

WONDERFUL GIFTS NEXT WEEK

The Schoolgirl

2^D

No. 356, Vol. 14
Week Ending
MAY 23rd, 1936

Every
Saturday
INCORPORATING
'SCHOOLDAYS'



UNSEEN!

A tensely dramatic
moment in this
week's enthralling
long complete
Cliff House story

Barbara Redfern & Co. in an Enthralling Complete Mystery and Adventure Story



THE FOURTH FORM FORTUNE HUNTERS

The Jape Which Meant Disaster

"I'M glad we're going—but I'm sorry we are!"

So said Barbara Redfern.

It was not a particularly lucid remark, coming from pretty, blue-eyed Babs, the clever and popular captain of the Fourth Form of Cliff House, that famous girls' school in Kent.

But the fact that she was glad about something when she was sorry at the same time seemed to be understood by the two girls who walked on either side of her.

"So am I," agreed golden-haired Mabel Lynn—Mabs to her chums, and Babs' chief lieutenant in Form affairs.

"It's good—but awful!" supported Tomboy Clara Trevlyn, sports captain of the Fourth—which, from a paradoxical point of view, crowned even Babs' effort.

But if the three chums were glad, yet sorry, about something that was good, yet awful, the other girls marching ahead of them down the short drive were unanimous in their opinion.

"Well, thank goodness we're leaving Drere Manor!" said Peggy Preston, with a little shiver.

"Beastly place!" remarked Janet Jordan.

"I'll say Drere Manor sure gave me the creeps!" observed Leila Carroll, the junior from America.

"Let's forget it! We'll soon be back at Cliff House!" put in Rosa Rodworth cheerfully.

"Hurrah!"

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrations by T. Laidler

And the Fourth cheered; and Miss Charmant, their mistress, and Dulcía Fairbrother, the Sixth Form prefect in charge, made no attempt to silence the outburst.

For they, too, were glad to be leaving Drere Manor, the old Tudor mansion on the outskirts of Friardale village, in which the Fourth Form had been temporarily quartered owing to structural alterations at Cliff House School.

But if the majority of the girls were pleased, Babs, Mabs, and Clara were not. At least, they would be glad to get back to their old quarters, but in leaving Drere Manor on this particular sunny May evening, all their plans for helping two friends were being seriously jeopardised.

"Does Eileen know we're going?" asked Mabs now.

"Yes; I told her over the phone," replied Babs, with a little frown of worry.

"She said she'd try to get along to see

us before we went, but she hasn't turned up yet. Oh, goodness, isn't this beastly luck? And just when we were all set for finding that money!"

Charming Eileen Hunter and her father, a cripple, had once lived at Drere Manor. That had been in their prosperous days, when Eileen's grandfather had been alive.

Then he had died suddenly, leaving no will or trace of his small fortune. Eileen and her father had been forced to leave the house and live in a small cottage in the village. But both had reason to believe that the money was hidden somewhere in Drere Manor, and Babs & Co. had promised to help them find it.

That very night they had arranged to meet Eileen and make an exhaustive search of a secret underground dungeon in which the money was apparently hidden. But now—

Now the chums were returning to Cliff House. Now Drere Manor would be left empty and deserted once more, giving easy access to others who were also after the money.

Reaching the end of the drive, Babs turned to throw a last look at the old house. Drere Manor, picturesque, but

ALTHOUGH they have had to leave Drere Manor, and return to Cliff House, Babs & Co. have by no means abandoned their attempt to find the hidden fortune which means so much to Eileen Hunter and her father. More than ever, indeed, are they resolved to defeat the schemes of those who are their rivals in this race for riches.

neglected, stood bathed in the waning sunlight. The lengthening shadows of the tall trees, creeping across its redbrick front, were giving it a gloomy appearance.

In the village it was whispered that Dreere Manor was haunted, and certainly many queer things had happened since the Fourth had occupied it. Many of the girls had been reduced to a state of terror—so much so that Miss Primrose, the headmistress, had been forced to recall the Form to Cliff House, even though the necessary alterations were not yet completed.

Only Babs & Co. knew the real truth of those mysterious happenings; only they knew that someone had deliberately tried to scare the Fourth out of Dreere Manor—and succeeded in doing so.

Babs was thinking of that now as she looked back at the house. And suddenly she gave a little gasp, her hands clenched as, at one of the lower windows, she saw two figures peering out furtively, watching the Fourth Form as they marched out into the Friardale Lane.

"Burgin," muttered Babs in a dismayed voice, "and Freda!"

There could be no mistaking them, though both figures hurriedly drew back out of sight. One was Albert Burgin, the rascally estate agent, who had been responsible for terrorising the girls. The other was Freda Ferriers, a member of the Fourth Form.

Babs did not know that Burgin was Freda's uncle, although she knew well enough that Freda had been assisting the man in his schemes. Nor did Babs know that Burgin was not really after the money hidden in Dreere Manor. Burgin had a much deeper and more sinister game afoot, though his efforts to frighten the girls away from the house had led her to suspect that he was seeking the lost fortune.

And already Burgin was in Dreere Manor—had no doubt entered it by one of the many secret passages with which the place was honeycombed. Having succeeded in getting the house empty once more, he could now search for the money with nobody to stop him. So tonight Babs, and she was filled with dismay.

She felt a pluck at the sleeve of her blazer.

"Babs, did you say something?" asked Mabs.

"Yes. I've just seen Burgin and Freda. They're both in the house already."

"You saw Freda?" broke in Clara. "My hat, but she's supposed to be missing!"

The apparent disappearance of Freda Ferriers had been the climax of the many disasters which had so frightened the Fourth during their short stay at Dreere Manor, and had caused Miss Primrose to decide that the girls must return to Cliff House.

Freda, after receiving special permission to go out during the morning, had not returned. Yet there was Freda in Dreere Manor. Obviously, her "disappearance" was yet another example of Burgin's duplicity.

"She's not missing!" retorted Babs grimly. "Didn't we see her ourselves this morning, when she went to Monk's Folly where Eileen had been made a prisoner? No; it's just part of Burgin's error campaign—and it's worked, too. Question is, shall I tell the Charmers or—"

But before the junior captain could decide whether or not it would be advisable to inform Miss Charmant of Freda's presence in Dreere Manor, a

figure came hurrying along the lane, and Babs' thoughts were diverted into another channel.

Recognising the figure, she smiled a sunny greeting.

"Why, it's Eileen!"

Eileen Hunter it was, her pretty, oval face smiling yet anxious. She hurried up to the chums as they paused, allowing the rest of the Fourth to march on down the lane.

THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE SCHOOLGIRL

WILL BE ON SALE ON
FRIDAY, MAY 22nd
4 BEAUTIFUL GIFTS WITH
EVERY COPY

"Oh, Babs, I'm sorry you're going," she said worriedly.

"And so are we, Eileen," replied Babs. "But there's nothing else for it. The Fourth is returning to Cliff House, and that's that."

"Will—will this make much difference to your father, Eileen?" asked Mabs diffidently; for the golden-haired one knew how much Mr. Hunter had been relying on the rent which Miss Primrose had been paying him for occupying Dreere Manor.

Eileen smiled wily, smoothing out a crease in her rather shabby but pretty blue home-made dress.

"Not financially, if that's what you mean, Mabs." She laughed reassuringly as Mabs flushed awkwardly. "Oh, you've been sports—so kind and helpful. But, you see, Miss Primrose agreed to rent the manor for a month, and, although you've been there only a short while, she insisted on paying the full money. Very decent of her, wasn't it? I don't know what we should have done without it. Oh, Babs, I do wish we could find grandfather's money. But now you're going—"

"The fact that we're going won't make the slightest difference, Eileen," smiled Babs. "We'll find that money whatever happens. What was that you overheard Burgin saying in his office this afternoon?"

"That he was meeting someone in an underground room at midnight tonight," replied Eileen. "And he said they'd get the plans together and get the stuff out. He must have meant the money—"

"Well, that's all right—couldn't be better!" put in Clara promptly. "He finds the money, and then we step in and take it from him. We're not letting that twister get away with your money, Eileen. You know where this underground room is?"

"I think I do, Clara. It's a dungeon, really."

"Right! We'll meet you at eleven o'clock to-night as arranged—eh, Babs?"

"Rather!" responded Babs eagerly. "It means we'll have to break bounds and detention—we were detained for missing lessons this morning, you know

—but that doesn't matter. See you here at the gates at eleven o'clock, Eileen. And now we must fly, or we shall be getting into a fresh bother with the Charmers. Bye-bye, Eileen—and don't worry."

"Good-bye—and you don't know how grateful daddy and I are," said Eileen a little huskily. "We shall never be able to thank you—"

"Leave the thanks until after we've found the money," laughed Babs.

And the chums flew down the lane to rejoin their Form-fellows, while Eileen stood looking after them with her large brown eyes swimming.

—and how marvellous it would be if, that night, they found the hidden fortune which meant so much to her and her dear daddy.

IN DREERE MANOR, Albert Burgin stood talking to his niece, Freda Ferriers. He was a tall, lean man, with a wispy moustache adorning the upper lip of his thin face. A ferrety face it was, like that of Freda's; and his small, narrow eyes glinted with satisfaction.

"Well, it's good!" he grinned. "Those dratted kids have gone and this place is empty once more. Now I can go ahead with the job."

Freda's sallow features became flushed with excitement.

"You mean—find the money?" "Money?" Burgin, his rascally mind busy, repeated the word vaguely.

Freda eyed her uncle in surprise, with which was mingled suspicion.

"Yes, the money which was hidden here by old Hunter. Why, uncle, surely you haven't forgotten what you're looking for?" Freda said tartly, but again she looked curiously at the man.

He started and then laughed—a hollow, mirthless laugh.

"Oh, the money! Yes, of course. We'll be able to find that all right now," he said, and abruptly changed the conversation. "Well, Freda, I think you'd better get back to your school now. There's no need for you to be 'missing any longer, and I don't want the headmistress woman making inquiries and bringing in the police."

Freda looked apprehensive. "But—but what explanation shall I give—"

"Oh, say anything you like! Tell 'em you were kidnapped and got away—tell 'em anything. But, listen, Freda, I still want you to keep an eye on those interfering girls—that Barbara Redfern and her friends. I don't want them prowling round here to-night when—"

He stopped abruptly. "Anyway, I don't want them spying on me."

Yet again that queer glance of growing suspicion from Freda.

"Uncle, you haven't got some other game up your sleeve have you?" she asked. "I've only been helping you because you said you were looking for that money, and promised to give me a few pounds for myself. But if there's something else—"

"Don't be silly, Freda! What else should there be?" But the man's tone was uneasy as he spoke; and had Freda been a little more observant she would have known that he was lying. "Now don't you get asking questions. I've got someone coming here to-night, and we're going to look for that—that money."

"You know where it is?" Freda persisted.

"Well, I've got a pretty good idea—" in rather a vague voice. Burgin fumbled in his pocket and produced a wallet. "Look here, Freda, I'm

keeping to our bargain. Here's five pounds to be going on with, and that's only a first instalment. Don't breathe a word of what's going on here, and I'll make you as wealthy as those other flash friends of yours you were telling me about."

Freda's mean eyes glittered. She'd always wanted to have as much pocket-money as had Lydia Crossendale and Rosa Rodworth, and others in the so-called Smart Set of the Fourth Form.

"All right, uncle!" she said. "I won't say a word, and trust me to watch every movement of Barbara Redfern and her beastly friends!"

Freda slipped out of Drere Manor. She was still not sure about her uncle—she still had a vague, uncomfortable feeling that he was keeping something from her, but in view of his lavish promise, she was quite content to let matters remain as they were.

While Albert Burgin chuckled to himself after she had gone.

"Never do to let her know everything," he muttered. "And if she becomes too inquisitive, I'll soon shut her up. Can't afford to take any chances with this job. I don't know where that money's hidden—if it's hidden at all—and I'm not worrying, anyway. Reckon the other stuff, if all goes well, will be worth a tidy bit more to me and the boys."

From which words it will be seen that Albert Burgin, contrary to what Barbara Redfern and her chums thought, did not know the secret of the hidden Hunter fortune and was not, as a matter of fact, very interested in it.

Burgin, clever scoundrel that he was, had made far bigger plans—

TEN O'CLOCK at Cliff House School.

The tenth stroke had just boomed out from the old clock tower. The sound of its chime was still echoing in the Third Form dormitory.

