

"SLAVES TO THE GIRL QUEEN!"

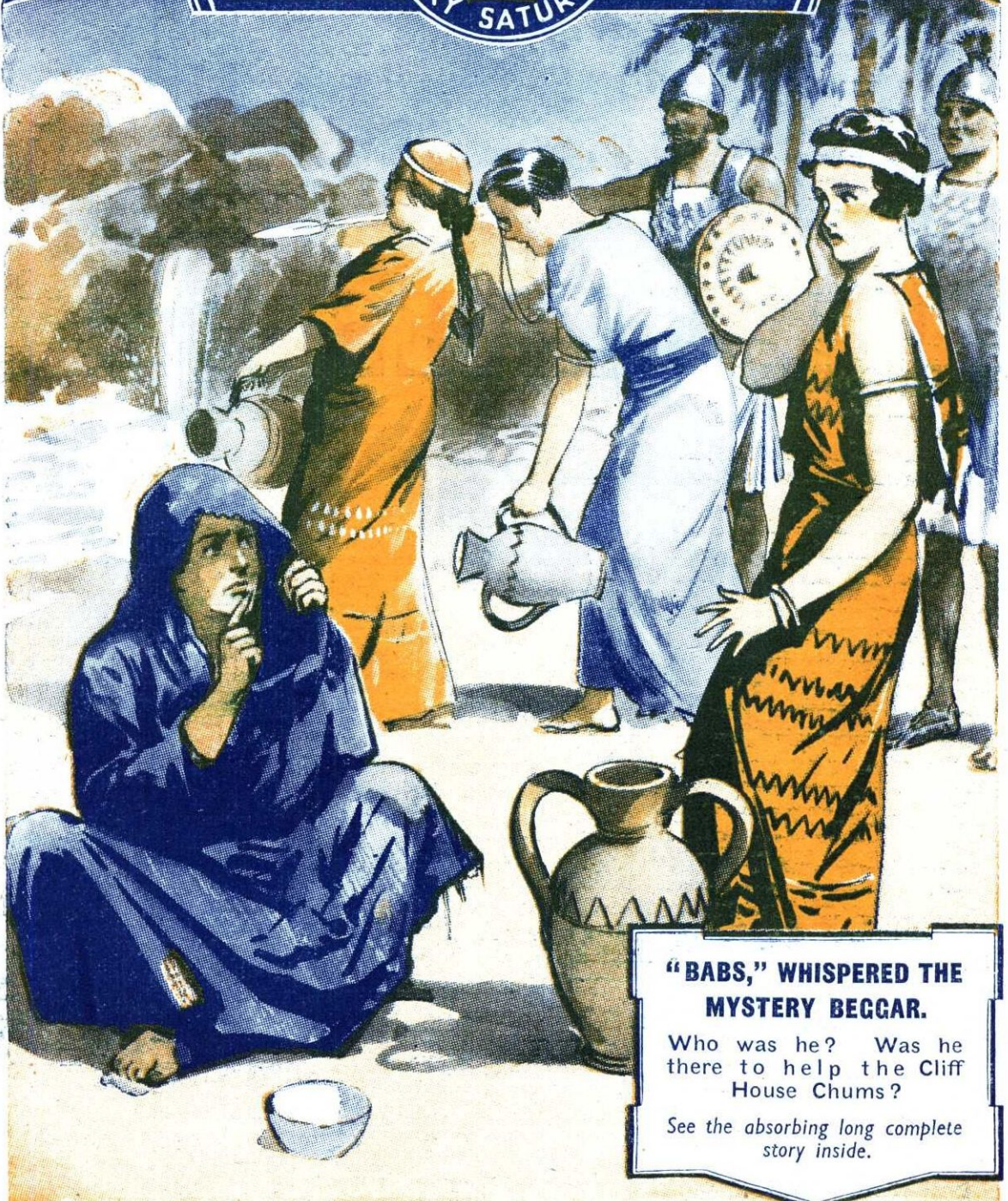
Fascinating Holiday-Adventure story featuring the famous chums of Cliff House School.

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EVERY **2^D**
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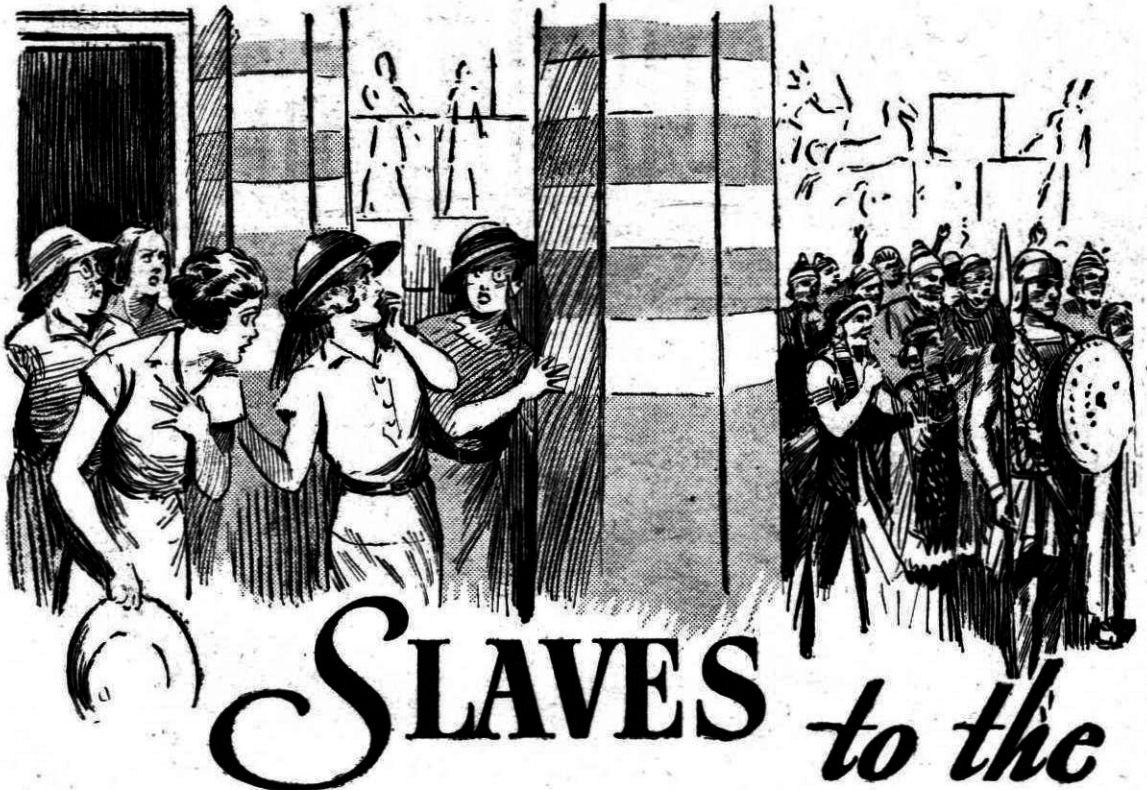


**"BABS," WHISPERED THE
MYSTERY BEGGAR.**

Who was he? Was he
there to help the Cliff
House Chums?

See the absorbing long complete
story inside.

A Long Complete story of most unusual adventure,



SLAVES to the

A Scene from the Past!



"CELESTE!" called Barbara Redfern.
"Celeste, ahoy!" shouted Jemima Carstairs.

"Where the dickens has the girl got to?" Clara Trevlyn asked crossly. "All together, girls—shout! Celeste!"

And the voices of the seven girls from Cliff House School rang along the golden sands of Lost Island, in the Indian Ocean. But no answering call rewarded their hail.

"But, great goodness, she must be somewhere!" Barbara Redfern said anxiously. "She's been gone two hours!"

The seven Fourth Formers stared at each other rather worriedly. For two hours now their madcap chum, Celeste Margesson, had been missing.

Celeste, jumping up in the middle of the picnic party they were all enjoying, had gone chasing after a gorgeous butterfly which had almost flapped its wings in the madcap's face. That, naturally, constituted a challenge to Celeste, and anything in the nature of a challenge to that light-hearted madcap must, of necessity, be answered without a second's delay.

"Oh crumbs! I sus-say, you know, we shall be late for dinner on the Gloriana!" fat Bessie Bunter said. "I thuth-think we ought to go and look for her. She mum-might have had an accident, you know!"

"Oh, stuffins!" Leila Carroll said. "Celeste's not the sort to meet with accidents, I guess! All the same—" and uneasily the American junior looked at Barbara Redfern, still unconsciously

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recognising her leadership, although they were all so far from Cliff House School now.

Babs, Fourth Form captain, nodded. Anxiously she looked around her—not that there was a great deal to be seen. The hills of the green, crescent-shaped valley near the seashore, which the chums had selected for their picnic party, frowned down at her. Ahead lay the ocean. In that ocean, a mile out to sea, the yacht Gloriana, looking like some fairy ship, rocked gently to the lazy swell. Near by, on the beach, was Celeste's own motor-launch, from which they had landed.

Yesterday, the Gloriana, crossing the Indian Ocean in search of the unknown

madcap, and irresponsible, but it was not Celeste's way to leave them for over two hours without some sign.

Babs headed towards the narrow pass in the tall, rocky hills which surrounded them—the way Celeste herself had taken.

"Celeste!" shouted Mabel Lynn, Babs' special chum.

No reply. They went on, penetrating farther and farther into the pass. Now they were climbing steadily, with Bessie grunting and puffing in the rear.

"Phoo!" gasped Bessie. "Oh crumbs! Oh dud-dear! I sus-say, I wish I'd never come, you know!"

"Well, sit here, Bessie!" Babs

It was a staggering surprise indeed for Babs & Co., when they discovered that the tropical island was inhabited by descendants of the Ancient Egyptians; but that surprise was as nothing to their amazement when they learnt the identity of their young girl queen.

Pirates' Island, there to hunt for treasure, had put in at this island to replenish the water tanks. Yesterday Mr. Margesson, Celeste's grandfather, and the crew, had cursorily explored it. The island was uncharted, far off the main shipping routes, and goodness knows how many hundreds of miles away from the nearest inhabited port. As far as could be ascertained, it was entirely uninhabited, too.

"Well, she must be somewhere," Babs said. "Bother it, she can't have vanished into thin air! Come on, let's search! Perhaps, when we get on to higher ground, we shall spot the old chump!"

They nodded. Every one of them was anxious now. Celeste might be a

advised. "We'll pick you up on our way back."

But Bessie shook her head. Having come so far, Bessie was going on. She was as anxious as they concerning Celeste's fate.

They tramped on. Now the side of the hill rose more steeply. Bessie, grunting, her eyes glued to the ground, rolled on in their wake. All at once, however, she uttered a little yelp.

"I sus-say, Babs!"
"What's the matter now, Bess?"
"Lul-look at this," Bessie cried. "I fuf-found it here!"

She pointed to a part of the ground, a bare patch among the tall grass which grew with such luxuriant thickness all

featuring the Cliff House chums on holiday.



GIRL QUEEN!

around them. In her hand she held a little turquoise bead.

"That's Celeste's, all right!" Mabel Lynn breathed. "She was wearing her turquoise necklace, I remember. She must have broken it! And, my hat, she'll be upset as the dickens when she finds that bead gone! Hunt around, girls. Where there's one, there may be others."

"That's true, Mabs," nodded Babs. They hunted around, all of them knowing how much Celeste valued her lovely turquoise necklace. But if Celeste had broken that necklace at that particular spot, she must have collected the rest of the falling beads. Not another one did they find.

They walked on. The bead established one thing, anyway; they were on the right track.

Up and up they toiled, until at last Babs, with a thankful gasp, reached the summit of the hill. Bessie promptly collapsed, panting, on the ground. They glanced around.

Lost Island, like a map, was spread before them.

It was a big island, some miles in length; and the first thing to which their attention was attracted was a smoking hilltop in the north part of the island, some six or seven miles away.

Jemima Carstairs whistled, and thoughtfully polished her monocle.

"Active volcano—what? And looks," she said keenly, as she watched the thick smoke which poured from the crater, "as if it might erupt at any merry old moment! And there's another," she cried, pointing to a conical-shaped hill, two or three miles directly ahead of them.

The chums looked. A volcano that other certainly was—or had been. The shape of the hill was evidence, but

neither fire nor smoke was issuing from its crater.

"Extinct, I guess!" Leila opined.

"Exactly!" Jemima beamed.

Then suddenly she took a step forward. From the ground she picked up something, and held it up. It was a second turquoise bead.

"Celeste's!" cried Marjorie Hazeldene.

Celeste's it was. Tomboy Clara Trevlyn grunted.

"Jolly careless chump, scattering turquoise beads all over a desert island!" she said. "And a jolly long way," Clara grunted, "for her to have come to get a closer look at that silly

volcano, was a long, shining ribbon, appearing and disappearing through the trees, but so straight, and of such a uniform breadth that it was impossible, all in a moment, to believe it due to some natural cause.

"Shucks, how can it be a road?" Leila demanded. "People make roads, and I guess there are no people on this island! All the same," she added, frowning, "I sure can't see any sign of Celeste. Perhaps we'd better wander towards it."

They nodded, interested now. Twenty yards they covered; then Marjorie stooped towards the ground, held something up.

"Look!"

It was a third turquoise bead. "Celeste's," Jemima said softly. "Oh, unusually clever old Celeste!" Her eyes grew keen all at once. "I wonder, old Spartans," she murmured, "if the losing of these beads was an accident?"

They stared questioningly. "Or whether," Jemima mused softly, "Celeste just dropped these at intervals in the hope they would guide us?"

"But why," Clara demanded, "should she drop them? She knew where we were."

"Supposing," Jemima murmured, "she was carried off?"

"Oh rats!" Clara scoffed. "How could she be carried off? Who's here to carry her off?"

"Let's get on, girls," said Babs rather quietly.

They went on, panting a little, suddenly anxiety giving place to alarm. Another twenty yards down the hillside Babs pounced upon the fourth bead; perhaps fifty yards past that, Mabs picked up a fifth.

A little farther on Jemima stopped again.

By

HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

butterfly! What's the matter, Jimmy? What are you staring at?"

"I don't know—yet!" But Jemima's eyes were gleaming suddenly. "But what," she said softly, "is that I see—at the bottom of the hill? Don't tell me, fair comrades, that I am having illusions!"

"Well, what?"

"That road—"

"Road?"

They stared incredulously. A road on a desert island! But then, following the direction of Jemima's pointing finger, they saw, and, seeing, looked startled.

Between them and the extinct volcano was a countryside covered with clumps and patches of trees, scrub, and swamp; but running directly from the bottom of this hill to the very foot of the extinct

"Whoa! Look at this!"

She was pointing to a stone which was stuck in the ground. It was a stone of some very beautiful bluish substance, a little smaller than an English milestone, but beautifully carved and chiselled. On the side facing them it bore a carefully inscribed decoration consisting of a cross surrounded by a loop. The chums stared.

"That," Jemima said, "is a man-made monument. And that sign on it, children—you know what that is?"

Babs frowned.

"Looks like Egyptian to me."

"And Egyptian," Jemima replied softly, "it is. Ancient Egyptian. You know, old Spartans, that I'm rather keen on that sort of thing. Well, that mark is a hieroglyphic, and it's the sign which stands for life. And look at that road," she added, and pointed, for now they were nearer the ribbon-like track which had first attracted their attention from the summit of the hill.

A road it certainly was—composed of the same glossy blue stone as this milestone.

Babs drew a deep breath.

"My hat!" she exclaimed. "But who built it?"

Uneasily they frowned at each other. "Sure looks as if the ancient Egyptians have been here!" Leila said. "But—but that seems just silly."

Wondering, they went on. They reached the road, and there Babs discovered another turquoise bead. Something more than anxiety was in their hearts now. Uneasiness, dread, the deepening conviction that something more significant than a mere accident might have befallen their missing chum, was forcing itself upon their minds. The island they had thought uninhabited was turning out to be a surprise packet indeed. Ancient Egyptians—here, in this modern day? It was fantastic!

"Look at that!" cried Jemima suddenly.

They had burst from the shelter of the tall, overhanging trees through which the road had run, and in a moment they stopped.

On both sides of them, as far as the eyes could reach, stretched fields—cultivated fields such as might be found in England! Acre upon acre they saw of rich vineyards; acre upon acre of maize, of rice, of orchards.

"It—it sure beats me!" Leila commented breathlessly. "But it's funny—no sign of life or anything. Anyway, this won't help us find Celeste. Come on!"

Behind them they soon left the orchards and the vineyards; now they plodded forward with green, slimy marshland to both sides of them. Unconsciously they hurried, dread entering all their hearts; but with dread and apprehension, a sense of adventure, of curiosity, as if they found themselves some part of a mystery.

Nearer the volcano loomed. Then, staring ahead, they became aware of something unusual in the nature of the ground at the base of the volcano. There the road drove on between two great banks of black and red lava, until it disappeared in mysterious blackness. And there, also, were two huge monuments covered with the strange hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Egypt of the past.

"Oh crumbs! They—they look like Cleopatra's needles, you know!" Bessie stammered.

Jemima, who knew all about hieroglyphics, studied them.

"And," she said abruptly, "Cleopatra's needles they are! Wait a

minute; I can make something of them out. There's a name here—Salasta—something about a queen. There's another name, too—Setti-Shimbi. That apparently refers to some naughty-naughty god!" She stood up, polishing her monocle. "And here's an inscription. I can make out this much," she added, drawing a hissing breath. "When Salasta shall come from the sea, the land of Little Khem shall know its deliverance."

"But what's the land of Little Khem?" Bessie asked. "Oh crumbs! I'm sus-sure I've got a kik-corn, you know!"

"The land of Little Khem is the land of Little Egypt!" Jemima said, her eyes shining. "Khem was the name by which Egypt called itself in Cleopatra's day." She peered up the dark tunnel and then frowned. "Comrades, we are on the verge of the unknown," she announced quietly. "This tunnel drives straight into the heart of the extinct volcano, and if I still read my hieroglyphics aright, that interior is a temple!"

They hesitated. Babs looked uneasy, but determined.

"Well, if Celeste's been taken into the temple, that's our way, too," she said. "Let's go!"

"Bib-but—oh crumbs! I sus-say—" Bessie faltered.

"Well, old Bess, want to go back?"

"Nun-no! Nun-not unless somebody comes, too!" Bessie said nervously. "Oh, nun-never mind, I'll gug-go with you."

They proceeded. Adventure in some shape or form lay ahead of them, but the only object of having that adventure was the finding of Celeste.

For the first time the road wound into a bend, and then at last they heard sounds of life. Somewhere ahead of them came a faint, very pleasing tinkle of music, followed by a dispersed and distant mutter.

They said nothing. Nobody could have said anything. The bewildering anxiety, the series of mysteries, held them all bewildered and enthralled. Now they had rounded the bend, blinking in a misty light which shone before them, a light which grew brighter as they went on. Then suddenly they all stopped, each girl catching her breath. Were they dreaming?

In a flash of time it seemed that almost three thousand years slipped away. Weird, wonderful, awe-inspiring, the scene which met their eyes.

In an immense chamber, shaped like a gigantic funnel, they stood, and in the top of that funnel was a great hole through which the rays of the sun poured. Smooth, shining, and polished were the walls of this marvellous chamber.

Thunderstruck, the chums paused, gazing with wide eyes about them. They knew then that Jemima was right. This amazing place in which they found themselves was, in very truth, the interior of an old volcano.

