

"THEIR QUEST FOR THE GOLDEN SNAKE!"

Exciting Holiday-Adventure story about the famous Cliff House Chums.

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Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



**"STOP!" CRIED
THE NATIVE IDOL**

Only Babs and Bessie
knew the secret of this
amazing happening.

See this week's thrilling story of
Barbara Redfern & Co. on holiday in
the tropics.

Absorbing LONG COMPLETE holiday cruising story, featuring Barbara Redfern & Co.



Their QUEST for

Welcome to Zolindi!



"ZOLINDI!" Barbara Redfern excitedly cried. "Look, there it is!"

"And, I sus-say, Babs, lul-look at those boats!" exclaimed fat, bespectacled Bessie Bunter.

"And the natives! My only aunt, see that fellow dive!" Tomboy Clara Trevlyn breathed.

Eight girls were stretched along the rails on the boat deck of the s.y. *Gloriana*. Eight sunburnt faces were radiantly beaming. Eight pairs of eyes sparkled as Barbara Redfern pointed towards the African shore.

Seven of those eight were Cliff House girls, a week out from England on the glorious cruise which this year was to be their summer holiday.

A doubly thrilling cruise, for its ultimate destination was some lonely island in the Indian Ocean, on which, armed with the chart they had discovered back at Cliff House, they hoped to find the hidden pirate hoard buried some 300 years ago.

The eighth member of the party was Celeste Margesson, their merry madcap hostess and granddaughter of Roderick Margesson, the owner of the yacht.

They were all laughing now, in spite of the blistering heat which poured down from above. For Zolindi, that little known country on the West African coast, was to be their first port of call in the great adventure, and

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at Zolindi, they were to take in some very necessary supplies.

Babs, shorn, for the moment, of her Form captain's duties, was laughing. Leila Carroll, the American girl, who had already used goodness knows how many feet of film on the trip, had her cine-camera to her eyes, and with her hand upon the release button, was whirring away.

Even gentle Marjorie Hazeldene had deserted her needlework to look at the wonder land immediately in front of

though the natives were, the chums could see them plainly, some waving paddles, some, out of sheer exuberance, it seemed, diving and splashing over the side, some holding aloft gay bunting and banners. From the golden shore, fringed with gigantic palm-trees, came the heavy roll and beating of tom-toms.

Up on the bridge, Mr. Roderick Margesson, Celeste's grandfather, was calling orders to lower ladders and ropes.

Bound for Pirates' Island! With that thrilling objective beckoning them on, Babs & Co., cruising on board the luxury yacht *Gloriana*, halt at the West African coast for supplies. Wonderful the welcome they receive; overwhelmingly friendly the natives! The chums are enchanted by it all. And then, suddenly, drama and mystery take a hand. The native chief's daughter presents one of them with a snake bangle, and from that moment onwards the treasure quest is threatened by disaster!

them; and that strange girl, Jemima Carstairs, was polishing her monocle.

Celeste, with her usual abandon, was gaily waving a hand.

"Look, the boats are putting off!" "I say, you're right!" cried Mabel Lynn, Babs' special chum, and known as "Mabs" to all her friends.

The boats were. There were a hundred of them in the tiny haven of Zolindi. All were native boats, propelled by the black, shiny paddlers of the Zolindi people. Half a mile away

"I sus-say, they're coming!" gurgled Bessie Bunter.

And then, what a race! A score of the larger craft, laden with flowers and with natives, had pushed out from the rest, their gaily decorated, bedaubed prows bobbing on the shallow waters. The chums heard the shout of voices, the sudden wail of flutes. They saw natives standing up in the boats, still frantically waving. Babs' eyes glistened.

"Seem pleased to see us!" she said:

of Cliff House School, Clara Trevlyn's adventurous brother Jack, and wealthy, high-spirited Celeste Margesson.



the GOLDEN SNAKE!

"And—oh, gollywogs, look at the leading boat!"

They were all looking at that. It was a boat to attract attention. Nearly four or five times as large as the rest, daubed with fantastic designs in every conceivable colour, it was obviously some sort of state vessel. Twenty hefty negro paddlers propelled it, singing in deep, rich voices.

Under a canopy, on a rush platform in the stern, sat a patriarchal figure, with a big, white, flowing beard, a European silk hat on his head, a European white collar round his neck, and an ebony stick in his hand. Apart from these garments and the loincloth he wore around his waist, however, his black body was entirely naked.

"That's Lenibi!" Mr. Margesson chuckled, joining the girls.

"Len who?" Celeste asked

"Lenibi! The chief of the Zolindi people. A friendly old chap, in spite of his weird dress. I've made half a dozen trips to this country, and he and I are fast friends. The girl sitting at his feet is his daughter, Rola!"

Babs dimpled a little. She had already spotted the girl. A shapely slip of a thing, she was, copper-black, like the rest, and, in her own native way, quite pretty. Unlike the other girls, who were dressed in frocks made from rushes, this girl wore a loose, striped garment of some cotton material, with a necklace of seashells draped around her dusky neck and gleaming bangles on her wrists.

Catching Babs' eyes, she waved, showing a set of white teeth. And Babs noticed that another girl, in a rush

dress, sitting next to her, pouted a little.

Then they were hidden from view as the boat rushed under the rail.

But now there was uproar. Shrieks and shouts filled the air. In a very frenzy of joy, native boys and girls were diving overboard, reappearing, diving again. The *Gloriana* shook beneath the army of black humanity which, hand over hand, came swarming up ladders and ropes. Mr. Margesson laughed.

"Clear a space!" he ordered.

"Oh, crumbs! I sus-say, I hope they're friendly!" Bessie Bunter stut-

**By
HILDA RICHARDS**

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

tered. "Crumbs, what a row! Wow!" Bessie yelled, as a grinning black face suddenly appeared above the scuppers, and she jumped almost out of her skin when a great circle of flowers, neatly thrown, dropped like the noose end of a lasso over her plump head. "Look here, you know, you can't throw things at me!" she glowered at the native.

"La, la, ibibi!" the native said, good-humouredly.

"Which means," Mr. Margesson laughed, "We love you, and we welcome you! Don't worry, Bessie! That's just to show they like you! Whoa, there!"

For then, over the rails, the Zolindi

came swarming. In a moment the deck was quivering to the tramp of native feet. With the natives came flowers—circlets and necklets, garlands and festoons. Babs, without knowing what it all meant, saw suddenly the slim, slight, laughing figure of Rola lifting a great triangular wreath of flowers. Then those flowers were falling over her head, and with Rola's laughing face beaming into her own, Babs felt both hands suddenly clasped in the black girl's and whirled on high.

"La, la, ibibi!" Rola cried.

Babs laughed. Jolly little thing! But now, around her, there was a great uproar—girlish squeals and yells, mingled with laughter and the high "atoa, atoa!" of delirious natives.

Babs broke into a peal of laughter as she saw her chums—all almost buried under the festooned masses of flowers which had been hung around them. A welcome, indeed!

"Fun!" Rola laughed. "Like him?"

"Oh, I say, you speak English!" Babs cried.

"Not much! Plenty learn him English in white man's mission! La!"—and she pointed vaguely towards the shore. "No have lot of words, but understand—iya!" she said delightedly. "Nice white girl! Rola like you! You come to feast by-and-by! Meet friend—Miski!" she added breathlessly, and drew forward the pouting, sulky girl Babs had noticed in Lenibi's state boat. "Miski dancer!" Rola added.

"Nice!" Babs laughed, and took Miski by the hand, whirling it aloft in the hurricane greeting fashion of the natives. "And you will dance for us, Miski?"

"One time, perhaps," Miski indifferently agreed, but she did not smile; she did not look even pleased.

Rather uneasily, in fact, she was gazing back towards the shore—almost as if she had no part in the happy greetings then going on on board.

"Miski—excuse!" she added, and rudely turned away.

Babs flushed a little, feeling almost snubbed at that. But then a fresh shout went up as Chief Lenibi came striding forward. Plainly trying to look stately and dignified, with his silk hat perched at an angle, and his collar back to front, he stiffly inclined his head as he stood before Mr. Margesson.

A torrent of words left his lips, after which he and Mr. Margesson solemnly tweaked noses—a ceremonial which sent Celeste into convulsions of laughter. Mr. Margesson held up a hand.

"One moment, please, girls," he said. "Lenibi wishes you to be the guests of the tribe. You all have complete freedom to go anywhere you like, except one place—the Sacred Temple of Kuli-Kuli—"

"Say, who's she when she's at home?" Leila asked.

"Kuli-Kuli," said Mr. Margesson, and an awed murmur went up from the natives as they recognised the name—"Kuli-Kuli is the Zolindi's sacred goddess. The Zolindi are rather touchy about her. You can do anything you like in Zolindi land; but touching Kuli-Kuli or anything belonging to Kuli-Kuli is the one thing you must and cannot do. You understand that? Now, Jack—Where's Jack Trevlyn? Jack, order those cases, with presents for the Zolindi, to be sent up from the hold."

"Ay, ay, sir!" Jack Trevlyn, Clara's elder brother, grinned.

There was a scuffle at once. More and more natives were coming aboard, till now the deck was black with them. Excited whispers were going to and fro, and there was a shriek when four of the Gloriana's sailors appeared out of the hold, each staggering under a case laden to the brim with glittering necklaces and brooches, dolls, toys, earrings, and cloths!

With the garlanded chums feverishly helping to distribute them, the presents were given out among the natives, who capered and danced with every expression of pleasure. Rola found herself the possessor of a Birmingham-made necklace, and a pair of pink diamante ear-rings, both of which, quaintly enough, she fastened into her fuzzy hair. She seemed the happiest of them all.

"I give you present, also," she said to Babs and Celeste. "Rola love to give you present, for Rola love you! Celeste," she added, addressing the madcap hostess of the Gloriana by her native equivalent, "what you like you shall have, for you I love as much as Babbarri"—with a smile at Babs. "Say Celeste!"

"Well, I'm bothered if I want anything!" Celeste began; and then, seeing the look of disappointment on Rola's face, laughed. "Well, perhaps, then—" she agreed, looking at the bangle on the little native's wrist. "What is that?" she asked.

There was a movement near them. Babs, looking, met Miski's strange dark eyes, and smiled. But again Miski did not smile in return. She seemed to be wholly absorbed in what was going on between her chief's daughter and the madcap. Rola held out her hand, touching the bangle at the same time.

"You like him?"

"Well, yes, rather!" And Celeste's eyes shone.

"Rola get you one," the native girl said. "Not this. This is gift from my father. I have another in my hut; that shall you have, Celeste, for I love you. Sacred Snake!" she added seriously, and held up her wrist so that Celeste and Babs could examine the bracelet upon it. "Token of Kuli-Kuli."

Babs blinked, not quite understanding. But she peered curiously at the sacred snake bangle, struck by its queer workmanship. The snake she saw now was a simple coil, very skilfully engraved with strange signs, and though composed of brass, it had been treated with some polishing liquid which made it gleam like gold.

"And you, Babbarri, to you I bring the kola cup," Rola promised.

"Lovely!" Babs laughed, though she had not the faintest idea of what a kola cup might be. "Hallo!" she added. "Where's Miski going?"

For Miski, with a sudden low-voiced exclamation, had moved away.

Babs lost her in the welter of black humanity which thronged the deck, then saw her again near the scuppers, in the act of swinging herself over the rail, and on to the rungs of one of the steel ladders. Funny that she should depart so abruptly without even a word of good-bye; but Rola, happy in her white chums' company, seemed not to notice.

Well, bother it; it was none of her business, Babs told herself.

But perhaps Babs would have changed that opinion if she could have been a witness of Miski's subsequent movements. For there was a strange gleam in the eyes of the native girl as, reaching the bottom of the Gloriana's ladder, she plunged into the clear waters of the sea.

Whatever Miski might lack in other respects, she was a strong and excellent swimmer, and even hampered by her reed dress, she cut through the water like a fish. Within a quarter of an hour of leaving the Gloriana, she dragged herself up on the sandy beach. There, like a dog, she shook herself.

For a moment she stood, gazing back at the shapely lines of the gleaming white yacht, on the decks of which she could still see moving figures, and from which, through the clear air, pulsed the sound of wailing flutes and high-pitched voices.

"Ala!" she breathed. "Rola, you are a fool!"

She smiled. Then swiftly she darted towards a clump of trees near by. Into them she disappeared, her naked feet following a beaten path into the undergrowth. For five, ten minutes, she sped, pausing once to glance behind her and listen. Then in a sombre clearing, purple in the shadows of the tall trees, whose foliage shut out the sun, she gave a sharp, low whistle.

Ahead there came an answering whistle, then a rustle. Miski shivered a little, but there was still that queer light in her eyes. A dim form loomed up ahead—a white man, dressed in a white drill suit, his keen eyes glittering, halted before her.

He spoke in the native tongue:

"Ah, Miski, so you come! You have been aboard the yacht?"

"White Lord, that is so," Miski answered.

"What did you find out?"

"Lord, this only. That Rola plans to give one of her sacred snake amulets to the white girl, Celeste."

A pause. The man appeared to be considering. Then he laughed softly.

"It is well," he said gently. "Ah, it is very well, Miski! Now I have a plan, and in this plan you shall help me, Miski. And if you do your part," he added, "then shall you have this tick-tock ju-ju upon which you have set your heart." And he touched the silver watch upon his wrist. "Miski, you will help?"

"Lord, for the tick-tock, I am your slave," Miski said feverishly, and her eyes glowed with greed as she surveyed the watch. "What is your wish?"

"Come, and I will tell you!" he said.

"No Snake—No Work!"



MORNING! With the exception of the watch and one girl, the main deck of the Gloriana was deserted.

For it was early in the morning—very, very early. Five bells—or 6.30 Greenwich time—had only just chimed, and the rest of the Gloriana's personnel were still fast asleep. The one girl was Barbara Redfern, who, sketch-pad on knee, was seated on the Gloriana's after-deck, sketching the coast-line in front of her.

A grand picture, indeed, that coast-line made in the almost startling clear light of early morning.

A strip of gleaming, golden coast, over which the white surf lazily washed, with, behind it, a forest of tall palms and trees sweeping down almost to the water's edge. Tiny, brown thatched huts, native dwellings, straggled along the shore. Behind them, forming an enchanting background, were tall mountains covered with trees of every colour, ranging from deep, olive green to glistening, golden brown and vermilion red.

No wonder Babs' artistic soul was utterly enraptured by it.

But as she sketched a tender smile played about the corners of her lips, for Babs was thinking of Rola—that sparkling, impulsive, good-natured little native girl, to whom all the Cliff House chums had taken such a great fancy.

Last night, when Lenibi and Mr. Margesson and the other natives had left to discuss the purchase of the much-needed stores which had been the owner's motive for visiting Zolindi, Rola had remained on board.

What delight had been hers when she had tasted real English ice-cream! What awe when Leila had flashed on to the screen some of her moving pictures! How astonished had she been at an exhibition of Bessie Bunter's ventriloquial tricks! How charmed with Marjorie's needlework and Babs' own paintings! And how amused by Jemima's eyeglass!

Such a sweet, winsome, wondering little things she was, in spite of her copper-black hue!

Babs smiled again. What a marvelous place; what a wonderful people these Zolindi were! If it were not for the excitement of the treasure-hunt upon which they were embarked, she could wish to remain at Zolindi for the rest of the holiday.

Dreamily she worked, glad of the respite from her chums. And then suddenly she stopped, her eyes attracted by a movement on the sea. She stared a little as a laughing hail reached her ears, and then, running to the rail, waved a hand as she saw a solitary native wicker boat being propelled towards the yacht. From the

thwarts of that boat a dark, diminutive figure waved a hand in response.

"Rola!" she cried.

Rola it was, beaming, bright-eyed, arrayed, as yesterday, in her cotton dress. As Babs hurried to the foot of the companion steps, she paddled her boat alongside.

"La, la, ibibi!" Rola sang, laughing. "I not stop, Babbarril! See, I have brought you present—for you, for Celeste." And she produced a small parcel done up in a large brown leaf, which at first sight looked uncommonly like brown paper. "Kola-cup for you, Babbarril. You give sacred snake bracelet to Celeste, iya?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh, Rola, yes! And thank you!"

"Rola made happy," the little girl said simply, and with that rowed away.

Babs blinked. She looked at the parcel in her hand. Then carefully she tore off the brown leaf cover, and her eyes gleamed as she saw the kola-cup—the half of a coconut, rimmed with silver, and decorated with carved, native symbols. What a lovely, unique ornament that would make for the mantelpiece of Study No. 4, she thought, and immediately, in her imagination, saw it there with a three-legged silver stand.

In the cup was another parcel, also done up in a brown leaf. The size, the shape and weight of it showed that it was the bangle Celeste had coveted. Babs dimpled for a moment. Her eyes, as she looked out to sea, where already Rola was a tiny speck in her native boat, were very tender, and very misty.

What a sweet thing the black girl was! She had almost forgotten until this moment that Rola had promised those presents!

She turned back up the companion. Celeste's cabin lay on her way to the boat deck, and, popping in, she surprised Celeste in the act of finishing her morning toilet. The madcap gave an eager exclamation when Babs told her of Rola's early visit.

"Oh, my stars! And you say she brought the bangle? I'd completely forgotten," Celeste said. "It was only

because I didn't want to offend the little imp's good nature that I asked for it! Still, let's have a look at it, Babs!"

Babs handed her the parcel. Eagerly Celeste unfolded it. And then even Babs blinked a little at the sight of the coiled-snake armlet which met her gaze. Extraordinarily beautiful it was.

"But, I say, it does look like real gold!" Babs exclaimed.

"All that glitters—" Celeste laughed, slipping it on. "H'm! Looks good!" she said, with satisfaction. "I think I'll wear this to-day, Babs—just to show little Rola how much I appreciate her present! I say, see how this bracelet thing gleams in the sunlight? Well, now—what about a spot of brekker?"

A spot of brekker was certainly indicated then. Most of the chums were up by that time—all except lazy Bessie, who, wallowing in the luxury of comparative freedom, had ordered breakfast in bed.

After breakfast, ignoring Bessie, they made up a bathing-party, intending to splash in a little cove to the left of the village which Celeste had marked out through the telescope the evening before.

A dozen or more natives were waiting on the bank as their boat grounded. A dozen cheerful hands were raised in the Zolindi welcome, and there was a rush to help the girls to beach the boat as they clambered ashore.

