

"THE HAUNTED STUDIO!"

Magnificent Long Complete story of
Cliff House School in this issue.

THE SCHOOLGIRL

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EVERY 2^d SATURDAY

Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



UNMASKING THE "GHOST"!

And what a staggering surprise
for Babs and Clara when they
discovered it was their own
chum **Jemima**.

(See this week's thrilling complete
Cliff House Story).

A very Intriguing Long Complete Story of the Chums of Cliff House School.



The HAUNTED

The Voice from Nowhere!



"ONE bucket of brown distemper," cheerily exclaimed blue-eyed Barbara Redfern, captain of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School. She turned in the gloomy interior of the toolshed. "Can you manage that, Mabel?"

Golden-haired Mabel Lynn, Babs' special chum, nodded eagerly. "Yes, rather!" she said, and promptly seized the bucket which Babs handed over.

"Now," went on Babs briskly, "two brushes for use with the distemper. Coming over, Jimmy."

"What-ho!" said that strange girl Jemima Carstairs, and, having safely jammed her monocle into her eye, she took the brushes with a grin.

At the same time Tomboy Clara Trevlyn, fat Bessie Bunter, and Leila Carroll, from America, gathered round to receive their instructions.

Very merry and very eager locked the six members of the famous Co. who were gathered in the toolshed this bright June afternoon, and very earnest and industrious. Even Boker, the school page-boy, who was also there, wore a businesslike grin.

It appeared that something unusual was happening in the precincts of Cliff House School. It was.

The whole school was busy in various ways. Next Saturday was one of the great events of the year at Cliff House—visitors' day—when parents and relatives and friends from all parts of

"Babs—Babs! Don't go in there! I've just heard the—the ghost!"

the country would gather at the famous old school. Sport, dancing, festival, and carnival were to be the order of the day, with fireworks at night, and a grand school show in the afternoon. Part of that show was to be a cavalcade of Cliff House, depicting the history of the school from its early days as a monastery.

Most of the school were taking part

without the backcloth Babs had designed was impossible. Babs, if not a junior R.A., was easily the best artist in the Junior School, and had, therefore, been prevailed to paint the backcloth herself!

Not that Babs, of course, required much persuasion. At the same time, she could not embark upon such a task without assistance, especially as time was growing rather short.

So here were the assistants. And here, helped by the cheerful Boker, were the materials for commencing work, Boker already having erected the huge canvas in the studio which Miss

What was the mystery of the school studio? What caused the eerie sounds, the strange happenings, in that room? Baffling, indeed; frightening, too—especially for Babs & Co., who, for the honour of their Form, had to work there. But that unusual girl, Jemima Carstairs, thought she saw a solution to the mystery. . . .

in the cavalcade, seniors and juniors alike. Parts had been rehearsed; everything was going with a swing. But there were still many things to be done, and Miss Primrose, the school's kindly and scholarly headmistress, had decreed that each Form should bear its own share of the burden. The particular part of its burden which the Fourth was most anxious about now was—a backcloth!

For the backcloth which Barbara Redfern had designed was beyond the purchasing power of the Fourth Form. But all agreed that to do this scene

Primrose had graciously allotted to Babs until the work was finished.

Now, all bearing something useful, they solemnly tramped through the door.

"Up, the paint-pots!" chortled the irrepressible Jemima. "Quick march!"

They marched. But, because the door was narrow, they marched in single file. First Jemima, flourishing her two brushes like a drum-major's baton. Then Clara, a pair of steps hoisted on one shoulder. Next came Mabel, carrying the bucket of brown distemper, followed in her turn by Leila, carrying



STUDIO!

the second pair of steps. Babs, laden with artists' brushes, a palette, and the scroll which contained her design, brought up the rear with Bessie Bunter, who strutted along empty-handed.

On to the lawns, bright and green in the dazzling rays of the afternoon sun, the procession stepped. There were many girls about and great activity in progress. Over on Senior Side workmen were already rigging the huge set pieces which would go off in a flare of spluttering fireworks. Other workmen, here and there, were touching up the paintwork on windows and doors, and two huge ladders had been reared against the windows of Miss Primrose's study.

In the quad the diminutive Second Form, led by Dolores Essendon, were enthusiastically rehearsing their "fairy march." On the lawns Flora Cann of the Lower Fifth was solemnly instructing a score of girls in taking cover; the Lower Fifth were rehearsing the air raid on Cliff House during the Great War.

Across the lawns, across the quad, in solemn single file they tramped, and Babs, now in the lead, was just putting her foot on the first step which led to the big entrance doors of the school, when there came a sudden hoarse cry from the right.

"Barbara! Barbara!"

Jemima stopped.

"Whoa, steady, the Buffs!" she cried. "Odds bodikins! Am I seeing things, or did Gladys Norman in truth run under that ladder? Whoa, Mabs! Take the end of your steps out of my ear, will you?"

Mabs grinned. The whole procession halted now, staring at the flying figure which, as Jemima had commented, had

actually run under the workmen's ladder.

Inclined to be plump was the figure—and tall, too. They all knew her, and all in this moment felt a little sorry for her; for Gladys Norman, prefect in the Sixth Form, a girl well liked, had caught cold last week while on a few days' leave to her parents and had practically lost her voice.

"Barbara!" Gladys came up, gulping a little and fingering the flannel bandage which was wound about her throat. "Oh goodness!" she said huskily, and swallowed again, wincing as she did so. "Barbara, I wanted to see you—about the studio. Is that your canvas rigged up on the wall there?"

"Why, yes!" Babs said in surprise.

"But what are you going to do?"

Babs told her.

"Big job, isn't it? Oh dear!" And Gladys gulped again. "Surely you'll never get it finished in time, Barbara?"

"Well, why not?" Babs asked. "It's not so very difficult, is it? All the canvas wants is a coating of distemper, you know; and I reckon, in two or three days I can finish the designing. So that's all right, isn't it?" she added cheerily. "Anything else, Gladys?"

"No. I admire your pluck, though I—!" And Gladys smiled, wincing as she did so. "Oh dear! This awful throat! Every time I swallow it gives me gyp. But—but, Babs, I don't want to scare you. I—I suppose there's nothing in it, really. But there's a story, isn't there, that the art-room is haunted?"

Babs laughed outright. Like everyone else in the school, she knew the legend of the studio; and, like everyone else, she paid little attention to it.

"Oh, that rubbish!" she said scornfully.

"But is it?" Gladys gave a strangely nervous look round. "I don't know so much," she said. "I—I don't want to alarm you, but I was in the studio about half an hour ago, Babs, and—well, I could have sworn." Gladys added seriously, "I heard a moan."

Bessie blinked. Even Bessie, so shrinkingly fearful of the supernatural, had forgotten the story of the studio until this moment.

Two or three times a week the girls received drawing instruction there, under the tutorship of Miss Annette Ayre, and familiarity with the place had bred out any lingering superstition. Yet it was true there was a story attached to the studio; for it was there, over two hundred years ago, that the skeleton of Abraham Mole, the then miserly owner of Cliff House, had been found amid a heap of gold, which he had been counting out beneath the skylight.

Bessie shivered.

"Oh crumbs! You know—"

But Babs again laughed. She shook her curly chestnut head. Poor old Gladys! So frightfully credulous and superstitious! It was said of Gladys Norman that she would swallow any yarn, and there was a great deal of truth in that.

"What you heard was the wind, perhaps," Babs said. "There are always noises in the studios, probably because it's so high. Anyway, ghost or no ghost, we're jolly well going on with the backcloth. Anything else, Gladys?"

"N-no. You really think it will be all right, then, Babs?"

"Oh, absolutely!"

"Of—of course, I may have made a mistake," Gladys said, and smiled.

By

HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

"Perhaps it's this beastly throat that's causing queer noises in my head," she added. "Can I do anything to help?" she offered generously. "I've got the whole afternoon on my hands, and I do paint a bit, as you know."

"Sporting!" Jemima purred.

"Pleased to have her, what, Babs, old Spartan? 'Many hands make light of the merry old broth,' you know." Jemima added wisely. "Fall in, Gladys! Forward the Light Brigade!"

And the Light Brigade, augmented now by Gladys Norman, cheerfully stepped forward. Up the endless stairs they toiled until at last the topmost floor of Cliff House was reached. Here was a collection of remote rooms and apartments; the attics on one side, the art-room with its huge skylight in the middle, and on the other side of the studio the big strong-room in which most of the school's and the girls' valuables were kept.

Thankful, after their long climb, to doff their burdens, the chums and the prefect swept into the studio. A great apartment was this. Square oak paneling lined the walls. There were many blackboards, many desks; a whole case of objects which students were given to copy, some paintings on the walls.

Even with the sun flooding in through the skylights, however, it looked somehow bleak, forbidding, depressing.

But Babs & Co. were not thinking of the studio's atmosphere; all their delighted eyes were directed towards the huge cloth which half-occupied one wall. White and gleaming it stared at them, almost shimmering in the afternoon sunset—a sight to gladden their hearts, indeed. Boker, the page-boy, had done his work well. The back-cloth, stretched on a complicated structure of battens and cross-battens, almost completely obliterated one whole wall.

"Oh, goodie!" Babs cooed. "Here we are. Careful with that distemper, Mabs. Put the steps here—in front—to make a sort of platform. Now where's Boker with the planks?"

"Here I am, Miss Redfern," Boker said cheerfully, and with two planks came staggering in. "Shall I put them up for you?"

"Oh, Boker, please!"

"Now who's going to do the distemping?" Babs asked. "The whole canvas will have to have a coat first, you know, otherwise I can't paint on it. Leila—Jimmy, will you take the brushes? When you're tired, Mabs and Clara will give you a relief. Be careful to do all downward strokes, and, whatever you do, don't let the edge of the work get dry."

"Can I do anything?" Gladys asked. "Gladys—yes," Babs laughed. "Would you mind pinning the design on a board? We can work from that."

Jemima and Leila, smiling, mounted the platform, grasping the brushes. Bessie glowered.

"But, look here, what am I going to do?"

"Well, for a start, old-timer, you can hand up the whitewash!" Leila chuckled. "And shake the old leg, I guess—we haven't got till Christmas!"

Bessie sniffed. But she grabbed the pail of brown distemper. The pail was rather heavy, and Bessie had to get both hands to it to raise it to the level of the platform.

"Well, blow, here it is!" she puffed. "And here—"

And then Bessie stopped. They all stopped, jumping quickly. For suddenly from the end of the room came a weird, unearthly sound.

Groan!

"The ghost!" cried Gladys, her cheeks paling.

Groan!

"The—uw-what— Owow!"

And Bessie, suddenly frightened, forgot what she was doing. The pail, poised, slipped as her nerveless fingers no longer continued to support it. The yell of fear that was rising to Bessie's lips changed into a most dreadful howl as the pail, slipping forward, first slopped its sticky contents full into her scared face, and then, as Bessie loosed her grip altogether, fell over her head, completely enveloping her.

And then swiftly came catastrophe. The pail-crowned Bessie frantically floundered. Temporarily blinded, she clutched the edge of the platform. From Clara came a yell; from Jemima went up a wail as the platform rocked and slipped, bringing the two down with a crash.

"Oh, I'm drowned! I'm sus-suffocated! I'm buried alive, you know. Gug-gug! Ooooh!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Babs. She darted forward. One snatch, and the pail was off Bessie's head.

Have you seen

SNOW WHITE and the SEVEN DWARFS

that fascinating new card game which is on sale at all stationers and toy-shops? It costs only 1s. 6d., and is lovely fun. Get one to-day.

Dazedly the fat one sat up, spectacles glimmering through a coating of thick, glutinous distemper, like weird eyes in the head of some shapeless animal. She was choking.

"Oh dear! What beastly stuff this is! Look here, you grinning dummies, give me a hand—Wow! What's that?"

For from somewhere in the room came a deep and hollow groan. It was followed by a muttering voice.

"The—the ghost!" quavered Gladys. "I told you—"

She was standing by Miss Ayre's desk, one hand to her flannelled throat. Her face was deathly white; fear was in her wide eyes. Even Bessie, smothered as she was, forgot her discomfiture and sat rooted and trembling.

For one moment they all remained transfixed. Then, somewhere in the room a voice spoke—the deep, quavering, but threatening voice of an old, old man.

"Know ye not that this is the home of Abraham Mole?" it asked. "What right have ye to invade this chamber wherein I kept my hoard? Begone, all of ye! Begone!"

"Oh crumbs! Thuth—that's enough for me!" Bessie glugged.

And Bessie, floundering up in a veritable panic of fear, bolted for the door. Frantically she tore it open; breathlessly she bolted through it. And then—

"Why, goodness gracious me! Bless my soul, what is this?" came a well-known voice from the corridor.

"Primmy!" gasped Babs.

"What on earth—Who—Great goodness!"

"Please, Miss Primrose, there's a ghost loose!" Bessie Bunter wailed.

"Ghost—ghost! Bless my soul, it's never Bessie Bunter!" Miss Primrose quivered, in amazement. "What on earth have you been doing to yourself, girl? And what," she added, as she came into the room, "is the meaning of all the noise emanating from this room? Gladys, you here? Barbara! Goodness gracious me! Just look at that mess! Gladys, really, you ought to know better than to allow this to go on! What has happened?"

"P-please, Miss Primrose, there was a ghost!" Gladys stuttered. She shivered. "It spoke!"

"Nonsense!"

"But," Babs said, "it's true, Miss Primrose. We all heard the voice—an old man's voice it was. It started with a groan, and then said that it was Abraham Mole!"

Miss Primrose regarded her sharply. "Jemima, you heard this, too?"

"Oh, yes, I heard it—even though," Jemima said sadly, rubbing her leg, "I was understudying a bit of wreckage myself at the time! Rather tactless of old man Abraham to make his voice heard at that particular moment—what?"

"Jemima, please do not be funny!" Miss Primrose frowned. She looked extremely astonished, however. "Surely one of you girls was not playing a joke?"

"Oh, no, Miss Primrose!"

"Then how do you account—"

But nobody could account. Everybody had heard; everybody was convinced that someone had spoken. Even Miss Primrose, incredulous as she was before, was forced to believe that when she had questioned them all in turn. Her brows puckered.

"It is extraordinary—extraordinary!" she said. "I do not know what to make of it. Gladys, my dear, I really think, if I were you, I should go and get a rest. You look quite shaken up. Ahem! I do not like this—decidedly I do not like it. However, it is absurd to fancy you heard the voice of Abraham Mole! If there is any further repetition of this—er—phenomenon, Barbara, acquaint me with it at once! Meantime, Boker, get the girls some more distemper, and clear up this mess! Gladys, you had better come with me!"

"Yes, Miss Primrose!" Gladys muttered; and, still looking frightened, she smiled tremulously at Babs as she left the room.

No Mistake This Time!



"POOR old Gladys! Frightful shaking up of the naughty old nervous system—what?" Jemima Carstairs said thoughtfully. "That's what comes of walking under ladders! What about inviting the old girl to tea, Babs?"

"Why not?" Babs laughed.

The time was three hours later. The scene was Study No. 4. Work in the study was finished for the time being, and, to the chums' relief, there had been no after scares. Bessie, pink and shiny-faced after an hour's laborious scraping in the bath-room, was her old fat and contented self once more as she bent over the fire, putting the last browning touches to a delicious pile of crumpets. The table in Study No. 4 groaned under good things.

And the chums were in a happy mood, despite the scare which had attended their efforts. Part of the distemper was rapidly drying on the canvas; Babs had already pencilled in half the design. Looking back on that scare now seemed like some dream.

There were six girls in that study—Babs, Mabs, Bessie, Jemima, Leila, and Clara. The suggestion that Gladys should be invited was applauded by all.

"Yes, rather! Nip along and fetch her!" Babs said. "It will do her good!"

And her face softened in sympathy.

Poor old Gladys, indeed! Frightened, timorous, nervous, it was easy to see that she had had a very bad scare; for Gladys, of them all, was the only one who really believed in ghosts.

Jemima beamed. Adjusting her monocle, she trotted off. It was Gladys' own voice which answered her knock on the door of Study No. 8 in the Sixth Form corridor.

"What cheer!" Jemima said. "Better now?"

"Thank you, yes! How are Babs & Co.?"

"All merry and bright, chirping like a row of trilling robins on a Christmas morn!" Jemima observed brightly. "And, making ready to gather round the old festive board and all that sort

of rot, you know, would fain welcome one Gladys Norman as their guest of honour—or, to put it plainly, you're invited to tea," Jemima added.

"Oh, I say, that's nice!"

"Not at all. Will you come?"

"Be along as soon as I've brushed my hair," Gladys promised.

And she laughed as Jemima, with a beaming nod, withdrew. Shortly after Jemima returned to Study No. 4. Gladys, all smiles and bearing no trace of her fright three hours ago, beamed into the room.

"Well, then, here we all are, burbling and bright—what?" Jemima chortled. "Bessie, surrender the cushion to the guest of honour. Thanks!" And Jemima, with a bland smile, deftly plucked it from under the fat junior as Bessie prepared to sit down. "What-ho! There we are, my Gladys! Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we may starve! Fall to, henchmen!"

The henchmen, requiring no further exhortation, fell to, appetites sharpened by the labours of the afternoon.

"Yum, this pork pie is fine!" Bessie mumbled. "I always did say that if there's anything I like better than a pork pie, it's—"

"Two pork pies!" Clara chuckled. "Pass the salt, Jimmy!"

"Certainly — certainly!" Jemima looked round. "What-ho!" she said, and obligingly grabbed the cellar. "Ahem! Gladys, old Spartan, do you mind handing the worthy condiment to our friend of the large tootsies?"

"Why, no!" Gladys laughed.

She stretched forward her arm to receive the salt. Babs, watching the movement, smiled. She saw Jemima make as if to hand it to Gladys, and then deliberately Jemima's palm opened. There was a faint clatter as the cellar fell upon the table, shooting its contents across the cloth.

"Clumsy!" Clara growled.

"Jemima, how careless!" Gladys said.

"Look, you've spilled it!"

"Alas!" Jemima sighed. "Tut, tut! Bad luck! What do I do now—have a broken mirror or something over my shoulder to ward off the evil eye?"

Gladys laughed.

"I should think the best thing you could do would be to shovel it back into the cellar," she said practically. "All the same, spilling the salt is supposed to bring bad luck, isn't it? Pitch a pinch over your left shoulder."

"Certainly!" Jemima beamed, and did so, to bring an immediate protest from Bessie Bunter, who happened to be sitting in the line of Jemima's badly directed fire.

The meal progressed, but Babs stared rather wonderingly at Gladys. Almost casually Gladys had treated that salt spilling incident—this Gladys, the superstitious, who positively trembled if even she broke a mirror. Strange, that one so brimful of superstition should remain so calm by Jemima's clumsy accident!

Or was it an accident? To Babs it appeared that Jemima had deliberately upset that salt.

