"JEMIMA UNDER SUSPICION!" Magnificent LONG COMPLETE Cliff House story inside.

THE SCHOOLGIRL

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Incorporating "SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"

JEMIMA'S MYSTERY DISGUISE!

An intriguing incident from the wonderful story of Barbara Redfern & Co. in this issue.

A grand Long Complete story of Barbara Redfern & Co., featuring a very, very strange schoolgirl.

JEMIMA UNDER SUSPICION!

The New Lydia!

"I SAY, Babs, what's the matter with Lydia?" Bessie Bunter demanded.

"Lydia?" Barbara Redfern asked absently.

"Lydia Crossendale, you know." And plump Bessie Bunter of the Fourth Form at Cliff House nodded. "I asked her to lend me a half-crown——"

"And she told you to go and eat coke?" golden-haired Mabel Lynn chuckled. "You can't blame her for that, old Bess!"

Babs smiled, and plump Bessie blinked indignantly through her thick spectacles at her two chums.

"But she didn't tell me to go and eat coke," she said offendedly. "And, anyway, if she had, why should I eat coke when the tuckshop has got a ripping new supply of strawberry tarts in? Lydia, in fact," Bessie said, glowering, "was most awfully obliging. And I must say she didn't make half the fuss you girls make about lending me a measly half-crown. She just lent it, that's all!"

"Sure it's a real one?" put in Tomboy Clara Trevlyn, with a wink.

"Oh, really, Clara! I hope I know a good half-a-crown when I see one! But, I say, Lydia is jolly decent since she's come back, isn't she? Do you think she might lend me another half-a-crown if I asked her, Babs?"

"Well, no harm in trying, at all

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER.

events," Babs chuckled. "By the way, where is Lydia?"

"Gone to post the jolly old letters," Jemima Carstairs said glancing round from her typewriter in the corner of Study No. 4, where this discussion was taking place. "Funny, though."

"What's funny?"

"Lydia!"

Funny, yes! They all knew what Jemima meant. They all looked at each other as Bessie, with a hopeful smile on her fat face, rolled out of the room. Funny it was that Lydia Crossendale, their erstwhile enemy, the former despised snob of the Fourth Form, should have shown such a startling improvement in her conduct since her return to Cliff House a week or so ago!

Not even yet could they altogether credit the miracle which seemed to have transformed that girl; for Lydia—the snob, the cheat, the sneak—was an overwhelmingly changed being.

Lydia, in fact, so far from being the sneering enemy of old, really seemed determined, since her return, to make Babs & Co. her best chums. Lydia, the languid, had become the most feverishly bustling and energetic girl in the Fourth Form.

"Well, she certainly seems resolved to turn over a new leaf," Barbara Redfern commented. "I don't think I've ever seen such a change in a girl."

"Not playing some sly game?" Clara questioned—Clara knew Lydia.

"But what sort of game could she be playing?" Babs asked. "What can she possibly have to gain? And I must say," she added warmly, "that she's done wonders on the preparations committee. If it hadn't been for her we shouldn't have got through half the work we have done. I only hope," she added, "she has decided to reform. Anyway, while she keeps on like this I've got no complaint to make."

Mabel Lynn nodded approvingly. That strange girl, Jemima Carstairs, pausing to adjust her monocle, frowned thoughtfully, but made no comment.

What Babs said was certainly true, however, and the sentiment she expressed was echoed by all of them. Lydia certainly had worked hard—and that at a time when hard work was most wanted. Apart from that, Lydia had materially helped the school in last Saturday's inter-school sports against Whitechester by winning the half-mile hurdle race.

Marvellous, that! Because Lydia, normally, was not interested in games. And because she had won that event Lydia was entitled to a prize for it.

Owing to a sudden downpour at the end of the afternoon the prizes had not been awarded on the day of the sports itself, and because prizegiving had to be postponed, Cliff House and Whitechester had decided to make a special event of it. It was in preparation for that event that they were all now so industriously working.

For the prizegiving evening was to take place at Cliff House next Saturday—and with the prizegiving, a grand dance with entertainment and refreshments.

Parents from both schools were being invited, and Lord Courtfield had agreed to present the prizes. Naturally, with so little time for preparation, both Whitechester and Cliff House had found themselves with a great amount of work to do, and it had been a case of all hands to the pumps. And Lydia had worked with untiring willingness and energy.

Clara Trevlyn flushed a little.

"Well, of course, I don't want to run Lydia down if she's really turning over a new leaf," she said. "This change in her does seem a bit too good to be true, though, that's all."

"At the same time," Babs said thoughtfully, "she had her lesson, didn't she? I can't imagine that she had a very good time at home after being suspended for what she did to Brenda Fallace. She was away six weeks, remember, and in six weeks she's probably had a chance to think things over. Yes? Hallo! Come in!" she finished, as a knock sounded at the door.

The door opened. It was Lydia Crossendale herself who appeared.

"Oh, hallo, girls!" she said brightly. "Babs, I've posted the letters. Shall I phone Linda Gay now?"

"Well——" Babs said. "No, Lydia, I don't think we'd better—yet. You see, I've got to get out a list of guests."

"Let me do that for you," Lydia offered.

"But you've worked like a horse already," Babs protested.

Lydia laughed—such a rippling laugh it was, so different from that half-sneering, half-mocking snigger she usually gave.

"Well, Lydia, you haven't given us much chance to think otherwise, have you?"

"No," Lydia admitted at once; "but I'm through with all that now. I've had my lesson," she added bitterly. "It wasn't nice being sent home for six weeks for the tricks I played on Brenda Fallace. I had a rotten time at home, and my parents only let me come back to school on condition that I behaved myself. That's why I'm anxious to do all I can now to show you that I'm going to play the game."

Babs smiled. Well, if Lydia genuinely meant that—and it certainly seemed that she did—she would have a loyal helper in Babs, the captain of the Fourth.

"And that's why," Lydia said sincerely, "I want to help. I want to do things. I want to make myself a credit to the Form. Honestly, I'm telling the truth! I've finished playing the fool!"

"Even finished," Jemima asked gently, "breaking bounds at night?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then why," Jemima asked; and Babs stared at her, feeling faintly annoyed that Jemima should ask such a question, "did you break bounds the night before last?"

Lydia stared.

"I—I didn't!"

"No?" Jemima shrugged. "Then maybe I was dreaming. Or maybe," she said, "it was your shadow I saw creeping into the merry old dorm about midnight. Or perhaps," Jemima added cheerfully, "I was just imagining things. Or perhaps it might have been some other girl—what? Sure it wasn't you, old Spartan?"

"The strangest girl in the Fourth Form!" Jemima Carstairs had often been called that. And when someone unknown set out to cause trouble between Cliff House and Whitechester School, Jemima acted more mysteriously than ever. The question girls began to ask each other was: "Is Jemima the unknown mischief-maker?"

"I've enjoyed it," she said. "And, after all, we have got rather a rush on, haven't we? Many hands make light work, you know. Isn't that so, Jemima?"

"Oh, quite! Absolutely! Simply staggering, the truth in that!" Jemima beamed. "Hard work breaks no bones, as the blithe old ballad says. Though I must add," Jemima groaned, straightening her back in her chair, "that two hours' banging at this fearsome typewriter has made my old spinal column creek like the leaning tower of Pisa. Fearfully cramping for the old back, typing."

"Please let me do it," Lydia cried eagerly. "You know I love typing."

"Well, well, that's an idea certainly," Jemima said and frowned thoughtfully. "At the same time—pardon the old illusion—but I had an idea you weren't fond of typing."

"Well, that's your mistake, I am," Lydia laughed. "And, after all," she added, "it's all in a good cause, isn't it?"

"Rather keen on the good cause—what?" murmured Jemima.

"And haven't I reason to be?" came Lydia's immediate retort. "Why shouldn't I be keen? I'm going to get a prize, aren't I? And aren't my parents coming down to see the prizegiving? Oh, I know," she added, shrugging, "that it all must seem jolly funny to you! This sudden change in me, I mean. You all think I'm an outsider, don't you? A sneak, a snob, a mischief-maker!"

Babs flushed a little. It seemed that the question was addressed to her.

"No?" Jemima shrugged. "Then maybe I was dreaming. Or maybe," she said, "it was your shadow I saw creeping into the merry old dorm about midnight. Or perhaps," Jemima added cheerfully, "I was just imagining things. Or perhaps it might have been some other girl—what? Sure it wasn't you, old Spartan?"

"No, it wasn't!" Lydia snapped, with one of the old Lydia-like gleams of anger in her eyes.

"Then, in that case, pardon," Jemima said blandly. "But some girl did break bounds the night before last, and that girl, as she passed the merry old bed on which I snuggle my weary bones o' nights, smelt strongly of the perfume which thou dost use, fair Lydia. Still, again a thousand and one apologies! No offence, old topper?"

Lydia laughed.

"None at all," she said. "In any case, I don't blame you, Jimmy. It's one of the fool things I might have done before I came back, but not now. And as for the perfume—well, you know that half a dozen girls in the Form borrow my perfume. Can I do that typing now?"

"The chair," Jemima said magnificently, "is yours. Be seated, Spartan."

And she smiled—that bland, puzzling smile of hers.

Babs frowned a little, because she knew that whenever Jemima asked questions like that, and smiled like that, something deep and profound was going on in the keen brain which was covered with that shining, sleek Eton-crop she wore.

Apparently pointless and very irritating could Jemima be at times;

mysterious both in her actions and her words, but underneath it all Jemima was very, very clever.

Even so, Jemima, like everyone else, made mistakes. And, in any case, as Lydia had said, someone else could have borrowed her perfume.

Lydia, a beaming smile on her face, took her seat at the typewriter, and began to rattle off the envelopes which Jemima had been addressing. Curiously and admiringly Jemima gazed at her as her nimble fingers swept over the keyboard.

There came a tap at the door. Freda Ferriers, the sneak of the Form and Lydia's chum from Study No. 1, looked in.

"Oh, there you are!" she said, as she saw Lydia. "I say, I've been looking for you! I thought you were going to Courtfield?"

"I'm sorry; busy!" Lydia said curtly.

"But you promised——"

"I said," Lydia retorted, "I'm busy! Buzz off!"

Freda's mean little eyes gleamed.

"Look here——"

Lydia rose. With a glance at Babs she crossed to the door. Very firmly she caught the open-mouthed Freda by the shoulder, and pushed her into the passage. Without a word she closed the door, resuming her seat at the typewriter. Jemima grinned.

"Neat—what?" she murmured. "Cheers for the strong, silent-woman stuff! Dear little Freda will be peeved."

"Well, let her!" Lydia snapped.

"Look here——" Freda hooted, outside the door.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Are you coming?"

"No!"

Crash! clumped Freda's foot upon the door, and, muttering and fuming, she was then heard stamping off down the corridor.

Lydia shrugged, smiling faintly.

"Good riddance!" she said. "I say, Babs, what's Mrs. Browne's new address? I think you've got the old one here. Shall I go and look it up in the phone book?"

"Oh, please!" Babs said.

Lydia rose. Out she went. The four looked at each other.

"My hat, how that girl's changed!" Mabs said. "Fancy ticking Freda off like that!"

"Jolly well amazing!" said Clara Trevlyn.

"And just look," breathed Babs, "at the amount of work she's done! Jimmy——"

"Adsum," Jemima said cheerfully.

"What did you mean by chipping her about being out of bounds?"

"Well, dash it, one must make conversation—what?" Jemima returned vaguely. "And, as it happened, there was a big dance at the Courtfield Palais that night. Well, we all know what interest our little Lydia used to have in the affairs at the Palais, don't we, and, putting two and two together, and sprinkling 'em with a dash of Lydia's nifty perfume, I made five and nine-tenths of them, as usual? Alas! that I should go through this sad life making such fearsome errors. What about a spot of tea?"

"Yes, rather; that's just what I was going to say," plump Bessie Bunter said, coming in at the door at that moment. "Crumbs!" she added, blinking round through her thick spectacles. "Nobody's even laid the table, you know. I say, Babs, when are you going to finish?"

"Two minutes," Babs said. "Shush! Don't worry, Bessie! I'm trying to make out a time-table."

"And I," Mabs said, looking up with a sigh, "have just finished a plan of the seating accommodation. Did somebody say tea? I'm just dying for it. Babs, shall we invite Lydia?"

"Why not?" Babs asked. "She's earned it! Oh, here she is!" she added, as Lydia entered the room. "Like to stop to tea, Lydia?"

Lydia flushed.

"Well, I—I'd love to, if—if you'll have me," she said. "I'd love to—frightfully! But let me help to get it."

And, with Babs finishing her task, she did help to get it, and bustled about with such energy, indeed, that tea was ready in half the time it usually took to prepare it in Study No. 4. Added to that, Lydia went along to her own study—Study No. 1—and added a new uncut cake she had bought. In beaming good humour they all sat down.

"And after tea," Babs said, "we'll trot along to Whitechester. Like to come, Lydia?"

Lydia looked up quickly.

"Whitechester?" she asked, and paused. "Well, no—no thanks! I—I'd rather get on with the envelopes."

"Oh, but they'll do to-morrow!" Babs said. "In any case, you look as if a stroll would do you good."

"No, thanks!" Lydia smiled, but she cast a rather peculiar look towards the door, and Jemima, coughing suddenly, took out her monocle and polished it vigorously. "I—I don't really feel like walking," she added lamely; "and—and—well, I would like to finish those letters off now I've started them. You won't mind?"

"Not at all!" Babs laughed. "Pass the jam, Bessie! Why, yes, come in!" she added, twisting round, and then leapt to her feet, with a cry of surprise. "Linda! Queenie!" she cried.

Linda Gay, the captain of the Fourth Form at Whitechester School, with Queenie Pelham, it was. But not the usually merry, laughing Linda they knew so well. Her face, indeed, was rather grim.

But in their delight at seeing these friends of theirs, none of the Cliff House girls noticed anything at all unusual.

"Come in!" Babs said joyfully. "Just in time for tea, Linda."

"Thanks!" Linda paused. "We didn't come for tea."

"Oh!" Babs blinked, aware then that something was wrong. "What's the matter?"

"The matter," Linda said, and suddenly revealed a cutting from a newspaper, "is this!"

She planked the cutting down on the table.

"That's a letter which appeared this morning in the 'Courtfield Herald.' It was sent to the paper by a Cliff House girl. I do think, Barbara," she added tartly, "that if that letter means exactly what you at Cliff House think, then the sooner we call off the prize-giving arrangements for Saturday, the better! Read it!"

But Babs, almost dazed, was already reading it. And she started as the heading to the letter caught her eye.

"SCHOOLGIRL COMMENT ON PUBLIC SCHOOL HYPOCRISY," it read. "ARE CLIFF HOUSE AND WHITECHESTER THE FRIENDS THEY SEEM?"

Not Much of a Clue!

"WELL?" Linda Gay demanded.

But Babs did not reply then. With dazed eyes she was reading the printed letter which, signed "Cliff House Schoolgirl," was unfolded before her eyes. It read:

"As a girl who feels some degree of honesty in these things, I really must write to protest about the preparations which are now going on at Cliff House School for the forthcoming entertainment of Whitechester. It is nothing but a display of hypocrisy.

"For it is a well-known fact that Cliff House and Whitechester never can be friends. The so-called 'friendly rivalry' which exists between the two schools is merely another name for jealousy. Already Whitechester are grumbling because they will not receive as many prizes as the girls of Cliff House School. Here at Cliff House, contempt for its rivals is expressed openly—except, of course, when Whitechester girl happens to be on the scene. Why can't we be honest, and tell Whitechester we don't really like them? And why can't Whitechester tell us the same?

"A CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOLGIRL."

Babs' face turned pale with anger as she passed the slip to her chums.

"Linda, you don't believe that?"

"Well, there it is!" Linda said shortly. "Believe it or not, it's not a very nice thing to see in the paper, is it? One of your girls must have written it, otherwise the paper would never have dared to publish it. I think, at least, it calls for an explanation!"

"My hat, I'll say it does!" Clara Trevlyn glowered.

"It's not made a very good impression at Whitechester," Queenie Pelham put in.

Babs nodded grimly. She could understand that. Had the letter been signed "A Whitechester Schoolgirl," it would not have made a very good impression at Cliff House. Fast friends though the two schools were, there were always people ready to believe in statements of this sort, and even among friends such an accusation was liable to leave bitter feelings. She looked again at Linda.

"You haven't made inquiries, I suppose?"

"No," Linda said. "I thought the inquiring, if any, had better be left to you. Whitechester's pretty mad about it, I can tell you. They're demanding that the girl who wrote it shall be found out and made to apologise. Some of them are already saying that they won't come to the reception on Saturday."

"But who," Lydia Crossendale asked angrily, "could have written such an insult?"

"Don't I wish I knew!" Babs said. "At the same time, we can jolly well find out," she added, "immediately after tea! Will you stop to tea, Linda? We want to talk to you."

"I'm sorry, I can't!" Linda said.

"Well, Queenie?"

"Thanks, but Linda and I have somewhere to go," Queenie Pelham said hesitantly. "But we'll be glad to hear, Babs, when you've found out. Bye-bye!"

She smiled round the room as she and Linda went out. But it was not the same cheery smile as of old, and the abruptness of their departure seemed to suggest that they were not quite satisfied at the turn events had taken. There was a long silence in Study No. 4.

"Spanner in the old works—what?" Jemima said thoughtfully. "Some big bad wolf stalking across the fold of friendship and peace. But how, Babs, my beloved, are you going to find out?"

"I'm going to the editorial office!" Babs said grimly. "I'm going to see the original letter!"

"And that, you think, might help?" Jemima asked. "I have my doubts," she said. "Writers of letters like that usually take good care to cover up the old tracks—what? Printing in black capitals, or typewriter, or something like that. All the same, I suppose we've got to do something. Can't let old Whitechester moon around with this bumble-bee buzzing in its bonnet. Strange—what?" she added thoughtfully. "Don't you think so, Lydia?"

Lydia stared.

"What's strange?"

