

Delightful Christmas Number

The Schoolgirl

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EVERY **2^D**
SATURDAY

Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



Twelve o'clock on Christmas Eve!—and
The "Lady of Glengowrie" Appears!

See the magnificent COMPLETE Christmas story of
the Cliff House Chums on Holiday, inside!

Glorious Christmas adventure with your Cliff House favourites at Romantic old Glengowrie Castle.

Jemima's Christmas Secret

By

Hilda
Richards



A New
Friend
for
Bessie!

"**B**ALLO, there's a light!" Barbara Redfern said suddenly. "Will that be Glengowrie Castle, Jean?"

"Oh, it must be," Jean Cartwright answered.

"And about time, too, if you ask me." Tomboy Clara Treviyn panted. "The weight of the snow I'm carrying makes it feel as if I'm giving Bessie Bunter a pick-a-back! And, my hat, isn't it dark!"

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"A question which," Jemima Cartstairs said, beaming round through her monocle, "being the clever little idol of my kind teachers, I can answer in the affirmative, what? It is dark, Clara, beloved. And do you know why, sweet che-ild? Because it is eight o'clock on a Scottish night, and at eight o'clock on a Scottish night the sun never shines! You hear me out in that, don't you, Mabs?"

Mabel Lynn laughed. "I most certainly do," she said. "All the same"—with her eyes fixed on the light ahead—"I do hope that is the castle, Jean. But where's Bessie, by the way?" She stared, straining her eyes through the gloom. "Bessie!" she called. "Bess Bunter! Where are you?"

"Ow-wow!" came a wailing voice from down the darkened hallway. "I'm here, you know! Oh, phoo. Oh, dud-dear! I'm sti-stuck in a snowdrift—"

The whole party—there were six of them, all merry schoolgirls from the Fourth Form of Cliff House School—stopped.

"Well, shucks, can you beat that?" Leila Carroll chuckled. "Trust old

Bess to strike trouble. Put the glimmer on, Babs. This way, the rescue-party!"

Barbara Redfern laughed. The glimmer to which Leila referred, a torch which the chums had had lent to them at the little railway station of Glengowrie—she flashed on, picking out their footsteps embedded in the deep snow.

Soft, scurrying flakes fell in the beams of the torch—some of them as big as half-crowns—whirled hither and thither by the gusty wind which blew across the mountains.

Snow—snow—it was everywhere, piling in some places six and seven feet deep.

Not a very auspicious night to be visiting—no! But Babs & Co. were loving every adventurous minute of it. Such a contrast, this, to the dull, foggy December weather they had left in London this morning. And such a thrill, that glorious ride in the magnificent Coronation Scot express, with its lounges, its shops, its hairdressing-saloon, its goodness knows what else!

And so joyous, arriving at Glasgow to find the snow thickly falling and the ground already covered as they pulled out in the direction of Inverness.

It was the first real snow this winter, and like the light-hearted schoolgirls they were, they had greeted its appearance with delight. That delight had



Illustrated by
T. LAIDLER

been rather tempered by many subsequent delays, however, due to drifts piling on the lines.

Three hours later they had arrived at the little station of Glengowrie. There they were to have been met by cars from Glengowrie Castle, the famous old Scottish home of Jean Cartwright's uncle, Angus Glengowrie, who was entertaining the party for the Christmas holidays.

At the station the cars had been waiting, in truth, but owing to the lateness of the train, the roads, in the meantime, had become impassable. And so, with only Jean as their guide, they

"We're here—or hope we are," Babs laughed, as she and Leila and Clara caught the fat one's arm. "Now then, all together—one, two, three—go!"

And out of the drift with a rush and a yell bounced breathless Bessie.

"Stout work, old Spartans!" that strange girl, Jemima, applauded. "Saved from the snowy old grave, eh, Bessie? But onward, comrades! I fain would see crackling flames and shed these flakes of winter from my cloak!"

That, at least, was a sentiment they could all share, and eagerly towards the glimmering lights ahead they crunched their way.

and gone Glengowries stared down from the ancient walls.

A great, banqueting table had been laid under the old, carved gallery which ran round the hall. The freight glistened upon its white glass and its polished silver. At the far end of the room, where a flight of stairs rose towards the gallery, was an enormous Christmas-tree, all ablaze with electric lights.

"Welcome!" boomed a voice. "Hoots, but it's grand to see you, lassies!" And across the hall came the "bird" himself, dressed in a kilt and dinner-jacket, a diminutive girl, her little, round face rosy with excitement, trotting at his side. "Ay, but I was afraid you had got snowbound," he said, with a twinkle in his eyes. "I was just about to send a rescue party! Well, well, so here you are! Introduce me to your friends, Jean!"

And Jean, with a laugh, introduced them. At once they fell in love with their host—such a fine, sturdy, rugged old Scotsman he. Bluff, hearty, genial, he gallantly helped them off with their coats, flinging them to the two maids who, as if by magic, appeared.

Dorrie Stewart, the little rosy-cheeked girl whose voice they heard before the door was opened, meantime, overcome with a sudden and unaccountable shyness, hid behind his kilts.

"And now, perhaps, you'll be wanting something to eat and drink," the old man boomed. "Come closer to the fire, lassies. Make yourselves at home. Hey, Dorrie," he cried to the youngest, "why, goodness me, I'd almost forgotten you. Come and meet your aunts."

Dorrie's big, wondering eyes fixed upon them all.

"Hallo," she said shyly.

Christmas at a grand old castle in the Scottish Highlands. Such joyous fun, and so thrilling for Babs & Co. when they learn that there is a ghost of the castle—and then actually see it! But perhaps equally as intriguing is the mysterious behaviour of one of their number, that strange girl Jemima Carstairs, who actually seems to have some connection with the ghost!



had been forced to make the rest of the journey on foot.

Not that any of them minded that—except, perhaps, plump Bessie Bunter, whose rather heavy weight made it more difficult for her to negotiate the soft snow than her more athletic chums.

They turned back. Bessie, her fat bespectacled face worried in the darkness, stood nearly up to her armpits in a deep drift. She blinked wearily.

"Oh crumbs, you know, if this is Scotland, give me London! Oh, dud-dud, I fuf-feel like a snowman, you know. How much farther, Babs?"

Very soon they saw the dark, tremendous outlines of Glengowrie Castle, and entering the grounds over the ancient drawbridge, Jean pulled at the bell.

From inside there came a delighted squeal in a child's voice.

"Grandpa, they're here!"

The great doors were flung wide, emitting a gust of warm, pine-scented air.

Jean, with a laugh, led the way into the wide, old baronial hall, where a great log fire roared in the open grate, where panelled walls gleamed richly, and the oil-painted faces of long dead

"Why, Dorrie, I'd almost forgotten you," Jean laughed. "It must be three years since I saw you! And, my, what a big girl you've grown! How old is he now, uncle?"

"Please, Auntie Jean, I'm five!" Dorrie spoke up proudly. "Aren't I, grandpa?"

"Five it is," grandpa affirmed generally. "Five last month, eh? Well, Dorrie, you miss your Auntie Jean and all the other nice aunts who have come to spend Christmas with you. This is Auntie Barbara," he added, introducing Babs. "This is Auntie Mabs—"

"Ooo, hasn't Auntie Mabs got nice hair?" Dorrie cried excitedly. "Just like a fairy—all golly and curly."

Mabs laughed. "And this is Auntie Leila, who comes from America—a great big country across the sea," Jean said impressively. "This is Auntie Bessie—"

"Bessie!" The child stared at her, and dear old Bessie, who fancied she had a way with children, smirked back. "Ooo, Auntie Bessie, isn't you fat?" she said, in wonderment. "I've got a picture in my fairy book just like you!"

"Oh crumbs! I say, you know," Bessie said, while the chums tittered. "You mustn't say things like that! I'm not fat really! I've only got a well-developed figure, you know—not like these other skinny things—aunties, I mean."

"And this," Jean said, cutting in on Bessie's argument, "is Auntie Clara. And this is Auntie Jemima."

"Pleased to meet you," Jemima beamed, polishing her monocle. "Sorry I haven't the charms of Bessie, but I'll pass muster, what? What-ho, the child seems to find in me an object of curiosity," she added, as little Dorrie, with childish curiosity, stared.

"Nice Auntie Jemima," Dorrie murmured. "But why do you wear a glass eye?"

"Ahem! Ahem!" Jemima stiffened. "Awfully bad sight, old thing," she said. "Frightfully shocking eye—wonky—so completely wonky I have to stick this window in to make it see straight, doncher know! It's not a glass eye, really, just a thing to help me see with."

"Oo!" Dorrie said. "It does look funny—"

"Oh, come—come now!" Uncle Angus broke in hurriedly. "Little bairns mustn't make rude remarks! Excuse the child, please, Miss Carstairs! Now, Dorrie, please, no more," he added admonishingly, and patted the little one on the head. "Come to the ginger-wine. Ah, here we are! Help yourselves to glasses, my lassies, and fill yourselves with our own Glogowrie wine. It will warm you up. To Christmas!" he added.

"To Christmas!" Babs echoed.

"And they drank the warming fluid. Then Babs suggested that they should change their frocks before supper. Swiftly this was done, and then in a bunch, and looking very charming, they hurried down into the old hall again.

While merry chatter broke out once more, Babs looked round. A fascinating place, in all truth! Gaily decorated

with coloured electric lights and holly and mistletoe and ivy as it was, nothing could hide its rather romantic grimness. For hundreds of years the castle of Glogowrie had stood thus, defying weather, time, wind, and foe. What stories these old walls could tell if they could only speak, Babs thought, and what adventures the originals of those pictures which now looked down upon them could also relate!

Rather intently Babs regarded those pictures. She had a keen interest in art of whatever country or period, and pictures of any kind at once claimed her attention.

And then suddenly her eyes became riveted on one rather different from the rest—a full length portrait of a very beautiful young woman dressed in the robes of Bonnie Prince Charlie's times.

She turned to the old laird.

"That's a very beautiful picture, Mr. Glogowrie," she commented.

"That. Ay!" He nodded his head.

"That's the picture of Flora Glogowrie, who died on Christmas Eve many, many years ago. 'Tis a sad, sad story." He shook his head. "But one which is honoured by the house of Glogowrie, and because of it we have made her the family's patron saint. But, maybe, Jean will tell it if you if you are interested."

They all were. Every eye turned upon Jean. Jean smiled.

"Well, here it is," she said. "Flora, you see, was married to John Glogowrie just before Prince Charles landed in Scotland. John Glogowrie became a captain in Charles' rebel army, and went off to fight, leaving Flora behind. While he was away she fell ill. The doctors despaired of her life.

"It was just such a Christmas as this!" Jean went on. "Snow lying everywhere. On the afternoon of Christmas Eve word was brought to her that John Glogowrie was wounded

and lay helpless and in hiding two miles away. Though she had been warned by her doctors that death would overtake her if she even ventured out of the bed-room, she got up. She went out into the blizzard—"

"Oh!" said Bessie. "I sus-say, you know, and on a night like this!"

"She found her husband. She brought him back. Almost at her last gasp, she staggered into the castle and dropped unconscious. She never recovered and died where she lay."

With renewed interest, they all looked up at the picture.

"And—and that is all?" Babs asked.

"That is all," Jean said, "except that—well, shall I tell them, uncle?"

"There's still a legend," she added, her voice unconsciously dropping—a legend which says that Flora Glogowrie goes on searching for her lost husband. She died, you see, without even knowing that she had rescued him.

"The doctors of the time say that she acted throughout with a sort of automatic consciousness, and the story goes—especially in such weather as this—that she walks these halls and the rooms of Glogowrie Castle again, calling upon the name of her loved one."

"Gee! A ghost!" Leila cried.

"A ghost—yes," Jean nodded.

"Many people are supposed to have seen her. Her voice at this time is often heard singing the song of the Glogowries. My mother, when she was a child, saw her. I believe my cousin Flora, who was named after her—" And then for some reason Jean looked quickly at her uncle, flushed and faltered.

"Anyway," she went on hastily, "you shall see her room later on. It is in the Prince Charles wing of the castle, and it is to-day exactly the same as she left it. For nearly two hundred years nobody has even slept in that room. Except for the servants, who keep it



clean and tidy, indeed, it is never entered."

"Oh, I say!" breathed Mabel Lynn. And her eyes shone, a delicious little shiver thrilled her whole spine. "Oh dear! I hope we see her!"

"Well, I jolly well don't!" Bessie said at once. "I dud-don't like ghosts, you know. Not that I'm afraid, of course. There's no braver girl in the world than I am. I once remember— Oh crumbs, save me!" she gasped suddenly, as the curtain beneath the minstrel gallery flapped.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled everybody, for from behind the curtain, walking with stiff dignity, came a butler, carrying a tray of cakes.

Little Dorrie clapped her hands gleefully.

"Oh, Auntie Bessie, aren't you funny!" she said. "I did love four face then. Make another funny face, Auntie Bessie!"

Bessie turned red.

"Look here, you know, little girls should be seen and not heard!" she said severely.

"And little girls," Old Angus Glengowrie put in, "should by this time be in bed, Dorrie, my bairn. It's nigh on nine o'clock."

Dorrie petulantly pouted.

"Dorrie doesn't want to go to bed!" she protested. "Sides, I can't go to bed, you know 'cos I've got no nanny to take me. Nanny went away this mornin'. Grandpa said she was going to London."

Her grandfather frowned.

