

"THE FIREBRAND FINDS A RIVAL!" Superb LONG COMPLETE story of Cliff House School inside.

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Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



**"GET OUT—GET OUT!
I WON'T HELP YOU!"**
The Firebrand of the Fourth lives up to her name—in the long complete school story within.

A Grand Long Complete Story of Barbara Redfern & Co. telling of the clash between.



The FIREBRAND

The Return of the Scapegrace!



"LOVELY!" breathed Barbara Redfern. "It—it's wonderful!" said Mabel Lynn, almost breathlessly.

"I sus-say, you girls, look at Diana!" squeaked plump Bessie Bunter.

The three chums of Study No. 4 were wide-eyed with admiration, but not more so than the other girls gathered in the music-room of Cliff House School.

Fully a dozen girls, all belonging to the Fourth Form, were in that room, and, to judge from appearances, something unusually exciting was afoot.

It was.

For on the dais which now served as a stage, a dazzlingly resplendent figure stood. It was a figure dressed with almost breath-taking loveliness—a figure slim, upright and graceful, whose compelling eyes were glowing in response to that murmured admiration which greeted her; whose mass of wavy, platinum blonde hair, brushed back from her forehead, showed to perfection the pink and white features of the most magnetically attractive girl at Cliff House School. Her name was Diana Royston-Clarke.

"But that costume," breathed Barbara Redfern, captain of the Fourth Form. "Why, it—it must have cost pounds!"

"And pounds!" Bessie Bunter gulped. "Oh, dud-dear, wouldn't I look lovely in that!"

There was a titter. Plump Bessie, the fattest and the hungriest girl in the school, had some queer ideas of dress. About the last thing which would have suited her rotund figure was the glittering thing which the haughty Firebrand of the Fourth now wore in her role as the Queen of Sheba.

Striking as she was, the costume gave to her figure a royal dignity which enhanced her wonderfully good looks. From the imposing headdress in her glorious hair to the jewelled

casually sweeping round so that everyone could get a better view. "Cost several pounds, you know. But Curmudge, bless him!—that's my nickname for my father, you know—shelled out like a lamb. But, well now," she laughed, "if you've all finished gazing, let's get on with the rehearsal. Where are my slaves, Mabs?"

Golden-haired Mabel Lynn laughed. It was a pleasant, thrilled laugh. It would have been hard to say in that moment who was the more pleased—

Diana Royston-Clarke, the limelight-loving Firebrand of the Fourth Form, was absolutely thrilled to be playing the leading part in the new play. That play meant a great deal to Mabel Lynn, and Diana was determined that it should be a success, if only for the glory it would bring her. And then that baby-faced schemer, Faith Ashton, appeared on the scene—and decided that she was going to have Diana's part!

sandals on her extremely shapely feet, Diana looked a queen indeed.

"Well, do I suit?" she asked, with a laugh.

"Suit?" breathed Mabel Lynn, and stared and stared as if hypnotised. "Oh, Diana, I—"

"Just too flatteningly stunning—what?" Jemima Carstairs burred, putting her monocle in her eye. "Oh, absolutely! No need for the play, old Mabs, with Diana in that dashing get-up. Expensive, Di—what?"

"Oh, quite!" Diana said airily,

the limelight-loving Firebrand or Mabel Lynn herself.

Mabs was pleased because she had selected Diana for the part. She was more than pleased, because Diana had spent so lavishly upon that costume. Her eyes glowed as she looked at the script in her hands.

The script was a short play, and was entitled, "The Queen of Sheba's Quest." Although she had written and produced several plays for the Lower School's Amateur Dramatic Society, this particular play was not Mabs'

two very unusual girls.



Finds a RIVAL!

work. It had been written by Mabs' twenty-year-old cousin, Raymond Lynn, and because Raymond was frightfully hard up and needed money badly, Mabs was hoping, through this play, to set him on the road to fame and fortune.

For when the play was produced—as it was due to be produced in a few days' time at the frightfully exclusive garden-party which the local aristocrats, the Fields-Crofts, were organising—the film cameras of the Enterprise Studios would be on the scene, too.

And Langley Runniman, the star producer of the Enterprise, would be with them. Mabs had already mentioned the play to him, and he had promised to buy the film rights if he liked it when he saw it performed. The hundred pounds Langley Runniman had hinted at would set struggling Raymond, poor in health, but too proud in spirit to accept monetary help, on the right lines.

"Well, here we go," she said eagerly. "Bessie, you're one slave. Margot, you're the other. Bag the chair there. That will do for a throne. Where's Clara?"

"On the spot!" answered Clara Trevlyn cheerfully. "What am I to do, old Mabs?" added the Tomboy, with a grin.

"You're the messenger from King Solomon," Mabs told her. "Leila, you will be Clara's aide-de-camp. Marcelle—Joan, get on the stage, will you? You are attendants. Clara, stand over there, please, and wait for your cue. Now, Diana—"

"Let it rip, eh?" Diana laughed. "Right-ho! But, I say, Mabs—"

"Yes, old thing?"

"About the garden-party again. You're sure the film people are coming?"

"Positive!" Mabs said. "And Lord Courtfield and his family?"

"Yes."
"And Princess Naida?" Diana asked, her eyes shining.

"Of course."
"And we know that Lord and Lady Lantham will be there," Diana

laughed, with a dimpling smile towards her studymate, Margot Lantham, who was the daughter of that peer and peeress. "And naturally my father, as mayor of Lantham, will be there, too," she added loftily. "Is Sir Richard Whitterdale coming, too?"

"Oh, yes!" Mabs said patiently. "But, Di, old thing, do please let's get on. Mr. Fields-Croft has promised that we can use his open-air theatre for rehearsals from to-morrow onwards, and I do want to get this thing knocked into shape before we start there. Now."

Diana nodded good-humouredly. She was bubbling then. Vainglorious, proud, she did so crave the limelight. And what a glorious limelight this garden-party promised to provide her with—especially as it was to be held at the Fields-Crofts. Wonderful, with herself as the star of the play, with herself compelling all the attention among such noted company!

She laughed. Very pleased, very thrilled was the Firebrand of Cliff House's Fourth Form then. For Diana, of course, was not thinking of the success of the play, though she knew as well as any of them what that success would mean to Mabs, and,

By

HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

through Mabs, that weak-in-health cousin who was fighting so manfully to obtain recognition.

Diana, as always, was thinking of herself. But because the success of Diana depended upon the play being a success, she was going to do her very, very utmost to make it the most colossal triumph ever known.

Languidly she swept her cloak around her. Gracefully she reclined in the chair. She waved a lordly hand.

"Let the messengers be shown into the royal presence!" she ordered, quoting her lines.

"Your majesty, it shall be done!" breathed Joan Sheldon Charmant, sweeping a grave curtsy.

"Bring me my perfumes. Let them be sprayed upon me," Diana continued to Marcelle Biquet. "See that food and wine are ready for our guests who have travelled far over sea and desert so that they may feast their wondering eyes upon my beauty, and carry back the story of its marvel to the all-wise Solomon. Let the room of gold be prepared for their reception, and the jewelled bath for their refreshing. How's that, Mabs?"

"Grand!" breathed Mabs. "Go on, Di! You make a stunning Sheba!"

"And let—" Diana royally decreed; and then paused. "Hallo!" she said suddenly, staring. "Yoicks! Look who comes here!"

The last line was not in the play. Following the direction of Diana's suddenly inquiring gaze, Mabs turned towards the door. Barbara Redfern twisted her head at the same time; and everybody, attracted by the new focus-point of attention, turned as well. And for a moment there was a deep, wondering silence.

Then—

"Oh!" said someone.

For, unnoticed until this moment, a girl had appeared in the doorway. She was a girl slightly older than the majority present; but she was looking not at the crowd, but with a sort of dazzled bewilderment at the scintillating figure of Diana Royston-Clarke.

Pretty as Diana was in her magnetically dynamic way, this girl, in an entirely different way, was even prettier. Her eyes, large and blue, glowed out of an exquisitely oval face, whose peerless complexion was that of a pink rose petal painted over with milk.

She looked, with her fair, curling hair, rather like a child, indeed—a very, very beautiful and decidedly angelic child. And then, as her eyes switched from Diana and fell upon the girls all staring at her, she flushed. And she smiled—such a tremulous, melting smile. And she said, so shyly, so sweetly, so diffidently, that one had the impression she was going to follow the words by bursting into tears:

"Hal-hallo, Babs! Hallo, everybody! I—I've come back, you see!"

Barbara bit her lip.

"But, Faith, why didn't you let me know?" she inquired.

"Well—" Faith Ashton's eyes became downcast. "I—I thought it better that—that I shouldn't make a song about it, you see. Auntie agreed and arranged everything with the headmistress. I—I didn't exactly leave the school in everybody's good books, did I? And—and—well, I didn't want everybody to meet me and—perhaps be horrid to me. I—I'm sorry now for what I did when I was at the school last time, and all I want is to just settle down and—and make amends. But, of course, Barbara dear, I—I can hardly expect you to believe that, can I?"

Babs gazed at her. Mabs gazed at her and turned her face away. Plump Bessie Bunter blinked. How was it possible not to believe Faith Ashton when she spoke like that?

And yet, despite that melting, innocent expression, despite the halting, shame-faced sincerity of the words, nobody there believed her. They knew Faith Ashton. They had had experience of her. That sweetly innocent and beautiful face of hers—what a crafty personality it hid! What a subtle snake-in-the-grass this girl could be!

Barbara's cousin she was. Because of that, Babs felt she owed her some sort of loyalty and responsibility; and yet, for the life of her, she could never, never again bring herself to like her. For during her last stay at Cliff House, Faith, aided by her childlike face and her scheming mind, had brought Babs within an ace of expulsion, had wrested from her her captaincy, and in the end had been sent away in disgrace. Now she was back.

"You really mean," she asked, "that you're going to toe the line?"

"Oh, Barbara, yes! I—I was such an awful thing last time!" Faith's soft lips quivered. "I—I want to live it down—please," she begged. "I want to be friends with—with all of you. I want to make the school forget all those horrible things I did, and—and to be a

credit to Cliff House. I've learnt my lesson, Barbara!"

There was a pause. Girls looked at each other. If Faith was sincere in that, then there was not one of them who would not have helped her. But was she sincere? With Faith you could never tell.

"And—and, anyway," Faith went on, flushing, "I'm in another Form now, aren't I, Barbara? Miss Primrose has put me into the Lower Fifth, and I'm to be in Study No. 12, with Millicent Ferryleigh and Rhoda Rhodes. But—but I had to come and see you, Barbara dear—and all of you. Please, please do say that I'm forgiven!" Faith entreated earnestly.

"Well—" Barbara said. "Well—" she said again, and paused. "All right, Faith. We don't hold anything against you. As far as we're concerned, anyway, you can start afresh. Anyway, let's get on with the play now," she added.

Faith glowed. Some girls smiled. Really, although they knew her so well, it was difficult not to feel sorry for her; difficult to recall what sort of a girl she really had been.

"M-may I watch?" she asked timidly.

"Oh, Diana, I do think you look lovely!"

"Thanks!" Diana laughed. "Glad to see you, Faith. I'm the Queen of Sheba," she announced loftily. "We're doing a play which Mabs' cousin—Raymond Lynn—has written for the Fields-Crofts' garden-party. Of course," she added haughtily, "you don't know the Fields-Crofts. Frightfully swell people really, and awfully county—"

"Oh, but I do!" Faith cried.

Babs regarded her sharply.

"But how—"

"Well, I do, you know!" Faith cried.

"I—I met them when I was with Aunt Felicity at Brighton. They—they're great hunting people, aren't they?"

"That's right," Babs said.

"And they've got a daughter—ever such a nice girl—named Paula," Faith added. "Paula and I became great friends. But this is the first I've heard about the garden-party, although dear Paula and I have been writing to each other every week. Oh dear! Isn't that costume of Diana's exciting? And how beautifully, Barbara, she does act!"

"Shush!" Babs said.

For Diana was getting into her stride again—was delivering with really marvellous rendering the speech of Sheba to the messengers of Solomon.

A ripple of hand-clapping went up as the Firebrand finished. Mabs, her cheeks glowing, almost dancing in her pleased excitement, rushed forward and grabbed her hand.

"Diana, that was wonderful!" she breathed.

"No faults?" Diana laughed.

"None—except just a touch here and there, perhaps," Mabs said. "But that's nothing! Oh, Diana, if you only carry it off like that at the garden-party—"

Diana shrugged.

"Just watch me!" she boasted. "Just watch! Don't worry, Mabs. If the play's let down, I promise you it shan't be my fault. Nothing else you'd like me to do?"

"No, thanks," Mabs said.

"And the next rehearsal," Diana asked, "is at the Fields-Crofts'—in the open-air theatre—to-morrow?"

"Yes."

Diana nodded joyfully. Oh, pleased with herself was Diana! And when Diana was pleased it was amazing the good feeling she seemed to radiate. Amazing how everybody else within the

influence of that radiance was affected, too. Almost in carnival spirit the rehearsal finished, with everybody happy, and Mabs absolutely delighted. If only Raymond Lynn had been there to see Diana's performance! If only Raymond could have heard his play rehearsed as it had been rehearsed that afternoon!

"Diana was grand!" she glowingly told Babs in Study No. 4 at tea. "Raymond's play just can't fail if she acts up to that standard! And didn't she look her part?"

"Yes, rather! Almost as well as I should have looked it, you know!" Bessie Bunter said. "There's only one mistake you've made, Mabs."

"What's that, old Bess?"

"Well, you ought to have made Diana my sus-slave, you know, and me the queen!" Bessie said profoundly.

"Good Queen Bess!" chuckled Babs. "Hallo!" she added heartily, as a tap sounded at the door. "Walk in!"

The door opened. It was Faith Ashton who stood there. She bit her lip.

"Oh, I didn't know you were at tea!" "Never mind. Sit down," Babs hospitably invited. "Join us, if you like."

"Oh, Barbara, may I?" Faith gushed eagerly. "Oh dear! I—I do think that—that's so frightfully sweet! You—you know, Barbara, you're such a dear girl," she added simperingly, as she seated herself at the table, "and—and—oh, it makes me feel so dreadfully horrid to think how much I must have hurt you in the past! But, Barbara darling, I really do, honestly and truly, mean to make things right again now I'm back."

"Right-ho, then!" Babs said serenely.

"Have a sandwich?"

"Thank you, Barbara dear! And—and I've been thinking," Faith said, her perfect features eager and animated. "Mabs, this play of yours. Oh, please, isn't there some part I could take?"

Mabs smilingly shook her head.

"Sorry, Faith, they're all booked! What part would you like to do?"

"Well"—Faith looked a little disappointed, "I—I was thinking of Diana's. I—I know Diana's awfully good, but—well, after all, she's not very reliable, is she? Oh, please—please don't misjudge me!" she cried. "But she has let you down in the past, hasn't she? And—and this play is so frightfully important that I'm sure you wouldn't want to take risks. Oh, I'm sorry!" she added, biting her lip. "I—I seem to have said something I oughtn't to have said! Oh, Barbara dear, you—you don't think I meant anything?"

"Well, no," Babs said. But she eyed her cousin queerly and rather uncertainly, remembering of old that particular approach of Faith's, but unable still for the life of her to decide whether it was false or true. "In any case," she said brusquely, "it wouldn't be possible; so why talk about it? Apart from looking the part and acting the part so jolly well, Diana's bought the dress herself, and the dress has cost pounds."

Faith smiled, and nodded. No further did she press that point. She was, in fact, all honeyed sweetness for the rest of the meal. But when the meal was over, and Babs and Mabs were preparing to settle down to prep, she ambled off to Study No. 10, which was shared by Diana and her chum, Margot Lantham. Diana, reclining in an easy-chair reading a latest fashion magazine, looked round.

"Oh, hallo!" she said carelessly.

"Glad to be back?"

"Oh, yes, please, Diana!" Faith beamed.

"Completely finished playing the fool?" Diana asked.

Faith flushed.

"Oh, Diara, I don't know what you meant! And I do think," Faith said reproachfully, "that it's not very kind of you to put it like that! Still, I forgive you," she added gently.

"Thanks!" Diana grunted.

"And—and, Diana—"

"Well?"

"I was wondering"—Faith paused—"I was wondering about—about the play, you know. I—I suppose you—you're frightfully keen on that Queen of Sheba part?"

"So kee—," Diana told her, "that I talked my father into paying twelve quidlets for the costume. But why?"

"No-nothing. I—I was only just thinking," Faith said worriedly. "Of course, I know the Fields-Crofts—they're awfully good friends of mine, really—and—and they've told me all about the little trouble they once had with you, Diana. Ahem! Please don't be offended," Faith pleaded, "but I was thinking, as the play is going to be held at the Fields-Crofts' garden-party, and—and as you're not particularly popular with them—"

Diana put the paper down. A gleam came into her eyes.

"So what?" she asked.

"Well," Faith said, in big-eyed innocence, "I was thinking perhaps you might like someone else to have the part—"

"You, for instance?" Diana sneered.

"Well, yes."

Diana rose. Her blue eyes were narrowed, and there was a red flush in her cheeks. Danger signs, these; but Faith, still staring at her with childlike wonderment, did not appear to observe them. She actually smiled.

"So, you see, Diana—"

Diana's answer was to stride towards the door. Savagely she tore it open.

"Get out!" she snapped.

"But, Diana, my dearest—"

"I'm not your dearest, and don't dash well try your sugar-sweet stuff on me!" Diana fumed. "Get out!"

"Oh, pup-please don't lose your temper, dear Diana!"

Diana made an angry, impatient gesture. That unbridled temper of hers, so easily aroused, was flamingly up in arms all at once. She caught Faith by the shoulder.

"Now," she panted, "get out!"

With a thrust of her arm, she sent her spinning. Like a tee-to-tum, Faith gyrated towards the passage, whirled through the door, and then, with a scream, cannoned smack! right into someone who happened to be coming along the passage at the moment. There was a cry, a thud. And then:

"Diana!" quivered an enraged voice.

"Di-an-a!"

And the Firebrand found herself staring into the angry features of Miss Evelyn Bullivant, the strict, rather bad-tempered mathematics mistress of the school.

"Diana, how—how dare you behave like a hooligan! How dare you make an unprovoked attack upon another girl! Take a hundred lines!"

The Maid Faith Ashton Sacked!



"DIANA!"

"Rabbits!"

snapped Diana.

"But, Diana,

Mabs pleaded anxiously.

"Will you leave me alone?"

Babs, Mabs, and Margot Lantham, in

Study No. 10, glanced hopelessly at each other.

It was ten minutes later.

