

"THE FUGITIVE OF THE FOURTH!" Exciting LONG COMPLETE Story of the Cliff House Chums inside.

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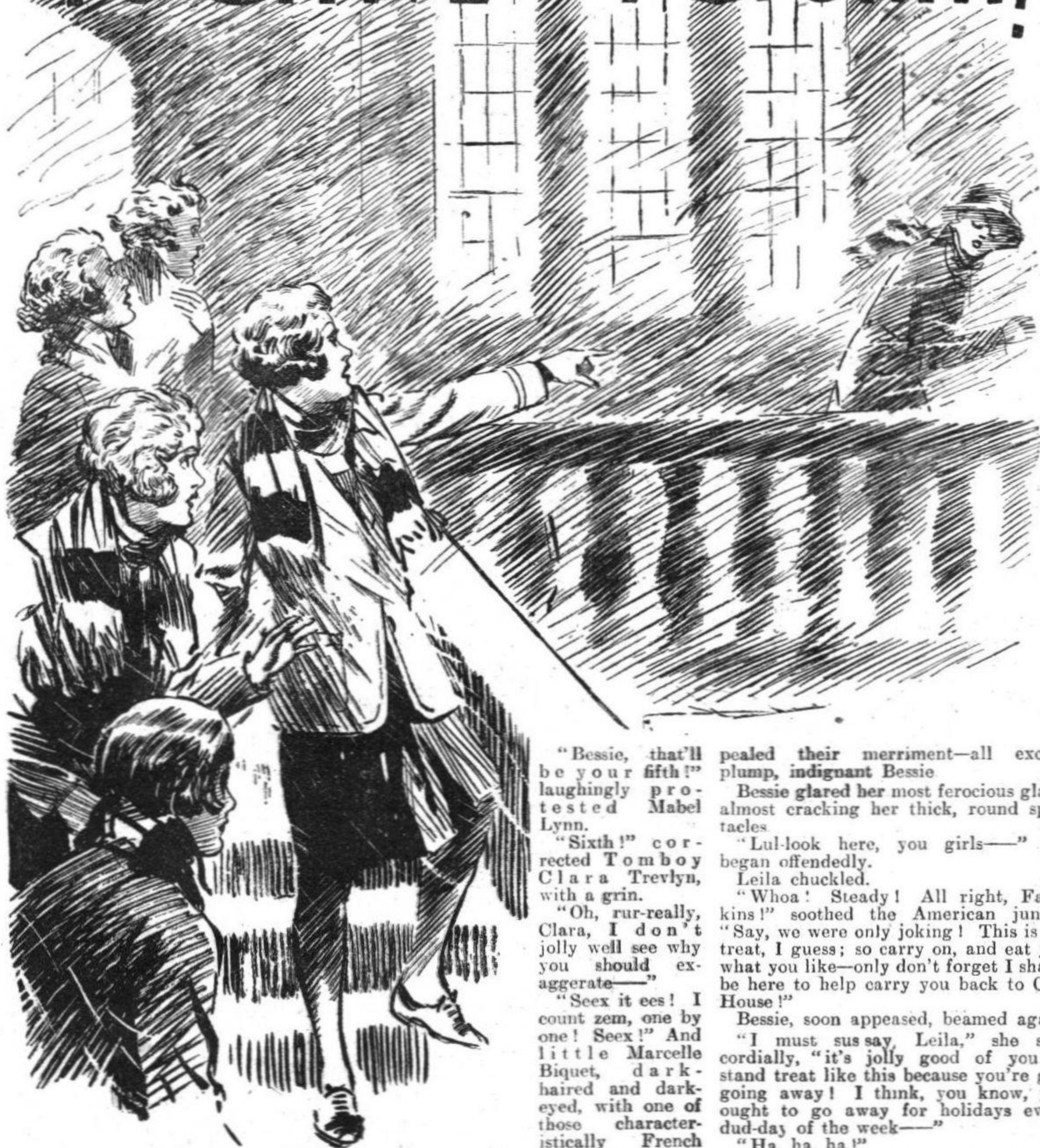


**DETECTIVE BESSIE,
ON THE TRAIL OF THE
MISSING SCHOOLGIRL—
follows her own footprints!**

(See this week's intriguing Babs & Co. story.)

Magnificent LONG COMPLETE story of Barbara Redfern & Co. of Cliff House School.

The FUGITIVE OF THE FOURTH!



A Figure in the Fog!



RIPPING! "Simply scrummy!" smiled blue-eyed Barbara Redfern, as she sampled her delicious-looking cream slice.

"Oh, rur-rather, Babs!" supported plump Bessie Bunter, an expansive beam on her red and shining face. "So j-jolly topping, you know, that I thuth-think I'll try just one more—"

hers, rolled her eyes in expressive wonderment, and screwed up her pretty little face comically. "What happen if I eat seex cream pastries? I be ill—so very, very ill! But Bessie—non! She eat and eat! She nevaire stop! She go on and on like—how you say?—like ze babbling brook!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kind of perpetual masticating motion!" chipped in Eton-cropped Leila Carroll

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Again the Cliff House Fourth Formers

"Bessie, that'll be your fifth!" laughingly protested Mabel Lynn.

"Sixth!" corrected Tomboy Clara Trevlyn, with a grin.

"Oh, rur-really, Clara, I don't jolly well see why you should exaggerate—"

"Seex it ees! I count zem, one by one! Seex!" And little Marcelle Biquet, dark-haired and dark-eyed, with one of those characteristically French mannerisms of

pealed their merriment—all except plump, indignant Bessie

Bessie glared her most ferocious glare, almost cracking her thick, round spectacles.

"Lul-look here, you girls—" she began offensively.

Leila chuckled.

"Whoa! Steady! All right, Fattikins!" soothed the American junior. "Say, we were only joking! This is my treat, I guess; so carry on, and eat just what you like—only don't forget I shan't be here to help carry you back to Cliff House!"

Bessie, soon appeased, beamed again.

"I must sus say, Leila," she said cordially, "it's jolly good of you to stand treat like this because you're gig-going away! I think, you know, you ought to go away for holidays every dud-day of the week—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Trust Bessie to think of that!"

"She would!"

"Hoggins!" chuckled Clara, and gave Bessie a playful slap on the back.

The chums of the Cliff House Fourth were in high spirits and merry mood. Babs & Co., indeed, were celebrating—at least, they were helping Leila Carroll to celebrate.

For while this afternoon, being Wednesday, was a half-holiday for Cliff House in general, it was the beginning of a whole three days' holiday for Leila,

Quite unexpectedly—and, therefore, all the more thrilling—had come an invitation to accompany her titled aunt,

lovely Lady Sutherland, on a short motor tour of Devon and Cornwall.

Miss Peimrose, the headmistress, had given her permission. At four o'clock Leila was due to meet her aunt, who was motoring to Courtfield from London to pick up her niece.

Barbara, Mabel, Bessie, Clara, and Marcelle had offered to see their American chum off and wish her a happy holiday; and as the bus had got them to Courtfield with half an hour to spare, Leila had promptly and generously invited them all to tea.

So here they were, in the Courtfield Creamery and a merry tea-party it was.

"But, Leila, you will not forget next Saturday—no? You will be back in time for ze concert—yes?" asked little Marcelle now, rather anxiously.

Leila reassuringly squeezed the arm of the French junior beside her. More than mere studymates were Leila and Marcelle; a great bond of affection existed between them.

"Sure, I'll be back, Marcelle!" she smiled. "We're going to make our little dancing act the high spot of the jolly old concert!"

"Ah, oui! Ze high spot!" Marcelle's eyes glowed with excitement and eagerness. "La, la! Such fun it will be! You ze toy soldier—so beeg, so upright, so strong! And me—voila, I shall be ze doll—like this!"

And, suddenly effervescing with enthusiasm, excitable little Marcell sprang to her feet. Forgetful of where she was, she went rigid, and began strutting round and round the table, arms and legs moving in stiff jerks, looking like some clockwork doll.

For as a clockwork doll, Marcelle was partnering Leila in a comedy dancing act which they had learned for the Cliff House concert, due to be held in Big Hall on the coming Saturday afternoon.

Leila was to be a toy soldier, and the act showed every promise of being a real scream. Marcelle herself was tremendously keen, and Leila, too, was every bit as enthusiastic.

"Zere! How zat be?" squeaked the French junior, jerking to a halt and bowing stiffly to her grinning chums.

"My hat, it's perfect!" applauded Babs.

While from a number of other people in the crowded Creamery, who had been watching the impromptu rehearsal in delighted amusement, came a round of clapping.

Marcelle turned pink.

"Oh dear! I forgot! I make ze exhibition of myself! I go—"

"I guess we're all going!" chuckled Leila. "Come on, kids! It's nearly four o'clock!"

There was a scraping back of chairs, and, after Leila had paid the bill, the six chums swarmed to the doorway. But outside in the Courtfield High Street, Babs gave a sudden whistle of amazement.

"Oh goodness! Look what's blown up!"

"Fog!" grunted Tomboy Clara.

"And it's going to be a real pea-souper, by the looks of it!" opined Mabel Lynn.

Round them it swirled—drifts of thick yellow fog, that had turned the waning winter's afternoon into night. Lights blazed out from all the shops; the street standards had been switched on; but they showed only as blurred splashes of wavering yellow in the wreathing pall.

In the roadway cars and buses moved at a crawling pace. Pedestrians, looking like ghostly figures in the gloom, scurried hurriedly on their way, anxious to get out of the fog and home to the warmth and comfort of cosy fires.

"I never dreamed it was as bad as this," said Babs, a little anxiously. "There was only a thin mist half an hour ago. Goodness, this isn't a very good start to your holiday, Leila—"

Leila smiled ruefully.

"I guess your weather clerk must disapprove of my dodging lessons for a day or two. But who cares? It'll probably be glorious sunshine when we get farther south."

"I hope so," said Babs sincerely. "Nothing worse than motoring through fog. But, I say, if it's like this all the way from London, Lady Sutherland is going to be late. Where shall we wait?"

"That's awfully sweet of you, Babs, but don't you think you ought to be getting back to Cliff House?" asked Leila. "You know what the local buses are. They might cancel them in this fog, and then you'll be stranded."

Babs nodded.

"Yes, I've been thinking that. You—you're sure you don't mind, old thing?"

"I'll mind if you don't hustle off before it gets any thicker," grinned Leila cheerfully.

It was obviously the wisest thing to do.

"Well, then, we'll be going," said Babs. "Happy holiday, Leila!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Thanks, girls!" grinned Leila. "And, Babs," she added quietly, "I'd just like to say again how glad I am that you came out of this business, with your cousin, Faith Ashton, so well."

"Thanks, Leila!" Babs smiled warmly. "Don't forget to enjoy yourself."

"And do not forget ze concert on Saturday," shrilled Marcelle eagerly.

"Trust me, Marcelle. I'll be there!"

Why did Leila Carroll of the Fourth Form return in secret to the school? Why did she act so strangely, furtively, hiding from her chums, refusing to speak to them? For Leila's own sake that was a mystery which Babs & Co. meant to solve.

"Remember us to Lady Sutherland. Bye-bye, Leila!"

"Bye-bye!"

And, with a wave of her hand, and picking up her small week-end case, Leila turned and strode off down the High Street, soon to vanish amid the swirling fog.

While Babs & Co. hurried along to the nearest bus stop. Fortunately, they did not have to wait long. The bus crawled up, and the Cliff House chums swarmed aboard.

But then they received a shock. The bus was only going as far as Friardale village, the conductor informed them.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Babs in dismay. "But won't there be a connection from there for Cliff House?"

"Fraid not, miss. The fog's worse out there, an' the Friardale-Pegg service has been cancelled."

The chums surveyed each other in dismay as the bus crawled out of Courtfield into country lanes where visibility had been reduced to less than twenty yards.

Cliff House was only a mile or so from Friardale, but they did not relish the prospect of a walk through this cold, clammy fog.

Walk, however, they had to. For the conductor's statement they found to be only too true. There were no buses at all going in the direction of Cliff House.

"Br-rr!" shivered Mabs, as they alighted at Friardale. "Blow the fog!"

"That won't do much good! It

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER.

wants at least a gale to clear this lot!" said Tomboy Clara with an attempt at cheerfulness. "But come on. Let's step it out, and we'll soon get warm!"

Stepping it out, however, was easier said than done. Thick as the fog had been at Courtfield, it was definitely thicker here. They could see only a few yards ahead of them, at the best of times.

They stumbled on. The fog became thinner for a distance, and Clara, peering ahead through the murk, gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"The cross-roads!" she observed. "Look, there's Cliff Cross! Not far now, kidlets—"

She broke off. A sound came through the fog from behind them.

Tring-a-ring-a-ring!

"Bicycle coming! Look out, there!" yelled the Tomboy, as much a warning to her chums as to tell the approaching cyclist of their presence in the roadway.

They closed in against the grass verge. There was a swish of wheels. The cyclist loomed up in the fog. A girl was riding the machine. Babs & Co., catching just a brief, vague glimpse of her as she swept past, suddenly found themselves staring in surprise.

For the girl wore a Cliff House hat over a head of fair hair, which was cut short, like a man's, at the ears; and she wore, too, a pair of large, horn-rimmed spectacles.

"Leila! It ees Leila!" cried Marcelle excitedly.

"Well, that's what I thought," said Clara puzzledly. "But it can't be—"

"Leila!" shouted Marcelle again.

But already the cyclist was vanishing into the fog, and she made no attempt to turn or stop.

Babs laughed.

"Jolly like Leila, I must agree," she said. "But it wasn't, of course!"

"Then who was it?" asked Mabs. "She was a Cliff House girl, and she had horn-rimmed spectacles—"

"Well, Leila's not the only girl to wear them, and they do make people look rather alike. Anyway, it wasn't Leila—it couldn't have been!" Babs said positively. "Come on! I'm perished!"

And Babs pressed on, the others stringing out on either side of her. Twenty minutes later, with the fog growing ever thicker, a dull yellow glow shone eerily ahead of them.

"Cliff House, at last, thank goodness!" sighed Babs.

They passed through the gateway, illuminated by two ornamental lights, set on top of the stone pillars, which Piper, the porter, had switched on. Along the drive they hurried, up the steps, and so into the warm lobby. Hats and coats divested, the chums made for the Fourth Form quarters.

Babs glanced at her wristlet watch.

"Goodness! Nearly six o'clock!" she exclaimed.

"Time for prep, then!" groaned Clara.

Marcelle pulled a wry little face. "Ze prep! And I have to do it all alone, in ze study!" she said miserably. "Jimmy go, and now Leila—she go, too!"

Very sad, Marcelle looked. Normally, she and Leila occupied Study No. 3, with monocled Jemima Carstairs. Jemima, as it happened, was also away for a few days, visiting a sick relative; and, with both her cheery study-mates missing, Marcelle suddenly realised how lonely she was going to be.

Babs, pausing outside the door of Study No. 4, smiled sympathetically. "Come and do your prep with us!" she invited. "There's plenty of room, and—"

"Thank you, Babsie, but—non! I be brave! I soon get used to being by myself, yes."

"Just as you like, old thing. See you in the Common-room after prep, then."

The chums split up. Babs, Mabs, and Bessie went into Study No. 4. Clara clattered into Study No. 7.

While little Marcelle, a rather pathetic figure, went up to Study No. 3, opened the door, and felt for the electric light switch.

But her hand never found it. Suddenly she gasped, and from inside the room came an answering gasp.

For, standing by Marcelle's bureau, bending over it, was a figure—the figure of a girl, whose face was faintly outlined in the red glow from the fire.

A girl whose hair was Eton-cropped, who wore horn-rimmed spectacles.

"Leila! Oh, Leila, then you have come back!" cried Marcelle, and joy submerged the amazement she had first felt at seeing that figure bending over her own private bureau.

But next second amazement returned—amazement increased a hundredfold now.

For Leila uttered another gasp—a gasp of fright. Then suddenly she swung round, dashed up to the open window, and, in wild panic, flung herself through it.

A moment later her fleeing figure was lost to sight in the thick grey fog, which enveloped the quadrangle outside in an impenetrable cloak.

A Joke, or—



"BABSIE! Babsie!"
"Marcelle, what is it? What's the matter?"

And Barbara Redfern, just settling down at the table for prep with Mabel Lynn and Bessie Bunter, stared in astonishment as little Marcelle Biquet came rushing into Study No. 4.

"She come back!" shrilled the French junior excitedly. "I see her!"

"Who?"
"Leila! She was in ze study. But come—come queeckly!"

Babs blinked her surprise.

"Leila back here? / But—but—"
"Queeckly!" cried Marcelle, and dragged at the Fourth Form captain's arm. "Leila come, but zen she go. She jump out through ze window and vanish—pouf!—just like zat!" exclaimed Marcelle, with an expressive gesture of her hands.

"Oh, my hat!" And Babs, very bewildered, not fully understanding yet what all Marcelle's excitement was about, dashed along to Study No. 3, followed by Marcelle, Mabs, and Bessie.

She switched on the light. She saw the open window, through which drifting billows of fog swirled into the room.

"Leila! Leila! Where are you?" called Babs, leaning out over the sill.

But only the echoes of her own voice, muffled by the density of the fog, answered her.

Babs turned back into the study and eyed the French junior.

"Are you quite sure it was Leila?" she asked.

"Positeeve! She was standing by my bureau, and—and—"

Marcelle broke off. Clearly she could recall the incident—how she had seen Leila bending over her own desk, how frightened Leila had seemed, and the guilty fashion in which she had gone rushing to the window.

The recollection startled Marcelle; disturbed her with an uneasy sense of wonderment. But she carefully ignored those details now, and going on, merely said:

"And then, as she saw me, Babsie, she—she suddenly rushed out through ze window."

"Was it already open, Marcelle?"

"Oui!"

"Which suggests," Babs said, "that Leila entered the study that way, eh? Funny! And—golly, then that must have been Leila we saw on the way back from Courtfield!"

"My hat, yes! But," asked Mabs puzzledly, "where did she get the bicycle from? It couldn't have been hers."

"Hired it, I suppose," replied Babs. "She must have known about the buses, and thought cycling back was the easiest and quickest way. Evidently this fog has messed up the holiday, and Leila's come back."

"But Leila not say one word to me," Marcelle said, with a little pout, an injured note in her voice. "I was so happy to see her, but she go like thees!"

Babs chuckled. "She wanted to give us a surprise, Marcelle. She's only joking—"

"Joking?" Marcelle seized on the word eagerly.

"Of course. And she's evidently keeping up the joke by hiding from us now. Well," laughed Babs gaily, "I hope she's enjoying herself out there in the fog. She won't keep it up long, I know. She'll soon be glad to show herself and get into the warm."

