

"SHE STOLE BABS' TRIUMPH!" Grand Long Complete Cliff House
Story inside

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Incorporating
'SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN'



**BABS AND BESSIE PLAY
THEIR PART FOR THE
HOSPITAL!**

A delightful incident from this week's magnificent long complete story of the Cliff House Chums.

A grand LONG COMPLETE story of the Cliff House chums, showing how Barbara Redfern sinks in popularity as her two-faced cousin, Faith Ashton, rises.



The Idea of the Term!



"BABS!"

Barbara Redfern, captain of the Lower School of Cliff House, did not seem to hear the voice which floated out of the misty darkness in the drive of the old school. She quickened her step.

"Babs!" The voice sounded again. Barbara hurried.

"Babs—?" For the third time the voice sounded, faltering, entreating. "Barbara dear! Oh, goodness! Please—please wait for me! I—I want to talk to you."

Babs, however, did not wait. In the darkness her blue eyes were gleaming. Cold and damp that darkness was, rendered so by heavy mist. For days, almost weeks, Cliff House and its surroundings had been fast in the grip of winter.

Yet it was strange to find Barbara Redfern, usually so ready and willing to listen, running away from that voice. Such a gentle, pleading, almost tearful voice it was, too—a voice which might have touched a heart of stone.

Stranger still, when Babs' own being was filled with such sunlit happiness, and Babs herself was keenly looking forward to the treat which lay at the end of her after-lesson mission.

For Babs was on her way to Friar-dale School to see her boy friends, Jimmy Richmond & Co., and to discuss with them ways and means of raising

money for the forthcoming Hospital Day in Courtfield, both schools having three or four beds to maintain in the hospital, and both anxious to make some really big effort.

"Barbara, please wait!" came the voice behind her again—this time accompanied by pattering footsteps.

Babs, at last, did pause. Her face was exasperated suddenly. She knew to whom the voice belonged, of course

Only they, among all the three hundred habitues of Cliff House, knew that that pretty, doll-like face was the mask of a schemer, those gently winsome ways mere artifices which hid the sly duplicity and subtle, crafty cunning which was Faith Ashton's real self.

About the last thing Babs desired now was the company of her cousin on this happy little mission. Outside the porter's lodge she stopped.

The whole of Cliff House applauded Faith Ashton's wonderful scheme for raising money for the hospitals. "You will help with the scheme, of course, Barbara?" the form-mistress asked Barbara Redfern. When Babs bluntly refused everyone thought she was jealous of her pretty cousin—not dreaming for one moment that the scheme was really Babs', that Faith had stolen it from her!

—her cousin, Faith Ashton, but recently arrived at Cliff House from Canada.

Sweet, charming, generous, wistful that girl appeared to the rest of the school, with her wonderfully pretty face and her gently insinuating ways. Amazingly popular, too.

But Babs, surprisingly enough, had no use whatever for her Babs, in fact, had been rather severely criticised in many places for her cold and aloof treatment towards her cousin.

For only Barbara and one other girl—Marjorie Hazeldene, now unfortunately isolated in the school's new hospital with an attack of influenza—knew the type of girl Faith Ashton really was.

Faith, her pretty face distressed and anxious, hurried up.

"Oh, Barbara dear, didn't you hear me?" she asked.

"I did," Babs said.

"But—but you didn't stop," Faith gently reproached.

"I didn't mean to stop!" Babs answered straightly. "I'm only stopping now, Faith, to tell you not to follow me about! What do you want?"

"Oh, Babs, darling!" Faith's ever-ready tears began to brim. "Babs, how hard you can be!" she said falteringly. "You do forget sometimes, don't you, darling, that I'm your cousin, and such a little stranger, Barbara, so far away from my real

home. I nun-never thought, Babs, you could be so hard-hearted."

Babs breathed heavily. "What do you want?" she repeated. "Well, Barbara, wouldn't you like me to come with you?" Faith asked. "You know I'm frightfully interested to meet your boy friends at Friardale School. And—and of course, I'm as keen as anything on doing something over the hospital. We—we might get ever such good ideas between us, Barbara."

Babs smiled grimly. "You mean," she interpreted, "you just want to get to know Jimmy Richmond & Co.?" Perhaps," she added, "so that you can create a little more mischief—or make yourself more popular? That seems your chief game!"

"Oh, Babs!" Faith sobbed. "Oh, Barbara, how could you?"

Babs shrugged disgustedly. She wasn't deceived. Faith had tried this hurt reproachness rather too often for it to remain effective. That sense of impatience which always rose within her when Faith adopted such tactics filled her at once.

"I'm not going to argue with you!" she said. "You'd better go back to the school."

"But, Barbara dear, I do so want to come with you!"

"And I," Babs said, turning into the road, "don't want you to come with me. Now buzz!"

She hurried on. For a moment a scowl came to mar that gloriously pretty face of the girl left behind in the mist.

"Horrid, hateful cat!" Faith muttered to herself. "Bah! All the same, Barbara dear, you're jolly well not going to meet those boys without me—no, rather not! If Jimmy Richmond & Co. are my friends, too, and I'm going to come in on the hospital idea, whether you like it or not! Once I get to Friardale, even you can't turn me out!"

And she smiled—a crafty smile which so transformed the innocent prettiness of her doll-like face. With a soft chuckle she stepped out into the mist.

That mist had already swallowed up Babs' form, but on the hard surface of the main road it was not a hard job to follow her footsteps, for Babs, unlike Faith, who wore rubber-soled shoes, had put on her stoutest walking shoes.

And Babs breathed more freely as she walked on. Thank goodness, she told herself, she had got rid of that two-faced girl!

But swift as she forgot her cousin. Her mind was busy with a thousand and one things. Pity poor old Marjorie was ill—that a help she would have been in a scheme like this! Pity, too, that the ice carnival had only just concluded at Courtfield—what a scheme an ice carnival would have been to help the hospital on the forthcoming day! All the same, except for the sale of flags and a jumble of odds and ends, she could think of nothing outstanding which might be calculated to raise the funds so badly needed.

Perhaps Jimmy & Co. would have an idea?

Phew! How the mist was thickening! Babs hurried on. It was fortunate for her that she knew the road so well.

Blacker and thicker the darkness became as she walked along the road into the South Copse of Friardale Wood, emerging finally on to Friardale Common, where the mist twirled so eerily that in the grey-black light it looked like dirty cottonwool.

Now where was the road which led past the lake and the Keep? Somewhere about here—near the signpost. With difficulty Babs found it.

What an evening! But Babs laughed a little. She rather enjoyed the eerie loneliness of it, the sense of isolation. Not a single other human being had passed her; not even a crawling car.

For ten, fifteen minutes she walked briskly up the by-road which later would bring her on to the main Turbridge Wells-Hythe road that straggled across the face of Kent, unaware that behind her the softly shod feet of Faith Ashton were intently following. Then ahead she heard a voice; saw a red light glowing in the mist.

"Hallo!" Babs muttered. She pressed on, almost cannoneering into the back of a hute van drawn up on the side of the road. It was that to which the red light—it was the van's tail-lamp—belonged. A man's voice hailed her out of the fog.

"Hallo, there!"

"Hallo!" Babs replied, and halted. There was a crunch of footsteps on the frost-rimed road. The forms of two men loomed up, one dressed in a long

vouchsafed. "But as it happens Lord Courtfield is away at the moment—in the South of France, I believe."

"Lucky him!" Josh commented wryly.

"But," Babs added quickly, "perhaps I can help. Mr. Williams is the man who manages Lord Courtfield's estate, and he's a friend of mine. He lives in the cottage about a quarter of a mile up the road, and I'm sure he'd lend you the land if you want it. I'll speak to him for you."

"Oh, Barbara, what a really lovely idea!" said a voice in the fog, and Babs jumped round, gazing at the figure of Faith which had loomed up. "I'm Faith Ashton," she added to the startled Josh, "and I'm Miss Redfern's cousin, you know. I do think Babs is just the kindest thing, don't you? Barbara dear, would you like me to come with you to see Mr. Williams?"

"Thank you," Babs retorted tartly. "I'm quite capable of going alone. Well, just wait here, Mr. Stafford. I won't be longer than I can help."

"Thank 'ee, miss!"

Babs turned. Faith smiled. As she vanished into the mist she looked at Josh.

"Such a dear, dear girl!" she sighed. "Always so ready to help. But I'd better go and help her as well, because I'm sure if I back her up, Mr. Williams couldn't possibly refuse. Be with you in a moment."

"Well, thank 'ee, miss!" Josh gulped gratefully. "You're a sport, you are!"

Faith laughed. She turned, vanishing into the mist on the trail of Babs. But she did not catch up with Babs. Perhaps she was curious to see what would happen next. Perhaps she had her own ideas of leading Babs get the necessary permission, and then chip in to claim some of the credit.

Babs, eagerly, was running on. Poor Mr. Stafford, she thought! What awful luck he had been having!

Still, if she could possibly help it he shouldn't remain stranded. And perhaps she could help in other ways, too. Just supposing, for instance, she could get permission for Mr. Stafford to erect his roundabouts and sideshows in the field, and turn it into a sort of temporary fair? With the girls of Cliff House on one side, and the boys of Friardale on the other, it might at least be possible for him to make some sort of living until he found a better proposition. Or supposing—

And then for an instant Babs jerked to a quivering standstill in her walk as the idea—the greatest, most scrumptious idea she had ever had—flashed into her head. And suddenly in the darkness she burst into a thrilled, ringing laugh.

"Oh, my goodness! If that could be worked out! Oh, she could put that into operation! What a success then—not only for Josh, but for the hospital as well!"

Excitedly she broke into a run. Faith, behind her, wondered what had suddenly happened. Though the fog was thickening to an almost tangible density now, Babs hardly noticed it. Unerringly her feet led her towards Mr. Williams' cottage. Breathlessly she knocked on the door.

Williams himself answered it. His face beamed.

"Why, Miss Redfern, what a treat to see you! Come in—do! Anybody with you?"

"No, Mr. Williams."

"Dreadful afternoon!" Williams commented, with a smile. "Have a cup of tea, Miss Redfern? Funny thing, I was just thinking about you."

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER.

ulster overcoat with an enormous astrakhan collar.

"Good-evening!" he said. "Maybe you know the country hereabouts, miss?"

Babs smiled.

"Yes, pretty well," she admitted.

"I'm Josh Stafford—boss of Stafford's Famous Sideshows," the man said. "I reckon we're stranded. This is Jim, my driver, and if there's a sign as in a worse fix than we are, just introduce me to 'em," he added glumly. "Here we are, right off our beat, all hands on strike, and nowhere to hang up for the night. Thought maybe you might know who owns this bit of land by the lake yonder?"

Babs blinked a little. Hidden by the mist, Faith Ashton had stolen a little nearer.

"But—but why should you want to know that?" she asked.

"Well, I guess we've got to find some sort of a shakedown," Josh Stafford said dejectedly. "You see, miss, it's like this. We're down; we're out. We've got no money, no engagements, no hands. Until I can fix up some new contract we're just stranded, and goodness knows where that's coming from!" he added glumly. "This morning, because we had no wages to give 'em, all the hands deserted the show."

"Oh dear!" Babs bit her lip. Warmly sympathetic herself, she could feel keenly for one in such a plight as this. "What sort of show is it?" she asked interestedly.

"Sideshows, hoop-la, coconut shies, roundabouts, dart stalls, racing stalls—all the sorts of shows you find running at fairs and circuses."

"Oh!" Babs nodded. She liked the look of Josh, despite his rather unhappy expression. She liked the look of lean-faced Jim, blue with cold, but grinning cheerfully. "And you want that bit of land by the lake?" she asked.

"That's the idea, miss—if we can find out who it belongs to."

"Well, it belongs to Lord Courtfield. Most of the land about here does," Babs

"Why, what were you thinking of?" laughed Babs, as she entered the snug little sitting room.

"Oh, nothing much! Just sort of rambling." Williams smiled again. "I was in Courtfield this afternoon, and I saw the notices announcing Hospital Day. It sort of took my mind back to last year when you organised the Courtfield Pageant. 'Member it? I was just wondering if you had any ideas of the same breed this year?"

Babs' eyes sparkled. She did not see the cautious face which suddenly popped up, peering through the little window. Nor did she realise at that moment that, outside, Faith Ashton was greedily listening to every word.

"Well, I have," Babs said; "and funny thing, too, it only this moment struck me. I hope you'll think it a good idea," she added earnestly, "because it all depend upon you whether it's carried out. Mr. Williams, you will help, won't you?"

"Put your money on it!" Williams grinned. "Well, and what is it, Miss Redfern?"

"Just this." And Babs told him about the stranded proprietor of Stafford's Famous Sideshows. "Mr. Stafford is up against it," she said. "He just wants permission to use the field by the lake for a while. His sideshows are doing nothing, you see, and he's too hard up to rent another pitch."

"Yes, of course I see that. But the idea—"

"This is it," Babs laughed breathlessly. "What about a hospital fair, Mr. Williams, on the edge of the lake? Get the sideshows and so on erected. Raise money for Hospital Day. A torch-light procession on the ice. Competitions at the darts stall, and so on. Jumble stalls, and reward things. Build snowmen, and award prizes for snowballing the pipes out of their mouths—so much a snowball, of course. We might have a snow battle on the ice at night, with the ice all lighted up by lanterns; we've heaps and heaps of them at Cliff House, and I'm sure Miss Primrose would lend us every one. We might have toboggan races—"

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Faith, outside, and clutched at the window-sill.

"And— Oh, by James!" said Mr. Williams, and blinked, amazed, at the flushed, excited Babs as though she was something unreal. Never before had he heard such a torrent of bright ideas pouring from one pair of lips in such a short space of time. "By James!" he said again. "Miss Redfern, steady on! I can't get it all into my head at once! Anything else?"