She glanced at Jemima. But that girl, monocle affixed in her eye, wore her gravest and most owlish expression.

"Jelly, Gladys?" Mabs asked. "These are lovely! Old Bessie made them, you know. They're one of her specialities. By the way, Babs, we shall have to buck up if we're going to do any more work on the canvas," she added, knowing that Babs intended to speak to Gladys about that.

Gladys looked up.



"LOOK—look!" cried Leila Carroll, staring upwards. The rest of the chums did the same, and then they fell back, aghast. Looking down at them from the skylight was the spectral-like face of a very old man.

all, there's really nothing to be afraid of, is there? Let's go now," she added feverishly.

"Well, if you're quite certain," Babs temporised.

"Yes!" Gladys cried.

"O.K.! Bess, will you clear up?" Babs beamed. "Everybody finished? Then let's get along while the light's still good!"

With a laugh she rose, and while the others pushed back their chairs, she chummily took Gladys' arm and led the way.

The studio was reached. Gladys gulped a little, fingering her flannel-covered throat as they entered. Rather scaredly she glanced round, and then gulped in relief.

For certainly there was nothing in the outward appearance of the studio to cause alarm.

"Well, here we are," Babs said. "Right-ho! Pencils forward!—everybody! Gladys, will you help to pencil in? If we do the outlines, the others can put the flat washes in. Oh crumbs! I've forgotten my charcoal! Clara, would you mind?"

"What-ho!" Clara said.

And work was started. The design, pinned on a blackboard, supported on an easel was dragged forward. Gladys, grabbing up charcoal, continued to rough in; and Babs, smiling, watched her appreciatively, for certainly Gladys had a very good idea of what was wanted. At the end of an hour the first roughing in was done, and Leila and Clara set to work on the platform to wash in the trees which formed the background to the old monastery and which occupied the foreground of the cloth. Jemima, meantime, was rather thoughtfully ambling round the room.

But nobody was paying attention to Jemima, and nobody was even thinking of the ghost. Even Gladys seemed lost and absorbed in what she was doing. And then suddenly:

Groan!

With a crash the palette which Gladys was holding fell from her hands. She flung round.

"What—what was that?"

Groan!—again. It seemed to come from the corner which, at the moment, Jemima was investigating. And Jemima was apparently as amazed and bewildered as themselves.

Then again it was heard—this time apparently from the very middle of the room. So weird was the sound that each of them felt their faces turn white. Each of them, in that moment, was paralysed by fright into utter

"You—you are still working in the studio?" she asked.

"Why, yes!"

"And—and you haven't heard anything else?"

"Narry a thing," Jemima said cheerfully. "No more merry old voices. Too tough—what? And we were looking forward with such interest to meeting old miser Mole."

Gladys bit her lip.

"All the same, there was someone, or something," she said. She shuddered a little. "I—I suppose, Babs, you couldn't paint the canvas somewhere else? I'd love to help, really, but that room—"

Babs shook her head.

"Where else can we paint it?" she asked. "Apart from that, it would take hours to dismantle the framework and re-erect it. But still, Gladys, never mind," she added kindly. "We can manage."

Gladys flushed at that. Babs only meant to be understanding; but perhaps Gladys was reflecting, as a senior and a prefect, that she was showing up in a rather bad light.

"You'd still like me to help?" she asked.

"Yes, rather, but—"

"Then," Gladys said, with a gulp; and they all really admired her in that moment for the undoubted effort she made to conquer her fears, "I'll come. No, please, let me," she added, as Babs opened her lips. "I—I hate to feel such a coward, and—and, after

mutes. And then, as they stood, a voice spoke.

Where it came from, nobody knew. It seemed, indeed, to be coming from the empty space in the middle of the room.

"Listen to the voice of Abraham Mole!" The voice was cracked, yet eerily sepulchral. "Listen, you girls, who have ignored my warning. And listen for the last time. This room is my resting-place. In this room I would remain undisturbed. Get ye gone. Get ye gone now before ye feel the weight of my wrath! I shall not warn again!" The voice stopped.

As they stared at each other with goggling eyes, there came a distinct rustling sound from the empty air. And then, for an instant, silence!

It was broken by a tiny scream from Gladys Norman. Her face was grey. She was trembling in every limb.

"Oh goodness, let's get out!" she cried. "Let's get out, Babs—"

She started for the door. Babs, shaken, made one step as if to follow, then angrily pulled herself up. She cried:

"Gladys—Gladys, come back! Oh, Gladys—"

The door opened and shut with a bang. Gladys had gone!

"Oh crumbs! Come on, Babs!" muttered Mabs.

"Wait a tick," Babs said. She was trembling herself, but her face was fierce. "Wait a minute," she cried, getting a grip on herself. "There's some trickery here. Jimmy, the voice started near you."

"Ay, ay, I heard it!" Jemima, of them all, seemed to be in complete possession of her senses. "Just here. Nothing here, though—nothing. Tut, tut! The mystery thickens like mud in pea soup! I wonder—"

And there, with a jump, she stopped, wheeling towards the door. For from the passage outside had sounded a sudden, unearthly, terrifying shriek.

"Gladys!" cried Clara.

She was the first to reach the door. She flung it open. Into the corridor they all pelted. And then Babs let out a shout as she saw, half-way down it in the dim light, the figure of Gladys Norman. The prefect was leaning against the wall, her eyes opened wide with fear, shaking as if attacked with the palsy. She pointed to the wall.

"I—I—I saw it!" The words came in a gulping whisper. "The—the ghost!"

"But—"

"It came out of the wall. It—it disappeared into the wall!" Gladys choked. "A horrible, wizened, little old man, with a white beard and dressed all in white. He— Oh!" And she covered her face with her hands. "It—it was dreadful."

Babs licked her lips. Expecting to see she knew not what, she stared at the wall.

"Gladys, you were imagining things," she said quietly.

"But I wasn't—I wasn't!" Gladys whimpered. "I saw it, I tell you. It was the miser, Babs—the miser come back!"

She whimpered again; Babs took her arm.

"Poor old Gladys," she said steadily. "Cheer up, old thing! It's gone now, anyway, and—we've just got to get that work finished, you know!"

"But, Babs, you're never going to carry on?" Gladys quavered.

"We are!"

"Oh dear, aren't you brave!"

"Please, Gladys," Babs urged, "do go and rest."

Gladys dumbly nodded. She staggered off. Babs, Leila, Mabs, Clara, and

Jemima eyed each other rather hesitatingly, rather apprehensively. Had they obeyed their own impulses they would have shut up the studio for the night and gratefully rushed back to their studies. But there was something fiercer, stronger in the make-up of Babs & Co. than that.

"Come on!" Babs said grimly.

"Bulldog, what?" Jemima murmured.

They raced back into the studio. On the threshold they nervously bunched, pausing as if expecting to see something. But nothing had changed. The room was a little darker if anything, though not so dark yet that lights would be required. The canvas seemed to glimmer at them invitingly.

"It's—it's all right," Babs said reassuringly.

"Of course it's all right," Leila scoffed. "Gee! What muffins we are—running like a lot of water-kneed ninnies just because a voice spoke!"

"But—but Gladys saw—"

"Stuff!" Leila said. "What Gladys saw was something her imagination made her see, I guess. Gladys just had—"

And there the words trailed off. And suddenly a most extraordinary expression came over Leila's face. She pointed a shaking finger.

"Look!" she cried hoarsely.

And her chums, looking for the second time within a few minutes, found themselves transfixed with terror.

For staring at them through the skylight was a face. It was the face of an old man, with a white beard and white hair that poured in tangled masses over his aged shoulders. Then, as they all gaped, the face disappeared.

Just Like Jemima!



CLARA TREVLYN was the first to find her voice. It was a voice considerably shaken.

"Somebody outside—on the roof," she said. "Come on!"

"But, Clara—" cried Mabs.

"Come on!" Clara snapped.

Once again she went for the door. Once again they tumbled out of it. That face—that face—just exactly as Gladys had described it. Just exactly as they would have imagined that ghost of old Miser Mole to look.

"It's somebody playing a jape!" Clara cried. "And whoever it is is on the roof. Come on!"

She simply flew along the corridor. Towards the attics she raced. Here was the nearest of the three or four trapdoors which, from this top floor, had direct access to the leaded roof. An iron ladder, a permanent fixture in case of fire, was reared against it, and Clara, without allowing herself time to think, scrambled up, wrathfully banging back the trapdoor and climbing on to the roof.

Her eyes at once darted to the huge skylight of the studio—a conspicuously glimmering mass of glass, rising like a small triangular mountain against the levels of the leads.

Nobody there.

Babs, gasping, squeezed through the trapdoor. Leila and Mabs and Jemima came after her. By that time Clara had sprinted across to the skylight; was staring around.

"Found anything?" Babs puffed, as she came up.

"No!" Clara cried.

She blinked at the second trapdoor near the skylight. But that, like the skylight itself, was closed. More than a

little anxiously they made an investigation of the other two trapdoors they knew the roof to contain, but here again they drew blank. Round the chimney they went, converging on it from four sides so that they would surprise anyone who happened to be hiding there. Not a sign. Not a trace.

"Well, where the merry dickens!" Babs gasped at last.

They looked blankly at each other.

"Mysterious—what?" Jemima asked. "The plot thickens, comrades. It seems, forsooth, that we are beaten. Wonder how our dear old Gladys is getting on?" she added thoughtfully.

Clara sniffed. But even she was a little disturbed. Across the leads they tramped again. Rather damped, they let themselves down the ladder. Strangely enough, nobody felt a great deal of enthusiasm for carrying on work in the studio, and they almost welcomed the suggestion made by Jemima that they should go and see how Gladys was getting on.

So, abandoning work for that evening, they went along to the Sixth Form corridor. Gladys Norman, fully revived, but still looking a little shaken, was in her study when they went in. She flushed as she saw them.

"Oh dear, I—I'm sorry. You must think me an awful funk," she said weakly. "I—I—"

Babs smiled.

"Feel all right now?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, thank you. S—sit down," Gladys invited nervously.

"Good idea, what?" Jemima beamed.

"Nice easy chair, you've got! Awfully comfy, what?"

"Oh, yes; frightfully," Gladys said.

"Like to try it?"

"What would I not give for the pleasure," Jemima murmured; but there was a strange look on her face as, Gladys rising, she sank back into the luxurious seat of the chair. "Nifty little study, this, Gladys," she remarked. "So bright and comfortable, what? Like that picture, too," she added, nodding towards the perfectly ordinary landscape which hung on the opposite wall.

Gladys laughed. But everybody, momentarily distracted by Jemima's comment, turned to stare at the picture in question. Babs frowned.

She turned queerly back, wondering why Jemima had made that remark. She was just in time to see Jemima's hand diving into the pocket of her tunic.

Jemima caught Babs' eyes, smiled, and pulled out her monocle.

"Pretty hectic times we're living in, what?" she observed conversationally. "No end of a thrill looking in the old studio. Did we tell you, Gladys, that we saw the merry old spook of miserly Mole?"

Gladys shuddered.

"Did—did you?"

"What—ho! A ghastly-looking man. Long grey beard and hair—or was it white?" Jemima asked thoughtfully.

"White," Gladys said. Her voice became husky again. "Almost dead white. But—but don't talk about it," she muttered. "Babs, tell me, when do you expect to finish the canvas?"

Jemima sighed. She relaxed into thoughtful silence. The conversation changed, Jemima contributing a remark now and then. But it was noticeable that she was very preoccupied.

"Penny for 'em, Jimmy!" Babs said suddenly.

"Eh?" Jemima asked. "Eh?"

Thoughts? Oh, not worth it, Babs! Keep your jolly old wealth in your pocket. Think it might be fine to-morrow, if it doesn't rain, Gladys?"

Gladys regarded her suspiciously. She, like many other girls at Cliff House, could never understand the burbling enigma of the Fourth Form. She just stared at Jemima, and Jemima, as if she had said something witty and clever, grinned back. Then call-over bell rang.

"Well, well," Jemima said. "Lift the weary old bones, henchman. Thanks for the restful old interlude, Gladys, old top. Frightfully nice of you, what? Look in and see us some time!"

And Jemima ambled off, leaving Gladys shaking her head. Clara followed her, then Mabs, then Leila, and lastly Babs. At the door, however, Gladys pulled Babs back.

"Babs, you—you don't despise me for being such a funk?"

"Oh, Gladys, of course not!"

"Because," Gladys said, drooping her eyes, "I—I feel horribly ashamed leaving you girls to face it out. And—and if you're going to work on the picture again, Babs, I'll come with you!"

Babs smiled. She felt very tender, very sympathetic.

"We'll talk about it when to-morrow comes," she said softly. "Meantime, old thing, don't worry. Everybody's afraid of something. Good-bye, Gladys!"

"Good-bye!" Gladys said, with a gulp, and put a hand to her throat.

And Babs went off. Call-over came and went. Bed-time presently followed it. Rather tired by the exertions of the day, and still vastly troubled in her own mind as to the nature of the happenings in the studio, Babs went to bed.

She was awakened suddenly by the squeaking of the door, and, sitting up, was just in time to see it closing. Some girl had gone out—some girl breaking bounds, was Babs' first thought. She looked around the dormitory, bathed now in yellow moonlight, and frowned when her eyes rested on the bed of Jemima Carstairs. That bed, with its tumbled sheets, its disarranged pillows, told its own tale.

Jemima had gone out! Jemima was breaking bounds!

Babs' brows puckered. Where the dickens had Jemima gone?

She would have been surprised if she could have seen the elegant enigma of the Fourth at that moment. For Jemima, contrary to Babs' first suspicion, was not breaking bounds.

Silently and stealthily Jemima was climbing the stairs at the far end of the corridor. She was chuckling softly; in her grey eyes there was a queer gleam. Presently she reached the topmost floor. There she halted before, with a swift glance round, she made her way towards the studio. Warily she opened the door and stepped in, and closed the door behind her.

"What-ho, we're here!" she breathed.

She did not turn on the light. There was hardly any need. Yellow moonbeams poured through the skylight, filling the room with a misty, yellow radiance and purple shadow. She stared for a moment at the canvas. Then, with an intent look upon her face, she crept towards the window.

The window was open just as Babs & Co. had left it. Jemima paused in front of it, gazing into the moonlit quad below. Like some impressionist painting, the green and yellow playing fields of Cliff House, with the gleaming River Fallsweir winding its way round the edges of Friardale Woods, met her appreciative eyes.

"Peaceful, what?" Jemima sighed.

Then suddenly she stiffened. Quickly her monocle went up into her eye.

"What was that?"

For from the tower in the east wing a light flashed out. A green light. Once, twice, thrice.

"Aha, a signal!" Jemima said.

Her eyes gleamed then. Tensely she watched. But the signal was not repeated. Nor, from anywhere she could see, was there any response. Softly she withdrew from the window, looking round.

If Jemima had any fear, it certainly did not show in that serenely oval face of hers. With the same strange smile she strolled back towards the canvas. Casually she took a seat in front of it, and was staring up at the pencilled outlines on the background when—

She twisted round, holding her breath.

From the corridor outside had come a faint swishing sound. There was the

"You mean you came here hoping to meet the ghost?"

"Why not?" Jemima asked. "No law against it, what? And what might my dear old Gladys be doing here?"

Gladys eyed her. She looked scaredly round the room.

"Well, I—I came be—because I was ashamed," Gladys gulped. "I—I came because I wanted to conquer my own silly fear. I was a funk this afternoon. I—I imagined things, you know, and—well, you know how it is."

"Making mind fight with old matter, what?" Jemima asked approvingly. "Good stuff, Gladys! Still, 'fraid you're going to be disappointed. I haven't even smelt the old ghost since I came in. He's not even showed a bony old finger-tip, y'know. I did think, though," Jemima added thought-

CLIFF HOUSE PETS

No. 13

Jemima Carstairs' TRAMP

TRAMP is the pet belonging to Jemima Carstairs of the Fourth Form. He is an odd-looking animal, with his Airedale-ish head; his Pomeranian-like tail; his Cairn-ish legs and his Sealyham-ish body. Tramp is, in short, a mongrel—a mixture of all breeds, with none, apparently, predominant. Yet to Jemima, Tramp is just perfect.

She insists, in fact, that Tramp is a breed all on his own!

From Mr. Merryweather, the school's gardener, Jemima purchased him for one shilling, and proudly she exhibited him in the Pets' Show. And would you believe it, Tramp won a prize—the booby!

Yet for all his lack of breeding, Tramp is a favourite among the girls, and even if Tramp is a mongrel, he certainly has no inferiority complex about the fact.

He has many friends among his more stately and aristocratic companions—he is a particular chum, indeed, of Faith Chandler's St. Bernard. His greatest rival, however, is Bessie Bunter's peke, Ting-a-Ling.

Like the majority of dogs, Tramp is very jealous of others who attain a greater popularity than he does. Although he receives a fair amount of attention himself, he feels rather overshadowed when Ting starts to perform his many and varied tricks.

Then Tramp, doubtless with the object of upsetting Ting's performance and drawing attention to himself at the same time, will set up a perfect pandemonium! That, of course, annoys Ting-a-Ling, who, like the great artiste he is, hates being interrupted, with the result that many an otherwise magnificent perform-



ance has ended in a common or garden dog fight!

I am afraid Tramp has no clever tricks, nor has he any great claim to fame as a hero. Jemima endeavours to teach him tricks, but as Tramp always seems to believe Jemima is playing some game, he has never taken his mistress' earnest efforts very seriously. So far indeed, he has learned only one trick—and that is to sit up on his hind legs and "ask." Jemima, however, is proud of that, and indignantly resents the suggestion that the act is merely the outcome of Tramp's greediness.

For that Tramp has a real Bunter appetite there can be no denying! Give Tramp a dinner as big as himself and it is gone before big Bruno has even swallowed his first mouthful.

He is not particular what he eats either—bones, meat, biscuits, toffee balls—even apples are all welcome. He will even watch hungrily for the crumbs and seed thrown to the birds; and many an unfortunate workman at Cliff House has found his dinner missing from the woodshed when he came to look for it! 'Twas unfortunate recently, however, that Tramp mistook a pot of glue for a bowl of jelly. He WAS ill!

faintest click as the handle of the door turned. The door moved, came open. Jemima stood up.

A girl appeared. Almost as soon as she stepped into the room she saw Jemima. A terrified gasp came to her lips.

"Jemima!"

"What cheer," Jemima smiled softly.

"Come right in, old bean."

Gladys' face was startled and pale.

"Jemima, what are you doing here?"

she asked, in the same throaty voice.

"Oh, taking the air, what!" Jemima answered.

