"THE OUTCAST PLAYS A PART!"

Grand LONG COMPLETE story of Cliff House School inside.

THE SCHOOLGIRL

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Incorporating "SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"

"THEY MUSTN'T FIND ME HERE!"

At all costs Christine had got to keep her secret from Babs & Co.

See this week's fine story of the Cliff House Chums.

The concluding story of that magnificent Cliff House series featuring Barbara Redfern and hot-tempered Christine Wilmer.

The OUTCAST

No Good to Anyone!

"HERE they are!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Cliff House!"

"See the conquering heroes come—whoops! Clear the way, girls!" And Jean Cartwright, the tall athletic Scots member of Cliff House's Fourth Form, enthusiastically pushed a way among the crowd of girls who thronged the school gates. "Now give them a real old rousing cheer. Hip, hip——"

"Hurrah!" swelled a deafening chorus.

"Who's won the semi-final of the school tennis championship?"

"We have! Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!"

"And who do we thank for it?"

"Clara Trevlyn! Clara, Clara, Clara! Hurrah!"

Thunderous the shout then. Excitedly hats and handkerchiefs fluttered in the air. And slowly, through the great throng of girls gathered in the quadrangle, the open car which had brought the Cliff House junior tennis team from Friardale Station threaded its way.

Clara Trevlyn, the Tomboy captain of junior games, red-faced and bright-eyed, stood up in its centre to wave cheerfully at her admirers. Leila Carroll, the American junior, was grinning all over her face as she bowed and bobbed from right to left. Peggy Preston, the third member of the victorious team, smiled shyly. But Mabel Lynn, the fourth member, her golden hair sparkling in the light of the afternoon sun, was looking anxiously around her.

"Clara, Clara, Clara!" yelled the crowd. "Clara, speech——"

"Oh, my hat!" And as the car came to a standstill in the drive just outside the tuckshop, Clara laughed again. But it was noticeable that she, too, flashed a swift look round the crowd as she mounted one of the steps. "All right. I'm not much of a hand at this sort of thing, though. Thanks for the reception. We won this afternoon——"

"Good old Cliff House!"

"But," Clara said, and her face was just a little more serious then, "it was touch and go, and for once luck was with us. If it hadn't been that one of the Kenmarsh players hurt her hand there might have been a different tale to tell. Anyway, there it is. We're booked now to meet Whitechester for the cup in the final."

"Hurrah!"

More cheers; more laughs. The crowd, excited by the victory, was in rare good humour. The good fortune which had attended the achievement of victory meant nothing in the face of the accomplishment itself. Wildly they surged towards the car. As Clara opened the door to step down she was caught in a whirling crowd and jammed, her feet still off the ground. Bessie Bunter, on the fringe of the crowd, set up a shrill treble.

"I sus-say, you girls, what about standing the team treat, you know?"

"Good idea!"

"Yes, rather, isn't it?" Bessie simpered. "Come on! Tuckshop, everybody! I'll go first and give the orders."

"Hurrah!"

A surge was made towards the tuckshop. Jostling and laughing, the girls crowded together. Happy and excited, that scene. But there were two girls who did not join in—two, looking rather envious and aloof, who stood a little way apart from the cheering

Treated as an outcast, Christine Wilmer has but one friend in the whole school—Barbara Redfern, who, through her loyalty, has lost the Fourth Form captaincy. Babs' faith in her is Christine's one consolation, and yet, amazingly enough, she suddenly turns upon Babs, scorns her friendship, and behaves just like the stormy "Temper" of old!

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BABS PLAYS A PART!

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. Laidler

throng. One was a girl with a pretty, though rather over-shadowed, face, crowned by a mass of chestnut curls; the other, slightly taller, was biting her lip. The first girl's name was Barbara Redfern, the suspended captain of the Cliff House Junior School; the other was her friend, Christine Wilmer.

Christine's face, at this moment, expressed the bitterness she felt. She flung a sideways glance at Barbara.

"Penny for 'em, Babs!" she said.

"Not worth it," said Babs, smiling.

"No?" Christine looked at her. Her face was a little grim all at once. "Not nice, is it, when you think that you ought to have been one of that victorious team? Not nice, when it was luck more than good play which gave Cliff House the game? But it wouldn't have been luck, Babs, if you'd been playing—and you ought to have been playing; you jolly well would have been playing if it hadn't been for me!"

"Christine!" Babs said warningly.

"Oh stuff!" Christine shrugged. "Why the dickens don't you pitch me overboard? It's only my influence that's got you where you are at present."

Babs gazed at her steadily; but her thoughts, rather longingly, were on the shouting crowd now filling the tuckshop to overflowing.

"Christine," she said, "must we go over all that again? I've told you—I'm sticking to you. Never mind. Of course I'd like to have played in the team, and so would you; but the team has come through without us, so why worry?"

"But," Christine retorted, "they won't come through without you in the final, Babs. Whitechester are the hardest nut in the tournament."

Babs shook her head. Again she gazed at the crowd. Perhaps there was just a little bitterness in her own face then. She, who a week ago had been their leader, was now ignored almost as if she did not exist. She turned restlessly.

"Shall—shall we go?" she asked, in a stifled voice.

"Babs—Babs!" It was a shout from the crowd. Babs stopped and stared, and for a moment a flash of gladness illuminated her features as she saw Mabel Lynn running towards her. "Babs!" gasped Mabel. She paused a moment as she saw Christine, and then, biting her lip, looked at Babs. "Babs, can I have a word with you?" she asked.

"Certainly you can," Christine replied. "I'm off, anyway."

And, without waiting for more, she strode towards the school. Mabs shook her head.

"Oh Babs," she gulped, "Babs I—I do miss you. It—it was beastly, somehow, playing there—in your place. I—I did my best, Babs, but my best wasn't half as good as yours would have been. If you don't play in the final goodness knows what we shall do!"

Babs shrugged.

"Well, they've only got to ask me," she said.

"But what's the good of asking you when you're gated?" Mabs asked wearily. "What's the good of asking you when——" And she paused. With eyes full of trouble she looked at the rapidly retreating back of Christine. "Oh, Babs, what is the matter with you?" she asked anxiously. "Why do you still get the Form's back up by chumming with a girl like Christine Wilmer? You know, Babs, if you gave her up all the Form would be at your feet in a moment, and—and I do believe, too, that Miss Bullivant would give you back your captaincy. Please, Babs, don't—don't look at me like that!" Mabs pleaded. "I'm only saying this for your own good. Come to the tuckshop," she urged.

Babs hesitated. She looked towards Christine again. Perhaps, just for a moment, her heart did yearn for that old company which had so aloofly withheld itself from her during the last week. Despite the friendship of Christine, whose cause she had so loyally championed, Babs had missed the old cheeriness, the old chumminess; and there could be no disloyalty to Christine in congratulating Clara.

Not unwillingly she allowed herself to be led; never noticing that Christine had turned, and, with rather a queer expression on her face, was witnessing the little scene. There was a momentary silence in the crowded tuckshop as she appeared. Then from Lydia Crossendale, the snob of the Fourth, went up a titter:

"Whoopsie! Here's our dear little Barbara without her sheet anchor!

What's happened to the outcast, Barbara?"

Babs threw her a look of scorn, but before she could speak——

"Babs!" Clara cried. "Babs, I say, come in. I'm just talking about you. Here, have a lemonade. Thanks for the congratters, but now let's get down to business. If we're going to win that final, we've just got to have you in the team."

"And Christine?" Babs asked.

"Christine?"

"Well," Babs said steadily, "we all know Christine's the best tennis player in the school. What about her?"

Clara's face darkened.

"We all know Christine is the best player in the school, and we know"—a little savagely—"that we can't rely on her. Every time we've given her a chance so far, she's allowed her beastly temper to step in and spoil things, and—well, blow Christine! She's just not in the reckoning. But, Babs, we do want you. Will you play if I put you in the team?"

Babs paused. There came a little murmur from the crowd. She saw Mabs' face, earnest, glowing, appealing—Mabs who, although she would lose her place in the team, was earnestly nodding to her to accept. She saw Bessie's big, mournful eyes. She saw the faces of the other girls.

And she read there that old undying loyalty, that friendship, never far below the surface, which one word from her would have called into fresh and vibrant life again.

They did not dislike her, in spite of her friendship for the girl they all hated—Christine Wilmer—Christine, the girl with the uncontrollable temper who, at this moment, was under the shadow of expulsion, only waiting that sentence to be confirmed when Miss Primrose and Miss Charmant returned to the school.

"Well?" Clara demanded.

There was a silence. Babs flushed. Play in the final! Help Cliff House to win that match! Only one thing better than that would she like—and that would be for Christine to play in the final with her, but that, obviously, was utterly out of the question.

"But—but I'm gated," she said.

"Through Christine!" sneered Freda Ferriers.

"Pipe down, Ferret," Clara sniffed. "Never mind the gating, Babs. I'll get Dulcia Fairbrother and Miss Keys"—naming the school games captain and the games mistress—"to talk to the Bull about that. If I can fix that, Babs, will you play?"

"Well, yes."

"And, girlie, shall we need you?" Leila Carroll gurgled. "Good old Babsies! Aunty Jones, another squash for Babs, please. Sure, this is scrumptuous. Just like old times, what?"

Babs laughed, Bessie beamed, Clara grinned, and Mabs relievedly sighed as though she had passed through some ordeal. All was well, it seemed, once more. For if Babs had felt neglected and lonely during this past week of her suspension, her chums had not been feeling happy, either.

Meanwhile, Christine, making her way to Study No. 13 in the Fourth Form corridor, was shaking her head. She had marked that wistful, moody expression on the face of Babs when the team had arrived. Oh, it was cruel! It was wicked. Babs should be happy! Babs deserved to be happy.

But Babs, in the present circumstances, could never be happy while she stuck to her.

"But what," Christine muttered, "oh, what can I do—the Outcast?"

She laughed shortly. The Outcast—yes. That was what they called her. That was the reputation she had earned. Well, she deserved it perhaps—at least, she had deserved it until this last week. It seemed now, however, that the stigma would stick as long as she remained at Cliff House.

In the Lower Fifth, from which Form she had been relegated, she had been known as "Temper" Wilmer. The title was deserved. Temper Wilmer she always had been since she came to Cliff House, and that temper had been her undoing. With Babs' help and under Babs' control, she had been making tremendous efforts to fight it, but there were occasions when it would still come uppermost, and because of that the Form refused to believe in her reformation, had stigmatised old Babs for standing by her. They had accused her of burning down the pavilion out of spite; they accused her of trying to throw away the game in the second round of the tournament in which she had been given her chance.

Christine laughed sharply.

If they knew——

If they knew that the careless hand which had thrown into the waste-bin the match which had resulted in the pavilion going up in flames, was Doris Redfern's, Barbara's younger sister, of the Third Form. If they knew that she had played such a bad game in the second round of the tournament because she was too proud to tell Babs that in doing her some small good turn she had hurt herself. Only Dr. Longmore, the school doctor, knew about her wrist.

But if they knew——

"If they did," Christine mused, "they wouldn't believe. I'm just the Outcast—the outsider. And the pauper, too, now that the pater's lost all his money. Well, blow them! I can get on without them. But Babs can't. Babs and they belong to each other. I'm just standing in Babs' way. If only," Christine mused, "if only I could make Babs give me up."

But saying that, she winced. For in that moment she realised more fiercely than she had ever realised before, that she did not want Babs to give her up. Babs was her friend—and such a fine, loyal friend at that. No. If Babs gave her up it would break her heart. The one thing that made life worth living at Cliff House was that fine friendship of Babs; the one thing that made effort worth while was Babs' comforting, inspiring influence.

And yet, all the time, she was dragging Babs down and down and down. She was, in very truth, a Jonah of a friend.

——

For Babs' Sake!

"JOLLY nice! Yum! Pass Babs the bread, Bessie."

"Babs, have another cup of tea?"

"Let me help you to another muffin."

Barbara Redfern laughed. A cheery laugh—a ringing laugh. For the first time in a week she was thoroughly enjoying herself.

Once again, seated among the old happy circle of her truest chums—Mabs, Bessie, Clara, Leila, Marjorie Hazeldene, and Janet Jordan—all worries were forgotten. Even Christine had for the moment receded to the background of Babs' mind, though, to be sure, Christine always had some place in that mind these days.

The scene was Study No. 7—Clara's study—and the occasion a rather belated tea an hour after the return of the tennis conquerors from Kenmarsh School.

During that particular meal, at least, there was no shadowing cloud. The chums, determined to make the most of Babs' return to the fold, refrained from mentioning the differences of the past. More than that, Clara had already spoken to Dulcia and Miss Keys, and, having got their assurances that they would talk to Miss Bullivant, the acting headmistress, on the first possible occasion, was looking into the future with rosy spectacles.

True, Babs had been to see Christine, but Christine, occupied in grinding out lines, had told her very earnestly to go away and enjoy herself.

So all was happiness in Study No. 7. The talk, of course, was mainly of tennis. All anxieties that Clara might have entertained about the final were now swept away. To herself Clara admitted that an even better choice for the team would have been Christine, who the junior champion of the Southern England Schools, was shaping like a future Wightman Cup player, when she remembered to control her temper. But very deliberately Clara kept Christine's name out of the conversation.

"Well," Clara said, sighing in content, "that was something like that was. Old times again, eh, Babs?"

Babs laughed.

"Blessed if I know how we ever came to get at cross purposes at all, you know!" Clara went on, frowning. "It's all so dashed silly when you come to think about it!"

"Well, we've never really quarrelled, have we?" Babs asked.

"No; that's so." But Clara frowned "And we'd never even have had a tiff in the first place, if it hadn't been for Christine—ahem! The only thing now, old Babs, is to get you back the captaincy. But—— Oh, my hat, Babs, I do wish—— Well, you know——"

"You mean about my friendship with Christine?"

"Yes."

Christine Wilmer, on her way to Miss Bullivant's study with her lines, heard her name, and paused.

"Clara, please," Babs said. "I'm sorry. I know you'd like me to give up Christine, but I can't. I know you don't believe in her reformation, but I do. I've been with her rather a lot this last week, and—well, whether you believe it or not, I feel that it's come to stay. Some day I hope she'll prove it to you——"

A little silence. Clara sniffed sceptically.

"So please," Babs begged earnestly, "don't let's talk about that any more. I've promised Christine I'll stand by her. While I know she's trying hard, I will stand by her; but that needn't make any difference to us. Let's keep Christine out of the conversation, please."

Christine, outside the door, heard that. She clenched her hands. Dear, loyal Babs!

She sighed a little. Rather brooding were her eyes as she went on down the corridor. Captain of the Lower School was Babs' real position, contestant for the tennis final her undisputed right. And yet Babs, by her friendship with her, had sacrificed all those things.

She reached Miss Bullivant's door, slightly ajar, and paused again as she raised a hand to knock. This time it was Barbara's name she heard.

It was Miss Key's speaking.

"And I am sure, Miss Bullivant, if you will only give Barbara a chance,

you will not be sorry. You have not had a bad report about her for several days, have you? And I really do assure you that Cliff House will have no hope of winning this final without her. I know you put the discipline of the school before its games—and rightly—but this, Miss Bullivant, means a very great deal to the school."

A pause. Then Miss Bullivant spoke:

"Were it not for one factor, I should have no hesitation in acceding to your request, Miss Keys. The factor, as you know, is Barbara's friendship for the girl, Christine Wilmer. Christine's record is a bad one, both in the Lower Fifth and the Fourth. She is under sentence of expulsion. Since Barbara Redfern's friendship with Christine, she has been an entirely different girl. The only impression to be drawn from that is that Barbara has fallen under the evil influence which Christine unquestionably exerts."

Christine clenched her hands.

"But on an occasion like this," Miss Keys said feebly, "couldn't you—couldn't you just stretch a point?"

"Well," Miss Bullivant said, "taking all the circumstances into consideration, I am prepared to make an experiment. If Barbara wants the honour of playing in the team, she must earn it. You may tell her so from me. I will leave my decision until Friday. It will all depend upon her conduct in the meantime. If I decide that her conduct merits her playing in the team, I shall, in all probability, return to her her captaincy at the same time. I do not believe in——"

Christine waited to hear no more. With her presence still undetected, she crept off down the corridor. If her face had been worried before, it was haggard then. More and more bitterly was it being forced home upon her—she was the girl who stood in Babs' way; she the girl who intruded between Babs and her happiness; her chance of playing for the school; her chance of retrieving her captaincy.

While Babs still had anything to do with her, she would know none of those joys.

Well, there was only one thing for it. Babs must give her up.

Yes, but how? And then suddenly she paused, with the strangest of expressions on her face, as she remembered the words she had overheard Babs use in Study No. 7: "While I know she's trying hard I will stand by her!"

Christine caught in her breath. Supposing Babs was suddenly made to feel that she was not trying hard? Supposing she went back to her old bad ways! Would Babs stand by her then?

A strange flame lit in Christine's eyes. Still pondering, she strolled out of the school. Towards the gate she went, thinking deeply, furiously. And then suddenly she looked up with a start as a voice fell upon her ears.

"Please—please, Miss——"

Christine was quite surprised that she had reached the gates. Outside those gates, just beyond the porter's lodge, was a girl. It was a girl of about eighteen, neatly though cheaply dressed, rather pale-faced, and with a wealth of yearning in her eyes.

Christine smiled. Only once had she met Judy Snaith, of Friardale—and that in Babs' company. But she knew all about Judy Snaith.

For here was a girl whom Babs had befriended in the past. A poor, hard-working, and very intelligent girl, whose frequently ill mother was a constant source of worry and anxiety to her. Babs was frightfully fond of Judy, and in the past had done much to help her.

"Oh, Miss Wilmer, is—is Barbara about?" Judy asked hesitantly.

"Anything wrong?" Christine asked keenly.

"Well, not—not wrong, but—— Oh dear!" And Judy bit her lip. "I hate to ask Barbara after all she's done for me, but she made me promise if ever I was in difficulties that I'd come to her. And—and I am in a difficulty—a dreadful difficulty," she added.

"Oh!" Christine eyed her. She was thinking suddenly. This girl was a friend of Babs. She wanted Babs to help her. Surely there was something she could do, too, for a friend of Babs? "Come into the tuckshop and tell me about it," she said.

