

“AUNTIE’ BESSIE TO THE RESCUE!” Fascinating LONG COMPLETE
Cliff House Shool story inside.

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Incorporating
“SCHOOLGIRLS’ OWN”



**BESSIE BECOMES
BRAVE FOR LITTLE
RODDY'S SAKE!**

See this week's grand story
of Barbara Redfern & Co.

A Charming Long Complete Story of Barbara Redfern & Co., with a very lovable

"AUNTIE" BESSIE



Pirates and Fairies!



"I SUS-SAY, you girls, here's Fallsweir Cottage, you know," Bessie Bunter beamed. "And look! Mrs. Bennett's got the notice

out!"

Six bright-faced girls alighted from their bicycles on the footpath that ran alongside the River Fallsweir, near Cliff House School.

And those six girls—all belonging to the Fourth Form of the famous Old school—looked with interest at the notice to which Bessie's plump finger now pointed. It was a notice composed of but one single word, and that said "TEAS."

"Jolly nice!" Barbara Redfern approved, admiringly eyeing the little thatched roof cottage at the other end of a trim garden. "Yes, jolly nice! And Mrs. Bennett is a friend of yours, Bessie?"

"Yes, rather, Babs! She used to be a friend of my Aunt Annie's. Then she got married in London, and they had a lovely little baby named Roddy; and then her husband died, you know, and she was forced to take the house-keeper's job at Marsh Manor. But now," Bessie beamed, "she's left the manor—left it yesterday, as a matter of fact, and she and Roddy have started in this tea business. But come on!" she added eagerly.

Babs laughed. Mabel Lynn, her

golden-haired chum, dimpled. Marjorie Hazeldene smiled gently, and Tomboy Clara Trevlyn grinned. Only Leila Carroll, the sixth member of the party, looked thoughtful.

"But say!" she commented. "She's chosen a place rather off the beaten track, hasn't she, Rolypolyskins? Shouldn't think she'd get much custom here."

"Oh, but she will!" Bessie said. "Haven't I told everybody at Cliff House about it? And at Friardale, and Courtfield, and Whitechester? I

Babs. For the door of the cottage at the end of the lawn was closed. The lawns themselves, which on this sunny afternoon should have been furnished with garden chairs and tables, were empty. Bessie sniffed.

"Well, haven't I told you that she's only just starting to-day?"

She paused in front of the cottage door. She knocked.

"Now wait," she said. "You'll like Mrs. Bennett, you know."

They waited. No sound. Bessie knocked again, blinking puzzledly

There can be no doubt that Bessie Bunter, the plump Fourth Former, is a duffer, but equally there can be no doubt that she has a heart of gold. The way Bessie and Babs & Co. rally round a lonely little boy, and set out to solve a mystery into the bargain, is delightful as well as thrilling.

think it's frightfully jolly to have some little place tucked away like this. And, anyway," Bessie said earnestly, "she just had to take what she could afford. Come on!" she added, with eager impatience.

Bessie pushed open the little tow-path gate. The chums followed the good-natured plump one on to the newly trimmed lawns.

"H'm! Doesn't look as if Mrs. Bennett's expecting much business," murmured Clara Trevlyn.

That idea had already occurred to

through her thick spectacles as she did so.

"Fuf-funny," she said. "She must be at home. Come on, let's go in."

She lifted the latch. The cottage door swung open. They stared into a small, spotless cottage sitting-room. There were tables in this room, at all events—four of them—and each table was furnished with three chairs. There was also a tablecloth and a bell on each table.

"Well, here we are," Bessie beamed. "I expect Mrs. Bennett is in the

duffer playing a leading part.

TO THE RESCUE!



kitchen, or somewhere. Sit down, girls! Marjorie, you might ring that bell, will you?" And Bessie's fat shiny face expanded into a pleased grin as Marjorie did ring it. "Now," she said confidently, "what shall we have for tea?"

The sound of the bell died away. But there was no sound of footsteps.

"Ring again," Bessie advised.

Marjorie Hazeldene rang again.

"Well—" Bessie frowned, and began to look worried. "I sus-say, you know, that's queer. Mrs. Bennett!" she called anxiously.

No reply, but suddenly:

"Who-oo-o!" came a high-pitched voice from outside. "Oh, ow!"—and clash and clatter went something, followed by a wail in a child's voice.

"Roddy!" cried Bessie; and over with a crash went her chair as she flew towards the door that led to the kitchen. "Oh crumbs! Oh dud-dear! I sus-say, come on, you girls!"

"Rod—" stuttered Babs.

"The little boy!" Marjorie explained swiftly. "Mrs. Bennett's little boy! Oh, goodness, what's happened?"

On the trail of the now vanished Bessie they turned. Helter-skelter they went, pelting through the door which led to the rear of the cottage outside. And then, simultaneously, they all stood gasping, eyes upturned, a look of consternation on their faces. For, ten feet above them, clinging precariously to the gutter of the cottage, on the very edge of the roof, was a small boy.

Little need to tell them in that moment, that it was Bessie's beloved Roddy. It was a boy of about five years old. A paper hat, with a

cockade of feathers, was perched on the back of his curly head; a wooden sword was stuck in the leather belt, which was fastened over the jersey round his waist.

Lying on the ground below him was an ancient ladder, which plainly had seen better days. Obvious, at a glance, what had happened! Roddy, climbing to the roof with the aid of that ladder, had accidentally kicked it from under himself.

"Oh golly!" gasped Babs. "Bessie, run—"

Bessie had swooped upon the ladder. With a strength that was as unexpected as it was surprising, she whirled it up, planked it against the roof, and, without even troubling to assure her-

dear, my spup-spino's broken, you know! Oh, I—I'm all bro-broken up! Oh crumbs! Wow!" And woefully, while Babs and Mabs and Clara ran forward to help, she wobbled to her feet. And then—

"Bessie, look out!" shrieked Marjorie.

Too late! Bessie, in the act of rising, went flat on her face again, as a small thunderbolt, in the shape of Roddy Bennett, came hurtling from above, a piece of broken gutter in his hand. A scream from Roddy. A gargling gasp from Bessie as, with the youngster thudding into the middle of her back, she dug her fat chin firmly into the earth. Then—

"Oh dear!" Roddy gasped. "Oh, I say, I fell, you know. Aunt Bessie, I hope I didn't hurt you!"

"Guug-grr-rur!" Auntie Bessie said.

"But, Auntie Bessie—"

"Groo, whoop. Gerroff! Gerrupp!" gurgled Bessie. "Oh, lawks, my mouth is full of dirt. Oh, phoo! Oh, woof!" She sat up while Roddy, failing to keep his astonished seat on her back rolled into the path. "Wumps!" growled Bessie. "Look here, who threw something at me?"

"Oh crumbs, are you hurt?" Babs gasped.

"No! Yes! I am! I—I'm hurt all— all over!" Bessie grunted. "Every bone in my body is broken and my spectacles are all covered with dirt. Who threw it?"

"Nobody threw anything, I guess!" Leila Carroll chuckled. "It was Roddy. He threw himself, eh?"

"Yes, Aunt Bessie," Roddy said, sitting up and looking at her seriously. "I dropped, you know—" He looked at the height from which he had descended

By

HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER.

self of its firmness, went swarming up like a fireman.

But alas for Bessie! And alas for the ladder! The ladder was old; the ladder was rotten. Half-way up two of the rungs gave way, and Bessie descended with a yell to the flower-bed!

The ladder, gently heeling over, fell in the direction of the chums, who scattered hurriedly to get out of its way.

And from Roddy.

"I say, I'm going to fall, you know!" he cried, with apprehension

"Woow, woow!" yelled Bessie. "Oh

with no little pride. "I dropped—buff—right on you. It was awfully kind for you to put yourself in my way!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Clara involuntarily shrieked at the expression on Bessie's face.

Bessie blinked. She rose, dusting herself.

"What were you doing up there?" she asked severely.

"Please, Auntie Bessie, I was climbing the rigging," Roddy said seriously. "You see, I'm on a bat's ship, and I was going to look for pirates. 'Normous lot of pirates about," he added solemnly, "and I'm the captain of the bat's ship, you know, who fires the guns bang!"

Bessie smiled. She had magically forgotten her hurts now.

"Playing a game, eh?" she suggested.

"Yes, Auntie Bessie."

"But, Roddy, where's your mother?"

"Mamma?" The little chap shook his head. "Mamma went off," he said sadly.

"She went off with two great big, ever so 'normous men. She told Mrs. Ph'ips to look after me, you know, and Mrs. Ph'ips let me play in the garden 'cos she had her housework to do."

But, Auntie Bessie, why was mamma crying when she went off with the two 'normous men?" he asked interestedly.

"I don't like to see mamma cry, do you?"

Bessie blinked again. Babs frowned, scenting at once some tragedy in that ingenious question.

"But your mother wouldn't go off when she's starting her tea-rooms?" Bessie objected.

"But she did, you know," Roddy said.

"And she hasn't come back. She went ever such a long time ago, too."

The chums looked at each other, remembering the deserted lawn, the unlatched door. Babs shook her head.

"Bessie, who is Mrs. Ph'ips?" she asked.

"Mrs. Phillips!" Bessie pointed vaguely to a clump of green trees, through which showed a tiled roof, a spiral of smoke ascending from its single chimney.

"That's Mrs. Bennett's neighbour," she explained. "A friend of hers. But-but, I say, what does it mean?"

"Auntie Bessie," Roddy asked interestedly. "Are you mended again?"

"Mum-mended?"

"Yes, you know. You said you had broken every bone in your body, didn't you?" Roddy asked. "I should think it must be a dreadful thing to break ev'ry bone. Do say you are mended, Auntie Bessie."

"Oh, of kik-course! I'm mummended, fine!" Bessie gasped. "I—I'm all right, really. Ha, ha! It was fuffin, wasn't it—and she distastefully picked a lump of mud out of her hair."

"But, Roddy, do tell us about your mother!"

"I don't know. Mrs. Ph'ips tell you," Roddy answered.

"Seems Mrs. Phillips is the clue to the mystery," Leila opined. "Say, what about trotting over? Roddy, you take us?"

But Roddy stoutly shook his curly head.

"You go," he said. "Roddy stay behind—and he glanced towards the bottom of the garden. "Roddy got something dreffully 'portant to do," he added. "Roddy must stop in the garden till the sun goes down. That's what the Magic Man says, you know."

They stared at the boy. Obviously Roddy was romantic and imaginative in mind.

"Well, let's all go," Marjorie suggested. "Bessie—"

"No, you go," Bessie said. "I'll stop and look after Roddy. You'd like me to

look after you, wouldn't you, Roddy darling?" she cooed.

"I'd like you to play games with me," Roddy corrected. "I'm a man, I can look after myself. That's Mrs. Ph'ips," he added, pointing towards the clump of trees, and Babs & Co. moved off.

"Auntie Bessie," he added, and took her hand confidently. "I've got something to show you. Just you, Aunt Bessie. It's ever so 'portant and ever so secret, though. I'm not going to show it to anyone else, only you; 'cos I like you, you know."

Bessie simpered. Dear little chap! For all his little life Bessie had known Roddy, and every time she met him she felt expanding love and warmth for the youngster in that big, generous heart of hers. Willingly she planted her plump palm into Roddy's tiny, though surprisingly firm, one. While Roddy anxiously looked round, he towed her down the garden path.

"Now," he said, drawing a deep breath, "close your eyes, Auntie Bessie."

Bessie obeyed.

"Now," Roddy ordered seriously, "say, let the spell work and the magic seeds grow. Say it three times, Auntie Bessie—and don't open your eyes," he added anxiously, "'cos if you do the spell will break, and if the spell breaks I shall never see the Golden Sword, you know."

It was all a mystery to Bessie. Not Bessie, even in her enormous fondness for Roddy, to be able to follow the workings of his agile mind. But Bessie believed in humouring children, and with her eyes tightly screwed up, she tolerantly repeated the formula.

Then—

"Look!" said Roddy proudly.

Bessie blinked. The little chap was pointing to a small flower bed. Certainly there was nothing extraordinary about that bed.

"What is it?" she asked.

"It's the magic garden," Roddy breathed. "There's seeds in it, Auntie Bessie. They haven't grown yet," he added informatively, "'cos I have to water them ev'ry night when the sun goes down and ev'ry morning when the sun comes up, you know, so I'd like you to think about that! That's why," Roddy added importantly, "I have to stop in the garden till the sun goes down! But it's a secret, you know, so you mustn't break the spell by telling anybody, must you? Now let's play Red Indians, and I'll scalp you."

But Bessie, with a shudder, promptly declined that invitation, looking anxiously towards the neighbouring cottage, at the door of which Babs & Co. were at that moment in the act of knocking. It opened. A woman with greying hair, wearing an apron over her clothes, appeared on the threshold.

"Oh, yes, misses!" she asked. "Is there anything I can do?"

"Well"—Babs bit her lip—"we're sort of friends of Roddy's mother," she said—"at least, our friend Bessie Bunter is a friend of hers. Roddy says—"

She stared at the sharply pained expression that came to Mrs. Phillips' face.

"You haven't heard?" the woman asked.

"No. What?"

"About—about—" Mrs. Phillips' kindly face worked. "Oh, it's too dreadful—too dreadful!" she broke out. "And, of course, it's all so terribly—so utterly silly! But the police—"

"The police?" Babs asked, with a start.

"The police—yes!" Mrs. Phillips shook her head. A tear glistened sud-

denly in her eyes. "The police came this afternoon just as the poor thing was so happily getting ready for that little business she's saved and saved for ever since her husband died, and—and—" Mrs. Phillips' lips quivered as they all started, staring at her. "There's—there's been a big theft at Marsh Manor—the place which Mrs. Bennett left yesterday. Some—some of the stolen property was found in the bag which Mrs. Bennett packed before leaving, and—and they've taken the poor soul off to prison!"

Bessie's Bright Idea!



IN utter consternation, Babs & Co. gazed at the woman.

Mrs. Phillips was openly sobbing now.

"It's not true!" she vehemently asserted. "I've known Mary Bennett for twenty years, and I'll swear—I'll swear—she would never do a thing like that! And that poor innocent lamb she's had to leave behind!"

Babs put a hand on her shoulder. Gentle Marjorie Hazeldene hastily sought for a handkerchief and dabbed her own eyes.

"Mrs. Phillips, tell us about it," Babs said.

And Mrs. Phillips, in a halting voice, told them. To be sure, there was not a great deal to tell. Until yesterday Roddy's mother had worked at Marsh Manor, keeping house for rich Mrs. Amersham. Yesterday, full of joy at the prospect of starting her cottage tea-rooms by the river, Mrs. Bennett had left. She had packed her bag in the servants' room. She had taken it away last night.

And then apparently, shortly after her departure, Mrs. Amersham had discovered the theft of her very valuable pearl-and-emerald necklace. She had communicated with the police. This afternoon two plain-clothes officers had paid a visit to Fallsweir Cottage and purely as a matter of form had examined the luggage which Mrs. Bennett had brought with her from Marsh Manor. Until that time, Mrs. Bennett had declared, she hadn't even touched the luggage, but the police found one pearl and one emerald in the bottom of the bag, and were detaining her in consequence.

"And—and that's all," Mrs. Phillips said—"that's all! I don't understand it—I don't! It—it's all so fantastic! Mary Bennett wouldn't have taken a pocket handkerchief that didn't belong to her! I told the police so!"

"And—and what did they say?" asked Babs.

"They just said that was a matter for the Bench. But what—what," Mrs. Phillips asked distractedly, "is the poor thing to do? Her whole life depended on her making a success of her tea-rooms. She spent practically every penny she had in buying up her first stocks. It will be Monday now before she'll come up before the magistrates."

"Oh my—my hat!" stammered Clara dismally.

"But Roddy," Babs asked—"what about him?"

"I'm looking after him. I told the police I'd be responsible," Mrs. Phillips said. "Not," she added tenderly, "that the little chap wants much looking after. He seems quite content to roam in the garden and play by himself. I shall sleep with him in the cottage. He's happiest there. But—oh dear—I'm sure I don't know what poor Mary

Bennett will do now!" she added. "With all that stuff going bad and stale, it'll just about ruin her. The police won't allow her bail, you see."

"Looks pretty bad for Mrs. Bennett," Leila Carroll said thoughtfully, when they were strolling back to the garden of Fallsweir Cottage. "But I guess that a woman with a friend like Mrs. Phillips isn't the sort who'd be likely to steal." "And Bessie," Marjorie murmured, "loves her. Dear Bessie may not be bright, but she has got an instinct for character."

"In any case," Clara said, "the mother of a ripping little chap like Roddy couldn't possibly do anything underhanded."

"Apart from which," Babs put in more practically, "it does seem to me that, if Mrs. Bennett wanted to steal from Marsh Manor, she'd have had heaps of opportunities long before yesterday. Hardly the sort of thing a woman who's hoping to make a success of a new career would attempt, if you ask me."

Practical and common sense, those arguments. And yet they did not lead anywhere. To the police, at least, the proofs of Mrs. Bennett's guilt were conclusive. And, anyway, how had two of the missing jewels come to be hidden in her bag?

In a thoughtful group, they reached the lawns again, and then suddenly broke into a chuckle as they saw a hot and perspiring Bessie crawling on the ground on all-fours.

Over Bessie's plump figure was spread a tablecloth, and in some ingenious way, obviously contrived by Roddy, Bessie sported a pair of horns made of paper. Roddy, with every appearance of hugely enjoying himself, was dancing around her, waving a large red handkerchief and occasionally fainting at her with his wooden sword.

"Crums, what's the giddy game now?" Clara grinned.

"Oh dud-dear! Oh lul-lawks! I'm hot!" Bessie panted. "I sus-say, Roddy, I—"

"You're a bull, Auntie Bessie!" Roddy said severely. "Bulls don't speak, you know; they roar! And I've wounded you ever so many times, and you haven't charged me once! Charge, bull!"

He flicked the handkerchief before her eyes. Bessie jumped forward, and buried under a spread of tablecloth, gaspingly spreadeagled herself on the ground. Roddy, leaping in, whooped.

"There!" he cried, and prodded. "I'm not hurting you, bull! Only tending, you know! Now you're dead, and I've won! If you like, I'll be the bull now, and I'll charge you!" he added generously.

