

"NOT THE GIRL SHE SEEMED!" Dramatic Long Complete Cliff House Story inside.

THE SCHOOLGIRL

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Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



**A RUSE TO
ATTRACT ATTENTION!**

Faith Ashton pretends to be afraid of a clock-work mouse

An intriguing incident from this week's grand story of Barbara Redfern & Co.

Magnificent LONG COMPLETE Story of the Cliff House Chums



Quickly a favourite at Cliff House, Faith Ashton, Barbara Redfern's cousin, won the school's admiration by her generosity and sympathy towards Babs' best chum, Mabel Lynn. But certain little happenings made Babs suspect that her cousin was—

NOT *the* GIRL SHE SEEMED

A Chance for Mabs—or Faith!



"**F** ALL in, the skating party!" cried Tom-boy Clara Trevlyn. "Mabs, this way!

Jimmy, hurry along, you old slacker! Jean! Marcelle!

Bessie! Janet! Marjorie! Leila! Buck up, for goodness' sake! Hallo! Where's Babs? Anyone know where Babs is?"

"Well, you know—" plump Bessie Bunter started

"But she doesn't, sweetheart!" Leila Carroll chipped in. "That's why she's asking, I guess."

"Oh, really, Leila, if you'd let me finish," Bessie said, with stiff dignity. "I was going to tell her. Babs is looking for Faith Ashton."

"Oh, her cousin?" Janet Jordan asked.

"Yes."

Clara gazed rather exasperatedly towards the entrance to Cliff House School, through which girls could dimly be observed moving about Big Hall. But of Barbara Redfern, the captain of Cliff House's Lower School and the shining light in the Fourth Form, there was no sign.

"Well, she'd better buck up!" the Tomboy grumbled. "The bus comes along in five minutes, and it's jolly cold

standing about here. What the dickens can have happened to her cousin? Mabs, would you mind going and digging them both out? Leave your skating boots with me."

"Right-ho!" Mabel Lynn said cheerfully.

And, handing her boots to the Tom-boy—each member of the party was equipped with them—Barbara's golden-haired chum cheerfully sped away.

Clara stamped her feet. The others stamped, too. Bessie Bunter, despite the fact that her numbed hands were encased in a pair of warm woollen gloves specially made for her by Marjorie Hazeldene, blew lustily through her palms, and nudged her fat cheeks farther into the collar of the coat she wore.

For what Clara had said about the weather was true. It was, in fact, freezing.

Already the playing fields of Cliff House School were stiff with ice. Hoar frost hung from the old elms, clothing their bare branches with a shimmering diamond-sparkle of white.

A hundred yards away, where the River Fallsweir ploughed its seaward way past the old school, the ice was three inches thick, and still freezing, rapidly promising to be twice that thickness before the new day dawned.

So perhaps it was not to be wondered at that the thoughts of the Fourth Formers at Cliff House had turned to skating. And it was certainly not to

be wondered at that, on this particular half-holiday, they were all bound for the Courtfield open-air ice rink.

And it was not surprising, either, since the weather promised to hold out indefinitely, that at that rink the great ice carnival in aid of local charities had been staged for next Saturday.

Most of the girls there hoped to take part in that carnival which this year was being organised and sponsored by Mr Holland, the millionaire owner of the great emporium at Courtfield.

Mabs, meantime, had hurried into the school. One swift look around Big Hall showed her that Babs was not there. Upstairs she darted towards the cloak-room. Babs was not there. Well, where the dickens was she?

She went out. She looked in the Fourth Form Common-room. Still no luck. She was emerging from that room rather puzzledly, however, when she heard her name:

"Oh, Mabs, are you looking for me?"

And Barbara Redfern, her pretty face quite flushed, came hurrying along.

"Why, yes! But where's Faith?"

"That's what I've been trying to find out," Babs said. "I've only just heard. She's in the Second Form Common-room with the kiddies there. But, look here, tell the others to go on, will you? We'll catch the next bus."

"Oh, but, Babs—" Mabs said disappointedly.

"I'm sorry, old thing! But I must look Faith up. Tell the others I'm sorry, will you? But there's no sense in everybody hanging about."

Mabs nodded, though she still looked a trifle disappointed. Mabs was fond of Faith Ashton, with her wonderfully pretty, doll-like face and her gentle and winsome manners; but she was far fonder of Babs, and had looked forward to Babs' company.

However, that was obviously out of the question now. Faith, apart from

being Babs' cousin, was also a new girl, only lately arrived from Canada. Not yet did she even know her way about the district.

So Mabs went off, and Babs, feeling she had a little breathing space at last, made in the direction of the Second Form Common-room.

Silly old Faith! she told herself. But, of course, it was impossible to be angry with the girl. Faith was always so sweet, so adorable, and so fond of the little youngsters at Cliff House that she was rather inclined to forget time in her enthusiasm for them.

It was no wonder that the new Fourth Former was popular with the mites of the Second Form! No wonder, indeed, that she was immensely popular throughout the school.

And yet, mused Babs, it was strange that dear, plump, enormously good-natured Bessie Bunter couldn't bring herself to like her. Strange, that!

Babs shrugged. There was no real reason why Bessie should not be making a mistake, though it was so unlike the plump duffer to make a mistake of an uncharitable nature.

But here she was now at the door of the Second Form Common-room, and from inside that room came a little girl's sob. Babs' brows came together a little as she pushed the door, and then, with it half-open in her hand, stopped to gaze upon the scene which met her eyes.

Faith was there. She was kneeling down, cuddling the woeful little figure of Dolly Drew. Sweet the sympathy upon her oval face. Luminously tender the glow from the big blue eyes of hers which looked almost too big for her face.

Dolly was sniffing.
"But they were new pennies!" she said. "I saved them up from Christmas! And then they went down the drain!"
"Poor little Dolly!" Faith crooned. "Well, never mind! Cheer up, you know! I'm sorry I haven't got two new pennies! But, look here, I'll tell you what I will do. I've got one of those twelve-sided threepenny-bits—and it's a

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER.

brand new one, too! If I give you that, you'll really have three pennies then, won't you?"

Dolly's tears dried as if by magic. She blinked.

"Oh, Faith, you wouldn't?"
"But I would, and will!" And up, with a gay laugh, Faith straightened, looking round. "Dolores darling, give me my purse!" she instructed little Dolores Essendon. "Now, then, here we are!" she added cheerfully; and, watched by an envious throng of Second Formers, she fished in the purse's depths and drew out a shining threepenny-bit. "There you are, Dolly dear! And you won't cry any more, will you?"

"Oh, no!" Dolly said eagerly. "Is—is it really for me, Faith?"

"Every little tiny scrap of it," Faith said. "Open your hand. There! Now give me a kiss for it, Dolly pet!"

There was a murmur. Faith's audience looked at her with flushed faces and adoring glances. Babs smiled as she stepped into the room, just as little Dolly Drew, with an almost worshipping look in her eyes, held her face up for the promised kiss.

Faith laughed.
"Well, Dolly, happy again now, darling?" she asked.

"Oh, Faith!" Dolly gulped, and her eyes shone. "Oh, Barbara!" she added next moment. "Barbara, look what Faith has given me."

And she held out the threepenny-bit. Babs laughed. Faith, swinging round, blushed a little confusedly—as though she noticed Barbara for the first time. Two bewitching dimples appeared in her cheeks.

"Oh, Barbara, I didn't see you!" she cried.

"But I saw you," Babs laughed. "That was very nice of you, Faith."

Faith blushed.

"Oh dear, it was nothing! After all, I couldn't see darling little Dolly breaking her heart over a silly twopence. But—" And then she jumped. "Oh, my goodness, Babs dear, I almost forgot. The skating rink. Is that what you've come to see me about?"

"Yes, we're late, you know," Babs said, and perhaps wondered for a fleeting second that if that was in the foreground of Faith's mind why she had not thought of it before. "The rest have gone," she explained. "But we're due to follow by the next bus."

"Oh dear, I'm most frightfully sorry!" Faith gasped. "I had completely forgotten all about it. My dears, please do forgive me," she added flusteredly to her kiddie admirers, "but I've just got to run away."

And Faith, flashing a tender smile around, hurried with Babs from the room. In the cloak-room they donned their hats and coats.

Briskly they made their way towards the gates—just in comfortable time to catch the next bus as it came along. Together they climbed on it. Faith, despite Babs' protestations, tendered the fares.

"No, Babs dear, do let me," she insisted. "You know I love doing little things for you. And—and," she added hesitantly, "it's really so nice to be alone with you, Babs. One can hardly get a word in edgewise with all the chums you have so constantly flocking around you. It must be lovely to be as popular as you are," she added.

Babs smiled.
"Well, it also has its drawbacks," she said.

Faith gave a little sigh.
"I only wish," she said wistfully, "that I was as popular, Babs. But, of course, you've been at the school a long time, haven't you, and you're captain of the Lower School and all that—quite an important person in the school? How does it feel to be a captain, Babs?"

"A bit of a worry at times," Babs said.



NOBODY saw how it happened. One moment Mabs and Faith were skating together, the next—Mab was skidding wildly, falling to the ice. What had caused the accident?

"But it is lovely, isn't it? It must be," Faith murmured. "And your friends, Barbara—how I love them all—Clara and Leila and Mabs and all the rest of them. Mabs," she added, "she's frightfully keen on you, isn't she, Babs?"

Babs flushed a little.

"Well, we've been friends for years," she said.

"A nice girl," Faith mused. "Quite nice. But, of course, she hasn't got as much character as you have, has she, Barbara dear? And—and—of course, I'm not saying anything against her, but you don't mind me talking, do you, darling? Mabs is just a weeny bit conceited, isn't she?"

Babs looked at her quickly.

"Well, I've never noticed it," she said. "What makes you say that?"

"Oh, I don't know! Just—just things," Faith said vaguely. She smiled disarmingly. "It's just an impression I've got, I suppose," she said. "But the way she fusses about with her hair, for instance. I suppose you've not noticed it, being her friend."

Babs felt a sensation of chilliness.

"Of course, her hair is lovely," Faith guilelessly went on. "But it's not so marvellous as all that, is it? You know, Barbara, I don't quite like that glittering golden hair—I much prefer the dull gold of my own hair—though, of course, I'm not a bit conceited about it. I'm sure Mabs must get it touched up at the hairdresser's—"

"Mabs does not," Babs said, and said it a little shortly, conscious that she was beginning to feel restless and very, very sorry indeed all at once that the bus had another quarter of an hour to travel before it would reach its destination. "Oh, please don't let us talk about Mabs!" she added.

Faith bit her lip.

"Oh, Babs dear, you—you're not cross with me?" she faltered.

"No," Babs said shortly.

There was silence, during which Babs, rather red and uncomfortable, stared through the window. Then Faith said: "Babs—has Bessie gone on with the rest?"

"Yes," Babs said.

"Oh!" Faith said.

"Why?"

"Oh, nun-nothing," Faith replied. "But I was just wondering, you know. I didn't think Bessie could skate. She's such an awful duffer, really. No offence, of course," she added, "but I do sometimes wonder, Babs darling, what a girl like you can see in such a fat frump as Bessie Bunter—"

Babs breathed a little hard.

"What's wrong with Bessie?" she demanded.

"Oh, I don't know! I suppose she's all right, but—but—oh, well, she's such an idiot for one thing, and—and so awfully greedy, you know. And she's so vain and conceited—as if she has anything to be vain and conceited about!"

Babs shifted restlessly. She felt herself on pins and needles suddenly. Did Faith realise that she was gossiping in the most harmful way against her friends?

"Well, perhaps it's the very fact that Bessie realises she's got nothing to be conceited about that she does affect conceit," she said. "Anyway, there's not a scrap of harm in her conceit. And she isn't greedy, really. After all, she is rather a fat girl, and I suppose she feels the need of extra food to keep up her strength. But please, Faith, don't talk about her—or Mabs. They're both awfully good chums of mine."

Faith bit her lip.

"Oh, Barbara darling, I'm so sorry," she said contritely. "Please, dear,

don't be offended: I—I really don't mean anything—you do know that, don't you? Of course, I simply love Bessie, and as for sweet Mabs—well, I just adore her, you know. I—I'd rather bite my tongue out than say a wrong word against either of them. Please, Babs dear—"

And she laid her slim hand upon Babs' arm. "Don't be annoyed with your little Faith."

Babs heaved a breath. Well, of course, she was just being churlish, she told herself. Of course, Faith did not mean anything—she was just idly gossiping.

Silly of her to lose her patience like that. Silly of her, even for a moment, to feel that Faith was just being a weeny bit mischief-making. And yet—and yet—

Fortunately the bus came to a halt then, and Babs, with an inward sigh of relief, saw Courtfield was reached.

"Nearly there," she said. "The next stop is at the market cross, and there we get out. Got your skates, Faith?"

"Oh, yes, Barbara—here!"

"Good enough," Babs laughed. "Did you do much skating in Canada?"

"Oh, yes; quite a bit!" Faith said. "Our winters over there are very severe, you know, and, of course, we've got ice rinks the same as you have here. I've never broken any records, but last year I won a competition for figure skating."

"Oh, good for you!" Babs said. "Mabs did, too, you know—at this very same ice rink. Mabs isn't a fast skater, but she's miles and away the most dainty thing you ever saw on ice. But here we are," she added. "The cross at last. Come on, Faith!"

She jumped up from her seat, missing the strange look in Faith's eyes as she made that last announcement. Out of the bus they both hurried, diving across the road towards the great new ice rink.

Smilingly Babs insisted on paying the admission money, and, leaving their hats and coats in the cloak-room, they stepped into the rink itself.

"Oh, I say!" Faith cried, and her eyes sparkled. "What fun! Look at Bessie!"

Bessie was there, so were the rest of the Cliff House party. Several other girls who had not been among Clara's party were on the ice as well, among them Brenda Fallace, Bridget O'Toole, Sylvia Sirrett, Margot Lantham, Joan Charmant, Lydia Crossendale, Frances Frost, Gwen Cook, the Hon. Beatrice Beverley, and Henrietta Winchester—all girls from the Fourth Form.

Bessie, at the moment executing a species of zigzag across the slippery floor, had just brought up against the barricading with a breathless crash.

"Hallo, Babs!" Clara sang. "Whoopee!" And swiftly she skated towards the two. "I say, come on!" she cried. "Mr. Holland is here."

"Mr. Holland?" Faith asked. "Who is he?"

"He's the man who's running the carnival next Saturday. No end of a big wig," Clara said. "He's got his daughter Helen with him, too. Nice girl. Look!" And she nodded upward towards the balcony, where Mr. Holland, fat and beaming, sat with a slim girl, whose brown face suggested she had just returned from a tropical holiday. "They're watching us," Clara said in a thrilled whisper. "And guess why?"

"No?" Babs asked, adjusting her skates.

"Because," Clara said, "Mr. Holland is going to select a carnival queen for next Saturday. He's got his eyes on Mabs, I think. But come on."

Faith, with a gay laugh and a wave of her hand, skated away. Babs watched her as she expertly threaded her way through the other skaters, and there came into her eyes a look of admiration.

Certainly Faith could skate—and certainly with her bewitchingly pretty face and her golden hair she made an arresting picture on the ice.

She looked up at Mr. Holland and his daughter. She saw her smile at them. She saw the big store-owner suddenly bend and whisper something to his daughter, and then she saw his eyes go back to Mabs, who at that moment swooped towards Babs.

"Oh, Babs, here you are!" she breathed. "And, I say, have you heard?"

"About the carnival queen?" Babs guessed.

"Yes."

"Yes, I've heard. Clara tells me that you're in the running," Babs said. "Oh, Mabs, I do hope they select you! But, I say, look at Faith!" she added breathlessly.

Mabs turned. They both looked at Faith. Most of the other girls there were looking at her, too, then. For Faith, dead in the centre of the hall, was cutting the most entrancing capers.

No doubt that she could skate. No doubt that she cut an attractively dainty figure on the ice with her slim form and her laughing, child-like face, which seemed to be just radiating her joy of every moment.

Now she was doing the figure eight—and doing it perfectly.

Mabs' eyes sparkled.

"Oh, Babs, what a lovely skater she is!"

There was a ripple of handclapping. Faith, as if surprised, turned and blushed.

Then out on to the rink sailed Mabs. Like a fairy she sped across the floor. Before the rosy-cheeked Faith she skated, a glow of admiration in her eyes.

"Oh, Faith, that was marvellous!" she said. "Can you do the loop?"

"Why, yes!" Faith laughed. "And the triple three. But, Mabs, what about partners?" she asked. "Arm-in-arm. Let's try to do the—er—rose together, shall we?"

"Oh, let's!" Mabs cried delightedly.

Mr. Holland and his daughter Helen leant forward from their box, their eyes aglow as they watched the two figures.

As if by common consent, everybody had stopped. The rose was, perhaps, one of the most difficult of feats to perform solo. But how much more difficult with partners, when the timing of one depended to a fraction of a second upon the timing of the other!

Like two fairies Mabs and Faith whirled in and out, every movement a poem of grace.

Even Lydia Crossendale, who had never been known to voice a word in favour of one of the famous Co., was heard to remark:

"Phew! What skating!"

What skating, indeed! And what a volley of handclapping went up when, the rose completed, Mabs and Faith laughingly and blushing bowed.

And then in the box a voice cried out, and Mr. Holland, waving an excited hand, called down:

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Please, everybody!" And with a rush

he disappeared, to emerge on to the floor, accompanied by his smiling daughter, a few seconds later. He beamed at Mabs and Faith.

"Good!" he said. "Excellent! You know I want a queen for the carnival?" Mabs' eyes shone. Faith looked breathless.

"Well, I'm going to make one of you girls the queen if you'd like it," he answered. "But before I do so I want to see you both skate again. Ladies and gentlemen, please help me to judge. Miss Lynn, you first, I think. Let me see what you can do."

And Mabs, thrilling, her face fiery red, waltzed out as the music struck up.

Could She be Trusted?



"WELL, I don't know. I'm bothered if I know!" Mr. Holland said perplexedly, half an hour later. "Helen, what do you say?"

Helen Holland shook her dark head. "I'm sure, father, I don't know what to say," she said perplexedly. "I—I suppose we can't have two carnival queens? Mabel and Faith both seem to fulfil all requirements to me."

It was half an hour later. It was in many respects the most interesting and thrilling half an hour which the Cliff House girls had ever spent at the Courtfield Ice Rink.

First Mabs had gone through her turns. Then Faith. Then Mabs again; then Faith again. But it was obvious from the outset that there was not a pin to choose between the two.

The producer shook his head. "Well, well!" he said. "No, Helen, we can't have two queens. One of these girls is going to be queen, but which one, I'm dashed if I can make up my mind. You're sure you have no preference?"

"Not even the weeniest one," Helen laughed.

Faith shook her head. Her big eyes were very wide, and most innocently appealing.

"Please, Mr. Holland," she said. "please choose Mabs. I really think Mabs is just a shade better than I am. And—and she's ever so much prettier."

A murmur of admiration, mingled with some protesting "No, no, no's," went up.

Mabs turned pink as she shook her head. But Babs, smiling, became aware that that smile froze on her face. Faith, with all the apparent sincerity in the world, hastened to press her advantage.

"Yes, please, Mr. Holland! I'm sure," she said earnestly, "that Mabs would make ever so much better a carnival queen than I should. Please, do select her. Besides, everybody knows her to be much better, and—and besides, she's got such awfully pretty hair," she added innocently, as though that childish contention clinched the case.

At which, from all, save Babs, there was a laugh. But Babs, remembering with renewed vividness this same girl's remark about Mabs' hair, in the bus, was staring at her as if she could hardly believe her ears.

Was this earnestly pleading Faith the same girl who had passed that remark? Could she be such a two-faced little hypocrite as to say two such utterly different things in the short space of an hour? Or was—

But Mabs was shaking her glistening golden head.

"No," she demurred, "that's not fair.

Let us be judged on our merits, Mr. Holland. In any case, it's untrue. Faith is prettier than I am."

"Giggle-giggle!" tittered Lydia Crossendale. "Aren't we all being just too—too modest? Oh, sorry Freckles"—as she caught a look from Henrietta Winchester. "I forgot Mabs was a pal of yours."

"I'm sorry!" Mr. Holland fingered his chin. "The best thing we can do is to postpone the decision," he said. "Obviously, we shan't get anywhere now. Leave it until later in the week. Meantime, however, I'd like you both to know that, providing your headmistress, Miss Primrose, has no objection, one of you most certainly will get

fear of such a sweet, unselfish rival as Faith appeared to be.

Though, naturally, Mabs did want to be the queen. What girl would not crave that honour?

And so they all went back to Cliff House to tea. In the study shared by Babs, Mabs, and Bessie—Study No. 4—there came the second surprise of that afternoon. That was during tea, with Faith, Clara, and Marjorie Hazeldene as guests, when Boko, the cheery page-boy of the school, popped his head in at the door.

"Letter for you, Miss Lynn!" he said. "It's the only one for the Fourth by the afternoon delivery, so I thought I'd better bring it up right away."



BABS looked up from the letter. "Remember, Faith," she said, "not a word to Helen about Mabs' ankle." Faith's eyes widened. "Oh, Babs, as if I would!" she exclaimed. "Of course not. Aren't I as anxious as you that dear Mabs shall be queen of the carnival?"

the post. Sorry to have interrupted, everybody! Get on with the show!"

But there was little getting on with the show after that. For at once both Faith and Mabs were surrounded. The Cliff House party, of course, was enormously proud of them both, enormously admiring of Faith, who had done so much to try to get Mabs the position.

Mabs herself was particularly touched. Very warm was the smile she had for Faith.

"It was sweet of you!" she breathed. "And I just want you to know how I do appreciate it, Faith. You jolly well deserve to be the queen, if only for your unselfishness."

"Dear, dear, Mabel," Faith sighed, "I do so hope you get it, even though we are, in a sense, rivals for the honour now."

At which Mabs laughed. She had no

"Thank you, Boker!" Mabs said. "That's very thoughtful of you."

