

"TREASURE VALLEY AT LAST!"

Superb LONG COMPLETE
story of the Cliff House Chums
on holiday in the tropics.

THE SCHOOLGIRL

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TREASURE VALLEY AT LAST!



Ghostly Voices!



"**B**UT, oh, grandpop, let us come, too!" Celeste Margesson pleaded. "We're every bit as anxious to find the pirates' treasure as you are."

"Yes, ru-rather, you know!" chipped in fat Bessie Bunter anxiously.

"Do take us, Mr. Margesson!" Barbara Redfern begged.

"We'll be ever so good," golden-haired Mabel Lynn promised.

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Mr. Roderick Margesson, owner of the s.y. *Gloriana*, good-naturedly eyed the eager faces of the girls before him.

"I've not the slightest objection to your coming," he said. "What I'm proposing to do is only for your own benefit. It will take the best part of two days, at least, to reach the anchorage near the valley in which we think

the treasure is hidden. The distance isn't great, admitted, but with all the shoals and the hidden reefs there are about the coast, we shall have to stop and take soundings at least every half an hour. Apart from that, when we reach the anchorage, we've got to find a way through a swamp to the treasure valley."

"Doesn't sound so good—what?" Jemima Carstairs said; and that unusual girl thoughtfully polished her monocle.

"In the meantime, what will you girls be able to do, except moon about the yacht? You can come if you like, but far better would it be for you to

stop on the island with Jess and have some fun. It's certainly safe now. You've provisions in your camp to last several days, and I promise, as soon as ever we land, I'll get in touch with you. Anyway, talk it over among yourselves."

And Roderick Margesson nodded to the eight girls on the main deck of the Gloriana, and, sticking his cheroot between his teeth, sauntered away.

"Well, and there we are, I guess," Leila Carroll said. "And the question now is to go, or not to go. Personally," Leila opined, looking towards the golden shores of Pirates' Island, "I figure Mr. Margesson talks sound sense. What just is the good of mooning around with the old Gloriana, when we can be having fun on the island?"

The other girls—all of them, with the exception of Celeste Margesson, from the Fourth Form of Cliff House School—looked thoughtfully. Naturally they were all excitedly eager, and most terrifically anxious to start work on unearthing the treasure of Pirates' Island, but, naturally, there was quite a bit of tedious work to be done before that enthralling work could be commenced.

Two days at sea; another three or four, perhaps, laboriously locating the treasure site, was not half such fun as remaining on the island with Jungle Jess and her leopards and monkeys, and doing a bit of exploring on their own account.

"Well, let's put it to the vote," Barbara Redfern decided. "Clara, what about you?"

"Oh, I'll do as the rest, Babs!" Tomboy Clara Trevlyn said.

"Bessie, what about you?"

"Well, the food on board is jolly nice," Bessie said. "But I don't mind."

"Marjorie, what about you?"

"I'd rather stop on the island," Marjorie Hazeldene said, and looked yearningly towards it; for of them all Marjorie was the chief friend of the strange white girl they now knew as Jungle Jess, and as she knew Jess would be most bitterly disappointed if she left her for any length of time.

"And, Leila, you're for the island? I am, too. Mabs—"

"I'm for the island as well," Mabel Lynn said quietly.

The golden-haired girl was Babs' especial chum, and invariably followed Babs' lead.

"Jimmy?"

"Let me with the army march," Jemima Carstairs said resignedly. "Anything for a quiet old life—what?"

"And Celeste?"

The Madcap laughed heartily.

"Well, since the vote seems to be for the island, what-ho!" she said characteristically. "But wait a minute," she added, with sudden excitement. "I've got an idea. Supposing"—and she stared at them, the imp of mischief dancing in her eyes—"supposing," she added, with a chuckle, "we do a bit of treasure hunting on our own account?"

"You mean?"

"Just a sec! I'll borrow the chart. Grandpop, ahoy!" Celeste called, and ran to him, in a few moments returning with something that crackled in her hands. "Come hither, girls!" she whooped.

They went "hither"—hither being the table under the awning of the sun deck. With care Celeste spread out the chart.

Very old and ancient was that chart.

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

Even now, when they were all so familiar with it, it gave them quite a little thrill every time they saw it.

A month had elapsed since the chart had come into Jack Trevlyn's possession, together with a letter written by the man who had made it—an old sailor by the name of Ned Pickering, who had been dead over three hundred years.

A letter had accompanied the chart, for the most part faded and indecipherable, written by Ned Pickering to his son, bidding him to go look for the treasure, and at all costs to be aware of a villain named Todd, who apparently had been the leader of a pirate band.

Strange its history—most of it gone and impossible to reconstruct. Yet it was queer that just after Jack had discovered the chart, a man named Carl Todd should have jumped out of nowhere, and that Carl Todd, with the aid of three or four other ruffians, had made a most desperate attempt to get hold of it.

Back in England they had defeated him in that enterprise, and, having defeated him, fancied they had seen the last of him. And yet Todd had sprung up again. Though they had not seen

but it doesn't look as easy as grabbing dominoes to me."

Again they stared at the chart. In their excitement they had never studied the map with the object of an exploration on their own account before. The chart obviously had been drafted in a hurry, with no great skill, and with no eye to anything except the most important physical characteristics of Pirates' Isle.

The north-eastern corner of the island, which was the focus point of the chums' interest now, gave a plan of two valleys, one of which was called Esmera Valley, the other Davy Jones' Dip. Running through both valleys was the river they would have to cross. Vaguely, between the two valleys, had been marked a black cross. Beside the cross was some wording: "Treasure here. Look for bear's head."

The exact location, however, was vague in the extreme.

"Well, the bear's head—that's the clue," Babs said. "What the bear's head is, though, goodness only knows! And blessed if I can make out," she said, frowning, "whether the treasure is supposed to be in Esmera Valley or Davy Jones' Dip. The cross goes through both places."

"What odds?" laughed Celeste. "It's pretty certain that nothing more is to be got from studying the chart. The great thing to do, shipmates, is to get to the valley, then do the looking for ourselves! Anyway, it will be fun," she cried, her eyes dancing.

**A valley which still bore traces of old-time pirate days.
And hidden in it somewhere lay the pirates' treasure.
But no sooner had Babs & Co. commenced their thrilling
search for the hidden horde than a rival treasure party
appeared, a party with whom they had already had many
a battle of wits.**

him since, they had every reason to believe that he had attempted to delay them when they had called in at the African coast to take in supplies.

What had happened to Carl Todd since then nobody knew.

"Well, here we are," Celeste said, stabbing a finger at the map. "Here's the cove where we camp. The treasure—if the treasure's still to be found—lies in a north-westerly direction across the island."

"Well, we can see that, I guess," Leila Carroll put in.

"And as the crow flies, it would be about seven miles walking distance," Celeste said thoughtfully.

"As the crow flies—yes," Babs sniffed. "But what about us girls—walk? There are no roads on Pirates' Island, remember. Looks to me," she added, studying the chart, "that the best plan would be to follow the old dried-up river-bed as far as Dead Man's Ravine."

"Then go up the ravine," Mabs nodded.

"And then, after that—what?" Babs asked. "According to this, we come to jungle—that might take us hours to get through. After the jungle, there are those rocks. Then, apparently, we've got to cross the river—"

"And then," Celeste cried, "we get to the treasure."

"And where," Jemima asked, putting her monocle in her eye, to gaze keenly at the chart, "might that be, comrades? Forgive my failing eyes,

"The only snag, as far as I can see, is getting there. The route is unexplored, as far as we're concerned."

"But," Marjorie said gently, "we have a guide."

"Guide?"

"Jess!"

"Oh, ahoy! Jess, of course! Come on, let's go! Wait a minute, I'll go and give this back to grandpop and tell him we stop on the island! But not a word, mind, as to what we're going to do. We'll save that as a surprise!"

Off Celeste rushed with the chart. Five minutes later the chums, in the Madcap's own motor-boat, were chugging through the glistening coral reefs towards the island. There, in a cove surrounded by green hills, they had made their camp.

Silent and peaceful the camp still stood, and a brown-tanned girl, dressed simply in a leopard skin, was seated on the ledge above it, staring out thoughtfully to sea. She gave a start and quickly jumped to her feet as they came ashore.

"Jess!" Marjorie cried.

"Mar'jie!" the girl answered, and her bronzed, startlingly beautiful face radiated in a smile. "Oh, my Mar'jie!"

Eagerly she came rushing down towards them—this strange white girl whose full name they did not even know; this queer, mystery-enwrapped girl of the jungle who, most amazingly, had lived her life on the island, having

been shipwrecked with her mother as a child, and most miraculously taken care of by the leopards and monkeys with which the island seemed to abound.

Very strange had been their early meeting with Jungle Jess, who, out of them all, had singled Marjorie for her best friend.

"Marj'ie, you come!" she cried. "Babs, you come, too!" The childish English she had originally employed had improved enormously in the last few days, for Jess, if she had not had the advantages of education, was very quick and eager to learn. "I look so much for you," she said. "I fear you go away and not come to see me any more!"

Marjorie smiled softly. "That, Jess, we should never do," she said. "And when we go, you know, you'll have to think about coming with us. You are English—like us. Your mother's diary proves that. In England, perhaps, you have relations."

"But my animals?" Jess said, and looked back towards the jungle. "Marj'ie, I cannot leave Kou and Kullo and all of them. They love me; I love them, and our hearts be broken if we part. But do not talk of parting," she added uneasily. "Let us be happy while we may! What shall we do?" she added, with childish eagerness.

"Jess, you know the island?" Celeste asked.

"Yes."
"Jess, we're looking for something," Celeste said—"something important! We believe this something is in the northern part of the island—see there, where the sun is hanging now. We want to go there."

Jess looked a little startled. "Not easy way," she said doubtfully. "Yes. We know."

"Bad place," Jess shook her head. "Very bad place," she said seriously. "Valley of bones!" She shivered a little. "Valley of voices and whispers! No like it! Jess 'fraid of it!"

The chums blinked a little. "You mean someone lives there?" Babs asked.

"No one lives there. No one lives on island 'cept Jess!" the girl said. "Voice go on—year and year and year!" She shuddered again. "Nasty place! Even big cats are 'fraid," she added. "Cats no go near it either!"

"She means it—it's haunted," Marjorie said.

"Haunted! Ghosts!" Jess said, and nodded her head. "You look somewhere else," she advised earnestly.

Babs smiled. "But, Jess, we can't. The treasure is hidden in a valley there. Money—gold—jewels—oh, goodness knows what! A man called Ned Pickering—"

Jess looked at her queerly. "Pick—Pick—"

She stumbled over the word. "Pickering!" Babs said; but wondered for a moment at the puzzled expression that showed on the jungle girl's face. "You know the name?"

"No; no know! Pickering!" Jess repeated anxiously, and shook her head as though banishing some doubtful memory. "What he do?"

And then, as best as she could, Babs explained. Jess nodded.

"We go!" she said. "I not come into valley of whispers, no—but I show you there," she added, and running to the top of the hill sent forth a vibrant "Chakka!" into the woods. "Kullo come, too!" she added.

Kullo was the king leopard of the



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great tribe over which she had established such miraculous mastery. Time was when the chums had been scared to death of Jess' great leopards, but since they had made friends with Jess, since Jess had insisted upon them making friends with the leopards, they were no longer afraid; though, to be sure, Bessie still rather nervously preferred Jess without her pets.

Suddenly there was a roaring sound behind the hill, and then, on to the crest of that hill, appeared a huge, tawny, spotted shape. It was Kullo. With a glad rumble in the throat, he came forward towards Jess, nuzzling her knees. His gleaming eyes, without hostility, surveyed the chums.

"Then we go," Jess said. "Bessie, you come, too?"

"Y-yes," Bessie said. "Oh, rather, you know. I mean to say, we want brains on a treasure hunt. You don't expect these girls to do anything without me, do you?"

The girls grinned. Had it not been for the prospect of unearthing that treasure—a prospect which Bessie Bunter had never ceased to talk about since the Gloriana had left England—Bessie would have chosen to remain behind in camp. The plump, bespectacled duffer was not fond of violent exercise.

They set off, Jess and the leopard Kullo in the lead.

For a mile along the rocky bed of the dried-up river they went. Then Jess, branching to the right, led the way across the scrub.

Hot though it was, the chums were hardly conscious of it as they pressed eagerly after their jungle guide. It seemed they were on the track at last!

Half an hour's march brought them to the foot of the gloomy ravine which had been the scene of a terrible adventure only a few days ago. Dark and gloomy, this place—almost cold in contrast to the heat which blazed outside. Their footsteps echoed hollowly as they picked their way over the loose rocks and debris which had fallen from the towering cliff faces to either side of them. Another half an hour, and they had reached the end of the ravine.

And there, for fifteen minutes, they

rested, munching the chocolate which Clara had brought with her. At a near-by spring they bathed their faces and drank, and, feeling much refreshed, pushed on through the mile-wide belt of scrub which separated them from the dark, forbidding woods immediately in front of them.

A light breeze had sprung up now, minimising the full force of the sun's heat and gratefully fanning them as they plodded onwards. Now they had reached the dark jungle. With Jess, sure-footed, twisting this way and that, they followed a tortuous path through it.

"Soon be there!" Jess said. "Oh crumbs! Oh phoo!" gasped Bessie. "I'm hot, you know! How much farther?"

"Hour—hour and a half!" Jess said carelessly, and although the chums were feeling the stress of the march, Jess herself looked as if she were doing nothing more energetic than a morning stroll. Then, ahead, they saw the bright blaze of sunshine through the trees again, and shortly emerging from the forest, stared about them.

Jess stopped. "Valley there!" she indicated. "No come farther!" she said, and looked anxiously and fearfully to the towering wall of rock opposite her. "Bad place!" she added.

The chums stared about them, impressed, a little awed, in spite of themselves. Here they found themselves on a small, red, sandy plain. On one side stood a towering wall of red ironstone cliff, filled with great hollows; before them, rising, perhaps, for a mile or more, the rock-strewn plain continued, ending in a gentle rise, on the crest of which, like Nature's own sentinel, five queerly-shaped rocks kept guard.

"Valley of Bones over there," Jess said, pointing to the rocks. "Ghosts there—no good! Jess 'fraid! Jess go back to camp and wait—yes?" she added anxiously, and suddenly stopped, tensing, with a terrified expression on her face.

The chums, stupefied, swung round. Kullo, with a deep, throaty growl, suddenly crouched, eyes wild, bristling body arched. From the direction of the rocks, to which Jess was now pointing, came a sound.