"Oh, heaps!" Babs laughed. "Heaps and heaps and heaps! What about an Eskimo igloo, with someone dressed up as an Eskimo, selling toys to kiddies inside? And a greasy-pole competition; but of course, being winter, we'll call it the North Pole! And what about— Oh, but there are tons and tons of things we can do! The great thing is to get people all in one spot and make them spend their money, the hospital, of course, receiving most of the benefit, and Mr. Stafford paid for the hiring of his shows. I'm sure Mr. Stafford would be only too pleased to listen to the suggestion."

"I'll say he would!" grinned Williams. "But what about getting the sideshows and stuff erected? Big job for you girls, that, isn't it?"

"Yes; but there's the boys," Babs laughed. "You forget Friardale are in on this, too. They'll do their bit—like Trojans! That's where they come in. We'll all have to help, of course. That'll mean fixing up a committee and so on.

Mr. Williams, please do give me your permission to use the field by the lake?"

"Granted!" said Mr. Williams at once. "By James, I'll say it's granted! About a scheme, I'm only sorry I shan't be here to see it materialise. I've got to go away to-morrow, you see. But, anyway, you carry on, Miss Redfern; and please save me the local Press cuttings and so on, so that I can read all about it when I come back. You can tell Mr. Stafford that he can have the pitch with my blessings, but only on condition he assents to your Hospital Day. But before you go, have another cup of tea?"

"But the poor man will be waiting!" Babs laughed.

"Never mind. I want to hear more about this," Williams replied. "As he's been out so long, I don't expect he'll mind waiting another few minutes. You're not in all that hurry, are you?"

"Well, no; but I've got to go to Friardale as well," Barbara said. "I told Jimmy Richmond I'd be over after lessons."

"Then Jimmy Richmond," Mr. Williams said severely, "has no right to expect you on an afternoon like this! No, please, Miss Redfern, don't go all at once. You know, I'm as keen as mustard on this idea, and I want to help you sort some of it out, especially as I've got to leave to-morrow. Tell your father he added—there's the telephone. Ring up and tell Richmond that you'll be late."

Babs dimpled. That was a good idea. She reached for the phone; spoke into the receiver. Then she laughed as she hung up.

"Well, that's topping!" she exclaimed, her eyes sparkling. "I got on to Ralph Lawrence, the games captain. Ralph says that Jimmy & Co. have already left Friardale for Cliff House—not knowing, of course, that I'm already on my way—to save me the journey through the fog. Thank you, I will have another cup of tea! But, Mr. Williams, supposing Lord Courtfield comes back in your absence? What will he say about it?"

"I'll leave him a note," Williams volunteered; and the girl outside slipped away from the window. "Now, Miss Redfern—"

And for a quarter of an hour Babs sat and chatted, for good-natured Williams was enthusiastically interested.

Babs refused his offer, however, to accompany her back to the stranded sideshows; she wanted to break the news to Stafford herself, she said.

Williams smiled. He shook her hand as she went to the door.

Well, you know, Miss Redfern, you have my very, very best wishes for your success," he said, "and anything I can possibly do I will. I'll be sending a donation to-morrow—just towards the printing expenses and so on. Good-night!"

"Good-night!" Babs laughed. "And thanks awfully!"

She groped her way into the fog. "Phew! Wasn't it thick! But what did that fog matter now? What did anything matter? If a blizzard had greeted her, Babs would still have been light-hearted—would still have warmly glowed from the very excitement which surged within her. And to think when she had started out from Cliff House that afternoon she hadn't an idea in her head!

She laughed as she blundered through the cottonwool darkness. Her cheeks were ruddy, her eyes sparkling. She felt pleased. She felt proud—not particularly because she had thought of how to raise money for the hospital, but

because of the attractiveness of the method of raising it; the great and tumultuous fun the whole thing promised to be.

It would be something new—something decidedly unusual. The Cliff House Hospital Fair! Wouldn't that just be a ripping name for it?

She suddenly paused. Ahead she saw vaguely the thrum of a motor-engine—saw vaguely in the mist the light of a flashing torch. She heard Josh Stafford's voice.

"Bit nearer this way, Jim. Whoa there! That's right! On again. Mind that hedge there, and don't run her into the lake, you mutt!"

"Hallo," Babs said, and stared. It sounded uncommonly as if Josh Stafford had taken the law into his own hands and was already moving into the field by the lake.

And when she reached the spot at which she had left the stranded caravan, there, sure enough, was the huge van—a hundred yards away from the road, already parked by the side of the lake.

Josh Stafford stared at her as she came up. His face was one big beaming grin.

"Hallo, Miss Redfern! I wondered why you didn't come back with Miss Ashton," he said. "But, I say, it's a great idea, isn't it?"

"Idea?" Babs asked perplexedly.

"Why, hasn't Miss Ashton told you?"

"Miss Ashton?" Babs stuttered.

"Oh, sure. You know; this business of running a fair in connection with the hospital."

Babs felt as if she had been struck a sudden blow.

"Faith Ashton told you—you that?" she breathed.

"Why, yes, why else should we be moving into this field?" puzzled Josh Stafford wanted to know. "You don't think I'd have dumped here without permission, do you? I must say it's a good idea," he added enthusiastically.

"Because, apart from helping the hospital, it also helps me. Miss Ashton got the permission, you know, while you were lost in the fog, and she's promised me a ten per cent rake-off on all the money taken at my stalls."

In the light of the torch, Babs stared at him. She had a sensation of breathlessness, of bewilderment. Not all at once could she take this in.

Faith Ashton had got permission! Faith Ashton had thought of the idea of the hospital fair? Had some magic telepathy transferred all her own thoughts into the brain of Faith Ashton?

"Good, ain't it?" Josh Stafford beamed.

"Y-es," Babs stuttered.

And Miss Ashton will get the Friardale boys along to-morrow, I suppose?" Josh asked. "There's a lot Jim and me can do towards unloading, but we can't do all the work. Still, we'll help all we can—and of course we'll tell the lads what to do with the things."

"But—but—" gasped Babs, and then stopped.

For in a flash she realised what must have happened—what had happened. Faith, then, had followed her. Faith must have heard her discussing the whole scheme with Mr. Williams. Faith, like the snake in the grass she was, had come back here playing the Lady Bountiful. Just what Faith would do, of course! Just the sort of thing she had been guilty of, so many times, since her arrival at Cliff House School—just the very deceitful, hypocritical trick she was so fond of playing!

Well, she wasn't going to get away with this—not if she knew it!

"Going, Miss Redfern?" Josh inquired genially.

"Yes, I've got to get back," Babs gasped. She felt an undesirable reluctance not to explain then. After all, what really mattered to Josh and Jim was that they had a pitch at last, and they could hardly be expected to be interested in schoolgirl politics. Explanations to them could come after she had settled with Faith Ashton.

Slowly, a great deal of the excited happiness she had experienced a few moments before considerably dashed and dampened then, she turned her heel.

Faith! That little two-faced schemer! So this was her latest game, was it?

In the darkness Babs' jaw took on a rather square outline. Rapidly as she could, she hurried back to Cliff House. It was not, however, a very quick return. The fog, thick in the open country, was almost impenetrable in South Cope. Several times she left the road and found herself wandering among the trees.

What should have taken her a quarter of an hour, indeed, occupied nearly an hour. It was half-past five when she finally reached the gates of Cliff House, and raced up the familiar drive towards the school.

And, pushing open the door, became aware at once that something most terrifically untoward was afoot.

For Big Hall, into which those doors opened, was crowded. Not only with girls, but with boys. Half a dozen boys were there, most conspicuous among them the handsome, Jimmy Richmond, of the Fourth at Friarvale School, with his pals, Lister Cattermole, and Douglas Coutts, and Don Haybury, and the Hon. Laceyport Levenden from the Shell.

The whole of the Hall was a-buzz with excited chatter, and Faith Ashton, radiantly beaming, her eyes shining, was the centre of quite an excited tumult.

There was a cry as Babs was seen.

"Here she is!"
"I say, Babs! What do you think?"
Your cousin—"

And next moment they were all clamouring round her.

"Babs! Babs! Oh my hat, here you are!" Tomboy Clara Trevlyn cried. "Babs, come here and listen to the very latest! Faith, your cousin—"

Babs stopped.
"Yes?" she asked, and all eyes turned towards her, including Faith's, who treated her to a shyly winning smile.

"Faith," Clara cried, "has an idea. Babs. The idea of the term! A real stunner! Faith," Clara rushed out, "is going to organise a fair, Babs—in aid of the Courtfield Hospital!"

"Oh!" Babs said, and her eyes became like steel.

"And—and," Clara jerked out, "you should just hear the wheezes she's got for it, hasn't she, Jimmy? Oh, don't look like that, Babs. You ought to be pleased, because it's an idea I don't think even you could have thought of. We're just trying to form a committee, you know."

"And," Faith said, coming forward, "we do want you in, Barbara, dear. Because I'm sure," she added softly, "that you will be ever such an asset. And guess, Babs, what they're going to call the fair. That, at least, is not my idea."

Babs stood rooted. She felt something welling up within her.

"And what," she asked, in a strange voice, "are they going to call it?"

"Well—" Faith prettily blushed as she looked at Jimmy Richmond. "Mr. Richmond says as it's my idea, they ought to commemorate the fact, you know, and—and so we've practically decided upon the name. We're going to call it, Babs—what do you think?"

"I don't know," Babs said grimly.
"Faith Ashton's Hospital Fair," Faith said, with smiling calmness. "I do think that ever such a lovely compliment to me, don't you, Babs, dear?"

They Didn't Believe Babs!



BUT it was obvious, at once, to every boy and girl assembled there, that whatever Barbara Redfern thought, it was just the reverse of Faith Ashton's suggestion.

For one moment she stared bitterly, seething and withering contempt in her expression as she faced the girl who had so calmly stolen her idea.

In that moment, at least, she could not speak. She felt, had she spoken, that she would have choked.

Faith, getting back first, had cleverly, triumphantly given the hospital idea out as her own. Faith, before a single thing was done towards the fair, had grabbed every bit of glory connected with it.

And to think she could be so unscrupulous, so smilingly hypocritical about it. To think she could calmly stand there, brazenly taking all these compliments, softly inviting her to be on her committee.

"Babs darling," Faith said anxiously, "aren't you strange? You don't seem a bit pleased. Don't you think it's a good idea?"

Babs had to speak.
"I think," she bitterly broke out, "it's a very good idea—naturally."

"Well, I must say you've got a jolly funny way of showing it," blunt Clara grunted. "Anybody'd think we'd suggested robbing a bank."

"Would they?" Babs asked strangely.

"Babs!" Jimmy, Richmond cried.
"Babs darling," Faith whispered.
"Babs, my dearest—" And, with that utterly brazen effrontery of which she was so capable, she laid a hand on Babs' arm, looking with wide-eyed anxiety into her face. "Oh, Barbara darling, I wish you wouldn't take it like this!" she said. "You make me feel so dreadfully unhappy—"

Babs bit her lip.
"And what," she asked, "about me?"



"FAITH has an idea, Babs!" cried Clara. "A real stunner. She's going to organise a fair—in aid of the Courtfield Hospital!" Babs felt as if she had been struck a blow. For the organisation of a fair had been her own idea.

"About you, Barbara? I don't understand."

"No?" Babs looked at her scornfully. "Oh, don't look like that! She broke out. Faith, don't you think you're going rather too far?" she asked, and her eyes flashed. "It may seem fun to you to steal another girl's idea—"

"What?" gasped Leila Carroll.

"Another girl's idea, I said." Babs' eyes burned. "This was my idea, and Faith knows it."

There was a murmur. Most girls there looked incredulous. Lydia Crossendale never a friend of Babs, scoffed scornfully.

"Stop it, Babs!"

"Yes, rather! Don't be a cat!" Frances Frost broke in.

"Please!" Faith cried. She looked terribly distressed. "Barbara, please explain," she said. "How can I possibly have stolen your idea?"

"You didn't follow me, I suppose?" Babs asked.

"Yes." Faith's big eyes were full of innocent wonder. "I followed you, of course," she said. "I was anxious to meet Mr. Richmond. But I've told the girls all this. I was with you when you met Mr. Stafford. You do admit that, Babs dear?"

"Yes, I admit it. What's the rest of the story?"

"Well, then— Oh, Babs, don't say it like that! Well, your kindly you said off to see Mr. Williams," she said, "to get permission for Mr. Stafford to park by the lake. You were rather rude to me, if you remember, but I thought you might get lost in the fog, and so I went after you."

"Sounds a good story—" Babs hated herself for the gibe, but for the life of her she could not have stifled it at that moment. "And what happened then?"

"Oh, really, Barbara, if you're going to take it like that, why should I explain?" Faith said offensively. "I do think you're being horrid. And the very first person I thought of for the committee was you. In any case, if you didn't get lost in the fog, how is it you are so late back?"

Babs clenched her hands. She looked around her. She winced as she met the glances which were fastened on her. Scornful glances, doubtful glances, glances of bewilderment, of amazement from her friends, uneasy glances, too.

Faith, almost in tears, had drawn nearer to Jimmy Richmond, whose brows were drawn in a frown, and who was looking very astonished about the whole thing.

They all believed Faith—false Faith, who had got her shot home first.

Something seemed to snap in Babs' brain. Once again she experienced that sense of hopelessness.

If Faith would come out into the open; if Faith, just for a moment, would cast aside this mask of injured hurt, she would—how much easier then to deal with her.

But Faith once again obviously had the school on her side.

"Well?" Diana Royston-Clarke challenged.