"That's so," he said, "her nurse did go off this morning. She went to London on Christmas leave. All the

QUITE frightened, Bessie pointed to the painting. "That—that was the ghost I saw!" she said. They all stared. "The Lady of Glengowrie!" Jean Cartwright breathed.

same, my wee one, that's no excuse. I'll get one of the servants to put you to bed."

"But I don't want a servant!" Dorrie strenuously objected. "The servants can't put me to bed like nanny can, and I can't go to bed by myself," she added rather triumphantly, "because nanny says I can't clean my teefies properly, so I should like to know what you think about that?" And also 'cos who's going to brush my hair? Nanny says I have to have a hundred strokes—a hundred, mind you!" she added impressively.

"Perhaps," Jean suggested, with a laugh, "you'd like me to put you to bed, Dorrie? Let me be your nanny?"

"No!" Dorrie said.

"But, Dorrie—"

"Dorrie go to bed," the little one said.

"Dorrie good girl. Auntie Bessie take Dorrie to bed!"

And confidently she put her small palm in Bessie's chubby one, and beamed into her face.

Bessie blinked.

"Oh, crumbs, that's nun-nice of you," she said. "But Auntie Bessie doesn't know the way, you know."

"Dorrie show you the way," the child volunteered at once.

"Well, it sure looks as if you've let yourself in for it, Bessie," Leila grinned.

Bessie had. But Bessie didn't mind. Bessie loved all children, and it was just impossible to resist little Dorrie.

"All right, then, I'll be your nanny," she agreed. "You lead the way. Kiss aunties good-night."

"Under mis'toe?" Dorrie asked.

"Grandpa says all kisses should be under mis'toe at Christmas."

"Egad!" ejaculated grandpa, and turned pink.

So, laughing, they all kissed her under the mistletoe, and with the little one's hand tucked confidently in that of Bessie's, the two trotted off.

The chums watched the strangely assorted pair as they climbed up the stairs, Dorrie prattling away, with no suggestion of tiredness in her voice, Bessie answering her. They disappeared.

"Well," the old laird beamed round, "that's got over that little difficulty. Ay, but she's a fine child, a grand child," he added. "I should be lost without her now. A fair little treasure she is about the place—just a little ray of sunshine."

For some reason his eyes went to the picture of Flora Glengowrie, and he sighed.

Jemima polished her eyeglasses.

"But her mother," she asked, "and her father—" and then she coughed at the sudden hard expression which came into his face—as she caught the frantic



look of warning Jean signalled from her eyes. "Ahem!" Jemima murmured, and, quick to realise she had unwittingly somehow put her foot into it, looked quickly away. "Nice fire, what?" she added. "Pine logs, Mr. Glengowrie?"

"Yes," the old man answered rather gruffly.

There was a silence. The chums looked at each other. Jemima bit her lip, thoughtfully polishing her monocle.

Jan, for some reason, was suddenly looking unhappy. Obviously, Jemima, by that casually careless remark, had disturbed some skeleton in the family cupboard of the Glengowries. Obviously, too, that there was some mystery connected with little Dorrie's father, which the laird himself was reluctant should be talked about.

The chums gathered around the fire, and the talk flowed easily again. Babs, who had been glancing at the pictures again, suddenly said:

"But, please," she asked, "Jan, until Bessie comes back, tell us something

about the lady of Glengowrie. She seems to have such a beautiful, such a wistful face. Mr. Glengowrie, have you ever seen the ghost of the—"

She suddenly stopped, as from beyond the stairs where Bessie and Dorrie had departed a quarter of an hour ago, came a sudden, terrified

screech.

"Help! Help! Help!"

"Bessie!" cried Babs.

"Help! I've seen it! The ghost—the ghost of the lady! Help!"

And while they stared at each other with startled faces, too utterly paralysed for a moment to move, Bessie herself, her face white, came rushing down the staircase.



"Oh dud-dear!" Bessie gasped.

"Oh crumbs!"

"But what have you seen, you old chump?"

"Oh dud-dear, I'm fainting! I'm expiring—"

"Here," Clara said, "drink this!" She put her glass to Bessie's still-chattering teeth, and Bessie, with a grateful gulp, drank down the warm wine. "Now, old chump, what did you see—and where did you see it?"

Bessie, in the midst of her chums, glanced scarcely towards the stairs.

"Well, I was coming out of Dorrie's room, you know—"

"Yes?"

"And—and I was coming down a corridor," Bessie said. "Then—oh crumbs! I say—say, she's not there, is she, Babs? And then suddenly I saw this figure, all dressed in white, coming towards me. Naturally, I was tut-too fright—too surprised to do anything then. I just stood still, you know, and—and this fit-fearful ghost came swishing past me."

"And then," Leila asked, "you yelled?"

"Oh, really, Leila. I didn't yell! I was just calling to the figure to come back, you know. But she didn't. She went on up the corridor and disappeared round the corner. But—and then Bessie pointed up at the picture of the Lady of Glengowrie. For a moment she looked frightened again.

"That—that was the ghost I saw," she said.

They all stared.

"Bessie, you're sure?" Babs asked.

"Yes, rather, you know."

"The Lady of Glengowrie!" Jean breathed.

For a moment they looked at each other in startled, thrilled amazement.

"And you say you saw her—in Dorrie's corridor?" cried Jean excitedly.

"Y-yes."

"Then," said Jean, and glanced quickly at her uncle, "what about a ghost hunt—here and now? Uncle, do you mind?"

The old man chuckled.

"Och, why should I mind?" he said.



"As far as I know, the Lady of Glengowrie has never done a body harm. If a ghost hunt will help your fun, then go off on a ghost hunt and enjoy it, ma bonnies! But don't be too long, please," he chuckled. "Supper will be waiting. And look in Dorrie's room. The wee one might have heard Bessie, and been frightened."

"Yes, of course, uncle," promised Jean.

She led the way eagerly enough. And eagerly enough the chums followed her, all except Bessie, who had had enough of ghosts for one evening. They peeped quietly into Dorrie's room, and saw the little one already sleeping peacefully. They closed the door, and then Jean said,

"If it was the lady, or he, or she, the best starting-place is her old room. Everybody who has ever seen her says that that's where she comes out of, and where she disappears into. This way!"

The chums followed, tingling now. None of them actually believed in ghosts, but it was fun to track down any scare to its source, and there was no doubt that Bessie had seen something.

It was colder up here away from the cheery fire in the hall. Gloomier, lonelier, somehow more mysterious. Great stone walls, intercepted with stout oak doors, rose on either side of them.

"Wough-creepy!" Clara shivered.

"Listen!" cried Babs. They stood still, listening. But the sound which had caught Babs' ear was only the whining of the wind as it blew the scurrying snowflakes against the windows. Tense and tingling they went on.

"Here we are!" said Jean suddenly. She stopped. Before them was a door—a big, stout door it was with a great lock, the heavy key of which was still inserted on the outside.

"This is the room of my Lady of Glengowrie," Jean said. "This is the room I was talking about."

Her voice was hushed suddenly. Almost in a whisper she spoke, and the chums had a sudden sensation of standing on the threshold of something sacred.

Unconsciously holding her breath, Jean caught the handle, and, with a sudden movement, pushed the door wide. They stood staring in, each girl conscious of a little thrill running through her frame.

"Come in!" Jean said.

Almost reverently she entered the room. Outside, the wind and snow beat against the windows. It lay on the sill, against the woodwork, spattering the squares of the little diamond panes in grey white.

A great four-poster bed, heavy with draperies, rose to one side. It looked white and ghostly in the dim light from the window, which also glistened on the brightly polished, brass-bound coffer near the head of the bed.

In the window was a table still laid out with my lady's articles of toilet and smelling-salts. But of ghost or other inhabitants there was no sign.

"Well, it's certain she's not here," Clara remarked. "But, I say, what a funny smell in this room!" She sniffed. "A sort

of pine and peppermint smell," she said.

They all sniffed. Certainly there was a rather distinct odour in the room. Jemima, striding towards the dressing-table, fixed her eyeglass.

"What's in the chest, Jean?" Babs asked.

"Clothes," Jean vouchsafed. "The same clothes that the Lady of Glengowrie herself wore on the night she rushed out to save her husband. They're still there—all of them—as perfect and as intact as on the day she wore them. There's a rule in the family—a sort of unwritten rule—that the head of the house shall look after everything in this room, and make it his business to see that it is kept preserved."

From the dressing-table came a faint tinkle. It was followed by Jemima's basty cough. Babs turned.

"Jimmy—" "Hallo!" Jemima's urbane voice came back. "Nice little scent bottles and things these—what? By the way, Jean—"

"Yes?" Jean said.

"I had a thought," Jemima said—"just a straying flash through the old stuff I call a brain, you know. I suppose you know all the servants here?"

"Why, yes," Jean laughed. "They've been in the family for years. But why?"

Another Treat

Next Thursday—

for that is when next week's issue of The SCHOOLGIRL will be published—two days earlier than usual.

Don't forget—
Thursday,
December 23rd.



"Nothing. Just wondering if any of them came from Scarborough," Jemima murmured.

"Good gracious, no! As far as I know they're all local, except for the nanny, of course. Why should you ask that, Jimmy?"

"Oh, nothing!" Jemima returned evasively. "Just nothing! Forget it, old Spartan! Well, well, the ghost's a bit of a merry old fellow—eh? No lovely lady, no rattling skeleton—not even a clanking chain. Too tough, comrades! I vote we wend our way hallwards."

The chums looked at Jemima a little knowingly.

Knowing her odd ways, and knowing that they were a cloak for a very shrewd brain, they were all faintly intrigued as to why she had asked Jean that apparently inane question. But Jemima, as usual, showed no desire to expand on the subject.

Hallwards they went, and, though none of them would have admitted it, they were all secretly glad to see the roaring fire, the soft-glowing lights again.

Bessie, lost in the depths of a comfortable armchair by the side of the fire, was balancing a plate of shelled nuts on her plump knees, and the old lady by her side was standing with his back to the blaze, warming his hands which were held behind him.

He smiled as the ghost-hunters returned.

"And what did you see, lassies?" he asked.

"Just nothing, uncle," Jean admitted.

"Och, and I guessed as much!" he chuckled. "Well, well, ghosties, or no ghosties, it's no business of ours any longer to deny the call of supper. Get you sat down, lassies!"

They all sat down. Bessie, developing a sudden distaste for nuts, leaving to her feet with alacrity. At the head of the table their genial host seated himself, beaming down upon them as the dishes, hot and steaming, were brought in, and the serving maid helped them to soup.

For the first time the chums realised how hungry they were. In the cheery hall, with the long-dead Glengowries beaming benevolence upon their faces, knives and forks, and a girlish laughter made musical clatter, and all the talk was of the joys to come.

With great gloe Clara learned of the existence of the Lake of Glengowrie nearby—a great expanse of water which had frozen hard, and where some of the finest skating in the Highlands was to be obtained. There would be tobogganing, too, and snow-fighting.

It all sounded topping. Added to that, the laird informed them that the Glengowrie pipers were due to arrive on Christmas Eve to entertain at the castle. Then there would be dancing to the skirl of the bagpipes, entertainment and what-not. And then after that there would be Christmas Day—apropos of which the laird hinted with many a chuckle at surprises in store.

There was a pause in the chatter while the meal was cleared away and the coffee brought in. And in that pause—

"Listen!" cried Jean suddenly.

She held up her hand. Quickly, startledly, she looked towards the stairs. For a moment there was a deathlike, eerie silence.

Then faintly from some remote part of the castle came a voice. A woman's voice, soft, sweet, crouching, low, a voice somehow of ethereal quality, which sent a thrill through them, which caused them to sit up in startled wonderment.

Words they could not distinguish, but the tune just spellbound them. It crooned on, rising, falling—and abruptly faded away.

"Who was that?" whispered Mabs, and then jumped. "Oh, my goodness! Mr. Glengowrie, are you ill?"

For her best, sitting at the head of the table, had undergone a sudden and surprising transformation.

In his chair he was leaning forward, staring with round, incredulous eyes towards the stairs. His face was white as paper.

He seemed to come to himself with a jerk as he heard Mabs' voice. For a moment he looked at her almost as if he did not see her. Then his lips moved.

"The Lullaby of Glengowrie—sung in her voice! That voice—I have not heard that since—" and he stared. As if suddenly aware that every startled eye was upon him, his lips snapped to. Rather shakily he passed a hand across his forehead. He smiled at them.

Then he said:

"Please, lassies, get on with your coffee."

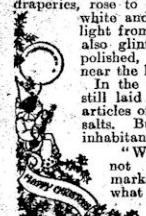
"But the voice," cried Mabs, "didn't you hear it?"

"Ay, I heard it!" he returned gruffly. "But who is it?"

He shook his head.

"I don't know. One of the servants maybe. Please get on with your coffee, lassies."

And with their coffee they got on,



and though they listened intently, the mysterious voice was not repeated.

Supper was carried away presently. At their host's suggestion they played table games, and then came half-past ten and bed.

Yet not one of them could forget that voice. The strange, haunting notes of that softly crooned melody haunted their ears. Not one of them could forget the laird's strange agitation, and not one of them, even Bessie Bunter, believed that the laird had meant what he had said when he suggested that the voice belonged to one of the servants.

In Jean's room, at bed-time, they surrounded her.

"Jean, what does it mean? Whose was the voice? Do you know?"

Jean slowly nodded.

