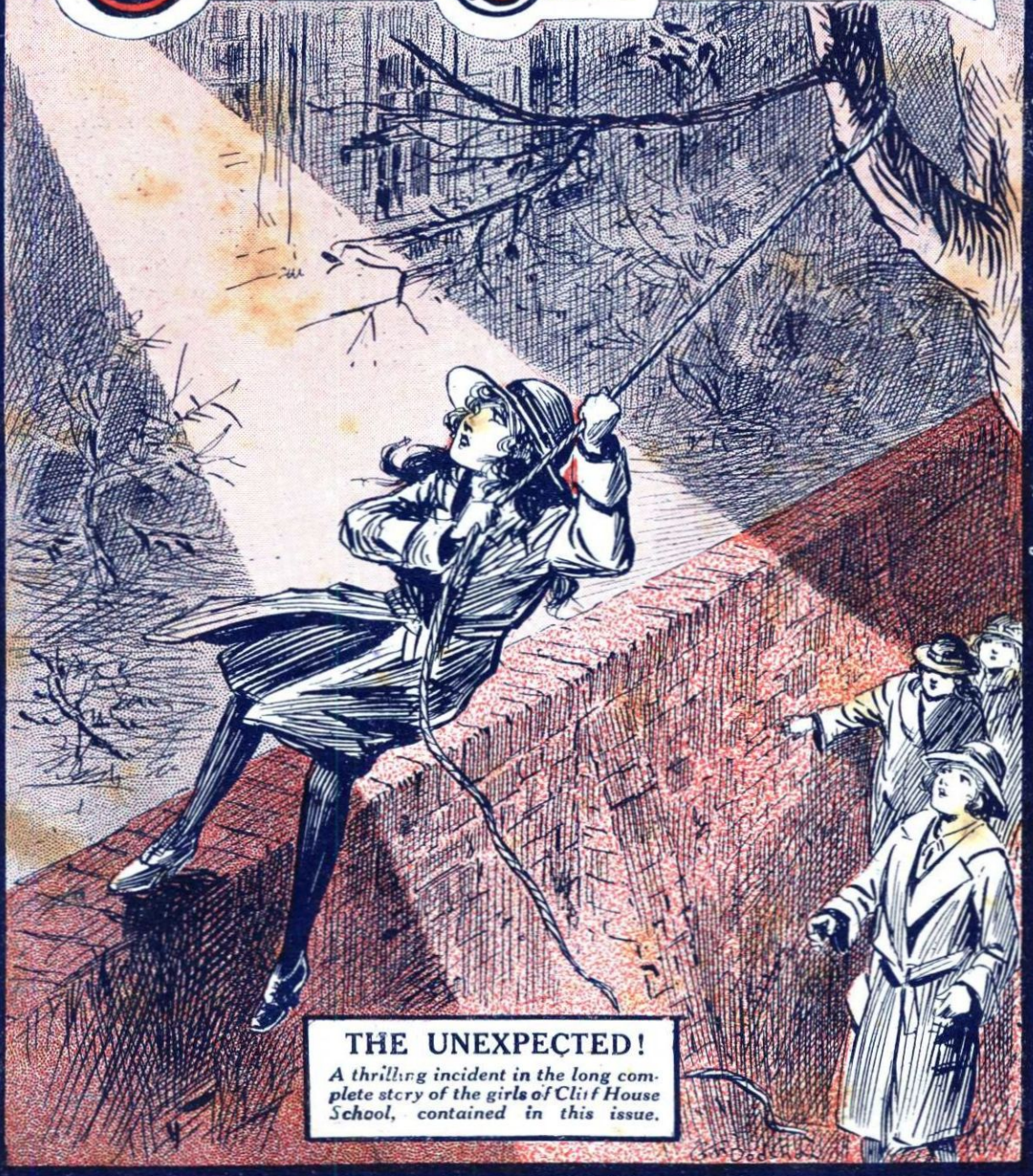


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Every 2nd Thursday



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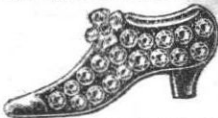
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OUR SPLENDID NEW SERIAL!



DOREEN the Circus Star.

By JOAN INGLESANT.

There, in the sunny land of South America, you will read how Fate decreed that Doreen Harcourt should once more become the Star Dancer of Barkomb's Famous Circus.

CHARACTERS YOU MUST KNOW!

DOREEN HARCOURT, a beautiful, fair-haired girl, formerly a dancer in Barkomb's Mammoth Circus. She, with her younger sister Margie, are on a visit to South America with
LADY GRAYLING, the wife of Sir Peter, their uncle and guardian.
NATALIA VORSKA, a spiteful, hot-tempered girl, formerly Doreen's rival at Barkomb's Mammoth Circus.
DON RAMON DA LOPEZ, a Spaniard, whom Sir Peter places in charge of his estate in South America.

Lady Grayling, Doreen, and little Margie go to sunny South America, but Sir Peter unfortunately is unable to accompany the party. Doreen has no time to enjoy the picturesque, romantic town of Rio de Sancta, and the Estancia Flores, her guardian's home, for she quickly has reason to believe that Don Ramon is working some scheme for his own interests.

Lady Grayling suddenly falls ill, and is taken away to hospital. Don Ramon practically orders Doreen to return to England, but Doreen, feeling strongly that he has an ulterior motive for wishing her out of the way, refuses.

Doreen shortly afterwards meets with Septimus Barkomb, her old master who treated her so well, lately arrived in South America with his circus. Natalia Vorska, whom he has re-engaged, has suddenly deserted the circus, leaving him without a star dancer. Doreen fills the breach, and proves a huge success.

After the show, "La Belle Doreen" sees Natalia Vorska with Juanita and Carmen, the two daughters of Don Ramon, and learns that they are plotting against her. She returns to the estancia, but is ordered off by Don Ramon, who tells her that Margie has run away. Doreen returns to the circus, and Margie is eventually found. While trying to discover Don Ramon's secret, Doreen enters the grounds of the estancia, and is imprisoned in the vaults of the house on the hill, by Natalia.

(Read on from here.)

Her Sister in Peril!

NATALIA determined that she must waste no time in finding Pedro, for there was much to be told—plans to be made.

Fate played peculiar tricks, she decided in her mind. It had been doubly fortunate that her father's brother, Pedro Vorska, was one of the citizens of Rio de Sancta, although she had not greatly taken to that itinerant musician when first she had met him.

Perhaps it was his crippled frame that had momentarily turned her against him, and his poverty; but she

had forgotten both those disqualifications when Pedro had hinted at the secret of the Estancia Flores, and had asked her help.

She thought she knew where to find him.

At this time, when others took their siesta, Pedro would be spending his largesse in the little Cafe de Torros, nigh to the bull ring of Rio de Sancta.

Natalia shivered slightly.

There was something about Pedro, the best-known beggar of Rio de Sancta, that caused apprehension in even her heart. She knew that he would look at her through his small and glittering eyes, and as he thought matters out he would play that everlasting tune of his, "Viva Carlotta Mia!"

Then he would smile strangely and lay down his violin, the only thing he really loved, and then he would speak in that rasping voice of his, which seemed so unmusical after his playing, which was excellent.

Natalia hurried on, and now, as she came to the corner of the Calle Agustina, she paused suddenly, for, floating out of the sultry air, was that eternal tune, and someone was singing to it. "Viva! Viva, Carlotta Carissima!"

The voice died away, and when Natalia paused by the little tables on the pavement of the Calle itself, there was only Pedro there. He was smiling down at his violin.

Natalia coughed, and then walked forward, and he looked up with narrowed, inquiring eyes.

"Well?"

Natalia did not speak as she took a seat near him. Her look was eloquent of success.

"There is a secret?"

Pedro—Pedro, the hunchback—bit out the words, and as he spoke a figure paused near to the cafe, and, pausing, started back at the sight of Natalia.

Natalia Vorska had not seen that newcomer. She had not noticed the pale and worried face of Margie—Margie, who had come out in search of Doreen—Doreen, her sister, whom she had missed from the circus.

Now Natalia was speaking—speaking hurriedly—and Pedro was listening.

"You were right. There is something they guard jealously," she said intensely. "What it is I have yet to find out. There was someone there—the girl—Doreen. Her they call La Belle Doreen."

Natalia laughed harshly, and fear came into Margie's eyes and terrible surprise as she heard her sister's name mentioned.

Margie's youthful brain was trying to piece things together—trying to understand why Natalia should be speaking of her sister and to this strange person with the black felt hat and the strange eyes that glowed beneath its battered brim.

"There—in the secret place—that girl?"

There was amazement in Pedro's tones.

"Yes," said Natalia harshly. "And I left her there. They will find her, and with her once out of the way our plans can be perfected more easily."

"You found the place easily?" inquired Pedro, as Margie, trembling in every limb, came closer to the palms that shielded her from the sight of the two.

"Yes," said Natalia. "It is entered to on the summit of the hill in Estancia—the hill where I first met La Belle Doreen. Now she is a prisoner!"

"A prisoner?"

Margie, as she breathed the two words, slipped back into the shadows of the Calle Agustina, and now, fearful and filled with wonderment, she stood irresolute.

"What was to be done? Doreen was a prisoner."

Should she go back and tell Barkomb, solicit his aid, or might that journey to the other end of Rio de Sancta preclude the possibility of rescuing Doreen in time?

Poor Margie's youthful mind was puzzled and troubled, and now her feet were carrying her away in the direction of the estancia, for she had deemed it wiser to find Doreen's prison, and was acting on the sudden decision of her thoughts.

Little did she know of any difficulties to overcome, nor did she care for them, for all her thoughts were centred on Doreen. Doreen was a prisoner. Something had to be done, and at once.

She knew her way into the estancia grounds, and her lithe legs were tireless as she ran through the scented groves and the flower-decked paths.

The thought of Doreen made her cautious. Doreen was in danger, so she must be careful—ever so careful—not to be discovered.



Doreen looked up in amazement and there she saw, wriggling like a snake as it slid through the opening, a rope! She was going to be rescued, after all.

Hanging in Space.

DOREEN was in danger! It seemed hours since she had heard Natalia's harsh and vibrant laugh die away in noisy echoes, and now, realising that it was useless to batter against the solid rock, she drew back and sought for some expedient by which she might be released from this terrifying prison.

The gloom of it appalled her!

Save for that glimmer of light, hundreds of feet above her, there was no illumination of any kind. And now, as the shadows of the place crowded upon her, she felt afraid. She felt that hands and mocking faces were near her, and as she covered back against the rock those mocking faces all took the semblance of Natalia's sneering visage.

"Go away! Go away!"

Doreen put out her hands as if to push those shadows away, and then, realising that they were but creatures of a distorted imagination, she felt ashamed at her show of fear.

From above there came a ribbon of light, and now, as the sun rose higher, the light, in its slow straying, fell on a gaunt and huge statue that reared itself on one side of the cave.

Awed and wondering, Doreen walked towards it.

She could see it but faintly; and yet, faint as the light was, she was able to distinguish the peculiar name that had been written in the solid rock, carved out, no doubt, centuries before.

"Hatmec!"

As she breathed the strange name she wondered in what age Hatmec had lived. Was he some strange idol that a cave people had worshipped generations before?

Then, as Doreen looked upward at the effigy in rock, the faint ray of light caught a pair of eyes that glittered into ruddy colour as the light found them.

Doreen's eyes lit up with amazement.

None but gigantic rubies could glitter so. She was sure that those two eyes were formed from precious stones, and rubies of such a size must be worth a fabulous sum.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 180.

Was this the secret of this underground place, or were there others, more important treasures to be found here?

The rock figure held and fascinated her. She seemed drawn towards those eyes, and, stepping forward, she tried to draw herself up to the great rock knees of the seated figure.

There was an impossible idea in her mind that she might climb up the figure to the light. But then she saw that the gigantic figure, large as it was, was really puny in the immensity of this wonderful cave.

How silent it was!

Interested some moments since, she had lost some of her fear; but now it returned, added to a thousandfold, and the shadows, lured on by the sun, were playing more tricks with her eyes.

The great statue looked green now, and those eyes—they held and compelled her—almost blinded her in their fascination.

A cry escaped her lips, but she beat the fear down, and stepped backward, and as she did so her foot settled on some round object, and, with a fearful cry, she fell to the rocky floor of the cave.

A scream escaped her, for she had thought that some human agency had laid her low; but some few seconds later she realised that she had fallen over some object on the floor of the cave, and now, with a pain in her ankle, she looked about her, or, rather, felt around for the thing that had made her stumble.

Suddenly her hands touched the object, and a cry of delight came to her lips.

"The lamp—the electric lamp!"

Natalia had evidently dropped it, and Doreen prayed that the lamp was not injured as, with frenzied hands, she picked it up and hugged it to her.

With careful fingers she felt the lamp's stem. Her hand had settled on the switch; she moved it, and the next moment—

A glare of light flooded into her face, momentarily blinding her.

Staggering to her feet, she swept the light's radiance about her, and cried out in joy at this wonderful aid that had been sent to her—an aid to defeat the terrors of the darkness, if nothing else.

Even it might be the agency of getting her from this frightening cave.

Doreen looked about her with excited interest, and as she did so she could not refrain from gasping with amazement.

For now the dome of the cave seemed alive with light as her electric torch picked it out in detail to reveal a glittering canopy of twinkling objects so closely placed together that they seemed like the stars of some wonderful and cloudless night.

The dome glowed as though to life. Like myriad glowworms those twinkling points looked down on her.

But how far from reach!

"What were they?" As Doreen asked herself the question she wondered if they were diamonds, wondered if this were some Aladdin's cave.

And then her heart sank.

To be so near such treasures, and to know that soon the time must come when Natalia, returning with her confederates, would bring her cruel plot to fruition, and bring punishment—prison, perhaps—to Doreen.

Doreen shuddered at the thought.

The best that might happen would be instant dismissal to England, for she knew that Don Ramon de Lopez would brook no interference in his plans.

But her fate might be worse than that—much worse! Now that she knew of what a wonderful place lay on Sir Peter Grayling's estate, they might cast her into some secret prison, and keep her guarded.

There were a hundred frightening possibilities that crowded into her distraught mind.

Doreen turned the light on to the rocky wall in which the door had been set, but she could see no traces of any door now.

How Natalia had found the secret of opening and closing the portal, she did not know.

As the light revealed the other features of the cave, Doreen saw that there were three openings from the cave, and into each of these she ran to see if freedom lay by any of them. But they were smaller caves; and other caves let off from them, and, fearful to get lost in a labyrinth of underground caves and passages, she returned to the big, vaulted chamber, and looked, with dejected eyes, at the monster statue which seemed to mock her.

Suddenly Doreen started back. She had fancied that she heard a sound, and in a second she had flashed out her light.

Gloomy as the cave had been prior to the discovery of the light, Doreen now found that it was even darker, and, as she looked upwards, to her absolute astonishment she noticed a shadow pass across the beams of sunlight, as though some figure had leant over the opening to the cavern.

The next moment she started back in surprise, for something rattled down on the rocky floor.

The next moment Doreen felt a smart pain on her arm. A stone—a small stone—had struck her!

She looked up in amazement, and, as she did so she gave a gasp of astonishment, for there, wriggling like a snake as it slid through the opening above, was a rope.

"Oh!"

Doreen clasped her hands and her fascinated eyes watched that rope as it sizzled down towards her.

Suddenly a way of escape had been presented to her, but by whom this rope had been lowered she did not know.

The thought came to her, even as she cried out, that this was some trick of Natalia's, some cruel plot; but, plot or no plot, she decided to accept the assistance of that fibre, which was now brushing against her.

And, even as in that sudden decision, she laid her supple hands on the rope,

there came a crash, and, turning, she saw, with frenzied eyes, that the rock door was opening.

Doreen did not wait for one second. She had caught sight of an angry and olive face, she had seen the hat of a peon, and in that sight she had nerved herself to urge every instinct that she possessed to climb that rope as never before had she ascended the high rope.

Like some nimble animal of the tree-tops, she swarmed above, and, unmindful of the shouts that came from below her, of the frantic manner in which the rope was swayed to and fro, she progressed upwards.

To her it seemed that never had she climbed so slowly; but, in reality, she had never been so speedy. It seemed, to those below her, those who wished to prevent her escape, that she was like lightning.

One man had raced back to the steps, thinking that he might have an outside chance of catching her at the top; but as that man mounted the steps, he knew that he was not so speedy as that wonder girl, who climbed a rope with as great an agility and speed as some marmoset.

Up and up, biting her lips in her excitement, Doreen raced to the daylight. The rope cut her hands; once she almost slipped; but sheer courage and dogged determination, kept her up, and as she saw that circle of light growing larger and larger as she came nearer to it, her heart leaped within her.

And now she was nearing the opening. Another moment and she had placed a frantic hand on the rim of the opening, and was drawing herself through.

One heave, and she was on terra firma, and turning for an instant to face the excited little girl who had found this strange hole in the summit of the hill, and had made speedy use of a rope she had discovered near at hand.

"Margie!"
Even as Doreen spoke the name, and, without waiting for explanations, she clutched at the little girl's hand, and, turning off at right angles, ran through the opened door of the stockade out into the grounds beyond.

Hardly caring for direction as long as she put distance between herself and the cave, she dived into the undergrowth, with Margie panting at her side.

And now behind them a band of thwarted peons were flooding up from the underground chamber, and were dashing in all directions in their wild attempt to stop the fugitive.

They had never expected to find a girl in that cave—they had been amazed to see the rope. They had not seen Margie, for she was so tiny, and had been careful to conceal herself.

What story could they bear back to Don Ramon? What lashes they would receive unless—

Shouting and crying out threats, they broke into the chase, and Doreen heard their wild cries echoing through the palm-trees behind her.

Frantically she dragged Margie along. The speed was too great for the little girl, so Doreen, picking her up, ran with her in her arms, and, coming to a small wood, paused.

The cries were coming nearer.
Doreen did not hesitate. Slipping Margie to the ground, she leapt towards a bough of a tree, caught it, and drew herself on to it.

The next moment she was lying prone on this, and her hands were extended to her sister.

Margie caught her sister's hands and was swung up into the leafy concealment. And hardly a moment too soon had this clever deception been accomplished, for the cries sounded clearly now,

and Doreen's frightened eyes saw the pursuers roar past the tree.

She waited until their cries died away in the distance; and then, slipping down from the tree, when she had first lowered Margie, she sped off at left angles and came into the dense undergrowth.

There she waited—waited as the day waned and the shadows came, and with the shadows, and clasping Margie's hand, she drew her sister out of the Estancia Flores grounds and into the safety of the lighted streets.

Both of them were tired and tattered after their journey through the undergrowth, but in the hearts of both of them there was the thrill of success at having won to safety.

"You were wonderful, Margie!" whispered Doreen as they hurried along.
"How did you know where I was imprisoned?"

In a few quick and breathless sentences Margie told her of the cafe incident, of the hunchback violinist, and of her fears.

The tale was barely told as the lights of Barkomb's circus came to view, and as they hurried into the enclosure it was evident that something out of the ordinary was happening.

Septimus Barkomb, his face a picture of mortification and anger, was standing surrounded by the members of the circus.

Lolling near at hand, and wearing the picturesque uniform of a gendarme of Rio de Sancta, was an olive-skinned officer, who smiled as he languidly rolled a cigarette.

"We've got to go, boys!"
As Barkomb spoke, Doreen forced her way through the press of performers, and came to his side.

"What is the matter? What has happened?"

Barkomb looked in surprise at the tattered clothes of Doreen and Margie, but he did not question them.

"Matter enough, Doreen, my child!" he said. "This land on which we are pitched belongs to Don Ramon de Lopez, and he has just given me orders to quit, and has sent the law, in the person of that police officer over there, to see that the law is enforced."

Tears had welled suddenly into Doreen's eyes. This was too much—too

much after all she had gone through in that gloomy cave!

"Oh, Mr. Barkomb!"
As Doreen spoke, the old circus proprietor shrugged his shoulders.
"Can't be helped!" he said resignedly.
"We must find another pitch."

Doreen clutched at his sleeve.
"No, no!" she cried. "You must stay here. You are doing so well. I am the cause of his withdrawing his permission. If Margie and I left Rio de Sancta it would be different; then you could stay. Oh, Mr. Barkomb!"

Barkomb laughed a great laugh, and, catching her hand, held it.

"Do you think I would let you go, Doreen?" he cried. "Not likely! Not for a thousand dagoes like Don Ramon da Lopez! Let him have his wretched piece of land back if he wishes to be vindictive. We'll find other quarters, and I'll have the British Consul on his track if he tries any monkey tricks with you or Margie. Let him endeavour to have you sent back to England! Just let him try, that's all!"

Old Barkomb looked proudly up at the flag that waved above the circus tent.

"That's the old Union Jack!" he cried.
"And if a dago like Don Ramon tries to flaunt it—my word!"

His fists were clenched, and now he swung round on his men.

"Dismantle the show, lads!" he cried.
"I'm off to find another pitch!"
And with that he swung out of the enclosure and hurried away.

He had been gone but a few minutes when three figures walked languidly towards the entrance to the circus, and with amused eyes watched the busy scene of dismantling.

They were Juanita, Natalia, and Carmen.

Slowly, and with studied insolence, Natalia strode into the enclosure, and Doreen, surprised to see the appearance of this girl, stepped from the crowd.

As she came face to face with Natalia, Natalia stepped back as though she was looking at a ghost.

The blood drained from her cheeks, and her hands trembled as they fell to her sides.

"You! You! And here!" she cried.



"Doreen!" cried Barkomb. "This land on which we are pitched belongs to Don Ramon de Lopez, and he has just sent this police officer to tell us to quit!"