"Crums! Forward, rescue squad!" gurgled Clara. "Let's get old Bess out of this! Ahem! Roddy, old chappie—"

"Hallo!" Roddy said, flinging round. "Look! I've killed the bull!" he announced, proudly pointing to the wooden sword and the gasping heap which writhed convulsively under the tablecloth. "But you can't come here! This is the bull ring, you know!"

"But the bull ring's on fire," Mabs said gravely. "We've come to rescue you."

"Fire!" Roddy looked round. "I can save myself," he added scornfully. "Ooo, though. Auntie Bessie, fire!" he shrilled excitedly. "I'm a fireman! Wait till I get my fireman's hat!"

And off, his sturdy little legs going like clockwork, Roddy scampered towards the house. Bessie, with a gasp, sat up amid the folds of the tablecloth.

"Oh dud-dear!" she gasped. "I—I

thuth-think I'm dud-dying! Where's Roddy?"

"I guess Roddy's joining the Fire Brigade at this moment," Leila Carroll chuckled. "And if you don't want to be turned into roast beef, old Rolypolyskins, you'd better make yourself scarce. Anyway, I guess we've got something to tell you. Come with us!"

Bessie, with a gasp, removed her horns—now decidedly crumpled. To the little garden shed not far away they all went, and there Marjorie thoughtfully shut the door.

Bessie blinked.

"I sus-say, what's the matter? What are you lul-looking so serious about, you know?"

"Bessie, we've got a shock for you," Babs said quietly.

"Shock?"

"About Mrs. Bennett."

"But what about Mrs. Bennett? You haven't seen her, have you?" Bessie asked eagerly.

"No, and not likely to for a few days," Mabs said. "But— Oh, Babs, you tell her!"

And Babs, as gently and as tactfully as she could, broke the news they had already learned from Mrs. Phillips. Bessie looked staggered.

"But it's rot—the—the most fearful rot, you know!" she burst out indignantly. "As if Mrs. Bennett is a thief! I shall jolly well write to the House of Parliament about this, you know! I think it's a scandalous shame the way the police are allowed to arrest innocent people. Look here, I'm jolly well going to the police station," she added, starting up. "I'll jolly well give those sus-silly people a piece of my mind!"

"Whoa, steady, old Rolypolyskins!" Leila said good-humouredly. "I guess that won't do any good. The question is," Leila added, "that Mrs. Bennett's spent all the cash she had on laying in food, and that food seems as if it's going to be wasted."

"Oh!" Bessie stuttered, her fat face expressing real alarm then. "Oh dud-dear! And I've told ever so many people to come along for tea, you know! Well!" she said suddenly.

"Well, what?" Babs asked.

"Well!" A flash of determination gleamed behind the fat one's spectacles. "I've got an idea," she said. "Why not?" she added, with challenging fierceness. "If Mrs. Bennett can't run her tea-room, why shouldn't we run it for her, then, you know?"

"Bessie!" cried Babs.

"Well, why not?" Bessie demanded again. "She's a friend of mine, isn't she? And I can jolly well cook, you know—cook like anything. And look!" She pointed through the tiny window which gave a view on to the lawns. "Sus-somebody's coming already."

The chums stared. But they stared with admiring enthusiasm. It was an idea—certainly, and no less a good one because, amazingly, it had come from the plump duffer of the Fourth Form. And, as Bessie said, already people were arriving. Four girls were at that moment standing on the lawn looking round.

"Well?" Bessie demanded.

"Come on, we'll do it!" Babs cried. "Bessie—"

"I'll cook," Bessie said. "Marjie, you help me, old thing. Babs, get the tables and things out— And look! Those girls are turning away. Babs, catch them—"

She was the first to burst through the door. Roddy, looking rather disconsolate in his cardboard fireman's helmet, and trailing a length of hose in his hand, squealed as she came out.

"Oh, Auntie Bessie, where ever have you been?" he cried. "I want to put you out, you know."

"Put me out?" Bessie started.

"Well, 'nyone can see you're on fire, you know," Roddy said seriously; and Bessie gave an alarmed jump as she



"OH, Auntie Bessie, where ever have you been?" little Roddy cried. "I want to put you out, you know." Bessie started. "Put me out?" she gasped. "Well, 'nyone can see you're on fire, you know," Roddy said seriously.

apprehensively looked down at herself. "Just stand still, and I'll squirt this water at you. 'Snot real water," he added consolingly, "'cos I can't get up to the taps. Only 'tending, Auntie Bessie. Oh, Auntie Bessie, you're running away!" he shrilled.

Auntie Bessie was. Mindful of her new duties, even Roddy for the moment had to take a back seat. Already Babs had caught up with the girls on the lawn, and two Friardale School boys at the same moment were in the act of entering the garden. She halted breathlessly.

"Please don't go, not for a moment," she begged. "I'm sorry we—we've been a bit delayed. Clara! Tables and chairs!" she cried.

"Coming!" Clara answered cheerfully.

And "coming" Clara was, literally staggering under a pile of folding tables and folding chairs, as she reeled across the lawns.

"Phoo! Oh dud-dear!" Bessie puffed inside the cottage. "Make the fire up, Marjorie. Lul-Leila, old thing, you'll fuf-find some menus in the cupboard, you know. Dish them out. Now," Bessie said, and with surprising energy bustled about finding things and producing things as if by magic. "Jolly good job, you know, I came to see this cottage with Mrs. Bennett last week, and sus-so know where everything is!" she beamed. "Oh crumbs! Some more people coming!"

People were coming. A real rush seemed to have started.

Little Roddy came in.

"Auntie Bessie, aren't you coming to play with me?" he asked plaintively.

"Oh crumbs! I kikk-can't—nun-not now," Bessie said. "Later on, Roddy. I—I'm working. There, have this cake, you know. Now run away and play like a good boy."

Roddy nodded. He looked rather wondering and awed. Even Roddy could see he was in the way in that hive of fearful industry. Out he went, cake in hand, and for a time nobody saw him again.

But, meantime, business was brisk. More and more people were arriving. There were many Cliff House girls among them—and what surprised cries as Babs, now reinforced by Leila and Mabs, waited upon them! But there was no time to explain, of course. For the first hour, indeed, the chums were rushed off their feet.

Inside the cottage Bessie gave orders, cooked eggs, toasted scones and muffins, and sliced ham and tongue with perspiring energy. Clara, who was too clumsy to act as waitress, was doing the serving, lading jam into dishes, eggs into cups, and in between whiles washing up the soiled crocks as they were brought back from the lawn. Still more people came, and business was going with a swing. Mrs. Phillips, rushing over from the neighbouring cottage, fluttered in amazement.

"But, my dears—my dears!" she cried. "Oh, great goodness! You—you are doing this to help Mrs. Bennett!"

"Of course," Bessie beamed. "Lo, Mrs. Phillips! It was my idea!" she declared proudly. "Marjorie, be careful that those eggs don't boil for more than three minutes. Eh, Babs? Of course we've got some Dundee cake!"

"Do you want any help?" Mrs. Phillips asked.

"No, thanks!" Bessie said promptly. Mrs. Phillips smiled. But she had her own work to do. Mrs. Phillips indeed, was extremely busy, for, apart from looking after her own little cottage, she

had several hundred binocular-cases to stitch for the local Courtfield leather manufacturers, who were working on a Government contract—leather-working at home being Mrs. Phillips' hard way of earning a livelihood. Off she flew, inwardly blessing those dear girls in her heart, while Babs and Mabs and Marjorie and Leila and Clara flew hither and thither.

Hard work! And hot work on that sunny afternoon. But they were happy. It was all in a good cause, and there was a thrill and a novelty in the venture. From the start everything went like clockwork.

"Two more eggs, Bess!" Babs sang, hurrying into the kitchen. "Slightly hard-boiled this time. Watercress, Clara—a double portion! Mabs, the girl in the green dress in the corner would like salmon sandwiches instead of paste. Hal-lo!" And Babs suddenly whistled. "Look who's arrived!"

"Whoops! Miss Belling and Lance Naylor!" breathed Leila.

Miss Belling, the general assistant mistress of Cliff House, looking radiantly pretty and extremely well-dressed, it was, laughing up into the face of her fiancé, Lance Naylor, as they strolled through the gate. Bessie chuckled.

"Yes, rather, you know. I tut-told Miss Belling that Mrs. Bennett was starting to-day, and she said she'd come along. Hurry up and see what they want, Babs!"

Babs darted off as the two took their places at a table. Miss Belling stared as Babs asked for her order.

"Why, Barbara, is this some joke?" she asked.

"No, Miss Belling. It's a fact," Babs said; and then, in a few words, explained: "You see, we—we're just doing it to help; to—to give Mrs. Bennett the sort of start she'd like to have made herself," she explained.

"And a very nice idea, too," Lance Naylor said admiringly. He grinned at Babs. Very fond indeed was Lance Naylor of the captain of the Fourth—almost as fond, indeed, as Miss Belling. "I happen to know Mrs. Bennett," he said, "and I've heard something about what happened."

"And—and you don't think—" Babs asked.

"No. Nobody who knows her could think it. Well, dear," he added to the mistress, "what order shall we give our charming young waitress to-day?"

Babs blushed. Wanda Belling laughed. She gave the order, and Babs happily scurried off.

She was humming then. Her heart glowed. If she had any lingering doubt about the innocence of Mrs. Bennett, those words of Lance Naylor completely dispelled them.

Suddenly Babs paused. Another customer was entering the little gate.

This customer was a stranger. A man. A tall, thin man with a tiny moustache and a pair of dark, piercing eyes. In some amazement he regarded the festively busy scene upon the lawn. He seemed, for a moment, to be taken aback. Then, raising his eyes, he saw Babs. Quickly he stepped forward.

"Hi, you," he rapped, "what is the meaning of this? What are all these people doing here?"

Babs gazed at him, her face flushing faintly at the insolence in the tone. People were craning round from their tables, looking on in surprise.

"I—I beg your pardon?" she said.

"What's the meaning of this?" the man repeated angrily.

Babs' hands clenched.

"I'd like to know," she said quickly,

"what right you have to ask that? Who are you?"

The man's eyes glimmered.

"You insist upon my answering?"

"Yes," Babs said indignantly.

"Then," said the man, with a scowl, "here it is. I am a police officer, and I have come here, under orders, to search this house. Now, please, tell all these people to go away!"

A Thief in the Night!



FOR an instant Babs regarded those grim features of the man in utter bewildered dismay. A police officer! She hadn't thought of that.

Hadn't thought, until this moment, that the house was still suspect!

Almost helpless, the feeling which seized her then. She heard the sudden buzz and mutter about her, and she saw, with helpless dismay, one or two people hastily rising in their seats. The man glared.

"You hear?" he rapped. "Y-yes," stammered Babs. "Oh dear, I—I had no idea—"

"One moment!" It was Lance Naylor who lounged up from his seat. "Just a moment. Please, folks, don't go," he said. "This young lady," he added to the police officer, "happens to be a friend of mine, and, policeman or not, you've no right to talk to her like that. You assert you are a police officer?"

"I am!" the man said stiffly.

"Might I inquire what division?"

"Hang it, sir, that's not your business!"

"My business," Lance Naylor retorted levelly, "is to look after the interests of my young friend. And you, as a police officer, cannot refuse to answer legal questions. I am within my rights in asking you your name and the division you belong to."

The man paused. Was it fancy, or did Babs see a look of fear dart into his eyes? But he answered:

"I am Inspector Rogers, of the Courtfield Division."

"I see," Lance nodded. "And, of course, you have brought your search warrant? May I see it, please?"

The man's face changed colour. Leila had stolen up behind Babs now. People who had been in the act of rising had resumed their seats, all staring interestedly towards the scene of the little drama. But distinctly the tall man looked uneasy; distinctly he appeared out of his depth. He put a hand to his pocket, hesitated, withdrew it again.

"I—I left my warrant at the station," he muttered uncertainly.

Lance Naylor's eyes narrowed.

"Rather remis for an officer of the law, isn't it?" he asked quietly. "I really think you had better run off and get that warrant right away. Otherwise," he added grimly, "I may find it necessary to phone up the superintendent of the Courtfield Division myself—just, of course, to satisfy myself as to your credentials!"

There could be no question that the man's face paled then. Baffled his look! For a moment hate shot from his eyes. And then, without another word, he slouched off back to the gate. Babs blinked.

"But, Mr. Naylor—"

Lance Naylor laughed as he reseated himself.

"Don't worry," he said easily. "Get on with the business, Barbara. I don't think," he added, with a smile towards his wondering sweetheart, "that you'll be troubled with him

again. That chap was no more a police-officer than I am. And, as far as I know—and I know most of the officers in the Courtfield division—there's not one of them named Rogers."

"You—you mean he was just pretending?" Babs asked.

"Just that—although why he should I can't understand. Now, let's have our tea, Barbara."

Still rather shaken, Babs served out the tea. Leila glanced at her meaningly. The atmosphere was eased now, however; guests once more were chatting away, and Miss Belling swelled with pride as she intercepted the admiring glances turned towards Lance. But why, if Lance was right, should a stranger try to bluster his way into the house by making such a fake declaration as that?

Despite Lance Naylor's reassurances, Babs wasn't too easy in her mind. For the rest of the afternoon, she found herself gazing rather anxiously towards the gate every time she tripped on to the lawn. The rush was nearly over then, however. Guests were dispersing. Lance Naylor smiled at her as he paid his bill.

"Don't worry," he said. "If that Johnny had been what he pretended to be he'd have been back here half an hour ago."

He turned to go. But Miss Belling paused.

"Barbara, I do think it's so marvelously kind of you," she breathed, "and I am—so glad! But how long are you going to keep this up?"

"Well, as long as we can."

"You'll remember you have to ask Miss Bullivant's permission?"

Babs paused. Until that moment she had not bothered about that aspect of the matter. But, naturally, they could hardly carry on without consulting Miss Bullivant, who, as acting headmistress of Cliff House during a temporary absence of Miss Primrose's, ordered all their comings and goings. Miss Belling smiled, however.

"But don't worry, Barbara," she said. "I'm sure Miss Bullivant will be only too glad to give you permission. In any case," she promised, "I'll have a word with her myself as soon as we get back to school. Good-bye now!"

She went off on the arm of her young man. Babs and Leila, glowing, returned. The rush hour was over now. A few couples still lingered at their tables, but no more orders were forthcoming. Bessie, hot and flustered, breathed fervently.

"Oh dud-dear! Phoo! What a rush! But, I say, what about some tea ourselves, girls. I'm fuf-famished, you know. And where's Roddy? Roddy will want his tea. Roddy!" she called through the open window into the garden. "Roddy!"

There was no reply.

"Roddy!" Bessie called again, and alarmedly blinked. "I sus-say, where is he?"

And then, as they all looked askance, there came a muffled thumping from the hut which had housed the folding tables and the chairs. It was accompanied by a piping voice:

"Please, I'm shut up I—I can't get out!"

"Roddy!" quavered Bessie.

And, without waiting to consult the others, she dashed from the room. She reached the hut—and she blinked again as, reaching it, she saw that the door was not only closed, it was locked. Alarmedly she turned the key in the

lock and swung open the door. Roddy blinked up at her with wide eyes.

"Oh, Auntie Bessie, a big, bad, thin man shut me in!" he said indignantly. "And I've been here ever such a long time, you know, and I've shouted and shouted, and nobody ever came—not even you! Auntie, why did the nasty, big, bad, thin man lock me in?" he added inquiringly. "Has mamma come home yet?"

"Nun-no!" Bessie stuttered. "She—she's gone away for—for a little while. But, Roddy, what sort of man was it?"

"Don't know. Didn't see his face, you know," Roddy said. "He had a hank'chief to it. I think he must be a pirate, you know, 'cos he was ever so rough, and next time I see him I'm going to shoot him bang with my gun! Can I have some tea, Auntie Bessie?"

"Roddy, have some cake?" she said. "You're sure that the man had a handkerchief to his face?"

"Yes, a big white one," Roddy replied. "Just like a pirate, you know."

"And you didn't recognise him. I mean, had you ever seen him before?"

"Oh, no!" Roddy said. "All the mens I know don't put hank'chiefs on their faces, you know, 'cept when they sneeze or blow noses. Auntie Bessie, can I have some jam, please? St'awb'ry, please."

Babs' brow wrinkled. "All the same," she said, "it does rather look as if the man was afraid Roddy might recognise him, doesn't it? And, I say, wouldn't that explain it?" she added, with sudden excitement. "Supposing Roddy did know him? It would have been rather awkward,

CLIFF HOUSE PETS

No. 10

Janet Jordan's GYP

Make no mistake about it, Gyp is no ordinary dog. His breed is Toy Pomeranian and in every outward respect he is exactly like other toy Pomeranians, with his perky little head and his shining jet black coat.

According to Piper, the porter, however, Gyp is always "that little black imp of mischief!" According to his mistress, Janet Jordan, he is just a darling "wonder-dog." According to a great many others he is "that nuisance" or "that pest!" Hardly a day passes unless Gyp is in some scrape or other.

For Gyp most certainly has a sense of humour. Gyp, like Ting-a-Ling, is an ardent practical joker. The hours of worry that that dog gives Piper in coyly hiding from him after exercises! The times he has slipped his collar and escaped! And the things he seems to take a fancy to and convey to his kennel! The cunning way he has of hiding, not only himself, but the things he has "bagged."

But perhaps Piper is Gyp's greatest victim. Gyp is always stealing Piper's slippers, his socks and even his pipe!

But Piper, despite the many dances Gyp leads him, has a warm spot in his crusty old heart for the little black Pom—for Gyp is the only dog to which Piper's own cat, Miggs, has ever shown a disposition to be friendly.

Like Gyp, Miggs is black, and very often is to be found snuggled up with Gyp in his kennel.

Sometimes Gyp is allowed in the school! And what wails there are afterwards! Janet Jordan hears of stockings, shoes, books, and even cushions that have disappeared as if by magic. And they are only recovered after the most strenuous hunts in the queerest of places.

Not long ago Bessie Bunter, washing in the cloak-room, lost her spectacles. What a hunt then! The cloak-room, searched from end to end, proved barren. Study No. 4, library, tuckshop—all failed to reveal the

"Y-yes, rather!" Bessie gulped, and with the little chap's hand in hers, led him across to the cottage. "But, I say, that's a bit thick, you know," she said indignantly to Mabs and Babs, and the rest, "shutting up Roddy in that awful hut. Why, he—he might have been saturated, you know."