"Yes, I know—or at least I know who grandpa thinks it was," she answered. "But—" she looked towards the door. "It's another story," she said, "a rather sad story. Babs, please shut the door, will you? I'm not sure I ought to tell you, but—well—you won't say anything, will you?"

"I guess not!" Leila said.

"It—it concerns Dorrie—or rather Dorrie's mother," Jean went on. "Her name, like the Lady of Glengowrie, was Flora—all the eldest daughters of the family, as a matter of fact, are named like her. The Flora Glengowrie in the picture, she was a beautiful woman—in fact," Jean added, "she was very, very much like her. For years and years uncle had set his heart on her marrying a certain Malcolm Maclean."

"And she didn't?" Babs asked.

"No, she didn't. Just before her engagement was to be announced she met a young engineer in London—Ronald Stewart. They fell in love at first sight, you see, and as far as I can gather the love affair was a rather whirlwind business. Against uncle's wishes she married him, and uncle, frightfully angry, forbade her to come near the castle again. She went away. In the meantime her husband had fallen out of work. Little Dorrie was born in a shabby boarding-house in London."

"Oh, tough!" Jemima said with heart-felt sympathy.

"Months went on. The situation became worse instead of better. Flora and Ronald were both half-starving, when Ronald got a chance of going to Canada. He went out to make good. Flora, meantime, was working her fingers to the bone to keep little Dorrie and herself. Then came the news—her husband had been killed in Canada. She was at the end of her tether then—out of work, living on the parish and all that. To add to her troubles Dorrie was ill also."

Babs bit her lip. Her eyes were suspiciously moist then. A great silence had fallen upon them all.

"The doctor said if Dorrie did not receive proper nourishment she would die. Flora was in despair. She thought of her father, but she was too proud personally to seek assistance from him. At the same time she could not let little Dorrie go on suffering. Somehow she made her way to Scotland. She came to my mother in Edinburgh and asked her to take the child to uncle. It was mother who told me the story, you see."

"And your uncle has kept Dorrie here ever since, I guess," Leila said. "But what happened to her mother—Flora?"

Jean shook her head.

"That," she said solemnly "is something we do not know. Since my own mother saw her she has just vanished. Uncle does not like her-spoken about. That is why, whenever her name crops up, he seeks to avoid the subject. And that," Jean said, "is why he was so

upset to-night when he heard the voice singing that lullaby. For the voice was just like that of Dorrie's mother."

A silence fell upon them all, a silence of sympathy and compassion. From Bessie came a little sniff.

What tragedy, what a wreck of a young life! What hardship for that poor Flora Glengowrie, so proudly brought up, so unprepared to fight the hard battle which fate had forced upon her. Deprived of husband and child, suffering herself from ill-health and in poverty—

"And your uncle," Jemima asked, polishing her monocle, "is he still as unforgiving towards her, Jean?"

Jean frowned a little.

"No one knows," she said. "It would appear that he was, though. He'll never hear her name mentioned if he can help it."

"Bib—but the voice—" Bessie said.

Jean smiled.

"I don't know. Just an accident I should say! One of the servants most likely. The Lullaby of Glengowrie, after all, is a song well known, and if Flora was on uncle's mind, it would be a simple enough matter for him to imagine that it was her voice. She did have a most beautiful voice, though," Jean added.

And that was all she could tell them. It was a story which left the chums rather sad and sorry.

"Y'know," Jemima said thoughtfully when retiring—she and Babs were undressing before the crackling log fire in the snug Lavender Room which had been set aside for their reception—"I'm wondering, Babs."

"Wondering?"

"About old man Angus, forsooth," and Flora Stewart. "Pretty tough story that which Jean told us, but old man Angus doesn't seem to me to be the sort who would go on harbouring the old grudge for years and years. Might it not be," Jemima added shrewdly, "that it is because his own conscience troubles him that he's not so frightfully keen on hearing his daughter's name mentioned?"

"Well, it might be so," Babs said with a little frown. "But if he won't speak about her, how are you going to find that out?"

"Exactly!" Jemima said blandly.

"Eh?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"But, Jimmy, what funny little bee is working in your mind?"

"The compliment," Jemima beamed brightly, "is accepted, Babs, with grateful thanks and so forth. For your suggestion that I have a mind, I mean," she added. "Babs, pass me the nightie, will you, old friend? Y'don't think I might shove one of these lighted logs in the bed just to warm it up?"

Babs laughed. Jemima grinned cheerfully. It was obvious from that that the monocled one had decided to say no more about the problem she had raised.

They went to bed. Almost immediately Babs, worn out with the long journey and the excitement of the day, was asleep. She awoke suddenly to hear a creak. The creak came from the door.



WITH a sudden gasp Jemima dived towards something which had slipped from her pocket to the floor. No wonder the chums were amazed. For it was the key they had all been seeking—and Jemima had had it all the time!



Sharply Babs sat up. The room was filled with a rose glow, radiating from the fireplace, where the glowing embers of the burnt-out logs were settling into extinction.

But the light was sufficient to show her the door softly closing. Sufficient to show her, too, that Jemima's bed was empty.

Jemima had gone out—where?

Babs frowned a little. She countered the impulse to slip out of bed and peer into the corridor. After all, she reflected, it was no business of hers where Jemima went.

But Babs would have been mighty puzzled if she could have seen Jemima at the moment, for, silent as a wraith that strange girl was creeping down the draughty passage, dark as ink, towards the room of the Lady of Glengowrie.

Before the door of that room she halted. Quickly she glanced towards the lock, and then her eyes narrowed a little.

"What-ho!" Jemima murmured.

She caught the handle. Gently she pressed it. Soundlessly the door gave before her, opening just a slit. Jemima, holding her breath, peered in.

For a moment she stood motionless, her eyes taking in every detail of the dimly lit room.

Then with a peculiar smile upon her face she withdrew, carefully pulling the door to behind her. In the corridor, hidden from the view of the door, she took up a watching position behind one of the stout pillars that supported the arches of the roof. There she waited.



Dorrie's Dream Lady!

"Oh, fun!" cried Clara Trevlyn, her eyes sparkling. "Just look at it!"

No need for that injunction. The whole crowd of Cliff House chums were "looking at it." And the whole crowd, to judge by the expressions on their faces, shared Tomboy Clara's unbounded delight.

For it was after breakfast next morning at Glengowrie Castle—and what a morning to be sure.

A bright if unwarming sun had risen above the mountain tops, flooding the snow-covered countryside with radiance.

As far as the eye could see there was snow—snow in the valleys, snow on the mountains, the summits of which were greyly obscured by trailing clouds of slate-grey mist.

"Oh, whoops for winter sports!" Leila gleeed.

"What—ripping tobogganing!"

"What topping sliding!"

"What-ho!" And what ripping skating!" Jemima beamed.

"Who says skates?" They all said skates, and there was an eager rush to get them right away.

Certainly it was an ideal morning for skating—for sliding

or tobogganing or any other form of winter sport. The snow, packed hard and firm by the heavy frost which had followed the gale, had transformed the Highlands for the time being into a counterpart of the Swiss Alps.

Up to their own rooms with gleeful laughs they bundled. Their skates were fished out, warm coats and scarves and gloves hurriedly donned. Breathless, they gathered again in the big baronial hall, just as Bessie, with little Dorrie in tow, came on the scene.

For Dorrie, keeping Bessie to her promise to act as her nanny, had insisted that Bessie help to dress her and superintend his her morning ablutions.

"Here, I say," Bessie cried, "where are you going?"

"Skating," Babs said, "down on the lake."

"Oh, lovingly!" Dorrie said. "Dorrie like skating, too. Can me and Auntie Bessie come, too?"

"Of course you can come!" Jean Cartwright said.

"And nice lady?" Dorrie asked eagerly.

"Nice lady, Dorrie like nice lady," Dorrie said, "Dorrie dream about nice lady. Nice lady like a fairy."

Jean stared.

"Why, what are you talking about, Dorrie?"

"Nice lady," Dorrie said impatiently.

"Nice lady who gave Dorrie sweetie. Nice lady who came to Dorrie's room and said she was a fairy. Didn't she, Auntie Bessie?"

"Oh, crumbs! Oh, y-yes, I suppose so," Bessie said, though she looked as puzzled as the rest.

"But never mind the nice lady," said Dorrie.

"But Dorrie wants her to come!"

"Well, I guess we'll take her," Leila Carroll said good humouredly.

"Dorrie, go and fetch her then. But step on the grease, you know. We want to make the most of the time."

Dorrie shook her head, however.

"Don't know where nice lady is," she said.

The chums smiled at her. It seemed obvious that Dorrie, with her mind full of fairies and things, had been dreaming, and had carried the heroine of her dreams into waking life.

"Well, Auntie Bessie will go and find nice lady," Babs said mischievously.

"Then Dorrie can follow with Auntie Bessie and nice lady down to the lake. You know the way, Bessie?"

"Oh yes, of course," Bessie said. "But look here, you know, what am I going to do about this nice lady? I did—don't know any more about her than you do. Where is she!"

But that, of course, was too awkward a question to answer. How could it be explained to Dorrie that the nice lady was a figment of her imagination—when Dorrie most certainly had determined that it was otherwise? Mabs coughed. Jemima grinned a little.

"Well, so-long! Leave you to it, Bess!" she said.

"But look here—"

But the chums, anxious to have done with that argument, had dashed out, leaving Bessie to explain to her ward as well she might.

Skates jingling, they scampered to the edge of the lake. Even Jemima, who liked to go skates lazily, stepped out briskly, and by the time they had reached the edge of the lake Bessie, Dorrie, and the dream-like nice lady were all forgotten.

There they fastened on their skates. For an exhilarating hour they skated about, thoroughly enjoying the fun. At the end of that time—

"Hallo!" Babs cried. "Here's Bessie!"

Bessie it was, rolling towards them with an anxious expression on her face, her skates in her hand. But no Dorrie was with her.

"Hallo!" Jean said. "Where's Dorrie?"

"Dorrie wouldn't come, you know," Bessie said.

"She's still looking for the nice lady." Bessie, if I know who that comes over her," she added worriedly.

"Ever since she got up she's been burbling about this silly lady."

"And you didn't find her?" Jemima asked.

"Oh, really, Jimmy, that's potty! How can I find someone someone else has dreamed about?"

"No," Jemima said thoughtfully.

"No, of course, that is a point. How clearly you put the thing, old fat Bess."

Well, when you will appoint yourself nanny to a kiddie, you must expect this sort of thing. I think the ice is about strong enough to hold you." But 'ware near the edge. There it's only six feet thick!"

Bessie sniffed scornfully. At the moment Bessie was put out. Bessie's conceit was hurt, for Bessie had a decided feeling that she had lost caste in little Dorrie's opinion by failing to make the "nice lady" materialise, and Bessie hated to disappoint children. All the same, she gingerly joined in the skating.

"Well, that's ripping!" Jean said, at last. "Sun's gone, though," she added, making a face. "And it does look, my hearties, as if mister snow is coming to visit us again."

She pointed to the dark, leaden-coloured clouds which were gathering behind the distant mountains.

"Apart from that," Jean added, "we've just nice time to get back to the castle for lunch. Who says?"

"Motion carried!" chirped Jemima.

"Skates off, Spartans!"

Willingly they kicked off the skates. In a group they set out for the castle again. It was a steep hillside climb, and, warmed by their exertions, they took it rather more slowly going back.

Already, however, a chill wind was springing up. The sun, Jean had remarked, was obscured by a thick leaden pall, spreading from the north, which made the day as dark as twilight.

On they trailed, in full view of the castle now. Then suddenly Mabs stopped with a cry.

"Why—look!" she cried.

Her arm rose, finger pointing. They all stood still.

"The Lady of Glengowrie!" breathed Babs.

Was it? For a second they stood entranced. Just for a moment they saw in a figure attired in a white, floaty costume, as if peered out of one of the upper windows. Distinctly they saw the white face, pretty, yet sad, so startlingly like the picture in the old hall that they all thrilled.

For an instant the figure stood looking out, then, in a flash, had gone. Bessie quivered.

"Oh, crumbs! The gig-gig, you know! That's her—"

The chums drew in a deep breath. Jean's eyes were gleaming.

"And the room," she said. "You see the window? That's the window of the lady's room! Oh, my hat, come on!"

"But look here! I say, wait for me, you know!" Bessie squealed. "Look here, how am I to climb—"

But nobody was waiting for Bessie. It is questionable, indeed, if anybody heard Bessie.

Thrilled, excited, forgetful of their weariness and the climb, they were making as fast as they could go now

for the castle, *Jemima* most amazingly leading the chase.

She was the first to fly across the drawbridge, the first to enter the great hall.

While *Babs* and the others sprinted across the hall she vanished up the stairs, and not until they had already reached the door of the lady's room did they catch up with her again. Then they found *Jemima* looking at the door and sadly shaking her head.

"Too tough!" she said.

"What?"

"The door's locked!"

"Locked?"

They stared at the door. *Jean* tried the handle, but it would not budge. She frowned.

"Well, that's funny!" she said. "That's jolly funny! The key of the door is always kept on the outside. This hero's uncle!" she added, as the laird himself, scenting that something was amiss, came up. "I say, uncle, have you given orders for the key to be removed?"

"Och, no!" the laird said. "The key is never removed. But why?"

"Well, it's not here now," *Jean* said. "We saw—or thought we saw—somebody moving about in this room while we were outside. She—"

And then she stopped, putting her eye to the key-hole. "I don't see anything," she muttered, "and the key most certainly isn't in the other side of the lock."

The laird chuckled.

