

"NO HOLDING THE FIREBRAND!" Grand Long Complete Story of the Cliff House Chums Appears Inside.

# THE SCHOOLGIRL

No. 435. Vol. 17.  
Week Ending  
NOV. 27th. 1937.

EVERY **2<sup>D</sup>** SATURDAY

Incorporating  
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



## DIANA THE RECKLESS!

Just like the Firebrand of the Fourth to canter past with a flourish, heedless of startling Babs & Co.'s mounts!

(See this week's unusual story of Cliff House School.)

Magnificent Complete Story of the Cliff House Chums, featuring Barbara Redfern &amp; Co.—



## No Holding

### Not as Diana Intended!



"Oh, well ridden, Margot! Rippling! Real giddy old steeple chase," Clara Trevlyn grinned.

"Grand! Stunning!"

breathed Barbara Redfern.

"Yes, rather, you know! Nun-nearly as well as I could do it," plump Bessie Bunter glowed. "Did I ever tell you, Babs, that my uncle, Lord Dilwater de Bunter, once won the Grand Derby?"

"At which there came a chuckle. Dear old Bessie, always drawing upon that very vivid imagination of hers.

"Grand Derby!" chortled tomboy Clara. "Sure you don't mean the Wimbledon boat-race, Bessie? But look! There goes Margot again! Gee whizzikins, what a leap!"

What a leap indeed!

It was certain that Margot Lantham, of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School, was no ordinary horsewoman.

But that, perhaps, was not surprising. For Margot Lantham, daughter of Lord and Lady Lantham of Lantham Towers, had been used to horses all her life. At an age when most girls were thrilling in the throes of their first hockey match, Margot had actually ridden to hounds. Since the days of Philipps Derwent, indeed, there had been no finer horsewoman in Cliff House School than Margot Lantham.

Not, to be sure, that Cliff House had realised those facts until recently. Margot was not given to boasting. Until the opening of the Copse Cottage Riding

Stables on the Eastbourne Road, indeed, nobody had even associated Margot Lantham with horses.

But the opening of those stables had made a great difference to the activities of Margot and had, incidentally, opened up a new and wildly exciting future for quite a number of the girls at Cliff House School.

A great many of the girls there rode in an indifferent way. A great many others were keen to learn, and on this bright November day quite a crowd of Cliff House juniors were gathered by the

and Janet Jordan, whose first mounts had been the Arab ponies of her father's circus.

Lydia Crossendale was there, too—Lydia, snob in this as in all things, who prided herself upon being frightfully upstage and county, but who really could only just manage to sit a horse. Rosa Rodworth, the Stormy Petrel of the Fourth, was also among the number.

By the gate of the paddock those girls formed an unconsciously pretty group in their jumpers and their jodhpurs, as they all watched the elegant Margot,

A new sport for Cliff House School. Horse-riding. Great enthusiasm amongst Barbara Redfern & Co., and great enthusiasm from Diana Royston-Clarke, the Firebrand of the Fourth Form. As ever, Diana wants to be to the front—wants to shine in the limelight of horse-riding honours. But when she finds that her study-mate and chum, Margot Lantham, bids fair to outshine her, then Diana becomes the turbulent rather unscrupulous Firebrand of old!

gate of the large paddock which adjoined the stables.

Clara Trevlyn, the tomboyish games captain, who loved horses and had ridden with indifferent skill for many years, was there, in company with Barbara Redfern, captain of the Fourth Form.

Leila Carroll, the American junior, who had had her first equestrienne experience in Hollywood, was there, too. Jemima Carstairs, who knew more about horses than most, was with them. So were golden-haired Mabel Lynn, in the throes of learning,

who now for the third time came leaping over the last hurdle.

That dear old duffer, Bessie Bunter, who at Cliff House shared Study No. 4 with Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn, was seated on a wooden dummy horse, where she had been learning how to hold the reins. She beamed down at the group of girls.

"I sus-say, that was ripping, you know! Good old Margot!"

Ripping it was! Beautiful, in fact! If she had been part of the horse itself Margot could not have swept over the

—and that strange mixture of good and bad, Diana Royston-Clarke.



# the Firebrand!

hurdle with greater ease and greater grace. It was just fascinating to watch her. Marvellous that automatic ease with which she did the right thing at exactly the right moment! The big chestnut hunter beneath her—a horse which Margot's parents had only recently bought for her, and which had not earned the name of Tartar for nothing—seemed to take the hurdle in his stride.

"Oh, well done, Margot!" cried Barbara Redfern involuntarily.

Margot, laughing, bright-faced and beaming, waved her hand as she pulled her steed's head round and trotted back to join them.

"Like it?" she asked.  
"Like it! It—it was marvellous!" Barbara said. "My only giddy aunt! If only I could jump like that! Lovely horse," she said, looking at the glossy-coated Tartar, "and so jolly quiet and docile when you handle him. What's the secret, Margot?"

Margot laughed again as she affectionately patted the neck of her mount. "No secret at all," she said. "Tartar and I just understand each other, that's all! She dropped her pretty face close to the hanging mane, and affectionately stroked a glossy ear. "Tartar is rather high-spirited and temperamental, and though he won't let everybody handle him, he's just given his heart to me, haven't you, Tartar?"

At which Tartar's ears moved backwards as if listening to, and understanding, every word.

"Like Diana," Clara grinned. "She's high-spirited and temperamental, too. And yet she's your friend as well, isn't she? By the way, what's become of

Diana? Did I see her this morning, or didn't I?"

"Begging your pardon, Miss Clara, you did," Ned Cripps, the groom, said. "Miss Diana hired a 'unter to go off to Courtfield Lodge. She said she'd be back about twelve though. Hope she hasn't had an accident," he went on worriedly. "That 'unter's, one of the best in the stables. She—!" And then he spun round as from the road outside came the clatter of horse's hoofs.

And then next moment everybody stared and stared.

For a girl had come cantering into the paddock. It was Diana Royston-Clarke herself.

## By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

Proud, bright-faced, bright-eyed, Diana, the supercilious and overbearing Firebrand of the Fourth Form, was always a girl to catch the eye and command attention—but the Diana they beheld now!

From the crown of her new hat to the tips of her shinningly shod feet Diana was a picture.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Clara Trevlyn. "Tell me, Babs, am I seeing things?"

She was not. There Diana sat. She sat with an air of conscious pride, of majestic grace, astride the hunter, a brand-new crop clasped between gloved fingers. A white stock was about her

slender throat. A smart, immaculately cut hacking jacket, which simply screamed expense, encased her slim body. On her legs were a pair of brand-new riding breeches, and on her feet a pair of glistening, gleaming riding boots.

If Diana had just stepped out of a fashion plate she could not have looked more dazzling, more impressive.

But Diana knew that, and, being Diana, eager and grasping for any tiny bit of limelight, she paused between the paddock's gates to allow the chums to get the full effect.

"Morning!" she said brightly.  
"What-ho!" Jemima Carstairs beamed and waved her monocle. "Nice morning if it doesn't rain or snow—what? Nice outfit, Diana."

"Yes—isn't it?" Diana said with studiously careless disregard. "Got it from Simmons', in Courtfield, you know. Frightfully expensive people, but not a patch on my London tailors. Had to order another rig-out, too, you know, for the County Hunt."

Babs blinked.  
"The what?"

"The Hunt," Diana smiled, patting at her glorious, platinum-blond hair. "But you wouldn't know about that, would you?" she asked loftily. "Naturally, the County Hunt is a frightfully exclusive sort of affair. If I weren't the daughter of the Mayor of Lanham I don't suppose they'd even have me in it, you know. Ahem! And D ana, with a smile, peeled off one of her gloves, while the chums stared at her. "Cripps, hold this nag while I dismount," she ordered haughtily; "and

next time give me a mount that can raise a gallop. I positively had to push him across the downs."

Cripps turned red.  
"Begging your pardon, Miss Clarke, I—"

"Royston—Clarke, man—Royston—Clarke!" Diana snapped impatiently. "Can't you ever remember my name is spelt with a hyphen and a final 'e'?"

"Yes, Miss Cla—Miss Royston—Clarke," Cripps mumbled. "All the same, Sleek is the fastest 'oss in these stables. Isn't he, Miss Jimima?"

"What-ho! Does seventy flat out, and ten miles to the gallon, you know," Jimima nodded seriously. "Give him wings and he'd beat the winner of the King's Cup. Grand jumper, too! I know; I had him out yesterday."

"Is that so? Well, what about the dearest horse that Margot is riding?" Diana asked, as she slipped to the ground.

"That 'oss," Cripps said gruffly, "don't belong to these stables, Miss Cla—Miss Royston. That is Miss Lantham's own 'oss. And, any case, you couldn't ride him," he added decidedly.

"Nobody," kept Miss Lantham. "Diana shrugged her shapely shoulders and glanced rather jealously at Margot.

"He is yours?" she asked.  
"Oh, yes!" Margot laughed.  
"Nice nag," Diana said. "Let me try him, Margot?"

Margot paused.  
"Well, he's mettlesome, you know."  
"Is he? I suppose," Diana said disdainfully, "if you can ride him, I can. Oh, come on! Be a sport!"

Margot glanced at her hesitantly. Her face expressed doubt.

"Diana, I tell you—"  
"Oh rats!" Diana said shortly.

"Afraid?" she sneered.

Margot shrugged. Very quietly she slipped from the saddle. She knew Diana. She read those storm signals in her face.

Margot Lantham was Diana's chum. Also, she was the co-sharer of Study No. 10, in the Fourth Form corridor.

Perhaps, indeed, Margot was Diana's only real friend, the temperamental fluctuations of the Firebrand's nature being rather too uncertain for most of the girls who knew her.

But, being Diana's chum, she understood her, she knew exactly when and how to humour her, and could read very plainly the signals that came and went in that laughingly handsome face of hers.

"Well, go on," she said good-humouredly. "But keep him on a loose rein, Diana. He's not used—"

"I suppose," Diana said loftily, "you're not teaching me how to ride?"

"She watched up the reins. The chums watched. Even Besnie Bunter could have told Diana that Tartar was a tartar to ride, but they all knew better than to protest. Diana was not the girl to take advice. Diana always had to learn her lesson—and learn it from bitter experience.

That Diana could ride pretty well there was no doubt, but whether she could handle Tartar was a different matter.

Now with studied effect she swung up on to Margot's saddle. Tartar shifted restlessly, and Margot soothingly stroked his nose.

"Good boy, then—good boy!" she crooned softly. "No larks, Tartar! Good boy, then!—Turn him round, Diana."

Diana superciliously turned him round at the same time digging him with her heels. Up went Tartar's head again.

"Diana, careful!" Margot warningly called.

But Diana, with a careless shrug, was off, trotting down the paddock. The chums watched her—as she went, a figure of grace, of shapeliness, forcing admiration even if that admiration was tinged with faint contempt.

From a trot the hunter broke into a canter, from a canter to a gallop. Margot shrieked.

"Diana—"  
But Diana was too far ahead then.

"She's holding him too tight!" Margot gasped. "Tartar doesn't like that. Oh gosh! Wish I'd refused now. He'll throw her!" she cried.

"As sure as eggs, he'll throw her! Oh, look at the chump racing for that hedge! Babs! Mabs! Clara! All of you, come on!"

And off they went, running hard, anxious Margot in the lead.

Diana by that time was a good two hundred yards away, heading like the wind towards the high hedge which bounded the paddock. Even Babs, no expert, could see what was going to happen.

"Come on!" gasped Margot, white-faced.

Along they tore. Ahead, they saw Tartar rise. They had a glimpse of Diana desperately trying to pull the horse in, in midair. They saw the daylight between her and her mount's saddle as she bounced, saw her pulling back with all her might.

Like an arrow Tartar rose before the hedge. In midair Diana was violently shaken out of the saddle, and, still clinging to the reins, dragged bodily through the topmost twigs.

Then Tartar and Firebrand vanished from view.

The chums dashed for the hedge, vaulting the low gate at the side of the field. Round they ran to the spot at which Diana and Tartar had disappeared.

And then they stopped. Simultaneously all of them went off into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For Diana—oh dear! There was Diana, scrambling up from a ditch. But what a different Diana from the lordly, overbearing Firebrand who had set out with such superior nonchalance to show-off.

A Diana now furiously wrathful, a Diana spattered from head to foot with mud, who was savagely squelching the water and the mud out of those lovely, expensive boots of hers.

She was not hurt—one glance told them that. But she was so tremulously furious with rage she could hardly speak.

Margot gave a shrill call to Tartar, who, by that time had come to a halt a hundred yards away, and then ran forward.

"Diana! Oh, Diana, you silly old chump!" she breathed. "You might have hurt yourself."

"Get out!" Diana said savagely.

"But, Diana, I told you—"  
"Get out!" Diana hooted.

"Get out!" she repeated furiously, wringing the mud from her clothes. "And take those grinning idiots with you!" she cried sulphurously.

"Ha, ha, ha! How are the mighty fallen!" Clara chipped. "You would ride him, you know, Di!"

Diana breathed hard. Utterly disregarding Margot's pleading look, and with a glowering glare at the grinning Fourth Formers, she tramped off across the fields.

Diana, obviously, had finished horse-riding for the time being. But Diana, strangely enough, had learned no lesson.

## Honour for Margot!



DIANA ROYSTON-CLARKE scowled.

It was a petulant scowl. A scowl

which sadly marred those superbly handsome autocratic features of hers.

Although an hour had passed since her unsuccessful effort to ride Margot Lantham's chestnut hunter, Diana had by no means recovered from her bad humour.

The spill Diana had suffered had not hurt her. What did hurt, however—and at the same time filled her with a sort of suppressed fury—was the knowledge that she had made a fool of herself, had made herself look ridiculous in the eyes of

Barbara Redfern &amp; Co. Diana could not stand ridicule.

Also, remembering that incident, she saw that she had behaved rather badly and churlishly towards Margot Lantham.

After all, Margot was her friend—and a jolly loyal and good friend at that.

Margot had tried to warn her against Tartar, and she, like the conceited fool she was, had taken no notice.

Common sense told her that she would have been best advised from that moment to leave Tartar severely alone.

But common sense, in circumstances such as these, was not one of Diana's strong points.

Tartar had beaten her. She was wrathful at that. Not Diana to accept defeat from anyone! She knew she could ride Tartar, given a proper chance.

Meantime, there was this funny business of Margot.