"So bright and fresh up here among the jolly old shades of night, what? I hope to meet old man Mole and have no end of a chat with him. Frightfully interesting to know how things are going on in Ghostland, don't you think? I mean to say—"

Gladys' face was sharp.

fully, "that I heard someone tapping, And I said to myself, I said, Jimmy—"

But what Jemima said to herself for ever remained a mystery. The words died on her lips. In the very middle of that sentence there came a diversion. From the centre of the room, near the window, suddenly rang out a most ghastly groan, rising and moving until it seemed to be hovering above Jemima's head. Jemima looked up. Gladys, her face suddenly ghastly, backed away.

"The—ghost," she faltered.

"Jemima—"

Groan!

"Hallo!" Jemima said cheerfully.

"Say there, Spookie! Come out of the air!"

"Jemima—" Gladys shrieked.

And then—Jemima jumped round. For suddenly there was a terrific, reverberating crash! Just in time she

darted forward to catch Gladys, as, half-fainting, she sank to the floor—Gladys, who in her panic-stricken fright had collided with the easel and black-board on which the design was pinned and brought it crashing down. For a moment there was a deathlike silence, broken only by a moan from the livid prefect. Then—

"Goodness gracious! Gracious me!" could be heard. A voice from the stairs—the voice of Miss Bullivant. "What on earth—"

"The Bull!" gasped Jemima. "Gladys, pull yourself together!" Gladys' eyes opened. She smiled faintly.

"Jemima, I'm sorry," she muttered. "I—I— Oh dear, I guess I—I'm still scared out of my wits," she added apologetically. "For-forgive me!"

"Freely," Jemima concurred. "But I doubt whether the old Bull will take the same sporting view. Ahem! Here we are," she added, as the light went on and Miss Bullivant, her hair in curlers, appeared.

She looked fiercely angry. "Jemima—Gladys! What is the meaning of this?"

"Ahem!" Jemima said. "Ahem! Tut-tut, too bad. Sorry you were disturbed, Miss Bullivant."

"What are you doing here?" Miss Bullivant rapped. "Gladys, answer me?"

"Well—well, we were ghost hunting, Miss Bullivant."

"What? Gladys—you—a prefect. How dare you?"

"May I be permitted to say a word?" Jemima drawled. "I'm afraid it was my fault, Miss Bullivant. Noble as it is of dear old Gladys to try to share the blame for my double-dyed crime, it was I, alas, who was the cause of all the trouble. Gladys, with motives far more worthy than mine, came to this room to conquer her own shattering fears. I, alas, with no more motive than that sad old curiosity, came hither just to be nosey. I was the ghost-hunter, Gladys was the conquerer of her own fear."

Miss Bullivant blinked. "By which, I presume," she said, "you were merely playing some joke in here. Jemima, you will go to my study at once."

Jemima sighed. With arms hanging limply at her side, head downcast as though in shame, she crept, pretending to weep silently, from the room. Ten minutes later the mistress joined her.

"Whatever your motive, Jemima, you know that you had no right to be out of your dormitory. I shall report this matter to Miss Primrose to-morrow morning, and meantime please see that nothing of a like nature occurs again. You may go."

"Thank you, Miss Bullivant!" Jemima sighed demurely.

Sadly she walked out of the room. Shaking her sleek head, she mounted the stairs to the Fourth Form dormitory, and, entering that moon-bathed apartment, stopped as Barbara Redfern's voice fell upon her ears. In the moonlight Babs sat up.

"Jimmy, where have you been?"

"Hunting the old ghost—what?" Jimmy said wearily. "The naughty voice spoke. Gladys was there; dear old Spartan Gladys had come to demonstrate the victory of the will o'er the flesh, you know, but the merry old will just wilted when old Miser Mole started reading the Riot Act. You know, Babs—"

And then Jemima broke off, suddenly staring

"Jimmy, what's the matter?"

But Jemima continued to stare, her

eyes directed towards the window. In the moonlight her face was etched into sharp lines. She seemed to be holding herself tense and rigid. Babs gave one look at her, then quickly scrambled out of bed. She, too, rushed towards the window. Calm and serene, beautiful in its cloak of moon-bathed light, the grounds of Cliff House stretched before her. She blinked.

"Jimmy, what did you see?"

"See?" Jemima asked stupidly.

"You were looking at something."

"Was I?" Jemima smiled benignly.

"You were, Jemima. What was it?"

Jemima, climbing into bed, shook her sleek, Eton-cropped head.

"Goo'-night, Barbara, old Spartan!

Pleasant dreams!"

"But, Jimmy—" Babs cried.

Jemima's answer to that question, however, was a snore. Whatever

Jemima had seen was a secret known to Jemima only.

A Most Destructive Ghost!



"I AM at an utter loss to explain it, Barbara, but I really do feel seriously disturbed about what is happening in the studio," Miss

Primrose said gravely.

Barbara Redfern smiled as she stood in front of Miss Primrose's desk after breakfast next morning. It was rather a grim smile, however.

"All the same, it is strange that these scares never happened before we started work on the canvas, Miss Primrose," she pointed out. "It almost looks, doesn't it, as if there was someone who wanted to scare us off working on the canvas?"

Miss Primrose gazed at her sharply.

"But who, Barbara?" she asked.

"You are surely not suggesting that some person would hide herself in the studio all night for the purpose of scaring you? And if what you suggest is true, then that was what must have happened when Jemima Carstairs and Gladys Norman were in the room last night. It does seem so unexplainable to me. Frankly, I would prefer you to abandon this work you have started on. Surely, Barbara, a suitable setting for your part of the cavalcade can be improvised in another way?"

Babs set her lips. It could, but it shouldn't be. The Fourth had set its heart on Babs' backcloth. Apart from that, there was the Form's honour and prestige to consider now.

"I'm sorry, Miss Primrose, but we'd prefer to go through with it," she said. "We are not afraid," she added.

Miss Primrose blinked at her a little.

She bit her lip.

"Very well, Barbara. I—I was not attempting to discourage you. I must admit, indeed, that I admire your determination and your spirit. I hope—I do most sincerely hope," she added fervently, "that we have seen the last of these happenings now! If you must work, then work on, Barbara. At the same time, I reserve to myself the right of closing the studio should any further untoward happening occur there. You may go."

And Babs went. If she went with her determination unshaken, she also went with a worried frown upon her brow.

Dear old Primmy! Naturally, having given her most gracious consent for the chums to use the art-room, in the first place, she was reluctant to withdraw that privilege now; but, at the same time, she had her responsibilities to consider. If it came to the worst, Miss

Primrose would have no alternative but to place the room out of bounds.

And then, with the backcloth barely started, and less than three days in which to finish it—

Babs' lips came together. Whatever others might think, she did not believe in ghosts. There was some explanation, she was certain, for those mystery voices in the studio.

Slowly Babs walked on. Where to get a clue to the mystery? And then she remembered Jemima—Jemima who all along had been so cool, so mysterious. She went in search of her.

Marcelle Biquet gave her the information.

"Shimmy? Yes, I see her," she said, in answer to Babs' question. "I see her in half-hour going to crypt. She haf ze tape measurement."

"Oh, a tape measure!" Babs chuckled. "What on earth was she going towards the crypt with a tape measure for?"

"Je ne ses pas," Marcelle said. "She was."

Babs nodded. She hurried off. Mysterious, puzzling Jemima. What funny game was she playing now? Nevertheless, she hurried off in the direction of the crypt, which was at the other side of East Tower near the Cloisters—a rather deserted portion of the school grounds approached by a trim lawn and a shrubbery. Then suddenly she stopped.

"Jemima!" she cried.

Jemima it was—but Jemima behaving in a bewilderingly unusual fashion. Near the shrubbery, where a new seed-bed had been planted, Jemima was on her hands and knees. There was a tape measure in her hands, and she was making careful notes on a pad. She jumped up as Babs called.

"Er—ahem!" she said. "Top of the morning, Babs!"

"Jimmy, what on earth are you doing?"

"Doing? Er—yes, of course!" Jemima beamed. "Just communicating with Nature—what? Just seeing what has been planted during the night. And would you believe it?" she added seriously. "I've found an astonishing lot of things! But what ails thee, Babs, my henchman?"

But Jemima's henchman did not answer that question at once. Babs was staring at the seed-bed. Here the soil was flat and carefully rolled, and in the centre of it were three or four footprints. It was pretty obvious what Jemima had been doing. She had been carefully measuring those prints.

Babs stared at her curiously.

"Jemima, what is the game? Why have you been measuring those footprints?"

"Curiosity—what?" Jemima asked.

"And then I have a passion for mathematics. Just love measuring things, don't you know! But thou looketh disturbed, Babs, old Spartan! Anything Uncle Jimmy can do for you?"

Babs stared at her.

"Yes. Explain the mystery of the studio," she said directly.

Jemima sighed.

"Would," she said softly, "that I could."

"But, Jimmy, you know something? You suspect something?"

"Well, perhaps—just a spot," Jemima agreed, and shook her head.

"But I do hate saying things that may be naughty. However, I will tell you one thing—"

"And that?"

"About the merry old ghost with the film star face, and the prima-donna voice," Jemima said. "It's human, Babs. Now let's trickle, shall

we? Methinks I spy the fair Gladys and Mabs approaching."

The fair Gladys, otherwise Gladys Norman, the prefect, it was, accompanied by an agitated Mabel Lynn. They came striding across the lawn as Jemima and Babs moved away. Gladys' face was red.

"Babs—"

Babs saw at once that something was amiss. She stopped.

"Oh, golly me! What's the matter now?"

"The—the backcloth!" Gladys gasped. "Babs, there's a great slit right in the centre of it. I asked Mabs to come with me to the studio just now. I was looking for my dressing-gown girdle which I lost last night. Then—then we saw it. Come and see it!" she urged.

Babs shook her head.

"Oh, great goodness!"

Jemima smiled, though there was a curious light in her grey eyes. As Babs and Mabs and Gladys hurried away she, strangely enough, did not follow. She wandered instead away to the Sixth Form quarters.

But Babs, her heart jumping with anxiety, had momentarily forgotten Jemima. Up to the studio, Mabs and Gladys at her side, she raced. She flung open the door.

"Look!" Gladys cried.

She pointed. Sure enough, dead in the middle of the canvas was a great slit a foot or more in length, ragged edges of canvas still clinging to it. Babs' eyes gleamed.

"Somebody has done this deliberately," she said angrily. "And it looks as if it's been done with a pen-knife. But, oh, my hat! What are we going to do now?"

"We can patch it," Gladys said. "Eureka, I've got an idea! What about sticking-plaster? I've got a great roll of that new stuff in my study. Babs. Cut off and get it, will you? You'll find it in my first-aid tin."

Babs nodded. She was biting her lip. Who had done that—that vandalous action? For what idiotic reason? All the same, her heart glowed with gratitude to Gladys for making the repairing suggestion, and at once she hurried off. Breathlessly she reached the Sixth Form corridor, breathlessly she flung open the door. Then she jumped.

Somebody else in that room jumped, too. The somebody was Jemima Carstairs.

Rather guiltily she flung round from the cupboard near the window. The doors of that cupboard were open, and Jemima apparently had been rummaging among its contents at the bottom.

"Jimmy!" Babs cried.

"What cheer!" Jemima beamed. She seemed in no way disconcerted. "Nice weather we're having—what?" she said brightly.

"But, Jimmy, what ever are you doing in here?"

"Oh, just looking for things—what?" Jemima asked. "I thought I might find something I'd lost, you know. Can I help you to get whatever you've come for, old Spartan?"

Babs stared at her—hard. But Jemima's beaming face was utterly disarming.

Babs knowing that expression, deeply wondered. But it was no business of hers, she told herself. Jemima had her own wonderful and inscrutable way of doing things, and whatever reason had brought her to Gladys' study would remain a secret until Jemima's own self chose to betray it. All the same—

"Don't you think," she added a little politely, when she had found the roll of sticking-plaster, "that you'd better come back to the studio?"

"Well, well, and if that wasn't what I was just going to suggest my brainy self," Jemima beamed. "Lead on, old Spartan! Let us totter."

Totter they did. And in ten minutes the slit in the canvas had been neatly patched over. After afternoon lessons that day Babs rather anxiously worked on it, slightly altering the design so that the patch was undiscernible, save at a very close range.

Rather feverishly they worked. As Gladys was duty prefect for that day, however, she was not able to lend a hand. While Clara and Jemima did the fetching and carrying, and Leila and Mabs washed in, Babs did the more intricate piece of the design. There were, to everyone's relief, no further scares, and by the tea-time such excellent progress had been made that Babs reckoned, by putting in a whole evening to-night, and using the whole half-holiday to-morrow, they would be finished. Just before they were knocking off for tea Gladys came in.

She threw a rather anxious look round the room, but her eyes brightened when she saw what they had done.

"Oh, I say, how lovely!" she croaked, in her hoarse voice. "Aren't you getting on famously? By the way, Babs, there's something I'd really like you to do for me. Being duty prefect means that I'm rather tied to the school, you know, and I simply must make an appointment with the hairdresser at Courtfield for to-morrow. I was wondering if you'd care to pop into Courtfield for me after tea?"

Babs looked at her chums.

"Well, we were thinking—" she began.

"Oh, Barbara, please don't refuse!" Gladys begged huskily. "In any case, I'll be helping you on the canvas to-morrow. And I'm sure," she added, "that a blow would do you all a power

of good. I'll pay the fares," she added generously.

Again Babs looked at her chums. But anxious as she was to get on with the picture, Gladys had been such a splendid sport that it would have been churlish to refuse. In any case, they could do the journey there and back in less than an hour. She nodded.

"Right-ho, then!" she said.

"Oh, Babs, thank you! It's so lovely of you!"

They left the room. Downstairs, Bessie had their tea waiting for them. Jemima had been invited to that meal, but when they sat down it was to discover that Jemima had failed to follow them in. Nor had she turned up when, after making a rather hurried meal—much to Bessie's grumbling annoyance—they set off for Courtfield.

"Well, never mind Jimmy," Babs said impatiently. "Let's get going. If we hurry we can be back in time to do an hour's work on the canvas before call-over."

And that, they all agreed, was the best thing to do. Happily they caught a bus without waiting. Happily there was no delay at the hairdresser's, and by good chance they caught another waiting bus back, which resulted in the completion of the whole trip ten minutes under even their optimistic schedule. Jemima, a new monocle gleaming in her eye, was waiting on the steps as they entered the school.

"What cheer!" she jovially greeted.

"Hallo!" Babs said. "Jimmy, where on earth did you get to?"

"Oh, just the library! Frightfully quiet and studious place the library," Jemima said seriously. "Full of books and things, you know. I was looking at books," she added brightly.

"Oh, you're hopeless," Babs said.

"Been to the studio?"

"No," Jemima said. "But I'll come now, if you'd like me to. Anything to oblige—what? Forward the paint-pots!"

Anxiously they hurried to the cloak-room, and from there up to the studio. Babs flung the door open.

Then she stood rooted to the floor. JEMIMA was not surprised, though she was extremely pleased, when all at once a light flashed out from the old tower. "Aha," she murmured, her eyes gleaming. "A jolly old signal!" But—from whom?



"Oh, great ninepins, look!" she cried, in consternation.

But they were all looking. They were looking in dumb horror and dismay. Somebody had been at work during their absence. The glistening canvas on which they had laboured all the afternoon was no longer up against the wall. Flat on its face it lay against the floor-board, the mass of battens and crosses upon which it had been strung staring up at them.

"It—it's fallen down!" Clara stutted.

Jemima, leaning forward, intently examined the wainscoting and the panels against which it had been fastened.

"I think not," she said, shaking her head. "Look!"

"Look at what?"

"Look at the screw-holes. The screws have been removed," Jemima pointed out. "If the thing had toppled of its own accord those screws would have been pulled out of the wall and still be here. Where are they?"

Astoundedly they stared. But what Jemima said was right. The screws were nowhere to be seen.

The five looked at each other.

"Then—then—" Mabs breathed.

"Somebody," Babs said fiercely, "has been in here while we've been away. Somebody deliberately unscrewed that framework!"

"But who, I guess?" Leila objected. They stared. Who, indeed? Who would do such a senseless thing as that?

"The—ghost!" Mabs insisted, with a shiver.

"Oh, stuff! Ghosts don't go about with screwdrivers," Clara Trevlyn said airily. "Heave it up!"

Together they heaved it up. With the picture propped against the wall again, Babs gaped at it in despair. The canvas itself was still intact, but the work done that afternoon, having been left while the paint was wet, was badly smudged and blurred by contact with the floor, and would require a considerable amount of cleaning and touching up to restore it. Babs bit her lip.

"A couple of hours' work there, at least," she said. "Oh, my hat! And how the dickens are we going to get the thing faced up again? It will take hours!"

"It strikes me that somebody's got a spite against this picture," Clara Trevlyn said bitterly.

They stared at each other again. That was true. Impossible now not to imagine that some vandal's hand was at work. What had happened twice in twenty-four hours might happen again. Babs' eyes glimmered, however.

"Then," she said, "we'll keep watch."

"What?"

"We'll keep watch." Babs determinedly nodded her head. "It's not likely, anyway, that there'll be any attempt until after Piper's been round on his final inspection, and that's not until eleven o'clock. We'll get Janet Jordan, Jean Cartwright, and Joan Charmant in on this. Three of us will keep watch from eleven till one; another three from one till three; the next three from three until five, and by that time it will be light."

"Well, I guess that's a cinch," Leila considered, after a pause. "Who takes first watch?"

"I will," Clara said.

"And me," Babs chimed in.

"Jemima, what about you?"

"In the words of the famous old William of the Shakespeare ilk, 'As You Like It.'" Jemima yawned.

"Eleven, did you say, Babs?"

"That's it!"

And so it was agreed. From then until call-over, Babs was busy clearing up. Call-over finished, they went to bed. And Babs, listening while Piper made his round—slightly before eleven, as a matter of fact—at last gave the signal.

She, Clara and Jemima dressed. Out into the corridor they stole, Babs leading the way, Clara following, Jemima bringing up the rear. As they shuffled along in the darkness, Babs halted.

After half a minute they crept up the stairs, along the Fifth Form landing, up the other stairs, and so on to the top floor. There Babs softly pushed open the door of the studio.

Moonlight, filtering in through the skylight, lent a purplish yellow glow to the room.

"O.K.," she breathed, though her breath was coming a little faster. "Slip in, Clara, and close the door. But I say, where's Jimmy?" she added.

And in the moonlight she and Clara blinked at each other, for of Jemima Carstairs, the third vigilante of the midnight expedition, there was no sign!

JEMIMA CARSTAIRS, had Babs and Clara known it, however, was not far away.

Jemima had, in fact, accompanied them to the top floor landing. But while, at the head of the stairs, Clara and Babs had slipped off in the darkness towards the studio, Jemima, without a word, had gone off in quite another direction. The direction led Jemima past the school strong-room into one of the attics overlooking the east wing.

Arriving in that room, Jemima closed the door. Then she went to the window, softly opening it. Cool air filtered in to fan her rather hot face. Below she saw the quad bathed in moonlight and darkened by shadows. Near at hand was the east wing from which, last night, she had seen the mysterious signal in green.