"That letter almost suggests," Jemima said thoughtfully, "that somebody has some reason for trying to burst up the happy friendship between Cliff House and Whitechester. Now, who could want to do that, do you think? And why?"

"Well, I'm afraid it's no good asking me," Lydia smiled. "Try Bessie."

"Oh, really, Jimmy, if you think I wrote that letter——"

"Not at all, old topper—not at all!" Jemima burbled. "The spelling's too good, for one thing. Well," she said resignedly, as she rose to her feet, "who's going to join the old tracking-down party? I'll make one. You coming, Lydia, old top?"

"No, thanks! I'll get on with the letters."

"Well, we don't want a crowd," Babs said. "Mabs, Clara, and you, Jimmy—that will be enough," she added. "Bessie, clear the table, will you? Let's get our hats."

So they went together. They got their hats. Rather less joyously than usual, they tramped down to the gates, caught the bus, and half an hour later were standing in the rather dingy editorial offices of the "Courtfield Herald." Babs at once asked for the editor—a man who wasn't particularly fond of either school. It was the editor himself who came to see them.

"Ah, the letter!" he said. "Yes, it's a perfectly authentic and genuine one. You would like to see it?" he added, rather maliciously.

"Most certainly we would!" Babs returned angrily.

"Well, you shall—certainly!" he beamed, and called the office-boy. "I hope," he added, "it didn't upset you?"

"It did!" Babs told him bluntly. "In fact, it's caused quite a lot of trouble!"

"Ah!" The editor smiled again. "I'm sorry," he said. "On the other hand, you must understand my position. Our correspondence columns are naturally open to all, and Whitechester and Cliff House are, of course, always news. Ah, here is the letter!" he said. "There you are."

He handed the letter over to Babs. One glance was sufficient to tell her that it was an authentic Cliff House letter. It bore the school crest, was on the school notepaper. But, as Jemima had prophesied, it gave no clue to the identity of the sender because it was typewritten.

"Well, I must say that doesn't help much," Clara Trevlyn grumbled. "That typewriter looks sort of familiar, though. Rather like yours, Jimmy!"

Jemima, adjusting her eyeglass, peered at it. There was a sudden strange look on her face as she rapidly ran her eyes over the typewritten lines.

"Is it?" she asked.

"Well—yes! Yours is an elite type, isn't it?" Clara asked. She gazed at Jemima, who was sitting now, looking very unconcerned indeed. "I believe it is yours!" she cried. "Jimmy, I believe this letter was typed on your machine!"

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

"But it is—look!" And Clara pointed to a word. "See that T—the cross part is blurred! Jimmy, the cross is blurred on the T on your machine. It—it wasn't——"

"Me?" Jemima asked.

They all stared at her dazedly. Jemima polished her monocle.

"Well," she said, "let me confess—at once! It wasn't me!"

"But your typewriter——" Babs cried.

Jemima shrugged.

"Am I the only one who uses my typewriter?" she asked.

"Well, no," Mabs admitted, colouring.

"Just a sec," Clara said thoughtfully. "Lydia does. Babs, do you think Lydia might have——"

They paused, staring at each other. For a moment they were all struck by that thought. Almost completely believing in the reformation of Lydia as they did this, certainly, was a trick of which Lydia might have been guilty in the old days. It was Jemima, however, who shook her head.

"And why," she asked, "should dear old Lydia have written it? Why should she seek to kybosh a merry old festivity for which she is working her nimble fingers to the bone? And if," Jemima went on wisely, "'twas real and truly our Lydia, don't you think she'd have had more sense than to type it on a machine which everybody knows she's using?"

They paused. As an argument that was sound. Apart from that, Lydia would have as much to lose as any of them if bad feeling were allowed to form between Cliff House and Whitechester.

"Then—then——" Babs said. "But who could it have been?" she burst out.

"Well," Jemima said. "It might have been little me, but it wasn't, you see. But now look at the letter again. Notice anything?"

They all stared.

"Well, what?" Mabs asked questioningly.

"In the typing."

"It looks quite nicely typed to me."

"Tough!" Jemima said sadly.

"What's tough?"

"Oh, nothing—just nothing!" Jemima said airily. "Nothing at all!"

"Then what," Clara glared, "did you say a thing like that for?"

"Just to get the old vocal organs a little exercise, what?" Jemima beamed disarmingly. "Saying things is the best way to keep 'em in order, you know. Well, well, as it doesn't seem we can do

"LOOK here——" protested the sneak of the Form. But Lydia Crossendale paid no heed. She bundled Freda out of the study. The chums watched in some amazement. It really seemed as if Lydia had turned over a new leaf, for the sneak of the Form had previously been a constant companion of hers.

any good by staying here, what about a spot of hiking towards the old school again? It doth seem to me," Jemima added, "that there, if anywhere, lies the clue to the old mystery!"

Which, if obvious, was true! If they hadn't found the solution to the mystery, they had, at least, discovered some information. The letter was undebatably the work of some Cliff House girl—and the fact that it was written on Jemima's typewriter seemed to narrow it down to someone in the Fourth Form.

Feeling their time had not been altogether wasted, they followed their slim, immaculate chum as she led the way out of the office.

"What's Happened to Jemima?"

"HALLO, what's up?" asked Barbara Redfern.

The chums, entering Big Hall on their return from Courtfield, paused.

There was quite a small scene in Big Hall, and Diana Royston-Clarke, the famous Firebrand of the Fourth, Rosa Rodworth, and Frances Frost, were obviously the centre of it. Glowering indignantly, they faced a small crowd of Junior School girls.

"Looks," Jemima murmured, "as if there's been trouble! Our Firebrand's on the warpath, what? Must say our dear little Di looks peeved."

Babs, however, was not listening to that. She walked over to Diana.

"Di, what's happened?" she asked.

"What's happened?" Diana flamed. "We've been jolly well insulted, that's all! Three of those Whitechester girls are——"

"Calling us names!" Rosa glowered.

"Insulting us in the street," Frances Frost put in.

Babs looked anxious.

"Not Linda Gay?"

"No, not Linda Gay," Diana retorted. "Three other cats. Ada Harmer was one—that pasty-faced little lemon! I don't know who the other two were. We happened to be coming out of Hathaway's tea-rooms in Friardale when these three came strolling along arm-in-arm——"

"Yes?" Babs prompted.

"Then this cat, Ada Harmer, pointed. They all laughed. We took no notice, but as we went by Ada turned round and called out something about Cliff House insulters. Of course," Diana said, "we jolly well caught hold of her and asked her what she meant. Then one of the others said that Cliff House wasn't a school, it was just a cats' home!"

Babs bit her lip.

"And then?"

"Well," Diana glared, "what did you expect me to do? I slapped Ada's face. Of course, a crowd collected. The crowd started hissing, thinking we were bullying the poor defenceless Whitechester girls, and so—well, we just hurried off."

Babs looked very worried at that. Clara frowned grimly. Mabs, gazing at Jemima, who was again polishing her monocle, shook her golden head.

It was not good news. Everybody at Cliff House knew Ada Harmer. Nobody at Cliff House would normally have paid a great deal of attention to Ada Harmer, who was renowned, even at her own school, as a sneak, a mischief-maker.

But Ada was a Whitechester girl. Feelings at Whitechester, if not running high, had been considerably ruffled by the letter in the morning paper, and incidents like this were not calculated to pour oil upon the already troubled waters.

"This is rotten," Babs muttered.

"Well, you didn't jolly well expect us to stand there, taking it lying down?" Rosa demanded.

"No, not exactly! But—— Oh, bother, I don't know!" Babs said worriedly. "Anyway, you ought to have known better than to pay any attention to Ada Harmer!"

"Oh, yes? And what would you have done?" Diana sneered.

But Babs did not answer that. She nodded to her three chums. In rather gloomy silence they went up the stairs to the Fourth Form corridor.

And then outside Study No. 1 they paused again.

"Tut, what a life!" sighed Jemima. "More trouble!"

It certainly sounded like it. The door of Study No. 1 was a little ajar. From behind that door came two angry voices—the voices of Freda Ferriers and Lydia Crossendale.

"Well, you said last week that we'd go," Freda was crying.

"I didn't!"

"You did! And now," Freda cried, "I've bought the rotten tickets. Do you think I'd have gone and spent seven shillings on two dance tickets for the Palais if I'd thought you weren't coming?"

"I told you," Lydia replied vehemently, "that I'd stopped playing those sort of silly games! You know we're not allowed to go to the Palais. You didn't jolly well consult me before you bought the tickets, and I've told you flatly—I'm not going! That's all!"

"But what about your ticket?" Freda hooted.

"Tear it up!" Lydia said scornfully.

"What! When I've paid three-and-six for it?"

"That," Lydia returned bitingly, "is your affair! Good-bye!"

The door opened, and she hurried out, only to pull up at sight of Babs & Co., who, realising they had been unknowingly listening, looked rather uncomfortable all at once. She smiled.

"Oh, Babs, here you are!" she said. "Did you find out anything?" she added eagerly.

"Not a thing!"

"Oh dear! But you saw the letter?"

"Yes."

"Didn't that tell you anything?"

"Only," Jemima put in, "that it was typed on my jolly old typewriter—what? Some fearful scoundrel borrowed the old machine without permish, you know—frightfully bad form. Ah, Freda!" she added next moment. "Dear, handsome Freda, child of my heart and light of my youth!"

The child of her heart and the light of her youth scowled bitterly.

"Rats! I'm not talking to you!" she cried. "Lydia, look here——"

"Would you like me to finish those envelopes now, Babs?" Lydia asked coolly.

"But look here——" Freda hooted.

"Because," Lydia went on, "I'd like to get on with them. Naturally, as your study has been empty while you've been away, I haven't been in it. Freda, for goodness' sake stop making a din!" she added impatiently. "Come on, Babs!"

"Jimmy," Babs said, as Jemima stepped towards the door of Study No. 1.

"Prithee amble without me," Jemima said cheerfully. "Freda, beloved, may I have thy shell-like ear for a moment or two? I fain would talk with thee."

Freda glanced at her suspiciously. Lydia, already walking along the corridor, did not look back, but Babs for a moment cast the puzzle of the Fourth a queer glance. What could Jemima Carstairs have to say to the sneak of the Fourth?

But, as Babs knew, there was never any telling what strange thing Jemima would do next.

At any rate, Jimmy always knew what she was doing, and her queer little ways had a habit of bringing the most surprising results.

"Tough luck," Jemima said, when she was in Study No. 1 and Freda was glancing at her curiously. "Tough luck about the old ticket, I mean. Rather upsetting to the old bank balance to find yourself with three-and-sixpence-worth of ticket you can't use."

"Is that all you want to say?" Freda sneered.

"Nunno, not quite! I have an idea," Jemima said thoughtfully. "Supposing I buy that ticket from you?" she asked.

Freda blinked.

"You?"

"Why not?" Jemima shrugged. "I can manage three-and-sixpence," she said, "and it will be no end of a thrill, won't it—risking being nabbed by one of the mistresses? Quite a new thrill feeling a naughty old go-ahead bad egg; and, after all, I should be a bit of company for you, shouldn't I?"

Freda stared at her as if she could hardly believe her eyes.

"Jemima, you don't mean it?"

"Honest!" Jemima asserted solemnly. "And there," she added, "is three and little sixpence! Hand over the ticket. What time do we start?"

"You're really serious?" Freda asked, her eyes beginning to shine.

"Absolutely!"

Freda grinned. She didn't understand what prompted Jemima's amazing offer, but that didn't matter. Everybody in the Form hankered after Jemima's friendship, and that it should be given to her—— Joyfully she fished out the ticket. She took up the money.

"But not," Jemima said solemnly, "a word of this, Freda!"

"Trust me!" Freda said. "Meet you outside at half-past three to-morrow afternoon."

"Topping!" Jemima murmured. "Topping!" She picked up the ticket, smiled an inscrutable smile at it and popped it into her pocket. "And next time," she added severely, "make sure before you spend your money that the goods are wanted! You know our good little Lydia doesn't do these sort of things now she's reformed!"

"Yeah?" Freda scoffed. "She might fill you with those yarns, but I know her! Anyway, she's a fibber!" she went on warmly, "because it was she who made arrangements last week for us both to go to this dance. Still, I'd rather have you—Jimmy!" she added.

She didn't notice the wince which Jemima gave at that use of her pet nickname as she went out.

The puzzle of the Fourth ambled along to Study No. 4. She entered to find Babs, Mabs, and Clara and Lydia energetically at work.

"Still with the old noses to the grindstone!" Jemima beamed. "Tut, what a hive of industry indeed! Getting on with the old letters, Lydia?"

"Yes, rather!" Lydia laughed.

Jemima strolled over to the table and languidly looked down.

"Nice work!" She picked up one of the envelopes, examining it carefully. "Slick, what? Wonderful!" she said, in a way which made Babs glance up at her with a sudden frown. "What a lot a spot of typescript can tell!"

Flames to the Feud!

"WELL, here we are, back exactly where we started!" Barbara Redfern said despondently. "I've tackled everybody who's used Jemima's typewriter for the last two days. I've tackled a good many others who haven't used it, and the result is——"

"Nothing!" Mabel Lynn said.

It was next morning, after breakfast, in Study No. 4, and both Babs and Mabs were looking quite worried.

They had reason to be, for, apart from the fact that they were no nearer proving the identity of the unknown mischief-maker, Babs had just returned from a summons to Miss Primrose's study.

Miss Jane Matthews, the headmistress of Whitechester School, had apparently written to Miss Primrose, enclosing the insulting cutting from yesterday's paper, and Miss Primrose, who was on exceedingly good terms with Miss Matthews, was extremely annoyed

"There's one girl, and one girl only, who can tell us anything about it," Babs resumed.

"Jimmy?" Mabs asked.

"Yes."

"But what does she know?"

"That's what I'd like to find out!" Babs pursed her lips. "Jimmy knows—or guesses—something, I'm pretty sure about that. I was watching her in the editorial office yesterday. I know that funny look in her face when she spots something, and she spotted something about that letter. Of course, I've tackled her, but might as well talk to a statue when Jemima's in one of her moods. The result is——"

"Just nothing!" Mabs said again, and frowned. "Babs, you—you don't think that—that—— Oh, I know it sounds silly, but, after all, the letter was typed on Jemima's typewriter. Jimmy is being rather funny and mysterious about it. You don't think she's playing one of her queer games?"

Babs shook her head.

"You mean that she wrote it? No!" she said flatly, and Mabs flushed. "All the same," she added worriedly, "she isn't being the same Jimmy as we know—even accounting for her mysteriousness. Notice how friendly she's been with Freda Ferriers since last night?"

"You don't think she suspects Freda?" Mabs asked quickly.

"No." Babs slowly shook her head. "No, I don't think so. But it's not like Jimmy to be pally with a girl like Freda, unless she's playing some deep game. I think—— Oh, hallo, Bess!" she added, as the door burst open, and into the room, her face red with indignation, rushed Bessie Bunter. "What's bitten you?"

"Look at this!" cried their plump study-mate, waving a sheet of newspaper.

"Look at what, chump?"

"This!" And Bessie spread the sheet on the table. "That!" she cried, and jabbed a fat finger at a printed column. "I say, you know, it's a bit thick if we've jolly well got to put up with that sort of thing! I've half a mind," Bessie said indignantly, "to go over to Whitechester and tell them what I think about it!"

But Babs was not listening to Bessie then. With Mabs leaning over her shoulder, she was studying the paragraph which Bessie had pointed out. Once again the paper was the "Courtfield Herald." It was a short letter this time, signed "Whitechester Schoolgirl."

It read:

"We at Whitechester are glad that Cliff House has at last come out into the open. We have never been under the illusion that Cliff House had any love for us, and it is good to find that one girl, at least, has the honesty to admit the fact. Perhaps they'll have the decency now to call off the prize-giving party and leave us alone."

Babs and Mabs looked at each other. But before either of them could speak the door opened. It was Jemima who looked in. She, too, carried a copy of the "Courtfield Herald."

"Seen it?" she asked.

"We have," Babs said, rather shortly.

"Pretty outspoken, what?" Jemima murmured. "Some of our Spartans are getting rather het-up about it."

Babs sighed.

"Well, I suppose we ought to have expected it," she said, "after that other letter. Somebody at Whitechester was bound to have taken it up."

"Think so?" Jemima looked thoughtful. "Or perhaps," she suggested gently, "the Cliff House mischief-maker was working hand in glove with a Whitechester mischief-maker, which would," Jemima went on, polishing her monocle, "help my deep old theory that there is somebody—two somebodies, in fact—who are working to bust up the old celebrations!"

"But why?" Babs asked.

"That's the question," Jemima said mysteriously.

"Jimmy, for goodness' sake don't be so annoying!" Mabs cried. "What do you know?"

"Oh, nothing!" Jemima replied blandly.

"Then what do you suspect?"

"Aha!" Jemima said profoundly, and smiled. "I have an idea—yes," she admitted slowly; "but is there not a proverb which says something about the proof of the succulent old pudding being in the consuming thereof? I should hate to give you a bite of my pudding before 'tis cooked, you know, the pudding in this case being the merry old who-done-it mystery of the letters."

"But I don't see how pudding could be that, you know," Bessie Bunter blinked. "I think that's silly!"

"Now, a pudding," Jemima went on, unruffled, "is composed of ingredients. Collect your ingredients, mix them in a certain way, and there—hey presto!—you have it. Now, in our particular pudding the ingredients are clues. You follow?"

"Well, vaguely," Babs said impatiently. "What clues have you got?"

CLIFF HOUSE PETS

No. 6.

Patricia Northanson's RASTUS

The Pets' House at Cliff House contains only two horses—Rastus, the property of Lady Patricia Northanson, of the Sixth Form, and Tartar, the famous pet of Margot Lantham, of the Fourth. Rastus is the older, both as to age and as a resident of the Pets' House. He is, in fact, the Pets' House oldest inhabitant.

For Rastus is six—not a very great age for a horse, of course. Perhaps he is a little more tolerant and dignified than the mettlesome Tartar, but he has lost nothing of his high spirits and his speed, and he is still winning Lady Pat prizes in point-to-point races.