"Diana!" Margot pleaded. Now, please, old thing, do be reasonable!" And Margot, who was the only girl in the Fourth Form who could ever do anything with the tempestuous Firebrand in a mood like this, put a gentle arm on her shoulder. "You know, old Di, it's just no good kicking against the Bull," she said earnestly. "If she's given you lines, you'll just have to do them. You don't want to get gated for the rehearsal to-morrow, do you?"

Diana paused. For the last ten minutes she had been railing. That awful, baby-faced Faith—she had got her into this! That awful hypocrite had insulted her, and she—she—Diana Royston-Clarke—had been punished because she had replied to that insult. Diana, who rarely considered her own unfairness to others, was bitterly and most resentfully furious when she herself became the victim of an injustice, and she was smarting now. She glared.

"Well, that cat—"

"But, Diana—" Mabs chimed in anxiously. "Oh, great golliwogs! Diana, don't you see," she added pleadingly, "if you go upsetting the Bull she'll only detain you—and if she detains you, what about the play? You know we're relying on you. And my Cousin Raymond—oh, Di, for his sake we've just got to make the play a success! Don't let anything spoil it now," she added. "Do, please, do the lines!"

"Please, Diana!" Babs added her pleadings.

Diana paused again. She calmed down suddenly. That cat—but well, dash it, Mabs was right. She'd be just the most awful idiot because of one bout of temper, to spoil everything, and though she wasn't very concerned about Mabs' cousin, never having met him, she was most frightfully concerned about her own glory. She shrugged.

"All right," she said sullenly.

"You—you'll do the lines now?" Babs asked.

"Yes. But wait till I see that little cat—"

"Oh, don't worry about her!" Babs said. "We'll talk to Faith. Margot," she added, and a message flashed from her eyes to the eyes of Margot Lantham, who, understanding, nodded, "we—we'll go and talk to her now," she added eagerly.

"And I," Margot said quickly, "will stop here and help old Di do her lines."

Mabs let out a faint "phew!" Babs gulped in relief. Really, building hopes on the Firebrand was rather like building a house on the brink of an active volcano and trusting the volcano not to erupt. She glanced uneasily at Babs as they strode off down the corridor.

"Babs, you—you think she'll be all right?"

"Now—yes," Babs said. "One thing about Diana—she always will keep a promise. But let's go and see Faith," she added grimly. "If she's going to start her mischief-making again—"

Mabs nodded.

They found Faith in her new study, looking very thoughtful. She leapt to her feet as the two juniors entered.

"Oh, Barbara—and Mabel, how—how sweet of you to come and see me. And especially," Faith said, dropping those long eyelashes over her blue eyes, "when I'm so dreadfully unhappy. I—I was just thinking of poor, dear Diana. Diana, you know, got a hundred lines, and I'm sure she blames me because she got them. Barbara, you—you don't think she does, do you?" she added anxiously.

"What happened?" Barbara asked rather gruffly.

"Why, I don't know." Faith's eyes opened in the widest of pained surprise. "I went to see Diana, you see. I was telling her how lovely she was as the Queen of Sheba. I—I just happened to mention how I'd love to play a part like that—well, I mean to say, that's just exactly sweet and natural, isn't it? I really thought, you know, that she would be most awfully complimented, and instead—instead"—Faith faltered, her lips beginning to quiver—"she just



DIANA stood in the doorway, glaring in fury. "Well, my—my aunt!" she gasped. Faith Ashton was parading in the dazzling robes she had especially bought for the play! Forward leapt the Firebrand of the Fourth!

rose up like a mad thing and fairly hurled me at Miss Bullivant! Oh dear!" Again Mabs and Babs glanced at each other.

"Well," said Babs, and—rather uncertainly—"well. But I do hope, Faith, you'll steer clear of Diana in the future. You know what a touchy girl she is."

"Oh, Barbara, how kind of you to say that!" Faith beamed. "Of course, I wouldn't want to annoy Diana for worlds. And I do—really and truly do—think she's ever such a clever actress. And she does look too utterly marvellous in that frock of hers."

Babs nodded briefly. She and Mabs left the room then.

Meanwhile, in Study No. 10, Diana, true to her promise, was industriously writing her lines, while Margot sat opposite her. She nodded as Diana finished.

"All done, old thing?"

"All, dash them!"

"Then shall I take them along for you?" Margot asked brightly.

"Oh, good kid! I wish you would!" Diana smiled. "Where's that script of the play?" she asked. "I thought I left it on the table by the door there."

She had, but it wasn't there now. While Margot went off, Diana, with fuming impatience, searched for it. In Study No. 12 in the Lower Fifth corridor, however, another girl was reading that script. It was Faith Ashton. And Faith, alone, was smiling curiously as she skimmed the lines.

"Well, bother it!" Diana snorted, when having turned Study No. 10 upside down the script had failed to come to light. "I must have left it in the music-room. Perhaps Mabs has it," she told herself, and hurried off to Study No. 4. But Mabs, faced with the inquiry, shook her head.

"No, Di! I haven't got it," she said. "I distinctly saw you take it away with you. Still, never mind," she added brightly. "I've a duplicate here. Take that."

Diana took it. She went back to her study. Over her tantrums now, thinking again of the delicious success which awaited her at the garden-party, she earnestly studied her lines, pacing the room as she read, occasionally stopping to wave a hand or declaim aloud some inspiring sentence which caught her imagination.

She was near the door and in the middle of one such gesture when that door opened. A face, which came perilously near to receiving a back-handed slap from Diana's waving arm, intruded, and hurriedly bobbed back again. Diana paused and glared at a girl dressed in servant's uniform.

"And who the dickens," she demanded, "are you?"

"Oh dear, I'm sorry, Miss Clarke."

"Miss what?" Diana scowled.

"Miss—Miss Clarke—"

"Miss Royston-Clarke," Diana said huffily. "Royston-Clarke! Hasn't anybody told you my real name? Royston-Clarke—with a hyphen and a final 'e.' And what the merry goose-step do you mean by barging into this room without knocking?"

"I—I did knock. But you were shouting something and—didn't hear," the flustered newcomer said.

"Please, Miss Royston-Clarke, I'm the new maid. Miss Lantham sent me to tell you that she'll be in the laboratory with Miss Carstairs, if you want her!"

"Oh!" said Diana, and eyed the new maid keenly, aware then of the decidedly pretty face that peered at her from beneath the servant's cap; aware of the girl's slim and shapely figure. "What's your name?" she said.

"Maisie Reynolds."

"Hum!" Diana considered. "Like the Maisie but don't know I'm keen on the Reynolds. You don't look like a servant!" she added bluntly.

"No, miss! You see I—I've never been a servant before. But I—I had to do something, because mother is ill, and when Miss Ashton dismissed me, her aunt got me this job. I—I used to be on the stage!" she said.

"Oh!" Diana's eyes lit up with interest then. She felt a sudden strange warming of her stormy heart towards this newcomer. "Come in," she said. "Shut the door! Sit down! Who did you say dismissed you?"

"Miss Ashton—a Miss Faith Ashton. She—" The maid paused. "She—she came to this school to-day!"

Diana jumped.

"Yoicks!" she breathed. "And what did she sack you for?"

"Well, miss, I oughtn't to say," Maisie Reynolds said nervously.

"Oh, rats! Come on! Out with it. I won't tell anyone. I promise."

And then Maisie, after some hesitation, told her story. A sad little story it was. As a juvenile she had had some success in a West End pantomime. She had thought, because of that, her career on the stage was cut out. But the luck had not been with her.

Four years ago she had played "Alice" in the famous Lewis Carroll story for a film which had never appeared, and after that she just couldn't get hold of the parts that would suit her. Chances had been so few and far between; indeed, there had been such dreadful competition that finally she had been glad to take the post of companion to Faith Ashton.

"Poor kid!" Di said sympathetically. "And then—"

Maisie gulped. She had been at Brighton with Faith Ashton. Faith was running around with a frightfully swell girl named Paula Fields-Croft. (How Diana's eyes gleamed there!) Paula had a friend for whom she wanted to find a job. Complaining to her aunt that Maisie was slovenly and careless, Faith had sacked Maisie in order to give Paula's friend her position.

"And—and so, because my mother was ill, I—I had to do something, you see!" Maisie finished, with a sigh. "And Faith's aunt, who was rather sorry for me, wrote to your headmistress and got me fixed up with this job. I started here this morning. That's all."

"Oh!" Diana said, and smiled. She was touched by the story. She liked the girl, perhaps more so because Faith had treated her unfairly!

"I suppose you'd like to get back on to the stage again?"

"Oh, Miss Royston-Clarke, yes! Or—the films," Maisie said earnestly. "All the same, it—it seems very nice here. Are you interested in acting, too?" she ventured, as her eyes fell on the script of the play that Diana still held in her hands.

"Oh, rather! I'm playing the part of the Queen of Sheba in our play at the Fields-Crofts' garden-party," Diana laughed, and, while Maisie's eyes opened in wonderment at the sound of that familiar name, Diana was struck with an idea. "Like to see me do a piece?" she added. "I was just rehearsing as you came in."

"Oh, please I—I'd love to!" Maisie breathed.

Diana laughed. More than ever was she pleased with Maisie. Diana liked an audience even in her private rehearsals. She liked to show off, and it was something to show off to a girl who had stage experience.

"I'll do the entrance of Solomon's

messengers," she said. "Of course, you have to imagine that the other people are present. Now, this is my throne." And Diana, sinking into the easy-chair, started to speak her lines. Maisie watched, her cheeks flushing.

"Well?" Diana asked, as she finished.

"Oh, I think that that was lovely!" Maisie said. "There was only one thing. Do—do you mind if I make a suggestion, Miss Royston-Clarke?"

"No, go ahead," Diana said good-humouredly.

"Well, it's while you are waiting for the messengers to appear. Why not have a mirror? There's a wait there of about ten seconds, isn't there? And naturally, during that time the audience's attention will be concentrated upon you. I think it would be an awfully good touch if you signed to one of your slaves to hand a mirror, and then, while waiting for the messengers, to be fluffing your hair or something. It—it's just a suggestion, of course," she added nervously.

"But it's a jolly good one!" Diana glowed. "Yoicks, yes! And I might even keep the messengers waiting a few moments while I finish playing with the mirror!" she said excitedly.

"Yes, that would be lovely."

"Like this?" And Diana, sitting down again, suited the action to the words. Maisie clapped.

"Splendid!" she applauded.

Diana was pleased. She looked at the girl.

"I say, you know, I've got an idea," she cried. "Are you busy?"

"No, Miss Diana; I'm off duty. But—but is it all right for me to be here?"

"Oh, rats to that!" Diana cried.

"I've got an idea. What about letting me go through the whole part? There might be half a dozen suggestions like that you could make—and, besides, if you held the script it would help me no end. Tell you what," she added eagerly, "I'll go to the dormitory and get my Queen of Sheba frock, shall I? I feel the part more in that somehow—and, anyway, I'd like to show it to you. Will you?"

"Oh, Miss Royston-Clarke, I—I'd love to!" Maisie cried.

Diana laughed. Oh, but here was a girl after her own heart, indeed! No further words she wasted. While Maisie, rather nervous, sat on, she dashed out of the study. With an excited laugh, she flew along the corridor, up the stairs, and like a whirlwind crashed into the Fourth Form dormitory. And then, as if some invisible hand had suddenly reached forward violently arresting her progress, she stopped dead.

"Well, my—my aunt!" she gasped. And her cheeks, a moment before so excitedly flushed, became crimson with fury.

"You cheating little thief, Faith Ashton!" she said measuredly. "What are you doing with that frock?"

And Faith, who, dressed in Diana's resplendent garments, was standing in front of a mirror, smiling pleasantly at her reflection, turned with a frightened start.

The Firebrand Breaks Out!



"Oh dear, I—I—I—" Faith stuttered.

"Take it off!"

And take it off!

now!" Diana blazed, quivering with fury. "Who the dickens told you to play about with that?"

"But, Diana—"

"Will you take it off?"

Faith looked at her. She gulped. There was something rather frightening about the Firebrand of the Fourth at that moment. With suddenly trembling fingers she began to fumble at the hooks and eyes.

"All right," Diana rapped. "I'll help." And she stepped forward, jerking Faith into position. With eager fingers she unfasted the dress. "No, hold still!" she said angrily. And, whipping the dress up, snatched it over Faith's head, at the same time giving that girl a push in the chest which spreadeagled her on the nearest bed. "And next time," added Diana, flaring round, "you want to use my clothes, come and ask permission! Here, what are you doing?" she cried in alarm.

For as she turned, Faith was in the act of throwing herself off the bed. Too late Diana started forward to prevent the fall. There came a thump, a shriek from Faith.

"Oh, Diana, Diana!"

For Faith had heard what Diana hadn't heard in her fury—footsteps outside the door. And Faith had recognised those footsteps.

"What on earth—" amazed Diana said, and stared at Faith, lying on the floor, whimpered. "Stop spoofing, you little actress," she said scornfully, "and jolly well get up! If this is—"

"Diana!" cried a voice.

Diana spun round.

"Diana!" Miss Bullivant came storming into the room. "Faith, my child!" she cried, and Faith, her eyes wet with tears and sobbing in the most heartbroken way, rose sadly to her feet. "Diana, you attacked her!" Miss Bullivant accused.

"I didn't!" Diana cried. "I only pushed her on the bed—"

"Oh—oh, Diana!" Faith quivered. "What a wicked, wicked fib!"

"Why, you—"

"Silence!" Miss Bullivant's eyes glittered. "Diana, this is the second time I have caught you acting violently towards Faith Ashton! I do not understand—"

"But—but please, Miss Bullivant," Faith whimpered, "oh, please, do not be too hard on dear Diana! She really didn't mean it, did you, Diana dearest? You see, Miss Bullivant, Diana, for the moment, forgot that she had given me permission to try on her frock—"

"I what?" Diana said, astounded.

"Well, you did, you know, darling," Faith said, and so convincingly innocent and reproachful was her expression that even Diana wondered for a moment if she really had given that permission. "You did say to me, didn't you, dear, that if I wanted to try on the frock I could—"

"No, I dashed well didn't!" Diana said furiously. "And I think—"

"That's enough, Diana!" Miss Bullivant broke in curtly. "Faith, you may dress, my child. I am not concerned about your quarrel," she said to Diana, "but I am concerned about your violence, Diana. I have warned you before to keep a curb on that hot temper of yours. I will not have you bullying Faith like this. And for that," Miss Bullivant said, her lips grimly compressing, "you will be detained to-morrow afternoon, Diana."

Diana started.

"To-morrow, Miss Bullivant? But I can't! The rehearsal—" she cried. "You should have thought of that before," Miss Bullivant curtly informed her. "Faith, please come with me."

She rustled towards the door. Faith, with a sad and forgiving smile towards the Firebrand, went out after her. Diana stood quivering.

Gated—for to-morrow afternoon! Gated, because of that awful little schemer!

Diana gritted her teeth. Inwardly she was raging. Mentally, she was visualising all sorts of fearful and dreadful vengeance on the new girl of the Lower Fifth, once opportunity offered. But wait a minute! Wait a minute! She'd got to do something about this. She couldn't let Mabs down, after promising. She couldn't go to her now and tell her that she couldn't come to rehearsal to-morrow afternoon. And she wanted to go.

But that baby-faced little hypocrite—

Diana paused, choking. Well, never mind. Why should she say anything to Mabs, or Babs, or anybody? To-

No. 9 of—

CLIFF HOUSE PETS

Georgina Skeppington's
Honey Bear
SUGAR

Sugar is a honey bear and, as his name implies, is fond of sweet things! Perhaps (do not blush, Georgina!) that is why he chose Georgina Skeppington of the Lower Fifth for his mistress.

A mischievous, prankish little chap is Sugar—but oh, so adored at Cliff House! Such a funny twinkling-eyed way he has of looking at you; such a laughable little trick of darting and withdrawing his furry head—just as if he were deliberately making faces at you! And woe betide your chocolate or your sweets if Sugar's mildly scheming eye alights upon them!

Sugar was given as a present to Georgina by an uncle of hers who keeps a zoological store in London. As he is the only animal of his species in the Pets' House he has a special "home"—the home being a tree fenced round by high iron palings. There are holes in the tree which Sugar has made; there are holes in the ground which Sugar has also made; and rarely, unless you are with his mistress, is Sugar to be found! All you have to do, however, to make Sugar exhibit himself is to rattle a paper bag of sweets!

Lovable and plump, Sugar is a very fine specimen of his kind. His adventures are legion. Despite the iron railings he seems to have a knack of getting out of his enclosure just whenever he likes—and on more than one occasion has been caught in the school itself—usually with his black little nose buried in somebody's tin of milk or treacle!



Once, on one of these expeditions, he was chased by Pluto, who, mistaking him for a cat in the distance, pursued him up the nearest tree, on a branch of which Mabel Lynn's Musta was having a quiet doze in the afternoon sunlight!

Now Mabel's Musta hates to be rudely awakened—especially by a honey bear—and poor Sugar, chattering with fright, was chased most dreadfully along the branch and fell off—straight on to the waiting and astonished Pluto's head! Pluto, of course, recognising his mistake, apologised by touching noses and then, with all his kingly dignity, marched away!

And there was excitement at Cliff House not so long ago, when Sugar was caught by Miss Primrose's two pet cats lapping up their milk, and was so furiously chased that he sought refuge in the tuckshop where Bessie Bunter was enjoying her morning glass of lemonade.

Fearful of the cats' vengeance, frightened Sugar took a leap on to Bessie's plump shoulder and poor Bessie, for two be-

wildered minutes became the arena of the most frightful battle ever seen in those cheerful precincts. When it was over and the cats chased away, and Bessie was recovering with a plate of tarts and a ginger pop, Sugar was discovered interestingly investigating the contents of Auntie Jones' ice-cream urn!

A laugh-providing, lovable little pet! But oh, what a trial sometimes, to his fond mistress!

morrow was half-holiday. The party wasn't due to leave Cliff House until half-past two. Detention would start at two—easy enough, once she had reported to Miss Bullivant, to slip out of the class-room and join the crowd, and dash the consequences. Not if she knew it was Faith Ashton going to have the laugh of her.

There and then, Diana recklessly decided. Breathing hard, she dressed herself in her Queen of Sheba frock. Once she had looked at that superb reflection of herself in the mirror, however, all anger went. Yoicks! But yes, she did look staggering. And wouldn't Maisie Reynolds be absolutely overwhelmed when she saw her.

With that swift change of mood, so characteristic of her stormy nature, she was all sunshine and smiles once again as she hurried out of the dormitory back into Study No. 10. Maisie, the

and blushed a little, "I would like to play a part like that."