Doreen smiled. "Yes, Natalia," she answered. "Where else should I be?" Natalia's colour returned, and her eyes flamed into fury.

"You have succeeded in outwitting me for the present," she cried, "But you won't do so for long, precious upstart! Wait until you are all hounded out of Rio de Sancta! Wait until you and your crowd are all outcasts! I shall have the laugh then!"

Doreen looked at Natalia in amazement, and slowly she realised that there was some grim suggestion of impending evil in Natalia's words.

A Dramatic Happening.

THE whole city has been turned against us, Doreen!"

Septimus Barkomb seated himself tiredly on the step of his caravan and looked into the anxious face of Doreen.

"I've been everywhere," he said sadly, "and they all put me off with either faked excuses or insincere apologies. One man was giving his land a rest, another intended sowing maize on his, yet another was going to set his out as a plantation. Why, there was no land that I saw that could grow a thing! Don Ramon has turned the landowners against us!"

Doreen's eyes were wells of feeling as she looked into his worried face.

"I am sorry!" she whispered. "And I feel that it is all my fault!"

He smiled wistfully. "Don't think that," he said softly. "These people can either be charming or treacherous. Don Ramon has played his cards well. Most of our money has gone on initial expenses, and if we fail now there will not be enough to get us by boat to Buenos Vistas, our next place of call."

Well did Doreen know how serious financial embarrassment was when touring in a strange country!

"Can I do nothing?" she asked.

Septimus Barkomb shook his head.

"There is nothing you can do," he answered. "If Lady Grayling had not

fallen ill, things might have been different. Her name carries weight here; but for how long it will carry weight I do not know. They tell me that Don Ramon is in the running for the Presidency, and when they change presidents here—well," he added, "things happen."

"You mean—"

Doreen looked anxiously into his face. "Don Ramon might sequester all Sir Peter Grayling's interests here," added Septimus Barkomb gloomily.

"But that would be theft!"

He laughed as Doreen spoke.

"They don't use that word in this country," he said, as slowly he walked into the caravan to be alone with his dismal thoughts.

Doreen looked about her and shivered. For the moment the whole circus was installed in a piece of swampy ground outside the city, and ramour had it that malaria and other tropic germs infested this humid spot.

Even a calamity worse than poverty might face the whole of the circus, for the authorities had only too readily consented to the circus coming here, and that fact was somewhat ominous.

Doreen clenched her little hands together, and, turning on her heel, hurried in the direction of the city.

It had suddenly come to her mind that Manuel Doria might help her.

He had told her that she could always find him at a certain hour in his little home in one of the small streets that ran off the Avenida Cathedral, and thither she hurried now.

An old woman with a sweet face opened to her knock, and as Doreen's voice echoed through the small dwelling, Manuel Doria himself came hurrying forward with his little daughter Pepita.

Pepita's large southern eyes were light with joy as she saw Doreen, and when Manuel Doria had told the child that Doreen had promised to come and see her, the little Pepita ran forward and flung herself impulsively into the arms of the circus star.

Murmuring words of welcome in her tuneful language, she clung to Doreen, and laughingly her father had to disengage her.

Doreen was cheered by the warmth of her welcome, and this emboldened her to tell Manuel Doria at once of the difficulties that Septimus Barkomb had met with.

Manuel Doria spread out his olive-skinned hands when the story had been told.

"What could you expect?" he said softly. "None knows better than myself how fearful Don Ramon is of your presence in the city. We are on the verge of big events here, and if they come off, Don Ramon will have nothing to fear from any action of his in the past that might have been dishonest."

He looked closely at Doreen.

"But," he added, "the presence of Lady Grayling here might dramatically alter the chances that he hopes for, and he is afraid of you—afraid of her."

The old man bent his head reverently. "I called at the hospital this morning," he said quietly. "They told me that you had been. I am indeed thankful that she is making progress."

He paused.

"If only Sir Peter could have come!" he added slowly. "Things might have been different then."

For half an hour Doreen and Manuel Doria tried to find some scheme whereby the circus might find a pitch. But no way seemed to present itself, and Doreen left with a sinking feeling in her heart.

It certainly seemed that the circus was threatened with disaster.

Turning out of the little Calle Maria, she came into the larger street of the Avenida Cathedral.

Here all was sunshine and gay people. Motors flashed by, and the jangle of electric tramway car bells reminded her of England.

Warm as the night was, the palm-lined road was cool, and Doreen smiled to herself as she thought how happy she and the others of the circus might have been if the wiles of Don Ramon had not been exerted against them.

She was roused from her momentary reverie by a loud cry of alarm and the noisy clanging of a tramway car bell.

Doreen looked up quickly, and what she saw sent the blood draining from her face.

In a flash she had taken in what was a truly terrifying scene.

Standing in the path of an oncoming tram, and so mesmerised by fear that she could not move, was a mantillad figure—the figure of a mere child.

She seemed fascinated by the approaching danger, rooted to the spot. But now a scream of terror came to her lips.

Hastily she toddled across on to the other line, and to Doreen's horror the child's sudden move only added to the prolonging of what appeared to be a terribly harrowing incident, for on this other line a tram was speeding, and the driver was making frantic efforts to pull it up.

Doreen had taken in all these things in a flash, for only a moment had passed since she had first seen the child's terrible danger.

Now, like a streak of light, she rushed across the tram lines, snatched the child up, and drew it out of danger as with a sickening clanging of bells the tram tore past.

Doreen cast an anxious glance about her. A carriage trotted past, and only just in time did she pull up to avoid being drawn beneath the horse's hoofs.

Then, holding the child to her, she ran across the road.

On the pavement at last, and with the sobbing child still in her arms.

Now people were clamouring about her. Someone shouted "Bravo!" It was taken up by other voices. Someone had recognised her, mentioned her name. There were murmurings in the crowd.

Doreen flushed, wishing to get away from the press, waiting for the child's governess or parents.

From whence had the child come?

Suddenly Doreen became conscious of a commotion on the fringe of the little crowd, and now someone was forcing his way through the press.

The next moment a tall and distinguished-looking man was at Doreen's side, and cries of wondering amazement came from the crowd as they saw him.

"El Presidentio Diaz!"

A youth in the background had cried the name, and it was taken up.

"Viva Diaz!"

From somewhere there came a discordant hoot. But Doreen did not hear this, for she was conscious of one overwhelming thing of importance. She was face to face with the president of this republic. Was this his child?

He soon answered that mental question.

"Eulalie!" he cried, as he clasped the child to him, took it from Doreen's arms.

"Eulalie! And safe!"

Then his dark eyes looked with deep thankfulness into Doreen's.

"How can I ever repay such a gallant action?" he said in English. "I know your face, and you are La Belle Doreen, and you have saved my child! There is nothing—"

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THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 180.

Doreen's heart was beating one hundred to the minute, and her face was flushed.

What a wonderful opportunity this presented! What a wonderful hope!

"I knew that you were English," he continued. "It was the action of your race to risk your life for another's. I must repay you, do something to commemorate the saving of my only child, my little Eulalie, who had strayed from our home on the Avenida!"

Now he had linked his arm through Doreen's, and was drawing her away from the crowd which was being kept back by some officious police, who had put in a sudden appearance, hearing of the president's presence in the broad avenue that led to the cathedral of Rio de Sancta.

Suddenly it seemed to Doreen that the great avenue's traffic had been stopped for them. They were crossing the road. There were mounted cavalymen, in red and gold uniforms, and with tossing black horsehair plumes, riding black horses that kept back the crowds. The trams had stopped with dramatic suddenness.

As in a dream, Doreen was led into a palatial house, and she was hardly conscious of the truth of these happenings as she was introduced to the president's wife and Doreen's gallant act was told by the happy father.

The signorina's eyes were filled with tears of gratitude, and now she was murmuring words of sincere thanks, and she bent and kissed Doreen, and called her dear in the soft language of the country.

The president was leaning forward. "La Belle Doreen," he whispered, "grant an old and a happy father's request. Let me do something for you—for those who are dear to you!"

To Doreen it was all too wonderful, and now the circus star's hands were clasped, and she was conscious of the fact that tears of gratitude lay in her eyes.

She hardly knew what she said. She heard herself asking for a pitch for the circus—a place where they might have a successful show, and she vaguely heard the president agreeing to find such a spot, and declaring that he and his cabinet would come to the opening night.

She remembered thanking him, remembered being kissed by his wife and the little Eulalie, and then she was hurrying along the Avenida, with eyes watching her, followed by two guards in fine uniforms, and an equerry with instructions to see that the circus was moved at once and with all speed, and that no pains were to be spared in getting it erected at once—not even if the whole army had to be employed in the work.

It was when she saw Septimus Barkomb—saw his amazement and his joy—that she came to herself.

"A miracle, Doreen!" he cried. "A miracle! You—you have succeeded where all of us had failed!"

"Oh, Mr. Barkomb," she sobbed happily, "it seems too wonderful to be true! But it is true, and we can open to-night!"

Barkomb laughed a great laugh, and indicated the soldiers who were packing the things.

"At that rate, we shall be soon there and soon erected!" he cried, and, kissing Doreen warmly he ran off to help.

Never had work been done so quickly. Everything was moving like clockwork, and already the tent was being raised on a grand site in the Avenida itself, a site that had been reserved for a new civic building. It was a wonderful position, and crowds, attracted by the busy scene, hurried off to spread the news.

Barkomb, his men, and the soldiers were tireless, and half an hour before the time announced for the show everything was ready.

Doreen was dressed and urgently waiting for her time to go on.

Over the telephone she had told President Diaz of the miracle of quickness that had been worked, and she had flushed as she had heard his answer.

"I shall be honoured to come, and those who govern here with me will come as well!"

As she sped to tell Mr. Barkomb the news the crash of a military band came to her ears, and, parting the curtains of her tent, she saw a gaily dressed band of

and cries of delight as a gay cavalcade swept forward.

The president had come, and with him had come the wealth and beauty of Rio de Sancta.

As Doreen peeped at the audience she saw that there was not an available seat in the whole place, and the band crashing out the opening tune, the tune to which she entered the arena, sent the blood racing to her cheeks.

"It is time, Doreen!"

Barkomb had come to her side, and now she looked up at him for a moment with a roguish smile, and then, parting the curtains, ran into the arena.

There was not a soul but knew of her gallant act, and they rose to her—their bravas, bravissimas rose even above the crash of the brass instruments, and it was noticed that the president was standing and waving his hand to the wonderful dancer who had come to charm all hearts.

Doreen bowed and ran to the high rope.



Like a streak of light Doreen rushed across the tramlines, snatched up the child and drew it out of danger a fraction of a second before the tram whizzed by.

soldiers marching into the big tent, and as she reached Mr. Barkomb's side, the officer in command of the soldiers was speaking to the circus proprietor.

"We come at the president's bidding," said the officer. "I am Captain Cabalero da Costa, at your service, senior!"

"And the president is coming also!" cried Doreen, unable to contain her news any longer.

Mr. Septimus Barkomb, resplendent in his best velvet suit, was aglow with happiness.

"So much for Don Ramon da Popinjay Lopez!" he laughed. "We shall have the show of our lives to-night, and you, little Doreen, you shall go on first. Listen! They are cheering! This must be the president!"

Rolling of drums, shouts of the crowd,

so that she could mount to the trapeze. As she climbed aloft she remembered for a moment the adventure in the cavern, but then her thoughts turned to the work in hand.

She had to excel to-night. She would do a daring feat first—she would fly from one trapeze to the other and turn a somersault midway.

Swinging to and fro, she prepared to fly from the trapeze.

The audience was watching her, fascinated, and then.

Suddenly there came a cry through the great tent, and then—

In a flash every light in the place went out.

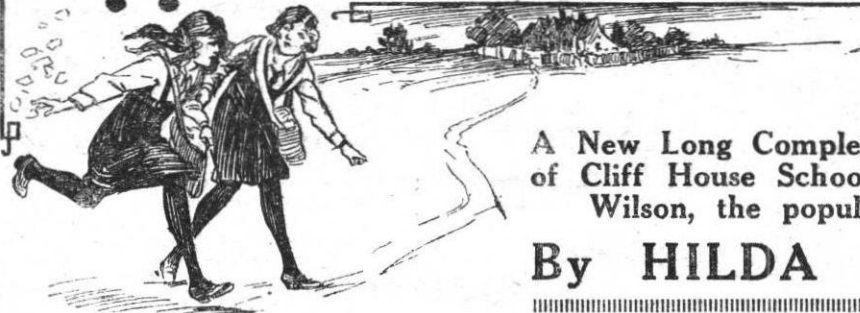
Doreen was swinging, swinging, and below her a madly frantic crowd were scrambling to their feet in the utmost alarm.

Who is responsible for the lights of the circus being so dramatically switched off? And Doreen, swinging on the trapeze so high above the ring, how will this sudden catastrophe affect her?

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A STORY PACKED WITH MYSTERY AND EXCITING INCIDENT!

The House of the Five Gables!



A New Long Complete Story of the girls of Cliff House School, featuring Pauline Wilson, the popular Sixth-Former.

By HILDA RICHARDS.

Very Peculiar!

"THERE'LL be a row!"

Barbara Redfern, captain of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School, buttoned the collar of her thick coat, and bent her head against the driving rain.

It was a miserable night, and pitch dark. The two girls, as they wheeled their bicycles along the muddy road, looked far from happy.

"Yes; we shall get it all right," nodded Mabel Lynn. "I wish to goodness we'd let Bessie come, as she wanted to. I think the dormitory feasts are a silly idea."

As she heard that remark, Barbara Redfern could not help smiling; for when, earlier in the day, the dormitory feast had been suggested, Mabel Lynn had been one of the keenest supporters of the idea.

Of course, Bessie Bunter, the fattest girl in the Fourth Form, was most keen, but it had been unanimously decided without voting, that Bessie was not to be entrusted with the delicate mission of buying supplies.

"If it hadn't been for my silly tyre bursting," said Barbara Redfern, looking dismally at the bike she was wheeling. "we should have been back in time for calling-over, Mabs. As it is, there'll be a row."

And Mabel Lynn nodded her head gloomily.

They trudged on in silence for a few moments, Mabel Lynn clutching the parcel of supplies—the cause of all the trouble—under her arm.

But suddenly Barbara Redfern stopped, and laid a restraining hand upon her chum's arm.

"What's that?" she whispered, and turned her head to look behind her up the road whence they had come.

"Sounds like a car," said Mabel Lynn; "but, if so, it hasn't got any lights!"

"It is a car!" said Barbara Redfern, after a pause. "Some silly madman! Mind, Mabs, we shall be run over—quick!"

And Barbara Redfern grabbed her chum and drew her into the side of the road. With angry faces they watched the approaching car, which they could now dimly discern.

For anyone to drive along such a dark lane without headlights was reckless and dangerous, and it was not unnatural that Barbara Redfern should be annoyed.

The car moved past them, and they caught a glimpse of a heavily muffled man at the wheel. The hood of the car was up, but the two girls were able to

see the parcels and boxes that occupied the rear seats of the car, for the car was slowing up.

It skidded rather upon the slippery surface of the road; then, moving slowly, made a wide detour to the other side of the road.

"What the dickens!" exclaimed Barbara.

And indeed it was surprising. The car had come to a standstill, and its solitary occupant had alighted, looking neither to the right nor to the left. His actions were those of a man whose course had been previously decided upon, and the two girls, standing quite still, watched in surprise as they saw him lift open a gate that stood on one side of the lane.

For they well knew that beyond that gate was a stretch of grazing land, bumpy, and with no inhabited house for miles round.

The man's subsequent actions were even more surprising. He turned to his car, jumped into the driving-seat, and steered it through the gateway.

They heard the car bumping away across the fields, and the two chums stared at one another.

"What on earth!" exclaimed Mabel Lynn. "He can't live in that field—no unless he's going to spend the night in his car!"

"Perhaps he's made a mistake," suggested Barbara Redfern thoughtfully, as they moved on again. "Farmer Jenkins' place is about a mile farther on, at least, and—"

"That's on the other side," said Mabel Lynn, "and there's a proper gateway and drive that's well over half a mile up to the house itself. He couldn't have made that mistake."

"I suppose not," agreed Babs. "He seemed so sure that that was the place he wanted. It's jolly peculiar!"

And Barbara Redfern shook her head wisely.

The two girls continued their journey in silence; with the driving rain they found it more comfortable to keep their mouths and chins tucked well down into the collars of their coats.

"What a night!" groaned Mabel Lynn at length. "Shouldn't think anybody would be out to-night unless it were a matter of life and death, or something!"

"Well, there is someone," said Barbara. "Can't you hear footsteps?"

Mabs listened and nodded. Footsteps were certainly approaching, but Mabel Lynn, apparently, had not much interest in anyone who chose to be out on such a night as this.

Barbara, however, who was looking ahead, nudged her chum.

"Look, Mabs!" she whispered. "It's

one of our girls, and a senior. It may be Iris Bentley!"

At that remark Mabel Lynn looked up, and eyed the figure that was coming down the road towards them. The girl's head was averted, and they could not see her face; but both juniors decided at once that discretion was the better part of valour.

Iris Bentley was a Sixth-Former and a monitress, and, as such, had disciplinary powers over the juniors. Iris, moreover, erred more on the side of strictness than justice, which was unpleasant so far as the junior girls were concerned.

So Babs and Mabs hurriedly wheeled their bikes to the side of the road, hoping that the girl, who had not yet raised her head, would pass them by.

But Babs gave a groan as the girl lifted her head. Then the captain of the Fourth Form almost dropped her bicycle in sheer surprise. For the girl in front—she was certainly not Iris Bentley, although she was a prefect.

But that was not what had surprised Babs. She recognised the girl instantly as Pauline Wilson, one of the nicest in the Sixth Form, and she had sighed gladly, knowing that Pauline would be lenient.

But, strangely enough, Pauline Wilson seemed far more afraid of meeting them than they were of meeting her.

The popular Sixth-Former stepped quickly to the side of the road, and was across the gate there in the twinkling of an eye.

Mabel Lynn goggled her eyes at her chum, and Barbara Redfern blinked.

"Well!" she exclaimed. "If that isn't the queerest thing ever! Anyone would think that she were a Fourth-Former and we were monitresses, instead of the other way round. It was Pauline Wilson, of course?"

"Of course it was," agreed Mabel, who looked as if she'd seen a ghost. "I suppose there's nothing wrong with us? We're not phosphorescent, or anything?"

"Goodness knows!" laughed Babs. "I'm blessed if I can understand it! First we see a silly man drive a car across an empty field that leads to nowhere and—"

"Not exactly nowhere," corrected Mabel. "There's the house with the five gables in the next field but one."

"But that's on the Friardale road," said Babs. "And, besides, he couldn't be going there. It hasn't been used for years and years. Its windows are all smashed, and you know what the people of Friardale think—"

"That it's haunted. Of course, that's only a yarn; but I suppose it does seem a bit unlikely that anyone would choose this time of the night to take up their

residence there, and go a couple of miles or so out of his way in order to drive across two or three bumpy fields, and get in the back way."

"I give it up," said Babs. "Anyway, here's the school, and now for trouble!"

The school gates were shut, and Piper, the school porter, was in his lodge. There was no doubt that Piper would be annoyed at being aroused and compelled to go out into the rain to admit two recalcitrant girls, but it had to be done.

Barbara Redfern gave a mighty tug at the bell-knob, and a heavy clanging awoke the echoes of the rain-swept quadrangle. For a moment there was no response, and Barbara rang again.

At the second peal of the bell, they heard the door of the lodge open, and Piper, with many grumbles, turned the key in the lock.

"Fine time to come in!" he growled. "The 'admistress wants to see you, Miss Redfern, and it serves yer right!"

"Oh, thank you, Piper!" grinned Mabel Lynn.

And the two girls walked past the grumbling porter, and deposited their bicycles against the cycle-shed, pending the time when they could get the key to unlock it.

Prepared for the worst, they made their way into the school.

"Hallo!" cried Clara Trevlyn, as they opened the door, letting in a rush of wind and rain. "The wanderers return!"

There was a crowd of girls standing in the entrance-way; all of them were Fourth-Formers, and apparently had been waiting there for the chums of Study No. 4 to return.

"Sorry we're late!" laughed Babs. "But I had a puncture."

"You'll be sorrier when you've seen Miss Primrose," laughed Freda Foote. "You're a bright pair of sparks to send out foddering!"

"I s-say," piped Bessie Bunter. "What did I tell you? Didn't I say they'd mess things up? Now, if you'd have sent me, I should have been back a long time ago."

"P'r'aps so," agreed Freda; "but the grub wouldn't!"

"Oh, really—" Bessie Bunter broke off sharply, as Clara Trevlyn pushed past her, and took the parcel from Mabel Lynn's arm.

"Look here!" began Mabel; then a frown from Clara warned her, and she saw the reason for that girl's sudden movement.

"Barbara Redfern! Mabel Lynn!" said a sharp voice. "Report to Miss Primrose at once!"

Connie Jackson glared spitefully at the group of girls. There was no love lost between Connie and the Fourth-Formers, and the looks that met hers were equally hostile.

"You needn't try to look so innocent," she sneered. "You're scheming and plotting something. I can see that. What's it all about?"

She glanced at Bessie Bunter. It was just like Connie Jackson to pick upon talkative Bessie, who, with all the good intentions in the world, would probably tell the whole story. But Bessie was not given time to answer:

Freda Foote, with a look on her face that a wax model might have envied, answered for Bessie.

"Finished!"

"I don't understand!" retorted Connie Jackson tartly. "If you're trying to be funny, Freda Foote—"

"Not at all," said Freda. "You asked what it was about. Well, it's about finished."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Connie Jackson glared at Freda's

innocent face, and strode off with a curt nod of the head at Babs and Mabs.

