

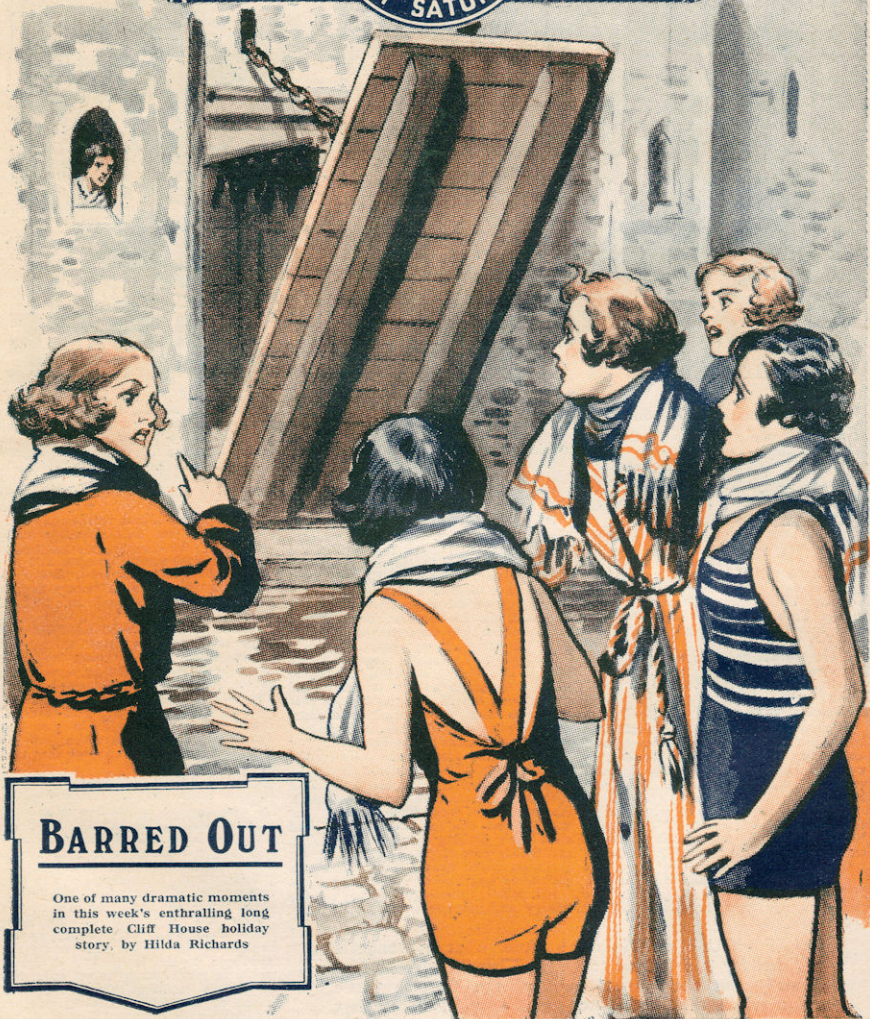
GRAND LONG COMPLETE STORY AND FOUR OTHER FINE FEATURES INSIDE!

# THE SCHOOLGIRL

No. 365, Vol. 15.  
Week Ending  
July 25th, 1936.

EVERY 2<sup>D</sup> SATURDAY

Incorporating  
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



## BARRED OUT

One of many dramatic moments  
in this week's enthralling long  
complete Cliff House holiday  
story, by Hilda Richards

## First of a New Series of Grand Long Complete Holiday Stories



# CLARA TAKES CHARGE

## Their Amazing Welcome

"FIVE more minutes," Barbara Redfern cried merrily, "and we shall be at the junction!"

"Gee, and won't I be glad to stretch my legs!" Leila Carroll yawned. "How many miles is it from the station to Pellabay Castle, Clara?"

"Cheer up, only eighteen," Clara Trevlyn replied, with a laugh.

Leila pretended to groan at that. Jenima Carstairs, fanning her face, fell back as though in a deep swoon. From a corner of the first-class compartment in the Cornish express in which they were travelling came a grunt in Bessie Bunter's tones.

"And there'll be a car waiting for us, of course?" Mabel Lynn asked.

"Oh, of course! Two, I expect," Clara said cheerfully. "My aunt believes in doing things in style."

"But we shall stop at the junction to have a snack" Bessie suggested anxiously. "I mum-mean to say, it would be silly to tackle another eighteen miles on an empty stomach. I'm just famished!"

"Ceil, when you eat ze whole of ze tuck hamper on ze way!" Marcelle Biquet squealed, and shook a finger under Bessie's nose. "Bessie Buntaire, you are one great hogsack!"

There was a laugh—except, of course, from Bessie. Despite the long and tiring journey from London, the Cliff

House party was in high feather. Eight of them there were in that compartment—all members of the Fourth Form, and all, in holiday spirit, on holiday bent.

Despite the heat—and it was really grillingly hot—they all looked fresh and excitedly eager for the really glorious time which lay ahead of them.

Barbara Redfern was normally the leader of the party, but on this occasion that honour had been relinquished to Clara. For it was to the Pellabay Castle Hotel, owned by Clara's Aunt Grace, that they were going.

High up on the rugged Cornish Cliffs it stood, an inspiringly romantic old castle which had braved the Atlantic gales for hundreds of years.

Strange and stirring legends were told of it. The names of King Arthur and his romantic knights of the Round Table were woven into its history. It had also been the stronghold of one, Roger Jolly, a bold, bad, dashing buccaneer in the days before Drake.

But Pellabay Castle was no longer the feudal stronghold of medieval days.

Its ruins had been repaired. Its old halls and turrets had been modernised. Electric lights now blazed where the candles and the lanterns of old had shed their fitful gleams; the spacious courtyards were carpeted with soft green turf; its battle-scarred walls echoed to the merry laughter of happy guests.

All these things were due to the energy and enterprise of Clara's Aunt

Grace, who, risking her last penny on the venture, had, two years ago, bought the castle at a bargain price, and had turned it into a first-class, modern hotel, without, however, detracting from its character.

Eighteen miles from the nearest station it stood, a grim but grand old pile, yet with its own tennis courts and playgrounds; its own seawater swimming-bath, its own indoor recreation-room, and bed-rooms, lounges, and rest-rooms. Everything, indeed, that could be asked of a modern luxury London hotel was incorporated in Pellabay Castle.

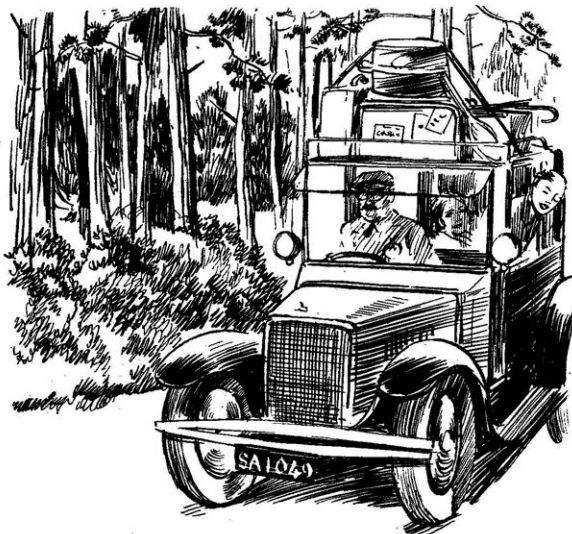
And it was to this spot that these eight girls—smiling Babs and her golden haired chum, Mabel Lynn, boisterous Clara and her contrastingly quiet and gentle chum, Marjorie Hazeldene; Leila Carroll, that pert, bright, and breezy product of the U.S.A.; and Marcelle Biquet, the excitable little girl from France; Jenima Carstairs, of the boyish Eton crop and the inevitable monocle; and last—but by no means least—the portly proportioned Bessie Bunter, fattest girl at Cliff House.

Clara was the only one who had previously visited Pellabay Castle, but it was Clara's account of the place which had inspired them, and had decided them upon spending their summer holiday there. Such fun it was to be so many miles away from anywhere, and yet at the same time living in luxury.

Now the train was slowing down. Bags and cases were being eagerly hauled off the racks. Four hours they had been in the train, and everybody would be glad enough to get out. Now they were running through the platforms of the great Cornish junction; crammed with summer-dressed people. The train was slowing. A hoarse shout

**CLIFF HOUSE on Holiday!** And what a wonderful holiday it promised to be for Clara Trevlyn and her chums! But the ancient walls of the Cornish castle, within which they hoped to spend so many happy days, sheltered enemies as well as friends. . . .

## Featuring Tomboy Clara Trevlyn



By

HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrations by T. Laidler

of porters—a hissing of steam—and they were at a standstill.

"Hurrah!" yelled Clara, first to leap out, and almost colliding with a ferocious-looking gentleman on the platform.

"Sorry!" the Tomboy gasped, and smiled back at him. "Well, here we are, girls!"

"Can you see your aunt?" Babs called back, from the interior of the compartment.

"No, ninnie! Didn't I tell you aunt's not there? She's gone to the South of France. Pellabay is in charge of a managerness now, a woman called Coates, who lives there with her daughter. Never met her, but I understand she's frightfully efficient, and all that. Bessie, can I give you a hand?"

They scrambled out, forming a merry group on the platform. Many an eye turned to stare at them in admiration. Many a smile was provoked by their happy spirits.

Clara led the way, keeping an anxious eye open for one of the hotel porters, who would be easily recognisable by the distinctive uniform in which her Aunt Grace had dressed them.

There were plenty of other hotel porters about, and plenty of guides, but none, apparently, belonging to Pellabay Castle.

"Expect the porter's outside," Clara said, though she frowned a little. "Might have had a hold-up on the way—it's the very dickens of a journey. But, half a tucket!" and she addressed herself to one of the guides from a St. Austell Hotel: "Could you tell me, please, if the Pellabay car is here?" The guide glanced at her curiously.

"You are going to Pellabay?"

"Why, yes!"

"All of you?"

"Of course!"

"Poor kids!" he said pityingly, and shook his head. "No, the Pellabay car isn't here—and I reckon if you want it you'll have to whistle for it. Excuse me!"

He moved away, leaving Clara staring. Babs, who had overheard that snatch of conversation, glanced at her curiously. Clara flushed.

"But that's rot, of course!" she exclaimed hotly. "My aunt makes a point of meeting all guests!"

They passed through the barrier into the station yard, which was full of taxis, cars, and coaches, but of the Pellabay conveyance there was no sign.

"Seems," Jemima opined thoughtfully, as if something's gone wrong, what? You're sure, Clara, old Spartan, that a car does meet the train?"

"Of course!" Clara said crossly. But she looked a little anxious, and more than a trifle ruffled. Rotten it was for things to go wrong right at the start like this. It was at Clara's suggestion that the party had come here, and Clara, naturally, felt responsible.

Hothead and Tomboy she was, but when Clara made a promise—and she had definitely promised her chums that at Pellabay Castle they would have one of the most wonderful holidays of their lives—she liked to carry that promise out to the very last letter. It was, she felt, up to her.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" she mumbled. "This is the very first time I've ever known the car not to meet the train. That idiot—" She glared back at the station, still annoyed with the guide who had cast such a slur upon the hotel. "Look here, will-you wait a few minutes while I go across the road and phone Mrs. Coates, the managerness?"

"But I'm starving," Bessie Bunter complained.

"Oh, Bessie, please!" Marjorie whis-

pered anxiously, for Marjorie could see that her chum was to come with you?" she asked.

But Clara shook her head. She had an idea that she would get through the business very much quicker if she did it alone.

She knew the town; she knew that she could phone from the Crag Hotel, two minutes' walk down the street.

The Crag Hotel was a small place, which relied more upon casual visitors than staying guests, and to reach the tiny lounge, in which the phone was situated, Clara had to pass through the dining-room. The dining-room was busy at this hour, for it was lunch-time. She caught a snatch of conversation from a man and woman seated at the far end of the room.

"And the breakfast this morning! Something appalling!"

"I know," nodded the man accompanying her. "The only thing right with the Pellabay Castle is the prices they charge. And for the third morning my shoes were left uncleaned. I'm glad we've packed up. Another fortnight of that would have killed me."

Clara glanced at them sharply; she had stopped. They were talking of her aunt's hotel—the Pellabay.

But what did it mean? The breakfast appalling; shoes not cleaned! That certainly did not sound like the way her aunt did things.

But Aunt Grace, of course, wasn't there; she had left a managress in charge while she went to the South of France.

Clara had a vague feeling that everything was not right. But Aunt Grace had assured her of Mrs. Coates' efficiency; had, she knew, put the hotel unrestrictedly into her hands. Rather tensely she gripped the telephone and gave the number. A languid, drawing voice answered her.

"Pellabay Castle here. Who is that?"

"Can I speak to Mrs. Coates?"

Clara asked.

"Oh, mother!" the voice snapped. "I'm afraid I don't know where she is. This is her daughter Ida speaking. Can I do anything for you?"

Clara bit back an exclamation of annoyance.

"I'm Miss Clara Trevlyn. I've brought my party along. We're at the junction now. How are we to get to the castle without a conveyance? I thought my aunt left instructions that we were to be met."

There was an exclamation at the other end; then, as Clara listened, she heard muttering voices. Ida was speaking of someone in the room.

"Well," Clara snapped.

"I'm sorry," Ida said, "but we can't send a car. You see, both the chauffeurs have left us."

Clara gasped.

"Then how the dickens are we to get—"

"I'm afraid," Ida said haughtily, "you'll have to make your own way." And before Clara could wrathfully utter the retort upon her lips—slam! went the receiver.

If Clara had been worried before, she was dismayed now. Oh, my hat! What was this? What had she brought her chums to? Why hadn't Aunt Grace told her that there might be these difficulties? What on earth was the matter with the chauffeurs? Why had they left?

Somewhat shamefacedly she rejoined her chums.

They gazed at her askance as she came up.

"What's the matter, Clara? Anything wrong?" Babs asked.



"Well, yes and no." And then Clara told them that the cars would not arrive. "I'm so dreadfully sorry, you girls! I had no idea—"

"Oh shucks!" Leila Carroll spoke up for the party. "Accidents can't be helped, I guess. Shouldn't be surprised if she does have some difficulty keeping servants at eighteen miles away from civilisation, you know. It's all right for us, sure! We're going there because we want to be cut off. But, say, we'll have to be getting a move on!"

In which Leila was right; for most of the cars and coaches had gone now. Two station cars still stood on the rank, and those they commissioned right away. Clara, Babs, Mabs, and Marjorie took the first, and the rest of the party bundled into the second. Fortunately, they had no luggage, except small cases used for requirements on the journey. The large baggage had been sent on in advance.