"You—you believe her?" Babs choked.

"Why not?" Diana shrugged. "I'm bothered if I see any reason to disbelieve her. Anyway, why argue?" she asked. "We all know for some reason you're dead set against Faith. We all know that even if you could, you wouldn't give her credit for anything. Why not admit, for once, that you

weren't the girl with the bright idea?"

"Oh, Babs! Mabel Lynn, Babs' great chum, said worriedly.

"Well, why not?" Diana demanded. "Can't you, just for once, admit that you've failed to be a sport, and join the committee?"

"Yes, Barbara darling—please do!" Faith pleaded. "Let us all work together for the cause. If—if, you don't like the name of the fair, Barbara, we'll change it."

Babs stood still. She was hurt to see the look in the eyes of Mabel Lynn—the look which Jimmy Richmond and Lillian Catermole were bestowing upon her stunned her. She had a feeling, if she remained in this atmosphere a moment longer, she would do something for which she might be sorry.

She turned away, blindly rushing towards the stairs.

"Barbara! Barbara darling!" Faith cried. "Oh, leave her alone!" said Beatrice Beverley disapprovingly.

Everybody stood still. Even Jimmy Richmond, colouring uncertainly, did not move. Only one girl among them all followed Babs as she blindly groped her way up the stairs. That girl was the plump duffer who shared Study No. 4 with Babs and golden-haired Mabel.

"Bab Babs!" she stammered, as Babs reached the door of Study No. 4. "Oh, Bib-Babs! Babs, old thing, dud-don't be upset," Bessie appealed as Babs let herself into the study.

Babs shook her head.

"Bessie dear, please leave me alone," she muttered.

"No, Babs. Nun-not while you're like this," Bessie said. "Oh dear! Babs, don't cry, Babs."

"No, I'm not going to cry," Babs said. "But—" she straightened almost fiercely, and Bessie was half-afraid by the tense whiteness of her face—"but that girl," she choked, "that—"
 And bit her lip. "Oh, Bessie, old thing, don't you cry," she added softly. "There—"

"But, Bib-Babs, I dud-don't like to see you so unhappy," Bessie said tearfully. "Lul-lend me your handkerchief."

"Silly old Bessie!" Babs said gently, and the fierce anger in her heart melted into tender compassion at the distress of the fat girl—dear, darling old Bessie, so utterly, so devotedly loyal even if the whole school turned against her. "There, now, dry up," she said. "It's all over."

"But was it your idea, Babs?" Bessie asked, sniffing.

"Of course," Babs shrugged.

"But there, she bagged it and I—I—"
 She shook her head. "Oh, I suppose I'm a fool to have flared up like that," she cried. "But, after all, it was a shock and—a disappointment, too. She—"
 And then she looked up as the door opened and in came Mabel Lynn, her pretty face wearing a worried look. She tried to smile. "Hallo, Mabs," she said brightly.

"Hallo, Babs," Mabs returned in a rather flat voice, and hesitated. "Are you all right, Babs?" she asked awkwardly.

"Why, of course. Why shouldn't I be?"

"Well, after—after what you said in Big Hall—" Mabs shook her head. She shut the door. "That—that wasn't like you, Babs."

"No?" Babs asked, pride rushing to stiffen her attitude at once.

"Please," Mabs begged. "Don't go

for me. But—but—oh bother! I just couldn't stay there and listen to all the wretched things they were saying behind your back," she said unhappily. "Babs, what is the matter? Don't you like Faith?"

"No," Babs replied bluntly.

"But she's your cousin, Babs."
 "That does not make any difference," Babs returned shortly. "Please don't let us talk about her."

Mabs shook her head. Bessie, her thick spectacles in one hand as she dabbed at her eyes, gazed at her mournfully.

Not at all happy the atmosphere in that usually pleasant little study then; and not at all like the sunny, cheery-natured Babs Mabs knew was her great friend.

But Mabs did not know, as Babs knew, the true nature of the girl who had electrified the school with her startling suggestions for Hospital Day. Mabs, in fact, had every reason—or so she thought—to be grateful to Faith Ashton.

For had it not been Faith who last week had made possible her triumph as Queen of the Carnival at the Court-field Ice Rink?

At least Mabs thought that. Only Babs and Marjorie Hazeldene knew that Faith, schemer and snake in the grass as she was, had done her utmost to rob Babs of that honour—and would have robbed her had it not been for Babs herself.

"Oh, dud-dear, shall we have some tea?" Bessie asked unhappily.

"Oh, please," Mabs said. "Yes, rather! You'd like some tea, wouldn't you, Babs—especially after having been out in that awful fog? Bessie, give me the kettle, will you?" Thanks! And Mabs, bent over the fat junior handed it to her. "I'll go and fill it," she suggested brightly.

She went out. Babs shook her head. Really, she hated to feel like this—especially with dear old Mabs who, after all, did not understand. With an effort she threw off the oppression which sat upon her, and rallying Bessie, set about preparing tea.

By the time Mabs came back the table was almost laid, Bessie busily cutting bread and butter, Babs opening a tin of salmon.

And then by common consent the Hospital Day was forgotten. Together they sat round the table.

Bright and cheerful Babs appeared to be, but Babs knew that it was rather a desperate cheerfulness, and despite her effort to restore the old atmosphere in Study No. 4, was very conscious of that air of constraint which pervaded it.

They were all rather thankful, indeed, when the meal was drawing to an end. Then suddenly there came a tap on the door.

It was Faith Ashton who looked in. "Oh, Mabel," she said. "Hallo, Babs," she brightly smiled—just as if nothing had happened. "Mabel, dear, I don't want to interrupt you, of course," she said, "but you will remember, won't you, that you are on the committee, and that there is a committee meeting at six o'clock."

Mabs turned red.

"Oh, yes, of course," she mumbled. "And Barbara dear, if you'd care to come along we'd love to have you of course," Faith simpered. "It will be such a jolly meeting, too. I've left your place open, Barbara, in case you change your mind."

"Thanks!" Babs said gruffly, and did not look up.

"You won't come?" Faith asked.

"No, thank you," Babs answered.

"But, Barbara—"



"I REALLY do think, Babs," said Jimmy Richmond curtly, "that you might be a bit more sporting." And he turned away, with Faith triumphantly linking her arm in his. Babs bit her lip. So Faith had even turned her boy chum against her.

Babs impatiently shrugged. Faith, sighing, closed the door. There was a long moment of silence. Mabs coughed. "Babs, sure? Quite sure?" "Quite sure!" Babs said gruffly. "But—but—" Mabs faltered. "Oh dear! I—I thought you were keen on doing something for the hospital?" she asked.

It was Mabs' turn to redden, but she looked at Babs straightly. "I'm still keen. I've no quarrel with the hospital and I mean to help all I can. But I'm not working on Faith Ashton's committee," she added bluntly, "and I'm not taking orders from Faith Ashton. I'll work on my own." "And I," Bessie said stoutly, "will help Babs, you know."

Dear old Bessie. She did not know the things about Faith that Babs did, but Bessie had never liked Faith, and Babs was, and always had been, Bessie's idol.

Mabs hesitantly rose. Rather wondering the stars she gave Babs as she went out, with a lingering trace of regretfulness and hurt that left a sore impression on Babs' memory.

In silence she and Bessie cleared up, washed the tea things and got down to prep. The door opened again. Faith, with Mabs and Clara in tow, entered the room with Miss Charmant, the pretty mistress of the Fourth.

Babs rose. "All right, Barbara," Miss Charmant smiled. "Sit down. May we come in?" "Oh, please do, Miss Charmant!" "I'm rather puzzled, my dear. I understood you were keen on Hospital Day—"

"And so I am," Babs replied. "Then you will help with the scheme, of course, Barbara?"

"I'm sorry, Miss Charmant—no." The mistress looked at her with anxious puzzlement.

"You mean you refuse to do anything for Hospital Day, Barbara?"

"Not quite that," Babs replied steadily. "But what I'm going to do I prefer to do on my own."

Faith gave a sigh. "I see," Miss Charmant said, but she looked a little troubled. "You are aware, Barbara, that a committee has been formed, and that the committee is very anxious for you to join it? As captain of the Form, Barbara, I think that you should, you know. You are a girl with ideas, and I am sure those ideas would help things enormously."

Babs smiled bitterly. "So, please, Barbara," Miss Charmant said, "do think about it, my dear—will you?"

"Yes, Miss Charmant." And the mistress, with a smile, left. But Babs had already thought about it. And Babs was determined. Not for anything would she let the hospital down; but not for anything would she join the committee under the lead of Faith Ashton, listening to Faith putting her own ideas forward and asking her to help those ideas to be carried into action—so that Faith's own vanity could benefit.

Before Miss Charmant had even left the study her mind was made up—and when Babs' mind was made up she could be as stubbornly immovable as Tomboy Clara Trevely.

But between then and to-morrow's classes, Babs was thinking things out. She was thinking them out rather fiercely. If she was at war with Faith, it was still up to her to "do her bit" for the hospital—but she was not going to do it under Faith's leadership.

From Mabs she received a rather hesitant report of the committee meeting—and, as she had expected, Faith had put forward all those suggestions which earlier in the evening she had made

known to Mr. Williams. All, that is, except one.

The idea of the Eskimo igloo. Before bed that night Babs drew Bessie to one side.

"Bessie," she said, "I've got an idea for the fair—and I want you to help me. But—not a word, mind!" "Nun-no, of course not," Bessie said. "But what's the idea, Babs?" And Babs told her. Bessie's fat face expanded into a smile, her eyes gleamed.

For certainly it was an idea—and certainly an original one. Babs and Bessie would build an Eskimo igloo on the lake. They themselves would dress up as Mr. and Mrs. Eskimo, and the charge would be one penny for a peep into the igloo's interior. In there, Bessie would act as auctioneer, selling toys to the kiddies and to the adults other articles—at the same time giving a ventriloquial performance with a doll dressed up as a baby Eskimo.

"Oh, topping!" Bessie said. "I sus-say, Faith hasn't thought of anything like that. But what about the things to sell, Babs?"

"Well, we've still lots of things over from Christmas," Babs said. "Apart from that I can draw a pound out of the Post Office to buy other things. Hollands, as you know, will let us have things at cost price if we give them a guarantee we're going to sell them for the hospital."

Bessie nodded eagerly. The idea was one which appealed to her—especially as it promised such an important "turn" for Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter.

With a satisfied smirk she accompanied Babs up the stairs when dormitory bell rang, with an air of satisfied mysteriousness climbed into bed when lights were turned out.

Discussing the forthcoming fair, the main details of which had been arranged now, the Fourth Form settled

down to sleep, but it was noticeable that there were not half so many of those heavy "good-nights" flung towards Babs as of yore.

Only Faith still apparently anxious to hold out the olive branch of peace, spoke more than half a dozen words, indeed.

And she said: "Oh, Barbara, we did miss you at the committee meeting to-night. But, of course, darling, your place is still there if you want it. Babs, won't you join the committee?"

Babs turned over. Frances Frost sniffed.

"Oh rats! Why waste your breath on that surly cat?" she asked. "Leave her alone."

Babs bit her lip. How her heart in the moment burned. But, stung and hurt as she was, still smarting under a sense of bitter humiliation, she just couldn't have replied.

In the morning the Form was more than ever aloof towards her. Something like a climax was reached when, in class, Miss Charmant looked at her.

"Barbara—" she began.

"Yes, Miss Charmant?" Babs answered, standing up immediately.

"I hope," Miss Charmant said, "that by this time you have thought over what I said last night. Frankly, Barbara, as captain of the Form, I think you ought to be taking a leading part in the preparations for Faith's fair. I cannot persuade you against your will, of course, but I do most certainly think that the idea is worthy of support."

"Yes," Babs agreed, "so do I."

"Then am I to take it, Barbara, that you have decided to join the committee?"

"No," Babs said.

Miss Charmant blinked. There came a mutter from the class.

"Be sure, Barbara, you are acting very strangely. What makes you take up this attitude?"

Babs turned pink. But she stuck to her guns.

"I think," she said steadily, "Faith Ashton can answer that question, Miss Charmant."

"Oh dear!" Faith, her face the picture of despair, stood up. "Barbara, dear, why do you persist in still holding out?" she asked, sadly.

You see, Miss Charmant, Babs has got some notion that I stole her idea."

Miss Charmant frowned.

"And what makes you think that, Barbara?"

"Because," Babs said evenly, "I had the idea first. It was I who told it to Mr. Williams. Faith must have overheard. I'm sorry; I didn't want to mention it, but since Faith has forced the explanation, there it is."

"I see," Miss Charmant, nodded.

"Very well, you may sit down," she said. "Yet it was Faith, apparently, who did all the work," she continued.

"Faith who saw Mr. Stafford—I know that because I have been talking to him myself this morning. I am sorry we cannot get in touch with Mr. Williams, however, because I understand Mr. Williams left in rather a hurry by the early train this morning. Yet it does seem strange, Barbara, if you had the idea first that it should have been Faith who saw Mr. Stafford. Mr. Stafford is emphatic on that point."

She did not reply. She couldn't. But she was thinking miserably—and furiously wild with herself—for the omission—that she should have challenged Faith's statement last night.

Mr. Stafford, of course, would support Faith. Mr. Williams, had he been here, would have been her one hope of refuting everything which Faith had said.

Too late she regretted that she had not phoned through to him last night—and yet, in the bitterness of the state of mind which had been hers then, how could she have been expected to think of those details?

Faith had won! Faith, with her usual slip artfulness and cunning, had taken advantage of every tiny loophole; had cut every inch of ground from under her feet.

Was it her fancy, or did a low hiss come from one corner of the class as she took her seat in her desk again?

Her Boy Chum Against Her, Too!