And then:

"Iya!" said one man, and suddenly, to the chums' consternation, drew away, agitated and scared-looking as he pointed at Celeste. "Tadditti!" he said.

"Tadditti! What the dickens is that?" Celeste asked.

"No comprez!" Leila said cheerfully.

"Tadditti!" the man said again, and pointed. "Kuli-Kuli—"

"Kuli-Kuli! That's the name of their god, isn't it?" Babs asked.

In surprise she stared at the men, for they had drawn away, muttering among themselves. Celeste approached; and as if terrified they shrank back. The chums, puzzled, halted. Then, before they could make a farther advance, the men melted away.

"Pears," Jemima observed, frowning, "we're not popular any more!"

"Oh, stuff!" Clara said. "They were friendly enough when we came ashore! Did seem, though, that you were the centre of attraction, Celeste! What have you been doing?"

But Celeste, in that merry madcap fashion of hers, shook her head and laughed.

But she did not know and, patently, did not care. All the same it was a mystery—and an unpleasant mystery at that. It was as if a sudden chill little shadow had mingled with the warmth of their happiness.

They continued on their stroll.

Presently, finding the cool, shady cove with its transparently clear water, they posted lazy Jemima as watch, and changing their cotton frocks for bathing costumes, enjoyed for a full hour a glorious bathe in its crystal, milk-warm depths. Then, much refreshed, they returned to the landing-point—just in time to meet Roderick Margesson and Jack Trevlyn, who in another boat, had rowed ashore. There was no sign of a native.

"Going ashore, grandpop?" Celeste asked.

"I am!" Mr. Margesson said, rather shortly.

"Poor old grandpop!" Celeste grimaced. "You did wake up with a naughty, sore head didn't you, grumpy? What's the matter?"

"Matter enough," he said gruffly. "I was expecting that old rascal Lenibi and his carriers about two hours ago. Half a dozen times I've signalled to the shore and received no reply. Whether everybody's been stricken with sudden plague, or there's some tribal palaver on, I don't know; but I want those stores—and I want them quickly! I'm off to see him—now! I—" And then he broke off, staring. "Celeste, what's that you have on your wrist?" he asked, in a different voice.

"Oh, only an old brass snake!" Celeste carelessly laughed. "Rola gave it to me," she explained. "Anything wrong, grandpop?"

"Let me have a look at it," he said strangely.

"But why—"

"Please!"



"CELESTE, let me have a look at that bangle," Mr. Margesson exclaimed. With a smile, Celeste held out her arm. "It's only brass, grandpop," she said, carelessly. But next moment she and the chums were regarding her grandfather in astonishment. "This isn't brass," he said strangely. "It's pure gold!"

Celeste, wondering, took it off. The old man's face grew sharp and serious as he examined it. Then he shook his head.

"This isn't brass—it's gold!" he said. "Real, pure gold!" And while the chums stared, he handed it back. "Celeste, I don't pretend to understand, but I'm pretty sure that this isn't the sort of trinket a native girl would give away—not even a chief's daughter! Better put it away in some safe place until I come back! I'll ask Lenibi about it!"

"But Rola—" Celeste indignantly began.

"Rola," he said sharply, "must have made some mistake. I don't know! Anyway, do as I ask, Celeste—please!" And he looked so worried all at once that Celeste blinked a little. "Barbara, please see that she does it!" he added. "I will," Babs promised.

And she did. For as soon as ever the *Gloriana* was reached again, she firmly escorted the madcap to her own cabin. Celeste was looking a little uneasy herself by that time.

"Oh, dash it! Babs, don't you think Rola did make a mistake? I don't care a hoot about the bangle, of course, but I should hate that little thing to get into a scrape because of me! Where shall I park it?"

"Well, nobody will take it—here! Just drop it in your jewel-box," Babs said, and as Celeste, with a sigh of relief, did so, she smiled. "No doubt there's been some footling mistake," she said comfortingly, "and Rola will be able to explain it all. Now, come on, let's get to lunch."

Celeste laughed. They went to lunch. There the rest of the girls were already gathered, Bessie looking particularly contented with herself. Bessie had spent the morning aboard ship.

"And I've been learning things, you know!" she said importantly. "What's scoffa mean, Babs?"

"Grubbings!" Babs guessed instantly.

"Wrong!" Bessie cried triumphantly. "Soffa's the native word for boat! You see, Peter Murphy knows the Zolindi language, and Peter's been teaching me ever such a lot of it! Clara, I bet you don't know what Zilli is?"

"Oh, rabbits!" Clara sniffed.

"Well, it isn't rabbits, you know, because they don't have rabbits in this country, so there!" Bessie said authoritatively. "Zilla means wash! You know," Bessie went on, looking thoughtful "when I leave Cliff House I think I shall come back here as an —an inter—inter—"

"Interruptor?" Jemima suggested wearily.

"Yes, rather! Oh, nun-no! Not at all. Really, Jemima, what a silly thing you are! I mean, I shall come back here as one who puts the things the natives say into English, you know!"

"Sure! And then get somebody to put your English into real English, I guess!" Leila grinned. "Sure does sound a top-line career to me! Pass the water, old thing!"

"The acquerra, you mean," Bessie corrected, with dignity. "When in a foreign country, speak the language, you know! Here's the acquerra," she added, anxious to show off her new-found knowledge. "Like me to pour it into the vassi?"

Leila grinned. Babs' eyes widened. If only Bessie showed the same faculty for picking up languages at Cliff House as she did here, she reflected, what a joy she would be to the language-mistress.

There was no doubt, surprising as it was, that Bessie had gleaned a smatter-

ing of Zolindi. How long it would last was debatable. Bessie's new hobbies, always taken up with red-hot enthusiasm, had a knack of dying uncertain deaths after the first few days.

Bessie, beaming, poured the water into the "vassi," or glass, and was about to expand on her newly-acquired attainments when there was a hail outside.

Celeste, rushing to the rail, gave a whoop.

"Ahoy, grandpop! Whoops, it's grandpop with old man Lenibi and the medicine johnny and half a dozen of the native soldiers!" she called excitedly over her shoulder. "Hey, what's that, grandpop? Right you are! We're wanted on the main deck!" she informed her chums.

As one they left the table, scampering above. Mr. Margesson was there, looking grave. So was Lenibi, now clad in a massive panther skin and looking much more like a royal chief. With him were six gigantic headmen, each carrying a tufted spear and a hide shield, and though they grinned uncertainly at sight of the girls, they looked rather apprehensively towards the medicine-man, who, in his full raiment of monkey skins and antelope-horned head, pointed a stick towards them.

Lenibi broke out in a loud and excited tirade.

"Sure! Well, let me do the talking!" Roderick Margesson said testily. "Celeste, did you put that bangle away as I ordered you?"

"Why, yes! But what—"

"Because," her grandfather said sternly, "that old brass snake, as you call it, Celeste, is a stolen article!"

"Stolen!"

"Stolen!" Her grandfather's face was grim. "It never belonged to Rola. What Rola had was only a brass copy. Your sacred snake was snaffled from the wrist of the tribe's goddess, and it's the real thing. But what's more to the point," he added, while the chums stared as if they could not believe their eyes, "the Zolindi declare that until it is placed back on the wrist of Kuli-Kuli, it is against their religion to work!"

"Oh, Great Scott! Then—then that means—" Babs began.

"It means," he said sternly, "that we don't get our supplies aboard. And that means," he added, "the trip, as far as Pirates' Island is concerned, is off. I can't take supplies in anywhere else at short notice, and we've just got to be away from Zolindi within the next three days. If we don't get away by then we shall strike the Indian monsoon. I'm not risking either the *Gloriana* or your lives in that!"

The chums looked at each other. Lenibi and the medicine-man talked in muttered asides. Not until then was the urgency, the serious significance of a hold-up borne upon them. Obviously the *Gloriana* could not travel without the supplies of fresh fruit, meat, and water so vitally necessary. Obviously these supplies could not be got aboard without the co-operation of the natives.

"And—and Rola?" Babs faltered.

"Rola," Mr. Margesson returned grimly, "has disappeared. The tribe will deal with her as soon as she is found. Meantime, the great thing is to restore the bangle and get on with the loading. Celeste, go and fetch it!"

Celeste nodded. Only too willingly she sped off. Lenibi and the medicine-man still continued to harangue; the native headman stood stiff and grim. Mr. Margesson, his eyes on the door through which Celeste had disappeared,

began to pace up and down. They all had a feeling then that some dreadful fate lay in the balance.

Two, three, four minutes went by. Lenibi came forward.

"Sacred snake," he said. "No sacred snake; no work!"

"Wait a minute!" Mr. Margesson snapped, and bounded to the door. "Where the Blue Peter has that girl vanished to?" he muttered irritably. "Barbara—"

But at that moment there was a step. Celeste, her face as white as paper, came tottering rather than running on to the deck. She gulped.

"Sacred snake!" gabbled Lenibi. "Ju-ju!" chattered the medicine-man. "No snake; no work!"

"Celeste, where is it?" her grandfather cried. "For goodness' sake let's have it!"

"I—I can't!" Celeste cried. "Because it's gone! Somebody else has taken it!"

Their Friend a Fugitive!



EVERY eye was turned upon Celeste. Every face expressed the most stupefied consternation. That golden amulet—gone! So that now it not only threatened to delay their trip to Pirates' Island, but to cancel it altogether!

"Gone!" Babs echoed.

"Gone!" Celeste gulped.

Mr. Margesson pulled his moustache. "You're sure you looked where you left it?"

"Yes. It was in my jewel-box. Babs was with me when I put it there—"

Lenibi broke out excitedly:

"Want Sacred Snake! No Sacred Snake; young men no work—"

"All right—all right!" Mr. Margesson cried. "Wait a minute! It can't have gone far. Nobody on board is likely to have taken it. Barbara, as you were with Celeste when she hid it, perhaps you had better go and look. The Sacred Snake must be found!"

Babs nodded eagerly. Filled with dismay herself, she was glad of the excuse for some action. At once she scooted off, but her heart was anxious as she went. Perhaps, even more than the possible cancellation of the trip, she was thinking of Rola, and quite desperately, even in that moment of misunderstanding, her heart was throbbing for the little black girl.

That Rola, of all people, could have taken that bangle in the first place!

And yet, there it was! Rola, with her own hands, had delivered the bracelet. Rola must have taken it!

Babs reached the door of Celeste's room. She crossed towards the table on which the jewel-case lay. And then again she paused, swiftly stooping to pick up something that lay on the thick green carpet that covered the cabin floor—a thin brown reed, such as might have come from a native girl's dress.

Funny! As far as Babs knew, Celeste had never entertained native visitors in her cabin. How did this come here?

Uncertainly she twisted back towards the door, her mind at once connecting the withered reed with the disappearance of the bangle. Oh stuff! She was just being unnecessarily suspicious, she told herself, half angrily. After all, it would have been the easiest thing in the world for Celeste to have carried this reed unknowingly on her dress, and dropped it when undressing last night. What mattered most was the appeasement of Lenibi and the medicine-man above.

She crossed to Celeste's dressing-table. Hoping desperately, and yet knowing somehow that the hope was already doomed, she picked up the jewel-case and opened it. Most certainly the bangle was not there! Feverishly Babs hunted on the floor. She pulled open Celeste's drawer; she even looked in the pocket of her coat. No bangle! Not a trace of one! As if it had melted into thin air the sacred amulet of Kuli-Kuli had vanished!

A further fruitless ten minutes she hunted, and then, despairing, trailed back to the main deck to confirm Celeste's news.

"BUT WHAT, oh what," Celeste asked despairingly, "made Rola steal it in the first place? It wasn't as if I really wanted it!"

"Well, you asked for it," Clara rather shortly pointed out.

There was silence, broken only by the gentle snore of Bessie, who, letting the cares of the world go by, lay back in a deck-chair, enjoying an afternoon nap, under the awning shade of the Gloriana's after-deck. But there was consternation among the chums.

Half an hour ago, Lenibi, his medicine-man, and his headmen had departed, gravely serious and sore. He did not blame Mr. Margesson or the girls for their part in the theft of Kuli-Kuli's sacred snake. But Rola, the vanished despoiler of the ju-ju's temple, should be hunted down and brought to book. Meantime, until that bangle reappeared on Kuli-Kuli's wrist, his young men held it against their rites to do a stroke of work.

Flatly and angrily Mr. Margesson declared that if the stores were not aboard he would alter his course and head for fine weather, and that meant, after all, that there would be no exciting treasure hunt. Meantime, there was Rola—Rola who, apparently, had disgraced herself in order to do Celeste a good turn.

"But who, forsooth, could have pinched it again?" Jemima asked. For plainly someone other than Rola had stolen the bangle from Celeste.

"And if the dress reed clue which Spartan Babs found upon your cabin floor, Celeste, didn't get there by accident, how did it get there?"

They all looked at Babs, but Babs shook her head.

"It seems certain," she said, "somebody was hiding on board, and that somebody, according to the clue of the dress reed, was a native girl. That means," Babs went on thoughtfully, "that she must have been spying on Celeste. If not, how would she know Celeste's cabin? How else could she have known where the sacred snake was hidden? How did she get on board? Most of these natives can swim like fishes. Once she'd reached the yacht it would have been one of the easiest things in the world for her to slip on board unseen."

"But who?" cried Mabs.

Babs shook her head.

"Not Rola," she said. "Rola, as the chief's daughter, never wears a reed dress; she's always dressed in cotton to show her rank."

The chums frowned. The argument, lucid as it was, was not getting them far. The thing was a puzzle—a frightfully worrying and perplexing puzzle at that, fraught with grave danger to their own plans, and with considerably more danger to the runaway Rola. It seemed impossible to believe that Rola had taken the thing in the first place. But had she not, with her own hands, given it to Babs? Could it be possible that

Rola, repenting that deed, had restolen the snake from Celeste's cabin?

Celeste moved restlessly.

"Well, let's do something!" she burst out. "Rightly or wrongly, Rola got into all this trouble because of me. Chuntering here won't help us. The main thing is to get hold of Rola and have a talk with her. For all we know she may be hiding out somewhere on the off-chance of getting a word with us. Who says going ashore?"

"Come on," Babs said, rising to her feet. "What about Bessie, though?"

"Oh, leave her!" Mabs said.

The chums nodded agreement. Love old Bessie as they did, she could be a hindrance on a trip like this. Apart from which, Bessie was plainly very contented at the moment.

Silently they tiptoed off, leaving Bessie still snoring. On to the boat deck they made their way, climbing

natives with horror. And Rola had brought all this upon herself because of them!

"Well, come on, let's go on to the village," Babs said. "But keep your eyes open as you do."

They nodded. The one hope in all their hearts was that the fugitive chief's daughter was lying low, on the off-chance of seeing them. With the hand of her own people turned against her, Rola's only remaining friends were these white girls; and surely, if to anyone, she would look to them for help.

Keenly they kept both ears and eyes alert until they reached the village. But sight of Rola was there none.

By and by the village loomed ahead of them. Here the natives were already busy erecting the giant pyre for the celebration bonfire which, in honour of their white guests, would be lit to-night. A cry of "La, la, ibibi!"

HILDA RICHARDS

Replies to Some of Her Correspondents.

"GEORGIA" (Bungay, Suffolk).—What a sweet little letter, my dear! I was delighted to hear from you. You would be in the Second Form if you went to Cliff House. I hope to be featuring the Fourth Former you mentioned in the near future, Georgia. Write again, won't you?

K. ANNIS (Suffolk).—Thank you so much for a charming little letter. I do hope that the present Cliff House holiday stories come up to your expectations, especially as your favourite, Marjorie, is appearing in them. There are more than two hundred girls at C. H. You would be a Second Former if you went there.

CHRISTINA ANDERSON (Angus, Scotland).—I do hope you enjoyed yourself at the Glasgow Exhibition, Christina. (Not that I've much doubt about it!) Yes, I also think you are rather like Beatrice Beverley in appearance, and you are exactly the same age.

CECILY McGRANE (Rock Ferry, Cheshire).—So glad to hear from you and to know you like my stories so much. The notepaper you won at the garden party was lovely; it looked most distinctive among my many letters. Give my good wishes to your sister, won't you, Cecily?

CHRISTINE SMITH (Canterbury, Kent).—What a lovely collection of pets you have, Christina! I expect they all know you very well! Have the birds begun to come to the coconut you hung out for them? No doubt they'll soon get to know it. Write again some time, won't you?

PAMELA ASHCROFT (Sydney, Australia).—So sorry I haven't a photo of myself available, Pamela, but thank you



for your flattering request. All the Fourth Formers are between fourteen and fifteen. You would be in the Lower Fifth if you went to Cliff House. I'll certainly keep your suggestion regarding a Clara story in mind.

ELSIE MARKHAM (Herne Hill, S.E.).—Many thanks for another charming little letter. So now you have started in business? Well, I wish you every success, Elsie. Aren't you thrilled about your new life? (For that's what it amounts to, isn't it?) I mentioned your little request to our Editor, who has promised to keep it in mind. He arranges these things, you see.

EDNA DIVALL (Brighton, Sussex).—Delighted to hear you have become so enthusiastic about collecting "Cliff House Pets." I've had many nice letters mentioning this little feature. Thank you, Edna, for the list of your favourites in the Fourth. It's very helpful and interesting, you may be sure.

PAT WATKINS (Southwick, Sussex).—What a nice little letter, Pat! But do make it a really newsy one next time, won't you? Six pages at least! So you want more stories about Jemima, Clara, and Faith Ashton? I hope to feature all three quite frequently in future stories, so look out for news. You'll write again, won't you?

down the ladder into Celeste's motor-launch, which was moored to the side of the ship. There were many natives on the beach when they reached the shore. For a moment they hesitated as they saw the chums; then, smiling, half a dozen of the young men came forward to pull in the boat. Celeste accosted them.

"Rola?" she said.

The natives looked at each other. Then one, who apparently understood a little English, came forward.

"Rola bad! Rola gone!" he said. "Young Zolindi men hunt Rola! Rola be caught, Rola be tried! Rola be sent to Forest of Ghosts!"

The chums looked grim. It was easy to understand what was implied by that last statement. The soldiers of the Zolindi were hunting for Rola. Rola, when caught, would be tried before the tribe, and, found guilty, banished to some horrible place of punishment, which was evidently regarded by the

greeted them; and Lenibi himself, moodily sitting on a pile of skins in front of his hut, beckoned them as they came. His brow was worried.

"Of Rola, my daughter, I have no news!" he said. "My heart is broken, and my young men do no work!"

