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Title: Six Little Bunkers at Cousin Tom's

Author: Laura Lee Hope

Release date: January 11, 2006 [EBook #17492]

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SIX LITTLE BUNKERS AT COUSIN TOM'S

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**SIX LITTLE BUNKERS
AT COUSIN TOM'S**

BY

LAURA LEE HOPE

AUTHOR OF "SIX LITTLE BUNKERS AT GRANDMA BELL'S," "SIX
LITTLE BUNKERS AT AUNT JO'S," "THE BOBBSEY TWINS
SERIES," "THE BUNNY BROWN SERIES," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS

BOOKS

By LAURA LEE HOPE

THE SIX LITTLE BUNKERS SERIES

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SIX LITTLE BUNKERS AT AUNT JO'S
SIX LITTLE BUNKERS AT COUSIN TOM'S
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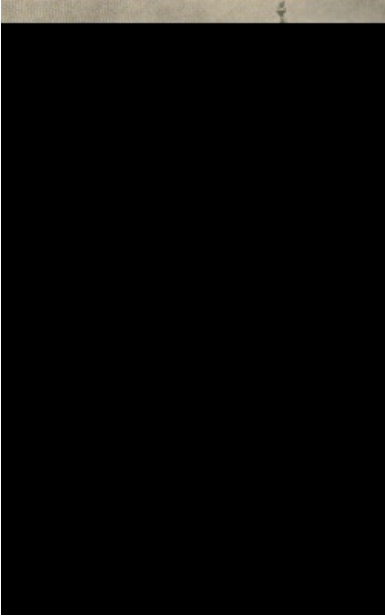
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GROSSET & DUNLAP, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

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Six Little Bunkers at Cousin Tom's



**THEY STEAMED ON DOWN
PAST THE STATUE OF
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—(Page [57](#))**

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[Pg 1]

SIX LITTLE BUNKERS AT COUSIN TOM'S

CHAPTER I

SAMMIE'S STORY

They were playing on the lawn of Aunt Jo's house—the little Bunkers, six of them. You could count them, if you wanted to, but it was rather hard work, as they ran about so—like chickens, Mrs. Bunker was wont to say—that it was hard to keep track of them. So you might take my word for it, now, that there were six of them, and count them afterward, if you care to.

"Come on!" cried the eldest Bunker—Russ, who was eight years old. "Come on, Rose, let's have some fun."

"What'll we do?" asked Rose, Russ' sister, who was about a year younger. "I'm not going to roll on the grass, 'cause I've got a clean dress on, and mother said I wasn't to spoil it." [Pg 2]

"Pooh! Clean grass like Aunt Jo's won't spoil any dress," said Russ. "Anyhow, I'm not going to roll much more. Let's get the pipes and see who can blow the biggest soap bubbles."

"Oh, I want to do that!" cried Vi, or Violet, who was, you might say, the third little Bunker, being the third oldest, except Laddie, of course. "What makes so many colors come in soap bubbles when you blow them?" she asked.

"The soap," answered Russ, getting up after a roll on the grass, and brushing his clothes. "It's the soap that does it."

"But soap isn't that color when we wash ourselves with it," went on Vi. "And what makes bubbles burst when you blow 'em too big?"

"I don't know," answered Russ. Like many an older person, he did not try to answer all Vi's questions. She asked too many of them.

"Let's blow the bubbles," suggested Rose. "Then maybe we can see what makes 'em burst!"

"Come on, Margy and Mun Bun!" called Vi to two other and smaller Bunkers, a little boy and girl who were digging little holes in a sandy place in the yard of Aunt Jo's home. "Come on; we're going to blow bubbles!" [Pg 3]

These two little Bunkers left their play and hastened to join the others. At the same time a boy with curly hair and gray eyes, who was Violet's twin, dropped some pieces of wood, which he had been trying to make into some sort of toy, and came running along the path.

"I want to blow some bubbles, too!" he said.

"We'll all blow them!" called Rose, who had a sort of "little mother" air about her when the smaller children were with her. "We'll have a soap-bubble party!"

"Shall we have things to eat?" asked Mun Bun.

"Course we will," cried Margy, the little girl who had been playing with him in the sand. "We always has good things to eat at parties; don't we, Rose?"

"Well, maybe we can get some cookies from Aunt Jo," said Rose. "You can run and ask her." [Pg 4]

Off started Margy, eager to get the good things to eat. It would not seem like a party, even with soap bubbles, unless there were things to eat! All the six little Bunkers felt this.

While Margy was running along the walk that led to the kitchen, where Aunt Jo's good-natured cook might be expected to hand out cookies and cakes, another little Bunker, who was walking beside Violet, the one who had been trying to make something out of pieces of wood, called out:

"Nobody can guess what I have in my mouth!"

"Is that a riddle, Laddie?" asked Russ. For Laddie was the name of the gray-eyed and curly-haired boy, and he was very fond of asking puzzle-questions. "Is it a riddle?" Russ repeated.

"Sort of," admitted Laddie. "Who can guess what I have in my mouth?"

"Oh, it's candy!" cried Violet, as she saw one of her brother's cheeks puffed out. "It's candy! Give me some, Laddie!"

"Nope. 'Tisn't candy!" he cried. "You must guess again!" [Pg 5]

Nothing pleased Laddie more than to make his brothers and sisters guess his riddles.

"Is it a piece of cake?" asked Mun Bun.

"Nope!"

"Then 'tis so candy!" insisted Violet. And then, seeing her mother coming down the side porch, she cried: "Mother, make Laddie give me some of his candy! He's got a big piece in his mouth, and he won't give me any!"

"I haven't any candy!" declared Laddie. "I only asked her if she could guess what I had."

"'Tis so candy!" insisted Violet again.

"No, 'tisn't!" disputed Laddie.

"Children! Children!" said Mrs. Bunker softly. "I don't like my six little toadikins to talk this way. Where's Margy?" she asked as she "counted noses," which she called looking about to see if all six of the children were present.

"Margy's gone to get some cakes, 'cause we're going to have a soap-bubble party," explained Russ.

"What makes so many pretty colors come in the bubbles, Mother?" asked Violet.

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"It is the light shining through, just as the sun shines through the water in the sky after the rain, making the rainbow."

"Oh," said Violet. She didn't understand very well about it, but her question had been answered, anyhow. "And now what's Laddie got in his mouth?" she went on. "Make him give me some, Mother!"

"I can't, 'cause it's only my tongue, and I can't take it out!" laughed Laddie, and he showed how he had thrust his tongue to one side, bulging out his cheek, so it really did look as though he had a piece of candy in his mouth.

"That's the time I fooled you with a riddle!" he said to Violet. "It was only my tongue!"

"I don't care! When I get some real candy I won't give you any!" cried Violet.

"Here comes Margy with the cakes!" exclaimed Rose. "Now we'll have the soap-bubble party."

"But don't get any soap on your cake, or it won't taste nice," warned Mother Bunker. "Now play nicely. Has the postman been past yet?"

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"Not yet, Mother," answered Russ. "Do you think he is going to bring you a letter?"

"He may, yes."

"Will it be a letter asking us to come some other place to have a good time for the rest of the summer?" Rose wanted to know. For the six little Bunkers were paying a visit to Aunt Jo in Boston, and expected to leave shortly.

"I don't know just what kind of letter I shall get," said Mrs. Bunker with a smile, "but I hope it will be a nice one. Now have your party, and see who can blow the largest bubbles."

"Let's eat our cake and cookies first," said Russ. "Then we can't get any soap on 'em."

"Why not?" asked Violet, who seemed especially fond of asking questions this day.

"'Cause they'll be inside us—I mean the cookies will," explained Russ.

"Oh, that would make a good riddle!" exclaimed Laddie. "I'm going to make up one about that."

The children went out to the garage, where there was a room in which they often played. There they ate their cookies and cakes, and then Russ and Rose made some bowls of soapy water, and with clay pipes, which the little Bunkers had bought for their play, they began to blow bubbles. They made large and small ones, and nearly all of them had the pretty colors that Violet had asked about.

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They took one of the robes from Aunt Jo's automobile, and, spreading this out on the grass, they blew bubbles and let them fall on the cloth. The bubbles bounced up, sometimes making several bounds before they burst.

"Oh, this is lots of fun!" cried Laddie. "It's more fun than making riddles."

"I wondered why you hadn't asked one," said Russ with a laugh. "Oh!" he suddenly exclaimed, for he had happened to laugh just as he was blowing a big bubble, and it burst, scattering a little fine spray of soapy water in his face.

Margy giggled delightedly.

"I like this!" said Mun Bun, as he put his pipe down into the bowl of water and blew a big string of little bubbles.

Just then a voice called:

"Hey, Russ! Where are you?"

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"Back here! Come on!" answered Russ, laying aside his pipe.

"Who is it?" asked Rose.

"It's Sammie Brown, the boy we met the other day when we went to Nantasket Beach," Russ explained. "He lives about two blocks from here, and I told him to come over and see us. Here he is now!" and he pointed to a boy, about his own age, who was coming up the walk.

"Hello, Sammie!" greeted Russ. "Want to blow bubbles?"

"Yes," was the answer, and a pipe was found for Sammie. He seemed to know how to use it, for he blew bubbles bigger than any one else.

"What's inside the bubbles?" asked Violet, who simply had to ask another question. "Is it water?"

"No, it's air," said Sammie. "If you could blow a bubble big enough to get inside of you could breathe the air, just like outside. Only when it was all breathed up you'd have to get more."

"Would you, really?" asked Rose.

"Sure," Sammie answered.

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"How do you know?" Violet questioned.

"'Cause my father's a sea captain, and he takes divers out on his boat and they go down after things that sink. The divers have air pumped to them, and they wear a big thing on their heads like a soap bubble, only it's called a helmet. This is pumped full of air for the diver to breathe."

"Oh, tell us about it!" begged Laddie, laying aside his pipe.

"Did your father ever go down like a diver?" asked Russ.

"Yes, once or twice. But now he just helps the other men go down. He's been a sea captain all his life, and once he was shipwrecked."

"What's shipwrecked?" asked Margy.

"It's when your ship hits a rock, or runs on a desert island and sinks," said Sammie. "Then you have to get off if you don't want to be drowned. And once my father was shipwrecked on a desert island that way, and they found a lot of gold."

"They did?" cried Russ.

"Sure! I've heard him tell about it lots of times."

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"Oh, is it a story?" asked Rose.

"No, it's real," said Sammie.

"Tell us about it," demanded Laddie.

"Well, I don't 'member much about it," Sammie said. "But if you come over to my house, my father'll tell you about it. Only he isn't home now 'cause he's got some divers down in the harbor and they're going to raise up a ship that's sunk."

"Couldn't you tell us a little about it?" asked Russ. "Did your father dig gold on the desert island?"

"Yes, he dug a lot of it," said Sammie. "He's got one piece at home now. It's yellow, just like a five-dollar gold piece."

"Where was the island?" asked Violet.

"Maybe we can go there," suggested Laddie. "That is, if it isn't too far."

"Oh, it's terrible far," said Sammie. "It's half-way around the world."

"That's too far," said Russ with a sigh.

"Maybe we could dig for gold here," suggested Rose. "There's nice sand in one part of Aunt Jo's garden, and I guess she'd let us dig for gold. We could give her some if we found any."

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"I don't guess there's any gold here," said Sammie, looking the place over. "This isn't a desert island."

"We could pretend it was," said Laddie. "Let's do that! I'll go for a shovel."

He ran to where the garden tools were kept, but, on the way, he heard the postman's whistle and stopped to get the mail. This he carried to his mother, and, when she saw one letter, she cried:

"Oh, this is from Cousin Tom! I hope it has good news in it!"

Quickly she read it, while Laddie wondered what the good news was about. Then Mrs. Bunker said:

"Oh, Laddie! We're going on another nice trip! Cousin Tom has invited us all down to his seashore cottage! Won't that be fine? We must soon get ready to leave Aunt Jo's and go to Cousin Tom's!"

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CHAPTER II

TREASURE HOPES

Laddie Bunker looked up at his mother as she finished reading the letter. Then he shook his head and said:

"We can't go to Cousin Tom's!"

"Can't go to Cousin Tom's!" repeated his mother. "Why not, Laddie, my boy?"

"'Cause we're going to dig for gold here. Sammie Brown's father is a sea captain, and he has divers. He knows a lot about digging gold on desert islands, Sammie's father does, and we're going to make believe Aunt Jo's back yard is a desert island, and we're going to dig for gold there."

"But there isn't any," replied Mrs. Bunker, wanting to laugh, but not doing it, as she did not want to hurt Laddie's feelings.

"Well, we're going to dig, just the same," insisted Laddie. "We can go to Cousin Tom's after we find the gold."

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"Oh, I see," said Mrs. Bunker with a smile. "Well, don't you think it would be nice to go to the seashore? There is plenty of sand there, and perhaps there may be a desert island, or something like that, near Cousin Tom's. Couldn't you dig for gold and treasure at the seashore?"

"Oh, maybe we could!" cried Laddie. "I guess that would be nice, Mother. I'll go and tell the others. We're going to Cousin Tom's! We're going to Cousin Tom's!" he sang joyously, as he raced back to where he had left Sammie Brown telling his story, and the other little Bunkers who wanted to dig for gold.

"I think it will be just lovely for the children at Cousin Tom's," said Mrs. Bunker to her husband, who came out to see if there were any letters for him. "They can play in the sand and never get a bit dirty."

"Yes, they can do that," said Mr. Bunker. "So Cousin Tom wrote, did he? Well, I suppose that means we will soon be leaving Aunt Jo's."

"I shall be sorry to see you go," said Aunt Jo herself—Miss Josephine Bunker, to give her complete name and title. She was Daddy Bunker's sister, and had never married, but she had a fine home in the Back Bay section of Boston, and the six little Bunkers, with their father and mother, had been spending some weeks there.

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While Mr. and Mrs. Bunker are talking about the coming trip to the seashore, and while Laddie is hurrying back to tell his brothers and sisters the good news, there will be a chance for me to let my new readers hear something about the children who are to have the largest part in this story.

This book is complete in itself, but it forms one of a series about the six children, and the first volume is called "Six Little Bunkers at Grandma Bell's." In that I introduced the boys and girls.

First there was Russ, aged eight years. He had dark hair and eyes, and was very fond of whistling and making things to play with, such as an automobile out of a soap box or a steamboat out of a broken chair. Rose, who was next in size, was seven years old. She often helped her mother about the house and looked after the younger children. And that she was happy when she worked you could tell because she nearly always sang. Rose had light hair and blue eyes.

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Vi, or Violet, was six years old. As you have noticed, she was very fond of asking questions, and she looked at you with her gray eyes until you answered. Laddie, her twin brother, was as persistent in making up queer little riddles as Vi was with her questions, and between the two they kept their father and mother busy.

Margy, or Margaret, was five years old, and almost as dark as a little Gypsy girl. Margy and Mun Bun usually played together, and they had a great deal of fun. Lest you might think "Mun Bun" was some kind of candy, I will say that it was the pet name of Munroe Ford Bunker, and it was shortened to Mun Bun as the other was too long to say. Mun Bun was rather small, even for his age of four years. He had blue eyes and golden hair and looked almost as I have an idea fairies look, if there are any real ones.

So there you have the six little Bunkers. When they were at home, they lived in the town of Pineville, on the Rainbow River. Mr. Bunker was a real estate dealer, whose office was about a mile from his home.

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In the first book of the series I told you of a trip the Bunkers took to Grandma Bell's at Lake Sagatook, in Maine. Grandma Bell was Mrs. Bunker's mother, and in the Maine woods the children had so many good times that it was years before they forgot them. They had quite an adventure, too, with a tramp lumberman, who had a ragged coat, but I will not spoil that story by telling it to you here.

Before the Bunkers left Grandma Bell's they received an invitation to visit Aunt Jo in Boston, and they were at her Back Bay home when the present story opens.

There had been adventures in Boston, too, and the pocketbook which Rose found, with sixty-five dollars in it, was quite a mystery for a time. But, finally, the real owner was discovered, and very glad she was to get the money back.

"Well, we have had good times here at Aunt Jo's," said Mrs. Bunker to her husband, when they had read all the letters that had come in the mail. "And now it is time for us to go. I think we shall enjoy our stay at Cousin Tom's."

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"It will be fine for the children," said their father.

"Yes, they are already counting on digging gold out of the sand," said Mrs. Bunker with a laugh. "Sammie Brown has been telling them some story about buried treasure his father found."

"Well, I believe that is a true story," said Mr. Bunker. "I heard my sister say something about Mr. Brown having been shipwrecked on an island once, and coming back with gold. But if we go to Cousin Tom's we shall have to begin packing soon, shall we not?" he went on.

"Yes," agreed his wife. "We are to leave about the middle of next week."

"We have been doing a great deal of traveling so far this summer," went on Mr. Bunker. "Here it is about the middle of August, and we have been at Grandma Bell's, at Aunt Jo's and we are now going to Cousin Tom's. I had a letter from Grandpa Ford, saying that he wished we'd come there."

"And my brother Fred is anxious to have us come out to his western ranch," said Mrs. Bunker. "If we accept all the invitations we shall be very busy."

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So Mr. and Mrs. Bunker talked over the time of leaving, what they would need to take, and the best way of going. Meanwhile Laddie had run back to tell his brothers and sisters the good news.

"We're going to the real seashore!" he exclaimed. "It's down to Seaview where Cousin Tom lives, and we can dig for treasure there!"

"Can we really?" asked Violet. "What's treasure, Russ? Is any of it good to eat? And look at that robin! What makes him waggle his tail that way? And look at the cat! What's she lashing her tail so for?"

"Wait a minute, Vi!" cried Russ with a laugh. "You mustn't ask so many questions all to once."

"Treasure isn't good to eat!" said Laddie. "But if you find a lot of gold you can buy ice-cream sodas with it."

"Maybe the robin is flitting its tail to scare the cat," suggested Rose, who remembered Violet's second question.

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"Well, I know why the cat is lashing her tail," said Russ. "Cats always do that when they think they're going to catch a bird. This cat thinks she's going to catch the robin. But she won't!"

"Why not?" asked Rose.

"'Cause I'm going to throw a stone at it—at the cat, I mean," explained Russ. He tossed a pebble at the cat, not hitting it, and the furry creature slunk away. The robin flew off, also, so it was not caught, at least not just then.

"I know a riddle about a robin!" said Laddie. "Only I can't think of it now," he added. "Maybe I shall after a while. Then I'll tell it to you. Go on, Sammie. Tell us more about how your father got the gold on the desert island."

"He dug for it," Sammie answered. "He and the other sailors just dug in the sand for it."

"With shovels?"

"No, they used big shells. It's easy to dig in the sand."

"Is sand the best place to dig for gold?" Rose wanted to know.

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"I guess so," answered Sammie. "Anyhow there's always sand on a desert island, like that one where my father was."

"There's sand down at Cousin Tom's," put in Laddie. "I heard my mother say so. I'm going to dig for gold, and if I get a lot, Sammie, I'll send you some."

"I hope you find a big lot!" exclaimed the visiting boy with a laugh.

They talked over their hopes of finding treasure in the seashore sand, forgetting all about the soap bubbles they had been blowing.

"I'll be lonesome when you go away," said Sammie to Russ. "I like you Bunkers."

"And we like you," said Russ. "Maybe if we dig for gold down at Cousin Tom's, and can't find any, you'll come down and help us."

"Sure I will!" exclaimed Sammie, as if that would be the easiest thing in the world. "I'll ask my father the best way, and then I'll come down."

"Could you bring a diving suit?" asked Laddie. "Maybe the gold would be down on the bottom of the ocean, and we'd have to dive for it. Would your father let you take a diving suit?"

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"No, I don't guess he would," said Sammie, shaking his head. "They are only for big men, and

you have to have air pumped down to you all the while. It makes bubbles come up, and as long as the bubbles come up the diver is all right."

"Did a shark ever bite your father?" asked Rose.

"No, I guess not," Sammie answered. "Anyhow he never told me about it. But I must go now, 'cause it's time for my lunch. I'll come over after lunch and we can have some more fun."

Sammie said good-bye to the six little Bunkers and started down the side path toward the front gate of Aunt Jo's home. Hardly had he reached the sidewalk when Russ and the others heard him yelling:

"Oh, come here! Come here quick, and look! Hurry!"

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CHAPTER III

ON THE BOAT

"What is it? What's the matter?" cried Rose, as she hurried after her brother, who started to run toward Sammie Brown.

"I don't know," Russ answered. "But something has happened!"

"Maybe Sammie found the treasure," suggested Laddie. "Oh, wouldn't that be great? Then we wouldn't have to dig for it down in the sand at Cousin Tom's!"

"Pooh! there couldn't be no treasure out in front of Aunt Jo's house," exclaimed Violet, not being quite so careful of her words as she should have been.

By this time Russ and Rose were in the front yard, but they could not see Sammie, because between the yard and the street were some high bushes, and the shrubbery hid Sammie from sight.

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"What's the matter?" asked Rose.

"What happened?" Russ wanted to know.

"A policeman has arrested a big bear!" cried Sammie. "Come on and see it! The policeman has the bear, an' there's a man with gold rings in his ears, and he's got a red handkerchief on his neck, or maybe that's where the bear scratched him, and there's a big crowd and—and—everything!"

Words failed Sammie. He had to stop then.

"Oh—a—a bear!" gasped Rose.

She and Russ, followed by the rest of the six little Bunkers, hurried out to Aunt Jo's front gate. There they saw just what Sammie had said they would—a policeman had hold of a long cord which was fastened about the neck of a bear. And there was an excited man with a red handkerchief tied about his throat, and he had gold rings in his ears. He was talking to the policeman, and there was a crowd of men and children and a few women about the bear, the policeman, and the other man, who seemed to be the bear's owner.

"What happened?" asked Russ of a boy whom he knew, and who lived a few doors from Aunt Jo's house.

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"I don't know," was the answer. "I guess the bear bit somebody though, and the policeman arrested it."

"No, that wasn't it," said another boy. "The bear broke into a bake shop and ate a lot of pies. That's why the policeman is going to take it to the station house."

"Here comes the patrol wagon!" some one else cried, and up the street dashed the automobile from the precinct station house, its bell clanging loudly.

"Get in!" the six little Bunkers heard the policeman say to the man with the red handkerchief around his neck. "Get in, you and the bear! I'll teach you to come around here!"

"Oh, maybe the bear bit the policeman," half whispered Rose.

"No, my dears," said Aunt Jo, who, with Mother Bunker, had come out to see what the excitement was about and why the six little Bunkers had run so fast around the side of the house. "Nothing much at all happened, my dears," said Aunt Jo. "But in this part of Boston, at least, they don't allow performing bears in the streets. That is why the policeman is taking this one away. The man, who is an Italian, led his tame bear along the street and started to have the animal do tricks. But we don't allow that in this Back Bay section."

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"Will he shoot the bear?" asked Mun Bun breathlessly.

"Oh, no," said Aunt Jo with a laugh. "The poor bear has done nothing, and his master did not

know any better than to bring him here. They will just make them go to another part of the city, where, perhaps, performing bears are not objected to. Whether they allow them anywhere in Boston or not, I can't say. But he will be taken away from here."

The automobile patrol, with the bear and man in charge of the policeman, rumbled away. The crowd waited a little while, and then, as nothing more seemed likely to happen, it began to scatter.

"I'm glad we saw it," said Russ, as he turned back into the yard.

"So'm I," added Laddie. "It's 'most as much fun as digging for gold. Say, Russ, I hope we find some, don't you?"

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"I sure do! I wish we were at Cousin Tom's right now. I want to start digging for that treasure."

"Don't be too sure of finding any," said Mother Bunker, who heard what her two little boys were saying. "Many persons dig for gold but never get any."

"Oh, we'll get some," declared Russ, and if you read this book through you will find out that what Russ said came true.

After supper that evening, when they had finished talking about the bear that had been arrested, Laddie and Vi wanted to go out into the yard and start digging.

"Oh, no," said their mother. "You have been washed and dressed, and digging will get you dirty again. Better wait until to-morrow."

"I thought we were going to start to pack to-morrow to go to Cousin Tom's," remarked Rose.

"So we are, but I guess you'll have time to dig for a little gold," returned Mother Bunker with a laugh. "Though that doesn't mean you will find any," she went on with another laugh.

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The next day Laddie and Vi did start to dig in a place where Aunt Jo said it would do no harm to turn over the ground.

"Though if there is a golden treasure in my yard I never knew it," she said. "But dig as much as you like."

"I—I just thought of a riddle," said Laddie, as he and Vi started out.

"Let me hear it," suggested Aunt Jo.

"What is it that's so big you can't put it in anything?" he asked. "That's the riddle. What is it that's so big you can't put it in anything in this world?"

"The ocean," answered Rose, who came along just then.

"Nope!" and Laddie shook his head.

"Well, the ocean is terrible big," Violet stated.

"Yes, it is," agreed Laddie. "But that isn't the answer to my riddle."

"Do you mean the sky?" asked Russ. "That's big, too."

"That isn't the answer," said Laddie. "I'll tell you, 'cause you never could guess it. It's a hole that you dig. You can dig one so big that you couldn't put it in anything. Not even the biggest box that ever was. Isn't that a good riddle?"

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"Yes, it's pretty good," agreed Russ; and he commenced to whistle a merry tune. "But you could fill a small box with some dirt, and dig a little hole in that, and you'd have a hole in a box," he added, after a moment.

"Yes, but the answer to my riddle is a *big* hole," said Laddie. "Now come on out and dig!"

"How big a hole are you going to dig?" Vi wanted to know.

"Oh, not the kind in my riddle," replied her brother. "We'll just dig a little one and make believe we're after treasure."