The Third Form should have been asleep—but it wasn't. The Third had been amusing itself entertaining three new occupants in its dormitory. Those three occupants were girls of the Fourth Form—Barbara Redfern, Clara Trevlyn and Mabel Lynn.

The entertainment had been raging fast and furious. Now, after a brief respite during which Babs & Co. had managed to drop off into a doze, the fun re-commenced.

"Sock 'em, girls!" cried the voice of Doris Redfern, Babs' impish younger sister and leader of the Third Form juniors.

"Thump! Bump! Biff! Shadowy figures leapt at the three beds occupied by Babs and her chums, and a forest of pillows rained down on Babs & Co.

"Up, the Third!"
"We'll show these Fourth Form kids!"

"Shush! Not too much noise!"
"Thud! Bump! Biff!"
Babs & Co. woke up with violent starts and startled cries as the pillows rained about them.

"O—oh!" yelled Babs. "What's happening—stop it, your little imps!"
"You young demons!" hooted Clara.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Third Form ragers laughed unsympathetically. The Fourth Form victims gasped and spluttered. At any other time they would have enjoyed that good-natured ragging, but now they were feeling dismayed and not a trifle apprehensive.

In less than half an hour's time they would have to leave Cliff House if they were to meet Eileen Hunter at eleven

o'clock at Drere Manor as arranged. Small chance they would have of slipping out unseen and unheard if the irrepressible Third Formers continued their lively larks.

"Doris, get back to bed immediately!" exclaimed Babs in her sternest voice.

"Rabbits!" scoffed Doris, and then, dodging from one to the other of the chums' beds in the darkness, suddenly gave a chortle which was taken up by the rest of the girls about her as they saw what she had done.

"Well, there's only one thing for it!" came the warlike voice of Clara.
"We'll have to teach the cheeky imps a lesson."

And the Tomboy began clambering out of bed, backed up by Babs and Mabs. There was a scuffling of feet. The Third Formers dived back into their beds like startled rabbits.

"Night-night, big sister!" chuckled Doris. "Pleasant nightmares!"
"Go to sleep!"

Snore!
The Third Form dormitory became silent once more. Babs sighed, wondering for how long. But she chuckled inwardly. Goodness, but the little imps had led them a merry dance since coming to bed. She'd be glad when the Fourth Form dormitory was finished and they were able to go back there to a little more peace and quietness!

She lay back in bed, hoping the Third Formers had concluded their tricks for the night and would go to sleep.

Ten minutes passed, and the long apartment was silent save for the sound of deep, regular breathing.

"Anyone awake?" she said softly.
No reply for a few seconds. Then:
"O.K., Babs!" came from Clara.

"Ready now?" asked Mabs.
For answer Babs climbed out of bed and began fumbling for her clothes. Mabs and Clara followed suit.

And then the chums made an alarming discovery.

"I say, where are my clothes?" demanded Clara suddenly.
"And where are mine?" echoed Mabs. Babs groaned.

"Gone—missing—vanished!" she said.
"Oh, my hat! These kids must have hidden them!"

That seemed obvious.
No clothes! And in a quarter of an hour's time they were due to meet Eileen at Drere Manor.

A joke was a joke—but this was disaster!



Midnight at the Manor

"FOUND them yet, Babs?"

"Not a sign!"

"Bother and blow!"
Babs & Co. were furious and frantic. They dare not switch on the light for fear of waking the Third. They couldn't even use their torches, for the chums had carefully placed them in the pockets of their blazers. In the darkness, relieved only by the glimmer of a pale moon, the chums were having to search for their missing clothes.

Babs was frantically stripping her bed of blankets and sheets, thinking her garments might have been hidden between them. Clara, groping under the bed, knocked into the table beside it; and nearly sent a glass of water



WITH frantic haste the chums searched for their missing clothes. But there was no sign of them. The Third Formers' jape seemed likely to bring disaster upon Babs & Co.'s daring plans.

clattering to the floor. Mabs, having failed to locate her clothes inside her locker, was searching on top of it.

But all three chums failed in their quest. Not a sign of their clothes did they find. Their looks were grim as they glared from each other to the rows of sleeping Third Formers, lying there so deceptively innocent and harmless.

"My hat! What are we going to do?" demanded Clara, and almost snorted in her wrath, vowing threats of dire vengeance on the heads of Doris Redfern and her merry-larking imps.

The chums extended the field of their search. Time was flying, and Babs saw by her wrist-watch that already it was just on eleven o'clock. It was just their luck that all their other clothes were still packed and at Dreder Manor.

Not until the following morning would their trunks and boxes be collected and delivered at Cliff House.

"Oh, thank goodness! Here they are, girls!"

Babs breathed a sigh of relief. At last she had located them—piled up on top of a cupboard.

"Are mine there, Babs?" demanded Clara, striding eagerly across the dormitory.

"Shush! Yes, you noisy duffer! And Mabs, too!"

The clothes having been found, Babs and Co. dressed in record time. But eleven o'clock had already struck when the chums finally left the dormitory and crept downstairs to make their way out of the school by the small window near the main door.

Three minutes later they were wheeling their bicycles out of the shed, and the gates having been closed and locked by Piper, the porter, reached Friardale Lane by way of adjoining meadows.

"We must simply fly!" breathed Babs. "Eileen will think we're not coming, and she might go into the house by herself. And if Burgin sees her—"

She broke off anxiously, and leapt on to the saddle. Once already Burgin had kidnapped Eileen, and he would not hesitate to do so again if he thought she were interfering with his plans.

The chums flew. But precious time had been wasted, and the half-hour was booming out from Friardale church when they pulled up outside the gateway of Dreder Manor.

Half an hour later, and no sign of Eileen.

"She's not here!" panted Babs, looking about her desperately.

Everywhere was very still and silent.

The only sound was a rustling from the trees as they stirred gently in the night breeze. Overhead the moon sailed through a wrack of clouds, casting an eerie glow over the scene.

"Evidently got tired of waiting for us," grunted Clara. "Oh, blow those kids!"

Babs bit her lip worriedly as she wheeled her bicycle up to the big gates of Dreder Manor. She couldn't help the fears which were already assailing her.

Why hadn't Eileen waited for them to arrive? She must have known that they would not fail her. Perhaps she had been seen by Burgin, or the man he was meeting that night.

"We must scout round and look for her," Babs said. "I—I hope nothing has happened to her."

"Possibly she's keeping watch on the house from somewhere in the garden," suggested Mabs.

They wheeled their bicycles through the gateway, and hid them in a thick clump of bushes near by. Then cautiously they crept down the drive, tense and on the alert, ears strained for the slightest sound. Hearts were beating fast, for they knew that this was a reckless adventure.

Still no sign of Eileen. Dreder Manor was in darkness—not a light shone from one of its many windows. Gloomy the old house had looked in the sunlight; now, bathed in the pale glimmer of the moon, and silhouetted against the night sky, it took on an eerie, almost sinister aspect.

Mabs shivered, and drew up the collar of her blazer. No doubt about it—Dreder Manor did give you the creeps.

The chums made their way round the side of the house, and into the long garden at the rear.

"Make for the summer-house," whispered Babs. "My hat! I wish we could find Eileen!"

She tried to keep her voice steady; was trying to fight down her fears. If Eileen were not somewhere near the summer-house—well, then Babs knew she would begin to fear the worst.

The large rustic summer-house at the end of the garden was likely to be the pivot of that night's activities. In it was concealed the entrance to a secret tunnel, which actually ran through part of the thick, hollow wall surrounding the house, and led right into Dreder Manor.

The chums had discovered it by accident, and knew that Burgin used the tunnel frequently. The summer-house loomed up before them. And suddenly a shadowy figure

emerged from the bushes which lined the garden path.

For a moment hearts leapt painfully. Then Babs laughed shakily. "Eileen!" she gasped. "Oh, thank goodness, you're all right. We were afraid something might have happened to you."

Eileen Hunter came up to the chums eagerly.

"Sorry to startle you, but I thought you'd come in this direction when you didn't find me waiting at the gates. Burgin's here, and another man," went on Eileen tensely. "That's why I couldn't wait for you. I followed them here, and I've been watching ever since."

"You mean they've gone into the tunnel?" asked Babs, in a thrilled voice. "How long ago? Did you recognise the other man?"

"About twenty minutes ago, I should say. No, the man with Burgin was a complete stranger to me." Eileen plucked at Babs' arm excitedly. "What shall we do, Barbara? Wait here and keep watch, or follow them into the tunnel?"

Babs made up her mind instantly. "Go into the tunnel," she said. "We want to see where Burgin's gone, and what he's doing. Perhaps they're searching for the money now. Goodness! Hide, everybody—quickly!"

Two figures were emerging from the summer-house—the figures of two men. Swift as shadows, Babs & Co. dodged behind the shelter of some bushes. Apparently the men had not seen them, for they came striding down the path, talking in low undertones.

"It's Burgin and the other man I saw," whispered Eileen, as she crouched beside Babs.

"Listen!" breathed the Form captain.

The two men came on, still talking, and actually passed beside the bushes which concealed the girls. Burgin was looking at his watch.

"Riley's due here at any moment now," Babs heard him say. "We'll have to work slickly, Dave."

"Sure thing!" came another voice, rasping and surly—the voice of the second man. "And everything's all right—eh? It won't make any difference to the others if we do this job a bit earlier than planned!"

"What difference can it make?" demanded Burgin. "If you ask me, it's going to make this—something about others coming back here with the stuff? But they'll have to be careful about coming back here with the stuff!"

The voices became indistinct as the two men passed on up the garden. Babs & Co. and Eileen, still crouched behind the bushes, looked at each other wonderingly.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" exclaimed Clara. "What the dickens did all that mean? What's their little game?"

"Ask me!" murmured Mabs. "What was that they said—something about others coming back here with the stuff? Babs, can you make sense of it?"

The Form captain was frowning thoughtfully.

"It's got me beaten," she confessed. "The 'stuff'—does that mean Eileen's money? But surely not, or they wouldn't have to bring it back here for—"

"Unless they've found the money already, Barbara," put in Eileen anxiously.

"Then if they have, why should they take it away, and then bring it back?" questioned Babs puzzledly. She paused, thinking swiftly, and then came to a decision. "Look here, girls! In my

FOUR PAGES OF ARTICLES

HELPFUL advice on dress and good looks. problems—delightful suggestions for making all sorts of novelties—sensible hints—bright and lively—conducted by Patricia, who really understands schoolgirls.

You'll love the four-page all-article feature which is to appear in all future numbers of THE SCHOOLGIRL. It's bright and modern—just the very feature you've been waiting for.

Order your SCHOOLGIRL right away.



opinion, our best course is to follow Burgin—try to learn something more definite. Everybody agree?"

Everybody did agree.

"Then come on," said Babs softly; "and the watchword is caution. If we're spotted all our chances of success will be ruined. And, Clara"—with a warning grin at the reckless Tomboy—"none of your impulsive ideas about charging out and tackling those men. They're desperate specimens, and we shouldn't stand a chance, and gain nothing by showing our hand."

Clara nodded. The girls rose and followed stealthily in the wake of Burgin and his companion. They saw them standing in the shadows of the high wall near the gateway. Creeping as close as they dared, the girls then dropped into cover again.

Excited and thrilled, they waited. Suddenly a purring sound was heard from the direction of the lane. A black saloon car glided up and came to a stop by the gates. Burgin and the other man went out to meet it.

"We'll see if we can get a bit closer," whispered Babs. "I want to overhear what they're saying, if possible."

Keeping to the cover of the trees and bushes which lined the drive, the girls reached the gateway without mishap. Their eyes opened wide at what they saw then.

One of the men was changing the car's number-plates!

Deliberately he unhooked those already in position at rear and front, and substituted others with different indecipherable letters and numbers, taken from the interior of the car.

The chums stared wonderingly. Babs was becoming more and more thoughtful. What could be the reason for that very suspicious move? What game were these men playing, and how was it connected with the money hidden in Dere Manor?

She heard Burgin talking.

"We might have to make a quick getaway with the stuff, Riley, so keep the engine running. They drive back here as quick as you like, drop me and Dave, and put the car in the usual place."

"O.K.!"

"Then let's get going!"

Burgin and Dave climbed into the back of the car. Riley took his place behind the steering-wheel.

And it was at that moment that Babs missed Clara. Looking round to say something to the Tomboy, she was startled to see only two girls crouched beside her.

"Goodness! Where's Clara?" gasped Babs.

"Why, she was here a moment ago—"

But the Tomboy was undoubtedly missing now. Unseen by the others, she had slipped away.

