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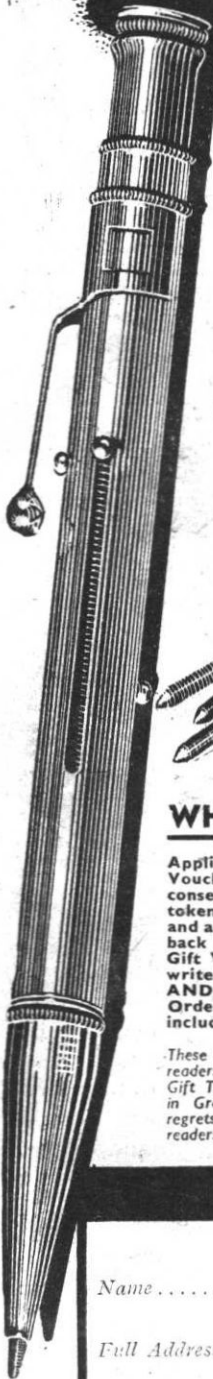


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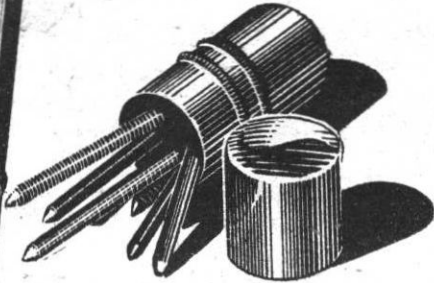
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In this Grand Long Complete story of Cliff House School, Barbara Redfern strives most earnestly to save stormy Christine Wilmer from expulsion.



The WORST-TEMPERED GIRL *in the* SCHOOL!

Bessie Brings News!



"I SUS-SAY, you girls," Bessie Bunter gulped breathlessly.

"Don't worry us now, Bess," said Barbara Redfern.

"Oh, really, Babs! Look here—"

"Buzz off, Bess. We're busy," golden-haired Mabel Lynn pointed out.

"Really, Mabs! I refuse to buzz off!"

And fat Bessie, her eyes gleaming behind her thick, round spectacles, glowered indignantly at her two study chums. She looked at the other two girls in the study. "I—I've gig-got some news, you know."

"Then go and bury it!" advised Tomboy Clara Trevlyn.

"Scram, old Bessiekins!" put in Leila Carroll tersely.

Bessie Bunter snorted.

"I've a jolly good mind not to tell you," she threatened.

"Then," Fourth Form captain Barbara Redfern sighed, "why not run off and tell someone else? The question is," she added, a thoughtful look in her blue eyes, "Mabs or Peggy?"

That had been the question facing the members of the Junior School's Tennis Committee—who now sat at the table of

Clara Trevlyn, Junior Games captain, is overjoyed when the news goes round that Christine Wilmer, the finest tennis player in the school, is coming down from the Fifth Form into the Fourth. Christine is just the player they need to help them win the Junior Tennis Tournament. But Clara reckons without Christine's uncontrollable temper. It is Christine's temper that has caused her to be sent down to a lower Form, and it is that temper which now stirs up trouble in the Fourth.

Study No. 7 in the Fourth Form passage of Cliff House School—for nearly half an hour; and to judge by the frowns on the faces of Babs, Mabs, Clara and Leila, it had provoked some anxiety.

Babs, Mabs, and Bessie shared Study No. 4, but as Clara Trevlyn was Junior Games captain, this meeting was being held in the Tomboy's study.

"But look here—" Bessie started again.

"Oh golly, do keep quiet a sec!" groaned Clara. "Now, girls, I think we're all agreed that Babs, Leila and I are chosen for the tennis tournament. Mabs and Peggy are pretty close candidates for the fourth position. "But—"

"But," Mabel Lynn put in, with a nod of her golden head, "neither of us is

quite up to the form of you three. Better draw for it," she added.

"But why draw for it?" Bessie Bunter asked. "Why go on gassing? If that's the worry on your mind, the problem's solved, you know."

"Meaning," Clara asked, looking up, "that we should elect one fat chump named Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter? No thanks, Bessiekins!"

Bessie sniffed.

"Well, you might do worse than pick me," she said. "After all, I can bat

By
HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER.

your heads off at tennis! But I wasn't talking about that."

"Then," Clara said, "we're not interested. Buzz!"

"I was talking—" Bessie said firmly. "Scout!"

"About Christine Wilmer, you know, Christine—"

Clara Trevlyn did look up at that. For Christine Wilmer, the spoiled, reckless, wayward member of Cliff House's Lower Fifth Form, was easily the best tennis player in the school, and besides a heap of other things, was the recognised schoolgirl tennis champion of Southern England.

"But Christine," Clara pointed out patiently, "is in the Lower Fifth Form. This is strictly a junior tournament in which only Fourth Form girls are allowed to compete. Don't waste time, Bessie."

"Well, I'm not wasting time," Bessie said. "And I've a jolly good mind not to tell you now. In fact," she added with vigorous indignation, "I jolly well won't! You can find out from somewhere else that Christine Wilmer has been put down into the Fourth Form!"

"What?"

Four pairs of eyes became fixed with a sudden and almost fierce interest upon the fat duffer of Cliff House's Fourth Form.

"I'm not going to tell you—" Bessie blurted.

"Christine!" In a moment Clara was on her feet. As Bessie began backing towards the door, she caught her arm. "Christine," she beamed, "Christine Wilmer coming into the Fourth? Bessie, beloved, tell me you're not romancing! Christine—at this moment when we're all worried stiff as to whom to put in the tennis team? Bessie, no!"

"But she is, you know," Bessie said. "I heard Miss Charmant talking to her—Miss Charmant is just going away with Miss Primrose, you know, to some silly conference or other. Christine's been making such shindies in the Lower Fifth that Miss Primrose is punishing her by sending her down."

Clara whooped.

"Then that means she'll be able to play for us?"

"Well, of course."

"And in the first round of the Inter-Schools Championships," Clara gurgled. "Oh, my hat, what a rod in pickle for poor old Newside whom we're drawn against! Do we smile, Babs?"

But Barbara Redfern was not smiling. Babs, indeed, was looking just a little anxious. Clara, keen games captain that she was, saw this dropping down of Christine only as a solution to the problem which had been worrying the tennis committee. Now that problem was solved, and Clara was happy.

But there was the other aspect of the matter—the one which Christine herself was doubtless pondering now. A staggering humiliation to be sent down into a lower Form!

True, there was no doubt that Christine had earned it. No doubt whatever that the Lower Fifth would breathe more freely and more gladly now that she was no longer in their ranks. For Christine, if she was the school's most magnificent performer on the tennis court, was also one of the school's most violent firebrands! Not for nothing had she earned that rather ugly nickname of "Temper" Wilmer.

Babs shook her head. Mabs, as if reading her thoughts, glanced at her.

"Christine won't be so pleased," she commented.

"Well, I guess she's asked for it," Leila Carroll shrugged. "If all I've heard is true, then I figure she's lucky

not to find herself expelled. She biffed Flora Cann with a fives bat only yesterday. That girl sure's got the wildest cat of a temper!"

"Oh, she'll calm down in the Fourth!" Clara said confidently. "Anyway, she's in the team."

That was decided, even without asking Christine's consent. But Babs again frowned.

She knew Christine. In spite of her untamed temper, she liked her, for there was a great deal of good as well as bad in the tennis star. It was nearly twelve months now since Christine, savage and bitter at leaving her beloved Swallowfield, a small school where she had been absolute and unquestioned queen, had arrived at Cliff House to find herself a mere unit among three hundred other girls.

That did not suit Christine, who wanted to be as big a noise at Cliff House as at Swallowfield. This fact, aided by that flashing, uncontrollable temper she possessed, had brought her within an ace of expulsion.

Thanks largely to the efforts of Miss Charmant, the pretty mistress of the Fourth, she had been saved from that fate. Just lately, however, it seemed, following her defeat at the hands of Flora Cann for the captaincy of the Fifth Form, the bad old streak had appeared again.

And this was the upshot.

"Ahem!" A voice spoke at the door. Dulcia Fairbrother, the popular head girl of the school, looked in. "Barbara, will you go and see Miss Charmant?" she asked. "It's rather urgent, as she wants to get off. Hurry, please!"

"Right away," Babs said. "Say, kids, let's get the tea. I'll dig up Christine afterwards and bring her along!"

She raced off down the passage and down the stairs to Miss Charmant's study.

That mistress, dressed for going out, was in the act of pulling on her gloves as Babs entered, and it was easy to see that she was frightfully worried.

"Oh, Barbara!" she smiled. "Barbara, may I have just a minute with you? It's about—you may have heard the news—Christine."

Babs nodded. She knew the wonderful interest Miss Charmant had in Christine. She knew of that great debt of gratitude which Miss Charmant owed to Christine's father.

"I am sorry!" Miss Charmant bit her lip. "I suppose," she added wearily, "this was bound to come. It would have come weeks ago, Barbara, if I had not persuaded Miss Primrose to stay her hand. I wish to goodness, though," she added fretfully, "it had not come just at this minute, when I am on the point of leaving the school for a few days. Barbara, you like Christine, don't you, in spite of her bad temper?"

"I've always felt," Barbara returned, "that if it wasn't for her temper Christine would be a girl we could all be proud of."

"Thank you!" Miss Charmant gulped gratefully. "But it's temper, Barbara—added to this foolish feeling she has that she's a mere nobody in the school, which is the cause of her downfall. I fear—I fear most dreadfully—her reactions to this new blow, Barbara. I shall not be here to look after her, so I rather hoped, my dear, that you will do what I cannot do, because I know Christine likes you. Will you?"

Babs knew exactly what that meant. She foresaw dimly, and perhaps with just a little stab of apprehension, the troubles that loomed ahead; but she did

not flinch. For Christine's own sake she would do her best to save her from any folly. For Miss Charmant's sake—this mistress she so adored—she would have done more.

"I—I'll do my best," she replied. "Thank you!" Miss Charmant smiled a relieved smile. "I hope, Barbara, that it does not mean too much for you," she said. "At the same time, I shall feel less worried now—and goodness, I must fly! There's Miss Primrose getting into the car. Barbara, thank you!" she said again, and warmly took the Junior School captain's hands. "And—good luck!"

She hurried to the door. Slowly Babs followed her, a little dazed by the suddenness with which everything had happened. Well, the first step obviously was to go and find Christine.

Thoughtfully she made her way to the Lower Fifth corridor, where Christine shared Study No. 12 with plump, contented Georgina Skeppington and the ambitious Rhoda Rhodes. Both Georgina and Rhoda were just starting tea when she popped in.

"Er—Christine about?"

"Christine?" Rhoda looked up. "Oh, you mean Temper Wilmer? No; she's jolly well not, and aren't we thankful! She's in the Fourth."

"And a jolly good job, too!" breathed the usually good-natured Georgina. "I think she's digging in Study No. 6."

Babs nodded. She went off. Back to the Fourth Form corridor she went, and, pausing in front of the door of Study No. 6, knocked. There was no reply. Babs knocked again, turning the handle.

But though the handle turned, the door did not budge. It was locked on the inside.

"Christine," she called, "are you in there?"

"Oh rats! Get out of it!" snapped the unmistakable voice of Christine Wilmer from the other side. "Who is it?"

"Babs."

"Oh!" A silence, then footsteps. The key clicked in the lock, and Christine's face, good-looking, but marred at this moment by a surly, bitter scowl, confronted her.

"Well," she said, "I suppose you've heard? I suppose all the Fifth and all the beastly Fourth are chuckling their heads off because I'm in the soup. Nice thing, isn't it?"

"Christine!" Babs went into the room. She pushed the door to with one hand, while with the other she took the rebel's arm. "Christine, please!" she pleaded. "Don't be so cut up about it. Nobody's going to look down on you because you've been put down."

"No!" Christine sneered, kicking sulkily at a chair.

"We're all jolly glad to have you," Babs said earnestly. "Really jolly glad, Christine. You ought to see old Clara, for instance. She's just bubbling over with joy. There may be one or two girls who'll say things, but I bet you what you like that most of the Form are as bucked as anything."

Christine shrugged.

"At having an outsider like me?" she scoffed. "Oh, Babs, chuck it! I know you mean well—"

"But, Christine, I'm serious. It's just up to you, that's all," Babs said simply. "Play the game, and you'll find the Fourth will play it with you."

"Does anyone say I don't play the game?" Christine demanded, with anger.

"Gracious, no! But—but you know—oh, Christine, come on, snap out of it!"

Babs pleaded. "Come along to Study No. 7 to tea. Clara wants to talk to you about the tennis."

"Tennis! The word struck a responsive chord in Christine. Quickly she looked at Babs. For a moment all the sulky petulance fled out of her face, transforming her into a radiantly pretty girl. Then she frowned.

"What about tennis?"
 "Nothing—except," Babs said, with a smile, "you're in the tournament on Saturday against Newside School. Clara's just crazy about it."

Christine Wilmer laughed then. It was a clear, ringing laugh. It did Babs good to hear it, somehow. She hesitated.

"So—will you come, Christine?"
 "Come—yes. Of course I'll come! Tennis!" And Christine's eyes shone. "Oh, Babs, forgive me for being a sulky, pouting little beast," she said sincerely. "But—well, I was thinking some rather rotten things about Cliff House when you came in. Give me a chance and I'll show them!" she vowed fiercely. "I'll let them see whether I'm an outsider or not! 'Temper' they called me in the Fifth. 'Temper,' Babs!" Her eyes flamed. "That's what made me wild, you know. But come on," she added, almost gaily. "Blow the rotten Fifth!"

Wonderful the transformation all at once! Wonderful that this girl, so down in the dumps a moment before, could be so happy now.

"Babs, I've got a new racket!" she breathed, as they went down the corridor together. "My pater sent it to me last week. Dear old pater! You know how he just gives me everything I want. But here we are," she added, as they halted outside the door of Study No. 7. "Babs, you're sure the others want me?"

"Of course!" Babs smiled. She pushed open the door, to sniff appreciatively at the odour of cooking sausages which hung in the air. Clara, in the act of cutting bread-and-butter, dropped the knife with a clatter.

"Christine!" she whooped. "Come in! Make way for the guest of honour! Here we are, Christine, you sit here. And congratulations," Clara added, "at becoming a member of the Fourth."

"Yes, rather!" Bessie Bunter beamed. "I say, here's the last of the sausages."

"Good girl!" Clara chortled. "Sosses, Christine? All nice and piping hot, you know. Sit down, everybody! Christine, head of the table for you, my girl! Who's pouring out?"

"I am!" Babs said. They sat down. Christine laughed again. If she had any doubts about the sincerity of her welcome, they were utterly dispelled in the very first moment. She gulped a little. Nice girls these!

"I hear," she said, "I'm picked for the team."
 "No need to pick you; you pick yourself!" Clara chortled. "We meet Newside on our own ground in the first round, you know—and Newside are hot stuff. Leita, pass Christine the salt. You're keen to play, Christine?"

"Oh, like fun!" Christine laughed.
 "Good egg! Practice on Little Side, then, at six o'clock," Clara said good-humouredly. "and sharp on the minute; we don't allow slacking in the Fourth Form. Feel all right for it, Christine?"

"Well, why shouldn't I feel all right?" Christine asked.
 "Oh, nothing—nothing, of course!" Clara stammered, reddening. "Only after all that's happened—"

"What's happened?"
 "Well— Oh crumbs! Don't look at me like that. Nothing!"

"But what's happened?" Christine deliberately put down her knife and fork. "What are you insinuating, Clara Trevlyn?"

"Christine—" Babs cried.
 "Let her answer!" Christine cried.

"Well—" Clara coloured to the roots of her hair. Clara was clumsy, and Clara was careless. She hadn't meant to hurt. It had not dawned upon her that Christine might be sensitive to references about being put down. "Well, I—I just thought perhaps you might still be feeling upset—"

"And why," Christine asked resentfully, the colour mounting to her own face, "should I be feeling upset? What have I got to be upset about? What the dickens are you hinting at?"

"Christine, please!" Babs broke out in agony.
 "I want an answer," Christine said sharply. "I want it now. No, Babs! She may be captain of the tennis team, but that doesn't give her the right to jolly well insult me! As if," she added fiercely, "I had something to be jolly well ashamed of in being put down! I may be an outsider, but I'm not going to be sneered at by a flat-footed thing like her!"

"W-what?" Clara cried.
 "You asked for it!"

"Why, you bad-tempered little cat—"

"Who's got a temper?"
 "You have!"

Christine Wilmer's eyes flamed. Like most girls with failings, she hated to be reminded of those failings. That one word "temper" when it referred directly to herself was as a red rag to an angered bull.

"You apologise for that!" she said between clenched teeth.

"Well, apologise for calling me a flatfoot!"

"Rats! You started it!" Christine said furiously. "And this," she added bitterly, "is the welcome I was to have

had, was it? This is what you call playing the game! This is what you call giving a girl a chance! A chance!" she laughed with ringing scorn; and then suddenly she flung both arms across the table in front of her.

Up from Bessie went a squeal as a cup of tea upset in her lap: Babs, in the act of putting down her knife, gave a choking gurgle as a small tart flew into her face. There was a crash as the rest of the table's contents went shooting across the floor towards the four corners of the room.

"And that," Christine panted, "is what I think of you! That for your beastly, friendly tea!"

"You—you—" choked Clara.
 "Here, come back!"

But Christine, quivering with the intensity of the anger that was upon her, had flounced towards the door. Almost sobbing in her temper, she flung it open and hurled herself through it.

Somebody was in the passage, and that somebody, receiving the weight of Christine's body, reeled against the wall with a gasp. Christine didn't even look to see with whom she had collided. Shaking still, she flung off down the corridor.

A voice, vibrant and indignant, followed her. It was the voice of Miss Wanda Belling, assistant mistress of the school.