"Right! Off we go!" *Jemima* cried. "Off they went—happy, carefree, full of the holiday-spirit again. Bessie grumbled a little, still averring that she was half-starved. Clara for the most part was worried and silent. "Penny for 'em!" Babs laughed.

"Oh, they're not worth it!" Clara announced.

Babs glanced at her curiously, understandingly. She knew exactly what the Tomboy was thinking. Very loyal in her sense of duty was Clara. It would be like her to feel that she had let her chums down simply because some silly accident at the castle had prevented the cars turning up to meet them. She smiled.

"Old goose, Clara!" she smiled. "Don't worry for goodness' sake! These little things will happen, you know, and— Oh, I say, look!"

She broke off, her eyes dancing suddenly, in her eagerness standing up in her seat. The open taxi, emerging from a winding road into open country, suddenly swept upon an almost-breath-takingly beautiful view.

In front of them the grass-covered slopes of a giant plateau rose out of a billowing circle of green woods and forest, and the road stretched straight as a die towards the crest of the hill. On the summit, perched like some toy, yet every feature clear in the brilliant sunshine, stood—

"Pellabay Castle!" cheered Babs. "Pellabay Castle it was, its drawbridge down, flags flying from its four towers. It seemed to gleam in the sunlight; its gay banners seemed to wave a welcome. Even Clara sat up. For the first time, a smile parted her lips; a look of animation came into her eyes. Oh, rubbish! What could be wrong at Pellabay?"

The cars chugged on. Now they were ascending the steep slope. The castle drew nearer. What a thrill when they noticed the old-fashioned drawbridge which spanned a shining moat, where graceful swans glided; though, to be sure, there were no signs of the boating which was one of the advertised features of the place. Outside the drawbridge the cars stopped.

"Well, can't you go inside?" Clara asked.

"Sorry, miss, but—" And the taxi-driver, with a jerk of the head, indicated a bold notice. It was a very new-looking notice and seemed as if it had recently been painted. It said:

#### PELLABAY CASTLE HOTEL.

##### REGULATIONS.

(By Order of the Management)

No car, coach, or other vehicle may

enter through this gate without permission. Visitors are requested to leave their luggage in charge of the gate porter.

Dogs are not admitted in any circumstances.

Visitors are requested to note that the drawbridge will be raised at sundown each day, and lowered again at dawn the following day.

It is forbidden to smoke, except in the special parts of the precincts and the room of the hotel set aside for that purpose.

Clara stared at that—she stared at it angrily, incredulously. The rest of the chums had dimounted now; they, too, were staring *Marcelle Biquet* looked bewildered.

"Ceil! Is zis a joke?"

"Looks," Mabs opined, "as if we're going to have a whale of a time!"

"Say, is this an hotel or is it a prison?" *Leila Carroll* wanted to know.

"I kinda thought we were coming here for a holiday."

"Yes, rather, you know. It's a bit thick!" *Bessie Bunter* echoed indignantly. "I jolly well object to the drawbridge being raised when we might want to be out, you know—Wow! Babs, you cat, that was my foot!"

"Shut up!" hissed Babs. For she was looking at Clara. Clara, the Tomboy, still regarding that notice as if she could not believe her eyes, had turned fiery red, her lips firmly compressed.

"That," she said, "is not my aunt's doing. There was no restriction on this place whatever when I was here last time. Still—and she looked round at the girls—"I'm sorry, I wouldn't have brought you here if I'd known this. There is still time," she added, "to change our minds and go back."

But that was utterly impossible. In this first place, there was nowhere else they could go. In the second place, their luggage was already deposited at the castle. In the third, although every one of them had misgivings now it would rather be letting down old Clara—and, through Clara, her Aunt Grace, whom they all knew and very much liked.

There was a fourth reason, too—the very important one of having contracted to remain at the hotel a month. And, whatever the restrictions, there was no denying that *Pellabay Castle*, picturesquely perched here on top of the plateau, with the wild, rugged country screening it on one side, the restless Atlantic pounding against the high cliffs on the other, was all that their imagination had pictured it to be. *Jemima* put her monocle in her eye and frowned thoughtfully.

"Out of the question, old Spartan," she said. "After all, you're your aunt's niece, and your dulcet voice should carry some word of weight and wisdom, what? Personally," *Jemima* added, "I'm all for trying anything one, even with the merry old drawbridge up. There may be a reason for this that we wot not of, beloved! Let's stagger!"

That was the general feeling. They were all rather tired, all very hungry, anxious for a wash and brush-up and a change of clothing. It was no joke to go back to the junction, and where on earth were they to go from there?

Preposterous and absurd it was, of course, for an hotel to put up unnecessary restrictions like this. And, after

all, as *Jemima* pointed out, Clara was in charge. Clara, as the niece of the owner, herself with a family interest in the place, should be able to do something about it.

"Well, come in, then!" Clara grunted. "But first I'm going to see Mrs. Coates. I want to know the meaning of this. Never mind that notice. Bring your luggage in with you."

They paid the taxi-drivers. Led by Clara, they took up their cases, stepped over the drawbridge. Clara's face was set now. There was more than anger glinting in her eyes. At the gate house tower she spoke to the porter.

"I'm Miss Trevelyn, niece of Miss Grace Trevelyn. Where can I find the manageress?"

The porter stared at her surlily.

"In her office, I expect. But I must warn you, miss, it's against the rules to bring bags into the precincts."

"Thanks, I'll answer for that!" Clara retorted loudly. "Come on, girls!"

She stamped away. Really, she was angry. She had painted *Pellabay Castle* in such rosy colours to her chums—a place where one could do exactly as one liked; a place where the most ideal holiday in the most ideally picturesque surroundings could be enjoyed! Boating, fishing, swimming, sun-bathing—everything they had dreamed about, everything which could make a holiday the most ideal success.

The one thing which Clara hadn't guaranteed was the weather, but even that, as she pointed out, could be put up with. For *Pellabay Castle* was well equipped to amuse its guests on rainy days, with its big recreation-rooms, its possibilities for exploration, its own cinema, and its large dance-hall.

But this—  
This was the last thing she had expected. She had a queer feeling that everything was not above board.

Beautiful enough the place was, but even at first glance it had an appearance of neglect. The grass which grew on the lawns was long, and shrivelled in places as though it had not been attended to recently. There was no sign of tennis courts or five courts; no sign of the cricket pitches which they had been told to expect.

Everywhere were notices: "Please keep to the path!" "Keep off the grass!" "No sunbathing on this lawn—by order!"

More, as *Leila* had said, like a prison than a first-class free-and-easy hotel! More restrictions even than there were at *Cliff House School*! Certainly, not Aunt Grace's doing, this! And, if Clara knew anything about it, those restrictions weren't going to last long!

But here they were—at the wide portal of the castle itself. Clara stamped in. A few visitors, seated around reading and dozing, looked up as the party halted in the hall and dropped their baggage.

Then out from behind a curtain on the left stepped a woman, accompanied by a girl of about twenty years of age, who was carrying a paper rolled up like a cylinder in one hand. She came towards them.

"Yes?" she asked. "I want to see Mrs. Coates, please." "I am Mrs. Coates," the woman announced primly.

"Oh!"  
Clara eyed her. She was not impressed. Tall, thin, with a sharp, feverish face was Mrs. Coates. She



looked angular and efficient, but there was a shifty gleam in her pale brown eyes, which put her in Clara's "untrustworthy" class at once.

"I," she said, "am Clara Trevlyn."  
"Very pleased to meet you," Mrs. Coates said, through thin, unsmiling lips. "I hope you will enjoy yourselves. Ida—this is my daughter Ida—will take charge of you and look after you."

She turned to walk away. No more interested in them than that!

Uncomfortably the chums glanced at each other. Up into Clara's face ran the red of humiliation and of anger. She started forward quickly.

"Wait a minute—please!" she said. "I don't quite get the hang of this. I was assured, Mrs. Coates, by my aunt, that we would receive your personal attention."

"I am busy," Mrs. Coates returned coldly. "My daughter will give you all the personal attention you want. I have other guests to look after. Miss Trevlyn, and I cannot tolerate any interference in my duties. Your aunt has placed me in charge here, and has given me a free hand to run this establishment on my own lines."

"Even," Clara asked dangerously, "to turning it into a sort of boarding-school?"

"That," Mrs. Coates returned biting, "does not concern you!"

Clara clenched her hands.  
"Pardon me, Mrs. Coates," replied Clara evenly. "I think it does concern me. I'm here, in a way, to look after my aunt's interests. I'm also here to see that my chums enjoy their holiday. One can't enjoy a holiday with all these restrictions."

"Oh, please!" Mrs. Coates said impatiently.

And angrily this time she turned on her heel and strode off. Ida Coates chuckled unpleasantly.

"'Fraid you won't get much change out of mother," she said. "In any case, I don't see that being Miss Trevlyn's niece entitles you to run this place! Shall I show you to your rooms?"

"Yes, please," Marjorie put in quickly. She saw that Clara was dangerously near the verge of explosion. "Clara, come!" she whispered.

Ida picked up a bunch of keys.  
"Will you follow me?"

She led the way—not into the castle but back towards the entrance door. The girls looked at each other then, wondering, dismayed. Babs frowned.

"But surely," she asked, "we have rooms in the castle?"

Ida's smile was mockingly sweet.  
"I'm sorry, but you have not," she said. "We do not allow children to mix with the grown-up guests, unless, of course, the children's parents accompany them. You will share a bungalow in the grounds with ten other girls. I," she added with a flashing smile, "shall sleep with you to keep you in order!"

And while the eight chums from Cliff House eyed one another with feelings too utterly deep for words, she smilingly whisked through the door.



### Conflict in the Castle

"I'M not going to stand it!" That exclamation burst from Clara Trevlyn.

It was ten minutes later. Outside the bungalow, set away from

the castle grounds in a wilderness of uncut grass and flowers among which tall weeds grew freely, she stood surrounded by her chums. The bungalow had been seen, inspected, and Ida, the keys jingling in her hand, had walked off towards the castle again. Clara was furious.

Not only furious, but humiliated. For it could not be said that the summer holiday to which they had all looked so eagerly forward had started off a smashing success.

One of the most anticipated thrills of that holiday had been to live and have their being in the romantic castle. And this is what they had got! To be sure the bungalow was clean. It had its own

"We're going," Clara said wrathfully, "to do what we wanted to do—yes, all of us. We can't leave now—not at least until we've consulted our parents. But we're not putting up with this. This is not Aunt Grace's idea. See these cards—those notices all over the place—and you'll see there's nothing at all about the proprietress. I've let you in for this. Well, I'm not going to see your holiday spoiled. And for a start," Clara went on vengefully, "we're going to have a meal. Follow me, girls."

"But what—"  
"Follow me!" Clara repeated. *Jemima shrugged. Mabs shook her head. But their mood now was one*



"STOP!" cried Clara in horror, and leapt forward. But she was too late. The lady Mrs. Coates had already torn to shreds the vital letter.

washbasins and its own bathroom, but when that was said about it—all was said. They had expected to share rooms, three or four in one, at least. They had expected the free run of the castle.

And what had they got? Each girl with a narrow cubicle which was just sufficient to accommodate one iron-hard bed, a washstand and an utterly inadequate wardrobe; each of them furnished with a formidable sheet of rules and regulations which completely put into the shade the notice on the gates.

They were not allowed in the public rooms of the castle after 8 p.m. Must not wear bathing costumes within the castle grounds. Must pay in advance for everything which was not specifically included in their pension terms. Must not talk to servants. Must not—

A whole page of it there was.  
"You know it's worse than Cliff House," Bessie Bunter said wrathfully. "And what I want to know is when are we going to eat? Oh, dear, if I'd nun-knew it was going to be like this, you know, I'd have stopped at Bunter Court."

"And played marbles with brother Billy?" Leila put in.  
"Oh, really, Leila! But look here, what are we going to do about it, you know?"

with Clara. They knew Clara had right on her side. At the earliest it would take a day or two to make changes. There was no reason, while those changes were being made, why they should not have the holiday they had promised themselves.

The flag of revolt from that moment was raised into the Cliff House camp, and when there was no revolt who could be a better leader than the tempestuous Tomboy?

Clara, at least, having visited the castle before, knew her way about. Back into the banquetting hall, now converted into a spacious lounge, they stampeded, Clara at their head. No word Clara said; no glance she gave at the bored looking residents—mainly middle-aged ladies and old gentlemen.

Straight through the lounge she led the way, brushed the curtains aside, and tramped through a corridor into a second room, which bore a panel on its outside announcing that it was the dining-room.

"Sit down," Clara said, and indicated one of the many tables which were dotted about the room. "Here we are, eight of us here. Now!" and she caught up the bell and vigorously rang it. "We'll see what happens."

But nothing happened. Clara rang again, more vigorously this time.

For a few moments still nothing happened. Then the curtain at the far end of the room whisked aside and the angry face of Ida Coates looked in.

"What do you want?"  
 "We want some food," Clara returned.  
 "Well, you can't have it. Lunch was over an hour ago. There'll be no more meals till tea!"

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Bessie. Clara's eyes glittered.

"My aunt," she returned grimly, "made it a point to give new arrivals a meal, whatever hour of the day or night they came. We're hungry. We haven't had a meal since breakfast and we want a meal now!"

Ida glared.  
 "Are you talking to me?"  
 "I am!"  
 "Then," Ida snapped, "don't! And you can get up from that table. There'll be no food for any of you until tea-time."

She turned, whisking out again. Clara was on her feet in a moment. Even as Ida disappeared through the curtain she caught at her arm. Ida turned. For a moment a look of fear shot in her eyes, then her hand came round.

"Clara!" shrieked Babs. "Look out!"  
 But Clara was unprepared. Like a pistol shot the impact of pain against cheek sounded in the room. Clara, her face suddenly pale, staggered back, clapping her hand to her red-stained cheek. Three steps she tottered and then collided with a suit of armour which stood on its plinth.

"Mabs yelled.  
 "Clara—oh, my hat!"  
 But the mischief was done then. The suit swayed. Desperately Marjorie leapt out of her seat, panic-strickenly caught hold of the arm of that suit as it was in the act of falling.

But Marjorie hadn't reckoned with the weight of the thing. As desperately she clung to it, it dragged her, pulled her over with it, and then—crash!—ending up with a clatter that shook the room and aroused every echo in the castle. In pieces it fell apart, Marjorie, suddenly screaming, falling among them.