"Now for it," said Mabs, with a wry grimace, and she and her chum followed in the footsteps of Connie Jackson.

Not Like Pauline!

"PASS the chicken, Bessie," said Clara Trevlyn, and she looked anxiously at the very small bird which Bessie Bunter, with knife and fork, was vigorously attacking.

"This is jolly good!" said Dolly Jobling, as she munched at a portion of pie.

Clara Trevlyn gave an elaborate wink. "One you made yourself—eh, Dolly?" she asked.

Dolly Jobling flushed. "Ahem! Well, as a matter of fact—"

"Never mind, Dolly," smiled Marjorie Hazeldene. "It is jolly good!"

late. The switch was near the door. Instead, there was a frantic scrambling for beds, and pies, cold chicken, and plates of ham had to be taken to bed, too, to get them out of sight.

One large pie, however, was left in the middle of the floor; Freda Foote saw it, and, with great presence of mind, flung the quilt from her bed upon it.

"That's not much good, Freda," said a pleasant voice. "And is that a pie you've got in your bed, Clara?"

S-n-o-r-e!

The sound came from Clara's bed.

Practically everyone in the dormitory was curled up as though fast asleep, and Freda Foote, like a queen of all she surveyed, sat up in bed, grinning.

"It must be uncomfortable, Bessie, having that huge, iced cake beside you," said Pauline sweetly; and Bessie Bunter suddenly ceased her unmusical snore, and from such of the Fourth-Formers as were looking at her came suppressed giggles, for one of Bessie Bunter's fat hands was



A GOOD SORT! "Come along!" laughed Pauline, "you're all awake, and you may just as well admit it. I was in the Fourth Form myself once, remember. So I know your little ways."

Marjorie was always the peace-maker in Study No. 7, which she, Clara, and Dolly shared.

"I don't see what you know about it," said Clara. "You haven't had any."

"Well, I saw her making it," Marjorie argued cautiously, and the feast proceeded amicably.

Bessie Bunter performed great feats, and the amount of food she managed to eat was really amazing, but there was plenty to go round. The dormitory feast was an excellent idea, and organised in celebration of a recent hockey victory over their rivals, the Danesford Hall girls.

Dolly Jobling, who prided herself on her cooking, had made several dainties—so had Bessie Bunter.

But Bessie had been compelled to test her own wares, to see if they came up to the required standard. Apparently, quite a great deal of testing had gone on, to the exclusion of the wares.

When the feast was at its height, and hot drinks had been made from water in Thermos flasks, the door of the dormitory opened.

"The light—turn out the light!" hissed Barbara Redfern; but it was too

clawing round at her back, groping for the cake that was not there.

"You're awake then, Bessie!" said Pauline.

"No, I'm as-sleep," stammered Bessie. "I didn't hear you s-say anything about cake, Pauline."

"Come along," laughed the Sixth-Former. "You're all awake, and you may just as well admit it. I was in the Fourth Form myself once, remember."

With rueful grins the Fourth-Formers sat up, and not unwillingly, it must be admitted, took from their beds remnants of the feast that had been.

"I think you'd better put all those things away, now," said Pauline; "and get to sleep. Dormitory feasts are all very well, in their way, but they're against school rules, you know. Just to remind you that rules are made to be kept, I think you'd all better do me fifty lines."

And with a nod she went from the dormitory.

"Jolly decent of her," said Mabs. "Fifty lines isn't much for a dormer feast—although it's a hundred and fifty with those we got from Miss Primrose."

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 180.

"Still it's jolly well worth it," said the captain of the Fourth. "If it had been Miss Bullivant, it would have been quite another hundred."

"Yes, Pauline's a jolly good sort," said Freda Foote, as she got out of bed to recover her quilt, and place the pie out of danger.

"By the way," said Phyllis Howell, when the lights had been turned out, and they were all settling down, "I wonder where Pauline had been? Did you notice that she was dressed?"

"Yes, I noticed it," chimed in her chum, Philippa Derwent. "She had been out, too, for her coat was quite wet."

Then Eabs and Mabs told them how they had seen Pauline earlier that evening.

"But I should have thought she would have been in before this," finished Mabel.

"Anyway, it doesn't concern us much!" yawned Babs. "Pauline's a jolly good sort, and I wish her luck."

"Hear, hear!" came an echo of approval. There was no doubt that Pauline was popular.

In a very short time the Fourth-Formers were asleep; but last of all was Babs, who could not keep herself from pondering on the mystery of the car and Pauline Wilson.

But even she fell asleep at last. The next morning dawned bright and sunny, and Clara Trevlyn ran to the window and gave a shout of joy.

"Hurrah! Good luck to the paper-chase. This is simply top-hole!" she cried. "I was just beginning to think that it would be all U.P. It's cold, and just the day for a run."

And other Fourth-Formers went to the window to test the accuracy of Clara's statement.

In paper-chases weather conditions were most important, and there could have been no finer day than the present. Though cold, it was clear, without signs of rain or snow, and the Fourth-Formers seemed very high-spirited during lessons.

But, then, Wednesday morning never was a good work morning, and Miss Steel sighed, and bore it as well as she could.

Clara Trevlyn, however, was a little bit too inattentive, and for her lack of concentration she received a substantial imposition from the angry Form-mistress.

Clara's face fell, and Marjorie Hazeldene gave her a warning look. Clara was to be one of the "hares" that afternoon and Babs the other.

Clara was not a girl to look ahead, or to realise that certain effects follow certain causes. As the morning wore on Miss Steel became more angry, and Clara had to be constantly nudged by her chum to be kept up to the mark. It was quite obvious that Clara had some scheme in her mind, and when lessons were over the other Fourth-Formers gathered round her eagerly.

"If it hadn't been for Marjorie," said Eabs, "you'd have been kept in, Clara, and then where should we have been?"

"Never mind that now," said Clara cheerfully. "That's all over. I've got an idea."

"We know that!"

"It's about Pauline Wilson. I've been thinking. It was jolly decent of her, the way she acted last night, and I think that we ought to show her how pleased we are to have a nice, just prefect."

"Good idea!" nodded Babs. "But how are we going to do it?"

"Give her some of the pie that's left over?" asked Freda Foote, with a grin.

"Ass!" said Clara candidly. "I happen to have seen her study, and know that it's jolly untidy."

"I should think you're an excellent judge of that," murmured Freda Foote.

Clara glared, but went on.

"I vote that we go and clear her study up," she said. "She's a jolly good-tempered sort, and she's unlucky enough to have that sneak of an Ida Jackson for her fag. She's too decent to rag Ida, and the little sneak won't clear up without."

Babs nodded.

"Yes, that is so," she said. "It's rough on Pauline. She doesn't like to bully the kid, and once when I went to her study I found her clearing it up herself. It's a jolly good idea, Clara."

"Splendid!" said Freda Foote. "Only, if it's going to be a success, I vote we leave Clara at home. You know how tidy she is."

"Oh, bosh!" said Clara.

"This is the very time," said Mabel Lynn. "The first eleven always have a knock about between lessons and dinner when there is a match in the afternoon. So Pauline will be out of the way. It will be a jolly nice surprise for her to come back and find her study all ship-shape. Come along!"

And the Fourth-Formers went.

Bessie Bunter was there, of course, and Annabel Hichens, as an expert on domestic matters, had to accompany the expedition.

Only girls like Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell stayed behind. But nobody minded their absence very much.

They reached the Sixth Form passage, and Babs looked round rather doubtfully. There were nearly enough girls present to clean out the whole passage, and if all of them insisted on going into the study more damage than good would probably be done.

"I think," she said tactfully, "that some of you might run off and get some cleaning things. You go and get a duster, Bessie."

"Oh, really, Babs!" squeaked the fat girl. "I'm g-going to clean out the cupboard."

"You're not!" said Freda emphatically. "This is a s-study-cleaning expedition, not a larder raid."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blest if I can see what there is to cackle at!" grumbled the fat girl, and she pushed her way into Study No. 6.

Barbara Redfern looked round the study and rubbed her nose thoughtfully. The room certainly was in a sorry state. The carpet wanted sweeping, dust lay thickly everywhere, and Pauline's books and needlework were strewn about everywhere. Flowers were dying for want of fresh water, and it looked very much as though the housemaid, as well as the fag, had deserted the study.

"This is where we begin," said Freda Foote, and she rolled up her sleeves.

Fourth-Formers at Cliff House were not compelled to fag, as were the Third-Formers, and had anyone asked them to clean up a study they would have stoutly refused. But this was a different matter. As Mabel Lynn said, it was almost a case of "noblesse oblige."

The dustpan and brush and the carpet-broom had not arrived, but Clara Trevlyn, never very particular, started work with her handkerchief.

"Stop! Stop!" shrieked Annabel Hichens, in agitation. "You foolish girl, Clara. Is that all you know about housework?"

"Just about," nodded Clara.

Annabel sniffed disdainfully. Annabel

was distinctly an old-fashioned girl, and looked with an eye of strong disfavour upon the modern girl, who played games in preference to sitting by the fire and sewing.

"If some of you girls knew a little more about housework and a little less about hockey," she said sarcastically, "you might know where to begin. There are more than a dozen of you here, and none of you know where to start."

"I shall be glad when you learn where to stop!" snapped Freda Foote. "Cut the cackle and get to the sweeping!"

"So you do know it should be swept?" said Annabel, in her most frigid manner.

But the cheerful Freda was carrying on with the good work that Clara had begun. Barbara Redfern was raking the ashes from the grate, and Marjorie Hazeldene was tidying up the scattered needlework.

Presently Phyllis Howell returned with the broom, which Annabel Hichens snatched from her. With much vigour, and imparting a moral with every thrust of the broom, Annabel carried on amidst clouds of dust. For one whole second there was a cessation of work, and the next one sound filled the room.

"A-tich-oooo!"

"Here, stop that!" screamed Clara. "If that's the correct way to do housework, Annabel, let's do it badly, for goodness' sake! Give me that broom!"

But Annabel did not cease work. Clara made a wild snatch at the broom, and Annabel clung to it, fiercely. One wild wrench and Clara gained possession. Annabel, losing it, staggered back, threw out her hand wildly, clutched a knob on a drawer in an effort to save herself, but it was too late.

She fell, and the drawer fell, too, showering her with papers and odds-ends.

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

So amused were the juniors at the result of Annabel's efforts that at first they did not hear the voice at the door, or the hammering at the panels. But Phyllis Howell, and Philippa Derwent, who were close against the door, realised it first, for they were suddenly pushed forward.

There was silence in the study, and then a gasp, as the thin face of Connie Jackson of the Sixth Form peered in.

"Hallo!" said Connie. "So this is it? I wondered what all the noise was. You're ragging Pauline's study, I suppose, because she 'lined' you last night. That's your idea of fair play, I suppose?"

"It's not that at all!" said Barbara Redfern sharply. "Quite the opposite."

Connie Jackson shrugged her shoulders.

"And nosing into her private affairs, too," she said, glancing at the drawer which Annabel had upset on the floor.

"It's not true!" shouted Clara.

And then she broke off, for someone else, with a puzzled frown on her face, was looking into the study—and that someone was Pauline Wilson.

"Fine thing, isn't it?" sneered Connie Jackson. "That's your nice, gentle Barbara Redfern! Revenge for last night, I suppose! Not content with ragging, they've forced open your desk and reading private letters!"

"Don't believe her!"

"It's not true!"

Pauline Wilson stepped into the study, then pulled herself up short. Her expression, which before had been merely puzzled, now became angry. Her face paled, and her eyes became strangely bright.

"What are you doing?" she cried

almost hoarsely. "Leave my things alone! Get out of here, all of you! How much have you read of these?"

She dropped to her knees amongst the pile of papers, and pushed aside the astonished Annabel Hichens. Her hands worked with feverish deftness, as she gathered the papers together and bunched them back in the drawer.

The Fourth-formers were amazed—far too amazed to speak. This was a new Pauline Wilson, a Pauline they did not know. Never before had they had cause to think she had a temper. She had been cross, but never in this white-heat of rage.

Pauline slammed the drawer back into the desk, then wheeled round again upon the girls.

"Little sneaks!" she cried. "Oh, how could you be so mean! I never thought this of you! Go, go, all of you!"

"Pauline!" pleaded Babs. But the Sixth-former waved her aside. "I s-say!" stammered Bessie Bunter. "We didn't look at any of the silly old papers—"

"Oh, go!" And the enraged Sixth-former made an angry movement towards the fat junior. Bessie Bunter skipped forward, and Connie Jackson moved aside to let her pass. Connie was as puzzled as the juniors, and she would have entered the study to speak to Pauline, but—

Slam! Connie jumped back, and Babs, half-way along the passage, turned, and frowned in puzzled amazement.

"Whatever can be wrong, Mabs?" she said. "It's not like Pauline to lose her temper."

"I know," nodded Mabs glumly. "And she was all right when she entered the room. It was all because of those silly papers. Fancy thinking we wanted to read them! It's jolly strange!"

And that conclusion was the only satisfactory one at which the Fourth-formers could arrive.

But what was the matter with Pauline?

More and More Puzzling!

TAP! Barbara Redfern, with some trepidation, tapped gently on the door of Study No. 6 of the Sixth Form passage. Mabel Lynn was with her, and Clara Trevlyn, and the chums of Study No. 7 followed close behind.

Stella Stone, the captain of the school, came out of the study with a hockey stick in her hand, and she stared at the juniors in surprise, for it seemed rather strange to find such a crowd outside a Sixth-former's door.

"We're a delegation," explained Clara Trevlyn.

"Oh, really!" said Stella, and she laughed, and walked on.

The key in the lock of Study No. 6 turned with a click, and the door was opened. Pauline Wilson's deep blue eyes widened with surprise, and she gave the girls a look that was not a little shamefaced.

"Please, Pauline," said Babs, "we've come to apologise."

"All of you," laughed the girl, as she buttoned her gloves, for she was dressed for outdoors. "I think it is I who should apologise, for losing my temper."

"Well, you see," interrupted Clara Trevlyn, "we really came to your study to clear it up, because—"

"Because you were such a good sort last night," chimed in Dolly Jobling helpfully.

"That was awfully nice of you," said Pauline, with a sweet smile. "And

now I suppose your opinion of me is completely changed? The fact is, I was rather worried about something."

"Of course," said Babs sympathetically. "Anyone would have been annoyed really, to find such a crowd in the study."

But Babs knew that that was not quite right. She was trying to make Pauline's task of apology easy. After all, they had done nothing terribly wrong, and even Connie Jackson could not have been more angry than Pauline.

There was an awkward pause, and Clara Trevlyn was the first to break it.

"We wondered awfully, Pauline," she said, "if you'd mind timing our paper-chase this afternoon. It won't take a minute, and the first eleven match doesn't start till three."

"I'm not playing to-day, anyway," said Pauline. "But I'll time it for you with pleasure, if you'd like me to. Only don't be too long, because I'm in rather a hurry."

The juniors ran off then, to make sure that everyone should be ready when Pauline arrived.

streaming small bits of paper as they ran.

"Can't miss that trail," said Dolly Jobling. "Hope Clara doesn't get caught."

"You wait," chuckled Madge Stevens of the Upper Third.

When Clara and Babs had been gone sufficiently long to give them a fair start, Pauline dropped her handkerchief, and at the signal the "hounds" ran off.

When they had gone, Pauline Wilson fetched her bicycle and rode up the lane. She soon passed the "hounds," and in a few minutes overtook the "hares."

"Buck up!" she laughed. "Don't let them catch you."

Soon she was lost to sight, and Babs and Clara trotted on steadily.

"Cut across to the right there," said Babs. "By the way, this is where the car went the other night. You remember I told you about it."

"Queer sort of place!" jerked out Clara. "I can see the wheel marks now."

And, indeed, the marks were quite easily distinguishable.



"GIVE ME THAT BROOM!" One wild wrench and Clara gained possession. Annabel staggered back, clutched a knob on a drawer, and then subsided on to the floor amidst a shower of papers and oddments.

"Fancy her not playing this afternoon!" said Mabel Lynn. "It must be something frightfully important to keep Pauline away from a match—she's usually so keen."

"Yes, and it was jolly funny about her show of temper," nodded Babs. "I'm glad she apologised though, because I think an awful lot of her."

The rest of the Fourth Form waited impatiently in the quadrangle, and there were some of the Third there, as well, Barbara Redfern's sister, Doris, and Madge Stevens, being prominently in the foreground.

Barbara and Clara were to be "hares," and they slung on their backs the two bags filled with torn-up paper that Freda and Gwendoline Cook held ready for them.

It had taken some hours to tear up all the paper required for the chase, but they had utilised the old stores of filled exercise-books, and with many hands at work the task had been lightened.

"Bet we'll catch you in the first mile," chaffed Doris Redfern.

And Babs merely smiled. At a sign from Pauline, who had come up, they trotted off, their huge bags

"May as well follow them," said Babs. "They can't possibly catch us so near home, and we've got to make a pretty long detour."

And so they followed the tracks of the car.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Babs. "He went through this field as well."

One after the other they vaulted the gate, and, sure enough, there were fresh wheel marks on the ground at the other side of the gate.

"Where on earth can he have been going to?" asked the bewildered Clara. "Seems to me this wants looking into, I wonder—"

She looked up, and raising her eyebrows, pointed in the direction of the old house that stood at the end of the field. It was a peculiar old house, with five gables, and only one or two windows were intact.

Some had been boarded up, but mostly they still showed the gaping, jagged holes caused by the stones that village boys had thrown at them.

"Perhaps so," said Babs. "Though

why anybody should go there I can't think. It's supposed to be haunted."

"That's bosh," said Clara. "No one believes in ghosts but Gwen Cook."

But Clara was wrong. Most of the villagers of Friardale firmly believed in the haunted house. It had stood there empty for many years, and some of the older inhabitants told with awe to white-faced audiences how they had seen strange apparitions.

These apparitions varied in size, quantity, and quality, according to the imagination of the narrator. Even the village boys who threw stones ran off immediately afterwards, and at night-time practically everyone walked past the house on the other side of the road.

"It does look uncanny," said Clara thoughtfully. "And with that high wall round it, who knows what's on the other side?"

"Well, we haven't time to see!" laughed Babs. "I should hardly think the man in the car came here—"

"Look!" interrupted Clara. She stopped abruptly, and caught her chum's arm. Pointing across the field, she showed her chum where two distinct lines of beaten grass outlined the chum's course, and they led to the house with the five gables!

"Goodness!" gasped Barbara. "Then the car went there, after all! Perhaps he was a ghost hunter."

Clara Trevlyn shrugged her shoulders.

"Jolly funny thing, anyway," she said. "Still, we can't investigate now. Come on!"

And they broke into a trot again. Once, on a rising mound, when they were near the house, Babs looked back, and could see the "hounds" coming along the lane they had left several minutes ago.

"We shall have to hurry," she said, and in silence they sped on.

They were almost up to the outside walls of the house now, and they glanced at it interestedly.

Suddenly Barbara Redfern threw up her hands, and with a sharp cry, plunged headlong on her hands and knees.

"What the dickens!" cried Clara, pulling up. "Well, you are a clumsy duffer, Babs!"

Babs pulled a wry face.

"I fancy I've twisted my ankle," she said. "It is a nuisance. I can't think what I could have fallen over. You go on, Clara. Don't wait for me."

Clara Trevlyn hesitated for a moment, torn between a desire to help her chum and eagerness to return to Cliff House unscathed.

Barbara Redfern scrambled up and rubbed her ankle. As she did so her hand touched something which caused her to emit a sudden ejaculation.

"Clara, it's a wire! What a strange thing. It goes towards the house. It—"

Babs traced the thin wire across the field, and she looked up at the ruined house. As she did so her face paled, and she pointed speechlessly to one shattered window.

Clara Trevlyn turned in wonderment, and she was just in time to see something that moved rapidly across the window.

"It was a man!" exclaimed Babs. "I am sure of it!"

"Yes, I saw something, too!" frowned Clara.

But from behind in the distance came a wild shout in a youthful girlish voice.

"Tally-ho!"

"That's my sister Doris!" cried Babs.

"You must go, Clara."

So Clara sped on over the hedge into

the field to the right, and so into the lane. Barbara Redfern stood still, the mysterious wire resting on her foot. She kicked it, and just faintly she heard what sounded like a bell coming from the house with the five gables.

"A trap!" she murmured.

Her ankle was aching painfully now, and as she heard the rapidly approaching "hounds" she hesitated, not knowing quite what to do. She had no wish to give in easily, but it occurred to her now that the others, following eagerly on the trail, might trip over the wire even as she had done, with perhaps more serious results.

So she stayed there. A slight breeze drew Clara's trail a little adrift, and Babs hoped that her fellow "hare" was getting away. Now the hounds were tearing up the field towards her, obviously surprised, by their gesticulations, that Babs should be standing alone.

"Look out!" she warned them as they came tearing up. "There's a wire across here."

"Wire?" asked Mabel Lynn breathlessly. Then she jumped it. "What's the matter with you, Babs?"

"I found the wire," explained Barbara Redfern ruefully. "And my ankle's twisted. I can't run any more. But Clara's gone on."

"Poor old Babs!" said Mabel, and took her chum's arm.

"But what a funny idea!" exclaimed Phyllis Howell. "Who on earth could have put the wire there?"

"That's just the queer part," said Babs, frowning. "It seems to me a trap of some sort. Listen; I'll kick the wire."

She kicked the wire, while the others, puzzled but attentive, listened.

From the direction of the house with the five gables came the buzz of an electric bell.

"My hat!"