"Poor old chappie!" said Babs.

They went on, leaving the village and pushing into the jungle behind. Following the dry valley of an empty stream, they strode on, each of them feeling the hopelessness of the hunt, but reluctant to admit it or give up. Overhead the birds screeched, like whispering voices the breeze stirred the leaves of the tall trees. Then suddenly the chums halted.

Ahead of them had come a furious screeching and chattering.

"Hallo, trouble in the monkey camp!" Clara said. "And, oh, my hat, look!"

She pointed along the dried-up river bed; and the others, looking, saw a

brown, cat-like shape locked in deadly combat with a little, light brown fur ball, the two of them rolling over and over among the stones.

"Gee, it's a lemur and a monkey!" Leila cried.

"Come on!" Clara cried.

She scooped up a stone as she ran. The monkey, fighting, continued to scream and chatter; the lemur, jumping fiercely as his little opponent turned, sprung viciously. They saw the little monkey's terrified face, as momentarily it disappeared under his opponent's furry body. Chattering with fright, and fury, he desperately fought back.

"Gee! Let go! Let go!" Leila shouted.

In a body the chums dashed forward. But the lemur was intent upon killing its prey now. They saw the little monkey cornered; saw it suddenly twist away; saw the vicious thrust of the snarling lemur's paw. In desperation, Clara made to throw the stone.

And then—

Swish! Something black and heavy sailed through the air over the bank of the valley. A short ebony stick, catching the lemur on the side of the head, caused it to leap in the air with a frightened screech. One frustrated snarl it flung towards the bank; and, in a moment, the monkey was up, and, still chattering furiously, was running like the wind towards the bank from which that unexpected help had come. The lemur, with a snarl, turned tail and bolted into the bush.

"Well, my hat!" Babs stuttered, and then gave a yell. "Look!"

No need to have said that. They were all looking. They saw the monkey reach the top of the bank. They saw, above the rim of that bank, a slender, girlish figure rise to meet him, arms outstretched. They saw the little monkey rush into those arms, cuddling against a cotton frock.

"Rola!" cried Jemima.

Rola it was. She turned; she saw them. For a moment it seemed that it was in her mind to run. Then she paused as, helter-skelter, they raced towards the spot. The monkey chattered.

"Hista!" Rola said. She looked up, with wide, uncertain eyes, into the faces of the chums. "You come! You hunt me, too?" she asked.

"Rola—no! We want to see you!" Babs said. "We are your friends, understand? La la, ibiba!" she added—and, at the sound of that familiar phrase, Rola's face cleared. "What are you doing—here?"

"Come!" was Rola's reply.

With the still chattering monkey clinging to her, she climbed down the bank. At the bottom she halted, quickly looking right and left. Then suddenly she dived ahead, beckoning as she ran. Mystified, but thrilled at having caught up with their quarry, the chums followed, until Rola, stepping among a clump of high ferns, disappeared. The chums reached the ferns—so high that they completely screened the entrance to a large, low cave formed in the river bank.

They followed her into the cave, through a screen of the tall ferns. Rola, still carrying the monkey—obviously a pet of hers—looked at them.

"Why you come?" she asked simply.

"Rola, we—we had to—to see you!" Babs said. "Oh, Rola, why did you take the sacred snake from Kuli-Kuli?"

"Rola no take sacred snake! Rola take arm-bangle—la!" And she pointed to her arm. "Rola wrap arm-bangle in Baboa leaf and leave him in hut! Rola then go find kola cup for

friend Babbarril Rola no look arm-bangle when she come back!"

The chums started.

"You mean," breathed Babs, "that when you wrapped up the bracelet you left it in your hut?"

"That so!" Rola said simply.

"And then you went to look for my coconut cup?"

"That so!"

"Meaning," Jemima guessed, "that while Rola was away the real ju-ju was substituted for the one she intended to bring you, Celeste?"

The chums stared at Jemima. Until this moment that solution had never occurred to any of them.

"Steal Kuli-Kuli armlet wrong!" Rola said gravely. "Big wicked thing to do! Zolindi say I steal him," she added sadly. "I do not prove it! So I stop here because no want to go to Forest of Ghosts!"

And she shuddered.

"But, Rola, haven't you an idea who did steal it?" asked Babs.

"No know!" Rola answered troubledly.

"But—but what are you going to do?" stuttered Mabs.

"No know!" Rola retorted.

"But food!" cried Celeste.

"Eat him roots! Drink him river water!"

The chums gazed at each other in consternation. Rola smiled uncertainly. Celeste stood up, forgetting the low roof, and promptly collapsed again as she banged her head on it. What could they do? It was unthinkable to leave her like this—the girl who had landed in such grievous trouble because she had tried to do them a good turn.

Babs set her lips.

"Rola, listen!" she said. "We are with you! We are your friends! We'll try, if we can, to find out who stole the sacred snake; but, meantime, old thing, we can't let you remain here living on roots and water. To-night—somehow—we'll bring you food! Understand?"

"Understand, good!" Rola nodded.

"Nice friends!" she added swiftly.

"But go now. Already soldiers pass this way, and I am afraid. Go! Come back to-night."

"With food!" Babs said.

"Thank you very much!" Rola said, and smiled and hugged her monkey to her.

And with that they left.

Miski the Baffling!



THERE was relief in the hearts of the chums—and gladness, too.

Seeing Rola, and convincing themselves at last of her innocence of the theft, had lightened their hearts. As Jemima misquoted:

"Something discovered is something jolly well done—what? And our job now, comrades—"

"To find that silly amulet and clear Rola," Celeste said determinedly.

That was it. How it was to be done, when they had not the remotest idea of the real thief's identity, was another question, however. Somehow it should be done; somehow all this unhappy mystery cleared up and Mr. Margesson's worries removed at the same time.

Relieved and inspired, they tramped back cheerfully towards the village. Rola had not stolen the bangle from Kuli-Kuli; some other miscreant had done that, fastening her crime upon Rola; and that same person, it seemed, for some very mysterious reason, had

taken good care to recover the bangle as soon as the mischief had been done.

Who?

Not the remotest idea had any of the chums; but Babs, as she wended her way back down the river bed, was doing some deep thinking. Somebody must have had an object for getting Rola in trouble. Or was the object to embarrass the party? Suddenly Babs found Miski's sulky face looming in her mind's eye. Miski, who wore a reed dress; Miski, who—

"Say, look who's ahead!" Leila breathed at that moment.

They had left the jungle now; were emerging into the wide clearing, at the opposite end of which stood the native village—a circle of huts, with a tall, hideous totem pole in the middle. Near that pole, seated on a low stool, sat a native girl. One arm was crooked, and on the wrist of that arm was something which flashed with a silver sheen in the light of the sun.

"Miski!" exclaimed Babs, and for a moment her heart jumped.

Miski it was—so wrapt in contemplation of the object on her wrist that she never heard their approach. Babs was within three yards of her, indeed, before she became aware of her. And then she looked up suddenly, with a startled gasp, one hand clutching at the bodice of her reed dress. Almost frantically she stared at them.

"You! White girl!" she jabbered.

Babs laughed.

"Sorry! We didn't mean to disturb you!" she said. "Goodness! Don't look so scared, Miski! I say," she added, staring at the thing on the black girl's wrist—a large silver wrist-watch, fastened with a leather strap, such as might have been worn by a man—"what a lovely wrist-watch! Where did you get that, Miski?"

Miski started.

"Watch? Watch?" she repeated. "No understand!"

"That." And Babs, taking a pace forward, touched the watch. "It's a white man's watch!" she said.

"Non, non!" Miski's face was agitatedly alive. "No white man! Miski's!" she said. "Miski no know white man! Miski no have tick-tock from white man! Miski good girl! Miski go!" she added in such a quivering terror all at once that the chums stared. "Miski no talk! Miski run!"

"Well, snakes and scissors!" gasped Leila. "Miski, you duffer—"

But Miski, still clutching her dress, was flying—flying, indeed—as if pursued, to disappear into a hut.

"Oh, my hat! I—I didn't mean to offend her!" Babs said. "What the dickens did she get as scared as that for? Wait a minute, you girls; I'll just go and speak to her."

Across the compound she raced, rather mystified by Miski's agitation—perhaps feeling just a little ashamed of the thoughts that had been connecting her with the mystery of the sacred amulet, and anxious to make it up to the girl. While the chums watched, she approached the doorway of the hut.

"Miski—" she breathed. "Miski I—"

And then she gasped. For suddenly Miski, her hand over her chest, reappeared. For a moment her eyes flashed at the sight of Babs; then, before the Cliff House girl could speak again—before she could even move a finger—Miski's arm shot outward, sending Babs staggering a pace.

Only just in time did she recover to prevent herself from sprawling over an

anthill. She glimpsed Miski's face, her eyes gleaming like electric lights in her head, her chest heaving, her white teeth bared, her whole body all of a tremble. Then the rush curtain inside the hut rattled down, shutting her off from view.

"Well!" gasped Babs.

She paused for a moment, really angry then. Miski's conduct, to say the least of it, had been unpardonably rude. Then she shrugged. After all, why worry? Miski obviously was in no humour to receive apologies—and, goodness knows, there had been enough trouble as it was! Slowly she turned, and, still puzzled, rejoined her chums.

"SANDWICHES," BARBARA REDFERN said thoughtfully.

"That's it, I guess!"

"And tinned salmon, biscuits, milk. Anything else?"

The six Cliff House chums—Bessie was in Peter Murphy's wireless cabin, taking another lesson in Zolindi—and Celeste Margesson shook their heads.

"That's all, I guess," said Leila. "We can't very well smuggle any more ashore. The question is—how are we going to get the stuff to Rola?"

It was an hour later, and the chums were back on the *Gloriana*. The meeting was taking place in Celeste's cabin, and the subject of the discussion was, of course, the fugitive native girl.

"Won't be safe," Babs opined, "for all of us to go. We may be being watched. After all, we are Rola's friends; the amulet was lost while in our possession; and if we all scooted off at once they might begin to smell a mouse. I vote," Babs added, "that two of us go!"

"And one of the two will be me," Celeste said.

"No; me!" clamoured Clara.

"Me!" Celeste insisted. Her lips were rather grim. "In a way, I was responsible for the mess Rola's in, and I guess it's up to me to help in any way I can. 'Nuff said, children! Babs and I make the journey. Everybody else try to cover us up. Is that agreed?"

Agreed it was, though there was not one of the chums there who did not ache to take part in the venture. Liking Rola, convinced now of her innocence, and anxious to do anything and all they could to help her, they would have run any risk for the little black girl's sake. But the wisdom of Babs' advice was seen and agreed by all.

"And not a word," warned Babs, "to old duffer Bessie!"

"Not a word," Jemima agreed slowly. "But how do we set to work, old Spartan?"

"It shouldn't be hard," Babs said. She looked towards the door. "Tonight we are invited to the Zolindi celebrations—"

"Well?"

"Each of us will hide some of the stuff about us. During the celebrations Celeste and I will collect it. I think I can find my way to the cave; but, just in case, I'll take a torch. When the moment seems ripe we'll creep off. But shush!" she added, as a footstep sounded, and they all swung round toward the door. "Somebody coming!"

Somebody was. The next moment the door opened. The round face of Bessie Bunter glowered in.

"Oh, so here you are!" she said. "Where the dickens have you been? *Atta itta incine*?" she added proudly.

"Haffa banana!" chortled Clara.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Clara!" Bessie protested. "*Atta itta incine* means 'what are you doing?'"

"You don't say?" Leila asked admiringly.

"But I do, you know! I'm becoming an expert in Zolindi!" Bessie beamed modestly. "It's fearfully easy when you understand it. But, of course," she added loftily, "you have to have a first-class brain like mine to master it! When we get back to Cliff House I'm jolly well going to tell Miss Drake to teach Zolindi, instead of silly Greek! It's ever so much more interesting, you know. And, after all, who the dickens wants to swot at a dead language?"

"Well, ghosties," Jemima murmured. "I should think dead languages are pretty popular with them—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Clara.

"Stupid!" Bessie sniffed. "How can ghosties—I mum-mean, ghosts—speak any language? I mean to say, if you can't talk anything else, Jemima, talk sense, you know! But what I came to see you about was the *Kala-kala*."

"Ice-creamo!" grinned Leila. "And what's the *Kala-kala* when it's at home, old plump chump?"

"The *Kala-kala*," Bessie said impressively, "is the feast of the moon! That's what we're going to see tonight, you know. Peter Murphy's told me all about it—old Peter knows everything about these Zolindi people—and I was just going to tell you that if there's

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anything you don't understand, just ask me! Meantime—" And there she broke off as the bell sounded from the deck above. "Oh, I sus-say, that's tea!" she cried hurriedly. "Come on, girls!"

The chums chuckled. It was obvious that, whatever passion Bessie might have for her new hobby, her appetite still had most influence upon her.

More leisurely, the chums followed. Only Celeste did not accompany them. Celeste, having the list of rations to be taken ashore that night, went off to the ship's larder, and, while the chums were listening to Bessie's prattle over the tea-table, she smuggled the required groceries to her own cabin.

Her grandfather met her as she came out.

"Hallo!" he said, rather gruffly.

"No news of the sacred snake yet?"

"No, grandpop," Celeste said.

"You don't know where this girl Rola is?"

"Well, I ask you!" Celeste said disarmingly. "But, grandpop, old top, don't look so worried!"

"Worried!" he growled. "Wouldn't you be worried?" he asked. "Would you like to be in my place? Here's a whole day gone, and not a single thing done!"

Celeste sighed, and shook her head. Poor old grandpop! But poor old all of them! Certainly the natives were keeping up their strike. And with every

minute that was wasted here the pirates' treasure in the Indian Ocean was fading farther and farther into the background.

Rather thoughtfully, Celeste rejoined the chums.

Rather thoughtfully—for her—she had her tea. After the meal Bessie went back to Peter Murphy, and the chums, returning to Celeste's cabin, stored the goodies she had procured into their pockets. By that time the red sun was swiftly setting, and already sounds of revelry and singing could be heard from the mainland.

"Time to go, you girls!" Bessie said, popping her head in at the door. "The boats are ready. And don't forget," she added generously, "if you get into trouble with the language, ask me!"

The chums grinned a little. They could not wholly believe in Bessie even now, and yet for once Bessie seemed not to be exaggerating. Astonishing as it was, the natives in the village seemed to understand her, and, what was more wonderful, Bessie seemed to understand them.

The village was en fete. Certainly there was no suggestion in the gaiety then under way that anything was amiss. Tom-toms were banging; flutes were whistling; laughing girls were pelting each other with flowers.

In the centre of the huge square, ringed about with the thatched-roof huts, the large bonfire was brilliantly alight, and round that bonfire the young men of the tribe were executing a weird native dance with all the frenzy and gusto of which they were capable.

"That," Bessie said, "is the dance of the fighting men. He told me," she added, pointing to a fat Zolindi who was grinningly squatting at her side. "The next item on the programme is the *Wishi-tisti*. That's the dance of the native girls," she added superiorly.

The chums settled down. Shouting natives thronged the large circle which ringed the compound. With quite startling abruptness the dance of the fighting men ended. For a moment there was silence. Then the flutes wailed again; the tom-toms beat out in a quivering crescendo; and suddenly, heralded by a cry from Marjorie, a procession of girls came pirouetting into the glare of the crackling fire, singing in rich, tuneful voices.

Babs started as she recognised the girl at their head.

"Miski!"

Miski it was, indeed—Miski still clutching her bodice, but, Babs noticed, without her silver wrist-watch.

With interest Babs watched her.

There was no doubt the girl could dance, and dance prettily, too. But Babs found herself wondering many times why she did not wear the watch which had so absorbed her attention during the afternoon, and why she marred many of her movements by clutching at her dress. Once there was a halt in the dance, and Babs, still watching the girl, saw her staring, as if afraid, towards the bush. Her eyes followed in that direction. Was it fancy, or did she for a moment see a vaguely moving figure among those bushes?

The incident passed almost without Babs being conscious of it. The dance went on. Three, four times round the fire the girls circled, throwing flowers into the air as they did so. Then, as abruptly as the dance of the fighting men, this dance also finished, and a cheer went up from the natives as the girls filed out of the compound, Miski still at their head. Babs clapped.

"Splendid!" she cried. "Splendid!" All the same, staring after Miski.

Babs felt considerably puzzled. Tonight for some reason the girl had seemed utterly terrified. Queer!

Queer it was. But there was no time to probe into the matter then. For Celeste, creeping up beside her, was plucking at her sleeve.

"Babs, now's our chance!" she said. "I've got the boodle!"

Babs nodded. In the darkness she rose to her feet.

A sudden silence had fallen on the assembly as out of a hut surrounded by a forest of totem poles at the other end of the square, the medicine-man, attired in a robe of monkey-skins and wearing a hideous mask from which sprouted a pair of antelope horns, came gesticulating into the firelight. The moment certainly was opportune, and, slipping back into the shadows cast by the trees, Celeste and Babs silently crept away. They were well out of earshot of the celebrations when Babs paused.

"What's that?" she said sharply, seizing Celeste's arm.

"What's what?"

But Babs was staring into the bushes ahead. Distinctly she had heard a rustling sound there. With a quick look at Celeste, she sprang forward, peering keenly through the tall ferns, and flashed on her torch cautiously, holding it low to the ground. There was nothing there.

"Thought I heard something!" she muttered.

"So did I!" Celeste whispered. "Still, I shouldn't worry," she comforted. "All sorts of wild animals are about at this time of night, and if we're going to jump at every rustle we shan't be at the cave by dawn! Come on!"

Babs nodded, feeling rather ashamed of her fear now. She led the way, once or twice uneasily looking back. With less difficulty than they expected, they found the river-bed, and, well out of sight and sound of the Zolindi village, pushed on ahead. Now and again Babs flashed her torch; now and again paused to stare back and listen, fancying she heard a sound.

But, as Celeste said, it was doubtless made by some prowler of the jungle. The whole forest seemed, indeed, to be full of strange whispers and rustles.

Once, rounding a bend in the river-bed, Celeste suddenly pulled Babs down with a hissed warning, pointing to a great shape ahead which stood on the bank of the river, plainly outlined against the moonlit sky.

It was a lion.

They stopped, hearts beating to suffocation point. The lion reared its head, for a moment turned, staring directly and steadfastly—or so it seemed—in the chums' direction. Then, to Babs' almost swooning relief, it turned with majestic slowness and silently padded away.