Judy, gulping, allowed Christine to lead her away. The tuckshop, fortunately, was empty. Christine, with her last sixpence—goodness knows where the next would come from—bought a lemonade for each of them, and then ordered Judy to tell her mission. It did not take long.

Judy, apparently, was out of work; her mother still ill. At the local night school, studying hard to fit herself for a better position in life, she had recently taken up shorthand and typing; but, though she was good at shorthand, she had not got a great deal of speed in her typing. In desperation she had applied for the vacant situation of secretary to Miss Phillipa Fortescue, the famous authoress, who lived in Courtfield. Miss Fortescue, as a sort of trial, had given her an eighty-thousand-word manuscript to type by Saturday. The delivery of that manuscript on time, and the neatness and accuracy of the typing, were to be the deciding factors in her application for the post.

Christine looked keen.

"And you're doing this at home?" she asked.

"Yes. You see, I—I've hired a typewriter. And Babs—well, Babs is such a good typist. I wondered if she'd help me."

"Well," Christine said, "listen to me. I don't think, if I were you, that I'd ask Babs. You see, she's up to her neck in things at the moment—practising for the tennis final, attending to school things, and everything. Apart from that, she's gated, which means that she can't get out without getting into trouble."

"Oh, I wouldn't have her risk that!" Judy said.

Nor would Christine. She knew that if Judy asked Babs to help Babs would agree. She'd break detention and land into worse trouble than ever. No, Christine decided, Babs mustn't do that. Babs mustn't even know about this.

"Listen!" Christine said, her eyes beginning to shine. "I can type—as well and as fast as Babs, if not better. I know old Babs would move heaven and earth to help you. She's my greatest friend, and I do feel that all Babs' friends ought to help each other. I've nothing to do, and, apart from that, I'm fond of typing. Would you let me do the job—for Babs?"

"Oh, thank you——"

Christine laughed.

"Then we can start now," she declared. "But just one stipulation though, Judy. Say nothing—absolutely nothing—about this to Barbara. I wouldn't like her to feel that I'm taking on a job she ought to be doing. Is that agreed?"

"Oh, Christine, of course!"

"Right! Then let's go!" Christine said.

With a smile on her lips, she rose. And then, remembering suddenly that she was gated, she broke into a laugh, which rather surprised Christine.

"Come on!" she said, and, heedless of the imposition she left lying on the tuckshop table, strolled off down the drive.

"IF only Barbara were rid of the influence of this girl she would be a credit to the school again," Miss Bullivant was saying. Christine stopped, hand to her cheek. They were discussing her—saying that she was dragging Babs down.

"Leave Me Alone!"

"AND you understand, Barbara?" Miss Bullivant said.

Babs, almost breathless with delight, gulped.

"Yes."

"Very well. The result remains with you," Miss Bullivant went on. "From now on you are free. Whether I decide to give you permission to be absent from Cliff House on Saturday to play in the final rests upon your conduct during the week. You may go."

And Babs, almost dancing with glee, went, to be pounced on by anxious Clara & Co., who were waiting in the corridor.

"Babs, what did she say?"

"Are you going to play?"

Babs laughed.

"She says I'm free," she said—"free from gatings, free to practise! She won't let me know until Friday whether she'll give me permission to travel with the tennis team; but that's going to be all right, too. Where's Christine?"

"Christine?" Clara stared. "Surely you're not going——"

"I want to see Christine," Babs replied, "because I'm going to get Christine to give me some extra coaching."

And, her heart light and happy, Babs skipped away. She had her chance, and through that chance, perhaps, she could do much to bring Christine back into favour. Christine should coach her—and what a wonderful coach Christine was! Even girls who were bitter against Christine could hardly be hostile towards a girl who was helping to train a member of the cherished tennis four.

Excitedly she burst into Study No. 13. She laughed.

"Christine darling, guess——"

And she stopped; she frowned. Christine was not there.

"Oh!" Babs said, and drew the door to behind her.

Hurrying on, she looked into the Common-room.

"Anybody seen Christine?" she asked.

There came a chorus of grunts. Babs, grim-faced, went out.

She looked in the music-room. No Christine there. Nor in the library, nor in the gym. Coming out of the gym she caught sight of her own Third Form sister, Doris. Doris was not looking very happy.

"Hallo, kid, seen Christine?"

"Christine?" Doris paused. "Yes, I saw her half an hour ago. She—she was going out——"

"Out!" Babs cried.

"With—with some other girl—a village girl I think. I only saw her back view from here. Oh, Babs, she's breaking bounds again!" Doris said anxiously. "You'll try—try to keep it from the Bull, won't you? She—she might only have gone down the road for something."

But Babs shook her head. She was feeling just a little resentful, just a little disappointed. Christine had deliberately gone out of bounds; deliberately broken her promise. She entered Big Hall. Immediately Bessie turned upon her.

"Hallo, Babs. I sus-say, there's a letter for you."

And Bessie eagerly held forward an envelope.

Babs started as she examined the inscription, recognising at once the handwriting of Miss Charmant, the adored mistress of the Fourth Form, who was at present attending a conference with Miss Primrose, in London.

Preferring to read it alone, she put the letter in her pocket. A few days ago she had written to Miss Charmant—who, having faith in Christine, had specially asked her to keep an eye on her while she was away—explaining exactly what had happened to Christine, and asking her to do her best to persuade Miss Primrose not to expel her on her return. Not until she reached Study No. 4, which she shared with Bessie and Mabs, did she open it. And then, reading it, her face overshadowed.

"I do thank you, Babs, for all you have done for Christine, and, of course, I understand perfectly," Miss Charmant had written. "Though Miss Primrose has already received a report from Miss Bullivant, I have persuaded her not to make up her mind until she has seen Christine, and I do hope, with your help, that we shall be able to avoid the expulsion which now seems to threaten her. I fancy there is a good chance of that, but I do hope, in the meantime, that Christine will not do anything which will aggravate the already serious position. Please, please, Barbara, do try to keep her out of mischief."

Babs bit her lip as she re-read that last passage. Keep Christine out of mischief! Wasn't that exactly what she had been doing all this last week? And now Christine had deliberately broken out of school bounds. Was that the way to avoid expulsion?

Her ruminations were interrupted by a knock at the door. Miss Bullivant peered in.

"Oh, Barbara, do you know where Christine is?"

Babs jumped.

"Nun-no, Miss Bullivant."

"I sincerely hope," Miss Bullivant said, with some asperity, "that she is not out of school bounds. Nobody seems to have seen her for the last hour. I gave express instructions that she was to deliver her lines by six-thirty. She has not done so. Please try to find her, Barbara."

Babs nodded. But her heart was anxious as she rose. Christine! Christine! What was the matter with the girl? Why, knowing that Miss Bullivant was watching her every action as a cat watches a mouse, should she do this thing?

Babs left the school. As she emerged into the quadrangle, Clara's stentorian hail brought her to a halt.

"Whoops, Babs! Cheers! I've fixed up a friendly match with the Lower Fifth for Wednesday—but what's the matter, old thing? Lost something?"

"It—it's Christine," Babs said unsteadily. "She's gone out."

"Well," Clara shrugged, "what do you expect? Babs, don't forget the practice."

And with a cheery wave of her hand she sped off. Babs, more slowly, wandered on towards the gates. She gasped a little as she looked at the school clock. Twenty past seven. In ten minutes call-over bell would sound.

At the gate she paused, gazing up and down the road. And then she stiffened.

"Christine!" she cried.

For Christine was hurrying towards the school from the direction of Friardale.

"Oh!" she said, as Babs ran to meet her.

"Christine! Where have you been?"

"Oh, out!" Christine said offhandedly.

"But you know you're gated?"

"Well?" Christine turned her head away for a moment. Then she faced Babs. She laughed—and the laugh caused Babs to wince, for it was not the laugh she expected from Christine. It was that old, dare-devil, don't-care laugh, with a note of mockery in it. "Oh rats!" she said roughly. "Why the dickens shouldn't I go out if I want to?"

Babs stared at her in amazement.

Was this the girl who, during this last week, had been her closest friend; who, in spite of all the circumstances against her, had tried so hard, so nobly, to conform to the right standards? This was the old, the uncontrollable Christine, the girl who had set the school by the ears and brought herself to the verge of expulsion.

"Christine, the Bull's looking for you."

"Well, let her."

Babs compressed her lips. In silence they swung along. The school gates were reached, and then both stopped. For emerging from the garage near by came Miss Bullivant.

"Christine," she cried sharply, "you have been out!"

"Yes," Christine said calmly.

"I see. Open defiance once again." Miss Bullivant's lips compressed. "And apart from breaking bounds, you have also failed to give in your lines. Where are they?

"Oh!" Christine gave a start. "Oh!" she said. "I—I left those in the tuckshop, Miss Bullivant."

"The tuckshop," Miss Bullivant flintily retorted, "is no place to deliver lines. You will take another fifty for not delivering them on time, and just to make sure you are telling the truth, I will inquire for them myself. You will also do special detention for being out of bounds. Apart from that," Miss Bullivant rumbled, "I shall put this offence upon your already black record sheet for presentation to Miss Primrose when she comes back. You may go."

Christine shrugged. Babs, watching her, saw her face turn just a trifle pale, but there was nothing in Christine's outward attitude to suggest that she cared one jot. Rather contemptuously she turned on her heel; with rapid strides reached the school, and mounted the steps.

"Christine——" Babs panted, running after her.

Into Big Hall Christine raced. Up the stairs she went. She fairly sprinted along the corridor, and reaching her study slammed the door.

Babs set her lips. Violently she flung the door open. Panting, she faced the Outcast.

"Christine!" she cried.

Christine clenched her hands.

"Oh, leave me alone!"

"I'm not going to leave you alone," Babs said. Her eyes were steely now. "I've stood by you. I still will stand by you if you face up and play the game. But it's not playing the game to go off the deep end like this. And it's not, Christine, playing the game to break your promise to me."

Christine winced.

"Well, you know what you can do!" she returned sulkily.

"Christine, you don't mean that——"

"Don't I?" Christine stood up. She faced her, but again Babs had an impression she was making an effort. "All right, then, listen to me," she said. "I'll tell you the truth. I'm sick of this school, Barbara Redfern! I'm sick of being lined, gated, and sneered at. I—I'm sick, if you want to know, of playing the little goody-goody to you!"

Babs turned quite pale.

"And supposing," she asked, "there's still a chance of you not being expelled?"

"Not——" Christine began, her eyes widening.

"Not—yes," Babs nodded. "Miss Charmant has written to me, saying that if you only behave yourself, Christine, she may persuade Miss Primrose to let you off. Are you going to sacrifice that hope,"

Christine all at once looked a little shaken. But in a moment the old reckless smile was back on her lips.

"Why not?" she asked. "Oh rats! I'm not wanted here; I don't want to be here! I'd rather be expelled, anyway, than sticking on with all your frostbitten pals. I tell you I'm sick—yes, sick of everything! Sick of your pals, this rotten school, sick of—of you! Get out! Leave me alone! I'm going my own way! I'm going to do what I like! I—I—— Will you go?" she blazed.

Babs, with a look of contempt, turned heavily towards the door. Without another word, she went out. Christine stood quivering, shaking, watching as the door closed upon her. Then for a moment she swayed on her feet. Almost like a girl blinded she groped her way to the armchair. Slowly she sank into it. And then suddenly, quiveringly, she put her face in her hands.

The silence which had descended upon Study No. 13 was disturbed by a sob which came straight from the innermost depths of a girl's broken heart.

The Outcast's Fault!

MABEL LYNN sighed, looked across the table of Study No. 4 at the shadowed, downbent head of Barbara Redfern, and coughed.

"Babs, is it true?"

"Is what true?" Babs murmured, without looking up.

"Well, there are rumours going round that—that you and Christine have had a split. Lydia Crossendale says that you and Christine had an awful row——"

A spasm of pain crossed Babs' features. But she did not look up. She did not even reply to that question, for it was a question which was occupying the whole of her own mind. A row—yes! She had left Christine in anger, in contempt. But she could not get rid, still, of that queer feeling—that Christine hadn't really meant it. That Christine's hurting of her had been deliberate; that Christine, in hurting her, had hurt herself ten times more!

She shook her head. What had so amazingly come over Christine?

"Babs——" Mabs said again.

"Oh, please don't talk about it!" Babs cried vexatiously.

Mabs bit her lip. From then until call-over, no further word was spoken in the study. And when call-over bell rang, they went down together, to be greeted by delighted nudges and winks from Lydia & Co., who had already taken their places in the ranks.

Christine was there, too, but she did not look at Babs, and Babs, glancing at her, bit her lip.

Miss Belling, temporary mistress of the Fourth in Miss Charmant's absence, called the roll. Miss Bullivant mounted the rostrum, giving out orders for to-morrow. Then she made an unusual announcement.

"After lights-out in Junior School, I want all prefects and mistresses to attend a special conference in my study. The school may now dismiss."

The school dismissed, Christine walking hurriedly away. Not until bed-time did Babs see her again, and then, in the dormitory, she found Christine undressing. Again she looked at her. She smiled, and Christine spontaneously smiled in response. But, seeming to realise what she was doing all at once, she quickly changed the smile into a scowl. Lydia, who noted that, tittered.

"Whoops, aren't we freezing?" she taunted. "What's the matter, Temper Wilmer?"

"Lydia——" Babs cried.

But strangely enough Christine made no reply. She flung one withering look towards Lydia, and for a moment her lips compressed, then, without even deigning to retort to the gibe, she flung back the bedclothes and climbed into bed.

"Well, my hat!" Lydia breathed.

One or two girls blinked. Babs stared. Christine had been called by the name she hated most, yet she had not turned a hair.

But she glowed a little; for that control was the sort she had been trying to instil into Christine. That was the Christine she knew, she liked—the girl she had championed.

She climbed into bed herself, but she did not sleep: she was too worried, too troubled. She still could not understand Christine, but the feeling that there was some weird reason for Christine's sudden hostility persisted.

Presently she started as she heard a faint fluttering sound in the dormitory: glancing round, she caught sight of a figure moving towards the door.

It was Christine herself.

"Christine!" Babs said, and in a moment was out of bed. All flustered agitation, she crossed the room, noticing then that Christine was fully dressed in her school tunic. "Christine——"

Christine looked round. Just for a moment Babs glimpsed her white face in the moonlight which filtered through the dormitory window; then she was gone.

Babs gave a cry:

"Christine, stop! You shan't——"

Desperately she stumbled towards the door; she reached it just as it closed, and then fell back as she heard the key click in the lock outside. Christine had locked the door!

"Hallo! What's the matter?" came sleepily from Diana Royston-Clarke's bed. "Can't some of you get to sleep?"

Babs shook her head. She went back to her own bed, but her heart was heavy and anxious.

CLIFF HOUSE PETS

No. 16

Jean Cartwright's ABBE

ABBE is his name; Cairn terrier is his breed; Jean Cartwright is his mistress. And as Abbe the Cairn is one of the smallest dogs in the Cliff House Pets' House, you'd naturally expect him to be shy, retiring, modest, and perhaps rather overawed by his bigger companions such as Bruno, the St. Bernard, or Pluto, the Alsatian.

But not Abbe—oh dear no! Abbe, despite his size, is one of the noisiest among dogs, and so far from being shy and retiring, conspires to get himself taken more notice of than any three other dogs put together!

Abbe has the loudest and the shrillest bark at Cliff House. Abbe is also the most demonstrative young dog you ever met. When you meet Abbe, like a cannon ball he will just hurl himself at you with the shrillest of barks! And if you don't catch him like a cricket ball, the odds are you will find yourself on your back with Abbe's tongue licking your face.

Clara calls him an Imp; Leila calls him a "Fusspot"; Diana Royston-Clarke, because of his enormous and most boisterous fondness for any human being, calls him "Anybody's dog," and I'm sorry to say that Diana is right.

You see, Abbe has some sort of idea that all human beings, good, bad, or indifferent, are all wonderful. As Abbe is not discriminating, he treats them all with the same recklessly gay enthusiasm.

I hate to tell the following story about him, but, alas! it is true! It concerns Abbe and a burglar—well, perhaps not the usual sort of burglar, but a "gentleman" who was walking round Cliff House on the off-chance of picking up some souvenir on which he could make a profit elsewhere.

It was night. Abbe was loose and Abbe, seeing this gentleman breaking through the hedge, greeted him in his usual effusive fashion. Having been pitched into the ditch, then made such a fuss of, Mr. Souvenir-Hunter decided after all that Abbe's roughness was only friendliness. So as the little chap excitedly frisked on ahead, the "gentleman" good-humouredly followed him. Abbe, apparently, was anxious to show his friend some new treasure!

Souvenir-Hunter, Esq., followed Abbe to the Head's garden and there, shrilly barking, Abbe began to dig. He dug swiftly and furiously, and presently something came out with the earth. Abbe picked it up between his teeth, gleefully capering around as an invitation to the intruder to catch him. Intruder won the race—and Abbe's hidden treasure! It was a gold watch which Miss Charmant, mistress of the Fourth, had lost the previous day!

How do I know all this? Because the burglar, next day, was caught while trying to dispose of the watch in a pawnshop, and that is the story he told.

I've no doubt of its truth, because "snaffling" and hiding is a pet hobby of Abbe's. Rather disconcerting, of course, but he is such a cheeky, cheery, noisy little chap that you can't be cross with him on that account.

On the credit side of his history, however, it may be mentioned that it was Abbe's noisy bark which gave the alarm of fire last term when Piper's lodge set alight; and it was Abbe, too, who, retrieving a ring which Miss Bullivant had lost, faithfully laid it at her feet.

A nice little fellow—yes, in spite of his impish, fusspotty, anybody's-dog sort of ways, and very, very fond of mistress Jean, who brought him from her native Scotland when he was a weeny, fluffy puppy!

She would have been surprised if her eyes could have followed Christine. For Christine did not go out; she strode, instead, to the school commercial-room, and there lifted up one of the typewriters. Panting a little, for the machine was heavy, she struggled along to Study No. 13; and there, carefully drawing the blinds and shading the light, untied a small brown paper parcel, and from it produced several sheets of manuscript, then she seated herself at the machine and began to type.

It was half-past ten then; the school was shuttered and silent. Christine fondly imagined that everybody—bar a stray mistress or two, perhaps—was in bed.