"Then it's a mistake you've made," he said. "All the same, I'll speak to the servants. No one has the right to take the key out of the lock. You've got the Lady of *Glengowrie* on the brain, lassies, the same as *Dorrie* has got some mysterious nice lady she's dreaming about."

Babs passed a hand across her brow. "Well," she said, "this beats everything. I suppose we weren't dreaming? We did see the white lady?"

"Well, I guess if you didn't, I did!" *Leila* said. "And *Mabs* did, because it was she who pointed her out, I guess. And *Clara*—"

And then she spun round as excited little feet came scampering along the corridor, as little *Dorrie*, with a joyous cry, sighted them, and headlong, came hurrying herself at them.

"Ooo-oo!" she cried breathlessly.

"Aunt!"

"What-ho!" cried *Jemima*, and then—whoo!—as *Dorrie* breathlessly crashed into her, sending the monocle she was polishing flying out of her hand. "Well, now, look at that!" she cried. "It's a good thing for you, young *Dorrie*, that I've got that insured with the plate-glass company." With a resigned sigh she stooped and picked it up, while little *Dorrie*, all contrition, flew to her, and "Aunt!" *Jean's* arms. "Too tough!" *Jemima* murmured. "Too—oh, hoch ay, and haggis!"

And with a sudden gasp, she dived towards something which, with a terrific clink, had slipped on to the flagged floor from her pocket.

Too late, however, she retrieved it, too late straightened up. Not often was it that the urbane *Jemima* looked confused, but very disturbed she appeared now. Wide-eyed the chums stared at her.

"The key!" cried *Babs*.

"Ahem!" *Jemima* murmured.

"Jimmy, you—you had it all the time!"

Jemima shrugged.

"Alas, I must confess!" she said. "Just a joke—just a joke. Ahem! Just a little *Carstairs* fun at Christmas time," she said. "Just a joke, I assure you. Too tough it not being

No. 19 of our delightful series for Your "Cliff House Album."

CLIFF HOUSE CELEBRITIES



Patricia Northanson

PATRICIA HONORA ISA NORTHANSON, Duchess of Northshire, is the full title of *Cliff House's* popular prefect; but she likes to be called just "Pat."

Wealth and position have not spoiled *Lady Pat*, who, despite everything, remains one of the most unaffected, unspoiled and popular girls at *Cliff House School*. She dresses expensively, but with exquisite simplicity; is fond of youthful amusements, and much prefers to jog along on her old push-bike to riding in her costly Rolls.

Though there are many costly dogs at her stately home, she has for her favourite pet a nondescript mongrel rejoicing in the name of *Scram*, whom she purchased, as a pup, from a tramp for the princely sum of one shilling.

Lady Pat is fond of all outdoor recreations, and a pillar of strength in the senior hockey and cricket elevens. She has lately come to be regarded as a regular member of *Cliff House's* winning water-polo team. Apart from this *Lady Pat* is a really superb horsewoman, and has competed with distinction in many *Hunter's Trials* and *Point to Point* meetings. She has dark hair very close to her eyes, set in a calm, oval face which always seems to glow with good health. Her great friend in the *Sixth Form* is *Dulcia Fairbrother*.

Scrupulously just, never jumping to conclusions, and always very careful to listen to every side of a case, it is no wonder that *Pat's* popularity is almost equal to that of *Dulcia's*. On very rare occasions only does *Pat* punish. At the same time, however, she will not stand nonsense, as many girls who have endeavoured to take advantage of her good nature have found to their cost.

Pat's favourite mistress at *Cliff House* is *Miss Charmant*, though *Miss Dora Gilbey* is now a good second. Her pet

aversion is *Miss Keys*, the gym mistress whom she considers to be rather too hard on girls who are not able to stand up to her rather "sergeant-major" style of drilling and discipline. She has a very warm corner in her heart for *Babs & Co.*, particularly for dear old *Duffer Bessie*. *Jemima* also regards with real affection, regardless of the difference in their ages.

Her age is 17 years 11 months; her height 5 feet 4 inches. She takes size 4½ in shoes, and has a weakness for walking-sticks—quite a dozen of which are to be found in her study.

She likes films, opera, theatres, and dancing, but has no favourite "stars." She does, however, adore *Doris* and *Elsie Waters* on the radio, and is very, very fond of circuses—especially the equestrian turns. Her favourite author is *Rafael Sabatini*; favourite flower, the viola; favourite colours, blue and yellow.

Lady Pat was born in *Mayfair*, London, where she still has a town house. But she much prefers her beautiful, romantic Northshire castle, which has been the property of her family since the sixteenth century.



appreciated at its true worth—what? Well, well, well!" And reluctantly she produced it. "'Tis the key," she confessed—"the key of this very door! Perhaps," she added blandly, while the chums stared at her in bewilderment, "you'd like to try it."

And she held the key out towards *Jean*. *Jean*, with a wondering stare, took it. She turned it in the lock and flung the door open.

But only emptiness rewarded their gaze. Emptiness and that strange, subtle perfume which they had noticed last night—the perfume which *Clara* had described as being of peppermint and pine.



"FUNNY!" muttered *Babs*. "What is it?" *Mabs* asked. "Eh?" *Babs* regarded her chum, and then coloured a little in confusion. "Oh, nothing! I was just thinking!" she said flustered. "About," *Mabs* asked, "the *Lady of Glengowrie*?"

"Yes." "And also"—*Mabs* eyed her shrewdly—"and *Jemima*?"

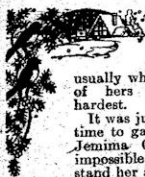
"Well, y-yes," *Babs* admitted. *Mabs* nodded. It happened that the same subjects were exercising her own mental processes at that moment.

It was after lunch at *Glengowrie Castle*—a sumptuous and satisfying lunch in all truth. With sharpened appetites, the chums had partaken of just a little more than their usual quota, except *Bessie*, who fast asleep in the armchair now with drowsy little *Dorrie* nestled in her plump arms, had eaten at least three girls' portions. For the dear old plump *duffer* had a most tremendous appetite.

Outside a storm was rising, the wind making singing shrieks and whining sounds among the buttresses and chimneys, and in the great fireplace the leaping fire crackled merrily, filling the hall with both warmth and light. In front of it at a table *Clara*, *Leila*, *Jean*, and *Jemima* were engrossed in a game of *Lexicon*.

Babs and *Mabs*, already out of that town, sat, side by side, on the settee. No more did *Mabs* say, but she stared curiously at the down-bent head and the thoughtful features of *Jemima*, who, with concentrated frown, was examining the cards in her hand.

The firelight gleamed upon her sleek *Elton* crop and upon the new gold-rimmed monocle she had donned with her afternoon frock.



Jemima was inscrutable; Jemima was mysterious. Jemima often was vague and inane usually when that sharp brain of hers was working its hardest.

It was just impossible at any time to gauge the thoughts of Jemima Carstairs. Just as impossible was it to understand her actions.

And her actions, to say the least of it, had been decidedly queer these last few hours.

Last night—that amazingly irrelevant question as to whether any of Glegowrie's maids came from Scarborough. Then her mysterious absence which had lasted over half an hour in the night—an adventure for which she had vouchsafed no explanation to Babs, even though Babs had been awake when she had returned.

Then lastly this business of taking the key of the door of the room of the Lady of Glegowrie.

Babs could just make nothing of it all. She was pondering it now. She was also pondering the apparition they had seen at the window of the Lady of Glegowrie's room.

"Out!" Clara said suddenly, and slapped down her cards.

"Oh, woof-woof!" grimaced Jemima. "And here I am left with the whole ten cards in my dainty hand! Too tough—what? The worst of being clever!" Jemima sighed. "I was hoping to pick up an M. you see, and make me a magistra!" Well, well, what next, conceited little!"

"Oh, Jean—at Christmas?" Jemima said, shocked.

"I've been thinking," Jean repeated, with a laugh, "about the Lady of Glegowrie. And I've got an idea!"

"Hold your breath!" murmured Jemima. "Bring round the chairs. Mabs, move up the settee. But don't wake Bessie and Dorrie," Jean said. "To-night!" she added in a thrilling whisper. "Who's game for a ghost hunt?"

"What-ho!" Jemima murmured.

"I told you, didn't I, according to legend, that the lady is supposed to come out of the sacred room and go back into the sacred room. If only Jimmy will stop playing fool japes, this is our chance. Supposing that at half-past nine we slip into the passage and watch the door? Uncle won't mind!"

"Good egg!" Leila voted.

Clara frowned.

"But why half-past nine?" the Tomboy wanted to know.

"Because, nunny, Bessie saw the ghost last night at about half-past nine," Babs replied. She looked round at the intent, animated faces, on which the red glow from the fire played. "Are we agreed?"

"Oh, ruther!"

"Topping fun!"

Agreed they were—and excited, too, at the prospect. Ghost or no ghost, there was attached to it a really some mystery attached to the room of the Lady of Glegowrie, and the expedition promised adventure at any rate.

Bessie woke presently, but Bessie, when informed of the plan, flatly refused to have anything to do with it.

It wasn't that she was afraid, Bessie argued. But what was the sense

of crawling round

dark, draughty corridors when one could sit by a ripping fire and eat nuts or oranges?

After that they played games—one an exhilarating game of blind man's buff, in which blindfolded Bessie "caught" a stone pillar, bringing shouts of laughter from little Dorrie.

Then a game of hunt the slipper, where poor Bessie got wedged under the great old-fashioned sideboard and rather unfortunately upset the peppercorn which, falling behind it, gave the fat one such a sneezing fit that she almost heaved the sideboard out of position.

Then tea. That, at least, was in Bessie's line. After that, more games and talking again. Then Dorrie's bedtime.

And Dorrie, strangely enough to-night, evinced no great objection to going to bed. But all the same, she insisted upon Bessie going with her.

"Well," said Bessie, and blinked nervously at the stairs, "well," she said feebly. "Oh, dud-dear! Auntie Bessie's tired, you know."

"Then Auntie Bessie sleep with Dorrie," was Dorrie's instant rejoinder to this objection. "Auntie Bessie see nice lady then!"

"But I don't want to see the lady!" Bessie unhappily objected. "I'm mummean, of course, I dud-do. Oh dud-dear! I say, will someone come with us?"

"I will," Jemima offered at once. "As a matter of fact, I want to go to my room."

Bessie beamed. She felt happier then. Off the three of them went, Dorrie's trusting little hands enveloped on one side by Bessie's, on the other by Jemima's. They entered the nursery—a bright, sweet little room, with cream-coloured walls and fairy wallpaper, and with Dorrie's toys strewn about the floor. Bessie beamed.

"Well, here we are," she said. "This is ripping, isn't it? But, I say, what a nun-nice-smell in here, you know."

Jemima smiled thoughtfully. "Peppermint-and-pine," she suggested. "Good for the old cold, what?"

"Why, y-yes," Bessie said. "I sus-say, how clever of you to think of that!"

Jemima smiled. She watched, giving rather useless advice as Bessie put Dorrie to bed, rocked her a little, and then, when the child was asleep, tiptoed out, leaving the nightlight on.

Jemima led the way back down the passage. Rather hurriedly Bessie followed her until the head of the main staircase was reached. Then Jemima gave an exclamation.

"Oh, haggis and hailstones! Tut-tut! My bulging old brainbox will never save my tottering tootsies!" she cried. "I did say, old Bessie, I wanted to go to my room, didn't I?"

"Why, yes, you did."

"And would you believe it, I've forgotten," Jemima murmured. "Too bad! Scuse me if I don't fall down the stairs with you. I'll just stagger back."

Bessie grinned. She didn't mind now. Unaccompanied, she made her way down the stairs where the chums, anxious eyes upon the clock, were gathered to greet her. It was half-past eight then.

"Jimmy's gone to her room," Bessie explained. "And Dorrie's fast asleep."

"Goody!" Jean chirped. "Well, buck up, Jimmy!" she added, addressing the stairs.

But whatever business had taken

Jemima to her room seemed to be a rather lengthy one. The minutes ticked on. A quarter to nine—nine o'clock.

At Babs's suggestion, Jean and Mabs went up to roust Jemima out. They came back, looking blank.

"Jimmy's not in her room," Mabs said.

"Oh, my hat! She's not forgotten?" Clara cried in exasperation. "But where the thump can she have gone to!"

"Perhaps," Jean suggested, "she's tracking the ghost down on her own account. Well, never mind. She jolly well knows what time we fixed up the hunt for, and it's her own silly fault if she's not in the fun. Uncle, can we put the lights out in the passage up stairs?"

"If it pleases you," Angus Glegowrie chuckled. "The place is yours, Jean. I'll stop here and keep Miss Bessie company."

It was nearly a quarter-past nine then. Keyed up with excitement, the chums moved towards the stairs. At the top of those stairs, near the gallery, was the switch which plunged the whole of the upper landings and rooms in darkness, and Jean switched it off.

In a body they crept forward.

"Sh!" said Jean, though nobody was making a sound.

In single file they went on. Silence now, broken only by the mournful howling of the wind and the soft rrou, rrou! of falling snow against the windows.

In pitch darkness they groped their way. Each girl had donned rubber-soled slippers for the hunt, and the noise of their footsteps as they moved along was at one with the flutter and rustle of the gale outside.

Then suddenly Jean halted. "Here we are!" she whispered. "Where?" muttered Clara. "Blessed if I can see a thing!"