"A pleasure, Miss!" Boker grinned, and with an admiring glance at Faith, slipped out of the room, while Mabs, gazing at the superscription, gave a little cry of glad surprise.

"From daddy!" she cried. "Excuse me a minute, will you, girls, while I read it?"

"Permission granted!" Clara said. "Bessie, pass the crumpets!"

"Oh, my goodness!" Mabs cried suddenly.

"Mabs, it's not bad news, dear?" Faith asked, in alarm.

"No!" Mabs laughed. "Listen to this! Daddy writes to say that he is attending the Courtfield ice carnival and—"

"No!" Babs cried.

"Yes! Oh, well, of course, I wrote and told him, in my last letter, that the

carnival was due to take place next Saturday. But, apparently, it's given him an idea. You know that daddy has just written the lyrics for a new ice ballet?"

"Yes," Marjorie said eagerly.

They all knew, of course, that Major Arnold Lynn was a famous playwright.

"Well, Mr. Selsey, the famous London producer, is putting it on. They're going to give it a week's try-out at the Courtfield Grand first, but there's a difficulty at the moment—that of juvenile lead. Well, daddy's got a perfectly scrumptious notion. He's bringing Mr. Selsey to see the ice carnival, with the idea of selecting the juvenile lead from that."

"Oh, I say!" gasped Faith. "No, Mabs, is that really true? Then—then—oh, Mabs, you'd love to play that lead, wouldn't you?"

Mabs' face shone rosy and red. How her eyes, in that moment, sparkled. Wouldn't she love to? Just wouldn't she! To act in her own father's ballet—to act at the Courtfield Grand Theatre!

Every fibre of the actress in her—and Mabs was really an accomplished actress—quivered at such a prospect.

"Goodness, I—I'd give a year's pocket-money!" she cried.

"Then," said Faith, "that just settles it, everybody. There can be no more talk of anybody but Mabs being the carnival queen now. Mabs, you've just got to take that part, and I do so hope," Faith went on fervently, "that you're selected to play the juvenile lead. Girls, we've all got to back up darling Mabel for all we're worth!"

"But, Faith," Mabs protested, "your own chance—"

"I don't care, Mabs!"

"Well, I must say that's jolly sporting," Clara said.

It was. And the way Faith said it! How glowingly earnest and enthusiastic her face, how shining her eyes!

Babs, glancing at her at that moment, felt ashamed of herself. How was it possible to believe that this girl was two-faced when she spoke like that and acted with such immediate good will. She was a sport!

"And to-morrow," Faith said excitedly, "we'll have a practice on the ice. Mabs. To-morrow—"

And she looked up then as there came a knock on the door and smiling Lady Patricia Northanson, the popular prefect of the Sixth Form, looked in.

"All right, don't mind me!" she said jovially. "Barbara you're wanted on the phone. Girl named Helen Holland."

"Oh, the daughter of the producer!" Faith cried. "Hurry, Babs, and see what it is."

Babs rose. With a "won't be long!" she quitted the study. Lady Pat smiled and nodded, and closed the door. In a few moments Babs was back again, however.

"It was Helen, all right!" she announced excitedly. "She says she wants to see me. Her father has got permission from Miss Primrose for Mabs or Faith to appear in the carnival. Isn't it grand? And she wants me to take both your measurements—something about a costume, I gather."

"Well, that's easy," Faith said. "Just take Mabs' measurements. Anyway, Babs, I'll come with you if you'll have me. I'd just like to make it clear to Helen that I'm not in it, you know."

"But, Faith, you're sure you don't mind?" Mabs asked.

"Mind? Oh, Mabs, my dear, if you don't become carnival queen I should just feel like weeping," Faith said.

"Really and truly I'm more excited than if it was me."

The chums shook their heads. What an extraordinarily unselfish girl! Only Bessie blinked, and only Bessie was silent. But Bessie always was in Faith Ashton's company.

After tea, while Bessie and Marjorie cleared away, Mabs, almost trembling with excitement, stood for her measurements, which Babs most painstakingly took. Faith simpered, and exclaimed:

"Why, Mabs, your measurements are almost the same as mine!"

Off, then, went Babs to ask Dulcia Fairbrother for a pass out, while Faith, with a dimpling smile at Mabs, rushed off to the cloak-room to get her own and Babs' things. In another few minutes, the passes having been readily granted, they were ready.

But unusually silent was Faith on the bus going to Courtfield.

Silent, too, was Babs, who found herself with much to think over. Not more than a dozen words passed between them, indeed, until the market cross was reached and they stepped off the bus. Then outside the ice rink Faith paused.

"Oh, Babs darling—" she said.

"Yes?" Babs asked.

"About—about my speaking to Helen. You wouldn't mind, would you, dear, if I spoke to her alone? I—I've got an idea that—that I may impress her more without an audience. And, Babs, we do so want Mabs to get the job, don't we?"

Babs smiled, though she gave her a sharp look as she rang the apartment bell next door to the rink.

"Why, of course!" she said. "Just do as you like, old thing."

The door opened. It was Helen herself who appeared. She gave a glad little exclamation at sight of them.

"Oh, please do come in!" she cried. "It's lovely of you to answer so promptly. And— Oh, I'm in the dickens of a mess!" she added, as she pushed open a door and led them into a snugly furnished sitting-room. "Daddy's been called away."

Babs blinked.

"You mean—"

"Oh, it's nothing serious! Business, of course!" Helen pouted. "He's gone up to Leeds, or somewhere, and won't be back until the end of the week. So if you please," she added, with mock tragedy, "I've got to see, in the meantime, to all preparations for the carnival. He's left everything in my hands."

"Oh, my goodness!" Faith breathed. "Then—then you'll be left to select the carnival queen?"

Helen shook her head.

"Not exactly," she said. "I expect father will be back before then. But just to make sure, you know, he's asked me to order the costume and so on—and order one, if you please, which might fit either Mabel or you, Faith? But that shouldn't be hard," she added, studying Faith. "You're both much of a size, aren't you? In the meantime, I'm to try to make up my mind for him as to which of you to choose."

Babs laughed.

"Seems you've got a big job," she said. "But if there's anything we can do to help—well, please don't hesitate to call upon us. But here are Mabs' measurements, and if you like I'll take Faith's now. Not," she added, smiling towards her cousin, "that Faith herself is so very keen on becoming queen now, are you, Faith?"

Faith flushed a little. Helen stared.

"No?" she asked.

"Well," Faith said, and paused a little as she flashed a look towards Babs. "Well, n-never mind that now," she

added hurriedly. "I—I want to speak to you about that afterwards, Helen—privately, if you don't mind, dear. Babs, will you take my measurements?"

Babs gazed at her, a little puzzled by her cousin's failure to respond to her hint.

And certainly, in spite of all that she had said, Faith seemed very keenly eager to have her measurements taken. Already she was standing up, almost dancing on tiptoe in excitement. Helen laughed to see her. Babs, hardly knowing whether to be pleased or puzzled, produced the tape measure she had brought with her.

Swiftly, accurately, she measured Faith, with Helen Holland noting the different sizes.

"Practically the same as Mabs," Babs said finally, "except that you're just a tiny, weeny bit bigger, Faith. Mabs is an inch smaller in the waist, you know."

"Dear, darling Mabs, she is so dainty," Faith simpered. "But it is lucky, isn't it, because you know it doesn't matter who the dress is made for—it will just fit both of us. Now, Helen dear, would you mind if I had a little talk to you alone?"

Helen looked a little surprised.

"But, Barbara—"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Babs, and gave an easy little shrug.

"Barbara, dear thing, knows exactly what I'm going to talk about," Faith said, with a smile at her cousin. "But—well, I feel I'll be able to tell you better if I speak to you on my own. Barbara doesn't mind—do you, Barbara dear? Shall we go, Helen?" she added.

She smiled radiantly at Babs, and, with Helen, passed into the next room. Babs sat down.

Funny Faith! Queer that feeling she gave her, of so utterly liking her one minute, of so distrusting her the next. Queer, too, if Faith had made up her mind that Mabs should have the queen of the carnival part, why she should have been so excited concerning her own measurements. Why couldn't she have said at once: "But, Helen, I want Mabs to have the part, so why should you bother to measure me?"

Babs frowned. She felt those uneasy, uncomfortable suspicions pulsing within her once again. And yet—was she right?

Faith, adorable and sweet as she was, was rather fond of fussing over everything. Getting her measurements taken and all that sort of thing might only be an outlet for that instinct.

And then Babs started as she heard Faith's voice. Apparently the door of the next room had swayed open slightly in a draught, for faintly but quite clearly her cousin's words came:

"Helen, yes, of course I want to be the queen. But, of course, my dear, I shouldn't dream of influencing you in any way. Mabs, after all, is such a nice girl, though frankly I don't think she'd fit the part as well as I should— But naturally, dear, it is for you to decide, and I know, Helen darling, that you will do what is for the best. I don't want to push myself forward, but—"

The voice dropped. But Babs had heard, and Babs, hearing in shocked, startled amazement, felt the blood rush to her cheeks in anger.

So that was Faith's game, was it? That was why Faith had really wanted this interview in private? She was not pleading for Mabs. She was just trying to influence Helen on her own behalf!

It really did seem that her cousin was that two-faced hypocrite which Babs, in her more suspicious moments, had thought her to be!

Accident on the Ice!



BUT Babs, if her attitude betrayed just the slightest coolness towards Faith on the return journey to the school, said nothing. She did not feel that she could say anything, though there was a definite doubt, now, in her mind.

The few words she had overheard might, of course, have been capable of misinterpretation; in any case, they had not been intended for her ears.

Not, to be sure, that Faith gave any further cause for suspicion when she arrived back at school. If anything, the girl from Canada was more gushingly enthusiastic over Mabs' chances than she had been before, announcing they had all got to back up Mabs to the final ditch, and for a start they would all have skating practice next morning.

Bewildering this Faith, so utterly enthusiastic, so terrifically sincere. What could a girl make of her?

And in the morning Faith was the first up. It was she who roused Mabs. She, who, bubbling with high spirits, got together the party that was to skate on the River Fallsweir.

Half an hour before rising-bell that party—consisting of Faith, Mabs, Babs, Clara, Leila Carroll, and Jean Cartwright—was ready.

Bessie, invited by Babs, blinked pathetically.

"Oh, Bib-Babs, you dud-don't mind, do you?" she said. "But I—I'd rather not. It—it's cold."

Cold it was, though Babs, staring at her fat chum, wondered if that was Bessie's real reason for refusal. She noticed how Bessie kept her eyes upon the excited Faith as she said it, and, though she could guess the inner reason, she did not press the point, but, with a smiling nod at her plump chum, left the room with the others.

Keen, biting the air when they reached the river. Thick and frost-laden with ice, with the willow-trees weighted down with shimmering frost-crystals. Not a morning for standing about, surely, and, in less time than it takes to tell, they had all discarded their own shoes and had donned skating-boots.

Faith, with a merry laugh, was the first to skate out.

"Lovely!" she enthused. "Come on, girls, let's have a race!"

"In pairs!" Clara exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, that's topping!" Faith laughed. "Mabs, you partner me, will you?"

And off in a body they went. Slip-slap, tick-tack, skating up the river.

Babs and Clara won the race, with Mabs and Faith a good second. And then, splitting up, they all went skating solo. Faith, however, still hung on to Mabs.

"Oh, Mabs," she cried, "let's try the loop together. I really think the loop is the most difficult figure to pair up on, don't you?"

Mabs did. But Mabs, in her present exhilarated frame of mind, was willing to try anything. She had complete confidence and trust in Faith. Willingly she took her hand as she skated towards her.

One of the most difficult of skating movements was the loop, practically all edge-skating and quick recoveries in balancing. Solo it was difficult. With a partner it was doubly difficult; but Mabs, filled with the conquering spirit, never even thought about it.

Bliethly she grasped Faith's hand,



"OH, Barbara," Faith cried brokenly. "Oh, how can—how can you say such dreadful things about me? Say that you didn't mean them." But Babs was unmoved. She knew her cousin was acting, knew now that Faith was not to be trusted.

blithely they started off. Babs & Co. paused.

"Gee! I say, gaze at them!" Leila breathed.

The whole party stopped and gazed. And certainly it was worth watching. In a perfect curl the two swept forward, overbalancing, recovering, in exquisite time, changing feet as the first loop was completed. Then on to the second curl.

"Oh, ripping!" Clara called. "Keep it—"

"Mabs!" shrieked Babs.

It all happened in a twinkling, and nobody really saw how it happened.

To Babs it appeared that Faith and Mabs mistimed, just the fraction of a second, and collided against each other.

But one moment there was Mabs marvellously skating. The next there was Mabs reeling away, Faith flinging her arms wildly in the air to retain her balance. And then came a crash and a bump.

And there was Mabs sprawled on the ice, supporting herself upon her hands, a look of excruciating agony on her face.

Faith, recovering, rushed towards her.

"Mabs! Mabs, darling!" she panted. "Oh, Mabs, what has happened? Mabs, dear, tell me—you're not hurt?" she cried wildly.

"My—my ankle!" Mabs gasped, biting her lip. "Oh dear, it—it turned under me. I—I—Babs!" she cried, as that girl, all anxiety, skated swiftly towards her.

"Mabs, you're all right?" Babs asked.

"Y-yes. I think so." But it was obvious, by the white and tortured expression on Mabel Lynn's face, that she was anything but. "I—I—" she gasped a little. "Oh dear, my—my ankle feels as if it's on fire. Babs, give me a hand, will you?"

"No, please let me," Faith said.

She stretched her arm forward. But Babs, to her surprise—and her own—pushed her, not very gently, out of the way. Faith, with a hurt look in her eyes, fell back.

"Now, Mabs, lean on me," Babs gasped. "Oh, my goodness. All right, heave yourself up—there! There, that's all right. But, oh dear!" she gasped, as Mabs, lowering her injured foot, gave a groan and slumped forward again.

"Mabs, dear! I—I'm frightfully sorry," Faith almost wept.

Mabs smiled strainedly. Babs had caught her by one arm now, Clara by the other. The skating-party got her back to the bank, and there, Mabs was made to sit down in the snow. In a twinkling Babs had her boot off.

"H'm!" she said, and shook her head anxiously. "Sprained! Mabs, I'm afraid this is the end of skating for this morning. Come on, let's help her back to the study, girls."

"Oh dear, it—it won't prevent her from being queen of the carnival, will it?" Faith gasped.

Babs eyed her. Funny that should be the first thought to spring to her cousin's mind.

"I don't know!" she said shortly, and Faith, snubbed, bit her lip. "Jean, give me a hand, will you? Mabs, don't

use the foot more than you can help, old thing. Clara, would you mind cutting along to your study and asking Marjorie to come along? Cheer up, Mabs, we'll soon have it right!"

Clara, with a nod, darted off. Babs and Jean, between them, supported the heavily leaning Mabs, and the procession began its journey schoolwards. Faith, bringing up the rear with Leila, anxiously shook her head.

"Oh dear, I—I do hope it's nothing serious," she quavered. "Leila, you don't think she'll come to any harm?"

"Not she," the American junior said confidently. "Not with old Marjorie and Babs to look after her. Marjorie Hazeldene is an expert nurse, I guess, and what Marjorie doesn't know, Babs does!"

"But, Leila, you don't think Babs can—can possibly have the idea it was my fault—"

"Oh, stuff!" Leila cried. "Sure, Babs doesn't blame you. Nobody blames you. Just an accident, pure and simple. I guess Babs was feeling cut-up some, 'cos why? 'Cos Mabs is her very best friend."

Faith breathed in relief. Peculiar, indeed, was the expression which crossed her pretty face in that moment.

And so the party made its way slowly back to the school.

Clara, as good as her word, had roused Marjorie Hazeldene, and Marjorie, resourcefully practical as ever, had equipped herself with her first-aid box and a supply of hot water.

In an anxious group they gathered round in Study No. 4 as Mabs was lowered on to the settee and the swollen ankle exposed to view. Sweet-faced Marjorie Hazeldene nodded.

"Hot fomentations!" she said. "Babs, dear, give me the sponge, will you? Pretty bad," she said, shaking her head, "but not so serious as it might have been. Babs, would you mind asking the matron to come along? It looks to me as if Mabs will have to rest up from lessons this morning!"

"But—but she'll be all right for the carnival?" Faith asked anxiously.

"Oh, I should think so!" Marjorie said. "Yes! Though, of course, she mustn't use the ankle for a little while. Nasty little swelling!" she added sympathetically. "It must have given you an awful turn, Mabs. Now, this is going to be rather hot, dear."

They gathered round, while Marjorie, her sweet face very earnest, administered the fomentations. Presently Mrs. Thwaites came along, with Babs in tow. She nodded as she inspected Marjorie's work.

"Very good, Marjorie. That's the right thing to do," she said. "Rather a nasty place, though! And, of course, Mabel must rest. Make the bandage tight when you've finished the fomentations, Marjorie. Meantime, I'll see Miss Charmant."

And the kindly matron saw the Fourth Form-mistress, and as a result Mabs was excused assembly and morning lessons.

Babs would have liked to be excused them, too—not because she shirked her lessons but because she was filled with most desperate anxiety concerning her chum.

All through morning lessons, Babs found herself thinking of Mabs. Found herself once again visualising the accident which had caused it. What, really, had happened? Was it an accident, or— But no! And Babs, to Miss Charmant's wonder, blushed red as she caught herself thinking that thought, and for some reason glanced towards Faith beside her.

But Faith's angelic face was serene and untroubled. Certainly, it seemed, Faith had nothing on her conscience.

Morning lessons over, Babs rushed at once to Study No. 4. Mabs, her foot resting on a stool, smiled brightly.

"Oh, it's ever so much better!" she replied, in answer to her chum's anxious inquiry. "I really do feel, you know, that I can hobble about on it. But I mustn't, of course—"

"I should say not," Faith said, coming into the study at that moment. "Oh, Mabs, my darling, I'd rather have cut off my right hand than you should be crooked like this! You're sure you'll be all right for the carnival?"

"Well, I don't see why I shouldn't," Mabs said. "I can sort of feel it getting better, you know. But silly old Faith. Don't look so worried about it. It wasn't your fault."

"Oh, Mabs, it's so sweet of you to say that!" Faith simpered. "I—I've been worrying like anything all the morning. I could hardly sit still in class wondering how you were getting on. I—" And then she saw the stare that Babs was treating her to, and hastily broke off. "But, of course," she added, "not one of us must say anything to Helen Holland about this."

"Well, who was suggesting that anyone should?" Babs asked.

"Oh—oh, nobody, of—of course." Faith gave a jerky little laugh. "How you do take me up, Barbara, just—just as if you suddenly didn't like me. Mabs, I do believe, you know, that Barbara thinks I pushed you, or something."

"Oh, don't be silly!" Babs said in gruff embarrassment.

"But, Barbara darling, you do still like me?" Faith asked, with yearning wistfulness.

"Oh, goodness, aren't you a child!" Babs exclaimed. "Hallo—yes, come in," she called, as a knock sounded on the door. "Oh, is that for me, Boker?" she asked, as the cheery page-boy came in carrying a postcard.

"Yes, Miss Redfern." Babs took it with a beaming nod of thanks. A look of consternation came to her face as she read it, however.

"Helen is coming here this afternoon!" she said. "She says she's bringing the carnival costume so that any alterations can be made if it doesn't quite fit. Oh, my hat—"

Mabs looked anxious.

"You mean she—she'll see my ankle!" "But she mustn't," Babs said. "If there's any doubt about you being fit for the carnival, you might lose your chance." She flung a swift look towards Faith, surprising a rather queer expression on her face. "Now," she cried, "we can't have that. Mabs, we'll have to get you out of the way."

Mabs bit her lip.

"But, Babs, supposing—" "Stuff to supposing! We're going to get that ankle right," Babs said with swift decision. "At the same time, though, there's no necessity for alarming Helen. Mabs, look here, you go into Study No. 7. Leave me to make the excuses. And, Faith—"

"Oh, yes, Babs?" "Remember, not a word to Helen about Mabs' ankle."

"Oh, Babs, as if I would!" Faith said injuredly. "Of course not! Aren't I as anxious as you that dear Mabs shall be queen of the carnival?"

And so that was settled. Babs passed the news around. And so immediately after afternoon lessons—Mabs, who was so sufficiently recovered that she could hobble about—limped into Study No. 7, and Babs, Clara, Leila, and Jean awaited the arrival of the expected

visitor in Study No. 4. Then all at once Babs frowned.

"Where's Faith?" "Keeping out of the way," Jean Cartwright suggested. "She's frightfully cut-up about this injury to Mabs. I haven't seen her since class."

"But I have," Leila said. "I guess it was just about ten minutes ago. I was looking in the letter-rack, and Faith came charging past me. She must have gone—"

The door opened, and a smiling, angelic face peered in.

"Hallo!" Faith said brightly. "I say, I've brought Helen along, you know. Nobody ever thought of going down to the gates to meet her—as if the poor girl knew her way about the school! Here we are, Helen dear," she added. "This is Study No. 4, and here are darling Babs and her friends all waiting to meet you. Come in," she added.

Helen Holland, her face all smiles, came in, breathlessly dumping a heavy parcel on the settee. She beamed.

"Hallo, girls! I say, isn't this jolly!" she laughed. "But where's Mabs?"

"Oh, hum—Mabs," Babs said. "Well, as a matter of fact, Mabs is not here. You see, she's visiting some friends—" Which was perfectly true, considering that Mabs at that moment was having tea with Bessie Bunter, Janet Jordan, and Marjorie Hazeldene in Study No. 7.

"What? You mean to say she's well again?" Helen asked in surprise.

Babs blinked.

"Well? I don't quite follow—"

"Well, hasn't she hurt her ankle rather badly?" And Helen stared as she saw the expression of consternation on the four faces which confronted her, and then turned with a gasp as Faith, suddenly puffing up a cushion on the settee, caught her arm and jerked her towards it. "I really understood—"

"There, there, Helen dear," Faith said hurriedly. "Sit there. Now, isn't that just comfy?" she beamed. "Do please make yourself at home. And please do stay and have some tea with us, because we're just going to prepare it! Aren't we, Babs?" she added brightly, and there stopped, her pretty face suddenly suffusing with crimson colour.