To that spot Jemima's eyes became directed.

The clock in the tower chimed out eleven. Five—ten—fifteen minutes went by. Then, all at once, Jemima tensed as she saw a light flash out in the east wing—not a green one this time, but a red. Once, twice, three times the light appeared and disappeared. Then darkness.

Jemima chuckled softly as she sped out of the room.

Unmasked at Midnight!



"WHAT'S the time, Babs?"

"Twenty-five minutes past eleven," Clara Trevlyn murmured sleepily.

She and Babs, minus Jemima, were in the art-room. For nearly half an hour now they had kept their vigil. But nothing had happened. Judging by present appearances, indeed, it seemed that nothing would happen. Clara was sleepily nodding in one of the desks; Babs, partly because the bright moonlight drew her thither, was leaning on the wide sill which surrounded the window that overlooked the grounds.

She was looking at nothing in particular—simply because there was nothing unfamiliar to look at.

It was very quiet; very peaceful. But suddenly Babs jerked upright; suddenly, for an instant, she stared towards the shrubbery near the east

wing. Then her voice, vibrant and hissing, broke in upon Clara's drowsy thoughts.

"Clara, quick!"

Clara rose. Jerked into life by the urgency of her leader's tone, she went to the window.

"What is it?"

"Look at the shrubbery—there's something moving!" Babs breathed.

Clara blinked. Then she stiffened. Sure enough, something was happening there. She saw a dim, white shape among the darker background of the shrubs.

And then they both gripped the windowsill.

"Clara!" gasped Babs.

For now the figure had emerged into the full light of the moon. High above it as they were, there was no mistaking it. A small, old, and very bowed man, his snowy head and beard glistening in the moonlight, had detached himself from the shadow of the trees. From his shoulders to his feet, he was draped in some shimmering white material.

"The—ghost!" stutted Clara.

"Yes?" said Babs. "That's no ghost. That's somebody dressed up. Look, it's coming towards the school, Clara! My hat, I do believe it's making for the window in the lobby!" She paused, looking at the Tomboy's set face. "Shall we?" she asked.

"Come on!" Clara retorted.

And eyes gleaming she went striding towards the door. If this was a marauding ghost, then they were on the track. Impossible, after those scares in the studio, not to associate the ghost with the disasters to Babs' picture. Once he was tracked down, then their worries were at an end.

In a flash, Clara and Babs had bolted through the door. Noiselessly they ran along the carpeted floor in the corridor, shinning down the banisters to save time. In a surprisingly short space of time, they had reached the top of the stairs which led into Big Hall. And there, for a moment, they paused.

"Listen!" Babs breathed, holding up one hand.

They listened, staring into the moonbeamed shadows of Big Hall beneath them. Eerily those moonbeams glinted on the sentinel suits of armour which here and there dotted the hall. Black and shadowy, at the far end of the hall, the square doorway of the lobby looked like some dim entrance to an underground tunnel. From the lobby on the other side of it there sounded a soft but distinct squeak!

"That's the window being dropped!" Clara muttered. "Babs, what shall we—"

But Babs, putting a finger to her lips, was creeping down the stairs. At the bottom, where the shadows grew thick and black, she halted, Clara by her side. There the two waited.

In a few moments, from the direction of the lobby, they heard soft, shuffling footsteps. Something vague and white moved among the shadows, hurrying towards them. Even prepared as they were for a close-up of the apparition, both Babs and Clara felt a little chilling thrill as their eyes beheld it.

Small and stooping, the figure glided across the floor. But it was the face which was most awe-inspiring.

A wrinkled, wizened old face it was, with long white hair dropping lankly over the shoulders, a white, tangled beard cascading over its chest.

"Get ready!" Clara muttered grimly.

"Nearer, nearer the figure came. It was heading straight for the stairs. Babs tensed; Clara gripped her big hands. Nearer, nearer, and now they could hear the quick, hissing intake of a very human breath. Then:

The figure stopped. Startled, the crouching Clara and Babs acted almost without realising it. With a rush, they were upon the figure. Round it twisted. For a moment Clara's grip slipped upon its smooth arm. Then:

"Clang, clatter, crash, crash!" "Look out!" shrieked Babs.

But the mischief was done before the words left her lips. For the ghost, tearing itself away from Clara, had crashed against the suit of armour. The armour, supported on a pedestal, heeled over, and then, in a dozen pieces, crashed on the floor, the visor spinning half-across the hall into the shadows. From Miss Bullivant's study next door there came a startled exclamation. While Babs and Clara and the raider hesitated, her door came open with a crash. Flaming fury was in her face.

"Barbara! Clara!" she cried; and then, as the white-robed figure made as if to dodge up the stairs: "Stop! Who is that?"

"The ghost, Miss Bullivant!" Clara stated.

"Nonsense! Clara, hold it!"

Clara held on grimly. Miss Bullivant came forward, switching on the light. And then, as the ghost was fully revealed, Babs and Clara started back. A black, mask-like face, adorned with hair and beard, was staring at them.

"My hat, it's wearing a mask!" Clara stuttered. "Babs—"

But Babs had lunged forward. Her fingers clutched into the hair. One pull and the mask came away in her hands. A gleaming, oval face with a shiny, sleek head stared at them with reproachful disapproval, above the white, sheet-like smock which covered the rest of the figure's frame. And Babs and Clara almost fell down as they recognised that face.

"J—J—J—J—Jemima!" Clara choked.

Jemima Carstairs it was!

The Ghost Forgotten!



"FOR the last time, Jimmy," Barbara Redfern said grimly, "are you going to explain?"

Jemima sorrowfully shook her Eton-cropped head.

"Alas!" she sighed, "that I should be so misunderstood. You may draw your own conclusions, my dear Babbikins, but 'tis not, methinks, the obvious one. I have nothing to explain."

The time was the next morning. The scene was the Fourth Form Common-room. A full score of rather angry girls stood around Jemima, who, with a monocle in her eye, her face inscrutable as ever, stood before them.

Everybody last night had been awakened by the crash of the falling armour in the Big Hall; everybody, by this time, knew the part Jemima had been playing; and nearly everybody had jumped to the one and only conclusion that there was to be jumped to—that Jemima had been impersonating the ghost of Miser Mole.

And though Jemima, for that exploit, was gated for the day, the Fourth were in no mood to view her offence with leniency. Impersonating a ghost was perhaps a joke, but it was a joke in

jolly bad taste. But when that impersonation also meant damaging the canvas on which the Fourth Form had set its heart, it ceased to be a joke, even in bad taste; it was an offence, an affront to the whole Form.

Even Babs was angry. "Alas!" Jemima sighed.

"Jemima, I think it's about time for a little straight talking," she said directly. "I don't know what your funny game is. I can't believe even now that you would deliberately mess up that canvas, but as you refuse to explain yourself, what are we to believe? In any case," Babs said, "until you do jolly well explain, you can consider the studio barred to you. You hear that?"

"I have ears," Jemima said gently. "And if you want a tip from me, Jimmy," Clara said abruptly, "I'd jolly well keep a mile from the studio! Come on, girls, let's get going!"

"Yes, trunk call, please!"

No more she heard, for Jemima, hearing their footsteps, moved back, pulling the door to. Up to the studio they went. And there, with half an hour to spare before call-over, they recommenced work upon the canvas. Half-way through the task Gladys Norman came in. Her face was rather anxious.

"Oh, Babs, I—I've heard what happened—about Jemima. You—you really think that she made the noises and all that?"

"Well, who else?" Janet Jordan wanted to know.

Gladys nodded; but she did not seem relieved. She looked rather worried, Babs thought, and then, remembering that Gladys Norman and Jemima Carstairs had always been good friends, she understood.

Assembly bell rang then, and work for the time being had to be postponed.



BABS regarded Jemima in astonishment. "Jimmy, what on earth are you doing?" she demanded. "Oh, just measuring things, you know," was Jemima's bland reply. But Babs, spotting footprints in the mould, knew that her strange chum had some special reason for her behaviour.

Jemima again sadly shook her head. Slowly she took her monocle out of her eye, slowly she walked towards the door. Amid a rather grim silence she disappeared.

Babs frowned. Angry she was, but she had doubts. She knew Jemima. That knowledge of Jemima told her that her chum, contrary to all appearances, was not guilty of the crime with which she had been credited. On the other hand, there was no doubt that Jemima was guilty of impersonating Miser Mole, no doubt whatever.

"Oh, come on!" she said abruptly. She, Clara, Leila, Janet Jordan, and Mabs left in a body. Along the Sixth Form corridor they hurried, passing the prefects' door, which was ajar. Out of the corner of her eye Babs saw the slim figure which, at that moment, was engaged upon the phone, and she frowned again—as she recognised Jemima. Jemima was saying:

There was still half of it to be done, however, and Babs, during morning lessons, was rather harassedly wondering how on earth they were to get through with it, especially as the back-cloth would have to be erected in Big Hall before first thing to-morrow morning.

Afternoon came. Gladys, to her disgust, was given the task of taking Jemima in detention; which meant that Jemima would be safely looked after until tea-time, at all events.

All afternoon they worked, and just as if to prove that Jemima had actually been playing some joke, there were no further alarms or excursions. After tea they worked. Even in the brief intervals between prep and call-over they worked. Still no more scares. But there was still a problem to be solved.

Babs bit her lip as she looked at the canvas.

(Continued on page 14)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

Your own *PATRICIA* writes to you week by week, telling you of her own doings and other news of interest to schoolgirls. She tells you of things to do and things to talk about; all in that delightful way so typical of her, which has endeared her to you all.



I'm quite sure you all have a favourite month of the year, but I wonder which it is!

Round about Christmas time, I—your Patricia—always tell myself that December is my favourite month. Though I confess, I throw a lingering thought forward to the summer even as I say this!

Then, as a smaller girl, I used to like the month of May best. Why? 'Cause it is my birthday month, that's why!

But now that I'm bigger I've just decided that my favourite month is May-June—if I may be allowed to cheat!

For to me, everyone looks prettier in June; everyone is happier; everyone is fitter.

London looks less dingy; the country looks more radiant; homes and gardens are at their loveliest in the early summer sunshine.

And one more reason why I like May-June—the lovely fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season. (Greedy me!)

But, seriously, if you'd had as much spinach and cabbage this winter as I have, and had eaten as many apples—very ordinary—you must be as thrilled as I am at the thought of fresh, garden peas and beans, cherries, plums, and—biggest treat of all—strawberries!

So now you know why I like May-June.

But also, knowing me, and how I love to change my mind, perhaps you won't be surprised if my favourite month should be different as holiday-time approaches. (I'm almost too terrified to breathe it yet, but I believe—I believe, there's just a chance of my going with Aunt Monica to the South of France again this year. So next time you "make a wish," just spare a quarter of it for me, will you?)

● Bad Lad

That young brother of mine—young Heatherington, known as Heath—can be a pest.

You'll remember that I told you he is to be a page at his dancing instructress' wedding.

He was highly tickled at the idea of wearing gay shoes with buckles on.

The shoes arrived last week from the shop and fitted him perfectly. He strutted around and couldn't have been more proud if he had won the V.C. (Even though I'm quite certain V.C. heroes are the most modest of brave men!)

But when it came to take the shoes off again! You should just have seen—and heard!—the fuss. He was really naughty.

I think that bad lad actually thought he was going to wear them every day for three weeks until the wedding.

I'm quite certain he'd have gone to bed in them if he'd had the chance!

But he didn't. Mother was very firm, gave Heath a scolding, and wrapped them up most carefully in tissue paper and tucked them back in their box.

And the box, containing shoes, is now the chief ornament on his bedroom mantelpiece—having replaced "Dopey," of the Seven Dwarfs!

● A Gay Sun-Top

As we're in such a sunny mood this week (yes, even young Heath after his tiny storm) I can't resist telling you how to make a very snappy sun-top for yourself to wear in the garden or at the bathing-pool.

If you haven't a triangle scarf, you can buy one for sixpence, or you could buy a square of material for a little more, and cut this into two! (One for another time.)

But pretending you have the triangle, I want you to snip a piece off the corner that is opposite the long side. Now save this piece, for it is to make a very useful hankie pocket.

Meanwhile, make a hem along this raw edge. Through this hem, thread a piece of thick cord, or sturdy braid, and tie this at the back of your neck.

Now sew the little triangle pocket into position—and the "top" is ready.

You can wear it over a skirt, or shorts, the two side corners tying at the back of your waist, you see.

● Fair Fun

A fair came to the common near our home last week-end, so you can just imagine that your Patricia wasn't far off.

I went along with young Heath and a very nice schoolgirl whose people have just taken the house next to ours.

Believe me, your Patricia won three coconuts. Whether they weren't in their rests properly or not I'm not going to say, but the fact remains, I won them!

I'm afraid I was proud enough to want to take all three home to show my prowess to the family. But somehow I changed my mind—at the sight of the small urchins who had been watching.

These youngsters looked so enviously at my trophies, and had cheered so loudly as I knocked them down, that I simply had to give them one each.

And when I saw how happy I had made them—and so easily—I realised I was glad, and didn't care whether big brother and father believed I had won them, or not!

● A Grand Offer

When I went up to the SCHOOLGIRL office the other day, your Editor pounced on me and asked me to try out the Four-Colour Propelling Pencil he held.

Gladly I did so, for I had heard of these pencils, but had never used one before. And much to my delighted amazement I found the pencil wrote in black, green, red, and blue.

"Marvellous!" I said, as I examined this wonder-pencil. "Wouldn't school-girls love one like it?"

"Just what Miss Richards said when I showed it to her," answered the Editor.

"But they'd be jolly expensive, I suppose?" I murmured, as I looked at the silverine finish of the pencil, noted the clip at the end for attaching it to blazer pocket or tunic top. "And there's a rubber, too!" I exclaimed. "Oh, and some extra leads at this end."

Your Editor looked very pleased at my approval.

"Well," he said, "I'm going to offer this pencil to my readers for sixpence—with an extra case of leads as well!"

Sixpence! Your Patricia is certainly going to have one.

But I've got to wait—like you—until next Saturday, when I can read full particulars of this perfectly ripping offer. Next Saturday, in the SCHOOLGIRL. Don't forget, my pets.

● A Mac Bag

I'm sure you're paying lots of visits to the swimming baths these days—whether indoor ones or out.

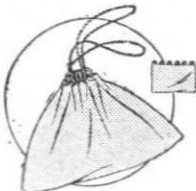
So what about making yourself a really roomy waterproof bag to take to the baths? Into it you can tuck your damp things without any fear of their coming in contact with things they shouldn't.

I'm quite certain mother will approve of such a notion, so I want you to ask her if there is an old macintosh in the family—a really old one that is in those final stages before being "thrown out."

If so, you will certainly find one good patch left—on the back, where macs seem to wear out last of all.

So I want you to cut two large rectangles out of this good part—about fifteen inches by thirty inches if you can manage it.

Then seam up each side and make a hem along the top. Buy a penny-worth of bone curtain rings from our favourite shop and sew these all along the top. Slip a piece of brightly coloured cord through these, and



you have a bag that will be really useful. It will be worth saving for your holiday beside the seaside, too!

Bye-bye, my pets, until next week.

Your friend, *PATRICIA*.

A SUNBATH FOR HEALTH —and Good Looks

To get the utmost benefit from your first sunbath of the year there are a few precautions you must take,
Patricia says.



I'M going to confess, right away, that my first thought when I propose having a sunbath is not "How good this is for me," but "How nice and brown I'll be!"

Isn't that what occurs first to you, too? I'm sure it is, and very natural, too, for there is nothing so beautifying to the face as a really good dose of sunshine.

A tanned face always looks attractive, of course, but had you realised how the sunshine also smooths out little worry wrinkles, and removes spots?

It certainly does—if—

Yes, there is an if and a very big one, so we'll have capital letters!—If you are really sensible over the way you take a sunbath.

Fair-haired girls, and girls with red-hair (or auburn if you like!) generally have a much more sensitive skin than the darker-haired girls. So you blondes and red-heads simply must not stick your face in the sun and leave it there, and hope for the best.

"Little and often" is the rule you must apply to your sunbathing—and let me tell you, the tan is much deeper and will last longer if you acquire it this way.

FOR TENDER SKINS

If your skin is tender and will burn easily, then it is a good idea to dab a little milk over it before you settle down to face the sun. This will protect the skin just sufficiently to prevent that horrid "burning"—which can be so jolly painful, quite apart from looking so unlovely.

Dark-haired girls, on the other hand, may rejoice that they won't have to be quite so careful—not of their faces. You see, as a rule, your skin is thicker, and your face having been exposed to sunshine, rain and cold all the winter and spring, should be quite ready now to tan easily.

All I ask you dark-haired ones to do

when trying to get a tan on the face, is not to sit in the midday sun for more than a quarter of an hour at a time. Even your easy-to-brown skin will rebel if you do.

All girls—blondes, brunettes and red-heads—simply must wear sun-glasses though, when facing the sun. If you don't, you'll not only acquire frown lines on your forehead and wrinkles around your eyes, but you may even get headaches.

So much then for that tanned complexion. But what about the rest of you? You'll want brown legs, a brown back and arms to display on the beach when you go on your holiday, won't you?

If you start now, you'll be as brown as a gipsy by August.

START GENTLY

Whether you take your sunbath at a favourite outdoor swimming bath on a Saturday afternoon, or whether you change into shorts and suntop to have one in the garden, the same precautions must be taken.

I know it sounds dull, but if the sun is high and fierce, you simply must not bake yourself for more than five minutes on each side for that first sunbath.

You can make this a quarter of an hour, if your sunbath is in the early morning, or on a day that is not blazingly hot.

The next day, you may toast for five minutes more—and so on, until you can lie for half an hour on one side and half an hour on the other.

After that you may relax your precautions, for that first redness will have turned to brown, and will then become deeper and deeper with every sunbath.

AN OILY PERSON

A good many of you want to know about sun-tan oil, and if it really does encourage the "browning" process.

Well, I can definitely assure you it does. There are plenty of good makes of sun-tan oil on sale for sixpence a bottle, but if you don't want to spend this amount, olive oil—such as you use for salads—will do as well.

It should be smeared sparingly on to the skin, never poured—otherwise it will just FRY there. But if you take the trouble to smooth it gently over legs and arms, and ask a chum to give your back a pat over with it, not only will your tan

be richer and more even, but the oil will also soften and improve the texture of your skin.

FAIRER HAIR

Some mothers insist on their daughters wearing a large-brimmed hat or at least a head-scarf all the time when sunbathing, so that the back of the neck is protected. And very wise this is, too—for sunstroke is a beastly complaint, and to be avoided at all costs.

Other girls, however, find their hair is a pretty good protection, and need only to slip a scarf around their shoulders when the sun is particularly fierce.

If you do not wear a hat when sunbathing, you will find the sun will take much of the natural oil out of your hair.

