

"THE SPEED GIRL'S SECRET STOWAWAY!"

Fascinating LONG COM-
PLETE story of Cliff House
School inside.

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Incorporating
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**WERE THE
SUPPLIES FOR THE
MYSTERY STOWAWAY?**

Freda Ferriers, the sneak of the
Fourth, meant to find out!

(See this week's thrilling story of Barbara
Redfern & Co.)

A Grand LONG COMPLETE story featuring Barbara Redfern & Co., with Tomboy Clara Trevlyn and her speed girl cousin in the limelight.

The SPEED GIRL'S SECRET STOWAWAY!



By
HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. Laidler

vation—except, of course, dear old duffer Bessie, for whom aerial excursions had no appeal.

In any case, as Tomboy Clara Trevlyn so glowingly said, it would be enormous fun meeting Mary Malcolm again—for Mary was Clara's own most tremendously admired cousin, and Mary, in addition to being a professional motor-racing driver, had recently qualified in the air for her pilot's "A" certificate. She was due, after an interval of some weeks, at the Aerodrome Stadium that afternoon.

The six girls were on their way to meet her. At the moment they were waiting for Marjorie Hazeldene and Janet Jordan, Clara's chums of Study No. 7.

It was after lessons at Cliff House, and with the next three hours to call their own and no prep to do that evening, they were visualising quite an exciting time at the Aerodrome Stadium, whither Mary was flying from Devon.

"Oh crumbs! I wish Marjorie and Janet would buck-up," plump Bessie said peevishly. "You know how that canteen at the Drome sells out. But I say, there's an aeroplane, you know!"

She pointed to a speck in the sky, sailing up from out of the west. The chums looked upwards.

Mary is Mysterious!



"JOLLY nice to see old Mary again," Clara Trevlyn said enthusiastically.

"Rather!" agreed blue-eyed Barbara Redfern, captain of the Fourth Form.

"And to congratulate her on winning her 'A' certificate for flying," observed golden-haired Mabel Lynn, Babs' great chum.

"And I vote, you know, as soon as we get to the aerodrome, we stand her a feed!"

That last suggestion came from plump Bessie Bunter, who shared Study No. 4 with Babs and Mabs.

"Which really means that we stand old Bess a feed," chuckled Leila Carroll, the American junior. "Still, I guess it's not a bad notion. What say you, Jimmy?"

The sixth member of the little group of Fourth Formers standing near the side entrance to Cliff House School polished her monocle and beamed.

"I say what-ho!" said Jemima Carstairs. "Topping old Mary Malcolm, what? One of the real bulldog breed! Stand her two merry old feeds if you like. I wonder," added the strange Fourth Former thoughtfully, "if she'll give us a flip in the old aeroplane, what?"

Perhaps they were all wondering that, perhaps all hoping for such an in-

For a moment they saw the plane as it emerged from a bank of cloud, a shining silver speck, and then disappeared again. Clara's healthy face flushed.

"I say, it might be Mary herself," she said.

"Why yes, of course it is! Look, she's waving over the side," Mabel Lynn said solemnly.

"Where?" Clara asked eagerly, and there was a laugh at her eagerness. For the Tomboy had been neatly trapped that time.

Considering that the plane must have been several miles away, it would have needed the aid of a powerful telescope to have detected such a happening.

Clara reddened.

"Chump!" she said witheringly.

Nevertheless she continued to watch. The plane was growing bigger now.

"It's kik-coming lower," Bessie said, blinking up through her thick spectacles.

Certainly it was coming lower. Growing larger, too. Now they could see the markings on the underside of the wings. The hum of the engine grew louder.

Then suddenly the engine noise stopped. They saw one wing drop sharply.

"Hallo, in difficulties," Clara breathed.

Janet Jordan and Marjorie Hazeldene, descending the steps at that moment, stopped to crane their necks. Half the girls on Junior Side, detecting something wrong, stopped in their play.

Now swiftly the cabin monoplane came rushing downwards, rather falling than flying, its engine cut off.

"Gee!" Leila Carroll cried, "it's coming straight for the school!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Barbara Redfern. "Look out there!"

No doubt then that something was wrong. Like a stone the plane was plunging straight for the school buildings.

Faces turned white. There came a sudden frenzied shout to scatter.

Then—whizz-z-zoom! By a miracle it seemed the plane had missed the chimney pots, was gliding on at a terrific pace towards the playing fields, throwing a dark, swift shadow across the ground.

There came a shriek from the girls out there. White-faced and tense, Babs & Co. straightened up.

Above them Miss Primrose's window went up with a startled bang. From her window on the ground floor Miss Bullivant screamed a frantic, "Scatter!"

They saw girls scattering. They saw the landing wheels of the plane touch the ground, rise, touch again.

Swiftly the cabin machine taxied along; within ten yards of the solid brick wall which screened Cliff House from the main road, came to a stop.

There was a moment of bewildering silence. Then an excited scamper began towards the disabled machine.

"Come on!" cried Clara.

From all directions electrified girls came running; from pavilion and tuckshop, from drive and gymnasium, from the school itself, and from the cycle-sheds. Out from the entrance to the school, all rustling dignity, emerged Miss Primrose, the headmistress, followed by Miss Bullivant. From the plane, however, came no sign of life.

It was a smallish, underslung cabin monoplane, not of very new pattern, made to hold about four passengers.

Excitement then. It was something new for a strange airman to use Cliff House playing-fields as a landing ground. Quite a swarm had gathered round the machine when Babs & Co. arrived. At that moment, the little

door which led to the pilot's cockpit opened.

A girl of about twenty, in a white flying-suit, her curling hair hidden beneath an air helmet, appeared. Clara threw one look at her and almost collapsed.

"Mary!" she shrieked, and leapt forward, her unruly hair dancing.

For her cousin, Mary Malcolm, it was!

Mary smiled. Then she slipped out of the cockpit, rather hurriedly closing the door behind her as she stepped on to the ground.

What a roar went up as she was recognised!

For Mary Malcolm, Clara's motor-racing cousin, was by no means a stranger to these Cliff House girls. An old captain of Cliff House herself, it had only been a few short months since she had been privileged to garage her own racing car in the school precincts, and practically all Cliff House had turned out to see her win the great Grand Prix.

"Mary! Mary!" Immediately there was a clamour as girls surrounded her, and Mary, in the act of shaking hands with Clara, found herself swept off her feet.

"Mary, take us up! Mary—"

"Please—please, girls!" cried a voice, and on to the scene strode Miss Primrose.

"What—why, Mary!"

"I'm sorry, Miss Primrose!"

"I should hope you were!" the headmistress said, a little stiffly.

"This is—er—rather unusual, Mary."

A mystery girl arrives at Cliff House School by aeroplane. She is brought by Mary Malcolm, crack racing driver and pilot. Mary enlists the aid of her Fourth Form cousin, Clara Trevlyn, in hiding the girl in the school! Tomboy Clara loyally rallies round—and thus starts a most amazing series of happenings at the famous school!

"I'm sorry!" Mary repeated, with a little smile, but she glanced up with curious anxiety towards the machine. "I didn't intend to make a landing here. That was rather forced on me. You see, I—I ran out of petrol. I should have filled up before I started. I'm sorry, Miss Primrose!"

The headmistress frowned slightly.

"I am glad," she said—"glad that nothing worse has befallen. But the handling of such a dangerous contraption as this calls for forethought and care, Mary. I sincerely trust that you will never allow anything of the kind to happen again. However, I am glad to see you." Miss Primrose added, melting into a smile. "And while I am here, let me tell you how pleased I am that you have got your certificate. You may leave the aeroplane here until such time as you can make arrangements for its removal. I presume you will fill it with petrol and fly it off again?"

Mary smiled ruefully.

"I wish," she said, "it was as easy as that, Miss Primrose. I am afraid that I shall have to have it partly dismantled and remove it on a lorry. You see," she added, "there's hardly enough room for me to take off here without hitting something. If you do not mind it remaining here until to-morrow, Miss Primrose—"

"Why certainly!" Miss Primrose agreed.

She smiled, and, nodding to Miss Bullivant, walked away. Clara stared at her cousin a little curiously.

"But, Mary, you didn't really forget to fill up?" she asked.

"Well, not really." Mary bit her lip

a little. "I had an idea I could make the distance without filling up. But—Freda, come down there!" she cried sharply.

For Freda Ferriers, the sneak of the Fourth, had climbed on to the starboard wing, and was peering through the pilot's window.

Freda grinned.

"Oh stuff! I'm not doing any harm," she said. "I'm only looking."

"Please come down!" Mary said angrily, and, Barbara Redfern thought, rather alarmedly.

"But—"

"Come down when you're told!" Clara cried. "Dash it, it's not your machine! You— Oh golly!" she added startledly, for Mary, in a very frenzy of annoyance, had grabbed at Freda's leg.

"Here, I say—" cried Freda.

"Please come down!" Mary repeated sharply.

Freda, with a glare, got down. Mary bit her lip.

"Now, please—please, all of you, go away!" she said. "There—there's—"

She looked at the plane, and, as if there was some guilt in that innocent action, looked away again. "Clara, will you please stop behind?" she asked.

"Mary darling, don't be mane!" Bridget O'Toole cried. "Let's have a look over the plane!"

"I'm sorry—not now. To—to-morrow."

"But sure it's dismantled it'll be to-morrow!" Bridget protested.

"Well, some other day then!" Mary gasped. "Please, girls, don't interfere!"

The girls stared. Babs & Co. stared. So strange did Mary look. So unlike the Mary they knew—to refuse that simple request! But Clara, with a quick, wondering gaze, nodded.

"Right-ho!" she said. "I say, give Mary a chance, you girls! Wait till to-morrow. Dash it all, she's had rather a shaking-up!"

"Oh stuff! She's got something in there she's afraid of someone seeing." Freda Ferriers spitefully giped.

"Why, you—"

"Freda, that is an insult!" Dulcia Fairbrother, the captain of the school, said angrily. "You will take fifty lines. Now go to your study!"

Freda gritted her teeth. Furious the look she flung at Dulcia, but more bitterly flung the glance she flung at Mary Malcolm. Mary gulped.

"Thanks, Dulcia!"

"Not at all! Please, girls, all of you disperse!" ordered the school captain.

"Mary, is there anything I can do for you?"

"No; but thanks all the same. Clara, please don't you go—nor you, Babs. Clara, I—I want to talk to you."

"Well, yes?" Clara said, puzzled.

"Barbara, will you—would you and your chums mind keeping an eye on the machine? And please, whatever you do, don't let anyone come near it. Now, Clara, where can I talk to you—alone?"

"Well, in the study," Clara suggested.

"You can keep an eye on the machine at the same time from the window. But, Mary, what's the matter?" she repeated. "Is—is anything wrong?"

"Heaps!" Mary whispered. "But come on!"

And, watched from a distance by a crowd of girls, she accompanied Clara into the school.

Once in Study No. 7, Mary closed the door. Then, most amazingly, she locked it. She turned and faced her wondering cousin.

"Clara," she said tensely, "I want your help!"

Clara blinked.

"Well, I'm here, and you know, Mary, you've only got to ask."

"I do; but—but—" Mary looked shaken. "Things have gone so badly!" she muttered. "I'm not sure— But listen, Clara, I want you to do something for me—something big—something which, for the time being, nobody must know anything at all about. I—I want you to smuggle a girl into the school and look after her."

Clara jumped.

"A girl? What girl?"

"A girl," Mary said simply, "I've got hidden in the plane!"

Spy in the Fourth!



FOR a moment Clara stared blankly at her motor-racing cousin.

Mary, however, gave her no time to ask questions.

"Clara, I can't explain fully now—some time later I'll tell you all about it. But this girl is a friend. I'm trying to do something for her. I expect you'll call me a fool when you know what I've done already, because if any of this came out I should be ruined."

"But, Mary—" Clara cried.

"No, please, Clara! And, for goodness' sake," Mary said feverishly, "say nothing—not even to Marjorie and Babs, or any of your chums. It's absolutely necessary, Clara, that this girl should lie low for a day or two—absolutely necessary that no one should know where she is. You understand?"

Clara was far from understanding; but the urgency, the desperation in Mary's tones left no room for argument. Clara loved and trusted her cousin. In many ways, Mary Malcolm, who, by her own sheer grit and her father's inventive cleverness, had forced herself to the front rank of racing motorists during the last few months, was her heroine.

"Well, O.K.," said the Tomboy simply. "When do we get the girl away?"

"To-night, Clara. It wouldn't be safe until then. Meet me at the plane just after eleven. Then together we can smuggle her into the school. You told me, didn't you, that you'd found a secret room behind the fireplace in this study?"

"Oh, yes!" Clara said.

"Does anybody else know of it?"

"Babs and Mabs and one or two others," Clara replied. "But they'll have forgotten it by this time. It's ages and ages since we looked at it."

"Right-ho, then, that's the idea," Mary said. "Try to smuggle some bed-clothes and things down. Get some food. See," she added, and feverishly fished in her pocket, "here's a pound note—I don't suppose you've got a lot of money. You'll see to it, Clara?"

"Trust me," Clara said. "To-night at eleven, then."

"Yes. And, Clara, thanks—thanks! You'll never know what you've done—"

"Oh stuff! Let's go!" Clara said gruffly.

She opened the door. Together they hurried out of the school into the drive. Little Dolores Essendon of the Second Form, her face wistful and excited, accosted them.

"Oh, pip-please, Miss Malcolm, will you sign my autograph album?"

"Why, of course!" Mary laughed, and signed it there and then. "Why, you, too, Madge?"—as Madge Stevens of the Upper Third approached. "There now! Sorry I can't do something else in it; but I've got to be busy, you know. So long! Come on, Clara!"

Beaming, she returned to the two delighted youngsters their albums, and with Clara at her side hurried on. Babs & Co., faithful to their trust, were still keeping a watchful guard over the cabin monoplane. Babs smiled as Mary came up.

"Well, here we are," she said cheerily. "Nobody's run away with it, you see, Mary."

"Thanks, Babs!" Mary breathed in relief. "It was nice of you."

"Oh, not at all!" Babs smiled. "But, Mary, won't you come and have a cup of tea with us?"

"Fraid not," Mary said. "I've got a lot of things to do, Barbara. I'd like to, awfully, and I will another time if you care to ask me. Look here, I'll tell you what," she added, "come along to the aerodrome to-morrow and have tea with me. I expect the plane will be put ship-shape again by then, and perhaps we can have a flip or two."

"Shucks, all of us?" breathed Leila.

"Why not?" Mary laughed.

"Oh, Mary!" gasped Marjorie.

And their eyes glimmered, their faces flushed. That was a treat to look forward to, if you like!

"And now," Mary said, "you just buzz off and get your tea. Clara, would you mind looking after the old ship while I hurry off to the aerodrome? I'll arrange there for it to be removed—and, oh goodness, I almost forgot to tell you what's brought me to the drome!"

"What-ho!" said Jemima Carstairs interestedly. "We sort of understood you were trying out the old plane."

"Well, that's partly the reason. But there's another," Mary laughed. "I've got the plane for a week, that's all. But on Saturday I'm driving a car for Mr. Cleveden-Carr in the South England Gold Cup!"

"Mary, no!" cried Clara.

"It's a fact!"

Clara beamed. If she had looked proud of her famous cousin before, she was positively adoring now. Everybody in the motoring world had heard of rich James B. Cleveden-Carr, of course, one of the most famous car manufacturers. To be chosen as his driver was a high honour. And Mary had got the job!

"And so," Mary laughed, "I've come here to practise, you know. It's a new car, too—no one knows yet what it's capable of. Naturally," she added, her face becoming a little serious, "it's a big opportunity for me. If I win the race it means that I've no need to worry at all about the future, because Mr. Cleveden-Carr, apart from being a famous motorist, is also terrifically interested in air speed, and may give me a chance to have a shot at one of the air records later on."

"I only hope to goodness," she added, with a little frown, "he doesn't hear that I've been forced to make a landing at Cliff House!"

"Well, he certainly won't hear it

from us," Babs said. "But, Mary, can we come to the race?"

"Why, of course. If you don't, I shall be frightfully disappointed! Remind me to-morrow to give you the tickets," Mary laughed. "Now please do go and get your tea. I expect you're starving."

And, beaming and happy, the chums went.

What a sport Mary was!

"Now, Clara, will you wait here and keep an eye on things?" Mary said. "I'll have to push along to the drome. I promise I won't be longer than I can help."

"Go ahead," Clara said cheerfully.

Mary smiled. With a grateful glance at her cousin she went off. Clara watched as her graceful form vanished through the gates. Good old Mary! What a cousin to be proud of!

She stared towards the plane. She wondered, looking at it, if the day would ever come when she would fly a thing like that—and found herself thrilling at the very prospect.

She wondered who was the girl Mary had stowed away in the plane—her name, what sort of girl she was, what circumstances had caused Mary to take so desperate a course of action! Not for nothing, however, would Mary have run such a risk. Whatever her motive it must be a jolly good one!

Interestedly, Clara walked round the plane, thoughtfully examining it from propeller to rudder, and finally swung herself to a sitting position on the starboard wing. There, with her body resting against the fuselage, she sat.

Inside the plane there came a movement. Clara started.

That, of course, was the mystery stow-away!

She made no sound, however, and the movement was not repeated.

Clara gazed idly across the playing fields, mentally making plans for the reception of the stranger when she should be rescued after dark. Have to get blankets, of course—those could be easily grabbed from the laundry baskets up in the attics. Have to lay in a supply of food—that could be done at the tuckshop. Mustn't forget the water, or the cups and plates and things. Have to give the girl some sort of light—and a spirit-stove as well.

Well, that was all right. The last items were all contained in Study No. 7's picnic hamper.

Candles she could buy at the tuckshop. Methylated spirit for the stove she could get from Babs. And—and—And then Clara sat up sharply, staring towards the drive.

"Aha!" she breathed.

She sat still, watching, a rather grim frown on her face.

For down the drive, cautiously, stealthily, a figure was approaching—Freda Ferriers of the Fourth.

Plainly Freda thought the plane was unguarded.

Clara's eyes glimmered.

She sat still, shielded by the fuselage. Now Freda had left the drive. With a backwards look towards the school, she was creeping towards the plane. Nearer, nearer she came, and then, five yards away, she saw Clara, stopped, and jumped.

Clara slipped from her perch.

"And what," she asked grimly, "are you doing here?"