Rising before them was a shining staircase of bluestone, and at the very top of those steps, directly beneath the great opening, was a long platform on which was set a glittering golden throne.

In front of it sat a crowd of white-smocked girls, waving fans and throwing flowers down the steps. In front, and to the side of the steps, every eye directed towards the platform which formed the summit of the steps, was a multitude of people—people of a strange coppery-yellow hue—not black, as the chums might have expected—dressed in white, stiff robes.

Not one of them turned; not one of them even breathed as the chums

entered. Every eye was directed on to the platform.

"G-golly! Where are we?" Leila murmured.

But before anyone could speak a trumpet blast echoed within the confines of the volcano's wall. A restless rustle ran through the great assembly. There was a mutter—a sudden atmosphere of strange, tense, excited expectation.

And Babs blinked.

For now, from the back of the platform, came a man—a tall, gaunt man, with flowing white beard and fiercely glittering eyes which reminded Babs of a hawk. Facing the assembly, he raised his arms, muttering something in a fervent voice. Jemima frowned a little.

"I think," she whispered excitedly, "I've got the hang of it. The old beaver with the beard is a sort of high priest. He's announcing the coming of the queen—"

Almost before the words were out of her mouth, there was a crash of cymbals. Then a great cry:

"Salasta! Salasta!" went up and down the huge funnel-like walls, till the murmur of it was whispering in every nook and cranny. From the rear of the platform came the sound of low, musical voices increasingly sweet.

A bevy of gorgeously attired girls, each carrying a golden basket on her arm, and strewing flowers as they came, marched on to the platform, singing the while. Then came the sound of marching feet, and brass-clad warriors in gleaming breastplates and helmets marched on to the platform and down the steps, turning smartly to form a guard. A moment's silence, tense, breathless, expectant. The high priest raised his hand.

"The queen!" he cried, in Arabic. "The queen!" the people echoed, and a great thundering roar went through the chamber. "The queen!"

Then silence again. The chums, with fascinated eyes, breath coming a little faster, watched, forgetful now that they were among a strange people, no longer mindful of the uncanny plunge back into the past they had made.

Now, from behind the platform, came a figure—a figure all dressed in brilliant white, so enshrouded that neither face nor form was distinguishable. Two servant-maids walked at her side.

Silently, majestically, the queen walked forward, looking neither to right nor left. She mounted to the golden chair, and took her seat. The high priest, approaching, called out something else.

Then suddenly he caught the mushroom-like shroud which hid her face and figure; with a cry he flung it aside. And, while a thunderous shout went up from the assembled multitude, the chums almost fainted.

For before them, dressed in rich Egyptian robes—could it be?

It was!

Their own chum—Celeste Margesson of the Gloriana!

The Prisoner Queen!



CELESTE—Celeste it was!

For a moment Babs & Co. stood spell-bound and petrified, unable to believe their eyes. This was a dream—it was all a dream! Presently they would all wake up and find themselves back again on the deck of the Gloriana! Celeste, their own gay, madcap chum, whom they had last seen only a few hours ago! It couldn't be true!

But it was true. Not yet had Celeste seen them. But Babs, looking at her, saw that her face, usually so animated, bore no semblance of a smile; and even from that distance, Babs fancied she detected a shiver run through her frame. But the sight of Celeste—there—the knowledge that Celeste was the proclaimed queen of these queer Egyptian people who seemed to have no place in a modern world at all—burst the bonds of her silence. She stepped forward.

"Celeste!" she cried. "Celeste!" Celeste jerked up from her throne. The high priest at once came forward, pushing her back. Babs had forgotten where she was then. Fiercely she was thrusting her way forward, her chums behind her.

"Celeste!" she cried frantically. People turned, aware of the strange foreign girls for the first time. The high priest held up his hand; anxiously he cried something. While Babs & Co., having reached the foot of the stairs, were now rushing to Celeste, he rapped out a word to the guards. There was a cry from the assembly, a sudden shaking of fists. The guards sprinted forward, shouting a word in a strange tongue.

"Uskut!" Even in the perturbation of the moment, Babs started. Her knowledge of Arabic was small, gleaned only during a holiday she had spent on the banks of the Nile with her friend, Princess Naida, but she knew the meaning of that word: "Be silent!"

One hand was grimly laid upon Babs' arm, a threatening spear was thrust before her eyes.

"Let me go!" she shouted. The man growled. From Bessie, in the grip of another guard—although Bessie, of all of them, had not moved a single step—there came a wail.

"Look here, you Egyptian rotter!" "Uskut!" hissed her captor. "Uskut to you, too!" Bessie said indignantly. "Don't you dud-dare to use bad language to me, young man! Celeste—"

"Bessie, be quiet!" Babs gasped. She looked around her. All of her chums now were held captive, and the people of Little Khem were glowering and furious.

Celeste, above them, rose. But again Babs saw the high priest hastily come between her and the populace. His voice rang out again.

"What's he saying?" Clara gasped. "He's saying," Jemima said grimly, "that we have been guilty of insulting the queen! He says as soon as the queen is crowned, we're going to pay for our naughty old sins! Seems," Jemima added, "that this is going to be no joke after all! But how did Celeste get herself in this tough old position?"

They all wondered that. But obviously Celeste could not explain then. Whatever had happened, Celeste was being ordered by the high priest.

"Celeste!" cried Clara. "Please," Celeste cried frantically, "don't make a fuss!" "But how—" "I'll explain later."

Another roar interrupted, drowning their voices. The high priest was mounting the steps. In his hand he held a red cushion, and on that cushion reposed a gold circle surmounted by a snake's head. Babs blinked as she recognized that. It was a uræus—symbol of ancient Egyptian royalty.

There was a hush. Reverently the high priest placed the golden uræus on Celeste's head. Then another trumpet blast, a great shout from the people. Jemima, listening, looked a little

startled. Very peculiarly like Arabic was that language—not so different, indeed, that Jemima, who was an accomplished interpreter of the tongue, could not construe. Frantically the people shouted.

"Hail Salasta, who has risen from the sea!" "Hail Salasta, who will perform those miracles we need!"

"Hail Salasta, who will deliver us from the fiery breath of Setti-Shimbi!" "Hail Salasta, who hath power to put out the moon and cause the stars to drop to earth!"

Celeste sat pale and silent. Then from behind the platform, two other figures emerged—both of them obviously were priests, since they were dressed exactly as the high priest. One carried a golden whip, the other a jewelled sceptre. They paused. Into Celeste's left hand the sceptre was thrust; into her right, the whip. Another cry. Then:

"Our queen!" went up a shout. "Hail Salasta, our queen! Hail Salasta, who shall reign over us till death!"

Again there was silence. The high priest was pointing once more. This time he was pointing to the chums, whispering something into Celeste's ears at the same time. Celeste bit her lip. She whispered back. Then came an order.

"Heads up and chins out!" Jemima murmured. "This is where we face the merry old music! We're going to be put on trial!"

Bessie blinked. "Oh, really, you know, I r-refuse to be put on tut-trial! I'm not a convict!" "Ist-a gilu!" grunted her guard, with a reminding touch of his spear.

"Look here, you know— Ow! Wow!"

"Bessie, do as he tells you, old Spartan!" Jemima hissed. "He's telling you to 'hurry up.' Pretty tough, and all that, but does appear these people are standing no nonsense." Apparently they weren't. For as the

chums, each grimly led by their guards, were hauled up the bluestone steps, an angry growl went up from the populace. Celeste, gripping the arms of her throne, sat silent and pale as they were ranged in front of her.

The high priest said something, pointing at them with a quivering finger. Jemima's eyes gleamed.

"Naughty old lad, that!" she whispered to Babs. "He accuses us of treachery to Celeste. He's telling her what she's got to do with us, but Celeste—" And then she stopped as Celeste, her face terribly anxious, turned to them. She spoke in English:

"Don't let on, girls, but I'm pretending I'm angry with you!" "Well, why?" asked Bessie.

"Shush!" whispered Clara. Even she could see the situation was ticklish and delicate; and obviously Celeste knew so much more than they.

They stood silent while the high priest continued to jabber. Celeste nodding seriously at intervals. What it was all about only Jemima understood; but Babs, who caught a word here and there, knew that their case was being put in the worst possible terms to Celeste and the people of Little Khem, and a great dislike for this cunning-eyed priest sprang up within her. Celeste raised her whip.

"Now," she said solemnly, "I give judgment!" She repeated the words in the Arabic tongue. "I order these intruders to be taken to my state apartment. There, until it pleases me to do otherwise, they shall remain as my slaves. Is this well, O Chikka? That's his name," she added, in an aside to the chums.

"Your majesty, it is well," the high priest Chikka said, solemnly bowing, and rapped an order to the guards.

The chums once again were seized, while the crowd below howled. Then they were led away. This time they were taken across the platform, to the farther side of the stone staircase.



FROM the ground Jemima picked up something. It was a second bead. "Celeste's!" cried Marjorie Hazeldene. No doubt about it. They were hot on the trail of their missing chum.

Here the stairs gave place to long terraces, each terrace containing doors and windows.

Into a great room, fitted with low tables, and its walls covered with bright, beautiful frescoes, which might have come straight from an Egyptian tomb, they were led.

"I believe," Leila breathed as they stood there, still in the grip of the guards, "one of us will wake up presently. Because, of course, this isn't really happening, I guess."

"Uskut!" said the guard, and jabbered something in Arabic.

"That means shurrup!" Jemima interpreted. "This is the queen's waiting-room. It is forbidden to speak in it unless one has the permission of the queen first."

They stood chafing, uneasy, silent. Nobody dared speak.

From outside there was a trumpet blast, and Celeste swept in, accompanied by half a dozen serving-maids. She turned, said something. The maids disappeared. She jabbered angrily at the guard, who looked uneasily askance, and then, saluting, withdrew.

"And now," Celeste announced, with a breath of relief, "we are alone."

"Well, thank goodness for that, anyway!" Clara said. "Bother if I don't feel like an actress in a musical comedy! What IS this lark?"

Celeste shook her head.

"I wish," she said, with undisguised seriousness, "I could call it a lark. Certainly I did think it was going to be fun at first."

"But what happened?" Babs demanded.

"Well, you know I went chasing the old butterfly—"

"Yes?"

"I chased it along the pass and up the hill. Then, before I knew where I was, this old chap Chikka appeared. Naturally, I was surprised to see him, thinking the island was deserted—"

"And, being a lemon, you went and spoke to him?" Clara sniffed.

"Well, yes," Celeste smiled a little.

"I was curious, of course, and pretty excited when I heard him jabbering a sort of Arabic. He told me I was Queen Salasta, and that I had come to rule over his people. When I just burst out laughing in his face, he got awfully mad, you know."

"You don't say," murmured Leila.

"We had an argument," Celeste continued. "At first I refused to go along with him. I said I'd got to get back to the boat. He said I was his queen, and I'd just got to come along. He pleaded so hard, and seemed so jolly anxious that, in the long run, I agreed, only providing he should send a messenger back to the Gloriana to tell grandpop where I was, and to invite them to come and join in the fun, too."

"Go on!" Jemima said, rather grimly.

"And then—well, I went. But, just in case it wasn't going to turn out to be the luck I expected, I dropped my turquoise necklace and left a trail. I got here. They dressed me up like this, everybody falling down and bowing, and all that sort of thing. For the first few minutes, I was tickled to fits. Then Chikka came in and cleared everybody out, and Chikka made it quite clear then that now I was here, I was never going back. If I attempted to escape, he said he would send his army to the Gloriana and capture everybody on board, and sink the ship."

The chums looked at each other in horror.

"And so I—I had to play the part." Celeste's voice faltered a little. "Chikka told me the yarn about this island of Little Khem, and I began to see what I'd really let myself in for."

"And the yarn?" Babs asked.

"Oh, I wouldn't know the details! But apparently there's a volcano on the island called Setti-Shimbi. Setti-Shimbi is regarded as an evil god by the natives, because it erupts every so often, killing off whole families, and destroying crops, and so on. There's a yarn that in the past a beautiful white queen, called Salasta, was murdered by some ruffian, and the legend says that until she comes to life again, Setti-Shimbi will continue to take toll out of revenge."

Leila whistled.

"I begin to see. Well?"

"Well"—Celeste threw a glance towards the door—"there has been no queen in Little Khem since Salasta died. The island has been ruled over by the high priests of which, I gather, Chikka is the last of a long, long line. Just recently, apparently, the old volcano's been showing signs of getting troublesome again. The people, panicky because it might blow up any minute, have been nagging Chikka to do something about it, and he, in desperation, I suppose, said that he had a vision that Salasta would reappear out of the sea to bring peace upon the land. And so—"

"And so," Babs said, her eyes glinting, "he's bagged you for Salasta. You're having to play his little game for him?"

"That's it," Celeste said.

There was a silence; then Bessie spoke.

"But tha—that's silly," she said. "Really, you know, Celeste, why don't you tell the people?"

"Because," Celeste said, "they wouldn't believe me if I did. Oh, don't worry! Chikka's been on to them for months and months about the return of Salasta. I gather, reading between the lines, that it's been his one big card. Legend says that Salasta had blue eyes—like mine. Hair like mine; also that she carried the sign of life upon her neck—like this" and she pointed to an old scar—the result of an operation in early childhood, which had left a curious mark under her ear.

"And, apart from that," Celeste added grimly, "if I don't play the part, poor old grandpop and all of us will get it in the neck. Chikka is in earnest, and he's got the people behind him. If he'd had his way, he'd put you into the dungeons; but I had the brain-wave of making you my slaves—I don't think he liked that, by the way. As far as I can gather, there are about five thousand of these people living on the island, and two thousand of them, at least, are men who are in Chikka's army. You can't argue with two thousand men."

There was a tense silence while the chums looked at each other.

"Oh, why the dickens did we decide to picnic on what we thought was a deserted island?" cried Babs. "Wait a minute!" she added keenly. "I've got a brain-wave. We've got to let your grandfather know about this, Celeste."

"Yes—but how? I tell you, even if I am a queen, I'm watched like a prisoner. Besides, how can you get out of this volcano place? There's

only one exit, and that's the one you came in by. Maybe you didn't notice it as you came in, but it's guarded by heavy metal gates which are only open on ceremonial occasions such as these."

"But you're a queen, aren't you?" Babs demanded. "You've got some power."

"Well, as long as Chikka's not about to see I don't use it the wrong way—yes."

"Then," Babs replied, "here's our chance. Celeste, have you got any of these native girls' clothes about?"

Celeste stared.

"Well, yes, there are two costumes belonging to my maids, and some slave clothes, which, by the way, you'll have to wear. But what—"

"Then," Babs said, "they'll have to do! Wait a minute! The people haven't gone yet, have they?"

"No, but they'll be going," Celeste said. "The fun's over now they've been introduced to their new queen."

"That's good enough," breathed Babs.

"Two of us have got to get out of this—and back to the ship. As queen, Celeste, you can get them through the guards and once they get among the crowd it should be an easy enough matter to get back to the ship. Who'll go?"

"I will!" Leila declared at once.

"No, me!" Clara cried.

"Oh goodness, don't argue! Look here, let's draw for it," Babs said. She plunged her hand into her pocket, drawing out a handful of coins. "Now—the two who guess nearest to the number in my hand," she added quickly.

"Ten," cried Leila.

"Forty," said Bessie.

"Three," said Jemima.

They all guessed. Marjorie was the only one dead right. Next nearest was Clara.

"O. K. then; it's you two," said Babs. "But for goodness' sake be careful. Now, Celeste—quickly—the dresses," she cried, and while Celeste darted to a box in the corner and threw it open, Babs turned to Clara and Marjorie. "Take those clothes off," she said. "Quickly!"

Marjorie, gulping, nodded. But Clara was kicking off her shoes even then. Celeste produced the dresses. With feverish haste the two dressed. But even so arrayed, their white faces betrayed them.

"Oh, goodness, we've no grease paints!" Celeste cried.

"But," Babs cried, "Bessie's got some chocolate, haven't you, Bessie?"

"Why, yes; but—"

"Hand it over!"

"But look here. I may want a snack—"

"Please, Bess. This is serious."

Bewilderedly Bessie handed over her chocolate.

"Sticky and messy, but it'll do," Babs said. "Wet that; rub it over your faces. Once you get away from here a wash will put you right. There—and there!" she cried. "Look at that!"

The chocolate-covered Clara and Marjorie grinned at each other.

"Now, Celeste, the rest is up to you," announced Babs.

Celeste chuckled.

"O. K.!" she said. "Here goes to use the queenly influence! Follow me, girls—close attention! It shouldn't be so light outside now," she added; "that will help. Now wait just inside the door!"

She went to the door while the chums watched anxiously. If cool cheek could carry anything off, then clearly success should belong to Celeste. Boldly she threw the door open, and the four guards outside, seeing her, stiffened, throwing up their spears in salute. Celeste frowned.

"Is that the way to greet Salasta?" she cried in Arabic. "I am your queen. I am your goddess. Down, you dogs, on your knees before me! Bow your heads to the floor!"

"Your majesty, we salute this way," one of the men mumbled. "This is the way told us by his greatness, Chikka."

"And is Chikka your queen?" Celeste asked haughtily. "Obey me my guards, and do my bidding, otherwise you shall tremble for your safety. Down upon your knees, bow your heads on the ground, and remain thus until I come back and give you the word to rise again. You hear?"

"Majesty, we hear!" the men murmured.

Celeste stood royally upright. Clumsily the men fell to their knees. While Celeste watched, they bowed their heads on the ground.

"I go," she told the guards, "with my serving maids to dress. Remain thus."

"Majesty, we hear!" the first guard said.

"Come on!" Celeste whispered.

She beckoned to Marjorie and Clara. Grinning, Clara stepped forward. Marjorie, rather wide eyed, followed a little nervously. The guards, however, believing as everybody else believed, that Salasta was the white queen come to free them from all disaster and ills, dared not look up. Quickly, they threaded their way between the kneeling guards; anxiously made their way along the passage.

As Celeste had said, the light was less powerful now. Already the interior of the extinct volcano was growing dim.

Down a long flight of steps to the lower terrace, she led the way. Here were more guards. While Clara and Marjorie hung in the background, Celeste repeated her order to the astonished soldiers, who obediently enough, went down on their knees, remaining motionless.

Along a terrace, down another flight of steps, and now they could see the people in the huge chamber moving towards the exit. Clara grunted.

"O. K. now, Celeste?"

"O. K. is the word," Celeste said. "Say nothing; do nothing. Just mangle and walk out—and good luck!" she added breathlessly.

"And good luck to you!" said Clara. "Tell Babs & Co. to keep their peckers up. We'll have you all out of this before you can say Jack Robinson!"

And with a nod, while Celeste hung back in the shadows so as not to be recognised, Clara and Marjorie stepped boldly among the outflowing populace.

"As Slaves You Shall Work!"



THE high priest Chikka, striding along the terrace from his own apartments to the apartments of the magically restored Queen Salasta,

stopped, jumped, glared. "Fools!" he quivered to the kneeling guards still prostrated before the door of the queen's waiting-room. "What dost thou here, grubbing like hens in search of worms?"

"Greatness," one of the men mumbled, "this is her majesty's salute. She it was who commanded us."

Chikka's eyes flamed.

"Then I command you to get up!"

"Greatness, that we may not do!" answered the man on the ground. "For Queen Salasta is great above all, and although we said to Queen Salasta you

would be displeased, she said we must obey her command."