A weird, unearthly, shivering sound it was, which sent the blood thumping in the chums' hearts.

A voice. A strange, weird, unearthly voice! It descended on a deep, echoing note, and as swiftly ascended again, rising to a perfect shriek. And then it died away.

Pale, and shaken a little, the chums gazed at each other. Kullo was growling and spitting. Jess' eyes were terrified. Bessie's knees began to shake.

"Oh dud-dear! Wuw-what was it?" "Bad place!" Jess chattered. "No good; Marj'ie, you come!" she bade anxiously, as though afraid disaster would overtake her chum.

But Clara set her teeth. "Rats! It's some animal or—or something!" she said, not very convincingly. "Anyway, there's nothing there! I'm going!"

They looked at each other. The weird, wailing noise had ceased now, and, having come so far, not one of them was inclined to abandon the trip. "No go! Please, no go!" Jess pleaded. "Marj'ie, you come back with me!"

But Marjorie shook her head. Dearly as she would have loved to go back with her strange jungle friend, she had her chums to consider.

"No, Jess; you go back! We shall be all right."

Jess looked at them. She shook her head. Then, abruptly, she turned on her heel, clucking to the huge king leopard to follow her. Rather hastily she walked into the scrub, disappearing into the jungle. Celeste broke into a laugh.

"Well, let's go!" she said. "Frightened ninnies that we are! There's nothing—just nothing!" she scoffed. "Are we superstitious kids, to be put off by a sound? Come on!"

On they went. But in spite of their madcap chum's scoffings, they didn't feel easy. Once or twice they stopped to look back, and once Babs thought she heard a faint, whispering sigh.

Presently they reached the large, sentinel rocks. Like fine, great rugged pillars those rocks stood, carved by wind and weather into lumpy shapes. Behind the rocks they found the broad river flowing into a lake near by, but just hereabouts easily fordable.

They crossed it. And then Leila Carroll, who was in the lead, gave a sudden cry.

"Gee! Look!" She pointed. The chums' blood quickened. Once again they were in a valley—a valley surrounded by great, towering rocks. Immediately before them rose a wall of white limestone, down the face of which a small rivulet trickled, ending in a great cascade, where it joined some underground stream which rushed out of the cliff face on a level with the chums' heads and went roaring away across the valley to join the main river, which they had just forded.

But it was not that at which Leila was pointing. It was a small heap of glistening white objects, which lay at the foot of the cliffs.

They all halted, struck for a moment into stupefied silence.

"Bones!" Babs breathed, and shivered. "Human bones!"

"Oh kik-crumbs!" gasped Bessie. Fascinated, they stared. But of human bones that heap was undoubtedly composed. For a moment they were filled with an overpowering dread.

Then, even as they stared, Babs ran forward. Towards the sand she dived in her hand and held up an old-fashioned cutlass, coated with a thick red rust. At the same moment Jemima Carstairs bent down, moving a stone, from beneath which she withdrew another cutlass, and there, half-buried in the sand, was also an old-fashioned pistol. With awe, yet with growing excitement, the chums stared at the relics.

"Sure seems," Leila said, wide-eyed, "as if we've reached the spot! I guess there must have been some sort of fight here in the past!"

"But who," Babs asked, "put those bones in a heap? And if it's the right valley, where's the bear's head?"

With quickening pulses she stared round, and then, seeing an upjutting rock a dozen feet away, she started. "Look at that!" she breathed.

They stared. The rock, like the five sentinels above them, was of a peculiar shape, and very small.

"Let's look!" Jemima Carstairs said.

And as they approached, their excitement rose to fever pitch. For it did seem, faintly, that the rock took on the shape of a long nose and head. They reached it.

"Well, I don't know!" Leila said doubtfully. "I guess it might have looked like a bear's head when old man Pickering made that chart, but it sure looks just rock to me now!"

"But time and weather," Babs asserted, "would have played havoc with it. It might have been shaped like

a bear's head once—what's that, Jimmy?"

Jemima, who had been peering at the rock through her monocle, now took out a penknife and scratched it. She shook her sleek head.

"Hate to disappoint you, comrades, but you're wrong!" she said cheerily. "This rock is of solid quartz, and quartz doesn't weather like ironstone and sandstone. Quartz," Jemima added impressively, "is one of the most imperishable of rocks, and if this was here in Ned Pickering's time, it would have looked pretty much the same to him then as it does to us now."

"But—but the bear's head?" Bessie stammered. "And really, you know, this must be Davy Jones' Dip! And—Here, I say, has somebody been digging over there?"

The chums twisted round. Bessie was pointing then, and they stared as they saw holes in the ground, with red soil piled each side of them. Diggings they certainly were, but whether modern or ancient it was difficult to tell.

"Shucks! Somebody's been on the trail already!" Leila breathed. "Come on; let's see!"

Expectant, eager then, they hurried across. Now they saw that the diggings were a series of shallow trenches.

Uncertainly they looked at each other.

"Somebody," Babs said, "has been here—that's a cert! Somebody has been digging! Somebody," she added, a thrill of excitement in her voice, "knows about the treasure—but whether these holes are years old or just days, it's impossible to say! And what," she added vibrantly, starting round, "is the bear's head? Where's that? Eh? Bessie, what's that?"

"Treasure!" hooted Bessie.

"What?"

"Treasure!" Bessie was red in the face. Ten feet away she stood, her eyes gleaming, almost dancing in excitement as she held up something which glistened with a yellowish sheen in the light of the

sun. "It's a ring, you know—a gold ring—and—and I fuf-found it just here! Treasure, girls!"

In five strides Babs had reached her chum. She took the ring which Bessie had found, and almost holding her breath, examined it. A startled look instantly flashed into her face.

A ring—and a gold ring at that, it certainly was. But the Jubilee hall-mark which was imprinted upon it showed that it had been made at a date no more ancient than 1935. It was, apparently, a man's ring of signet type, with two initials engraved upon its golden surface. And Babs, examining those initials, felt her face suddenly drain of colour.

"C. T.," she said, staring at her chums. "C. T. There's only one man whom that would fit—Carl Todd! Todd is on the island!"

In the Hands of the Enemy!



"TODD?"

The name came in a little whisper from all of them.

In their sudden interest in the ring, they had momentarily forgotten the haunted valley in which they stood and the strange, ghostly moaning which had heralded their arrival.

Todd—Carl Todd! Their rival for the treasure!

Impossible! And yet—

The ring certainly required explanation. That it had got there recently, there could be no doubt. But how—how had Todd got to the island? By what means had he arrived here? He must have had some sort of boat. Though the Gloriana had steamed twice round the island and had examined every inlet and lagoon in search of a convenient anchorage, no sign of a boat had they seen. The only other craft which had been in these waters at all was the cargo



"HERE'S the spot. Now then, you two," Todd ordered, looking at Babs and Clara, "cut a hole in that!" The chums exchanged glances. If their rival imagined the treasure was hidden here, then he was making a big mistake!

boat belonging to Bill Shelley, the circus king, and that had left some days ago.

"You mean he—he's been searching here?" Mabs breathed.

"What else?" Babs' face was grim. Then suddenly she stooped; she picked up something else. This time it was a cigarette-end—of an English brand well known, and it was as clean and as tightly packed as if it had only just been thrown away. "If you ask me," Babs said, a slight tremor in her voice, "the man's been here within the last twenty-four hours! This cigarette-end seems to prove it!"

In consternation they regarded each other.

"Then," Clara mused anxiously, "what do we do?"

"Get in touch with the Gloriana at once!" Babs decided. "We've got to let them know before we do anything else. No good going back," she added, "the yacht will have left the cove now; but it should be steaming round the headland to the east. What we've got to do is to warn the Gloriana to keep an eye open, land some of the crew here at once to guard the treasure spot! If one of us can climb up the cliff, there should be a good view of the eastern headland from the top—"

"I will!" Clara said at once. "And I'll do the signalling, too! Meantime, keep your own eyes peeled," she added. "Babs, lend me your mirror."

Babs handed the mirror over. Clara, without more ado, ran to the face of the cliff and, scouting round it, gave a sudden, joyful shout.

"Hurrah! There's a sort of path here! Won't be long, kidlets!"

She disappeared. The chums glanced at each other. Almost scaredly Marjorie was glancing round, looking longingly in the direction of the forest, as though regretful now that she had not followed Jess. Over all hung a heavy, brooding silence—until there came again the shrill, shrieking voice which had so startled them half an hour before.

"Oh crumbs! The gig-ghosts!" Bessie stuttered. "Oh dud-dear! Babs, let me gig-get behind you! Where is it?"

"Who—how—how—ooh!" screamed the voice.

The faces of the chums blanched. With wide eyes they stared. The voice seemed to be filling the valley. Now it moaned; now it rose to a shriek; now it died away, leaving lingering echoes quivering among the rocks.

Leila laughed a little shakily. "Gee! That sure is uncanny!" she said. "But who's doing it? Babs, you—you don't think it's Todd trying to scare us?"

"Oh dear!" Marjorie muttered.

Babs shook her head. She could not be sure on that point. If it were Todd, he was taking a funny way of scaring them. The voice was so weird, so unearthly somehow, that it seemed fanciful to associate it with a human being. They stood, waiting. Again all was still and silent.

"Where's Clara?" Marjorie asked presently. "She's been gone rather a long time. Shall I go up and see what's happened?"

"I'll go with you," volunteered Mabs.

Together they strolled off, disappearing round the foot of the cliff where Clara had disappeared.

In rather uneasy silence the chums waited. Five, ten minutes went by. Leila frowned.

"Say, something's wrong, I guess. Shall I go and see, Babs?"

"No; I will," Celeste said.

"I think," Babs said, a little uneasily, "we'd all better go and see.

Even if Clara hadn't got in touch with the Gloriana, she'd have let us know. Bessie, if you'd like to stop behind—"

"No. No jolly fuf-fear!" Bessie said, with a nervous blink down the valley.

Babs led the way to the foot of the cliff. Round the ledge of rock, which here rose from the ground, they went. And then they all stopped, staring a little at the steep path which wound laboriously up the side of the cliff, here and there levelled off into the form of steps to give a safer foothold. It was obvious that these steps were the work of human hands.

Babs clambered up first, holding Bessie's hand. Celeste came after Bessie, pushing her from behind. A stiff climb of five minutes eventually brought them to the top of the cliff.

Ahead, beyond a dense patch of jungle, was the glistening sea, its north-eastern corner cut off from view by a rugged mass of red rock which blocked their vision. No sign or sight of the three missing Cliff House chums, however.

Babs gazed round her. Below was Davy Jones' Dip, the valley out of which they had climbed. Beyond it, and only separated from it by a strip of rising ground, was the other valley marked on the old chart as Esmera Valley. It was half-filled by a gigantic lake.

"Where—where are they?" stuttered Bessie.

"Over there, I guess, behind the rock," Leila said. "Obviously they have had to get to the other side of that to see the Gloriana. That's the way, sisters." And Leila, with a nod, started forward. "Come on!"

In a body they pressed after her. They reached the rock. Between the end of it and the beginnings of a great cleft in the ground which seemed to run straight into the jungle land, and which lay between them and the sea, was a tiny ledge no more than two feet wide, and carefully Leila steered her way round it.

"Careful, I guess," she bade, as she went from their view. "Shucks, I say—"

"What?"

"Clara, and Mabs, and Marjorie."

"Thank goodness! Are they all right?" Babs asked.

But, strangely enough, no reply came from Leila.

"Leila!" Babs called.

Again no reply.

Jemima stepped forward. Cautiously she groped her way round the rock. She disappeared, and Babs heard a sudden cry. Then Bessie went. Now Babs followed, and after her came Celeste. And then they all blinked.

For in front of them were their chums. And firmly holding the chums were five men. Babs took one look at the leader of the five, and nearly collapsed.

Bland, urbane, smiling as usual, Carl Todd stood there!

Todd's Story!



"NICE of you to call," Todd drawled. "Very nice! I can't say, young ladies, how I appreciate the kind attention—especially," he added thoughtfully, "as I was just at my wits' end. I hate," he purred, "to threaten, but I think you realise that it is hopeless to try to escape. Incidentally—oh,

quite incidentally—you may notice that we are armed!"

Babs clenched her teeth.

"You—you scoundrel!"

"Rather surprised to meet me again, no doubt," said Todd coolly, his white teeth flashing. "And very nice of your friends to come, one by one, I'm sure."

"Lul-look here!" hooted Bessie nervously. "Oh crumbs! I sus-ay, you rotter, let us go! I'll tut-tell the police about this when we lul-leave this island, you know."

"I'm sure that worries me," smiled Todd. "Wally," he added to one of his men, "just for safety's sake, rope them together. Then we can talk."

"And why," Babs demanded, "can't we talk without being bound?"

"Because, young lady, at the present moment I prefer not to take risks. Not," he added, smiling, "that any of you could escape if you wanted to. You see, there are only two ways to this snug little stronghold of mine. One is the path by which you arrived; the other is by the ravine, and then only if you have a rope-ladder long enough to reach to the bottom. Now," he added, as the chums were tightly roped together, "I don't think we need waste time in any formalities. You know what I am here for?"

Babs set her lips. The chums, overcome with dismay, and not a little fearful, stared into the sneering face of the suave scoundrel before them.

"I have come," Todd went on, "for Ned Pickering's chart. I fancy, you know, I have some right to it. You see, young ladies, the Todd Ned Pickering spoke of when he drew the chart was an ancestor of mine. He was, not to put too fine a point on it, a pirate."

"Like you!" Clara Trevlyn cried defiantly.

"Somewhat." The man seemed in no way offended at the insult. "Anyway, cutting a long story short, it was Todd who collected the hoard which is hidden somewhere on this island. Pickering did him in the eye. Pickering, who was an honest man after his own standard, hid the treasure during a terrific scrap between his men and Todd's. My unfortunate ancestor, though he won that fight, came to look for the chart, and found it gone."

"And serve the old ruffian right—what?" Jemima Carstairs said coolly. "Cheers for Ned Pickering."

Todd's eyes flashed.

"Young lady, I may give you something else to cheer about before long!" he threatened quietly. "Anyway, to get on with the yarn. My ancestor marooned Pickering here. Pickering, somehow, got away. He made a chart of the hiding-place of the treasure, intending to pass it on to his son. Before he could do that, however, my dear old ancestor found him again, and this time, in an attempt to make him tell where the chart was hidden, tortured him in the chalk tunnel near your delightful school in England. You know that, of course. Ned Pickering left a clue of sorts there, didn't he?"