And now she lay sprawled along the branch of a tree which overhung the Friardale Lane. Directly beneath her was the car into which Burgin and the other men had just climbed, completely unaware of that figure above them.

There was a reckless glint shining in the Tomboy's eyes. Babs had warned her not to do anything rash, but impetuous as she was brave, Clara had already forgotten that warning.

She was determined to discover where Burgin and his companions were going, what they intended doing. And once Clara had made up her mind, there was no stopping her, however foolishly reckless and dangerous her project might be.

And, as far as Clara could see, there was only one way of trailing the men. She chose that way without hesitation. She lowered herself from that over-

WHEN TENNIS SHOES WEAR OUT



Try this decorative idea next time your tennis shoes start to fray. And socks should match, remember.

ARE you what is called "light on your shoes"? I am—especially on tennis shoes. That is to say, they never seem to wear out in the sole.

But my goodness, how my toes will pop through canvas tops! And how they fray round the ankles.

I expect you're just the same in those days of sorbo soles that never get thin, and canvas uppers that have to be cleaned so frequently they simply must wear out.

It was a pair of tennis socks that gave me the idea. They were all-white and very cheap, and I did so want them to go with a belt I was wearing—one I'd knitted, incidentally.

But there wasn't enough wool to knit some over-sock to match—and why bother, anyhow, I thought lazily, when they're so cheap to buy.

But I did have enough wool to make a trimming around the tops of my white tennis socks—a trimming of ordinary blanket-stitch. It really did look nice, too, and I'm sure you'd be just as pleased with it!

Turn the top of the sock over, just as you wear it, before doing it, won't you? (If you just decorate the upturned rim, you'll find it snuggling inside your shoe when you come to put it on!)

DEFINITELY SNAPPY

Feeling very pleased with myself after this, I picked up my shoes to clean them and discovered—yes, you've guessed it! They'd frayed round the ankles.

So I used my last oddments of wool the same colour as the belt, and blanket-stitched around both of these, too.

And to complete the perfect picture, I dipped my white laces in red ink to add a further splash of colour.

The result was that my white frock and pink belt, with socks and shoe trimming and laces to match looked like a new outfit, and rather snappy at that, instead of rather ordinary and a bit frayed about the feet!

hanging branch and dropped quietly on to the roof of the car as it was

Any sound she might have made was drowned in the roar of the revving engine. Then away shot the car, taking Clara with it.

At the last moment Babs and Mabs and Eileen saw her—saw her lying sprawled on the roof of the car. They rushed out into the lane, but too late.

In horrified dismay they watched the saloon as it vanished rapidly down the lane, taking with it three desperate men who had planned a sinister coup—taking with it, also, Clara Trevlyn, the reckless Tomboy!



Clara's Ride of Peril

THE wind whistled about Clara's face.

"No, you don't!" she muttered, and made a frantic grab at the brim of her hat as it was in danger of being swept from off her unruly chestnut curls.

The car sped on down Friardale Lane, its three occupants blissfully unaware of the girl who was perched so precariously on the roof. Clara, knowing the risks she was taking yet pluckily disregarding them, clung on grimly, slithering about on the smooth cellulose as the car swung round corners and jolted over bumps in the road.

Clara was more concerned with the danger of being flung off that the consequences if she were discovered by Burgin and his companions. Where they were going—she had not the slightest idea—nor did she care very much. They might be driving for hundreds of miles through the night, but Clara had not considered that possibility.

The only fixed thought in her mind was to trail these men to their destination. Clara was convinced that in some way this mission of theirs was connected with the fortune that she and her chums had promised to help Eileen Hunter find. The Tomboy meant to discover that connection, never realising how far from the truth she really was.

"Whoops!" exclaimed Clara, as, rounding another corner, she found herself slithering over the roof as if it were ice. "Talk about an ice rink, or a greasy pole! Hold on there, duffer, or you'll be doing a nose-dive into the road. Ah, that feels safer. Wonder where we're going?"

Even as Clara asked herself that question, the speed of the car began to slacken. She saw now that they were on the outskirts of Courtfield, in a residential part, where many big houses, with their own grounds, had been built of recent years.

Now the car was only crawling, and Clara, peering over the top of the roof, saw the headlights suddenly extinguished.

"Going to stop!" the Tomboy decided. "My hat, I'd better make myself scarce before they get out and spot me!"

To lower herself down the sides or back of the car was to invite discovery. She would have to jump, and jump Clara did.

Straightening up, she stood upright on the roof for a breathless moment, and leapt nimbly to the roadway. Slow as the car was travelling, its momentum sent her rolling on the hard asphalt. But nimbly as a monkey, she was quickly on her feet again, and sprinting to the cover afforded by a thick

holly hedge which enclosed the grounds of a big house.

From there she watched.

The car came to a standstill at the main gateway of the house. Now side and rear lights were extinguished. The three men emerged, looked up and down the road cautiously, saw no one, and went through the gateway at a run.

"And now to do a spot of detective work," grinned Clara. "She allowed a minute or two to elapse, and then followed in the wake of Burgin and his companions.

They were just visible, moving shadows in the darkness. Displaying unaccustomed caution now, the Tomboy fitted from bush to bush, watching their every movement.

And mysterious those movements were in all truth. Clara became more and more puzzled as she saw the men furtively approach the large house which loomed blackly against the night sky, not a light showing from its windows.

For a moment they stopped, looking about them. Clara, with fast beating heart, stopped, too. Then even more cautiously they crept forward again, making for the big french doors which gave on to the lawn.

Now the Tomboy tensed. Swift suspicion crystallised in her mind. Obvious it was becoming that those men intended forcing an entry into the house. But what connection could this have with the finding of the missing fortune left by Eileen Hunter's grandfather?

That was what puzzled her. That money was surely hidden in Drere Manor.

Clara suddenly gave a violent start. Abruptly the silence of the night was shattered by a loud ringing of many bells. There came a hoarse shout from in front of her.

"My giddy aunt, what's happening?" gasped the Tomboy and then like a flash the answer came to her. "Oh goodness, they've set the burglar-alarms off!" She had hit upon the truth. Burgin, forcing open the french doors, had indeed set the mechanism of the electric alarms in motion, arousing the household.

Dogs sprang up as if by magic. A dog barked fiercely. There were shrill screams from inside the house, mingling with the hoarse shouts of Burgin and his startled accomplices.

"Run for it!" came Burgin's alarmed bellow. And Clara saw the men pelting back towards the gateway. In a panting group they rushed past her, not seeing her as she crouched behind a bush in the darkness.

Now the lights in the downstairs rooms of the house were going on. The barking of the dog drew nearer. Figures were flocking out into the grounds.

For a moment the Tomboy stood irresolute, and then panic gripped her, too. The pursuers must not see her. She must not be caught and perhaps accused of being concerned in the attempted burglary.

With a gasp she turned on her heel and fled in the direction whence she had come. Running footsteps behind her—a shouting voice:

"There goes one of them! Let the dog loose!"

Clara seemed to fly, her breath rasp-

ing in her throat. The low, overhanging branch of a tree caught against her hat, whipping it off. It fluttered to the ground, but Clara, in her desperation, did not notice it.

Fanting, almost sobbing, she reached the gates, rushed through them. From the road came a roar as the waiting car whirred into motion. With a crashing of gears it was off, shooting away into the darkness.

Burgin and his two accomplices had made their getaway. Clara gritted her teeth. What was she to do?

Nothing for it but to conceal herself until the hue and cry had died down. Desperately she looked round, and, crossing the road, dodged behind a thick hedge opposite.

And there she lay, her heart palpitating, for almost half an hour. The searchers from the house, deciding that the would-be thieves had got clean away, abandoned the pursuit and returned indoors, where no doubt they got into frantic communication with the police.

While, behind the hedge, Clara groaned.

"Oh, my goodness, this is a pretty kettle of fish!" she muttered fiercely. "Here I am, stranded, with miles to walk back. And what have I achieved? Nothing! And what's more," she ruminated bitterly, "I've lost my hat!"

"O' ALL the reckless duffers!" Barbara Redfern was frantic with anxiety. So were the two girls with her.

"We must follow her!" said Mabel Lynn wildly.

"Yes, yes, we must do something!" put in Eileen Hunter distractedly.

"Babs sho!" her head.

"But how can we follow her? They're probably miles away, and we've only got our bikes. Trust that chump to get into some pickle!"

Worriedly she stood staring down the Friardale Lane, still vivid in her mind that last horrified glimpse of their tomboy chum being whirled away into the darkness or the roof of that saloon car.

Hopeless, as she said, to attempt to follow on their bicycles. Clara was a girl of crazy impulses, and this seemed the crazies: of them all.

But somehow Clara always came through her reckless escapades, and from that knowledge Babs derived a grain of comfort. The Tomboy could be trusted to look after herself, even when dealing with three such desperate men as Burgin and his companions.

Where the car was going she had not the faintest idea. She could only hope, for Clara's sake, that its destination would not be too far distant.

Babs turned now, walking slowly towards the gate of Drere Manor.

"I'm afraid it's hopeless to think of doing anything," she said. "She's a reckless chump, but let's hope she learns something useful. Anyway, she'll probably come back here, or go straight back to Cliff House. I vote we carry on with our original plan. The house is empty now, and this is our opportunity."

"But," added Babs, frowning thoughtfully, "jiggered if I know what to make of this business. Why has Burgin gone rushing off like that? Where's he gone, and what's he doing?"

Mabs and Eileen shook their heads. They were as baffled as the Form captain. Still under the impression that Burgin was interested only in finding that money which they believed to be hidden in Drere Manor, his actions were puzzling and mysterious.

"Oh, come on!" went on Babs, with

SOMETHING—

THE new stories in next Friday's SCHOOLGIRL—to say nothing of the gifts, and the articles—are going to be the talk of school-girls everywhere.

You can help to spread the good news by telling all your chums—at home and at school. They'll be glad you told them, too—when they get their copies on Friday.

Don't forget next Friday's treats—a new Cliff House School series, starring Diana Royston-Clarke; a new Morcove adventure serial, the scene laid in Africa; a new mystery serial—"THE PAGODA OF PERIL"; and a new humorous series, featuring Princess Cherry. AND four pages of articles! AND the most entrancing illustrations! AND—but buy THE SCHOOLGIRL next Friday and see for yourselves.



—TO WRITE
HOME
ABOUT

● ORDER YOUR "SCHOOLGIRL" EARLY ●

a rather impatient shrug, as though annoyed with herself for not being able to fit the pieces together in this puzzle, "let's find that dungeon. That seems to be the only definite clue we've got towards solving this mystery and locating Eileen's money."

With a last worried glance up the road, Mabs and Eileen followed, as Babs led the way down the garden of Dreer Manor.

"I'm not sure where this dungeon is," whispered Eileen, "but I think we shall get to it by way of that tunnel leading from the summer-house."

"O.K.," Babs replied. "Better go carefully, in case there is someone else knocking around."

Ten minutes later they were threading their way in single file through the narrow tunnels. All three girls had switched on torches, and with Eileen leading now they pressed on in growing excitement.

They reached the panel, with its intricate mechanism, which Babs knew opened into the main hall of Dreer Manor. Eileen, however, did not stop. The tunnel became even more narrow, and now sloped downwards sharply.

This was the first time Babs and Mabs had penetrated so far down the passage, and their anxiety for Clara became submerged in the thrill of anticipation which had now assailed them.

But Eileen, familiar with the tunnel from her childhood days spent at Dreer Manor, forged forward steadily.

"Look out for steps ahead," she warned suddenly. "We're now going right under the house."

Down a long flight of old, worn stone steps. And then, reaching the bottom, the chums halted abruptly.

A short distance down the passage, gleaming dully against the wall, stood a lighted storm lantern. The three girls looked at each other in alarm, and then stood tense, listening.

But no sound came to their ears other than the hiss of their own breath. Babs smiled in relief.

"Seems all right," she opined. "Must have been left there by Burgin to light up the passage. Out with your torches, old things. We'll make use of the lantern; it doesn't throw such a beam. Are we anywhere near the dungeon yet, Eileen?"

That girl nodded eagerly. There was a light of excitement in her large brown eyes.

"At the end of this passage," she whispered. "Look, just ahead of us!"

They walked on a few paces, Babs holding the lantern aloft. And then they saw, set in the wall, a heavy, iron-barred oaken door. Again the girls stood listening.

"Still no sound."

"Let's chance it!" breathed Babs.