For a moment Chikka's hands clutched. Then he drew back, reflecting that it was himself who had made Celeste all-powerful; remembering that he, as her outwardly humble priest, was not empowered to countermand her orders. Very hard, he breathed through his nose.

"And where," he asked, "is her Majesty?"

"Greatness, she went to dress with two of her serving maids."

Chikka started. In that case there had been no necessity for Celeste to leave her room at all—not, of course, that the guard knew that.

Scowling, Chikka whirled and strode into the room.

Babs, Bessie, Jemima, Mabs, and Leila were there. Chikka eyed them grimly.

"Five," he said—"five!" And Jemima, interpreting what he was saying, looked up. "Seven slaves Queen Salasta condemned. Where are the other two?"

"Ahem!" Jemima said.

"Where are the other two?"

The chums looked at each other, understanding what was said if only from the inflection of the high priest's voice. It seemed a case, however, where pretended ignorance would serve their purpose best.

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But, as it happened, there was no need for them to reply. For at that moment there was a merry laugh on the terrace outside and a clank of metal as the unhappy guards were allowed to resume a standing posture—once more. Then the door opened, and Celeste came in.

Chikka immediately spun upon her, pointing to the girls.

"Majesty, there were seven slaves. Now there are but five," he said. "Where are the others?"

Celeste faced him fearlessly.

"Am I your queen or your servant that you should demand answer to any question you chance to put?" she asked haughtily.

"Two have gone!" cried Chikka.

Celeste shrugged.

"Well, is that my business?"

The chums looked at each other again, grinning a little. Chikka glared in thwarted fury. Then, with something like a snarl, he flung round and hurried from the room.

"Nice, cheery old bird—what?" Jemima said. "All the same, he seems to have cottoned to what happened. What will he do now?"

Celeste bit her lip.

"Probably send some of the priests and a bodyguard of men after them," she said.

"Oh, my hat! You mean they won't escape?"

Celeste looked worried.

"I don't know. I—I'm sorry," she

added, "to have got you into this. I mean—perhaps, after all, it was wrong of me to lead you on this trail—"

"And what," Babs demanded, "do you think we'd have done? Left you on the island not knowing what had become of you? Do you think for one moment that your grandfather and Jack Trevely and all the rest aboard the Gloriana would have gone off leaving you here? Talk sense, Celeste!"

"But what are we going to do?"

"For the moment hope that Clara and Marjorie have got through," Babs said. "Once your grandfather knows the position it won't be long before something happens—even if he has to wireless for a British gunboat to help! Meantime, we've just got to make the best of things," she added. "And, after all, it's not such a bad best, is it?"

"Nun-no, rather not!" Bessie said. "But I'm fuf-famished, you know! I sus-say, Celeste, could we get something to eat?"

"Oh, I'm sorry!" Celeste at once rose to her feet. She broke into a sudden laugh. "Why not?" she asked gaily.

"Why be miserable? We'll have a feed—a real slap-up feed!" She took up a bell near by, shaking it so that it emitted a silver tinkling sound. One of the guards looked in.

"Your majesty?"

"Order food for my slaves and myself," Celeste said. "Quickly!"

"Majesty, it shall be done," the guard said solemnly, and went down on his knees, touching the ground with his forehead, and then rose again, closing the door.

The chums waited, realising suddenly that they were hungry. Presently the door opened again. Into the room came six serving maids, each carrying piled-up trays of luscious fruits and meats and crystal glasses and jugs. Bessie's eyes gleamed.

"Oh crumbs! I sus-say, I dud-don't mind being a sus-slave at all, you know, if this is how they are going to feed us!"

With something of a return to their normal spirits, the chums laughed. In front of Celeste the trays were set down. Cushions were arranged round the trays, and Celeste, with a queenly wave of her hand, dismissed the maids. She chuckled.

"And now fall to!" she said.

"What-ho!" Jemima gurgled.

And with appetite and zest they fell to.

But, alas, that sumptuous feed was not to last long. Hardly a minute had it been in progress, indeed, than the door was flung open again. Chikka, attended by six gigantic guards, entered the room. His face was livid.

"Stop!" he cried.

"Oh crumbs!" Mabs muttered.

"Stop!" Chikka cried, his voice trembling. "What is this? Is it fitting that slaves sit down to eat with the royal Salasta? These, Salasta, are not your guests—they are your slaves!"

Celeste rose.

"They are my friends—"

"The Queen of Little Khem hath no friends save her priests!" Chikka said steelily. "And, since they are slaves, they shall eat the food of slaves and do the work of slaves!"

He flung round upon his guards.

"These slaves displease the queen!" he cried. "Take them to the royal woodyard and there set them to work!"

"I protest!" cried Celeste. "Guards, I—"

"The guards," Chikka said fiercely, "have orders! As Queen of Little Khem you have power over the people. Over slaves—and foreign slaves at that—you have none! It was your wish that

these girls should be your slaves, and as your slaves they will now work for you—in your royal woodyard! Seize them, guards!"

"But look here——" howled Bessie. "You cannot do this, Chikka!" cried Celeste.

But she, too, was helpless. Glaring fiercely, Chikka seized her by the arm. Almost weeping as she looked back at the feast on the floor, Bessie was dragged from the room, and after her quivering form the chums were dragged, too. Celeste, with feelings too deep for words, angrily shrugged in the grip of Chikka.

Down the steps, along the terrace, the chums were hustled, watched by sniggering girls and guards. Overhead the sun's rays had disappeared now, a gloomy, murky light filled the interior of the extinct volcano, and here and there great oil-soaked torches, set in iron standards, were flaring. They reached ground level at last, and, marched between an avenue of torches, finally found themselves in a palisaded enclosure.

And before them, newly felled, was an immense pile of wood.

The keeper of the woodyard came forward. The captain of the guard spoke to him in a low tone. The man nodded and disappeared. When he returned he carried five saws.

Leila whistled. "Shucks, we're not going to saw wood!" she cried.

Jemima groaned hollowly. "That is exactly what we have to do! And orders are, comrades, that we are not to stop until we have sawn up one whole tree-trunk each!"

In glum dismay the chums regarded each other.

The Cunning of Chikka!



"ALL right, Marjorie?"
"Yes!" gasped Marjorie.
"Nobody following?"
"No!"

"Good, then we've made it!"—and Clara's eyes shone as, racing into the green cove by the seashore, she saw Celeste's boat still as they had left it some five hours before. "Got clean away!" she chuckled. "Not even the sound of a pursuit! My hat, though! I'm puffed with running! In you get, Marjorie!"

Marjorie Hazeldene gaspingly nodded. With melting chocolate running down both their faces, and still dressed in the raiment of Celeste's serving maids, the two presented a picture indeed. But the goal was reached now; safety, in the shape of the Gloriana which still stood out in the bay a mile away, was in sight.

Rather apprehensively Marjorie looked back as Clara set the engine of Celeste's motor launch going.

Even now she could hardly believe in the good luck of herself and her chum. There had been no difficulty in getting out of the temple. Mingling with the outflowing throngs, nobody had seemed to give them a second glance, and once they reached the bluestone road with the populace disappearing in all directions, the rest had been simple.

And now, growing nearer and larger with every thresh of the motor launch's propeller, loomed up the Gloriana. Now they could see the figures of the men on the decks, could see waving hands. Could see, as they drew near, the anxiously worried face of Celeste's grandfather staring down at them. He

was the first to greet them when, having moored the boat, the two scrambled up to the deck to find all the ship's officers and half the crew waiting to meet them. Jack Trevlyn, Clara's brother, was there; so, also, was Peter Murphy, the young wireless officer.

"But where," Mr. Margesson demanded, his face sharp with anxiety, "are Celeste and the others?"

They blurted out their story, and gasps of amazement greeted it.

"The people of Little Khem?" Jack Trevlyn exclaimed. "Gosh, I've heard of them! Ned Pickering, in that letter he wrote about Pirates' Island, mentioned the people of Little Khem—a gang of ancient Egyptians who, apparently, were prisoners in Egypt somewhere about Tut-ankh-Amen's time, and fled to escape being executed or something! Pickering says they were caught in the Indian monsoon and were thrown up on some desert island in the ocean!"

"Well, this is the island!" Clara said grimly, "and the descendants of Tut-tie's prisoners are there in their thousands! And Celeste, whether she likes it or not, has been crowned their queen, and if the Khems have their way, will remain their queen for ever and a day! And Babs & Co., they're her slaves, doomed, if you please, to wait upon Celeste for the rest of her queenship! The question is: what are we going to do?"

Mr. Margesson's eyes were grim.

"There's no question of what we're going to do," he said. "That's obvious. I was just on the point of landing a search-party when you were spotted. Clara, will you come back with us? We'll go and see this high priest Chikka and let him know that he can't fool around with British subjects just as he pleases! Simpson, get the long boat lowered!" he ordered. "Arm a dozen of the men and three of the officers! Murphy, you're off duty; you'd better come, too!"

"And me!" eagerly cried Jack Trevlyn.

"I'm sorry, no; not you!"
"Oh, but dash it, sir——"
"I'm sorry," Mr. Margesson firmly repeated. "Not you, Jack. Apart from Murphy, you're the only man on board who can work the wireless apparatus. There may be trouble. If we're not back within, say, three hours, I want you to send out a message. Give longitude and latitude, and ask the nearest British warship to steam here at once!"

"But Murphy is the best man for that!" Jack protested. "Peter——"

Peter Murphy grinned. "Sorry, old top! It was your suggestion you should be wireless relief," he said, his eyes twinkling. "Orders are orders, old man, and you can't very well expect me to give up a picnic like this! Pretty tough," he added, grinning, while Jack scowled. "But duty first—you know the old saying! Cheer up. I'll try to bag you a souvenir! Mr. Margesson, is Marjorie coming, too?"

"No; no need," Mr. Margesson decided. "Marjorie, you had better remain here with Jack. Clara, you're sure you know the way back?"

"As sure," Clara said, "as I know my way to my own cabin! But, come on, let's go! Good luck, Jack! Good luck, Marjorie!"

Marjorie smiled a little, perhaps rather relieved than otherwise not to be going back, though her heart was anxiously throbbing for the safety of her chums. She stood near the frustrated Jack, watching as the rescue-party, strongly armed, took to the lowered boat. It swirled away.

Swiftly it drew close to the shore, heading for the little, crescent-shaped cove, ringed about by the green hills.

Jack put a pair of field-glasses to his eyes. Marjorie, realising that nothing further could be gained by watching, and realising that she was rather hungry, went below in search of food. Jack, meanwhile, stared on.

Through his glasses he watched the party as they climbed out of the boat on to the bank, drawing it up after them. Plainly he saw Clara making towards the pass to the left of the cove. Then suddenly his grip on the binoculars tightened.

What was this? Jack's eyes glittered, an exclamation burst from his lips. For suddenly the green hills about the cove had come to life. Up from behind the hills, surrounding the party on every side, had sprung a horde of warriors, the sun gleaming on bright spears, striking shafts of light from glistening helmets. There must have been hundreds of them.

Short and sharp was the battle which followed.

For the Gloriana's party, completely trapped, had no chance. Like an avalanche the brass-armoured Khemites swept fiercely upon them. There was a short, fierce struggle, a few shots, and then Mr. Margesson, Clara, and all the rescue-party were lost to sight in the swarm of soldiers which surrounded them.

Jack lowered his glasses as he saw his friends being hauled towards the pass. His eyes were blazing; his face pale with fury.

"Ambushed!" he hissed, between his teeth. "And me here, helpless to do anything! But, my stars, they're not getting away with this." And he rushed towards the wireless cabin. With fingers that trembled a little, he fitted the ear-phones as he seated himself before the transmitter. Then suddenly he paused. What was that?

A stealthy sound from the deck outside the cabin.

Jack Trevlyn's eyes were like steel. Silently he slid his hand towards a drawer. The drawer he pulled open, his hand closing round the cold butt of the revolver which reposed there. With the weapon in his hand, he slowly rose to his feet.

Something moved beyond the door. Then, while Jack tensed, the door opened. For a moment he gave back at the sight of the white-robed figure which, a knife poised on high, came rushing in upon him—a priest of Chikka's, no less. In a flash Jack had levelled his gun.

"Put that down, or I shoot!" he rapped.

Such a threat might have acted with a white man; but it did not act with Chikka's priest. Never in his life had he seen a gun before, and, being unaware of its deadly powers, had no fear. He did not pause at the words. Like a tiger he came on.

Jack, gritting his teeth, tensed to meet him. He couldn't shoot the man down. Then—crash! They met. Up went Jack's free hand to grip the hand that held the knife. As he did so he twisted round, his finger unconsciously tightening upon the trigger of the revolver.

There was a thunderous explosion as the gun went off, jerking out of Jack's hand. Still gripping the priest's knife arm, he brought his free hand up in a short-arm jab. There was a click as his bunched knuckles connected with the priest's jaw; a half-strangled cry from the priest himself as, with eyes suddenly

glazing, he went backwards, to pitch unconscious on the deck outside.

Jack smiled grimly. He flung round, intent on grabbing up the pistol, then stopped, frozen in horror, gazing with stupefied eyes at the delicate mechanism of the transmitting set on the table.

The set, a mass of twisted wires and splintered valves, lay in ruins before him. The accidentally-fired bullet had smashed it utterly!

"And that—" Jack whispered. "Oh, great stars! That was the set on which I am supposed to send the message for help!"

Horror was in his eyes as he stared at it. For it was obvious, even to the merest novice, that the instrument now was utterly beyond repair. What to do now? How to send the vital message which would mean rescue for the Gloriana's prisoners in the power of Chikka and his men?

An Interrupted "Miracle!"



"O H dud-dear!"
 "Oh crumbs!"
 "Oh s h u c k s,
 every bone in my
 body's splintered!"
 "My hands are blistered!"
 "And I," mournfully sighed Jemima
 Carstairs, "have no bones in my body
 left—what? They must have all
 melted!"

Five dishevelled and sorry-looking figures sat up and groaned.

It was the following morning, and the figures were those of Barbara Redfern & Co.

Inside the cone of the old volcano, a small walled-in compound had served them as a sleeping apartment; and to be sure, in spite of the poverty of their surroundings and their circumstances, they had all slept like logs. And all had awakened feeling nothing but a mass of aches and pains, and gigantic weariness.

For there had been no nonsense about the severity of the punishment inflicted upon them by the high priest, Chikka. For four or five hours last night they had worked in the woodshed, sawing up great logs.

Almost dead they had been when the work at last was finished. With bruised and blistered hands, with aching heads and spines which were so heavy and numb that they might have turned to iron in the process of the work, they had been huddled into this miserable compound, and there left.

Very, very sorry indeed were the five feeling for themselves now.

Bessie, almost weeping, rubbed her back, blinking feebly and pathetically at her chums. Babs was rubbing her legs, biting her lip the while. Mabs, as if even the effort of sitting up was really too much for her, had flopped back, breathing heavily. Jemima was making faces as she polished her eyeglass. Leila just groaned.

"Oh crumbs!" mumbled Bessie. "I sus-say, when are we going to have breakfast—"

Nobody replied. Rather grimly, perhaps, they were wondering if they were ever going to taste food again.

"Ah, me! I would fain welcome a wash!" Jemima sighed. "I wonder," she added broodingly, "where Clara and Marjorie are now?"

Babs shook her head. She had almost given up hope. No sign from the Gloriana, no hint that their chums had got through to the rescue.

"And what," Mabs asked, "is Celeste doing?"

Again they shook their heads. From Celeste they had had no sign.

Abruptly there came a swift challenge from the guard outside the door, a clank of arms. Then the door was thrown open. A figure, breathing hard, entered. Babs started to her feet.

"Celeste—" Celeste, in the strange light reflected down the sides of the tunnel, looked harassed.

"Babs, Jemima—all of you!" she cried, her voice breaking. "You here—like this!" She paused for a moment, gazing at them. Then tears welled to her eyes. "I—I had no idea that savage old brute would treat you like this!" she added. "He told me I need not worry about you, that you were all right. Last night—three times—I left my room to try to get in touch with you. Each time I was caught and taken back."

"And Clara—Marjorie?" Babs asked quickly. "Celeste, is there any news?" Celeste shook her head.

"None!"
 "Oh!"
 "But—but," Celeste went on, "there is news of another kind." She shook

Chikka he's got to get on with the fulfilment of his promises! If he doesn't—if I don't—they—"

She paused. "If you don't, forsooth?" Jemima urged.

"Chikka says that you will all be banished to the Land of No Return!"

"Oh crumbs!" moaned Bessie. "Why us? And what's the Lal—land of No Return?"

"I don't know! Some place miles and miles away from here. You can guess," Celeste added, "it's pretty dreadful. But wait a minute," she said, "let me go on with the yarn. When Chikka told me I was to perform a miracle I told him, of course, he was mad. But he said somehow I'd got to do it. At the same time," Celeste went on softly, "I was more anxious to get in touch with you than anything else. I told him that I must see you—that I couldn't perform any miracle, or anything like a miracle, without you! Naturally, he wasn't too keen on the idea, but—"

"But?" Babs asked.
 "But he agreed finally to let me come—only on condition I would please the



MARJORIE and Clara got busy on their faces with Bessie's chocolate. It was sticky work, but it was the best they could do in the way of disguising their skin. "Now, Celeste, the rest is up to you," announced Babs.

her head agitatedly. "Apparently the people of Khem are impatient, now that their queen is found, for her to get on with the job, Chikka has promised she shall do. And that job, if you please, is to perform a miracle!"

"Eh?" They stared at her bewildered. "I," Celeste said, "have to perform a miracle!"

"Then," Leila grunted, "I sure wish you luck! Say, can't you perform one and produce some grubbins?"

"And half a ton of ointment, and splints, and things," Jemima groaned. "Oh dear, my poor old bones!"

"Please!" Celeste begged. "This miracle business is deadly serious. Goodness knows what I'm to do, but I've got to do something! Chikka has promised the people I shall do it, but, as far as I can gather, Chikka was in a pretty desperate plight before I came along. His power was waning. Just to keep it going, he promised the Khemites all sorts of things when the queen turned up. Well, now they believe she has turned up! Now they're telling

people by performing the miracle. I made out it was impossible to do anything without you, and that is how I got here. And now—" she shrugged. "Well, there it is! That's the news, and if any of you happen to have a miracle you've got no use for, I'd be glad of a loan of it!" she added with a grim flash of humour. "Oh, Babs, what can we do?"

Babs blinked. It was the first time in her life she had ever been called upon to suggest a miracle!

But Jemima frowned. "Idea!" she said.

"What?" "Bessie!" Jemima nodded towards where Bessie woefully rubbed her limbs. "I don't suppose the Ancient Egyptians knew anything about merry old ventrioloquism, what—and our dear old Bessie is a past-master in the art! Supposing," Jemima said thoughtfully, "supposing old Bessie, the voice of the gods, spoke to the people from various parts of the old volcano?"

Bessie blinked.

"But how can they when I don't know the lingo?"

"H'm! Question mark!" Jemima frowned thoughtfully. "Well, why worry?" she asked brightly. "You can't expect gods to talk the same as ordinary mortals! Any old gibberish will do! Try a bit of Zolindi language you were so fond of mugging up when we were in Africa!"

"Oh, Bessie, yes!" Celeste pleaded anxiously.