BANG, bang, bang!
Thump, thump,
thump!

There was a cheery scene of busy industry on the edge of Friardale Lake the following afternoon.

Half Cliff House seemed to be there—and half Friardale School, too. With a will, the two schools had got to work, and, under the beamingly genial direction of Josh Stafford and Jim (surname as yet unknown), boys and girls were settling down to their task with enthusiasm.

The little plot of land which surrounded the lake was becoming transformed. Half a dozen stalls already were in position. Except for the prizes, the hoop-la stall was completely erected. So were the coconut-shies, the skittles and the darts stalls.

One roundabout-of the kiddies' variety—had been put into position; the other, a larger one, called the Crawling Caterpillar, was already nearing completion.

Near them the girls of Cliff House were busily erecting stalls which would accommodate the articles they intended to sell to the fair patrons. And Jimmy Richmond & Co., of Friardale, were struggling with a great marquee which was intended as a refreshment tent when the big day came.

But away from the scene of concentrated industry—right in the middle of the lake, indeed, two girls were working with earnest zeal.

These were Barbara Redfern, captain of Cliff House's Lower School, and Bessie Bunter.

Energetically, Bessie was scooping up snow; Babs, with a wheelbarrow, was transporting it to the scene of operations. Already on the ice a circular wall of snow had been erected, with an attendant framework of split bamboo poles, which formed the skeleton structure of the igloo which they were both manufacturing. It was significant, however, that no one else was paying attention to them.

Not that Babs cared. Babs, in her own way, would do her duty towards the hospital Bessie, glowingly pleased to find herself her great chum's helper, working with a will that was truly amazing.

"I sus-say, it's coming on, you know," beamed the plump duffer.

"Isn't it?" Babs laughed. "This time to-morrow, Bessie, we'll have it all finished. No; don't dump that lot there, old dufferkins. Over there—by the door. That's the stuff! Pass the shovel, Bessie, there's a dear. Now we're all—!" And there Babs broke off. "Oh!" she added, a sudden steely infection in her voice as Faith came up.

"I say, Barbara, that does look intriguing!" Faith simpered. "What are you doing?"

"Is that your business?" Babs asked quietly.

"But, Barbara, of course it's my business," Faith smiled. "After all, I am sort of the head of all this, aren't I?"

Babs did not seem to hear.

"More snow, Bessie," she said.

"But, Barbara darling—" Faith persisted.

"And please," Babs added, ignoring her, "turn that barrow round, Bessie. Would you mind?" she asked, gently shoving Faith out of the way. "We're busy."

Faith bit her lip. Even she turned red at that direct snub.

Bessie, who never had had any use for Faith, grimaced a little, a trifle anxious, yet glad in her heart that Faith at last had met her match. At the same moment Jimmy Richmond strolled up. Very absently, almost hesitantly, he looked at Babs.

"Hallo, Babs!" he said. "Busy?"

"Oh, frightfully!" Babs smiled.

"Looks a nifty sort of contraption you're rigging up," Jimmy said.

"Yes, isn't it?" Babs asked. "You see, it's a secret."

"Oh!" Jimmy looked abashed. He glanced at Faith, who treated him to a bearing smile. Faith shook her head.

"Dear Barbara is being so mysterious about it," she said.

"Would you believe, Jimmy, she even refused to tell me what's in her mind. But I'm sure it's good!" she added enthusiastically.

"Barbara's ideas are always so marvelously good. Barbara, would you like Jimmy and me to help you? We'd love to, wouldn't we, Jimmy?"

"Well, yes," Richmond assented, but he gave Babs a queer look. "Anything we can do, Babs?"

"Yes, please," Babs said at once.

"You, Jimmy."

"But Miss Ashton—"

"Oh, Jimmy—please don't keep on calling me Miss Ashton!" Faith pleaded. "We're all such jolly chums together, that you make me feel out of it, you know. You call Barbara Babs, so why not call me Faith? And, after all, I do call you Jimmy now, don't I?"

Phase, Jimmy."

Richmond coloured a little.

"Well," he said; "well, y-es, all right—F-Faith."

"Oh, Jimmy, how nicely you say it!" Faith sighed, and to that young man's terrific embarrassment, caught his arm and hung on to it. "Barbara, dear, do let Jimmy and me help you." And looked at Babs, clinging to Jimmy's arm with a light of challenge in her eyes, saying to her, with every expression in her face: "See how easy it is for me to do just as I like with your boy chum," but with the false smile on her face pleading and beseeching at the same time.

Babs turned white. Oh, what a girl—what a girl!

"Jimmy can help me if he wishes," she said.

"And I?" Faith cried.

"Thanks, no. I'd rather you didn't," Babs said bluntly.

She couldn't help it. She didn't want to say it. But Faith, silently goading her, just dragged the words from her lips.

She saw the blink which Richmond gave. She saw his dark eyes regarding her, and she read there the puzzlement, the little resentment, in their depths. Faith shook her head.

"Oh dear!" she said. "Babs still doesn't like me. All right, then, Jimmy, I'll leave you to help."

"Babs, you don't mean it?"

"I'm sorry," Babs said; "I do."

"I see," Jimmy shrugged. He looked rather contemptuous all at once. "Then, in that case," he asked, "you won't mind if I withdraw my offer? I really do think, Babs, as we're all working for the same cause, that you might be a bit more sporting!"

"Oh crumbs! But, look here, you know—" Bessie blurted.

But Richmond, rather curtly, had turned on his heel. Faith bit her lip; but as she walked away she turned her face to Babs—and there was that in its glowing triumph which turned Babs' heart sick.

They went off. Bessie beamed. "Oh, Bib-Babs! Oh dear—" "All right, Bessie. Let's get some more snow," Babs said gently.

"Bib-but Jimmy—" "Please, Bessie!"

Bessie shook her head. But her face was shining with indignation as she gazed after Jimmy and Faith, now disappearing.

Rather white, Babs resumed her work. Rather choking was the lump which rose in her throat. Jimmy—her boy friend—Jimmy, like everybody else, was misunderstanding.

How could one possibly fight such a cunning enemy as Faith Ashton? How possibly combat such wiles as hers?

But Jimmy—her chum of a hundred jolly adventures, should share the same opinion as the rest—

With her mind in a riot, she worked on. Dusk was descending now, however, and several of the groups had packed up. Well, she'd go to see Jimmy. She'd try to explain matters a little. She smiled at Bessie.

"Bessie, will you clear up? I just want to have a word with Jimmy Richmond."

Bessie nodded. Babs, with a last look round, turned towards the fairground. Clara, just packing away a mallet, turned as she called her name.

"Oh, hallo, Babs!" she said—but it was noticeable that she did not say it with the usual cheeriness she always reserved for this, her chum. "See you've joined the isolation camp," she said, looking towards where Bessie was collecting in the tools of the igloo labours. "Fair's going up nicely, don't you think?"

"Yes," said Babs, and bit her lip for a moment. "Clara, where's Jimmy Richmond?" she asked.

"Jimmy?" Clara shrugged. "Oh, he went off about ten minutes ago—with Faith."

"Faith?"

"Yes. Didn't you know? He's invited her over to tea at Friardale."

"Oh!" said Babs. "Oh, th-thanks!" she said in a listless sort of voice. "I say, Clara—"

"Well, Babs?" Clara asked.

"You—you wouldn't like to come to tea in Study No. 4?"

Clara reddened a little.

"Well, I'm sorry, but—well, Mabs and I have agreed to have tea with Diana," she said rather awkwardly. "We—we want to discuss plans for one of the stalls we shall be working on together."

Babs nodded. She understood. Not another word she said. She strolled away. But her heart was heavy as she rejoined Bessie.

Together they went back to the study. Mabs was there, tidying her hair before the mirror. She looked round with a little self-conscious flush as Babs came in.

"Oh, hal-lo, Babs!" she said. "Hallo!" Babs said.

"You—you don't mind if I go to tea with Diana?" Mabs asked.

"Not at all, old Mabs," Babs said quickly.

Mabs smiled. She went out. But Babs bit her lip. She didn't blame either Mabs or Clara, of course, for accepting the invitation, but she felt deeply the reflection upon herself—rarely, if ever, were Mabs and Clara invited to tea unless she herself accompanied them.

"Oh, Bib-Babs!" Bessie said, her lips quivering. "Oh dud-dar! Babs, old thing, I—I'm sus-sorry."

"But why, old Bessie?" Babs smiled. "Oh tush! Come on, let's get the table laid. I say, we can have salmon for tea," she added brightly. "We've got that small tin left, you know—there's just enough for two of us. Bessie, cheer up," she added gently.

Yes, Bessie said, but blinked woefully. Oh, Bib-Babs, what's the matter?" she broke out. "Why is it since that—what cousin has been to the school that nothing has happened the same, you know? Why dud-dud! they believe you when you say it's your idea? Why dud-dud! they invite you—"

Babs put an arm round her shoulders. "There, old Bess," she said soothingly. "don't get cut up. It's nothing—really. They'll soon get over it. In any

case, I'm not on their committee. So I can't expect to be invited to discuss things which are the committee's business, can I? Now, don't upset yourself, old thing. Let's have tea."

And they had tea. But it was by no means a cheerful tea. For once, even Bessie's appetite seemed to have failed her; and Babs, weighed down by the sick, dumb misery in her heart, could hardly make even a pretence of eating.

Well Done, Babs!



"O H, Barbara! Barbara, darling here you are! Babs dear, do have a look at these proofs and tell me what you think of them, because you've got such an expert knowledge of printing—haven't you?"

That was two days later. Barbara Redfern, dressed for going out, was descending the stairs into Big Hall, when Faith Ashton's voice struck upon her ears.

A rather large and excited crowd was in Big Hall, and Faith Ashton's angelic face forming a strikingly pretty picture among them all, was, as usual, the focus point of attention.

Faith these days, though, was always

No. 25 of our delightful series for Your "Cliff House Album."

CLIFF HOUSE CELEBRITIES

MISS PENELOPE PRIMROSE, M.A., B.Sc., F.R.G.S., and goodness knows what else, is the headmistress at Cliff House—a position she has graced for close upon a quarter of a century.

Though her position makes it necessary for her to be a disciplinarian she is held in great affection by her pupils—a fact which is testified by the affectionate nickname they have bestowed upon her—"Primmy."

And if ever a headmistress deserved to be loved that one most certainly is "Primmy." Though firm, she is never harsh; will always attentively consider both sides of every case; punishes only when unavoidable. She is ever ready and willing to listen to girls' troubles, and in her own kind, dignified way to put them right.

A great admirer of athletic exercises—she played hockey for her university and was a capable swimmer when younger—she does everything in her power to encourage games at Cliff House, though of course she does not allow them to interfere with the scholastic routine of the school.

She has grey hair, light blue eyes—usually protected by pince-nez—is tall, dignified, and though nearly fifty years of age looks much younger.

When she became headmistress of Cliff House, twenty-four years ago, she had the distinction of being one of the youngest headmistresses in the country—though, of course, Cliff House was a much smaller school than it is now.

Looking back upon those years she confesses that the very happiest event of them all was on the day she completed her 21 years service with the school, when a great banquet and concert was given in her honour and she was presented with a beautiful Illuminated Address inscribed by every scholar in Cliff House.

Miss Primrose is particularly proud of the medal she was awarded for her services to her country during the Great War.



P. Primrose

She has published many books on archaeology, ancient history and mythology. At present she is engaged upon a book of personal memories, which is being eagerly anticipated by her many admirers.

She was born in Wanstead, but her home, when she is not at Cliff House, is now Kensington.

She is very fond of animals, especially cats—she has a darling, by name "Waffles." Her favourite flower is the rose; her favourite colour Royal Blue; her favourite actor John Gielgud and her favourite actress Marie Tempest.

She has no screen favourite though she confesses that she enjoys the films occasionally.

Brilliantly clever, just and modern in her outlook, Cliff House girls and mistresses are proud of their Head—but perhaps even their pride is not equal to Miss Primrose's pride in Cliff House. Long may she continue to reign!

the focus point of attention. It seemed, since the fair had been in progress, that the whole school revolved around her.

And most marvellously was that fair getting on now. Except for the furnishing of the stalls, practically everything was in readiness.

Babs and Bessie had finished the Eskimo igloo that morning. It must be confessed, however, that everybody else, occupied with their own particular jobs, had given neither a great deal of attention nor interest to what Babs and Bessie were doing—which, again, had hurt Babs, though she would not have admitted it for worlds.

But though the igloo was finished, not yet was it furnished. Bessie had gone off to Pogg with measurements for the shelves which Babs had ordered. Babs herself, raking up all the funds she possibly could, was at this moment bound for Holland's Store to buy some toys and other oddments with which to fix it up.

She stopped, however, as Faith's voice fell upon her ears, as excitedly waving a sheaf of bills in her hand, that girl came towards her.

"Oh, Barbara, please look!" she cried. "The proofs of the handbills. Dear Babs, do tell me what you think of them!"

For one moment Babs was tempted to turn her back, but she didn't. After all, they were all working for the same cause. She took one.

But, despite herself, she felt a little stinging flush assail her cheeks when she saw the bill.

For there it was, with a headline a good two inches high completely dwarfing the rest of the type:

"FAITH ASHTON'S GREAT HOSPITAL FAIR."

"The Joint Effort of Cliff House School and Friarale Boys' School, under the chairmanship of Faith Ashton, to raise a Record Fund for the Courtfield Hospital."

Underneath were further details. "You like it, Babs?" Faith asked anxiously.

"Oh, it's all right!" Babs said. "Oh dear! You don't say it as if you meant it." Faith pointed. "Please, Babs, do try to be a little more enthusiastic. I'm frightfully sorry, darling, if I've offended you, but you know I didn't mean to—not in the least—don't you, Barbara dearest?"

