

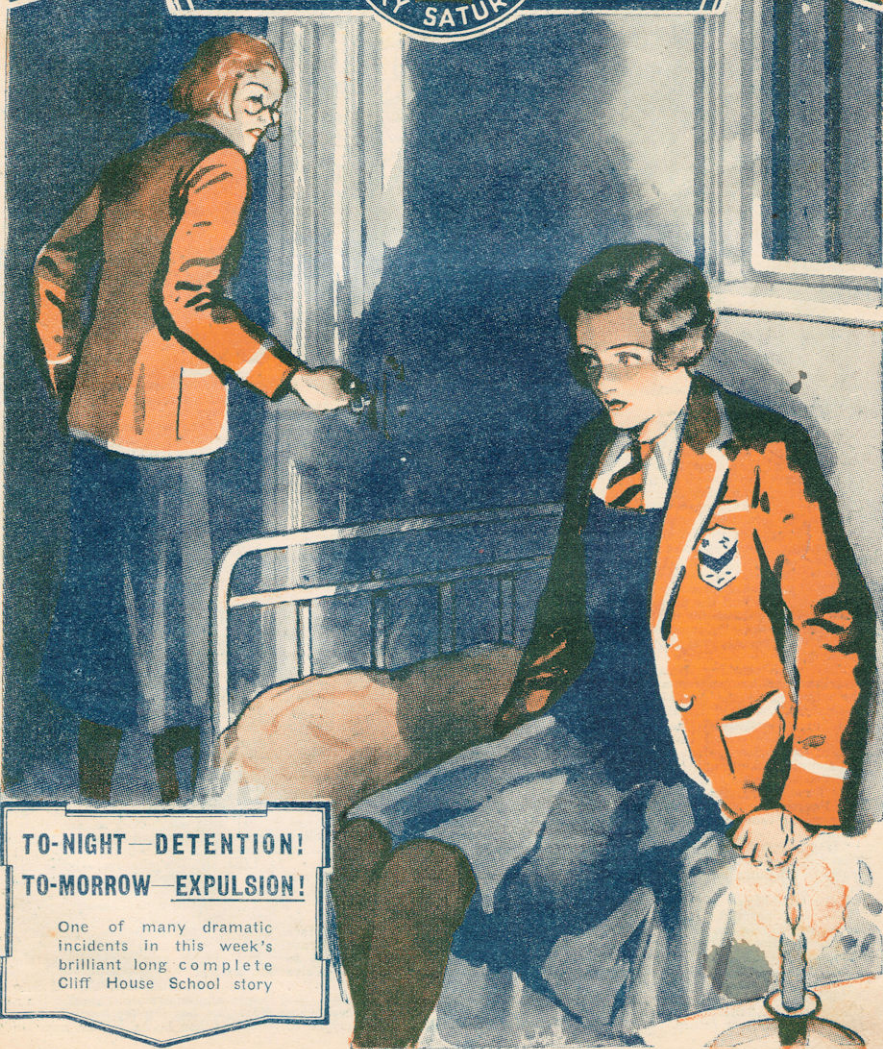
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# THE SCHOOLGIRL

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**TO-NIGHT—DETENTION!**

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Barbara Redfern & Co., in This Brilliant Long Complete Cliff House School Story, Are Fighting Together—

# IN THE Ex-Captain's Cause



## The Form Protests

"SOMETHING'S got to be done!" Barbara Redfern spoke firmly. There was a determined light in her blue eyes as she addressed that remark to the crowd of girls from the Fourth Form at Cliff House School who were congregated in the Fourth Form Common-room.

"True, O queen!" Jenima Carstairs agreed, fixing her monocle and staring approvingly at the speaker. "But the question, as usual, is—what?"

"That, indeed, was the question. Browns corrugated fiercely as their owners tried to find the answer. Something had to be done—for at the moment the Fourth Form, in common with the rest of Cliff House, was discontentedly seething.

They were seething because Sarah Harrigan, the most unpopular prefect in the school—with the possible exception of Connie Jackson of the Sixth Form—had been appointed as temporary captain of the school in place of the adored Stella Stone.

Through trickery and cunning Sarah had won that appointment, by worrying and humiliating the idolised Stella. The Fourth very strongly had made up their minds that they weren't going to stand it.

"If Primmy," Babs said ominously, "only knew half the truth she'd be ready to go down on her benedick knees to Stella."

"The trouble is," Mabel Lynn added, "that Sarah's got round Primmy. She's got Stella in Primmy's black books. Primmy, as a result, has deprived Stella of the captaincy and given it to Sarah. But," Mabs added, "Sarah's only temporary captain."

"Which means, I guess," Leila Carroll put in, "that there'll be another election in the near future."

By

HILDA RICHARDS

SARAH HARRIGAN has triumphed—but Babs & Co. are resolved that her success, won by such crafty methods, shall be short-lived. The chums of the Fourth mean to see Stella reinstated, and to achieve that object they are prepared to go to any lengths.

"In the future," Babs sniffed. "But who wants to wait for the future? Sarah's at the top of the tree now. You can bet Sarah will do everything she can to postpone the election. We've protested to Primmy. Primmy, primed by Sarah, won't listen to us. We've seen Stella, but Stella's on her high horse—says that she'll never think of taking the captaincy back unless Miss Primrose asks her."

"Then," said Bessie Bunter, glowering, "we've jolly well got to make Primmy ask her."

"Just as easy," Clara put in sarcastically, "as falling off the clock tower. How are we to make Primmy ask her?"

"Again brows corrugated. Babs it was who gave a sharp exclamation.

"I know!"

"Hurrah!"

"Listen!" And Babs, her face suddenly radiant, looked over the heads of the crowd. "We've protested to Primmy verbally—that's no good. We've got to take action."

"Such as?"

"Such as," Babs said, her eyes gleaming, "sending Sarah Harrigan to

Coventry. If we refuse to recognise Sarah, if we refuse to obey her—"

"Oh, my hat!"

There was a buzz. Girls gazed at each other. The nerve of that suggestion! But the Fourth was strong for Stella. The Fourth was especially strong against Sarah. They didn't want Sarah. They wouldn't have Sarah. And what better way of letting Sarah know than by just ignoring her on every possible occasion?

"Now, order," Babs said. "Do nothing. When Sarah speaks, treat her with stony silence. As far as we're concerned, Sarah Harrigan doesn't exist!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And we start," Babs said, "at once! Pass the word round. Let everybody know. Anybody who doesn't respect the orders of the Form will be tried in the dormitory to-night by Form law! Let Lydia & Co. know that!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Babs!"

And excitedly the meeting broke up—none too soon, as it happened, for the bell for early morning lessons was already ringing.

Sarah Harrigan, the despised, would be taking that lesson in the absence of Miss Charmant, the Fourth Form's usual mistress, which meant that the Coventry ban would come into operation at once.

Like wildfire the news sped round. The Fourth was sending Sarah to Coventry!

Truly it was a novel situation. Never before had any Form sent a prefect to Coventry—never before, certainly, a prefect with such authority as that which Sarah now wielded—captain of the school!

To-day was the first day of Sarah's new administration, and Sarah Harrigan, hearing the lesson bell as she collected her books in her own study,

smiled a little. Sarah at that moment was very pleased with herself.

For Sarah had realised her heart's desire. Her appointment, it is true, was only temporary. But there was no reason, given time, that it should not become permanent.

So Sarah smiled. She had her plans worked out. From that moment she was going to be a changed Sarah—a honey-sweet Sarah, wooing the good opinion of the school.

There was just one fly in Sarah's ointment, however—and that she was beginning to realise with increasing apprehension and dismay.

True enough she had filched the captaincy from Stella Stone, and by doing so had left Stella free of authority and free to follow her own devices.

For Stella at the moment was studying as hard as she could for the veterinary examination, which she hoped to win when she sat for the examination in a few days' time.

The diploma, if she could win it, meant much to Stella. It meant a glorious start in the career she had cut out for herself. For Stella had been promised, if she got through the examination, that the appointment as assistant manageress at Sir Absalom Whittier's private zoo should be hers.

And, unknown to Stella, it also meant a great deal to Sarah Harrigan. Stella, in that examination, would have competitors. One of those competitors was a girl named Doris Grimshaw—rich, well-dressed, influential.

Doris was afraid of Stella's competition. Doris, less scrupulous than most girls, had promised Sarah, if she prevented Stella from winning or taking part in the exam, that she would give her twenty pounds.

To the unscrupulous Sarah, overwhelmed with debts, desperately fending off her creditors, that twenty pounds meant salvation.

With the five pounds Doris had already advanced her she had paid off the more pressing of her creditors, but others were beginning to raise their voices on a threatening note, and Sarah lived in hourly dread of one or more of them coming to the school.

"But I will earn it," she vowed to herself. "I will!"

She paused for a moment, listening to

the bell still clanging. Her eyes glittered. In the next study Stella Stone would be working now, she knew— feverishly, frantically, to make up time.

If she could only badger and bait Stella. If she could only upset her for a few days longer.

A sudden, rather forced smile came to her sallow features.

She went out, book under her arm. At the door of Stella's study she paused. Stella, desperately writing, looked round, and then, seeing her visitor, her lips compressed, and she bent her head to her task once again. Sarah's voice rapped out:

"Stella!"

"Please go away! Can't you see I'm dreadfully busy?" Stella asked.

Sarah's face flushed. "Busy?" she scoffed. "Haven't you heard lesson bell?"

"Yes."

"Then why aren't you on your way to your class-room?"

Stella did turn at that. Her face expressed astonishment.

"Sarah, are you talking to me?"

"I am," Sarah sneered. "I'm your captain now, remember. You were fond enough of giving me orders when you were captain, weren't you? Now for a change—the boot is on the other foot. Go to your class-room!"

Stella's face turned pink. For one second a hot retort trembled on her lips. But she controlled herself, remembering that Sarah would have liked to provoke a real quarrel—that Sarah was always ready for quarrels. Well, she wasn't going to upset herself—not at this juncture. She nodded quietly.

"I am going," she said.

"Well, hurry up!" Sarah snapped, a little nonplussed by the surrender, and feeling somehow that she hadn't got the better of those exchanges, despite her new authority. She wandered off to the Fourth Form class-room.

But there was a smile on her face as she entered that famous apartment—a bright and forced smile. The Form sat stiff, still, and rigid as she entered. Every eye fastened upon her. Sarah smirked as she put down her books.

"Good-morning, girls!" she said brightly.

No reply.

"Good-morning, girls!" Sarah repeated.

Stony silence. Sarah bristled. She looked from one face to another, but each was as stolid as the Sphinx. True, Lydia Crossendale, her crony, was not looking happy. Nor were Eada, Ferriers, Frances Frost and Eleanor Storke, her henchmen. They had supported Sarah during her campaign against Stella.

But even Lydia & Co. dare not risk the displeasure of the Form on an occasion like this. Perhaps they had too vivid a knowledge of the Form trial which was threatened to any girl who broke the ban.

"Lost your tongues?" Sarah asked pleasantly.

Sarah felt nonplussed, and a sense of irritation was developing within her. But she fought it back. At all costs she was going to be sweet and sunny natured.

With a rather bewildered blink at the Form she took her seat at the mistress' desk, arranged her papers, and then, in a confidential attitude, leaned towards the girls.

"Now," she began, "just before we start, girls. I don't want to remind you, of course, that I'm your captain now. I just," Sarah added expansively, "want you all to look upon me as your very good friend. We've had our differences in the past, I know. Perhaps we've both been to blame. Most of you here have punishments which I have imposed—"

She smiled again. Like rows and rows of Sphinxes the Form sat. They might have been carved from granite.

"And, in order to celebrate my accession to the captaincy," Sarah went on, less certainly now, "I have made a resolution. All the punishments which I have inflicted during the last few days are washed out. A sort of amnesty." And she giggled brightly.

"I want you girls to co-operate with me. I want us to be all one jolly, happy little family together."

From Clara Trevlyn came a rather disdainful sniff. It brought a titter from Muriel Bond's corner.

"You hear?" Sarah asked.

Stolid and frozen the Form sat.

Sarah frowned. She felt disheartened. What was the matter with



WATCHED by the whole class, Babs went to the blackboard and wrote in bold letters: YOU ARE IN COVENTRY. Sarah was speechless with anger—knowing full well that the message was meant for her.

## 4 "In the Ex-Captain's Cause"

the Form? She cleared her throat again.

"And," she added, "as you don't like mathematics, I'm going to change the subject for first lesson. You're all fond of history, I know. Get out your history-books."

Not a finger moved.

Sarah stared.

"Get out your history-books!" she repeated.

Silence.

Sarah's eyes glimmered. A flush came to her cheeks. It was not easy for Sarah to be bright and sunny tempered at the best of times. Some of the friendliness faded from her face now. Her natural acerbity began to reassert itself. Rather snappishly she repeated the order for the third time.

"Get out your books!"

A certain stiffening of backs, a firmer rigidity of uprightness was the only response she received.

Sarah broke out a little harder, her eyes fastened upon Barbara Redfern.

"Barbara, you are captain of the Form! Stand up!"

Babs remained seated.

"Barbara, you heard?"

But Babs apparently hadn't. Stolidly she looked directly to her front.

"Barbara, you will take fifty lines! Now answer me when I speak to you!"

No reply.

"Barbara, you will take a hundred lines!"

Babs rose. Very upright she walked into the aisle between the desks. Sarah started as stiffly she came to the front of the class. She blinked as Babs picked up a piece of chalk, and in bold, round capitals began to scrawl upon the blackboard.

"What are you doing?" Sarah asked.

"Barbara—"

But Babs went on. She wrote:

"YOU ARE IN COVENTRY!"

Ahd, having written, began to walk stiffly back to her place.

Sarah glared.

The last vestige of sunniness vanished behind the stormy cloudbank of her wrath. Her voice was almost a hoot as she shouted:

"Barbara! Barbara Redfern!"

Babs, as if she hadn't heard, walked on to her seat, reached it, and sat down.

"Come and wipe this off the board at once!"

Babs folded her arms.

"Take a hundred lines!"

No reply.

"Clara Trevlyn!"

Clara turned her head.

"Mabel Lynn!"

Mabs became absorbed in the pattern of her desk.

"Bessie Bunter!"

Bessie looked unhappy. She shook her head.

Sarah's eyes glittered. She was savage now. She glared over the heads of the silent Form.

"For the last time," she said, between her teeth, "get out your books! If you refuse this time, I will punish every one of you!"

Immovable the Form sat.

Sarah's angry gasp could be heard all over the class-room. Hate was in the glare she turned upon the Form. Quivering she stared, and then, turning roughly on her heel, went out of the class-room altogether. There was an uneasy murmur.

"Look here!" said Lydia Crossendale. "Oh, dash it all, we can't keep this up!"

"Why not?" demanded Joan Charmant.

"Well, it's silly!"

"Silly or not, you toe the line!" Clara Trevlyn said grimly. "Don't forget that first girl who breaks the ban is tried by Form law! But hist!" she added. "Oh, my hat! Here she comes with Primmy!"