"Shush! The door's there!" And Jean indicated. In the faint glimmer of light that came from a small latticed window high up in the roof, they dimly saw it then. "Now wait!" she counselled.

Superfluous advice. But crouching there in the darkness, they waited. No sound then except the beating of their own hearts, thudding with unusual intensity; no sign of life save their own breathing.

Down the passage the wind blew with increasing chilliness, causing Babs to shiver suddenly. They—

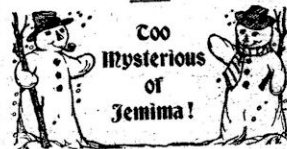
"Listen!" Jean whispered.

Ramrod-tense they stood, electrified, scarcely breathing.

For from the room behind the door had come a sound. Then the door began to open and Jean tensed.

"Get ready!" she breathed. "And then: 'It-it-it's the Lady of Glegowrie!'"

For a dimly seen figure, dressed from head to foot in white, had appeared in the doorway.



QUIVERING, tense, the chums crouched: For a moment no one moved; no one spoke. Every eye was fixed on that dim, shadowy figure.



WHAT a thrill, what fun, when the huge Yule Log was piped in. It was a ceremony none of the chums had witnessed before. But the greatest thrill of this Christmas Eve was yet to come, and was to be supplied by Jemima.

And then, with a rustle, it tiptoed into the passage. Suddenly it turned to the left. With that, Babs found her voice.

"Quick!" she cried. The figure seemed to start. For a moment it halted. Then, with a silky rustle, it dashed on.

"After it!" cried Clara. No need for that cry. No longer fear inspired them. No longer were they hanging back. Here was the lady—and ghost or woman they meant to catch up with her!

"Come on!" Jean gasped. All very well, that! But if they could run, so could the figure in front of them. Like a deer it flew, reached the end of the corridor, and disappeared round it. Pell-mell, the chums pelted on its track.

Along this corridor, now along that, through one of the main rooms, and finally into a smaller, narrower corridor.

Ahead, the figure still sped. "Whoops! Wait a minute!" Jean panted, her eyes gleaming. "We've got her now. She can't get away. This passage leads to the gallery above the hall. String out, all of you. She might try dodging back when she comes to the end of the passage."

"Gee!" breathed Leila. And hearts filled with excited exultation, they moved on.

Then ahead they saw a light—the light from the old hall. They saw the figure pause, saw her swiftly glance back. Jean tensed, expecting her to double back on her tracks, but the figure, to her astonishment, turned to the left along the gallery itself.

Jean whooped. "Come on! We've got her now!" Got her it seemed they had. They

reached the end of the corridor which led on to the gallery. In chorus they shouted:

"There she is!" Patter, patter, went their feet against the old, oak floor. On before them the figure flew. Downstairs the laird looked up, his face full of startled amazement. Bessie, in the act of dozing, looked up, too, and then, with a frightened yell, went scurrying palpitatingly under the table.

Jean panted. "Uncle, stop it!" The laird moved forward. Down the stairs the figure was leaping now. From Bessie went up a wild yell. Then—"Ouch!" gasped the laird, as the figure, leaping the last three steps, rushed right into his waistcoat!

"Hold her, uncle!" cried Jean. But the laird was holding her. Automatically he had wrapped his arms around her. And strangely enough—though the chums were too excited to heed that in this electrifying moment—the figure, caught, made not the slightest attempt to struggle or to resist.

Then Babs, with Jean, was on the scene. Breathlessly they dashed up. Babs caught at the fugitive's shoulders, pulling her round. And then, from them all, went up a shriek:

"Jimmy!" For Jemima Carstairs, dressed in the old-fashioned clothes of the Lady of Glengowrie, it was!

"JIMMY, you spoofer!" "Jimmy, you—your nunny!" "What the dickens—" "Why on earth—" Jemima, raising her eyeglass, polished it rapidly and put it in her eye. "Merry Christmas!" she said brightly.

"Merry grandmother!" Clara retorted. "Explain yourself."

"You're not pleased?" Jemima asked, and shook her head in anxious negation of her own inquiry. "Tut! What a life. And here was I, thinking I was adding to the gaiety of all and sundry!"

They stared at her speechlessly. Bessie at last scrambled from under the table. She did not seem to be sure, even now, whether Jemima was ghost or girl. She blinked indignantly through her thick spectacles.

"Oh crumbs, you know, you're all dressed up. Really, Jimmy, I think—"

"But what," Jean demanded, "made you play a trick like that?"

"Milk of human kindness—just that," Jemima said. "Too tough on the old Spartans, I thought, if no ghost appears. Hated to feel you were going to dither in draughty corridors for hours on end without seeing anything, what? So, says I to myself, says I, 'Jimmy Carstairs, why let these frail children be so richly disappointed? Dash it all, Spartans, it's Christmas, so why not play the giddy old ghost yourself?'"

They stared witheringly. "And you mean to say," Babs asked wrathfully, "that because you thought we were on a wild-goose chase, you deliberately planned this for us?"

"Alas!" Jemima sighed. "Ah, me, how terribly, tragically one's noble motive may be mistaken. You wanted the jolly old ghost hunt. You had it. What more can a faithful friend do to please you? Woe is me! As old Bill Shakespeare said, bless him—'how sharper than the toothless child is the thankless serpent!' One never gets one's—"

"Jimima's Christmas Secret!"



dues at all in this world, does one, Mr. Glengowrie?"

The laird, his eyes gleaming fun, chuckled.

"Well, all I can say," Clara said wrathfully, "is that if you had your dues you'd be rolling down the hill in the snow, you spoofer. Brrrr! So that's why you went and disappeared half an hour before the ghost hunt. And where did you get that costume?"

"Oh, found it," Jimima murmured vaguely.

"Found it, you know. Remember the old motto that 'he who finds shall seek.' I did a spot of seeking, you know. Well, here we are, just one big, happy, gay and laughing family," she chirruped, beaming around at her glowering chums. "All bright as little berries on the merry old mistletoe bough, what? 'Setse' me, will you, while I go and change back to the twentieth century!"

And with a cheery wave of her hand, and an engaging smile, Jimima tripped off up the stairs again, leaving her despairing chums glaring after her.

And as she went she chuckled mysteriously.



Jimima Promises A Surprise!

"NO!" Angus Glengowrie said, almost angrily. "No, no, Miss Carstairs. Please! Do not mention that name again."

"But if she came—" Jimima persisted.

"Please!" And with sudden agitation the laird of Glengowrie rose from the seat on which he had been sitting. "I'll go and see that fool Sandy afoot the turkey. Excuse me, please," he said, and quickly strode from the room.

Jimima looked after him and sighed—a rather heavy sigh, it was. Rather thoughtful, too, the expression that crossed her face as the laird, closing the door behind him, went out of his study. Obviously he was not to be tackled on the subject of his daughter.

It was the next morning—Christmas Eve morning, bright and frosty and crisp, with a great, red sun hanging above the mountains, touching the snow-covered peaks with a sheen of crimson gold.

Outside Babs & Co., with Bessie and Dorrie, were dispersing themselves upon the lake.

Jimima, however, had stopped in that morning.

For Jimima had a programme of her own to work upon.

The first part of that programme concerned Angus Glengowrie. Jimima, desperately anxious to discover his reaction to the loss of Dorrie's mother, had tackled him in his own den. It could not be said, however, that she had had a great deal of luck.

"Tough," Jimima murmured. "Tough! Well, well, never shall it be said that a Carstairs met with defeat. If

the merry old cat can't come out at the top of the bag it must emerge from the bottom, forsooth!"

And—with that cryptic remark, Jimima quitted the room.

Rather thoughtfully she trailed across the old hall. With pensive frown on her brow, she mounted the stairs. Along to the room she shared with Babs, she went, pausing a moment to stare through the window at the happy scene which met her eyes.

Down in the glen on the lake, Clara Trevlyn and Bessie Bunter between them were giving Dorrie a slide, and the child's merry, pealing laughter came faintly to her ears.

Across the lake, Leila and MaIs and Babs were engaged in a merry scuffle in the snow.

"Such fun," Jimima murmured.

She crossed to her case. From her pocket she took out a key. With this she unlocked the case, thoughtfully rummaging among the clothes in its interior. For a few minutes she fumbled, then, with a sigh of relief, she drew something out. It was a white mask.

And with that mask in her possession she tripped out again. But this time she did not go downstairs. Once again she went to the sacred room of the Lady of Glengowrie, and then, three times, in a peculiar way, she knocked.

At the third knock the door swung silently open from the interior, and Jimima entered.

"BUNGRY as hunters from the hunt!" Clara Trevlyn said, with a laugh. "But where's Jimima, Mr. Glengowrie?"

"Jimmy? Your friend Miss Carstairs, you mean?" The old laird frowned. "I'm sure I don't know. She came to see me an hour ago in my study. Since then I have not set eyes upon her."

The chums, glowing with health, had just come in from the lake, to meet the laird in the hall. Dorrie was with them—Dorrie, whose woollen-gloved hand was clasped in that of the beaming Bessie, and who carried a pair of diminutive skates in the other.

She laughed.

"Nice Auntie Bessie and Auntie Clara give me ride on the lake, grandpa," she glowed. "It was lovely, but Dorrie wants to see her nice lady," she added seriously. "Dorrie love nice lady. Have you seen my nice lady, grandpa?"

The old man smiled indulgently.

"No, lassie."

"But nice lady here," Dorrie said disappointedly. "Nice lady say she come to see me ever so many times and live in the castle. Last night nice lady gave me more sweeties," she added proudly. "And nice lady gave me one for grandpa. Look!"

And eagerly from her tiny pocket Dorrie fished out a little brown lozenge.

"Och, and that's nice of your nice lady!" he said. "Thank ye, ma bairn."

"Well, eat it," Dorrie adjured.

"But grandpa doesn't eat sweeties."

"But grandpa eat nice lady's sweeties," Dorrie said earnestly.

"Grandpa, please!"

"There's no resisting an appeal like that, even if the laird of Glengowrie was not a sweet eater. Good-humouredly he put the lozenge, in his mouth, at which little Dorrie clapped her hands.

"Nice?" she asked anxiously.

"Hum! Yum, very nice," the old man mumbled. "A cough sweet, eh? Then he broke off. "But who gave you cough sweeties, Dorrie? There's none in the house, as far as I'm aware."

"Nice lady," Dorrie said innocently.

"Nice lady say sweeties good in cold weaver. Nice?" she asked again.

The old man stared at her with a puzzled frown. And then suddenly Babs, who was near him, sniffed. She sniffed again, giving a little start as she did so.

That smell—

A strange, distinctively pleasant smell: A smell she had smelled before. "The smell of—"

"Oh, my hat!" she cried suddenly.

"That's strange! Can you smell it?" They all sniffed. Clara's eyes widened.

"Why, peppermint and pine."

Peppermint and pine—yes. The same distinctive odour they had all noticed so strongly in the room of the Lady of Glengowrie.

Peppermint and pine in the room of the Lady of Glengowrie! Peppermint and pine in this sweet which Dorrie had handed to her grandpa and which she said came from her mysterious dream lady.

"My hat! I believe there's more in this than meets the eye," Babs said, when, in her room, ten minutes later, the chums had forgathered—still without the missing Jimima. "That lozenge couldn't have come from nowhere. Somebody did give it to Dorrie—"

She paused as the door opened. And there, beaming, stood Jimima.

"What cheer!" she said brightly.

"Nice morning we're having, what? Ahem! Have I changed into a prickly cactus or something, that you stare at me like that, sweethearts?"

"Where," Babs demanded, "have you been?"

"Oh, doing things!" Jimima said vaguely. "Such sweet and lovely things, too! Such a heap of winsome surprises your little Auntie Jimmy has up her Christmas sleeve for you—and such rapturous thrills to come, my adored beloveds! To-night," Jimima announced impressively, "is Christmas Eve."

"Go hon!" Clara scoffed. "You'll be telling us next that it's Christmas Day to-morrow."

"Well, well, and so it is!" Jimima said in surprise. "Tut! How clever Clara does find these things out. Now I know why you were poring over the calendar at breakfast. But to-night," Jimima went on again, "is Christmas Eve, and to-night there will be reveals. The noble Jimima has used her abundant store of grey-matter to shed rays of happiness on all and sundry. Fun for everyone—whatto!"

"You don't say," Leila put in.

"Absolutely," Jimima beamed. "And to-night there will be something else. To-night, upon the stroke of midnight, we are going to have a visitor, fair comrades—a visitor from another world and another age. Wait not for explanations; seek not to pry into the secrets of the sages. Leave everything to Uncle Jimmy."

They all stared.

"Meaning?" Babs asked.

"Just that," Jimima smiled. "Just Auntie Jimmy's little Christmas surprise, what? Star not so rudely!" she added. "If you keep your mouth open at that angle, Clara beloved, you'll get a draught down your throat. Instead," Jimima added, "have a sweetie." And she held out towards them a small bottle, at the sight of which their eyes widened.

For the bottle, labelled by a chemist in Scarborough, was full of small sweeties. They were peppermint and pine lozenges, one of which Dorrie had given to her grandpa.



"JIMMY, explain!"
 Thus Babs & Co. before lunch.
 "Jimmy, you eump, tell us
 what the game is."
 Thus Babs & Co. during the afternoon.
 "Jimmy, you tantalising old idiot,
 what have you got up your sleeve?"
 Thus Babs & Co. after tea, before
 changing into their new party frocks.

But to all those inquiries Jemima
 returned the same answer, with the same
 artless, beaming smile.