Babs stiffened. She felt the old wave of sick disgust sweeping over her.

"And I do so want everybody to be happy!" Faith went on wistfully. "I do so want us all to be friends. And I do so want to be friends with you, Barbara—dearest—you are my cousin, aren't you? And I think your igloo idea too perfectly delightful! And Barbara, despite a great many protests, I've still kept your place on the committee open for you, and we would all be ever so pleased if you would join us now, and help to choose the girls and boys to manage the stalls. Won't you, Babs?"

Babs paused. She looked over the group. She saw Mabs' eye appealing, earnest, pleading, saying: "Yes, Babs, please do!" She saw Clara frowning, and looking at her with that strange puzzlement which had been so often in her expression lately. She saw Diana, calm, sneering, suspicious; Lydia Crossendale gibing. She saw the rest of the faces anxious, urging, expectant, and plainly to be read in those faces was what their owners thought—that Faith, in spite of everything, was being ex-

treinely sweet, most tolerably forgiving, most dreadfully anxious to please.

For one moment she paused. If she accepted this offer now she knew her popularity would soar once more. For one moment she was tempted.

But only for a moment. Impossible to make herself a party to Faith's hypocrisy—as she would have done if she had accepted.

She just said, with a rather more curt shrug than she intended:

"I'm sorry—no!"

"But, Babs—!" cried Mabs.

"Let me pass, Faith," Babs said, white to the lips, and shaking now with an emotion she could not control.

And from somewhere went up a hiss. Some girl said "Rotter!" While Faith, with that treacherously hurt look on her face, and the tears welling in her lovely blue eyes, stepped back.

Babs stiffly descended the stairs.

"Pig!" cried someone else, and the jeering became more pronounced. As Babs passed through the great doorway a last voice, charged with bitterness, followed her.

"And that's the girl we have for Form captain. Why the dickens don't we get rid of her?"

Burning-eared and hot-eyed, Babs hurried down the drive.

SICK AT heart, Babs sat in the bus, almost unconscious that it was taking her towards Courtfield, mechanically handing out her fare and taking the ticket in return.

She never remembered a single detail of the journey. Every time she thought of her two-faced cousin she felt a wave of something most dreadfully repugnant sweep over her. Every time she visualised that still vividly fresh scene in Big Hall she caught her breath.

They didn't understand. No one understood, except dear Bessie and poor Marjorie. How was it possible to comb such heartless artifices as those of Faith?

Almost without realising it, she stepped off the bus at the Courtfield market-place. And then, pausing to cross the road, she saw something which in an instant swept all her own preoccupation from her mind, and brought a shrieking gasp of warning from her lips.

For a child was in the act of crossing that road—a rather pretty child in a little red coat—and, apparently unconscious of danger, was crooning to the doll she carried as she walked.

She could not see, as Babs could see, the car which was rushing out of a side street at that moment, turning in her direction. She did not see, either, the great lorry which had just passed through the traffic lights, and was bearing down upon her from the opposite direction.

But Babs saw. Several other people on the pavements saw. The lorry driver saw—too late! The driver of the car skidding round the corner saw—too late!

Up from the crowds went a horrified shriek, because it seemed in that instant that the little girl in the red coat would be caught between the two. A man stepping out of a big Daimler gave a hoarse cry.

"Annie!"
And then—
What happened—hardly anybody was conscious of how it happened.

But just in that fraction of an instant when it seemed that lorry and car would crash—using the little one as a buffer in the collision—there was another figure

in the road, the figure of a desperate girl.

That figure had caught the little one by the arm, with one desperate jerk had wrenched her out of harm's way, jumped back herself, and only by a hairsbreadth escaped the shock as lorry and car came together.

The car's wing buckled up under the onslaught; the lorry jerked to a dead stop. But the little girl in red was safe, and Barbara Redfern, though shaken, for Babs was the rescuer—was safe, too.

A crowd of people immediately collected.

"Oh dear!" the child sobbed.
"Daddy, daddy!" she wept. "Daddy!" she cried.

"Please, please!" said a voice, and through the crowd now surrounding Babs and the little rescued girl came the man who had stepped out of the Daimler. He was faintly familiar to Babs, and to judge from the sudden wavering deference of the onlookers, was well known.

There was a murmur as they made way for him. He gave one grateful glance towards Babs before kneeling on the pavement and clutching the child to him.

"Annie—Annie! My little Annie!" he murmured.

Babs gulped. The little one was all right. She was plainly unaware of the narrow escape from death she had had, and in a few moments would be herself again.

For a moment Babs hesitated. She knew what would follow. She had a natural revulsion towards waiting there to receive congratulations. Apart from that, there was the question of time. With the lorry driver and the driver of the car now locked in fierce argument and a policeman already bearing down upon the scene—

Quickly Babs turned. Quickly she pushed her way into the crowd. When the rescuer of the little girl was remembered at last she had vanished.

AND NOT till an hour later did Babs receive any clue as to the identity of the girl she had saved. That was when, having placed her order at Holland's, she had retired to the tea-room, and, to beguile away the time which must elapse before the next bus was due, was reading a copy of the evening paper.

On the front page was a full length photograph of a man. Babs knew immediately she saw it why the face of little Annie's daddy had struck her as familiar.

For the caption under the photograph read:

"Earl of Courtfield returns unexpectedly. Research drags him from South of France. Rumours say earl is on verge of world-shattering discovery!"

Babs read that with a great deal of interest. In the evening she read it again, together with two or three additional paragraphs which described from an eye witness the rescue of his lordship's younger daughter at the Courtfield Market Place. And she read with considerable interest the last lines:

"To the plucky girl who effected the rescue there is no clue. As modest as she was brave, she retired under cover of the commotion caused by the accident. If her eye chances to read this paragraph she will be interested to learn that Lord Courtfield himself is

VERY anxious to meet her again, and bids her welcome at his home, Courtfield Towers, whenever she may care to call."

A wry little smile crossed Babs' lips. She threw the paper aside. What she had done, she had done merely on the spur of the moment, and in her generosity considered that any other girl in her position would have done the same.

She had no intention of claiming recognition of her heroism, and no intention whatever, on the strength of such an impulsive act, of claiming friendship with the famous Lord Courtfield.

She was very, very glad to learn that little Lady Annie was all right, and there, as far as Babs was concerned, the incident should rest.

Faith's New Idea!



BUT someone else had also seen that news in the paper—Faith Ashton.

And while Faith had no attention at all to spare for the unknown who had rescued his lordship's little daughter, she gave a great deal of attention to the fact that the Earl of Courtfield was in residence again, and immediately had an idea.

"And what an idea!" she told her committee that morning. "Oh, what an idea! You girls, I've got it! I'm going to see Lord Courtfield and ask him to open our fair. Now, what do you think of that?"

Diana Royston-Clarke, who knew one of the Earl of Courtfield's daughters—the haughty Lady Wenda—shook her head.

"You'll never do it!" she said. "The old boy is wrapped up in his research work. You know, he's had a special laboratory built in the grounds of the Towers, and they say that once he gets in there nobody can ever get him out."

Faith laughed. "But I," she declared gaily, "will get him out. Oh, yes; just leave it to me. He can't resist an offer like this, you know. I'll just make him come. You see!"

Just a hint of boastfulness in that, perhaps, but Faith said it with such glowing confidence that she impressed her hearers—even the sceptical Diana.

And what a triumph if they could prevail upon such a terrifically big public figure to do the honours at the opening ceremony!

And Faith really had no doubts. Very carefully she dressed herself after lessons, putting on her trimmest Cliff House uniform and smiling at herself in the glass.

"No, he just couldn't refuse me," she murmured. "Dear Lord Courtfield," she smirked, rehearsing the part.

"Dear Lord Courtfield, I have so longed to meet you. I do just adore all those wonderful experiments I've heard about, and as you're so awfully interested in experiments, I hope you'll be interested in a poor one of mine. Of course, you've heard of the fair I've organised for the poor, dear hospital. My experiment, which I cannot carry out without you, is this—"

Faith gurgled. Lovely! Never, never yet had her winsome ways failed to get her what she wanted. Even Babs could not say that she had thought of this idea. And wouldn't he another poke in the eye for her—cat!

She laughed again. Outside she tripped, popping into the Common-room as she passed the door to wave a cheery, confident hand.

"Cheerio, girls, I'm going. Wish me luck!" she bubbled joyfully. "Oh, I say, Barbara, are you going out, too?" she smirked.

Babs was, but she did not look very pleased that Faith should have observed the fact. Like Faith, she was dressed for out of doors, and was, in fact, going to Peg, to see Long Dan, an old fisherman, who made most marvellous tops out of odds and ends of rope and shells he found on the beach, and sold them at ridiculously cheap prices. She said: "I am."

"Oh, goodness! Perhaps you'll be coming my way?" Faith asked.

"Which way are you going, Barbara?"

"Peg," Babs answered briefly.

"Why, I'm going that way, too!" Faith cried.

"Oh, how delightful,

catch in her breath. "Babs— Oh dear! She's gone!"

And gone Barbara had, leaving a rather grim and angry silence behind her.

"I'M SORRY, miss," said the butler at Courtfield Towers politely but insincerely. "His lordship has given strict orders that he is not to be disturbed—not even by a member of his own family."

Faith Ashton pouted. "But if you asked him just for a minute— Oh, please let me go and see him myself!"

"I'm sorry, miss, but that also is impossible," the imperturbable butler returned. "His lordship at the moment is in his laboratory."



FAITH ASHTON had stolen Babs' idea, and yet she had the audacity to show one of the handbills with her name across the top to her cousin and beg: "Dear Babs, do tell me what you think of them."

Barbara! Let us go together, shall we? Come to the Towers with me."

"Oh, Babs, yes!" Mabel Lynn pleaded anxiously.

But Babs looked away. She knew that Faith was pretending again. She knew that Faith was merely gesturing for the Form's benefit. But she couldn't for the life of her have walked out of that room on friendly terms with the girl who had already achieved so much to drag her down in the eyes of her Form-fellows; the girl who had already purloined her idea, who had robbed her of the triumph which should have been hers.

She just said in a stifled kind of voice: "Thank you!" and walked to the door. "Barbara!" Faith cried, with a

"But—but—" Faith pleaded desperately.

"I am afraid I can do nothing, miss. Good-afternoon!"

"But, please," Faith panted—"oh, please! You look such a nice kind man—"

"I'm sorry," the butler said stiffly. "But nothing really can be done. Good-afternoon!"

Faith scowled then. The butler obviously was not impressed by her winsome ways and her appealing face.

Firmly he closed the door behind her. Faith, furious, found herself standing on the steps.

"Beast!" she muttered gloweringly.

But for the moment, at least, she did not move. After her vaunting boast of this morning she could hardly go back

to Cliff House and tell them there that she had failed to accomplish her mission.

Hang the butler!

She looked round, and saw above the heads of the shrubs the shining glass roof of some half-hidden place that looked like a small conservatory.

Then she stared as there came from its direction a sudden vibrating "whirr" rather as if some huge electric dynamo had been set in action. Now what the dickens was the place—

She remembered the account she had read of Lord Courtfield's research activities in the paper that morning. There it had mentioned his magnificently equipped laboratory in which he personally conducted those life-saving experiments which had made him so famous. Why, that must be the place then! And the butler—what had he said: "His lordship at this moment is in his laboratory."

Faith grinned then. She straightened her shoulders. Well, if his lordship was there, why not tackle him in his own den? It was so jolly absorbed in his silly experiments, she'd jolly well make him say "yes" just to get rid of her. With a chuckle she set out.

A path led her to the laboratory—a large building, with a great, glass-topped roof, fenced around as if it had been a small fortress.

The whirring grew louder as she approached. Once or twice a green flash seemed to shoot through the domed glass roof. A little gate was let in the fence, and on that gate was prominently displayed a curt notice:

DANGER! KEEP OUT!

Faith looked at it and laughed. How utterly absurd! She pushed the gate open, jumping a little as another flash came from the laboratory. The dynamo's whirr now was so deafeningly loud as to make her laughingly stuff her ears. She reached the door.

And on the door was another notice. That read:

THESE PREMISES MUST NOT BE ENTERED WITHOUT THE PERSONAL PERMISSION OF LORD COURTFIELD.

Faith just shrugged. She pushed the door. Silently it came open, and interestedly and a little wide-eyed she stared inside.

The huge laboratory was full of deafening sound. On a table in the centre, surrounded by weird-looking apparatus, a great test tube, full of some boiling green liquid, was hissing fiercely. The floor was strewn with wires and cables, and in one corner a huge electric dynamo hummed.

At the far end of the room, dressed in white rubber overalls, peering through a microscope on a bench, stood a man, his back towards her.

Was Lord Courtfield himself?

"Oh your lordship!" Faith cried.

The man did not look round—which was not surprising. Obviously, he was utterly immersed in what he was doing. In any case, the noise was so deafening that it was questionable, even had Faith shouted, that she would have made herself heard. She called again. No reply. Faith pouted a little. Well, bother him! And with petulant irritation, she stepped forward.

Then—

"Oh!" gasped Faith.

She did not see the thin wire beneath her feet until her foot had caught in it.

Headlong she stumbled, taking the wire with her, and only pulling herself up with a jerk when it seemed she must go crashing to the floor. And then—

In the centre of the laboratory came a sudden cracking. While Faith stood startled and unnerved, it seemed that a great sheet of searing, red-hot flame shot across the roof, and at the same time the green liquid in the retort exploded with a crash.

From Lord Courtfield sounded a hoarse, despairing cry.

And then, too late, Faith realised the mischief she had wrought. That unfortunate wire must have been a fearfully important connection.

