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AT DEAD OF NIGHT—

Diana Royton-Clarke steals
slightly out of Cliff House.
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week's vivid complete story.

DIANA ROYSTON-CLARKE In An Extra-Long, Extra-Exciting Complete Story of Cliff House School



Just the Firebrand's WAY!

The Two Dianas



"Oh, Barbara, can't we do something about it?"

Lily Walters, of the Fourth Form at Cliff House, asked that question. She asked it in a very appealing, a very useful way. The heavy sigh which accompanied the words proclaimed plainly the distress which possessed her mind. Barbara Bedford, captain of the Fourth Form, looked at her cousin, Mabel Lyon, and bit her lip.

"But, Lily," she asked gently, "what can we do?"

Lily's lips quivered. "Well, couldn't you see Miss Princess?"

"We've already seen her," Babs replied. "And she says—well, you know what she says—No!"

A silence. Lily shook her head.

"Oh, dear, I don't know," she muttered. "Babs's beauty having Diana against me like this. I—I feel awful about it. Because you know, Barbara, it was through her that I was sent to this school. Her father paid my fees and bought my clothes and everything. And Diana herself was—was so awfully good to me before all this singing business cropped up. I wish," Lily added miserably, "that I'd never started to sing. Then all this wouldn't have happened, would it?"

Again Babs and Mabel exchanged a glance of helplessness. But Babs again shook her head. Her private opinion of Diana Royston-Clarke forced her to say what was in her mind—that it was not Lily's singing which had been the cause of

DIANA wanted fame—longed for the limelight. She got both, though not in the way she expected

the bother. It was Diana's own willfulness, her obstinacy, her stubborn determination to do things her own way.

For it was true, what Lily said, that Diana's father had reacted for from the stress; that he, upon his daughter's suggestion, had sent her to Cliff House School. There was no doubt whatever that Lily owed everything to the Royston-Clarke.

But there was also no doubt whatever that the recent operations at Cliff House had not been Lily's fault, even though Lily was too ready to blame herself for all of them.

Diana, jealous of her singing talents—and Lily had a really marvellous voice—had conceived the idea in the first place, of making a future opera star of Lily. Not, to be sure, entirely for Lily's benefit, but because Diana wanted the privilege of being proclaimed Lily's "discoverer," wanted to give in the undecided glory that would be hers as Lily's bosom and manager.

Professor Larkin, at the Courtford Opera House had prophesied a wonderful future for Lily if she was only trained. Diana, impulsively, had taken Lily in hand and with the professor's help had embarked upon the training.

So far, so good. But Diana's methods were as ruthless as they were impetuous. Rules, discipline, orders, and requests had failed to move her headlong rush towards the goal of her ambition. Lily, as well as Diana, had been involved in the consequent trouble and, at last, Miss Princess, the headmistress, had stepped in, forbidding Lily to have anything further to do with Diana, and handing her over, in the meantime, to Barbara Bedford's care. That, of course, had led to friction between Diana and Babs.

"Oh, Lily, cheer up," Babs said. "How can I cheer up?" Lily asked miserably. "Barbara, I do as Miss Diana. I—I don't want her to feel that I'm at loggerheads with her. She—who's such a fine girl whom you know her properly, and she's all my flesh! All my flesh," she added despairingly. "You and she were friends before I came to this school, and look at you now! Oh, Barbara, can't we all make it up?"

Another pause. Babs sighed.

"And if we did make it up, would that make you happy, Lily?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And you'll practice? Remember, Lily, you've got to appear at the European College's concert in a fortnight's time for your diploma?"

"Oh, yes, I'll do anything if Diana will only be friends!"

"Then," said Babs, though there was

By

HILDA RICHARDS

not much hope in her voice. "We'll try! Now, then, don't look so down in the mouth, you old silly! Make up the books again, will you?" Lily, who heard no more words, said: "Babe, I'll do what you're all ready. But, remember, Diana might be in a tricky mood. Don't provoke her!"

She led the way towards the door. The three of them, Lily looking a little more hopeful, made off down the corridor to Study No. 13. Before the door of that apartment, which was shared by Diana and her friend, Margaret Latham, Babe paused and knocked. It was Margaret's voice which answered.

"Come in!"

They went in. Margaret was drawing on her gloves, quite plainly going out. Diana stood at the table. There was a pile of music sheets in front of her, and she was writing out certain of them and putting them aside. She looked up as the three entered.

"Want me, Babe?" Margaret asked.

"No, thanks! We rather wanted to speak to Diana." Babe said, spying the first-hand.

"Excuse me, then," Margaret smiled, "just going out. Leave you at it! And she turned toward the door, frowning just a little warningly at Diana as she went.

But that warning seemed to have no effect whatever upon Diana Roynton-Clarke. It was doubtful, indeed, if she even saw it. She was staring, not at Margaret, but at Babe & Co. and the expression on her face was by no means friendly. Imperturbably she continued, irresponsibly that she could have, with its billows of glorious blonde hair, went up. The curved red lips parted in a diabolical sneer. She snatched one unperceptive word:

"Well!"

Babe coughed.

"We—we came to see you, Diana."

"Well, tell me something I don't know!" Diana sneered.

"It—it's about Lily," Babe said. "Oh, Diana, for goodness' sake don't look like that!" she broke out. "Diana, listen, please. You seem to think we're all against you."

Diana batted herself once more with her music on the table. Her eyebrows arched.

"Well, aren't you?"

"Diana, no! Try to be reasonable." And Babe faced her firmly. "Do you want to go on?" she asked quietly, "breaking Lily's heart?"

Diana blinked a little. For a second she looked toward the pathetically appealing face of the wall. Then she stiffened.

"And what?" she demanded, "about my heart? Oh, all right! And irritably she pushed the music aside. "Well, come on, all of you! Sit down. Let's have this out once and for all. No, wait a minute! I'm going to say my say first." And with a flash of her eyes she questioned them. "I know you think I'm several sorts of cheerful pig—"

"Oh, Diana, we don't!" Lily quivered.

"Yes, you do! Haven't I seen it?" Diana asked bitterly. "All right! I'm not going into details you already know. You know that it was through me that Lily got her chance here. You know that it was through me that she got a start in the operative world. Well, having given her that start, what happened to me? Lily, who was my protégée, who I hoped to make a famous star, was taken out of my hands!"

"Well, wasn't that your—?" Babe began.

"Never mind. I'm dealing with facts," Diana said. "What happened? She was given over to you. Lily herself

hasn't got the pluck to stick up for what she wants! She handed your company letter than mine, and she went over to you—ignoring the heartbroken protest that came from Lily. "Then you and Primary and all the rest of you crowd past her up for the diploma contest which should have won her a five-year's musical education in London."

"But, Diana—"

"I'm telling the story," Diana retorted them. "Apparently, you all thought," she went on scornfully, "that you had given me one in the eye. The thing I'd worked and striven for, you'd carry on with, hoping, no doubt, to rub me of all the credit that was due to me! The only way in which I scored over you was in playing the piano. I was the only girl who could do justice to Lily's singing, and you know it! You tried Peggy Preston; Peggy didn't fill the bill!"

Babe's lips compressed.

"Well," Diana went on, "the contest came off. You thought Lily was going to win it. But, wretchedly, something went wrong. Peggy Preston didn't turn up to play for her. Another girl assumed to be in danger of getting away with it instead. Desperate, after all the insults and the humiliations you'd piled upon me, you had the pluck to ask me to play for Lily! Well, I didn't. And as a result," Diana went on scoldingly, "Lily didn't win away with the contest as you'd hoped. She and Christine Smithson tied and have to sing again in a fortnight's time!"

"But, Diana—!" Lily broke desperately in.

"And you were surprised when you found out, weren't you," Diana sneered, "that Christine Smithson, Lily's only

serious rival, was also my protégée? You thought I was a traitor because I paid her fees and brought her into competition with Lily, after all of you had turned me down. Well—read Diana's struggles—that was the position yesterday. As far as I'm concerned, it's the same to-day. Lily and Christine are still in the contest. They both have to sing for it in London in a week's time. I'm still forbidden to have anything to do with Lily. But I'm still," Diana went on scornfully, "determined to make you crowd bye the dust. Therefore," she added, "I'm sticking to Christine!"

From Lily came a faint cry. Babe, controlling the anger she felt rising in her, bit her lip.

"But, Diana, doesn't it occur to you," she asked, "that all this trouble is not of our making? And, after all, Babe went on, "what is Christine Smithson to you, a girl you never knew until a day or so ago. You know what this diploma means to Lily."

"And I know," Diana bitingly retorted, "what it means to me! I tell you I'm backing Christine Smithson through thick and thin. Lily has preferred you to me. If Lily won that diploma, she'd get all the credit for training her now! You! You think I'm going to stand for that! Not likely! If Lily had had the pluck to stick by me, there might have been a different story to tell. Now, please my what we have to say and get out. I'm busy!"

"In other words," Babe asked bitterly, "you're simply backing Christine Smithson to spite us!"

"I'm backing her," Diana angrily retorted, "because I want her to win!"

Babe and Lily exchanged a glance of utter hopelessness. Diana, as if the



WHITE-FACED, fury in her eyes, Diana flung herself out of Miss Primrose's study. Straight past Lily she swept, ignoring that girl's straining cry—cutting her dead!

interview was finished, walked again to the table. From Lily came a distressed little cry.

"Dianna!" she choked.

Dianna took no notice.

"Dianna," Lily said again. "Oh, please, do look at me. Oh, dear, but I don't want to do it, I didn't! But what could I do?" Miss Primrose gave orders that—that I wasn't to have anything else to do with you."

"Well," Dianna said steadily.

"Well," Lily went on enthusiastically. "What would have happened if I'd disobeyed her? You'd have got into more trouble. I should have been sent away. And, Dianna, you're young, about Barbara! Barbara, really and truly, has been a friend to me."

Dianna's lips curled in a sneer.

"Well, in that case, why do you come crawling to me?"

Lily gasped.

"Oh, Dianna, can't we all be friends?" she pleaded. "Dianna, please, I—"

And then she broke off, springing round as a knock came at the door and the figure of Francesco Barrett, temporary captain of CBE House, entered the room. Her eyes travelled round quickly.

"Dianna, Miss Primrose wants you," she said.

"What for?" Dianna roared.

"I do not know, and please," Francesco coldly replied, "do not speak to me like that. Your father is with her. I advise you to go right away."

Dianna staggered, she stared at the others. Then, with a shriek, she walked out.

For a moment Lily stood, her eyes glittering.

"Lily," Babs said comfortingly.

"No," Lily cried. "No, please go away, leave—leave me alone!" she cried fiercely.

"Oh, goodness, but Lily, we've got to practice!"

"I don't want to practice," Lily said stubbornly.

"Oh, my hat! But look here—"

But Lily, her loyal heart aching, had torn herself away. Dianna had deserted her. Dianna blamed her for all these things which had happened to her.

Almost a sob was the cry Lily gave as she rushed into the corridor.

"Dianna!"

And Dianna, at the end of the corridor, looked back. She saw her. She hastened her steps. She was a cat, she was a traitor, she told herself, but it was too late to relent. Reaching the angle of the corridor she flew.

By the time Lily reached the head Dianna was no longer in sight. But Lily, pale-faced, hurried on towards the Head's study. Oh, how she hated everything! This big school, this singing—yes, especially the singing! She must see Dianna, though, she must!

She reached the door of the Head's study. It was slightly ajar. From inside there came the murmur of voices. Dianna's voice; now her father's; now Miss Primrose's. Unwarily, Lily hesitated, waiting in a fever of anxiety for her business to reappear. Then suddenly, as Miss Primrose raised her voice, Lily caught her words:

"—and I must warn you, Dianna, here, in front of your father, that you have tried my patience to its uttermost limit. Many times these last weeks have you come within an inch of expulsion. I give you one last chance, and one only. If I have any more bad reports of you I shall unhesitatingly expel you."

"And is that all?" came Dianna's voice.

"That is all, unless your father wants to speak to you."

There came an audible sigh from Mr. Royce-Clarke.

"I can only say, Dianna, that I am gravely disappointed. I hardly know what has happened to you, but please, do try, for my sake, to be the best little mare. You will only regret all this in the long run."

A sharp, short laugh from Dianna. Lily's big eyes opened wide. She caught her breath a little. Dianna, in danger of being expelled!

The door swung open. Dianna, head afloat, her face wearing its most defiant expression, appeared in the corridor. She stared a little as she saw the staff of Courtfield, seemed to stiffen, and then, as if not recognizing her, walked on down the corridor.

"Dianna!" Lily choked. "Dianna! Please wait!"

She made as if to catch her by the arm. Dianna, tossing her head, walked on.

A strolling sob heard from Lily. For a moment she stood on if frozen. Then, up the passage came Babs, Main & Co., accompanied by Peggy Foston.

"Oh, goodness, Lily!" Babs said.

"Here you are! I say, what about practice? We're all waiting!"