"But look here, I'm starving!" Bessie said indignantly. "You can't jolly well expect me to go working miracles on an empty stomach! What about grubbins?"

"Bessie, I'm sorry!" Celeste said anxiously. "But once work the miracle—impress the people—and then you shall have everything you want—Chikka says so! But listen," she added, starting up. "The guards are coming now. Bessie, please, please don't fail me!" she added earnestly.

She flew to the door. Now there was the sound of great mysterious shuffling outside, telling plainly that people of Little Khem were flowing in. The door was pushed open again. Two strong guards appeared, pointing with their spears. Quickly the chums rose.

They went out, trailing across a square to a small walled-off place in which was set a huge basin with linen towels.

"Well, this means a wash!" Mabs said. "And thank goodness for that!"

"But where's the soap?" Bessie glowered.

There was no soap. They managed without it. Cool and refreshing was the water; and though they were all faint from lack of food, and poor Bessie particularly so, they all felt much better when the ablutions were finished.

In the chamber there was a great muttering and a great shuffling. A trumpet blew somewhere, followed by the sound of singing voices.

And then a sudden thunderous cry: "Salasta!"

"Sounds," Jemima murmured, "as if Celeste has made an appearance! Let us totter, my Spartans!"

Totter was the word. Tottering described their spirits and their physical strength as, following the guard, they staggered up the long stairs and along the windowed terraces toward the high platform.

Celeste, as Jemima had guessed, was already there, sitting in white faced and majestic silence upon her golden throne. Near her was Chikka and three high priests, kneeling on the ground and flourishing their arms towards the great crater through which the light poured, giving the whole place a ghostly glittering sort of illumination.

There was a cry as he rose, while the chums, ranging themselves before the throne, gazed down at the sea of faces before them. Chikka swept up his arms.

"Salasta, our queen! Salasta, who was sent down to us by the gods! Let the gods give some message of their pleasure!" he said.

"Bessie, get ready!" Celeste muttered, and rose, stretching out her hands. For a few minutes she talked falteringly to the people in Arabic, and a great wondering sigh went up. She pointed across the temple to a spot where, carved on the wall and shining redly in the weird light which reflected from the glistening sides of the old crater, was a great cross and loop. "Listen!" she cried. "Go on, Bessie!" she added in a whisper.

Bessie twisted her lips and shut her eyes, swaying on her feet. Perspiration was on her face, and a great faintness was upon her. But she did her best, remembering now that the freedom of

her chums and herself was at stake. Suddenly from above the loop and cross a booming voice leapt out, speaking strange words. There came a hissing sigh from the wide-eyed Khemites.

"Now, Bessie, from the other side!" Celeste breathed, and pointed her hands in that direction.

"Ig biaga noolala wowla!" came a deep-throated voice. "Wala alala! Balooobi! Wuff! Cut his head off! Have a banana! Oh, crumbs! I—I believe I—I'm going to fuf-faint, you know—"

"Bessie, keep it up!" Babs urged. Bessie drew a deep breath. A great and wondering silence had fallen upon the people now. With eyes starting out of their heads, they were staring.

"Lilli, willy, wally, wask!" Bessie said as Celeste motioned in front of her. "Ill bazooka! Az-ill— Oh dud-dar, Babs, catch me—" And then Bessie, to everybody's consternation, heeled gently over. She collapsed in a crumpled heap at Celeste's feet.

"She's fainted!" cried Mabs. "Bessie—"

Bessie had fainted. The tremendous labours of last night, coupled with a complete absence of nourishment, had been too much for her! In the middle of the "miracle" she had collapsed.

There was a cry from the assembled populace while the chums anxiously gathered round their fainting chum. Then an excited shout rent the air. Everybody was yelling frantically, the name of "Salasta! Salasta!" being repeated many times. Celeste rose again, her face suddenly white.

"Oh, Bessie!" cried Babs. "Bessie!" But Bessie lay inert, motionless.

"Babs, wake her!" Celeste urged. "Wake her—please! The mob is shouting to hear the voice again. They say it must speak to them in their own language! Bessie! Bessie!" she called frantically.

But Bessie, pale, unconscious, gave no sign.

Another yell from the mob. High Priest Chikka, his face deathly white with fear, was waving his arms, shouting at them. But the people of Little Khem, having been treated to one apparent miracle, wanted more.

"Salasta, go on!" panted Chikka.

"But I can't go on!" Celeste cried. "If you hadn't kept my friends without food, this would never have happened!" Chikka threw her a furious, hunted glance.

"Silence!" he roared. "People of Khem, listen to me! Owing to the presence of the slave girls, the gods are offended. The gods will speak no more!"

"Banish the infidels!" came a threatening roar, and half a dozen people came storming up the steps. "Banish them! Punish them—they who dare annoy our Queen Salasta!"

"Say, we'd better scram!" Leila said anxiously. "Look! They're coming! Babs, get old Bessie up!"

Chikka was shouting: "Be sure they shall be banished!"

Jemima, who understood, threw a look of loathing and contempt at the high priest. Quickly she and Babs picked Bessie up. With her fat form hanging a dead weight in their arms, they moved to the other side of the platform. Half a dozen guards came forward. They, too, looked rather bewildered and frightened. They caught Bessie between them.

"Hina!" one hissed.

And roughly the chums were pushed into an adjoining room. The door slammed upon them, and the guards were gone.

But outside there was uproar.

All Hope Gone!



HOURS and hours later.

Still in the room on the terrace, the five chums sat in gloomy, wondering silence, each heart anxious, each heart aching. Rather late in the day, Chikka's priests had supplied them with food and a change of clothing, and though they were all feeling stronger and much refreshed, the hand of despair was beginning to lay itself heavily upon all of them.

In the temple the great meeting was still going on. Celeste they had not seen since the scene on the platform.

Suddenly a guard appeared. He beckoned to them.

"Come!" The chums rose. Resignedly they trooped out. Down the steps they went, along the terrace, and into the great compound on the ground level. There other guards were waiting, together with five huge jars. The guard signed to the girls, saying something at the same time.

Jemima gasped. "Ods-bodikins! What new form of torture is this!" she groaned. "He says we are to go and fetch water. Pick up the pitchers, comrades."

"But look here, this is heavy!" Bessie faltered miserably.

Heavy they were, though empty. Goodness knows what they would be like when full! But there was no dodging the task. Clumsily they lifted them, slinging them over their shoulders. The guard pointed.

"Ala!" he directed. They followed him, and the other guard. Across the road they went, and there, to their astonishment, they paused in front of a huge, heiroglyph-covered door. One of the guards turned a key in the lock. The door flew open.

And the chums gasped. Celeste had said there was no other entrance or outlet to the crater of the temple, except that route by the blue-stone road. Yet here, in front of them, was a tunnel which obviously led out into the open air.

They tramped along it, wondering, but terribly conscious of the overpowering weight of the pitchers upon their shoulders. The walls, smooth and built of the same uniform blue stone, showed that the tunnel was man-made, at all events.

Presently they emerged into blinding sunlight. Before them a great path stretched for half a mile through a grove of cultivated olives. In the fields near by were people digging, some of them free, and some of them with threatening guards standing above them, some of them roped together.

"Sort of prisoners, I guess," Leila muttered.

That evidently was the case, for as they went they saw more and more of them. They passed into the next grove. Here again were prisoners and guards, none of the former daring to look up, none of them even glancing towards the chums. With the pitchers seeming to increase in weight every minute they tramped through the grove, and then, in spite of their guards, stopped.

To the right of them, fifty or sixty feet deep, was a huge quarry.

The quarry was obviously that from which the native bluestone was worked. Great stratum of it lined the walls.

In the pit of the quarry, thirty feet below them, a small army of prisoners, attended by guards, were hauling and carrying and digging. The bluestone itself, revealed by the sun's rays, glistened and glistened.

"Yalla!" one of the chums' guards snarled.

"Which means 'on!'" Jemima panted. "Oh, my poor arm! I don't believe we are any better off than the digging johnnies in the quarry below—!" And then suddenly Jemima drew in her breath with a hiss.

"Babs, look!" she cried, pointing. Babs looked. Instantly she cried out. Jemima, with her free hand, was pointing into the quarry at the form of a girl in the act of loading a barrow with slabs of the bluestone. Even from that distance there could be no mistaking her. A thrill went through Babs as she recognised her.

"Clara!"

Clara Trevlyn, their chum, who yesterday had gone for help, it was!

"And look!" Jemima breathed. "There's Mr. Margesson! And there's Peter Murphy, and there's the first officer!" She gazed horror-stricken at Babs, and Babs, realising what must have happened, was assailed by a giddy feeling of faintness. "Babs, they've nabbed them."

"Yalla!" the guard cried angrily, and touched Babs with his spear.

Babs gulped. If she had had any hope before, she felt all in a moment that hope blotted out. Celeste's grandfather down there; Peter Murphy—the officers of the Gloriana. Clara, and doubtless Marjorie and Jack, too. All in the power of that arch-soundrel, Chikka! They also were doomed to the same fate as themselves. And the Gloriana—what of that?"

With awful despair gripping her heart, Babs staggered on.

The Beggar at the Spring!



HALF a mile farther on, to the chums' gasping relief, the guard halted them at a shady spring in the rocks down which the water came cascading, throwing up a shimmering spray as it did so.

Before them flowed a swift stream, running through green fields, and above them gloriously plumed birds twittered throatily in the branches of the shrubs that clung to the face of the rock. Except for them and an old beggar, dressed in rags, who sat on the bank of the stream, his head bowed, there was no sign of life.

Babs glanced at him as she waited her turn to fill her pitcher. And then her heart seemed to leap into her throat; for the beggar, his face hidden by a ragged cowl, had whispered one word:

"Babs!"

Babs almost cried out. She tried to peer beneath the cowl, her pulses jumping wildly; but only a dark-stained chin was visible.

"Who—who are you?" she breathed. "Jack!" came back a low whisper. "Jack Trevlyn, old thing! But shush! I've come to get you out of this if I can. Quick, the guards are looking! Shrink back as if you're afraid of me!"

Babs shrank back, but her heart was hammering with excitement.

"Pretty lady, eh?" Jack jeered aloud in Arabic. "Pretty lady!" And then whispered swiftly: "Tell Celeste to get the key of Chikka's room. Tell her this

afternoon, at the festival of flowers, to throw it to me. Got that?"

"Yes," Babs breathed, shrinking as if terrified, and saw the guards grinning.

"O.K. Keep your pecker up!"

The beggar shufflingly withdrew, leaving Babs wondering if she were standing on her head or her heels. Jack Trevlyn—here! Jack Trevlyn in disguise! Jack, who knew so much about things! How did he know? How had he found out? And why should he want the key of High Priest Chikka's room?

But there the fact was, and there was hope yet! Hope for themselves, and for Clara, for Mr. Margesson, and the helplessly held prisoners of the Gloriana. They had a friend in the enemy camp—a friend unsuspected, unknown, spying upon the priests of Chikka, working for Chikka's downfall!

If he only succeeded!

Almost cheerily Babs filled her pitcher at the spring, and though the weight of that filled pitcher was terrific, she hoisted it unaided on to her shoulder. Then wearily the procession trooped back.

Dreadful as the journey had been, carrying the empty pitchers, how much more dreadful the return trip, carrying them full!

Bessie was the first to succumb. She collapsed with a sob, spilling the water as she dropped. Quickly one of the guards sprang towards her. As though it was some great joke, he laughed uproariously as he dashed water from the fallen pitcher over Bessie's white face.

That, if it was uncomfortable, had the effect of refreshing Bessie, and for a space she carried on, helped surreptitiously by Clara and Leila and Babs, who, when the guards were not looking, put a hand to the fat one's shoulder to ease her burden's weight. Near the chalk quarry, Leila, with a moan, fell her legs giving under her. She, too, was revived by the water brutally splashed into her face.

Gasping, the chums staggered on. When would the journey end? Sheer will-power kept them going then, though each girl was almost at her last gasp when the guarded gates of the secret tunnel came into view.

They staggered through it, and with what relief at last they deposited their burdens! And then, while they stood panting, on the verge of complete collapse, a voice spoke.

"What is this?"

"Celeste!" cried Babs. Celeste it was! Celeste, who, suddenly entering, was quivering with anger; Celeste, whose face was red and furious, before whose scornful gaze the guards quailed. She rapped a curt order. The guards, shaking, went down on hands and knees, bowing their heads to the ground. Celeste's eyes flashed.

"And now," she said, "you can stop there—until someone else releases you! And I hope, you brutes, that you all get cramp in the neck! Babs—all of you—follow me!" she cried, quickly glancing at the humbled guards. "Please!"

"But—"

"Please!" Celeste insisted. She turned, beckoning them. Without a word the chums followed. Exhausted as they were, there was hope in their hearts.

Up the stairs, along the terrace, Celeste sped, fiercely throwing open the door of her room. Hastily she beckoned them in.

"I only heard, when you had gone, what had happened," she said. "Oh, that I should ever have let you in for

this! Babs, tell me—have you news of Marjorie or Clara?"

Babs eyed her queerly. "Yes."

"What?"

She told her and the chums what she had seen in the quarry. From Bessie went up a low moan.

"Oh kik-crums, we're doomed, you know!" she whimpered. "But not quite," Babs said. "Listen, now!" And while they all gaped at her in wonder, she recounted the interview with the disguised Jack Trevlyn. "I don't know what Jack's got in mind," she said, "but we've just got to trust him! Celeste, can you get that key?"

Celeste thought swiftly. "I think so. The keys of the whole place are in Chikka's room. Chikka himself is on the platform, making preparations for the festival of flowers," she said. "That is the next item on this idiotic ceremonial programme, when, if you please, I am supposed to throw flowers to the people below! Wait here," she added.

She flew from the room, while the chums, still panting after their water-carrying exertions, eyed each other uneasily. Three, four, five minutes went by, and the tension increased. Then suddenly the door was flung open again. Celeste, with a chuckle, reappeared.

"Got it!" she gurgled. "But touch and go! One of the priests came in just as I was leaving. Oh phew! There's been a frightful racket while you've been away," she added. "The people have been calling for the voice of the goddess again. They—!" And then she stopped, suddenly clutching at the pillar by which she stood. "What's that?" she cried.

But nobody replied. For suddenly the most startling thing happened.

Without warning the chums were flung this way and that; without warning the floor beneath their feet seemed to rise, and then mysteriously subside. There came a terrific quiver, a distant growling rumble.

"An earthquake!" cried Leila. "The volcano," Jemima corrected. "The one we saw smoking."

Rumble, rumble, rumble! The sound was filling the air with thunderous echoes.

"That," Jemima said breathlessly, "is old Setti-Shimbi, in action again. Down, everybody!"

Frantically she flung herself on to her face. Somewhere near at hand there was a crash. Then again, as though pushed from some invisible giant's hand from beneath, the floor rose, quivering, and subsided again. Bessie gave a terrified yell as she was flung in a corner.

Babs, white-faced, staggered up on hands and knees. From outside went up a great wailing cry.

Then suddenly the door came upon. Chikka rushed into the room.

"Your majesty Salasta!" he cried, and then staggered back again as the floor once more trembled. "Salasta, it is Setti-Shimbi! The people call for you! Come!"

"But—"

"Come!" he said savagely, and, plunging forward, grabbed her hand.

"Come!"

"Babs, help!" shrieked Celeste, as she was dragged towards the door.

Babs, breathless, rose and rushed in pursuit.

Celeste, tugged on by the frantic Chikka, reached the high platform. Babs came dashing up.

The whole cone was swaying; the temple walls themselves had cracked in

(Continued on page 14)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS



If your idea of a real friend is someone who is pleased when you are happy and will sympathise when you are sad—someone young and modern and gay, with a delightful sense of humour, too—then you will love PATRICIA, who writes to you all on these pages each week in that chummy and helpful way so typical of her.

QUITE a number of you are perched on some sturdy breakwater, or lounging on some sandy beach, I imagine, as you read your Patricia's letter this week.

If it's as gloriously sunny as I hope it is, then you should have your sun-glasses on. Now have you?

For reading in the strong sunlight is bad for young eyes, you know.

That little lecture over, you can now proceed to enjoy yourselves, you lucky young things. (Though I mustn't be envious, for next week I shall be going away—hip, hip!)

● Out and About

But perhaps there are others of you who are not, for various reasons, going away this summer.

In that case you must have a lovely time at home instead. If you live near a park, you can take tea out, and get beautifully sunburned, too.

Then you could spend a day at your nearest open-air swimming pool, taking sandwiches for lunch and cakes for tea.

If pocket-money is not too scarce, perhaps you could go off for a bus or coach ride with one or two of your chums, and spend the day visiting famous beauty spots and places of interest.

Whatever you do, whether it's the washing-up or going to the Zoo, providing you start in a cheery mood, determined to have a good time—why, then you will!

● Such a Treat

It was my mother's birthday last Saturday, so she decided to treat herself to a little birthday tea-party, and invited two or three of her best friends who live near.

"Mother and her cronies," my big brother Brian always calls them.

I suspect he does this because these friends will insist on saying: "How big you are, Brian," and: "Why, I remember you when you were so high, and you used to sit on my knee and gurgle so prettily."

Brian goes fiery red and all hot round the collar at these reminiscences, and clears off as soon as ever he can with politeness, leaving me to help mother with the entertaining.

That's just like boys, though, isn't it? They can't bear to think they were ever young and sweet, instead of tough and manly.

But personally I get on rather well with mother's friends, for I just love being told of my baby charms—though I'm sure they exaggerate.

In honour of mother's birthday, Olive, that's our maid, and I made a super, bumper, wizard trifle for tea—for mother's not very keen on cake, you see.

In it were six very new sponge cakes, as soft as butter, real egg custard, fresh raspberries, strawberry jam, cream, angelica and cherries.

"We'll make a big one, Miss Pat," said Olive to me, rather knowingly. "Then there'll be some over for Master Brian and Heath for supper."

This seemed a brainwave. But it was jolly fortunate that I had determined to keep the treat for the lads a secret—for, believe me, mother and the friends scoffed all that trifle!

● Holiday Thoughts

Although I am not going away until next week, I have already started to pack, because Aunt Monica (who is taking me to the South of France) says we must send the luggage in advance.

You can just imagine how I have been burnishing up my nice suitcase. I polished the outside with furniture cream, and scratches I rubbed over with brown boot-polish.

Oh, and though it's rather selfish of me to keep talking about myself like this, I must tell you about my new holiday outfit.

It consists of a blouse top, and very scanty shorts. That's for the beach. For "going places," there is a drindl skirt which just ties around the waist, over the shorts.

A drindl skirt, I must explain, is very full and gathered; a bit Tyrolean looking, and a bit like a fish-wife's skirt. So now you'll know and won't have to look blank if your fashion-conscious friends should mention it.

● For the Beach

Have you seen those smart beach outfits made of towelling material? They are striped, as a rule, and so very smart.

You could make yourself one of these gay beach frocks from two gaily-striped bath towels in no time.

You should place the two towels together and gather right round the top of them both, turning over the hem or fringe. Stitch down the sides, just

leaving an opening for your arms to slip through. Then stitch along the shoulders.

Wear a cord round your waist—and it's complete. Perfect to wear over a bathing suit.

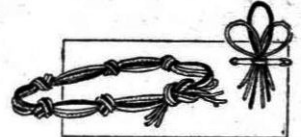
● So Fresh

If your eyes are not very strong, and tend to get tired rather quickly with the glare of the sun, then I can suggest a very comforting tonic for you.