"Marjorie!" Clara gasped.  
 "Oh!" moaned Marjorie. "Oh!"  
 "Marjorie, are you hurt?"

Forgotten now was the meal. In a concerned group the Cliff House chums clustered round. One of the sharp edges of the suit had cut Marjorie just above the wrist. Another piece had bruised her forehead. Her pale lips were quivering.

"Oh!" she gasped.  
 Clara, shaken, was on her knees. Outside there was a rush of feet. Everybody in the lounge had heard the crash followed by the cry. Half a dozen scared faces were peering into the room.  
 "What happened?"  
 "Who did it?"

"Ida licked her lips.  
 "It was Miss Trevlyn," she said, "she—she attacked me. I—I had to defend myself, of course, and—and she knocked against the suit of armour, sending it over on the other girl. I——" and then she turned as a new figure rushed on to the scene—the figure of Mrs. Coates.  
 "Mother!"

"Oh, my goodness gracious! What is the matter?" Mrs. Coates cried.  
 "My dear—my poor girl!"  
 Even in the midst of their own consternation the Cliff House girls jumped at that. Was this the tight-lipped woman they had met less than half an hour before? But here was Mrs. Coates, all full of surprisingly motherly concern, pushing her way to the forefront of her open-mouthed guests, brushing Babs and Clara out

of the way while she took hold of Marjorie herself, and raised that half-fainting girl's head, to pillow it in the crook of her arm. She turned swiftly to her daughter:

"Ida! Bandages, water, and iodine immediately! And tell Perkins to come and take this suit away! My poor, poor dear!"

Ida flew. The chums, staring, stood round. Certainly Mrs. Coates seemed to know what to do. She did it swiftly and expertly. Marjorie, pale and shaken, was at last on her feet. The guests—they had increased now to double their original number—murmured between themselves.

"Now," Mrs. Coates demanded, "how did it all happen?"  
 "Clara Trevlyn attacked me—"  
 Ida began.

"Clara?" Mrs. Coates' eyebrows came down. A look of flinty severity spread itself across her face. "I have had reason," she said, "to expostulate with you before. You seem to have an idea that you have come to this hotel to run it. Apart from injuring one of your own friends, you have most dreadfully upset the nerves of my guests. I must ask you," she went on, "if you have no consideration for me, to have consideration for others."

Clara's eyes gleamed.  
 "But look here—"  
 "Thank you, that will do! Marjorie, my dear, dear child, do you feel all right now?"

"Y-yes, thanks," Marjorie said.  
 "But, Mrs. Coates, it wasn't Clara that—"  
 "Thank you, you needn't explain! I think," she added, "you had better go to your room and lie down."

There was a murmur among the guests. Every eye was upon Clara—Clara, who stood there with crimson face, her hands clenched—Clara who had been blamed because her best chum was injured. Angry were her chums, but condemning and freezing were the faces of the guests. She gritted her teeth.

"I tell you—"  
 "Say, take it easy!" Leila said, in disgust. "Don't fall for it. She's just trying it on, the old hypocrite! Wants you to flare out again."

Clara bit her lip. But she had the sense to see that Leila was right. Cunningly enough, by her show of motherly concern, Mrs. Coates had put her in the wrong among the guests—had made Clara the scapegoat of the whole proceedings.

"And please," Mrs. Coates added, as she rustled on, "leave the dining-room. The waitresses are waiting to lay the tea."

"But, look here! You know, we've had nothing to eat," expostulated Bessie Bunter.

"That," Mrs. Coates told them, "will be remedied in half an hour. Surely you can wait that time?"  
 It was the final word. One sour look she flung at them as she stalked off. Ida, turning at the curtain, flashed back at Clara a triumphant grin.

Nothing to do then but to obey. In a disconsolate body they drifted out, Marjorie still looking rather white and shaken, Bessie moaning loudly that she was on the point of collapse. In rather grim silence they returned to the bungalow.

"Well?" breathed Clara.  
 "Some holiday, I guess," Leila Carroll said. "Anybody got a bullseye or chocolate-drop to save old Bessiekins expiring? Who said going out to find something?"

But Clara shook her head. The nearest village was five miles away, she explained, and that, as far as she remembered, only had one general shop. Nothing to do but to wait till tea.

They waited for tea. As hungry as hunters they took their places at the table. Tea was served with slices of thinly spread bread-and-butter, hardly enough for three girls. Thin tea with watery milk, and acidulated jam which set the teeth on edge.

Not a cheerful meal. Not by any means a satisfying meal. If anything, they felt more hungry when it was finished than they had felt before. Loudly Bessie clamoured for more, but the clamouring of Bessie was lost in the wilderness. Clara ran a hand through her unruly hair.

"Oh, my hat! I'm sorry, you kids. I'd never have brought you here if—"

"No good crying about spilled milk—what?"  
 "Jemima said cheerfully—'even if the milk was rather thin and diluted. Question is, though—what's the little game?'" she added thoughtfully.

"What little game?" Clara demanded.

"Oh, nothing!"  
 "Oh, nothing!" Jemima said—"just a trivial thought which flowed in words out of the thing I call a brain—what?"  
 And she smiled in that enigmatic way of hers, and beamed at Clara, as though to assure her that there was no purpose behind that thought. "Well, what about a bathe to take off the slumberous effects of the banquet we've just eaten? Dwell not upon life's troubles, beloved. Let us do something to take these worrying questions from our minds. Who says swimming-pool?"

They all said swimming-pool, except Marjorie and Bessie, Marjorie looking really shaken after her accident, Bessie too desperately hungry to think of anything but the next meal.

Into the bungalow there was a merry scamper at once. Bathing-costumes and towels were grabbed, and, led by Clara, they rushed off across the long grass towards the pool. A really magnificent pool it was, too, with high diving-board, a water-chute, and a treadmill, and a rubber raft tied up at one side.

To the chums' great astonishment, however, it was deserted when they arrived there. Not a soul was to be seen, and, despite its magnificence, it bore a real air of neglect and gloom. Babs uttered an exclamation.

"Why, what on earth! There's nobody here!"

And then, staring into the pool, they saw the reason. Mabs grimly pointed.

"And no wonder. You can't swim in an empty bath!"

In blank dismay they stared at the pool—or what should have been the pool. The bath was empty!

"And this is supposed to be one of the chief attractions—what?" Jemima asked.

Chief attraction or not, the attraction at that moment was of use to no one. In rather glum and angry silence the chums turned back.

Mabs suggested tennis; but tennis, they discovered, was also out of the question. Though all the tackle was there in the pavilion which overlooked the courts, the courts themselves were uncut and unkempt, and utterly unusable. More, indeed, like paddocks.  
 "Well, and now what?" Jemima asked cheerfully.  
 "Ceil, we could bathe in ze sea," Marcelle suggested.

But Clara shook her head. "No sea bathing, except at low tide," she said, "and low tide isn't till midnight." Her eyes flashed suddenly; her jaw outthrust. "It's sickening!" she cried. "Look here! I'm going to see Mrs. Coates about this. I'm going to demand that the swimming-bath is folded. I'm jolly sure Aunt Grace would go bats if she knew this was going on."

"But—" Babs objected. But Clara was already striding off, brows knitted, face like a thundercloud. She had seen enough now to arouse her suspicions against the manageress and her daughter. What their game was she didn't know, but it was obvious to anyone with half an eye that they were not running this hotel as it should be run, and Clara wanted to know the reason.

Clara reached the bungalow. Contemptuously she tossed her things in her barrack-like room. Outside she met one of the maids. "Excuse me, but there's a letter for Miss Trevlyn. I believe she's in the bungalow."

"I am Miss Trevlyn!" Clara said. She took the letter, noticing with a quick thrill that it bore a French stamp. She put her finger under the flap and slit it open. A rather long and involved address of some town on the Mediterranean headed that letter. She paid no attention to that, however, but with sudden interest read the letter itself. It was from Aunt Grace.

"I hope, my dear, you and your chums have settled down in Pellabay by now," Aunt Grace had written. "And I hope you are enjoying it. You know, don't you, that I want you to have a very, very happy time there. Please make full use of all the amenities of the place; see that your chums have everything they want. Any extra things you require, I am sure Mrs. Coates will be only too pleased to supply."

"Oh, will she?" thought Clara. "How do Barbara and the others like the swimming-bath? Have you had your first dip yet? I'm sure you'll make full use of the tennis courts and the cricket pitches, and so on—the latter, if you remember, I put in at your own special suggestion, Clara dear."

"I am sorry to say, however, I am at the present losing quite a lot of money on the hotel, probably owing to the bad weather we had just before the holiday. I sincerely hope that things will improve."

Clara frowned grimly. She read on: "And if, as her aunt continued, 'you can think of any other improvements, Clara, let me know. Your suggestions are always valuable. As a member of the family, I naturally look to you to see that all your guests have a good time, and as there are no restrictions whatever as to what you shall and shall not do, I do not expect you will have much trouble in the inconvenience of being eighteen miles from the nearest big town. You have my full authority to do anything you wish to make the lot of your friends as happy as possible.'"

"And that," Clara said, "is enough for me!" Her face cleared. She felt that the letter was a weapon in her hands. If she had any doubts that Mrs. Coates and her daughter were playing funny games contrary to their employer's interest, this surely dispelled it.

Well, Mrs. Coates should see this letter. She'd jolly well like to know what she'd say when she'd read that! Here, if she needed it, was the authority she sought.

knocked on the door of Mrs. Coates' office, and went in. But neither Mrs. Coates nor Ida was there.

"If you want Mrs. Coates," a maid who was passing remarked, "I think she's in the private lounge."

"Thanks!" Clara replied. She knew the lounge referred to. It was at the other end of the banquetting hall. That way she hurried, and, reaching the door, paused to knock. But even as she raised her hand she stopped.

For voices—the voices of Mrs. Coates and Ida—fell upon her ears. She heard her own name mentioned.

"Get rid of that girl Clara!" Mrs. Coates was saying. "You hear, Ida? She's a danger. Get rid of her—and her friends!"

Clara's eyes gleamed. "But how?"

"Use your brains, girl. Make them go! They might ruin everything. Grace Trevlyn is already asking questions—I received a letter from her by the last post. It only needs a complaint from one of them to bring her here sticking her nose into everything."

Clara heaved a deep, explosive breath. If she had been suspicious before, she was positively convinced now.

Not Clara to think in a crisis like this. Her face went up with the wrath that suddenly flamed within her. Clutching her letter as if it had indeed been a weapon in her hand, she turned the handle and flung the door open.

Ida and her mother jumped. "Why—"

"Good gracious, Clara! How dare you come into a room without knocking!"

Clara's eyes seemed to flame. "And how dare you," she flung back, "run my aunt's hotel in a way calculated to ruin it! Oh, wait a minute! I didn't intend to listen, but I couldn't help overhearing what you said as I came into the room."

"And that?" Mrs. Coates asked, drawing herself up stiffly.

"You know! That Ida had got to get rid of me and my friends. That you are afraid we shall complain to my aunt! Well," Clara said grimly, "if it will give you any satisfaction, we're going to complain—every single one of us—and we're going to nip your rotten game, whatever it is, in the bud. I've a letter from my aunt; I've got her authority to do things—"

She paused, gasping for breath. Mrs. Coates, seemingly composed, exchanged a look with her daughter, who was serenely tapping a cigarette on the edge of a silver box, and smiling with tolerant amusement as she reached for the silver lighter. She laughed a little, as though amused.

"Clara," Mrs. Coates said, "I'm afraid you have too high-flown an idea of your own importance. You have been at this hotel just long enough to prove yourself and your friends an intolerable nuisance. Whatever you overheard while you were sneaking and prying outside this room, did not concern either you or your friends. We were not even thinking of you. And lastly, let me tell you this! I am manageress here, and as manageress it is my duty to run this hotel as I think fit."

Clara clenched her hands. "Even to the point of shutting up all the amusements?"

"That is my business!" "Oh, is it!" Clara flamed. "Then I'll tell you this! It's my business, too! It's my aunt's hotel—and I'm not going to see you ruin it! I have her authority here to demand that you open up all the amusements of the place. I demand—yes, demand," Clara flamed, "that you take down all those piling notices and

let the people who are stopping here really enjoy themselves! I—"

Not by a muscle did the expression on Mrs. Coates' face change.

"And, of course, you can show me this permission?"

"I can!" "Where is it?" "Read that!" Clara exclaimed, and temptuously held out Aunt Grace's letter.

Up went Mrs. Coates' hand. Quickly she grabbed, took one look at the address, and then, before the astonished Clara could stop her, had torn the letter deliberately into pieces and tossed the pieces on to the fire which burned behind her. At the same moment she touched a bell in the wall.

Up into Clara's cheeks the blood rushed at once. By her sides her hands clenched. Ominous the look that came into her face, fearful the light that flashed in her eyes.

For one second she stood staring stupidly as the flames consumed her letter. This woman had stolen that—had deliberately destroyed it!

"You—you thief!" she panted. She took a step forward. Unseen, the door behind her opened. The sulky-looking gateman who worked the drawbridge, accompanied by a burly, six-foot gardener, came in.

"Kindly show her out, please!" Mrs. Coates purred.

"Look here—" hooted Clara. "And remember," went on Mrs. Coates, unperturbed, "I run this hotel!"

"Bother you! Let me—"

But, mutinous as she was, Clara realised that she was helpless. Watched by the cynically smiling Mrs. Coates and the disdainful Ida, she was hustled into the corridor. She heard the key click in the lock of the door as the two men escorted her into the lounge.

Across the lounge she was hustled, while the guests seated about there stared in surprise, through the door and into the grounds.

"I think," said the doorkeeper ominously, "you had better return to your friends."

Clara threw him one furious, bitter look. Then she turned. In a bitter, humiliated mood she went to rejoin her chums.



## Rebellion!

**B**UT Clara was not beaten. Clara never was beaten. The stronger the obstacles, the stiffer the hurdles put in her way, the more grim the Tomboy's determination to overcome them.

Mrs. Coates might wield the rod of authority, but Mrs. Coates, if Clara knew it, was not going to get away with the game she was playing any longer. In a savage mood she rejoined her chums.

In detail she told them what had happened. Leila whistled.

"Say, sure looks as if there's dirty work afoot," she said. "What's the big idea?"

"That," Clara said, "is what I don't know. But it's what I'm going to find out. My aunt's complaining that she is losing money over the hotel—and who can wonder? She can't afford to lose it. Those two between them are up to some rotten trick, and it's up to me to nip it in the bud. I can't write to Aunt Grace. Her address was on that letter,



Full in her chest Mrs. Coates caught the cataract, went bowling over and over. The stream, shooting above her, played upon the startled men.