Of course I need not tell you that Laddie and Violet did not find any. Treasure doesn't usually grow in Boston back yards. But the children had fun, and that was best of all.

During the next few days there was much packing of trunks and valises to do, for the six little Bunkers were getting ready to go to Cousin Tom's at Seaview. This was a place on the New Jersey coast, and none of the Bunkers had ever been there. For Cousin Tom had been only recently married to a very pretty girl, named Ruth Robinson. Cousin Tom and his bride had stopped to pay a visit to Daddy and Mother Bunker when the young couple were on their honeymoon trip, and then Cousin Tom and his wife had said that as soon as they were settled in their new seashore home the Bunkers must come to see them.

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"And now we are going," said Mother Bunker, on the morning of the day they were to leave Aunt Jo's. The last trunk had been locked and sent away, and the family of travelers was soon to take the train from Boston to Fall River. There they would get on a boat that would take them to New York, and from New York they could go on another boat to Atlantic Highlands, in New

Jersey. Then they would take a train down the coast to Seaview.

"Well, I certainly shall miss you!" said Aunt Jo, as she kissed the big and little Bunkers good-bye. "And I hope, children, that you find lots of treasure in the sand."

"We'll dig deep for it," said Laddie. "Did you hear my riddle, Aunt Jo, about what's so big you can't put it in anything?"

"Yes, dear, I heard it."

"The answer is a *big* hole," went on Laddie, lest his aunt might have forgotten.

"I remember," she said with a laugh.

The trip to Fall River was not a very long one, and the six little Bunkers, who looked out of the windows at the sights they saw, hardly realized it when they were told it was time to get off the train.

"Where do we go now?" asked Rose, as she helped her mother by carrying a package in one hand and holding to Margy with the other. Rose was a real "mother's helper" that day.

"We go on the boat now," said Daddy Bunker. "And I want you children to be very careful. We are going to ride on the boat all night, and we shall be in New York in the morning."

"Shall we sleep on the boat?" asked Laddie.

"Yes, we'll have cute little beds to sleep in," said Mother Bunker.

A half hour later they were on one of the big Fall River boats that make nightly trips between New York and the Massachusetts city. The Bunkers were shown to their state-rooms. They had three large apartments, with several bunks, or beds, in each one, so there would be plenty of room.

They had their supper on the boat, and then they went out on deck in the evening. There were many sights new and strange to the children, and they looked eagerly at each one. Then it grew dark, and it was decided that the time had come for little folks to "turn in," and go to sleep.

Laddie, who with Russ and his father shared a room together, was looking from the window of the stateroom, out into the dark night, when he suddenly cried out:

"Oh, there's going to be a big thunder storm! I just saw the flash of lightning!"

"Are you sure it was lightning?" asked Mr. Bunker with a smile. "I didn't hear any thunder."

"There it is again!" cried Laddie, and this time a ray of bright, white light shone in the window, full in Laddie's face.

CHAPTER IV

A MIX-UP

"That isn't lightning," said Russ, who had come to the window of the stateroom to stand beside his brother and look out.

"'Tis, too!" insisted Laddie, as another flash came. "It's lightning, and maybe it'll set our boat on fire, and then we can't go to Cousin Tom's an' dig for gold! So there!"

Mr. Bunker, who was opening a valise in one corner of the room, getting out the boys' pajamas for the night, had not seen the light shining in the window, but had seen the glare of it on the wall.

"'Tisn't lightning at all!" declared Russ again.

"How do you know it isn't?" asked Laddie.

"'Cause lightning flashes are a different color," said Russ. "And, besides, they don't stay still so long. Look, Daddy, this one is peeping right in our window like a light from Aunt Jo's automobile!"

Mr. Bunker turned in time to see the bright flash of light come in through the window, and then it seemed to stay in the room, making it much brighter than the light from the electric lamps on the wall.

"Of course that isn't lightning!" said Mr. Bunker. "That's a search-light from some ship. Come on out on deck, boys, and we'll see it."

The bright glare was still in the room, but it did not flare up as lightning would have done, and there were no loud claps of thunder.

"Well, if it isn't a storm I'll come out on deck and look," Laddie said. "But if it rains I'm coming in!"

"It won't," said Daddy Bunker with a laugh. "We'll go out for a few minutes, and then we'll come in and go to bed. To-morrow we'll be at Cousin Tom's."

Out on the deck of the big Fall River boat they went, and, surely enough, the light did come from the search-lantern of a big ship not far away. It was a United States warship, the boys' father told them, and it was probably kept near Newport, where there is a station at which young sailors are trained. The warship flashed the light all about the water, lighting up other boats.

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"I thought it was lightning," said Laddie.

"It is a kind of lightning," said Daddy Bunker. "For the light is made by electricity, and lightning and electricity are the same thing, though no one has yet been able to use lightning to read by."

Mrs. Bunker, who had left Rose in charge of Margy and Mun Bun, came out on deck with Violet, and met her husband and the two boys. She was told about Laddie's thinking the light was from a storm, and laughed with him over it.

"I'm going to make up a riddle about the search-light to-morrow," said the little fellow eagerly.

They stayed out on deck a while longer, while the boat steamed ahead, watching the various lights on shore and on other vessels, and occasionally seeing the glare of the search-beam from the warship. Then, as it was getting late and the children were tired, Mother Bunker said they had better go to their beds.

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This they did, and they slept soundly all night.

The morning was bright and fair, and the day promised to be a fine one for the rest of the trip to Cousin Tom's. As I have mentioned, they were to take a boat from New York City to Atlantic Highlands, and from there a train would take them down the New Jersey coast to Seaview, and to Mr. Thomas Bunker's house on the beach.

"Are we going to have breakfast on the boat?" asked Russ, as he helped his father gather up the baggage, whistling meanwhile a merry tune.

"No, I think we will go to a restaurant on shore," said Mr. Bunker. "I want to telegraph to Cousin Tom, and let him know we are coming, and I think we shall all enjoy a meal on shore more than on the boat after it has tied up at the dock."

So on shore they all went, and Daddy Bunker, after leaving the hand baggage at the dock where they were to take the Atlantic Highlands boat later in the day, took them to a restaurant.

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"Shall we have good things to eat?" asked Violet, as she walked along by her mother's side.

"Of course, my dear," was the answer. "That is what restaurants are for."

"Will they have as good things as we had at Aunt Jo's?"

"Well, yes, I think so."

"Will they have strawberry shortcake?"

"You don't want that for breakfast!" laughed Daddy Bunker, turning around, for he was walking ahead with Russ.

"I like strawberry shortcake," went on Violet. "It's good and mother said they had good things in a rest'ant. I want strawberry shortcake."

"Well, you shall have some if we can get it," promised Mother Bunker, for Violet was talking quite loudly, and several persons on the street, hearing her, looked down at the little girl and smiled.

"All right," said Vi. "I'm glad I'm going to get strawberry shortcake in the rest'ant. What makes 'em call it a rest'ant, Daddy? Does an ant rest there? And why doesn't Aunt Jo come to one an' rest?"

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"I'll tell you about it when we get there," said her father.

The restaurant was not far from where they were to take the boat for Atlantic Highlands, and, though it was rather early in the morning, quite a number of persons were at breakfast.

There was a smell of many things being cooked, and the rattle of dishes, and of knives, forks and spoons made such a clatter that it sounded as though every one was in a great hurry.

"Are all these people going down to the seashore like us?" asked Violet, who seemed to have many questions to ask that day.

"Oh, no," answered her father. "They are just hungry, and they want their breakfast. Perhaps some of them have been traveling all night, as we were. But come, we must find a table large enough for all of us. I don't believe they often have a whole family, the size of ours, at breakfast here."

A waiter, who had seen the Bunkers come in, motioned them to follow him, and he led them to a quiet corner where there was a table with just eight chairs about it.

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"Ho! I guess this was made specially for us," said Russ with a laugh, as he slid into his seat.

"Yes, it just seems to fit," agreed Mr. Bunker. "Now, Mother," and he looked over at his wife, "you order for some of the children, and I'll order for the others. In that way we'll be through sooner."

"Have they got any strawberry shortcake?" asked Vi. "I want some."

"I don't see it down on the bill of fare for breakfast," replied her father, "but I'll ask the waiter."

One of the men, of whom there were many hurrying to and fro with big trays heaped high with dishes of food, came over to the Bunkers' table.

"No, the strawberry shortcake isn't ready until lunch," he said. "But you can have hot waffles and maple syrup."

"Oh, I like them!" and Violet clapped her hands. "I like them better than strawberry shortcake."

"Then you may bring some," said Mr. Bunker. It took a little time to get just what each child wanted, and sometimes, after the order was given, one or the other of the youngsters would change. But finally the waiter had gone back to the kitchen, to get the different things for the six little Bunkers and their father and mother.

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"And now we can sit back and draw our breaths," said Mrs. Bunker. "My, I never saw such a hungry lot of children! Now sit still, all of you, until I 'count noses.' I want to see if you're really all here."

She began at Russ, and went to Rose, to Violet, to Laddie, and to Margy, and then Mrs. Bunker suddenly cried:

"Why, you're not Mun Bun! Where is Mun Bun? You are not my little boy!"

And, surely enough, there was a mix-up. For in the seat where Mun Bun had been sitting was a strange little boy. He was about as big as Mun Bun, but he was not one of the six little Bunkers.

Where was Mun Bun?

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CHAPTER V

MARGY'S CRAWL

Mother Bunker looked at the strange little boy. And the strange little boy looked at Mother Bunker.

"Where did you come from?" asked Mr. Bunker.

"Over there, and I'm hungry!" said the little fellow. "I'm terrible hungry, 'cause I didn't have no breakfast yet. Has you got any breakfast?" and he looked at each plate in turn, for the waiter had put plates in front of each of the Bunkers. "No, you hasn't anything to eat, either. I guess I'll go back," and he started to slip down from his chair. He was sitting between Violet and Margy.

"Wait a minute, my little man," said Daddy Bunker with a smile. "Don't run away so fast. You might get lost. Who are you and where do you live?"

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"I live away far off," answered the strange boy. "My name is Tommie, and I come in a ship and I'm going out West, and I'm hungry!"

"Oh, maybe he's lost!" exclaimed Russ.

"I'm sure Mun Bun is!" said Mrs. Bunker. "Oh, where can he be? He was in his chair a minute ago, and then I looked to see what else I wanted to order to eat, but when I looked up there was this strange boy, and Mun Bun was gone. Oh, I hope he hasn't gone into the street!" and she looked toward the door of the restaurant.

Mun Bun was not in sight, and Mr. Bunker got up from his chair to make a search. The strange boy who had said his name was Tommie, looked about hungrily.

Just as Mrs. Bunker was going to call a waiter, and ask about Mun Bun, there came a cry from another table at the far end of the restaurant. It was the voice of a woman, and she said:

"Oh, that isn't Tommie! Where is he? Where is Tommie?"

"I guess that explains the mystery," said Mr. Bunker with a smile. "The two boys are mixed up. We have Tommie—whatever his other name is—at our table, and Mun Bun must have gone down there," and he pointed to the table where the woman had called for Tommie. There were five children at this table, waiting for breakfast as the six little Bunkers were waiting, and one of them was Mun Bun, as his mother could see. She ran down the long room.

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"Oh, Mun Bun!" cried Mrs. Bunker. "What made you go away? Why did you come over here?"

And she hurried to his chair and took him in her arms.

At the same time the boy who had called himself Tommie, slipped out of his chair and hurried with Mrs. Bunker back to the table where the woman who had called him sat.

"Now I guess the mix-up is straightened out," said Daddy Bunker with a laugh. "Mun Bun slipped away, when we were not looking, and went to the wrong table. At the same time a little boy from that table came to ours. They just traded places."

"Like puss-in-the-corner," said Rose, who had followed her mother and father to the other end of the room.

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"That's it," agreed Daddy Bunker. "I'm sorry you were frightened about your little boy," he went on to Tommie's mother. "We didn't know we had him."

"And I didn't know I had yours," she said with a smile. "I have five children, all girls but this one, and when I didn't see Tommie in his place, but saw, instead, this strange little chap, I didn't know what had happened."

"That's just the way I felt," said Mrs. Bunker. "I have six, and when we travel it keeps me and their father busy looking after them."

"My husband isn't with me now," said the woman, who gave her name as Mrs. Wilson. "But I expect to meet him at the station. We are going to Asbury Park for the rest of the summer."

"We are going to Seaview," said Mrs. Bunker. "Perhaps we may meet you at the shore."

"I hope so," said Mrs. Wilson, as Tommie slipped into the seat out of which Mun Bun slid. "Now here comes your breakfast, children."

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"Yes, and the waiter is bringing ours," said Mr. Bunker with a look over toward his own table. "Come, Mother, and Mun Bun. You, too, Rose."

They said good-bye to Mrs. Wilson, and soon the six little Bunkers at one table were eating waffles and maple syrup, and at the other table the five little Wilsons were enjoying their meal.

"What made you go away, Mun Bun?" asked his mother, as she buttered another waffle for him.

"I wanted to see if they had any shortcake down there," he explained. "I wanted some like Vi did, and I went to another table to see. But there wasn't have any," he added, getting rather mixed up in his talk. "And when I wanted to come back I didn't know the way and I sat down and you weren't there, Mother, and I was afraid and——"

"But you're all right now," said Mrs. Bunker, as she saw Mun Bun's chin begin to quiver as it always did just before he cried. "You're all right now, and not lost any more. Finish your waffle, and we'll soon be ready to go on the boat to Cousin Tom's."

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The children were eating heartily, for they were hungry after their night trip from Fall River. Laddie, who had had several helpings of waffles, at last seemed satisfied. He leaned back in his chair and said:

"I know another riddle. When is Mun Bun not Mun Bun?"

"He's always Mun Bun, 'ceptin' when Mother calls him Munroe Ford Bunker, when he's got himself all dirt," said Vi. "I don't call that a riddle."

"It is a riddle," insisted Laddie. "When is Mun Bun not Mun Bun?"

"Is it when he's asleep?" asked Russ, taking a guess just to please his small brother.

"Nope! That isn't it," went on the small boy. "It's awful hard, and you'd never guess it, so I'll tell you. Mun Bun isn't Mun Bun when he's Tommie Wilson. Isn't that a good riddle?" he asked. "Mun Bun isn't Mun Bun when he's Tommie Wilson."

"Yes, that is pretty good," said Mr. Bunker. "But now we had better hurry, or we may be late for the Atlantic Highlands boat. Are you all through?"

They were; all but Mun Bun, who saw a little pool of maple syrup on his plate, and wanted to get that up with a spoon before he left the table. Then once more the six little Bunkers were on their way.

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The Atlantic Highlands boat left from a pier near one of the New Jersey Central Railroad ferry slips on West street in New York City, and it was quite a long walk from the shore end of the pier to the end that was out in the Hudson River. It was at the river end that the boat stopped, coming down from a pier farther up the stream.

"Now are we all here?" asked Mother Bunker, as she and her husband started down West street. "I don't want Mun Bun to change into some one else after we get started on the boat, for then it will be too late to change him back. Are we all here?"

They were, it seemed, and down West street they hurried. The way was lined with out-door stands, where it seemed that nearly everything from bananas and oranges to pocketbooks and shoes, were sold. West street is along the river front, where many boats land, and there are

sailors, and other persons, who have no time to go shopping for things up town, or farther inland in the city of New York. So the stands on West street are very useful. You can buy things to eat, as well as things to wear, without going into a store. A big shed over the top keeps off the rain.

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As the Bunker family hastened on, Margy, who had been walking with Rose, let go of her sister's hand and cried:

"Oh, look at the little kittie! I want to rub the little kittie!"

A small cat had crawled out from under one stand and was walking along the street. Margy saw it, and, being very fond of animals, she wanted to pet it.

But the cat, young as it was, seemed to be afraid. As Margy ran from Rose's side and trotted after the furry animal, it gave a sudden scamper under another stand.

But Margy had chased kittens before, and she knew that once they got under something they generally stayed near the front edge, hoping they would not be seen. By stooping down, and reaching, she had often pulled her own kitten out from under her mother's dresser.

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"I can get you! I can get you!" laughed the little girl.

Paying no attention to her clean, white stockings, which her mother had put on her only that morning, Margy knelt down on the sidewalk, and stretched her arms under the fruit stand, beneath which the half-frightened kitten had crawled.

If the little cat had known that Margy only wanted to stroke it softly and pet it I am sure it would not have run away. But that is what it did, and that is what caused all the trouble. For there was trouble. I'll tell you about it.

"Come on out, kittie!" called Margy. "Come on out! I won't hurt you! I like kitties, I do! Come on out and let me rub you!"

She stooped lower down to see under the edge of the fruit stand. By this time Mrs. Bunker had seen what had happened, and she called:

"Margaret Bunker, get right up off your knees this instant. You'll spoil your clean white stockings! Get up! We'll miss the boat!"

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But Margy paid no heed. She could see the kitten now, back in a dark corner under the stand, and she wanted to get it out.

"Come on, kittie!" called the little girl. "Come on out, and I'll take you to Cousin Tom's with us and you can play in the sand! Come on, I'll rub you nice and soft!"

"Mew! Mew!" said the kitten, but it did not come out.

And then Margy did a very queer thing.

With a sudden wiggle and a twist she crawled all the way under the fruit stand, her little legs, in the white stockings, being the last to disappear.

"Oh, catch her! Quick! Catch her!" cried Mrs. Bunker. But it was too late. Margy was out of sight under the fruit stand after the little kitten.

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CHAPTER VI

AT COUSIN TOM'S

When Mr. Bunker heard his wife calling as she did, he stopped and looked back, for he was walking on ahead with Russ and Laddie. Then all the other Bunkers stopped, too, and gathered around the fruit stand. All except Mr. Bunker and the two boys knew what had happened, for they had seen Margy crawl under.

The man who owned the stand, who had gone away from it a moment to talk to the man who kept a socks-and-suspender stand next to him, had not seen the kitten crawl under his pile of fruit, nor had he seen Margy go after it. But when he saw the seven Bunkers gathered in a group he at once thought they wanted to buy some apples, pears, or oranges.

"Nice fruit! Nice fruit!" said the man, who was an Italian. "Very nice good fruit and cheap."

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"No, we don't want any fruit now," said Mrs. Bunker. "I want my little girl."

"Lil' girl? Lil' girl!" exclaimed the Italian.

"No got lil' girls. Only got fruit, banan', orange, apple! You want to buy? Good nice fruit cheap!"

"No, I want Margy!" cried Mrs. Bunker.

"Where is she?" asked Mr. Bunker, who, as I have told you, had not seen where Margy went.

"She's under the stand," explained his wife.

"She went to get a kitten," added Rose.

"No got kittens nor cats needer," said the Italian. "Only got fruit. Nice fruit, cheap!"

Mr. Bunker stooped down to look under the stand.

"No fruit there!" the owner said. "All fruit on top. Nice fruit, cheap!"

"I am looking for my little girl," explained Mr. Bunker. "She crawled under there—under your stand—after a kitten."

And just then could be heard a loud:

"Mew! Mew! Mew!"

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"Oh, she's caught it! Margy's caught the kittie," cried Mun Bun. "I can hear him holler."

Certainly something seemed to have happened to the kitten, for it was mewling very loudly. Mr. Bunker reached in under the fruit stand, and made a grab for something. He gave a pull and out came—Margy!

And as Margy came into view, being pulled by one leg by her father, who found that was the only way he could reach her, it was seen that the little girl held, clasped in her arms, the kitten after which she had crawled.

"I got it! I got it!" cried Margy, as she sat down on the sidewalk in front of the fruit stand.

The kitten was a soft, furry one, but it was rather mussed and bedraggled now, from the way Margy had mauled it. And the little Bunker girl was rather tousled herself, for there was not much room underneath the stand where she had crawled.

"Oh, my dear Margy!" cried Mrs. Bunker. "You are such a sight!"

"But I got my kittie!" said the little girl.

By this time quite a crowd had gathered around the six little Bunkers and their father and mother. Margy still sat on the sidewalk, with the kitten in her lap, petting and rubbing it.

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"Come! We must hurry!" exclaimed Mr. Bunker. "We may miss the boat. Get up, Margy. Rose, you help your mother dust Margy off, and then we must hurry."

"Can't I take the kittie?" asked the little girl.

"No, dear," answered her mother. "It isn't yours. And besides, we never could take it to Cousin Tom's with us. Put it down, Margy, my dear!"

"Oh, oh, I don't want to!" cried the little girl, and real tears came into her eyes. "I got this kittie out of a dark corner, and it loves me and I love it! I want it."

"But you can't take it," said Daddy Bunker. "The kittie must stay here. It belongs to the fruit stand. It's your cat, isn't it?" he asked the Italian.

"My keeten? No. I have no keeten. I sell banan', orange, apple! You buy some I give you keetie. Me no want!"

"No, and we don't want it, either," said Mrs. Bunker. "I was hoping it was yours so you could say you had to keep it here to drive the mice away. If Margy thought it was yours she wouldn't want to take it away."

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"Ah, I see!" exclaimed the Italian with a smile. "All right, I keep the keeten," and he said the name in a funny way.

"There, Margy!" exclaimed her father. "You see you'll have to leave the kitten here to keep the mice away from the oranges."

"Can't I take it to Cousin Tom's with me?"

"No. And you must put it down quickly, and hurry, or we shall miss the boat."

Margy started to cry, but the Italian, who seemed to understand children, quickly offered her a big, yellow orange. Then Margy let go of the kitten, and the fruit man quickly picked it up and put it down in a little box out of sight.

"She no see—she no want," he whispered to Mrs. Bunker.

"I want an orange!" exclaimed Mun Bun, seeing Margy beginning to eat hers. "I likes oranges!"

"All right, we'll all have some," said Mr. Bunker. It seemed like disappointing the stand-owner to go away without buying some, after all that had gone on at his place of business.

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So Mr. Bunker bought a large bag of oranges, telling his wife they could eat them on the boat. Margy forgot about the kitten, and, being dusted, for she was dirty from her crawl under the stand, the six little Bunkers once more started off. This time their father and mother watched each one of the boys and girls to see that none of them did anything to cause further delays. Russ

and Rose and Laddie and Violet were not so venturesome this way as were Margy and Mun Bun.

"Now here we are at the dock, and all we have to do is to walk straight out to the end of the pier and get on the boat when it comes," said Mr. Bunker. "It is nearly time for it. I don't believe anything more can happen."

And nothing did. There was a long walk, or platform, elevated at one side of the covered pier, and along this the children hurried with their father and mother. A whistle sounded out on the Hudson River, which flowed past the far end of the dock.

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"Is that our boat?" asked Russ.

"I hope not," his father answered. "If it is, we may miss it yet. But I do not think it is. There are many boats on the river, and they all have whistles."

A little later they were in the waiting-room at the end of the dock, where there were a number of other passengers, and soon a big white boat, with the name "*Asbury Park*" painted on one side, was seen steering toward the dock.

"Here she is!" cried Mr. Bunker, and, a little later, they were all on board and steaming down New York Bay.

They steamed on down past the Statue of Liberty, that gift from the French, past the forts at the Narrows, and so on down the bay. Off to the left, Daddy Bunker told the children, was Coney Island, where so many persons from New York go on hot days and nights to get cooled off near the ocean.

"Is Seaview like Coney Island?" asked Vi.

"Well, it may be a little like it," her father answered; "though there will not be so many merry-go-rounds there or other things to make fun for you. But I think you will have a good time all the same."

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"We're going to dig for gold, like Sammie Brown's father," declared Laddie. "If we find a lot of it we can buy a ticket for Coney Island."

"What makes them call it Coney Island?" asked Vi. "Did they find some coneyes there?"

"I don't know," her father replied.

"What's a coney, anyhow?" went on the little girl.

"I don't know the answer to that question, either," said Mr. Bunker. "You'll have to ask me something else, Vi."

"Maybe it's an ice-cream cone they meant," said Russ, "and they changed it to coney."

"Did they, Daddy?" Vi wanted to know.

"Well, you have a questioning streak on to-day," laughed her father. "I'm sorry I can't tell you how Coney Island got its name."

So the children looked, first on one side of the boat and then on the other as they steamed along. Now and then Vi asked questions. Russ whistled and thought of many things he would make when he reached Cousin Tom's. Laddie tried to think up a riddle about why the smoke from the steamer did not stack up in a pile, instead of blowing away, but he couldn't seem to think of a good answer. And, as he said:

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"A riddle without an answer isn't any fun, 'cause you don't know when people guess it wrong or right."

Finally the boat turned toward land and, a little later, Daddy Bunker said they were near Atlantic Highlands. Then the steamer slowly swung up to a big pier, the gangplank was run out, and the six little Bunkers, with their father and mother and the other passengers, got off, their tickets being taken up as they left the boat.

A train was waiting at the pier, and soon, with the Bunkers in one of the coaches, it was puffing down the track, along the edge of the water. Above the train towered the high hills which gave Atlantic Highlands its name.

On the heights, at a station called "Highlands," are two big lighthouses.

The Highland light is as bright as ninety-five million candles, and on a clear night can be seen flashing for many miles.

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"Could we come down and see the light some night?" asked Russ, as his father told him about it.

"Yes, I think so," was the answer. "But get ready now. We shall soon be at Cousin Tom's place."

The train rumbled over a bridge across the Shrewsbury river, which flows into Sandy Hook Bay, and then, after passing a few more stations, the brakeman cried:

"Seaview! Seaview! All out for Seaview!"

"Oh, now we're at Cousin Tom's!" cried Rose. "Won't we have fun?"

"Lots!" agreed Russ.

"And don't forget about digging for gold!" added Laddie.

They got off the train, and Cousin Tom, who was waiting for them, hurried up, all smiles. Behind him came his pretty wife.

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you!" said Cousin Ruth.