"P'raps it was used during the war," said Philippa Derwent lightly. "Some signal station or other. Still, we can't bother about it now, you know. We've got to find Clara."

"I'll j-jolly soon find her," piped Bessie Bunter, who had been half-dragged, half-carried along by Freda Foote and Dolly Jobling. "This way, girls!"

And Bessie raced on. But instead of following Clara's path, she wheeled round to the left of the house.

"Here, where are you going, Bessie?"

"This is the way," said Bessie excitedly. "Here's the s-silly old track."

"But that's the wrong one," laughed Freda. "Can't you see that doesn't lead anywhere?"

She ran after Bessie, and pointed out to the fat girl the track that Clara had left.

"Oh, really," blinked Bessie. "You needn't think I don't know a track when I see one, Freda Foote. I know this is the one by the—by the quality of the paper."

"You silly duffer!" laughed Freda, and she picked up a few scraps.

The others, with the exception of Mabel and Babs, had gone on. Freda did not join them. Instead, she stood, with frowning brow, staring at the pieces of paper in her hand.

"I say, Babs," she called in a voice that was strangely unlike her usual flippant tone. "What do you make of this?"

Barbara Redfern, leaning on her chum's arm, limped across the field to Freda.

"Make of what?" she asked.

Freda handed over the scraps of paper. They were certainly none of the pieces that had been used by the hares. They were not very small scraps, but on them were strange hieroglyphics and writing.

"Looks mighty weird," said Babs. "Collect these up, Freda. There is more in this than meets the eye. This and the wire seems to prove that there's something very fishy going on."

Freda picked up the scraps of paper and handed them to the captain of the Fourth.

Freda looked away to where the hounds had disappeared through a gap in the hedge.

"This is far more exciting than paper-chasing," she said. "I think I ought to help you back to the school, Babs."

"Right-ho!" laughed the captain of the Fourth. "We'll see if we can make anything of this paper."

And, watched by two anxious eyes that peered at them from one of the broken windows, they made their way back to the school.

A Visitor for Pauline!

EXCUSE me! Is this Cliff House School?"

A small woman, plainly attired, turned to Barbara Redfern as that girl, assisted by Freda Foote and Mabel Lynn, limped up to the school.

"Yes, rather!" blinked Bessie Bunter.

"I suppose there will be no difficulty in my seeing my niece?" asked the woman.

"I should not think so; but, of course, most of the girls are out this afternoon," said Barbara. "It's a half-holiday."

"My name is Wilson," explained the woman. "And my niece, Pauline, is, I fancy, in the Sixth Form. I really can't quite remember though. It is so many years since I have seen her."

They were at the gates now, and the woman went through with them.

"I fancy Pauline is out at present," said Mabel Lynn. "Still, you could go into her study, and wait. I will show you up there, if you like."

"If you will be so kind," said the woman, with a smile. "I shall be greatly obliged."

So while Babs, helped by Freda and Bessie, went to the Fourth Form passage, Mabel Lynn escorted Pauline Wilson's aunt to the Sixth Form corridor.

As Mabs had expected, Study No. 6 was empty, and she showed the visitor in.

"I don't think Pauline will be very long," said Mabs, with a smile, as she left the study.

She returned to the Fourth Form passage, and in Study No. 4 she found her chums poring over the scraps of paper they had found near the house with the five gables.

Freda Foote, with a puzzled, frowning face, was trying to ascribe some sort of meaning to the weird figures.

"Looks like bits of mechanical design," she said. "There are formulae, and all sorts of things. Perhaps Miss Scott might know something about it."

Miss Scott was chemistry mistress, but was versed in many subjects.

"It's probably only a lot of rubbish," shrugged Babs, "and just coincidence that we found it near the house."

Bessie Bunter, however, shook her head, and plunged her fat face into the plump palm of her hand.

"It strikes me," she said, very wisely, "that it's a chart to a hidden treasure. You know there's a ghost in the s-silly old house. Perhaps he's looking for the treasure."

"Yes, I should say so!" chuckled Freda Foote. "What would he do with it if he got it, Bessie? Ghosts can't spend it on tarts."

(Continued on page 689.)

THE SCHOOLGIRLS' PAPER

THE CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY



No. 30. (New Series.)

Week ending October 21st, 1922.

MY DEAR GIRLS.— If you have read "Put Yourself in His Place!" a very fine book by Charles Reade, you will know quite well what I am going to say this week.

Sometimes you may meet a lady who is generally described as "narrow-minded." She has her own view of everything, and nothing will change it. She may object to girls playing hockey; although she has never gone into the question at all, she will absolutely refuse to change her mind on the subject at all. Being narrow-minded comes from being in a groove that you cannot, or will not, get out of. It all comes from not making allowances!

Once that lady—or, maybe, man—was young like yourselves. That was when her character was formed. She formed a conclusion and kept to it; perhaps she was rather proud of the fact that she did so. Well, I don't advise anyone to be a "waverer," for you can be broad-minded without being that. But, even though it may be difficult at times, do try to see "the other side" of things—it will be so helpful!

Perfect chums, of course, always "make allowances" for each other. I know of boisterously inclined girls who get on splendidly with the very opposite type. Are they always as charitable to other people?

Perhaps something happens that you do not consider to be quite fair. Do not form a hasty decision, but try to reason, first of



This Week's Message:
MAKING ALLOWANCES!

By Miss Penelope Primrose
(Headmistress of Cliff House School.)

someone on a night when you are already engaged for something else—dancing. You go, although not really anxious—it is just a complimentary visit. You stay as long as you consider necessary, and then depart, and arrive at the dance when half finished. Later on you are told: "Elsie is awfully upset that you rushed away so early the other evening!" And indignantly you retort: "Well, Elsie ought to have known that I couldn't miss that dance!"

You say she should have known. To know, in other words, is to "make allowances." If Elsie had made allowances, she would have understood why you left, and not felt offended, even though not a dancer herself. If only everyone made allowances, how fewer misunderstandings would be! "Put yourself in her place!" is a motto well worth bearing in mind. Believe me to be your sincere friend,

PENELOPE PRIMROSE.

SCHOOLGIRL TOPICS!

By the Editress (Barbara Redfern) and her Staff.

THE NEXT WET EVENING!

We don't hope for it, but it is bound to come sooner or later. Will you have anything special to do that evening? If not, supposing you make a little resolution, and write a letter?

No doubt there is something that you would like to see in the "Schoolgirls' Paper." Have we published the particular feature that you would like to see? If not, suppose you send word of it along to the Editor of the "School Friend"?

And which features, up to the present, are your favourites? Bessie Bunter has asked us specially to "put that bit in." You see, Bessie is sure that her column is far and away the most attractive contribution that we publish. In a particularly boastful mood the other evening she even told us her plans for the "Schoolgirls' Paper" when our readers demand that she should edit it herself.

What a threat! As Clara Trevlyn says, you can hear her quake in her shoes—if you listen intently enough!

"JUST LIKE A GIRL!"

Arthur Jobling, brother to Dolly of that ilk, visited Cliff House the other evening, and stayed to tea in Study No. 7. We had a very jolly party; there was plenty of leg-pulling, and when the meal was over at last Arthur made a really sporting offer.

"Someone has got to wash-up the tea-things," he said. "I'll toss you, Dolly, whether you do it, or I do it!"

"Rather!" Dolly cried. Arthur spun a coin, and Dolly cried out

"Heads!" The hand was raised and showed a tail. Whereupon Dolly exclaimed: "Oh, bother! I meant to call tails! That 'heads!' simply slipped out—I didn't mean it at all!"

Arthur Jobling burst out laughing.

"I guessed it!" he cried triumphantly.

"Just like a girl!" I've never tossed with you yet but what you've always been going to call the other thing. You can't have two tries, you know!"

Dolly argued. We all argued about that "just like a girl." Perhaps it wasn't fair for so many of us to take the same side, but Arthur did not seem to mind. He still stuck to his point.

"Look here," he said, "I'll test it to prove that I'm right! Clara will be back in a few moments. I'll toss with her, and just see what she says."

Clara was heard approaching. In dead silence we watched her come into the study. Surely Clara would uphold the word of her sex! Surely we had a fine champion in Clara—one who would stick to her call!

"You or I to wash-up," said Arthur Jobling. "Heads or tails?"

"Done!" grinned Clara. "Throw the giddy penny up!" Arthur did so. "Tails!"

It was a "head."

"There!" exclaimed Clara indignantly. "And I always call 'heads'—always! It's the first time—"

Arthur simply shrieked with merriment. "Just like a girl!" he exploded.

And Clara! She only realised then what



she had said. So excited did she become that she said that "she wasn't like a girl at all," and, of course, Arthur Jobling only laughed the louder at that. We all laughed, for that matter, to see Clara so tongue-tied.

But there, we can have our revenge sometimes! Maybe, we have a brother of a boastful disposition. He starts out fishing, certain that he will have a big catch—certain that he "knows all about it." Later, he returns home empty-handed, and full of explanations. But we have heard them before, and we softly murmur:

"H'm! Just like a boy!"

RUMOURS!

What places for rumours schools are! Have you ever noticed it? All sorts of extraordinary tales have been about during this term. One was that Miss Bullivant was shortly going to be engaged to be married; another was that Miss Primrose meant to leave at Christmas. We heard that a new "youngsters' form" was to be opened in the school.

None were true. For a few hours everyone repeated them, and then they died a natural death. Who starts these rumours? We tried to find out, but quite in vain. One we traced back through no fewer than half a dozen different girls who had all heard it from each other, but we never got to the end of it. Does some practical joker start them, just for something to talk about? We believe so; but we have never been able to find the practical joker yet!

The latest rumour is going round the school to-night. It is a strange one, and to the effect that a certain Sixth-Former has been to the school tuckshop and bought a bun that was absolutely soft and new. It may be true that we were told it "on the very best authority," but—we're not going to believe that one!



MY SPESHUL REPPORT!

By Bessie Bunter.

MY dear readers will be delited to know that I have a lot of moast exsiting adveuchers and happinings to cronickle this week, and you will see what a splendid reporter I am proving, becoss I have got full detales of everything that happined.

First, there was a most ameuising sceane outside the pets' howse. On Munday evening, just after tea, there was a yell, and someone cride out, "Oh, girls, some of the pets have escaped, I do declair!" Who was the first one to come on the scean? Why, I was! You see, reporters are supposed to have what is called a "nose for news," and I suppose it was a sort of insticte that brot me there.

Anyway, old Jumboc was loose, and Barberer's silley little munkey was rushing about, and the rabbit was out of his cage and feading on Piper's allotmint, and severral uthers were semowair or uthur. Fealing that it was a happinning that you all ort to know about I quickly produced my noatbook and took down in shorthand what happined.

One after another the gerls came rushing out of the skool, and went in chaise of their pets. It was reely moast funny, and I larfed so much that I cocdent make out a lot of my shorthand afterwards. Babbs had an awful long chaise to catch old Tooney, and Clara fell over twice before she got her hedjog, and then it pricked her. Piper joined in as well, but it was quite a quarter of an hour before they were all recaptured and put back in their boxes.

"It is some practackal joak!" Barberer declared, as we went back into the skool. "I wish I could discover who did it! Do you know anything about it, Bessie, for you were larfing a lot."

"How shooid I know?" I replide, with jiggity. "Being a well-enformed gerl, I might be able to make a shrood guess, but I decline to give anynoone away."

Just at that moament Clair Treverlin most unjustly pulled my plait, and said something about it haddent better happen agane, and I told her indigently that good reporters never want to repport the same thing twice. I am shure I don't know why she grined as she did.

Anyway, on Tuesday there were still more remarkable things happening, and a lot of gerls quite came to the conclusion that Miss Bullervint must be wandering in her mind. All sorts of gerls distinctly heard her call to them by name, but when they went along to her studdey she absolutely denied that she wanted them.

I happined to be in the passidge just outside, as my jernalistic insticte had warned me that there might be fun, and I saw all that happined. First, some of the Seckend-Fourmers came along. Then Steller Stooan of the Sixth. Then Madge Steavins. Each time Miss Bullervint's voice got angrier, and when Allise Constible of the Upper Third appeared Miss Bullervint almost flew at her.

"Go away!" she cride. "You will rite a hundred lines! I am shure that this is what is called a jaip, becoss I have not sent for anyone, and you all keep on pestering me! Go away immediately; you know that I did not call for you!"

There you are, readers! Doan't you think that that was a misterious ocurrence? It stopped after that—at least, I think it did, but I am not shure. The fact of the matter was that I was driven from my poast of duty becoss someone startid the rumor that it had all been done by ventrilloquissem, and then there suspishus minds all settled on me! Doan't you think that was unjust?

Well, that wassent the end of the week's happinings. I happin to know—becoss I am a well-enformed gerl—that a very strange messidge came for Katey Smith, and I am the only reporter at Cliff Howse who is able to give the exact wercds of it. (It is reely a closely-garded secret, becoss Katey won't say a word to anyone, she only prittends to larf.) The messidge that I am able to give exclsosively was this:

"BEWAIRE, Katey Smith! Do not go down to the seashore agane, becoss tresher has been hidden there, and we are determined to get it ourselves.—(Sined) BILL JENKENS."

I quite expected that Katey, being a reckless gerl, would disobey the warning, and go down to the seashore; but she seemed afraid, and prittended to larf it off. Therefore, I can only say that I expect the tresher is still there.

That was Wednesday afternoon. In the evening I happined to be stroaling about in the Sixth Fourn passidge, when who did I see but Piper, our porter, carrying three big hammers. He went to the door of Franses Barritt's studdey, and nocked on it.

"I have brot up the three hammers that you sed you wanted for your grammerfoan, Miss Barritt," he said.

Franses was feuriosus with Piper, and sed she had never sent such a messidge at all, and they had quite an arguement—which I would have taken down in shorthand, only the light was bad—when Steller Stooan came along in rather an interfering manner, and said it must be a jaip, and sent Piper away. Recalling that my duty as a reporter was over, I was just about to depart, when Steller called me back.

"Bessie," she said, "you are rather an infooenshal gerl, and know how a lot of things happin, and I don't want such a thing as this to occur agane if you can help it."

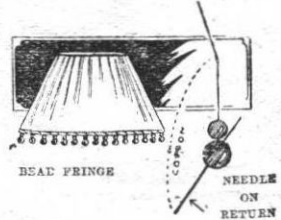
Thos were not quite the wercds she used, becoss Steller is rather an abrupt gerl, and a lissener might almost have immagined that she thort I knew something about it. But the above wercds were what she reely ment, and, of course, I assured her that I would do my best, and try to stop that sort of thing happening agane.

LATER.—I thort I had finished my artical when I rote the above. Now I feel so hurt and angrey that I hardly know what to say. I am accused of causing all the "news" that has happined this week. Steller Stooan has terned on me, and even Barbera is the same, and ses she gessed it all the time. That is what comes of having a sense of duty and trying to get good copy for my dear readers, and I can tell you I am absolutely feed up, and say bother the silley old "Weakley"!

Your indigent chum,
BESSIE BUNTER.

NEEDLEWORK NOTES.

By Marjorie Hazeldene.



HOW TO MAKE A CHARMING LAMP SHADE FRINGE.

"I didn't have time to finish the lampshades, Marjorie," said mother, as we sat together in the drawing-room after dinner. "And now that we're a maid short, I'm afraid they will never be finished," she added.

I thought that over. Next morning, I inspected the shades closely. Mother had covered the wire shapes with new silk, but they wanted neatening and finishing with a pretty fringe.

I rummaged in mother's work-basket, and found some beads and a length of silk cord which matched the silk of the shades. I hadn't many beads, so I decided to make a pretty bead-and-silk fringe.

The shades were covered with gold-coloured silk. In addition to the cord and beads, I bought a ball of strong black mercerised cotton.

The beads were in two colours and two sizes. The larger beads were gold coloured and the smaller ones were black. Thus the colour scheme of the shades was gold and black—a very charming combination of colours.

First I sewed a length of cord round the bottom of the shade, joining it very neatly. The cord completely hid the stitches where the silk was sewn to the bottom of the wire shape. Before commencing to use the beads, I spread a paper on the table, and placed the beads on it. This made it easier to pick the beads up when threading them. I selected a needle which was large enough to take the cotton, and fine enough to go through the smaller beads.

After I had threaded the needle with a length of mercerised cotton, I commenced by attaching it firmly to the cord round the shade. Next, I slipped a large bead on to the thread, then a small bead, slipped the needle back through the large bead, which locked the small bead in position. I carried the thread up again to the cord, and stuck the needle through again in the same place where I had commenced.

The first strand of the fringe was then completed.

Without breaking off the thread, I slipped the needle a little farther along the cord, and made another strand of fringe in the same manner, and continued all round the shade until the fringe was completed. When it was necessary to renew the thread, I was very careful to fasten-off very securely, and also to join the new thread very neatly.

I was also careful to keep the fringe exactly level.

Instead of trusting to my "eye," I used an inch tape, and carefully measured each strand. I didn't find the measuring much bother, and the evenness of the fringe well repaid me for the very little additional trouble.

THE DAYS OF THE WEEK.—SUNDAY.

Sunday's the first day, and far from the worst day

Of weeks that a schoolgirl spends;

To struggle and strive may keep you alive,

But we're glad when a hard week ends.

On Sunday we're resting, no lessons or jesting,

On foolscap our pens do not roam

In tiresome additions and long impositions;

With new nibs we write letters—home!



Sometimes we're excited because we're invited

To "dine with the headmistress, please"!

We're often in just a wild panic of flutter,

And tremble right down to our knees!

But friends rally round us, with help they surround

us,

We're dressed and our last fears we quell;

The "Head's" simply topping—we wish we were

stopping

For tea and for supper as well!

(Next Week: Monday.)



DORMITORY FUN.

By
CLARA TREVLYN.

SOME girls are of the opinion that a dormitory is a place simply and solely for sleeping. They're quite wrong! If I were asked to define it—and I'm going to, although I haven't been asked—I should put the sleeping part last; its principal uses are for pillow rags and dormitory raids, soft-toned sing-songs, "stunts" of many ingenious kinds, waking Bessie Bunter in the morning, and undressing in the dark on Miss Bullivant's "strict nights."

Quite a different thing, as you will agree, from mere sleeping!

Pillow rags are too well known to need description. They are great fun. The principal requirement is a sentry at the door with very sharp ears, and a number of girls inside the room who don't feel "the least little bit like going to sleep."

And the way they start—that's always the amusing part to me! I don't know how it is, but, personally, I always feel livelier at bedtime than at any other time during the day. Others feel the same, I know.

Take Dolly Jobling, for instance!

Dolly never prides herself on reciting. She never bursts forth into eloquent spasms of oratory in Study No. 7. Two nights ago, however, nothing would please Dolly but that she must immediately mount on her bed, and, with a perfectly mischievous grin, start reciting Mark Anthony's speech from "Julius Cæsar." Dolly didn't really want to recite—she just wanted to stir up a "bother." She did so effectively, for I must confess that I immediately threw a pillow!

Another diversion has recently come to our midst. Phyllis Howell inspired it. She suggested that we might play make-believe basket-ball for five minutes every night. She told us that it was excellent practice, and we could easily "imagine" a "phantom ball," and play with that.

Well, we "played" basket-ball, but I must confess that we didn't get very much practice. It just turned into a very amusing and diverting farce. You see, Phyllis had quite forgotten about Bessie!

And Bessie was a mark on that "phantom ball." It was really Bessie's game. She made snatches here, there, and everywhere, and every time proudly informed us that she had "got it." No one could take it away from her. We made feints and grabs; told Bessie she was holding it and fouling; but each time Bessie grinned, and said that she had still got it. Without the slightest trouble she scored goal after goal, announcing each one as a "splendid shot!"

Her first goal was a subdued but triumphant whisper, the second was not so subdued, the third was conversational, the fourth was loud, the fifth was a yell, the sixth—we had to stop it at the sixth goal, or Bessie would have aroused the whole school!

"Phantom basket-ball" may be all right for some girls, but it is of no use to us when Bessie is with us!

And sing-songs! There's something very romantic and jolly about a dormitory sing-song. Often we chant "Pollywollydoodle"—a ballad that concerns a certain grasshopper that sat on a railway-track.

Then I dare say you know the song, "One man went to mow, went to mow a meadow"? Well, we have that, too, but with our own rendering. In our song it is: "One Miss Bullivant came, came to say 'Good-night, girls!'" and we do it in rather an original way. The first girl to start it stands by the door. After the first verse another girl joins her, and they sing, "Two Miss Bullivants came, came to say 'Good-night, girls!'" I can tell you there's rare fun in standing by the door when it gets to seven or eight, and there is the prospect of the real Miss Bullivant appearing before we have sung the ten verses and feel satisfied. If we can get to ten, of course, we hop into bed, and all is well; but more than once we've been surprised, though, fortunately, not heard!



NEW PLAYBLOCKS FOR OLD!



An Ingenious Notion by GWENDOLINE COOK

I DARE say that playblocks can be found somewhere in every house where there is a family. Of course, you know the things I mean—wooden blocks contained in a box, and if you put them together in the right manner you can make one of the pictures contained inside the lid.

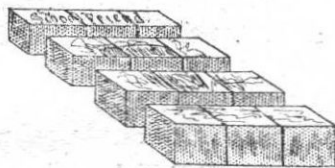
As a rule they are first used for their right purpose, and then for "building castles." The youngsters get tired of the pictures, and they are soon scratched and battered. Some of the blocks are lost and others are spoilt. Have you ever reflected how easily they can be made "almost like new" again?