But there Christine was wrong; for in the conference-room, adjoining Miss Bullivant's study, the prefects' and the mistresses' meeting was still in full session.

"And now," Miss Bullivant was saying, "we are going to have a surprise fire drill. Every mistress will attend to her own Form, and I expect every Form to be in its position in the quadrangle two minutes after the alarm. Dulcia, will you go now and ring the alarm?"

Dulcia Fairbrother, captain of the school, rose and left the room. Half a minute later——

Clang, clang, clang, clang!

The sleeping school jerked into startled life. Sharply girls sat up in bed. Where a second before black windows reflected only moonlight, now those windows became twinkling squares of yellow light. A gathering cry, swelling in volume, went through the school.

Clang, clang, clang!

"Fire!" cried Babs. "Fire! Oh, my hat! Up, everybody!"

"Fire!"

Hastily dressing-gowns and slippers were grabbed and donned; with a rush the foremost girls made for the dormitory door, and then a yell went up:

"I say, the door's locked!"

"Oh, Great Scott!" Babs, remembering, jumped. "Bang on it!" she cried frantically.

In Study No. 13 Christine also heard that alarm—and Christine, white-faced, had jumped to her feet. Like the rest, she did not know that the alarm was not genuine, but her first thought was for the precious manuscript which she was helping to type against time for poor Judy Snaith. Her second thought was for the door she had left locked upstairs. Oh goodness! Now, where had she put the key? Frantically she hunted around for it.

"Help! Help! Help!" came from the Fourth Form dormitory.

Christine gulped. Outside she could hear feet thudding, girls shouting. Already in the quad mistresses were briskly calling names. The key! The key! Christine pounced on it and flew out of the study.

Miss Bullivant, just emerging along the corridor, saw her.

"Christine, what are you doing?"

Christine paid no heed. Up the stairs she pelted; along the corridor she tore, her heart in her mouth. Most of the school were outside now. The Fourth, left to themselves, were lustily yelling and banging on the door.

Quickly Christine inserted the key and turned it. Half a dozen girls glared out at her.

"You!" cried Rosa Rodworth furiously. "So you locked us in, Christine!"

"You pig!" cried Freda Ferriers.

"Oh, come on!" said Babs impatiently.

She led the way. Christine, receiving a sharp dig in the ribs as the girls poured out, fell back, gasping, against the lintel of the door. Down the stairs pell-mell the Fourth rushed, but by that time the whole school was in position; Miss Belling, like some agitated hen, was flitting to and fro.

"Oh, my goodness! Girls, girls, girls!" she cried. "Quickly get to your places!" And with trembling fingers she unfolded the register. With one eye upon the frowning Miss Bullivant, she called the names, reporting no absentees. Miss Bullivant, watch in hand, frowned.

"I cannot;" she said icily, "congratulate your Form upon its promptness, Miss Belling. I do not consider five whole minutes in getting out of the school anything like satisfactory, when this may have been a matter of life and death. Each girl in the Fourth," she added, "will take fifty lines for being dilatory."

"But it isn't our fault!" Rosa Rodworth hooted.

"What?"

"It was that outsider Christine!" Lydia cried. "She locked us in!"

"What? Christine, how dare—— Come here!"

Christine—who had been about to step forward and own up, in any case—went out in front of the Form.

"You did this, Christine?"

"I did."

"Why?"

"Because," Christine stated boldly, "I wanted to work in my study. I was afraid of being followed."

"Oh!" Miss Bullivant said; and while Babs clenched hands in despair her eyes flashed. "Very well," she said. "You are excused the lines, girls, but you, Christine—you! You really do seem bent upon creating as much mischief as possible before leaving Cliff House, do you not? Once again, I have to warn you that I shall enter this on your record sheet. Go to your place!"

And Christine, with head downbent, went back. A hiss from the Form greeted her as she took her place once again in its ranks.

——

Not the Real Christine!

TAP!

It was next morning. Babs stood outside the door of Study No. 13. Not a very happy girl did Babs look this morning. Her face was shadowed and perplexed. A fretful, rather upsetting night Babs had spent, and the urgency to see Christine had brought her to that girl's study before breakfast. There was no reply to her tap, however, so she looked in. And then she started.

A piece of machinery was on the table. And that machinery—one of the school typewriters.

Babs blinked in wonder. Christine, obviously, had borrowed that machine without permission. She was still staring at it when Christine herself came in.

"Why, Babs!" she cried; and there was no mistaking for the moment that unguarded delight in her tone. Then, as Babs turned, she drew back. "Oh, hallo!" she said sulkily.

"Hallo!" Babs replied, and quietly closed the door. "Christine," she said. "I want to talk to you."

"Oh!" Christine said.

"I think," Babs said levelly, "it's about time you told me what you're up to, Christine. No, don't answer. I'm not a fool. I can't believe, knowing you as I do, that you're deliberately deciding to go to the bad just because it pleases you. I can't believe, somehow, that you've really turned against me. Christine, won't you tell me what silly ideas you have in your head?" she asked gently.

Christine convulsively clutched the edge of the tablecloth. Quite suddenly she found herself shaking. She was not prepared for this. Babs' direct accusation took her completely unawares. For a moment she fought fiercely the almost irresistible desire which surged within her.

She wanted to say to Babs:

"I'm fooling you because I want you to be happy, and you can never be happy while you stick to me!"

But she checked the impulse. She was going to brazen it out. Hating herself for every word she said, desperately steeling and bracing herself to see the pain she brought to Babs' face, she was going through with it! If Babs didn't believe her she'd do something to make her believe.

"What should I have in my mind?" she asked thickly. "I've told you, haven't I? I'm sick—I'm fed up! I've finished with this school, and with your crowd, Babs. Please—please don't worry about me," she added. "Let me go my own way."

"And your way," Babs said, eyeing her narrowly, "leads slap bang downhill to expulsion."

"Well, who cares?"

"Christine——" Babs started forward. "I care," she said softly, "and I—I——"

"Hallo, hallo! Babs!" cried Clara's strident voice from the passage. "Babs! Oh, where the dickens is that girl? Babs, tennis practice!"

"Your pals are shouting for you," Christine said fiercely. "Go and join them! Go and play their silly tennis! Anyway, leave me alone," she said violently, panting—but not with temper. It was in the utter distress of her own feelings. "Babs, will you go?"

"Christine, I want an explanation," Babs replied steadily.

"I tell you that——"

And then Christine's eyes fell upon the vase in the middle of the table. Her lips tightened suddenly. Babs believed she had that fiery temper of hers under control, did she? Well, she'd let her see she was mistaken. As though goaded beyond endurance, she caught the vase and whirled it aloft.

"Christine——" Babs cried, starting back in horror. "Christine, you idiot!"

But Christine, with a wild laugh, had flung the vase, not at Babs, but, just as if she had to have an outlet for her rage, into the fireplace. It smashed into a hundred pieces, and flowers, water, and broken glass, lay in a pitifully smashed heap. At the sight of that display Babs compressed her lips.

"I see," she said. "I see! Apparently I did make a mistake. Apparently you are still the old wild cat, the girl they called Temper Wilmer. Thanks, Christine, I won't stop for another exhibition. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" Christine said thickly.

She clutched at the table as Babs went out, her face whiter than chalk. She seemed to sway on her feet as the door closed. A choking cry welled from her heart. As if ague had suddenly taken possession of her frame, she quivered from head to foot.

Babs, hurrying up the corridor, paused.

Anger and disgust burned within her at Christine's display. And yet——

Most amazingly, almost without

realising it, she turned back upon her heel, and as suddenly as she had departed from Study No. 13, she re-entered it.

And then she stopped, rooted, appalled. For Christine, sobbing as if her heart would break, was kneeling at the table, her head pillowed in her arms.

Babs, seeing her thus, took one impulsive step towards her. Then she stopped, shook her head, and, with the tears starting impulsively to her own eyes, groped her way out of the door.

Christine was playing a part. Christine was acting—for her benefit.

Oh, why—why—why?

"JOLLY GOOD, old Babs!" Clara Trevlyn enthusiastically applauded. "Phew! But that backhand's a slasher! Try a game with Leila?"

"As you like," Babs agreed, with a laugh.

Midday break had arrived, and with midday break, tennis practice. Watched by a sprinkling of the Fourth and Third Forms, Babs was undergoing her trial in the company of Clara, Leila, Peggy Preston and Mabs.

No doubt that Babs' backhand was a "smasher," and Babs, remembering that she had Christine's tuition to thank for it, smiled.

She looked anxiously around as Clara trotted off the court and Leila, with a do-or-die expression on her face, took the Tomboy's place. Then she started as, out of the corner of her eye, she saw Christine walking slowly towards the court. She waved her racket.

"Coo-ee, Christine!"

Christine started, looked up. Unguardedly her hand half went up to return the salute; then she shrugged, and pretending she had not noticed it, or did not want to notice, came on her way.

"Oh, leave her alone!" Clara cried. "Come on, Babs, get busy."

Babs nodded. Leila gathered up two balls and promptly served. She was a good player was Leila—almost, but not quite as good as Clara—and her first shot was a scorcher. It landed an inch inside the line and streaked away. But Babs, coolly side-stepping, drove it forehanded to the back of the court, leaving Leila hopelessly out of position. Clara gurgled.

"Good work—jolly good!" she cheered. "Let's have some of that on Saturday, Babs, and we've got Whitechester on toast. Oh, hallo!" she added frigidly, for Christine had come up and, with moody eyes, was staring at the court. "And—well!" she cried in a different voice, as another figure loomed up—the good-looking young school's doctor, Frank Longmore. "'Morning, Dr. Longmore!"

"'Morning, Miss Trevlyn!" he replied. "Practising hard, I see. 'Morning, Miss Wilmer!" he added, nodding in a friendly way towards Christine. "How's the wrist now?"

"The wrist?" Clara asked. "What's the matter with her wrist?"

"Nothing!" Christine said swiftly. "Nothing." And Clara blinked to see the agitated way she was shaking her hand, as though telling Dr. Longmore not to say anything else. "My wrist's all right," she muttered. "Dr. Longmore knows it is."

Clara's eyes widened a little. She looked at the doctor, who was biting his lip, as though having betrayed some treasured secret. He smiled his apology at Christine, and as that girl turned away, strode after her.

"Now what," Clara asked herself, "did all that signify? Oh, well played, Babs!" she cried enthusiastically, as Babs served an ace that beat Leila all ends up. And Clara, from then on, forgot all about Christine and her little mystery.

But Dr. Longmore was saying:

"Sorry, Miss Wilmer! I forgot for the moment I'd promised to say nothing of the circumstances in which you hurt your wrist. Sure it feels quite strong again?"

"Yes," Christine said.

"Pretty bad while it lasted, eh? Be more careful in future, young lady. By the way, I didn't know you were a friend of Judy Snaith's."

Christine looked at him quickly.

"How do you know?"

He smiled.

"Perhaps you forget that Judy's mother is ill, and I'm her doctor," he said. "Judy is full of praise for you, and I must say"—with an appraising nod—"that sums up my own feelings. Fine work you're doing, Miss Wilmer; fine work! If Judy Snaith gets that job, it will be through you."

Christine breathed quickly.

"But, doctor, you won't say anything?"

"Why?" He gazed at her queerly. "Because you're running risks to do this work, eh? Because you're gated, and—I don't come here twice a week without hearing things, you know—there's a

Have you seen

SNOW WHITE and the SEVEN DWARFS—

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

likelihood of your being expelled? No, Miss Wilmer, I won't say anything if you don't want me to—but I really do think, you know, you ought not to be so modest. Bye-bye! And," he added softly, "the very, very best of luck!"

He raised his hat as he strode into the school. Christine bit her lip a little, Judy—poor Judy—but it was not only for Judy's sake she was doing that work of mercy; it was to relieve Babs. A funny little lump came into her throat. But Babs should never know—never!

Heavily she turned away. In the distance she saw Babs on the courts, struggled with a desire to go back and watch her play, then moodily drifted on towards the gates. There, for a time, she stood, looking out into the road, shimmering under a noon-day heat haze. And then suddenly she straightened up, looking more eagerly along the road as a figure came into view.

It was Judy Snaith—Judy in a state of utter distress, her eyes plainly betraying that she had been crying.

"Oh, Christine, some—something dreadful has happened!" she choked. "The typewriter——"

"You mean the machine you hired from the Courtfield people?"

"Yes." Judy gulped. "Oh, what shall I do?" she cried distractedly. "This—this morning I dropped it——"

Christine pursed her lips.

"And it busted?" she suggested.

"Y-yes. I—I took it back to the typewriter people to ask them to let me have another machine. But they won't. They say that the typewriter will cost three or four pounds to put in working order again, and they refuse to let me have another unless I pay three pounds deposit. And—and—and—I haven't got three pounds!"

Christine frowned. This, she saw at once, was a very real tragedy. Though she was doing her best to help Judy, there was a limit to her output, and, unless Judy continued to work at home, it would be a sheer impossibility to get the manuscript finished in time.

Christine herself hadn't got three pounds—Christine, at this moment, indeed, hadn't got three-halfpence. But Judy had to be helped.

She thought for a moment. Then she broke into a laugh.

"Well," she said, "well! Oh, don't worry, Judy. Just don't worry! Leave this to me. I can fix it, I think. Judy, go back now. I'll see you about it this afternoon. Expect me about five," she added.

"Oh, Christine!"

"Rubbish!" Christine laughed. "Scoot now! Babs might see you."

And while Judy, gulping, gratefully stammered her thanks, Christine hurried back into the school. Straight to Study No. 13 she went, and she closed the door.

For a moment she paused, looking at the array of cups and trophies which her tennis prowess had won for her in the past. Very dear, very precious those were to the heart of Christine Wilmer.

Her face twisted in a wry smile. She shrugged her shoulders. Then, grabbing up an attache-case from the corner of the room, she began to take the trophies down one by one, and carefully pack them.

"After all, they're just rubbish—rubbish!" she said fiercely. "Who the dickens wants them?"

She banged down the lid, snapped the locks of the case shut, and laughed. But it was a laugh which sprang from no source of amusement in her own being, because it was accompanied by glistening tears.

Babs is Intrigued!

"JUDY SNAITH!" Barbara Redfern said thoughtfully. "Yes, I really think we ought to go and see Judy, and take her mother some flowers. Dr. Longmore told me after lunch that Mrs. Snaith is awfully ill again."

"And you can have tea at the Hathway Tea Rooms?" Bessie Bunter eagerly inquired. "I sus-say, that's a ripping idea, Babs."

And Mabel Lynn smilingly agreed.

A few minutes later the three chums left the school. Babs was looking thoughtful. As a matter of fact, Babs was thinking of Christine. She had not seen Christine to speak to since the violent scene of the morning. But she had been thinking all day about that scene, wondering what could have persuaded Christine into making an actress of herself for her benefit.

In strange contrast to that outburst had been Christine's conduct during the day. Not a solitary bad mark or even a line had she earned in class. In the hours of leisure she had quietly effaced herself. But Babs' heart ached for her.

Even so, she managed to seem cheerful enough. As it was a fine, sunny afternoon, and the next bus was not due for twenty minutes, they decided to walk to Friardale. There, at the Market Cross, Babs purchased the

flowers for Mrs. Snaith. At Mabs' suggestion they looked in at Marshall's, the second-hand dealers, on their way.

A month ago Mabs had found in that shop a mirror which she had decided would make a useful addition to the furnishing of Study No. 4. The mirror had been priced at twenty-five shillings, and having left a deposit, Mabs had been paying off the amount at a few shillings a time.

In a body they entered the shop. Mr. Marshall, white-moustached and mild-mannered, rose from behind his counter to greet them.

"Nice afternoon, young ladies. How much this time, Miss Lynn?"

"Two shillings," Mabs said.

"Thank you. That makes another six shillings to pay. And then," Mr. Marshall beamed, "I'll send the mirror to the school. Oh—and talking of the school," he added, a little frown coming over his face, "do any of you know a girl named Christine Wilmer?"

Babs looked up sharply.

"Yes. Why?"

"Nothing much—except——" and Mr. Marshall paused. "As a matter of fact, Miss Wilmer has been to see me," he said. "She has sold me several rather nice silver cups, a clock, and other trophies—but I was rather wondering. Is it all right for Miss Wilmer to sell those things?"

Babs started.

"But why should she sell them?"

"Well," he said, "she had to have money—urgently. She wanted three pounds. Perhaps I ought not to have bought them?" he added nervously.

Bessie blinked; Mabs looked at Babs, who was breathing rather quickly. For she knew how much Christine loved those trophies. Most desperately hard up Christine must have been to part with them. And Christine had been here recently, which meant that she had again broken bounds.

"Well, as they're Christine's property, of course, it's all right for her to sell them," she said. "Nobody can interfere with that. But—can I have a look at them, Mr. Marshall?"

"Certainly."

The trophies were produced. Babs shook her head as she recognised them. Foolish, foolish Christine to do a thing like this in a moment of hot-headedness. When she came to her senses, how she would regret such an impulsive action! Babs came to a quick decision.

"Can I buy them?" she said.

"Babs!" cried Mabs.

"Please," Babs said gently. "Mr. Marshall, there's ten shillings. Keep them aside for me—please. I—I'll pay the rest later."

"Yes, Miss Redfern; but——"

"I—I'd like her to have them back, that's all," Babs said.

And ignoring the stare of Mabs', the frown of Bessie's, she firmly placed her ten-shilling note on the counter.

"'THE PURPLE cloak of night had enfolded the still and sleeping earth!'—how marvellously you do type, Christine!—'and the majestic oak beneath which Lola lay gently shed its withered leaves upon the sleeper's face.' —Not going too fast, am I?"

"No," Christine said earnestly. "What's after 'face'?"

Judy Snaith, a page of manuscript in her hand, smiled a little. But her eyes were full of envious admiration as she watched the slim, tapering fingers of the girl who sat at the typewriter in the window of her mother's cottage. Marvellously, indeed, Christine could type—and with what speed, with what precision, with what freedom from error!

For Judy, if careful, was not speedy. And it was at Christine's suggestion that she dictated while she typed. The few pages Christine had been able to do in Study No. 13 last night, she had brought with her. But even so, the manuscript was not more than half completed yet. Thanks to her sacrifice, however, Christine had been able to get another machine, and, barring accidents, there was a good chance of the task being finished according to schedule.