Waves of colour came and went in the sneak's face.

"Well, what are you doing here?" she blustered. "I wasn't aware that this ground was exactly yours. If—if you want to know, I dropped something

this afternoon. I—I came to look for it.

"Yes?" Clara asked contemptuously. "You mean you came to spy!"

"No, I didn't!"

"Don't tell fibs!"

"I'm not telling fibs! And, anyway," Freda flashed out, "why should you be afraid of anyone spying? Jolly funny, isn't it, that your cousin wouldn't let anyone go near the plane? And jolly funny, now that she's gone, that you're here on guard!"

Clara gazed at her. She gazed rather measuredly. Trust Freda to read suspicion into the most casual action; but, for once, Freda was treading on decidedly dangerous ground. Easy to see that Freda suspected something. Clara took her by the arm.

"Come on!" she said.

"But I don't want—"

"Come on!" Clara repeated. "Never mind what you want. If Mary doesn't want anybody to go near that plane, that should be good enough for you! Trot along!"

"But I tell you—"

"Leave it until you see me again!"

And Clara, having conducted Freda to the drive, gave her a warning glance and marched back to the plane once more. Freda hesitated, her little eyes glittering.

"The cat! If you ask me," she muttered vengefully, "there's something jolly fishy about that plane. Why should they both be afraid of anyone having a look at it?"

She glared at Clara's retreating back. But she did not follow her. Freda had a wholesome dread of Clara Trevlyn. One could go just so far with the Tomboy of the Fourth, and she had the sense to realise that she had already travelled the full distance.

But Freda did not return to the school. Unnoticed by Clara, she turned into the tuckshop, the doorway of which afforded an excellent view of the stranded plane and all that happened in its vicinity.

Presently the throb of a powerful car was heard in the road outside. Then into the drive turned a long, low, glittering racing car, of crimson and gold. Mary Malcolm sat behind the big, taped steering wheel.

Freda craned forward. She watched as Mary smartly turned the car towards the garage, brought it to a halt on the wash-down there. Eagerly curious, suspicious, she watched as Mary joined Clara.

For a few moments the two stood there in animated conversation. Then Mary, with a nod, climbed into the cabin monoplane, while Clara turned towards the tuckshop.

Freda hastily dodged inside, looked agitatedly around, and then dodged out of sight behind the end of the counter.

Clara came in. The tuckshop, of course, was deserted. Even Auntie Jones, the good lady responsible for its upkeep, was sharing a friendly tea with Piper, the crusty old porter, in the adjoining sitting-room.

Clara banged the counter; and Auntie Jones, wiping her hands on her apron, hurried into the shop.

Freda listened eagerly.

"I want an order, aunty," Clara said. "A rather big order. A loaf, half a pound of butter, a quarter of tea, a pound of sugar, some ham rolls, milk—" She reeled off a list which made Freda open her eyes. "Do them up in a parcel, will you?" she asked. "And I'll call down for them during supper-time. I'll pay now."

"Now, why," Freda breathed, "doesn't she take them with her?"

Unaware of the sneak's proximity, Clara strolled out of the tuckshop.

Freda, waiting until Auntie Jones had retired into her sitting-room, dodged to the doorway. Clara was heading towards the school.

The sneak did not follow immediately. She glanced towards the plane, through the window of which Mary Malcolm could be seen apparently making some adjustments in the cockpit.

Clara, meantime, had gone to Study No. 7.

Marjorie Hazeldene and Janet Jordan, who normally shared that apartment with her, were at tea with Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn, and Bessie Bunter in Study No. 4. Clara breathed a sigh of relief.

Could the prying Freda have seen Clara's actions then she would have been greatly intrigued. For Clara, closing the door, carefully locked it. Then she went to the window, drawing the curtains close to. After that she fetched a torch from the cupboard and approached the fireplace.

That fireplace was one of the original relics of Cliff House, and in its way one of the most handsome and ornate. From floor to mantelshelf it was ornately hand-carved. Few knew the secret it concealed, however.

Clara fumbled with the roses that formed the framework. She touched a certain one. There was a faint, rumbling sound. Then fireplace—fire and all—swung as if on a pivot into the room, displaying a dark opening in the rear. Clara stepped into it, looked quickly to right and left along a narrow, shaft-like tunnel. Seven paces she stepped to the right, and then halted before a door. She pushed it open, flashing the torch inside.

A small, square room, rather dusty and untidy, met her gaze.

"O.K.!" Clara muttered. "Better get it swept out, though."

And this she proceeded to do, afterwards making the secret room as comfortable as possible. That done, with the fireplace back in place once more, she joined Babs & Co. for tea.

Somewhat to the chums' surprise, she slipped away from them immediately after the meal, and they didn't see her again until call-over.

And that was because the Tomboy had spent her time in getting blankets and other odds-and-ends down into the secret room—and also dodging Freda Ferriers.

Call-over came and went. Then bed. Usually one of the first girls to go off to sleep, Clara Trevlyn, to-night, lay awake. Ten o'clock chimed. Half-past. Eleven. Sharply on the last stroke Clara sat up. Quickly she looked round the dormitory—particularly keenly in the direction of Freda Ferrier's bed. But Freda was sleeping.

She rose, donning her clothes in the darkness. Then silently she hurried downstairs. Through the lobby window she made her exit, slipping towards the stranded plane. It was Mary's voice which softly hailed her as she approached.

"Clara, that you?"

"Yes," Clara answered.

"Oh, good! All right, Sophie!" Mary called softly, and from the cabin door of the monoplane emerged a girl—a girl a trifle older and a trifle taller than Clara. "This is my cousin," she added, and Clara, extending her hand in the darkness, grinned a friendly welcome to the dark-eyed, rather palefaced girl who turned towards her. "This is Sophie Trent," Mary explained. "At least, that is what she is called at the moment. Is everything ready, Clara?"

"CLARA, open this door!" cried Sarah, and thumped furiously on the panels. Babs and Mabs, coming up, stared in wonder. Why had their Tomboy chum locked herself in her study?



"Everything," Clara said. "Come on, let's get back. Mary, you're not coming, are you?" she added, as her cousin fell into step beside her and Sophie.

"But I am," Mary said. "After all, why not? Nobody is up now; I'd like to see that Sophie is comfortable before I leave. Anyway," she added, "I know the study. If you'll explain to me how to work the fireplace panel, you can skip off to the dormitory and I'll look after Sophie."

Clara nodded, and in a few words she explained the secret of the fireplace in Study No. 7.

"I've got it," Mary said. "But shush now," she added, as they approached the open lobby window.

They stood still, listening. No sound. Cliff House, except for a steady light which burned in Miss Primrose's room, was silent and shrouded in darkness.

Silently they climbed over the sill, and while Clara closed the window, Mary and Sophie stood in the corridor. Clara grinned.

"O.K!" she breathed, "But be careful going across Big Hall. The Bull's room opens into the Hall, and the Bull's got the ears of a lynx. First corridor on the left when you get to the top of the stairs—that leads to the Fourth Form studies," she added in a whisper. "I take the first on the right to the dorm. You go first."

Mary nodded. Taking Sophie by the hand she flitted away. Clara, covering up their retreat, followed, holding her breath as she passed Miss Bullivant's door. From inside the room there came a movement.

"Quick, get along!" Clara hissed. "Hurry!" Mary panted.

Together she and Sophie flew towards the stairs. Clara, with a look at the Bull's door, followed. Then suddenly that door came open. A yellow light splashed a square across the floor of Big Hall, just as Mary and the fugitive reached the top of the stairs. For one second Clara halted, her heart in her mouth. Then—

"Stop!" commanded a sharp voice from Miss Bullivant's doorway. "Stop! Who are you—" and then she saw the transfixed Tomboy. "Clara, you!" she cried. "What are you doing here—in your outdoor clothes—at this time of night?"

A Sneak Out of Luck!



CLARA TREVLYN gasped. She hoped to goodness Miss Bullivant hadn't heard the faint scuffling of feet from the corridor above.

But the mistress's attention was wholly and most suspiciously concentrated upon the Tomboy herself.

"Clara, you have been out?"

"Y-yes," mumbled Clara.

"Where have you been?"

Clara gulped. But inwardly she was sighing with relief. For upstairs now all was silent.

"I—I went into the grounds," she told the mathematics mistress.

"Indeed! What for?"

"Well, I went down and looked at the aeroplane," Clara blurted, reflecting at least that was true. "After all, Miss Bullivant, it's not often we have an aeroplane stranded in the grounds, is it?"

"But that," Miss Bullivant said tartly, "is no reason whatever why you should set school rules at defiance, Clara. You have had every opportunity during the evening to inspect the aeroplane. I

imagine since it is your own cousin's property, that you will have as many opportunities as you require in future. I shall report you. You may return to your dormitory at once!"

"Y-yes, Miss Bullivant! Thath-thank you," Clara gasped.

"Good-night!" the mistress added frigidly.

"G-good-night, Miss Bullivant!"

And Clara, breathing a thankful sigh of gratitude that her coup still remained a secret, hurried off up the stairs.

She pushed open the door of the Fourth Form dormitory, and crept to her bed. Almost at once a voice spoke.

"Hallo, where have you been, Clara?"

It was Freda Ferriers.

"Oh, you would be awake! Go to sleep!" Clara grunted.

"But you've been out—"

"Well, any business of yours?" Clara asked angrily.

"Eh, what?" asked Barbara Redfern, starting up, and then stared. "I say, who's making a row?" And then she jumped as she recognised her chum.

"Clara—"

"Well?" Clara said resignedly.

"You're never going out?"

"No," Clara admitted, "I've been! Please, Babs, don't ask questions. I'm tired. And anyway," she added, "I've done all my explaining to the Bull!"

"You mean—she caught you?" Babs breathed.

"Yes!" Clara replied shortly.

There came a titter from Freda. Babs, shaking her head, settled down again—wondering, amazed, rather troubled if the truth be told. Clara rather angrily threw off her clothes, and ignoring another question from Freda, climbed into bed. And so once again the Fourth Form dormitory settled down to sleep.

But in the morning—early, Babs was awakened by a hand shaking her shoulder. She looked up to see the sharp, ferrety face of Freda Ferriers bending over her.

"Babs!" gasped Freda. "Clara—she's gone!"

Babs blinked indignantly.

"Well, is it any business of yours?" she asked. "And why, if she wants to go, shouldn't she go?"

"But it wants half an hour to rising bell," Freda cried.

Babs' eyes glimmered. She sat up in bed.

"Rather trying to make mischief aren't you, Freda?" she contemptuously asked.

"Why shouldn't Clara get up half an hour before rising-bell? Go back to bed. I want to go to sleep."

She snuggled down again. But she was far from sleeping then. Uneasiness as to Clara's actions and intentions filled her, but still more uneasy did she feel about the sneak of the form. It was obvious now that she had her knife into Clara Trevlyn.

Freda, dressing swiftly, stepped towards the door. Babs sat up again.

"Freda, where are you going?"

"Like to know, wouldn't you?" Freda sneered. "Well, take a bit of the advice you're so fond of giving and mind your own business!"

The door closed behind her. But in a minute Babs was out of bed. Swiftly she crossed to Mabs' bed, shaking her by the shoulders. Mabs sat up in startled sleepiness.

"Come on!" Babs said swiftly.

"Clara's out, and Freda's bent on mischief. Get dressed, old thing."

Mabs nodded at once. She was wide awake then. Swiftly the two of them dressed, quickly padded off downstairs. They reached the Fourth Form

corridor, starting as they approached the corner. They heard a bang at somebody's door. Then, rounding the corridor, they saw.

Freda—with Sarah Harrigan, the ill-natured prefect of the Sixth—was standing outside the door of Study No. 7. They were banging on the panels. Easy, then, to guess what had happened. Freda, finding the door of Study No. 7 locked, had brought Sarah on to the scene.

"You sneak, Freda!" Babs cried as she came up. "What's the matter?" she asked of Sarah Harrigan.

"Clara, open this door!" Sarah called, without deigning to reply.

"But how do you know Clara is in there?" Mabs asked.

"Because," Sarah said, flashing round, "Freda saw her go in. And if," she added, "she isn't in there, how is it that her door is locked on the inside? Clara, for the last time, will you open this door?" Sarah hooted.

From inside Study No. 7 there came no reply.

Sarah's lips compressed.

"Very well!" she said. "Freda, get me a sheet of newspaper." And while Freda darted into Study No. 6, to reappear with the required article a moment later, she produced a thin, silver propelling pencil from her pocket. "Slip it under the door," she ordered.

Freda slipped the newspaper under the door, casting a jubilant glance at Babs and Mabs as she did so. Into the keyhole Sarah inserted the point of her pencil—the lead, of course, withdrawn to prevent the lead becoming damaged—and for a moment twisted and turned. Inside the room the key fell with a soft thud on to the newspaper.

Freda, drawing the newspaper from under the door, withdrew the key with it. She handed it to the prefect.

"Thanks!" Sarah said curtly.

She inserted it into the lock. Then, with a very angry frown indeed, she flung the door open. Babs and Mabs followed her in. So, moving quickly, did Freda. And then they all gasped. For of Clara Trevlyn there was no sign.

"Oh, mum-my hat!" stuttered Freda. Sarah's eyes gleamed.

"I thought you said you saw Clara come in here?"

"Sus-so I did," stammered the sneak of the Fourth.

"Then where is she?"

Babs smiled. Mabs hid a grin. Freda looked utterly amazed.

"I—I don't know! She must have got out, somehow," she blurted bewilderedly. "The window, perhaps."

Sarah sniffed.

"I hardly think Clara would risk a climb down from the window!" she snapped. "Freda, if this is a joke, you can take fifty lines!"

Freda glowered.

"But it's not a joke," she cried. "I tell you I saw—"

"Thank you, don't shout at me," Sarah said angrily. "Take another twenty for being noisy and insolent. Barbara, and you, Mabel, get out of this room."

"Why, of course, Sarah! Certainly, Sarah," Babs said cheerfully, and with a wink for Mabs and a grin at the glowering and infuriated Freda, she got out willingly enough. In the corridor, however, she glanced at her golden-haired chum.

"Now how," she asked softly, "did Clara manage that little trick?"

A question to which Mabs, at that moment at least, could not have returned the vaguest answer.

A Stranger Comes to Cliff House!



"MABS, wait a minute! Look!" Mabel Lynn paused.

It was about half an hour later. Rising-bell had rung, and Cliff House was astir. Babs and Mabs, having searched in vain for Clara Trevlyn, both in and out of the school, were on their way to snatch an early morning dip in the school's swimming-bath.

That swimming-bath was in the rear of the gym, and to reach it one could either slip through the gym or, taking a more circuitous route, approach by way of Cliff House's model kitchen and through the cloisters. The gym, at this early hour of the morning, was closed, and so the later and longer route was the one, of necessity, which must be taken. It was as they reached the cloisters that Babs made her whispered exclamation.

Mabs halted.

In front of them were the cloisters, a series of half-ruined arches, which, in the far-off days of the Middle Ages, had been the sanctuary used by the monks of Cliffe Abbey. Through one of those arches loomed the entrance to the old crypt—a dark, grim-looking opening.

And just coming from the entrance was Clara Trevlyn! She stepped swiftly into the open—and saw Babs and Mabs.

A wave of guilty colour stained her cheeks.

"Clara!" cried Babs.

Too late Clara turned, looking very much as if she intended to run away. She paused awkwardly.

"Oh, hallo!" she said.

"Hallo!" But Babs eyed her curiously. Rather pointedly her eyes went to the crypt. What had Clara been doing down there? And how, escaping from Study No. 7, had she got down there? The very question set alive a sudden startling thought in her mind, and for a moment her eyes reflected the startled surprise she felt.

At the same time, she told herself, it was no business of hers.

"We—we rather wondered where you'd got to," she temporised.

"Yes, I suppose you did," Clara returned awkwardly.

"Especially as—as Freda Ferriers went sneaking down after you this morning," Babs said. "And Freda got Sarah along to Study No. 7. They found it locked, Clara, with the key on the inside."

"Oh, fuf-fancy!" Clara said. She did not seem surprised.

"And so," Babs said, "I thought I'd give you the tip, that's all. But—Clara," she added quietly, "can I give you a hand with anything?"

Clara flushed, but shot Babs a grateful glance.

"Well—no, but thanks, old Babs."

"Not at all! Coming in for a swim?"

Clara paused. She smiled.

"Yes, I will, I— and then she broke off, as from round the corner of the cloisters the thud of running feet was heard, and scampering on to the scene came Freda Ferriers and Lydia Crossendale.

"Clara—I say, Clara—" Freda shrilled.

"Come on!" Clara said to Babs.

"But Clara—here, I say, wait a minute!" Freda panted. "There's someone to see you. A woman."

Clara stopped at that. Babs and Mabs stopped, too.

"What woman?" Clara demanded.

"A woman," Freda announced, "named Mrs. Trent."

Was it Babs' fancy, or did Clara's face, for a moment, turn suddenly pale? "What—what does she want?" she asked.

"Don't you know?" Freda looked at her meaningly. "She says she wants to see you because you're the cousin of Mary Malcolm. And how," Freda demanded, "did you jolly well get out of Study No. 7 after shutting yourself up in it this morning?"

But Clara did not reply to that question. She was wondering, with a sudden dread, what a woman named Mrs. Trent could be doing here. Trent! The same name as the girl whom she had just visited in the secret hide-out she had made for her behind the fireplace of Study No. 7!

It was debatable, indeed, if she even heard that last question of Freda's. But as Freda, determined to get an

No. 3 of a delightful new series for your "Cliff House Album."

CLIFF HOUSE PETS

Mabel Lynn's MUSTA

MUSTA is the name by which Mabel Lynn's magnificent blue Persian pet is known, but please don't run away with the impression that "Musta" is all of that name! Look at the register of the British Cat Club, of which Musta is a dignified member, and we get that name in full. It is Mustapha Kaliph Alladatra Cleastro!

Very impressive, isn't it? I don't wonder, with such a name, that Musta is one of the most haughty animals in the Pets' House. In Musta's company one feels that one is standing in the presence of a veritable king among cats!

Sleek, slinky, and regal—that's Mustapha! That wondrous greyish coat (called blue in the cat world) of his is so unbelievably soft that priceless ermine would seem harsh compared with it. It is a fitting cloak for his royal personality.