And it is quite free!

As soon as you enter the sea for your daily dip, take a ducking and then stand up for a few minutes and just splash your eyes with the sea water.

They may smart a little, but only for a moment or so; afterwards they will feel so fresh and looking sparkingly bright.



● Both to Match

There's no end to the amount of jewellery we young people can have these days, now that "jewels" are no longer made of precious stones.

In fact, a bracelet to match every frock isn't nearly as extravagant as it sounds—especially if you make it of cord, as shown here.

Three lengths of coloured cord—say, red, green, and blue—should be knotted at intervals, tying in a loose bow around your wrist.

The brooch to match is made of three pieces of cord in the same colours. These are twisted into loops and knotted all together, before being sewn on to a pin which will fasten it to your dress.

● A Tonic

You must have seen quite old ladies at the sea holding up their skirts and tripping along in the foam at the water's edge. And maybe you have even smiled at them, and their evident enjoyment.

But actually they are very sensible ladies, and this splashing in the sea does their poor feet—which I've no doubt are very busy all the year, from early morning till night—a wondrous amount of good.

Sea water, specially that in which seaweed is plentiful, has wonderful tonic properties, which take out all aches; ease wretched corns; and make the feet feel fairy-light and dainty again.

So remember this next time you watch these grown-up paddlers, won't you?

Bye-bye until next week, all!

Your friend,

PATRICIA.





HOLIDAY REMINDERS

—To get a seat facing the engine. Not only would it have given you easily the best view out of the window, so that you could see all that was coming instead of what had gone, but it must have been much better for those of you who may suffer just a tiny bit from travel sickness.

—To take a book—preferably one with a paper cover—to read when you were tired of looking out of the window. (I won't say that I hope you took a certain little book, costing twopence, with a blue-and-orange cover, because I expect that was your favourite choice, anyway.)

—To greet your landlady and do your own unpacking as soon as you reach your particular On-Sea. Mother would have appreciated this, I'm sure.

—To bring those coat-hangers with you, now did you? If not, never mind; quite a good hanger can be made from a roll of newspaper or brown paper, with a loop of string for hanging up.

Now I Hope You Will Remember

—Not to dash into the sea on your very first trot out of doors. Allow yourself to get used to the place first; a change of air demands this, you know.

—Not to stay in the sea too long on your first dip. Go gently at first, and you can make it a longer bathe the next day.

—Not to bathe until at least an hour after a big meal. Just before dinner, and again before tea are the best times for you who like two dips a day.

—Not to leave your room in a glorious pickle every time you go out, even though there is a maid to tidy up after you. She'll love you for your thoughtfulness, you know.

—Not to take too much sand indoors in your shoes. Empty them in the garden first.

—To wring your bathing suit out in clear water before hanging it up to dry. This will help it to keep shapely and soft.

—Not to hang either your wet bathing suit or towel over the window-sill, if your room is at the front of the house. Some landladies disapprove of these bright banners decorating the front of their premises, you know.

—To send those cards off to the chums you promised should have one. Oh, and don't forget to include your address, if you're one of those young people who love to receive a letter on holiday.

I HOPE You Did Remember

—To board out the family puss-cat, the canary, and the gold-fish. And the dog, too—if he didn't insist on going with you!

—To tell the kind lady next door just what Tiddles prefers for dinner, what time the canary likes to go to bed and have his cover over the cage, and how often the water in the goldfish bowl should be changed.

—To thank her, very, very nicely for doing all this for you, and to promise to do the same for her one day!

—To resolve to bring her back "a little something" from your holiday for such kindness.

—To slip moth balls or cloves into the pockets of the wintry garments you have left hanging in the wardrobe at home, otherwise those moths will be having a real old picnic!

—To cancel the milk and the newspapers for mother, and to have the telephone cut off—so that no possible charges can run up against you while you are away.

—To go with mother to get the train or coach tickets a day or so before your journey, and so save that tedious queuing up at the station.

—To take fruit with you to eat on the journey, rather than chocolate—which can make you so sticky and "mussed up." Fruit also is so much more thirst-quenching.

—To wear an oldish frock or a dark-coloured coat when you set off. It's really shocking how grubby clothes can get if the journey is long. And it's so nice to arrive at your On-Sea looking fresh and dainty, isn't it?

—To have your sponge-bag easily get-at-able on top of your cases, if you were travelling in a corridor train, so that you could have a cold-water wash. If you didn't, perhaps you kept a damp sponge in your bag to wipe your hands and face after a snack.

—To refrain from hanging out of the carriage window. It may be fun, but it honestly is most dangerous. (Otherwise, why should railway companies bother to have a notice printed about it?) So I hope you avoided this, for quite apart from the danger, it is terribly bad for the eyes.

—To talk quietly if there were other people in your carriage. Mother may have loved what you were saying, but there's a chance that other people were terribly bored. On the other hand, I hope you didn't whisper a lot, for that is almost as bad. I don't suppose for one moment you did either of these things, although I know how easy it is to forget a moments of excitement.



INITIALS ARE SMART

THE more initials we display over ourselves this summer, the smarter we are!

So lucky is the girl with a name like Charlotte Diana Alice Pearl Newman—for she can wear them all!

And one way of sporting initials that are more than just two, is on the buttons to your frock.

You can buy plain wooden buttons from any drapery shop very cheaply, and you can then paint your initials on to these—one initial on one button.

Or if you'd prefer to be a bit more original you can make your own set of matching buttons—from cork. Either corks from a bottle, or an old cork table mat.

Cut the cork into squares or circles about a quarter of an inch thick, then paint your initials on them. Next jab two holes through the cork with a skewer or knitting needle and the button can be sewn into place.

Not only will these buttons evoke a lot of admiration from your family and friends, but also they will make you new friends, for what a marvellous opening they will make for conversation with those nice people you will meet on holiday!

TO HOLD YOUR HANKY



I EXPECT you have a little pocket in your school bloomers for holding your hankie during term-time.

But on holiday—if you haven't a pocket in every summer dress—where to tuck the thing is a problem.

Unless you make yourself this very novel hankie-pocket, which is shaped like a swing-boat straight from the fair.

Cut two pieces of bright-coloured material to the shape of a boat and stitch them together with silk. Then embroider your initials in running stitch on the front side.

Sew two pieces of cord to the boat and knot these, sewing a pin at the knot.

This now fastens to the bodice of your frock in the very latest fob-fashion, and your hankie peeps coyly out.

(Continued from page 11)

half a dozen places. Even as she ran there came up a fresh tremor. A wail went up from the people.

Celeste, stretching forth her hands, spoke.

With that action something very like a miracle happened. For, as if they had never been the tremors ceased. People who had been flung on their faces wonderingly rose up. And then a great cry arose.

"Salasta! Salasta! Salasta has performed a miracle!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Babs.

"Salasta! Hail, Salasta!"

Celeste stood, shaking and dumb, realising, like Babs, what had happened. So far from performing a miracle, her appearance among the people had just coincided with a cessation of the earth tremors; and because of that coincidence the people thought of her own powers she had stilled the tremors!

She stepped back. But Chikka, quickly seizing the opportunity, had jumped forward. Wildly waving his arms in the air, he was shouting to the people. What words, Babs could not understand. But suddenly there was another thunderous cry:

"Salasta! Salasta is great! Salasta is our saviour! Salasta shall free us from the terror of Setti-Shimbi!" it went up.

"But look here——" Celeste cried.

"Silence!" hissed Chikka. "Silence! Cannot you see the advantage is on your side? Can't you see that in the people's eyes you have worked a miracle? Let all be peace lest they banish you and your friends at once! Bring on the flowers!" he cried to the wondering serving maids. "Salasta, act now as though nothing had happened!"

Celeste gulped. She turned towards Babs. But Babs nodded. For Babs, scanning the faces below, had made out the ragged, hooded robe of the beggar she knew to be Jack Trevlyn.

"Jack is here, Celeste," whispered Babs. "See where the light shines on the bottom steps? He is in front of it—the man with the hood. See him?"

"I see him!" Celeste muttered.

"Have you the key?"

"Yes!"

"Then," Babs breathed, "when you throw the flowers, throw the key to Jack!"

Celeste nodded. Below, the populace still proceeded thunderously to acclaim her. Then there was a trumpet's blast, the sound of music in the air. And while Chikka, trembling and perspiring, stepped back, six serving maids, each carrying a huge basket of flowers, entered. The mob seemed to go mad then.

Dancing and singing, the serving maids came towards Celeste. Quickly they placed the flowers at her feet. Chikka, raising a trembling hand, pointed.

"Throw quickly! Throw!" he jabbered.

Celeste plunged her hand into the basket. A shout went up as she flung the first handful of flowers. Like confetti they floated on the air. Scores of extended hands rose to receive them. Another shout went up as another handful floated down.

"Hail Little Khem!" Celeste shouted. "Now, Jack," she added in English, "catch this!"

And with a swift look towards Babs, she inserted a rose in the hole of the key and threw.

Babs rushed towards the edge of the platform. A howl went up from the

crowd. A surge was made towards that single floating tower. A hundred arms shot upwards in the air. It seemed for a moment that Jack had disappeared. It was lost—lost!

Now the key, falling steadily, was nearing the mob. Babs held her breath. It was torture to look at it. And then suddenly she gave a wild leap of excitement as a fierce figure leapt forward. Quickly a hand streaked upwards towards the flower, snatching it. For a moment the man who had caught it looked up. He nodded.

"Jack—Jack—he's got it!" Babs gasped.

The next instant she was flung on to her face. And a great, frantic shriek rent the air as once more the volcano surged and heaved.

The Impossible Task!



"SALASTA! Salasta!" went up in a terrified cry. "Salasta, stop Setti-Shimbi!"

Babs staggered to her feet, her face white. The temple seemed to have gone dark suddenly, and, looking towards the sky, she gasped as she saw that the hole of the crater was full of a fine rain-like dust. In terror she looked round for Celeste. A scream left her lips as she saw her chum lying prostrate a few yards away.

Celeste, flung off her balance by that last tremor, had knocked her head and had collapsed.

As Babs ran towards her, a groan went up from the fear-stricken crowd. "Salasta is hurt! Salasta has no power!" they were crying. "The vengeance of Setti-Shimbi falls upon our queen as it falls upon us! It is an omen! We are to be destroyed!"

Then Chikka, while Babs bent down by her collapsed chum, stepped forward. With his face twitching, he hailed the people.

"Salasta has power! Salasta," he cried desperately, "shall perform the miracle! Peace, peace, my children! Have faith; have courage! Remember the prophecy of Khem—that when Salasta would come from the sea, Salasta should also quell the fiery breath of Setti-Shimbi so that he should trouble us no more!"

"When? When?" clamoured the populace.

"To-morrow," Chikka promised. "To-morrow, after the festival of fire. To-morrow Salasta shall quell Setti-Shimbi! Salasta shall breathe upon Setti-Shimbi and Setti-Shimbi will be no more. Listen! This I tell you; should that promise be not fulfilled, Salasta, with her slaves, shall go to the Land of No Return!"

There was a roar, a shout.

Babs, only half understanding what all the talk was about, was desperately attending to Celeste. Celeste's eyes opened; she gave a shiver.

"Babs——"

"Celeste?"

"O.K. now—I—I think," Celeste said unsteadily and rose to her feet to be immediately pounced on by Chikka. "Look here——"

"Quickly! Come—show yourself!" Chikka hissed. "Let them see that you are alive! And say to them, 'I will do as my high priest promised!'"

"But what have you promised?" Celeste asked.

"No matter—now! I will tell later! Speak to them—quickly!"

Celeste blinked. But the people were crying out. Torn between hope and terror, it was plain they were in an

ugly mood; plain that they must be appeased. She raised a hand. Immediately there was silence.

"My people——"

A roar.

"What my high priest has said, so shall it be!" Celeste announced in the Khemish tongue; and then turned again to Chikka. "What is that you have promised?"

"That to-morrow you shall put out Setti-Shimbi!" Chikka said.

"What?"

"And this," Chikka said seriously, "you must do, lest you and your friends be banished!"

Celeste looked staggered.

"But are you mad?" she cried. "How can I, a girl, put out a volcano? No, no, I will not let them believe it!" she cried. "I will not!" And then turned again to the people. "My people——"

A cry. A shout. Then suddenly a figure was seen cleaving a way forward. It reached the foot of the steps.

It was the beggar.

"Salasta! Hail Salasta!" he cried. "Salasta, if so unworthy a one as myself may have speech with you, let me have that speech now! For I am not a beggar as you see; I am a prophet, and I may do those things which may help you to carry out the will of the gods!"

A mutter arose. Chikka glared.

"Let that beggar be thrown out!" he cried. "Guards——"

"No, no!" Celeste cried. She held up a hand. "Dare touch that man," she cried furiously, "and Setti-Shimbi shall take his revenge! Prophet, come!" she said imperiously. "Come hither and give me the message thou hast for my royal ears!" And while the people muttered, not understanding, but still a little awed by the appearance of the "prophet," Jack came slowly up the stairs and bowed low.

"Cheer up!" he murmured. "Don't fret, Celeste! See that painted cross on the wall over there?"

"I do!" Celeste said, while the crowd looked on, wondering that their queen and the prophet conversed in such a strange language; and Chikka, his brow puckered, glared suspiciously.

"To-morrow," Jack murmured, "there will be fireworks here before the procession to the volcano starts! Don't be surprised at anything that might happen, but keep on your toes. Tell the others to listen for the sound of a gong. It will sound from beneath the cross on the wall, and when it goes tell them to run like the merry dickens to that spot! That's all!"

He bowed again; but Babs, who had heard those words, confusedly stared. Jack, straightening up, called something now in Arabic, and from the crowd below went up a cheer. Celeste nodded.

"It is well!" she said simply.

A Dash for Freedom!



THERE were no more shocks of an alarming nature during the night, but now and again there was a slight tremor, and for most of the night a subterranean rumbling went on. Not one of the Cliff House party, despite their overpowering weariness, slept.

As a small concession, the chums that night were allowed to have Celeste's royal apartment, Celeste telling Chikka that if there was to be the remotest chance of performing the gigantic miracle on the morrow she could not do so without the aid of the white girls.

Despite their surroundings, however, it was a glum crowd who watched the night out. The situation was so terrifying, so fantastic.

"Our one chance—and our only chance," Jemima said, "is to do what Jack asks. Wait for the gong, then run like merry old helter-skelter for the cross on the wall! But what, perchance, is going to happen there?"

"When all the people of Khem will be present," Mabs observed.

"And when we," Babs put in, "will be on the high platform, watching Chikka doing his flaming magic stuff! Oh dear!"

They stared at each other, quivering hope and yet despair in all their faces. If they only knew what Jack intended to do! If they could only be sure that all would come right!

Morning dawned—a dark, murky morning. With fine volcanic dust filling the air, choking their mouths and ears and nostrils, they waited anxiously. Whispers were going around that Setti-Shimbi himself was at last on fire, and that plans for the procession must be

In a helpless group they stood, wiping hot dust from their eyes.

What was going to happen? Or would anything happen?

Then there was another shout, and from the opposite end of the platform Chikka appeared, followed by two high priests. He stood before the throne of Celeste. Abruptly he stopped, placing a cone-like object on the floor.

"I guess this is all part of the ceremony!" Leila breathed.

"I sus-say, that looks lul-like a fire-work!" Bessie stuttered.

Chikka, stepping forward once again, put a flame to the cone. And while he did so a great cry arose, as from the cone a sudden stream of white smoke flashed up. Dense smoke filled the air at once, choking the chums so that the tears started to their eyes.

But Jack—where was he? No sign.

Another cone, larger than the first, was lit, while the mob coughed and blinked. Then a third—and yet a fourth, till five cones were smoking freely, so that the atmosphere became so

flash out, and they heard the click it made as it connected with the real high priest's jaw.

Chikka, as if kicked by a mule, went rolling down the steps.

At that moment, from somewhere near the painted cross on the wall, sounded the sudden booming of a gong.

"Our cue!" cried Jemima. "Come on!"

"But Celeste—"

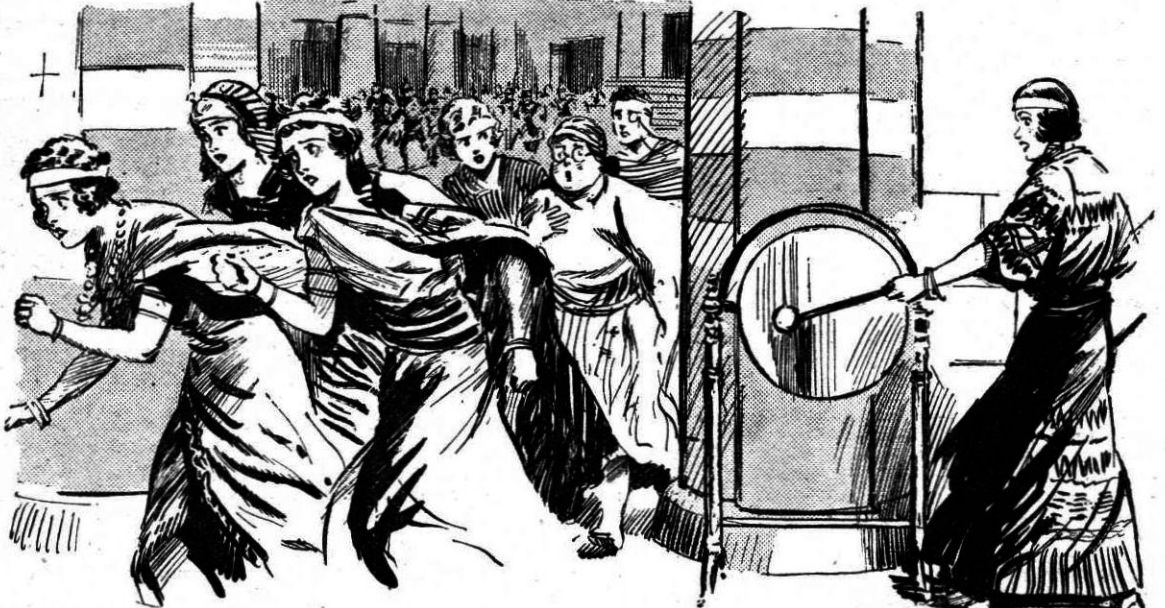
"Look!"

They turned—just in time to see Jack grabbing Celeste's hand. No time for more then. With one accord they fled. Even Bessie needed no help in that fateful moment, and the crowd, blinded by the smoke screen, had not seen what had happened above them. They reached the ground where people were coughing and gasping in breathless amazement, too blinded to tell friend from foe.

Clang went the gong again.

"Come on!" cried Mabs.

The chums pushed a way through the crowd. And what a shout suddenly arose from them as they saw Marjorie Hazel-



THERE was Marjorie, standing beside the gong, as they rushed through the gateway. "Quickly, girls!" she cried. "Oh, quickly!" Behind them came the sound of furious pursuit.

hastened lest it showered its fiery death over the whole island.

They heard rumours from beyond of houses having collapsed; they learned that the huge bluestone quarry had already fallen in.

A breakfast of fruit was served, but flavoured with volcanic dust; even Bessie had no appetite for it. Into the temple the people could already be heard tramping.

There was a queer stillness in the air, and the volcano cone seemed to be radiating heat.

Hardly anyone spoke.