She stepped forward and tried the door. But then came the first setback.

The door did not budge. It was locked.

"Not so good," said Babs glumly.

"Question is, what do we do now? Ah!" she chuckled joyfully. "Just the thing!"

For there, lying on the stone floor of the tunnel, was a stout oak beam.

"Lend a hand, girls!" the Form captain said jubilantly. "We'll use this as a battering ram. Bit of luck, finding it here!"

She placed the lantern on the floor and stooped to grip the beam. And it was as she stooped that something else attracted her attention—something that glittered and twinkled in the rays of the lantern. Wonderingly Babs picked it up, staring in astonishment as she saw what it was.

"My hat, a ring!" she exclaimed.



FROM their concealment the chums saw a sight that sent their hearts leaping. For the two men were furtively changing the car's number plates! Surely this must mean that there was fresh trickery afoot?

A ring it was—rather curiously shaped, in the form of a snake, with a huge diamond in the centre of the head.

"Goodness, if this is genuine it must be worth, in a small fortune!" Babs murmured, in an awed voice. "But what's it doing down here? I say!"

Her eyes shone as a new thought struck her.

"Eileen, you don't recognise this, do you?" she asked excitedly.

Wonderingly Eileen shook her head.

"Why, no, I don't!" she admitted.

"What makes you ask?"

"Don't you see?" Babs went on quickly. "This might be part of your grandfather's hoard. And if it is, it means we're hot on the track."

In great excitement the three girls looked at each other. It was quite a feasible theory.

"Come on!" said Babs feverishly, slipping the ring into a pocket of her blazer. "Let's try to batter down this door and get into the dungeon. Heave-ho with this beam!"

Together they picked up the beam, balanced it, and then charged at the door.

Crash!

But that door was stout, and it did not even shiver. Again and again they charged, but still with no effect. At last, exhausted and breathless, shaken by the force of the impacts, they were compelled to desist.

"Phew!" puffed Babs. "Must have a breather. But we won't be beaten, girls. We'll try again when we've got our breath back."

And it was during that pause that Eileen suddenly stiffened.

"Listen!" she said, in a scared voice.

"Footsteps! There's someone coming!"

Babs and Mabs heard those sounds in

the same moment—the sound of heavy footsteps descending the stone steps.

The chums turned pale, looking around them wildly.

"Can't be Clara!" gasped Mabs.

"The footsteps are too heavy for one thing, and there's more than one pair. Must be Burgin; he said he was coming back."

"Quick! There's an alcove at the end of this passage!" put in Eileen.

"We'll have to hide there and chance our luck."

"But the lantern—" began Mabs.

Before the words were out of her mouth, however, Babs had grabbed up the lantern, and was running fleetly and silently back to the spot where they had found it.

She dumped it down, swiftly rejoined the others, and the three of them rushed along to the alcove. There they cowered back against the wall, listening fearfully while the thud of feet sounded nearer and nearer.

Only too well did the friends realise the danger in which they now stood. Discovery by these men would assuredly mean disaster of the direst nature. Burgin was ruthless, as they had already found out to their cost. He was the type of man to stop at nothing to further his own ends.

That it was Burgin coming down the passage they soon knew for certain. And from the tone of his voice he was in a furious temper. When he spoke his rumbling tones echoed vibrantly in the confines of that stone tunnel.

"That fool of a butler bungled!" he growled. "Bah, makes me sick! Unlocks the doors, and forgets to disconnect the alarm. He'll pay for this night's work, the blundering block-head!"

FOUR FREE GIFTS AND WONDERFUL NEW

Babs tensed. In the darkness she gripped Mabs' arm tightly.

What was this they were hearing? What did it all mean? She frowned wonderingly, momentarily forgetting her fears. She felt she was on the verge of making some tremendous discovery, but what exactly it was just eluded her.

Again Burgin's furious voice could be heard.

"Come in here, you fellows. The others should be here at any moment, and if they haven't had better luck there'll be the dickens to pay."

Babs' heart leaped as she heard a key grate in the lock of the dungeon door. They heard a crash as the door was flung back and the men stalked in. Then another crash. The door had shut behind them.

Babs drew a breath of relief.

"My hat, that was a narrow squeak. But you heard what he said? More of them are coming. I think we'd better get out of here as soon as we can. No good asking for trouble. Don't be downhearted, Eileen. We'll try to come back to-morrow when the coast is clear. We've simply got to search that dungeon, and they got to search that without much restriction—leave the door unlocked, and they might"—but quietly "That lantern will light the way to the bottom of the steps, and then we can use our torches. Ready?"

Mabs and Eileen nodded.

"Keep behind me," whispered Babs, "and don't forget—not a sound."

Stealthily she stepped out, hardly daring to breathe; the others followed close on her heels.

Along the passage they crept. Now they were level with the door, through which the faint rattle of voices percolated.

Just a fleeting glance Babs cast at the door, and then drew up with a jerk that made Mabs cannon into her.

Babs was staring at the door as though she could hardly believe the evidence of her eyes, and, following the direction of her gaze, the other two blinked.

For there, in the lock, was the key of the dungeon—the key which Burgin had not troubled to remove.

Babs thrilled as a daring idea came to her. Without a word she motioned Mabs and Eileen to be silent. With her heart seeming to pound in her throat, she stepped up to the door, watched breathlessly by the others. Mabs could hardly suppress a gasp. What was her leader doing? But she was soon to know.

Carefully, silently, Babs reached the door. She extended a hand which trembled slightly. Her fingers curled round the top of the key. Slowly, slowly, she drew it out, winching apprehensively as it grated in the lock.

Rigidly they listened, but the voices continued undisturbed.

Now Babs had the key. Now she had thrust it in her pocket.

She gave one terse, whispered command, as she turned:

"Scout!"

Scout they did, triumph lending wings to their feet.

Now they'd got the key of the dungeon. On the morrow, when they came again, they would have free access to that room which they believed to be old Charles Hunter's treasure chamber.

A shadowy figure stepped out as they approached.

"It that you, Babs?" came a well-known voice.

"My hat! Clara!" Babs said delightedly. "Why, you old chump, what do you mean by floating off in that crazy way? But what happened?"

"Plenty!" said Clara tersely, and went on to give an account of her experiences.

Babs listened in wondering silence. Then:

"Funny!"

"The Tomboy snorted a joke!" she exclaimed. "But what about you? What have you discovered?"

"Lots of things. We've got the key of the dungeon, for one thing, and"—

Babs groped in her pocket—"we found this."

She produced the ring, handing it to Clara. In the light of a torch the Tomboy examined it, and gave a whistle of amazement.

"My hat," she murmured, "this affair gets more and more mystifying!"

"Yes. But I think I'm beginning to see daylight!"

Three pairs of eyes regarded the junior captain interestedly.

"Don't you see," she went on, "after what Clara's told us, it's fairly obvious that Burgin is mixed up in a gang of thieves! They must have been using Dreer Manor as their headquarters. Now, that's it!" Babs became more and more excited as her keen brain grasped the situation "That's why he was so anxious to get us out—"

"But what about Eileen's money?" Babs frowned thoughtfully.

"Do you know, I'm beginning to think he doesn't know anything about that." Eileen started.

"Then what happened to that half of the letter we found—the one written by my grandfather, giving us a clue that he'd hidden his money somewhere in Dreer Manor? Don't forget that vanished."

"True!" Babs nodded. "But we don't know that Burgin has got it. The more I think about it, the more I'm convinced that he's interested only in this burglary stunt. Now I come to think of it, there have been a lot of burglaries at all the big houses in this neighbourhood lately. Oh, goodness!"

Another idea struck her.

"Eileen, that mention Burgin made of 'getting the stuff away to-night' might very well have referred to the loot of these robberies!"

"My giddy aunt, Babs, you're a genius!" Clara added admiringly.

"Yes, you must be right!"

"Well, it's a theory, anyway," Babs laughed. "Now, look here! Let's make our plans for to-morrow. First and foremost, we've got to find Eileen's money. From what it said on that piece of letter, I still think the money must be hidden in the underground dungeon. You'll remember the word 'underground' was mentioned. But we'll have to organise a search for the other half of the letter, which will give us definite details of where the money is hidden."

"And what then?" questioned Eileen eagerly.

"Then we'll go straight ahead. We've got the key of the dungeon, and as soon as we can be sure it's deserted, we'll make a search. And if we can bowl

out Burgin and his bunch of crooks at the same time, so much the better."

"Rather!"

"We'll have to keep a watch here to-morrow and await our opportunity," continued Babs. "Luckily, it's a whole holiday, so we'll meet you at ten o'clock in the morning, Eileen. And now, kids, I think we'd better be going."

Clara stifled a yawn.

"My hat, yes! Lucky we haven't got a cricket match on to-morrow, or we'd be a fine lot of sleepy-heads. Well, cheerio, Eileen. See you in the morning—and I've got a feeling that it's going to be the last lap in our little adventure."

All this time the Tomboy had been holding the ring which Babs had found in the secret passage of Dreer Manor. In the excitement of discussing their plans they had both forgotten its existence. Now, as Clara reached out to grab her cycle, she quite unconsciously slipped the ring into one of her blazer pockets.

Barbara Redfern asked that question of Rosa Rodworth, the Stormy Petrel of the Fourth.

It was the following morning, and the scene was the Fourth Form Common-room.

A very spick-and-span-looking Common-room, bright and clean and airy in the sunshine streaming through the windows, still smelling strongly of fresh paint and varnish.

The Common-room was the first of the Fourth's many apartments to be finished after the structural repairs which had closed the whole of their quarters.

Now extra men had been engaged to get the work finished as soon as possible, and speedy progress was being made.

Naturally, the Fourth were very pleased to be back in their old Common-room, and that celebrated apartment was now crowded. Breakfast had not long been finished, and, being Saturday, with no lessons to darken the horizon, everybody was looking bright and cheery.

A remarkable change had come over the Fourth already since leaving Dreer Manor. That house of horrors, as many of the girls had come to regard it, was rapidly becoming forgotten now that they were back at Cliff House once more.

Rosa Rodworth, engrossed in reading the "Courtfield Gazette," looked up with a start as Babs addressed her.

"Eh?"

"I said is there any interesting news in the paper this morning?" Babs repeated more fully.

Rosa slowly turned over a page, carefully creasing it exactly down the middle.

"Oh, nothing much, so far, Babs! Nothing at all in fact!"

And she went on reading.

Babs grinned a little. Evidently Rosa, a girl of many moods and temperaments, did not like being



Sensation at Cliff House!

ANY news, Rosa?" Barbara Redfern asked that question of Rosa Rodworth, the Stormy Petrel of the Fourth.

It was the following morning, and the scene was the Fourth Form Common-room.

A very spick-and-span-looking Common-room, bright and clean and airy in the sunshine streaming through the windows, still smelling strongly of fresh paint and varnish.

The Common-room was the first of the Fourth's many apartments to be finished after the structural repairs which had closed the whole of their quarters.

Now extra men had been engaged to get the work finished as soon as possible, and speedy progress was being made.

Naturally, the Fourth were very pleased to be back in their old Common-room, and that celebrated apartment was now crowded. Breakfast had not long been finished, and, being Saturday, with no lessons to darken the horizon, everybody was looking bright and cheery.

A remarkable change had come over the Fourth already since leaving Dreer Manor. That house of horrors, as many of the girls had come to regard it, was rapidly becoming forgotten now that they were back at Cliff House once more.

Rosa Rodworth, engrossed in reading the "Courtfield Gazette," looked up with a start as Babs addressed her.

"Eh?"

"I said is there any interesting news in the paper this morning?" Babs repeated more fully.

Rosa slowly turned over a page, carefully creasing it exactly down the middle.

"Oh, nothing much, so far, Babs! Nothing at all in fact!"

And she went on reading.

Babs grinned a little. Evidently Rosa, a girl of many moods and temperaments, did not like being

IN SAFETY the three girls reached the garden of Dreer Manor, and hurried to find their bicycles.

STORIES IN NEXT FRIDAY'S "SCHOOLGIRL"

disturbed when reading the local newspaper.

The Form captain crossed over to her chums, Clara Trevlyn and Mabel Lynn. The three girls were smiling and cheerful, in spite of their late night and loss of sleep.

"Soon be time to go and meet Eileen," whispered Clara, and the others nodded.

From the other side of the Common-room, a girl with a ferrety face and cunning eyes watched them suspiciously. That girl was Freda Ferriers.