"Where is the chump?" Diana fumed, as she stared through the study window.

Hardly the way to talk about a girl to whom she owed an apology. But Diana was like that. She had behaved badly to Margot. Having decided she should make it up to Margot—to make it up was her intention. One of the most likeable traits about the Firebrand was that she never hesitated to face the music, or do what she considered the right thing. She wanted to get it over.

But Margot was not here. Margot had not come in with the rest of the Fourth Form chums, though Diana had watched them all arrive half an hour ago.

"I suppose," Diana told herself, "the chump's teeing with one or other of them. Oh yooks! I'd better go and find her, I suppose!"

She hesitated a moment, and then, with a shrug, went out. Study No. 7 was her nearest port of call, and almost violently she flung herself towards it.

Quite a merry chatter was coming from that study, for Clara, in funds, was standing a spread, and had invited Muriel Bond and Joan Sheldon Clarmant, and Henrietta Winchester the day girl, to share this meal with herself and Marjorie Hazeldene and Janet Jordan.

Diana heard Clara's voice.

"Oh, there's no doubt about old Margot. She was just born to ride. I always thought I knew a bit about it myself until I saw her in action. But she makes me feel just like a novice."

Diana bit her lip.

"And that horse of hers," Janet Jordan said. "Why, it's as much as the grooms can do to hold it. But in Margot's hands it's just as docile as a pet kitten."

"Anyway, it was more than Di could do to hold it," Clara chuckled. "You should have seen that swanking was being rushed over the hedge—oh, my hat! Of course, the trouble with Di is that she can't admit that anyone's half

as good as herself, and I do jolly well believe she's jealous of Margot."

The frown on Diana's face gave place to a scowl. All at once she quivered. So that was what they thought of her, was it! Margot could eat her head off when it came to riding! Margot— She did not go into Study No. 7. Obviously, from that conversation, Margot was not there.

Rather more furious, she stamped off to Study No. 4.

The inmates of that study, Barbara Reifern, Mabel Lynn, and Bessie Butler, were also at tea, and the talk there, also, was of horses and Margot. Diana paused with her hand on the knob as she heard Babs' voice.

"Oh, Diana wouldn't be bad if she'd think less of herself and more of her riding," Babs was saying. "A horse isn't a horse as far as Diana's concerned. It's just a pedestal on which she can sit herself and look down from a superior height. Now, Margot—"

"Old Margot just sits a horse as if she were glued to the saddle," Mabs said. "My hat! It was as good as watching the Grand National to see her taking those jumps this afternoon."

"Yes, rather!" Bessie chipped in. "And when Diana tried to ride Tartar—he, he! Pass the jam, Babs."

Diana scowled. Her eyes were glowing then. Margot! Margot—all Margot! Margot this, and Margot that! Margot being held up as an example.

She passed on to Study No. 3. That study was shared by Jimima Carstairs, Leila Carroll and little Marcel Biquet. There, at least, tea was finished. But she heard Jimima's voice even before she reached it.

"Too tough on old Di," Jimima was saying. "All in that nice, neat, natty uniform, what? What ho, my benchmen, have I not always said that pride goeth before a bump? Now if Di would only ask Margot to give her a few lessons—"

Diana aimed a savage kick at the door as she went past.

She was quivering then. Hang them! Dash them! >Rather bitterly her lips curved into a sneer.

Margot, Margot, Margot! Was everybody Margot crazy?

Margot, indeed! Wait till the Hunt came off! She'd show them all then who was the best horsewoman in Cliff House School!

Passionately she turned upon her heel. Just at that moment the door of Study No. 4 came open and Barbara Reifern, kettle in hand, stepped into the corridor. She had to pull up short to prevent the furious Firebrand colliding with her.

She smiled. "Oh, hallo, Di! What's the matter? You look upset!"

"Do I?" Diana scowled. "Well, is it your business?" she asked.

"Not at all," Babs smiled. "Had your tea?"

"No."

"Like to join us? We're only half-way through, you know."

"Thanks, no," Diana said disdainfully, and paused. "Where's Margot?" she asked.

"Margot? Oh, don't you know?" asked Babs. "She's gone down to Friars Gables. But what—" and Babs stared as the Firebrand gave a sudden jump. "I say—"

But Diana did not deign to reply then. She was tramping off. Friars Gables! That was where Major Fields-Croft and his daughter, Paula, lived. Major Fields-Croft—the Master of the Hunt!

What the dickens was Margot doing down there? It was the first intimation Diana had ever had that Margot even knew the Fields-Crofts!

Diana's vanity was hurt again. She had congratulated herself upon being the only Cliff House girl to get in with the Fields-Croft—a well-known county family, whom it was terrifically "toney" to know.

Margot had got in touch with them, had she?

Diana fumed. Bother the girl. Anyway, Margot wasn't going to cut any more grass from under her feet if she knew it, and in a fine old temper she raged up to the cloak-room. Just a tiny dab of powder on her cheeks, a rather belligerent glare at herself in the mirror, and, struggling into coat and hat, she flounced off.

It was dark then. Already the moon was up and the stars winking in the blue-grey canopy of the heavens above. Impatiently Diana turned off towards the gates, fumingly waited till the bus came from the direction of Pegg. She boarded it, and ten minutes later, outside St. Mary's Church in Friarvale, alighted.

Friars Gables, recently taken over by the Fields-Crofts, was about a quarter of a mile up the rather lonely, dark and bleak Church Lane. Diana, however, never noticed either the bleakness or the darkness, and she found herself outside the door of the old building almost before she realised it.

The butler who answered her ring bowed his head deferentially.

"Will you please come in, Miss Diana," he asked.

Diana stepped in, haughtily handed her hat and coat to the maid, and then fluffed up her glorious platinum-blonde locks before the mirror in the hall.

From the room on the left came a burst of laughter.

"Well I say," boomed the hearty voice of Major Fields-Croft, "every man—or girl—to his taste. Anyway, your sentiments do you credit, Margot."

What on earth, Diana thought, were they talking about?

But Margot, obviously, was in there—and Margot, by the sound of things, was holding the stage. A little jealous pang shot through Diana as she waited for the butler to announce her. He did. "Miss Diana Royston-Clarke!"

There was a silence.

Diana smiled. Now for her entry! She stepped forward, holding herself consciously erect, pausing on the threshold, and at once she saw Margot standing near the piano in the corner of the raftered room, talking to a tall slim girl rather older than herself—Paula Fields-Croft. Near the fireplace, a tankard in his hand, still dressed in his riding breeches, was Major Fields-Croft himself, surrounded by his guests. "Oh, come in, Diana," he boomed. "come in! Margot, here's a friend for you," he said. "Give Diana a drink, Paula. You know Margot Lantham, Diana, don't you? But of course you do!



"HERE'S to Margot Lantham, the finest little horse-woman in the county!" said the major. "And here's to her success in the Hunters' Trials!" But Diana was late in rising to the toast to her chum. For the news that Margot was riding in the Trials was a bitter shock to her.

Great friend of ours—at least her father and mother are."

"Indeed?" Diana said. "You never told me."

"Didn't we? Well, those sort of things are understood, you know. We've just been trying to persuade Margot to join the Hunt, but Margot, if you please, doesn't believe in hunting." He chuckled. "Fine sport," he added, "good fun. But everyone to their own taste. I suppose you'll join us at dinner, Diana? We're having it rather early."

"Thank you," Diana answered a trifle stiffly, and then a glass Paula handed to her. She forced a smile she was far from feeling. "I didn't expect to find you here, Margot," she said.

"No?" Margot asked. "But why not, Diana? My people and the Fields-Crofts have been friends for ever so long, you know."

"You never told me," Diana said challengingly.

"Well, I suppose the opportunity has never really cropped up," Margot laughed. "Still, this is jolly, you know. Can I have another drink, Paula?" she asked. "This ginger-wine really is lovely."

"All home made," Paula laughed. "I made it with my own lily-white hands. Another for you, Diana?"

"No, thanks," Diana said somewhat gruffly.

She just couldn't, all at once, be herself again. And again, in spite of her intention to make it up with Margot, she felt that taint of jealousy.

Easy to see that Margot was very popular and very welcome here. Easy to see, indeed, that she was almost one of the family.

And the mention of the Hunt—an invitation, which Margot had turned down because she didn't believe in the sport! Diana's face betrayed a fleeting scowl at that. Up to this minute she had prided herself on the fact that she was the only Cliff House girl who had even been considered for that important event. Margot had not only been considered, but had rejected it.

The talk went on. Naturally among so many horse-loving people, it was all of horses.

Diana never believed in being left out of a conversation. She always prided herself that she could hold her own—and especially among older people than herself. She talked loudly and noisily, and oftentimes without any particular respect for the point aimed at. Once or twice, indeed, there was silence as everyone glanced towards her.

She did not see the sometimes contemptuous glances which the tall and willowy Paula carelessly threw at her. She did not see those rather anxious glances which came from Margot—Margot who realised that Diana was trying to show-off and was desperately anxious to prevent her going too far.

Dinner was served in the dining-room—a long, lantern-hung apartment, with a low, oak-beamed roof, walls hung with prints mainly of hunting scenes and the lodge lined with bright pokers, hunting-crocks, and gleaming brass horns. In the big inglenook at one end of the room a log-fire roared away.

Diana simpered. She was in her element then. She took quick stock of the guests, gloating to find herself in such company.

Over her was young Gregory—the son of Sir Wilfrid, Lord the Grange—not far away. Opposite him was Lady Courtfield, and Lady Courtfield's daughter Wenda. Langley Timman, from the Enterprize Film Studios, was also there—and so was Miss Terrence, his latest star.

Inwardly Diana glowed. This was the sort of company in which she felt herself excelling.

"Hope it's a good day for the hunt," the major said chattily. "The hounds are simply mad to get off the leash. What was that you were saying, Diana?"

"I said," Diana spoke up, "exactly where are we meeting?"

Actually, of course, she already knew, but trust Diana to make the most of any hull in a conversation!

"Outside the Boot and Spur on the Courtfield-London road," the major returned good-humouredly. "Ten o'clock's the hour, and everybody, you turn up to time," he added, a twinkle in his eyes. "Hail, rain, or sunshine the hunt is on, you know."

Diana smiled. Her eyes shone a little. She wouldn't forget—rather not! Wait till she turned up in her new riding habit! Wait until they saw her—yorks, she'd give them something to talk about! She said with a laugh:

"Bit too tough, major, Margot won't be there! Margot, dear, won't you change your mind?" she asked gushingly.

"I don't see why she should change her mind," the major said. "In any case, I expect Margot will be too busy. Margot, to you!" he added, raising his tankard. "Ladies and gentlemen, will you all join me in this toast?" He rose to his feet. "Here's to Margot Lantham, the finest little horsewoman in the county!" he said proudly. "And here's to her success in the Hunters' Trials!"

"Every, rather! Good luck, Margot!" Everybody rose. Margot sat there laughing and blushing. But not at once did Diana do so.

The Hunters' Trials! She looked strangely at Margot. She looked startledly at her host. Paula nudged her.

"Diana—" "Eh? Oh, I'm sorry!" Diana struggled to her feet. "Gig-good luck, Margot," she said, and gulped down a draught of ginger-wine, almost choking in the process. "Why didn't you tell me?" she added furiously to Margot as she sat down again.

Margot's eyes widened. "What, about the Hunters' Field Trials? I don't know. I had an idea you did know. Diana, dear, don't look so bad-tempered," she whispered—"everybody's watching you!"

But Diana, at that moment, couldn't have altered the look on her face if her life had depended upon it. If she had been resentful of Margot's easy popularity with these people before, she was flamingly, madly jealous now.

Margot had entered for the Hunters' Field Trials!

She drew a deep breath as she bent her head over her plate. She had heard of those Hunters' Trials, of course—who interested in horses hadn't? In their way, the Hunters' Trials were a bigger attraction than the hunt, and, naturally, required far more skill in horsemanship. All the local bigwigs, of course, turned up at the trials, and so did an army of local and London reporters.

Why hadn't she thought of that? She choked a little over her food. Fool! Fool! She had been so engrossed in the hunt that she had

not taken the larger prize to slip her girth. And what a triumph for the winner! A gold-and-silver trophy—her photograph in all the big society papers—the columns of the local Press full of it next day. Even the London dailies giving it a paragraph or so!

But—And then Diana took a grip on herself. Wait a minute! What was she thinking? What Margot could do, she could do, and she jolly well would do it.

She—Diana—would enter for the trials!

That would make Margot sing small. That would show her if she could keep things from her! Dinner ended then. At the suggestion of Paula, all the ladies retired, while the men surrounded the table, smoking and chatting. Off went Diana with Paula and Margot, Lady Courtfield and Wenda, and Miss Terrence and three other women, into the drawing-room.

"Margot, what about a song?" asked Paula.

Margot shook her head. "I'm sorry, Paula, but we'll have to get back."

"We?" Diana glared. "Speak for yourself!"

"But, Diana, you don't want to be late," Margot cried. "There's not much time before call-over."

"Oh, yes," Paula said. "I should hate you to get into any trouble, Diana."

"Trouble?" Diana laughed. "Oh, stuff!" she cried disdainfully. "Who cares? You can go if you want to, Margot!"

"Diana—" Margot pleaded. But Diana, with a shrug, turned away, seating herself at the piano. Margot hesitated, glanced at Paula, and then hurried into the lobby.

Diana watched her go. Well, thank goodness, she was out of the way! That meant she could hold the floor, and, in her desire to hold it, broke into the crashing chords of "Tautiv," at the same time raising her voice.

Diana could play, and Diana could sing; but when Diana wanted to attract attention to herself, she rather forced both her playing and her singing.

She attracted the attention all right. From the dining-room the men poured out. They looked rather curiously at Diana, and Diana rather sulkily wondered why they did not join in the chorus when she boisterously requested it.

Out of the corner of her eye she saw Paula talking to her father, caught the sidelong looks which the two threw in her direction. Then she found the major standing at her elbow.

"Diana—oh—thanks," he said. "But—but would you mind? I suppose you've forgotten, my dear, but isn't it time you go back to school?"

Diana pouted.

"Oh, that's all right!" she said. "But is it, Diana?" He shook his head. "Your headmistress—Miss Primrose—is rather a friend of mine, you know. If you're late, I should hate her to think that I'd been the cause of it. Perhaps," he gently suggested, "you'd better get along now."