Those amber eyes, agleam with hidden fires, seem, when they look at you, to be reading your every secret thought. That unhurried, slinky walk of his can only be compared with the lithe grace of a tiger!

Yet, for all that, Musta is an astonishingly friendly cat. Unlike most of his tribe he has no affection for furniture, preferring always, when purringly pleased with himself, to find a

"Yes."

"And the cousin, I believe, of a girl named Mary Malcolm? The girl"—and the woman nodded towards the aeroplane—"who came down in these grounds yesterday?"

Clara admitted it.

"Ah!" The woman gazed at her. "My name is Mrs. Susan Trent," she volunteered. "Does that convey anything to you?"

"What should it convey to me?"

"I thought you might understand."

The woman paused. "As you are Mary Malcolm's cousin I thought perhaps Mary might have confided something in you. You see," she added silkily, "I have reason to believe that somebody else was in that plane yesterday when it arrived. You're sure," she added, with a hint of menace, "you know nothing about it?"

human leg to rub himself against. If not a human leg then Musta will choose the massive leg of Fay Chandler's St. Bernard, Bruno, with whom he has always been on most astonishingly good terms.

Of course, Musta is clever—what else could one expect? He can walk quite a long distance on his hind legs; he has a habit, when pleased to see you, of raising his right forepaw in the air as if giving you a royal salute!

He will talk to his beloved mistress in a series of purrs and meows, so differing in intonation that it is almost possible to believe he is carrying on an intelligent conversation.

With all dogs, except Bruno, however, he is a terror! Never yet has Musta been known to run away from any dog, and in such terrific fights he has had with them it is always Musta who has emerged the victor!

Musta was presented to Mabel when a tiny kitten by Princess Alvos Naida, the Egyptian princess who lived for a while at Luxor Hall, Essex.

Since then Musta has been entered in no fewer than eight cat shows, and in each has won a first prize.

Can you wonder, therefore, that Mabs, besides being so fond of Musta, thinks that he is the most wonderful cat in the world?



answer, planted herself in her path, Clara calmly pushed her aside.

Babs, with a look at Mabs, followed the Tomboy.

"But look here—" roared Freda.

Nobody was looking there Clara, rather fierce and worried, with a queer light in her eyes, was striding off, with Babs and Mabs uneasily following in her train. The quadrangle was reached, and as Clara was sighted, a shout went up from the half-dozen girls who surrounded the figure of a woman who stood on the edge of the drive.

"Here's Clara! Clara, you're wanted!"

Clara, bracing herself, stepped forward. The woman—she might have been between thirty-five and forty, with very small, greenish eyes—looked at her.

"You are Clara Trevlyn?" she asked.

Clara paused, her lips became set. Babs, gazing at her, saw that Clara did know something about it—and saw, too, that Clara did not intend to say anything about it. But at the question a sudden cry went up from Freda, who had again arrived on the scene.

"My hat, that explains it!" she cried.

"Explains what?" Mrs. Trent asked. "Explains why Mary Malcolm didn't want anybody to go near the plane?"

"Be quiet!" hissed Clara.

"Rats! Why should I be quiet?" Freda flared. "Didn't she jolly well pull me away from it when I tried to take a peep into the cockpit? And didn't she take jolly good care to keep guard over it until we all went to bed? And didn't you jolly well get up in the middle of the night for something, and

—but look!" she shrieked. "Here's Mary Malcolm herself!"

It was true. At that moment the crimson and gold racing-car had just thrummed its way through the gates of Cliff House, and had come to a halt near the stranded plane.

Without another word Mrs. Trent turned. With the crowd following her she hurried off towards the car, just as Mary Malcolm climbed out of it. She halted before her.

"Good-morning, Miss Malcolm!" she said.

Mary's face paled for a moment, but only for a moment.

"Good-morning!" she returned quietly, and looked at Clara, desperately signalling with her eyes.

"Yesterday, Miss Malcolm, I believe you made a forced landing at this school?" the woman said, her eyes steadfastly on the speed star's face. "And yesterday my daughter was abducted. She disappeared near a spot at which your aeroplane was seen to alight. Do you want me to speak more plainly?"

There came a gasp from the girls. Clara gritted her teeth. But Mary, supremely in possession of her control now, looked at the woman.

"What exactly are you trying to accuse me of?" she asked.

The answer came:

"I am accusing you, Mary Malcolm, of having abducted my daughter! And"—whirling on the startled Clara—"of this girl, your cousin, being concerned in that abduction! I demand at once, as Sophie Trent's mother, to search that plane!"

Clara Doesn't Care!



"P H E W E W!" whistled Freda Ferriers.

Even she had not expected anything half so dramatic as this.

There came a hiss of surprise from the assembled girls. Babs, with a sudden tremor of alarm, gazed at Clara. Clara was standing tense and taut, her nails biting deeply into the palms of her clenched hands. Mary, however, had not turned a hair. She looked, indeed, almost contemptuous.

"If," she said, "it would ease your mind to search the plane, Mrs. Trent, do so, by all means. At the same time," she added, "I absolutely deny having abducted your daughter, or anyone else."

Mary spoke calmly, confidently, and Clara, seeing that her cousin had the situation well in hand, relaxed, flashing at the electrified Freda a glance of triumph.

The woman paused.

"You deny my daughter travelled in that plane?"

"I deny it utterly!" Mary said emphatically.

Mrs. Trent looked taken aback a little. Nevertheless, it was plain she was not satisfied. With eyes still heavy with suspicion, she walked towards the plane. As some of the other girls would have followed her, Mary beckoned them away.

"Let her search," she said quietly. In a group they stood. Into the cockpit the woman disappeared. Five, ten minutes passed, and then she came out again. Her face was a mask of bewilderment.

"Well?" Mary asked. "Did you find her?"

"I was not looking for her," the

woman retorted. "I'm not fool enough to think that she would still be in the plane! I was merely looking for some clue which might have shown she had travelled in the plane."

"And you found none?"

"No!"

"Thank you!" Mary was supremely calm. "In that case, I take it you are satisfied?" she asked.

The woman glanced at her.

"You may take," she bit back, "what you like! But I shall not be satisfied, Mary Malcolm, until I have found my daughter! I am going to make it my duty to see the headmistress of this school, and tell her exactly what I suspect!"

She flashed a hard glance at Mary, who winced a little, but still smiled. Then, very deliberately, she strode towards the school.

Freda and Lydia Crossendale moved after her. The others, with a queer glance at the speed girl, turned hesitantly away.

Mary smiled a little. It was a twisted smile, however.

"Well, that's that!" she said. "But—" She shook her head. "Babs, do you mind if I have a word with Clara?" she asked. "And—and don't forget, all of you, that I am expecting to see you at the drome this afternoon! Clara," she whispered, when Babs and the others had moved away, "is everything all right?"

"Yes!" Clara told her.

"But that girl Freda—"

"Oh, don't worry about her!" Clara said confidently. "She doesn't know anything. She's just trying to be spiteful because you yanked her off the plane. But, Mary—" she added worriedly.

"Yes, old thing?"

"What did you mean by telling Mrs. Trent that you hadn't seen her daughter? That was a bit of a whopper, wasn't it?"

Mary glanced at her strangely.

"It was," she said, "the truth!" And, watching Clara's wide-open eyes, she added: "Because the girl who is known as Sophie Trent is no more Mrs. Trent's daughter than you are, Clara. That is why I helped her to run away. But shush!" she added quickly. "Here comes Bessie Bunter. Ask Sophie herself for the answer to your question. She'll explain. But for goodness' sake, Clara—"

"Yes?" Clara asked.

"Watch that girl Freda. I feel afraid of her somehow."

"HERE SHE IS!"

"Clara—"

Clara Trevlyn, emerging from the Head's study after breakfast, paused as she found herself confronted by Babs, Mabs, Janet Jordan, and Marjorie Hazeldene.

The interview with Miss Primrose had not been a pleasant one. To Clara, indeed, unused to the finesse of evasion, it had been something of an ordeal.

Very frankly Miss Primrose had told the Tomboy of her interview with Mrs. Trent; but as Miss Primrose herself was openly incredulous, it had not been such a hard job to persuade her that Mary and herself had had nothing whatever to do with the kidnapping of Mrs. Trent's daughter.

Apart from that, however, Clara had been rather severely hauled over the coals for her adventure of the night, and as a punishment had been confined to bounds for the afternoon.

"Get it hot?" Mabs asked sympathetically.

"Gated," Clara replied briefly.

"But, Clara, what—what happened about that woman?" Babs asked. "What did Primmy say?"

"Well, what should Primmy say?" Clara asked off-handedly. "I mean, the whole thing's so utterly silly, isn't it? Fancy accusing old Mary of kidnapping her silly daughter! As if Mary could do such a thing! Of course, it's all rot!" she said easily. "The less said about it, the soonest mended. Sorry I shan't be able to come with you this afternoon, though," she added. "You'll explain to Mary that I'm gated?"

Again Babs bit her lip. Clara seemed almost light-hearted. Puzzling that attitude, especially as Clara had been so keen to go to the aerodrome, especially when to-day was a half-holiday. On another occasion Clara would have grumbled like the very dickens!

Babs was puzzled bewilderedly. As Mary Malcolm had definitely denied being party to the abduction of Mrs. Trent's daughter, she believed her; but she could not help but wonder what other secret Clara and Mary were sharing.

No doubt Mary had been mysterious yesterday. No doubt Clara had been extremely baffling since her cousin's arrival. No doubt, either, that Clara had given no satisfactory explanation for having been out last night. Apart from that there still remained, unexplained, the mystery of the locked door of Study No. 7.

Rather deeply had Babs been pondering that last point—not because she wished to pry into Clara's business, but because she felt that Clara was handling something which might prove to be beyond her powers.

What Clara did Babs was prepared to believe she had good reason for, but Clara's notoriously clumsy methods of doing anything that required finesse made her anxious, and—

That locked door! The emergence of Clara from the crypt!

Not until those two incidents had linked themselves in her mind had a sudden blinding truth flashed upon Babs. Not until that truth had come had she remembered the almost forgotten secret room which was hidden by the fireplace of Study No. 7.

It seemed obvious to Babs then that Clara was hiding something, or someone, in that room.

But that Mary should abduct somebody's daughter, that Clara should be party to that abduction—that, of course, was preposterous!

"You don't seem to mind much, Clara," Janet Jordan said, staring.

"Well," Clara shrugged, "why should I mind? Anyway, what can I do about it? Oh, come on, don't let's gas! Let's get down and have a look at the plane, shall we? The workmen are coming this morning to dismantle the wings so that it can be taken away on a lorry."

And that was all.

Actually Clara was thinking that being confined to bounds this afternoon was in its way a blessing in disguise.

Confined to bounds was not the same as detention, where girls were shut up in class for the afternoon. Confined to bounds meant that she was free to rove anywhere in the school, but must not go beyond the school boundaries. And what a chance, with everybody half-holiday-making, to have a long chat with the girl she knew as Sophie Trent!

That, at this juncture, more than compensated Clara for the treat she would miss by being unable to visit the aerodrome race-track.

But perhaps Clara would not have

felt so easy in her mind could she have seen Freda Ferriers at that moment. For Freda, behind the tuckshop, was talking to Mrs. Trent.

"And you're sure that all you've told me is true, Freda?"

"Quite sure!" Freda answered.

"You think that my daughter is in the school, and that Clara Trevlyn is hiding her?"

"I do."

"I see!" The woman gazed at her narrowly. "You don't like Clara Trevlyn, eh?" she asked. "You don't like Mary Malcolm? You'd like to see both of them shown up, I take it? Oh, don't look horrified! I don't blame you. Well, supposing—supposing," she added cunningly, "I told you that if you did show them up there's ten pounds for you, as well as the satisfaction of getting your own back on them?"

Freda caught her breath.

"You mean—"

good-bye to Babs & Co., en route for the aerodrome, she strolled back into the school.

Most of the girls were out by that time. Those who were not were either playing in or watching the various hockey games going on on Junior or Senior Sides, and the school buildings were practically deserted. Out of the corner of her eye Clara saw Freda as she furtively followed her into the school.

Unhurriedly she strolled up the stairs towards the Fourth Form corridor. Carelessly she ambled round the corner, and there, reaching Study No. 1, which Freda shared with Lydia Crossendale and Rosa Rodworth, she halted, pressing herself flat against the wall. In a few moments Freda, breathing a little deeply, came hurrying round.

She started back, with a cry, as Clara's heavy hand fell upon her

Clara, with the key of the study in her hand, chuckled grimly as she scooted up the corridor towards Study No. 7. Freda was safe—for the time being, anyway.

Breathlessly she entered Study No. 7, quickly shut and locked the door, and then, drawing the curtains, fumbled with the rose in the ornamental carving on the mantelpiece. Slowly the fire-place swung back.

Clara stepped through, closing the secret entrance behind her. A few yards down the passage the door of the secret room was open, making a patch of light in the pitch darkness. Clara slipped towards it.

Sophie Trent rose from the pile of blankets in the corner as she came in.

"Oh, Clara, I wasn't expecting you! Is—is everything all right?"

"Perfectly," Clara said, "except that



WHAT a shock when Mrs. Trent accused the speed girl of having kidnapped her daughter! "I demand at once to search that plane!" cried the woman.

"I mean," the woman snapped, "that if either directly or indirectly through you I find Sophie again, there will be ten pounds as a reward. You understand?"

And she smiled, while Freda, her eyes suddenly shining, stared at her. Ten pounds!

"Leave it to me!" she said breathlessly.

The Fugitive's Story



FREDA FERRIERS had underestimated Clara Trevlyn's caution, however. For her own part Clara did not care two hoots about Freda, and most certainly was not afraid of her. But Mary had said—and said with deep meaning—"watch that girl Freda!" Mary's word was law to the Tomboy. Clara was watching her. And more especially as, ever since breakfast that morning, she had been conscious of Freda lurking about.

Clara was taking no chances. As soon as, after dinner, she had said

shoulder as the Tomboy rather grimly stared into her face

"Still spying?" she asked.

"I—I'm not!" Freda panted.

"No?" Clara looked at her with contempt. With a sudden movement, she flung the door of Study No. 1 open, at the same time extracting the key.

"Come inside!" she ordered, with a jerk of her head. "I want to talk to you!"

"But—but—"

"Come inside!" Clara rapped.

Freda threw her a half-scared glance, and walked in.

"Sit down," Clara ordered, "over there by the window!"

"But, look here—"

"And don't argue!"

Freda, trembling, crossed the room. In the act of turning to sit down there came a sudden click from the direction of the door, and she spun round. She was just in time to see the door closing—just in time to hear the key snick in the lock as desperately she ran forward.

"Clara!" she shrielled. "Clara, you cat, let me out!" And thump, thump, thump! went her fist on the panels. "Let me out!"

a woman named Mrs. Trent is on your track."

The girl's face paled.

"She—she's found out?"

"Nothing," Clara said; "but she's got more than an idea. Sophie, I haven't had a chance to talk to you yet, but there are one or two things I want to get clear. I haven't had a chance, either, to ask Mary the details of the case. Mary said you'd tell me. Is that right?"

"Yes," Sophie said simply.

"Then," Clara said, seating herself on the canvas picnic stool she had supplied, "what's the story? How did all this happen?"

Sophie glanced at her. For a moment her good-looking face overshadowed.

"But it sounds so—so fantastic!" she said.

"Never mind," Clara advised. "Mary believes it. What's good enough for Mary is good enough for me. Fire ahead!"

And Sophie, in a low voice, "fired ahead." She had been an assistant at

the aerodrome canteen in Cornwall, she said, where Mary Malcolm had learned her flying. Mary and she had become friends. One day she had taken Mary home to the cottage occupied by her mother and father, and, looking through an old photo-album, Mary, to her amazement, had come across a photograph of two young men, one of whom was her own father, Mr. Malcolm.

That, of course, excited Mary. She wanted to know who her father's companion was. She had asked Mrs. Trent, who for some reason had flown into a rage, had snatched the photograph from her, and ordered her out of the house.

"Well, Mary went," Sophie said. "I was ordered never to speak to her again. Naturally, I did speak to Mary—until, without a word of explanation, I was taken from my job in the aerodrome and kept at home. To all intents and purposes, although I was their daughter, I was kept a prisoner. I was never allowed to go outside unless father or mother accompanied me."

"Funny!" Clara frowned.

"You'll think so when you hear the rest," Sophie replied, and went on: "Meantime, Mary had gone back home on leave. There she had asked her father about the photograph she had seen. As it happened, he had a duplicate. He told Mary that the man he had been photographed with was a Keith Petherick, a great friend of his, who had gone to Canada twelve or fourteen years ago after the death of his wife. Apparently, Keith Petherick had a baby daughter. He left this daughter in charge of his married sister, Susan Trent."

Clara stared.

"The woman who accused Mary—"

"Please listen!" Sophie begged. "Mary had an idea there was something rather funny about it all. She made inquiries. She found out that at the time Mrs. Trent adopted Mr. Petherick's daughter, she also had a daughter of her own. Meantime, Mr. Petherick had found gold in Canada, and was a rich man."

"Go on!" Clara said excitedly.

"Then—then Mr. Petherick's daughter died. They sent all her effects and the death certificate and so on to Mr. Petherick in Canada, and he was so upset that he said he never wanted to see England again. Meantime, of course, he was still writing to Mrs. Trent, and had made a will in Mrs. Trent's favour, as she was his only sister and, therefore, his next-of-kin now that his own child had died."

"Well, yes; but all that seems straightforward," Clara said.

"No—wait!" Sophie went on. She leaned forward, her pale cheeks a little flushed. "A week ago a letter came from Mr. Petherick. It was a letter which said that he had decided to come back to England to see a specialist, as he was suffering from some disease which the Canadian doctors said was incurable. I can tell you there was a great scuffle in the house when that letter arrived, and I was told, to my astonishment, that in a few days' time I should be leaving England for a school in Italy. Naturally, I didn't want to go. I would sooner have run away. In fact, I did try."

And then she went on to describe how, hiding herself behind the sofa in the living-room one night, she had heard a conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Trent; and how she had learned at that conversation that she was not Sophie Trent at all, but the daughter of Keith Petherick!

"Because, you see," she said simply to Clara, "what had happened was this: It wasn't Mr. Petherick's daughter who

had died—it was their own; they faked the death certificate. And why? Simply because, now that Mr. Petherick was rich, they knew he would leave his money to his sister. But he wouldn't have left that money to her if his own daughter had been alive, would he? So you see why they were flustered when his letter came. They had never expected him to break his vow and return to England."