"Are all the six little Bunkers here?" Cousin Tom wanted to know, with a grin.

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"Every one!" answered Mother Bunker. "But we nearly lost Margy. She crawled under a fruit stand after a kitten. Where is she now? Margy, come back!" she called, for she saw the little girl running toward the train. "Don't get on the cars!" cried Mrs. Bunker. The train was beginning to move. "Come back, Margy! Oh, get her, some one!"

But Margy was not going near the train. Suddenly she stooped over and caught up in her arms a little, white, woolly poodle dog.

"Look what I found!" she cried. "If I can't have a kittie cat, I can have a dog. He is a nice dog and he jumped off the train 'cause he likes me!"

And, just as Margy picked up the dog in her arms, a woman thrust her head out of one of the windows of the moving train and screamed.

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CHAPTER VII

DIGGING FOR GOLD

The dog began to bark, the engine of the train whistled, the woman with her head out of the car window kept on screaming, and the conductor, standing out on the platform, shouted something, though no one could tell what it was.

"It sounded," said Daddy Bunker, afterward, "like that Mother Goose story, where the fire begins to burn the stick, the stick begins to beat the dog, the dog begins to chase the pig and the old lady got home before midnight."

"What is the matter?" asked Cousin Tom, who had stopped greeting the six little Bunkers to look at Margy and the dog, and listen to the screaming of the woman on the train.

No one seemed to know, but, suddenly, the engine whistled loudly once, and then the train came to a stop. Out of the car rushed the woman, down the steps and toward Margy.

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"My dog!" she cried. "Oh, my pet dog! I thought he was killed!"

"No'm, I picked him up," explained Margy, as the woman took her pet animal. "I saw him, and he came to me, 'cause he liked me. I almost got a little kitten, but it went under a stand and when I pulled it out Mother wouldn't let me keep it. Now I can't have the doggie, either," and Margy acted as if she were going to cry.

"I'm sorry, little girl," said the woman, "but I couldn't give up my pet Carlo. He is all I have!" and she cuddled the dog in her arms as she would a baby.

"Did you stop my train, lady?" asked the conductor, and he seemed rather angry.

"Yes," was the answer. "My Carlo ran off, just as it started, and I saw the little girl pick him up. Then I pulled the whistle-cord, and stopped the train. I just had to jump off and get my Carlo!"

"Well, now that you have him, please get back on again," said the conductor. "We are late now, and must hurry."

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"I'm sorry I can't leave Carlo with you, for I'm sure you would love him," said the woman to Margy. "But I could not get along without him."

Margy did not have time to answer, as the woman had to hurry back to the train. The conductor was waiting, watch in hand, for the train had stopped after it had started away from the station, and would be a few minutes late. And on a railroad a few minutes mean a great deal.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Margy. "I had a little kittie and then I didn't have it. Then I had a little dog and now I haven't that, either! Oh, dear!"

"Never mind," said Cousin Tom, as he patted the little girl on the head. "You can come down to the bungalow and play in the sand, and maybe you can find a starfish or something like that."

"Oh, are there fish down in your ocean?" asked Russ.

"Lots of 'em, if you can catch 'em," said Cousin Tom, laughing.

"And is there any gold?" Laddie asked.

"I never found any, if there is," was the answer. "But then I never had much time to dig for it. You may, if you like. But now are you all ready?"

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"All ready, I think," said Mother Bunker. "Don't pick up any more stray dogs or cats, Margy, my dear."

"This one came to me," said the little girl. "I loved him, I did, but now he is gone."

However there was so much new to see and talk about down at the seashore that Margy soon forgot about her little troubles. There were some carriages and automobiles at the station, and, dividing themselves between two of these, the Bunkers and Cousin Tom and his wife were soon driving down toward the ocean, for Cousin Tom lived on a street not far from the beach. He was the son of Mr. Ralph Bunker, who had been dead some years, and Mr. Ralph Bunker was Daddy Bunker's brother. So the children's father was Cousin Tom's uncle, you see.

"Did you have a nice trip?" asked Cousin Ruth, of Mrs. Bunker, as she rode beside her in the automobile.

"Yes, very. Laddie thought a search-light was a thunderstorm, when we were coming down on the Fall River boat, Margy crawled under a fruit stand in New York to get a stray kitten, and Mun Bun got mixed up with another little boy. But we are used to such things happening, and we don't mind. I hope you will not be driven wild by the children."

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"Oh, no, I love them!" said Cousin Ruth with a smile, as she looked over at the six little Bunkers.

"That's good," said their mother with a smile. "Of course they get into mischief once in a while, but they are usually pretty good and don't give much trouble. They play very nicely together."

"I'm sure they must. I shall love them all—every one! I wonder if they are hungry."

"They generally are ready to eat," said Mrs. Bunker. "But don't fuss too much over them. They can wait until meal time."

But the six little Bunkers did not have to do this, for when they reached the bungalow, not far from the beach, where Cousin Tom and his wife lived, there was plenty of bread and jam for the hungry children—and hungry they were, you would have believed, if you could have seen them eat. Cousin Ruth seemed to think it was fun.

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"Welcome to Seaview!" cried Cousin Tom, when the children were eating and Mr. and Mrs. Bunker had laid aside their things and the baggage had been carried to the different rooms. "Now I want you all to have a good time while you're here. Make yourselves right at home."

"They seem to be doing that," said Daddy Bunker, for the children just then finished their bread and butter and jam, and began to run all around the house.

Cousin Tom's bungalow was about a block from the ocean, and on a new street in Seaview, so there were no other houses very near it. Not far away was what is called an "inlet." That is, the waters of the ocean came into the land for quite a distance, making a place where boats could get in and out without going through the surf, or heavy waves. This inlet was called Clam River, for toward the upper end, a mile or so from the sea, it was shallow and sandy, and many clams were found there.

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Clam River was a harbor for fishing and lobster boats, and they could run into it and be safe from storms at sea.

"I'm going out and dig in the sand!" cried Mun Bun.

"I'll come, too," said Margy.

"Well, don't pick up any stray dogs or cats," warned her mother. "Perhaps you had better go with them, Rose," she said to the oldest girl.

"All right, Mother. I'll look after them," was the answer, and Rose became her mother's little helper again.

Vi and Laddie seemed to be looking for something. They wandered about the big porch of the bungalow, and out in front, up and down.

"What do you want?" asked Cousin Ruth, who saw them.

"Something we can use to dig for gold," answered Laddie.

"Dig for gold!" exclaimed Cousin Ruth. "Is that a riddle?" for she had heard that Laddie was very fond of asking riddles.

"No, this is real," answered the little fellow. "'Tisn't a riddle at all. Sammie Brown's father dug for gold, and we're going to. There is always gold in sand."

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"Oh, I'm glad to know that," answered Cousin Ruth. "We have so much sand around us that if it all has gold in it I'm sure we shall soon be rich. But I wouldn't be too sure about it, Laddie. Some sand may not have any gold in it. But you may dig all you like. You'll find some shovels and pails on the side porch. I put them there on purpose for you children."

Vi and Laddie found what they wanted, and hurried down to the beach to dig. Margy and Mun Bun went also, with Rose, while Russ, having found some bits of driftwood, began to whittle out a boat which he said he was going to sail on Clam River, where the water was smooth.

Mr. and Mrs. Bunker sat in the bungalow talking to Cousin Tom and his wife, telling them about their trip and the visit to Aunt Jo's, from whose house they had just come.

"I hope you can stay the rest of the summer with us," said Cousin Tom.

"It is a lovely place," said Mrs. Bunker, "And we shall stay as long as you like to have us, for I think the children will like it here. And we are more than glad to be with you and Cousin Tom. But we have half promised to visit Grandpa Ford." [Pg 70]

"Yes, and he surely expects us," added her husband. "Is it all right for the children to play on the beach?" he asked his nephew.

"Oh, yes, surely. Did you think anything could hurt them?"

"Well, I didn't know. It's so near the water——"

"The beach is a very safe one, and the water is shallow, even at high tide," said Cousin Tom. "At low tide you can wade quite a distance out. The children will be all right. But do they really expect to find gold by digging?"

"I believe they do. It's a story they heard," said Mr. Bunker with a laugh. "Near Aunt Jo's lived a boy whose father was a sea captain, and who, I believe, did once find gold on an island. It set Laddie and Vi to thinking they might do the same. But, of course, there isn't any gold here."

"Of course not," said Cousin Tom.

So Mr. and Mrs. Bunker talked with Cousin Tom and his wife, while the children played outside. The sun was going down, and it would soon be time for supper, when Mrs. Bunker, who had gone upstairs to change her dress, heard Rose calling: [Pg 71]

"Come back, Laddie! Come back! You mustn't get into that boat!"

"Into a boat? Oh, I should say not!" cried Mrs. Bunker, who could not see from her window what was going on. "What are you doing, Laddie?" she called, as she hurried down.

She heard her little boy's voice in answer:

"I'm going off in the boat and dig for gold. No, I won't come back, Rose. I'm going to dig for gold. Come on, Vi!"

Fearing that something was going to happen, Mrs. Bunker ran out on the porch, from where she could see the beach. [Pg 72]

CHAPTER VIII

ROSE'S LOCKET

Mrs. Bunker gave a quick glance about to see what was happening. She noticed Margy and Mun Bun, well up on the beach, digging holes and making little piles of sand. But down near the inlet, where a boat was tied, Rose was having trouble with Laddie.

The little boy who was so fond of asking riddles, and his sister Violet, who liked to ask questions, had left the place where they first had begun to "dig for gold," as they called it, and Laddie was about to get into the boat, calling to his sister Vi to follow.

"No, you mustn't go!" declared Rose. "You mustn't get into the boat. Mother told me to stay and watch you, and you've got to keep here on the beach and dig for gold!"

"There isn't any gold here!" declared Laddie. "I've dug all over, and we can't find any; can we, Vi?" [Pg 73]

"Nope, not a bit," and Vi shook her curly hair.

"So we're going out in the boat, like real sailors. That's what Sammie Brown's father did," went on Laddie. "Then we'll find gold."

"But you mustn't get into the boat, Laddie, unless Daddy or Cousin Tom is with you!" said Mother Bunker. "Do as Rose tells you, and come away."

Laddie did not want to, but he always minded his mother, except when he was very bad, and this was not one of those times. So he went slowly away from the boat, which was tied to a little pier.

"I was going after gold," he said. "We can't find any here," and he pointed to the holes he and his little sister had dug.

"But if you went out in the boat alone, or with Vi, you might fall into the water," said his mother. "Never get into the boat unless some big person is with you, Laddie. And I mean you, too, Vi."

"All right," said the two children. "We won't."

"Come on!" called Rose to them, now that the dispute was over. "We will go farther down the shore and dig. And if we don't find any gold maybe we'll find some pretty shells, or a starfish." [Pg 74]

"Does a starfish twinkle, Mother?" asked Vi.

"No, I don't believe it does, my dear."

"Then what makes 'em call it a starfish?" the little girl wanted to know.

"Because it has five arms, or perhaps they are legs, and as a star, such as you see in our flag, has five points, they call the fish that name. It is shaped like a star, you see. It doesn't twinkle, and it eats oysters, so I have read."

"How does it crack the oyster shells?" asked Vi.

"Oh, now you are asking too many questions for a little girl, and some that I can't answer," said Mrs. Bunker with a laugh. "Run along and play in the sand with Rose. But don't go too far, for it will be time for supper soon. And don't forget about the boat!"

"I hope we find a starfish," said Laddie, glad he had something new to think about. [Pg 75]

"Could I make up a riddle about one, Mother?"

"I guess so, if you tried hard."

"I know a riddle about the sand," went on the little chap. "Why is the sand like a boy?"

"It isn't," said Rose. "Sand isn't at all like a boy."

"Yes, it is," went on Laddie. "A boy runs and so does sand."

"Sand doesn't run," declared Rose.

"Yes, it does," insisted her little brother. "I heard you say that some sand ran down into your shoe. So sand runs and a boy runs and that's a riddle."

"Yes, I guess it is," laughed Mother Bunker. "Well, you run along and play."

And Rose and Laddie and Violet did. They went to where Margy and Mun Bun were digging holes in the sand.

"Did you find any gold?" asked Laddie.

Mun Bun shook his head until his hair was in his eyes.

"We found a lot of funny little white bugs that jump," he said.

"They were awful nice little bugs, and they wiggled and wiggled in the sand," added Margy. [Pg 76]

"Oh, I want to see some!" cried Vi, and then Margy and Mun Bun dug until they found some "sand hoppers," for the other children. They are a sort of shore shrimp, I think, and very lively, jumping about, digging themselves holes in the sand in which they hide.

Margy and Mun Bun and Laddie and Vi became so interested in looking for the sand hoppers that they forgot about digging for gold, and it was almost time for supper when Russ came whistling down the beach calling:

"Who wants to come and see me sail my boat?"

"I do! I do!" cried Mun Bun and Laddie, and the girls, Rose also, said they would go.

"I haven't got all the sails on yet," explained Russ, "but I guess it will sail a little this way, and I can put some more sails on to-morrow."

From an old shingle and some sticks Russ had made a nice little boat, fastening to the mast a bit of cloth, which looked like a sail. Followed by his smaller brothers and sisters Russ took his boat to a place in the inlet where the water was not deep, and there he let the wind blow it about, to the delight of all. [Pg 77]

Then came a call from the bungalow.

"Supper, children! Come on in and get washed!"

"Oh, I'm so hungry!" cried Rose.

"So'm I," agreed Russ.

Margy and Mun Bun didn't say anything, but they looked as if they could eat.

"I thought of another riddle," said Laddie, as he went along with Russ. "It's about why does the sand run."

"No! That isn't it!" laughed Rose. "You've started it backward, Laddie, and spoiled it."

"Oh, yes, now I know. Why is sand like a boy?"

"Because they both run," answered Russ. It was easy to guess the riddle after Laddie had partly told it to him.

"Cousin Tom said lobsters run backwards," put in Violet, having heard Rose say that Laddie started his riddle backwards. "What makes lobsters go that way, Russ?"

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"I don't know. I s'pose 'cause they like it."

"Do fish go backwards?" the little girl went on.

"I never saw any," Russ answered.

"And can they stand on their heads?" went on the little girl.

But no one could answer this question, and there was no time to do so, anyhow, as they were now at Cousin Tom's bungalow, and from it came the smell of many good things that had been cooked for supper.

"My! you have a houseful with all of us Bunkers," said the children's mother, as they gathered about the table.

"Yes. There wouldn't be room for many more," said Cousin Tom's pretty wife. "But I like company."

"Even if they eat so much it will keep you busy buying more?" asked Daddy Bunker.

"Oh, I guess they won't do that," replied Cousin Tom, laughing.

"We're going to dig gold in the sand, and then we can buy our own things to eat," declared Laddie.

"Well, until you do that I'll see that you get enough to eat," said his cousin.

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After supper they went for a ride on the inlet in Cousin Tom's big rowboat.

"I think we had better go back," said Mother Bunker, after they had ridden about a bit. "It is getting late, and I see two of my little tots are getting sleepy."

This was true, for Margy and Mun Bun were nidding and nodding, hardly able to keep their eyes open, though it was hardly dark yet. But they had been up early and they had traveled far that day.

Back to the bungalow they went, and soon the four smaller children were in bed.

"And it will be time for you, Russ and Rose, in a little while," said Mrs. Bunker. They were allowed to stay up a half hour longer than the others.

While Daddy Bunker and Cousin Tom and the two Mrs. Bunkers were talking on the side porch, and watching the moon rise, as though it came right from the ocean, Russ and Rose sat down on the beach. They were within call from the bungalow, though about a block away from it, Cousin Tom's place being the first one up from the water.

Russ picked up a shell, and started to dig.

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"What are you looking for?" asked Rose.

"I was just wondering if there was any gold here," said her brother. "Sammie Brown said there was gold in sand, and there's lots of sand here; isn't there, Rose?"

"Yes, but Laddie and Violet dug in a lot of places to-day, and so did Margy and Mun Bun, and they didn't find any gold."

"They didn't know how to look for it," declared Russ. "You have to dig deep for gold."

"I'll help," offered Rose. "I like to dig in the sand."

She found a clam shell, as large as the one Russ had, and with those for shovels, the children began digging on the beach in the moonlight. They could look back and see the bungalow, and Mr. and Mrs. Bunker could see the children from where they sat.

The ocean surf made a loud noise.

"Doesn't it sound nice and scary-like?" asked Rose, as she reached her arm down into the hole she was digging, and scooped up some damp sand.

"Yes. It's like the desert island Sammie told about," agreed Russ, listening to the boom and hiss of the waves as they broke on the beach. "Have you found any gold yet, Rose?"

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"No. Have you?"

Russ shook his head.

"I guess we've got to go deeper," he said.

It grew later. The moon rose higher, and it became a little more "scary-like." Presently Mrs. Bunker called:

"Come, Rose! Russ! Time to go to bed!"

"All right!" they answered. They were tired enough to want to go to sleep.

They dropped their clam shells near the holes they had dug, and started up the beach. Suddenly Rose gave a cry.

"What's the matter?" asked Russ.

"My locket! My gold locket that Grandma gave me! It's gone! Oh, I have lost my lovely gold locket!"

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CHAPTER IX

THE SAND HOUSE

"What's the matter?" called Mr. Bunker from the bungalow porch. He had heard the sobbing voice of Rose. "Has anything happened?" he went on. "Tell Daddy what it is."

"I have lost my lovely gold locket!" sobbed Rose. "The one Grandma gave me! I dropped it in the sand, I guess, when I was digging the holes for gold. I wish I hadn't dug!"

"Stand right where you are!" called Daddy Bunker. "I'll bring my electric flashlight and look around for your locket. It may have dropped on the sand right where you are. So don't move until I get there and can see the place. I'll find your gold locket, Rose."

The moon was bright, and, shining on the ocean and on the white sand, made the beach very light. But still, as Rose looked about her and over to where Russ stood, she could not see her gold locket. And she wanted very much to get it back, as it was a present from Grandma Bell, and Rose liked it more than any of her other gifts. She did not often wear it, but on this occasion, coming on the trip from Aunt Jo's, Rose had begged to be allowed to hang the ornament on its gold chain about her neck, and her mother had allowed her to do so.

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Rose had promised to be careful, and she had been. She had noticed the locket after supper and when she came out in the evening to dig in the sand with Russ. But now it was gone, and just where she had dropped it Rose did not know.

"And now my lovely locket is gone!" she sobbed.

"Never mind! I'll get it for you," said Daddy Bunker.

Russ and Rose stood still as he had told them to do, and now they saw their father coming toward them waving his pocket electric light. He usually carried it with him to peer into dark corners. It would be just the thing with which to look for the lost locket.

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"Did you remember where you had it on you last?" asked Daddy Bunker, as he came close to Rose.

"Just before Russ and I started to dig with the clam shells to find the gold," she answered.

"Where was that?" her father asked.

Russ and his sister pointed to where two little piles of sand near some holes could be seen in the moonlight.

"That is where we dug for gold," said Rose.

"But we didn't find any," added Russ.

"You may now, if you dig—or to-morrow," said their father.

"Really?" inquired Russ.

"You may dig up Rose's gold locket," went on Mr. Bunker. "I don't believe there is any other gold in these sands, even if Sammie Brown's father did find some on a desert island. But if Rose dropped her locket here, there is surely gold, for the locket was made of that. Now don't walk about, or you may step on the locket and bend it. I will flash my light as I go along, and look."

Daddy Bunker did this, while Rose, standing near her brother, looked on anxiously. Would her father find the piece of jewelry she liked so much? It was hard to find things, once they were buried in the sand, Rose knew, for that afternoon Cousin Ruth had told about once dropping a piece of money on the beach, and never finding it again.

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"And maybe my locket slipped off my neck when I was digging the deep hole," thought Rose; "and then I piled up the sand and covered it all over."

Daddy Bunker must have thought the same thing, for he flashed his light about the sand piles

made by Russ and his sister. He did not dig in them, however.

"We won't do any digging until morning," he said. "We can see better, then, what we are doing. I thought perhaps the locket might lie on top of the sand, and that I could pick it up. But it doesn't seem to. You had better come in to bed, Russ and Rose."

"But I want my locket," sighed the little girl.

"And I thought I could find it for you," said Mr. Bunker. "I think I can, in the morning, when the sun shines. Just now there are so many shadows that it is hard to see such a little thing as a locket."

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"Will it be all right out here all alone in the night?" asked Rose.

"Oh, yes, I think so," her father said. "As it is gold it will not tarnish. And as no one knows where it is it will probably not be picked up, for no one will be able to see it any more than I. And I don't believe many persons come down here after dark. It is rather a lonely part of the shore. I think your locket will be all right until we can take a look for it in the morning."

"Maybe a starfish might get it," said the little girl.

"Oh, no!" laughed Daddy Bunker. "Starfish like oysters, but they do not care for gold lockets. I'll find yours for you in the morning, Rose."

This made Rose feel better, and she went inside the bungalow with Russ and her father. Mrs. Bunker, as well as Cousin Tom and his wife, felt sorry on hearing of Rose's loss, but they, too, felt sure that the ornament would be found on the sand in the morning.

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I do not know whether or not Rose dreamed about her lost locket. Certainly she thought about it the last thing before she fell asleep. But she slumbered very soundly, and, if she dreamed at all, she did not remember what her visions of the night were.

But she thought of her locket as soon as she awoke, however, and, dressing quickly, she ran down on the sand. Her father was ahead of her, though, and, with a rake in his hand, he was going over the beach near the place where Russ and Rose had dug the holes.

"Is this the only place you children hunted for gold?" asked Mr. Bunker, as he saw Rose coming along.

"Yes, Daddy," she answered. "And we were right there when I didn't have my locket any more. Can't you find it?"

"I haven't yet," he answered. "I've raked over the sand as carefully as I could, but I didn't see the locket."

"Did you look down into the holes we dug, Daddy?"

"Yes, and all around them. It's queer, but the locket seems to have disappeared."

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"Maybe a starfish came up and took it down into the ocean with him."

"No, Rose. If the locket was dropped on the beach it is here yet. But it is rather a large place, and perhaps I am not looking just where I ought to. However I will not give up."

Daddy Bunker looked for some little time longer, pulling the sand about with the rake, but no locket showed. Then others looked, including the children, Cousin Tom, his wife and Mother Bunker. But they had no better luck.

"Well, we know one thing," said Daddy Bunker. "There is gold in this sand now if there was not before. Rose's gold locket is here."

"And I don't guess I'll ever find it," said the little girl with a sigh. "Oh, dear!"

"Maybe it slipped off your neck in the house," suggested Cousin Ruth. "I'll look carefully, and you may help me."

But this did no good either, and though the search was a careful one, and though the sand was gone over again, the lost locket was not picked up.

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"I'm going to dig every day until I find it!" said Rose.

"And I'll help!" added Russ.

"So will I!" said Laddie; and the other children, when they knew what a loss had come to Rose, said they, also, would help.

If it had not been for this accident the visit of the six little Bunkers to Seaview would have been without a flaw. Even as it was, it turned out to be most delightful. Seaview was a fine place to spend the end of the summer, and Cousin Tom and his wife made the children feel so at home, and did so much for them, that Russ and the others said they never had been in a nicer place.

"If I only had my locket!" sighed Rose, as the days passed.

But it seemed it would never be found, and after a time, the thought of it passed, in a measure, from the little girl's mind. She did not speak of it often, though sometimes when she went down

on the beach, near the holes she and Russ had dug in the moonlight, Rose looked about and scraped the sand to and fro with a shell or a bit of driftwood.

But as the beach looks pretty much alike in many places, it is hard to know whether, after the first few times, Rose dug in the right place.

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Cousin Ruth looked again all through the bungalow for the gold locket, and, whenever any one thought of it, he or she poked about in the sand. But the locket seemed gone forever.

There was plenty to do at Seaview to have fun. The children could go in wading and swimming, they could play in the sand, they could sail toy boats in the inlet and they could go out in a real boat with their father or Cousin Tom.

More than once they were taken out on the quiet waters, and they sat in the boat while their father or his nephew fished. Once Russ held the pole and he caught a funny, flat fish, that seemed as if it had been put through the wringer which squeezed the water out of the clothes on wash day.

"What kind of fish is that?" asked Violet, when she saw it flapping about in the bottom of the boat.

"It's a flounder," answered Cousin Tom.

"Is it good to eat?"

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"Yes, very good."

"Maybe it swallowed Rose's locket. Do you think so, Daddy?" asked the little girl.

"Oh, no, Vi. Now don't ask so many questions, please."

"Could I ask a riddle?" Laddie wanted to know.

"Oh, I suppose so," laughed his father. "What is it?"

"I haven't made it up yet," went on Laddie. "It's going to be about a flounder and a wringer, but I got to think. When I get it ready I'll tell you."

"Don't forget!" laughed Cousin Tom.

It was about a week after Rose had lost her locket and it had not been found, that one day Russ called to Rose:

"Come on down to the beach. I know how we can have some fun."

"What can we do?" asked his sister.

"We'll build a house and have a play party," answered Russ.

"Where?"

"On the beach. We can build a house in the sand."

So the children started off, with their shovels and sand pails. Their mother watched them, thinking how nice it was that they could be at the shore in hot weather.

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It was about an hour after Rose and Russ had started down the beach together to make a sand house that Mrs. Bunker, who was just thinking of taking a walk and having another look for the lost locket, heard cries.

"Mother! Mother! Come quick!" she heard Russ calling.

"What's the matter?" cried Mrs. Bunker.

"Oh, come quick!" went on Russ. "Rose is in the sand house! Rose is in the sand house!"

Not knowing what had happened, Mrs. Bunker set off on a run down the beach.