Tap, tap, tap! Her busy fingers drummed out the words almost as fast as they came from Judy's lips. Then, in the middle of a sentence, Judy gave a sharp exclamation:

"Oh, Christine! I say, here's Miss Redfern!"

"Miss who?" Christine jerked upright. Then suddenly her face turned pale. For the window in which she was working faced on to the street, and up that street, chattering as they came, strolled Mabs, Babs, and Bessie—Mabs with a great bunch of flowers in one arm. In a moment Christine was on her feet.

"They're coming here," she cried. "Oh, my hat! Judy, not a word about me—understand?" she said fiercely. "Don't let them know I'm helping. And for goodness' sake," she said agitatedly, "don't let them see in this cupboard, because that's where I'm going to hide. Now, Judy, don't let me down."

Judy blinked. Babs & Co. were crossing the road then.

And with one hurricane jump, she leapt across the floor and dived into the cupboard, just as Babs' knock came at the door. Judy, with haste, went to open it.

"Why, M-miss Redfern," she said.

"Hallo, Judy, can we come in?" Babs smiled. "We've brought a few flowers for your mother. Phew! I say, what a hive of industry. Writing a novel, or something, Judy?"

Judy Snaith smiled.

"No—it—it's for Miss Fortescue," she said, and swiftly explained.

"Oh, I say, and you've got to get all this done by Monday?" Babs cried. "I'd no idea you were such an expert typist, Judy. Sure you don't want any help?"

"Nun-no thank you, Miss Redfern."

"Jolly nice typing, too," Babs said appreciatively, picking up one of the sheets. "I say, Bessie, go and find some water to put these flowers in, will you? I suppose there's a bowl or something in the kitchen, isn't there, Judy? No, don't you trouble. Bessie knows her way about the cottage!"

"Well, of course," Bessie beamed.

"But no—no!" Judy cried. "You mustn't go into the kitch—I mean—oh dear! I—I haven't tidied up yet," she said agitatedly, "and—and you wouldn't know which bowl to use. Give them to me, please."

And almost snatching the flowers, she rushed off.

"Well!" breathed Bessie. "Crumbs! I thought she was going to hit me, you know. What's the matter, Babs? What are you looking at that typing like that for?"

"Funny," said Babs. "This 't.' It's just exactly the same as the scratched 't' on one of the school typewriters. And yet," Babs added, gazing keenly at the machine, "the 't' on this typewriter isn't scratched at all. Oh, here's Judy. I say, Judy, here's a mystery," Babs laughed. "Some of this copy was typed on a machine with a scratched 't.' But your machine, Judy, bears no sign of a scratched 't.'"

Judy breathed quickly.

"Well, that—that's another machine," she blurted. "You see, I had an accident with the other one, and Chri—and—and this afternoon the hirers lent me that one in its place. But would you like to see mother now, Miss Redfern?" she rushed on anxiously. "I'm sure she'll be ever so glad to talk to you, and—and"—with a blink at the kitchen door—Oh dear! Please do come and see mother," she added distractedly.

Babs, gazing at her curiously, wondered why Judy should have become a prey to such dreadful apprehension. She did not see the scared eyes of the girl who, through the crack of the cupboard door, was staring at her.

Tricked!

TAP, tap, tap!

That was the only sound that broke the silence of Study No. 13.

Christine Wilmer was seated at the typewriter, and Christine, with eyes that drooped a little, and head that, despite her fierce efforts to keep her attention concentrated, would nod now and again, was typing steadily. She had been typing steadily for two solid hours, since eleven o'clock. And the rest of the school slept.

She had got to get it all done—for Judy's sake.

Unflaggingly she carried on. Half-past one chimed; still she stuck it. Two o'clock came, but her progress was noticeably slower then. Half-past two—oh goodness, she could hardly hold her head up! Three o'clock, and she knew she'd just have it give it up then because she was making the most curious and idiotic mistakes.

"Well, enough for to-night," she muttered thickly. "Oh dear! Yaw-waw-waw!"

Covering her machine, she collected the sheets together, making them up into the parcel she could take to Judy to-morrow. Softly she stole back into the Fourth Form dormitory, almost feeling asleep as she undressed. The very moment her head came in contact with the pillow, she was fast asleep.

She was still blissfully unconscious when Babs, with an anxious glance towards her bed, rose before rising-bell in the morning with indefatigable Clara—Clara who insisted upon as much extra practice as could be crammed in, for this afternoon's match with the Lower Fifth.

But Babs shook her head a little. Rather mistily she smiled as she saw Christine's wan, tired face on the pillow.

She was thinking about Christine as she dressed. She wished the girl wouldn't go on avoiding her. Last night, on her return from Judy Snaith's, she had waited for Christine, and until call-over had seen no sign of her. For once, at all events, Christine had got back into the school without detection. And in the dormitory she had pretended to be asleep.

But Babs meant to talk to Christine; she meant, somehow, to get to the bottom of this funny act she was putting on, and to find out, if it were possible, why Christine, who was obviously breaking her heart over it, should treat her like an enemy.

She went down to the courts. There, for a solid hour, she and Clara slammed tennis balls at each other. Rising-bell had gone then. First breakfast-bell was ringing when, flushed and breathless after the exercise, they returned to the school. Lydia Crossendale, in Big Hall, met them, with a chuckle.

ANGRILY, the Fourth Form teemed out of the dormitory. "You!" cried Rosa Rodworth, pointing to Christine. "You locked us in!" Christine could not deny it—could not explain why she had acted so strangely.

"Poor old Temper!" she called.

"Temper?" Babs stopped sharply. "Christine, you mean? What's the matter with her?"

"Haven't you heard?" Lydia chuckled. "The Bull caught her still fast asleep in bed twenty minutes after rising-bell."

"And none of you woke her?"

"Well, why should we?" Lydia asked sneeringly. "She never exactly tried to prevent us getting into trouble, did she? In any case, who's fault was it? If she hadn't been playing the giddy ox during the night, she'd never have overslept."

But Babs, her eyes dimmed with worry, had rushed on into the school.

At the door of dining-hall she stopped, for there, with her hand on Christine's shoulder, was Miss Bullivant. Christine, still looking most dreadfully tired, was glaring up in her face. Miss Bullivant was angry.

"You are not fit—not fit, Christine, to be in a decent school. I am tired and wearied of punishing and warning you. This afternoon, girl, you will spend your half-holiday in detention. And if there is a single repetition of any of these offences, I shall put you in the punishment-room. Now go to breakfast."

And off Miss Bullivant swept.

"Christine——" Babs cried, as she walked into the room. "Oh my hat! What's happened?"

Christine's lips came together.

"Nothing," she muttered. "Now please leave me alone."

There was a titter from Frances Frost, who had just entered, and overheard. A rather mocking glance passed between her and Lydia Crossendale. Christine obviously was touchy. But she had cause to be, Babs reflected, knowing that a score of girls must have allowed her to sleep on in the sure realisation of trouble to follow.

She sighed a little as she watched Christine toying with her breakfast, and desperately she wondered what she had been doing during the night to cause that sleepiness so plainly showing on her face this morning.

But again, after breakfast, Christine avoided her, and the moment lessons were over she disappeared.

Dinner came. Immediately after dinner Christine again walked off, and Babs called upon by Clara, went up to the dormitory to change into her clothes for the tennis match. Rapidly she dressed and went to her study for the racket. It was then, again out of the window, that she saw Christine.

Christine, dressed in coat and hat, was stealthily sneaking through the shrubbery towards the gates.

Babs' heart gave a jump. Christine was in detention this afternoon. Christine had to report to Miss Bullivant. Christine, most fearfully threatened with the punishment-room, was, in spite of that deliberately breaking bounds.

She shouldn't—she mustn't!

Down went Babs' racket. The tennis for the moment was forgotten. Out of the study she rushed, down the stairs. Girls turned in surprise to stare after her flying figure as she raced towards the shrubbery and disappeared. At the end of it she was just in time to see Christine climbing the wall by means of a ladder which had been reared against it.

"Christine!" she cried.

Christine gave one startled look round and dropped.

Babs set her teeth. In a moment she was shinning up the ladder. Without a thought she dropped on the other side of the wall, just in time to see Christine bolting into the trees which fringed the North Copse of Friardale Woods. Babs, giving a shout, sprinted in pursuit.

Ahead she heard the rustling of branches as Christine raced through the trees. And then, breathlessly running, she entered the clearing in which stood the abandoned ranger's hut—just in time to see Christine slipping through the door of that hut. Babs smiled a little grimly then. She had her now!

But had she?

For momentarily Babs had forgotten that hut had two doors—one back and front. Christine, skipping in through the front one, as rapidly let herself out of the back, dropping the door bar behind her as she went. Then she paused. Unseen by Babs, she watched her dash into the hut. Then, with rather a grim expression on her face, she nipped round to the front. She caught the door. Fiercely she banged it to; fiercely she rammed home the heavy bar which held it secure. Then she flew.

While Babs, turning too late, jumped frantically forward.

"Christine—Christine, you fool!" she cried. "Christine——"

Dying footsteps were the only sounds that answered her cries.

"FOUR O'CLOCK," mused Bessie Bunter, looking at her watch. "I suppose those silly chumps will have finished their tennis by now, and be ready for tea. Yumps, I must hurry!"

And Bessie, in Friardale Woods, quickened her pace.

Bessie, not vitally interested in tennis, had been out on her own, and now, appetite sharpened by the unusual exercise of the walk, was returning post haste to the school.

Happily Bessie strolled along, eyes glistening at the thought of the spread in Study No. 4. And then, reaching the old ranger's hut in the woods, she suddenly blinked as she saw, lying in front of the door, a glove. The glove was a new one, too—and an expensive-looking one at that. Bessie, picking it up, frowned as she saw the initials "C.W." working in gold thread upon the wrist. Then she jumped.

"Hallo!" a voice said, from inside the hut.

Bessie was so startled that she forgot all about the glove, mechanically stuffing it into her pocket. She looked at the door, bolted from the outside.

"Babs!" she almost shrieked.

But she went to the door and lifted up the bar, revealing Babs, looking rather grim and very angry.

"Well, mum-my hat, you know, I thought you were playing tennis!" Bessie stuttered. "Who shut you up?"

"Never mind." Babs' lips compressed. "What's the time?"

"Four o'clock."

"Oh, my goodness!"

"But——"

"Bessie, come on, please!"

Bessie, in great astonishment, followed, as Babs began to stride away. Babs was breathing heavily. Rather fierce the glint that showed in her eyes, and rather disgusted the expression on her face. Christine had shut her up. What would Clara say?

She soon knew, for Clara, grim-faced, was waiting with Mabs and half a dozen others at the gate for her when she came in.

"Well, thanks," she said bitterly, "for your assistance. I suppose you'll be glad to know that while you've been rushing after that outsider we've lost the match to the Lower Fifth."

"I—I'm sorry!" Babs muttered.

"Sorry!" Clara snorted. "A fat lot of good that will do! At least," she added, "you might have let us know you were going off with Christine."

"But I—I haven't been off with Christine."

"No?" Clara glared. "But Christine's missing from detention."

"Th-that's right," Bessie put in warmly, "because I found Babs in the

(Continued on page 14)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

How happy that delightful young person, PATRICIA, is to know that you all regard her as a friend—and a very special friend, too, one who can understand all schoolgirl joys, and sympathise with all schoolgirl problems.

I WONDER if you all have a favourite Ice-Cream man? I, your Patricia, have, and he always gives a merry tinkle on his tricycle bell as he passes our house.

But now, I'm afraid he has a rival.

The first sign of this was when a very musical peal of bells—"tra-la-la-la-la" sounded along our road the other day.

I'm afraid we all forgot our dignity and rushed to the windows to see the cause.

And—strangely enough, everyone else in the road had done the same.

It was a man with a brand-new ice-cream tricycle, and in front of our admiring eyes, he picked up a stick and again beat his peal of bells—"tra-la-la-la-la."

Heath, of course—Heath is my young brother, whose full name is Heatherington, by the way—demanded to go out to see, and begged a penny from mother on the way.

I expected him to return at any moment. But not Heath. Finally I had to go in search of him. There he was, talking to the ice-cream man as if he were a long-lost uncle, telling him all the family history.

"Yes, I've got a cat of my own," he was saying. "His name's Minkie. I'd show you to him 'cept that he's asleep just now, an' I don't want to wake him or he'll want some of my ice——"

"Greedy things, cats," the ice-cream man said, understandingly.

"Oh, no," Heath replied seriously. "Minkie isn't greedy; he jus' likes ices. An' do you know, I was a page at a wedding. Not a page of a book, of course——" at which the I. C. man laughed appreciatively. "But a page what—I mean who—holds up a train. An' that sounds funny too, doesn't it?"

"It does," laughed the I. C. man. "But I bet you made a jolly good page. Did you like it?"

Heath nodded.

"Yes, I did, thank you. I wore shoes with buckles on, an' we had ice-creams on plates after, but they weren't as nice as yours. Could I have another, please, Mr. Man. My big sister, Pat'll pay you——"

"Will she?" big sister thought, but of course, paid up like a lamb.

Heath hadn't even paused.

"The only thing I didn't like was the way everyone kep' kissing me. My mummy says you're supposed to kiss the bride. Not you, of course, but people at the wedding. But it was me they kept kissing, an' I couldn't get on with my ice. But Miss Phyllis—she was the bride with the train, you know—though now I have to call her Mrs. Phyllis, I s'pose—she's gone to Paris, which is in France, an'——"

"Heath!" said a stern—or fairly stern—voice. "Your ice will melt if you keep on talking so——"

And firmly I pushed the young chatterbox into the house, before he had told the ice-cream man exactly what we had for breakfast, and the exact cost of mother's new hat——

● For Lazing

I expect you're spending lots of time reading, lazing and snoozing in the garden these days, aren't you?

And if you do this lazing and snoozing in a deck chair—well, I think that's just about the height of luxury, don't you?

In fact, some friends of ours insist that their garden deck chairs are infinitely

more comfortable than the chairs of their "three-piece suite" in their sitting-room! (But I confess I don't QUITE agree with this.)

However, the point is, that comfy as your favourite deck chair may be at the moment, it can be made into an article of the most sumptuous luxury by the addition of one or two cushions.

You don't want a cushion to sit on, but one placed just behind your back, and rather low down, is very restful. Mothers especially would appreciate this.

Then another cushion for a head-rest would be a treat. You could make one in a very few moments from a piece of cretonne measuring nine inches by twenty. Just seam this around and stuff it with flock.

Two old wood bangles or curtain rings—either bone or wood—can be sewn at each corner. And these will enable the cushion to hang over the chair so that it doesn't slip when you're having a short forty-winks in the sun.

● A Word of Our Own

Most of us realise that Americans use many words that are different from ours. For example, they always talk of "canned" food, never "tinned" food, as we do.

They never say "Autumn," but always "Fall"—which I think is rather pretty, don't you?

And "suspenders" in America are not articles which hold up stockings (for women) or socks (for men), but are for holding up trousers. Just homely "braces" in fact!

But there is one word I recently discovered in our language which the Americans never use.

And do you know what that word is? Fortnight!

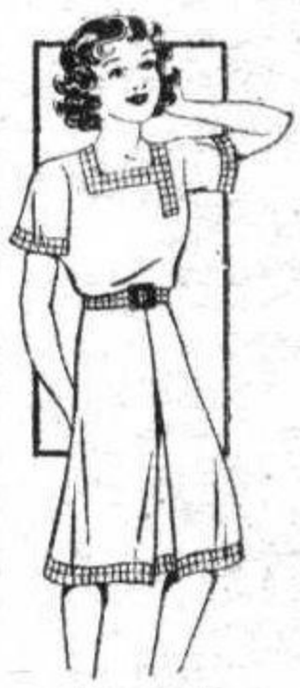
When an American friend of my father's was staying with us a week or two ago, I used to see him frown every time we mentioned "fortnight." And at last he asked us what it meant.

Believe me, no one could have been more surprised than he when we explained it meant "two weeks." I think he wondered why we were too lazy to say it!

● Trimmed with Check

Don't you adore this frock in the picture? It's so gay and sweet—and so young!

If you had one like it, no one—even the cattiest girl at your school—could ever guess that it was an "altered" frock, now could they?



Just supposing you have a frock that is too short in the skirt and in the sleeves, just show mother this picture. With her help, I'm sure you could very quickly add a false hem of checked material (gingham at ninepence a yard). Treat the sleeves in the same way, and then—just to disguise that lengthened look—trim the neck to match, and make a check belt also.

Who'd now believe that once this had been anything else?

Good-bye now, my pets, until next week.

Your friend,

PATRICIA.

P.S. I hope you're taking great care of those precious tokens that are appearing at the foot of our back pages each week. I have my three carefully placed in an envelope most mysteriously marked T. F. C. P. P. (I'll give you the solution to this weird collection of letters next week if you really need it!) You who started collecting from Token No. 1—as I did—have only three more weeks to wait before you can qualify for that wondrous Four-Coloured Propelling Pencil which your Editor is offering to his readers for only sixpence! (There, now I've given away the secret on the envelope!)

Patricia wants you all to be AT YOUR VERY BEST FOR SPORTS DAY

I THINK all schoolgirls regard School Sports Day as one of the most exciting events of the whole year—especially those who are taking part! (Even those who are not competing, get the holiday!)

Whether you have been selected for the gruelling "half-mile," or to cause much mirth in the "Egg-and-Spoon," you must certainly do some practice at home for a week or two before the great day.

Sprinting round and round the garden path will help your speed, especially if a nice brother will "time" you with the aid of the second-hand on his watch. (Or he may even have a stopwatch, which would help still more.)

It is also a good idea to practise the start. The "crouched start" is being used in many modern schools, but I have seen many girls do this all wrong. You must not crouch back on your left foot and have a nice little rest there.

No, your right foot should be forward—and so should your body. In fact, the whole weight should be on this right foot—none on that back one. So do practise leaping off from this position in your spare moments.

GETTING INTO FORM

You who are going in for the "comic" races should also practise at home.

If you're entering for the Egg-and-Spoon, ask mother if you may borrow one of her cooking spoons, a rather shallow one for preference. Place an egg-shaped pebble in this, and for the first practice, just go at a trot, keeping your eye on the "egg" and worrying more about balance than speed.