But Babs, for once, proved herself a bad prophet. Leila Carroll did not soon show up. She did not show up during the whole of that evening, and there was still no sign of her when eventually dormitory bell rang for the Lower School.

By that time Babs had to confess herself puzzled.

"I never thought Leila would keep it up as long as this," she admitted, as she and Mabs, Bessie, and Clara descended the stairs together and headed for the Fourth Form dormitory.

"She wants a job if she's still hanging about outside in this beastly fog," opined Clara, who, of course, had been told of Leila's return to the school.

"Perhaps she's waiting for us in the dormitory," suggested Mabs.

But Leila, as they discovered five seconds later, was not in the dormitory.

Clara grinned. "If this is Leila's idea of a joke," the Tomboy said, "she's welcome to it. And if you want my opinion, she's a chump!"

Upon which point the Fourth Form agreed. But Marcelle Biquet, undressing slowly beside her bed, was looking anxious again.

What had become of her American studymate? Where was she? And why, since that abrupt and peculiar departure from Study No. 3, hadn't she shown herself again?

Those questions, lacking answers,

sadly puzzled the little French junior, and now, as she climbed into bed, she felt her earlier anxiety returning.

Mary Buller of the Sixth came in to put out the lights. She saw Leila's unoccupied bed, but made no comment. Evidently prefects and mistresses were still under the impression that Leila Carroll was away on holiday.

"Good-night, girls!" said Mary.

"Good-night, Mary!"

The lights snapped out. Mary quietly quitted the darkened dormitory, and the Fourth settled down for the night.

Marcelle Biquet, however, lay with her eyes wide open, still thinking of Leila. And in her own bed, Barbara Redfern, too, found herself unusually wakeful.

Babs, also, was thinking of Leila; and the more she thought, the more puzzled she became. The Junior School captain had been prepared to treat lightly the matter of Leila's non-appearance since being seen by Marcelle in Study No. 3. But now—well, now she had to admit it was more than a little strange.

Babs tossed restlessly. Surely Leila was not still hiding outside the school? Leila had much more sense than that. Then what—

She suddenly found herself listening intently.

From the landing outside the dormitory came a soft pattering as of footsteps. Then they ceased, as if someone were standing on the other side of the door.

"My hat! Perhaps it's Leila, the goose!" muttered Babs audibly.

"Just what I was thinking," came Mabel Lynn's voice, showing that Mabs was also awake with her mind on their American chum.

"Let us look, Babsie!" Marcelle Biquet put in eagerly.

Simultaneously the three girls climbed out of bed, Clara Trevlyn a second later.

Babs flung the door open. Then—

"Leila!" she cried.

For Leila it was, in the act of tip-toeing towards the stairs which led down into the Fourth Form quarters. She wore her Cliff House blazer over her gym tunic, and though she had her back towards the chums, they could not fail to recognise the head of Eton-cropped hair, and glimpse the horn-rimmed spectacles as she gave a violent start and half turned.

"Leila, you chump, what are you playing at?" Clara called, with a grin. "Why don't you come to bed—"

Click!

"Oh crumbs!"
The chums suddenly found themselves in pitch blackness. Leila, acting swiftly, had switched out the electric light. They heard a rush of footsteps, an exclamation.

Babs ran forward blindly, felt herself crash into someone, and staggered backwards from the force of the collision.

"Is that you—" she began.

"You clumsy young idiot! Who put that light out—"

And as Marcelle, finding the switch, flooded the landing with light again, a startled Babs found herself gazing into the infuriated features of Grace Camperhill, the unpopular prefect of the Sixth.

While of Leila—not a sign of her anywhere. The American junior had completely vanished during those few seconds of darkness and confusion.

Babs, Mabs, Clara, and Marcelle blinked around them in amazement. But Grace glared and fumed angrily.

"What are you four kids doing out of bed?" demanded the prefect. "And who switched out that light just as I was coming up the stairs?"

Babs & Co. remained silent. The prefect's eyes glittered.

"All right, it doesn't matter! If one of you won't own up, then you'll all write me a hundred lines!" snapped Grace unpleasantly. "And you'll all do an additional hundred lines for being out of bed!"

"Here, but I say, Grace—" protested Clara indignantly.

"Get back to bed, and sharp about it!"

The chums obeyed. Miserably they went back into the dormitory.

"Two hundred lines!" groaned Mabs.

"And it was Leila's fault!" Tomboy Clara grunted, a trace of annoyance in her tone. "My giddy aunt, what game does she think she's playing?"

"That's what I'd like to know," Babs confessed, with a puzzled sigh.

But Marcelle said nothing. Silently she climbed back into bed, a prey to tangled, disturbing thoughts which buzzed through that sharp little brain of hers.

Once again Leila, her chum, had been acting mysteriously. Once again she had fled, as if frightened of being seen.

Was Leila frightened of being seen?

Marcelle lay there wondering, wondering—

THE FOLLOWING morning Leila Carroll's bed in the Fourth Form dormitory was still unoccupied and still undisturbed.

Babs, Mabs, Marcelle, and Clara were up early. Half an hour before rising-bell was due to ring they were all in Study No. 4, busily engaged in writing their lines for Grace Camperhill.

Finished at last, the chums wearily threw down their pens, and then delivered the impositions to the prefect. After that, back in the Fourth Form Common-room just before breakfast, Babs asked a question of the girls assembled there:

"Any sign of Leila yet?"

And back came an answering chorus:

"No, Babs."

Babs frowned. Her pretty brow wrinkled with perplexity.

Completely and finally dispelled now was the possibility that Leila had some joke afoot.

For some extraordinarily strange reason the American junior was deliberately playing a queer game of hide-and-seek. But for what reason; what was her objective in behaving in such mysterious fashion?

The Fourth had to confess itself bewildered, intrigued, vaguely annoyed—but most certainly definitely beaten when they tried to seek an explanation.

After brekker the post arrived. It arrived exactly an hour and a half late—delayed by the dense fog which had thrown its paralysing grip over the south-eastern counties and showed no signs of lifting.

There was a big parcel for Marcelle Biquet.

Miserably downcast, puzzled and worried by Leila's behaviour, had been the French junior since rising that morning; but now, as she saw the label on the parcel, her dark eyes sparkled and the rosy flush crept back into her cheeks.

"Ze three cheers!" she exclaimed in her quaint way. "Ze costumes for ze concert—they have arrived! Babsie, I am so excited!"

"Let's have a look at them, Marcelle!" Babs laughed.

And in Study No. 3 Marcelle feverishly unwrapped the parcel and opened the long cardboard box, watched by an eager and interested crowd of Fourth Formers.

"Oh, loffy!" exclaimed Marcelle rapturously. "Look at zem, mes amis! Aren't zey loffy?"

She held them at armslength, the two costumes which she and Leila were to wear for their dancing act at the concert.

Leila's uniform consisted of a bright scarlet coat with silver buttons, full-length dark blue trousers with a single scarlet stripe, and a small imitation of a Guardsman's bearskin.

While Marcelle's doll's dress was a shimmering, fluffy creation of white satin, spangled with diamante buttons that glittered and sparkled in the glow of the electric light. Well above knee length it was, with a frilly hem and puffed-up shoulders.

It would suit the dainty, petite Marcelle to perfection, and the chums, as they inspected it, could visualise the little French girl strutting jerkily around in it as she danced, a large-sized doll come to life!

They hurried out.

The morning passed quickly. Last lesson came—French. Marcelle, of course, was able to take it easy during this lesson—English was her terror—and when the mistress wanted a message taken to Miss Primrose, it was only natural that she should ask the little French junior to execute it.

Marcelle hurried out of the Form-room, delivered the message, and was on her way back along the Fourth Form passage when, passing her study, she suddenly halted.

Her eyes glowed with an eager light. Perhaps Leila was in the study now. Perhaps at this very moment she was examining those gorgeous costumes they were to wear for the concert.

Marcelle thrilled. She would just peep in and see. And if Leila were there—



"I SHALL be ze doll—like this!" cried excitable little Marcelle Biquet, and springing to her feet, she began strutting round and round the table. Chuckling, the chums watched her. There was no doubting the French girl's enthusiasm for the forthcoming concert.

"They're ripping!" enthused Babs.

"But Leila—she should be here to see zem!" Marcelle cried excitedly. Then suddenly her eyes shone, and she nodded her head vigorously. "Mais oui! I have ze idea! I leave these costumes on ze chair—like thees. Maybe Leila come in. Maybe she see zem—oui? Zen she remembaire ze concert, and be so happy that she weel not go away again. C'est tres bon, Babsie?" asked Marcelle eagerly.

"Jolly good, Marcelle!" the Form captain acquiesced. "We've got to do something to make Leila—Hallo! There goes the bell for lessons! Come on, kids! Yes, that's right, Marcelle. Leave the costumes there. Leila will be sure to see them if she comes in."

She stepped up to the door, saw that it was slightly ajar. Very quietly Marcelle pushed it open, and then she smiled—a radiant smile of pleasure and happiness.

Leila was there. It was very gloomy in the study, owing to the fog outside, but Marcelle could easily discern that the figure of the girl standing by the armchair was her American chum.

Marcelle stood in the doorway, smiling, quiet as a mouse, intending to surprise Leila. She saw Leila, unaware that she was no longer alone, pick up the costumes.

Marcelle waited, thrilling and excited. Leila would be so tremendously overjoyed to know that the costumes had arrived. But then—

It was Marcelle who received the surprise—such a surprise that it came as a horrifying shock!

For Leila had thrown the costumes back on to the chair—thrown those beautiful costumes there with a contemptuous gesture, regardless of the fact that they had fallen in a crumpled heap that, as she moved, her foot trod on the hem of Marcelle's dress as it dangled on the floor.

"Silly things!" she muttered.

A strangled cry came from Marcelle's quivering lips then.

"Oh, Leila—Leila!" she sobbed.

"How can you—"

She broke off.

Like a flash Leila had swung round, a gasp of fear on her lips. Then ruthlessly she grabbed up the two costumes, flung them over Marcelle's head so that all vision became blacked out.

Next moment the French junior felt two hands seize her tightly—felt herself being pushed backwards. She went staggering. Then—

Slam! went the door.

Sobbing, Marcelle tore the costumes away from her head. She saw that she was now in the corridor. The door of Study No. 3 was closed against her.

She had been thrown out of her study. And Leila Carroll—Leila, her chum, had done it!

Bessie Makes a Capture!



"LEILA, open zo door! Leila—"

And Marcelle Biquet, as she sobbed out the words, hammered frenziedly at the locked door of Study No. 3. But no answer came from inside; the door was not opened.

Bang, bang, bang!

Again and again Marcelle's clenched fists beat on the door.

"Leila, what is ze matter? Let me in! Oh, why you be so cruel? Let me in, please—please—"

Bang, bang, bang!

And in that distraught moment Marcelle did not hear footsteps coming down the passage; but she heard the voice that rapped out with stern authority:

"Marcelle! How dare you make this commotion? Why are you not back in your class-room?"

Marcelle swung round with a choking gasp, to find Miss Primrose, the headmistress, staring at her with an angry glint in her eyes.

"Well, Marcelle?"

"I—I—" began the French junior, then broke off with a sob.

Miss Primrose looked startled.

"Why, good gracious, child, you are crying! Marcelle, what is the matter?" she asked, on a kinder note.

Marcelle dabbed at her eyes.

"I—I am sorry, Miss Preemrose. It ees—it ees nozzing!" she replied hastily.

"Nothing—when you were creating all that commotion!" said the headmistress. "Why were you banging on the door so noisily?"

"It—it ees locked," Marcelle said hesitantly.

"Locked? By whom? I heard you calling Leila's name, Marcelle. Surely Leila— But Leila is away until Saturday. Then who has locked the door?"

Marcelle remained silent. Miss Primrose, with a frown at her, gripped the door-handle of Study No. 3, and turned it.

The door opened. Marcelle blinked in surprise.

"Oh, but—but—" she began.

"Marcelle" rapped Miss Primrose, "you deliberately told me an untruth. The door was not locked, and there is no one in here. You will write me one hundred lines for creating that disgraceful commotion and for being out of your class-room."

The French junior nodded dumbly. Eyes wide and staring, she was gazing round the study. Less than three minutes ago Leila Carroll had been here—but there was no sign of Leila now.

"Now return to the class-room immediately!" the headmistress said.

Marcelle obeyed, her brain in a whirl.

After lessons she told Babs & Co. what had happened. Very pathetically, very unhappily, she told them of her encounter with Leila. The chums looked indignant.

"My giddy aunt! What's come over Leila?" Clara demanded. "All she seems to do is to dodge about and get one or all of us into trouble. It's getting beyond a joke!" she added bluntly.

Babs bit her lip.

"I can't make it out," she confessed. "It's not like Leila at all to behave in this way."

"It's certainly not," put in Mabs. "She comes back to the school, when she's supposed to be away, and then won't show herself. When we do catch sight of her she dodges off as if—as if she's frightened of our seeing her. It—it almost seems fishy to me, Babs!"

The Form captain frowned thoughtfully.

"Look here, let's leave her a note," she suggested. "We've got to get to the bottom of this giddy mystery. Where's a piece of paper— Oh, thanks, Marcelle. Let me see—"

Taking a propelling pencil out of her tunic pocket, Babs wrote:

"Leila, you mysterious old chump, what's the game? Why avoid us every time we see you? There's no trouble of any sort, is there? No more of this elusive stuff, please.

"When and where shall we see you?"

"BABS & Co."

"There, perhaps that will work the trick!" Babs said. "We'll prop it up on your mantelpiece, Marcelle. And now let's await developments."

They waited. The note was still there, undisturbed, after dinner. It was still there before they had to go into afternoon lessons.

But after lessons—

Swiftly Babs & Co. hurried along to Study No. 3, wondering if anything had transpired, hoping to find Leila awaiting them there.

They burst in. No one was in the room. But Marcelle, gazing eagerly around, suddenly uttered a dismayed, horrified shriek.

"Look! Look! My bureau—"

The others, however, had already seen. And, seeing, a wave of anger swept over them.

For little Marcelle's bureau had been ruthlessly rifled. Pigeon-holes and drawers had been turned out, and the contents scattered all over the floor.

A photograph of Leila, which had been one of Marcelle's most treasured possessions, lay by the armchair, the glass frame smashed. Beside it was a heap of letters—cherished letters from her brother Henri, whom she adored. They had been trodden on, and mud was spattered all over them.

Marcelle seemed stunned.

"It's a downright shame!" said Clara Trevlyn furiously. "It's—it's wicked! My hat, I'd just like to know who's done it—"

And then she saw Babs, her expression grim, looking towards the mantelpiece.

The message they had written to Leila was gone!

"Gosh!" Clara almost grated out the word. "Was it—Leila?"

"It looks like it!" Babs said heavily.

"No, no! Not Leila, Babsie! Leila would not be so cruel!"

Marcelle, in tears, sprang to her feet.

"Babsie," she shrilled on vehemently, "tell me you do not really theenk that! Not Leila!"

Passionately Marcelle screamed out the words. Imploringly she looked at Babs, frenziedly wanting the Form captain to take back the accusation she had made—take it back because she, Marcelle herself, had found herself thinking the same thing. Because, caring for Leila as she did, she was fighting desperately to thrust such a terrible thought out of her mind.

No; it couldn't have been Leila! It couldn't—it couldn't!

Babs bit her lip, shook her head hopelessly. Gently she placed an arm around Marcelle's shaking shoulders.

"Marcelle, I know what you're thinking. We're all thinking the same. We just can't believe that Leila—Leila of all girls—would do such a thing as this. And yet—well, what else are we to think? We know Leila's been in here again—that message has gone, anyway. She's been behaving queerly ever since last night. And look how she treated you this morning. I—I don't know what to make of it."

Very serious the Form captain had become. If Leila had done this thing—and there didn't seem much doubt of that—then the American must have had a very good reason.

Leila, perhaps, was in some dreadful trouble. Otherwise, why should she be skulking in the school like this, avoiding even her closest chums, frightened of being caught, going to such desperate lengths as rifling Marcelle's bureau?

What could it mean? That Leila was searching for something in that bureau—something which necessitated her descending to such underhand methods to attain it?

Intensely loyal was Babs—a very shrewd judge of human nature. She had always liked Leila. In spite of all the evidence against Leila, she found it impossible to condemn until she was certain of the whole circumstances.

She suddenly looked at Marcelle.

"Marcelle, old thing, is—is there anything in your bureau that Leila might want very desperately?" she questioned, hoping that she might throw some light on the mystery.

The French junior looked startled.

"Non, non! There could be nozzing at all. Babsie, what you mean—"

Babs shrugged quickly.

"Oh, never mind. Just a thought. Poor old Marcelle! Look here, we'll help you tidy up, and then after tea I suggest we have a little rehearsal of the items we're doing for the concert. Your dance you know—you must keep in practice!"

Marcelle nodded, but she showed no enthusiasm. There was a big ache in her warm heart.

And Babs, Mabs, and Clara, watching that pathetic little figure, turned away in sympathy, and hastily began tidying up the study.

After tea, Babs rallied the girls who were actively participating in the concert. Marcelle, of course, was doing her comedy dance with Leila. Babs had written a short playlet, in which Babs, Jean Cartwright, Sylvia Sirrett, and Rosa Rodworth were appearing.

Peggy Preston, the Lancashire junior, was giving a piano recital. Lucy Morgan, who had a really wonderful voice, was down to sing. Plump Bessie Bunter, undeniably a duffer at most things, was an expert ventriloquist, and would be doing her act with Ting-a-Ling, her performing Pekingese.

Altogether the Fourth was to be well represented in the concert, and they were determined that their "turns" should be the star events in the programme.

Babs had intended that the rehearsal should take place in the music-room, but discovered that Flora Cann & Co., of the Fifth, also busily rehearsing, had taken possession.

"Never mind," said Babs. "We'll go up to one of the attics. Nice and quiet up there and we shan't be disturbed. By the way, where's Bessie? She said she was coming along to rehearse her act."

Bessie Bunter, however, was not among those present. But they found her, two minutes later, as they were on their way up to the attics.

She was on the landing near the Fourth Form dormitory. And Bessie seemed to be engaged upon a most extraordinary task.

The Fourth Formers stared in bewildered amazement. Then they grinned.

For Bessie, bent almost double, so that plait of hair dangled in front of her, was slowly moving down the passage in short little steps, holding in one plump hand a magnifying-glass through which she was scrutinising the floor with owl-like solemnity.

"Bessie, what on earth are you doing—" exclaimed Babs.