Diana's face turned brick-red. That was tantamount to being asked to go. For a moment a look of rather bitter fury flashed into her fine eyes, and then her lips compressed.

"Good-night, Diana!" she said. "Very well. Good-night!" Come again whenever you like," her host said cordially.

And as Diana rather flouncingly marched off he glanced at his daughter and made a little puffed motion with his lips. Paula grinned.

"Well, that goodness for that!" she breathed. "Perhaps we can get a little peace now. I don't know why it is, sladdy, but that girl somehow gets right on my nerves."

## Snubbed for Her Pains!



"HERE'S Margot?"

"I say, Margot, Margot, pausing in Big Hall, smiled.

"Oh, dear, I'm not late?" she asked of Barbara Redfern.

"No, old thing, ten minutes before call-over." Babs chuckled. "But, I say, have you seen Diana?"

"Yes, I've seen her," Margot said. "Why?"

"Nothing, except that Miss Charmant's been asking for her. Di had some lines to do, or something, and she hasn't handed them in."

Margot said nothing more then; but she was feeling a little worried, a little perplexed. Perhaps no one in the school understood Diana Royston-Clarke as well as Margot Lantham understood her—and that wasn't frightfully well, for Diana was a girl who never even understood herself.

But even Margot was at a loss to account for Diana's decidedly chilly and overbearing attitude towards her at the Gables that evening.

Rather anxiously she doffed her clothes in the cloak-room and hopefully trotted down to Study No. 10, which she shared with the Firebrand.

Diana was not there.

In Big Hall she joined Babs & Co.

"Diana not turned up?" she asked.

"No," Babs answered. "And it looks," she added grimly, as call-over bell sounded, "as if she doesn't intend to. What the dickens has happened to her, Margot?"

But Margot did not reply. The one subject Margot always tried to avoid was discussion of Diana. Not, in any case, that there was much time then. Already the girls were streaming into Big Hall and being lined up by the prefects. Already mistresses had appeared, with the registers in their hands.

Sarah Harrigan of the Sixth came scowling forward.

"Now then, you girls, that's enough chattering!" rapped the unpopular prefect. "If you're not in your places in five seconds I'll line you."

The girls lined up. Miss Charmant, the pretty mistress of the Fourth, cast an eye over them.

"Now, attention, girls!" she said. "Please answer 'Adsum' as I call. Beatrice Beverley."

"Adsum!" answered the Hon. Beatrice Beverley.

Miss Charmant nodded as she ticked her name. The roll-call went on.

"Adsum!" Margot answered when Diana's name was called.

Unconsciously the mistress ticked the name off, and Margot breathed relief. Then from the back of the Hall came a scuffle.

"Which I say—" the voice of Piper, the porter, sounded.

"Right—right!" came in Diana Royston-Clarke's furious accents. "You needn't jolly well push me!"

Miss Charmant stared. There was a stir and a rustle in the ranks of the Fourth.

Margot's face went suddenly white; for striding forward, looking, as usual, proudly and superciliously defiant, was Diana Royston-Clarke.

Miss Charmant blinked.

"Diana—"

"Which Miss Diana is late," Piper said unnecessarily. "She arrived just

after I'd locked the gates, Miss Charmant. Naturally, as it was my dooty.

"Yes—yes, of course!" Miss Charmant said. "You may go, Piper. But—"

"Diana, take your place," she said, "and also take a hundred lines for turning up late. And now, please," she added quietly, turning to the Form again, "who answered Diana's name?"

Margot gulped.

"Oh dear!" she stuttered, crimson-faced. "It was me."

"Then for that, Margot, you will take fifty lines," she said.

"Now, order, please!" Janet Jordan.

The roll continued. But Diana cast a queer look towards her chum, Margot,

No. 15 of our delightful series for Your "Cliff House Album."

## CLIFF HOUSE CELEBRITIES

WHEN Stella Stone, ex-head girl of Cliff House, left the school to take up veterinary work, there were many who rather gloomily said that she could never be replaced. These prophets, happily, have been wrong, for in Stella's place to-day as Head Girl reigns a girl who carries out the Stella traditions at their best.

She is Dulcía Fairbrother, captain of games in Stella's time, and now combining both offices.

A nicer girl than Dulcía it would be impossible to meet. Almost to a girl the Junior School adores her—and especially Clara Trevlyn.

Strictly impartial in all her judgments, Dulcía will never push, unless it is absolutely necessary; never gives a decision unless she has heard all sides of the case, and she wages a firm and unceasing war against all forms of injustice and tyranny.

Though she has the double responsibility of head girl and games captain to uphold, Cliff House, thanks to her efforts, holds a high position on the Southern Counties Sports Ladder.

Dulcía's father was a Cambridge Blue and a fine cricketer, so it is not surprising perhaps to find Dulcía so keen a sportswoman. Built on athletic lines she is equally at home whether on the running and cycling tracks, on the hockey, tennis, and cricket fields, and—to mention the sport she herself introduced into Cliff House—water polo.

On the sports field she has won more championships than any other girl in the school.

Dulcía was born at Stourbridge, but now lives at Peggsall Manor, near Pegs village—a great distance from the school.

She has fair, wavy hair and sparkling blue eyes and a tanned, always-healthy complexion.

She rarely does anything without seriously thinking it over first, but once she has made up her mind her decision is as firm and unshakable as a rock.

crimson-faced, stood staring straight in front of her.

"What did you do that for?" Diana muttered.

"Diana, you are talking!" Miss Charmant rapped.

Diana scowled, but she had the good sense to remain silent for the rest of the roll-call. All the same, she was looking uncomfortable now. As soon as call-over was finished she tackled Margot again.

"Margot, what did you do that for?"

"Well— Oh, dash it, Diana, I didn't want you to get into a row."

"When you knew," Diana asked, "that I was going to be absent?"

"Well?" Margot stuttered.

"I see!" Diana's smile was bitter.

"Well, I don't want to shield under you—or anybody else, Margot Lantham!" She glared at the girl, and while Margot stood still, the colour coming and going in her cheeks, she took three impatient steps away, and then swung round again upon her heel. "Oh rats!" she said savagely. "No, Margot, I—I didn't mean that. It—it was jolly decent of you really, jolly sporting! Thanks, old thing!"

And again she turned hurriedly, leaving Margot blinking. What an amazing girl Diana was!

"HALLO, DIANA!" Barbara Redfern said. "Going riding?"

Diana Royston-Clarke turned with a start.

It was next morning. An early,



Dulcía Fairbrother

Her hobby, as you may guess, is sport, and her ambition to win international honours at athletics.

Dulcía's age is 18 years and 3 months. She has no particular floral favourites, but she has a host of heroes and heroines in the world of sport. She is a keen admirer of Helen Wills-Moody and Bunny Austin.

Her favourite flower is the wild rose and her favourite colours, blue and white. The mistress she likes best at Cliff House is Miss Valerie Charmant, if she has an aversion to another she has not mentioned it.

Although Dulcía likes Babs & Co., she never shows them favouritism.

She is very devoted to her great friend, Lady Patricia Northanson, with whom she spends most of her holidays.

And—here's a little secret, though I wonder if I ought to tell you—she is very fond, too, of Jack Trevlyn, our Tomboy Clara's adventurous brother! Just you mention Jack's name to Dulcía Fairbrother and see her eyes light up!

though unwarming, sun streamed through the window of the Fourth Form dormitory of Cliff House, and Diana Royston-Clarke, in the act of slipping into her riding breeches, was up at least an hour before rising-bell.

"Well, what does it look like—as if I'm going polar exploring?" Diana asked.

"Oh, sorry! No offence!" Babs said cheerfully. "I was just wondering, though— Will the stables be open? I suppose you're taking Sleek?"

But Diana, pulling on her boots, did not reply to that.

At the same moment Margot woke up.

"Hallo, Di! I say, are you going for a trot?"

Diana breathed hard,

"Oh, voicks! Can't a girl get up an hour before the bell without everybody asking questions?" she asked. "Of course I'm going for a trot!"

"Like me to come with you?" Margot asked.

"No," Diana said, and said it quite shortly and with such snapped decisiveness that Margot coloured. "Well, so long. See you later."

But Diana—! Margot cried, slipping out of her boots.

But Diana, rather hurriedly, had gone. The last person she wished to accompany her on that trip was Margot Lantham.

For Diana, in that never-say-die, not-to-be-beaten spirit of hers, was determined to master Tartar, and this time master him without an audience!

Margot, she knew, would have given permission if she had asked—but Margot would probably also have insisted upon being present. Diana wanted no spectators this time.

She went out, while Margot and Babs glanced at each other.

To the pet's house Diana made her way, to be greeted by a noisy barking of dogs. As Tartar was Margot's own property she was, of course, allowed to horse him in the pet's house, and had taken over the box once used by the now departed Phillippa Derwent's Rastus.

With a swift glance round she unlocked the box. A sleek head came over it.

"Lo, Tartar!" Diana said.

Tartar looked at her. Then he looked towards the gate as if expecting to see his mistress there. Diana put up a gloved hand to stroke his muzzle. Tartar snorted and plunged back.

But Diana was not dismayed. She opened the door of the box. The eyes of Tartar rolled a little. Again she reached up, again Tartar drew back, at the same time stamping down with his hoofs, so that Diana was forced to the Firebrand had to jump away.

"Now, Tartar! Tartar, old chap!" Diana soothed.

Fearlessly she moved towards the harness and saddle. With a grunt—for it was heavy—she got it down, and slung the saddle over the horse. Tartar trembled.

"Keep still, bother you!" Diana panted.

Fixing the harness was a job. It was obvious that Tartar was neither used nor liked being handled by strangers. It was fortunate for Diana that he was strongly tethered.

She was gasping a little when the harness was finished, and Tartar, as if he guessed what was coming, pawed restively at the ground.

She slipped her foot into the stirrup, and with the reins in her hand, swung swiftly into the saddle. Then, stooping, she unfastened the tether.

At once Tartar tugged at the reins, but keeping the curb tight, Diana rode him out of the pet's house.

Suddenly Tartar took the law into his own hands. One plunge, which almost unseated Diana, and then, taking 'the bit' in his teeth, he was off in the direction of the lawn.

And at that moment Babs, Mabs, Clara, and Margot came out of the school. Margot almost faints as she saw the galloping horse with Diana clinging frantically to the reins, heading for the pavilion on Junior Side.

"Diana—and Tartar!"

"The idiot!" Babs gasped.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" yelled Clara. "Come on, after her!"

It is possible, however, to chase Diana. Diana was going like the wind. Fiery and unshaken still her resolution, but she had a most dreadful sinking of the heart; perhaps for one moment

regretted this rash purpose on which she had embarked.

For the moment at least Tartar was most decidedly the master of proceedings, and Diana could do nothing but let him have his head.

Across the playing-fields they thundered, through the Head's garden.

Then in front of them loomed the hedge that separated the school from the potato field of Farmer-Nicholls, on the west side of the school.

Diana saw it. It looked like a towering wall to her. She set her teeth, bracing herself. Tartar never even seemed to pause. Like an arrow from a bow he rose to the hedge, while Diana, desperately gripping the reins, threw herself back.

She need not have worried. The horse's hoofs barely touched the top-most branches. Then he had alighted, stumbled for just a fraction, and like the wind was rushing away across the field of cabbages and potatoes on the other side of the hedge.

"Well, go it!" Diana cried.

She had given up the idea now of trying to hold in the horse. Let Tartar have his head. A wise resolve, truly, for a thousand Dianias could not have done anything with that fractious steed in those early moments.

Later, when he had exhausted himself—

A voice struck upon Diana's ears. Diana turned, and then her heart gave another leap as she saw coming through the gates at the far end of the field a figure—the furious figure of a tall, bearded, breeched-legged man, waving a stick in the air. Farmer Nicholls himself!

"Voicks, now there'll be trouble!" she thought.

Still, no time to dwell upon that now. Here was the hedge. Over it Tartar thundered to rush madly into the meadow beyond. But Diana was glowing now. A feeling of warm satisfaction was spreading all over her. Tartar was tiring! Tartar, though he had done his best to throw her, had not succeeded. She was mastering Tartar!

Diana laughed. Supreme confidence seethed into her being once more. This was the fiery, the untamable, was it? This magnificent creature beneath her, the beast which only Margot Lantham could handle with confidence! Even in this midst of her excitement a sneer curved the lips of reckless Diana Royston-Clarke.

Tartar was slowing. That instinctive understanding between horse and rider told Diana he was giving in. She allowed him to run, guiding him now, and Tartar amazingly responding. She pulled steadily at the curb rein, slowing his gallop to a canter. She kept up the pressure, and Tartar obediently trotted, and then ambled into a walk.

Diana leaned across his neck.

"You silly idiotic old boy!" she breathed. "Did you think you could beat me? Did you think, old Tartar, that for one second I would have allowed you to beat me? Now whoa!" she cried, and as the tamed Tartar, alert and obedient to every word she uttered now, came to a heaving stop, she patted his neck again.

"Now stand still," she ordered, "while I dismount. I'm not going to let you run any more, young man, until you've had a rest."

Tartar stood still. His obedience was complete. Diana laughed again—exciting, victorious, but with no little pride in her own achievement. Quickly she slipped from the horse's back. While Tartar stood still, trembling from his exertion, she reached up, patting his muzzle, and finally drawing his head

down to her and rubbing her fresh young face against it.

"Pat Tartar," she asked.

Tartar's ears pricked.

"Because, you know," Diana said seriously, "I forgive you. No ill-will. Tartar, old chap! Simply had to tame you, because I couldn't bear Margot Lantham to get all the credit. Next time I want to ride you, you won't go slaying and kicking up a fuss, will you? Well, now, seeing that we're pals, why not let's get pallily, and go off and enjoy ourselves?"

Tartar gave a whinny, and thrust his muzzle against the Firebrand's shoulder. She laughed delightedly.

Perfectly still he stood while Diana, smiling, remounted. Obedient to her will, he turned through the gate and trotted off down the road.

And Diana laughed again out of sheer rapture. So this was the horse only Margot could manage, was it? This was the horse she was going to ride in the trials on Saturday?

A curl came to her lips, a flash to her eyes. Well, she'd see about that, too! Margot wasn't the only one who could enter for the Hunters' Trials!