"I don't want to practice!" Lily said defiantly.

"But Lily, you must!" Babs shook her head. "Lily dear," she went on appealingly, "don't worry about Dianna. She'll come to her senses in time. And you mustn't forget, Lily, that—"

"All the same, I don't want to practice!" Lily said stubbornly.

And once more she broke away; once more hurried off. How could she practice now, when it was this hateful music which had come between her and the girl she loved better than any one else on earth? She did not, however, rush off to Dianna this time. With a heavy heart she trailed down the steps into Big Hall, and out of the school. She wanted to be alone. She wanted to think. Instinctively her steps took her in the direction of the cloisters.

It was a mild day for January. But had it been cold Lily would scarcely have noticed it. Rather feverishly she dropped on to one of the benches beneath the ruined arches, wistfully stared towards the school. Not for the first time, she told herself she ought never to have come here. Not for the first time, she dwelt upon the possibility of running away.

But running away, after the kindness of Mr. Royce-Clarke, would have seemed ungrateful. Her one chance of leaving the school honorably remained only in this glorious opportunity of winning the diploma at the European's concert a week hence.

Given that diploma she would be her own mistress, answerable to nobody except her professors. Given that she would be independent, with a golden future ahead of her. But Dianna who, at one time, had so badly wanted her to have that chance, was against her now. Dianna wanted another girl to win it. Dianna—

"Dianna!" she cried.

And in a moment, wide-eyed, she was upon her feet. For there was Dianna—Dianna, a bundle under her arm, smoking across from the school towards the hedge that formed the school's boundary. Dianna, looking wistfully, furtively behind her, obviously intent on breaking bounds.

Lily started to her feet.

Dianna stopped, biting her lip. Lily hurried to her side.

"Dianna, you're—you're not breaking bounds?"

"Anything to do with you?"

"Oh, Dianna, please, don't!" Lily begged. "Don't, Dianna! I heard what Miss Primrose said. Dianna, please don't go and get yourself expelled!" she entreated earnestly.

Dianna laughed shortly.

"And who," she demanded, "will care if I am expelled?"

Lily gasped.

"You know I shall, Dianna. Don't go, please!"

Again Dianna eyed her—wistfully, queerly. And again something inside her seemed to leap up, and then as swiftly die down again. Not mistaking the profound sincerity in that earnest little face.

"Lily, I'm sorry, kid," she said impulsively. "Sorry for being a cat to you. But—well— Oh, bother, I can't explain! But hurry in, kid! I've got to go—got to!"

Lily's lips quivered.

"But, Dianna, suppose—"

"Supposing nothing," Dianna said roughly. "Don't worry about me; I'm not worth it. Go back now, and—"

and try to think as steady of me as you can. I—"

And then, turning with a swift amazing impulse that outwitted even herself, she kissed Lily quickly on the forehead. "There," she said, with a suspicious break in her voice. "That's—that's for friendship, Lily."

And, leaving the maid flushed and startled, she hurried away, to disappear through the gap in the hedge.

Dianna Takes Charge



DIANNA had spoken truth when she said she was in a hurry.

For Dianna had a most important appointment.

That appointment was with Christine Smithson, the girl who had supplanted Lily in her interest. The bundle of music under her arm was for Christine, too.

It was the first time Dianna had ever visited Christine in her own home. She had, indeed, only the vaguest of ideas where that home was. Christine, who worked in the Courtfield Opera House, rarely by chance.

Purely by chance she had heard her voice, and in that impetuous way of hers had immediately made up her mind that there was the girl she would use as a tool against Babs & Co. With glowing, glowing, glowing, and attention, Dianna's own ambitions had revolved a tantalizing job whose Lily Wallace was concerned. She looked to Christine Smithson to make it all up again.

But there was no glow in her heart as she hurried down the road towards Fyfevale. She was still thinking of Lily, Christine Smithson, as a friend, meant nothing to her. Lily did.

But there could be no retreating now. She had thrown down the gauntlet. She felt that she had right on her side. She had paid Christine's fee. Christine simply had to win.

Dianna's face settled into a smile. Happily she looked forward to the day when Christine, her prestige, should be in demand. When she would look up her engagements at the most marvellous opera houses in the world. Christine who, owing lifelong allegiance to her, should be the object of gazing by the the most exclusive of circles.

Dianna hurried on, glowing as she

thought about it. In that vain mind's eye of hers she saw it all. The bright lights above the theatres.

"DIANA ROYSTON—CLARKE PRESENTS CHRISTIE SMITHSON."

On the programme:

"CHRISTIE SMITHSON, BY PERMISSION OF DIANA ROYSTON—CLARKE."

Reaptured!

Diana felt almost giddy with the whirl of her own thoughts when she reached the Priarado garage. There, perceptibly, she ordered a car. Now! Where was that address of Christie's? Oh, here! No. 5 Cherry Lane. She communicated it to the driver.

In ten minutes she was in Courtfield. She hardly knew it. She sat there, a useful mule on her face, as she both those glorious cities in the air.

Then suddenly the taxi came to a standstill. Diana came back to earth with a jerk, to start at the decidedly dingy street in which it had stopped.

"Perhaps a little feeling of dismay crept into her; Yuck! Was this where Christie lived? It was little better than a slum. Then she saw the name of the street, looked at the peering point of the door opposite her and compressed her lips. She got out, banging her bundle of music.

"Thank you!" she said stiffly.

"What's the fare?"

"One-and-nine, miss."

"Then here you are. Keep the change."

She gave him a half-crown. The driver, with a grin, touched his cap. With her collieries just a little damped, Diana knocked at the door of the house. It opened. Christie Smithson, her face rather tired and strained-looking, appeared at the door. Her lips parted as she saw her visitor.

"Oh, Miss Royston-Clarke, I—I forgot all about you coming!"

"What?" the scandalized Diana cried.

"I mean— Oh, please come in!" Christie murmured confidentially, and Diana, with a soft sigh, stepped in from across the shabby furnished but spotlessly clean room in which she found herself. "You—you see," Christie explained, with a gulp, "there—there's been an accident."

Diana frowned.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, my mother—my mother's been taken ill. And—and—Christie glanced furtively behind her head—"well, you see, there's only mother and me and little Bobbie, and—and mother looks after as while I work at the Opera House." She picked up the edge of her apron and glanced at it nervously. "Oh, I'm so awfully sorry. Miss Royston-Clarke, but—but I shan't be able to go in for the Diploma, just at all."

Diana almost jumped at that.

"You won't what?"

"Well, you see, now mother's in bed I shall have to do the housework, and—and I can't get away for lessons."

Diana stared at her. Quietly she sat down on the rather deflated seat of a stuffed chair.

"Christie!" she said quietly.

"Oh dear! You, miss?"

"Look at me, girl. You're not going to lose this chance?"

"But, miss, what shall—"

"I come here," Diana said, "to take you to the Opera House. You may remember you're due for a practice there at half-past three. Sit down; look at me." And while Christie wonderingly opened, Diana looked her straight in



DIANA staggered back as a rush of steam poured from the pot, and belatedly into her face. Cooking was a new art to Diana—but she was doing her best, for Christie's sake.

the eyes. "Christie, you're going there," she said. "You're going now."

"But I shan't leave mother—"

"You dare, you've got to!" Diana said grimly. "While you're away I'll look after your mother."

"What, you?"

"Give me that apron!"

"But—"

"Give me—that apron!"

No denying Diana when she spoke like that. Christie rose hesitantly to her feet, and began untying the apron from about her waist. Diana stood up. With an air of businesslike determination she took off her coat, placed the bundle of music on the faded tablecloth, and donned the apron herself.

"Thanks!" she said. "Now, take me up to see your mother, Christie. There'll all too soon be no one to tell me what to do and beat it."

"But—"

"And far goodness! take back up! You're wasting time!"

One wondering, almost scornful glance Christie gave her, then led the way into the next room.

This was a sort of dining-room—the living-room, Christie explained—and in it was the door that led to the bedroom above. Up a flight of creaking stairs she led the way, halting in the narrow hall at the top to tap upon another door. A sweet, though every voice made them. "Come in!"

They went in. Diana stared curiously round. Small and poor the room was, but the window was wide open, she noticed with approval, and mingling with the aroma of boiling stew, which seemed to permeate every corner of the house, there was an exhilarating smell of disinfectant. Obviously Christie knew how to look after an invalid.

And then she found herself face to face with Mrs. Smithson, and for a

moment it seemed that her heart ceased to beat. Was this Christie's mother—the girl, young-looking woman with such great, wide, staring eyes, with a face that irresistibly reminded Diana of a china doll she had once possessed when she was quite a tiny thing! The woman must have been forty, but lying there, ill as she was, she looked unbearably child-like.

"Mrs. Smithson," Diana began hesitantly, "I am Diana Royston-Clarke."

A smile quivered upon the pallid lips.

"Christie has told me about you," she said. "And oh, Miss Royston-Clarke, I do so thank you for the interest you have shown in her! When I heard that—that Christie was going to leave lessons, I was so excited as she about them. But, you see," she added sadly, "what has happened. The doctor says I am likely to be in bed for three weeks."

"Which means to say," Diana laughed, "that I've got to help look after you for three weeks. Yes, ma!" she added, with a beaming nod. "Mrs. Smithson, Christie isn't going to lose those lessons. Now listen!" And in that compelling and wonderful manner which Diana could so well adapt on occasions, she told Mrs. Smithson exactly what she intended to do. While Christie is away I'm taking on her job," she said. "Whatever happens now, Christie isn't going to lose ground. Now, Christie," she added, "get your things on."

Happes to agree. Mrs. Smithson smiled, shaking her head. Christie got on her clothes. Then, in response to Diana's command, she gave her her instructions. Her mother was to have the bedclothes, which was on the gasolene downstairs, in half an hour. Her brother Bobbie would be home from school at four-thirty. He was to have

his tea. At five o'clock the doctor would come.

Diana listened. Perhaps she wondered for a moment how she would get through—the who had so many done housework, who, even as Cliff Hesse, preferred holding a servant to doing things herself.

But it had to be done. Christine's interest and her own—depended upon it. Nothing new was coming between Diana and her ambition.

"You can manage?" Christine asked.
"Of course I can manage!" Diana scoffed. "Now you look off! I'll take you through one or two of those songs when you come back."

She almost pushed Christine out of the house. Then, rather grimly, she went into the kitchen. Some hot-iron was bubbling on the stove. She went to the saucepan and took off the lid, to stagger back as a hissing rush of steam followed up full into her face.

With a shriek, Diana angrily jerked the lid back. Bobbie had smarting eyes, she seized the towel which hung behind the door, inspected it instinctively before trusting her face to it, and then wiped off the steam from her cheeks.

"Now look at the mess I've made of myself!" she growled.

In exasperation she surveyed her features through the stippled glass of the cheap mirror that hung upon the wall. Irritably she rubbed again, and looked for her hand-mirror. Now where the dickens was that? Oh, there! From it she retrieved her eyes, pondered calmly, and, contrary to all the rules of Cliff Hesse, carefully dabbed at her cheeks. She was in the middle of that, when—

Min-o-e-o!

As if she had been shot, Diana jumped round. Oh, great goodness, look at the hot-iron! Either by accident, or unthinkingly, she must have turned the gas-tap full on when she had slammed the saucepan on the stove. A thick cloud of steam was leaping into the air; little flames were licking all round the sides. Diana made one quick grab, seized the handle, and yanked it straight

down!

Too late she reported her recklessness. The handle, being made of aluminium like the rest of the vessel, was hot. Instantly she dropped the saucepan. She gave a fresh yell as it tipped against the edge of the stove and shot its contents forward—whizz!—right upon the apron, right through the apron on to her immaculate school tunic beneath. With a furious leap, Diana bounded, crashing against the kitchen table. At that same moment there came a burst of laughter from the doorway.

"Gee! Ain't you in a mess?"

Diana spun around furiously. It just needed what she saw then to awaken her temper. For there, in the doorway which communicated with the living-room, was a boy—a small, grubby boy, his tin away, a cloth cap over one eye. Diana's face turned red as fire. Furious as she already was, to be made ridiculous was just the last straw. She took one stride forward.

"Get out!" she snarled.

A further burst of laughter was her only reply.

And then—

Like magic, the guffaw faded. He roared as a vicious snarl lit his cheek.

"Now will you go?" Diana boomed.

The boy's answer was to burst into tears.

"O-o-o-oh crumbs! O-o-o-oh!"

"You—?" And then Diana hit her hip. Hot-headed fool! Battering idiot!

She had hurt the kid. "Well, you asked for it," she said defiantly.

The boy's lips quivered as he rubbed his smarting cheek.

"Well, who are you anyway?" he roared. "And what are you snarling about with Christine's cooking?"

"Christie! You're—?" and Diana stared. "Oh yow! Are you Bobbie?"

"Yes, I am. An' what's more, I'm going to tell me all about you!"