The duffer of the Fourth, still bent double, raised her head and wagged a forefinger.

"Ssssh!" she hissed cautiously. "Kik-can't you see I'm a detective?"

"Eh?"

"Oh corks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Babs' blue eyes twinkled merrily. She winked at the other girls.

"Ssssh! Pray silence for Bessie the detective," she said, with mock severity. "Bessie dear, what is it that you are—ahem—detecting? Or is it some frightful secret?"

Bessie looked mysterious, glanced quickly around her as if to make certain she were not being overheard.

"I've fuf-found Leila!" she hissed melodramatically. "But—ssssh! Don't let her know I'm on her tut-trail!"

Babs started.

"You've found Leila? Where is she?" the Form captain asked, with a trace of excitement.

Bessie blinked.

"Well, I—I've nearly fuf-found her, you know," she had to confess. "I'm hot on the track. I'll soon kik-capture her. I'm gig-going to see justice done, you know, after the way she's treated poor Marcelle! Look!" Bessie added triumphantly. "Kik-clues—scores of them!"

And eagerly she began her examination of the floor again, almost dusting it with her snub little nose.

The girls looked. Then their grins returned.

"You mean those muddy marks, Fatima?" chuckled Clara.

"Y-yes. They're fuf-footprints, you know. I sus-say, here's another—and another! You've gig-got to hand it to

me, girls," Bessie crowed, "that I'm a jolly good detective—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rur-really, I don't see anything to laugh at—"

"Poor old Bessie! The dud detective duped!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lul-look here—"

"Look yourself!" laughed Babs, holding her sides. "Those aren't Leila's footprints—they're your own, duffer!"

"Eh? Oh, I sus-say—"

"You've been out on the fire-escape, haven't you?" asked Babs. "Yes, and you forgot to shut the doors, and the fog's coming in in cloud's. You got your shoes wet, Bessie, and you left those marks on the floor as you walked along!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better stop being a detective—in case you capture yourself—and come up to the rehearsal," Babs advised, chuckling. "We'll be in Attic No. 3, Bessie."

And peeling their merriment, the crowd of juniors continued on their way upstairs, leaving a sheepish and disconsolate Bessie sadly surveying her "clues."

The fact that complete failure had rewarded her efforts to trace the elusive Leila took some seconds to sink into Bessie's brain, by which time the passage was filling with fog as it billowed in through the open fire-exit.

Grunting peevishly, Bessie hastily

closed the doors, decided that perhaps she'd stop being a detective for the moment, and rolled upstairs to join her chums at the rehearsal.

But Bessie's memory was notoriously a bad one. She'd forgotten Babs had said Attic No. 3, and paused outside the second door along the landing.

She opened the door—then almost collapsed with surprise.

For just in the act of emerging from behind a pile of trunks and suitcases near the window of the attic, was the figure of a girl. Bessie, shortsighted as she was, recognised her instantly.

"Leila!" Bessie gave a whoop of triumph. "I've fuf-found Leila! I'm a jolly gig-good detective, after all!" she stammered excitedly.

And then acted with surprising swiftness and with unusual forethought.

Leila was in this attic, and Leila mustn't be allowed to escape until Babs & Co. had seen and talked to her!

Quickly Bessie rushed out, slamming the door after her and turning the key. But in her haste she didn't see that her gym tunic had caught in the closed door.

Bessie started to run, then found herself jerked back so that she almost banged her head on the woodwork. Still Bessie didn't realise that her tunic was caught. Bessie's imagination was much too vivid to appreciate such a simple explanation as that!

"Help! Help!" yelled the duffer of

No. 27 of our delightful series for Your "Cliff House Album."

CLIFF HOUSE CELEBRITIES

DOES anyone love Constance Alma Jackson, of Cliff House's Sixth Form? I doubt it! Does anyone even like Connie Jackson? I doubt that, too. You might answer, of course, that her younger sister Ida of the Upper Third does, but that would not be right, because Ida, like Connie, has liking for only one person—and that is for herself!

If Ida at times sticks up for Connie it is not because she is particularly fond of her. It is simply because that Connie, as a prefect, has power, and—well, it is rather helpful at times to have a sister who is a prefect.

There are few girls in Cliff House whom the old school would be happier without, but Connie is certainly one of them.

Harsh, strict, short-tempered, something of a bully, it is woe betide the unfortunate junior who incurs her wrath!

Tyrant by nature, she has a particular dislike for the Fourth Form. A girl to steer clear of, this Connie!

What is she like in appearance? Not very attractive, I am afraid—but how can one possess a nature like hers and still be charming to look at? Her hair is wavy and brushed back off her forehead. Her cold, grey eyes are cruel; an ill-tempered mouth is a clear index to the uncertainty of her nature, and her pale face hints that she is no great lover of healthy outdoor sports and exercises.

Connie, so fond of laying down the law to others, has no scruples at all about breaking rules herself. She can be found at a forbidden dance hall in Court-field. On the sly she smokes more than is good for a girl of her age, and eats fashionably rich things, which do not agree with her.

Apart from that she is frightfully extravagant, and is, therefore, always burdened by debt. Very often she is unscrupulous, and will toady to other girls who are more well-off than herself.



Connie Jackson

All the same, Connie is not bad at games, and when she cares to exert herself—not often—she can play brilliantly both at cricket and hockey. Her unreliability, however, has excluded her from getting a regular place in any of the Cliff House senior teams.

Dancing and dress are her favourite pastimes, and her great ambition is to own or manage a fashion-shop in the West End of London.

She is keen on the films—William Powell and Ginger Rogers being her favourites—and very fond also of motoring.

Her favourite colours are gold and brown; her favourite flower the chrysanthemum, and her favourite holiday resort the Italian Lido.

She has no favourite among the mistresses, but is very jealous of Miss Charmant. Her great enemy in the Sixth Form is Dulcia Fairbrother, whose captaincy of the school she has always coveted.

Her age is eighteen years and four months.

the Fourth, in wild alarm. "Sus-save me! Rescue! I've gig-got Leila! She's my prisoner, but the kik-cat's kid-napping me! Help!"

Worse and Worse!



"MY hat! What—"
"Listen!"
"It's Bessie!"

Rehearsal in attic No. 3 came to a sudden stop. Barbara Redfern and the chums of the Fourth Form gathered there, stared at each other in startled astonishment as a chorus of frantic yells in Bessie Bunter's voice came from the landing outside.

"Leggo, Leila! I'm ch-choking! I'm dud-dying! Rescue, sus-somebody!"

And Bessie continued to bellow with a vigour that denied that she was in danger of choking and dying.

"Come on!" cried Babs.

"She say she got Leila!" cried little Marcelle Biquet, eagerly.

There was a rush from the attic. They surged along the landing. At which exact precise moment Bessie, having discovered to her amazement that she wasn't being "kidnapped" by Leila and that her tunic had merely become caught in the door-jamb, gave a terrific wrench.

The tunic jerked free, and Bessie hurtled forward—right into the arms of the Fourth Formers as they came rushing up. They wilted under the shock of the impact, for plump Bessie was no light-weight. There was a chorus of breathless gasps.

"Ow-wow!"

"Bessie, you duffer—"

"You clumsy chump—"

They sorted themselves out. Then Bessie, ignoring the uncomplimentary remarks that were being hurled at her, grabbed Babs' arm excitedly.

"Babs, I've fuf-found Leila. I told you I was a detective, didn't I? She's in that attic, and I've locked her in. Come and sus-see!"

The Form captain forgot her bruised shin.

"Fine! Good work, Bessie! Now we can hear what Leila's got to say for herself!"

And striding across to the door, Babs turned the key in the lock and strode into the attic. Eagerly she stared round the room, only next moment to look blank.

"Bessie, you fibber, Leila isn't here! There's no one in here at all!" she said exasperatedly.

Bessie was blinking round with goggling eyes.

"Bib-but I sus-saw her!" she stuttered. "She was over by those trunks and things, you know."

"You imagined you saw her, you mean," said Clara Trevlyn gruffly. "Oh, goodness, another false alarm!"

"Bessie," wailed Marcelle, scarce able to hide her disappointment, "you zink you play ze joke on us, yes?"

But Bessie shook her head dazedly. She was utterly flabbergasted. She knew she had seen Leila in the attic, she knew the American junior could not possibly have got out—yet now Leila was gone.

Bessie went limp. She stood there tongue-tied. She suddenly shivered. Leila's unaccountable disappearance savoured of the uncanny, and Bessie had a horror of the uncanny.

She began to imagine the most fantastic things. Leila must have gone up the chimney, or disappeared through the floor, or gone up through the ceiling—leaving, of course, because it was uncanny, no trace of her going!

Bessie expounded those theories now, and was rewarded with exasperated grins.

"Or perhaps she flew through the window into space!" suggested Rosa Rodworth sarcastically.

And little realised how near to the truth she was!

For while the girl they were seeking had hardly flown through the window, she had certainly climbed through it, and at that very moment, white faced and tense, was recklessly and dangerously crouched on the sloping roof outside, with a drop of over a hundred feet to her death should she lose her grip on the slippery wet tiles!

Inside the attic, Barbara shrugged.

"Oh, come on," she said disconsolately, "let's get back to the rehearsal. Old Bess saw a shadow and thought it was Leila—she would!"

And that was the general opinion, in spite of Bessie's indignant protests to the contrary.

They trooped back to the next attic, little Marcelle Biquet trailing rather pathetically in the rear of the crowd.

Wretchedly miserable was Marcelle. Gone her usual gaiety and vivacity, her bubbling, excitable enthusiasm.

Leila! If only she could see Leila—talk to her, ask her what was the matter! For there must be something the matter, something dreadfully wrong.

But surely Leila could have confided in her—at least, given her an inkling of why she was behaving so strangely, so cruelly.

Marcelle's lips quivered. She felt a warm tear trickle down her cheek. Outside the door of the attic she paused, hastily searching for her hankie.

The door of the next room opened. The figure of a girl emerged. Marcelle's heart pounded. She stared incredulously.

"Leila! But it ees impossible—non, non! It ees Leila!" the French junior cried, and sprang forward.

But her joy was short lived. Even as she moved, Leila, with one frightened gasp and a hunted look round, turned and raced towards the stairs.

"Non! You not run away again! Leila, come back—please!" shrilled Marcelle, running desperately.

But Leila flew on.

"Come back! Leila, you duffer—"
It was a shout from Clara Trevlyn.

She and the other Fourth Formers in the attic had heard Marcelle's cry. They came pouring out into the passage just in time to see Leila reach the stairs, with Marcelle close on her heels.

"After her!" yelled Babs.

Down the stairs they all pelted, taking them two, three, and four at a time with reckless abandon.

Not if the chums knew it was Leila going to escape them this time!

But somehow Leila managed to keep her lead. Along landings, down and round the flights of stairs, with Leila's Eton-cropped head showing elusively through the banisters.

Then she reached a long passage—a passage which led to the Fifth Form studies. She raced along it, Babs and Marcelle and Clara and the others strung out behind her.

"We've got her now!" cried Clara jubilantly.

With an extra spurt the athletic Tom-boy shot ahead, charged round an angle in the corridor, then pulled up.

Leila had vanished!

But Babs, racing up, laughed breathlessly.

"She can't get away. There's no exit at the end of this passage. She must be hiding in one of the studies. Come on,

girls—we'll search every room!" cried the Form captain.

Doors crashed open as, unceremoniously Babs & Co. invaded the Fifth Form studies one by one in their comb-out for the elusive Leila Carroll.

In study after study they drew blank, until at last Clara led the way into the study of unpopular Florence Ellison of the Lower Fifth. She switched on the light.

One quick glance round she made, then shook her head.

"Not here, Babs. Leila's dodged us once again. We forgot she could get out through the windows," the Tom-boy said ruefully.

Barbara Redfern, standing beside her, suddenly leapt forward, however.

"Look!" she exclaimed, making a swift grab at something lying on the floor. "Recognise these?"

In her hand she held a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles—the glasses which the runaway had been wearing.

"Leila's!" Marcelle Biquet said at once.

"My hat! Yes. Then she must have come in here and dodged out through the window. Here, we'll search outside—"

But as Clara made to stride across to the window, Babs, kneeling on the floor now, uttered a startled cry and reached out her hand.

"Oh goodness! Look at this!"

In horrified consternation she was staring at a pretty blue dress—actually a new one which Florence Ellison meant to wear on Saturday at the concert. It had been lying rumpled up, half in the fireplace, before a glowing fire. Babs had snatched it clear, and now—

Now she saw the damage that had been done. On one of the sleeves was a large circular brown mark where it had scorched against a hot cinder. Even as Babs touched the sleeve the scorched material frayed, leaving a tear.

"Phew!" Clara whistled her dismay. Suddenly she looked uneasy. "Babs, Leila must have knocked that off the table as she bolted. I say, there'll be trouble about this. It looks a new frock—"

She broke off, spun round. An unpleasant-faced girl was pushing her way through the crowd of Fourth Formers in the doorway.

"Here, what's the idea?" demanded Florence Ellison angrily. "What the dickens are all you kids doing in my study? Clear off—"

She stopped. Her gaze had travelled to Barbara Redfern, still kneeling on the floor by the fireplace, the damaged frock in her arms; and then she saw the brown scorch mark, the tear in the sleeve.

For a moment Florence became speechless; then she leapt forward, a crimson tide of fury rushing into her cheeks.

"My frock! Look at it!" she yelled. "It's been burned—it's ruined! Barbara Redfern, did you do that?"

Quickly Babs jumped up, her face scarlet.

"Don't be ridiculous! Of course I didn't do it—"

"Then who did? One of you kids has done it—"

"We haven't!" There was an indignant roar of protest from the Fourth Formers.

But Florence Ellison—almost dancing in her fury, almost on the verge of tears—glared round her furiously.

"You're lying!" she shouted wildly. "One of you must have done it! I left my frock on that table—"

"And we found the frock lying half



"LEILA, you chump! What are you playing at?" Clara called. Amazingly enough, Leila did not answer, but instead, sprang towards the electric light switch. Next moment the passage was in darkness.

in the fireplace, the damage already done!" retorted Babs hotly. "Florence, it wasn't one of us. We're all dreadfully sorry it's happened—"

"Sorry!" raved Florence. "What's the good of being sorry when the frock's ruined? I'm going to see Miss Primrose about this, and I'm going to see that you—"

"Florence, must you shout like this? Silence! What is happening in here?"

And in the doorway stood Miss Primrose, the headmistress.

Babs groaned. Now for the storm!

The Headmistress' Ultimatum!



MISS PRIMROSE, eyes glinting behind her pince-nez, strode into

the study.

Florence Ellison rushed across to meet her, her frock held over one outstretched arm.

"Miss Primrose look at this—" she shouted violently.

"Florence, please control yourself! Why, bless my soul!" And a startled look leapt into the headmistress' grey eyes as she beheld the scorched sleeve of the frock. "Goodness gracious! What a terrible pity! The sleeve is completely spoiled. Florence, how did this happen—"

"I think Barbara can answer that question better than I, Miss Primrose!" the Fifth Former said spitefully.

"Barbara"—the headmistress looked sharply at Babs—"what do you know about this?"

Babs' face was anxious.

"Nothing, Miss Primrose," she replied quietly. "I found it by the fireplace

when the damage was already done. But Florence is accusing me—"

"You know jolly well you did it—or one of you did!"

"I tell you we didn't—"

"Then who did—?"

"Barbara! Florence! Silence!" cut in Miss Primrose angrily. "Allow me to do the talking, please! Now, Barbara—"

"I did not damage that frock, Miss Primrose," the junior captain said. "All these girls here will bear me out—"

"Yes, rather! Babs didn't do it, Miss Primrose!"

"Then what," broke in Florence furiously, "were you all doing in my study? The frock was all right when I looked in here ten minutes ago. One of these girls must have done it, Miss Primrose—perhaps not deliberately, I'll admit. But I caught Barbara as she was kneeling by the fire with the frock in her hand—"

"Is that true, Barbara?" questioned the headmistress.

Babs nodded.

"Yes; I had just picked it up."

"Why did you come here, in the first place?"

Babs bit her lip.

"Well, Barbara?"

"We—we were looking for someone."

"And who was it, may I ask?"

Babs stood silent.

Miss Primrose regarded her severely.

"I asked you a question, Barbara. For whom were you searching?"

"I—I'd rather not say, Miss Primrose."

And she gazed despairingly at the other Fourth Formers who stood silently around. But all of them were looking startled and grim; all of them were thinking the same as Babs was thinking.

Leila Carroll had been in this study. It must have been Leila who, in her haste to escape her pursuers, had caused this damage to Florence Ellison's new frock!

They knew it—they were convinced of it! Leila was the culprit. And yet—how could they sneak?

"Who was it?" Sternly Miss Primrose rapped out the question, gazing from one girl to another. "I demand to be answered. Bessie—"

Bessie, who happened to be standing nearest to Miss Primrose, trembled. Unhappily she blinked through her spectacles at the headmistress.

"Oh dud-dear! Oh, I sus-say!" she stuttered, and sought desperately for words. "Lul-look here—I mum-mean, Miss Primrose, don't blame Babs. It wasn't Babs, you know, who burned the frock. As if Babs would dud-do such a beastly thing. And—and I hope you won't thuth-think I did it, Miss Primrose. I dud-don't know anything about it—oh dear no! And I'm not sneaking on Leila! I wouldn't dud-dream of saying she was here—Ow! Sus-somebody's kicking me—"

"Leila? Do you mean Leila Carroll?" rapped the headmistress.

"Eh? Oh kik-crumbs! You sus-see—" Bessie trailed off wretchedly.

But the truth was out now. Dear old duffer Bessie, in an attempt to evade the question, at the same time loyally trying to clear Babs of the charge, had unconsciously let the cat out of the bag.

"Then I am to understand that Leila was in this study?" Miss Primrose demanded. "But Leila was to be away until Saturday. Has she returned to the school, Barbara?"

Babs nodded dumbly.

"Why hasn't she reported to me? Where is she now?"

"We—we don't know, Miss Primrose."

"Then she must be found and brought to me immediately!" said the headmistress. "Since you girls deny any responsibility for spoiling Florence's frock, then I must conclude that Leila can throw light upon the subject. But I am determined to find the culprit. Unless this matter is satisfactorily explained the Fourth Form will be barred from taking part in the concert!"

The juniors gasped.

"Oh, but, Miss Primrose—"

"Silence! I mean what I say!"

And Miss Primrose, having delivered that shattering blow, turned on her heel and swept from the study.

"IT'S NOT FAIR!"

"We're not taking the blame when Leila did it!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Down with Leila!"