Babs tensed. Her mind flew back to Cliff House and that weird clue of the three bells which had first put herself and her chums on the track of the treasure chart.

"After that," went on Todd smoothly, "I've only the vaguest idea what did happen, but certain documents have come down from the past through my family, and are now in my hands, and from those documents I know all this.

Also, I have a rough plan of the island, though, to be sure, no treasure site is marked on it. That, I gather, is contained in the chart which Pickering left behind, and which is now in your possession."

"So what?" Celeste Margesson asked.

"None of you has it, by any chance?"

"Thank goodness we haven't!" Babs told him steadily.

"I see!" He produced a cigarette.

"The chart, then, is still in your grandfather's possession, Miss Celeste?"

"Find out!" Celeste retorted.

"I will!" Calmly he lit up. "How-

ever, to resume. Not wishing to bore you with details which are already

past history, we will pass over the attempt I made to get the chart back

in England. We will even pass over the attempt I made to delay you at

Zolindi. My friends and I flew across Africa, and made our way to Madag-

ascar. There we chartered a small motor-boat."

Babs' eyes widened. In spite of herself, she was interested.

"A foolish craft to sail in, perhaps; but the only one, alas, available!

Drawing near the island, the boat was caught in a terrific storm. Rather

sooner than we all expected, we arrived on Pirates' Island—thrown up

in the wreck of the boat. And on Pirates' Island," he said, "we have re-

mained for a long, long time. In the meanwhile, while waiting we have

made several unsuccessful attempts to find the treasure.

"But," he added, "I'm almost cer-

tain the treasure is somewhere about here, because Pickering hid it while

the battle with my ancestor was in progress, and he and his men couldn't

have carried heavy cases too great a distance away. But," he concluded,

"I can't go digging up the whole of these two valleys! The chart must con-

tain the vital clue. And so I want the chart!"

"And how," Leila asked scornfully,

"do you figure on getting it?"

"A very proper and intelligent ques-

tion, young lady!" Todd showed his teeth.

"Through you!" he snapped.

"By dawn to-morrow the yacht will be

taking soundings near this part of the island. I shall then let your grand-

father know, Miss Margesson, that you and your friends are my prisoners. I

hope to encourage him to exchange the chart for you. At the same time,"

Todd said thoughtfully, "I also have other plans. But those, at the moment,

do not concern you. You see?" he added smilingly.

The tied-up chums gazed at him despairingly. They saw only too forcibly.

They knew Todd had all the cards in his hands.

He rose. With a mocking glance towards them, he threw his cigarette into the grass.

"And now, no doubt," he added, "you would like an opportunity of discussing the matter between yourselves."

He strode away.

There was silence for a space. Then Clara broke out in her blunt way.

"And this," she grated, "is what comes of falling in with your hair-brained schemes, Celeste!"

"Sorry!" murmured Celeste.

"Oh, stuff! No sense in going for each other!" Babs interposed. "Celeste couldn't help it any more than I could. If you blame Celeste, blame me, too, because it was my suggestion you should come here and signal to the Gloriana."

"Oh kik-crums!" Bessie moaned.

"I sus-say, you girls, this is awf'ul! And I'm h-hungry, you know."

"Dear old Bess," murmured Jemima, with a faint smile. "She can even think of grubbing at a time like this!

But if only," she sighed, "I could release my jolly old hands from these ropes!"

Babs was looking grim. No more than any of the others did she trust

Carl Todd. Get the treasure chart he certainly would, but there was no tell-

ing after he had got it, that he would carry out his part of the bargain.

And, another thing, what did he mean by that coolly mocking remark

of "other plans"? What plans? And how, seeing that his own boat was

wrecked, did he plan to get off the island with the treasure?

"There's one chance—only one chance," Jemima said thoughtfully.

"If one of us could get away and warn the Gloriana—"

"If—" Clara said.

Silence again. Bessie groaned a little. In the full glare of the pitiless

sun they sat, perspiring and parched. Two, three hours went by. Then sud-

denly Leila sat up with a jerk.

"Look! The Gloriana!" she gasped. But they were all looking. Three

miles out to sea, a majestic gleaming thing of white against the blue waters

of the Indian Ocean, the Gloriana came

GRUMPY?

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slowly steaming cautiously feeling its way to seaward the distant coral reefs. If only they could signal! If only Mr. Margesson knew they were here!

But they were helpless.

Carl Todd came along presently.

While he and his men freed their chafed wrists, they were given some

bread, some cheese, and water. Then the ropes were retied and they were

left once more.

Nearer, nearer they watched the Gloriana come, steaming at a snail's

pace.

Todd appeared again.

"Rather worried, eh?" he asked mockingly.

"Like something to do—in a cooler spot than this? I think," he

added, gazing towards the Gloriana, which had now stopped about a mile

from the shore, "that your friends have struck some snag. I have been

watching them through my glasses, and I rather imagine they're going to heave

to for the night. Excellent, I assure you! In any case, they cannot move

far away; the coast hereabouts is just a mass of shoals and hidden reefs. But

get up now," he added. "There's something for you to do."

"Such as?" questioned Jemima.

"You shall see. Follow me!"

They got to their feet, Bessie blinking a little anxiously. Well, anything was better than sitting there watching the

dear old Gloriana—so near at hand, and yet so maddeningly out of reach. Roped

together, they followed Carl Todd as he led the way to the edge of the ravine

which led to the sea.

"Entrance to the stronghold," he said mockingly. "Not many could scale

that height, what?"

They stared down into the chasm which confronted them. Certainly Todd

was right there. For thirty, perhaps forty feet, the ravine drove into the

earth, its walls so smooth and straight that nothing except a gnat could have

scaled their sides.

"Safe, eh?" Todd smiled. "And this," he added, "is the only means of

getting down." He pointed to two stakes driven in on the edge of the

ravine, and secured to which was the end of a rope ladder. "You see, young

ladies, the first hint of danger, and all I have to do is to pull up the ladder.

But now," he added, "I'll release you one by one, and down you go."

"Oh crumbs! I dud-don't lul-like the look of it!" Bessie faltered.

But that mattered not a jot. With her hands unfastened, Bessie, like the

rest, was forced to climb down the swaying ladder. The man Todd had called

Wally went first, blocking the passage at the bottom in order to foil any sud-

den bid for escape. After them came Todd.

"Wally, hand out the small picks," he said. "Each of you take one."

And then, as a pick was given to each girl, he motioned Wally to get a move

on. "Follow him," he ordered, and, wonderingly, the chums followed.

One Gets Away



BECAUSE the passage was so narrow, the little party of girls

could only walk two abreast, with Wally stalking

on in front, and Carl Todd in the rear. Clara, next to Babs, looked

at her with glimmering eyes.

"Babs, this tunnel leads to the sea, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"Good!"

"But, Clara, you're not—"

"If," Clara said fiercely, "I see half a chance of dodging, I'm going, Babs."

"Nuff said! Don't talk any more. Todd's got his eye on us!"

Babs nodded.

But any hope they might have entertained of making a get-away was

speedily doomed to disappointment. For perhaps a quarter of a mile they

were marched down the deep, shadowy valley, and then, in a space a little

wider than the rest, they were halted. Cutting off any retreat to the sea, one

of the other men sat, rifle on knees, and plainly ready to deal with any break-

away.

"Here, I think, is the spot," Todd said thoughtfully, tapping on the wall.

"You will please cut a hole in that. Miss Trevlyn, you look strong; you, too,

Miss Redfern. You start."

"My hat, does the idiot think the treasure is here?" whispered Mabs.

"Go on, get to it!" Todd snapped curtly.

Babs and Clara nodded. They got to it, contemptuously smiling, deriving

some satisfaction, at least, from the thought that if Todd expected to find

treasure embedded in this rock, he was making a mistake.

For fifteen minutes they worked. Then they were relieved by Jemima and Celeste. After that Bessie and Mabs took a hand, Bessie bitterly complaining all the time. A hole grew, cutting

far into the face of the cliff. Overhead the light began to grow dim.

They were all panting and exhausted when at last Todd called a halt.

"Very, very creditable," he said mockingly. "I congratulate you upon your energy. Now let us get back."

They got back, aching a little as they climbed the rope ladder. Babs noticed, however, that Todd did not pull it up after them.

"And now," Todd said, "we will have a meal, eh? And seeing, young ladies, that preparing such is more in your line than mine, you shall have the honour. Who can cook?"

"I kik-can, you know," said fat Bessie, who was feeling very hungry.

"Right! Then you're chef-in-chief!" Todd smiled. "Getting quite friendly, aren't we?"

But nobody smiled in response. In every word Todd said there was an underlying note of mockery. In every expression on his smooth and handsome face there was that which suggested the furtiveness and cunning of the mind behind it.

Babs, as she helped prepare the meal, was wondering many things. With every minute that passed her distrust of the man was deepening. Todd, in spite of his anxiety to get hold of the chart, seemed to be in no hurry. Why did he not signal to the Gloriana, now in full view of the island? And why, she vaguely wondered, had he forced them to dig that hole in the face of the ravine?

For treasure? Babs doubted it. If Todd had fancied treasure lay there he and his henchmen would surely have been as eager to get to it as themselves, and would have helped.

Not for the satisfaction of making them work had Todd forced them to dig that hole, Babs felt convinced. Then why?

She gave it up.

The meal—a singularly unappetising one, for all Bessie's skilful cooking—was prepared at last. However well stocked these modern pirates might be with digging tools and firearms, it was obvious they were short of food.

Some rather tough and tasteless meat was made into a sort of stew and eaten with hard ships' biscuits, the whole being washed down with tea.

Bessie groaned.

"Oh crumbs! If this is the way he's going to fuf-feed us, I shall dud-die a corpse, you know!"

"Chin up, old Bess!" Babs said softly. The meal was eaten. Under Todd's orders the girls cleaned up. The red rim of the setting sun was touching the edge of Table Hill then, and in a very few minutes it would be dark. As before, they were tied together, and Todd pointed to the rock.

"It is my regret, ladies, that I cannot provide you with bed-rooms and hot and cold water," he said. "Except for the little cave over yonder, which is shared by myself and my comrades, I am afraid there is no sleeping accommodation on the hilltop. However, I am sure you will be able to make yourselves reasonably comfortable. The grass is fairly soft; the night is warm. I wish you good-night!" he added mockingly.

"Rotter!" Clara snorted angrily.

"Thank you, Miss Trevlyn!"

With a grin he strolled off, joining his pals, who were lighting camp-fires some distance away.

With feelings too deep for words, the chums looked at each other.

Lower and lower yet sank the sun, and then, with that swift transformation so typical of the tropics, it was suddenly night, with brilliant stars winking above them.

Babs, lying in the cool grass, found her mind toying with a million thoughts. Then from Clara at the end of the line, there came an excited whisper:

"Babs—"

"Yes, old thing?"

"I believe," Clara said, "oh, my hat, I believe I can get away! Shush, don't talk! I've been working at my hands. I've got them free. The beggars apparently didn't tie me up as securely as they thought!"

"Oh, Clara!" breathed Babs.

Cautiously Clara sat up, one wary eye on the five men about the fire. Fiercely she fumbled at the cord which bound her feet. Then she gave a hiss.

"Babs, I'm free! I'm going!"

"Oh, my hat, be careful, old thing! Look, undo me! I'll come with you!"

"Not good enough!" Clara shook her head. "Two of us might be missed if the ruffians stroll this way. They mightn't notice me! Anyway, now's the chance! Pass the word along to the others, and wait and hope!"

"Good luck, old thing!" Babs breathed.

Clara nodded in the darkness. With one wary eye on the men, she stepped to the end of the rock. Now, silently, she dropped flat, and wriggled out into the open, hoping to goodness that the long grass was effectively screening her from view.

In front of her clearly revealed in the moonlight, she saw the stakes to which the rope ladder that led down into the ravine was attached. Could she make them without attracting attention?

Inch by inch, hardly daring to breathe, she wriggled her way along. Nearer, nearer.

From Todd broke out a loud laugh. Clara crouched, heart in mouth, as he rose; but only, apparently, to pull a stick from the fire to light one of his interminable cigarettes. Another wriggle, another. Now she was at the posts, was gazing down into the black shadows of the ravine.

If only, she thought for a moment, she had a torch!

She lay still, gathering energy and breath. Now! With a wary back-flung look at the men round the camp-fire, she rose swiftly, and, creeping, caught at the stakes. With one swift twist, she flung herself over the edge of the ravine.

She felt the rope strands beneath her feet. Careful to make no sound, she climbed down them. With a sense of overwhelming relief, she reached solid ground at last.

She was free! And from above came no sound of alarm.

Clara grinned a little in the darkness. Well, Mr. Todd wasn't so jolly clever, after all! Bother though—it was dark—so intensely dark that even the starlight did not penetrate here, and of the moon there was no trace except for the pale yellow etching of the ravine's rims above her.

But, fortunately, she had had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the ravine, and surefootedly she made her way down it, only occasionally stumbling over fallen rocks.

How far she walked, Clara did not know, but it seemed hours and hours and hours. At times the ravine walls closed in so narrowly that her shoulders touched them on either side as she passed.

Once she ducked as a shower of small stones, loosened from the face of the wall above, came rattling about her ears. Once she went stumbling over some unseen obstacle in her path, and blundering on, crashed into the wall which here turned sharply to the right.

Now the ravine began to open out.

Now she found herself climbing. Suddenly she was out in the moonlight again, on top of a slight rise decorated with scattered scrub, the ravine a great black slit in her rear, and in front of her the dark jungle.

Clara paused, breathing heavily. As she did so, there came a rustle near by; a movement. Clara started back, and then cried in alarm.

A gleaming pair of amber eyes were fixed upon her in the moonlight.

A leopard!" Clara breathed.

A leopard—yes, and a gigantic fellow at that. Steady, unblinking, his eyes were upon her, and Clara, shrinking, stood still.

Next second there was another movement, followed by a soft-voiced cry of "Chakka!"

Clara's heart knew a buoyant bound.

"Jess!" she cried.

The lithe figure of the jungle girl came bounding into the moonlight.

"Clara!" she cried. "Clara, why you and Mar'jie and the others not come back? All day in the camp have I waited!"

As best as she could, Clara explained. Jess shook her head.

"Nasty man—he keep you there?" she asked. "Jess no know nasty man on island. What you do now?"

"I'm going back to the boat," Clara said. "But, Jess, don't worry. You can help me, too! You know this patch of jungle?"

"Very well I know him!" Jess wonderingly assented.

"Then guide me through it!"

Jess nodded.

"Kullo!" she called to the leopard—for it was Kullo no less. Together they stepped out.