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CHAPTER X

THE PIRATE BUNGALOW

The mother of the six little Bunkers was used to having things happen to them. She did not have half a dozen children without knowing that, nearly every day, some one of them would fall down and bump a nose, cut a finger, get caught in a fence, or have something like that happen to make trouble. So, in a way, Mrs. Bunker was used to calls for help.

"But this seems different," she said to herself, as she ran along. "I'm afraid something has happened to Rose."

And something had. As Mrs. Bunker came within sight of Russ and his sister, where they had gone to dig their sand house, their mother saw her oldest boy dancing about on the beach.

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"Where is Rose?" called Mrs. Bunker. "What have you done with Rose?"

"I didn't do anything to her, Mother!" answered Russ. "But she's in the sand house and she can't get out!"

Mrs. Bunker kept on running toward the children; at least toward Russ. Rose she could not see.

"She can't get out of the sand house 'cause it fell down on her," explained Russ. "I tried to pull her out, but I couldn't, so I hollered for you, Mother!"

"Something dreadful must have happened! I wish I had stopped for Daddy!" thought Mrs. Bunker.

By this time she was close beside Russ, who was capering about like an Indian doing a war dance. But Russ was not doing it for fun. He was just excited, and couldn't keep still.

"Where is your sister?" asked Mrs. Bunker.

"There!" answered Russ, pointing.

Then Mrs. Bunker understood why she had not seen Rose before. It was because the little girl was hidden behind a pile of sand. But there was more than this the matter. For Rose was down in a hole, and the sand had caved in on her feet and legs, covering her up almost to her waist. Rose was held fast in a heap of sand, and, wiggle and twist though she did, she could not get out.

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"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" sobbed the little girl, tears streaming down her cheeks. "I'm all fast and I can't get out!"

"I'll get you out! There! Don't cry any more," said Mrs. Bunker. "I'll soon have you out. Get a shovel, and help me dig Rose loose," she called to Russ.

"All right," answered the little boy. He had stopped jumping about now.

"Where are your shovels, Russ?" asked his mother, looking about for something with which to dig.

"We didn't have any. We used big clam shells," he answered. "Here's one, and I'll get another."

The large clam shells were pretty good to use as shovels, though Mrs. Bunker felt that she could have worked faster with a regular one. However, she had to do the best she could, and really the shell scooped the sand out very well. Russ helped, and they both set to work to dig Rose out of the hole in which she was partly buried.

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"It's a good thing the sand didn't slide in on you and cover your head," said Mrs. Bunker. "How did it happen, Russ?"

"Well, we were digging a sand house—it was just a hole in the sand, you know," the little boy explained. "We were going to put some sticks across the top, when we got it deep enough to stand up in, and put some seaweed over the sticks for a roof. I saw some boys on the beach make a sand house like that yesterday.

"But after we dug down a way," he went on, "Rose got down in the hole so she could dig better. She scooped the sand up to me and I put it in a heap on the beach. And then, all of a sudden, a lot of the sand slid in on Rose and she was held fast and—and——"

"And I couldn't get out, but I tried like anything!" added Rose, as her brother stopped for breath. "And then Russ screamed for you and—and—Oh, I'm so glad you came!" and Rose leaned her head against her mother, who was busy digging out the sand with the clam shell.

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"I'm glad I came, too, my dear," said Mrs. Bunker. "After this don't dig such deep sand holes, or, if you do, don't get into them. Sand, you know, is not like other dirt. It doesn't stay in one place, but slips and slides about."

"But we want to have something to play in!" exclaimed Russ.

"Well, we want you to have fun while you are here at Cousin Tom's, but we don't want you to get hurt," said Mrs. Bunker. "Can't you make a little playhouse of the driftwood on the beach? That would be nicer to play in than a damp hole."

"Oh, yes, we could do that!" cried Rose. "Let's make a wooden house on the beach, Russ! There's lots of wood!"

"And then we can play pirates!" added the little boy.

A little later Rose had been dug out of the sand, and though her dress was a little damp, for the sand, as one dug down into it, was rather wet, she was not hurt.

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All along the sands at Seaview, after high tide, were bits of planks and boards and chips, and after Rose had been dug out of the sand house she and Russ began gathering all the wood they could pick up to make what Russ said would be a "pirate bungalow."

Mrs. Bunker, after telling the children once more not to dig deep holes, left them on the beach to play, herself going back to Cousin Tom's bungalow.

Margy and Mun Bun, who had been gathering shells and stones down on the sand, had come up to play in front of the house, on a bit of green lawn. Laddie and Vi, who had walked up and down the beach, looking for some starfish, which they did not find, came to where Russ and Rose were getting ready to play.

"What are you making?" asked Laddie.

"A pirate bungalow," answered Russ. "Want to help?"

"Yep," answered Laddie.

"And I will, too," said Vi. "What are you going to put in it? Will it be big enough for all of us, and what makes so much wood here, Russ?"

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"Now if you're going to ask a lot of questions you can't play!" said Rose. "You just help pick up the wood, Vi."

"Can't I ask just one more question?"

"What is it?" asked Russ, smiling.

"What makes the ocean so salty?" Vi asked this time. "I got some water on my hands and then I put my finger in my mouth and it tasted just like I'd put too much salt on my potatoes. What makes the ocean so salty?"

"I don't know," said Russ. "We'll ask Daddy when we go up. But come on, and let's build the bungalow. I'll be a pirate, and we'll play shipwreck and everything."

"I'll be a pirate, too," added Laddie. "I know a good riddle about a pirate, but I can't think of it now. Maybe I will after I've been a pirate for a while."

"We'll be pirates, too," said Vi.

"No, girls can't be," said Russ. "You can be our prisoners. Pirates always have prisoners."

"Prisoners? What's them?" asked Vi.

"They're what pirates have," explained Laddie. "I know, 'cause I saw some pictures of 'em in a book. Pirates always keep their prisoners shut up in a cave."

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"I'm not going to be in a cave," said Rose. "I was in the sand house when it caved in, and I don't like it."

"But you get good things to eat," explained Russ. "Pirates always have to feed their prisoners good things to eat."

"Then I'll be one, 'cause I'm hungry," said Vi.

"So'll I," added Laddie. "I'll be a prisoner. I guess I'd rather be a prisoner than a pirate, Russ. You can be the pirate and get us all good things to eat."

"All right, I will. Now come on, we've got to get a lot more wood to make this pirate bungalow. Get all the wood you can."

"Why don't you get some?" asked Laddie, as he saw his brother sitting down on a pile of drift pieces that had already been gathered.

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CHAPTER XI

GOING CRABBING

Russ Bunker looked up at his brother Laddie and smiled. Still he made no move toward helping gather the driftwood for the bungalow they were going to make.

"Well, why don't you help get wood?" asked Laddie again. "Think we're going to do all the work and have you sit there?"

"Say, I'm a pirate, ain't I?" asked Russ, not getting his words just right, though his brother and sisters understood what he meant. "Didn't you say I was to be the pirate?"

"Yes, 'cause we don't want to be," retorted Rose.

"Well, all right then, I'm going to be the pirate," went on Russ.

"But you've got to get us good things to eat," said Vi. "We're the prisoners, an' you said they had good things to eat."

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"I'll get good things to eat if Cousin Ruth'll give 'em to me," promised Russ. "But I'm the pirate, and pirates don't ever work. They just boss the prisoners. Now come on, prisoners, and build me the bungalow!" and Russ leaned back on a pile of sea weed and looked very lazy and comfortable.

"Don't pirates *ever* work?" asked Laddie.

"Nope! Not the kind I ever heard Mother read about in books," went on Russ. "They just tell the prisoners what to do, 'ceptin', of course, when there's any fighting. Pirates are 'most always fighting, but we won't play that part, 'cause Mother doesn't like that. I'll be a good pirate, and I'll let you prisoners build the bungalow."

"But you've got to get us something to eat," said Vi again.

"I'll do that," promised Russ. "I'll go up now and ask Cousin Ruth for some, and you prisoners can be getting a lot of wood."

The plans Russ made came out all right. Cousin Tom's pretty young wife was very glad to give the children some crackers and cookies to take down on the beach to eat, and when Russ got back with the bag of good things he found that Rose, Laddie and Violet had collected a large pile of driftwood. [Pg 103]

"Now we'll make the bungalow," decided Russ. "I'll help work at that, 'cause the pirates want it made just so. But you prisoners have got to help."

"Can't we eat first, 'fore we make the bungalow?" asked Violet. "I'm as hungry as anything!"

"Yes, I guess we could eat first. I'm hungry, too," returned the "pirate."

Then the "pirate" and his "prisoners" sat down on the sand together, as nicely as you please, leaning against bits of driftwood covered with seaweed, and ate the lunch Cousin Ruth had given them. It did not take very long. Probably you know what a very short time cookies last among four hungry children.

"Well, now we'll start to build," said Russ, when the last cookie and cracker had been eaten. "First we'll stick up four posts in the sand, one for each corner of the bungalow."

The children had made playhouses before, not only at their home in Pineville, but while they were at Grandma Bell's house, near Lake Sagatook, Maine; so they knew something of what they wanted to do. [Pg 104]

Of course the bungalow was rather rough. It could not be otherwise with only rough driftwood with which to make it. But then it was just what the children wanted.

When the four posts were set deep in the sand, in holes dug with clam shells, the children placed boards from one to the other, sometimes making them fast, by driving in, with stones for hammers, the rusty nails which were found in some pieces of the wood. Other boards or planks they tied together with bits of string. Over the top they placed sticks, and on top of the sticks they spread seaweed.

"We don't want the roof very heavy," said Russ, "'cause then if it falls in on us, as our snow house roof did once, it won't hurt us. All we want is something to keep off the sun."

"Won't it keep the rain out, too?" asked Rose.

"No, I don't guess it will," answered Russ, as he looked up and saw several holes in the roof. "Anyhow we won't play out here when it rains. Mother wouldn't let us." [Pg 105]

The pirate bungalow was soon finished; that is, finished as much as the children wanted it, and then they began playing in it. Russ pretended that he was the pirate, and that the others were his prisoners. He made them dig little holes in the sand, and bring in shells and stones as well as seaweed. This last he made believe was hay for a make-believe elephant.

"Do pirates have elephants?" asked Violet.

"Sometimes maybe they do," her brother said. "Anyhow I can make believe that just for fun."

"Are we going to eat any more?" asked Laddie. "Or is that only make-believe, too?"

"I'll see if I can get some more from Cousin Ruth," promised Russ. Once more he made a trip up to the real bungalow, and Cousin Ruth, with laughter, filled another bag with cookies. This time Margy and Mun Bun, tired of playing with the shells and pebbles, went down on the beach to the driftwood pirate bungalow. [Pg 106]

It was rather a tight squeeze to get all six of the little Bunkers inside, and not have the place burst and fall apart. But they managed it, and then they sat under the seaweed roof and ate the cookies, having a fine time.

"My, this is cozy!" cried Cousin Tom, as, with Daddy Bunker, he came down to see what the children were doing. "And you've had something to eat, too!" he went on, as he saw some crumbs scattered about.

"Yes, we had some," said Russ, "but it's all gone now. But if you are hungry I can get some more," and he started from the bungalow.

"Oh, no!" laughed Daddy Bunker, who had been told by his wife of Russ' two visits to Cousin Ruth's kitchen. "I guess we don't feel hungry now. Anyhow dinner will soon be ready."

The children played in the pirate bungalow all the remainder of the day, stopping only for

dinner and supper. The seaweed roof kept off the hot August sun, and, as it did not rain, the holes in the covering did not matter.

Rose and Violet took their dolls down and played with them there. Russ, after a while, gave up being a pirate, and said his "prisoners" could all go, but they seemed to like staying around the driftwood house.

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"If we had a door on it we could stay in it all night," said Vi. "Why didn't you make a door, Russ?"

"Too hard work," he answered. "Anyhow we don't want to stay down here all night."

"The waves might come up and wash us away," said Rose.

Laddie, who had been smoothing the sand in one corner of the pirate bungalow, now stopped and seemed to be thinking hard.

"What's the matter?" asked Russ.

"I have a new riddle," was the answer. "It's about a door."

"Is it why does a door swing?" asked Violet. "'Cause if it is, I can answer that one. I've heard it before. A door swings because it isn't a hammock."

"Nope! 'Tisn't that," said Laddie. "This is my new riddle. What goes through a door, but never comes into the room?"

"Say it again," begged Russ, who had not been listening carefully.

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"What goes through the door, but never comes into the room?" asked Laddie again. "It's a good riddle, and I made it up all myself."

"Does it go out of the room if it doesn't come in?" asked Rose.

"Nope," answered Laddie, shaking his head. "It doesn't do anything. It just goes through the door, but it doesn't come in or go out."

"Nothing can do that," declared Russ. "If a thing goes through the door it's got to come in or go out, else it doesn't go through."

"Oh, yes, it does," said Laddie. "Do you give up?"

"Is it a cat?" asked Vi.

"Nope."

"A dog?"

"Nope."

"A turtle?" guessed Mun Bun, who didn't quite know what it was all about, but who wanted to guess something.

"Nope!" said Laddie, laughing. "I'll tell you. It's the keyhole!"

"The keyhole?" cried Russ. "No!"

"To be sure!" answered his small brother. "Doesn't a keyhole go all the way through the door? If it didn't you couldn't get the key in. The keyhole goes through the door, but it doesn't come into the room nor go out. It just stays in the door. Isn't that a good riddle?"

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"Yes, it is," answered Rose. "I'd never have guessed it."

"I thought it up all myself while you were talking about a door to this bungalow," said Laddie. "What goes through the door but doesn't come in the room? A keyhole," and he laughed at his own riddle.

The next day Cousin Tom went down to the beach, where once more Russ, Rose and the others were playing in the driftwood bungalow, and called:

"How many of you would like to go crabbing?"

"I would!" cried Russ.

"So would I," said Rose.

"What is it like?" asked Vi, who, you might know, would ask a question the first thing.

"Well, it's like fishing, only it isn't quite so hard for little folk," said Cousin Tom. "Come along, if you're through playing, and I'll show you how to go crabbing."

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"Are Daddy and Mother going?" asked Rose.

"Yes, we'll all go. Come along."

The six little Bunkers followed Cousin Tom up the beach to the inlet. There, tied to a pier not far from Cousin Tom's bungalow, was a large boat. Near it stood Mother and Father Bunker and

Cousin Ruth. Cousin Ruth had some peach baskets, two long-handled nets and some strings to the ends of which were tied chunks of meat.

"Are we going to feed a dog?" asked Russ.

"No, that is bait for the crabs," said Cousin Tom. "Come, now, get into the boat, and we'll go for a new kind of fishing."

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CHAPTER XII

"THEY'RE LOOSE!"

"All aboard!" cried Russ as he stood on the edge of the little wharf in the inlet, at which the boat was tied. "All aboard."

"Does he mean we must all get a piece of board?" asked Violet.

"No," answered her mother with a smile. "Russ is saying what the sailors say when they want every one to get on the ship, take their places, and be ready for the start."

The rowboat was a large one, and would hold the six little Bunkers, as well as their daddy and mother and Cousin Tom.

Cousin Ruth had intended to go, but, at the last minute, the woman living in the next bungalow asked her to help with some sewing; so Cousin Ruth stayed at home.

"I'll get all ready to cook the crabs if you catch any," she said with a smile, as Cousin Tom and Daddy Bunker rowed the boat out into the inlet.

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"Oh, we'll get some!" cried Russ.

"Crabs bite, don't they?" asked Violet, who seemed started on her questioning tricks.

"Well, they don't exactly bite; it's more of a pinch," said Cousin Tom. "But it hurts, I can tell you."

"Then I'm not going to catch any," declared Violet. "I'll just watch you."

"Oh, a crab won't pinch you if you catch him in a net; and that's what I'll do," said her cousin. "We'll soon be at the place where there are lots of them, I hope."

As Cousin Tom rowed along, he told the six little Bunkers that the crabs swam up the inlet from the sea to get things to eat, and also for the mother crab to lay eggs, so little crabs would hatch out.

"And when the big crabs swim up, which they do whenever the tide runs into the inlet, twice a day," said Cousin Tom, "we go out and catch them. Of course you can catch them at other times, but the crabbing is best when the tide is coming in."

"But I don't see any hooks on the lines," remarked Laddie, who was looking at the strings in the bottom of the boat. On one end of each string was a short piece of wood, and on the other end a piece of meat, while on a few were some fish heads.

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"You don't need hooks to catch crabs," explained Cousin Tom. "All you need to do is to tie a piece of meat on the string."

"And does the crab bite that?" asked Russ.

"No, but he takes it in his strong claws, to hold it so he can tear off little pieces with his smaller claws and put them into his mouth," said Cousin Tom. "A crab's mouth is small, and he has to tear his food into little bits before he can swallow it. He uses his big front claws for grabbing hold of what he wants to eat and holding on to it, and he likes old meat or fish heads best of all."

"So, when we get to the place where I think some crabs are, we'll let down the pieces of meat. The crabs, swimming along, or crawling sideways on the bottom of the inlet, as they more often do, will smell the chunk of meat. They will take hold of it in their claws, and then one of us can reach down the net and scoop it under Mr. Crab. That's how we catch them."

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"But how do you know when one has hold of the piece of meat on the string?" asked Rose.

"You can feel him giving it little jerks and tugs," said Cousin Tom. "Or, if the water is clear, you can see him as he takes hold of the chunk of meat. Then you want to pull up on your string, very, very gently, so as not to scare the crab and make him let go. If you know how to do it you can lift your string up with one hand, and scoop the net under the crab with the other. But when you children have a bite, your Daddy or I will use the net for you."

"Oh, it's going to be lots of fun," cried Violet. "I like this kind of fishing."

"And there aren't any sharp hooks to hurt the crab," added Rose.

"No, it doesn't hurt a crab to catch him this way," said Daddy Bunker. "And crabs are very good to eat after they are cooked. I like them better than fish."

"Is a crab a fish?" asked Laddie, who was holding a little stick down in the water, watching the ripples it made as the boat was rowed along.

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"A crab is a sort of fish," said Cousin Tom. "Why did you ask?"

"Oh, I am trying to make up a riddle about a crab and a fish," said Laddie. "But I don't guess I can if they are pretty near the same. I guess I'll make up a riddle about a boat. I have one 'most thought up. It goes like this: When a boat goes in the water why doesn't the water go in the boat?"

"It does, sometimes, if the boat leaks," replied Cousin Tom with a laugh. "I hope your riddle doesn't come true this trip, Laddie!"

"Oh, well, I haven't got the riddle all made up yet," was the answer. "I can't think of a good answer. Maybe I can after I catch some crabs."

"Why doesn't our boat sink?" asked Violet.

"'Cause it's wood, and that floats," said Russ.

"Well, once you made a little wooden boat, and it sunk when we put a lot of stones on it," said Vi. "And my doll—a little one—was on the boat, and she got all wet."

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"Well, if a boat is made of wood, an' it's big enough, it won't sink, will it, Daddy?" asked Russ.

"No, I don't believe it will, if it doesn't get a hole through it so the water can get in. But sit still now, children. I think we are at the place where Cousin Tom is going to let us catch crabs. Aren't we, Tom?" asked Mr. Bunker of his nephew.

"Yes," said Cousin Tom, "this is a good place. There is plenty of seaweed on the bottom of the inlet here, and the crabs like to hide in that—especially the soft-shelled crabs."

"Are there two kinds?" Russ inquired.

"Yes, hard and soft," was his cousin's answer.

"Like eggs," said Russ with a laugh. "There are hard and soft boiled eggs. Isn't that so, Cousin Tom?"

"Yes," said Cousin Tom with a smile. "But the funny part of it is that sometimes the same crab is soft-shelled, and again it is hard-shelled. An egg can't be that way. Once it is boiled hard it never can be boiled soft again."

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"What makes soft crabs?" Rose wanted to know.

"A soft-shelled crab is a hard-shelled crab with its old, hard shell off, and it is only soft while it is waiting for its new shell to harden in the salty sea water," explained Cousin Tom. "You see a crab grows, but its shell, or its house that it lives in, doesn't grow. So it has to shed that, or wiggle out of it, to let a larger one grow in its place. When it does that it is a soft-shelled crab for a time, and very good to eat. But you can't catch soft-shelled crabs on a string and a chunk of meat. You have to go along and scoop them out of the seaweed with a net. But now we will fish for hard-shelled crabs."

Cousin Tom and Daddy Bunker had rowed the boat about a mile up the inlet, and now the anchor was tossed over the side, to keep the craft from drifting with the tide.

"Now each one of you take a string, and toss the meat-end of it over the side," said Cousin Tom. "Keep hold of the stick-end, or tie that end to the boat. If you lose that you can't pull in your crab. Each one of you keep watch of his or her string. When you see it beginning to be pulled, or when you feel a little tug or jerk on it, as if a fish were nibbling, then pull up very slowly and carefully. And look as you pull. Don't pull it all the way to the top, or the crab, if there is one on it, will see you, let go, and swim away."

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The six little Bunkers did as they were told. Of course Margy and Mun Bun were too little to know how to catch crabs, but they each had a line, and Mother Bunker said she would catch them for the small tots.

"Oh, I think I have one!" suddenly exclaimed Russ in a whisper. "Look at my line move!"

"Yes, you may have a crab on there," returned Cousin Tom. "Pull up very gently."

Russ did so, while his cousin reached forward with the long-handled net ready to scoop it under the crab, if it should happen to be one.

Up and up Russ pulled his line. Every one was eagerly watching, for they wanted to see the first crab caught. And then, as the chunk of meat on Russ's string came near the top of the water, Rose, from the other end of the boat, cried:

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"Oh, it's only a piece of seaweed!"

And so it was! How disappointed Russ was! The bit of green seaweed, catching on his line, had

wiggled and tugged, as the tide swayed it, just as a crab would have done.

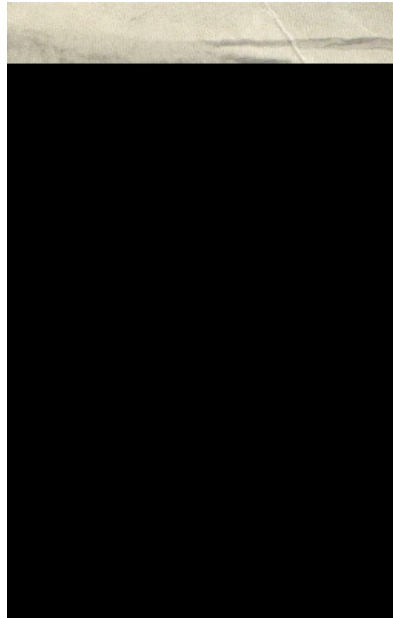
"Oh, I have one! I have one!" suddenly called Laddie, from his end of the boat. "He's a big one! He's pulling like anything!"

"Well, don't get excited and fall overboard," said Daddy Bunker. "Keep still, pull up slowly, and I'll get him in the net for you."

Slowly Laddie pulled up. Every one was watching. Would his "bite," too, prove to be only seaweed?

"Yes, you have one!" said Mother Bunker in a low voice, so as not to frighten the crab. I don't really know whether loud noises frighten crabs or not, but generally every one keeps quiet when fishing.

"Yes, Laddie has a crab," said Daddy Bunker. "Wait, now, I'll get it in the net!"



**THE CRAB HAD HOLD OF
LADDIE'S BAIT IN BOTH
CLAWS.**

***Six Little Bunkers at Cousin
Tom's.—Page 120***

Laddie's father dipped the net down into the water, shoved it under the crab, chunk of meat and all, and lifted it suddenly out of the water. The crab had hold of Laddie's bait in both claws, and before the creature could let go it had been caught.

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"Oh, look at him wriggle!" cried Rose.

"Now I'll dump him into the basket," said Daddy Bunker. He turned the net upside down over the peach basket. Out dropped Mr. Crab, letting go of the chunk of meat, which Laddie pulled out by the string. The crab crawled about sideways on the bottom of the basket, raising its claws into the air and clashing them together, at the same time opening and shutting the pinching part.

"That's the way a crab fights," said Cousin Tom. "And sometimes two big crabs will fight so hard that one pulls a claw off the other. You have caught a fine, big one, Laddie."

"A dandy," agreed Laddie.

"And I've got one, too!" cried Vi. "Oh, he's pulling like anything!"

She really had a crab on her line. Cousin Tom netted it for her, and it turned out to be larger than Laddie's.

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"I think the crab fishing will be good to-day," said Daddy Bunker.

And so it turned out. From then on each one began to catch the pinching creatures, the older folks using the net when the children had bites. Once Russ tried to use the net himself, but he was not quick enough with it, and the crab let go of the chunk of meat and swam quickly away.

"He was a dandy big one, too!" said Russ regretfully.

Mun Bun and Margy each one caught a crab, with the help of their mother, and Rose, Violet and Laddie had good luck, also. Cousin Tom and Daddy Bunker, of course, caught the most. Mother Bunker helped the children land theirs in the net. And, after about an hour of fishing, the peach basket was full of the big-clawed crabs.

"I think we have enough," said Cousin Tom. "We will take them home and cook them. Then we can eat them cold-boiled with lemon juice on them, or they can be made into a salad."

"Catching crabs is lots of fun," said Russ.

"Eating them is good, too," said his father.

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They rowed back home, and found Cousin Ruth waiting for them at the bungalow.

"Oh, you did have good luck," said Cousin Tom's wife. "A whole basketful! Well, I'll soon have the water boiling and we'll cook them."

The basket full of live crabs was set in the kitchen, and the six little Bunkers and the others went out on the porch to rest and wait for the water to boil. Russ, a little later, wanted a drink, and, going into the kitchen, he turned to go to the sink. He was barefooted, and suddenly he felt a sharp pain on one toe.

"Oh, I'm bit! I'm bit!" he cried. "Something pinched me!"