Miss Primrose it was. She came rustling into the Form-room with a look of testy annoyance on her face. A little hissing breath went up from the Form. Somebody was going to be in for it now.

As one, however, the Form stood up in deference to her presence; as one, sat down. Miss Primrose appeared a little puzzled.

"I see no sign of the disturbance you are speaking of, Sarah!"

Sarah's lips tensed.

"It is a fact, however, that they will not obey. It is a fact that Barbara Redfern wrote that insulting message on the blackboard. But perhaps," she added, with a bitter sneer, "they have decided to change their tactics now that you are here." Her eyes glittered.

"Barbara Redfern," she called, "stand up!"

Babs, her heart thumping, nevertheless, sat still.

"Barbara," Miss Primrose rapped sharply, "you heard?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose," Babs answered at once.

"Then why do you not stand up?"

"If you order me to, I will stand up,"

Babs replied respectfully.

"Barbara, you are being utterly absurd! Stand up! Did you write this—this message on the board?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose."

"Why?"

"Because," Babs replied firmly, "it is true, Miss Primrose. We have sent Sarah to Coventry!"

A low murmur of assent went round the room.

Miss Primrose pursed her lips.

"And why, might I ask," she returned tartly, "have you sent Sarah to Coventry?"

Now the silence for a second was tense. Babs reddened. Her heart was thumping tumultuously now, but she did not flinch. Straight her gaze as she looked at the headmistress; square her shoulders as proudly she stood erect. The bombshell burst.

"Because," Babs answered; "we don't agree with the appointment of Sarah Harrigan as captain. We want fair play for Stella Stone, and until we get it we refuse to recognise Sarah's authority at all. Sending Sarah to Coventry is our method of protest."



The Silent Mass

TENSE the silence which descended.

Miss Primrose's face turned thundercloudy. Sarah smiled—a sour smile.

"Barbara!" the headmistress cried sharply.

"Yes, Miss Primrose?"

"You—you dare—" Miss Primrose drew a deep breath. "Barbara, you have the authority to tell me this—you, the captain of the Form!"

"I am sorry, Miss Primrose!"

"You are not!" Miss Primrose's eyes glittered. "Am I to understand that the whole of the Form is with you in this?"

With the exception of Lydia Crossendale & Co. the Form stood up as one

girl. With one voice the reply was

chanted:

"Yes, Miss Primrose!"

Then, very respectfully, they all sat

down again.

Miss Primrose looked flabbergasted. She stared at the girls; she stared at Sarah. Her features went first red, then white.

"I see," she said quietly, "you are in rebellion."

"No, Miss Primrose," Babs said stoutly. "We have no fault to find with anything else. But if you don't mind me saying so, we do feel you've made a mistake in appointing Sarah—"

"Barbara, cease this moment!" And Miss Primrose stamped her foot. "How dare you!" she cried furiously. "What I have done, I have done for the good of the school. Stella has proved herself unfit to hold the post of captain in her place. I appointed her, Barbara, and as MY head girl I command respect for her. Let this foolish nonsense cease at once. You will obey Sarah!"

"But, Miss Primrose, I must point out—"

"Thank you! I am not going to argue the matter," the headmistress said. "I have given my order. You will obey Sarah. If you do not—Miss Primrose's brow darkened—then I shall punish you all most severely. Sarah, if you have any more trouble please report the matter to me."

"Yes, Miss Primrose," Sarah said gleefully.

And Miss Primrose turned on her heel and whisked out of the room. A low murmur went up. Every eye was upon Babs now, who, red and mighty uncomfortable, resumed her seat. But her face was still set, her chin still square. She passed a quick whisper round:

"Obey, but don't speak! She's still in Coventry!"

"Silence!" Sarah cried.

The whisper went on.

"Silence!" Sarah's eyes gleamed.

"The next girl I find whispering will be detained," she said. Her gaze fastened spitefully upon Barbara Redfern. "I hope," she said venomously, "that you've had your lesson, Barbara. And for a start you can come and rub this insult off the board. I'm sent to Coventry, am I?" She laughed grindingly. "I'll send some of you to the punishment-room before I'm finished. Barbara, do as I order!"

Babs left her seat. She strode out. She picked up the duster. Unseen by Sarah, she picked up the chalk. While Sarah turned her back to the class Babs rubbed out the words "you are" at the beginning of the message, and rapidly wrote the words "She's still, making it read: 'She's still in Coventry.'"

She paused a moment so that the whole class could see, then wrote below:

"Obey, but don't speak." Then, as Sarah turned, she wiped out the whole message.

"Thank you! But wait a minute," Sarah said sneeringly. "I haven't finished with you, Barbara Redfern. A bright idea, wasn't it, to send your captain to Coventry. Whose was it?"

Babs closed her lips.

"Answer me!"

Babs stood perfectly still.

"Barbara Redfern, have I got to report you to the headmistress?"

Babs remained silent.

"I see," Sarah heaved a breath.

"Clara Trevlyn, perhaps you—"

Clara's lips shut tightly.

"Jemima Carstairs!"

"Begad!" Jemima murmured, and coughed. Then firmly she set her lips.

"A conspiracy of silence, eh?" Sarah's eyes glittered. "And if I make no mistake take you're the ringleader, Barbara Redfern. Well, wait a minute." And she went to her desk, wrote something on a slip of paper, and gave it to Barbara. "Take that to Miss Primrose."

Babs took it. She dropped it in the wastepaper basket. Sarah flamed. "Why you— Lydia, go and fetch Miss Primrose!"

Lydia paused, but Babs had said obey. She stepped from her place. With rather a queer look at Barbara she went out.

In five minutes Miss Primrose was upon the scene. Her frown became black when she heard of the latest development.

"Barbara, am I to understand that you are the ringleader of this disgraceful mutiny against Sarah?"

"I am only carrying out the wishes of the Form," Barbara said.

"Whose idea was this?"

Babs flushed. "Well, Miss Primrose, it—it was mine."

"Yours!" Miss Primrose's lips curled in a bitter smile. "And you are my Form captain! Barbara, go to your seat, and until you come to your senses and apologise both to Sarah and to me, you can consider yourself deprived of your office. And if," she added, "I have any more trouble from you, Barbara, I shall make it my duty to take you in hand myself. Now go."

Barbara went, dismayed but unvanquished. It was for Stella's sake. Miss Primrose did not understand. Miss Primrose, blinded by Sarah, hoodwinked by Sarah, did not realise the horrible mistake she was making. No longer was Babs captain, but she wasn't going to apologise. It was Miss Primrose and Sarah who were in the wrong.

Lessons that morning were something of an ordeal to the Fourth Form, but they stuck it. Sarah, furious, fed-up, could not get a word out of them. They obeyed; when asked questions each insisted on walking out in front of the class and writing the answer on the blackboard.

Lines flew. Every girl in the class was richer by scores of lines when at last break came. But they did remain true to their resolve and to Stella. Not one of them had opened their lips to Sarah.

But perhaps Barbara was the worst off of the Form. Sarah, sensing that Barbara was the leader of the mutiny which barred her, made a dead set at her.

"But," Babs said between her teeth, "we're not giving in."

"Rather not!"

"We'll keep it up!"

"What-ho!"

That was the Form's mood. Babs might no longer be their captain, but they still looked to her. It was Stella against Sarah, and under Babs' banner they would fight on for their idol.

But Babs frowned. Perhaps she had a foreboding of the strife that was to come. No doubt now that Sarah had her knife into her.

Not that Babs was afraid. Drastic her methods might be, but she felt justified. But something of what had happened must have come to Stella's ears. For as Babs, surrounded by her sympathetic chums, stood in the quadrangle, little Dolores Essendon, of the Third Form, came up.

"Barbara, please, Stella says she would like to see you," she said.

Babs paused. Her eyes had been upon

a figure which was strolling through the gates of Cliff House at that moment—a stranger to the school, a girl who would be older than Stella Stone by almost a year. Babs had seen her once before, in Sarah Harrigan's company, and knew that her name was Doris Grimshaw. "Right-ho!" she said. "I'll go at once."

She flashed a smile at her chums and disappeared into the school. Stella's pleasant voice bade her "come in" when she knocked at the door.

"Oh, here you are, Barbara," she

it. Leave Sarah alone. Let her go her own way. It is very kind and nice, Barbara, but, well—please don't."

There was a silence. But if Stella hoped to win Babs—from the path upon which she had set her feet by that appeal, she obtained a result that was the very reverse. Her very sweetness, her utter readiness to give in for the sake of others, more fiercely than ever won that girl to her side.

In that moment Babs felt there was not a thing she wouldn't do for Stella—if she could make things happier for



"BARBARA, I don't want you to lose the captaincy for my sake," Stella said gravely. "It's kind of you to try to help me—but please don't." Babs was silent; but more than ever was she determined to stand by Stella.

said softly. "Do come in, my dear. Sit down, will you? Have one of these sweets, Barbara"—and she faced the ex-captain of the Fourth very seriously—"what is this I have been hearing?"

"Oh, what—" Babs asked off-handedly. "Stella, can I have the pink one with a walnut on?"

"Have them all if you like. But, Barbara, please don't try to avoid the question." Stella shook her head. "I have been hearing things, Barbara—things which distress me. There has been rather a scene in the Form-room this morning?"

Babs sighed. "Well, yes," she reluctantly admitted. "And you," Stella said sadly, "got into trouble with Miss Primrose?"

"Er—yes. Just a little," Babs said.

"A little!" Stella looked grim. "Is it a little thing to you, Barbara, to be suspended from the captaincy?" she asked. She came forward, touching the other girl upon the shoulder, and Babs blushed. "Barbara, please don't do it, Stella pleaded. "I know why you are doing it, but believe me it isn't wor-

se this girl she still adjudged as her captain, she would even suffer expulsion.

Rather tremulously she smiled.

"Oh, please, Stella, don't worry," she said. "After all, I was only carrying out the wishes of the Form. But tell me," she added eagerly, and paused, her sharp ears attracted by the sound of voices in Sarah Harrigan's study, which lay next door. "Stella, how are you getting on with the swotting?" she asked.

Stella smiled a little.

"Thanks, Babs, but I'm getting on very well," she said. "Being deprived of a captain's duties has its compensations. I've no duties to carry out now, you know. That leaves me with all my spare time to myself."

"You think you'll get through?" Babs asked eagerly.

"Oh, I've no doubt about it now. That is, of course, if I'm left to myself."

Babs laughed.

But in the next study Doris Grimshaw and Sarah Harrigan had paused. The wall was not thick and every word of

that conversation had come to their ears.

Sarah, on the point of assuring Doris that Stella hadn't said a word in the examination, bit her lip and frowned. Doris stared at her.

"So?" she asked, a note of inquiry in her voice.

"She's bluffing!" Sarah said savagely. "Is she?" Doris' brows went up. "I haven't heard," she said rather tartly, "that it is a habit of Stella Stone's to bluff. I thought you told me you had made study impossible for her?"

"Well, I have," Sarah muttered.

"Sounds like it, doesn't it? You heard what she said? If she's not interrupted she can get through!" Doris' teeth showed between her made-up lips. "Sarah," she added, "you know what it means if she does get through? The exam's in three days' time, and she's not finished."

She did not finish. But Sarah, meeting her gaze, felt desperate.

"I'll see," she promised between her teeth, "that she doesn't get through. Leave it to me. And, Doris—"

"Well?" Doris grimaced asked.

"If you could manage to advance me another five pounds—"

The expression on the face of the other girl became hard.

"Sarah, I've told you," she said. "Stick to the bargain. Make it impossible for Stella Stone to win that examination and the twenty pounds are yours. Until that issue is settled one way or the other, not a penny more of my money do you receive. Now—good-morning!"

And she turned on her heel and went.



Puzzle: Find Barbara

**D**INNER-BELL rang and Sarah, furiously thinking, took herself off to dining-hall. When Sarah thought furiously she was not long in arriving at a result, and before the meal was half-way through, she found a way to stop Stella—for a time, at least.

After the meal she accosted the deposed captain as she was about to leave the hall.

Stella eyed her coldly.

"You want me?"

"I want your study," Sarah said.

Stella started.

"You want what?"

"I said, I want your study," Sarah retorted. "I'm captain now, aren't I? Those are the captain's quarters."

"But that's absurd!" Stella protested. "What difference can it make if I remain in the study? One study's as good as another."

"All the same," Sarah snapped doggedly, "I'm going to move into yours. You can take my room over in its place. We'll do the shifting immediately after lessons to-day."

Stella's eyes glittered a little. A flush of anger came into her pretty cheeks. Scornful was the look she cast upon Sarah.

Oh, she understood, all right. Sarah, returning to her baiting, had deliberately thought of this as a scheme to prevent her getting on with her work.

Changing studies would take a couple of hours, at least; and with a couple of hours gone her evening's work would be ruined.

The thought of appealing to Miss Primrose came into her mind, to be immediately dismissed. No! Sarah had

doublet foreseen that. Sarah would be ready with some very plausible reason, making it appear once again that she was just contesting Sarah's every order out of pure and spiteful perverseness.

But her heart was heavy. She had been so happily gaining time. She went on down the passage. She felt in need of a breath of fresh air, after her labour of writing, and walked out into the sunny quad.

She was frowning a little worriedly when Babs, Mabs, Clara and Jemima strolled on to the scene. Babs glanced up quickly.

"Why, Stella," she cried, "what's the matter?"

"Matter?" Stella forced a smile and shook her head. "Nothing, Barbara. But I'm a bit worried."

"Oh?" Babs asked quickly.

"Sarah has taken it into her head to take over my study. She wants me to move."

A frown came to Babs' face. Like Stella, she saw immediately through that sly move. She glanced quickly at her chums. They, too, had seen through it, and they were frowning rather ominously. To their surprise, however, Babs broke into a laugh.

"Well," she asked calmly, "why worry? You haven't got to do the moving yourself, have you? As a senior girl, you've a perfect right to get yourself else to do a job like that for you."

Sarah smiled, "here we are! I'll get Leila and Jean Cartwright to help, and we'll jolly soon make short work of the moving. Meantime," Babs suggested calmly, "there's no reason whatever why you shouldn't get on with your own work in our study."

Stella's face lightened.

"Oh, Barbara, do you mean that?"

"Of course!" Babs said cheerfully.

"It—it's awfully nice of you."

But the Co. required no compliments from Stella. The pleasure of saving her, of frustrating Sarah's schemes, was enough. Sarah hadn't reckoned with the fact that they would come to the rescue, of course. But as soon as lessons were finished Babs & Co., ready, and willing, and cheerful, were there. By the time Sarah came along they had already put Stella's things into the passage. Sarah jumped.

"What are you kids doing here?" she demanded.

As solemn as owls, the juniors lined up. Babs flashed them a warning look. Then she pointed into the doorway of Stella's study, then at the furniture. Finally, at the door of Sarah Harrigan's room.

Sarah gritted her teeth. Dagger-like was the glare which she gave to Babs. Obvious, the Fourth meant to keep up the ban of Coventry. But what concerned Sarah at that moment was the absence of Stella. Where was Stella, while these cheeky brats were clearing out her study?