All around her things seemed to be bursting and cracking. Hissing bars of light and miniature lightning filled the air. She now started, frightening moment she saw Lord Courtfield through a haze of smoke, his face white, tugging desperately at a long lever. She heard his voice:

"You little fool! You—"

Terribly scared, Faith quickly turned. In that commotion and the smoky, steamy atmosphere the accident had endangered, it was unlikely his lordship had been able to recognise her.

Her one thought now was of flight. Deaf to Lord Courtfield's shouted commands, she plunged through the doorway, skinned down the drive, and, flinging open the wicket gate in the fence, flew down the longer drive into the road.

As she rushed into the road she almost collided with another girl staring thoughtfully up the drive.

And she blinked. For a moment a dilette, guilty flush stained her cheeks. For the girl whom she met was Barbara Redfern.

"Oh!" she gasped. "Oh, Barbara, I say—"

Babs looked at her. Rather long and curiously she looked. She glanced towards the Towers, wondering in that moment what Faith had been up to. But she did not reply. She wanted nothing to do with Faith Ashton.

As Faith hesitated, she walked quickly on. And Faith, staring after her with a scowl, shrugged her own shoulders as she hurried back towards Cliff House, throwing many a scared glance behind her.

A Crushing Blow!



"THERE we are, Bessie!" And Babs smiled as she looked at her plump chum in the snowy interior of the igloo they had built. "That's about finished everything, I think," she said delightedly.

"Yes, rather, you know. I us-say, it does look ripping!" Bessie beamed. And ripping it did look, to be sure. Made of snow as it was, the inside of the igloo was cosy. Round the curved wall Babs had hung a series of lamps which shed a really brilliant illumination upon the scene.

Almost a quarter of it had been given up to shelves which, now loaded with toys, gave it the appearance of some fantastic bazaar.

Propped in a prominent position was Bessie's favourite ventriloquial doll, with which she would entertain the would-be purchasers on the morrow.

Babs smiled as she looked round. She was pleased with the effort. Away on the banks of the lake the last nails were being driven in. The roundabouts were already tuning up, everything was ready

for the great day which would begin to-morrow.

Perhaps Babs, too, being only human, had a sense of satisfaction that Faith had not, after all, been able to get Lord Courtfield to do her bidding. Faith, returning from the Towers, had confessed failure in that respect. Lord Courtfield, she said, was busy in his laboratory when she had called. The butler had turned her away.

But naturally Faith had said nothing of what she really happened.

So everything then was almost ready. Failing the appearance of Lord Courtfield, Faith had prevailed upon Diana Royston-Clarke to invite her father, the mayor of Lantham, to open the show.

Prizes had been bought and arranged. The roundabouts were erected and in full working order. The whole show had been very well organised, thousands of Faith's handbills being distributed over the countryside, and all pointed to something in the way of a record success for the hospital fair.

With hearty good will Cliff House and Friardale co-operating had done their work well. Only Babs and Bessie, rather ignored by the rest of the workers, had been left to complete their job without help.

"Well, there it is," Babs said. "I don't think we can do anything more, Bessie. Better close up now and go and have a look at the rest of the show."

"Yes, rather!" Bessie beamed, and smiled fondly at the igloo. "I say, Babs, we ought to get pounds and pounds for these toys, you know. This was a jolly good idea."

Babs smiled.

"Let's go," she suggested.

Bessie nodded. They went out together, locking the little wooden door which gave access to their snowy cave of treasures. In the fair itself they found great excitement and much laughter while boys and girls rehearsed their parts for the morrow.

Clara, in charge of the hoop-la stall, was already handing out rings to imaginary customers, shouting with a lusty voice. Elsie Effingham, her helper, was arranging last-minute presents on the boards.

At the darts stall they found Diana and Margot Lantham in charge, while Jimmy Richmond and Lister Cattermole were busy on the coconut-shies. Everybody was happy. Everybody was full to the brim with excitement, and Faith, like some glowing fairy elf, was threading her way from one point of amusement to another.

"Oh, Barbara, here you are!" she cried, but holding that girl just as if there were no rift at all between them. "Barbara, please do come with me. Come and look at the entrance to the fair. I've got some photographers coming, too, you know, and they're going to take pictures for the papers."

Babs held back.

"Please, Babs!" Faith pouted.

"Oh, yes, go along, Babs!" June

Merrett beamed.

Babs shrugged. Rather contemptuous the glance she flung at Faith. But she went along—everybody, rounded up by Faith, was tramping along to the spot then. She reached the road, and her cheeks burned a little when she saw the two great poles erected there, and supported between the poles a great red-and-green banner, erected by Josh Stafford and Jim, which announced "FAITH ASHTON'S HOSPITAL FAIR." The photographers were already on the spot.

"Here we are," Faith gleed excitedly. "All come in the picture—please! Stand under the banner—and do be



"REMOVE those contraptions immediately!" barked Lord Courtfield. "The fair is not going to be held on my land." The Cliff House girls and the Friardale School boys stood dumbfounded in dismay. What a stunning blow after all their efforts.

careful, Mr. Photographer, to get the banner in, won't you? Now, here we are! Barbara darling, you're not in the photograph!" she cried.

"Thanks!" Babbs returned a little curtly. "I'd rather not."

"Oh, Barbara, don't be mean. Please, please do come in."

"Yes, come on. Forget your silly, jealous self for one minute at least!" Freda Ferriers snapped.

But Babbs shook her head. Rather fiercely she shook it. Why should she pander to Faith's vanity? Why should she make Faith's triumph so devastatingly complete?

She moved away a little, while Faith, placing her helpers, took up a position with Jimmy Richmond on one side of her and Clara on the other, chummily hanging on to the arm of each.

Bessie glowered.

"Cat!" she muttered.

"Now we're ready," Faith said. "Oh, please do make it a good photograph. Smile, everyone. Babbs dear, you're sure you wouldn't like to be in it?"

"No!" Babbs said quietly.

The photographers got ready, the group smiled. Then suddenly along the road came the clatter of horse's hoofs. Babbs turned quickly. A man on horseback was cantering towards the scene, and she gave a jump as she recognised him. It was Lord Courtfield.

And a Lord Courtfield looking most furiously disturbed.

For one second Babbs stood still. The red ran into her cheeks. If Lord Courtfield saw her again he was bound to recognise her—and Babbs, shrinking with her usual modesty from being proclaimed a heroine in front of these girls who now looked upon her rather contemptuously, felt an understandable embarrassment at that prospect.

Quickly she turned, quickly disappeared behind the hedge which happened to be handy.

Lord Courtfield, galloping up, drew rein.

"Wait a minute!" he ordered grimly. And Faith, staring up, felt her face suddenly go as white as paper.

"Wait a minute," he repeated grimly. "Who's in charge here?"

"Hallo!" Clara muttered. "He looks cross."

Faith gulped. The earl's eyes were upon her, but he gave no sign of showing that he knew her. Timorously she stepped forward.

"Please, sir, I am."

"Oh! You a Cliff House girl, eh?" His eyes seemed to snap. "Who gave you permission to erect this fair on my land?"

Faith stared. "Oh dear! Are you Lord Courtfield?" she asked. "Please, your agent, Mr. Williams. He gave me permission before he went away."

"Did he? Then it's a funny thing I haven't heard of it," his lordship said grimly. "In any case, I think it's like your cheek not to confirm the arrangement before starting. But then," he added bitterly, "I'm not surprised to find you Cliff House girls taking the law into your own hands. After what happened this morning in my laboratory—which one of you was it who came there and ruined the work I've been engaged upon for six months?"

Faith's eyelids batted rapidly.

"Please, your lordship, I don't understand."

"No? The girl who ruined it understood all right," the earl said. "This morning," he went on, his voice beginning to rasp, "some unscrupulous girl belonging to your school came into my laboratory—despite the notices which were plastered everywhere warning strangers to keep out. She tripped over a wire, fusing every other wire in the place, and causing an explosion which completely ruined the experiment I was engaged upon. But she knows. It was a Cliff House girl all right. I saw enough of her uniform to convince me of that. Is she here?"

A deadly silence. The earl's lips came together.

"Thank you!" he said bitterly. "I hardly expected her to own up, anyway. Seems to me you girls are rather experts at ignoring other people's rights. Anyway, this is my land, and you can remove those contraptions immediately. The fair is not going to be held on my land. If they're not off the ground by nightfall I'll call my men and move them for you!"

A cry of protest went up. Josh Stafford, his face angry, swept forward.

"But see here, your lordship—"

"That's my final word!"

"But—but—oh dear, there must have been a mistake!" Faith pleaded. "Your lordship—"

"Take those things off my land," said the earl angrily. "That's all!"

"But what about the hospital?" Clara hotly demanded. "You surely wouldn't interfere—"

"I'll make good any loss the hospital might suffer," the earl said quietly.

"No more arguing, please."

He wheeled his horse's head, and went galloping off down the road. Dreadful the silence which fell. Faith began to weep.

"My fair! My fair!" she cried heart-brokenly. "Oh, my fair!"

"Oh crumbs! Cheer up, Faith," Mabs said, and bit her lip. "He's just in a paddy, that's all. If it hadn't been for some cat who ruined his experiment he'd probably have taken no notice at all. This is just his way of getting his revenge."

"But who," Faith whispered, "could have ruined his experiment?"

Bessie came forward. She stared directly at Faith.

"Well, you were at the Towers, weren't you?"

"Bessie, my dear, what are you saying?" Faith asked, wide-eyed. "Of course I was at the Towers, but you

(Continued on page 16)

don't think I'd do a dreadful thing like that, do you? When I was told his lordship wouldn't see anybody, I rushed straight away, of course. But— and then she stared. "Oh, great goodness! Barbara—where's Barbara?" she asked suddenly.

"Well?" Babs asked, stepping from behind the hedge. "I'm here."

"Babs, you—you didn't have anything to do with it, did you?" Faith asked. "Oh dear, forgive me for saying it, but I must, you know. You've been against the fair all along, haven't you, and— the Towers this morning, weren't you? Because I bumped into you coming out. Barbara, do you know anything?"

Sweetly anxious those words, but there was something in the look which accompanied them—that cleverly doubtful note in the voice in which they were uttered that set at once the flaming suspicion which Faith wished to ignite darting into everyone's mind.

All at once everyone was remembering Babs' apparent hostility to the fair. All once again were recalling that bitter look on Babs' face when she had curtly refused Faith's forgiving invitation to accompany her to the Towers. Strange that Babs should have been on the spot somewhere about the time this had happened.

Babs, reading very well what impression Faith was creating, stood stock-still. Ungovernable the wave of anger which overcame her then. Steely and narrow her eyes became as she stared back.

And said: "What are you trying to hint at?" "Oh, Barbara, I—I'm hinting at nothing," Faith said tearfully, and looked round for support. "But I do think, Barbara, if you know anything, that you ought to go and tell Lord Courtfield and— and so save the fair. After all, you were there, weren't you?"

"Oh, come on, own up!" Lydia Crossendale said angrily. "I've got nothing to own up to," Babs replied.

"No?" Rosa Rodworth glared. "Faith is right," she cried. "We all know you've been jealous from the first because Faith happened to get in with the idea before you did. Haven't you shown all along how you've hated the girl—how you'd have loved to ruin her scheme? And wouldn't that have been a trick to ruin it?" she added savagely.

Babs turned white to the lips. Faith, sobbing, looked at her appealingly. "Oh, Barbara darling, if you did do it—"

"You know I didn't do it!"

"But why were you?"

"And why," Babs blazed out, "were you rushing out of the grounds looking as scared as a rabbit and as white as a ghost? Why, if you hadn't been doing something you oughtn't to have been doing, were you in such a hurry? Why?"

Faith reeled in wide-eyed horror.

"Barbara, you're never trying to put the blame on me? You know I wasn't running, and you know I wasn't looking frightened—why should I be? Oh, Barbara, please, please take back those words!" she choked, her voice a moan. "Please, Babs— Oh!"

And she started back with a very real yell. For Babs, trembling, hardly conscious of the action, but goaded beyond bitter endurance at last, had done something she had never done to a girl in her life before. She had smacked Faith's face!

AND THE result— Surely, surely had Babs blackened herself completely in the eyes of her Form fellows.

The moment it happened she was sorry herself, yet only sorry because she had lost her self-control.

If any girl had ever deserved that smack, Faith Ashton certainly had. But, as it happened, Babs could not have helped Faith's cause better.

Faith was clutched by Clara. Angry faces glared into Babs'. Rosa Rodworth, indeed, started forward with an angry rush, and was only forcibly held back by Mabel Lynn and Leila Carroll.

But everywhere went up a shout. Unhesitating, unthinking, it seemed to the girls and boys that Babs had condemned herself by her own action.

"You rotter, Barbara Redfern!"

"You jealous cat!"

"Who let the show down?"

"Booh! Get out!"

Babs, fists clenched, faced them, her own face burning then. Faith quietly crying on the shoulder of Clara Trevlyn, while Jimmy Richmond hovered near, sickened her. Red-hot anger, also, not only against Faith, but against these girls who, knowing her, could so jump to the poisonous conclusion which Faith's words and manner had put into their minds.

For one moment she stood returning the bitter, hostile condemning glances which confronted her. Then— "Bib-Babs," said a faltering voice, at her elbow.

And Bessie plucked at her sleeve.

"Bib-Babs, come away!"

Both them! Both the whole silly lot of them! They believed Faith. It had been Faith who had led them into this. Well, let Faith get them out— if she could!

Babs Saves the Day, But—



SO was Babs' first reaction to that violent scene. She had been robbed of her show; had been made to appear all along as the black sheep of the piece. Faith's triumph, after all, would be a hollow mockery. Why should she, Babs, worry about the fair?