"Well, you'd make a ripping Queen of Sheba," Diana generously conceded. "And I will own, Maisie, that you've been no end of a help. Ahem!" She paused. "Wait a minute," she said, and went to her bag, producing a ten-shilling note. "I say, buy something for yourself with that!" she said.

But Maisie crimsoned, drawing back. "Oh, thank you, Miss—Miss Royston-Clarke!" she faltered. "But—but do you mind if I don't? You see—"

Diana pouted a moment. Then she smiled.

"O.K.," she said. "If that's how you feel about it. You know, Maisie, I like you, and if you'll help me a bit more—just in private—"

"Why, I'd love to!"

"Good egg, then! And perhaps," Diana said, "I may be able to do

something for you one day. I've got influence," she said, with some of her old hauteur. "My father is Mayor of Lantham, you know, and several big film producers are personal friends of mine. And, Maisie—"

"Oh, yes, Miss Royston-Clarke?"
"Drop the Miss Royston-Clarke; just call me Miss Diana," Diana said softly.
"Y-yes, Miss 'D-Diana,'" Maisie stammered.

And, crimson with embarrassment, she flew, while Diana smiled pleasantly as she looked at the door through which she disappeared.

"Nice girl!" she murmured. "Oh, jolly nice! And a pig like that baby-faced hypocrite would sack a girl like that!"

A flash lit up her eyes as she thought of Faith. Well, just let her wait! Off again, she rushed to the dormitory. There she changed once more, and, putting away the Queen of Sheba robes, returned to her study just as Mabs came up the corridor. Mabs asked anxiously:

"Everything all right, Diana?"
"Why, of course!" Diana said.
"What should be wrong?"

"Nothing. But—but I heard there's been some bother in the dormitory."

"Oh, that!" Diana laughed carelessly. "Nothing, really," she said. "How you do worry, Mabs! Excuse me now, though. Must fly. Haven't started my prep," she added over her shoulder, as she ran off.

Mabs smiled. Looking more relieved, she went back into Study No. 4.

Nobody saw Faith Ashton again that evening, and nobody knew that, in a corner of the library, Faith had tucked herself, and was busily digesting every line of Diana's script. Morning came, with Diana bright, cheerful, and smiling, with Babs & Co. looking forward in high glee to the rehearsal in the afternoon. Diana, true to her resolve, said nothing about her detention.

But after dinner she did say to Babs: "Babs, I—I'll come on later to the Fields-Crofts. You don't mind, do you? You see, I—I've got to meet someone in Courtfield first."

"But you won't be late?" Babs asked.

"Of course not. Expect me about half-past three. And will you take my dress along for me?"

Babs nodded. Diana went off. At two o'clock, while Babs & Co. were foregathering in the quadrangle, she reported to Miss Bullivant in the detention-room. Miss Bullivant, as was usual in these circumstances, gave her a detention task, saw her settled down to work, and then, locking the door upon her, went off. Directly she had gone Diana crossed to the window.

The nearest girls on that fine half-holiday were on the playing field. Nobody was in the immediate vicinity of the class-room window. Carefully Diana climbed on to a desk, quickly lowered herself out of the window, and with one swift glance round flew towards the hedge which separated the grounds from Lane's Field.

Then she paused, quickly turning. A momentary scowl came to her good-looking face as she saw a girl, standing by the cloisters, watching her. It was Faith Ashton.

But Diana did not care then. Faith wasn't a mistress or a prefect, so what did it matter?

Faith stood for a few moments until the Firebrand had disappeared, then, shaking her golden curls, she thoughtfully ambled off into the quadrangle.

She looked up towards Miss Bullivant's study window as she approached,

and she smiled with satisfaction as she saw that window fully open. Miss Bullivant, her back towards the quad, was also to be observed as she bent over her desk. Nobody else was about.

A very peculiar gleam came in the big blue eyes of Faith Ashton.

Quietly she approached the window. It stood nearly ten feet from the ground, and just to the side of it was a buttress in the wall.

Safely hidden from Miss Bullivant's eyes if she chose to peer out, Faith took up a position beside the buttress, and, clearing her throat, suddenly spoke in a loud voice which was entirely different from her own, and which was, of course, calculated to reach Miss Bullivant's ears. She said, as if gossiping to another girl:

"And Diana broke detention, you know. I saw her climbing out of the window. I say, though, don't let Miss Bullivant know."

From the window above came a sudden exclamation.

Faith grinned. That gift of mimicry she possessed was a dangerous weapon in the hands of a girl like Faith Ashton. She said now, apparently replying to the first comment:

"But where has Diana gone?"
"Why, don't you know?" Faith conversed. "She's gone off to the Fields-Crofts. They live at Friar's Gables."

Something like a snort came from above. It was accompanied by the screeching of a chair. Faith grinned a little. She stood still until she heard the door of Miss Bullivant's room violently bang, then immediately strode into Big Hall. She was wistfully studying the notices on the board when Miss Bullivant, like a raging fury, came tearing in from the direction of the detention-room. She glared at Faith.

"Faith, have you seen Diana?"
"Why, no, Miss Bullivant," Faith said, in wide-eyed surprise. "She's in detention, isn't she?"

"She is not," Miss Bullivant said irritably. "She is not. The wretched girl has broken out. She has, I believe, gone to Friar's Gables. Faith, go to Jenkins and order the school car."

"Yes, Miss Bullivant," Faith said. "But, oh, please don't be hard on dear Diana. Where are you going?"

"I am going," Miss Bullivant said, "to Friar's Gables. Hurry, Faith!"

Faith bit her lip. "Poor, poor Diana!" her expression said to Miss Bullivant. But she was chuckling as she hurried off. She gave the order to Jenkins, and then, rushing outside, caught the bus to Friardale village.

"And now," she said, as she settled herself inside it, "to watch the fun! And then—then—" She smiled again, and withdrew a sheaf of papers from her pocket. Leaning back, she began to study them. They were Diana's lines in the play!

The Schemer's Reward!



"M A B E L—M a b e l Lynn!"

"Eh? Somebody calling me?"

"Oh, yes!" And Mabs turned in the grounds of

Friar's Gables, smiling, as the tall, willowy figure of Paula Fields-Croft approached.

"Can I have a word with you?" asked Paula.

"Why, of course! Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Nothing—no," Paula answered, as she drew Mabs aside. With a very un-

friendly stare towards the stage to which Diana Royston-Clarke, a glittering vision of glory in her dazzling Queen of Sheba costume, had strutted, she paused near a hedge. "I suppose," she asked dubiously, "it really is necessary for Diana to take part in this play?"

Mabs glanced at her.
"Why, yes, Paula. But—"

"I only thought I'd mention it," Paula said. "You might know we're not too keen on Diana here. She caused more than a bit of trouble when the County Hunt was in progress, and—well, my pater had rather to warn her off, that's all. But, of course," Paula said toleratingly, "I don't want to interfere with your arrangements. As long as Diana behaves herself nobody will have any objection. That's all. Just keep her in order, will you? Why, Faith!" she cried in delight, as another girl appeared on the scene.

Mabs frowned a little worriedly; but she was obviously forgotten then as Paula and Faith Ashton greeted each other. No doubt, if ever she had doubted it, of their friendship for each other!

She turned away. Diana, on the stage, was "doing her stuff!" And, knowing that Paula Fields-Croft was somewhere near, she was out to impress. She was doing well—so well, indeed, that even those who had admired her previous performances were agreeably surprised. All those high-lights which Maisie Reynolds had taught her she was incorporating in her performance now, and the result was polished. Mabs blinked.

"But, Diana, that's wonderful!" she said. "Where did you pick up all the other touches?"

"Oh, that's just as I see the part!" Diana said. Trust the Firebrand to take all credit to herself! "That just comes of intelligently reading it, you know. Shall we take the exit of the messengers now? Shall—?" And then Diana paused as Paula Fields-Croft, accompanied by Faith Ashton and Paula's father, Major Fields-Croft, approached. A gleam lit up her fine eyes at the sight of Faith; a flash of contempt for Paula; a haughty, supercilious smile for the major. "No, let's start again!" she said.

"All right," Mabs agreed. "Right-ho! Take positions, please!"

Diana smiled. Now she'd show them! Perhaps the lofty Paula, when she saw how she could act, might alter her opinion of her. And that two-faced little cat—well, she'd show her!

Gracefully Diana swept forward, with queenly languour sank into her chair, waving her fan. She raised her arm.

"Let the messengers be shown into the royal pre—" she began, and got no further.

For suddenly, on the outskirts of the crowd which was watching, came a commotion.

Diana, from her superior viewpoint on the open-air stage, saw it before Mabs and Babs and the others. The words she was uttering suddenly froze on her lips. At the same moment came a voice:

"Diana!"
"My hat! The Bull!" exclaimed Clara Trevlyn. "What the dickens is—?"

"Diana!" Miss Bullivant's voice was vibrating with fury. "Diana, how dare you! Mr. Fields-Croft," she added, pushing forward to confront that bewildered gentleman, "I am sorry to interrupt you, but I really must insist upon Diana coming back to school at once!"

"What?" cried Mabs. "But, Miss Bullivant—"

"Mabel, I am not speaking to you!" Miss Bullivant said tartly.

"But the rehearsal!" cried Babs. "Your rehearsal is not my concern. My concern," Miss Bullivant said angrily, "is upholding the discipline of the school. Diana deliberately broke out of detention!"

"De-detention!" Clara Trevlyn stutted. "But we never knew Diana was in detention!"

"Diana knew it; that is enough," Miss Bullivant said. "Diana, step down at once!"

But the Firebrand did not step down—she remained perfectly still. She saw that supercilious "I-told-you-so" smile which Paula's face wore. She saw the furtive satisfaction in Faith Ashton's eyes. She saw the frowning displeasure in the face of the major. She—to be dragged like some naughty Second Form kid back to school!

"Oh rats!" Diana burst out. "I mean, Miss Bullivant—well, dash it, we're doing rehearsal!"

"Miss Bullivant, won't you—" cried Mabs.

"Please!" Miss Bullivant swept them all aside. Her own eyes glittering now, she stepped on to the front of the stage. "Diana, will you come?"

"No!" Diana said furiously.

"Diana, how dare—" "Will you let me come when the rehearsal's over?" Diana cried.

"You will come now!"

Diana quivered. Easy to see that she was on the verge of an outbreak. But Major Fields-Croft stepped forward.

"Diana, I think—I really do think," he said, frowning "you ought to go."

"And let the rehearsal down!" Diana flamed.

"You should have thought of that before—"

"Well, I did think of it before! That is why I said nothing to the others," Diana cried. "In any case, the detention wasn't justified. If it hadn't been for that sneaking, two-faced cat, Faith Ashton, there never would have been a detention! It's not fair!" she fumed.

The major frowned angrily.

"Diana," he said stiffly, "I would remind you that in speaking of Miss Ashton, you are speaking of my daughter's friend."

"I don't care!"

"Oh, my hat!" cried Babs. "Diana—"

"Please!" Major Fields-Croft had taken command of the situation now.

"Diana, I am sorry," he said, "I cannot be a party to your wild law-breaking at Cliff House. I will not stand here and hear a girl whom I like and respect so completely slandered. If you will not go at Miss Bullivant's order, perhaps you will go at mine," he rapped. "Now, please, Diana!"

Mabs, her face suddenly white, glanced with such heart-breaking appeal at Babs, that Babs, all at once, was filled with ungovernable anger against the Firebrand.

Even Diana could not refuse to remain against her host's wishes, and Diana, filled with humiliation, stepped down. She did not look at Paula; but she did look at Faith, and she grated:

"You spying little sneak. I suppose I've got you to thank for this. But wait, wait!" she raved. "Well"—and flamed upon Miss Bullivant—"here I am. I'm ready."

"Diana, how dare—" "Oh, come on!" cried Diana, who



SAFELY concealed from Miss Bullivant's eyes, Faith spoke in a loud voice, as if gossiping to another girl. "And Diana broke detention, you know," she said. "I saw her climbing out of the window. I say, though, don't let Miss Bullivant know."

would have dared anything at that moment. "Mabs, I—I'm sorry!" she muttered.

But Mabs did not reply. As Diana stormed away, the thin-lipped Miss Bullivant in her wake, she gave a little moan. Faith, biting her lip and looking utterly miserable, came over to her.

"Oh, Mabs, I'm frightfully, dreadfully sorry! Oh, please, you—you don't really believe I had anything to do with it?" she asked.

"Of course you hadn't!" Paula said. "That's just the sort of trick, anyway, Diana would play—"

Mabs shook her head.

"But what can we do now?" she asked desperately. "The whole play revolves around Diana. We can't get an understudy. We haven't got anybody who could do the part half as well. We—" And she dropped her hands helplessly.

Babs bit her lip. She hardly knew in that moment which she felt most—sympathy for Mabs, who was now so desperately anxious for her cousin's sake to make the play a success, or anger against the Firebrand who had so cruelly let them down.

"Mabs, could—could I help?" Faith asked shyly.

"You!" Mabs cried. "How could you?"

"Well," Faith blushed, "I—I happened to have a knowledge of the part, you see, dear. I—I happened to find a copy of Diana's part in the music-room yesterday, and—and—well, I was so enchanted by the part that I read it over quite a lot, and—and I'm sure I could do it."

"I shouldn't, of course, be half as good as Diana," she went on, simpering modestly, "but it's such a shame to mess up the rehearsal that—that I wouldn't mind taking her place. Mabs,

dear, please do let me help you out!" she pleaded.

"That's an idea," said Paula Fields-Croft.

Mabs gazed at Faith. Sweet, anxious, melting that girl's expression. Babs gazed at her, too, a little sharply—wondering whether, after all this crafty, doll-faced cousin of hers had contrived all this to happen. Funny, that Faith should have found Diana's script and said nothing until this moment; funny, she should have swotted it; funny, too, that in Study No. 4 yesterday she should have mentioned Diana's part as a part suitable for herself. And yet—where was the evidence?

But it was clear that something had to be done. Obvious, too, that Faith had Paula on her side—and Major Fields-Croft.

Mabs, after a moment, nodded helplessly.

"All—all right," she said.

"I can take it?" Faith asked.

"Yes," Mabs said.

And while Paula beamed and Major Fields-Croft's face expanded into a smile, Faith joyfully leapt up on to the stage.

Too Much Temper!



"I SHALL expect you in the detention-room in five minutes' time, Diana," Miss Bullivant said, her voice flinty. "And for your insolence at Friar's Gables

you will write out an extra two hundred lines."

Diana scowled. Without a word she strode away. This was at the entrance to Cliff House School. Not a word had been spoken by either on the way back in the school's car. Perhaps that was all to the good. For Diana, in that bitter, furious mood which sat upon her then, might very well have earned herself expulsion before the school was reached had Miss Bullivant encouraged her to talk.

Hang them! Hang them all! And hang most particularly that sneaking, sweet-faced little cat, whom she was becoming more and more convinced now was at the bottom of her downfall.

And, dash it, where was her handbag? She must have left that behind.

In a perfect fury, she raged into the Fourth Form dormitory to put away her Queen of Sheba robes. Then she stopped as she saw the girl who was there. It was the new maid, Maisie Reynolds, quietly folding the soiled bed linen preparatory to packing it for the laundry. She started.

"Miss Diana, is anything the matter?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes, everything's the matter!" Diana scowled. "Oh, don't look at me! That rotten little ex-mistress of yours—but never mind. Maisie, I wonder if you'd do something for me?"

"Why, miss, I—I'm free when I've packed this laundry!"

"Then," Diana said, "will you go to Friar's Gables and ask for my handbag? I left it behind."

"Yes, miss, of course!"

Diana nodded, hung up her dress, and stormed back to detention-room. Miss Bullivant was there, grimly awaiting her. She gave her her task, but this time sat with her in detention, while Diana, bitter and humiliated, ground savagely away at it.

Two hours passed. Miss Bullivant nodded.

"Give me your work, Diana, and go!"

Diana picked up the sheets. So furiously had she worked that she had covered almost double the amount required. She went out. In the passage she met Maisie Reynolds.

"Miss Diana, I—I've got your handbag!" she said.

"Oh, thanks!"

"And—and—" Maisie bit her lip. "Miss Diana, you did say that you— you were playing the Queen of Sheba in the play, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did—and am." Diana stared. "Why?"

"Nothing. But—but when I got to Friar's Gables there was a rehearsal going on and—it was Miss Ashton who was playing the Queen. And—and everyone was saying how well she was doing it. She—she seemed to know the lines, too."

Diana started. Faith! Faith had taken her part. Faith! Yoicks! She saw it now. Of course, that little cat had schemed this. Of course, of course. Faith was up to the same monkey tricks now that she had played before. Then Barbara Redfern had been the victim of her wiles, because on that occasion she had wanted Babs' captaincy. Now it was her—was it? Faith was playing those same cunning tricks against her because she wanted her part.

"Thanks, Maisie!" she said thickly. She took the bag. Leaving Maisie wondering, she strode tempestuously down the passage. It was perhaps the most unfortunate of happenings that Faith, accompanied by Paula Fields-Croft, whom she had invited back to the school to see her new study, and

Babs, Mabs, Bessie, Clara, and Leila, should have been returning at the same time.

As Diana, quivering with fury, strode into Big Hall, the returning party from Friar's Gables, Faith laughing happily in their midst, came up the steps.

Diana's eyes blazed. Like a tornado she hurried forward. She halted in front of the group; and then, suddenly, without a word, her hand swept out.

"Oh!" cried Faith, as with a pistol-like crack that hand smote her cheek. And "You cat!" came from Paula as she swiftly put out a hand to support her friend. And then, in a moment, Diana, realising where her temper had led her, stiffened.

"Diana!" Faith whimpered.

"Diana—" Babs said angrily.

"I—I—I—" Diana stuttered, but the "sorry" which was to have instinctively followed stuck in her throat. "Well, she asked for it!" she flamed. "She jolly well deserved it! I know! I've heard! Getting me out of the Gables so that she could pinch my part and—"

"Oh, Diana, how can you be so cruel?" Faith sobbed. "I—I only did it to help Mabs!"

"Yes?" Diana asked scornfully.

Paula's eyes flashed.

"Yes!" she retorted defiantly. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"Oh, please!" broke in Babs. "Wait a minute!" she added distractedly.

"Faith—"

"Oh, Barbara, y-yes?" faltered Faith.

"I—I suppose there's nothing in what Diana says?"

"Oh, Barbara, as if there could be!" Faith sobbed. "As if," she breathed, "I would—or could ever think of such a horribly despicable thing!"

"Do you mean, Barbara," Paula asked, with a curl of the lip, "that you're sticking up for Diana?"