"Suffocated is the word, I guess," Leila said. "Still, sure is queer!" she frowned, and looked at Babs. "First the fake detective pops up on the scene. Then we hear that fake detective has imprisoned Roddy—because it seems pretty certain he was the fellow who did it. Now why should Mr. Fake Detective take care to get Roddy out of the way?"

Babs looked at the youngster



treasured "specs"! And where do you think they were found after a two-hour search? On the chair in the cloak-room exactly where Bessie had left them. Gyp had been about that afternoon, you see. Where those spectacles had been is a mystery. True they were covered with mud, but they were, miraculously, undamaged.

Gyp, apart from his flair for fun, also has other peculiar characteristics. He is fond of bones, but just you dare give him a bone that is not at least as large as himself, and he will sniff disdainfully at you and turn his back. Dare to scold him for something he has done, and he will sit up on his hind legs and cover his eyes with his forepaws, exactly as if he were weeping. Tell him to "be quiet," (a frequently needed order) and he will roll on his back with all four feet in the air, and remain so for minutes. Give him a coin when he is off the lead, and see him run immediately and excitedly to the tuckshop to buy himself a chocolate biscuit.

An endearing little chap, to be sure, but oh! such a worry at times to poor Janet! An imp, a pest, a nuisance he may be but he is well-loved, and perhaps loved best by those he worries most!

You know, of course, that he spent his earliest days in a circus?

wouldn't it, for him to work off his fake detective stunt with Roddy on the scene."

"But what," Clara frowned, "did he come here for?"

"Something to do with Mrs. Benn—" Mabs started, and then, glancing at Roddy, bit her lip. "I never realised. I—I'm sorry, I—I forgot!"

Tea was over then. They cleared up. As there seemed no likelihood of further customers, they packed up the tables and chairs into the hut, washed up and tidied round. Meantime, Bessie had taken Roddy—looking a little tired now, after the excitements of the day—for a walk in the garden.

"Auntie Bessie," he asked curiously, "is the sun going down?"

Bessie blinked.

"Why, yes, I thuth-think so."

"Then," Roddy said, with determination, "I must water my magic garden, you know. Get the water-can, Auntie Bessie. Not the big one, you know. Only the little one."

Bessie got the water-can—a particularly fiery red toy one. Solemnly Roddy filled it from the water-but, solemnly marched off with Bessie down the garden. Bessie, yawning, watched him as he watered a small circle in the middle of the bed, and then closed her eyes and repeated the "spell," at Roddy's earnest direction. After that they returned to the cottage, to find Babs & Co. already preparing to leave, and Mrs. Phillips, who had drifted over with her own night things, in possession.

Roddy's eyes filled with the greatest dismay when he learned Bessie had to go, too.

"But I don't want Auntie Bessie to go!" he protested. "I want Auntie Bessie to stop and play polar bears with me. Auntie Bessie makes a lovely polar bear," he added, appreciatively studying Auntie Bessie's ample frame. "Auntie Bessie—"

"Oh, crumbs! To-to-morrow, Roddy," Bessie stammered. "To-morrow, you know. Then—then we'll play over such a lovely game, you know."

"All right. But where's mamma?" Roddy asked. "Mamma hasn't come home. Oh, I don't want to go to bed," he added wriggling as Mrs. Phillips began to peel off his jersey. "I want mamma. Isn't mamma coming to sleep with me, Auntie Bessie?"

"Nun-not to-night," Bessie gulped. "You see—oh, dud-dear!"

"Then Auntie Bessie sleep with me," Roddy pleaded. "Please, Auntie Bessie!"

But Auntie Bessie, looking almost on the verge of tears, simply had to tear herself away. She went, with Roddy's protesting little voice in her ears, rather defiantly, dabbing her eyes as she cycled with her chums back to Cliff House School. Few of them spoke. Now that the excitement was over they were beginning to be conscious of a growing weariness. As soon as they reached Cliff House however, there was a message for Barbara. It was from Miss Bullivant.

"Ah, Barbara," the temporary head-mistress said when Babs stood before her. "Miss Belling has been telling me—but I prefer to hear the story from your own lips. What is it, exactly, that you are doing at Fallsweir Cottage?"

Babs told her.

"And a very, very worthy cause," that usually strict mistress commented. "I only hope, Barbara, that it does turn out that Mrs. Bennett is innocent. However, that is beside the point, as far as you are concerned, and you certainly have my permission to carry on. But only on condition, of course," she reminded her warningly, "that you keep order, treat your guests with respect, and give no cause for complaint. And, Barbara—"

"Yes, Miss Bullivant?"

"I really think," Miss Bullivant said thoughtfully, "that you had better not extend your circle of helpers. There is a saying about too many cooks, you know, and you have managed very commendably, so far. I may," Miss Bullivant said, "I may—but I will not promise—look in at the cottage myself to-morrow afternoon."

Babs beamed. Happily she danced back to Study No. 4—which she shared

with Mabs and Bessie—to spread the good news among her chums.

There was, of course, some curiosity in the Fourth Form that evening—and in forms above the Fourth. All the school had heard now of Babs & Co.'s activities at Fallsweir Cottage. In the Common-room the chums were bombarded for information, with offers of help. But Babs shook her head.

"I'm sorry! We'd really love to have you all," she said. "But Miss Bullivant's put her foot down!"

"But it's a jolly good idea," Janet Jordan approved. "Who thought of it, Babs?"

"Ahem!" Bessie simpered modestly. "What's the matter, Bessie? Got a cold?" Janet asked.

"Eh? Who says I've got a cold? I was just remarking," Bessie said loftily, "that it was my brilliant idea, you know. Naturally, being a Bunter, I'm noted for brain-waves—"

"Or crater on the brain!" June Merrett chuckled.

But it was a good idea. Everybody agreed on that point. Bessie, for once, had excelled herself.

All the same, the dear, plump duffer was thinking more of Roddy, and Roddy's mother than her own triumphant brain-wave. There was a rather forlorn look on her round face when she went to bed that night. Babs, noticing it, smiled.

"Penny for them, Bess."

"Nun-nothing," Bessie said. "But it—it's just awful, Babs, to think of little Roddy going to be without his mother Mrs. Bennett used to tell him such lovely stories, you know, every night before he went to bed, and he'll miss them. Oh, dud-dear, I wish I'd got permission to sleep in the cottage, you know!"

Babs smiled. Dear old tender-hearted Bessie! A duffer she might be, at times, but what a heart of the purest gold was hers! She said consolingly: "Never mind, old Bess! You'll see him again in a few hours."

And on that comforting prospect Bessie went to sleep. But, most astonishingly for Bessie—who was usually the last up—she was awake before rising bell the next morning. And it was Bessie who, for once, actually roused Babs & Co.

That day was Saturday, and, being Saturday, was, of course, a whole day's holiday. Immediately after breakfast the chums got out their cycles. Once again, it was a glorious morning, already hot. At half-past eight they came within sight of the cottage.

There was little Roddy, anxiously waiting at the gate. He rushed with such a scream of whole-hearted delight at Bessie that he almost spilled her into the road. His little face was beaming.

"Kiss Auntie Bessie!" he said. "Ooo! Auntie Bessie, nasty mans came last night. He broke a window, you know, so what do you think of that?"

"Who broke a window?" Bessie asked.

"Nasty mans."

"What nasty man?"

"Don't know. It was dark, you know, and we didn't see him. But Mrs. Phillips says he must have been a robber, you know, so isn't that 'citing'? Come and see the hole," he added eagerly, energetically towing the stumbling Bessie up the garden path. "Look!" he shrilled.

Bessie stopped. She looked. Babs & Co., coming up immediately behind her, paused. Roddy was pointing to the window of the tea-room, and in that window, just beneath the catch, was a neatly cut, circular hole.

The chums tensed, thrilling, wondering, and, at the same time, Mrs. Phillips rushed out of the cottage. She gulped as she saw them.

"Oh, Miss Redfern! I—Roddy has told you what has happened?" she asked, as she saw the direction in which their eyes were fastened.

"Well, not quite," Babs said. "What really did happen?"

"I don't know—all," Mrs. Phillips shook her head. Her face became rather troubled all at once. "I suppose it was about midnight," she said. "I heard footsteps in the garden, then a scratching sound. I caught up the lamp, and, taking a walking-stick, went down into the tea-room. Then I saw this hole in the window. I saw a hand coming through it—"

"Isn't it 'citing'?" Roddy beamed. "I do think Mrs. Phillips is ever so brave, you know."

"And then—well, I hit at the hand with the stick," Mrs. Phillips said. "The man, whoever he was, gave a cry and dashed off."

The chums looked at each other. Babs frowned.

"Was he a tall man?" she asked.

"I didn't see him properly, as I've said," Mrs. Phillips said. "But yes, I think he was tall. I—Miss Redfern, what's the matter?"

For Babs had stepped forward. She was pointing over at the flower-bed under the window. And there, as plainly as if it had been pressed into a mould, was the imprint of a foot—a rather large foot, with a distinctive design in crosses and circles, obviously made by the pattern on a rubber sole.

"A clue!" she cried.

Not a Successful Afternoon!



A CLUE it was, but after the first exciting thrill of its discovery, it was rather difficult to know what use to make of it.

And then Babs, with a sudden, thrilled little exclamation, rushed round to the hut in the back garden. Wonderingly the others followed her.

They found Babs on one knee before the hut door, intently examining the soft earth there. She lifted her head. Her eyes were blazing.

"Look!" she cried, and pointed to a footprint, faint, but quite distinct in pattern. "That was made by the fake detective yesterday—"

The chums gasped.

For it was exactly similar to the footprint left by the unknown intruder of last night!

"And that means," Babs cried, "that the man who broke in last night and the fake detective are one and the same!"

Rather breathlessly they all stared at each other. But although here was fresh evidence, it didn't seem to lead them anywhere until, half an hour later, Babs suddenly said:

"I've got an idea!"

Five of them were in the kitchen then, busy polishing up the crockery and the utensils to be used in the rush they hoped would come in the afternoon. Bessie, who had not started her cooking duties, was in the garden playing some mysterious game with little Roddy—the game consisting of Bessie lying down while Roddy, with excited whoops, went hurtling backwards and forwards over her apprehensive body.

"It doesn't seem likely," Babs said,



"I AM a police officer," said the man. "I've come here to search this house. Now, please, tell all these people to go away!" Babs looked at him in dismay. Did this mean they would have to shut up the tea-rooms?

"that anyone would take the trouble to burgle a poor cottage like this."

"It doesn't. But somebody did," Clara pointed out. "Give me the knife polish, Marjorie."

"Unless," Babs went on, "there was something of extraordinary value in it."

"Such as?" Mabs asked.

"Such as," Babs said thoughtfully, and they all stopped and stared at her, "the rest of the pearls and the emeralds in Mrs. Amersham's necklace! Remember, only two of the stones were found. They were found in this cottage. Where then, are the rest?"

They all stared at their leader. That idea had not occurred to them before.

"Then—then you suggest that—that Mrs. Bennett did—?" Marjorie asked, round eyed.

"I'm suggesting nothing," Babs said. "I don't believe any more than you do that Mrs. Bennett's a thief. At the same time, where those two stones were, the others might be. It's just possible that somebody did hide the stones in this cottage, planted those two on Mrs. Bennett to get her accused of the robbery, and then intended to get hold of the other stones as soon as she was out of the way. Unfortunately for him, however, we took possession yesterday—and Mrs. Phillips had possession last night! Girls, I believe I'm right!"

The others looked at each other. It certainly seemed that Babs had struck the right track, but—where was the proof? And—what were they going to do about it?

"OH, AUNTIE BESSIE, aren't they nice!"

"Yes, aren't they?"

Bessie Bunter beamed, and with a glowing smile drew out a panful of delicious cakes from the oven.

"Yum! Smell them!" she invited.

"Smell them, Roddy!"

"Yes," Roddy said. "I think they smell ver so lovely, Auntie Bessie. Mamma makes cakes like those, you know. May I have one, please?"

It was three o'clock that afternoon. Lunch had come and gone. While Bessie busied herself making cakes and

scones indoors, Babs, Mabs, and Leila basked lazily in the hot sunshine on the lawns, snatching a rest before the first onslaught of customers arrived. Clara, in the garden, was busy gathering salad stuff, and Marjorie and Bessie, with little Roddy—Roddy having pleaded very earnestly to be allowed to help—were in the kitchen. There had been no more alarms.

"But we're going to see him again," Babs said, referring to the mystery man. "I feel it. It's pretty plain now that he's after something. It's pretty plain that he's desperate to get hold of it. First he pretended to be a detective. That didn't come off. Then he turned burglar. That didn't come off."

"M'm!" said Mabs. "And you do really think, Babs, he's after the rest of those stones?"

"Well, what else?" Babs asked.

"But—but how does he know they are here," Mabs asked, "when the police have already searched the place? Oh, Babs, you—you don't think he might have hidden them himself?"

Babs' brows puckered. As a matter of fact, that was exactly what she had been thinking. And she had been thinking, too—if only they could catch the man in the act! If only they could prove that he was after those stones!

More than ever the chums were convinced of the innocence of Mrs. Bennett now. It made their hearts ache to think of that poor, innocent woman shut up in close confinement, probably eating her heart out about her little son and her business, while her innocence still remained unproved. Fortunately, however, Mrs. Phillips had been allowed to see her that morning, and Mrs. Phillips had brought back to the chums her fervently breathed blessings for their help.

"Well, I only hope," Leila said, "that we have as good a day to-day as we had yesterday, and—Barbara, a customer, I guess!" she said, sitting up.

A customer it was—or looked like one. A girl had just sauntered in through the gates—a girl of about their own age, carrying a small bag.

"Tea?" Babs beamed, as she hurried towards her. "Tea?"

"Tea?" The girl looked at her, then she laughed. "Oh dear, no! I've not come for tea. I've come to help," she said.

"Help?"

"Yes. My name is Alma Perkins. I'm a friend of Mrs. Bennett's, you see. I was in service with her at Marsh Manor. I've just been to the police station to see Mrs. Bennett—oh, poor woman, she is so dreadfully cut up! Well, of course, I asked her if there was anything I could do for her—because, you know, I am fond of her—and she suggested that I might like to come along and give you girls a hand."

She smiled. Babs smiled back. If Mrs. Bennett had sent the girl, that was all right.

"Well, that—that's fine!" she said. "Topping! We'll be pleased to have you—yes. What would you like to do?"

"May I help in the kitchen?" Alma asked. "I am a kitchenmaid at the manor, you know. Is Roddy about?" she asked. "I think you'll find he recognises me if you're doubtful about my credentials."

Babs laughed. She took her into the kitchen. Bessie was making pancake biscuits then. She was utilising a clean tin bath in which to deposit the freshly cooked articles, and on the table by her side was a great bowl of creamy batter. Little Roddy, coat off, sleeves rolled up, was under Bessie's direction energetically cleaning out the little cake tins. He turned round as Babs and the newcomer came in.

"I say, Auntie Barbara, look at me," he said. "I'm working like anyfink, you know. Oh, hallo, Alma!" he said. "Have you brought my mamma back with you?"

"You know Alma, Roddy?" Babs asked.

"Oh, yes, Auntie Barbara! Alma works where mamma works, don't you, Alma? Alma threw my teddy bear on the fire, didn't you, Alma, and I was dreffily 'noyed about that, you know. Auntie Bessie, shall I put these tins here?" he asked.

"That's it, Roddy," Bessie beamed. "I sus-say, haven't you made a nice job of them? Oh, phoo! I sus-say, it's

warm in here!" she said. "Is Alma going to help, Babs?"

"Just tell me what to do," Alma smiled.

Bessie beamed. Bessie loved giving orders. While Alma unlocked her case, which proved to contain an apron, she set her her tasks. At the same moment, Leila popped her head round the door.

"Prepare for action, kiddlets! Customers!"

Customers they were—two of them. Both were Cliff House girls—Audrey Verner of the Sixth Form, and her little Third Form cousin, Jill. Hardly were they seated, however, than Christine Wilmer of the Lower Fifth arrived, waving gaily to Babs as that girl was hurrying back with Audrey's order. Then came Jemima Carstairs, followed by Linda Gay, Eve Clavering, Queenie Pelham, and Hazel Brent, of Whitechester School.

The rush was starting. Babs dashed into the kitchen. Eggs for Audrey, cream tarts for Jill, pancake biscuits for Christine.

More and more customers were arriving then. If yesterday had been a busy day, to-day seemed like breaking records. As before, Babs & Co. were run off their feet.

But things were not harmonious in the kitchen. When Babs hurried back for the next order, she found a first-class row in progress. The contestants were Bessie and Alma Perkins.

And the kitchen floor was swimming in yellow batter.

"Oh, goodness, what's the matter?" she cried.

"It was Roddy!" declared Alma. "He knocked the batter-bowl over!"

"But I didn't, you know," Roddy said indignantly. "I never went near the bowl, you know."

"And I," Bessie glowered furiously, "take Roddy's word. If Roddy says he didn't knock the bowl off the table, then Roddy jolly well didn't knock it off, so there. Perhaps you did," she added.

"Look here!" Alma hooted.

"Oh, my hat, wait a minute!" Babs gasped. "I—I expect it was an accident. But, Bessie—"

"Eggs, Bess!" Leila trilled, tripping in. "And pancake biscuits! Say, Babs, the Bull and Miss Keys have just come in, and they're sitting at one of your tables! But stars! Who's been painting the floor?" she added, as she saw the batter. "If Miss—"

"Roddy did it!" put in Alma.

"I didn't!" cried Roddy. "Aunt Bessie—"

"All right! All right! Oh, goodness, don't row!" Babs cried. "Alma, give a hand to clear the mess up, will you! Clara! Marjorie!" she called. "Now, Bessie, this order!" she added feverishly. "We can't keep the customers waiting!"

Glowing and decidedly ruffled, Bessie got the order. Babs hurried off with it.

Rather flushed, she made her way across the lawn, pausing to smile at Miss Bullivant and Miss Keys—the latter Cliff House's gym and drill mistress—who had taken the table nearest the cottage. She deposited her order and hurried back.

Miss Bullivant was frowning.

"Well, Barbara. I am pleased to see you have such a good crowd," she said. "But surely there is an unwarrantable noise in the kitchen?"

Babs glanced worriedly in the direction of that apartment. Bessie's voice upraised and wrathful, could be heard exclaiming:

"But you kicked it over, you cat—"

"No, I didn't, it was Roddy!"