"Phew!" Celeste gasped. "Babs, have I gone platinum blonde? Talk about turning one's hair grey!"

Quickly they passed on. There were no more alarms, but, even so, it was no easy job to find the cave in the darkness; and, with no landmark of any description to guide them, they suddenly paused in confusion.

Babs frowned.

"Well, it was somewhere about here," she said. "But where, I'm jiggered if I know! Have we overshot the mark, do you think, or—"

She stopped, wheeling with a frightened start. For near by a sudden shrieking chatter rent the air. And while they both drew back, tensed to meet some new peril, a diminutive figure came running down the bank. Celeste's eyes widened.

"Why, it's a monkey—"

Babs' eyes lit up.

"And," she cried excitedly, "Rola's monkey! See, Rola has made a bandage for his head!"

Celeste blinked. But she saw then that what Babs said was true. The little monkey, crying and chattering as he ran, had clearly received some wounds in his fight with the lemur of that morning, and round his tiny head was a piece of cotton material that could only have come from Rola's dress.

Up he came, shrieking still. And then, in a leap which almost overbalanced Babs, he hopped on to her shoulder, and chattering animatedly, pointed with one tiny hand towards the bank.

Celeste grinned.

"Whoops! I do believe the little beggar has come to fetch us!" she said. "Almost looks as though his mistress knew we were on our way."

And then, as they stood still, a faint moan reached their ears.

"Rola!" cried Babs.

"Kak-kak-kak-ata!" the monkey said, and jumped up the bank.

"Come on!" exclaimed Celeste.

Hastily following their strange little guide, they scrambled up the bank, led by the monkey along the path. Then, at last, they recognised the tall clump of ferns which formed the screen to the fugitive's lair. Babs pushed them aside.

There came from within a faint, strangled voice.

"Celesti! Babbarrri!"

Babs, flashing the torch into the interior of the cave, stopped. For there, stretched out on the floor, the blood oozing from a long wound in her foot, and plainly in the last stages of exhaustion, was their fugitive friend!

"We Demand—the Thief!"



"ROLA!" Babs cried, and in a moment, putting down the torch, was crouching at the girl's side. "Rola!"

Rola smiled faintly.

"Foot!" she said. "Rola gather leaves for bed. Rola hear Zolindi soldiers looking! Rola run, fall over big stone! La! Nice white girls!" she added sighingly.

But Babs, by that time, was bending over the foot. The first anxious glance showed her the futility of doing anything. The wound was long, and deep, and in the worst possible state.

And without a first-aid kit, without water even, what could they do?

"Only one thing," Babs said, staring up at Celeste, "we've got to get her to the yacht! If this isn't attended to pretty quickly she might get blood-poisoning!"

Celeste looked a little grim.

"Then, in that case, there's no alternative, is there?" she asked. "But ticklish work," she added. "Easy enough to get her to the yacht, but what about getting her aboard? Still, never mind that! We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. Rola, old thing, can you get up?"

"No leave!" Rola cried, in terror. "No want go Forest of Ghosts!"

"You're not going to the Forest of Ghosts, old thing!" Celeste assured her. "You're coming with us—on the big boat—see? Now," she added, while Rola still uncertainly stared at them, "better eat some of this food and drink some of this milk, and you'll feel stronger for the journey. Can you manage?"

Rola smiled, while the little monkey, contented now, put his head under his arm, and promptly went off to sleep. With a greed which showed she had not eaten for some time, Rola ate the sandwiches and drank the milk, and then actually laughed. After that, Babs made a rough bandage of her own and Celeste's handkerchiefs, swathing them round the injured foot to prevent any further dirt getting into it.

She had just finished that operation when she looked up towards the opening. Celeste frowned.

"Hear something?" she asked. "I've an idea I did, too!" She went to the mouth of the cave, staring into the moonlit darkness. "Nothing here, though," she said.

"Him leopard, perhaps!" Rola said. "Plenty big leopard hunt in night! Now I ready," she added simply. "With white friends I go. You not let them send me Forest of Ghosts?" she pleaded, with a momentary return of alarm.

"No, of course not! Now!" said Celeste.

Tenderly they lifted her; somehow they got her outside. There, on her one sound foot, Rola was held, and with one arm round each of the chums' shoulders, smiled a little.

"Rola show you new way—quick way!" she said. "Safe in moonlight—no safe in day! You come?"

Breathlessly, between them, she limped along, pointing out the route. Certainly that was a safer and quicker route than the difficult river bed, with its loose stones and jungle prowlers; and in what seemed to be a very short time they came within sight of the sea, glistening like a gold-spotted mirror in front of them. The village still echoed to the sound of laughing and beating tom-toms, showing that the revels of the

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moon were still at their height. The beach itself was deserted.

"So far, so good!" Celeste chuckled. "Now, Rola, get into the boat!"

She pointed to her own little motor-launch which, fortunately, had been moored in the black shade of the tall bombax-trees.

"Get down into the bottom and stop there!" she advised. "Babs, when we reach the yacht, I'll climb up on deck and keep the watch talking. While I'm doing that, get Rola to my cabin."

"Good wheeze!" Babs said.

For once luck was with Celeste and Babs.

With Rola crouched in the thwarts of the boat, they reached the Gloriana's side. Celeste herself went aboard, and presently Babs, listening, heard her talk to the watch, heard the sound of footsteps as Celeste artfully piloted him to the opposite side of the boat.

Rola, with her one sound foot, could fend very well for herself, and went up the ladder after Babs with no hesitation. They reached the deck.

"Now come!" Babs whispered.

With one arm round the native girl, she helped her to the dark companion. Stealthily the two slipped down it. Without mishap Celeste's cabin was reached, and there Babs quickly set to work to dress the injured foot. She was in the middle of that task when Celeste appeared.

"Hallo! So all goes well," she chuckled. "Manage, Babs?"

"Nicely, thanks," Babs said.

"Right! Take your time," Celeste said, lounging on the door. "When you've finished, though, we'd better hop back to the village just in case we're missed. I'll lock Rola in the cabin—to prevent accidents," she added thoughtfully. "You won't mind that, Rola?"

"Nothing mind!" Rola said happily. "Nice kind Celeste and Babbbarri! No go Forests of Ghosts!" she added. "Stop on big boat!"

"You've said it!" Celeste chuckled.

"There," Babs exclaimed, finishing her bandaging. "Now, Rola, lie down," she said, and made the girl comfortable on Celeste's bed. "Come back by-and-by," she promised. "I'm ready, old thing!"

They left, smiling with tender glances at the happy little native on the bed. Outside, Celeste carefully locked the door, and the two sped up to the companion-way. Like shadows they flitted towards the scuppers. And then they both simultaneously jumped as a voice rang out.

"Stop! Who are you?"

"Oh, great goodness!" breathed Celeste. "Grandpop!"

They stopped. Suspiciously, Mr. Margesson came up.

"Hallo! Thought you were in the village?" he added. "What are you doing here?"

"We—we came for something," Celeste replied.

"Oh!" he grunted, apparently quite satisfied with that explanation. "And now you're going back?"

"Yes!"

"Mind if I come with you?"

"Delighted!" Celeste beamed, and looked at Babs. "This way, grand-pop; the navy's waiting!" she added gaily.

The old man grunted, plainly in no mood for levity. Down the ladder they climbed, and into Celeste's waiting boat. In ten minutes they scrambled out on the shore and, beaching the boat, started towards the village.

But all at once Babs paused.

"I say, what's the matter?" she exclaimed, aware that something was wrong. "Listen, I can't hear anything."

For from the direction of the village where the feast of the moon was still in progress—and which, in fact, was not due to break up until the moon itself had disappeared—there came no sound save the distant crackling of the huge bonfire.

"Perhaps," Babs went on, "they've given up—or are having a rest!"

"The Zolindi," Mr. Margesson retorted grimly, "never give up; they never rest; the fun goes on from dusk till dawn. And if they'd given up, where are your other friends—why aren't they here?" he challenged. "Queer," he added, frowning, and, after a pause; "Uncanny! Come on!"

Wonderingly they tramped on, but there came no sound from the native village. Ahead they saw the gleam and heard the splutter of the flames, but there was not a note of music, not a suggestion of a human voice.

Then, emerging from the trees, they came upon the village, the fire blazing in its middle; the natives sitting round all stolidly staring in one direction. At

forward," he said, "though what the dickens—"

He paused then, and, while Babs and Celeste apprehensively exchanged a glance, he moved towards the fire-lit circle.

"Come," he said.

Not a sound, not a movement. Babs, following him, felt like a prisoner going to her execution. Motionless, immovable, Lenibi and the medicine-man waited. Miski her hands stretched across the bodice of her rush-dress, stood like a bronze statue. Her eyes seemed to glow red in the firelight.

The three halted. Mr. Margesson broke into a testy exclamation.

"Miski," the medicine-man asked, "are these the white girls?"

"They are!" Miski said.

"And this the white man—"

"Of what has happened he knows nothing," Miski said sulkily.

"But what—" Mr. Margesson broke out.

"White lord, listen!" The medicine-man spoke again. "For many moons



"WHY, look!" cried Babs, pointing. The chums saw the distant figure of a girl, reaching out to catch the little monkey as it fled from its attacker. No doubt as to who that figure was. They had found the fugitive Rola at last!

the foot of the huge totem pole were three figures, however, all facing towards Mr. Margesson and the chums. The three were Lenibi, his head bowed on his breast, the medicine-man and—Miski.

Babs, Celeste, and Mr. Margesson stopped in amazement. Not a head was turned.

"What the dickens—" Mr. Margesson muttered, and then started as a wail went up from the medicine-man.

"White lord of the big boat, we see you!" he chanted in a sing-song voice. "Babbbarri, the white girl, we see you. Celeste, daughter of the white lord, we see you also, and would have council with you. In the name of Kuli-Kuli we command you to step forward."

"He—he means us?" Celeste stuttered.

Mr. Margesson's face was grim. "And in the name of Kuli-Kuli, there'll be trouble if you don't step

have you and the Zolindi been friends. For many future moons would we continue to be friends. Because you understood not, white lord, we looked with eyes of love upon you when the sacred snake of Kuli-Kuli was stolen this morning, even though that snake was given into the keeping of your daughter."

"Well—" Mr. Margesson began angrily.

"Now," the medicine-man pronounced, "we shall no longer look with love upon you if you do not surrender to her people she who is prisoner of Kuli-Kuli."

And while Mr. Margesson blinked he raised a monkey-skinned arm and pointed to Babs and Celeste.

"In the name of Kuli-Kuli," he added sternly, "we demand that Rola, the thief, who has been befriended by these girls, be given up at once!"

(Continued on page 14)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

Every Saturday your friend PATRICIA writes to you. She tells you about herself, her family, and her friends—of news to interest schoolgirls—of things to do and things to talk about—all in that chummy way so typical of her.



I EXPECT you're all most terribly thrilled this week—what with "breaking-up" at school, and the coming holidays!

So first, this Patricia of yours wants to wish you all a most marvellous time.

You fair ones must all become as golden-brown as toast, and you dark girls as brown as young gipsies. In fact, just have the time of your giddy young lives!

And then, the week after next, perhaps you'll wish the same to me, will you? For, you see, I am going away very soon—and I can't think of anything else I want in the world than my lovely holiday on the Riviera in the South of France. Lucky Pat!

● Just for Fun

Do you often ask yourselves what you would choose first if you could have a really expensive present—from a benevolent old millionaire, say?

Perhaps you wouldn't give yourself long to think, but would promptly say "a big house, with a huge garden," or "a pony," or "a luxury car," or you might even be very nice and unselfish and ask for a new bed-room carpet for mother.

But this "pretend" present is not for other people; it is to be for ourselves.

I'm afraid I'd ask for a day or two to think it over, and then make one of my inevitable "lists." It would, I am quite certain, in spite of the temperature being 80 degrees in the shade, or thereabouts, be headed by "Two fox furs—please."

Or I might, on second thoughts, ask for one of those fox fur capes, instead—which are certainly finding their way into my heart very rapidly.

Next I'd like a "dream bed-room," all of my very own, and furnished with pale blue carpet and white furniture, with a blue and pink cover on the bed and sheets of real satin.

Or, by this time, I might think it would be easier to ask for a thousand pounds and so have both my presents. But perhaps that would be cheating.

Then I'd like gold bath taps—though why, I don't quite know, for it wouldn't make the water any hotter.

Oh, and I'd like a diamond watch.

Then, as I've now got into the realm of film stars' ideas of presents, I'd also like a swimming pool in the garden—with perhaps an ice-cream bar thrown in for luck at one end.

But now we're getting impossible, when what I really need is a new bathing-suit for my holiday. So we'll decide the game is over.

● A Lovely Gift

All the same, I was very thrilled to know that our young princesses have recently had a wondrous present from their father. It is a swimming pool in the grounds of Royal Lodge, Windsor, which is their favourite country and week-end home.

This pool lies just near the princesses own little house, the one that was presented to them by the people of Wales a few years ago. So you can just imagine what fun these two young people are having this weather, can't you?

Both Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret are good swimmers, Princess Elizabeth having recently passed her Life-Saving tests.

● Pretty Pettis

I hope you'll be taking several pettis away with you on your holiday to wear under your more flimsy summer dresses. Gingham and linens, and other tub-able frocks, are fairly shadow-proof, of course, and don't require pettis, but some of your best silky ones certainly will.

And please don't think that wearing pettis is too warm, for it needn't be, really. A pair of light panties, a full-length petti and your frock over is the most deliciously cool outfit on even the hottest day. (Even cooler than a wool bathings-uit, I always think.)

Slim-fitting as we like our pettis to be these days, they're not much use if they are too tight, now are they?

So you'd better try your best ones on very quickly to make sure they still fit you. But if you should have grown out of them, then there is no need to get panicky, for it will take only a very few moments to "let them out."

The simplest and very prettiest way to do this is to let a strip of lace insertion all the way down the front. This will give an extra two inches to the width, and if your petti should still be too tight, why, then you can repeat the idea down the back as well.

"Seasy," as my small brother, young Heath (or Heatherington in full), would say.

A dainty trimming of lace right round the top of a petticoat and round the hem will always give you extra length. And even if the lace should dare to peep beneath your frock on a breezy day—why, it will look perfectly sweet!

● So Cool

What a lot of people seem to have refrigerators these days—and what a luxury they are, too. They always make

a kitchen look so expensive, I always think.

But even the smallest refrigerators cost pennies to keep running in the hot weather.

So next time you hear mother saying that the butter is simply melting away to nothing, just tell her that you will fix her up with a patent butter-cooler.

An ordinary brick is what you require. This should be washed thoroughly and then left to soak in cold water. Wrap it around next with wet butter muslin, and place the butter on top, where it will keep daisy-fresh.

Very money-saving, this idea!

● To Wear at the Sea

You must certainly have one or two brooch-fobs to wear on your summer clothes and to pin on to the lapel of your blazer this summer.

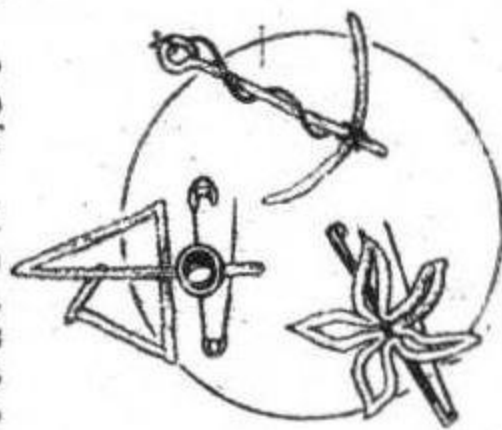
So how do you like the nautical look of these here?

They are all made from pipe-cleaners, which means that the cost is next to nothing!

With one eye on the picture, I am sure you could soon twist a pipe-cleaner into the shape of the sails of the little boat, and you'll want a small bead or button through which to sew the safety-pin.

The anchor is also made by bending one pipe-cleaner (cutting it if necessary), and this has a piece of coloured cord wrapped around it to represent the anchor chain. A pin sewn to the back makes the fastening for this, too.

The starfish is just as easy to bend to shape as it looks, and this also should have a pin sewn to the back for pinning to your dress, blazer, beret, or scarf.



● A Smile

Here's just a tiny joke to tell mother in the train as you set off on your holiday.

The lady of the house went to the door when the milkman arrived, and he was obviously new to his job.

"Good-morning," she said. "How much is my milk bill?"

"'Scuse me," said the milkman, "but my name's Joe."

I hope you're smiling!

Bye-bye till next week, my dears.

Your friend,

Patricia

GAMES BESIDE THE SEA

"What shall we play?" is often the question on the beach, isn't it? So here are some suggestions for boisterous and more restful games that you are sure to enjoy.



A LOVELY, firm stretch of beach, a family party—and, of course, someone is sure to say: "What shall we play?"

Cricket will probably be the first game voted, providing there are enough of you to make it exciting, for no holiday by the sea yet has ever been complete without sand-cricket.

But supposing there are not more than six of you to play, then what about playing "Hot Rice" instead?

One player is given a light cricket bat, or a smallish tennis racket, and with this she has to defend herself.

The other players gather around, and at the word "Go," one of them hurls the ball at the player with the bat. (A softish ball, please, especially if there are any young ones playing.)

The object of the thrower is to try to hit the girl who holds the bat, while she must try to hit the ball away all the time.

Every time she does so, the ball is fielded, and aimed again. But—just one rule; both "thrower" and hitter must stand still while the ball is actually being thrown. Apart from this, all players can dodge just wherever they like.

The girl who does succeed in hitting the girl with the bat, then takes her place.

That's an exhausting game, if you like, so now what about one that's a bit more restful.

"Sand Golf" is grand fun, and can be played with either inverted walking-sticks or putting irons, which are on sale at the seaside for sixpence each.

But first you may lay out your "course." This might start off with a long gully scooped in the sand, and at the end of it a pail which is buried so that the top is on a level with the gully.

This is the first "hole," for the ball must be played right along this gully and into the pail, in as few strokes as possible.

The second "hole"—again made from a sunken pail—might have a piled-up hill of sand just in front of it, as a difficult-to-negotiate bunker.

The third "hole" can be approached by a pathway of sand edged with pebbles, with a pit at one end, and the pail on ground level. That would be quite a difficult one.

Think out at least six of these "hazards," making each as different from the others as possible.

The winner, of course, is the player who completes the course, knocking her ball into each pail in turn, in the least number of strokes.

Should the ball stray off the laid-out course, then it may be returned at the point where it left. But that move, of course, adds one to your score.