Freda was no longer "missing." She had turned up "safe and sound" the previous evening, much to the relief of Miss Primrose and the rest of the school.

She had told a wild story of being kidnapped by mysterious persons whom she had not seen, how they had intended holding her to ransom, and how eventually they had seemed to become frightened and thus let her go.

However, the Ferret had told it with plausible gibbness, and the story had been accepted and her return hailed with a gladness which she was far from deservng.

And now Freda, bearing in mind her rascally uncle's strict orders, anticipating the joys of the pocket-money which he had promised her, was keeping an eye on Babs & Co.

It was being rendered a little difficult owing to the fact that she was quartered in a Fifth Form study during the day, and was sleeping in the Fifth Form dormitory at nights. Thus she knew nothing of the Co.'s midnight adventure the previous night.

But the fact that the Common-room was now completed, and that the Fourth would all assemble there once more, was making her task easier during the day. And Freda, watching Babs and her chums, could see that there was something "in the wind."

She decided to shadow their every movement.

Babs was consulting her wristwatch, and was on the point of nodding a signal to her two henchmen that it was time to be going, when there came a sudden exclamation from Rosa Rodworth.

"My hat! Wonder they didn't come here!" she said aloud, folding her newspaper in half and now reading it avidly.

"Wonder who didn't come here?" inquired Jean Cartwright politely.

"The thieves!" explained Rosa. "Apparently there was a whole series of daring robberies in the neighbourhood last night. Thousands of pounds' worth of jewels and stuff stolen, and the thieves got clean away without trace, apparently."

"Here, let's read it," said Babs quickly, after exchanging significant looks with Mabs and Clara.

"Jumping grasshoppers!" If Rosa had been interested before, now she became thoroughly excited. "I say, listen to this bit! 'That these daring robberies were carefully organised and planned by the same gang seems obvious, for they all took place over a wide area at precisely the same time.' The thieves met with failure at the house of Lieutenant-Colonel Myrzebrook, in Courtfield, however. The police were called in late last night, and they

(Continued overleaf)



WARMER WEATHER WISDOM

Lovely as the [summer is, it has one or two problems. Here, some of them are solved for you.

SOME girls seem to look their best all the year round, don't they?

Others glow and sparkle in winter time, and go dull and listless during the summer.

While the rest are radiant during the warm weather, yet cold and shivery all through the cool months.

The cold weather problem can wait; for the moment let's see what we can do about the girl who finds the warm weather too much for her—and for her good looks.

One of the biggest reasons for listlessness during warmer weather is—too many clothes.

CLOTHES SO LIGHT

Providing you're a normally healthy young person—and, of course, I'm leaving girls who're under doctors' care out of this—you really should discard heavier clothes during the summer.

Over-heated blood is not only the cause of that constantly tired feeling, but also gives rise to spots.

But nothing drastic, mind. Choose a really warm spell to leave off heavy woolen undergarments, talking the subject and number of them over with mother first.

Just as you part with thicker clothes, so should you eliminate some of the heavier foods from your diet.

FOR SKIN AND HAIR

No, I'm not going to say anything so foolish as that you should cut out suet puddings and potatoes. But I do say that if you have a substantial first course to your dinner, such as roast beef and batter pudding, or stew with dumplings, fresh or stewed fruit is quite an adequate second course—and very beautifying.

Salads, whether fruit or green—are also very cool-making and excellent substitutes for cakes or cooked vegetables.

Greasy, hot skin is another little warm-weather problem, that seems to affect even schoolgirls.

AN ICE MASSAGE

So to cure this, I don't want you to make the mistake of washing only in cold water, thinking that will keep you fresh.

You must still have your warm-water washes—but it's doubly important in the summer to have that cold rinse afterwards. (And if mother should happen to have a refrigerator, a bit of ice tugged inside your face flannel and then rubbed briskly over your face is wonderfully stimulating.)

Should your skin prove really a worry, and impossible to keep fresh

on this—which I'd like you to try first, remember—then I have a little beauty treatment that is just right for schoolgirls.

A BEAUTY HINT

Ask your favourite chemist to make you up a bottle of witch hazel, which he'll do for threepence.

Then after your morning wash and cold rinse, dab this over your face, patting it in until it is quite absorbed. If your hair, too, gets greasy more quickly this weather, and you haven't time to wash it as often as you'd like to, try a dry shampoo. Sounds very grown-up, doesn't it?

•But it's fine for your hair. Just sprinkle some ordinary starch over it and brush and brush and brush! No more grease—but a lovely fresh sheen instead.

TO SUIT THE WEATHER

Summery shoes are so cheap and pretty these days, that I'm sure you have at least one pair of sandals.

These are definitely more comfortable in the summer than heavy "Oxfords," and keep the feet cooler.

But when they go to be repaired, don't you sometimes think you'd just wear your tennis shoes or pilmolls, as it's so hot? I know it's tempting. But honestly, they're not meant for walking.

You see, the rubber tires the feet more than leather, so even after a game of tennis it is always a good plan to change into other shoes as soon as possible.

KEEP CALM

Leather gloves are also heating, so cotton ones should be worn on those warm weather occasions when they are absolutely necessary.

Tight belts around the waist also should be avoided if you'd like to keep cool and carefree.

Garters, too, should be avoided in warm weather, and suspensives used for keeping stockings up if you're too big to go into socks.

Taking things calmly, without getting flustered is a separate art and part of beauty's charm. A jolly good idea is to take several really deep breaths when you're feeling a bit hot and bothered. You'll feel at peace with the world then, and your summery brightest, as well as most beautiful.



have found what they consider to be a valuable clue. A schoolgirl's hat was picked up in the grounds, and from the evidence it seems that a schoolgirl must have taken part in the attempted robbery!"

"What's that?" exclaimed Clara Trevlyn, in a curiously hoarse voice. The Tomboy's healthy colour had faded from her cheeks, leaving them white as chalk.

A schoolgirl's hat found in the grounds of a house at Courtfield—a schoolgirl suspected of being in with the gang of crooks!

And it was at Courtfield that she had lost her hat on the previous night, and she had been seen by the occupants of the house that was to have been burgled!

No wonder Clara was filled with panic at that moment, as, watched wonderingly by all the girls, she suddenly snatched the newspaper from Rosa's hands, and began reading it with startled agitation. No wonder Babs and Mabs, knowing of their chum's adventures when she had followed the three men in the car, were as dismayed as the Tomboy!

The coincidence could not be ignored. An uneasy feeling of impending trouble filled Babs with dread foreboding. And as if to prove how well-founded were her fears, the door of the Common-room opened at that moment.

Stella Stone, head girl of Cliff House, entered. Her pretty face was grave.

"Is Clara here— Ah, Clara, Miss Primrose wishes to see you in her study at once!" Stella announced.

If Stella looked grave, her voice sounded graver. There was a stifled exclamation from Clara.

"I—I'll come now!" she said shakily, and then glanced at Babs and Mabs. "My goodness!" the Tomboy whispered. "This looks like trouble with a capital 'T'. That hat had my name in it!"

"Clara!" said Babs tragically. Then the Tomboy was gone, a troubled light in her eyes.

Miss Primrose was not alone when

Clara arrived at the headmistress's study. Standing there was a grim-faced man whom the Tomboy recognised with something of a shock—Inspector Winter, of the Courtfield Police.

The headmistress looked pale and anxious.

"Clara," she said, coming to the point immediately, "do you recognise this?"

And she held up a wide-brimmed straw hat, with a blue-and-gold band—the Cliff House colours—running round its crown.

With a gulp, Clara stepped up to the headmistress' desk and took the hat. She didn't need to look at the name-tab inside to know that it was hers.

"Yes, Miss Primrose, this is my hat!"

"Ah!" The exclamation, one of satisfaction, came from Inspector Winter.

Miss Primrose's kindly face became even more haggard.

"Clara, did you know you had lost this hat?"

The Tomboy, her head in a whirl, knowing what this was leading up to, reading the suspicion in the police-inspector's eyes, knew that it would be useless to evade the question.

Besides—here Clara's obstinate defiance asserted itself—why should she evade telling the truth?

"Yes, Miss Primrose."

"When did you lose it?"

"Last night, Miss Primrose."

"Where?" Inspector Winter snapped in with that question.

"At—at Courtfield," the Tomboy confessed.

Miss Primrose was looking stern now.

"And what were you doing at Courtfield last night, Clara?" she demanded.

"I understood from Miss Charmant that you had been detained."

Clara squared her shoulders.

"I—I'm afraid I broke bounds, Miss Primrose."

"Why?"

"Yes, why?" repeated Inspector Winter, his keen eyes boring into the Tomboy's own.

For the first time Clara hesitated.

"I—I went to see a friend."

"And who was the friend?"

The Junior Sports captain's chin suddenly set with characteristic firmness. To mention Eileen's name would mean involving that girl, and no doubt her father, in endless police inquiries. Mr. Hunter and his daughter already had their troubles, without adding to them.

"I'd rather not say, Miss Primrose," the Tomboy replied steadily.

Now the sternness faded from the headmistress' face, to be replaced once more with anxiety.

"Clara, you must tell us," she said, almost pleadingly, and heaved Inspector Winter to silence as he wanted to speak.

"Last night a series of robberies was perpetrated in this neighbourhood. Your hat was found on the scene of one of the crimes. Surely, girl, you realise now that you must answer all our questions. A terrible suspicion hangs over you—"

"Miss Primrose," broke in the police-inspector with a frown, "this is not quite the way—"

"I'm sorry, inspector," said the headmistress tersely, "but you must remember that Clara Trevlyn is one of my pupils. I am in a position to know her character much better than you are. Clara has her faults, but her honesty and integrity are undoubted. I am convinced that she will be able to give us a perfectly innocent explanation of her movements last night. Clara, you must answer my questions. What were you doing last night, and where exactly did you go?"

Miss Primrose, aware of Inspector Winter's suspicions, though, naturally he had made no definite accusation, was fighting for the honour of one of her pupils, for the good name and reputation of Cliff House. Clara knew that, was grateful to the headmistress for her attitude.

But already the Tomboy had decided that, whatever the consequences, she would say nothing. Perhaps, in the circumstances, she was to carry her obstinacy too far. But it was typical of her to think of others even at the expense of herself suffering.

She was thinking of Eileen; of her



No. 536

FOUR FINE 'LIBRARY' NUMBERS

- No. 536. "THE SLEEP-WALKER OF ST. MILDRED'S," by Ruth Maxwell. An exciting and unusual story, specially written for the Library.
- No. 537. "THE MORCOVE GIRLS IN CANADA," by Marjorie Stanton. Famous favourites in an early adventure abroad.
- No. 538. "ORPHAN OF THE JUNGLE," by Pauline Stewart. A tensely dramatic tale of the African jungle.
- No. 539. "RECKLESS PAM'S SCHOOLDAYS," by Gertrude Nelson. A fine school tale about a most unusual character.

The Schoolgirls' Own Library

ALL ARE
NOW ON SALE

Price 4^d. Each

chums, Babs and Mabs, too. Like her, they had been detained and had broken bounds. Never would Clara admit that to the headmistress.

And Eileen—knowing in what desperate straits the Hunters were, Clara was determined that she would say or do nothing that might jeopardise their chances of finding the money which meant everything to them.

By now Clara, like her chums, was convinced that they were on the verge of discovering the whereabouts of that hidden fortune. That very day, probably, success would reward their efforts.

She knew she had only to mention Burgin, and his mysterious activities at Drere Manor, to send the police on a definite trail which would result in the crooks being rounded up.

But that meant Drere Manor would be occupied by the police; that all efforts to search for grandfather Hunter's secret hoard would have to be abandoned for a time.

That was not to be considered. In Clara's view, liking Eileen as she did, her friend came first. Find the money, and then send the police on the trail of Burgin and his gang.

Thus Clara decided. It was foolish, perhaps; but it was rather wonderful—a self-sacrifice worthy of the golden-hearted, impulsive Tomboy.

She shook her head restlessly now.

"I'm sorry, Miss Primrose, but I'm afraid I can say no more."

"Clara, you must! What am I to think if you refuse to give an account of yourself? Clara—"

Again the Tomboy shook her head, lips tightly shut.

Agitated and startled, Miss Primrose rose to her feet.

"Clara, I demand that you explain—"

In jumping up from her chair, Miss Primrose knocked against the blotting-pad on her desk. It fell to the floor, taking Clara's hat with it.