Then suddenly the door was flung open. A guard stood there, his clothes blackened, face bedewed with perspiration. He said some words to Celeste, who rose to her feet, beckoning her chums to follow her. Tensing, they went out, coughing in the rain-like dust. A terrific yell greeted Celeste's appearance as she stepped on to the platform.

Slowly she went to her throne. There, composed but pale, she seated herself. The chums made as if to follow; but the guard motioned them back.

thick that it could hardly be endured. Still no sign of Jack.

Where—oh, where was he?

Babs, through the choking smoke, looked round. In another few minutes surely the procession would start? Something must have gone wrong with Jack's plan—

Came a sudden shout from the end of the platform. For a moment the smoke seemed to clear, and the chums jumped in amazement as they saw the figure, gesticulating fiercely, that was rushing along towards the throne.

It was Chikka!

Chikka—but Chikka was already here!

A great cry burst from Clara.

"My hat! That's Jack! It's Jack, letting off smoke flares from the Gloriana! And he's caught!"

"No!" cried Babs. "Look!"

For the disguised Jack had wheeled. In time he saw the rushing figure of Chikka hidden from the crowd below by the smoke which was still pouring from the cones. They saw him twist. They saw suddenly that ever-ready fist of his

dené, also attired in a slave costume, standing by a gate in the wall. A gong was on its stand beside her.

"Quickly, girls!" she cried. "Oh, quickly!"

They pelted in, just as a frenzied shriek went up from somewhere in the crowd.

"Stop them! Stop them! The slaves have kidnapped Salasta!"

"That's Chikka!" Leila gasped. "Oh, golly! Where's Jack?"

"Here I am!" Jack said, and with Celeste before him, came running forward. "Good girls! Marjorie, what about Clara & Co.?"

"In the tunnel!" Marjorie cried.

"Good egg! Quickly, Chikka's giving the alarm! In girls—in, and run for your lives!" he cried as a furious howl went up from behind them. "I'll close the gate!"

The chums quickly nodded. What had happened? How, in the name of all that was marvellous, had Jack accomplished this? But there was no time to ask questions then—no time to falter. They heard the gate clang;

ahead they saw shadowy forms. A figure loomed out of the darkness.

"Babs, that you?"
 "Clara, yes! Mr. Margesson there?"
 "All of us!" Clara chuckled. "Jack got us out of it by impersonating Chikka! Here's a torch!" she added, pressing forward. "Quickly now!"

"Hurry!" Jack gasped.
 "Oh dud-dear!" Bessie gasped. "I sus-say, give me a hand!"

Clara grabbed one arm; Babs the other. They ran, their feet pattering on the floor.

Jack, panting, brought up the rear. "Get on!" he urged. "My stars, lucky I found this place! It's an old lava passage," he added, "made when the volcano was active, and it comes out in the passage near the cove. Gosh, the beggars are after us! Don't let up, girls!"

The "beggars" were after them, for from the end of the tunnel came shouts of fury. Babs looked back. Flaming torches were reddening the old lava passage, and behind them was a charging crowd.

On, on!
 Panting, gasping, they ran. Behind them the Khemites followed. On, on, until at length, when it seemed they had run miles, they saw a grey opening in front of them. Fifty yards in the rear, the foremost of the Khemites sprinted.

"One last burst!" encouraged Jack.
 They sprinted. A spear hissed harmlessly above their heads. Then at last they were out of the tunnel, emerging in the open pass. Bessie, all out, gave a shuddering moan and collapsed.

"Oh, my hat! What now?" Clara gasped. "Bessie! Bessie!"
 "Gig-go on!" gasped Bessie.

Nearer, nearer the sound of footsteps from the passage. Jack yelled.
 "Get on! Get Bessie away!" he urged.

"But you—"
 "I've got the tunnel entrance mined! Now the fuse—the fuse!"—and while they gaspingly tugged Bessie on out of the way, he groped in the grass. "Go!" he yelled, and even as he said the word a spear flew from the opening.

On rushed the party, helping Bessie along. Then—
 Crash!

The earth seemed to open and split. A great red flame rushed up before their eyes. Masses of earth and stone crashed down. They were smothered in dust, flung against each other, then Jack's grimy form came looming out of the dust.

"O. K.!" he said faintly. "There must be hundreds of tons of rock blocking the entrance—a jolly good job I thought of dynamiting it yesterday! Come on, though! Let's get back to the Gloriana before they start following down the road. To the shore."

They lifted Bessie. Bearing her, they staggered down the pass. They reached the shore—and there, what joy! For there was Celeste's motor-launch; there was the Gloriana's fast motor-boat.

They climbed in. Ten minutes later they were on board the yacht, and Mr. Margesson was giving orders for full steam ahead.

Babs stood by the rails, feeling still a little shaky.

"I—I don't think I shall ever forget that run through the tunnel, girls!" she confessed. "I didn't know I could run so fast!"

Clara chuckled faintly.
 "Me, too," she nodded. "I bet that we'd all have broken records if we'd been on the running track at Cliff House—even old Bess!"

There was a chuckle, and Babs

glanced to where the plump duffer had collapsed into a chair, puffing and sighing. Babs smiled tenderly. Dear old Bess! Duffer she might be, but Babs was remembering how her plump chum had called on the others to go on in that frantic dash through the tunnel.

Scared enough in the ordinary way at trifles, Bessie sometimes surprised them all when the big occasion arose.

"Oh, I say!" Marjorie Hazeldene's voice suddenly rang out. "Look—it's Chikka!"

All gazes instantly flashed to the shore.

True enough!
 A score of excited figures, headed by their old enemy, Chikka, had suddenly appeared over a rise, dashing down to the shore.

Jack smiled grimly.
 "Must have come round by the road," he commented. "But you're just a bit too late, my dear high priest!"

"Could they get boats?" asked Marjorie, rather anxiously.

Jack shrugged.
 "Maybe they have boats," he answered. "But they'll never catch us now. Listen, our engines are on the move."

They all felt then a slight tremor running round the length of the yacht.

"And now," Clara said as the Gloriana slowly steamed round, "tell us how you managed it, Jack!"

Jack Trevlyn grinned.
 "Not hard!" he said. "You see, I speak Arabic. Having busted the wireless, it was up to me to do something. One of Chikka's charming followers tried to knife me, and when he came to

he was so terrified of what I might do, that I hadn't much difficulty in finding out all I wanted to know about the island. I learned from him the secret of the lava tunnel. I learned from him all about the rites and customs, and what would take place."

"Gee!" breathed Leila.

"And aided by this garment which I took from him, it wasn't very difficult to disguise myself as a beggar. Knowing the entrance of the lava passage, it wasn't hard either for me to get into the temple. There I saw Chikka, and hearing about the procession of fire, hit upon the wheeze for impersonating him. But first I had to have the key of his room to nobble the old ruffian!"

Celeste drew a deep breath. Her eyes were shining.
 "And then?"

"Well, having got the key and laid my plans last night, I came back to the Gloriana and told the wheeze to Marjorie. Marjorie agreed to help by coming along to bang the gong—I managed to snaffle a slave costume for her, so that if she was spotted no one would suspect her."

"But the priest you captured—where is he?" cried Babs.

"In my cabin! By and by I shall put him adrift in a boat so that he can sail back to his pals! And that," Jack said with a grin, "is about all!"

"Except for a whacking great vote of thanks for old Jack!" cried Clara.
 "Good old brudderkins!"
 And "good old Jack!" was the general cry.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

WILD ANIMALS WERE HER PETS— AN ARMY OF LEOPARDS HER BODYGUARD!

That was Jungle Jess—the most unusual and yet most fascinating of all the remarkable characters whom Barbara Redfern & Co. have so far met on their thrilling quest for ancient treasure.

Pirates' Isle is reached at last, but it is Jungle Jess who bars the intrepid little party's way to success. For Jungle Jess, resenting their intrusion into her home, and keenly distrustful of them—especially of that strange girl Jemima Carstairs—is determined to drive them off the island. Queerly enough, she takes a liking to one of their number, gentle, sympathetic Marjorie Hazeldene, and it is upon this unusual friendship that the little party's success depends.

You'll love every word of Hilda Richards' latest holiday story, so don't miss it, will you? Order next week's SCHOOLGIRL well in advance.



JUNGLE JESS OF PIRATES' ISLE!

Further absorbing chapters of our colourful Western story—

GIRL RIDER OF THE BLUE HILLS!



By
**DORIS
LESLIE**

FOR NEW READERS.

FAY THORNTON lives on the Flying H Ranch in Texas with her father, ROBERT THORNTON, and her two little brothers, Ted and Bobbie. The ranch is small and not too prosperous. The Thorntons have powerful enemies in John Hampton, wealthy owner of a neighbouring ranch, and his daughter, Lucille. Hampton and his daughter do all they can to foster a rumour that Mr. Thornton is a cattle thief. This rumour starts to die down, however. But fresh trouble comes to the Flying H when the main water hole for the cattle dries up. Three men have to be hired to help overcome this difficulty. Fortunately Mr. Thornton is able to sell some cattle, and thus get sufficient money to pay these men. Fay has just seen that the money is safe, and is about to leave the ranch-house to ride into town, not aware that through the window Lucille Hampton has seen where the money is hidden, and is planning to strike a blow against the Thornton family.

(Now read on.)

Fay is Suspicious, but—

“WELL, so long, boys!” said Fay Thornton, with a cheery wave to her two young brothers. “I shan’t be any longer than I can help, and when I get back I may have some surprises for you.”

Bobbie and Ted, industriously making paper flags at the big table in the Flying H kitchen, looked up excitedly, Ted, being a little over nine, attempted to conceal his feelings with a restrained:

“Gee, that’s swell, sis!”

But curly-headed Bobbie, three years Ted’s junior, always wore his heart on his sleeve.

“Yiiiipeeee!” he shrieked, in perfect imitation of the cowboys, at the same time showering Ted with paste from a wildly waved brush. “Rah, rah, rah! Good old Fay! Please, can I have a kiwi that grunts?”

Fay patted his cheek in passing.

“Well, that wouldn’t be a surprise then, would it?” she laughed. “But I’ll see. Bye-bye!”

And she gaily strode out of the yard and went across to the little corral to

saddle Starlight, her pony, for the ride into the near-by township of Redland Gulch.

Her face was radiant, her eyes asparkle. Oh, gloriously happy did Fay feel this sunny afternoon. Everything had undergone such a wonderful transformation these last few hours. For the first time for days and days they had money to spend—and money to spare.

A hundred and fifty dollars in a vase in the kitchen—more than enough to pay the wages of the three labourers who were helping to construct the all-important canal to the dried-up water-hole and thus save the thirsty cattle.

And now, here she was, armed with more money, setting off for a simply grand shopping expedition.

A Bid to Steal the Money Which Meant so Much to the Flying H Ranch—And Only Little Bobbie and Ted Could Prevent it.

But Fay’s ecstatic feelings came to an abrupt check as she rode out of the yard and on to the dusty, heat-shimmering trail. Half-screened by one of the trees that bordered a steep slope was another rider—another girl.

“Lucille!” Fay breathed, her lips setting.

And then, turning Starlight’s head in the opposite direction to which she had intended, she rode straight up to her enemy.

“Afternoon,” she said, nodding curtly. Her eyes scanned Lucille Hampton’s disconcerted face. “Pretty close to our ranch, aren’t you?”

“And why not?” demanded Lucille, with a sudden, nonchalant smile. “The trail’s public property. Anyone can stop here if they like.”

“Trying to conceal themselves?” Fay challenged quickly.

She sought an answer in Lucille’s shifty blue eyes. But the girl was completely in control of herself now.

“Keep on guessing, if it amuses you,” she answered, and with a sneering laugh rode off down the trail, making in the direction of the Blue Hills.

Fay stared after her, and then shrugged.

“Come on, old boy,” she said, and headed Starlight for the town. “I guess there’s nothing to worry about.”

But Fay, unfortunately, did not realise everything. The moment she was out of sight, Lucille returned to the ranch, dismounted, led her horse across the yard as quietly as she could, and, having tethered him to one of the bars of the corral, and assured herself that no one was about, strode towards the little porch.

There was an exultant, eager smile on her face. Those two young brats were by themselves now. It wouldn’t take long to get them out of the way; it would take even less time to get hold of that money!

For Lucille knew all about the hundred and fifty dollars hidden in a vase on the kitchen mantelpiece. She had seen Fay examining it. And instantly she had realised what it meant to the Thorntons. With it, they could save their cattle; without it, they would be ruined!

Humming lightly to announce her approach, Lucille breezed into the kitchen. She was smiling now, so winningly, so endearingly.

“Oh, hallo, boys!” she exclaimed, halting behind them, a hand on their shoulders. “All on your ownsome? My,” she went on, looking at the product of their combined efforts, “work for the social! Good chaps! Those are topping little flags! And did you make them all this afternoon?”

“Oooo, yes,” said round-eyed Bobbie, becoming rather proud of himself. “And we would have made a lot more only Ted upset the pastepot.”

“Well, you chucked—I mumm-mean, you threw paste all over the table,” Ted retorted. “But—” And he glanced inquiringly at Lucille. He and Bobbie knew little about Lucille; they just looked upon her as a neighbour. “Did you want to see Fay?”

Lucille nodded, still smiling her best. Oh, but it didn’t matter if Fay was out, she declared lightly. She’d wait, and—why, she’d got it! How about a

game in the meantime? Then she'd help them make more flags.

Nothing loath, Bobbie and Ted downed "tools." Thrilled at having a brand-new and extremely important playmate, they were clay in the hands of the schemer. She had but to suggest a game of hide-and-seek—or "Cowboys and Rustlers," as romantically minded Bobbie preferred to call it—and away the boys scampered to conceal themselves.

Lucille, heart thumping, waited until they had vanished around a corner of the house, and then darted over to the mantelpiece.

She seized the vase. Excitement almost made her drop it, but tightening her grip, calming herself, she drew out the notes, put the vase back, and dived for the door.

Then, on the very threshold, she came to an abrupt halt.

Oh, confound those kids! What the dickens were they playing at? Here they were rushing towards her, yelling out that they'd thought of a better idea. So far they hadn't spotted her. But if they did—if they saw what was in her hand—

Frantically, Lucille dodged back. Agitation made her drop the notes to the floor, and a breeze scattered them across the room. By the time she'd panic-strickenly gathered them up, she was back over by the mantelpiece. No chance to stuff them in her pocket; no chance to do anything except hug the money to her chest and keep her back to the door. Then, a moment later—

"Cooee!" piped Bobby, excitedly bursting in. "I sus-say, you needn't hide your eyes any longer. Ted an' me have thought of a mighty fine wheeze, haven't we, Ted?"

"Sure! It's much better, really, Aunt Lucille—"

Lucille, shielding her money-filled hands with her body, half-turned, managing to force a disarming smile.

"Shan't-shan't be a minute, boys," she said. And then, spotting the object that stood next to the vase, her eyes lit up. "I—I was just admiring this money-box. Isn't it dinky? Yours, Bobbie?"

Covertly transferring the money to one shaking hand, Lucille took hold of a little wooden money-box, in the form of a house, the roof of which opened on hinges to allow the insertion of money.

"It is now, I guess," said Ted. He thrust back a wisp of unruly hair. "I had it once, but I gave it to young Bob when dad got me another. But, I say, hurry up, Aunt Lucille. We want you to go and hide!"

Lucille slowly lifted the lid of the money-box; tremblingly, scarce daring to breathe, she stuffed the notes inside.

"All right. Only I do think, you know," she added, "that you ought to shut your eyes. I might want to hide in one of the rooms, mightn't I?"

That possibility hadn't occurred to the boys. So, side by side, they screwed up their eyes and started to count.

Lucille became galvanised into activity.

Dragging off her scarf, she draped it over the money-box, and then bolted!

Lucille is Too Clever!

ONCE in the sun-drenched yard, Lucille sent chickens scuttling and squawking in alarm as she raced for the corral, where her fine chestnut was tethered. Her cheeks were flushed with victory; her eyes gleaming.

Done it—done it, after all!

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

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS.—I haven't very much space this week, as you can see—we Editors have to make do with what's to spare, you know—so I hope you'll forgive me if I straightforwardly tell you about next week's superb Cliff House story—

"JUNGLE JESS OF PIRATES' ISLE!"

What an intriguing, romantic title! And what a fascinating and unusual character Jungle Jess proves to be!

A girl Tarzan, who has lived all her life in the jungle; whose home is above the tree-tops; whose friends are the wild beasts; and who has, for her special pets, an army of leopards!

And this girl of the forest, encountering Babs & Co., is responsible for the chums experiencing a most amazing series of adventures; adventures which, thrilling in themselves, also threaten to ruin the intrepid little party's quest for pirate treasure.

You simply mustn't miss Hilda Richards' latest holiday story. It is quite the most enthralling of the whole series so far. Order your SCHOOLGIRL at once, and thus also make sure of further grand chapters of "Girl Rider of the Blue Hills," another delightful COMPLETE story of "Cousin George and 'The Imp,'" and more of Patricia's interesting and useful pages.

And now, before I bid you au revoir for another week, here are some

LITTLE LETTERS.

"A Hopeful Reader" (Bolton).—Many thanks for your suggestion. I am afraid, though, that it would not be fair to other readers to adopt it at the moment, because they prefer our present arrangement of stories. But I do appreciate your interest in our paper. Write again soon, won't you?

Moir Lawrence (Perthshire).—The weather in London at the moment of writing is—well, the sort you just want to forget, if you can. But by the time you read this reply, Moira, it may—and let's all hope it actually will—be really summery again. I shall look forward to another letter one day. Best wishes!

Eliza Gordon & Co.—I'm very much afraid, dear readers, that it is not possible to grant your request at the moment, but if sufficient other readers should desire such a change to take place you may be sure it will be done. Write again soon—each of you! And remember that I shall be only too pleased to send you a reply.

Dorothy.—I hope the right Dorothy will realise that this reply is for her. Perhaps she'll be quite certain if I ask how her little budgerigar is getting on. He is a clever little fellow, isn't he? I'm quite sure you must be very proud of him.

And now, all of you, bye-bye until next Saturday.

With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

Goodness! Wouldn't the Thorntons be sick? And wouldn't her father be elated? Their enemies were at her mercy now. All she had to do was to drop another hint to those three expert labourers working down on the Flying H range, suggesting even more directly than she had done before that they weren't likely to get paid for their services, and the fat would be in the fire.

If they asked for money on account—and Lucille knew she could induce them to do that—there'd be no money available. The men would leave, naturally; and without their expert aid the work of constructing a canal from the stream to the dried water-hole would never be completed, in time.

"Which will mean good-bye to your cattle, Mr. Thornton," was Lucille's callously sneered words as she fumbled with her horse's reins.

No wonder Lucille was aglow with triumph! But not yet had she escaped.

It was young Bobbie's fault. Bobbie, like most youngsters, couldn't see much fun in hide-and-seek unless you had some idea of where your victim was hiding; so, although his face had been screwed up while he counted and while Lucille dived from the room, his eyes hadn't been entirely shut.

The moment Lucille had disappeared, a very hazy sort of figure to his partly obscured view, he opened his eyes wide. Lucille had fumbled with something by the mantelpiece. What? And then, as he looked, Bobbie gave a jump.

"Ooo! Here, Ted, I sus-say—" he shrilled, grabbing the elder boy's arm. "Hi, stop foolin'! Open your eyes! Listen! Wh-what do you think? She's taken my money-box! Lul-lul-look!"