This is nothing to worry about if your hair is the oily type; it will in fact, do it lots of good. But supposing your hair is dry and inclined to be brittle already, then you may find that the constant exposure to the sun is making it more unmanageable than ever.

So you dry-haired young people should give your hair, as well as your skin, an extra oil-bath before exposing it to the sun.

The sun is kind to you blonde school-girls, too. It is quite usual for fair-haired girls to find that their hair has grown rather dark during the winter months. (Most people's do.)

Well, now is your chance to restore that natural fairness to the hair. And a very good tip for speeding up this "treatment," is to smooth a dab of toilet eau-de-Cologne (the cheap variety which costs threepence for quite a big bottle) over the hair, and allow this to dry on in the sun.

EXPERT OPINION

Now I must just tell you what a very famous English doctor says about sunbathing.

He says that mental activity is definitely increased by sunbathing—so that should cheer you who're not looking forward to exams!

The morning sun is always the best, he says—so remember this on Saturday mornings.

His warning, however, is the well-known one. You MUST be content to start slowly.

SUMMER'S FAVOURITES

—are these up-to-the-minute head-scarves that schoolgirls can make for themselves in a few minutes.

YOU remember I told you some time ago how to make those cosy wool caps that come right over your ears and tie under the chin?

Well, this fashion caught on so, that it has now been adapted for summer-time as well.

And the result is very charming—as you can see from the picture.

To make one of these caps, you will require a long, straight scarf, either a silky or cotton one,

You must fold it in half, and then stitch down one side for about eight inches—as in the diagram.

There, that's all! And isn't it simple? You slip this part on your head, and the ends can either be folded over as a scarf or tied in a perky bow under the chin.

If you feel very energetic, you might like to embroider your initial right on top of the cap—to make sure your big sister doesn't "bag" it! For everyone is



going to want one of these caps during the next few months, to wear for motoring, walking, cycling and at the sea.

(Continued from page 11)

"It'll take another two hours at least," she said. "Two hours' work to-night and the thing will be ready. Who's game?"

They all were.
"Eleven o'clock, then," Babs said. "But don't say anything to Gladys, of course. And don't," she warned, "let a hint get to Jemima's ears. Eleven, then."

And at eleven o'clock that night, five girls, sounds of their movements covered by the deep, reverberating bass snores of Bessie Bunter, crept towards the door in the Fourth Form dormitory. It was as they were nearing the door that Leila Carroll gave a sudden exclamation.

"Gee! Babs, look! Jimmy's gone!" Babs stared at the faintly visible bed of Jemima Carstairs, its sheets tossed aside, its pillow awry.

"Come on," she said grimly. They hurried up the stairs, a strange presentiment in all their hearts once again. The studio was reached. Babs softly snicked the door open. While Clara started across to pull the curtain, Babs switched on the light.

And then they all gasped and stared. For in front of them, the canvas, so near completion, still stood against the wall. But cut from the middle of that canvas was a great square hole, revealing the panelling beneath.

"Who—who's done it?" Babs choked. "Jemima—"

"But Jemima wouldn't—"
"Wouldn't she?" Janet Jordan asked, and suddenly she strode forward. From the wave of canvas which was coiled across the floor she picked up something and held it up. "Look at this!"

And she held up before them an article they all knew only too well. It was Jemima Carstairs' monocle!

"JIMMY'S!" BREATHED Clara Trevlyn. "But—but it can't be! Jimmy wouldn't do it—Jimmy couldn't do it!" Babs broke out. "Jimmy might be all sorts of a mysterious nunny, but she wouldn't do a thing like this!"

"Well, explain that," Janet Jordan said.

They stared at it. The fact that it had been found on the scene of the crime seemed to prove that it was Jemima's hand, no other, which had committed it. Clara's eyes glimmered.

"That," she said, "was why her bed was empty. That was why she got up before us. If Jimmy hadn't—" And there, all at once, she stopped. "What was that?" she added in a different tone of voice.

They stopped. They stared. They had all heard it. A faint, muffled cry. "Help!"

They stared round the room. "Where is it?" asked Babs.

"Out in the corridor!" Clara cried. "My hat! Is this some more of Joker Jimmy's mischief? Listen! It seems to be coming from the strong-room!"

They listened again. The cry, a little louder this time, was repeated.

"Help! Let me out!"
"Crums! That voice!" Mabs cried, with a jump.

"Primmy's!"
Miss Primrose's voice, weak and far away, it was. And unmistakably now it came from the direction of the strong-room, wherein most of the school's valuables were stored for safety. One swift look they threw at each other.

"Come on!" Clara cried. She threw open the door. With her chums following, she hurried down the corridor to the strong-room, whose great

iron door was shut when they reached it. Then Babs pointed.

"Look! The key is still in the lock!"

"Help!" came the voice again. It was Leila who rushed up; Leila who turned the key. The heavy door swung open, making them blink in the brilliance of the electric light which was full on inside.

A white-faced figure tottered to meet them—a figure whose bruised hands and disarranged hair gave testimony to the efforts she had made to make herself heard. It was Miss Primrose herself.

For once it did not seem to strike her as unusual that Babs & Co. should be prowling on the top floor in the middle of the night.

"Oh, girls! Oh, thank goodness!" she gasped. She was trembling. "Barbara—quick! Go downstairs! Rouse the mistresses and prefects. The grounds must be searched at once!"

"Searched, Miss Primrose?"

"The strong-room has been robbed!" Miss Primrose gulped. "They—"
She put a hand to her head. "I—I had some bonds to put back," she said. "I came here with the keys. I put one in the lock, and, to my surprise, found the door open. I—I— Oh, my goodness!"

"Miss Primrose, steady!" Clara urged, putting an arm round her.

"I—I went in. A man with a handkerchief round his face was stuffing things into a sack. He saw me. Most brutally he hurled me across the floor, and then decamped, locking the door behind him. But, Barbara, please! Summon the prefects! Tell them to search the grounds! I must fly and phone the police!"

"Oh, great crumbs!" Clara breathed. "Babs—"

But Babs had gone. Breathlessly she flew to Dulcia Fairbrother's study. Dulcia at once got up. And while she went off to rouse the prefects Babs rejoined her chums. Her face was alive.

"Come on; we're in this," she said. "Get torches, everyone! If the burglar's still in the grounds he'll be making for the gap in the hedge near the crypt. Even if he's gone there may be a clue there."

No need for more. Action and urgency were the order of the moment. Back to the studio they pelted; in a very few seconds had armed themselves with torches.

Prefects and mistresses were aroused now. Lights were on, and great scuffles were going on throughout the school. Bewildered voices could be heard exclaiming; white-faced, wondering girls were peering over landings and banisters.

But Babs & Co. had no time to waste on the rest of the school. The hunt was up! Angered and indignant by the affront to their mistress, anxious at all costs to recover the school's possessions, they were on the scent. Willy-nilly they tumbled through the lobby window into the grounds outside. It was Babs, flashing her torch in search of telltale footprints, who led the way towards the gap in the hedge which separated the Cliff House grounds from Lane's field.

Babs raced on, scanning the ground. Along by the east wing she led the way into the cloisters. There they paused.

For clearly they had all heard a sound which had issued from the entrance to the dark crypt near by. A voice. Somebody was down there!

"This way!" Babs cried. "Hallo, down there!"

"Phoo!" a voice came back.

"Come on!" rapped Clara.

They flashed their torches. Miss Primrose, gulping, came running after them. Down the stairs they tumbled. They reached bottom.

"Ach! Hum! Jove!" came a voice near by. "Woofs!"

Five torches, like five fingers of light, stabbed towards that voice. Five beams of light concentrated on one spot. And five girls simultaneously let out a shout as they saw the figure revealed by the torches' rays, while Miss Primrose, hurrying down the stairs, gave an astonished cry. For the figure—

Dirty, grimed, smothered and covered in cobwebs as it was, it was still recognisable. Miss Primrose strode forward. "Jemima!" she cried.

For Jemima, of all people, it was.

"Simple, My Dear Old Spartans!"



JEMIMA'S grimy face gazed sadly at them as, with a little shudder of disgust, she delicately removed a clinging cobweb from her hand.

"Alas!" she sighed. "That so many defenceless spiders should have been rendered homeless this night!"

"Jemima, where have you been?" Miss Primrose quivered.

"Jimmy, you dummy!" Babs cried. "Don't you know there's been a burglary in the school?"

Jemima found her eyeglass and polished it.

"All those things I know," she said mournfully. "Miss Primrose, it breaks my Spartan heart to present myself before you in such an unworthy condition, but if you will follow me I will show you wonders of which you have never dreamed!"

"Jemima—"
Miss Primrose quivered.

"This way!" Jemima said firmly. "The girl's mad!" Gladys muttered. "Miss Primrose, don't you—"

But Miss Primrose had no recourse. Jemima was already walking away. She went to the door of the old chapel. That she threw open, and, flashing a torch which she now mysteriously produced, shone it on the wall. The wall, bare, bleak stone, stared solidly at them.

"Jemima, I really must insist—"
Miss Primrose said again.

"Shush!" Jemima said warningly. "Watch!"

She went forward. She touched the wall, and then a startled gasp went up from all of them, and from Gladys came a queer cry as a section of that wall swung inwards. A dark cavity, surrounded by a dimly seen flight of broad steps, was disclosed. Miss Primrose stared.

"This," Jemima explained solemnly, "is the entrance to a secret stairway, Miss Primrose. The stairway, if you will study the book in the library, was built in the time of Henry the Eighth, by the johnnies who dwelt in these palatial halls. It leads," Jemima added thoughtfully, "to the studio."

Miss Primrose's face was a study. "Jemima, how did you discover this?"

"Readin', markin', learnin', and inwardly digestin'," Jemima replied. "In the intervals of my misspent leisure, I have been putting in some hefty work with the school volumes. Now, please, follow the girl from Cooks! But I think," Jemima added gently, looking at Gladys, "our dear-dear Gladys needs some smelling-salts, Gladys, old Spartan, don't faint!"

"I—I—" Gladys stuttered. "Miss Primrose, don't—don't go!"
 "Why shouldn't I go?" Miss Primrose said. "Jemima, what is up those stairs?"
 "A surprise!" Jemima beamed. "In fact, two surprises. This way. Turn on the searchlights and advance, troops! Mind the cobwebs! Aha!" Jemima said mysteriously, and paused before a sack. "Here is the first of the surprises. Miss Primrose, will you take custody of this?"

They stopped, staring. From Gladys came a moan. Incredulously they all blinked as they saw the sack. Its neck was open, and protruding from it were several small cases, the handle of a gold cup, and a scroll of papers, tied up with an official blue ribbon. Miss Primrose's eyes bulged.

"Jemima, this—is this is the stuff the burglar stole from the strong-room!"
 "What-ho! That also I know!" Jemima said. "Rather jolly to see

She flung the beam of her torch into the pit, and then she jumped.

For in the well, three feet beneath her, a white, strained face glimmered up into her own.

"A man!" cried Babs.
 "The burglar!" Jemima said, with immense satisfaction. "Tut, tut!" she added shockedly, as a sulphureous exclamation sounded from the pit. "Naughty, naughty! Gladys, old topper, you really ought to speak to your friend—"

"Gladys—what?" Babs cried.
 "Her friend!" Jemima smiled blandly. "Quiet!" she added severely, as the man shouted again. "Because, you see," she added gently, "our dear Gladys Norman is not Gladys Norman. Our Gladys, old topper, is an accomplice of the naughty, horrid old burglar. Whose there?" she cried, her voice suddenly filled with alarm. "Clara, look out! Catch Gladys! She's fainted!"

of British justice—what? Odd thing, though," Jemima said, frowning, "that the girl was so like Gladys Norman."

"Exactly!"
 The inspector smiled.
 "They say we all have doubles in this world," he added. "This girl, Netta Forshaw, was Gladys Norman's double. Her brother, a well-known criminal, had been in the employment of the Norman family for a few months as a chauffeur. It was he who hit upon the idea of making his sister change identities with Gladys Norman. And as things happened, luck aided them. As you know, Miss Norman became ill on her week-end's vacation. Forshaw was dispatched to London to summon a specialist. At the same time he was to have delivered a letter to Miss Primrose, telling her that Gladys would not be returning for some time. He did not deliver the letter. Instead, he sent his sister, so marvelously like her, back in Gladys' place."



HORRIFIED, Babs looked at the damaged canvas. Somebody had deliberately ripped it across with a knife. "Oh, my hat!" she said, in mingled anger and dismay. "What ever are we going to do now?" Their painstaking work was almost ruined.

them again—what? Leave them, Miss Primrose; we will call for them later. Now surprise number two," she said, and turned. "Clara, hold Gladys!" she cried.

The chums stopped then. Gladys had turned, was panic-strickenly flying. Clara did not understand. But she was tingling then. She saw that there was something more behind Jemima's madness than appeared on the surface. She grabbed the prefect fiercely.

"Let me go!" panted Gladys.
 "In a moment—in a moment!" Jemima said. "Now for surprise number two!"

And suddenly she stood before the next step—a single, solid flagstone. She bent. With one finger she touched something. There came a soft, whirling noise, and before their astonished eyes the flagstone slid back, revealing a well-like cavity.

"Show a glim," Jemima bade.
 Wondering, Babs stepped forward.

And Gladys Norman, while they all stared in bewildered amazement, gave a sort of sobbing sigh, and fell unconscious at Clara's feet.

A QUARTER of an hour later. The scene was Miss Primrose's study, and it was full. Inspector Winter, looking very pleased and satisfied with himself, was there. So, also, were a sergeant of police, and a uniformed constable. He nodded, smiling at Jemima who, with Babs and Mabs and Clara stood in one corner of the room.

"Good work! Excellent work!" he glowed. "I congratulate you, Miss Carstairs, upon your pluck. For a long time we have been trying to lay hands on this man Forshaw, and his clever sister. Thanks to you, we have got them!"

Jemima beamed.
 "The pleasure," she beamed, "is all mine. Bulldog stuff, helping the cause

"And the sister," Jemima asked, "was a ventriloquist, wasn't she?"

Babs started.
 "Then that accounts—"
 "For the merry old mystery voices in the haunted studio," Jemima beamed. "I had a shrewd suspicion all along, but naturally I couldn't be sure. I also," she added, while they all stared at her, "had a shrewd suspicion that our dear old scaremonger was not the girl she seemed to be, but again, I could not prove that until to-day."

"But—but how, you giddy mystery bag, did you get the suspicion?" Clara stuttered.

"Perfectly simple, my dear old Spartans—perfectly! 'Member," Jemima asked, "that I remarked about Gladys walking under a ladder? Rather odd for such a superstitious old Spartan we knew Gladys to be? 'Member, then, that we invited her to tea and I spilled the salt? And remember how she took it?"

"Oh, great golliwogs!" Babs cried. "You mean you did that to prove your suspicions?"

"What else, forsooth?" Jemima brightly smiled. "I was on the sticky old track from that moment. Then there was the face of the old man at the skylight—remember that, don't you? And dragging your grey matter back into the dead and ancient past, you will also probably recollect that Gladys saw that apparition on her own account doing extraordinary things like walking and disappearing through walls. After that we went to see Gladys—recollect I sat in Gladys's armchair? On the arm of the armchair I found a grey, coarse hair—"

"You mean a hair from that mask?" Babs asked.

"That's it. I knew I was dead right then. But I didn't know what Gladys's game was. I meant to find out. The night Gladys and I were caught by Miss Bullivant in the studio I saw a green signal flash out from the east wing. Later, when I was chatting to old Spartan Babs in the dormitory, I saw old Miser Mole crawling out towards the shrubbery. Next day," Jemima added, while they all blinked, "I found footprints near the shrubbery. I measured them up."

Babs stared at her stupidly.

"To prove to my own satisfaction that Gladys was Miser Mole, I searched her study for shoes. I found my prints and her shoes coincided. I also found," Jemima said thoughtfully, "the mask and the sheet which belonged to the spectre of the old miser, and I found an ancient plan of the crypt showing the secret stairway."

"Well, my only summer bonnet!" Clara murmured.

"And so," Jemima added brightly, "I studied the chart. I compared it with other charts in the library. And then I found out things. I found, for instance, that there was a secret staircase leading from the crypt to the studio. And I also found there was a secret well in the stairs. I found out, too, that while you could get into the secret passage from the crypt, you couldn't get into the studio unless someone opened the secret passage from inside the studio itself."

"Unfortunately," Jemima added, with a regretful shake of her sleek head, "Babs' canvas was spread over that secret entrance. And it was Gladys' job, working from inside the school, to let her pal in. She trailed along, helping us, to keep her peepers on us and also try to scare us away. Perhaps now," Jemima purred, "you understand why the old canvas got so much in the wars?"

They stared at her.

"But why didn't you tell us?" Babs stammered.

"Because," Jemima replied gently, "I still had not discovered the most important thing of all—the game. Apart from that, I made a big slip. 'Now,' I said to myself, 'if I imitate the old ghost and get talking to the mystery man outside I shall probably get on to the business.' And last night, the same as I'd done the night before, I watched for the signal. The signal came. It was a red one—meaning, I suppose, danger. Anyway, I did impersonate the old ghost, as you so sadly know. But the mystery man was not there, and all I got for my trouble was an argument with Clara and Babs and a suit of armour in Big Hall!"

Babs and Clara turned red.

"Well, you ninny—"

"And then to-night I worked it all out," Jemima said. "I hid in the studio. Presently Gladys came in. She slashed the old canvas to find the secret

entrance. Then our friend Forshaw appeared through the panel. Right! I nipped into the panel. Fighting my way through a dense jungle of cobwebs and dust, I found the secret well. I opened it. Then I stopped to watch, and presently down comes Mr. Forshaw in such a tearing hurry that you'd really have thought he'd been trying to catch the twelve-thirty at a quarter to one! He didn't see the well. He pitched into it and dropped the sack. And—well, what else?" Jemima beamed. "There ends the merry old story! Oh, pardon for one breathless moment, old Spartans. Gladys did the croaking-voice stuff to disguise her own dulcet tones."

"But your monocle in the studio we found?" Clara queried.

"Careless old Uncle Jimmy dropped it, my henchman."

There was a deep, deep silence. The inspector shook his head; Miss Primrose's face worked.

"Jemima," she said, "I—I have no need to tell you what a service you have rendered the school. I have no need, I think, much as I must frown upon your unorthodox methods, to tell you how I admire your keenness and your courage. And if, Jemima, there is anything I could do for you in return—"

Jemima smiled as she looked at Babs, Mabs, and Clara.

"There is," she said.

"Jemima, what is it?"

"The canvas," Jemima said, "still remains to be finished. I am sure—with a bow towards Babs and Mabs and Clara—that myself and my friends could seek no other rewards than your most gracious permission to finish it—now."

"But, Jemima, the hour!"