And then, as he looked at the kitchen floor, he cried:

"Oh, come quick! Come quick! They're loose! They're all loose!"

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CHAPTER XIII

IN THE BOAT

Every one out on the porch of the bungalow jumped up on hearing Russ's cries.

"What's the matter?" asked Mother Bunker.

"What happened?" Daddy Bunker wanted to know.

"Oh, they're all loose, and one of 'em bit me," wailed Russ, and now came sounds which seemed to indicate that he was hopping about on one foot, and holding the other in his hands. And he really was doing this, as they found out afterward.

"Loose? They're all loose? What does he mean?" asked Rose.

"It's the crabs!" exclaimed Cousin Tom, as he made a run for the kitchen. "I guess some of them got out of the basket. They will do that once in a while."

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Daddy and Mother Bunker, with Cousin Ruth, followed Cousin Tom to the kitchen, where Russ was still hopping about and yelling:

"Oh, they're all loose! They're all loose, and one of 'em pinched me! Oh, dear!"

"Don't cry, silly little boy!" called his mother. "A pinch by a crab can't hurt as much as that."

"Oh, but it hurts like anything!" yelled Russ. "He 'most bit off my big toe!"

By this time they were all in the kitchen. The rest of the six little Bunkers had followed their father and mother. They saw a queer sight.

Crabs were crawling all over the floor. They had managed to wiggle out of the peach basket in which they had been put as they were caught from the boat. Cousin Tom had spread wet seaweed over the top of the basket, but this had not been enough to keep the crabs in.

"Look, they're chasing us!" cried Rose, as a crab came sliding sideways over the oil-cloth, clashing its big claws.

"They are only trying to get into the dark corners to hide," said Cousin Tom. "I'll pick them up."

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"Will they pinch you?" asked Laddie.

"No, not if I pick them up by one of their back flippers," said his cousin. "There is a certain way to pick up a crab so he can't reach you with his claws."

Just then a crab came toward Cousin Tom. He put out his foot, and held it tightly on the hard shell of the crab's back. Then, reaching behind the crab, and taking hold of one of the broad, flat swimming flippers, he lifted the crab up that way. The crab wiggled and tried to reach Cousin Tom with the pinching claws, but could not.

"That's the way to do it," called out Cousin Tom, as he tossed the crab into the basket.

"I can do it!" said Laddie, who liked to try new things.

"You'd better not," advised his mother. "Look how the crab pinched Russ."

"My toe's bleeding," said the little fellow, and so it was. A big crab can easily pinch hard enough to draw blood.

"I'll tie it up for you," said his mother. "Perhaps you children had better not try to pick up Crabs the way Cousin Tom did," she went on. "You might make a mistake and get badly pinched."

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"Yes, let the children keep out of the way," agreed Daddy Bunker. "Cousin Tom and I will catch the crabs."

Russ was led away, hopping on one foot, though if he had tried, he could easily have stepped on his sore foot. He was more frightened than hurt, I think. And then the other children followed him, though the twins would rather have staid.

It was not easy to catch the crabs, for there were so many of them, and they scurried around so fast. But Cousin Tom picked them up in his fingers, and Daddy Bunker soon learned the trick of this. As for Cousin Ruth, she took the crab tongs, which were two pieces of wood fastened together on one end, like a pair of fire tongs. In these the crabs could be picked up either front or back, or even by one claw, and they could only pinch the wood, which they often did.

"There, I think we have them all," said Cousin Tom at last. "And now, as the water is boiling, we can cook them." [Pg 127]

So the crabs were cooked, and set aside to cool until morning, when the white meat would be picked out of the red shells, and made into salad.

"What makes the crabs red?" asked Violet the next morning as she saw the pile of cold, boiled creatures. "They were a sort of brown and green color when we caught them yesterday."

"Yes," said her father, "crabs, lobsters and shrimps, when they are boiled, turn red. Just why this is I don't know. I suppose there is something in their shells that the hot water changes."

"Can they pinch my toe now?" asked Mun Bun, as he stood near his mother, looking at the basket full of cooked crabs.

"Nope! They can't hurt you now; they're cooked," Laddie replied. "I'm not 'fraid!" and he picked up a big crab, holding it by one of the claws.

Vi then did the same thing.

"Go ahead and take one, Mun Bun," urged Laddie. [Pg 128]

"No! I don't guess I want to," said the little fellow.

"I know a riddle you could make up about a crab," said Rose, who had come to the kitchen to watch Cousin Ruth clean the shellfish.

"What is it?" Laddie demanded instantly.

"What color is a crab when it can't pinch?" sing-songed Rose. "And the answer is it's red when it can't pinch."

"Yes, that is a pretty good riddle," said Laddie, as, with his head on one side, he thought it over. "But I know how to make it better," he went on.

"How?" asked his mother.

"Let me think a minute," he begged. "Oh, I have it! Why is a crab like a newspaper?"

"'Tisn't!" exclaimed Russ who came along just then. He was limping a bit, for his toe was sore where the crab had pinched him.

"Yes, 'tis!" declared Laddie. "That's the riddle. It's something like the one Rose told. Why is a crab like a newspaper?"

"'Cause it folds its claws when it doesn't want to bite you?" asked Violet.

"Nope!" [Pg 129]

"Tell us," suggested Russ.

"Well, a crab is like a newspaper, 'cause when it's red it can't bite or pinch," Laddie said. "See?"

"Huh! Yes, I see," murmured Russ. "A crab is like a newspaper because when it's red. Oh, I know! You mean when a newspaper is r-e-a-d. That's a different red from reading. But it's a good riddle all right, Laddie."

"I didn't think of it all," said the little boy. "Rose helped."

"Oh, well, you made a riddle out of it," his sister told him. "Here comes Cousin Ruth. I'm going to watch her clean the crabs."

It was quite a lot of work to take the sweet, white meat out of the crab-shells, but Cousin Ruth knew the best way to do it.

In about an hour she had a large bowl full of the picked-out meat, and the children—all except Mun Bun and Margy, who were too little to be allowed to eat any—said the crabs were better than fish. Daddy and Mother Bunker liked them, too.

"Some of the crabs have awful big claws," remarked Russ after dinner, as he looked at a pile of the legs and claws. "I guess they could dig in the sand with 'em, the crabs could. They could dig [Pg 130]

deep holes."

"I wish one would dig down and find my lost locket," said Rose with a sorrowful sigh.

For, though they had all searched the sand near the bungalow beach over and over, there was no sign of the missing gold locket.

"I guess we'll never find it," Rose went on with another sigh. "Not even if a crab could dig down deep."

"Well, I'll dig some more," promised Laddie. "Vi and I are going to make some holes in the sand to play a new game, and maybe we'll find your locket that way."

But they did not, and Rose, though she herself searched and dug in many places, could not find the ornament.

There were many happy August days for the six little Bunkers at Cousin Tom's. They played in the sand, went crabbing and fishing, wading and swimming.

One hot afternoon, when it was too warm to do more than sit in the shade, Mrs. Bunker, who had been lying on the porch in a hammock reading, laid aside her book and looked up.

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"Where has Mun Bun gone?" she asked Rose, who was playing jackstones near by. "And did Margy go with him?"

"I don't know, Mother," Rose answered. "They were here a minute ago. I'll go and look for them."

Just as Rose got up and as Mrs. Bunker arose from the hammock, a voice down near the shore of the inlet called:

"Come back. Get out of that boat! Mother, Margy and Mun Bun are in the boat, and it's loose, and they're riding down the inlet and the tide's going out! Oh, Mother, hurry!"

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CHAPTER XIV

VIOLET'S DOLL

You can easily believe that Mrs. Bunker did hurry on hearing what Russ was calling about Mun Bun and Margy. She almost fell out of the hammock, did Mrs. Bunker, she was in such haste.

"Daddy! Daddy! Come quick!" she called to her husband, who was in the bungalow, talking to Cousin Tom. "Margy and Mun Bun are in a boat on the inlet and are being carried out to sea. Hurry!"

Daddy Bunker also hurried.

Mother Bunker was the first to get down to the shore, where she could see what had happened.

At first all she noticed was Russ jumping up and down in his excitement, and, at the same time, pointing to something on the water. Mrs. Bunker looked at what Russ was pointing to and saw that it was Cousin Tom's smaller rowboat, and, also, that in it were her two little children, Mun Bun and Margy!

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And the boat was being carried by the tide down the inlet toward the sea. The inlet, when the tide was flowing in or out, was like a powerful river, more powerful in its current than Rainbow River at home in Pineville, where the six little Bunkers lived.

"Oh, Margy! Mun Bun!" cried Mrs. Bunker, holding out her hands to the children.

"Oh, what will happen to them?" went on Mother Bunker, as she reached Russ standing near the edge of the inlet. She could see the boat, with Margy and Mun Bun in it, drifting farther and farther away. "Oh, I must get them!"

Mrs. Bunker was just about to rush into the water, all dressed as she was. She had an idea she might wade out and get hold of the boat to bring it back. But the inlet was too deep for that.

"Wait a minute! Don't go into the water, Mother! We'll get the children back all right!" cried Daddy Bunker, as he ran up beside his wife and caught her by the arm.

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"How?" asked Mrs. Bunker, clinging to her husband.

"We'll go after them in another boat," said Mr. Bunker. "Here comes Cousin Tom. He and I will go after the children in the other boat. You sit down and wait for us. We'll soon have them back!"

Cousin Tom had two boats tied at the pier in the inlet. One was the large one in which they had gone crabbing a few days before, and the other was the small one in which Margy and Mun Bun had gone drifting away.

Daddy Bunker, left his wife sitting on the sand and ran to loosen the large boat. But Cousin Tom cried:

"Don't take that. It will be too slow and too heavy to row."

"What shall we take?" asked the children's father.

"Here comes a motor-boat. I'll hail the man in that and ask him to go after the drifting boat for us," Cousin Tom answered.

"All right," agreed Mr. Bunker, as he looked up and saw coming down the inlet, or Clam River, a speedy motor-boat, in which sat a man. This would be much faster than a rowboat. [Pg 135]

Just then Mrs. Bunker, who had jumped up from the sand where she had been sitting for a moment, and who was running toward her husband, cried:

"Oh, see! The children are standing up! Oh, if they should fall overboard!"

Margy and Mun Bun, who, at first, had been sitting down in the drifting boat, were now seen to be standing up. And it is always dangerous to stand up in a small boat.

Daddy Bunker put his hands to his mouth, to make a sort of megaphone, and called:

"Sit down, Margy! Sit down, Mun Bun! Sit down and keep quiet and Daddy will soon come for you. Sit down and keep still!"

Mun Bun and his little sister did as their father told them, and sat down in the middle of the boat.

"Now we'll get them all right," said Mr. Bunker to his wife. "Don't worry—they will be all right."

Cousin Tom ran out on the end of his pier. He waved his hands to the man in the motor-boat, who was a lobster fisherman, going out to "lift" his pots. [Pg 136]

"Wait a minute!" called Cousin Tom. "Two children are adrift in that boat. We want to go after them!"

The lobster fisherman waved his hand to show that he understood. The motor of his boat was making such a noise that he could not make his voice heard, nor could he tell what Cousin Tom was saying. But he knew what was meant, for he saw the drifting boat.

With another wave of his hand to show that he knew what was wanted of him, the lobsterman steered his boat toward Cousin Tom's wharf. A few minutes later Daddy Bunker and Cousin Tom were in it, and were speeding down Clam River after the drifting craft in which sat Margy and Mun Bun.

"How did it happen?" asked Mr. Oscar Burnett, the lobster fisherman, as he steered his boat down stream.

"I don't know," answered Daddy Bunker "All I know is my wife called to me to come out, and I saw the two tots drifting off in the boat." [Pg 137]

"They must have climbed in to play when the boat was tied to the wharf," said Cousin Tom. "Then either they or some one else must have loosened the rope."

"Maybe it came loose of itself," suggested Daddy Bunker.

"It couldn't," said Cousin Tom. "I tied it myself, and I am a good enough sailor to know how to tie a boat so it won't work loose."

"Yes, I guess you are," said Mr. Burnett. "The youngsters must have loosened the rope themselves. Or some older children did it, for those two are pretty small," and he looked at Margy and Mun Bun, for the motor-boat was now quite near the drifting rowboat.

"All right, Margy! All right, Mun Bun! We'll soon have you back safe!" called Daddy Bunker to them, waving his hands. Both children were crying.

Up alongside the drifting rowboat went the lobster craft. Cousin Tom caught hold of the boat in which the children sat, and held it while Daddy Bunker lifted out Margy and her brother.

Then the rowboat was tied fast to the stern of the other boat, which was steered around by Mr. Burnett, and headed up the inlet. [Pg 138]

"I've got time to take you back to your pier," he said to Cousin Tom. "I started out a bit early this morning, so I don't have to hurry. Besides, the tide is running pretty strong, and you'd have it a bit hard rowing back."

"It's a good thing you came along," said Daddy Bunker, as he thanked the lobsterman. "The children might have been carried out to sea."

"Oh, the life guard at the station on the beach would have seen them in time," returned Mr. Burnett. "But I'm just as glad we got them when we did."

"What made you go off in the boat?" asked Daddy Bunker of Margy.

"We didn't mean to," answered Mun Bun. "We got in to play sail, and the boat went off by itself."

And this was about all the two children could say as to what had happened. They had got into the boat, which was tied to the pier, and had been playing in it for some time. Then, before they knew it, the boat became loose, and drifted off. Russ, who had been playing on the beach not far away, had seen them, but not in time to help them. [Pg 139]

He had, indeed, called to them to "come out of the boat," but then it was too late for Margy and Mun Bun to do this. There was already some water between their boat and the pier. Then Russ did the next best thing; he called his mother.

It did not take long for the lobster motor-boat to make the run back to Cousin Tom's pier, pulling the empty rowboat behind. Mrs. Bunker rushed down and hugged Margy and Mun Bun in her arms.

"Oh, I thought I should never see you again!" she cried, and there were tears in her eyes.

"We didn't mean to go away in the boat," said Margy.

"We didn't mean to," repeated Mun Bun.

And of course the children did not. They had been playing in the boat as it was tied to the wharf, and they never thought it would get loose. Just how this happened was never found out. Perhaps Mun Bun or Margy might have pulled at the knot in the rope until they loosened it, and the tug of the tide did the rest. [Pg 140]

But the children were soon safe on the beach again, playing in the sand, and the alarm was over.

"What makes the water in the inlet run up sometimes and down other times?" asked Violet.

"It's the tide," said Russ, who had heard some fishermen talking about high and low water.

"What's the tide?" went on the little girl.

"The moon," added Russ. "I heard Mother read a story, and it said the moon makes the tides."

"Does it, Daddy?" persisted Violet. She certainly had her questioning cap on that evening.

"Yes, the moon causes the tides," said Daddy Bunker. "But just how, it is a bit hard to tell to such little children. The moon pulls on the water in the oceans, just as a magnet pulls on a piece of iron or steel. When the moon is on one side of the earth it pulls the water into a sort of bunch, or hill, there, and that makes it lower in the opposite part of the earth. That is low tide. Then, as the moon changes, it pulls the water up in the place where it was low before, and that makes high tide. And when the tide is high in our ocean here it pushes a lot of water up Clam River. And when the water is low in our ocean here the water runs out of Clam River. That is what makes high tide and low tide here." [Pg 141]

"Oh," said Violet, though I am not sure she understood all about it.

But after that Margy and Mun Bun were careful about getting into the boat, even when they felt sure it was tightly tied to the pier. They always waited until some older folks were with them, and this was the best way.

The happy days passed at Cousin Tom's. The six little Bunkers played on the beach, and, now and then, they looked and dug holes to try to find Rose's locket.

"I guess it's gone forever," said the little girl as the days passed and no locket appeared. And she never even dreamed of the strange way good luck was to come to her once more. [Pg 142]

One warm day, when all the children were playing down on the sandy shore of the inlet, Violet came running back to the house.

"Mother, make Russ stop!" she cried.

"What is he doing?" asked Mrs. Bunker.

"He's taking my doll. He's going to take her out on the ocean in a boat. Make him stop."

"Oh, Russ mustn't do that!" exclaimed Mrs. Bunker. "Of course I'll make him stop!"

She went down to the beach with Violet, and, just as they came within sight of the group of children, they heard Rose say:

"Oh, Russ! Now you've done it! You have drowned Vi's doll!" [Pg 143]

CHAPTER XV

THE BOX ON THE BEACH

"Dear me!" exclaimed the children's mother, as she hurried along beside Violet to help settle whatever trouble Russ had caused.

"Oh! did you hear what Rose said?" asked Vi. "Did you hear?"

"Yes, my dear, I did."

"Oh, my lovely doll is drowned!" cried the little girl, and there were real tears in her eyes, and some even ran down her nose and splashed to the ground. "I just knew Russ would be mean and tease me, and he did, and now my doll is drowned and——"

"Well, it might better be a doll that is drowned and not one of my six little Bunkers," said the mother. "Though, of course, *I* am sorry if any of your playthings are lost. Russ, did you drown Vi's doll?" she called to her oldest son.

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"I didn't mean to, Mother," was the answer. "I was giving the doll a ride in a boat I made, and the boat got blown by the wind, and the wind upset the boat, and the boat went under water, 'cause I had a cargo of stones on it, and——"

"What happened to Vi's doll?" asked Mother Bunker. "Why don't you get to that part of it, Russ?"

"I was going to," he said. "The doll fell off when the boat upset and sank, and the doll sank, too, I guess."

"Is my doll really, really, drowned?" cried Violet.

"I—I'm afraid I guess so," stammered Russ. "But maybe I can fish her up again when the tide is low," he added hopefully.

"Do it now," sobbed the little girl.

"The water's too deep now."

"Where did she get drowned?" asked Violet, gazing through her tears at the waters of the inlet.

"The boat upset out there in the middle," said Russ, pointing.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Violet. "If she was my rubber doll maybe she wouldn't be drowned. But she's my china doll, and they won't float, will they, Mother?"

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"No, my dear, I'm afraid not. How did it happen, Russ? Why did you take Violet's doll?"

"'Cause I wanted to give her a ride, and I didn't think she would care—I mean Vi. Course the doll didn't care."

"She did so!" exclaimed the little girl, stamping her foot on the sand. "My dolls have got feelings, same as you have, Russ Bunker, so there!"

"Now children, don't get excited," said Mrs. Bunker gently. "Russ, you shouldn't have taken Vi's doll."

"Well, I wanted to see how much my boat would hold, and I was playing the doll was a passenger. I'll get it back for her. Cousin Tom will take me out in his boat to the middle, and I can scoop the doll up with a crab net."

Mrs. Bunker went with Russ and Violet to find Cousin Tom, leaving Laddie, Rose, Margy and Mun Bun playing with pebbles and shells in the sand.

Russ told Cousin Tom what had happened. The little boy had made a boat out of a piece of board, with a mast and a bit of cloth for a sail. He had loaded his boat with stones he had picked up on the beach of the inlet, and had started his craft off on a voyage.

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Violet had been playing near by with her doll, and when she put it down for a moment Russ had taken the doll and put it on his toy boat.

Then he gave it a shove out into the Clam River, the wind blowing on the sail and sending his toy well out toward the middle of the inlet. There the accident happened. The boat turned over and sank. Perhaps if Russ had only laid the stones on, instead of tying one or two large ones fast, as he had, the boat might have floated, even though upset.

For if the stones had not been tied on they would have rolled off and the boat would have righted herself and floated, being made of wood. But, as it was, she sank.

"And my doll went down with it," said Vi sadly. "Please, Cousin Tom, can you get her back?"

"I don't know, Violet. I'll see," was the answer. "The tide is running out now, for it was high water a little while ago. If the boat sank down to the bottom, and stayed there, we may be able to get it when the water is low if we can see it."

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"The sail is white, and you can see white cloth even under water," said Russ.

"But I'm afraid the cloth won't stay white very long. The mud and sand of the inlet will cover it," remarked Cousin Tom. "Did you tie the doll on the boat, too, Russ?"

"No, I just laid the doll down on top of the stones."

"Then when the boat upset the doll rolled off, and she probably sank in another place," said Mr. Bunker. "I don't believe we can ever find her, Vi, I'm sorry to say, but I'll try at low tide."

"Would she be carried out to sea, like Mun Bun and Margy 'most was?" the little girl wanted to know.

"She might, if the tide current was strong enough," said Cousin Tom. "What kind of doll was she?"

"China," answered Vi. "She was hollow, 'cause she made a hollow sound when you tapped her. And she had a hole in her back, and sometimes I used to pour milk in there, and make believe feed her."

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"Well, if your doll was hollow, and had a hole in her back, she probably filled with water when she sank," said Cousin Tom.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Violet.

That evening, when the tide was low, so there was not so much water in the inlet, Cousin Tom and Daddy Bunker, taking Russ with them to show where his boat had upset, rowed out to the middle of Clam River. It took them a little while to find the place where Russ had last seen his toy boat, but finally they found it. Then, looking down into the water, they peered about for a sight of the white sail.

"There it is!" suddenly cried Russ, as he leaned over the side of the boat. "I see something white."

"Yes, I see it, too," said Daddy Bunker. "Perhaps that is the sail of the sunken toy boat, and perhaps the doll is near here."

But when Cousin Tom put down the long-handled crab net and scooped up the white object, it was found to be a bit of paper.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Russ. "I wish it was Vi's doll!" He felt bad about the sorrow he had caused his little sister.

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"We'll try again," said his father, and, after rowing about a bit and peering down into the water, they saw something else white, and this time it really was Russ's boat. Cousin Tom scooped it up in his crab net, and when the stones which were tied on deck, were loosed, the boat floated as well as ever, and the wind and sun soon dried the wet sail.

But, though they scooped with crab nets all about the place where they had found the boat, they could not bring up Vi's doll.

"Oh, didn't you find her?" asked the little girl, when her father, Cousin Tom, and Russ came back in the rowboat.

"No, dear, we couldn't find her," said Daddy Bunker.

"Oh, dear!" and Vi cried very hard.

"Never mind, I'll get you another doll," said her mother.

"They won't ever a doll be as nice as she was," sobbed Vi. "I—I just lo-lo-loved her!"

They all felt sorry for Violet, and Russ said she could have his new knife, if she wanted it. But she said she didn't; all she wanted was her doll.

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"Never mind," said Rose, trying to comfort her sister. "Maybe when I find my gold locket, if I ever do, you'll find your lost doll. We've got two things to hunt for now—your doll and my locket."

"But your locket is lost on land, and, maybe, if you dig in the sand enough, you can find it," sobbed Violet. "But you can't dig in the water!"

"Maybe she'll be washed up on the beach with the tide, same as the driftwood and the shells and the seaweed are washed up," put in Russ. "I'll look along the beach every day, Vi, and maybe I'll find your doll for you."

This comforted Vi some, and she dried her tears. Then Laddie made them all laugh by saying:

"I have a new riddle!"

"Is it about a doll?" asked Rose.

"No. It's about a cow."

"How can you make a riddle about a cow?" Russ demanded.

"Well, I didn't make this one up," said Laddie; "and it isn't like the riddles I like to ask, 'cause there isn't any answer to it."

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"There must be some answer," declared Violet. "All riddles have answers."

"Well, I'll tell you this one, and you can see if it has," went on Laddie. "Now listen, everybody."

Then he slowly said:

"How is it that a red cow can eat green grass and give white milk that makes yellow butter?"

No one answered for a moment, and then Daddy Bunker laughed.

"That is pretty good," he said, "and I don't believe there is any answer to it. Of course we all know a red cow, or one that is a sort of brownish red, does eat green grass. And the milk a cow gives is white and the butter made from the white milk is yellow. Of course that isn't exactly a riddle, but it's pretty good, Laddie."

"And is there an answer to it?" the little boy asked.

"I don't believe there is," answered his father. "It's just one of those things that happen. Did you make that up, Laddie?"

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"No. Cousin Tom told it to me out of a book. But I like it."

Vi still sorrowed for her doll, and, in the days that followed, she often walked along the beach hoping "Sarah Janet," as she called her, might be cast up by the tide or the waves. Russ looked also, as did the others, but no doll was found. Nor did Rose find her gold locket, though many holes were dug in the sand searching for it.

One morning, after breakfast, when he had gone down on the beach to watch the fishing boats come in, which he often did, Russ came running back to the house, very much excited.

"What's the matter?" asked his mother. "Did one of the boats upset and spill out the fishermen?"

"No'm, Mother. But a box washed up on shore, and it's nailed shut, and it's heavy, and maybe Vi's doll is in it! Oh, please come down and see the box on the beach!"

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CHAPTER XVI

CAUGHT BY THE TIDE

Ever since they had come to Cousin Tom's, at Seaview, the six little Bunkers had hoped to find some treasure-trove on the beach. That is, Russ and Rose and Vi and Laddie did. Margy and Mun Bun were almost too little to understand what the others meant by "treasure," but they liked to go along the sand looking for things.

At first, when the children came to the shore, they had hoped to dig up gold, as Sammie Brown had said his father had when shipwrecked. But a week or so of making holes in the sand, and finding nothing more than pretty shells or pebbles, had about cured the older children of hoping to find a fortune.

"Instead of finding any gold we lost some," said Rose, as she thought of her pretty locket, which, she feared, was gone forever.

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But now, when Russ came running in, telling about a big box being cast up on the beach, his mother did not know what to think. The children had heard her read stories about shipwrecked persons, who found things to eat, and things of value, cast up on the sands, and she knew Russ must imagine this was something like that.

"Hurry, Mother, and we'll see what it is!" cried the little boy, and taking hold of her hand he fairly dragged Mrs. Bunker along the path toward the beach.

"What sort of box is it?" the little boy's mother asked.

"Oh, it's a wooden box," Russ answered eagerly.