She had tamed Tartar. She was in the Hunt. Being in the Hunt gave her a prestige above Margot—though it was true that it was Margot's own fault she was not at it, too.

Well, she'd jolly well enter for the trials, too. She'd show Margot if she should get away with that! She knew the secretary of the trials, Sir Richard Morraby. Diana headed straight towards his house.

Sir Richard was in his garden. He looked up as Diana, having tethered Tartar to the post outside, came upon the drive.

"Ah, good-morning, Miss Royston-Clarke! About early, aren't you? Anything I can do for you?"

"There is," Diana said.

"Well, command me," Sir Richard said good-humouredly.

"I want," Diana said, "to enter for the Hunters' Trials!"

He stared.

"You?"

"Why not?"

"No reason at all, of course," he said hastily. "But not the trials on Saturday, Miss Royston-Clarke. You see, all entries are accepted."

Diana started back.

"But Margot Lantham's in it!"

"Yes; but then, you see, Margot entered over a week ago," the secretary of the trials informed her. "The list was half-open when she put her name down. I'm sorry, Miss Royston-Clarke. I'd love to have accepted your entry, but as things are, I just can't. We're full—absolutely chockablock full!"

Diana scowled. In a moment all her radiant dreams had toppled. So Margot had the laugh of her there still. Hang Margot!

In a temper that was in strange contrast to the happy mood of elation which had brought her to Sir Richard's house, she remounted Tartar. With her mind savagely awhirl, she rode back to Cliff House School.

The school was awake then. A great many girls were taking an airing in the quad before breakfast.

Diana was too moody, too engrossed even to notice them until her own name struck upon her ears. Then she started, pulled up, and looked down.

Margot Lantham, her face flushed, Babs and Mabs by her side, barred her way.

"Diana!" Margot cried.

Diana slipped from the saddle.



"Diana, what have you been doing with Tartar?"

Diana glared at her smoulderingly.

"Well, what's the matter with him?"

"You had no business to take him out without my permission!"

"Hadn't I?" Diana gazed at her. She wanted to say she was sorry, but somehow the words stuck in her throat. She saw in Margot no longer the friend she had admired and loved. She saw in her only an obstacle to her own vaunting ambitions; as the girl who had cut the ground from under her feet; as her rival for triumph in horsemanship.

She knew she was being ill-mannered and unreasonable. But she couldn't help it. She said:

"And if I'd got your permission, you'd have come fussing round. Well, I just took him. I've not hurt him, and I don't think"—with a flash of contempt—"that you need have any more qualms about me riding him in future, Margot! There he is. If you think any damage has been done, let me know, and I'll foot the bill! Catch!"

She flung the reins at Margot, and savagely stamped off into the school.

Margot's voice cried:

"Diana! Oh, Diana, you silly chump, you!"

But Diana did not look round; she hurried on.

In the dormitory she divested herself of her riding rig, and slipped into her school outfit.

Breakfast-bell was ringing by the time she had finished, and after breakfast she went with the others into assembly.

At once Miss Primrose's eyes fastened upon her.

"Diana, I shall want to see you before lessons," she said. "Meantime"—her eyes ranged the school—"I want to speak rather seriously to you—other girls who are interested in horse-riding. The girls concerned teased a little. 'I have already told you that I shall only countenance this new sport at Cliff House, provided that sport is kept within bounds.'"

A murmur.

"At the moment," Miss Primrose went on, "it is not being kept within bounds. I have just had an extremely unpleasant interview with Farmer Nicholls, who accuses Diana Royston-Clarke of riding over his potato field this morning, and has presented me with a bill for damages. Apart from that," Miss Primrose went on, "Diana has done considerable damage to my garden. I am not blaming you others for the faults of course, but I am issuing a warning now that if this sort of thing continues I shall definitely ban horse-riding of all description at this school!"

There was a buzz. Angry glances were fastened upon Diana. The Firebrand stood still, contemptibly oblivious, thinking not of the warning, but of the Hunters' Trials which she had so wanted to enter.

When assembly was over, she trailed off to Miss Primrose's study, but, even there, she was not giving her whole attention to what Miss Primrose said. What did she care about the headmistress' silly garden? What did she care about Farmer Nicholls?

"I shall send the bill for damages to your father," Miss Primrose said. "Meantime, Diana, I must warn you that if I have any more complaints, I shall forbid you to take any further part in riding. You may go."

Diana went to face her Form-mates in the Common-room before lessons. The Form, angered by the disgrace which Diana seemed to be bringing upon its latest interest, had some very cutting



"DIANA—and Tartar!" gasped Margot in horror. "Oh, my giddy aunt!" yelled Clara. "Come on, after her!" Without permission, Diana had taken Margot's horse—and Tartar had bolted with her.

things to say. Diana listened—cool, calm, contemptuous, saying never a word. Only when Margot approached her did she speak.

"Thanks!" was all she said. "You needn't speak to me!"

"But, Diana—" Margot pleaded.

"Rabbits!" Diana snapped.

And off in a huff she walked, feeling angry and shocked with one side of her nature for that treatment of her chum: feeling with the other that Margot fully deserved the snub.

The triumph of the Hunt, the glory of having subdued Tartar—somehow those accomplishments seemed meaningless now. Diana could never feel a stirring of satisfaction unless she had everything!

Lessons in consequence were rather an ordeal for the Firebrand. Warring within herself all the morning, she was often at fault, and the crop of lines she earned in consequence did not improve her temper.

Once or twice she caught Margot's eyes upon her—longingly, yearningly—the eyes of a girl mutely asking Diana: "What have I done to you?" And she flushed.

She knew she was being mean. She knew she was uncharitable. But somehow in those moments she did not want to be anything else.

At break Margot came to her again. Almost pleadingly she looked up at her.

"Di, Babs and a few others are going for a canter. Like to join us?"

"No," Diana said shortly.

"Diana, what's the matter with you?"

"Oh, leave her alone!" Barbara said disgustedly, as she came up just in time to hear the last part of the conversation. "She doesn't jolly well deserve your

consideration. Let her go her own silly way."

Diana shrugged and turned away. Margot watched her go, with a sigh.

"But, Babs, I—I can't," she said. "You know you wouldn't let Babs go her way if you were in the same position. Diana—Diana—" She stumbled. "Oh, I don't know! She's so jolly nice really—but—but what has she got against me?"

Babs shrugged.

"One never knows with Diana! Anyway, she'll get over it," she prophesied. "You know what she is when she gets in one of these moods! Give her her head and she'll come round all right. Don't worry, old thing. Let's go and change."

Margot was still worried; but, nevertheless, she followed Babs.

To-day the chums were going to rally round Bessie Bunter. That dear, plump old duffer, so anxious to be in the swim, was, despite her boasts, so utterly nervous of horses that she would do nothing without Babs & Co.

In the paddock she looked dubiously at the docile hack which Cripps, the groom, had supplied for her benefit.

"I s-s-say, he's not s-s-sus-sav-ge, is he?" she asked anxiously.

"As quiet as a lamb, miss," Cripps grinned. "You could put this boss in a cradle with a year-old baby."

Bessie did not look convinced.

"You're sure he—he's broken in and—"

and all that sort of thing?" she asked.

"This last twenty-five years," Jimina murmured. "Not only broken in, forsooth, but broken down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Jimina, I wish you wouldn't be ridiculous!" Bessie said decisively.

"Oh crumbs! Hal-hallo, horse!" she said, nervously extending

one hand towards its muzzle, and then jumping back in alarm as the hack turned his head towards her. "Oh d-d-d-d-d! I sus-say, don't let him loe' at me like that, you know. He won't bubble?"

"Not unless you turn yourself into a carrot," Clara assured her. "Well, come on, nunny, don't stand jittinger. Go on him."

"But—but—"

"Hold the stirrup, Cripps."

Bessie gulped. She took a tremendous grip upon herself. Rather nervously she approached the horse, eyeing him warily, ready to run at the veriest flick of his tail. But the hack stood still, cheerfully.

"Here we are, miss!" Cripps said indignantly. "Take the reins first."

He held the stirrup, Bessie, taking the reins, put one fat foot into it. Then, as if anxious to get the thing over and done with in the shortest possible space, she gave a grunt and, assisted by Cripps, heaved herself up.

"There we are, Miss Bunter," said the groom. "No, don't hold the reins like a bunch of radishes. Now then, let me sort them out for you." And he did so, while Bessie shook with nervousness. "Right?"

"R-right as—as run-rain," Bessie quavered.

"Then let's shunt," Jemima said. "Forward the Light Brigade!" Hold tight to the fiery mustang, Bronco Bess! Whoops! Off we go!"

The others had mounted now. Babs was leading the way out. Bessie, with Cripps at her side, ambled after them.

And off down the road they walked. Bessie beamed. Now she was beginning to regain her confidence.

"I say, Babs, how do I look?"

"Oh, topping, Bessie!" Babs smiled.

"I think I cut rather a ripping figure on a horse, you know," Bessie said. "I'm rather a dab when it comes to riding. Not, of course," Bessie added modestly, "that I ride as well as Gordon Richards, or one of those people. But then, I'm only learning. If I'd been a boy I rather think I should have been cut out for a jockey, you know. The influence we Bunters have over horses is wonderful. Wow, there— I sus-say!" Bessie yelled. "Sus-save me, somebody—"

But there was no need to save Bessie. The hack had merely stopped in his stride to crop the grass which grew on the shelving bank at the side of the road.

For the road hereabouts was narrow. It was full of twists and turns, leading farther along on to the main Friarade road, and gave easy access to the downs.

They ambled on. Margot, in the van, frowned a little as the thought of Diana Royston-Clarke. All at once there was the sound of clattering hoofs behind them.

"Hallo!" Clara muttered. "Who the dickens is in such a hurry?"

Instinctively they all turned. They could not see the rider. The rapidity of the horse's hoofbeats, however, told them that the unknown was coming at a rather swift canter—and that, to say the least of it, on a narrow road such as this was dangerous. Then into view came—

"Diana!" exclaimed Babs.

Diana it was, mounted upon Sleek. She saw them, her curved lips parted in a scornful smile. She did not show up as they expected her to do. If anything, she spurred her horse into a faster canter. Right at them she came, causing them to press into the edge of the road. Bessie's horse for the first time showed signs of animation as it plunged, and Bessie, with a yell, flung

her arms round its neck to prevent herself from being spilled.

For a moment there was confusion, bustle; then Diana, with a sardonic wave of her hand, was ahead.

Cripps, the groom, was frowning angrily.

Clara's face turned red.

"My hat! The dangerous idiot!" she cried. "Cantering along a road like this! Come on, after her! She jolly well needs a lesson in manners!"

"No, no!" Babs said. "No sense in all showing our bad manners. My hat!" And she frowned as Diana disappeared round the corner.

"If the mad idiot goes on like that—" And there she stopped. For suddenly from the corner around which Diana had disappeared came the sudden frantic hoot of a horn, the sibilant, slithering squeal of motor-car brakes hastily applied.

They heard a shout, followed by a laugh in Diana's voice; then the cantering hoof-beats rode on.

Margot was the first to turn the corner. A girl in a Daimler saloon car was there, furiously looking back through the rear window towards the distant form of Diana. She flung round as Margot, riding ahead of the others, came up.

And Margot jumped.

"Paula!"

Paula Fields-Croft it was. She looked furious.

"Do you usually let Diana out without a lead?" she asked icily. "Is that the sort of road manners you learn at Cliff House? Oh, Margot, I'm sorry! I—I didn't mean that! But that fool—that fool—"

And she trembled angrily again. "There might have been an accident then, Diana coming round the corner like that. Yet the fool just laughed and rode on!"

Margot looked startled.

"Did she recognise you, Paula?"

"I don't think so. All the same, that doesn't matter," Paula said warmly.

"The girl's got no right to rush around like that in lanes like these. Her lips compressed a little."

Her lips compressed a little. "Margot," she said, "but the more I see of Diana the less I like her. I hope after this you'll drop her a hint that she's not welcome at Friars Gables."

## Diana Goes Too Far!



TO do her justice, Diana had not recognised

the girl in the car as Paula Fields-Croft;

but that, of course, did not excuse her behaviour.

It was a combination of skill and luck which had prevented her from riding straight into Paula Fields-Croft's Daimler saloon; but Diana, of course, liked to think of it as all skill, and in the after-glow of that adventure laughed lightly.

In much better humour was Diana as she left the road and set Sleek's head towards the downs. There was a sparkle in her eyes. Off at a tearing gallop she went, joying in every minute.

Well, what if she wasn't in the Hunters' Trials? she asked herself. She was in the Hunt, and nobody could deprive her of that honour.

Then ahead of her there was a shout. From out of a belt of trees fifty yards away came riding a man—a short, stumpy, rather plump man, whose red face beamed benevolence. He raised his riding crop.

"Hi, Miss Royston-Clarke, just a minute!"

Expertly Diana wheeled her mount.

"Why Mr. Torrance," she cried, "fancy meeting you! How are things?"

"Fine, thanks to you!" The man's eyes glowed with admiration as they rested upon Diana. Easy to see in that moment that he was fond of the Firebrand. Easy to see that he and she were old friends. Which they were; for Bernard Torrance, a veterinary surgeon, who had won many honours, had, only six months ago, brought

Diana's dog through a rather virulent attack of distemper, and Diana for that would ever be grateful. He smiled.

"I am glad," he said, "to meet you, Miss Diana. There are one or two things I wanted to talk over. You remember your suggesting I should start a fund for the poor people of Courtfield who couldn't afford to pay their dog licences?"

Diana looked at him quickly.

"You've not told anybody I had anything to do with that?"

"As you asked me not to—no," the vet said. "Still, I must say the fund's in a thriving way. Thanks to the five pounds you persuaded your father to start it off with, and the jumble sale of those cast-off clothes and other things you sent me, I reckon we'll be able to pay all licences at the end of the year, and then have five pounds over for next year's expenses. Oh, it's a great work you're doing, Miss Diana!"

Diana laughed and went pink. Her eyes softened. Yes, it was great work; but it was characteristic of the Firebrand that, having started that great work, she should not wish her own name to be mentioned in connection with it.

Diana, haughty, overbearing Diana might be, but she had a really soft spot in her heart for people poorer than herself, and perhaps a softer spot still for dumb animals.

"And don't forget, Miss Royston-Clarke, if ever I can do anything for you—"

"Thanks, I won't!" Diana assured him, and laughed, and was off again.