"Not for hitting Faith, but—but—well—" And Babs glanced helplessly at Paula. "Y-you see—"

"Because if you are," Paula interrupted hotly, "I think it's mean and unfair of you. And I shall certainly make it my business to speak to my father about this. Faith is not only a friend of mine; she is a friend of the family. Faith, my dear," she added consolingly, "come away!"

"Yes, Paula!" Faith gulped.

"Paula, please!" cried Mabs.

But Paula, with an angry glance at the group, had gone. They all turned and faced Diana.

"WELL, ISN'T it just jolly well plain?"

Diana demanded hotly. "Can't you all see her beastly little game now? She's trying to cheat me out of my part the same as she tried to cheat Babs out of the captaincy. Do you think she learnt my lines for nothing? Do you think she happened to be on the scene when the Bull arrived just by accident? If you think that," Diana said bluntly, "you're just plain fools, knowing her as you ought to know her."

Babs, Mabs, and Clara, whom the Firebrand faced, looked uncertain. Bessie, who never could stand rows, had gone off with Leila.

But there was truth in what Diana said. And because they recognised the truth they felt whatever defences they had crumpling beneath them. How was it possible to support Faith against the Firebrand when secretly all three of them felt that Diana for once might be right?

"All the same, you oughtn't to have smacked her face!" Clara grumbled.

"Oh, I'll own it!" Diana said resent-

fully. "I was sorry the moment I had done it, but I wasn't going to apologise to that two-faced little cat. But perhaps you'd have done the same if you felt as I did. Nice for me, wasn't it, after I'd been shut up all the afternoon to find out you were giving her my chance, Mabs? And nice, wasn't it, for you to tell her she was jolly good? Mabs, you're not thinking of giving her the part?" she added, in sudden alarm.

Mabs bit her lip.

"Well, no. But if you will act the giddy goat—"

"I shan't."

"Well, that's all right. You know we want you. Faith could take the part at a pinch, but she's not in your class. O.K., then, Di."

But was it O.K.? For when Faith returned from Friar's Gables that night—Paula had taken her back there to make a fuss of her and console her—she brought back a note with her for Mabel Lynn. And, opening that note, Mabs felt a sudden renewal of all the anxiety of the afternoon. For the note said:

"While I have no desire to make suggestions, I really do think, in view of what happened this afternoon, and in view of Diana's attitude towards our friend, Faith Ashton, that you would be wise in finding another girl to take her part in the play. In any case, I should take it as a favour if, during future rehearsals at Friar's Gables, you would kindly request Diana not to accompany you.

Your sincerely,
"CHARLES FIELDS-CROFT. (Major)."

The Major's Ultimatum!



THAT was the first of two letters which caused Mabel Lynn a considerable amount of worry and anxiety. The next came by post the following morning.

It was, to Mabs' astonishment, post-marked "Courtfield," and, though it bore no address, it was from her Cousin Raymond.

"Things are so bad," he wrote, "that I have been forced to take a job I loathe. I am not complaining, and, for your sake, I am not going to tell you what the job is. But, Mabs, I do hope the play will be a success. I am down to my last shilling now, and, perhaps foolishly, I am building all my hopes upon the play. I know, old girl, that it will be all right in your hands. I am glad that you think so highly of it. I only hope that your film friend, Langley Runniman, will think as highly when he sees it."

Mabs, who knew her cousin, felt alarmed. What sort of job had Raymond got in Courtfield? Raymond, in spite of his pluck, was an utter physical weakling, whose heart was so bad that doctors had forbidden him to do any work of a hard nature whatever.

She showed the letter to Babs. "Oh, Babs, what can we do?" she asked distractedly.

"We'll just have to make a success of it," Babs said.

"But how—how?" And Mabs shook her head. "Babs, we can't get a better girl than Diana for that part. Even if we could, we couldn't afford the money to spend on the dress she'd have to have. And yet—and yet—" her voice faltered—"Mr. Fields-Croft has practically forbidden her to go to the Gables for rehearsal. And how the dickens is Diana going to get all the

practice she needs if she's not allowed to rehearse?"

It was a poser. Babs bit her lip. "But the major hasn't forbidden her," she said. "All he's done is to ask that she shan't come to rehearsal. H'm! That's the same thing, though, I suppose. On the other hand, I don't think Di will play the giddy clump again. Tell you what," she added brightly, "let's nip over and see the major after dinner, and make the position clear. If we undertook to be responsible for Diana's future good behaviour, he might change his mind." Mabs nodded thoughtfully. And so it was left at that.

But Diana, meantime, had been doing some hard thinking. Diana, so anxious that nothing else should crop up to threaten the success of the play, had got up at an astounding early hour that morning, just in order to polish off the two hundred extra lines which Miss Bullivant had given her yesterday.

And Diana had realised that perhaps she had behaved rather badly at

"Well, well, you'll spoil everything." Diana glared. She was looking irritated now.

"Why should I spoil everything? What the dickens is the matter with you?"

"Diana!" Mabs' face was desperate. "Diana, please listen! Last—last night I—I had a letter from the major. Here!" And, hardly realising what she was doing, she dragged it from her pocket. "Perhaps," she added, as she showed it to Diana, "that will explain. You see, Babs and I are going to see the major now, and explain that there's a mistake."

Diana's face became dark as she swiftly scanned the letter.

"I see," she said. "And I suppose I've got to hang about till you put things right for me?" Her blue eyes lit up. "Well, thanks!" she said, rather tartly. "But if there's any pleading to do, I can stand on my own feet, Mabs. And now"—and she grabbed at the bell, pulling it almost savagely—"leave this to me."

"But——"

Diana gasped as she recognised her own line from the play.

And then through the foliage of the plants inside the conservatory she saw Faith Ashton standing near the door. She had the script in her hands and was reciting those lines to Paula Fields-Croft who sat in a deck-chair some feet away, nodding animatedly and pleasedly as she listened. Diana's temper instantly flared. Faith, reciting her lines. Faith, of course, had had something to do with that letter Mabs had received. Faith was still intent upon cheating her of her part.

But would she? In fury Diana rushed forward. Crash went the door of the conservatory as she tore it open. Faith, with a gasp wheeled round. Then Diana in three steps was upon her. Savagely she swiped through the air to grab the script sheets which Faith held.

But even in that fraction of time Faith was prepared. Her mind worked swiftly; it worked cunningly. As Diana lunged forward she gave back with a cry. But she did not forget, in giving



AS Miss Bullivant led Diana away, the Firebrand whirled on Faith. "You spying little sneak!" she blazed. "I suppose I've got you to thank for this!" Babs & Co. watched in dismay. Even if Faith had worked this, how was the play to go on without Diana?

Friar's Gables yesterday. Well, that should be cleared up. The major wasn't the sort to refuse to listen to a gracious apology, and, much as Diana loathed making apologies, she would face up to it this time.

And so it happened that Diana, after break, strolled out of the school, just a minute or two before Babs and Mabs, all bound for the same destination. And perhaps it wasn't surprising when Mabs and Babs toiled up the hill which led to the Gables that they should find Diana outside the gate, in the very act of stretching up her arm to pull the bell.

"Diana!" Mabs and Babs hurried up. "Diana," Mabs gasped, "what are you doing here?"

"Well," Diana asked, "what are you doing here?"

"We're going to see Major Fields-Croft."

"So am I," Diana said.

"Diana, no! Wait a minute!" Mabs gasped. "Oh, my hat! Diana, don't!" she pleaded. "Dud—don't see him until we've seen him."

"Why not?"

"I tell you—leave it to me!" Diana snapped.

And at that moment the door opened. The gardener stared out.

"Major Fields-Croft," Diana asked haughtily—"is he in?"

"Why, yes, miss. He's in the conservatory, I think. But what——"

"Thank you! We've come to see him."

"But, Diana——" muttered Babs.

"Come on!"

And Diana, sweeping the gardener aside with one lordly wave of her arm, strode into the grounds.

Mabs and Babs, with rather apprehensive looks at each other, followed her as she made her way to the conservatory—a glass-covered annexe built on to the back of the house, in which Major Fields-Croft raised the exquisite orchids he so proudly exhibited at big horticultural shows.

Diana was the first to reach the conservatory, and there she paused and suddenly jumped.

A voice had come to her ears:

"Let the messengers be shown into the royal presence."

back, to stick out her foot, and Diana, scething as she was, never noticed it.

She tripped and then fell—crash—full against the staging on which Major Fields-Croft's priceless orchids were housed. The staging creaked; it snapped; it broke!

Half a dozen plant pots showered past Diana's head, one actually clumping her upon her shoulder. At the same moment Babs and Mabs, white-faced, peered in at the door.

Then:

"Diana!" shrieked Paula.

"Diana!" cried Mabs and Babs at once.

"Oh, Diana, Diana, dear, darling Diana, I—I hope you haven't hurt yourself?" quivered Faith. "Please——"

Then a fourth voice. A voice that was hoarse with anger. It was the voice of Major Fields-Croft.

"Good gad, girl! My orchids——"

Diana gasped.

"I—I—I——" she stammered. "Oh, Major Fields-Croft. I'm sorry! It wasn't altogether my fault! That little



OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

Salad days are here, says your friend PATRICIA, and she gives you some tips on preparing one. A new pen-wiper can brighten school-work, she feels. And one hankie can brighten a plain frock—four times over!

HOW this Patricia of yours does like to talk about food!

But it's a very nice subject, now isn't it?

And, in any case, the food under discussion to-day is so good for us all that I'm quite sure we all approve, and can even feel rather virtuous over the subject.

It's salad.

No, not fruit salad—though I shall have something nice, I hope, to say about that, too, in a month or so, when fruit is plentiful and cheap.

But for the moment it's green salad.

I'll confess straight away that I adore it—and I hope you do, too.

Mind you, I have heard of schoolgirls who say they don't like it, but I think that must be because they've not really tried it with all the trimmings that make it so interesting.

Most green salads have a foundation of lettuce, of course. My own weakness is for the cos lettuce (which sounds rather like something about a physics or advanced maths lesson, doesn't it?)

The cos lettuce is the tall one; it is slightly more bitter than the other variety, the cabbage lettuce, and tends to be crispier. But both are delicious.

Watercress and mustard and cress are the other two popular "green" ingredients.

Cucumber may be green, but I call it one of the trimmings. Some people say that cucumber gives indigestion. If you find it does this to you, try it with the peel on next time.

Radishes always look very pretty in a salad, but I confess I'm not keen on them; they're too hot for me. But please don't let that put you off if you like them.

But perhaps my favourite salad ingredient is tomato. Delicious, firm, soft-skinned English ones—yum!

● So Tempting

The first step in preparing the salad is, of course, the washing of the greenery. This should be done in cold water to which a little salt had been added.

To dry it thoroughly, you should place it on a clean tea-towel and swing it around in the garden—for a well-dried salad is much more tempting than a soggy, wet one.

The lettuce should be torn with the fingers, never cut, remember. But before you place it in the salad bowl artistically, just smear a spring onion or so around the bowl. This imparts the onion's tang just sufficiently, you'll find.

Arrange lettuce, cress, and beetroot in the bowl and then decorate the top of it

with the radishes, sliced cucumber—with or without the peel—and tomatoes.

Other tempting additions are slices of cold potatoes, hard-boiled egg, cold peas and cold beans that have been left over from a previous meal.

You now have a dish fit for a king—or a princess, shall we say?

● "Dressed"—or Not?

Do you like your salad dressed or "undressed"? That is the next question. Mayonnaise is considered the top note in dressing for salads, and this can be bought already prepared.

But a French dressing is my very own favourite. To three parts of olive oil (or salad oil) you add one part of vinegar and mix. You can add a sprinkling of sugar to this, if you like, and a spot of mixed mustard, too. But try the oil and vinegar first.

● Three Cute Shapes

I wonder if school ink is still as cloggy and unpleasant as it was when I was at school?

It wouldn't surprise me in the least if there is a big chorus of "Yes, it jolly well is!" from you all in answer to my wondering.

So I think perhaps it's about time you had some pen-wipers, don't you? Then there'll be no more spludgy writing that looks as if a spider with a club foot has been walking over the page of your nice new exercise book.

But, of course, pen-wipers must be cute, says your Patricia.

How do you like the three in the picture here? You can recognise them, of course?

There's a loving-looking heart—that would look very real if it were made in red! There's a decidedly smart hat—complete with feather. And there's a clog.

Four thickness of fairly stiff material, cut into a heart shape, will soon make the first pen-wiper.

And do note that only about three thicknesses are required to keep all pieces of material together.

When cutting out the hat-shaped pen-wiper, I want you to keep an eye on the picture as you snip. The four thicknesses can be kept together by stitches in the place shown, and if you have a little pigeon's feather to spare, you might tuck this into the stitches.

Very chic!

The clog-shape is also easy to cut out, and the four thicknesses of this should be fastened together with three bold cross-stitches at the top of the shoe.

One of these on your desk at school will cause something of a sensation, I've an idea!

● Four Pockets

How do you like this frock here? Of course, it is the pockets that fascinate, for without them it might be any ordinary frock.

So I'll tell you how you can trim a plain frock in the same way—and it would take you about a quarter of an hour.

Your only requirement to make these novel pockets would be one pocket handkerchief—a gaily coloured one, for preference.

Cut the hankie into four pieces right across the centre so that the four corners are whole.

Then fold over the plain part of the hankie and sew each piece to your frock—two on the bodice and two on the skirt—so that the pretty corner

part hangs down.

There now, isn't that simple—and attractive?

● A New Cure

Oh, I've discovered a very nice cure for you—a cure for hiccups.

Just eat a nob of sugar slowly and see if these wretched "hics" don't vanish. But slowly, mind you—no gobbling!

Then, just in case there should be no sugar around, here's another cure—not a new one this time.

Fill a cup or glass with water and place it on the table. Then press your two fore-fingers in your ears and stoop. Sip the water slowly, still keeping your fingers in your ears.

Only five or six sips will be needed.

Just one more cure—for that occasion when there's no sugar, no water and no cup handy—in the middle of a long walk, say.

Count ten while you take a very deep breath—then hold it. At the same time grab your little finger with your right hand and pinch.

I don't know how grabbing the little finger helps—but it's supposed to!

Eye-bye till next Saturday.

Your friend,

PATRICIA.



LET'S PLAN A PICNIC

Says Patricia — a real winner that everyone will enjoy.



THERE are some people who will insist that "looking forward" to an event is just as enjoyable as the event itself! Which is rather startling at first, isn't it? But, do you know, on thinking this over, I almost agree with them—especially where a picnic is concerned.

They can be such fun to prepare. You can think up the most delicious dishes—dishes that will pack easily into the picnic basket—and just as easily into hungry tum!

I can't help you over deciding how many should go with you on the ideal picnic—obviously, that's not up to me. Mother and father and you will discuss that together, taking into consideration the number that can pack into one car (if you're that lucky), and so on.

But we'll suppose that this is all fixed and you're ready to get down to the delicious business of the actual packing of the food for the picnic.

Some people like to take a whole joint of cold meat and cold salad, but this can be such a lot of trouble.

DELICIOUS FILLINGS

Myself, I think sandwiches are just as nourishing—and are certainly much daintier to eat.

You should allow five half-round sandwiches to each person. I think two of these should have a meat ingredient, like beef, ham, or tongue.

Two of them should have a lighter filling, and the odd sandwich, for luck, can have a novelty filling.

For the lighter-than-meat sandwiches I suggest tinned salmon mixed with a little mayonnaise dressing, trimmed with thinly sliced cucumber. Cream cheese and tomato makes another sustaining, yet dainty, sandwich. So does fish paste, to which you add a spot of cress or tomato.

For the "novelty" sandwich, what about jam or honey? They taste delicious out of doors. Mashed banana mixed with a little chopped nut is another popular idea for a "sweet" sandwich.

After the sandwiches, some cakes would be nice, wouldn't they? But do be very firm about what sort they are. Rich squasy ones will arrive at the perfect picnic spot looking very sat on and dejected.

FRUIT SO FRESH

The bun type of cake packs much more easily, and look appetising under all conditions.

Some fruit makes the ideal finish off to a picnic—particularly bananas, for some reason, I've always noticed.

An apple, an orange, and a banana for each person would be more than sufficient.

"What to drink" on a picnic is generally settled by the person who says: "Oh, tea, of course!" But even if you do plump for tea, don't forget to take a

bottle of lemon or orange juice for the very young ones. It's so refreshing, and so good for them.

If you're like me, you love to lay the picnic out in style at your chosen beauty spot, arranging all the goodies with as much care as if you were preparing for a party at home.

A PICNIC CLOTH

So you are sure to take a cloth with you. Paper ones can easily be disposed of, and are very cheap to buy, but they will blow about if there is the slightest wind.

Perhaps mother would rather you took one of her less valuable coloured breakfast cloths.

In this case, before you go, there is something I would like you to do. You must get a small piece of pretty material and cut it into four fancy shapes—say, butterflies, heart shapes, or just triangles.

Sew one of these pretty shapes on to each corner of the cloth, leaving one side open.

Then, at your picnic, you find small pebbles and tuck one into each of these decorative pockets. All the very smartest picnic cloths in the shops are like this.

THE PERFECT CUSHION

One other invaluable treasure to take with you on a picnic is a damp-proof cushion.

You can turn any old garden cushion into this in a twinkling. Cut the good part from the back of a macintosh that is quite worn out and make the underside of a new cushion cover from this. Make the top side of a pretty piece of sturdy cretonne.

Tuck the cushion inside and sew up the seam—and you have a cushion which may be sat on without any fear of catching cold!

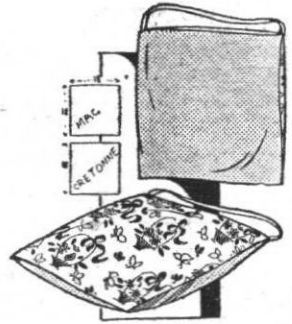
DON'T FORGET—

—To make certain whether you want tin-opener, a bottle of water, a ball for a dog, a magazine for mother.

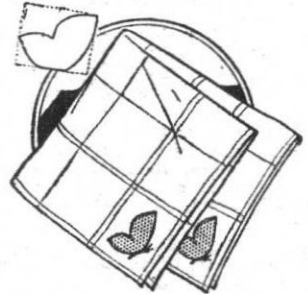
—To take your camera, complete with new spool of film, and your sun-glasses.

—To wear a frock that won't hurt even if it does crease, and a hat that can be knocked any-old-how without a single regret. A wool cardigan, too, might be useful on the return journey.

So—happy picnic!



A picnic cushion for mother—or baby—that's really damp proof.



This tablecloth just can't blow away.



SCARVES HAVE GONE TO THE HEAD

You lay the long end of the scarf about two inches back from your hair-line and tie the two ends under your chin.