"Ow! Ow!"

"Stop it!"

"Go it, Bessie!" Clara cheered. "Go it!" And, rushing forward, herself caught the hose from the fat one's hand, playing it furiously. "Now will you get off this field?" she shouted.

"No!"

"Good! Then try this!"

She turned the tap on harder. At a fiercer pressure the water gushed out. She ran forward, paying out the hose as she did so. Then one of the men gasped, slipped, lost his balance. Another blindly turned with one arm crooked to protect his face, and fell upon him. The third, catching a sweeping smack under the shoulder blades, staggered blindly, and joined the others. Merrily Clara played upon them.

"Hiss! Splash! Szz!"

"Will you go?"

"Oh! Groo—yes!"

"And never come back?"

"No!"

"O.K. Then get up!" And grimly she turned off the hose, holding the nozzle in her hand like the nose of a revolver. Slowly, squelchingly, dripping water, the men rose, while Mrs. Coates stood and glared helplessly at the triumphant Clara. "I give you," Clara said, "five seconds in which to get off this court. One—"

"Look here, Clara—" shrieked Mrs. Coates.

"Two, three, four—"

The men broke into a run.

"Clara, release that hose at once!" hooted the furious manageress.

"Five!" Clara cried, and then

grinned. "Certainly!" she said, and his! the jet shot through the air again. Mrs. Coates gasped as she received the stream.

"Clara—"

But Clara, instead of going, made a run at her, hose first. That was too much. Soaked, infuriated, beside herself with temper, Mrs. Coates beat an

undignified and ludicrous retreat. Not until she had left the grass verge did Clara desist.

There in the drive she turned and shook her fist.

But Clara laughed. She felt she had the situation in hand now. Twice the rebels had joined battle with the enemy, and twice the rebels had won.

The final victory was surely accomplished when, half an hour later, with nets up and rackets flashing in the sunshine, the Cliff House girls and Susie & Co., were seen by wondering guests to be indulging in the first game of tennis which had been played on the neglected Pellabay courts that season.



### Desperate Measures

**B**UT it was a victory for which they paid.

They paid at supper. It was the most niggardly meal that any of them had ever eaten.

Spitefully Mrs. Coates took that way of paying them out. In contrast, for once, the remaining guests enjoyed a supper of magnificent proportions. Not all of them looked with favour upon Clara & Co., and Mrs. Coates, in her own self-defence, had taken good care to spread the news of the unruliness and their disobedience.

In glum and exasperated frame of mind, the chums and Susie & Co. gathered at the bungalow. Bessie was practically prostrate.

"Oh crumps! I nun-know I shall d-die if I stop here much longer!" she said. "I thuth-think you ought to do something about it, Clara. You brought us here!"

"Bessie!" Babs hissed.

Clara's face whitened. She glanced at Bessie, but there was no anger in her glance. If no one else believed

that Clara should be blamed, Clara herself did.

"I'm sorry," she said quietly. "But what can I do?"

"Well, can't you get some grub, you know?" Bessie asked pathetically.

Clara looked at her again. The remark gave her an idea. Without a word, she vanished into the bungalow. The chums looked uneasily at each other.

"Now, what's the chump got into her head?"

In a moment Clara had returned, a pillow-case in her hand.

"You shall have some grub," she said. "We'll all have some grub. No, wait a minute, don't ask questions! See this sack? Well, wait here ten minutes, and I'll be back with it—full!"

Babs blinked.

"You mean, you're going to raid the larder?"

"Just that," Clara said grimly.

"Oh, my hat! Clara, I'll help!"

"And I!"

But Clara shook her head.

"No," she said; "one's enough. I know the lie of the land. You don't. Wait here."

She strode off. The chums, looking after her, shook their heads. Clara strode on, concealing the pillow-case as best she could under her arm. She was not aware that two watchful eyes were witnessing her coming from the window of Mrs. Coates' office, however. Nor did she know that Ida Coates had seen her displaying that pillow-case in front of her chums.

Not this time did Clara enter the castle by the main entrance. She made her way round to the south tower, which gave access to the converted servants' quarters. Access was gained through a small, iron-studded door, which led up a short flight of stairs into a stone-walled corridor, from which the kitchens, the cellars, and the servants' quarters led off. At this time all the servants were at their meals, and the corridor was deserted.



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Three, four doors Clara passed, stopping at the fifth. There she softly turned the key.

She was in. Closing the door, she switched on the electric light.

And her eyes shone with satisfaction. The larder it was, an unusually well-stocked larder, too. Hams hung from the ceiling, there were several cooked joints ranged along the bench which ran alongside the wall; tins and tins of other food; cakes, jellies.

In a trice she had opened her pillow-case. In went a whole joint of beef, then three or four loaves of bread; a slab of butter; a bottle of pickles; tinned fruit and cream, and other odds and ends. By that time the pillow-case was almost full.

"That, I think, will do," Clara said grimly.

She tied the neck of the case up. She grinned. Then swiftly she hoisted the sack on her shoulder, grunting as she did so, and stepped softly towards the door.

She flung it open. And then she paused.

For a figure—Ida's figure—holding a smoking cigarette in one hand—stood there in the corridor outside. Her face was cold with hatred.

"You thief!" she grated. Clara's eyes flashed. "Go easy with the names!" "Take that food back!"

"I won't!" Ida's chest heaved. She took a step forward. Clara was still in the larder, and the doorway was so narrow that Ida took up the whole space. For a second they stood glaring at each other in intense hatred, both unwilling to move or even give a step.

"Well!" Clara challenged. Ida did not reply. But suddenly, swiftly, the hand that held the cigarette came up. It made a red arc in the gloom as it stabbed forward at Clara's hand. Clara, taken by surprise at the treachery of the trick, let out a hoot of pain. Ida, following up her advantage, grabbed the edge of the door and made as if to pull it back. But in a second Clara had moved. In an instant she had divined the other's intention. Ida meant to lock her in.

Down with a bump went the sack. She jumped forward. Fierce her face then, blazing her eyes. Even Ida, bigger and older girl that she was, was appalled at the fury which broke out upon the Tomboy's face.

"You beast!" Clara flared. She caught the hand that held the door. With a superhuman jerk, she flung the other round. Ida was helpless. Back with a crash she cannoned against the shelves. Something overhead slipped, rocked on the edge of the shelf and fell.

"Oh, my hat! Look out!" Ida shrieked. But too late. Whiz! Down came the thing. It was a bag of flour—a fourteen-pound paper bag. Ida and Clara caught it between them. It burst upon Clara's shoulder, smothering her at once from head to foot, and gushing into Ida's face with a force that smothered her and choked her all at the same time.

Back she went. Clara stooped to retrieve her bag.

From that moment Clara was the victor. Having got so far, no power on earth would have robbed Clara of the fruits of her victory. She had the food she wanted for her chums, the food to which they were entitled, for which they had paid.

Ida, smothered, had reeled to the

other side of the larder. A cloud of choking flour dust hung between them. In a trice Clara had grabbed up the sack, and slung it on her back. Into the corridor, she slipped, closing the door behind her.

"Don't you!" she muttered gleefully. But in her excitement Clara had forgotten her own appearance. White she was, almost from head to foot. Her face, her hair, her clothes, smothered in white flour, gave her a really strange appearance.

As she flew from the servants' entrance, ahead of her a door opened, a woman appeared. At sight of Clara, she stood transfixed and wondering for one instant, and then, with a shriek, flung back into the room.

"The ghost! The ghost!" she quavered. "Save me, Mary! I've seen the ghost!"

"Oh, my goodness!" Clara gulped.

She paused. Should she stop? But no! Stopping meant delay. She rushed on, had reached the entrance when another figure appeared, the figure of a frail old lady, walking with a stick, whom Clara had remarked before. One look she gave at Clara—a thin, piercing shriek left her lips:

"Oh!"

"I say—" Clara exclaimed. And then she blinked. For the frail lady, who had always walked with the aid of a stick, was running as fast as her panic-stricken legs would take her.

"Mum-my hat!" Clara blinked. She ran on. At the bungalow her chums were waiting. There was a howl as she appeared.

"My hat!"

"It's Clara all right," that girl panted, "and here's the grub! But, crumbs, what a mess I'm in! Ida caught me. I've an idea that there's going to be trouble. Better take the grub off to the lawn and spread it out there under the hose-pipe."

"But why, you know?" We don't want to drink water," Bessie said feverishly.

"No, duffer," Clara replied; "but we do want to guard against having the grub snatched away from us again. You see to the picnic. I'll get busy and wash this filthy stuff off me."



At Midnight

**B**UT that meal, eaten, enjoyed, and so wonderfully lavish that even Bessie Bunter was actually satisfied, had not been won without cost.

True to Clara's prophecy, Mrs. Coates did turn up while the meal was in progress. But servants, held at bay by the threat of the hose, could do nothing.

However, Mrs. Coates made capital out of the incident in another way, by putting all her boarders against the girls.

Clara, she declared, had acted the part of thief. Clara, in order to frighten her guests, had deliberately dressed up as ghost and had almost killed poor, fluttering little Miss Maybird with sheer fright. Apart from that, Clara had thrown a tin of fruit at her daughter, Ida, in the pantry, when Ida, very properly, had stepped in to prevent her from unning away with the food she had stolen.

The result was that, later in the evening, when Clara & Co., and Susie and her chums, took possession of the lounge, they were looked at askance by most of the guests. Several of them, indeed, got up and walked out altogether.

"Does seem," Jemima opined, "as if we're unpoet."

But that did not worry the chums very much. They had their tennis, they had enjoyed, in spite of Mrs. Coates, a really excellent meal.

More excitement promised tomorrow, when Clara & Co. raided the boathouse and got the boats out on to the moat.

Susie, too, had good news. The shop in the village five miles away was plentifully stocked, she declared, and one could get there practically everything one wanted. They all promised to pay it a visit on the morrow.

The only fly in the ointment at the moment was Marjorie. Marjorie, who was looking wan. Clara eyed her considerably.

"Marjorie, you're sure you're feeling all right?"

Marjorie smiled faintly.

"Of course!"

"Hand not hurting?"

"No," Marjorie said, biting her lip.

"You don't look good."

"Oh, I'm just a bit tired, thanks!"

Marjorie replied. Clara stared at her hard. She felt a little worried; and Marjorie, though she had tried to tell the truth, sighed: Never at any time was Marjorie a strong girl.

She had worked dreadfully hard during the last few weeks at Cliff House, and though she did not complain ever, she had really been in vital, urgent need of the holiday upon which she was now embarked.

The fall had shaken her. Her hand, if it were not hurting painfully, was throbbing dully.

"Well, I guess it's been a great day," Leila opined. "Gee, I don't know if I haven't enjoyed it more than I would have done if things had been all up to scratch. My only regret, I guess, is that I haven't had a dip in the old briny 'Suppose," she added hopefully, "there's still no chance of a bathe?"

"Only at midnight," Clara told her. "Tide's out then. You can't bathe hereabouts until the tide's fully out. But I say," she added, springing up, "that's a ripping notion. What about a moonlight dip, you girls?"

"The suggestion," Jemima replied dryly, "receives full marks, beloved. The reply, however, is likely to be nil. Thinkest thou of the merry drawbridge?"

"Well, what about the drawbridge?"

"It'll be up," Susie replied. "It's pulled up every night at sundown, and dropped again at sunrise in the morning. Which means," she added, "that we're as good as prisoners every night."

Clara pouted. "There must be some way of getting out."

Susie shrugged. "Well, try it," she said. "You think the idea hasn't occurred to you? Apart from the drawbridge, there's a fifteen-foot wall surrounding the castle, and its sides are as smooth as glass. Also," Susie added, "it's lined with stakes and barbed wire on the top." "What about working the drawbridge?" Mabel Lynn asked. "Not an earthly. Miggs, the porter, sleeps in the drawbridge tower."



Faces fell again. As if by common consent, all looked towards Clara.

Clara sat up.

"You all keen on a midnight bathe?"

"Yes, rather!"

"You, Marjorie?"

"I—I'd love it!"

"And you, Bessie?"

"Oh, really, you know! I'm blessed if I want to go bathing at midnight!"

Bessie said. "Night is the time for sleep, you know."

"All the same," Clara replied, "you're coming with us to-night, old Fatima." She threw a glance round. The lounge was empty now. "I've got the scheme," she said, "but the success of it depends upon you, Bessie. Now listen."

And as they listened they nodded and chuckled.

"O.K.?" Clara asked.

"Wasn't it O.K.?" They were all grinning delightedly. It was ten o'clock then, however, and outside it was growing dark. A bell clanged.

"Signal for bye-byes!" Susie grinned. "They run this place like a prison.

But, oh, just a minute!" she cried.

"What about Ida?"

"Ida?"

"Ida sleeps in the bungalow, you know. She's supposed to be in charge of us."

That certainly was a danger. It was a danger, however, which only strengthened Clara's determination. Clara had set her mind upon her chums having that bathe. Now all the Idas in the world weren't going to upset her plans if she knew it.

Though, to be sure, when they reached the bungalow, there was Ida—scowling, and in a very nasty frame of mind indeed.

"Before me!" she rapped. "You girls get into your cubicles, and don't make a row! If you attempt anything in the night, I shall be here." And she indicated a door. "And, don't forget—no larks!" she added maliciously. "If there is, there'll be trouble. I sleep with one ear open."

"By Jove!" Jemima remarked. "A peculiar sort of ear that is, what? You know, Ida, I sleep with both eyes closed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were chuckles. "Everyone looked towards Clara. But Clara very deliberately winked. Off they strolled then to their cubicles, and, undressing, got into bed. For two hours there was silence.

Then, in the middle of it—

"Help, help help!" came a shriek from Clara Trevlyu's bed. "Help! Ida! Oh, Ida!"

Consternation at once. Bessie, in her bed, waking up under the impression that she was being attacked, bellowed with lusty vigour. Pandemonium. Girls came rushing into the hall. The door of Ida's room went back with a crash.

"What is it?" she demanded.

"Help!" cried Clara.

Ida compressed her lips. In frantic fury she flew towards the Tomboy's room. There were no locks upon those doors; one merely turned the handle and they flew open. Clara's, under Ida's onslaught, flew open as though it had been jerked back by a spring, and then Ida stopped.

Clara was standing in the middle of the floor, her eyes big in the moonlight which filtered into the room; she was pointing a quivering finger at the tiny window above her bed.

"Look!" she quavered.

"Look at what?" Ida rapped.