With twelve two-inch blocks and six pictures the size of the "School Friend" cover-picture, an hour's patient labour will work wonders. Further, if you also keep additional copies of the covers by you it is possible to work from these in putting the pictures together. As a rule, a box contains more than twelve blocks, but this number allows for "casualties."

It is best, first of all, to clean the old pictures off the blocks. Then lay them as shown in sketch, only with the rows close together. Paste the picture right across them, using strong paste, or thin glue. When thoroughly dry, cut right along all the joints with a very sharp knife, and one "side" of the blocks will be done.

Pressing one row together, turn over the three blocks, and repeat with the four rows. You will then be ready to paste your second picture as you did the first. In this way use up four pictures. Then turn them over again, and fill the vacant spaces with the last two pictures. I recommend doing them in this manner, so that when once one picture is properly put together the others can be found without much trouble, and one good effort is usually enough for youngsters.

You can finish the blocks by carefully varnishing them, but as a rule they will wear quite long enough without this trouble being taken—that is, until the youngsters are tired of making the pictures and use them once more for "building material."



FOR THE AUTOGRAPH ALBUMS.

By KATIE SMITH



I have been asked to suggest some more humorous verses for albums, so I am doing my best this week and offering three. A little illustration accompanies each one, and, of course, the entries will look very much better if you can copy the sketch as well. The first and third, however, can be inscribed without illustration if you prefer to do them that way.

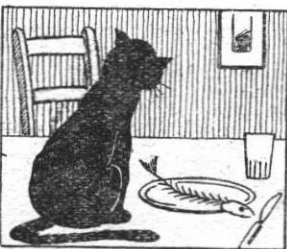


A small and interfering girl
Once played at parties by herself;
She laid a spotless tablecloth,
And reached the jam down from the shelf.

Alas! disaster soon occurred.
Not dreaming of impending wrath,
Her jammy finger strayed, and left
A long mark on the table-cloth!

She gazed at it, and then said: "Oooh!
What mummie says is always true—
'You must draw the line somewhere!'"

This tramp so black, on a railway track,
From a daily paper dines;
With wrinkled brow, he shows you how
To "read between the lines."



The pussy was fond of his kipper;
Temptation was really too great
To find a nice plump one unguarded
Upon his fair mistress' plate.

But conscience awoke as he gazed at
The skeleton, meatless and clean.
He said: "Shall I catch it for stealing?
"Well, that will remain to be seen!"

CLIFF HOUSE EGGS!

Another Novel and Amusing Outdoor Game.

Described by PHYLLIS HOWELL.



EGGs—a curious name for a game, you will say. It is rather unusual, I will admit; but you will understand how we came to hit on the title when I say that in some respects it is like an egg-and- spoon race. Only, there are differences! When you have played it, and seen the Cliff House "eggs" at close quarters, you will agree that they can be the most vexatious things imaginable!

We thought of all things imaginable—potatoes, chunks of wood, apples—before we decided to use the same china eggs that are used in an egg-and- spoon race.

All you want for playing the game is a hat, a few sticks, some sticky labels, and the same number of china eggs and tablespoons as there are players. If anything, it is even simpler to play than Cliff House Bowls.

The game is played on a piece of ground about the size of a tennis-court, and the course is marked out with three posts as shown in Sketch 2. The players line up at the place marked "Start," and at the word "Go!" they rush forward with their spoons to the place where the eggs are lying in the grass. Having picked up the eggs in the spoons they obey the instructions contained on the egg they have chosen, and endeavour to reach home by following the course indicated by the arrows outside the posts or sticks placed in the ground.

That would be all very simple—but for the eggs!

Have a glance at Sketch 1, and then you will see what I mean. Each egg has a label pasted to it, and on that label there are certain instructions. We have given five in the sketch, but these can be added to or repeated as you like.

When first we played we were not very sure of what was going to happen, but we started with five eggs and five players, and "discovered things" very rapidly indeed.

The eggs, we soon decided, must be placed far enough away from the players for the instructions to be invisible. (For this purpose it is best to have eggs as much alike as possible—i.e., bought from the same shop). They are scattered about on the ground, none of the players knowing which is which until they reach them. The one who scatters them, however, takes care that the labels are uppermost, so that they are easily read when the players reach them.

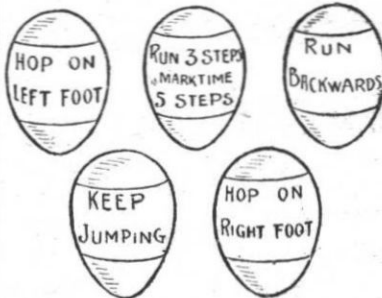
Having had the word "Go!" you run with the others to where the eggs are lying. Now, you may fancy yourself at hopping on your right foot, but perhaps that is the very egg that you cannot see. It would be all very well if you had time to make your choice, but you haven't. Unless you hurry up, the others will have taken four of the eggs and left you the least popular of all. And you will be last in starting as well.

That means that you've got to use your eyes quickly and take your chance. As soon as the egg is in your spoon, you must start obeying the instructions—hopping, jumping, running, or whatever it is. If you cease hopping (or whatever else you are supposed

to be doing) that counts as a "Penalty," and you must purposely drop your egg and pick it up again if you wish to complete the race.

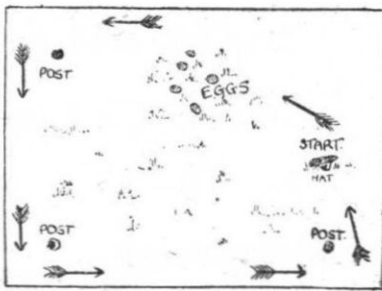
And what is the scoring? Well, that was the point that vexed our minds when we had sampled the first excitement of Cliff House Eggs. Very soon we had quite a brilliant idea. We called upon one more player to bring a spoon, but did not get another egg. That meant that there were six playing and only five eggs.

And that made it simpler and more exciting than ever on account of a fresh rule that we quickly introduced.



We decided that every girl should start with a score of five points. The winner of each race scored one point by being the first to drop her egg in the hat provided at the starting-and-finishing point. But, to stop slacking, we also decided that the last girl home should lose a point.

And that was not all! The loser also becomes "egg-setter"—that is, she collects up the five eggs from the returned players and arranges them on the



grass. In doing so she can get up to just whatever pranks she likes, considering that she is to be egg-less for the time being. When they are all ready she calls "Go!" and the five players start.

And now the loser in the previous game has her chance. She has her spoon with her,

of course, and, as soon as all the eggs have been lifted off the ground, she can join in. How? Very simple indeed! As soon as anyone drops an egg she can pick it up (if quick enough) and rush off with it in her spoon—perhaps to the winning-post—providing she obeys the instructions on that egg.

There is one other rule that I have not mentioned, but we found it an excellent one. Supposing a girl drops her egg, anyone else besides the "Spoon girl" is allowed to pick it up—if quick enough. To do this she will have to throw her own egg away, of course, and she will be unwise to do so unless it is a very "favourable" egg in chancery. But if she does succeed in getting it, then the girl who has been "robbed" must either rush to pick up the thrown-away egg or resign herself to being last in the race.

Let us take a case in point. Dolly was the "Run three steps, mark time five steps" girl. Sure enough Dolly dropped her egg. Clara, who was close behind her, "Hopping on left foot," promptly dropped her egg and gathered up Dolly's, and arrived home an easy first. But she tried it again in the following game—with very different results. Dolly recovered her own egg, and Clara had to go about twenty yards to retrieve her egg, and came hopping home miles behind everyone else.

It is not permissible to pass inside the posts, of course. Bessie Bunter, who provided heaps of fun, as you will guess, tried this repeatedly. She did so many funny things that at one time she had lost all the five points given her at the start. But there are so many surprises in the game that even Bessie was able to win occasionally, and at the finish she had recovered her five points—and there wasn't a prouder girl on the field.

If you wish to do so, you can use the wooden spoons used in ordinary egg-and- spoon races, but personally we found that they made the game too difficult. With ordinary tablespoons we found quite enough excitement, for it needed a considerable amount of skill to hop, and run backwards, and jump without having a spill occasionally. And spills often mean a lot! I recall one case that illustrated it vividly.

Babs was nearly home, hopping. Mabs was jumping just behind her, and the others were some distance away. Well, Babs dropped her egg. Instantly Mabs threw hers away and leapt forward. There was a "Battle of spoons," and Mabs won—and Babs, instead of being first, was last! That all happened within a few feet of the winning hat!

Even the hat was the cause of a lot of fun. More than once a girl, too eager to be first, pitched her egg forward—and missed the hat! She wasn't a winner, simply because she was the first home—the egg must go in the hat.

Any number of girls can play, as I have already said. We have played one game with a dozen girls, and our system then was not by counting points. After each game the last girl retired, and one egg was withdrawn. In the end, of course, it came to a struggle between two girls, and there was great excitement. This was really a "knock-out" tournament, and it worked very well indeed.

Will all of you who play this game send your opinions and any criticism of it to the Editor of the "School Friend"? He will value them most highly.

THINGS ALL SCHOOLGIRLS SHOULD KNOW!

Do you know the difference between "tennis" and "lawn tennis"? The latter is the popular game of to-day, and is little older than fifty years. "Real" tennis is a different and more complicated game, requiring an elaborate and very expensive court, and the oldest one known is at Hampton Court Palace, built in 1530, for Henry VIII. Lawn tennis, when first introduced, was called "Sphairistike." Bessie Bunter's effort at pronouncing in a recent lesson was "Sperry-sticks." Perhaps you can do better?

There is a splendid and very simple way of making the soles of your boots give better wear, especially if you have to walk over rough roads or pavements. Just give the soles a coat of good varnish—that's all.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 180.

But let them get thoroughly dry before wearing them! That's the little thing that Angelica Jelly forgot when she first tried it. You can imagine the chuckles when her right foot came up from the floor of the Fifth Form passage—and brought a loose tile with it!

Here is a tip for drying handkerchiefs and finishing them without the use of an iron. When washed, lay them on glass—a window will do—and see that they are as flat as possible. They will cling to the glass until dry, and come off almost as smooth as though ironed.

Do you ever save pretty magazine covers and other coloured pictures that take your eye from time to time, and then not know what to do with them?

Here is the very latest notion, and Katie Smith is one who has shown what really can be done. She cuts out the most pleasing figures, mounts them on fairly stout cardboard, and then cuts the cardboard to the shape of the figure with a strong pair of

scissors. They really look very fine on her mantelpiece.

Bessie Bunter tried to do some, but when the scissors slipped and cut off one or two heads she lost heart. So take a little care, and you will be well repaid!

A "repairing evening" passed away a wet night very pleasantly a week or so ago. In almost every study some long-neglected tasks were undertaken. Most noticeable in Study No. 7 is the bookcase, many of whose books have been damaged at various times by boisterous Clara Trevlyn and clumsy Dolly Jobling. A pot containing thin glue—which did not catch fire like some of Dolly's toffee!—worked wonders by refixing covers that had partly torn away from their volumes. Dolly fixed loose pages in with stamp-paper, and soon found the best way of doing it. Those covers that were "beyond hope" were restored by Marjorie by pasting pretty art paper over them. This she lettered with Old English characters, and they look very nice indeed.

The House of the Five Gables!

(Continued from page 684.)

"I know I jolly well would," said Bessie. "It's a good idea being a ghost, because no one can see you."

"You'd haunt the tuckshop," said Freda. "But this has got nothing to do with ghosts, Bessie."

It was very interesting, however, to piece the scraps of paper together. The larger pieces fitted in quite naturally, but there were some much smaller pieces that somehow seemed all exactly alike.

Soon Babs, glancing up at the clock, realised it was tea-time.

"I wonder if they've caught Clara?" she said. "We'll have to get tea ready for them when they return. They'll be jolly-hungry."

Luckily, the chums of Study No. 4 were in funds, and Bessie was sent down to the tuckshop to get supplies. It was when tea was laid that Barbara remembered Pauline Wilson's visitor.

"I say, Mabs," she said to her chum, "if Pauline's aunt is still up there, she must think we're an inhospitable school. She's probably come a long way, and won't want to go without seeing Pauline. Don't you think we ought to go and see if Pauline has returned?"

"And if she hasn't?"

"Ask her to have tea with us."

So Mabel Lynn hurried up to the Sixth Form corridor. She ran along to Study No. 6 and knocked at the door. There was a sound of a hurried scuffle in the room, and the sound of a key being surreptitiously turned in the lock.

Rather puzzled, Mabel entered the room. The small woman was sitting in the chair, but it was quite obvious to the keen-eyed Mabel that she had only just seated herself there.

The girl's eyes roved round the room, and noted that the desk had been disturbed; not only the desk, but also the bed and a small cupboard.

"Er—will you—will you come down to tea with us, please?" asked Mabel, giving the woman a queer look. "I'm sorry you've been left alone here so long."

"That's quite all right," said the small woman, with a glance at her watch, and another glance through the window over the quadrangle. "As a matter of fact, I must be going now. I have stayed too long already. Possibly I shall meet Pauline on the way. I hope so."

"You won't wait?" asked Mabel, rather surprised. "But surely Pauline won't be long now—she can't be."

"No; I must go," said the woman hurriedly. "It's very kind of you to ask me to tea. But I must get back to-night, and as it is, I have very little time to get to the station."

She picked up her umbrella, lowered her veil, and affixed it. Then, with a smile, she nodded to Mabel, who was holding open the door. The visitor disappeared down the passage, and Mabel Lynn gazed after her, puzzled and not a little alarmed.

The woman's manner had been strange—very strange. Why had she had the door locked, and why had she not stayed longer? She had stayed so long that a few minutes more would hardly make much difference. There were plenty of trains.

Mabs returned to Study No. 4, and her puzzled look did not pass unnoticed, though no comment was made. Clara Trevlyn, triumphant as the uncaptured hare, sat at one end of the table. The hare and the hounds looked flushed and happy.

The story of the chase was told in

detail, and then Freda Foote brought forth the scraps of paper.

"I'm going to offer a prize for the solution of this," she announced. "Bessie says a ghost wrote it."

"Oh, I didn't!" protested the fat girl. "I said—"

"Ghosts can't write," said Gwendoline Cook, with an air of great wisdom.

"Let me have a look at it."

Grinning, Freda Foote passed the pieces of paper, and Gwen examined it with the care and serious mien of an expert in such matters.

"What's the matter with you, Mabs?" asked Barbara Redfern, as she returned with a teapot she had gone to borrow, and noted her chum's expression.

"Wouldn't Pauline's aunt come?"

"No, she wouldn't," said Mabel.

"And I'm rather worried about that aunt, Babs. When I went to the study I found the door locked."

"Locked!"

Mabs nodded.

"And it looked to me," she said, "as though the woman had been rummaging around. It's rather funny."

Mabs told them all, then, how they had met the woman in the lane and piloted her to Pauline's study, where her actions had been mysterious.

"There's nothing in that, really," said Freda. "All these mysteries are making you suspicious, Mabs. After all, she may have been looking for a photograph of Pauline. You know what a proprietary interest aunts take in one's affairs."

"Yes, there's nothing in it at all," agreed Dolly Jobling. "Where is she now?"

"Gone!" said Mabs.

"Well, then, there's nothing to worry about."

"I know what she came for," said Bessie Bunter, blinking up through her glasses over a slab of bread-and-butter, thickly spread with jam. "She came to steal my ring!"

"Your what?" grinned Clara.

"My ring—my twenty-five-carat gold ring. It's a jolly valuable one. Lots of people have tried to steal that."

"No need to steal it," said Freda.

"It's probably steel already!"

But, argue though she did, Bessie Bunter could not persuade the girls that the woman was a thief who had come to steal her "twenty-five" carat ring. Pauline's aunt was Pauline's aunt, and they saw no reason to doubt it.

When the festivities were at their height—a tap came at the door, and a pleasant, smiling face looked in.

"Come in, Pauline!" went up a shout of welcome. "Just in time."

"Have my chair, Pauline."

"No, thanks!" laughed the Sixth-Former. "I haven't come to stay. I just wanted to know how the paper-chase went."

"Jolly well," said Clara Trevlyn.

"Babs had to drop out, but I got through all right."

"You had to drop out?" asked Pauline, looking at Babs.

Babs nodded.

"Yes, like a silly ass," she said. "I tripped over a wire in a field by the house with the five gables."

"A wire!" exclaimed Pauline, and her expression changed remarkably.

In Study No. 4 there was a rather strained silence. There was nothing, so far as the girls could see, that could alarm Pauline, yet she certainly seemed alarmed.

"By the way," said Babs, to break the silence, "your aunt has been here to see you, Pauline. But she couldn't stay any longer."

"My aunt!"

Pauline seemed more amazed than ever.

"I don't understand. Which aunt?"

"A small woman," explained Mabs. "She didn't say which of your aunts she was, but she said her name was Wilson. She is small, with rather bright brown eyes, with a veil—"

"Wearing a dark blue costume, and carrying an umbrella?" asked Pauline quickly. "Has she been here?"

Her whole frame was tense, and her voice tremulous with an eagerness she could not conceal.

"Ye-es," answered Mabs awkwardly.

"I say, was it wrong of me to show her up to your study?"

"My study!"

Now thoroughly concerned, Mabs rose to her feet.

"I ought to tell you, Pauline," she said, "that I went up a few minutes ago to ask her to tea, and I found the door locked. It looked to me as though she had been searching round—"

"Searching round my study!" exclaimed Pauline. "Oh, why did you let her go there? She is not my aunt at all; she is—she is—"

For one brief second she stood as though rooted to the floor, petrified, and incapable of movement. The only mobile part of her was her eyes, which stared from one to the other of the girls, yet seemed to see none of them.

The Fourth-Formers sprang to their feet. But before they could say a word Pauline Wilson had gone.

Just in Gwen's Line!

"IT'S jolly fishy!"

"Yes, I must say it's queer."

Most of the Fourth-Formers were gathered round the cosy fire in the Fourth Form Common-room. After all that had happened that afternoon, it was only to be expected that the topic of conversation was the house with the five gables and Pauline Wilson's inexplicable conduct.

"I've never known Pauline to be so mysterious and strange before," said Barbara Redfern, shaking her head. "And I can't help thinking she's got something very secret hidden in her study."

"Perhaps she's got a recipe for a new cake," suggested Bessie Bunter, not very helpfully.

"And perhaps she hasn't!" growled Clara Trevlyn. "Whatever the mystery is, you can be quite sure it isn't cake, Bessie."

The whole story was now known to everyone in the Form, and everyone was interested in it. Marcia Loftus had listened to the story with a peculiar kind of sneer on her face.

"Just like all the goody-goody girls!" she said. "Probably Pauline's committed a theft, and hidden the spoils in her study."

"Oh, shut up, Marcia!" came a general cry.

Whatever the mystery was, no one wished to have it explained by Marcia Loftus.

"She evidently knew that woman this afternoon," said Mabel Lynn; "but it wasn't her aunt. I wonder what it can all be?"

"One thing's pretty certain," said Freda Foote. "It's connected with the house with the five gables, though what Pauline should have to do with that house, I don't know."

"It always has been a mystery house," said Marjorie Hazeldene. "All the villagers say it is haunted, and Gwen Cook has threatened to explore it dozens of times."

"That's a good idea!" cried Clara Trevlyn. "Gwen, go and explore the place, and give your expert opinion."

But from Gwen Cook came no retort.

"Hallo!" cried Clara, in surprise. "She's not here. That's funny! Anybody know where she is?"

No one replied.

"She can't be out, surely!" exclaimed Babs. "Still, p'raps she's in her study."

And the conversation was resumed; but it was nearly bed-time, and Barbara Redfern began to look rather anxious.

"It's funny that Gwen hasn't been in," she said.

Freda Foote, with a worried look on her face, glanced up from the fire.

"I suppose I ought to have told you before," she said. "Gwen asked me not to tell you. But now she hasn't come back I'm rather anxious about her. She's gone to explore the house with the five gables!"

"Good gracious!" gasped Babs. "How stupid! You shouldn't have let her go, Freda! I hope to goodness she hasn't fallen over that wire, as I did! She may have hurt herself badly."

"Well, what's to be done?" asked Freda, rather agitatedly, wishing that she had told them at first.

"Wait to see if she comes in," said Babs. "That's the only thing; and, if she doesn't, then someone will have to go out and look for her. I suppose we ought to tell Stella Stone, or someone?"

"Yes; it's no good keeping it secret."

So to Stella Stone they went, and told her of Gwen's escapade.

Stella looked alarmed.

"Good gracious!" she cried. "You should have told me this before. If you fell over a wire there this afternoon, Barbara, Gwen may quite easily have done the same. But I should hardly think that any girl would want to inspect that uncanny place."

"Gwen's a ghost enthusiast, you see," explained Freda Foote. "She has never seen a ghost, and she wants to, badly."

"Well, she's gone to the right place," said Stella. "That is the sort of place where you might see anything. You'd better go to bed now, and I'll go and look for Gwen."

"Can't I go, too?" pleaded Barbara Redfern. "I know the way across the fields."

Stella Stone hesitated. She did not relish that journey across the fields alone. Pauline Wilson was out, and

Isabel Drake had gone to bed with a cold.

"I'll ask Miss Primrose," said the school captain. "You ought to be in bed, really."

But Babs pleaded, and so did the others. Miss Primrose was really alarmed when she heard the news, and readily consented to Babs accompanying the school captain.

Barbara and Stella, wrapped in thick coats, each carrying an electric torch, were soon ready to depart upon their search.

But before they could reach the door a gasp of surprise ran through the girls crowded on the staircase, for in the doorway stood Pauline Wilson, and, resting on her arm, looking very white and frightened, was the missing Gwen.

"Goodness!" cried Stella, and rushed forward.