Among the horse-lovers of Cliff House he is a great favourite, and to Lady Pat, at least, more wonderful than all the Grand National winners that have ever existed.

Sleek, shiny and glossy is Rastus' coat; haughty and proud that magnificent head of his! And you should see the tireless, effortless ease with which he moves! Many good judges of horses who have watched Rastus perform have suggested to Lady Pat that she should enter him for the big races. But Lady Pat always shakes her head.

Rastus is more than a pet to Lady Pat. He is her chum! If ever horse loved mistress, then that horse is certainly Rastus! His eyes light up at even the sound of her approaching footsteps; he quivers with joy when he hears her voice, and he whinnies with happiness when her hand caresses that noble neck of his!

Every morning, fair weather or foul, Lady Pat takes him for a brisk gallop across the downs—and does Rastus look forward to that? Several winters ago, during one of her extra-long Saturday gallops, Lady Pat was caught in a blizzard. She lost her way, and galloped Rastus into a treacherous bog. In her desperate efforts to save herself before she was sucked into the bog, she struck her head against a bole of wood and became unconscious.

At Cliff House she was missed. Hours later search parties were sent out. Good luck guided the feet of Dulcia Fairbrother and Mary Buller to the bog, and what do you think they found there? They found Rastus, whinnying pitifully, and smothered with marsh mud. They found the still unconscious form of Lady Pat close beside him.

Nobody, of course, had seen what had happened, but there can only be one explanation for Lady Pat's miraculous salvation. Obviously Rastus, floundering out of the bog, had dragged his mistress to safety and refused to leave her side until help arrived. Lady Pat, at least, is firm in her conviction that that is the explanation, and to prove it, will exhibit the riding-coat she wore on that occasion, which plainly shows the marks of horse's teeth! As a momento of her pet's gallantry, Lady Pat still keeps that coat!

Can you wonder, therefore, that she thinks Rastus the most wonderful animal in the world?

"Alas, only one!" Jemima sighed.

"And what's that?"

"Two spaces."

"Eh?"

"Just that," Jemima nodded, "just two spaces. But, like little Oliver Twist, I'm hoping for more!"

"Jimmy, what on earth do you mean?"

"Oh, just that!" Jemima beamed. "Just that, you know. Ahem! There goes assembly bell. Brace up, old Spartans, and march to the gathering!"

And Jemima, as assembly bell rang, adjusted her monocle, smiled at the three bewildered faces which gazed at her, and ambled out of the study.

"She's potty!" Bessie sniffed, while Babs and Mabs stared at each other.

There was no opportunity for further discussion then, however. Assembly bell was a summons that could not be ignored.

They scampered off, to find most of the school already gathered in Big Hall, and an undercurrent of rather angry conversation, which showed that the latest insult in the "Courtfield Herald" had already spread throughout the school.

In her address Miss Primrose had a few words to say about it, too.

The headmistress was angry.

"I am disturbed—very, very greatly disturbed," she said, "by this correspondence in the Press."

She paused. Faces glowed with indignation.

"I suppose," she said, "it is of no use asking the girl who wrote the original letter to come forward and own up. I warn her now, however, that I shall take the utmost steps to discover her identity, and when I do I shall deal with her very severely indeed.

"Meantime," Miss Primrose went on, "just to prevent this spite which I feel is gaining ground, I ask you all to keep your heads, and so far from blaming Whitechester for the action of the cowardly prevaricator whose letter appeared in the newspaper this morning, to make every added attempt to keep on good terms with the school."

That was all. But it was a neat little speech, and one which found an echo in most hearts there.

After morning lessons Babs called her chums into Study No. 4.

"My idea," she said—which was echoed with heartfelt enthusiasm by Bessie Bunter—"is to pool funds, and invite Linda and Queenie and half a dozen others of the Whitechester girls over to tea. We can talk things over calmly then. Agreed?"

Agreed it was. Babs went off at once to Lady Patricia Northanson, who was duty prefect for the day. Lady Pat at once gave her permission to use the phone in the prefects' room, and two minutes later Babs was in communication with Linda Gay.

Linda, however, expressed her regrets when Babs made her project known.

"No; I'm sorry, but it's impossible," she said. "You see, we're going over to see Miss Raymond."

"Miss Raymond?" Babs frowned, for Miss Raymond was the mistress of the Fourth Form at Whitechester—a very charming and popular young lady, much adored by all the junior girls of the school. "But isn't Miss Raymond at school?" she asked.

"No. Didn't you know?" Linda's voice sounded surprised. "She was hurt, you know, in Courtfield, the other night. Fell down a fire-escape or something, and pushed her kneecap out of place. Nothing serious, I'm glad to say; but as she's so dreadfully anxious to be fit for Saturday, she's having special treatment at the Courtfield Hospital. We're going over to see her this afternoon."

"Oh!" Babs said, and thought. Then: "But wait a minute, Linda. What time will you be leaving there?"

"About five."

"You'll be coming through Courtfield, of course?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Then," Babs laughed, "what about this? As there won't be time for you to come up to Cliff House, what about meeting at the Market Cross Cafe? We would like to talk things over with you, Linda."

"And so would we," Linda said. "By the way, Babs, did you find out who wrote that letter?"

"No."

"Pity!" Linda said. Her voice took on a grimmer note. "Because," she said, "we've found out who put the Whitechester letter in the paper this morning. It was Ada Harmer."

Babs uttered an exclamation.

"And—and what happened?"

"Well, what do you think? We couldn't give her away to the headmistress, of course; but we've taken the law into our own hands. We've sent her to Coventry, and anybody who's found talking to her goes to Coventry, too. I'm sorry about the letter, Babs. On behalf of Whitechester I apologise for it. We'll be pleased to meet you—very! The Market Cross Cafe, then?"

"At five," Babs said happily.

And, feeling that the clouds had cleared a little, she rushed back to Study No. 4 to break the good news to her chums. Jemima, who was among those present, looked at her quickly when she told them about Ada Harmer.

"And did Ada give the Cliff House girl away?" she asked.

"Well, I didn't ask," Babs said, "but I shouldn't think so. If she had, Linda would have been bound to mention it, wouldn't she?"

"Yes, I suppose so," Jemima said. "Well, well; be interesting, all the same, to hear what Linda has to say."

Interesting it would be. Jemima, in fact, seemed to be looking forward to meeting Linda with more than ordinary keenness. And yet, despite this, when lessons were finished, and Babs was collecting the crowd who were to meet at the Market Cross Cafe, no Jemima was to be found.

She was not in her study: she was not in the Common-room. Jean Cartwright remembered having seen her dressing. Muriel Bond had seen her walking towards the gates. It was from Flora Cann of the Lower Fifth that they received at last definite news of Jemima's activities.

"Seen Jemima? Why, yes," Flora said, when they tackled her as she came out of the tuckshop. "I saw her half an hour ago, getting on the Courtfield bus with Freda Ferriers."

"With whom?" Babs cried.

"Freda."

"You're sure?"

"Positive! Why?"

But Babs shook her head. Lydia Crossendale, who was one of the party, looked hesitant.

"I—I don't want to say anything. I—I suppose I oughtn't," she said. "But—but——"

"But what?" Clara Trevlyn asked bluntly.

"Well, I suppose Freda couldn't resist crowing, but she let out this morning that Jemima was going to a dance with her at the Palais this afternoon."

"Oh, stuff!" scoffed Mabel Lynn.

"I'm sorry," Lydia returned, flushing. "I was only saying what Freda told me, and she and Jimmy have been rather friendly since yesterday afternoon, haven't they?"

The party looked at each other. That was true. They had all commented on it. But that Jemima would attend a dance hall forbidden to the school with the sneak of the Fourth—well, it seemed incredible!

All the same, the fact remained—Jemima had gone, and it seemed pretty conclusive now that she had gone in Freda's company. More and more Babs wondered. More than a little she felt worried. It was so strange, so utterly extraordinary of Jemima.

"Well, anyway, blow her!" Clara said, ruffled. "We'll go without her. All the same," she added somewhat bitterly, "I didn't think Jimmy would let her own pals down for the sake of that sneak. Must be something frightfully fascinating about Freda all at once!"

They crowded into the bus. Outside the Market Cross they got off. It was a quarter to five then—just nice time, as Babs said, to get across to the cafe and order the meal. In a group they stepped across the square, and then suddenly Leila Carroll, who was a member of the party, jumped.

"Say! I must be seeing things! Babs—look!"

She stood blinking. Babs turned her eyes in the same direction. And then she, too, jumped.

Across the road was the Courtfield Palais de Danse, and through the main doors at that moment came two well-known figures.

"Jemima—and Freda!" stuttered Mabs.

Incredible as the fact seemed, Jemima and Freda it was! Jemima, then, had been to the forbidden tea dance!

"Well, I told you!" Lydia could not help but murmur.

But nobody was paying any attention to Lydia. They were all staring at the two. And then Jemima suddenly looked up. She saw them.

Then coolly, calmly, just as if the Courtfield Palais was the most natural of all places for her to be found emerging from, Jemima waved a slim hand and led Freda towards them.

"What cheer!" she greeted languidly, as she came up. "Nice spot of afternoon we're having, what? So sweet and balmy the blithe old air. And so pleasing to see all the old happy, smiling faces once again. Or are," she added, adjusting her monocle, "the faces so happy and smiling, after all? Methinks you do not look pleased to see us, my Barbara."

"What's the silly game?" asked Babs bluntly.

"Game?" Jemima's brows lifted in pained surprise.

"Why didn't you come along to Courtfield with us?"

"Oh, that!" Jemima said. "Well, I came with Freda, you know."

"To go to an afternoon dance?" Mabs asked grimly.

"Alas! My dear old head is almost bowed in shame—for 'tis true," Jemima sighingly admitted.

"Well, why?"

"Gathering experience, what?" Jemima murmured. "Adding to my education in life. As the old guv'nor says—no end of a wise old bean, my guv'nor—'Jimmy,' he says, 'this sad old life is built up of new experiences, and when you get a chance of going in for a new one, plunge at it with both feet first, old-timer!' And there you are!"

"I don't know about that," Freda put in a little tartly. "You didn't jolly

well dance at all: Where were you most of the time?"

"Oh, just looking round," Jemima murmured. "Well, well, after all my exhaustions of the day, what about tea? Ahem! I do so hope you'll excuse me, Freda, old topper, but I think I forgot to mention that I had this tea appointment with old Spartan Babs & Co. You don't mind?"

"But didn't you have tea at the dance?" Mabs asked.

"Alas, no!"

"But why not?"

"Just saving the pleasure, beloved. I wanted tea avec vous, what? Bye-bye, Freda, old scout! A thousand thanks for your company!"

She beamed at the sour-faced Sneak of the Fourth.

"But aren't I coming, too?" demanded Freda

"Oh, tut! I mean to say you had tea at the merry old dance, and such hoggishness, Freda, sweetheart, doesn't become you! Now run away and play, there's a good girl, and think of all those joyous adventures you've enjoyed with stalwart Uncle Jimmy. Forward, troops! To the cafe let us march!"

And Jemima, with a wave of her monocle for Freda, led the way forward. In a rather bewildered, but still rather nettled, group the chums followed, leaving Freda to scowl her displeasure.

At the table already booked by Babs they seated themselves Hardly was the meal served, however, than Linda Gay, Queenie Pelham, Eve Clavering, and another girl came in.

"Here we are, right on the minute," Linda Gay laughed. "How are we all? 'Lo, Lydia! Didn't know you would be joining the merry throng."

Lydia flushed a little

"Well, Babs asked me," she said defensively. "Er—how was Miss Raymond?"

"Oh, you heard, then?" Linda Gay asked.

"Babs told me. Didn't you, Babs?"

"She's getting on fine," Linda said. "So fine, in fact, that she'll be out of hospital to-morrow morning. I say, are those meringues? Oh, goodie! We haven't had meringues since we came back from the South of France, have we, Hazel? Hazel's our new friend," she added, with a smile. "We met her in the South of France and now she's one of the Co. at Whitechester. Babs, everything all right at Cliff House?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes," Babs said.

"Nobody rattled about that awful letter this morning?"

"Well, no—not now." Babs turned a little pink. "Primmy gave the school a pretty stiff talking to at assembly this morning," she added

"And you haven't found the girl who wrote the first letter?"

"Not yet."

Linda frowned.

"She's clever," she said, "cleverer than that awful little mischief-maker, Ada Harmer! Ada didn't think we should take a leaf out of your book and go to the editorial office and demand to see that letter. And when we did we recognised the handwriting. I do hope," she said sincerely, "that there'll be an end of the matter now. I suppose you still haven't any idea who the girl was, Babs?"

"No," Babs said, and looked at Jemima.

"Well, only one clue," Lydia put in, and also looked at Jemima. "That was the typescript. The letter was typed on Jemima's machine, you know. Not, of course, that Jemima knows anything about it, do you, Jimmy?" she added hastily.

"JIMMY, I believe this letter was typed on your machine!" cried Clara Trevlyn. Every eye instantly turned on Jemima, who was lounging back in the most unconcerned manner imaginable. Was it possible that Jemima had sent the letter which had caused all the trouble?

"Not a thing!" Jemima assured her cheerfully. "But—her-hum! I say, isn't this Ada Harmer?" she asked.

They all looked up as another girl strolled into the shop. A tallish girl, this, with an ill-natured scowl upon her face.

Linda Gay's lips compressed.

"Don't speak, please," she said quickly. "She's in Coventry!"

Ada Harmer paused, then as if making up her mind, she came over to the group. She stood in front of the table.

"Linda!" she said.

Linda averted her face.

"Queenie!"

"Bessie, will you pass the sugar?" Queenie asked steadily.

"Eve——"

Good-natured Eve Clavering coloured, but she did not speak. Ada's lips twisted into a bitter smile.

"Keeping it up, eh?" she rapped. "Hazel——"

Hazel Brent studiously stirred her tea. Babs & Co., feeling uncomfortable, remained silent. Ada's face became red.

"Cats!" she gibed. "Why the dickens can't you speak to a girl when she speaks to you? This isn't Whitechester here, is it? Babs——"

Babs looked up.

"You're in Coventry, aren't you?"

"Well, what's that got to do——"

"Never mind! That's enough for us. Bessie, have another sardine?"

Linda glanced up grimly. Ada, with a black scowl, sauntered away. She took a seat at an unoccupied table in the far corner of the room, and though they did not look at her, they felt her glowering eyes upon them as they progressed with the meal. Then suddenly Jemima sighed.

"Ahem! Pretty tough," she observed. "Will you excuse me, Spartans?"

"But where——"

"Shan't be long," Jemima promised.

And she rose. While the chums watched in utter stupefaction, she crossed over to Ada Harmer, stretched out her hand to the other girl and then seated herself at her table.

Linda Gay stared, her face went pink with indignation.

"Jimmy!" she cried.

But Jemima, leaning forward, was now absorbed in deep conversation with Ada Harmer.

Amazing Behaviour of Jemima!

"JIMMY!" Babs called. But Jemima's only answer was to wave a slim and elegant hand from her table. She did not even look round as she waved it.

Linda Gay's lips compressed a little. Queenie Pelham looked angry. Even inoffensive Eve stared, and Hazel bit her lip. Upon the chums of Cliff House an embarrassed silence descended. What on earth was Jimmy doing?

For Jemima, of course, knew very well that Ada Harmer was in Coventry at Whitechester. Courtesy to their guests demanded at least that ban should be respected in their company.

"Well, that's pretty thick!" Lydia said indignantly.

"I didn't know," Linda Gay said a little tartly, "that Jemima was a friend of Ada's. I didn't know she even knew Ada."

"She doesn't," Babs returned.

"Then why——"

"Oh, I don't know!" Babs shook her head. "One never knows what Jimmy Carstairs is doing—or what she's going to do. All the same——Jimmy!" she called again.

"Won't be long, old thing," Jemima replied cheerily. "Well yes, Ada, and what happened then?" she asked interestedly. "Go on, you don't say!" she added a moment later.

Clara was looking nettled. Noticeably now the conversation had dried up. Noticeably now that chummy, trouble-free air which had characterised the start of the party had vanished.

"Well," Linda said at last, "I—I thing we'd better be going. You—you don't mind, Babs?"

"But, Linda, we haven't talked over anything!"

"Well, I—I think we ought to go, all the same," Linda said lamely. "Perhaps—to-morrow," she said awkwardly, but her eyes were upon Jemima as she said it—Jemima who, with elbows on the table, was utterly absorbed in what Ada Harmer was saying. "Perhaps," she added, "you'll drop over and have tea with us? Come on, kidlets," she said to her chums.

Babs & Co. looked at each other. No doubt that the little party was a washout.

Linda & Co. moved towards the door. At the same time Jemima, with a beaming nod, rose.

"Thanks," she said. "Oh, thanks most frightfully, old top! Hallo, Linda, you're never going?"

"We are!" Linda said curtly.

"But——"

"Good-bye!"

"A little put out, what?" Jemima mused thoughtfully as she watched them through the door. "What happened to them, Barbara, beloved?"

"You ought to know," Clara returned shortly.

"I?" Jemima looked surprised.

"If," Clara said dangerously, "it had been a girl of Cliff House who had been sent to Coventry, and Linda talked to her, wouldn't you have been peeved?"

"Oh!" Jemima shook her head. "So I'm the cause of the merry old rumpus? Alas! How are my motives misunderstood! Does nobody love me any more?" she asked forlornly.

"Oh, don't be an idiot, Jimmy," Babs said angrily. "Well, we might as well see about going, too. I can't say," she added a trifle bitterly, "that the getting-together party has been a success. Waitress, will you let me have the bill, please? Bessie, buck up and finish that tart!"

Jemima sighed.

"Dear, dear!" she said. "Aren't we all cross! Perhaps," she suggested tentatively, "'twould brighten your homeward walk if one, Jemima Carstairs, did not accompany you?"

"Please yourself!" Clara sniffed.

And with Babs having paid the bill, they all walked out. They were ruffled and resentful, feeling that Jemima had not only let them down, but had let Cliff House down as well.