"Where's Stella?" she rapped.

Babs made a vaguely distressful circular motion of her arm.

"She ought to be here!"

Babs shook her head, pointing to herself to indicate that full authority for the removal was vested in her.

"Well, get on with it, then!" Sarah snapped.

In a fury, she stamped off, so disturbed by Stella's absence that she even forgot to punish them. Babs & Co. grinned at each other, and then willingly went to work.

Sarah's things were dumped into the corridor, Stella's put into Sarah's study in their place. Neatly and tidily they arranged everything, and, leaving Sarah's stuff still in the corridor, went off to Study No. 7 for tea, having pre-

viously agreed not to disturb Stella until she herself chose to quit Study No. 4.

They were in the middle of the meal when the door came open and Stella came in.

"Might I," she asked, with a smile, "have a cup of tea? Barbara, what did you do about the study?"

"We've changed everything," Babs answered cheerily.

"Oh, thank you! Then I can move back?" Stella asked. "It's been lovely working in your study, Barbara. I've got through such a lot, too. But perhaps I'd better get back to my own. I don't want to risk further trouble with Sarah."

"Shall I help you with your books and things, then?" Babs asked eagerly.

"Oh, Barbara, if you would!" Stella said. "A pleasure indeed it was to serve Stella in any way. They finished her tea, and, with Stella looking happier than she had looked for many days past, went on to Study No. 4."

The pile of notes gave joyful testimony that the work Stella had done, and Babs eyes glistened with pleasure as she regarded them. Stella was making up for lost time with a vengeance.

"But I've still got to keep at it," she told Mabs. "In three days' time the examination takes place. If I work every available moment I shall only just be able to squeeze in all that I have lost."

Loaded with papers and books, the two quitted the study. Back to Stella's new quarters in the Sixth Form corridor they went, and Stella dimpled as she looked around, her eyes fastening again upon the door.

"You do all this?"

"Yes," Babs laughed.

"It looks nice—yes, very," Stella nodded brightly. "How marvelously you have cleaned and dusted, Barbara!" She swung round as the door opened and Sarah Harrigan, her expression wrathful, poked her head in at the door. "Well?" she asked, freezing.

"Where have you been?" Sarah gritted.

"Is that," Stella asked, "any business of yours?"

Sarah's eyes glittered. It was not, of course, any business of hers, but she had to have the last word.

"The Stone!"

Stella merely shrugged. The look of contempt upon her face stung Sarah. Babs, regarding her, saw how her eyes, feverishly gleaming, were surveying the table—that table stacked now with the notes and books brought in from Study No. 4.

She paused for another inimical moment, looking very much as though she would have liked to give Stella lines or a detention; but even Sarah's powers did not enable her to punish members of the Sixth Form.

She closed the door and went off. Stella smiled grimly.

"Spotting for a row," she said. "Sarah's at her wits' end to find an excuse for a quarrel. Barbara, would you help me just to sort out the papers and notes? I really must get on."

Babs helped. The papers and the notes were sorted out into neat heaps and piles. Stella sat down. There was a knock at the door.

Again Sarah looked in. Her eyes strayed at once to the seated figure of the ex-captain.

Stella sighed patiently.

"Well, Sarah?"

"Is my Thesaurus in here?" Sarah snapped.

No.

"Where is it, Barbara Redfern?"

Babs shrugged. She turned to Stella.

"Will you tell her that it is in her bookcase?" she said.

Sarah glared. She went out. But in five minutes she was back. Stella rather impatiently raised her head.

"Somebody's taken my coal-shovel," Sarah said. "Have you got it?"

"No," Stella said. "Please do not interrupt!"

Babs said nothing, but there was a strange gleam in her eyes.

She had finished tidying now. Very quietly she left the study.

Down to Study No. 4 she went, where Mabs, starting prep, looked up.

She saw at once that something was "on" from the expression on Barbara's face. Quickly, questioningly she glanced at her chum.

"Sarah's started the old game again," Babs said, between her teeth.

"Stella?"

"Yes, Stella!" Babs' eyes gleamed.

"Stella is working like the dickens to get finished. She's still behind time. Sarah knows it, of course. Sarah keeps showing her face in at the door—just to interrupt and take Stella's mind off what she's doing. If Sarah gets her way, Stella will never get through the exam. But," Babs stated, "Sarah's not going to get her way!"

"But how—" Mabs began.

"We're going," Babs stated, "to lift the ban of Coventry. That's served its purpose. We're jolly well going to play Sarah at her own little game. Just for a change we'll keep her occupied—so jolly occupied that she won't even have a chance to think of Stella. Get the gang along, Mabs."

Mabs grinned.

"Oh my hat! You mean we're going to pester Sarah?"

"For all we're worth," Babs agreed.

Mabs laughed. It was a scheme after her own heart. Gladly she quitted the study. In five minutes Study No. 4 was crowded to overflowing. To them, her loyal henchmen, Babs briefly outlined her plans, and the delighted chuckles with which her announcement was received, showed the unanimous approval those plans received.

Stella, alone in her study, frowned. If her arrears were lighter than they had been, they were still heavy. Impossible it was to concentrate, with the frequent interruptions which came from Sarah Harrigan. And Sarah Harrigan showed no signs of relenting in the campaign of persecution she had launched against her.

In the study next door she heard Sarah moving noisily about. There was a sudden crash at the wall.

Stella compressed her lips. What a hateful girl Sarah was!

But Sarah was grinning. Sarah had a hammer in her hand. There was a framed picture in the other. That picture had been lying about in Sarah's study for terms, but not until this moment had she thought of hanging it up.

Anything—anything to annoy Stella! The hammer came back for the next blow. But it was never delivered, for at that moment something whizzed in through the open window, striking Sarah cleanly between the shoulder blades. She glared.

The missile was a tennis ball, aimed, of course, by some careless Junior in the quadrangle outside. Down went Sarah's hammer. Black the look which came to her face. In stormy fury she stared out of the window. And then she blinked. No one was there.

"The little beasts!" Sarah grated.

She stopped for a moment. Then, setting her teeth, went back for her

hammer, and for the second time glared. The hammer was no longer there.

"Why, what the——" Sarah spluttered.

Then she saw the open door. So that was the scheme, was it? That ball had been aimed from the quadrangle to divert her attention while somebody nipped in and stole the hammer.

Sarah at once thought of Barbara Redfern, and, striding to the door, was more than confirmed in that suspicion by finding Babs' handkerchief upon the floor. In a perfectly towering temper she strode out of the study.

At the end of the corridor Gemima Carstairs, monocle in eye, one hand carefully concealed beneath her tunic, eyed her. She smiled affably.

"Hallo, Sarah!" she murmured.

"You don't look pleased, what? But you should, you know," and Gemima wagged her head kindly, "because I've great and glorious news to impart. The Fourth has decided, after all, not to send you to Coventry any more!"

"Where's Barbara Redfern?" scowled Sarah.

"Where?" Gemima asked. "Did you say where, Sarah?"

"Gemima, don't be a bigger fool than you look! Where's Barbara?"

"Well, you know, I think she's in the tuckshop," Gemima murmured. "But let me tell you——"

But Sarah did not wait to be told. Off she stormed. Gemima looked after her, thoughtfully shook her head, and then carefully produced a hammer from under her tunic. Mabs, strolling up at that moment, grinned.

"It worked?"

"Like a charm," Gemima returned.

"Our wrathful Sarah is now on the track of Barbara. I've sent her to the tuckshop. Clara is there?"

Mabs chuckled.

"She is! Did Sarah have Babs' hanky?"

"She did!"

Mabs laughed. Sarah, meantime, out for revenge, reached the tuckshop. Her eyes widened when she saw that Babs was not there. Clara was, however, talking to Marjorie Hazeldene. She looked round as the furious prefect entered.

"Oh, hallo, Sarah! Just in time for a ginger-beer."

"I don't want your ginger-beer!" Sarah snapped crossly. "Where is Barbara Redfern?"

"Babs? Babs? Now let me think." Clara put on her most portentous frown. "Oh, I know," she said; "at least, I think I do! She did mention that she was going to the library. But, I say——"

But Sarah was off, while Clara winked at Marjorie and grinned. In rising fury she reached the library, and looked in. Babs, of course, wasn't there. But Leila Carroll was. She smiled.

"Gee, Sarah," she cried, "looking for anything?"

Sarah eyed her suspiciously.

"Isn't Barbara Redfern in here?"

"I guess not!" Leila shook her head. "Why should she come here, when she's helping Mabel Lynn with the theatrical props in the attic? Are you looking for her, Sarah?"

Sarah threw her a look of hate. Rather hot, and with her temper in shreds, she climbed to the top of the school.

Mabel Lynn was there, arranging costumes in the huge basket which contained the Junior School Amateur Dramatic Society's props. Sarah glared.

"Where's Barbara Redfern?"

"Why," Mabs said, "don't you know——"

"Should I be asking you if I did?" Sarah snapped.

"No, I suppose not," Mabs admitted. "But then, you see, I don't know, either. The last I saw of Babs, she was walking in the cloisters."

Sarah glared suspiciously. But to track down Babs had now become an obsession. For the time being she had forgotten Stella, who, rather surprised by the unusual silence from next door, was working in peace.

But Babs, of course, was not in the cloisters. Neither was she, as June Merrett suggested, down in the crypt. She wasn't in the Common-room, nor in her study. Sarah was almost wild by this time.

Half an hour she had spent looking for Babs, with Babs apparently vanished off the face of the earth. She came furiously to herself, to discover, to her chagrin, that in ten minutes she would be due to take call-over. That meant, of course, an end to her persecution of Stella for to-day, for, as school captain, Sarah's hands would be pretty full from now until lights-out.

Baffled and furious, she made her way to Miss Bullivant's study, Miss Bullivant being duty mistress for the day, to whom she must report before call-over was due.

The acid, annoyed voice of Miss Bullivant bade her enter. Sarah went in, and almost fell down. For seated at Miss Bullivant's desk was Barbara Redfern.

"Barbara!" Sarah thundered.

"Yes, Sarah?" Babs asked meekly, and sighed—a sigh of relief, perhaps, for it had been no easy thing to endure a voluntary half an hour of extra tuition under Miss Bullivant, and most amazing of all things, Babs had actually asked for that extra half hour.

As a result, of course, Babs had taken an upward leap in Miss Bullivant's favour, though Babs herself was feeling almost half dead after her self-imposed ordeal.

Miss Bullivant frowned.

"Sarah, I presume you have come to see me?" she cried.

Sarah frowned savagely.

"Yes, Miss Bullivant. But I have a little affair with Barbara Redfern first," she said. "Half an hour ago Barbara Redfern took something from my study."

"Indeed?" Miss Bullivant stiffened.

"What did she take?"

"A hammer."

"A hammer?" Miss Bullivant looked surprised. "Why should anyone—Did you take a hammer, Barbara?"

"No, Miss Bullivant."

"But she did!" Sarah almost booted. "And I can prove it!" Savagely she produced the handkerchief. "That is what she left in my study. Now perhaps you'll deny that this is your handkerchief," she spluttered vindictively.

Babs shook her head.

"No, I don't deny it. This is mine," she said. "But that doesn't prove that I was in your study, Sarah. Handkerchiefs are always getting mixed up—why," she added, "I had one of yours only the other day, given me in mistake for one of mine. And I couldn't, in your study, demurely, 'have been' in your study half an hour ago, because I was in the cloisters asking Miss Bullivant to give me extra mathematics instruction well over half an hour ago. I think you must have made a mistake, Sarah."

Sarah looked baffled.

"Yes, I am afraid I must support Barbara in that," Miss Bullivant said coldly. "Obviously, Sarah, she could not have taken your hammer half an hour ago. Thank you, Barbara, you may go. Sarah, will you take these reports?"

And Barbara, with a smile, went. She strode towards the door, flashing a sweetly innocent smile at Sarah as she passed her.

Sarah's reply to that smile was a scowl. If Miss Bullivant was convinced, Sarah was not. Barbara Redfern, she felt, had tricked her. Very well, Barbara Redfern should pay for that!



### Detention for the Asking

**B**UT Babs did not pay for it that night, neither did the rest of the Co. Careful to be on their best behaviour, their conduct was so exemplary that even fault-finding Sarah could find no excuse to get even with them. Meantime, Stella worked on.

But it was obvious that it would not be long before Sarah Harrigan struck her next blow.

Babs shrewdly suspected that that blow would come tomorrow afternoon, which was a half holiday. That half-holiday would make all the difference to Stella. Allowed to work in uninterrupted peace, she would at last catch up with her studies—now so vitally necessary if she were to come through the veterinary examination with flying colours.

In the morning, before breakfast, Babs took counsel with her henchmen in Study No. 4.

"It is practically Stella's last opportunity before the exam to make headway," she said. "Sarah must realise that. It's perfectly plain now that her object is to ruin Stella's chances in the exam, and she will ruin them if we don't nip in. We've got to anticipate Sarah, old toppers—for Stella's sake!"

Easily said, but how to be done? For Stella were free to please herself, Babs was also free to do likewise. Once again they all looked towards Babs.

"But how?" asked Leila Carroll. Babs' face was grim.

"You're all standing by Stella?"

"Yes!"

"You don't mind getting into a row for her sake?"

"No!"

"Then," Babs said, and nodded, "here is the plan. If a dozen of us get detained this afternoon, it will fall upon Sarah, as captain, to take detention class. We've got to get detained."

The Co. looked at each other at that. A whole glorious half holiday to be spent in the Form-room under the scowling glare of Sarah Harrigan!

It was a sacrifice—a big sacrifice—but it was worth it for Stella's sake. As Babs said, it was the only way of making certain that Sarah was kept away from Stella. It was either that, or leaving their adored ex-captain to her enemy's devices.

They debated the point. Well, they'd do it, though to be sure everyone wished there was a happier way out. The question now was—how to get detained?

And then in the middle of the discussion came Bessie Bunter, breathless from the Sixth Form passage, to announce that Sarah Harrigan had asked

Lydia Crossendale and Co.—Lydia, Freda Ferriers, and Frances Frost, and Eleanor Stork being the Fourth Form's amateur musicians—to practice in her study during the afternoon.

Babs' eyes gleamed.

"So that's her game," she cried. "My hat, isn't it just like Sarah to think up something like that. With the awful din that crowd will make there'll be no peace whatever for poor old Stella. Well, this is where we nip the little scheme in the bud and get ourselves detained at the same time. Clara, Mabs, Leila, come with me!"

"Where?"

"To the music-room."

"What for?"

"To grab those instruments. And then," Babs said grimly, "we're going to parade under Primmy's window and play them."

Girls gazed at each other; some grinned.

If there were one sure way of finding trouble, then certainly Babs had hit upon it. But they had to go through with it.

They went through with it!

Ten minutes later, Miss Primrose, knitting her classic brows over the first term's exam papers, almost jumped out of her skin.

Blare, blare, blare!

Crash, crash, crash!

Bang! Thump! Wheee!