"Christine! Christine, how dare you! Come back!"

But Christine raced onwards.

Even Babs was Against Her!



BOTHER Miss Belling! Bother the school! Hang everybody and everything! Why— oh, why had she ever come to this school?

And Clara—that insulting cat!

Christine was shaking as she darted into the school grounds. She did not know where she was going; she did not care. Why couldn't they let her be



PRACTICALLY nobody in the school had a good word for Christine Wilmer, but when Doris Redfern of the Third smashed her racket . . . "What about taking this one?" said Christine, holding out her own. "No, don't stare, you goose. I mean it."

happy? Why taunt and tease and sneer at her—about this temper of hers? Temper! Her hands clenched. If she had a temper, it was they who roused it, wasn't it? It was they—

She came to herself presently, to find she had wandered into the cool and quiet Cloisters. Not a soul was about. Everything was peacefully and most soothingly still. Sulkily she sought the stone surface of one of the old monks' seats, and sulkily she sat down. Clara—

That cat!

Or was she a cat? Was she? Had Clara really meant to be nasty—or was it just her own touchy self? Oh, but she had fired up! She really had made a rather disgusting exhibition of herself! And Babs—Babs had tried hard to prevent a row. Babs—dear old Babs! Babs, who had been so jolly nice to her.

Christine gulped a little. The temper which had reached boiling-point with such dramatic suddenness had as swiftly sunk to zero again. Once again she saw herself for the hot-headed fool she was.

She rose. Well, perhaps it was not too late to make amends. Honestly and sincerely she was sorry now. What a frightful mess she had made of things! What a frightful lot of damage, apart from bruised and hurt feelings, she had caused! Well, she could pay for the damage, of course; not for nothing was she known as the richest girl in the Fifth.

She tripped away. Back towards the school she hurried. She did not notice the three girls who, striding up the drive towards the school, stopped as they saw her. She did not notice one of them—the tallish, slim girl, immaculately dressed—who pointed. The tall, slim girl was Lydia Crossendale, the snob of the Fourth Form, and the leader of its so-called "Smart Set." With her were the two other members of that set—Freda Ferriers and Frances Frost.

"There she is," Lydia said.

"And looking sorry for herself," Frances Frost giggled. "She must be fleeing her come-down. Come on, let's call 'Temper!' at her!"

"Oh, yes; come on, let's pull her leg!" ill-natured Freda cried.

"Wait a minute!" Lydia glared at them witheringly. "It may be fun to pull her leg, but just think a bit. We're not going to tease and taunt her, you chumps! We're not going to be anything but as nice as mince-pie to her! And why?" Lydia chuckled.

"Well, why?" Frances stared.

"Because," Lydia said, "we want her—in the set. We're not frightfully well off, are we, at the moment? And Christine's got more money than she knows what to do with. Get the wheeze?"

"Oh, my hat!" Freda breathed. "She stands treat for us, you mean? But how do we do it?"

"We'll wait our chance, my dear Freda," Lydia drawled. "And I don't think we shall have to wait long."

Meantime, Christine had re-entered the school. With her face flushed with shame, she hurried to Study No. 7. Hesitantly she pushed open the door, and then bit her lip.

Clara was on the floor gathering together pieces of broken china; Babs, looking rather troubled, was shaking the cloth; Bessie Bunter, almost with tears in her eyes, was ruefully inspecting the remains of an uncut pork pie, which had become saturated with tea; Leila was picking up lumps of sugar, and Mabs collecting knives and forks. They all turned as she came in.

Clara glared.

"You—"

Christine bit her lip.

"I—I'm sorry!" she faltered. "Oh, dear, I—I didn't mean to do that. Babs, can I help to clear up?"

"Lul-look at this pork pie, you know," Bessie said dismally.

"I'm sorry! I'll pay for that. I'll pay for all the damage," Christine said sincerely. "I didn't mean to be such a hot-head."

They paused; Babs smiled a little.

"Well, come in!" she invited. "It's not as bad as it looks."

"No thanks to her!" Clara grumbled, and then caught Babs' eye. "Oh, rabbits!" she said crossly. "Why the dickens should I jolly well have to swot up everything I say? I think it's about time somebody gave you a word of warning, Christine Wilmer—"

Christine's eyes gleamed.

"And you're going to give it?"

"For your own good—yes."

Clara faced her grimly. Not so easily appeased as the rest of her chums, was Clara, and, though she was by no means a quarrelsome girl, Christine's outburst was still rankling.

"We're keen enough to have you in the tennis team," she said steadily, "and we're keen enough, if you'll only toe the line and play the game, to treat you as a chum. But if you don't—"

"Are you talking to me?" Christine flamed.

"I am!"

"Oh, my hat! For goodness' sake!" Babs cried distractedly. "Christine, stop it! Clara, you stop it, too! Don't let's have that all over again. Christine, put that piece of bread down!" she cried sharply.

"But she said—"

"Never mind what she said. Christine—"

But Christine, up in arms again, had acted. She flung the bread. It missed Clara, but rather heavily clumped on Bessie Bunter's ear as that girl turned from the table. Bessie gave a howl.

"Oh, wow, wow!"

"Bessie!" The door opened. The pale but pretty face of Miss Wanda Belling peered into the room. Then she started as she saw the furious and flushed Christine, as she saw Clara, her hands clenched. "Oh, Christine, so you are here!" she said icily, "and, to judge by appearances, creating further trouble. Why did you not come back when I called you just now? Didn't you hear?"

"Yes, I did," Christine flamed.

"And you deliberately ignored me, eh?" Miss Belling's lips compressed a little. "I would like you to know, Christine, that while Miss Charmant is absent, I am in charge of the Fourth Form, and as your mistress I command your respect. Apart from that," Miss Belling added, "you did quite a bit of damage in this study before you left and—"

"Well," Christine retorted, "I'm going to pay for it."

"That is not the question. The grave matter is that you let your temper run away with you."

Christine's face became on fire. She clenched her hands.

"I didn't!"

"Christine, please!" Miss Belling's eyes glinted a little. Peace-loving as she was, understanding as she was, there was that in Christine's attitude which aroused her. "Christine, do not be so defiant!" she said. "You may think yourself lucky that I do not report you to Miss Bullivant, who is now acting as headmistress during Miss Primrose's absence. Go to the detention-room!"

"I—I—"

"Go!" Miss Belling snapped.

Christine paused. Anxiously Babs watched her. Then suddenly Christine gave a short, bitter laugh. She flung towards the door.

"All right!" she choked.

She went out, seething.

Clara! She had got her into this! Clara—and that cat, Miss Belling! What a sickening mess everything was!

She reached the detention-room. And she paused before entering it. Well, why should she submit to this? Who the dickens was Miss Belling, anyway? And yet she knew, deep down within her, that Miss Belling had let her off lightly. She knew that if this escapade had come to the ears of Miss Bullivant a very much graver view would be taken of it. Well, dash it, she'd just have to go through with it. Detained!

She gave a bitter laugh as she entered the room and sulkily plumped herself into a desk. Glowering, she was sitting there when Miss Belling came in.

"Christine, I'm sorry—"

"Oh, let's get on with it!" Christine muttered savagely.

Miss Belling eyed her. She could have punished Christine for that, and Christine knew it. But Miss Belling, anxious to be as lenient as possible, allowed the retort to pass. She said quietly:

"Christine, you will copy out pages 20 and 21 of Euclid. I shall shut you in this room for an hour while you do it."

Christine said nothing. Sulkily she got out her books, and Miss Belling, seeing her settle, left the room without another word, closing the door behind her. But Christine did not start work; she just sat and glowered.

Through the open window sounded voices.

"I say, Doris, that's a lovely back-hand!"

Tennis! They were playing tennis! Christine listened, and then glanced at her watch. Six o'clock—just. That meant that practice on Little Side would just be beginning—the practice to which she had been invited! She felt her blood quicken a little. A wave of mutiny swept over her. Well, why should she be grinding out Euclid in this stuffy room when out there she could forget all her woes in the game she loved best of all, and in which she so loved to show off. Detention! Rats to detention!

She rose. Carefully she approached the window, and clambering up to it by the aid of the desk, pushed it open and jumped through on to the soft lawn beneath. Well, that was that!

Tennis!

She laughed now. She felt free, happy again! The laugh still on her lips, she raced into the school; in Study No. 6, grabbed up her racket, and hurried across to Little Side.

A rather large and interested crowd was gathered round the pavilion, and Clara, who was playing the first singles against Babs, was just strolling on to the court. She turned as Christine's voice hailed her.

"Clara!"

Clara paused; Babs started. For there, just as if she hadn't a care in the world, was Christine, gaily waving her racket as she ran towards them. Other girls turned; other girls stared. A breathless gasp went up.

"My hat, Christine!"

"What's she doing here?"

"Clara, I'm playing!" Christine cried, running up.

Clara eyed her grimly.

"But what about your detention?"
"Never mind that."

Clara paused. She looked at Babs. Babs was biting her lip.

"Oh bother!" Christine said peevishly. "What the dickens is the matter with you all? Does it matter whether I've broken detention or not? It's my business, isn't it? I said I'd turn up to practice, and here I am. Well," she added, glaring at Clara, "aren't we going to start?"

Clara eyed her.
"You're still keen to be in the team?"
"Of course."

"And you're not going to play any more funny tricks?"

Christine reddened. Her eyes began to glimmer.

"I don't know what you mean. But if," she said, her temper beginning to flare, "this is the start of some new insult—"

"It's the start of nothing," Clara said sharply. "At the same time, I'm skipper. And we want girls in the team we can rely on—not chumps who can't control themselves."

"Clara!" Babs cried. "Christine, she doesn't mean—"

"I see!" Christine's face had turned white. She was staring at the Tomboy. From those round about who heard those bluntly spoken words there came a little murmur of approval. "I see," she grated, with a deep breath. "And that's your last word?"

"That's it!" Clara gruffly retorted.
"Then," Christine asked, "can I have the first game—against you?"

Clara looked at Babs.

"Babs and I—" she began. But Babs shook her head. Anything—anything to keep Christine in a good mood.

"That's all right. You play," she said hurriedly. "I'll score."

"One set?" Christine asked.
"Yes," Clara said shortly.
Christine smiled.

"Right-ho, then. You serve," she said disdainfully.

Clara picked up a couple of balls. The two strode on to the court. Clara braced herself a little. She knew she was up against a player of class, but Clara wasn't the acknowledged tennis champion of the Junior School for nothing.

She tossed the ball high and served hard to Christine's forehand. Swiftly but smoothly Christine moved across, and tang! her return went flashing down on Clara's backhand, just inside the "tranlines." Impossible for the Tomboy to have retrieved that one.

There came a chuckle from some of the watching girls. From Lydia Crossendale and Frances Frost, who had just stepped on the scene, went up a ripple of handclapping.

A little red-faced, Clara turned to serve from the left-hand court. With a tiny smile on her lips, Christine waited.

A very hard service from Clara this time, sending up a puff of white from the service court on Christine's side. But again that girl was there, chopping the ball viciously. Clara ran in swiftly, but the cut on the ball made her send it into the net.

From Lydia & Co. went up a cackle of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Thought you could play tennis, Clara?"

Clara bit her lip. She gazed at Christine, cool, undisturbed, that same defiant smile on her lips. Christine was just playing with her!

Clara put all she knew into her next serve, and Christine swung her racket at it rather carelessly. It just hit the top of the net and dropped back.

"Fifteen—thirty," sang out Babs. Christine laughed. She knew she

could have had that point if she had wished. Smiling, she finished that game with two perfect drives, placed so accurately that Clara was left standing.

Now it was Christine's service; and if Clara's service had been fast, Christine's was of the cannon-ball variety. She went to forty—love with three "aces" that Clara didn't even touch.

Jubilant howls from Lydia & Co.; breathless gasps of pure admiration from the others. Christine laughed.

She purposely sent over an easy service then, and until she finally won the point and game with a beautiful backhand drive, she kept Clara running all over the court, with perfectly placed shots.

"Arrah, and it's not tennis Christine plays; it's just magic!" Bridget O'Toole said, in awe.

CLIFF HOUSE PETS

No. 14.

Miss Primrose's DEENA

ONE of the most beautiful of all dogs is the Borzoi. And Deena, who belongs to Miss Primrose, is certainly one of the handsomest of that stately breed! Long-legged, slim-bodied, with his beautiful white and gold curly coat, it is no wonder that Deena is the pride and joy of Miss Primrose's heart—and no wonder, either, that the Cliff House girls are so proud of him. Deena is a champion of champions among his class, and never, never yet has he been exhibited in a show without carrying off a prize.

That, naturally, makes him valuable—I forget how much he is supposed to be worth at the moment! And you'd really think, wouldn't you, that a dog with such an aristocratic pedigree would behave as befits his noble line of ancestry?

But not Deena! Let Deena off the lead and dignity and good looks can go to the four winds! Poor Miss Primrose! Her heart must break sometimes!

Deena's breed are famous hunting dogs—and is Deena a hunter? Cats and rabbits are his prey, and though Deena wouldn't dream of hurting one if he caught it, he has been known to chase them into the next county!

Next to hunting rabbits, Deena likes digging them out of their burrows, and you should just see the sight Deena presents after a wallow in a sandpit or one of the dried mud banks near Cliff House.

Deena is also fond of company—but Deena's doggy chums must be the despair of Miss Primrose's anxious heart! The bigger and uglier the mongrel the more Deena seems to like it!

Deena, too, is fond of swimming—but, unfortunately, Deena is not particular as to what water he swims in!

Third game. Clara looked grim. She knew Christine was paying her out; she knew Christine was having her revenge. But Clara didn't mind. The Tomboy never minded being beaten by a superior player, and Christine was most certainly superior. At the same time, she wasn't going to have it all her own way.

She didn't. For in the third game, with Christine just a little careless, Clara played at her best and actually won to fifteen.

"Two games to one," Babs called. Christine's eyes glistened. She was enjoying herself now. She smiled, for the first time, towards Lydia & Co., who, despite her defeat in the last game, were still cheering her.

Then came the fourth game, with Christine playing all out. Hopeless for Clara now.

"Three-one!" sang Babs. "Your service, Clara!"
Clara scooped up two balls. Breathing hard, she faced her opponent. But before she could serve there came an interruption. There was a stir among the crowd. A figure taller than the girls came striding on to the court. It was Miss Belling, the young assistant-mistress.

"Christine!" she cried.
Christine wheeled round.

"Christine, how—how dare you?" Miss Belling cried. "You have broken detention!"

"Whoops! Now we're going to see fireworks!" Lydia Crossendale gurgled.

Christine stood still. Round the handle of her racket her fingers fiercely clenched as the mistress strode on to the court.



Often a shaggy, mud-caked animal will limp into the Pets' House—unrecognisable as a kingly borzoi, but blissfully happy and tired. It is Deena! He's been for a bath in the mud-pool of the old quarry!

But when Deena is groomed and combed—oh, what a vision of canine elegance then! It's hardly to be wondered at that girls clamour to take him out and show him off; and hardly to be wondered at either, with a dog of Deena's hunting instincts, that nine times out of ten they come back without him!

Twice Deena has been stolen—once by gypsies, once by a tramp. On the first occasion, Deena was fastened to a table and shut up in a caravan; on the second occasion he was tied to the thieving tramp's own waistbelt. But twice Deena escaped—first by leaping clean through the glass of the caravan window, and turning up at Cliff House with one leg of a table still clattering behind him.

The second time he came back with a limp, perspiring and exhausted tramp towed behind him. For Deena is terrifically strong as well as marvellously handsome. And Deena, if he is an aristocrat among dogs, certainly knows how to take care of himself!

"Christine, you will go back at once!"

And a gasp went up as Christine's reply, clear and distinct, came through her set teeth:

"I won't!"

"You—you dare—!" Miss Belling stared. Obviously, it was no use talking to the girl. She strode forward and caught Christine's shoulder. "You will come back at once!" she cried.

"Christine!" suddenly shrieked Babs.

She had seen that sudden light in the girl's eyes; she had seen that tremor which for a moment shook her whole frame. But before she had taken one step the mischief was done.

"Blind to what she was doing, Christine flung up a hand. In the tense and almost deathlike silence

which had fallen, there was a sudden smack. Miss Belling, with a cry, put a hand to her face.

"Christine!"
"Christine—oh, you fool!" blazed Babs.

Christine stood still, quivering. And then, in a moment, she was terribly ashamed. She had not meant to do that.

But now the Form took a hand. Miss Belling was a well-liked, a very popular, mistress. If they admired Christine's tennis, there could be no admiration for a girl who behaved like this; and Miss Belling had only been within her rights.

A cry went up—an angry cry it was—followed by a hiss, and someone shouted "Cat!" Christine paled a little, and clenched her hands. She saw that even Babs was regarding her with eyes of scorn.

"Christine," said Miss Belling quietly, "if I reported that to Miss Bullivant, you would be expelled without notice."

"I—I— Well, go and report!" Christine burst out.

"I shall not report!" Miss Belling caressed her face. "I hope, Christine, when you have thought about it you will be ashamed. Then, Christine, I will give you a chance to apologise! Now, please, do as I wish! You will go back to the detention-room—at once!" she ordered.

Christine stiffened. She looked at Babs, but Babs deliberately turned her face away. She looked at the other girls, angry, contemptuous. And for some reason she shivered a little. Without a word she turned on her heel.

A hiss came to her ears, as, swinging her racket, she tramped away.

Lydia Steps In!



"WELL, we've got to make allowances," Barbara Redfern said.

Clara Trevlyn snorted.

"Meaning," she said, "we've got to put up with Christine's paddies for the rest of the term? Well, you can jolly well go on making allowances, but I've made all I'm going to make. That girl's a disgrace to the Form."

"But, Clara—"
"And unless she jolly well apologises to Miss Belling," Clara added, "she doesn't get in the team. That's flat."