"Wait, beloveds, until the stroke of
 midnight."

And Jemima, maddeningly mysteri-
 ous, just refused to say another word.
 They just had to wait till midnight.

Eagerly as they had been anticipating
 the evening, there was that undercurrent
 in all of them which could not see the
 hands of the clock more fast enough.

Though, to be sure, there was enough
 fun and excitement at Glengowrie
 Castle that night. Dinner was eaten
 and cleared away, little Dorrie taken to
 bed, the fire piled high with logs, when
 faintly from down the hill came a
 strange and whirling noise.

"The pipers!" cried Jean.
 She stood up. They all stood. The
 old laird chuckled as he watched their
 thrilled faces. Outside a freshening
 wind brought the swirl of the pipes
 nearer.

Then voices. Young voices, girls'
 voices, boys' voices, and men's voices,
 blended in melodious chorus:

"List to the bells in tuneful chime,
 Blending their tones with the bells of
 time,
 Ringing together a choral lay,
 Hailing the light of Christmas Day."

Nearer and nearer Strange, whining
 music, but peculiarly tuneful, peculiarly
 sweet to the surroundings in which they
 found themselves. Nearer, nearer. Now
 they could hear the crunch of feet on
 the frozen snow. Now they could see
 through the windows the dark shapes.
 Then suddenly the castle doors were
 flung back with a crash. And into the
 room—
 "Oh, I sus-say!" stuttered Bessie
 Bunter.

In came the pipers, kilts twirling,
 bagpipes skirling. Straight into the
 room they marched, followed by sixty
 or seventy rosy-cheeked youths and girls
 from the village of Glengowrie two
 miles away.

Round and round they marched, sing-
 ing, laughing, the eyes of the pipers
 goggling and the cheeks of the pipers
 bulging. Then suddenly the tune came
 to an end. With one accord the pipers
 flung up their hats.

"Och, and a merrie Christmas to ye,
 laird, and a merrie Christmas to y'
 guests! Sandy, give us a reel and show
 the lassies frae England how we enjoy
 oursen in bonnie Scotland."

And Sandy gave them a reel, and
 twenty or more very pretty and kilned
 Highland lassies did the Highland fling,
 Jean Cartwright laughingly and en-
 thusiastically joining in.

After that there were drinks and
 snacks all round for the village guests,

followed by the most wild and exhilarat-
 ing dancing to the blare of the bagpipes
 that Babs & Co. had ever known.

At ten o'clock the servants entered in
 solemn procession, each carrying an
 enormously fat candle in a stick. These
 were arranged round the fire. At half-
 past ten the toast of Christmas Eve was
 drunk with much good-natured chaff
 and banter, and the roundest and most
 gigantic Christmas pudding which Babs
 & Co. had ever seen was brought in and
 proudly placed upon the table.

"Och, lads and lassies, come to the
 board," the laird invited, beaming
 round, "and help yourselves. Jean, oot
 wi' the lights," he ordered. "Lassies,
 light up the candles. If ye haven't
 heard about the ceremony of the yule

"Come bring with a noise,
 My merry, merry boys,
 The Christmas log to the firing—"

And then, what a roar!—as out from
 the kitchen appeared four hefty ser-
 vants bearing on their shoulders such a
 log as must have been cut from the
 father of all the oak-trees on earth!

In a solemn procession, while the
 music waited on and the voices roared
 ever more lustily, they approached the
 fire. There they arranged themselves so
 that the log was broadside to it, and
 then with a heave sent the giant bole
 crashing into the flames.

A shower of sparks like a hundred
 fireworks flaming rushed up the
 chimney.



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

My Dear Girls—

This tiny letter is just to wish every single one
 of you the old, old wish—

A Merry, Merry Christmas.

There's nothing new I can say, I'm afraid, but
 then, there's nothing new that I want to say, for
 it is all contained in that wish—that this may be
 the Happiest Christmas you have ever known.
 And I shall be more than happy if I dare to think
 that my stories will help just a little in the fulfil-
 ment of that happiness.

My Alsatian dog, Juno, would also, I'm certain,
 like to send you doggie greetings, for she does
 realise that something exciting is in the air.

Again, a HAPPY, HAPPY CHRISTMAS is the
 sincere wish of

Hilda Richards

P.S.—Oh, and thank you for those Christmas
 cards and other greetings! I love them all.

log before, ye shall see now how we
 welcome our Christmas!"

And while Jean put out the lights,
 Babs & Co. lit the great candles around
 the fire. The chef appeared then, pour-
 ing spirit over the Christmas pudding,
 which was set alight. In the green and
 purple flames which rose up, the chums
 grinned at each other, laughing their
 delight.

Then everyone to the hospitable
 board, where a glass of home-made
 wine was pushed into one hand, and the
 other furnished with a slice of pudding.
 At the laird's orders they then all stood
 around the fire.

The laird clapped his hands.
 "Let the yule log be brought in!" he
 roared. "Pipes, laddies!"

Immediately the pipes swirled. Fifty
 or sixty lusty voices roared in chorus.

"Oh crumbs! I sus-say, you know!"
 Bessie stuttered. "Oh dud-dear, I am
 enjoying this!"

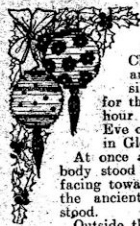
They all were. The spirit of Christ-
 mas was in the air. Gay, laughing,
 they all stood round the blazing bole,
 singing lustily in chorus as the seem-
 ingly never-weary pipers puffed on.

Time went. Eleven came. Half-past
 eleven. A quarter-to-twelve! Babs
 suddenly clutched Mabs' arm.
 "Mabs, look! Five minutes to
 twelve!"

She glanced towards Jemima, who at
 that moment was trying a Highland
 fling with a lad in a velvet jacket.
 Jemima seemed serenely unconcerned.

Four minutes to midnight. Three-
 two! The laird held up his hand.

(Continued on page 16)



(Continued from page 13)

"Two minutes to Christmas Day, ladies and lads. I bid ye be silent awhile and list for the first strokes of the hour 'Tis the Christmas Eve custom, as you know, in Glengowrie!"

At once a hush fell. Everybody stood still and silent, all facing towards the stairs where the ancient grandfather clock stood.

Outside the wind hummed on a low note. In the grate the Yule log spluttered.

"A minute to go," Babs murmured.

"Jimmy—the stairs!" Jemima whispered.

"But—
Half a minute to go!
They all tensed now.
Boom!"

The first stroke was struck. And then—
Softly, sweetly from the distance beyond the stairs came a voice:

"God rest ye, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay—"

Soft, sweet, swelling it rose, each note as clear as a flute. Nearer and nearer it came, growing louder, sweeter as it approached, filling every nook and corner with its pure notes.

The whole assembly stood spellbound. Babs was staring as if she could hardly believe her eyes. Every nerve in her seemed to be quivering in an electrical vibration. For the voice—

"The Lady of Glengowrie!" she stuttered.

In the darkness from the old laird came a funny sort of cracked cry.

Steadily the voice came on. Now at the head of the stairs something appeared. There was a rustle in the room, a sudden hiss of excitement, of fear. A girl cried out somewhere. Bessie gulped.

"Oh crumbs! Oh dud-dear, the ghost!"

"Shush!" Clara said fiercely, and gripped her wrist.

With fascinated eyes they watched. Now the figure had emerged into the light. Revealed, she stood in her white, old-time dress.

Sweet, fearless, clear the song swelled from her lips as she slowly descended the stairs.

But her face—
It was masked!
Nobody moved. Nobody, in that moment, could have moved. It was as if everyone were held in the grip of an hypnotic trance.

Now she was descending, coming towards them—no ghost but a woman of flesh and blood, even if her face was indistinguishable. In the middle of the stairs she stopped. The carol came to an end. She looked down.

And then from the Laird of Glengowrie went up a great rasping cry—

"Stop! Stop! Ma goodness, am I going mad? That voice—put on the lights! Woman, who are you?"

The figure faltered. They all sensed in that moment her fright. A cry, low, choked—the cry of bitter failure—came from her lips. Then, as the laird hurried forward, she turned, gathering up her skirts and flying back up the stairs.

"Stop! Stop!" the laird cried. "Stop!"

"Oh, hobgoblins, I've done it!" Jemima's voice cut in. "Quick, get away!"

The woman raced. But before she reached the top of the stairs another

figure appeared—a small, excited, rosy-faced figure dressed in a trailing white nightgown.

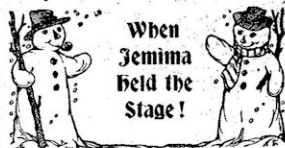
With a glad shriek, she rushed towards the mysterious masked singer as it would have bolted into the corridor, and flung herself upon it.

The figure was little Dorrie, most enormously excited. She gave a cry. "Nice lady! Dorrie's nice lady! Dorrie got you now and Dorrie never let you go again! Dorrie love nice lady," she added, "but why nice lady wear that funny thing upon her face?"

And innocently, as the distracted woman bent down to catch her in her arms, she plucked the mask from the features it covered.

At the same moment there came a gasping cry from the laird himself.

"My daughter!" he shouted. "My daughter—Flora!"



"MY daughter!"

In the hall there was a breathless gasp of surprise. Speechlessly Babs & Co. stared at each other. So this then was Jemima's big surprise!

Proud and pale, the woman at the top of the stairs stood, hugging little Dorrie to her.

No fear was in her face. She looked almost alarmingly like the Flora Glengowrie of the picture in the hall as defiantly she stood thus.

While up the stairs rushed the laird, Jemima breathlessly at his heels.

"Flora—you!"

"Yes, father—I!" the woman answered quietly.

"What are you doing in this house?" "I came," the woman said proudly, "because I had to come. I did not come to ask favours. I came because I wanted once again to see my child, this darling from whom I have been separated so long. I—"

And then a sob broke into her voice; for a moment

she hugged the child closer to her. "Dorrie, my darling," she whispered. "I have to go—I have to leave you!"

"No, no!" Dorrie cried, clinging passionately. "No! Dorrie not let nice lady go! Dorrie love nice lady, and—"

"Oh, golly, wait!" Jemima gaspingly broke in. "Just a merry old jifflet, please! Mr. Glengowrie, I'm sorry, I'm afraid I've got to own up to this."

"Own up?" the laird stuttered. He was still staring, as though stupefied. "Flora, no!" he cried agonisedly, as the woman turned, making an effort to disengage the clinging child's arms from her neck. "Don't—don't go—don't—"

She turned, her eyes big with wonderment.

"Don't—don't go!" he repeated brokenly. "Flora, I—I don't want you to go! I—I have never wanted you to go, really, not even when I turned you out! Flora"—and here his voice cracked—"if you have suffered, I have suffered, too. I never expected, when I told you to go, that you would take me at my word! My heart has been full of bitterness ever since—bitterness with myself, my dear. Ever since you left, I have made efforts to find you, succeeded. Flora, I loved you as a little girl; I loved you as my daughter. I have always loved you—so much, my bairn, that it has broken my heart whenever anyone mentioned your name."

"Oh, goodness!" Babs said confusedly. "C-Clara, have you got a hanky?"

"I—I'm using it," Clara mumbled. There was a deep, deep silence. The clock had struck its last chime now. Downstairs was an uneasy silence.

Then softly, as father and daughter stood gazing at each other, Jemima took the laird's hand. He, still staring, never seemed to notice the action. Unresisting, she drew it towards that of the woman in white.

They touched, they met, and then the man, with a great sobbing cry, had stumbled forward.

"Flora!"

"Father!"

Jemima heaved a sigh.

While outside, from the direction of the village, there came through the

(Concluded on page 28)

The Most Memorable Christmas Day of Their Lives!

That was how Babs & Co. will always regard their Christmas Day at romantic old Glengowrie Castle. All they could wish for was theirs for the asking. What thrilling sport, what glorious fun! But there was one girl who, despite all the jollity, was not completely happy, who began to act mysteriously, secretly. And that girl was Leila Carroll, one of their own chums.

This is the intriguing theme of next week's magnificent LONG COMPLETE Cliff House story,



Be sure to order next Thursday's copy now.

Not even a Traitor in the ranks can mar the Festive Safety of Betty Barton & Co., who are now—

SCHOOLGIRLS IN SOCIETY



FOR NEW READERS.

BETTY BARTON and her Morocco chums, POLLY LINTON, NAOMER NAKARA, PAM WILLOUGHBY, JUDY CARDEW, to mention only a few, join forces with JACK LINTON & Co., of Grangemore, to form a concert party which, visiting rich Society homes, during the Christmas holidays, is raising a fund on behalf of a children's home. They have a chaperon, MISS LESTER, a charming lady they adore. At Morocco, during the preparations, a valuable concert frock is ruined. Betty & Co. seek the miscreant in vain—never suspecting that it is actually Miss Lester! But Betty has doubts later—and they become certainties when Miss Lester suggests Polly has stolen some missing funds.

(Now read on.)



On Their Guard!

ALONE in the room with Miss Lester, Betty, angrily answered the nasty insinuation that had been made.

"You're suggesting that Polly Linton has helped herself to money collected for charity?"

"I'm only saying, Betty, your chum Polly was creeping about down here in the night. And you have just been telling me that during the night some of the concert party takings were stolen. Shall we ask Polly?"

"No!" Betty hotly refused. "Because it's been none of her doing. Quite likely the missing pound notes will be found upon her. But that'll only prove the theft—against the wrong person! They'll have been planted on Polly!"

"I—I don't understand you, Betty," stated Miss Lester. "Please explain."