Such a din arose from the quiet cloisters beneath her window that Miss Primrose jumped. In bewildered astonishment she blinked round. Then she strode towards the window.

Blare! Crash! Thump!

"Bless my soul!" the headmistress gasped.

She stared at the scene below. A dozen girls were standing in a circle about the girl who was jauntily waving a pointer in its centre.

The girl with the pointer was Barbara Redfern, and Barbara apparently was acting as an earnest bandmaster to this excitedly noisy and amazing group.

Clara Trevlyn banged lustily on a big drum. Bessie Bunter's fat cheeks ballooned and deflated at an alarming rate as she brought shrieking sounds from a cornet.

Leila and Jimema were playing flutes; Muriel Bond an accordion. Janet Jordan played cheerfully on a paper and comb, and little Marcelle Biquet was grating away on a saxophone. Meantime, Mabel Lynn was clashing a pair of cymbals.

"Girls!" shrieked Miss Primrose.

"Take no notice," Babs muttered.

"Pretend we haven't heard. Now, girls, come on, second stanza!"

Blare! Shriek! Tinkle! Crash! Thump!

"Barbara!" hooted Miss Primrose.

But Miss Primrose might have been simply a cloud in the sky for all the notice that the ragtime band took. Merrily they continued. Miss Primrose, breathing fire and wrath, noisily banged down the window. In a great flutter of indignation, she rushed out of the room.

In two minutes she had broken through the circle, and, almost quivering with rage, was confronting Barbara. The activities of the band came to a stop with a wail.

"Barbara," Miss Primrose gasped, "have you taken leave of your senses? Are you deliberately seeking to annoy me, girl?"

Babs stood still.

"Are you not aware that there is a strict rule against making a noise of any description," Miss Primrose

stormed on, "and especially under my window—yes, my very window! Barbara, I observe once again that you are the ringleader. You will take two days' detention. All you other girls will be detained this afternoon. Now take those hideous instruments away!"

"Yes, Miss Primrose."

"And," Miss Primrose added grudgingly, "report at once to Sarah. Tell her that she will take the detention class. That is enough, except—"

And she flung on her heel. "Barbara!" she rapped.

Babs jumped.

"Yes, Miss Primrose?"

"I am extremely displeased with you. I am, I may say, extremely disappointed. Your behaviour these last few days has been disgraceful. Do you hear?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose."

"And Miss Primrose, with a final glare, very angry and flustered, and still rather red-cheeked, rustled off. The band looked at Babs and shook their heads, and then, without a word, went to report to Sarah Harrigan.

But if Babs were satisfied, Sarah was furious. She again saw in this the hand of Barbara. Barbara, from that moment, became her fiercest enemy. The band practice was curtly called off. In vain Sarah saw Miss Primrose and begged to be excused. Very curtly Miss Primrose reminded her that, as she had taken on the duties of captain, she must stand by them. All of which, of course, put Sarah Harrigan into the most indescribable temper.

She was desperate. Bother Barbara Redfern! For Babs, of course, had made it impossible for her to bait Stella that afternoon.

In a tempestuous frame of mind, Sarah flounced into the Fourth Form class-room that afternoon. She signalled her arrival by immediately giving Bessie Bunter fifty lines, and then her greeny eyes fastened upon Barbara Redfern. Babs smiled.

"Barbara Redfern, take fifty lines for laughing!"

"I wasn't laughing!"

"Take a hundred for answering back!"

Babs bit her lip. Clara glanced at her sympathetically. Immediately Sarah pounced upon her.

"Clara, take fifty lines for inattention!"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Mabel Lynn.

"Mabel, take fifty lines for muttering!"

Silence.

"Now get out your exercise-books," Sarah went on.

Exercise-books were got out. The detention task—a stiff one—was set. Sarah flounced to the mistress's desk and took a seat, gripping a pointer as though she would have liked to wade in and thrash the lot of them.

"And one murmur, one mistake, one mark on your books, and I'll line you again!" she said.

That was the atmosphere in which the detention started. Sarah, vindictive, meant to make them all sit up—especially Barbara Redfern. She was thinking of Stella, she was thinking of her with something like desperation—working quietly and steadily in her study, while she was cooped up here with this pack of hooligans. She jerked out a sudden snarl.

"Barbara Redfern, put a black mark in your book!"

"But what for?" Babs gasped.

"For not being attentive!"

"But I was attentive, Sarah."



"Be quiet! Another black mark!" Babs' lips set. The red ran up into her cheeks. Much she would stand for Stella's sake, but this, she felt, was going altogether too far. Clara Trevlyn, next to her, murmured:

"Oh, I say, that's unfair!"

"What's unfair?" Sarah wanted to know.

"You are!" Leila Carroll said boldly.

"Leila, how dare you? A black mark!"

"But wait a minute!" And Clara stood up. "You can't throw black marks about like that, Sarah. Black marks count against us in our reports at the end of the term, and they're only supposed to be given when we're not in detention."

"Take another black mark, Clara—and a hundred lines!"

Clara's face flamed.

"I'm dashed if I will!"

"What?"

"I said," Clara returned between her teeth. "I won't put a black mark in my book. I haven't earned it, and I don't deserve it. You've got no right to give it to me."

"Hear, hear!" cried Leila.

"Look here—"

"Shan't!"

"Go home!"

And then the vials of the delinquents' wrath broke up. Up jumped Sarah, clutching her pointer. She shrieked:

"A black mark, all of you!"

"Only one?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you be qu—"

And then Sarah flung round as the door opened, and Miss Primrose, a frown on her face, came in. The class was reduced to immediate silence.

"There is a lot of noise in here," Miss Primrose said. "Clara Trevlyn, I distinctly heard your voice!"

"Yes, Miss Primrose," Clara said fearlessly.

"What were you shouting about?"

"We weren't shouting," Clara said. "We were just expressing our objections."

"Indeed? To what?"

"To being given black marks during detention!"

"Oh!" Miss Primrose's face relaxed. She gazed at Sarah. "Sarah, that is rather exceeding your authority," she said. "You had no business!"

"It was the only way left for me to discipline them," Sarah said resentfully. "The whole crowd has been as unruly as a pack of monkeys ever since they entered the class-room. They—"

"Thank you!" Miss Primrose's tone was rather cold. "You may spare yourself further explanations, Sarah. I see that the class is out of hand. You are excused," she said stiffly, and Sarah started. "I will take detention for the remainder of the time."

Sarah jumped. She jumped with jubilation. That meant she was free!

But Babs, who had heard that, gave something like a gasp of dismay. Her chums, who had so loyally backed her up, looked furious all at once. Detention was only half an hour old. The thing they had worked for and schemed for, the punishment they were suffering, would just go for nothing.

But Sarah, with a triumphant look at Babs, went. Babs fell back, dismayed. What now—oh, what now? Her scheme, so far from bearing the fruit she had hoped, had left Stella completely at her enemy's mercy.



## Five Seconds Too Late

**B**UT hardly had Sarah reached her own study than she met Doris Grimshaw, who had called to see her again. Doris was furious.

"A nice mess," she said between her teeth, "you are making of things! What price your part of the bargain? What the dickens are you doing? I've been waiting here for you for the last half hour. Stella's in the next room. She's been getting along like a house on fire. A girl called Pat something came in a moment or two ago. She asked Stella how she was getting on, and Stella—well, you know what Stella said." "No! What?"

"She said she had caught up. She said, given another day, she would be finished. Finished, mind you, and the examination is the day after to-morrow!"

Sarah gulped. In dismay she stared at the other's furious face, for once absolutely nonplussed.

"Look here, you've got to do something! And you've got to do it pretty quickly!" Doris told her. "No more of your twopenny-ha'penny interrupting schemes. Stella's got to be got out of it—away from those books and papers, away from everything. She"—and she frowned. "Wait a minute," she said quickly. "She lives in Warwick, doesn't she?"

"Why, yes?"

"Got a telephone here?"

"Of course. But why?"

"I've an idea. This! I know someone who lives in Warwick. I'm going to phone them asking them to send

Stella a telegram. That should be here in an hour's time—less! Wait a minute, let me think this out. If she gets a wire recalling her home, that means she will leave to-night."

"Yes."

"The journey will take her best part of the night. She'll get home to find, of course, that the telegram is a fake. That doesn't matter, though. By the time she gets back here, to-morrow will have been entirely wasted from her point of view. That means, of course, that she can't possibly hope to catch up. In any case, when I've done my share, I'll leave the rest to you. Come on now, show me the phone!"

Sarah showed her the phone.

Exactly two hours later Stella received the telegram that sent every bit of colour ebbing from her face.

"Please come home at once.—MOTHER."

Stella gasped. She fancied she knew the reason for that telegram. For a long time her father had been unwell. Indeed, so serious had been his condition that the doctor had prescribed a rest cure in the South of France. This could only mean the worst—

Stella felt herself shaking suddenly. She looked at her work. Her father lying at home, perhaps—but, no, no, no! She must not think such dreadful thoughts! She dared not think them! she must go to him—at once!

From that moment work was abandoned. Straight to Miss Primrose's study Stella went. Miss Primrose, who had dismissed the detention class an hour ago, sympathised as her ex-captain showed her the telegram, and readily gave permission for Stella to absent herself from school for whatever length of time was necessary.

It was half-past six then. In haste she went up to the dormitory, packed the things she would require on the



AS Babs flung open the door a figure barred her way, and the letter was snatched from her hand. Sarah Harrigan! "Give me back that letter!" Babs panted, but Sarah only laughed harshly.

journey, and went along to the Sixth Form Common-room to find the railway time-table. The time-table, however, was gone.

"Sarah Harrigan's got it," Mary Buller granted.

So off Stella went to Sarah's study, never guessing that Sarah had deliberately taken it in order to find out if Stella had swallowed the bait which she and Doris Grimshaw had prepared.

Sarah was there. She had the time-table. She handed it over.

"Going on a journey?" she asked casually.

"I'm going home," Stella answered shortly.

"Oh, I say—not bad news?"

"Very bad news?" And Stella frowned.

"Oh, goodness," she cried, "there's not a train until half-past ten!"

She paused for a moment, and then handed the time-table back. "Thank you," she said, and went out, ignoring Sarah's cheerful—perhaps relieved—"don't mope!"

"Four hours to wait. Stella frowned. She thought of her work. But she was too restless, too utterly anxious to be able to concentrate on that.

Then she thought of something else—her brother Gerald, who was returning from Scandinavia to-day, and who had written to her. Supposing that letter came while she was absent?

There was a knock at the door. Babs looked in.

"Oh, Stella—"

"Barbara!" Stella exclaimed, with relief. "You're just the girl I wanted to see! Will you do something for me?"

"Why, of course!"

"You're a brick!" And Stella smiled softly. "It seems you do nothing but favours for me, doesn't it, Barbara?"

And you've been such a little sport already. By the way, why were you detained this afternoon?"

Babs flushed.

"Oh, just—for making a row in the Clusters."

"Why did you make a row?"

"Well," Babs said, and flushed, "we were practising," she said.

Stella gazed at her shrewdly.

"And Sarah took the detention?" she asked quietly.

"Well, yes!"

"And of course," Stella asked, "you never thought of that, did you?" She shook her head. "Barbara, I shall never, never be out of your debt!" she said. "But I do wish you wouldn't run yourself into deliberate trouble for my sake. Now, about what I want you to do—"

And while Babs listened in sympathetic dismay, Stella told her what had happened.

"I'm expecting a letter from my brother Gerald," she went on.

"Naturally, he will not be able to get his letter from Cliff House, and until I hear from him, I shall not know where he is stopping in London. When that letter comes, Barbara, will you open it and telephone me at Threefords, Warwick, giving me his address?"

"Well, of course!"

"Thank you!" Stella smiled.

"There is the money for the call," she said. "I will instruct Piper to hand you any letter that comes for me."

"But—but what about your exam?" Babs said.

Stella shook her head. A look of pain came into her face.

"That," she said constrainedly, "will have to wait."

"Meaning?" Babs asked, with a quick look.

"Oh, Barbara, I don't know! I can think of nothing at the moment except my father."

Babs went out. In the corridor was Sarah. She straightened guiltily as Babs appeared, abruptly turning the other way. Babs paused a little, wondering—had Sarah been listening? But why should Sarah listen?

Rather slowly she went towards Study No. 4. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Wasn't it an awful thing to have happened—just when she was so near to completing her studies. Another girl came up the corridor as she went down it, and she looked up as she brushed past, faintly startled to recognise Doris Grimshaw. For some reason, Babs paused.

At the corner of the corridor Doris and Sarah met. She could not help but overhear the Grimshaw girl's first eager question:

"The telegram—has she got it?"

"Shush!" Sarah hissed, in a panic-stricken whisper. "There's somebody about!" She cleared her throat, hoping that Babs had not noticed. "Oh, hallo, Doris!" she said, in a loud voice.

But Babs had noticed. Wondering more deeply than ever, she went on her way.

Telegram! Why had Doris Grimshaw made that remark? Why had Sarah been so anxious to cover it up? And what, in any case, was the understanding between those two girls? Doris Grimshaw, who seemed so friendly with Sarah, but whom Sarah had never mentioned as a friend; who, Babs felt sure, she had never seen in her life until a few days ago.

Suspicion stirred faintly within the mind of Babs. Somehow she could not help but link that reference to the telegram with the telegram Stella had received.

Were those two—

But no! That, of course, was impossible!

Nevertheless, impossible or not, the thought continued to occupy her mind. Mrs. Stone was on the phone. Why, if the matter were so urgent, had she not phoned her daughter instead of sending a telegram? She must know the rules and routine of the school. She must know that Stella, studying as she was, would have been bound, to be in. Queer, that! The telephone was so much more simple, so much quicker.

But call-over bell was sounding then, and there was no time for further rumination. After call-over came a ten minutes' interval, and then bed.

Babs undressed, still preoccupied, suspicion deepening within her. Why hadn't Mrs. Stone rung? Why had Sarah been so scared when Doris Grimshaw mentioned the word "telegram."

Suspicion became crystallised. There was something on. Knowing Sarah's desperate and mysterious efforts to stop Stella from studying, it occurred to Babs that such a wire as Stella had received would be the very best possible way to bring that object about.

Cut out Stella's study to-morrow, and Stella had no more chance of getting through the examination than she herself. Had Stella fallen into Sarah's trap?

Mentally Babs reviled herself for not having thought of that before. She was really desperately concerned now.

She rose. Quickly she slipped her feet into her slippers, donned her dressing-gown, and padded downstairs.

Some mistresses and prefects were still up, and one light in Big Hall shone.

Babs, heart thumping, waited. The coast seemed clear.

She darted across the Hall to the Sixth Form corridor.

And in doing so she passed the letter-rack. There was an envelope in the "S" section. Remembering Stella's instructions, Babs took it down. Swiftly she padded down the Sixth Form corridor, and entered Stella's study.

The light was off, the study was empty.

"She's gone!" Babs gasped.

For a moment she felt like kicking herself. Why hadn't she warned Stella? Stella, who would be travelling half through the night, and if the telegram was the fake she had suspected, back again to-morrow. No possible hope, then, of continuing her studies. What should she do?