"I tell you—"

"Oh, my hat!" Babs cried. "Miss Bullivant, please—excuse me!" And she rushed off towards the kitchen, where Bessie, red-faced with rage, was dancing in the middle of the floor, her arms and her stockings soaked in the warm soapy water which Leila had brought to swab the floor, and the pail upturned, lying on its side. She glowered.

"Look here, Babs, I refuse to work with that cat—"

"Oh, my goodness, all right!" Babs sighed. "Alma, please!" she said.

"You take a turn at waiting. I'll help Bessie. Get Miss Bullivant's order, will you?"

"But—"

"And please do hurry," Babs said tactfully.

Alma shrugged. But she went out. For five, ten minutes, peace was restored. Then Marjorie came in.

"I say, Babs—"

"Yes, Marjorie?"

"Three of the customers are complaining that some salt has been mixed with the sugar."

"Oh, golly me!"

"And—two of them have found soot in the lettuce," Marjorie said anxiously. "And— Oh goodness! What's that?"

There was a shriek from outside.

"You clumsy girl!"

Babs groaned. Helter-skelter she rushed out, to find Miss Bullivant, red with fury, standing up, frantically wiping a stream of jam from her skirt. Almost crimson with dismay, Alma stood by, looking on helplessly.

"Oh dear! I—I'm sorry!" she stammered. "It was an accident."

"Accident!" Miss Bullivant hooted. "Accident! T'cha! Ugh! Look at that! Barbara," she added, as she saw the leader of the Fourth Form, "who is this girl? And why, Barbara, after I asked you not to add to your helpers, have you taken on someone else? The girl is utterly unfit to act as waitress. She is clumsy."

"Oh dear, yes!" stammered Babs.

"Alma, you get back in the kitchen," she added. "I'll serve."

"Barbara, listen!" Miss Bullivant went on angrily. "I refuse to allow this to go on. I have heard many complaints from the people around me. To judge from the quarrels and noises coming from the kitchen, this place is a menagerie! I can only suspect that one of you is playing jokes. Either this ceases at once, Barbara, or you close up this place and come back to school."

"Y—yes, Miss Bullivant!" Babs gasped.

But her eyes were gleaming then. Her suspicions against Alma had become aroused. She hurried back into the kitchen. There was no time to mince words or matters.

"Look here, Alma, do you know anything about this?" she asked.

"Me? No. What should I know about it?" Alma asked.

"You haven't been mixing salt and soot with things?"

"Oh, Miss Redfern!"

"All the same," Babs said grimly, "it's funny. And I really think, Alma, that you'd better find some other job to do—outside the kitchen. No, please!" she added sharply. "We can't afford to lose customers at this rate."

"You mean you don't want me?" Alma cried.

"No," Babs said.

Alma glared. She shrugged, and then went outside. Leila came in

"What a life!" she gasped. "Two customers have packed up, Babs. One found a caterpillar in her jam tart. The other says that boot polish is in the tea. You'd better look at everything before we take it out. Roddy, go and cut some lettuces from the garden."

Roddy nodded. Bessie was looking happier. Now that Alma had gone she seemed magically to become her old good-natured and good-tempered self once more. They bustled around, carefully testing everything that was on the serving-table.

"What's that?" cried Babs suddenly.

A furious buzzing came to their ears. It was followed by a yell from the lawn.

"Bees! Bees!"

"Get out!"

"Look, a swarm of them!"

Babs jumped. In stricken amazement the chums stared at each other. Now from the lawn came the sounds of wild stampede.

Chairs were crashing, people screaming. Flurriedly Babs darted through the door, and then dodged as a sudden angry hum sounded above her, and a dark cloud seemed to pass over her head.

"I'm stung! Oh, oh!" Miss Bullivant, dancing like a dervish on the lawn, was frenziedly clutching that somewhat thin nose of hers, and blindly swiping in all directions at a swarm of bees buzzing about her head. "Barbara, how dare— Ow, ow, ow!"

"Oh dear! I'm sorry!" Babs gasped.

But she noticed, even as she ran up, the change that had come to the busy tea party. Most of the customers had disappeared. A remnant of half a dozen, bees angrily humming about them, were rushing to the little wicket gate.

Every table had been overturned in the mad scampor for safety. The lawn was littered with broken crockery, remains of food, and spilled tea. Miss Bullivant was stung in three or four places, while Miss Keys was swiping about her with her walking-stick.

At Miss Bullivant's side, Barbara flicked bees off her for a serviette.

"Barbara, how dare—how dare—"

The mistress quivered: "I am hurt, severely, in several places. You will all leave here at once! Do you hear? I forbid you utterly to sell a single further tea! Take that notice down, clear this mess up, and come back to school. From now on this place is out of bounds to you all. If—ow, woo!" she added, placing a hand to her face. "Barbara, you hear?"

"Oh crumbs, yes, Miss Bullivant! But let me do something—"

"I utterly refuse, Barbara, to let you do anything—anything!" Miss Bullivant stormed. "Woo! Miss Keys, please come along!"

She stamped off. Groaning, the chums looked at each other. How the dickens—

And then, from the back of the cottage, came a shout. It was a shout in Roddy's piping voice.

"You're a nasty, wicked thing, Alma! Those were my bees, you know, and now they've all flowed away. Auntie Bessie—" And then Roddy's voice turned to a shrill wail of pain. "Oh!"

For distinctly there had come the sound of a slap.

Babs set her lips. She looked at her chums. Round the back of the house she flew, to find Bessie, very wrathful, in the act of emerging from the kitchen door, and little Roddy trying hard to stem the tears, with his hand to his face, as he slowly rose from the ground beside Alma. Bessie's eyes were blazing.

"You—you awful cat!" she gasped. "You beastly thing! You hit him!"

Not like Bessie to be warlike; but Bessie, at that moment, was quivering with fury. Apparently she had seen the blow which Babs & Co. had only heard. With every protective instinct a-bristle, she was rushing right at Alma. She reached her. Alma, instead of giving back, furiously rushed forward. Bessie, caught off her balance, was sent spinning.

She staggered back, crashing against the water-butts that was supported against the wall. The water-butts were rotten and old. Untouched, it would have probably survived another six months of useful life, but it was certainly in no condition to meet the full onslaught of Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter.

So I should like to know what you think about that? Alma had a long pole, you know," Roddy said, "and I saw her when I was picking lettuces."

"You little liar!" Alma hissed. "Thanks!" Babs snapped. "That's enough, Alma. And thanks," she added bitterly, "for messing up the afternoon! I'll take good care that Mrs. Bennett knows all about it. You can clear off, and please don't ever come again. Oh, goodness, Bessie, you're drenched!" she added.

And while Alma, a sneer on her features, turned away, Babs turned to Bessie. Bessie was drenched—and not only drenched, but furious.

"Th—that cat!" she spluttered. "Never mind. You come with me," Babs said. "Mrs. Phillips might have some clothes to lend you until we can

Babs frowned, suddenly, understanding. She thought she knew then why Alma had done her best to ruin the afternoon. For Alma, of course, was in league with that man.

And that man— He was the same who had come into their lives yesterday as the fake detective whom Lance Naylor had outwitted. Alma was his accomplice!

A Surprise for Babs & Co.!



Of course, we were fools!" Barbara Redfern said, with annoyance.

"We ought to have guessed. But what with the rush, and one thing and another, there was



"COME and see the hole," little Roddy said eagerly, and as they all hurried up the garden path: "Look!" he shrilled. The chums looked at each other breathlessly. Someone had tried to break into the cottage during the night!

Desperately Bessie grabbed its rim as she hurtled against it. There was a crash, and suddenly the side gave way, and out cascaded the water, with Bessie full in the middle of it.

"I sus-say, I'm drowned!" she gurgled.

Fortunately, Roddy was to one side. The rush of water ended as soon as it began, but it left Bessie in a sorry position amid the ruins of the barrel, thoroughly drenched from head to toes. Angrily Babs caught Alma by the arm, while Mabs and Clara went to the fat one's rescue.

"What did you do that for?" "Well, she was going to hit me!" Alma snapped.

"Because you hit Roddy!" "I didn't!"

"Oh, yes, you did! We heard you! What did you hit him for?"

"I tell you I didn't!"

"Well, but you did, you know," Roddy said instantly, and rubbing a little ear that was burning and red. "She hit me, you know, because I saw her pushing my beehive over with a long pole, and now all my bees have gone and stung the people having tea.

get your own dry. Clara, see that the lawn is cleared up," she added, "and—and— Oh, goodness, I hardly know whether I'm on my head or my heels! Bessie, come on!" she added, and yanked the fat girl across the path which connected with Mrs. Phillips' cottage. "Roddy, are you coming?"

"Oh, please, Auntie Barbara, may I?" Roddy asked. "Poor, poor Auntie Bessie!"

Poor Auntie Bessie, indeed! Very dejected and very wet was poor Auntie Bessie. Mrs. Phillips was horrified when she saw her; but instantly Bessie was shown upstairs. There, while Babs helped her to dry herself, Mrs. Phillips looked out some clothes. Then it was that Babs, suddenly guided by some instinct, looked out of the window. And she started.

From here, given a commanding view of the lane opposite, she could see what would have been unobservable from Fallsweir Cottage. And she saw a girl in the lane talking to a man. The man was tall with a thin face, and he was chuckling as he listened to what Alma was saying, and Alma's face was alight with glee.

no time to think about anything."

"And that sure doesn't alter the fact," Leila Carroll said glumly, "that we're about two pounds down on the afternoon, and half the folks ran off without paying. What are we going to do about that?"

Clara paused. "Well, there's only one thing we can do—make the money up between us," she said. "I've got ten bob."

Fortunately, the chums happened to be in funds, and between them they could practically make up the two pounds.

"At the same time," Babs said, a little wryly, "we haven't given Mrs. Bennett exactly the best advert for her tea-rooms. We ought to do something more than make up the money we've lost. Now it's pretty certain that Alma Perkins was just trying to mess up things here, because she was in league with the big man—"

"And she's succeeded, I'll say," Leila grunted.

"But," Babs asked, "why? What was the object behind that move?"

(Continued on page 14)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS



How you all enjoy PATRICIA'S weekly letter to you. And no wonder! For Patricia is a friend after your own hearts—young and gay, yet wise, too. And Patricia can be as helpful as she can be amusing. That is one of the secrets of her popularity.

THERE are so many lovely things to think about in May that you probably won't thank your Patricia for suggesting that you add one more to them.

But I really do think that Mr. Willett, the man who was responsible for the Daylight Saving Bill, deserves just a little mental "thank you" from us all to-day, for it is the 22nd anniversary of the commencement of his Daylight Saving Bill.

I know there are still some villages in England to-day that simply loathe the idea of "changing the clocks" in spring and autumn. And gipsies, of course, take no notice at all of the new time.

Busy schoolgirls and their families love it, though, don't they?

It's just grand for mother to be able to sit in the garden after tea and for father to potter around while it is still light, isn't it? And how schoolgirls do love to go out to play in the evening sunshine.

Yes, I think we must all spare Mr. Willett a tiny thought to-day (if it is Saturday) and say very quietly: "Bless you!"

● Such a Crowd

Father took your Patricia and the rest of the family—mother, big brother Brian, and small brother with the long name, young Heatherington (or Heath for short)—on quite a long trip in the car last Sunday.

We had planned a long walk across the glorious Wiltshire Downs. Mother isn't too fond of walking, by the way, so she was going for a shorter one with young Heath, while we three energetic ones did the serious striding.

After parking the car right on the downs—and mother and Heath as well—we three set off.

It was simply glorious. Although miles from the sea, the wind that blew in our faces actually seemed to have a salty tang to it. Big brother Brian must have felt this, too, for without my even mentioning it, I noticed he would keep bursting into nautical songs, all about "heave ho" and "red sails in the sunset" and so on!

But to get on with the walk. We were just feeling that we were miles from anywhere, that the downs were ours—when all at once we saw a crowd (no, not a host of shining daffodils!)

At first we couldn't make out what the crowd consisted of. But as we stepped out, do you know what it was?

Of course you don't—and you couldn't possibly guess.

There was one woman, striding along with a long stick, and with her were dogs. Do note the "s" on dogs, for there were five, six—no, ten, fifteen—twenty, twenty-seven—

She had thirty dogs with her. Yes, thirty!

And they were all hers, too!

Of course, we had to stop and pat all these lovely dogs.

The leader of them all was a huge, black Alsatian named Wolf, who would insist on "shaking hands" with me each time I patted his handsome head.

There were several greyhounds. There were cairn terriers, there was a French poodle (but not clipped, as they so often are). There were sheep dogs, and—

There were pekies!

You never saw such an adorable and mixed collection. Their mistress told me she had been out over the downs with them for more than two hours, and that she lived alone in a big house with all these!

But that wasn't all. At home she had monkeys and cats—oh, and goodness knows what else!

She carried no lead for any of the dogs and none of them wore a collar, yet they all behaved beautifully—and obviously adored their "missus."

"Weren't they darlings?" I said to father, as we passed on. "She must love animals."

"She must!" father grunted, as he filled his pipe. "But I wouldn't like to buy dog licences every year for that lot!"

Which I thought was quite an unnecessary sort of thing to say at that moment!

● In School Mood

Aren't school hat-bands jolly expensive? I think so, anyway.

I know one lasts a long time, but you do have to buy a new one occasionally, especially round about this term, when a brand new school hat will insist on making the band that has seen you all through the winter look rather tired and faded.

Just in case you're thinking of having a new hat-band about now, I want to tell you very swiftly not to throw the old one away.

Instead, make a snappy little purse and comb case to tuck into your school satchel or blazer pocket. (The other girls will think it such a good idea when you pull them out, oh, so casually!)

Now some very simple and easy-to-follow details about the actual making of these two useful treasures.

The comb case will require a strip of the hat band that measures about ten inches in length.

Fold this in half and oversee the long sides. Make a tiny roll hem at the rough edges at the top, or if you prefer it, a little flap that will fold over and fasten with a press-stud.

For the purse you require about seven inches of the good part of the hat-band. You fold this so that there is a generous turnover left at the top. Seam both sides. Make a hem along the rough edge of the flap and fasten with either one or two press-studs.

(You could actually use the part of the hat-band that holds the school badge for this, providing the badge came exactly in the middle of the back of the purse!)

Now slip a little comb to fit into the comb case and your weekly pocket money into the purse. Trot off to school—and I wouldn't be at all surprised if your chums don't snaffle your ideas, the old copy-cats!

Here's a jolly good way of letting a piece into a frock that's on the tight side—a way that just doesn't show.

You use the matching belt of the frock, you see. Supposing the belt is double, you can open it out and cut it in half lengthwise and let in just an inch down each side of the frock.

There! No one would ever guess you'd grown plumper. But, of course, you'll need a new belt!

● No Trouble

If there is one thing I enjoy doing, it is cleaning my shoes!

Yes, truly I do!

And I find only one snag. Which is that the more I clean them, the dirtier my nice clean hands become, and then I have to wash again, which can be very peevish when you're in a hurry, as your Patricia quite often is.

So how I rejoiced when I read of a clever idea for preventing this getting of blacking (or browning or whitening) all over one's lily-white "paws."

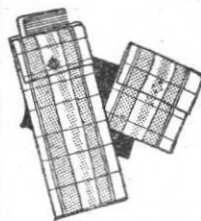
It's such a simple remedy, I think it will appeal to you, too.

You simply pop your hand into a paper bag first—any old bag. Then slip hand and bag into the shoe while the cleaning goes on.

Easy—you agree?

Your friend,

PATRICIA.



SHOPPING FOR MOTHER

Some useful tips that will ensure you get the very best for mother's money.



I SIMPLY must begin by telling you a very tiny but perfectly true story.

We had some people coming to dinner (or supper, if you prefer it) one Saturday evening, and mother discovered she hadn't any tomatoes for the salad. So as father set off on his round of golf she asked him if he'd be sweet enough to bring back a pound of tomatoes with him.

Father said he would, and at half-past five he returned with a pound of the

most handsome tomatoes you ever saw. "These are lovely. How much did they cost?" asked mother.

"Fourpence," said father. "I got them from a barrow in the market."

Mother looked baffled. "It's wonderfully cheap," she said. "I've been paying sixpence from Sanders. I never trust these barrows myself. So often I've got such disappointing stuff." "Oh well," said father, "you see, I went to the BACK of the barrow!"

Which I thought was very clever of him—for in this way, in order to make sure of pleasing mother, he had actually seen what he was buying.

And that is the secret of wise shopping—to SEE what you are buying, whether you shop from the most exclusive place in the district—or from a barrow.

As we know, though, the cheapest goods are not always the best—by any means, so here are a few hints to remember when you are out bargain-hunting in food.

MEAT should be sweet-smelling and tender to the touch. Remember that

Imported Meat costs less, yet is of very good quality.

FISH.—Bright eyes in the fish mean that it is at its best. The outside should be firm—never flabby. Kippers should be oily.

BREAD.—Ask for day-old bread if mother tells you NOT to get a new loaf, as she might. A loaf which has a good crust will keep "new" much longer than that with but little crustiness.

CHERRIES.—These should be firm and big. But don't always avoid those that have "split their sides" with goodness, for they are often the biggest, are cheaper, and have a glorious flavour.

ORANGES.—Beware of those with a suspiciously thick skin, for often their size will only deceive you. Rather, choose the smaller ones, with the thin skin—there's more to them.

GROCERIES.—both for the household and for cooking, vary enormously in price—and in quality. Unless mother asks for a special brand, you may find yourself in some doubt just what to ask for. So to be on the safe side, ask for goods by the name of the makers.

GOOD-BYE TO WINTER CLOTHES

For a few months we shall be parted from our precious warm garments. So they must be fresh and smiling again when Autumn demands their re-appearance.

WHOEVER it was who said "Ne'er change a clout till May is out," was a jolly sensible person, in my opinion, even though we do find "clout" a very old-fashioned word.

Of course, in these days, we adapt that little saying a bit and quite often wear cotton frocks and go without stockings long before Whitsun. But—we don't discard winter clothes altogether until glorious June arrives.

However, the time's nearly here, and if there is to be room in chests-of-drawers and wardrobes for all our summer "pretties," then most of winter's heavy garments simply must disappear for a little while.

Let's start from the feet and work up, shall we? (As my mother always says is the correct way to take a bath—though why, I can't imagine.)

SHOES. "Wellingtons," and rubber booties should have the cleaning of their lives before sandals and tennis shoes take their place.

Take out all laces and give shoes a really good polish. Then lightly smear a little "vaseline" all over leather and rubber surfaces. Iron the laces, or have a new pair, and tie them in position again.