The Coal-Black Mammy style is my, own special favourite, because, I suppose I fancy it suits me.

This time you place the long end of the triangle to the back of your head, placing the point opposite so that it just touches the front hair-line. Now bring the two long ends round your hair, over your ears, and tie in a topknot in front, tucking the other point around this.

It takes a spot of practice, but it's worth it!

For you who don't like the scarf tied under your chin, there is the Nurse style. You arrange the scarf as you do for the Gipsy style, but take the ends backwards and tie under your hair at the nape of your neck.

NOTE.—I think it would be a good idea to keep this little feature for reference—for holidays are coming!

FOR walking, motoring, and games—for grown-ups and for schoolgirls—surely there is no more sensible fashion than the one of wearing a scarf around the hair.

It's a comfortable fashion; it's economical and it is very pretty—so that means it is here to stay.

The Gipsy style is still the most popular way of tying a three-cornered scarf.

(Continued from page 11)

wretch stuck out her foot and tripped me."

"Diana!" cried Faith, in shocked accents. "Paula, I didn't, did I?"

Paula, tight-lipped, had risen to her feet.

"I didn't see exactly what happened," she said, "but I did see Diana. Diana rushed in here like a wild thing. She made a grab at Faith. Well, Faith managed to dodge. Diana crashed into the staging."

"Hang it, do I care how it happened?" roared the usually jovial Major Fields-Croft. "Look at my orchids! Young woman, get out of here!" he cried. "Get out, get out! You hear?" he rasped. "Get out!"

"But—" Diana stammered. "Diana, for goodness' sake go!" urged Babs. "Major Fields-Croft—"

"Hey! What are you doing here?" "Oh, goodness, we—we came to ask you to forgive Diana. We want her in the play."

The major paused. Diana, with a bitter look, marched off. He drew a deep breath.

"Listen to this," he said grimly. "You do your play. I'd like you to do it. But—I won't have Diana in it. I won't have her near this house. If you want to do your play find someone else to put in her part. And if," he said, his eyes glinting, "you can't find anybody else, then, much as I regret it, I shall have to refuse to allow you to do the play here at all. Is that clear?"

"Oh, yes!" Babs bit her lip. "But, Major Fields-Croft, we—we haven't got anybody—"

"No?" Paula quickly put in. "But you have! And somebody," she added scornfully, "who can act Diana's head off. Faith here! Mabs, why not be sensible? Why not save yourself all further trouble and put Faith into the part? It must be obvious even to you now, that Diana, so far from helping your play to be a success, will only go on messing it up. Give Faith the part."

Mabs, her face dreadfully worried, paused, as Faith smiled coyly and shyly towards her. Her every thought in that moment was of poor cousin Raymond.

Diana Meets An Author!



"MISS DIANA, would you like a rehearsal?"

Maisie Reynolds' rather sweet voice fell upon Diana as she sat alone staring into the empty fireplace in Study No. 10.

"No!" she said. "But I've got the script. I—I've one or two suggestions to make."

"No!" said Diana savagely. "Go and make 'em to the moon! Take the script out of it. Burn it! Chuck it away! No, no! Oh, dash it, I'm sorry," she added as she saw the expression on the new maid's face. "Forgive me, I'm a bit rattled, that's all. But not now—not now," she added, "come and see me later on."

"Yes, Miss Diana," Maisie said, with an awed glance. "Shall—shall I keep the script?"

"Yes!" Maisie withdrew. Diana, with an irritably bad-tempered shrug, lit a cigarette. She was in the act of puffing at it when there came a knock on the door. That knock might have been a mistress or a prefect, but it was indicative of Diana's stormy reckless-

ness that she made no attempt to conceal the cigarette as she snapped out a peevish "Come in!" Fortunately for Diana, however, it was only Mabs and Babs.

Babs frowned a little; Mabs coughed. But neither of them affected to take any notice of the cigarette.

"Diana," Mabs said, awkwardly. "Well?"

"It's about the play."

"What about the play?"

"We—we were wondering—" Mabs paused. "Oh, Diana, I—I hate to ask you—but—but you do know what the play means to me, don't you? I—I've told you what it means to my cousin. Well—" Mabs gulped, and then broke off helplessly. "Babs you tell her," she added feebly.

"Cold feet?" Diana sneered. "Well, come on, out with it. What's the ultimatum?"

Babs drew a deep breath. "Diana, we're going to ask you to retire from the play."

"Why?"

"Oh, Diana, why ask questions? You know. Simply because Major Fields-Croft says if we don't drop you there'll be no play at all. Well, you know what it means to Mabs' cousin. You know what it means to everybody concerned. Diana, we don't want to lose you, but the position is just hopeless at the moment. Won't you, Babs urged, "do the decent thing and back out?"

Diana's eyes gleamed. "And if I do, who's going to be put in my place?"

"Well, Faith Ashton."

"Oh!" Diana paused. "And, of course, you'll want to borrow my dress?" she asked.

"Well, Diana, we had thought of that. That—that's awfully sporting of you," Mabs gulped, her face beginning to express joy. "Of course, we promise to take great care—"

"All right, don't get excited!" Diana said. She rose to her feet. For a moment she stared at the two. Then suddenly, with a laugh she pitched her burning cigarette into the fireplace. "So," she said mockingly, "you want me to drop out of the play, do you? You want me to lend you my dress? And you want me—with another bitter laugh—to let two-faced Faith wear that dress and have my part? And all because you're anxious about Mabs' cousin!"

"Diana, what are you—"

"Wait a minute! Let me finish!" And all at once Diana became her most blazing Firebrand self. "You silly idiots! You blind couple of mutts! Yoicks, but you've got a nerve, haven't you, Mabel Lynn? Do you think I care about your wretched play? Do you think I'd give a snap of the fingers for your wash-out of a cousin? Do you think, for a single second, I'm interested in your tuppenny-ha'penny dishwashy play if I'm not in it?"

"Diana!" Babs blazed, taking a step forward.

"Don't you come near me, Barbara Redfern, or I shall throw something at you," Diana said levelly. "Just listen to this. Your two-faced cousin has got you into this mess. She plotted it all! And you really think, do you, that I'd give my part to the girl who has made a fool of me? I wouldn't let that cat have my part or wear my dress for all the money in the world!"

"That's final?" asked Babs, her eyes glimmering.

"Yes! Now get out!" Diana blazed.

Babs glared, Mabs, nearly in tears, looked on the point of collapse. But Babs wisely pursued the argument no

further. Perhaps she felt that some of it, at least, was justified. She put her arm round Mabs' shoulder and led her from the study.

As the door closed Diana bit her lip. For there was something in Mabs' expression which disturbed and unsettled her, something which— Oh, hang it, blow it, dash it! Both of them and their play! Hang the rotten garden party! She hoped it poured with rain from the moment it started!

Diana, hardly realising what she was going to do, tore open the study door. She went to the dormitory. There she put on her hat and coat. Savagely she tramped out of the school. On the spur of the moment she caught the bus which happened to be coming along, and presently found herself in Courtfield.

Seeing the Royal Restaurant in front of her, reflecting that she had a whole two pounds in her bag and could do with a meal anyway, she tramped across the road. The commissioner, recognising the Mayor of Lantham's daughter, beamed.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Royston-Clarke."

"Good-afternoon," Diana grunted.

She went in. An attendant approached her.

"Shall I take your hat and coat, miss?"

"No!" Diana barked, and, withering him with a glance, marched to a table.

"Waiter—waiter!" she impatiently called, peeling off her gloves.

A young, very pale-looking, and frightfully nervous waiter timidly approached.

"Are you serving this table?" Diana said.

"Y-yes, miss."

"Well, don't gape at me!" Diana said irritably. "Take my order! Bring me some pate de foie gras sandwiches and some coffee. No, wait!" she called, as the waiter took three steps across the room. "Never mind the coffee. Bring tea!"

"Yes, miss."

The waiter trotted off. But before he had gone ten yards Diana called him again.

"Waiter!"

"Y-yes, miss?"

"Never mind the tea. Bring iced orangeade instead. And don't stare, man! Get about your business! Have you a newspaper?"

"I'll get you one, miss."

And the waiter, looking flustered and agitated, hurried off. Diana scowled. Diana was letting off steam then, never realising, in allowing it to escape, how she was shattering the serenity of others. Two minutes went by. The waiter had not re-appeared. She banged impatiently for the manager.

He came.

"Where's that waiter?"

"I'm sorry, Miss Royston-Clarke, he's new. He only started yesterday—" the manager began.

"Well, do you think I want to know the history of your staff?" Diana blazed. "Hurry him up!"

"Yes, miss."

And the manager, breathing hard, hurried away.

Presently the young waiter came back. He was nervous, almost trembling. Half scared, he looked at Diana as he approached with the tray, and Diana glared up at him. The glare seemed to unnerv the young man completely. As he was reaching forward with the orangeade he stumbled. There was a swish of liquid, accompanied by an infuriated shriek from Diana as it swamped into her lap.

"You fool! You fool! You clumsy

blockhead!" she choked. "Now look—Oh, yoicks!"

For the new waiter, staring in appalled horror at the result of his mistake, then did a most astounding thing. With a clatter his tray fell to the floor. As though his legs had suddenly melted beneath him, he collapsed to the floor.

Diana gaped.

"Well, I'm—" she stuttered. And then, seeing that something was really wrong, bent down. "Oh, yoicks, he's—he's fainted!" she breathed in amazement. And in a moment, looking into that white face, she felt a sharp stab of compunction dart into her heart. "Oh, my goodness! I—I'm sorry," she muttered. "I'm sorry! I didn't mean to—I say, manager!" she called.

"Yes, Miss Royston-Clarke!"

"This man is ill. Have you a spare room?"

"Yes."

"Then let him be taken to it," Diana ordered, and, rising, bit her lip, reflecting all at once what a hateful, spiteful, trouble-making cat she was. "And be careful how you carry him," she snapped at the other two waiters who came bustling up. "I'll look after him."

They carried the inert form to a small room. They laid him on a couch. Diana, anxious now, finding a lump in her throat, stared into his white face as the manager bustled off for a reviver.

"Poor fellow!" she thought.

His hand, dropping limply from his chest, fell with a swish to his side. Gently Diana lifted it. She was just replacing it when something slipped from his inside pocket. It was a letter. Diana stared in astonishment as she saw the well-known Cliff House crest which adorned its head. And she saw, without meaning to see, the signature which was written at the bottom—"Mabel Lynn." Then this—this—

The young man's eyes opened. He seemed to shudder as he saw the Firebrand.

"You," he muttered.

"I—I'm sorry," Diana faltered. "Please do forgive me! I was a nasty-tempered little beast—but—but I was upset. But tell me, who are you?"

"George Smith," he said, after a pause.

"And not," Diana asked quietly, "Raymond Lynn?"

He started agitatedly.

"No, no! You mustn't tell—"

Diana bent forward.

"Listen!" she said. "I'm not going to tell if you don't want me to. But I've heard about you—all about you. I know your Cousin Mabs. You've written a play, haven't you?"

Dazedly, he nodded.

"And," Diana asked, "it'll mean everything to you if that play's taken up?"

"Yes," he admitted shamefacedly. "If it isn't, I—I don't know what I shall do! You see, I—I'm not cut out for hard work. But please don't say anything to Mabs."

"I won't," Diana promised, and she meant that. "I'm sorry!" she murmured contritely. "Please—please forgive me! But—" And she stopped, biting her lip as she thought of the play and all that it so plainly meant to this haggard young man. "I—I'd like to help you!" she murmured, and looked suggestively at her handbag.

The first spots of colour came into Raymond Lynn's cheek.

"Please, not that!" he begged. "The only thing you—or anyone else—can do for me," he added, "is to make my play a success. But don't tell Mabs."

His eyes closed again. Diana, with a very peculiar expression indeed on her face, rose to her feet.

They Couldn't Understand Her!



"BABS, we can't do it!" Mabel Lynn said hopelessly.

"But we can! We—we must!" Barbara Redfern set her lips.

"We've just got to fake up a frock somehow. Naturally, we can't get anything half as marvellous as the dress Diana was going to wear, but we can't allow Faith to appear in any old thing. What's in the bottom of the basket, Mabs?"

Mabel Lynn shook her head. Without any great enthusiasm, she turned out the bottom of the basket. The time was two days later, and the scene was the attic wherein Babs and Mabs were rather forlornly running through the "props" of the Junior School Amateur Dramatic Society in quest of a rig-out for the Queen of Sheba. But it could not be said as yet that their efforts had been crowned with success.

All sorts of oddments there were in the props basket, but nothing really suitable.

Rather hopelessly Mabs regarded the result. She couldn't get that dazzling frock of Diana's out of her mind. Diana had set the Queen of Sheba standard; nothing else, it seemed, would be satisfactory. And, besides, Faith, though she was doing her best with Diana's part—though, in fact, she was really good in that part—did not shine somehow with the magnificence of Diana.

"Goodness knows what we are going to do!" Mabs said worriedly. "And with the garden-party coming off tomorrow, too! We can't dress the Queen of Sheba in those old things. It will just ruin the part! Oh, goodness, if Diana hadn't been such a fool!"

"Thanks!" a voice said at the door, and they both wheeled to see the Firebrand herself.

Mabs flushed.

"Well, bother it, you deserve it!" she said. "You let us down!"

"Still worrying about the frock—eh?" Diana asked, grinning at the pile of assorted garments on the floor.

"Yes."

"Tough!" Diana frowned thoughtfully. "And it's urgent now?"

"Oh, Diana, for goodness' sake, don't chatter!" Babs said crossly. "You know it's urgent! We've got to send the props off this afternoon!"

"And if the Queen of Sheba's not a success, flop goes the old play—eh?" Diana asked. "And if the play goes flop, that cousin of yours goes flop with it, Mabs! Pity! Perhaps," she added thoughtfully, "I ought to do the big thing, after all. How would you like to dress the Queen of Sheba in my frock, Mabs?"

Mabs stared.

"You mean—you'll lend it to Faith Ashton?"

"I didn't say so. I said," Diana emphasised, "that you could use it for your Queen of Sheba."

"Oh, Diana, please—yes, please—please!" Mabs stuttered. "But you don't mean it, do you?"

Diana shrugged. With a nod, she led the way. The chums stared at each other, and then hurried after her.

Diana was as good as her word. In the Fourth Form dormitory she took the frock from its hanger; with rather a bitter smile, flung it at Mabs.

"Oh, Diana, you—you sport!" she breathed. "Diana—"

"Take it!" Diana said curtly. "Take it, and—" She paused, her face softening all at once. "Mabs, I—I'm sorry for what I've done!" she said. "And—and I really do hope your play is the most stunning success—for Raymond's sake!" she added swiftly.

And, while Mabs blinked at her in astonishment, she flew.

But from that moment Mabs was bubbling. Life once again seemed rosy. The frock was packed; with the rest of the things sent off to Friar's Gables. And off she went to seek out Faith Ashton, whom she found in Big Hall with several other girls, waiting for the postman. Faith beamed when she heard the news.

"Oh, dear, dear Diana!" she gushed. "What an adorable creature she is! So sweet, so forgiving! I— Oh, here is dear Diana!" she cried, as that girl approached. "Diana darling," she gushed, "thank you—thank you!"

Amazingly, the Firebrand laughed. "That's O.K.!" she said cheerfully. "All I want is the play to be a success. Don't bear any malice?" she asked.

"Oh, Diana, as if I could!" Faith gushed.

"Right-ho!" Diana laughed. "And, by the way, Faith—"

"Oh, yes, Diana dearest?"

"My father's sending a car to-morrow morning, and if you'd like a lift, I shall be going to the garden-party myself. Of course, I'm not in the play," she added, "and I suppose, strictly speaking, I'm warned off. But I've still got my invitation ticket, and I reckon, unless I'm pushed out, I'll take the risk of crashing in. Would you like to come along with me?"

"Oh, Diana, how sweet!" breathed Faith. And her eyes shone as she remembered the Royston-Clarke's magnificent Rolls-Royce. "I'd love to!"

"Right-ho! Ten o'clock in the quad, then," Diana beamed, and sauntered away, leaving Babs staring.

What a change. Oh, what a change! And yet, in a way, how characteristic that sudden change of front in the turbulent Firebrand!

But it was a change for the best. A change which made Mabs happy at last. If Faith wasn't quite as good as Diana she was good enough to put over the part—in Diana's costume.

Diana was not present at call-over. Nor when the Form went to bed. She was not present, either, when lights were put out. Miss Bullivant, who was taking that task, frowned.

"Does anybody know where Diana has gone?" she asked. "Barbara?"

"Well, no. I—I don't think she's out," Babs said. "Her out-door things are still in the cloak-room."

Mystery there! Ten o'clock came. No Diana. Eleven o'clock. Still no Diana. A few minutes past eleven, however, the dormitory door opened. Miss Bullivant, with a face like a thundercloud, stood in the doorway, grimly clutching the truant by the shoulder. She frowned at her.

"And you insist, Diana, that you have not been out of the school?"

"Yes!" Diana said.

"I see!" Miss Bullivant's lips came together. "If you choose to be mysterious, Diana, very well. You will go to bed. And over the week-end you will work out all the exercises in chapter six of the Algebra Prima. Now go to sleep!"

She went out. Babs sat up.

"Diana, where have you been?" she breathed.

"To the moon," Diana snapped.

"Oh, yoicks, don't bother me! I'm tired!"

She got into bed. Obviously Diana intended to say nothing. In the morning she would give no account of her mysterious absence. Not, indeed, that anyone was troubling about Diana. The morning, fine, sunny, and warm, gave promise of excellent weather for the great garden-party, and everybody was too busy making themselves look their most radiant.

Diana, of them all, looked superbly lovely in a new, flower-patterned georgette frock and a great, wide-brimmed hat of cream straw, which simply shrieked expense and exquisite taste. Faith, meeting her on the steps, beamed.

"Oh, Diana, dearest, don't you look adorable!" she breathed.

"Yes, don't I?" Diana answered carelessly. "Ready to go, now, Faith? Look, there's my father's car coming up the drive."

"Oh, Diana!"
And the little schemer, gurgling with glee, marched forward on Diana's arm as the car stopped. Diana, with a smile, helped her in and turned to the chauffeur.

"You know where to go, Griffiths," she said. "Please get there as fast as you can, and unseen by Faith, now snuggling in the luxurious upholstery of the Rolls, she deliberately winked.

And Griffiths, with a grin, knowingly winked back.

Diana Springs a Surprise!