Ted, quickly looking up, took one glance at the empty space on the mantelpiece, and then gasped.

"Golly! So she has—"

"She's—she's thieved it—rustled it!" Bobbie hooted angrily.

"I dunno about that," returned Ted. "She may be playin' a joke. But we'll soon find out. Kimmon!"

And the youngsters charged out into the yard. Lucille, having untethered her horse, was just preparing to mount, when they raced up. Desperately she hitched the money-box, still covered by her scarf, under her arm. With a strained sort of smile she looked at them.

"I'm terribly sorry, boys, but we'll have to play games another time. I've just remembered something I've simply got to do right away."

But Bobbie wasn't to be denied. He planted himself between Lucille and the horse, a dogged look on his chubby face.

"Please I want my money-box back," he said, holding out his hand.

Lucille affected to look utterly astonished.

"Your money-box?" She laughed. "But I haven't got it—"

"You have, too!" Bobbie hooted indignantly. "You took it! And I know where it is! There!" He pointed.

"Under that scarf! I jolly well told Ted you'd rustled it, and now I know you did! Give it to me! It's mine! I'll tell Fay! I—I'll tell daddy—"

Suddenly filled with childish frenzy, he sprang forward, and, before the startled Lucille could dodge, had snatched at the scarf.

"There it is!" he shrilled triumphantly. "You have got it! Ted—quick! Fay! Daddy!" he yelled at the top of his voice; then: "Oooooo!"

He ended with a shrill cry of fright; for Lucille, frantic with rage and

anxiety, had given him a brutal push in the chest; then, even as he went sprawling over backwards—even before Ted, angry and concerned, could try to catch his young brother—Lucille had pivoted round.

A desperate leap and she was swinging on to her horse.

"**T**HET TH' lot, Miss Thornton? Waal, it's sure as much as yuh kin manage. Rather a little too much, I'm figgering. Like me to get th' lad to pop th' bigger parcels in on his way home?"

And old Mark Vallance—the fat, prosperous-looking owner of Vallance's Stores, in the High Street of Redland Gulch—beamed across the counter at Fay Thornton.

Fay—both arms clasping several enormous parcels, so that her chin could scarcely be poked over the top of them—smiled happily.

Goodness! She felt almost dizzy with happiness. What a contrast! What a simply staggering difference between this kindly, considerate attention and the curt manner in which she had been refused their usual supplies only a few days ago!

But then things themselves were different. To begin with, she had money to put down on the counter; she herself had become Redland Gulch's very own heroine since her rescue of little Tina Mason from the cattle stampede; and the suspicion regarding daddy was dying down.

"Why, that's mighty kind of you, Mr. Vallance!" she said, her eyes sparkling. "My saddle-bags are nearly full already."

With clothes for daddy and the boys; with surprises in the form of a brand-new pipe for Mr. Thornton, a toy kiwi that grunted for Bobbie, and a packet of foreign stamps for Ted; and her own dainty frock for the great social event in two days' time which she was organising.

Eagerly Fay dumped the parcels on the counter. She wanted to get home; wanted to distribute all her other purchases, and try on once more that thrilling dress of hers. A laughing word of good-bye to old Mark, and she was gaily stepping out over the sidewalk to the wooden rail where her range pony, Starlight, patiently stood waiting for her, the reins trailing over his head.

"Gee up, old man!" she cried, springing into the saddle. "Let's break all records for this trip, shall we?"

"Sure!" Starlight seemed to agree, for he streaked away up the dusty High Street and on to the narrow trail like a racehorse!

Half a mile after mile slipped past. Fay mused as she rode.

How were Douglas and the cowboys faring with the work of the canal? Douglas Lessiter had ridden back from town with the dynamite they needed to blast through the ridge of rock. Once that obstacle had been overcome it was a clear path to the stream. Only time stood in their way then.

"An' I guess with those men from Ainsworth helping, time won't beat us, after all," Fay mused. "We'll manage it! We'll save the cattle!"

With a clatter and series of loud "whoopies!" Fay rode into the yard of the Flying H. To her surprise, the youngsters did not come tearing out to meet her. Thinking they were probably playing a jape, she unfastened her saddle-bags and, carrying them into the kitchen and dropping them on to a chair, tiptoed to the boys' bed-room.

No sign of them. No sign of them in any of the rooms. Strange. The kitchen table was still littered with paper, scissors, pins, and a few flags they had already made for the social flag-collection, but of Bobbie and Ted themselves there was no trace at all!

And then Fay's eyes lit up. Ah! The vegetable patch, their favourite playground. But—no! That, too, was deserted. And when she ran to the corral, a glance down the long slope to the range, where her father and Douglas & Co. were standing in a group at one end of the digging, showed her that the youngsters weren't there either.

Fay's face became very white. She bit her lip.

"Oh gee," she gasped. "What—what ever's happened to them?"

A Demand for Money!

PRESENTLY Fay smiled, a wry smile of self criticism that developed into quite a little chuckle.

"Stupid!" she called herself. "Jumpy little stupid! The boys have gone up the trail the other way to have a game. That's what's happened."

Of course it was. Fay sighed with relief. They'd done the same thing more than once before, although they were forbidden to because of a landslide some months ago. But all risk of that was over now. They were safe enough—

"The little monkeys, leaving their work and giving me the fright of my life," Fay smiled, and went indoors to unpack.

It was a delightful occupation. Everything she laid out in its appropriate place, daddy's pipe on the mantelpiece, his shirts on his bed, Bobbie's new dungarees and grunting kiwi on his own bed in the next room, and Ted's new shoes and foreign stamps on his.

Then—what palpitations seized Fay! The frock, of gorgeous pale blue, with little frills and flounces and a billowing skirt, and the dinkiest wide-brimmed hat to match.

Tremblingly, Fay slipped out of her more serviceable cowgirl breeches and donned those alluring creations, and

there were undies as well. She went to the dressing-table mirror and, radiant-faced tilted it backwards and forwards so that she could see every inch of herself, section by section. At last, she stood still, breathing quickly.

"Oh, it—it's simply—simply—"

"Honey, you'll be the belle of the town!" declared a voice behind her.

"Daddy!" Fay cried. Round she spun, face aglow, and then suddenly went a little red with embarrassment.

"Oh gee, I—I didn't know you were there, daddy," she said. "I—I was just tryin' it on, I guess."

Mr. Thornton's rugged, sun-tanned face was one huge beam of pride and joy as he drew her to him.

"Honey, I've never seen you look so grand. Just—just like yore mother," he said softly. "Aw, it's great to know you've got a real posh rig-out at last."

"Fraid you don't get much chance to wear things like that with all the work you have to do."

Tenderly, he tilted back her head. Fay, laughing happily, reached up on her toes and kissed him.

"Guess I don't often want to wear things like this," she told him. "It makes it all the nicer when I do. I'd far rather be doin' things for you and the boys."

"Where are they, by the way?" her father asked. "They'll be hoppin' mad if they miss the fun."

Fay did not tell her father where she believed the boys had gone. She knew he would probably have scolded them. So vaguely explaining that they were somewhere about—"you know what they are for vanishing, dad"—she asked him what he meant by "the fun."

"Honey we're going to blast that ridge of rock that's holding up our digging of the canal!" he cried, a ring of excitement in his voice. "That's what I came up to tell you. Comin'?"

"Gee, I should say I am!" Fay said excitedly. "You go and saddle up Starlight for me, while I'm changin' again. I won't be a jiffy!"

Fay wasn't. In less than three minutes she and her father were cantering down to the half-finished canal. All save one of the men had withdrawn a safe distance from the now visible ridge of



FRANTICALLY Fay tore to meet her two little brothers. What had happened to them? What had caused them to leave the ranch for so long?

rock, and he, matches in hand, was waiting for the signal from Douglas Lessiter.

Douglas grinned cheerily at Fay. There was no longer any doubt in her mind as to his attitude towards her father. She knew now that, despite his having so recently been a guest at the Hamptons' luxurious ranch, he was their friend, loyally, untiringly striving to help avert disaster from their little home.

"Zero hour, old thing," he said, in his pleasant English voice. "One big bang, and away we go, straight for the jolly old stream!"

"We'd better," came a lugubrious comment from lanky Tiny Shaw, the Flying H foreman. "It'll be a near thing even then to get the hole filled in time for them that steers!"

Fay, glancing towards the distant herd, nodded grimly. Tiny was justified for once in being melancholy.

"O. K.?" came a yell from the man who crouched by the end of long white fuses that ran to the buried sticks of dynamite.

"O. K.!" Douglas shouted back. "Let her go!"

The man lit a match. One, two, three, four times he moved it in front of him, close to the ground, and each time a fuse spluttered into twinkling life. Then he sprang up and raced pell-mell towards them.

All eyes were glued upon those creeping snakes of flame, and the man who had fired them tore on. Then—

Baaaang!

The ground quaked. Great chunks of grassy earth and rock went hurtling into the air. Patteringly, it descended, and even while the patter was still taking place Douglas made for the spot. He halted, stared through the billowing dust, and then waved his hat in glee.

"Done it, boys—done it as easily as cutting a chunk of cheese!"

There came an answering roar of cheers. From now onwards it would be a clear-cut race against time.

Fay would have liked to watch the men resume digging, but there was no time. She must get supper, and for another thing she wanted to see whether her brothers had returned. But as she turned to ride back to the ranch-house, she caught her father's arm.

"Say, daddy," she said, frowning "where's the other Ainsworth fellow?"

For she had noticed for the first time that there were only two labourers present, instead of three, and a vivid picture of Lucille's crafty conversation with them that morning flashed into her mind.

But Mr. Thornton, chuckling, patted her cheek.

"Scarey-boots!" he teased. "Nothin's wrong. Th' fellow rode off to help Douglas bring th' dynamite back, an' durn well lamed his horse! He'll be back soon."

"Gee, I am a scarey-boots!" Fay grinned ruefully; and, pressing her father's arm, she turned Starlight round towards the ranch.

BUT ALMOST at that identical moment Fay's alarm, unknown to her, was being justified. Lucille, having easily given her brothers the slip, had waited impatiently for a chance to get hold of the labourers. And luck played right into her hands!

As she waited at a spot on the trail overlooking the Flying H, one of the labourers rode up. His horse was limping. Lucille used that as an excuse for getting into conversation with him, and then played her real cards.

"By the way, about what I was saying this morning," she said easily. "I mean, about Thornton and your wages. He hasn't got a cent to bless himself with!"

"How do you know?" The man looked startled and concerned.

"That doesn't matter," Lucille said. "But it's the truth. If you don't believe me, just go and ask Thornton for a little money on account, and see what happens."

And then, perceiving that the hint had had the desired effect. Lucille nodded, smiled, wrenched round her horse's head and rode off. Now to see father over by the Two Pines.

"**O**H GEE! Where on earth can they have got to? What ever's happened to them?"

It wasn't often Fay Thornton felt afraid, but she did now as she stood by the entrance to the Flying H yard, glancing up and down the winding trail.

Nearly an hour had dragged by since the blasting of the rock—an hour of growing suspense, for still her young brothers had not returned. It was more than Fay could bear. Briskly she stepped down the trail in the direction of the Blue Hills. For more than a mile she went without seeing a sign of Bobbie and Ted.

And then, quite suddenly, around a bend, she saw them. Overwhelming joy surged into her heart. With a cry she ran forward. But that cry was repeated on a note of new alarm as she saw what had escaped her first of all.

Bobbie was sobbing bitterly, hands pressed to his face. His dungarees were torn; there was a bandage tied around his knee, and he was limping so badly that it was as much as Ted could do to help him along.

Frantically Fay tore to meet him. "Bobbie! Oh, my darling, what ever's happened to you?" she cried, taking him into her arms. Not that there was any need to do that, for, with a choking sob he flung himself at her, and clung there, sobbing and quivering. "There—there, old man! You'll soon be better now. Just let Fay take off this hanky and put a clean one on—just as though you were a wounded soldier. There, now, that's better, isn't it?"

The nasty cut on Bobbie's knee covered by her own spotless handkerchief, in place of the very grubby one which Ted had crudely tied there, Bobbie snuffed his tears away. But he still looked pitifully unhappy, and Ted had a fierce, angry set to his face.

Taking Bobbie into her arms, Fay carried him back, and not until they were in the yard did she voice the question that was gnawing her mind. What had happened?

"It was Lucille Hampton, sis," Ted said wrathfully. "She came here just after you'd gone, an'—an' pinched Bobbie's money-box!"

"What?" Fay ejaculated, astounded. "She—she did, sis!" Bobbie said wretchedly. He sniffed. "An'—an' when we tried to stop her she—she pushed me over and cut my leg, and then rode off. We went after her, but she rode so—so awfu' fast we just couldn't catch her, could we, Ted? And—and now she's got my money-box!" she ended tearfully.

Fay was dumfounded. Lucille's conduct seemed senseless, crazy. But first, to comfort the overwrought

Bobbie—that was fairly easy. A mention of the boys' "surprises," awaiting them in their room, soon did that. Tears and wrath forgotten, they rushed off.

Fay hurried after them—into the kitchen, and there went straight to the mantelpiece. Yes, the money-box was gone all right. She remembered noticing it when looking at the money in the vase, and—and—

"Oh golly!" Fay suddenly panted. White-faced, she snatched up the vase; wide-eyed, she stared into it. Empty! Not a single note left. The inference was startlingly clear. This was the explanation of Lucille's amazing conduct.

She had robbed them of practically every cent they possessed.

TEN MINUTES later.

To Fay Thornton, ten minutes of mental anguish.

The first stunning shock of her discovery having faded, she was filled with a blazing determination to ride hotfoot after Hampton's treacherous daughter. And Fay meant to—just as soon as she could.

But she did not want daddy to know what had happened. He had come in for a brief rest, and a bite to eat. And he had been so happy, so optimistic about the outcome of the work down on the range that Fay hadn't the heart to break the terrible news.

For that reason Bobbie and Ted had to be bribed to keep silent.

But at last Fay drew a deep breath. Forcing herself to smile, she drew off her overall and tossed it to one side.

"I—I reckon I'll have a little ride on Starlight, daddy," she said. "It's a lovely night, and I feel like some exercise."

"Sure, honey!" Fay went out. Once in the yard she sprinted over to the corral. With impatiently trembling hands she clapped a saddle on Starlight.

Somehow she would force Lucille into yielding up that money. Time enough to let daddy know what had happened once the money was recovered; or—Fay's lips compressed—or if that quest was hopeless.

Into the saddle she leaped, gave a gentle tug on the reins, and made for the trail. But at that moment, topping the rise from the range, came three other riders—the labourers from Ainsworth.

Fay reined in. Strange they had deserted their posts as early as this.

"Evenin', boys!" she greeted them. "Anything wrong?"

One man, surly and glowering—the man Lucille had interviewed—answered at once.

"Plenty!" he snapped. "We've come to ask for some money on account."

Fay caught her breath. "On—on account?" she repeated. "But you're not supposed to be paid 'till Saturday. What is it? Don't you trust us?"

"Aw, Miss Thornton, it ain't 'xactly that—" began one of the others; but he was drowned by the first.

"No, we don't! And we ain't doin' another stroke of work, Miss Thornton, until we see the colour of your money, an' have a little in the palm of our hands to help us jog along."

SO Lucille's scheme has succeeded—and Fay must find a way to cope with this fresh problem, or disaster will come to the little ranch. Be sure to read next Saturday's instalment.

Another topping COMPLETE laughter-story featuring that lovable pair—



COUSIN GEORGE AND THE IMP

that he was going to say something really important.

"There is just one other thing," he said. "Work!"

"Oh!"

"And I am going to make you work," added Cousin George. "This afternoon, too."

The Imp sat back in horror, for this afternoon was a half-holiday at her day-school, and she had planned just how to spend it. In fact, a moment before Cousin George had brought up the sorry topic of exams, Hetty had been about to tell him her plans.

"Oh, no, Cousin George! Not this afternoon," she objected.

"This afternoon," he said firmly. "We shall have the house to ourselves, and you can swot hard. I shall be here to give you any advice you need, to help and encourage you, Hetty."

At that moment Nellie appeared.

"Oh, Miss Hetty," said Nellie, "I've ironed that frock for you! Looks as though the weather will hold for the garden-party."

"Hem!" said Hetty, giving her a warning glance.

Too late! Cousin George looked up sharply.

"Garden-party! What garden-party is this?" he demanded.

The Imp sighed faintly, and then told all.

"It's just a garden-party that one of the girls at school is giving—at least, her people are," she said. "It should be awfully jolly. And I've been invited. I can take a boy friend, too," she added. "If you weren't swotting I— Still, perhaps Bob Biggs—"

Cousin George thumped the table.

"Hetty," he exclaimed, scowling, "I am sorry to disappoint you, but you are not going to that garden-party. Mother is getting anxious about your report. Remember, your report will have to be sent to your father."

The Imp wrinkled her nose and smiled.

"Yes, Cousin George; but dad's a sport. He never expects me to do well in exams. I've brought him up not to, so to speak. Right from the first I got dad used to the idea that I would come somewhere near the lower middle of the list."

Nellie giggled, and then, as Cousin George frowned at her, looked solemn, and hurried out with the tray.

"There! You're getting Nellie into bad ways, too," he said hotly. "Before you came into this house, Hetty, that girl seldom smiled. She was a typical quiet, subdued servant. Now she hums and whistles and giggles—"

"Shame!" said Hetty. "Tututt!"

Cousin George eyed her measuringly. It occurred to him that she was being

Dignity and IMP-udence! Cousin George, full of noble thoughts; the Imp, full of prankishness. And when they clash it isn't always Cousin George who comes off best—by a long way!

Wanted—One Good Wheeze!

HOW would you like to come top of your Form in the exams, Hetty?"

Hetty Sonning, the Imp, glanced up from her plate at the dinner-table, and gave her Cousin George a peculiar look. She had never achieved higher than tenth place in any school examination—and that had been when at boarding-school.

"How would I like it?" mused Hetty. "Why? Is there a flu epidemic, or something?" she asked, with interest.

Cousin George was older than Hetty, and his mind worked only in serious grooves. He did not see the connection between coming top of a Form and influenza; and he said so.

"Who's talking about influenza?" he asked.

"Well, measles, then," said Hetty.

"Or measles," retorted Cousin George. "There are times, Hetty, when you seem to talk nothing but sheer drivel. It seems impossible for you to carry on an ordinary rational conversation. If you can show me the slightest connection between an epidemic of measles, and your coming top of the Form—"

"You'll give me a bob?" the Imp asked eagerly.

Cousin George had had no such idea in mind, but he shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes; a whole shilling," he offered.

"But it must be reasonable."

The Imp held out her hand.

"Well, if there were an epidemic of measles, and the fifteen girls who usually come higher than I do fell ill, I might come top. Shilling, please!"

Cousin George stiffened and frowned. It was an ingenious point of view that had not occurred to him before.

"That's just piffle," he said.

"All right, don't pay up," said Hetty. "Only do you know what Bob Biggs used to say about boys who did not pay up when they betted, Cousin George?"

Bob Biggs was a wonderful youth, invented by the Imp to ginger up her cousin, and George's jaw hardened, his eyes glinted. But he dived a hand into a trouser pocket, and pulling out some coins, selected a shilling, and gave it to Hetty.