Wrap the shoes lightly in tissue paper, or newspaper and place them at the bottom of a suitcase, or the cupboard where you store such things.

STOCKINGS should be washed, ironed, and mended before they go away. Roll each pair carefully, and tuck a little moth ball into the roll, for moths just adore wool, you know.

UNDIES (winter ones) should all be washed and dried in the sun in the garden

if possible. For this not only keeps them white, but imparts a sweetness which even three months of being packed will not destroy.

Once again you must use some anti-moth preparation for keeping these quite whole. It's a good notion to wrap two or three moth balls in a fine hankie or piece of rag, and just lay this between the thicknesses of garments.

FROCKS will either have to be cleaned professionally, or at home. There is nothing like ammonia for removing stains from navy blue garments—and it actually revives the colour, too!

After removing all "frilly bits," like collars, cuffs, and fancy belts, you should lay the frock on the kitchen table. Now pour a teaspoonful of ordinary ammonia into a saucer and add two tablespoonfuls of water.

With a clean rag dipped in this, rub any stain with a circular movement. If a grease spot should prove extra stubborn, a little petrol will remove it. But this, of course, MUST be used away from the fire. (I'm sorry to keep repeating this from time to time—but it is so important!)

Hang the frock in the garden for an hour or so to remove all the cleaning smells, and then fold it carefully. If you place a sheet of paper between each fold, it will not crease at all, you'll find.

COATS should be treated in the same way, and after cleaning, pay special attention to any loose buttons or torn pockets.

If you should have a light-coloured coat (or frock either for that matter) which is just grubby all over, I want you to take a chunk of stale bread and to rub this all



over it. Pay special attention to wrists and the back of the collar where the dirt and grease collect.

You've only to look at the breadcrumbs left from this treatment to see how much good it has done.

Give the coat (or frock) a good shake and brush after this and hang it in the garden before folding away.

TRIMMINGS. Leather belts should be polished and cleaned with a spot of white shoe polish or furniture cream. Suede belts can be rubbed up with an india rubber, particularly an "ink" or "typing" rubber, or with a special suede brush.

HATS, whether felt or velour, can be freshened up wonderfully if they are held on the hand and twirled around in the steam from a boiling kettle.

Brush carefully with a soft brush—in one direction only—afterwards. Then be sure to stuff the crown with some soft paper and remove any old or chewed elastic before putting them away.

Some felts roll easily and keep their shape, but generally speaking, it is better to give hats plenty of room and they should when possible be placed in a box by themselves.

(Continued from page 11)

No; I'll tell you," she added, answering her own question. "The big man, for some reason, wants to get us out of here. And why," she added, "should he want to get us out of here? Simply because we're in his way. And why are we in his way? Because he wants to search."

"Sure seems that you know all the answers," Leila beamed. "Well, what then?"

"And what should he be searching for," Babs asked, "but the remainder of those jewels? Yesterday he tried to get us out of the place by playing fake detective. Last night he burgled the cottage. This afternoon he sent Alma here to ruin our custom, and get us sent away. Right!" Babs' eyes were gleaming now. "The first thing we've got to do is to find out who the big man is."

"And how—" Clara began argumentatively.

"Wait a minute! Right or wrong, it seems pretty certain now that this man is connected with those jewels which Mrs. Bennett is accused of having stolen. The jewels in the first place were taken from Marsh Manor. How, we don't know. But it's just possible," Babs said, "that Mrs. Amersham may be able to tell us something."

They stared.

"You mean the owner of the manor?"

"Why not?"

Why not? It was a very good idea. Apart from the police, Mrs. Amersham obviously was the main source of information. In addition, there was the fact that Alma Perkins was in her employment.

"We'll get back to school, report to Miss Bullivant, and then go along and see her," Babs decided swiftly. "But come on now! Get your things together. I'll go along and see if old Bess is ready."

The others nodded. Babs strode off to Mrs. Phillips' cottage. But Bessie, dressed in some very ill-fitting garments belonging to Mrs. Phillips herself, was not ready. Her clothes, she declared, were by no means dry, and, in any case, she couldn't think of trailing back to Cliff House in Mrs. Phillips'. Apart from that, she was engaged in solving a jig-saw puzzle with Roddy. She'd come on later, she said.

So Babs left her. It was still early evening, and it was not likely, Marjorie said, that Miss Bullivant would insist upon seeing the Co. individually—a fact which was proved when Babs and her chums returned to school. Miss Bullivant, indeed, was not on view at all. Still recovering from bee-stings, she had appointed Miss Charmant her temporary deputy, and it was she to whom Babs & Co. had to report. She nodded graciously when told about Bessie.

"Well, as long as Bessie is not at Fallsweir Cottage, that's all right," she said. "Remember, the cottage is out of bounds for you all. Miss Bullivant will probably have a word with you later; but you may go now, Barbara."

Babs went gladly. The next item on the programme was the visit to Marsh Manor. The manor was perhaps a mile and a half from Cliff House, on the main Eastbourne road, and in less than half an hour they had reached it. In a body they marched up the trim drive. Boldly Babs rang the bell. Half a minute went by. Then the door

"Please will you tell us—" Babs began, and stopped, staring.

And from Clara came a sudden exclamation:

"My hat!"

For the man who half-opened that door—a man dressed in the black livery of the house's butler—was the fake detective!

Just the faintest of starts he gave as he saw them. Then in a moment his face was frozen, impassive, rigid.

"You!" cried Babs.

"I beg your pardon!" the butler said. "You—you are—" And then Babs paused. "We'd like to see Mrs. Amersham," she said.

"I am sorry, but Mrs. Amersham left this morning for London!" the butler said stiffly. "Good-day!"

"But, look here—" cried Babs.

"Good-day!" the butler repeated; and bang! went the door in their faces.

They stood gaping at each other.

"Spoofing—eh?" Clara asked keenly. "Still, it may be true that Mrs. Amersham's away. If she had been at home, I shouldn't think even he could have found the opportunity to rush off playing detectives and burglars. But there's one thing," she added.

"What's that?" Marjorie asked.

"Well, we know where he is now, and what he is. The very fact that Alma's in service at this place proves, if we wanted proof, that the two are in league. What's the next move, Babs?"

But Babs, foiled in this one, had not looked ahead yet.

"I think," she replied in a rather disappointed voice, "that the next move is to get back to school. There are one or two things I'd like to talk over."

For Roddy's Sake!



"BUT, please, Auntie Bessie, stop!" Roddy pleaded.

"Please, Auntie Bessie! Auntie Bessie, you come and sleep with me like mamma did!" he urged anxiously. "And tell me ever such lovely stories about King Arthur and the knights with their shiny swords, you know. Please, Auntie Bessie!"

Bessie Bunter gulped. She was dressed again in her own clothes now, and was preparing to leave Mrs. Phillips' little cottage. Mrs. Phillips, summoned by a sudden hasty knock, was at the front door.

"But, Roddy, I kirk—kirk, you know," she added feebly. "I—I've got to get back. I'd love to—awfully, but—but my headmistress wouldn't allow it, you know. I—I'll just—"

"Oh, Auntie Bessie!" Roddy said.

And then she paused and started, for Mrs. Phillips, looking disturbed, had hurriedly entered. She had a telegram in her hands.

"Roddy, please—please go upstairs and—and get my bag!" she said. And as Roddy, with a rather wondering look, obediently ambled off, she turned with an anxious face to Bessie. "Oh, Miss Bunter, what—what shall I do?" she gasped. "I—I've just received this from my sister."

"Your sus-sister?"

"Yes. She lives in London. She—she says her husband is dying. She—she wants me to go at once. But—oh"—and Mrs. Phillips, in her acute distress, almost wrung her hands—"how can I go at once, with Roddy to look after? Besides which," she added inconsequently, "there's not another train now

until eleven o'clock. I've got to go. I—I must go! But, Miss Bunter, what about Roddy?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I—I suppose you—you couldn't stop with him?" Mrs. Phillips asked. "If you—you don't, I shall just have to leave him at the police station."

"Oh, no!" Bessie breathed.

"But what else can I do, Miss Bunter?"

Bessie blinked woefully and furiously. Notoriously slow thinking, there were times, however, when her brain could work with astonishing rapidity. Under the inspiration of her affection for little Roddy, it was so working now. She said:

"Mrs. Phillips, Roddy's not going to the police station! It's—it's bad enough having his mother there, you know!"

"But, Miss Bunter, what am I going to do?"

"Wait till I come back," Bessie said.

"I—I won't be long. I—I'll be back in time for you to catch your train—you trust me." And in that moment a scheme was born in Bessie's mind. If she couldn't jolly well get permission from Miss Bullivant, she'd break bounds and come back. "You wait here for me," she said confidently. "If—if I'm not back in half an hour, I—I'll be back by half-past ten."

Mrs. Phillips looked anxious.

"Miss Bunter, you—you will come?"

"Sus-certainly I'll come!" Bessie said, almost fiercely. "Just—just tell Roddy I've popped out. And don't worry," she added softly.

She went out then, fired with determination. Back at Cliff House, she marched straight to Miss Bullivant's study, to find Miss Charmant in charge. Miss Charmant shook her head as she made her request.

"Well, Bessie, I am afraid I am hardly empowered to give you that permission, but I will certainly speak to Miss Bullivant," she said. "Wait here!"

Bessie waited—hoping for the best, but prepared for the worst. Ten minutes later Miss Charmant came into the study. Her face told Bessie the news.

"Bessie, I'm sorry," she said.

"But didn't you tell her about Roddy?" Bessie almost wailed.

"Yes, but Miss Bullivant said that the police will look after him. I'm sure, my dear, that he'll be in good hands in their charge. Please, please, don't worry yourself, Bessie."

"Nun-no," Bessie said.

But she left with a rather fierce look on her face. Her mind was made up then. Well, all else having failed, she'd break bounds—not if Bessie knew it should little Roddy spend a night in the police station. But she wouldn't say anything to anyone. Bessie was going to see this through herself.

She ambled off to Study No. 4. Mabs and Babs were there. Both glanced up quickly, sensing instantly that something was wrong.

"Bessie, what's the matter?"

"Oh, nun-nothing, you know!" Bessie stammered. "Nothing at all. But I'm not jolly well going to let Roddy spend the night in that awful police station, you know—I mum-mean Roddy will have to spend the night at the police station."

"What? How's that?"

"Well, Mrs. Phillips has got to go away to London, you know. She—she's got a telegram."

"Oh!" Barbara looked interested at once. "Bessie, tell us about it!"

And Bessie told—what little she knew, careful for once, however, not

to betray her own secret intention. Babs looked very thoughtful. "So!" she said slowly. "Thanks, Bessie." She looked at Mabs, nodding towards the door. Mabs, recognising the significance in the glance, followed her out. They went to Study No. 7, where Clara and Marjorie were alone. Janet Jordan, the third member of the study, was doing something in the library.

"Something's happened," Babs said, and told the story of the telegram. "I've got an idea. Of course, the wire may be genuine, but—well, knowing all we know, I wouldn't be surprised if the butler man hadn't found out about Mrs. Phillip's sister in London, and has taken this means of getting Mrs. Phillips out of the way so that he can search—in peace. He knows Mrs. Phillips sleeps with Roddy in Fallsweir Cottage."

"Phew!" Clara said. "For Mrs. Bennett's sake it's an opportunity we can't afford to miss," Babs said quietly. "I may be wrong, of course—but if I am no harm will be done. We know that the butler man is keen to find something in Fallsweir Cottage; we guess it's connected with those jewels. All right. Once we catch him breaking into that cottage again—you see?"

They did—absolutely. As Babs said, it was too good an opportunity to miss. They were all willing to take the risk. They were all keen now to know what the butler's game was—but they were keener by far if Mrs. Bennett was innocent of the crime of which she was accused, to put things right for her. There and then the plan of campaign was devised. With Leila Carroll called into conference, they decided to break bounds that night. They planned to keep watch upon the cottage from the hut in the garden.

"And if he does break in?" Clara breathed. "What do we do? Grab him?"

"We don't!" Babs shook her head. "As soon as ever he gets into the cottage one of us will fetch the constable on duty at the crossroad. But mum's the word. And for goodness' sake," she breathed earnestly, "say nothing to old Bess!"

Nobody did say anything to old Bess, and old Bess, for her part, said nothing about her plan! But that night, after lights had been put out, it was Bessie who was the first to creep out of the dormitory, and Bessie, acting with surprising silence and stealth, did it in such a way that even Babs, half-awake, did not suspect she had gone.

Bessie crept down the stairs in her stocking feet, with her heart thudding, climbed out of the lobby window. Then she paused.

The night was dark. A faint wind stirred, making the old elms rustle with ghostly voices. Bessie at all times was afraid of the dark. On a normal occasion, wild horses would not have persuaded her to make the journey she now contemplated. Timorously she peered into the shadows. With a gasp pulled herself together. Well, it was for Roddy's sake.

Bessie set her teeth and set off. She was panting when at last she came within sight of Fallsweir Cottage, its lights still on. Almost at the double she went up the garden path. Mrs. Phillips must have heard her. She opened the door before Bessie had reached it. And she gave a gasp as she saw her.

"Oh, Miss Bunter, I—I was just thinking I should have to take Roddy after all. It's nearly half-past ten. Thank goodness you've come! I'm sure it would have broken the lamb's heart if you hadn't. He's in bed—but still

awake, waiting for you. I must fly now. You—you don't mind, do you?"

"Nun-no," Bessie stammered. "Oh dear. I—I'll go up to him, shall I?"

"Yes, I'll turn out the lights."

Bessie gulped. She nursed a sudden vivid recollection of the burglar who had tried to break in last night. But she pulled herself together as she heard an eager little voice calling from above.

Auntie Bessie—is that you, Auntie Bessie?"

"Good-night, Miss Bunter!" Mrs. Phillips said. "And—oh, I do think it's ever so good of you!"

Bessie flushed again. She turned towards the stairs. In the bed-room Roddy sat up eagerly.

"Oh, Auntie Bessie!" He scampered out of bed. "I knew you'd come, Auntie Bessie! And look, there's mamma's bed for you to sleep in. Mamma undresses in that room," he added, pointing to a door, "and this is her bed next to mine, you know. Auntie Bessie, did you see my magic garden when you came in?"

star until he found a big, big dragon with seven heads, and breathing fire, you know, and then killed it with his magic lance!"

Bessie breathed deeply, starting as another sound came from the landing. She did not know that story, but she did her best.

"Well, once upon a time there was a witch."

"Ooo, Auntie Bessie, what's that?"

"Well, a witch was—a witch, you know," Bessie said lamely. "A nasty old wicked woman."

"Like Merlin?" asked Roddy brightly.

"Merlin?"

"Yes; he was a nasty old wicked man, you know. He was a saucer-saucer, you know," Roddy said seriously. "He told King Arthur such a lot of dreadful things! An' he used to—" Roddy paused. "Auntie Bessie—" he whispered.

"Oh, yes, what—"

"Listen, you know."

And Bessie suddenly felt as if her



"YOU—you awful cat!" Bessie gasped. "You hit him—" Not like Bessie to be war-like. But Bessie at that moment was quivering with fury. Up towards Alma she rushed.

"Nun-no," Bessie stammered.

"Cos I'm dreadfully 'fraid," Roddy said seriously, "that the magic seeds aren't growing, you know. I watered 'em ever so much when the sun went down, but there's nuffing there at all, Auntie Bessie, so I should like you to think of that. But they will grow, won't they?" he added anxiously.

"Of course," Bessie said. "Of course. They'll grow like anything. Oh, what—what's that?" she added nervously, as a distinct squeak sounded in the room.

Roddy laughed.

"That's mouse," he said. "He always squeaks like that. 'Course, I haven't seen him, but I call him Wilfred, you know—like they do in a picture book. Auntie Bessie tell me a story," he added wistfully. "Tell me 'bout the knight who had the magic horse and went gal'ping from star to

whole body was melting away. For downstairs, plainly shattering the night silence, came a sound. It was the sound of a human voice, followed by the tinkling of glass!

Bessie the Brave!



"LOOK!" Barbara Redfern tensely whispered.

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's them!"

Five pairs of eyes staring fixedly through the window of the little hut in the garden of Fallsweir Cottage concentrated upon the two stealthy figures which had come stealing towards the cottage from the direction of the lane in its rear.

The eyes belonged to Barbara Redfern, Mabel Logan, Clara Trevlyn, Marjorie

Hazeldene, and Leila Carroll, of Cliff House School.

Certainly, it seemed Babs & Co. were in luck. For only ten minutes ago they had taken up their position in the hut.

And now the two furtive figures were at that moment stealing towards the house. And those figures! Even though in the gloom their features were unrecognisable, their figures gave them away. They were the butler of Marsh Manor, and Alma Perkins, his accomplice.

"Watch!" breathed Babs.

No need for that advice. The whole five of them were watching. Now the two had reached the kitchen window.

The man's hand went up, moving with a circular motion on the pane. They heard a crash.

"Shucks! He's broken the window!" Leila breathed.

A moment's pause. Once more the man and girl stared around furtively. Babs & Co., all unguessing that in the cottage was their plump chum a-quiver with fright, stared as the man put his hand through the circle he had made; as he forced the catch and threw the window open. Then, with a muttered word to the girl, he climbed over the sill. The girl went in after him. The window closed.

Babs jumped to action.

"Leila, get back and fetch the policeman at the cross-road!" she breathed excitedly. "We've got them now!"

"AUNTIE BESSIE, nasty man's in the house, you know!" Roddy said excitedly. "So I should like to know what you think of that!"

No doubt Roddy would. Bessie, herself, would have liked to know what she was thinking about at that moment. Desperately she was striving to control herself. Desperately she was trying to find her courage. Downstairs, now, she could hear the "nasty man" moving about.

"Oh, dud-dear!" she muttered. "Oh kik-kik-kik-crums!" Sut-sit down, Roddy—I mum-mean lul-lie down! Hide your head under the bib-bib-bed-clothes, you know!"

"But I don't want to hide my head under the clo'es!" Roddy protested. "I want to see nasty man! Nasty man might be a pirate, you know," he added seriously. "And if he's a pirate I'm goin' to shoot him bang with my gun!" And Roddy, to Bessie's horrified consternation, resolutely got out of bed, and from his toy-box picked out a toy popgun. "You wait, Auntie Bessie," he said.