One Minute Too Late



"O H dear!" Diana was

all fluttering

apology at once.

"Oh goodness! I'm sorry," she said.

"Bobbie, look here, don't cry, I'm Diana. I'm helping Christine

while she goes for her music lessons. I didn't really mean to hurt you."

"Gee, didn't you? Then how

hard do you hit when you do mean to hurt!" Bobbie sniffed.

Diana laughed.

"Well, I'm sorry. I—I was a little

put out," she said. "But look here, Bobbie, go and do something for me,

there's a good little chap! Here, do there's a good little chap! Here, do

there's a good little chap! Here, do there's a good little chap! Here, do

there's a good little chap! Here, do there's a good little chap! Here, do

there's a good little chap! Here, do there's a good little chap! Here, do

there's a good little chap! Here, do there's a good little chap! Here, do

there's a good little chap! Here, do there's a good little chap! Here, do

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there's a good little chap! Here, do there's a good little chap! Here, do

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there's a good little chap! Here, do there's a good little chap! Here, do

Find a clean one, and then get under that tap and scrub yourself as clean as a new tin. If you don't," Diana threatened, "I'll cut all that cake myself."

Enough for Bobbie, that. He scribbled off with alacrity. Diana laughed a little. She fluttered herself she knew how to handle small boys, and certainly Bobbie responded amazingly to her treatment. While she was waiting for him, she darted upstairs to Mrs. Smithson.

"That—that was lovely, Miss Rogston-Clarke," the invalid said.

"You know it!"

"Yes, very much indeed, thank you."

Diana laughed again. Really, she was almost enjoying this! She took the dirty things back to the kitchen, and put them on top of the boiler. There, at least, could wait for Christine's attention, she thought. She arrived in the living-room to find a spotlessly clean and shining-faced Bobbie, and together they had tea. Hardly was the meal finished, when there was a knock at the door.

It was Dr. Wharfedale.

Diana led him in. He smiled at her and treaded upstairs. Diana felt it was her duty to go up with him. She went and stood in the room while he examined the patient. He shook his head.

"Getting on, getting on," he said.

"But, you've got a long way to go, Mrs. Smithson. You're not as well as this had as I'd like you to be, and the nights are cold. Haven't you got a rag or anything?"

"No, doctor."

"Hm. Well, try to find something else to put on the bed as soon as it gets a little colder. That's good, bed-iron," he said, examining the drugs of the rag. "Keep on with that. Where did you get it?"

Mrs. Smithson smiled faintly.

"I'm afraid I cannot afford such luxuries, doctor. This young lady bought it."

And that naturally brought Diana into the focus of the doctor's attention. He stared at her curiously.

Diana smiled. She knew him slightly. She was pleased to be found here, seeing the Good Samaritan.

She went down with him. He shook his head as he spoke of Mrs. Smithson.

"She's over ill," he said, "very ill. It is a great pity," he added sadly.

"That such a woman should so have come down in the world. You didn't know, did you, Miss Rogston-Clarke,

that once upon a time she was a great singer—was looked up upon indeed as a coming opera star? She married another singer, and it just broke her up when, after the birth of Bobbie, he was drowned at sea on his way to America. She's never been the same woman since. Well, well, I'll get along. And thank you for the good work you've doing."

Diana thrilled. She looked at him.

"Wait a minute before you go," she said quickly. "Did you say that Mrs. Smithson hadn't enough clothes on her back?"

"I did. It is vitally necessary, if she is to be saved from a relapse, that she should be kept warm. Why?"

"Just because—," Diana smiled.

"Good night, doctor."

He left, but Diana stood at the door following his figure down the street. She was strangely stirred by the story she had heard. Poor, poor Mrs. Smithson! How famous Mrs. Smithson might have been to-day if that dreadful accident hadn't happened!

Meanwhile, however, there was that far-famed motor-car which she kept on

the actress in her study at Cliff House. Mrs. Smithson should most certainly have that.

Amazing, this Diana, who at times could be so thoughtfully, at others, so reckless, so unscrupling! Astounding this Diana who, in pursuing her own selfish ends, could be so unselfish in her methods!

And then, everything else was swept from her mind as, down the street, she saw Christine approaching. A moment later Christine arrived with the news that she had had her lesson, that Professor Larkin at the Opera House was very pleased indeed with her.

Then up she flew to see her mother, to listen, with a smile to the story of Bobbie, who, in spite of his unfortunate introduction, had now really fallen completely under Diana's spell. Nothing then would satisfy Diana but that Christine should go through the lesson which she had had with Professor Larkin.

And so the old piano in the living-room came into its own. Diana was surprised at the sweet mellowness of its tone. She played well; Christine sang well—so well, indeed, that Diana was thrilled. At the end she stood up. Her eyes were shining.

"Well, that's topping!" she said, "topping, Christine! I declare that is even better than when you sang at the Coastfield Opera House."

Christine smiled modestly.

"It's not so much my singing as your playing, Miss Virginia-Christine," she said. "You really do play marvellously."

Diana laughed. Then she looked at her watch. Yuck! Look at the time! Seven o'clock, and gates at Cliff House were closed at half-past seven. Have to fly! And fly she did, taking Bobbie as a guide to the taxi rank. There she hired a cab, and was whisked back to Cliff House.

But, what for Diana. Just by a private she missed gates. Piper, indeed, was just in the very act of stepping away from them when she deigned.

"Which you're late!" he growled. "Oh, come on, Piper, let me in!" Diana coaxed. "Nobody will be any the wiser!"

"Which I'm sorry, but it's against orders!" Piper said mildly. "I'll have to report you!"

"Well, then, dashed well report, and be bothered to you!" Diana snapped.

And, having been let in, she pushed past the indignant porter and went into Big Hall. There were many girls there awaiting the distribution of the evening post, and there was a murmur as Diana was seen. Everybody knew, of course, that the Fitzbards was gated. Everybody knew that she had been out. Somebody called to her. Diana took no notice. She went on up the stairs.

And then, having seen her own study, she stopped.

For a pale, forlorn little figure rose to meet her. It was Lily Walters.

The Last Warning

"YOU, Lily!" Diana cried. Lily gulped. "Yes, Diana. I hope you don't mind my coming!" Lily cried pathetically.

"Not at all!" Diana smiled. "Pleased to have you, kiddie!" She pulled off her gloves, took off her hat, shaking out her mass of blonde hair.

"Well, she looked, "here we are!" Lily bit her lip.

"Oh dear, Diana, were you caught!"

"Caught? Oh, by Piper!" Diana shrugged. "Yes, I was caught," she confessed, and pretended not to notice the unhappy expression on the other's face. "But don't you worry, Lily."

"Oh, but I do worry!" Lily cried. "Diana, you know Miss Fitzbards meant what she said. She said she'd expel you next time." And hardly had she spoken when the door opened and into the room, frowning grimly, came Miss Fitzbards.

"Diana!" Miss Fitzbards snapped. Diana shrugged.

"Well!"

"And please do not speak to me like that!" Piper. "Miss Fitzbards announced, "has just reported you."

"I know," Diana said.

"What excuse have you to offer for breaking detention and arriving at school after gates?"

"I'm sorry!" Diana said, though she did not look it a bit. "I had a most tremendously important appointment. That appointment," she added deliberately, "was made before you gave me detention. I was in horror bound to keep it."

"And you kept it," Miss Fitzbards asked primly, "without asking permission?"

"Would I have got permission if I had asked?" Diana demanded.

Miss Fitzbards paused.

"If your reason had been sufficiently strong, permission might have been granted," she said. "What sort of an appointment was it?"

"Oh, a purely private one!" Diana answered.

"With whom?"

Diana shrugged.

"I'm sorry," she said coolly. "I cannot tell you that."

Lily gulped. She gazed entreatingly at her sister.

"I see!" Miss Fitzbards compressed her lips. "The appointment, then, was not one for which you could have asked permission to keep? I have no doubt, Miss Fitzbards went on angrily, "that you have been meeting some friend or other, and that you have been disrupting in attendance the time which you should have spent in the school."

Diana laughed.

"It," she said, "you only know!"

"Well!" Diana boiled up. "What right—"

she began passionately, and then, catching Lily's entreating look, paused. She dropped her hands. "All right," she said faintly, "thank what you like. Say what you like, I suppose—"

with a half-sneer—"I'm going to be expelled now!"

"Diana!" Lily cried. "Miss Fitzbards, please, please don't—"

"Lily, you have no right in this study! Leave at once!" Miss Fitzbards rapped. She stared fiercely at Diana.

"Diana, I promised your father this afternoon that I would give you one last chance, and only one. This is it. I warn you most solemnly that your next offence will be your very last. Meantime, consider yourself confined to bench for the rest of the week!"

She went out. Diana shrugged. What did she care about being expelled? What did it matter now? What did anything matter? No longer was her father bound up in Cliff House. No longer did she care a brass button about the school. Her future was with Christine Smithson—as Christine's manageress, as her pianist.

She lit a cigarette. Then, looking round for her cigarettes, she spotted the memorandum bag which was thrown over the arm of the chair. Slight of that bag provoked another train of thought. She

remembered Mrs. Smithson—that dear, patient woman, with the face of a china doll, who could be abdicating in bed to-night.

She bit her lip. Then, suddenly, purpose came into her eyes. Without a further thought, she strode across the room, snatched up the bag, and, folding it, found a suitcase and placed the rug inside. A moment more she paused; then went to the cupboard and looked in.

Diana's cupboard was always well stocked.

From a box she took down a bunch of lustrous black grapes. Her cousin, Madge Stevens, had sent her those only yesterday, all the way from Nice. She found a box of dates, a tin of tangerines. There was also an unopened tin of biscuits, a packet of salt, a butter. These she added to the contents of the case. She then made her way up to the Fourth Form dormitory, and slipped the case under her bed.

Meanwhile, Lily had drifted along to Study No. 4, where Babs, Mabel, and Bessie Baxter were commencing an early prep. They looked up at the wail entered.

"Lily, where have you been?" Babs asked.

Lily sighed despondently.

"To see Diana."

"Oh, she's come back, then? Where has she been?"

"I—I don't know. She won't say," Lily bit her lip. "She even refused to tell Miss Fitzbards. Miss Fitzbards thinks she's been doing something that she hadn't ought to do."

Lily had not yet comprehended all the grammatical subtleties at Cliff House. "And she's told her that next time she's got to go?"

She gulped, gazing with unmeted ardency at the captain of the Fourth.

"Oh dear, Barbara, what does she want to go and get herself expelled for?"

Babs shook her head.

"I don't suppose," she reflected, "that Diana wants to get herself expelled, any more than anyone else. But when Diana has one of these fits—or—well, she just doesn't seem to care. Don't look so worried, Lily, please! It's not your fault!"

But Lily was thinking, on always, that it WAS her fault. It had all started through her, and if she'd never come home, Diana wouldn't be in any danger of expulsion now!

She shrank from the thought of that! Diana expelled! Diana thrown out in disgrace! She knew what expulsion meant. In her own of the word, her imagination painted it as a punishment that was only akin to being sent to prison! And because of her, Diana was in danger of expulsion. Diana couldn't—couldn't get herself expelled!

It was a heavy-hearted Lily who went to bed that night. Diana, on the contrary, snatched quite happily and lightly heartedly. Babs & Co., realising the depth of Lily's loyalty, found themselves vaguely alarmed. It was obvious that Diana was prying upon the new girl's mind. This afternoon they had almost had to force Lily to rehearse, and the lesson had by no means been a success.

But what, Babs thought, could they do?

Lady Patricia Northerton, duty pressed for the day, came round to put out the lights. There followed the usual chapter in the month's darkness, dying in its usual desultory fashion, until at last silence reigned. Ten o'clock struck from the clock tower, followed by half-past. Then eleven. The whole school was wrapped in slumber.

Then suddenly, from Diana's bed there was a faint rustle. The moonbeams that



slanted through the window gleamed on the Firebrand's golden hair as she sat up in bed. There was a soft sound in the darkness as she stepped out of bed, hastily searching for her clothes. At the same time, Lily Walters woke up.

"Dianna!"

"Go to sleep!" Dianna said.

"Oh, Dianna, you—you're not going to break bounds!"

"Go to sleep!" Dianna hissed.

But Lily did not go to sleep. Feverishly, rapidly, Dianna was dressing now. She drew on her coat, and, previously smuggled into the dorm, she fastened the suitcase from under the bed. Lily heard it scraping across the floor, and sat up in bed just as Dianna made a beeline for the door.

Lily, dread in her heart, scrambled out of bed. The door shut softly behind the Firebrand as Lily crossed the floor. At the same time, Babe and Mahe woke up together. They started.

"Lily! Lily, you corker! Where are you going?"

But Lily paid no heed. Dianna was out there! Dianna was in the act of breaking bounds again! She ran into the corridor.

Babe and Mahe exchanged glances.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Babe. "Come on! That little idiot might catch her death of cold!"