Tempers were running high in the Fourth Form Common-room. In shocked dismay the Form had heard the news. Banned from taking part in the concert on Saturday—not only from participating in it, but also forbidden even to attend it!

Dismay had then turned to seething fury—fury against Leila Carroll, the girl they thought to be responsible. And there and then an indignation meeting had been called.

Not by Babs. Babs, angry though she was, had wanted to avoid such a meeting, knowing full well what was going to happen. But opinion in the Form had been overwhelming. Bitter and furious were the feelings of the girls against their American member.

"But where is Leila?" went up a shout.

"She's got to be found!"

"And when we do find her we'll jolly well take her to Miss Primrose!"

"Yes, rather!"

Barbara Redfern jumped on to a chair.

"Girls, listen!" she cried, holding up her hand for silence.

The pandemonium died down.

"Let's settle this matter a little more quietly," Babs pleaded. "We don't want any mistresses or prefects down on us, or the matter will be ten times the worse for us. Listen! Let's look at this sensibly—"

"We are!"

"If Leila is to blame—"

"She is! She is!"

"Yes, I'm afraid she is!" Babs acknowledged. "But it might have been an accident—"

"Then why won't she show herself and tell Primmy the facts? No; she's too scared! She's not going to do that while she can skulk in hiding and we have to take the punishment for her beastly trick!" shouted Lydia Crossendale angrily.

"Lydia's right!"

The Snob of the Fourth felt pleased with herself. Not usually did she have the support of the Form. Lydia, actually, didn't care one way or another what happened. She wasn't taking part in the concert, in any case, and she wasn't frightfully interested.

But Leila Carroll was a member of Barbara Redfern's circle of friends in the Form, and Lydia, disliking Babs, never missed an opportunity to score against any one of the Co. A smack at Leila was, in a way, a smack at Babs.

"Anyway, I'd like to know what Leila's up to these last few days," Lydia went on loudly. "It seems beastly underhanded to me—"

"Non, non! I not let you say zat

about Leila!" broke in Marcelle Biquet, shrilly and indignantly.

"Yes, draw it mild, Lydia!" protested Mabel Lynn.

"Rabbits! I'm finished with Leila from now on!" yelled someone else. "I always thought her a decent girl, but blowed if I do now! She's not playing the game!"

"Hear, hear!"

Uproar again! Voices raised louder and louder as girls condemned Leila.

Babs & Co. glanced at each other rather helplessly. They themselves were the first to acknowledge that Leila's actions demanded an explanation; but first, before she was condemned, surely Leila deserved the chance to explain her actions.

Yet before that could happen—Leila must be found.

"That's what it all boils down to, Babs," Clara Trevlyn said emphatically. "We've got to find Leila. Then, once we've got at the truth, we shall know where we stand, and who's wrong and who's right."

"Words of wisdom, old thing," Babs agreed. "And the sooner we do it the better." But where do we start looking—

Up on to a chair jumped Clara. The Tomboy, having come to a decision, was a girl of action.

"Listen, everybody!" she yelled. "There's only one way to settle this matter—and the whole Form can help. The whole Form's got to help! Find Leila, and we'll know what's what! We'll give her a chance to explain everything, and then we can judge."

"Well, that's fair enough!"

"Thank goodness you've got sense enough to see that!" Clara retorted. "Right! Then I suggest that here and now we organise the search. We'll scour the school from top to bottom, inside and outside—"

"That's the idea!"

"Good old Clara!"

"We'll find Leila all right!"

"Then come on!" shouted Clara, jumping down from the chair.

So there and then the search began, with the whole Form taking part. They split up into groups, and the school was combed from the attics down to the cellars.

But no sign of Leila did they find. Wherever she might be hiding now, it was certainly not inside the school.

"Then," said Clara crisply, "we'll try outside now. There's the clock tower, the crypt, the pavilion and the cycle sheds—we're not missing a single likely place. All those who've got torches bring them—they'll be needed!"

But on reaching the main doorway which led out into the quadrangle, the searchers discovered that they were going to need something more powerful than torches if the hunt was to be continued.

For, going out on to the steps, they were met by a wall of yellow fog that rendered everything beyond a radius of ten yards practically invisible!

Clara groaned.

"Oh, my giddy aunt! I'd forgotten the beastly fog! This is going to help—I don't think!" she grunted. "But never mind—" She broke off and pointed with an excited yell. "Leila!"

Everyone whirled. Sure enough, there was a girl dashing away into the fog to their left. Only a swift glimpse of horn-rimmed spectacles and short fair hair did they get, before the girl vanished—but it was enough.

"After her!" went up a shout, and a rush was made.

"Leila, you chump!" cried Babs. "Wait! Wait! We must talk to you—"

But there was no answer, only a swift pattering of feet which grew fainter and then was gone.

Through the fog blundered the Fourth Formers, keeping in touch with each other by calling but though strung out in a line and moving as fast as possible, they saw no sign of the elusive American junior. At last they banded together again.

"Seems hopeless," grunted Clara.

"In this fog—"

"Listen!" broke in Babs tensely. They all paused. There was a crunch of footsteps on gravel. Clara started.

"Crumbs! We must be beside the drive!"

The footsteps sounded nearer—moving slowly, as if the person, whoever it was, was having difficulty in finding the way.

"Who is it!" muttered Babs, straining her eyes through the fog.

And then a figure loomed up.

"Leila! It ces Leila!" shrieked Marcelle Biquet excitedly.

"Marcelle!" came the drawling voice of Leila Carroll. "And say, there's a whole crowd of you—"

"Grab her!" yelled Lydia Crossendale. "Don't let her get away this time!"

And in a body the Fourth Formers swooped down upon Leila!

Leila's Denial!



"SAY, what's the big idea—"

Leila Carroll broke off with a startled gasp as a dozen hands seized her none too gently and began dragging her along in the direction of the school steps.

"Got her at last!" shouted Janet Jordan triumphantly. "Well, we're waiting Leila!"

Leila grinned.

"Waiting for what? Here, steady on—"

"You know jolly well what!" broke in Lydia Crossendale viciously. "The rotten things you have been doing—"

"Yes: but we'll make you own up! The Form's not going to take your punishment!"

"Here, what is this?" Leila's grin had become a trifle uncertain now. Bewilderedly she was looking round at the hostile faces surrounding her.

"Oh, Leila, why you do it—why, why?" Marcelle asked agonisedly.

"Do what? Look here, is this some sort of a joke? Babs, Clara—"

Babs looked at the American junior queerly.

"Go easy, girls," she said. "Wait until we get back into the Common-room."

"But listen here—"

Babs said nothing; she turned and led the way.

They reached the Common-room. Leila found herself dragged into the centre.

Babs, very serious of demeanour, faced her.

"Leila," she asked, "why have you been dodging us since you came back here on Wednesday?"

Leila looked utterly dumbfounded.

"Dodging you?" she echoed. "What on earth are you talking about—"

"You don't deny that you returned to the school on Wednesday—"

"Or that you broke into Marcelle's bureau?" shouted the Hon. Beatrice Beverley.

"Or that you ruined Florence Ellison's new frock?" yelled Freda Ferriers.

Leila almost staggered. Her cheeks flushed crimson as she stared incredulously at her accusers.

"What are you loonies talking about?" she demanded more in exasperation than anger. "Of course I deny it! I haven't been anywhere near Cliff House. Haven't I been away? Didn't some of you see me off at Courtfield—"

"Go on—tell some more fibs!" shouted Lydia Crossendale jeeringly.

Leila's hands clenched. Usually so cool and collected, so easy-tempered, she was fast losing her control now.

"Another word from you like that, Lydia, and I reckon—"

But the last part of her sentence was drowned in the outburst that came then.

"She's not going to own up!"

"She's going to let the Form suffer for her beastly trick!"

"Shame!"

"Send her to Coventry!"

"But we'll make her tell Primmy the truth!"

Someone started to hiss.

Leila's eyes blazed. Angrily she glared around.

"You're crazy—you're all a set of crazy boncheads!" she yelled fiercely.

"I tell you I haven't been anywhere near Cliff House. You know jolly well I've been away with my aunt. We got as far as Hampshire, but the fog was as bad there as it is here. So we came back—"

"Prove it!"

"We'll phone up Lady Sutherland!"

Leila shook her head.

"I only wish you could. But I left her just up Friardale Lane and I don't know where she was going—"

"A likely tale!"

Desperately Leila turned to Babs.

"Babs old thing—Marcelle, you—surely you don't think—"

Babs looked uncomfortable.

"But, Leila, we've seen you," she said.

"Marcelle's seen you—we've all seen you. And we know you were in Florence Ellison's study just before her frock was burned."

The American junior breathed hard.

"But I wasn't—gee, I guess I ought to know where I've been! It's someone else you've seen—say, that must be it."

Leila said quickly. "Someone who looked like me—"

"Rabbits!" went up a disbelieving yell.

Babs started. An eager flush came into her cheeks, only to fade again.

"I wish I could think that, Leila, only I happened to find a pair of your glasses in Florence's study, beside the scorched frock!" Babs said significantly.

Leila stared.

"Well, they weren't mine," she said decidedly.

"You know very well I've always had two pairs of glasses—those I wear and a spare pair. And—diving into her handbag—"

"here is the spare pair. And I guess you can all see that I'm wearing the others. Say," she added as a sudden thought came to her,

"where are those specs you found? Let me look at them."

Without a word, Babs produced them from her blazer pocket and handed them to Leila.

The American junior took off the pair she was wearing and put on those Babs had found.

Whereupon Leila grinned. She handed both pairs to Babs.

"Try them," she invited. "See if you can spot any difference."

Babs obeyed. She knew Leila had a

slight defect in her sight, while her own was perfect. First she tried on the pair Leila had been wearing. The lenses, specially designed for Leila, made everything slightly blurred to Babs' vision.

She took them off. Then she tried the others. Objects remained normal.

She examined the spectacles more closely.

"My hat!" she exclaimed. "Plain glass!"

Leila nodded.

"Exactly! Plain glass. Now, would I wear spectacles with plain glass, hurting my eyes, when I've got two pairs of my own? Which proves I hope,"

she went on excitedly, "that I wasn't in Florence's study, that I didn't scorch her frock and that I'm not the villainess of the piece at all! Don't you see, it's someone else who's been getting up to these tricks. An impostor—"

vinced that Leila was guiltless, not all of them were. The Form became divided, and those who still refused to believe were as bitter as ever.

"What I want to know," demanded Lydia Crossendale unpleasantly, "is what Leila thinks she's going to do now. The Form's been punished unfairly, and it's up to her to put things right—whether she or the precious, convenient impostor did it or not," she added with a sneer.

Leila gave the snob a contemptuous look.

"Don't you worry! I'm going along to see Primmy now and I'll face what's coming to me!"

And along to Miss Primrose's study Leila went there and then. It was not a pleasant interview she had with the headmistress.

Miss Primrose was taking a very serious view of the matter of Florence



FOR a moment the Fifth Former was speechless as she gazed at her damaged frock. Then: "My frock!" she yelled. "One of you kids has done it—" Babs & Co. were not guilty, but to clear themselves it meant incriminating their chum, Leila Carroll.

"Bosh!"

"We don't believe you!"

"You can't kid us!"

But Marcelle Biquet, her eyes shining, the old glow back in her cheeks, rushed forward and impetuously kissed Leila.

"I believe you, yes!" she cried happily. "Oh, so glad am I! Leila I believe you. You do not do zese awful things. I keeck myself for doubting you. I ask your forgeevevness! Leila, you forgeeve me?"

Leila laughed.

"Marcelle, of course—"

"I am so happy—so happy!"

"And I believe you, too," put in Clara. "I've been a chump—a blind chump!"

"Me, too," confessed Babs with a grin.

But if some of the girls were now con-

vinced that Leila was guiltless, not all of them were. The Form became divided, and those who still refused to believe were as bitter as ever.

Leila protested her innocence in the affair, and with Babs to support her, tried to prove it by means of the glasses which the Fourth Form captain had found.

But the headmistress refused to be convinced.

"The matter is far from satisfactorily explained, Leila," she said sternly. "Your suggestion that an impostor did this wilful damage does not strike me as at all plausible. Barbara's evidence of finding these glasses does not prove to me that you are innocent of a disgraceful act of destruction—either careless or wanton.

"However," continued Miss Primrose, (Continued on page 14)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

How popular PATRICIA has become with all schoolgirls! No wonder you love to read of her doings, written as only Patricia can write of them. You'll enjoy what she has to say about St. Valentine's Day, and the two how-to make suggestions that appear this week.



I'M quite certain Saint Valentine would be very disappointed if he realised that his Festival (February 14th) is no longer celebrated in these days, as it used to be!

He was, of course, and still is, for that matter, the patron saint of all lovers, but I'm afraid he preferred the Victorian young people to us modern young folks!

Some people wonder why St. Valentine's Day is kept with so little fuss these days.

I think the reason is quite simple. In Victorian days the maidens and young lads had very little opportunity to be friendly and enjoy games and outings together. So they chose the sending of Valentines as a way of telling of their regard and affections.

In these days girls and young men have no need for such methods—for they are naturally friendly and make no secret of the fact.

Which is much nicer for us—even if it isn't for St. Valentine—I'm sure you'll agree.

● A Valentine for Heath

All the same, I think the sending of Valentines can be great fun.

You'd certainly have thought so if you had seen the one that arrived at breakfast-time for my very small brother.

"For you, Heath!" I said, as the postman arrived, delivering a letter for small Heatherington.

Eagerly he opened it.

"Coo, a Chrissmus card for me—an' it isn't Chrissmus!" he shrieked.

Whereupon all the family had to be shown, and then had to explain that it was a "Valentine," not a "Chrissmus" card.

Heath felt very important at being the only member of the family to receive one—though I suspect he was rather disgusted to discover it was from a girl!

"Poo, Priscilla!" he said, as mother told him.

"You must listen to what she says, Heath," said mother. (Priscilla, by the way, is a very tiny and very sweet girl who lives in our road. Her mother and mine are old friends, so now you see who was REALLY responsible for the Valentine!)

"What does she say?" demanded Heath.

"Please will you be my Valentine if I give you some of the cokernut ice mummy made me?" mother read.

Heath's eyes sparkled.

"Cokernut ice!" he said in glee. "I'd like that. But will you tell her mummy, please, that I can't be Valentine, 'cause my name's Heatherington!"

So that was that!

● A Second One

But it wasn't the last of our Valentine excitements for the day.

"No one ever sends dear Patricia a Valentine, I notice," I pretended to grumble.

"Poor Pat!" laughed mother.

"I should say not," growled big brother Brian, as he took his paper and dashed out of the dining-room for the office.

Yet, do you know, by the last post one did arrive—and it was for your Patricia. And this is what was written in it:

*"Some call her Pat and some Patricia
(Her blue eyes are divine!)
And all I want to do is wish her
A Happy Valentine!"*

I read this aloud to the family with great glee as we sat round the fire.

"See," I said to big brother, "I have got a Valentine. I wonder who sent it?"

"I don't think much of the poetry," broke in father. Neither did I as a matter of fact, but I hadn't said so!

"I think Patricia—and 'wish her'—isn't a bad rhyme," surprisingly enough said Brian.

I looked at him.

"Thank you, Brian." Then I looked at the Valentine again. "Anyhow, my blue eyes are divine, you people, so don't forget," I reminded them.

It was Brian who spoke again.

"Oh, well, that was only put in to rhyme with Valentine! I couldn't think of anything else!"

He had let the cat out of the bag!

It was my silly brother who had sent it from the office—for a joke.

All the same, I received a Valentine. No one can deny me that! (Though I don't think I'll bother to make a note of it in my diary after all!)

● Zips in Colour

Have you noticed how fashionable those zipper fastenings are becoming?

They've been in use on all sorts of garments for quite a long time, of course. But since they have been made in such a variety of colours, as they are to-day, they are growing even more popular.

They can be bought in different lengths, too—from three inches up to a yard, and the price works out at about a penny an inch.

If you have any pennies to spare you simply must buy some.

It makes a very novel fastening for ordinary patch pockets—whether they are on frock or on coat.

You have to measure the pocket first, of course, so that you can buy the exact length required.



Then you sew one edge of the zip to the coat or frock itself, and the other edge to the pocket.

How lovely and safe the contents of said pocket would be then!

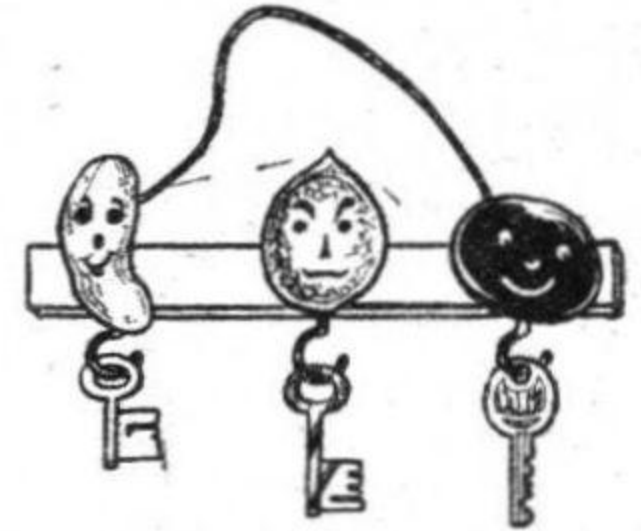
● No Lost Keys

Have you a knack of collecting all sorts of odd keys?

I have a perfectly enormous assortment and the joke is that I don't know what these keys unlock! But I still refuse to throw them away.

Here is a useful little ornament that you could make either for yourself or for mother, for hanging keys on.

You'll want a piece of wood about 4½ inches long, and three nuts. (Are there any over from Christmas? I doubt it!)



Screw three ordinary dresser hooks (six a penny, if you haven't any) on to the wood, and then glue the nuts in place. First a monkey nut, then a chestnut, and then half a shell of a brazil or walnut.

Paint faces on them, if you like dabbling with paints. Fix a piece of cord to the back of the wood, and then hang your three most precious keys on the hooks.

This can now hang up either in your bed-room, beside your homework desk (if you own one), or in the kitchen.

But, wherever it hangs, I'm sure it will be very useful—and much admired!

Here's rather a foolish little story for you that will cause you to smile—if only to yourself.

"I want a reel of cotton, please," said the very nice old gentleman who went into the draper's shop.

"Certainly, sir," said the assistant. "What colour would you like?"

The old gentleman—who was decidedly vague and absent-minded—thought a minute.

"Oh, any colour, as long as it's black," he said.

Mother will laugh at that one if you tell it to her, so now here's one for father.