Immediately the Tomboy sprang forward to retrieve the fallen articles. As she bent down, her unbuttoned blazer hanging loosely, something rolled out from one of the pockets. It was the diamond ring which Babs had found in the secret passage of Drere Manor, and which Clara had absent-mindedly slipped into her blazer.

Clara gasped in surprise as she saw it roll on to the floor, having completely forgotten the existence of that ring. But from Inspector Winter came a bellow of triumph.

"That ring—it was stolen from Mr. Julius Braggot, of Braggot Manor, a week or two back. Let me have it. What is this girl doing with that ring? And even while Clara still kneeling on the floor, was gazing stupidly at the ring, the inspector leapt forward and grabbed it up in his hand. He turned to the dumbfounded Miss Primrose.

"Stolen property!" he said grimly.

"In this girl's possession. I think this makes it clear that she knows something about these robberies, Miss Primrose."

The headmistress, even her faith shattered somewhat now, gazed incredulously at the Tomboy.

"Clara, what are you doing with that ring in your possession?" she snapped.

And all Clara said was:

"Miss Primrose, I did not steal that ring—I had nothing to do with the person who stole it."

"Then what is your explanation?"

But Clara had said all she intended to say. Even in the face of this fresh disaster, when circumstantially the evidence of her being concerned in the daring robberies seemed to be piling up against her, she resolutely stuck to her decision.



JUST as the car began to move, Clara dropped silently on to the roof. It was a desperately daring act, but the Tomboy knew how much depended upon her efforts!

She remained silent.

Miss Primrose sank back weakly into her chair, a look of condemnation growing in her grey eyes now. Clara's silence seemed to her only to be a confession of that girl's guilt.

Inspector Winter, pocketing the ring, regarded Clara grimly, and then turned to Miss Primrose.

"I'm afraid this girl comes under grave suspicion of being concerned in the robberies," he said. "We have the evidence of the hat, this ring, and the details given us by one of Lieutenant-Colonel Myzebrook's servants. He has told us that he saw what looked like the figure of a schoolgirl running away after the attempted crime. Owing to the darkness, his description is admittedly vague and inconclusive, but it would certainly fit this girl."

The inspector paused for a moment thoughtfully.

"As she is only a junior, Miss Primrose," he continued, "I will leave her in your charge just now. But I regret to say she is definitely a suspect, and I must ask you to confine her to your

punishment-room, and see that she has no opportunity to escape. I must point out that her safekeeping is your responsibility."

"Very well, inspector." The headmistress's voice was little more than a shocked whisper. And then tragically she looked at the Tomboy. "Oh, Clara, Clara, what have you done? How can you have been so wicked. And when your parents learn the truth—"

She broke off with a shudder. "Clara, your conduct leaves me almost dazed. Never had I thought that you, of all girls, would so besmirch the fair name of Cliff House."

And at that, even Clara's barrier of silence was broken.

"Miss Primrose, it's all a terrible mistake!" she cried desperately. "I'm innocent—innocent, I tell you. One day I'll be able to explain, and then you shall know the real truth—the full truth. But until then—"

The look of obstinate defiance shone in Clara's eyes. Once more the chin was thrust out determinedly, the shoulders squared, the lips set.

Bravely she carried herself when Miss Primrose personally escorted her to the punishment-room. But the Tomboy's heart was near to breaking because the headmistress still believed her guilty.

WHAT A sensation there was throughout Cliff House that morning!

Clara Trevlyn in the punishment-room—suspected by the police of being concerned in the robberies which had so terrified the neighbourhood!

At first, even the Tomboy's worst enemies refused to credit such a story. But as the evidence against her became known, then there was a general shaking of heads. Some still found it hard to

Clara will be expelled—sent to a reformatory! Come on, Mabs, old thing. We'll try to slip up to the punishment-room and get a word with Clara. Something's got to be done—and quickly."

The Junior captain and her golden-haired chum rushed upstairs. It was one of the strictest rules that no attempt in any way should be made to see or speak to a girl in the punishment-room unless by special permission.

Such permission was not likely to be granted in this case, even to Clara's own particular chums, so Babs and Mabs took the risk of being spotted by a mistress or a prefect.

They were fortunate. They reached

found. Then I'll have my say, and Burgin and his crowd of rotters are going to be unlucky!"

Babs had to smile. Good old Clara! Trust her to think of anyone but herself and her own troubles.

But what she said was true: Babs, reasoning it out swiftly, saw the strength of her remarks. Frankly speaking Clara's own recklessness had plunged her into this mess. But she was in no real danger. And there was still Eileen Hunter and her father to think about.

"Babs," came the Tomboy's voice again. "Promise me that neither you nor Mabs will breathe a word to anyone. Meet Eileen as arranged this morning. I shan't be able to come"—regretfully—"but that won't make any difference. You can go ahead, and here's hoping you find that money for Eileen."

Babs turned to her golden-haired chum; and Mabs nodded.

"Right," we promise to say nothing, old thing," the Form captain called back softly. "And we're starting out for Drere Manor now."

"Good egg—and good luck!"

"By-bye, Clara! And we'll have made Eileen happy, and got you out of that punishment-room by to-night, or—or I'll eat my cricket bat!" promised Babs recklessly.

Clara Trevlyn, on the other side of the door, grinned.

Babs and Mabs retraced their steps downstairs, both determined, somehow, in spite of anything and everything, they would make Drere Manor reveal its secretly hidden wealth.

The sooner they did that the sooner they would be able to tell the whole story, and so clear their Tomboy chum of the dreadful stigma which at the moment overshadowed her innocent head.

Downstairs they went, and knew nothing of the stealthy figure which followed them down some ten minutes later.

The figure was that of Freda Ferriers. And Freda had overheard them telling Clara that they were going to Drere Manor.

Babs and Mabs left Cliff House on their bicycles. So, too, did Freda; only she took good care not to be seen by the chums.



The sporting girl and the tennis-keen girl will love these new ways of wearing scarves!

ALTHOUGH spring-cleaning time is over, I'm sure you could manage to rummage through your belongings to find an odd scarf that simply doesn't go with your summer coat, and wasn't warm enough to wear in the winter.

If you can't—what about buying one, or a square of material that's as good.

I'm sure, even the spending of your precious pocket money will seem well worth while when you realise that the smart trimmings in the picture here can be made from one scarf!

The tennis girl in particular will love the notion on the left.

One square scarf will make the very up-to-the-minute neck trimming on the left—and the attractive hair band to match.

I know it sounds cruel, but you must cut your scarf square right through the middle, from corner to corner.

Then tie the two ends of one triangle around the neck of your frock, and roll the other to tie around your head.

The result will be a splash of colour on your tennis frock—which is all the rage this year. And your hair

will not blow in your eyes—while it'll still look pretty.

READY FOR A STROLL

The other notion on the right can be done with the same scarf, and added to the same frock, for the sporting girl in her off-the-tennis-court moments.

But in case you have a second scarf to spare, I have had it sketched in different material to make the difference in the styles more marked.

With a square scarf cut into two triangles again, you are ready to make a tennis frock look just right for a stroll in the park, and your school hat into an almost garden-party affair.

Just tie one of the triangles around your waist, leaving the short end drooping as wide as you like, and fastening with a careless, but definitely artistic-looking, knot.

Then knot the other triangle around your school hat—over hat-band as well. Not because you don't like your school hat-band—but because it's smart for hat and frock trimming to match.

Vary the scarves as often as you feel you'd like a new frock, and you'll almost feel you have one!

FOR SPORT AND COURT

the punishment-room without meeting anyone, and Babs tapped softly on the door.

"Clara, old thing!" she whispered.

"It's Babs—and Mabs is with me."

"Hallo, you merry old cripples!" came the Tomboy's cheery greeting from the other side of the door.

"Clara, we've heard about Inspector Winter and—and everything! It's dreadful. But why didn't you explain about Burgin? You must tell them the truth—"

"Listen, Babs!" Clara's voice sounded very firm and decisive. "Don't you worry. I'm not. I can clear myself as soon as I speak out, and with your evidence to support me these ridiculous accusations will fall flat. But we've got to think of Eileen. I'm keeping quiet until that money has been

believe, but against such incriminating evidence what were they to think?

Only Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn, of all the girls in Cliff House, were certain of their chum's innocence. Knowing the truth of what had happened the previous night, they were stunned by this disaster which had overtaken the Tomboy. Frantic, too!

"And Clara wouldn't say a word!" exclaimed Babs, marvelling at the sports captain's sacrifice. "But she must—she must! We can prove her innocence. Oh, why didn't she tell Primmy? We can clear her name completely. We know that Burgin and his gang carried out those robberies."

"But perhaps Clara was thinking of Eileen," said Mabs worriedly.

"Yes, I suppose so. But—oh, it's terrible! We've got to do something!



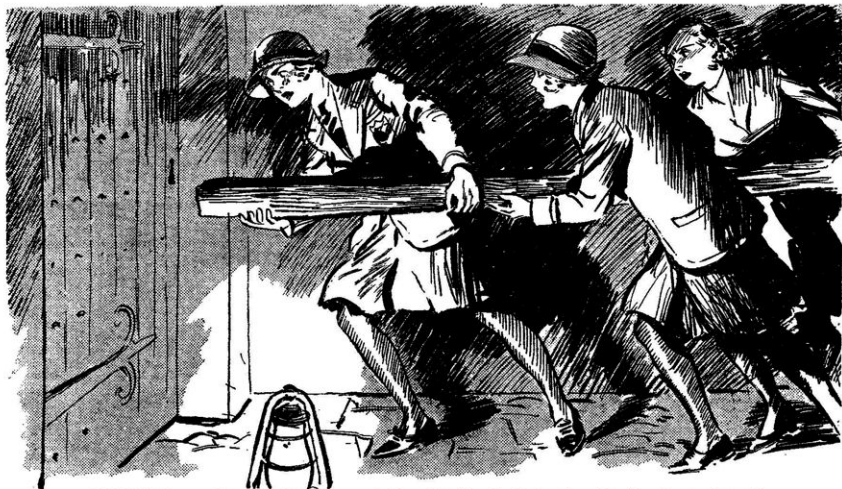
Triumph! And Then—

DRERE MANOR—looking empty and deserted amid its surround of neglected, overgrown gardens. Even the bright May sunshine, streaming down upon its Tudor outlines, could not banish completely the sinister atmosphere which seemed to be part of the old house.

So it appeared to Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn as, obtrusively, they entered the gateway. Even to Eileen Hunter, who walked between the Cliff House chums, that sense of eeriness was not entirely absent.

How different Drere Manor looked now from those happy days when it had been a show place in the district, when she and her father had lived there, when old Charles Hunter had been alive. For years the house had been Eileen's home. She loved the place, and was always dreaming of the day when once more she and her dear daddy could afford to recoccupy it.

If only they could find her grandfather's lost wealth! Then would that



"NOW then—altogether!" Babs panted, and with all their strength the three charged the door with their battering ram. But the old door showed no signs of giving way.

dream be possible; then would they be able to lift themselves out of the depths of poverty into which every week they were sinking deeper and deeper.

Never had she seen her father looking so wan and ill as he did these days. Eileen, although afraid to admit it, had become more and more worried.

Mr. Hunter, now a cripple for life after some terrible accident in the hunting-field, could not work like ordinary men to earn a living. That was what was making him so frantic, with the knowledge of his own helplessness.

Drere Manor, which should have been a source of income to him, had been nothing but a burden—mainly due to Albert Burgin, who—he was now discovering—although supposed to be acting as agent for the old house, had never made any attempt to sell or rent it, rather had he always driven away prospective clients.

Eileen sighed. Babs heard it, and turned to her with a smile.

"Cheer up, Eileen," she said. "I've a feeling in my bones that we're going to be lucky to-day—that very shortly now we shall find that money at last, and that then you and Mr. Hunter will be able to live happily ever afterwards!"

Eileen felt her heart give a leap; an eager light came into her large brown eyes.

"Oh, Barbara, I do hope so!" she replied fervently.

Again Babs smiled.

"The first thing is to find the other half to that letter. So far as we know, Burgin has got it. But— and she paused, frowning slightly.

"Well?" Mabs asked curiously.

"Just this," returned Babs, with sudden eagerness. "Suppose—suppose Burgin didn't really find that letter?"

"But we saw him take it!" objected Mabs.

"But just suppose," Babs pressed. "We may be wrong, of course, but it's worth trying. Supposing what he found wasn't the letter at all? Supposing it's still there—still lying somewhere—waiting to be discovered? After

all, if Burgin had found it, surely he would have made some attempt to find the hidden money! And, so far as we know, he hasn't!"