Black as night was the jungle as they penetrated into it; but to Clara's mild surprise, the path—a shallow dip which was apparently an overgrown continuation of the ravine—led directly through it. And then, at last, she was on the seashore, with, a mile out to sea, the Gloriana, gleaming whitely in the moonlight.

"How will you get there?" Jess asked.

"Swim," Clara said. "Jess, back! You've been a little brick! Go now; I'll do the rest!"

"No go back Valley of Voices?" Jess asked, with a soared look in her eyes.

"You bet I am! But this time," Clara said softly, "I'm going back with a surprise packet for Mr. Todd & Co.! Bye, Jess! No time for more now; I must hurry!"

She waded into the shallow water, firm sand beneath her feet; moonlit sky above her head.

Her heart was leaping joyfully. She had made it! The way to the rescue of her chums, the defeat of Todd in his quest for the chart, was clear. Hurriedly she waded on, feeling like calling to the Gloriana, but fearful in case Mr. Margesson should turn the searchlight upon her, and so give away her presence to the watching guard on the hill above.

A hundred yards out the sea bed dipped. With a silent laugh, Clara plunged forward and struck out.

Half an hour later, dripping wet, but with a smile on her lips, she was clambering up to the Gloriana's main deck.

Too Clever for the Chums!



THEIR hearts throbbing alternately with anxiety and hope, Babs, Bessie, Mabs, Marjorie, Leila, Jemima, and Celeste lay in the lee of the great rock on the hill which overlooked the sea.



STEALTHILY Clara began to creep away from the other prisoners. She alone could bring help, but if one of the men around the camp-fire chanced to detect her now—

It was half an hour now since Clara's departure.

Unrest had seized them all since Babs had passed along the word of the Tomboy's escape.

No sign had come from the men round the camp-fire, now apparently playing a game of cards with the assistance of its light. Once or twice Todd had glanced towards them, only to grin and continue with the game.

Clara, unless some other fate had overtaken her, was at this moment on her way to the Gloriana.

And yet—yet there was some nameless dread in Babs' heart. She had a feeling even now that all was not as it should be.

Another half an hour went by; then suddenly Todd rose. Babs saw him point to the entrance of the small cave, whose black mouth showed just within the radius of the firelight. Together the three went into it.

In a few minutes they had emerged, each carrying several longish sticks.

For a moment Todd stood there, looking towards the moon-bathed Gloriana. And he laughed.

"O.K.!" Babs heard him say. "Let's get to work. Bring the fuse, Wally, and be mighty careful with those sticks. I'll just have a look at the sleeping beauties first, though."

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Babs, and added in a quick, hissing whisper: "Sham sleep, girls."

They all snuggled down as Carl Todd came across.

He stood looking down at them. "O.K.!" they heard him say. "Get going, boys!"

He spoke sharply. The "boys," carrying the queer sticks, followed him as he led the way towards the top of the ravine.

Babs sat up sharply, her heart suddenly thudding, more convinced than ever now that something was wrong. "O.K.!" he had said, but he must have known, if he had counted them—and he would do that mechanically—that it was anything but O.K. He just must have spotted Clara's absence.

"Well, it sure seems he didn't," Leila protested when, with three of the men disappeared, and only two remaining—rather suggestively nursing rifles

across their knees—by the camp-fire, Babs explained that suspicion.

Jemima glanced swiftly towards the men by the fire.

"You saw the sticks?" she asked quietly. "You heard them mention a fuse?"

"Well?" Babs asked.

"A stray thought just wandered into my old cranium," Jemima said slowly. "Those sticks looked like high explosive. The fuse, of course, would be to set the explosive going, which brings us to the conclusion, comrades, that something is going to be blown up. And seeing," Jemima said with emphasis, "that they're in the ravine now, it's obviously something in the ravine which is going sky high."

Babs looked at her sharply.

"And what," she asked, "does that signify?"

"Perhaps a lot," Jemima's voice held a note of fear. "Remember the hole we made this afternoon?"

Babs started.

"A hole for the high explosive, perhaps," Jemima said softly. "Pretty tough if Clara brought the Gloriana party along that path, and the explosive went off behind them. I mean to say," Jemima added, while the chums stared at her in dawning horror, "with the pass blocked in at the back, and Toddy & Co. in the front, they'd all be caught like animals in a jungle trap. And that," Jemima said softly, "might account for the fact that Clara was able to get free with such jolly old ease. Because, you see, Todd wanted her to go free."

Frozen with horror, yet with some fatal intuition that Jemima was speaking nothing but the simple truth, one and all of them gazed at her.

"But—but why?" Babs gasped. "Oh, goodness! But why, Jimmy, should he go to those lengths if—he only wants the chart?"

And at the mention of that word, even in her alarmed dismay, Babs' teeth came together—that Todd so easily should get that chart.

"That," Jemima said solemnly, "I don't know. The only thing is—"

"The only thing is," Babs said, beginning to struggle fiercely, "to get out of this. We've got to get out. We've got to warn them. Oh, what a

villain that man is! We've got to warn them somehow. We've got—"

"Too late!" cried Jemima.

"Listen!"

And as she spoke, from the pass a thunderous explosion rent the air.

Todd Wins Again!



"THIS way! Careful now! We're nearing the ravine!" Clara Trevlyn spoke softly.

Mr. Margesson, behind her, grimly clutched his rifle. Jack Trevlyn, following him, drew in his breath with a little hiss. And behind those two, twenty young men, all sailors of the Gloriana, stepped softly as the word was passed along the line.

The rescue party was at hand.

For Clara, having reached the Gloriana, had told her story; and seeing, for the time being, that work was at a standstill on the yacht itself, Mr. Margesson had mustered every man jack, with the exception of Peter Murphy, the wireless operator and the watch.

Rather grim that party as they pressed forward; rather short would be the treatment given to Todd and his rascals once they came up with them. Against a band of twenty-three armed men, Todd & Co. could do little.

There was a confident smile on Clara's face as she groped her way up the ravine, sending back cautious whispers now and again when some obstacle was encountered in her path.

The rescue party wound its way through the pass after her.

No word was said. Grimly they went on, aided by the moonlight which still etched the rims of the pass.

Clara paused in dismay. "Oh golly!" she said. "Look! They've taken up the rope-ladder!"

They had reached the end of the ravine now. Bunched up, they stared at the smooth, solid face of the narrow wall which confronted them. Thirty or forty feet that wall towered above them, unscalable.

Suddenly the ground rocked beneath their feet; farther down the pass came

the sound of a shattering explosion. There came a cry from Jack: "Duck, duck!" before, with a rush and roar, a rain of small stones and dust shot up the pass from their rear.

Dazed, half-blinded, the party flung itself on their faces, choking in the sudden rush of smoke that poured up the pass.

"By gum, they've blown up the pass!" gasped Jack. "We're trapped!"

"Go back!" yelled Mr. Margesson. "Quick, men!"

"I don't think," a sneering voice spoke from the top of the pass, "I should try, Margesson. The pass is completely blocked, and one of my men is back there in hiding, with orders to snipe at any of you who dare come forward.

"Far better," Carl Todd went on, a chuckle in his voice, "to behave like good little boys, and do the business you came to do. I'm not a hard man, Mr. Margesson, but you must admit that, like you, I've the right to protect myself, and this is my way of protecting myself. Miss Trevlyn, thank you for so neatly helping me out," he said smoothly. "I rather hoped you would bring the whole gang along like this."

"You—you—" choked Mr. Margesson.

"Be careful," Todd blandly said. "I have a revolver here, and I do hate letting it off. The position is this, Mr. Margesson—and all of you. Whether you like it or not, you've got to admit now that I'm top dog. I've got your girls, I've got you. But what I want more badly than all of you is the chart. Have you brought it with you, Mr. Margesson?"

"You scoundrel! I wouldn't—"

"Because," Todd went on, "the sooner you hand it over, the better it's going to be for all of you. Give me the chart and all will be well. Refuse, and—well, I do hate to issue threats, but I hold all the cards, you know."

Clara clenched her hands. Oh, fool, fool that she had not seen through this villain's scheme! Fool that she had not suspected something in her easy escape!

There was a muttered consultation. But Mr. Margesson was thinking of the girls, of his granddaughter, Celeste. After all, the treasure was nothing to him—nor was it a great deal to the girls, come to that. It was not the money they had been after, as much as the excitement and adventure of finding Treasure Island and its hidden hoard.

Todd spoke again.

"I'll come back—in an hour," he said. "Make up your minds by then."

He strode off. The Gloriana men, helplessly trapped, muttered amongst themselves. No doubt that Todd was triumphant. No doubt that they were helpless. A cautious Jack Trevlyn, scouting back to the scene of the explosion, brought back the news that the pass was blocked from the ground upwards. Certainly there was no more opportunity of escape that way than this.

"And I," Clara fumed savagely, "have led you into this. Because of me Todd can force us to give him the chart!"

"Clara, please!" Mr. Margesson said gently. "Don't blame yourself." He turned. "Well, gentlemen," he said, "the alternative is as distasteful to me as it is to you; but the day is Todd's, and I am afraid we must accept Todd's terms."

A groan broke from all of them.

But plainly there was nothing else for it. And when Todd, an hour later, came

back, Mr. Margesson signalled his surrender.

A rope was thrown down to him. He was pulled up, and faced the triumphant Todd on the brink of the ravine.

Margesson took out his wallet, withdrew the precious treasure chart, and slowly passed it over. Todd's eyes flashed as he looked at it; his fingers trembled.

"Mine!" he cried. "Mine!"

Mr. Margesson eyed him contemptuously.

"And now, I presume, having got what you want, you will release my men and the girls. I give you my word of honour that we shall attempt no resistance."

"Is that so?" Todd said mockingly. "That is the term of the agreement, is it not?"

Todd burst into a roar of laughter. "And when you've gone," he sneered, "you just lay in wait for me with the Gloriana? No, sir. No, thanks! Carl Todd wasn't born yesterday, and I'm too old a bird to be caught with a trick like that! You will go free, Mr. Margesson, when I have lifted the treasure and got it safely away from here—not a minute sooner than that! And now," he added, with a snarl, "you can get down that rope back among your men!"

"You scoundrel, sir! You—"

"Mr. Margesson, look out!" shrieked Clara. "Oh, my hat! Catch him! Catch him!"

For Todd, with a brutal laugh, had suddenly hit out at the elderly man.

Mr. Margesson reeled back and dropped over the lip of the ravine. Just in time, Jack Trevlyn and the first officer, Simpson, rushed forward, catching him as he fell, and borne backward under his falling weight, sprawled on the ground. From the top of the ravine came a laugh. It was Todd's.

"We've got the chart! We've got the chart!" he cried. "And now for Ned Pickering's treasure!"

Babs Discovers the Vital Clue!



BABS & CO. hardly slept a wink that night.

From the ravine near them they heard the muttering and the shifting of the Gloriana's captured crew, saw the laughing, triumphant Todd sitting over his camp fire, eyeing the treasure chart. In the early morning he came to them.

"Well," he snapped, and gone was his smooth, mocking tone. "Who wins now, eh? Here's the chart; and since two of my men have to keep constant guard over your pals, it's you who are going to help me find the treasure!"

"We won't!" Babs defiantly blazed out.

"No?" His face hardened. "We shall see. But first," he added, "tell me something. Where is this bear's head that is mentioned on the chart?"

"We don't know," Babs told him steadily.

Todd stared at them hard. Scowling, he turned away, and presently, chart in hand, they saw him tramp off, with his other two men. Two, three, four hours went by, then Todd returned. His face was dark with baffled fury.

"So none of you knows where the bear's head is?" he cried angrily. "You girls were searching in that valley. You're sure," he demanded suspiciously, "that you don't know where it is?"

"We've told you—no!" Babs replied. He glared at them.

"It's somewhere," he said. "Somewhere."

Once more he went off, this time with a revolver in his hand, towards the ravine. The chums, still roped together, heard him snarling down at the Gloriana's men. But when he put his question there was dead silence. Off he stamped again, and did not return for another two hours. It was well after midday then, and the chums, not having either food or drink, were feeling faint with hunger and parched with thirst.

For the third time Todd confronted them. He was in a towering rage.

"Get up!" he said harshly. "There's only one possible spot that can be the bear's head—that's the stone in the valley. Well, seeing that my men are otherwise engaged, you are going to do the work. Rather a joke, eh, if I make you find the treasure for me? Come on!"

"B-but I'm ravenous!" whimpered poor Bessie.

"You can have food when you've finished!"

"You—you brute!" gasped Babs.

"At least give Bessie—"

"That's enough talk," snapped Todd. "Get moving, or it'll be the worse for all of you!"

There could be no arguing against such a heartless ruffian.

The chums were marched off towards the ravine. As they slipped round the rock which overlooked it, they saw the Gloriana crew—saw Clara.

"Clara—"

"Babs, cooee! Keep a stiff upper lip!"

"Get on!" snarled Todd furiously.

Now down the twisting path into Davy Jones' Dip they went. Longingly they looked at the sparkling cascade falling from the face of the rocks; longingly they looked towards the five weird sentinel rocks, behind which lay the jungle and Jess and freedom. And Babs stared a little. Was it her imagination, or did she see a slight movement among the trees yonder, and for a moment a tanned, startled face peer out?

It was no imagination. It was Jungle Jess. Jess was on the watch!

A sudden puff of wind sprang up, and startlingly, amazingly, making even Todd jump round, a weird, unearthly, hollow voice seemed to speak.

"The—the gig—ghost!" quivered Bessie.

Hoo-hoo-wooh-aha!

It trailed away, rose suddenly on a piercing note, then trembled back into silence.

White and shaking, the girls looked at each other.

"Wuw—what was it?"

"The voice again!" Todd muttered. He looked uneasily around. "Oh, hang it, get on!" he snarled. "Get on! It's nothing!"

But something it was—but what? Where did it come from? A movement from among the trees attracted Babs' attention, and her heart fell as she saw what had happened. Jess, scared by that ghostly voice, had gone; Jess, to whom some faint hope had been in her heart of getting a message, had deserted them.

Strange that voice. Strange that it came only when—

And then Babs started. When what? When the wind blew! Three times they had heard that voice; on each of those occasions, she remembered now, a breeze had rustled through the valley. She gazed around her. Had the wind some connection with those voices?

"Stand still!" commanded Todd suddenly.

They had reached the quartz rock in

the centre of the Dip. Now Todd was unfastening their bonds. His henchman, Wally, meanwhile, had appeared from somewhere armed with a bunch of spades. Now he came forward, handing them out to the girls. Todd grunted.