Gwen, affected by the light and by the many faces, clutched at Barbara Redfern's arm for support. Her spirit, which she had striven to keep conscious, now ebbed out.

For a moment she blinked about her dazedly, her grip upon Babs' arm relaxed, and then, before the Fourth Form captain could move, had fallen, a crumpled heap, upon the floor.

Gwen Cook had fainted.

Immediately there was a rush to assist. Barbara Redfern took command, clearing away the crowd to give the unfortunate girl sufficient air to enable her to recover.

Now that she was in good hands, Stella Stone turned to Pauline.

"What made her faint?" she asked. Just for a moment Pauline hesitated, as though she were loth to reply.

"I—I was crossing a field when I saw her. Something must have frightened her badly, for she was trembling most of the way home."

"What field was it?" interposed Freda Foote quickly. "The field beside the house with the five gables?"

Pauline nodded.

"Jolly lucky you happened to be passing there!" commented Stella Stone. "It's not a much frequented place. I wonder why Gwen was there?" she added thoughtfully.

But Pauline did not answer. Stella, looking at her, quickly noted that she swayed slightly. She put out her arm in support.

"You've worn yourself out," she said. "Don't stand there staring, you girls. Come and help Pauline to her room!"

Half a dozen of the girls who were standing near by ran forward immediately, and Pauline was guided to her study.

They had placed Gwen upon the rug before the fire that burned in the hall grate. Several girls were grouped around her. Most of them had a knowledge of First Aid, and quickly took measures to restore the girl.

Someone ran for sal volatile, and Miss Steel, who came upon the scene, took charge. It was not many minutes before Gwen opened her eyes.

She looked fearfully around as she struggled to sit up, dazed and frightened.

"Oh-h!" she gasped. Then she shuddered. "The ghost!"

"It's all right!" said Barbara Redfern soothingly. "You're back at the school now, Gwen."

"Oh dear!" murmured Gwen Cook. And she gripped the friendly arm of the Fourth Form captain, as if to assure herself of its reality.

She was soon fully recovered, and realised that she was safe among her friends at Cliff House.

"Oh, it was such a fright!" she said jerkily. "I went to that—that house, and—and something tripped up my foot. Then—ugh!—a great black thing whizzed over my head!"

The girls looked at one another, and the same thought was in every mind. Poor Gwen had let her imagination run wild. Gwen saw those looks.

"It's true!" she said. "I looked up in time to see something white come out of the house!"

She flushed, and shifted uneasily.

"Then my ankle was hurting awfully, and I suppose it made me faint!"

"That wire I fell over tripped you up," said Babs.

"But what was the black thing like?" asked Stella Stone, amazed. "What sort of thing was it? What shape?"

Gwen Cook shook her head.

"I—I can't remember!" She shuddered. "It made a swishing noise."

Stella Stone whispered to the captain of the Fourth, and Babs nodded.

"This comes of busying yourself about things you do not understand," said Miss Steel tartly. "The best thing for you to do is to go to bed at once, and forget all about it. It's too utterly absurd to talk of ghosts existing!"

"But they do—they do!" cried Gwen. "I always said they did, and now I am sure of it!"

"Nonsense!"

Gwen Cook would have made some further retort, but Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn wisely assisted Gwen to her feet and led her away. It would not do the Fourth-Former any good to start arguing with Miss Steel.

"It's all right, Gwen!" Babs whispered. "Forget about the silly old ghost!"

"It was not a silly old ghost at all," said Gwen obstinately. "That house is haunted. I—I—I'm jolly glad I went!"

"Yes, you look it!" sneered Marcia Loftus. "You're a fine ghost expert, I must say. First time you see one you faint!"

"I didn't!" protested Gwen. "At least, not because of that. It was my—my ankle!"

"Yes, of course it was!" said Babs soothingly. And she glared angrily at Marcia Loftus.

"Anyway, ghost or not, I must say there is something fishy about that house," said Clara Trevlyn. "And how came Pauline Wilson to be coming past there? Most people prefer to give that house a very wide berth."

"It was jolly lucky Pauline didn't, anyway," said Mabel Lynn.

They helped Gwen into bed, for she was still a little unsteady, and then they all got undressed quickly.

When the light had been put out, and they were all settled for the night, Barbara Redfern leaned out of her bed and whispered across to Mabel Lynn.

"Look here, Mabs," she whispered. "I don't like this business at all. What do you say to a search?"

"Just as you like," yawned Mabel Lynn. "I'm rather fed up with it!"

And Mabel Lynn turned over, and was soon fast asleep.

But Barbara Redfern could not keep her mind from pondering on the mystery of the house with the five gables, and it was some time before she closed her eyes that night.

What the mystery of the house was she could not begin to imagine, but that in some way Pauline Wilson was connected with it she was sure. And when at last she fell asleep that night she

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was firmly resolved to go more deeply into the matter. But what would be the result?

What was the mystery of the house with the five gables?

The Great Lady Detective!

I KNOW all! Confess!" Freda Foote jumped as those words came through the doorway of Study No. 4. Freda was about to pay Babs a visit, but she drew up as she heard these dire words.

"You cannot deceive me. I am Hunter, the great girl detective!"

At these peculiar utterances Freda's expression underwent a change. They certainly sounded less fearful when she recognised the voice of Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter.

The humorist of the Fourth Form pushed the door ajar and peered in.

Standing at the table, with one hand pointing with dramatic fierceness to some scraps of paper, was a most remarkable figure. A fat figure it was, attired—or, rather, shrouded—in a short military cape, and topped by a three-cornered Napoleonic hat.

Freda recognised that cloak and hat, and also the green coat. It was part of the Fourth Form Dramatic Society's equipment, and made to fit Mabel Lynn, who was to play the role of the famous French emperor.

In view of the fact that Bessie Bunter was at least three times the size of Mabel Lynn, it was not greatly surprising that the coat hung apart.

Bessie Bunter apparently had not heard the door open, and as her drama increased, her small eyes, behind the large round spectacles, glittered with greater fierceness.

"Be-ware!" hissed Bessie. "The end has come!"

Her fat hand trembled, and in her emotion the Napoleonic hat tilted to an even more absurd angle.

It was very impressive, and Freda Foote should have observed this and been impressed; but she wasn't.

She burst into a shout of laughter that caused the fat girl of the Fourth to jump clean off the floor.

"Oh! Oh, you cat, Freda! Why did you come creeping in like that?"

"What's the game?" asked Freda. "Thinking of holding up a post-office, Bessie, to see if your remittance has come?"

"N-not at all. You know perfectly well who I am, Freda Foote."

"Wandering Willie?" guessed Freda.

"No; Hunter, the great criminal hunter! I'm going up to that silly old house, and arrest them all!"

"That's a good idea," said Freda enthusiastically. "You're a clever girl, Bessie. You do think of things. Of course, when the ghost sees you—"

"It's not a ghost at all," said Bessie. "There's a gang of burglars there, and I'm going to arrest them. When they see me they—"

"They'll faint," said Freda.

"Not at all. You know perfectly well what I mean, Freda. I'm going up there now."

"And the papers?" suggested Freda.

"They're the clue," beamed Bessie. "When I confront them with this evidence of their crime—"

"What crime?"

"Well, the burglaries, you know. They'll surrender, and my photograph will be in the papers."

And Bessie Bunter, with a look of determination on her fat face, strode from Study No. 4.

Out in the passage she met Barbara

Redfern, Mabel Lynn, and several others, dressed ready to go out. Afternoon lessons were over for the day, and there was still a little time before darkness fell.

"My hat!" gasped Clara Trevlyn.

"What on earth's this?"

"I'm Hunter the Bunter!" announced Bessie in the deepest voice that she could muster. "Let me pass."

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Mabel Lynn. "You silly ass, Bessie!"

But suddenly Babs gave a cry of warning.

Coming along the corridor towards them was Pauline Wilson. But short-sighted Bessie Bunter had not apparently noticed the Sixth-Former, and she walked on heedlessly.

The other girls behind her pulled up short in dismay. They knew it would not be long before Pauline saw the fat girl, and they were right.

As her eyes alighted on the absurd figure, Pauline Wilson stopped and stared. Her face broke into a smile,

"Oh, oh, you're hurting me!" she squealed.

"Pauline!" exclaimed Babs, running towards them; and there were murmurings from the Fourth Form.

Pauline Wilson heeded not the cries of the Fourth-Formers. She snatched the scraps of paper from Bessie Bunter's hand.

"Oh, let go!" wailed Bessie.

"Pauline!" said the captain of the Fourth Form, surprised and angry at the Sixth-Former's lack of restraint.

"Where did you get these?" demanded the Sixth-Former.

"I—I—I don't know!" gasped Bessie.

"Oh, you're hurting!"

Pauline flung the fat girl's arm away, and turned to face the captain of the Fourth Form.

"Has this duffer been rummaging in my study, Babs?" she asked.

"Rummaging in your study," repeated Babs, thoroughly amazed. "I



STRANGELY AGITATED! "What are you doing?" cried Pauline hoarsely. "Leave my things alone. Get out—all of you! How—how much have you read of these papers?"

which she fruitlessly tried to change into a look of stern reproach.

"Bessie!" she said. "What are you doing, you silly girl?"

"I—I'm not a s-silly girl!" retorted Bessie. "And I'm going to arrest all the burglars at the house with the s-silly gables. You may think it is haunted, but I don't. If you ask me"—her voice sank mysteriously—"there's something jolly funny going on there."

Pauline Wilson's face paled slightly.

"You stupid girl!" she said after a second's pause. "Take this absurd rig off at once!"

"But I'm going to arrest the burglars, I tell you!" howled Bessie Bunter. "I've got a clue!"

And she held out a fat hand, revealing the scraps of paper with the weird hieroglyphics.

Pauline Wilson bent her head forward, and her eyes seemed to goggle out as she stared at those pieces of paper. She clenched her hands, unclenched them, then caught one of the girl's fat wrists in a fierce grip—a grip so tight that Bessie Bunter squirmed.

don't think so. We found those papers in the field—"

"What field? Where?"

"In the field by the house with the five gables," answered Barbara.

"Oh!"

The Sixth Form girl stared at the papers in her hand, then at Barbara Redfern.

"Have you read these?" she asked.

"Read them? No, of course not!" answered Babs rather tartly.

Pauline Wilson heaved an obvious sigh of relief, and the junior's wonderment increased. The mistress was so patently glad that the mysterious hieroglyphics had not been deciphered, that the Fourth-Formers could not help wondering what the strange signs on those scraps of paper could mean, and how they affected Pauline.

"I order you not to go to the house with the—er—five gables," said the Sixth-Former to Bessie, "and I shall ask Miss Primrose as soon as possible to place the house out of bounds. After Gwen Cook's experience last night, I

should hardly have thought that any of you would have wanted to go there."

And with those words she strode out of the School House, leaving the juniors in a state of great wonderment.

"Well," said Clara when the monitress had disappeared, "if that doesn't beat the band! All this mystery makes my head go round. What was on those bits of paper, Freda? You saw most of them."

"Only a lot of drivelling figures," retorted the humorist of the Fourth. "If you ask me, Pauline is going off her head."

"Well, hardly that," laughed Babs. "But certainly something funny is happening."

"But it is not like Pauline," said Mabel Lynn. "I've always admired her, and she isn't the type of girl to do anything underhand, is she?"

"Well, anyway, we'd better go on to the house as arranged," said Babs. "Perhaps we shall see something that will clear up the mystery a bit. Come along!"

Bessie Bunter took a step forward, as if to join them, but Babs waved her back.

"You can't come, Bessie," she said. "You've been ordered to stay at home."

So while Bessie Bunter, grumbling and complaining, went to undisguise herself, the others started off to the house with the five gables.

Babs & Co. Take Action!

"WE shall have to go jolly carefully!"

Clara Trevlyn nodded her head wisely. There were six of them in all. The chums of studies Numbers 4 and 7, and Freda Foote.

"Of course, it's all bosh about the place being haunted!" said Freda Foote, when the gables of the mystery house have into sight through the trees. "But it's an uncanny sort of place, and I don't wonder that Gwen fainted, if she really thought she saw a ghost."

"But what puzzles me so," said

Barbara Redfern, "is what that buzzing thing was."

"Probably a large bird, or bat," said Marjorie Hazeldene. "Gwen was probably imagining quite a lot of things that night. She was overwrought."

"Well, there are enough of us to tackle a ghost," said Dolly Jobling.

"Hear, hear!"

And there was a chuckle.

"Hallo! Who's that up there?" said Clara Trevlyn, as they went through the gateway into the first field. She pointed along the hedgerow to where a figure was crouching.

"It's a Cliff House girl," said Mabel Lynn, and as she spoke the crouching girl turned her head.

"Katie Smith!" they all cried at once. The girl came running towards them.

"Hallo!" she said. "Have you come to investigate, too? I simply couldn't keep off it. It's awfully mysterious, isn't it?"

Little Katie Smith's eyes were shining. Katie spent most of her spare time in reading books of fiction that dealt with wild and romantic adventures. Anything in the nature of a mystery appealed to Katie, and now she was thoroughly in her element.

"Have you seen anything?" asked Clara Trevlyn.

Katie Smith nodded.

"I've seen a man creeping along up there," she said. "I can tell you there's more in this than meets the eye."

"This man must be an enemy of the people in the house, whoever they are. I suppose," said Babs. "So we shall have to go awfully carefully."

"You lead, Katie. You've been here longest, and you probably know the salient points. We'll all follow."

"But go carefully," said Clara. "We don't want to make a mess of things, you know."

They crawled along, keeping in the shadow of the hedge; but presently they stopped, as Katie Smith pointed to a figure that moved slowly and cautiously in the distance.

Then all was motionless again. They had crossed another field now, and could clearly see the whole of the mystery house and the walls surrounding it.

"It does look a funny sort of place," said Mabel Lynn thoughtfully. "Rather interesting. I wonder why nobody has ever lived there?"

"Can't think," said Barbara. "You know several people have tried, but they have always gone, on account of its being haunted. But that's ridiculous."

Her voice showed a trace of doubt, however. She knew that many families had come to the house, always to go almost immediately. There must have been some reason for their going. What was their reason?

And the people who had come to the house now—how long would they stay? And why were they there so secretly?

"Look!" whispered Katie Smith suddenly; and Babs and Mabs took their attention from the house and interestedly fixed their gaze on the figure in front, which was once more moving.

It was a man, and he was acting with extreme caution.

They strained their eyes to recognise the man, but he was too far off for them to distinguish details.

"There's something jolly fishy!" said Clara Trevlyn, to whom the long silence was painful. "Can't we get up nearer?"

"Well, we don't want to be seen," said Babs. "He's trying to get to the house unobserved. That's quite obvious, isn't it? And if we start moving about the people in the house—if they are watching—will begin to get suspicious."

"Besides," argued Katie Smith in a

whisper, "we should only tread on wires and ring bells and things."

Clara growled something inaudibly, but it was obvious to them all that Katie Smith's suggestion was the right one.

"I'll watch the windows," said Babs. "You watch the man. Then we can see all that happens. Look! He's at the wall now."

After that Barbara kept her eyes fixed on the house with its many broken windows. Though her eyes were keen and her stare concentrated, she caught no glimpse of moving figures. The house looked deserted and bare.

Now the dusk was beginning to fall, and the man's movements became every minute less easy to discern. So, very cautiously, the girls crept nearer, still keeping close against the hedge.

The figure of the man could be seen now sneaking round the wall. Now he had stopped, and was unwrapping something from round his waist.

"A rope!" breathed Katie Smith, whose acquaintance with so many adventures in fiction was of assistance in making deductions from the man's movements.

"What on earth for?" asked Clara Trevlyn.

"S-sh! Wait!" said Katie very softly.

The man moved backward, and then climbed up a tall elm-tree, the lowest branch of which was quite twice his height from the ground. He had the rope with him, and the girls watched his movements in breathless eagerness.

Katie Smith was thoroughly excited. She alone knew what was about to happen. The man clung to the lowest branch and crawled along it.

"My word!" said Freda Foote. "That looks risky! What on earth's he trying to do?"

"Well, at present," said Katie Smith, "he's seeing if there is anyone about on the other side of the wall."

And, judging by the man's actions, it was apparent that Katie was correct in her explanation.

The man wriggled back along the branch and drew up the rope, which he had looped lightly at the fork of the tree. Once more he crawled along the branch, and this time it was quite evident what he was doing.

With great care he tied one end of the rope to the branch, then back he went, and was soon on the ground again.

The girls watched with growing interest as the man caught hold of the end of the rope and swung himself gently to and fro.

"My hat!" said Freda Foote, with a chuckle. "Do you mean to tell me he's been creeping and crawling about like that to make a swing for himself?"

"You duffer!" said Katie Smith witheringly. "Can't you see he's going to swing himself on to the top of the wall?"

Now that Katie had pointed it out it seemed almost obvious. The man was taking long, strong swings that took him higher and higher up the wall. At every swing the juniors swayed in sympathy, as it were; and when at last, with a final rush, the man went above the wall and disappeared from view there was a general gasp among the juniors.

"Oh!"

They looked at one another, and Babs nodded.

"We'd better get a little nearer," she whispered. "I haven't seen a sign of anyone at the windows, and the whole place looks deserted. I wonder what that man's gone there for?"

"Perhaps he's on the hunt, too," suggested Clara. "Doesn't seem much to wait for."

"Oh, do be quiet!" admonished Katie Smith. "How can we pay attention to



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the house, with you chattering away nineteen to the dozen?"

And Clara, with a hopeless sigh, relapsed into silence.

All around them was dark now, though they had hardly noticed how quickly dusk had fallen.

But the darkness ahead was suddenly pierced, cut through by a keen, yellow-white shaft of light. And the shaft of light came from somewhere inside the high wall.

"Oh, look!" cried Katie Smith.

The shaft of light seemed to ascend the wall, searchlight fashion, and when it stopped the girls gasped.

"Look—look! The man!"

The light had found him out. He turned and looked down, and the girls' hearts beat faster as they noted that he was clinging to the window-sill of a half-open window.

He seemed fascinated by the light, and could not turn away from it.

"He'll fall!" cried Katie Smith. "Oh!"

"Why doesn't he climb down?" exclaimed Marjorie Hazeldene.

Now another figure was lit up—a figure that blocked the frame of the open window.

The light was switched off too quickly for them to discern who that figure was—whether man or woman.

A sharp sound was audible, an angry cry.

"They've shut the window," said Babs. "Come on! We must see into this."

She rose, and went forward; the others, after an almost imperceptible pause, followed.

Just before the house they stopped, and Katie eagerly prepared for some sort of surprise, though what she knew not.

The door of the wall opened, and a man hurried out. The gate was slammed, and the man stood awhile fuming angrily.

Then he caught sight of the girls.

"What do you want?" he snarled.

"Nothing!" retorted Clara. "We've been watching the performance. Very illuminating!"

"You're from the school!" snapped the man. "Take my tip, and keep your noses out of things that don't concern you. Leave haunted houses alone."

"Haunted!" exclaimed Babs.

But the man was gone.

"It's a blind," said Katie, with a nod of the head. "There is something very secret and mysterious going on. And I'm going to see."

Before they could stop her, adventure-loving Katie Smith had run towards the tree, from which the rope still dangled.

"Stop her!" exclaimed Marjorie Hazeldene. "Katie dear, come back!"

But Katie, having pulled the rope back from over the wall, was swinging to and fro on it.

Clara made an attempt to stop her, but save for swerving Katie from her straight course it did no good, and in a second Katie had swung herself on top of the wall. The shouts of the girls had roused someone inside; for immediately a blinding beam of light shot out from the darkness, dazzling the girl.

Katie covered her eyes, lost her footing, and only by a tremendous effort retained hold of her rope.

As she swung back her chums stopped her flight.

"Oh, you silly!" said Babs quite crossly. "You shouldn't have done that."

"Did you see anything?"

"No; but what was that light from?"

"I don't know," said Babs. "But let's get away. I don't like it here at all. It's too jolly mysterious."

They turned, after one long last look at the house with the five gables.

What an eerie house it was! But what hope had they of probing its mystery when it was all so dead and dark?

"It's a funny place," said Clara, when they returned. "But give me the fire-side."

And under the circumstances, Clara's suggestion was popular and very sensible.

The Deputy!

"CAVE!"

Nancy Bell waved her arm frantically in the doorway of Study No. 6 in the Sixth Form passage, and then ran off.

Marcia Loftus it was, to whom she had given the warning, and Marcia was in Pauline Wilson's study, where she certainly should not have been. But

"It's jolly rough luck, Pauline," Amy Barlow of the Fifth Form was saying.

"It looked a pretty even game, and if only you hadn't been crooked we should have won the game."

"It's rough," said Pauline, and Marcia could hear the note of pain in that voice. "If only it were my arm, instead of my ankle, I could have played on! But I simply can't walk a yard!"

Marcia listened intently, and heard them go into the room opposite, and heard the creak of Pauline's bed as she was laid upon it.

"Shall I stay with you?" asked the voice of Angelica Jelly.

"No, thank you!" came the reply, in Pauline's soft tone. "I shall be all right. You get back to the game."

There was a silence then that was only interrupted by what Marcia judged to be Angelica's well-meaning thumps upon the pillow.



BESSIE IN A NEW PART!

"Be-ware!" hissed Bessie quite unconscious of Freda Foote's appearance. "I am Bessie Bunter, the great detective!" And in her emotion the Napoleonic hat tilted to an even more absurd angle.

Marcia, having interested herself in the mystery, was solving it in her own way.

It was Saturday afternoon, and Pauline Wilson was playing hockey. It was a fine afternoon, and practically no one but these two girls were in the building.