And yet it was such a puzzle. Everything about Jimmy these days was a puzzle. Not normally would Jemima Carstairs have acted like that—but then, not normally would Jimmy have been found associating with Freda Ferriers in a forbidden dance hall.

What had come over the girl?

Babs was worried as well as angry. And because she was worried, and most of them were still feeling that the afternoon had been wasted, there was little conversation going home in the bus.

Jemima did not go with them.

But in Study No. 4 all was soon hustle and bustle. With understanding established between themselves and Whitechester once more, there was work to be done.

Lydia Crossendale, as usual, was the most energetic, the most untiring of them all. In half an hour she had finished off the letters, had sent out no less than six phone calls, and had helped Mabs to polish off her plan of the seating accommodation.

At half-past seven, indeed, half an hour before assembly, the work for the day was done.

"Nothing else I can do, Babs?" she asked.

"My hat! No, thanks!" Babs laughed. "What a steam-engine you are when you get going. Thanks frightfully, Lydia, for the help you've given."

"A pleasure!" Lydia laughed. She paused. "I—I like working with you, Babs," she added, almost shyly. "Can I come along again to-morrow?"

"Yes, please do!"

She went out. Babs looked after her, and laughed.

"You know, Mabs," she said, "it seems almost impossible, thinking of the old Lydia, to imagine her putting her back into it like this. How did she do the plan?"

"Splendidly!" Mabs glowed.

Splendidly had Lydia done everything, indeed. Impossible then not to believe in her reformation.

The necessary routine work was at an end now. Invitations had been sent out, accommodation fixed up. Aunty Jones of the tuckshop, interviewed that morning, had agreed to handle the refreshment side of the evening.

The only detail which required to be fixed up was that of the entertainment. But that, as Babs pointed out, could not be done without the co-operation of Whitechester, for Whitechester, as well as Cliff House, were producing some of the "turns" with which the guests of the prizegiving would be regaled.

Prep was the order of the hour then. With prep finished, they hurried along to call-over.

Jemima was already there. She greeted them with a smile, and then sadly sighed as they turned their heads away.

After assembly, Jemima mysteriously disappeared again. Not until bed-time did they see her. Rather inscrutable, rather mysterious was the smile upon her face as she undressed.

Mary Buller of the Sixth entered to put out the lights, and the Fourth Form settled down to sleep.

Half an hour later Jemima's voice came through the darkness.

"Babs, old thing——"

Babs, who had been thinking of Jemima, started.

"Yes, Jimmy?"

"Still cross with your little Jimmy?" Jemima asked wistfully.

"Well—no!"

"Aha!" Jemima heaved a profound sigh of relief. "Thank you, Babs!" she said. "Sorry to be such a mysterious old pest, and all that. But you understand, old Spartan?"

"No, I jolly well don't!" Babs said.

"Then," Jemima said, "remember what I said about the old pudding and the ingredients. The ingredients now number two, apart from the two spaces. Pleasant dreams, old topper!"

And Jemima went to sleep, leaving Babs to ruminate upon that cryptic utterance.

Morning came. Babs & Co., and Jemima, were up just before rising-bell. For Mabs had prepared a little sketch and had asked the cast to give it a quick reading in Study No. 4 before breakfast.

It was not a long sketch, and it did not provide many parts. Only Babs, Mabs, Marjorie Hazeldene, Jemima, and Leila Carroll, the American junior, and Lydia were included in it.

In a body they tramped down to Study No. 4, Jemima beaming and sunny, and, in spite of the incident in the cafe yesterday, apparently on the best of terms with all the Co. once again.

In the study they collected, and Mabs handed out the parts.

"Now we'll go through it quickly," she said. "Jemima, you're the maid."

"What-ho! Just made for me!" Jemima beamed. "Spot the joke?"

"Bright, aren't we?" Babs said. "That's not a joke, that's an outrage. Now, what am I, Mabs?"

"You're the captain of the school!"

"And Lydia?"

"Lydia is the harsh mistress."

"What-ho! Tyranny with the 'lid-ia' off—what?" Jemima gurgled. "Oh, pardon! Wow! Babs, don't look at me like that! I promise not to do it again! Well, who kicks off, Mabs?"

"Lydia. Here we are. Lydia, you stand here—just near the window. You," Mabs told her, "are supposed to be addressing the class. Now——" And then Mabs, moving towards the window, broke off and stared. "Hallo! It's Miss Raymond!" she said.

"Who?"

"Miss Raymond, of Whitechester School! Jolly early for her to be paying a visit," Mabs said, in surprise. "She looks frightfully cross, too!"

They crossed to the window. There, sure enough, was Miss Raymond, and, as Mabs said, she was looking cross; not merely cross, indeed—almost grim.

A slim, pretty figure was Miss Raymond, looking very much from the distance like Jemima herself. She carried an oblong box, done up in brown paper, under her arm.

"Peeved — what?" Jemima said thoughtfully.

They watched as she strode into the school. Babs bit her lip

"Oh, great goodness, I—I hope nothing else has happened!" she said nervously. "Funny, though, she should come here like that! I understood she had only left hospital this morning. Still, let's get on! What did you say, Lydia?"

"I said, if—if you don't mind, I—I'll just go and get my handkerchief," Lydia said. "I've left it in the dorm."

She went out. Jemima thoughtfully took out her monocle, breathed on it, and polished it as the door closed behind her.

"Brake on the old wheel of progress," she said. "Can't start without dear Lydia. We——"

And then she stopped as a knock came at the door, and Boker, the page-boy, peered in.

"Miss Redfern, you're wanted in Miss Primrose's study," he said, looking at Babs—"at once!"

"Trouble?" asked Leila Carroll.

"I don't know, miss." Boker shook his head. "All I know is that Miss Raymond, of Whitechester, is with her, and Miss Raymond is looking very angry about something. Will you go now, Miss Redfern?"

"At once," Babs promised.

And she did, wondering anxiously what had gone wrong now.

Miss Primrose's voice bade her enter as she knocked on the door of the headmistress' study. Babs entered.

"Barbara, come here!" Miss Primrose said.

Babs nodded. She went forward. Miss Primrose stood beside her desk, looking very grim indeed. Miss Raymond, her pretty face, as Boker had said, bearing unmistakable signs of anger, sat on the other side of the desk. She was holding an oblong box.

"Barbara, do you know anything about this?" Miss Primrose asked, nodding towards the box.

"Why, no, Miss Primrose!" Babs said, in amazement, and blinked inquiringly from one mistress to the other. "I don't understand!" she said.

"This morning," Miss Primrose said, "Miss Raymond, of Whitechester School,

received this box. It was sent to her last night and, as you will observe, looks like a box of flowers. It bore this label, Barbara."

She handed to Babs a little card. On that card, in the unmistakable script of Jemima's typewriter, was a message. It read:

"To Miss Raymond, with the compliments of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School."

"Miss Raymond, naturally, opened the box. She imagined that it contained some congratulatory little present from this school. That was far from the case, however." Miss Primrose went on grimly "for when the lid of the box flew off, soot blew into her face, spoiling her clothes, the bedclothes on which she had stood the box, and generally making a fearful mess of her room.

"The box apparently had been carefully prepared, a false bottom having been added, underneath which had been placed a spring, so that the immediate effect when the box was opened was to shoot its contents into the face of who ever opened it."

As Miss Primrose spoke, Miss Raymond removed the lid of the box, and Babs was able to see the nature of the booby-trap

"Oh golly!" she muttered.

"If that," Miss Primrose went on tartly, "was intended as a joke, it was an extremely ill-natured joke. I cannot, however, believe that it was intended as a joke, and, as you are captain of the Form, Barbara, I command you to make inquiries, and try to find out the girl who did that. You may go. Meantime, Miss Raymond——"

Babs went, her mind buzzing, back to Study No. 4. Lydia had not yet returned, but Leila, Jemima, Mabs, and Marjorie had been reinforced by Clara Trevlyn and Janet Jordan.

In a few words Babs told them what had happened

"And the message with the box was written on Jemima's typewriter," she said.

"And that" Mabs asked, "is the only clue?"

"Yes."

There was a pause. Every eye was upon Jemima now She frowned.

"And what," she asked gently, "does that prove—except that somebody has used my typewriter? You aren't blaming our dear Lydia?"

Clara looked at her queerly.

"You don't think Lydia—

Jemima shrugged.

"Why should she?" she asked disarmingly "I mean to say, look at it from Lydia's point of view. Lydia is going to get a prize. Lydia's fond parents, expecting a reformation, are coming to see their good little girl get it. Jolly old Lydia has worked harder than anybody to make the old scheme a success; so, surely," Jemima murmured, "she is above all suspicion?"

"Then who——" Babs began.

"Jimmy"—Clara faced up to her—"isn't it about time you came into the open?"

"You mean you want me to go out into the playing fields or the dear old quad?" Jemima burbled, deliberately misunderstanding.

"No, I don't! You know what I mean!" Clara stared at her directly. "I mean to say, what's the little game? Why the dickens are you being so idiotic about things? If we didn't know you better—well, even you'll admit that you've painted a pretty black case against yourself!"

"I don't follow," Jemima murmured. "You aren't suggesting, surely, that it looks as if I'm the naughty old mischief-maker?"

"I'm not suggesting—no!" Clara sniffed. "At the same time, if I didn't know you, I might be inclined to believe it. The only clue we've got to this mischief-making business is through your typewriter. And it's jolly funny, isn't it, that that should be the clue always to turn up?

"Apart from that, why, yesterday, should you go and chat to Ada Harmer, when you knew all the time that Ada was in disgrace with her own school? And especially when you knew it would offend Linda Gay & Co., when we were trying to make friends with them.

"And why, in the name of all that's wonderful, must you go and behave like an ass with Freda Ferriers?"

Jemima sighed.

"Anything else?"

"Yes. The time's come," Clara said bluntly, "to speak out. If you aren't having a hand in this business yourself, Jimmy, you know something about it."

"Aha!" Jemima said profoundly, and blinked at the window. "Hallo, there goes Miss Raymond!" she said. "She's leaving."

"That isn't the point. Jimmy——"

Jemima turned round.

"I'm sorry," she said slowly.

"You mean, you won't tell us anything?"

"I mean, I can't," Jemima said. "Ahem! Do you mind? I think I'll take a walk."

And, with a flickering smile around, she trotted to the door. She went out just as Lydia, handkerchief in hand, walked in.

The Last Straw!

BUT that, unfortunately, was not the last heard of the matter of the extremely ill-natured jape played upon Miss Raymond, of Whitechester School.

INDIGNANTLY Babs & Co. and their chums from the rival school stared at Jemima. For that puzzling girl was walking across to the girl who had been sent to Coventry! "Jimmy!" called Babs. But Jemima walked on.

At assembly Miss Primrose had quite a lot to say about it. After assembly Linda Gay rang up Babs, and suggested, after all, that the Cliff House chums had better postpone their visit to Whitechester that afternoon. Pressed for the reason, though Babs could guess it, Linda explained somewhat flusteredly that the incident had set a new wave of feeling against Cliff House seething through the school.

It was all very upsetting, and, as the day went on, things became no better.

Margot Lantham, who was sent during the morning to Friardale to buy some stamps for Miss Charmant, came back to announce that she had been sneered at by three of the nastiest girls of Whitechester in the village.

Lady Pat, in Courtfield that morning, was hissed at by two other girls from the same school.

A new sensation was aroused that

(Continued on page 14)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

That popular young person PATRICIA writes to you week by week, and you do, by now, regard her as a friend of your very own, don't you? This week she chatters about her own doings, things for you to do and talk about, and gives you a little trick to try on the family.

WHAT a number of exciting anniversaries and celebration days come along at the end of April!

Last Thursday (April 21st) was Princess Elizabeth's twelfth birthday, and to-day, Saturday, it is not only St. George's Day, but Shakespeare Day as well.

If you see some men and women wearing a single red rose in their buttonholes, you will know that they are wearing England's own flower in honour of England's patron saint.

It seems very suitable, somehow, that Shakespeare should have been born on St. George's Day, doesn't it? But did you realise he also died on his birthday?

. . . . . .

I wonder if you have been presented with a chum's autograph album to "do something in" over the holiday. (It's a sign of popularity if you have!)

Of course, "doing something" is almost easy if you're a wizard at drawing or painting. But if you're not this, and you're not a budding poet, in spite of Spring—it can be a problem.

You don't want to write the same things that everyone else writes; you don't want to copy out a huge piece of Wordsworth that no one will ever read.

Something short and sweet would be lovely—something about friendship, perhaps.

So what about these two lines of Ella Wheeler Wilcox's that I have found for you?

"Be glad and your friends are many;
Be sad and you lose them all."

While we don't like to think the last line is really true of friendship, it is at least a warning not to be a sad sort of person, isn't it?

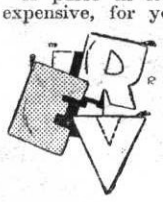
And, as you know I have always said, a smile of real happiness is one of the greatest assets when making friends.

. . . . . .

A purse that is the same shape as the initial of your name is a novel idea, isn't it?

They're so easy to make, too.

A purse in leatherette is not a bit expensive, for you can buy an eighth of a yard of this material for threepence, and it goes a long way.



Cut out two pieces of the leatherette (or any other suitable material, like felt) in the shape of an initial. Don't bother about the inside shape of the letter—just the outline will be sufficient.

Then join the two pieces together, either with small stitches or with blanket stitch in cotton of a contrasting colour.

Sew a short zip fastener at one end—or side—of the letter, so that your money is completely safe. (The fastening costs a penny an inch, you know, and it is very easy to sew in position.)

Now the final touch is just to make a few stitches on the front of the purse to indicate the letter of your name more clearly. Just a glance at the picture below will help you in doing this, and should be sufficient guide for any letter of the alphabet.

A Slight Mix-up

Mother was going out the other afternoon, so she suggested that your Patricia should take out young brother Heath (or Heatherington in full) for the afternoon.

"Where would you like to go, Heath?" I said.

"Can Minkie come?" asked Heath, referring to that adorable imp, the kitten.

I shook my head.

"Of course not; he'll be all right at home. Where would you like to go now?"

"On a bus—on top!" said Heath, at once. "An'—an' see things."

What things he wanted to see, I don't know. But off we set for the bus-stop.

"An' there's something else I'd like," he said, as we waited.

"Yes?" said big sister.

"An ice—a twopenny!"

I was watching for the bus, and not listening very carefully.

"A twopenny? An ice?" I murmured.

Then along came the bus, and after a push Heath was soon on and dashing up the stairs to the front seat.

I fished threepence out of my bag, twopence for my own fare and a penny for Heath's (penny child's, that is) and held the coppers until the conductor should come.

"Don't forget my ice, will you, Pat?" Heath insisted, his nose glued to the window pane, "seeing things," I suppose.

"No, I won't—a twopenny ice, isn't it?"

Just then the conductor came whistling up the stairs.

"Hallo, young feller," he said to Heath.

"Hallo," said Heath, as if he'd known him all his life.

I thought it was about time I had a turn in the conversation, so held the coppers up to the conductor.

"A twopenny ice and a penny child's, please," I said. Whereupon the conductor burst into a roar of laughter as if I'd said something funny.

"I suppose you mean a twopenny and a penny," said the conductor. "I don't keep ices in this gadget here, miss," and he tapped his ticket machine.

And, believe me, it was only then that I realised that, having twopence and ice-creams on my mind, I'd asked him for a twopenny ice!

News in Shoes

I've spotted two most exciting new styles of shoes, that I'm dying to tell you about.

You'll possibly never own a pair of these shoes—for they're rather costly—but you are sure to hear about them, and I like you to be "in the know" when such things are discussed.

Shoes with "wedge" soles are the newest ideas for tennis and walking. The only way I can describe these to you is by saying that the flat heel of the shoe runs right along to meet the sole, so that there is no dip for the instep when you look at the bottom of the shoe.

From the sole these shoes look quite, quite flat, as if they have no heel at all. Yet they have!

The other shoes are more unusual still to look at. If you can imagine a very thick clog, with fancy "sandal" tops, you have some idea of the appearance of these shoes.

But these thick soles, which are more than an inch in thickness, and the heel, higher still, are made of cork. So when you try a pair on—as I have—you feel all airy-fairy, as if you're walking in the clouds almost.

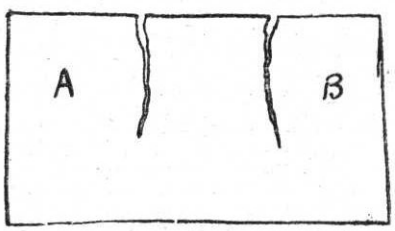
You can actually dance in these curious shoes, I am told, though the pair I tried were for wearing on the beach.

They're a positive boon to the short damsel who wants to look taller.

. . . . . .

And now, here's a little trick for you to try out on your father at home—or on any other member of the family.

Take any piece of paper, and tear it twice, as shown in the diagram here, so that it is in three divisions.



Now hand it to father, and ask him to hold it at each end, which I have marked A and B. Then ask him to tear it into three pieces by pulling.

Believe me, or believe me not, my nice schoolgirls, it is quite impossible to tear this piece of paper into more than TWO pieces.

Just try it yourself first, before trying it on the family!

Your friend,

PATRICIA

A NEW HAIR STYLE FOR SPRING

Short hair—or long; curly—or straight! Patricia here gives you some advice for keeping it at its loveliest, and also some suggestions as to styles.

SPRING days mean hatless days for lots of us.

For others, they mean, perhaps, a new hat.

But for all of us, whether we are going hatless, or whether we are going to shine in a sparkling new "Easter Bonnet," our hair must certainly look its very best to do justice to the bright, sunny days.

And as it is spring, we probably long to do something just a little different. Perhaps you wish you could go to America; perhaps you wish you could move into a new house; perhaps you wish you were grown up—just because there's that "something" in the spring air.

Well, I don't suppose you'll be doing the first two things, and you certainly *can't* do the third all at once. So you must do something else instead.