"Noughts and Crosses" and "Draughts" sound rather dull as a holiday pastime, now don't they?

But just you wait till you've tried out both these games on the beach, instead of indoors. You'll love them.

The "Noughts and Crosses" diagram can be marked out in the sand with your finger, or you can make your marks with a stick.

"Draughts" can be played with twelve white pebbles for one player and twelve darker ones for the other player, and the "board" made of smooth and ruffled squares of sand.

A sort of "Tiddleywinks" can be played with spades, buckets, and balls.

You arrange the pails in a row—about four of them. Each player must stand at least six feet away, her toes against a line marked there.

In her hand each has a spade, and at

her feet a ball. At the word "Go," she must aim to get the ball into a pail. Any methods may be used—patting, banging, jerking, or bouncing, but the only spade is allowed to touch the ball, remember.

The girl who gets her ball into her goal first is the winner, and should be presented with an ice-cream from the other players!

Races are always grand fun on the sands, and one of the most amusing to watch is the "Catch the Train Race."

The players in their bathing-suits must be lined up, and some distance away must be piles of clothes, consisting of a pair of shoes, a dress, and hat for each player.

At the word go, off they dash, and at the clothes heap they must pause to don shoes, dress, and hat. Then, clad like this, they must race back to the starting point, take off the garments, and lay them in a neat heap. The first girl to accomplish this is the winner.

There's only one rule to this race, which is that any player who tears a garment will be disqualified. That will ensure the dressing being done with every care.



**A SMART
BLUE BLOUSE**
—that is made from two large hankies

ISN'T this a perfectly charming blouse that would be just the thing to wear over shorts or a skirt on your holiday?

And when I tell you it is made only from two large hankies, and requires no cutting out, and only the tiniest bit of sewing—well, I'm sure you'll long to own one yourself.

Your first requirements are the hankies, of course. You can buy beauties, in red and white or blue and white spots, made of cotton fabric, for threepence each, while for sixpence more you could buy two silk ones.

But myself, I prefer the spotted cotton ones, for these are the rage this year—real "navvies'" hankies, as they used to be called.

Now with these two treasures, just place one over your front and one over your back, as a try-on. Then mark with a pin on each side where the armholes should begin.

Take the hankies off, and now for the little bit of sewing. Just over-sew from the hem at the waist, up to the pin-mark, and fasten off securely.

To make the shoulder part, you simply tie the two corners of the hankies in a knot at each side.

There, that is done, and you can wear a clip or a brooch at the neck to make it a bit lower if you like.

"One In The Middle" is a good game that can be enjoyed by three players with a big beach ball. (Incidentally, this game is excellent practice for netball next term at school.)

Two players stand about twenty feet apart and the third girl stands between them. The outside girls must hurl the ball to each other, and the girl in the middle must try to intercept it, by leaps and jumps.

If she does so, she takes the place of the girl who threw the ball, and that girl now goes into the middle.

"Deckchair games" for those occasions when you feel dozy and thoroughly sun-warmed, shouldn't be too exhausting. But you'll like "Word-Making"—particularly if you are good at spelling.

One player starts off with a letter, say "C." The next one continues, say, with an "a." Now the poor third person has to think a little, for she must try not to make a word. So obviously she had better not say "t," otherwise she will have "cat" shouted at her, and will lose a life. She mustn't say "r" either, even if she has got the word "cart" in mind.

So we'll hope she'll say "s," thinking perhaps of "castle," but woe betide the next player if she says "t," for she'll have made a word.

And so it goes on, rather dreamily, the winner being the player who has lost fewest "lives," having completed the least number of words.

Of course, there are also quite a number of other games—old standbys, such as cricket, rounders, tennis and hockey—that you can play on the sands, but I'm sure you know all about them.

I do hope you'll find these suggestions useful. But don't try and carry all of them out on the same day, or you'll feel like spending the rest of your seaside stay stretched out in a deck-chair!

(Continued from page 11)

Babs is Suspicious



FOR one tense, timeless moment the world seemed to spin round Celeste and Babs as the significance of those words hammered in their minds.

Rola! Rola whom they had secretly rescued, whom they had promised should not be banished to the Forest of Ghosts, was betrayed. It was less than an hour since they had rescued her, yet these natives knew!

How?

But the answer stood there in front of Babs—Miski!

Miski was the girl who had given them away! Miski was the author of those rustling sounds which, on their journey to Rola's hiding place, had so filled Babs with uneasiness. Miski had followed them then; Miski had spied upon them, and discovering what had happened to Rola, betrayed them.

A wave of anger shook Babs as she stared at the girl, and Miski, meeting the searing contempt in her eyes, gave back a pace.

But now at last the tribe were muttering. Mr. Margesson, however, was angry.

"Lenibi, what nonsense is this?" he cried.

"'Tis true," Lenibi said sulkily. "White lord, even now Rola is on your big boat, taken there by these girls. No longer may she belong to me, having done such grievous wrong. No longer may I acknowledge her, who is to stand her trial before the Council of Kuli-Kuli! Lord, let there not be enmity between us," Lenibi pleaded. "Deliver her up!"

"No!" cried Babs. "Mr. Margesson—"

"Oh, wait a minute!" he cried distractedly. "Wait a minute! What is all this? Has everybody gone mad? Celeste, answer me—and answer truthfully! Have you got this girl aboard?"

Celeste's face was white.

"Yes. But—"

"You have!" His eyes grew steely all at once. "Don't you think," he asked wearily, "you have caused enough trouble? Already the trip is practically ruined—thanks to you and this Rola! Must you do these things, knowing that the natives are so touchy? Where is she?"

"In my cabin. But, grandpop—"

"And locked up, I presume?" He nodded grimly. "Lenibi." He turned to the chief again, while Miski, with a scared look at the two girls, melted away. "I am sorry," he said. "I did not know. Out of some misguided sense of friendship for your daughter, it is as you say."

"Lord, it pleases us to hear you say that," the medicine-man said. "Now may we go with our soldiers to fetch her?"

"I will take you myself," Mr. Margesson said grimly.

"No, grandpop! No, no, no! You can't!" Celeste cried. "We promised—"

"Celeste, I'm sorry." He turned and faced her. "There are some things, young lady, you have to learn not to meddle with. Accepting presents of sacred tribal ju-ju's is one! Another is sheltering a girl who is marked down as a criminal by her tribe!

"If this," he added, "happened in some tribes I know of, not only Rola, but you and Barbara would be put on trial, and the chances are that you would all be banished to the Forest of Ghosts—or worse! Now stand aside, please, and

cease to interfere! Remain here until we come back."

He called out something in the native tongue to the medicine-man. But already half a dozen fierce young men, armed with swords and spears, had appeared in the firelight.

While Babs & Co. fell back, dumbly realising the impossibility of doing anything further, they saw the young men, with the medicine-man and Mr. Margesson at their head, march off towards the beach. Up from the assembled people went a wail. Babs felt almost sick.

And to think, after all they had done, all they had risked, that their efforts should have ended—in this!

With wild desperation Celeste looked at Babs.

"Babs—oh, Babs, what can we do?"

Babs lips compressed.

What could they do, indeed? What possible hope now of saving Rola from the fate which awaited her when she was tried and condemned in the name of Kuli-Kuli?

Betrayed by the girl she had called a friend, every tiny scrap of evidence was against her. Every fact so overwhelmingly condemning her that there could be no possible loophole of escape.

Because of her affection for them, Rola had been brought to this. Because they had persuaded her against her own wishes to go to the yacht, she was now a prisoner.

"There's one thing—and only one thing," Babs said. "We must find the real thief before Rola is tried!"

Celeste stared.

"And how are we to do that?"

But Babs did not reply. She had an idea. She was thinking of Miski, and of the reed she had found on the floor of Celeste's cabin. Miski wore a dress from which that reed might conceivably have come. Miski, the frightened, tremulously alarmed girl, had gone out of her way to betray her friend. Why?

"Celeste," she said quickly, "go and join Mabs and the others; find out, if you can, what is going to take place. I've an idea—or half a one—that Miski knows more about this than she cares to tell. I'm going to talk to her!"

Wonderingly Celeste stared at her chum. But there was urgency in Babs' voice now, and before she had time to put another question Babs had gone racing off towards that hut in which Miski had so terror-strickenly disappeared when the chums had surprised her wearing the watch. Reaching the hut, Babs called:

"Miski!"

No reply.

Babs set her lips.

"Miski!" she repeated.

From inside came the sound of a hissing breath.

Babs' eyes glimmered. Not now was she going to be put off. Determinedly she strode towards the reed curtain that served as a door, then, as the firelight for a moment flickered up, paused, staring with sudden intentness at the ground.

"Hal-lo!" she muttered softly.

In front of the hut sand had been sprinkled. It was fresh sand, bearing the imprint of Miski's naked feet. But it bore another imprint, too—and that imprint was not Miski's; nor, indeed, did it belong to any native. It had a zig-zag pattern, obviously made by a patent rubber sole. In other words, it was the imprint of a white man's boot—or shoe!

Suddenly, vividly, Babs was remembering Miski's terror of the morning, her almost vehement denial of any knowledge of a white man.

"Miski!" she called again. "Miski!"

And this time she caught the reed curtain and pulled it aside. "Are you there?"

All at once she found Miski in front of her, large eyes showing terror, and still unconsciously clutching at the bodice of her dress.

"Go away!" the native girl cried.

"Miski, I want to talk to you."

"No want talk to you!" Miski said. "Go 'way!"

"Miski, you've got to talk to me!" Babs said sternly; and she thrust out her hand, intending, if the native girl did not come of her own accord, to pull her into the open.

Just in time, however, Miski, dithering with fright, jumped back. As she jumped, Babs noticed that the hand which clutched her reed bodice fell. For an instant Babs fancied she detected a glistening sheen beneath the reeds of the dress, and then, quickly, agitatedly, Miski's hand was back in the same place.

"Go away! Go away! Miski know nothing!" she cried wildly.

The reed curtain clattered into place. For a moment Babs stood looking at it. But her face was rather startled, her eyes grim. Then, with a shrug, she turned away, striding back across the compound. But almost at once there was a great cry from the woods between the village and the shore, and Babs halted, her heart in her mouth. For, coming up the path that led from the seashore to the village, was Rola—Rola, in the grip of six brawny soldiers, with her own father solemnly following in the rear and the medicine-man dancing on ahead, shouting in a throaty voice.

While Babs watched, conscience urging her to spring forward, Rola, sobbing bitterly, was led into a near-by hut.

Bessie's Big Moment!



"CELESTE! Celeste, what did you find out?"

Barbara Redfern spoke urgently.

She had rejoined the chums—a glum and doleful little party, in all truth. They all knew now what had transpired—that Rola had been made prisoner, and was to be tried before the councillors of Kuli-Kuli.

Already the figure of Kuli-Kuli, watched by the awed and almost terrified natives, had been wheeled from her hut. Mounted on a platform in the red glare of the fire, the great, hideous goddess, carved from a single tree-trunk, with eyes like emeralds and shining jewels flashing from different parts of her, stood glaring upon the assembly.

"Nothing—much." Celeste spoke jerkily. Her face, in the firelight, was pale; her eyes, no longer those of a madcap, were drawn and haggard. "There is to be a dance of the natives to celebrate the capture of the prisoner," she said. "After that, the trial will take place. But, Babs, it's hopeless—hopeless! Already Rola is condemned!"

Babs' eyes flashed. She said nothing more. Though she was trembling a little, resolution was still in her face. Silently, urgently, she beckoned to Bessie Bunter, who was still carrying on a conversation with the plump native opposite her.

Bessie blinked.

"I say, you—you want me, Babs?"

"Please, Bess! Come here!"

Bessie, with a fat frown, rose. The chums watched, shaking their heads, wondering what new bee Babs had in

her bonnet, but seeing plainly, from the look on her face, that she certainly had some bee there. Quickly Babs caught hold of Bessie's arm; quickly she led her to the shadow of the date-palms near by. For five, ten minutes, she spoke earnestly.

Bessie's mouth was wide.

"Bessie, you are sure you can do it?" Babs asked tensely.

"Well, yes."

"Right!" Babs breathed freely. "It's our only chance to save Rola," she said. "You like her, Bessie, don't you? You wouldn't like to see her banished—for nothing? But don't do anything until I nudge you. You understand?"

"Y-yes, Babs!"

They both took their places, Babs sitting next to Bessie. The natives were chanting in a low voice now. The medicine-man, on his knees, was making strange gesticulations before the carved, impressive Kuli-Kuli. He rose. A breathless silence fell, as reverently, almost fervently, the natives stared at their awesome goddess. Excitedly he jabbered something.

suddenly darting forward, Miski clutched at the girl's hair, pulling her to her feet. A shout went up, dying to silence as the other girls surrounded the prisoner.

At that moment Babs nudged Bessie.

And then a most strange thing happened.

For plainly, in the silence which had descended, a voice spoke. It was a voice which came straight from Kuli-Kuli herself.

"Stop!" it said, in the Zolindi tongue.

From Miski went up a gasp. Eyes glazed, she spun round. Even the medicine-man paused, staring up through his mask at the goddess' carved face. A breathless hush went round the compound, followed by a moan and a tense, excited whisper, as if the natives found themselves in the presence of some miracle.

"Kuli-Kuli speak! Kuli-Kuli speak!"

"Stop!" Kuli-Kuli repeated. "Stop now! Go no further, my children, for I, your ju-ju, have words to deliver to you. She, whom you accuse of stealing my sacred snake, is not the thief!"

medicine-man at that moment came running forward, followed by Lenibi.

And Babs, rising, pointed a quivering finger.

"Look!" she cried.

For, hung by a loose chain from Miski's neck, was the sacred snake of gold. At the eleventh hour Babs had discovered the thief!

GREAT THE commotion, great the hubbub then.

While Miski, still half-unconscious, was hauled to her feet, the soldiers of the tribe surrounded her. For a moment she blinked in terror at the goddess. Then, as she saw the sacred snake in the medicine-man's hand, she gave a whimper of fright.

"I not take it," she babbled—"I not take it! I not take, because white man asked me!"

"Miski"—Babs spoke sternly—"would you tell lies before Kuli-Kuli? You have been found out! The sacred snake was in your possession. Your friend, Rola, you betrayed! What have you to say?"

"Speak!" Lenibi said contemptuously.



DRAMATICALLY the medicine-man pointed at Babs and Celeste. "In the name of Kuli-Kuli," he thundered, "we demand that Rola, the thief, befriended by these girls, be given up to us!"

"Bessie, what's that?" Babs asked.

"He—he says," Bessie stuttered, "that the dance of the girls will now take place. After that will be the trial, with the goddess herself sort of taking charge, you know. Oh, I sus-say, look! Here come the dancing girls!" she added.

A cry went up. Babs turned her head. And then she started, her face hardened, as tripping on to the scene came Miski, still clutching at her dress, her eyes wide and wild. She blinked in the direction of the Cliff House chums, and then, in terror, spun round to look towards the dreaded Kuli-Kuli.

She waved her free hand. The girls began to dance.

A mumbling murmur rose from the natives.

The chums watched, fascinated. It was a wild dance, quite different from anything they had seen before. Obviously, this was not supposed to be part of the usual gaiety. It was some ritual which foreshadowed the trial about to take place. One of the girls, kneeling with her face in her hands, sobbed quietly, while the others danced round her, gradually closing in. Then,

Came a breathless chorus of gasps. Babs, teeth clenched, saw Miski take a staggering step backward.

Terror-stricken, she goggled at the goddess.

Fiercely Babs nudged her chum.

"Go on, Bessie!"

"The thief," Kuli-Kuli went on, "is here among you! The thief"—and while a quiver of fear went through the natives the voice dropped to a terrific rumble—"the thief is before me! If you would find her, look among the dancing girls."

And there ventriloquial Bessie abruptly stopped. For suddenly there sounded a piercing shriek, and Miski, convulsively clutching at her dress, fell forward on her face, fairly gibbering in terror.

In a moment Babs was jumping forward.

"She's fainted!" she cried. "Quickly—water!"

Across the compound she rushed, reaching Miski's side before any of the stupefied assembly could act. She lifted the hand that still clutched at the bodice of the reed dress, and frenziedly she tore that dress apart. The

Miski stared with wide eyes; then suddenly she put her face in her hands. Bessie, who had started forward, blinked as she listened to the tirade that poured forth from her lips.

"Oh crumbs! She—she says that a white man gave her a tick-tock—a watch, you know. She wanted the watch so badly that she promised to do as he told her. And he told her to get the sacred snake, you know—"

"Yes," Babs breathed.

How she blessed Bessie's new hobby in that moment!

"And Miski, though she was afraid, she—she got it," Bessie babbled on. "She put it in the place of the bangle Rola was going to give to Celeste."

"And then?" Babs asked, looking at the whimpering Miski.

"Then," Bessie said—"then, you know, she jij-jolly well thought of what she had done. She had a dream, she says, and Kik-Kuli-Kuli spoke to her, and told her that she must get the bangle back. Well, she—she got it back. And she's kept it ever since. But all the time she was jolly well scared, you know, of being found out."

"And that," Babs put in quickly, "was why she accused Rola, feeling, I suppose, that she would be safe if another girl was punished for her crimes. But who is the white man?" she added.

"No know," Miski said, looking up. "No give name. Give me tick-tock. Tick-tock great ju-ju, he said. More powerful than Kuli-Kuli. White man say with tick-tock I should be chief of tribe. Babbarri," she cried—"Babbarri, say that I shall not be sent to Forest of Ghosts!"

"Try her—try!" thundered the natives.

"Babbarri, please!" Miski pleaded. "Babbarri, look!" Feverishly fumbling in her dress, she held up a man's silver wrist-watch on a leather strap. "Babbarri, save me, and this I give you!" she cried eagerly. "White man give it to me!"

Babs paused. There was a silence then. She glanced at Bessie—Bessie looking remarkably uneasy now that she realised what her ventriloquial performance had done.

"Babs, let's put things right, you know," Bessie stammered. "Even if— if she deserves it, you know, I—I dud-don't want her to g-get into a row because of me."

Babs thought swiftly.

"Give me the watch!" she commanded Miski.

Miski, quivering with terror, handed it over. Babs nodded.

"Go ahead, Bess!"

And once more the natives were struck into frightened silence as the voice of the goddess spoke.