They scrambled out, rapidly donning dressing gowns. It was cold—bitingly so.

Dianna, meantime, was slipping downstairs as speedily and as quietly as possible, and when Lily, who followed and alarmed, reached the head of the stairs, she had almost reached the hall. Lily's eyes, quivering, interesting, pursued the bounder-downer.

"Dianna, please!"

But Dianna was already flitting across the hall. Lily, bearing steps behind her, went racing down the stairs. She saw Dianna disappear into the lobby; heard the soft click as the window catch was forced back, and hurried her own steps. And then, on a ruckle in the carpet, her foot slipped. She gave a cry.

At the same moment Babe and Mahe appeared at the top of the stairs.

"Lily!" they cried simultaneously.

But it was too late then. Lily was already overtaken by disaster. Bang, bang! Bang, bang! she went, while Babe and Mahe, filled with alarm, rushed down the stairs to her rescue. But disaster was afoot. At the foot of the stairs stood a heavy suit of armor, and it was this Lily hit. The armor quivered from helmet to spurs. From Mahe came a shriek.

"Lily, look out! It's tapping over!"

Just in time, the dismaged Lily saw; just in time twisted out of the way. And then—crash! With a thunder that shook the floor, the suit heeled over, sweeping its feet all over the floor. Breathlessly Babe and Mahe arrived on the scene. They caught Lily by the arm.

"Lily, you goose!"

With a bang the door of Miss Ballivan's room went back, and an angry Miss Ballivan gazed in fury at the three.

"And what," she demanded, "are you girls doing here, playing pranks at this time of the night?"

The Path to Expulsion



CONSTERNATION held Babe and Mahe. For a moment they stood helplessly silent.

But Lily was equal to the occasion. After the first moment of horror, she had possession of

her wits. Not Lily's intention to let Babe and Mahe be blamed, but, more desperate, Lily's intention to prevent Dianna being dragged into this. If Miss Ballivan should come back into the Fourth Form dormitory—if she should take it into her head to ask questions—She stammered forward.

"Please, Miss Ballivan, it wasn't Babe or Mahe's fault! It's mine!"

"I have no wish to listen to any of your invented excuses! It is quite obvious," Miss Ballivan said sternly, "that you three girls have been indiscreet in some sort of prank! You have an right to be out of bed! For that you will take a hundred lines each, and you, Lily, will take a further hundred lines for having upset that suit of armor!"

Lily gulped. She looked pathetically at Babe and Mahe.

"Now go to your dormitory!"

"Yes, come on!" Lily said hurriedly. They went, Miss Ballivan frowning grimly as she watched them up the stairs. Lily gulped as they entered the room.

"Oh, Barbara, I—I'm sorry!"

"That's all right!" Babe said, tight-lipped. "Go to bed!"

And miserably, tearfully, feeling a Jonah indeed to her friends, Lily climbed into bed.

And there was no further disturbance in the Fourth Form dormitory until, half an hour later, Dianna Reynolds, clad in some padding back into the room minus her bag, having bribed the driver at the Friarfield garage to deliver that to No. 3, Cherry Lane.

"**B**UT," Clara Thornley exclaimed cooperatively, "what silly game is she playing?"

There was something like an indignation meeting in Study No. 2 next morning. Clara Thornley, the long-legged games captain, was there, together with Janet Jordan, Marjorie Handerson, Babe, and Mahe. Some, having reviewed her weekly pocket-money, was absent. Lily was absent, too.

They were, of course, discussing Dianna Reynolds-Clarke and the events of last night.

Mabel Lynn sighed.

"Gosh, I never knew what it is!" she said. "Yesterday afternoon she broke bounds; refused to say where she had been. Last night, according to Lily, she sneaked out of the dormitory with a suitcase, and returned without it. Lily tried to save her; we tried to save Lily. Dianna got off scot-free: we got lines from the Head! But the matter of the suitcase is, not what is Dianna doing, but what is happening to Lily! She's just worrying her silly self about Dianna!"

"More fool she!" growled Clara.

"Fool, if you like," Babe put in; "but she can't help it. Perhaps we should do the same in her place. She likes Dianna. She feels that she owes everything to her—as she does, in a way. She's really a loyal little thing, and the thought that Dianna might get expelled is worrying her head off. But we've got to do something about it!" she broke out.

"At this rate Lily will go all to pieces, and soon the concert."

"Then I won't," Janet Jordan said.

"We go and see Dianna!"

"Voicks!" a voice put in at the door.

"But why worry, my little Mabelones, when the occasion will come to you? Behold!" And Dianna walked radiantly as she played into the study, showing not a trace of the disturbed and restless night she had spent. "I wasn't nervous," she asserted. "I just happened to hear my distinguished name as I passed the study door and I thought

I would look in and see who was taking it in vain. What do you want to see me about?"

"Babe found her."

"It's Lily."

"Lily?" Dianna asked with soft mockery. "But, surely, Lily is your concern?"

"Dianna," Babe said quietly. "You know Lily likes you?"

"Well, don't you think she ought?" Dianna asked lightly.

"That's neither here nor there. You know, too, Dianna, that she's training for the concert. She's worried about you, thinks you're heading for expulsion. You don't expect her to do her best while she's in that frame of mind?"

Dianna laughed.

"And you really expect me to be generous by that argument?" she scoffed.

"You'd! Don't you think?" with a sneer, "you're getting things rather distorted! Why should it matter to me what frame of mind Lily gets into? She's getting to do with me! She's yours!"

"And I suppose," Clara put in contemptuously, "just because you're playing the giddy game trying to get your silly cap expelled, you'd like to get Lily expelled, too?"

Dianna sniffed.

"That, dear heart, is where you're not so dead wrong. Why should I want to get the kid expelled? I like Lily. I'm not against her! I'm just up against you and because you look her away from me! Tough on Lily, perhaps, but, well, your kid, she just happens to be the best player we both fighting over. And how," she demanded, "do you make out I'm trying to get her expelled?"

"You know what happened last night?"

"No!" Dianna's eyebrows lifted in quick interest. "Is this news? What happened?"

"When you broke bounds, Lily followed you, and Mahe and I followed her. Then the Head caught us. Lily got two hundred lines, and we got a hundred."

Dianna grinned amiably.

"Too tough?" she asked. "Just shows you the wisdom of minding your own business. But Lily got two hundred, you say? Where is she?"

"We don't know."

"Then is that case I'll go and find her," she said, and went out closing the door behind her, leaving the chums looking hopelessly at each other.

Clara kicked amiably at the table leg.

"Oh my sainted aunt," she burst out, "the more I see of that girl the more I wish we were both boys! Now, what is she going to do?"

But Dianna knew. Dianna had made up her mind. She flitted the knew where the wretched Lily. Instantly took her to the clubroom and instant was right. Lily was sitting there in upper solitude, her eyes cast down and worried.

"Oh, Dianna," she said.

"Get up," Dianna commanded. "Now, goon, put your arm in mine. No, don't speak! Don't say anything! Just follow me." And dragging her along, she led her back to Study No. 10.

"Now," she said, "you got yourself two hundred lines last night, I hear."

"Yes, but—"

"There's my paper! There's a pen! There's a chair!" Dianna said. "Here's paper, pen, and chair for me! Now get down to it and write, write, write! Be a hundred! I'll do the rest."

"But Dianna, I—"

"Silence! Work!" Dianna frowned. Lily gulped. But there was worship in her eyes as she stared at her heroine.

"LOOK out, Lily—look out!"
Baba gasped. But her warning came too late; there was a terrific clatter as Lily collided with the suit of armour and crashed to the floor. Now, surely the whole school would be aroused!



Wasn't this just like Diana? Diana who hated writing her own lines, was actually helping her with hers! She looked up once or twice, but Diana's down-bent head, the fierce industriousness with which she was driving her pen across the paper forbade question. Half an hour; an hour went by. It was nearly lesson time when Diana looked up.

"Well, there you are," she said. "That's my bit! Finished!"
"I—I've still got another twenty to do."

"Good gracious, what a small you are! Pass me that sheet! I'll do half of them."

"But—"
"But!"
And again Diana screwed up, landing the result to Lily. Lily, trembling, her face pink, rose to her feet.

"Oh, Diana, you're an awful sport!"
"I'm not," Diana snapped. "Now go and give them in."

"But," Lily pleaded, "Diana, promise me you won't break beneath any more."
"I'm promising," Diana told her, "just nothing! Now, hurry unless you want to be late for lessons."

And Lily hurried, meeting Baba and Mabel as they came out of Study No. 4. Baba stopped.

"Oh, Lily, just a minute. Miss Primrose—"

Lily's heart missed a beat.
"Oh crumbs, what's the matter now?"
"Nothing," Baba smiled. "But Primrose would like to hear you sing to-night. I told her we were having a party at six o'clock. She said she'd be coming along—"

"Oh!" Lily said faintly.
No more she said. She hurried off. Not until she met her again in the cloak-room did Baba see her. At break she made a point of seeing Lily.

"Lily, you won't forget six o'clock, will you?"

"No!" said Lily.
But she wasn't interested in six o'clock. She wasn't even thinking of her singing lesson. She was thinking of Diana. Diana, her benefactress, her heroine. That girl who could be so utterly charming, so deeply and poignantly mysterious. Would Diana be breaking bounds again this afternoon?

Diana, at that moment, came along the passage on her way to dining hall. She stopped her.

"Diana—"
"Yes, kid," the Fitzgerald said good humouredly.
"Oh, Diana, please," Lily implored. "Don't—don't think I'm sticking my nose into your business, but—but you know how I feel about things. Diana, you're not going off again this afternoon?"

Diana gazed at her oddly.
"Why?"
"Because, Diana, I don't want you to! I've scored you'll get caught."

Diana laughed lightly.
"Lily," she said. "Listen! Please don't worry your stupid old head. I'm all right. If you must know, I've got to go out to-day. I've got to," she added. "I'm not just playing the fool for the sake of playing it if that's what you think. I've got something to do. Important!"

Lily lit her lip.
"But, oh, Diana, couldn't you stop here and let me go and do it for you?"
"Kid, I'm sorry. I can't! It's a job I've got to see through myself."

"Then—then, oh, Diana, can't you come with you?" she asked despairingly. She thought, if she could only find out what this mysterious mission

was, she might, in spite of Diana's protest, take it upon her own shoulders. "Diana, let me!" she added pleadingly. "You know I love being with you."

Diana considered. She frowned. Then, indulgently, she laughed. "All right," she said. "But no questions, mind, now listen. Meet me at the telephone-booth at three o'clock. Now hasten it," she added teasingly, as there came a step down the corridor and Connie Jackson appeared.

Busive Diana



LILY'S face was flushed. Her eyes were bright as she strolled on. She could hardly eat her dinner for excitement.

And Baba, nothing but wonder. After dinner she conferred with Mabel and Clara.

"I see, there's something the matter with Lily. Did you notice? She hardly ate anything at lunch. She looked sort of awfully up, as though—"

"As though," Mabel broke in, "she was doing something she ought not to do."

The three looked at each other.
"Diana's been getting at her!" Clara affirmed.

Had she? Baba felt uneasy. But she resisted, remembering that Primrose was coming to the party that night, to keep a careful eye on Lily. But Lily, from that moment, seemed to have vanished.

High and low they searched for her. Where was the girl! In a crowd they peered on the steps of the school just before three. And then Clara uttered an exclamation.
"Look, there she is!"

There Lily was—in the act, at that

very moment, of disappearing through the gates! The very way she turned to look guiltily back at the school before she disappeared into the road, showed that she was engaged upon an lawful enterprise.

"My bag, she's going out!" Babe gasped.

"I'll bet," Clara growled, "she's meeting Diana."

"Come on!" Babe cried.

With one accord they moved for the gates. But Lily had a good start, then. Before either the three cars, arriving at the gates late in time to see Lily, a hundred yards from the road, popping into the Courtfield bus. With her was another girl.

"Diana!" Clara cried, "Come back!"

She darted forward, waving her arms. But by that time the bus had started off. Diana, turning, saw the girls, and mockingly blew a kiss. Babe's eyes gleamed.

"Never mind!" she said. "Come on! We've no reason yet! Get the buses! We'll follow the bus to Courtfield."

They accompanied back. Towards the gate ahead they moved. But they had forgotten, in the excitement, that today was not a half-holiday, and when they reached the sheds they found, to their great chagrin, they were locked. Hopeline to ask Piper, with his decision to study, for the keys. Absolutely hopeless to try to force the locks. There was only one thing for it.

"Wait for the next bus!" Babe said.

They waited. Meanwhile, Lily and Diana had reached Courtfield. Lily, her face alight with pleasure to find herself in Diana's company again, greeting with happiness as Diana, stepping off the bus first, bent her head to alight.

"Well, here we are!" Diana chirped. "Now, Lily, come and help me out with some shopping."