"I remember once when an explosion tore up a main street," the navy was saying to his chum.

"Really?" said the chum. "And what did you do?"

"Me? Oh, I tore up the side street," replied the navy.

Bye-bye till next week, all!

Your friend,
PATRICIA.

THE GIRL WE ALL LIKE

—IS as nicely-mannered to her own chums as she is to grown-ups. She'll open a door and pick up a dropped book or hankie for an older person—but then, so she will for her Form-mates.

—DOESN'T save those nice manners just for school. Her cheery "good-morning" is just as much appreciated by members of the family as it is by prefects and Form-mistress.

—DOESN'T talk loudly on buses and trains. What she has to say may be perfectly enthralling to her listeners, but it may be very boring to busy people who're off to work. And they might think the loud-talker was showing off!

—DOESN'T walk arm-in-arm, or with more than one chum at a time on a busy pavement. It may be friendly to do so, but it's not courteous to other users of the pavement. And it isn't a very great compliment to her nice school—particularly if she is in school uniform.

—ISN'T necessarily pretty or even very clever, but she does take a pride in her appearance so that we are proud to be seen with her—at all times.

—WOULD never let us down in front of other people. Even if we have got a large hole in our stocking (just arrived, of course) she wouldn't point it out in front of that girl who has a new pair of stockings every week almost.

—DOESN'T deliberately contradict us in the middle of that lovely story we're telling about the family puss-cat. Maybe we did exaggerate just a little, but it was all in fun—and her butting-in embarrassed us all.

—IS frank, but never unkind with it. She realises that frankness is a virtue which must be combined with tact. So that if we ask her how she likes our hair,

for example, she will say: "Well, it is straight, you know. But then, your eyelashes are so nice, why worry?" After which, we've quite forgotten the original question in our pleasure!

—IS generous. Willingly she will lend a pencil, or even a penny. And if you forget to return either, she has a way of asking for it that makes you so sorry you forgot, without feeling: "I'll never ask her to do me a favour again!"

—LOVES to talk—and who doesn't! But it's not always about herself. For she has learned that one of the secrets of being friends is to talk so as to encourage others to do the same!

—IS a good listener. She doesn't just sit and say nothing, for silence is not always a compliment. But she is a sympathetic listener—which means she is really interested in what is being said, and shows it!

—SHE is considerate and thoughtful, which doesn't mean only inquiring casually after your toothache, but inquiring as if she really meant it!

—IS fond of games. But she doesn't let them absorb her to the exclusion of everything else. She knows that to be a "good sport" in everyday things is just as important as being a champ at netball (or swimming, or tennis).

—HAS ideas of her own, which makes her "original." But she is sensible enough to know that good as her ideas may be, that doesn't mean everyone else should follow them. Which leads us to her next virtue.

—IS tolerant, without being easy-going. She realises that what may appear a fault to her is sometimes delightful to others. So she doesn't criticise before asking



herself first if she is the only one who is offended. If she is, she says "nuffin."

—DOES not cheat in anything. Of course she wouldn't at lessons, but neither would she "run down" a girl behind her back, when she is not there to speak up for herself—for that would be cheating, too.

—IS gallant. That is, she will always spring to the defence of someone weaker than herself, whether it is a small kitten being bullied by a large dog, or a new girl at school who is frightened of her first day there.

—SHE has a sense of humour. Of course, anyone can laugh at a joke, but it is a gift to be able to laugh at oneself—and a very precious gift, too.

—SHE is loyal to her family and her friends. Of course, she isn't blind to all their faults—any more than she imagines she herself has none!—but it means instead that she loves them in spite of them. And always will—for she wouldn't have them any different!

AN APRON FOR MOTHER

—or for you—that has a brainwave of a pocket and can be made in about ten minutes.

ISN'T this afternoon apron just the daintiest thing? I'm sure mother would love it to slip round her waist while cutting bread and butter for tea.

If you have a square scarf or large coloured hankie you can spare, you could make it for her in a very, very short while.

But before we go any further, I do want you to notice the clever pocket which runs right across the bottom corner of the apron.

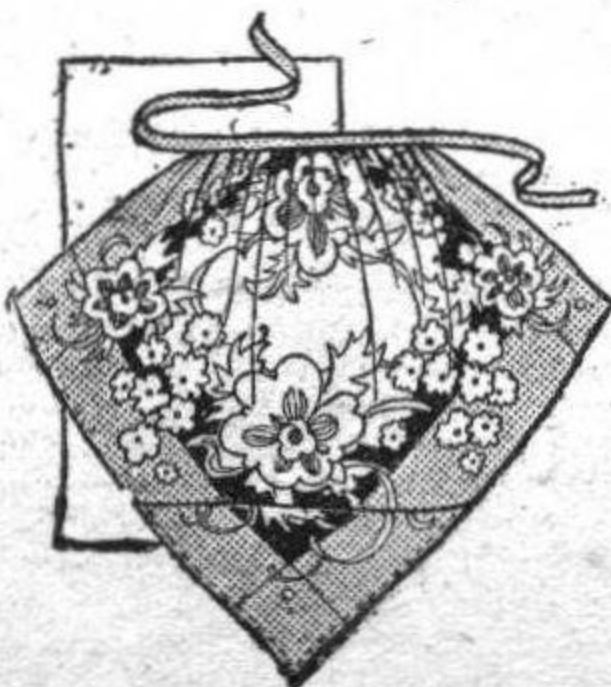
You see, this pocket is made from the opposite corner of the large hankie or scarf—which had to be cut off, anyway. So there's certainly no waste of material in this, is there?

For the actual making, I want you to cut a triangle off one corner, leaving a straight edge. Gather up this edge and sew it on to a dainty piece of ribbon which will tie round mother's waist.

No stitching will be required at the sides. But next you must sew the cut-off corner over the opposite corner, pocket-wise.

Make a hem along the raw edge, and then, without any turnings, sew the two short edges to the pointed end of the apron.

There, that's all! A perfectly lovely present—and so useful, too!



YOUR VERY OWN BOOK-SHELVES

And you don't have to be a carpentry expert to make them yourself.

HERE'S something for the schoolgirl to make who loves her own room and who has a nice father or big brother who is good at carpentry.

Persuade the "man of the house" sometime to let you have three strips of wood left over from one of his "jobs." These should each be at least a foot in length and should have a hole bored at each corner before they reach you—if the man will be so kind.

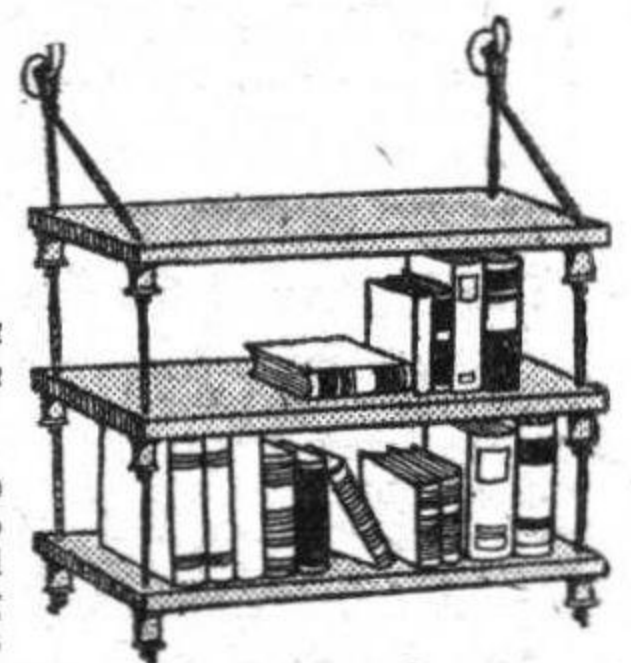
Now you must obtain some coloured cord in a favourite colour, which costs a penny a yard.

Thread the cord through each hole, and put an empty cotton reel below each shelf. Take a close look at the picture and knot the cord in the places shown.

With a sixpenny tin of enamel, in any favourite colour to go with the colour-scheme in your bed-room—or gold—paint the shelves all over. Then hang up by the cord on two sturdy hooks.

When they are dry they'll look really smart and you'll have a bookcase to be proud of—one that would have cost a great deal to buy.

If this doesn't inspire you to win lots of prizes at school to put on these shelves—well, it should!





HILDA RICHARDS

REPLIES

to some of her correspondents and would like to say how very sorry she is for the delay. But she's had such shoals of letters that she has only just been able to catch up with them. You do forgive her, don't you?

"TWO ARDENT ADMIRERS" (Dudley, Wores).—I will remember your suggestion about Dulcia Fairbrother, my dears—though I'm afraid I cannot make any promises! Write again, and do tell me all about yourselves, won't you?

NAN WHITE (Colne, Lancs).—Thank you for another very nice little letter, Nan. It was very sweet of you to write again. You have got a lot of favourites in the Fourth, haven't you? (Not to mention those in the Third Form!)

JOAN B. HEYWOOD.—You can obtain any back numbers you want, Joan, from the Back Numbers Dept., Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Bear Alley, Farringdon St., E.C.4. But I must warn you, Joan, that you will not be able to get any that are more than three months old! Juno sends a pawshake to each of your pets.

JEAN McLEAN (Surbiton, Surrey).—How did your school play "go off," Jean? I'm sure it was a great success, and you must have enjoyed every moment of it. Yes, I shall certainly feature Clara and Jean in many more of my stories.

BETTY ROSE (Eastleigh, Hants).—Thank you for your good wishes, Betty (and isn't yours a pretty name?). I hope you, too, will have a very, very happy New Year, even though we are in February (!). I wonder who your favourite Fourth Former is. You must tell me next time you write.

JACQUELINE BOND (Southend-on-Sea).—So glad to hear from you once more, Jacqueline. You certainly did have a good time at Christmas; but I expect you were excited when you returned to school to start the new term! You must be sure to write again when you have time.

SARAH JORDAN (Dublin).—What nice compliments you pay me, Sarah! I'm sure I can't possibly deserve them all! So Babs is your own favourite? She must have many thousands of admirers among my readers. The answer to your other question, by the way, is No, Sarah.

ELSIE HARRISON (Hull).—Your little letter was as welcome as ever, my dear. How did you enjoy the pantomime? It must have been great fun, and no doubt you were thrilled by every moment of it. Don't forget to write when you have time, will you?

MARY CLOSE (Derby).—It was very nice to hear from you once more, Mary. And how sweet of your puss to send greetings to Juno. (I wonder whether puss would be so bold if she came face to face with my large Alsatian? Juno has quite a number of cat friends, you know, for she's a very gentle darling.)

JOAN IVES (Ware, Herts).—Have you managed to keep those New Year resolutions so far, Joan? I'm afraid I haven't been able to keep all mine! I shall certainly bear in mind your other suggestion, and pass it on to the Editor.

JEAN PARR (Newcastle, Staffs).—Your letter was very short—but also very sweet, Jean, and I was delighted to hear from you. Pat's Pages always are useful, as you say, my dear. I told Pat what you had to say about them, and she was delighted.

BARBARA BARCLAY (Penrith, Cumberland).—Thank you for your good wishes, Barbara. Though I am a little late in saying so, I do hope you, too, will have a very happy New Year. Be sure to write again when you have time, won't you?

MORVEN (Glasgow).—That was a most charming letter you sent me, Morven, and I was very pleased. Dolores Essendon's biography appeared in the issue of *THE SCHOOLGIRL* dated January 22nd. I hope you didn't miss it.

"The Fugitive of the Fourth!"

(Continued from page 11)

"I am satisfied that the other girls of your Form were not involved in any way, and therefore I shall rescind my ban against their participating in and witnessing the concert on Saturday.

"But as for you, Leila, the ban stands. I forbid you to have anything at all to do with the concert."

"Oh, gee! But, Miss Primrose—"

"Silence, Leila! And I dislike intensely that absurd exclamation!" Miss Primrose said sharply. "Consider yourself fortunate that the punishment is not more severe. Luckily, Flora will still be able to wear the frock after alterations to the sleeves, otherwise, Leila, I should have insisted upon your father paying the cost of a new one. Now go!"

Leila went

The Fourth, when they heard the news about the lifting of the ban, were jubilant. They even forgot their anger against Leila Carroll.

But in Study No. 3, little Marcelle Biquet was heartbroken.

"Oh, Leila, our dance—our so beautiful dance!" she almost wept.

Babs, who was there, put her arm around the little junior's shoulders. A determined glint came into her blue eyes.

"Cheer up, Marcelle! We've got till Saturday and there's still a chance that you and Leila will be able to do your dancing act!"

The French junior turned wondering, wistful eyes upon Babs.

"Babsie, eef only we could! I so look forward to eet! But how—"

"There's just one chance," Babs said thoughtfully. "We've got to prove Leila's innocence to Primmy, and the only way to do that is to find this girl who has been masquerading as Leila! And how are we going to do that? I don't know yet," confessed the Form captain but added confidently: "Leave it to me!"

And Leila and Marcelle nodded.

They knew, from past experience, there was no one better to leave it to than Barbara Redfern!

FRIDAY CAME and went.

But the fog stayed—unparalleled fog, the worst within living memory, that absolutely paralysed trade and traffic on land and sea over the south-eastern part of the country.

Cliff House, as was everywhere else, was cut off by the thick pall.

No one, by order, was allowed outside the school gates—not that anyone wanted to go out.

In the school lights blazed all day, and fires roared merrily to dispel the gloom and the damp and the cold.

But faces were long as anxiously the Cliff House girls thought of the concert on the morrow. Mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers and relatives had been invited, and had promised to attend.

But if this fog still held, then nobody would be able to reach the school, and the girls would be left to entertain themselves—unless Miss Primrose cancelled the concert altogether—which was just too disappointing even to be contemplated.

Saturday! And, wonder of wonders, the fog began to lift!

Faces became radiant again. Cliff House joyed and made happy preparations for the coming of the visitors; held last-minute rehearsals, and helped to supervise final arrangements for the concert.

And among the happiest and most optimistic of the girls was Barbara Redfern, for everything was working out well for the success of the idea which had come to her the previous day.

Babs, believing implicitly in Leila, convinced that there was an impostor, meant to do everything in her power to make it possible for Leila and Marcelle to take part in the concert.

The junior captain had reasoned that the impostor must still be hiding somewhere within the Cliff House precincts, for Babs had a shrewd idea that the unknown girl had not yet found that for which she was seeking—something which, from her previous actions, was obviously to be found in Study No. 3.

But now—now the fog was lifting. And now the impostor would make another effort to secure what she was after, and do it as quickly as she could, so that she could make her getaway—which meant, Babs was hoping, that she would make the attempt this afternoon during the concert.

And, planning on those lines, Babs was now ready to spring her idea.

As soon as dinner was over she collected her chums in Study No. 4.

Clara Trevlyn, Mabel Lynn, Janet Jordan, Leila Carroll, and Marcelle Biquet were there.

Babs grinned.

"Cut off, you two!" she said, addressing Leila and Marcelle. "You've got to change into your costumes, because if my plan works—and I think it will—you've got to be ready for your act—"

"Say, but I thought we were helping you!" Leila protested.

Babs shook her head.

"Clara, Mabs, Janet, and I can manage, old thing!"

Little Marcelle looked pleadingly at the Form captain.

"Babsie, you think ze idea will work—yes?"

"I'm hoping so, Marcelle," replied Babs. "I can't guarantee it, of course; but I've got one of those hunches, as Leila puts it. This mystery girl will see all the guests arriving. She'll realise there's some big event on, and that the studies are most likely to be empty. She'll strike, but we shall be ready to strike back. Now, off you go and change, while we fix up positions and all that."

Marcelle and Leila vanished upstairs in the direction of the Fourth Form dormitory.

Babs, Mabs, Clara, and Janet made their way along to Study No. 3. They went in.

"You've fixed up the screen, then?" Janet asked, looking across at the tall canvas screen which stood near the window, facing the wall.

"You bet! Borrowed it from the music-room," Babs replied. "And that's where we hide—behind the screen. This girl is pretty sure to come in by way of the window—she's done it every time before. Let her get right in. Wait until she starts searching or whatever she's going to do, then pounce!"

"O.K., chief!" grinned Clara. "When do we take up positions?"

"Right away!"
And behind the screen the chums went, there to begin their vigil, waiting for, hoping desperately that the mysterious impostor would come—and the sooner the better!

Outside the fog had cleared with amazing rapidity before a breeze that was sweeping in from the sea; while, inside the school, the first visitors were already arriving, and Miss Primrose was standing in Big Hall to greet them.

Big Hall presented an unusual and gay scene, with its rows and rows of chairs, and garlands festooning the walls and ceiling and platform, which was to be the stage this afternoon.

In Study No. 3, Babs & Co. still waited—still waited.

Time was passing all too rapidly. Leila and Marcelle—whose names still appeared on the official programme—were soon due on the stage for the comedy dancing number.

Babs and Mabs would be appearing in the playlet shortly afterwards.

"Oh, goodness, I wish something would happen—" began Clara impatiently.

"Hist!" whispered Babs sibilantly. They thrilled.

For at that moment a face had appeared at the window of Study No. 3. The chums almost gasped aloud.

"It's Leila—it is Leila!" Janet muttered.

"Sssh!" Babs cautioned.

Now the intruder had quietly and carefully lifted up the bottom frame; was climbing into the room. She had on a Cliff House blazer and gym tunic; her hair was fair and Eton-cropped; she wore horn-rimmed spectacles; her eyes—

And then Babs noticed a difference. This wasn't their chum Leila; it was the impostor, right enough. Evidently she had carried a spare pair of glasses. Amazingly like Leila she was, until she was seen at closer quarters. And then one saw the colour of her eyes; and her features, too, were different.

It was the glasses and short fair hair which were so misleading. Seen at a distance, or in dim surroundings, she became almost a living image of the American junior.

She was tiptoeing up to Marcelle's bureau no v. Her blue eyes burned with a desperate light. Nervously she glanced around her.

Behind the screen the chums waited, tense, motionless, afraid to breathe, waiting for the moment when they could pounce.

And then—
Clara, crouching there, quivering with suppressed excitement, suddenly over-balanced.

Forwards she toppled, hands thrusting out instinctively to save herself.

Babs made a despairing effort to catch her, but no use.

Crash!
Clara's hands pushed against the screen, and over on to the floor the screen smashed.

From the impostor came a terrified scream. In utter panic she gazed around her wildly.

"Stop her!" Babs shouted, and jumped forward, Janet and Mabs beside her. Clara, sprawling on the floor, calling herself all sorts of clumsy idiots, was scrambling up, red and furious.

Way of escape through the window was blocked by the chums. The impostor saw that, and, with a gasp, she suddenly charged towards the door.