"But why," Clara asked, "did they want to get rid of you? They didn't know you knew anything; and surely, after all that time, they wouldn't have expected your father to recognise you?"

"That was it!" Sophie spoke tensely. "My father would recognise me," she said, "because I have a certain heart-shaped birthmark above my elbow. It was their plan to get me out of the way in case of accidents."

"Well, my hat!" Clara breathed. "What a plan! And then what happened?"

"Well, I got away. I was running away when I met Mary. I told her everything. But, as Mary pointed out, I couldn't do anything. The only person who could prove my identity was my own father. But, naturally, if it was left to the Trents, I should never see him."

"Quite!" Clara agreed.

"And so Mary arranged the scheme. She said she was coming to Courtfield by air. She told me to get away on the following day, and meet her at a certain spot. I did. But I was spotted when I was running off. My mother followed. I got to the place where Mary had the plane waiting, and—well, you know the rest."

There was a silence. Clara looked at her.

"And now?" she breathed.

"Now Mary is trying to find out exactly what time my father will arrive at Southampton. Once she knows that, she is going to fly me there to meet the boat. That's all."

Clara looked at her. Poor, poor girl, was her first compassionate thought! But what a brick Mary was—Mary, her cousin, who would do all this for the sake of a friend! The girl eyed her pleadingly.

"Clara, you believe it?" she asked. "I know it must sound awfully woolly and far-fetched, but—"

"Believe it? Of course!" Clara said. She grinned chummily at the other. "And until Mary takes you away to meet your father, I'll help all I can. We'll win through! Now—you're sure you've got everything you want?"

There was no mistaking Sophie's gratitude as she nodded.

"Oh, Clara, yes."

"Right-ho! I'll bring you some more grubbins to-night," Clara promised. "Meantime, don't worry. Now I'll be going."

"So long!" Sophie whispered. "And—thank you so much!"

Clara nodded. She went out. Carefully she manipulated the secret entrance, stepping into her study. Carefully she closed it again, and then swiftly tiptoeing towards the door, turned the key in the lock and threw it open. And then in dismay she started back.

For in the passage confronting her were two figures. One was Miss Primrose, the other Freda Ferriers. Miss Primrose looked at her angrily.

"And why, Clara Trevlyn," she asked, "have you kept me waiting here for the last ten minutes, refusing to answer my calls? And what do you mean by shutting Freda up in her study? Are you asking for expulsion, girl?"

Babs Investigates!



"ENJOYING it,

Babs?"

"Oh, rather!"

Babs laughed.

"Well, hold tight. Here

comes the bend again."

And broo-oommm went the crimson and gold car as at eighty miles an hour it rushed along the straight of the aerodrome track.

Babs was in that car. Mary, her pretty face all smiling dimples, was by her side. In the stand, waiting their turns for a joy ride, were Mabs, Gemma Carstairs, Leila Carroll, Marjorie Hazeldene, and Janet Jordan. Bessie Bunter was a member of the party, too, but Bessie at the moment was rather more interested in the aerodrome canteen.

"Gee, look at her!" breathed Leila.

Look indeed! In the seat beside Mary, Babs was holding her breath as the car, racing along the straight, touched eighty-five, six, seven, eight—up to ninety. Then the banking, which made Babs close her eyes. The back straight, with the car pulsing and thundering beneath her. Ninety-five!

"Watch for the hundred!" Mary roared.

"Oh, gug-goodness!" Babs gasped.

But she was thrilled; gloriously, excitedly thrilled. Never before had Babs travelled at such a rate in a car. The needle went up. A hundred! She caught her breath. Five—ten—they were still accelerating!

Then Mary, with a laugh, decelerated. The car shot once more round the track, slithering to a standstill.

"Oh, my hat!" Babs gasped. "Oh, crumbs, Mabs, I'm still here, aren't I?" she asked her waiting chum. "Mary, that was wonderful!" she breathed.

"I—I never knew a car could go so fast!"

Mary laughed.

"Just wait," she promised, "until you see what this machine really can do. Gemma, you like a spin now?"

"What-ho!" Gemma beamed.

"Make way, me hearties!"

She got in, waving a hand to them as the car started. Off she went, while the chums, shining-eyed, watched the car tear round the track. In three minutes Gemma came in. Mabs' turn then.

No doubt that the chums were having the time of their lives that afternoon. How they all regretted, however, that Clara, their tomboy chum, was not there to share their enjoyment! But what a driver Mary was. How thrilling to be in her company. How utterly increasing their admiration for her handling of that powerful car.

If they had a regret it was because the cabin monoplane, which by this time had been removed from Cliff House, had not yet been reassembled, and a flip in that therefore was out of the question.

There were people other than the chums watching those breathless spins on the track. A group of admiring mechanics, and racing-men, and owners, stood at the other side of the stand. Babs, looking towards them, recognised one as the famous James B. Cleveden-Carr. Cleveden-Carr was Mary's latest and most enthusiastic backer. It was Cleveden-Carr who owned the new car she was driving now; he from whom she hoped for such big things in the future.

Now the racer had pulled in again, and Mabs, breathless, thrilled, scrambled out. In climbed Leila, and with a roar and a rush the huge red and gold monster was off once again. Then all at once Babs touched Mabs' arm.

"I say, look!" she breathed.

Mabs looked.

"Phew! Mrs. Trent!" she said.

Mrs. Trent, Mary's accuser at Cliff House, it was! She was pushing her way down one of the aisles towards the little group of owners and mechanics. Now they saw her touch Mr. Cleveden-Carr's arm.

The man looked round. He looked towards the hurtling racer, as the woman began to speak, then he frowned.

"Trouble, looks like," Mabs muttered.

Babs nodded. It certainly seemed like it. Mr. Carr was looking troubled and angry now, and more than a little amazed.

As Mary, with Leila, finished her run and they all ran out on to the track to meet her, he raised his arm. Mary looked up. She saw Mrs. Trent; her face paled.

"Oh!" she muttered.
 "Mary!" The motor magnate, with Mrs. Trent beside him, came up. His

"I PROTEST! I won't—I won't allow it!" Clara almost shouted.
 "You can't search—you mustn't search!" The Tomboy's outburst seemed to prove that the woman's accusation was well-founded, after all.



face was rather grimly set. "You know this lady?"

"Yes," Mary said, and slipped from the car.

"She is making a rather serious charge against you. Do you know anything about that?"

Mary faced him steadily.
 "If she is accusing me of kidnapping her daughter, I know nothing of it," she said steadily, "and I am afraid I do not understand, Mr. Cleveden-Carr, why she should come to you."

"She came to me for a very good reason," the motorist said, "because I am your employer. Because you are racing for me. Naturally I admire your work, Mary. At the same time I must point out the enormous harm you would do both to me and yourself if you got mixed up in a scandal of such a nature."

Mary gazed at him.
 "You mean, Mr. Cleveden-Carr?"

"I mean," he said curtly, "that it would mean the end of your racing career as far as I am concerned! I think, Mrs. Trent, you had better go," he added.

"Then you do not intend to do anything?" Mrs. Trent snapped.

"Certainly not! I hope," the motor magnate said stiffly, "I am above acting upon mere suspicions, Mrs. Trent. I am sorry that you have lost your daughter. At the same time, you can hardly expect me to dispense with one of my most skillful assistants because you suspect her."

"And if," Mrs. Trent asked, her eyes glimmering, "I bring you proof?"
 "Then," he said tartly, "we will talk about it. Very well, Mary, you may proceed!"

And Mary, while the chums rather wonderingly eyed her, climbed into the racing car.

But it was noticeable now that she was looking rather pale. And it was noticeable, too, during the rest of the afternoon, that she hardly spoke a word.

"THERE'S SOMETHING in it! There must be something in it," Barbara Redfern said, and she said it very

Mabs looked startled then. Her lips parted. But, remembering all at once the existence of that room, she caught her breath.

"I've not said anything yet," Babs said. "I'm not going to say anything now—except to you. But I've been doing a little thinking, Mabs—and, frankly, I'm worried. Clara, as you know, won't say anything—and until she does, how can we possibly help her? But if we can't help her, it looks to me as if there's going to be trouble. Big trouble!" she added significantly.

"But how—" hesitantly began Mabs.

"Only one way," Babs replied, anticipating the question, "that is to find out what Clara's little game is. Once we know that, she can't very well help



worriedly. "It's not like Clara to be so jolly mysterious. It's not like Mary to be so shaken up because some silly woman makes a preposterous charge. I don't want to poke my nose into things that don't concern me, but, Mabs, supposing it is true?"

No less worried than Babs was Mabel Lynn as she regarded her chum across the table of Study No. 4 that evening.

An hour ago they had returned from the drome, to be met by the news which was now the common property of the school—that Clara Trevlyn, having locked Freda Ferriers in her study, and then locked herself in her own, had earned another detention and lines for having refused to answer Miss Primrose's demand to unlock the door.

"But—but how could it be?"

"I don't know!" Babs shook her head. "But, Mabs, Clara didn't lock herself up in her study because she wanted to defy Miss Primrose. If you ask me, she wasn't in the study when Miss Primrose was calling her!"

"Then," Mabs demanded, "where was she?"

"In the secret room behind the fireplace!"

but let us into the secret then. And I." Babs finished, rising, "am going to find out—now!"

Mabs looked startled.

"But, Babs—"

"It's all right," Babs said. "Marjorie and Janet are in the gym with Lady Pat. Clara will be alone in Study No. 7. I'll tell her you want to see her—which you do, don't you, about her part in the concert? Keep her engaged in conversation until I come back. We'll never get the old duffer to spill the beans unless we force her hand. If we really can't help, then we'll just back out."

Mabs nodded.

Babs went along to Study No. 7 and found Clara just finishing her lines. Babs told her that Mabs wished to see her.

"O.K.," nodded the Tomboy. "I'll just drop these lines in first."

Babs left the study with her, but directly Clara went off to hand in her lines, she dodged back into the room again, closing and locking the door.

Eagerly she approached the fireplace.

(Continued on page 14)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS



PATRICIA is glad that you all look upon her as a friend of your very own. This week she writes to you all again in that friendly way so typical of her, telling you news and happenings of interest to schoolgirls.

I'LL soon be Easter [won't it? And I expect you're all thinking and wondering just what you will have to wear that's NEW—for it's lucky to have something new on Easter Sunday.

Your Patricia is certainly considering that matter.

I think it shall be a new hat—an Easter bonnet. (Actually, you can take that "bonnet" word almost seriously, for this year's newest shapes, even for well-dressed schoolgirls, are bonnets. Not Highland bonnets as were worn in the winter, but the real poke-bonnet style, that should delight all you who have ever fancied yourselves as the Victorian, crinoline type!)

Perhaps also, I shall have some new gloves. And over these your colour-loving Patricia will be reckless. They shall be fuchsia coloured, to match the flowers on my new blue hat!

The Family is also contemplating new things—whether it's due to Easter, or merely to the bright weather, I don't know.

Father is going to have a whole new suit—not that less than a whole one would be much use, I suppose!

Small brother Heatherington, Heath for short, will have some new summery blouses—for his last year's look as if they'd just about fit the family cat.

Mother—not to be outdone by her favourite one and only daughter Patricia—or me I—will also have a new hat. And possibly some new shoes.

● Heath's Story

After reading in the newspapers about the funny little stories that small children made up, I thought I'd try the idea out on young Heath.

"Now I want you to tell me a very nice story, Heath," I said. "One of your very own."

Heath looked solemn, picked up Minkie, the family kitten, sat down and began.

"Well," he said. "I was going for a walk. Me an' you, an'—an'—"
He paused. "Me an' you an'—a mouse! We went walking along the road—ever such a long way. Then we came to a park, an' we met another mouse." He drew a deep breath. "This mouse," he went on, "started fightin' my mouse, an'—do you know?—he fought this mouse an' killed it!!"

"Shocking!" said I. "And is that the end of the story?"

"Oh, no!" said Heath. "The other mouse was so sorry, he was deaded, too. So then we went for another walk."

"Who? Just you and me??" I asked.

"No, me and you and the two mouses," said Heath impatiently. (Apparently they had mysteriously come to life again.)

"We went ever and ever such a long way. Right to the other end of the park."

"Then what did we do?"

"Oh," Heath looked rather surprised. "We came home again and went to bed." He was hurrying now, obviously tired of this story, which I felt ought to be a serial, he was spinning it out so.

"When we got up in the morning, the mouse had some breakfast—some porridge. An' the mouse said to me: 'Please, who's been eatin' my porridge?' An' that's the end of the story. Do you like it?"

I certainly did like his little story—even though it might not come up to the standards of Mr. Grimm or Mr. Anderson, of fairy-tale fame.

And by the way, did you realise that while these stories are considered the finest fairy stories in the world almost, not a single fairy is mentioned in any of them?

● A Dainty Touch

I know we mustn't cast a clout till May is out! But at least you'll be thinking soon of discarding your warm, woolly pyjamas and wearing a more flimsy nightie for bed-time wear.

When a nightie has grown too tight for you, it can be very uncomfortable, but rather than discard it, why not "let it out" in the ways suggested in the picture here?

As you will see, a piece of lace, or lace insertion, let in from the neck will give an extra inch or so that will make just the difference.

After cutting a little opening down the front from the neck of the nightie, you can slip in the lace and sew it at each side, making the end to a point. It can be done in two ticks, and the nightie will look even prettier than before.



● Fish and Owl

Here are two more ideas for making the Easter morning breakfast egg look different. The young members of the family in particular will love to crack an egg like this.

From any scraps of paper you cut out fins, tail, and mouth of the fish. Then, when the egg is boiled, you swiftly paste them into position with just a dab of glue.

The wise-owl decoration consists of two circles and one triangle of paper, all prepared beforehand, with the eyes and beak marked on in coloured pencil. It takes but a second to stick the paper on to the egg when it is ready for the table.



Two strips of cardboard make the egg-cups. The top one has a piece cut out each side to enable the egg to rest long-ways. The underneath one is snipped all round like a crown.

Then the strips of cardboard are glued into a little ring so that the egg is quite safe resting in it.

● A Dictation Test

When you have some of your chums at home to tea, and are wondering what to do to fill in the time while the kettle's boiling, do give them each a pencil and paper. Then, standing in front of them, announce a dictation test of this very old rhyme that I found in a book.

It is supposed to be very, very difficult to write down correctly to dictation, so I warn you.

It is also a voice test as well, for all words must be said very clearly, with just that correct enunciation which is the test of a good speaking voice.

Here's the rhyme.

"While hewing yews Hugh lost his ewe,
And put it in the 'Hue and Cry.'
To mark its face's dusty hues,
Was all the efforts he could use."

As you'll realise, there are seven different ways of pronouncing the sound "u" in that rhyme. So it's a test for you, the dictator, as much as for your patient chums.

Don't forget to keep this rhyme, in order to check over their spelling, will you?

Bye-bye till next week, pets.

Your friend,

PATRICIA



CAROL DOES SOME SPRING-CLEANING

Carol spends a very busy time being really domesticated—and enjoys it, especially as she has a chum to help.

“WHAT shall we do, Carol?” asked Anne when she called on her chum last Saturday afternoon. Carol grinned.

“Well, I don’t know about you, my uninvited guest, but I was going to do a spot of spring-cleaning.”

“Sounds deadly!” said Anne, with a shudder.

“Tis not!” Carol retorted with vigour. “It’s neither deadly, stuffy, dull, boring, nor old-fashioned. Come on and you’ll soon agree with me.”

Into the kitchen the two chums went.

“Mother’s out shopping,” Carol explained, “and I promised her a surprise on condition she brought back some chocolate swiss roll; so if you behave yourself, young Anne, I may let you stay to tea.”

As she spoke Carol picked up the tea-tray and laid a clean dishcloth over it. Then into the sitting-room they went, where Carol proceeded to scoop up all the ornaments in sight.

She stood them on the tray, and they didn’t slip about there, thanks to the cloth. Back to the kitchen.

Warm water was poured into the washing-up bowl and a very few soap flakes.

Carol washed while Anne wiped. Each washable ornament was quickly immersed in the soapy water, rinsed in clear water, and then dried and polished with a clean cloth.

Carol and Anne played at spelling bee while working and found it good fun, especially as they hadn’t a dictionary to check up with.

Anne was quite surprised at how quickly they had finished the nicknacks.

“You have to wash ornaments ever so

quickly,” Carol said during a pause. “You mustn’t use any soda or harsh scouring powder, or else the colours tend to come off. That’s why they must be dried again quickly, too.”

“Thank you, teacher!” said Anne, with a curtsy. “Now what?”

“The piano,” Carol said promptly. She squeezed the juice of half a lemon into a saucer, took a piece of rag and went into the sitting-room, Anne following.

IVORY-WHITE

Carol wiped over each of the rather discoloured keys of the piano with the cloth dipped in the lemon-juice.

“Run and get a damp cloth from the kitchen, Anne,” she commanded.

Anne ran off. When she returned Carol wiped the keys of the piano over with the damp cloth, and Anne was really surprised to see how white and new they looked now.

For the polishing of the keys, which is very important after the lemon-juice treatment, Carol dipped a cloth in a drop of milk. She wiped each key carefully with this and then polished with a dry duster.

Then to the kitchen they went again, and Carol used up the lemon-juice in cleaning the handles of the table knives. They looked almost new as a result.

The remainder of the milk she used to mix with the “whiting” for cleaning her tennis shoes.

“I’m playing tennis over Easter,” she explained to Anne, “with one of my cousins who’s coming to stay with us, so I might as well have my shoes ready.”

“But what extra good does the milk do?” asked Anne. “I always mix the shoe-white with water.”

“It prevents the white from rubbing off,” explained Carol, “apart from making the white go on whiter.”

“Aren’t you clever!” said Anne, who, being an old chum, was allowed to be facetious. “Now what do we do?”

“Sure you’re not tired?” asked Carol.

“Of course not; I’m enjoying myself, as a matter of fact,” Anne replied.

“Right. Then we’ll spring-clean the food-cupboard.” And Carol made her way to the tall cupboard in the corner of the kitchen. Being a small house, it didn’t boast a roomy, stone-shelved larder, so this meant the cupboard had to be kept extra neat, always, if it were not to become overcrowded.