Barbara Redfern sighed. Rather wearily and forlornly she regarded her, tomboy chum. It was after tennis practice, and Clara, Babs, and Mabs had returned to Study No. 4, wherein this rather heated discussion was taking place.

It could not be denied that Clara had some justification for her views. It could not be denied that Christine, so far from accepting the opportunities held out to her, and making a fresh start in the Fourth Form, had done the very reverse.

But Babs, understanding Christine better than any other girl, could see the good in her, knew that although she might not admit it, Christine was deeply regretting her behaviour to Miss Belling.

The Form captain hesitated, wondering whether to go along to see Christine. And then she shook her head. Better, perhaps, to leave Christine alone for now.

That was an unfortunate decision, for at that moment, alone in Study No. 6, Christine was feeling most bitterly that she hadn't a friend in the school. Even Babs must be against her, she felt sure.

At this rather critical moment the door opened. Lydia Crossendale came in.

"Lo, Christine!" she said brightly. Christine gazed at her with smouldering eyes.

"What do you want?"

"Just popped in." Lydia smiled her most charming smile. "Can I sit down? Thanks! You know, I'm frightfully sorry for everything that's happened. Pretty hard the breaks you've been getting."

Christine gazed at her.

"And—well, I gather that you and Babs & Co. aren't exactly friends," Lydia added.

"Anything to do with you?" Christine scowled.

"Oh, no, nothing!" Lydia said hastily. "Nothing at all. But I was thinking—well, perhaps as you're not having a great deal of fun in the Form you might like to join us? I hear you're rather keen on dancing."

Christine brightened.

"And there's one on at Friardale's Palais de Danse this evening," Lydia went on. "Evening dress and all that sort of stuff, you know. Freda and Frances and I are going, and I happen to have a spare ticket if you'd like to make up the four. Means breaking bounds, of course, but I know that wouldn't worry you."

Christine frowned.

"How much are the tickets?"

"Five bob."

Christine thought; then she smiled.

"O.K.," she said. "I'll take it. Hang them! Why shouldn't I have a good time? Thanks, Lydia, that's jolly sporting of you—jolly sporting! Look here, what about a feed at the tuckshop?" she added eagerly. "I've got plenty of money. You think Freda and Frances would like to come, too?"

"Wouldn't they?" Lydia chuckled.

"When do we go?"

"Well, what about now?" Christine laughed, and rose. "Come on, let's eat, drink, and make whoopee! For to-morrow," she added mockingly, "we may all be expelled!"

IMPATIENTLY BARBARA REDFERN pulled the sheets above her shoulders, impatiently she turned over. She closed her eyes for the hundredth time, and almost immediately found them open again.

She couldn't sleep—sleep was just impossible.

She was thinking of Christine.

If ever a girl was heading dead for expulsion that girl was Christine. Had it not been for the generosity of Miss Belling, indeed, she would probably have earned it now.

Thanks to her conduct on the court, half the Fourth were against her now. Peggy Preston and Jane Mills had declared flatly that as long as she remained a member of Study No. 6 they would not use it. Clara had bluntly called Babs a fool for sticking up for her.

And during the evening there had been further disturbing news—news which Babs did not like. Christine was "in" with Lydia & Co.!

Disturbing, that!
She turned again. In the dormitory there was a sound. It was followed by a soft chuckle.

"You ready, Christine?"

"I am," Christine said. "Got the tickets?"

"What-ho!" chuckled Lydia Crossendale's voice. "Come on! Don't wake the others!"

Babs sat up sharply. In a moment she was out of bed.

"Christine, where are you going?"

Christine Wilmer lunged round.

"I'm going out!" she said carelessly.

"If you must know, I'm going to a dance!"

"Oh, Christine, don't be a fool!"

"Oh, come on, Christine!" said Lydia peevishly.

"Christine, no!" Babs put a hand on her arm as she turned towards the door.

"Christine, please don't!" she urged.

"Christine, you don't want to go and get expelled! And if you're caught, after everything that's happened—Christine, don't go!" she cried.

"Shurrup!" came a grumbling voice from Rosa Rodworth's bed.

Very resolutely Christine tried to remove Babs' hand.

"Thanks, Babs! I know what I'm doing!"

Babs set her teeth. She clung to the other's arm.

"Christine, no, please!" she cried.

There came an exclamation in the darkness. Christine drew back. Furiously and hotly her temper raged out all at once. Wildly she wrenched herself free. One push she gave Babs, and Babs, taken by surprise, went staggering towards Clara Trevlyn's bed, to collapse across it. Clara started up.

"My hat! What—"

"Christine!" Babs cried.

But the door had closed. Christine, with Lydia & Co., had gone!

"Phew!" Lydia gasped. "A near squeak, that! But, my hat"—she laughed—"didn't you show that cat Barbara where she got off!"

"I thought," giggled Freda, "you'd have thrown her through the window!"

Christine, however, did not reply. Her face in the darkness was rather shadowed. Now that the deed was done she felt, as usual, a wave of remorse. Babs had only been trying to help her.

Dash it—

"Here we are!" Lydia breathed, as they reached the lobby. "Up with the window, Freda, and, for goodness' sake, don't make a noise! Chrissie, you go first, old girl!"

Christine, however, stood still.

"No; you go without me!" she said suddenly.

"What!"

"I'm not coming!"

Three pairs of eyes fixed upon her resentfully.

"But you jolly well said—"

"I know. But I'm not coming!" Christine broke out. "You can go without me."

"Afraid?" sneered Freda.

"Afraid?" Christine glowered. "What have I got to be afraid of? You say that again, Freda Ferriers, and I'll just stand here and yell the beastly place down! I'm going back!"

The other three looked stupefied. But Christine, turning on her heel, was already striding towards the stairs. While the three eyed each other in flabbergasted and angry astonishment, she climbed up the stairs. She hesitated as she reached the Fourth Form dormitory, biting her lip as she pushed open the door. Instantly she was greeted by a growl from Clara:

"Hallo, you! What have you come back for?"

Christine did not reply. She went straight across to Babs, who sat up in bed and eyed her angrily.



"ANYTHING else to offer me?" asked Christine, immensely enjoying goading Clara Trevlyn. "Yes," said Clara thickly. "This!" And she smartly, contemptuously smacked Christine's face. Christine had gone too far with the Tomboy this time.

"Babs, I—I'm sorry!" Christine muttered. "I—I had to come back! I—I didn't hurt you?"

"No," Babs said. "And—and—oh, Babs, forgive me, please!" Christine said wretchedly. "I didn't mean it!"

Babs gazed at her. From Clara's bed came a snort. The moonlight, glittering through the window, shone upon Christine's pale, troubled face, and Babs, despite her anger, was touched.

"Forget it, Christine," she said softly, "and—"

"Yes, Babs?"

"Do try—please do try," Babs urged earnestly. "to remember, Christine! You're not breaking bounds again now, are you?"

"Not—not if you don't want me to, Babs," Christine said, and shook her head. "Good-night!"

And, with a repentant smile that made Babs' heart soften, she turned towards her bed.

have been more or less assured in advance.

But if Clara was an enthusiastic games captain who liked her side to win, Clara valued the game and the conduct of her players more than victory.

"Well, let's go!" she said, with a sigh, picking up her racket. "Babs, you and Mabs had better partner Leila and Peggy in the doubles. I'll keep the score for the first set. Oh, halo!" she added, as she reached the entrance to the pavilion, and blinked. "What do you want?"

For Christine Wilmer, in her tennis frock, her new and very expensive racket in her hand, was standing at the bottom of the pavilion steps.

She smiled.

"There's a tennis practice on, isn't there?"

"There is."

"Well, I'm here to practise," Christine said. "I'm a member of the team, aren't I?"

Clara's eyes glimmered.

"Have you apologised to Miss Belling?"

The smile fled from Christine's face.

"No; I haven't apologised to Miss Belling, and I don't jolly well intend to apologise to Miss Belling! Anyway, what's that got to do with tennis?"

"It's got a lot to do with tennis!" Clara faced her firmly. "We're rather particular about the sort of girl we include in a team meeting another school!" she said bluntly. "And we're not playing somebody who might let us down!"

"Wait a minute!" Christine cried, her eyes beginning to gleam, "you want me because I can play tennis, or you don't want me at all. I can play tennis. What I do apart from tennis concerns neither you nor the man in the moon. I'm willing to play, but I'm not willing to let you jolly well lecture me on what I should do or not do! I'm not apologising to Miss Belling, and I don't intend to apologise to her! Well, do I play?"

"No!" Clara flashed.

"But, Clara, old thing—" Babs gulped.

"And that's final?" Christine asked.

"Apologise to Miss Belling and we'll think about it," Clara retorted.

Christine gave a bitter laugh. Then, with a shrug, she had flung on her heel. Without looking round, she walked away. Babs shouted:

"Christine!"

Christine did not even pause.

Stormily she strode across the playing fields, savagely swinging her racket at the empty air.

Dark and tempestuous her thoughts as she stormed savagely on. She reached the quad and then, hearing a cry, swivelled round. And she stopped, temper suddenly ebbing, at the sight of the minor tragedy which was then revealed before her eyes.

Doris Redfern, Babs' younger sister of the Third Form, was in one of the alcoves framed by two buttresses of the building, with Fay Chandler, her friend of the same Form. A tennis ball, unheeded, was rolling across the ground. Doris, her eyes filled with tears of dismay, was looking at her racket—the framework broken, the strings limp. Almost with a sob in her voice, Christine heard her say:

"And—and it's the only racket I've got, Fay."

"But how did you do it?" Fay asked.

"I don't know. I must have hit the buttress with it," Doris gulped. "Oh dear! I—I just forgot where we were, and I made such a swipe at that last ball. Look at it!"

And the two of them gazed with feelings too deep for words at the ruins of the racket.

Christine suddenly smiled. Christine liked Doris and Doris liked Christine, despite her temper. She stepped forward.

"Cheer up!" she said softly.

"Eh? Oh, Christine!" Doris bit her lip. "Look at this," she said, holding up the damaged racket.

"Bit of a mess, eh?" And Christine laughed. "Still, why worry about that?" she asked. "You haven't got another racket?"

"N-no."

"Then," Christine said, and Doris blinked, "what about taking this one? It's just about your weight, too. Try it."

The Good in Christine!



"IT'S a pity—a jolly great pity," Clara Trevlyn said worriedly, "that Christine won't toe the line! All the same, I'd rather risk losing the match than having her show the school up in front of Newside. She hasn't apologised to Miss Belling yet, Babs?"

"No," Babs said. "But, Clara—"

"Thanks, don't plead!" Clara retorted curtly. "Well, Mabs, it just looks as if you or Peggy'll have to take her place. Come on! Let's get on the court!"

It was the next morning after breakfast, and Clara, who believed in wasting no time when important matches were on hand, had collected together her team for early morning practice.

Clara wasn't looking too pleased. For Clara had been so happy yesterday at the prospect of including Christine in the team, and Christine had given such a sample of her worth last night, that victory against Newside School would

Like a girl in a dream Doris took the racket.

"Suit you?"

"Yes, Christine, but—"

"Then," Christine laughed, "take it. It's yours! No, don't stare, you goose, I mean it. I don't want it," she added; and with another smile walked away.

"But, Christine, it's worth pounds," Doris cried. "Christine—" and her face red she ran after her. "Christine!"

"Don't be an idiot," Christine said gruffly, and with a swift pat on Doris' head. "Anyway, it'll be more useful to you than to me! That's all! Now get on with your game."

And while Doris watched in dancing, shiny-eyed wonder, Christine strode on towards the school.

Babs Plans in Vain!



"OH, Babs, I don't care what anybody says! She's jolly nice! She's fine!" Doris Redfern said with glowing enthusiasm. "And she did give it to me—really!"

With mixed feelings Barbara eyed the lovely racket which Doris proudly flourished before her eyes.

"And, Babs, please do something to help her," Doris went on, "please do! Make Clara put her in the tennis team. She might have a temper, but she's jolly true blue at heart, you know. I say, Babs, how much is this worth?" she added eagerly.

Babs shook her head. Her face was rather peculiar in its emotion. How much the racket was worth she did not know. Pounds, perhaps; for Christine was in the habit of buying the most expensive and best of everything. Yet she knew Christine had only that one racket with her at the school; she knew what an inward wrench it must have been to her to part with it.

She bit her lip.

"Where is Christine?" she asked anxiously.

"In the music-room," Doris said. "Babs, shall I come with you?" she added eagerly.

"No, old kid. Just leave this to me. I'd rather like to talk to Christine. I'm worried—no end, about her. But still, it was jolly nice of her," she added softly. "You cut along now, kid. I'll go and talk to Christine."

Doris radiantly nodded. Hugging her new treasure, she went off. Babs, more thoughtfully, strolled along to the music-room to find Christine there, running through the score of "La Boheme"—an opera of which she was very fond. She glanced up as Babs entered.

"Hallo, Babs. Want me?"

"Christine, why did you give Doris your racket?" Babs asked.

"Well, it was mine to give, wasn't it?" Christine asked.

"But it's your only one."

"What of that?" Christine shrugged. A rather bitter expression crossed her face. "Better Doris has it than it should not doing nothing."

"But Christine, you'll want it."

"And why," Christine asked, "should I want it? Do you think I'm going to play tennis in this rotten school again? Do you think I'm going to let that big, flat-footed Clara, preach at me? She doesn't want me in the team—well, all right, I'm not the one to poke my nose in where it's not wanted, and I wouldn't play tennis now if she begged me to do it. I'm just a nobody here. Well, a nobody I'll stay—until I'm kicked out, and the sooner that comes the better.

Doris is welcome to it. Anyway, she's a nice kid," she added inconsequently.

Babs gazed at her. Christine's greatest joy was her tennis. Without tennis what was there left for Christine—the stormy rebel so plainly ready to do reckless, silly things, so openly and defiantly mutinous?

Christine, as if the matter was finished, had dived her nose into "La Boheme" again. Worried and thoughtful, Babs felt her, feeling she had to do something—something, now—at once! But what? And even as she pondered the problem, Babs found a solution in the figure approaching her along the corridor. It was Miss Belling.

If Miss Belling, against whom silly Christine held one grudge, could put things right from her side it would only remain for Clara to be dealt with.

Miss Belling stopped, reading in Babs' face the fact that she wished to speak to her. Very, very fond indeed was Miss Belling of Babs, and never could she forget how Babs, not so long ago, had helped her when it had seemed that she would lose her sweetheart, Lance Naylor. She dimpled.

"What's the matter, Barbara? You do look worried, my dear! Can I do anything to help?"

"Miss Belling, yes, you could," Babs said. "It's about Christine."

The face of the young mistress overshadowed a little.

"Miss Belling, I—I like her. You know, too, that Miss Charmant likes her, don't you? Oh, I know you have been awfully, frightfully decent to her, Miss Belling. But she's a queer girl, always thinking that nobody cares about her, always feeling that everybody is against her. If—if you could only have a word with her, Miss Belling. If you would tell her, perhaps, that you'd forget about what happened yesterday, that you weren't looking for an apology. You—you do understand, don't you?"

"Dear Barbara!" Miss Belling smiled. "How very kind you are! Yes, I like the girl, too, in spite of her faults. Where is she? In the music-room? Very well, I will go and talk to her at once."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Belling."

The mistress smiled. Babs, so that Christine should not draw any obvious conclusions, hurried off the scene. Miss Belling went on to the music-room. She was about to enter when, to her slight discomfiture, the door opened from the inside. Christine Wilmer and she faced each other across the threshold.

"Christine," Miss Belling said, "I want to talk to you."

It was, perhaps, the most unfortunate thing she could have said. Christine did not know that she was on a friendly mission bent. Had she done so, her reaction might have been different. Christine, jointly blaming this mistress and Clara for the present plight into which she found herself plunged, was, at the first glimpse of the mistress, stiffening with expectation of trouble to come. She was in no mood to detect the soft ring in Miss Belling's tones.

"Oh!" she said, uncompromisingly.

"Christine—my dear girl!"

"I'm not your dear girl!"

Miss Belling breathed hard.

"Christine, I don't think you understand."

"Don't I?" Christine faced her bitterly. "I understand well enough," she said. "You've got it in for me, haven't you—you and Clara Trevlyn between you? You're just picking on me. Well, carry on. I don't care! You've both given me a bad name, and now I'm jolly well going to live up

to it! You needn't think you'll have the laugh if you get me kicked out of this school, because getting kicked out is just what I want to be!"

Miss Belling quivered.

"Christine, how dare you speak—" "May I pass?" Christine choked, and clenched her hands.

And Miss Belling, with a hard and rather scornful face, stood aside. It seemed that nothing could turn this wilful girl from her purpose.

Clara's Last Effort!



HOPELESS, hopeless, it all seemed. So dreadfully, completely hopeless that even Barbara, not usually ready to give way to despair, felt herself baffled. For Christine Wilmer, so far from improving, seemed to be going from bad to worse.

From Miss Belling Babs had learned all about the fruitlessness of her interview before lessons that morning. During lessons developments had followed. Christine, not satisfied with being sulky, had been positively rude to Miss Belling in class.

Miss Belling had been very patient with her, but even Miss Belling was only human, and for what Christine should have received half a dozen detentions she had reaped two hundred lines.

But that was not the worst of it, from Babs' point of view. For, apart from antagonising Miss Belling, Christine had annoyed the whole Form.

Very fond indeed of the assistant mistress were the Fourth Form, and if half of them had been against Christine before lessons that morning, practically the whole crowd was up against her now.

The only voices which did not join the general condemnation, indeed, were the voices of Lydia Crossendale & Co.

Lydia had been only too pleased to welcome Christine back into the fold again, and Babs had heard that they had all planned to spend the half-holiday together.

This, of course, suited Lydia & Co., who, hard up at the moment, had no funds of their own, and looked to the rich Christine to foot the bills.