GAY, colourful, and animated, that scene on the wide, extensive lawns of Friar's Gables. The Fields-Crofts' garden-party was in full swing. It certainly seemed that Major Fields-Croft could not have chosen a better day for it, in spite of the rather pessimistic weather forecast in the papers, which that morning had announced "Fine at first—rain later."

The sun blazed down. What clouds there were in the sky were of a white, fluffy, and harmless nature. What wind there was blew with a gently refreshing breath, just delightfully sufficient to counter the heat. And everywhere were people, people, people.

The cream of the district was there. All sorts of high-sounding nobilities and celebrities. Many, many girls from neighbouring schools; fully fifty boys from Friardale. There was Princess Naida, the whole of the lordly Courtfield family, and Lord and Lady Lantham as well. Over there, talking to Major Fields-Croft, was the great Langley Runniman, promoter of the biggest film company in the south of England, and reckoned by many as Britain's ace producer. Servants, dressed in white, attended to the wants of the guests.

But by far the busiest scene of activity was round the open-air stage where the performers were getting ready to give the concert of the day.

Already, there, the film cameras had been erected. While Mabs and Babs and the rest, in the dressing-room, were changing and making-up, reporters outside were interviewing guests and taking notes. With every moment it seemed that more and more guests were arriving.

"Phew!" Mabs laughed. "I only wish Raymond were here to see this. Clara, pass the grease-paints, will you? What's the time? Oh, great goodness! I say, the curtain goes up in half an hour, and Faith—where's Faith? Any-one seen Faith? I—hallo, Paula!"

"Hallo!" Paula Fields-Croft sauntered into the room. "Where's Faith?"

"Well, haven't you seen her? She came along nearly two hours ago in Diana's car."

"Diana," Paula said, her lips compressing, "has only this minute arrived."

"But—but she ought to have been here two hours ago—with Faith! What the dickens has she been doing in the meantime?"

Paula's eyes narrowed.
"Wait a minute," she said. "Oh, goodness! Mabs, if Faith doesn't appear in the play, Diana's the only one who can take the part?"

"Yes!"
"Then—"

And they started, looking at each other, each mind seized with the same ghastly suspicion. Mabs' face turned white.

"Where's Diana now?" she gasped.

"Here!" announced a voice. "How goes it, everybody?" And Diana, looking radiant in her new dress, lolled into the room, keeping one hand behind her back. "Did I hear my name mentioned?" she asked. "How do, Paula?"

"Where's Faith?" bluntly asked Paula.

"Is that a question?" Diana asked lightly.

"Diana, don't rot!" Babs faced her squarely. "We want Faith. She ought to be here now—being made-up. Nobody's seen her since she left Cliff House, in your company! Where is she?"

"All right!" Diana straightened up. Gone like magic was the mocking look upon her face. "If you want to know I will tell you. Faith isn't here—and won't be here—not for hours and hours and hours! Faith," she added, while they all stared at her in petrified horror, "is about thirty miles from this spot at the moment, stranded in the middle of the Downs."

"You—you cut!" Clara Trevlyn cried.

"But the play! The play!" Mabs groaned. "Diana, you—you said—"

"I see," Paula's eyes flashed. "A pretty scheme!" she cried. "Oh, pretty indeed! And isn't it just like you, Diana! Wouldn't you have loved to see it come off? Clever to get rid of Faith, wasn't it, then turn up in her place thinking you'd get your part back? Well, it's just not coming off, Diana. My father said that he wouldn't have you in that play, and my father's a man of his word. As there's no Faith, there's going to be no play!"

"But—" Babs cried.

Mabs gulped.
Diana eyed them all unmoved, seemingly amused than otherwise at the consternation she caused.

"There will," she pronounced, "be a play. Because," she added, with a sneer at Paula, "I shan't be in it! You needn't fret. I wished Mabs yesterday that her play would be a success. I hope, for her cousin's sake, that it will be a success."

"But, Diana—Diana," Mabs despairingly gasped, "how can there be a play if there's no leading lady?"

"Well," Diana retorted, "who says there's no leading lady? What do you think I spent half last night in doing? Why do you think I cut bed-time and got nabbed by Miss Bullivant? Because," Diana blazed, "all that time I was training your leading lady for you. It's true. I want to give her a chance. I want to pay Faith Ashton for the dirty trick she played this girl, and for the dirty tricks she's done to me. Mabel Lynn, do you think for one instant I'd have lent my dress to that scheming little hypocrite?"

Mabs blinked. She began to understand then.

"But—but the leading lady! Where is she?"

"Here!" Diana said, and, stepping back through the doorway, she bundled a pale-faced girl into the room. At the sight of her, Paula's eyes opened.

"Maisie Reynolds!" she cried.

"Yes, Miss Paula."

"And—and you know the lines?" Mabs asked.

"Yes," said Maisie. "Thanks to Miss Diana. Diana—oh dear—"

But Diana, with a rather twisted smile, had gone.

TWENTY MINUTES later Diana sat in front of the stage looking at that magnificently arrayed, that superb figure which was playing the part she had earmarked for herself. She was glowing, triumphant, one moment; brooding the next. What a fine figure Maisie cut! What a superb actress she was! And yet—it was her part. She should be standing there.

She heard the murmurs of the enraptured crowd. She saw Langley Runniman nodding to the cameramen, as he stood with his host. No need to be told that the play was a success. No need to be told that Maisie was a success, too. That was a foregone conclusion. Diana thought of Mabs' brother—the haggard young waiter whom she had so callously treated; he to whom she was now making amends. She was glad, glad for his sake. But—the part **SHOULD** have been hers!

The curtain dropped. A moment of deep silence; then a thunder of

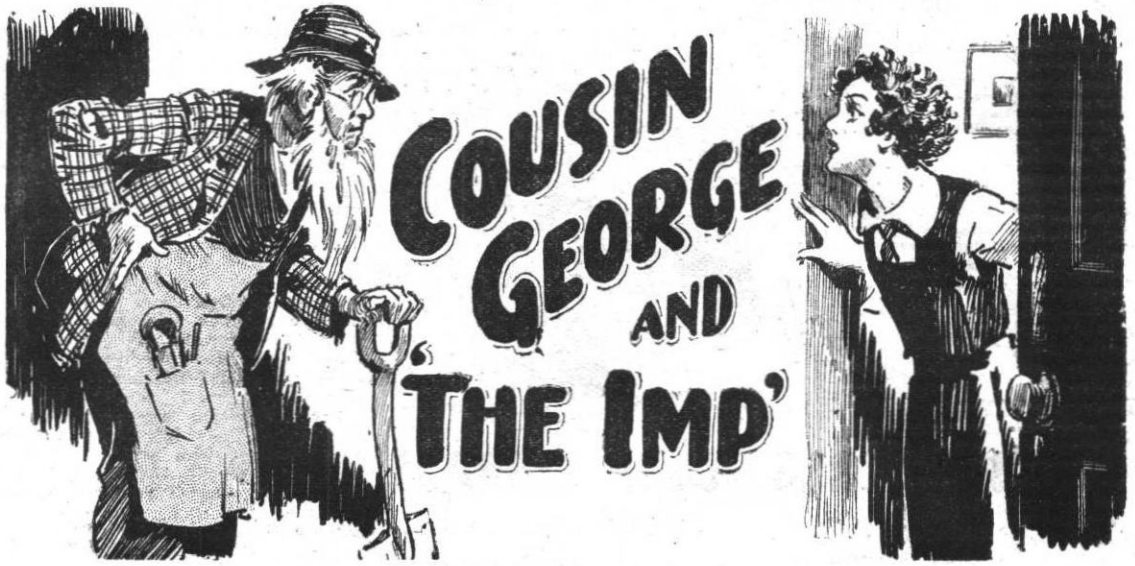
(Concluded on page 24)

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COUSIN GEORGE AND THE IMP

Hetty Rallies Round!

HETTY SONNING, known to her intimates as the Imp, looked across the dinner-table at her Aunt Miriam.

"Cousin George is late!" she exclaimed. "And he's usually as punctual as the tick of the clock."

"Get on with your dinner. If George is late, there is sure to be some good reason for it," said Aunt Miriam.

"I bet there is," agreed Hetty. "He's probably kept in. Poor old George"

She caught a look from her aunt, and gave her attention to her dinner. Hetty found it hard to remember to be meek and mild; for at her boarding-school she had been the life and soul of the party. Of course, school is not a party, really, although Hetty had seemed to think it was, and that, together with other disagreements with her headmistress, had caused her to be removed discreetly.

Here she was with solemn Cousin George and her Aunt Miriam. Her own parents being in India, Hetty had to stay with someone, and she preferred Aunt Miriam and Cousin George to being sent to a stern, strict, harsh school! And that was the alternative she had been offered.

"I suppose it is most unlikely that Cousin George could be kept in, aunt?" she said mischievously. "He's such a good boy."

"Your Cousin George is studious, not irresponsible, and you should take a lesson from him," said Aunt Miriam stiffly. "Doubtless he is studying overtime."

At that moment the front door latch clicked, and a few seconds later the dining-room door opened, and Cousin George entered. He wore a look of forced joviality. As a rule, he was stately, lofty, condescending. But he came in rubbing his hands.

"Ah, ha! Ah, ha!" he said.

"Ah, ha, to you!" said Hetty.

"I am sorry to be unpunctual," said George grandly "I was detained in conversation with the headmaster. We were discussing something—er—er—um—of mutual importance."

Hetty side-glanced at him. There was something wrong with Cousin

George, even though his flow of words was as good as ever, and the words as long as usual. He was not at ease.

A few minutes later Aunt Miriam, who had to attend a meeting of the Literary Society, hurried off, but she paused in the doorway.

"Hetty, I have heard that your school has an extra half-holiday, in celebration of an Old Girl's achievement in winning some scholastic honour."

"Oh! Yes, Aunt Miriam," admitted Hetty. "I've arranged what to do this afternoon," she added hastily.

"In that case you will be unable to come with me to the Literary Society," said Aunt Miriam, not without a note of relief.

She went, and Hetty turned to Cousin George.

"An extra half, eh?" he said. "Lucky for you. I hope you will

well, perhaps—matter of fact, I don't think girls will be allowed to watch."

Hetty, in perplexity, saw that things were worse than she had suspected, for she knew he was side-stepping the truth.

"George—you mean you're not playing, after all!" she gasped. "Oh golly! What have you done? Not socked the Head, or anything?"

Anything less likely she could not imagine, but she was trying to make confession easy. Girl-like, Hetty was inquisitive, and the more George hugged his secret the more her curiosity burned within her.

George put down his knife and fork, and looked at the door, then, ill-at-ease, he lowered his voice.

"Matter of fact, there's been a misunderstanding at the school," he said. "I—I'm not playing to-morrow. I—I'm being whacked instead!"

The Imp's Cousin George, full of his own importance, was sure his disguise as a gardener would save him from a caning. The Imp knew it would get him an even bigger caning—so she disguised as well, as a fish-seller!

employ the time profitably. Take a tip from me, and polish up your French. It's good for you."

"On a half-holiday? Oh, come off it!" begged Hetty. "And, anyway, how about this discussion with the Head? I used to have them with the headmistress. Make you wriggle, don't they?"

Cousin George went red about the ears.

"Could you mind your own business?" he asked.

Hetty changed her tactics.

"I say, George, I am looking forward to the match to-morrow. Hope you score a century for the first eleven."

Mollified, Cousin George unstiffened, but a sad look came to his eyes.

"I—I don't think you'd enjoy the match," he muttered. "You see—

Cousin George, having blurted it out, went crimson, and Hetty felt a wave of sympathy for him.

"Whacked, instead of playing in the match! Oh, I say—poor old George! How awful!" said Hetty, and stretched out her hand to him. "Poor old George!"

Hetty's heart beat for him at that moment. A whacking was bad enough for an ordinary, every-day boy; for proud, lofty Cousin George, sixteen, and trying to be twenty, it would be awful!

Cousin George drank water, crimson-faced still, eased his collar, and looked at her, his mouth working slightly.

"Fact is, Hetty," he said, with another look at the door in case, so she guessed, his mother could hear. "I'm in a mess. I—I want to keep this from the mater."

Hetty leaned forward, neglecting her apple tart.

"George, spill it. I'm a pal. If you want help, reply on me."

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very powerful magnifying-glass, and a white beard upstairs."

Hetty rose, and shook her head sadly.

"George," she said, "don't be a mutt. You're as much a detective as you are a—gasometer. Less, in fact. And suppose you can't get the beard off? A nice chump you'll look sitting in Form wearing a white beard and smoked glasses."

"Oh, shut up!" said Cousin George. "All girls can do is to talk twaddle and poke fun. Not a word to aunt, mind!"

Hetty went to the door.

"Honour bright!"

"And, look here!" Cousin George went on. "Don't you go turning up there wearing a false nose or something, and butting in. This is my show. I'll see it through myself. Gosh, why did I tell her?" he added, in anguish.

But Hetty was gone—racing up to her room, her busy brain working, and a daring idea already beginning to form. Cousin George had to be saved—from himself as much as from a caning—and Hetty knew that she alone could save him.

Fishy!

"POOR old George!" Hetty walked up and down her room, deep in thought.

She had planned to have fun with some friends from her day school this afternoon, but then she had not known that this would happen. She had need of some fun, but Cousin George's need was greater than her own.

Quite how much she liked him, she had not known until now. But she burned with wrath at the injustice done to him; snorted at the thought of the dumb, goopy headmaster, and glowered at the name of Milson.

"Poor old George!" she muttered. "I've pulled his leg, and he's a gump, but he's not a rotter. He's a jolly decent sort, and they're not going to whack him—not if I have to burn up all the canes!"

Naturally, if Cousin George could have known the thoughts that were passing in Hetty's mind, he would have torn his hair. But, fortunately for him, he didn't.

"Now if I could only go there—get into the place," mused Hetty. "If—Ahah!"

Her eyes brightened, and she snapped her fingers.

The idea which had dawned as she left the dining-room was now at its blazing zenith. And it was a peach.

But as Hetty wheeled to get busy, there was a rap at her door.

"Come out at once!" boomed a sepulchral voice through the panel.

Hetty, recognising the voice as Cousin George's pitched a few tones lower, opened the door and stepped out on to the landing.

There stood Cousin George, wearing the white beard, the gardener's hat and jacket, a pair of dirty trousers, and some immense boots.

There was no mistaking Cousin George, despite the beard which he had hooked to his nose and ears, or the basting of greasypaint which shone on his face.

He looked as though he had been left too long in front of a fire, and was badly scorched.

Hetty wanted to scream with laughter, but, by a magnificent effort of self-control, she merely gulped.

Cousin George pulled himself together, and had the air of regretting what he had said.

"Help? I don't want help. I can manage my own affairs. But I have been falsely accused. Am I the kind of chap," he said hotly, "to go into the Head's garden and root up his best plant—the one he expects to get a prize with at the flower show. Am I?"

"No," said Hetty promptly. "My golly, no! You wouldn't know a prize plant from a weed."

"Oh, yes, I would! That isn't what I mean. I know all about plants," he said huffily. "The thing is—is it like me?"

"What—the plant?" said Hetty, facetious to keep his pecker up and to save him from breaking down.

Cousin George was so human that he had to be made ratty to keep a stiff upper lip.

"If you can't treat this seriously, Hetty," he said coldly, in his most distant tone, "we had better not discuss it. Why I allowed myself to be tricked into telling you, I don't know. I won't say another word."

"Who do you think did it?" asked Hetty.

"Milson!" said Cousin George hotly. "The little toad! Not that I have proof," he added. "Only I heard him say he'd get his own back on the Head."

"And why are they fixing it on you?"

Cousin George tried to hold his dignified silence; but his brain was whirling with the facts.

"Just because I went into the Head's garden to ask him about a Greek word."

"That sounds more like you," admitted Hetty. "And that's all the evidence they have?" she added, in surprise. "Why, the awful ninnies!

Just let me have a word with your Head, that's all!"

Cousin George gave a start of alarm.

"Hetty, keep out of this," he said. "Don't interfere. I don't blame the Head, crazy though he is. I picked up a trowel lying on the path, and I admit I hid it behind me when the gardener came along, and then dropped it."

"Oh! Well, even that—" said Hetty scornfully. "Poof! And they're whacking you for it."

Cousin George writhed at the word. "Er—hum—yes. After lessons, that is, unless the culprit is found."

Hetty thumped the table, making the plates dance, and there was a flash in her eyes.

"He's got to be found. And I think you're right about Milson. He's the boy with the nasty eyes and pimples, who threw a stone at the dog!"

"Yes." "Then we'll fix him. Make him confess. Leave this to me. What a bit of luck it's a halfer for me," said Hetty excitedly. "George, I'll find some evidence. I'll search the Head's garden."

She meant it. But the mere thought of it made Cousin George yelp.

"You'll get me in a worse mess than ever. Keep out of it," he said. "I'll manage this. I've planned it all. I've got a detective brain. I'm going to look for finger-prints. I—I'm going to disguise."

Hetty blinked. "Why disguise?" she asked. Cousin George wafted his hand. "I haven't thought it all out yet," he said, in his loftiest tone. "But I have read detective stories, and it's easy enough. Footprints, finger-prints, clues. What's more, I've got a

"Ooo-h!" she said, backing away as though afraid. "A stranger! Help! Cousin George, help! Mercy, a villain, a rogue, a vagabond! Help! Cousin George—Hi!"

Cousin George rose from his stooping position.

"Here! Whoa, steady! It's me!" he said.

Hetty looked at him, and widened her eyes.

"Why, Cousin George!" she cried. For the first time since he had returned home, Cousin George smiled.

"Hetty, don't be scared. I look pretty terrifying, but it's only me," he said. "And now don't say I can't use make-up. If you, who know me so well, can't penetrate it—"

"George, it's amazing!" said Hetty, piling it on. "Why, I thought Bob Biggs was pretty wonderful, but this is staggering!"

"Huh, Bob Biggs! That fool!" he said, with a trace of irritation. "I shouldn't have expected him to be able to disguise."

Hetty smiled to herself, for Bob Biggs was merely an imaginary person she compared with Cousin George in moments of annoyance—usually to the latter's detriment.

"Cousin George, what are you going to do now?" she asked. "And what's the shovel for?"

"I'm hiding that behind me till I get there," said George eagerly, wiping some grease-paint off his face with his sleeve. "Gosh, this stuff makes you hot!"

Hetty blinked.

"You—you're going to the school like that?" she gaped.

"Of course. No one will recognise me. You didn't. I've got my school togs underneath. I shall creep into the school on some pretext, then go into the Head's garden and search. This shovel is to pick up the footprints with."

Hetty stifled a yelp of mirth, for this was the limit.

"George, don't be potty!" she begged him. "You can't do that."