She enjoyed the ride, and, for once, she was not late back for dinner. With that other side of her nature uppermost now, she was almost in the mood to forgive Margot. For was not the Hunt, which would be a whole holiday at Cliff House, due to come off to-morrow?

Later, of course, when the excitement of the Hunt was done with, and the trials loomed up as the next most important event upon her horizon, her feelings might undergo a change. At the moment, however, it was all of the Hunt that Diana was thinking.

When she entered Study No. 10 after dinner, to meet Margot there, she felt really ashamed of the way she had treated her. And was all out to make friends again. She smiled brightly.

"Hallo, Margot! Enjoy the trot?"

"Yes, thank you," Margot said, responding in a moment to her mood.

But, Diana, that was a dangerous thing to do—come cantering past a string of horses like that."

Diana laughed.

"Oh rats! I wanted to get on to the downs," she said. "Anyway, don't let's talk about that. Going to the Gables to-night?"

"Yes," Margot said.

"Good kid! Then we'll go along together, shall we? Bound to be a big crowd there; the eve of the Hunt, you know."

Margot, remembering Paula Fields-Croft's parting words, looked at her queerly.

"Diana, you want to go?" she asked.

Diana stared. "Of course, nunny. Why?"

"Well—well—" Margot stumbled. "I—I don't think, though, that I'd go to the Gables if I were you," she blurted. "You see—"

"What?"

"Well—" Margot said feebly. "You're going, aren't you?"

"Yes, yes."

"Then," Diana said, and glared a little, "I'm going, too! Why the dickens shouldn't I go? You're not jealous of my going, are you?"

"Oh, goodness, nun-no!" Margot said. "But—but—oh dear!"

Diana shrugged her shoulders, trying to fight down the annoyance which she felt was surging up within her. Fortunately, at that moment, lesson bell rang.

And after lessons Diana did go to the Gables. She went with Margot, pretending not to notice how unhappy and uneasy that girl appeared on the way. Puffed up with pride, supremely conscious that she was looking her best, she did not notice either the rather strange awkwardness with which she was received, and, as usual, immediately set out to attract all attention to herself.

Among company which had been born among horses brought up with horses, Diana was certainly the most noisy and the most authoritative of them all. She loved to air her knowledge, little realising, in her eagerness to be the centre of attraction, how dangerously little that knowledge was among such people.

After dinner Margot looked at her anxiously.

"Diana, don't you think it would be a good idea to—to come and have a game in the morning-room?" Paula wants us to play ping-pong."

Diana laughed loudly and scornfully. "Ping-pong—that's a child's game!" she scoffed. "No, thanks! I'll stop here. I'm enjoying myself."

"Oh, Diana—do go and play ping-pong yourself!" Diana snapped.

Margot bit her lip. From the other side of the room Paula watched in cold contempt. The butler came up with a load of cordials. Diana laughed.

"Thanks, I'll have one," she said. "Well, as I was saying," Mrs. Lancaster— "Hallo! Where's Mrs. Lancaster gone?" she uttered, next moment.

"Bored, perhaps," Paula drawled. "Well, what about the ping-pong?"

"Rats to ping-pong!" Diana said, nettled.

She fancied she had been getting on so swimmingly with Mrs. Lancaster.

"Diana, that's hardly the way to speak to Paula," Margot protested. "After all, Paula's your hostess."

"Eh?" Diana glared. "Are you telling me what to do?" she asked witheringly. "You—" And, jerking round, she quite forgot the full glass of cordial in her hand. The contents slopped over, and before Diana could step back, had spilled all over the lovely oyster-satin frock she wore.

"Oh, yooks! Now look what you've done!" Diana hooted, and in a moment was flaming with wrath. "You and your wretched ping-pong! You and your— Look at my frock!"

Margot started back.

"Diana! I didn't do—"

"No, but you jolly well caused me to do it!" Diana cried. "Look at it! That frock cost five guineas, and now it's ruined!"

"Please, Miss Diana, please!"

Major Fields-Croft himself stepped

over. "No quarrelling—if you please!" he added severely. "You are spoiling the enjoyment of my other guests. Margot, will you take Diana upstairs and ask the housekeeper to do something about the frock?"

"Yes, Diana, come with me," Margot said anxiously.

But Diana paused. Her face flushed crimson then. She felt every eye upon her. She saw the looks of contempt that were being thrown towards her. That, coupled with the accident to her frock, flung her into an ungovernable temper.

Margot had done this! Margot, this afternoon, had tried to dissuade her from coming here! Margot, jealous because she had been having all the limelight, had tried to cramp her style!

Unfortunate, indeed—for Margot and for Diana herself—that Margot should have chosen that moment when Diana's chafing, unreasonable rage was at its height to lay a gently restraining hand upon the Firebrand's arm. She could not have done a worse thing.

For Diana was not thinking. Blind rage, spurring on her worst instincts, made her act.

Swish! With uncontrollable impulse her arm swept outwards. Up from Margot went a cry as she reeled back into the arms of Paula, her face covered with the blackberry wine which had remained in Diana's glass.

As soon as the action was done, Diana realised its awfulness. She stood staring for a moment, hardly believing that she had done it. A deathlike silence descended over the room.

Then— "Diana!" rapped Major Fields-Croft's voice.

Diana flushed.

"Diana, I think—yes, I really think," the major said angrily, "that you had better get your clothes and go home! Please, Diana!" he added

gently, and, catching her firmly by the arm, led her from the room.

## Her Triumph Gone, But—



"HALLO!" Barbara Redfern remarked. "Here's Diana—and, my hat, doesn't she look pleased? I say, Diana—"

Diana, striding into Big Hall, paused.

"Well, what do you say?" she asked, with a sort of suppressed savagery.

Babs blinked.

"Good gracious, what ever's the matter with you? Bother it, you needn't jump down my throat! You did go out with Margot, didn't you?"

"Needle-points of fury appeared in Diana's eyes.

"I did—so what?"

"Well, nothing. We were looking for her, you know. Hasn't she come back with you?"

"Does it look like it?" Diana asked.

"Well, where is she?"

"Find out!" Diana retorted to that, and, with a bitter sneer, passed on.

"Sweet child!" murmured Jimima Carstairs. "So docile and gentle! Always such a complete little lady, our darling old Spartan, Di!"

Babs frowned. She was a little pink from that interview. She looked after the Firebrand as she went flouncing off up the stairs. She wondered rather curiously what had happened.

But she wondered more why Margot had not come back. Babs was very anxious to see Margot. For something was wrong with Tartar.

It was twenty minutes later before Margot showed up. Her face was rather drawn. Also, on her frock there were stains that seemed to suggest that she had had an accident. She looked up quickly as she found Babs and Jimima in her way.



DESPITE the rain, Diana had turned up in all her glory to the meeting place of the Hunt, but the man at the inn said: "I don't know nothing about the Hunt, miss. It ain't being held here."

"Has Diana come in yet?" she asked.

"She has," Jennima said. "Or shall we say raged in? Simply too-awful paddy, what? Crashed in like a thunderbolt, and disappeared like a flash of lightning. What's been happening?"

But Margot shook her head at that. It was no purpose of hers to recount Diana's misadventures.

"Oh, nothing!" she said uneasily. "She went up to the study?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll go—"

"But hold on a moment, Margot," Babs said. "I think you ought to know about Tartar first. He's not been well this evening. Marjorie Hazeldene went to feed him, said he was coughing in his stable, and when I went over there I found him lying in the straw."

"I asked Cripps to come and look at him, and Cripps says that the vet ought to be sent for. But, naturally," Babs added, "we didn't like sending for the vet without your permission. Will you come over and have a look at him?"

Margot glanced at her in quick alarm. She paused a moment. Well, Diana could wait, she told herself. If Tartar was ill, then Tartar must be looked after.

Off she went at once with Babs and Jennima to the stables, and Tartar, lying on the straw, blinked up at the light was switched on. It was obvious at a glance that something was wrong.

"Oh, my goodness!" Margot murmured. "Babs, what can I do?"

"Well, they've got a vet at the stables, you know," Babs said. "Man named Venn. I don't know a great deal about him, but they tell me he's all right. Look here," she added, "you cut back and see Diana, if it's her that's on your mind. I'll go and fetch Venn."

"Oh, Babs, thank you!" Margot gulped.

"Not at all!"

And Babs most kindly cut off there and then. Margot, feeling more worried and anxious than ever, went on into the school. Her heart was sick with worry—and with dismay. She had tried so hard for her friendship's sake to prevent Diana from making a fool of herself, and Diana, in spite of all her efforts, had just crowned herself with disgrace. But, apart from that, she had a message for Diana.

Diana was slumped in the armchair when she entered the study. She did not look up.

"Diana—" Margot began gently.

"Get out!" Diana snapped.

"But, Diana, I've got something I want to tell you—"

Diana's reply was to get up and walk out.

Margot flushed. For a moment an angry light shone in her eyes. Still, Diana had got to hear her news—Diana must hear the news. She hung up her hat and coat. Down into the Common-room she went in search of Diana, only to draw a blank. She looked in the music-room. Diana was playing the piano.

"Diana—" Margot said again.

"Oh, bother it! Can't you stop following me around?" Diana blazed. "Leave me alone!"

"But, Diana, there's something I must say—"

"Then," Diana sneered, "leave it till Christmas!"—and down with a bang went the lid of the piano, and

out in great dudgeon strode the Firebrand.

Margot sighed. Well, bother her, she thought. She paused, and then slowly wandered towards the door. At the same moment Babs appeared.

"Margot! I've fetched Venn. He's in with Tartar now. Will you come along?"

Margot nodded. She went along. Venn was there shaking his head. His eyes were puzzled.

"Something wrong," he said; "I can't quite diagnose it. I don't think it's very serious. I've given him a powder, and by to-morrow perhaps he'll be over it. Don't worry, Miss Lantham. Give him gentle exercise early to-morrow morning, and I think you'll find he'll be as right as ninepence again. Good-night, young ladies!"

He went. As call-over bell was ringing then, Margot and Babs went off. The Form was already lined up when they reached Big Hall, and Diana, with the rest, went in her place. Margot slipped between her and Bessie Bunter.

"Diana!" she whispered anxiously.

"Shurrup!" Diana hissed between her teeth.

"But I want to—"

"Margot Lantham, take twenty lines for talking," Sarah Harrigan said shortly. "Now listen to your name."

Margot fished in despair. But she was not beaten. As soon as call-over was dismissed she tackled Diana again. Diana, without a word, brushed her roughly aside. In the dormitory in the middle of the night Margot woke up. She breathed—

"Diana—"

Diana pretended to be asleep.

"Diana, you must listen!"

"Oh, go to sleep!" growled the voice of Frances Frost.

"But I want to say—"

A pillow swept through the air, and Margot subsided with a gurgle.

She gave it up after that, and fell asleep. When she awoke next morning rising-bell was noisily ringing, and a glance at Diana's bed showed her that the Firebrand had already dressed and gone out. Somewhat wearily she rose, washed and dressed herself, and went off to see Tartar.

Tartar was standing up. He certainly did look a little better, though there was a look about him that Margot did not like.

The morning was wet and miserable, with an unpleasant mist which promised later to develop into a fog. In the circumstances Margot decided not to exercise him as she had been ordered. Rather anxiously she groomed him, however, saw that his supply of oats and water was all right, and took herself into the school.

Breakfast then. No chance to speak to Diana—Diana, who sat in her place, looking radiant, her eyes sparkling as she thought of the Hunt to be held that morning.

Diana was going to show those county people something! As if yesterday had never been, was Diana's mood that morning. The Hunt was here! She could think of nothing but the Hunt!

To be sure, she had not forgiven Margot. Remembering yesterday, Diana did not blame herself. Margot, she told herself, was jealous because she was taking part in the Hunt—else why should Margot have tried to dissuade her from going to the Gables? Why should Margot have tried to cramp her style when she had been there?

She deliberately ignored Margot's entreating look across the breakfast

table. Immediately breakfast was over she rose.

Off to the dormitory Diana went. There she locked the door. Hang the weather! That was rotten luck—but she did look rather marvellous in this outfit! Carefully she dressed herself. With a friendly grimace at her own reflection, picked up her crop, and went out. Margot was in the passage.

"Diana, before you go—" she panted.

Diana walked straight past her.

"Diana—"

Diana hurried on.

She had already ordered Cripps to bring Sleek to the school, and there Sleek was. She was rather disappointed that a larger crowd was not present to see her off. But, for the benefit of the others watching from inside Big Hall, she mounted majestically and leisurely. With a haughty smile, she tossed Cripps half-a-crown, and, head in air, sitting her horse like a rock, she rode off to the Boot and Spur.

Her heart was glowing now, in strange contrast to the fine rain which drove at her. A wretched morning in all truth—even that could not damp Diana's ardour.

Perched aloft, she felt like a queen. Wait till the rest of the Hunt saw her!

It was five minutes to ten when she came within sight of the Boot and Spur. Already she was straining her ears for the barking of the dogs, for the clump of impatient horses' feet.

The countryside, shrouded in mist and rain, however, was unacceptably silent.

Then, rounding a bend, she came within sight of the inn, and blinked and frowned. Not a soul was there!

Diana scowled. So much for her triumphant entry among the hunters. Had she made a mistake? Anxiously she consulted the watch on her wrist. Just ten o'clock. Impossible to believe that nobody had turned up—Major Fields-Croft was so particular about meeting-time, and he had stressed the ten o'clock to her. What the dickens had happened?

She'd have to wait.

So Diana, oblivious to all the bleak surroundings and the driving rain, sat and waited. Five, ten, fifteen minutes went by—still no sign. The rain began to fall in a steady, chilly downpour.

She set her lips. Twenty-five minutes—half an hour! Then suddenly the door of the inn opened. A rather astounded and stupid-looking face peered out.

"Here, you!" Diana snapped.

"Yes, miss?"

"What's happened here? Why isn't the Hunt present?"

The man shook his head.

"Why, miss, how should I know?" he asked. "I don't know nothing about the Hunt, miss. It ain't being held here. All I know is that the missus has a cough, and we're waiting for the doctor. Maybe you haven't seen Dr. Longmore?"

"No, I haven't!" Diana snapped, and, in fuming anger, turned again.

But fury was welling up within her now. Bitterness filled her heart. The Hunt was obviously off. Those ambypantly hunting people were afraid of the weather, she supposed contemptuously. All the same, they ought to have warned her, ought to have let her know. She was soaked now, numb, and blue.