"Wally, you take four of them. Go to the left of the stone. You three"—indicating Babs, Mabs, and Jemima—"will dig with me on the right of the stone. And put your backs into it!" he barked.

Bessie almost sobbed. But there was nothing for it but to obey. Todd himself was the first to start operations—and how, in those first few moments, he made the soil fly!

Half an hour went by. Nothing came to light except a rusted cutlass. An hour, and backs were aching; Bessie hardly doing any work at all.

A short rest, and on again. Now they were three feet below ground level; each shovelful of earth an agony, each bend an excruciating effort. Thankfully, they watched the sun sinking behind the trees.

"Oh, give it up!" Todd said savagely at last. "Wally, rope them up again. Fine lot of use you are!" he said scathingly. "But I'll have you at it from dawn to-morrow! Give them some water, Wally, and some ships' biscuits and cheese. And to-night," he said, "since you're too near the rest of your crowd for my fancy, you sleep in this valley!"

The chums made no reply. Each one of them was too utterly weary to open their lips.

The ropes were loosened. Water and hard biscuits and cheese were doled out. Poor, plain fare though it was, they ate it hungrily and, comforted a little, sank down in the sand along the bottom of the cliff.

Bessie almost instantly was asleep. So were Mabs, Celeste, Leila, and Jemima. At the other end of the line, Marjorie, as if to distract her mind, produced an old faded diary, and in the light of the moon, now hanging like a golden ball in the sky, commenced to read. Her face was unusually excited.

Babs, who, in spite of her own utter weariness, felt no inclination for sleep, frowned at her.

"Marjorie, what are you reading?" Marjorie's face was peculiar in the yellow moonlight.

"The diary," she said. "The diary Jess' shipwrecked mother wrote before she died on this island!"

"Oh!" Babs said, and nodded, knowing all about that diary, but at this moment of her anxiety, too disinterested to be curious in spite of that strange expression on Marjorie's face. She was thinking of Clara and the rest—if only she could get them out of this!

Babs was thinking, too, in a vague way, of the treasure. What was the meaning of that bear's head? Was it something which had since completely disappeared? And Todd—what did he intend to do if and when he found the treasure? Why—and still this problem worriedly haunted her mind—why had he taken the trouble to secure all the Gloriana's crew? Surely, even he trusted the word of honour of Mr. Margesson?

Marjorie, the diary falling from her hands, dropped asleep. Then Babs herself dozed, coming to with a sudden jerk, thrilling and shivering as the wind passed down the valley and that ghostly "Who-o-o-o" rose disturbingly. And then silence.

What made the sound?

She looked towards the great sentinel rocks, so queerly carved by the eroding

forces of rain and wind. For one fanciful moment they seemed to take on moving shapes. Her eyes sought the glistening cascade ahead of her—how wonderful, how diamond-like that water shone in the moonlight!

Todd had disappeared. Only Wally, his back towards them, guarded the entrance to the valley, and he was dozing in front of the fire which the two scoundrels had made.

All was still now. Not a breeze; not a rustle. The valley, filled with mysterious shadows, was somehow sinister and alive, as though the ghosts of those long dead pirates and sailors had risen to haunt the scene of their adventures.

Once again a slight puff of wind fanned Babs' face, and like a faint, moaning breath the ghostly voice whispered in the valley.

Babs looked sharply towards the waterfall.

Surely it came from that direction?

She blinked. And then suddenly her bruised frame stiffened. What was that

"We—we've found it!" Jemima gasped.

Found it they had. And now Babs' gaze, moving round in quest of the secret of the phenomena, fell upon the sentinel rocks.

Behind them the moon gleamed, throwing shadows across the valley. One of the shadows touched the bottom of the fall, where, broken by the glistening water and spray, it showed up in the shape of the bear's head. So that was Ned Pickering's secret!

Then—then somewhere actually behind that fall was the treasure!

Babs stared, tensely gripping Jemima's wrist. The shadow was moving slowly with the moon. Already the shape was becoming blurred and distorted as the shadow crept higher and higher up the face of the cliff. For perhaps ten minutes during the night, only when the rising moon was in a certain position, would it be visible.

"Jimmy, there's some entrance behind



"PLEASE, Mr. Todd," Babs begged, showing her cut hand, "can I go and bathe this under the waterfall?" Her captor hesitated, and Babs' heart seemed to stand still. Would he suspect that this was a trick?

shivering black thing which danced among the down-pouring waters? She was seeing things! She closed her eyes. She opened them again. No! There it still was, dancing, shimmering, seeming to mock! She caught in her breath. Then frantically she nudged Jemima who lay by her side.

"What-cheer?" Jemima said sleepily. "Wow! My old bones!"

"Jimmy, look over there! The waterfall!" Babs breathed.

Jemima sat up. She stared. Then she adjusted her monocle, and she stared again, a quivering excitement flashing into her face. She looked at Babs.

"It's—is it—the bear's head?" she stuttered.

"Jimmy, it is!"

And Babs thrilled now as that strange puzzle of Ned Pickering's chart was at last revealed before her eyes. For among the glistening waters of the fall, a black shape was dancing—a shape that grew more and more realistic every time she looked at it. It possessed the outline of a bear's head.

the waterfall!" Babs breathed. "I'm sure of it! And, Jimmy, those voices—"

"Yes, old Spartan, what about them?"

"They seemed," Babs whispered, "to come from the direction of the waterfall. My hat, I've got it! Jimmy, supposing there's a cave or an opening behind that waterfall. The wind whistling through it might make a sound like that!"

"True, old Spartan," Jemima said. "And if the wind whistled through the cave," she added excitedly, "then there's an exit somewhere else!"

"You mean—escape?" Babs asked, thrilled.

"What else? Question is—how are we going to find it? And what," Jemima asked, "are we going to do if we do escape?"

But Babs, her mind working like clockwork now, was thinking that out. Were they right? They must be right! If they could get through into the

(Continued on page 14)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS



Your friend *PATRICIA* is a lucky young person—on holiday at the Riviera. So her letter to you this week comes all the way from the South of France, telling you of her holiday doings, and news to interest all schoolgirls.

WOULD it be very wicked if I told you that I am having such a glorious time on my holiday here on the French Riviera, that I have actually found it difficult to make time to write to you all?

No, you're all so sweet that I'm quite sure you will understand—especially now that I've owned up.

But, quite seriously, I'm having the most lovely time, and so you simply must hear about it.

Now I wonder what you'd like to know first.

● Holiday Sights

About the sea perhaps. It really and truly is UNBELIEVABLY blue—so blue that it looks as if you could dip a paint brush into it and PAINT with it.

It is also most gloriously clear, so that even when you are a hundred yards from the shore, you can see right to the ocean bed.

Of course, you're thinking your Patricia must be swimming like a Tarzan at least to be this far from the shore. But actually I have been out on the *bicyclette*—the thing you see in the picture.

They have wooden pedals which are comfortable to bare feet, and floats instead of wheels, so you can just pedal over the sea as calmly and safely as you could on a lily pool in your garden at home.

There are three rafts in the bay here—most beautifully fitted up with water chutes, trapezes, rope ladders and other exercising gadgets, and with the gay French flag waving proudly on top.

It is so intensely hot on the beach that you simply have to go into the water to get cool. And the water is so soft and milky that I swim around feeling rather like Cleopatra—who used to bathe in real milk (for beauty), so 'tis said.

● Around and About

Now for the clothes to be seen here. Play-suits are everywhere, of course—just as I assured you they would be. And shorts are so jolly short that I honestly don't think they can go up even an inch more! (Good job I shortened my pale blue ones, wasn't it?)

Head-scarves are being worn also, of course—but very few of the smart French girls wear them tied under the chin. They wear them in my favourite coal-black-mammy style.

And how these French people do love ice-cream! They eat it all day—big men, women and children.

One idea that I liked, is that the cornets are double, so that they hold two flavourings. A portion of vanilla in one compartment and one of strawberry or chocolate, say, in the other, so that you can

All the small children wear those flat sun hats, like plates, embroidered with flowers and mimosa, on the beach, while many of the older people—men and women—wear Mexican hats, with high crowns and wide brims.

Quite the most colourful figure here is the dog-clipper man.

He is a huge person—rather like a swarthy, bold, bad brigand—dressed in bright blue trousers with a red shirt and wearing a Mexican hat.

As he goes around he clashes the most enormous pair of scissors I have ever seen—and all the hot dogs queue up with their owners to have their coats shaved off. (The dogs, not the owners, of course!)

● For Sun Wear

For trips to the smart cafes and restaurants, very gay and dashing dresses are worn here. But quite the favourite, I've noticed, is the sun-frock—cut fairly low in the front and lower still at the back.

I can't help thinking how easy it would be for a schoolgirl who likes to get plenty of sun to her body on holiday to make one of these sundresses out of a last-year's frock that might have grown too tight under the arms, and a bit worn at the neck.

You can cut the sleeves right out and bind them with ribbon, tape, or material from the sleeves.

Then you must cut the neck to a deepish V in the front and a square at the back.

Hem these raw edges—and you have the perfect sun-dress. Also, when you are home again, or on duller days, you can wear any favourite blouse under it, and it will look charming.

● Celebrities

I went into Cannes with Aunt Monica yesterday, to look at the shops—for aunt wanted to buy a pair of shorts.

She has never had a pair before, but since women of sixty and seventy wear them here, she didn't see why she should look about a hundred by NOT having a pair.

After much trying on, we chose a pair

in yellow with a blouse to match—and I must say Aunt Monica looked sweet in them, even though I simply had to warn her that they would come out black in snaps.

"Well, you must take a snap of me in colour, Pat," she said to that, so there you are!

Coming out of the shop, we nearly collided with two people coming in—a man and a beautifully dressed woman.

Douglas Fairbanks (senior) and his wife!

She is very beautiful, with long hair, rather like Greta Garbo's—and he—well, he's exactly like he was on the films, with a marvellous grin!

"He was my favourite film star in the silent days," said Aunt Monica, when we had passed on after a brief apology for the collision.

● Gay Shoes

Gay as all the clothes are in this colourful place—where colour simply cannot be too bright—I think the shoes are just about the most vivid things obtainable.

As you know, I adore colour—so they simply enchant me.

But white, you'll be pleased to hear, still takes some beating—though even white is generally livened up with a dash or so of colour here and there.

If you're taking your tennis shoes away with you, you can very easily make them into the smartest beach shoes that would be the envy of the sands.

Bright cross-stitches in different coloured wool or raffia would look very snappy—and it's quite easy to sew on canvas.

Or you could fix two pieces of coloured braid across the front of each shoe—which would lend that extra note of colour that holiday time seems to demand, and give a smart sandal effect at the same time.

All the French people here are still talking of our King and Queen's visit to France.

But what delights me is that they talk of King George and Queen Elizabeth as "the King and Queen"—just as if they were THEIR royal family.

Now I must dash off some cards to the Family at home, otherwise they will think I have forgotten them.

So bye-bye, my pets, until next week. Votre amie (so very French this week, just for fun!),

PATRICIA.



GOOD LOOKS QUESTIONS

—for HOLIDAY TIME

HERE YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS AND PATRICIA SUPPLIES THE ANSWERS.

YOU: Patricia, tell me, does sun-tan oil really make you brown?

ME: No, sun-tan oil alone will not give you a tan. But if applied correctly when sun-bathing, it will give you an EVEN tan. It is also very, very good for the skin, keeping it soft and smooth. But it must be rubbed well in—otherwise it will just FRY on the skin, which would be most uncomfy. Oke?

YOU: Yes, thank you, Pat. (You see, I call you Pat this time—not Patricia!) Now will you tell me why my hair is always so greasy when I'm at the sea, while my chum's hair is always so dry—like a bird's nest, she says.

ME: You are a poor old pair, aren't you? But the heat has the two effects, you know. (My own tends to go more greasy as a matter of fact.) You should go without a hat as much as possible—not in the middle heat of the day, of course—and so allow the sun to dry out those excess oils. Another good notion is to comb eau-de-Cologne through the hair every morning. Yes, I know that sounds very ritzy, but it need only cost you threepence a bottle.

But your chum, whose hair is too dry, should keep a scarf around her hair as often as possible, and should brush "Vaseline" into it every other night.



(Incidentally, this is a wonderful tonic and makes the hair grow long and lustrous.)

YOU: I know it sounds as if I'm an awful wreck, Pat, and ought to be in an infirmary or somewhere, but I also get lots of blisters on my heels on holiday. Can I avoid this?

ME: Poor pet! Blisters can be so jolly painful, can't they? It's the going without stockings or socks which makes your heels rub the shoes themselves, and so causes the trouble. So, obviously, the cure is to avoid this. Wear little "feeties"—at sixpence a pair—inside your shoes—which don't show at all above the shoes, if you insist on bare legs. Otherwise, wear ankle socks. If you refuse to do either, as I confess I do, then remember to sprinkle the inside of your shoes with boracic powder, or starch, at least twice a day. It's positively magic!

YOU: I know this isn't strictly a good looks question, and you may think it feeble, but I can't swim very well, and I would like to be better at it.

ME: It isn't a bit feeble, your problem, and it does concern good looks, for swimming is the grandest exercise yet invented for fitness and health—and, as we all agree, good health is good looks. After all that, let me admit that I can't tell you how to swim here—I haven't space. But if you know the strokes, you need have no fear of entering the water, providing you do not let it come above your chest-box. After ducking to get wet all over, strike out with your arms from this standing position, and your feet will automatically rise. Then—just practise your swimming. But on no account strike out from the shore. Keep going PARALLEL with it—then if you do get panicky, you can easily find your feet again. Don't stay in too long if you tire easily, but rather have short and frequent swims with a rest between. You'll be doing the "length" with the greatest of ease when you get back to school.

YOU: This is rather a personal worry, Pat. It's perspiration, which does spoil the underarms of some of my holiday frocks.



ME: To stitch dress-preservers into the sleeves of your frocks is one way of saving your prettiest dresses, my dear. But, also, I want you to wash very carefully under the arms, two or three times a day, first in very hot water—then in cold. Do this several times, finishing up with cold. Then dry, and dust some boracic powder there. Yes, there are special anti-perspiration lotions on sale, which I can assure you are perfectly harmless when used occasionally and according to directions. But I do want you to consult mother before investing in any of these—for I myself do not think schoolgirls should use them unless the perspiration is so excessive that it causes real embarrassment.

YOU: One more question, please, Pat. My friend says that to go in the sea and then lie on the sand all wet makes you browner than if you dry yourself first. Does it, Pat?