And I suggest you forget your present hair style and do it some other way. It'll give you no end of a "kick," and probably cause that "want-y" feeling to disappear.

But before you change your hair style, we must see that your hair is in perfect condition.

So you must examine your hair, in the mirror, very critically.

The first question you must answer is: "Does it shine and sparkle?"

Next: "Is it soft and smooth?"

Third: "Does it suit me this way?"

A TREAT

If it doesn't shine and sparkle, I want you to give it a little treat. The day before you plan to shampoo it, spend half an hour in your bed-room.

Dip your fingers into a tin of "Vaseline" (or olive oil), and rub this into the parting. Then make more little partings all over your head and rub more and more grease into them, working your fingers about so that you can actually feel the scalp moving.

Leave your hair then. (It won't look very elegant, I'm afraid—but it will later.) Next day treat yourself to one of the excellent shampoos that are for sale for twopence and threepence, and give it the washing of its life.

You'll be thrilled at the result.

TOO OILY

Having answered the first question, we'll now deal with the second.

Your hair may not be soft and smooth because it is inclined to be a little too oily, even when it is newly washed. So I want you to treat yourself to a bottle of hair tonic containing bay rum.

Sprinkle this over your hair, and then brush it well in. Give it at least a hundred strokes, and don't forget the underneath hair. You should flop your head down to your chest for this part.

Your hair should now be soft and smooth as a kitten's ear. To keep your hair in good condition, there are just two "treatments" to remember:

One is the regular shampooing and the other the regular stimulating.

Very fair-haired girls and those girls whose hair tends to be greasy, should wash their hair every week, or every ten days.

Dark haired girls and those whose hair tends to be dry, will find it quite sufficient to wash it every fortnight, or even every three weeks.

But all girls, fair and dark, "greasy" and "dry," must brush and comb their hair regularly—and it will well reward you.

Now for some answers to the third question.

If you decide you would like to do your hair a little differently, just because it's springtime, I have some suggestions for you.

FOR SHORT HAIR

Short-haired girls first.

The top style shown in the picture here would suit the girl who has even features and a "widow's peak." (A widow's peak is the point of hair that grows in the middle of the forehead, and is supposed to be very lucky.)

Part the hair in the centre of the peak and draw it smoothly over the forehead and behind the ears. If the ends are curly, you're lucky, for you can just comb them round your fingers. Try wearing a ribbon round your hair to keep these curls in their place and show your ears.

A middle parting can also look sweet on the girl who has straight hair. Wear a clip or a tiny slide over each eyebrow and comb the hair well forward over to the ears to make it look more fluffy.

For the girl who wears her hair with a side parting and has decided it suits her, it would be foolish to change. But she might like to have a little wavy fringe as well on the side where the thick hair is. This is particularly attractive for the girl who has rather a high forehead.

Comb the hair upwards at the bottom, and if it doesn't curl of its own accord—well, there's no reason why you shouldn't "do it up" in curlers for special occasions, now, is there?

FOR LONG HAIR

Now it's the long-haired girl's turn.

If your hair is wavy, it's a pity to plait it, for this so often takes out the wave. So try the style shown at the top of the picture. Part the hair down the centre back, dividing it in two, and tie a bow on each piece of hair, close to the neck.

The girl with long, straight hair, has an advantage over all the curly-tops, for plaits are still hard to beat for sheer charm. Don't think you must have a centre parting, necessarily, just because you wear plaits. Try one on the side for a change, and a half-fringe as well if you like.

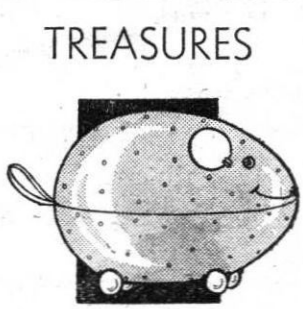
The schoolgirl with shoulder-length hair sometimes finds it can get in the way. It can't be plaited comfortably, and it's too long to keep neat easily.

She should try this very charming "little girl" style, of parting the hair at the back, and tying it over each ear with a little bow.

There, I think all of you who have been wishing for a slight change will find at least one new style to try out here.

And even if you decide afterwards that you're not keen on it—well, you can always go back to your old one!

TO HOLD YOUR TREASURES



This novel little trinket box can be made so easily from one of those cardboard Easter Eggs you had given you, and which you simply can't bear to throw away.

To make the egg stand firmly you must sew four beads to the lower half of the egg as shown in the picture. These form little feet.

The top half can have two buttons sewn on for eyes, and then you can mark the mouth and nose with ink or paint.

Next, cut two little circles of paper and stick these on to the "face" for ears.

The result will be a weird-looking animal that won't resemble anything in the Zoo, perhaps, but will certainly be original.

Place a layer of cotton wool or tissue paper in the lower half of the egg and keep your treasures, such as bracelets or brooches, in the egg trinket-box.

(Continued from page 11)

afternoon when Miss Primrose, very flushed, came into the Fourth Form-room demanding to know if any girl in that Form had rung up Miss Jane Matthews, the Whitechester headmistress, on the phone during the mid-day break, and had insulted her.

"I regret to state," Miss Primrose concluded, "that the friendship which has been so pleasing a feature between the two schools seems to be in danger of cracking.

"Obviously with this unhappy spirit prevailing, it will be just impossible to hold the celebrations which we are planning. And if," she added, "the girl, or girls, who are responsible for these outrages do not cease their activities from this moment, we shall have to think about that. Meantime, I ask you all to lend your every earnest effort to unmasking that girl."

The Fourth did, but the girl, whoever she was, was too clever. In anxious knots and groups that day, girls stood about discussing latest developments.

In the evening there were more heated stories of Whitechester and Cliff House encounters in Courtfield, and in one case, at least, a violent quarrel.

Hot-headed Flora Cann of the Lower Fifth, and Angelica Jelly and Georgina Skeppington, having been sneered at in the creamery at Courtfield by three of the not-too-nice of the rival school, had got themselves involved in a row which had finally ended in the manager requesting the whole six of them to leave.

Not a very bright or rosy prospect ruled that night when Cliff House went to bed.

Such uncertainty was there now that all work on the prizegiving had stopped. And, strangely enough, Lydia Crossendale, the one-time enemy of Babs & Co., was the most cut-up and disappointed of them all.

"Oh, Babs, can't we do anything?" she asked, before dormitory bell.

"Well, what?" Babs asked.

"Well, can't we find out who the girl is? It seems to me," Lydia said, "that if we only knew that, and made her apologise or something, the trouble would be at an end."

"The trouble would," Babs said. "At the same time, who is she? And why," she went on, "is she going out of her way to create such bad feeling?"

"Jemima knows," Lydia said.

"We're not sure of that. She may not."

"But she suspects, don't you think? Unless——" And Lydia bit her lip. "No, I ought not to say it," she said.

"What?"

"Well"—Lydia flushed—"I've wondered more than once if Jemima really is at the bottom of it. After all, we do know, don't we, that she's hand-in-glove with Ada Harmer——"

Babs shrugged restlessly. At another time Lydia would have received a sharp rebuke for that observation. But the plain fact was now that Babs, like the rest of Cliff House, was so bewildered, so utterly disheartened, that frankly she did not know what to think.

In any case, there was nothing learnt from Jemima herself. For that puzzling girl, perhaps feeling that she was under a shadow, took good care to busy herself in her own mysterious way, and hardly came in contact with Babs & Co. at all.

And then, next morning, there came a fresh sensation.

It was Miss Primrose who broke the news at assembly.

Miss Jane Matthews, headmistress of Whitechester, she declared, had just rung her up. Babs gathered, though Miss Primrose did not say so, that there must have been something like an angry passage of arms between the two headmistresses; but, all the same, Miss Matthews had something to grumble about.

For during the night someone unknown had been to Whitechester, and in letters a foot high had scrawled on the walls of the school such messages as:

"KEEP OUT OF CLIFF HOUSE!" "DON'T DARE TO COME TO CLIFF HOUSE!" "CLIFF HOUSE DOESN'T WANT YOU!"

"And after that," Miss Primrose said angrily, "there can be no possible question now of the prizegiving taking place. Barbara, as you are in charge of the arrangements, I must request you at once to send out letters cancelling the invitations already given. That is all!"

"But, Miss Primrose," Babs requested, "can't we see Whitechester first?"

"Every girl in this school," Miss Primrose said, with a glimmer in her eyes, "will keep away from Whitechester until such time as the quarrel between the two schools has blown over. Whitechester from this moment is out of bounds to you all. If I hear of any girl disobeying this order, she will be detained for a fortnight!"

"So that," as Clara gloomily put it, "is that!"

In a dismayed, disheartened group the girls who had been working so hard for the prizegiving day met in Barbara Redfern's study after lessons. Jemima, rather surprisingly, turned up.

"Tough luck!" she said. "Very, very tough luck! Alas, that things should come to such a pass! Hefty bit of work for you now, Lydia."

"Me?" Lydia asked.

"Typing out all those letters cancelling invitations. Have to be sent off quickly, too," Jemima said.

Lydia bit her lip.

"Yes, I—I suppose so. But I can get through them. I'll start now, shall I, Babs?"

"Well, yes, I suppose you'd better," Babs agreed dispiritedly.

"And in the meantime," Jemima sighed thoughtfully. "Ah, me! Pity about the old sketch, and so on—what? Tough luck, Mabs, old Spartan, having had all the merry old work for nothing. Which," Jemima said, "reminds me about something—something, Mabs, I want to talk to you about. Will you spare me a few valuable minutes of your priceless time?"

Mabs looked at her queerly.

"Alone?" she asked.

"Well—yes."

Mabs blinked, but she went out. Lydia, meantime, sat herself down at Jemima's machine.

Outside in the passage, Mabs looked at Jemima queerly.

"Well, what is it?"

"Come to the props room," Jemima said. "As the shining light of the Junior School's Dramatic Society, you're the person I want, old Spartan."

"But why?"

"Please!"

Wondering, Mabs followed up the stairs to the props room, which was, in reality, attic No. 2, where the Junior School Dramatic Society kept its impedimenta.

Jemima entered first and closed the door. Then amazingly she walked to the window and gazed out.

"Splendid!" she said. "Light rather bad. Weather conditions topping for a little excitement—what? Remember the costume, old topper, that I wore as the schoolmistress in the last sketch? We've still got that?"

"Why, yes."

"And that blonde wig that Jean Cartwright wore?"

"Yes."

"And that little sailor hat which Babs wore?"

"Yes, of course."

"All is well!" Jemima said heartily. "Let us dig them out, forsooth. Help me to don them."

And when the articles, to Mabs' amazement, were dug out and donned—by Jemima, of course—she smiled cheerfully.

"Now, Mabs, the make-up box," she said. "Make me up to my instructions."

"But, Jimmy, what's the game?" Mabs asked.

"You'll see!" Jemima said mysteriously.

She stood in front of the mirror. Mabs, in great astonishment, began the make-up.

Mabs was really marvellous at anything theatrical, but this was the queerest make-up she had ever tackled, not knowing before she started what character Jemima had decided to impersonate. But apparently Jemima knew what she wanted.

"A little bolder with the rouge—higher up on the cheekbone," she said. "Now a little thickening of the lips. M'yes! That's fine! Now just a teeny-weeny line each side of the mouth."

Mabs blinked.

"You look like someone I seem to know—someone older," she said.

"Exactly!" Jemima murmured.

"Like—like—who is it you look like?"

"Give me a dimple in the chin, lengthen the old eyes just a fraction, and then take another look," Jemima advised.

Mabs did so, then gasped.

"Mum-my hat! Miss Raymond, of Whitechester!"

Jemima smiled.

"You think I'll pass?"

"In this light, yes," Mabs said. "But, Jimmy, what are you going to do?"

"Getting the voice may be a spot tricky," evaded Jemima. "But if I hold a handkerchief in front of my mouth—pretend I have a cold—all should proceed well. Go now, Mabs, my old beauty expert, and wait in Study No. 4. Say nothing of what you have done, or what your eyes have so staggeringly seen.

"And maybe," Jemima added softly, "maybe, Mabs, my henchman, in five minutes' time the answer to a great and baffling mystery will burst upon a dazed and bewildered world. Go now, I prithee!"

And Mabs, completely in the dark, went back to the study. She found her chums still gloomily gathered there. The only one of them, indeed, who seemed to be at all normal, was Lydia, who was busily typing.

They glanced up as Mabs came in; but so dismal were they all that it never occurred to any of them to ask where she had been, or what she had done.

Mabs went to the table. But she was wondering all the time about Jemima, and, in spite of herself, she found a queer sort of excitement possessing her.

Presently there sounded footsteps in the passage, a timid knock on the door. Babs, looking up, called "Come in!"

The door opened. Everybody turned, and at sight of the figure who stood there Lydia Crossendale uttered a sudden cry, and her face turned as white as paper.

"Miss Raymond!" Babs cried, in amazement.

"Miss Raymond!" breathed Lydia.

"Miss Raymond—yes." The figure nodded grimly. "So you are the girl! Now I see you I recognise you!" And while Lydia shakily rose, the disguised Jemima advanced into the room, careful, however, to keep out of the light which fell through the window. "Lydia," she added quietly, "you will come with me to Miss Primrose!"

Thanks to Jimmy!

LYDIA was shaking. While Babs & Co. stared at her in amazement, she gave a cry.

"I won't! I can't!" she gasped.

"Lydia!"

"I won't!" Lydia panted. "If anybody should go to Miss Primrose, take Ada Harmer!" she cried out. "It was her fault! I did it to save her——"

"What?"

"I did!" Lydia's eyes were wide with fear. "I—I didn't mean you any harm. I didn't know when I pushed you through that door that it was the door leading to the fire-escape. I didn't mean any harm. I——" And then, suddenly becoming aware of the faces staring at her, buried her face in her hands. "Miss Raymond——" she said.

"But what——" Babs broke out.

The disguised Jemima raised a handkerchief before her lips, so that her voice was muffled.

"I think," she said, "I had better explain. Yes, I really think so. Some four nights ago, Lydia and one of my girls, Ada Harmer, were attending an evening dance at the Courtfield Palais——"

Babs jumped.

"But Lydia hasn't been to any dances."

"That," Miss Raymond said, "is what Lydia has told you. Unfortunately, I am able to prove beyond question that Lydia was there. So was Ada. I knew that Ada was there and went to bring her back. They saw me. This girl Lydia told Ada that she would attend to me. She pushed me through a door. The door unfortunately led to a fire-escape, down which I fell, hurting my knee."

Lydia shivered.

"I—I didn't know——"

"From that moment," the bogus Miss Raymond went on, "Lydia has been afraid of meeting me again. She knew if she did meet me I should recognise her. She knew that I would be coming to the prizegiving carnival. Then, fearing that recognition would take place in front of her parents, who were also coming to the carnival, she would be more than ever in the soup—ahem!—in—in trouble. And so"—the false Miss Raymond smiled gently—"Lydia concocted a little plot, didn't you, Lydia?"

"I—I don't know what you're talking about," Lydia blustered; but her face was ashenly guilty.

"No? Then let me refresh your memory," the disguised Jemima smoothly went on. "You see, Lydia, I have had the privilege of talking with your friend, Ada Harmer."

"She—she didn't tell you anything," Lydia gasped. "She promised——"

"Ah, but one can never be certain of promises with girls like Ada Harmer, can one?" Jemima asked wisely. And while Babs & Co. still gaped at her: "Ada," she added calmly, "told me all I wanted to know. In a nutshell, the scheme was to stir up trouble between Cliff House and Whitechester, so that it would be impossible for the prizegiving to be held. Wasn't that it?"

"Lydia!" cried Babs.

Lydia Crossendale panted.

"I—I——" she helplessly mouthed.

"And so," the disguised Jemima pitilessly went on, "you wrote a letter to the 'Courtfield Herald.' That started the ball rolling, so to speak! Ada, next morning, replied to it, but Ada, not being as clever as you were, was discovered by some of my other girls. Your next step was to insult me by sending that booby-trap in a parcel, typing the label on a machine owned by Jemima Carstairs, of this school——"

Lydia started.

"Jemima—is she in this, too?"

"Very much in it!" Jemima nodded calmly "I have my friend Jemima to thank for quite a bit of my information. This same Jemima, later, saw you in the phone-box at the cross-roads, and being as I gather, a girl of an inquiring type of mind, slipped into the phone-box afterwards and asked the operator who you had been talking to. Strangely enough, it was to the headmistress of Whitechester School, and, strangely enough, it was at that very time that Miss Matthews was insulted over the phone by a Cliff House girl——"

"Oh, you—you awful rotter!" Clara Trevlyn breathed at Lydia.

"Last night," the bogus Miss Raymond went on steelily, "you crept out of this school and chalked those insults on the walls of Whitechester. All this time," she added, "just to make certain no one would attach suspicion to you, you pretended that you had reformed, and to show your good faith and enthusiasm were working hard for the event you were secretly plotting should never take place."

Lydia was shaking now. No doubt about her guilt. It was registered on every line of her face.

"You admit it!" the disguised Jemima rapped.

"N-no——"

"Think carefully!" Jemima forbiddingly frowned. "I am going to give you one chance, Lydia—and only one. If I go to Miss Primrose and tell her all this, you can guess what will happen, can't you?"

"Expulsion," Clara announced grimly. "And she jolly well deserves it!"

"Exactly," Jemima nodded. "On the other hand, if Lydia goes to Miss Primrose and confesses of her own accord, I fancy Miss Primrose would be more lenient. But either, Lydia, you go or I go—and that one of us within the next two minutes. Which is it to be?"

"BARBARA," said Miss Primrose sternly, "do you know anything about this?" She indicated the box the mistress from Whitechester School held. That box had contained soot which had smothered the mistress—and the Fourth Formers of Cliff House were accused of sending the box!

Lydia's face worked. Her eyes were hunted then. She looked at the unpitying, angry faces of the chums, reading no mercy there.

She was caught. She knew it. Expulsion loomed before her, and the only way of averting that dread fate was to make, frankly and openly, the confession now demanded of her.

Her fists clenched.

"All right," she muttered.