On a sudden furious impulse Diana turned her horse's head round. Red-hot with rage, she urged her mount on. Down the road Sleek galloped, presently halting in front of Friars Gables.

There she tethered the horse and went to the front door.

The butler opened it. He blinked as he saw her.

"Why, Miss Royston-Clarke, are you back so soon?"

"So soon! So soon!" Diana raved. "Don't stare at me like that! Where's the major?"

"Why, the major's gone hunting, Miss Diana!"

"What?"

"But you knew, surely?" The butler stared in perplexity. "Mrs. Watts—at the Boot and Spur, was taken ill yesterday. The doctor says she must have perfect rest and quiet, and so they altered the meeting-place to the Leather Bottle, near the Gay Buccancer Roadhouse. Miss Margot was told to tell you last night as she left. But, miss, you're soaked through. Won't you come in?"

"No!" Diana said thickly. And, in towering temper, feeling more angry than she had ever felt in her life before, she flung herself on Sleek's back and galloped like a mad thing across the downs towards Cliff House School.

Margot! That cat again! Margot had been entrusted with that message! Margot, realising she would make a fool of herself, had not even told her!

In those moods Diana was not reasonable. She did not trouble to reflect that many times last night and this morning Margot had tried in vain to speak to her.

But she'd have something to say to Margot now! That awful cat! That jealous rotter! That girl who had always pretended to be her friend!

At a perfectly reckless pace she urged Sleek on. Breathlessly she reached Cliff House. Bessie Bunter, just coming out of the tuckshop, jumped back in alarm as Diana flung herself from the saddle.

"Where's Margot?" she rapped. "In—in the pets' house," Bessie said. "But, really, Diana, that's not the way to speak to me! Here, I say."

But Diana was off, brow furrowed, eyes gleaming. She raised her crop as though it was in her mind to lay it about Margot Lantham's shoulders.

Crash! went the gate of the pets' house as she flung it open, and clump, clump, clump stamped Diana up the gravel path.

She reached Tartar's stable. A cluster of girls were there, among them Clara Trevlyn and Barbara Redfern. She snapped a question:

"Where's Margot?"

"She's in the stable," Babs said. "But, Diana, don't worry her now—Tartar is ill."

"And," Diana ground out, "a jolly good job, too! I suppose that means say won't ride in those silly trials? Well, serve her right! Tit-for-tat for the rotten trick she played me! Anyway, let me come in. I want to see her!"

"Diana, you're not coming to cause a scene?" Babs asked.

"Let me come in!" Diana cried, and then stopped.

For Margot, white-faced, her eyes gleaming with an anger that could no longer be suppressed, stood before her.

"Diana, you awful thing!" she cried. "I heard that. Tartar—"

"Hang Tartar! What do you mean by not telling me about the Hunt?"

"I tried to tell you."

"You didn't!"

"I said," Margot repeated in a subdued kind of voice, "that I did! Now please go away. Tartar is ill!"

Diana paused. But her anger was

too great to be subdued even by the look of distress upon Margot Lantham's face.

"I'll go away," she stated grimly. "When I've told you what I think of you, you jealous cat! I'll go away when—"

And then she stopped as a distressed, plaintive little whinny came from the stable—a whinny almost of gladness, a whinny which, even in her anger, sent the queerest of thrills through the frame of Diana Royston-Clarke.

For there was something in its note—what, it was impossible to say. She could not see Tartar, but she seemed to sense that Tartar had heard her voice; that that whinny was his way of letting her know that he was here.

It was as if a message had been telegraphed to her brain that Tartar

creature she had tamed, this glorious creature who seemed to have established some queer telegraphic understanding with her. Margot knelt down.

"Well," she said, "if you've finished, let me attend to him. You're glad now?"

"Diana did not reply. She rose. With another look at the horse she walked off. It was dinner then, but Margot did not come in. Margot, in fact, did not put in an appearance all the afternoon. Only at night, when she entered the study, worn-out and haggard, did Diana again feel that pang of pity for her.

"No better?" she asked.

"No," Margot said shortly.

Diana nodded grimly. She was about to say something, but thought better of it.

After tea, however, she went down to the pets' house. Tartar was alone



## HILDA RICHARDS' SURPRISE PRESENT

THE "SCHOOLGIRL" OFFICE,  
FLEETWAY HOUSE,  
FARRINGTON STREET,  
LONDON, E.C.4.

**MY DEAR GIRLS,**—If receiving letters is a sign of friendship—and I like to think it is, don't you?—then I have more friends than I'm sure I can possibly deserve!

I'm loving your letters more and more—if that is possible. Even a film star might envy me—for I believe even film stars get unpleasant letters at times. But yours are really wonderful—and I do thank you all.

It was a letter from **STELLA WILLIAMS**, whose address is **10, Stour Road, Richmond Park, Bournemouth**, which interested me particularly this week. (Stella asks me to call her Billy, by the way.) She, with seven other girls, is on the stage, and has appeared in pantomime several times, and I found her "doings" most enjoyable.

But Billy didn't talk all about herself by any means, and her letter was so charming I've decided to send her a little present.

I hope you'll find the **gold-nibbed fountain pen** very useful, Billy. (Perhaps you'll use it to sign autographs this Christmas!) And, yes, I do like cats—as well as dogs. I used to have one as a matter of fact, named **Waffles**, but he was stolen, I'm afraid. Tickle Squeaker behind the ear for me, and please give him very respectful regards from my dog, Juno. (She has three cat friends now—Billie, Nigger and Pat, the cat. But also—one enemy, named **Kipper**. Kipper's rather a crosspatch in cats, I suspect!)

My love to you all, my dears—and, of course, my thanks, right from my heart.

*Hilda Richards*

wanted her. And all at once Diana stood still.

"Is he very ill?" she asked.

"Very!" Margot replied.

Diana stepped forward. Almost scared she looked into the box. There Tartar was, the worried vet kneeling beside him. But Diana could have sworn that the look in the horse's eyes changed as they fell upon her. A little quiver seemed to shake his frame.

And all at once Diana had forgotten her feud with Margot, had forgotten her disappointment, and her vanities. She knelt down beside him.

"Tartar! Tartar, old man!" she said softly.

"He is ill," the vet said—"very ill! And I'm hanged if I can make out what's the matter with him. He'll be no earthly use for the trials at this rate."

But Diana did not hear that. She wasn't thinking about the trials. She was thinking of Tartar—this glorious

then, and he greeted her with a glad whinny as she entered the box. She bent over him.

"Tartar—dear old Tartar!" she said softly. "Pleased to see me?"

Again Tartar gave that queer, half-glad sound.

"Like me to stop?" Diana asked.

Tartar raised his head towards her. So Diana stopped. She was still there when call-over came. Tartar, by that time, was shivering. She went back. Again Margot saw her, and, worried to death, hardly nodded. Diana, however, had made up her mind.

Venn was no good. What Tartar wanted was a real vet.

And that night, after lights had been put out, Diana rose. She crept from the dormitory, and, taking a blanket with her, went to the pets' house. She was a fool, of course—she told herself that—but something stronger than herself, stronger than her

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 13)

feud against Margot, dragged her to Tartar's side.

Margot had humiliated her; Margot had stolen her limelight. She ought to have been glad that Tartar was so crooked that it seemed utterly impossible for him now to run in that great event for which Diana herself would have sacrificed her social position as the daughter of the mayor of Lantham to shine in it! She felt amazed at herself.

But it was not Diana the Firebrand who acted now—not Diana the headstrong, the impulsive, the shine-at-any-price! There were finer and deeper chords in Diana's complex nature. One of them was her affection for dumb animals; the other was her mercy, her tolerance, her compassion for the foe when she was the victor!

She was trembling with anxiety when she entered the box and switched on the light.

Already she felt afraid. Something like a lump of relief jumped into her throat when she heard Tartar's welcoming whinny, and when his brave, weary head was raised to hers and his soft, hot, velvet-like muzzle was confidently and trustfully thrust into her palm.

"Tartar! Oh, dear old Tartar!" Diana cried with a suspicious crack in her voice, and dashed a silly tear from her eye. "Look, I've brought you this!" And, with a rather choky laugh, she threw the rug over him and tenderly arranged it. "And now, Tartar, old chap, I'm going to bring you the best vet in England! Be good until I come back—darling!"

She patted the glossy neck. For a moment pressed her cheek against the horse's tender jaw. Then she crept out again.

If she were caught—

But Diana, reckless now in a good cause, did not care! Nothing mattered—except Tartar! Across the grounds she padded, clambered through the gap in the hedge, and was fortunate in catching the last bus to Courtfield.

It was a vastly surprised Bernard Torrance who, half an hour later, confronted her in his consulting room.

"Mr. Torrance, if you could do me a good turn you would, you said. I've come to claim it. At Cliff House there's a horse—ill. He's not mine, but I want you to come to have a look at him. And please," she added, "whatever you do, don't say a word to anybody."

The vet eyed her. But he nodded. Back to Cliff House they went in his car, Diana leading him through the gap in the hedge, while the car was left outside. When he saw Tartar he frowned.

"It's a sickness I know," he said. "Rare in horses, but he's got it right enough."

"You can cure him?" Diana asked anxiously.

"Ay, I can cure him. But—" He paused. "I don't see how it's to be managed. The horse wants nursing—careful nursing. I've some tablets here. One of them must be given him every hour for the first six hours, then another every three hours. If that can be done he'll be fit in twenty-four hours. But who's to stop and give them to him?"

"I will," Diana said. "Let me have them."

And so that night Diana did not return to the dormitory. She stopped, anxiously watching at Tartar's side. Each hour, to the minute, she administered the tablets, and, worn out at last, crept back to the school—to be caught climbing in the lobby window by Miss Bullivant.

Miss Bullivant's eyes almost bulged. "Diana, I declare you have been out! Come with me to the headmistress at once!"

Diana smiled wearily. Miss Primrose frowned when she was brought before her.

"You have been out, Diana?"

"Miss Bullivant says so," Diana said.

"Please, girl—no impertinence!

Where have you been?"

"That," Diana said coolly, "I prefer to keep to myself."

"Then," Miss Primrose said, "until you choose to tell me, Diana, I shall not deal leniently with you. You will be confined to bounds until further orders. And, meantime," she added, "no more riding."

Diana merely shrugged.

But she smiled as she went off. She smiled still more when, after breakfast, she heard "Margot" discussing the wonderful improvement in Tartar.

Every three hours thereafter Diana sneaked out, and that night at eleven o'clock sneaked out again. By arrangement she met the vet outside the school.

"It looks," he said, "as if you will be needing attention next. You ought to get some rest, Diana."

"Come and see Tartar," Diana said.

"Tell me what I have to do to-night."

"Keep on with the tablets every three hours. Keep him warm, and to-morrow he'll be as fit as ever," the vet said, after making his examination. "But, Miss Diana, I wish you would make some arrangements—"

"Thanks, I've made them. I'll look after him," Diana said. "You're sure he'll be all right?"

"As right as anything," the vet said.

He shook his head, however. "Miss Diana, I'll tell you this now. If you hadn't called me in when you did, if you hadn't looked after him as you have done, he'd probably have been a dead Tartar by this time!"

Diana smiled. "And all that night—the night before the trials—she kept watch in the stables. Every three hours to the minute she gave him his tablets, while Tartar grew in fitness and strength before her eyes. Dead tired, she crept back to school.

And after breakfast—

"He's well! He's well!" Margot deliciously announced to Barbara Redfern. "Mr. Venn says that he can run in the trials. He says that something like a miracle has happened. Oh, Babs

—Babs! Diana!" she shouted, turning her head. "Diana, Tartar's well!"

"Is he?" Diana asked.

"Diana, oh, please!" Margot said, her eyes glinting, "say you're glad!"

"I'm glad!" Diana said, with a wry smile, and then walked away.

And later, from her study window, she saw the cavalcade leave Cliff House. She smiled wearily, bitterly. Margot was off—on Tartar! Margot who never knew how much she would ever owe to her!—That horse—those trials—the trials which would give Margot such glory!—Was she a fool? Was she just an idiot in what she had been doing?

Then she became aware of Sarah Harrigan's scowling face at the door.

"Come on, you're in detention for the morning," said the prefect. "And I"—bitterly—"have got to jolly well watch you."

Diana shrugged.

In the Form-room she sat herself down. She started to grind out the task set her while Sarah read a book. She felt half-dead from lack of sleep. She was sure she would doze off. How were the trials faring? How was Tartar faring? How—

"Diana, wake up!" rapped Sarah. "You can't go to sleep here!"

Diana yawned. She scratched on. Ten o'clock came, eleven, twelve. Oh goodness, would dismissal never come? By this time the trials would be over. By this time Margot would have won or lost, and if—

Outside, clatter, clatter, clatter! A sudden shouting of girls' voices.

The trials party was returning.

It was all over!

Diana started up. She peered through the window. Through the gates a cavalcade of schoolgirls was pouring.

Babs, Clara, Jemima, and Bessie among them, and in their midst a girl riding on a chestnut horse—a girl who clasped something in her arms, on which the sun gleamed and glinted.

It was Margot Lantham, and that thing she held was the silver-and-gold cup!

So Margot had won!

A bitter sneer twisted the lips of Diana Rouston-Clarke. She had made Margot's victory possible. And no one would ever know; no one would ever guess!

Clatter, clatter—coming nearer. Clatter, clatter—and then a great crowd

(Concluded on page 28)

## MARJORIE HAZELDENE

kind . . . gentle . . . loyal . . . sympathetic!

How like Marjorie it was to respond so nobly to the plea of a girl who did not deserve to be helped; a girl whose only motives were those of selfishness! But Marjorie thought of nothing but what she believed to be her duty. And so, quite unwittingly, she paved the way for the finest deed of her life.

There you have the theme of next week's dramatic LONG COMPLETE Cliff House story, by HILDA RICHARDS.

Don't miss it!



Golden-Hearted MARJORIE!

Opening Chapters of a Fascinating New Morcove Story



### Their Reason Why!

**Y**OUR change, miss, and the receipted bill. And if the things are sent along tomorrow—

Betty Barton, captain of the Morcove Fourth Form, smiled.

"Oh, we want them at the school sooner than that," she said. "And besides, they can go with us now. The school bus is outside."