Out into the passage she fled; crashed the door shut after her. Down the deserted corridor she flew.

By the time Babs had wrenched open the door she was some yards ahead. Pursued and pursuers pelted on.

Fast sprinters were all three Cliff House girls, but Leila's double managed to hold her lead. On she raced.

From somewhere ahead came the sound of laughter—roars of laughter, intermingling with Bessie Bunter's voice and the yapping bark of her Pekingese pet, Ting-a-Ling. Evidently Bessie's ventriloquial act with her performing pet was going down well with the audience.

Big Hall, in fact, lay ahead, though for this afternoon, while the concert lasted, it was screened from view, and the passage leading to it was barred by large velvet curtains on pulleys.

The hunted girl, while still some distance away from these curtains, heard the sound of laughter; realised that be-

yond the "partition" must be assembled all the people she had seen arriving.

More frantically frightened she became. Where to run—where?

At the same moment Babs spotted Leila, in her soldier's uniform, standing by the curtain.

"Leila!" she yelled. "Here she is! Head her off!"

Leila turned, saw her double, and started running towards her. The impostor, caught between two fires, so to speak, swerved, and went streaking down a side passage.

Babs, seeing the passage she had taken, looked startled. But Leila was grinning. Quickly she gave chase.

For the girl was hareing down the private passage, used exclusively by Miss Primrose, which led on to the platform of Big Hall, and which was now doing duty as the stage.

Three seconds later—
From crowded Big Hall came loud, incredulous gasps. From Bessie Bunter, still on the stage, an indignant splutter; from Ting a yapping bark.

For the door at the back of the stage was suddenly wrenched open, and two figures careered on to the boards, the leading figure seeming to be Leila Carroll, chased by Leila Carroll in the uniform of a Guardsman!

"Oh, I sus-say, look here!" stuttered Bessie.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Miss Primrose, jumping up from where she sat in the front row of the audience.

"My hat! Am I seeing double?" came Rosa Rodworth's startled voice from the Fourth Form ranks.

People were on their feet, amazed by



LEILA passed one of the pair of spectacles to Babs. "Try them," she invited. "See if you can spot any difference." Eagerly Babs took them. This might clear Leila of the charge brought against her.

this dramatic and extraordinary interruption to the concert.

Other girls were rushing on to the stage now—Babs, Mabs, Clara, Janet Jordan, and Marcelle Biquet.

But Leila Carroll was staring in stupefaction at the hunted girl, who, suddenly stopping as she realised that escape was impossible, had now buried her face in her hands and was weeping pitifully.

"Oh, Miss Leila, I'm sorry—I'm dreadfully sorry!" she sobbed. "I've been a fool; but I didn't mean any harm—really I didn't, Miss Leila!"

"Well, golly gee! If it isn't Winnie, my aunt's maid! Gee!" repeated Leila, and felt quite limp.

Nor was she the only one. Clara blinked.

"Your aunt's maid?" she echoed. "Oh, goodness! But—but what's she been doing here—"

"Girls, girls! What does all this mean? Who is this girl? Leila, she seems to be extraordinarily like you in many ways. Bless my soul, I—I feel quite bewildered!"

And now Miss Primrose joined the group on the platform, gazing from Leila to Winnie, the maid, as if she could not be quite sure of her eyesight.

"Well, Winnie," said Leila grimly, "I think you'd better explain why you came here pretending to be me, and landing me in all sorts of jams."

And Winnie sobbed out her story. She was personal maid to Lady Sutherland, but always she had dreamed of getting a chance on the films, and that chance had come.

She could appear as an extra in a film produced at the Courtfield studios. But there was a snag—a very serious snag which threatened to rob her of this glorious chance.

She must provide her own clothes for the part, and, most important of all, she must wear a fashionable evening dress in one of the scenes, and such a frock Winnie did not possess.

"I thought perhaps I—I could borrow a gown from her ladyship," Winnie faltered. "But—but then she

went away on Wednesday, and in the hustle and bustle I didn't get a chance to ask her.

"I—I became desperate. Her ladyship's town house was closed, so that I couldn't get in. But I had to get a gown somehow, only I hadn't much money. Then—then I thought of Miss Leila."

Winnie sobbed afresh.

"Oh, I know I have been wicked, but I didn't really mean to be—honestly I didn't! I—I knew Miss Leila was going away with her ladyship, and I knew that she had a valuable bracelet locked up in her bureau. I heard her tell her ladyship where she kept it."

Leila's expression became grimmer.

"Ah, now we're coming to the giddy solution of the whole mystery. So you reckoned you were going to steal that bracelet—"

Winnie covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, Miss Leila, not steal—honest I didn't mean to steal it! I—I was just going to borrow it—get some money on it, so that I could buy the gown I wanted. And then, when I'd earned some money, I was going to get the bracelet back, and return it to you. Please, please believe me!"

She paused, trying to stifle her sobs. Miss Primrose, listening in increasing astonishment, motioned her to continue.

"And—and so I came to your school, Miss Leila, on Wednesday evening—after I knew you'd gone away. My hair does rather make me look like you—I've always admired you, Miss Leila, and tried to copy you—and with horn-rimmed spectacles, and one of your old school outfits, I managed to dig out, I knew I might pass for you if anybody saw me.

"So I managed to find my way here through the fog, and I hid in all sorts of places—one of the attics, and in that clock tower place outside.

"I knew which study was yours, Miss Leila," the maid went on brokenly, "and I tried to find the bracelet; but I couldn't trace it no how."

Leila smiled grimly.

"No, Winnie, for the simple reason that you weren't searching my bureau at all, but my friend's. I guess a photograph she had of me on her desk caused you to make the mistake."

And so gradually Winnie's story came out, and soon it became obvious to everyone who had believed Leila guilty that it was this girl who was really responsible. To her credit, Winnie owned up to everything, even to telling them how she had accidentally scorched Florence Ellison's frock when desperately trying to escape.

Miss Primrose, hearing that, smiled at Leila.

"I see now how I have misjudged you, Leila," she said sincerely. "I am sorry."

"Gee, does that mean that little Marcelle and I can do our dance number, after all?" Leila asked eagerly.

"Most certainly it does, Leila," smiled the headmistress. "And now, please leave the platform—everybody! That is, except you, Bessie. The concert will now continue. Come, Winnie!" she added, frowning a little as she took the sniffing maid by the arm. "You have behaved most foolishly, but I am sure you have learned your lesson."

"I think you had better remain here until I have telephoned Lady Sutherland, and acquainted her with the facts. Knowing her ladyship, I have no doubt that she will be willing to give you another chance."

And so, after that amazing interruption, the concert continued. And so, after all, Marcelle and Leila gave their comedy act as the dancing doll, and parading toy soldier.

The audience loved it. They shrieked with laughter. They clapped again and again, and called for an encore.

A request with which Marcelle and Leila, both in the best of spirits, were only too happy and delighted to oblige.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.



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TERESA FORRESTER, self-possessed and resourceful, and **LUISE RAYMOND**, her more timorous chum, are on their way to meet Teresa's parents in Africa when they become stranded. With a quaint native girl, **FUZZY**, as guide, they set off by canoe. The canoes were stolen by Fuzzy from a warlike tribe, who come in pursuit of the chums! They escape, but find that another steamer they must catch has started. A native canoe crashes into them.

(Now read on.)

Fuzzy is Deceitful!

TERESA, standing up in the canoe, waving to the steamer, hoping against hope that she would be able to attract someone's attention, suddenly lurched.

She had not noticed that the other canoe was so near.

Bump! With a heavy jar the two collided, and Teresa flopped forward on her hands and knees.

Luise, fearing that she would go overboard, let out a squeal of fright, and Fuzzy wheeled her canoe with deft movements of her paddle.

It was a frail canoe that had collided with theirs, but the natives in it knew how it should be managed, and they avoided disaster.

Then they called to Fuzzy in a language that conveyed nothing to the white chums.

"Fuzzy! Tell them that we must catch the steamer!" urged Teresa.

Fuzzy started to chatter excitedly, and the other natives answered in fierce tones.

"Oh, if only they would get out of the way!" fretted Luise anxiously. "The steamer'll be gone in a minute!"

"They think we have stolen the canoes—or else that we are enemies!" frowned Teresa, guessing as much from their gesturing and excited talk.

Having spent some time in Africa before with her parents, she knew a few words here and there, but Luise knew none at all, for this was her first experience of wonderful Africa.

Every moment that was spent in

arguing with these natives meant that catching the steamer would be more difficult—perhaps impossible. And it was the only thing that could take them to their journey's end.

Luise waved frantically, snatching off her sun helmet to use; but the steamer went round a bend of the winding river, and only its wash remained to show that it had been there at all.

"Oh, goodness! We've missed it!" Luise gasped, turning white.

"Yes. No hope of catching it now," murmured Teresa grimly. "Can't even signal it. No canoe could catch it up."

In sinking dismay she realised the alarming truth. They were completely stranded! There were few white people in these parts, and no means of trans-

THEIR LITTLE NATIVE FRIEND TURNED TRAITOR—BECAUSE SHE WAS SO FOND OF THEM!

port, except canoes by river, or their own feet by land. And the journey ahead of them was a long one.

But to go back now was impossible. The warriors would be waiting. They would realise that they had been fooled before, and even if the girls returned the stolen canoes it would not necessarily mean forgiveness.

Teresa, thinking quickly, decided that to reach some white settlement was their only hope.

"Fuzzy, no use arguing any more!" she called. "We've lost the steamer. We're stranded!"

Fuzzy, her eyes flashing, was arguing fiercely with one of the native men, and there was obviously scorn in her tone.

"We along all right, Missa Teaser," she said, with a quick nod of her woolly mop of hair. "Me tellum you belong white chief, many muddles, big army."

"Tell them anything you like," said Teresa, giving a faint smile, "as long as it'll help. We've got to get on just

as quickly as we can, Fuzzy. Why did these people stop us, anyway?"

"Dey tink us in war canoes. Dey tink it means we bad people, attack steamer."

Teresa saw the natives looking at her in awe, and it was pretty obvious that Fuzzy's story had been accepted.

"Well, now that they know we're not, can't we go?" asked Luise anxiously. "There might be a straight stretch of river ahead."

"Yes; that's an idea," agreed Teresa eagerly. "Come on, Fuzzy. If there's a good stretch of water we can keep the steamer in sight, and maybe make them see us."

But Fuzzy still delayed. "Way along—big tom-tom drum," she said. "Men him send word way 'cross country."

"Well?" said Teresa, not quite understanding the point.

"Him send message quick long way," said Fuzzy eagerly. "Mebbe him send message way on front of steamer, stop steamer—"

Teresa gave a quick exclamation of excitement. She knew that natives could send messages long distances by the use of drums, passing on the information to the next tribe, who passed it on to the one nearest them, and so on.

"My goodness, if they can send a message to my father!" she cried.

"Oh, yes—we must!" said Luise in delight. "Then they won't worry so much."

Fuzzy addressed the other natives again in a very superior tone. And Teresa, impatient though she was to start, had to laugh, for beside Fuzzy sat the baby chimp, mimicking her hand and arm movements, just as though he, too, were addressing a meeting.

The natives gave a murmur of

By
**ELIZABETH
CHESTER**

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approval, and nodded their heads. Fuzzy, evidently satisfied, flashed a smile at Teresa.

"Me tellum," she said. "Tellum big white army come if mebbe you not find youse father."

Then Fuzzy set off in her canoe in the wake of the steamer, obviously feeling very important indeed.

Teresa, following with Luise, looked at her friend and laughed.

"Fuzzy's loving every minute of it," she said. "I honestly don't think she knows by this time whether she is a princess or not, or if there really is a big army coming."

Fuzzy looked back and eased her canoe until it was level with theirs.

"If you not catchum steamer, what?" she asked.

"If we not catchum steamer—I mean, if we don't catch the steamer," said Teresa gravely, "we shall just be stranded. I don't suppose you can come on with us for a hundred odd miles?"

Fuzzy's eyes dulled for a moment, and then brightened.

"You takem me alonga you?" she asked eagerly.

"Well, if we go by ourselves, yes," said Teresa.

Fuzzy would be useful. She knew the country. She could speak the language, and if they had to cross overland her understanding of wild animals would be vital to their safety.

"We couldn't go without you," agreed Luise.

Fuzzy almost skipped about with joy at the idea.

"Goody!" she exclaimed. "Me show you many tings—all places. You teach me 'come white girl, act for pikshers."

"Yes; but don't forget," warned Teresa anxiously, "we want to catch the steamer if we can."

Fuzzy frowned, and then nodded.

"We get 'em all along soon," she said.

And, singing to herself, she drove her canoe along at a speed that left Teresa and Luise far behind, despite the fact that they were doing their genuine best.

"What a funny kid she is!" said Teresa, between strokes of her paddle. "She's just loving being so important."

"I wonder if she is anyone?" mused Luise. "Perhaps she is someone important."

But Teresa, even though she had taken a liking to Fuzzy, did not seriously think that the little black girl was anyone of any account at all in her own village.

Great trees overhung the river at this point, and in the branches were monkeys who threw down small nuts and made odd chirping sounds.

On either side there was dense, apparently impenetrable jungle, although beyond to the west could be seen the misty purple shape of a high mountain.

Luise could not help thinking how frightened she would be here alone. Even with Teresa, whom she admired more than any other girl she had ever met, and who was so competent, she was none too sure that they would ever find their way back to civilisation.

Fuzzy, more than a hundred yards



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ahead of them, had reached the point where she had to land and search for the native who sent messages by drums.

She pulled her large canoe in, and tethered it skilfully to some trailing creeper that dipped into the water. Then, waving to the white girls, she picked up Adolphus, the baby chimp, who waved, too, and they disappeared into the thicket.

"Bad steamer take nice white girls way along from us, chimp," she said dolefully. "Bad steamer!"

She looked back towards the river bank, and then along the beaten path through the thicket towards the valley where the sender of drum messages had his hut.

"No send message stop steamer," she whispered to Adolphus. "Bad steamer! Fuzzy she takem long much more betterer."

And, albeit with a guilty heart, Fuzzy ran on to the drum-beater.

How Could They Trust Her?

"AND this is how they really send messages?"

Luise, fascinated, stood watching the drummer. He was an old man, but there was something impressive about him.

In order to send his drum message he had put on special paint and a queer headdress composed of leaves.

His drum was a large hollow tree-trunk, his stick a carefully shaped and carved club, and the dull booming noise echoed from the surrounding hills and went far away into the distance.

The drummer knew no English, it seemed, and Fuzzy had to interpret. Teresa sent a message to the steamer, urging the captain to wait for two white girls who were travelling alone.

"Send message to big papa, too?" asked Fuzzy thoughtfully.

"Not if we catch the steamer," said Teresa.

She did not want to worry her father needlessly.

"Suppose no get him steamer?" said Fuzzy.

"M-yes, maybe," agreed Teresa.

"Very well, ask him to send a message through to my father, big chief."

And she told Fuzzy just where it was her father lived. There were drummers in between who would take the message and forward it, and when the district had been mentioned the drummer became quite eager and excited. He had sent messages there before.

"Daughter safe—do not worry—steamer delayed. May travel overland," dictated Teresa.

Fuzzy translated the message, and the old drummer set to work.

He sang as he drummed, and the sound was rhythmical, but neither Teresa nor Luise could get any sense of a message.

It took some little time to send the message, and at the conclusion the drummer stood up and beamed in pleasure.

"He want be gib some present," said Fuzzy.

Teresa took a coin from her pocket, her lucky half-crown, and gave it to the old man, telling him that it was the picture of the greatest king in the world.

He looked at it and was delighted. He rubbed it, peered at it, sniffed it, and touched it with the tip of his tongue.

Adolphus, the chimp, filled with curiosity about the drum, crawled along it to the far end, and appeared to be surprised when he emerged to find that Fuzzy, Teresa, and Luise were still there.

"Thank the drummer many times, Fuzzy, please," said Teresa. "And then we ought to rush on to catch the steamer."

Delighted, Teresa and Luise hurried back to their canoe, followed by Fuzzy and Adolphus.

But Fuzzy wore a guilty, ashamed look, and was subdued.

"Hallo! Anything wrong, Fuzzy?" asked Teresa, as they settled down, and she noted their black friend's expression.

Fuzzy shook her head.

"You look sad," murmured Luise.

"Perhaps—perhaps the thought of parting?"

"Yes. Poor Fuzzy, she won't be able to come on board the steamer with us," said Teresa kindly. "But never mind—we'll give you lovely presents when we say good-bye."

Once more they set out in their canoes, and Teresa began to wonder what would happen to Fuzzy when she did return.

"I hope the warriors won't blame you for stealing the canoes, Fuzzy," she said.

Fuzzy shook her head dismally.

"Fuzzy not go back," she said.

"Not! Oh, but you must," said Teresa in surprise. "You can't just wander about on your own in the jungle, silly kid. You must go back to your own people."

"Fuzzy take Adolphus along," said Fuzzy. "We go far—far 'way to big white city."

"But the nearest big white city is hundreds of miles," said Teresa gently. "I don't think you'd better. Far better go back to your own people. Besides—you are a princess. You can't desert them."

Fuzzy looked sadder than ever.

"Dey don't know me am princess," she sighed. "Dey tink me just norphan girl, no papa, no mama. No one know Fuzzy Princess, sept Fuzzy."

Teresa and Luise did not laugh; for there were tears in Fuzzy's eyes, and she was very, very sad.

They knew now that she really was just nobody—only a little orphan girl. But her mind reached out for happiness, and she day-dreamed that she was the daughter of a big chief.

Teresa sighed sadly, and wished that she could take Fuzzy with her. But she knew that her father would not approve, and there might also be serious trouble if she were taken without the permission of her tribe.

Teresa's father was an official, and so, of course, he wanted things done in an official, regularised manner. Collecting a black girl, befriending her, and taking her hundreds of miles from her home would be an inexcusable thing in his view, as Teresa well knew.

At good speed they made their way along the river, and some twenty minutes later came in sight of a landing-stage, a platform supported by thick pillars that went down into the river.

"Is that the steamer's halting place?" asked Teresa in dismay. "My goodness! But why didn't it wait for us?"

In silence they covered the remaining distance, and Fuzzy shivered a little as Teresa waved to a native who stood there.

Fuzzy did not say a word, but Teresa called to him, and he answered in English.

"Steamer gone!" he called.

"Gone! Then—didn't it get our message?" called Teresa.

He nodded then, beaming.

"Message him come. White girl am safe. Message go on to big chief. Girls dey go by land alonga black girl princess," he said.