As Carol removed all the food and grocery stores from the cupboard, placing them on the table, Anne dusted each packet, bottle, and jar thoroughly.

Nearly empty jam-jars were examined to see that the jam had not gone all “sugary.”

LABOUR-SAVING.

Soon all the shelves were empty. They were covered with American cloth, which meant that no scrubbing was ever required.

“Mother bought this for sixpence a yard,” Carol told Anne, “and a card of white-headed drawing-pins at the same time. So it took no time to fix over the shelves. And apart from looking so much better than bare boards, it’s frightfully easy to keep clean.”

As she spoke, she rinsed out the dish-cloth, rubbed a little soap on it, and wiped over the shelves. Then she wrung out the cloth in clear water and repeated the process.

“Now we can put the things back,” she said.

Anne passed them one at a time, while Carol did the arranging. Tall bottles and packets went to the back of the shelves, shorter articles to the front.

Little-used stores, tinned food, and so on, went on the top-most shelves in neat rows.

“Well, that looks fine,” Anne said admiringly, when they had finished. She listened. “Oh, there’s someone coming!”

It was Carol’s mother.

“Hallo, Anne!” she said. “I hope you like chocolate Swiss roll. You are staying to tea, aren’t you?”

“She’s earned it, mother mine,” chipped in Carol.

A KITE FOR A SMALL BOY

It can be made by the nimble-fingered schoolgirl in less than an hour.

WOULDN’T a small—or even a bigger—brother be thrilled with a kite like this one here? (My small brother adores his, and at the moment his first words each morning are: “Is it going to be windy to-day?”)

You may need the assistance of a big brother or father for the first step in the making of the kite. For your first requirements are two thin strips of wood. One must be fifteen inches long and the other ten and a half inches.

Once having these, you can proceed merrily on your own, with an admiring audience if you like.

Place the shorter strip of wood across the longer, about four inches from one end,

then keep both in position with string tied around the crossing.

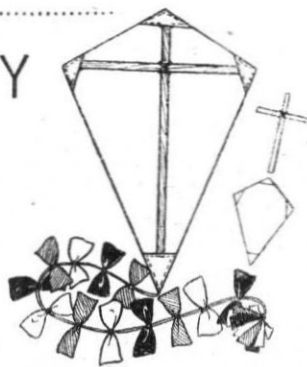
You’ll want a large sheet of drawing paper or stout brown paper next.

A BRIGHT TAIL

Cut it out to the shape shown in the little diagram, so that it is fifteen inches high, and ten and a half inches across at widest part.

Make little triangle pockets of paper and sew one across each of the four corners. Rest the sticks in these.

Attach a long, long string to the bottom corner of the kite and tie pieces of paper at intervals along this string. The gayer and more varied the pieces of paper for the kite’s “tail,” the better, of course,



There, now it is complete, and your final requirement is a ball of string to enable the kite, once it is launched, to fly high into the air—the delight and envy of all the small people in the neighbourhood.

(Continued from page 11)

As she did so she caught her leg against the coal-bucket.

"Oh!" gasped Babs. She winced as for a moment a stab of pain shot through her leg. But the next she had forgotten her injury.

Knowing the secret of the fireplace, she swiftly found the rose which opened it, and passed through. She looked to the right, a rather grim smile on her face as she saw the light which flooded out into the corridor. Softly she tiptoed along to it.

And then—
"Oh!" cried Sophie, agitatedly staring up. "Who—who are you?" she added faintly.

"A friend," Babs said. "Clara's friend—Mary Malcolm's friend. No, please don't look startled. I rather expected to find you here," she added, "and perhaps a little explanation is due. I came here because of Clara."

In a few words she explained. The girl's face cleared.

"And—what do you want of me?"

"Only one thing," Babs said. "Is your name Trent?"

"Well, yes, I'm known by that name—" And then she started. "Oh, my goodness! You must have hurt your leg," she cried. "Look, it's bleeding!"

Babs looked down. She had forgotten until that moment having collided with the coal-bucket. Quite a hole had been torn in her lisle stocking, through which blood was oozing.

"Oh dear, what a nuisance!" she said. "And, of course, I would leave my handkerchief in Study No. 4! Never mind!"

"But you must mind," Sophie said. "I've seen those sort of scratches turn to dreadful things. Wait a minute, here's a handkerchief—" And she plucked one from her pocket. "It's a clean one," she added. "Please take it!"

"Thanks!" Babs smiled. She took it and dabbed at her leg. Then, facing Sophie again, she unconsciously slipped the handkerchief into her own tunic pocket.

"I'm sorry, I hope you didn't mind my barging in like this? But it'll make it easier for Clara if she knows somebody else is in the secret. It'll make it easier for me to help her—and you. I'm going to her now. I'm going to tell her what I've found out. Meantime," she added, "good luck!"

"And good luck to you!" breathed Sophie.

Babs, with a smile, disappeared. Swiftly she retraced her steps into Study No. 7. There softly she pushed back the secret panel, but in reaching up, never noticed the handkerchief which dropped from her pocket. Leaving the study, she hurried along to Study No. 4, and entered.

Clara, talking to Mabs, looked up. She saw at once, from the very look on Babs' face, that something significant had happened. If Babs' face hadn't told her, her actions would have. For Babs very deliberately locked the door. Clara blinked.

"But, here, I say, what's that for? What's the matter?"

"The matter," Babs said, seating herself, "is that Mabs and I want to talk to you, Clara, old thing! We want, as I've told you before, to help—and now we're going to insist upon helping! Because," Babs confessed, "without your permission, I've taken the liberty of peeping into the secret room behind the fireplace in your study."

Clara started.

"Babs, you didn't—"
"I did!" Babs said. "I did it because it was the only way to force you to let us help. I know you've promised Mary you won't say anything, but now we've found out, you can't very well keep silent, can you? And three heads," Babs added shrewdly, "are better than one! We're standing by you—and Sophie! So now, Clara, old oyster, what about it?"

And Clara shrugged and sighed.
"What is the use of trying to keep a secret from you?" she asked. "But I'm jolly glad you do know. Here's the whole story—"

AND WHILE Clara told that story, a furtive figure came along the Fourth Form corridor and slipped into Study No. 7.

For a moment Freda Ferriers stood gazing round her.

"Now how the dickens," she muttered, "does she get in and out of this room with the door locked?"

She looked at the fireplace. Impossible that way, of course! She tiptoed towards the window, and then suddenly stopped as she saw the thing that lay in her path—a white handkerchief covered with red stains.

With a sharp, hissing intake of breath, Freda bent forward. She picked the hanky up, running it through her fingers. And then she jumped, peering more keenly, almost holding her breath as her eyes picked out two initials in the corner.

"Phew!" gasped Freda.
For those initials were:

"S. T."
Who else's but Sophie Trent's?
Two minutes later Freda, in Study No. 1, was cramming that handkerchief into an envelope. The envelope was addressed to Mrs. Trent, at the Grand Hotel in Courtfield!

Swift Work!



"H A I L O!" Clara Trevlyn exclaimed suddenly. "Talk of angels and airwomen!"

It was next morning after breakfast. She and Babs and Mabs stood sunning themselves on the steps of Cliff House.

Rather glowingly Clara had been discussing Mary's chances in the great motor-race—the race which was destined to take place at the aerodrome track to-morrow.

Full of enthusiasm was Clara for that great event, and most desperately anxious that nothing should happen to mar its success.

It was odd, perhaps, that who should drive in at the gates but Mary herself.

She waved a rather urgent hand to Clara as she applied the brakes. Clara, with a quick look at her two chums, ran towards her.

"Mary!" she cried. "What's the matter?"

"Clara—" Mary did not get out of the car. She looked up anxiously.

"Sophie—is she all right?"

"Why, yes."

"Then listen," Mary said. "I'm not going to stop. I passed the Trent woman on the way here and I've got an idea she's coming to the school. Clara, I've located Mr Petherick. He's arriving to-morrow morning at three o'clock at Southampton on the

Plathian. To night at eleven I'll be in the road near the old elm with the car. Will you bring Sophie?"

"My hat, I should say so!" Clara cried, her eyes glistening.

"Right-ho! I'll rely on you, then. And—and thanks, Clara," Mary whispered. "I'll never forget what you've done! Bye-bye!"

"And good luck!" glowed Clara, as Mary, smartly reversing, sent the car out into the road.

Assembly bell was ringing then, so that there was only time to tell Babs and Mabs, in the most hurried of whispers, the exciting news.

They entered Big Hall, stepping into their places in the Form, which was already marshalled in front of the dais.

The registers were called, orders for the day read out by Miss Bullivant. Then came a shuffle as the curtain on the right of the dais opened and Miss Primrose, accompanied by another woman, stepped on to the rostrum.

Clara, Mabs, and Babs gasped as they beheld the newcomer. It was Mrs. Trent!

"Now, what the dickens—" Babs muttered.

There was a stare of wonderment as Miss Primrose stepped to the middle of the rostrum. Then her eyes fastened full upon Clara Trevlyn.

"Clara, please come up here!"

Clara tensed. There was going to be trouble, evidently! Babs glanced uneasily at Mabs; Mabs uneasily at Babs. Rather astoundedly the whole school looked on as Clara very quietly stepped up to face the headmistress.

Miss Primrose looked at her.

"Clara, you are already aware of the charge Mrs. Trent has laid at your door—that of helping your cousin Mary to abduct her daughter! I admit that I regarded the charge myself with some incredulity when I first heard it, and I most sincerely hope, Clara, that you will be able to explain away a new fact which has now come to light. Mrs. Trent, persisting in her belief that you are hiding her daughter in this school, threatens to bring in the police unless this matter is finally cleared up. Now, Clara, answer carefully. Are you hiding Sophie Trent?"

"No!"

"And you deny ever having seen Sophie Trent?"

"Yes!"

"Then," Miss Primrose asked, and suddenly held up a small and blood-stained handkerchief, "how do you account, Clara, for this evidence being found in your study yesterday? Mrs. Trent assures me that it is her daughter's. The initials 'S. T.' are in the corner!"

Clara blinked at that. It held no significance for her, of course. But Babs, recognising and remembering all at once, almost uttered a cry.

That handkerchief! What a fool, what an idiotic, careless fool not to have remembered it until this moment!

"I've never seen the handkerchief!" Clara protested.

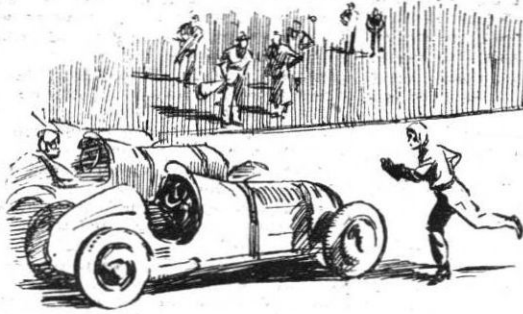
"The girl is lying—deliberately, wilfully!" It was Mrs. Trent who spoke.

"Miss Primrose, why do you persist in this ridiculous scene? Why not, as I have asked you, have the whole school searched from end to end? Obviously, Sophie is on the premises—and, obviously, that girl knows exactly where she is. I believe this school contains many secret entrances and exits. Have you ever thought, Miss Primrose, as has been suggested to me, that Study No. 7 may hold one of them?"

Clara started. Babs bit her lip.

"But, my dear Mrs. Trent—"

NO wonder Babs & Co. were startled. For there, dashing along the track towards her waiting car, was Mary Malcolm. And behind her—the missing Clara Trevlyn!



"Miss Primrose, I insist upon a search! I insist upon that search here and now, starting with this girl's study—otherwise," she added grimly, "I call in the police!"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Mabs. "Babs, I believe Primmy's going to let her have her way!"

That was obvious. Miss Primrose's face was working. Clara, white and hunted, waited breathlessly.

The school was in a buzz. Every eye then was upon the dais, wondering tensely what was going to happen.

But the proof, it seemed, was there, in spite of Clara's protestations. The threat of the police was working with Miss Primrose. She slowly nodded.

"Very well!" she said.

"No!" Clara quivered. "I protest! I protest! I won't—I won't allow it!" Clara almost shouted, and made a leap forward, only to be caught by Sarah Harrigan and Connie Jackson. "You can't search—you mustn't search—"

"Sarah, take Clara to my room!" Miss Primrose thundered. "Lock her up in there. Girls, everyone silent, please!"

"Mabs," muttered Babs, "come on!"

"Why—"

"Quickly!" hissed Babs.

She moved towards the door next which she stood. Easy, in that moment of tense excitement, to slip through it unnoticed.

Once outside, Babs spoke quickly.

"Mabs, get to the cloak-room. Put on a coat and hat. Then get back to Study No. 7—quickly! Don't let anybody see your face. When you hear them coming—run! Lead them a wild-goose chase—run—run anywhere—anywhere; but for goodness' sake don't go near the crypt! Clara's helpless. It's up to us to get Sophie away!"

Mabs nodded. She was quick to understand. She obeyed at once, while Babs, flying up the stairs, darted into Study No. 7.

A moment's fumbling with the fire-place before it swung open, and then she had darted through, closing it behind her.

Sophie, when she appeared, jumped up startledly.

"Get your hat and coat on—quickly," Babs gasped—"the hunt's up!"

Sophie gave her one scared look. She seemed to understand. Without a word she snatched up her hat and coat. As Babs led the way down the tunnel which led to the crypt she struggled into them.

"Hold on to me!" Babs whispered, in the darkness.

Again Sophie obeyed. She caught Babs' girdle. Downwards in the darkness they both stumbled, feeling their way. Then suddenly they pulled up

short at the blank wall which formed the exit to the tunnel. Babs, pressing the secret spring, swung it open, and they entered the crypt.

Across the floor Babs led the way, up the stairs. Fearfully she looked out into the cloisters.

Nobody about. But inside the school came muffled cries and shouts, followed by the excited scampering of feet.

Mabs, evidently, was doing her work well!

"This way," Babs breathed. She plunged into the open, with beating heart. "Follow me," she said, leading the way towards Lane's Field, and then, hearing a sound behind her, suddenly whirled.

"Clara!" she gasped.

For Clara Trevlyn, fierce and determined, it was. Clara, who was at that moment in the act of pushing open the window of Miss Primrose's study wherein she had been imprisoned by Sarah and Connie Jackson. Clara who, knowing nothing of Babs' ruse, but determined, if determination could do anything, to rescue Sophie from the crypt end of the secret passage.

As they watched, Clara threw one leg over the sill, and, taking a grip at the ivy, came swarming down. Babs ran to meet her.

"Clara!" she cried. "Oh, you chump!"

"Sophie—" Clara gasped.

"Clara, get her away," Babs said quickly. "Get her into the woods. Hide near the old oak. Now's your chance, while Mabs leads the school a wild-goose chase. I'll dodge back and get on the phone to Mary, and ask her to pick you up."

"Good egg!" Clara approved. "Good old Babs." She nodded towards Sophie. "Come on!" she whispered.

Babs, without waiting to see what happened, rushed back into the school. The hunt was in full cry. Everywhere was uproar, everybody shrilly calling, everybody, apparently, on the scent, and no doubt a great many of the girls



enjoying the fun such an unexpected diversion offered.

Three at a time Babs mounted the stairs that led to the prefects' quarters. She rushed into the prefects' room and grabbed at the receiver of the telephone.

"Friardale, four five," she ordered.

"Hallo, is that the aerodrome? Miss Mary Malcolm please." A pause, then:

"Mary, is that you? This is Babs. Clara and Sophie are waiting for you at the old oak in Friardale Woods. There's been trouble. Pick them up, will you?"

"Right!" Mary snapped.

Gasping, Babs hung up the receiver. Then she stepped outside. As she did so there came a roar of voices down the Sixth Form corridor, and then the thudding of feet. Mabs, dressed in somebody else's hat and coat, came running desperately towards her.

"Babs!" she cried.

"Oh, my hat!" Babs blinked, her brain working like lightning. "Mabs—in here!" she cried, and dragged her chum into the prefects' room. "Take off that hat and coat—quickly! Throw them into the cupboard there. When the crowd comes by we'll join them, pretending to be in the hunt ourselves—see?"

"Golly!" Mabs gasped. "Babs, where do you get your ideas?"

But feverishly she flung the coat from her. Babs, snatching the hat, pitched it after it. They waited.

Round the corner, with a rush, came the vanguard of the pursuers, shouting and whooping out as they came. In a flood they swarmed past the door of the prefects' room, and in that flood Babs and Mabs, unsuspected, joined.

And ten minutes later Clara, Sophie, and Mary were whizzing towards the aerodrome in the car Mary would race to-morrow at the aerodrome-track.

It was half an hour later when the three of them were in a plane, racing towards Southampton, before the escape of Clara Trevlyn was discovered.

Last-Minute Dash!



At half-past ten Mary's plane glided across the landing stage at Southampton. For

the time being, at all events, they had escaped.

"But," Mary said seriously, after they had left the plane, "we can't risk having you seen about, Sophie! It's several hours before the Plathian will arrive, and there's no doubt once Mrs. Trent discovers how she's been fooled at Cliff House, she'll have the police on your track."

"I—I'm in your hands!" trembling Sophie said.

They took a taxi into the town itself. A room was found for Sophie at the New Pelican Hotel, and there they stayed until lunch.

Immediately that meal was over Mary dispatched a telegram to the Plathian, which said: "Important news of your daughter! Come to Pelican Hotel, Southampton. Tell no one of this." She signed it "Mary Malcolm."

Excitement, tense and electrifying, gripped them as the day drew on, as night came, to be followed by early morning. Then, at Clara's request, a telegram was sent by telephone to Cliff House, saying that all was well with her.

One o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock—

"The Plathian's docking now," Mary said. "He should be here in half an hour."

Sophie sat still, pale and silent. Clara grinned. Mary sat wrapped in thought, gazing at the clock. A quarter-past three! Half-past. A quarter to four, and Mary stirred uneasily.

Four o'clock!

"Something wrong," Clara muttered. "He should be here, shouldn't he?"

Mary was rather pale.

"Give him until half-past," she said. But when half-past chimed, there was still no Mr. Petherick!

"I'm going to the dock," Mary announced. "Clara, no! You mustn't come with me. You and Sophie try to get some sleep."

But sleep for those two girls was as impossible as for Mary. Sophie was almost sick with excitement. Clara was thrilling.