Marcia, however, never one to take risks, had left her crony, Nancy Bell, to keep guard, and now someone was coming.

With a savage exclamation, Marcia slammed back into the bureau the drawer she had been searching. She could hear the footsteps approaching, and sped across to the empty study on the other side of the corridor.

There she was safe, and with the door ajar, could see and hear all that might take place in the room opposite. Perhaps the approaching footsteps would not be directed towards Study No. 6; but, on the other hand, they might be.

The footsteps drew nearer, and Marcia's sharp ears could distinguish the different treads. Two steady walking, and one dragging—Marcia could distinguish them easily.

"By the way, Amy," said Pauline, "you might ask Barbara Redfern if she'll come up and see me, please."

"Right-ho!" said Amy cheerily. "So-long, Pauline! Hope you won't be crooked for long. Do you want a book before I go—this one?"

Then came the sound of the door gently shutting, and retreating footsteps.

Marcia Loftus gave a sigh of relief, and her eyes glistened. She was on the track of something interesting now. It was some moments before the silence of the corridor was again broken by footsteps, and they were familiar ones that the sneak of the Fourth immediately recognised as belonging to Barbara Redfern.

Babs had been extremely surprised to get that message from Pauline Wilson, and she had hastened to the Sixth-Former's study.

Since the affair of Thursday evening the juniors had not lost interest in the mysterious affair at the gabled house, but they had taken no active part in it.

And now Babs wondered if it were in that connection that Pauline wished to speak to her. She tapped on the door, and entered in response to the welcoming reply.

"You wanted me?" said Babs quickly. "I'm awfully sorry you were knocked out, Pauline. The school's losing now. Awful luck, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," said Pauline ruefully. "But that isn't what I've asked you to come about, Barbara."

She raised herself on her elbow, looking at the Fourth-Former keenly. Neither of them heard Marcia Loftus creep stealthily up to the door.

"You must be thinking that I have acted strangely during the last day or two," said Pauline, "but there have been reasons for it, Barbara—reasons that I cannot now explain. Suffice to say that they are not dishonourable reasons. But I have not brought you here merely to explain that. I want you to do me a favour. I should have done it myself, but for the fact that now I cannot walk."

"Why, of course!" said Babs eagerly. "I'll do anything you want."

"I was sure you would," said Pauline gratefully. "You're a good sort, Barbara, and I can trust you. I don't want you to tell anybody what I am going to ask you, except, perhaps, Mabel. It would not be fair to keep it from her, since you are such great friends."

"But what do you want me to do?" asked Babs.

"I want you," said Pauline, "to go down to the Sixth Form room and take from my desk a foolscap envelope that you will find there marked with an X."

"Is that all?" said Babs, a little disappointed, and very surprised.

"Hardly," said Pauline. "That's only the beginning. The rest is a little more difficult. You can't make any mistake about the envelope."

"Marked with an X?" asked Babs.

"Yes. When you have got it hurry out of the school, take Mabs with you if you like, though I'd rather you didn't, and take the envelope to the house with the five gables."

"The house with the five gables!" repeated Babs. "But—"

"Please don't ask me any questions!" said Pauline imploringly.

Babs' face expressed the completest amazement.

"Then, when you get to the house, go to the gate in the wall, which you reach through the fields from this lane, ring the bell, and throw the envelope over. Then come back. What was that? Someone outside the door!"

"I don't think so," answered Babs. But she went to the door and opened it. The passage was deserted.

"No; must have been the wind," she said.

But it was not the wind. Marcia Loftus, as she emerged from the next study into which she had hastily dodged, chuckled, then hurried down to the Sixth Form room.

Two minutes later Babs followed her, and was just too late to see the sneak of the Fourth scuttle behind the mistress' high desk.

She searched Pauline's desk hastily, and gave a glad sigh as her fingers closed on a foolscap envelope. She drew it forth, and noted the X with satisfaction. It was the letter right enough. Babs had no doubt about that, although had she known that Marcia was behind the desk she might not have been so sure.

With the envelope in her hand she hastened down to the School House doorway, where Mabel Lynn was waiting for her.

"Seen her?" asked Mabs.

Barbara nodded, and told her amazed chum all that occurred.

And Mabel Lynn stood in the doorway watching as her chum hurried across the quadrangle with the mysterious envelope tucked in her drill-slip.

Pondering on the strange mission of her chum, Mabel went along to Study No. 4. She walked rather hurriedly, and so engrossed in thought was she that she failed to see a girl, who came hurrying in the opposite direction. The other girl, too, was prepossessed and looking at something she carried in her hand.

Bump!

The two girls collided and staggered back. Both lost their balance, and landed on the floor in a sitting posture. Mabel Lynn grinned, and her eyes met the scowling face of Marcia Loftus.

"Sorry!" she said.

Marcia scowled and scrambled up. She looked over the floor as though searching for something.

"What have you lost?" asked Mabel.

"Nothing," said Marcia hastily.

"Well, you needn't be so polite about it," said Mabel, but good-naturedly helped to look for whatever it was that Marcia had lost.

Marcia searched in the same direction, and almost simultaneously they saw the foolscap envelope.

Mabel gave a sharp cry as she snatched up the envelope, and turned on the sneak of the Fourth.

"Marcia, where did you get this?" she demanded.

"Give it to me!" cried Marcia angrily. She made a grab at it, but Mabs put the envelope behind her back.

"Not yet," she said grimly. "I'll ask Pauline Wilson if this is hers, and if it isn't you can have it."

"You—you—" blustered Marcia, changing colour.

"I don't see what you've got to worry about if it is yours," said Mabel. "Come along!"

She made as though to walk off.

"No, don't!" said Marcia, with a sudden pleading tone in her sneering voice. "You'll only get me into trouble. It was only a joke, anyway."

"Only a joke!" echoed Mabel. "So you admit that this is Pauline's? It's the envelope that Babs should have taken, I suppose—eh?"

"Yes," answered Marcia suddenly; "I changed them. It was only a joke."

But Mabel Lynn did not stop to argue with Marcia Loftus.

It was not long since Babs had gone, and there should yet be time to overtake her. Mabel hurried to the bicycle shed, got out her machine, and flouted the rules of the school by cycling across the quadrangle towards the gate, almost knocking over the outraged Piper.

Out into the lane she went, pedalling furiously. Overhead came the roar of an aeroplane engine, and Mabs looked up. The great machine was coming towards her, flying quite low down. She saw it bank, and wondered, as she pedalled on, why an aeroplane should be landing in this district.

She was nearing the fields now, and as she reached the gate, could see the far-distant figure of Barbara. Circling lower and lower, the aeroplane, with a final graceful swerve, landed in the field.

She saw Babs stop, then deviated from her course, and make towards the aeroplane, where the aviator stood beckoning.

"Lost his way, probably," mused Mabel. She watched one man come round to the front of the machine, and catch hold of the propeller, and then, so suddenly that Mabs could hardly believe the thing could have happened, her

chum was lifted, in spite of her struggles, into the machine.

There was a terrific roar as, after the second attempt, the engine started. The man ran round and clambered into the machine even as it taxied forward. It ran along the ground for some few yards, and Mabel Lynn, coming suddenly to a full realisation of what had occurred, rushed wildly towards the field, waving the packet above her head.

"Babs, Babs!" she screamed.

She had reached the field now, round which the aeroplane was circling. It rose gracefully, and flew but a few yards over Mabel's head.

How near her chum was, and yet how hopelessly far! As the great machine banked slightly Mabs caught a glimpse of the four figures, and one helmeted face she recognised—it was the woman who had posed as Pauline's aunt.

Then the aeroplane grew smaller, the noise of the engine died away, and in a few minutes it was but a mere speck in the blue sky, and Babs, her chum, was gone!

The Wrong Passenger!

"KEEP quiet!"

Barbara Redfern struggled furiously to free herself from the leather-clad arm that held her so firmly.

"Let me go!" she said. "Why have you done this?"

The hand of the woman was placed roughly over her mouth and kept there. Babs, unable to utter a word, cramped in the smallness of the cockpit, gazed over the side of the machine as it hummed its way through the sky.

Far, far below, almost hidden by mist, was the county of Kent. That she knew. Afar to her left stretched something that became light then dark, like a piece of tin in the sun.

It was the sea, a silver ribbon tinted by the setting sun. In front of her were the leather-clad backs of the two men, the pilot and his companion who had started the engine.

Why had they taken her? Where was she going? If only these silent companions would speak.

But there was only the engine's incessant hum to break the monotony.

The man in front of her opened a map, searching, probably, she thought, for some landing-place. From time to time he gazed over the side trying to pierce the slowly gathering dusk that mantled the land beneath.

She turned her head, looking back; but the dark, puffy clouds prevented her from seeing anything.

Cliff House must be many miles away. What of her chums? What must poor Mabs be thinking? And this message of Pauline's, now it would never be delivered.

Oh, it was too bad. It— Of course, they had kidnapped her to get that message—they must have known.

But she would not let them have it. Rather would she send it to the winds.

Somehow now she knew that the house was directly connected with Pauline, but in what way she knew not.

Darkness presently made everyway ink-black, and so they had been travelling awhile.

An argument between the man in front of her and the pilot was in progress.

But a sharp exclamation from the woman put an end to it.

"The flares," she said, and pointed.

The man in front of Babs turned to look at what she was pointing, and muttered to the pilot. The machine was gracefully banked, and Babs sensed they

were making a beeline for the flares to which the woman had pointed.

At first puzzled, Babs realised what they were—landing lights.

Already the earth, represented by a dark mass, was rushing towards them. The moon had risen, and lit up some rivulets below, making them shine like tinsel.

Nearer they got to the flares, and one or two figures could be seen—a shed and house.

Then Babs saw that the flares were in a hollow—a long, flat-stretched plain sunk below the level of the other ground.

A white L was on the ground, and the pilot came down against the wind.

They landed, and for a minute Babs could not believe that once again they were on earth. At first she was loth to land, for it seemed the same as when they had been many thousand of feet in the sky.

But she got out at last, with the man in front to help her down. The woman followed, and led her away to the dark house.

The flares were darkened, and everywhere seemed black until once more the moon escaped the clouds.

"Come along," said the woman, and pushed her through the open door of the house.

It was large, empty, and barely furnished. A gas-jet burned with meagre yellowness in the hall, and Babs shivered.

"That's the room," said the woman. "Go in!"

And she shut the door after Babs. The captain of the Fourth looked about her, but save where a gleam came through a chink in the door there was no light.

She stumbled against some bulky object, groped round it with her hands, and smiled as she found it was a chair.

"Well," she said half to herself and half aloud. "I may as well sit down, though what it's all about I don't know."

She had just made herself comfortable in the chair when the door was flung open, and the men and the woman entered.

One of the men struck a match, and with a pop the gas lit. Babs shielded her eyes against the sudden flood of light, then blinked at her captors.

Her eyes met those of the helmeted and goggled pilot.

"You!" she gasped.

For it was the man who had visited the

house with the five gables. But he was even more amazed than she.

"What is this?" he cried sharply. "You fools! This is not Pauline Wilson." He turned to Babs. "Who are you?" he demanded.

Babs laughed. "You have been fooled!" she said. "If you think I am Pauline Wilson, you are greatly mistaken. Please let me go."

She made a move as though to pass them, hoping by bluff to escape and get free with the package. But the woman still with a hand upon Babs' coat, shook the girl angrily.

"Let her go!" exclaimed one of the men, and then he gave a start. For, as Babs raised her hand to protect herself, the envelope dropped from her pocket.

"Give it to me!" she cried anxiously, as the man picked it up. But the woman held her back.

"So we are not tricked after all," said the man, with a short laugh. "This is just what we are after! Thank you!"

And he bowed mockingly to Babs.

With tantalising slowness he slit the envelope, and, with a smile upon his face, brought out the single sheet of paper—the paper that Marcia Loftus had hurriedly inserted.

His jaw dropped, and he glared at Babs.

"What is it?" cried the woman, and snatched the paper. Then she, too, turned upon the schoolgirl.

For on the paper, instead of what they had expected, was the solution of an algebra problem in Pauline's neat writing.

"Duped!" cried the man. "Duped by a schoolgirl!"

"I—I don't understand!" exclaimed Babs blankly.

In silence the woman handed her the paper, and Barbara Redfern blinked at it unbelievably. From the paper she glanced up to the fierce, angry, chagrined faces of her captors.

"Well!" they said together.

Barbara Redfern looked at them keenly, then threw back her head.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Later the kidnappers saw the joke. Though at first inclined to believe that Babs had tricked them, they believed her story.

She asked to be returned, and she was, but in such a manner!

Her hands were tied behind her back, and her eyes were blindfolded. Then

with the woman sitting beside her, she was driven back for many miles.

It was past midnight when the car drew up and she was allowed to descend. She was released from her bondage, and the handkerchief removed from her eyes.

The car moved off instantly, and Babs gazing after it, made a quick note of the number.

But it was round the corner in a flash. And Babs was left alone in the centre of the High Street, Courtfield, with lonely miles to walk back to the school.

She set forth pluckily, and soon after one o'clock the school was aroused by the pealing bell at the gates.

There was no sleep for the Fourth that night, and Babs had to tell her story over many times.

"But the place!" said Clara. "Where was it—what part?"

"I can't say," answered the captain of the Fourth. "Miles from here; but I was blindfolded. I know the car number—that is all. But it's a queer business."

"A jolly queer business, and we're not going to let them kidnap our captain without retaliation," said Mabel. "Girls, we've got to solve this mystery."

"Hear, hear!" came a chorus.

"And the first thing is to trace the number of the car," said Katie Smith. "We'll find them out in no time. My hat! What a feather in our cap—eh?"

"Yes, rather!" yawned Babs. "But the first thing, Katie, is sleep. Good-night!"

And poor Babs fell asleep directly her head touched the pillow.

But the others—they lay awake half the night talking. And though nothing was settled, the Fourth Form came to one important decision.

The mystery could be solved, it should be solved, and the Fourth Form would do it!

THE END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

(Next Thursday's issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND will contain another magnificent story by the author of "The Schoolgirl's Own Library," entitled "The Captured by Schoolgirls!", by Hilda Richards; further absorbing long instalments of our splendid new serials, "Doreen, the Circus Star!", by Joan Inglesant, and "The Schoolgirl Queen!", by Ida Melbourne; and another wonderful number of the "Schoolgirls' Paper." Order your copy of the SCHOOL FRIEND in advance to avoid disappointment.)

ON SALE TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24th.

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"Life Was One Long Misery."

"EVERY time I thought I was going to have a little pleasure I would get one of my terrible headaches. Of course, Jim, my husband, couldn't understand. He wanted me to be gay and bright.

"Come on, Flo," he would say. "Don't sit moping there. Put on your hat and come out and have a bit of fun."

"Then, when I couldn't move for the pain in my head, he would get cross and disappointed.

"Oh dear! How unhappy I was and how I suffered until 'Daisy' took away my headaches.

"It was just like magic. I'd been advised always to keep 'Daisy' in the house, and next time my head was bad I tried one. In five minutes the headache vanished. And now, whenever I feel a headache coming on, I take 'Daisy' and get rid of it at once. There is no fuss or bother about taking 'Daisy.' Just dissolve a dose in half a cupful of hot tea, milk, or water, or, if you like, place the powder on your tongue and swallow it down. You can take 'Daisy' with complete confidence. It is the only headache cure which has received serious medical support."

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THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 160.

THE SCHOOLGIRL QUEEN!

By IDA MELBOURNE (who wrote that most popular story, "Friendship Forbidden!")

THE LEADING CHARACTERS.

DOLORES KALENZI—or Princess Dolores—an attractive, brave-hearted Eastern girl, the daughter of the King of Bouralia. When at Limmershaw High School she found great chums in the persons of **KITTY CRICHTON, PEARL HARDY & CO.**, the merry and sterling Fourth-Formers, with whom she had many thrilling adventures before it was discovered that she was an Eastern princess.

PRINCESS JOZINE, the niece of the **GRAND DUKE OF YARAFEY**, who was formerly King of Bouralia, who was de-throned. Both are enemies of the Kalenzi's.

Dolores receives an urgent message from her father (the King of Bouralia), telling her that her presence is greatly needed in her own country, and that she might bring friends if permission were obtained. Everything is arranged, and, with the headmistress taking charge of the party, Dolores, Kitty, Pearl & Co. set off to continue their schooling in Bouralia.

From the outset the Yarafeys show that they mean to be the enemies of Dolores. The princess, however, does not fear them. Whilst out riding, the King, with Dolores and her friends, is caught in a sandstorm, and the King is separated from them. Later, his horse returns riderless. The girls suspect the Yarafeys of treachery, but can prove nothing.

The King is presumed dead, and Dolores is crowned Queen of Bouralia. After the ceremony she is lured into a trap. Dolores, however, effects an escape, and Princess Jozine and Yarafey are accused of treason, and are arrested. During the coronation banquet Dolores receives a message from her father!

(Read on from here.)

In the Temple!

DOLORES passed the note to her friends, and there were exclamations of surprise. Her father, prisoner or not, was in full possession of all the facts. If he were not himself watching, he had a spy.

That message seemed to give her fresh strength, and she braced herself. She would not waver—no threats from the nobles could intimidate her now. For she was acting upon her father's orders.

Why he sent orders—why he did not appear in person, she could not say; but she was wise enough not to question his reason. She was there to obey his commands.

She would keep the traitors in prison. Princess Jozine should not have further opportunity for scheming.

"It is useless to protest!" she exclaimed sharply to the nobles. "Please maintain order. The Grand Duke and the princess shall remain in prison."

"But, your Majesty—"

The white-bearded noble stopped short in his expostulation as the curtains behind the queen moved to admit an officer, his tunic dishevelled, his breath coming in gasps.

"What is it?" exclaimed Dolores anxiously turning.

"Your Majesty, the coach was taken by force of arms, the horses unharnessed, and the Grand Duke and the princess have escaped."

"Escaped!"

Dolores echoed the words, and stared in amazement at the officer.

The bedraggled officer who had brought her the message watched her anxiously.

(THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 180.)



"Go, call out the Hussars," ordered Dolores, "and search the desert. Do not come to me again until you have recaptured your prisoners."

"We did our best, your Majesty," he said. "But we were overpowered."

Dolores nodded curtly.

"It is no matter," she said. "They shall not long escape. Call out the Hussars and search the desert—"

"No, no, no!" came from the nobles. "They have escaped, so let it be!"

Without even so much as a glance at them, Dolores looked the officer straight in the face and pointed to the curtains whence he had come.

"Go!" she exclaimed angrily. "I am the Queen, and my orders shall be obeyed!"

"But—"

"Go! Call out the Hussars, and search the desert! Do not come to me again until you have recaptured your prisoners!"

The officer paused, glanced from the scowling nobles to his Queen, then saluted, and, turning on his heel, rushed through the curtain.

"That's the style!" said Pearl Hardy enthusiastically. "Make these old beavers sit up!"

And Pearl looked ferociously at the bearded nobles. Pearl, at any rate, had no fear of them, and the nobles began to see that the schoolgirl Queen was in no wise awed by them.

"It is impossible, your Majesty!" exclaimed one of the nobles half-angrily and half-pleadingly. "A Royal Duke and a Princess cannot be placed under arrest."

"But they have been," pointed out Dolores. "And you can say nothing that will alter my decision."

She sat down, and it became obvious that, as far as she was concerned, the matter was ended.

The banquet continued, and from the public hall below came the merry sound of laughter. Dancers were there, too, as Kitty Crichton saw when she leant over the balcony.

The capture of the Grand Duke, or even his subsequent escape had not apparently affected those in the hall.

The sound of song came to the girls' ears, and although they could not understand any of the Bouralian words, it was evidently a song of gladness.

"Long live the Queen!"

The cry rose every now and again, and by the sound it seemed to be uttered by every voice in the hall below.

Yet, despite the obvious loyalty of her subjects, Dolores seemed far from pleased. An anxious frown had settled on her brow, and she ate little of the dainty dishes that were brought to her by the dusky servants.

"What's the matter?" asked Julia Parsons, as she laid her hand upon her friend's arm.

"I—I was thinking about daddy," answered Dolores, with a troubled look in her eye. "If only I could find out where he is; if only I knew why he did not come to help me."

"But surely," said Julia, "he is a prisoner. He can't come; if he were free he would naturally claim the throne."

Dolores nodded slowly.

"I suppose so," she agreed slowly.

"But—but I must say it is very mysterious. How is it that he can send me messages? Surely a prisoner would not be allowed to do that?"

"But, goodness," protested Julia, "he must be a prisoner! Why, if he were free he'd be certain to come here; he wouldn't let them presume him dead."

But Dolores shook her head. Unanswerable as that argument seemed, she was not at all satisfied in her own mind that her father was a prisoner. True, if he were not, it would be natural that he should make his presence known to her—unless—

It was on that qualifying word that she paused. Her father did nothing without an excellent reason, and might it not be that he now had some motive for concealing his presence?

The other girls, however, did not see the force of her reasoning. They tried

to comfort her, supposing that she would believe him free.

But when she asked how it was that he had managed to send those messages to her, they could find no reply. And so the banquet continued, the nobles arguing, Dolores silent. It was ended at last, and the sigh that the schoolgirl gave as she rose from the head of the table showed that she was not displeased.

"Whither bound?" asked Pearl Hardy, catching her friend by the arm, as Dolores passed through the curtain.

"I am going to change into a dress," Dolores answered evenly. "And perhaps the Grand Duke and Princess Jozine will be captured," she added cryptically.

"You're going to hunt for them?" ejaculated Monica Lawrence. "Then, I guess I'll be with you."

And the others signified their intention of attaching themselves to the party. "Splendid!" laughed Dolores. "The more, the merrier. Come by all means."