But Babs dreaded that. Christine, in her present don't-care mood, would be ripe for any mischief which might be afoot. Christine, feeling the Form against her, was reacting characteristically by annoying and defying the Form and making scathing remarks about the school.

She was in the midst of one such tirade in the Common-room, just before dinner, when Babs, feeling she must make some effort to stay the headlong pace at which the girl was galloping downhill, drifted off worriedly to Study No. 7.

Clara was there, binding tape round the handle of her racket. She grinned.

"Cheers, Babs! What's the worried look for?"

"Clara, it's about Christine."

The dogged, uncompromising expression Babs knew so well overspread the Tomboy's face at once.

"That cat!" she said.

"Clara, please listen!" Babs pleaded. "Please, Clara, just for the last time, hear me out. Give her a chance."

Clara's eyes glistened.

"Babs, I've told you—"

"I know, I'm sorry, I—I hate to ask, really," Babs blurted, "but, Clara, I don't think you'll be sorry.

Tell her she can play—let her play. When she's playing tennis, you know what a different girl she is. She'll behave then; she'll be pleased, especially if you tell her how well she plays. I'm sure, then, Clara, that she will apologise to Miss Belling."

Clara bit her lip.
"And, after all," Babs said, "you would like her in the team, Clara?"

"If she'd only learn a bit of real team spirit, yes," Clara acknowledged. "At the same time, I'm hanged if I'm going to ask her. I told her plainly that until she apologised—"

"Clara, for my sake!" Babs quivering pleaded.

Clara paused. She looked angry all at once—angry, not with Babs, but angry at herself because she felt herself weakening. She had no sympathy with Babs' championing of the wildcat of the Form; at the same time, Babs was her chum, and never, if she could help it, had she refused Babs a favour. She put down her racket.

"All right," she grumbled, "though I'm jiggered if I know what you're so jolly keen about her for. I don't like it, Babs, but—well, just because you've asked it, I'll do it. But this is the last—the very, very last chance!" she added warningly. "Where is she?"

"In the Common-room. And—and thanks, Clara!"

Clara nodded. Before she changed her mind—as she was liable to do on reflection—she hurried away. She entered the Common-room, to find Christine still holding the floor. She laughed as Clara came in.

"Whoops! Tuck in your toes, girls! Here comes big feet!"

Clara clenched her hands at the sneer at her rather big feet, but admirably she kept herself in hand. She went straight up to Christine.

"Thanks," she said, "for the insult! But, as it happens, I've got my thickest hide on at the moment. I want you," she added gruffly, "to play in the practice this afternoon."

Christine's eyes opened.

"Really?"

"Yes."

"How sweet!" Christine gurgled. "How really charming! How marvelously and nicely she does ask, doesn't she, girls? Well, dear Clara, thanks for the invitation, but the answer's just 'No!' And it," she added, while everybody glared and a danger light appeared in Clara Trevlyn's eyes, "I ever play tennis at Cliff House again, it will be on the side of the opposing team! Go and get yourself out of your beastly tennis mess! Anything else to offer me?"

"Yes!" Clara said thickly. "This!"

A gurgle of joy went up from everybody as her hand came out. Smartly, but without force, she contemptuously smacked Christine's cheek. Then, while Christine, dead white, gave back, she strode from the room. Outside she met Babs.

"And don't," she said thickly, "ask me to ask any more favours from your awful pal, Babs! She's through!" she flashed. "For my part, she can jolly well go and get herself expelled!"

Deserted by Her Friends!



"WHAT cheer, Doris, and how goes the old tennis? Clara scored a century yet?"

Thus Jemima Carstairs, that rather unusual Fourth Former.

The scene was the junior playing fields. Doris Redfern, with Fay

Chandler and Bessie Bunter—Bessie deeply and blissfully asleep—was seated in a deckchair in front of the pavilion. On the courts at the moment energetic Clara and Babs were opposing Mabs and Leila Carroll in a doubles match, while Peggy Preston acted as umpire. Rather woefully Doris looked up as Jemima's cheery greeting fell upon her ears.

Doris did not look happy. She had one hand to her face.

"Y-oo-oh!" she said. "Oh dear!"

"Not a very intelligent remark—what?" Jemima observed, examining Doris through her monocle. "What's the matter—toothache?"

"Oh dear! Yes!" Doris groaned.

"Hurting?" Jemima asked sympathetically.

"Yes."

"Tough!" Jemima shook her head.

"Naughty tooth should be pulled out!" she observed sagely. "Terrible business, but teeth that ache have to be taught a lesson, you know! Howsomever,"

of the fence? How's the old molar, Doris?"

"I—I believe it's getting better," Doris said. "Yum! Jimmy, it is!" she cried. "Oh crumbs! I can feel the pain slowly going, you know! I say, that's wonderful stuff!" Doris cried, leaving to her feet.

"Wonderful's the word!" Jemima smiled. My gov'nor out in Nigeria sent it, you know. Some merry old native makes it up. But beware, fair youth, it's not a cure! Just hang on to the tube, and if you're worried again give the old toothie another dose. Hallo! Clara's calling you!" she said.

Clara was.

"Doris, come along and take my place, will you? I want a breather."

"Me?" Doris started up. Doris was pining for a chance to use her new racket. "You mean me?"

"Well, who else?"

Doris laughed joyfully. Into the pavilion she bolted. With the toothache eased and forgotten now, she rather



"CHRISTINE, you—wicked girl!" gasped Miss Bullivant. "You have set the pavilion alight!" Christine was not guilty of such a deed, but it seemed certain that the blame would fall upon her shoulders.

Jemima said thoughtfully, "I have here a little remedy which in my own sad case hath been known to work miracles. Is it a hollow tooth, Doris?"

"Ow! Yes!"

"Then—" Jemima said, and fished in her pocket. From it she withdrew a tiny glass tube. The tube was half full of small, white pills. "Just drop one of these into it," she said. "If it doesn't cure, it will relieve, you know. Better keep the old tube," she added, with a nod, "and let me have it back when you've seen the dentist. Cheers, Clara!" And Jemima clapped. "Topping boundary!" she applauded. "Run, old thing!"

Clara glared. It was one of Jemima's peculiar ideas of fun to muddle up the rules of games. Clara's "boundary" was a full-blooded drive which she had hit well out of court, and which had just given the game to her opponents.

"Don't be funny!" she sniffed.

"No?" Jemima nodded her head.

"Rather hard job, though, what, looking at the performance from this side

carelessly tossed the tube on the table while she grabbed up her racket. The tube, unheeded and unseen, rolled away, vanishing into a corner.

CREAK!

Barbara Redfern started.

The scene was once again the Fourth Form dormitory, and ten o'clock had just chimed out from the clock tower. Babs, fitfully dozing, jerked into wakefulness with a wide-eyed start as that unmistakable sound came from the door. She was just in time to see a figure vanishing through it.

"Christine!" she muttered.

Christine it was. Babs' heart leaped. Christine going out, and Christine obviously going out with Lydia & Co., for the beds of Lydia Crossendale, Freda Ferriers, and Frances Frost were empty.

She started up, then she shook her head. Foolish, foolish Christine! Where was she bound? Not since dinner had

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

PATRICIA is a friend after your own hearts, young and gay, yet helpful and wise, too. So she wants you to regard her as your very own friend—one who understands all schoolgirl joys and all schoolgirl problems, and who is always ready to rejoice and sympathise.



WELL, well, if it isn't your Patricia here again, and all very rushed and busy, too—though never too busy to write, or to enjoy writing, my weekly chatter to you all, let me hastily add.

Yes, I think you have guessed the cause of this busy-ness already.

It is that young brother of mine. The wedding at which Heath is to be "page" is next Saturday, and the family—or rather, mother and I—are busy putting him through his paces.

Mother said he simply must learn to carry Miss Phyllis' train properly, so Heath—his full name is Heatherington, you know—and I had a rehearsal.

I pinned a lace curtain to my shoulders and paraded solemnly up and down our sitting-room, looking very regal and impressive. Heath got on beautifully, and even managed to do the turns quite efficiently, with the help of the instructions I hurled out of the corner of my mouth—in order not to spoil my dignity!

However, I regret to inform you that this rehearsal ended rather disastrously, and through me, I'm ashamed to say.

It was just after mother had peeped in to see how we were getting on that I suddenly tripped—over the family puss-cat, who must have slipped in un-noticed.

Heath, the silly person, didn't have the presence of mind to let go of the "train." He just clung grimly on—and, of course, fell, too. Fortunately he didn't soil his precious suit, but the loss to your Patricia was: (1) her dignity; (2) a tear on her frock where the curtain had been pinned; and (3) the cat refuses to speak to me!

The loss to mother was one lace curtain. The cat was the only winner, as cats usually are, in my opinion. He was cuddled and fussed and petted and given the empty cream carton to lick out—which I'm rather partial to myself!

● Funny Little Ways

Do you ever look around your chums at school and decide what particular little habits they have? Do try it, sometimes; it's great fun.

My mother, for example, has quite a funny habit of constantly removing her hankie from place to place. She takes it out of one sleeve and slips it in a pocket; out of there, up the other sleeve. Then she tucks it into a belt. Isn't it curious?

I told my rather-rich friend Esme about this, and she asked me what I thought her habit was. It hadn't occurred to me

until then, I confess, but actually, she is always pulling and twirling at the hair on the right side of her face.

"Have I got any habits like that?" I asked her, for, of course, the owner of a habit never seems to know she has one.

"Well, as a matter of fact, you have," Esme said. "I've noticed it tons of times. You're often looking at your hands. You hold them this way and that—as if you were a sculptor just about to model them in wondrous alabaster—"

"With priceless rubies for nails," I finished with a grin. And Esme nodded. The favourite expressions that people use are often very amusing, too. Of course, I know new expressions become a rage—just like oddities in hats—from time to time. But some of them seem to go on for ever.

My mother will say "Gracious me!"—very mildly, whether she is surprised, peeved, or merely pleased. But, of course, the expression in the voice varies.

When my big brother is annoyed, he has a way of saying "Oh, nuterackers!" that really can sound very funny, especially as he puts such feeling into it.

That very nice young film star, Deanna Durbin, has two favourite expressions. One is "Bunk," and the other is "Swell."

I wonder what your favourites are?

● Spotted Chic

As we're in cruising mood this week (and if you don't believe me, just look at the page opposite) I have a special how-to-alter suggestion for you, that will appeal particularly to you wonderfully lucky young people who are going for a cruise this summer. (And probably missing some school into the bargain—you old meanies!)

A dressing-gown is an absolute necessity on a luxurious cruise, for you'll make many trips to and from the bathrooms, when you simply must look very trim, for you are quite certain to meet other nice people on your journeyings. (This also applies to all you who're going to stop at boarding-houses and hotels in England for your summer holidays—naturally).

A new dressing-gown is a treat, indeed, of course, but if an oldish one requires a spot of lengthening and cheering up at the same time, here is the way to do it.

Buy three or four yards of sturdy spotted ribbon, with a spot the same colour as the garment. Then sew this all round the hem and cuffs of the dressing-gown, and make a new girdle to match.

You'll be wishing you were taking a bath at least six times a day after this, so that you can wear it more!

● Very Clever

Do you remember my telling you some time ago, of that very clever little sentence which reads exactly the same backwards as forwards? You don't? Then I'll just repeat it. It was "Madam, I'm Adam." Read it backwards and it is the same.

Now I have another for you, a longer sentence, and so, I suppose a cleverer one.

"Able was I ere I saw Elba" it reads, frontwards and backwards, too, and is popularly supposed to have been said by Napoleon. But I myself can't believe that even Napoleon was clever enough to make up a sentence like that in a language foreign to him.

I'm quite sure I couldn't make one up in English, let alone in French. Could you?

My other how-to-make notion for this week is again in holiday mood—whether for that cruise, or for a seaside holiday.

If you have been keeping your eyes wide open, you cannot have failed to notice what an amazing variety there is this year in bathing wraps.

Some are still made of very practical toweling, but many more are not! The latest are just down-to-the-beach covers for your brief bathing suit—some are ankle-length and some are dress length.

You can make a very snappy beachcoat from a frock that is too tight for you. Ask mother first, and then cut it right up the middle. Hem the sides, and tie with perky bows, at neck and waist. You'll be the belle of the beach then—I promise!

Your friend, PATRICIA.

P.S.—I'm so thrilled, for I'm saving the coupons to get one of those amazing Four-colour Propelling Pencils that are being offered on page 2. Your nice Editor let me try one out when I went to see him at his office, and I was most impressed. How four such ripping colours—red, green, blue, and black—can emerge so easily from one exit simply amazed me. I confess I wished I was back at school for the moment in order to colour maps with great skill. But I shall cheer myself up with colouring small brother's picture books instead. I think—when he isn't looking, of course! (As a matter of fact, father has one of these pencils—and his cost five shillings! He just gaped when I told him that I was going to have one, complete with extra leads—for sixpence!)





CLOTHES FOR THE CRUISE

If you are lucky enough to be going on that most glamorous of holidays—a cruise—you'll find this article of Patricia's most helpful.

In addition, the scarves can be used to tuck into the neck of a blouse or sporty frock.

Now for dresses.

- 2 party dresses.
- 2 (at least) washable dresses.

The party dresses you will wear in the evenings, for everyone changes for dinner and dancing. I know two party frocks sounds very luxurious, but believe me, you can get very tired of wearing the same one each evening.

The two washable dresses are a necessity. These should be simple and made of crease-resisting material, with short sleeves. You will wear these for shore excursions, for it is considered very bad form to alight at a foreign port wearing clothes that are really only suitable for the beach or decks. The short sleeves will protect the tops of your tender arms from the intensity of the sun, so are well worth noting.

It is for shore trips also that a more solid pair of shoes is advisable, for cobbles can be very painful and strike hot through rubber or thin soles.

Next, the shoes you'll need.

- 1 pair of walking shoes.
- 1 or 2 pairs of deck shoes.
- 1 pair of party shoes.

The walking shoes may be made of plaited leather, or be of the sandal type, providing the soles are fairly stout.

The deck shoes can be as plain or as fancy as you like—your present tennis shoes and a pair of beach sandals would do beautifully.

The party shoes are for the evenings, and should "go" with both your party dresses, so gold or silver kid ones would be very useful.

SUMMER UNDIES

Undies should present no problem to you, for you will wear much the same as you wear at home in the summer. But do take plenty of them, for laundering on board ship is expensive, and include several pairs of gay over-sox.

You'll not require to wear a petti during the day, unless one of your washable frocks is rather transparent, but you'll want to wear one under your party dress.

It is a good idea to wear close-fitting panties under your dresses, then you won't feel any embarrassment when high breezes blow—as they will!

EXTRA LUXURIES

Now for some extra luxuries that you might like to add to your list of packing. (And this reminds me that it is a good idea to write out a list and then tick each item off as you pack it.)

- 1 fancy-dress costume.
- 1 pair of sun-glasses.
- Camera.
- Playsuits.

On all cruises one fancy-dress dance is generally held. So it is a good idea to take your own costume with you.

Sunglasses are absolutely a necessity, but these can be bought on board if you don't happen to have a pair.

Your camera will make you many friends and be a perpetual joy to you.

Playsuits are the shortest, briefest, most adorable garment ever invented since baby's rompers. They are as scanty as bathing suits, but are made of the most fascinating silky or cotton fabric, and have a little skirt—in fact, they're adorable, but a luxury, none the less.

There, now, I think that is all. But please remember that I have only given you a list of the minimum garments you must take. You can pack many more under each heading, and you'll still find that you have time to wear them all!

SO—you're going for a cruise this year, you lucky thing! Well, there's no need for me to promise you that you'll have the time of your life. For not only have the shipping company's pamphlets assured you of that—but your chums' envy most certainly will have done so, too.

Naturally you're so thrilled that you can talk of nothing else.

And then comes the deliciously serious business of planning what clothes to take.

It will seem a colossal task at first, but you can cheer yourself up by realising that you're not going to a desert island for six months—and that you can buy things that may become unexpectedly necessary.

I think a list will be the easiest way to see at a glance just what you will require.

- 1 warm coat.
- 1 woolly dress or jumper and skirt.
- 1 soft felt hat.
- 1 pair of comfy, flat-heeled shoes.

You will wear this outfit on the first hours of your voyage, for English waters are jolly chilly.

Afterwards, you will need your cosy coat—of tweed, flannel, or camel hair—quite often in the evenings, but the warm frock will probably disappear for the rest of the trip. Your felt hat may also vanish, but don't put away those shoes. They will be such a comfort when you go ashore at foreign ports, where roads are often cobbly.

- 1 shady straw or linen hat.
- 2 pairs of shorts.
- 2 sun-tops or blouses.
- 1 wool cardigan or blazer.
- 2 bathing suits (or 3 would be heavenly).
- 1 bathing wrap.
- 2 (or more) triangle scarves.

This is your on-deck list—the clothes that you will wear most of the time.

The sun hat will be a great comfort when the sun is blazingly hot, I assure you, even if you find it hard to believe now.

Your shorts should be made of uncrushable linen. One pair white and one pair navy would be my own choice—for these are the sailor's own colours. (Long slacks may be preferred instead, but are not so useful for sunbathing.)

The sun tops or blouses can be as gay as you like—red and white, pale blue, yellow, or pink—and will "go" with either pair of shorts.

The wool cardigan mustn't be forgotten, for it is always so useful to slip around your shoulders after a gruelling deck game when you sit in the shade for a rest. I should have this in white, if I were you.

The two bathing suits sound rather extravagant, but actually they are not, for you will find that everybody takes more than one. Then, after a morning dip in the ship's pool, you can change to sunbathe in a dry one.

A full-length bathing wrap—that is, to your ankles—can do double duty, for you can wear it as a dressing-gown as well as to and from the bathing pool. As you know, wraps this year are much cheaper, since quite often they are made only of brightly coloured cotton material with short sleeves.