"Well, we could try—" hesitated Mabs.

"Good enough!" said Babs crisply. "Then come on, and let's take a chance. We'll use that tunnel again and get into the hall."

"Have you any idea where to look for the missing letter?" asked Eileen eagerly.

"Yes, I'm positive it must be somewhere near the upstairs room which the Fourth used as a dormitory when we were here. We'll start from that point, anyway."

Some ten minutes later the three girls were standing in the hall of Drere Manor, having made their way along the secret tunnel leading from the summer-house, and emerged through the panel in the wall.

Now the manor was a place of gloom and silence. The fine old panelled hall stretched away into shadows beneath the wide staircase. Babs stood listening tensely, but there was no sound.

"Lead on, Babs," said Mabs, in an excited whisper.

Mabs nodded, and went up the stairs, making for the room which had been the Fourth Form dormitory. It was in that room that Babs had found the first half of a letter written by old Charles Hunter—a letter which there could be little doubt gave details of where he had hidden his money.

Vividly Babs recalled the circumstances of the finding of that fragment of paper which had told her chums and Eileen so much—and yet not sufficient.

It was the other portion of the torn letter which contained the vital information they were seeking. Once that was in their possession, the secret of Charles Hunter's hidden fortune would be a secret no longer.

Babs thrilled at the thought.

"I'm going to have another look in that trap in the ceiling here," she decided.

That trap in the ceiling of the passage

just outside the former dormitory had been one of the many mysteries of Drere Manor which Babs had discovered during her short stay in the house.

Beyond the trap was a cavity in the ceiling, with above it another opening into the room directly above the passage.

"I shall want a table and a chair to reach up there," Babs said.

Eileen soon procured these articles of furniture from one of the rooms. Babs stood the chair on the table, and then clambered up.

Producing a torch from her blazer pocket, she thumbed down the switch and shone it on the ceiling. Well concealed though the trapdoor was, she had no difficulty in locating it. She pressed, and up shot the door, revealing in the beam of the torch the cavity beyond.

In that cavity still stood the powerful electric fan by means of which Burgin had worked one of his scares on the Fourth Form. And it was Babs' theory that the turning on of that fan had dislodged Charles Hunter's letter from its hiding-place, but torn it in the process. Which surely meant, if the theory were correct, that the remaining portion of the letter was to be found somewhere within reach.

Eileen and Mabs watched with growing excitement. Babs swung the torch from side to side of the cavity, her keen eyes searching every inch.

"Can you see anything, Barbara?" asked Eileen.

"Not yet—" Babs, standing on tip-toe on the chair, leaned farther forward. And then it was that disaster nearly happened—disaster which led to success!

Babs, balanced on the edge of the chair, felt it wobble.

"The chair! Look out!" yelled Mabs warningly.

Instinctively the Form captain flung out her free hand to save herself from being precipitated to the floor. She grabbed at something, and instantly the electric fan whirled into motion.

Br-r-r-r!

Babs' wildly grasping hand had

touched a switch and started the fan. Now she felt a rush of air in her face; it caught at her hair. Dust was whirled into her eyes and nose.

Something fluttered in the farthest corner of the aperture in the ceiling; was caught up by the revolving current of air.

Babs suddenly felt as if she had been blinded. She could not see; her vision was obscured by that fluttering something which swept across her eyes, and was held there by the force of the fan-driven wind.

She tore it away frantically, stretched out and switched off the electric fan. At the same moment—

An excited shout—almost a scream—from Eileen below:

"The letter—it's the letter! Barbara, we've found it!"

Hair dishevelled, striving to maintain her balance on the still wobbling chair, Babs stared down at the two girls below in amazement.

"But how—what—?" Startled, yet wonderfully thrilled, she couldn't yet grasp the full significance of what had happened.

"It blew out of that hole in the ceiling right into your face!" cried Mabs. "But it's the missing portion of that letter all right. Oh, come down and look, Babs!"

Babs was already doing that. She simply jumped, and then eyes glowing, was standing beside her friends as they examined the scrap of paper.

The missing part of the letter it undoubtedly was. Eccentric Charles Hunter had concealed the letter behind one of the laths in the mortar of that aperture in the ceiling.

When Burgin had first switched on the fan he had partially dislodged the paper, the fierce current of air tearing it.

And Babs, by that lucky stroke of good fortune in accidentally starting the fan, had completed its dislodgment.

"Eileen," she exclaimed excitedly, "have you a copy of the first part?"

"Yes, here!" Eileen fumbled in a pocket of her dress. She brought out a piece of paper. Now, at last, they had the completed letter. And this is what old Charles Hunter had written, the letters in italics being those on the portion which the girls had just found:

"I know enemies are after me. All my money is converted into bonds which I have hidden in the secret chamber in underground dungeon—Charles Hunter."

"Then the money is in that dungeon after all!" Eileen shouted.

"And Burgin didn't find the letter, after all!" cried Mabs.

"We'll search for the treasure right away," rushed on Eileen.

"Rather! But do you know where this secret chamber is?" asked Babs, as excited as her friend.

"Yes," Eileen laughed joyfully. "Oh, why didn't I think of it before? It's just the place where grandfather would hide anything!"

"But what did he mean by enemies being after him?" put in Mabs. Momentarily Eileen frowned.

"Nothing at all, really," she replied. "I told you how grandfather became rather eccentric just before he died. He began imagining that people wanted to harm him—wanted his money. But he always said that daddy and I should have every penny of it. Goodness, I see now why he had his money converted into bonds and hid them. He must have thought it was the only way to guard against these imaginary enemies getting his fortune! But don't

let's stop here talking. Let's get down to the dungeon. Oh, Barbara—Mabel—it seems so wonderful to be true!"

And they all three rushed downstairs, making for the secret tunnel which led to the dungeon.

IN FRIENDLY HIGH STREET, a panting, breathless figure rushed into the unimposing offices of "Albert Burgin—Estate Agent."

The figure was that of Freda Ferriers. Straight into her uncle's private office she went. Burgin was there. And Burgin's ferrety face paled with rage and fear as he heard what Freda had to tell him.

"Gosh, they've got to be stopped—at all costs they've got to be stopped!" he raved.

Burgin left his office at a run.

"HERE WE ARE!"

"Got the key?"

"You bet," Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn, and Eileen Hunter, breathless and thrilled, had reached the dungeon in the secret tunnel.

The heavy, iron-studded door loomed before them in the light of their torches. Babs laughed suddenly, pulling at an iron ring on the face of the door.

"No need for the key," she said. "The door's not locked!"

"Oh, goodness!" Mabs' voice dropped to an alarmed whisper. "Perhaps there's somebody here already."

"Listen!"

But not a sound came from the other side of the door. Babs pulled it open. Darkness beyond. The three girls went into the dungeon, flashing their torches about them.

That underground chamber was not very large—a cold, depressing place, with stone walls and floor and ceiling. It contained no furnishings at all. But over in one corner were two sacks, bulging and obviously well filled.

"Oh, great goodness! Look at these!"

Babs had crossed over to the sacks and opened them. At sight of the contents she was literally robbed of her breath for a few seconds.

"Barbara!" shouted Eileen. "You haven't found the bonds—"

The Form captain couldn't take her eyes away from those sacks.

"No. But I've found— My hat, talk about treasure!"

Never before had Babs seen such a varied collection of valuables of all descriptions, worth tens of thousands of pounds, as were jumbled in those sacks.

Beautiful pearl necklaces, glittering diamond bracelets, jewels, gold and silver—dozens and dozens of each.

Treasure, yes—but stolen treasure! "The stuff!" exclaimed Babs. "The stuff Burgin was talking about. The proceeds of all his gang's robberies!"

Fascinatedly the girls stared and still stared at that glittering hoard. Now they began to realise the immensity of Burgin's crooked activities. Here was evidence of what an utter scoundrel the man was.

And Drere Manor was his secret hide-out. No wonder he had been so furious when the Fourth Form had taken up their quarters in the house. Fearing discovery, terrified lest his movements should be observed, no wonder he had been so desperate in his attempts to scare the girls away!

"Well"—Babs turned away at last—"having found one fortune, now let's look for the other one. An honest one this time—oh, Eileen? Where's this secret chamber?"

"Over here!"

Eileen crossed to the opposite wall. Tremblingly, in her excitement, she pressed against one of the massive stone blocks. It swung outwards.

Then a jubilant shout went up from the three girls in chorus:

"There they are!" A small pile of documents, neatly tied with tape, rested at the back of the aperture revealed by the opening of the stone block. This particular block, Babs noticed, was only half the thickness of its neighbours on either side.

Feverishly Eileen grabbed at the pile; was withdrawing it from the cavity when—

The door of the dungeon crashed open and three men burst in.

Babs and her companions swung round, with cries of dismay. They saw Albert Burgin, his face a mask of rage.

"Gosh, they're here!" he snarled. "They've found this dungeon!" His eyes went to the sacks in the corner, and he saw that they had been opened. Fear struggled with anger for the mastery of his features. "You—you interfering brats! So you know—eh? Well, it won't do you any good. You won't leave this house until me and the boys have made our getaway!"

The girls stood motionless and tongue-tied, too overwhelmed by this disaster to be capable of clear thinking.

"Grab them!" he snapped, turning to the men with him.

And before the girls could even attempt to struggle they were roughly seized in strong hands.

The bonds dropped to the floor as Eileen was made a prisoner. Burgin saw them and stooped swiftly.

"What are these—Gosh, bonds!" He examined the documents, and then a look of triumph crossed his face. Old man Hunter's bonds!" he crowed excitedly. "Just a little more to add to our collection! They're negotiable by anyone, and will come in useful when we clear out of the country!"

And, with a smirk at the girls, he tucked the bonds in his pocket.

"Oh, you—your brute!" panted Eileen. "They're not yours! Give them back to me—"

"Shut up!" said the man who held her, jerking her roughly. "What shall we do with them, boss?"

Burgin ruminated for a moment. "Put 'em upstairs in the attics—each one in a different room!" he ordered.

"Then phone up Joe, and tell him to bring the car here pronto!"

Struggling furiously now, but in vain, the three girls were dragged out of the underground room, along the tunnel, and so into Drere Manor.

Success had turned failure in the very moment of their triumph!

Babs could have wept.



"Quickly—the Police!"

ALONE in the attic in which she had been imprisoned, Babs paced up and down, thinking furiously.

How to escape? That was the problem which confronted her.

Burgin had been clever to put the girls in separate rooms. They could not connive together, could not make any concerted action.

"But he won't beat us!" Babs vowed. "He shan't take Eileen's money! And he shan't get away with all that other stolen stuff, either! Somehow I've got to stop him and his gang!"

But it was easier said than done. Babs was the first to admit that. A dozen times she paced to the small barred window. No hope of escape that way, with the ground so far below.

No; the only exit was via the door, and it was to the door that Babs now turned her attention. It had been locked, of course.

She bent, applying her eye to the keyhole. And then her heart gave a violent jump, for her view was obstructed. The key was still in the lock.

"My hat!" she breathed, a red flush of excitement suffusing her pretty cheeks. "I wonder if I can manage that stunt I read about?"

She inserted her fingers beneath the door. There was a good inch of space between the bottom edge and the floorboards.

"Better and better!" she breathed. Babs' actions were curious then. She whipped off her blazer, and, heedless of the dust, pushed it carefully between the door until only the collar was left in her grasp. Then she felt in her hair, taking out one of the clips which she wore to keep her curls in place.

This she opened out. Then inserted it in the keyhole and pushed. From the other side of the door came a faint plop. Babs thrilled.

Quickly she bent and began carefully to pull the blazer back under the door. "Done it!" she breathed.

"Done it she had. For there, lying in the folds of her blazer, was the key of her prison.

It was the work of a moment to slip on her blazer again and unlock the door. A second later she was free.

And now—what should she do? Release Mabs and Eileen, or— Or should she attempt to get help before Burgin and his gang made their getaway with the loot? "Yes that's it!" Babs told herself excitedly. "Now, let me think!"

She thought as she crept down the stairs. Burgin and his men were waiting for a car to arrive. He had told one of the men to phone for it. Goodness, that meant, assuming he phoned from Drere Manor, that the instrument had not yet been disconnected.

Telephone! She must get to it, down in one of the rooms. She would phone up Inspector Winter, of the Courtfield Police—

Another idea came to her. Where would Burgin and the others be? Perhaps down in the dungeon, making ready for their flight.