"Well, I didn't suppose it was tin or pasteboard," said Mrs. Bunker with a laugh. "A tin box would sink, and a pasteboard box would melt away in the water. Of course I know it must be of wood. But is it closed or open, and what is in it?"

"That's what we don't know, Mother," Russ answered. "The box has a cover nailed on it, and it isn't so very big—about so high," and Russ measured with his hands.

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"Did you open the box?" asked Mrs. Bunker.

"No'm," Russ answered. "We were all playing on the sand when I saw something bobbing up and down on the waves. We threw stones at it, and then it washed up on the beach, and I ran down into the water and grabbed it.

"Maybe it's gold in it, Laddie says," went on Russ. "But I told him it wasn't heavy enough for gold."

"No, I hardly think it will be gold," said his mother with a smile.

"And Vi thinks maybe it's her doll," went on the little boy.

"Oh, it hardly could be that. Her doll is probably at the bottom of the ocean by this time. It could hardly have been got up and put in a box. I'm afraid you will find nothing more than straw or shavings in your treasure-trove, Russ. Don't count too much on it."

"Oh, no, but we're just hoping it's something nice," Russ said. "You go on down where the box is and I'll go get a hammer from Cousin Tom so we can open the box."

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He led his mother to a little hummock of sand, from the top of which she could look down and see the children gathered on the beach about a square wooden box that had been cast up by the sea. Then Russ ran back to get the hammer.

Mrs. Bunker looked at the box. There seemed to have been some writing on a piece of paper that was tacked on the box, but the writing was blurred by the sea water and could not be read.

"Oh, Mother! what you s'pose is in it?" asked Vi. "My doll, maybe!"

"No, I hardly think so, little girl."

"Maybe gold," added Laddie, his eyes big with excitement.

"No, and not gold," said Mrs. Bunker.

"Candy?" asked Margy, who had not one sweet tooth, it seemed, but several.

"Pop-corn balls!" said Mun Bun.

"Huh! candy and pop-corn balls would all be wet in the ocean," exclaimed Laddie.

By this time Russ came running back with the hammer. Behind him came Cousin Tom, Cousin Ruth and Daddy Bunker.

"What's all this I hear about a million dollars being found in a box on the beach?" asked Daddy Bunker with a laugh.

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"Well, there's the box," said Russ, pointing. "Please open it."

"I wonder what can be in it," said Cousin Ruth.

"Oh, maybe nothing," replied her husband, who did not want the children to be too much disappointed if the box should be opened and found to hold nothing more than some straw or shavings for packing.

"Lots of boxes that are cast up on the beach have nothing in them," said Cousin Tom, as Daddy Bunker got ready to use the hammer on the one Russ and the others had found.

"There is something in this box, all right," said Daddy Bunker, as he lifted one end. "I don't believe this box is empty, though what is in it may turn out to be of no use. But we will open it and see."

The six little Bunkers crowded around to look. So did Mother Bunker and Cousin Tom and his wife. And then a very disappointing thing happened. All of a sudden a wave, bigger than any of the others that had been rolling up on the beach, broke right in front of the box resting on the sand. Up the shore rushed the salty, green water.

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"Look out!" cried Mother Bunker. "We'll all be wet!"

Daddy Bunker, not wishing to have his shoes soiled with the brine, jumped back. So did the others. And, in jumping back, Mr. Bunker let go his hold on the box, which he was just going to open with Cousin Tom's hammer. And the big wave, which was part of the rising tide, just lifted the box up, and the next moment carried it out into the ocean, far from shore, as the wave itself ran back down the hill of sand.

"Oh! Oh, dear!" cried Rose.

"Grab it!" yelled Russ.

"I'll get it!" exclaimed Laddie.

He made a rush to get hold of the box again before it should be washed too far out from shore, but he stumbled over a pile of sand and fell. He was not hurt, but when he got up the box was farther out than ever.

Daddy Bunker looked at the water between him and the box, and said:

"It's too deep to wade and spoil a pair of shoes. And, after all, maybe there is only a lot of old trash in the box."

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"Oh, I thought maybe my doll was in it," sighed Violet.

"Can't you take your boat, Tom, and row out and get the box?" asked Cousin Ruth.

"Yes, I could do that," he said. "I will, too! The water is calm, though I can't tell how long it will stay so."

But before Cousin Tom could go back to the pier in the inlet, where the boat was tied, the box was washed quite a distance out from shore. Then the wind sprang up and the sea became rough,

and it was decided that he had better not try it.

"Let the box go," said Daddy Bunker. "I guess there was nothing very much in it."

But the children thought differently. They stood looking out at the unopened box, now drifting to sea, and thought of the different things that *might* be in it. Each one had an idea of some toy he or she liked best.

"Well, we waited too long about opening it," said Mr. Bunker. "We should have pulled the box farther up on the beach, Russ."

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"That's right," said Cousin Tom. "The tides are getting high now, as fall is coming on, and the tides are always highest in the spring and the autumn. But maybe we can get the box back, after all."

"How?" asked Russ eagerly.

"Well, it may come ashore again, farther up the beach," replied Cousin Tom.

"Then somebody else may find it and open it," Russ remarked.

"Yes, that may happen," said his father. "Well, we won't worry over it. We didn't lose anything, for we never really had it."

But, just the same, the six little Bunkers could not help feeling sorry for themselves at not having seen what was in the box. They kept wondering and wondering what it could have been.

But a day or so later they had nearly forgotten about what might have been a treasure, for they found many other things to do.

One afternoon Margy and Mun Bun, who had been freshly washed and combed, went down to the wharf where Cousin Tom kept his boat.

"Don't get in it, though," warned their mother. "You were carried away in a boat once, and I don't want it to happen again. Keep away from the boats."

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"We will!" promised Mun Bun and Margy.

When they reached the shore of the inlet Mun Bun said:

"Oh, Margy, look how low the water is! We can wade over to that little island!"

"Yes," agreed Margy, "we can. We can take off our shoes an' stockin's, an' carry 'em. Mother didn't tell us not to go wadin'."

And Mrs. Bunker had not, for she did not think the children would do this. So Margy and Mun Bun sat down on the wharf and made themselves barefooted. Then they started to wade across a shallow place in the inlet to where a little island of sand showed in the middle. And Margy and Mun Bun did not know what was going to happen to them, or they never would have done this.

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CHAPTER XVII

MAROONED

"That's a nice little island over there," said Mun Bun to Margy as they waded along.

"Yes, it's a terrible nice little island," agreed his sister.

"An' we can camp out there an' have lots of fun."

"Oh, Mun Bun, catch me! I'm sinking down in a hole!"

"All right, I'll get you!" cried the little boy, and he grasped hold of his sister's arm. She had stepped into a little sandy hole, and the water came up half way to her knees. Of course that was not very deep, and when Margy saw she was not going to sink down very far she was no longer frightened.

"But I was scared till you grabbed hold of me," she said to Mun Bun. "Is it very deep any more?"

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"No, it isn't deep at all," the little boy answered. "I can see down to the bottom all the way to the little island, and it isn't hardly over your toenails."

The tide was very low that day, and in some parts of the inlet there was no water at all, the sandy bottom showing quite dry in the sun.

As Cousin Tom had said, toward the fall of the year the tides are both extra high and extra low. Of course not at the same time, you understand, but twice a day. Sometimes the waters of the ocean came up into the inlet until they nearly flowed over the small pier. Then, some hours later, they would be very low. This was one of the low times for the tide, and it had made several small islands of sand in the middle of Clam River.

It was toward one of these islands that Margy and Mun Bun were wading. They had seen it from the shore and it looked to be a good place to play. There was a big, almost round, spot of white sand, and all about it was shallow water, sparkling in the sun. The deepest water between the shore and the island was half way up to Margy's knees, and that, as I think you will admit, was not deep at all.

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"We'll have some fun there," said Mun Bun.

"Maybe we can dig clams," went on the little girl.

Clam River was so called because so many soft and hard clams were dug there by the fishermen, who sold them to people who liked to make chowder of them.

There are two kinds of clams that are good to eat, the hard and the soft. One has a very hard shell, and this is the kind of clam you most often see in the stores.

But there is another sort of clam, with a thin shell, and out of one end of it the clam sticks a long thing, like a rubber tube. And when the clam digs a hole for himself down in the sand or the mud he thrusts this tube up to the top, and through it he sucks down things to eat.

The six little Bunkers had often seen the fishermen on Clam River dig down after these soft-shelled fellows. The men used a short-handled hoe, and when they had dug away the sand there they found the clams in something that looked like little pockets, or burrows.

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"Maybe we can dig clams," said Margy.

"We hasn't got any shovel or hoe," returned Mun Bun.

"Maybe we can dig with some big clam shells, if we can find some," his sister said.

By this time they had reached the little island. Just like the islands in your geography, it was "entirely surrounded by water," and it made a nice place to play, except that it was rather sunny. But Mun Bun and Margy did not mind the sun very much.

They were used to playing out in it, and they were now as brown as berries, or Indians, or nuts, whichever you like best. They were well tanned, and did not get sunburned as many little boys and girls do when they go to the seashore for the first time.

"We can take the clams to Cousin Ruth and she can make chowder and she'll give us some cookies, maybe," said Mun Bun.

"I like clams better than cookies," remarked Margy. "I mean I like to eat cookies, but I like to dig clams."

"You can't dig cookies," said Mun Bun.

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"You could dig one if you dropped yours in the sand," returned his sister.

"Yes, you could do that," agreed the little boy. "But it would be all sand, and it wouldn't be good to eat."

"I don't guess it would. We'll just dig clams. Anyhow, we hasn't any cookies to dig or to eat."

This was very true. And now the two little children began to hunt for clam shells to use for shovels in digging. They wanted the large shells of the hard clam, and soon each had one. Then they began to dig, as they had seen their father and Cousin Tom do. For Daddy Bunker had once taken Margy and Mun Bun with him and the other Mr. Bunker, when they went to dig soft clams.

Whether Margy and Mun Bun did not know how to dig, or whether there were no clams in the sand of the island I do not know. But I do know that the two little Bunkers did not find any, though they dug holes until their backs ached.

Then Margy said:

"Let's don't play this any more."

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"What shall we play?" asked Mun Bun.

"Oh, let's see if we can find some wood and make little boats."

So they walked about the island looking for bits of wood. But none was to be found. For wood floats; that is, unless it is so soaked with water as to be too heavy, and all the pieces of wood that had ever been on the island had floated away.

"I don't guess we can build any boats," said Margy. "Let's go back to shore and get some wood, and then we can come back and sail boats."

"That'll be fun," said Mun Bun. "We'll go."

But when he and his sister started to wade back, they had not gone very far before Margy cried:

"Oh, the water's terrible deep! Look how deep down my foot goes!"

Mun Bun looked. Indeed the water was almost up to Margy's knees now, and she had gone

only a few steps away from the shore of the island.

"Let me try it," said her brother. "I'm bigger than you."

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He wasn't, though he liked to think so, for Margy was a year older. But I guess Mun Bun was like most boys; he liked to think himself larger than he was.

However, when he stepped out from the island, ahead of Margy, he, too, found that the water was deeper than it had been when they started to wade from the shore near Cousin Tom's pier.

"What makes it?" asked Margy.

"I—I don't know," answered Mun Bun. "I guess somebody must have poured more water in the river."

"Lessen maybe it rained," suggested Margy. "Don't you know how Rainbow River gets bigger when it rains?"

"It didn't rain," said Mun Bun, "or we'd be wet on our backs."

"No, I guess it didn't rain," agreed Margy. Then she cried: "Oh, look, Mun Bun! Our island's getting awful little! It only sticks out of the water hardly any now! Look!"

Mun Bun turned and looked behind him. As his sister had said, the island was very much smaller.

"What—what makes it?" asked Margy.

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"I—I don't know," answered Mun Bun. "But it is getting littler, just like when you keep on sucking a lollypop."

And that is just what the island was doing. What Margy and Mun Bun did not know was that the tide had turned, that it was rising, and that it would soon not only make their island much smaller, but would cover it from sight, leaving no island at all!

"Oh, the water's getting deeper," said Margy, as she took another step and found it coming over her little knees. "What are we going to do, Mun Bun?"

"I—I guess we must go back to the middle of the island and stay there," said her brother.

"Oh, shall we ever get off?" Margy asked, and her voice sounded as though she might cry before long. "I can't ever wade to shore when the water is so deep. What are we going to do?"

"We'll call for Daddy!" said Mun Bun.

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE MARSHMALLOW ROAST

When anything happened to Mun Bun or his sister Margy they always called for Daddy or Mother Bunker. The other children did the same thing, though of course Margy and Mun Bun, being the youngest, naturally called the most, just as they were the ones who were most often in trouble that needed a father or a mother to straighten out.

"Our island's getting terrible small," said Margy; "and the water's gettin' deeper all around us."

"Yes," agreed Mun Bun, as he got in the middle of what was left of the circle of sand and looked about. "The water is deep. I guess I'd better call!"

"I'll help you," said Margy.

The two children stood in the center of the sandy island that was all the while getting smaller because the tide was rising and covering it, and they called:

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"Daddy! Mother! Daddy Bunker! Come and get us!"

They called this way several times, and then waited for some one to come and get them.

If you want to imagine how Margy and Mun Bun looked, marooned as they were on an island in the middle of Clam River, with the tide rising, just get a big, clean stone and put it down in the middle of your bathtub. If you try this you had better put a piece of paper under the stone, so it will not scratch the clean, white tub.

Then on the stone put two other little stones to stand for Margy and Mun Bun. Now put the stopper in the tub and turn on the water. You will see it begin to rise around the stone, and soon only a little of it will be left sticking out of the water.

"Daddy! Mother! Daddy Bunker! Come and get us!"

Now Margy and Mun Bun did not have very strong voices, and, besides, though they were not far from one part of the shore, it was quite a distance to Cousin Tom's house, where their father

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and mother were at that moment. Also, the wind was blowing their voices away, and over toward the other shore of Clam River, where at this time no one lived.

But the two little Bunkers did not know this, and they kept on calling for their mother or father to come to get them. But neither Daddy nor Mother Bunker answered.

And the water kept on rising, for the tide was coming in fast, and it was going to be high.

Now it happened, just about this time, that Mr. Oscar Burnett, the lobster fisherman, was coming up the inlet in his motor-boat. He had been out to sea to lift his lobster-pots and he had been waiting at the entrance of Clam River for the tide to make the water deep enough for him to come up. On days when the tide was not so low he could come up all right, even at "slack water." But this time the channel was not deep enough for his motor-boat and he had to wait.

And as he puffed up, steering this way and that so as not to run on sand bars, he heard, faintly, the cries of Margy and Mun Bun. [Pg 173]

Having good ears, and knowing the cries must be near him, Mr. Burnett looked about.

He saw the place where the island was now almost hidden from sight because of the rising waters, and he saw the two children, Margy and Mun Bun, standing there, their arms around each other, crying for help, and also crying real tears. For they were very much frightened.

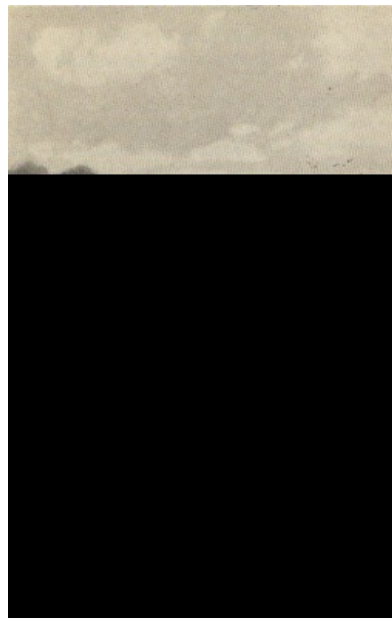
"Well, I swan to goodness!" exclaimed the lobster fisherman. "There's those two children again, and this time they're marooned 'stead of being adrift! Yes, sir! They're marooned!"

I used that word once before and I forgot to tell you what it means, so I'll do so now. It means, in sailor talk, being left alone on an island without any way of getting off. Sometimes pirates used to capture ships, take off the passengers and set them on an island without leaving a boat. And the poor passengers were marooned. They could no more get off than could Margy and Mun Bun. [Pg 174]

"Marooned! That's what they are!" said Mr. Burnett. "I'll have to go over and get 'em, just as I got 'em when they drifted down the inlet in the boat. I never saw such children for getting into trouble!"

Not that Mr. Burnett thought it was too much trouble to go and get Margy and Mun Bun off the island where they were marooned. Instead, he was very glad to do it, for he loved children. So he steered his motor-boat over toward what was left of the island—which was very little now, as the tide was still rising. Then the lobster fisherman called:

"Don't be afraid, Mun Bun and Margy! I'll soon get you! Don't be afraid. Just stand still and don't wade off into the deep water."



**"DON'T BE AFRAID! I'LL
SOON GET YOU!" SAID MR.
BURNETT.**
*Six Little Bunkers at Cousin
Tom's.—Page [174](#)*

The island was shaped like a little hill, high in the middle, and Margy and Mun Bun had kept stepping back until they now stood on the highest part in the middle.

All about them was the water, deeper in some places than in others. And you may be sure that the little boy and his sister did not try to get off the high spot. There the water was only over their feet, but if they stayed there much longer it might cover their heads. [Pg 175]

However no such dreadful thing happened, for Mr. Burnett steered his boat up to them until it grounded in the sand of the island that was now under water.

"Now you're all right!" said the kind man. He shut off his motor and jumped over the side of the boat. Right into the water he stepped, but as he had on high rubber boots he did not get his feet wet.

Mr. Burnett picked up Margy and set her down in his boat.

"Oh, look at the big lobsters!" cried the little girl. "Will they pinch me?"

Well might she ask that question, for the bottom of the boat was filled with lobsters with big claws, some of which were moving about, the pinching parts opening and shutting.

"They won't hurt you," said Mr. Burnett with a laugh. "Just keep up on the seat, Margy, and you won't get pinched."

The seats in the lobster boat were broad and high, and on one of them Margy and Mun Bun, who was soon lifted off the island to her side, were safe from the lobsters, which Mr. Burnett had taken from his pots, some miles out at sea.

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"How did you come to go on the island when the tide was rising?" asked the fisherman, as he started his boat once more.

"The water was low, and we waded out barefoot," explained Margy.

"We were goin' to dig clams," added Mun Bun.

"But we couldn't find any," continued Margy. "And then when we went to wade back home the water got deep and we were afraid."

"I should think you would be!" replied the lobster fisherman. "Well, I'm glad I heard you call. It wouldn't be very nice on your island now."

The children looked back. Their island was out of sight. It was "submerged," as a sailor would say, meaning that it was under the water. For the tide had risen and covered it.

"Will you take us home?" asked Margy.

"That's what I will," said the lobster fisherman. "I'll take you right up to Mr. Bunker's pier. I guess your folks don't know where you are, nor what trouble you might have been in if I hadn't come along just when I did."

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And this was true, for neither Daddy nor Mother Bunker, nor Cousin Tom nor his wife, nor any of the other little Bunkers had heard the cries of Mun Bun and Margy.

But as the motor-boat went puffing up to the little wharf the noise it made was heard by Mr. and Mrs. Bunker, who ran down from the cottage to see it, as they wanted to buy a fresh lobster and they had been told that Mr. Burnett might soon come back from having gone to lift his pots.

"Well, I had pretty good luck to-day," said the old fisherman, as he stopped his boat at the pier, and pointed to Margy and Mun Bun. "See what I caught!"

"Margy!" cried her mother, in great surprise.

"Mun Bun!" exclaimed the little boy's father.

"Did you go out in a boat again?" asked Mrs. Bunker.

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"Oh, no'm, we didn't do that!" said Mun Bun quickly.

"We just waded over to the little island," said Margy. "But somebody poured water in the river, and it got high and we couldn't wade back again."

"They were marooned in the middle of Clam River for a fact! That's what they were!" said Mr. Burnett. "But I heard 'em yell, and I took 'em off. Here they are."

"You must never wade out like that again," said the father of Mun Bun and Margy. "This river isn't like ours at home. An island there is always an island, unless floods come, and you know about them. There is a tide here twice a day and what may seem a safe bit of sand on which to play at one time may be covered with water at another. So don't go wading unless you ask your mother or me first."

"We won't," promised Mun Bun and Margy.

Then Mr. Bunker thanked Mr. Burnett and after the lobster had been bought the fisherman puffed away in his boat, waving a good-bye to the children he had saved from being marooned on the island.

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Mun Bun and Margy had to tell their story over again several times and they had to answer many questions from their brothers and sisters, about how they felt when they saw the water coming up.

Of course the two smallest of the six little Bunkers had been in some danger, though if Mr. Burnett had not seen them and rescued them, some one else might have done so. But it taught all the little Bunkers a lesson about the dangers of the rising tide, and if any of you ever go to the seashore I hope you will be careful. If you live at the shore, of course you know about the tides.

As the August days went on, the children played in the sand and had many good times. Often they would pretend to be digging for gold, as they had heard Sammie Brown tell of his father having done, but they had given up hoping to find any.

"But we might find my locket," said Rose.

"And we might find that queer box the tide washed away before we could see what was in it," said Russ. "I wish we could find that."

Often he would walk along the beach looking at the driftwood and other things cast up by the waves and hope for a sight of the mysterious box. [Pg 180]

"If we'd only seen what was in it we wouldn't feel so bad," said Rose. "But it's like a puzzle you never can guess."

One evening Daddy Bunker came home from the village with some round tin boxes.

"What's in 'em?" cried Violet, always the first to ask a question.

"Let's guess!" proposed Laddie. "Maybe I can make up a riddle about 'em."

"I know what's in them," said Russ. "I can read it on the box. It's marshmallow candies."

"Oh, are we going to have a marshmallow roast on the beach?" cried Rose.

"Yes, that's what we are going to have," her father said.

"Oh, hurray! Hurray! Hurray!" cried the six little Bunkers. [Pg 181]

CHAPTER XIX

THE SALLIE GROWLER

Have you ever toasted marshmallow candies at the seashore beach? If you have you need not stop to read this part of the story. But if you have not, from this and the next page you may learn how to do it.

In the first place you need three things to have a marshmallow roast, and you can easily guess what the first thing is. It's a box of the white candies. Then you need a fire, and, if you are a little boy or girl, it will be best to have your father or mother or some big person make the fire for you, as you might get burned.

Then you need some long, pointed sticks on which to hold the marshmallow candies as you toast them. If the sticks are too short you will toast your fingers or your face instead of the candies. [Pg 182]

"Have you got lots of marshmallows, Daddy?" asked Rose, as she and the other children gathered about their father.

"Plenty, I think," he answered. "We don't want so many that you will be made ill, you know."

"I can eat a lot of 'em without getting sick," declared Laddie.

"I like 'em, too," said Vi. "Where do the marshmallow candies come from, Daddy?" she asked.

"From the store, of course!" exclaimed Laddie.

"No, I mean before they get to the store," went on the little girl. "Does a hen lay the marshmallows, same as chickens lay eggs?"

"Oh, no!" laughed Daddy Bunker. "Marshmallow candy is made from sugar and other things, just as most candies are."

As the six little Bunkers, with their father and mother and Cousin Tom and his wife, walked down to the shore of the sea, which was light from the beams of a silvery moon, Laddie said:

"I have a new riddle!"

"Is it about marshmallows?" asked Vi. [Pg 183]

"No. But the candies made me think of it," replied her brother. "It's about a fire."

"What is your riddle about a fire?" asked Cousin Ruth, who always liked to hear Laddie ask his funny questions.

"Where does the fire go when it goes out?" Laddie asked. "That's my riddle. Where does the fire go when it goes out?"

"It doesn't go anywhere," declared Russ. "It just stays where it is."

"Part of it goes away," declared Laddie. "Where does it go? Where does the hot part go when the fire goes out?"

"Up in the air," said Rose.

"Off in the ocean!" exclaimed Mun Bun, who really did not know what they were talking about.

"Does it, Daddy?" asked Laddie.

"Why, I don't know," said Mr. Bunker. "It's your riddle; you ought to know what the answer is."

"But I don't," admitted Laddie. "I made up the riddle, but I don't know what the answer is. If some of you could think of a good answer it would be a good riddle."

"Yes, I guess it would," agreed Mrs. Bunker. "This is the time you didn't think of a good one, Laddie. A riddle isn't much good unless some one knows the answer."

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Perhaps some of you who are reading this story can tell the answer.

Down on the beach went the six little Bunkers. There was a bright moon shining and here and there were other parties of children and young people, some going to have marshmallow roasts also, and some who only came down to look at the ocean shining under the silver moon.

Mun Bun and Margy, with Violet and Laddie, raced about in the sand, while Russ and Rose helped their father and Cousin Tom gather driftwood for the fire. There was plenty of it, and it was dry, for it had been in the hot sun all day.

"What makes the sand so sandy?" asked Vi, as she sat down beside her mother and Cousin Ruth and let some of the "beach dust," as Daddy Bunker sometimes called it, run through her fingers.

"That's a hard question to answer," laughed Mother Bunker. "You might as well ask what makes the moon so shiny."

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"Or what makes the water so wet," added Cousin Ruth. "Oh, you are such a funny little girl, Violet!"

"What makes me?" asked Vi.

"I suppose one reason is that you ask so many funny questions," said Cousin Ruth. "But there, Daddy has lighted the fire, and we can soon begin to roast the marshmallows."

On the beach, near Russ and Rose, where they were standing with their father and Cousin Tom, a cheerful blaze sprang up. It looked very pretty in the moonlight night, with the sparkling sea out beyond.

"Can we roast 'em now?" asked Laddie, as he got ready one of the long, pointed sticks.

"Not quite yet," said his father. "Better to wait until the fire makes a lot of red-hot coals, or embers of wood. Then we can hold our candies over them and they will not get burned or blackened by the blaze. Wait a bit."