"I certainly can," he retorted loftily. "I have been complimented on my playing of Lady Macbeth by the Head himself—"

"She didn't wear a hooked-on beard or—"

"That's right. Now jeer. You're annoyed because you didn't see through me," said Cousin George, with a short laugh. "I thought you were more sporting. But girls never like being taken in. Why, you screamed in fright!"

Hetty breathed hard. She regretted that playful scream now, for she began to see that it had deceived Cousin George as to his acting ability.

"Listen, George!" she said.

"Call me Cousin George, please!" he retorted. "Just because I am in trouble I have not lost my relative position."

And he stamped downstairs.

Hetty nearly tore her hair in despair. "George!" she cried. "Stop, come back! I recognised you at once. That disguise is silly—"

But George had gone out into the great big world, holding the shovel behind him. Like so many other serious-minded, learned people, Cousin George's sense of humour was liable to misfire at times. It was hardly firing at all now.

Hetty shuddered to think of the annoyance of the headmaster when he found George, disguised, digging in the garden. The true reason for the disguise would not be believed by the Head. He would merely think that a mania for digging up his plants was

obsessing George, even if a disguise had to be adopted!

There was only one thing for it. Hetty must act; she must find the real culprit and clear George before he got into a bigger mess than ever.

HETTY SONNING, a basket on her arm, walked through the school gates—the boys' school gates.

She did not look like a girl from the local High school, she looked more like a girl selling something. Her clothes were shabby, and she had a battered hat on, a shawl about her shoulders, wrinkled stockings, and worn shoes.

"Here, here!" said the janitor. "Outside, you!"

"Me?" said Hetty. "I've got something for Mr. Sibley. He's the Head here, isn't he? Or are you?"

Several grinning boys gathered around, but Hetty was not well-known enough in the district to be recognised.

"See the Head, eh?" said the janitor.

"What have you got?"

"Mind your own business. If he says I can go right into the school to his study, what's it to do with you, eh? It's his fish."

The janitor frowned.

"Fish?" he echoed.

"Never heard that Mr. Sibley is keen on fishing?" said Hetty.

She had heard it herself—from Cousin George. It was one of the few things she did know about Mr. Sibley.

"Fishing?" said the janitor.

"You know—bent wire, line, rod," said Hetty. "Then you go to the fish-monger, buy something likely, and show your friends." She winked. "So I've got to go to the Head direct."

It is easy for some people to jump to conclusions, and this janitor was no exception. Now, without the slightest hesitation, he guessed that the Head intended to go fishing and was buying some likely fish because he mightn't catch any.

The janitor grinned and winked back. "All right, missie! Get on with it!" he said.

Past an admiring crowd of boys Hetty walked, and presently saw the boy Milson, who pulled a face at her.

"Knock her basket over!" he suggested to someone else.

Hetty fixed him with a look.

"You're the boy I saw," she said.

Milson gave a slight start, and his truculent manner underwent a change.

"What do you mean? When? Where?"

"In the headmaster's garden, wasn't it?" said Hetty, with a shrewd look. "Digging up something."

Milson changed colour, and several other fellows drew nearer, murmuring. But Hetty's attention was fixed on Milson.

"Don't you tell lies!" he said thickly. "I wasn't there."

But there was no mistaking his alarm and guilty expression. Hetty, with quickened steps, went on. She was glad she had seen Milson, because now she had no doubts as to his guilt.

But Hetty's doubts and the Head's were hardly the same thing; and the fact that she thought George innocent was just nothing compared with the fact that the Head thought him guilty. It was the Head who would decide the matter of the caning, not Hetty.

Nevertheless, Hetty pushed on until she was well clear of Milson, and then she beckoned a tall boy with glasses, who rejoined in the name of Soapey Sims, a friend of Cousin George's.

"Here, master!" she said. "Seen an old man round here with a white beard, a battered hat, and a dirty green jacket?"

"No," said Soapey, shaking his head.

Hetty heaved a sigh of relief.

"Well, if you do see him, boot him out," she said. "He can't help it, mind you; just hustle him out without being rough."

"What's wrong with him?" said Soapey, with interest.

"Hits boys on the ear with a coal-shovel he's got. Just a whim of his," Hetty explained. "But don't hurt him."

Soapey's eyes widened.

"Gosh! Hits chaps with a coal-shovel? Hi, you fellows! Hear that? Mulligan! Jones! Watkins! Here!" he called his friends.

Hetty, chuckling softly, left him to it. She was sorry for Cousin George, but it was better for him to be buzzed out by his own friends at sight than to be found digging in the precious garden.

A bell rang. Boys started to move to the school, and Hetty, seeing the doorway ahead, hurried on inside just as the headmaster crossed the Hall to his study.



THE disguised Hetty was just making fine progress in her efforts to clear Cousin George, when an extraordinary person, wearing a dislodged beard and carrying a lump of mud on the end of a spade, rushed into the hall. It was George himself—dressed as a gardener!

A Great Big Bluff!

HETTY knocked on the headmaster's door and peered in. Mr. Sibley looked up, adjusted his glasses, and looked again, hardly able to believe his ears. "Good gracious!" he gasped. "Scuse me, mister!" Hetty said. "Want any fish?" "Fish? How dare you come into my study!" the Head expostulated, jumping up. "I will have you ejected at once!" But Hetty was quite calm.

"You've never caught such a big fish as this," she said, bringing out a cod from the basket. "That's a fine pike for you!"

"Pike? That's a cod!" said the Head, and gave a short laugh.

"Well, fancy!" said Hetty. "But if you say so, I believe it, mister. You're an honest man. No one's ever said different, and you're just. I bet you'd never punish the wrong boy?"

Mr. Sibley gave a wry grimace.

"I trust not."

"No, mister. That's why I've come along. You see, I didn't ought not to of bin near your garden like."

Hetty's eyes glimmered as she saw the Head wince at her grammar.

"You near my garden? Certainly not!"

"Ah! But suppose I said I was?" said Hetty guardedly. "And suppose I said I saw a plant dug up—"

The Head drummed his fingers on the desk.

"I see—I see!" he murmured. "This is new evidence. This is the thing I have been wanting. Tell me, what was the boy like?"

Hetty hesitated. She could not lie and say that she had seen Milson dig up the flower. But she could deny that it was Cousin George. She hadn't seen him in the garden.

"If you was to line up the school, mister," she said, "then maybe—maybe I could pick him out."

The Head was silent, but his mind was working, and suddenly he pressed his buzzer, and sent the boy who answered the summons with a hurriedly written message.

"Young woman," he said to Hetty. "as you said, I am a just man. The school shall be lined up."

Hetty heaved a sigh.

For two minutes she stood shifting from one foot to the other, while the Head wrote. Then the door opened, and a tall boy looked in.

"Sir, there's no sign of Sonning anywhere."

"What! Has the young rascal not returned to school?"

Hetty gave a jump of dismay. For Sonning was Cousin George. And now she feared the worst. His pals hadn't found him, or else he'd got away. In either case, he was probably waiting his chance to dig up footprints.

"Telephone his home!" said the Head. "Search the grounds! Sonning must be in this identification parade, or the thing is worthless!"

"Yes, sir!" said the fellow, after looking Hetty over carefully.

Hetty waited in an agony of suspense; but though the search went on, there was no sign of Cousin George. Without him being present in his normal Form, the identification parade would be utterly useless.

She had intended looking at him, and saying "No, that isn't the boy."

But Cousin George, disguised, was in the Head's garden, digging!

HETTY WAS cool, and she had plenty of nerve, but it nearly failed her when she faced the lined-up school and saw a few hundred grins.

They started at the top of the school, and Hetty glanced at the seniors hurriedly. As befitted their dignity, the seniors had an air of lofty disdain reminiscent of Cousin George at his best.

Hetty reached the Upper Fifth, Milson's Form. She looked along the ranks, and, seeing him, tried to think of a way to bowl him out.

At that moment there was a commotion at the doors. Uproarious laughter came, and then into view appeared a dishevelled figure, complete with battered hat, and a white beard that hung by one hook, and a face streaky with grease paint.

Held out in front of him, as though he was entering for an egg-and-spoon race with the wrong implements, was a coal shovel, balanced on which was a chunk of earth.

"I've got it!" he said hoarsely.

Confusion reigned. The Head wheeled upon him, startled, shocked. Cousin George saw Hetty, and reeled. Hetty fell back, gasping in horrified dismay.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the school.

"Sonning!"

"Hetty!"

The Head and Cousin George spoke together, but the Head won.

"Sonning, what is the meaning of this outrageous tomfoolery?" he roared.

"Tut-tut-tomfoolery?" said Cousin George, fixing Hetty with a basilisk glare. "Oh, gosh—it's not my fault! I asked her not to—"

"What is on that shovel? Why are you dressed in this manner?"

Cousin George found his own voice. "It's a footprint, sir," he said. "I dug it up in your garden."

Hetty saw the Head's face as he turned, eyes bulging, to the school, and roared for silence. Masters and prefects stormed and gave impositions, and even used canes, and in a minute or two a heavy silence reigned.

Seeing Milson sniggering, something seemed to snap inside Hetty's brain. Of a sudden she jumped forward, grovelled in George's footprint, and then stepped back.

"A clue—proof!" she cried.

The school was certainly hushed now. But no one knew what clue it was.

"A watch-chain!" she said.

Milson's hand jumped to his waistcoat. Then he lowered it, and went crimson.

"There's the culprit!" said Hetty, pointing to him.

Milson choked out a hoarse reply.

"It's a lie! Here's my watch-chain!" he said.

"Yes; but you felt to see if it was there. Well, I was fooling," snapped Hetty. "It isn't a watch-chain I've got here."

There was a hush. Everyone wondered what it was—and no one more urgently than Milson.

"You," said Hetty to Milson. "Where's the half-sovereign from your watch-chain?"

Milson trembled.

"I—I—it came off yesterday, in the village, and—and—"

His voice trailed away, and Hetty looked at the Head in triumph. His face, grave and puzzled, he walked to Milson.

"How many half-sovereigns had you on that watch-chain?"

"Only one, sir. It came off yesterday, sir, in the High Street. I can prove it, sir. I remember it distinctly."

Betty smiled, and looked at Cousin

George, who was frowning, puzzled by all this. He did not understand that Hetty was only pretending to have found something.

But the Head did.

"Milson," he said, in a harsh tone. "You have a half-sovereign still on your watch-chain. How could you remember it coming off? You seem very sure it is off. Why? Because, apparently, you think one has been found in my garden—a guilty conscience! Go to my study!"

Milson, head down, went.

"But just a minute, sir!" cut in Cousin George. "This footprint—it'll be proof! Proof positive, sir!"

The Head shrugged and called Milson back. The footprint was hard, in sticky, clay soil, and there was the distinct imprint of a rubber heel, badly worn.

Milson's foot was steered into it.

"Cinderella!" chirped Hetty. "The shoe fits!"

Cousin George, in beaming triumph, stood up, and removed his beard, and although no one reeled back and gasped "Sonning!" there was no laughter.

"Good old George!" came the murmur.

"Hetty—" said George huskily.

Hetty scowled.

"Don't recognise me, chump!" she hissed.

And before the school dismissed Hetty hurried out, head in air, smiling happily. For although Cousin George's footprint had clinched matters, she had already bowled Milson out by then.

But it was a triumph for George, nevertheless. While Soapey & Co. hunted him, George had been in hiding, waiting until lessons started to get busy searching in the garden, disguised as a gardener.

It was half an hour after Hetty arrived home that Cousin George strolled in, in his own clothes, without the beard.

"Oh, hallo, Hetty!" he said, with a nod. "I've been given the rest of the afternoon off. For some reason, the Head was rather snorty about the disguise, but he apologised for accusing me. I accepted it, and he let me off for the afternoon, as I might cause a disturbance in lessons—"

Hetty chuckled.

"Nothing to giggle at. It was a triumph," said George. "And don't say Bob Biggs would have thought of it, either. But—" And he climbed down from his lofty perch and smiled. "You were quite cute the way you handled the things, Hetty. Thanks! I won't forget it."

They shook hands.

"Just nothing, George. Any time you're in a mess—call on me," said Hetty lightly. "And now, how shall we spend the afternoon? Fun, eh?"

"Providing we are restrained," said George. "But let me warn you, Hetty. Never enter the school again. And although this worked out well, another time it might be different. I forbid you to enter the school again without my permission. You understand?"

Hetty put on her meekest air.

"Yes, Cousin George," she agreed.

And then—with his permission—they went and had fun!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

GEORGE and the Imp will be here once again next Saturday, so look out for them, won't you? And do please recommend them to all your friends.

Further thrilling chapters of our great adventure serial—

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 came 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. Teresa exposes a treacherous magician. The king gives them all jewels, but Fuzzy's are taken by the queen. Later, Luise disappears. In searching for her, Fuzzy falls into a hole.

(Now read on.)

Their Old Enemy!

AS Fuzzy disappeared from sight into the opening of the dark tunnel, Teresa sprang forward dropping to her knees.

The little black girl had acted with her usual impetuosity, eager to be first, and to prove that she was quite unafraid.

But Teresa, staring down into the inky darkness, had an ache of fear in her heart.

"Fuzzy!" she called softly. "Fuzzy, are you hurt?"

She hardly dared expect a reply, for it was quite likely that there was a sheer drop from the opening to the ground below.

To her great surprise Fuzzy's voice albeit a little shaky, answered her almost at once.

"All right, Missa Teaser. Ground plenty soft."

"Then move and I'll come down, too," said Teresa. "Or better wait. I'll go back and get the torch. I'm a dufer not to have thought of it before."

Teresa hurried back to where Bambo, the young elephant, was making a lazy meal from a near-by bush; and finding the pocket torch, returned to the tunnel opening.

Fuzzy had not moved, but now she whispered up that she could hear voices in the distance.

Shining the rays of the torch down Teresa saw the soft ground, and Fuzzy standing beside it, waiting. It was quite an easy drop, so she lay flat, and swung her legs round.

As she did so, Adolphus the baby chimp, moved forward. He meant to be in this. He climbed over Teresa, clung to her legs and dropped down below.

His extra weight loosened Teresa's grip and down she went.

With a bump she landed in a sitting posture in the soft earth, every ounce of breath knocked from her.

"Oh," she gasped. "Adolphus, you silly chump!"

Fuzzy helped her up, and Teresa, finding that she was unharmed, straightened up and flashed her torch down the tunnel.

HUNDREDS OF MILES FROM THE NEAREST DOCTOR—AND LUISE COLLAPSES FROM A DEADLY SNAKE-BITE!

She found that it was a natural cavern below the ground, and judging by the surface at the foot of it she decided that it must, at one time, have been a subterranean river.

From the far distance, echoing and reverberating so that no words could be distinguished, came the sound of voices.

"Come on, Fuzzy," she said. "We'll go in the darkness as it's pretty clear ahead. We don't want to warn them."

There was quite a draught blowing through the tunnel and it made a soft, roaring sound that drummed in their ears.

"It must have an opening ahead for there to be this draught," murmured Teresa.

Only fifty yards farther on there was a bend in the tunnel and Teresa came to a halt. There was smoke in the air,

and she guessed rightly that torches had been lit.

Reaching the bend, she halted, warning Fuzzy to be quiet, and then finding some largish stones, moved them to form a small hiding-place.

From the far end of the tunnel! there came a glow, which Teresa, peering out from her hiding-place, realised was a flaming torch. A group of people stood there, and Teresa gasped as she saw who it was who stood in the centre of that group. The Witch Doctor—the Magician.

By the light of the torches Teresa saw the flash of jewels.

There came then a native voice speaking in broken English.

"De king hab gibbed you de jewels, but dey am de magician's. He take dem, but you not say de word to de king. You hab been bad, you hab made king not like magician."

Teresa drew a deep breath. The magician, furious that they had opened the king's eyes to his trickery, was seeking revenge. But first of all he had stolen the jewels! That was what he wanted above all.

But Teresa knew that he had taken his defeat badly. Unless by some cunning trick he could earn the king's good graces he was banished from Nonpanyo's land. Worse still, if captured he might be punished.

"Mighty man ob magic—mighty Witch Doctor—him make you snake," droned the voice.

Teresa gritted her teeth. She did not fear his magic. She knew that he could not possibly make Luise into a snake. But he could frighten her.

Even now sensitive, nervous Luise must be suffering agonies of fear, thinking that she would never see her friends again.

By
ELIZABETH
CHESTER

"Go, take her 'way?" asked Fuzzy eagerly.

"Shush! Two of us could do nothing," warned Teresa. "Not possibly. They are too many."

She was silent, thinking. The magician was the very man likely to be deceived by a trick; but it would need to be an artful one.

Force was hopeless. If Teresa and Fuzzy rushed to the rescue, they themselves would be captured. Thinking, Teresa took stock of the scene at the other end of the cavern.

Half a dozen ideas came to her mind, only to be rejected, and then suddenly she got inspiration.

"Get wood," she whispered excitedly to Fuzzy. "Wood that will make smoke. Plenty of smoke."

She could see Luise now. Her hands and feet tied, she stood upright between two soldiers. She could not possibly run, but if there was a sudden panic, Teresa suspected that in the general confusion Luise would be left behind.

And Teresa meant to create that confusion. Creeping back, she helped Fuzzy out of the tunnel, and then took twigs, and small branches and dry grass which Fuzzy passed down.

Back along the tunnel, Teresa set light to them. The flames grew; the wood crackled, and smoke rose in a thick cloud.

The draught blowing down the tunnel fanned the flames, and soon smoke was being carried along in a billowing cloud towards the magician, his henchmen—and Luise!

Teresa Tries a Trick!

LUISE, terrified, stood stock-still, balancing herself with difficulty. Her heart was thumping, and she was in despair, fearful that she would never be freed; that Teresa could never guess that the tunnel existed.

Never had Luise regretted anything so much as having been given those jewels. She had been so pleased at the time—almost as pleased as poor Fuzzy. But now she saw what a disastrous gift it had been.

What fate Teresa's jewels would lead her to she did not know, but tears ran down Luise's cheeks at thought of her friend, and the dread fear came that she might never see her again.

The magician had the jewels. They were stacked before him in a small pile, and even though they were worth many thousands of pounds, so far as Luise was concerned he could keep them.

"Magician make you snake," she heard the native say.

A shiver of dread ran through Luise. She did not believe in magic, and yet—how miserable the king's sister had been when freed from the magician's trickery.

It might be only trickery, but it would be a frightening ordeal!

The magician started to "make magic." From a large, carved wooden box he took a writhing snake, and Luise's eyes started from her head in horror.

Already the magician was uttering magic words, and waving his free hand with mysterious passes.