And then a daring scheme came to Babs' mind. The key—she had the key of the dungeon. If only they were all together in that underground chamber, and she could lock them in!

No sooner the idea than Babs was bent on carrying it out. Reaching the hall, she crept stealthily to the panel in the wall and operated the mechanism which opened it.

A hasty glance to left and right, a pause to listen, and she whipped through, almost stumbling over a storm lantern which had evidently been left there by the men to light the way.

That would be useful for negotiating the tunnel, Babs thought instantly—safer than her powerful torch.

She picked it up. Along the tunnel she went, reached the flight of steps, and crept cautiously down.

There was the dungeon a few yards ahead, the door slightly ajar. From the other side came the sound of Burgin's voice.

"Well, get the stuff together, and we'll be moving. Don't want the car outside to attract too much attention. I'll get

these bonds cashed, and we'll slip out of the country to-night."

"But, boss, what about the kids?" asked another voice.

"Oh, Freda, my niece, will let them out to-morrow, when we're clear away! Now, ready?"

Babs tensed. It was now or never, she realised.

Her heart thudding painfully, she placed the lantern on the floor and ran forward, abandoning all caution now.

A NEW DIANA SERIES



It begins in next Friday's GIFT Number of THE SCHOOLGIRL—the series you have been waiting for, starring Diana Royston-Clarke, the Firebrand of the Fourth.

Each story in this grand new series is complete—and each story is a "winner"! Next week's shows Diana in her most reckless, her most wayward, mood—determined to get her own way, resolved to ride roughshod over the whole form, to be in the limelight when a film is made at Cliff House.

Don't miss this brilliant and powerful story in THE SCHOOLGIRL next Friday. It is entitled:

"THE FIREBRAND'S FEUD"

By HILDA RICHARDS

in THE SCHOOLGIRL next Friday.

With one hand she grabbed the door and crashed it shut. The other hand had already dragged out from her pocket the key of the dungeon.

Feverishly she slammed it in the lock, turned it, and then, trembling in the reaction, leaned against the wall for a moment, while from inside the dungeon came the hoarse, angry bellows of the trapped crooks.

"And now—the police!" panted Babs. Recovering, she again picked up the lantern and ran back along the tunnel out into the hall.

The telephone—which room was it in? In her excitement, she could not think clearly for a moment.

Yes, of course; the room which Miss Charmant had occupied. Across to it she raced. The telephone stood on a bureau. Putting down the lantern, which she had brought with her, she grabbed up the receiver.

"Hallo—hallo! Quickly, please put me through to the police!" she panted.

Clicks from the other end of the wire. Feverishly Babs waited. And, in waiting, her eyes travelled to a mirror above the bureau. A cry left her lips at what she saw reflected there.

Creeping up behind her was a stealthy figure, a sheet held out in its hands.

Freda Ferriers! Freda, her face frightened, but desperate in its expression. Her intention was obvious. She had seen Babs at the telephone, had heard her ask for the police.

Realising something had gone wrong, Freda knew that she must prevent that call from being made.

Nearer she crept to Babs. Now the sheet was poised over Babs' head, ready to enmesh her in its folds.

But the Form captain was ready. As it descended she dropped the receiver, whipped round, and caught at the sheet with her hands, snatching it from Freda's grasp.

There came a shrill scream from the ferrety one. Her face turned even more livid as Babs grabbed her.

Freda tried to struggle, but it was a vain effort. Babs shook her.

"Now, you little idiot, what game are you playing? Do you want to get sent to prison?"

"Prison—"

"Yes; because that's where your crook uncle is going just as soon as I get the police here. Freda, I never thought you'd be mixed up in anything as dreadful as this."

Freda glared. "What do you mean? If my uncle finds those bonds first he's entitled to keep them. Finding's keeping—"

Again Babs shook her.

"I'm not talking about the bonds now," she said. "I'm talking about all those robberies he and his gang have carried out—"

"Robberies?" Freda's start of surprise was genuine. "I don't know what you are talking about. My uncle's not in a gang."

"Freda," Babs said quietly, "Burgin, your uncle, has been using you not to get the bonds but to help him in his real objective. He is the leader of the gang which carried out all these robberies in this neighbourhood last night. This place is his secret headquarters. And, do you realise," Babs went on sternly, "that he has made you an accessory after the fact?"

Freda swayed on her feet.

"Oh, Barbara—" A thin whisper left her lips. "I never knew that—really I didn't."

"Fifty in Babs' eyes now.

"You have been a fool, Freda. You must have known you were doing wrong. Go back to Cliff House and keep your mouth shut. But," Babs added grimly, "your uncle deserves no mercy. He must take the consequences."

And, releasing Freda, she pushed her towards the door. The Ferret was sobbing as she quitted the room. Indeed, she had learned her lesson. Freda would be a changed girl for a long time to come.

Babs turned back to the telephone. A voice was shouting frantically from the mouthpiece.

"I'm speaking from Drere Manor," she said quickly. "Is that Inspector Winter?"

"Yes. Who are you?" barked the voice.

"Barbara Redfern, of Cliff House School speaking, Inspector. Listen! Don't ask any questions, but come quickly, to Drere Manor. And bring some men with you. Locked up here is the gang of crooks who carried out those robberies last night."

(Continued on page 28, col. 3.)

around the corner from the corridor where the Lavender Lady always disappeared!

But of even greater significance was Pat's subsequent actions. She dragged a ladder to the entrance of the corridor, and hammered several nails into each of the walls, within a yard of the end.

"That's just about all, I think," she said, surveying her handiwork with evident pride. "And now—for a little surprise I've been saving up for you, Renee."

She led the way to the picture of the Lavender Lady. Though the sight of it made their pulses tingle, it seemed to offer no clue to the amazing fashion in which a solid portrayal of that character stepped down to the floor.

But Pat made a reveal something—something that made Renee jump and stare!

"There you are!" Pat exclaimed triumphantly. "That's how she gets down. And those little bits of tobacco show she has a man accomplice."

And, chuckling, Pat led a very dazed-looking Renee away from the spot!

Time dragged slowly on that day, but at last it was night, and darkness enveloped the countryside. Shortly after dinner, Pat and Renee led six thick-set youths in at the servants' entrance, and ushered them upstairs.

A little while later the chums retired to their bed-room—to wait!

The seconds ticked on: Ten o'clock! Toek, toek, toek! Dong! In the clock—half-past ten! Toek, toek, toek, toek! Eleven o'clock! Toek, toek, toek!

All at once, with startling suddenness, Pat seized Renee's wrist in a fierce, whirling grab.

"There it is!" she cried in triumph. "That voice again! My hat! She's fallen into the trap!"

Fully dressed, the chums tore out of their room, and raced up to the ghostly corridor, picking up guests and servants as they went, until, when they came in sight of the picture, half the hotel were there.

Dramatically, Pat flung out a hand. "Look!" she cried, hurling herself up the last three stairs.

Exactly as on the previous night, the Lavender Lady was materialising from the picture.

Sensation broke out among the chums' followers, some of whom drew back.

Not so Pat and Renee. They tore after the phantom, round corner after corner, down corridor after corridor, until they saw the fugitive racing towards the place where she always disappeared.

Round it she flew, vanishing again. But all at once there came a terrific scream. A terrific slithering and thumping took place. Lusty boys' voices joined in.

"They've got her!" Pat panted. "They" had!

When she and Renee reached the corner, there was the Lavender Lady, still glowing eerily, but struggling and crying out in very material fashion in the old fashioning while the six youths who had been visited that morning roared with laughter.

"Thanks, boys!" Pat congratulated them. "Oh, here's mother! Well," as Mrs. Heather led a rush of people to the scene, "what did I tell you, mother?"

"Who is this person, Pat?" "The wife of someone you know. Guard her, chaps," Pat instructed, turning away. "If all you people will come

with me, I'll show you something very interesting."

Racing back to the picture, she indicated two little dents near each bottom corner. Then, putting her fingers under them, she heaved.

Came a perfect chorus of gasps and cries.

The canvas slid up, out of the frame, revealing a cavity beyond, and, crouching back in it, looking scared out of his life, was—

"Mr. Knowles!" Pat's mother ejaculated hoarsely.

"Look—look here—" the man began to stammer; but at a sign from Pat he was seized by the porter and marched back to the Lavender Lady.

Then, while both of them were detained by the boys, Pat explained everything to a most excited and over-the-top audience.

The Knowles were old music-hall artistes, famous for their magical illusions, including one billed as "The Ghost," in which Mrs. Knowles went through a turn very similar to the one she had been practising at the hotel.

The papers Pat had found in the garage were old theatre programmes and newspaper cuttings, referring to the Knowles' act. There was also an article from the local paper mentioning the existence of a secret cavity behind the picture at the hotel, and explaining how it could be used. The author of this article was "R. Knowles, the illusionist."

Having discovered that much, it was simple for Pat to arrange a trap. But one thing still puzzled her, she told everyone.

"How did Mrs. Knowles disappear?"

The woman herself revealed that secret in a moment of fury, just before she and her husband were turned out of the hotel. She had escaped by means of the chest at the top of the corridor. It had a false back, screening a passage, which led from the hotel to the grounds of the very house where Pat had been taken!

There were many other unsuspected secrets which Pat discovered after the Knowles' departure—quite a dozen secret retreats and tunnels, as well as another "sliding" picture.

But the finest discovery of all occurred a fortnight later, when two very American gentlemen called at the hotel.

"Madam," snapped one, brandishing a cigar. "I guess we wanna buy this lil shack o' yores."

And buy it they did—at a figure that made Mrs. Heather's eyes sparkle, and sent Pat running for the nearest pen and ink!

"So that's why Mr. Knowles wanted it, mum," Pat murmured afterwards, as they set off for a cruise. "He'd heard about those chaps wanting the place for filming purposes."

"Well, he didn't get it after all, dear—thank you!" said Mrs. Heather, with an affectionate embrace.

"Thanks to the Lavender Lady," Pat corrected. "She oughtn't to have insisted on taking that extra curtain-call."

THE END.

In the next issue of THE SCHOOLGIRL, on sale on Friday, May 22nd, there will be three wonderful new stories. Three photo-postcards of famous film stars and a charming wallet will be given away with every copy of this grand number. Make sure of yours by ordering it at once.

"THE FOURTH FORM FORTUNE HUNTERS"

(Continued from page 17)

She heard a gasp, but without waiting for more, hung up the receiver. Now to release Mabs and Eileen.

It was the work of moments to rush upstairs and do so. Quickly she told them what had happened.

Ten minutes later there was a thunderous knocking at the door. Babs flew down to open it, and in swarmed half a dozen stalwart policemen, led by Inspector Winter.

"Now, what's this about a gang of crooks—"

"Come this way, please, inspector," smiled Babs.

Down to the dungeon they went, the police amazed as they were led along the secret tunnel. And their amazement became even more pronounced when Babs unlocked the dungeon door and flung it open.

Burgin and his gang rushed forward, straight into the arms of the police. A short, sharp struggle, and it was all over.

Inspector Winter beamed down at Barbara Redfern.

"Clever work!" he congratulated. "Gosh, and you did this all by yourself! There'll be a reward coming to you for this."

"Bother the reward!" laughed Babs. "There's only one thing I want—and those are the bonds which Burgin took from Eileen, here. They're her property. Burgin's got them now, in his pocket—"

"Don't you worry," replied the inspector. "They'll be given to her at the police station whenever she likes to apply for them. Must take them along with me now, though—that's the law."

He turned to his men. "Bring them along!"

Prisoners, the crooks were taken away.

Eileen, tears of happiness in her large eyes, stood smiling mistily at Babs and Mabs, for the moment too overwhelmed to speak. But at last she found words.

"Oh, Barbara—Mabel—how can I ever thank you?"

"Don't try," said Babs. "Go along and tell your father the good news. And we must get back to Cliff House and get old Clara out of the punishment-room."

There remains little more to be told. Clara, of course, was completely exonerated. Burgin and his confederates received heavy sentences. Their crooked activities would be curtailed for many years.

And Eileen—

Now Eileen Hunter is hostess at Dreer Manor. There she is living happily with her father. The bonds realised enough to keep them in comfort for the rest of their lives.

Perhaps their most frequent visitors are Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn, and Clara Trevlyn, to whom Eileen and her father are devoted.

For they know that to those three staunch friends they owe their life's happiness.

THE END.

A grand new series of long complete Cliff House School stories, featuring Diana Royston-Clarke, begins in the next issue of THE SCHOOLGIRL. See pages 17 and 18.