For Babs, with one bitter, contemptuous glance, had turned her head deliberately away.

For Babs, at least, was not deceived. She began to see all at once why Faith had been so anxious to receive Helen away from her chums. She knew then, as surely as if she'd been told, where Helen Holland had received the information the whole Co. were pledged not to divulge.

She needed no telling now that her suspicions were true. Faith Ashton was two-faced! And not only two-faced, but a traitor to the very girl for whom she professed such anxiety and friendship.

The Mask Falls!



"NO, no, I won't stay to tea," Helen Holland was saying. "I only

looked in to leave the costume so that it could be tried on. I've just got to get back—truly. But, Barbara, you are sure that Mabs will be all right for the carnival if called upon?"

"Quite sure," Babs replied. "Then give her my love," Helen said. "And I'm so relieved, Babs. Good-night! Oh, Faith, are you coming with me to the gates?"

"Yes, please," Faith agreed hurriedly. "You don't mind, Babs?"

Babs, however, did not reply. She was looking rather grim, almost fierce. Faith, with that childishly disarming smile of hers, hastily followed the visitor out, shutting the door softly to behind her. Leila blinked.

"Now how," she breathed, "did Helen hear about Mabs? I sure guess it beats everything the way news travels. Somebody gave Mabs away."

"'Fraid so," Jean Cartwright remarked glumly. "At the same time, though, perhaps it isn't surprising. It wouldn't be one of us, of course, but not everybody's pledged to secrecy. I expect Helen met some thoughtless duffer who blurted it out."

Still Babs did not say anything. Babs, at least, didn't think that. Faith had made it her own express business to meet Helen at the gates. That meant that Helen had been in her charge from the moment she entered the school. Hardly likely, in that event, she would have spoken to anyone else!

All those unpleasant doubts against which she had fought were beginning now to crystallise in her mind. She was beginning to understand at last what had prompted that instinctive dislike which was so upsetting good-natured old Bessie, and causing her to avoid her cousin from Canada on every possible occasion.

Her lips curled a little as she thought of the girl's deceitfulness. What a colossal traitor her cousin was! But how utterly artful, how cunningly clever, with all her subtle subterfuges and her ingratiating insincerities!

Right until this very moment she had, with her honeyed words and her sweet little actions, completely deceived Babs herself. But the scales had fallen from her eyes now.

Well, let her wait, that's all!

She said nothing when Faith, glancing at her quickly, came back. She said nothing when Mabs, assisted by Janet Jordan and Marjorie Hazeldene, came back into the study for tea.

She said nothing during the meal, nor did she make any comment until the meal was cleared away. Then she said, looking directly at Faith, and with a sort of challenge in her look:

"Faith, would you mind remaining behind a moment or two? There's something I want to say to you. Mabs, old thing, do you think you can manage to hobble into Study No. 7 again? And Clara, take the dress with you, will you, and let Mabs try it on?"

Faith bit her lip.

"But, Barbara, do let me help dear Mabs."

"Clara and Janet will do that," Babs said.

Clara blinked a little. Mabs, catching that sudden steely, almost commanding inflection in Babs' voice, looked wonderingly from cousin to cousin as she left the room. The door closed behind them.

Nervously Faith bit her lip.

"Oh, Barbara darling, how annoyed you look. I—I haven't done anything to upset you, have I?"—just the right blend of unhappiness and reproach in the expression on her face as she said it.

Yesterday—even this morning—Babs would have been completely deceived by that look. She was vaguely amazed at herself, now, however, to find that it had no longer power to appeal to her.

"Please sit down," she said.

"Oh, Babs dear, you're speaking to me like a mistress!"

"Sit down!" Babs repeated. Her

No. 24 of our delightful series for Your "Cliff House Album."

CLIFF HOUSE CELEBRITIES

JUNE MERRETT is certainly one of the best liked girls in the Fourth Form at Cliff House.

Because of her sense of fun, June generally plays the comic parts in the Junior School's dramatic efforts. Rarely at a loss for a humorous remark or a witty rejoinder, it is usually June whose assistance is sought when searching for lighter moments during the writing of a sketch or a play.

With June's spirit of fun she also combines a spirit of mischief. She used to be very fond of playing pranks, and had among her treasures a perfect compendium of manufactured tricks like faked chocolate, hand-blackening soap, and pencils that collapse in the hand.

The jokes, though the cause of much hilarity, were also the cause of so many "lines" that eventually June had to be strongly warned against trying them out.

June is more attractive, perhaps, than pretty, with her fair hair, her rosy complexion and her lively eyes.

Fond of all outdoor games she is a valuable member of the hockey team and can hold her own in most other sports, though it must be confessed she is not very brilliant in class. She has no hard-and-fast friends, though she has always been a staunch follower and admirer of Babs & Co. with, perhaps, a tendency to be swayed by bolder characters like Rosa Rodworth and Diana Royston-Clarke.

Most of you will remember the sensational manner in which June found her mother working as a cook at Cliff House, but until that time June really believed her mother dead. The person she loves most dearly now is that same mother—which



June Merrett

accounts for the enormous amount of spare time she gives to letter-writing.

Nearly every day June writes to this new-found mother of hers.

June's great hobby is stamp collecting. Her favourite flower is the hyacinth; her favourite colour—pale blue.

Her great ambition is to travel—particularly to South America—though for what reason she does not say.

She is fond of films, with a particular liking for Jean Arthur and Franchot Tone, and with very warm spots in her heart for W. C. Fields and Charles Laughton.

Her home is in Lincolnshire at a house called Crayshaw. Her age is 14 years and 7 months; her position in class, 18.

eyes glimmered. "I'm going to answer your question. I'm not just annoyed with you, Faith—I'm disgusted! Why, after you promised to keep Mabs' injury a secret did you go and blurt it out to Helen?"

"But, Barbara, I didn't!" Faith protested, wide-eyed. "Someone else must have told her. As if," she added, pouting, "I would ever think of such a thing—especially when I'm so keen to see Mabs queen of the ice carnival! Oh, Barbara dear, that is a wicked thing to think!"

Babs remained entirely unmoved. Her lips compressed.

"And why," she pressed, "after making out to everybody that you were throwing over your own chances in the ice carnival, did you practically ask Helen Holland to give you the job?"

"Oh, Babs, I didn't!"

"No?" Babs' lips curled a little. "But you did," she said. "Perhaps you had forgotten that I was sitting in the next room while you were talking to her." She stiffened as Faith, a look now of real fear and sudden fury in her face, tremblingly rose. "Why did you?" she relentlessly pressed.

"You—you spying, interfering cat!" Startlingly the words were hissed. Startling, too, was the livid fury in Faith's face as she swung upon her cousin. "You—you—" she choked, and then stopped abruptly, aware in that moment that she had allowed the mask completely to fall, and shaken, it seemed, by a sudden fit of trembling. "Oh, Barbara!" she cried brokenly. "Oh, Babs, how can—how can you say such dreadful things about me, when—when I love you so much? Babs, say that you didn't mean them!"

Babs eyed her. If there had been contempt in her glance before, the scorn

which shone from her eyes now was immeasurable.

What a hypocrite! And this was her cousin—that girl from Canada whom she had promised her Aunt Felicity to look after and help to settle down!

Disgust filled her. She felt all at once that she could not stop in the same room with her.

While Faith sobbed heartbrokenly, collapsed into an armchair, she herself quiveringly moved towards the door. Faith's voice, brokenly sobbing, came after her as she went out:

"Babs! Babs! Oh, Babs darling, I—"

Shaken, Babs rushed off along the corridor.

What a girl! What a sickening girl! Why, oh, why, had she ever come to Cliff House?

She paused as she reached the door of Study No. 7, from behind which sounded a peal of merry laughter. Her face softened as she thought of Mabs—Mabs, in there, who was trying on the dress she would wear at the ice carnival.

Involuntarily her face flashed into a smile. Well, dash it, why should she worry about Faith Ashton? She went in.

And then—

"Oh, Mabs!" she cried.

Mabs was there, looking prettier, more radiant than Babs had ever seen her looking before.

The table had been pushed back, and leaning with one hand on its edge for support, she stood in the Ice Queen's dress. Her face was flushed with excitement, her glorious eyes shining. She dimpled as Babs came in.

"Oh, Babs, how do I look?"

Babs shook her head. Words could hardly express her admiration. The close-fitting dress of pale mauve, edged

and ornamented with silver, suited Mabs to perfection. On the table was the purple cloak, edged with white ermine which she would wear over it, while Marjorie Hazeldene very industriously was tacking in a hem at the bottom.

"It—it's gorgeous!" Babs breathed. "Isn't it?" plump Bessie beamed. "Oh crumbs, you know, I dud-do think Mabs looks lovely in it! Almost as nice as I'd look, you know," she added seriously.

"Says you!" Leila Carroll chuckled. "There!" Marjorie laughed. "That's pinned up the hem. Now let me see the bodice, Mabs. No, I don't think that anything wants doing to that. Turn round, please. Oh, it certainly is a most beautiful frock! Perhaps we could do with just a teeny bit taken in at the waist—"

"Oh, do you think so?" a voice asked, and in strolled Faith—Faith with not a trace of those tears she had a moment before been so copiously shedding in Babs' study, but with the old bright smile on her face, her eyes gleaming with admiration. "Oh, Mabs, you do look lovely!" she breathed. "What an adorable queen you will make. Don't you think so, Babs?"

Babs blinked. Even she was taken aback by this duplicity. Scornfully she turned.

"But I don't think, you know, that I'd interfere with the waist," Faith added. "After all, it seems a shame. It might spoil the—the set of the thing, and Mabs won't want to feel as if she's sort of boxed-in. I like to see a little fullness in the waist myself. Don't you, Babs?"

"No!" Babs said shortly. "Hallo!" Clara pursed her lips. She looked quickly at Leila, whose eyes opened a little. "What's the matter with Babs?" she asked.

"And I do think," Faith said, apparently not noticing the snub, "that it would be improved with a few sequins down the front. Sequins glisten so adorably—I always think, don't you, Marjorie, Mabs, do have sequins."

"Mabs," said Babs pointedly, "doesn't need sequins."

"Oh dear! But I love them," Faith said.

"Perhaps you do," Babs returned, "but if we have our way Mabs is going to wear this frock. Anyway, sequins would only make it look gaudy!"

Once again the chums stared. Even Bessie blinked. Faith shook her head sorrowfully, regretfully—and Mabs felt her heart give a queer little contraction as she saw the soft lips quiver.

She said no more then, but rather hesitantly walked towards the door. Clara frowned.

"Faith, where are you going?"

"Oh, out," Faith said in a low, choked voice. "I—I don't think I'm very popular here, you know. G-good-bye all!"

"Oh, but Faith—" cried Mabs anxiously.

Faith smiled tenderly and mistily and closed the door. There was the sound of a low sob as she stepped into the passage.

And Mabs, standing still, bit her lip. Rather worriedly and amazedly she eyed Babs.

"Oh, poor Faith!" she cried. "Oh, Babs, I believe she's breaking her heart! Babs, you didn't really mean to hurt her, did you?"

But Babs merely shrugged.

"Shall we," was her strange reply, "pack the cloak and frock up again, old thing?"

Puzzled by Babs!



"YOU'RE sure," Faith Ashton anxiously questioned, "that your ankle is better, Mabs?"

"Heaps!" Mabel Lynn laughingly replied.

"But you're not going to try to walk about on it, are you, dear?" Faith asked.

"Well, no. I'm not taking any chances," Mabs returned. "But thanks to Babs' bandaging and Marjorie's fomentations I really believe I could walk quite a distance on it, you know."

"Which means to say," Faith interrupted, her eyes shining, "that it'll be as fit as anything for the carnival, Mabel? Oh, my dear, I'm so glad! Because you know," Faith crooned softly, "I do so want to see you make a success of the part, Mabs. And it will be just too thrilling, won't it, if, as a result of being the Carnival Queen, you also get that part in your father's play?"

Mabs smiled softly as she looked at the girl. The scene was the music-room and the time after lessons next day.

All that day Mabs' ankle had been steadily on the mend—so much so that, as she said, she could walk quite well—only the faintest of limps, indeed, betraying that anything was wrong at all.

Eagerly and excitedly she was looking forward to the carnival, thrilling every time she thought about it.

If there was just one shadow on the sunny happiness of Mabs' horizon, however, it was this strange, chilly starchiness which seemed to have grown up between her chum Babs and this adorable Faith.

For Mabs there was no girl in the world like Babs, but during the time she had known her she had formed a deep and affectionate liking for the sweet and gentle Faith.

It hurt her to feel that these two very good chums of hers could be at loggerheads, and it puzzled her to know why they should be at loggerheads.

It was partly because of that that Mabs had sought distraction in the music-room this afternoon while Babs had gone down to Courtfield to take the carnival costume for the necessary alterations. And there Faith, hearing her playing on the piano, had sought her out.

Mabs smiled a little mistily now. "It will be more than thrilling," she said. "It will be—oh, Faith, I can hardly tell you how I feel about it, and I can hardly tell you, either, what a brick I think you are!"

"And Babs," Faith said. "Remember Babs, Mabs, is doing just as much to get you made queen as I am!"

"Y-yes, and Babs," Mabs said, and flushed faintly. "Babs is a dear, too. But you all are. Everybody is being so really topping about everything. But I wish—I wish— Oh, Faith, what is wrong between you and Babs?" she broke out.

Faith shook her head.

"Nothing, Mabs, dear!"

"But, Faith, there is! Babs—"

Faith smiled sadly.

"Oh, you mustn't mind, Babs," she said. "She's just a bit touchy. After all, Mabel, she has rather a lot on her mind, hasn't she? I mean, being captain of the Lower School and all that, must be a dreadful responsibility. Apart from that, she's most fearfully worried about you, so—so perhaps it's natural that she gets a bit short tempered with me at times. Dear, darling Babs. She doesn't really mean anything, you know!"

Sweet, forgiving Faith—and how her face lit up as she said that with a soft and tender smile.

But again Mabs shook her head. She knew her Babs. She knew her far, far better than this lovely doll-faced cousin of hers. Not Babs to be cross with other people for nothing!

There was a knock on the door. It opened. Babs herself came in, rather flushed from hurrying back.

She cast one look at Faith and paused.

"Oh!" she said constrainedly. "I—I heard you were in here, Mabs. I've taken the frock back and the alterations will be done by this evening. How's the ankle?"

"Fine!" Mabs beamed.

"Oh, good! Walk all right?"

"Like a champion," Mabs laughed.

"Good again!" Babs smiled relievedly. "To-morrow, old Mabs, I think you'd better try it out," she advised "Gently for a start, of course."

Faith shook her head.

"But, Babs dear, do you think that would be wise?" she demurred.

"Why shouldn't it be wise?" Babs demanded.

"Well, I mean to say, supposing it gave way again?" Faith asked. "Don't you think it would be better for dear Mabs to rest it right up to the carnival?"

Babs' face showed signs of faint irritation. Mabs again became unhappily aware of the strained tension in the air.

"If Mabs," Babs distinctly replied, "is going to use her ankle at all at the carnival, it's got to be exercised first of all. Supposing she does keep on resting it? How is she to know when the carnival comes that it won't let her down? Still, Mabs, let's have a look at the old thing!"

Faith bit her lip. Quick and glistening the tears started to her eyes. She threw one sorrowful look towards Mabs, then biting her lip, went out. In the corridor she met Clara Trevlyn.

"Hallo, what's wrong?" The Tomboy stared.

"Nun-nothing!" sobbed Faith, and went on.

Clara frowned. She gazed at the music-room door. Clara, like everyone else, was terribly puzzled by the sudden strange change in the attitude of Babs, and Clara liking Faith as the rest of the girls did, felt perplexed. Apart from that, the rumour that there was a rift between Babs and her cousin was beginning to be whispered in the school.

She pushed open the door. Babs was stooping in the act of peeling off Mabel's shoe.

"Babs, what's the matter?" Clara asked bluntly. "What have you done to make Faith cry?"

"Nothing," Babs said shortly.

"But look here, old thing, don't you think you're being rather mean? What has Faith done, anyway?"

Babs breathed heavily.

"It's not my fault if Faith likes to burst into tears whenever I say anything that she doesn't agree with, is it?" she asked. "Bother Faith! Oh, hallo!" she added as the door opened again, and this time Sarah Harrigan, the unpopular prefect of the Sixth Form, came in.

She glared at Babs.

"You may be captain of the Lower School, Barbara Redfern," she began tartly, "but that doesn't entitle you to bully the girls under your charge. I have just seen Faith Ashton, and Faith was crying her eyes out."

Babs' lips compressed.

"She—she told you that I—"

"She told me nothing," Sarah said nastily, "but I've got eyes to see, I suppose. Apart from which," Sarah

went on with a sneer, "I don't walk about with my ears closed, and it's pretty common knowledge now, isn't it, that there's some sort of quarrel between you two? She might be your cousin, and you might think, because of that, you've got the right to treat her as you like. But just be warned, that's all. I'll stand no bullying in this Form, Barbara Redfern!"

Babs turned red.
"I wasn't bullying—"
"And don't back answer!" Sarah snapped.

"But I want to make it clear—"
"Take fifty lines!"

"Sarah, please listen—"
"Take a hundred!" Sarah snapped.
"Write out a hundred times: 'I must not take advantage of my position as junior captain.' Now be quiet! What did you say, Mabel?"

"I said," Mabs repeated, "that Barbara wasn't bullying Faith. All that happened was that she and Faith had a slight difference of opinion."

"When," Sarah snapped, "I want you to butt in, I'll say so, Mabel Lynn!"

"But, Sarah, don't be unreasonable! After all, I was a witness—"

"And," Sarah flamed, "don't call me unreasonable. Take fifty lines for impertinence!"

It was Mabs' turn to crimson. She glared.

"Really, Sarah, don't you think you're getting rather too high-handed—"

"Take," Sarah blazed, "a hundred lines. Write out: 'I must not be disrespectful to my superiors.' And now shut up, all of you," she blazed, "otherwise I'll detain the lot of you! Well, Clara, anything to say?"

"Yes—oh, stuff, no!" Clara said gruffly.

It was obvious that Sarah was looking for trouble. And at the best of times she was always ready to vent her ill-temper on any of the chums.

Another glare and she passed out. At the end of the corridor she met Faith, still sniffing. Faith looked up.

"Oh, Sarah, I—I hope you didn't say anything to Babs?"

"I gave her a hundred lines!" Sarah snapped.

"But, Sarah—"
"And I gave Mabs another hundred for jolly well chiming in," Sarah added. "But you, kid—go and wash those tears from your face! Come and tell me if there's any more bullying!"

Faith shook her head dismally. But, as she went off, a grin appeared on her face. Not for another two hours was she seen again, and that was when, tea over, the chums were all gathered in the Common-room. Mabs was among them—Mabs standing upright now without any necessity for support, and laughing as she exchanged some remark with Bridget O'Toole.

At once Faith hurried over to her.

"Oh, Mabs dear—Bridget, please excuse me, there's a darling! Mabs, I—I'm frightfully sorry," she got out. "I've just heard—about Sarah lining you. Mabs, you don't think it was my fault?"

"Good gracious no, old goose!" Mabs laughed.

"And—and you're still going to practise?"

"To-morrow morning," Mabs informed her gaily.

"But—but how can you practise if you've got to do lines?" Faith asked worriedly. "Oh dear, I forgot to tell you. I—I met Helen Holland not so long ago, and Helen wants you and me and Barbara to go down to the rink to-morrow afternoon to make arrange-

ments for the dress rehearsal." (She did not think it necessary to explain that she had made a special trip to see Helen.) "That means," Faith added, "that if you have to do lines at all you'll have to do them to-morrow morning."

Babs glanced at her queerly. Mabs, realising the truth of that statement, bit her lip.

"Then—then that means I'll have to cut out practice?" she said.

"Oh dear, I wish we could arrange something," Faith murmured, and then started as the door opened and Miss Charmant, the mistress of the Fourth, came in. "Oh, Miss Charmant!" she cried, and flew to her. "Miss Charmant, could you do something for me?"

The pretty mistress smiled.
"Why, Faith, if I possibly can without breaking rules," she agreed lightly.

"Yes, please, Miss Charmant," Faith said fervently. "You see it's like this. We're all desperately anxious for Mabs to test out her ankle on the ice to-morrow morning. Because, you know, we're all dying to see Mabs made queen of the carnival. But Mabs has got lines, and she can't practise and do her lines as well, can she? Please, Miss Charmant, couldn't you ask Sarah to let her off her lines?"

So earnest, so utterly sincere was Faith, that the mistress paused. From

But Babs could not reply. She felt suddenly sick. She felt strangled, helpless. How could one combat such sweet, such subtle cunning as this? Faith, wittingly or unwittingly, had been the cause of Mabs and herself being punished, but what a triumph Faith had made out of getting them released from that punishment.

The look of the Form told her that Faith was more than ever a heroine now.

And the looks of the Form told her also that they were resentful of her seemingly unsporting conduct towards her cousin!

A Cat Causes Complications!



"THE dress rehearsal is to-morrow afternoon," Helen Holland said.

"Father will be back then, and he will make his final choice between you, Faith, and you, Mabel! You do both understand that, don't you? And you'll both be certain to turn up at three o'clock?"



"HALLO, GIRLS!"

Know me? I thought you would. I'm Tinker, "Gipsy Joy's" dog . . . of course. And I'm just longing to meet you. You'll find me on page 21. Joy's there as well—AND Nakita—so we're going to have fun galore. See you in a tailwag. Woof-woof!

the girls in the room—there were a good score of them—went up a little murmur. Miss Charmant looked at Mabel Lynn.

"Mabel, why did Sarah give you lines?"