In silence she tramped back across the lake with Bessie, intent upon dismantling her own igloo. Then suddenly she became aware of Josh Stafford standing in front of her.

"Miss Redfern," he said, almost nervously.

"Yes, Mr. Stafford!"

"I dunno how to say it, but—but I don't believe what them there girls are saying," Josh said unhappily. "It wasn't you, Miss Redfern. I know a true-blue girl when I see one, and you're one of 'em, if ever there was one. But what about me and Jim?" he added gloomily. "What am I to do if I'm turned off this land? And what about the rake-off I was going to have for the use of my show? And what about the hospital, Miss Redfern? Oh, lawks! Can't you do anything at all?"

Babs looked up sharply. In her bitterness she had been ready to let the fair go to pot. But she couldn't—she couldn't! The fair represented something more than Faith Ashton's fallen vanity. It was the big effort Cliff House was making for the hospital. It was the thing which stood between this poor man and a more hopeful future.

And yet—and yet— Oh, what could she do?

(Concluded on page 28)



When Babs Lost the Captaincy!

A HEROINE NO LONGER. INSTEAD, A FALLEN IDOL, DESPISED AND CONDEMNED BY ALL EXCEPT HER DEAREST CHUMS!

Such is the tragic position in which once-popular Barbara Redfern finds herself. And why? Not for anything she has done. Merely because a newcomer to Cliff House—Faith Ashton, her own cousin—has set her mean, deceitful little heart on humbling Babs in the dust and claiming the coveted office which has been hers for so long. Captain of the Fourth Form . . . Captain of the whole Lower School.

That is the theme of next Saturday's magnificent LONG COMPLETE HILDA RICHARDS story. Don't fail to read it. Undoubtedly it is the most dramatic—and surprising!—story she has ever written.



The Most Memorable Adventures of the Morcove Chums' lives took place when they Became—



SCHOOLGIRLS IN SOCIETY

FOR NEW READERS.
BETTY BARTON and her Morcove chums,
POLLY LINTON,
NAOMER NAKABA,
PAM WILLOUGHBY,
JUDY CARDEW, to mention only a few,
join forces with
JACK LINTON & Co., of Grangemoor, to
form a concert party which, visiting
wealthy Society houses during the
Christmas holidays, is raising a fund on
behalf of a children's home. They have a
claqueur.

MISS LESTER, an outwardly charming lady,
but whom they suspect of being a traitor.
Eventually, they follow her to Devon,
and in the old house which is to be con-
verted into the Home, find a hoard of gold!
(Now read on.)

"Stand Still, There!"

"TWO hundred and sixty-five pounds, my little lot!" cried Betty Barton gaily. "And you, Polly?"

"Two-ninety-eight! Anybody else finished counting?"

"Hurrah, chaps! Three hundred and eighty-seven lovely golden sovereigns!"

"Three-sixty-five," said Lord Freddie.

"One for every day in the year!"

"It's just wonderful!" Polly fairly yelled. "And your total, Lady Kitty? Dave, what about you?"

"I make it different each time," sighed Lady Kitty, meaning the total of the pile of gold coins she had undertaken to count. "Round about three hundred, anyhow."

"Three-eighty-three," Dave announced his total quietly.

It was nearly a quarter of an hour since the thrilling discovery of the miser's hoard of gold in this empty room of Rock Hill House.

First, the finders of the gold—all in sovereigns once put by in canvas bags that were now rotted to bits—had been excitedly occupied in removing the hidden treasure from its secret store-place.

Then, to save time, the wonderful haul had been roughly divided for an eager counting of the coins.

"And now, somebody who is quick at mental arith," Betty gaily clamoured, "how much in all?"

"Reckoning Lady Betty's total as three hundred," said Dave—"nineteen hundred and ninety-eight."

"Just think!" Polly gasped. "Two thousand pounds! And now, what about there being enough money by the

appointed day to buy Rock Hill House for a seaside home? This windfall—"

"Only," said Lord Freddie, lighting a cigarette, "it won't be ours." "But 'What!' Betty grimaced. "But we've found it!"

"And you're always allowed to keep treasure trove!" Polly cried. "Or aren't you?"

"Percentage," said Dave. "But this isn't treasure trove. It's obviously a hoard put away by the Johnny who once owned the house. We know he went a bit batty towards the end."

"'Fraid Dave's right," said Lord Freddie.

"Ugh!" Polly stamped. "Dave is always right—and always so aggravating! So we've only come upon all this money, just to see it made over to a lot of the miser's relations—is that it?"

Their Enemy Exposed, Betty & Co. Make an Astounding Discovery in a House of Mystery!

"Oh, I guess we'll be given a share!" Jack cheerfully remarked. "And so there'll be that, anyway, to go towards the jolly old fund. Say, though! If Miss Lester and the man Steve have been searching the house for this money, then I just can't see what they stood to gain if the place got burned down 'by accident.' Yet if we hadn't turned up in the nick of time just now there would have been a bad fire."

"That's still the puzzle," Betty agreed. "Supposing they really were hoping to find a secret hoard—then, of course, one can easily understand their wanting the house to stay empty; not be bought for a seaside home. But how on earth could they stand to gain if the place were burned down?"

"Hanged if I know!" shrugged Lord Freddie.

"We want to know more about the man Steve," came Dave's thoughtful murmur. "Who he is—his occupation, and so on? Hidden treasure mayn't have had anything to do with the game he and Miss Lester have been at."

"What!" yelled Polly. "In that case—"

"'St! Jack excitedly gestured. "Listen! Hear those sounds below?"

They did, becoming tense and still.

There was a cautious treading about in the passage between kitchen and front hall, and in addition the mumble-mumble of a man's voice.

"Is that Steve?" wondered Polly under her breath. "He and Miss Lester—they're come back?"

"Still listening, they now heard foot falls on the bare stairs.

"The fellow may be armed," Dave whispered to Lord Freddie. "What about Betty and Polly and your sister?"

His youthful lordship nodded. "You three girls stay here," he calmly advised. "And now, you two chaps, as our friends appear to be coming up—let's go out to meet them."

He sauntered across to the room door, opened it, and went out into the dingy bed-room-passage. Jack and Dave tiptoed after him. The two lads were clenching their fists. And Betty and Polly, after exchanging excited glances, looked at Lady Kitty. She nodded her understanding of their feelings.

For the moment the advice to remain here was being obeyed by all three. But neither Lady Kitty nor the two Morcovians would hesitate to go to the lads' aid if it came to anything like a scrap out there on the landing.

Suddenly a man's voice sounded clearly and gruffly voicing an ugly challenge:

"Stand still, there! Who are you?"

"Perfectly willing to explain," Lord Freddie's affable voice was heard in return. "But may we first be allowed to ask—who are you?"

And the answer came sharply: "Scotland Yard!"

Dave Was Right!

SCOTLAND YARD!
Giving each other excited nudges, Betty and Polly were as quick as Lady Kitty in rushing out of the dreary bed-room in which all the golden coins had been counted.

A few dashing steps along the passage, and all three girls were close behind Lord Freddie and the two school-boys on the wide landing.

Coming off the top stair of the first flight was a burly man, in ordinary town clothes, and wearing a bowler hat. About to follow him was a police-sergeant, and also a constable.

Jack turned to Betty and Polly in huge delight.

"It's Scotland Yard—oh, boy!"

"Detective-Inspector Johnson!" the man in the bowler hat gruffly gave his

By

MARJORIE STANTON

name. "So now, please, come on! Just explain yourselves!"

Lord Freddie, by giving his own titled name and his sister's, and then the names of all four juniors, did more than impress the plain-clothes detective and his underlings.

"I see!" Johnson nodded. "Then you've no connection with a certain Miss Lester and any confederate of hers?"

"But—yes, we have!" blurted Betty.

"It's why we're here. You see, she was our official chaperon. The Morcove Concert Party, you know—giving shows up in Town in aid of the Rock Hill House Scheme. And from the very first Miss Lester has been doing all she can to stall us. Ther last night I discovered her on the phone with a man named Steve, telling him things would have to be worked differently—down here, instead of in London."

"So we're really not public enemies in disguise," laughed Lady Kitty, "although our personal appearance may seem to suggest it. We caught the same midnight train as Miss Lester, in a bit of a hurry."

"And have found nearly two thousand pounds in pre-war savings!" Lord Freddie sprang the fresh surprise upon Scotland Yard. "It's in one of the bed-rooms. Care to come and look at it?"

"Hidden treasure!" exclaimed Detective-Inspector Johnson. "But that hasn't been the game."

"There!" Polly yelled. "Dave was just saying it might not have been! And so he was right—again!"

"Mind telling us what really was the game, sir?" Dave asked the detective.

"Not smuggling, by any chance?"

"But smuggling it has been; and so you're dead right about that, as well," was the admiring cry. "For your information, my lord, we have just arrested Miss Lester—"

"Oh, how lovely!" clapped Polly.

"Hurray!"

"And an individual known as Mr. Stephen Grainger, down in Sandton Bay—although that isn't his real name. He's had an office as an architect, just to take folks in, for he and Miss Lester have been making a good thing out of smuggled stuff."

"Using Rock Hill House as a secret store-place?" Dave quietly inferred.

"There you have it," he said to Betty and Polly. "If the seaside scheme went through, then they stood to lose this old house as a place where the stuff from abroad could be handled."

"What's more," Jack now had the wit to see, "they stood a nasty chance of the whole thing being rumbled, after the place had been bought, and was being put into order. That is, of course, unless there happened to be—a fire!"

"Phee-ew!" whistled Polly. "Plain as my face now!"

"But will you and your men just come along to the bed-room," Lord Freddie invited Detective Johnson, "and look at the money?"

"Oh, and count it, too!" Polly gaily rejoined. "As a check—before we get it out to our car."

"I think we will," smiled Scotland Yard.

"Betty, dear," was Polly's joyous outburst, during a general hurrying to the bed-room, "aren't you just yearning to get on the phone to the others, in Town, and let them know?"

"We can do that easily—presently."

"I say! How lovely it would be to do it from Morcove!" was Polly's next idea. "Can't we? Why not—on our way back from here?"

Betty's eyes were sparkling.

"And so get a sight of Study No. 12, Polly—whilst the hols are on! Splendid!"

Nor was there to be either difficulty or delay about their doing such a thing.

Less than an hour later, Lord Freddie drove the treasure-laden car up to the main entrance of Morcove School. Out whom the front door was next moment opened by a most staggered-looking caretaker.

The trunk-call to the Willoughby house, in London, was put through, and then, having a few minutes to wait, Betty and Polly showed Lady Kitty and her brother some of those features of the famous school that most appealed to strangers.

And very strange indeed it seemed to the chums to be looking into their old class-room again. The same with Big Hall and Chapel, and many another part of the school to which the routine life of term-time called all the scholars so often.

Everywhere the very spirit of the school seemed to be whispering to this pair of girls, who were fleeting visitors to-day: "It is lonely without you all; come back soon!"

At last the phone-bell shrilled its warning that the call was "through," and they all rushed to take a turn at speaking over the long-distance wire.

Lord Freddie, as senior of the party, spoke first to Mrs. Willoughby. Betty was next; but Polly—she roughly chose to be last of all, so as to steal an extra minute!

"Betty's run upstairs to Study No. 12," Dave said to Polly, as she came away from the phone.

"Oh, then, come on up, all of us!"

But Jack and Dave, like Lady Kitty and her brother, had a fancy that it would be nice to let the Study No. 12 pair have a minute to themselves, anyhow, in the old familiar "den." So Polly, accepting the various excuses for letting her go up alone, was next moment mounting the stairs two at a time.

Then she was in the Form corridor, speeding past one closed door and another in a high-spirited gallop to the study!

Here it was—favourite rendezvous of the whole Form throughout term; and to the chums themselves their usual rallying place for tea after school.

The times out of number that Polly had whirled into Study No. 12, yet now she went in quite slowly and quietly, as if seized with a kind of sudden, tender reverence for the room.

Betty was there, ready to give the hushed madcap a rather queer smile. Ten days to go before the start of another term, and yet here they stood to-day, amidst the four walls of their own study.

"Just our two selves," Betty murmured; yet, even as she said it, in filling the room seemed to start imagination.

Was it so with Polly as well, that she remained motionless and mute, looking half entranced? At any rate, Betty fancied that all their chums were drifting in.

Here was capering Naomer again; there sparkling Bunny Trevor, voicing the habitual flippancies; then staid Judy Cardew—Dave's sister, and just like him for being always so quiet, so thoughtful.

And now Madge and Tess were entering together; Madge just come from piano "practer" in the music-room downstairs, and Tess from some bit of work done with brush or pencil in that neighbouring study which the clever pair shared.

And now, last of all, tall, slim Pam,

so serene, and yet what a girl for the games field, or for setting her pony to take a grand jump in her father's ancient deer park!

Suddenly the closed door of the study was knucked in a certain way, familiar to Betty and Polly.

"It's the boys!"

And, even as both girls voiced that guess, laughing to think how often they had said the words before to-day, Jack and Dave came in.

"Any tea or coffee?" Jack jested.

"No; but we are going," said Betty a little emotionally, "to come back again—some day!"

The Final Curtain!

THAT evening all six of them were back in London, although not early enough for the M. C. P. to be able to give its show.

In any case, Betty and Polly would hardly have felt equal to it after the big sensations of the last four-and-twenty hours. And so Mrs. Willoughby, with this in mind, had already arranged a postponement of the performance fixed for to-night.

That there was only a postponement left the chums with nothing to feel "down" about.

Indeed, even if the performance had been cancelled, Morcove & Co. need not have cared.