And then, quite suddenly, the smoke from Teresa's fire arrived in a black cloud. It blotted them all out for a moment. It was like a London fog. The roaring draught made it circle and swing, and Luise, coughing and choking, lost her balance and dropped down.

In a moment there was wild confusion. The magician, totally unprepared for this, could not even guess at the explanation.

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.

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS.—Dear, dear me! How time does fly, to be sure. I know that statement may not be sparkingly original, but at least it's very true, and in any case, readers all, I only mention it because I have just been reminded of the fleetness of time in a very delightful way.

Patricia, that charming and clever young person who fills our two centre pages every week with her delightful chatter and useful suggestions, brought me in her "copy"—Editorial word for articles—for next week's issue.

Well, Patricia's articles were not only as interesting and enjoyable as ever. They were enlightening. I had not realised how near summer was.

But Patricia had. She had not only remembered the approach of summer; she had thought of the end of winter, which, although meaning virtually the same thing, is apt to be overlooked.

Patricia, though, in one of her articles, has gone very thoroughly into the question of summer, as it applies to clothes—WINTER clothes. A very, very important thing, you will realise, I am sure.

I'm afraid mine have, in the past, been rather neglected. But not this year. Patricia's hints and suggestions as to what to do to ensure that your winter clothes emerge quite nicely and attractively from their long rest have inspired me with all sorts of resolutions. I'm going to take Patricia's hints. I'm going to make certain that my clothes come out next winter as good as new.

And you can do the same with all your clothes. Patricia tells you how next week, in that enchanting way of hers which has made her so popular. You must read what she has to say.

Now just a few words about our grand story programme. First:—

"AUNTIE" BESSIE TO THE RESCUE!"

which is the title of the superb **LONG COMPLETE** Cliff House story, featuring Babs & Co., and fat, lovable Bessie Bunter in particular. I'm afraid I can't tell you much. I haven't the space. But Babs & Co. rally round to help run the tea-gardens of a hard-working woman who has been charged with theft.

There is also a most endearing little boy to be looked after, and the chums revel in their joint task. Bessie is in her element, one moment supervising activities in the kitchen, the next allowing herself to be the "victim" in all sorts of boyish games.

Of course, there is drama, too, as well as the most intriguing mystery! **HILDA RICHARDS** has excelled herself with this magnificent story. Don't miss it.

Next week's issue will also feature "The Jungle Hikers," "Cousin George and the 'Imp,'" another Cliff House pet, and—

Your sincere friend,
THE EDITOR.

His followers, thinking that this was some of his magic, entreated him to have mercy. Coughing and spluttering, they hesitated only for a moment, and then rushed away from the smoke to freedom.

Down the tunnel, in the wake of the smoke, came shrill screams and demoniacal laughter.

The magician, although he pretended to have all the powers of evil at his command, knew in his heart that he lied. Terror seized him. His conscience numbed his limbs.

Still with the snake about him, forgetting Luise, whom he could not even see in this pall of smoke, he fled.

But Luise, lying on the ground, could breathe easily. For she was below the smoke, which was kept off the ground by the draught.

As she lay there she heard running steps, and then voices.

"Luise, Luise!" came Teresa's voice. Almost fainting though she was, Luise rallied.

"Teresa!" she cried. Teresa, a damp handkerchief over her face, dropped to her knees beside her friend. Out came her hunting-knife, and the things that bound Luise were severed.

"Oh, Luise, Luise, dear!" said Teresa, her eyes moist. "Are you safe?"

"Safe, safe," said Luise, scrambling up. "Oh, take me out of here. This—this terrible fire—"

"No—just a small bonfire, but plenty of smoke. Duck your head and run, if you can," said Teresa.

In a few minutes they were beyond the fire, and, panting and gasping, their faces covered with smuts, they drank in the cool air of the draught.

"And the jewels?" said Teresa. "I don't care. Anyone can have them," said Luise. "I think the magician left them. They were on the ground, and he bolted at terrific speed."

Fuzzy heard, and brightened. "He leave jewels?" she asked excitedly. "On ground?"

"I think so," said Luise. "Fuzzy can have?"

"Yes—have them all," shivered Luise. "No—don't. You'll regret it—"

But Fuzzy went rushing into the smoke, to return, a moment later, beaming with pleasure—and carrying the jewels.

By that time Luise had heard the story of Fuzzy's unhappy imprisonment, and her return. But that experience had not upset Fuzzy at all. The fact that she had lost her jewels only made her want others more.

Dancing with joy, she rejoined them. "But mind—no wearing them in public. Only paste can be worn in public," said Teresa, smiling.

"Me good. Me not wear—yet." "Only with an evening dress," said Teresa.

And then, all three happy, they climbed out of the tunnel to where Bambo waited patiently, eating a meal of fruit.

"Oh, Bambo. I could kiss you," said Luise. "Poor Bambo. They beat him and made him run. At least, I suppose so. I wasn't actually looking. He came in here, and so did I. Then the soldiers said something and pointed into the middle of the bush. I went to look—and they pushed me."

"Thank Fuzzy for guessing about the tunnel—and Adolphus for finding it," smiled Teresa.

So they left it at that. There was work ahead of them. They had to pack the luggage on Bambo, and decide what had been lost, and then find it. Until that was done they could not proceed.

"But anyway, the old magician won't trouble us any more," said Teresa. "And we don't need any soldiers for escort. They're a lot more bother than they're worth. It's straight ahead for us."

"Straight ahead," nodded Luise. "And as quick as we can, too. But first, I must eat. I'm hungry. Aren't you, Terry?"

"I certainly am," Teresa agreed. "But I think we'd better put another mile or two between us and the magician first."

"My word, yes!" shivered Luise. "If you think he might be near here let's move on."

So, without wasting more time, they set to work finding the scattered luggage and reloading their faithful porter Bambo.

The Deadly Snake!

"MISS TEASER—"

Teresa opened her eyes. She had been dozing, and Fuzzy's voice came to her as from another world. In fact, although her eyes had been closed for but a moment, she had been dreaming.

In her dream she had been back at school in England, and the magician had been taking the Form in magic. The dunce of the Form had failed to turn one of the school waitresses into a leopard, and had been fined three diamond ear-rings.

Naturally, awakening from a dream like that, Teresa was a little dazed, and wondered at first how the large tree had come to be in the Form-room.

"Oh, I was dreaming!" she laughed. "Yes, Fuzzy?"

"Me speak soft—Miss Luise—her sleep," said Fuzzy.

"Hope she's not dreaming, too," said Teresa. "What's wrong, Fuzzy? Indigestion? I told you not to have so much tinned tongue."

"Not gestion," said Fuzzy. "Nice tongue. Me like wear jewels, Miss Teaser," she said meekly.

Teresa rolled over and smiled at Fuzzy.

"Well, of course you can wear them. There's no one here except us and Adolphus—and he's asleep. Besides, he wouldn't want your jewels."

Then Teresa rolled back and shaded her eyes. If Fuzzy preferred playing with her jewellery to having a doze that was her own affair, but Teresa was enjoying her nap.

They had moved on at good speed after their escape from the tunnel, and when they judged that they had put sufficient distance between themselves and the magician to feel really safe they had decided to camp.

A likely spot being found, they had rested Bambo, eased him of his load, and made sure that there were no wild animals or snakes lurking near.

There was plenty of shade in this spot, fresh water in a rippling stream near to hand, and everything they needed. For on near-by bushes there was luscious fruit to aid their own fare.

It had been a happy meal, and they had felt as carefree as though they had picnicked in England.

Luise had even been the first to drop asleep, feeling quite safe, and so drowsy that she could not keep her eyes open. Then Teresa had nodded off, relying upon Fuzzy to keep watch.

Fuzzy, anxious to do what she had been told, and feeling that she had had a bad girl and might have offended her friends by loitering at the black king's palace instead of accompanying them,

was particularly eager not to do anything against orders.

For quite a while she had managed to stifle her yearning to wear the jewels, and then, when Teresa had stirred in her dozing, had spoken to her.

"Wear the whole lot, dear," yawned Teresa sleepily.

Fuzzy, shaking with excitement, unpacked her jewels. They sparkled and flashed, and her deep brown eyes shone in a way that almost rivalled them. Bangles, necklets, hair ornaments, she tried them all on, and then rose, feeling very important.

Stepping lightly, she walked with swaggering gait and wished that there was a mirror in which she could see her own reflection, for she was quite sure that she looked a true princess.

Fuzzy sighed and turned to Adolphus, who was snugly asleep.

"Dolphus," she said gently—"Dolphus, look at me!"

"Fuzzy, that you making that din?" she asked drowsily. "Couldn't you play with the diamonds a bit more quietly?"

"Dolphus hab took my big one."

"Well, let him have it," mumbled Teresa.

Fuzzy snatched at it, however. Dolphus snatched back, and then was beaten by a twist of the wrist.

"You're jealous," said Fuzzy sharply, and rose.

Adolphus, with a sense of grievance, ambled away, and by good luck found the frying-pan. Luise had cleaned it until it shone, and, looking into it, Adolphus saw a frightening sight.

Something horrid looked at him from the frying-pan, a hideous face belonging to another chimp. Adolphus made a face. And the chimp in the frying-pan made an ugly face back at him.

Adolphus, with a cunning smack of the paw, fetched that other chimp a



"QUICK! Drive the smoke up the tunnel!" Teresa cried, and waved her coat at the smouldering wood. Fuzzy promptly waved a sun-helmet, while Adolphus, the chimp, as if realising how urgent it was to rescue Luise, flapped a leaf!

Dolphus opened his eyes, and then, as she tickled his ear with grass, woke up, scowling, twitching his ear, and looked at the jewels.

To Fuzzy, thirsting for admiration, even Adolphus' regard mattered. It would have been all one to him if she had worn lumps of coal, for he did not know a diamond from a piece of glass.

Yawning, he consented to look at his young mistress.

"Diamonds, Dolphus," said Fuzzy, in awe.

Adolphus blinked, caught the flash from the large brooch in her hair, and snatched it. Quick as a flash he put it in his mouth.

"No!" cried Fuzzy sharply. "Stop!"

Adolphus bit the diamond, rolled it round his mouth, and took it out, fixing Fuzzy with a glower. He had awakened in anything but a good temper, and this mean trick annoyed him.

"Bad monkey!" said Fuzzy sharply.

"Much bad!"

Teresa sat up.

swipe in the face, and the frying-pan made a metallic noise.

"Ssssh!" said Fuzzy.

Just to show her that he could do as he liked, Adolphus hit the frying-pan again. Then, with real chimp cunning, he groped behind it to get the other monkey with the ugly face.

Oddly enough there was no monkey there, not even when he looked behind the frying-pan, and, as he knew nothing about reflections, Adolphus sat down, perplexed.

Again he stared at the face, and Fuzzy, turning to him, suddenly realised what caused his interest.

"Me—me," she said. "Gib me."

She took the frying-pan after a slight tug-of-war, and then beamed at the reflection of herself wearing the jewels. It was lovely—perfect. And by polishing the frying-pan more she made it lovelier.

Adolphus, scowling wandered away, determined to find something of his

very own, and, by the greatest good fortune, he found it close to hand.

What he found was a lovely curly stick, marked with glittering jewels. There were little glinting greenish spots all along it, and as a trophy it was a prize find.

Really delighted, Adolphus picked it up by the pointed end. In a flash the stick stiffened in his hand, and then the other end coiled round.

Adolphus had found a snake!

In sheer surprise he dropped it, and it shot away at speed through the grass. Unalarmed, chirping with joy, he went after it just as it found a small dead branch on the ground and went along it, hiding amongst the leaves.

The baby chimp picked up the branch, and, chattering with excitement, toddled back to show his prize to Fuzzy, who, intent on her mirror, paid him no heed. Not to be ignored, Adolphus took the trophy to Luise, and put it down beside her.

"Dolphus, come 'way!" called Fuzzy crossly, lowering her mirror.

He stepped back, and Fuzzy, putting the frying-pan down, looked at the branch. At first her glance was idle, and she lifted the mirror again. With it half-raised, however, she paused, and her eyes rounded in horror.

Petrified, she recognised that highly coloured object as a snake, and only with the greatest difficulty was able to repress a scream.

For that snake was one of a deadly kind. If Luise made the slightest movement the snake would strike. If Fuzzy screamed, or dropped that frying-pan—

Fuzzy, shivering with dread, lowered the mirror gently, and then crept forward on all fours.

Teresa, turning, opened her eyes, and,

without knowing quite why, looked towards Fuzzy. The sudden silence may have impressed itself upon her mind, or else Fuzzy's dread may have transmitted itself by some form of telepathy.

Whatever the method by which it reached her, Teresa sensed danger.

She sat up and stared at Fuzzy. The little black girl, on all fours, was not looking at her. Intent only upon the snake, she was stalking it.

"Fuzzy," said Teresa, in a scarcely audible voice.

She could not imagine what it was that made the little black act in this peculiar manner.

Of a sudden Fuzzy lifted her eyes to Teresa. Her fingers went instantly to her lips in warning, and she made frantic signals, pointing to the snake.

Alarmed, Teresa leaned more forward, and at once saw the leafy branch with the snake crawling along it towards Luise.

Teresa scrambled up, and Fuzzy waved her arms and moved her lips voicelessly.

Guessing what the signs meant, Teresa moved with very great care for fear of awakening Luise. With hardly a sound she rose to her feet, trembling. Action was needed. But what kind?

To move Luise, to drag her away, or to find something with which to beat off the snake?

Teresa looked about her anxiously, saw a brand from their fire, and, stooping hardly more than an inch at a time, picked it up.

Fuzzy crept stealthily nearer, like a snake herself in the softness of her movements.

Only a yard separated her from the branch now, and Fuzzy reached out with one hand. Teresa, holding the brand, crept nearer, ready to strike the snake.

There was a hush, a heavy silence, tense and dramatic, and Adolphus, in the background, wondered what was amiss.

Chattering excitedly, he galloped forward.

Luise, startled, sat bolt upright, saw Fuzzy, saw Teresa, and then the snake.

With a shrill cry she sprang back in terror, and at the same instant Fuzzy dragged the branch, and Teresa struck out.

But the snake, with fearful speed, shot from the branch, and Teresa's blow went wide.

Slithering on to Luise's rug, the snake followed her. In wild terror Luise scrambled up, slipped, and then, while Teresa watched in horror, and Fuzzy remained kneeling, the branch in her hand, fell forward on to the snake.

Teresa grabbed at her, caught her arm and tugged her back, lashing at the snake as it struck. Fuzzy, the branch in hand, swung it and turned the snake over.

Again and again she swept at it, and the snake now swung on to the branch.

No discus thrower ever achieved better results than Fuzzy did then, as she hurled the branch away over the path into the far bushes, the snake clinging to it until a yard from the end of the journey.

But Teresa was on her knees beside Luise, who, round-eyed, was gazing at red marks on her forearm.

"I've been bitten!" she cried hoarsely. "Terry, it bit me!"

Fuzzy gave a wail of distress, jumped up, clasped her head, and became hysterical in panic; but Teresa, gripping Luise's arm, pressed it hard just above the wound.

"If we can prevent the poison spreading, it's all right," she said. "Fuzzy, a knife—quickly!"

Luise, as she saw Fuzzy bring that knife, took one look, and then, despite a desperate effort at self-control, fainted off.

There was only one thing to do, as Teresa knew—to let out the poison with free-flowing blood to prevent its running up the arm, to suck it out.

She put her lips to it, while Fuzzy, tears streaming down her face, beat her head with her hands.

A minute or two passed, and then Teresa, spitting out the poison, wiped her mouth and tightly bandaged the arm above the wound.

"Fuzzy," she said huskily, "an anti-dote. Is there one?"

Fuzzy blinked.

"Anti-dote!"

"A cure—remedy—make better," said Teresa frantically. "A herb—a leaf."

Fuzzy jumped up and stood rigid, thinking—thinking. And then she nodded her frizzy head.

"Yes—yes—near water," she said.

Teresa lowered Luise gently, and found that she herself was trembling.

"Near water! What is it like? Find some—quick! It may be only a matter of—of minutes. Oh, Fuzzy, find some—find some!"

Fuzzy looked right and left, and then, turning, ran as hard as she could down the path.

LUISE, helpless and ill, in the heart of the jungle! No wonder her chums are so frantic! Will Fuzzy be able to find a cure in time? Be sure not to miss next Saturday's dramatic chapters.

"THE FIREBRAND" FINDS A RIVAL!"

(Concluded from page 16.)

applause. Clap, clap, clap! Like surf booming on a shore it rolled round the lawns.

Then a cry:

"Maisie Reynolds! Maisie Reynolds!"

Rosy, smiling, Maisie came before the curtains. Diana swallowed something in her throat. Then Mabs stepped out beside her, her eyes bright, her face all ablush, and simultaneously Langley Runniman leapt up on the platform. Both Mabs' hands he grasped. Both Maisie's he grasped. And he said:

"Oh, splendid! Miss Lynn, I'll buy it! Tell your brother I'm willing to make a deal. Tell him he can have what he wants for his play! By Jove, it's good! And you, Miss Reynolds," he added to the beaming maid. "By James, girl, I wouldn't look for another Queen of Sheba if they offered me all the stars in Hollywood! If you'd like to come along, too, you can star in the film—yes, and others after it! How came it you got this chance?"

"Oh, Mr. Runniman, it was Diana who—"

"Diana? Diana? The Royston-Clarke girl? Hey, where is she?" he shouted. "Miss Royston-Clarke!"

But Diana had slipped away. Diana, at that moment, was on her way to get hold of Raymond Lynn and drag him back to the scene of his triumph!

"Diana, it was wonderful of you—wonderful!" Mabel Lynn breathed later, as she stood with her smiling cousin in the grounds of Friar's Gables. "Never, never can Raymond or I thank you! Diana, you heard, didn't you? Raymond has got a contract with Mr. Runniman! So has Maisie!"

Diana laughed shortly.

"And so," she said, "all ends happily for everybody—eh? Except for the real heroine of the piece—which, as usual, is me. But I'm glad! I'm really and honestly glad, though I warn you now that when the next time comes—if it ever does—you won't find me so ready to play the little heroine. Anybody seen Faith?"

Nobody had. And nobody saw her when, amid a sudden downpour of rain—the weather prophets had not proved false, after all—the garden-party ended. Nobody saw her when they got back to Cliff House; and at call-over she was still absent.

But just before bed-time a limping figure trudged up to the gates of the school. It was a girl in a bedraggled frock, a girl whose baby-like features were twisted into a scowl of fury, a girl who had had to walk most of the way back from the Downs, a girl who had matched her wits in vain against the Firebrand of the Fourth.

It was Faith Ashton.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

(See page 16 for details of next week's wonderful Cliff House story.)