She led the way across the High Street into Holland's Stores. Lily blinked, wondering if Diana was going to buy a new frock? But Diana, instead of entering for the Fashion Department, went, most amusingly, to the provisions counter, and Lily blinked as she heard her order five pounds of grapes, tea, sugar, milk, butter, eggs, and butter. What on earth did Diana want all that for?

"Here we are, kiddie! Make yourself useful, and carry this little lot," Diana said. "Now we'll go to the cinema."

Again Lily followed, staggering under the weight of the provisions parcel. What was Diana going to do with all this stuff? Why did she not have it delivered, as usual? She staid again when they reached the chemist's—two bottles of tonic wine, for a start. A great bottle of cod-liver oil. Another bottle of calves' foot jelly.

And then, most astonishingly, to the toyshop, where Diana bought a clock-work engine that was enough to turn any boy's head with delight.

Lily could contain her astonishment no longer.

"But, Diana, what do you want all that stuff for?"

"The agreement," Diana informed her, "was that you should ask no questions, Lily. Now—take it home—there's just one other thing; but I think you might get them for me. I want a box of chocolate from Bob's, down the road—no, give me good boy of their own special brand, which I am going to give to you. No argument, please! Here's the money. I'll wait here till you come back. No; leave the parcel!"

"Yes, Diana," Lily said happily. She trotted off. She got the chocolate.

She returned. And then she stood, blinking round bewilderedly. For of Diana there was no sign.

"Where was she?" Lily asked, thinking she had popped into another shop. Ten minutes—a quarter of an hour—was by. She



looked at the clock, which glared against the dim background of the open hall, across the narrow passage. It registered a quarter past four, and already it was growing dark. It was obvious then that Diana had left, leaving her.

Lily gulped. Diana standing in her secret passion, didn't want her to know whom she was going, what she was doing. She had agreed to allow her to accompany her simply because she thought it would make her happy. As far as solving the Firebrand's mystery, however, she was no better off than before.

But Lily was not the girl to give in easily. Knowledge of Diana's habits told her that Diana would have taken a taxi, with all those parcels. Off to the taxi rank she went. There she questioned a number of the drivers, and at last got a clue—yes, one of them had picked up a girl about a quarter of an hour ago. He had taken her to No. 3, Station Road.

It wasn't, of course, Diana. But faithfully Lily followed up the clue. She arrived at the address after half an hour's eager trudge, to discover her mistake, and with less energy, tramped back. It was half-past five then, and it was beginning to rain. Disheartened and dismayed, she wended her way to the bus stop, at the Cross.

There, gork, chiding impatiently as they waited for the bus, uttered a simultaneous exclamation as she appeared.

"Lily! Where ever have you been?"

Lily stopped, flushing guiltily, as she found herself looking into the accusing faces of Babe, Mabel, and Clara Trent.

"We've been looking everywhere for you!" Mabel said severely.

"And where," Clara demanded, "is Diana?"

Lily checked.

"Oh, I—dear, I—I'm sorry! Diana went off your knee—"

They looked at her. Clara grimly frowned.

All the afternoon Babe & Co. had spent in Courtfield, searching for Lily, who seemed to have dissolved into thin air. They were all tired, a little damp, decidedly cold, and by no means unapproachable; for the bus was late, and in the foreground of all their minds was the appointment with Miss Prizeman. Clara was frankly fed-up.

"You mean," she said, "she gave you the slip?"

"Yes!"

"Moss told you to go out with her," Clara grunted. "You might have known she'd play you some low-down trick. And a five-oh five," she added bitterly, "we're never to get into when we get back, with old Perry waiting on the doorstep to welcome us. I suppose you've forgotten she's coming to hear you sing at six o'clock!"

Lily bit her lip. She had! The belated bus came along then.

Tired and anxious, little more was said between them as they jostled back to school. Babe, nervously fidgeting her wrist-watch, watched with despondent dread as the minutes ticked away. Six o'clock! Five past! A quarter past! She gasped. It was half-past six when, finally, they all presented themselves in the music-room, to find Miss Prizeman, accompanied by her friend, Professor Barnswell, in a state of quarrelling wrath.

"Barnswell, is this your idea of keeping an appointment?" she only asked.

"And Babe?"

"Oh, we're frightfully sorry, Miss Prizeman!"

"I should hope," Miss Prizeman tartly returned, "that you are! The professor and I have been waiting for half an hour! I observe"—with a significant glance at the man on their door—"that you have been out! And—Lily, whose did you get that box of chocolates?"

"But there was no need to ask that! The betraying chocolates, in the Professor's bag, showing the Professor's name in bold print, was still in her hands. Too late, she tried to hide it.

"You have all been to Courtfield?" Miss Prizeman asked.

"Oh, yes!" muttered Clara.

"Barnswell, have you?"

"Oh, yes!" Babe stammered happily.

"You are aware that Courtfield is out of bounds?"

"Yes, Miss Prizeman."

The headmistress' face set sternly. "I see!" she said—meaning that "I see!" It was always a prelude to some unpleasant announcement, and it lived up to tradition now. "Very well!"—with still severity. "For going to Courtfield without permission you will all take an hour's detention to-morrow after lessons. For having the other discrepancy to keep me waiting you will each do a hundred lines in addition, to be handed in before breakfast to-morrow morning. Now, if you like, you may get on with your practice. I shall not be in if this were the bitterest sting of all—stay to hear."

And while Babe, Lily, Mabel, and Clara exchanged a feeble grin, she turned on her heel, and with the professor at her side, whisked out of the room.

Unhappy Heroine



MRANTIME—Diana J. Diana, at No. 3 Cherry Lane, was enjoying herself.

It was an extraordinarily delightful Bobbie who greeted her—a Christie tremulous with gratitude—Mrs. Smithson who cried softly out of her full-bearded thankfulness when Diana showed her gifts upon the family—and a doctor whose eyes gleamed as he fervently pressed her hand, calling her the little fairy god-mother. That pleased Diana. Un-demonstrated and contented as she was for the burden which she had taken on her own shoulders, she set to work with a cheerful will that afternoon, while Christie went off for her lessons.

To be sure, Bobbie would rather have played with his new engine than give a hand to Bobbie. Like everyone else, had fallen under the headmistress' magnetic spell. Manifestly he got much by one's instructions, willingly and earnestly helped Diana in her work, chattering all the time. They had tea, Mrs. Smithson was made comfortable. Christie came home, her coat glistening, for by this time the rain had settled into a

said, steady claspings. Diana stared at her with a frown.

"Oh, my goodness, Christie! Are you wet?"

"Not really!" Christie laughed.

"Not cold?"

"Only a little."

"Well, get your wet things off quickly," Diana said. "Can't afford to risk you catching cold. Don't forget, Christie, it only wants three days to the concert, so for goodness' sake do look after yourself! Now, Bobbie, skip around, my lad! Some nice hot tea for Christie, and some of that hot buttered toast: When you've had that," Diana went on, "we'll go through your lesson again."

Christie had it. They went through the lesson. Diana played, glowing inwardly at the girl's beautiful voice ring through the house. Christie was getting better and better. No doubt of that. The diploma seemed already as good as hers.

"No, Christie," she said, when that girl offered to come with her to the taxi rank later, "not in this weather. I'll have Bobbie for escort. And please be careful!" she warned. "If you caught cold now I should just go crackers! Good-bye, old thing! Be here at the same time to-morrow."

She went off, glowing, thrilling the cheerful Bobbie at her side. Without stopping she reached Cliff House, scudded into the school by way of the gap in the hedge, and was in her own study before long. During the evening she heard of the misadventures of Babs & Co., and shuddered sadly. She was sorry for Lily, but for Babs she had no sympathy. Never those jolly well right, she thought disdainfully.

After prep she strolled down to the music room. Lily was there, singing. Peggy Fenton was playing the piano. Hiding behind a crowd of other girls, Diana listened, smiling to herself.

And she could have laughed then. Kean, good judge of music as she was, she knew that Lily Watson, on her present form, could never hold a candle to Christie Smithson.

After the practice she sought Lily out.

"Kid, I'm sorry for what happened," she said. "I told you not to come, but you would insist."

Lily shook her head.

"Oh, that's all right. I don't mind for myself, but I do hate seeing Babs and the others get into a bother. Diana, is—is it all over now?" she asked wistfully. "You're not going to break bounds any more, are you?"

To that, however, Diana did not reply. She just patted the little wail's head and walked away.

Next day Diana found a chance to slip out after afternoon lessons. Excitedly, triumphantly, assured of victory now, Diana took a taxi to No. 5, Cherry Lane. She knocked at the door, Christie herself it was who opened it.—Christie, reeking of camphorated oil, her neck swathed in flannel.

Diana took one look at her and almost fell down.

"Christie!" she cried, in accents vibrant with horror. "What's happened?"

"My throat!" Christie croaked.

Diana felt a wave of faintness pass over her.

"Don't tell me you've lost your voice!" she cried wildly.

But it was only too painfully obvious that that was what had happened. Christie could scarcely speak. In a dismay that was almost despair, Diana listened to the story—how Mrs. Smith-



WITH all her strength, fighting for breath, Diana hoisted Mrs. Smithson to her feet and dragged her to the window—just as a fireman appeared. Diana's desperate effort had not been in vain, after all!

son had been taken worse during the night; how Christie had run, in the pouring rain, to fetch the doctor. How those had let in water; how her chest had been soaked. Diana, listening, felt as if the bottom had dropped right out of her world.

"And now this!" she groaned. "Oh wicken! Why didn't you tell me your shoes were thin, you idiot? Why didn't you tell me about your coat? Why didn't— Oh, back, back!" And she bang up her arms. "All this—with the concert two days off!"

"Oh, Diana, I—I've awfully sorry!" Christie croaked, the tears in her eyes.

"Sorrow won't mend it!" Diana's eyes flamed. "And I was hoping, looking to you—for so much! Don't you realize! You as good as had that diploma in your pocket! You— And then she turned with sudden terrible energy.

"But come on!" she cried. "There's a chance yet. This might only be the first symptoms of a bad cold. Bobbie, here's ten shillings. Go to the chemist's. Buy four hot-water bottles!"

"Four?" the goggle-eyed Bobbie stopped.

"Oh and get 'em—yes, four!" Diana cried. And Bobbie, with a half-scared glance at her, grabbed his hat and departed forthwith.

"Now," Diana snapped, "to bed with you! I'm going to cure you—or bust!"

Christie was as clear as the Firebrand's hands. Diana had her own methods. Her every nerve depended upon Christie. Christie must get fit—rest, sweat, wash! She made up a roaring fire in

the girl's bed-room. She boiled milk and forced Christie to drink it steaming hot. Bobbie came back with the hot-water bottles. She filled them, padded them with Christie's bed, and then packed Christie in with them to keep them company. She looked at her anxiously.

"Christie," she asked, staring at her intently, "you haven't got a temperature, have you?"

"I—I don't know," Christie croaked feebly. "I feel awfully hot!"

Diana checked her breath. She felt like throwing things. If only she dared scream—just to relieve her feelings! Christie was going to be ill. She looked at her watch. Gone six! That meant that she was going to be late again—with expulsion awaiting her. But what did expulsion matter? What did anything matter?

"Christie, I'm going to get Dr. Wharfedale!" she decided.

"But, Diana, won't you be back late to school?"

"Hang school!" Diana snapped.

"Bobbie!"

"Yes, Diana!"

"While I'm gone, get some more milk heated up on the gas-stove!"

"Yes, Diana."

She went out. Savagely she strode along. Christie! Christie! Her very heart seemed to be aching the more. Christie like this! She almost ran to the doctor's, who received her with a smile. Desperately she blarneyed the nurse.

"I'll be ready," she promised hot, "in ten minutes. Will you wait for me?"

"No; I'll get back!" Diana protested. She stepped out of the surgery, almost running into a crowd of excited people which came surging past the door. She heard an excited cry.

"It's a fire!"

"Oh, get out of my way!" Diana snarled impatiently.

She pushed through the crowd, exchanging elbow jabs for elbow jabs. A fire! What a crowd of sensation-seeking shrewd people were! A fire—when Christine had lost her voice, when her own glorious future trembled in the balance!

"Back! The Courtfield fire-engine comes rushing up the street, hunting past her with a clangor of bells. Neither she nor the beauty fire!"

She hurried on.

"More and more people! It was a wonder where they all came from.

"Where's the fire?" someone shouted.

"Cherry Lane!" came the reply.

"What!"

Diana, arrested by the name, stood still. With a nameless fear juggling sublimely at her heart, she hurried on. Then she saw, as she reached the end of the street, the great cloud of smoke and smoke that was flying upwards. Cherry Lane! By Jove, there was a fire there! And—and—No! It couldn't be!

But it was!

No. 5!

She thought of Christine, of Bobbie, of Christine's mother.

"Here, let me come!" she cried.

The street was packed. But Diana, resolute in her anxiety, simply forced her way along. News—news! What a roar! What heat! And then at last she stood on the edge of the crowd, gazing with fear at the conflagration in front of her. What a blaze!