"It is well," the goddess said in Zolindi. "Be not vengeful, my children. All that I ask is that my sacred snake shall be returned to me. That done, and I would have you all at peace with each other, and with the white men. Leave Miski alone. Miski has learned her lesson. She'll never do foolish things again!"

A quivering cry of joy came from Miski. The natives, thunderstruck, muttered to each other.

Then Rola, her face radiant, came limping forward on the arms of her father and Mr. Margesson. She nodded.

"Kuli-Kuli is great; Kuli-Kuli is merciful!" she pronounced softly. "Miski, I would not have you suffer as I have suffered. Be nice like the white girls, and be sure that if you obey the voice of Kuli-Kuli, no harm shall befall you. Go now!"

Sobbing quietly, Miski crept away.

"And you, my friends," Rola smiled mistily, "you have been so good, so wonderful to me—you and Kuli-Kuli"—with a glance of affection at the tribe's ju-ju—"I—I could never thank you enough! If there is anything I can do—"

"You can," Mr. Margesson put in, with a faint smile. "Tell your father to get my stores aboard."

"Lord, it shall be done!" Rola said, with a smile.

And done it was. Inspired by the voice of their goddess, the natives worked like slaves that night, and all the following day. Urged by Mr. Margesson, the stores were all aboard and battened down in the hatches before sundown the following night; and on the third day, with time to spare in which to beat the Indian monsoon, the *Gloriana* steamed on its stately way, festooned by the flowers of the friendly Zolindi.

The chums, lining the rail, laughed and waved hands as the cheering

natives stood up in their frail boats; Rola, the last of them all, madly fluttering a Union Jack. But then, at last, the *Gloriana* had steamed out to sea. When eventually the shores of Zolindi land had faded into the distance, Babs' face became sharp.

"And so," she said softly, "we're on our way to Pirates' Island."

"That's true, I guess," Leila Carroll agreed. "But it seemed that we were bunkered."

"Thanks," Babs said, "to Mr. Carl Todd!"

They all looked at her sharply. Not since they had left England, and beaten Carl Todd in the race for the recovery of the chart of Pirates' Island for which they were in quest, had that scoundrel's name been mentioned.

"Why, what has Carl Todd to do with it?" Jack Trevlyn asked.

"Carl Todd," Babs repeated, "had everything to do with it. Carl Todd must have got here before us. Carl Todd obviously wanted to delay us, because it was he who concocted this almost successful little scheme. The footprint outside Miski's hut was his. He was the white man who persuaded Miski to steal the sacred snake—"

"But—but how do you know?" stammered Mabs.

"By—that!"

And Babs, producing the silver watch from her pocket, flicked it open.

They stared, eyes widening, as they saw the inscription engraved on the back of the case:

"Carl Todd—1935."

In consternation, and yet queerly thrilled, they looked at each other.

"Todd," breathed Jack—"Todd!"

He swung round and, his face hardening, stared back towards the coast of Zolindi, now out of sight beyond the horizon.

"My gosh!" he breathed, clenching his hands. "My gosh, to think that rotter was behind all that! To think he was there all the time, and we didn't even suspect it! Why, hang it," Jack went on fiercely, "he may be there now for all we know!"

Babs looked at Jack sharply.

There was a note of anxiety and longing in his voice, as if, conscious of the menace Carl Todd had been to their plans so often in the past, he was toying with the idea of returning to Zolindi and settling with the fellow here and now.

"I doubt it," Babs said, shaking her head; and she laid a hand on Jack's arm. "You know what a slippery customer Mr. Todd is. He won't have stayed long after knowing the game was up. He'll be well away by now."

Jack, frowning thoughtfully, suddenly broke into a smile.

"Why, yes; I guess you're right, old thing!" he said. "He'll have discovered where he gets off. We've finished with Mr. Carl Todd for good this time!" he added gleefully.

But Babs hadn't meant quite the same as Jack. She looked at him oddly.

"I wonder!" she murmured, beneath her breath.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.



Continuing their thrilling journey to Pirates' Isle, Barbara Redfern & Co., together with Jack Trevlyn and Celeste Margesson, explore an uninhabited island. Almost at once they make two startling discoveries; the first, that the island is not uninhabited at all, but actually peopled by descendants of the Ancient Egyptians; and the second, and far more staggering, that the girl queen of this romantic race is someone they know very well indeed, the last person whom they would expect to find in such an amazing position.

Who is this intriguing person? You'll meet her yourself next week, when you read Hilda Richards' latest absorbing story of the Cliff House chums on holiday. And you'll be able to share all the extraordinary adventures that befall Babs & Co. when the girl queen makes them her slaves!

Order your SCHOOLGIRL early to avoid being disappointed.

All the Thrills and Glamour of the Golden West!

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, Ted and Bebbie. 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 there is a rumour that he is really one of the men rustling cattle. The rumour starts to die down, however, and Fay is asked to help organise a forthcoming charity event in the near-by town of Redland Gulch. Lucille Hampton, John Hampton's daughter, is on the committee. At a meeting of the committee Lucille accuses Fay of playing an underhand trick.

(Now read on.)

The Reward of Her Heroism!

"THAT'S not true!" Fay cried, in a vibrant voice. "I haven't played any sort of trick!"

And, jumping to her feet, she stood there, white-faced and trembling a little, looking at the angry, contemptuous faces which were turned to her from all parts of the school-room.

Lucille Hampton's accusation was still ringing in her ears.

"You deliberately voted against employing those men for the charity social and then palmed us off with a rotten old shed—to keep us quiet—so that you could collar those men to work for your father!" Lucille had declared.

And it was a lie. Fay's eyes flashed as they alighted upon the supercilious face of the daughter of the man who hated her father. It was a lie, as Lucille knew full well.

She hadn't schemed to get those men for her ranch; and she hadn't sent a dilapidated shed to the town for use in the forthcoming social.

The men in question—three labourers from Ainsworth, fifty miles away—had been hired without Fay's knowledge by one of the helpers on the Flying H. And their assistance was vital, too. For, thanks to the treachery of John Hampton in blowing up the source of their only water-hole, their entire herd of cattle was faced with extinction.

Only one thing could save them—the

construction of a canal between an underground stream that ran through the land and the rapidly drying water-hole. And those men—experts at that sort of work—were the only people who could help to get it completed in time.

But as for the shed—Fay's dismay, as she realised the hostility of everyone present, was tinged with utter amazement. It had been in perfectly good condition when it left the Flying H, strong enough to withstand plenty of rough wear. And yet—

It was Lucille who broached that subject now.

"What?" she cried scornfully. "You've got the sauce to stand up there and deny playing a trick on us when the shed you sent was so rickety it fell to pieces as it was being taken off the lorry! Utter rot! You knew the shed was rotten!"

FAY'S GOOD DEED FOR THE CHARITY SHOW ONLY BROUGHT HER HOSTILITY — THANKS TO HER ENEMIES.

"It seems like it!" one woman added grimly. "I was there at the time, an' saw the whole thing!"

There were murmurs of agreement—murmurs of anger and scorn directed against her—and Fay bit her lip.

But what really had happened to the shed? It couldn't—just couldn't have collapsed for no apparent reason at all, except a mild shaking up on the journey along the trail.

"Now listen, folks!" Fay said desperately. "To begin with, I didn't cheat the social out of those men!" Swiftly she explained how they had come to work for the Flying H. "An' what's more," she went on resolutely, "that shed was perfectly all right when it was put on the lorry. I'd like to see it!"

But when she had followed Lucille and the rest out to the school playground, she stared in mingled wonder and incredulity at the pile of jumbled

boards that had been dragged through the gate and left in a corner, out of the way.

No doubt about it. This had once been her shed. And now it lay in ruins—broken, splintered, shattered.

"Well, you see?" purred Lucille's gloating voice.

"Now who says it wasn't rotten when you sent it!" said someone else angrily. "A pretty low-down trick, I say! Just like a Thornton!"

The blood draining from her cheeks, her eyes ablaze, Fay started to swing round. That insult had filled her with sudden anger. But something checked her. She stared down at the pile of wreckage, and suddenly dropped to her knees, her expression changing.

"Come here, folks!" she cried. "Now, then, you see that—and that—and that?" Her finger stabbed at various broken boards. "Those breaks aren't natural like. They didn't just happen because the shed was old and weak, but because—"

She got to her feet, eyes gleaming. "They were made with some kind of tool—most likely an axe!"

"What!"

"Why, of—of all the ridiculous things!" said Lucille, and shakily laughed.

But Fay, stepping back, knew that she had scored; for people, swiftly examining those telltale marks, were already looking at each other in dumb-founded conviction.

And Fay felt sure of something else; something that made her eye Lucille in silent disgust. John Hampton's men, who had been driving the lorry, were responsible for this! Without a doubt, it was another attempt on the part of her father's enemy to ruin them—drive them out of the town in disgrace!

Hampton knew how vital it was for the three Ainsworth men to work for them, and this was his ingenious scheme of dealing her and daddy a double blow—getting her accused of playing a despicable trick against the social, and also making the success of that affair entirely dependant upon the Ainsworth men leaving the Flying H.

But it hadn't succeeded, after all. Quite shamefaced, Fay's former critics admitted their mistake. She wasn't to blame—of that they were certain now.

And one of them summed up the general impression so satisfactorily that Fay saw no reason to disillusion them

—Lucille, the only other person to know any different, certainly didn't.

"I can't explain those axe-marks!" this woman said, shaking her head. "Those men would never have damaged the shed apurpose, surely? But they must have been mighty careless, I guess, and maybe the thing dropped off on the way here, and that's how it got damaged!"

There was a nodding of heads.

"Reckon you're right, Mrs. Parkes! But what do we do now? What about those three new men working for your dad, Miss Fay? Couldn't you spare them to make a shed for us?"

Fay, biting her lip, hesitated. Then she explained just how much the men's assistance meant to her and her father.

"Gee, but that's pretty tough on you, Miss Fay!" came a sympathetic comment. "I guess you need them more'n the social does!"

And that was what everyone else—with the exception, of course, of Lucille—roundly declared. But it didn't help the social. What ever could be done on behalf of that, with no shed available for the cowboy and Redskin set-piece, and no other men available to construct one?

It was Fay, bitterly incensed against Lucille, and keenly concerned for the success of the great event, who took a lead.

"You go back and carry on with the meeting," she said. "I'll see what I can do!"

And, leaving the group, she hurried away, taking one of the sidewalks towards the other end of the town.

Her only hope was Jim Stiles' odd-job establishment, and even that was a very forlorn sort of hope. Jim usually had plenty of men at his disposal—men capable of tackling any kind of work—but recently they had all gone over to another town where a sports stadium was being constructed, and it was hardly likely some would have returned to Redland Gulch just when she needed them.

Fay's lack of optimism was justified. Jim Stiles, a lanky old chap, with a grizzled white mustache, shook his head when she had told him the position.

"Guess not, Miss Fay." He turned to an elderly cattleman who was examining a repaired saddle. "Say, Ted, s'pose yuh don' know of any likely hombres?"

"'Fraid not, Jim!"

Two heads were shaken at Fay. With a wry little smile, she nodded. Slowly, she left the place; slowly, she began to retrace her steps back to the School House.

"Guess I just don't know what to do," she mused anxiously. "I can't lend our men to the social, and yet if I don't, there—"

But at that moment a voice broke into her thoughts.

"Say, 'scuse me, Miss Thornton! Could I have a word with yuh?"

Quite startled out of her reverie, Fay turned. It was the elderly cattleman who had been in Jim Stiles' place.

"Why—why, sure," she said, and stopped.

"Jim an' me have just been chattin' over yore little problem," the stranger went on, "an' I figger I can solve it for you!"

Fay's heart gave a tremendous leap. "You—you can?" she cried eagerly. "Oh, gee, you don't mean it?"

"Sure I mean it." He grinned. "I come from Ainsworth. I've a pretty big ranch there. But I've also some land just outside this little township—

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,—Just a final reminder about our wonderful Propelling Pencil Offer. This is almost your last chance to obtain one of these topping pencils. If you didn't send along your six tokens, and a sixpenny postal order, last week, then be sure to do so now. On page 10 of this issue you will find full particulars as to exactly where to send for the pencil, so I should turn there straight away if I were you.

And remember, I shall be expecting all you lucky ones to let me know exactly what you think of your treasure!

It really is thoughtless of me, but do you realise I've completely forgotten to ask you all how you are enjoying your summer holidays? Do please forgive me I didn't mean to overlook it. It's all because your favourite paper is printed such a long time before publication, and these notes of mine, although appearing during your holidays, are being written weeks and weeks before you break up.

Well, if you feel you can forgive me for my shortcomings—how ARE you enjoying your rest from school? What sort of things are you doing? Have you gone away yet, to the country, the seaside, or—you very, very lucky ones—to the Continent or on a lovely, sunshiney cruise? I'd love to hear what sort of things you've done, so please let me know, won't you? Just a few lines on a postcard would do, although a nice long chatty letter would be even more acceptable.

And speaking of holidays, it's only natural I should come to the subject of Babs & Co., and their thrilling tropical cruise in quest of treasure.

What DO you think of this series? Isn't it every bit as thrilling and romantic as I promised? But just wait until you read next week's story

"SLAVES TO THE GIRL QUEEN!"

It'll hold you spellbound. An amazingly new experience befalls the Cliff House party, for it is they who are forced to become slaves to the girl queen of a strange little tropical country. The most amazing part of it all is that the girl queen is actually someone they know very well!

No need to tell you that there are thrills galore for the treasure-bound Cliff House party; and no need, I am certain, to say that Hilda Richards has taken good care to provide a feast of thrills for you, too. So don't miss this superb tale, will you?

As usual, next week's issue will contain further magnificent chapters of "Girl Rider of the Blue Hills," another delightful COMPLETE story featuring "Cousin George and 'The Imp,'" and more of Patricia's bright and useful pages on a very holidayish note.

Order your SCHOOLGIRL well in advance, won't you?

With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

'bout half a mile or so to the south. And it'd be th' very thing for that Redskin show o' yore's. There's a number o' tumbledown outhouses yuh could use as they are—an' burn 'em, too, at th' end o' yore show—an' you can have it all for nix!"

"Oh, Mr.—Mr.—" Fay began, gulping, then she laughed rather wildly. "Gee, I don't even know your name to thank you!" she said.

"Mason—Ted Mason," he said.

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Mason," Fay said in breathless gratitude. "It's mighty swell of you. Gee, but—but—" And then she broke off, staring at him curiously. "Mason?" she repeated. "Oh! Are—are you any relation of Lefty Mason, who works for my dad?"

A look almost of embarrassment entered the elderly rancher's face.

"He—he's my son, lass," he said. Awkwardly, he laid a hand on Fay's shoulder. "Guess I—I didn't mean to let on 'bout that. I ain't no truck at thankin' folk, leastways by word of mouth, but I've been wantin' to thank yuh for what yuh did for my son's kiddie, an' when Jim Stiles told me you were the Miss Thornton, waal—" The old man grinned. "Waal, I figgered that field o' mine was a fine way of doin' it."

Their eyes met in a new understanding; Fay so gloriously happy now, smiled. So this was the grandfather of the little child she had saved from the cattle stampede; and this offer his way of showing how he felt.

"Oh, Mr. Mason, it's—it's grand of you," she told him, her eyes a little starry. "Gee, but we'd love to have that field o' yours. You're a—you're a darling!"

Thanking him again and again, she almost ran back to the meeting.

"I'm longing to see Lucille's face when she hears," Fay murmured with a smile.

It was a sight well worth witnessing. Lucille nearly collapsed. Then, furious and chagrined, she raised all manner of objections to Mr. Mason's offer. But once again all her wiles were useless. The rest of the meeting enthusiastically greeted this new proposal, and it was adopted.

Fay was aglow with triumph as she rode back home on her range pony, Starlight. The social was sure to be an enormous success now.

Reaching the Flying H, her face became serious again, as she wondered how the work to keep the water-hole filled was progressing. She rode on to find out.

Splendid progress had been made in the construction of a canal from the underground stream, and Douglas Lessiter, the young Englishman and former guest of John Hampton, who was now working for them, expressed himself delighted.

"Those three Ainsworth men I hired are whales for work, Fay," he said with enthusiasm. "We shouldn't have stood an earthly without them."

"And now you—you reckon we'll get through in time?" Fay asked, gazing anxiously through the gathering dusk to the distant herd of cattle which, already restless through lack of water, was being kept under control by three of the cowboys.

"Barring accidents—yes," Douglas nodded. "But if anything goes wrong—" His jaw set. "It'll be pretty grim, old thing."

"And meantime, Doug," Fay said gently, "you an' the boys need a rest. You're done up. I can tell you are. If you get a good rest now, you can start early in th' mornin'."

It was such a good suggestion that only for a moment did Douglas hesitate.

"O. K., boss," he said, and grinned. "And we'll be a jolly sight fresher in the morning, too."

Not long afterwards Douglas, Tiny Shaw, the long-legged foreman of the Flying H, and the other five cowboys, rode back to the bunkhouse, while the three men from Ainsworth hit the trail for a shack they were using some three miles away.

Fay, tired out but thoroughly satisfied with the way this eventful day had ended, retired to her room. Daddy was already asleep, having put just a little too much strain on his injured shoulder.

Dawn was just breaking over the Blue Hills when Fay arose. There was plenty to do, breakfast to cook for everyone, see that her young brothers had washed and dressed themselves properly, her household duties to be got through and, later in the day, quite a lot to be done for the social. But Fay didn't mind.

Meanwhile, a lone rider was approaching the Flying H along the trail from the direction of Hampton's luxurious ranch-house; none other than his elegantly-dressed daughter, Lucille.

And the bait that had roused Lucille so early to-day was an offer of fifty dollars from her father if she undertook a certain little mission for him, and the promise of another fifty dollars if that mission proved successful.

All she had to do was to ride past the Flying H, intercept the three Ainsworth men on their way to resume work at the canal, and induce them to desert the Flying H in preference for better wages with her father!

Lucille's eyes smouldered with hate as she approached the Flying H. Then they lit up. Coming towards her were the three labourers. It was a pity they'd all meet just by the entrance to the Flying H yard, she'd hoped to be well past it before she encountered them, but it couldn't be helped.

With a smile she stopped in front of them. Putting on her most charming manner, she began to inquire about their work before finally coming to the point.

"Why don't you chaps work for my father?" she asked mildly. "He'd pay you far more than you're getting here."

"Thanks all th' same, Miss Hampton," said one of the men, "but we're quite satisfied with Thornton. Money's good—leastways, it will be when we get it—an'—"

"An' Thornton's not a bad sorter guy!" declared another. "Even though there's been some talk about him."