The triangle scarves are a necessity. You'll wear one on your hair most of the time, for there is always a breeze at sea, and sometimes it's quite a strong one, too. (I hope you remember the three different ways I suggested a week or two ago for wearing your head scarf.)

(Continued from page 11)

she seen the girl. What had happened between her and Lydia & Co. during the afternoon she did not know. Only a minute before call-over had they returned from their half-holiday jaunt, and from then until bed-time Christine had confined her attentions exclusively to Lydia & Co.

Babs rose. Quickly she donned her dressing-gown; softly she made her way towards the door, looking along the darkened corridor. As she did so, she heard a step.

And then the light flashed on. Miss Drake, duty mistress for the day, was coming down the corridor. She frowned as she saw Babs at the door.

"Barbara, what are you doing out of bed?"

Babs gasped. She thought with panic of the four empty beds in the dormitory. If Miss Drake should come in—

"I—I thought I heard something," she mumbled.

"What?"

"Well, I don't know. Just—just something!" Babs stammered lamely.

"Well, there's nothing here," Miss Drake frowned round. "Probably a mouse, Barbara, or the wind outside. Please get back to bed!"

"Yes, Miss Drake. Good—good-night!"

"Good-night!" Miss Drake said stiffly.

She switched off the light. Babs, her heart heavy, went back. Hopeless now to prevent Christine & Co. from going out; by this time, indeed, they would be out of the school. What a chump Christine was!

Foolish indeed Christine was. It had been her suggestion that afternoon that she and Lydia & Co. should go to the Palais de Danse in the evening. It was Christine who had bought the tickets.

This was the Christine recklessly defiant, the girl who did not care. And she was enjoying this escapade—or so she liked to believe. Anyway, if she was a nobody in the Form, she was somebody with Lydia & Co. They liked her, they looked up to her.

Laughing, she went off down the lane with her three companions.

"Good time—eh?" she said. "Let's all enjoy ourselves. I've money—heaps and heaps of it. Money to spend. Money to burn. And the best of it," she added, "is that when that's gone there's more where it came from! Hallo! Car coming!" she added.

Lydia swung round. A car was coming from the direction of Cliff House. Its headlights glowed like twin searchlights in the darkness of the countryside.

"Phew!" she said. "Better make ourselves scarce. It may be a mistress."

"Well, what of it?" Christine scoffed.

"We don't want to be expelled."

"Scared, aren't we?" Christine scoffed. "Oh, all right!" she added, as the three dived for the bushes, and carelessly followed. "I suppose, after all, we don't want to miss the dance. I say, it's Miss Bullivant's car," she added, as the vehicle swung into view. "Where the dickens is she going this time of night?"

"She sometimes goes into Courtyard to play bridge with some friends," Lydia muttered. "But 'shush! There she is!"

The car came by. In its lighted interior, sitting very firmly upright, they caught a glimpse of the well-known figure of the "Bull," scanning the dark road as she passed. Lydia looked uneasy.

"I say—"

"Well, what?" Christine asked.

"I say, had we better go, after all?" Lydia asked nervously. "You know what the Bull is. She caught Connie Jackson once at the Palais."

"Oh, stuff!" Christine scoffed. "Come on!"

"They went on, but rather nervously now.

In half an hour the dance hall was reached. It was very full, and, giving up their tickets, they went up to the cloak-room. Christine laughed as she flung her things aside.

"Here we are, and here we stop," she said. "But goodness! Isn't the place full? I say, what about a spot of refreshment before we start? I'd just love a nice iced lemonade! Look here, I'll go down and order it. Meet you at the buffet."

She laughed gaily. Off she went, slamming the door behind her. Lydia and her two chums looked at each other.

"I say, I don't feel safe," Lydia said. "I've got a feeling that the beastly Bull will be barging along and—"

She started suddenly, peering through the window, which had a view of the street below. Then she pulled Frances' arm.

"Oh, my hat! Look!"

Frances looked. Her face turned pale.

"The Bull's car! And it's stopping outside the dance hall!"

"Come on!"

"But what about Christine?"

"Blow Christine! Get out by the back way."

Miss Bullivant's car it was, and with Miss Bullivant in it—a weary and ruffled Miss Bullivant, who had arrived at her rendezvous to be informed that there would be no bridge to-night, as her friend had suddenly been stricken with an illness.

And just like the Bull, of course, to have a peep round the dance hall on her way back. Miss Bullivant had caught girls out like that before.

The three members of the Smart Set of the Fourth flew in a panic. Along the corridor they rushed, almost crashing into an attendant, at that moment coming up the stairs. Down the stairs they tumbled; in frightened panic sprinted for the fire exit gates. Lydia threw them open.

"Come on!" she gasped. They sprinted into the night.

While Christine, smiling and all un-mindful of her treacherous friends, was at that moment ordering them iced lemonades at the buffet.

That buffet was near the great glass doors which gave access to the foyer of the hall. Anybody stepping into that foyer would have seen Christine immediately, but Christine did not even think about that. Impatiently she looked towards the stairs; with a shrug sipped her own drink. And then suddenly she became aware of a certain commotion at the other side of the glass doors.

"Christine!"

Christine started round. The glass she was holding almost slipped from her fingers. Oh, great goodness! Look who was there! The Bull—Miss Bullivant—pointing through the glass towards her. Miss Bullivant arguing with the doorkeeper, obviously demanding admission. For a moment Christine's cheeks paled.

She didn't care—or so she had said at Cliff House. She wanted to be expelled. But did she? Face to face now with the highest authority at Cliff House, it dawned upon her that she wasn't quite sure of that. Even in her lawless heart there was dread and terror of Miss Bullivant. And Miss

Bullivant had seen her! For a moment she paused. Well, she'd jolly well stop and face it out. Nobody yet had ever accused Christine Wilmer of being afraid to take her medicine.

But she didn't stop. For suddenly she remembered Lydia & Co. Lydia and Frances and Freda might come tripping down those stairs at any moment. She must warn them. They must get out of it—somehow. Never mind about herself; she was caught, anyway. While Miss Bullivant still argued she turned. Frantically she sprinted up the stairs to the cloak-room. She threw the door open.

"Lyd—" she urgently began, and stopped. The cloak-room was empty. Where the dickens had they gone?

"If you want your friends, miss, they went off two or three minutes ago," a voice said; and Christine wheeled, to behold the attendant into whom Lydia & Co. had almost crashed on their flight down the stairs. "They went out by the fire exit."

Christine stared. She understood then—and, understanding, furiously called herself a fool. Lydia & Co. had been warned, then; Lydia & Co., callously leaving her to her fate, had run away.

"Thanks," she said.

What now? Stop here and wait for the Bull to find her? Stop here and be dragged away in front of all those people downstairs?

Not she! And not if she knew it were Lydia & Co. going to get away with this!

She snatched down her clothes. Tossing half-a-crown to the astonished attendant, she sprinted for the stairs. Down them she pelted. Out through the gate she tore into the road. By great good luck, a taxi was crawling by. She hailed it, flung herself into it.

"Cliff House," she ordered. "Stop a hundred yards past the gates."

And while Miss Bullivant, having gained entrance to the dance hall at last, was angrily demanding that Christine Wilmer should be searched for and brought to her, Christine went whizzing through the night in a taxicab.

Caught by Miss Bullivant!



BUT Christine did not catch up Lydia & Co. They, too, had hired a taxi.

Thus when Christine at last found herself in the grounds of Cliff House there was no sign of life; no sound, save the restless whimper of some puppy in the Pets' House. But—and suddenly she stared as a sickly light flared up in the junior pavilion opposite her, as she saw for a moment a well-known head and shoulders silhouetted in the panes.

Doris Redfern!

Christine blinked. Doris of the Third Form. What was she doing here? Even as she watched, the glow faded and went out, to be replaced a moment later by another light. Doris was striking matches in the pavilion!

"Hal-lo!" Christine muttered.

She forgot for the moment her own plight. Some very urgent and very strong reason must have brought Doris out of her bed at this time of night.

She remembered the Bull—the Bull who was probably on her way back now, who might, indeed, arrive at any moment. If the Bull found Doris striking matches in the pavilion—

Never mind herself—she was spotted in any case. Christine crossed the grounds.

Another match flared as she reached the door. Quickly she went into the room. Half a dozen spent matches littered the floor. Doris, one hand to her cheek, wheeled round, with a cry. "Oh goodness, C-Christine!" she gasped.

"Doris, what are you doing here?" "I'm looking for a little glass tube," Doris said. "It's Jenima's really. Oh dear, Jenima gave it to me this afternoon to cure my toothache, and I must have left it here when Clara asked me to play tennis. I didn't think of it then—ow!—because my toothache had stopped. Then to-night it came on again. Oh, Christine, I've got to find it—I must find it. This tooth is nearly driving me crazy."

"Poor kid," Christine said sympathetically. "You're sure you dropped it in this room?"

"Yes, I left it on the table." "Well, buck up then and find it," Christine said. "The Bull's on her way back to school. Look here, you look that side of the room. I'll look around here. Give me a few of those matches."

"Oh, Christine, how nice of you!" "Rats! Hurry!"

Doris gave her the matches. Christine, striking them on one of her shoes, commenced to search. Wincing with pain, Doris struck another, peering round the floor and the opposite side of the room. Christine turned.

For two, three minutes they searched, striking matches as they went. Then suddenly Christine saw it—a small glass phial sticking from under the arch of a girl's shoe. She picked it up.

"Doris, here we are," she said. "I say, didn't I smell something burning? But here," she added urgently, "take the thing—and beat it—beat it just as fast as your legs will carry you. No, don't worry about me. The Bull knows I'm out, and I can't get into any more trouble. Scoot!" she added urgently.

"Oh, Christine—" "Get going!" Christine cried impatiently.

She hustled Doris towards the door. Doris, trembling, rushed out. Christine watched her from the door, turned, and sniffed again. My hat, but the smell of smoke was strong! She struck another match.

And then she fell back with a gasp. In the opposite corner of the room, near where Doris had been searching, stood a tall wastepaper-basket, made of wicker. It was there that oddments of unwanted rubbish were thrown during the day. The basket at this moment was more than half-full, and it was belching smoke.

Christine could guess what had happened. Doris, in her frantic search for the missing phial, had accidentally dropped a still burning match into the basket.

Frantically Christine rushed towards it. She caught it up, emptying the waste on to the floor so that she could stamp out the blaze there and then. But alas for Christine!

It was the very disturbance of the smouldering rubbish which precipitated disaster. As it shot from the basket so it burst into flame. Just in time Christine leapt back, with a startled cry of alarm, dropping the basket as she did so. The basket instantly caught fire.

Christine was badly frightened then. What to do? Then she remembered the pail of sand in the next room. She rushed for it, with trembling fingers grasped at it. Her own haste and her urgency, however, were her undoing. For in levering the pail from its hook, she dropped it completely. The sand shot across the floor.

She plunged back, choking now. And then she cried out. The wooden wall of the pavilion was well alight. There was only one thing—to give the alarm.

She must warn Piper, the porter.

In a perfect frenzy Christine dashed out. Half-blinded by smoke and the heat of the blaze, she did not see the figure which was running towards the pavilion—not indeed until she crashed right into it. And then, halting, she panted, quivering as a hand fiercely caught her arm, as she was whirled to a breathless standstill. Like a girl in a daze she looked into the stern features of Miss Bullivant.

"Christine, you—you wicked girl!" that mistress gasped. "You have set the pavilion alight!"

The Final Blow!



"Oh, she did it all right. No doubt about that. And why?" Clara

Trevlyn furiously demanded. "Simply because she wanted to have her own back on me and the tennis team. She knew jolly well

BABS stepped wonderingly into the study. Here was the stormy Fourth Former, crying as if her heart would break. On top of all her other troubles, what was this final crushing blow that had come to Christine?



that most of the tackle was in the pavilion."

"Just a rotten act of spite!" June Merrett said hotly.

"Just letting her beastly temper run away with her once more," Margot Lantham chimed in.

"She ought to be expelled!"

Cliff House next morning was in a ferment of wrath and indignation. For all Cliff House now knew what had happened in the small hours of the night.

Half the junior pavilion was in ashes. Practically every stick of the junior tennis gear had perished in the flames. Christine Wilmer, confined to the punishment-room for the night, had not been seen until assembly, when Miss Bullivant, in a voice that still quivered with the outraged indignation she felt, had made the news known to the school.

Everyone knew now how Christine had been caught in the Priardale dance hall; everyone knew that Miss Bullivant had actually caught her running out of the blazing pavilion.

But Christine was not to be expelled—not at once. Miss Bullivant was only acting headmistress. Her expul-

sion must wait until Miss Primrose returned. Meantime; however, Christine had been turned out of Study No. 6, had been confined to bounds, and, because of the shame which she had covered herself, was now occupying, entirely alone, the meagrely furnished room at the head of the Fourth Form dormitory, which was known as "unlucky study," and was numbered 13. There was no doubt in anybody's mind that as soon as Miss Primrose returned she would be expelled.

"I vote, look you, that we send her to Coventry!" Lucy Morgan cried.

"But—but—" Barbara Redfern shook her head. This discussion was in the Common-room after assembly, on the morning of Cliff House's tournament with Newside School. "Oh, my hat, I can't believe it!" she said. "I can't believe it even now. Of course, Christine's got a temper, but she doesn't do spiteful things."

"No? Well, she's done this all right," Clara Trevlyn said grimly.



"It's as plain as a pikestaff what her object was. She knows the match is due to take place to-day. Can you have the slightest doubt that she meant to try to mess up our chances by ruining the tackle—"

"And she has, begorra!" Bridget O'Toole put in.

"No, she hasn't!" Clara said grimly. "I've fixed that up—thanks to Dulcia Fairbrother! We're playing Newside on Senior Side, and Dulcia is lending us all the tackle we want."

Babs looked very worried. It seemed clear that Christine's guilt was proved; but she had an odd feeling, somehow, that she wasn't guilty.

Rather worriedly she drifted out of the Common-room. She went along to Study No. 13. She entered, and then started to find her own sister Doris in Christine's company, and Christine standing by her with a rather bitterly ironic smile twisting her lips.

"Doris—" "Babs, oh, please help me!" pleaded Doris. "There's something wrong. Christine wasn't alone in the pavilion

last night when that fire broke out. Christine would never have come to the pavilion if it hadn't been for me."

"What?"

"Well, it's true," Doris said in misery, and then went on to tell the story. "It might just as well have been me as Christine who set the pavilion on fire."

"Christine," Babs cried, "why didn't you say—"

Christine shrugged.

"Why should I say?" she asked. "Everybody's made up their minds, haven't they? How would it help me to drag Doris into it? And, in any case, how could there have been a mistake?"

Babs eyed her keenly.

"Christine, you're sure?"

"Positive," Christine nodded. "Of course, I burned the pavilion down," she said mockingly. "Why not? It was good fun. I'm such a beastly, spiteful, bad-tempered wretch that it's just the sort of thing I'd do, isn't it? If I had my way," Christine went on, "I'd burn the whole rotten school down!"

"Christine," choked Doris—"Christine, please don't talk like that!"

"Eh? Oh, sorry!" Christine flushed. "Doris, you run off," she said. "And please don't say anything to anybody about you being there. You can't help me by doing it. You'll only get into trouble yourself, and what's the good of getting it in the neck when there's nothing to be gained by it? Cut off, there's a good kid! And, Babs, will you go, please?" she added.

"But, Christine—"

"Please!" Christine said wearily.

Babs looked at her. She shook her head. If she had doubted Christine's guilt before, she was convinced of her innocence now. Christine had no more deliberately set fire to the pavilion than she had. Christine, most nobly, was taking all the blame.

But it was no good arguing with Christine. Christine, characteristically reacting to the hostility of the school, seemed to take an ironic joy in being dubbed as the bad girl.

Doris, almost crying, went off. Babs more slowly followed. Christine, left alone, sank into a chair. Fool, fool, fool that she was! What a pretty mess her recklessness had led her into! First deserted by those so-called friends of hers. Now accused of this crime!

Still, better she to be blamed than Doris!

She went out presently. Bitterly hostile glances met her. Some girls freezingly turned shoulders, others just scowled; some hissed. Christine flushed, clenching her hands, desperately trying to keep her temper in control. Her temper—this is what it had led her to!

Scorned by the school. The shadow of certain expulsion over her head!

Even she couldn't stand the hostility. She went back to her study—bare, bleak, uncomfortable room—only one degree better than the punishment-room. Where were her friends now? Oh, hang it! Hang everybody! Hang everything! But hang most of all herself—this beastly, rotten, uncontrollable temper which had earned her the reputation, which had made this crime of which she was judged, so easily believable. She must fight that—she must conquer it.

Or was it too late?

Brooding and bitter, she remained in Study No. 13 all that morning. She didn't even go to dinner, which, on this

whole day's holiday, was an optional meal.

Outside she heard the happy, laughing voices of girls at play; she was aware vaguely of the excited bustle which heralded the arrival of the New-side school tennis team.

Gulping a little, she sat on, brooding. Time passed slowly.

Bright sunlight flooded the room; out of the window she caught a distant glimpse of Senior Side, where Clara & Co. were playing against Newside. Tennis! Her game! This frightfully important match in which she was to have starred! They didn't want her now!

Then there came a knock on the door. It was Boker, the pageboy. He had a letter in his hands.

"Letter, Miss Wilmer."

"Thanks," Christine said.

She picked it up. A little flush came to her cheeks as she regarded her father's handwriting. Dear, dear old pater. He, like Babs, would never let her down. She opened it.

The letter was still in her hands when, half an hour later, Babs, with a gleeful cry of "We've won, Christine! We're through the first round!" rushed into the room.