Three fire-engines were already on the scene, the brass helmets of the firemen glowing red gold in the reflection of the flames. She saw Bobbie on the side of the cleared aisle in front of the house—Bobbie, who, with his heart out, was fearfully protesting:

"Well, when I struck the match to light the gas-stove, the head flew off and set fire to the curtains!"

And near Bobbie, lying on a stretcher, another figure, limp, unconscious—Christine!

"Well, thank goodness, Bobbie and Christine were safe! But what about Mrs. Smithson? Where was she?"

And then from the crowd went up a terrified, horrified shriek:

"Look!"

Diana gazed anxiously up at the house. Voices were shrieking. In the upstairs window, in a frame of smoke and flame, appeared for a moment a white face that Diana instantly recognized—a face that was convulsed by fear, Mrs. Smithson! Something seemed to snap in Diana's brain. She hardly realized what she did then. She ran. That was enough.

"Come back!" a voice called.

But Diana did not come back. She was making for the door.

She reached it. Clanking in the pall, closing her eyes, she strode through the fog of smoke, and groped blindly into the living-room. It was slight. A tongue of flame darted towards her. She gave back, gasped, then fiercely fought her way on.

Where was the door leading to the bedroom? There it was, crackling, spluttering in flames. From top to bottom. Without thinking, Diana rushed for the lavatory. She felt the doors locking about her, heard her wrist. She was conscious in a dull fashion of the terrific pain that suddenly seared her fingers. She found the

knob—very hot! She pulled—ugh!—and down, with a clatter and a roar, the whole blazing door came tumbling. Flaming only to land a blazing panel aside, Diana stumbled up the stairs.

Now!

Into the bed-room she fought her way. Floor, bed, washstand were all well alight. But she saw, with a thrill, the figure that lay beneath the window.

Almost unconsciously, Diana noticed that the woman had dressed. Blindly she groped her way towards her—hoisted her up. How limp, how light the woman was! Outside came a roar.

There—snick, snick, snick! Up ran the escape, perched upon its topmost ring a brass-breasted woman. Crash! went his arm as, with one bloodcurdling stroke, he smashed the window out of its frame.

"Give her to me!" he cried. "You can never get back!"

Diana eyed him. Then, staggering, she handed her burden over. The fireman took it, looked at her.

"All right!" Diana gasped. "I can manage!"

More dead than alive, she clambered on the sill. From the crowd below came a cheer. Gamping, dazed, she nevertheless managed to work her way down the escape. Reeling, she stood for a moment at its base, holding on to one of the rungs. There with a crack, the roof of the house gave in. There came a roar:

"Back! Back! Back away!"

Diana felt herself seized, felt herself hoisted back. Without fully realizing how she got there, she found herself among the crowd. Mrs. Smithson was saved! Thank goodness for that! She heard somebody shouting:

"Where's the girl? Where's the girl who saved her?"

But Diana had gone by that time. She was on her way to Courtfield, to wash and tidy up before returning to school. Characteristic of the Firebrand it was that, while she eyed the lime-light for her own ambition, she cared it not at all in circumstances such as these. The thing she wanted was generously, irrevocably, Christine had lost her voice. Christine was at that moment unconscious! How was health, stinging and burning like fury, told her that, had everything else been as it should have been, she could never have played the piano at the concert.

Diana felt nothing of a heroine as she trudged into the night. She felt instead just a baffled and rather miserable girl.

The Diploma Is Won



"I'm going! I'm going!"

Lily Walters protested passionately.

"But, Lily, you go—"

"Lily!"

"I'm going, I tell you!"

"Not what," Barbara passionately inquired, "can you do if you go, Lily? You don't know where Diana is. Please, Lily, for goodness' sake, do get back to bed!" she added despairingly. "Nothing you can do will save her now! She's already been spotted!"

"Yes; get back to bed!" growled Lydia Crossendale's voice.

Lily protested. The scene was the Fourth Form dormitory. Lily stood at the doorway of the dormitory, already dressed for going out.

Diana had not come back. No one knew where she was. Lily, wracked up to a point of unthinking frenzy, had been going out to find her beloved Diana, to bring her back, to do anything—anything—rather than remain in this tormenting doubt.

"Lily get back!" Babs protested. "If a mistress comes—"

"Care!" hissed Phyllis Howell indignantly.

There was a whisper. Lily, with one quivering look towards the door, scrambled back to bed. The door opened; the lights flashed on. Into the room, walking stately, her face grim, came Miss Priceless. Behind her—and here everybody gasped—trailed a girl; a girl with a defiant, unconquerable smile upon her face, one hand concealed in a glove.

"Diana!" the mamma went round.

"Diana, you will go to bed!" Miss Priceless said. "You still refuse to say where you have been?"

"I do!"

"You know the penalty!"

"Oh, yes!" Diana said woefully.

Miss Priceless compressed her lips.

"Tomorrow, I shall send for your father to take you away."

Diana shrugged.

"And a lot of good that will do," she retorted. "My father is on the Continent until Monday!"

"Very well, I shall send for him on Monday," Miss Priceless said stiffly.

"Then you will leave Cliff House for ever. Meanwhile, you are to consider yourself expelled!"

Diana's careless drag implied that she did not care. Miss Priceless stood while she undressed. Wearily, more hurt in mind than in body, Diana climbed into bed. Miss Priceless turned out the light. There was a chorus of cries at once.

"Diana, you idiot!"

"Where have you been?"

"Oh, go to Justice!" Diana said crossly.

"Diana!" Lily choked. "Oh, Diana!"

"I'm sorry, kid; go to sleep!" Diana said.

And nothing more could be got out of her. Diana, obviously, was not in a mood to chatter. Significantly eye-like at times Diana could be, and cynicism, added to her disappointment, turned her from that moment into the sulky, scornful Firebrand they knew so well of late. Next morning she was besieged again.

"Diana, won't you tell us?" Babs asked.

"Cried! Why is it that you were so

glorious!" Marcelle Niquet asked.

"Because," Diana sneered, "I lost the lot one. I want to wear the other out!"

Strange girl! Even Lily could make nothing of her, when, after breakfast, she visited her in her study. To her, as to everybody, Diana maintained her silence, moodily confining herself to her own bitter, disillusioned thoughts. After breakfast there was another sensation.

"I say, Diana, do you know Christine Smithson's house was burnt down?" Babs asked.

"Well?" gazed Diana.

"And Christine and her mother are in hospital."

"Well?"

"And—and—" Babs paused, speaking her strangely. "It says in the morning paper that a girl rescued Christine's mother. The paper says it was one of the most splendid acts of heroism ever seen in Courtfield."

"How fearfully interesting!" Diana nodded. "And who was the girl?"

"That," Babs said, "was what I came to ask you! The girl got away without giving any particulars about herself. Do you know anything about it?"

"What should I know?" Diana retorted, and strode away.

And for the rest of that day she kept to her study, nursing her injured hand, whose gloved movement was provoking so little speculation at Cliff House. In the evening she heard and Lily singing—a heart-broken Lily, who drowned now the sentence that would be passed on Monday.

Moody, bitter indeed, was Diana. On Friday she went to the hospital, here to be informed that Christine was in a critical condition.

On Saturday—the concert. Diana, without saying anything to anyone, went to London.

And when the curtain went up at the European College of Music, Diana was there, hidden away in a back seat. Why she was there, she hardly knew. She wanted, perhaps, to hear Lily; perhaps to see Lily get her diploma now that her own prestige was no longer in the running!

Bulkily she watched an unopened programme clutched in her hand. This was to have been her day of triumph. There, at the piano she would have sat, outshining the audience with her playing, while Christine electrified them with her singing. And this was the end of it—Christine couldn't sing! She couldn't play!

The announcer came on.

"Miss Lily Wallace, accompanied by Miss Peggy Preston."

Diana closed her eyes. This should have been her moment. Here!

There were Peggy and Lily! And then, as Lily began to sing, Diana stiffened.

"Hark, hark, the lark." She had taught her that.

Unwittingly Lily began, gathering confidence as she went on. It was by no means Lily's best, but the audience roared for an encore. Then another.

"A lover and his love." Diana had also taught her that.

A moment's silence when the song had ended. Then the adjudicator:

"I am pleased to announce that the diploma has been awarded to Miss Lily Wallace."

Diana joined in the burst of clapping which went up, only to hit her back a sharp reminder of pain as she hit her injured hand. She was glad for Lily's sake. But that Babs & Co. should have such a crowd over her! Where was her highlight now!

She waited. Why wasn't the announcer going off! He held up a hand.

"Before I go, I want to say something else," he said. "There should have been another competitor for this diploma—Miss Christine Smithson. Unfortunately, owing to a flu which broke out at Miss Smithson's home the other night, she is now in hospital."

A murmur of sympathy went up.

"It was during the flu," the announcer went on, "that an unparalelled act of heroism was enacted by another girl. That girl, without thought for herself, risked her life in saving Miss Smithson's mother."

He paused.

"Just a few minutes before the roof caved in the girl entered the burning house and rescued Mrs. Smithson, who had collapsed. With great readiness she afterwards disappeared."

Diana shifted uneasily. What had this to do with the diploma award!

"You will be wondering why I am telling you all this," the man went on, with some agitation. "I should like, however, to go on. You all know me as Professor Smith, the head of this great college of music, but my real name is Smithson. For many years I have been seeking my wife and my children,

who thought I had been drowned. Through the publicity given to this unknown heroine of the flu, I am pleased to announce that I have traced them."

There was a murmur of excitement.

Diana sat up.

"And while I am here," the announcer went on, "I would like to do honour to the girl who has brought me, Christine, and her mother such great happiness. A girl," he went on with some emotion, "who helped this family some months ago, when they were in distress, who risked her own life to save a stranger, who did not know that one was recognized her on that night of the flu, A Dr. Wainfield, who can speak more convincingly than I of her high qualities." He cleared his throat. "I have," he said, "a present of a silver casket which I would like to give this girl as a mark of admiration and my deep gratitude towards her."

He paused.

"Will Miss Diana Royston-Clarke, of Cliff House School, please step this way?"

Cliff House sat electrified. Then—

"Diana!" a cry went up.

Diana rose. She saw Lily, tears of happiness on her face. She saw Babs & Co. looking at her. Everyone was staring. The hall was full of one name:

"Diana, Diana!"

Out from her seat she stepped. Such a roar of cheering went up! Head up, she walked to the platform where Mr. Smithson was waiting to receive her, where Lily greeted her with a great cry of delight.

She saw the casket, heard, as in a dream, Mr. Smithson's moving words, as he handed it to her. More cheer. Then murmuring, agitated, Miss Preston was before her.

"Diana, my—my dear girl, why didn't you tell me!"

Diana shrugged.

"Diana, please look at me! I am sorry! Of course," Miss Preston staired proceeds, "I couldn't think of expelling you now!"

Diana smiled.

"Thank you," she said.

"But I do hope, my dear Diana, you will try to spend your years in future!"

Diana smiled again.

"And," Babs blurted out, "oh, Diana, I do—oh, I do—think you're splendid, old girl! We've never been against you, really. We've always liked you, and still do. Diana, it's ever now! You're not the one to bear malice. Will you shake?"

And frankly Babs held out her hand. Diana, with a rather twisted smile, put her own into it.

"Bless the glass," she murmured, "and don't squeeze too hard!"

A murmur—

A what a terrific whirl of excitement it all was—with Lily almost crying in her happiness. Lily, the contorted wail of the Courtfield shawl, now a diploma

winner in the European College of Music; Lily, with her future secured, who next week would leave Cliff House to embark upon a career which should lift her to the highest pinnacle of fame! With Babs & Co. dancing with delight, and the whole of Cliff House enthusiastically clamouring about its two heroines!

What a whirl! How happy everybody was! And through it all, Diana maintained her pose; hardly smiling, rarely speaking! Under her arm she tucked the silver casket; in her hand she carried still the programme which she had not even looked at.

Unwitting, she was, when at the banquet that followed the concert, she sat on the right hand of Mr. Smithson, with Lily, radiant, at her side. Unwitting, she was going back to Cliff House in the train.

And, arriving there, Diana immediately went to her study, leaving Lily to the praise of a delighted school. There she put the casket on the table, took off her clothes, and, dropping into the armchair, stared unseeing, but contentedly, into the fire.

Strange, the thoughts which must have been passing through her mind. Queer that combination of a smile which now and again flitted across her handsome features. She stirred. From the table she coldly picked up the programme, still with its seal unbroken.

Deliberately she broke the seal; deliberately opened it, and stared at the printed notes set forth. The programme had been posted before the disaster at the Smithson's home, when Christine was still a candidate for honours. She stared at her list.

"Miss Diana Royston-Clarke presents Christine Smithson."

It seemed to glow before her eyes! In a moment all those great ambitions, those darling hopes, those extravagant dreams of fame, came rushing back! The folly, the mockery, the futility of it all!