ME: Yes, I think it does. But I honestly don't recommend this, for the salt water drying on your face will make it dry and liable to "peel." It will brown you, but give you a sort of weather-beaten look at the same time. Which I'm sure you don't want, now do you? If you crave that really expensive-looking tan, always, always dry at least your face when emerging from the sea before stretching out for a sun-bath.

More questions and answers another time, my pets!

This is

THE WAY WE FOLD A SCARF—TO MAKE A SUNBONNET GAY

NOW you didn't think you were a milliner, did you?

But you very soon will be—making this delightful sunbonnet simply by folding. Not a single stitch is required—which should thrill all you who prefer to hold a hockey-stick to a needle.

If you have a large square scarf, measuring 27 inches square, you can make this bonnet to fit yourself right away.

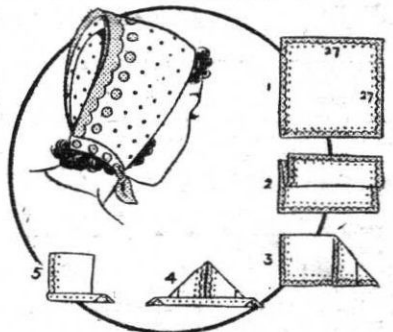
But perhaps you haven't, yet you still want to try your hand at it.

And so you shall. For the moment you may use an ordinary hankie—just to practise.

Now, follow these directions very carefully. I'll number them for simplicity—for I know I'm a bit of a duffer myself at following most written directions.

1. Lay hankie (or big silk scarf) flat on table (see diagram 1).
2. Take the top corners and fold hankie over, in half.
3. Take the two upper corners and fold back again to folded edge (diagram 2).
4. Turn this carefully on to the other side, so that the folded side is against the table.
5. Fold down one corner (see diagram 3).
6. Fold down other corner, so that corners meet.
7. Roll up long side once or twice (see diagram 4).
8. Fold over in half (see diagram 5).

There, if you have been using an ordinary hankie, you'll find you have a perfect dollie's bonnet. And I know you won't



be happy until you have a 27-inch square to make one for yourself—which slips over your hair, and ties under the chin.

Oh, and I might as well warn you—this fashion is going to be all the rage. Which means that you'll be much in demand for demonstrations, both to your own chums, and most certainly with the grown-ups—who will pounce on an idea that is so smart—and NEW! So perhaps you'd better keep these directions somewhere for reference.

(Continued from page 11)

jungle, what then? Like a flash the answer came:

Jess!
Jess, with her army of leopards and her monkeys—they would make the rescue! With all the wild life of Pirates' Island raging around their heels, even Todd & Co. could not put up with a fight.

Jess was their hope. Jess would come to their rescue. But how—how to get in touch with Jess? How to get to the treasure tunnel which, she was now convinced, lay behind the waterfall.

There was a tramping of feet, and Todd came striding into the valley. He exchanged a few words with Wally before approaching the girls.

"Hey, you, Redfern!" he barked. "Wake up! I want to talk to you!"

Babs, pretending to be asleep, blinked up at the scowling face in front of her.

"Listen here!" he said sharply. "You seem to have brains. You're the leader

but it stands to reason that he couldn't possibly have done that. If he hid the treasure anywhere, it was somewhere away from here."

"But this valley's marked on the chart!" Todd scowled.

"Well, not exactly," said Babs quietly. "The cross on the chart sort of takes in this Davy Jones' Dip and Esmera Valley. Probably it's in Esmera Valley you should be looking."

Todd blinked.

"Well, what about the bear's head?" "That might have been anything," said Babs. "A shape in the grass; a carving in the rock. And—and during all these years such a mark might easily become altered."

Todd looked thoughtful. He nodded once or twice, and then straightened. Plainly he was impressed.

With fast-beating heart, feeling a little shaky, Babs watched him go. She felt a sense of triumph. If her plan succeeded, if Todd started digging in

cry as she held up her hand. Todd glared at the hand. There was an ugly cut on it.

"Well, what's the matter now?" he rasped. "What have you done?"

"My—my hand!" Babs cried, and pretended to whimper. "I—I caught it against a sharp stone." That was true, and it gave Babs the very excuse she needed. "Mr. Todd, please let me go and wash it!" she cried.

"A scratch like that won't hurt! Oh, all right; go and bathe it in the lake," he said surlily.

"But, Mr. Todd, the lake is dirty!"

"Well, where else can you wash it?"

"Please can't I go and wash it under the waterfall in the other valley?"

"No."

"But, running water, Mr. Todd. They always say it is better for a cut, and—and this—this might be poisoned," Babs said, watching him anxiously. "Mr. Todd, please!"

The man hesitated. He stared at her suspiciously. Then he nodded.

"All right, beat it!" he said tersely. "Be back in ten minutes!" he threateningly warned.

"Yes, Mr. Todd."

And off, in eager haste, dragging on her blazer again, Babs scampered. Her ruse had succeeded!

Up the hill she flew; down into Davy Jones' Dip she raced. She reached the waterfall, holding her hand under it, her eyes trying to pierce the curtain which it made. Black rock shone from the other side of the fall, yet in those falls there was a hollow sound which filled her heart with hope. Even as she stood a puff of wind fanned the valley. From in front of her it seemed a voice moaned.

Her pulses leapt.

She looked round. The valley was deserted. Now or never was her chance, and suddenly, holding her breath, she darted right at the fall. A moment's gasping confusion; a sensation of a thousand tiny hammers beating upon her head, sending her sun-helmet flying. And then—cheers! She was through!

She found herself in a gigantic cave, illuminated by an eerie light which filtered through the curtain of the fall behind her. She had made it! She was free! At last, unless the chart was a lie, she had found the hiding-place of the treasure—and the road to safety!

But, all unsuspected by Babs, from the cover of the grass which grew on the rise of the hill which separated Esmera Valley from Davy Jones' Dip, Carl Todd, suspicious of Babs' every movement, had seen all!

A LETTER TO YOU ALL!

THE SCHOOLGIRL Office,
Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.4.



My Dears,—Your letters to me have all been so very sweet that I felt I simply must write a little letter to you all to tell you how much I do appreciate them.

As you can imagine, it is wonderfully encouraging to know that you enjoy my stories as much as you do. And I also love the nice things you say about me—though I'm quite sure that I can't possibly deserve such hosts of compliments!

My dog, Juno, has also come in for a very big share of your affection—and I know all you dog-owners and pet-lovers will understand how happy I feel over this!

Junio is, of course, my pet Alsatian—the gentlest and kindest creature imaginable. She is nearly six years old now, but will still insist on behaving like a foolish and frolicsome pup most of the time.

The greatest treat I can give her is to take her out in the car—to Hampstead Heath, to the park, or—great thrill!—to the country at week-ends, where she meets her best doggie friend. This friend is the most unbeautiful black dog you ever saw, named Pat. But such a darling!

Many of you have been kind enough to ask if I enjoyed my holiday. Yes, thank you all, I had a lovely time motoring in Devon and Cornwall with some friends. Since the car was filled with humans, there was no room for Juno. So she spent the time in the country with dog Pat, his master and "missus," and small daughter.

But immediately on my return, I dashed over to fetch her—and you can just imagine the boisterous welcome I received!

I hope all you nice young people had fine fun on your holidays, and are now as brown as pennies. Some of you, of course, will be returning to school very soon now, while others still have a week or two of holiday and good times. But whether you are at home or at school, I do hope you'll find time to write to me, telling me how you are enjoying my stories—but also, all about your nice young selves.

My love to you all! (And hug from Juno.)

HILDA RICHARDS.

of these girls, aren't you? I've got an idea, my girl, that you know more about this treasure than you care to tell. Now, out with it! Do you?"

Babs thought swiftly, her heart pounding. She had a plan in her mind.

"I know no more than you," she replied, fighting to keep her voice steady. "But—"

"But what—"

"Why should I tell you?" "See here," he snapped, "every moment that treasure remains unfound you and your friends are no better off. If you know anything, if you even think anything, you can lessen the burdens of everybody by telling me. Now!"

Babs gulped. "And if I tell you what I think, will you let everybody go free?"

"Tell me!" he barked.

"Well"—Babs looked thoughtful—"you—you may be on the wrong track," she said, a little unsteadily. "You said yourself that Ned Pickering hid that treasure during a battle in this valley,

Esmera Valley on the morrow, all might yet be well.

Babs' brain worked swiftly again, until at last, worn out, she fell asleep. She awakened, the sun in her eyes, to find Todd before her again.

"Come on, out of it, all of you!" he said gruffly. "We're digging in Esmera Valley! And woe betide you," he snapped at Babs, "if you find nothing!"

He turned away rather grimly. Jemima, glancing at her leader, grimaced.

Babs said nothing, and, with aching bones and sleep-filled eyes, the chums were unroped and led across Davy Jones' Dip into the Valley of Esmera. There, apparently, Todd had discovered some rough and almost unrecognisable carving on the cliff face, below which he set them to dig.

With a groan the chums removed their blazers and took up their spades.

The digging commenced, Todd, as before, working harder than any of them. Then suddenly from Babs arose a

The Secret of the Cave!



BARBARA REDFERN, dashing water from her face, stared around her. For a moment she stood rooted with amazement and awe.

In a gigantic chamber, filled with long, thin stalactites, she stood, the hard stalgamate floor beneath her feet, wet and slippery. Shining with an iridescent glow, those great diamond-like tentacles hung from the roof, here and there reaching right down to the floor.

The cave of the treasure!

And even as she watched a cool draught of rushing air came through the cave, stirring the delicate hanging tentacles and making them quiver, filling the whole cavern with that ghostly moaning which had so scared her and her chums when they had first heard it.

Babs, in her relief, could have laughed then.

She took two or three steps into the cave, and then again suddenly paused, her heart giving a gigantic leap.

What was this she saw?

A sort of niche, worn in the side of the cave by the passage of water, long since shifted to a lower level, was before her. And in the cave, covered with green and glistening mildew, but still intact, was a pile of stout, brass-bound boxes. There must have been eight or a dozen all told, and one of them bore the initials "N. P."

The treasure! The treasure at last! As she stood, another sound caught her ear—a sound of muttering.

Babs swung round in alarm. Whence had that come?

Opposite the treasure chests she found herself staring into a long, down-sloping tunnel. A breath of air floated up from that tunnel, bringing the muttering voices with it. Human voices this time—unquestionably human voices, though she could not gather the words.

For a moment Babs wondered, unconsciously drawing a sort of mental map

a subterranean river, emptying itself possibly into the ravine.

In that case—

In that case—Babs caught her breath as, through the pitch dark she hurried on over the smooth, sloping floor—in that case, might it not be that a thin wall of stalactite only separated the Gloriana crew from the tunnel?

Then nearer, louder, the voices became. And distinctly Babs heard Clara's voice.

"I tell you, we've got to get out of it somehow! Look, the sentry's gone!"

"But how can we?"

Babs stopped, her heart thumping now. She was right! In the darkness she paused, tapping at the wall in front of her with her shoe. It gave out a hollow sound beneath the impact of her toe.

"Hallo! What's that?" came Mr. Margesson's voice.

"It's me—Babs!" Babs cried breathlessly. "I'm here—the other side of the wall—in a tunnel!"

"Babs, what's happened?"

"Listen!" cried Babs. "Listen and

wall, making the stout stalactites shiver. Crash! Another and yet another. And then a frantic pounding. Something cracked. There was a heavy thud. A jagged piece of stalactite like the piece of a smashed window pane came shattering in at Babs' feet, and Babs saw Clara's white face. Then—

Crash, crash, crash! And in four minutes it was done. With a rush and a whoop, the Gloriana crew came streaming into the tunnel, bringing with them the light that the great hole had made. Mr. Margesson caught Babs' arm.

"Babs—"

"Clara, old thing—"

"Come on!"

After the men they went. But climbing that tunnel was no easy job. Easy enough to descend the slippery floor, but much more difficult to make the ascent with the floor like ice beneath their feet, and their very eagerness making difficulties for them.

More than one man fell with a crash, bringing his fellows down with him, and valuable minutes were lost getting



A HUGE portion of wall collapsed at Babs' feet. Next moment, crashing their way to the rescue, came the crew of the Gloriana—led by Tomboy Clara herself! "Quick!" Babs cried, pointing. "They've gone along there—with the treasure!"

of the cave in her mind, and then starting as she realised where this tunnel led, and her heart bounding at a possible explanation of those voices.

For the tunnel, unless her sense of direction was utterly at fault, led to the ravine in which the Gloriana crew were trapped. And those voices—

Babs caught in her breath with a hiss. No longer she hesitated. Down the tunnel, in pitch blackness, she plunged. She did not require Jemima's geographical knowledge to realise what had happened.

As if the whole thing had been drawn as a picture in a book, she saw it in her mind's eye. The ravine, unscalable with its smooth walls, was part of the same system to which the treasure cave belonged; the rushing river which had once reared its way through this cave, must have turned somehow, making its way through the ravine which it had carved.

The walls of the ravine, like the walls of this cave, were stalactite walls—that accounted for their smoothness. This tunnel, which led to the base of the cave, must in its day also have been

act quickly! You've got some picks there, haven't you? Smash in this wall—it's only thin, I think. It must be, otherwise you wouldn't be able to talk to me like this! And, oh, be quick!" she added, as suddenly there came a sound from the treasure cave above.

A pause. Then came a heavy blow. Babs looked upward, hearing something, realising all in a moment that somebody else was in the cave. She heard a voice—Todd's voice!

"It's here! I thought she would lead us to it, and, by gum, she has! Quickly, Wally, come here!" he called, his voice rising in wild excitement. "We've found it! We've got it! This way!"

Babs' heart missed a beat. Todd had found the treasure!

"Grab it! Make for the Gloriana!" Todd yelled excitedly. "The motor-launch the crew came on is in the bay. Grab that! There's only two men aboard the yacht. If they make a fuss, shoot them down! Quick now!"

"Mr. Margesson, quickly!" screamed Babs. "Hurry!"

Crash! came a terrific blow on the

up the slope. But finally they broke into the great treasure chamber. And Babs gave a gasp.

"For most of the chests had gone! "After them!" panted Mr. Margesson. "They can't have gone far! Which way, Barbara?"

"Through the waterfall!"

She herself took the lead then, diving quickly through the descending cascade. After her came the men, and then, running up the valley, they met Jemima, the rest of the chums on her heels. She panted wildly.

"You've lost them!" she cried. "Todd followed you, Babs! They've grabbed the treasure and pelted up the path! They've all gone!"

"Come on!"