"Well—" Mabs bit her lip. She glowered at Babs who, reddening, had turned away. "Well, she lined Barbara first," she said. "I—I said it was unfair because she accused Babs of bullying Faith, and Babs hadn't bullied Faith."

"Oh, no, indeed not, Miss Charmant!" Faith supported. "Dear Barbara would never dream of bullying anyone, would she? It was my fault," she said. "I was rather upset because Barbara was cross with me, and I suppose Sarah just jumped to conclusions. Please, Miss Charmant, if you can do anything—"

Miss Charmant frowned a little. She was very well aware of Sarah's little habit of jumping upon girls without reason. And she knew that Sarah was a particular enemy of Babs & Co.

"Very well!" she said. "I will speak to Sarah. If the facts are as you say, Faith, I think I can give you my promise that both sets of lines will be cancelled. Thank you for telling me. I'll go and see about it now."

And Miss Charmant, with a smile, left. Faith laughed delightedly.

"Oh, isn't she a dear?" she breathed. "Oh, Mabs, I do hope she succeeds! It will be such a shame, won't it, Barbara, if Mabs can't take that test before seeing Helen?"

"Will it?" asked Babs in a stifled voice.

"Oh, but Babs, of course, dear! You are pleased, aren't you?"

"You bet!" laughed Mabs.
"Try us!" smiled Faith.
"Then that's settled!" Helen smiled, relieved. "Father says that if he can't decide any other way, he'll toss for it. Well, so-long, now! To-morrow afternoon—"

"At three o'clock," Babs added. "Right, Helen, we won't forget!"

They smiled, and shook hands. Then, in the gathering dusk, the three of them—Babs, Mabs, and Faith—set out on their homeward journey to Cliff House School. Mabs, particularly, was frightfully excited.

For the Ice Carnival was due to take place the day after to-morrow. To-morrow was the dress rehearsal. That morning, Mabs, in accordance with Babs' instructions, had tried out her injured ankle on the ice, and the ankle, to everyone's joy and relief, had responded splendidly.

Not once during that day, either at morning classes or during afternoon lessons, had it given her as much as a twinge.

It seemed, indeed, as good as it ever was.

Mabs, in fact, was bubbling over. No less so was Faith. She was as excited and enthusiastic now about Mabs' chance as Mabs herself.

Only Babs, for once, was rather silent.

Not, to be sure, that Babs did not share the general excitement. Babs' one great ambition at this moment was to see Mabs installed as the queen of

that carnival. Her second great ambition was that Mr. Selsey should give her the juvenile part in the ice ballet for which her actress soul so craved.

Yet she was feeling shaken.

About Faith—

If Faith really was fighting to outdo Mabs in the carnival, then her methods were certainly obscure. Not in front of Helen, to be sure, had she been so over-bubbling concerning Mabs—and yet it was truly a fact that it was Faith who made attendance at this interview possible for Mabs, for Miss Charmant had cancelled the lines Sarah Harrigan had given Babs and Mabs.

Very thoughtful indeed was Babs as they rode back on the bus to Cliff House School, Faith chattering away all the time to a Mabs filled with such thrilled excitement that for once she did not notice her chum's preoccupation.

Outside the gates of Cliff House School the bus stopped, and the three alighted. It was dark then, of course, and a chill wind was rustling in the branches of the old elms.

Piper, the porter, came out of his lodge as they entered through the gateway.

"Miss Lynn?" he asked. "Is Miss Lynn there?"

"Yes, Piper?" Mabs said brightly. "Anything wrong?"

"Which it's your cat, Miss Lynn," Piper said worriedly.

Mabs paused. Swift alarm crossed her face at once. For Mustapha was a prize-winning cat, and of Mustapha Mabs was extraordinarily fond.

"It's a cold, I think," Piper said. "The poor animal's been sniffing and snuffling something cruel. I've got him in the lodge next to the fire at the moment. Which I must say he does seem a little better now. Perhaps you'd like to look at him?"

Mabs would. They all stepped in. Mustapha, sprawled on a cushion in front of the fire, blinked woefully from out of a pair of watery eyes as they came in. Faith bit her lip.

"Oh, poor Mustapha!" she said. "What an awful shame! Poor, wee catty, then!"

Piper coughed.

"Which it's very awkward," he said. "Him being here, I mean. You know, Miss Lynn, I ain't allowed to have pets in the lodge, but I brought him along because the hot water system in the Pets' House has gone phut. It may be you could take him," Piper suggested hesitantly, "just till I get the pipes going again. It won't take me more'n half an hour."

"You mean, take him to the study?" Faith questioned. "But isn't it against the rules for pets to be brought into the school?"

Piper shifted uncomfortably. But Mabs had Mustapha in her arms now, softly crooning as she stroked his glossy fur.

"Never mind the rules," she said. "It will only be for half an hour. Come on, Mustapha, old pet, then! You shall sit in front of the fire in Study No. 4 till Mr. Piper has your box nice and warm. Thank you, Piper!" she added. "Can I borrow the blanket?"

"Which is a pleasure, Miss Lynn," Piper beamed, and very willingly—for Piper, in spite of his usual crustiness, was inordinately fond of cats—handed over the blanket, beaming as Babs slipped a sixpence into his hand.

"Be careful!" Babs said, as they reached the school. "For goodness' sake, don't let Sarah Harrigan or Connie Jackson see you. Wait a

minute! I'll slip into Big Hall first and see if the coast is clear."

Mabs and Faith waited, Faith crooning to the cat in the darkness as she stroked it. Into Big Hall Babs disappeared, to re-appear on the steps a minute later, urgently beckoning.

Quickly Mabs and Faith slipped through Big Hall, up the stairs, and into Study No. 4. Mabs gulped breathlessly.

"O.K.!" she chortled. "Close the door, Faith! Babs, would you mind getting me a cushion? Now, old boy—" And gently she laid the cat down in front of the fire. "There, now! Isn't that lovely?" Mabs beamed. "Oh, Mustapha, old darling, please, don't be ill!"

"Poor, sweet thing!" Faith sighed. "How miserable he does look! Oh, dear! I simply adore cats, you know! It just wrings my heart to see the poor darling in pain! But what about some warm milk?" she added. "Real fresh milk. Babs, have we any?"

"Only tinned," Babs said.

"Oh, dear! But Auntie Jones, at the tuckshop, will have some, won't she?" Faith asked. "Give me the jug. I—I'll go and get some."

"Oh, Faith, you dear!" Mabs cried.

Faith laughed. Beaming and smiling her face now. How impossible to believe ill of the girl when she looked and acted like that!

Gaily she caught up the jug Babs handed to her and lightly skipped out of the study. At the tuckshop she got the milk, returning, strangely enough, by way of the Sixth Form corridor. Outside Sarah Harrigan's door she paused as that door opened. Sarah, a rather black and savage look on her face, emerged.

"Oh, hal-hallo, Sarah!" Faith simpered.

Sarah glared. Sarah was in a bad temper. Sarah had been in a bad temper, indeed, ever since Miss Charmant had sought her out to demand an explanation as to why she had given Babs and Mabs lines.

Sarah had not emerged at all gloriously from that interview. Apart from the punishments she had given being cancelled, she had received rather a lecture from the pretty mistress of the Fourth on the subject of jumping to conclusions.

The mere sight of a Fourth Former, in consequence, was as a red rag to a bull to Sarah Harrigan.

"What are you doing?" she snapped.

"And what's in that jug?"

"Please, Sarah, it's only milk," Faith faltered. "There's no harm in buying milk, is there? Especially," Faith added seriously, "when Mabel Lynn's cat is so dreadfully ill, you know. You ought to see the poor thing, Sarah!"

"Thanks!" she retorted icily. "I want no telling from you what I ought to do. Well, buzz off with that jug! Don't spill the stuff on the carpet. But wait a minute," she added. "Is that milk for Mabel's cat?"

"Why, of course, Sarah," Faith said.

"We're going to warm it, you know."

"Oh!" Sarah's eyes narrowed.

"Where is the cat?"

"Well, Mabel is keeping it warm in the study," Faith said. "Oh, dear, Sarah—I say, Sarah—"

But Sarah, with a sudden, eager gleam in her eyes, was not waiting. With quite startling agility, indeed, she was striding away. Faith shook her head as she looked after her. She gazed at the milk, and then, as Sarah whisked round the corner, sighed and chuckled.

Sarah, meantime, throwing open the door of Study No. 4, glared.

"Mabel, who told you to bring that cat into the school?"

Mabs jumped around with a jerk, Mustapha in her arms.

"Oh dear! Sarah, the cat's ill—"

"All the more reason," Sarah snapped, "why he shouldn't be here. Take him out—at once. And jolly well take a hundred lines for bringing it into the school. I shall come back in ten minutes. If it's not off the premises within ten minutes, I shall detain you."

And bang! went the door. While Mabs, her face a trifle angry, looked at Babs.

Babs bit her lip.

"Now how the dickens did she know about that?" she asked. "Anyway, Mabs, it's no good disobeying. If she gates you now, that means to say that it will be all up with the rehearsal. We—" And then she paused as Faith, with a bright smile, came in—Faith, who had listened to every word of Sarah's from the far end of the corridor.

"Well, here we are," she said. "I've got the milk—but, oh I say, what's the matter?" she asked in surprise.

Babs eyed her.

"Faith, did you say anything to Sarah about Mustapha being here?" she asked.

"I—" Faith's eyes were saucer-like, as she shook her head. "Why, goodness, no, Babs. I haven't even seen Sarah," she said. "Oh goodness, you don't mean to say Sarah has been here?"

"She has," Babs said grimly, "and she's not only been here. She's given Mabs a hundred lines. And she's told us to get Mustapha out of this study. But what's the good of taking him out when the Pets' House is cold?"

Faith bit her lip. She looked genuinely distressed.

"But—but—" she stammered. "Oh dear. Oh, Mabel darling, I am so sorry. Isn't Sarah really awful? But wait a minute," she added brightly. "I've got an idea."

The two chums stared at her.

"Supposing," Faith said eagerly, "I take him to Piper's lodge again? Piper won't know, as he's in the Pets' House, attending to the hot water system. By the time Piper comes back, the pipes will be warm again, and I can take him along to the Pets' House. Yes, that's it," she cried delightedly. "I'll do that while you get on with your lines, Mabs. Barbara, will you wrap the darling in the blanket?"

"Oh, Faith," Mabs said. "You—you really mean it?"

"Why, of course. Why not?" Faith asked, with a laugh.

Mabs gulped. Again Babs eyed her strangely, feeling that sense of bewilderment, of bafflement. Was Faith the two-faced girl she judged her to be?

In any case, there was no time for speculation or argument then. Sarah was likely to be back in much less than the specified ten minutes. While Mabs tenderly rolled Mustapha in the blanket again, Faith put on her coat, which she had already discarded, and, taking the cat, went off to Piper's lodge. There she remained until Piper came in.

He blinked.

"Here, which I says—"

"Oh, Piper, darling, nasty Sarah turned the cat out of the school," Faith pouted. "I brought him here until the pipes were warmed up. But, of course, you don't mind, do you, nice man?" she said appealingly. "And if everything's all right now, I'll take him back—"

"Which it is," Piper grunted.

"Thank you so much, Piper," Faith laughed. "Nobody has seen me," she said, "and I can find my way to the Pets' House nicely, thank you. Come on, Mustapha, my poor darling. Good-night, Piper."

"Good-night, Miss," Piper said, and watched Faith hurry off in the direction of the Pets' House.

But Faith did not go to the Pets' House! Instead, she made a detour round the school, sneaking back into the building by the mistress' premises.

She knew at this time that Sarah would be attending a prefects' meeting in the prefects' recreation-room, and with a sly smile on her face, she made her way to Sarah Harrigan's study.

When she left that study, Mustapha was no longer in her arms.

And for the rest of that evening, nothing further was heard of Mustapha. Not until, in fact, the Fourth Form retired to bed, was the name of Mabel Lynn's pet breathed again.

And that was when, just as Miss Bullivant, duty mistress for the day, was putting out the lights, the figure of Sarah Harrigan stormed into the room. She pointed straight at Mabel Lynn.

"Miss Bullivant, I ask for that girl's detention!" she choked, while everybody stared. "This evening, I told her to take her cat, which she had brought into the school, against all the rules, back into the Pets' House."

"And she didn't?" Miss Bullivant asked.

"She did not," Sarah flamed. "Because, Miss Bullivant, I have just discovered the cat curled up in my study—on my bed!"

Was Faith Really Frightened?



"OH, but I can't understand it," Faith said dazedly. "Mabs, darling, I just can't understand it. I did take the cat back to the Pets' House—Piper will tell you so. Either he broke out and came back into the school himself, or somebody let him out."

"Well, sure sounds as if something went wrong somewhere," Leila Carroll opined. "At the same time, that doesn't alter the fact, I guess, that Mabs is detained. And as Mabs is detained, what about the rehearsal this afternoon?"

Mabs bit her lip. It seemed in that moment that she was almost on the verge of tears.

The scene was the Fourth Form Common-room, and the time was after breakfast the next morning.

Everyone was looking glum; but most distressed of them all was Mabel Lynn.

For the blow had fallen. Mabs had, naturally, denied putting her pet in Sarah's study, but seeing she was Mustapha's owner, and was responsible for its behaviour, Mabs had received the blame, and Mabs, in consequence, was detained this afternoon.

Babs, standing by her side, looked queerly at Faith Ashton. Why was it she couldn't be convinced? All the same, she had to admit there was nothing against Faith. Babs had made it her business to see Piper, and Piper had said that Faith had gone with Mabs' pet to the Pets' House.

Yet it was strange that Mustapha, ill as he was, should have made his way into the school. And if he had been carried in, it was curious that anyone should have dreamt of playing such a trick upon Sarah Harrigan.

But what beastly awful luck. That



"DOLORES, will you do me a big favour?" asked Babs. "Let me borrow this mouse." The little Second-former nodded. "Why, yes, of course, Barbara." Babs took the clockwork toy, a plan to save Mabs, her great chum, already simmering in her mind.

Mabs should be detained on the afternoon which meant so much to her.

"Oh dear! Mabs, darling, what about the rehearsal?" Faith asked.

Mabs shook her head. "I—I don't know. You—you'll have to go," she said. "After all, it isn't as if I was already chosen."

Faith bit her lip. "But, Mabs—no," she said. "After the way we've all fought for you to be the queen. Oh, no," she cried. "I couldn't, Mabs. It wouldn't be fair. Oh dear, I wish I could think of something. I—I—" And then she stopped. "But I have an idea," she cried. "Mabs, it can be done."

Mabs blinked up hopelessly. "Supposing," Faith breathlessly went on, "someone took your place in detention? Mabs, I could do it, couldn't I? No one's likely to look in, and even so, we're quite alike; and there's not a great deal of light in the Form-room, is there? Please, Mabs—no, do listen," she added eagerly. "Let us do it. It's worth the risk! I shall feel just too heartbroken, Mabs, if you don't get the carnival queen part now."

"But—but—" Mabs hesitated.

"It will be easy," Faith said. "All you have to do is to answer the detention call at twelve o'clock. Sarah, or some other prefect, will set you your task, and then leave you, won't she? Well, what's to prevent me, then, from taking your place, while you go off to the rehearsal? The rehearsal won't take long, and you can get back easily before the detention class ends. Yes, please, Mabs, let's do it."

There was a murmur. It was a murmur of admiration, of approval. Girls looked at Faith; and glowing their admiration in those looks. What a sport she was! What an utter little brick!

Here, if she wanted it, was the chance which any girl in that room would have given a term's pocket-money to have. And she was volunteering—pleading—to give it to her rival!

"But—but, Faith—" Mabs said.

"Please," Faith begged. "Babs, you make her."

Oddly again Babs eyed her. She could not make it out. If Faith was acting, it was certainly impossible to see what she would gain by the acting. She looked so utterly earnest, so admirably sincere.

"Well, that's sporting," she said slowly. "I—I should accept, Mabs."

"Oh goody!" Faith cried delightedly. "Faith, you angel!" Mabs breathed.

Faith laughed deliciously. An unrestrained cheer went up from the assembled girls.

If Faith had been liked before, her popularity ascended now with one bound to the topmost pinnacle.

And smoothly the plan worked. After lessons Mabs reported, as was the custom, to Sarah Harrigan. The prefect accompanied Mabs to the Form-room and set her detention task. Then, when Sarah had left, Faith sneaked in.

"O.K., Mabs! Coast clear," she said. "I'll take your place."

(Continued on page 16.)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS



HOW are those resolutions going that you made so pluckily on the last day of the poor old year?

One of mine has gone "bust" already, I'm afraid.

I had most seriously said to myself that I would give up my early morning cup of tea in bed and get our Olive (she's our maid, you know) to bring me a glass of hot water instead. It's supposed to be very good for you first thing in the morning—and very complexion-beautifying, in addition!

● Broken Resolution

The first morning I felt very virtuous, pulled a face, drank it down and jumped out of bed feeling as if I had conquered the world.

The second morning didn't give me such a smugly satisfied sensation, I regret to say, and I felt I deserved a tiny snuggle in bed again before rising.

The third morning the hot water didn't taste at all good, and I treated myself to a five-minute snooze—to forget it.

Then on the fourth I drank only half of the tumblerful of the horrid stuff.

On the fifth I just sneered at it, pulled on my dressing-gown, dashed into mother's room and begged a cup of tea from her pot.

So now I have my early-morning tea again—but it is China tea—and have absolutely stifled that feeling of weakness and tried to pretend that making resolutions is a silly business, anyway. Bad me!

● Bows for the Blouse

You must have wondered many times just how to make your school blouse look a little less like the Fourth Form and a little more home-y.

These ideas in the picture here are the very thing for giving it that out-of-school look, and the joy of them is that they can be easily removed for the blouse to take on a workish air again.



Bows are, of course, the simplest and most easy-to-apply-and-remove trimmings.

Three bows of stripey ribbon would look sweet pinned at even intervals down the front of your blouse. While, if you are rather artistic, you might prefer the bow

PATRICIA is a friend after your own hearts—young and gay, yet very understanding. No wonder she is so popular with schoolgirls, who just love to read of her doings, and the suggestions she has for young people!

that is rather remindful of a French painter.

But don't, please, use a plain bow of the hair-ribbon type. Half a yard of brightly-patterned ribbon will look so much gayer and fresher. You just make the bows in the ordinary way, and sew a little gold safety-pin to the back of them.

Then they can be worn on blouse, frock, or what you like.

● Clock Work

One of the most treasured possessions in our family—after my young brother's kitten, little Minkie, of course—is a grandfather clock.

This clock was given to my father by his father, and to his father by his father—and so on since about 1700 or thereabouts.

It's a perfect marvel of a clock, and one that isn't satisfied with merely telling the time. Oh, no—that would be too simple.

It tells the date, the phase of the moon, the weather, and also gives the sign of the Zodiac for the particular day. In fact, this clock does pretty well everything—except the washing-up!

So you can imagine father's horror when the other day it stopped. Naturally, the clock doesn't go by magic, nor by electricity for that matter, and father has always attended to it himself once a month.

When it stopped fourteen days before it was due father was as worried as if it had foretold an earthquake.

"Never gone wrong before," he muttered (as if that was any reason why it shouldn't do so now, after more than two hundred years!).

"We'd better get a clock-maker along," said mother vaguely.

"The firm that made this clock wouldn't exist now," groaned unhelpful father.

Then your Patricia had a brainwave.

"Perhaps it's dust in the works?" I ventured respectfully.

Father looked rather shocked at such a slur being cast on his beloved clock, but had to admit it might be possible.

"And I read of a wonderful way to clean the insides of clocks," I went on, feeling my way gently.

"Washing them with soap-flakes, I suppose?" growled father. Clearly the episode had not improved his temper. "Still, I must dash off now, or I'll miss my train."

So off he went, and mother and I schemed together.

The result was that I placed an egg-cupful of paraffin in the back of the clock. (There's enough room in the back of it to stand a bungalow almost, without touching the works!)

In the evening we told father. He looked at mother and me pityingly, as much as to say "These women!" and got on with his paper. But he let us have our way.

The result now is that the paraffin has all evaporated. This morning I fixed the hand and the date and the weather and the

sign of the Zodiac—and grandfather, the clock, is going, not merrily, but as sedately as before.

And looks like doing so for another hundred years at least!

So remember, pets, that paraffin in evaporation cleans the works of a clock wonderfully.

If it's a smallish clock, all you need is a piece of rag or cottonwool soaked in the paraffin and tucked into the back.

As soon as the paraffin has all evaporated the clock should be ready to "go" again. But if it has got extra grubby in the works you can repeat the process.

● Real-Looking Fur

I wonder if any of your grown-up friends have got coats made of fur-cloth?

It really is remarkable stuff—looking so very real and quite deceiving all but the very expert.

I've just discovered that you can buy it for sixpence a quarter of a yard— isn't that a thrill? And from our very favourite shop, too!

So if you should have a week-end coat of tweed that's just craving for a fur-trimming, do ask mother what she thinks of the idea of sewing fur-cloth on to the lapels? (Unlike real fur, fur-cloth is as easy to sew as any other material.)

If you should have a tiny spot over after this, a pompon of the same fur-cloth perched on hat or beret would make you look very swagger.

● A Little Problem

Lots of schoolgirls have the same little puzzle, I've discovered.

It is this: how shall they sign their names at the end of a letter?

Naturally, if you're writing to your very best friend, or to Aunty Mabel, you'd end with your Christian name only.

But when you're writing to someone who doesn't really know you—what then?

Well, it is best to put your full name—say, Ethel Chalmers, not just E. Chalmers.

You see, courtesy is one of the first principles of letter-writing.

Naturally, that person won't want to address the letter back to E. Chalmers, Esq., by mistake! So by putting your Christian name and surname you are avoiding any embarrassment.

When writing to someone who is not exactly a stranger, and yet not an intimate friend, you can always sign yourself "Ethel," and put Chalmers in brackets afterwards.

All clear?

Your friend,
PATRICIA.