There was a slip on Stella's desk. It was apparently a note which Stella had left behind. It simply said—"Friarade, 10.30."

The time of her train!

Then Babs remembered the letter she held. With trembling hands she tore it open. It was not as Stella had indicated, from her brother Gerald, but it was from Stella's mother. One passage sent the blood racing in Babs' veins.

"This is rather sudden, dear, but your father decided this morning, after he had received the doctor's report, not to delay his convalescence any longer. By the time you receive this, your father and I will be on our way to the Continent. Meantime, I need hardly tell you of all the luck we wish you in the examination—"

Oh, goodness! Her suspicions were true, then! Stella had gone off on a wild-goose chase, to an empty house! Stella would lose that last precious day of study which would make all the difference between success and failure in the exam!

But should it—should it!

Babs glanced at the clock on Stella's mantelpiece. Ten o'clock! Stella's train did not go till half-past. If she followed— How could she manage it? It would mean breaking bounds, of course; and after Miss Primrose's warning this afternoon, to be caught breaking bounds would, probably mean that she would be expelled. But never mind—never mind! She had to risk it!

She crumpled the letter in her hand. She flung the door open, and then started back. A figure was there—a figure which, moving quickly forward, snatched the letter from her hand.

Blazing Harrigan! Her eyes were blazing.

"Barbara, you little spy!"

"Give me that letter!"

"I will give you this," Sarah said slowly, "as soon as I think fit! What are you doing here?"

"Give me it!" Babs cried, between her teeth.

"Barbara! Silence! Back to bed! Do you want me to call the headmistress?"

Babs bit her lip. No, no! Time was precious. A quarrel with Sarah could wait until to-morrow. One bitter glance she threw at the prefect, and flew.

While Sarah, popping into her own study, first threw the letter and the telegram on to the fire, and then went to Miss Primrose's study.

Babs, meantime, was dressing at feverish speed.

"Oh, great goodness, could she do it? There, the last shoe was on! Never mind hat! She caught up her hand-bag, and flew. Down the stairs she went, just as Miss Primrose's door opened, and the headmistress and Sarah Harrigan appeared. She heard Miss Primrose's startled cry:

"Barbara! How dare you—"

Babs flew.

"Barbara, come back!"

Babs set her teeth.

"If you do not come back this moment, I shall expel you!"

Babs clenched her hands. She was at the window in the lobby now. To Miss Primrose's utter stupefaction, she forced back the catch, threw it open, and fairly hurled herself into the night.

Behind her she heard the headmistress' cry, heard Sarah calling, heard them running. Babs raced for the gap in the hedge.

A quarter of an hour—could she do it?

She had to do it!

Now she was in Lane's Field, racing, racing! Now in the road! Oh heavens, her lungs seemed to be bursting. Out of sheer exhaustion she had to slacken to get a second wind, and then flew on.

She reached Friar-dale. Half-past ten chimed as she raced up the entrance to the station. A whistle shriled. Breathlessly she confronted the porter at the barrier.

"The London train?"

"Gone, five seconds ago!" he informed her.

Babs groaned. She felt herself baffled, beaten. But wait! There was a chance! If she could catch the train at the junction!

Back into the road she raced, breathlessly flew to a garage. She wanted a car, she said, to go to Courtfield.

She got the car, a rather broken-down vehicle, which deposited her at Courtfield Station three minutes after the London train had gone.

Hopeless then! Had she had enough money she would have hired a taxi to take her to London, but she hadn't. Nothing to do but to return.

And face Primmy!

But Babs was not thinking of her own ordeal; she was thinking of Stella. Miserably, furiously, she wended her way back. After all her efforts Stella had fallen a victim. Stella would lose the examination.

An hour later she reached Cliff House School. Miss Primrose was waiting in the Hall. Her frown was terrible.

"I warned you, Barbara, what would happen if you persisted in your lawlessness," she said. "Why did you go out?"

"To save Stella."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," Babs said, glancing at Sarah, who accompanied the headmistress, "that it was Sarah who sent that telegram and made her go home."

Miss Primrose looked scandalised.

"Barbara, how dare you! Why should Sarah wish to send Stella home? And where is your proof?"

But Babs, of course, had no proof, seeing that Sarah had destroyed it. And Sarah smiled sneeringly; she felt quite confident now of being able to grapple with the situation.

"Barbara," she said, "is making me an excuse for her lawlessness, Miss Primrose. She had some idea, as you know, that I deliberately and maliciously put Stella out of the captaincy. How," she added, "could I have sent a telegram from Warwick, when I have been in the school all day? And, as you say, why should I attempt to send Stella home?"

"Because," Babs said, "you wanted to stop her studying for her examination."

"Really, this is ridiculous!" Miss Primrose said. "How utterly absurd! What possible benefit could Sarah derive by preventing Stella from winning the examination? Sarah, take her to the punishment-room. To-morrow, Barbara, I shall communicate with your parents and ask them to come and take you away."



**HEEDLESS** of Miss Primrose's angry command to "Come back at once!" Babs flung up the window and scrambled over the sill. She knew she was courting expulsion—but it was all for Stella's sake.

Babs turned white. Hopelessly she gazed at the headmistress; for in that statement she read her fate.

She was to be expelled!

**FIVE MINUTES** later Barbara was standing outside the door of the Cliff House punishment-room—that gloomy, drear apartment in which girls who were to be expelled spent their last night in the school.

Sarah Harrigan, a gloating smirk upon her sallow features, fumbled with the key, and at last the heavy door creaked open. She stood back, pointing into the dark room.

"Get in, Barbara; and perhaps"—with a vicious smile—"that will teach you a lesson!"

Into the dark room Babs stepped. Her mind was in torment, but she held her head high; never would she let Sarah suspect her feelings.

The door closed with a thud; the key grated.

And the girl who was to be expelled was left alone.



Beneath Sarah's Window

"**W**ERE going to bowl that traitress out!"

Fiercely Clara Trevlyn spoke the next morning after breakfast.

The events of the night before, if the

reason was not fully understood, were fully known by Cliff House at this time.

Babs was in the punishment-room; Babs had been sentenced to be expelled.

But Clara, at times, had been to the punishment-room—through the keyhole she had carried on a conversation with Babs, and in that conversation Babs had told her everything she knew, all that she suspected, all that she guessed.

But bowling out Sarah, when that girl had covered up her tracks, did not, on the face of it, appear an easy thing. Many and wild were the suggestions put forward, but by breakfast-time no solution had been arrived at.

Jemima Carstairs it was who finally solved the problem, although Jemima was aided by a bit of luck; for, passing the prefect's room after breakfast, Jemima saw Sarah at the phone. Sarah was the enemy now, and Jemima paused to listen.

"You'll be round—what time? Nine? Yes, that will suit me, Doris. And don't forget to bring the money with you, will you?"

"Aha!" Jemima said, and her eyes lighted up.

She smiled. She thought she had found the way. To her study Jemima went. There she fished out her camera. Off she strolled then to Sarah's study, knocking on the door.

Sarah, beaming—for Sarah was contemplating with considerable satisfaction the prospect of handling the balance of the twenty-five pounds Doris Grimshaw had promised, and of getting rid of her ancient enemy Barbara Redfern—was in a pleasant mood indeed.

"Well, Jemima?"

"Oh, Sarah," Jemima said, "do you mind—just a tickle, you know? Ahem! You see"—and Jemima held up the camera—"I've rather promised my guv'nor, in Nigeria, that I'd let him have photographs of the school celebrities. Can I snap you?"

"Why, certainly!" Sarah purred.

"Thank you!" And Jemima clicked the shutter. "Nifty—what?" she added. "I'll let you have a proof of that when it's developed. Meantime, old Sarah, I wonder if you'd mind mentioning that I'd like a snap of Miss Primrose when you go to see her. You know, you can get the old cause better than I."

Sarah smiled.

"I am going to see Miss Primrose now, Jemima. Certainly I will do my best."

"Thanks!" Jemima said.

And Sarah went out. Jemima strolled with her as far as the end of the passage; then, as soon as Sarah's back was turned, flew back to her study.

There quickly she opened the window at the top, securing it with two wedges, which she had thoughtfully brought with her—just in case Sarah happened to notice the open window and closed it.

After that she trailed into the quad-range again.

Sarah came out just as Doris Grimshaw was entering the gates. She smiled at Jemima.

"Miss Primrose will be out in five minutes, Jemima; she will be pleased to let you take a snap of her."

"Oh, thanks!" Jemima beamed. "You don't know what this will mean to some people, Sarah!"

Sarah laughed. She hastened to meet Doris.

Jemima watched them as arm-in-arm they went into the school; then, catching sight of Miss Primrose, advanced towards her.

Miss Primrose smiled.

"Well, Jemima, Sarah has informed me of your wish. Certainly you may photograph me. Shall I stand here?"

"No, no. There, if you don't mind," Jemima murmured. "The light, you know," she added vaguely. "These new cameras are such sensitive things—what? Besides which, there's the question of the merry old background. Now, do you mind, Miss Primrose, if I put you here?"

And she caught the headmistress by the hand, while Miss Primrose, who understood very little about photography, suffered herself to be led, not realising that Jemima carefully planted her beneath Sarah's open window.

"There we are!" she said brightly. "Now, if you don't mind waiting a moment while I adjust the things—mybobs—"

Indulgently Miss Primrose smiled, Jemima, with a wise wag of her sleek head, moved a few paces away. She fumbled with the camera.

"Ready, Miss Primrose?"

"Quite, thank you, Jemima!"

Jemima smiled again. She had one eye upon the window now. Through the curtains she could dimly make out the shapes of Sarah and Doris Grimshaw, who stood facing each other. To her ears came the mutter of voices, growing insensibly louder. Then, very clearly, she heard Sarah say:

"But you promised me twenty pounds if—"

Jemima sighed a little. She glanced at her "sitter." Miss Primrose had heard. Miss Primrose had started.

"I promised you the twenty pounds," came Doris Grimshaw's contemptuous retort, "when the job was finished—not before! I'll own you helped me to get Stella Stone out of the way, but that

doesn't mean she'll fail in the examination. When she fails, then the twenty pounds are yours!"

Jemima breathed deeply and tranquilly. Her little scheme was working. Miss Primrose, obviously, had completely forgotten her. She had half-turned towards the window—was staring at it, mesmerised by horror.

"Why, you traitor!" Sarah's spluttering reply came clearly. "You didn't let me understand that at the beginning! You told me to badger Stella while she was studying. And didn't I? Didn't I steal the captaincy from her so that it would add to her worries? Haven't I practised all sorts of tricks to prevent her from working? What do you think my position would be if our headmistress realised that she was going to expel Barbara Redfern because of—of the lies I have told for you?"

Miss Primrose, at that, gave a jump. Quite suddenly her hands clenched and unclenched. Incredulity and horror were on her face. She was quivering now with rage. Forgotten at once became Jemima. Forgotten everything. In sudden tempest, she turned on her heel.

Jemima sighed.

"And that," she said, as Clara came up, "is the end of that! Tough luck! I never got my photograph, after all!"

"But Sarah," grinned Clara, "is going to get something, if I'm not a Dutchman!"

Clara was not a Dutchman.

Half an hour later the whole school knew that Sarah Harrigan, after the most painful interview on record with her headmistress, had been forced into admitting everything on pain of expulsion.

Sarah from that moment was stripped of her captaincy, suspended from her prefectship until the end of the term. And great indeed was the jubilation when, half an hour after that, Barbara Redfern, forgiven all her misdeeds, appeared in the Form-room, to be congratulated by everyone present.

But Babs, in spite of that, was not happy. She was still thinking of Stella.

Sarah had been bowled out. Stella,

though she did not know it, was captain again, thanks to her efforts and the efforts of her chums.

But Stella was hopelessly out of the running for the diploma now. That precious extra study, having been missed, could never be made up.

At break Babs received a telegram from Stella. It said simply:

"Arrive at four-thirty."

Half the school was at the gates to welcome the reinstated captain when that hour arrived. To Babs' amazement, she looked neither downcast nor unhappy. She was, indeed, radiant.

"Barbara, you little brick!" she cried. "Miss Primrose phoned me up at my home and told me everything. I don't know even how to start to thank you!"

Babs hastily shook her head.

"Oh, please don't!" she said. "That's all over now. We're only sorry that it's messed up your studies."

"But it hasn't—it hasn't!" Stella gleefully laughed. "In a way," she added whimsically, "Sarah did me the best of good turns by sending me off on that wild-goose chase—because in the train, you know, I couldn't sleep, and, to take my mind off other things, I carried on with my work, luckily having brought my notes with me. To-day, at home, I finished."

Babs' eyes shone.

"And you'll get through?"

"With luck," Stella smiled. "And if I do"—her cheeks suffused with tender gratitude—"it will be all due to you and your chums, Barbara!"

And due to Babs & Co. it was. For when the examination took place, Stella Stone came through with flying colours.

Great was the joy in the Fourth Form upon receipt of that news. Bitter the humiliation which must have filled the deposed and despised Sarah Harrigan, who, surrounded by a pile of bills she could not pay, sat unhappily alone in her own study, listening to the cheers that rang throughout the school for her triumphant rival.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

## ● "I have run away from Cliff House . . ."

**D**RAMATIC indeed is Doris Redfern's message to her sister—a message that leads the Fourth Form chums upon a quest as hazardous and as mysterious as any they have ever known, Share Babs and Co.'s thrilling exploits on Belwin Island next week in the grand long complete story, by Hilda Richards, entitled:

COMPLETE  
NEXT  
SATURDAY



By  
HILDA  
RICHARDS.

*the Girl who Disappeared*

# Stirring Adventures Befall Betty Barton & Co. In This Grand New Desert Island Serial



## Morcove Marooned!

### FOR NEW READERS.

**BETTY BARTON & Co.** of Morcove School together with members of Grangemoor—on their way home from Africa by air liner, when they have to make a forced landing on a tiny island. With them is a mysterious girl named

**MURIEL** who has jumped by parachute from another plane. She tells Betty & Co. that she was escaping from people who had kidnapped her. During the night she disappears. The chums search the island. Betty, Polly Linton and her brother Jack see two men land from a motor launch which they leave anchored off the beach. "Quickly!" whispers Jack. "We must capture that boat!"

(Now read on.)

### To Sea!

"**C**OLLAR the boat!" Jack Linton repeated his tense whisper. "Get to her—and then she's ours!"

Betty Barton and Polly Linton, their lips parting in a mute "Oh!" of intense excitement, looked at each other. Then they gave Jack eager assenting nods.

In a flash, complete understanding of his daring plan had come to them.

By seizing this chance to board the boat before the men returned, it could be quickly placed beyond their reach.

Not only would the two men be forced to remain upon the island, but the boat—the boat itself would then be in the possession of "Morcove & Co."

And, for a party of castaways in a plight as desperate as was theirs, what could be better than that?

"Yes," Betty said. "Come on, then!"

And, with all the pluck demanded for a deed so daring, they ran together down to the water's edge, waded out to the deserted boat, and nimbly clambered aboard.