"I am not interested in Bob Biggs," he said coldly. "I do not respect his opinion, and kindly do not mention him again. You won that shilling by a trick."

"Well, an epidemic is about the only thing that would make me come top," the Imp pointed out, with a smile.

Cousin George pressed the bell for Nellie, the maid, to clear the table, and struck an attitude which suggested

By IDA MELBOURNE

sarcastic. Without another word he rose from the table.

"I want you to understand this, Hetty," he said quietly. "Whether or not you stay on here as mother's guest depends on whether you behave, and show signs of improvement. So, remember that!"

"Yes, Cousin George," the Imp said meekly. "But—"

"There are no buts! I shall expect you upstairs in the Common-room," he answered coldly, "ready to work."

Then out he went, closing the door with emphasis.

The Imp rested her elbows on the table, her chin in her hands, and sighed. For she had thought of little else but the garden-party ever since Muriel Jennings had invited her to it. And now it was off.

What Cousin George said in this house was almost law, for his doting mother, Hetty's Aunt Miriam, looked up to him as a budding super-man.

And the unfortunate part of it all was, that Cousin George, in some ways, was quite right. Hetty had to make good. She had to live down the reputation she had earned at boarding-school.

Hetty and her headmistress, never the best of pals, had squabbled, and rather than let her headmistress resign, Hetty had left the school—or, at any rate, that was her humorous version of the affair.

And unless she minded her p's and q's she might leave Aunt Miriam's, too. Then, instead of having this comfy home, she would be packed off to a really grim school, where all the mistresses were hard-boiled, and never a smile was seen from one term's end to the next.

"Work—work!" the Imp sighed dismally. "And all I want to do is to

go to the garden-party. Oh gosh! Why isn't Cousin George human sometimes?"

But George—two years her senior, and a prefect at his school—did not want to be human, although there were times when Hetty had succeeded in making him be so, despite himself.

The Imp rose from the table, looked through the french windows at the sunny lawn, the gay flowers, and the bright blue sky, and sighed.

Fun at the garden-party—or swotting in the Common-room upstairs, under the supervision of Cousin George?

"Oh tish!" said Hetty, bracing herself. "I'm jolly well going to the garden-party! I'm jolly well going to take Cousin George, too! Only—"

How? That was the little problem. And Hetty, going slowly up to the Common-room, went quietly to her desk, sat down, and remained deep in thought, with school-books in front of her.

But she was not thinking about schoolwork; she was groping for a plan, a wheeze, a plot—a means of persuading Cousin George to leave the house.

For His Country's Sake!

"COUSIN GEORGE—" said the Imp in her meekest tone.

Cousin George looked up from a table of logarithms and leaned back.

"Well?" he said in schoolmasterly tone.

"Suppose," the Imp began—"suppose you were a schoolgirl—"

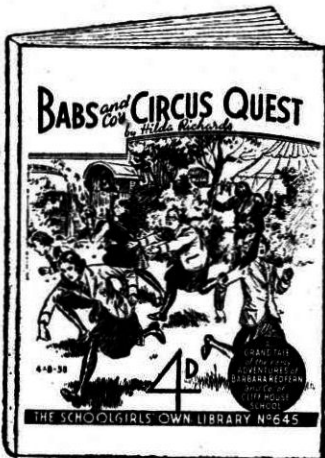
"What!"

"And suppose another girl—a foreign girl—said to you—asked you—"

Hetty hesitated.

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Cousin George, frowning, wondered what it was all leading to.

"Well, get on!" he said.

"Well," said Hetty slowly, "I don't want to mention any names, you see; I want to state a hypodermic case, or something—"

"Hypothetical case. Yes, go on."

The Imp was pleased. She had worked him into a good mood; for Cousin George, giving advice and feeling superior, was at his kindest.

"Well, then," the Imp continued, "it's like this. We'll say that you're a schoolgirl at my school, and that a foreign girl asks you to take some photographs. See?"

"What sort of photographs?" Cousin George asked quickly.

"Just of aeroplanes and engines and things," said Hetty. "I'm just giving an example," she added hastily. "Just a hypo what-not case. Well, suppose this girl asked you to take photos of aeroplanes which weren't supposed to be taken, and suppose—"

Cousin George stiffened, and then rose.

"Hetty!" he said sharply. "My word! This is serious. Do you realise what you're saying?"

"How do you mean?" she asked innocently.

"You're practically saying," said Cousin George in suppressed excitement, "that there is a foreign girl at your school who—h'm— But go on!" he added.

"Golly! You don't mean she may be a spy?" the Imp asked eagerly.

Cousin George waived his hand.

"No, no! Don't get such dramatic ideas," he said sharply. "Of course not! But tell me more."

The Imp was silent, and it seemed to Cousin George that she was picking her words; he did not guess that she was inventing them. When Hetty had said that she was stating a hypothetical case, she certainly was. There were no foreign girls at her school.

"All right. Suppose this girl knew that another girl lived near the aerodrome at Spinking. And suppose, she knew that you had a wonderful camera. And suppose she asked a girl to take photographs to give to her father—the foreign girl's father— Would it be all right to take them?"

Cousin George did not answer at once. It was a most important question that needed thought, and, hands in blazer pockets, he strode up and down.

The great thing he felt he wanted to avoid was putting any alarming ideas about spies into Hetty's mind. Of course, he could see in a flash what the game was. A foreign girl was asking Hetty to take photographs of secret aeroplanes!

It was serious. True, Hetty had pretended that it was merely a hypothetical case, but he knew better. Who was this girl?

In a flash Cousin George saw himself rounding up a spy, and his heart-beats quickened with excitement. He could see it all in the papers—see himself a public hero.

"H'm!" he said. "H'm!"

"In any case, you wouldn't let me borrow your new miniature camera," said the Imp; "so it's all absurd."

Cousin George wheeled upon her.

"Hetty," he said, "don't get the idea into your head that there's any harm in this at all. Of course I will lend you my camera—"

The Imp jumped up eagerly.

"Now?" she asked. "This afternoon?"

Cousin George gave a brief nod.

"Yes. I'll load it up and give it to you," he said.

As he turned to go to the door Hetty rushed to the window.

"Now what?" he asked.

"Did you hear anyone whistle three times?" she asked.

"No. But just stay there!" he said excitedly.

Hetty stayed there. She had not heard anyone whistle three times herself, but Cousin George did not know that; and, chucking to herself, she remained at the window.

A moment later the back door was opened stealthily, and Cousin George crept out; he crawled near to the hedge and crept along.

"Cousin George," the Imp called, "what are you looking for?"

"Sssh-ssh!" he hissed fiercely, and gave a signal, waving her back from the window.

A minute later he climbed a tree and took a survey in all directions; for several minutes he remained there before going to ground again.

For Cousin George had the impression that someone—doubtless the foreign girl—was loitering outside, whistling. But obviously anyone so cunning knew how to remain hidden, so he was not surprised when he failed to see her.

Hetty, in the Common-room, chuckled softly, and then became solemn as Cousin George returned. He was carrying his precious camera.

"Hetty," he said, putting it down. "I shall be going out for an hour or two. As regards your hypothetical case, I think a girl's duty would be to take the photographs, having first warned some responsible, older person."

"Yes, Cousin George," said the Imp. "But would a girl be justified in neglecting her work to do it?"

"Her country's interest comes first," he said mysteriously, and went from the room.

For a moment the Imp waited in silence; then, jumping up, she did a little war-dance and snatched up the camera.

"Oh golly! Of all the mutts," she chortled. "Fancy his taking in that rubbish."

But he had taken it in—and she was free!

Off she rushed to her room, and changed into the frock which Nellie had ironed. A few minutes later, dressed for the garden-party, with Cousin George's expensive camera slung about her shoulders, she cycled from the house.

Half-way down the drive she caught a glint of sunlight on chromium plate just through the hedge. A second glance showed her it came from the handlebars of Cousin George's machine.

Cousin George was watching—and in two minutes, the Imp guessed, he would be shadowing her!

Turning right from the house, the Imp made for the main road with the aerodrome as her objective—well, not exactly the aerodrome itself, but one of the houses adjoining it, the house where her friend's people were holding the garden-party!

Cousin George did not know where the garden-party was to be held. All he knew, as he followed Hetty at a discreet distance, cleverly disguised as a jobbing gardener, was that she was taking the road to the aerodrome.

Dressed in an old jacket from the potting-shed, old flannels and greasy cap, and with a rake under his arm, Cousin George was not easily recognisable as himself—especially from a distance.

But the Imp recognised him. But then she had only to turn her head and



DISGUISED as a gardener, Cousin George, trembling with excitement, listened at the fence. "Crumbs—foreign spies at work!" he muttered. He didn't realise that the Imp, with the help of a friend, was deliberately pulling his leg.

see the person behind her to realise it was Cousin George in pursuit.

And if the hypothetical German girl did not put in appearance, then Hetty would have to go to the garden-party, and as he had been invited, Cousin George—in his guise as a jobbing gardener—might as well go, too.

But there was just one little thing that Hetty had not foreseen!

At her friend's house all was joy and jollity, there were tables with sunshades on the lawn, there was a powerful amplified gramophone, pretty frocks, laughter, merriment, strawberries and cream—and a guest of honour.

"Oh, Hetty. So glad you've come," said Muriel Jennings, in genuine delight. "But where's your Cousin George?"

"He'll be along later," said the Imp. And then she looked at a rather plump, pink-faced girl, whose arm was linked with Muriel Jennings'.

"Hetty, this is my guest of honour," smiled Muriel. "Came unexpectedly by air this afternoon. I met her on the continent when we were on holiday there last year. Dito Broom—Hetty Sonning."

The Imp reeled. This was the one thing she had not foreseen! A genuine foreign girl.

"Di—Dito Broom?" she babbled in dismay.

She was so shocked that she almost forgot to take the outstretched hand. Then she clasped it weakly.

"Zo—I am vairy glad to meet you—yes," said the foreign girl, shyly.

"Not at all—I—I mean welcome to England," stammered Hetty.

"And look, Dito," cried Muriel excitedly. "Hetty's brought her Cousin George's new camera. Dito knows a lot about cameras, Hetty. Do let her see it—"

Hetty stood for a moment as in a trance, gave a wary look behind her, and then slipped off the camera, which Dito eagerly took.

"Thees ees one good camera," she said.

But the Imp scarcely heard. For at that moment she had seen the jobbing

gardener arrive at the house, and, resting his machine was standing by the hedge, listening.

"Ha!" said Cousin George, his eyes glinting. "Rut to earth."

And pulling from his pocket a drooping black moustache, he clipped it to his nose.

A Little Misunderstanding!

THE Imp had been thinking furiously.

If Cousin George marched into the garden-party and charged the foreign girl with being a spy, then there would be a disastrous mix-up.

But the Imp did not ponder for long. She took Muriel aside.

And two minutes later Muriel strolled out towards the gates and found Cousin George fiddling with his bike.

"Oh—are you a gardener by any chance?" she asked.

"Me, miss? Yes, miss," said Cousin George, dabbing at his moustache.

"Oh, that's good," said Muriel, managing not to giggle. For Cousin George did not look like a middle-aged man—he looked like a school prefect sporting a false moustache. "Could you come in and do some—er—raking for us?"

Cousin George smiled to himself. By a sheer fluke things were going right for him.

"Yes, miss. Righto, miss. I'm an expert raker, miss," he said.

Muriel led him by a side path which avoided the main garden. Right at the end was an unused patch of ground sheltered from the rest, and intended to be used as a kitchen garden.

"Will you please give that a good rake over, please?" said Muriel.

Then, giggling, she rejoined the Imp. "Oh, golly—however he expected to get away with that disguise I don't know," she said.

"Shush," warned Hetty. "In case he hears you. Now, come on. Where's your uncle—the good sport!"

Muriel led the way to where a jovial man stood chatting to friends. His conversation ended, Muriel beckoned to him, and Hetty whispered an explanation.

The jovial uncle grinned.

"All right, girls, leave this to me," he said, and marching up to the kitchen garden, glowered at Cousin George. "Now then, my good man, put your back into it! Take that spade and dig. And really dig. I want to see this garden turned over completely before you go. Don't be afraid of work."

Cousin George fumbled with his cap, pulling it over his eyes.

"Yes, sir—yes, sir," he said. "But—"

"Don't argue—get on."

Cousin George got on. He found the spade and he dug under the frowning gaze of the uncle.

But while he was digging, Cousin George did a little quick thinking, and presently he rested his spade.

"There's something I've got to tell you, sir," he said, in a deep, disguised voice. "I am no ordinary gardener. I am here to track down a spy. But not a word, in case she's warned. But I think I ought to tell you."

The uncle gave a nod. He had heard all about it from Hetty.

"A spy, eh?" he said. "Rubbish, my man, rubbish!"

Cousin George gave a grim smile.

"You may not believe it, but don't be surprised if I unmask the plot," he said.

"I'll try not to be," said the uncle, turning a laugh into a cough. "But you get on with your digging, my good fellow."

He strode away, and Cousin George, with a shrug, got on with the digging for a minute more. Then, hearing a foreign voice, he stopped abruptly.

The voice came from the other side of the high hurdle that guarded the south side of the patch, and he crept towards it.

"Don't you want me to take the photos, then?" came Hetty's voice.

A hoarse voice answered.

"No, no. Eet was too dangerous. But if you can keep one secret I will tell you what else there is."

"Well, what?" asked Hetty.

Cousin George held his breath.

"Een de garden earth behind de fence here," said the hoarse voice, "are two machine-guns, four feet down."

"No!" said Betty, in awe. "Not really? Well!"

"S-sh! To-night we deeg dem up. I tell you thees so that you are in the plot—and you shall not tell Scotland Yard."

"Oh-h!" said the Imp.

Cousin George, peering through the fence, saw Hetty walking away with another girl, carrying a large camera. Round he whirled. He grabbed the spade, marched to the fence, threw off his jacket, and started to dig!

THE IMP had the time of her life.

It was a grand garden party, with dancing on the lawn, tea, with plenty of strawberries and cream, ices, and delicious fruit salad. There were games, a conjurer showing tricks—and, all in all, it was a grand do.

For a whole hour she completely forgot about Cousin George; and then Muriel ran up to her, laughing.

"He's still digging. He's got down about three feet," she said, "and there's a mound of earth like a young

hill. And—golly, he's purple in the face!"

"Oh! Poor old George!" said Hetty, in remorse. "He'll need some tea."

She hurried off with Muriel to find the jolly uncle, and a few minutes later that cheery man strolled up to the kitchen garden, stared in, and then gave a roar of laughter.

Cousin George gave a jump and swung round, gasping, his face bright red, and perspiration dropping from it.

"Ha, ha, ha! He took it in!" roared the uncle. "Muriel! This crazy gardener fell for your little joke."

"Der beeg fool!" said Muriel, in a guttural voice.

"Zo!" said Hetty. "Der man must poitty be." She laughed. "Aren't people funny? I think my Cousin George actually thought some foreign girl had told me to take photos. And it was only a dodge to get to the garden-party."

Cousin George skipped in the air and gasped aloud.

"Yes, thank goodness your Cousin George didn't come here spying, Hetty," laughed Muriel.

"Oh, my Cousin George isn't a mutt!" said Hetty indignantly.

Cousin George pressed his moustache into place and quivered with wrath.

"Here, you!" said the uncle to him. "Clear off! You've ruined this patch, and you'd better not be here when my brother, the owner, sees it. He'll make you put it all back."

Other people came crowding round, and there was renewed laughter.

Cousin George reached down and grabbed his coat. If his moustache came off he would feel the world's biggest fool. And suppose his headmaster was a guest—or the Head's daughter!

If Violette Sibley should see him in this ludicrous guise, these shabby clothes, and the butt of everyone's jokes—then Cousin George would die of shame. For Violette, the Head's daughter, was a sensible girl, with a proper appreciation of a serious-minded fellow, and dazzlingly pretty.

Hetty, her eyes twinkling, had also thought of that, and now, anxious for him to bolt, she gave him his chance.

"Violette—" she called. "Here—something funny!"

Cousin George dragged on his coat, grabbed up the rake, charged at the opposite fence, and hurled himself over it, to the accompaniment of roars of mirth.

The Imp, taking a short cut through the garden, reached Cousin George just as he was mounting his machine.

"Lemme go!" said Cousin George throatily.

"But you haven't had your wages," said the Imp in surprise.

Cousin George, gulping, tried to make a bolt for it, but finding it impossible unless he also dragged the Imp along with him, hanging limpet-like to his coat-tails, gave up after a few futile attempts to get started.

"Lal-look here—er—missy," he said, "I don't want no wages. I've gotter get home. Me dinner's getting cold."

"Well, that doesn't matter," said the Imp, a twinkle in her eyes. "This is the weather for cold meals. Besides, you can have a snack in here."

"Don't wanna snack," said George doggedly.

"What? Not some nice fruit salad and cream—oodles of it?"

Cousin George's mouth watered at the thought, but he remained firm.

"I tell you I don't want anything, Hetty!" he snapped, his voice lapsing into its normal tone. "I—I—Nothing, missy!" he said, desperately trying to retrieve his mistake in calling Hetty by name.

But he was too late.

The Imp reeled dramatically.

"Kik-Cousin George. You!" she said. "Oh!"

"S-sh!" he chattered in panic. "Don't let on—gosh! If they should guess? If Violette—"

The Imp put a hand on his arm.

"Cousin George. She shan't know," she said. "Bunk—quick! I'll pretend to have a call from you now to say you're just coming. Rush back home, change into your best flannels, and come back. That'll be an alibi."

Cousin George, who had been thinking dark things about Hetty, heaved a sigh of relief.

"By gosh, you're right!" he said. "It's the only thing to do."

Off he went at speed, and the Imp, chuckling, returned to Muriel.

"Mun's the word—honour bright!" she said. "No one must know it was George."

"Honour bright—but no more about the spy business, in case Dito hears of it," said Muriel.

As the jovial uncle had had sense enough not to spread the story, only the three of them were in the know, and wisely they kept it to themselves. All that the other guests knew was that a slightly eccentric gardener had dug a four-foot hole in the kitchen garden, looking for a buried treasure! And that was enough to keep them giggling.

When George arrived as himself, looking spruce and sparkling, he was told the story by Violette Sibley, who arrived during the afternoon with her father.

"Amazing," he commented, with a sickly grin. "When people get spy fever they'll believe anything."

laughed Violette.

"Oh, quite!" said Cousin George, wriggling. "Quite!"

And he gave a feeble laugh.

For days after, Cousin George could not make up his mind whether Hetty had merely stated a purely hypothetical case, or whether she had deliberately pulled his leg. But it was a good garden-party, and he managed to perform a conjuring trick which came off perfectly, and puzzled everyone.

So far as the Imp could see, he had no reason to grouse. He had worked as he wanted to, digging that hole, and also he had had fun. Nor, in fact, did he grouse. What Cousin George thought or suspected, he kept to himself.

His one real regret was that he had deliberately not loaded his camera, for there were one or two photographs he rather wanted to take. Violette standing in front of the marquee was one; and Violette sitting down in a chair was another; and Violette playing clock golf. But, with sheer cunning, he had given Hetty the camera devoid of films. It was a pity.

However, Dito gave the Imp a film, and Hetty took one gorgeous snap of Cousin George falling over a tent rope. So the camera was not wasted, after all.

THE END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

BE sure to meet these two fascinating funsters again next week. They're more entertaining than ever.