They rushed in pursuit. Up the twisting path they went. Now they were on the crest of the hill. And ahead—half a mile ahead—four men, staggering under the treasure chests, were hurrying along the lip of the ravine.

Mr. Margesson groaned.

"The scoundrels! They'll make it! But why are they heading for the Gloriana?"

"Because," Babs panted, "they mean to steal the ship! That must have been in Todd's mind all along! And if they do—"

She gulped frantically, dismay again in her heart. So near, yet so far! In the very last moment, it seemed, Todd had beaten them.

But had he? For even as the party rushed on, there came a new diversion—came a sudden shrill call of "Chakka! Chakka! Chakka!"

Babs stopped, gasping. Ahead of her a lithe, tanned figure had burst into view. It was Jungle Jess, a great stream of leopards behind her.

Marjorie Hazeldene gave an excited shout:

"Jess! Jess, stop them!"

"Chakka!" called Jess.

"Come on!" panted Margesson.

Todd spun round, with a yell of terror, as he saw the jungle girl and her wild animals approaching. Too late, he dropped his chests and yanked out his revolver. Even as he did so, a little monkey—it was Kon—with a shrill yell, leaped upon his shoulder, grabbing at his hair. At the same moment a big leopard leapt magnificently, bearing him backwards.

Next instant the pirates were lost to sight beneath a heavy mass of great, tawny, spotted bodies. A growling and snarling rent the air, interrupted by a sharply barked order from Jess.

When Mr. Margesson and the chums reached the scene, Carl Todd & Co., eyes wide with terror, but unharmed, were lying flat on their backs, and astride each of them was a leopard, while others, snarling, crouched round them.

"Oh, well done, Jess! Well done!" Mr. Margesson panted. "I think," he added, with a smile, "we win in the end, Carl Todd!"

Todd, gasping and dishevelled, rose to his feet, held firmly by two of the Gloriana men.

"Then," he said, his lips curling in a bitter sneer, "have another think, Mr. Clever Margesson! You've beaten me! Oh, I admit that! You've got the treasure! But the treasure"—and he glared spitefully, "is not yours!"

The chums stared at him. Marjorie uttered a cry that was lost in the general excitement.

"He had man!" Jess muttered. "No like him!"

"You mean?" Mr. Margesson asked coolly.

"I mean," Todd said, "that when Ned Pickering hid that treasure, he intended it to be found by his son. It never was found by his son, which means that any ancestor Ned Pickering has living to-day is entitled to it. It's the Pickering treasure, not yours!"

"Oh crumbs! But—but that's right, you know!" Bessie said, in dismay; for Bessie had visualised becoming rich for life.

The chums looked at the man. Todd was bluffing, of course. And yet—wouldn't it just be like this scoundrel to have some last card up his sleeve!

"And," Todd went on, his eyes glistening, "there's a Pickering living. The Pickering in question is the direct ancestor of old Ned Pickering, and lives in a fishing village on the Yorkshire coast. He knew about the treasure, and about 1925 he spent all his savings by sending his son out this way to try to find it. The son came with his wife and kiddie. The ship was wrecked, the family lost; but old Pickering still lives on."

"And, of course," Mr. Margesson said steilily, "you can prove all this?"

"Mr. Margesson, may I say a word?" Marjorie asked.

"Marjorie, wait a minute!"

"But, Mr. Margesson, I must speak—now!" And Marjorie, shaking with excitement, came forward. "Mr. Margesson, Todd is right!"

"What?"

"He's right!" Marjorie gasped. From her pocket she drew forth a little vellum-bound diary. "This," she said simply, "is the diary which Mrs. Pickering left behind. This," she added, and the chums all stared, "was left on this island by Jess' mother, whose name was Dorothy Pickering. Remember the initials on the purse? If you read it through, you will find that everything is as Todd says."

"Oh, my hat!" stuttered Babs. "Then—then Jess is old Pickering's granddaughter?"

"Yes."

"And Jess," cried Clara, "is the heiress to the treasure?"

"Yes."

A silence. Jess looked puzzled. Then Celeste laughed.

"Well," she said, "if that doesn't beat the band! Whoops! And to think all this time you've been living on the island with your own riches, Jess! If this isn't as good as a book, please tell me what is, everybody! Jess, hail the heiress to the pirates' treasure!"

"But I not understand!" Jess said bewilderedly.

"But," Marjorie said softly, "you will, Jess. Because, you see, we don't really want the treasure—do we, girls? We only half-expected to find it in the first place. We came here more for the fun of the thing than because we felt we should all be rich for life. The treasure's yours, Jess—or your grandfather's. And that means," she added, "that you have to come back to England with us."

"But—but Kullo—and Kon?" Jess stuttered.

"Those," Marjorie said, "you shall bring back with you! Jess, please do not look so upset. Later, when you've been to England—when you've met your grandfather, and everything is cleared up—you can come back here if you wish to see all your pets again. And, Jess, we do want you to come—don't we, girls?"

"Yes, rather!"

For a moment Jess did not reply. She looked towards Carl Todd and his men, who were now being hauled away. Then she smiled.

"I come!" she said. "I see my grandfather! I come with you, Mar'jie, and all my good friends! And some day," she said, "I return to Pirates' Isle to see my friends the cats again—to tell them of my adventures in your great country. And in your great country," Jess went on earnestly, "I will make a place for them, so that if they would like to come back with me, they shall."

"Rather!" Marjorie laughed. "Of the treasure—I give you some of that, too?"

"That," chuckled Babs, "we will leave till we get back to England and see your grandfather, Jess. Now," she added, "let's go back to the Gloriana—and a really good meal—eh, girls?"

THREE DAYS later the Gloriana, carrying Carl Todd & Co. as prisoners, set sail.

It was three days of excitement, of rapture; but it was a sad three days for Jess, who, calling her jungle animals together, told them in that queer language she used between herself and them that she was going away, taking Kullo and Kon with her. Whether those jungle animals understood or not the chums could not say; but it was noticeable, for the remainder of the time they spent on the island, that there was a marked dejection among them.

And the last sight they saw when looking out over the rail of the Gloriana towards the receding shores which had provided them with such strange adventures, was of a great crowd of leopards on the shore, and in the branches of the trees an army of little chattering monkeys. Jess, who was with them, shook her glossy head. Frantically she waved an arm.

"Chakka!" she called. From the shore came suddenly a screaming and chattering, followed by a long-drawn, howling roar.

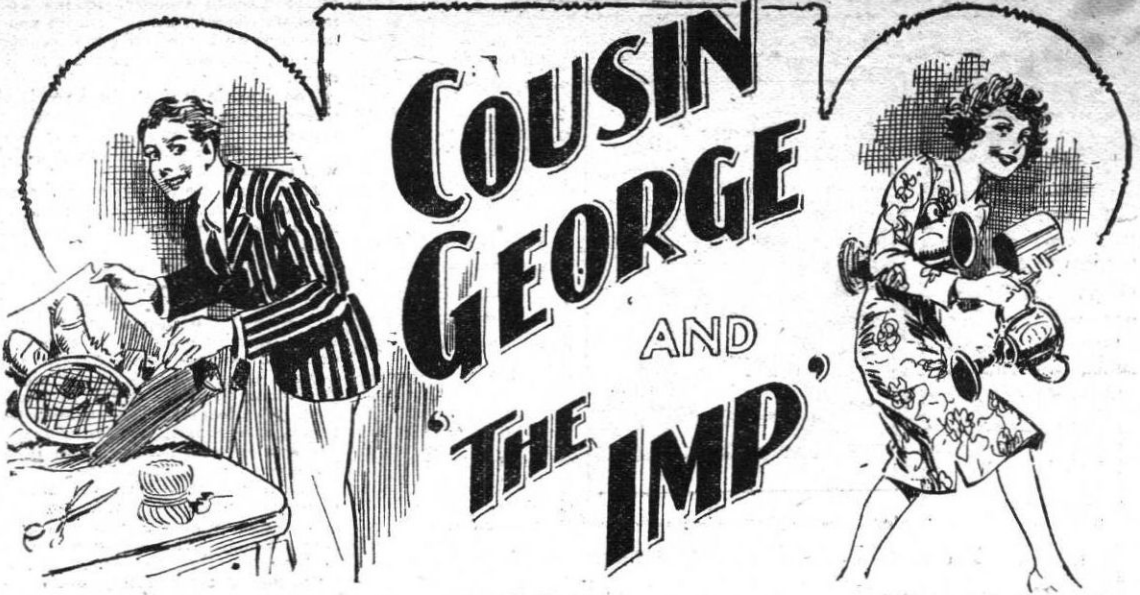
It was farewell from Pirates' Island! END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

BACK TO CLIFF HOUSE

Holidays over—such thrilling holidays, too, for Barbara Redfern & Co.—and school begins again. Cliff House awakes to new life! But not only Cliff House itself, for Janet Jordan, special chum of Tom-boy Clara Trevlyn, appears in a startling new guise. Smart, chic, almost grown-up. And with her is a charming, vivacious French girl, a year or two older, who swiftly wins the hearts of all Janet's friends—all, that is, except for dogged, outspoken Clara. Clara has strange doubts about this attractive stranger. Clara is sure the French girl is not quite the friend of Janet she appears. And—Clara is right! But you must read for yourselves the enthralling way in which Hilda Richards works out one of the finest stories she has ever written. Don't forget. It is COMPLETE next week.



COMPLETE this week. Another delightful story featuring—



No tea-party for the IMP! Thus decided lofty Cousin George, and he cunningly tried to trick Hetty out of the fun. Not that Hetty minded. Imp that she is, she arranged her own fun—and that included hiding Cousin George's cups and getting him captured as a burglar!

Tit for Tat!

STOP! Hetty, stop!" Hetty Sonning's Cousin George gave that excited shout as she hurried down the stairs to answer the knock at the back door.

It was Wednesday afternoon, and the maid Nellie was out. So, too, was Hetty's Aunt Miriam—Cousin George's mother—so that either Hetty or George had to open the door.

Hearing his shout, Hetty stopped; but she was surprised all the same.

"I'm only going to open the back door, Cousin George. It's the baker," she said.

"I'll go," he said in his most authoritative tone.

"But I'm half-way there."

"I said that I'd go," Cousin George insisted, slipping on his school blazer.

Pushing past Hetty on the stairs, he hurried down, leaving her puzzled. And there was good reason for her to be puzzled. Cousin George—two years Hetty's senior—had such a keen and lofty idea of his own dignity that he considered door-opening beneath him.

Time and time again he had let people knock because Hetty happened to be too busy to open the door for a minute or two. Yet now he was rushing to do it.

Hetty Sonning, known as the Imp, had learned to obey her Cousin George—or to seem to do so—because, having unfortunately earned herself the reputation of being an imp at her boarding-school, she was now a dog with a bad name.

And Cousin George, a prefect at his school, was making her toe the line. If the improvement continued, then Hetty would be allowed to stay on at the house instead of being sent away to a really tough school where there would be no fun at all, but plenty of work under the surveillance of grim-eyed mistresses.

It was for that reason that the Imp

did not argue now, but let Cousin George rush to open the door himself.

"Something going on," she decided shrewdly. "And I'll bet anything that the baker has brought something that Georgy-Porgy doesn't want me to see."

Hetty went through into the kitchen just as Cousin George was dumping some parcels in the larder.

"It's all right. I took the stuff in," he said, with a swift side-glance at her. "One has to be careful taking things from tradesmen to see that they bring everything that's ordered. You'd better get back to the Common-room and do some swotting. Or have you something to do this afternoon? Did I hear you say you were going out with Jill?"

The Imp eyed him with deeper interest than before, for Cousin George

By IDA MELBOURNE

did not as a rule show keenness for her to go rushing out with Jill. He liked to keep her under his eye.

"No; we're not doing anything this afternoon. Are you?" she asked.

"Me? Oh, nothing much! Just going out with a couple of my friends," said Cousin George lightly.

He held open the kitchen door for her most gallantly. And that alone made it clear to Hetty that he did not want her to loiter in the kitchen. And why? Because he didn't want her to see what it was the baker had brought.

Hetty walked out of the kitchen and went upstairs to the Common-room, where she and Cousin George did their homework, read, played draughts, or otherwise killed time.

But Cousin George went along to his room, for he had been interrupted by the baker in the task of doing his hair, getting it really smooth and accurate.

No sooner was his door closed than the

Imp tiptoed out, and went softly down to the kitchen. If she didn't find out what the baker had brought she would have no peace for the rest of the afternoon.

Opening the larder door, she peeped in, and espied some paper bags that certainly had not been there before dinner, and on which the baker's name showed clearly.

"Ah-ha!" the Imp murmured.

She opened the first bag—jam tarts. The second—cream buns. The third—macarons and eclairs!

Hetty gave a soft whistle, and her eyes rounded in wonder. Cousin George could not be eating those things himself. The very number of cakes and buns told the whole story. A tea party.

"A tea party—and I'm not invited!" the Imp gasped. "The cheek—"

She replaced the bags, closed the door, and then in thoughtful mood hurried upstairs again.

There was nothing Hetty disliked more than being left out of anything, especially if the thing happened to be a tea party. And this had all the makings of a really good party, too, judging by the supplies that Cousin George had obtained.

But was the party to be held at home, or out somewhere?

Back in the Common-room, the Imp was still musing when the door opened, and Cousin George looked in.

"Ah, here you are!" he said. "I think you had better stay in this afternoon, Hetty, and do a spot of work."

"Oh! But you'll be out?" she asked with interest.

"Yes, I shall be going out," he nodded lightly.

"I may as well come with you," said Hetty. "I've got nothing to do, and aunt said she wanted you to keep an eye on me, you know."

Cousin George gave a slight start, and a look of anxiety crossed his face.

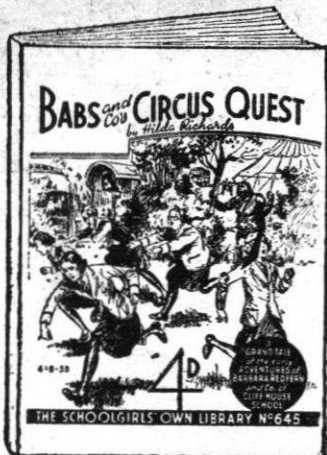
"You can't come with me," he said sharply.

"Why, where are you going then?" said Hetty innocently.

"Oh, just out somewhere!" he answered casually. "You wouldn't care for it, Hetty! Besides—er—someone may call. We can't leave the house empty."

"We've left it empty before now,"

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said Hetty, her eyes gleaming. "And it's a grand afternoon. Look at the sunshine—look at the blue sky. Golly! Just the afternoon for the river."