Gradually you can speed up, until you no longer worry about the "egg," but can really concentrate on getting to the winning tape first.

"Sack race" is another race that you can practise on your own, but for the "three-legged," you will, of course, need the assistance of a nice chum.

In addition to the straightforward racing practice, there is one exercise I want you to do before Sports Day. Every single morning, I want you to do deep breathing.

Stand in front of the open window—breathe in and lift your arms wide. Breathe out, and drop them to your sides. Do this ten times every single day, and you'll be as fit as two fiddles, with lots of "staying power" when Sports Day arrives.

VERY TRIM

Still presuming that you're taking quite a big part in the Sports, you must go off to bed really early the night before the event.

Before you go upstairs, ask mother if she'll be a pet, and see that your sports outfit—whether it consists of very professional shorts and vest, or merely of your school tunic and blouse—is looking immaculate for the morrow.

Upstairs, you must have a bath if this is possible—or at least, an extra-special wash-down. But the water mustn't be too hot. Just lukewarm; otherwise you will wake tired in the morning—which would never do.

Before popping into bed, give your feet, which will be so busy to-morrow, a brisk rub-over with methylated spirit, or that very inexpensive bath eau-de-Cologne. This will toughen them most wonderfully.

You'll be terribly excited, naturally, but you mustn't allow this to interfere with your rest.

So there must be no reading in bed for you this night.

A deep sleep—and then morning.

THE BIG DAY

No exercises for you this morning. Have a good breakfast then pack your school case, not forgetting running shoes, pull-over or blazer, and a little boracic powder done up in a screw of paper. Then off you set to the school sports ground.

If you change there, I want you to be sure to sprinkle the insides of your running shoes with the boracic powder. This is most cooling and refreshing. A little rubbed into the palms of your hands, too, will prevent that stickiness which excitement and a hot day can produce.

Tie your hair well back out of your eyes. Slip on your blazer or pullover while you are sitting around waiting for your turn, and then—

Off you go!

Remember what I told you about that flying start. It makes such a difference to be first off the line. Swing your arms rhythmically in front of you as you run, as if you were holding an imaginary ruler at each end.

Keep that head forward, too—all the weight should be to the front. Run as straight as ever you can; any unnecessary swerving will only waste precious seconds. Don't try to over-take on a corner. Wait for the straight to do that.

As you approach the finishing tape, put on your finest sprint. Don't throw your arms out and your body back as many runners do at the finish. That forward lunge of your body may make the difference between winning and being second!

There—you're at the finish—and I hope you've won!

Amidst much clapping and cheering, off you go to watch the next race. Slip that blazer on, and take deep, steady breaths, to refresh you for the next item.

I expect you'll want to watch the other events and to cheer your lustiest, especially your own Form or school. But you won't forget to help with the clapping for the other side, will you?

As soon as you have cooled down a little you may have a nice cold drink of water, if you'd like it. While it isn't exactly harmful to drink cold water while you are terribly hot, it is much more thirst-quenching to sip gently after a tiny rest.

Many expert sprinters and sportsmen will not drink at all during sports events. They will suck a slice of lemon or orange. Some prefer water, but they seldom swallow it. They take a sip, allow it to cool their mouths, and then spit it out again.

So you who take sports very seriously might like to copy this idea and save your drink until the events of the day are over.

A PROUD MOMENT

After a glorious day will come the prize-giving.

Take some deep breaths again if you feel nervous about receiving yours. Take the cup or prize with your left hand, while curtsying, and be prepared to shake hand with your right.

Don't rush off the platform, if the prize-giver says a few words to you. On the other hand, don't linger.

As you descend the steps, the cheering will burst out afresh—this is your big moment—the reward which you have won for the honour of your team, your Form, your House, and your SCHOOL!

BUTTONS SO BRIGHT

You can buy such amusing and fascinating buttons for so very little these days; they are much too good to be used as mere fasteners, and make the most charming trimming to a summer frock.

Some buttons stitched round the neck of a favourite dress would look very sweet. You can get some perfectly round ones that would look almost like a necklace of beads.

Pretty flower buttons, or cheery doggy ones, sewn diagonally across the bodice of a frock would give that smart cross-over appearance.

Then again, buttons sewn along the shoulder and down the short sleeves of a dress would add just that extra note of gaiety which summer demands.

(Continued from page 11)

wood. She was shut up in the ranger's hut, you know."

"Eh? Who shut you up?"

"Oh, never mind!" Babs said uneasily.

"Meaning Christine," Clara guessed. "My hat, I begin to see it now! You followed Christine. Christine didn't want you, and so she locked you in the hut."

"Clara—please!" Babs cried.

"And that's the girl you call friend!" Clara said bitterly.

"I haven't said it was Christine."

"Well, it was Christine," Bessie said. "It was, you know, because I found this glove outside the door. Christine must have dropped it when she fastened the door up." And to Babs' dismay she produced the glove.

There was a moment of silence.

"Well, I'm dashed!" Clara said, at length. "And you stick to her! You fight her battles for her! Babs, have you gone absolutely potty? I should think——" And then she stopped. "Talk of angels, here's Christine herself!"

They all started round, as through the gates the girl in question came sailing. She stopped at the sight of them, and for a moment she looked as if she was going to retreat. Then, with a shrug, she came on again.

She bit her lip a little. All afternoon Christine had been worrying about Babs. Very much had it gone against the grain to play that trick, but she couldn't risk Babs following her and learning the truth. As it was, she had hurried away from Judy before the expected time, and returning, to release Babs, through the wood, had been relieved, but a little confused, to find that somebody had been before her. She stopped now.

"Christine," Babs cried, "why did you lock me in the hut?"

"Well," Christine said, and for a moment dropped her eyes. "I—I—well, bother it, you were following me!" she blazed out.

"You knew I should miss the match."

"The match! What match?" Christine paused. "Oh crumbs, I—I'd forgotten about that! I—I——" And then she shrugged. "Well," she said, "it serves you jolly well right!"

"Christine," cried Babs—"Christine, I——"

But Christine, with a careless shrug that hid the breaking of her heart, was hurrying away. She did not want Babs to see the tears that were starting to her eyes.

True Blue—Both of Them!

SHE was just a fool. She was just an idiot. She was making herself cheap. She ought to think of the Form. Why bother about such an unworthy friend as Christine had proved herself to be?

Those were merely some of the comments to which Babs was forced to listen after Christine's departure, and for a few moments she felt most bitterly inclined to agree with her chums. And yet she could not convince herself—she could not be sure. These sort of things Christine had done before, and after doing them had broken her heart.

Thoughtful and serious was Babs that evening. Her anxiety was by no means diminished when she learned that Miss Bullivant, in a towering rage, had sent Christine to the solitary confinement of the punishment-room for the night. It was increased tenfold next morning, when she heard that Miss Primrose and Miss Charmant were expected back, and that Christine, under the sentence of expulsion, was confined to her study for the whole day.

It was on her mind during class in the morning. But now and again she lifted her head to frown and listen. For plainly through the open windows of the class-room came a faint tap, tap, tappety, tap!

Somebody typing.

Babs wondered, remembering that Christine had one of the school machines in her study. She wondered more deeply when, starting as though unbidden to her mind, came the memory of that scratched "t" she had spotted on the manuscript in Judy Snaith's home. Was there any connection between those? But how could there be? Christine hardly knew Judy Snaith.

Steadily, all through the morning, however, that ceaseless tapping went on.

Then midway through second lesson came an interruption. It was known then that Miss Primrose had returned. On her arrival Babs was summoned to her study, to find there a rather pale-faced Miss Charmant, a frowning Miss Bullivant, and a rather stiff and frigid Miss Primrose. Miss Primrose gazed at her.

"I am disturbed, Barbara, by the reports I have received about you," she said, "but I am glad to be informed that during these last few days there seems to have been a marked improvement. I wish," she added heavily, "that I could say the same about Christine. Kindly fetch her, Barbara."

"Miss Primrose, you—you're not—not going to expel her?" Babs faltered.

"That," Miss Primrose said flintily, "I shall decide when I have seen her."

Babs gulped. At once she rushed off, and, reaching Study No. 13, flung the door open. And then she jumped.

HILDA RICHARDS

Replies to Some of Her Correspondents.

"ADMIRER OF JEMIMA" (Sheffield): So glad to hear from you, my dear. Your favourite, Jemima, is 14 years and 9 months old. I shall certainly keep your other suggestion in mind, though I cannot make any promises, you know. The answer to your last question, is "No," by the way.

"JOAN" (Dagenham): Many thanks for your two last letters, Joan. I'm afraid it isn't possible for the printed replies to appear immediately after I have received your letter, as our paper is printed some weeks in advance. There are more than 200 girls at C.H. at present, my dear. Yes, Marcia Loftus was eventually expelled for her bad behaviour. I won't forget your various other suggestions—thank you for sending them along.

"GLORIA" (Darwen, Lancs): I think you are rather like Peggy Preston, of the Fourth, in appearance, my dear. Jemima's home is at romantic Delma Castle, in Yorkshire. No, she has no brothers or sisters. Juno thanks Judy for her doggy greeting, and sends her a tailwag in return.

NANCY GREGG (Ballymoney, Ireland): So glad to hear from you again, and to know you are still enjoying "Cliff House." Nancy. Of course, I shall be featuring Marjorie and Bessie again in my future stories—I'm certain there would be a storm about my head if I didn't! Write again, won't you?

MAVIS COLE (Coventry): Delighted to receive another charming little letter from you, Mavis. Please thank your mother for her very nice compliments about my story she read. I hope she will enjoy other C.H. tales, too. My dog, Juno, sends a pawshake to Spats—she knows your pet's "hiss" was really meant to be friendly!

"LIGHTNING" (Kilburn): Many thanks for a charming little letter, my dear. You would be in the Lower Third if you went to Cliff House, and would go into the Fourth on reaching your fourteenth birthday. I think you must be rather like Joan Charmant in appearance. You may be sure I shall keep your other suggestions in mind—though I cannot make any promises, you know!

MARY McGURRAN (Regina, Sask., Canada): I've managed to squeeze in a printed reply this time, my dear! Lucy Morgan is still at Cliff House. She is aged fourteen, and is thirty-second in Form at present. Our very helpful young friend, Patricia, has asked me to send you her love.

DOROTHY WELSH (Beal, Northumberland): So you have had your tonsils taken out, Dorothy? I hope you have quite recovered from the operation. Miss Primrose was already Headmistress at Cliff House when Babs and Co. went there. Before Babs herself came to the school, Marjorie Hazeldene was Form captain for some time.

FRANCES PENROSE (Paris, France): So Leila Carroll is your C.H. favourite, Frances? I hope to be featuring her in a leading role before long, so be sure you don't miss the announcements of new Cliff House stories. You must tell me all about yourself next time you write, my dear.

"NORA" (Richmond, Yorks): You'll see I managed to squeeze a reply in for you this time, my dear! Thank you for writing again. So you cannot make up your mind who you like most in the Fourth? You certainly have quite a long list of favourites, Nora. It's nice to know you are enjoying the Pets Series so much.

"BETTINE" (Bury St. Edmonds): What a very sweet little letter, Bettine! I'll certainly keep in mind your suggestion regarding a story about little Fanny Tibbitts. Do tell me more about yourself next time you write. I shall be watching for your letter, you know!

"VIRGINIA" (New Ferry, Cheshire): You tell me that you are sometimes thought a little prim, my dear—but after reading your cheery letter, I can see that is quite out of the question! In appearance, I think you are rather like Mabel Lynn. Your favourite Fourth Former, Leila, has many fans among my readers, as I can tell from their letters!

ELVA, SERVA, & RHODA (Lincoln): Three very enthusiastic little letters! Here are the answers to your C.H. questions: Babs is fifth in Form at present, and Mabs is seventh. The Fourth's best dancers are, perhaps, Diana Royston-Clarke and Lydia Crossendale. Yes, Doris Redfern is very fond of films, and has many favourites among the stars. Mabs' full name is Mabel Elsie Lynn. Sarah Harrigan is nearly nineteen. I thought Rhoda's cousin's sketches were excellent. You'll write again, won't you, my dears?

For Christine, a brown-paper parcel under her arm, her macintosh on, was engaged in adjusting her hat. She swung round at Babs' entry.

"Christine, the Head wants you!" Babs cried.

"Well, let her jolly well wait!" Christine said sulkily. "I'm going out, Miss Primrose or no Miss Primrose!"

"Christine——" Babs swung the door to behind her. "Christine, stop this!" she said sharply. "No, don't act! I'm not deceived! There's a chance—just a faint, ghostly chance, I think—that even now you won't be expelled. You'll just ruin it if you don't obey Miss Primrose at once. Are you going?"

"No!" Christine snapped.

"Then," Babs said, "you're jolly well going to stop here. You shut me up yesterday. Right! I'll do the same to-day, and if you won't jolly well come of your own accord, I'll bring Miss Primrose to you. Now——"

Christine stared, suddenly wide-eyed. For Babs, with a grim, determined face, slipped back through the door into the passage. As Christine, hardly realising what was happening, took one pace forward, she heard the key turn in the lock. She gave a gasp:

"Babs, Babs, Babs, you ninny! Babs, wait a minute!"

"Well, are you going to Miss Primrose?" Babs demanded through the door.

"Babs, I—I can't! I've got to take this parcel somewhere. Babs, really, it's desperate!"

Babs paused.

"Go to Miss Primrose," she insisted—"go now! If the parcel's so desperately urgent, I can take it."

A pause. She heard Christine's agitated breathing.

"All—all right," Christine said at last. "Dash it, Babs! You can take it, and—and I'll go. The—the parcel is Judy Snaith's," she added, as Babs opened the door. "No, don't ask questions. It's urgent. I promised Judy should have it before lunch."

Rather wonderingly Babs took it, though at the back of her mind was a rather startling idea. While Christine took off her macintosh, Babs waited. She was taking no chances.

"And before I go," she said gruffly, "I'll see you go to Miss Primrose's study. This way."

She took Christine's arm. Christine, setting her teeth, followed her. Straight to the headmistress' room Babs went. She knocked on the door; she pushed Christine in. Then she flew.

In a quarter of an hour she reached Judy's house. Rather to her surprise, it was Dr. Longmore who opened the door.

"Judy's upstairs with her mother," he said. "I'm just going. Is Christine with you?"

Babs looked at him.

"Why?" she asked.

"I rather wanted to see her about that wrist of hers. Oh, my goodness! There I go again! Er—never mind. I—I ought not to have mentioned that, I suppose."

"But what's the matter with Christine's wrist?" Babs asked, staring.

"Well, she hurt it, you know—the day before she played in the tennis match. But, for goodness' sake," he added, "don't say I've mentioned it!"

Hurt her wrist—hurt—— And then Babs started. A flash of understanding came into her eyes.

"THERE'S my answer to you!" Christine flared, and, seizing up a vase, she hurled it into the fireplace. Babs looked at her, appalled. Christine had gone back to her old stormy ways!

"Dr. Longmore, please wait a minute," she said earnestly. "I don't think you understand. Christine may be expelled at any moment. If she is, she'll be expelled with every girl in the school against her, except me and my—my sister Doris. And one of the reasons they're against her is because they think she let them down in that tennis match by playing left-handed when there was no reason to."

"But that's absurd! She never could have played right-handed," the doctor said warmly. "She had a very badly strained wrist. A blackboard in the art-room fell on it the night before."

"In the where?" Babs asked.

"The art-room. She was collecting some papers or something."

Frozenly Babs stared at him. Suddenly she was remembering. In collecting those papers, Christine had been doing a favour for her. Christine had hurt her wrist, and said nothing about it. Why? Because Christine, pleased to do that favour, would not mar the happiness she felt in doing it by complaining.

There was a knock on the door. The wondering face of Judy appeared.

"Why, Miss Redfern," she cried, "you! I thought Christine——"

"Christine," Babs told her, "is more than likely being expelled at this moment. Judy, what does all this mean? Why was it necessary for her to send you this parcel? And why," Babs added, "was some of the manuscript I found on your desk typed on a Cliff House typewriter? Yes, it was, Judy—and Christine has been typing all morning, to. Why?"

Judy was standing rooted.

"You said, Miss Redfern, Christine's all morning, too. Why?"

"Oh, for some things! But, really," Babs said, "for being out of bounds and playing fast and loose these last few days."

"But—but, Miss Redfern, they can't expel her!" Judy cried. "They can't! Oh, she told me to say nothing! But if she's been breaking bounds, it's been for me. She's been helping me, Miss Redfern—helping me to get a job. Miss Redfern, she mustn't be expelled!"

Babs' face was white now.

"But—— Oh, my hat! Christine, what a fool she is! The—the silly thing! But, Judy, tell me—never mind what Christine said—why has she been doing this?"

And Judy, quivering, told. Babs' eyes snapped.

"Come on," she said. "Judy, you've got to help me to put things right. Dr. Longmore, would you do something, too, please——"

"Anything," the doctor agreed, "to help Christine."

"Then—then will you take this parcel in your car to Miss Fortescue's? And then please will you come on to the school and tell the girls about Christine's wrist? Judy, come with me—now!" she said.

And Judy, feverishly flinging off her apron, grabbed up her hat. Together she and Barbara rushed back to the school. Strangely enough, the school grounds were deserted; not a soul was to be seen. Babs' heart gave a beat of dread.

"Judy, there's a special assembly!" she gulped. "It's Christine—they're going to expel her!"

"Oh!" Judy cried.

"Come on!"

They hurried on. Up the stairs they flew and into Big Hall. At the door they paused, taking in the scene in front of them.

Miss Primrose stood on the platform. Beside her was Christine, head down-bent, as if afraid to look the school in the face. And Miss Primrose was saying:

"Never, I think, have I seen such a black record, Christine. Your temper lured you into burning the pavilion. Apart from that, you let down your

schoolfellows right and left. These last few days had been nothing but a record of breaking bounds and scorning discipline. Christine, you are expelled!"

"No!" cried Babs.

"Good gracious me!" gasped Miss Primrose.

A fluster. A craning of heads. Everybody stared.

"Miss Primrose, no!" Babs cried, and fiercely towed Judy forward. "It's not true—it's not right! Christine has been guilty of nothing except trying to do a good turn. Here you are!" she cried. "Judy, tell the school what you've told me!"

"Barbara, how dare—— Why, bless my soul—Judy Snaith!"