Teresa shot a look at Fuzzy, who, quaking, turned her head.

In a flash Teresa understood, and her cheeks flamed, a glint of anger came to her eyes.

"Fuzzy! You didn't send that message! You didn't try to stop the steamer!" she cried.

"Oh!" Luise gasped. "Oh, no! She couldn't be so treacherous."

Fuzzy clasped her hands and knelt in the bottom of the canoe.

"Bad Fuzzy," she said tearfully.

"Not be cross with Fuzzy. Fuzzy, she take you safe along, bettern bad steamer. Fuzzy never leabe you. Fuzzy, she serbe you likum slave for eber and eber always."

Teresa tossed her head. She was really angry. For there could be no doubt at all that their little native friend had betrayed them. She was shocked and hurt.

Fuzzy's eyes were wide in appeal, and tear-brimmed.

"Fuzzy bad!" she wailed. "Get whip beat Fuzzy. She not want you go 'way. Fuzzy not lib without you now."

Teresa sat quite limp, not knowing for once what to do. Furious though she was, she was not vindictive. The thing had been done, and there was no sense in taking it out of Fuzzy.

"I don't want to hit you or hurt you," she said brusquely. "But I just don't want to see you again, Fuzzy."

"Fuzzy—how could you?" said Luise, in deep distress. "Now we really are stranded!"

Fuzzy rocked to and fro in grief. She had not meant to hurt them, or

make them unhappy; and certainly she had not meant to make them cross.

"Me sendum message to papa," she pleaded tearfully. "Him not worry. Fuzzy—she take you all way safe."

Teresa shook her head.

"No fear," she said grimly. "We couldn't trust you. I knew you were a little fibber, Fuzzy—but I didn't think you'd ever do a horrid thing like this."

Fuzzy beat her chest and uttered plaintive cries.

"Fuzzy catch steamer—Fuzzy she work paddle like she was steamer boat. Not stop till she catch em steamer."

"Too late. You couldn't catch that steamer," said Teresa. "We're just stranded. And as for you, Fuzzy, I really think that the best thing you can do, is go back to your people. We'll manage as best we can alone."

Luise tapped Teresa's arm. She was upset, and worried, but her kind heart went out to the little black girl.

"Terry dear—I don't think she meant to be really bad—"

"But she was bad," insisted Teresa.

"And we can't trust her. We'd better pack all the things into this one canoe—and she can go back—"

Fuzzy seemed terrified.

"You go 'way—leabe Fuzzy?" she asked.

"Yes—we're going on."

"But bad lions, bad leppuds—snakes—crocodiles—you not know how treat 'em. Fuzzy know," she cried in despair.

"Fuzzy, she make friends all animals!"

"Then you go and make friends with them," said Teresa curtly. "Put those things in our canoe, please, and then go back."

Fuzzy sat motionless.

"Well, come on," said Teresa grimly.

Fuzzy suddenly came from her trance. She seized her paddle and moved her canoe forward down river as fast as she could go.

"Oh gosh! After her—quick, Luise! She's got the food!" cried Teresa urgently. "Oh, what fools we've been to trust her."

But Fuzzy was not trying to steal their food; she had but one ambition now—to do something to make them like her, to win back their esteem, their friendship. And until she had time to think, the one way of keeping them with her was to take the canoe and go in the right direction.



BREATHLESSLY, Teresa and Luise watched the old native drum out their message. But they did not know that Fuzzy, their little friend, was deliberately tricking them!

They would have to follow.

As fast as she could go, Fuzzy went bitterly remorseful and afraid, yet determined to win back the love and respect which in a foolish moment of temptation she had thrown away.

Fuzzy's Terrible Risk!

DARKNESS came—African darkness. It came without the least warning, as though the sun had suddenly been smothered.

Teresa and Luise, paddling in pursuit of Fuzzy, could hear the trumpeting of elephants; the roar of roving lions; the chatter of monkeys in the trees.

"Oh, Terry!" Luise whispered. "What are we going to do?"

Luise was a timid girl; there was nothing of the adventurer in her, although she admired the grand African scenery in daylight, the blue of the sky, the wild splendour of Nature.

At night it was different. The moon was not risen yet, and the darkness seemed black as velvet. Every sound was magnified.

Teresa, although uneasy, did her best to hide the fact. She had to be Luise's support. She had to be the comforter, and to make believe with whatever conviction she could that she was used to this kind of thing, and there was not the slightest need for any alarm.

"We'll pull up and picnic," she said. "May as well have a meal before turning in."

"Turning in—sleeping?" said Luise.

She sat motionless in the canoe as Teresa steered it into the bank. From above came a rustling sound, and from not so far away came the roar of a lion.

"I'm not going ashore," said Luise firmly. "And there's no room in the canoe."

"There will be when we've dumped the luggage ashore," said Teresa confidently. "We can tether the canoe, and sleep without any worry. We've got some mosquito nets in the luggage."

She listened and heard the sound of a paddle splashing in water. A moment later a canoe drew alongside.

"Fuzzy," whispered Teresa to Luise, "don't speak to her—not yet, anyway."

Fuzzy stopped paddling, and peered through the darkness.

"Me cook eats," she said in a pitcous little tone.

"This is as good a spot as any other, Luise," said Teresa, as if she hadn't heard the native girl.

"Me find betterer place," said Fuzzy.

"We'd better get the stuff ashore first, though," Teresa went on.

"Yes, I suppose so," agreed Luise.

Teresa, seeing better in the darkness now, stepped ashore and dragged the canoe along until she came to a small tree where she could make it fast.

Fuzzy, working her canoe slightly ahead of them, tethered that, too. She unloaded all the luggage she had, and put it beside the things that Teresa and Luise dumped ashore.

"Me find better place," she said pleadingly.

"A good thing Fuzzy isn't with us," said Teresa. "We might take her advice. Now we know she can't be trusted."

"Y-yes—a jolly good thing she isn't here," agreed Luise.

Fuzzy stood back, dumb and miserable. Then she turned suddenly and disappeared into the thicket.

"Terry!" gasped Luise. "Don't say she's run away!"

Teresa turned in alarm.

"Oh, goodness! I hope not—she couldn't get far at night," she murmured.

Fuzzy came back at that moment carrying a long switch torn from some creeper shrub.

She walked to Teresa and held it out solemnly.

"Beat Fuzzy. Fuzzy bad. Make Fuzzy cry," she said.

Teresa looked away, so Fuzzy turned then to Luise and held out the switch.

"Please make Fuzzy better girl tell troof," she begged.

Luise shook her head.

"Oh, I couldn't," she said gently, breaking the silence.

Fuzzy stood back, drew herself up, and raised the switch with a sudden fierce gesture. Then she hit her own legs with a report that was painful to hear.

A gasp came from her, then she raised the switch and brought it down again.

Fuzzy, since they would not punish her, was punishing herself!

Teresa gasped, and then sprang forward, tearing the switch from Fuzzy's hand.

"You silly, crazy little goose," she cried. "Stop!"

Fuzzy, covering her face, dropped to her knees and wept.

"Teaser no love Fuzzy no more," she wailed. "No more. Fuzzy not want to lib."

Teresa tossed the stick into the water, fought for a moment with herself, and then dropped to her knees.

"Fuzzy," she said tenderly. "Why did you do it? Why did you make us miss the steamer?"

"Cos I not want you go," sobbed Fuzzy. "You nicer to Fuzzy tan anyone ebber bin. Fuzzy she lub you—she die for you. She not want you go away all times, not see more."

Luise slipped an arm about her while Teresa sat back, feeling almost as guilty as Fuzzy.

"But, Fuzzy—can we trust you?" she asked.

Fuzzy let out a cry of despair.

"Always for ebber me tell troof," she cried. "Me not be bad ebber more!"

"You mean that?" asked Teresa.

"I'm sure she does," said Luise gently.

"Yiss, yiss," nodded Fuzzy. "Me tell you now—dis am bad place. Lions come—water pool just by—lions come 'long. Fuzzy watch. Lion catch Fuzzy—no matter. But lion not catchum you. No, no!"

Teresa looked about her anxiously and listened. She could hear some animal quite near, and there came the unmistakable sounds of drinking. Instead of forcing their way through the thicket to the river itself, the animals halted at a pool. Some were there now, drinking.

"I think you're right, Fuzzy. We'd better move on. They're too near."

There was a rustle in the undergrowth, and Luise jumped to the canoe in a panic, Teresa following a moment later.

But she had forgotten to untether the rope.

Quick as a flash, Fuzzy ran to it, and struggled with the knots; and as she crouched there the bushes parted.

Teresa, groping in the canoe, found the pocket flashlamp, pressed the button, and shot the rays round.

Two glowing lights seemed to come from the bush as the rays fell upon something.

The eyes of a lion!

The flashing torch, full on to the creature, showed him in all his jungle

might, his tawny head seeming gigantic, his jaws agape, giving vent to a mighty roar.

"Fuzzy—jump in!" shouted Teresa.

Fuzzy, who had loosened the rope, turned her head and saw the lion. It was crouching, swaying. In a moment it would leap.

Grasping the prow of the canoe, Fuzzy, instead of jumping in, did a thing that horrified Teresa.

Her one idea was to make retribution, to make a sacrifice for them—save her friends at her own expense.

"Jump in," screamed Luise.

But Fuzzy, with a mighty shove at the canoe's prow, sent it away from the shore!

"Fuzzy—oh, Fuzzy!" cried Luise, terrified at the danger to their little black chum. "Don't stand there! Jump in—jump in!"

For by this time the canoe with the two English girls was some yards from the bank, and getting farther away every second.

Fuzzy darted a swift glance towards the lion, then, flinging her hands above her head, prepared to dive into the river. But she did nothing of the sort. To Teresa's amazement, she suddenly seemed to hesitate.

"Quick!" Teresa screamed. "He'll spring at you. Quick, Fuzzy!"

With a sudden leap, Fuzzy dodged to one side. The lion, trembling all over, checked himself, and with a baffled snarl twisted round in the new direction.

"Me not come! Adolpuss! He gone. Me find him—me save him!" Fuzzy cried. Frantically she waved the chums to go on. "Me get him an' find you. You go! Me all right!"

Then, fixing her eyes upon the lion's snarl-twisted features, she backed away from him, one step at a time, slowly drawing near to a group of trees.

And Adolphus, the beloved little rascal for whom Fuzzy was risking her life?

Adolphus was, of course, unaware of the drama taking place on his behalf. In fact, he was thoroughly enjoying himself a short distance off, swinging from the branch of a tree with one hand and taking pot-shots at another monkey with the other, using nuts for missiles.

"Oh, my goodness!" panted Teresa, white-faced and shaken. "She'll—she'll never do it, Luise!"

Luise, gulping, watched with horrified eyes.

Their little black chum was nearly at the trees now. They saw her slowly raising her arms, and their hearts seemed to stop altogether.

But they knew their little black chum was quite fearless of wild animals, and they saw she had a chance, after all. If she could grip a branch, she was quick and agile enough to draw herself out of the lion's reach in a twinkling.

She was going to try it—now!

They saw Fuzzy leap, clutch at a branch. And then they saw something else. Somehow, Fuzzy slipped. Down she went full-length. Almost at the same moment a terrifying roar rang through the jungle, and the lion sprang at the little native girl's prostrate form!

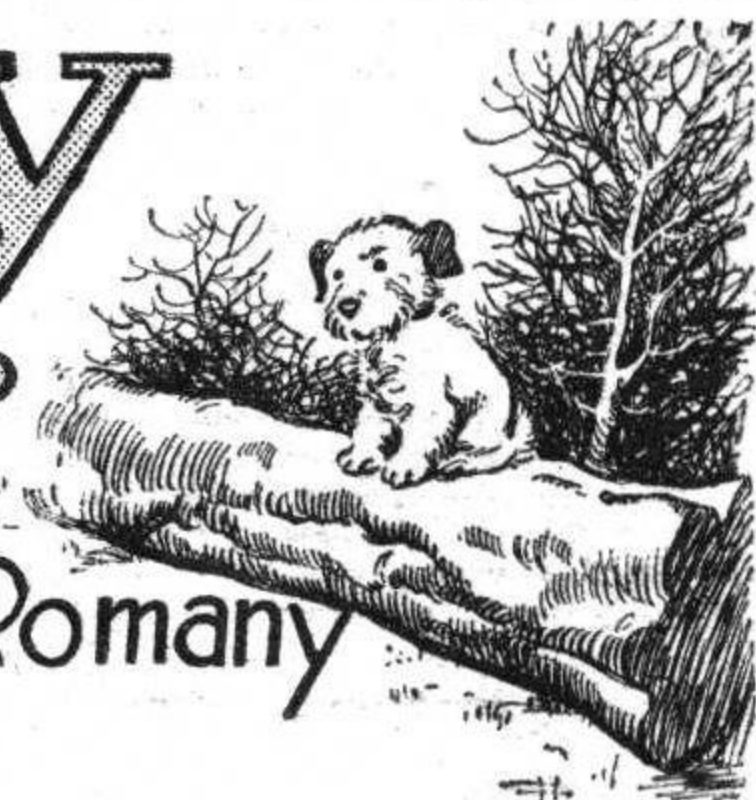
BRAVE little Fuzzy! So anxious to save her chums and her pet that she has put herself in terrible danger. On no account should you fail to read the sequel to this tense, dramatic situation. Order your SCHOOLGIRL well in advance.

Another sparkling COMPLETE full-of-fun story featuring lovable—



'Gipsy Joy'

The Rich Girl Romany



—in which rich girl Joy Sharpe—
disguised as Nakita, the gipsy—gets
up to monkey-tricks galore, with a
real, live marmoset!

Preparing for a Present!

JOY SHARPE clapped her hands with delight, and her eyes sparkled. It was breakfast-time, and Joy was at table with her governess, Miss Retcham, in the sunny morning-room of her home, the Gables.

But, of course, it was not the presence of austere Miss Retcham that caused Joy such delight. The sour-faced governess was never a ray of sunshine, nor a source of mirth or gaiety.

It was a letter that caused Joy's exuberance—a letter from her cheery, generous Uncle Geoffrey.

"Miss Retcham, Uncle Geoff's sending me a present!" she cried. "A mystery present!"

Miss Retcham lowered the newspaper at which she was glancing, and her eyes glinted. She had cold eyes that could contract to pin-points.

"What! Have I not yet made it clear to your Uncle Geoffrey that I will not have him sending you gifts without consulting me?" stormed Miss Retcham. "Tell me at once what your uncle is sending you!"

"I don't know, Miss Retcham," Joy admitted dismally.

And already half the pleasure had been taken from the gift by the governess' anger.

"Then show me the letter."

Joy gave her governess the letter, and then got on with her breakfast.

"Your uncle does not say," frowned Miss Retcham, as she read. "It is only something that will brighten your dull moments—dull moments, indeed!—and leave its mark on the walls. Hah! Something which when curled up seems lifeless, but which when it uncoils is full of life, merriment, and movement—"

Joy's eyes shone. She could not keep to herself the thought that came then.

"A monkey," she murmured.

Miss Retcham gave a violent start and upset her coffee over the cloth.

"A monkey!" she cried. "Good

gracious! Surely even your Uncle Geoffrey would not be so utterly irresponsible as to send you a monkey. A monkey! I should send it back at once. But whatever he sends, I shall confiscate it!"

"Oh, Miss Retcham, but suppose it's quite harmless!" Joy exclaimed in dismay.

"That is hardly likely, Joy. I have not forgotten the time when your uncle sent you a large

parcel of fireworks."

"But he didn't know you were going to throw them on the fire," protested Joy.

Miss Retcham's cheeks flamed, and she pointed fiercely to the door.

"Go to the school-room at once!" she stormed.

Joy went, head in air, rebellion in her heart. There were times when she wished that she could really tell Miss Retcham just where she got off. But Joy knew what the consequences of that would be. Miss Retcham would see to it that all her pleasures were curtailed; more work, less play, and less freedom even than she had now.

"But Nakita can be rude," Joy told herself grimly, as she went up to the school-room. "It doesn't matter what a gipsy girl says."

Between a rich girl and a gipsy girl there was all the difference in the world, as Joy well knew. She had reason to know; for Joy Sharpe, rich girl, could by a mere change of clothes and dyeing of her skin become a gipsy.

She opened the school-room door, and there came a thumping sound that she knew well—the thud, thud! of her pup Tinker's tail as it wagged welcome and hit the side of the armchair.

"Hallo, Tinks!" said Joy, as he jumped down to greet her with joyous licking.

Then, going to the door, he looked back at her with bright, shining eyes. He understood nothing about lessons; and, unlike human beings, he did not see any sense in looking at books for hours at a time, or making marks with sticks on other books.

"Wow!" said Tinker in appeal. "Hey, walk—come on! The woods, the open road—wow!"

Naturally, he did not express himself in words, but even the gift of speech could not have made his meaning more clear.

"Poor old Tinks! It's such a shame!" said Joy softly. "He did want to go out for a run! Run with Nakita?"

she added, with a gentle teasing lilt in her voice.

Tinker leaped in the air, swung round, and darted through the still open door of the school-room.

Almost at once Joy heard his piercing yelp of pain, and with it Miss Retcham's angry, rasping voice.

"You silly, stupid dog! Why cannot you run somewhere other than under people's feet?"

Tinker looked up at her, tucked his tail out of sight, and then went down the corridor at speed. He liked governesses just about as much as Joy did.

Joy, having gone to the door to see if he had been badly hurt, was confronted by Miss Retcham.

"I suppose you were playing with Tinker—exciting him?" said the governess grimly. "However, no matter. I came to tell you, Joy, that I am going to the station to find out if that parcel from your uncle has arrived. You will take the geometry book and study the next proposition carefully. I shall expect you to have learned it perfectly by the time I return."

And, in grim mood, she strode away,

By IDA MELBOURNE

her firm footsteps resounding down the corridor.

Joy listened, standing stock still until she could hear them no more. Then she clapped her hands with glee and crept to the door.

At the same moment, from another room farther along the corridor, Tinker peered out warily, with a "has she gone?" look.

"O.K., Tinks!" called Joy softly.

And then she led the way up to her bed-room, where, in the locked wardrobe, she kept her gipsy frock and make-up.

Miss Retcham was walking to the station via the lane, but Joy, cutting across the fields, could get there first!

And, with luck, she might get possession of the parcel.

"WHAT'S IT to do with you, gipsy?"

The porter at the station looked with deep suspicion at the gipsy girl in the pretty frock.

She had just asked him if there were a parcel for Miss Joy Sharpe, of the Gables.

"All right, mate," Nakita said, in gipsy tones. "Keep your hair on! You've got a lucky face, but I see trouble ahead, mister."