"Not now," Betty again refused, marching to the door. "Going into it all would take too long; there's so much else to explain!"

And, leaving Miss Lester to make what she liked of that cryptic answer, she went out of the room.

Up some flights of stairs dashed Betty,

to end by whirling into the bed-room which she shared with two of her chums. Only one of them—Polly—was there, starting to get dressed.

"Morning, Polly!" was Betty's panted beginning. "I say, d'you mind looking in the pockets of your frocks?"

"What's at it?" screamed the madcap. "Funny," she jested, darting to make the search, "I dreamt I had come into money!"

But next moment, her hand coming out of a pocket with two currency notes, she looked seriously staggered.

"I'll have them—thanks," Betty smiled, promptly taking possession of the notes. "It's just a rotten trick, Polly—to get you accused of theft! But listen, old thing! I want to say something about Miss Lester. She's not being straight with us!"

Polly was in a state of round-eyed amazement. "Phew!" she gasped.

"Yes," Betty gravely nodded. "Now, you weren't creeping about downstairs in the night, were you?"

"If I were, then I was walking in my sleep!"

"And in your sleep you used a key stolen from me to open the concert party cashbox and take out two pounds," Betty joked back. "What really did happen then? When I went to the cashbox just now I found the money short!"

"I am only guessing, mind, so there mustn't be a word, or Miss Lester will have us for slander!"

"She—she opened the box, Betty? And then she crept to this bed-room—while we were all asleep—and put the stolen notes in my pocket?" Polly burst out.

"Yes," said Betty grimly. "Oh, I know it's jolly hard to understand! she broke out in a guarded tone, "but even before this I've been suspecting her—about the way our stage costumes all went astray on the way up from Morocco. It could have been Miss Lester."

"So, it could!" Polly now realised.

"Yet why," Betty went on wonderingly—"why on earth Miss Lester should not want the concert party to succeed quite beats me, Polly."

Polly could not answer. Her helpless stare meant "No use asking me!" And so, for a few moments, both mystified girls were silent, racking their brains.

"We can, anyhow, decide what to do," Betty at last resumed. "My idea, Polly, is to keep everything 'under our hat' for the present. We can't prove anything yet."

"Oh, and another thing!" Polly breathed. "If she really is out to do us harm, better to have her still with us. Then it should be easy for us to bowl her out some time. At least, we know who our enemy is!"

Then it was decided to let certain of their fellow-holiday-makers into this secret.

Study No. 12 never did reckon that Naomer and Paula could be trusted with a confidence. The one girl was far too great a chatterbox, and the other—too much of a simpleton!

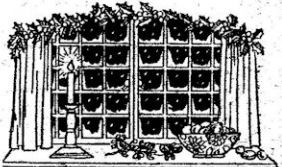
But the rest of the girls, and all the Grangemore boys—they were "given the tip" during the hour wait for breakfast.

In the case of fun-lovers like Jack and Tom and Tubby there was unholly delight at the prospect of getting such an extra thrill out of the holiday "stunt." As for Dave, it was just like him to out with the terse remark that he had expected something of the sort.

Miss Lester, making her own smiling appearance just after the gong, found the girls in shrieks of laughter over Messrs. Jack, Tom, and Tubby, each of whom was sporting a beard and moustache borrowed from the stage property basket.

"So glad you're enjoying yourselves!" was Miss Lester's gushing greeting. "Big day in front of you, I suppose!"

"Big day for them all, did I hear you saying?" cried Pam's mother, as she came in to preside at the breakfast-table. "By the look of things, bigger than you ever expected!" she gaily addressed the juniors. "Here's a letter I've just had from old Mrs. Davisham,



The Compliments of the Season, Girls—
Marjorie Stanton

Your Editor's address is:—Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4
Please send a stamped, addressed envelope if you wish for a reply by post.



"ISN'T this a dreadful part of London, girls?"

"Awful, Betty!"

The crowded taxi, with one just in front, and two more just behind, was purring through the very narrowest, meanest streets.

Constantly the overcoated driver was sounding a warning "braah-rah!" for sharp turnings at dingy corners were frequent, and kiddies, with nowhere else to play, were swarming everywhere.

"Oh, I do hope enough money is collected to buy Rock Hill House for a sea-side home! A home for just the kind of kiddies who live round here!" Polly said passionately.

"A fortnight for some of them at Sandton Bay," Judy murmured wistfully.

"Hallo, though!" This was Betty, as the cab suddenly ran round, between a wide gateway, into a small courtyard in front of a sooted brick building. "We're there."

Then the taxi stopped, and in a few moments the girls and lads were all getting together, to go into the hospital.

Five minutes later the "M.C.P." had been handed over to a buxom matron, who conducted them to a ward where every tiny cot had its wee patient.

Sitting up in their beds, with pillows at their backs, eagerly yet shyly the little sufferers watched Morcove & Co. follow matron down the long room, to where the best had been done to form a stage, with a curtain before it.

From last night, at Lady Mountmerry's—how different this scene! Instead of a grand West End ball-room, the ward of an East London hospital. Instead of a beautiful grand piano for Madge to play, only a much-scratched "upright," jammed against the wall.

"How do you feel, Polly-wolly?"

"Rather funny, Jack—but longing to get to work!"

So Morcove's madcap answered her brother, "behind stage," just as Madge started to rattle away at that tinkly piano.

"I know," Jack nodded. "Gee," he next moment grinned, "hark at that!"

The bed-ridden children had started to sing one or two popular choruses that Madge was cleverly working into her "overture."

Betty and some of her chums nipped to window, by peering round the edge of the stage curtain, they could see over the whole ward. And a sight for sore eyes it was now—all the little patients clapping even as they sang.

"Say," Betty suddenly whispered, being seized with a bright idea. "I'm going to say my few words right now, instead of after the show. It'll be much better—"

"Ever so much! Go on, then, Betty!"

Betty waited until the last line of a chorus was reached, then suddenly walked out in front of the curtain.

"Oooray!" the singing changed to cheering.

"We're all ready to begin now," Betty blithely assured the eager audience. "I only want to say that she's a very kind lady who has asked us to come here to-day, and she's going to



Between Ourselves

MY DEAR READERS,—Your editor has been most terribly busy just recently—quite apart from his work in preparing your favourite paper for you. He has been busy buying Christmas presents.

You see, I thought I'd be most fearfully cunning and shop early so as to avoid the rush—just as the shops tell you to do. But unfortunately everyone else seemed to have the same idea—and the crush was terrific.

It was last Saturday, and I spent at least two hours in one of London's most popular emporiums. But, believe it or not, girls, in that time I was only able to buy four presents, and two of them were the same.

Firstly there was a pair of fur gauntlet gloves for my niece Claudine. For Claudine has a little two-seater car now—lucky girl!—and I know she wants a warm pair of gloves for driving. (By the way I must tell you some time about my first ride in Claudine's car. It was quite an adventure!)

Then there were two pairs of skates, a pair each for the twins who live next door to me, Iris and Veronica. And lastly—but very important, you know—was a new collar for my dog Chum. Of course, I have simply crowds more presents to buy, and I'm trying to puzzle out the best time to buy them.

And now, girls, you will remember last week that I told you this was to be the SCHOOLGIRL'S Christmas Number, a little early so as to help you—be it ever so little—get in the right mood for the festive season.

So to-day, my staff—including that imp of mischief, Gusty, the office-boy—and I, wish to join together in wishing you

All the Very, Very Best for Christmas, with Lots of Fun—and Presents!

and we do all hope that you will thoroughly enjoy this issue.

Miss Hilda Richards has written a special greetings letter to you (on page 13; I expect you have already seen it), and Miss Marjorie Stanton, Miss Elizabeth Chester, and Miss Ida Melbourne each asked if they could send a little personal Christmas wish to all readers.

A very nice thought, don't you agree? And so on the first page of the stories written by these old favourites of yours you will find their little greeting.

And now on to: "A HOLIDAY TASK FOR LEILA,"

next week's long complete story of the Cliff House chums at Glengowrie Castle. Babes & Co.'s Christmas Day at the old castle is really joyous. Such ripping fun; happy times.

But it is not quite all light-hearted frolic. No, a more serious, more thrilling note creeps in when that favourite of so many of you, Leila Carroll, the American Fourth Former, plays a lone-hand part.

I'm sure you're going to love this Christmas story, as you will the serial instalments, a "turkey time" complete of Gipsy Joy, and Pat's Pages, which deal so brightly with matters pertaining to the festive season.

And now, before I finish, just one little private wish from your editor for the best of Christmases.

Happy days, girls!

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

who lives in Park Lane. She offers to give twenty guineas towards the fund if you, will give the show at one of the London hospitals for children.

"Gee!" shouted some of the boys.

"When?" clamoured Morcove.

"When?"

"This afternoon."

"Cheers for old Mrs. Davisham!" cried Polly. "Whoever she may be!"

"Eighty, and has lived in a wonderful old house for sixty years," Pam's mother admiringly remarked. "I'll ring her up, then, and tell her. Oh, and, by the way, in the letter she hopes that after the show you will all go to her house and meet her."

More loud cheers.

"Bekas—gorjus! Anuzzer grand spread!"

"Oh, fine!"

"Lovely idea," enthused Betty.

While the Grangemore boys joined together in a rousing:

"Roh—roh—roh!"

Meantime, Naomer could do justice, like all her chums, to the Willoughby breakfast. Up from that fortifying meal, the entire party plunged into activities that were largely due to the unexpected engagement.

Nor did high spirits suffer a fall when it became known, after lunch, that the "official chaperon" was not going to accompany the party this afternoon. So much the better!

give a lot of money to a Seaside Home, where lots of you will be able to spend a fortnight by the sea! And so—

But the next words were taken out of Betty's mouth.

"Free cheers for the kind lady!" shrieked one of the small patients.

"Ip, ip, ip—"

"Ooray!"

And the rest of the cheers were going up as Betty pranced back into the wings.

"Dash!" she said, because tears were suddenly blinding her. "But it's all right—carry on!"

So, whilst Madge played the last bars of the overture, there was a hasty getting into order on the stage.

Up went the curtain, and, with unmistakable gaiety, the show began.

Soon, the comedy stuff was being given, and Morcove was not behind Grangemoor in introducing bits of fun that had never been rehearsed. Cross-talk and backchat were made brisker than ever, and much simpler. Clowning by the boys was carried to such a knock-about extent, there was just one prolonged cackle from the bed-ridden audience.

But what gave most delight during the first half of the show, was the concert party's skit on Public school life.

This meant a crowded stage, and every part a funny one.

The rich burlesque featured Polly as a headmistress—and Jack in his part of the bearded headmaster of the boys' school "next door."

He came to answer a complaint from the headmistress about his boys being cheeky to the girls. It was a fine old row that developed between the two "Heads," ending in the headmistress chasing the headmaster round the stage, throwing books at him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" the laughter went up, wilder than ever. "Bravo! Encore!"

Then all the girls romped on, but they had the boys with them! This idea of "fair play for all" kept small hands clapping furiously. As for the way the headmaster and headmistress handled the subsequent "inquiry," the scholars certainly got the best of it.

The last to be seen of headmaster Jack, he was being "outed" by his own riotous boys.

"Bump him!" was the cry, as he was carried, struggling, across the stage. And bump him they did—good and hard.

In all this rough-and-tumble, stuff there was a complete change from the school-life farce given, overnight at Lady Mountberry's.

And it was just the same when, as the last item in the programme, our youngsters acted their Riding School farce.

No bit of nonsense could be too extravagant for such an audience as today's.

So stage-horse Ginger was made to ramp about as he had never ramped before.

Tom, as front legs, vied with back-legs Tubby in being the livelier pair. Ginger not only ran races all round the stage with Jack the Groom, he threw fits, and had to be given physic by Dave the Vet.

One of the hospital's own dispensary jars was used on the stage, and it must have been wonderful "horse medicine" that Dave used, for it soon had Ginger sitting up, neighing loudly. Becoming much better, Ginger even did some acrobatic tricks.

By this time a few nurses and other members of the staff had slipped in to see how the show was going. Along with matron, they laughed and applauded. And from every bed came the delighted shrieks and the mad clapping of wee sufferers whose aches and pains—for this little while at least—had been charmed away.

Finally, Ginger did an unexpected leap off the stage, and ran amok all round the ward.

From the stage, Betty and others saw the runaway "horse" doing his comical gallop between the rows of beds, with Polly in the saddle—or supposed to be.

As a grand finish-up, nothing could have been better. It even left the girls themselves doubled up with laughter.

Not long afterwards there were

"free cheers" for the M.G.P. as it said good-bye to its delighted audience.

From drab East End to all the wealth and splendour of the West, were their taxis speeding the concert party!

Pitying thoughts for the poor and needy who were being left behind lingered in the minds of all. But at least the players could feel that they had done their bit towards brightening up a few young lives. And even if it had all taken place in their own holiday-time, and been fun for them, it had also been very hard work!



NO sooner were Betty and her chums mustered on some shallow steps leading up from the pavement, than a beautiful old green-painted door opened wide.

"Will you come in, please?" smiled a very elderly, spick-and-span woman-servant. "I will tell Mrs. Davisham that you are here."

"Thank you," said Betty. "Has a Miss Lester turned up yet?"

"No, miss, not yet."

The answer caused some pleased nudging to take place amongst the girls and lads, whilst the elderly parlourmaid hastened away.