DEFTLY Bessie Bunter swept the hose round on to the plotters so that they staggered back. This was Bessie's chance to get her own back and she meant to make the most of it.

"There! Oh, don't let it come near me!" Clara moaned.

Ida impatiently brushed the Tomboy aside; she flew to the window, she flung it open. That was Clara's cue. In a moment she was in the passage with her chums.

"Oh, oh!" she chuckled. "She's fallen for it! Hold on to the latch of the door while I slip into her room and fetch her clothes."

"I can't see anything," Ida grumbled, leaning farther out of the window.

"What—"

And then, as the door closed, she turned, to see Clara no longer there.

The trick to which she had so innocently fallen victim dawned upon her. She let out a cry of rage.

Furiously she flew to the door. But Mabs, Babs, Susie, and Leila were hanging on to the latch for all they were worth. Clara, meanwhile, had scooted into Ida's room. In a trice she had swept Ida's clothes into her arms, and, taking down the dressing-gown from the door, rushed out into the hall again.

"O.K., kiddlets! Scoot!" she said.

"Let me out!" Ida yelled, pulling furiously from the inside.

"Certainly!" agreed Babs.

As one the four let go. There came a cry from the other room, a yell, the sound of a crash. Breathlessly the whole crowd bundled outside.

"Worked like a charm!" Clara grinned. "I guess she won't be able to follow us without clothes. I've taken her shoes, too, in case she should be tempted to scoot across the ground in her nightie. Come on; we'll leave these things at the lodge-keeper's tower. Bessie! Is Bessie there?"

"Yes."

"Then scoot!"

And scoot they did, grinning cheerfully as they went. Each of the girls, prepared beforehand, was dressed in her bathing costume; each had her towel wrap over her arm, and each was shod in bathing shoes.

Away across the dark lawns they sped towards the gaunt turrets which guarded the drawbridge. There they paused.

"Now, Bessie, do your stuff!" Clara whispered. "Everybody else hide behind these bushes."

Bessie smirked. If Bessie objected to being got up in the middle of the night, Bessie never minded an opportunity of showing off her ventriloquial powers. She cleared her throat; marching boldly to the door, she tapped upon it.

A surly voice from inside called:

"Hallo! What's the matter?"

"Miggs, that is not the way to speak to your employer," Bessie said—but nobody stationed there would have guessed that it was Bessie; the voice was an exact imitation of Mrs. Coates. "Miggs, come to the castle at once; I want you!"

"But I haven't got my shoes on," Miggs complained.

"Then get them on—and be quick about it! Hurry, man!"

"Good enough, Bessie!" Clara breathed. "Come along here now."

Bessie rejoined the group. They waited in the darkness. Presently the door opened. Miggs came out. Bessie gave a chuckle as he stepped down on the lawn and, muttering under his breath, tramped off in the direction of the castle. In a moment Clara had risen; in a moment had slipped inside the lodge. Now—

She knew how to work the drawbridge. On her last visit she had toyed with that drawbridge, not once but many times. She knew how to fasten it when it was lowered so that nobody not in possession of the key which worked the mechanism could undo it again.

One swift, hefty tug she gave at the lever. In the darkness the drawbridge dropped, hitting the ground with a dull thud. Quickly Clara turned the key in the lock, quickly pocketed it. The way was clear.

"Scoot!" she cried breathlessly.

And they scooted, laughing among themselves. They felt they had beaten the enemy all along the line.

But had they? They had reckoned without Mrs. Coates, and they had reckoned without the possibility of a duplicate key to the drawbridge being in existence. But Mrs. Coates had one; and when, after a perfectly delicious and invigorating bath, they returned, it was to halt at the drawbridge in dismay.

The wide moat yawned between themselves and the castle, and the drawbridge was resting securely in its vertical position again. As they stood staring in furious dismay the little window in Miggs' lodge was pushed open.

A face peered out—a thin, spiteful face—and Mrs. Coates glared.

"And as," she snapped, "you were so anxious to get out, you can now stop out until the morning! Perhaps," she added, "that will teach you not to be so clever a second time!"

And slam! went the window.



Ordered to Leave

"OF all the spiteful, hateful, and rotten tricks!"

"She ought to be bumped!"

"My hat! I'll have something to say about this! Wish to goodness we could get back, though! Marjorie! Marjorie, how do you feel now?"

Three o'clock in the morning. Greyly the first glimmer of dawn was beginning to disperse the drab, leaden clouds of night. Shivering and wet they all were. The fine drizzle of rain which had started to fall with the first gleam did not improve either their comfort or their temper.

Bessie, bleating miserably, was huddled beneath a tiny bush; Marjorie, her face flushed, lay on the ground, her chums clustering round her.

Marjorie was ill. Spending the bleak hours of night in a wet bathing costume and in a drizzling rain had hastened the disaster which had threatened earlier in the evening.

In desperation they had yelled and shouted; they had even thrown stones at Miggs' window. But Miggs had his orders; the castle might have been uninhabited for all the response they evoked.

Now in a shivering circle they surrounded their sick friend.

"Marjorie!" Clara whispered again. "It—it's all right," Marjorie whispered hoarsely.

"But it isn't all right!" Clara cried. "Oh great goodness! Your head's as hot as an oven. Marjorie! Marjorie, old girl, forgive me! It was my fault!"

"Not your fault, Clara dear," Marjorie said gently. "No, not your fault. It was just—just bad luck." A dry cough rasped in her throat. "Will—they open the drawbridge soon?"

Clara growled savagely. In the greyness her face was white. It was her fault—her fault, she reviled herself savagely. If she had never persuaded her chums to come here this would never have happened. For every moment of their existence they had had to fight tooth and nail—and all because that awful woman Mrs. Coates was playing some unguessed-at, shady game against her aunt. But, my hat, wouldn't she tell that woman what she thought of her? Wouldn't—

"Clara," Babs whispered, "look! The drawbridge is coming down."

They all wheeled. Sure enough the drawbridge was dropping slowly, in faithful observance to the rule which said it must be lowered at daybreak. Clara stooped.

"Marjorie, old thing," she said huskily.

With difficulty she helped the sick girl to her feet.

Together they assisted her, Marjorie leaning heavily upon them, Back to the bungalow they made their way. Marjorie, delirious now, was put to bed at once, and Clara, Babs, and Mabs took it in turns to watch by her side until the castle was astir.

"Have to have a doctor," Babs said anxiously. "She's seriously ill."

Clara groaned.

"And it's all my fault!"

"Oh, rubbish! You couldn't tell what was going to happen!"

But Clara, all the same, blamed herself.

Breakfast came. She didn't want to go, but because her chums insisted she must. In the dining-room, full of guests, she came face to face with Mrs. Coates.

"Why, Clara," she said hypocritically, "what is the matter? You are not looking yourself. Have you not slept well?"

Clara gritted her teeth.

"You ought to know," she said bitterly.

"I beg your pardon?"

"I said you ought to know," Clara bit out. Her eyes gleamed. "It's not your fault, is it, that Marjorie's ill! It's not your fault that you kept us out all night shivering in our bathing costumes! It's not your fault that we're half-starved, that we're—"

"Clara—indeed!" Mrs. Coates cried in a shocked voice. "I've no idea what you are talking about!"

Every guest in the room was looking towards the scene as Mrs. Coates continued:

"I may tell you now, Miss Trovlyn, since you force me to speak, that I have had several complaints about you from my guests."

Clara set her teeth.

"That's nothing to do with—"

"It is," Mrs. Coates calmly assured her, "everything to do with it. You

have alarmed them, you have been a nuisance to them. My guests came here for a quiet rest, hoping to find this hotel the haven of peace they expected. Until you and your friends came it was. Since you have been here a glance like Bedlam." She threw a glance round the room. "I hate to take this step, but I'm sure everyone here will sympathise with me when I say that I can tolerate your nuisance no longer. I request that you and your friends pack your bags and leave immediately!"

There was a blank, dumbfounded silence. Susie & Co. fell back, looking uneasily at each other. The Cliff House chums murmured. Into Clara's cheeks rushed a flush of temper.

She set her teeth.

"And if we don't go?"

"Then," Mrs. Coates said grimly, "I shall refuse to recognise your existence. There will be no boarding for you, no food for you. I shall deal with you all as a nuisance. I may even," she added ominously, "call in the police!"

"And a very good thing, too!" put in a voice from the other side of the room.

Again there was a pause. Clara broke into a bitter laugh.

"Very well!" she said, and faced Mrs. Coates. "We know you're playing some dirty game here. You know that we can't let our friend, even if we wanted to. Well, you want an answer—here it is!" Her vest heated. "We're not going. We don't move from this place until we've got to the bottom of the treacherous game you're playing. We stick! And if," she added ominously, "you don't want to look after us we'll jolly well look after ourselves!"

And with that she signed to her chums. There was a shuffle in the room. Rigid, sphinx-like, Mrs. Coates stood as the Cliff House chums, with one bitter glance in her direction, turned and fled back out of the room. The die was cast. Open war was declared now between the mutineers and this woman they regarded as their enemy.

If misgivings came to them they stifled them. Clara was their friend, their leader. Whatever befell, they were sticking to her!

THE END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.



## CASTLE OF CONFLICT

By HILDA RICHARDS

DEFIANT is Clara Trevlyn, rebellious as her chums. Come what will, they are determined to stop at Pellabay Castle—to frustrate the scheming and tyranny of the Coates. "Brighten up Pellabay!" is Clara's slogan; but there is treachery at work. The result you will read in the dramatic Long Complete Story

IN NEXT SATURDAY'S "SCHOOLGIRL."

# MORCOVE Mystery in UNKNOWN AFRICA



## Join Betty & Co., in Kwamba—land of Mystery and Peril

FOR NEW READERS.

BETTY BARTON & CO., of Morcove School, together with members of Grangemoor, are in Africa, seeking a mysterious Golden Grotto in the Kwamba country. They have a rival — a Frenchman named DUPONT.

Through his villainy two of the girls' fathers and Kwamba, a negro guide, are kidnapped by natives. MADAME DUPONT, wife of the villainous Frenchman, lands near the Morcove camp on her way to Kwamba by aeroplane. Betty, Polly Linton, and her brother Jack hide on the plane, and are carried on to Kwamba, where the plane crashes. Madame Dupont steals the vital Ankh necklace from Jack, but, to their amazement, DAVE CARDEW, one of the main party, appears—with the necklace!

(Now read on.)

### The Witch-Doctor's Spear

ALL three chums—Betty, Polly, and Jack—were overjoyed.

Only a moment since grave anxiety about all their friends had weighed upon their minds.

But Dave Cardew had burst upon the three of them with only the very best of news.

Here he was, a staunch and ever-reliable lad, who must have come on in advance of the party to which he belonged, chancing his life as he struggled alone across the miles of night-bound African bush.

And—he had the fateful Ankh. He was calmly dangling it before their eyes; that all-important relic which, a few hours since, had been stolen for the second time by the wife of Pierre Dupont.

No wonder Betty and Polly voiced a joyful "Dave!" whilst Jack's schoolboy voice was at its loudest as he cried: "Oh, boy! By all that's wonderful! Dave!"

"Wonderful!" Polly gasped. "How on earth, Dave, did you manage it?"

"Oh, it's not a long story!" he smiled. "You see, I was having to come on very

carefully and quietly, and that was how I took the Dupont woman quite by surprise. We sort of blundered into each other out there in the bush an hour ago. I could tell she was lying low, waiting for daylight. And I guessed at once that she must have made a getaway from you three. I questioned her. She was all smooth talk, and obviously anxious to give me the slip. Then it flashed upon me. She wouldn't have left you and the plane, except for a thumping good reason. She'd collared the Ankh again—I guessed as much. And so—well—"

"Well, what?" jerked Betty.

He shrugged.

"I made her give it up, that's all. No violence, of course. But she had stopped pretending to be friendly when she went off, leaving me to push on again in search of you."

"But, Dave," Betty clamoured, "what about the others?"

"They're all right. But most of them were all in, and they had to make camp for the night. I stayed with them for a few hours. Then I got hold of the mater, and asked her to let me get off alone, in advance. I felt sure I could do the trick, and she—well, she trusted me."

"She would!" Polly ardently exclaimed.

"Yes, my boy!" Jack, in his joy, went off into one of his bursts of absurdities. He was putting on the voice of a Grangemoor master. "Excellent! Go to the top of the Form, Cardew! Have an extra halfer, extra bed, whenever you like! Gee, though, what he wants,

girls," Jack gaily realised, "is brekker, I guess!"

"And we can give him that, all right!" Betty rejoiced. "We're well off for supplies, Dave. All the stores that Madame Dupont had in her plane are ours!"

"So come on!" Polly blithely rejoined. "It looks as if we had better get something ready, Betty, for when the others turn up!"

"There's another thing," Dave said, as quietly as ever; and they all three stopped dead to stare at him afresh.

"Pam's father and Madge's have got back."

"They have! Oh—"

"And Kwamba," Dave calmly added, "he's with us again—I mean, with the lot who are coming on this morning."

"Hold me!" Polly appealed to Betty, exaggerating a giddiness over the grand news. "Oh, but this is simply too wonderful for words! It means—the whole party together again, after all!"

"Will be"—Dave smiled the proviso—"when they get to us. But I don't think there's any doubt about that."

"Rah, rah, rah!" shouted Jack, putting himself arm-in-arm with his chum. "The old school tie, chaps; that's what does it! Mine's a bit crooked this morning, old son, but can't be helped. I and the two girls have had a bit to do, one way and the other, to keep the jolly old flag flying on this outpost of Empire. Another thing, Dave; we've had the Kwambas!"

Jack said it as if he were naming a tropical malady.

"The place just swarms with 'em," Betty and Polly heard Jack rattling on, whilst they started to get busy. "And so long as we had the Ankh to swank about, they were simply all over us. But in the night that Dupont woman served us a rotten trick. There she was, getting Betty and Polly to take turns at nursing her, because she was nearly dying or something—but she could never have been as bad as she made out—no, sir!"

By  
MARJORIE  
STANTON

Illustrated by L. Shields



"She really was in a bad way, though"—Betty spoke across to Dave without pausing in her activities—"only the medicine we gave her got rid of the fever. She got some proper sleep at last."

"And what did she do when she woke up?" Polly furiously struck in, whilst rekindling the dead fire. "Got hold of some stuff, in secret, from her medicine-chest, and put it in the tea that we'd made for ourselves. That's what comes of helping an enemy!"

"Well," Dave consoled her, "you've got your reward. You're on top now."

"Yes; we have come off best!" Polly agreed, changing from bitter wrath to crazy delight. "We've still got the Ank; in a little while we shall be all one big party again; and—we've got to Kwamba! We're there!"