"Then I will have everything parcelled up and brought out to the bus at once," replied the smart young shop assistant.

"Thanks!"

"Thank you, young ladies, I'm sure!"

As Betty led the way out of the draper's shop at Barncombe, it was like Polly Linton, her companion, to feel tickled to death by the shopwalker's low bow.

"Money talks," Betty!"

"Oh, well, can you wonder?" smiled fair-minded Betty. "It'll be a quiet time for all the shops after this week—when Morcove's broken up. Say, though; you want to run across to the Cromery, don't you?"

"Bearing in mind that the boys are coming over from Grangemoor after school to-day—perhaps I'd better!"

And away flashed Polly, every bit as eager as her chum to avoid delay.

There were great matters afoot in Study No. 12 at Morcove School, this last week of term. A certain novel project was going forwards with tremendous enthusiasm, and every minute was precious.

At this very moment, the school's private bus was only at the disposal of Betty and Polly, because the head-mistress had let it be known that they and their chums must be given all possible help.

Polly was still across the way, hastily acquiring extras for this afternoon's tea-table, when a silken feminine voice spoke from behind, Betty:

"Excuse me—"

She turned round.

There was a complete stranger—a very stylish woman—smiling in a winning way.

"Does this bus happen to be going to Morcove?"

"Yes; we're going back right now, if you'd like a lift?"

So the lady, letting a delighted smile acknowledge the hearty invitation, entered the bus just as Polly came

prancing back to the pavement, laden with cardboard cake cartons, and bulging paper bags.

Betty chuckled.

"Enough to go round—should be, anyway! Polly, we're giving this lady a lift—don't know who she is," the captain whispered on.

This meant a semi-introduced smile from Polly to the stranger, whilst getting into the bus. Then:

"How nice for you girls to have the use of the bus for your shopping!"

"Oh, we don't always—it's usually bikes," was Betty's grinned response.

"This morning, though, our Form—"

### ON TOUR WITH THE MORCOVE CONCERT PARTY

Betty Barton & Co. and their boy chums join forces to help a Children's Home. Thrilling times—and exciting, too, for they have a traitor in their midst.

mistress said we might, as she knew it would help us such a lot;

"Christmas shopping!"

"E—no!"

"Then I wonder what all those parcels mean? Do tell me!" smiled the lady, as if only for the sake of making conversation.

"Oh—er—it's just an idea of some of us girls for the coming hole," Betty said, with a little laugh of diffidence.

"We've formed ourselves into a sort of concert-party, to give shows that will bring in money for a jolly good scheme. Really, it's so that Rock Hill House can be bought for a seaside home for slum kiddies; but we heard that the money isn't coming in at all fast enough."

"There's only until the end of March to get the money that's needed," Polly supplemented.

"I know—I've heard about the scheme. And, of course," the lady spoke on, most feelingly, "at this time of the year there are so many appeals, which make it hard to get the Rock Hill House money in time."

"Going to have a jolly good try, anyhow," Betty said quietly. And then, so as to change the talk: "Are you some Morcove girl's parent, perhaps?"

"I? Up till now, I have had no connection with Morcove in the least," was the laughed disclaimer. "But I think it quite likely that I may soon have a good deal to do with you girls."

"With us?" gasped Betty and Polly.

"And your concert-party? So isn't it rather funny that I should have fallen in with you like this?" chatted on the lady. "My name is Lester—Miss Laura Lester. And there is an idea of my services being accepted."

Betty and Polly looked amazed.

They knew all the names of those influential people who were sponsoring the Rock Hill House scheme, but until this moment they had heard no mention of a Miss Lester. Where, then, and how, exactly, did Miss Lester come in?

"I was on the phone with your headmistress early this morning," she carelessly imparted. "And now I am going along to see her at the school, by appointment, to talk things over."

But what "things"? Betty could not understand, and yet they did not like to press for explanations.

"I suppose," Miss Lester blandly resumed, "you have quite settled your programme by now? You are having rehearsals—holding one this afternoon, perhaps? If so, how I shall enjoy being present!"

"Not this afternoon," Betty rather mumbled. "We shall be busy making stage costumes. But this evening—"

"Then I shall do my best to look in upon you all! Songs, of course, and some dances, and a sketch or so, perhaps?"

"That's about it," Betty smiled. "Polly, here, has written several sketches. And then we've two girls—Madge Minden and Pam Willoughby—who are good at the piano."

"Pam Willoughby! That will be Mrs. Willoughby's daughter, from Swanlake?" Miss Lester eagerly inferred. "I was on the phone with her, who advised me to get hold of your headmistress to-day, thinking my suggestion so good!"

This, in its continued vagueness, was just about too much for impatient Polly. She would have been crying out, in another moment: "But what suggestion!" Only Miss Lester now got her first glimpse of Morcove School through the bus window.

"Nearly there! Well, girls, in any case, you have my very best wishes! Oh, and I think you will get the money

By

MARJORIE STANTON

that is so badly needed, right enough. You are to give the show at all sorts of fine houses up in town?"

"And in the country," Betty nodded. "You'll be quite in Society, in fact!" Miss Lester said merrily.

Then the bus slowed, to do the sharp turn in at the school gateway.

Another minute, and half a dozen boisterous girls flocked close to the bus, where it had pulled up outside the School House porch.

They were chums of Betty's and Polly's, wanting to grab the various parcels and make a joyous dash with them up to Study No. 12. But Miss Lester's getting out first put an almost dramatic check upon the clamorous mob.

A total stranger to these other girls, was made for her in an abashed manner.

Every excitabile voice was stilled—even dusky Naomer Nakara's, although that excitabile imp had become crazier than ever over the sight of "Creamery" purchases.

"Thanks so much for the lift, girls!" And then Miss Lester was gone.

"But who is she, Betty? Polly, who is she?"

Captain and madeap were being instantly bombard with the question. "We only know she's a Miss Lester, and may be going to have something to do with our stunt," said Betty.

"What?" gasped some. "But how can she?" exploded others.

"B-kas, swendle!" Naomer stampet, whilst hugging Creamery pastry bags to her chest.

"Pam"—the captain turned to the ever-serene Pam Willoughby—"your mother may be able to tell you something. Why don't you ring up Swan-lake?"

A calm nod from Pam as she promptly hurried indoors gave promise of early enlightenment. And so, next moment, the rest of the girls were getting hold of the parcels, meaning to make the portering of them upstairs a very jubilant business indeed.

### False Friend

"OO, gorjus! A whole Swees roll!"

"Put it away, kid!"

"Naomer will do the putting away, all right, Betty—at tea-time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But what the captain had meant was that Naomer must put the Swiss-roll where it would not imperil lovely flimsy fabrics, which, almost frenziedly unparcelled, were now being eagerly inspected.

There was, too, a great danger of French pastries getting mixed up with dress materials that would scarcely be improved by receiving stray blobs of cream, or dabs of buttery chocolate.

The study table, at that moment, was like a draper's shop in sale-time, plus an array of eatables more proper to a cakeshop counter.

"Can you beat it?" snorted Polly. "Even at a time like this, the kid can only think of stuffing. She just can't take the slightest interest in anything else we've bought."

But the others could! And one and all reckoned that every penny was well spent.

Bunny Trevor suddenly became a mannequin, displaying the loveliness of a certain six-yard remnant of rose-pink chiffon, draped about her quite in the Russian ballet style.

"Too good for the stage, really!" was Bunny's ecstatic opinion. "I want this, girls, for when we go into the ball-room at Lady Mountquerry's house, after doing our stuff!"

"If we're not asked to leave, half-way through the show," Polly grimly feared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Then Pam came in.

"I got mother on the phone——"

"O, you did? Oh——"

"And she told me about Miss Lester, whose home is at Sandton Bay——"

"Sandton Bay!" Betty echoed.

"And that's just where Rock Hill House is, which we want to get for a seaside home."

Pam nodded.

"Mother has met Miss Lester out, once or twice, and she thinks her awfully nice. And the idea is for the lady to become a sort of official chaperone for the party."

"Official wha-a-at?" yelled some.

"My hat!" gasped Judy, whilst Bunny loudly wondered: "Why on earth should we want a chaperone?"

"What ze diggings ees a jabberone, any old how?"

"A chaperone," said Polly, for Naomer's special edification, "is one who sees that you don't enjoy yourself any more than she is doing—which isn't much, ever."

"Zen I shall strike!"

"Oh, it's all right!" Betty laughed.

"After all, it will save our people from

## YOUR "ANNUAL" TREASURE-TROVE!



Here are some of the contents:

"IT WAS FUN FOR THE FOURTH!" Topping long Cliff House story by Hilda Richards.

"WHEN CLIFF HOUSE MADE HISTORY!" A delightful old-fashioned tale of one of Clara Trevlyn's ancestors—as big a tomboy as Clara herself.

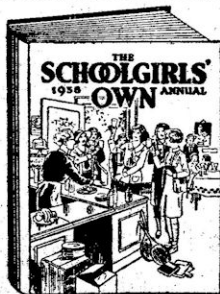
"BESSIE THE BEAUTY QUEEN!" A screamingly funny story, which shows Hilda Richards in her gayest mood—and the fat girl of the Fourth in her most serious.

And other enthralling tales, on a whole variety of themes, by numerous popular authors.

Don't delay. Buy your copy NOW. Or, if pennies are short, ORDER YOUR COPY TO BE SAVED FOR YOU!

But, most thrilling fact of all, it is really Babs & Co.'s annual, for the chums of Cliff House appear again and again.

To lovers of Morcove the "Schoolgirls' Own" Annual, price 6s. makes a simply irresistible appeal, for Betty Barton & Co. appear in numerous delightful features.



There are also many other stories to appeal to girls of every taste. Be sure to secure this fine book before it is too late.

(See page 20 for particulars of our other fine Annuals.)



having to fuss about us, if Miss Lester is ready to take us on as a full-time job."

"So long as he isn't going to boss the show," Polly grimaced. "I won't stand that!"

"Really, I think it will be all right for us," Pam hastened to say, "or mother would have downed the idea straight away. Miss Lester, anyway, is paying her own expenses—doing her whack for the sake of the scheme."

"Well," Betty grinned, "she does seem to be a real ripper. Dinner, now"—for the gong downstairs was whanging—and afterwards, girls, up to the sewing-room. Needn't trouble to put all this stuff away; we'll be wanting it then."

Off they romped, liveliest of all the lively batches of scholars going down to table.

One-forty-five, at the latest, Study No. 12 was agreeing, must find them busy with tape-measures, scissors, needle-and-thread. And they would work on until only a few minutes before the appointed time for the boys to turn up from Grangemoor.

Meantime, Miss Lester indulged a sudden wish to see over the school-house. At such a busy time for the staff there was no one to show her out—as to which, indeed, she had begged the headmistress not to trouble in the least! And so nobody was aware of the visitor's sudden turning back from the front door, first to get a look at some of the class-rooms, and then see what it was like upstairs.

Miss Lester's growing interest in all that was to be seen upstairs took her at last down a long corridor of studies. Almost every door was ajar, so that she could do a good deal of glancing in whilst going by. If a study door did chance to be shut, then Miss Lester opened it to take a peep. She was so interested!

And in the end it was Study No. 12 whose door she opened, to see a table heaped with quantities of rolled-up dress material.

Miss Lester advanced quickly into the study, and closed the door behind her. She gazed at the handsome face had lost its benign expression. In the same instant she snatched at an inkpot and turned it upside down upon one roll of rose-coloured fabric.

"Let that be the beginning of the trouble I mean to make for them," she muttered fiercely to herself. "Hinder them somehow, I will—every chance I get!"

And after a moment, more under her breath than ever:

"Rock Hill House, if only I can get hold of it! If only enough money is not raised after all, so that the scheme has to be dropped. But if ever those girls do make a success of what they're undertaking, then I'm done!"

Miss Lester went out warily, un-noticed, from Study No. 12. And there on the table lay that upset inkpot, the spilt ink soaking, soaking into the dainty fabric's every fold.

"Oh! Oh, how awful!"

"My giddy aunt!"

"Bekas—"

"Deliberate!"

The last was Polly's own infuriated cry, rising above shouts and yells of anger from other girls who, of the school being up from dinner, were flocking back into Study No. 12.

Betty, a moment behind the rest, came in now, to find Polly taking up the ink-stained roll of rose-pink chiffon.

"Look at this, Betty!" raged the



ROUND and round the room dashed the "fiery steed," Naomer clinging on for dear life. Shrieks of laughter rang out. Such a hilarious rehearsal promised well for the future success of the Morcove Concert Party!

madcap. "Some girl's done it on pur-

posely!" Betty looked amazed.

"My golly!" she gasped. "But—but who?"

"Fay and Edna?"

What wonder that several of them were suddenly thinking of the Denver sisters, in connection with this cruel deed. Study No. 12 never went in for any creditable activity of its own without incurring the spiteful ridicule, the jealous hostility, of Fay and Edna.

Suddenly Betty took the ruined length of material from Polly and went away with it. She strode up the corridor to the Denver sisters' study. Walking straight in upon the pair, she offered them a sight of the ink-stained chiffon.

"Did you do this?" she demanded.

"We do that?" And Fay and Edna stood taller. "No. How dare you accuse us of such a thing!"

Betty looked at Fay very steadily, but without getting her to flinch. Then she looked just as fixedly at Edna, who also, for once, stood such a searching scrutiny without losing countenance.

"No, you didn't do it, either of you," Betty said, as if it were as good as proved. "All right, I'm sorry!"

And she walked out.

But who, then, was to blame for the loss Study No. 12 must suffer?

Again and again, during their busy afternoon in the sewing-room, the chums debated that question, for the injury was one that rankled—badly.

Nine shillingworth of material—ruined! To see it lying by in the sewing-room was to be kept in mind of the inconvenience as well as the monetary loss, until of a sudden Tess Trelawney had an idea about using the stuff most cleverly.

She, the born artist of the chummary, would paint a design upon the length of

chiffon that would take in all the ink-stains, and the result would be a freak dress of Eastern design that Naomer could wear.

After such a bright idea as this, the chums soon got over their disgruntled state, and by tea-time were in grand spirits.

Then the "boys" turned up from Grangemoor School, all five of them booked to play big parts in the concert party.

The talk during tea was of the forthcoming production, and afterwards they had the spacious music-room as a fine place for rehearsal, not to mention the use of a grand piano.