Then Babs faltered and halted as she saw Christine, wretchedly forlorn, sitting at her table. Great, uncontrollable sobs were shaking her shoulders, and her head was pillowed in her arms. Babs ran up to her.

"Christine, what's the matter?"

Christine gulped.

"Everything!" she cried. "Everything's the matter!"

"Christine, old thing—" Babs muttered.

"I'm an outcast!" Christine's eyes flamed. "I'm the girl with the terrible temper. I'm the girl who's going to be expelled! Girls sneer when I pass—I'm here, alone in this study, like some rotten prisoner. But"—she gulped—"Babs, read that," she said, and passed the letter.

And, frowning, Babs read it. And then she turned pale.

"You mean, Christine, that your father's lost all his money?"

"That's it, every penny. So now," Christine said, with a choking laugh, "I'm not only the outcast—I'm the

pauper. Not even Lydia & Co. will want my friendship now! I've made a mess of things," she said slowly. "I've been a beast, a cat! All along, Babs, I've steeled myself to hate this school. I've lied to myself that I want to be out of it."

Babs bit her lip.

"And until I saw the school turn against me, until I knew I hadn't a single friend in the school, I believed that. Well, I don't want to go—now. Some stubborn streak in me tells me to stop here and fight things out. My temper is the cause of my downfall. I was hoping, if I could only stay on long enough, to fight that temper and get the better of it. But now—"

"Now?" Babs asked, with a gulp.

"Now what?" Christine shrugged.

"I've no money. I can't face it, Babs—I daren't face it! I'm going."

She rose. But Babs stayed her. "Christine, wait a minute," she said. Her face twitched a little. "Christine, don't be a hasty idiot," she begged, "and don't say things that aren't true. You've one more friend at least besides Doris."

Christine looked at her.

"Me," Babs said.

"Oh, Babs—"

"And—and if you're serious, if you mean what you say—about fighting your temper—"

"I do, Babs."

"Then," Babs asked, "why not stop and face it out? Why not stop and fight it, Christine? I believe in you. I'm your friend. Christine, let me help you as I told Miss Charmant I would. Let's start together from this moment and turn over a new leaf. Christine, I mean it."

Christine looked at her, wondering. Her eyes began to shine.

"Babs, you mean it?"

"I mean it," Babs said solemnly, and held out her hand. "Well, Christine, is it a bargain?"

"It is," Christine said, and gulped again, and with a hand that trembled placed her palm within that of Babs'. "Babs, you're—you're just wonderful!" she breathed.

And Babs smiled. She seemed to feel from that moment that she was talking to a different girl.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

HER ONLY FRIEND in the FOURTH!



Christine Wilmer is an outcast, the girl with the shadow of expulsion hanging over her head. Not a soul in her form will have anything to do with her—except Barbara Redfern.

Babs, knowing that Christine is really trying to make good, is determined to stick by her through thick and thin. Babs does stick by her—but at what a cost! For her friendship for Christine brings trouble her way, strikes at her wonderful popularity . . . and still Babs remains loyal to Christine!

This superb story by Miss Hilda Richards appears complete in next week's SCHOOLGIRL and it has tennis incidents in it that will please all lovers of that game.

Further chapters of our fascinating and unusual Western story—

GIRL RIDER OF THE BLUE HILLS!



By
**DORIS
LESLIE**

FOR NEW READERS.

FAY THORNTON lives on the Flying H ranch in Texas with her father, ROBERT THORNTON, and her two little brothers. The ranch is small and not too prosperous. But Fay hopes to win a money prize on her range pony,

Starlight, in a forthcoming rodeo race. Mr. Thornton is wounded by cattle thieves on the land of wealthy John Hampton, who owns a big, neighbouring ranch. Mr. Thornton is not seriously hurt, and that afternoon Fay rides into the nearby township, Redland Gulch, to collect some stores. She learns that people are whispering that her father is really one of the men rustling cattle. Because of this Fay is refused credit, and is not able to buy all the stores necessary. In the town she meets Hampton himself and his snobbish daughter, Lucille, who taunt her about her father. Fay angrily denies the rumour that he is a rustler and rides for home.

(Now read on.)

The Watcher in the Rocks!

THEY think daddy's a rustler!" There was shock and bitter resentment in Fay Thornton's voice as she spoke. There was no one to hear her except her stocky range pony, Starlight, for they had left the township of Redland Gulch two miles behind along the winding dusty trail.

And now, at a brisk gallop, they were making for home, the little Flying H Ranch, and daddy, waiting there for her, nursing an injured shoulder.

Fay sat upright in the saddle, gazing unseeingly towards the distant Blue Hills.

Fay was seeing again, in her mind, the startling incidents which had just taken place in Redland Gulch. Refused their usual supply of stores; told that her father was a member of the rustling gang who had actually shot him early that morning; taunted by their wealthy next-door neighbour, John Hampton, on whose land the shooting had occurred, and told to clear out while the going was good!

And her father was innocent! It was all a ghastly mistake. He'd tried to tackle the rustlers while they were in the very act of stealing Hampton's steers. That was why he had been on

the Lazy T range; that was why he had got shot.

"One day we'll prove it, old boy," Fay murmured. "Sure, we'll prove it!"

As she approached the fork a mile from home, Fay's thoughts centred upon another aspect of this startling state of affairs. She and daddy were going to find it difficult to carry on. But they'd manage—they'd manage somehow.

When she reached the Flying H, she found, to her surprise, that her father was in the kitchen, clad in a dressing-gown, and with his injured arm in a sling. She halted on the threshold, and was about to utter a gentle reproach when she stiffened, lips still parted.

Her father was leaning forward in his chair, running the fingers of one hand through his hair in a gesture of utter distraction. And he was speaking to himself. On the table beside him was

TO WIN THE RODEO RACE WAS VITAL NOW. IT MEANT SAFETY FOR HER FATHER.

a pile of papers. Fay recognised them at once. Bills!

"I sure just don't know what I'm gonna do," he was muttering. "Ten dollars wanted here, twenty dollars wanted there, another five wanted somewhere else—and not a cent in the bank!" He drew in a quivering breath. "If Fay learns, she—she—waal, I guess I ain't gonna let her learn!"

Softly Fay tiptoed over to his bowed, dejected figure. Very comfortingly, she put her arms about his neck. And as, starting up with shock, he jerked back, she forced herself to smile, and pressed a kiss to his cheek.

"It's too late, daddy!" she whispered. "Fay already knows. You can't expect me not to know one or two things, can you, daddy? And I know it costs money to run a ranch, and that things haven't been too good for us of late. But they'll get better, daddy! I—I know they will!"

"Honey!" her father murmured. He said no more, but clasped her in his arms. Fixedly he gazed in front of him; and even more fixedly, and with a little light of fierce determination in her eyes, Fay gazed in front of her.

The rodeo to-morrow! The hundred dollars prize in the ladies' race! More than ever, she must win it, after this. She'd got to help daddy!

"Listen, daddy!" she began softly, and told him about the race, of her confidence in Starlight, and her own optimism—just a little exaggerated, for his sake.

"You reckon you stand a chance, lass?" Eagerly he looked at her, and smiled at her quick nod. "Waal, I feel better at the bare idea. An' I've a hunch maybe you're not far out, honey." Almost gaily he hugged her. "Waal, what about your trip? Got the stores? An', say, you didn't forget the boys' popcorns—an' my baccy?"

Fay's heart twinged. "I—I got the popcorns, and—and the baccy, daddy," she said. "They're in the bag. I—I'll just go and put the things away."

But as she rose and drew back, her father, catching her hand, pulled her towards him again.

"Fay, lass," he said, looking at her intently, "something's wrong. Tell your dad. What is it? You ain't worryin' about my little wound?"

"Why, no—no. I'm not worrying about anything, daddy. Everything's fine! Sure it is!"

Fay nodded quickly, actually managing to laugh.

"Just you sit there, daddy, and let me put the things away."

But her laugh did not sound natural, and Mr. Thornton was not deceived.

"Look at me, honey," he said softly. "Now then—something's happened. What is it? Guess you can tell your old dad, can't you, now?"

There was such affectionate appeal in his voice that Fay could no longer keep up her pretence. Daddy was bound to discover the truth sooner or later. Perhaps it would be as well if he discovered it now. And so, her voice one instant faltering, the next vibrating with anger, she related everything that had happened in Redland Gulch.

Her father did not speak until she had finished. Then, very quietly, he said:

"So they think that, do they, lass?" "Oh, daddy, it's so—so unfair! It's

the wretchedest lie I've ever heard!" Fay choked. "I—I feel I want to go and tell everyone how I despise them, and—and what a fine, good daddy you are—"

"One day they'll learn what fools they're bein'," he said, in the same even tones. Then his voice hardened. "And so they wouldn't let you have our stores on credit?"

"No, daddy."

"An' Hampton and those dude pals o' his from New York laughed at you, lass?"

"Yes, daddy. Oh, but I—I don't really mind that. I can stand it. They're not worth feeling hurt about. It's you, daddy, I'm thinking of."

"I know, lass, an' I'm proud of you for—" He paused, and his face became very grave. "Say, honey, the youngsters mustn't hear of this."

Fay caught her breath at that. She'd rather overlooked her young brothers, who, at the moment, were still at school in the little township.

"Bobbie and Ted!" she cried. "Oh! No, they mustn't know—mustn't even have any idea of it. I won't let them, daddy. I'll keep it from them somehow. And as for those nasty little slips of paper—" She pulled a grimace at the heap of bills as she got to her feet. "They won't count much"—snapping her fingers—"after to-morrow! Just wait till we've won that hundred dollars."

And Fay spoke in such self-assured tones that her father, not suspecting she was deliberately trying to make light of things, felt somehow calmer himself.

"Honey, you're a little gem!" he said, squeezing her hand. "I sure don't know what I'd do without you! All right! Run along!"

So Fay, giving him a fond kiss, set about preparing tea for the return of her young brothers from school. As usual, she met them at the fork in the trail, and said nothing of their father's mishap until they were entering the yard. Then, quite casually, she said:

"Oh, daddy had an accident this morning! He's hurt his shoulder, so be careful you don't bang against it, won't you?"

"Hurt!" said nine-year-old Ted. "Gosh! Not badly, sis?"

"Oh, no; not badly! He just—just came off his horse. His shoulder's bandaged, but he's all right."

Bobbie, aged six, looked at her with inquiring blue eyes.

"Coo, sis, was he caught by rustlers? Teacher was tellin' us about rustlers to-day, wasn't she, Ted? An' I think they're awfully brave men to go about taking other people's cows an' horses an'—an' things! Wish I were a rustler!" he ended wistfully.

Fay's heart had begun to beat very queerly.

"So—so your teacher was telling you about rustlers?" she said. "What—what did she say?"

"Oh, nothin' much!" said Ted. "Just said what bad guys they are, an' that everybody ought to try to stamp them out. Say, sis, have you ever seen one? Well, then, has dad?"

"No," said Fay swiftly. "No; daddy—daddy hasn't ever seen one."

"He may have done," said Bobbie, and looked all excited. "I'm going to ask him. Then, if he has, he could tell me what they're like, an' I could go and look for them, couldn't I?"

They had reached the stable now, and Bobbie, the young rascal, slithered out of the saddle and dropped to the ground, with the obvious intention of rushing straight in to his father. But in the nick of time Fay hauled him back.

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

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—I expect you've already seen page 2 of this issue, and the really exciting particulars there of our great Presentation Offer, but if you haven't I advise you to turn there ever so quickly.

Then read the instructions, do just as they tell you, and so make quite sure of YOUR Four-Colour Propelling Pencil.

I have one of the pencils in the office, and it really is not only the most attractive thing of its kind you could desire, but easily the most useful—and the most ingenious.

Just think of it!

Four colours, red, blue, black and green, at your beck and call, just whenever you need them. It's like carrying a box of coloured crayons about with you—but all ingeniously tucked away inside a pencil of excellent appearance! And by the way, do tell all your friends of this wonderful opportunity, won't you?

Before passing on to next Saturday's splendid story-programme, just one word about "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." I don't mean that brilliant film which is now enchanting thousands of people every week, but the game which is based on the film. It's a card game, you know, for any number of players; perfectly simple to understand, but ever so exciting—and it costs but 1s. 6d. at all stores, bookshops, and toyshops.

You'd love it—so would father and mother, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts.

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE.

And now we come to next week's magnificent story of Cliff House School, the second of our fine series featuring Christine Wilmer and Barbara Redfern. When you have read it, you will, I am confident, join me in congratulating Hilda Richards on what is undoubtedly a most gripping and human story.

Christine, for the sake of Babs as much as for herself, strives with might and main to control that fiery temper of hers. Babs does all she can to help. But the fates are against them both. It is not Christine's fault exactly that she fails, but fail she does. And Babs is the one who suffers!

You simply mustn't miss this wonderful story, which is so aptly summed up in the title: "Her Only Friend in the Fourth!"

As usual, of course, next Saturday's issue will contain further fascinating chapters of "Girl Rider of the Blue Hills," another delightful COMPLETE laughter-story featuring "Cousin George and 'The Imp,'" more of Patricia's Bright, Breezy, and Instructive pages, and another Cliff House Pet. So—order your copy well in advance.

And now, au revoir for a few more days.

With best wishes,

Your sincere friend, THE EDITOR.

"I shouldn't, there's a good boy," she said in a low voice. "Daddy's tired. If you don't say anything, you shall have a lollipop in bed."

The bribe had its effect. Neither Bobbie nor Ted breathed a word about rustlers when they saw their father,

though they were curious and concerned, in a childish sort of way, about his hurt.

Tea was its usual boisterous self. There were the usual corrections, the usual demands to Bobbie to stop playing with his bread-and-butter and brandishing a jammy spoon in Ted's face.

But at last the youngsters, washed and with their hair neatly brushed, were popped into their separate beds in the same room, Fay and their father went in to say "Good-night!" and all was peaceful in the little ranch-house.

An hour afterwards, peeping into the bed-room, Fay made certain both boys were sound asleep. Then she returned to the kitchen.

"I'm takin' Starlight out for a practice run, dad," she said. "I'm not going to take any chances about to-morrow." Secretly she reflected that there was too much at stake for that, but breezily added: "Why don't you go to bed, dad?"

"I may wait up until the cowboys return, lass. Anyway, I'll come an' see you off first."

Her father stood in the porch, waving, as she set off with Starlight. The evening shadows were lengthening now, and there was a cooling breeze after the blazing heat of the day. But the trail was as sandy as ever, and great clouds of it gathered under the pony's sturdy legs as he galloped along.

Fay's thoughts began to dwell on the tragic situation the little home was facing—pressing bills to meet; their one chance of paying them her success at the rodeo, and daddy under suspicion! She caught a glimpse of him as she glanced back, slowly pacing the yard.

"Poor daddy!" she muttered. "I only wish I could— Why, that's mighty queer!"

And, slowing Starlight down to a trot, she stared up at a wall of rock that fringed the trail on her left. It was full of crags and boulders, and from one of the crags, about fifteen feet up, she had caught the glint of something that twinkled in the waning sun.

Keen-eyed, she regarded it, then gave a violent start. A pair of binoculars! Somebody, lying at full length amid the rocks, was looking through binoculars, directing them towards her ranch!

Someone spying on the ranch—spying on daddy!

Instinctively Fay knew that was it. But before she could recover from the shock she discovered something else. The watcher sat up, and she recognised him as the young tenderfoot-looking Englishman who had been with John Hampton's party this afternoon.

It was he who was showing such remarkable interest in her home. But why? Why should he, of all people, come here to spy like this? From the brief glimpse she had had of him he hadn't seemed capable of meddling in anything requiring courage and Western skill, and yet—and yet—

Fired with indignation, seething with curiosity, Fay scarcely knew what she was doing; but she turned Starlight's head and rode straight for the rocks.

A Puzzling Encounter!

HIDDEN from the young watcher's view by great boulders and out-jutting spurs, Fay reached a sandy avenue that sloped up to the shelf of rock on which he lay.

She dismounted, dropped the reins over Starlight's head to prevent him from straying, and scrambling up the avenue, was confronting the young man before he even suspected he was no

longer alone. But her shadow, falling in front of him, brought him twisting round.

"I say," he exclaimed—"you! Why—er—hallo!" He grinned cheerily. "Topping view from here! You can see for miles!"

"Mebbe—if you want to," Fay returned levelly. Hands on hips, she looked at him as he jumped up. "But you seemed more interested in my home."

"Did I?" Again he grinned, then shrugged. "Well, perhaps I was. It's rather a cute little place. And I was watching that fellow there strolling about, the one with the bandaged shoulder." He regarded her almost casually. "Your father, isn't it?"

"You know very well it's my father!" Fay said shortly. "You're one of Hampton's friends. You were with him when he and I had words this afternoon. You know who I am, and I guess you know what folk are saying about me and—dad. Isn't that why you're here?"

The young man's eyebrows lifted quizzically.

"I was going to introduce myself—tell you my name's Douglas Lessiter; but after that," he said, and brushed some of the dust from his smart grey flannel suit, "I think I'd better ask questions instead. What do you mean—isn't that why I'm here?"

His flippant tones did not completely deceive Fay. They merely puzzled her. A queer fellow! He wasn't more than a couple of years her senior, and, to all intents and purposes, he was a tenderfoot in the ways of the West; and yet—yet—

"I thought mebbe you wanted to—to watch my father," she said at last.

"You mean—spy on him?" Lessiter chuckled. "Why the dickens should I want to spy on your father? Hampton might—one of those cowpuncher wallahs of his might, too. But I'm not Hampton, and I'm not a cowpunching wallah, thank goodness. I'm just one of the dear man's much honoured and respected guests, out for a little evening ride, complete with these—to admire the view."

But Fay did not notice the binoculars he lightly displayed. She was staring at him—at his suddenly serious face. And for an instant she had the oddest sensation. There had seemed to be a vein of contempt about his reference to Hampton. And his expression almost suggested that he was mentally saying: "Well, you don't think much of Hampton, either, do you, so we're partners here, anyway."