The fund would have been none the poorer because of that lightning trip to Sandton Bay, for already it was known that the lawful claimant to the miser's hoard intended to bestow a half-share of it upon the finders. They could do as they liked with very nearly a thousand pounds! And what they were going to do was to give every penny to—the fund! So, most unexpectedly, the committee now had in eight even more money than it had set out to collect.

But were Morcove & Co. going to let this mean an untimely end to their work as a concert party?

Not they!

Now that there was money and to spare for the purchase of Rock Hill House, the thing to do was to get money for an endowment fund!

And so the following evening found the tireless juniors facing the footlights again.

The newspapers were making a big "story" of the Rock Hill House find of treasure, and the chums rather feared that this would affect the "rake-off." People before whom they were appearing now felt that there was now less need to give.

Nothing of the sort! Or, if there were people in the audience that evening who had decided to give less, then the M. C. P., by its feast of fun and frolic, must have charmed them back into a lavish mood. The collection made fifty pounds odd.

And it was gloriously the same on the following night. During the last few days of the winter "hols" the chums added a grand five hundred pounds to what was already at the bank.

Then came their last evening together as the M. C. P., with headquarters at the Willoughby town house.

For the last time all the juniors—still as fresh as paint when they went on stage—were to "do their stuff" before a Society audience. For the last time Ginger, the stage pony, was to enjoy his grand kick up, and to-night—gala performance at Lady Lundy's!

As a happy finish up to their season in town the chums could have wished for nothing better.

Lady Lundy was not only "chairman" of the Rock Hill House Com-

mittee; she was a life-governor of Morocco School, and a close friend of Miss Somerfield, the headmistress. Then there was her daughter and heiress, Lady Evelyn, a vivacious young thing who, whenever she was at home at Bandoncombe Castle, took the liveliest interest in Study No. 12.

Now the Lundy family were up in London; and their famous town house, when the chums got to it by car and taxi, proved to be more magnificent than any other Society home to which they had been made welcome.

Mrs. Willoughby was with them all this evening. As for that woman, whose imposture had been exposed at last, she was now on remand with her accomplice Steve, with the certainty of going to prison for smuggling offences spread over a lengthy period.

Once again the juniors were set down just where a striped awning had been erected above the patch of pavement in front of wide steps leading up to a flunkey-attended front door. And this time there were policemen to keep scores of sightseers from

marble staircase led up to all the majestic entertaining-rooms.

As hostess, Lady Lundy was at the top of the stairs "receiving." And above all the pleasant murmur and subdued laughter of mingling arrivals, there was the steady announcement of names by a very dignified official.

"So glad to see you, dear! We must have a talk," Lady Lundy affectionately greeted her lifelong friend, Pam's mother. "Betty! So here you are—all of you! We are so looking forward to your show! Oh, by the way—"

And the smiling hostess dropped a thrilling whisper into Betty's ear. "Really?" Betty was next moment gasping. "Oh!"

"Not going to make any of you nervous, I hope?"

"Yes—no! Why should it?" Then they were all past Lady Lundy, and so Polly and others could clamour to be told by Betty:

"What, Betty—what?"

"Something about Royalty being here to-night—"

a line, not a word altered! Knock-out business by the boys, witty "drives" in lines spoken by the girls—in all respects, in fact, the show was exactly the same as the one Morocco & Co. had given that memorable afternoon in the ward of a children's hospital.

And that proved favourite—the "Riding School" skit—with what a bang it went to-night.

As a final absurdity, old Hearthrugs took a call in front of the curtain, when it had fallen for the last time. Up and down, Tom, as front legs, made the dummy head go, by way of "bowing," whilst hind-legs Tubby worked the tail about, to imply similar appreciation of the applause at that end.

Then, during all the breathless changing out of stage attire, Tom and Tubby suffered the same sudden fear that was seizing other players. Had they, perhaps, gone a bit too far?

But Lady Evelyn, coming behind stage a few minutes after the show had



AT the sound of footsteps and voices from outside the room, Betty & Co. swung round from counting out the gold. Then one of the boys led a dash to tackle the unknown visitors.

pressing too close, in their eagerness to see and recognise distinguished arrivals, and to glimpse some of the wonderful dresses.

It must have been known that Betty & Co. were attending to-night's grand gathering, for even as they hurried across the pavement, to go up the carpeted steps, there were cheers.

Artfully some poorly dressed little girl managed to dodge one of the good-humoured bobbies and get to Betty, with a held-out penny pocket-book and pencil.

"Could—could I have your autograph, please, miss?" she gasped. "I'm hoping for a chance myself of a holiday at that home some day."

"I do so hope you will," Betty said very tenderly, whilst she dashed down her signature. "There! And let's see if I have something for you to spend now. Good-night!"—after quickly bestowing a silver coin.

"Ooo, fank you, miss, I'm sure! I must show mother—a whole shilling! Coo!"

Then, with the rest of the party, Betty was passing into the grand entrance hall, from which a wide

"Royalty? Phee-ew!"

"Yes, a foreign princess—"

"Bekas, what ze diggings—gorjus!"

"Royalty, my hat!" grimaced Jack.

"Hear this, chaps? H, Tubby—and you, Tom—"

"—in a mock-serious whisper. "Have to be careful with old Hearthrugs to-night."

"Careful, be blowed!" said Bunny's brother Tom. "Last performance, and so we're jolly well going to make it the biggest kick-up ever."

And they did.

Long before that boisterous moment arrived, the entire concert party had received every encouragement to alter nothing on account of a certain charming personage sitting next to Lady Lundy in the "stalls."

Live-wire Lady Evelyn had slipped round to Betty & Co. in their dressing-room, just before the ring-up, to dispose of any lingering doubt. It was the young princess' own keen interest in all charitable efforts that had made her graciously pleased to honour to-night's gathering with her presence.

So songs and dances were all as usual, and the five-minute farces were given with just the same gaiety—not

ended, soon dispelled such very natural misgivings.

"Too far! Absurd!" she rippled.

"Hear them still laughing about it all! And how much, the collection, Betty dear?"

"Don't know yet! Must be enormous!"

"Well, let me give my little bit," said Lady Evelyn, tendering a bank-note. "Oh dear!" she burst out laughing again, "what a scream it really was!"

"Zen we are not going to be asked to go at once?" dusky Naomer wistfully inferred. "We are to be allowed to stay for refreshments, anyhow?"

"But first," Lady Evelyn changed to a thrilled tone, after a smiling nod to set Naomer's mind at ease, "I have a message to give. Mother says you are all to come to the drawing-room to be presented."

"What?" gasped Morocco.

"Oh gosh!" groaned Jack.

"Comb!" Tom clamoured, feeling that his hair was still out of order. "But see here, Tubby, if you get knighted, then I shall expect an earldom! Only hind-legs, you!"

AND so, in the great, cream-panelled drawing-room a few minutes later, the M. C. P. went forward to be presented, by Lady Lundy, to a real princess!

One after another the girls made their curtsy, Betty being first, as leader.

Then it was the boys' turn to make each a bow whilst being named.

But there was to be much more in it than this. Words of praise were spoken such as they would never forget. And every one of the juniors, retiring at last, had a souvenir to cherish. To each had a little gift been made—gold brooches for the girls and gold cuff-links for the boys!

No wonder Morcove & Co. felt a bit overwhelmed, a bit giddy.

Their holiday concert party, got together at such short notice down

there at Morcove, just before last breaking-up day—and how little could they ever have dreamed that it would end like this!

"AND NOW, all, something in the dining-room," said Lady Evelyn. "Ooo, yes—queek, gorjus!"

"Come on, girls!"

"Come on, chaps!"

The way they had to go gave them a glimpse of the stage, and it was made Polly voice just two words to Betty.

"Exit all!"

"Yes," Betty nodded and laughed—for she quite understood.

Those two words—they were the final stage direction in the concert party's "book" that versatile Polly had written, in Study No. 12. And

now they held a special meaning for the whole company of players. It was "exit all" indeed, now that the curtain had fallen on their very last performance.

"It's been such fun," Betty murmured. "Wonder if there'll ever be anything like it for us again?"

"Oh, I guess so."

And we, writer and readers alike, will let that happy belief of Polly's be ours as well.

Some time, somewhere, the stage will be set anew, and Morcove and Grange-moor will be there to animate it, in this own team-like way.

Betty & Co. and the Boys! As good chums as ever, and as lively, too—doing their best, as in the past, to capture our affections!

THE END.

"SHE STOLE BABS' TRIUMPH!"

(Concluded from page 16)

"Something can be done, I think," she said suddenly. "Anyway, I'll try it. Mr. Stafford, don't let anything be dismantled till I come back."

"But what'll Josh Stafford stuttered. "I don't know. I'm not making promises, but I'll do what I can."

"Bless you, miss, if you can do anything!" Josh said fervently; and then while Babs darted away, he blinked at Bessie. What's she mean?" he asked.

But Bessie did not know. And Babs herself had only faint hope. But she was running then—along the road down which Lord Courtfield had disappeared.

Near the gates of Cliff House she caught him—just in the act of talking to Piper—very plainly in his way to complain to the headmistress.

He turned as he heard his name. "Lord Courtfield!"

And frowning at first, seeing a Cliff House figure, then gave a cry of delighted astonishment as he recognised that figure.

In a moment he was down from his horse.

"Why, you—the girl who saved my little girl! Haven't you read the papers?"

"Oh, yes!" Babs gasped. "But—" "Then why haven't you been to see me?"

"Because," Babs said, blushing. "I didn't want to—not to receive your thanks for what I did, or add credit—at least, not then. But—but—oh dear, I do want to see you now!" she added.

"Well, here I am," he said jovially, "and you're coming with me to the Towers, young lady. Little Annie is lying to see you, to thank you herself, and I just want you to know that if there's ever anything I can do for you, I'll do it."

Babs looked at him. "You mean that?" she asked. "Of course."

"You promise that—that if I asked you a favour, you'd carry it out?"

"For you, my dear, I'd grant any favour," he said gallantly. "But please, before you ask the favour, tell me your name!"

Babs told him. "And the favour?"

"It's the fair," Babs said. "Oh, your lordship, don't look cross! There's a mistake, Mr. Williams did promise me—me, that we could use that land. I suppose being called away in such a hurry, he forgot to leave a note of it—just as he forgot to send on the donation to the hospital fund he promised me. Your lordship, I want the hospital fair to be a success. If you only give your official permission for it to carry on, it will be a success. That," she added, "is the greatest favour in the world at this moment that you could do me."

He looked at her queerly. "Why, you almost speak as if the fair was your idea," he said.

"Well—no," Babs bit her lip. "Oh, never mind whose idea it was!" she never mind whose idea it was!" she said this favour! In—in the meantime we'll try to find out who spoils your experiment. You promised, you know," she added earnestly.

He stood for a moment in silence; then he nodded.

"I promised, yes," he admitted, "and I'll stand by it. Very well, Miss Redfern, you shall have your favour granted, but I may tell you this, if any other girl in this school had asked it, I'd have said flatly, no. Well, there you are, then. And, just to prove I mean it, I'll come back with you now to the fair, and let them know with my own lips. Get on that horse, will you?"

So Babs, glowing, swung on to the horse, and, jogging in front of the carl, trotted off down the road again.

Presently they came within sight of the bannered entrance, where a gloomy-looking lot of lads and girls were disconsolately hanging around. Lord Courtfield reined in his mount.

"A Fair, Ashton here?"

"Oh, yes, your lordship!" Faith Ashton said, wide-eyed.

"I just want you to know that I take back what I said," his lordship announced. "You can hold your fair. But wait"—as a burst of cheering rose—"I just want you to know something else. The pluckiest girl it has ever been my fortune to meet, has asked me to do this, and for her sake, and for her sake only, I've consented. If you want to thank anybody that your fair is still intact, don't thank me. Thank this girl, Barbara Redfern!"

And while he nodded at them, and everybody gaped open-mouthed, Babs happily slid from the saddle.

AND was the fair a success?

From the moment Mr. Royston Clarke opened it, it was crowded. All day excited crowds of visitors thronged to the site. Prizes melted so fast that girls were constantly kept running for fresh supplies. The crowds, in high, good humour, and seemingly with money to burn, had the day of their lives.

Faith was happy, even though she owed that happiness to Babs. But Babs drew even more was happier still, for the Brass of the whole turn out proved to be of the whole turn out dressed as Mrs. Eskimo, and Babs as Mr. Eskimo. Money just rained in upon them.

At night, when the fair was over, and the tally was taken, it was found that nearly two hundred pounds had been noticed, and a proportion of that, by agreement, handed over to joyful Josh—who that same day had received a new commission from the Eastbourne area.

A great day—yes, with everybody grateful to Babs for saving the show, and everybody most tumultuously applauding Faith for her success in carrying out her idea. Everybody, indeed, willing to forgive Babs.

The only discordant note came that night in the dormitory, when Faith, dimpling, came over to Babs. She held out her hand.

"Babs, thank you," she said—"thank you for saving my idea!"

Babs looked at her. "Your idea?" she asked pointedly.

"Yes, Oh, please, don't let us go all over that again, because, you know," Faith said softly and meaningfully, "all that is behind us. If you've hurt me, Barbara, I fully and most freely forgive you. I just want to be now, as ever, your very, very best friend. Please, Barbara, shake hands!"

She held out her hand. "Steadily, coolly, Babs stared into the big, pleading, blue eyes before her. And then, with a rush of colour staining her cheeks at the sickening hypocrisy of this girl, she turned away.

A murmur arose—a murmur of anger and disgust that one girl could so treat another—especially when that other was such an adorable girl.

But Babs knew what none of them knew—Faith was still acting.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.
(See page 16 for full details of next week's lovely Cliff House story.)