"Roddy, nun-no, no!" Bessie quavered. "Oh dud-dear, give me that gun!"

She hurried towards him. That Roddy should dare the danger she herself was afraid to face! No, no! For Roddy's sake Bessie had to take this situation in hand. Magically finding courage, she snatched the toy gun from his hand.

"Roddy, you—you stut-stop here!" she quavered.

Feeling her courage evaporating, she bolted through the door. But little Roddy didn't mean to be left out of this. Snatching up a wooden sword, he tiptoed in Bessie's wake. But half-way down the stairs, quivering Bessie tripped and fairly shot down the remaining steps into the sitting-room, where she wildly aimed her popgun at the darkness.

"Hands up!" she roared. "Hands up! I've gig-got you kik-kik-covered,

you know, and you needn't think this is a tut-toy gun, because it isn't!"

Her arm described a wavering, uncertain circle. Then in front of her came a sudden exclamation; the beam of a torch shot full into her face.

Half-blinded by the sudden light, almost collapsing with palpitating terror, Bessie started back. At the same moment there was a rush. A hand grabbed her. The pop-gun fell from her hand.

"You fool!" a voice hissed. "How did you get here?"

"Help, help!" Bessie roared. "Oh, help! I'm shot! I mum-mean, I'm being stut-strangled! I'm murdered! I'm dead! Help! Werr-uff—"

"Rescue!" came a voice. "Come on, girls!"

And then Bessie hardly knew what happened. There was a patter of feet—a cheer. Then suddenly the room was full of rushing figures. Another torch flashed; sounds of strife and struggle. Babs, who had led the attack, streaked towards the lamp. In a moment she had it alight.

"Bib-Babs!" gasped Bessie.

"Bessie!" cried Babs. "Where's the man? Officer—"

She wheeled. But the officer—otherwise Inspector Winter, of the Court-field Division—had the butler by the arm now. The man, ruffled, but smiling scornfully, was glaring at Bessie. Alma, in the grip of a uniformed policeman, was green with fright, however.

The inspector looked at the man.

"Well, what's all this?" he asked.

The man smiled sourly.

"I think," he said, "I can explain. You know who I am, officer?"

"You are Perkins, the butler at Marsh Manor?"

"Not Alma's father?" cried Clara.

"That is so." The butler smiled. He seemed amazingly composed, despite his predicament. "You may know that Mrs. Bennett was in service with me," he added. "Mrs. Bennett was a friend both of my daughter and of my own. This morning, as you are aware, Alma visited Mrs. Bennett at the police station. Mrs. Bennett asked that Alma should get her some knitting from this cottage.

"Unfortunately," the man went on smoothly, "Mrs. Bennett forgot to give Alma the key, so we had to break in."

"Well, my hat!" cried Clara.

"What a yarn!"

"For what other reason should we

break in?" the man asked. "You do not think we are thieves, do you?"

"But the jewels?" cried Babs.

"What jewels?"

And then Babs stopped. She eyed the man. The crafty scoundrel! It struck her, for the first time now, how weak her own case was. They had caught the man in the act of breaking into the cottage—true. But they had not caught him in the act of searching for the missing jewels!

At that moment Bessie gave a cry.

"Roddy! Roddy!" she gasped. "He's gone! Roddy!"

"Oh, but I haven't, Auntie Bessie," a voice piped at the door—and while Bessie jumped round, into the room trotted Roddy, still in his small pyjamas.

"I went out by the other door, you know, and Oo! look at the policeman. Hallo, Mr. Perkins! I say, you know, you trod on my magic garden and upset my magic seeds, you know! Seeds won't grow now," he added doubtfully, "cos I've looked at them and they haven't even started to sprout, you know. Look!"

Woefully he held out something in his palm to Bessie, something which glittered and winked in the light of the lamp. It was a small shining pearl.

Babs jumped.

"It's—a jewel—look! A pearl bead from a necklace!" she cried excitedly.

"Yes, all magic seeds have to be jewels, you know," Roddy said. "But I'm not telling you 'bout my magic garden 'cos it's a secret. No!" he said, and shut his lips. "Only Auntie Bessie knows. Not even mamma knows."

They stared at him. The inspector nodded. He seemed to understand. He possessed a small boy of his own.

"I see," he said, but he looked at Barbara. "All right, little man, you trot off to bed. Er—Miss Bunter, just a moment."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bessie as Roddy obediently trotted off, anxious not to be questioned about his secret further.

"Miss Bunter, just listen," the inspector said. "Get him to talk. Get him to tell you about this magic garden. I've an idea. Make him tell you the whole story. It may," he added, and glanced grimly at the face of Perkins, who was looking uneasy, "mean the proving of his mother's innocence!"

Bessie nodded. For once she seemed to grasp her duty. Babs' eyes lit up; the chums breathed again. The inspector nodded to the constable.

(Concluded on page 24)

MARJORIE

the Gentle, the Timid

becomes

MARJORIE

the Spirited and Resourceful



CHAMPIONED
by Marjorie!

An amazing change indeed to come over sweet-natured Marjorie Hazeldene, one of the quietest girls in all Cliff House. But there is a reason, of course—a very good reason indeed. It is to defend Ralph Lawrence, her cousin, a former black sheep who is believed to have broken out again, that Marjorie suddenly shows unsuspected spirit. Ralph is NOT guilty, Marjorie avows; and she means to prove it to the world. But everyone else, including the rest of the famous Co., think otherwise. Is Marjorie wasting her new-found courage? HILDA RICHARDS tells you the answer to that intriguing question in next Saturday's magnificent LONG COMPLETE Babs & Co. story.

Don't miss it.

COMPLETE this week. Another delightful full-of-fun story featuring—

COUSIN GEORGE AND 'THE IMP'



Just Like George!

HETTY SONNING wiped the nib of her Cousin George's fountain-pen carefully and then screwed the top on. That done, she dusted down his desk and arranged some flowers in a vase on top.

If the unfortunate woman who had been Hetty's headmistress at her boarding school had seen this preparation she would have become uneasy and suspicious, for at school Hetty had been known as the Imp, and had been a sore trial and tribulation to the mistresses.

But Hetty was not at school now. At the moment she was in the recreation-room which she shared with her Cousin George at his home. Hetty was there on probation, in the charge of Aunt Miriam, his mother, and Cousin George himself.

"There!" mused Hetty. "That ought to please him. And if he doesn't dub up two bob out of the money-box account, then he's a stingy, ungrateful chump!"

She turned at that moment, because the door opened and Cousin George entered.

He stalked rather than walked in, and regarded the Imp as from a lofty pinnacle—for Cousin George was two years Hetty's senior, and never let her forget it.

"Hetty, what are you doing at my desk?" he asked sharply.

"Dusting it. And look at the lovely flowers," said the Imp.

Cousin George stepped forward, and his eyes roved the desk in suspicion.

"I have told you not to touch my desk," he said. "I am tidy by nature, and you are just a messer."

With that he unscrewed his fountain-pen, and Hetty waited. Cousin George had emptied it a moment ago, preparatory to filling it, and then been called to the telephone.

It was in his absence that Hetty had completed the task.

"Oh, Cousin George," she said meekly. "There's an awfully nice picture on at the local cinema, and my friend Jill and I thought of going."

"Jill?" he said sharply. "I don't know that I approve of Jill. A high-spirited girl. Why not stay at home and do some extra French?"

"What, on a half-holiday?" asked the Imp, shocked.

"Yes, on a half-holiday. I intend working," said Cousin George.

And then, having unscrewed the top of his fountain-pen, he moved the lever.

As the pen was full a stream of ink shot out over his trousers. Cousin George goggled, jumped back, and then glowered at Hetty.

"Oh golly!" said Hetty feebly.

"George, you—you chump!"

George waved the pen in wrath.

"Did you fill this?" he demanded.

"Yes. What on earth made you squirt it out?" asked Hetty, in surprise.

"Well, how was I to know it was

The Imp was honest, and she owned up.

"If you must know, I did it to please you. I couldn't guess you'd do the wrong thing. You see, I want two bob from my pocket-money to go to the pictures."

Cousin George mopped his trousers, and then turned to her, wagging an admonishing forefinger.

"Hetty," he said, "I have been put in charge of you. Painful though it is, I am in the position of having to lecture you and dole out your pocket-money. I don't say you didn't mean well, but your carelessness was to blame, and you will have to pay for the damage. The two shillings can do that."

The Imp breathed hard, and rebellion surged within her. But she knew that rebellion was in vain. If Cousin George

When Mrs. Mitson told Cousin George's mother she could pick her flowers, George pompously exclaimed: "Leave it to me!"—and promptly went to the wrong house. That was why "The Imp," to save them both from trouble, pretended George was a conjurer.

full?" he retorted. "I left it clean and empty—"

He swung round, and, not being used to flowers on his desk, did not move guardedly. His arm caught the stalks, and the vase tottered—tottered, and fell.

Crash! Cousin George, with water soaking down his trousers into his shoes and into a part-open drawer, just gaped.

But Hetty, with a hollow groan of despair, leaped to action with a duster.

"Hetty," said Cousin George in grim tone, "I suppose this is your idea of a joke. Look at my trousers. They've just been cleaned. It will cost me another one and sixpence!"

Hetty looked at the trousers and grimaced.

"Well, I'd wash them for sixpence."

"You dare try! Now then, why did you do this?" he demanded.

decided that she was unmanageable, and if his mother agreed, then Hetty would be packed off to another boarding school—a very strict one—where she would have no fun at all.

So Hetty had to keep in with Cousin George and soothe his ruffled feathers.

"I'm sorry, Cousin George," she said meekly.

Before she could say any more the Common-room door opened, and his mother looked in.

"Why, goodness! What a mess, George?" said his mother. "Don't say you have knocked over the flowers that Hetty put on your desk! What a pity!"

"A pity she put them there, mother," he said.

By IDA MELBOURNE

"Oh, George dear!" said Hetty it was a good idea! Men should have flowers on their desks," said Aunt Miriam mildly. "And talking about flowers, Hetty dear, I wonder if I can trust you to execute a little mission for me?"

Hetty gave a jump.

"Yes, aunt," she said. "Of course."

"It's a little trying perhaps, and will take up your early afternoon, but if you do it nicely you shall have two shillings. It will be worth it to me to get the flowers and save my own."

"Two shillings? Aunt, that will be a windfall!" the Imp exclaimed. "That's what it will cost me to have George's trousers cleaned."

Aunt Miriam seemed surprised, and George went a little pink as she fixed him with a puzzled look.

"I don't see why Hetty should bear the expense," she said, "if you spilled the ink, George."

Cousin George loftily explained.

"However, I will waive this," he said. "But I warn you, mother. Hetty is careless and reckless. I trust it is not a very important mission. If it is, then even at risk of neglecting my work, I'd better take charge."

"And get the two bob," said Hetty quickly.

Cousin George drew up with dignity. "I do not require payment for doing my mother little kindnesses," he said. "And I am surprised, Hetty, that you should."

"Then that means that I can have the two shillings," said Hetty in relief. "What is it you want me to do, aunt?"

The mission was quite a simple one, but it would take a little time, and in-

volved a cycle journey of a mile or two. "My friend Mrs. Mitson has gone away," explained Aunt Miriam, "and she has left the flowers in her garden. That means that they will either die, their beauty unused, or else that someone will steal them."

"Quite right," said Cousin George. "So you want me to collect some of the flowers and bring them home, mother."

"Yes, dear. But I think Hetty can manage it. I can give her the address," said Aunt Miriam. "It seems a pity to interrupt your work."

"If you will pardon my saying so, mother," said Cousin George, "I think I had better take charge of this. No sense in her returning with weeds, or with someone else's flowers."

The Imp was nettled.

"If I can't find the right house and pick a few flowers—" she began, unable to keep a hint of resentment from her tone.

But Cousin George interrupted.

"Enough, Hetty!" he said loftily. "Mrs. Mitson's, mother?"

"Yes, George. Bring as many as you possibly can. And here is the two shillings."

Cousin George took the money.

"I will see that Hetty has it if she deserves it, mother," he said.

"Very well, George. And now I must fly."

And off Aunt Miriam went.

Hetty looked at Cousin George with feelings too deep for words.

"So I'm to get the two shillings if I'm good?" she said.

Cousin George smiled grimly at her.

"A touch of sarcasm—eh?" he said. "Well, I'm going to surprise you,

Hetty. On one condition, you can have this florin now."

"And what's that?" asked Hetty.

"That you don't come with me to Mrs. Mitson's. She happens to be a friend of mother's, and I don't want any blunders or foolery. If you promise to stay here you can have the two shillings."

Hetty almost reeled; she could hardly believe her luck. Then she snatched at the two shillings, and her eyes danced.

"Cousin George," she sighed, "you're a wonder!"

And, to his surprise, she threw her arms about him and gave him a smacking kiss. Then she danced out of the room, hurried downstairs, and telephoned her friend Jill to say that she would meet her outside the cinema at four o'clock, when the next complete programme began.

"Whoopee!" chirped Hetty.

Five minutes later she watched Cousin George on his cycle ride down the drive with two baskets fixed to his machine. Hetty, blowing kisses, softly wished him luck.

Ten minutes later a car swept up the drive, and a hooter screeched. Rushing to the window, the Imp looked down, and in surprise saw Aunt Miriam peering up through the sun roof.

"Hetty, thank goodness you haven't gone yet! I forgot to mention to George—Mrs. Mitson has moved. The address now is not the Poplars, but the Laurels, Minchworth. Write it down. And, for goodness' sake, don't go near the Poplars!"

Hetty held her breath and thought of George, already half-way there.

"Not go near the Poplars? Does George know?" she asked.

"No. I forgot to mention it to him. But, whatever you do, don't go near the Poplars—her old house! There is a horrid, bad-tempered man there, who thinks everyone steals from his garden. I've heard he is violent. Thank goodness I remembered in time! Good-bye! Don't forget—the Laurels, not the Poplars!"

"And Aunt Miriam, turning round neatly, went down the drive at speed.

Hetty remained at the window, her eyes gleaming.

"Golly! The wrong house! And Cousin George—hoity-toity!—is going to pick the nasty man's flowers—eh?"

For one mischievous moment Hetty toyed with the idea of delaying her mission, of letting Cousin George stew in his own juice. But deep down she liked her cousin.

"Poor old George!" she murmured.

"Hope I'm in time!"

Then down the stairs she flew.



Your Editor's address is:—Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Please send a stamped, addressed envelope if you wish for a reply by post.

MY DEAR READERS,—Have you peeped at Patricia's Pages yet? If so, then I am sure you will have seen by now that I was quite right last week when I said how very, very useful that article on the care of your winter clothes will be to you all.

But now let's chat about next Saturday's programme of stories, shall we? We'd better do so soon, or else there won't be any space left, and that would be too terrible for words—or too short for them!

First of all, the superb **LONG COMPLETE** story of the Cliff House Chums. Here is the title which **HILDA RICHARDS** has given it—

"CHAMPIONED BY MARJORIE!"

And a more fitting title it would be impossible to find. Admirers of Marjorie Hazeldene—which means all of us, I know—will revel in this tale. Marjorie, the gentle and kindly-hearted, reveals a new side to her nature. Of course, she's as kindly and sympathetic as ever, but no longer timid.

The reason is her cousin, Ralph Lawrence. Now Ralph, as some of you may know, belongs to Friardale Boys' School, and at one time was rather a black sheep, a boy with a bad name,

Well, Ralph is in trouble again; dire trouble. He's branded a coward! Everybody thinks so, even Barbara Redfern, Clara, Bessie—all the Cliff House girls. All, that is, except Marjorie herself, and Marjorie believes in Ralph; Marjorie intends to clear his name.

It's a different Marjorie now who takes the stage. She defies everyone, everything, to stand by her cousin. Her chums are astounded by her spirit—almost recklessness. Fiercely, courageously, Marjorie champions the former scapegoat, ignoring even her own troubles in her resolute efforts to save him from his.

You'll be held spellbound by this wonderful story. Please don't miss it. Next week's number will also contain further chapters of "The Jungle Hikers," another topping **COMPLETE** story of "Cousin George and 'The Imp,'" more of Patricia's Bright and Interesting Pages, and another Cliff House Pet. Order your copy now!

And before I go, just three

LITTLE LETTERS.

Joan Maynard (St. Annes-on-Sea).—Yes, Joan, I passed on your letters to Patricia and Miss Richards, so I expect you have already heard from them by now. So glad you are enjoying our programmes.

"**The Jolly Three.**"—Such a delightful letter. You really must write again. Only make it three times as delightful by sending one each, will you? Best wishes!

Muriel Clayton (Cardiff).—You may write to Miss Richards, c/o this office, just whenever you like, and our popular author will be only too pleased to send you a personal reply.

Well, cheerio, everyone, until next week.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

Two in a Tangle!

THE Imp reached the Poplars, breathless from hard cycling, and peered over the gate; but, though the front garden was a mass of flowers, there was no sign of Cousin George.

"Not there! He's found out the mistake," she decided.

And she would have ridden off then to go to the other house—the Laurels—had she not, by lucky chance, noticed Cousin George's cycle. It was resting against the fence of the path that led down to the back entrance to the house.

With that undeniable evidence that Cousin George was "on the spot," Hetty rode down the path, and, standing on the pedals, looked over the fence.

The garden was a long, rambling one, with a number of trees, shrubs, a greenhouse, a potting-shed, another shed, a pergola, and various adornments.

At the far end was an attractive bed of perfect daffodils, and standing beside it, holding a basket full of flowers, was Cousin George.

The Imp almost hurled herself from the bicycle, rested it against the fence, opened the gate, and scurried down the path.

"George!" she called.

Cousin George wheeled, gaped, frowned, and then put his fingers to his lips in warning.

"Shush!" he said.

"You've found out, then?" Hetty whispered.

"Yes! Did you see him, too?" said Cousin George.

"See who?"

"The old rascal," he frowned. "Don't talk loudly. Hark! Listen—"

Hetty, listening, heard the sound of heavy thumping, and then a muffled voice, and with a jump of alarm looked at her cousin.

George, with lofty expression, gave her a nod.

"Yes, I acted pretty quickly," he said. "And in a way I'm glad you came along. In fact, you may be useful."

Hetty was a quick-thinking as well as a quick-acting girl, but Cousin George had her guessing at the moment.

"Useful—to help you cut more flowers? Oh, golly! You've cut all the best ones," she groaned.