A GOOD BEGINNING—

To the New Term will work wonders towards making it a happy and successful one.



NO, I don't want you to start making good resolutions all over again in preparation for the new term. But, as it is the first term of this brand new year, and we're still in January—I do want you to promise yourselves to make a real success of it.

DON'T forget to take back your Health Certificate on the very first day, will you? (That is, if you have to take one, which important piece of paper asserts that you haven't had any of the frightening list of complaints printed there.)

WASH your school shoe-bag and iron it, so that it's all sparkling and fresh to decorate your peg in the cloak-room. Oh, and here's a tip. If your shoe-bag should be trimmed with braid—which has a wretched habit of "running" when it sees water—I want you to soak the bag first in cold water to which you've added a little kitchen salt. This will most effectively keep the colours in their places when you tackle the washing.

WHETHER you wear a silk or a woolly blouse under your school tunic, I expect it is either white or cream in colour. So often these blouses tend to lose a little of their freshness after constant washings and become a little yellow. A dip in blue-water, after the blouse has been washed and rinsed, will give it a lovely new look that will delight you.

IF you have long hair, I expect you wear a hair-ribbon. These do tend to get creased and tired-looking, don't they? So if you're not having a new ribbon to start the term, I want you to give your old one

a special pressing. But do be sure that the iron isn't very hot—otherwise the ribbon will wear out so very quickly.

A GOOD way of keeping hair ribbon crease-free—the way that I always used when I had long hair, as I had!—is to wind it very smoothly round the end of your bed each night. This won't work if your bed is very modern in design, of course; but if it has a rail at all, you simply must try it.

WHILE the iron is still warm, please don't forget to press your gym-girdle and your school hat-band. Both will appreciate this.

MOST of your school uniform will already be marked with your name, of course. But it's quite likely that you'll have acquired one or two new school treasures over Christmas. So mind you don't wear those lovely new fur-backed gloves unless they have your name in! Mark that new case of pencils very clearly also—and even your fountain pen. (A piece of tape on which is your name can be sewn around the end of your pen, under the part that clips on to your blazer pocket.)

EXAMINE all your school uniform before you return to "work" again. Sew on all loose and missing buttons, and stitch the flopping corners of any pockets.

A MACINTOSH that has a three-cornered slit in it can almost invariably be repaired this way. Buy a reel of surgical tape. (It sounds frightening, but it's only that sticky-backed tape, you know.) Lay your mac flat on a table, inside uppermost, and arrange the tear so that it shows as little as possible. Then hold the tape in front of the fire, and when the sticky part is nice and "tacky" lay this straight along the slits. From the right side you'll hardly see the mend.

COLLECT together all your school books to be certain that you get no Disorder Marks on the very first, or even second, day of the term just for forgetfulness—that would be too bad! If mother has saved some of the best brown paper

over from the Christmas parcels, take this to school with you to cover your books.

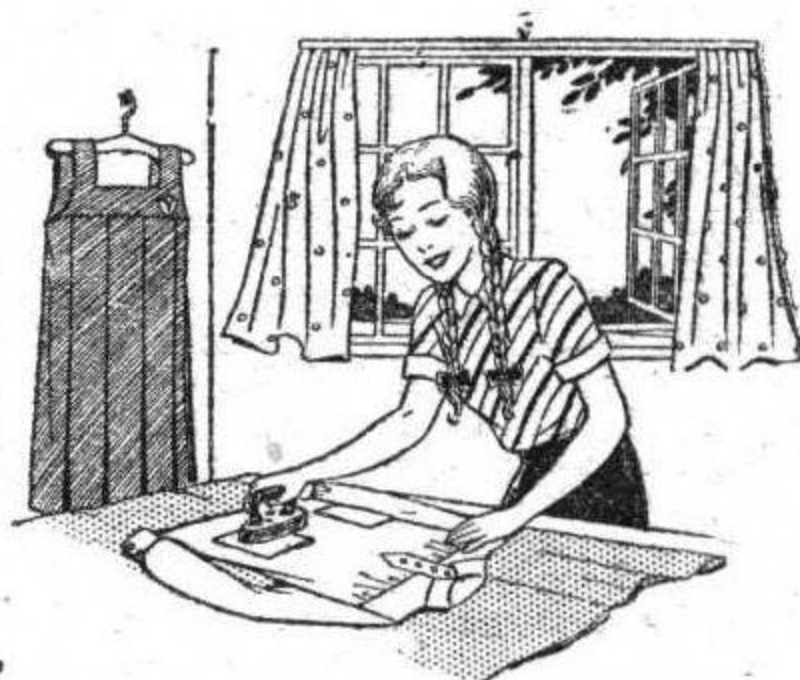
SEE that your desk—particularly if it is a fresh one—is perfectly dust-free inside before packing your school belongings inside. Then arrange your text books to one side, backs uppermost, so that you can pick which you want at a glance.

PIN your school time-table inside the lid of your desk (or in the lid of your school case), where it will keep flat and easy-to-see until you know each lesson and your homework programmes off by heart.

MAKE a little case of cretonne or artificial leather to hold your school comb—if you haven't a case already. This will keep your comb much cleaner and prevent it from picking up oddments of fluff from your pockets. A case always looks so much daintier, too.

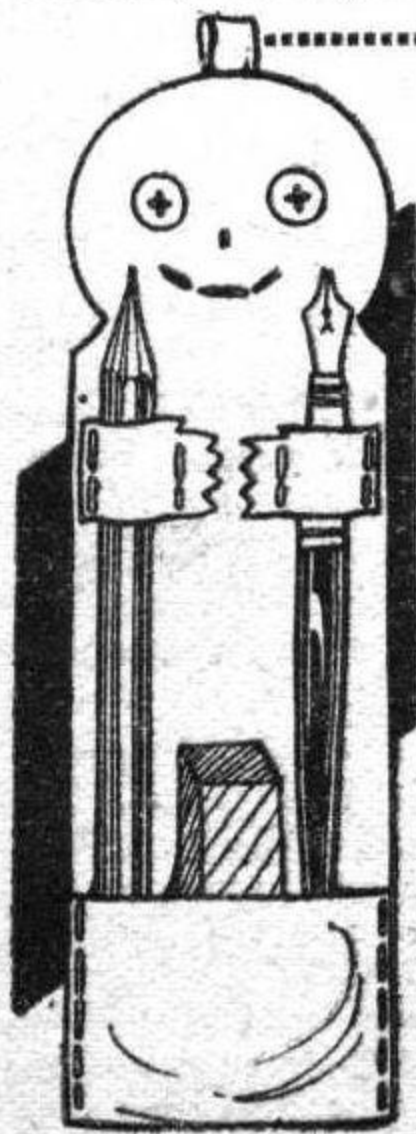
GIVE your school case a thorough turn-out. A generous polishing with brown shoe polish or furniture cream will work wonders with the appearance of the leather. If it is rather dirty in places, try rubbing the inside of a banana skin over the leather before the polishing process.

TAKE out the laces from your school shoes and give them the cleaning of their lives, all in-and-out of the eyelet-holes. Iron the laces if they are creased, or else treat yourself to a new pair, before putting them in again.



HERE'S A CHEERY PENCIL-CASE!

You could make it for a small sister or friend who is going to school for the first time—or for yourself!



THIS friendly-looking snowman would make a lovely little gift to a small person just starting school. Or it would make a present for yourself, to hang up by the table or desk where you do your homework.

He is made from a piece of thick material—felt for preference—measuring three inches by twelve inches.

A HANDY POCKET

Fold up two inches at the bottom and stitch up the sides so that a pocket is formed.

Shape the other end into a circle to form a head and sew two buttons there for the eyes. Then mark the mouth and nose with plain stitches.

Cut out two comic hands from a piece of similar material and sew them on in two places so that they make loops. (Take a look at the picture for this part, will you?)

Make a loop at the top to hang up Mr. Snowman, and the case itself is complete. Then for the filling. Slip a pencil under

one of the hand-loops and a pen under the other, so that the ends of pen and pencil stand in the pocket at his feet. This pocket will also hold a rubber and a nib or so.

Mention of new nibs reminds me how difficult they are to write with. If you remember to dip a new nib in warm water and then wipe it dry before using it, you'll find it will run over the paper much more easily.

Often, too, a nib that has been well used is almost impossible to remove from a pen-holder. Before you throw both away in despair try washing the end of the pen. Once the old ink is removed it will probably come out quite easily.

(Continued from page 13.)

"Thank—oh, thanks, Faith!" breathed Mabs.

She darted out. Faith, with a smile, took her place. By the hedge in Lane's field Mabs joined Babs, who had the delinquent's coat and hat on her arm. Hurriedly they slipped out into the road, intending to intercept the Courtfield bus as it passed. Mabs laughed deliciously.

"Oh, Babs, that ripping cousin of yours! Isn't she just a sport?"

Wasn't she? But if they could have seen Faith as Mabs said that, if they could have been present in the classroom—

For Faith, bending over her desk, was winding up a small clockwork mouse.

She chuckled.

Then she put the mouse on the floor, immediately afterwards leaping up on to the desk. From Faith's lips came a piercing scream.

Sarah Harrigan, at the end of the corridor, talking to Miss Bullivant, jumped as she heard it. Girls at the other end of the corridor heard it, too, and in one wave all rushed towards the scene of the sudden commotion.

Bang! went the door as Miss Bullivant flung it open. Then—

"Faith!" she cried.

"A mouse! A mouse!" Faith shrieked. "Look at it!"

She was standing on the desk, hugging her skirts round her legs.

Miss Bullivant stared, then grimly she went forward, picking up the mouse. She laughed.

"Faith, you foolish thing. Someone has been playing a joke on you. This is only a clockwork mouse."

"Oh dear!" gasped Faith. "Oh—oh dear!" And then she stared as Sarah grimly looked down upon her. "Oh, Sarah!" she feebly spluttered.

"What are you doing here?" Sarah demanded. "And where is Mabel Lynn?"

"Mum-Mabs?" Faith stuttered. "Oh, Sarah—"

"Where's Mabel Lynn?" Sarah relentlessly repeated. "Miss Bullivant, this girl has taken Mabel's place. Mabel should have been detained. Faith has taken her place, and if it hadn't been for this mouse trick we should never have known. Faith—"

Faith bit her lip.

"Oh, please, Sarah, don't blame Mabs! I—I wanted her to go to the dress rehearsal at—at the ice rink, you know."

"Oh!" Sarah's eyes snapped. "Right—ho!" she said grimly. "Miss Bullivant, will you come with me—to the ice rink?"

"I most certainly will," Miss Bullivant said.

And they hurried away together to catch the bus, which at that moment came bowling along.

But there was no need for them to go all the way to the ice rink. For on the bus, having caught it farther up the lane, were Babs and Mabs themselves!

HALF AN HOUR later, while Mabs, looking heartbroken, was doing her detention task in the class-room, Faith looked in at Study No. 4. Barbara Redfern was there, sitting by the fire.

"Babs, I—I'm sorry," Faith faltered. "But—but— Oh dear! I hope you don't blame me. But—but Helen's father has just rung through—"

"Yes?" Babs asked distantly.

"And—and I had to tell him that Mabs couldn't come," Faith said. "So

he—he asked me. He says that if I don't go the whole rehearsal will be held up. Babs, you don't mind?"

Babs smiled scornfully.

"Would it matter," she asked, "if I did mind? It's what you've been working for, isn't it?"

Faith looked at her in horror.

"Oh, Barbara, you surely don't think—"

"No," Babs said swiftly, "I don't think; I'm sure. I'm sure you arranged that mouse business. You're artful, aren't you? All along you were scheming for this, and making everybody like you by appearing to help Mabs. You want to be queen, don't you? Well, now you've got your chance. And I hope"—Babs choked as Faith, looking a little scared, backed out of the study—"that your conscience lets you make a success of it, you—you rotten little hypocrite!"

Thanks to Babs!



WELL, it was all dashed bad luck, the Fourth Form agreed sympathetically. And nobody really could be cross with

Faith for being afraid of what she had mistaken for a real mouse. Half the Form affirmed they would just have died of fright if they had been in her position.

Jolly bad luck for old Mabs, of course—but, well, perhaps it wasn't altogether too unfair, considering the sporting and unselfish way in which Faith had worked to give her rival the chance.

Anyway, there it was. Faith, whatever anybody thought about it now, was the chosen carnival queen, and unless some other entirely untoward incident occurred, Faith would be the central figure in the great event at Courtfield to-morrow.

So the Fourth Form argued, all on the

side of Faith Ashton; and to those arguments Mabs, with a heavy heart, and nearer to tears than she had ever been in her life before, listened that evening after her detention, in the Common-room.

With her sweet-faced rival looking not at all happy about things, resting one sympathetic hand on her shoulder, and murmuring in tones of self-contrition from time to time.

"Oh, Mabel darling, I'm so sorry—so, so awfully sorry. If I wasn't so sillily afraid of wretched mice!"

But Babs was not there—Babs at the moment was in the Second Form Common-room. For the clockwork mouse had been identified as little Dolores Essendon's property, and Babs was making a few inquiries.

"But I didn't lend my mouse to anyone, you know, Barbara," she said. "Faith took it. I saw Faith taking it this morning from my box in the play-room."

"And she knew that?" Babs asked.

"Oh, no!" Dolores shook her head. "You see, I was behind the screen there. We were playing hide-and-seek, and I was the hider, you know. But I didn't like to say anything to Faith, because she has been so nice and kind to me."

"I see," Babs murmured. She fished for a threepenny-piece. "Dolores, will you do me a great, big favour?" she asked. "Two favours, in fact. Please don't say anything to anyone that you've told me this. And next, let me borrow this mouse."

"Why, yes, of course, Barbara," Dolores said.

Babs smiled. With the mouse in her possession, she left the room. Immediately she took her way to the Fourth Form Common-room. Faith turned as she came in, and looked a little uncertain.

Immediately Babs nodded her head.

(Concluded on page 20)



WHO DID? Babs' enemy? Someone who hated her? Someone who everybody knew was hostile to the popular Fourth Form Captain?

NO! No one like that . . . apparently. It was none other than Faith Ashton, Barbara's own cousin, who seems to adore her, who deliberately and callously takes the credit for something which Babs invented herself.

A scheme, you see, for making money for the local hospitals near Cliff House. Babs thought of it . . . only for Faith to put it forward as her own, and take all the credit and applause. And when Babs, disgusted, refused to help her treacherous cousin, Cliff House murmured: "Jealous, eh? of a topping girl like Faith!" Don't miss this wonderful LONG COMPLETE story of the famous chums. It takes the strange conflict between Babs and Faith Ashton a step nearer the climax. Never has HILDA RICHARDS written more powerfully. The story will hold you spellbound. Order next Saturday's SCHOOLGIRL at once.

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(Now read on).

After Her!

IN great excitement Betty voiced an eager suggestion to those who were with her on the lamplit pavement, outside the Willoughby town house.

"What about going after Miss Lester—yes, all the way to Sandton Bay? Can't some of us do that?"

"Catch the midnight train that she is catching?" Polly panted. "Without letting her see us! Oh, there's an idea surely! Lady Kitty—and you fellows—come on now! Say you're for doing it!"

"I am," agreed Dave quietly. "All right! Sandton Bay for some of us, straight away," Lord Freddie cheerfully decreed. "And if that midnight train is to be caught, there's not a moment to waste. Let's get indoors—"

"And see Mrs. Willoughby about who's to go," Betty nodded. "She'll understand—quick as lightning."

Then, before any of them had taken more than a couple of strides towards the front door steps, Lady Kitty made her own ready-witted suggestion.

"My brother and I will run round home in his car and grab a few things. We can change afterwards in the train. And those of you who will be coming had better do the same."

"You have six minutes," Lord Freddie gaily warned. "Come on, then, Kitty!"

And he and she dived into the waiting car, whilst the rest ran up the house steps.

The fine Roysler was flashing off along the midnight street ere Betty and her few chums had been admitted to the house, and before one of the precious six minutes had sped, brother

and sister were at their own front door. It was only just round the corner from the Willoughbys'.

And exactly within the remaining five minutes the car was back again. Jack, Dave, Betty, and Polly were all ready, and they came running down to the pavement even as Lord Freddie drew up his car at the kerb.

"They all wanted to come—were simply howling to be allowed!" Betty breathlessly imparted to Lady Kitty, directly the filled-up car was speeding off again. "But Mrs. Willoughby just wouldn't think of it."

Some easy looking at wrist-watches by the bright interior light of the fine car lessened the general anxiety regarding time. Then the Roysler was held up at an unavoidable crossing, where a great stream of after-theatre traffic was flowing by.

It seemed to the desperate, would-be travellers by the midnight train from Waterloo that the policeman in control never would signal the "Come on!" to them. And, even whilst they were held up like this, they heard the chimes

From London, gay and colourful, to Devon, bleak but beautiful, the Morcove Concert Party trail their treacherous chaperon.

from Westminster sounding the quarter to twelve.

But at last the car could shoot ahead again. Trafalgar Square was cleverly dodged, and suddenly they were speeding straight for Westminster Bridge. And now Big Ben loomed, bright and high above them in the night.

Eight minutes to midnight!

Over Westminster Bridge at real speed; then a whiz aside into the runway round to Waterloo. Five to twelve, and they were in the station yard, all jumping out.

"This car o' mine," Lord Freddie said to a saluting porter. "Get her looked after, please."

He gave his name, handed over some money, and dashed after the others.

Waterloo was very much in a state of midnight deadness. Past shuttered bookstalls and confectionery shops streaked the five, to where a sleepy ticket inspector stood at a platform barrier, beneath a much-lettered sign. Doors were being slammed along the train.

"Tickets—"

"Pay on the train—or at the other

end," Lord Freddie said urgently.

"Go on then."

They did that, right enough! Full-pelt they dashed along the dreary-looking platform, hearing the forward guard giving blasts upon a whistle.

"Hurry up, there!"

They drew level with the tail-end guard's van, and dived inside, one after another, with such successful swiftness as entitled Jack, for one, to do a dance upon the spacious floor.

Then the train gave a startling jolt, and he fell against Polly.

"Wow!"

"Don't act the goop!" she snorted.

"Sit down!"

"Where?"

And there was time for merriment over the absence of seating, before the guard came swinging aboard, tucking away his whistle.

In a bluff way he laughed at them all.

"Where're you for?"

"We really can't say," Lord Freddie pleaded, with that charming smile of his. "But, naturally, we have no idea of being in your way for long. Sleepers on this train?"

"Firsts and thirds—yes, sir."

"Good! Could these others stick

around here whilst I go along and fix up things for the night? What we don't want to do," stressed Lord Freddie, rocking away to the exit into the train corridor, "is to disturb others who may be already getting down to it. Thanks so much!"

In a few minutes he was back, and a gleeful smile implied more than mere satisfactory arrangements about "sleepers" for the night.

"She didn't see me, but I saw her!" he chuckled to the others. "So for goodness' sake be careful to dodge her whilst we're on the train!"

Down to Devon!

THE carriage wheels kept up their steady beat in the night—rurr, rurr, rurr!—a lullaby for all passengers, whether feet-up in an ordinary compartment or enjoying the luxury of a "sleeper."

Rurr, rurr, rurr!

Betty and Polly had one sleeping-compartment all to themselves, and were as "comfy" as could be. Now

Polly was fast asleep. Like most mortals who are full of energy and dash by day, she had a wonderful way of dropping off as soon as her head found the pillow.

But Betty, with that active brain of hers, was still awake.

To her the monotonous sounds of the express were a reminder of how often this very journey had been made—on the way back to Morcove School for another term! And now—

With a fortnight of the January holidays still to run, she and Polly were travelling Morcove way like this. By a midnight train out of Waterloo, speeding on steadily in the darkness across the snowbound countryside, and due to reach Exeter long before the wintry dawn had come!

And from that important junction far away in the West Country, they would speed on again, perhaps by car. Sandton Bay their objective, only a few miles from Morcove, for it was certain that Miss Lester was herself journeying to Sandton—suddenly, and in secret!

There was a moment at last when Betty almost drowsed off in her bunk. Then her mind seemed to start back into a fresh alertness.

The problem, the mystery of Miss Lester—it was altogether so teasing.

Why—why had she gone to such lengths to frustrate the Morcove Concert Party in its efforts to raise that money for the Holiday Home Scheme? Why on earth should anyone not wish that charitable purpose to prosper?

Those, along with many others, were still questions that had to be answered. Well! Perhaps every answer would be found at Sandton Bay.

One thing, at any rate, was crystal clear by now. Miss Lester, finding the "M.C.P." more than a match for her original scheming, had resorted to a fresh plan.

The engine whistled shrilly just before rushing through a closed junction. The carriage wheels clack-clacked loudly over points, then settled down to that steady purr once more.

And now Betty's thoughts of the long journey's end made her hear the sound of waves along the shore in that persistent murmur of the train.

Nearly asleep, in fancy she was somewhere near the rocky shore at Sandton, was getting her first sight of Rock Hill House.

She seemed to see it standing all by itself on the outskirts of Sandton—a roomy residence, once the home of a wealthy man, whose pride it had been for many a long year.

Then, in his old age, the owner of Rock Hill House had become eccentric, and the once lovely place had been sadly neglected.

But Sandton Bay itself was a coming watering-place, and so the zealous Holiday Home Committee had known they were very lucky to obtain an "option" on Rock Hill House, to buy it by a certain date for a comparatively low figure.

Betty was thinking thus when, at long last, she fell asleep. Confusing dreams followed such a thoughtful lying awake. "Old Hearthrugs" was whinneying very bad-temperedly as he ramped about the stage.

Betty awoke, and knew instantly that what had been the whinneying of the stage pony in her dreams was really the whistling of the engine.

The brakes were on, no doubt slowing the tram, on account of another junction.

Then suddenly the fastened door of

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the sleeping compartment was rapped.

Out of her bunk tumbled Betty, in the day clothes that, like Polly, she had been compelled to keep on during the night.

"Hi, Polly!" she called. "We're stopping, I think."