Lucille ground her teeth. But she smiled.

"So you haven't got any money yet?" she asked quietly. "Oh," and she nodded, a thoughtful expression on her face. "Well, I hope you do, that's all. Only I'm wondering where Thornton is going to get it from. It's pretty well known that he hasn't a cent worth speaking about at the moment—"

The three men exchanged startled looks.

And at that moment Fay, emptying waste on to a rubbish dump at the side of the ranch-house, spotted the quartette for the first time.

"Lucille—and those men!" she exclaimed.

Instantly she was on her guard, suspicious. Lucille was up to no good—and Lucille was her enemy; her father's enemy. Dumping the bucket on the ground, Fay resolutely strode across the yard towards them.

Her Father's Big Surprise!

"MORNIN', boys," Fay greeted the men, and smiled. But she was scrutinising them keenly. "Glad to see you in such good time. Had breakfast?"

"Waal, no, not 'xactly," one of them said slowly. "Had a snack."

"Then just go into the kitchen," Fay told them, with a sweep of her arm. "and help yourselves. The others'll be there in a jiffy."

Then, as though suddenly aware of the presence of Lucille, she looked at that girl, surprising a scowl, which swiftly changed to a haughty look of disdain.

"Mornin'!" Fay said shortly. "You're ridin' early, Miss Hampton?"

"Obviously," Lucille sneered.

And, with a petulant tug on the reins, she rode off down the trail.

Thoughtfully Fay stared after her. Queer! What exactly had been her game? To bribe those men to desert?

"Guess that's just about what the Hamptons would try to do," Fay murmured, then came to a quick decision. "I'll tackle those men right now!"

Straight back to the kitchen she went. The three Ainsworth labourers were seated round the table when she entered, and she came to the point at once.

"I don't know what Miss Hampton was saying to you boys," she said, "but if it was to get you to join her father's ranch I'd like to ask you this: You're satisfied here?"

The trio were disconcerted by Fay's directness. They hesitated.

"Er—why—why, sure!" said one, at last. "Sure! We're sticking by you and your dad, Miss Fay."

Fay smiled. "Thanks, boys!" she said, and there the matter ended.

Hectic indeed the next hour or so for Fay. Before the Ainsworth men had finished their meal Douglas and the cowboys trooped in. There was plenty of cheery banter, and Fay was kept busy serving one hungry man after another. Then, when they had all left to resume work on the all-important canal, Mr. Thornton appeared.

Fondly he took Fay into his arms. Quite jovial, he seemed, too.

"'Fraid I shan't be able to lend the boys a hand this mornin', honey," he said. "I've something else to do—mighty important."

And he winked, patted her cheek, and tackled his breakfast. It wasn't many minutes before a door opened to admit two human tornadoes in khaki dungarees, the one golden-haired and rosy-cheeked, six-year-old Bobbie, and the other tall, slim Ted, three years the senior, and with lank, untidy hair that formed a vivid contrast to the younger boy's. They were struggling and arguing over the ownership of a toy six-gun.

"'Tain't yours, it's mine!" Bobby was protesting shrilly.

"It isn't yours. It's— Ted, about to settle the question with a tremendous wrench that would have left him in possession of the bone of contention, changed his tactics quite hastily as he spotted the eyes of Fay and his father upon him. "There you are!" he said, with magnificent disdain, letting go of the toy. "Go on, take it! I told you all along I don't wanna kid's toy that won't fire even corks properly, an' next time you— Oh, 'lo, dad!" he exclaimed, as if noticing Mr. Thornton for the first time. "'Lo, sis, Gosh, breakfast looks good! I'm rav'nous!"

And, having greeted his father and big sister, he slumped into a chair. Bobbie also greeted them, then brandished the toy six-gun in triumph.

"There you are!" he boasted. "I'm stronger'n you! I pulled it away from you. You're only a weak-kneed crittur who—"

"Bobbie!" Quite sharply Fay spoke, though concealing a smile, while the boys' father, coughing, bent over his plate. "Come here, and let me see if you've washed yourself properly. H'm!"—as she critically inspected Bobbie's neck, knees, and hands. "Not too bad! And now get on with your meal, and stop using words you don't understand, there's a good boy!"

But the curly-headed youngster could not fight down his passion for imitating the cowboys as easily as that. "Crittur" was usually a name for a steer, but Bobbie didn't know that.

"All right," he mumbled, clambering into his place. "Only—only, Tiny Shaw calls people critturs, an' so does



FAY started as she saw Lucille Hampton speaking to the new men. Was her enemy trying to persuade them to desert the Flying H Ranch?

Sam. Crittur is a mighty fine word, whatever it means, an'—an' Ted's one, anyway! So there!"

"Bobbie—" began Fay, putting down her cup.

But before she could get any farther Ted gave his younger brother a warning nudge.

"Shurrup," he hissed, "or Fay won't let you help with the digging again!"

"Coooo! Oh, I sus-say, I hadn't thought of that," Bobbie piped plaintively. "Oh, gee, sis, I'm sorry! Ted ain't a crit—one of those things, really, he ain't. I didn't mean it, I guess. There you are, Ted!"

And, dumping the toy six-gun into Ted's lap, as though it had suddenly become red-hot, Bobbie seized up knife and fork and actually started on his meal before Fay had had time to cut it up for him.

She and her father exchanged winks. Adorable young imps, both the boys. Naughty, at times, like all children, but devoted to her and their dad, and she loved every hair of their heads. She could just picture their delight this afternoon when she set them to work with paper, pins, and gum, making little flags for the flag-day collection that was to be one feature of the social event.

After breakfast, the youngsters, whooping and yelling, raced down to the hive of activity near the stream, and Mr. Thornton, with another cryptic smile, rode off towards Redland Gulch, and Fay was alone.

But not exactly lonely. She was too busy for that, and time simply flew. Dinner-time came! Piping hot meals to be taken down to Douglas & Co. on the wagon, the table laid for the youngsters and herself, then the clearing-up, the washing-up, the tidying-up, and at last she was ready to commence work on behalf of the social.

But before she could go down to fetch Bobbie and Ted, Douglas appeared. He looked not only tired and grimy, but rather anxious.

"You haven't any dynamite, have you?" he said, more as a statement than a question.

"Dynamite?" Fay echoed. She shook her head, then looked at him inquiringly. "Why, no. Do you want some, Doug?"

"I'm afraid we've got to have some," was his reply. "We've struck a ridge of rock. It's too vast for us to dig round. We've got to go through it, and that means blasting. Is there any chance of getting any dynamite?"

Fay thought swiftly for a moment. Dynamite cost money! Daddy had assured her that he could meet the men's wages, but could he stand this additional burden?

"I'll see dad about it," she told him slowly. "He'll be back some time this afternoon."

"Hope he's not long," said Douglas, "or we'll be held up. But we've enough to do, reinforcing what we've already dug, to keep us busy for a couple of hours or so. Cheerio!"

And off Douglas went. Fay had forgotten about the social now. She stood in the porch, watching the young Englishman's sturdy, athletic figure as he strode down to the range through the shimmering blue heat-haze. Another set-back! Just when everything was working out so well, just when success seemed within their grasp—dynamite needed!

"I just hate havin' to worry dad," Fay mused, turning back into the kitchen, "but I'd better speak to him the moment he gets back."

It was less than half an hour later that Fay, sorting out pieces of material from her work-box, heard a none too stealthy step behind her. Swiftly she turned, but not swiftly enough, for a hand was thrust over her eyes, and then a voice, deep and sepulchral, spoke into her ear.

"Guess what I've got, honey!"

"Daddy!" Fay cried. Her heart leaped with delight. "Why, you're back awful early. You're in time for tea. Oh, but listen, daddy—"

But Fay had no chance to mention the dynamite then, for—

"Look, honey!" cried her father. "All ours—every manjack of 'em!"

Blinking, Fay looked round. At first she saw only her father's face, lit up by a simply transforming grin. And then, as her gaze dropped, she saw something else; something that made her blink again and gasp with astonishment.

Held out towards her in her father's hand was a staggeringly large wad of dollar notes!

The Watcher at the Window!

"O H, daddy, it's so—so wonderful I can scarcely believe it's true, even now!" Fay breathed, in the most thrilling tones, and she looked across the teatable with bright eyes.

Her father lowered his teacup. He chuckled and patted her hand.

"It's true enough, honey. Nigh on two hundred dollars—ours! I told you I'd got a little surprise for yuh, an' that's it. Preston's been goin' to buy a bunch of our cattle for weeks past, an' to-day we clinched the deal, an' he paid me in advance."

Eagerly, Fay leaned across the table.

"We'll be able to buy that dynamite I was telling you about," she said happily. "And pay the men a bonus, too. They'll have deserved it, I guess. And—daddy!"

Quite sharp her voice had become all at once.

"You've got to get yourself some new clothes. Those boots are nearly done for, and you could do with a couple of shirts." And then she laughed. "If you won't do it yourself, then I'll take some of the money an' do it for you behind your back!"

Mr. Thornton chuckled.

"All right, honey, I'll get the things. I do need 'em, yes. And the boys can have some things, too. Bobbie's dungarees look kinder moth-eaten, I've noticed. But you're not going to leave yourself out, my dear," he ended, his eyes softening as he looked at her.

"I'm all right," Fay demurred. "There's nothing I really want."

"What you want and what you need are two different things altogether," Mr. Thornton returned, "and you need a really nice new dress for th' social. Look! Take this." He counted out fifty dollars and thrust them into her hand. "That'll cover the dynamite an' all. Pop into town as soon as you've finished your meal an' do some shoppin'. Guess you'll revel in that, like all the women."

And, chuckling, he went over to the mantelpiece and thrust the rest of the money into one of the vases, then stood it behind an old money-box of Bobbie's.

Softly Fay's eyes glowed as she drew the notes towards her. There was a lump in her throat. Dear daddy!

Then, as she thought of something, she turned in her chair.

"Oh, daddy, when does Preston want the cattle delivered?"

"By Monday—four days' time," was the reply. "But why, lass?"

"I was only thinkin'," Fay said thoughtfully. "That'll give us time to get the water-hole put to rights. It should be finished by to-morrow night."

She did not add, nor was there any need to add, that if the cattle did not have a plentiful supply of water by then the position would be extremely grave.

Fay went down to the range where they were cutting the canal and fetched Bobbie and Ted. She gave Douglas the money for the dynamite, and he was already hitting the trail before she and her brothers were back at the ranch.

"Oh, gee, that's swell!" Ted cried delightedly, when Fay had explained what she wanted them to do with the sheets of coloured paper and the pins and gum that littered the table. "I've never made flags before."

"Oh, goodie, goodie, goodie!" chanted young Bobbie.

"You'll be awful careful not to get a lot of paste all over the place, won't you?" Fay warned, with a smile.

"Oh, sure!" said Ted. He gave an old-fashioned nod at the younger boy. "That's for you, you know. No larking about!"

"But I don't ever lark about; only—only sometimes, I guess."

Laughing, Fay speedily made three specimen flags for them, and then prepared to set off.

At last—ready to start. A trim, neat figure she looked, too, in her serviceable breeches and blouse, smart neckerchief and wide-brimmed hat. On her way to the door, she suddenly thought of the money in the vase. She halted then. Better just have a final peep to make sure it was all right. Not that anything could have happened to it, of course—

Well, nothing had happened to it. It was still there, perfectly safe and sound, and Fay smiled happily as she gazed at it.

Lost in contemplation of those rolled-up notes, Fay did not hear a sudden faint sound from the direction of the window. Neither did the industriously working youngsters.

Had Fay done so, and had she glanced up at that moment, she would have seen a face peering into the kitchen—the face of Lucille Hampton!

And Lucille was looking exultant, excited.

Fate had played the Thorntons right into her hands, she was thinking keenly. She had come here, hoping to be able to strike a blow at them. And what a chance this was! That money—she didn't know how the supposedly impoverished family had obtained it, but that wasn't so important. What was important was the fact that they almost certainly intended to pay the wages of those labourers with it.

"But if the money disappears they won't be able to pay the men," Lucille's thoughts raced on. "The men'll walk out. I've only got to drop another hint to them to make certain of that. And if the men walk out, the canal will never be finished in time—and then what'll happen to their cattle?"

She dodged back out of sight, cheeks white with excitement.

"That dashed girl's going off somewhere—those brats will be by themselves. What a chance! A couple of minutes' work and the Thorntons will be just where father wants them—bang on the rocks!"

LUCILLE HAMPTON means to take the money which means so much to Fay and her father! You must read what happens in next Saturday's thrilling chapters

Another Delightful COMPLETE Fun Story, featuring—

COUSIN GEORGE and the 'IMP'



Not Such a Secret at All!

HETTY SONNING, known as the "Imp," sat bolt upright in bed, her heart thumping.

A strange sound had awakened her—a cry as though someone were in dire agony. It was early morning, very early for Hetty—in fact, seven o'clock—and she blinked about her wonderingly.

She had been dreaming that she was in the African jungle and that a ravenous lion had missed her and caught her Cousin George, who had uttered a fearsome cry of terror.

But a glance about her showed Hetty that she was in her bed-room, not the African jungle, and the likelihood of Cousin George being eaten alive by a lion here was very remote.

Nevertheless, again came that fearful cry—undoubtedly in Cousin George's voice. But Hetty, fully awake now, heard the tinkle of a piano, too, and her alarmed look gave place to a grin.

"Golly! Cousin George singing!" she chortled.

Actually there was nothing screamingly funny in the idea of George Sonning's singing; or if there was he couldn't see it. He took himself seriously, and his singing was solemn, thoughtful, and studied, although, now and then, aiming at a note, he failed to score a bullseye.

"Cousin George, up at this hour—singing! What on earth—" murmured Hetty.

And although it was well before her own getting-up time, she slipped out of bed, put on slippers and dressing-gown, and crept to her bed-room door.

"Ah—ah—ha—ha—ah—ah—" sang Cousin George, doing exercises.

Two years Hetty's senior, Cousin George was a serious-minded fellow, regarded her as a mere kid, and did not make a rule of taking her into his confidence and explaining just why he did things. So unless Hetty investigated, this might remain a mystery.

As the Imp stepped on to the landing, Nellie the maid came along, and Hetty winked.

"It's all right, Nellie," she said. "He's not dying—just singing!"

Nellie smiled. "Yes, Miss Hetty. It's for the concert—"

And then Nellie drew back, her eyes widened, and she clasped her mouth as though to choke back the words.

"Concert?" said the Imp, in surprise.

"Sh!" warned Nellie anxiously. "Oh dear! What ever have I bin and gone and said now? I didn't ought to have told you."

Hetty blinked, and a deep curiosity grew within her.

"You mean there's a concert at my cousin's school, Nellie?"

But the maid was guarded now. "N-no, not exactly there, but I promised not to tell," sighed Nellie.

"Please don't say you know, Miss Hetty. It slipped out."

Readily the Imp gave the promise, hoping for further information.

ribs, and ruffle his well-oiled hair—especially when he was lecturing her.

Hetty could see what had happened. There was to be a concert—arranged, no doubt, by her aunt and her pals of the literary, debating, dramatic, and social societies—and Cousin George was to perform. But Hetty was to be left out—except perhaps as one of the audience.

"Uhuh!" the Imp frowned. "So that's it! Well, if there's a concert I'm going to be in it! Why, Jill, Biddy and I could do one of those crooning sisters turns jolly well."

They often amused friends at school with their crooning, and as Biddy could strum a uke marvellously, it would be a fine turn.

Still thinking deeply, the Imp hurried back to wash and dress, early though the hour was. She dressed in haste, left her hair, and then, an impish smile on her face, hurled open

"I shall be 'star' of the concert!" thought pompous Cousin George. "A pity Hetty won't be present. But there—she's too irresponsible!" But Hetty, true to her nickname, the "IMP," was at the concert—more irresponsible than ever!

"I won't say a word," she said.

And then, after Nellie had gone downstairs, she stood on the landing in thoughtful silence.

It was at her boarding-school that she had earned the nickname of the Imp, and when she and her headmistress had agreed to part, Hetty had come to live with her Aunt Miriam and her Cousin George. The family had felt that her cousin's influence would have a steadying effect. And as the alternative was being sent to a stern, grim school where there would be no fun at all, Hetty had to be good.

Nevertheless, there were times when she wanted to tell Cousin George that he was a mutt, and prod him in the

the bed-room door and scurried downstairs.

Having promised Nellie not to say that she had heard about the concert, her one hope of offering her services was to have official information straight from the horse's mouth—Cousin George's!

Hetty took a flying leap downstairs, and hurled open the door of the lounge where Cousin George sat tinkling the ivories, and no longer yelling his head off.

"Oh—oh goodness, did you hear it?" gasped Hetty, looking as scared as she knew how.

Cousin George swung round on the music-stool.

"Hear what?" he asked

"Poor Ming Fu."

"Ming Fu!" he said, starting up.

"Gosh—not run over or anything?"

For Ming Fu was Aunt Miriam's Pekingese.

By IDA MELBOURNE

Hetty gulped.

"I don't know. It might not have been Ming Fu. But it was a dreadful, horrible cry, in deep, fearful agony—"

Cousin George, nonplussed, shook his head.

"I don't know. I wouldn't have heard it—I was singing," he said. "Doing exercises."

Hetty shook her head.

"Oh, I don't think it could have been that," she said. "What were you singing? Funny I didn't hear any words."

Cousin George gave a slight start, then eyed her closely.

"I wasn't singing words—I was singing exercises—like this." And: "Aha-hahahaha—ah—" he cried.

Hetty gave a jump as he ended.

"Golly—that's it," she said. "That was the noise. Phew! Thank goodness it wasn't Ming Fu after all."

Cousin George's face reddened, but his eyes glinted.

"Are you trying to be funny?" he demanded.

But the Imp could assume a solemn expression when she chose, and she chose now.

"Funny?" she said stiffly. "I don't call it funny; I think it's unkind of you, Cousin George. Suppose aunty heard. She'd be terrified. She might think one of us had had a bad accident or something. A joke's a joke, but my heart hasn't stopped thumping yet."

Cousin George stared at her, and she saw that he was not certain how to take this.

"Do you think I'm doing this for fun?" he demanded curtly. "I'm practising."

"But practising what?" asked Hetty blankly. "Just practising doing that? Golly, you're not trying to imitate a dog-fight, are you? Bob Biggs, you know—he can imitate a dog-fight so wonderfully that you really think two

dogs are fighting—and he can throw in a cat in the middle."