Long after Mary had gone they sat and chatted—of this and that, of the glorious girl Mary was, of her race, her flying, of everything. Five o'clock chimed, a quarter-past. Then a ring at the bell.

"That's them," Clara said joyfully.

But it wasn't. It was only Mary herself. She looked tired, hunted, and distressed as she came in. Clara stared up.

"Mary. Mr. Petherick—"

"He—he's not come!" Mary got the words out with difficulty. "Apparently there was an overflow of passengers at the other side, and Mr. Petherick is coming on in the next boat, which won't arrive until one o'clock midday. I'm stumped," she confessed, and slumped on to a chair, "because if I wait, what about the race? If I don't turn up for that, Mr. Cleveden-Carr will never give me another chance!"

But Sophie came to the rescue.

"Mary, please, look at me," she said. "You've done enough. Go back; win your race! Leave me here. Come back, if you can, after the race, and then we'll trace my father together. And, Clara," she added, "you go with her!"

"Right-ho, we'll do it!" Clara said, and yawned. "Oh, my hat, who says shut-eye? I'm dead beat!"

Dead-beat they all were. Reluctantly, however they retired to their beds. But the night's wait took its toll of them. They slept so very, very soundly that it was half-past eleven next morning before they woke up.

And then what a bustle—what a frantic scamper, with a race at two, the airfield to be reached, breakfast to be rushed through, toilets to make. It was half-past twelve before Mary and Clara breathlessly bade good-bye to Sophie.

"And, whatever happens," Mary said, "stop here till you see me again, Sophie."

"What do you think?" Sophie said. "And—good luck, Mary. And you, Clara!"

"And you!" Clara grinned. "Mary, come on!" she panted.

They flew. Clara set her teeth. Could they do it?

They had to do it!

Five to two, and on the motor-racing track the cars were already lining up for the great race in which Mary was to take part!

Most of the drivers were already in position. In the stand Babs and Mabs and a crowd of other Mary Malcolm admirers were looking at each other with growing uneasiness. For the red and gold racing-car, surrounded by anxious mechanics, and a worried Mr. Cleveden-Carr, was still lacking a driver.

"Something's happened," Babs muttered. "She's probably been arrested. Three minutes for the start. But—hallo!"

She broke off with a cheer. It was a cheer which echoed round the track. For, suddenly running round the track in her airwoman's kit, came a figure—the figure of Mary herself. And behind her—Clara!

They saw Mary darting towards the car, saw her breathlessly mutter some words to Mr. Cleveden-Carr; then hastily she climbed in. Clara turned and pushed up into the crowded stand.

"Clara!" Babs cried. "Where on earth have you been?"

"Southampton," Clara grinned. "But, phew, what a race to get back! Thank goodness Mary arrived in time, though. Another two minutes, and we should have been too late. I—"

And then she stopped as a hand touched her on the shoulder, and,

swinging round, she stared into the face of a man she had never seen before. She blinked.

"Are you Mary Malcolm's cousin, Clara Trevlyn?" he asked quietly.

"Why, yes!"

"Thanks! We shall want you after the race. You are to be charged with Mary Malcolm for being an accomplice in the abduction of Mrs. Trent's daughter, Sophie. Under Mrs. Trent's instructions we traced Miss Malcolm's plane from here to Southampton, and back again to here. She will be arrested after the race."

Fortunately, only Clara heard that. But she sat stunned. The race was on now. Babs & Co., leaning forward, were shouting frenzied encouragement over the rail!

To be arrested after the race! To be charged with Sophie's abduction! Clara shivered—but not only for herself. For Mary!

Could she warn her?

She looked round, and then turned back hurriedly. The detective, his eyes on her face, was behind her!

Dully she watched, her heart in her mouth. Everybody was shrieking now—and, Jove, look at Mary! Third in the race, she was pulling up, was overhauling the second car, rushing on to overtake the first. People were shouting:

"Mary! Mary! Mary Malcolm!"

"Come on, Mary!"

"Mary! Mary! Mary!"

Babs & Co. were jumping up and down in their excitement.

Sixth lap; Mercedes still leading! Seventh lap; Mary and Mercedes flat out!

Tense, the crowds now! Look! The distance was lessening. Mary was creeping up!

Then—that glorious tenth lap! So exciting, so thrilling, that nobody remarked the plane which came swinging over the track, to disappear on the landing field at the other side of the stands.

Then a shriek as the flag dipped, a rousing, roaring cry from everybody: "Mary! Mary, Malcolm! Mary Malcolm has won!"

She had, Clara, shuddering, felt the fingers on her shoulder again.

"Come!" the detective said.

(Concluded on page 24)

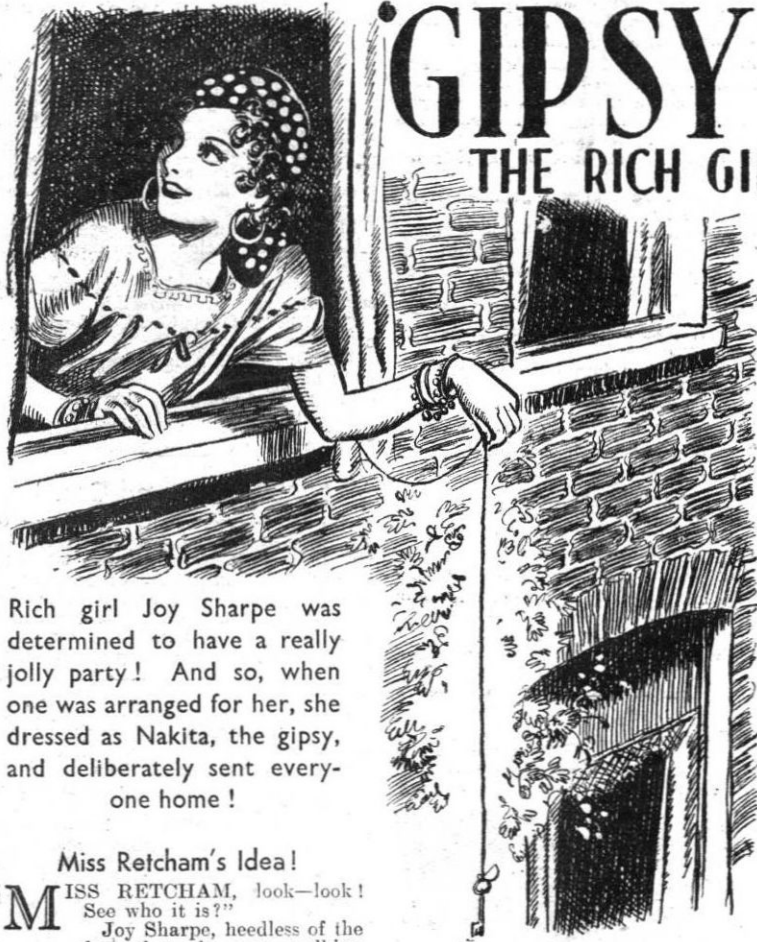


Little Dolores Essendon of the Second Form at Cliff House, lovable and inoffensive, is the last person one would expect to have enemies. And yet, when Dolores is given a chance to reveal her dancing talent in a show organised by Mabel Lynn, one of the famous Chums of the Fourth, someone deliberately sets out to ruin that chance. In the most heartless way this person humiliates Dolores, so that she is glibed at and eventually made the outcast of her Form.

Babs & Co. go to the little one's rescue—but it seems that even they cannot save her from great unhappiness.

Don't miss this wonderful LONG COMPLETE HILDA RICHARDS story. It appears Next Saturday.

COMPLETE this week. Another topping laughter-story featuring narum-scarum—



Rich girl Joy Sharpe was determined to have a really jolly party! And so, when one was arranged for her, she dressed as Nakita, the gypsy, and deliberately sent everyone home!

Miss Retcham's Idea!

"MISS RETCHAM, look—look! See who it is?"

Joy Sharpe, heedless of the fact that she was walking along a public thoroughfare—to wit, a country lane—skipped in the air with excitement, clutched her governess, Miss Retcham, by the arm, and, in fact, gave every sign that she had seen someone she liked and didn't care who knew.

Miss Retcham stood appalled, and gave a quick, fearful look about her.

"Joy, for goodness' sake!" she cried. "Mrs. Wingham's house is in full view. She might be looking out—"

"But here's Uncle Geoff!" cried Joy. "Look, that's his sports car coming down the road!"

There was a strident noise and a cloud of dust, and Miss Retcham, adjusting her glasses, recognised the small sports car that was the cause of it. The car belonged to Joy Sharpe's Uncle Geoffrey, and since it was proceeding at a steady thirty-five miles an hour or more through a thirty-mile limit area, Uncle Geoffrey himself was most likely at the wheel.

Miss Retcham grabbed at Joy.

"Quick—hide!" she said.

"Hide?" asked Joy, amazed. "Oh, as a joke, you mean!" she added.

"As a joke!" withered Miss Retcham. "Am I in the habit of playing jokes? Hide at once, in case he sees us and stops."

But Uncle Geoffrey had already stopped. A small, dark-blue car overtook him, and an alarm-bell clanged busily.

"Oh!" gasped Joy, in dismay. "A police car! He's been gonged!"

Uncle Geoffrey had met his doom, and Joy went quite limp for a moment with

GIPSY JOY

THE RICH GIRL ROMANY

showing his licence, and giving the required information.

Now, with the horn blowing shrilly, he drove up behind Joy, just as Miss Retcham tried to skip with dignity as well as speed out of sight.

"Why, Uncle Geoff!" cried Joy.

"What cheer!" he beamed. "Well met, Joy! And where is the gargoyle—er—hm! Good-morning, Miss Retcham!" he ended stiffly, as the governess returned to the main path, looking like some sinister prophecy coming true.

"Good-morning!" she said harshly. "We noticed that you were being arrested, and turned back to spare you from humiliation."

"Me," said Uncle Geoff, "arrested? Not so likely! I soon talked them out of even writing down particulars. It's my birthday."

"Birthday? Oh, Many Happies, Uncle Geoff!" said Joy, and gave him a kiss.

"Thanks, Joy! And I bet you've been knitting me some bed-socks, under Miss Retcham's eagle eye, eh? Or a jumper for my hot-water bottle. Ha, ha!"

Joy felt rather guilty about not having even done that, but she knew Uncle Geoff was just having fun at Miss Retcham's expense.

"No, seriously," said Uncle Geoff, "I've come to rig up a party for you, Joy—or, rather, me. I'm throwing a party, and I want you and some pals to roll along. Tea at a snappy little joint in the offing, fun with crackers and paper hats, perhaps a look in at the flicks, or a jaunt on the scenic railway, wiggle-woggle, and crazy cars."

"Uncle, you mean it?" said Joy, in delight. "Oh, what fun! You do think of grand things!"

Miss Retcham gave a dry cough. It

By IDA MELBOURNE

came like a bleak wind from Arctic regions on a May morning.

"Unfortunately Joy cannot accept the kind invitation," she said.

Joy's expression hardened, and a sigh escaped her.

"Just because it will be fun—" she began.

"Silence, Joy! The mere exchange of words with your Uncle Geoffrey seems to give rise in you to rudeness, impertinence, and unreason," said her governess. "I have said that you cannot accept the invitation."

And Miss Retcham's word was law! What she said at the Gables, where Joy lived with her grandfather, "went." For her grandfather had resigned his authority to Miss Retcham. A scholarly man, he had no time to worry about the affairs of to-day, when there was so much to learn about ancient Egypt.

Joy looked in appeal at Uncle Geoffrey. She was powerless against the governess, but he was an uncle. Surely he could insist.

Uncle Geoff caught the look and

sympathy. For Uncle Geoffrey was one of the bright spots of her life. He always came as a ray of sunshine, often armed with odd gifts, but always cheery and bright.

"Gonged! Justice is slow, but sure," said Miss Retcham grimly. "Turn round, Joy. We will return home."

Joy turned reluctantly, not caring to defy her governess openly, and in somewhat dejected frame of mind she accompanied her governess on the way back.

"Reluctant though I should be, Joy, to utter one word which might be interpreted by some malicious person as a criticism of your relatives," said Miss Retcham frigidly, "I nevertheless consider that your Uncle Geoffrey is utterly irresponsible, quite childish for his age, and a bad influence."

"Oh!" said Joy, unable to think of anything more apt.

But in her eyes there was a glint of defiance, and her lips became set; for she was loyal to Uncle Geoff, and thought him a heap better influence than Miss Retcham, who wouldn't let her run, who kept a strict eye on her, and made her almost Victorian in her behaviour—almost.

"We will turn aside at the path," said Miss Retcham, with a glance back.

That was her way of dodging Uncle Geoffrey, but it did not work, for Joy stopped to tie a shoe-lace, untying it quickly first.

A moment later Uncle Geoff had finished with the police. He was an old offender, and knew the routine so well that he had become proficient in

folded his arms, looking for a moment not unlike some European dictator.

"May I ask why?" he said. "Is it because I am supposed not to have sufficient sense of responsibility to—"

"The reason is," said Miss Retcham quickly, "that Joy herself is giving a tea-party this afternoon, and as hostess even she can hardly be so ill-mannered as not to be present."

Uncle Geoff's stern manner was deflated.

"Oh—ah—um!" he murmured, and stroked his chin.

But Joy, staggered by the news, blinked at her governess.

"A party? This afternoon? But it's the first I've heard of it, Miss Retcham!"

"Excitement and anticipation are bad for a highly strung young girl," said the governess coldly. "Your guests will be refined, well-mannered girls and boys, and you will learn a lesson you need in entertaining."

Miss Retcham made to walk on, and Joy looked in appeal to Uncle Geoff. Her hopes had been raised on high, and then crushed. She felt that at any moment she would cry.

"Just too bad!" he murmured. "But never mind. Let me give you a lift. Come on, Miss Retcham! Skip in!"

As Miss Retcham could think of no good motive for refusing, she climbed into the car with as much good grace as she could muster.

Joy followed, sad and depressed. For if there could be anything worse

than not going to Uncle Geoff's party, it would be holding a party which Miss Retcham had arranged. Dullness, constant correction, boring, stuck-up girls, and spiritless, namby-pamby boys!

Rebellious, and yet helpless, Joy settled down in the back of the car, and did not speak until Uncle Geoff stopped it outside the library and opened the door for Miss Retcham.

Then he looked at Joy, shaking his head.

"I would have been a grand party!" he said sadly.

Joy clenched her hands, and ideas seethed in her mind. She thought of cutting the party of taking french leave. But only for a moment; Miss Retcham could not be defied like that.

"Uncle, you must come to the party," she said "or—"

And then her face suddenly cleared. A grand idea had come—a daring, desperate idea.

"Uncle, be a pal!" she breathed.

"At your service!" he winked.

"Then have your party, and take Nakita—some really jolly girls and boys! Nakita and Boko, and, say, three others, their pals."

Uncle Geoffrey shot up his eyebrows, pursed his lips, and then gave a nod.

"O.K! I could be done," he said. "But how about you?"

Joy smiled and winked.

"That's telling! Ask no questions, uncle—but I may be there."

Uncle Geoff assuming a solemn,

avuncular air as he saw Miss Retcham approaching, nodded.

"I trust you are doing well at your lessons, Joy?" he said gravely.

"Yes, uncle."

"Good, my girl! Always study hard," he added; and then flickered his left eyelid at Joy as he helped the governess into her seat. "Something tells me," he murmured, "that the suggestion of rain and storm will come to nothing, after all. The sunshine will skim through, and all will be merry and bright."

Miss Retcham, looking at the sky, which had been clear since dawn, gave a sniff.

"I have not noticed black clouds or a suggestion of storm myself."

"No?" said Uncle Geoff, and whistled a tune as he drove off.

But Joy, sitting in the back, knew what he meant. There was a good time coming. And so there would be—if only she could join his party and miss her own!

Nakita—Uninvited Guest!

IN her bed-room, Joy Sharpe was very busy indeed at the wardrobe. It was nearly time that she was dressed and ready for the party, but she was still in her dressing-gown.

Sitting on the floor, Joy was putting a button on to a pair of gay red sandals. They were pretty sandals, but not the type that a reasonable girl wear at a party.

They were really more the kind of sandals that a gipsy girl might wear—and which one gipsy girl had worn often. That girl was Nakita.

It would have struck Miss Retcham as very odd could she have seen Joy with those sandals. It would have struck her as being even more odd could she have seen the exotic gipsy frock that hung in the wardrobe, and the scarf. For Miss Retcham would have recognised them instantly as Nakita's.

Why was Nakita's frock in Joy's wardrobe? And why, if it came to that, was there a jar of brown stain for making pink cheeks seem brown, and a jar of special stuff for removing it afterwards? Miss Retcham would have asked herself those questions. And if by ill-chance she guessed the answer—

"Golly, Tinks, Nakita would be in a pickle—and Joy, too!"

Tinker's eyes twinkled, as though he knew the joke. But, then, the mention of Nakita always brightened his eyes, for he knew that Nakita and Joy were one and the same girl.

Miss Retcham might be deceived by face-stain, scarf, and gay clothes, but he was not. He knew that Nakita was merely Joy Sharpe—a gayer, carefree girl. But he did not sneak.

"Oh, Tinks, if only we can work it!" sighed Joy. "How I want to be Nakita again—a carefree gipsy! I shall hate this afternoon's tea-party! You won't be allowed in, either. You knocked over a cake-stand last time, and chewed holes in Geranium Mortimer's gloves and made her cry!"

Joy hurried with her dressing, and made herself look meek and demure. She knew that this party had not even been thought of before Uncle Geoffrey had suggested his.

"Just to keep me from having fun! Just about the best excuse she could think of!" Joy told Tinker, who listened with full agreement.

But the party had been arranged, and Joy would have to attend it. There was just no getting out of it—yet.

Some twenty minutes later Joy was in the drawing-room.

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There were six guests—four girls and two boys. Two of the girls were sisters, in the charge of their granite-faced governess, and the other two were almost too good to be true.

The conversation had turned to geography, and one of the girls mentioned the rainfall of China; another girl then discussed clouds and their bearing on rain, while a white-faced boy told them why the sky was blue.

"Who cares?" said Joy. The little boy goggled at her, and Miss Retcham went pink.

"That was a very rude remark!" she said, through her teeth. "You will apologise to Perceval!"

"Yes, Miss Retcham," said Joy. "But I was only seeking information—I mean, I wonder who really cares? Suppose, for instance, we woke up tomorrow, and the sky was yellow, with black spots, I don't see that it would matter!"