"Here," Jack glibly corrected his sister. "When at Kwamba, stay at the Double Hawk cote! One mile from the village. All windows facing the famous mountain. Excursions arranged to the Golden Grotto!"

"So there will be!" Polly gaily answered this last flippancy of Jack's. "But, of course, as soon as the others turn up, nothing to prevent us from starting to look for the Golden Grotto!" "That's the idea!" Jack nodded.

Having supplied journey-weary Dave with a pan of water, soap, and a towel, he was standing by whilst that chum revelled in the comfort of a wash.

After a first blazing-up, the re-made camp-fire of dry wood quickly died down to glowing embers, which a pot of water could be set for tea-making.

Betty and Polly were claiming the feminine right to get everything ready for breakfast. Such happy activity put a slight check on their tongues. But they were able to pay attention to all that Dave had to say, amplifying his good news about Mr. Willoughby, Mr. Minden, and the native guide—Kwamba, as he called himself, being a member of that mysterious tribe.

"It seems that we were right in what we hoped, about Pierre Dupont," said Dave, as he completed his morning toilet. "That rotter's luck changed. When it was a case of wanting those natives of his to leave the forest and come on across open country, they refused. So Dupont was in a bad fix. Without his gang of natives, he couldn't hope to keep our captured men prisoners any longer. Yet it didn't suit his book a bit to leave the men still in the hands of the natives, back there in the forest. There appears to have been a lot of palavering—Dupont knows the Bantu lingo all right. But the natives weren't having any. From being sulky, they got to being really rowdy. And it was all this scuffling and rowing, which gave Mr. Willoughby and Madge's father their chance. They got away, and they had our old Kwamba with them still."

"Then what, I wonder, has happened to Dupont?" Betty feelingly exclaimed.

"Oh, he'll find his wife somewhere, I dare say, sooner or later," Jack grinned. "And let's hope it will be fine for them both. If they turn up here, I don't see how we can offer to put them up, as it were? This hotel is really made out of their wrecked plane, of course. But then—Oh, hang the Duponts, anyhow! Hurry up with breaker, girls—"

"We're getting it!" Polly yelled. "For it would be nice to get a meal in peace. Jack sighed, up. "Before all the Kwambas come along to stare at us again."

"Quite friendly, are they?" Dave soberly asked.

"Friendly! Gee, man, you should

have been here yesterday! I was wearing the Ank round my neck, and I tell you I could do anything with 'em—just anything! There isn't the slightest doubt that Ank necklace is the goods—our passport into the best circles of Kwamba society. We are going to be able to go where we like, do as we like, find the Golden Grotto for them, help ourselves to a few chunks of King Ank's gold, just to pay the expenses of the trip—"

"And so home to Croydon at last, by air from M'Geya," Betty chimed in. "And back to school!"

"I don't know that I'm terribly eager for school again," Polly joked. "No more than this water is anxious to come to the boil, it seems!"

But at last the tea was made—special brew, in celebration; well sugared and heavily milked. This, with something out of a tin by way of a luxury, completed a most enjoyable meal.

The immediate future looked so propitious—at times there were silences and an exchange of smiles, eloquent of supreme happiness.

Habitual caution kept them constantly glancing about, although they fully expected that the Kwambas, if they did make an appearance, would do so en masse, giving ample warning of their coming by much shouting and a beating of tom-toms.

Never for an instant, either, were the breakfasters neglecting to listen for the first sound to tell of their friends being within hailing distance at last. There continued, however, an unbroken silence, so that it seemed to the four as if they were not sharing this part of the bush with so much as a wild beast even.

And then suddenly—flick!—and Betty and Polly gave a start, tilting backwards, whilst Jack and Dave jumped up, to be instantly on the defensive.

A spear! A hurled spear had landed, point downwards, in their midst, narrowly missing both girls. It had struck, quivering, into the earth.

Bang went Dave's gun, just as Jack shouted:

"See him—there he goes!"

Betty and Polly, whose eyes had been held by the slanting spear in a fascinated way, stood up now, to look the way Jack was pointing.

They saw a tall, skinny black for a moment or so as he sped away. Then he dodged out of sight amongst some rocks.

Dave lowered his rifle. He had fired, as the others knew, over the black's head. As for Jack, he turned round, and, with looks as dark as thunder, pulled the spear out of the ground.

"The witch-doctor!" Jack commented grimly. "I had a hunch last evening, and now it's certain. Our standing so well with the tribe isn't at all to his liking."

Betty nodded. "Jealousy, that's it. He was everything until we turned up."

"Oh," Polly fumed, "how I wish the others would show up!"

Faintly at that very moment there came the distant crack of a firearm, drawing from Betty and Polly the wondering cry:

"What's that?"

"That," Dave quietly asserted, "is Morcove!"

It had been a chaotic scene then. Those three juniors had been able to contrive only a rough shelter for the night, by making use of parts of the wrecked plane. But now—

Now there was ample tenting in evidence, and Morcove & Co. could feel that it had a camp to be proud of!

They even felt entitled to call it the expedition's "C.H.Q.," for it was from here that the rest of the adventurous campaign would be conducted.

No going on again, after this! No more forced marches, with baggage to porter along, some of it slung from poles that went from shoulder to shoulder. Morcove, when it set off by air-liner from Croydon, had been starting its first stage in the great journey to find the Kwamba country.

And at last—at last, as a reunited party, here they all were, encamped at the very foot of that mountain, on which, thousands of years ago, the mystic sign of the Double Hawk had been carved.

Morcove had got to Kwamba. So now to solve the riddle of the Ank necklace, fashioned, as it was known to have been, from gold found by the Egyptians even here in equatorial Africa.

To be at Kwamba was to be in the Land of the Golden Grotto, to which secret treasure house there was such a direct allusion in the wording of the necklet's medallion, as translated by Pam's father.

On one side of that medallion were hieroglyphics, which told how King Ank had given the necklet to his queen, all those ages ago: "*Ank, who rules and has dominion over the Golden Grotto, to his royal wife gives. . .*"

And on the reverse side of the medallion the same Egyptian symbol which still showed, after so many thousands of years, upon the face of Kwamba's greatest mountain.

A very giant of a black fellow came running fast towards the camp; but it meant no warning outcry from any of the Britishers who saw his approach. There were very few to do this, for nearly all of them were snatching some rest under canvas, after recent exhausting experiences.

But Betty and Polly were a couple who with Jack and Dave, were still busy about the camp. The two girls were revelling in some cookery, when, observing the black man as he came running their way, they exchanged the most gratified comments.

"He's back already, Polly!"

"Good old Kwamba!" chuckled the madcap; for the negro was no other than the expedition's loyal guide and interpreter—enlisted weeks ago in the Homeland, where he had belonged to a travelling circus. "And now to hear what he has to say!"

Polly added, as she and Betty promptly left the cooking to look after itself:

"Thank goodness, we are all to be able to talk with the tribe, now that Kwamba's here! Making signs is all very well, at a pinch; but it doesn't go far enough!"

"And my slight misunderstanding," Betty laughed, "liable to lead to trouble!"

She ran to a tent where some of those who, a few hours ago, had turned up almost at their last gasp, were now obtaining much-needed rest. Stepping very quietly as she neared the tent entrance, Betty was next moment whispering in to one who was awake, although lying down:

"Mr. Willoughby—Kwamba is back."

Then the father of Pam Willoughby

### Ready for the Kwambas

BY noon that day wonderful changes had taken place at the spot where, yesterday, Betty and Polly and Jack had all but "crashed" in the plane piloted by Madame Dupont.

got up to come away from the tent, being as careful not to disturb others as Betty had been.

Mr. Willoughby, seasoned traveller that he was, did not look any the worse for hardships and privations which he had had to endure of late, along with Madge's father and the native guide. A wash and shave had restored a good deal of his normal spruce appearance. A fine man he was—tall, wiry, and his handsome face well bronzed.

Old but nimble Kwamba, at the end of his run back to the camp, was now trying to say a lot to Polly and the two boys, whilst puffing for breath. As Betty approached the group with Mr. Willoughby, the faithful negro—who looked just like some Uncle Bones in a nigger troupe—gave a very grand salute.

"Well, Kwamba, how did you get on at the village?"

"I done very good, boss, yessah!" the leader of the expedition was breathlessly answered. "Dey take me to de chief, and I tell him all you say, and den de chief, him mighty glad, yessah! All de folks ob de village had been told, and you nebber in your life, sah, see folks so on de dance!"

"They're turning up here for me to address them at the time I asked?"

"Yessah!" nodded old Kwamba, his goggling eyes adding emphasis. "Oh, I fix eberything up all O.K., boss! Dose folks o' mine—I jess tell 'em a few things about you folks, on my own account, and dey jess about think all de world ob you, yessah!"

Shutting his eyes as he laughed at pleasant recollections, Kwamba further imparted:

"And de best thing of all, sah, when I tell dem how we all come down from de air!"

"They believed it?"

"Dey surely did dat, sir, yessah! Oh, and I hab no trouble either, bakas—lucky! Dem Kwamba folks of mine see one airyplane come down out ob de sky y'es-day!"

"That's it!" Jack had to burst in. "That's that explains something! They all marched out this way, soon after the Dupont plane landed here yesterday, and were standing about—"

"All gazing up to the Ankh sign on the mountain," Polly put in, with a nod, "as if expecting something to happen!"

"Not the least doubt," laughed Mr. Willoughby, "it was the plane that did it! They had never seen one before. All right, Kwamba; now you must get some rest. By the way—"

"Yessah?"

"Your people hadn't taken offence, because we have been sending away those who came to stare at us?"

"No, sah! Dey surely think all de more ob you! Oh, you folks are de big noises round here, jess now, right enough!" chuckled the ex-circus hand, as he went off to find a bit of shade for himself.

"So then," Pam's father said to Betty and her companions, "in a couple of hours from now, we will hold our big rally. It's a treat to have this certainty of the tribe's friendship, after the way things have gone of late. I only hope that we shall be able to repay them—amply."

"If we discover the Golden Grotto for them," Polly sparkled, "there'll be a grand reward! Oh, and we shall—we simply must! Goodness, Betty! That pot—boiling over!"

So back dashed the pair of them, to resume their present self-appointed duties, every now and then, however,

glancing up to the great mountain which towered so close at hand.

Always with a thrill, they saw again the ancient sign, chiselled in the face of a precipitous wall of rock. It awed the girls to think how, for thousands of years on end, that graven symbol had meant "something" to the Kwamba tribe—a mysterious promise of fortune held in store!

But there was far more levity than awe in all the talk which presently accompanied the expedition's midday meal in camp.

If only because this was the first occasion, for many a day and night, that the whole party had sat down to a meal together, there had to be ringing cheers at the start.

Everyone had "rolled up for rations" in bounding spirits, and this made for a frivolity which Morcove & Co. were accustomed to.

Dinner over, for half an hour Betty & Co. were busy with clearing away, whilst the boys all did useful things about the camp. Then excitement worked up over the imminent arrival of the Kwamba tribe, for what the juniors were calling a "grand pow."

Paula, playfully advised to put on something special, took the hint seriously, and there was the sort of entranced "Oh!" of a firework display, when presently she came from her tent, wearing a "semi-evening" that was as lovely as it was flimsy.

"Whilst I don't even get time to run a comb through my hair!" was Polly's mock complaint. "At it," she complained, making a great show of taking off a coarse apron, "from morning to night!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But, with ten minutes still in hand, Polly did after all take her personal appearance in hand. The idea of "showing the neighbours"—in this case the natives—caught on as a joke. Morcove dressed for the occasion; and Grangemoor, after deciding that etiquette did not call for "evening

dress with trousers," as the Court Circular put it, did at least re-knot the "old school tie."

Then, at the last moment, Tess Trelawney, as the born artist of the chummers, was provided with a big square of white sheeting on which to draw the sign of the Double Hawk.

With the speed of a lightning artist, Tess drew in charcoal the outlines of the Ankh symbol. Just as she finished, Jack and Tom came up with two poles, to which they quickly attached the sheet. Holding each a pole, they raised the improvised banner.

"Bravo!" Bunny applauded. "In fact—Ankhcore!"

"Royal and Ancient Order of the Double Hawks," Jack grinned. "Grand Investiture of Chief Grotto-Finder Willoughby. All schoolgirls to stand at the back, please!"

"Oh, yeah!" retorted Polly.

And Morcove, far from being out of the picture, was well to the fore when, presently, the whole Kwamba tribe came swarming into view.

### The Chosen Ones

**M**EN, women, children; on they came with all the haste of joyful expectancy. The very aged and the crippled—they could be seen hobbling to keep up with the rest, whose pace was set by a man with a giant's stride.

He was the chief, walking in front with some half-dozen Kwambas who were obviously the pick of the tribe. Fine muscular fellows they were, fearless hunters of the country's big game, no doubt, and ready to prove themselves mighty warriors in any little "dust-up" with enemy tribes.

But they carried neither knobkerries nor spears at present. Instead, like others to the fore in the mob, they had come from the village laden with gifts.

Jack and Tom had the "Ankh" banner held aloft, facing the excited,



AN ominous swish—sudden cries of amazement—and the four chums were staring in horror at the native spear which quivered in the ground.

jabbering mob, and it certainly added to Morcove & Co.'s prestige. The chief himself was pointing to it in great delight, and when the moment came for a general shouting down, he seated himself as close in front of the banner as a six-year-old might seat herself to watch a Punch-and-Judy show.

Before the sitting-down, all the gifts had been tendered, Morcove's own Kwamba translating the chief's "speech."

This, delivered with much chucking, was to the effect that the tribe was sure of receiving a good return. At the same time, there were comments on some of the presents, so that their recipients might understand them to be—*extra special*.

Hides, and ivory, and monkey-fur, and clumsy earthenware vessels—these and an extraordinary medley of other articles were finally dumped together.

Then Mr. Willoughby told old Kwamba-of-the-Circus what to say to the chief, by way of thanks. The interpreted remarks gave huge delight, Morcove's own trusty Kwamba shouted everything loud enough for the whole crowd to hear, and the result was a din of friendly yells.

But it was after more important pronouncement had been made by Mr. Willoughby, that the vast audience of blacks went really whooped. The speech must have been interpreted into the native dialect with great eloquence, for the Britishers could see how their Kwamba friend worked himself up into a fine frenzy whilst performing his happy task.

No sooner had he finished than the assembled tribe not only broke out into fresh shouting and yelling, but there was also a general rising up, to jig about in delight.