The porter narrowed his brows. He had heard that gipsies had an uncanny knack of looking into the future—and he did not like trouble.

"Go won!" he said. "What sort of trouble?"

Nakita put her hand up to her forehead, as though trying to clear her mind. Then she passed it mystically in front of her eyes.

"Ah! A book—a big book! I see someone signing it," she said. "You should stop them. But no, you let them do it. Ah, if only you had said no—"

Of course, she was referring to the book that Miss Retcham would have to sign to get the parcel.

The porter, eyes wide, was looking deeply impressed, when—

"Porter!"

That sharp voice came from just behind, and Nakita jumped a foot in the air in sheer surprise.

Miss Retcham had arrived!

Nakita stepped back, for a moment alarmed lest the disguise should be penetrated. But the governess gave a stern, contemptuous look, and then glanced away.

"Porter, go at once and see if there is a parcel for Miss Joy Sharpe of the Gables!" she commanded.

Nakita looked at the porter, grimaced, and shook her head.

But the governess' haughty manner overawed him, and he went to the luggage-room. He was there for about

three minutes, and then returned empty-handed.

"No, ma'am. Nothing for the Gables," he said.

"You are sure, my man?"

"Certain, ma'am," said the porter.

"If anything should come, detain it here. Don't send it to the house. I will call."

And Miss Retcham swung away.

"Bit of luck you didn't give her the parcel," said Nakita, with a meaning look. "It's your lucky day. Why doesn't she want it to be sent to the house, eh? That sounds sorter fishy, don't it?"

"Ah! Does sound queer," the porter admitted.

"You're no fool," said Nakita admiringly.

The porter looked as shrewd and as artful as he could.

"They'd have to get up right early in the morning to diddle me," he said. "That parcel'll come on in the next train in, in half an hour, and I'm sending it to the Gables."

Then he returned to his lair, and Nakita ran down the platform.

"Come on, Tinks! We've got to get home first," she said.

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—I expect you remember the twins, Iris and Veronica, who live next door to me. I have mentioned them once or twice before in my weekly chat to you.

They're very lighthearted young persons, very likeable, and both keen readers of THE SCHOOLGIRL. In appearance they're exactly similar, save that Iris has a few freckles on her nose, and Veronica hasn't. But where they differ very strongly is over THE SCHOOLGIRL.

They never seem to be able to agree about the best type of story, the most interesting character. Perhaps you remember I told you that they had an argument about Diana Royston-Clarke and Babs?

Well, I hadn't seen the twins for some time, but yesterday, as I was starting out for the office, I met Iris just leaving her house on the way to school. She saw me, rushed after me, and burst out with:

"Oh, I say, the Faith Ashton series that has just finished—I thought the stories were simply wonderful! I loved them all!"

Naturally, I said I was glad to hear it. And then Iris rushed on to say that I should run nothing but series—that she liked completes, but that series were much the better, because it was so exciting to wonder how the chief characters would get on in the next story.

"Every week I could hardly wait to see what Faith would do, and what Babs would do. Do have more series, please!" she begged. "And now I must rush," she added, "'cos I'm late. Please remember, though—do have more series!"

And off dashed Iris. Well, I'd only taken about ten more steps, when again there was a patter of feet behind me, and the other twin, Veronica, panted up beside me.

"Iris has been talking to you," she said accusingly. "The wretch didn't wait for me. Please, I wanted to tell you that that story before the Christmas series, you know—'Page-boy Boker to the Rescue,' it was called—was simply super. It was a—a tip-

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topper. And—and I think you ought to have complete stories all the time. I like series awfully, of course, but complete ones are better."

Your Editor found it difficult to hide a smile. It was perfectly obvious that the twins had been arguing again—Iris saying that Cliff House series were better, and Veronica that the completes were.

"You see," said Veronica swiftly, "with complete stories there is such a—a variety. I mean, there can be a story about Clara one week, then one about Dulcia Fairbrother, and the next about the Friardale boys. And—and if you don't like one, you know there'll be a different one next week, and with the series you can't do that. Don't you see?" she finished breathlessly and triumphantly. "Iris doesn't know what she's talking about," she added decidedly, with a sly look at me. "Must rush now. I'm late. But please don't forget—lots more complete stories."

And off dashed Veronica.

Now there must be many readers who agree with Iris, and many who agree with Veronica. So what's a poor editor to do? Why, have some of each! What do you think, girls?

Phew! There is little space to talk about

NEXT WEEK'S PROGRAMME.

So I must be very brief. Firstly, the Cliff House story, by Hilda Richards. This is a complete, and tells how Babs & Co., for a very special reason, wish to bring out a superb number of the school magazine.

Peggy Preston of the Fourth Form—who hasn't played a leading part in these stories for some time—comes into the limelight. For it becomes vital to her that the magazine is a great success. Babs & Co. back her up all along the line, but—

Someone—someone unknown—is quite determined that the production of the magazine shall not run smoothly. There is fun, excitement, and mystery in this story, and you Jemima Carstairs "fans" will be glad to hear that the inimitable "Jimmy" is well to the fore.

Instalment No. 4 of "The Jungle Hikers," (by the way, isn't Fuzzy a lovable little person?), a Complete "Gipsy Joy," another Cliff House Celebrity, and Pat's delightful pages complete next Saturday's issue. I hope you enjoy it, girls.

'Bye-bye for now!

YOUR EDITOR.

Nakita and "Da Monkee"!

SOMETHING told Nakita that all would be well, that she would get that parcel; for Miss Retcham would not be prepared for its delivery by van. She would think that it was still at the station.

In light-hearted mood, Nakita skipped and danced her way home over the fields, taking the short cut.

She was free for a while, and she meant to make the best of it, doing the things that she was ordinarily forbidden to do—singing, dancing, jumping, running.

If Miss Retcham had seen her, and known that she was really Joy, most probably she would have fainted.

The mere thought of her charge singing and dancing in a public place would have filled the governess with horror. But Miss Retcham was in the village, and the painful sight was concealed from her.

As Nakita skipped forward she heard the strains of music—just a snatch, from the trees near by.

"Hallo—what's that, Tinks?" she asked.

Tinker ran forward, then barked excitedly.

"Go away!" came a man's voice. "Leave the monkey alone!"

Monkey!

Nakita ran on, curious and surprised; for after Miss Retcham's mention of a monkey, it was odd that there should be one here.

A moment later she saw a man with a small barrel-organ on a pole. And on top of the organ was a monkey, wearing a red hat and a red jacket. He had a quaint little face, and was looking down at Tinker with deep scorn.

"Here, Tinks!" called Nakita.

The man with the organ looked up from it, and Nakita saw that he was dark-skinned, with a florid, Italian face.

"Calla da dog," he said sharply.

"He maka da monkey bad."

When Nakita called Tinker again, he reluctantly obeyed; for he considered the monkey a really good play-fellow!

"Fancy a street-organ in the woods!" said Nakita, amazed. "Why, there's no one here to give you money."

"Da organ go wrong," grunted the man. "I trya to mend him. Da police-

mans move me along. He say if I not make da music, I am making da begging."

Nakita was full of sympathy at once. "What a shame! Can't you mend the organ?" she asked.

The Italian shrugged his shoulders. "In tree minutes, yes," he said. "I go getta da screw-driver. But how is it possible I leavea da organ?"

"Is that all?" said Nakita quickly. "Why, I'll look after your organ and monkey."

The organ-grinder surveyed her anxiously.

"You not leava da monkey?" he asked.

"Of course not," said Nakita. "But don't be long, will you? Three minutes?"

"Si, si. Tree minutes," he nodded. "I go getta da screw-driver at house over dere," he explained, pointing to a near-by house. "But dere am da big dog. He go for da monkey."

Nakita eased his mind, and assured him that she would not desert her post if he hurried, so the man went off through the trees towards the house.

The monkey was a cute little chap, and she played with him, encouraging him to put his hat on and off, and generally having fun.

The minutes passed quickly, and before she quite realised how time had flown, she heard the clock strike the half-hour.

Nakita turned, moved forward and looked towards the church-clock.

"Half-past ten! Phew!"

Then she moved a little farther forward to give herself a view of the lane, so that she could see if her governess were returning.

She looked down the lane towards the village, but it was deserted. Then, turning in the other direction, she gave a jump. There, walking towards the Gables, was her governess.

"Oh golly!" gasped Nakita, in horror. "Tinks, we must fly!"

It would never do for the governess to reach home and find that Joy was not there!

The thought of what would happen if Miss Retcham ever learned who the cheeky gipsy girl was, simply scared Joyce white.

"Tinks—home!" she gasped.

Then she stopped short as she saw the organ and the monkey.

She had promised not to desert the monkey. Already it was turning round and round, tying itself up with the chain. One false move, a slip, and it might easily fall from the organ and be suspended, with the chain about its neck.

"Oh dear! Now where is that man? Is this his idea of three minutes?" Nakita fretted.

She freed the monkey, and then, to make sure that no harm came to it, she unfastened its chain from the organ and took the friendly little creature in her arms.

"Come on, Tinks, let's go to the house!" she said.

But, running towards the house, she suddenly paused in dismay. For even at a few yards' distance, it was quite obvious that the house was shut up, deserted!

Where was the Italian? Nakita, in a panic, ran to and fro, calling him. But no answer came.

With every passing minute, Miss Retcham was drawing nearer to the Gables. Nakita's chance of getting home first was lessening—and her chance of being caught in disguise was increasing.

"Monkey, if your master doesn't come back, I'll have to leave you. I



"COME here—come here, you vicious creature!" cried Miss Retcham, crawling round the piano after the monkey. Behind her, Joy popped into view, chuckling and holding the monkey in her arms!

can't take you home with me possibly—"

Nakita fumed and fretted. She did not want to leave the monkey—yet how could she take it home? Yet, she had to do one thing or the other, since there was no means of telling where the organ-grinder was.

He had been gone fifteen minutes instead of three. He might be gone another fifteen.

She had to make up her mind. Either she had to take the monkey back to the Gables—or else wait, and risk punishment, as Joy, for having left the house, and also risk being caught sneaking in as Nakita.

And then suddenly a great idea came. The way out.

"Phew, Tinks. If only we can do it," she gasped. "If only we can!"

Her eyes sparkled, and she shivered a little with excitement. For the plan that had come to her mind was daring—and risky.

"Monkey, you're coming to the Gables!" said Nakita. "And for just a wee while you're going to have fun."

She groped in the pocket of her frock and found a piece of chalk she had borrowed from the school-room, and with which she sometimes made "gipsy signs" on gateways and walls.

With it she left a message on top of the organ:

"Have gone to the Gables with monkey."

Monkey Business!

MISS RETCHAM strode along the corridor to Joyce's bedroom. As Joy was not in the school-room, that was where the governess suspected she would most likely be.

The governess was right. She opened the door and saw Joy sitting in the armchair, changing her shoes.

"I thought I told you, Joy—" began the governess.

But at that moment a cardboard box which had been resting peacefully on top of the wardrobe moved forward.

Miss Retcham glanced up, amazed. Still more amazed, she saw the box tilt up of its own accord, and rise a foot in the air, clear of the wardrobe top.

Joy said not a word. For the mysterious movement of that box did not mystify her at all.

"Joy!" exclaimed the governess. "That box— Tell me, is it indeed being lifted into the air?"

Joy hid a smile.

"Yes, Miss Retcham," she said.

The box suddenly shot from the wardrobe top and, before the governess could dodge, crashed down on to her head.

From it showered some bonbons saved from Christmas.

Staggering back, Miss Retcham rubbed her head, stared down blankly at the box, and then up at the wardrobe top.

Peering over the edge was a small, impish face.

"A monkey!" cried Miss Retcham.

Her cheeks flamed red; her eyes flashed.

"So this is your uncle's present!" she cried.

Joy said not a word. For this was her little plan. Miss Retcham had blundered. The hasty governess, ever ready to jump to conclusions, had jumped to the wrong one.

The monkey, perching on the edge of the wardrobe, took a flying jump, landed on her shoulder, and clutched at her hair.

"Get off—get off!" screeched the

governess. "Joy, take him away! Good gracious, your uncle must be crazy!"

"Don't annoy him, Miss Retcham!" pleaded Joy. "And I don't see why you should blame uncle, because—"

"I don't suppose you do! But I do, Joy. Take him off—at once!"

Joy went to the rescue, removing the monkey from Miss Retcham's shoulder. But he made a passing swipe and snatched her glasses.

"He's got my glasses."

Joy took them away, but let the little imp go, and he darted out of the door and down the passage.

Miss Retcham, taking her glasses from Joy, put them on and went in pursuit. But that monkey was like an eel. He dashed down the stairs to the hall, and into the drawing-room, where he disappeared behind the piano.

"Come here—come here!" cried Miss Retcham, and began a game of hunt-the-monkey on her hands and knees.

Joy, chuckling, joined in. She soon caught the monkey, and while Miss Retcham peered around one corner of the piano, Joy and the chimp peered at her from behind.

Then, as Joy released him, he swarmed up the curtains and perched on the pole at the top, chattering.

"Come down! Come down!" shouted the governess, scrambling up. "Joy, get me the step-ladders—"

Joy ran to get them from the cupboard, and returned just as her grandfather came into the hall, wondering what could possibly be the cause of all the commotion.

"Miss Retcham, what is this?" he asked.

"A monkey. Joy's Uncle Geoffrey has sent her it!"

"But, Miss Retcham—" protested Joy.

"Silence! The animal is wild and savage and evil—"

Joy looked towards her grandfather.

"Miss Retcham won't listen to me," she said sadly.

"Then you should not argue," he reproved her gently.

And that was that!

Miss Retcham erected the steps beside the window, mounted them, and grabbed the monkey, which smacked her face.

The steps tilted, and Miss Retcham clutched the curtain just in time as they crashed against the window, shattering it.

The monkey scrambled down, to be grabbed by Joy, who gathered him into her arms and soothed him.

"Now," said Miss Retcham, as she lowered herself to the ground with the grandfather's help. "Now, Joy, I am taking the monkey and sending it back to your Uncle Geoffrey—"

"But, Miss Retcham, you can't do that—"

"Silence!" stormed the governess.

And, with the monkey in her arms, she marched from the hall.

Joy was filled with sudden alarm. She had guessed that her governess would make this mistake. But Miss Retcham was going just a shade too far.

Anxiously Joy ran out through the main door, realising that if the organ-grinder did not come soon to the house, there would be serious trouble.

But she had not to run far to find

him. He was coming up the drive at a trot.

"My monkey! Where am my monkey?" he shouted.

Joy heaved a sigh of relief.

"My guardian is sending him away to someone," she said.

"Wha-at—"

He charged forward into the house and almost collided with Joy's grandfather.

"My monkey! Where am he?" demanded the man in fury.

Miss Retcham returned to the hall, looking pale and grim. But at sight of the organ-grinder, she came to a halt.

"You—" he shouted. "You steal a monkey?"

Miss Retcham nearly swooned.

"You—your monkey?" she babbled.

"Who—who are you?"

"I maka da music. I have small monkey. You steal him. You send him away?"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Joy's grandfather. "Is the monkey this man's? I thought you said that Joy's uncle had sent it, Miss Retcham?"

Miss Retcham paled.

"I—I—I understood so—" she muttered.

"I kept trying to explain, Miss Retcham," said Joy.

At that moment there came a knock on the door.

"Parcel for Miss Joy Sharpe," said the postman.

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Joy spun round as a large parcel was dumped inside on the floor, and moved towards it. It was the present from Uncle Geoffrey.

"Joy, put that down!" stormed Miss Retcham.

The organ-grinder roared with excitement.

"I wanta ma monkey!" he shouted.

"You steal him—I go get police."

He turned, and, before they could move, ran off down the drive. For the first time in his life he had the police on his side.

Joy's grandfather gave a horrified gasp:

"He is going to bring the police. Miss Retcham, this is disgraceful!

You have been too hasty. I am surprised that, without any evidence, you should suppose that this monkey came from Joy's uncle. Where is the creature now?"

"The—the gardener is taking it in the car to the railway station," groaned Miss Retcham.

"Oh dear, dear! You will be accused of stealing it!" groaned Joy's grandfather.

Joy intervened.

"Granddad, Nakita, the gipsy girl, knows the organ-grinder. She can save us all. Nakita will do it for us, I know."

"Nakita," cried her grandfather eagerly, "do you think you could persuade the gipsy girl to do this, Joy? Where is she?"

"She was looking for the monkey, granddad. I'll go and find her."

Miss Retcham said not a word, but swung away and stamped to her room.

Five minutes later Nakita, the gipsy girl, appeared in the hall, and confronted Joy's grandfather.

"Oh, mister," she said, "don't you worry! I can fix it! That old organ-grinder will be sweet as sugar if you can manage to spring him ten bob."

"You think you can talk him into taking that small sun, and saying no more?"

Nakita smiled.

"I'll fix it. But if one good turn deserves another, mister—"

"It certainly does," said Joy's grandfather.

"Well, gov'nor, let the little girl have the present her uncle has sent her. I know the governess said she shouldn't have it. But why? Be a sport, mister. I'm doing this for you."

Joy's grandfather picked up the parcel and studied it.

"Hallo! A home cinematograph," he explained. "And some reels of film—"

Nakita almost forgot that she was not Joy, and gave a delighted little skip of excitement.

And in a flash, she knew why that present would make its mark on walls, and why, uncoiled, it would seem to come to life.

"Lucky, Miss Joy!" she exclaimed. "And she can really have it?"

"Assuredly."

That was enough. Nakita ran all the way in pursuit of the organ-grinder, caught him up, apologised, explained, and gave him the ten shillings.

Needless to say, that money was compensation for anything he had suffered; and as he found the monkey at the station none the worse for its adventure, he was well pleased. For with the money he could get his organ repaired—and that done, the cloud that had darkened his horizon would be blown away.

Later that day he went to the Gables and played his organ. But Miss Retcham did not give him even a penny. Joy, however, took a half-crown from her money-box, and gave it to him, and a banana for the nice little monkey.

In the evening, helped by her grandfather, she worked the tiny cinema projector, and saw an exciting film, which, though small in size, was clear and brilliant.

"Hurrah for Uncle Geoff!" she breathed.

And it was hurrah, too, for Nakita, whose ready wit had saved the situation. For though Joy and Nakita were one and the same, yet when dressed as Nakita Joy seemed to be quicker, freer of mind as of spirit—and it was Nakita who deserved the praise for the happiness that was now Joy's.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

OUR irrepressible lover of fun and freedom will be with us again next Saturday, so order your SCHOOL-GIRL well in advance and thus make sure of meeting her.