And they hurried upstairs to change. They met Miss Bowden in the corridor, and she stared somewhat surprised at their hasty manner.

The mistress had been resting, having expressed the wish not to be present at the banquet.

"We are going out, Miss Bowden," Dolores exclaimed. "The Grand Duke has escaped, and we are going to see that he is recaptured."

"My dears," murmured the mistress anxiously, "I do hope you are not going to take risks. Can't the soldiers be sent?" she asked. "I feel that I am responsible for you; and, really, the desert is not a safe place to explore."

"I have sent soldiers," answered Dolores. "But I want to see that the Grand Duke and the princess are captured. They are enemies, and it won't do to have them at large."

She smiled, and looked earnestly at the mistress. Miss Bowden sighed.

"I suppose you must," she agreed. "I would prefer that you did not, but if you must go, Dolores, I would certainly rather the others accompanied you."

Dolores laughed, and pressed the mistress' arm.

"I know you will be awfully worried while we are gone; but, really, it must be done. If I don't show them I mean what I say, they won't respect me."

She did not tell the mistress that she thought her father was watching, but it was that conviction that was chiefly responsible for her desire for direct action. For if her father were a spectator, watching and judging, there was some danger that he might be betrayed.

Was he watching to detect enemies, or to test her? In either case it was essential that a dangerous enemy such as the Grand Duke should be imprisoned.

Leaving the mistress looking after them anxiously, they hurried off to change, and a very few minutes later, dressed in drill-slips, they were waiting in Dolores' room.

Kala Fiuse had been dispatched to prepare forces. And in a few moments the servant returned to say that they were ready.

"And now," asked Pearl Hardy, as she sat astride her horse, "where do we begin?"

She looked at Dolores as she spoke, her eyes expressing admiration of her friend's appearance, for, on second thoughts, Dolores had dressed in her uniform as commander of the Flying Hussars.

"To the town," their leader replied, and she mounted her horse.

Monica drew abreast of her as she rode off, and they were soon down the narrow street of the town.

Surprised natives stared at them, and

several saluted and bowed low to their queen. But the girls heeded them not; their attention was riveted on the group of soldiers in the centre of the town.

Dolores hurried towards the officer, and he, recognising her, saluted.

"Is the search being made for the prisoners?" she asked, returning the salute.

"Yes, your Majesty," the officer replied. "But they are in this locality somewhere. Fortunately they did not escape far; the Hussars set upon them, and the Grand Duke was seen to dismount. He is hiding even now somewhere in the town."

"And the princess?" asked Dolores quickly.

The officer shook his head. "I do not know," he replied. "The princess managed to ride off."

Dolores frowned, and looked about her at the quaint old buildings of the town. With no idea of symmetry they had been placed anyhow, scattered about. To search them would probably take many hours, and no doubt the Grand Duke had friends in the locality, all of them ready to help him. Otherwise it was unlikely that he would have risked capture by dismounting in the centre of the town.

But even as she looked about her she became aware of a hand that was placed upon the bridle of her horse. Glancing down she saw the old, crippled beggar, his frame bent and his head bowed.

"Well," she asked, "what is it?" "Your Majesty is looking for the escaped Grand Duke?" he asked in a strange cracked voice.

"I am—yes," Dolores answered, somewhat surprised. "Know you where he is?"

The old man pointed a trembling finger at the temple, visible on the right of a rising slope of green beyond the rocks. "I know that the temple holds many secret hiding-places. He may know that."

Dolores glanced at him keenly. She had not yet made quite certain whether he were friend or enemy. Was this some trap? Or did the beggar know of a probable hiding-place, and wished to betray the Grand Duke in revenge for the treatment he had himself received at the hands of the traitorous noble?

"Very well," she answered, coming quickly to a decision. "I thank you for your loyalty."

The beggar bowed deeply, touching his forehead.

"Your Majesty has no more loyal servant, nor the Grand Duke a greater enemy."

Then he backed away, and Dolores watched him hobble down the main street.

The officer of the guard laughed and looked at Dolores.

"Your Majesty, heed not the idle words of the beggar," he asked.

"Most certainly I do," Dolores answered. "And you will follow, lest the Grand Duke should be in the temple, yet slip through our fingers."

With an almost resigned salute the officer signified his assent.

Without another word Dolores strolled off, her friends following. It was not a great distance to the temple, and they covered the ground quickly.

Outside it they paused, tying up their horses.

"We can leave the princess at the present," said Dolores grimly, "provided that we can catch her, uncle."

She entered the temple which but a short time before had been the scene of the Grand Duke's treachery.

It was a magnificent building, extensive, and imposing. Somewhat awed by its magnificence and size, the girls glanced at the tall pillars and the strange

idols that lined the walls. Where to begin the search was undoubtedly a problem.

Jane Prestwich was the first to move, and she stepped forward thoughtfully to examine an immense pillar.

"I was just wondering," she said, "if these might form a hiding-place. They are pretty large, and in a book I was reading in the palace there was something about moving pillars."

"In the temple?" asked Dolores eagerly.

"I hadn't time to finish it, really," Jane said as she moved her hand round the gigantic stonework. "The book was written in Bouralian, and it is a funny language."

"Oh, well," said Kitty Crichton easily, "if we can hope for something like that, there is plenty to search; there are dozens of places where he could hide here."

As she spoke she glanced at the high roof, conical in shape, and the immense walls.

But Pearl Hardy, whose quick ears had caught a sound behind them, had turned.

"Hallo, who's this?" she exclaimed.

The girls, facing in the direction whence the footsteps came, saw a tall man, bald-headed, white-bearded, whose long black robe reached down to his sandalled feet. He was a priest, as they quickly realised, and his hands, unfolding themselves from the deep sleeves, went up nervously together as he bowed his head.

"Most gracious Majesty," he droned, "what is it that you require?"

"I have come to search," said Dolores quickly, "for a traitor!"

The priest raised his hands, as though in horror.

"Your Majesty," he exclaimed, rolling his eyes upward, "the temple must not be searched! The gods would protest, and evil would befall Bouralia."

Dolores drew a deep breath and stared at him.

The beliefs of the Bouralian people were strange, she knew, and it was not unlikely that they would regard a search of the temple as being sacrilege.

"Someone is hiding here," she said. "A prisoner of state. It is the Grand Duke Yarafey; he must be found."

"But, your Majesty, surely he cannot hide here. There is a mistake; he must be elsewhere. I beg you, do not search. I have been here since the coronation service. No one has entered."

"Are you sure?"

"Your Majesty—"

Even as he began a denial, Jane Prestwich stepped forward and pointed to the flagged floor.

"What is that, then?" she asked. And the others, stepping forward, too, saw that she pointed to a muddy foot-print.

"And it's not yet dry," exclaimed Jane. "It is the black mud of the highway."

She looked triumphantly at the priest, who had drawn back a step, his lips parted, his eyes staring.

"That—that!" he exclaimed. "A soldier came a moment ago to make inquiries."

"You said that no one had entered the temple!" flashed Dolores. "Are you shielding someone? I warn you that traitors in Bouralia pay for their treachery. Where is the Grand Duke of Yarafey?"

The priest, at a loss for words, lowered his eyes.

"I crave your Majesty's pardon for my forgetfulness," he stammered. "The visit of the soldiers shipped my memory."

"Then your memory is not to be

re. Upon," replied Dolores harshly. "The temple must be searched."
She turned, but the priest placed a detaining hand upon her sleeve. "Stay here! For Bouralia's sake do not disturb the silence of the gods."

Dolores shook her arm free, and in silence strode down the centre of the temple. For she had noticed that the muddy footprints were repeated at intervals.

Her friends followed her, and the priest, throwing up his hands, gave vent to a wail that might be interpreted as fear or warning.

"It strikes me," said Pearl Hardy indignantly, "that Bouralia is a nest of traitors."

"And it is pretty obvious," commented Jane Prestwich, "that the duke is in hiding here somewhere."

In the centre of the temple they paused, glancing at the pillars and idols in wonderment. To say that the Grand Duke was in hiding here was simple, but to find his hiding-place far more difficult.

"Stand up!" she commanded. "What are you doing there?"

The priest, obeying her, gave her a look more of sorrow than of anger.

"I plead," he murmured huskily, "that the great god Ruski will not vent his wrath upon innocent Bouralians."

And even as he spoke there came a strange whistling sound, and a wreath of smoke floated towards them.

Fascinated, and a trifle anxious, the girls stared. In trembling agitation the priest, covering his eyes with one hand, pointed with the other to where an immense idol could be dimly seen.

"See!" he cried. "Ruski breathes forth vengeance!"

A whistling sound from the idol accompanied his words, and the amazement of the girls increased.

"Well, what—what does that?" asked Dolores.

"Ruski!" retorted the priest. "You have trampled upon his sacred silence, and now he will wreak his vengeance upon us!"

the others, suddenly jabbed her hand upon the bird's head. As she did so, the priest uttered a sharp cry of alarm, flung himself upon the idol, and placed his back to it.

"Stand back!" he urged, "or you will regret it! Leave the temple while you may go in safety!"

The girls stared at him, amazed and anxious. There was something sincere and sinister in the urgency of the priest's words. They hesitated, and for a moment it seemed that they would draw back. But Jane Prestwich gave a sudden laugh. She caught the priest by the wrist, and, to the amazement of the other girls, gave him a sudden tug that wrenched him away from the idol. Then, without a second's pause, she brought down her fist hard upon the bird's head.

Click!
With a swish the front part of the idol swung round in a semi-circle. The priest covered back, and from the girls came a perfect shout of recognition

"The Grand Duke!"

An Exchange of Prisoners!

"THE Grand Duke!"

They stared at him speechless, and he, as though petrified, stood motionless in the hollow interior of the idol. There were springs about him and other mechanism the meaning of which was not apparent. But they did not give a second glance to them.

His eyes stared at them from beneath the shaggy brows, and the tufty beard bristled angrily.

He was quivering and breathing deeply. His eyes rolled from side to side, as though calculating his chances of escape. With a sudden spring he dashed out. Pearl Hardy thrust out her foot to trip him up; but, whether by accident or design, the priest bumped against her, causing her to fall heavily on to the flagstone.

Then, before the others could reach him, the Grand Duke was through the doorway of the temple, and running down the steps.

In pursuit they ran, passing through the temple entrance, but a second after him. They saw him ahead, racing wildly down the slope. To the right were the soldiers, running towards their horses with the object of mounting them.

"Oh, the fools, the fools!" panted Dolores. "Why do they delay? He will elude us yet!"

But, even as she spoke, the Grand Duke had another pursuer. From a small boulder on which he had been seated, the crippled beggar sprang up, and, raising his crutch, sent it hurling at the flying legs of the Grand Duke.

His aim was unerring, and the violent blow that the crutch gave the Grand Duke on the shin, caused that portly nobleman to stumble and fall. In a moment the beggar was upon him, placing his knee firmly in the centre of the fallen man's back. And before the courageous assailant could be thrown off, the girls were upon the scene.

"Well done!" praised Dolores. And as the beggar slipped aside, she caught the Grand Duke by the arm.

He struggled wildly, but the combined efforts of the girls sufficed to hold him, and then the soldiers were upon the scene.

"Captured," said Dolores, with a rather shaky laugh, "thanks to the beggar." And she looked round to congratulate the cripple.

"He's gone!" said Kitty Crichton in surprise.



As the priest spoke there came a strange whistling sound and a wreath of smoke floated towards them from the dark interior.

"Another footprint!" said Jane Prestwich quickly, and, hurrying forward, they traced another mark.

The priest, walking quickly, went with them. He hurried ahead, raising his hands as though in prayer, then suddenly dropped upon his knees.

Dolores regarded him somewhat anxiously. Necessary though it was to discover the Grand Duke and recapture him, she had no wish to do anything that was calculated to bring down upon them the wrath of the priest. For the priest had great power, and was regarded with awe by the peasants.

"What is he saying?" she asked Jane Prestwich anxiously. But Jane smiled and shook her head. "I don't know," she answered softly. "The point that matters is not so much what he is saying, but what he is doing. 'See!' she added quickly. 'He is shuffling about.'"

"Yes, I see," Dolores agreed slowly. "But what of that?"

"Simply that he is erasing another footprint," smiled Jane.

Dolores started, then, as she saw that Jane was right, she frowned heavily, and strode towards the priest.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 180

"What utter rubbish!" exclaimed Dolores contemptuously. "Surely you do not expect me to believe that! There is some mechanical contrivance that works it."

"Contrivance!" echoed the horrified priest. "You, the Queen of Bouralia, a disbeliever!"

Jane Prestwich alone understood what passed between them. She went up close to the idol and examined it. Only too well did she realise that the priest's eye was upon her. But Jane was as keen as she was curious. With a quick movement she made as though to press the head of the small carved bird that was in the giant idol's hand.

"Stop!" cried the priest in agonised tones. "It is sacrilege! It will bring death and disaster!"

Jane would have disregarded the warning, but Dolores restrained her. "Be careful!" she whispered. "Goodness knows what power this priest has!"

"But there is a spring there," protested Jane. "I can see it."

"So can I," added Pearl Hardy. "It's only a mechanical stunt. Don't let him scare you!"

And Pearl, who was more reckless than

And they looked about for him in vain. "But how strange that he should run off like that!" said Dolores, in amazement. "I was going to reward him!"

Jane Prestwich shrugged her shoulders. "Perhaps he hopes that the Grand Duke hasn't seen him," she suggested. "Anyway, it is rather strange that a cripple should be able to run as well as he can."

And the girls looked at one another in surprise as they realised the truth of Jane's words. There was certainly something peculiar about the beggar. Perhaps they would have said and thought more about it then had not the Grand Duke occupied their attention.

Despite the hold his captors had upon him, he shook his fist threateningly at Dolores.

"This is not the end!" he said thickly. "Bouralia shall not have a white girl queen. The Princess Jozine will return, and when she does it will be as queen."

"When Jozine returns," Dolores answered coldly, "she will accompany you to prison. The desert shall be searched; no stone shall be left unturned until Princess Jozine is captured and brought a captive to the capital."

"When!" sneered the duke. "My dear child, you have a lot to learn. An English schoolgirl shall never queen Bouralia!"

Dolores made no reply, but, with an indication that she required the duke to be conveyed immediately to the cells, she returned to her horse.

"And that," she said to Pearl Hardy, "is the finish of the Grand Duke!"

"But what about the princess?" Dolores shrugged her shoulders, and endeavoured to appear unconcerned.

"I am not afraid of Princess Jozine," she said. "The princess shall be captured."

But as they followed the soldiers and the prisoner back to the palace, Dolores did not look at her ease. The worried frown that had settled upon her brow told of doubt.

And the frown was only temporarily dispelled when she saw the Grand Duke safely in prison, in the cold stone cells far below the ground level.

Through the grating in the stonework the Grand Duke glared at her venomously.

"Soon," he declared, "we make a bid for the throne, and all Bouralia will be with us!"

Dolores turned away, and went upstairs. She was puzzled, anxious, and a little alarmed. For, despite her hopes and beliefs, she realised only too clearly that she had many enemies, that the Grand Duke had plenty of supporters.

So long as the Princess Jozine was at large she was in danger. But how was the princess to be captured?

At that moment Kala Fiuse, her maid, appeared.

"Your Majesty," murmured Kala, bending low, "an officer of the Hussars awaits you below. He brings news, he says, of the Princess Jozine."

A new light in her eyes, Dolores nodded and followed the girl from the room. Kala's slowness was almost irritating to her, so eager was she to hear the news the officer had brought.

Kala opened the door, and stood aside for her mistress to enter the waiting-room.

A tall officer saluted, and stepped forward. "Your Majesty," he exclaimed anxiously, "we have heard strange tidings of your father, the king—"

"My father!" ejaculated Dolores. "I thought you had come about Princess

Jozine. What news have you of him?" she asked of him, a catch in her voice. "You have seen him alive?"

But the officer shook his head regretfully.

"It has not been our good fortune to see him, but that he is alive we doubt not. For the Princess Jozine has sent word that if her uncle is not released, she will not reveal the whereabouts of your father!"

"My father is, then, a prisoner?"

The officer did not at once reply. He glanced over his shoulder through the window, then, turning back to the schoolgirl Queen, looked at her keenly.

"From the message I gather as much, your Majesty," he answered. "For there was no proof of the King's death, and it is possible that he lives."

Dolores drew a deep breath, and in her fine eyes there was smouldering anger.

"But where is my father?" she asked.

The officer shrugged his shoulders.

"He must be in the castle; there is no alternative," exclaimed Dolores. "Never shall I bow down to these people! They have misjudged me. I am not a weakling to concur to their scheme, and release the Duke. My father shall be rescued by force of arms!"

(The Princess Jozine is mistaken in Dolores if she thinks she can obtain her father's release in this fashion. But does Jozine really know the whereabouts of the King? How is Dolores about to act? Do not miss next Thursday's magnificent long instalment of this powerful serial on any account.)

Your Editor's Corner.

MY DEAR READERS,—I am sure you are all tremendously interested in the weird happenings round about the House of the Five Gables, and are longing to read next week's long complete story of the doings of the girls of Cliff House School. In this you will find the mystery grows even more thrilling and exciting, and in

"THWARTED BY SCHOOLGIRLS!"

By Hilda Richards,

you will have a yarn that I can promise will hold you enthralled from start to finish. As you read on you will feel a glow of pride that Babs, Mabs & Co. belong to the same nation as yourselves. Their pluck, resource, and determination is what we expect from British schoolgirls, and these qualities were never more necessary than in the events of which you will read about in next week's issue of your favourite paper. I will not spoil your anticipation by describing the part that Pauline Wilson plays—for Pauline holds the key of the puzzle, and to disclose her doings would, as they say, "give the whole show away!" Stories such as Miss Richards pens, depend a good deal on making you wonder how they will end—making you exercise your brains as to the why and wherefore of it all. You can, in a way, imagine yourselves to be detectives engaged in solving some deep mystery with only just a slender clue here and there to help you. Wonderfully sharp my readers are, too! Often I receive letters concerning some story, with a baffling plot, and, although they have not yet read the end, their comments show that they "are getting warm on the scent," and that they have a pretty shrewd idea of the way the conclusion will work out.

Our new and absorbing serial, telling of the adventures of Doreen Harcourt, entitled:

"DOREEN, THE CIRCUS STAR!"

By Joan Inglesant,

continues to grip the interest to a remarkable degree. Going to press so many weeks in advance, I have not yet had time to receive your opinions; but I have little doubt that Doreen will meet with your approbation in the same way that readers of our companion paper, the "Schoolgirls' Own," regarded this plucky and attractive little heroine. Should you desire to read about her previous adventures in England, you have only to order the issues of the "Schoolgirls' Own" dated May 6th to July 15th of this year, inclusive. For back numbers of either the "School Friend," or the "Schoolgirls' Own," apply to "Back Number Department, Amalgamated Press, 7-9, Pilgrim Street, London, E.C. 4," enclosing three penny stamps for each number, and additional halfpenny stamps for each extra copy required.

Barbara Redfern desires me to thank the many readers who have sent their congratulations on the splendid school mag. issued from Cliff House School. I can assure you that the whole staff are striving might and main to produce even a more perfect paper than that which you already consider so excellent. They are keen at Cliff House—every one of them!

Followers of the adventures of Dolores will find an absorbing number of incidents awaiting them in next week's instalment of

"THE SCHOOLGIRL QUEEN!"

By Ida Melbourne.

Dolores and her friends are now well on the warpath against the plotters of Bouralia,

and Dolores does a very noble action, which causes a considerable sensation amongst the natives, and further convinces them that the Schoolgirl Queen is a ruler of whom they can be proud.

GREAT NEWS!

This week I have reserved the greatest news until the last. But it is news which will fill you all with the greatest excitement and pleasure, for it is news that many of you have been waiting to hear ever since the early days of the "School Friend." Here it is:

ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24th,

the first number of

THE "SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN" FOURPENNY LIBRARY

will be on the market! This is the great news—as sudden and unexpected as it is gladdening. Hitherto I have been able to reply to the tens of thousands of readers requesting a fourpenny library with nothing more cheering than words to the effect that "the matter is under consideration." Well, the matter has been considered—and decided upon.

On OCTOBER 24th you will have before you the library that has been so consistently clamoured for! The "SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN" FOURPENNY LIBRARY contains what is undoubtedly one of the finest long complete stories that has ever been written round schoolgirl life. The girls of Rockliffe School will make as strong an appeal to you as any schoolgirl characters have ever done, and I am convinced that May Pendleton, the scholarship girl in this line story, entitled "The Schoolgirl Outcast!" will at once become your favourite character. Be advised, and order the "SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN" FOURPENNY LIBRARY from your newsagent without delay!

Your Sincere Friend,

YOUR EDITOR.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND—No. 160.

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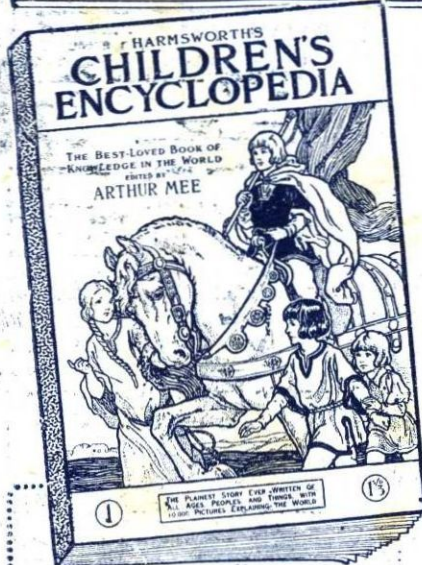
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