"Best ones?" he returned, puzzled. "Of course I have. And it's lucky we came to-day, or the whole garden load might have been gone. I'll stay here and keep guard while you get the police."

With a mysterious smile he stepped towards a shed on the far side of the garden.

"That noise you can hear," he said, in as casual a tone as he could muster in his present excited state, "is my prisoner!"

Hetty reeled.

"Golly! You—you've locked someone in that shed?" she choked.

Cousin George misunderstood her horror.

"It's all right. He can't get out. And I'm here if he does," he said.

"Mrs. Mitson will be pleased when she knows! This fellow was actually in the house. The rascal had found that it was empty you see, and then he coolly came down the garden as though he owned it—"

Hetty cut him short.

"She—she jolly well won't! Oh, George, you've made a mistake. Mrs. Mitson doesn't live here now! Someone else does—and you've locked them in the shed! Your—your mother warned me just after you'd left. Mrs. Mitson is at the Laurels!"

Cousin George stood rooted to the ground, and the colour had drained from his cheeks.

"Hetty—you—you don't mean that?" he asked.

"I do," said the Imp grimly. "You'd better put the flowers back."

Cousin George looked at the flowers he had cut and his eyes goggled.

"Put 'em back? Don't be silly, I can't. But—gosh!" he ended. "I've cut the wrong flowers. I—and that chap!"

A muffled roar of rage came from the shed, and then a mighty banging.

Cousin George glanced towards the shed, and then turned to the gate.

"Bunk," said Hetty crisply. "It's the only way. Then phone up anonymously and say you're frightfully sorry."



"WELL, of all the prize chumps," said the Imp scornfully. "Do you know what you've done?" "I do," said George, but he jumped at Hetty's next words. "You've cut flowers from the wrong garden!" George didn't know THAT.

But even as she stepped forward she saw the side gate swing open to admit a burly man who appeared by his dress to be a gardener.

"Hide—" she hissed.

George needed no second bidding; he dodged back, and Hetty, noting another shed with a gap between it and the wall, struggled behind it and beckoned him to follow.

From that place of concealment they could hear voices. They heard the gardener hurry to the other shed, and unfasten the door. Then came a bull-like roar.

"Who locked me in here? Was it you, Wiggins?"

"No, it weren't, sir."

"Someone crept up behind me, and gave me a push," roared the voice. "Anyway, lock the gate! See no one escapes!"

Hetty nudged Cousin George.

"A pity I didn't come with you, and this wouldn't have happened," she murmured. "I blame myself."

Cousin George gritted his teeth; she could actually hear them moving.

"Shush," warned Hetty.

For ten minutes they crouched there. They heard steps approaching and heard the owner of the house find the basket. His rage was terrible.

"My best blooms," he raved. "If I find that thief, I'll tear him limb from limb!"

Then another voice came.

"Some of the guests have arrived, sir, and a telephone message has come from—er—Flora and the Boy Wizard."

"Well?" barked the irate house-owner.

"It appears, sir, that they will be a little late, as they have had trouble on the road."

"Gah!" came the answer. "I might have guessed it. I hire an expensive conjurer to amuse my guests—and he doesn't turn up! All right—he won't get his fee!"

And then came the murmur of voices. Guests were arriving. Hetty, peeping out, saw one or two of them clad in summer clothes, men and women who had just arrived by car, were now wandering about the garden, admiring it.

"We're sunk," quavered George. "We can't stay here much longer—and

we can't get out. Not with all these guests. Oh gosh!"

Hetty, as much in the soup as George, was thinking desperately. She had been in many tight corners in her life, but not quite as bad as this; and she did not believe that their explanation would go down well.

The wrathful owner was not likely to listen to excuses if he caught thieves red-handed; and it would go hard with George.

"Mother will never forgive me," muttered George. "Never!"

"Nor me," agreed Hetty. "She'll say I didn't try to give you the message in time."

"I hope you did," said George swiftly.

"Of course I did, but you'd already done the damage."

"Shush!"

Guests were roaming near, and Cousin George and Hetty held their peace until the sound of voices became fainter.

But Hetty was busy thinking, and presently she nudged George.

"I've got an idea," she said. "If we can carry it off—we're saved! Pretend to be guests."

"What? Don't be potty! He'll know his own guests—"

But Hetty crept out from hiding, straightened her summery frock, and shook herself. Then she tossed her school hat over the wall, and stepped boldly forward.

Cousin George hissed at her, waved frantically, and signalled, but she ignored his urgent plea to return.

"Remember—I'm Flora."

"Wha-a-t?"

"Flora! Whatever you do—call me Flora!"

And a moment later, the Imp was gone!

The Boy "Whizz"—ard

THE Imp looked about her warily. The guests were huddled in the garden of the house with their host, while he told them for the umpteenth time precisely how he had been hurled by some ruffian into the shed.

"How terrible, Mr. Plodger!" gushed a woman guest.

Hetty walked forward boldly.

"Is Mr. Plodger here?" she asked.

The guests turned, and Mr. Plodger pained in his demonstration of how he had been smashed down from behind, to look at her.

"Yes," he said, "I am Mr. Plodger."

Hetty looked at him. He had a frowning expression, beetling eyebrows, and largish hands.

"You don't recognise me?" she asked coyly. "Well, if I say I am Flora—"

Mr. Plodger gave a start.

"Flora? So you have come? H'm! You are rather younger than I supposed. And the Boy Wizard?"

"Ahah!" said Hetty coyly, with a roguish smile. "He isn't so tidy. Excuse his dust, please!"

Mr. Plodger looked at his guests. "Famous new music-hall turn," he said. "Flora and the Boy Wizard. I engaged them to come and amuse us during tea."

There was a murmur of interest and gratitude from the guests, who looked at Hetty with deep interest.

"Only a girl—" murmured one. "Quite young—"

Quite unabashed, the Imp turned aside.

"George," she called, "it's all right. I've explained."

Cousin George heard. Unaware that the wrong thing had been explained, he came from hiding, but not without a certain reluctance and hesitation.

But when he saw his Cousin Hetty talking amiably to the big man, he had a shock.

"The Boy Wizard," said Hetty, with a flourish of the hand.

Cousin George came to a halt, and stood as though about to bolt at the first hint of aggression.

"Shy," said Hetty, behind her hand, and gave a meaning nod.

"Quite, quite," said Mr. Plodger understandingly.

Then he stepped forward and held out his hand to Cousin George, who, rather dazed, took it.

"Flora has told me all about you," said Mr. Plodger.

Cousin George shot a look at Hetty. "Flora— Oh, yes, yes!" he said, remembering her final word of advice. "Y-e-s!"

Why Hetty had called herself Flora, he could not imagine.

"I am proud to meet you," Mr. Plodger went on. "I am myself an amateur conjurer—and pretty good—eh?" he said to his guests.

Hetty noticed a few sly winks and nudges, but the guests gave instant assent.

"But not as good as you," added Mr. Plodger modestly.

"Oh?" said George, in surprise. "Het—I mean Flora—has told you about me?"

"Ha, ha! Ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Plodger. "That's good! Ha, ha! A medal for modesty—eh? Ha, ha, ha! Name all over the theatre bills! Good, that, good! Well, would you rather have tea first—"

"First—" said George blankly.

"Oh, yes—first!" said Hetty quickly, and tried to get near him to warn him not to apologise about the flowers.

Tables had been brought on to the lawn by servants hired for the afternoon, and plates were already in evidence.

"Oh, Mr. Plodger," said Hetty, "do show us a little juggling with plates!"

Mr. Plodger picked up three plates and hurled them into the air. He had tried this trick before, and had succeeded. But he was obviously out of form.

He missed all three plates and they crashed to the grass and broke.

A tactful silence, broken only by a few siphon-like noises from the guests, ensued.

"Tell show what he did wrong, Boy Wizard," said Hetty.

And she handed Cousin George three more plates.

He hadn't grasped yet who he was supposed to be.

"Watch this carefully, everyone," said Mr. Plodger. "This boy is a real wizard. They say he can keep ten plates in the air at the same time, catch them backwards, kneeling, lying, with his eyes shut or open."

"The Boy Wizard!" said Hetty, in ringing tone. "And—oh, boy! What a wizard!"

Then she looked Cousin George full in the eye.

And suddenly the truth dawned on him; out of the mists of memory came the message they had both heard about the conjurers being delayed on the road.

"I—er—I—" mumbled George. "Oh gosh—"

He was so stunned by the realisation that he just stood there. They were out of hiding, but it looked to him as though they had jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire.

"I—I tell you what," George said. "I'll show you the disappearing egg trick."

"No, no, no!" said Mr. Plodger. "Juggling. I dropped the plates. I did wrong. I want to know what I did wrong."

And the guests gathered in a ring round Flora and the Boy Wizard.

Hetty came as near to being in a panic as she had ever been in her life, but she fought for self-control and won. Then out of nowhere came an idea. A real wowser!

"Just a minute!" she said. "We'll show you our most staggering trick of all."

Mr. Plodger brightened. "Good, good! I hope everyone here will promise that?" he said.

"Of course."

"Right, then!" said Hetty in her briskest tone. "You must all be blindfolded."

"Blindfolded?" said Mr. Plodger.

"Yes, and stand in a half-circle," said Hetty calmly. "We shall want a pile of twenty plates. Now, everyone—in a half-circle, please, and bandage your eyes; and have a chair behind you ready to sit down."

It took a few minutes of organisation, while Cousin George dried his fingers, eased his collar, and swallowed about twenty times.

Hetty arranged the chairs so that there was one behind each guest, and commanded that all the servants should be sent indoors, and must on no account peep.

"Now," said Hetty, "you all have to hold a plate in your left hand, and keep your right ready to catch another plate. Don't move your right hands."

The guests sat around, and Hetty made sure that their eyes were well bandaged, and handed round plates, putting one in each left hand.

"Get your right hands ready to clutch," she said, "and when I say 'Go!' you all throw your plates to the centre, starting with the man on the left here. He shouts 'One!' The next person shouts 'Two!'—and so on."

It sounded thrilling.

"And the Boy Wizard will catch all the plates—and throw them back to our hands," explained Mr. Plodger in a

loud whisper. "I remember it perfectly. Very clever!"

Hetty looked at Cousin George, who stood with a blackly frowning face. Walking softly to him, she gave him a nudge and pointed to the gate.

"Go!" she shouted.

And she and George went. His brain shot to action, and he actually raced her to the gate.

From behind came the clatter of plates and shouts of "One!" "Two!" "Three!" punctuated by roars of laughter and giggles.

Hetty unfastened the top bolt of the gate, and George the bottom. They rushed down the path, leaped to their machines; then, without glancing back, pedalled down the lane, and nor did they stop until they reached the Laurels.

"Gosh!" muttered George, as he dismounted. "Hetty, I—I— Of all the crazy tricks!"

"Crazy nothing! It got us away," said the Imp. "And I bet Mr. Plodger is explaining just how it's done."

"I bet he's hunting the garden for us," said Cousin George in awe.

"Let him hunt! We've left him his flowers; and if he had been reasonable we could have explained," said Hetty.

"Anyway, we're free. Of course, Cousin George, if you think I've done wrong, you'd better go back and apologise."

Cousin George did not answer—nor did he go back to the Poplars.

"Here are the flowers," he said, looking about the garden. "As we forgot to bring the baskets with us, we'll have to make them into bundles, Hetty."

And then he laughed. Hetty laughed. They roared with laughter.

"Gosh! But it wouldn't have been so funny if we'd been caught," said George, shaking his head. "Hetty, although I can't say that I approve of impersonation, it was quite an ingenious way out."

"Thanks! And you played up jolly well," said Hetty with gentle irony.

"You think so?" said George, smirking. "Oh, well, I can usually carry a situation off! I'm a pretty decent amateur actor. You were overdoing it at times; but, still, it worked. And now—careful how you pick the flowers."

Back on the high horse, Cousin George gave her careful instructions, but Hetty did not mind; for between them they picked all the flowers they could carry—and in a short time.

Before long they were home again; and Hetty, although late for her meeting with Jill, was in time enough for the big picture.

"By the way," said Cousin George casually, "you've behaved rather well really, Hetty. Perhaps to mark the occasion I should let you have another two bob of your pocket-money."

"Thanks a lot!" smiled Hetty. "And, Cousin George, how about coming along to tea with us?"

But Cousin George could hardly afford to be seen about with two kids like Hetty and Jill; he had his prestige to think of, and not without a certain grace he declined—for which the Imp, with alacrity, thanked him. And Aunt Miriam never knew the truth about the flower-picking—nor, for the matter of that, did Mr. Plodger. It was just as well.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

DON'T forget to meet this delightful pair of funsters again next week.

And do please tell all your friends about them.

Further thrilling chapters of our great adventure story—

The JUNGLE HIKERS



FOR NEW READERS.

TERESA FORRESTER, self-possessed and resourceful, and

LUISE RAYMOND, her more timorous chum, are on their way to meet Teresa's father in Africa when they become stranded. With a quaint native girl,

FUZZY, as guide, they set off 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. Continuing their journey, Luise is bitten by a deadly snake. Fuzzy rushes to find a cure.

(Now read on.)

Only One Hope!

"**HURRY!**" called Teresa. "Snatch even one leaf and come back, Fuzzy."

It was not often that Teresa showed the slightest signs of panic, but she came dangerously near to it now; and if, indeed, she had lost her head, no one could have blamed her.

Luise, her friend, the greatest friend she had in the world, lay in a dead faint, terrified by snake-bite and the fear of suffering and death in the loneliness of Africa.

And what there was to do Teresa hardly knew. She felt she had already done everything possible by sucking the wound and letting the poison out, thus making sure that it could not spread up her friend's arm.

It took her a moment to revive Luise; but what a glad sight when she saw her stir, felt her move and breathe.

"Luise, Luise, speak to me!"

Luise opened her eyes and stared; then, as they rested on Teresa, she clutched her friend.

"Oh, Terry, you won't let me die?" she whispered, and so tight, so frenzied, was her grip that it hurt.

Teresa hugged her and fought back the tears that came to her eyes.

"Die? Don't be silly? Why should you die? It's a harmless snake."

But she found it hard to lie when Luise's clear blue eyes were looking into

hers. She had never lied to Luise before—their friendship was too deep, too real, for any pretence—but now it was vital to do so. And not only to lie, but to lie with conviction.

"You're frightened, Terry," whispered Luise huskily. "I've never seen you frightened before. And that means—"

How Teresa fought back her fears she did not know, but she managed to force a laugh.

"Frightened? Why should I be? The old snake's gone. Fuzzy threw it away. But I don't mind admitting I was scared when I saw it creeping near you. I didn't know at first whether—whether it mightn't be a dangerous one. Lucky for you it wasn't."

Luise looked at her bandaged arm, but she could not see the wound. Teresa had wisely made sure of that.

I'm safe. Tell me the truth. Oh, please, Terry—"

There was a sob in her voice, a dry lump in her throat. Luise had had illnesses—the usual illnesses of children: measles, chicken-pox, whooping-cough—but she had never been frightened by them like this.

"Terry," she gasped, with a sudden pang of loneliness, "can you get mother?"

Teresa's eyes widened for a moment, for Luise's mother was four thousand miles away.

"Luise dear, you'll be all right—"

"But I want mother," said Luise shakily. "I must see her. Oh, Terry—"

And she covered her face with her right hand. Her left arm, numbed and heavy, lay at her side.

Teresa hugged her tightly, almost crushing her.

LUISE WAS DESPERATELY ILL IN THE HEART OF AFRICA—AND ONLY A WITCH-DOCTOR COULD SAVE HER!

"Nothing to see," said Teresa. "Not so bad as a dog-bite, or a chimp-bite, either, come to that. Young Adolphus could give a nasty nip."

She babbled on then, speaking about the frying-pan mirror, and how Adolphus had looked into it and tried to grab his reflection. Then she told how Fuzzy had looked into that mirror, wearing her jewels.

It was not like Teresa to chatter, though, and Luise knew it.

"Oh, don't, Terry!" she whispered. "It's no use. You're trying to take my mind off it, trying to make me think

"Luise, don't be a baby," she said gently. "Why, anyone would think you were—you were in danger. That's just silly. Fuzzy knows all these snakes, and that was just a silly thing, not harmful at all."

But Luise, her face pressed against Teresa's chest, sobbed.

Hugging her, Teresa looked round for Fuzzy, hoping to hear at any moment quick, running steps and the little black girl's excited voice.

And she told herself that Fuzzy would come in a moment, that there was bound to be some remedy, some leaf or herb.

Yet back of her mind was the dreadful thought that the chances were ten thousand to one against such a thing. That even if there were a remedy for one snake Fuzzy might not know it, or else it might not grow anywhere near here.

"Luise darling, try to lift your arm."

"I can't," said Luise through sobs. "It's dead—numb, numb—"

By
ELIZABETH
CHESTER

You Can't Be Bashful



... when you're playing **SNOW WHITE**, the grand new card game that's making new friends every day.

Of course you know BASHFUL, the funny little dwarf from the famous WALT DISNEY film "SNOW WHITE." You needn't be like him but you can join with him and all the other dwarfs in this grand new game founded on the amazingly successful film. There are cards showing DOC, SNEEZY, the WITCH, and all the other characters whose antics you enjoy, and any number of players can join in. There is endless fascination and thrills galore. Each pack contains cards and full book of rules. Get yours to-day.



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Teresa let her fall back gently, her head on the cushion, and covered her.

"You must keep warm," she said, and suddenly became quite cold herself, cold and cool.

She knew that she was facing the biggest crisis of her life, that something she could do might save her friend. But she must think, think.

Teresa racked her brain. How she wished that she had read more about snake-bites, studied it, brought something—some tube of stuff, some remedy.

Too late for that now. Luise, no longer sobbing, was talking, and her words were rambling, her sentences disjointed. She was delicious.

"Luise," whispered Teresa, kneeling, "listen, dear—"

"It's the jewels—the curse of the jewels—something dreadful was bound to happen. The magician—it's his doing. I used to like magicians. Do you remember—at school—the magician—conjurer, and Betty's face—" she mumbled, and then half sat up. "What's next lesson, Terry?" she muttered.

Her hand went to her head, and she half turned over.

Terry, chalk-white under her tan, was clenching her teeth, but a hot tear stole down her cheek. Abruptly she turned away, ran to their luggage, and took out the first-aid box.

Did snake-bite produce fever? Was it something to lower her temperature that Luise needed? Would aspirin help? Teresa snatched at the small first-aid book and scanned it rapidly.