Miss Retcham's eyes almost bulged, but Perceval leaped into the breach. He was a born bore.

"There are three reasons why the sky could not be yellow, with black spots," he said in a piping voice. "I will enumerate them—"

"Have a bun instead!" said Joy, the complete hostess.

Miss Retcham rose. "That is enough!" she said. "Go to your room!"

Joy stood up, blinking. "Have I said anything wrong?" she asked. "I thought my guests might be bored with hearing all about lesson things in their free time!"

"Indeed? Perceval was giving you the benefit of his intelligent study?"

"He read it on a cigarette-card," said Joy. "I know, because it's one of a bunch Uncle Geoff—"

"Go to your room! You astound me, shock me!"

Joy very nearly beamed widely, and had all she could do not to jump with delight. But she managed to hang her head, although, of course, it was impossible to fake a blush.

Perceval eyed her with sad reproach, the two girls with their governess looked at their shoes, while the others seemed likely to burst into tears.

Once outside, Joy scurried up the stairs to her room. Then locking the door, she swiftly changed. In record time she made herself up as Nakita. Practice had made her proficient and quick, so that not one little piece of her own fair skin showed.

In Nakita's pretty frock, the shawl over her head, she looked a real gipsy of the most romantic type.

"Now I am Nakita—and now even Miss Retcham wouldn't recognise me!" she chuckled.

Beckoning Tinker, she turned to the door, and at that same moment there came a rap on the panels.

"Joy!" Nakita's heart quaked. The governess was at the door, and for a dreadful moment she could not be sure that she had really locked it.

But now Miss Retcham tried the handle and pushed at the door in vain. "Open this door!"

Nakita crept forward. "It—it's locked!" she said breathlessly.

"Well, unlock it. I want to give you a severe talking-to!"

Nakita, with trembling fingers, took the key from the lock.

"The key isn't in the lock, Miss Retcham."

"What? Where is it, then? You must know. The door is locked from the inside."



"WHATCHER," said Nakita cheerily, and began to sample the cakes. The prim and proper guests were horrified—which was just what Nakita wanted in her scheme to go to a party she could enjoy.

Joy's plight was desperate. Anything was better than being caught here and now in this guise! Better to be punished for wilful rebellion even.

Her mind worked quickly in the crisis, and suddenly she saw the way out. She crossed to her dressing-table where there was a reel of thread, and tied the end of it to the key.

That done, she dangled the key out of the window.

"I—I've thrown the key out of the window, Miss Retcham!" she called.

"Thrown the key out of the window—what?" gasped the governess.

It was true! And Miss Retcham did not doubt it. But that did not lessen her fury, her surprise, her sense of shock.

"Joy, how dare you! Don't think that the key will remain undiscovered! You will be a prisoner now by your own planning. Instead of coming down to apologise to your guests, you will stay here. And when I do release you—"

Miss Retcham left that unexplained, although the threat lost none of its force. She stamped away from the door in fury.

Nakita, pulling at the cotton, brought back the key over the windowsill, untied it, and waited only until she heard Miss Retcham in the garden looking for the key. Then she unlocked the door, relocking it behind her.

Downstairs she went, and, an imp of mischief possessing her, entered the drawing-room.

The guests looked up, startled, and Geranium Mortimer sipped her tea into her saucer.

"Whatcher!" said Nakita, as they goggled at her. "Am I late?"

She walked forward, giving them all a nod, and taking up a dish of cakes cheerily started munching one. It was

the best one there—reserved, she knew, for Perceval.

"Better take two while I'm about it. I've got two hands, so that means two cakes. I'm a gipsy, and manners don't matter to me," said Nakita, while the horrified silence continued. "You've got a crumb on your, waistcoat, Charlie," she said to Perceval.

"My name is Perceval. I shall tell Miss Retcham you came in!" he said hotly.

"Yes, you look like a nasty little sneak!" said Nakita candidly. "What you want is a rough half-hour with some real boys. You'd be sobbing like a girl at the end of it, but it would do you good!"

The girls' governess rose, glowering. "If you have been invited, then I shall leave!" she said.

"O.K., pal! Skip it!" said Nakita. "But leave the cakes."

"Oh, how horrid!" said Geranium. "You're just common!"

"You ought to know," said Nakita, her mouth full of cake. "What a frock to wear! Coo! And look at your hair! No wonder Darwin said we sprang from monkeys—"

"Huxley," said Perceval involuntarily—"not Darwin!"

"Well, if your ancestors sprang from monkeys," said Nakita, "they didn't half make a rotten jump!"

The door opened as the governess ordered her charges to rise—and Miss Retcham walked in, gaped at Nakita, and drew up.

"What are you doing here, girl?" she demanded.

"Me? Give you three guesses," said Nakita cheerfully, confident of her disguise. "And if you say 'eating cake,' you win the first prize—a doughnut!"

The girls' governess marched to the door.

"Come!" she said, and glared at

Miss Retcham. "If this is the kind of guest—"

"Guest!" Miss Retcham almost screamed. "Why—"

In the drive there came the sound of a car's horn. And Uncle Geoff's car skidded up with four passengers crammed in. They all wore paper hats, and they were blowing tin trumpets and squeakers.

Uncle Geoff jumped out and rushed to the open window.

"Miss Retcham, can you tell me where the gipsy girl Nakita hangs out—Why, hallo!" he cried as he saw her.

"What cheer! Here I am! Am I invited?" asked Nakita.

"You are. And these kids, too—if they can get a perch on a mudguard," said Uncle Geoff excitedly. "This party is going to be a wowster."

"Then leave this lot where it is," advised Nakita. "I'll just take this other cream bun and meringue, and then I'll be ready. Sorry I've got to go," she said to the petrified Miss Retcham. "Cheerio, Charlie, Maud, Gertie, and the rest!"

And out of the window Nakita went.

A Ladder and a Locksmith!

"GOSH, mister, hasn't it been grand?" said Nakita.

It had been a stunning party, and Boko—the butcher's boy—and his pals were singing choruses as the car made its way back to the Gables.

Uncle Geoff was wearing a paper clown's hat, and all the others had similar fittings, while Nakita wore a false red nose, moustache, and glasses.

They had had a slap-up tea; everything they wanted, and more. They had gone to the fair and to the menagerie; had screamed themselves hoarse on the scenic railway, crashed and bumped themselves black and blue on the crazy cars, got splashed on the water chute.

No girl could have been happier than Nakita was now, though there was one sad thought apparently.

"A pity Miss Joy couldn't have come," she said, with a side glance at Uncle Geoff.

And he, completely deceived by Nakita's disguise, looked solemn.

"Poor old Joy—yes," he said. "But, still, we've got her some good prizes."

They had won dolls, an enormous box of chocolates, four-colour pencils, and other delights.

Joy had not been forgotten.

"Poor Miss Joy," said Nakita. "Wonder what she's doing now? Miss Retcham left her locked in her room."

"And that's where she is still, then," said Uncle Geoff gloomily. "How are we going to get these things in to her—eh?"

Nakita smiled to herself.

"We'll find a way," she said; for, after all, she had to get in herself somehow, although having got in so often before she didn't foresee any difficulty now, especially as Uncle Geoff could engage Miss Retcham in conversation.

They dropped Boko and his pals in the village and said a cheery good-bye, then Uncle Geoff and Nakita drove on to the Gables.

Nakita was lighthearted right until the last minute, until she dived her hand into her cloak pocket for the key.

"Oh!" she gasped.

"Anything wrong?" said Uncle Geoff.

Nakita went white under her dye. She searched the floor of the car, everywhere; and Uncle Geoff, being

told that a key was missing, hunted, too. But the key could not be found.

"Oh golly!" said Nakita in horror.

For now how on earth could she get into her bed-room? The door was locked, and Joy was supposed to be still there. Besides, without clothes from Joy's room Nakita could not become Joy again.

Uncle Geoff pulled up in the drive of the Gables and gathered Joy's gifts.

"Now then, how are we going to get them to her?" he asked.

Nakita's heart thumped with fright; for it really looked as though the end had come. There was no way of getting into the locked room.

As Nakita sat and cogitated, a man on a bicycle drew level with the car and stopped.

"This the Gables, mister?" he asked.

"I'm new around here. I've come to open a door."

"Open a door?" gasped Nakita.

"Yes. Seems as someone locked the door and lost the key."

"Yes, this is the Gables," said Uncle Geoff before Nakita could intervene.

And on went the locksmith. Nakita felt dreadful.

In a few minutes her door would be open—and the room found empty!

"Uncle Geoff—I mean, mister—guv'nor," she said breathlessly, "there's only one way of getting these things to Miss Joy—"

"How?"

"A ladder. There's one at the back of the house. It's getting dusk, and we

SUCH FUN!

SUCH LAUGHTER-MAKERS!

Coming Soon—

You Must

Meet Them.

can do it," said Nakita. "You find the governess and keep her talking, and I'll go up the ladder—"

Uncle Geoff liked the idea. It was the kind that could be guaranteed to appeal to him; and with Nakita he went to find the ladder and returned with it.

They rested it against the wall, and Nakita climbed up it loaded with gifts. Uncle Geoff, assuring himself that she was safe, rushed into the house and found Miss Retcham in the corridor outside Joy's room.

"Open the door as quickly as you can!" the governess was saying to the locksmith. "There is a girl in there. I have knocked and called and shouted without bringing any response!"

Uncle Geoff pulled up.

"Go on?" he hooted so that Nakita could hear. "You mean Joy hasn't answered? Well, I never did! How long will it take to open the door?"

"I'm not deaf," said the locksmith. "It'll take two ticks to open a door like this. Almost any key will fit it."

Inside the room, Nakita, hearing, hurled the gifts under the bed, tore off the gipsy frock and sandals, pulled on the party frock, and jumped to the bed.

By this time the locksmith was trying various keys in the lock.

"Wrong 'un," Nakita heard him mutter, as there came a rattle. "And I could have wagered—"

Miss Retcham gave an impatient click of her tongue.

"You have not been brought here to indulge in any form of gambling," she said icily. "I want that door opened—at once! If you are unable to open it, then I shall consider instructing the gardener to force the lock—"

"All right, ma'am," said the locksmith, in a decidedly peeved sort of voice.

And there was another rattle.

Nakita, safe and sound—so she thought—chuckled to herself. The man was finding it more difficult than she'd imagined. She could hear him grunting and gasping, and Miss Retcham egging him on, while Uncle George tried to enliven the proceedings with some choice items of humour.

"Some lock, eh? Obstinate fellow. Try being more gentle, my man—sort of persuasive, you know. You've got to put these things in the right frame of mind."

Whether the locksmith obeyed those instructions, Nakita did not know, but he triumphed all the same.

"Ahah!" she heard him say; and then suddenly she remembered her stained face.

In horror she rushed from the bed to the wardrobe, found the jar of dye-remover, and got frantically busy.

She heard the key click in the lock. Desperately she went to the bed and rolled on to it, pulling the eiderdown over herself even as the door was opened and Miss Retcham snapped on the light.

"Asleep," said Uncle Geoff. Crossing to the window, he saw the ladder and pulled the window down. "She might catch cold with this window open."

Miss Retcham shook Joy hard; and finally Joy sat up with such a start that her forehead bumped the governess' nose.

"What's wrong?" she gasped. "Goodness! Who is that?" she added, looking at the locksmith.

Miss Retcham let out a sigh.

"I—I thought you were ill, unconscious—that you had fallen and stunned yourself, Joy. Thank goodness it is not so! Are you well? You were heavily asleep."

"Yes, I'm all right, thank you," said Joy.

Miss Retcham's anxiety gave place to grimness.

"Then you had better get into bed. I will deal with you in the morning. You have behaved disgracefully! And for this you will have no pocket-money for a fortnight, and do extra work."

She swept from the room; and Uncle Geoff, sighing, followed.

"Poor old Joy!" he said.

But Uncle Geoff would have changed his mind if he had heard the giggle as he closed the door; for Joy, immensely relieved, was letting off steam. Poor old Joy! it might be; but Nakita had had the afternoon of her life, while under the bed was an enormous box of chocolates and other gifts.

True, the punishment was severe; but Joy felt that she had had her fun, and it was worth paying for, and not for a long time did she go to sleep. She lived through the whole lovely afternoon again, not the least amusing part of which was when she had swept into the drawing-room as Nakita!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

ANOTHER topping "Gipsy Joy" story next Saturday! - Don't miss it, will you? And be sure to introduce your friends to our lovable harum-scarum.

Our thrilling story of adventure in the wilds of Africa.

The JUNGLE HIKERS



FOR NEW READERS.

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 canoe was stolen by Fuzzy from a warlike tribe, who come in pursuit of the chums! They escape, but miss their steamer and continue by canoe. When they help a white hunter he gives them a talisman ring to show a native king. Later, the native porters desert with all the baggage. The chums, hiding behind a baby elephant, pretend it is talking to scare the porters.

(Now read on.)

Bambo Does the Trick!

TERESA thought quickly. Her scheme had all but succeeded. The black porters who had stolen all their luggage were motionless only a yard ahead of them, the luggage still poised on their heads, staring at the strange elephant.

They thought it had spoken! They did not know that, hidden in the foliage on its back, was first, the baby chimp, Adolphus, behind him Luise—and behind the elephant, concealed by a trailing branch, Teresa herself.

But suddenly Adolphus moved his branch.

"Someone is hidden in the leaves," shouted one of the black boys shrilly.

In another moment they might have guessed that they had been tricked, but Teresa kept her head.

"My friend is changed into the likeness of a chimpanzee like little Adolphus," she said. "She rides on my back."

Adolphus' head peered out through the leaves, and the boys quaked, their teeth chattering.

"Thieves—rascals! Kneel—ask for mercy," commanded Teresa, while Luise crouched low on the elephant's back, "or all of you shall be turned into elephants, too!"

The boys, convinced now that this

was some terrible magic, put down their bundles in order to kneel.

Next Teresa intended to order them to close their eyes, and then to become herself again, after driving Bambo into the bush.

But things did not go as she planned.

So impressive was she, that, with a wild howl of terror, the black boys left the luggage just where it was, and ran, disappearing round the next bend of the path.

"Golly! They've bolted!" cried Luise.

"But they've left the luggage," said Teresa, in jubilation. "Oh, hurrah, hurrah! Now we've got it we can hide it, and go back for poor Fuzzy!"

She laughed. She could not help it; for the trick had worked so wonderfully well.

"But we can't carry all that!" expostulated Luise.

Teresa, before answering, made sure

TO TRICK THE RASCALLY TRADER, TERESA THREW A HAIR-CLIP INTO A BUSH!

that the precious black case had not been stolen. Finding it, she gave a sigh of relief; for, although she did not know what it contained, she had been told to guard it carefully.

She felt like skipping with joy. At the moment when the black boys had bolted, she had had a guilty feeling that she had done the wrong thing—gone too far. But calmer reflection showed that by losing them, they had actually made a gain.

There was plenty of luggage, but Bambo would not mind carrying it; and they could go on at a moderate pace.

Hunting round, Teresa found a spot farther along the path where there was good shade from a tree, and which would be ideal for a picnic. But now

Bambo was worrying about Fuzzy, for he kept looking down the path for her. "Fuzzy come soon," promised Teresa, "So don't go wandering off!"

"We're not going to wait for Fuzzy?" asked Luise. "Aren't we going to meet her—to see if we can help?"

"Of course we are," said Teresa briskly. "But, first, we must find a good hiding-place for the luggage, in case those rascals come back again."

Together they made a search, while Bambo, worrying about Fuzzy, and thinking that he must inevitably find her if he kept near the others, followed faithfully, pushing through bushes.

Luise was the one who found the best place, a little spiny, and, on Teresa agreeing that it was ideal, they hurried back for the luggage.

As the luggage had been divided carefully so that there was an equal amount for every boy, it was easy enough to move, and they took it all to the spiny in no more than three journeys, helped by Adolphus.

And, save for the fact that Bambo nearly trod on one bundle, all went well.

"You keep your old feet to yourself," warned Teresa. "One touch of those fairy-like tootsies, and a saucepan would become a plate."

Bambo looked at her solemnly, and then lumbered after her as she returned to the path.

"Now—back to the warriors to find Fuzzy," said Teresa worriedly.

Once again they mounted Bambo, and helped Adolphus up, too. This time Bambo did not hurry. Rather tired after that fierce rush, he ambled along at a pleasant speed.

By
ELIZABETH
CHESTER

But suddenly his step quickened, and he broke into a trot.

"Whoa!" ordered Teresa, grasping his large ears. "No bolting!"

"Terry—let's jump off!" cried Luise, in alarm.

But Bambo was making a strange little noise with such a pleasant lilt to it, that Teresa guessed its meaning.

"My golly—I think—Luise, can it be that he knows Fuzzy is near—"

Even as she spoke a running figure came into view—Fuzzy herself!

"Good Afternoon, Ladies!"

BAMBO quickened his pace eagerly, and Fuzzy rushed forward, dancing and shouting with delight.

"Jump off!" shouted Teresa suddenly, as a low branch loomed ahead.

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—It's dreadful when you lose something, isn't it? Something really valuable or important, I mean. So you can imagine my feelings when one of Miss Richards' precious manuscripts disappeared!

It happened like this. Gussy, our celebrated office-boy had been given the story to hand on to Mr. Laidler, the artist, when he came in. Your Editor, needing it, sent for Gussy.

"Ah, Gussy," I said, "you might let me have that story of Miss Richards'. I want to choose a different heading for Mr. Laidler."

Gussy looked queer
"Pip-please, sir, I kik-can't!" he stammered.

"What do you mean—you can't?" I exclaimed in astonishment.

"Pip-pip-please, sir, I—I haven't gung-got it!"

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, and wondered if the chap was still half-asleep. "But surely you remember, my lad. I gave it to you when you brought my tea in—"

"I know, s-s-sir!" Gussy stammered.

"Only you see, sir, I haven't got it now. I—I—" Gulping, stuttering, and tugging at his tie, Gussy, looking the most wretched object in the world, managed to make his awful confession.

"I—I've lost it, sir!"

"What?" I shouted.

At least, I believe I said "What?" and I'm almost sure I shouted. Given time to think, I should probably have lifted one eyebrow in mild surprise and murmured "Tut-tut!" just to create a favourable impression.

But I forgot myself. All I could think of was—Hilda Richards' latest story lost!