"'Tis one," Jemima announced, "and we shall be finished by four. Miss Primrose, please! It was you who asked me, remember?"

And while Miss Primrose paused, gazing at the smiling inspector, Babs, Mabs, and Clara eagerly looked towards her. She smiled.

"Very well. Unusual as it is, the request is granted, Jemima. But I shall insist—I really must insist that the sleep you girls will lose in doing what you want to do must be made up over the week-end."

"For which," Jemima glowered, "three whole-hearted, full-throated British cheers! Let us trickle, my henchmen!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

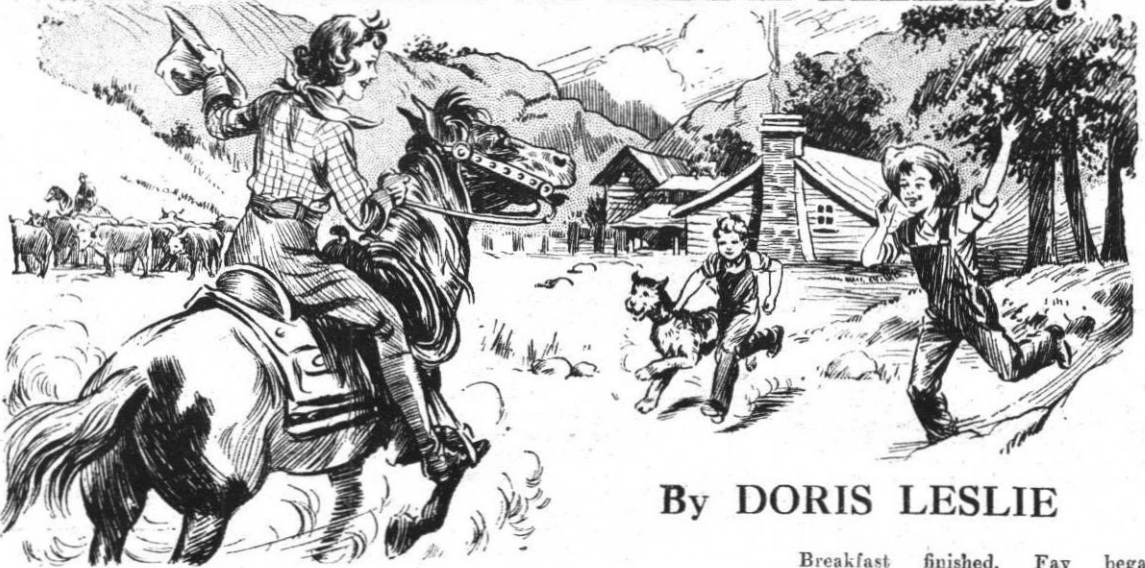
THE FINEST TENNIS PLAYER AT CLIFF HOUSE! A GIRL WHOM EVERYONE COULD ADMIRE: WHOSE FRIENDSHIP EVERYONE MIGHT CRAVE, BUT FOR ONE THING—HER UNCONTROLLABLE TEMPER!

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Opening chapters of a fascinating and unusual story of the Golden West—

GIRL RIDER OF THE BLUE HILLS!



By DORIS LESLIE

The First Hint of Trouble!

"NOW, then, you young rascals, get on with your breakfast at once, or—"

Fay Thornton, pausing, surveyed her two table-companions in the ranch-house kitchen with every appearance of sternness.

And they, her younger brothers, startled out of an argument as to who owned the model truck-wagon, hastily bent over their plates.

It was a good thing they did not look at Fay too closely or the merry, affectionate twinkle in her eyes would have told them she wasn't nearly as stern as she sounded.

"Or what, sis?" asked nine-year-old Teddy, glancing up from his energetically working knife and fork.

"Nun-no popcorns?" asked Bobbie, with all the terror that can come to a child of six who sees such an awful tragedy in the offing.

Fay looked at them—from Bobbie, with his chubby, freckled face, his bright, round blue eyes, and his halo of golden curls—plus the smudge of butter on his nose—to the bigger, darker, more sinewy Ted, whose own hair was gathered untidily on his forehead.

"No rodeo to-morrow," she said firmly.

"Oh gee, sis!" Bobbie piped. "But then we wouldn't see you win that race, an' you did promise we could—didn't she, Teddy?"

"Sure," Ted agreed. "Don't do that, sis—please."

"I said if you were good," Fay corrected. "And playing about at breakfast-time and being late for school isn't at all good. But, Bobbie, young man," she said, "just what are you doing with those beans?"

Bobbie ceased tracing an intricate pattern in the beans with his fork, speared one, and held it up.

"I've made a pony out of my beans, sis," explained the little chap. "He's called Ranger. He just told me so, an' he's awfu' hungry, so I'm going to feed him. I know he's glad, 'cos he's just twitched his ear."

And Bobbie pointed the fork, complete with solitary bean, at the plate. Trying not to smile, Fay went to investigate. She found that the beans had been painstakingly arranged to form the crude outline of a horse.

"So that's Ranger?" she said solemnly.

"Um," Bobbie nodded. "Sure is," he added, with an adorable little drawl—for Bobbie loved imitating the speech of the cowboys.

"An' you're going to feed him, Bobbie—not eat him?" asked Fay, her lips twitching.

"No, sis, I mustn't eat him," Bobbie said seriously. "The beans wouldn't—I mean, Ranger wouldn't like it. He—"

As little mother of the Flying H Ranch, Fay Thornton had many duties to perform, but she hadn't a care in the world until whispers went round that her father was a cattle-thief!

"Then I'll have to give them to Ted. He'll eat them, I know."

And Fay, neatly removing Bobbie's plate, gave a wink which the elder boy returned with a grin.

"Sure," he said. "Hand 'em over, sis!"

Bobbie, waving both knife and fork, gave a yelp of alarm.

"Oh, sis, I—I didn't mean that! I—I think, p'raps, Ranger wouldn't mind, after all. I was only pretending. Don't give him to Teddy, please, sis!"

Fay hadn't had the least intention of doing that, but Bobbie wasn't yet sufficiently astute to recognise a bluff. When the plate was put in front of him again, he made short work of his precious horse, and the unfortunate animal's carefully selected meal, as well!

Breakfast finished, Fay began gathering up the things.

"Run along now. Give yourselves a good wash—back of the knees this time, Bobbie. And comb your hair, Ted, there's a good chap."

By the time the breakfast-things were heaped into a basin in the huge sink, Bobbie and Ted reported for inspection.

In their serviceable khaki dungarees, consisting of trouser legs, frontpiece, and shoulder-straps, they looked adorably cute. Fay wanted to hug them. But a little mother mustn't always show her affection for her charges. She has her duty to perform, and Fay's duty at the moment demanded that she should examine their toilet.

"Good!" she said, when she had examined them from every angle. "There's two clean, smart boys! Reckon you'll be the nicest in class. Just a moment."

She crossed to a cupboard, taking off her overall and neatly tossing it on to a hook behind the door, revealing herself as very trim and businesslike in the typical clothes of a girl of the West.

She wore a flannel shirt, with a faint pattern of red check, well-worn breeches, a broad leather belt, high-heeled riding-boots, and a yellow neckerchief, that lent a saucy splash of colour to her rig-out.

At the reference to "clean, smart boys," Bobbie and Ted had begun eyeing each other up and down, neither any too certain whether to feel injured or flattered. But when Fay, whirling round from the cupboard, suddenly held out both hands, they gave simultaneous whoops of delight.

"Popcorns!" shrieked Bobbie.

"Wow!" exclaimed Ted. "Sis, you're just dandy!"

And then it was that Fay, stooping, put an arm about each and hugged them to her. Warmly, happily her heart was beating. Such mischievous, tantalising young monkeys at times—and yet so very, very precious. She loved every hair of their heads.

If only—if only mother had lived to see them growing up like this. Just a twinge of sadness came to Fay then;

but it soon faded, and she became her old cheery self again. Up she sprang, and, still keeping an arm about each of the boys, led the way to the corral.

The Thornton Ranch—known as the Flying H—was a dwarf compared with some of its neighbours; the enormous Lazy T, belonging to wealthy John Hampton, which hemmed them in on three sides, for instance. Three hundred head of cattle, a few hens that scuttled away as sister and brothers crossed the yard; a vegetable patch behind the wooden ranch-house, and seven hands. That was all.

But it was sufficient for their needs when times were prosperous. True, they hadn't been any too prosperous of late. But they'd improve, Fay always comforted herself. And if only she could win that race for girl riders at the rodeo on the morrow, what a tremendous difference the hundred dollars prize would make to them all!

The boys had their own ponies, young as they were, and could ride with all the skill and confidence of children who had been used to a saddle just as soon as they could be lifted on to one. Fay, seeing them comfortably mounted, got out her own favourite, Starlight.

Now Starlight wasn't beautiful; range ponies seldom are. He was long-maned, untidy-looking, short and stocky. But he had strength and fearlessness, and was as sure-footed as a mountain goat—qualities which counted most of all in a Texan horse—and he adored his mistress.

"Mornin', old boy!" said Fay, as he rubbed his nose against her. "Feel- ing fit? A trot'll do you good. Get you in trim for our race, eh? And maybe we'll set a flying pace back from the fork."

For the trail which ran past the ranch, and, by devious twists and turns, arrived at Redland Gulch, the little township five miles away, branched off some mile or so from the ranch. It was there that the boys were met by Mrs. Gribbin, and her eight-year-old daughter Polly, who took them the rest of the way, and brought them back in the late afternoon.

"Will daddy bring back more pop-corns when he comes home, sis?" asked little Bobbie, as they rode out of the corral, with Fay in the centre.

"I hope not, or you'll go off a mighty pop yourself," Fay said, and then laughed. "Sure, he'll bring some back. And some tinned peaches, too, and—and— Oh, just heaps of every- thing we all like!"

Mr. Thornton had gone into Redland Gulch the previous evening to transact some business, and purchase fresh supplies for the ranch. He had intended staying there the night, and was due back about noon. Even so, Fay half-hopefully scanned the dusty trail, peering into the shimmering haze of the blazing Texan sun.

She longed to see daddy again. The hours seemed so long when he was away; and tinged with anxiety, too, for, although she was proud of his courage and manliness, and knew he could take care of himself, there were occasional dangers in these parts, such as footpads, and rustlers.

But she did not worry now. The chatter of Ted and young Bobbie kept her quite preoccupied. Side by side, they rode on to the fork.

About half a mile from the Flying H the trail began a steady rise, and they had a wonderful view of miles of country.

On their left was a deep, rocky slope that went down to a once bubbling watercourse, now parched and dry. Beyond it rose another slope, almost sheer, and then beyond that vast plains; sandy wastes, dotted with cactus; boulders, stratas of rock, ridges, ravines, a series of swift-changing features that finally merged into the verdant valleys at the foot of the Blue Hills.

At the fork of the trail Mrs. Gribbin, fat and amiable, and her dimple-checked daughter, were already waiting. Fay, pausing for a brief chat, handed over the boys to her charge, kissed them good-bye, smilingly said, "Be sure to have a good dinner," and then rode back.

As a test of his form, she galloped Starlight fast over the dusty, treacherous trail. But not once did he falter. He had never been so sure-footed, so adept at taking the zigzagging course, and at grazing the rocky walls with scarcely a hairsbreadth to spare.

There was only one little fault—he seemed to tire a little.

"But I reckon a few more training spins will put that right," Fay reflected. "Trouble is, you haven't had enough exercise lately."

Back at the ranch-house, she let Starlight loose in the corral with the other horses, and then set about tackling her usual routine.

The Flying H cowboys were busy on various parts of the range, most of them with the cattle, two of them repairing some broken boundary wire, another strengthening the footbridge over the tiny stream. Fay was quite alone at the ranch, but perfectly happy.

Singing to herself, she bustled about. The breakfast things, well soaked by this time in hot, sodary water, were dried and put away, looking most spick and span. There were odds and ends left littering the place by the boys to pick up.

But Fay soon tidied everything, and then it was time to think about lunch. And lunch for eight healthy, hungry Texans was no joke.

With tinned beans, beef, and turnips and carrots from the vegetable patch, Fay prepared a stew. Tinned peaches were to form the basis of the boys' favourite "afters"—pie!

Sleeves rolled up, Fay, sprinkling flour over the pastry, glanced at the mantelpiece clock. Half-past twelve! Daddy was late; but then daddy was often late. He'd such a host of friends in town.

It was nearly an hour afterwards that there came the drum, drum, drum of a galloping horse. It slithered to a halt outside the ranch-house.

Fay, hurrying to the porch, was just in time to see someone go tearing past towards the cowboys' bunkhouse.

It was a long, thin, lanky figure, well over six feet in height, and dressed in typical cowboy clothes. Fay, recognising him at once, called:

"What's the hurry, Tiny?"

"Tiny" Shaw slithered to a halt, staggered and twisted round. He was a solemn-looking fellow of about thirty, with untidy hair, a long, tapering nose, and a lantern jaw.

"Just an affair between me an' a steer, Miss Fay," he said breathlessly, and swept a lengthy arm in a gesture back across the range. "One of 'em's got himself fixed in a water-hole. I went out this mornin' without a rope, so I came back for one."

In a moment Fay, whipping off her overall, was striding towards him.

Quite often cattle, venturing too far into a water-hole, sank helplessly in treacherous mud and slime. Left, they were slowly drawn under, but it was a simple matter to extricate them—when you knew how.

"Right, Tiny!" Fay said briskly. "I'll come with you. We'll make a race of it."

With a grin, Tiny dived for the bunkhouse, while Fay rushed to the corral. Springing over to Starlight, who whinnied with delight at seeing her again, she swiftly began adjusting saddle-blanket and saddle.

By the time Tiny came rushing out of the bunkhouse, a lasso in his hands, Fay was already swinging into the saddle.

"So-long, slow-coach!" she called gaily. "Reckon you're speedier on foot!"

And, with a wave, she went clattering from the corral. Round by the side of the bunkhouse she galloped, and then, at a tearing, exhilarating pace, went streaking down the quarter of a mile of gently sloping glassland to the pasture valley below.

Cheeks filling with rosy red, hair streaming out behind her, Fay leaned slightly back in the saddle, riding with ease.

She could see one or two steers dotted about the valley; saw one of them, pitifully alone, in the water-hole.

In the distance was the boundary wire, trailing out of sight, and dividing their land from Hampton's vast Lazy T tracts.

At breakneck speed, Fay descended. A glance behind her brought forth a gay, delighted laugh. Tiny, going all out, was fifty yards away!

"Good old Starlight!" she cried, patting the pony's neck. "It's practice you want! You're sure doin' better than you did on the trail!"

And it was the same loyal, hard-working Starlight, amazingly strong for his size, who helped more than anything to rescue the floundering, bellowing steer.

Fay, unhitching a lariat from one side of her saddle, had it ready when she reached the less treacherous side of the water-hole. Reining in, she whirled it above her head, quickly took aim for the steer's curving horns, and then let fly.

The noose, hissing like a snake, sailed through the air. A moment's suspense while it hovered above the animal's head, and then down it dropped as neatly as could be. Fay hitched the rope round the saddle pommel, then gave a brisk:

"Back, Starlight—back! Steady now!"

Starlight knew what he had to do. Carefully he backed from the water-hole, and at every step he took, so the helpless steer was drawn out of the clinging mud, through the water, and finally on to solid ground.

While Fay, sitting back, looked on, Tiny removed the noose from the steer's horns, and the animal, with a baleful stare in her direction, slowly ambled off, none the worse for his experience.

"Gee, you sure can fly, Miss Fay!" Tiny grinned, handing back the rope, neatly coiled up again. "You stand a mighty fine chance of liftin' that hundred dollars in the rodeo race!"

"Thanks, Tiny!" Fay said, smiling. She gave Starlight a knob of sugar, his usual reward for any good work, and then looked up, to exclaim: "What's the time?"

Tiny, doubling himself into a knot, dragged a battered gun-metal watch out

of his pocket and squinted at it uncertainly.

"Quarter—quarter to two, I figger, Miss Fay."

Fay frowned. Daddy was late. "Peckish, Tiny?" she asked. "Me, too. Better round up the boys and come in to dinner. We won't wait for dad. Reckon he may be waitin' for a new supply of baccy to arrive!"

And so, the instant she got back to the ranch-house, Fay was kept untiringly busy feeding and bantering with seven ravenous cowpunchers who came whooping in from the range.

But half an hour later, when the riders were finishing their meal, she began to feel a strange qualm stealing over her. She went to the porch. The sun-baked trail was deserted. She returned to the table and toyed with her own food, then went to the porch again. Still no sign of her father.

The hands rose and slouched off, with cheery flips of the hand. But Tiny paused to press her shoulder.

"Don't get het-up, Miss Fay," he said kindly. "Guess there's a whole heap of things could be keepin' th' boss in town. Why, he might—"

Startlingly there came a shout from one of the cowboys outside:

"Miss Fay! Tiny! Quick! The boss—"

With a clatter, Fay dropped her knife and fork and tore into the sunlight, and what she saw made her heart go icy cold. Her father was back. Several of the hands, looking white and anxious, were helping him out of the saddle, staggering as he suddenly collapsed.

"Daddy—daddy—"

Feverishly Fay raced forward. As the cowboys made way for her, she dropped to her knees and, trembling, cradled her father's head in her arms.

"Daddy, what is it? Oh, what's happened? Daddy—"

She broke off, her eyes widening with horror as she saw the ominous red patch, slowly welling larger and larger, that stained his shirt by one shoulder. Her father spoke then in hoarse, feeble tones.

"Fay, lass, they—they got me! Rust-rustlers!"

And then he sank back. His eyes closed.

Her Father Under Suspicion!

"**H**OW—how're you feelin', dad? Better now?"

Fay bent over her father as he lay on the bunk in his room. His face was strained, but he smiled as he looked up into his daughter's anxious brown eyes.

"Sure, lass," he said weakly. "A whole heap better'n I did. Guess the old shoulder's got a pretty nasty ache, but it might be worse—tons worse. Don't you worry, girlie. Your dad'll soon be on his pins again. You got the bullet out?"

"Yes, dad. Tiny here did. But don't talk too much, dad."

He nodded. With a sigh of thankfulness, Fay rose.

For the first time in nearly an hour—an hour fraught with the most nightmarish fears and torments she had ever known—she could relax. All danger was past. Thanks to prompt ministrations from all of them, and Tiny's crude but effective surgery, the bullet had been removed, the wound cleansed and bandaged, and her father made as comfortable as possible.

A grim bunch, the cowboys stood in the doorway, but Tiny now came

forward, hat in hand, lantern-jaw jutting out like rock.

"Say, boss, me an' the boys are mighty sorry about this!" he said. "Ay, an' hopping mad, too!" he growled. "Where were them curds?"

"Later, Tiny," Fay said, with a gently reproving smile. "Dad'd better sleep now. That's all he needs—sleep and rest."