"Miss Primrose, please let me say something!" Judy begged, and gazed at the crimson Christine. "Let me tell you before you go any further. Christine has only been helping me."

And then, while Miss Primrose stared, and the whole school murmured, she blurted out the story. Girls looked with incredulous amazement at each other. Miss Primrose pursed her lips.

"I am glad," she said, "to hear that. Er—that certainly is a point in Christine's favour; but it does not mitigate her offence of burning down the pavilion."

"And yet," Babs said, "there is a doubt."

"A doubt, Barbara? What do you mean?"

"I mean," Babs said quietly, "that Christine was not the only girl in the pavilion when it caught alight."

"Babs," Christine said, "don't you say——"

"Barbara, what is this you are talking about? Who else was there?"

"I was," cried Doris, from the ranks of assembled Second Formers.

"You were?"

"Yes, I was." Doris came to the front. "Christine made me promise to say nothing," she said. "Christine said that she did set the pavilion alight, and that there was no sense in my getting mixed up in it, Miss Primrose. But Christine was only helping me," Doris said; and told how Christine had helped her to search for her lost toothache tincture.

"And you persist," Miss Primrose demanded, turning to Christine, "that you deliberately set the pavilion alight?"

"Yes," Christine said desperately.

"One moment, Miss Primrose!" It was Miss Charmant who came forward. "I think you had the surveyor's report of the damage, didn't you? The surveyor, in that, said most definitely that the pavilion fire was most probably caused by a match being thrown into the waste bin. Perhaps," Miss Charmant added gently, "there may have been a mistake. Christine, were you ever near the waste bin?"

"No, she wasn't!" Doris cried, but her face paled. "We divided the room into two parts for the search, and I was the one searching near the waste bin. And—and I was mad with toothache," Doris faltered. "I was rather chucking my matches about, and Christine had to tell me to be careful. If the fire started there, it must have been me. Oh, Christine, why didn't you say so?" she cried.

A dead silence now. Christine breathed deeply.

"Well, why should I have said so?" she asked. "You didn't want to get into a row, did you? In any case, Miss Bullivant was quite ready to believe it; the whole school had no hesitation in believing it."

Miss Primrose coughed. The murmur in Big Hall was swelling into a buzz.

"Christine," she said, "I think I begin to understand. Ahem! You are a queer girl—a strange girl. If you have been misunderstood, you have only yourself to blame. It seems, however, that there is a great deal of room for inquiry into your action, and until I have made that inquiry the sentence is postponed. I should be glad," Miss Primrose added, "if anyone else can throw any light upon this girl's seemingly incomprehensible conduct."

"I can," a voice said.

And there, striding on to the platform, came Dr. Longmore. While Christine collapsed into a chair, he told the school why Christine had apparently let them down in the tennis tournament. Cliff House listened; Cliff House stood spellbound.

"Well!" Clara gasped. "Well—— Oh, my hat! Kick me! Call me a fool! And all the time we never knew. We were never willing to give credit. Here we've been calling Christine an outsider, and Christine all the time has been a giddy heroine. Babs was right. Babs stuck by her when we were too blind to see she was playing straight. Three cheers for Christine!"

"And Babs!" shouted Mabel Lynn.

And the girls, in spite of Miss Primrose's presence, gave them with a will.

And later, when Christine was at last released, Clara came up to her.

"Christine, shake," she said—"if you can shake with such a fathead! I'm sorry I didn't understand. And if there is anything I can do for you——"

"You can," Babs laughed. "What about putting her in the tennis team? I'll stand down to make room for her."

But Peggy Preston grinned.

"I'm already standing down," she said. "Christine, will you?"

Would she? Christine laughed. She did play—and how she played! Whitechester, unbeaten so far, went home vanquished by four matches to one, Babs and Christine each winning both their singles; and the shining silver trophy came to Cliff House.

On the very night it came Christine, going into her study, found her own trophies ranged on the mantelpiece, while Babs and Miss Charmant stood there laughing at her bewildered face. Miss Charmant smiled tenderly.

"Christine," Miss Charmant said, "they're for you. To-day I bought them back. And, my dear, I have news."

"Good news?" Christine asked.

"Good news. Two pieces of good news, in fact," Miss Charmant smiled. "My father, who has just heard of your father's financial downfall, is lending him sufficient money to tide him over. The other news, Christine, is that Miss Primrose has decided to give you a new chance. But she says that, because of your conduct, you will not return to the Lower Fifth; you will stop in the Fourth."

Christine gulped.

"Well, that suits me. Because," she added softly, and caught Babs' arm, "I shall have Babs for my chum."

"And," Miss Charmant laughed, "your captain, too."

While Babs blushed in rosy bewilderment she dimpled.

"There," she said, pinning the captain's badge on Babs' tunic. "Are we all going to be happy now?"

"Aren't we just?" Christine said.

And she meant it.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

A gorgeous summer's day; a peaceful, enchanting river; a girlish voice, fresh and vibrant, suddenly breaking the silence in melodious song—and Barbara Redfern & Co. of Cliff House School had entered upon one of the strangest mysteries of their lives. They had never seen the singer before, but they knew her song. It was a famous air they had heard scores of times before. But never had it assumed such queer, dramatic significance as it did on that pleasant summer's afternoon; never had it brought in its train such a host of momentous happenings.

Don't miss this gay, intriguing, and very appealing COMPLETE Cliff House Story, written with all Hilda Richards' skill and charm. It appears next Saturday, so—order your copy now!

Further fascinating chapters of our grand Wild West 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.

Mr. Thornton is wounded by cattle thieves on the land of wealthy John Hampton, who owns a big, neighbouring ranch, and who is their enemy. Mr. Thornton is not seriously hurt, but people are whispering that he is really one of the men rustling cattle.

It becomes imperative that Mr. Thornton should have a new saddle exactly like his old one. Fay sends off one of the cowboys to a distant town to buy one. But in the meantime the sheriff arrives and demands to see her father's saddle. Fay is striving desperately to keep him engaged until the new saddle arrives,when suddenly her young brother, Bobbie, appears at the window. He is carrying her father's old saddle which Fay had hidden away in the loft, and which the sheriff, at all costs, mustn't see!

(Now read on.)

The Sheriff Mustn't See That Saddle!

"COO-EE, sis! Look what we've found!"

White-faced, scarcely daring to breathe, Fay stared towards the window of the ranch-house kitchen as those excited words of six-year-old Bobbie brought her whirling round from the table.

Her gaze was fixed in horror upon the bulky object he had so proudly dumped on to the sill.

Their father's saddle!

Swiftly Fay glanced at Sheriff Martin, then her nerves steadied a little. The sheriff was sipping his coffee, quite unaware that the very object he had come here to examine was at this moment being innocently displayed behind his back.

But Fay's sense of impending disaster did not dwindle. If the sheriff turned—as he might do at any second—if he saw the saddle, nothing could prevent him from discovering the very thing she had been trying so desperately to conceal.

For that saddle was scarred by a bullet hole! Fay knew that the damage had been done by some cowboys when her father was pursuing rustlers on the Hampton Ranch. But the cowboys were convinced it was one of the rustlers they had hit. What was more, they suspected her father was that man.

And the sheriff had come here to see for himself whether those suspicions were justified—whether her father was a rustler!

Fay thought at lightning speed.

Up she sprang. She did so clumsily, knocking against the table so that it shifted and heaved against the sheriff; his arm was jolted, his cup tilted, and hot coffee spilled over his breeches.

"Oh gee! Say, I'm dreadfully sorry, sheriff!" Fay gasped. "Quick! Dab your breeches with this! I am a clumsy thing!"

Fussing about him, she thrust a dry dishcloth into his hands.

"Aw, this ain't nothin' much!" the sheriff grunted and smiled.

"And dad'll, maybe, give you a five cent piece as well," Fay hastily cut him short. "Please, Bobbie, will you—now? I—I can't stop."

Nor could curly headed Bobbie, in view of two such tempting offers. He heaved the saddle off the sill and went staggering back with it towards the stable, where he and nine-year-old Ted had unearthed it; and Fay, in rather a little whirl of relief, hurried back to continue her ministrations to the sheriff.

She was white-faced, she knew, and very trembly; but the danger was past—for the moment. Her task now must be to keep the sheriff preoccupied until Tiny Shaw, their long-legged foreman, returned from Ainsworth with a new saddle exactly like the one with the ominous bullet hole.

The sheriff, while appreciating Fay's anxious attentions, nevertheless laughed the incident away.

"Reckon yuh want to mother everyone, Miss Thornton," he said teasingly, and then suddenly looked serious. "Huh!" He coughed. "But that reminds me, lass. I came here for a purpose, as I told you, an' time's gettin'

A FRESH PROBLEM FOR FAY WHEN HER YOUNG BROTHERS LEARN OF THE RUMOUR THAT THEIR FATHER IS A CATTLE THIEF!

"Wait a minute!" Fay cried. "I'll get another cloth."

She turned away. True, she did obtain another cloth, but she did not take it to the sheriff immediately; instead, she darted over to the window, and, standing so that the cloth was draped completely over the saddle, leaned out to her round-eyed young brother.

"Coo! Sis, is the sheriff very mad?" whispered Bobbie. "Is he goin' to take you to the lock-up? Sheriffs can arrest people just whenever they like——"

"Bobbie," Fay cut in tensely, but she forced a smile, "listen, dear! I—I want you to play a game of hide-and-seek. If you and Ted can put this"—she jerked her hand down towards the saddle—"where I can't find it I'll give you each extra popcorns in bed. Will you try?"

"Whooppee!" Bobbie cheered. "You bet! But suppose dad——"

on. Guess I'd like to see thet saddle o' yore dad's right now, if you don't mind."

Fay, her heart missing a beat, pretended to be perfectly calm.

"Why, sure!" she agreed. "I'll get it now."

She crossed to the doorway. And then a great wave of relief swept over her; for even as she emerged into the blazing sunlight faint but unmistakable sounds came to her ears—hoof-beats! Tiny Shaw! He was coming back at last! Why, yes, a glance out of the corners of her eyes showed his tall, mounted figure racing towards the ranch along the dusty trail from the direction of the Blue Hills. It was Tiny all right—Tiny with the saddle!

Almost frantic with anxiety, she tore across the yard and met Tiny just as he rode round to the corral. He was carrying his own saddle, but the new saddle was there on the back of his

mount; for, as the lanky, melancholy-looking cowboy sagely pointed out, it wouldn't look so new if it had been used for several hours.

Fervently Fay gasped out her thanks, took the saddle in her arms, and then, about to rush back to the sheriff, paused for a second.

"Oh, Tiny, keep the youngsters out of the way, please!" she begged.

"Sure, Miss Fay! Trust me! I get you!"

And Tiny, who knew as much about the danger to her father as Fay did herself, and realised how desperately anxious both she and Mr. Thornton were to keep any suspicion of the trouble from the ears of the two boys, gave an understanding wink, and then strode off to the stables.

If the sheriff was surprised when Fay, beaming broadly, returned with the saddle he did not show it, nor did he appear to be seeking anything as he examined it. Quite casually he turned it over, although for an instant his lips tightened as he looked at the horn. It was just there that the bullet had become embedded in the other saddle. Here—nothing!

Fay's suspense as she watched him did not last long. The sheriff was plainly satisfied.

"Sorry to have troubled you, Miss Thornton," he said gruffly, as he heaved the saddle over the back of a chair. "Guess a little hunch I had was wrong. Well, s'long! An' thanks for the entertainin'. Mighty fine corfee you make. Your dad's lucky!"

Never had Fay been so glad to see the back of anyone than at this moment. When the sheriff's sturdy figure eventually vanished round a bend in the trail she leaned against one side of the porch and drew in a deep breath of relief.

"Gee! We—we've done it!" she murmured. "Daddy's safe! Oh, I've simply got to let him know everything's all right!"

And wasn't Mr. Thornton—who had kept out of the way by taking a walk—jubilant when he did know! His bronzed, good-looking features crinkled to one huge smile, and, despite his injured arm—or, maybe, because it was so speedily healing—he gave her a simply breath-robbing hug.

"Honey, you're sure the cleverest, cutest, bravest lass I've ever met—an' I'm proud of you! If it hadn't been for yuh——"

But Fay, a twinkle in her eyes, swiftly kissed his cheek, and then skipped away.

"If it wasn't for me those young imps of ours wouldn't ever get to bed at nights," she said teasingly. "Which is a hint it's gettin' time for their bye-byes now. Bobbie! Ted!" she called from the window. "Bed-time!" And then, as she remembered: "Golly! They've still got your old saddle, dad! They're hidin' it."

Up to a point the excited boys had done their work well, for they had concealed the saddle inside an empty water-butt. Having dared the vigilant Tiny to betray the secret, and tied Rex, the wire-haired mongrel to a post, they excitedly challenged Fay the moment she appeared.

Discovering the object would have been easy. The difficulty was not to discover it. For young Bobbie gave the game away by staring intently at the butt the whole time, while nine-year-old 'Ted furiously kept turning him the other way.

Fay, though, pretended to be completely baffled. She showed utter astonishment when the saddle was produced; laughed, congratulated the triumphant boys, and saw that they received their five-cent-pieces. Then, as her father took charge of the vital article, she pick-a-backed Bobbie into their bed-room, while Ted pushed from behind.

While she undressed them, Mr. Thornton stored the incriminating saddle away in a safe place until he could remove all traces of the bullet-hole. Then he went to thank Tiny for his loyal assistance.

The boys in bed, Fay obtained a double ration of popcorn, the second half of their reward. There was a skirmish going on when she returned to the room.

"Bobbie—Ted!" she exclaimed. "Good gracious, you've no right to play about with that! Give it to me at once!"

"Sorry, sis," Ted muttered, and handed over the object with which he and Bobbie had been having a tug-of-war. "We wondered what was in it!"

Fay took the object. It was a large, bulky saddlebag which Ted had found in Redland Gulch during the rodeo that afternoon. Of course, she'd have to return it.

"Good-night, Bobbie!" she said, kissing him. "Good-night, Ted!" She kissed him, too. "Here are your popcorns. And now—no more noise until morning!"

"Good-night, sis!" they chorused.

Out Fay went, gently closing the door. Her father, pouring himself out some coffee, smiled as she appeared. Then he stared.

"Hallo, whose bag's that, honey?"

"Oh, just one young Ted found at the rodeo!" Fay said, and placed it on the table. "I'll have to take it back!"

But, about to draw up her chair, she paused, her eyes on the bag. Mr. Thornton was also gazing at it, cup poised in mid-air, an extraordinary expression on his face.

"Why, lass," he began, "ain't thet the——"

He broke off, but Fay knew what he had been about to say. She, too, had seen the object which protruded from one side of the bag, where the strap had become unfastened.

It was a short iron, a smaller edition of what people in these parts knew as running-irons. And a running-iron is used for altering the brands on cattle!

In other words, it was a cattle-thief's indispensible tool!

Her Brothers Knew!

IT was an excited exclamation from Mr. Thornton that broke the short, electric silence in the ranch-house kitchen. Slapping down his cup, he seized the saddlebag, thrust it between his knees, gripped it, and then,

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

MY DEAR READERS,—I simply must tell you all about next week's Cliff House story straight away, not only because it's such a very delightful one in every respect, but partly because I want to have some space for Replies in Brief.

From the dramatic theme of the Christine and Babs series, which concludes in this issue, we pass to something different—a river regatta, and also a girl with a glorious voice with whom Babs & Co. become friendly.

The regatta provides heaps of glamour and colour; the girl with the lovely voice provides lots of charm and appeal. But she also provides mystery, too. At least, the most delightful of lullabies does. For, you see, this strange girl sings that lullaby. It has, in some queer, inexplicable way, a fascination for her. Sing it she does, to Babs & Co's enchantment.

But at the same time it is that haunting little melody which gives rise to the most thrilling and puzzling happenings, and produces: "BABS & CO.'S REGATTA PROBLEM!" Don't miss Hilda Richards' latest wonderful story, will you?

As usual, of course, next Saturday's issue will contain another topping COMPLETE story of "Cousin George and 'The Imp,'" further fascinating chapters of "Girl Rider of the Blue Hills," more of Pat's Bright and Interesting Pages, and another Cliff House Pet. So order your copy well in advance.

And now for some of those

LITTLE LETTERS

mentioned right at the beginning. Here they are—and I'm sorry if some of you have had a long time to wait for your replies.

Winnie Thompson (Norton Hardwick).—So glad you're better now, Winnie. There's nothing more tedious than having to stay in bed, is there? I only hope the SCHOOLGIRL helped to cheer you up.

"Mary."—Quite right, Mary, you would be in the Upper Third at Cliff House. What a dear little fellow that robin is! I wonder if he'll come back again next year. Best wishes!

"Cherry" (Thornton Heath).—Delighted to hear from you yet again. I think that's a topping idea of yours regarding Pat's Pages. Pat asked me to send you her love.

"Brown Eyes."—I was sorry to hear about your pet. Perhaps you will be having another soon. No, I do not edit the other paper you mention. Please write again whenever you like.

Dorothy (Sinfin, Derby).—Oh, no, Dorothy, I don't think it queer that you should read your favourite story last. It is very human to save up the best thing until the end. And many readers tell me they do this.

"Scottie" (Glasgow).—Lucky girl to have been to the Empire Exhibition! I have heard how marvellous it is from friends of mine, and would love to be able to snatch off time to visit it myself.

"Anxious."—There is no likelihood of your wish being granted at the moment, I'm afraid, "Anxious," but if sufficient readers desire the same thing I will see what can be done in the future. Please write again.

Audrey Godden (Scunthorpe).—I'm very sorry, but for various reasons I cannot grant your request. I am sure you will understand.

Well, now I really must say good-bye until next week.

With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR.

with his uninjured hand, feverishly began undoing the other strap.

The bag belonged to a rustler! Of that there seemed no possible doubt. And when Fay, suddenly diving in a hand, produced a red handkerchief mask, she and her father were positive.

"And a photo, lass." He held up a slip of pasteboard, about the size of a postcard. "Huh, don't know the guy!" he said, shaking his head. "But that can wait. What's this? Aha! A watch—a gold watch, an' a mighty expensive one, too, by the looks of it!"

There was little else in the bag besides masculine odds and ends, cigarettes, penknife, a packet of chewing-gum. But Fay and her father had found more than sufficient. They looked at each other, Fay, with bright, gleaming eyes; he, with eyes that had narrowed thoughtfully.