"Bekas, good job eef our jabberena doesn't turn up at all," Naomer merely whispered, being somewhat awed by the quietude of the house. "I don't zink she de-erves a good tea like me do. Bekas, we know where she's been all ze afternoon—looking at ze shops."

There was just time for those who shared the suspicion against Miss



"GIRLS—help!" Polly Linton cried, in her disguise as a headmistress, and she chased "Headmaster" Jack Linton around the stage, throwing books. The little patients shrieked with laughter. They were having the time of their lives!



Lester to exchange
gins about
Naomer's own
poor opinion of the
lady. Then came a
bit of a thrill—a first
sight of old Mrs.

Davisham, hobbling in
with the aid of a stick!
Very tall and bony,
with snowy-white hair
and a wrinkled face—that was
Mrs. Davisham. But it must
be said that she was beautifully
dressed, and on one or two thin
fingers there were magnificent
rings.

"Well, young people," she rather
croaked at them, at the same time
smiling in a wintry way.

"Good-afternoon, Mrs. Davisham!"
they murmured in chorus.

"I have had a telephone message
from the hospital, that you gave an
excellent performance," the tired-sound-
ing voice spoke on. "And so now
you want your tea—"

"Yes, plis, zank you, bekas—"
But Naomer was checked by a
secret elbow-nudge from Polly.

"Hannah will show you all where to
leave our outdoor things. Tea is all
ready for you now—in the dining-
room," the old lady rasped on. "Be
very careful not to break anything,
won't you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Davisham."

"I have so many things I am fond
of—china and curios that my dear
husband, the general, collected in the
East. But I wanted to have you, my
dears, and I'd like to come in with
you before you go, though, and then,"

she finished, with great relish, "I'll let
you have that cheque!"

"Thank you, Mrs. Davisham!"—
again.

"Bless you, my dears," was her with-
drawing murmur, "you are doing a
very good work."

Then old Hannah had charge of them
again, telling the boys and girls where
to get rid of their outdoor things. Two
minutes more, and the juniors were all
sitting down to a really grand tea,
with Hannah and a younger servant to
wait upon them.

At first the rather solemn grandeur
of the dining-room meant the sup-
pression of high spirits. But Hannah,
sensing this oppressive effect upon the
visitors, made it clear that they were
supposed to enjoy themselves. So
tongues were rattling away in the
right Morcove-Grangemoor fashion
when at last Miss Lester appeared upon
the festive scene.

But she did not sit down to tea with
the party, pleading that she must find
Mrs. Davisham and say a few grateful
words to her.

With their "suspect" gone again, as
soon as she had come, Morcove & Co.
at once became happier than ever.

The jolly of Naomer and Tubby,
over the good appetites they were show-
ing, went on none the less freely be-
cause of Hannah's presence.

There was, too, great hilarity when
Jack pretended very nearly to have an
accident with his cup and saucer—some
of old Mrs. Davisham's priceless egg-
shell china.

It was just like the Grangemoor
comics to make all the fun they could
out of the recent warning to be careful.

Solemnly, and under their breath, the

jokers kept on "warming" notoriously
careless girls like Polly and Bunny and
Naomer. It became such a mirth-
provoking game, played under the very
nose, as it were, of servants in attend-
ance, that at last Bunny choked over
her tea.

And she had left her "hanky" in her
outdoor jacket!

Hastily a red-faced, spluttering Bunny
retired in quest of that very necessary
article. What with trying not to laugh,
whilst tea-leaves still tickled her throat,
the tears were flowing freely.

Yet this same Bunny was suddenly
back in the dining-room, looking utterly
horror-stricken, only a moment or so
after all her companions had jumped
up from their chairs, having heard a
tremendous—

CR-A-A-ASH!

"Oh!" white-faced Bunny was gasp-
ing. "Oh—it's smashed to bits!"

"What is—that?" jerked Betty and
others. "Bunny! Oh, what have you
done now!"

She could only shake her head, as if
implying: "But I didn't!" Past her,
at the doorway, they all flocked out
into the roomy hall. And there, dashed
to bits upon the floor, was a great
Chinese vase that they had previously
noticed standing by a cloak-room door-
way.

"My goodness!" was now the horrified
cry from several of the girls. "Oh,
whatever will Mrs. Davisham say!"

"Bekas, what ze diggings, she was so
jolly partie—"
"Sh!"

The drawing-room door was opening,
to let out old Mrs. Davisham and Miss
Lester.

Mute and still, in utter consternation,
stood the girls and boys, whilst their
"chaperon" kept by the old lady, as if
to be ready to lend her support. Mrs.
Davisham was visibly trembling as she
came slowly out into the hall, her stick
tap-tapping at every faltering step.

"You—you've broken that, have
you?" her quivering voice came at last.
"My husband's Kang-He!"

"Dear Mrs. Davisham," interposed
Miss Lester, "I am so dreadfully sorry.
I will see who was to blame—"

"You cannot give me back that vase,"
was the bitter cry, voiced with a passion
that was dramatic, in one so old. "Of
all my husband's gifts to me, the
loveliest and rarest!"

"Whoever did it will be punished,"
Miss Lester submitted sadly.

"At least these young people shall be
taught a lesson!" Mrs. Davisham fiercely
responded. "After my warning—how
could you!" she fairly raged out at them
all. "Now get your things on, and go!"

"But, Mrs. Davisham," Betty gently
protested. "Will you first of all make
sure that—"

"Betty," came the very "official" re-
buke from Miss Lester, "be silent,
please."

"And go, I tell you, with all your
graceless companions," Mrs. Davisham
quivered on. "As for that cheque I
promised—I shall tear it up now. Let
that teach you a lesson in behaviour! I
will give the money to some other
charity."

And then, again tap-tapping with her
stick as she turned to hobble away:
"Hannah—show them out!"

EVERY week this fine story gets more
intriguing, doesn't it? What will be
the outcome of this new set-back to the
Morcove Concert Party? Don't
miss next week's chapters. And re-
member, that issue will be on sale two
days earlier than usual, on Dec. 23rd.

A FEAST FOR YOU!



No, not the
feast depicted
here, but one
of quite a differ-
ent sort. In
short, a feast of
delightful read-
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WHO MARRIED
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fun and excitement.

Talia, who had kept her pointed stick, found another, and got busy, while Norma, Belinda, and Kit waited in excited impatience.

At last the fire was going; and soon it would blaze up. Then Norma, ready with the blanket, could do the signaling.

IN THE camp there was great excitement. Miss Manders had been informed that Norma & Co. had gone to the volcano, and their purpose had been made clear, too.

Naturally, a search party had been organised, for the headmistress did not like the idea of their going alone. But after Virginia had all but got lost in the company with other seniors, she returned to report failure.

"The only thing to do was to hope for the best; but that was very little consolation to Miss Manders, who hardly slept a wink all night."

Millicent, almost as though it were no concern of hers, had wrapped herself in a blanket in the hut and gone to sleep.

While breakfast was being prepared, Winifred Motley came hurrying up to Miss Manders, her face pale and agitated.

"Miss Manders—Millicent is ill!" she said in a faltering tone.

"Ill?" said the headmistress sharply. "In what way?"

"I don't know; she's very hot and she seems to be saying silly things—raving."

Miss Manders stood quite still; her face white.

"Fever!" she said. "Oh dear!"

"Fever? She's got fever?" gasped Winifred.

"Yes—yes. If probably is not catching," said Miss Manders, "although you will be well advised to leave her alone. I will see her."

Leaving a senior in charge of the bench, Miss Manders went at once to the hut where Millicent lay, turning and tossing, her head burning, her eyes glazed.

Miss Manders made her comfortable, and then turned back, closing the door carefully.

As she stepped out she saw Virginia come running through the trees, greatly excited, carrying some binoculars.

"They've reached the top—almost at the crater," Miss Manders' she cried.

"Let us hope, then, that they will soon be back."

"They lighted a fire and are signaling," said Virginia.

"They want help?" asked Miss Manders in alarm.

"I don't know," confessed Virginia.

"I came straight back to tell you."

Miss Manders hurried with the prefect to the nearest spot from which the top of the mountain could be seen. The distance was far too great for

figures to be distinguished even through powerful field-glasses, although small dots could be discerned.

"They are signalling—with a blanket, I should say," murmured the headmistress.

And then as she stared she gave a sudden scream and lowered the glasses.

"It's caught light—flames are spreading—look—Virginia—look!" Oh, my goodness, the girls are trapped!

ON the volcano, Norma, Kit, Belinda, and Talia were running. Without warning, the whole ground had seemed to catch light; then, the air above, and soon they were enveloped in dense yellow smoke, with heavy fumes.

Norma, looking back at the cloud of flame, saw a different colour. The came a mighty, shattering roar, and the whole volcano seemed to shake.

They stumbled and fell, and billowing smoke seemed to follow them down the mountainside.

Kit was to Norma's left; Talia was slightly ahead. But Belinda—

"Belinda!" Norma called.

There was no reply, and so Norma staggered and lurched to a halt in the blinding yellow smoke.

WHAT ever has happened to Belinda?

On no account should you miss next Thursday's wonderful chapters!

Jemima's Christmas Secret!

(Concluded from page 15)

cold, frost-laden air of the night a glad, merry peal of bells.

"Christmas!" Jemima murmured. "Christmas—the time of good will and forgiveness! Shall it ever be said, henchmen, that a Carstairs failed to do her duty?"

LATER! ONE o'clock, or thereabouts, this would be.

The guests had gone. Dorrie, nearly asleep again, lay in her mother's arms in front of the blazing Yule log. The old laird, a look of unutterable peace in his rugged old face, sat quiet, looking like a man newly awakened from a happy dream.

Jemima, in the circle of her friends, was talking—to all, save Bessie. Bessie had gone to sleep.

"Well, it was all dead easy," she said. "The only fly in the merry old ointment was you, beloveds, who made up your merry minds to hunt the ghost. You remember, the night we first went into the lady's room?"

"Yes," Babs said.

"Ah, 'twas then your clever Uncle Jimmy got her first clue," Jemima beamed, and went on in her own queer fashion to explain.

Curiosity being her strong suit, she had noticed among the dressing-table bottles the smaller bottle from which she had proffered sweets to Babs & Co. that afternoon—a bottle containing lozenges, and bearing the label of a Scarborough chemist, from which twofold Flora Stewart had made her way to Glengowrie.

That, Jemima decided, had certainly no right to be among the ancient toilet articles on the dressing-table, and the fact that the room smelt so strongly of the lozenges gave her her first sus-

picion that the owner of that bottle was using the room.

That suspicion had been more than amply borne out during her midnight visit to the room.

"For then," Jemima said, "I saw the lady for the first time. She came out of the room. She went to little Dorrie's. I saw her bending over Dorrie. I saw her kiss the kiddie as she lay sleeping. And then as she came out, I saw her face all wet with tears, and from that moment," Jemima added, "I made up my mind to help her. I did. When I followed her back to my lady's room, I spoke to her. She told me all."

Flora Stewart smiled.

"And since then you know what has happened," Jemima went on. "I had a sort of notion, you know, being the brightest pride of my kind teachers, that our Mr. Glengowrie was cut up about Mrs. Stewart."

"Mr. Glengowrie, you wouldn't talk about Mrs. Stewart," she added, "so I planned with Mrs. Stewart to appear to-night. It was a thrill for you all, too, wasn't it, Babs?"

"Go, I'll say it was!" Leila replied.

"The notion being," Jemima added, "that if Mr. Glengowrie heard his daughter's voice once again, you know, all would be well. That and the merry old Christmas atmosphere just to help things along."

"I admit," Jemima added, "that I thought for a moment the merry old scheme was going to be a howling flop; and I certainly hadn't counted on little Dorrie turning up out of bed, attracted by the voice of her nice lady."

"Babs smiled."

"But why," she asked, turning to Mrs. Stewart, "did you dress up as the ghost?"

"That was not my intention," Mrs. Stewart said. "I had no choice. I came here soaked through to the skin. I made my way to my lady's room,

knowing that as that room was held to be sacred, I should be safe there, you see. The only alternative clothes I had were the costumes I knew were kept in the brass-bound coffer. My own wet garments I hid."

"And that," Jemima said, "is nearly all—what? Except, of course, that I was giving Mrs. Stewart the wire all the time you ardent ghost-hunters were on her track. And I played naughty old ghost myself, and led you a merry, merry dance, so that she could visit little Dorrie without being spotted."

"But what about the key of the lady's room?" demanded Clara. "Why did you snaffle that?"

Jemima sighed.

"The old thing!" she reproved. "Pretty obvious, isn't it?—I dashed ahead of you all, locked the door, and took the key to prevent you bursting into the jolly old room, and perhaps spotting Mrs. Stewart. It gave her time, anyway, to nip into a secret cupboard in the room. All clear now, my Spartans? Good! Then I vote, Jemima added, "as we've got to hang stockings up, and all that sort of merry old Yuletide thing, you know, that we just tickle old Bessie into life with a holly-tree and wander off to bed."

Babs nodded.

"Well done, old Jimmy!" she said. And everyone there heartily endorsed that.

"Thank you, old Spartans!" murmured Jimmy. "There is but one sad thing," she added, sighing. "The night will be what you have to-morrow night. No ghost to hunt," Dorrie said."

"I said," Dorrie repeated sleepily, "smuggling closer to her mother, 'nice lady's secret Christmas lady! And nice Aunt Jimmy! Dorrie loves Aunt Jimmy!'"

"Then which," Jemima beamed,

"there can be no greater reward."

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.