Next second, the illusion passed.

"Well, if that's square talkin', I'm sorry," Fay said. She smiled, simply because he had smiled, and there was something infectious about the friendly crinkle of his face. "But if—if you're at all interested in what's going on around these parts," she added meaningfully, "I'd sure like you to know that my dad's innocent. And, what's more, he and I are going to prove it one of these days. Well, s'long!"

"Going—already?" said Douglas Lessiter, seeming quite disappointed. He grinned and shrugged. "All right. I'll come down with you. May as well beetle along myself."

And he led the way down to level ground, turning now and then to offer quite unnecessary assistance to Fay.

Completely puzzled she felt. She could not make out this pleasant but peculiar young Englishman at all. Undoubtedly, he had been spying on daddy, and yet his friendliness now seemed more solid than just a mere pose. She

felt it to be genuine, sincere. What exactly was he up to? Why had he been spying on daddy? Why was he being so charming now?

Lessiter himself gave no inkling of his reasons for behaving so queerly. Fetching his own horse—one of Hampton's magnificent string of thoroughbreds—from where he had left it, out of sight, behind a boulder, he rejoined Fay, and together they picked their way over the rocky ground to Starlight.

There he turned and smiled.

"Well, cheerio, Miss Thornton. And—good luck!"

"S'long!" Fay returned. Watching his tall, well-built form go riding down the trail in the direction of the Lazy T Ranch, she thoughtfully bit her lip.

"Guess I can't make him out at all, Starlight," she mused. Frowning, she fondled one of the pony's ears. "One moment I think he's just a harmless tenderfoot, mighty nice an' all that, but pretty slow, and then the next he seems just the other way round, cute, clever, up to some queer game. Wonder why

dusk, so she lit the oil-lamp, and then, getting out her work-basket, and seating herself in an easy-chair, began to inspect the boys' clothes.

There was ample to do in the way of repairs—as usual. A button missing from Ted's dungarees; two enormous holes in the heels of Bobbie's stockings; and the pocket of Ted's new trousers—what a tear!

Fay was industriously plying needle and thread when her father came back. He looked tired, and she was not surprised when, kissing her good-night, he went on to his room.

"Reckon I'll read awhile; the rest'll do me good," he intimated.

And so, curbing her desire to tell him of her encounter with Douglas Lessiter, Fay got on with her work.

At last, the stitching and darning finished, Fay rose. She put everything away. But she did not herself think of bed just yet. For one thing, it was comparatively early, and daddy was still awake, as the light under his door clearly showed. And for another, she had just thought of something.



FAY'S heart jumped as she saw the cowboy standing in the doorway. He had come to examine the saddle which she was holding. But he mustn't see it—for her father's sake he mustn't see it!

he wished me good luck—for the race to-morrow?"

She watched him out of sight, then gave a little sigh.

"Ah, well, Starlight, let's be gettin' back. I'd sure like dad to hear about this."

And just as fast as she could, so that Starlight should not lack some practice for the all-important race on the morrow, she streaked back to the ranch.

As a matter of fact, her father was not there, and Fay, noticing that his hat was missing from behind the door, guessed at once where he had gone. Down on the range to have a chat with some of the boys.

"He's a bad lad to go ridin' so soon with that shoulder of his," she reflected, and then smiled. "But I'm glad. Shows he's not feelin' too bad, and it'll keep his mind off things for a while."

Fay herself had plenty to keep her busy. First of all, the long table to prepare for breakfast next morning. And that meant eleven places, for the seven cowboy hands had most of their meals with the family. By the time that task was finished, it was growing

Her saddle, beautifully silver-mounted, which she had won in a rodeo contest last year, ought to be at its brightest and best for the great day to-morrow. Well, it should be! She'd polish it now.

Out through the little porch she strode, across the yard, turning to gaze appreciatively at the near-by hills, whose misty cloak of blueness was now enhanced by the splendour of the Texan sunset, and so to the stables.

Her saddle, like her father's was kept on one of the wooden supports that protruded from the walls. Making a bee-line for it, past a heap of straw, Fay's high-heeled boot caught against something, and she stumbled. Recovering herself, she bent down. Curiously, she stared at a large, dark object poking out of the straw.

"A saddle!" she exclaimed. Stopping, she dragged it out, and then her eyes widened. "Daddy's!" she cried.

There was no mistaking her father's familiar and conspicuous saddle. It was known for miles around; envied, too. Of Mexican design, high-backed, and superior in the quality of the leather,

to the majority of saddles, it was adorned with a border of tiny silver studs.

"Why, the lazy old thing!" was Fay's first reaction to her discovery. "Just fancy throwing it down there like that! I've never—"

Her voice trailed away; her little smile froze, and then slowly changed to an expression of startled wonderment and shock. That mark just under the saddle-horn—

A bullet-hole! Someone had fired a bullet into daddy's saddle! When—where—oh, what did it mean? What could it mean? Only that daddy had not spent all his time away from the ranch this evening down on the Flying H range. He must have gone somewhere else.

But where—where?

Almost unconsciously Fay dropped to her knees on the straw. In a tumult of doubts and fears, she stared at the saddle, while the answer to her own questions blazed into her mind.

On Hampton's range—the Lazy T Range—again?

A soft footfall sounded behind her. A shadow fell across the floor at her side. Startled, she twisted round on one knee, the saddle still in her hands. And then a spasm of fresh shock took hold of her.

Regarding her from the stable door, hands on hips, a measuring, menacing look on his grizzled, sun-tanned face, was the foreman of the Lazy T outfit!

One Chance to Save Her Father!

"HUH! In here, are yuh?" the Texan drawled. Sharply he scanned the stable. "Yore dad anywhere around?"

Fay, disconcerted though she was, kept her wits. Behind her back she thrust the saddle into the straw, then got to her feet. She did not understand what all this was about, but she did realise two things with startling clarity. The unexpected visit of this man, Lew Tate, to the Flying H was in some way connected with the discovery she had just made; and daddy was in terrible danger!

"Oh, howdy?" she said as calmly as she could, and, stepping towards Tate, she carelessly brushed against the top of the straw.

She saw part of it topple; saw it fall over the saddle, completely covering that telltale object.

But her heart was pounding. Despite the way Tate lolled against the doorpost—nonchalant, almost indifferent—his attitude did not deceive her. She knew Tate. He wasn't usually like this. He had come here for a definite purpose. To examine her father's saddle?

At all costs, she must stall the man.

"Did you want me to get dad?" Fay offered amiably, though she had no intention of leaving the saddle in its present dangerous hiding-place.

"Aw, no need ter bother," Tate said, with a casual flick of his hand. He heaved himself from the doorpost and surveyed the stables appraisingly. "Nifty place yuh've got here, Miss Thornton," he remarked. "Gee! An' a swell bunch o' saddles, too!"

For a moment he regarded the row of saddles on the far wall, then turned to Fay. Fighting to appear quite undismayed, she faced him boldly. Saddles—significant, ominous word!

"I guess they're not a bad collection, Mr. Tate," she said.

"Talkin' o' saddles, Miss Thornton," he went on conversationally. "I was

jawin' to one o' our riders about mine. Not too pleased with it. An' the subject o' yore dad's saddle kinder cropped up—"

"My—my dad's?" said Fay.

She raised her eyebrows inquiringly, but deep in her heart was a gnawing fear. No need for Tate to try his bluff any longer. It was all too patent to her. He did want to see her father's saddle. He knew, or suspected, that bullet hole was there. And that bullet hole had some ominous significance.

"Sure, yore dad's," Tate went on before she could say anything more. "It's sorter famous round these parts. I've had my eye on it for quite a while, an' I reckon I'm keen on gettin' one like it. Mind if I have a squint at it, Miss Thornton? Wh-ere's he generally keep it? Over there?"

He moved over to a bench on which lay an assortment of odd saddles, bridles, and stirrups. Fay clenched her hands as she watched him. If she left him to his own devices it could only be a matter of seconds before he found the saddle.

And then a plan came to her. Turning, she dived out of the stable. As she tore across the yard to the corral, making as much noise as she could, she heard Tate give a furious yell.

ARE YOU A FILM FAN?

When you go to the pictures are you so familiar with the faces of your favourite artists that you know them without having to glance at their names flashed on the silver screen?

If so, you can turn the pleasure of your jaunts to the pictures into profit. Buy this week's PICTURE SHOW and enter for the fascinating competition that this popular 2d. film paper is running. They are publishing full faces and profiles of various film stars, and all you have to do is to pair them off—a really simple and enjoyable game for film lovers, and there are handsome cash prizes offered.

"Hi, you! Come back!"

But Fay, her face set resolutely, tore on. Starlight was in the corral. And hanging over one of the wooden poles was an ancient saddle nobody had any use for.

It was the work of a moment to clap that saddle on to Starlight's back, swiftly tighten one of the straps, and then, with a slap of her hand, as she lifted the barrier pole, send the pony galloping away.

As Starlight disappeared into the darkness Tate rushed up. He looked after the dimly seen retreating pony.

"Why, you—you little twister!" he barked; then, leaping for his horse, set off in frantic pursuit.

Back to the stables Fay raced, fished the saddle from under the straw, and, clambering up the ladder, concealed it up in the loft.

Barely had she descended and reached the yard again than Tate returned, leading Starlight, and nursing the ancient saddle under one arm.

"So that's the game—eh?" he snapped, as he sprang down. "Tryin' to make out your dad's saddle was on your horse. Waal, it didn't work. Now then!" He heaved the saddle to the ground and snatched at her arm. "Where is yore dad's saddle?"

"Let go of my arm!" Fay cried indignantly.

"Nothin' doin'!" Tate jeered.

But he was wrong. At that moment came the clippity-clop of horses' hoofs, faint from the distance, but rapidly coming nearer. The Flying H cowboys

Tiny Shaw & Co.—returning for the night.

With an exclamation of rage, Tate flung Fay away from him and sprang on to his horse, delivering an open threat before he galloped away.

"Waal, you did it this time, but I guess there'll be a different story after I've had a chat with th' sheriff. I'll get hold of that saddle, if I have to disguise as a pony meself!"

Then he was gone. Fay, trembling a little and very pale, knew a wonderful relief. Daddy was saved, thank goodness! But what did it all really mean?

She did not waste a moment, but unearched the saddle from the loft and sped back to the ranch-house with it, reaching the porch just as Tiny and the rest of the outfit streamed over the hill beside the corral.

She hurried indoors. She went straight to daddy, where he sat in bed. And she did not beat about the bush. Showing him the saddle, pointing to that hole under the horn, she said very quietly and trustingly and yet with undeniable firmness:

"How did you get that, daddy?"

"Why, honey?" He looked at her sharply. And when she had told him his face set. "So Tate's been here," he muttered. "An' I thought they'd no idea it was me. Yes, I've been on the Lazy T Range again, honey." He drew her close. "I was ridin' near the boundary wire, when I spotted a man. He was masked, I'm sure. I went after him, but he got away. As I was comin' back to our land some of Hampton's boys rode up. They fired. I don't think they recognised me; my hat was pulled too well down. But seems they'd a pretty shrewd idea who it was."

"They'll know for sure if ever they do see your saddle, daddy," Fay said worriedly. "They must have known it had been hit. That's why Tate came here, to make sure. An', daddy, he said he was going to speak to the sheriff. Supposing the sheriff comes here and demands to look at your saddle? On top of—the rumours about you, he wouldn't believe your story, and we couldn't refuse to show the saddle."

Her father shook his head.

"No. That'd be as good as admitting it, honey," he muttered.

"The only thing I can think of," Fay went on thoughtfully, and none too certainly, "is if you could get hold of another saddle just like this."

"Sure, that would do the trick!" he agreed. "But how can I get another when we've no dough, an' no one will allow us credit? 'Sides, I bought this kind in the Gulch. An' it cost nigh on fifty dollars. I jes' don't know what we can do," he ended helplessly.

But Fay did. There was one way to get sufficient money to ride in to Ainsworth, forty miles away, and buy another saddle exactly the same as this. The rodeo race. Now it had become absolutely imperative to win that race, for not only would it enable the little ranch to meet some of its more pressing obligations—it was the one thing which could save daddy from certain arrest!

"Daddy—the race!" she breathed, her eyes gleaming. "If I win that, the problem's solved." Oh, and I will win it, daddy—I will!"

EVERYTHING depends on Fay now—on the race. Even if she wins there is the all-vital saddle to be bought before any further action is taken against Mr. Thornton. You'll love next week's chapters of this colourful serial.

COMPLETE this week. Another delightful laughter-story featuring—



COUSIN GEORGE AND 'THE IMP'



Just Like the Imp!

"HURRAH, it's grand! It fits." Hetty Sonning, known as the Imp, twirled in front of the long mirror in her bed-room, admiring the pretty, blue summer frock which she was trying on for the first time since it had been altered at the shop.

Not every frock fits better after being altered than before, but this one did, and Hetty was pleased. In fact she was so delighted that she went hurrying out on to the landing to show her Cousin George.

Hetty's Cousin George, two years her senior and serious-minded in addition, was downstairs, making an early start for school. His eyes rounded in horror as he saw Hetty.

"What on earth—you're not going to school in that!" he gasped. "Hetty! Are you crazy?"

The Imp's joy faded a little, but she did not admit defeat.

"This is what I'm going to wear at the garden-party—not at school, George—"

"Cousin George," he said stiffly. "You must remember your place. However, this talk of garden-partying is premature."

Hetty gave a quick start and stared at him wonderingly. For the garden-party was to take place this afternoon, and only yesterday Aunt Miriam had given them two tickets.

"Premature—you mean too soon?" she said.

"That is what most people accept as being the meaning of the word," agreed Cousin George, in his cold, superior, big-brother tone. "Whether or not you go to the garden-party this afternoon depends entirely upon the marks you get for your homework."

Hetty could have been stunned with a feather. For until this minute she had taken it for a fact that she really was going to the garden-party, even if her homework scored no marks at all.

And as Hetty hadn't done her homework yet, she was hardly likely to win glowing praises for it.

Cousin George, smugly satisfied, departed.

With a sigh, Hetty looked out

through the windows of the landing at the sunny fields, the clear blue sky, and thought of the garden-party, the pleasant lawns, the side-shows, the tea, the ices, the fun—and her pretty, new frock.

But it was not to be. For when Cousin George spoke, lo! it was as the wisdom of many ancients, and his words as heavy as a ton. Behind him was the authority of his mother.

And Aunt Miriam and he agreed that Hetty had to be handled firmly, made to understand that work is what matters. She had to be uplifted—and Cousin George was the fellow to do it!

"Golly—and to think that it would be all right if only I had done that homework instead of playing ping-pong with Jilk!" she sighed.

At least, however, she did know that the French exercise was about twin sisters who were almost exactly alike.

Bossy but well-meaning Cousin George delivered two statements to the Imp: "You haven't got a double—and you're not going to the Garden Party." But the Imp proved him wrong—both times!

It was some help knowing that, even if she had not made a translation of the exercise, which was her homework task.

"A twin sister is just what I need," the Imp told herself.

Suddenly, as she made the sighing remark, she stiffened, and leaped in the air with a yell. Then she gave a burst of laughter and doubled up.

"Oh, ha, ha, ha!" laughed Hetty.

And she was still chuckling when she hurried off to school.

If only she could find a twin, she was saved. And already the Imp had a pretty good idea how to obtain a twin—to-day.

"WELL?" SAID Cousin George. It was dinner-time, and he had returned from school rather later than the Imp, because he had stayed

on to finish some work. Putting down his school books on the hall table he turned to her.

He spoke in a lofty manner, and looked down from his four inches superiority of height.

"Oh, Cousin George," said Hetty excitedly. "What do you think? I've got a double."

"A double?" he frowned. "A double what?"

"A double—someone so like me people mistake her for me," said the Imp breathlessly. "Isn't that exciting?"

Cousin George tossed his cap on to the hallstand, and closed the door.

"There are times, Hetty, when you talk utter twaddle," he said. "You don't seriously suggest that there is some unfortunate girl who resembles you as closely as that? Rubbish!"

"Oh, is it! Well, I bet you'd be

taken in, Cousin George," said Hetty. "Why, even Bob Biggs would. And Bob's clever."

A shade of annoyance crossed Cousin George's brow at that; for he disliked Bob Biggs, even though he had never met him. Naturally he hadn't, as Bob Biggs was an invention of Hetty's whom she always chose to compare him with Cousin George—to Bob's advantage and credit.

"I don't want to hear about Bob Biggs. It's a pity you can't admire someone really admirable," said George, a little peevish.

"Yes, Cousin George," said Hetty, an impish glimmer in her eye.

"However, we are not talking about this Bob Biggs," said Cousin George, purposely giving him the wrong name to show how little he mattered. "If you're suggesting that I should mistake your double for you, or vice-versa, you are quite wrong."

The Imp nodded.

"Oh, I don't suppose that you would, Cousin George," she admitted.

By IDA MELBOURNE

"Of course, there are certain differences. She's got red, rosy cheeks, and she wears glasses, and her hair is very dark—"

"In fact," said Cousin George, with a scoffing laugh, "she's just the opposite. But tell me—how many marks did you get for your French homework?"

The Imp shifted a little from one foot to the other.

"Well—er—none," she admitted, her eyes glimmering. "You see, we told her the truth. Jill and I were playing ping-pong and using the serve mademoiselle showed us. She's fearfully hot on ping-pong, and when we explained that we were playing ping-pong and forgot the time—"

Cousin George stared at her. "You mean, she let you off with that potty excuse? Phew!"

"Well, mademoiselle is awfully decent," Hetty said. "You see, I explained about going to the garden-party—"

Cousin George thumped his desk, a trick of his own headmaster's.

"Hetty! Enough fooling! You are not going to the garden-party. You are staying in."