Suddenly she dropped the book and sprang up, for she fancied she heard Fuzzy's voice.

Teresa, ready enough to believe that it was a mere delusion, ran to the path, and then stopped, waving excitedly.

"Fuzzy—Fuzzy!"

But Fuzzy was approaching, though not alone. Behind her came an old, wizened man, helping himself along with a stick, a piece of faded green calico wound round him, and in his hand what seemed to be a leopard-skin bag.

"Who is he, Fuzzy? Did you get the cure?" asked Teresa, her hopes sinking.

Fuzzy, chest heaving for breath, took Teresa's arm.

"Him great doctor—witch-doctor man cure all tings!" she gasped. "Find him way along—make well berry sick people."

The witch-doctor stopped and looked at Teresa measuringly, with dark, glowing eyes. He was bent of back, with crinkled skin, but he had a keen, clear gaze, and there was something about him that impressed Teresa.

"Witch-doctor or not—if he can cure Luise, let him try," Teresa said agitatedly. "And quick as he can."

The witch-doctor put down the leopard-skin bag.

"He is hungry," translated Fuzzy, when he had said a few words to her.

Teresa fetched him some fruit and nuts, but he waved them aside.

"Meat," said Fuzzy.

Teresa could find nothing better than a tin of tongue, but the witch-doctor turned it round in his hand, nodded, and smacked his lips. Then he put the tin in his open bag, and crept towards Luise.

The Witch-Doctor!

GENTLY lifting Luise's arm, the witch-doctor looked at it. Then he lifted her lids.

"If you cure her we will give you jewels. Tell him that, Fuzzy," said Teresa.

Fuzzy spoke to him, and he nodded his head. But he was busy working, and seemed not to heed. From his bag he brought some well-chopped herbs and a flask of strange-looking fluid. Putting in a pinch of the herbs, he shook the bottle vigorously, poured some of the contents on to Luise's arm, and then worked it into the wound.

Bandaging the arm carefully, he produced yet another bottle, shook it, sprinkled drops on his hands, and smeared it over her parted, dry lips.

Teresa watched, hardly breathing. A minute passed, and her hopes sank. She took Luise's left wrist, and felt her pulse. It hardly seemed to throb at all.

There was a pain in Teresa's heart, a tightness in her chest, and her eyes were hot as fire.

For it seemed to her that Luise would never stir again; that those eyes would never open and shine; that those lips never more curve to a smile.

But even Teresa's eyes misted over. Luise stirred. Then her eyes opened, and Teresa, brushing away tears from her own, gasped out:

"Luise!"
Luise looked at her, blinked, saw the witch-doctor and stared at him puzzled.

"Make you well," said Teresa huskily, and gave a shaky laugh. "Oh, Luise, don't close your eyes again."

Luise knit her brows, stared, and then struggled up, only to be pushed gently back by the witch-doctor.

"I—who are you?" she said.

"He's a witch-doctor," said Teresa gently.

"No, no, you—who are you?" said Luise, staring.

Teresa sat rigid. She could not believe her ears. But Luise's eyes told a story that could not be denied. In those eyes was now no recognition. She was puzzled, perplexed; she stared at Teresa as though at a stranger.

The witch-doctor spoke rapidly to Fuzzy, gesticulating, and she listened intently, while Teresa waited impatiently for the translation.

"Him say—memory come back," said Fuzzy. "Him say, Luise not die."

Teresa groped for the witch-doctor's hand and wrung it.

"Oh, thank you, thank you! I know you have saved her!" she cried.

But Fuzzy touched her arm.

"Teaser—Miss Teaser," she said softly. "More time—one, two, free—make stuff on arm fore better, all gone."

Teresa nodded understandingly.

"Three more applications? That's all right. He can stay here, can't he?"

But Fuzzy shook her head miserably.

"Him say no more stuff. Him say—need find more herb."

Teresa gasped and stiffened.

"You mean he hasn't any more?"

"No," said Fuzzy sadly.

"But he can get more?" Teresa insisted.

"Way along by water," said Fuzzy.

"Can you find it?" Teresa asked eagerly.

"Me find," nodded Fuzzy. "Find drinking-place—soon along mebbe two free miles. Den all well. Him tell Fuzzy how do."

"Tell me, then, and I'll write it down," insisted Teresa.

She looked at Luise, who lay back, shielding her eyes from the sun. But there was colour in Luise's cheeks now, a shine in her eyes.

"Luise, you'll be better soon," Teresa whispered. "Don't worry, dear. You'll get well."

And then Teresa wrote as Fuzzy translated the odd speech of the witch-doctor, who seemed to talk as much with his hands as with his mouth.

"Collect by moonlight," murmured Teresa. "North side of drinking pool. Put four leaves in goolsberry juice."

There was more of it, and she wrote it all down.

Then, with another look at Luise, a load lifted from her mind, Teresa shook the old witch-doctor by the hand again.

"And now you shall have jewels," she said. "Fuzzy, get the jewels. Let him take what he wants."

Poor Fuzzy hesitated for a moment, her face falling in dismay; but it was only a passing disappointment. For, after all, Luise's safety and health meant more than jewels.

She went to the spot where she had left her jewels, and found Adolphus, the baby chimp, with them, draped about his neck, ears, and ankles.

Taking them from him, not without argument and struggle, she returned to the witch-doctor.

He looked at them, his eyes widening. Then he recoiled. Drawing up, he let fly excited words, closed his bag, and hurried off.

Dumbfounded, Teresa looked after him.

"Golly! He wouldn't take them!" Fuzzy, blinking, watched him until he was out of sight.

"Not like dem," she said slowly, and frowned at the jewels.

"He seemed cross, though. I hope we didn't offend him," said Teresa anxiously. And then she gave a sigh. "Oh, Fuzzy, I'm so happy! Luise, Luise darling—"

Fuzzy turned and dropped the jewels on to Luise's chest.

"Not unlucky," she said softly.

"Good, nice jewels!" And only she knew that the witch-doctor had told her that nothing but ill-luck would dog her while they carried the jewels of evil.

Teresa looked down at Luise, met her eyes, and again saw no recognition. She was hurt and frightened, but because the witch-doctor had worked such a wonderful cure she believed what he said—that memory would return.

"At nightfall—near a drinking pool," she murmured. "Fuzzy, we must move on. We must rig up a hammock on Bambo so that Luise can ride. Quick's the word!"

The Pool of Peril!

"LUISE, do you remember me?" Teresa knelt beside Luise. It had been a nightmare journey to the drinking pool, and one which she would never forget. Luise had been carried along to the side of Bambo, the young elephant, by means of creeper tendrils plaited by Fuzzy and herself.

It had taken some time to work that hammock, and time had seemed their greatest enemy. Even packed with rugs, the hammock had not been too comfortable, and Teresa had had to watch every step of the way to make sure that her friend was not cramped, and did not fall.

Even Adolphus, the baby chimp, knew that something was amiss, and had seated himself on Bambo's head in gloom, not even trying to play.

Now, Bambo unloaded, and Luise carefully rested on the grass, Teresa and Fuzzy had made their camp for the night.

Nor was night very far away. It

would come soon and suddenly, bringing heavy darkness, but the golden moon would ride in the blue-black sky, and there would come the snarling, howling, growling, and jangling of wild animals.

Fuzzy, foraging ahead, had found the drinking pool. Her sound jungle sense and her quick ears had guided her to it, and she had come across a leopard drinking there, forefeet in the pool, ears back alert.

The leopard had heard Fuzzy, snarled, and then swung round at lightning speed, hesitating before it slunk into the thicket, out of sight.

"Leopards?" Teresa had murmured, when Fuzzy had told her. "And to-night, more leopards—and perhaps lions—at the pool. My word, it's not going to be easy to get that herb."

Fuzzy shook her tousled head. "But me get 'um," she said confidently. "Oh, yes."

Teresa looked down at Luise, who wore a puzzled look.

"You've moved me, Terry," said Luise.

forget my best friend in the world! I know I cried. I was a baby. I think I called for mother."

"You did; but then you were delirious," said Teresa. "But now you're well. Soon you'll be quite well, and skipping about like young Adolphus, over there."

Luise looked across at Adolphus and smiled.

"It's good not to be afraid. And somehow, I'm not," she said. "Tell me about the witch-doctor."

Teresa described him, explained what he did, told about his leopard-skin bag, and the tin of tongue he had been given.

"A wonderful bedside manner," she added.

"Golly, the funniest doctor I've ever had, anyway," laughed Luise. She looked up at the sky. "It'll be night in a minute. I'm sure I can hear leopards. Are you sure we aren't near a drinking pool, Terry?"

"Drinking pool? What makes you think that?" asked Teresa quickly.



WHILE the witch-doctor poured some of his patent fluid on to Luise's arm, Teresa and Fuzzy watched in suspense. Would their friend soon get better now?

Teresa gave a cry. She dropped down and kissed Luise, pressed her sound hand, and gave a gurgling laugh.

"You know me?" she cried.

"Know you? Of course!" said Luise, puzzled. "But why have we moved? I don't like this so well. I can hear a leopard snarling."

Teresa sat beside her, all smiles.

"You don't remember the witch-doctor who cured you?" she asked. "You don't remember riding on Bambo in the hammock? Nothing?"

"Witch-doctor? No—what did he do?" asked Luise anxiously.

"Oh, just used one of his patent remedies," said Teresa. "And, my golly! He cured you! Oh, Luise, it was—"

She bit her lip, for she had been about to say "touch and go," but Luise was not out of the wood yet.

"Cured me. But my arm still hurts," said Luise.

"But you're cured! Just another few applications," said Teresa. "Of his special stuff, you know. Oh, Luise, I've been so scared! Do you know that you didn't recognise me? You looked at me and asked me who I was."

Luise smiled.

"Don't be silly! As if I could ever

"Well, the snarling, for one thing. Ask Fuzzy to find out," begged Luise. "It would be rather awful if we did camp near one, because they're always thick with animals at night. A nice thing if a leopard attacked us!"

"More work for the witch-doctor," nodded Teresa, anxious to make light of it. "But don't chatter, dear. You're supposed to be quiet and still. Matter of fact, you ought to have wool in your ears."

That bright idea was sheer inspiration, and Teresa found some cotton-wool in the first-aid kit, made little wads of it, and insisted on pressing them into Luise's ears.

"But why?" asked Luise, in surprise. "Always obey the doctor, and don't ask questions. Weren't you told that as a kid?" asked Teresa. "I was."

"So was I. And I had nasty stuff to take, too," said Luise. "And, what's more, I was prodded with needles in the arm, and—ouch!" she gasped, as she moved.

"Steady with the arm!" said Teresa anxiously.

Luise nodded, smiled, and lay back. She could not hear the snarling leopards at the pool now, and what she did not hear did not worry her. Sounds close

at hand could be heard, such as Teresa's clear voice, but not those jungle noises, which grew as the darkness came nearer.

And darkness in Africa comes without gradual twilight.

Almost before they realised it, black night was upon them. The tea made, Teresa poured it into cups, and then looked for the moon.

"Soon there'll be a moon," she murmured.

"But I shan't sleep," protested Luise, and then: "Where's Fuzzy?" she exclaimed.

Teresa looked about her.

"Oh, she's wandered off," she said lightly. "You know what our Fuzzy is."

But, moving behind Luise, she stood up and listened tensely. Snarling came from the drinking pool now, and the roar of lions. And the moon was rising.

Now was the hour! Now was the time to collect the precious herb, which alone

could save Luise from a relapse. But Teresa, while her friend was still awake, could not move away without giving her anxiety, and all she could hope for was that Luise would soon drift off to sleep.

But it seemed as though Luise, suspecting that something was afoot, that all was not well, was worrying about Fuzzy.

Teresa's excuse that the little black girl had wandered off, was hardly good enough for Luise.

"Terry, where are you?" she called. Teresa turned to her.

"Here," she said soothingly. "Don't worry. Feeling all right?"

There was a pause, and then came Luise's voice, very low.

"I'm afraid."

Instantly Teresa was beside her, anxious, comforting, soothing.

"Pain, dear—where? What's wrong?" she asked.

Luise clutched at her.

"I feel giddy again—faint—I— Oh, Terry, it's coming on again! It is—Terry—don't leave me!"

From the drinking pool came louder snarling, and Teresa's heart thumped. She prayed that Fuzzy was safe, that she could find that precious herb; but she dreaded to think of the perils that little Fuzzy was facing alone.

"You'll be all right, Luise," she whispered huskily. "Listen, dear. There's a special herb. It grows near here, and that's what Fuzzy is looking for. The witch-doctor told us all about it; and we know just what it's like." We can find it, and when we do, you won't have any more need to worry. Honour bright."

Luise did not answer, and Teresa leaned down over her. In the pale moonlight, her friend's face seemed of a ghastly pallor, and she stared more closely, hardly breathing herself.

Then, with a trembling hand, she stroked Luise's forehead.

"Luise," she whispered.

Luise's lips moved. She was muttering deliriously again!

Teresa jumped up. There was nothing she could do, nothing at all, until the herb was found, and Fuzzy might be in difficulties.

Either Teresa must stay here, or she must leave Luise and help Fuzzy. And Luise was now delirious, did not know whether she was alone or not. Yet, suppose she came to—

Teresa faced her dilemma. It seemed to her that it was better to leave Luise and take the chance of her making a sudden recovery to consciousness and dread loneliness, than to take the far more serious risk of not finding the herb—of perhaps leaving Fuzzy to fall a victim to the wild animals.

Teresa, heart beating a little more quickly than usual, took the gun that she had kept all the while in the luggage. In a case of need it would have to be used. Better to use that gun than be mauled, maimed, or even killed.

Guided by the jungle noises from the pool, Teresa pushed her way cautiously through the thicket, starting up small animals, and bringing a momentary lurch to the drinking pool.

In a few minutes she saw the pool, gleaming in the moonlight, and drinking from it, crouching, ever ready to run or attack, were leopards.

"Fuzzy!" called Teresa, stepping forward, gun at the ready.

And then came a soft call, not words, but a soft cooing sound in lilting tone.

"Fuzzy—oh, cheers!" said Teresa, in relief; and then in the moonlight she saw a black-arm held aloft from the thick green lurch near the pool.

Fuzzy was crouching there, hiding, waiting.

The shadowy shapes were suddenly lit by the moonlight as the leopards, startled by Teresa's voice, moved aside.

"Fuzzy, have you found it? If not—come back!" cried Teresa.

Too late. In utter horror she saw a lion moving towards the spot where Fuzzy lay!

WHAT a terrible danger Fuzzy is in! And so much depends upon her finding the precious leaf. On no account fail to read the continuation of this magnificent story.

"AUNTIE' BESSIE TO THE RESCUE!"

(Concluded from page 16)

"Take care of this man," he said. "Miss Redfern, and you, Miss Trevlyn, I may want you as witnesses! Come with me. We'll listen outside the door!"

Babs glowing, nodded. She felt they were on the right track at last. Silently she and Clara followed the inspector as he led the way upstairs. Outside the door they halted; Bessie's voice came to their ears.

"But now you tell Auntie Bessie a story, Roddy," she coaxed. "You tell Auntie Bessie that lovely story of the magic garden, you know. 'cos I'm in the secret, aren't I?"

"Oo yes," Roddy said. "Only you, Auntie Bessie. Well, you know there were some magic seeds—"

"Yes?"

"And these seeds were ever so nice and shiny," Roddy went on. "King Arthur put them in his garden and then they grew and grew and grew, you know, and lovely flowers sprouted out of them, and in one lovely flower was lying a golden sword, so I should like to know what you think of that! And mamma said that if I ever found magic seeds like King Arthur's, I should have a magic sword like that."

Babs bit her lip.

"But where," Bessie asked, "did you get the magic seeds?"

"I found them," Roddy answered. "I found them in mamma's big bag, and they were in a little bag just like King Arthur's seeds! Look, Auntie Bessie, here it is! And—and—oooh, I'm so tired!"

There came silence. It seemed the youngster had dropped off to sleep. The inspector nodded swiftly. He and Babs and Clara slipped downstairs. Two minutes later Bessie came down on tip-toe, holding a little leather bag in her hand. She blinked.

"This is the bag," she said. "The magic garden is at the back. I'll show it to you."

The inspector examined the bag. It was a little wash-leather bag with the initials F.P. fitted to the key ring. He looked significantly at the butler.

"Yours, eh? Johnson, go outside with Miss Bunter and dig in the magic garden. I think," he added softly, "that you'll find the rest of the necklace there. The kiddy, apparently, has been

carried away by a fairy tale. And now I'd like to know," he added to the white-faced Perkins, "exactly how this bag was found in Mrs. Bennett's belongings."

BUT THAT story was not told until later—when, escorted with his daughter to Courtfield police station, Frank Perkins blurted out a full confession. He had taken the necklace. In order to dispose of it, he had unthreaded it, intending to sell the stones two and three at a time. In the servants' room he had been counting the stones when he was alarmed by the sudden approach of Mrs. Amersham, and in a moment of panic-stricken guilt had hidden the leather bag in the bag which Mrs. Bennett, in the act of packing, had temporarily left to answer the door. Then while he stood talking to his mistress, Mrs. Bennett had entered, had shut the bag, and walked off with it.

And Roddy later, all unknown to his mother, had found the jewels, jumped to the conclusion that these must be the magic seeds his mother had described in a previous bed-time story, and planted them in his strip of garden.

Later had followed the arrest of Mrs. Bennett. Perkins, imagining Mrs. Bennett was crooked-minded as himself and had secretly hidden the jewels, had, with his daughter, attempted to find them by searching in the cottage.

That was the story which Babs & Co., accompanying the inspector to the police station, heard. That was the story, substantiated in part by a tearful Mrs. Bennett, whom they brought back with them to Fallsweir Cottage, afterwards fortunately getting back to Cliff House without having been spotted. But there was a sequel to it.

That sequel happened the next morning. It was the result of a consultation in Study No. 4, and once again, it was Bessie Bunter's bright idea.

For when Roddy Bennett woke up to gaze at his magic garden, it was to find sprouting in the very centre of the bed a lovely plant made of stiff green calico leaves, and in the centre of the plant was a great white lily, made, although Roddy did not know, of white sailcloth. And when Roddy, in trembling expectation, opened the flower, what do you think he found in it?

A golden sword.

At least it was a golden sword to Roddy. But Babs & Co., who had taken it from the "props" basket of their Amateur Dramatic Society, knew that it was only a tin one gilded over!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.