So they sat about the fire, while Daddy Bunker and Cousin Tom piled on more wood. The boxes of the candies had been opened, so they would be all ready, and each of the ten Bunkers had a long, sharp-pointed stick to use as a toasting-fork.

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"I guess we are ready now," said Daddy Bunker, after they had listened to a jolly song sung by another party of marshmallow roasters farther down the beach. "There are plenty of hot embers now."

Cousin Tom poked aside the blazing pieces of driftwood and underneath were the hot, glowing embers.

"Now each one put a candy on a stick and hold the marshmallow over the embers," said Daddy Bunker. "Don't hold it still, but turn it around. This is just the same as shaking corn when you pop it, or turning bread over when you toast it. By turning the marshmallow it will not burn so quickly."

So, kneeling in a circle about the fire, the six little Bunkers, and the others, began to roast the candies. But Margy and Mun Bun did not have very good luck. They forgot to turn their marshmallows and they held them so close to the fire that they had accidents.

"Oh, Mun Bun's candy is burning!" cried Rose.

"And Margy's is on fire, too!" added Russ.

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"Oh, that's too bad!" cried Mother Bunker. "Never mind," she said, as she saw that the two little tots felt sorry. "I'll toast your candies for you. It's rather hard for you to do it."

Mrs. Bunker's own candy was toasted a nice brown and all puffed up, for this is what happens when you toast marshmallows. So she gave Mun Bun and Margy some of hers, and then began to brown more.

The other children did very well, and soon they were all eating the toasted candies. Now and then one would catch fire, for sugar, you know, burns faster than wood or coal. But it was easy to blow out the flaming candies, and, if they were not too badly burned, they were good to eat.

"Oh, look at the little dog!" cried Rose, as she put a fresh marshmallow on her stick. "He smells

our candy! May I give him one, Daddy?"

"Yes, but give him one that isn't toasted. He might burn himself on a hot one. Whose dog is he?"

"He just ran over to me from down there," and Rose pointed to some boys and girls about another fire farther down the beach, who were also roasting marshmallows. The dog seemed glad to be with Rose and his new friends, and let each of the six little Bunkers pat him. He ate several candies and then ran back where he belonged.

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"Oh, he was awful cute!" exclaimed Vi. "I wish we could keep him. Couldn't we have a dog some time?"

"Maybe, when we get back home again," promised Mother Bunker.

The marshmallow roast was fun, and even after the candies had all been eaten the party sat on the beach a little longer, looking at the waves in the moonlight.

"Now it's time to go to bed!" called Mother Bunker. "Margy and Mun Bun are so sleepy they can't keep their eyes open. Come on! We'll have more fun to-morrow!"

"I'm going crabbing off the pier," declared Russ. "There's lots of crabs now, Mr. Burnett says."

"Yes, August is a good month to catch crabs," returned Cousin Tom.

"I'm going fishing," said Laddie. "Can you catch fish off your pier, Cousin Tom?"

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"Oh, yes, sometimes. But don't catch any Sallie Growlers."

"What's a Sallie Growler?" asked Vi, before any one else could speak.

"Oh, you'll know as soon as you catch one," laughed her cousin. Then he picked up Mun Bun, who was really asleep by this time, and carried him up to the house, while Daddy Bunker took Margy, whose eyes were also closed.

True to their promises Russ and Laddie went down to the little boat wharf the next morning after breakfast. Russ had the crab net and a chunk of meat tied to a string. Laddie had a short pole and line and a hook baited with a piece of clam, for that was what fishermen often used, Cousin Tom said.

"Now we'll see who catches the first fish!" exclaimed Laddie, as he sat down on the pier.

"I'm not fishing for fish, I'm fishing for crabs," said Russ.

"Well, in this race we'll count a crab and a fish as the same thing," returned Laddie. "We'll see who gets the first one."

The boys waited some time. Now and then Russ would feel a little tug at his line, as if the crabs were tasting his bait, but had not quite made up their minds to take a good hold so he could pull them up and catch them in the net. And the cork float on Laddie's line would bob up and down a little as though he, too, had nibbles. But neither of them had caught anything yet.

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Suddenly Laddie felt a hard tug, and he yelled:

"Oh, I got one! I got one! I got the first bite!"

He yanked on his pole. Something brown and wiggling came up out of the water and flopped down on the wharf. At the same time a little dog that had run up behind the two boys and was sniffing around, gave a sudden yelp.

"What's the matter?" cried Russ.

"He's bit by a Sallie Growler! The Sallie Growler you caught bit my dog on the nose!" exclaimed another boy and he began striking at the brown thing Laddie had caught, which was now fast to the nose of the dog that had been eating marshmallows the night before.

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CHAPTER XX

THE WALKING FISH

Laddie dropped his fishing-pole. Russ let go of his crab-line, and they both stood looking at the dog and at the strange boy. The dog was howling, and trying to paw off from his nose a queer and ugly-looking fish that had hold of it. It was the fish Laddie had caught and which the boy had called a "Sallie Growler."

"Cousin Tom told us about them last night," thought Russ. "I wonder why they have such a funny name, and what makes 'em bite so."

But he did not ask the questions aloud just then. There was too much going on to let him do this.

The dog was howling, and the new boy was yelling, at the same time striking at the fish on the end of his dog's nose.

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"Take him off! Take off that Sallie Growler!" yelled the boy.

But the brown fish Laddie had caught looked too ugly and savage. Neither of the little Bunkers was going to touch it and the new boy did not seem to want to any more than did Russ or Laddie.

As for the dog, he could not help himself. The fish had hold of him; he didn't have hold of the fish.

Finally, after much howling and pawing, the dog either knocked the fish off his nose, or the Sallie Growler let go of its own accord and lay on the pier.

"Poor Teddy!" said the boy as he bent over his pet to pat him. "Did he hurt you a lot?" The dog whimpered and wagged his tail. He did not seem to be badly hurt, though there were some spots of blood on his nose.

"I guess he'll be all right if the Sallie Growler doesn't poison him," said the boy. "How'd you come to catch it?" he asked, looking from Laddie to Russ.

"I didn't want to catch it," said Laddie. "I was fishing for good fish and I got a bite and pulled *that* up!" and he pointed to the ugly brown fish that lay gasping on the boards.

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"Is it a Sallie Growler?" asked Russ.

"It is," said the new boy. "And they can bite like anything. Look how that one held on to my dog's nose."

"I hope he isn't hurt much," put in Laddie. "I didn't mean to do it."

"No, I guess you didn't," said the other boy. "Nobody ever tries to catch a Sallie Growler. They're too nasty and hard to get off the hook. 'Most always they swallow it, but this one didn't. He dropped off just as you landed him and then my dog came along and smelled him—Teddy's always smelling something—and the fish bit him."

"Do you live around here?" asked Russ.

"Yes, we're here for the summer. I guess I saw you down on the beach last night roasting marshmallows, didn't I?"

"Yes, and we gave your dog some," returned Laddie. "What's your name?"

"George Carr. What's yours?"

"Laddie Bunker."

"Mine's Russ," said Laddie's brother. "Oh, look! I guess I've got a crab!"

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He ran to where he had tied the end of his string to a post of the pier, and began to pull in. Surely enough, on the end was a big blue-clawed crab, and, with the help of Laddie, who used the net, the creature was soon landed on the pier.

"Here! You keep away from that crab!" called George Carr to his dog Teddy. "Do you want your nose bit again?"

And from the way the crab raised its claws in the air, snapping them shut, it would seem that the shellfish would have been very glad indeed to pinch the dog's nose. But Teddy had learned a lesson. He kept well away from the gasping Sallie Growler, too.

"What makes 'em be called Sallie Growler?" asked Laddie, as he and Russ looked at the fish. It was very ugly, with a head shaped like a toad, and a very big mouth.

"I don't know why they call 'em Sallie," said George; "but they call 'em Growler 'cause they do growl. Sometimes you can hear 'em grunting under the water. There goes this one now!"

Just as he spoke the fish did give a sort of groan or growl. It opened its mouth, gasping for breath.

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"They're no good—worse than a toad fish!" exclaimed George, as he kicked the one Laddie had caught into the water.

"Are there many around here?" asked Russ.

"Yes, quite a lot in the inlet," answered George. "They don't bite on crab-meat bait, but if you're fishing for fish they often swallow your hook, bait and all. I don't like 'em, and I guess Teddy won't either after to-day."

"Was he ever bit before?" Laddie wanted to know as the dog lay down on the pier and began to lick his bitten nose with his tongue.

"Not that I know of," answered George, who was a little older than Russ. "Once is enough. I wouldn't want one to bite me."

"Me, neither," added Russ. "Want to help catch crabs?" he asked George. "I have two lines and

you can have one."

"Thanks, I will. I was out walking with my dog and I saw you two down on this pier. I came to see if you were the same boys that gave my dog marshmallows last night."

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"Yes, we're the same," answered Russ. "Did he like the candy we fed him?"

"Oh, sure! He always eats candy, but he doesn't get too much at our house. Teddy's always smelling things. That's how he came to go up to the Sallie Growler. I guess he'll let the next one alone."

"I hope I don't catch any more," said Laddie. "I don't like 'em."

"Nobody else does," said George. "We come to the seashore every year, and I never saw anybody yet that liked a Sallie Growler."

Laddie, Russ and their new chum stayed on the pier for some time. Russ and George caught quite a number of crabs, and Laddie had fine luck with his fish-pole and line, landing three good-sized fish on the pier. He caught no more Sallie Growlers, for which he was thankful. I guess Teddy was, too, for his nose was quite sore.

For several days after that George came over each morning to play with the two older Bunker boys. He brought his dog with him and Teddy made friends over again with Rose and Violet and Margy and Mun Bun, as well as with Russ and Laddie.

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"I guess he 'members we gave him candy," said Margy, as she patted the dog's shaggy head.

There were many happy days at Seaview. The six little Bunkers played in the sand, they went wading and bathing and had picnics, more marshmallow roasts and even popcorn parties on the beach.

"I don't ever want to go home," said Laddie one night after a day of fun on the beach. "This is such a nice place. It's so good to think up riddles."

"Have you a new one?" asked his father. "Have you thought up an answer yet to where the fire goes when it goes out?"

"Not yet," Laddie answered. "But I have one about what is the sleepest letter of the alphabet."

"What is the sleepest letter of the alphabet?" repeated Russ. "Do you mean the letter I? That ought to be sleepy 'cause it's got an eye to shut."

"No, I don't mean I," said Laddie. "But that's a good riddle, too, isn't it? What's the sleepest letter of the alphabet?"

"Do you know the answer?" Rose wanted to know. "This isn't like the fire riddle, is it?"

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"No, I know an answer to this," Laddie said. "Can anybody else answer it?"

They all made different guesses, and Vi, as usual, asked all sort of questions, but finally no one could guess, or, if Mother and Daddy Bunker could, they didn't say so, and Laddie exclaimed:

"The sleepest letter of the alphabet is E 'cause it's always in bed; B-E-D, bed!" and he laughed at his riddle.

"That is a pretty good one," said his mother.

"You ought to say what are the three sleepest letters in the alphabet," declared Russ, "'cause there are three letters in bed."

"Oh, well, one is enough for a riddle," said Laddie, and I think so myself.

One day the children saw Daddy Bunker and Cousin Tom putting on long rubber boots, and taking down heavy fishing-poles and some baskets.

"Where are you going?" asked Russ.

"Down to fish in the surf," answered his father. "Want to come?"

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Russ and Laddie did. Rose and Violet were already trying to catch crabs further up the inlet. Margy and Mun Bun had gone to take their afternoon nap.

Laddie and Russ played about on the beach while their father and Cousin Tom began to fish, throwing the heavy sinkers and big hooks far out in the surf, trying to catch a bass. The men had to stand where the waves broke, and that is why they wore rubber boots.

Suddenly Laddie, who had run down the beach to watch a big piece of driftwood come floating in, called:

"Oh, Russ! Come here, quick! Here is a fish that's got legs! It's a fish that can walk! It's worse than a Sallie Growler! Come and look at it!"

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CHAPTER XXI

THE QUEER BOX AGAIN

Russ at first thought his smaller brother was playing a joke.

"You can't fool me," cried Russ. "I don't want to guess any of your riddles!"

"This isn't a riddle!" declared Laddie. "It's a real fish, and it's got real legs. Come and look at it!"

He was pointing to something on the beach, which seemed to have been washed in by the tide.

"Come on!" cried Laddie again. "It isn't a riddle—honest! It's a fish with legs. I didn't see him walk, but it sort of—sort of stands up!"

Still Russ was afraid of being fooled. So he called over to his father and Cousin Tom, who were fishing in the surf not far away.

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"Daddy, is there a fish with legs? Laddie says he's found one on the beach."

"Well, you might call 'em legs," answered Cousin Tom, as he flung his hook and sinker as far as he could out into the ocean. "I guess what Laddie has found is a skate."

"But he says it's a fish!" exclaimed Russ. "Now you call it a skate! I guess you're both trying to make up riddles."

"No, Russ," said his father, as he reeled in his line. "The fish Laddie sees, and I can see it from where I stand, really has some long, thin fins, which are like legs. And the name of the fish is 'skate,' so you see they are both right. Come, we'll go and look at it."

And when Russ got to where Laddie was standing over the queer creature on the beach he had to laugh, for surely the fish was a very queer one.

"Isn't it funny?" asked Laddie.

"I should say so!" cried Russ. "It's as funny as some of your riddles."

And if any of you have ever seen a skate at the seashore I think you will agree with Russ. Imagine, if you have never seen one, a fish as flat as a flounder, with a flat, pointed nose sticking out in front. Away back, under this nose, and out of sight from the top, or the back of the fish, is its mouth. And the mouth is rather large and has sharp teeth.

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Fastened to the back of the skate is a long, slender tail, like that of a rat, only larger, and between the tail and the round, flat body on the under side, are two things that really look like legs. Perhaps the skate may use them to walk around on the bottom of the ocean, as a horseshoe crab uses his legs for walking. But a skate can also swim, and in that way it comes up off the bottom, and often bites on the hooks of fishermen who do not at all want to catch such an unpleasant fish.

The skate swims, using the things like legs as a fish uses its fins, and sometimes, when landed on the shore, the fish really seems to be standing up on these legs, so Laddie was not so far wrong. On each side of the skate were thin, flat fins, which were something like wings. The skate had a humpy head and big, bulging eyes.

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"What's a skate for?" asked Russ, as he looked at the queer creature.

"And who gave it that name?" Laddie wanted to know.

"My! You two are getting as bad at asking questions as Violet!" laughed Mr. Bunker. "Well, I'll answer as well as I can. I don't know how the fish came to be called a skate unless it sort of skates around on the bottom of the ocean. Though when a skate is dead its tail curls up and around like the old-fashioned skates once used in Holland. It may get its name from that."

"Are they good to eat?" asked Russ.

"Some kinds are said to be," answered Cousin Tom, "though I never tasted one myself. I have heard of fishermen eating certain parts of the skates caught along here. But I never saw any one do it. Whenever I catch a skate I throw it back into the water. I can't see that they are good for anything."

The skate which Laddie and Russ were watching, and which seemed to have been cast up on the beach by the waves, was flopping about, now and then raising itself on its queer legs, until, finally, the tide came up higher and washed it out into the sea again.

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"I guess it's glad to get back in the ocean," said Russ.

"Yes," agreed his brother. "I'd have put it back in only I was afraid it might bite me."

"No, I don't believe it would," said Cousin Tom.

"There's heaps of funny things down at the seashore," said Laddie, as he watched to see if the skate would swim back, but it did not.

"Lots of funny things," agreed Russ.

"The shore is a good place to make riddles," went on Laddie.

"And it's a bad place to lose things," said his brother. "Look how Rose lost her locket."

"Yes, that was too bad," said Daddy Bunker. "I'm afraid we shall never find that now. There is so much sand here."

"We've dug holes and looked all over," said Russ, "but we can't find it."

"I wish we could find that box we had up on shore and that the waves came up and washed away," remarked Laddie. "Don't you 'member the box you were going to open, Daddy?"

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"Yes, I remember," answered Mr. Bunker. "I would like to know what was in that. But I don't suppose we ever shall."

"And I guess we'll never get back Vi's doll that I lost," said Russ. "But when I get back home I'm going to save up and buy her another."

"That will be a nice thing to do," replied Mr. Bunker. "Of course Violet has, in a way, forgotten about her doll, but I'm sure she would like to have you get her another."

"And I will!" exclaimed Russ. He did not even dream how soon he was to do this.

"Well," said Cousin Tom, after the skate had been washed out to sea, "I don't believe, Daddy Bunker, that we are going to have any luck fishing to-day. I think we might as well go back to the bungalow and see what they have to eat."

"I hope they didn't count on us bringing some fish," said the father of the six little Bunkers with a laugh. "If they did we'll all go hungry."

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"I don't want to be hungry," murmured Laddie, with a queer look at his father.

"Oh, he's only joking," whispered Russ. "I can tell by the way he laughs around his eyes."

"Yes, I'm only joking," said Laddie's father. "I guess Cousin Ruth will have plenty to eat. We'll walk along the beach a little way and then go home."

The two men reeled in their fish lines and, with the two little boys, strolled along the sand. Laddie and Russ were wondering what they could do to have some fun, and they were thinking of different things when Cousin Tom, who was a little way ahead, cried:

"Look! Isn't that a box being washed up on the beach?"

They all looked and saw something white and square being rolled over and over in the waves nearest the shore. It was quite a distance ahead of them, but Cousin Tom, handing his pole and basket to Daddy Bunker, ran and, wading into the surf with his high rubber boots, caught hold of the box.

"It shan't get away from us this time!" he called to Daddy Bunker, Russ and Laddie as they hastened toward him. "I'll keep it safe this time, all right!" and he carried the box well up among the sand dunes, or little hills, well out of reach of the highest tide.

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"Why do you say 'this time'?" asked Daddy Bunker. "Did you ever pull in this box before?"

"Indeed I did, or, rather, one of us did. This is the same box the children found once before; don't you remember? This time we'll find out what is in this box for sure. And we won't wait for a hammer, either. I'll use a piece of driftwood."

As Daddy Bunker and the two boys gathered around the box they saw that indeed it was the same one that had been cast up before by the waves.

What could be in it?

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CHAPTER XXII

THE UPSET BOAT

Cousin Tom had said he was not going to wait for a hammer to open the box, and he was as good as his word. When he had carried the box well up on the beach, out of reach of even the highest waves, he looked about for a piece of driftwood that he could use in knocking the cover off the case. And while he was thus searching, Daddy Bunker, Russ and Laddie examined the box.

"It looks just like the same one," said Russ.

"I'm positive it is," added his father. "I remember the size and shape of the other box and this is just the same. And there were two funny marks in the wood on top, and this has the same marks."

"There was a piece of paper tacked on the other box," said Russ. "That isn't here now."

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"That was soaked off in the water and washed away," said his father. "But you can still see the four tacks, one for each corner of the card. I suppose that had some address on but it was washed off by the salt water."

"What made the box come back to us?" asked Laddie, as Cousin Tom came walking along with a heavy stick he was going to use as a hammer to open the case.

"Well, no one knows what the sea is going to do," replied Daddy Bunker. "It washes up queer things and takes them away again. I suppose this has been floating around for some time—ever since it was washed away from us the time we thought we so surely had it."

"It may have been washed up on the beach in some lonely spot a little while after we last saw it," said Cousin Tom. "And it may have been there ever since until the last high tide, when it was washed away again and then I happened to spy it just now. But it will not get away again until we open it."

Using the piece of heavy driftwood he had picked up as a hammer, Cousin Tom soon broke the top of the box that had drifted ashore. He pulled back the splintered pieces and eagerly they all looked inside. The box was about two feet long and the same in height and width, and all Laddie and Russ could see at first was what seemed to be some heavy paper.

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**COUSIN TOM BROKE
OPEN THE BOX WITH A
PIECE OF DRIFTWOOD**
*Six Little Bunkers at
Cousin Tom's.—Page 210*

"Is that all that's in it?" cried Russ.

"Wait and see," advised his father. "There may be something under the paper."

Cousin Tom put his hand in and raised the covering. Some bright colors were seen and then what appeared to be a lot of pieces of cloth.

"A lot of dresses!" exclaimed Russ in disappointed tones. "That's all!"

"But here is something inside the dresses," said his father with a smile.

"Something in the dresses?"

"Yes. Unless I am very much mistaken there are Japanese dolls in this box—maybe half a dozen of them—and it is their gaily colored dresses which you see. Isn't that it, Cousin Tom?"

"You are right, Daddy Bunker! There they are! Japanese dolls!" and Cousin Tom pulled out one about two feet long and held it up in front of the two boys.

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"Dolls!" gasped Laddie.

"Japanese dolls!" added his brother.

"A little spoiled by the salt water, but still pretty good," said Cousin Tom, as he pulled another doll out of the box. "They were wrapped in oiled silk and the box is lined with a sort of water-proof cloth, so they didn't get as wet as they might otherwise. Some of the dresses are a bit stained, and I see that the black-haired wig of one of the dolls has melted off. But we can glue that on again. Well, that's quite a find—six nice, large Japanese dolls," laughed Cousin Tom.

"They aren't any good for us!" exclaimed Russ. "I was thinking maybe there'd be a toy steam engine in the box."

"If there had been it would have been spoiled by the sea water," said Cousin Tom with a smile.

"Dolls are about the best thing that could be in the box. They are light and wouldn't sink. And, being so well wrapped up, they didn't get very wet. We can take them home to Rose and Mun Bun and Margy and——"

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"Oh, there'll be one for Violet!" cried Russ. "Now I can give her back a doll for the one that sunk when my boat upset! Save the nicest doll for Violet!"

"Yes, I think that would be no more than fair," said Daddy Bunker. "The sea took Violet's doll and the sea gives her back another. How many dolls did you say there were, Cousin Tom?"

"Six. One for each of the six little Bunkers."

"Pooh! I don't want a doll!" exclaimed Russ. "I'm too big!"

"So'm I!" added Laddie.

"Very well. And as there are six dolls and only four who will want them, that will leave two over, so if Rose or Violet or Mun Bun loses a doll we'll have two extra ones. Only I hope they won't lose anything more while we're here," and Daddy Bunker smiled.

"Where do you suppose the dolls came from?" asked Russ as Cousin Tom packed them back in the box so the case could be carried to the bungalow.

"It's hard to say," was the answer. "As the tag on the box has been washed off we don't know to whom the dolls belonged. They may have gotten in a load of refuse from New York by mistake, from one of the big stores, and been dumped into the sea, or they may have been lost off some vessel in a storm. Or there may even have been a wreck."

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"Anyhow the box of dolls, well wrapped up from the water, has been floating around for some time, I should say. It came to us once but we lost it. Then we had another chance at it and we didn't lose it. Now we'll take the dolls home and see what Rose, Violet and the others have to say about them."

It was a jolly home-going, even though no fish had been caught. Long before they were at the bungalow but within sight of it Laddie and Russ cried:

"Look what we got!"

"We found the box again!"

Rose, Violet, Margy and Mun Bun came running out to see what it all meant.

"Did you find my gold locket?" asked Rose eagerly.

"No, my dear, we didn't find that," her father answered.

"Did you get my doll back from the bottom of the ocean?" Violet called.

"Well, we pretty nearly did," answered Russ. "Anyhow, we got you one I guess maybe you'll like as well."

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Cousin Tom gave Russ one of the Japanese dolls from the box and, with it in his arms, Russ ran toward his little sister.

"Look! Here it is!" he cried.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" gasped Violet, hardly able to believe her eyes. "Oh, what a lovely, lovely doll!"

A disappointed look came over the face of Rose, but it changed to one of joy when her father took out another doll and gave it to her. Then Mun Bun set up a cry:

"I want one!"

"So do I!" echoed Margy.

"There is one for each of you," laughed Cousin Tom, as he took out two more dolls.

"And two left over!" added Russ.

"Oh, where did you get them?" asked Rose. "Oh, I just love mine!" and she hugged it to her closely.

"My doll's wet!" exclaimed Mun Bun, as he saw the damp dress on his plaything.

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"Mine is, too," said Violet. "But all dolls have to be wet when they come out of the ocean, don't they, Daddy?"

"Yes, I suppose so. And that is where these dolls came from—right out of the ocean."

Then the children were told how the queer box had been found again floating near the beach and how Cousin Tom had waded out in his high rubber boots and brought it to shore.

Mother Bunker and Cousin Ruth came out to see the find and they, too, thought the dolls were wonderful.

"And we saw a fish that could walk," added Laddie when the dolls had been looked at again

and again.

Then he and Russ told about the queer-looking skate.

The doll with the wig of black hair that had been soaked off was laid aside to be mended, as was the one the dress of which was badly stained by sea water. But the other dolls were almost as good as new. And, in fact, Rose and Violet would rather have had them than new dolls right out of the store, because there was such a queer story connected with them.

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"I wonder if they came right from Japan," mused Rose as she made believe put her doll to sleep.

"We can pretend so, anyhow," said Violet. "I'm not going to cry about my other doll that was drowned now, 'cause I got this one. She's the nicest one I ever had."

"Mine, too," added Rose.

I might say that the six little Bunkers never found out where the dolls came from. But most likely they had fallen off some ship and the oiled silk and other wrappings kept them in good shape until the box was washed up on the beach the second time.

"Well, if the seashore is a bad place to lose things on account of so much sand it is also a good place to find things," said Mother Bunker that night when the six little Bunkers had been put to bed and the dolls were also "asleep."

"I'm glad you like it here," said Cousin Ruth. "But I am sorry that Rose lost her locket."