"Oh, daddy, it's a clue!" she cried, a hand settling upon his. "Maybe it'll help us! If only we can find out who owns this saddlebag—who this chap is. If we do, it may lead us to the real rustlers—the pack of curs for whose sneaking thefts you're being blamed! Why, daddy——"

Her voice rang with excited hope.

"Why, it might even clear you altogether!"

"You're right, honey," he said tensely. "This stuff belongs to a rustler all right; an' it seems pretty certain it belongs to one o' *the* rustlers. To-morrow I'll take that photo an' do some investigatin'. But in the meantime we'd better put these things away somewhere, honey."

Saddlebag, running-iron, and mask were thrust into one of the cupboards of the huge dresser, and the key put under an egg-cup. Mr. Thornton tucked the photo into his hip-pocket, and, as Fay turned, laid a hand on her arm.

"Honey, lass," he said, smiling, "I think things may be on the turn. It all depends on what I can find out to-morrow."

"Not all to-morrow, dad, surely!" Fay said, with a tantalising little pout.

"To-morrow?" Her father frowned. "But I sure don't—aw, gee, what a bonehead I am!" he reproached himself. "Yore birthday, lass!"

Fay laughed. So had she almost forgotten in all the stress and turmoil of these last few days of hectic drama. But she didn't mean to forget it any longer.

"So just you make sure you get back in mighty good time, dad," she said threateningly. "I'm going to give everyone a treat!"

But it also seemed that everyone else had secretly decided to give Fay a treat; for, although she and her father had overlooked the great day to a certain extent, it hadn't been forgotten completely by any of them, as she discovered next morning.

First of all, as she was preparing the usual breakfast of beans, bacon, and tomatoes, Tiny Shaw led an embarrassed cavalcade of cowboys into the kitchen. They halted, removed their hats, shuffled, looked at each other, at the ceiling, at the floor, and at their own feet, and then, while Tiny stood there, gulping and twisting his hat in his hands, gave him a concerted push forward.

"Hallo!" said Fay, in seeming surprise, turning from the sizzling frying-pans. "What's the matter?"

But she knew. This pantomime took place every year. And her heart glowed with happiness.

"Waal, Miss—Miss Fay," Tiny began, his long face more melancholy than ever, "we—that is, th'—th' rest o' th' outfit an' me—we—we know that it is to-day—what it is for you, that is—an' —an' we figgered thet, as you're such a —such a mighty square-shootin' little miss, an' look after us so well, we'd better—we oughter—we sorter just had to——" He stopped, gulped, and then thrust out one hand. "Aw, shucks, I ain't no speechifier! Here's a present!"

And as Fay, blushing but radiant, stepped forward to take a dainty box of handkerchiefs, Tiny gestured like a conductor; whereupon the other six cowboys came out like a well-trained choir with a hearty:

"Happy birthday, Miss Fay!"

Fay's eyes were sparkling, her cheeks a rosy red.

"Oh, thank you, boys! They're lovely, and you're darlings, all of you!"

A term of endearment which so inspired the cowpunchers that they kept her busy for nearly twenty minutes ladling out beans, bacon, and tomatoes.

No sooner had they departed for the work of the day than Mr. Thornton appeared, and he, too, had a present for her.

Fay's face softened as she took it. Almost reverently, she held it in her palm—the dinkiest little silver wrist-watch she had ever seen.

"Oh, daddy, you're the sweetest thing ever!" she breathed. "But you oughtn't to have done it. It must have cost a mighty lot of money. I—I'd have been just as pleased with something else."

"But you wanted that, didn't you, honey?" he said, smiling. "Well, then. I don't mind the expense. 'Sides, I bought it weeks ago."

Fondly Fay kissed him. She was too happy to protest any further. But her cup of joy was not yet filled, for presently Bobbie and Ted emerged, to make their own little offerings in their own different ways. Golden-haired Bobbie, struggling to be first, thrust out a wee bottle of scent at armslength. And then Ted, serious-faced, held out a box of candies.

Fay, dropping to her knees, put an arm about each and drew their cheeks close to hers.

But only for a moment. Ted was getting too big for much display of sentiment, and Bobbie too impatient, except when he felt like it. So almost at once she jumped up and sent them to their places at the table.

As her father was going into Redland Gulch that morning on the trail of the owner of the photo, he and the boys, bound for school in the town, set off together.

Fay waved them out of sight, and then turned back into the kitchen.

Briskly she set to work. There was heaps to do—the dinner to prepare for the outfit; a multitude of other household tasks to perform; and then, in the afternoon, cakes, jellies, blancmanges, trifles, and a host of other delicacies for the party to be made.

But she loved every moment of it. Time simply flew. And she had quite a shock, while busy grooming her range pony, Starlight, in the corral, to discover that it was almost time she met the boys from school at the fork in the trail.

Quickly she returned to the kitchen. Then she pulled up short.

"Why, you boys!" she exclaimed. "You're back very early to-day—and by yourselves, too!"

For Bobbie and Ted were over by the sink. Bobbie, tongue in rosy cheek and rocking on his heels, seemed bursting with some uncontrollable impulse, while the elder boy was washing his face.

"'Lo, sis!" Ted mumbled through the flannel. "Guess we are kinder early. Come on, Bobbie!" he added, in a sort of hiss.

And, holding the flannel to his face, he began to push his young brother towards their room. Fay stepped in front of them. Her surprise and curiosity at their unexpected return had given way to a strange sort of uneasy wonderment.

"Just a moment, boys!" she said gently. "Ted"—she laid a hand on his shoulder—"what's the matter with your face?"

"Oh, nun-nothing, sis—nothing! Is there, Bobbie?" Ted said, with a desperate glare at the younger one.

"Coo, no! Nuffink at all! You can't see anything now you've got the blood off!"

Fay's heart went cold.

"Blood?" she cried. "Oh, Ted, you're hurt! Let me look, please!" Despite his struggles, she dragged the flannel

EXCITEDLY Fay and her father examined the contents of the saddlebag. Both were convinced that it belonged to a cattle thief. "If only we can find out who owns this saddlebag!" Fay cried breathlessly. "Why, daddy, it might clear you altogether!"

aside, revealing a bruise just under one eye. "Goodness!" she said, and stared at him. "How ever did you get that?"

Ted, glowering down at the floor, turned his head towards Bobbie.

"You would go an' give the game away, you little baby!" he snapped.

"I'm not a baby! I'm not—so there!" Bobbie shrilled. "I hit that nasty boy right on the ear, and I was going to hit him again, only teacher——"

"So that's it?" said Fay, and her concern was mingled now with a swift alternation between pride and annoyance. "So you've been fighting, Ted? Why?"

"Only a row, I guess!" Ted growled.

"Who with?"

"One of the boys—a big boy. It—it was just a row."

"He said——" Bobbie began, then gave a yelp as Ted swung round.

"You keep quiet!" the elder boy said fiercely.

"That's not the way to talk to your brother, Ted!" Fay quietly reproved him. "And, please, Bobbie, wait until I speak to you! Now, then, old man"—she put an arm about Ted's shoulders—"tell me all about it. What were you quarrelling over?"

Doggedly Ted shook his head.

"I ain't gonna say, sis!"

And he wouldn't say.

"All right!" said Fay, drawing a deep breath. "I didn't want to have to do this, but I suppose I must. What was it, Bobbie?"

"You dare!" Ted burst out, ominously glaring at his brother.

But at a frown from Fay he drew back and looked on surlily.

"Now, then, old man, don't be afraid. I'm not going to be angry with either of you," Fay said, drawing Bobbie to her. "What was all the trouble about?"

"'Bout what the boys were saying," Bobbie faltered, big-eyed.

"And what were they saying, Bobbie?"

Somehow Fay, a sensation of terrible emptiness inside her, knew what Bobbie's piping answer would be even before it came.

"They—they were sayin' that daddy's one of those nasty rustlers!"

Trouble at the School!

FAY'S heart seemed to stop beating altogether.

The very thing she and daddy had been so fervently anxious to avert had happened at last. The boys knew of the rumours which pointed the finger of suspicion at their father, and now they, like she, had actually become embroiled because of them!

"But they mustn't understand how bad things are even now," Fay mused frantically. And somehow she forced herself to smile, then to give quite a little chuckle. "Oh, you poor old thing!" she said to Ted. "You have got a nasty eye, and all over some silly story——"

"But that boy meant it, sis. I'm plumb sure he did. And, sis"—Ted's features were anxious now—"dad ain't a rustler, is he? It's not true, is it? I said it wasn't true, an'—an'——"

Fay chuckled again.

"It's just the craziest thing I ever heard of!" she declared. "Of course, that fellow didn't mean it! None of the boys did."

Gradually, by her attitude of mild amusement at the very suggestion that the taunts had been sincere, Fay managed to convince her young brothers. And she also extracted from them a full story of what had happened.

The school teacher, it seemed, had come upon the scene when Ted's scrap was in progress. Several other boys had become involved by then, including plucky young Bobbie, who had gone to his elder brother's help. And the mistress had sent the Thorntons home for the day."

Having tended Ted's cheek, Fay set the boys playing near the vegetable patch. Then she saddled her stocky little range pony, Starlight, and set off for Redland Gulch.

For she was determined not only to try to banish the rumours which had now involved her innocent young brothers, but also to prevent a repetition of such trouble as this.

It was when she was within sight of the little township that three other riders came into view around a bend in front of her, travelling towards her. They rode abreast—a fat, swarthy-faced man, the elegant figure of a girl dressed in spick-and-span riding habit, and a young man who seemed to have paid even more attention to the dictates of an English riding school. He looked simply immaculate.

Fay, recognising them at once, tightened grip on her reins.

John Hampton, owner of the enormous Lazy T Ranch adjoining the Flying H; his supercilious, snobbish daughter, Lucille; and Douglas Lessiter, a young Englishman, one of his aristocratic guests.

If the Hamptons had been alone, Fay would have passed them without any sign of recognition. They had never been friends of hers or daddy's. Indeed, since all this trouble had arisen, they had practically come into the open as enemies. For Hampton—who coveted the small Flying H holding—and his daughter as well, had made no attempt to conceal the fact that they believed the rumours about Mr. Thornton.

But Douglas Lessiter was different. Even though Fay had actually caught him spying upon her father; even though he puzzled her; even though she felt sure he was up to some mysterious game of his own, she liked him.

And so, as they drew abreast, she glanced at Douglas, smiling and nodding, and meaning to ride on. But Hampton reined in sharply.

"Just a moment—you!" he said curtly.

Fay stopped, her eyes flashing at his rudeness.

"You spoke to me, Mr. Hampton?" she said.

Hampton half-sneered.

"Who did you think?" he snapped. "Of course I spoke to you! But it's nothing much—just to let you know there's a little surprise awaiting you in town, that's all! Come on, Lucille!"

He rode on. Lucille, flashing Fay a look of mingled amusement and triumph, followed him, with a haughty toss of her head. And then, as Fay stared after them in wonderment, she felt someone touch her arm.

"I've an idea I may be seeing you shortly, old thing," Douglas whispered, his blue eyes seeming to convey some hidden message. "Chin up, you know!"

And then he, too, was gone.

Fay's forehead puckered. Strange! What did Hampton mean? What did Douglas mean?

"Oh, I give it up, Starlight!" she said, all at once. "Kimmon, old boy! We've other things to attend to."

But it so happened that those other things had a distinct bearing on the cryptic remarks of their hostile neighbour, as Fay discovered after only a few moments' conversation with the schoolmistress.

Miss Doreen Lee, young and attractive, and adored by her scholars, was at the same time extremely capable. To-day she was also extremely serious.

"I'm just as sorry as you are, Miss Thornton," she declared, "that this trouble has arisen. It's really most unfortunate; but you can see how I'm placed, I'm sure. Order and discipline have got to be maintained. If they're not, I am held responsible."

"Sure I know that, Miss Lee," Fay agreed. "I guess I wouldn't have your job for the whole of Texas. But even if my boys did wrong, I think you'll agree that they had some excuse. Their father was called a—called by the most despicable name anyone could be called," she finished grimly. "That's why I'm here. I want everyone to know—I want you and all your scholars to know that those rumours aren't true, Miss Lee; that they're the beastliest lies ever invented, and that Ted an' Bobbie are——"

Understandingly, and yet very determinedly, the young mistress interposed.

"I'm not saying they aren't, Miss Thornton," she said. "I don't believe them, for one." And then as Fay flashed her a look of deep, glowing gratitude, she added, tight-lipped: "But if those rumours persist in stirring up trouble here, Miss Thornton, then—then I'm afraid there's only one thing to be done. Your boys will have to leave!"

Fay drew a deep breath.

"Did you know Mr. Hampton had cancelled a treat for this afternoon because of this trouble?" the mistress went on.

"Mr. Hampton?" Fay said sharply. "A—a treat? Why, no!"

The mistress explained. In rising indignation Fay listened. She understood now. This was Hampton's surprise. The school had been invited to a beanfeast at his ranch this afternoon, but he had cancelled it on the grounds that the scholars were unable to behave themselves, and he didn't want his precious garden turned into a shambles.

(Continued on page 24)

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

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Boundary!

"BUT, Cousin George, I don't see if other girls are going, why I can't go to the match, too!" protested Hetty Sonning.

And it really did not seem reasonable at all. Hetty—otherwise known as the Imp—had played cricket at her boarding-school, and had earned a useful reputation as a swiper, until things had come to such a pass that the headmistress had actually stepped in and forbidden her to play unless she paid for the damage herself.

At any rate, Hetty knew enough about cricket to understand what was going on; and she particularly liked plum cake. In fact, she was looking forward more to the idea that would be given after the boys' school cricket match than to the actual play itself.

But she did not tell Cousin George that. Since the Imp had come to stay with her Aunt Miriam and Cousin George, she had learned the meaning of tact. Tact was knowing the wrong thing to say, and not saying it.

Her Cousin George, more than two years her senior, and a prefect at his school, was a lordly fellow, who seemed to look down on Hetty from a great height, and although she was very fond of him, there were times when the Imp felt like ruffling his hair.

At the moment, standing in the garden of his mother's house, a shiny new cricket ball in his hand, Cousin George seemed perched upon a pinnacle.

"My dear Hetty," he said, in his most crushing tone, "if I felt that you knew how to behave yourself, I should be pleased to let you watch the match; but it would be asking too much of you. Besides, if I know you, it's the tea you're really interested in."

The Imp hid a smile.

"My friend Jill went last year," she continued, "and she said they had cake as well as jam, and it was awfully good fun. When the Head got up from one end of a form, two boys at the other end fell flop on the floor and broke five cups."

It was slightly exaggerated, and Hetty was teasing; but it really did not help her case.

"Yes, that would stick in your friend Jill's mind as the piece de resistance," said Cousin George, with a slightly French accent. "However, make up your mind to it, Hetty—you are not going."

He tossed the ball up idly, and went to catch it a little too idly. It eluded him and bumped on to the hard stone path. Picking it up, he frowned at the slight mark.

"New ball, too," he said. "I had the job of buying it as treasurer. Seventeen-and-sixpence."

"Phew—for a ball!" whistled the Imp. "We used to play with a compo ball costing a bob."

Cousin George did not deign to answer, but sauntered towards the lawn, and idly swung his bowling arm over to make sure that it was really free and not jamming anywhere.

Watching him, the Imp sighed; for his heart had not melted at all. All her life she would be haunted by the fact that at her boarding-school she

When the IMP showed pompous Cousin George how to hit a cricket ball, she little knew it would mean he'd have to disguise as an Indian sailor!

had been known as the Imp, and it seemed to her that she would never live down the fact that she and her headmistress had agreed to differ, and to go their separate ways. Actually, the headmistress had stayed where she was—at the school. It was Hetty who had gone a different way—to stay with Cousin George, and to attend a day school.

"I can't go then?" she asked.

"No."

Cousin George tosssed the ball down the lawn. Hitting a small bump, it jerked sideways.

"Ha! See that cunning break I got on it then?" he asked.

"Jolly cunning," said Hetty eagerly. "I bet you'll bowl them all out. I bet you're a googly bowler. Bob Biggs was. Bob Biggs," she said, warming up, "could make a ball break backwards sometimes! Why, he even had me guessing!"

Hetty was annoyed, and she thought it time to take the rise out of Cousin George. And there was no surer way than by mentioning Bob Biggs.

It happened that Bob Biggs was purely a figment of her imagination, who she pretended to be a wonderful boy who could do everything. Beside him Cousin George was a mere woof, a nincompoop, a jitterer.

"Bob Biggs!" said Cousin George, in scorn. "Huh! There seems to be nothing he couldn't do! And, anyway, I should think a bowler who couldn't get you guessing was pretty poor."

The Imp picked up his bat, which was leaning against the wall.

"Of course, Bob was a fearfully fast bowler, but then he was strong," she added, looking Cousin George up and down sympathetically.

Cousin George scowled.

"I suppose I'm weak? Well, any fool can bowl fast. It's cunning, slow bowling that needs skill. If you think you can bat, just try one of these slows."

He waved his hand to send her down the lawn, and the Imp galloped away to about twenty yards' distance, and took a tight grip on the bat.

"Now," said Cousin George, wrapping his fingers artfully about the ball, "just see what you can do with this!"

"Can I hit it?" asked Hetty eagerly.

"You may hit it—although I doubt your ability to," he said, smiling. "I rather fancy you will miss it completely."

"Bet you I slash it for six," said Hetty.

Cousin George gave a short laugh. He had never seen Hetty play cricket!

"Certainly, smash it over the roof if you can," he said. "Knock the cover off the ball, send it out into the road."

Walking back seven paces, he smoothed the ball in his hand, placed his fingers to get the best advantage of the sharp seam, and then took his tripping, deceptive run forward.

There was grace in his delivery, and his arm went over smoothly. Bowling a good length, he intended the ball to break back, going past Hetty's legs while her bat idly beat the air in the usual girlish manner.

By IDA MELBOURNE

So thought Cousin George; but as the ball left his hand, the Imp, bat swung back, made a tiger-like spring. Down whistled the bat, and as the ball pitched she caught it.

As a cricket stroke it was not perhaps pretty to watch, being more reminiscent of someone with a scythe cutting grass, but there was power in it, and the timing was perfect.