The uproar was such that Betty & Co. could hardly hear one another speak. Not that they wanted to exchange many comments at present, and most certainly they did not want to make fun of the proceedings.

The black way of displaying good will and joy might be amusing. But Morcove was realising that all this jubilation was tintured with pathos. If these grown men and women were like so many very young children, due to receive a great treat, it was only fair to remember that the treat was one looked forward to for hundreds of years, perhaps even thousands!

Down through the ages, generation after generation of Kwambas had cherished the belief that they were a tribe chosen to receive great benefit, through the medium of the Ankh, in some great day to come.

And now, to all the people gathered here, it was apparent that the day had come—in their own life-time! Strange beings from afar had come to their own secret dwelling-place, with power to work the great mystery.

The thought did suddenly occur to Betty: "And supposing after all we fail to find the Grotto? It is what they expect us to do, crediting us with magical powers. But—supposing we don't?"

It did not do to think of failure, however—of what might happen to the entire British party, if ever such a failure to fulfil the tribe's expectations should cause a change of mood. She cast the grave thought out of her mind.

Unquelled by any silencing cry from the chief, still the great gathering kept on with its noisy rejoicings. He, the chief, had signed to Mr. Willoughby to draw nearer, with the interpreter, and now the junior saw that a most excitable discussion was going on, as between one leader and another.

Suddenly, Jack was pointed at by the Kwamba chief. Then, to the amazement of Betty and Polly, they also were pointed at, as if, with Jack, they had been singled out in connection with something that was being asked.

What did it mean? Betty, for one, had a possible explanation flashing into her mind instantly. She and Polly and Jack had been the first to get to Kwamba yesterday. There had been Madame Dupont as well, but the tribe had known nothing of her presence. And Jack, yesterday, had worn the Ankh necklace!

For at least five minutes the difficult parleying went on, with Morcove's Kwamba having to interpret every word. Then Mr. Willoughby, as he turned to go away to one of the tents, beckoned Betty and Polly and Jack to follow.

They, the very three who had been indicated by the black chief, were to be told something by their own leader. "Hurrah!" Jack cheered under his breath, as he and the two girls hurried after Mr. Willoughby.

"Well, young ladies—and you, Jack, my boy"—Mr. Willoughby was ready to greet them, in the yellowish light of the tent—"feel like a big adventure, do you?"

"What—just us?" cried Polly, whilst Jack said:

"Ge!"

"It is like this," Mr. Willoughby continued. "These Kwamba friends of our are in a mighty hurry—or, rather, they want us to be in a hurry. I've had the chief telling me that we must start in on the job, so to speak, at once."

"No harm in that, sir," Jack submitted.

"A new moon to-night has something to do with it," Mr. Willoughby spoke on, without any smile at the absurdity of this idea. "The chief expects me to set off now for a place that he evidently supposes we know about. The name for it, in their lingo, means the Valley of the Giant. And he says I must take you three youngsters. It's in his mind, you see, that you three are very important!"

"And aren't we—always?" said Polly. Mr. Willoughby laughed.

"Wait a moment, though. This Valley of the Giant, from all accounts, appears to be an uncanny, possibly dangerous, place. I feel it must have something to do with the undiscovered grotto. The giant is a man turned to stone."

"Goodness!" Polly gasped. "Yet that's better, I suppose, than having a live one to deal with!"

"I wouldn't mind him being alive," Jack playfully boasted. "I enlisted for anything that might turn up!"

"The stone image is very likely another King Ankh relic," Mr. Willoughby pursued, looking pleased at the juniors' lightheartedness. "The Egyptians who carved the sign up yonder on the mountain, probably set up a statue in some valley—"

"And that's where the grotto can be found!" Betty jumped to the thrilling conclusion. "Only the Kwambas don't know!"

"Shouldn't wonder, my dear," nodded Mr. Willoughby. "Anyway, I'm eager enough to set off at once. But this taking you two girls and Jack along with me—"

"You must, though!" Polly impetuously insisted. "Oh, you must!"

"That's just it; I'm afraid I must!"

"Is it far?" questioned Betty eagerly.

"Not so very, I gather. Difficult to get at; but we shall have a guide—the one man in the tribe who can be got to go near the place, I'm told. The chief has sent somebody to fetch him along now, from the village, for he didn't come to the mass meeting—the only Kwamba to stay back."

"How strange!" Betty exclaimed. "Why, I even saw a blind man in the crowd! He'd got friends to lead him, so that he shouldn't miss anything. But this man who is to be our guide—"

"Oh," shrugged Mr. Willoughby, "in every tribe, almost, there is a chap of the sort I take this man to be. Superstition does it. They say this one mostly lives in the valley, whereas, it's a place any other Kwamba man might go into—never to be heard of again. But don't let that scare you!"

"Oh, it doesn't, sir!" laughed Jack. "Not it!"

"Do you mean, Mr. Willoughby, a sort of—witch-doctor?" Betty asked, a sudden suspicion in her mind.

"Well," came the reply, "yes, something like that."

BETTY AND Polly dare not turn to each other, nor could they give Jack a consulting glance, lest the expedition's leader should guess what was agitating their minds.

The witch-doctor! That man to be their guide!

"SO THERE it is," Mr. Willoughby smiled, ending the slight pause. "Going or not, then—which? You're quite free to choose."

"Going!" said Jack. "Rather!"

"And you two girls?"

"But, of course!"

"Good! Then we'll let the others know."

Adventure ahead! And peril, too, perhaps? You'll be longing to know what happens to the Morcove chums on their strange quest, so you must on no account fail to read the enthralling instalment of this wonderful serial which appears in next week's SCHOOLGIRL.

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# THE PAGODA OF PERIL

FOR NEW READERS.

CATHERINE STERNDALE and her cousins, MOLLY and CHARLES, are staying at a queer Chinese house owned by their UNCLE GERALD. Catherine makes a friend of a little Chinese girl, KWANYIN, whom Uncle Gerald seems to suspect. The cousins defend Kwanyin against a crafty Chinaman—KAI TAL, whom they strongly mistrust. Uncle Gerald, however, appears to have the greatest faith in Kai Tal, and has little sympathy for Kwanyin.

Catherine receives a hidden message from Kwanyin, asking for help. The cousins decide to respond, but Chinese servants try to stop them. Catherine, however, gets away.

(Now read on.)

## To the Rescue

**"RUN, Catherine! One of them's after you!"**

Catherine Sterndale ran like a hare as she heard her cousin Mollie's warning yell. She knew that a Chinaman was not far behind her. His speed might be greater than hers. If he caught her up, her whole plan would be ruined.

Not twenty yards ahead, in the grounds of her uncle's house, were thick bushes through which ran winding paths. They gave admirable hiding-places. She could dodge the Chinaman if only she reached them ten yards ahead of him.

There was no time for Catherine to risk a look round.

Her thoughts, as she ran, were with the little Chinese girl, Kwanyin.

Poor Kwanyin was a prisoner in the toils of the enemy. She might be at the mercy of the cruel Kai Tal. And only Catherine could help her.

Uncle Gerald had gone out in the car, thinking that Kwanyin had run away.

But Catherine knew now that Kwanyin had been forced to write what Kai Tal, or some ally of his, had dictated.

And she had written to say that she was leaving the house.

It was a false message. Artfully the little Chinese girl had secreted quite a different message in the letter. She had

By  
ELIZABETH  
CHESTER

Illustrated by E. Baker

told Catherine that she was held prisoner.

"Oh, goodness, if they catch me!" gasped Catherine, in distress.

If they caught her now, they would take Kwanyin to some other hiding-place. They would realise that Catherine knew the truth.

And if they did move the pretty little Chinese girl, Catherine and her cousins would not know where to start looking for her.

As never before, Catherine ran. Her heart was thumping. Her legs went of their own accord, like machines.

But that wonderful spurt was too much for the Chinaman. Catherine reached the bushes thirty yards ahead of him.

In and out she darted, dodging here and there, and then ducked down.

She could see the shining lake slightly to the left of her. It shone like silver in the sunlight, and in the centre of it was the small island where Kwanyin was a prisoner.

If she could throw the Chinaman off the scent, it would take Catherine only a minute to reach the water. But then? Then her troubles would begin.

As she crouched, fighting for her second wind, but trying to make no sound, her mind worked briskly. She had to think of a way of crossing the lake.

Catherine was a strong enough swimmer to reach the island—even fully clad. But she could not be sure that the alligator was not still in the water.

The mere thought of that alligator made her shudder. She was ready to risk much for the sake of Kwanyin, but not the terrible alligator. She could remember its terrible jaws, the fearful look of it.

The only alternative to swimming was

the small boat they had used before. If she could get a start, she might race the Chinaman who was pursuing her.

But he was likely to be more skilled paddling a boat than she was.

Catherine peeped out from her hiding-place. She heard the Chinaman's hard breathing. She saw him looking to right and left, peering behind bushes, and muttering angrily to himself.

She crept back very carefully, looking at the ground before she placed her feet, lest she should snap a twig or cause a tell-tale rustling.

With immense care she worked her way back.

There was a stone lying on the path she was about to cross. As she saw it, an idea came to her mind.

If she were to throw the stone into the air so that it landed among some bushes far ahead, the Chinaman would most likely think that it was she who had caused the rustling.

She waited until his back was turned, and then put the plan into operation.

The stone, thrown high, landed in a thick bush to the right of the Chinaman and some yards away from him.

The Chinaman turned his head sharply, attracted by the sound.

Catherine, watching, was thrilled.

When she saw him crouch and creep stealthily towards it, she could have cheered with delight. He was going away from her.

Without a sound, but feeling triumphant, Catherine turned back and made for the lake.

She knew where the small boat had been left, and soon reached the spot. But the boat was gone.

A faint rippling of water caused her to look towards the lake, and what she saw made her jump with surprise. The boat was a hundred yards or so out on the water. The man paddling had his back to her, but one glance was enough to tell her his identity.

Uncle Gerald! Catherine was amazed, for she thought he was in the car driving towards the station to look for Kwanyin.

Apparently, so she guessed, he, too,

had heard about Kwanyin being a prisoner on the island.

In wild excitement she called to him.

"Uncle—"

Uncle Gerald gave a tremendous start of surprise, and looked back.

She was obviously the very last person he had expected to see standing on the shores of the lake.

"Any news?" he called.

"Yes—yes! She's on the island. A prisoner, uncle!" Catherine called.

"What?"

He turned the boat and paddled back, while Catherine looked warily behind her.

A yellow man had just appeared through the bushes.

It was the Chinaman who had come in pursuit of her from the house. There were rage and triumph mingled in the expression on his face, and he crouched as though to spring.

But Catherine stepped back, her hands clenched. She knew that she had nothing to fear when her uncle was so close at hand. The Chinaman would not dare to touch her.

Nevertheless, there was something menacing in his attitude that made Catherine's heartbeats quicken.

"Uncle—" she called anxiously.

Uncle Gerald called out angrily in Chinese, and the man, baffled rage on his face, fell back. He stepped amongst the bushes and disappeared from sight.

Catherine heaved a sigh of relief, and her heart warmed to her uncle. It was wonderful to feel that she had his protection. However menacing the Chinese appeared to be, he was their master.

Uncle Gerald beached the boat and stood up to go ashore. But Catherine stepped quickly aboard.

"Whoa!" said Uncle Gerald quite sharply. "I'm just coming ashore myself. Where's Charles and Mollie?"

"In the house," said Catherine. "But, uncle, there's not a moment to lose," she added in distress. "Poor Kwanyin is being held prisoner in the hut on the lake. We must rescue her. She sent a secret message in the note she left."

Uncle Gerald uttered a sharp exclamation of anger.

"The fool," he said.

"Fools—they're villains, uncle!" Catherine said indignantly. "Kwanyin might be terribly scared. It was lucky she managed to get that message in—and lucky I saw it, too."

Uncle Gerald smiled grimly.

"Yes, most fortunate. It saved us a wild goose-chase."

"Now we can go to the island. But some of them know that I'm after her," said Catherine, anxiously looking over her shoulder as though expecting a Chinaman to spring out from hiding, even now. "They'll be here any minute. They may send a warning to the island."

She was eager to get the boat moving and go to the rescue. But Uncle Gerald seemed in no hurry.

"No need to get alarmed, Catherine," he said. "Kwanyin will come to no harm. This is an old Chinese family feud. I am afraid."

"She may seem the victim, but there is good to be said on both sides. She has offended against their code. However, I cannot have her made prisoner."

"Then, shall we go at once, uncle?" asked Catherine.

He looked at his watch, and seemed thoughtful. Then nodded his head.

"Yes. But we must hurry. I have just had an important message. Hold tight."

With strong strokes, he sent the queer, punt-like craft over the water at

steady speed, while Catherine, feeling calmer than she had done for some time, settled down in the front.

She knew now that Kwanyin was safe. She would be rescued, and if her uncle were firm, the Chinamen would be made to realise that they could not play these tricks.

"They ought to be punished, uncle," she said.

"Yes, indeed," he agreed. "I suppose all this makes you very nervous, Catherine. This Chinese house, these strange people, these odd happenings? I don't want you to stay if you and the others are at all frightened."

Catherine had been frightened. There were mysteries—there were strange happenings. But she did not admit it. For she remembered her promise to Kwanyin. They had agreed to stay, to help her.

"I'm not afraid, uncle, while you're here," she said, with a smile. "For the Chinamen are afraid of you. I can see that. And I couldn't feel happy about leaving Kwanyin, either. Poor Kwanyin, I am so sorry for her. She's so sweet, you know, and so worried about her father."

Uncle Gerald did not answer. He looked grim, and rather angry. Catherine, noting that expression, was glad; for until recently he had been all too lenient, in her opinion, with the Chinamen. Even though they were his servants, and apparently loyal to him, they took liberties.

But Catherine was not even convinced that they were loyal to him.

"We will rescue Kwanyin," he said, as they drew close to the island. "And then, Catherine, I'm afraid I have rather a shock for you."

"Shock?" said Catherine. She felt a stab of anxiety. In this queer house there had been many shocks, but her uncle's tone was very grave.

"Yes—after what you have said, I realise that you will not be happy here without me—and I have just had a message that I must go at once to London. I may be away a few days—perhaps a week. I realise that you would not be happy alone with these Chinamen, and harmless as they are—"

Catherine's heart sank. She remembered her intense relief when her uncle had called out to the Chinaman who had been about to spring upon her. Suppose her uncle had not been on the scene?

The thought of it made her shiver. Although the Chinamen would not perhaps have harmed her, there was something sinister about them. Rightly or wrongly, she was afraid of them.