"Eh? Wha'? Where— Oh, of course!"

Betty, chuckling as she got that response from an awakened, bewildered Polly, opened the compartment door.

"Exeter, girls! Had a good night?"

That was Lady Kitty, as vivacious as ever at this unearthly hour—five o'clock in the morning.

"Gosh, Exeter?" jerked Betty. "How we must have slept!"

"Exeter!" Polly imitated a porter's bawl. "Change for the Barncombe Junction line and Morcove!"

"S-sh!" Lady Kitty merrily cautioned, finger-at-lip. "My brother knocked me up just now to warn you girls. Got to leave the train here, without being seen by you know who."

"I guess we do," said Polly. "Righty-ho!"

"Miss Lester's bound to get out here, too," Betty gravely nodded. "But we'll manage."

"Back end of the train," Lady Kitty whispered, pointing that way along the corridor. "One blessing, it's still pitch dark. Platform lights, though—so mind!"

Then she flitted back to her own compartment.

The train stopped. Porters alongside on the platform mumbled, rather than called out. Waste steam hissed softly.

Half a minute more, and all six passengers who had caught the train at the very last moment, at midnight, were scurrying, one behind another, to the back end of the corridor.

There a carriage door was warily opened, and it was Lord Freddie, who, having stepped down first, handed out his sister and the two Morcovians.

"Quick—behind the milk-cans!" he gleefully advised. "Look sharp—she's getting out now!"

So, too keyed up to notice the bitter cold after the warmth of the train, they got to cover behind all the milk-cans, which, luckily, were empties, not needing to be handled at present. Perhaps a dozen other passengers had alighted, and Miss Lester was one of them—hurrying to get off the platform.

Betty, peering around the edge of the cans, saw Miss Lester go past a ticket collector.

"She's given up her ticket!" Betty whispered. "No farther by train, then!"

Dave nipped across to where he could see out over some spiked railings into a lamplit yard. After a minute, he came back.

"Car waiting for her. She's just got in."

"Ah, friend Steve!" Lord Freddie promptly inferred. And he lighted a cigarette.

"That's the second before breakfast!" Lady Kitty commented.

"Breakfast!" echoed Jack, beating gloved hands together. "Gee, wouldn't a cup of tea go down just nicely—and eggs and bacon, boys, with toast and marmalade!"

"Come on, then!" urged Lord Freddie.

And in a little while he and they were all sitting down to just such a heartening meal as Jack had envisaged.

Lord Freddie was soon cigarette-in-mouth again, going away to hire a car

When he came back with it, not even Jack could rival him for gaiety.

"Going to be lovely!" he flippantly predicted. "The roads, they tell me, are pretty well caked with snow. By the way, how do you like the look of her?" he consulted Jack and Dave, while indicating the car. "Exactly!"—as their amused grins told him. "But there she is, for what she's worth. And that, I suppose it would be fair to say, is about five pounds!"

"You haven't bought her?" Betty suddenly laughed. "Cheaper, perhaps, if I had. But don't get in yet—"

"What!" Polly impatiently exploded. "I must," said Lord Freddie, "first get shaved. No hurry really!"

And he was absent ten minutes, in the hotel where they had had breakfast, rejoining them then in a very spruce state.

"This is your country," he affably remarked to the four juniors. "So sit

along a moorland road lumpy with frozen slush, both Morcovians gazed fondly, wistfully

Strange—so very strange—for them to be down this way at such a time as this! And just as strange to see the dear old school in such a dark and lifeless state, when in term-time it housed so many happy-hearted girls.

The same when the car did its swift run, presently, along Barncombe's quaint old High Street. Everything looking so different, so dead!

Betty and Polly joked about all this, but there was emotion in much of their merriment. The car got going upon the straight run out to Sandton Bay, and then the purpose of the great journey down from London reasserted itself to grave effect

A mile short of the growing seaside town they turned aside into a by-road that would get them by a back way to Rock Hill House. In a little while they were confronted with an old one-

Stealthily, after a good deal of creeping through the deep cover that overgrown shrubberies offered, they had climbed in, one after another, over the low sill of a broken kitchen window.

Fallen plaster from the ceiling had been trodden upon by people at different times, and the bare floor was footmarked all over.

"They've been through here," Dave suddenly declared.

"They have?" Polly said amazedly, under her breath. "How do you know?"

"Petrol." He sniffed. "First thing I noticed."

"Some on the Steve-chap's gloves," Lord Freddie smiled his shrewd reasoning. "Tipping in a canful, maybe, ready for getting away."

"Sh!" gestured Jack, where he had got to a doorway leading out into the passage. "Gosh!" he breathed, coming away from the door on tiptoe. "They're about! Outside—quick as we can!"



BETTY, peering over the top of the milkcans, saw Miss Lester give up her ticket at the barrier. The unsuspecting traitor was being trailed to her secret meeting-place!

beside me, Dave, and do the guide act. The rest—sit tight!"

Off they went, adding their own peals of laughter and a great guffawing to all the initial spitting and banging of an engine not yet in the mood.

"But we'll soon warm her!" his lordship, at the wheel, jovially remarked.

Out of the city's still dark and empty streets they made their way, into the great white wastes of the snow-covered countryside.

In spite of the darkness and the awful state of the roads—icy patches here and great drifts there—they made good speed. For an hour and a half it was a sturdy struggling along, with only a few really nasty checks.

Then, when at last a tardy daylight was eerily brightening the landscape, Betty and Polly cried out together in thrilled tones:

"The school! Look! Morcove—there it is!"

Away upon their right loomed a great pile of buildings, the windows all in darkness—and one window, Study No. 12!

For as long as they could keep the school in sight, whilst the car jiggered

armed signpost giving the direction: Rock Hill House—½ mile.

There was not much snow in the narrow lane along which the signpost pointed. As near to the sea as this, very little snow had remained about. Even so, Lord Freddie did not drive on down that lane. Instead, he took the car a little farther on, then pulled up.

Out jumped he and Dave, so the rest did the same.

After prowling on foot a few hundred yards along the approach-lane—which was nowhere wide enough to allow of passing—they came upon another car.

Left untended, it had a motor-rug thrown about the radiator to keep the engine warm, and away from it went footprints in the patchy snow—those of a woman and a man.

Morcove & Co. were on the trail!

The Room Upstairs

"BY Jove! Bit creepy!" "Awful, to see the place in such a state!"

They were inside the House now.

And so, out in the nipping open air again, all six hastily crept round to another side of the empty building.

Soon they could hear sounds that meant the couple's leaving the house, by means of that broken kitchen window.

Excited smiles and nudges were exchanged. "Back now!" was the idea for all to act upon eagerly. Only another minute, and they were under the leaky roof of Rock Hill House again, crowding across that kitchen floor to find the main hall.

From there they started a systematic inspection, going first upstairs, in view of the descent from there of Miss Lester and her confederate.

"Beautiful old house, really," Betty murmured to Polly, as they climbed a first flight behind their companions.

"Lovely!" Polly nodded. "And the position! The sea—the bay—"

"Only," Betty sniffed, "I don't smell the sea at present. I do smell petrol, though! Say, you in front," and she ran on to join them on the bed-room landing, "can you understand why there's still such a reek of petrol?"

"Yes," said Dave. "Eh?"

But instead of answering, he took some quick strides along a dingy corridor, suddenly checked, just past a closed door, and came back to it. He seized the knob, gave it a twist and sent the door swinging wide round; and then—

"Oh!" yelled Betty and Polly, whilst Jack shouted: "Hi!" at what could be seen.

On the unfendered hearth of a littered room a candle was burning. No container held it; but, stuck down to the old stone slab with its own wax, it had a quantity of rag and crumpled paper heaped close about it. And this room, as they all rushed into it, was heavily charged with petrol vapour.

"Good law!" cried Lord Freddie. "Setting the place on fire!"

Then Dave, rushing across, smothered

the candle with one well-judged stamp. "But—" Betty muttered. "But still I can't see why—I just can't understand! It's—"

And there her fierce voice broke off. Betty was not alone in being amazed at something Dave was doing now.

Again he was stamping the hearth, just where he had stamped before. As there was not a spark of fire to be dealt with, it seemed a daft thing for him to be doing. But, next moment, there came his quiet:

"Yes, I thought so, that first time I stamped. Here, Jack, this slab of stone is wonky, as if made to move!"

"What! Oh, boy!" shouted Jack, darting to lend his pal a hand. "By jingo, she comes right out," he roared on, as between them they lifted the old

hearthstone and dumped it aside. "And look, all— Hi!"

"Yes, what are those?" clamoured Betty and Polly. "Goodness!"

For they could see several rotting bags that bulged as if crammed full, packed together in a recess beneath the stone's lodging-place.

"What's in them?"

Jack and Dave each reached down a hand to take up a bag; but in both instances the rotting material burst, starting a trickle of yellow coins.

"Gold—gold!" yelled Jack. "A miser's hoard of sovereigns!"

WHAT a thrilling discovery! But even more thrilling—and startling too—are the things that happen to Betty & Co. next week. You simply must read all about them.

"NOT THE GIRL SHE SEEMED!"

(Concluded from page 16)

"Hallo, Faith!" she said quietly. "I—I say, I've forgotten to congratulate you, haven't I? It's awfully tough on Mabs; but, after all, I don't wonder really that you're scared of horrid mice."

Faith smiled.

"Oh, Babs, I'm so glad! I realised you were upset, and—and didn't really mean the things you said to me."

"O.K., then," said Babs. "Perhaps you'd like me to help you dress tomorrow for the carnival? Marjorie will help, too, won't you, Marjorie?"

"Why, of course!" Marjorie said.

Faith gurgled. She looked happy then. She might not have felt so happy, however, if she had realised what was at the back of Babs' mind.

And in the morning—

Quivering was Faith's excitement. Yet she still did not forget to make one last false protestation of regret to Mabs before, after breakfast, she flew up to the Fourth Form dormitory, where Babs and Marjorie, her frock all laid out, were waiting to help her dress.

And great her glee as she struggled into the frock, terrific her excitement, as she preened herself before the mirror. Until, all at once—

"Oh, look—look!" shrieked Babs.

She turned. On the bed stood Babs, her eyes wide. Trembling, she was pointing at some object hidden behind the bed from Faith's vision. Faith stared.

"Barbara dear, what's the matter?"

"A—a mouse!" stuttered Babs.

"A mouse?" Faith laughed. "Wait a minute, Babs dear." And she ran round the bed, while Marjorie stared in sudden, shocked amazement.

One hasty dive, and Faith pounced upon the clockwork toy which was running round her.

"Why, it's the clockwork mouse that I—" and then she stopped.

For Babs was on the floor now, and there was no look of fright on her face. Marjorie, in wide-eyed excitement, eyed her from the other side of the bed.

And in that moment Faith knew what she had done. Realised, in her excitement at being arrayed in the ice queen's dress, that she had forgotten her supposed fear of mice.

"Oh, I—I—I—" she stuttered.

"All right." Babs nodded. "Rather gives the game away, doesn't it?" she asked. "What will the Form say when we tell them how gallantly you came to the rescue of a girl who was afraid of a mouse—you, who yesterday smashed up

Mabs' chances of appearing in the carnival because you were afraid of mice? It will sound rather a queer story, won't it, Faith?"

Faith had turned white.

"Oh, Babs, I'm sorry! But, Babs, you wouldn't tell—"

"Won't I?" Babs replied grimly.

"Don't you think I ought to tell?" she asked. "Don't you think the Form ought to know what sort of a little sneak you are? You borrowed that mouse from Dolores Essendon yesterday, to use it and get Mabs detained, at the same time pretending you were doing her a good turn. All along you've plotted your way into this carnival—at the same time making out you were the sweet and unselfish friend of the very girl you planned to defeat!"

Faith bit her lip. She looked appealingly at Marjorie, who, with an expression of disgust on her face, turned her head away.

"Then—then what do you want me to do?" she asked.

"What you ought to do, that's all," Babs said steelily. "Give Mabs back the part you've cheated her out of. I give you half an hour to do it," she added. "If you haven't done it at the end of that time, then I shall go down to the Common-room and tell them myself. Marjorie will back me up."

Faith looked at Babs, then, quickly tearing off the dress she wore, put on her own frock and went out.

Mabs, in the Common-room, jumped as she came hurrying towards her five minutes later, the frock on her arm. Faith's eyes were shining.

"Mabs dear—oh, Mabs darling, take this!" she said. "It's not fair. I—I can't go on with it. No, Mabs, I insist. Why should I be the queen when it might mean so much to you? Mabs, please, you've got to go!"

A murmur. Mabs stared in consternation.

"But, Faith, I can't. They—they've chosen you!"

"Well," Faith said determinedly, and she laid the frock on Mabs' arm, "there it is. I'm not going. I don't want to go. And if I'm not there they'll have to have a queen, won't they? Mabs dear—please, to please me," she added softly, and bent forward and kissed Mabs on the cheek.

Mabs gulped. Up from the others went a cheer, and Faith, with a merry laugh, skipped out.

For a moment Mabs looked at the frock, then at the door.

"Oh, what a wonderful, wonderful friend!" she breathed, and laughed. All happiness was Mabs then.

AND ALL happiness that night after the carnival. Such a breathlessly exciting day!

All happiness, because she had made such a wonderful success of her part; happier still, because, as a result of that success, she had been invited by Mr. Selsey to play the juvenile lead in her father's ice ballet.

A day of thrills, of excitement, of triumph for Mabs.

"And, Faith," she said that night in the Common-room, "oh, Faith, I owe it all to you!"

Faith smiled radiantly.

"I'm so glad it's been such a success!" she said. "But don't give me all the credit, you know. Dear, dear Barbara played a big part, too. You know, Mabs, I think you're the very luckiest girl in the world to have such a sweet and loyal friend as Barbara. Don't you, Clara?"

"Of course!" Clara said, and looked at Babs, and was rather astonished to surprise the grim and measuring look which at that moment was passing between her and Marjorie Hazeldene. The Tomboy frowned.

"Oh, Babs, aren't you pleased?"

But Babs, for a wonder, did not seem to hear. She had moved nearer to Marjorie, whose rather worried glance was plainly telling Babs that she wished to speak to her alone.

While Clara, uncomprehending, stared, the two moved away.

"Babs," Marjorie said worriedly—"oh, Babs, I just can't stand by and see Faith getting all the credit! After all, Babs, it was through you—and you only—that Mabs got her chance. It was your triumph, Babs. Why not tell Mabs?"

But Babs shook her head.

"No," she decided—"at least, not yet. Mabs is happy. Mabs believes in Faith. Why upset her by starting a row now? Apart from that, the Form is pleased with Faith—even Clara! Let Faith go her own way. I don't fancy, somehow, after this scare that she'll try her two-faced tricks again!"

Which was a generous sentiment, and one which found an echo in Marjorie's heart.

But if Babs had only known!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

(See page 16 for full details of next week's dramatic story of Babs & Co., and that remarkable newcomer to Cliff House—Faith Ashton.)

Another delightful COMPLETE laughter-story featuring irrepressible—



When Joy Sharpe, rich but restricted, wants to be free, she just disguises as a poor gipsy. And then, like a sprite of fun and frolic, she casts her magic spell over rich and poor alike.

One Snowball—Disaster!

“GOOD? Phew! I’ll be so good, Miss Retcham, you won’t know me! I won’t make a sound. I won’t talk. I’ll just work and work!” said Joy Sharpe.

And Joy meant it, too.

She did not usually have such good intentions; but now her eyes sparkled and shone, and there was a glow of excited colour in her cheeks. In truth, she felt more like jumping on to the school-room table, or hurling all the books in the air, than just sitting down quietly in studious manner.

It was all she could do at this moment not to obey those wild impulses.

For Joy was to go to a pantomime!

And so excited was she that she could even have hugged her governess, Miss Retcham, only the latter’s appearance was far too forbidding.

Joy was in the school-room at the Gables, her home, where she lived with her grandfather and her governess.

As a rule, Miss Retcham had the final say in everything that concerned Joy, for granddad was a scholarly man, more at home in his library than anywhere else. But to-day he had suggested that Joy should go to the local pantomime, and Miss Retcham had been reluctantly forced to agree. Perhaps he might not have suggested it at all had he not received two tickets from a friend who had actually written the book of the panto.

“And to think it’s what I’ve been wanting to do ever since it was first advertised!” breathed Joy.

Miss Retcham smiled grimly; her face was hard, and her eyes lacked the soft kindness that spells happiness for others.

“It is quite certain that whatever has been in your mind during the last few days, Joy, it has not been work!” she said coldly.

Joy composed herself, and tried to be solemn.

“I’ll work hard this morning, Miss Retcham!” she vowed.

And, as though to give dramatic effect to her words, Miss Retcham went swiftly from the room and sharply closed the door.

Joy sighed and sat down, but looked up again as Miss Retcham peered in.

Fortunately, Joy was dragging a textbook on geography towards her at the moment.

“If you do not behave in an altogether exemplary way, Joy, you will not go! You had better understand that. Your going is not as inevitable as the sun’s rising.”

Bang! went the door again, and the governess’ departing steps could be heard.

“Well, I am going!” said Joy to herself. “And I’m not going to think about Cinderella, or the ugly sisters, or the ponies, or the coach, or the prince, or the songs, or the frocks—I wonder if they’ll be real ponies!” she mused.

For it was hard to think of the rainfall of India when there were such other exciting things to have in mind.

But Joy battled with herself. She cast out the ponies, and the fairy coach, the pumpkin, and the fairy godmother, and concentrated her mind upon a dull-looking map.

For five minutes Joy worked, and then came a sound that made her raise her head.

That sound was a soft whistle.

Joy looked up, and gave a guilty start; for she knew that whistle. It belonged to Boko, the butcher’s delivery boy.

Joy half-rose, then sat down again.

Chatting with Boko was one of her pleasures. He was a cheeky lad, with a sense of humour, and a good sport. Sometimes Joy had bribed him to bring her back toffee from the village, and Boko was a skilled shot, who could throw a small bag of sweets unerringly through the school-room window.

But to-day Joy was on her best behaviour. Even if she opened the window and told Boko to go away, Miss Retcham might hear her.

“You should need no such incentive as this!” retorted the governess, going to the door. “You should work because you want to improve your mind; because you do not want to grow up a fool; because it is your duty to work; and, finally, although it may seem to you an eccentric suggestion, because it would please me.”

And if the governess caught her talking to Boko, there would be a row, meaning—no pantomime.

So Joy did not move from the table. She hoped that, if she did not open the window, Boko would come to the conclusion that she was not in the school-room and go away.

Again the whistle came, this time from just under the window. In another minute, if Boko kept on whistling, Miss Retcham would hear him. And then the fat would be in the fire just the same.

Joy, desperately anxious not to miss her chance of going to the pantomime, crossed to the window to warn Boko and urge him to go away.

It was odd that he took the chance, considering that he was really quite scared of the governess.

Opening the window, Joy then jumped aside suddenly as something white came whistling through the air—a snowball!

With a thud, it landed on the table, smothered Miss Retcham’s notebook, and sent the inkpot dancing.

“Boko, you duffer!” breathed Joy, peeping out. “You just dare throw another!”

Boko had drawn back from the house, and now, as he spotted Joy, he pointed towards the gates, beckoning her.

By IDA MELBOURNE

“I can’t come out!” hissed Joy. “Don’t be so silly! It’s lesson-time!”

“He’s got the coat!” called Boko excitedly. “Buck up!”

“Coat!” echoed Joy, bewildered.

But Boko did not explain. Dashing to where his cycle leaned against the side wall, he mounted it and whizzed off at speed.

“What ever could he have meant?” blinked Joy, quite dazed.

But there was no chance of finding out now. And besides—

“Phew! If I don’t clear up this mess before she comes in—” began Joy, in alarm.

Even as she spoke, however, she heard the governess’ returning steps. In frenzied haste, Joy tried to gather up the snow and throw it out of the window. But it was scattered too much for her to succeed.

The door of the school-room opened, and Miss Retcham glared in. She halted, drew up, and then, lips tightening, strode to the table and picked up her book, shaking snow from it out of the window.

“So this is how you behave in my absence?” she demanded angrily. “This is your idea of being good, is it, Joy?”

“I—I—” faltered Joy, not knowing what on earth to say.

BETWEEN OURSELVES



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.

It's our talented—sorry, no flattery!—I mean, popular writer of adventure stories to whom that letter's gone. And the story that caused your Editor to break his pledge is her very latest work.

Without a word of exaggeration, Miss Chester has—has—whoa! Just in time. Nearly did it again. But I know. I'll just say what the story is, and leave the praising of Miss Chester to you! The story is undoubtedly the finest of its kind *THE SCHOOLGIRL* has ever published.

Thrilling, romantic, glamorous, and often very, very amusing, it is called:

"THE JUNGLE HIKERS,"

and tells of the adventures that come to two English girls, and their quaint little native companion, when they set out to hike through dark, mysterious Africa.

The enthralling opening chapters will appear next week. And by the way, I've just thought of something. I may not have broken that resolution after all. Flattery, I find—per my dictionary—is undue praise. Well, I don't think any praise of this story could be undue. What do you think? Do let me know, because if you agree with me about this story, then you'll have mended my broken resolution. For I shan't have done any flattery after all.

Another very special story in next Saturday's *SCHOOLGIRL* is the third in the Faith Ashton series by Miss Hilda Richards. It tells how that amazing, two-faced girl cleverly strikes another blow at Barbara Redfern, how she gains even more popularity at the expense of the Fourth captain.

But Babs has her triumph, too, in a way which is sure to please you. In fact, girls, I'm confident that the whole story will please you—very much.

As usual, of course, the next issue will contain another grand instalment of the Moreove serial, another delightful COMPLETE laughter-exploit of "Gipsy Joy," more of Pat's bright and instructive page, together with another Cliff House Celebrity.

Until next Saturday, then. With best wishes,

YOUR EDITOR.