Her lips compressed. There was a hard light in her eyes as she scanned the programme again. Then, with a short, bitter laugh, she tore the programme from end to end, folded it, tore it again and again.

Danahly, then, she dropped the pieces in the wastepaper-basket at her side, flaking her fingers together, as though they had been contaminated by contact.

"And that," she breathed, "is the end of that!"

She rose. For a moment she stood, her eyes going to the casket. She smiled bitterly, twistedly. Obeying a sudden impulse, she snatched it up, glanced, and then, with the same "don't care" gesture, dropped it beside the broken fragments in the basket!

She laughed—sharply, breathlessly. Then, with the old cynical, moody smile on her face, she went out.

Strange girl—Diana!
END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

IN NEXT SATURDAY'S "SCHOOLGIRL"

You will read how Barbara Redfern & Co. attempt to solve the amazing mystery of

"THE SKATER IN THE SCARLET MASK"

This brilliant story by Hilda Richards is complete in next week's issue, and features all your favourites of the Fourth. Don't miss it!

THE GIRL WITH A FALSE NAME: An Exciting Instalment of This Powerful Morcove Mystery Serial



HER SECRET AT SWANLAKE

By **MARJORIE STANTON**



Her Reckoning Hour?

"**THAT'S** strange!"

"Yes—
"What's made her go like that?"

It was a moment of great excitement in the drawing-room at Swanlake.

Betty Barton and others who had arrived from Morcove School only a few minutes since for another rehearsal of their gala week play, were aware at the girl they knew as Claire Ferrard.

She had suddenly fainted—and why? None could tell. Not, of course, was this a time for debating the strange occurrence. As a girl who, without a moment's warning, was suddenly down upon the floor, in an inert heap, they had instantly to do their best for her.

Betty and Pam Willoughby were two who promptly went upon their knees beside the sufferer. Others wisely took back, as crowding around would be the worst possible thing for her. Madge Mindem, with free promise of speed, ran out of the room to fetch a glass of cold water.

But that first-aid remedy was not required, after all. Before Madge returned, the girl who had been faintly lifted up and placed upon a couch was opening her eyes. After a firm but unobtrusive stare, she faintly pleaded:

"Sorry. I—I—I'll go up to my room."

"But, Claire," came Pam's concerned remark, "shall I ring up for a doctor?"

"Oh no; don't be silly!" was the feebly smiled protest. "I—I'm all right. It was only—only a sort of exhaustion that came over me."

"But why?" several of them chorused.

"I hope," interposed Lady Evelyn Knight, "it has nothing to do with yesterday's accident in Kester, when you just missed being run over by my car?"

"Oh, that?" faltered she. "Claire Ferrard," while she insisted upon

FOR NEW READERS
PAM WILLOUGHBY of Morcove School has become a show-girl in order that she may have time to act as hostess to

CLAIRE FERRARD—a girl who, after living all her life on a sheep station in Australia, has come into a fortune. Could she be able to settle down in England she is to stay with the Willoughbys at their stylish home—Swanlake.

VIVIANE MUNRO, having heard of Claire's fortune, wishes to take her place. She meets Claire and tells a plausible story to the effect that the fortune is wanted by the police. She represents herself as an amateur detective and offers to help Claire in the Red Wing at Swanlake until she can clear her name. Claire consents, and Viviane arrives at Swanlake to be welcomed as the real Claire Ferrard. But

BETTY BARTON, one of Pam's Morcove friends, is at once suspicious of Viviane. The real Claire Ferrard is discovered, but, as she is suffering from concussion, she can tell nothing. One evening at Swanlake, Viviane, faced with a sudden threat of exposure, tells untruths.

(Now read on.)

standing up. "Well, of course, I have been—or—rather feeling the effects all day. Not that I was hurt—just the twisted ankle, you know. But—but I suppose my nerves were left all upset. Can't think of any other reason."

With an obviously forced smile that asked all present to forget the incident, she drifted across the great room to the door. Offered assistance was declined. She went out alone, and those who had been eager to see her safely up to her room could only come away from the door, looking perplexed.

"Strange!" was noted again by several Morcovians.

"From the very first," Betty gratefully remarked, "Claire Ferrard has been strange."

Then Pally turned to Lady Evelyn, that charming daughter of the Earl and Countess of Lundy, who had

turned up by surprise at Swanlake, to display obvious interest in the junior's amateur theatricals.

"It seemed to me, Lady Evelyn, if you Claire a bad turn to be introduced to you just then."

"Just what I was thinking," her youthful ladyship nodded, in astonishment. "Yet I can't imagine why, unless—"

"Oh, I wonder if that was it?" My looking at her a second time, after I'd asked about giving a false name to the policeman in Kester. You remember, I said I felt like doing that—"

"But you were only joking!" Betty cried. "You never did give a false name."

"Of course, I didn't!" Lady Evelyn laughed. "But your Claire Ferrard did."

"What?"

"I was standing by when the policeman had his notebook out. That girl who has just gone upstairs—Claire Ferrard, you say her name is?—But the name she gave to the policeman was Viviane Munro."

"Never?"

"Oh, if you doubt me, ring up the Kester police!" said her youthful ladyship. "It's all on their accident book."

"Of course, we don't doubt you," Pally said excitedly. "But how strange again! And the address she gave—Swanlake, of course?"

"No. It was no address in Brighton."

"Really? Well!"

"But how?"

"Belas, what is digging?" Naomi Nakara had now to offer her shrill comment, "as girl had not mentioned your car, Lady Evelyn, she why should she want to dodge at police?"

"Rather stupidly, I suppose, she thought it a good way of avoiding her—correspondence. She was in a great hurry to get away from the crowd."

"I don't like the idea of a false name and address," Pam expressed

"Under any circumstances, Claire shouldn't have done it."

"So she fainted," Betty inferred, wearing a hard-thinking frown, "because she suddenly knew that you knew she had given the false address. Well, I can understand her feeling ashamed. I still can't understand her fainting for a thing like that."

"No more can I," exclaimed Polly. "But, there! It would take more time than we have to spare to tell Lady Evelyn all the many things about Claire that we have been unable to understand."

"I think somebody should run up just to make sure that Claire is all right now," Pam remarked. "I'll go!"

"No, I will, Pam."

That was "Miss Blank," who had been silent up till now, white feeling as concerned as any near the upset. It was like her, the mystery girl, for when Betty & Co. had formed such an affection, to add considerably:

"You girls want to make the most of your time—especially as Lady Evelyn has come. I'll give an eye to Claire Ferrand."

"Thank! And 'Good of you!' were the appreciative cries as Miss Blank hurried away.

"Now she!" was Lady Evelyn's admiring exclamation, as soon as the door had closed behind Miss Blank. "I like her."

"We all do," said Pam warmly. "And we just long for her to get quite right again."

"You mean—her memory?"

"Mind's a complete blank—you. No silly fainting about her," Polly rattled on. "As for false names and addresses—the only wishes she could tell us her own proper name, and where she belongs, but she just can't remember."

Lady Evelyn smiled, looking very sympathetic.

"I saw something about it all in the local rag. She was found, at dead of night, lying insensible at the bottom of a flight of stairs!"

"In the east wing—yes," Pam rejoined. "Come up now, Lady Evelyn, to the east wing, and we can show you a few things that will help you to understand. We'd want you to go up with us, in any case, for our dresses for the play are up there, and we'd like you to see them."

Their going up meant passing by the closed door of Claire Ferrand's bedroom. And so the sound of a dropping foot in the long corridor near Swanlake's apartment as an excuse for going to Miss Blank, who was with her in the room:

"Don't, stay here, please, fusing over me. I've quite all right, really. I'll be coming along in a few minutes to take my part in the play."

"Right—do, then!"

And a moment later when "Claire Ferrand," left to herself, could stretch her false smile, and look—as she was feeling—like one whose reckoning hour was nigh!

A Guilty Mind

"**Q**UITE all right," she had declared herself to be, just then. But what a mockery, those words!

Now, indeed, it seemed as if her daring course were run. That Barcombe Castle girl had heard her give her real name—Vivienne Mauro—to that policeman yesterday.

Fatal slip of the tongue, that had been! At the time, she had feared it might prove her complete undoing.

Afterwards, she had felt less frightened, had told herself that it was not going to matter, after all. The incident was closed! It was not as if that mis-lap in her in the busy street could have any serious sequel.

But Fate had so decreed it all, that now she knew. The very girl who had looked up the car just in time to avoid a serious accident—that girl was Lady Evelyn Knight! Daughter of the Earl and Countess of Landy, and they were the organizers of that Gala Week in aid of Barcombe charities, for which Betty and the rest were getting up a play!

Vivienne Mauro, who had believed, only a short while ago, that she had all the daring in the world, paled about her bed-room as a caught tiger might rage about his cage.

No use, she felt, telling oneself that one was not caught—yet! There was the stern fact to be faced; the trap was surely closing!

Delay, now, over that flight from Swanlake, for which she had held herself prepared; delay by even an hour longer—and she might be too late.

From the very first, those Morocco girls had been suspicious of her. In particular, that Betty!

In her, the girl who was the Form's capable captain, once at Morocco School, there had been a girl to go to fear of. Doubt, suspicion, had existed, and Betty Baerton's was not a brain to abandon a problem simply because, day after day, that problem seemed only to become more difficult.

"Always thinking about me—of course she is!" Vivienne raged to herself. "Always talking with the rest of the girls about me! And now I've given them that to wonder about! Why, I fainted at sight of Lady Evelyn, who'll have told them I gave a different name to the policeman yesterday!"

She came to a standstill, for her heart sank as passing her again. And suddenly she gasped with increased dismay.

Listen!

The infinity would be gone in a day or two. But whilst it lasted, dare she think of fleeing? If, by morning, she was gone from Swanlake, then all the vague suspicion about her would crystallize into certainty that she was up to no good. There would be a hue and cry for her, which meant the police being asked to look out for a girl who slipped!

So that settled it. For good or ill she must stay on beneath this roof.

"Oh, and pull yourself together!" she suddenly mouthed to herself. "Where's the nerve you used to have? A pack of school-girls—mere kids! What if they have been trying to catch you tripping—saying their hardest to connect you with that affair of 'Miss Blank' in the east wing? The fact remains they've prised nothing yet—nothing!"

A little after this she was telling herself that it was the last time she would give way to panic. She realized that only temporary lameness had prevented her from doing the very thing to convince the girls that their suspicions were well founded.

There must be no holding away from Swanlake, leaving them to find out that she was suddenly gone. But if, after a day or two, she spoke of making that post-office trip to London, her sudden having got all right again, how could they see anything suspicious in that?

Suddenly she heard all of them rattling past her door again. They had come away from the east wing, and by the nature of their chatter she could tell that they were taking things down-

stairs with them to the drawing-room for the rehearsal.

Vivienne heard "Miss Blank" being excitedly thanked by one or two of the juniors, for much useful needlework that she had done, so that some of the stage costumes were now the perfect fit.

There was no tap at the door, no cough: "You coming down, Claire?" All the same, she meant to go down and take her part, now that she was once her dancing self again. Her abhorred interest in the amateur theatricals would still be—as it had been from the first—so much dead in their eyes. At least, so she hoped!

Only, what extreme wastefulness was hers, in want to realize that the best she could hope for now was to escape the penalty of her daring fraud!

Even if she had the luck to go on a day or two longer at Swanlake, there could be no getting half of the real Claire's ruses. Not even a part of them!

She had been talked in that clever plan of hers to obtain the Ferrand jewels. All that she had obtained, so far, was a fifty-pound cheque. And what would the lawyer think of a Claire Ferrand who wrote as soon, asking for another cheque?

"He'd never send it," she concluded, passing from her own to go downstairs. "Not that they'd odd bend, when he could serve me a mean trick like that over the pearls! Claire Ferrand, to him, is much too young to be allowed anything!"

Gay piano music was coming from the drawing-room. It was Madge's own lively overture for the play, but it was not being listened to—except, no doubt, by young Lady Evelyn, hearing it for the first time. Vivienne could hear the girls' dressing remarks as one another's skirt getting ready for the play's opening chorus.

Just outside the drawing-room door she felt bound to loiter, taking a full minute to get a good grip on her nerve. She had got to go in and face them all, after giving them cause for increased suspicion. The strain was becoming too terrible to be borne. Supposing—supposing they had suddenly put two and two together! Supposing they had suddenly guessed that she was not Claire Ferrand, but only an impostor!

Her nerves passing resulted in her entering just as Madge stood up the overture, with some final crashing bars. The music ceased, and that made an equally sudden break off of chatter all the more apparent to guilty-minded Vivienne.

Then one of the Morocco girls spoke across to her. It was Polly Linton, asking dryly:

"How do you feel now—Vivienne Mauro?"

She Was Afraid!

VIVIENNE came not a step farther into the crowded room.

She stood, checked to a standstill, as if by a gauntlet thrown down as a challenge to a fight.