Cousin George drummed his fingers on the piano and tapped his foot in irritation, exercising great self-control. He did not suspect that "Bob Biggs" was a marvellous boy Hetty had invented to ginger him up.

"I am not interested in this fatuous Bob Biggs you used to know," he said. "He has always sounded half-witted to me. If you must know, I am training my voice, because—well, I am—er—taking up singing."

"Oh!" said Hetty. "The school choir?"

"Listen, Hetty," said Cousin George sternly. "Will you mind your own business? If I want to sing, I shall sing. And the early morning is the time to practise—to loosen the vocal cords. If you would concentrate on plain singing instead of that absurd crooning, it would be to the good. Now kindly go."

The Imp went, and frowned deeply. Apparently her cousin had no intention of letting her share the secret.

In somewhat dejected mood she mounted the stairs and, in the Common-room—as Cousin George's study had been called since she had come to share it—stood for a moment in deep thought.

Strolling across the room to open the window, she passed something on Cousin George's desk covered with a newspaper. The opening of the window let in a gust of air that blew it lightly aside and brought into view a large sheet of drawing-board on which was a pencilled design.

"Golly!" gasped the Imp.

For it was a poster, half-finished, obviously designed by Cousin George. And on it the date of the forthcoming concert was given.

"Next Thursday—early closing day,"

murmured Hetty. "That ought to be a big pull. Phew! If only I—"

And then, quite suddenly, an idea flashed into her mind; an idea that made her chuckle with glee.

The Imp had seen the way out—or rather, the way to bring Cousin George to heel. Excitedly covering up the poster as she had found it, she closed the window, and then tiptoed from the room!

Breakers Ahead!

IT was on the evening of the same day that Cousin George, closing his school books, rose from his desk in the Common-room and looked across at Hetty.

"I'm just going to the post," he said.

"Have you anything to send off?"

The Imp had just written a letter, as he had noticed, and now she glanced up.

"Well, a walk would freshen me up," she said. "I'll come with you."

Her manner was mysterious, and Cousin George eyed her sternly.

"It seems as though you don't want me to see that envelope," he said. "Whom is it to?"

"Well, whom are yours to?" challenged Hetty, with a smile.

"That's impertinent. I am old enough to manage my own affairs, but I have been told to keep an eye on you," explained Cousin George loftily. "If that letter is to Bob Biggs, I don't know that I shall allow you to send it. I consider that lout Biggs has a bad influence. He encourages you in your impishness."

Hetty managed not to smile. But Bob Biggs couldn't have harmed a fly; he couldn't have influenced a blancmange, for he did not even exist. He was just a little imaginary hero of Hetty's, she used to liven up Cousin George, make him jealous, and put him on his mettle.

"Oh, no, it's not to Bob Biggs!" the Imp said lightly. "But I'll come to the post."

She took up the letter, strolled to the door, and then, with deliberate carelessness, dropped it. Quick as a flash Cousin George picked it up and glanced at the address.

"What? Signor Torino? Not the tenor?" he demanded.

"Oh, yes!" admitted Hetty. "The tenor."

Cousin George eyed her blankly.

"What on earth are you writing to him about?" he demanded.

Hetty smiled.

"I don't think I ought to tell you. It's a secret," she said. "But you know what a marvellous voice he has?"

"Well, he's not what I call a first-rater," said Cousin George patronisingly; "but he's popular."

"Yes; just what Bob thought," nodded Hetty impishly.

"Bob—Bob Biggs? You mean he's going to take lessons from this chap?" asked Cousin George, puzzled.

"Goodness, no!" smiled Hetty. "He wants him to sing in the Follies. You know, the Bob Biggs' Follies—"

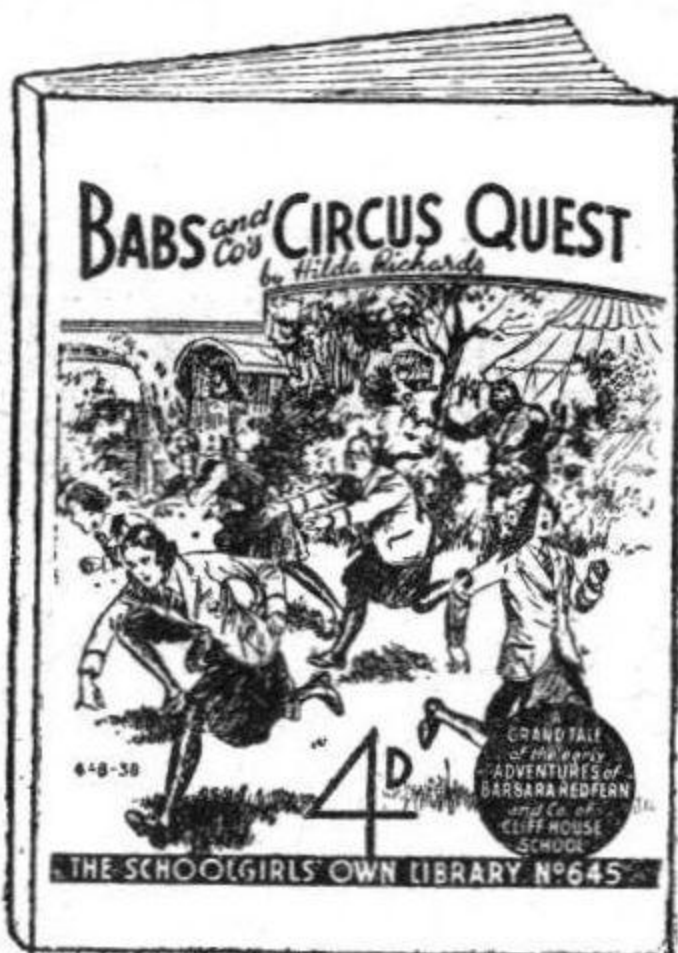
Cousin George had heard of several of Bob Biggs' follies, but not this kind and it gave him a shock.

"Follies—you mean a kind of pierrot troupe?" he asked.

"Yes. They don't perform for money—just for charity," said Hetty. "And these tenors are always ready to oblige. Besides, Mademoiselle Lavine has said she will appear—so there!"

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"What, the Frenchwoman with the bird-note voice?"

"Yes," nodded Hetty.

Cousin George gave a soft whistle.

"Well, all I can say is, it must have been arranged by mistake," he scoffed. "Bob Biggs' Follies! Pierrots—huh! Where is it going to be held? In Bob Biggs' back garden?"

Hetty spoke quite casually and evenly.

"Oh, no; here!" she said. "In Farmer Grady's field. We can hire the chairs easily enough, and get a platform rigged up. Pierrots are always best in the open air, you know. And as the shops will be closed, we ought to get a whacking crowd, and make a lot for the hospital."

Cousin George looked as though he had been dealt a severe blow.

"But, look here! Next Thursday—why— But that's impossible! It can't be done!"

Next Thursday was the day of George's concert in the village hall!

"Can't be! Oh, Bob can fix things!" said Hetty lightly. "He's a wonder at organisation, Cousin George."

Cousin George did not reply. His own concert was to take place in the village hall that evening, and he saw in a flash that two concerts would divide the possible audience.

And if the famous tenor was to appear, or even Mademoiselle Lavine, it would be a big draw. Cousin George at times had a swollen head, but he did not suffer from it so badly now that he really supposed that the name of George Sonning, tenor soloist, could compete with that of Signor Torino.

"Is anything wrong, Cousin George?" asked Hetty, innocently.

Cousin George ground his teeth.

"I want this fellow Bob Biggs' address," he said grimly.

But although the Imp had planned carefully, she hadn't foreseen this, and was taken aback.

"Hi-his address!" she said, dismayed.

As Bob Biggs did not live, he had no address.

"Yes. Never mind why; but I've got to talk to Bob Biggs," said Cousin George darkly. "It's like his cheek bringing his Follies here. Talk of coals to Newcastle! Give me his address, Hetty."

The Imp shook her head.

"It's a secret," she said. "Er—he doesn't want to be pestered."

But Cousin George was not taking no for an answer.

"If you refuse to give me Bob Biggs' address, you may be in your rights. He is a friend of yours, and I have no authority," said Cousin George, in a tone of fairness. "But mother can certainly use authority."

He opened the door, and hesitated, not wishing, as the Imp knew, to go to his mother, and yet determined to get that address.

Cousin George was going to warn off Bob Biggs.

"Er—just a minute!" said Hetty quietly. "Suppose I got Bob to come here? Would that be all right?"

Cousin George gave an eager nod. He had always wanted to meet Bob Biggs.

"Yes," he said. "Do that, and I'll have a word with him. And there are one or two things I have to say," he added.

"Um!" murmured Hetty thoughtfully.

"If he's as you describe him, I imagine he must be the biggest fathead and most conceited dummy any school



"GOSH, I'll teach Bob Biggs to laugh at me!" snapped Cousin George, and leaped out of the window. Hetty smiled behind her hand. It wasn't Bob Biggs George had seen—Bob Biggs didn't exist. It was someone who would teach George a lesson!

has turned out," added Cousin George, as together they made for the post.

The Imp's step was not so light and springy.

Cousin George, without knowing it, was calling her bluff. Bob Biggs either had to have an address, or else be produced.

There were breakers ahead, and to the Imp it looked like the end of that useful vision and dream-boy Bob Biggs!

Face to Face with Bob Biggs!

"D O-DE-ODO—"

The worrying sound came from the lounge, and George Sonning looked up, with a snort, from the proofs of the concert poster which the printer had just sent him.

These days Cousin George was busy and important. He was helping his mother—and doing it well. With infinite tact he had told various people that the village hall was either too large or too small for their type of singing, and he had thinned down the tenors to one other beside himself.

But what haunted George was the Follies. Signor Torino's agent had actually answered Hetty's letter; and, reading the reply at breakfast, she had danced up and down in her chair with delight.

For Signor Torino had agreed to sing in the Follies!

It was enough to make George gloomy. And now from below came the crooning and uke playing.

He banged down his pen, opened the door, and marched downstairs.

Hetty, Bidy, and Jill—in pierrot outfit, with bandeaux round their heads, voluminous silk trousers, and their faces powdered and patched—looked quite professional, and Cousin George himself was shocked.

"Could you stop making this din for a moment?" he asked.

"Ssssh, chicks!" said Hetty, and jumped up. "Oh, Cousin George, did you say you wanted to see Bob Biggs to-night?"

"Then he's coming?" asked Cousin George.

"Not just yet," fenced the Imp, and then turned to Bidy. "Oh, Bidy, you did say you'd like to hear Cousin George sing?"

"Oh, rather!" said plump Bidy.

"My golly—yes!" nodded Jill gravely.

Hetty looked at Cousin George with excitement.

"Cousin George," she said, "if Signor Torino can't turn up—gets a chill or anything—could you take his place?"

Cousin George drew up, and, despite himself, he looked pleased.

"Take his place— Then he may not come?" he asked.

"It's as well to have a stand-by, in case of accidents," said Hetty.

Cousin George cleared his throat, sat down, and yauped, while Hetty, Bidy, and Jill, stifling giggles, put on rapt expressions as he sang about "boats, boats," marching over Africa.

Bidy, who had never heard the song, was puzzled, not appreciating that in Cousin George's type of singing "boots" can easily sound like "boats."

The Imp, however, opened the window so that the whole world and all the neighbours could have a treat.

Cousin George finished and looked about him, receiving hand-clapping that half-deafened him; and then he became aware that Hetty was leaning out of the window.

"What did you think of it, Bob?" she hissed.

Cousin George gave a start. Bob Biggs! Outside—listening!

As he rose, eyes glinting, from the music-stool a deep, masculine voice sounded in reply:

"I wouldn't have a voice like that in my concert party for a thousand pounds, Hetty! I thought you said he could sing!"

Cousin George strode to the window, pulled Hetty aside, and leaned out. In the gathering dusk he saw a fellow in a blazer and flannels, a school cap on his head. Without hesitation, and before Hetty could stop him, George had scrambled out of the window.

"Wow!" gasped the Imp, and turned to Bidly. "Oh golly! I hope your brother bunks, or there'll be a fight!"

For they had arranged for Bidly's brother to impersonate Bob Biggs!

"My brother—Golly! He could make mincemeat of your Cousin George," said Bidly easily.

"Well, who wants mincemeat made of him?" asked Hetty. She leaned out of the window. "Bob, bunk!" she shouted.

And then she, too, clambered out.

Bidly's brother Tom—aged twenty-three years, who was said to stand a good chance of becoming the Territorial Army heavy-weight champion—certainly would make mincemeat of Cousin George if it came to a scrap.

Very decently Tom had put on an old blazer and school cap for a rag; but if Cousin George hit him, he might hit back.

The Imp tore along the garden path, and saw, with relief, that Tom was running. But so was Cousin George—after him!

"Come back, you funk!" roared Cousin George.

The supposed Bob Biggs turned. He was over six feet in height, broad, and massive, and the school blazer which once had fitted him was now on the skimpy side; the school cap balanced on his nose seemed more in keeping, and the half-light prevented Cousin George from making an accurate guess of his age.

Cousin George, dashing up, lashed out his left.

And if Bidly's big brother hadn't side-stepped, it might easily have hit him. But he did side-step, and with his left hand he took Cousin George by the collar and twisted him.

Then, chuckling, he gripped the seat of his flannel bags, hoisted him easily, and tossed him into the bushes.

Cousin George went out of sight for a moment, while Bidly's brother gave a chortle, doffed his cap, and departed to the gate, where his own jacket had been left.

Hetty, heaving a sigh of relief, went to the bush where Cousin George was sprawling.

"Oh, there you are, Cousin George—are you looking for anything?" she asked innocently.

Cousin George scrambled up, straightening his collar.

"Hiding somewhere," he said, in a mumbling tone. "He's gone, anyway. I—er—I must have tripped over something."

His face was a deep crimson, and Hetty, who had a warm spot in her heart for him, did not rub in his defeat.

"The next time I see Bob Biggs," said Cousin George fiercely, "I'm going to slam him on the chin. Gosh—the cheek! Fellow coming here and insulting my singing. Who asked him to come, anyway?"

"You did," said Hetty, in surprise.

"Ahem—er—I didn't ask him to open his mouth about my singing, did I?"

"You said you'd like to be a stand-by for Signor Torino, and Bob had to hear you to decide whether you were good enough."

Cousin George writhed; the idea of being tested by Bob Biggs made his blood run hot.

"Look here, Hetty," he said grimly. "You may as well know now. But we're giving a concert on Thursday."

"You—you are? Why ever didn't you say so?" the Imp asked.

Her cousin shrugged his shoulders.

"Well—we decided to keep it secret," he said lamely. "But this fellow will ruin everything. Can't his concert be—"

"He might want you to apologise for bashing him," said Hetty musingly. "And, besides, George, I can't let my friends down. They've been rehearsing their crooning. That wouldn't be fair. I might be able to arrange it with Bob. I dare say anywhere would do for his Follies, really."

Cousin George leaped to it.

"Hetty—I'm your cousin—mother is your aunt, and blood is thicker than water. Don't you think your family has first call—"

"First call—you mean on our talent?" asked the Imp. "Well—I don't know. I suppose you mean we ought to sing for you and not for the Follies?"

"That's precisely what I do mean," said Cousin George warmly.

Hetty looked solemnly at her friends, who had recently arrived on the scene.

"After all, duty comes first," she said slowly. "I feel I ought to stand by George and aunty."

"It's what you say," agreed Bidly and Jill, shaking with inward mirth.

"Then, George, we'll do it," said Hetty. "I'll have to patch it up with Bob Biggs somehow, that's all."

Cousin George patted her back and smiled.

"Hetty—there's the right stuff in you," he said. "I always knew. I'll tell mother; she'll be no end relieved." And off he ran to the house.

Hetty winked at her friends, and then all three dissolved into mirth. When they parted, they were thrilled and delighted to take part in a real, rather than an imaginary concert. Jill to tell her proud parents, and Bidly to thank her brother for his help.

In the kitchen the Imp met Nellie.

"I've given in," she said. "Given in, Miss Hetty?" asked Nellie. "How?"

"Well, I feel I owe it to my aunt," shrugged Hetty. "I've agreed to sing in their concert after all."

Nellie's jaw sagged; for the last she had heard was that Cousin George and Aunt Miriam were scheming hard to keep Hetty out of it.

"Well—well, I never did!" she gasped.

ON THE following day the Imp had final good news for Cousin George. Bob Biggs' Follies had decided to cancel their show in the village!

"H'm—and then—by gosh!" exclaimed Cousin George. "How about Torino and the Frenchwoman? They might act in our show?"

"Why, yes—they would," nodded Hetty eagerly. "Only there's their honorarium—two hundred guineas each or so."

Cousin George nearly dropped his coffee cup, and Aunt Miriam let out a hissing gasp.

"Tut, tut! Two hundred guineas?" said Cousin George in a strangled sort of voice.

The Imp beamed.

"Oh, yes!" she agreed. "But they usually give the odd shillings back to the funds, you know," she added, with an airy little shrug. "These singers are so frightfully generous. I dare say they'd have done it for two hundred pounds apiece, if we'd put the odd shillings into the funds first of all."

Cousin George, having exchanged a completely incredulous look with his mother, tried again in a firmer voice.

"And—and this Bob Biggs bloke—I mean, this friend of yours—he actually intended to pay them that fee?"

"Why, naturally," said the Imp. "Bob Biggs is awfully honest."

"And—and how was Bob Biggs going to find that money?" Cousin George demanded.

The Imp had to smile.

"Oh, Bob—well, Bob knows his way around," she said.

"Ah—then now I know why he calls it the Bob Biggs' Follies," said Cousin George, and he gave a sardonic laugh.

Nevertheless, even without the famous artistes, the show was a great success.

The Imp's turn went over well, and as she and her chums had a good sense of rhythm, and the uke playing was excellent, the applause was stirring.

And George excelled himself, perhaps not in the Torino manner, but well enough to earn sincere applause. Remembering Bob Biggs all the while he was singing, he went flat-out, so to speak. And Bidly's brother clapped loudest of all.

"Jolly good, Cousin George," said the Imp sincerely. "Well done."


"Well done you, too," nodded Cousin George. "It was a good idea putting your modern touch into this rather high-brow show. Glad I made up my mind about it. Don't forget to tell Biggs about this."

"Poor old Bob," sighed the Imp, and winked at Jill.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

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