"You admit it?"

"Yes."

"You will go to Miss Primrose now?"

"Yes."

"Good enough." Jemima held the door open. "Marjorie, will you go with her, just to see she doesn't change her mind en route?" And as Lydia, not daring to meet the scornful glances of the chums, stumbled out of the room with Marjorie in her wake, Jemima, with a sigh, dropped into the armchair. "Gadzooks!" she

sighed, in a voice which brought Babs, Clara and Leila jumping to their feet. "Warmish work, what, old Spartans! And this beastly old wig—wuff! Barbara, beloved, get me a drink of water."

"Jimmy!" shrieked Babs, as the wig came off.

"Alas," Jemima sighed, "that I should be guilty of such base deception!"

"But you—you—you——" Clara stuttered.

"Natty, what?" Jemima smiled.

"But what—what—what——" stuttered Babs.

Jemima frowned concernedly.

"Should see a doctor about that impediment in your speech, my dear Barbara. Cannon-balls stuck in the merry old throat are not good for one's health. That water—— Ah, thanks, Mabs, my angelic fellow-conspirator! How nobly didst thou support me! Well, well," Jemima beamed as she handed the glass back to Mabs, "here we are again—all bright, merry, and smiling, what? The old pudding is cooked, you see, my Barbara!"

"But how the dickens did you do it all?" Babs breathed.

"Oh, ways, means, and all that sort of rot, what?" Jemima murmured vaguely. "A little tact, common sense, and powers of observation not found in ordinary mortals. Sit down, my brethren, and lend your wondering ears to the bed-time story your wise old Uncle Jimmy will now unfold to you. You know, of course, that profound old truth about leopards——"

"Leopards?" repeated Babs.

"About not being able to change the old spots," Jemima nodded wisely. "That is what I felt about Lydia, you see? You remember, when I spoke to her about breaking bounds, she denied it?"

"Yes."

"Aha! Now we come to it. For 'twas from that significant old night that Lydia's reformation began. After that, butter wouldn't melt in her rosebud mouth, and Lydia the languid became such a fearsome bundle of frightful energy on my old typewriter that I had fears for its aged springs. Then," Jemima resumed, "came the letter in the 'Herald' which we nipped along to have a look at. 'Twas there, my wondering beloveds, that your Uncle Jimmy got her first clue."

"And that——" Clara asked.

"Say, rather, those," Jemima said painedly. "Let us, as Britishers, be accurate. Those," she added profoundly, "were two spaces."

"Look here, Jimmy, if you're going to start that rot again——" Clara exasperatedly began.

"List!" Jemima replied. "Burble not when wisdom infects the air. In typing, as in writing, we all have our little pet tricks. Lydia's pet little ditto was to type two spaces after a full stop instead of the usual and correct three. I spotted that on the letter, you know. I also spotted it on the work Lydia was doing for you, Babs. Clever, what?"

"Very!" Babs agreed dazedly.

"Now for Point No. 2—the Palais de Dance. Freda, weeks ago, had asked Lydia to get those tickets. Freda got them. Then Lydia, as we know, refused to go. Now why should Lydia be afraid of the Palais when she went to the Palais three nights ago? And, putting two and two together, and with my usual cool mathematical precision making four of them, I went to the dance hall with Freda Ferriers to find out for myself.

"While Freda was drinking tea and scowling at the dancers in her usual amiable way, I was deep in palaver with the genial manager, and from him I heard all about the disturbance when our own gentle Lydia pushed Miss Raymond through a door on to the fire-escape——"

"My hat, you ought to be a detective!" Clara gurgled.

"True, O queen, I have had ideas that way myself, what?" Jemima modestly murmured. "To resume, however. Next point of attack was Ada Harmer, whose name the dear old managing fellow had given me.

"As you know, I fortunately caught her at a moment when she was just dying for a fellow human being to break into her forlorn loneliness. Then—but why go on?" Jemima asked, while the chums blinked at her as if she was something unreal. "Oh, one jolly old point. When you wondered at first if Lydia was the nasty plotter behind this, and I pointed out that it was unlikely, my reason there, old Spartans, was that I had no definite proof against her at the time, and it would have been a bad egg to put her on her guard by accusing her."

Jemima sighed.

"I wonder," she murmured, "how Lydia is getting on now?"

But she had not long to wonder about that. Half an hour later, there was a great stir at Cliff House. Assembly bell went suddenly, and at the same time that its deep note was clanging throughout the school, who should come up the drive but Miss Matthews, Miss Raymond herself, Linda Gay, and several other mistresses and prefects of Whitechester School.

While wondering Cliff House gathered in Big Hall—Jemima having taken off her disguise—the Whitechester guests were given positions of honour on the dais, and then Miss Primrose related everything that had happened.

Lydia herself, at the end of the recital, downcast, white-faced, was brought forward to face the angry school.

A hiss, which Miss Primrose quelled by holding up a hand, greeted her.

"Why Lydia has decided to confess at this hour, I do not know," she said—and Babs smiled wryly at Jemima. "I am glad, before it is too late, however, that she has taken this step. I have invited our friends of Whitechester here so that they may hear this story, and go away satisfied that we at Cliff House are still their friends, and deplore the despicable conduct of this one unworthy girl as much as they themselves must do.

"Had I been left to discover this from other sources, Lydia, I should unhesitatingly have expelled you. As it is, I shall detain you for a month, and put Whitechester out of bounds for you for the rest of the term. Apart from that, your prize will be confiscated, and at the prizegiving function you tried to ruin, you will not be allowed to attend. I don't fancy, either," she added grimly, "that you will find your own Form very pleased with you."

"True words!" murmured Jemima.

They were. For Lydia, after that wigging in public, was sent to Coventry for a week. Meantime, however, her confession had cleared up matters between Whitechester and Cliff House, and, harassed no longer by the unknown mischief-maker, friendship between the two schools once again became most firmly established.

On Saturday, as arranged, the prizegiving took place—with Lydia a notable but unregretted absentee. A great success, and an occasion for joyful jubilation that was, indeed!

But nobody, except Babs & Co., ever knew the inner story of Lydia's confession. At Jemima's wish it remained a secret from Lydia and the rest of the school. Jemima, in any event, had a horror of being feted, and she also had an idea that, if ever Miss Primrose learned the true details, she might yet reverse her decision and expel Lydia. As she herself said:

"Temper justice with mercy, what? Let the old sleeping dogs most blissfully remain asleep. I fancy, between us and the wigging Lydia got from her parents, she will think twice before playing again the part of the naughty old villainess."

Which, perhaps, was very much what Lydia, at that moment, was thinking herself.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Great excitement at Cliff House! Miss Belling, the youngest mistress there, engaged to be married. Such a pretty little thing, too; talented and popular. But—she didn't know what to wear for the best; just didn't seem capable of choosing clothes that suited her. Even in her best wardrobe she looked dowdy. And so—

"THEY CALLED HER 'THE FRUMP'!"

But that wasn't all. Someone at Cliff House, determined to wreck Miss Belling's romance, made use of her unattractive appearance for that despicable end. Which was where Barbara Redfern & Co. took a hand. They liked Miss Belling; and they wouldn't see her made unhappy. Don't miss HILDA RICHARDS' latest superb story. It appears next Saturday.

Further fascinating chapters of our wonderful adventure story—

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 canoes were stolen by Fuzzy from a warlike tribe, who come in pursuit of the chums! They escape, but miss their steamer and continue by foot. When they help a white hunter, he gives them a talisman ring, which allows them to enter a native king's country. Helping a sacred lioness to escape from a trap, they are taken to the king, who is furious.

(Now read on.)

"After Her—Quick!"

"THE king awaits, and lo! his wrath is as the wrath of a trapped leopard!"

Teresa felt Luise clutch her arm as the guide made that ominous pronouncement, and then waved towards the arch that gave entry to the king's room in this ruined palace.

"Teresa, don't let's go!" begged Luise, in fright.

"Him plenty cross," said Fuzzy shakily, for she was even more scared than timid Luise.

But Teresa, even though she also quaked inwardly, knew that there was no way out. They had come to see King Nompanyo, and they must see him, even though he might be angry, might blame them for setting free the lioness which had been caught in the trap.

"Luise, pull yourself together," Teresa said. "There's nothing to be scared about. And, anyway, if there were we mustn't look it. Chin up."

Teresa marched boldly forward, as though she was an honoured guest. But, crossing the threshold of the room, she came to a halt. King Nompanyo, seated in a gilded chair, his black face wearing a stern, forbidding expression, a coloured cloak wrapped about him, was so awe-inspiring that Teresa, impressed despite herself, was for a moment overawed.

King Nompanyo, ruler of a large tract of land and many thousands of black people, was unquestionably no ordinary man. It may have been the habit of ruling that had stamped its mark on him, or the consciousness of his power; but whatever it was, he looked a king.

Ebony black, his hair frizzed and adorned with gold jewels, he was plainly different from the average native.

Teresa, silent and motionless, lost her confidence for a moment. Her planned speech went from her mind.

King Nompanyo leaned forward, frowning.

"You make free the lioness who am my sister?" he said.

Teresa drew a breath. She could feel that Luise was shaky, afraid, and that Fuzzy was in chattering fright.

"We come with a loyal message, O king," said Teresa.

She was not sure how a black king should be addressed; but that sounded quite poetic, she thought, and could not give offence.

THE SCHEMING BLACK MAGICIAN SAID "I WILL CHANGE YOUR NATIVE FRIEND INTO A LIONESS!"

King Nompanyo still frowned upon them angrily, so Teresa, stepping forward, held out her hand with the ring.

"Where you get it?" asked King Nompanyo, his eyebrows going up in an expression of surprise.

Teresa explained how they had helped the hunter who was suffering from fever, and saved him from being deserted by his boys.

As King Nompanyo listened his hard look vanished.

"He was my friend—a brave man. I give you thanks," he said simply.

"It was a small service," replied Teresa, and her heart-thumping seemed to get less. She felt confidence grow. "We would also serve you, O king."

King Nompanyo sat forward in his chair.

"You set free the lioness!" he said sternly.

Teresa did not deny it, but she tried her hardest to seem surprised and hurt.

"We were kind to her. She was a sad lioness caught in a trap," she said, "and she cried for her lonely cubs. We took the cubs to her, and she escaped. Would so noble and so kind a king wish for a lioness to suffer?"

It was a clever speech, for King Nompanyo jerked up.

"No no!" he said. "For that lioness is my sister. She is turned into a lioness by the evil, and I am sick. Great pain takes me. I am weak; I am sad. And always it shall be so until my sister she come back to me."

Teresa did not smile, for the king himself was very serious, and he really believed that the evil ju-ju men had turned his beloved sister into a lioness.

"And the cubs—little Numa and little Tasa," he said heavily. "Her children."

Teresa drew up, her eyes shining.

"Then I am glad that we saved your sister's children," she said. "It makes us happy."

"They were very sad," cut in Luise.

King Nompanyo, who had been prepared for an angry scene, was now in different mood, for he could hardly be ungrateful for such service.

"You do well," he admitted grudgingly.

But as he spoke a man came forward from an alcove where, unnoticed by the girls because it was slightly behind the arch where they had entered, he had stood listening and waiting.

At sight of him Luise gave a gasp of

By ELIZABETH CHESTER

horror, and drew closer to Teresa. For his whole appearance was so fantastic, so weird, that he seemed not to be an ordinary being at all.

His face was painted with deep white lines that radiated from the nose, and on his head were feathers that sprouted out from all angles. Long ear-rings, weirdly carved, a dozen bracelets of twisted bone on his bare arms, and a leopard skin wound around him, added to the striking oddity of his appearance.

Waving his long hands, he bowed to the king and spoke rapidly.

Teresa watched the king's face, and saw how intent he was, how he seemed to hang upon this man's every word.

"What is he?" Luise asked, in a soft whisper.

"Witch-doctor—the one to blame for all this trickery, I should say," answered Teresa, almost into Luise's ear, for fear that she might be overheard.

Now the king turned back to Teresa, and his frown had returned.

"Magician, he saw you. Must find lioness, my sister," he said, "or evermore she roam jungle."

"Your sister will come back, O king," said Teresa.

"Magician, he know," insisted the king, not without anger, and Teresa realised in dismay how strong was the witch-doctor's hold on him. "You must go find my sister the lioness. Please!"

It would have been easy enough to say "yes." But that would not help. How ever could they be sure of finding the right lioness?

Teresa argued.

"But, even then," she said, "your sister would not become your sister again, but remain a lioness. How will she be changed back, save by the Ju-Ju men?"

The King pointed to the magician.

"Magician know way. Magician, he can turn people to lions, also."

Teresa glanced at the magician then, and he fixed her with a look of concentrated ferocity, with the object, she guessed, of terrifying her. But although a slight shiver did run down Teresa's spine, she mastered herself. It would not do to give way and let him think that she was afraid.

"I do not believe it," she said.

The king gaped. His eyes rounded in horror, as though he really could not believe that anyone could dare to say such a terrible thing, he turned to the magician and translated.

The magician drew up, folded his arms, and looked Teresa up and down. Then he addressed the king again, speaking at some length.

Fuzzy, able to understand what he said, gave little gasps of dismay and clutched at Teresa.

"Him say he prove it! Him say turn you into lioness. Make you go find king's daughter."

Teresa, knowing, of course, that this was quite impossible, did not turn a hair.

"Let him try," she said, in contempt. "But beware! For my father is a powerful man, and if any ill should befall me or my friends, woe unto the evildoers!"

King Nompanyo bowed his head. He had great respect for white officials.

"The black girl," he exclaimed. "She will do."

Fuzzy drew back white-eyed.

"No, no! Me not want be lioness!" she cried.

"You dare try," said Luise fiercely to the magician.

Luise was timid enough on her own account; but in defence of a friend she found new courage.

"All right, Fuzzy," said Teresa. "Don't be afraid. You shan't be turned into a lioness. It's only a silly trick, anyway."

But the king now became very eager and excited. For he was so anxious to find his sister, that the idea of having someone changed into another lioness, who could easily find his sister, and persuade her to return, appealed to him immensely.

"We tie cord about neck. Then we know her," he said. "And to whoever shall bring back my sister I give jewels, I give gold, I give land. Yes, I make her even a princess."

Fuzzy's fear lessened at that, and Teresa noted the change.

"Take care, Fuzzy," she warned. "It is only a trick."

"It is no trick!" cried the king in wrath. "I offer jewels, gold! It is no trick! I am man of honour. Yes, like the white man's word is mine, true as the rising of the sun, ever faithful as the moon."

Teresa had not meant that his offer was a trick, and she hastened to explain. But the king was still annoyed.

"You say trick. You say magician no can do," he said. "Then let the magician make try."

Fuzzy, thinking of jewels, of gold, of riches—of becoming a real princess—was deeply tempted.

"Not always be lioness?" she asked.

"No," said the king.

But Fuzzy then spoke to the magician, making quite sure, and the more they talked, the less she was afraid; the more eager she became to make this exciting experiment.

Useless for Teresa to say that it was a trick. Fuzzy really believed it possible, and there was to her a thrill in being for a while a lioness and roaring and roaming in the jungle, speaking to other lions—and learning their secret language. And then, when it was all over, and she was herself again—she would have jewels, gold, and be a princess.

"I will be lioness," she exclaimed, tapping her chest.

Teresa turned to grab her, suddenly alarmed. She had an idea of what had become of the king's sister. She was probably a prisoner somewhere—to be produced when the magician decided. It was he who would get the reward, not Fuzzy!

"Fuzzy—wait!" she said.

But Fuzzy, obstinate when her mind was made up, dodged back, and then disappeared through a doorway with the magician.

"After her—quick!" cried Teresa, and leaped forward.

Fuzzy Becomes—a Lioness!

TERESA and Luise came to a halt almost as soon as they had left the presence of the king, finding their way barred by tall men with spears.

It was to some kind of a temple, only

HILDA RICHARDS—REPLIES

to some of her correspondents.

JEAN HORWOOD (Kingswinford, Staffs).—What a very sweet little letter, Jean! I was delighted to receive it. So you have four favourites in the Fourth—Babs, Mabs, Clara, and Bessie? I know they each have hosts of admirers among my readers—to judge from the nice letters I get!

"HAZEL" (Kingston-on-Thames, Surrey).—I was delighted to hear from you, Hazel. Sylvia Sirrett is top of the Fourth Form at present, and Jemima is twelfth. I think your big Alsatian must be very sweet to be so friendly with your little kitten. I'd love to see them together, and I'm quite sure my dog Juno would, too.

MARY ELLEN (Thorpe Bay, Essex).—Thank you for a most charming little letter, my dear. I will certainly feature Jemima as often as I can in my future stories, for I know she is very popular with my readers. My dog Juno sends Scamp a pawshake.

JOAN STOKES (Slough, Bucks.)—So glad to hear from you again, Joan. Thank you. I'd love to see a snap of your pet (another Scamp!) I'm sure he is a lovable pet. Have you named your new budgerigars yet? I wonder if they will learn to answer to their names?

"GOLDIE."—I see that your favourite Fourth Former at Cliff House is Jemima. Thank you for your suggestion regarding the holiday series. I will certainly remember it, though I cannot promise that I can use it, of course, for there are a surprising number of things that an author has to consider, you know.

PAMELA SMITH (Blackpool).—Here is the printed reply you asked for, my dear. I was pleased to hear from you, you may be sure. My dog, Juno, sends a tail-wag to Melvyn. You have certainly chosen an original name for your pet, and I do think it is a charming one. Write again, won't you?

"ADMIRER OF IVY FINCH" (Harrow, Middx.)—You would be in the Second Form if you went to Cliff House, my dear. Evidently little Ivy Finch is one of your "special" favourites at C. H. Yes, I shall certainly feature her again in some of my future stories. Do you like those in which the "babies" appear?

"A CLIFF HOUSE FAN" (Ville La Salle, Canada).—I'm afraid you will not be able to get the "Celebrities" you mention, my dear. You see, there has been such a great demand for them that they are now out of print, and even your Editor and I have disposed of our own copies of them. There are two foreign girls in the Fourth—little Marcelle Biquet, who is French, and Leila Carroll, who is an American.

a short distance away, that Fuzzy had gone with the magician, and the men with spears stood at the entrance.