To anyone allowed in to watch the rehearsal, it would now have been apparent that here was a vast amount of real talent, guaranteeing a show that would go with a bang.

Madcap Polly and her roystering brother Jack had such an aptitude for comedy stuff that, as partners on the stage, they could even be trusted to "make it up as they went along." And portly Tubby Bloot—really, he had only to be himself, with his fat smile and his perfect readiness to be the butt of everyone else, and you could not wish for a better clown.

But Betty & Co. believed that what an audience liked best was a comic sketch. There were to be several of these five-minute farces, all written by Polly in exercise-books.

Some of Polly's demands were pretty drastic, but nobody minded that. One sketch, for instance, was a skit on the present riding-school craze.

Pant Willoughby, in jodhpurs and hacking-jacket, was, of course, cut out for the part of a lady instructress. But at least one horse must appear upon the stage, and so Bunny's brother Tom and

Tubby Blot were between them to be that horse.

The boys had brought along with them a brown-paper parcel containing something that looked like several hearth-rugs sewn together. Another minute, and a stable-yard was being imagined at one end of the music-room, with a screen so placed as to represent a loose-box, over the low door of which lolled the horse's head, his eyeballs rolling.

From the very start it was all funny enough, with Pam and Jack on the stage together. She was the aristocratic priestess of the establishment and he a groom.

Then came some new talents—Polly as the adoring mother of a charming daughter—Naomer—who was to be given lessons. Jack, the groom, had orders to bring out the horse, but it was the horse that brought out Jack.

He followed the floppy-legged steed round and round the stage, trying to do something to the saddle, but it would have none of him. Finally, it bolted back into the stable.

Yet when Pam went in, that horse was ready to come out with her, as obedient as could be.

This greatly reassured mother and

had been formally introduced to her, had stayed on with the headmistress to watch the rest of the rehearsal.

Now the two ladies were gone, and it was time for Grangemoor to think about being off as well.

A hasty packing and clearing up was going on in the music-room, whilst tongues gave utterance to much delighted comment in regard to Miss Lester.

Even Betty and Polly were feeling that nothing but good could come of the concert party having Miss Lester as its honorary chaperone.

Away into the wintry night rode Jack and his pals, after a jovial "good-night!" to the girls at the Morocco porch.

Back in Study No. 12 for a little while the girls sat about, pleasantly tired after happy activities.

Bed-time came, and before lights were out Betty & Co. were reminded once again of how the Form, as a whole, was wishing them the best of luck over their "collecting stunt." But it had been a tiring day for all, one way and another, and no sooner was the dormitory in darkness than girls were yawning last remarks before dropping off to sleep.

But the door, when Betty got to it, was locked.

A maddened gasp passed her lips.

Thoughts of all the fresh injury that somebody might be doing, at this very moment, made her desperate. She would find out who it was, inside the room, even if it meant rousing the whole school!

And so there began a rattle, rattle of the wrenched-at door-knob, whilst she furiously demanded:

"Who's in there? Open this door, whoever you are!"

Then—complete silence.

Suddenly the line of light went from under the locked door.

For a few moments, Betty felt content to wait, quite expecting some awakened mistress to come along.

But nothing happened, and she lost patience. Again she took hold of the door-knob, shaking it furiously.

Come out of there, will you! Better have me to face, whoever you are, than a mistress! Come on, I tell you!

And still no one responded.

But the lock itself responded, next time she gave a violent twist to the knob.

Betty found that the door would open now.

Wide-round she sent it—strode in—gave a quick click to the wall switch. But, most strangely—the light did not come on again!

She was advancing into a groping-dark room, her peering eyes vainly trying to make out the shadowy shape of some miscreant, huddled away in a far corner, dreading to be caught.

It flashed upon Betty that the unknown mischief-worker had had the wit, just now, to unsocket the electric light and whip it away from its holder, so as to keep the room in darkness.

Clever dodge, that! And it meant that one must be prepared for a sudden dash by the culprit—an attempt to get by, unrecognised, and so escape from the room.

With a sudden idea that she herself had advanced too far into the room, Betty started to draw back. But, even as she took the first receding step, she came in for a very violent push from someone who had darted clear of a hiding-place, behind the wide-flung door.

All but thrown off her feet was Betty. The powerful thrust from behind was one that sent her sprawling forward, and she had not recovered herself when her assailant went darting for the passage.

Then the door was quickly closed.

Too late, by a split second, Betty got to it to find it being pulled shut against her. A key rattled into the lock.

Click!

And now Betty was locked in the room where no light could be obtained, and whoever it was had served her like this was making a safe getaway.

Gone was the tricky, unknown—gone without being glimpsed even.

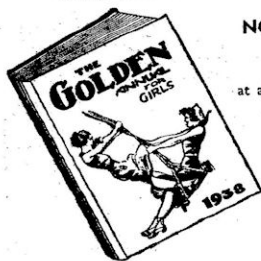
Where, then, and when, would Study No. 12 have another chance of finding out what it had so narrowly missed discovering to-night?

A chance of being warned in time against a "friend" who was no "friend at all." Miss Lester, "official chaperone" to the concert party, yet doing her crafty best, in secret, to bring such splendid work to nought!

**WASN'T** that a lovely instalment—thrilling as well as full of high spirits! But just wait until you read the continuation of this wonderful new story in next Saturday's **SCHOOLGIRL**. It is even more fascinating than what you have just read.

## THESE TWO FASCINATING ANNUALS

simply packed with lovely stories and illustrations, are



NOW ON

SALE

at all booksellers  
and  
newsagents



PRICE **3/6** Containing stories  
to suit all tastes

In which many famous heroines  
reappear PRICE **2/6**

daughter, and so at last Naomer was "up."

Then she was off!

Hanging on as if for dear life, Naomer had no need to act her wild alarm.

Round and round the stage the horse galloped with her, and they were real screams every time he up'd with his hind legs; they were real yells whenever he shot out his fore legs, almost throwing her over his head.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And then, when all the peals of laughter were at their loudest, the door opened, and in came Miss Somerfield with Miss Lester.

### Treachery Again!

**A**n hour later:  
"How awfully nice she is!"  
"Bekas, she even had a box of chocolates to pass round!"  
"Shan't mind leaving her to chaperone us."  
"Rather not!"  
Miss Lester, after the girls and boys

And Betty, perhaps, was asleep as quickly as any, although she soon woke up again, wondering about all the stage stuff in the sewing-room—whether she and her elms should not have locked up the room and brought the key away with them?

"Better to be safe than sorry!" was the wise decision that induced Betty, next minute, to go away from the dorm in dressing-gown and slippers, tiptoeing downstairs to the first floor.

The sewing-room was there—at the far end of the same passage that served the music-room.

It was as soon as Betty turned into the passage, all in darkness as it was, that she got a big shock.

A line of light under the sewing-room door!

Someone was behind the closed door. Why?

For what reason could it be, except to meddle with the concert party costumes? Silently, the angered captain flashed along the dark passage, meaning to throw the door open violently, and then fix the culprit with an accusing stare.

"Borki, is your father coming here with armed men?"  
 "Me not get prizes. Him come make you gib," said Borki.

The headmistress was silent, but giggles came from some of the girls. The idea of a parent arriving with armed followers to ensure that his daughter is presented with prizes tickled them.

But it did not amuse Talia.  
 "Your father bring warriors—mine him bring alonga plenty double twice more," she said in scorn.

Norma walked forward to Talia and gave a quick smile, hoping that her friend would understand that it meant—I'm fooling.

"Borki very nice girl," she said. Talia stiffened.  
 "No, no," she said, shocked and puzzled.

Norma grimaced and, with Talia between herself and Borki, shook her head.

"Very nice," she said. Talia turned from Norma and looked at Borki loftily. She understood now that Norma was pretending—that Borki was being fooled.

"Me let you stay alonga us," she said. Borki looked her up and down.  
 "Me want prizes—me go," she said.

"And if you have the prizes your father will not come here with armed warriors," asked Miss Manders.

Borki shrugged.  
 "Me tell him not p'raps. You nice to me—him not come," she said.

Miss Manders eyed her with considerable distaste. There was no disguising the fact that Borki was demanding rewards for not urging her father's warriors to attack.

"Borki," she said, "you may take some prizes, since you won some."

The headmistress went to the school store-room, a clearing under the trees, where the rescued stuff had been assembled. There was rubbish there as well as useful things, and she selected for Borki an exercise-book, a broken alarm clock, and a picture frame.

"Norma!" Miss Manders called. Norma willingly went across to help.

"You seem to understand these girls. Select prizes for Borki, will you?"  
 Norma took the picture-frame, the exercise-book, and the broken alarm clock, and added to it a cracked hand-mirror.

"These will do, Miss Manders, I think," she said. And it might be a good idea to make it a real presentation. Only you must warn Talia that it is just a joke.

Norma returned to Talia and explained what was to happen, and the word was passed round that this prize distribution was to be treated quite seriously.

Miss Manders, who had saved her gown with other oddments from the wreck, put it on, together with a mortar-board, and Norma led the girls with their school song.

Borki, a little abashed, stepped forward to take her prizes.

Miss Manders presented her with Belinda's exercise-book; and before accepting her other prizes she scanned the pages intently. To her it was a magic symbol of great portent.

Fingering tentatively her attention from the book, she tucked it under her arm and reached out for the alarm clock.

Norma shook it, and it ticked; it could tick for nearly two minutes without stopping.

Borki could hardly control herself, and gave little skipping jumps.

Last came the picture-frame. Borki took it and seemed a little cast-down, despite its gilt.

Norma, realising that, had a brain-wave.  
 "Wait!" she said. "I will show you how to wear it."

Lifting the frame, she placed it over Borki's head so that it rested on her shoulders.

Borki's eyes shone like stars, and she cast a look of contempt at Talia.

"All!" said Norma. "No more. And now, because you have won prizes, you must not come again to the school until the next moon."

Borki nodded, and, without giving thanks or saying good-bye, went off.

After roars of laughter, the school settled down to lessons, with Talia as mistress, and for once every girl was interested.

But while peace reigned on the beach, inland there was strife.

Borki, dancing with pride, had taken her presents to her father, and he had duly admired them. Then, finding that the back of the clock was partly open, he levered it off, and sought the little animal that was making the ticking noise. With a hiss of excitement, he saw a coiled metal snake.

It was the clock spring he had found, but he did not know that. He pulled and tugged.

Suddenly out shot the spring with a fierce clatter. It uncoiled, slashed his face, and numbed his fingers.

Dazed, goggle-eyed, he let the clock drop. Then, in wild fury, he leapt upon it, venting his rage, smashing and crashing it with a heavy stick.

"I go punish! I go take all things they have!" he roared. "Come, all! Follow me!"

Within five minutes he had rallied other bushmen, and through the undergrowth they went to make a surprise attack.

Talia was still lecturing and demonstrating when the bushmen rose from amongst the trees and dense vegetation. They let forth a yell that shattered the silence and sent birds flarrying from the trees.

"The bushmen!" gasped Norma. "Oh golly!"  
 Talia stared at them, and then turned to run, only Norma caught her by the wrist.

"Stop, Talia! Where are you going?"  
 "My father—plenty men—fight bushmen!"

"No, no!" cried Norma. "It will mean war—battle! It'll be horrible!"

Already girls were rushing in panic towards the water, and some into hiding in the bush. Confusion reigned, and Miss Manders shouted to call them back.

"Let me go!" panted Talia. "My father save you!"  
 She struggled free and ran; but Norma, knowing full well the awful consequences if there were drawn battle, rushed in pursuit.

In his own language the bushman gave a shout, and pointed to Talia and Norma, guessing the reason for Talia's flight.

"Stop them!" he ordered angrily.

**WHAT EVER** will be the outcome of this dramatic development? On no account fail to read next week's fine chapters, and be sure to recommend Elizabeth Chester's latest superb story to all your friends.

## "NO HOLDING THE FIREBRAND!"

(Concluded from page 16)

halting outside the Form-room window. And then a shout—a shout which made Diana jump. A shout in Babs' voice.

"Now, girls, altogether!" she said. "We want—"  
 "Diana!" came a thunderous roar.

Diana stared. At the same moment Miss Primrose came in. Her face was shining.

"Sarah, I think we may let Diana go," she said, and looked at her, almost with affection. "You are wanted in the quadrangle, Diana."

"But—but—"  
 "Please, go!" Miss Primrose said.

Diana stumbled from the room. She went out. As soon as she appeared on the steps again that thunderous roar swelled forth, followed by a mighty cheer.

And then Diana, blinking in amazement, saw that not only were Babs & Co. there, but also Major Fields-Croft, Paula, and Sir Richard Marray, Mr. Torrance, and a score of others. It was Margot who trotted forward.

"Diana, Diana, you—your wonderful thing!" she breathed.

"Eh?" Diana said.  
 But here was Sir Richard Marray, and in his hand was a gleaming silver hunting crop. While the others gathered round he smiled at her.

"Diana," he said, "er—Miss Royston-Clarke, you may not know it, but your friend Margot has won the Hunters' Trials—"

"Thanks, I can see that," Diana said. "But what—"

"And you, Diana, have won something which is even more worthy of having than the Trials Cup," Sir Richard went on. "You may not have remembered it, but at the trials every year there is a prize we call the golden-hearted prize—a prize for the best and most heroic act connected with horses which is brought to the notice of the Trials Committee over the year. That prize," Sir Richard continued, while Diana stared at him speechlessly, "has been won by you, Mr. Torrance, here, broke his promise to you. He couldn't allow your act of gallantry to pass unrecognised. We all know now, Diana, who saved Tartar, and how Tartar was saved. We all know—"

The rest of his sentence was drowned in a thunderous cheer. And Diana started and blinked again as that beautiful hunting crop was pressed into her hand.

Then she became aware of Margot in front of her—Margot, clasping that envied cup, with her radiant face glowing into hers. Margot smiled.

"Oh, Diana, you marvellous, you wonderful thing," she breathed.

"Diana, how—how ever can I thank you for all you have done for me?"

And Diana, her eyes upon that cup, those warring strings within her beginning to twang and snap again, turned impatiently away.

"I didn't do it for the horse," she said gruffly. "I did it for the horse!"

And hated herself next moment for what she had said! Because she realised, even as she said it, that it was only partly true. But that was Diana! If Diana could have bitten out her tongue for blurring out those words, she would rather have choked than withdrawn them!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.