"Well, it couldn't be helped," said the little girl's mother. "I did have hopes that we would find it soon after she lost it. But now I have given up."

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"Yes," agreed her husband. "The locket is gone forever."

But I have still a secret to tell you about that.

A few days after the finding of the dolls all six of the little Bunkers were playing down on the beach. Four of them had the Japanese dolls, but Russ and Laddie did not.

Laddie was digging a hole in the sand and trying to think of a new riddle, and Violet had just finished asking Russ a lot of questions when, all of a sudden, George Carr, the little boy whose dog had been bitten by the Sallie Growler, came running around a group of sand dunes, crying:

"Oh, the boat's upset! The boat's upset, and all the men are spilled out! And the fish, too! Come and see the upset boat!"

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CHAPTER XXIII

THE SAND FORT

"What do you mean—the boat upset?" asked Russ, looking up from the sand fort he was making on the beach. "Do you mean one of your toy boats and is it make-believe men that are spilled out?"

"No, I mean real ones!" exclaimed George. "It's one of the fishing boats, and it was just coming in from having been out to the nets. It was full of fish and they're all over, and you can pick up a lot of 'em and they're good to eat. And maybe one of the men is drowned. Anyhow, there's a lot of 'em in the water. Come on and look!"

"Where is it?" asked Laddie.

"Right down the beach!" and George pointed. "'Tisn't far."

"Come on, Mun Bun and Margy!" called Rose as she saw Russ and Laddie start down the beach with George and his dog. "We'll go and see what it is. Vi, you take Mun Bun's hand and I'll look after Margy."

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"Shall we leave our dolls here?" asked Vi.

"Yes. There's nobody here now and we can go faster if we don't carry them," answered Rose. "Here, Mun Bun and Margy, leave your dolls with Vi's and mine. They'll be all right."

Rose laid her doll down on the sand and the others did the same, so that there were four Japanese dolls in a row.

"Won't the waves come up and get 'em?" asked Margy as she looked back on the dolls.

"No, the waves don't come up as high as the place where we left them," said Rose, who had taken care to put the dolls to "sleep" well above what is called "high-water mark," that is, the highest place on the beach where the tide ever comes.

"Come on! Hurry if you want to see the men from the upset boat!" George called back to Rose

and the others.

"Let's wait for 'em," proposed Laddie. "Maybe they'll be lonesome. I'm going to wait."

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"Well, we'll all wait," said George, who was a kind-hearted boy. "If you can't see the men swim out you can see the lot of fish that went overboard."

As the children came out from behind the little hills of sand they saw, down on the beach, a crowd of men and boys. And out in the surf and the waves, which were high and rough, was a large white boat, turned bottom up, and about it were men swimming.

"Oh, will they drown?" asked Russ, much excited.

"No, I guess not," answered George. "They're fishermen and they 'most all can swim. Anyhow the water isn't very deep where they are. They're trying to get their boat right side up so they can pull it up on the beach."

"What made 'em upset?" asked Laddie.

"Rough water. There's going to be a storm and the ocean gets rough just before that," George explained.

The children watched the men swimming about the overturned boat, and noticed that the water all about them was filled with floating, dead fish.

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"Did the men kill the fish when they upset?" asked Violet.

"No, the men got the fish out of their nets," explained George, who had been at the seashore every summer that he could remember. "There are the nets out where you see those poles," and he pointed to a place about a half mile off shore. "The men go out there in a big motor-boat," he went on, "and pull up the net. They empty the fish into the bottom of the boat and then they come ashore. They put the fish in barrels with a lot of ice and send them to New York.

"But sometimes when the boat tries to come up on the beach with the men and a load of fish in it the waves in the surf are so big that the boat upsets. That's what this one did. I was watching it and I saw it. Then I came to tell you, 'cause I saw you playing on the sand."

"I'm glad you did," said Russ. "I'm sorry the men got upset, but I like to see 'em."

"So am I. Will they lose all their fish?" demanded Laddie.

"Most of 'em," said George. "They can scoop up some in nets, I guess, but a lot that wasn't quite dead swam away and the waves took the others out to sea. The fish hawks will get 'em and lots of boys and men are taking fish home. The fishermen can't save 'em all and when a boat upsets anybody that wants to, keeps the fish."

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After hard work the men who had been tossed into the water when the boat went over managed to get it right side up again. Then a rope was made fast to it and horses on shore, pulling on the cable, hauled the boat up out of reach of the waves, where it would stay until it was time to make another trip to the nets.

"Could we take some of the fish?" asked Russ of George.

"Oh, yes, as many as you like," said his friend. "The fishermen can never pick them all up."

So the six little Bunkers each picked up a fish and took it home to Cousin Ruth. They were nice and fresh and she cooked them for dinner.

"Well, you youngsters had better luck than Cousin Tom and I had," said Daddy Bunker with a laugh as he saw what Russ and the others had picked up. "I guess, after this, we'll take you fishing with us."

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The promise of the storm brought by the big waves that upset the fishing-boat, came true. That night the wind began to rise and to blow with a howling and mournful sound about the bungalow. But inside it was cosy and light.

In the morning, when the children awakened, it was raining hard, the drops dashing against the windows as though they wanted to break the glass and get inside.

"Is the sea very rough now, Daddy?" asked Russ after breakfast.

"Yes, I think it is," was the answer. "Would you like to see it?"

Russ thought he would, and Laddie wanted to go also, but his mother said he was too small to go out in the storm.

"It is a bad storm," said Cousin Tom. "I saw a fisherman as I was coming back from the village this morning early and he said he never felt a worse blow. The sea is very high."

Daddy Bunker and Cousin Tom put on "oilskins," that is, suits of cloth covered with a sort of yellow rubber, through which the water could not come.

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A small suit with a hat of the same kind, called a "sou'wester," was found for Russ, and then the three started down for the beach. It was hard work walking against the wind, which came out of the northeast, and the rain stung Russ in the face so that he had to walk with his head down

most of the time and let his father and Cousin Tom lead him.

"Oh, what big waves!" cried Russ as he got within sight of the beach. And indeed the surf was very high. The tide was in and this, with the force of the wind, sent the big billows crashing up on the beach with a noise like thunder.

"I guess no fishermen could go out in that, could they, Daddy?" asked the little boy.

"No, indeed, Son! This weather is bad for the fishermen and all who are at sea," said Mr. Bunker.

They remained looking at the heavy waves for some time and then went back to the house. Russ was glad to be indoors again, away from the blow and noise of the storm. [Pg 225]

"Do you often have such blows here?" asked Mother Bunker of Cousin Ruth.

"Well, I haven't been here, at this beach, very long, but almost always toward the end of August and the beginning of September there are hard storms at the shore."

It rained so hard that the six little Bunkers could not go out to play and Cousin Ruth and their mother had to make some amusement for them in the bungalow.

"Have you ever been up in the attic?" asked Cousin Ruth.

"No!" cried the six little Bunkers.

"Well, you may play up there," said Cousin Ruth. "It isn't very big, but you can pretend it is a playhouse and do as you please."

With shouts of joy the children hurried up to the attic. Indeed it was a small place. But the six little Bunkers liked it. There were so many little holes into which they could crawl away and hide.

The four who liked to play with dolls brought up their Japanese toys, and Russ and Laddie found some of their playthings, so they had lots of fun in the bungalow attic. Cousin Ruth gave them something to eat and they played they were shipwrecked sailors part of the time. With the wind howling outside and the rain beating down on the roof, it was very easy to pretend this. [Pg 226]

The storm lasted three days, and toward the end the grown folks in Cousin Tom's bungalow began to wish it would stop, not only because they were tired of the wind and rain, but because the children were fretting to be out.

At last the wind died down, the rain ceased and the sun shone. Out rushed the six little Bunkers with gladsome shouts. Laddie and Russ had some large toy shovels which their mother had bought them.

"What are you going to do?" Rose asked her two older brothers as she saw them hurrying down to the beach when the sun was out.

"We're going to make a sand fort and have a battle," answered Russ. "The sand will pack fine now 'cause it's so wet. We're going to make a big sand fort."

And he and Laddie began this play. Something very strange was to come from it, too. [Pg 227]

CHAPTER XXIV

A MYSTERIOUS ENEMY

"Here's a good place to make the fort," said Russ as he and Laddie reached the beach not far from Cousin Tom's bungalow and looked about them. "We'll build the fort right here, Laddie, near this hill of sand."

"What's the hill for?"

"That's where we can put our flag. They always put a flag on a hill where everybody can see it."

"But we haven't a flag. Where are we going to get one?"

"Say, you ask almost as many questions as Vi," exclaimed Russ. "We'll *make* a flag!"

"How?"

"Out of a handkerchief. You've a handkerchief and so have I. One is enough for both of us and we can take the other and make a flag of it." [Pg 228]

"But that'll be a white flag, Russ, and soldiers don't ever have a white flag lessen they give up and surrender. We didn't surrender, 'cause we haven't even got our fort built. We don't want a white flag."

"Oh, well, I didn't mean to have a white flag. That's just the start. We'll take a white handkerchief for a flag and we can make it red and blue."

"How?" Laddie certainly was asking questions.

"Well, Cousin Tom has some red and blue pencils. I saw 'em on his desk the other night. He marks his papers with 'em. You go and ask Cousin Ruth if we can't take a red and a blue pencil and then I'll show you how to make a red, white and blue flag out of a handkerchief."

"You won't make the fort till I come back, will you?"

"No, I'll only start it. Now you go and get the pencils."

Laddie ran back to the bungalow and Cousin Ruth let him have what he wanted. He promised not to lose the pencils, and soon he was helping Russ mark red stripes and blue stars on Laddie's white handkerchief. They did make something that looked like our flag, and then, finding a long piece of driftwood to use as a flag-pole they planted it on top of the hill. [Pg 229]

Making a fort in the damp sand at the seashore is very easy. It is even easier than making one of snow, for you don't have to wait for the snow to fall and often after it has snowed the flakes are so cold and dry that they will not pack and hold together. But you can always find damp sand at the seashore. Even though it is dry on top if you dig down a little way you will find it moist. Now, on account of the rain, the sand was wet all over and was just fine for making forts.

Russ and Laddie had some toy shovels their mother had bought for them. The shovels had long handles and were larger than the kind children usually play with at the shore, so the boys could dig faster with them.

"How do you make a fort?" asked Laddie. [Pg 230]

"Well," explained Russ, "you dig a sort of hole and you pile the sand up in front of you in a sort of half ring and then you can lie down behind it and if anybody throws bullets at you they won't hit you."

"Do you have a roof to your fort?"

"No! Course forts don't ever have a roof."

"Then you get wet when it rains."

"Yes, but a soldier doesn't ever mind rain. All he minds is bullets, and they can't hit him in the fort."

"Supposin' they come over the top where there isn't a roof?"

"I don't guess they'll come that way," said Russ. "Anyhow, you mustn't throw any that way."

"Oh! am I going to throw the bullets?"

"Yes," Russ replied, "We'll take turns being in the fort. After we get it made I'll be captain of it and you must come up and try to take it away. You must shoot bullets at me."

"Real ones?"

"No, course not! Make 'em of paper. Then they won't hurt. After a while I'll take down the flag—that means I surrender—and you can be in the fort and I'll fire bullets at you." [Pg 231]

"That'll be fun!" exclaimed Laddie.

"Lots of fun!" agreed Russ.

So they dug in the sand with their shovels, piling it up in front of them in a long ridge shaped like a half circle. The ridge of sand which was to be the outer wall of the fort was in front of the hill over which floated the red, white and blue handkerchief flag. Between the hill and the outer wall of the fort was a hole which was made as Laddie and Russ tossed out the sand.

"I'll sit down in this hole," Russ explained, "and then it will be all the harder for you to hit me with the paper bullets."

The boys fairly made the sand fly as they dug with their shovels, and soon they had quite a high ridge of it half way around the little hill with the flag on top. There was also quite a hole for Russ to stand in and throw paper bullets back at Laddie.

"Now I guess we can have the battle," said Russ. "You get a lot of paper, Laddie, and roll it up into bullets." [Pg 232]

"And I'll make some big ones!" exclaimed the little fellow.

"We can call the big bullets cannon balls," said Russ, and Laddie agreed to this. "I'll help you make the bullets," Russ offered.

There were plenty of old papers at the bungalow, and soon Russ and Laddie were tearing them up on the beach near their fort and wadding and rolling them up into "bullets" and "cannon balls."

"I guess we have enough," said Russ at last. "Come on now, we'll have a battle."

"Are Rose and Vi going to play?" asked Laddie.

"Nope! Girls never can be in a battle. They can be Red Cross nurses if they want to. But we won't call 'em until after the fight. They'd only holler like anything."

Rose and Violet were up in the bungalow playing jackstones, while Margy and Mun Bun had gone for a walk with their mother. So Russ and Laddie had the beach to themselves to play on.

Russ got inside the fort and crouched down in the hole he had dug. Laddie took up his position not far away, a little distance down the beach, having with him a pile of paper wads that he was to throw at his brother.

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"Are you ready?" asked Laddie.

"All ready!" answered Russ. "Go ahead and fire!"

"Bang! Bang!" shouted Laddie, making believe he was shooting off a gun. The boys often played this game so they knew just how to do it. "Bang! Bang!"

Then Laddie began throwing large and small wads of paper at the sand fort behind which crouched Russ. And Russ threw wads of paper at his smaller brother.

The sand walls of the fort kept Russ from being "shot" in the battle. Laddie's "bullets" and "cannon balls" hit the sand walls of the fort more often than they struck his brother and Russ only laughed at them, at the same time he was pelting Laddie.

"Oh, say! this is no fun," complained the smaller boy after a bit. "I'm getting hit all the while and you don't get any at all."

"I do so! I got hit twice!"

"Well, that was when I threw cannon balls up in the air and they came down on your head like rain."

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"Well, you shoot me a few more times and then I'll let you come into the fort," agreed Russ. "I'll pull down the flag and surrender. Go on, shoot me some more!"

So Laddie got together more paper "bullets" and "cannon balls" and threw them at his brother. But hardly any of them hit Russ. The fort was a good protection and with the flag floating from the top of the hill made a fine place for him to stay.

"This is the last time I'm going to shoot!" cried Laddie, and he took good aim with a large wad of paper which he called a "double cannon ball."

He threw it at Russ and then, from some point back of the fort another "cannon ball" came sailing into it, flying off and hitting Laddie's brother.

"Ouch! Quit that!" cried Russ. "'Tisn't fair throwing sand! A lot of it went down my neck."

"I didn't throw sand!" said Laddie.

"Yes, you did, too! That last cannon ball you threw had a lot of sand wrapped up in it."

"No, I didn't," cried Laddie.

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"Don't you think I know!" shouted Russ, scrambling up out of the hole behind his fort. "Can't I feel it?"

Just then another paper "cannon ball" sailed into the fort from a sand hill back of it and it fell at the feet of Russ and burst, letting out a pile of sand.

"There!" cried Russ. "What'd I tell you?"

"But I didn't throw it!" said Laddie. "You looked right at me and I didn't throw it."

"No, you didn't," admitted Russ. "It came from in back of me. I wonder who's throwing sand cannon balls at us."

And then came another which hit Laddie, sending a shower of the gritty grains down his back.

"Hi! Quit that!" cried Russ. He and Laddie looked all around, but they could see no one. A mysterious enemy was shooting at them.

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CHAPTER XXV

THE TREASURE

Once more there came sailing through the air a paper "cannon ball." It fell on the ground between Laddie and Russ and burst open, a lot of dry, soft sand spilling out.

"There!" cried Laddie. "See! I didn't throw 'em!"

"No, I don't guess you did," admitted Russ. "But who did?"

Just then a jolly laugh sounded, and out from behind a ridge of sand—one of the dunes made by the wind—came George Carr.

"Did I scare you?" asked George.

"A—a little," admitted Russ, wiggling to get rid of the sand down his back.

"We didn't know who it was," said Laddie. And he, too, squirmed about, for there was sand inside his blouse.

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"I thought you wouldn't," said George, laughing again. "I saw you playing soldiers and I thought I'd make believe I was another enemy coming up behind. You didn't make any fort in back of you," he said to Russ, "and so I could easily fire at you."

"But we don't put sand in our paper bullets," complained Laddie.

"Don't you?" asked George. "Then I'm sorry I did. I hope I didn't hurt you, or get any in your eyes."

"No," answered Russ, sort of shaking himself to let the sand sift down through the legs of his knickerbockers. "But it tickles a lot."

"Well, I won't throw any more," promised George. "But lots of times we play soldier down on the beach and we throw sand bullets. Only we don't ever throw 'em at each others' eyes. Sand in your eyes hurts like anything."

"I know it does," agreed Russ. "Mun Bun got some in his the other day and he cried a lot."

"Well, come on, let's play soldier some more," suggested George. "I'll be on Laddie's side. You go in the fort, Russ, and we'll stand against you. Two to one is fair when the one is inside a fort."

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"And won't you throw any more sand bullets or cannon balls?"

"No, only paper ones."

"All right, then I'll play."

Russ went back in his fort, and Laddie and George, outside the wall of sand, began pelting him with wads of paper. But now the battle went differently. The attacking force could shoot twice as many paper bullets and balls as could Russ and they soon ran up on him, pelting him so that he had to put his hands over his head.

"All right—I surrender! I give up!" he cried.

"Wait till I haul down the flag!" laughed George.

Then he took down the red and blue penciled handkerchief and he and Laddie took possession of the fort. Russ was beaten, but he did not mind, for it was all in fun. Then he took a turn outside the fort, with Laddie and George inside. However, as this was two against one, Russ could not win, though the three boys had jolly times.

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They were pelting away at one another, using paper "bullets" and "cannon balls," shouting and laughing, when, as they became quiet for a moment, they heard a voice asking:

"What is all this?"

They looked up to see Mrs. Bunker with Mun Bun and Margy.

"How-do?" called George, grinning.

"Oh, we're having such fun!" cried Laddie. "We're soldiers and we got a fort, and we had a flag ___"

"It's made out of a handkerchief and red and blue pencils," added Russ.

"I want to play soldier!" exclaimed Mun Bun.

"No, it's too rough for you," explained Russ.

"I want to play, too!" insisted Margy.

"We're done playing fort and soldier," said Russ. "We'll play something else."

"Let's see who can dig the deepest hole," suggested George. "I'll go and get a shovel, and you have yours, Russ and Laddie. Let's see who can dig the deepest hole!"

The two older Bunker boys thought this would be fun, and George ran over to his cottage to get his shovel.

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"Can we play that game, Mother?" asked Margy.

"Yes, you and Mun Bun can do that," said Mrs. Bunker.

The warm sun was drying out the beach, and when George came back with his shovel he and Laddie and Russ began three holes in a row, each one trying to make his the deepest. Mun Bun and Margy, each of whom had a small shovel, also began to dig, though, of course, they could not

expect to dig as fast as the boys, nor make as deep holes.

"I'll sit on the sand and watch you," said Mrs. Bunker.

"Maybe we'll find a treasure," suggested Russ.

"What treasure?" asked George.

"Oh, before we came down here, when we were at our Aunt Jo's in Boston," Russ explained, "we knew a boy named Sammie Brown. His father dug up some treasure on a desert island once. We thought maybe we could dig up some here."

"But we didn't—not yet," added Laddie.

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"And I don't guess we ever will," said Russ. "Only we make believe, lots of times, that we're going to."

The three boys dug away and Mun Bun and Margy did the same, only more slowly. Then along came Rose and Violet.

"What are you doing?" Violet asked, getting in her question first, as usual.

"Digging holes," answered Russ.

"Seeing who can make the biggest," added George. "Mine's deeper than yours!" he said to Russ.

"Yes, but mine's going to be bigger. I'm going to make a hole big enough so I can stand down in it and dig. I'm going to make a regular well."

"I guess I will, too," decided George.

"So'll I," said Laddie.

"Well, if you come to water, don't fall in," advised Mrs. Bunker with a laugh.

"You go get a shovel and dig, too," called Russ to Rose.

"No, I don't want to," said his sister. "I'll watch you."

My, how the sand was flying on the beach now! Russ, Laddie and George were all digging as fast as they could with their shovels, each one trying to make the biggest hole. Mun Bun and Margy dug also, but, though they made a lot of sand fly, they did not always dig in the same place. Instead of keeping to one hole they made three or four. But they had just as much fun.

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Suddenly Laddie, who had made a hole in which he could stand, it being so deep that he was half hidden from sight in it, uttered a cry.

"What's the matter?" asked his mother. "Did you hurt yourself?"

"Did you dig up a Sallie Growler?" asked Vi.

"Maybe it's a crab," said Mun Bun, and he dropped his shovel and started for his mother.

"No, nothing like that," said Laddie. "Only—oh, goody—I guess I've found the treasure!" he shouted.

"Treasure!" cried Russ. "What do you mean?"

"I guess I've found some gold in my hole!" went on Laddie. "Come and look! It shines like anything!"

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Russ and George leaped out of the holes they were digging and ran toward Laddie. Mrs. Bunker got up and hurried down the beach. Mun Bun and Margy followed. Rose and Violet went too.

"Where is it?" asked Russ, stooping over the edge of his brother's hole. "Where's the treasure?"

"There," answered Laddie, pointing to something shining in the sand. It did glitter brightly and it was not buried very deeply, being near the top of the hole, but on the far edge, where Laddie had not done much digging.

"It is gold!" cried George. "Whoop! Maybe that boy you knew was right, and there is pirate's treasure here!"

Mrs. Bunker bent down and looked at what Laddie had uncovered. Then she took a stick and began carefully to dig around it.

"Here, take my shovel," offered Laddie.

"No, I don't want to scratch it, if it is what I think," said his mother. "I had better dig with the stick."

She went on scratching away the sand. As she did so the piece of shiny thing became larger. It sparkled more brightly in the sun.

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"Is it treasure?" asked Laddie eagerly. "Did I find some gold treasure?"

"Yes, I think you did, Son," said Mrs. Bunker. "It is gold and it is a treasure."

"Did the pirates hide it?" demanded Russ.

"No, I think not," said Mrs. Bunker with a smile. "I think Rose lost it."

"Rose lost it!" cried the two Bunker boys. "What?"

"Yes, it is her locket that she dropped when we first came here and never could find," went on Mrs. Bunker. "Laddie, you have found it. You have discovered the golden treasure—Rose's locket!"

Having dug away the sand in which it was imbedded, Mrs. Bunker lifted up a dangling gold chain to which was fastened the gold locket.

"Oh, it is mine!" cried Rose. "Oh, how glad I am to get it back again! Oh, Laddie, how glad I am!"

Her mother handed the little girl her long-lost locket. It was not a bit hurt from having been buried in the sand, for true gold does not tarnish in clean sand. And the ornament was as good as ever. Rose clasped it about her neck and looked very happy.

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"How did it get in my hole?" asked Laddie.

"It didn't," said his mother. "You happened to dig in just the place where Rose dropped her locket and you uncovered it. Or this may not have been the exact place where it fell. Perhaps the sands shifted and carried the locket with them. That is why we could not find it before. But now we have it back."

"It was like finding real treasure," said Russ.

"I wish we'd find some more," said George. "I'm going to dig a big hole."

But, though he scooped out more sand, he found no more gold, nor did Russ, though they found some pretty shells.

Daddy Bunker, Cousin Tom and Cousin Ruth came down to the beach to see what all the joyful laughter was about and they were told of the finding of the lost locket Rose had dropped in the sand.

"I never thought I'd get it back," she said, "but I did."

"And I never thought I'd get my doll back," said Vi, "and I didn't. But I got a nicer one out of the sea."

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"Well, that was very good luck," said Daddy Bunker. "For once digging in the sand had some results."

They all walked up to Cousin Tom's bungalow.

On the way Laddie seemed rather quiet.

"What's the matter?" asked his father. "Aren't you glad you found your sister's gold locket?"

"Oh, yes, very glad," answered Laddie. "Only I was trying to think up a riddle about it and I can't. But I have one about why is the ocean like a garden?"

"'Tisn't like a garden," declared Russ. "It's all water, the ocean is."

"It's like a garden in my riddle," insisted Laddie.

"Why?" his mother asked.

"The ocean is like a garden 'cause it's full of seaweed," answered Laddie.

"I don't think that's a very good riddle," remarked Russ.

"It wouldn't be a very good garden that had weeds in it," said Mr. Bunker with a laugh. "Anyhow we ought to be happy because Rose has her locket back."

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And they all were, I'm sure.

"What makes gold so bright?" asked Vi, as she saw the locket sparkling in the sun.

"Because it is polished," her mother answered.

"What makes it polished?" went on Vi.

"Oh, my dear, if you keep on asking questions I'll get in such a tangle that I'll never be able to find my way out," laughed her mother. "Come, we'll get ready to go crabbing this afternoon and that will keep you so busy you won't want to talk."

"We never came to any nicer place than this, did we?" asked Russ of Rose as they sat on the pier that afternoon catching crabs by the dozen.

"No, we never had any better fun than we've had here. I wonder where we'll go next."

"I don't know," answered Russ. "Home, maybe."

But the children did not stay at home very long, and if you want to hear more about their adventures I invite you to read the next book in this series. It will be called: "Six Little Bunkers at Grandpa Ford's," and in it is told all about what happened that winter and how the ghost—

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But there. I guess you'd better read the book.

"Daddy! Daddy! Come quick!" called Mun Bun, as he felt a tug at his line. "I got a terrible big crab!"

"Well, I should say you had!" exclaimed his father, as he caught it in the net. "It's a wonder it didn't pull you off the pier!"

The crab was a large one, the largest caught that day, and Mun Bun was very glad and happy. But he was no more glad than was Rose over her locket that had been lost and found.

And so we will leave them, the six little Bunkers, enjoying the last days of their visit at Cousin Tom's.

THE END

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[Pg 249]

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