"Let us pass!" said Teresa fiercely. "The girl is our friend. She is someone of importance."

But the men did not understand English, and their crossed spears contrived to bar the way, so that, unless the chums risked a nasty gash, there was no hope of their getting past.

"Teresa—she can't be turned into a lioness? You don't believe it?" panted Luise in horror.

"Of course not!" said Teresa. "It's impossible——"

"But—but suppose it isn't? Awful things can happen," said Luise shakily. "I've heard of people becoming wolves. Suppose this is true. Suppose black people——"

"Watch—and we shall see the trick," said Teresa. "Remember how I tricked the black boys into thinking I had turned into an elephant? Well, this is the same sort of trick."

Luise, biting her lip, watched intently what happened.

Fuzzy knelt down in the ruined temple on a large stone, stained red and blue. Her wrists were tied with a silk handkerchief, while another was wound as a bandage about her eyes.

Round and round her danced the magician, shouting and stamping. But Fuzzy still remained herself, and took on no likeness to a lioness, although the stained stone dazzled the eyes of Teresa and Luise.

"At this rate we shall get dazzled and begin to think she is a lioness," Teresa said. "Or else—I wonder! He may say that it cannot be done because Fuzzy does not want to find the princess."

But at that moment two men appeared, carrying between them an enormous carpet composed of lions' skins. They flapped it, almost as a conjurer might to show that nothing was concealed, and then made a canopy of it over Fuzzy's head, while the magician stood rigid, arms upheld, shouting at the top of his voice and stamping his right foot.

Then he rubbed his hands together, and of a sudden there came from them a sheet of blue flame.

As Teresa and Luise, startled, gazed at that flame, they heard a roar—a lioness' roar.

The men lifted the lions' skin canopy on high, and Luise gave a shrill scream.

Fuzzy was no longer kneeling on the red and blue square—but in her place stood a sleek lioness.

Luise, after that one scream, stood with rounded eyes, while Teresa hardly breathed. She could not believe it. She was sure that she was dreaming—in a trance.

For that lioness had about her eyes the same bandage that had been about Fuzzy's; and about her fore feet, which were close together, was another.

"Terry, it's Fuzzy. He's done it. She's a lioness!" gasped Luise.

And then, her face chalk white, she crumpled up at Teresa's feet in a dead faint.

TERESA DROPPED to her knees. Shaking all over herself, she almost lost control for a moment. For this was so startling, so truly magical that all her fixed beliefs seemed to be quite shattered.

Her hand went under Luise's neck, and she lifted her, slapping her cheeks and hands to revive her. Poor Luise, still very white, sat up, just as the lioness trotted past, and went out of the temple.

"Terry, get her back—get her back!" cried Luise. "Oh, my goodness! Why did we let it happen? Why did we just stand there? Suppose she's never Fuzzy again? Suppose——"

Luise covered her face with her hands, on the verge of breaking down into hysteria. But Teresa, shaken though she was herself, shook her almost roughly.

"Don't be a duffer! It's a trick."

"It isn't a trick! How can it be?"

"That's what we've got to find out," said Teresa, with a quick look about her. "It must be a trick; but we've got to let them think we're duped. Understand!"

It would take no acting on Luise's part to make them think that. But Teresa, the first shock off, was once again mistress of herself.

Her brain cool, she remembered her father's words: "The natives are only children, Terry. Remember that. Their magic is simple compared with any of our conjurers, and their magicians are frauds."

A fraud—a trick!

The magician came from the room, looking triumphant. But what he said they could not understand. He passed on to bear to the king the glad tidings that another lioness had been sent to find the princess.

"A clever trick," said Teresa, through her teeth. "That's all it is. And no wonder this rascal has the king in his power! But I've seen better tricks than that in England."

Teresa, her mind busy, led Luise back to the king, who became solemn and deeply concerned when he saw how upset Luise was.

"Oh, please—please," begged Luise, clasping her hands—"please let her come back! Make the magician bring her back, O king! If we have done wrong, we are sorry. But poor Fuzzy oh—— You don't know what a dear she is! She'll be trapped——"

"STOP, Fuzzy! Don't be silly! You mustn't!" Teresa cried, but she was too late. Almost proudly, Fuzzy tapped her chest and bowed to King Nompanyo. "I will be lioness!" she cried. "Magician change me to animal!"

The king stretched out his hand, and gave her head a kindly pat as she stood before him.

"I, too, am sad," he said heavily. "My dear sister—now also your dear friend. It is bad."

"Yes; and the magician made them both lionesses," said Teresa hotly.

"Not so. The ju-ju men—they make my sister lioness. If she come back, my magician make her again a woman. He shall have riches—have gold——"

Teresa's eyes glinted. For now she saw how the artful magician worked. It was a novel form of kidnapping. He blamed ju-ju men for making the king's sister a lioness, and wanted a reward for bringing her back.

And in some way the princess would not know where she had been.

Teresa stood back. There was a trick in this, and she had to find it. King Nompanyo was in the hands of a scoundrel, and that scoundrel would soon gain the whole kingdom.

If Fuzzy was not the lioness, then where was she now? And where was the princess? They were both prisoners, although probably not in the same place.

The magician came to speak to the king again, and Teresa led Luise away.

"Listen, dear!" she said gently. "Don't worry; I'm quite sure there's no need to. Fuzzy's all right. She's a prisoner somewhere. Haven't you ever seen the vanishing lady trick? Well, this is the same."

"Yes; but an appearing lioness trick, too," pointed out Luise.

Teresa, a far-away look in her eyes for a moment, suddenly gave a little gasp.

"My golly! I think I have it," she said.

"How—what?"

But Teresa did not reply. Instead, she stepped boldly forward.

"May I ask a favour from the magician?" she said.

"Why, yes," said the king.

"May I, too, be turned into a lioness so that——"

But Teresa was interrupted by a shrill cry from Luise, who flung herself upon her friend, clinging to her so that Teresa was almost strangled.

"Luise, let go!" she choked.

"You shan't do it, Terry—you shan't!" Luise cried frantically.

Teresa whispered, tried to explain that it was a trick—the only way of finding out the truth—but Luise would not listen.

"Very well," said Teresa, with a sigh. "My friend does not wish it."

"I understand," nodded the king. "But be at peace. You shall have comfort. I will call my queen, and you shall have food and all comfort—yes, and music."

But Luise and Teresa were in no mood for comfort and music.

"I think we'd rather go outside," said Teresa. "We are very sad."

The king raised no objection, and the two went outside the palace, where Bambo, the faithful young elephant, loaded with luggage, stood surrounded by an admiring crowd of black girls and boys.

Adolphus, on his back, was showing off to the crowd by putting on a hat of Luise, and trying to fit a glove to his left foot.

He liked an audience, and this was a really appreciative one.

Between acts he paused, and bowed a little, and then seemed to say: "I will now give my famous impersonation of a certain film star." And on would go the hat, upside down, and he would flop the glove from his teeth.

But to-day Luise and Teresa were far too sad to be amused. Luise, convinced that Fuzzy would never be seen again, was on the point of tears the whole time, her lips trembling her chin quivering.

But Teresa, eager only to think of some way of defeating the magician, was racking her brains for ideas.

"A secret trapdoor, hidden by the lions' skins," she mused. "Aha! And, perhaps—yes!"

She turned to Luise.

"Wait!" she said, moving away.

"You're not going without me!" Luise exclaimed.

"I only want permission to amuse the king with Adolphus and Bambo," said Teresa. "He is sad, and needs entertaining."

But although that was part of the truth, it was not the whole truth. Teresa had another idea in mind—a way of settling the whole affair, of solving the mystery and denouncing the magician for the fake he was.

And to that end Adolphus would be needed—and Bambo.

Teresa's Scheme!

KING NOMPANYO had a simple sense of humour, and Adolphus tickled his fancy. The gramophone was brought in, and the chimp did his dance. Luise provided him with a hat and frock, and he really was most comic.

"Ah, he is more funny than men!"

Teresa smiled at that.

"But, you see, gracious king," she said, "he is a man—a famous clown turned into a baby chimpanzee."

The king gave a start, and explained to the magician, who shot a quick glance at Teresa, in which there was suspicion and hatred. He knew her for an enemy.

"Magician, let him be a man again," said the king. "I would praise and reward him."

Teresa nudged Luise, who had heard her friend's statement with wonder and amazement.

"This is where the magician fails," she said. "Watch him try to turn Adolphus into a circus clown!"

But the magician had no intention of trying. He did not want to look a fool in the king's eyes. Unfortunately, the king was very eager to see Adolphus as he really was, and to chat with him. Now that the idea had been put into his head, it could not easily be removed.

"Wait!" said Teresa. "I will get his sister."

"His sister?" asked the king.

"The young elephant," explained Teresa. "Come! Let them be human again, O king! This wonder magician can do it if he will But he is jealous because you have been amused."

Teresa had struck the right note. The king was obstinate, and he dearly wanted to see Adolphus as a human being. So he ordered the magician to do his work.

"It will be bad if he cannot turn back your sister from a lioness when she returns," said Teresa anxiously.

The king had not thought of that, for he had faith in the magician.

"Do this," he commanded, "or I do not believe when my sister come back you can make her again herself!"

The magician's eyes flashed as he answered, but Teresa did not know what he said until the king interpreted.

"He say if the chimpanzee is such because he has been bad, then he shall be turned into some other animal—a leopard."

"And so, then, may your sister," said Teresa, growing eager and excited in this battle of wits.

The magician answered with raised voice and the stamp of bare feet that jingled his ankle ornaments. His evil face became creased in anger.

"He say he do not do white people's bidding. He say white people give orders to black people, and it shall not be. The black people shall rise," said the king, frowning.

Teresa bowed her head.

"But it is you who give the order, O king. Or have magicians more power than a king?"

Teresa now was on thin ice. It would not do to offend the king. For he could hold them there, and her father would not know where to search for them. Already they were late on their journey, delayed by these adventures.

But Teresa now saw the true intention of the evil magician. He sought power; he sought to rule the king, and for one major purpose apart from his own gain—to make the black people rise against the white.

If the thousands of black people in King Nompanyo's country armed, then there would indeed be grave peril. They would lose the war they might wage against the white men, but at what cost of suffering, of death, of maiming! The mere thought of it sent a shiver down Teresa's spine.

Never had she despised anyone so much as this cunning man.

"Let him try—let him test the wishes of the gods," she said.

The magician gladly took that way out, not realising that Teresa had some plan in mind. But as the magician, followed by the king, went down the corridor to the room of music, Teresa turned back to fetch Bambo.

Guards were protecting their baggage, which had been unloaded from Bambo. Eagerly the young elephant followed Teresa.

By the time they reached the magic room, however, the magician and Adolphus were inside, and the young chimp was being bandaged.

The king, knowing that he must not enter the room for fear of suddenly becoming a lion himself, stood back, while the guards crossed spears to prevent Luise's entry.

When Teresa led Bambo along the corridor and halted him before the spears, the guards looked alarmed.

For Bambo could shatter those spears with a mere push, snap them off as though they were mere twigs.

The magician had not seen him. He was dancing round the chimp, who sat quiet, the bandage over his eyes, his paws fastened.

In a moment the critical juncture would arrive. The magician would rub his hands, bringing fire—in some quite simple manner, as Teresa could guess.

But that would be the moment of change, and just before it Teresa meant to intervene.

If she was wrong, if she failed, then the king's anger would be boundless. Already he was signalling her to move Bambo back.

But Teresa moved forward instead: for now the men with the carpet of lions' skins had entered, and were about to spread it over Adolphus.

What happened under that carpet of lions' skins that caused a human being to vanish and an animal to appear?

The lions'-skin carpet was swept over Adolphus; the magician was rubbing his hands.

Teresa, with a swift pat on Bambo's flank, gave him the command:

"Forward!"

With sharp reports, the spears were shattered like twigs, and Bambo marched into the magic room just as flame came from the magician's hands!

WHAT ever is the magician's amazing secret? And will Teresa discover it? Be sure not to miss next week's fascinating chapters of this superb story.

Another topping **COMPLETE** story featuring irrepressible—

Gipsy Joy

The Rich Girl Romany

Rich Girl Joy Sharpe has to do as her Governess tells her. Nakita, the Gipsy Girl, does just as she likes. That's why Joy—who is really Nakita as well—has heaps of forbidden fun!

Boko in Distress!

JOY SHARPE, hair flying in the breeze, ran at top speed across the smooth, pleasant lawns of the Gables. She carried a large spoon in her right hand, and in the spoon was a new-laid egg.

So engrossed was she that she did not see her governess, Miss Retcham, stern, grim-faced, appear suddenly from the shrubbery.

But Miss Retcham saw Joy, and the book she had been holding fell from her nerveless grasp. Her pince-nez dropped to the end of their black cord, and she stood rigid in amazement.

"Ten more yards," muttered Joy. "Oh golly! Phew!"

Miss Retcham jumped forward.

"Stop!" she cried.

But Joy was too near to be able to stop.

A faint thud, a gasp or two, while Joy staggered sideways and Miss Retcham lurched back, and then they both sat down bump! on the grass.

Away went the egg from the spoon, hit the grass, and burst.

"Oh! Phew! Oh dear!" said Joy in dismay. "Mum-Miss Retcham, I—I didn't know you were there. I'm awfully sorry!"

The governess adjusted her glasses, and her eyes glinted through them in piercing anger.

"How dare you!" she cried. "Joy, can it be you? You, whom I have brought up to be a lady! You were running—running across the lawn as though pursued by some wild animal!"

Joy scrambled up and offered her governess a helping hand, which Miss Retcham, however, scorned.

"What possible motive can you have in running across the lawn bearing an egg? Where were you taking it?"

Joy Sharpe hid a smile.

It was no time for smiling, of course, but she could not help being amused. Anyone less serious-minded than Miss Retcham would have guessed that a girl running across a lawn carrying an egg in a spoon was practising for an egg-and-spoon race; and, considering that the village sports day was not far distant—in fact, on the coming Thursday—Miss Retcham should have realised that Joy was thinking of competing.

Instead, the governess looked blankly bewildered.

"I'm fearfully sorry I bumped into you, Miss Retcham," said Joy. "Shall I scrape up the egg——"

Turning, Joy saw cook approaching—and cook, not having stayed the course well, was breathing hard, puffing and blowing, and glowing red in the face.

"A nice thing, coming into my larder and stealing eggs!" puffed cook.

"You will be punished," said Miss Retcham grimly. "But I intend to discover the why and wherefore of this. Ah!" Her eyes lit up. "Good—good gracious! The village sports! You were practising for a race? The egg-and-spoon race?"

And she all but reeled. If Joy had been practising throwing stones at windows the governess could not have looked more shocked.

"Oh, Miss Retcham, I don't see any harm in it!" Joy protested. "Other girls are entering for the races; and I stand quite a chance of winning. Why, Boko——"

Joy broke off. For the mention of the butcher's delivery boy, who rejoiced in the name of Boko, was never tactful; but, unfortunately, Miss Retcham had already heard.

"Boko! Ah! I might have guessed it. That boy has been speaking to you again, in defiance of my wishes, has he? Return to the house at once! I will see to it that you do not even attend the sports as a spectator, let alone as an entrant. And if that lad Boko, as you call him, is anywhere here I shall report him to his employers."

There was a faint rustle in the bushes, and Joy, casting a quick, anxious look in that direction, was glad that her governess' eyes and ears were not as sharp as hers. For she herself had a momentary glimpse of Boko's scared face.

"I will give you some work to keep you busy, Joy," Miss Retcham went on. "But, first, I will tell the gardener to watch the gates, in case the butcher's boy is loitering here. I shall most certainly report him."

In the school-room—where Tinker, her pup, rousing himself from sleep in Miss Retcham's chair, sneaked under the bookcase—Joy sat down at the table.

"Here is your geography text book," snapped the governess. "Turn to the rainfall map of India, study it, and be prepared to draw it from memory when I return."

Click! went the door, and then the key was turned in the lock.

JOY SHARPE glowered at the average rainfall of India, made a face at it, and then peeped out of the window. Miss Retcham was crossing the lawn to where the gardener was making a search amongst the bushes for Boko.

"Poor old Boko!" mused Joy uneasily. "Now he'll cop it!"

By IDA MELBOURNE

Boko certainly would "cop" it if he were caught. And yet what had he done? Nothing wrong. He had merely hidden in the bushes and held his new three-and-ninepenny stop-watch to time Joy running her egg-and-spoon race. It was a kindness, rather than an offence, for Boko had timed the other entrants secretly and could give Joy a very fair idea of her chances of victory.

Tinker, her pup, realising that Miss Retcham had gone, looked out warily from under the bookcase, and then appeared in full view.

"Tinks, I was copped," said Joy. "And now I can't enter for the sports."

Tinker yawned.

"Nothing to yawn about, because you can't enter in the Free for All dog's race," pointed out Joy dismally.

Then her face set.

"Tinks, we're not going to be out of it! We won't be! Even if, somehow, we——"

Joy, eyes now gleaming, took a key from a secret crack in her desk, went to the door, unlocked it, and crept out.

Her heart thumped with excitement as she locked the door behind her, told Tinker to be quiet, and then tiptoed up to her bed-room

Tinker's furtive manner changed as he crossed the threshold of that room. He rushed to the wardrobe and scratched at the door vigorously.

"All right, impatient!" whispered Joy softly.

She opened the wardrobe door and took out a gay gipsy frock. The sight of it nearly sent Tinker crazy, and when his mistress next brought out a jar of face-dye, he barked, and went skipping round in circles.

Nakita! That was what the frock and dye meant to him—fun, racing, jumping ball-chasing, happiness.

And that was in effect what it meant to Joy, too.

"But careful, Tinks!" she warned him. "We mustn't be caught! If Miss Retcham ever guessed——"

Joy put that thought at the back of her mind, and slipped on the pretty gipsy frock, the sandals, and the scarf. Next she used the dye, and soon, thanks to skill and practice, she had darkened her skin so that she really did look like a gipsy.