"Betty—or you, Polly—up with that anchor!"

"Right-ho, Jack!"

"And I'll start up the engine."

Now both girls darted to fetch in the small anchor which had been thrown out by those two mysterious men before they landed on the island.

Betty and Polly acted together, in case the anchor should give trouble. There was not an instant to lose.

Even as the two girls hauled on the wet rope, their excited eyes were glancing first at Jack as he got to work in a knowing way in the engine-pit, and then towards the beach.

Unless the captured boat could be taken farther out before those two men reappeared, terrible things would certainly happen.

But, at least, the anchor was coming in all right. It had taken no awkward hold of anything underwater, but had only lain in the soft sand.

Over the boat's side it came—if anything, a bit too soon for Jack. He had not yet got the motor running, and Betty and Polly were now alarmed to see the boat being drifted into still shallower water, so that she was liable to go aground.

"Goodness! Look sharp, Jack!" Polly implored her brother in a frantic whisper. "What's the trouble?"

He did not answer, agitated by a sudden misgiving that he would not be able to start the motor, after all. He went on trying his desperate best with the motor's controls.

Then the boat bumped violently, and Polly lost her balance.

"Dash!"

Her annoyance was all the greater, because she saw how Betty, with great presence of mind, had already snatched up a boat-hook, and was using it to counter the boat's drifting.

There was another boat-hook, and Polly, recovering from her sudden

sprawl, seized it, and was next moment taking example from Betty.

Both girls punted with all their might to save the boat from being washed so far in that she would thump down—hard aground.

If that happened, then the three of them must all jump overboard, and push her afloat again. With those two men liable at any moment to come dashing upon the scene!

But now Betty felt entitled to shout:

"That's better!"

She and Polly were managing to overcome the strong inshore wash of the surf. If only Jack could get the engine started up!

With a most vivid understanding of all that certainly depended upon their depriving those two men of the boat, Betty and Polly longed to hear the tiny propeller whirring in the yeasty shallows, as they had never longed for anything yet.

Thrrrr! came the sudden welcome purring noise, and there was Jack's exultant:

"Got her!"

The engine had roared to life. The boat, stern-first to the open sea, went backing out, bouncing and slapping over the creaming waves.

Betty and Polly, standing astride to keep their balance, cast aside their boat-hooks, at the same time anxiously watching the receding beach.

They knew that Jack was having to give all his attention to the engine, where he crouched close to it, right aft.

For a few moments longer both girls watched, without seeing any signs of life back there on that strip of the island's beach where such mysterious things had happened. The captured boat was still backing out, bucketing about all the more because she was going hard astern.

Then suddenly Betty huddled low, at the same time crying to Polly:

"Down, Polly—down! They're there!"

And, with a flop, down beside her

By **MARJORIE STANTON**

chum dropped Polly, so as to be quite out of sight from anyone on the beach.

Like Betty, she realised that the two men might produce revolvers, and fire.

But whether the men on the beach did fire or not, not one of the juniors was able to tell.

The roar of the motor, and the swish and slap of water about the boat's side, would have rendered any revolver-shot inaudible. But this Betty, for one, knew. Both men, in the moment when they got back to the open shore—having dumped that mysterious load of theirs somewhere amongst all the tropic vegetation growing behind the beach—had checked as if to draw weapons and take aim.

So, very wisely, both girls waited until the boat had worked some distance farther from the shore before venturing to peep.

When they did so they saw that the two men had rushed down the shingly slope, and, in their helpless rage, had even waded in up to their knees, standing then to gesticulate wildly.

They were shouting, too. Doubtless it was a volley of savage threats which was being sent after the two girls and Jack; but hard words mattered no more to the triumphant juniors than did all the shaking of clenched fists in the air.

"What are they saying?" chuckled Polly.

"Something about if ever they get hold of us," Betty laughed. "But I'm only guessing. It's all in a foreign lingo."

"If they get hold of us—if!" Polly mocked.

Meanwhile, Jack was bringing the boat round, to go full speed ahead. The small but powerfully engined craft answered nicely to his handling, and a moment or two later she was offering her sharp bows to the waves.

Away she went, knitting through the sea, with such a jolly casting back of foam that all three juniors had to give a victorious cheer.

Quickly the figures of the two men dwindled into the distance as the boat raced away from that sheltered side of the island. Suddenly, however, she encountered much bigger waves.

The weather was certainly becoming stormier; so much brine was in the air the girls' faces were smarting. They sat down so as to escape being pitched about, and Jack shouted a mock-grin: "Yes, you'd better!"

Moving hills of green water, under a lowering sky, were the ocean waves at this distance from the shore. Still standing out to meet them as they came sliding in towards the island, the boat had to take violent tossings.

Up again, and down again—with Polly often sending up a half-laughed—"Ooo-er!"

Betty, as the boat drove down into the trough between one wave and another, bawled to Jack:

"Hi! Mustn't lose sight of the island!"

"I know all about that!" he yelled back. It was no touchy answer, but simply a hearty, almost jovial, reassurance. All the same, Betty and Polly did not seek to engage him in further talk; he had become "the man at the wheel"—not to be spoken to.

They could guess that he wanted to get a bit more used to the navigation before altering course, so as to run round to the island on its other side.

To that other side they must work back, or they had better not return at all. There, where the whole big batch of castaways from the wrecked air liner

had spent the night on the beach, friends would be at hand, but anywhere else—Who could tell?

As anxiously as ever, both girls peered astern towards the fast-receding island for a minute or two longer.

Then they took a look-round on the boat, for the first time. From what it might have on board much could be inferred. Provisions—but they could not find any provisions, and Polly gave an understanding nod when Betty shouted to her about this.

"Doesn't look as if the boat had either come far, or would have had far to go back, does it?" Polly sang out. "So I wonder where she started from?"

"But this!" was Betty's next shout, above the noise of the motor engine and the hiss-shish! of sheeting spray. "She was reaching out a hand to an old-fashioned wooden case stowed away beneath the bit of forward decking."

Polly looked at that long box, then pointed to a couple of smaller ones lying beside it; these smaller boxes bore red labels, giving in large print the contents.

"Ammunition, Betty!"

"And this long case—guns, for a cert!" Betty shouted back. "Then the long case which those two men carried ashore, to hide it on the island—guns in that one as well, Polly?"

"That's it! This is just such another case—and we know how heavy those two men found the one they were carrying."

"A supply of guns and ammunition!" Betty voiced her marvelling thoughts aloud. "And what for, Polly? Something to do with the kidnapping of that girl Muriel—must be!"

"Perhaps, because they knew that we were on the island, meaning to protect her?" Polly suggested, still shouting.

"Some idea of—"

But her shrewd reasoning was carried no further than that. Jack was interrupting with a bellowed "Hi, look!" as he kept the boat thrusting on a direct course away from the island.

"Look there, girls!" And he pointed out to sea.

And looking straight ahead over the tossing bow, they saw—a ship!

A magnificent, cream-painted, ocean-going yacht, she was, looking like a small liner with her twin funnels and her grand upper decks.

"Oh, Jack!" Betty instantly cried out, "she belongs! I mean this motor-boat is theirs!"

"And that steam-yacht, then," Polly gasped, "is the gang's!"

"Yep!" Jack emitted, as if his teeth were clenched. "So now, girls—hold tight! Time to alter course!"

**T**URN and run for it; the only thing to do. Back to the island without a moment's loss of time!

## Breakers Ahead

**A** SPIN of the wheel which Jack was handling, and the motor-boat started to sweep about on the heaving sea.

She came broadside-on to wind and waves, and Betty and Polly were pitched about as she slanted badly.

It seemed as if at any moment the end might come for all three of them.

The boat only needed to be caught broadside-on like this by some giant wave, which the stiff wind was cresting with foam, and they might be swamped.

But she fetched round still more in answer to the rudder, her stout engine going all-out, and suddenly that terrible

danger was no more. Now they were running with wind and waves—dashing for the island, their stern towards that stately vessel which had so alarmingly appeared upon the wide waters.

"She's stopped, isn't she?" Jack bellowed, unable to turn round to get another look at her; and when the girls had shouted:

"Yes!"

"They'll be watching us with glasses!" he bellowed on. "It's her hanging about like that which makes it so certain! And they must know we've collared this boat of theirs!"

Betty plucked Polly to huddle down with her, just in case there should even be a gunshot from the mile away that the vessel was.

Somehow the cargo of arms and ammunition which the motor-boat had carried, to be landed on the island, suggested long-range armaments on the steam-yacht.

Outwardly, she was just such a graceful, innocent-looking cruising yacht as a millionaire might run for pure pleasure.

But all three juniors had not the slightest doubt; she had been chartered by those who—scoundrels as they must be—had caused the girl Muriel to be snatched from home and parents, to be carried off by air.

Grandly the motor-boat spurred along upon her top-speed run back to the island. Wave after wave she overtook, with Betty and Polly huddled together amidships, seizing every chance to look back over the dark sea to that vessel from which there had been immediate flight.

The management of the boat had to be entirely in Jack's hands; so for the girls there was simply a time of most anxious watching.

The best they could do was to let him know the moment their straining eyes detected anything connected with the steam-yacht that was significant; but, so far, they could tell in such a poor and misty light, she remained idle.

Then they lost her in the mist that was such a tiresome feature of this wretchedly dull morning. To look astern now was to see only the empty ocean, but to gaze ahead was to see the island once more—and this time it was what they had come to call "their" side of the island.

Dimly they made out that strip of beach where they and their fellow-castaways had waded ashore yesterday after the air liner's falling into the shallows; there was the derelict plane, still wallowing in the sea just off the shore.

But signs of life—where were they now on that part of the beach where Morcove's make-shift camp had been made?

"Can't see any of them!" Polly fumed, standing up with Betty in the tossing motor-boat so as to take the best advantage of every climbing to a wave-top. "Not a soul!"

"Oh, but there must be!" Betty cried. "We know that several stayed behind in camp when we and others went off to try to rescue Muriel. The two or three in camp may be in amongst the trees behind the beach."

"Yet surely all the time they would be giving a eye to the sea!" Polly un- easily exclaimed. "And so they should have spotted us by now—I mean spotted this boat. They'd never guess who's in it!"

"That they wouldn't at this distance," Betty gravely smiled. "Polly darling, it'll be a marvel if we don't have to swim for it presently with Jack!"

There was a nod from Polly and that was all. It couldn't be helped, but they

were making for a part of the island's shore off which the sea was dangerously rough.

The long rollers were tumbling in heavily just there, casting up such quantities of fine spray that it was like trying to see the beach itself through a drizzling mist.

Not a word came from Jack where he stood at the steering-wheel. The girls could get a side view of his face. Hardest it was, and the eyes were frowning as they peered ahead fixedly.

Everything depending upon him! The lives of all three of them—and, very

roar was at its loudest in their ears, and they could hardly see one another even for the flying spray. Bubbling water slopped in heavily over the sides. A breaking wave was lifting them—taking them on with it. Now!

Betty and Polly drew each a big breath. They expected the boat to remain right side up not another moment in these swirling shallows. Rolled over, swamped, and instantly smashed, she must be!

At that very instant, however, a violent tremor went through her that had nothing to do with the agitated waters.

Only a few seconds it stank to get her securely grounded. Then they flashed about and ran together—to dry land!

But it was still a strip of beach where they appeared to be—alone!

### The Enemy in Sight

"**W**HERE'S everybody?"  
 "Yes, this is strange!"  
 Betty followed on Polly's wondering cry. "We know who should be here; Paula and Naomer, and Pam and her mother. Those four, at least—"



likely, other lives as well. If, during the next few minutes, this motor-boat should be smashed to bits in boiling surf that mocked any efforts of theirs to swim ashore—then what about the rest of the party? The girl Muriel—what about her?

For this was the state of things now; the kidnapers' yacht, lying by off the island, capable, no doubt, of sending an armed batch of desperate characters ashore, to win "all along the line."

Of a sudden they were white-capped waves with which the motor-boat was running. Each time she dipped into the trough of the sea, there was a crested wave hissing after her. She would lift again, to go slapping over a patch of deadly surf. The wide ocean's great rollers, these; "white horses," careering in to fling themselves upon the inhospitable shore of this lonely island.

Betty and Polly, meeting each other's eyes, smiled a little queerly, but, at any rate, it was a smiling in the very face of dreadful danger.

Again the boat overtook an inrunning wave, and remained atop of her for a brace of seconds. Only a few hundred yards though they now were from the foam-faced beach, they could see less of it than ever. All was flying spume between boat and beach.

Betty and Polly thought that Jack was slowing the boat. She seemed to drop to the waves' own pace, so that the next one she topped, kept her lifted high upon its frothy crest.

The lost air liner they did see quite distinctly, suddenly, a little to the left, lifting up and down heavily in the surf. Waves were bursting against her.

A moment after that, and the tide's

**JACK'S** voice came to the girls above the chatter of the boat's engine: "Look—look over there!" And they saw—a magnificent steam yacht, bearing down upon them. "The gang's!" muttered Polly.

The two girls felt it as a sudden mighty propulsion supplied by the engine, Jack must have gone into full-throttle again.

Marvellously, then, the boat seemed to skip clear, as it were, of the wave that was piling slowly to make a last tumbling crash! They flashed clear of it, and were instantly in a patch of water which, although it swirled and foamed, was waveless.

There was just time for Betty and Polly to obtain understanding by an excited glancing about. Jack had darted the boat at full speed again into shallows lying between the derelict air liner and the beach. The plane's great weight had caused her to lodge in the shallows, and where she now lay, finally stranded, she was serving as a sort of breakwater.

All this the girls realised in the one moment which was left to them for any glancing around. Then a shouted: "Hold tight!" from Jack, prepared them for a jarring shock as the boat herself grounded.

Ashore!  
 Out they jumped, all three of them together, to knee-deep in warm surf. No one was there to send up thankful cries over a witnessed escape from deadly peril. Quick-wittedly, Betty and Polly were ready to help Jack lay hold of the rocking boat and haul her in.

"Hi!" Jack sent his lusty voice into the wind. "Morcove! Grangemoor! Ahoy, there! Ahoy!"

And then an answer came. "Morcove!" girlish voices yelled back from the jungle of rank vegetation lying behind the beach. "Coming!" the same voices added, in chorus.

Betty burst out laughing. "That doesn't sound as if anything very terrible has happened whilst we've been away. And here they are!"

Pam Willoughby and her mother were advancing at an eager run from deep cover afforded by the wilderness of mimosa, cacti, thorn-bushes, and stunted palms. Close upon the heels of mother and daughter, were Paula Creel and Naomer.

They all four showed every sign of joyful relief; but it was like Morcove's dusky imp, Naomer, to be crazily demonstrative.

No sooner was she clear of the trees than she caught Paula by the hand to prevent her from lagging. Towing Paula, Naomer pranced and capered, whilst her shrill voice gave Betty and Polly and Jack the first intimation as to why no one had been in evidence when the boat came in.

"Bekas, we didn't know it was you in ze boat!" was Naomer's high-pitched beginning. "What ze diggings, we thought zere must be men in it—more men!"