There had been a deliberate utterance of the name that was really hers—Vivienne Mauro! How could she have been, but whilst she was doing her best to put on a bold, impudent front, she could have her heart beating.

"Very funny," she tacitly answered Polly. "So you've heard how I gave a different name yesterday—"

"Yes—Vivienne!"

It was an answer from all the Morocco girls, in chorus.

"I don't mind your knowing!" she flared out at them all. "I've nothing to be ashamed of!"

Then, in her desperate, blistering state, she strode towards young Lady Evelyn.

"But you?" Vivienne pointed. "I think you might have had the decency to hold your tongue about yesterday! I did say to that policeman anything!"

Lady Evelyn smiled.

"I scarcely think you, Claire—or Vivienne, or whoever you want to call yourself—are the one to tell me how to do the decent thing. Was it doing the decent thing yourself, when you gave a false name and address?"

"It was nothing! Only that I was flustered—"

"Oh, so that was the reason!" Betty quickly commented. "You didn't stop to think of a false name?"

"Just remember—Vivienne now addressed them all wildly—"I had fallen down in the road and had just picked myself up. I had no time to think—"

"Oh, you had no time to think! I was!"

"Betty again! It left Vivienne glaring at her, as a witness who has gone to prison and places at a calm cross-examination is court.

"May I," interposed Lady Evelyn sweetly, "as I am being blamed for mentioning the matter? I'd just like you to remember, Claire—or Vivienne!—that I was the driver of that car in front of which you stepped off the pavement without looking. I think you owed it to me to leave your true name and address with the police!"

"Oh, rubbish! The accident was nothing. I knew that at the time."

"And yet," Betty put in, looking Vivienne in the eyes very sweetly, "you did give a false name and address! But then, as you as good as said just now, you did that without thinking!"

Vivienne stood reduced to silence. She felt herself to be cornered.

"In other words," Betty added on, "Vivienne Moore, as a name to give the police—came naturally! You hadn't time to think, being so confused!"

"What are you driving at!" Vivienne raged out furiously. "Look here, I've had enough of it! I'm done with the lot of you! Get somebody else to take my part in your rubbishy play! Where's Pam?"

She stepped out that girl with her wild eyes.

"Pam, you quite understand; as soon as my ankle is all right, I shall pack and leave! If I feel fit enough by the morning I shall go then."

"Yes, well—"

"I am tired of being mistrusted, insulted—as you know I have been all along!"

"You do such strange things, Claire. There has been so much to make us—"

"There's been nothing. It's simply that you're a lot of self-important kids. Taking advantage of Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby being away from home—that's what you're doing! Junkies of me, because of the fortune I've come into—that's what you are!"

"Ahmed—"

"It's the plain truth!" she stamped.

"A more affectionate set of girls I couldn't imagine!"

"I won't," Pam protested quietly, "have you say that, Claire Ferrand."

"But I do say it, to your faces!"

"And I say this," said Morocco's "little lady of Swanslake," with a good deal of her mother's composure, "it's utterly unjust. Why have my shares been coming over to Swanslake to reimburse the play? Why did we ask you to take part in it? You know very

well, Claire, the idea at the start, that we were to try to give you a good time at Swanslake. But—"

"I won't listen!" Vivienne struck in, and took retreating steps towards the door. "I asked to what I have said, and if I can get away in the morning, I will! As for the play—I know it's for a good cause. But I can easily help that cause in my own way. With all my money!"

She came back a step.

"I can give money to the fund!" she boomed. "And that's better than your charging people to see you show off—how wonderful you are at acting. Acting!" she laughed, going away to the door again. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Alone!

And she was gone.

Over in the hall, after slamming the drawing-room door behind her, Vivienne laughed to herself.

Splendid, to have had that row with them all—a final "heat up!"

Now nothing could be suspected, if she pushed and left, come morning.

Better still—when she was in her wildest state, just then, as she had come to her like an inspiration. Money for the Gals Week effort! There was a grand excuse for writing to the lawyer for another cheque, so soon after receiving that fifty pounds. Run, be, with his news and busy notions about what a girl of Claire Ferrand's age should do and want, could not refuse her a cheque in the dearest of charity!

She looked at her wrist-watch. There would be just time for her to get off a letter by this evening's post. As the

lawyer himself was away in the north, she would ask that the matter be attended to at once by whoever had been left in charge at the London office.

So, next minute, she clicked on a shaded light, at a writing-table in Swanslake's handsome library, and dashed off the note. To make certain of the cheque coming by return post, she went into details.

"This idea of making a contribution to the funds" (she wrote), "came to me only this afternoon, when Lady Evelyn Knight called at Swanslake and I heard her for all about the efforts that are being made. I at once made up my mind that I would give a cash subscription, at once, so as to encourage others."

"I do not think a hundred pounds would be too much for me to give, when I have had the good fortune to come into such a pile."

"Another thing, I feel that this is my best way of repaying the Willoughbys for letting me be at Swanslake. They are, of course, very keen, to make the Gals Week effort a crashing success."

"So will you please let me have the cheque for £100 by return of post. There it will take it along to Baccoscombe Castle."

"Will it?" Vivienne grinned, blotting the sheet of letter-paper to turn over. "That hundred-pound cheque gets cashed by me, so soon as I get hold of it."

And then—then indeed she could fit, having contrived after all to feather her nest.



VIVienne turned from the window, and there was the real Claire Ferrand, staring at her with a strange expression. And in that moment, the impostor knew a terrible dread; had Claire remembered everything, at last?

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

M^y DEAR READERS,—You'll remember I told you that my niece Christine went abroad for winter sports at Christmas? Well, the other day I received a long, long letter from her, describing all her adventures—on, at least, one particularly exciting adventure. Let Christine recount her escapade in her own words:

"We started out one morning to climb the glacier. There were six of us in the party, among them our guide—a marvelous man with a character built in his face (at least that's what it looked like) and alpenstocks, ski-poles and things. I felt like I was 'conquering the Alps.' (Napoleon or Alexander, perhaps, but not Caesar!)—Ha."

"We started away in the slip, all roared together, and soon we were right up on the glacier, with the most marvelous view."

"Then we had lunch. It was gorgeous, and the man was quite hot, though there was some controversy. But presently the man went in behind bushes of clouds and our guide said that there was snow coming and so we had better return."

"Sure enough, before we'd gone very far down the glacier it came on to snow and our guides' are a thing. I was lost in the line and I was pretty nervous because I knew there was a possibility on one side of the glacier—I'd seen it in my dream."

"It snowed and it blew and we all felt pretty miserable, when all of a sudden a great chunk of the snow under my feet seemed to give way and I fell flat."

"And before I knew what was happening I was sliding and sliding right towards that precipice I mentioned, of course, and grabbed the rope with all my might. And then, suddenly the rope went slack in my hands and I realized that it had broken."

I'm afraid the conclusion of Christine's account must wait until next Saturday or there won't be any space for me to tell you about all the good things in next week's *Swanlake*.

The *Club House* complete story starts Phyllis Howell and Barbara Redford, and is a grand tale of mystery and adventure. All your favorites of the famous Fourth one to the fore in a tale that'll thrill you from first to last.

Look out for it under the title of

"THE SEASIDE IN THE SCARLET HAZEL"

By Hilda Richards.

"HER SECRET AT SWANLAKE" and "MISS MYSTERY OF CARNIVAL LAND," our two topping serials, will continue to delight you next week, and there will, of course, be another merry complete tale starting **HAPPY-GO-LUCKY LULA**.

PAT'S PAGES will appear as usual next Saturday. (Yes, I know that there are only three pages of **OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS** in this issue, but that is an account of the extra length of the *Club House* School story; next Saturday there will be **FOUR** pages as usual.)

I do hope you have told all your chums about the fine features now appearing in *THE SWANLAKE*.

With best wishes,

YOUR EDITOR.

After placing the letter on a hall-table, to go off with others presently, she went upstairs to her own room, shutting herself off from Betty & Co. with another violent slam.

The banged door was one way of proclaiming injured innocence. Owing to the weekend, it would be Monday morning before that couple could meet. Still, she was not going to be at all "jumpy" about having to wait as long as that. The real Claire could not be on the point of recovering her lost memory, or surely the girl would have left some recollection stirring within her mind just now.

"They called me 'Vivienne Masaro' in front of her, and even that," the impostor chuckled, "had no effect upon her!"

Presently she heard Lady Evelyn drive away, and a little later Pam's Marrovo coach went off in the Swanlake car, back to Marrovo School.

Vivienne was looking aside a bed-room curtain, peering out, as a last exchange of good-nights took place between Pam, on the gravel, and the girls in the car.

"Yes, good-night, the lot of you!" Vivienne decided them, under her breath. "Good-night, you dearest Betty—but not so clever that I won't have the laugh of you, after all! By this time Monday it will have become—good-bye!"

She let the window curtain fall back, turned round—and there, at the doorway, having entered silently, was the real Claire Ferrand, with a strange, staring expression.

Miss Black was staring hard at her—Vivienne—as if trying to remember:

44 HMM! Once again Vivienne was

having to appear unconcerned. "So they've gone again! Come to put in a good word for them!"

"No, I don't see any call for that."
"Oh, I see!"—it is a little laugh.
"You don't think there was any need for me to go off the deep end? Any way, my quarrel isn't with you, Vivienne silkily added.

Miss Black received this in silence, still looking as if she were thinking about something else. After a few moments, Vivienne threw out an airy: "Well!"

"The sorry if my coming to your room again is tiresome, but—oh, it's so difficult for me to explain how I feel, all of a sudden."

"About me?"

"In a way—yes. But really about—about everything!" was the troubled response. "You see, just now it was as if—as if something in a corner of my brain had sort of whispered: 'That's the only way I can describe a—feeling that my memory was coming back.'"

It seemed to bear a name better spoken—Vivienne Masaro."

The impostor, plunged back into a state of neural panic, managed to burst out laughing.

"Vivienne Masaro?" But that's the name I gave, so stupidly, yesterday."

"I know it is. And, of course, I've been hearing the Marrovo girls speaking at this evening. It may simply have impressed itself upon your mind as a name quite fresh to me. Only—I don't know! I did feel as if I had heard it before."

"Oh, that's too funny!" Vivienne

steepled. "But don't think I want to laugh at you, dear. I'm really terrible sorry for you! How I wish you could get your memory back! What ever will you do if you don't?"

"But I think I shall—yes, soon now!" her hapless victim exclaimed, with a brightening face. "Anyway, it was a sort of feeling just then—"

"Did you say anything to the girls about it?"

"Oh, no! As it had to do with the name of Vivienne Masaro—at least, as it seemed—I felt I must come upstairs to you, and—ah—well, look at you!"

"I got you?" she laughed again.

"And now that you have, does it help you?"

"No, and I'm sorry—I mean, I'm sorry for having bothered you!" pleaded Miss Black, unconcernedly. "Oh, it could have been nothing, after all, to do with the name before my accident! There's some confusion just at present, she sighed, scrapping a hand across her forehead. "Although I haven't felt like that before this evening, not confused."

"It's quite all right, and please don't think I'm offending," Vivienne parried.

"I can imagine your mind will, for a bit, serve you queer tricks. I shall come down again to-night, as I'll say good-night now. Hope you get a good night's rest when the time comes!"

"Thank you, Claire! But why stay up here for the rest of the evening? Why not come down now, and be with Pam?"

"Oh, no! I'm done with Pam, as I'm done with the others! I've made up my mind to leave Swanlake in the morning, whether my uncle's all right again or not. I shall come down in the morning—after Pam has gone off to school!"

She said it, in sudden fresh terror as she was of this Miss Black—the real Claire—being on the point of recovering her lost memory. "Thank goodness for the timely warning! Could there be the slightest doubt the girl had very nearly remembered something [just now!]

Very nearly she had remembered having dealings with a girl whose name was Vivienne Masaro!

"And now how am I going to pass even another night under this roof?" ran the impostor's mind, in its renewed state of panic. "But I must, and sleepily chance it! How can I—how can I go before the morning?"

She was alone again, wanting to shriek with rage at having been balked once more.

That hundred-pound cheque—she would never get hold of it now. She dare not wait for it! The morning simply must find her gone from Swanlake—and the cheque could not possibly arrive before Monday.

She could, of course, leave word that she would look in on Monday, just to pick up any letters that had come for her. But how was she going to leave, on Monday, that conditions were safe for her to do that?

What, in the district, would it be safe for her to stay? Within an hour of the real Claire Ferrand's getting her memory back, the police could be hunting for her—Vivienne Masaro. Where, then—where could she go into hiding, in case of a hue and cry?

"I know!" she suddenly whispered herself. "I did it once before; I'll do it again! The attic at Marrovo School!"

ONCE again Swanlake's impostor has decided on a daring move. You will be longing to read next Saturday's thrilling chapters of this powerful serial, in order to learn what happens as a result of her decision, so do not on any account miss your copy of **THE SCHOOL-GIRL**. Order it at once—and remind your chums to do the same.