The new ball went winging away to leg in a graceful curve, over the greenhouse, over a young tree—and straight for the wall of the house next door.

Cousin George stood rooted to the lawn. His eyes almost bulged as he saw the ball deliberately, and with evil intent, swing towards a window.

Then:

Crash! came the sound of shattering glass.

Up to Cousin George!

"GOLLY!"

The Imp dropped the bat, and drew a breath. It had been a grand swipe without any particular object in view, and as such it was a success. But the sound of breaking glass awoke painful memories of boarding school, and if anyone knew what a window cost to repair, Hetty did.

"Gosh!" said Cousin George, in horror.

"Bunk—hide!" urged Hetty. "The Skipper's at home!"

Cousin George turned to her, his face red.

"Of all the lunatics!" he gasped.

"Well, you told me to hit it as hard as I could."

The argument was interrupted by what appeared to be the roar of a wounded tiger; and the sound came from the house next door.

"The Skipper!" said Hetty. "Wow!"

The broken window was hurled up, and there appeared a very red face fringed with white whiskers. Captain Storm, late of the Merchant Service, and known locally as the Skipper, glowered out.

"Who threw that ball?" he roared, in his best hurricane voice.

"I—I——" murmured Cousin George.

"You son of a sea cook! Come here, and I'll thrash you!" roared the Skipper. "That ball has bust the glass of the picture of the ship I first went to sea in in '84—no, '85!"

"Oh golly!" said the Imp.

Cousin George stepped forward.

"Sir, I am extremely sorry that such a thing has happened," he said. "It was a pure accident, and I take part of the blame myself. The damage shall be paid for, and I trust you will be kind enough to return the ball."

Captain Storm roared out again:

"Don't stand there yammering! Say something intelligent!"

The Imp nudged Cousin George.

"He's deaf," she said. "You'll have to shout."

"I'm sorry!" howled Cousin George. "I'll pay for the damage! But—but that's our match-ball! Can I have it back?"

The Skipper let out a snort.

"You'll have a whack all right! Come to the fence!"

He disappeared from the window, and Cousin George turned to the Imp blankly.

"He thought I said whack! How'm I going to make him understand?" he groaned. "I might have guessed this would happen. A seventeen-and-sixpenny ball!"

The Imp sighed worriedly.

"Well, I'm sorry. But when you tossed down that lob, I had to hit it. Bob Biggs always said 'slosh the sloppy ones for six.'"

"That was a jolly good ball," retorted Cousin George. "It was just a fluke you hit it. Don't you dare——"

But at that moment the Skipper, standing at the dividing fence, called him across.

"Come into my garden, young man!" he said. "I've got a rope-end here!"

Cousin George did not accept the invitation. Speaking loudly, he explained.

"I'll pay for the window——"

"Of course you'll pay for the window!" snorted the Skipper. "Think I'm going to? I'm not barmy, my lad!"

"Yes; but that's a match-ball. It cost seventeen-and-sixpence. They want it this afternoon!" groaned Cousin George.

Then the Imp stepped forward.

"Please, I hit the ball," she said.

The Skipper frowned at her, and his whiskers bristled.

"Don't talk blarney to me!" he frowned. "A girl couldn't have given a hard ball a slosh like that. I know who did it all right. He did! And he can have the ball back to-morrow, and he can have a whacking to-day—and now. Come on, and be a man! Get it over!"

"I'm not going to take a whacking!" said Cousin George indignantly. "I'm a prefect at our school."

"Don't blame me for the barmy way you run your school," said the Skipper. "I've been to all the trouble of routing out this old rope-end, and it's going to be used!"

It was no use arguing with the Skipper. He had been right on every point he made ever since he had been a Skipper, and that was going back to the days when steamships were novelties.

The Imp tried a little charm.

"Please, captain, be nice!" she urged. "I hit the ball, really I did, and I can prove it. If you let us have the ball back, I'll slosh it again!"

"That ball stays where it is!" said the Skipper.

He turned aside then, for his maid-of-all-work had just emerged, dressed for an afternoon's outing.

"Well, and where are you going?" he demanded.

"It's Wednesday, and that's my day off, and I'm not used to being shouted at!" sniffed the girl. "And if I'm shouted at again, I won't come back!"

The Skipper let out a snort, lifted his peaked cap, and scowled as she flounced round and went off.

"A nice thing!" he muttered. "Expecting a visitor, too."

The Imp had an idea.

"Can I come in and help, please?" she asked. "If you're expecting a visitor, captain, I could get tea——"

"My visitor's a seaman, and I don't want anyone dancing attendance on a seaman!" he said.

"Oh!" said Hetty, feeling that it was better to talk about the seaman than the ball at the moment. "An old shipmate? I should think you could tell some thrilling shark stories, and sea-monster yarns——"

"Now, look here; no blarney," he said, knitting his brows. "You're not getting that ball back, not until this coward takes his hiding. That seaman's no friend of mine, either. I've never set eyes on him before. Probably a good-for-nothing young waster."

Cousin George felt that they were getting nowhere.

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"I'm afraid I must insist on having my property returned, sir," he said coldly. "The fact that the ball broke your window does not give you the right to keep it."

"No? Well, you try to get it back, me lad!" said the Skipper, moving away. "If you shy your cricket balls into my window that's your loss. Have your whacking and the ball's yours."

As Cousin George, looking pale and grim, turned away, the Imp took his arm.

"Cousin George, I'm fearfully sorry!" she said guiltily.

"Oh, that's all right!" he said gruffly. "I don't blame you more than myself. Flukes can always happen, and I should have remembered it."

"Couldn't they use another ball?" asked Hetty.

"That's the only new ball, and I can't say I forgot to get it. They may want the seventeen-and-sixpence to buzz off to the village for another," said Cousin George wretchedly.

Hetty folded her arms.

"Then we've got to get that one back," she said softly, "even if it means breaking in. I'll break in somehow, if you keep him talking."

"Oh, no, you won't! We're in trouble enough already."

Hetty pursed her lips.

"Well, suppose—— My golly!" she exclaimed brightening. "Suppose I put on one of Nellie's outfits, cap and apron, and go as a maid?"

Cousin George gave a scoffing laugh.

"You'll be suggesting next that I dress up as the seaman he's expecting. You always get such crazy—— Gosh!" And he thumped his fist into the palm of his hand, his face lighting up. "Wonder if I could!"

"What? Go there as the seaman?" said Hetty eagerly. "With a red beard? Phew—yes! I say, what fun!"

"Fun! This is serious for me," retorted Cousin George bitterly.

"What a pity Bob isn't here!" sighed Hetty. "He'd pull it off. He could dress up as a seaman easily, especially with that yachting cap uncle left, and the reefer jacket."

Cousin George looked her full in the face and gave a whistle.

"My gosh! With dark trousers, that reefer jacket, yachting cap, and my navy blue sweater. Phew! Wonder if I dare!"

Hetty's eyes shone. Why shouldn't Cousin George make a presentable young sailor? With his face darkened, wearing the red wig they had upstairs, and sun glasses, he would not be recognised.

"I'm not a coward. I'm not afraid of being whacked. But there is such a thing as justice," frowned Cousin George. "Besides, if I had a whacking with a rope-end it would spoil my bowling, and the team's rather relying on me as second change bowler, you know."

"Then take a chance," urged Hetty. "For the sake of the team. It's the only way to get the ball. Once in the house, it's as good as yours. It's in that room upstairs."

Cousin George, with a little more encouragement, made up his mind.

"I'll do it!" he said. "And you'd better help."

High Jinks Next Door!

"NOW that," said the Imp, with pleasure, as she regarded her Cousin George's face through half-closed eyes, "is what I call an improvement."

Cousin George looked at himself in the mirror, and looked again. He was changed. He was heavily sunburned, and he looked five years older; added to which, the reefer jacket made to fit his uncle, and now padded to fit him, gave him a burlier appearance than normal.

Captain Storm had seen him but rarely, and at a distance. Being short-sighted, he was hardly likely to notice details keenly, and there could be no suspicion in his mind that the supposed seaman was really Cousin George.

"I'll keep the Skipper talking at the fence, and you go to the front door," said Hetty. "If you can get in without knocking, so much the better. If not, go to the side gate."

"That's an idea," admitted Cousin George.

The Imp left him to use his wits, and hurried back to the garden, standing at the fence, coughing, until she had attracted the Skipper's attention.

"Lovely afternoon it's turned out," she said chattily.

The Skipper glowered.

"Don't try any blarney. You're not getting that ball back."

"It won't be any good soon; the match starts in half an hour," said Hetty. "Cousin George will have to buy a new one."

"Serve him right! And you stop chattering. I shan't hear if the bell rings."

"What sort of seaman is coming?" asked Hetty casually. "A real sailor—a naval man, all handsome and sun-bronzed?"

The Skipper gave a guffaw.

"He's bronzed all right; he's a Hindu," he said.

Hetty nearly collapsed.

"A—a—a Hindu?" she faltered. "Oh! Oh golly!" she added softly.

She dropped from the fence, stood for a moment dazed, then ran frantically to warn Cousin George. A Hindu! Excellent though Cousin George's disguise was, it was not equal to that strain on it.

By luck Hetty found him in the front doorway of the house, just about to ring.

"Go back!" he hissed.

"'Sh! Stop! You're supposed to be a Hindu!" she whispered frantically.

"I'LL soon see whether you're a real Indian or not," roared the old salt. "Take off your shoes and stand on those nails!" The disguised Cousin George nearly collapsed. Hetty, looking over the fence, groaned. It looked as if the game was up.

"A Hindu? Bosh! He didn't say so," objected George.

"He said so just now. He did really. My golly! Lucky we've got some black grease-paint!" sighed Hetty.

Back to their house in panic Cousin George went, and five minutes later he returned, his face, hands, and every visible portion of his flesh darkened.

By this time there was no need for him to ring, for the Skipper met him advancing by the side gate from the garden.

"Ha, there you are!" said the Skipper, while Hetty stood by the fence, listening. "Come right into the garden."

Cousin George, quaking, went with him.

Then the Imp bobbed into view over the fence.

"O-oh—the Hindu sailor!" she gasped. "O-oo-er!"

"Yes. The Hindu sailor. And no ordinary one. He may call himself a fakir, but my idea is he's a fake," said the Skipper.

"A fake? Oh, no, no!" said Cousin George tremulously.

"Huh! Well, if you are a fake," said the Skipper, in his booming voice, "it'll be the worse for you. Claim to be able to walk through fire without getting burned, eh?"

"Who, me?" gasped Cousin George.

"Say you can sit on nails without getting hurt? Well, I've got some nails on a board—some nice, sharp ones, you can sit on!"

Cousin George had never had the slightest inclination to sit on nails.

"Don't try running away," said the Skipper, crossing to a kennel and loosening a large, mysterious black dog. "One word from you, and he'll get you by the heels."

The dog sniffed round Cousin George's heels to get his bearings, while the Imp, gaping, just stared at the extraordinary board which the Skipper brought forward. It was studded with nails, points uppermost.

"Now then," said the Skipper. "Take your shoes and socks off, and stand on this, as a start."

Cousin George nearly collapsed.

"St-stand on it?" he quavered.

"Speak up!"

"He's deaf!" yelled Hetty, over the fence.

"You skip off!" snapped Captain Storm irritably. "You don't even know what a fakir is!"

"Yes, I do. I saw one at the circus," said Hetty quickly. "They can have swords run through them, and hot needles, and they don't feel a thing. They can walk through flames, and not be burned."

Cousin George gaped at her.

"Do you think I'm going to walk through flames——" he began.

"Come on, if you're not a fraud! Take your shoes off!" said the Skipper, and picked up a rope's end. "Someone's been trying to pull my leg, and my pal's leg, and if you've been a party to it, young fellow, the worse for you. Watch him, Fido!" he added to the dog.

Cousin George went limp. For the game was up. He had not thought it necessary to blacken his feet, and once his shoes and socks were taken off he'd be revealed as an impostor.

For one awful moment Hetty thought that the Skipper had seen through their trick! But she decided, after thought, that he was acting too well, if that were so. He was in deadly earnest. And besides, he had prepared the board well in advance. That showed he believed he was dealing with a real Hindu.

But Cousin George was doomed. He could not carry it off. And it could be only a matter of moments before the Skipper, his suspicions roused, either decided he was a fraud as a Hindu fakir, or else that he was not even a Hindu.

And then Cousin George would get the whacking, perhaps Fido at his ankles; but not the ball.

Time was passing, too. The match would be due to begin soon.

"Well?" said the skipper.

Cousin George could find no words, and Hetty, in the hour of need, knew that she must go to the rescue.

"What? You want him to stand on those nails? Poof! Who couldn't?" she asked.

"You couldn't," said the Skipper.

"A shilling if I do?" asked Hetty.

The Skipper stared at her.

"What? You'll stand on those nails, in bare feet, for a shilling?" he asked.

"Try me!" said Hetty.

She took a jump, clambered up the fence, and rolled over neatly into his garden.

Standing on one foot, she took off one shoe and stocking. In a moment both were off.

"Hetty, for goodness' sake——" George gasped.

But luckily, the Skipper's hardness of hearing prevented his catching the words; and the Imp spoke quickly.

"Get me some hot water, Hindu!" she commanded.

And there was a look in her eye which he suddenly read and understood. He turned to the kitchen and hurried in.

"Right-hand tap!" said the Skipper.

The back door closed, and Hetty tested the nails with her finger while apparently waiting for the hot water. A minute passed—two—three—five!

"Where on earth has he gone?" demanded the Skipper; and he banged open the back door, looked about him in the empty kitchen, and then stamped into the house, calling:

"Hi, you!"

Hetty heard him, picked up stockings and shoes, as well as a stone. She threw the stone for Fido to fetch, and then jumped at the fence, climbed up, rolled over, and tore like mad into the house.

At the foot of the stairs she almost cannoned into Cousin George.

And in his hand was a new cricket ball, marred by a slight gash from broken glass, but otherwise perfect.

"READY, HETTY?" asked Cousin George, ten minutes later, pausing at the door of her room.

The Imp opened it and looked out. Her cousin, red-faced and shiny, was clad in immaculate flannels and blazer, and carrying a cricket bag.

"Ready for what?" she asked innocently.

"The match. You might as well come along," he said, a little gruffly. "I mean, but for you we shouldn't have had the ball; and, what's more——" He grinned. "Gosh, I bet the Skipper's raging!"

Hetty, ready for the match, stepped on to the landing, and they both stared out of the window at the garden of the house next door.

In that garden was the Skipper, Fido—and a Hindu, who stood bare-footed on that very same board of nails!

"Golly, he's not a fake!" said Hetty. "Or else anyone can do it. I've a good mind to go back and earn that bob!"

But she did not, after all. Cousin George linked an arm with hers and led her downstairs. Then, at top speed, they rode to the match.

It was a close game, well worth watching, and it was when the school's opponents, with four wickets to fall and only ten runs for victory, seemed likely to win that Cousin George was put on to bowl.

His first ball was sent for four. His second was caught by point, off a mistimed stroke. That was Cousin George's first wicket, but two more followed with the next two balls.

Hetty jumped up in the air and yelled.

"Hat-trick! Hurrah!"

Cousin George, quietly proud, bowed to the applause. Last man in arrived, sloshed the ball hard, tried to score a couple, and was run out. The school had won!

"The new ball did it," said Cousin George modestly, afterwards. "And that little snick the broken glass made," he whispered to Hetty.

She winked. For Cousin George had stepped for a moment from his pedestal.

"A grand match—and a grand tea!" she said. "Even if the Head wasn't really frightfully funny this time. And Cousin George, do you know it must have been a fluke when I hit that ball."

"It wasn't a bad smite," he said. "You timed it well." And then added heavily: "But don't do anything of the sort again."

With the bill to pay for the Skipper's window, and a lecture from Aunt Miriam, who had received a wrathful letter from him, the Imp decided against it.

But the Skipper, in his letter, did not mention the Hindu. His leg had been pulled, and he decided, being a skipper, to skip it!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

THERE will be another delightful COMPLETE story featuring these two lovable fun-makers next week. Don't miss it.

"GIRL RIDER OF THE BLUE HILLS!"

(Continued from page 20)

So every single little person at the school had suffered a grievous disappointment. And Bobbie and Ted were being blamed. It was they who had caused the trouble which had made Hampton withdraw his offer.

Fay turned away. With bitter thoughts she walked to the little wooden gate that led out of the tiny playground. And there she came upon a small crowd of mothers and children, who surrounded her at once.

"Waal, I hope you're mighty pleased with yoreself at havin' two such grand kids for yore brothers!" one woman exclaimed. She held the hand of a small girl who was sobbing quietly. "S'pose you know what they've done? They've ruined th' treat, upset my Ruby, upset every kiddie here."

Fay drew herself up.

Hemming her in was a sea of angry, contemptuous, hostile faces. Bitterly incensed mothers. Her cheeks reddened at the sight, her hands clenched. But she saw something else, too. She saw the children—some tearful—all looking most frightfully disappointed.

Hampton had done this—Hampton, using her brothers as the excuse, so that they and she and daddy should suffer; should be blamed!

"Guess—Guess I'm dreadful sorry about this!" she said huskily. "I wouldn't have had it happen for the world! But my brothers only——"

"Your brothers," said someone angrily, "are a couple of savage little hooligans, attacking Johnny Benson like that! They'd better not lay a finger on my Tom, or I'll thrash them!"

"I figger the rest of the school's likely to do that to them after this!" exclaimed someone else.

"Reckon if they've got any sense they'll stay away."

Fay's heart went cold—cold with dread for her young brothers. Their little lives would be made a misery from now onwards; they'd be persecuted, bullied, held to scorn and ridicule.

Tremblingly, yet resolutely, she looked at her accusers.

"I—I guess I don't care what you say about me, or what you do to me," she said. "I reckon I can stand up for myself. But why persecute a couple of innocent boys who did something that was perfectly natural? It—it isn't fair!" she finished, her eyes flashing.

Back came a reply from the woman with the sobbing daughter.

"Anything's fair with a rustler's kid!"

IF only for the sake of her younger brothers this trouble must be smoothed over somehow. But how can Fay do that? So many difficulties are in her path. Do make sure of next week's instalment of this colourful serial. Why not order your SCHOOLGIRL now?

S.C.L. 3

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