MY DEAR READERS,—Oh dear! It's broken—no, nothing in the crockery line, or even my fountain-pen or shoe-lace. Something else; something I dearly wanted to preserve for at least twelve months, because it was most precious, even though nobody's ever seen it—not even me.

But I'd better explain, in case you think this is a new form of riddle. I'm speaking about one of my New Year resolutions.

Oh dear (once more)!

It's broken. And not even all the king's horses and all the king's men will ever be able to put it together again.

You see, I'd made up my mind on the morning of January 1st—at five minutes past eight, too!—that, among other things in the Good Resolution line, I'd never indulge in flattery again. Why? you ask. Well, because the previous day, in trying to be kind to a dear old aunt of mine, I inadvertently flattered her—and she didn't like it. She said I was deceitful and sly, and wanted to get round her. So, your Editor thought no more flattering people for me!

TOO LATE TO MEND.

And now I've just gone and thrown that splendid resolve overboard, without any hope of ever being able to rescue it.

I've sent off a letter to a friend of mine that's as charged with flattery as a shell with explosive. I know how it happened. The friend had sent me one of her stories to read, and it was really so magnificent that almost before I realised what I was doing I was hammering out compliments on my typewriter, and then, when it was too late, I sat up with a jolt and discovered the letter had been posted!

And now Miss Elizabeth Chester—Goodness! I'd forgotten to tell you.

"A snowball! It could not have come in had you not the window open. Who threw the snowball?"

Joy was silent. She did not want to sneak; for, although Boko merited the blame, his job might be at stake. Miss Retcham was quite capable of reporting him to his employer.

But there was no need to tell. Miss Retcham could guess.

"The butcher's errand-boy? Ah! Just what I suspected! You opened the window to talk to him, and then snowballed him, and he threw one back, the impertinent rascal!" stormed Miss Retcham.

Joy hastily denied it.

"Oh, no, Miss Retcham, that wasn't it at all!" she protested. "Really. You see—" But she could not go on; for the true explanation would sound even worse.

"Enough, Joy! I am going to the village, and I shall call in at the butcher's and report the boy."

"Oh, Miss Retcham, but—"

Joy was interrupted by the governess' uplifted hand.

"I do not want to hear any ridiculous excuses. As for you, and your part in this, Joy, you realise, of course, what will be your own punishment?"

Joy's heart sank into her boots. There was no need for Miss Retcham to say it—it was all too obvious. The pantomime was "off."

"You will stay at home doing work, instead of going to the pantomime!" said the governess grimly. "And you may have the satisfaction of knowing that you have deprived me of an afternoon's entertainment."

Without giving Joy a chance of saying anything else in her own defence, the governess went from the room, slamming the door.

Joy stood for a moment irresolute, tears in her eyes—tears of bitter disappointment. Then she braced herself. She never gave in easily, and she did not mean to be defeated now.

Boko was to blame. Yet something told her that Boko had not been acting in fun. He had thrown that snowball for some very definite reason.

"But what—what?" Joy asked herself, amazed. "Why did he say 'coat,' and point to the gates? If only he could explain!"

With new hope, she went quickly from the room. Miss Retcham would soon be on her way to the village. And when she was—Joy Sharpe meant to leave the house, too.

As soon as possible she had to find Boko and learn from him why he had wanted to attract her attention—what was amiss.

And if Boko had had some good reason for acting as he had done, then, even now, Miss Retcham might forgive him—and for Joy, the pantomime might yet be "on."

The urgent need was to find Boko!

Nakita on the Trail!

JOY SHARPE gently opened her wardrobe door, and pulled out a pretty frock. It was a gipsy frock, gay and charming, and with it was a pair of sandals, a cloak, and a shawl.

If Miss Retcham had seen those things there she would have been staggered, for they were the clothes worn by the gipsy girl, Nakita.

"Come on, Nakita!" murmured Joy. "You've got to get me out of this scrape."

Tinker, her pup, barked excitedly, and seemed to echo: "Come on, Nakita!"

But there was only Joy and Tinker in the room. Nakita, the gipsy girl, would be there in a minute—as soon as Joy had put on that pretty frock, sandals, and cloak.

For Joy Sharpe and Nakita were one and the same. Joy, rich girl, dressed in the gay frock and with her face stained dark brown, became Nakita, the mystery gipsy.

And not even Miss Retcham, who had often spoken to Nakita, had ever guessed that she was really her charge!

It took Joy but a few minutes to change, and, looking at her reflection in the mirror, she made quite sure that she really was well disguised.

There only remained Tinker now—and a dab of dye on his flank made him into "Slinker," the gipsy girl's dog.

"Now we'll find what young Boko meant," murmured Nakita to Slinker. "Something must have made him excited. It was something about a coat. What coat, though?"

She opened the bed-room door, peeped up and down the corridor, and then made for the servants' staircase, her secret way out of the house.

As a rule she could go down it without fear of meeting anyone, but to-day she paused half-way down. She could hear angry voices—and one of them was Miss Retcham's.

"I know I put my coat in that drying cupboard. And if it is not there—where is it?" she was demanding.

Cook answered with equal heat:

"If you put it there, it would be there still! I've got something better to do than move fur coats."

Nakita held her breath. She had thought Miss Retcham would be out of the house by this time.

"That fur coat is worth fifteen guineas!" came Miss Retcham's angry reply. "It must be found!"

Nakita crept farther down. She could reach the back door without being seen by either the governess or the cook, who were in the kitchen. But if she delayed, either of them might come into the corridor.

Quickly and softly Nakita crossed to the door, opened it, and stepped out into the snow. Then, Tinker at her heels, she ran on down the garden.

But she had gone only a dozen yards when she heard an angry shout from behind.

"Nakita!"

Nakita stopped and turned. Her heart sank with dismay. For the voice that had called was Miss Retcham's,

"Oh golly! If she saw me leave the house the game's up!" she told herself, in horror.

"Y-yes, lidy?" she called a little shakily, turning to face Miss Retcham, who stood in the doorway.

"Come here!"

Nakita retraced her steps and halted a few yards short of the governess. Miss Retcham, eyes blazing, was in one of the worst rages she had ever known.

"Y-yes, lidy? Anythink wrong?" asked Nakita.

"Wrong? Yes! Have you seen my fur coat? Have you dared to enter this house and move it?"

"Ooo, no, lidy!" said Nakita, aghast.

"Well, it's gone. It must have been stolen!"

And then, like a flash, the truth came to Nakita. She remembered Boko's excitement, and the mention of the coat.

"Stolen!" she gasped. "Why—"

"Don't pretend. You know something about it. I can tell that by the way you started," said the governess fiercely. "What are you doing loitering here, anyway? You come inside at once. I'm sending for the police."

That was enough. Nakita did not hesitate. She turned and ran for the gates. For though she could fool Miss Retcham, she did not want to take her chance with the police. They might take her finger-prints, and find at once that she was wearing dye. They might ask questions; where she lived, for instance, and that was one thing she could not answer.

In horror Nakita fled. But there was, too, another good reason for her flight. She had to find Boko!

In trying to clear herself as Joy she had let Nakita into a worse plight. For Nakita was being accused of a theft!

"My golly! Run, Slinker, run!" she urged. "We've got to find Boko. He must have seen someone with that fur coat. Oh, my goodness! We've just got to get it back!"

had an idea that his puppy barking struck terror into any heart.

"He might be a rough rascal," Nakita mused anxiously. "And he may guess I'm chasing him—"

The last thing she wanted was to arouse the man's suspicions. But if he saw her and took her for an ordinary gipsy girl he would hardly suspect that she was chasing him. There was no reason why he should think that she had heard about the stolen coat.

Nakita, turning over ideas in her mind, walked on slowly.

She knew that everything depended on her recovering the coat. For even if Boko did tell his story it might not be believed. He might have made up the story just to save Joy from blame about the snowball—and himself.

"And it's me she'll blame for stealing it," said Nakita worriedly. "She'll put the police on me."

If Miss Retcham did that, then Joy would never dare to be Nakita again.

Tinker, running ahead, suddenly barked excitedly, and then dodged as snow was flung at him from behind a bush.

Nakita pulled up short. She knew just what that meant. Tinker had found the man. He was hiding behind the bush.

"Slinker—here, yer young rascal!" she called in her best gipsy voice. "Not so much of it!"

Slinker, wagging his tail, ran back to her, and at the same moment a rough-looking man rose from behind the bush.

"You keep that dog away," he called nastily.

"All right, mister. No harm," said Nakita. "Just his fun."

Her heart was thumping with excitement. This was the man who had stolen the coat. And the coat was most likely hidden behind that bush even now.

It was a thrilling thought, and Nakita's eyes gleamed.

But there was all the difference in the

world between knowing that and getting possession of the coat, or capturing the thief.

All the same, Nakita had a quick brain, and it gave her confidence to feel that she looked like a gipsy girl. She did not care much what she said.

An idea she had been turning over in her mind occurred to her now, and, greatly daring, she decided to act on it.

"Say, mate," she said, "seen any people searching around here?"

"Searching for what?" he asked, frowning.

"Ah, that's telling! But haven't you heard about the miser's hoard?" asked Nakita, making up an exciting little story to intrigue him.

"Miser's hoard—hoard of what? Gold?" he asked keenly.

"Well, that's what they usually hoard," admitted Nakita. "But I bet someone's been here already. I'm late, as usual. The rumour's got around. I could do with a hundred pounds in gold, though."

She saw the man's eyes light up, and knew that he believed the story. There was no reason why he should doubt it. For why should a gipsy invent such a yarn? That was what he would ask himself.

"Ah! And so could I," he said. "Where's it hidden?"

"If I tell you," said Nakita, after a pause, "will you go halves in what you find?"

"Course I will," he said readily, with a half-smile.

"Then all you've got to do is to find an old wooden shed with a rusty iron roof and search under the floor."

Nakita knew that shed well. Why, she was even now standing with her back to it! The man, looking at her, could see it over her shoulder.

She saw him give a quick start.

"What? A shed with a little rusty chimney?" he asked.

That described it exactly.

"If Miss Joy had come out when I called we might have got him!"

Thus Boko, as he stood talking to Nakita in the lane, a quarter of a mile from the house.

Nakita, running and trotting, had at last reached him, and now Boko was telling his story, not guessing that he was really talking to Joy disguised.

"Miss Joy couldn't have understood what you meant," said Nakita. "But where's the thief now?"

"He's gone into that wood," said Boko. "But I haven't got time to go chasing him."

"I'll chase him," Nakita exclaimed. "But, Boko, if you want to be a pal to Miss Joy tell her governess all about it! Tell her you bunged the snowball through the window. Yer see, Miss Joy's bin blamed for it. Got in a proper row, she has, and no mistake."

Boko whistled in surprise.

"Is that so?" he said. "Coo, what a rotten trick! I didn't mean to get her blamed!"

"And you tell the governess about the coat, too—and the man you saw."

"O.K.!" said Boko. "Leave it to me, gippo!"

And off he rode, leaving Nakita the problem of getting back the coat.

Turning towards the woods, she realised that finding the man would not be hard, for there was deep snow and his tracks were plainly visible.

But, all the same, she presently came to a halt.

"What are we going to do if we do catch up with him?" she asked her pup.

Tinker couldn't even guess, unless to terrify the man by fierce barking. He



VERY, very stealthily, Nakita closed the door of the shed. There was an impish smile on her face, for the thief had walked right into her trap!

"Yes; supposed to be near here," Nakita said.

The man did not hesitate. He pointed in the opposite direction.

"Over there it is," he said.

"Thanks, mate," said Nakita. "It's half and half for us, then. You'd better get a spade and help dig."

"I will. You go there and wait for me."

Nakita walked on, her steps muted by the snow. But as soon as she was out of his sight she stopped, and, warning Tinker not to move, turned back.

Moving in a half-circle, she returned to a spot where she had a view through the bushes.

She saw the man a moment later. He had a large bundle under his arm, and was already more than half-way to the old shed. A few moments later, after hesitating in the doorway, he entered it.

Nakita, waiting until she judged it safe to run forward, dodged across the open, and then crept behind bushes towards the shed, her heart thumping with wild excitement.

She knew something about that shed which the man apparently did not.

grip meanwhile on Nakita's arm. Now, of course, she released her.

"I—I apologise for suspecting you," she said. "And I must thank you for—for behaving so cleverly. I—I feel most guilty."

"That's all right, lidy," said Nakita.

"You shall be rewarded!" said the governess excitedly. "Pray come to the house with me."

"S'long as Miss Joy don't get the blame for Boko's buzzing the snow-ball through the window, that's all I want, lidy. He did it to attract her attention, and tell her about the coat, so it was all for the best," said Nakita.

"I will go into that later," Miss Retcham declared.

In the hall was Joy's grandfather, and he looked as relieved as the governess, for, having heard all about the theft, he had foreseen interviews with the police and much trouble and confusion to disturb his scholarly life.

"You deserve a reward for this," he said.

Nakita hesitated, wondering if her proposed reward would be approved.

"I heard as you were wild with Miss

"The whole circumstance of the window's being broken is now explained, Joy," she said. "Nevertheless, I am not taking you to the pantomime. It is to be broadcast this afternoon—or a part of it—and listening to that will be enough."

"Oh!" said Joy, her heart sinking.

Miss Retcham walked away then, down to the hall, and Joy sadly followed. How ever could she be Nakita—at the theatre—and yet sit here with Miss Retcham, listening to the show?

As she descended the stairs, however, she heard her grandfather talking to Miss Retcham:

"Pantomimes are meant for children," he was murmuring.

But his tone was mild, and Joy knew that he would not put up a fight for her if Miss Retcham was stubborn—and she would be that all right!

"As neither of us have seen this particular performance—" the governess was saying, when Joy, with a sudden idea, moved forward.

"Miss Retcham!" she exclaimed excitedly. "Oh, please—couldn't you go, just to see if it's all right for me? There'll be another matinee on Saturday. Granddad, couldn't you take Miss Retcham—please?"

Her grandfather smiled.

"Why, I just hadn't thought of it! Of course. You can hear the broadcast, and Miss Retcham and I can go as judges, and if I think it's suitable for you, you shall certainly go!"

The governess hunched her shoulders. "Very well!" she said icily. "If that is your decision, I will abide by it."

IT WAS a grand pantomime, with hearty laughs, gorgeous scenes and clothes, real ponies, a lovely coach, and a most beautiful Cinderella and charming prince.

Nakita, sitting with Boko in the stalls, looked back now and then to where the governess and her grandfather sat—in rather inferior seats—and now and again smiled at them.

Both Boko and she had the time of their lives. And when Nakita was amused she laughed heartily—without the fear of Miss Retcham saying "Sh!" She even stood up and cheered.

By a mere matter of a minute she arrived home first, and when Miss Retcham entered the school-room was sitting listening to the news.

"Did you like it, Miss Retcham?" Joy asked, her eyes sparkling. "I thought it was grand!"

"Indeed? But then you did not see the absurd horseplay. Having seen it, Joy, I have decided that it is not for you—too rough—too stupidly comic and burlesque. The gipsy girl seemed to enjoy it—and what a gipsy girl enjoys cannot be suitable for you. However, you have heard the broadcast. Be satisfied with that."

Out she went, and Joy did a little dance.

"Oh, if only she knew—if only she knew that I was there! Not suitable, eh? My golly, it was grand—grand!"

And though Joy would dearly have loved to see it again, she was sensible enough to be happy that she had seen it once—and seen it as Nakita, able to laugh and to sing, joining in with the gay choruses that now went through her mind!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

ANOTHER sparkling laughter-story featuring "Gipsy Joy" next Saturday. You really mustn't miss it.

THANK YOU ALL—

for the shoals of lovely Christmas Cards, which came from all parts of the world and continued to pour in to these offices even after the New Year had begun. Some of them, hand-painted by readers themselves, were especially delightful. Your Editor, Hilda Richards and Patricia are sorry they cannot send everyone a personal word of thanks through the post, but few of you kind well-wishers enclosed your addresses, so they are thanking you this way. And they do hope that you all have lots more lovely Christmases in the future!

There was a broken padlock on the door outside. But though its lock was broken, it could still jam the door.

Creeping up, she listened and heard the man levering up the floorboards. Gently she pushed the door to, and then slipped the hook of the padlock through the eye of the door-fastener.

The man was a prisoner—and so, too, was that bundle of his—the fur coat!

Joy's Punishment—Nakita's Reward!

MISS RETCHAM gave a cry of joy as the local policeman held out a fur coat for her to identify.

"Yes, yes—that is my fur coat!" she cried. "Oh, thank goodness!"

"We caught him trying to escape from the hut in the woods," said the policeman. "The gipsy girl trapped him. You can thank her, ma'am."

Nakita, her eyes shining, stood in the lane beside Miss Retcham.

The moment after she had trapped the man she had rushed back to the Gables and told her story. Miss Retcham, hardly believing her, had nevertheless telephoned the police, and a constable had gone to the hut in the woods.

But Miss Retcham had kept a tight

Joy," she said. "I suppose you couldn't let her off?"

Miss Retcham drew up, her eyes flashing.

"No," she said. "But that gives me an idea for the reward. You shall have the tickets for the pantomime. Perhaps you and the butcher boy would care to go together."

Nakita's eyes sparkled.

"Oh, lidy, you mean that?"

"Yes. Joy behaved badly, and, in any case, I do not think the pantomime a fit show for her. For you it is different."

Anything was good enough for a gipsy girl—even a pantomime!

"Oh, I'll like it all right!" said Nakita.

A moment later she was given the tickets, and, happy as a skylark, rushed away.

It was only when she was up in her room, hurriedly becoming Joy again, that she suddenly realised that she could not go to the pantomime as Nakita without causing Joy to make a mysterious disappearance.

She had only just finished wiping the spot from Tinker when the handle of her door was tried, and she rushed to unlock it.

Miss Retcham frowned upon her, demanding to know why the door was locked, and looked about her suspiciously.



Our wonderful serial about a cheery crowd of schoolgirls who have so long been—

AT SCHOOL IN THE SOUTH SEAS



FOR NEW READERS.

NORMA LANGTON, bright spark of St. Wanda's School, on holiday with a party of the girls and two mistresses, is wrecked on a tropical island. With her are her chums,

BELINDA MALTRAVERS, pretty but dull, and

KIT TURNER. While gathering fruit they come upon a little native girl,

TALIA, whose father is chief of the island. Her father insists that she joins the school. As a rival for the chieftainship insists that his daughter joins also, the school splits in two, with

MISS CHATTERTON, an unpleasant mistress, in charge of one section. To please the bushman father of the other native girl,

BORKI, the chums pal up with her. A trader with a yacht arrives on the island. Borki's tribe capture him, but Norma & Co. capture her as a hostage, only for her to take the yacht adrift.

(Now read on.)

Aboard the Drifting Yacht!

AS Miss Chatterton went into the sea, head first, Borki, looking over the side, gave a triumphant yell, and then a cackling laugh. She was too stupid to realise the peril, or to care what might happen.

Norma, calling to Talia and Kit to use all their strength, pulled desperately at her oar.

Their boat was only five yards from the mistress, but, even so, the need for haste was urgent enough. For in these shark-infested waters, a yard, or a few seconds, meant the difference between life and death.

Miss Manders, sitting in the stern of the boat, was as white as a sheet. She did not say a word, but clung on.

When Norma looked back, she saw Miss Chatterton's face rise above the water, and a yell of terror rang out.

Never had those three girls pulled so hard.

The mistress, striking out for the boat in frenzied manner, got near them, and Norma threw out her hands.

Once Miss Chatterton nearly grasped them; then a mighty roller swept her away.

Norma snatched her oar, and flung it out as Kit and Talia turned the boat.

The length of the oar was sufficient to reach the mistress. She snatched at it, and held on.

It was all that Norma could do to keep her grip; but now Miss Manders was grasping the oar, too, and between them they pulled it in, with Miss Chatterton thrashing the water, plunging and gasping in fright.

Norma helped Miss Chatterton aboard, and the mistress fell into the boat, gasping and panting.

"Oh, thank goodness, thank goodness!" panted the headmistress, in shaking relief, and, to Norma's amazement, there were tears on her cheeks.

"All right, Miss Chatterton?" asked Norma gently.

"Yes—I'm all right. But—but stop the yacht."

The yacht was under way, but making slow progress, and Borki was already hauling up the rope-ladder, having sent Miss Chatterton's canoe adrift.

making for the shore. She was already turning the canoe to the yacht, thankful that Borki, at the helm, could not see them as they stole alongside.

From astern trailed the anchor on its chain, and as Talia sent the canoe close alongside, Norma grasped the chain, and then hauled herself up it.

She was glad of all the practice she had had in the school gymnasium. Hand over hand she went up, and before Borki could realise what was happening, she had scrambled on to the deck.

Borki wheeled in anger, and left the yacht's wheel to its own devices.

"Go 'way!" she stormed. "Me take boat ship—way over seas!"

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" said Norma grimly. "Where's Belinda?"

A shrill cry came from the saloon. "Here I am! She's tied me up! I can't move!"

At that moment Talia's head appeared over the gunwale, and then, with a lithe spring, she was on deck at Norma's side.

Borki faced them with glaring eyes

The Prisoners Freed; the Yacht Ready to Sail Away—But There is Still One Drama Left for the Castaway School!

"We're too many in this boat," said Norma. "Talia—you and I had better get the canoe."

Pulling together, they worked the overladen boat towards the canoe. Now water swamped aboard them, and Miss Manders sat with compressed lips, fearful that it could be a matter of moments only before they sank.

But Talia had managed to get the canoe, and scrambled aboard, then held it alongside while Norma climbed over.

"Kit—you take the boat back!" urged Norma, as Kit tried to follow.

And Kit, although she wanted to go with them, realised that it was up to her. Miss Chatterton was hardly in a state to row; and Miss Manders had had little experience.

"Girls—go carefully," Miss Manders pleaded. "Go ashore—never mind the yacht."

But Norma had no intention of

and clenched hands, prepared to use violence.

But Norma decided to use more subtle means.