In two strides I was out of my office. At the end of twenty seconds every single member of my staff was frantically searching for the missing MS. High and low we hunted. We turned out cupboards, we ransacked desks, we emptied shelves and bookcases. At the end of half an hour we were covered with dust, panting for breath, and utterly desperate.

Luise swung off, touched the ground, stumbled, and rolled over. Teresa followed, landing more luckily; but Adolphus remained on, the sola topee so far down over his face that he saw nothing.

Bump! went the branch into his chest, and with a shout of anger he clutched it and fought desperately to master this new enemy.

Bambo, lumbering on, halted just short of Fuzzy, extending his trunk in greeting.

"Bambo! Good elephant," said Fuzzy joyously, patting the trunk, then rushed at Teresa, arms outstretched.

Teresa, helping Luise up, and finding her unhurt, turned to Fuzzy and hugged her.

In a moment the three friends were almost beside themselves with joy.

Teresa told Fuzzy about the elephant

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

Not a sign of the story anywhere. Did we ever find it? We did—thirty-one minutes after starting to search. We found it because it had never been lost; we found it because—

Gussy, appearing in the middle of our despair, and keeping close to the door, suddenly piped out:

"A-A-April Fuf-fools, every-bub-body!"

By the time we had recovered and realised the date—April 1st—Gussy was gone. And then we couldn't find HIM! But Hilda Richards' story, the thing which mattered, was back on my desk. Gussy, having had it all the time, had seen to that!

I am now wondering how much to raise the courageous youth's wages. What do you think he deserves?

Perhaps you'll be better able to judge when you've read the story in question, for it appears next week, entitled:

"THE LONELIEST GIRL IN THE SECOND!"

It's a "different" sort of story, too, featuring little Dolores Essendon of the Second Form at Cliff House, and full of the most win-ome, poignant touches. Babs & Co. play a very active part, of course, particularly kind-hearted Marjorie Hazeldene, but it is Dolores' story really.

For Dolores, clever little dancer that she is, has the chance to be a fairy in a play Mabel Lynn has written. Dolores is delighted, of course. But someone else in the Second Form—Eunice Hunter, the biggest girl there, spiteful and bossy—decides that SHE shall have the part. With her prefect sister, Helen, of the Sixth, Eunice conspires to cheat little Dolores out of her wonderful chance.

As a result, Dolores finds the whole of the Second Form against her, taunting her, gibing at her, calling her "Baby!" Wretchedly unhappy, Dolores would be helpless but for Babs & Co.'s ready sympathy. And even they find it terribly difficult to help the little outcast.

Don't miss this wonderful story—or all the other topping features in next Saturday's number: "Gipsy Joy!" "The Jungle Hikers!" more of Patricia's Pages, and another "Cliff House Pet."

And now I must say au revoir for another week.

With best wishes.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

and the boys, while Fuzzy recounted her own exciting story about the lion.

"Well, anyway, here we are, thanks to Bambo," said Teresa. "The best little elephant in the whole wide world. He's got to be our porter, now, Fuzzy."

Fuzzy assured them that there could be no better porter in all the world, and that he would do just what he was told, so in happy mood they returned to the spot where they had left their luggage.

"What we want to do now is to have a picnic," said Teresa. "I think our troubles are over for a bit. We're heading in the right direction, and with Bambo carrying the luggage, we shall make good speed."

There was fruit near by, and wood for a fire. Luise, happy at the prospect of doing a little cooking, soon had a fire going, and they decided that they would have some of the eggs which the hunter's friend had given them.

Carefree, despite the fact that they were in the wilds of Africa, the three girls sang gaily, preparing their meal.

Adolphus, new to cooking though he was, got the hang of the thing, but they kept him well away from the fire.

When the meal was cooked the three girls sat down to it, really hungry. Adolphus was given a plate, and allowed to sit down with them. His small, quick eyes watched everything they did, and it was quite obvious that he did not know that he was not really a human being.

Luckily he had not been hurt in his collision with the branch of the tree, although the sola topee had been dented. Happy and contented, he picked up a drinking-cup with his left foot, and drained it. Life was good, huh?

After the meal they rested, and Teresa wound up the tiny portable gramophone and played a dance record.

Fuzzy, thrilled, sat with large, round eyes, and even Adolphus was entranced.

Then, eager to show what she could do, Fuzzy gave them a pas seul. She threw her whole spirit into the dance; she stamped and she swayed and she threw her arms about in the most fascinating, rhythmic manner.

Luise, who had never seen African dancing, wanted more, which delighted the vain little native girl. As soon as she had finished, Luise was persuaded to dance in the classical manner, and it was Fuzzy's turn to sit round-eyed.

Suddenly Teresa got up, laughing.

"Well, I think it's time we packed up and went," she said. "Come on."

And while Adolphus, from the safety of a bush, made rude remarks to his relatives, they packed.

"But how are we going to load the stuff on to Bambo?" wondered Luise. "We haven't any rope."

Fuzzy, proud of her knowledge, provided the solution. With the sharp hunting-knife she cut long tendrils of creeper, and showed how by intertwining and plaiting them, they became just as long and as strong as anyone wished.

Very patiently Bambo stood by while all the bundles were loaded on, secured in position, and then covered finally by rugs and groundsheets.

"And now," said Teresa, "on our way—and let's hope it will be a non-stop journey!"

"Yes, rather, it's time—" began Luise, and then ended in misadventure, for, turning towards the path which lay a little to the right, she saw a movement in the bushes.

Into view there stepped a tall, bearded white man, dressed in tropical kit, a gun under his arm.

"Good-afternoon, ladies," he said, in

a nasal voice. "Reckon you're the girls I'm looking for. Just stay right where you are."

Teresa wheeled and confronted the newcomer. At the same moment she saw, behind him, one of her own treacherous black-boy porters!

In a flash she knew who this white man must be. He was the trader to whom the black boys had planned to sell the luggage. And from what little she knew of him, Teresa could guess that he was a rogue—an enemy!

They Had To Go On Alone!

LUISE moved nearer to Teresa, and Fuzzy, always awed in the presence of white men, who were usually people of great importance, lost her excited, happy look, and became dejected.

"All right," said Teresa. "Nothing to fear, Luise."

"Nothing to fear at all," said the bearded white man, stepping forward. "I'm a friend all right. My name is Garson. I'm well known in these parts, an honest trader."

Teresa kept cool, and took good care not to show the inward alarm she felt. Even though she suspected that he might try to rob them of their luggage, she determined to seem friendly.

"I'm sure you are honest," she said quietly. "We are on our way to go to my father."

"Sure!" drawled the man. "And say, some of these black boys spilled a yarn that one of you kids has a ring that belongs to King Nompango."

Teresa looked at Fuzzy.

"Show the ring," she said. She knew well enough that Fuzzy had not got the ring. It was on her own finger at this moment; but her mind worked quickly.

At all costs, the ring must be hidden. And if she could turn attention from herself for a moment she might have a chance to take the ring off.

Cunning though the trader was, he was deceived by the ruse, and turned to Fuzzy.

Acting like lightning, Teresa slipped the ring from her finger, and, stooping, thrust it into her left riding-boot.

"Me not got—" murmured Fuzzy.

"Show the ring," said Teresa calmly.

"It was on your hand. Don't say you have lost it, Fuzzy!"

She was rather sorry for Fuzzy; the little black girl looked quite puzzled and distressed.

"Ring gone!" she quavered.

"Gone?" said the trader sharply.

"Gee! You haven't lost it, surely? Why, that ring would take you through the black country like you was the King's best pal!"

"Fuzzy!" said Teresa, in shocked tones, and then, turning so that the trader could not see her face, she winked meaningly.

Like most black people, Fuzzy was a good actress. That wink told her that this was a trick, and she liked tricks.

"Me lose dem ring," she said huskily.

"Why, you little mug!" said the trader hotly. "I'd have paid for that ring—bought it for cash!"

"Oh, Fuzzy!" reproached Teresa.

Fuzzy dropped to her knees, clasped Teresa's ankles, and looked up in pitiful appeal.

"Not be cross—Fuzzy no help," she said. "Fuzzy she go down drinking pool—she put hand in water—crocodile him come. Fuzzy, she frightened. She pull him up—no ring—"

There was a hush, and Luise, quite

puzzled, frowned at Teresa; for she could not get the hang of this play-acting. Even Teresa was half in doubt as to whether Fuzzy really did understand that she was not being blamed.

"Reckon this hysteria will get us nowhere," said the trader angrily. "Get up!"

"Fuzzy—it can't be helped," said Teresa gently. "We're not cross with you. And I don't see," she added to the trader, "what it has to do with you."

Garson grunted, and scowled at the black boys behind him.

"Get along to that drinking pool we passed, and find the ring!" he shouted at them. "Go on—and if you don't find it, look out!"

Then he turned back to the girls.

"I'll show you the way into old Nompango's country. I have a special reason for wanting to get across it, but

"Oh, that's quite different," she said quickly. "Of course we'll help. Won't we, Teresa?"

But Teresa, shrewd and cautious, did not give too ready assent.

"We'll help anyone who's ill, of course," she said guardedly. "Where is your wife?"

The trader's relief at the change of decision was quite obvious, and Teresa thought she detected a glint of triumph in his eyes.

"Just along there. I'll go and cheer her up with the news."

He hurried off then, and Luise looked quite concerned.

"Poor woman, I do hope she's not seriously ill," she said anxiously.

But Teresa stood silent, frowning.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Luise, wonderingly. "Don't you want to help her, Teresa?"

"Want to? Of course, dear," said



"SHOW him the ring, Fuzzy!" Teresa said sharply. The trader swung round on the little black girl, who looked astounded. And while the man's attention was distracted, Teresa, acting like lightning, dropped the precious ring down her boot.

they have guards along the frontier, and it won't be easy."

Teresa did not hesitate. The time had come to be more direct.

"That doesn't suit us," she said quietly. "We're travelling alone."

The trader looked at her rather in wonder, as though he could not believe his ears.

"What, girls travelling alone in the jungle? Why, there are lions, crocodiles—wild animals of all kinds. Yes, and pretty savage warriors, too!"

Teresa hunched her shoulders.

"We've got on alone so far, and we go on alone. What do you say, Luise?"

"Yes, rather!" said Luise promptly. The trader narrowed his brow.

"Listen! My wife isn't well. I want someone to nurse her. Surely, you wouldn't refuse to give help to another white person?"

It was an appeal that touched Luise.

Teresa, taking her hand and smiling.

"Aren't you just the nicest, kindest-hearted thing that ever was? Of course, I want to help anyone in distress, Luise. Only, I'd like proof that this isn't an excuse. He wants us to help him bluff through the king's country, that's my idea. And he's artful enough to know the way to appeal to us. He's gone on now to tell his wife she's supposed to be ill."

Luise was shocked.

"Terry. That's awfully suspicious," she reproved her.

"Maybe. But it's not a bad guess, I'm thinking."

Fuzzy, who had been listening carefully, puckered her forehead, and then moved away.

"Me go find out," she said.

"One thing I am determined about," Teresa went on grimly. "He's not going to make use of this ring."

They were half-way to the trader's settlement when Fuzzy came running back, panting hard with exertion.

"What's the news?" asked Teresa eagerly.

"Miss Teaser," said Fuzzy. "She, am ill. She do need summon to help."

"There!" said Luise, without a note of triumph, but in relief, because she did not like suspecting people of evil.

"Then I'm wrong," said Teresa, quickly. "And I hope we can help."

The trader's boys had packed ready for the journey, and in addition he had the boys who had been porters for the girls.

They goggled at the elephant, and at Teresa, Fuzzy and Adolphus, then exchanged glances full of meaning. Their sulky faces eloquently showed that they knew now that they had been neatly fooled.

But Teresa, Luise and Fuzzy did not care what they thought. They went at once to the litter which had been arranged for the trader's wife.

She was a frail-looking woman, and her expression was pathetic as she gave Luise a limp hand.

Luise unpacked the smaller first-aid box, and then took out some tablets, while Teresa provided the flask of water.

With only natives in attendance the woman had been lonely, and her relief was quite touching when she looked at Teresa and Luise.

"You are coming through Nompanyo's country with us?" she asked weakly.

"Yes—we'll see you through," said Teresa.

But the woman's sad expression deepened at that, and she sighed heavily. The trader's voice came then, ordering the boys into line.

"And if that elephant's coming, keep it in order," he called.

"He'll be all right," said Teresa.

The cortege moved on, and Luise kept close to the trader's wife, while Fuzzy and Teresa looked after Bambo, who seemed to be quite happy ambling along.

They covered a mile, quickly, through a clear path, the trader marching ahead, then Teresa went forward to see how Luise was faring with her patient.

Luise was leaning down listening to something the woman whispered, and now she looked up, her face white.

"Terry," she called softly, and cast a look ahead towards the trader.

"Here a minute—" Then Luise lowered her voice and spoke with considerable agitation. "Terry—Mrs. Garson—she's frightened—she doesn't want to go into Nompanyo's land. She's begged me not to go—"

Teresa, with new alarm, looked down at Mrs. Garson, who, her eyes brimming with tears, beckoned so that Teresa stooped to hear.

"Don't let him know I've mentioned it," she whispered. "But we must not cross that ford. It is madness. If we fail now—we shall be sent down river to safety. If we get through, things may go wrong—you may be held to blame with us—"

"For what?" asked Teresa.

"My husband is carrying plans—his men have spied in Nompanyo's land. They are taking information through

to the enemy—it will mean tribal war—suffering. You must not let it happen. You must not."

Teresa understood.

"If we are captured and the luggage searched there will be serious trouble for us all?" she exclaimed.

"Yes—and it may happen. The king may be suspicious."

The trader turned and Teresa drew away. Calling to Fuzzy, she ran back to the elephant, while Luise opened the flask and tried to keep her hand steady.

"The ford is just ahead," called the trader.

He strode up to Teresa, smiling.

"Come now," he said. "I know you have been fooling. Where's that ring? There's a guard at the ford. Come and see for yourself."

Teresa stepped forward to the bend in the path and saw the ford of the river. On the far bank stood six fine men, tall and powerful, wearing feathered headdresses. Five were carrying spears and leopard-skin shields, while one was armed with a rifle.

"Now understand, we must get across," said the trader.

Teresa did not answer. The ring might get them across—yet what a betrayal of the king's trust it would be!

As she stood there hesitating, two of the men came across and Fuzzy ran to Teresa's side to act as interpreter. The men spoke no English but waved their arms and stamped their feet, pointing all in the same direction westwards.

"What do they say?" asked Teresa.

"Dey say: No one go 'cross ribber. Canoes wait—take all people way down ribber. No one go 'cross!"

"Down the river—where to?" asked Teresa.

"Fifty miles down river," snapped the trader. "Does your way lie there?"

Teresa shook her head in dismay.

"No, no. My goodness, we can't do that."

"Then produce the ring," said the trader, "and we'll be passed through." He spoke rapidly to the men in their own language and Fuzzy translated to Teresa.

"He say, 'we am got ring of king'—de warriors dey am pleased. Dey ask see ring. Dey say if ring am good, we go trough."

Teresa thought of that long trek down river, miles and miles off their course. Then she thought of the trader's wife, and the awful peril should they go through and the luggage be searched.

Suddenly she made up her mind.

"No!" she cried, and dived her hand into her pocket. "The ring shall not be used for such purpose."

Before the trader could intervene she threw her hand round. Something that glinted in the sun sailed through the air into the tangled bush.

With a cry of anger the trader rushed to the spot, tearing thorns and leaves in frenzy, shouting to the boys to 'help find it."

But Teresa turned to Fuzzy.

"That was not the ring," she said in a low tone. "It was a hairclip. Bring Luise—and Bambo. Quick, quick! We'll go through alone!"

RESOURCEFUL Teresa! But can she and her chums really outwit the unscrupulous trader, after all? You will see when you read the continuation of this great story in next Saturday's issue.

"THE SPEED GIRL'S SECRET STOWAWAY!"

(Concluded from page 16)

She rose. The man kept a grip on her arm. Babs & Co., seeing that little episode, looked at each other in wonder as they followed.

Down the aisle of the stand the detective went. Just as Mary was being helped out of her car by the flushed and gleeful Mr. Cleveden-Carr, the detective was joined by Mrs. Trent. Mrs. Trent flashed Clara a spiteful look.

"Not quite clever enough, eh?" she sneered.

Now the detective was approaching Mary. His face was grim.

"Miss Malcolm, I have orders to arrest you!" he said.

"Arrest her?" Mr. Cleveden-Carr cried, while from Babs went up a cry.

"On a charge," the detective announced, "of abducting a girl named Sophie Trent! A charge by this lady of—"

"And a charge," a voice put in, "which is wrong! If there is any arresting to do, officer, arrest the woman who employed you to do it!"

And while Babs and Clara jumped, their eyes opening in bewilderment, another man rushed on to the scene—and with him Sophie herself!

"I am Mr. Petherick," he said. "This girl is my daughter, whom I have identified by a certain birthmark! For years that woman has deceived me, leading me to believe my own child was dead. Officer, arrest her!"

Too late Mrs. Trent turned to flee.

The detective caught her by the shoulder.

Sophie, trembling, was at Mary's side, however. Her eyes were shining.

"Mary," she sobbed, "and Clara! Oh, how can I thank you—how can I ever thank you? You—you see, I disobeyed. I went to meet my father myself. I introduced myself to him. Mary, you don't mind?"

"Mind?" Mary cried, and hugged her. "Mind! You silly darling!" she cried, and almost in tears, shook Mr. Petherick's hand, "I'm glad—glad!" she went on. "Thank goodness you came in time!"

"In time," Mr. Cleveden-Carr said, "just to miss the finish of one of the finest races I have ever seen in my life. Miss Malcolm, I congratulate you—not only upon your ability as a racing motorist, but also apparently on your ability to bring happiness to other people. I will see you later!"

"For which three cheers!" Clara Trevellyn grinned. "Let's celebrate!"

"But what," Mabs demanded, "about you? What about Primmy?"

"Well, blow Primmy!" was Clara's characteristic retort. "Let's enjoy ourselves while we may."

And they did, though, to be sure, when Miss Primrose heard the whole story of what had happened she could not be hard upon the reckless Tomboy of the Fourth for her share in the escapade.

Clara, in fact, escaped with a hundred lines!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

(Now see page 16 for details of next Saturday's wonderful Babs & Co. story.)