"Oh!" was all she said.

"But first Kwanyin," he said. "We will see that she is safe. And perhaps she shall come to London with me. Then you will have nothing to worry about."

He stepped ashore, moored the boat, and helped Catherine to land. The clouds went from her brow then. For whatever might happen later, at the moment they were going to the rescue of little Kwanyin.

---

### Rich Jewels and Gold

KWANYIN sat on a scarlet cushion trimmed with gold. She was not tied in any way; she had no gag. She could move and speak. Yet she sat quite still, and was silent.

Standing before her was the evil Kai Tal, whom Uncle Gerald had only that

day dismissed from his service. But Kai Tal had not gone.

His face was impassive; but so was Kwanyin's. The Oriental does not easily betray emotion.

Yet this scene was dramatic enough. The situation was serious.

"Illustrious Kwanyin, daughter of a noble, misjudged and altogether wrongly-treated father," said Kai Tal, speaking Chinese in smooth, level tones, "this very evil and despicable creature who stands before you, begs that you will accept some simple gifts."

Kwanyin's pretty face showed no sign of the turmoil that went on within. She showed no fear; no apprehension. But she was afraid, and she was suspicious.

Kai Tal opened an enormous chest of exquisite beauty. It was of highly polished wood. There were large hinges and strengthening bands of gold, beautifully chased. But however beautiful the exterior, the treasure within made it seem tawdry.

Flinging back the lid, which was lined with richly embroidered silk, Kai Tal dived his hand as though into a bran tub loaded with gifts.

He brought out a handful of precious stones. The sunlight upon them was sent forth in many colours, in flashing rays that were like gleaming swords, slashing this way and that.

Kwanyin's hands clenched. "Before the noble and beautiful Kwanyin these are but candles in the sunlight," said Kai Tal. "Compared with the shining eyes of Kwanyin, they are dull. Yet Kai Tal has great temerity. He offers them to Kwanyin. He throws them at her feet—"

With a graceful gesture he tossed the stones which rolled across the polished floor to Kwanyin's feet.

She did not move; but her eyes surveyed the wonderful flashing gems. She loved jewellery; she was deeply affected by beauty of colour and form.

She was tempted.

"All these shall be Kwanyin's," said Kai Tal, "if she knows well how to be mistress of her tongue, how to speak gentle words that shall gild the truth."

Kwanyin replied, in her own language, "Miserable and despicable Kai Tal, she said, as though addressing someone else, "that room," offers me flashing gems which I may deceive with my tongue and shame my illustrious ancestors whose noble deeds have been the burden of songs. But Kwanyin would rather die than bring disgrace upon her venerable ancestors. Kwanyin understand well that Kai Tal wishes her to tell lies to Catherine and her cousins of whom he is afraid!" she added defiantly.

"Afraid!"

Kai Tal's mask fell from his face. His eyes blazed.

"It is so!" snapped Kwanyin. "You are afraid she will find my father. You were afraid that she shall learn the secret of this place. Why you are here, and why—"

There was a sudden rap on the door. Catherine's voice came.

"Kwanyin—Kwanyin! Are you there?"

Kai Tal, his face dark with anger, dived his hand into the treasure-box and scattered jewels and rich fabrics in all directions. Then he crept to the door, unlocked it, and vanished from sight through a panel in the wall.

"I am here!" called Kwanyin.

The door opened, and Catherine stepped into the room.

She stood still in amazement. She had expected to find Kwanyin bound, or at least secured in some way.

To find the little Chinese girl

surrounded by rich jewels and treasure took her breath away.

"Why—Kwanyin—I thought—" she gasped. Uncle Gerald followed her in, and drew up without surprise.

"Hallo, Kwanyin!" he said. "Playing with your treasure-box?" Kwanyin spoke to him rapidly in Chinese as she rose to her feet.

"Evil Kai Tal has not gone. He offers me bribes. He wishes me to tell evil lies—"

"Who offered you those jewels?" asked Uncle Gerald, in English.

"Kai Tal," said Kwanyin. "Kai Tal?" But you sacked him, uncle!" exclaimed Catherine.

"Uncle Gerald snapped his fingers. An old and loyal retainer will not be dismissed," he said. "To dismiss Kai Tal I must throw him out. I must set dogs on him. I must shoot at him when he tried to enter. Only then can he understand that dismissal is serious."

He laughed. But Catherine was not amused.

"Kai Tal back," she said, in dismay. "But why did he give Kwanyin jewels?"

"A peace offering," shrugged Uncle Gerald, while Kwanyin looked from him to Catherine, her face expressionless.

"Peace offering?" said Kwanyin, not understanding.

She meant to express surprise and bewilderment, but she could not manage an English intonation. Instead of sounding like a question her words seemed just a remark.

In fact, Catherine jumped to the conclusion that Kwanyin was just agreeing with her uncle.

"Oh!" said Catherine, frowning. "A peace offering."

After all the warnings Kwanyin had given about Kai Tal it seemed strange that the little Chinese girl should accept such a peace offering. But Catherine, thoroughly English, was prepared to be bewildered by a Chinese girl's way of thinking.

If someone had been cruel to Catherine, if she despised and distrusted a person, no amount of present-giving could alter her feelings.

Had Kai Tal offered a thousand pounds to her she could not have liked him or taken back one word of accusation or denunciation.

So now she was puzzled. She was forced to believe that Kwanyin had been bought over by bright jewels.

"I see," she said dismally. "And Kwanyin not plisoner?"

Kwanyin shrugged. She was a prisoner, and yet not. She would not have been allowed to escape; she was not nearly strong enough to struggle and make her escape. So she was, in effect, a prisoner, even though her hands were not tied.

"Well, well," said Uncle Gerald, with a relieved laugh. "Nothing to worry about, really, eh, Catherine? I'll wager you expected to find poor Kwanyin tied hand and foot, with an alligator snapping at her feet and branding-irons dabbing at her nose—"

He laughed heartily at the idea, and Catherine felt foolish. Her face was crimson.

"I don't understand it at all," she said in perplexity.

"Just the Chinese mind," said Uncle Gerald. "You never will understand it. But never mind. As long as you realise that Kwanyin is quite unharmed, that's what matters."

He spoke in Chinese to Kwanyin, while Catherine listened, wishing she could understand even one word.

"Kwanyin is coming away with me to friends in London," he said. "We go in one hour. I leave this house on urgent

business. You shall not stay here without me. Catherine, Mollie, Charles are afraid to be here without my protection. They will probably leave to-morrow."

Kwanyin uttered a sharp cry.

"No, no! I do not go! I must stay! My father is a prisoner here—"

"That is nonsense!" said Uncle Gerald sharply.

"I do not wish to go!" wailed Kwanyin.

Tears filled her eyes. A great fear seized her. Dropping to her knees, she threw up her hands in appeal to Uncle Gerald.

"Oh, no, no!" she said, still speaking in Chinese.

Catherine stood wondering, puzzled, with increasing anxiety.

This was not acting on the part of Kwanyin; it was genuine distress.

"Come with Catherine," she said. Kwanyin nodded her head.

"Kwanyin must brave, noble, Catherine," she said.

Together they went out of the hut; but Kwanyin looked back warily. She wanted to warn Catherine that Kai Tal was near, and watching.

Uncle Gerald was close behind, however, and Kwanyin did not mean to give the warning in his hearing.

"Everything will be all right now, Kwanyin," said Catherine. "Don't worry."

But Kwanyin was trembling as she was led into the boat.

If Catherine could have seen Kai Tal at that moment, she, too, would have felt alarm. For the cunning Chinaman was smiling.



THE Chinaman put a yellow finger to his lips. Then, as the paper unrolled, Catherine gave a little gasp of excitement. What new mystery was this?

"Uncle, what ever is the matter?" she asked.

Uncle Gerald shrugged his shoulders. "She is worried still about her father; but I am going to take her to see him. She thinks he is held prisoner here; but, as I have told you, he was arrested by the police, poor fellow."

Catherine gave Kwanyin a look of commiseration, and then tried to comfort her. Kwanyin took Catherine's hands and held them tightly. She knew that in the English girl she had a real friend.

"Not lettee go," she said pitifully.

"I won't let go," said Catherine, holding her tightly. "But you've nothing to be frightened of, Kwanyin. Uncle Gerald will look after you—"

Kwanyin shook her head, and tears welled to her eyes.

"Uncle Gerald not able helpee," she said. "Uncle Gerald—he he too—"

"Come, Kwanyin, come!" said Catherine's uncle sternly. "This is merely silly. Bring her to the boat, Catherine!" he added.

Catherine still held Kwanyin tightly.

He watched from a window of the hut, and spoke to another Chinaman behind him.

"Much admire cleverness of noble Uncle Gerald," he said.

"Considerable cunning is always asset," said the other. "Kwanyin no more trouble us—"

"Cousin also. The interferences of noble-minded meddlers is more to be feared than the evil designs of enemies," quoted Kai Tal, from the proverbs of Fu Tsiu. "Yet no longer shall this person have reason to fear the meddlers."

Kai Tal bowed his head. In some way, the departure of Uncle Gerald and the freeing of Kwanyin, spelled triumph for him.

The Chinese Message

IF uncle's going, and Kwanyin's going, then we're going, too!" Charles Sterndale spoke firmly. He could be obstinate on occasion, and this was an occasion,

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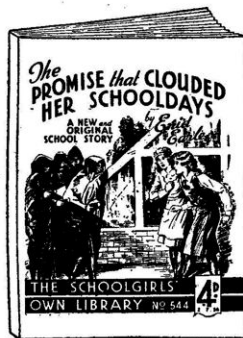
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PRICE 4d. EACH

Serious-minded and conventional, Charles thought it would be quite wrong for them to stay on. Even though Uncle Gerald had said he would be pleased for them to do so, it made no difference to Charles.

The three cousins were in the large lounge where the party had been given for their entertainment. There were no Chinese present, although, of course, as there were bead curtains leading from the room to another, every word the cousins said could be overheard if anyone cared to listen.

There was nothing really private about the conversation, however. It was just an argument as to whether they should stay or not.

"Bosh!" was Mollie's contribution, for Mollie was always blunt. "I say we can stay!"

"And I don't see why not," said Catherine, "if uncle's willing. He might be back at the end of a week, and we were invited here for three. It would be silly to go home and then come back. Besides, there's no one at home—my home."

"Oh!" said Charles. "H'm! Well, perhaps you could come and stay with us."

"Oh, let's stay," said Mollie. "Anyway, try it for a day. If Kai Tal's gone, and Kwanyin's gone, the others won't worry us. We can have the old alligator removed from the lake, and can have some decent swimming. They're jolly good tennis courts—"

"Yes, marvellous courts!" agreed Catherine. "And swimming in the lake will be fun. And we can have the use of the car to go picnics in, and into the town, and so on—"

"And Charles could learn some of those clever conjuring tricks from Wang Hu, or whoever it is."

Charles gave a slight start. He had forgotten the clever conjuring tricks they had seen. But now the suggestion moved him. It would be rather wonderful, he thought, to return to school and casually produce things from other people's cars, and make coins disappear in full view, and open an unopenable box which had baffled everyone else.

"H'm!" he said. "Still, our chief reason for staying was to look after Kwanyin, you know, and—"

The bead curtains rustled. They all turned, and stood silent.

A Chinaman had entered the room. With head bowed and arms folded, he remained like a statue. Then he stepped forward, and, as he did so, whisked something from his sleeve.

Catherine winced slightly. For a dreadful moment she thought that it was a weapon he was bringing out. But, to her intense relief, she saw that it was a sheet of paper.

Charles clenched his fists even so, and stood ready to take action if the Chinaman intended trouble.

"What do you want?" he demanded. The Chinaman looked at Charles, then at Catherine and Mollie. He put a finger to his lips and turned a wary glance back at the curtains, as he handed the paper to Catherine.

"Me velly good friend of Kwanyin," he said.

"Oh!" said Catherine. "Is anything wrong? And what's this?" she added, as she took the paper from him.

"Message from illustrious father of Kwanyin—"

Catherine, excited but puzzled, looked at the paper. It was covered in Chinese characters arranged in columns. It was completely meaningless to her,

"The Pagoda of Peril"

but she could see that it had been but recently written.

"But can't you take this to Kwanyin?" asked Charles. "Why bring it to us?"

The Chinaman turned his head very slowly, and looked at the bead curtains. "Kai Tal—spices—watchee!" he said softly.

Catherine rolled up the paper as it had been when he had taken it from his sleeve.

"I'll give it to Uncle Gerald," said Catherine, frowning, and looking cautiously at the bead curtains herself.

The Chinaman shook his head in an urgent way.

"No shooee—no shooee anyone, only Kwanyin," he said, speaking jerkily. "Plomise me no givee. Word of English girl, yes?"

Catherine hesitated, but she could tell that this was a very important message.

"Yes," she said. "I prom—" She broke off. The bead curtains had rustled slightly.

A hand reached through towards the Chinaman; then the curtains fell apart slightly, and for a fleeting moment Catherine saw Kai Tal's face.

"Oh!" she gasped in horror. "Oh, look—Kai Tal—"

The curtains were hurled apart; but at the same moment the Chinaman who had brought the message darted sideways. He sprang to the windows.

"They're fastened!" cried Catherine. The windows were closed, but the Chinaman made for them. With head ducked, hands over his face, he charged straight at the large pane of glass in a french window.

There was a shattering crash, the tinkling of falling glass; but he was through, rolling over on the grass.

Kai Tal rushed to follow, muttered, turned, and dashed back through the bead curtains.

In the drive, Uncle Gerald's car was drawn up, waiting to take him to the station. The Chinese chauffeur had just stepped from the driving seat, and was looking at the house, trying to find whence the sound of broken glass had come.

But he turned back as Miss Smith, their uncle's secretary, came into view from the house.

Beside her hobbled Kwanyin, much as Chinese girls and women had hobbled in the bad old days when their feet had been compressed. There was no sign of Uncle Gerald.

The chauffeur assisted Kwanyin into the car, and Miss Smith followed.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Catherine. "I think she struggled—they forced her in. Uncle wouldn't allow that—"

"Look—they're driving off—and without uncle, too!" said Charles.

Catherine did not hesitate.

"Wait!" she cried, and jumped through the broken window and out on to the lawn.

At the same moment, from the main doorway of Pagoda Place, stepped Kai Tal.

What a dramatic turn events have taken! What will happen? Will Catherine be able to frustrate Kai Tal? Will she be able to rescue Kwanyin? Make sure of reading next week's powerful instalment of this serial by ordering your SCHOOLGIRL in advance.