"A nice mess you've got yourself into," she said. "Miss Manders was going to set you free, because our trick worked. See—Talia is free! And just wait until the trader finds what you have done to his yacht."

Borki's eyes narrowed. She understood from Norma's words that the trader was free.

"Me take ship," she said sullenly.

And then, without warning, she rushed

By
**ELIZABETH
CHESTER**

at Norma. Her arms were raised, and there was savage rage in her eyes.

Quick as a flash, Norma jumped aside. At the same moment Talia rushed to the rescue.

It was Talia whom Borki closed with, not Norma. She caught her enemy's hair and tugged.

Talia squealed in pain, and Norma, turning, thought quickly. She knew that a struggle might last many precious minutes.

Then, looking about her, she saw by the deckhouse a large bucket.

Snatching it up, she jumped forward, and dumped it over Borki's head.

The bush girl clutched at it, releasing Talia, and Norma gave her a push that sent her staggering round. Blinded by the bucket, Borki tripped, and crashed headlong.

"Come on, Talia!" snapped Norma, and made for the saloon.

As soon as Talia was in with her she slammed the door and slipped the bolt home.

Then, panting for breath, she looked round for Belinda.

"Here I am," said Belinda dismally.

Her voice came from under the table, and Norma, dropping to her knees, saw Belinda's face peering out from the blanket.

"I'm trussed like a chicken!" wailed Belinda. "That horrid girl! She tricked me. She said she was too tightly tied, and started crying, and once she fainted, and I got frightened. But she was only fooling, you know. And I didn't find it out until she was free."

"Poor old silly-billy," said Norma. "Thank goodness you aren't hurt. She's a terror."

"But I am hurt. I've got a bruised elbow, and a fearful scratch on my arm," said Belinda.

Norma untied her and helped her out. Belinda, rubbing her bruised elbow, looked at the scratch.

"Don't ever leave me in charge of her again," she pleaded. "She's just—"

But Belinda was interrupted by a thump on the door.

"Me make fire on ship!" Borki shouted.

The three girls stood silent, stupefied;

and then there came the smell of burning paper!

Norma tugged open the door and rushed out, followed by Talia and Belinda. But there was no real danger, for although Borki had started a fire with paper, it was too small to do any damage.

Having stamped it out, Norma looked up at the mast. The sails were furled, and how to unfurl them she did not know, nor how to manage the drifting yacht even then.

But there was an auxiliary engine, and if only that could be set going—

Norma looked round. The yacht was going ashore, borne there by the waves carrying it in.

"My word, if we beach the yacht, it may be wrecked—and then we're certainly done!" gasped Norma. "We've got to stop it—do something. Talia, can you manage a yacht?"

Talia shook her head in despair.

"Too big!" she said.

"Then we're beached," said Norma dismally. "And the best thing we can do is to go ashore at the softest spot—if there is one."

Then Talia pointed eastward in excitement.

"There—there!" she cried. "Go 'shore there. Ribber. Ribber come down along to sea!"

At once Norma leapt to take charge.

War!

"WE shall crash—Norma, look out!"

Belinda gave that alarmed shout as the yacht raced towards the shore over the rollers. But Norma, guided by Talia, was steering for the eastern part of the island.

A river ran out to sea there—the river where they had gone to find the crocodile—and if only Norma could manage to turn into the mouth, all might yet be well.

With the waves rushing the boat forward it would not be easy; but Norma had good common sense, the surest of all guides in a crisis, while Talia, well versed in the currents, and

the various reefs, stood ahead and directed her.

Those on the shore were in a panic of excitement. Miss Manders and Miss Chatterton had landed, and now were leading the rest of the school towards the part of the island where they judged the yacht would beach.

But their task was almost impossible; for thick forest stood between, and the way through it was not easy to find.

Norma, tense, knowing how much depended upon her, was feeling the thrill. If she wrecked the yacht, there was not only their own personal danger to be considered. In addition, she might ruin for ever their chance of escape.

But Norma meant to make no mistake. Teeth set, she fought the wheel, letting it through her hands or hauling it back as need demanded.

At one times it seemed that she could not possibly avoid ramming the bank of the river's mouth; but somehow she managed to fight the yacht back.

The bank was cleared, and Belinda clapped her hands with delight.

"We're through! Norma—you've done it—"

The yacht went leisurely up the river for perhaps a hundred yards, and then idled to a state of absolute calm.

"Well, here we are," smiled Norma, delighted.

"Nice," smiled Talia. "Nice! 'Way up ribber Borki live."

"Me go alonga now," sneered Borki. "Me get plenty men come back bymbye take ship."

With that she scrambled over the stern of the yacht and dropped down into the canoe which had been trailed behind.

"My goodness—she's taking the canoe," gasped Belinda. "Our only canoe."

But Norma, measuring the distance to the shore, was not perturbed.

"No distance to swim, and sharks don't come inland as near as this," she said. "Come on! Over we go—"

And, climbing on to the top rail, Norma spread out her arms and dived.

Talia sprang after her. She sailed down and went into the water more neatly than Norma, to come up laughing.

"Nice!" she called.

"Lovely," said Norma. "Hey—Belinda!" she called back.

But Belinda was wearing her best white shorts, and some nice sandals. So before going into the water, she removed her shorts. The bathing suit she wore underneath would come to no harm.

Wrapping the shoes in the shorts, Belinda bundled them both into the blanket, and then balanced the combined outfit on her head with one hand. Holding her nose with the other, she sat on the rail, counted three twice, and fell off squealing.

Down went Belinda, and the precious bundle fell from her head. It seemed a year later that she came up, and struck out blindly in panic.

"Come back—you're going out to sea!" shrieked Norma.

Belinda turned, saw her bundle just about to sink and grabbed it. By good fortune she saw something floating near.

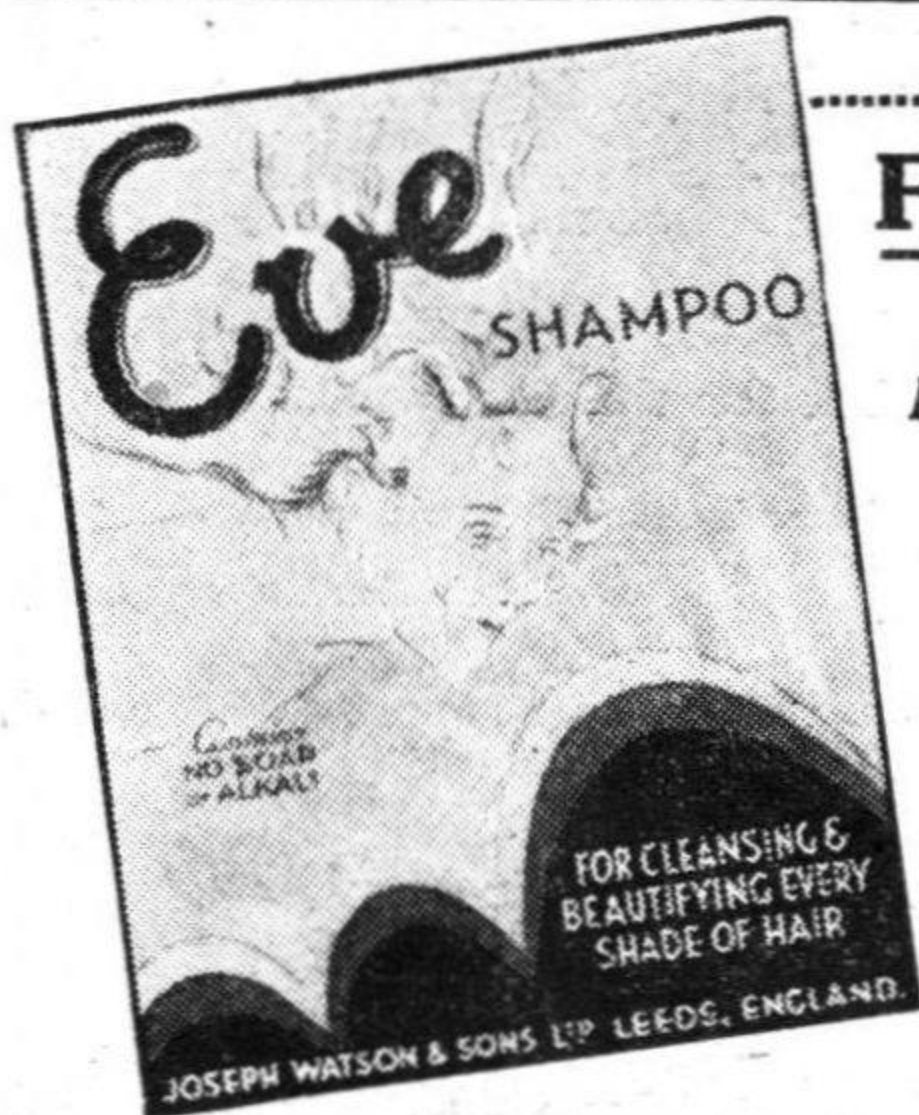
"I'm going to get on this tree-trunk and paddle it!" she called.

Norma looked, paled, then yelled.

"Alligator!" she screamed.

Belinda, shocked and terrified, struck out madly and collided with Norma and Talia, who helped to drag her ashore. Meanwhile, the bundle drifted downstream, where the girls managed to get it.

The sandals were not even wet, and



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The GIRLS' CRYSTAL

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the shorts were only slightly damp—thanks to the blanket.

"Good!" said Belinda. "Now I don't care what happens."

In another five minutes they had reached the camp.

When Kit saw her friends she charged forward, waving her arms with delight.

"Oh, hurrah! Oh, jolly good! Is it O.K.?"

"Of course it is!" said Belinda.

"It's in mid-river," said Norma, hugging Kit gleefully.

Miss Manders was all smiles.

"I really do congratulate you, Norma," she said "You have acted very bravely indeed, and most competently."

"And I hope that you manage to tie that girl Borki up," cut in Miss Chatterton. "Tie her up tightly, and gag her—"

"She escaped," said Norma, and explained.

"Well, never mind," said Miss Manders. "I have been having a chat with Millicent. Her delirium seems over, thank goodness!"

"Oh, I am glad!" said Norma, in delight. "That is wonderful news. Poor Millicent—the only unlucky one. And to think it's her uncle that's arrived."

"Yes, it's amazing. But I understand from Millicent that he has been here often before"

"How funny she didn't mention it," frowned Norma.

"Ah! I think I know the reason," smiled Miss Manders. "Millicent seems a changed girl after her attack of fever. It appears that her uncle located some treasure, which was buried on this island hundreds of years ago by buccaneers. It was a common practice in those days."

Norma stared, round-eyed.

"My goodness! No wonder those bushmen were so keen. They must know about it."

Miss Manders nodded and looked grave.

"That is what is alarming Millicent. She is afraid that they will try to wring the secret from her uncle in some way."

Virginia Dereham came hurrying up just then, looking alarmed.

"Miss Manders, there are warriors approaching!" she exclaimed. "And they're armed."

"The bushmen!" said Norma sharply. "My goodness, now we're for it! Borki has made trouble."

But Norma was wrong. It was not bushmen; it was Talia's father, and a score or more of his armed warriors, who emerged from the trees.

Talia, in wild joy, ran to greet her father, and he, seemingly surprised to see her, rushed forward and gave her a fond embrace.

For a minute or two they talked together excitedly, and then her father looked at his men, and gave a command. At once they all turned and marched off through the trees.

Talia returned to Norma, her eyes bright with happiness.

"Papa him go to fight bushmen, come back alonga you with trader," she said excitedly.

Norma's face fell.

"Fight! Oh, Talia! There'll be bloodshed! You mustn't let it happen. Call him back! For goodness' sake, stop him! Kit—Belinda! Are you game to try?"

"Game for anything," said Kit eagerly.

"Oh dear! Wait, wait!" implored



"NOT a sound," whispered Norma, with a warning gesture to her chums. For Borki, their enemy, stood by the wheel, quite near, and somehow they had got to capture her or else lose their chance of leaving the island.

The Island's Secret!

TALIA, also anxious for peace, ran on, and presently came in sight of her father and his men. But by then they were actually capturing the bushmen, who had come running to meet them.

Their excited pow-wowing meant nothing to Kit or Belinda, but Talia understood, and, in a low tone, translated.

It seemed strange that in these lovely surroundings there could be such a thing as battle. The clear blue sky was peaceful; the lovely palms waved their leaves lazily in the breeze, and now and again there came the cry and song of birds.

But the two chiefs were already growing heated, snarling at each other in anger.

The bushmen refused to give up the trader! His prisoner was too precious.

But now Talia, Kit, and Belinda intervened.

"Warship come!" screamed Talia, in her own language.

Her excited manner brought a temporary lull in the wrangling.

"Warship?" her father said.

"White man ship. Big ship. Guns go bang-bang!" said Talia excitedly. "Like revolvers. And dymanite."

And then, at that very moment, there came a shattering roar. It echoed and re-echoed from the hills, and seemed to live in their ears.

Terrified, the natives fled for their homes.

But no less alarmed were Belinda and Kit.

"By golly, the dynamite—on the yacht! Norma's found it," quaked Kit, going almost yellow with horror. "The yacht's blown up—and Norma is—"

A voice came, calling musically.

"Hal-ooe!"

It was Norma. She came running towards them, laughing a little shakily, but with sparkling eyes.

"Oh, golly! Hear the bang?"

"Hear it! I can hear it still," said Kit. "What on earth happened?"

Norma prodded her ears.

"You'll have to shout. I'm half

Belinda. "I must change these sandals."

"Put on your special war shoes," giggled Kit.

Belinda changed into a shabbier pair of sandals, for in a war anything might happen, although Belinda hoped to keep well away from spears.

Norma, as she ran, was vowing that there should be no spears flying.

"Talia," she panted, "do you know what a warship is? Have you seen one—with big big guns that go bang, bang and—"

Talia had not, but she had heard of them; she had seen revolvers, and knew the damage they could do.

"Trader on ship have guns, and big bang-bangs," she said.

"On the yacht?" said Norma excitedly.

"Him call dymanite."

"Dynamite, you mean," said Norma.

"Phew! I wonder—here! Kit, Belinda! Run on—say that the warship has arrived, and all is well! I'll be back—"

And, not giving them time to argue, she cut through the trees to where the shining water of the river could be seen!

deaf. I found the case of dynamite, and I read the instructions, and lit a stick, and threw it as hard as I could. Phew! You should have seen the water that went up!" Then she chuckled. "Hallo! No battle!"

"Broken up," smiled Kit. "The whistle blew for half-time—or, rather, the dynamite blew, and—Hallo! My golly!"

They heard running steps and hard breathing, and then into view came a man in a white drill suit.

"Hallo there!" he shouted.

"Millicent's uncle! Free!" cheered Kit.

He pulled up, panting.

"No time to waste. They're following," he said. "Has my yacht blown up? I heard the dynamite."

Norma explained, and was going into details, when Borki appeared, brandishing a spear.

"You play trick!" she cried in fury. "Now me trow spear—"

Norma grabbed the trader and pulled him back as Borki hurled the spear. But, badly thrown, it whizzed straight for her.

"Norma!" screamed Belinda.

But Norma, having pulled the trader away, was half turned, and could not see.

Kit and Belinda watched in horror. Not so Talia. She sprang forward, arm outstretched.

The spear thudded, and Talia, with a groan, collapsed.

Norma, wheeling, gave a cry, and then dropped to her knees.

"Talia— Oh my goodness! Her shoulder—"

Talia lay still. The spear's sharp edge had cut her shoulder deeply, and her eyes were closed.

With hankies they stemmed the flow of blood.

"First-aid kit on the yacht," said the trader briskly. "Come on—I'll carry her. She's fainted."

Norma's eyes brimmed with tears.

"Oh, Talia, Talia!" she whispered. "You dear, brave kid!"

TALIA LAY in the sun, wrapped over by a blanket. Her shoulder had been bandaged and strapped up, and she was in no pain now. Yet her face was very sad; for all about her there were scenes of feverish activity.

The castaways were leaving. It was two days now since their adventure, and in that time much had happened.

The trader, taking Miss Chatterton and the two sailormen—who had been held prisoners all the time by the bushmen, but were now freed—had gone to a trading station, and from there wirelessed the news.

Then, with a schooner, he had returned to take them all aboard to the trading station.

Everything was packed ready, and the trader with the sailors warded off any natives who might approach while he dug at the spot where his map indicated treasure.

Helped by Norma, Kit, Belinda, and the others, a rusty sea chest had come into sight.

Amidst frenzied excitement, it had been hauled up, to reveal almost unbelievable treasures—gold coins, chalices, brooches, bracelets, dishes and plates—and even jewels and silks.

"My golly! What a grand end to it all!" cried Norma. "Oh, cheers! And can't the islanders have some? Can't Talia have a share? Just think—all

this has been here all these years under their feet!"

Millicent's uncle, elated, threw up his hands.

"Everyone shall have a souvenir," he said. "Here, this for Talia!"

It was a lovely little gold bracelet, and Norma herself ran to Talia with it. But Talia hardly looked at the gift.

"You are going away," she said huskily. "Going away! Never, never Talia see Norma again. Never, never!"

"Talia, if only you could come, too!" sighed Norma tenderly. "Oh, how you'd love England—even school!"

The trader came across, whistling cheerfully.

"School?" he said. "Does Talia want to go to school in England?"

Talia sat up.

"Oh, yes—yes, please!" she cried excitedly.

Millicent's uncle laughed.

"Well, I can afford that," he said. "I can afford almost anything. If

that's your wish, and considering what you've done for us all—how brave you've been—it's little enough to grant, you shall go to school!"

Talia screamed in excitement. She rushed at once to her father; and he, delighted and proud, almost skipped with joy, too, since his dearest wish had always been that his daughter should learn English manners and customs.

Only Miss Manders remained to be consulted, and she was so beside herself at the thought of returning homeward that she would probably have agreed forming a special class for all the native girls, including Borki.

"Why, of course! Talia has proved

herself of far better character and greater intelligence than many girls we already have at the school, Norma," she said.

Norma nodded gratefully.

"Oh, thank you, Miss Manders! And—and I'm awfully sorry if I have seemed rude or impertinent."

The headmistress smiled warmly.

"What you did was wise, Norma. But I'm sure that when we all do get back to St. Wanda's you will not prove to have learned any savage ways, but will be your sweet self, dear."

Norma blushed.

"It's been lovely here, Miss Manders," she said.

But parting was sad. And when Norma, with Talia at her side, leaned over the schooner's side and waved good-bye to the natives crowded on the shore there were tears in her eyes.

"Good-bye, South Seas!" she called softly. "And may we come back again soon!"

The island grew smaller; even the volcano became a mere mist; and presently only the white stretch of beach and the dark green of the trees could be seen.

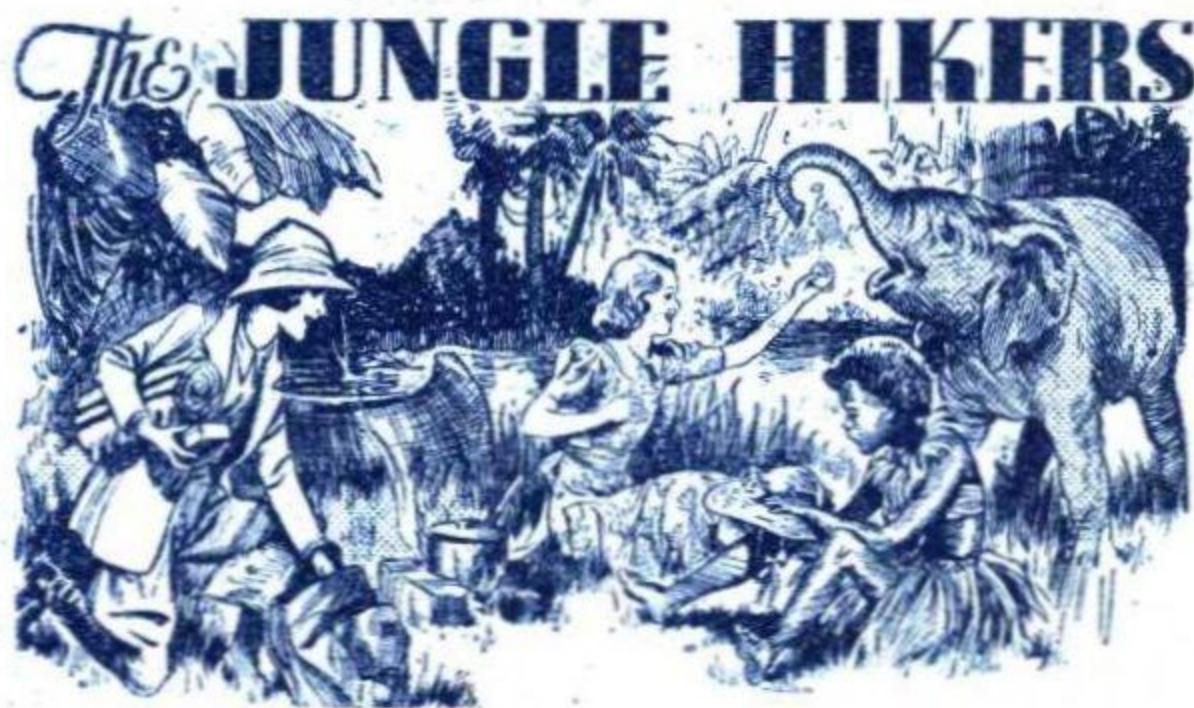
They blew kisses; and because there were lumps in their throats they were glad when Belinda called out in excitement:

"Captain, turn the ship back! Good gracious! I've left my palm-leaf sunshade behind!"

But the captain did not turn back; and presently the island could not be seen at all. It was but a memory—a lovely, fragrant memory that they would never forget!

THE END

BRAVING THE PERILS OF AFRICA—ALONE! Stranded in that mighty continent, two courageous English girls set out to defy its dangers; cooking their own food; struggling through dense jungle; shooting rapids; meeting warlike tribes and ferocious creatures of the wilds. Those are just a few of the novel, exciting experiences that fall to—



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