"There! And now where's Joy, for goodness' sake?" she asked merrily. "Oh, Tinks, if only we could go into the woods!"

For it was not exactly on pleasure that Joy had changed herself thus into Nakita, the gipsy girl. It was business—to save Boko!

"Come on, Tinks!" she said, and led the way to the back staircase.

Leave It To Nakita!

WHEN Nakita reached the spacious, well-kept grounds of the Gables, Miss Retcham and the gardener were still seeking Boko, the gardener taking his stance by the gates, while Miss Retcham searched the bushes.

"If you're sure he was here ten minutes ago, then he's here still, ma'am!" the gardener presently called out. "He hasn't gone through these here gates nor over the wall."

Nakita moved forward, confident of her disguise.

"'Arternoon, lidy!" she said.

Miss Retcham wheeled.

"Good gracious! How did you get in?" she gasped

"On gipsy wings, lidy," said Nakita. "Spare us a few fl'ahs! Go on! Just a few—just a bunch!"

Miss Retcham strode towards her, fluttering her right hand.

"Get out! Go at once!" she commanded. "This is a plot! You and that wretched butcher boy have schemed to encourage Miss Joy to enter for the sports! If you stay here another minute, you will be charged with trespassing!"

"Oh come orf it, lidy!" said Nakita, with a grin. "Chuck it! Aren't you mingy——"

"Mingy?" said the governess, shocked.

"Stingy! All these 'ere fl'ahs, and you can't spare me a bunch! They'll just die, and that'll be the end of them! Proper old skinflint you are! Can you run?"

"Run? Can I run? If you mean, am I entering for the sports, I am not!"

Nakita giggled at the mere idea.

"I didn't mean that, lidy. What I meant was—suppose I was to pick some of these fl'ahs, could you bunk after me? Course not!"

And, running some fifty yards from the governess—to a spot near Boko's hiding-place—Nakita began to pick flowers. As she had been told—as Joy—that she could pick all the flowers she wanted, she was not guilty of stealing. But Miss Retcham did not know that this common, offensive girl was her own charge.

Snick, snick, snick! went the stems as Nakita, smiling over her shoulder, broke off tulip after tulip. They were near the end of their days, anyway, but that did not make the theft any less reprehensible to the governess.

"Stop!" she cried, and then called frantically to the gardener. "Stop her! Stop her!"

At the same moment as Miss Retcham rushed to intervene, the gardener came from the gates.

Nakita, watching warily, judged distances, leaving herself a margin to spare, and then gave a chirrup of delight as she saw a boy in a blue-and-white apron crawl from a bush and make for the gates.

He was through in a flash, unseen by either Miss Retcham or the gardener.

Boko had been saved. But Nakita? The gardener and Miss Retcham were thudding near, and Nakita knew that the time to bolt had come.

If Miss Retcham grabbed her and rubbed off some of her dye, then the game was up.

But Nakita was fleet of foot. Away she sped, making for the gates; and when she got through them and glanced round, Miss Retcham, a hand at her side, was slowing, and the gardener, well beyond his best sprinting days, was doubled up, puffing and blowing.

Without slowing, Nakita made for a gap in the hedge and hurled herself through, followed by Tinker. Then, dropping flat, chest heaving, she drew in great gasps of much-needed breath.

Safe!

Sitting up at last, she patted Tinker, and then blinked as Boko, on all-fours and fingers to his lips, crept towards her.

"Gosh! Can that old governess run?" he gasped.

"Run—like—like a hare!" panted Nakita, and suddenly remembered that she was a gipsy girl. "Not 'arf, chum! But you got away."

"Thanks to you!" grinned Boko. "Was that why you did it?"

"Yus!"

"You're a sport! I suppose Miss Joy put you up to it?"

"That's right!" nodded Nakita.

"She's a sport, too!" said Boko. "But how did you get in? I didn't see you there before."

"Oh, I just got in!" said Nakita. "I have my ways."

Boko nodded, and chewed a bit of grass, frowning.

"Lucky she didn't cop me!" he said. "But now Miss Joy's in the soup all right. She can't go to the sports."

Nakita naturally pretended not to know.

"Go won! Can't she?"

"No." And Boko explained what he had overheard. "And I call it tough!" he grunted. "Because she ought to win the egg-and-spoon. Though, mind you, you can run!" he added admiringly. "It's a pity Joy's sunk. If only we could think of a dodge for getting that governess out of the way for the afternoon!"

Nakita gave a start, and looked at him eagerly

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.

MY DEAR READERS,—Cousin George and the "Imp"—those two mysterious people about whom you've seen little notices from time to time—are almost here at last. In fact, they WILL be here, in all their glory, next week.

And so, readers all, I can now tell you about them without any fear of spoiling the "surprise" nature of their appearance.

Now Cousin George, as you will discover next week, is the over-confident, "Leave-it-to-me," "Girls-need-taking-care-of" kind of chap you can't help laughing at, and you can't help secretly liking, too. And the Imp——

Well, I could write about the Imp for hours. For the Imp—Hetty Sonning is her real name—is just the cheeriest, happiest, cutest bundle of vivaciousness and gaiety you ever encountered.

Not even her Cousin George can depress her; and he is under strict orders from his mother to keep a "fatherly" or guardianish eye on Hetty.

What a gorgeously delightful time the Imp has! George does, too—often against his wishes. While, as for you—well, you'll be laughing all the way through these topping stories.

For, yes, there are to be lots of them, replacing our old friend "Gipsy Joy," and written by the same talented author, Ida Melbourne

Of course, you'll naturally be sorry to say good-bye to Joy, but I am certain your disappointment will soon fade when you meet Cousin George and the Imp. Don't forget—next Saturday!

Our next issue will contain another thrilling instalment of "The Jungle Hikers," more of Patricia's Bright Pages, another Cliff House Pet, and:

"THEY CALLED HER 'THE FRUMP'!"

Unusual title? Yes; but then the story is unusual, too, although it is written in HILDA RICHARDS' very finest vein, which means that it will hold you spellbound from the start.

In this case, "The Frump" happens to be one of the Cliff House mistresses, and, certainly, to judge by the clothes she wears, and her very appearance, there is some truth in that unflattering description.

But, as is so often the case, appearances are deceptive with regard to this particular person. It is not only Babs & Co. who discover that, but one selfish, spiteful girl in particular.

If I add that "The Frump" is the means of bringing romance to Cliff House, I'm sure you'll realise just what an entertaining tale this is. You'll be able to sample it for yourselves next week.

Well, my space has run out. I must say bye-bye—everyone! With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,
THE EDITOR.

"You mean it?" she asked. "How?"

Boko scratched his ear and thought.

"Dunno," he admitted. "'Course, we might lasso her, and shut her in a haunted dungeon——"

"Well, if you can use a lasso and know where there's a haunted dungeon," scoffed Nakita. "Might as well say you could have her kidnapped by a lot of gangsters. You do talk barmy at times."

"You think of an idea, if you're so smart?" retorted Boko.

Nakita sighed and was silent, chin cupped in hands. It was easy enough to say that Miss Retcham ought to be out of the way, but not so easy to think of a plan.

Boko's wild ideas were not a help, and even the best of them—galloping up on a fiery steed, and pretending to be a cowboy bandit, and keeping the governess quaking in the coalhouse—wasn't much good when closely examined.

"What we want," frowned Nakita, "is an idea that—is"—she mused—"is a way of making her want to go to the sports."

Then she sprang up, clapping her hands.

"I've got it!" she cried. "Got it! My golly—I've got the idea——"

"You have? Well, what is it?" asked Boko.

For a moment Nakita seemed about to tell him; and then she shook her head.

"Tell you later, chum. But look 'ere—I must buzz orf!"

For she had suddenly remembered that Joy Sharpe was supposed to be behind the locked door of the schoolroom. With a wave, she left Boko and went furtively along the wall that guarded the grounds of the Gables, to climb over at her usual easy spot.

Five minutes later she was in her room. Eight minutes later, changed back into Joy Sharpe, she was in the school-room behind the locked door once more.

But now, instead of being depressed and despondent, there was a bright shine in her eyes, and a smile on her lips.

What a Race!

JOY SHARPE hummed to herself gaily. Considering it was lesson-time, she should not have been so lighthearted; but to-day there was a reason.

Joy sat at the table in the sunny school-room and seemed quite a little ray of sunshine herself—in complete contrast to Miss Retcham, who was, more than anything else, like a black cloud.

"Joy," said the governess grimly, "I shall not tell you again not to hum. Do you realise that even were I prepared to relent, and to allow you to go to the sports this afternoon, your conduct would deter me?"

Joy looked up.

"Why, yes—this is the afternoon of the sports, Miss Retcham. How thrilling! I wonder who will win the high jump?"

"I am not interested," said the governess coldly.

"I know who will win the races, though," said Joy confidently.

"Indeed? You know? Everyone else is in doubt—but you know for certain. Dear me, what a little wonder you are, Joy," said Miss Retcham, with heavy sarcasm.

But Joy was not taken aback.

"Oh, well, everyone knows, Miss Retcham," she said, "that the gipsy girl Nakita is easily the fastest runner around here."

Miss Retcham gave a slight start, and an angry glint came to her eyes.

"Good gracious! The gipsy girl, indeed!" she said. "I have never heard such nonsense in my life. Never! Why, I can run as fast as she can. But for the fact that I had already run a considerable distance the other day, I should have overtaken her in these very grounds."

Joy opened her eyes as wide as she could.

"Miss Retcham—you don't mean that?" she gasped.

"I do mean it! That girl win—good gracious!" And the governess laughed.

"But—but if you can run faster than she can, why don't you enter for a race, Miss Retcham?" asked Joy innocently.

"Because I have no wish to make a fool of myself," said Miss Retcham, and then added hurriedly: "not that I look like a fool when I run, but—we will not discuss it. Get on with your work."

"Yes, Miss Retcham. But do you think Miss Ridgeley will win the Old Crocks race?"

The governess frowned heavily.

"Old Crocks race? A motor event for ancient cars? There is not such an event at the sports!"

Joy bit her lip.

"Oh, nunno. I—er—that's what they call one of the races."

"Indeed? And what race is that?"

Joy wriggled a little.

"I—well, that's only the name given it in fun, of course. It's a race for schoolmistresses, and—ahem!"

Miss Retcham stiffened and glared.

"The race for teachers of ladies?" she gasped. "Good gracious! Old Crocks, indeed! Let me tell you, Joy, that that race is likely to be run at a faster rate than any other. And now—one more word, and you will be punished."

In silence Joy got on with her work; but there came an interruption. The door opened, and her grandfather peered in.

"Oh, Miss Retcham," he said. "Here is the manicure set."

Joy looked across at the governess, who went pink.

"The manicure set?" Miss Retcham faltered, surprised.

"Yes. I meant to consult you about it, but forgot," the absent-minded old gentleman said. "I think it is quite good, the best they had in the chemist's shop here. Rather more than I meant to pay——"

Joy held her breath. She knew that Miss Retcham had coveted that set, for her governess had stood admiring it in the window time and time again.

"Oh, really—I cannot—I—this is so sudden!" gasped Miss Retcham.

NAKITA tore round the track, with Miss Retcham in pursuit. The other competitors in the governess' race were left behind. Miss Retcham was winning—but she didn't know it. That was Nakita's scheme.

"Oh, granddad," cut in Joy, "is that a present for Miss Retcham?"

Miss Retcham had already undone the wrapping, and now was looking at the expensive case.

"If she wins the race—yes," said Joy's grandfather, and then gave a slight start and frowned. "Dear me, I trust I did not lead you to suppose I had brought you a gift. Is it your birthday?"

Miss Retcham went a dull crimson.

"No, no. I—— Oh, no, I did not think it was a gift!" she said; but her face fell.

"What is it, granddad?" asked Joy.

"Why, you don't mean to say I haven't mentioned it?" he exclaimed, with a laugh. "How absent-minded I'm getting. It was Nakita's idea—Nakita, the gipsy girl."

Joy watched her governess then. Miss Retcham drew up.

"The gipsy girl's idea?" she exclaimed.

"Yes. Apparently there is a sports

meeting in the village to-day," said Joy's grandfather, as though it were hot news. "I quite intended to give a prize; but, really, I knew nothing about it until the gipsy girl actually came through the french windows into the library."

Joy held her breath, and feigned surprise.

"Merely an artful way of goading you to do it!" snapped Miss Retcham. "That girl intends to win the race, and this prize.

Joy's grandfather laughed.

"I don't think the gipsy girl can pretend to be a teacher," he said. "That is the prize for the teacher's race. As you are entering, Miss Retcham, and have such a reputation as a sprinter——"

Miss Retcham gasped. She had not heard of this before.

"But—but, really—— I—enter for a race! I would not dream of it."

"No, granddad; we're staying here working," said Joy.

He looked over his glasses and frowned.

"It's a thing you ought to see, Joy," he murmured. "Unless, of course, you have misbehaved. But if you are not going, I must send some other messenger with the prize. It must be there in time for the race."

The door closed behind Joy's grandfather, and Miss Retcham, with a somewhat peeved expression, corrected Joy's essay which lay before her.

There was silence until, half an hour later, Miss Retcham announced that she was going to the village. Joy, skipping with delight, thought that the plan had worked

Miss Retcham, however, was tough. Dinner came and went, with no hint of a trip to the sports, and on the tick of time the governess gave the order for work in the school-room.

Joy's heart sank. The plan had failed. The bait had been offered, but not taken, and Miss Retcham, despite the manicure set, was staying at home.

If Miss Retcham stayed, then Joy must stay, and Nakita could not come into being.

At a quarter past two Miss Retcham rose.

"Joy," she said, "I am going down to the hot-houses. To make sure that you do not leave this room during my short absence, I shall lock the door."

And off Miss Retcham went.

"She has gone to the sports. It's just a blind," Joy told herself. "She isn't in the hot-houses at all. But I'd better wait a while."

Five minutes passed, and then, suddenly making up her mind, she stole out, locked the door after her, and hurried to her room with Tinker.

She changed rapidly, and then, with bated breath, crept down the back stairs into the garden, and to the hot-houses.

Miss Retcham had not bluffed. There she was at work. True, her cycle was just outside, but its presence there did not necessarily mean that she intended to ride to the village.

Dismally Joy admitted defeat.

Turning back to the house, in case the governess returned before she had a chance to change, Nakita suddenly stopped. She wheeled, looked about her, and then snatched up an empty flower-pot.

Knocking a watering-can from a shelf on to the tiled path to make sure of a good rousing noise, Nakita mounted the governess' cycle. Immediately the hot-house door opened, and Miss Retcham rushed out, startled.

"Stop!" she shouted.

Nakita went whizzing down the path, and Miss Retcham, following at a sprint pace, hesitated, and then hurried to get the car from the garage.

Outside the gates Nakita paused only until she heard the car engine start up; then she cycled from the lane to the fields, and pedalled her hardest towards the gay, distant scene where the sports meeting was being held.

"MISS RETCHAM, come along, please! It is the start. On this line!"

Miss Retcham felt a tug at her arm, and glowered at the tall, soldierly man beside her.

"I am looking for the gipsy girl," said the governess tremulously. "She took my cycle, and even though I have recovered it, she still has the valuable plant in the pot."

Major Ryan shrugged.

"Well, the teachers' race is just starting. I'm lining them up," he said.

He returned to the crowd bordering the track, where the schoolmistresses and one or two governesses were in line.

"Ah!" said the governess loftily. "I would not make such a fool of myself. Why——"

And there in the crowd was Nakita!

Nakita looked back and saw the governess, tucked the flower-pot under her arm, and waved. Miss Retcham ran towards her, and Nakita, dodging, moved forward just as the competitors crouched down for the start.

Bang! went the pistol. Nakita shot away with them, and went at her best speed. Miss Retcham, grim and furious, gave chase.

By a yard Nakita led from Miss Ridgely, with the crowd yelling in excitement. Miss Retcham, teeth set, went like the wind.

Ten yards to go. Nakita, at her last gasp, hurled herself forward over the line. A few paces behind Miss Retcham followed.

Two men stepped forward and caught her.

"You've won!"

"Lul-le——" panted Miss Retcham, trying to say: "Let me go!" But she was all in.

Nakita flopped down into a wheelbarrow, and, puffing and gasping, was wheeled from the scene by Boko.

Looking back, she saw the exhausted Miss Retcham patted on the back.

"Golly, she won all right!" said Nakita. "When's the egg-and-spoon, and the under sixteen?"

Those races came quite soon, and Miss Retcham, who had to wait for the end to get her prize, stood and watched. Nakita, by a yard in one case, and by at least five yards in the other, won both her races, and was third in the sack-race, too.

Boko himself won a sprint race, the long jump, and the obstacle race.

Nakita, happy and gay, had the time of her life, and when she did see the governess she made no effort to dodge, but congratulated her.

"I didn't steal the bike, lidy—just borrowed it, and the flah-pot was empty. Jolly good race you won!"

"I wish to say nothing to you," said the governess stiffly. "Have you seen Joy here?"

"No, worse luck!" said Nakita.

And Miss Retcham, who kept her eyes open for Joy, was satisfied that she was not there. It was quite late when the prize-giving was over, and Miss Retcham, suddenly wondering if she had given the key of the school-room to cook, raced home.

Joy, in the school-room, looked up as the door opened. She had only been home a minute herself, and her prizes were hidden behind books on the shelves.

"Good!" said Miss Retcham, in relief. "You had better have tea, Joy, late though it is. I quite forgot to let you out."

"Oh, I've been quite happy, Miss Retcham!" said Joy easily.

And the governess, furtively keeping her parcel under her arm, went to her room.

Thereafter her nails were very trim and shiny; and so, too, were Joy's, for she had also won a small manicure set, and not only that, but a fountain-pen, chocolates, and a writing-case. But Miss Retcham never knew that!

THE END.

WELL, we say good-bye to "Gipsy Joy" now—at least for the present. Now read the announcement which appears alongside.

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