"More?" And three pairs of eyes invited calmer explanations from Pam and her mother.

"We were busy about here at the camp," Mrs. Willoughby said quickly, "when suddenly two men appeared. Pam sighted them—"

"I saw them skulking around; it

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**MY DEAR READERS.**—In last Saturday's *SCHOOLGIRL* I told you something about Elizabeth Chester's wonderful new serial—and now I expect you are longing to know the title of this fine new feature, the opening instalment of which will appear in next week's issue.

The title of this unusual new serial, which is even more exciting than "The Pagoda of Peril," is:

**"THE HOUSE OF BYGONE DAYS,"**

which I think you will agree has about it an intriguing flavour of romance, novelty, and glamour.

As I told you last week, this powerful new serial features a character you will love and admire—*Sylvia Grant*—who finds herself called upon to solve a perplexing mystery in a weird old house which has remained unchanged for half a century.

You will be able to share *Sylvia's* adventures when you come to read this absorbing story—and what adventures she has! Called upon to shield her cousin *Virginia*, she finds herself instantly in conflict with rascally schemers, who will stop at nothing to achieve their purpose.

Mystery—adventure—romance! All in this brilliant new serial: "THE HOUSE OF BYGONE DAYS," which the popular author of "The Pagoda of Peril" has written for your enjoyment.

Make sure of reading the opening chapters by ordering your copy of next Saturday's *SCHOOLGIRL* right away—and don't forget to tell all your chums about this extra-special treat.

More good news! In the very near future—perhaps next week—I shall announce details of a topping new series of complete humorous stories, by *Ida Melbourne*.

Look out for this exciting news in my Chat.

In addition to the first instalment of the new serial, there are other treats in store for you all in next Saturday's issue.

The long, complete *Cliff House School* story, by *Hilda Richards*, is a powerful adventure tale and features your favourites of the Fourth in a thrilling adventure on *Belwin Island*.

The title of this exciting story, which is packed with big thrills and surprises is:

**"THE GIRL WHO DISAPPEARED."**

"MORCOVE MAROONED!" will be continued in next Saturday's issue, and the new adventures which *Betty* and *Co.* and their *Grangemoor* chums have to face, and which are vividly recounted by *Marjorie Stanton*, make most thrilling reading.

A sparkling complete tale featuring *Princess Cherry* in another merry escapade, and *Patricia's* four pages of articles, complete a number you simply must not miss.

With best wishes,  
YOUR EDITOR.

P.S.—May I remind you that those two old favourites, "The School Friend Annual" (8s. 6d.) and "The Schoolgirls' Own Annual" (6s.) are now on sale. If you're wise you'll order your copies at once, for the demand is very heavy.

would be about ten minutes ago. They had knives in their hands," Pam supplemented, "and we, of course, were quite helpless. So mother advised our all hiding."

"They must have seen us before we slipped away to find cover—"

"Bekas, zey come right along ze shore, past this camp!" Naomer butted in. "Bekas, by peeping out through ze bushes, we could see zem! Awful specimens, too! And zey were looking about as if to get us. I can tell you!"

"But I don't think so now," Pam dissented from Naomer's opinion. "I'm inclined to think they were themselves afraid of being attacked. Anyhow, they didn't stay to rout us out, and we were just coming out of hiding, after they had been ten minutes gone, when we saw that boat coming in."

"And you—you three were in her!" was Mrs. Willoughby's amazed rejoinder. "We couldn't tell who was on board. You brought her ashore—you three!"

"Jack did," Betty quickly corrected. "Polly and I—we had nothing to do—"

"Except keep your heads, and I'll say you did that all right!" Jack said heartily. "But those two men—we know what nasty guys they are. It's their boat, isn't it, we collared."

"What!"

"Bekas?"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Paula. "Incredible!"

"Ah!" said Polly. "You haven't a brother—like I have!"

Another compliment for Jack, that. But, as before, he was quick to return it—with interest. By the time a hasty account of the adventure with the boat had been given, those who were astounded listeners knew how well Betty and Polly had backed up Jack from first to last. He was no playful derider of girls now, but praised his sister and her best of chums over and over again.

"Listen!" Betty and others voiced together, now that a significant sound had reached them faintly from the wooded land behind the beach. "One of the search-parties back now!"

The tell-tale noise was such as two or three persons were bound to cause if making their way in haste through the almost trackless thickets.

Eagerly the girls, with Mrs. Willoughby and Jack, started to run up the shingly slope to meet whoever might be coming, and a few seconds later there was another reunion.

Dave Cardew and his sister Judy—they had got back to camp, bringing Muriel with them.

That ill-fated girl was in a very fagged state. Judy and Dave were having to assist her along as they all three came out into the open.

"Dave and I were searching around on our own," Judy informed the eager listeners. "Suddenly we simply blundered upon Muriel and the woman who had got hold of her. It was a rocky, wooded place, and the woman was preventing Muriel from calling out. Of course, we simply went for the woman, and then she made off."

"I'm so terribly sorry to have been such a nuisance!" was Muriel's own distressed rejoinder.

"My dear," smiled Pam's mother, "don't worry about that now. Tell me, Muriel—do you know anything about a yacht? Yet I ought not to ask you to say anything which will throw light on what to us is such a mystery."

But Muriel, after starting violently, echoed huskily:

"A yacht? You mean, a steamer—Dulip Khan's boat?"

It became Mrs. Willoughby's turn to look very agitated.

"Whose, do you say? Dulip Khan is a man I have heard my husband speak of. Mr. Willoughby has been much in India. Dulip Khan is a ruler—"

"Yes. A bad man—cruel!" Muriel said, in a shuddering way. "And the worst of it is he is tremendously rich, so that he need not mind how much it costs him at any time to obtain—revenge!"

"Then your being taken away from your parents—it has been an act of revenge?" Mrs. Willoughby promptly inferred. "You seem to have known that a steam-yacht would be used—"

"I was told that the plane would take me to where I would be put on board a ship."

"Ah! And the ship was to take you—where? To India? But perhaps I shouldn't ask you—"

"Yes, it is only right!" Muriel said, with a spirit which Betty and the rest greatly admired. "I must tell you everything, if only to make you understand what terrible danger you are drawing upon yourselves by wanting to save me. For Dulip Khan—when you are simply helpless castaways on this island—would think nothing of—"

"But not now, Muriel, my dear—no," Mrs. Willoughby gently dissuaded the poor girl from continuing. "It is fine of you, but I must not let you ignore that terrible warning to be silent. At any rate, now that you are safely back at camp, we must do our best at once to fetch in the other searchers."

"Let's shout," Polly suggested. Jack, with a sudden excited smile, remarked:

"You can all shout, but I—I know what I'm going to do, just in case. If shouting doesn't fetch them back, then a rifle-shot will!"

"Rifle?" stared Pam. "Who's got a rifle?"

"We've got a whole case of rifles on that motor-boat; ammunition, too!" Jack chattered, starting to run down to the water's edge. "I'll get the boxes busted open somehow, and then—"

"Helpless castaways!" He gaily echoed Muriel's words of a few moments ago. "Not quite so helpless, after all! Dave, you'll lend a hand? Good man!"

"And so will we!" shouted Betty, as she and some of the other girls joined the two boys in their run to the hauled-up boat. "We can keep on shouting all the while we are—getting the cases ashore," she was going to finish, but a sharp cry from one of her chums cut her short.

"Look! Oh, look!"

That was Polly, stopping dead halfway down the shingle bank, to point across the rough sea.

"The yacht! The yacht! There she is!"

Out of the grey murk of this stormy morning, she had suddenly loomed into view—at less than a mile from the shore.

Dave's quiet voice it was that ended the silence.

"She's stopped! She's getting a boat away—no, two boats!"

"Yes!" Betty responded. "It means—they're going to land to look for Muriel!"

**WHAT** can the chums do, in this moment of new peril? You will be anxious to learn the sequel to this exciting situation, so on no account fail to read next Saturday's thrilling chapters of this vivid serial. Don't forget that "THE HOUSE OF BYGONE DAYS" begins in next week's issue. Order your copy at once.



Thrilling Last Chapters of—

# THE PAGODA OF PERIL

By the Shadowy Lake

**K**AI TAL knelt at the edge of the lake in the darkness. He was pulling the punt nearer to the shore, and so intent was he on his task that he did not hear the slight sounds that Charles Sterndale made in creeping forward.

After Charles crept his cousins, Catherine and Mollie, one on either side of him.

Kai Tal—their enemy, their uncle's enemy—was at their mercy. If they could capture him, make him prisoner, as he had imprisoned their uncle, their hearts would leap with joy.

But he was a cunning rascal, not easily defeated.

Catherine and Mollie, crouching low, were not easily seen; but if Kai Tal did knock Charles aside and run, he must run either to left or to right. Whichever direction he took, it meant that he must trip over one of them—they would see to that.

But Charles, in any case, did not mean to rush like a bull at a gate. He knew the kind of man Kai Tal was—how strong, how cunning.

Charles did not mean to match his strength against Kai Tal's, nor risk a ju-jutsu grip.

The Chinaman was kneeling on the bank, leaning forward. A push only was needed to send him lurching forward into the water.

Charles' muscles tense, suddenly hurled himself at Kai Tal and pushed.

The Chinaman threw up his arms, toppled, and then—

Splash!

His arms went into the icy water up to his shoulders, his face momentarily went under.

Charles, with a little spring, sat astride Kai Tal's back and grabbed his hair.

Kai Tal's face came out of the water; he opened his mouth to yell, but at the first sound Charles pushed his face down under water.

Catherine and Mollie were on the scene. While Mollie helped Charles, Catherine scrambled into the punt and brought out the cord for the ankles; these they secured, also his arms.

Next came the gag, which they pressed over his mouth and tightly tied. Helpless enough now to be dragged ashore, they pulled him in.

"An enormous rag here—used to throw over Kwanyin's father. Quick—wrap it over him!" said Catherine. "Leave him in the punt—for the time being, anyway. Here come the others."

Lights showed not far away; sounds had been heard, and the searchers were making for this spot.

Kai Tal was hustled into the punt, and Catherine gave it a push; then the three moved back into the bushes and waited.

They heard voices in a moment; the man who pretended to be their uncle was talking English to "Miss Smith," his secretary.

"After this they must be locked up. I insist! In another week the work will be through, and we can get away. We can't afford to have them at large—"

The three cousins heard every word.



THE torch's ray cut the darkness and with a quickening of her heart Catherine made out the figure of a Chinaman, swimming silently towards the punt.

They hardly breathed for fear of giving away their presence. Once captured, they would be imprisoned, and they would remain imprisoned until this man's plot had succeeded.

What that plot was they did not know, but its object was to rob their uncle. Catherine remembered the digging operations under the house and the gold she had seen.

That gold was clearly her uncle's, and this man was robbing him. A week free from interruption and he could get what he wanted—and escape, too.

Catherine's jaw set and her eyes glinted; already she was resolved that he should not succeed.

"Kwanyin—where is she? If that girl escapes she may ruin everything yet!" snarled the man, flashing his torch about him.

By  
ELIZABETH  
CHESTER

who begins in next Saturday's  
SCHOOLGIRL a brilliant new  
serial entitled: "THE HOUSE  
OF BYGONE DAYS."

"Kwanyin is safe," said Miss Smith, "and her father, too."

She drew up, staring sharply at the water's edge.

"Footprints—and recent ones!"

"The bogus uncle joined her and scanned the ground.

"Oh goodness!" sighed Catherine to herself.

The bogus uncle examined the footprints carefully, and then drew up.

"A struggle!" he said. "The girl's shoe-marks are here and the mark of rubber soles, but also Kai Tal's."

He laughed in an unpleasant, jeering way as he mentioned the Chinaman's name.

"Kai Tal's! Then they are captured?" asked Miss Smith. "Good!"

"Yes," the artful rogue knows how to hunt. He caught them—caught the boy, most likely. That was my plan. The girls would then follow."

He turned away then—with no idea that the vaunted Kai Tal was at this moment lying bound in the drifting punt.

The cousins heard him go, and saw the light of his torch as it grew fainter in the distance.

"Gone," said Charles gleefully—"and gone towards the house!"

Catherine sat silent, thinking. She knew that, though they had succeeded, their success might not reign for long.

"We've got to return to the house, too, some time," she said, "or else go now to explore the island; but I don't

think we could all three get into that punt as well as Kai Tal."

"No separating," said Charles grimly. It was a tricky problem that faced them now. The major object was to find their uncle. Kwanyin was safe; she was with her father. But when their bogus uncle returned to the house and failed to find them he would search.

How—and where—would he be likely to search? Kai Tal would be missed, too. There would be a hue-and-cry for him, and someone might think of searching the punt; or they might decide to take their prisoner to the island. In any case, the trick would be discovered. "Uncle won't guess that we've captured Kai Tal," said Catherine, in an undertone. "He'll go on thinking that Kai Tal has us. Therefore, he'll go to the likeliest place for Kai Tal to have taken us—"

"The island?" said Mollie. "I'm all for searching the island." Catherine did not answer. She was thinking, planning. A daring scheme had come to her mind, so daring that it took her breath away, and she hardly liked to mention it for fear of her cousins' scoffing.

"Suppose," she said, "suppose we could make that man a prisoner, too, like Kai Tal? Suppose we could take charge of the place?"

The suggestion certainly startled Charles and Mollie.

"Impossible," said Charles. "How could we, when they're so many?"

"Because they won't suspect—we can trap them," said Catherine slowly, her heart racing with excitement. "If we could get them one by one, and be prepared—trap them in their own traps—"

"Too risky," said Charles. "Far better search—"

Catherine stood up. "Let's make sure of Kai Tal. Let's get the punt in."

"Kwanyin mentioned another boat," said Mollie sharply. "When she heard you had gone to the lake, she suggested the other boat—"

"Other boat—yes, a skiff," said Catherine quickly. "You remember—we found it once—along here—"

Catherine, greatly excited, led the way.

But they had been forestalled. Kwanyin herself, and her illustrious father had taken the boat, and the splash of the oars could be heard.

Catherine took a risk.

"Kwanyin," she called softly. In the silence the sound carried well—perhaps too well. But the rowing ceased.

"Who?" came a soft whisper.

"Catherine—wait—"

The rowing started again, and presently they saw the shadowy outline of the rowing-boat as it drew near.

In the boat were Kwanyin and her father. The little Chinese girl's delight at seeing the three cousins was almost pathetic.

"Oh, velly great fiend, how happy Kwanyin," she whispered, "please to come—"

"Not room for all," smiled Catherine. "Mollie and Charles go. I can swim—I'll get the punt back—"

"I'll get the punt," said Charles. "Better to have a boy alone than either of you. I'm a match for any Chinaman—I mean," he added in embarrassment, realising that Kwanyin's father was one, "any of these rotters—"

"Anything, as long as we don't argue," whispered Catherine. "Look, a light over there—shining it over here—"

She scrambled into the boat, and Mollie followed. The combined weight even then made the boat low in the water, low enough to be dangerous if rocked.