But her father, before Fay could protest or even attempt to restrain him, had hoisted himself up against the pillows and begun to speak.

"I'll tell you, boys," he said. "You know where the trail forks, up by Black Rock?"

"By Hampton's land?"

"Sure—just by Hampton's land." His eyes gleamed a little, for he and the wealthy rancher had never been friends. "It was on Hampton's land I got this. You see," he went on, lowering his voice so as to nurse his strength, "I was passin' Black Rock, half a mile or so from Hampton's wire, when I

sort of way; Sam Hicks, the ginger-haired youth and latest recruit to the Flying H, was tugging at his underlip, uncertain and a little frightened. The others looked glum or angry or bewildered.

"Wonder where their hideout is?" Tiny muttered.

"We'll sure have to keep our eyes skinned after this."

"An' a heavy holster at our thighs," said another ominously. "I'll sure feel safer when I'm packin' a gun again. Guess I'll get one now."

There was a shuffling at the door. The boys were leaving to look out their six-guns and rifles. Fay sat on, her veins tingling.

Of course, rustlers had descended upon Redland Gulch before this, but never in such a startlingly personal way as now. And although she hated the thought of shooting and wounding, she knew that it was best for the boys to be in a position to take care of themselves, or one of them might suffer the same fate as daddy here—only worse!



"**I** RECKON you can't have no stores, Miss Thornton." Fay stared at him in blank amazement. She did not know that he thought she was the daughter of a cattle-thief.

spotted a bunch of fellows on his land near the stream. About a dozen of 'em. They were driving cattle towards the wire—must have been nigh on a couple hundred head. I thought at first 'Some of the Lazy T outfit.' And then—"

Then he had noticed that the boundary wire was cut farther on and that the cattle were being driven straight towards it. At once he had guessed the truth. Rustlers! He'd made for them, almost reaching them before they suspected his approach.

But suddenly one of them, glancing round, had seen him, and fired, hitting him. Mr. Thornton had tried to give chase, but loss of blood had caused him to faint, and it was his pony who had steered unerringly back to the ranch.

"Poor, brave daddy," Fay whispered, a hand soothing his forehead.

There followed a strange silence in the little room. The different range-riders were reacting in their own characteristic ways. Tiny looked more solemn than ever in a grim, vengeful

Tiny, the last to leave, paused to whisper words of rough comfort and reassurance.

"Don't take it to heart, Miss Fay. Your dad'll soon be around again."

"Thanks, Tiny," Fay said, and smiled as he went.

Yes, daddy would soon be better again. A week at the most, and he'd be almost as capable as ever.

She'd got to look on the cheery side of things. Daddy must have a smile about him, not a frown; lightheartedness, not despondency.

"Maybe Tiny's right, dad," she said gently, "and those cattle thieves will think twice before trying the same game again. Oh, it's great to know you're no worse! You're looking mighty fine already. Feeling better?"

"Sure, honey, a whole heap!" He squeezed her hand. "An' I'm real proud at the way you've taken things. Some lasses would ha' got real scared."

"Maybe I was thinking more about the supplies you got in Redland Gulch,"

Fay said, laughing. And then her expression changed. "Oh," she added, "but you didn't bring any, did you, dad? Leastways, your saddlebags were empty."

He shook his head. "I'm afraid the rustlers are to blame for that, too, lass. I stayed the night with Jim Garvice, an' it was as I was on my way into town to get the stores that I ran into this trouble. But how'd you like a trip to town?"

Fay's eyes shone. Anything that meant another chance of exercising Starlight for the race at the rodeo on the morrow!

"Sure, I'd love it, dad!" she said. "But will you be all right all by yourself? I could call in one of the boys to—"

But her father wouldn't hear of it. What? Have one of his own outfit to act as nursemaid? Not on his life.

"Just you get out that horse of yours," he told her, "an' put him through his paces. An' if you're not back in what I figger is good enough time to mean well for th' race, then danged if I won't pack you off again!"

He laughed. So did Fay. And as though by magic her last vestige of depression vanished. Gaily enough she kissed him good-bye and set off.

She did not press Starlight unduly. Except for occasional bursts of speed she rested him. But those little bursts all helped to tone him up, and the way he climbed some of the hills made her eyes shine.

She reached Redland Gulch in good time. It was a moderate-sized Texan township, consisting of one broad main street with a few narrow turnings branching off. Its buildings, box-shaped, were for the most part of wood.

There were wooden sidewalks, plenty of dust, and a few telephone wires to betray the hand of civilisation, apart from a clutter of cars, buggies, carts, wagons, and cycles. And the High Street, gaily decorated and bannered, was teeming with people.

As Fay rode through to Vallance's General Stores she saw Mexicans from over the border, cowboys, one or two Chinese, employed as cooks, and even a few city folk.

The stores sold everything from a hairpin to a blanket, and from a pipe-cleaner to a shampoo. Fay, hitching Starlight by his reins to the rail outside, briskly crossed the sidewalk and entered the stores.

Luke Prout, the grizzled, elderly assistant, was busy behind a pile of tins at the back of the counter, so Fay began to make mental purchases of her own.

"Beans for all of us, tinned tomatoes, a water melon, more peaches, pears; cornflakes for Bobbie and Ted," she murmured, "popcorns, and let me see—"

She picked up a tin of beans for a start, and then she felt a hand on her arm.

"Aw—er—jest a minute, Miss Thornton, but was you meaning ter buy yer stores ter-day?"

And there was old Luke bending over the counter looking at her.

"Why, sure, Luke!" Fay returned. "Leastways, as much of them as I can manage. Have you still got any of those—"

Old Luke coughed. "Then I wonder if you'd sorter mind payin' yore account ter-day, Miss Thornton?" he said. "The boss was kinder saying he'd like you to."

"To-day?" said Fay in surprise. "But you never have it before the end of the month. You'll have it Saturday

right enough, Luke. Mr. Vallance must have meant some other customer."

But old Luke shook his head. "He weren't makin' no mistake, Miss Thornton. He said he wanted the bill paid ter-day, or you couldn't have no stores."

Fay looked at him in puzzled annoyance.

"No stores?" she repeated sharply. "But that's stupid! I've never heard of such a thing. It isn't as if he doesn't know us. Why, we've had credit every month for more than five years. Say, I'll see Mr. Vallance himself!"

"Afraid—afraid he ain't here, Miss Thornton. An' it wouldn't do much good if he were. Yer see, he—he's kinder tightenin' up all round."

But something told Fay the matter went deeper than that.

"Are you sure there's nothing else, Luke?" she asked keenly. "Come on, now, that isn't the reason. What is the reason? Tell me!"

"Waal—waa! it seems folk are kinder—kinder sayin' things."

"Saying things?" said Fay in a slow, quiet voice. Her heart beat quickly. "What kind of things, Luke?"

He looked away from her steady brown eyes—looked anywhere but at her—as he went on, gulping, running a hand over the counter, ill-at-ease.

"Oh, jist—jist things, Miss Thornton." Fay grasped his arm, her eyes flashing.

"What things—what things?" she cried.

"'Bout—'bout your dad, I guess; only I ain't one of 'em, honest."

"And what exactly are they saying about my father, Luke?"

There was a pause, and then came the bombshell.

"Guess some o' th' folk figger that he—he was one o' them rustlers on the Lazy T land this morning!"

Fay Speaks Out!

FAY drew back, her face slowly filling with horror and incredulity.

Almost dazedly she looked at old Luke. Daddy—suspected of being a rustler! Why, it was absurd—too utterly ridiculous to be taken seriously for a moment!

"Luke, you—you don't—you can't—Why— And then, seeing his face again, she realised that there was no mistake. The folk did think that of daddy—they did! Luke did, anyway, and— "Who's saying that?" she burst out passionately. "What folk are calling daddy a rustler?"

"Oh, jist—jist some o' the folk in Redland Gulch, I guess!"

"An' you believe them?" she demanded fiercely.

"Gee! I never said as I did, Miss Thornton!" Luke gasped.

"But you do!" Fay flashed back. "I can see you do! But it isn't true! It's the beastliest lie I've ever heard! And you believe it! Mr. Vallance believes it! That's why you won't let me have our stores. You're afraid you won't get your money," she added bitterly, "or that it'll be money we got from rustled cattle! All right!"

She produced some coins from her pocket and tossed them on the counter.

"There's two dollars. I'll have all I can get with that. An' I'll be in on Thursday for the rest o' the things with money from the rodeo!" Her eyes gleamed. "Guess we can hang out till then. I'll have some of those, two tins of tomatoes, that—that—that—"

A few minutes later she left the shop,

her head high and proud, even if her cheeks had now become deathly white, and she walked in a kind of daze.

Daddy suspected of rustling! Almost unconscious of what she was doing, she slipped her purchases into the saddlebags on Starlight's flank and headed back through the street for the trail. Blind to the gay, colourful life about her, she rode on; but suddenly she—

"I sure guess that was mighty tough on your dad, Miss Thornton. He should ha' been more careful."

Fay turned; then, as she saw the group of riders at the side of the street, she reined in, the queerest of sensations stealing over her.

It was John Hampton himself, together with his blonde, fashionably dressed daughter Lucille—and it was Hampton's taunting voice that had addressed her.

"What do you mean by that, Mr. Hampton?" Fay said quietly.

"Only that another time he'll get no chance to escape," was the reply. Hampton, heavily built and very swarthy, stroked his dark moustache. "Tell your dad from me he'd better leave my cattle alone in future!"

"And while you're about it," inserted Lucille, with her usual supercilious tilt of the head, "better give that bag of bones a good meal!" And, with a laugh, she pointed her riding crop at Starlight. "How you expect him to stand up to my Phantom in the race to-morrow just leaves me guessing!"

There were smiles from some of her aristocratic friends, though one of them, a good-looking young man, was too busy trying to look perfectly at ease on the back of a superb roan. He seemed in imminent danger of coming a cropper at any moment—and apparently feared so, too.

A tenderfoot in the ways of the West, as Fay knew from a glance.

Fighting down her anger at the sneer, Fay would have ridden on but for something else Hampton said.

"Why don't you and your father clear out before this part of Texas gets too hot for you? Rustlers aren't welcome here."

Fay reined in. Eyes blazing, she turned. For an instant complete control over herself deserted her. Scornfully, angrily, she faced the wealthy rancher.

"My father isn't a rustler!" she went on heatedly. "I don't care what you think; I don't care what you say—or anyone else, for that matter, but daddy's as straight an' honest as anyone in this town, and—and one of these days he'll sure prove it, too! You—you needn't think we're going to quit, Mr. Hampton," she said, her eyes flashing. "I know you don't like daddy; I know you'd like to buy our land. But you'll never have the chance. What we've got we're going to cling to—and it'll take more than you to shift us!"

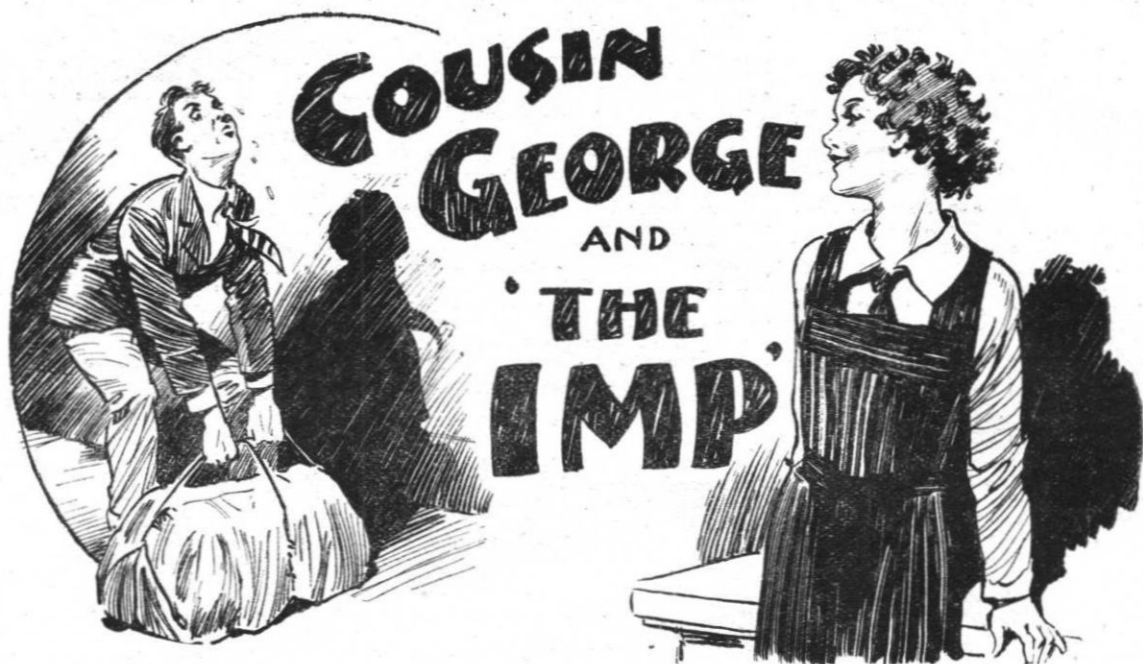
Then, trembling a little, and rather awed by her own defiance, she jerked the reins.

"Come on, old boy," she said whisperingly.

But her head was held high, her face was set, and her eyes blazed with a light of fierce determination and pride as she rode away for the trail.

WELL done, Fay! She means to meet the difficulties ahead in the same courageous spirit. And there are difficulties, and thrilling adventures, too, ahead! Be sure not to miss the second instalment of this wonderful new serial. It appears next Saturday.

COMPLETE this week. Another delightful laughter-story featuring—



Putting the Blame on George!

PHEW! It's heavy. Fancy having to lug this lot all the way to school!"

Hetty Sonning, the "Imp," having picked up the large parcel, put it down again promptly on to the gravel drive of the house where she lived with her Aunt Miriam and Cousin George.

It was school time, and Hetty's friend Jill had called for her. Unfortunately Hetty could not cycle carrying the heavy, solid parcel—nor could she fit it properly to the carrier of her machine.

"We've got to get it to school somehow," said Jill worriedly. "I suppose your Cousin George wouldn't help?"

And she giggled. So did Hetty.

For Cousin George, two years her senior, was a self-important, serious-minded fellow, a prefect at his school.

"Cousin George," Hetty murmured thoughtfully. "I wonder. Yes," she added, "I think I might fix it. Only he mustn't know what's in the parcel. He'd interfere. If my Cousin George knew that we were going to run a school magazine, he'd start editing it, re-writing it—"

But at that moment Cousin George left the house. Out he came in snappy new flannel bags and jacket, wearing his cap at a jaunty angle, shoes gleaming, tie just right.

"Just our luck," Hetty said, and winked.

Cousin George arrived quite jauntily.

"What's this, Hetty? Good-afternoon, Jill?" he said.

"This parcel—don't try to lift it, Cousin George," said Hetty anxiously. "It's fearfully heavy."

Cousin George looked at it. He did not realise that it contained clean, new paper, and was therefore deceiving.

"That!" he said.

Stooping, he gave it a tug. The parcel did not move, but Cousin George tottered a little and went a bit pink.

Then, bracing himself, he took a firm grip, lifted the parcel with one hand, added the other hand, and hoisted it up.

"Not so heavy as I thought," he said lightly. "But I hope you haven't been lifting this, Hetty. Better balance it on your saddle and wheel it."

"Um. But if I don't cycle I'll be late," the Imp pointed out. "If I had a cross-bar to my bike it would be different. I remember Bob Biggs—"

"Oh, Bob Biggs!" said Cousin George witheringly. He did not know Bob Biggs was a sheer invention of Hetty's. "That mutt. If you're to get to school this afternoon at all you'd better leave this to me. I'll balance it on my cross-bar."

Hetty was truly grateful. "Oh, thank you, Cousin George," she said. "Jill and I will ride ahead."

They mounted, and Cousin George balanced the paper on his cross-bar, mounted from the left, and then, unable

and as he stooped to gather it up, another cyclist stopped, a girl from Hetty's school, a prefect.

The scattered paper was barring her way, and she dismounted.

"Sorry," said Cousin George.

"Looks a nasty mess," said Sylvia Doyle, the prefect. "And—hallo—" she ended.

She looked down at one or two of the sheets, on which there was lettering and a drawing. Stooping, she picked one up, stared at it, and then at Cousin George.

"School magazine!" she exclaimed, and her face darkened. "Junior magazine—"

"Dear me!" said Cousin George, in surprise. "And Hetty never said a word!"

When the Imp planned a new school magazine, pompous Cousin George decided that it should be full of uplifting contributions by himself. But the Imp had other ideas. When the mag appeared, George had the shock of his life—and the Imp and her chums one long laugh!

to keep his balance owing to the weight of the parcel, dismounted unintentionally the other side into a flower-bed.

But Hetty and Jill were through the gateway.

"Gosh—and he let it go at that. Didn't ask any real questions!" said Hetty in glee. "Jill, this magazine will knock the school flat. The dull, old miserable school mag is going to look like just nothing."

"Hear, hear. We'll get down to it directly after lessons," said Jill eagerly.

Behind them came Cousin George, riding now, and trying to balance the parcel on his luggage carrier with one hand behind him.

All went well for half a mile, and then Cousin George lost his grip on the parcel. It swayed, and he heard it go thud on the road.

Cousin George braked and dismounted, to find the parcel had burst,

"Hetty?" said the prefect sharply.

"Hetty Sonning," nodded George.

"My cousin," nodded George.

"Rather a handful."

"You're telling me," answered the girl, in a grim tone. "I think I'll take these few pages along to the school. It will save you the trouble."

And away she rode, in a most determined mood.

"School magazine, eh?" she muttered as she rode along. "A junior magazine—skits on prefects—silly jokes—twaddle. And selling it at twopence a copy? Oh, they are, eh? We'll see about that!"

And with the proposed cover of the new magazine under her arm, and a

By IDA MELBOURNE

caricature of herself. Sylvia made her pedals whizz in her eagerness to meet Hetty.

THE IMP sighed.

"All my fault, girls. I'm fearfully sorry," she said.

It was a dismal group that gathered in the corridor during the afternoon break; yet only that very morning the same girls had been in a state of wild enthusiasm.

But then, in between, Hetty had had an interview with Sylvia Doyle.

"There is one school magazine—and one is enough!" Sylvia had said. "All other efforts are forbidden!"

"Well, what's to be done?" asked Jill dismally.

Hetty grimaced.

"Fifty lines—for me. 'Caricature is a vulgar form of art'—in copper-plate, too!"

"Your Cousin George ought to write them for you," said one of the girls in wrath. "The mutt!"

"He jolly well will, too," said Hetty frowning.

Jill giggled.

"Yes, I bet he will. More likely give you a lecture, Hetty."

Hetty herself could not picture Cousin George writing those lines for her; but she had made up her mind that somehow he should be compelled.

"I'm the mutt, thinking he could do even a simple thing like carrying a parcel," she declared.