The Imp folded her arms.

"Oh, I am, eh?" she asked. "I suppose you think I'll just stay in this room? If you want me to stay, you'll jolly well have to lock me in."

Cousin George accepted the challenge.

"Then I will lock you in!" he said grimly, "and give the key to Nellie. And you can do that French homework here and now, and I'll correct it. Bring me your book."

With a meekness that surprised him, the Imp handed over the book at exercise one hundred and twenty-four. As that was an earlier one for

which she had received high marks, she did not mind.

"And you'll really lock me in?" she asked.

"Yes—really," he said grimly.

And he swept from the room. Hetty, waiting only until the door was closed, glanced out of the window, and called softly to the man who was cleaning out the gutter round the roof.

"I say—be a sport—leave that ladder just beside this window while you're out to dinner," she said.

And in her hand a sixpence glinted. The man, always willing to earn sixpence, and not caring much where he left the ladder, shifted it along beside the window, and, climbing down it, took the sixpence gratefully.

Then Hetty went down to dinner and put on as much gloom as she could manage, glancing at her French book until corrected by Aunt Miriam. Putting the French book behind her, she asked Cousin George for the translation of one or two words, just to show interest.

No sooner was dinner over than Hetty hurried to her room. But it was not to study French; she had one or two things to pack in a small suitcase; and having packed them she slipped along to the Common-room and put them down beside her desk.

It was ten minutes later that Cousin George, dressed for the garden-party, looked into the Common-room and saw Hetty hard at work—at work, but in that new frock!

"Good!" he said, nodding approval. "I'm sorry about this, Hetty. But it will be a lesson to you. In future do your homework. I am locking the door, you understand, just to prevent accidents. But don't think you can slip out—I have guarded against that!"

"Yes, Cousin George," said Hetty.

"Does my frock look nice?"

"Not bad," he said kindly.

Out he went, locking the door carefully.

Five minutes passed, and then the Imp, suitcase in hand, climbed over the window-sill on to the ladder, going warily down.

Reaching the garden, she went down it to the field at the bottom and took the short cut across to the station, for the garden-party was being held in a nearby village.

In the seclusion of a small hollow, Hetty, breathing hard, took a mirror from her suitcase, and, resting it against a tree branch, dyed her cheeks a brighter pink, took out a dark wig she had borrowed from the dramatic society at school, a small hat that belonged to Jill's sister, and then a summery frock of her own which George had not yet seen.

"Ah, zo zo I am like ze Marcelle Arline—I am ze Marcelle Arline—and 'ow mooch like ze 'Etty Sonning. No?" she chuckled.

Padding her cheeks with the special stuff used in the dramatic society, the Imp made up her lips, darkened her eyebrows, and put on some lightly tinted glasses.

"At last—I am ze tweens!" she chuckled. "Zo I am ze double of myself. No. Yes."

Then she picked up her suitcase, into which she had put the new frock, stepped out into the lane, and walked away from the station—towards Cousin George!

But Oh! So Different!

Cousin GEORGE, strolling along, was beginning to feel that perhaps he had been a little over-strict.

He was sorry for Hetty. In fact, he was very fond of Hetty; but being no longer a youngster, he realised that work is important.

"It's up to me," he mused. "I've got to bring up Hetty. Her father's in India, my own dad's dead, and I'm the man of the family. I must be like a father to her—Hallo!"

He pulled up short, for a girl came towards him, carrying a suitcase. She walked five yards, tottered, put the case down, took it in the other hand, and tottered anew.

Cousin George, always gallant, stopped and lifted his cap.

"Pardon me," he said. "Can I be of any assistance?"

Not for a moment did he guess that he was wasting his gallantry on Hetty! Yet Hetty it was in very thin disguise.

"Ah, monsieur—how you are so kind!" she gasped. "You gif me ze handing help, no?"

"Helping hand," smiled Cousin George; and then he suddenly peered closely. "I say, you're very like my Cousin Hetty. In fact, but for the hair—"

Hetty drew up, snapped her fingers, and then waved her arms. It was a moment for which she was prepared. Drama was needed.

"Zo—always I am ze insult gifed!" she cried. "Pah! Zere is no ones like me—no! Is zere anozer Marcelle Arline? No!"

Cousin George recoiled before her fury.

"Er—h'm!" he said, colouring deeply. "Pardon, mademoiselle! Of course, you're not really like my Cousin Hetty at all—not really—"

A word from Bessie Bunter!

"I SUS-SAY, YOU GIG-GIRLS. . ."

I'm so excited. Th-th-the Editor has asked me tut-to tell you all about the other stories f-f-featuring me and—and Bib-Babs & Co. You know, the ones that app-pp—oh, dud-dear—now I've mum-made a big bu-blot. . . ."

From which point onwards Bessie's letter was indecipherable. But what she meant to say was that you can meet her—and all your Cliff House favourites—every month in the grand LONG story of their early adventures which appears in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY. This month's story—No. 637—is one of HILDA RICHARDS' Masterpieces. Don't fail to get it!



No. 637

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No. 636—"AT SCHOOL TO GUARD A MADCAP!" Specially written for this number by Ruth Maxwell.

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No. 639—"AN OUTCAST—ON MYSTERY'S TRAIL!" Which is simply packed with excitement.

The girl threw out her arms, and, to George's horror, embraced him and gave him a smacking kiss on the cheek.

"Zo kind!" she exclaimed. "So much ze grand chentleman's!"

Cousin George, his cheeks flaming like fire, tottered back, and gave a wild, anxious look up and down the road, in case this embrace had been noticed.

"Gosh—I—er—um—" he murmured. "So kind," said the girl. "But ze Eengleesh chentlemans he is magwonderful! And how—you show me way to ze station?"

Cousin George bowed acknowledgment of the compliment, and began to feel a few feet taller. Hetty had never admired him like this.

"The station? You are coming away from it," he said.

"Awayce?" the girl cried, and then clasped her hand to her chest and let out a theatrical wail of despair. "Oh—oh! I am wrong. I walk ze wrong way. Oh, what can I do? Ohoh!" she wailed.

It seemed easy to Cousin George—big, strong, self-reliant fellow that he was.

"Why, just turn round," he said. "There's the station." And he pointed to it.

It did not look like anything else, and it was only a few hundred yards away, so that really it was odd that the girl had been walking in the other direction; but Cousin George, who had a poor estimate of girlish mentality, was not surprised. And besides, was not this girl a foreigner?

"Zo, zat is ze station?" asked the Imp, in exaggerated surprise.

"Zat—I mean that is. Come—Je porterai votre baggage," said Cousin George, just to show that he could speak French.

Cousin George whipped up the bag, which was surprisingly light, and as he did so the Imp clasped her hands and loll'd her head on one side.

"Ah, how str-r-rong you are!" she cried.

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Cousin George, and swung the bag lightly in the air, changing it from one hand to the other with ease.

"Wonderfulls!" breathed Hetty.

And she nearly giggled as Cousin George, his chest stuck out, strode to the station.

Marching in, he halted at the booking-office.

"Where do you wish to go?" he said. "I go—to ze place—Wimstone," said Hetty.

"Really? That's funny! That's where I'm going," said Cousin George, while Hetty fumbled with a handbag.

"Two to Wimstone," said Cousin George, supposing that the Imp was groping for money.

He was wrong. As he took the tickets Hetty produced a small hanky, dabbed at her nose, and replaced it.

"Zank you," she beamed at him. "But you keep ze ticket. I lose him maybe."

Cousin George was far too gallant to mention the matter of the shilling for fares, as Hetty saw; but she had not finished with him yet.

Cousin George needed a lesson, and she happened to know that he was in funds. If he had to bring her up, she had to bring him up. There were times when he needed a lesson, too, and this was such an occasion.

"Get ces a first-class ticket?" she asked eagerly.

"Eh—no," said Cousin George.

"No?" said Hetty, and put one hand on her hip and tilted her head in disdain.



"HALLO, mother!" said Cousin George. "Meet Mademoiselle——" And he gestured towards the disguised Imp. But his mother had sharp eyes. "Gracious, so you brought Hetty, after all!" she exclaimed—and Hetty, fearing the game was up, groaned.

"Oh, I can soon change it!" said Cousin George, ashamed of having offered such an insult.

He rushed back to the booking-office, changed the tickets for an additional shilling, and returned to find the Imp fumbling in her bag again. But she wasn't looking for eighteen pence—only for a twenty-five centimes piece. It was one she had brought home from a holiday in France, and its value was less than a halfpenny.

"Zere!" she said to him, with a gracious smile, and took her ticket.

Cousin George looked at the twenty-five centimes piece in a sickly manner, and then at Mademoiselle Marcelle Arline.

"Th-this is a twenty five centimes piece," he faltered.

"No matter," said Marcelle airily. "You give me ze change later."

"Yes, but—" murmured George. "Er——"

And as Marcelle Arline gave him a haughty, lofty look, he frowned and said no more. But he pocketed the coin, and reckoned his loss at two shillings and elevenpence halfpenny.

When the train came in, George lifted the suitcase and bumped it into a first-class compartment.

"And your name, my friend?" asked Marcelle.

"Me? Mine?" asked George. "Er—George—George Sonning. I'm Hetty's cousin."

"Ah! Zat 'Etty!' cried Marcelle crossly. "You zink I am like 'er—no?"

George looked at her closely, but although he saw something very like Hetty's nose, expression and mouth, yet there was the obvious difference of the dark hair and brows, and, of course, the French accent and the clothes.

"A slight likeness," he admitted; "but as to being Hetty's double—that's just bosh!"

Hetty heaved a huge sigh of relief, and then, finding a newspaper on the seat beside her, and not wanting George to look at her too intently, she read the paper for the rest of the journey.

And behind that paper the Imp giggled; for unless something really

startling happened, careful Marcelle should manage to be taken to the garden-party.

Cousin George, clever, shrewd, and serious-minded though he was, had been duped and diddled. In his pocket-book were two tickets for the garden-party. And how could gallant Cousin George refuse one to Mademoiselle Marcelle Arline, when she most unfortunately had lost her own?

So when the train pulled into their station the Imp folded the newspaper and put it beside her. Now for it!

The train stopped, doors opened, and hurrying forward towards them came Aunt Miriam.

"George—there you are! Splendid! Did you think to bring that envelope I left on the table?" she asked anxiously.

"I did, mother. I guessed you had left it behind by mistake," said George dutifully, and then took hold of Hetty's arm. "Mother," he began, "meet——"

Hetty had already grabbed the paper, and was holding it in front of her. But Aunt Miriam had sharp eyes apparently.

"Good gracious!" she gasped. "You've brought Hetty, after all!"

Only the Telephone Did It!

"YOU'VE brought Hetty, after all!"

To the Imp those words came like the knell of doom. Aunt Miriam, with feminine intuition, had spotted the truth, then! Her keen, quick eyes in a flash had bowled out the impostor.

Hetty gave a hollow groan and lowered the paper.

"Oh golly!" she murmured softly.

She looked at Cousin George, but he did not give a yelp of horror, or any other sign of dismay.

"Hetty, mother? Oh, no, this is—er—Mademoiselle Marcelle Arline. My mother," he added to her.

Hetty stared at Aunt Miriam's blank, astonished face, and wanted to giggle with hysteria.

"Oh—er—bonjour, madame!" she said, with a little nod of the head. "How kind is ze son of you—so wonderful!"

It was the right line to adopt with Aunt Miriam.

"Oh, really? Er—dear me! Marcelle, Arline. But—but you are strangely like Hetty," frowned Aunt Miriam. "But for the hair and the glasses—"

Hetty took a desperate chance. "Ohoh! Again it is said!" she cried, in anger. "Zo!"

Hetty stood back in an attitude of righteous wrath, turning from Aunt Miriam, while George, in deep confusion, explained to his mother.

"Don't say she's like Hetty, mother," he begged. "It upsets her."

And then, seeing Marcelle leaving the station without her bag, he went charging after her, gallant to the last.

"Can I get you a cab?" he asked politely. "Til call one," he added.

"I go to ze garden-party!" said Marcelle.

Cousin George gave a start of surprise.

"The garden-party? No, really? That's odd! So am I!"

"Ah—wo go togeezzer!" said Marcelle, linking arms with him.

Cousin George looked back to his mother, who had halted by her car, just as the Imp hailed a taxicab, and hurried in, leaving him to follow.

"Er—she's going to the garden-party, too, mother!" George called.

Aunt Miriam strode up, a glint in her eyes.

"Indeed, George?" she said. "Well, I should really like to see Hetty and this girl together, side by side!"

Cousin George shrugged.

"Then you'd see the difference. But Hetty's in detention, doing French."

"Well," said his mother ominously, "I think that Hetty might reasonably go to the garden-party, George. In fact—she shall go!"

And, entering her car, she drove off.

George, puzzled, stepped into the taxi, having given the address of the garden-party.

"Wh-what did your mother say?" the Imp asked fretfully.

"Oh, she wants to see you and Hetty side by side!" frowned George.

"Against my wishes, I really think she is going back for Hetty."

Hetty gaped.

"Back for her? Back home?"

"Yes. To bring Hetty here."

The Imp did not speak. She could not! For it was as obvious as anything could be that even if Aunt Miriam had not seen through the little plot, she was harbouring strong suspicions.

And then, happening to glance down at her shoes, the Imp gasped. She was wearing a pair about which she and Aunt Miriam had argued—a smart pair which Aunt Miriam had said were too smart.

Aunt Miriam had recognised them—that was it!

Something had to be done, and done quickly. But what?

Then, intensified by the desperate need, Hetty's brain really worked.

"Stop—stop ze car! Make ze taxi go find your muzzer!" she cried.

George hesitated, even argued, and then, because Marcelle seemed likely to have more hysteria, he agreed, and told the taxi-driver to make for the main road.

They had only just turned from it, and, as Aunt Miriam never drove fast, it was only five minutes later that they caught up with her, and George, leaning out of the window, made her understand that she must stop.

"What shall I say?" he asked, puzzled.

"Zay—zay, zero is not ze need to trouble to go back. Zay—we shall telephone zat she come by ze train," said Marcelle. "Zen I will show you how I am not zo like her."

George stepped out of the car and gave the message.

"Oh! So she is willing to meet Hetty face to face?" his mother asked, surprised. "Dear me! Then can I be wrong? Is she really like her, and wearing shoes like hers? No! Surely not? But, all the same, we can telephone. I shall not rest until I have seen Hetty and this girl face to face!"

The taxi was turned round first as Aunt Miriam always had to drive on until she found a side street or side turning of some kind.

Consequently, George and Marcelle reached a telephone first.

George obtained the number, and gave Nellie, who answered, instructions to unlock Hetty's room and bring her to the telephone.

He waited, and Marcelle snatched the instrument.

"I talk wiz her!" she said excitedly.

And it was she who held the instrument when Nellie returned.

"The room's empty," she said.

"Ah zo. Mees Etty she ees to come to ze garden-party after all—zo? Zat is good," she added, when Nellie insisted that Hetty must already have gone.

George stood by waiting for his chance to speak, but Hetty kept the phone to herself.

"Zo I am cross, too!" she cried loudly, to hide the fact that Nellie had hooked up her instrument. "You are my doble—nevaire—nevaire—no, no—not so! You come by ze train here—to ze Wimbstone—zen we shall zee. What? You dare zay zuch—you dare

zay zuch. Bad girl! Bab! Bah!"

And she worked herself into a fine frenzy.

Then bang! went the instrument back on to its hooks.

"You've rung off?" said Cousin George, surprised.

"Zo! I would not spik longer with her!" she cried. "We go to ze station to wait for her."

They went to the station, and Cousin George bought two platform tickets.

But no sooner was Marcelle on the station that she remembered that there was an urgent telegram she must send.

Cousin George offered to send it. It was a simple message, and he proudly wrote it down in what seemed a very odd language.

"Zah wagnitch fulard munchi—Marcelle" And it was addressed to somewhere in Moscow.

Cousin George hurried off to dispatch it, and Hetty scurried into the ladies' room to change.

And although Cousin George returned and hunted for her, the Imp did not reappear until the next train from their home station came in. And then, dressed as herself, she mingled with the passengers until George spotted her.

"Hetty, where's Marcelle?" he asked.

"Marcelle?" said Hetty innocently. "That awful girl who spoke on the telephone?"

Aunt Miriam arrived, and looked Hetty over in some surprise.

"Where is this French girl?"

"Hetty was rude to her, mother," said George. "Insulted her on the phone!"

"No more than she insulted me!" said Hetty firmly. "I've a right to stand up for myself."

Aunt Miriam, conscious that various amused passengers were staring, interrupted.

"If Hetty has annoyed the girl, it is what one might expect; but I cannot say that I liked the look of that French girl, and I am glad that she has gone. No doubt she was rude to Hetty!"

And to George's surprise, his mother seemed quite relieved that the girl had gone. She was satisfied that since Hetty and the girl had been rude to one another there must be two of them. And that was all she wanted to know.

For almost the first time, Aunt Miriam found things to say in Hetty's favour. But Cousin George looked on sulkily.

It was a magnificent garden-party, with dancing on the lawn, sideshows, tea, ices; and Hetty, wearing her new frock, loved every moment of it. Even Cousin George brightened at the end.

"Quite good!" he admitted, as they sat in the back of his mother's car while she and a friend chattered in front.

"Magwonderful," agreed Hetty. "Zo good, oui?"

Cousin George nearly shot up to the roof. Then he goggled at Hetty.

"Wh-what did you say?" he asked.

"Jolly good show!" answered Hetty, her eyes glimmering.

Cousin George, a deep frown mantling his brow, let it go at that. But at the back of his mind suspicions un- easily dawned; suspicions which, because he did not want to believe them, he pushed out of his mind for ever.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

GET ready to welcome Cousin George and The Imp once again next week, won't you? They're more delightful than ever.

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