But Catherine had a brain-wave. She suggested rowing to the punt. She could then get into the punt and return for Charles.

"O.K.," said Charles. He stood on the bank and watched them go drifting out in the darkness towards the rowing punt.

Then, very warily, he crept to the water's edge in the same direction.

Alone, he felt vaguely alarmed, although he would not have admitted to his closest friend that the presence of the two girls had given him any comfort.

But Charles' vague uneasiness was not without foundation. He was being followed.

Now and again he paused to listen, but his shadower artfully paused, too. "Imagination," he told himself un- easily, and strode forward with squared shoulders.

A sudden sound behind him then—and he half turned. Too late. A hand was over his mouth, a knee was in his back, one hand was cleverly imprisoned in a cruel ju-jitsu grip, and Charles was down on his knees, a prisoner, eyes almost starting from his head, a cry for help choked back in his throat by lean, strong fingers.

## The Terror in the Water

CATHERINE STERNDALE had already reached the punt. First she assured herself that the evil Kai Tal was still tightly bound, then, as silently as possible, she used the paddles and sent the punt to the lake's edge.

"Charles," she called softly, straining her eyes to pierce the darkness. Charles, tightly held, his arms twisted, beads of perspiration standing out on his forehead, could not answer.

Nearer and nearer came the black outline of her boat. The two Chinamen, lying flat on the grass, prepared to slide into the water and take it.

Charles could see them; he could see his cousin coming, unsuspecting, into the trap.

But Catherine now turned the punt. She thought she was making in the wrong direction.

Seeing that she was going away, and that the trap might fail, the Chinaman who held Charles prisoner whispered into his ear.

"Call—call—call sister, or—"

Something sharp pierced Charles' back with a hot pain.

The grip was suddenly released from his mouth.

Charles yelled.

He was made of stern stuff. Although he knew the penalty, he yelled a warning.

"Ca—ve—"

With a snarl of rage, the Chinaman twisted Charles' arm. A gasp of pain escaped even the hand that pressed his mouth.

Out on the lake Catherine eased back the punt, trembling.

"Charles!" she called.

There was no answer but a splash. Catherine found her pocket-torch. It was better now to risk using it. They knew she was somewhere about. Better be seen and to see one's enemies.

But when the torch cut the darkness, Catherine saw the face of a Chinaman

on the water's surface. He was swimming towards the punt.

With frantic strokes of the paddles, she sent the punt away from him. The water gurgled against the flat front; it swished about the punt bottom.

Behind swam the Chinaman. Then suddenly Catherine turned.

"The crocodile—the crocodile!" she cried.

The swimmer hesitated; he knew that there was a crocodile somewhere in the lake, and he did not take the risk of swimming on.

He turned back.

At the same moment, something bumped against the punt, and Catherine flushed her torch. For a moment there rose into view the gaping jaws and snout of the crocodile.

Paralysed, she stared, and then crashed down her paddle on the side of the punt, but a few inches from the horrible teeth.

The crocodile's head moved away.

Catherine ploughed at the water frantically, hardly caring where she went now.

But the crocodile followed. It grabbed at the paddle, but missed it. Catherine changed to the other side and dug the paddle in frenzied manner into the water.

"Catherine—Catherine—"

It was Mollie's voice from the rowing-boat. Mollie flashed a torch, and in its rays saw the crocodile.

Catherine, paddling frantically, could not steer her boat sufficiently to avoid collision. But Kwanyin's father, quick as a flash, fended it off.

He snatched an oar and raised it as the crocodile's tail thrashed the water, forcing its way between the two boats.

Catherine hardly saw the Chinaman move, so quickly did he act. The blade of the oar was hurled into the crocodile's mouth.

Choking and shuddering, the animal drew back and sank.

"Is it killed?" whispered Mollie.

"No, no—it will draw back much afraid," said the Chinaman. "Now hard—straight for the island—already we see the dark shape."

Catherine paddled the punt in frenzy, and together the two boats reached the island.

"Charles—Charles has been caught!" panted Catherine. "We must go back. They've got him! I heard him call out!"

"Oh goodness! If we go back, can we save him?" asked Mollie.

"If we go back we're caught—we're all caught!" said Catherine.

"We have Kai Tal—we'll offer him back for Charles!" went on Catherine grimly. "Take Kai Tal on to the island—make him a prisoner!"

Kwanyin looked into the punt. Her father saw the trussed figure and clasped his hands.

"Kai Tal—the evil, malignant Kai Tal a prisoner!" he said. "Then we shall know the truth from his cruel and twisted lips."

"He knows where uncle is hidden, of course," said Catherine.

Then Kwanyin, who had been silent, staring at the bound figure, spoke suddenly.

"Always so kind to me, Miss Catherine," she said softly. "Humble Kwanyin and illustrious father owe so much to—"

"Indeed, it is so!" her father agreed.

"Then—way save Charles, too," said Kwanyin. "Save uncle, too. Come now—"

She beckoned them on to the island, and they soon were on the firm ground, puzzled by her mysterious manner.

"Now," said Kwanyin, "Kwanyin goes. She tellee bad man you take Kai Tal. She tellee him, oh, yes—Kwanyin knowe—"

Before Catherine could move a step to intervene, Kwanyin had jumped into the skiff, and was pulling at the oars. The brave little Chinese girl was rowing alone—rowing to the enemy to save Charles. How, she did not explain; but in her Oriental mind an ingenious scheme had dawned. It might succeed. If it failed, then, once again, she would be in the enemy's hands.

It was a risk she took for the sake of the cousins who had been so kind to her.

### Kwanyin's Bravery

CHARLES, securely bound, was in Pagoda Place, lying on the floor. Two Chinamen stood close by. His bogus uncle paced up and down the floor.

"They have gone to the island?" he asked Charles fiercely.

"Yes."

"How much do you know? Answer me! Tell the truth, or by—"

Charles found glaring eyes staring into his. The mask of geniality which the grey-haired impostor had worn when pretending to be their uncle, was gone. He revealed his true self, merciless and cruel.

"I only know they've gone to the island, uncle," he said.

"Don't keep up that bluff, or try to! It's too late now! Kwanyin has told you I'm not your uncle—yes or no?"

A shrill gasp of pain came from the doorway before Charles could answer, and, looking in that direction he saw, with horror, that Kwanyin, her wrist in a tight grip, was being dragged forward by one of the Chinamen.

The bogus uncle wheeled upon her. "You, little sneak and cheat. Why didn't I lock you up right away?"

"You much fuid lockee me up," said Kwanyin, "when nice Catleen here!"

"Where is Kai Tal?"

Kwanyin met his eyes. He had compelled her to lie to the cousins; now she was lying to him, with a vengeance. Her Oriental mind saw nothing wrong in it.

"Kai Tal, he plisner—"

"Prisoner?"

"In lake—drag behind boat in water," said Kwanyin.

The bogus uncle stiffened.

"What! But there's a crocodile in the lake! It'll smell him—kill him!"

Charles went faint with horror at the thought. He could not tell that Kwanyin was bluffing.

"Illustrious father thinkee clever plans," said Kwanyin. "Dlaage Kai Tal in water. Kai Tal open mouth, talkee plentee quicke. Tellee all!"

The bogus uncle had gone white. His nails dug into his palms.

"If Kai Tal tellee nottee thut," said Kwanyin blandly, "no takee Kai Tal froom water. Takee Kai Tal to bungly crocodile plantee quick—"

"You fools! You mad Chinese idiots!" said the bogus uncle. "If that man is killed—"

He turned to the Chinamen standing by.

"To the lake! Get boats!" he said in Chinese.

Then he rushed into the corridor, shouting to Miss Smith.

Kwanyin was left alone. She pushed at once to Charles, drawing from the folds of her frock a small, sharp knife. Never had Charles seen hands move so quickly as Kwanyin's. She severed his

bonds in a moment, and he rose stiffly, rubbing his wrists.

"Oh, plenty quicke!" begged Kwanyin. "Me knowee where boat left!"

She dragged Charles down the corridor and into a room, through bead curtains.

Only a moment later they heard the bogus uncle's voice calling.

To Charles' horror, Kwanyin called out, calling Catherine's name:

"Catleen, comee quicke!"

She had moved something in the darkness, but what it was Charles did not see.

Crouched behind the curtains, he waited. The bogus uncle's steps came nearer. He rushed through the bead curtains.

"Oh—oh!" cried Kwanyin.

She was on the far side of the room, and Charles prepared to go to the rescue as the man jumped forward.

But Charles need not have bothered. Kwanyin was acting with Oriental cunning.

For the bogus uncle, as he stepped forward, gave a wild yell. He suddenly disappeared from view, seemingly through the floor.

A trap shut over his head, and his shouts were muffled.

"The trap—the secret dungeon!" exclaimed Charles.

Kwanyin smiled gleefully; then, opening a window, led him out. Charles found himself on a path, and saw that the lake was quite near.

While the others ran to the spot where the boats were usually moored, Kwanyin led Charles to the place where she had beached the skiff.

It was ten minutes later that Catherine, returning with the others from a vain search of the island, heard the skiff.

"My goodness, they're here!" she cried, in desperation.

But a voice called—Charles'.

"Catherine—Catherine!"

"Here—here! Is Kwanyin there, too?"

"Yes!"

Kwanyin's father clasped his hands, and his eyes shone with joy and pride. His daughter's bravery had gone to his heart, even though he had dreaded and feared what the outcome of it might be.

But now she was safe.

It was a glad reunion, and Kwanyin told him with pride how she had deluded, and then trapped the uncle.

"They're coming here—coming to rescue Kai Tal," said Catherine, "and to make sure we don't get uncle! Then he must be here somewhere!"

"And Kai Tal knows!" said Charles. "My word, I wish he had heard Kwanyin's story!"

"He shall!" said Catherine quickly.

"There's not a moment to lose! Things are desperate! Poor uncle is a prisoner all this time! How glad he'll be to see us!"

"And how jolly glad we'll be to see him!" said Mollie fervently.

Kwanyin's father spoke fiercely to Kai Tal, who, although he could not answer, could hear every word.

Like all bullies, he was a coward. His evil conscience made him dread his own fate. What he had done to others might now be done to him, for he was helpless in the hands of the man he had once tormented. When the gag was removed, he spoke in Chinese.

Kwanyin jumped up when she had listened.

"A tlee—a tlee-thunk—large tlee!" she said. "Uncle hidden! Uncle in dungeon below island! Entrance by tlee-thunk!"

Catherine turned sharply.

"A tree-trunk? A fallen tree?" cried Catherine excitedly.



ELIZABETH CHESTER

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In her search of the island she had come across a huge tree-trunk lying on the ground. She ran almost straight to it, then knelt.

The trunk was hollowed carefully by hand with the wonderful mastery of wood that the Chinese possess.

Charles knelt and shone the now-fading electric torch along it.

"There's a cord inside," he said.

"Pull it!" urged Catherine.

Charles groped, caught it, and pulled hard.

Even though they were expecting some result, they had a shock when a great portion of the trunk suddenly lifted up like a trapdoor.

Catherine ran to it and peered in, and shone the torch below.

The torch light and her own face were reflected back.

"Water! The lake ran through below! Catherine's heart sank with disappointment. It was not really possible for her uncle to be there, she told herself.

But, as the doubt entered her mind, a shout came from below—a strange, hollow, reverberating cry.

"Who's there? Who it is?"

"Catherine Sterndale! Who is that—uncle?"

"Catherine—Catherine! Yes, I am here! Help! Can you find the rope ladder?"

There came into view then, shutting out her own reflection, the prow of a punt, and then the whole punt. A mattress was stretched out on it, and on the mattress sat a man in flannels. His hair was untidy, and he was unshaven.

But even so, when Catherine looked at him, she wondered how she could have mistaken the other man for her uncle.

The family likeness seemed to jump at her when she smiled.

"Catherine—Catherine, you wonderful girl! Quick! The rope ladder!"

Catherine groped along the trunk and found the rope ladder, neatly coiled. She tossed it down, and her uncle clambered up stiffly.

Charles and Mollie gave a shout of joy when he appeared, and Kwanyin and her father, rushing to the scene, were even more emotional. Kwanyin

dropped to her knees and kissed his hand. Her father hugged him, tears shining in his eyes.

"Well," said Uncle Gerald, "if this isn't the most amazing thing that ever happened! Where is that rogue Bennet? Where is Kai Tal—"

They told him that Kai Tal was their prisoner.

"Bring him here. We'll have him safe," said Uncle Gerald.

When Kai Tal saw Uncle Gerald, horror shone in his eyes. They never left the white man's face.

"Well, you rascal—a taste of what you gave me," said Uncle Gerald.

"Down you go—"

He lifted Kai Tal as though he were a child, severed his bonds, and forced him down into the water dungeon.

The ladder was hauled up, the lid closed and hooked, the tree made whole again.

"And now for the rascal Bennet," said Uncle Gerald. "But first—three loyal servants who are also prisoners."

He went to another part of the small island, and found an iron ring in the grass. Lifting it, he raised the stone to which it was fastened, and then shone the torch down. Another dungeon was revealed.

Three dishevelled, miserable-looking Chinamen were brought up a moment later; but their misery changed to joy when they saw their rescuers.

The junk was moored at the shore of the island, and in it there was room for them all. They crowded aboard, and Catherine and Kwanyin hugged each other with joy.

Never had there been so much relief. Not a sound did they hear of other Chinamen when the junk landed. There were no voices, no sounds.

In a large party they advanced to Pagoda Place. Lights burned, but there was no one to be seen.

"Hallo, there!" called Uncle Gerald. He called in Chinese, and an excited voice answered. From behind the hollow idol now replaced in the hall came a trembling Chinaman—the one loyal servant—the one who had given Catherine the message from Kwanyin's captured father.

"All gone—all run away," he said in Chinese. "Despicable, deceiving rogues and thieves, they run—"

"Good—good! And Mrs. Bennet?" asked Uncle Gerald.

"There's no Mrs. Bennet," said Catherine, "there's a Miss Smith, the secretary—"

She described her, and Uncle Gerald nodded.

"As I'm not married, my impostor couldn't be. His wife became Miss Smith," he said. "That's all. And now for the rascal Bennet—but I'd rather talk to him alone. You had all better get something to eat and drink. Kwanyin, you'll see to it, will you?"

Kwanyin knew the rarest delicacies, and saw that they sampled them. And when, half an hour later, Uncle Gerald joined them, he became their host in reality.

"And a wonderful time we'll have," he said. "That impostor and rogue has been handed over to the police—but not before I thanked him for his trouble."

"Thanked him, uncle?" exclaimed Catherine.

"Certainly," smiled Uncle Gerald. "He and his gang have done my good deed for me. They have almost completely revealed the gold idol. But unfortunately the jewelled one they have not discovered. Kwanyin's father kept the secret well, though they did their best to wring it from him."

"An idol of gold—phew!" said Charles. "I'd like to see that—"

"You shall see all the wonders of this place, and this time enjoy them. You are going to have the most wonderful holiday, you hero and heroine. Thank you all; I'm proud of you."

THE END.

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