The bell rang for lessons again, and

Hetty drew up, a new, warlike light in her eyes.

"Listen!" she said. "We're not giving in. Sylvia can't stop our publishing a magazine—"

"Yes, she can. Two school mags are against rules—"

"It won't be a school mag," said Hetty excitedly. "I've got an idea. Girls, that magazine is coming out! It will sell like hot cakes! Leave it to me!"

There was no time to ask how or when, for they were due in to lessons, but they knew enough about Hetty by this time to be sure that she was not just talking through her hat.

They had all written articles, stories, verses for the new, projected magazine, and the fact that it was not to be published was a bitter disappointment.

After lessons that afternoon, Hetty hurried home.

When Cousin George looked into the Common-room, which they shared, Hetty was at the table, writing.

"Good-afternoon, Cousin George!" said Hetty meekly. "You ran into Sylvia, didn't you?"

"Sensible, thoughtful girl," he nodded. "And, by the way, Sylvia—if that's her name—said something about your running a junior mag."

"And did she seem pleased?" asked the Imp keenly.

"I hardly think she was interested," said Cousin George, in his loftiest tone, and with a smile. "You can hardly expect a prefect to worry her head

about a trashy rag full of spelling errors and blots. One has one's dignity as a prefect."

He swelled his chest and sat down. Hetty thought quickly, glad that Sylvia had not spoken her mind about the projected mag, for she needed Cousin George's help again.

"Perhaps you could do a little thing for our mag. It isn't really a school mag. A village mag, more," she said.

Cousin George swallowed the bait. She saw him stiffen.

"A village mag? What? You mean you've got the cheek to run a village mag—you, a mere kid?"

"Well, I knew you'd give me a few tips," said Hetty. "Write the leading article, and perhaps a serial story, and a poem or two."

Cousin George did not scoff. He became serious.

"Very well," he said. "It will be at least something useful and intelligent for you to do. But I shan't agree to publishing rubbish, of course—not if I'm to contribute. I shall want to read through the stuff, and so on—and correct the spelling."

Hetty nearly skipped with joy, but she managed to remain serious. Another magazine in her school was forbidden; but who could deny Cousin George the right to produce a magazine and publish it? His own headmaster, but not Sylvia Doyle!

"George," said Hetty sharply, as though the idea had just struck her. "You edit it. We'll call it—let's see—"

Cousin George's eyes lighted up.

"The Sonning Budget," he said. "That's it! Grand!"

He jumped up, quite excited; then he crossed to the table where the Imp sat writing.

"Caricature is a vulgar form of art!" he exclaimed. "Not at all!"

"It's copper-plate," explained Hetty. "It's supposed to be impossible to write a phrase like that fifty times without making a mistake. Bob couldn't—"

Airily Cousin George waved her aside. "I can't copy yours, but I'll do a set myself," he said pompously. "And without a mistake, or anything approaching one."

Hetty watched him for a while, and then, thrilling with triumph, crept away to telephone her friends and summon them to an editorial meeting in the Common-room.

When she returned, Cousin George, tongue in his cheek, was just finishing.

"There—fifty, and not a mistake!" he said in triumph.

Hetty patted his back.

"Well done! And thank you ever so much, Cousin George!" she added fervently. "And now—about this magazine."

Cousin George settled down to it, and when three of Hetty's friends arrived, twenty minutes later, George had the whole magazine roughed out—leading article, a serial story, complete story, and a poem.

He had not written them all—just planned them.

"Isn't Cousin George kind, girls?" asked Hetty.

"Awfully kind," they agreed eagerly. "Not at all," said Cousin George. "Now let's get busy. You girls have home-work. Better trot along. Don't waste school time doing this work," he added sternly. "Keep your things short. I shall use them as filling-up bits here and there."

They thanked him, and he almost hustled them from the room, eager to get busy with his serial, article, complete story, and poem.

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

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—Life seems to be full of surprises these days.

First, we—or rather, YOU—had the surprise of learning all about our grand new serial, which begins this week and which, I am sure, you are going to love, and now I have two more surprises for you, just as exciting in their own particular ways.

To begin with, next week's issue of the SCHOOLGIRL will contain full details of a

WONDERFUL PRESENTATION OFFER,

which will be open to every one who reads our paper regularly. I won't say much more at this stage, because you will learn all you need to know next week, but I can say this—just to whet your appetites, as it were. This splendid offer takes the form of a really ingenious and useful Propelling Pencil—with four leads of different colours! I'm sure you've never seen anything so fascinating and so novel in all your lives, so do please make sure of your copy next Saturday, won't you?

And if you make certain of next week's issue, and of thus discovering how YOU can become eligible for one of those topping pencils, you will also make sure of No. 2 of our surprises. In other words, the magnificent story of the Cliff House Chums.

It is, by the way, the first of a series. And that's where the surprise element comes in. Aren't you thrilled? I'm

positive you are, because the last series we ran of Cliff House stories were overwhelmingly popular. Miss Richards and I had shoals and shoals of enthusiastic letters.

The "star" of this particular series is Christine Wilmer, who caused so much trouble, you may remember, when she first arrived at the school. Well, Christine, thanks to her uncontrollable temper, is relegated from the Upper Fifth to the Fourth Form. And aren't the Fourth—especially Clara Trevlyn, the games captain—delighted.

For Christine is far and away the finest tennis player in the school, and she will be a tremendous asset to the Fourth in a most important tournament. So think all the Fourth. But, unfortunately, Christine's temper just won't be governed. Suddenly she flares up again, furiously antagonising Clara, and upsetting the rest of the Fourth. Not once, but again and again she breaks out.

The Form are disgusted. Oh, Christine is hopeless, they feel. She'll never be any good. The sooner she's back in the Fifth the better. But there is one among them who has confidence in Christine, and that lone person is Barbara Redfern.

Babs sets out to help Christine. She stands by the girl when everyone else is against her; she encourages her, defends her, protects her!

But, unfortunately, there are some girls who very much want Christine to break out again, and they do all they can to provoke her.

You simply must not fail to read this dramatic first story of one of the finest series Miss Richards has ever written. Next week's issue will also contain another delightful COMPLETE fun-story of "Cousin George and 'The Imp,'" the second instalment of "Girl Rider of the Blue Hills," more of Patricia's Interesting Pages, and another Cliff House Pet.

Order your copy at once. And now—au revoir until next week.

With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

Outside on the landing, the Imp's friends pulled faces.

"Doesn't look as though it's going to be our magazine," grimaced Jill. "He'll write it all himself—"

Hetty soothed them, a glimmer of mischief in her eyes.

"Don't you worry," she said. "Just write whatever you want to, and get Miss Mimms in the village to do it on a stencil. Leave the rest to me!"

And Hetty, trilling a song, went back light of heart to the Common-room. For although the Sonning Budget was to be edited by Cousin George, the real master-mind—whether he knew it or not—was Hetty's. And the new magazine was going to be a wow, indistinguishable from a Junior School magazine.

Hetty is So Meek!

Cousin George was in a fever of excitement. It was Press day, and he could not find a rhyme for "month." Apart from that his epic was complete except for the last four stanzas; his leading article was finished; so was his instalment of the serial and his complete story.

The Common-room at his home, usually so tidy, was transformed. Cousin George himself, wearing a tennis-eyeshade, sleeves rolled up, collar and tie loosened, and a soft felt hat on the back of his head, was giving a good impersonation of a Pressman of the film type.

Sheets of paper littered his desk. There was a pot of paste, three blue pencils, a dictionary, and a large wastepaper-basket.

The Imp, sitting at a small card-table, was scribbling busily.

"Can you think of a word that rhymes with month?" he asked.

"Month?" asked Hetty, looking up and musing. "How about punth?"

"What! There isn't such a word," he snorted.

"Of course there is, Cousin George. Haven't you seen them on the river?" said Hetty, her eyes glimmering.

"Punth?"

"Yeth. They don't have seath, and you puth them along with polesth," said Hetty. "Thilly flat-bottomed thinth."

Cousin George fixed her with a dark look.

"I suppose you're being funny," he said. "This is an epic poem about St. George and the dragon. St. George didn't lisp."

"How do you know?" asked Hetty.

"Don't be foolish," said Cousin George coldly. "I've got to the bit where the dragon has been killed, and St. George is standing with one foot on him, declaiming, his sword in air: 'This derring deed, in hour of need, shall keep my name in blazing fame, not for a day, a week or month—'"

"Just put 'to be continued,'" said Hetty. "And everyone will buy next month's issue to know the answer. How do you spell limerick?"

"L-i-m-e-r-i-c-k. But why?" asked Cousin George. "I'm not putting limericks in my paper. If you're thinking out one you're wasting your time. The paper is full already."

Hetty did not answer, and Cousin George, rising, crossed to her table, and then snatched a piece of paper as she tried to hide it.

"A superior person, Miss Blank" (he read).

The success of her rivals would spoil
When she sees this to-day
Will she shout 'hip, hooray!'
Froth up, simmer gently, or boil?"

Cousin George gave a scotting laugh. "Blank doesn't rhyme with spoil," he said. "What utter twaddle! You don't think I'd accept that?" he asked with a smile. "If so you must be potty, Hetty!"

"Doesn't blank rhyme with spoil?" she asked innocently.

"Of course it doesn't. You must know it doesn't," he frowned. "Make the first line: 'A superior person, most royal,' if you like."

"Thanks," said the Imp. "That's an idea."

George strolled back, conscious that his masterly touch could make sense out of jargon. But, of course, it hadn't occurred to him that Doyle rhymed with boil, and that minds more bright than his own at Hetty's school might realise that Sylvia Doyle would certainly froth up, simmer gently or boil.

"I have decided to round off this epic," said George. But although he paused, Hetty did not cheer or dance up and down on her chair, or even look sad. "I have ended it rather neatly, although I believe Shakespeare used rather similar words once, or Milton. 'Shall keep my name—in blazing fame—not just for days—forever always!'"

Hetty, feeling something was expected of her, clapped.

"Jolly good," she said.

"I think so, too," nodded George.

"But don't go on writing, Hetty. We've got enough for two editions here."

At that moment the door of their room opened and Hetty's friends looked in, carrying sheafs of contributions.

"Hallo—hallo!" said Cousin George, surprised. "Too late. We're going to press. I've got a complete paper full."

Hetty closed one eye at her friends.

"All right, girls, what doesn't go into No. 1 can go into No. 2," she said.

"That's right," nodded Cousin George. "Yours can be in next month's issue. Or next quarter's. I rather like the sound of quarterly. It's more literary and important, you know."

But not being unkind, he looked after their contributions, corrected the spelling here and there, and did not permit himself more than an amused smile.

Hetty's friends were quite agreeable to waiting, rather to his surprise.

Neatly, he gathered his papers together, for he had to get the stuff typed, and having stowed the whole lot into a small attache-case, he turned to Hetty and her friends.

"I'm sorry if you haven't done as much in this magazine as you hoped," he said kindly, "but we wanted a high standard for No. 1, you see. You girls have taken it pretty well. I don't mind saying I expected you to be more obstinate, and perhaps even tearful. But you are wiser than I thought."

"Thank you, Cousin George," said Hetty meekly. "Actually you haven't anything of mine, have you?"

"Er—er—well, no," he admitted.

"Or mine?" asked Jill.

"No—come to think of it—no," he admitted.

He felt a little awkward; for now that he realised it, there was nothing in the magazine that he had not written himself—nothing in the batch of stuff in his case.

"We'd better make sure," said Hetty quickly and rather anxiously. "Can we look, George?"

He opened the case and they all peered over to watch.

"No—nothing of ours," said Hetty, in relief.

Cousin George gave them a cheery salute and strode out. As the door closed, a merry peal of laughter came.

"Poor old George!" sighed Hetty.

"Poor old George!" giggled Jill.

"And now we'd better rush, hadn't we, Hetty?"

"We certainly had," the Imp agreed, with a soft chuckle. "And, unless all our plans go wrong, this will be the most up-to-date paper there ever was—with No. 2 on sale before No. 1. Come on, girls! Got the funds, Jill? Good! The stuff's been stenciled, and all we have to do is to get the copies run off, and bind them in Cousin George's nice covers."

And the Imp, her plans cut and dried, hurried along to Jill's uncle's office, where there was a duplicating machine which they had permission to use this afternoon.

Already their own copy, No. 2, was a stage ahead of Cousin George's No. 1, for theirs had already been typed, and



"NOBODY could write that fifty times in copper-plate without making a mistake," Hetty declared. Cousin George fell right into the trap. "Just you leave it to me," he said grandly, and picked up the pen. Hetty chuckled. George didn't realise he was going to do her lines for her!

his had not. But then, Cousin George did not know that it was a race—and he did not know that for once No. 2 of a new paper was to appear ahead of No. 1. Of course, such things are apt to happen even in the best regulated editorial offices—and such a thing was to happen now.

No. 2 the Favourite

"It looks stunning!" beamed Cousin George.

The Imp had just produced for him an advance copy of No. 1 of the "Sonning Budget," having obtained it from the agency which was typing it for Cousin George.

—He was looking it over with satisfaction. It was well-typed, and the appearance was pleasing if a little solid. On the cover was the name of George Sonning, as editor, and the initials "G. S." appeared here and there through the paper, although, out of modesty, George had used four other pen-names, and left a few of his contributions anonymous.

"Well, well, This is good!" he smirked. "We'd better get busy selling them. I thought they weren't arriving until to-morrow, though."

"The girls are out selling copies," said Hetty.

"Oh? Then I'll get busy, too!" said George.

It was later that evening, but not too late to sell copies, and when George went downstairs with Hetty, he saw that there was a whole bunch of copies for sale.

He took an armful, mounted his cycle, and proceeded to the addresses he had jotted down in a notebook.

The Imp, with suppressed excitement, took another course, and went to the homes of various school friends. There were a hundred and twenty copies, and, at twopence a time, there should be a useful profit.

George sold thirty copies himself, and had only five left when he arrived home at half-past nine. Hetty had returned ten minutes earlier, sold out and happy.

It was a quarter to ten when she was in bed, and George was just finishing another complete story, that the phone went.

"Hallo, yes," he said, and Hetty leaned over the banisters to listen. "Yes, this is George Sonning. What—who? Sylvia Boyle—Doyle. Oh, yes—yes. I remember you. How are you? Is it about Hetty?"

Hetty held her breath and guessed what it was about. Nor was she mistaken.

"Oh, the magazine?" she heard George say. "Oh, no—Hetty did not instigate it. I have run the whole thing. I'm the editor!"

George's smile died a moment later, for Sylvia Doyle's voice had an unpleasant ring.

"If you call this sort of thing funny, I don't!" she said angrily. "If you are a prefect at your school—"

"I am," said George, puzzled. "But what—"

"Then you ought to have more sense than to publish this sort of twaddle! As for that caricature of me—"

"You? Caricature of you? I don't understand!" said George sharply. "The only picture there is of an Elizabethan ruin. If you can see any likeness to yourself—"

"You are merely adding insult to injury," snarled Sylvia Doyle. "I forbade your cousin to produce a Junior School magazine—"

"This is a village magazine!" retorted Cousin George "and I am quite at liberty to produce it. As for Hetty, she's had practically nothing to do with it!"

"Indeed? Well, I shall have a good deal to say to her to-morrow!"

Br-r-r-r! sounded in his ear, and Cousin George realised that he had been cut off.

Puzzled to know how Sylvia Doyle could have seen the slightest resemblance to herself in his sketch of an Elizabethan ruin, done during the last holidays, he picked up one of the five copies lying in the hall.

Even as he turned the cover he realised that there was something unfamiliar about it. For one thing he saw a large figure two.

Yet there was his own signed introductory editorial article.

He turned the pages, and saw a limerick.

"A superior person, Miss —. The success of her rivals would spoil—"

He turned the pages again, saw more limericks, an article about homework, another about cricket, a set of comic verses, a short story, cookery hints, and some answers to correspondents.

Cousin George drew a deep breath, and, then in a royal rage, charged upstairs and banged on Hetty's door.

"Hetty—are you asleep?" he roared. Snorrrrr! came the reply.

"Hetty—you can't sleep through this!"

Thump! Bang, bang! Snorrrrr!

At last it dawned on him that Hetty refused to wake up, so back to his room went Cousin George, and thought of the people who had bought the "Sonning Budget"—bought No. 2.

So late was George abed that Hetty was first up in the morning, and had scamped through her breakfast before he was down.

But Sylvia Doyle was an early arrival at school, too; and so were others, eager

to hear what their friends thought of the new paper, and to exchange comments and giggles.

White-faced, Sylvia approached Hetty, who waited warily.

"So you published the magazine, after all?" she asked fiercely. "The headmistress will hear of this!"

"Cousin George sold the Head a copy last night," nodded Hetty. "But it's not a rival school mag, you know."

"No?" said Sylvia, shaking with rage. "But nearly every contributor is a junior of the school. A village magazine, indeed! H'm!"

But that was all Sylvia could say. She was baffled. Despite her angry threats, she could not punish Hetty for something done outside the school.

Just before lessons the blue-covered magazine could be seen everywhere in the school grounds, and giggles came from all directions. But Hetty's glee was less chirpy when a summons came from the headmistress.

"Hetty, I have perused your cousin's magazine," she said. "And although its literary standard is appallingly low, I cannot ignore some of the comments—especially in regard to homework. A School governor has telephoned to ask if certain statements are true. Although you may have had some grievance, I should have preferred other means for ventilating it. However, the whole question will be gone into."

Hetty's eyes rounded.

"Oh, thank you, Miss Saker!" she said.

"Understand, Hetty, that if there are any further references to school authority, or if fun is made of mistresses or prefects, I shall be most severe. Your Cousin George appears to be a foolish young man, and I will communicate with him."

"Yes, Miss Saker. But I am more to blame than he is," admitted Hetty. "No. 1 will be—I mean was—quite different."

The headmistress dismissed her, and Hetty, skipping with glee, went back to the Form-room, and during the interval, received even more orders for reprints!

Later that day Cousin George called upon the headmistress with six copies of No. 1, to explain that No. 2 had slipped from the press, so to speak, unnoticed.

He was given a lecture, forgiven, and told not to let it happen again. But Sylvia Doyle, passing him in the corridor, cut him dead.

At home at dinner-time Hetty awaited him, all innocence.

"Fancy, Cousin George. No. 2 was on sale before No. 1!" she said.

He looked at her coldly.

"I do not wish to discuss it," he said. "But I shall give a copy of No. 1 free to every person to whom in error I sold No. 2."

Hetty nodded agreeably and solemnly.

"Yes; now they're printed we'd better get rid of them somehow," she agreed. "They'll litter up your room horribly otherwise."

It was beneath Cousin George's dignity to answer such a crude, elementary sally. Besides which, on the spur of the moment, he could think of no reply.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

MORE high-jinks with these two irresistible funsters next week. Make quite certain of meeting them again, won't you?

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