Cousin George's brow darkened more than ever at that, and he shook his head.

"You can't go on the river unless you are accompanied by a senior," he said. "You know that quite well. Your headmistress made it clear, Hetty."

"Well, I dare say she'd regard you as a senior—"

"Now, look here," cut in Cousin George, frowning. "I don't want any argument. A—Mr. Snorram may call this afternoon, so you'll have to stay in," he added, inventing an excuse.

"Mr. Snorram?" said Hetty, who had never heard the name before. "Who's he?"

Cousin George hesitated, and then spoke quickly, developing his brilliant idea.

"If Mr. Snorram calls, you'd better give him a parcel. I'll let you have it," he said. "Wait here!"

Then he hurried out from the room. But on the landing he turned and hustled downstairs as the telephone bell rang.

"Hallo! Yes, George speaking!" he answered. "The stuff's arrived, Bill. What? No. Hetty's not coming. I'm choking her off. Hetty's a handful! But I think I'll ask Violette to come along—yes, the Old Man's daughter. We should have a pretty good time. Make sure of a good boat!"

He rang off, his eyes glimmering; for a really great idea had occurred to Cousin George—a way of putting Hetty off the picnic.

Hetty was all right. He liked Hetty, but she lacked the quiet dignity of say, Violette Sibley, his headmaster's daughter. Besides, Hetty was only a kid, and Cousin George and his pals,

had the more serious minded outlook befitting their years.

Hetty might lark about on the river, or upset the picnic stove, or generally become a nuisance.

As Hetty had to be choked off, but he did not want to hurt her feelings, Cousin George had not mentioned the picnic at all. If Hetty stayed in and swotted French, it would be far better for her than picnicking, so he made a good pretext.

Strolling back to his room, chuckling at the idea that had occurred to him, he opened a cupboard in his room and took out some brown paper. Then, looking about him for something to make into a parcel, he put in a fire-brick, a pair of worn-out tennis shoes, the head of a broken racket, and some old newspapers.

Trying it neatly with string, he wrote the name Snorram on it, and added: "To be Called For—Urgent!"

Then, humming to himself, and stifling a chuckle, he went along to the Common-room. It struck him as a very comic idea, Hetty's staying in, waiting for someone who didn't exist.

"Oh, Hetty," he said airily, "here's the parcel! If Mr. Snorram calls, just give it to him, will you? And leave this door open so that you can hear the bell."

He put the parcel down on the table, then gave Hetty a pat on the shoulder.

"Mr. Snorram—funny name?" said the Imp.

"Oh, people do have funny names," he admitted.

"What's in the parcel?" said Hetty. "Oh, nothing much—but it's rather important. As you have to do some swotting—your French is pretty dusty—it won't be a hardship. There's a cake in the larder, I believe, and you can make yourself some tea."

"I see," said Hetty quietly. "And you're going now?"

"In a few minutes, yes. Don't forget

to listen to the bell—and if you do that French composition reasonably well," added Cousin George, in his kindest, most patronising tone, "I'll let you have half-a-crown out of your pocket-money." Then, with a smile, he went out of the room.

The Imp looked at the parcel, at the closed door, and then sat silent in thought. There had been something odd in her cousin's manner—very odd. He was up to something.

Hetty ran her fingers over the parcel, wondering what was inside; then, finding a corner where the paper did not meet perfectly, she peeped inside. The tip of an old pair of tennis shoes showed, and some newspaper. Further investigation revealed the fire-brick.

"So-ho!" the Imp murmured grimly. "Just a trick—eh? Just a neat little dodge to keep me here. Mr. Snorram!"

And, quite indignant, she rose from the chair, and marched to the door with the idea of telling Cousin George that she was going out, after all.

But a better idea came, an idea that banished her frown at once.

For if her little idea worked, Cousin George would decide that she was not safe to be left; she would have to be taken along. And where was he going in his white flannels and blazer, armed with picnic stuff, Hetty could guess—the river.

The river. Just where she wanted to go herself. And if a little cunning would help, that was where she was going?

The Joke that Went Astray!

THE bell in the kitchen rang noisily some five minutes after Cousin George had dumped the parcel on Hetty. It rang because the Imp, in the Common-room, had pressed the bell; but as no one could see the indicator, then no one was any the wiser.

"All right, Cousin George, it's probably Mr. Snorram," the Imp exclaimed, and hurried downstairs.

Cousin George chuckled and went back into his room to load his camera.

Downstairs, Hetty opened the front door, walked out, and tossed the parcel over the hedge. Then she walked into the sitting-room, where three silver cups which Cousin George had won, were on display, and removed them. She also removed a silver cigarette-box from the table.

That done, she went to the front door, opened it, and banged it shut, just as Cousin George, whistling cheerily, came downstairs.

"Who was that?" he asked. "Who do you think?" smiled Hetty. "Mr. Snorram!"

George stood stock still and stared. Considering that he had invented Mr. Snorram, he was surprised.

"Did he say his name was Snorram?" he asked.

"No. But there isn't anyone else calling, is there?" the Imp asked innocently. "Golly, would it matter if I gave that parcel to the wrong person?"

Cousin George thought of the parcel and laughed. What a joke!

"Oh, no! Not at all, Hetty!" he said lightly. "Doesn't matter a bit. But you're a young duffer, you know. If it had been important, you'd have done the same thing. Ha, ha—gosh! When that chap opens the parcel—ha, ha, ha!"

It was very funny, he thought—and Violette would give her silvery tinkly laugh when he told her.

"Yes, but the cups!" exclaimed Hetty, hand to mouth, looking as startled as she could.

"Cups?" frowned Cousin George,

"You know, your silver cups!" the Imp went on, in dismayed tone. "You don't mean—he—wasn't he to have those, and—the silver cigarette-box?"

Cousin George stared at her for a second or two without moving, and then, springing suddenly to life, he rushed into the sitting-room and looked at the place where his silver cups were kept. Then he looked for the silver cigarette-box, and a low moan escaped him.

Turning, he bumped into Hetty and grabbed her arm. The light of fun had gone from his eyes now, to be replaced by fierce alarm.

"Hetty—where did he go? Gosh—what did he look like?" he asked.

"Why, is anything wrong?" asked Hetty. "Didn't you mean him to have the things?"

Cousin George seethed and fumed. "Of course not. Why should I give him my silver cups?" he demanded wildly. "And that silver cigarette-box. Mother will be mad when she finds out. Gosh! That's worth a packet, that box. Have you gone barmy or what?"

The Imp stood back, made her lip quiver, and then she gulped.

"You—you dud-didn't tell me w-what Mr. Snorram looked like," she faltered.

"Never mind him—what did this thief look like? This rascal?" asked Cousin George in a panic. "I've got to get those things back."

"Oh, Cousin George, I'm ever so sorry," said Hetty. "If only you had described this Mr. Snorram—"

Cousin George nearly tore his hair in distress. He could have kicked himself for ever having thought of that brilliant idea; but such a terrible possibility as this hadn't entered his mind for a moment.

"What in the world made you give the man the silver for I can't imagine," he groaned. "But quick—tell me what he's like. Was he—was he tall?"

"Was Mr. Snorram tall?" fenced Hetty.

"What does it matter about Mr. Snorram?" hooted Cousin George, wishing fervently that he had never invented the man. "It wasn't Mr. Snorram you gave those things to. Describe him."

And then as the Imp hesitated Cousin George looked down the drive and saw a man walking along the lane. He was tall, and he had a reddish face and a ginger moustache; also he was wearing a gent's boater.

"Hetty," he said sharply. "Was the man tall, reddish-faced, with a ginger moustache, and wearing a straw hat?"

Hetty misunderstood. She thought that Cousin George was inventing a description of Mr. Snorram, so that she should say "no" to the description, and thus prove that she had given the parcel to the wrong person.

So Hetty, in her impish way, pulled his leg a little more.

"Why, golly! How did you guess?" she asked. "Then it was Mr. Snorram—"

But Cousin George made no reply. That very same man was in the lane, and there was not a moment to be lost if he were to be caught!

After him went George, fast as he could go, with Hetty running behind. And as Hetty ran, she also saw the man!

"George—stop!" she shouted. "Stop!"

But George did not heed; he went at full gallop, and Hetty halted in deep dismay, wondering what on earth she should do next. For Cousin George, assured that he was chasing the guilty party was bent on trouble.

"Wow!" muttered the Imp. "Now I've done it! Now there'll be a row."

Caught Red-Handed!

COUSIN GEORGE, reaching the lane, slowed, because the man in the straw hat was momentarily hidden from view. In point of fact the man had turned in at one of the houses farther along the road.

He had turned in there because he had rented the house for the summer, a better reason than which it would be hard to imagine.

But Cousin George did not know that. No one had told him. And as he walked past the house, wondering where the man had got to, he was just in time to see a very odd circumstance.

The man with the straw hat had forgotten his key, and as one of the lower windows was unfastened, opened it.

He was actually stepping through, carrying a small case, when Cousin George reached the gate.

Cousin George, holding his breath, dodged behind a tree in the garden to watch.

"Caught red-handed, by gosh!" he muttered.

At that moment Hetty came along calling him; but George gave no sign of his presence; for he did not want Hetty to be involved in the desperate scene



"DO you know this young rascal?" demanded Cousin George's captor. "We are strangers," said the Imp disdainfully, but there was a twinkle in her eyes. Cousin George must be taught a lesson.

that might follow when he caught this house-breaker in the act.

For a minute he waited, and then, tiptoeing up to the window, carefully climbed in.

At least—Cousin George meant to climb in carefully; but not being aware of the furnishing of the room, he put his foot on a small side table which gave way as he used his weight.

Crash! Down went the table, and Cousin George tumbled in.

The door of the room opened just as he was getting up, and the red-faced man stood there, gaping.

"What the—" he began. "Got you red-handed!" snapped George.

"Got me?" said the man. "You mean I've got you. What's the idea of breaking into my house like this, eh?"

"Your house?" said Cousin George scoffingly. "I suppose you always get into your house through the window?"

"And I suppose you're always getting into other people's houses through the window?" snorted the man.

Someone else walked into the room behind him, a woman wearing a print overall, and she gave a startled gasp as she saw George.

"Oh—who ever is it?" she asked.

"It's a housebreaker!" roared the man. "I got in through the window, as I knew you wouldn't hear me knock—and I left the window open. Then in came this young rascal out to get what he could pick."

Cousin George gave a violent start. Of a sudden it dawned upon him that he had blundered.

"You are not Mr. Snorram—I mean, you didn't call at the White House across the road?" he asked.

"No, I didn't, my lad; and I'm going to hand you over to the police right now."

Cousin George, although he had a perfectly good explanation, suddenly saw that it might sound rather feeble, and he decided not to chance it. With a quick spring he was through the window, to go pelting down the path.

In the lane he almost bumped into Hetty.

"Phew! Thank goodness you've come back, Cousin George!" she said. "That wasn't the man. I tried to tell you."

Cousin George did not stay to answer, but dashed across the road, over the five-barred gate, and hid behind the hedge. Hetty, without knowing his reason, followed him, and together they crouched there.

"Hetty," he said, through his teeth, "you led me to think that was the man. It was a trick. I'm beginning to think you didn't give the silver to anyone."

Hetty sighed.



"No, Cousin George, I didn't," she said. "But you rather jumped to conclusions, you know."

"Oh, did I?" he said bitterly. "Well, you could soon have let me know the truth. This is your idea of fun, I suppose. All right, then, Hetty. It's time you were brought to your senses—"

"Shush! The man's coming!" whispered Hetty.

The man walked past.

"I'm sending you to Coventry!" said Cousin George fiercely. "For the rest of the day I shall treat you as though you don't exist! I don't want you to speak to me, either, or to know me! For the rest of the day we are strangers! You understand?"

Hetty looked at him in silence for a moment. Then—

"I don't think I ought to loiter here with a complete stranger," she said coldly. "My Cousin George wouldn't like it."

And, leaving George gaping, she stepped out into the lane and hurried back to the house. All hope of joining up with the picnic was gone now, and she was not feeling any too chirpy as she reached the house.

"Strangers—eh?" she mused. "Well, I'm not supposed to let strangers into the house."

In quite a rebellious mood, she shut the door and closed all the downstairs windows. Five minutes later Cousin George tiptoed up to the house, tried his key in the door, but found that it was bolted.

Muttering, he went to the window, and was using his penknife to force it open when—

"Hah!" said a voice just behind him. A hand dropped on to his shoulder, and Cousin George was swung round, to confront the red-faced, ginger-moustached man, who eyed him grimly.

"Breaking in somewhere else—eh, my lad?" he asked. "This time it shall be the police!"

Cousin George goggled. "Breaking in? But—but this is my home! I live here!" he yelped.

"Is that so? You live here, do you?" said the man grimly.

An upper window opened then, and Hetty looked down.

"Is anything wrong?" she asked. The man looked up, and interrupted George, who had started to speak, by shaking him, having a tight grip on his collar.

"Do you know this young rascal?" he said.

Hetty, her face very solemn, avoided meeting Cousin-George's pleading look and leaned farther out of the window.

"I've been asked not to speak to him," she said. "We are strangers."

"Aha! Strangers—eh?" said the man. "He was just breaking in here."

"Tut-tut-tut!" said Hetty in shocked tone.

Cousin George wriggled desperately. "I live here," he howled, "and she jolly well knows it! She's fooling! Hetty, tell him I live here!"

"Did he break into your house a minute ago?" Hetty asked the man.

"He did. It seems to be a hobby of his, the young rascal, and I'm handing him over to the police!"

Cousin George wriggled and writhed, but the man clutched him in a tight grip.

Hetty, leaning out of the window, made an appeal from the heart.

"Oh, no, not the police! He looks so young and simple," she said. "It may be only a boyish prank, you know. I'll bring you a thick walking-stick."

"Walking-stick?" asked George, puzzled.

"Well, better have a hiding than be handed over to the police!" the Imp observed.

She went back into the upper room, and then skipped with joy. She hadn't the slightest intention of letting Cousin George be given a hiding, but this was where he was taught a lesson not to be so uppish.

Opening the door downstairs, she held out a thick walking-stick to the man.

"Perhaps you're right," said the man. "A good welting would do him good. Prison might ruin him."

Cousin George's face was crimson, and his eyes literally bulged.

"You're not giving me a hiding!" he howled. "I tell you this is my house; and I've got a jolly good explanation why I went into your house, too."

The man looked at Hetty.

"Whose house is this?" he said. "My aunt's," said the Imp. "I live here with her and my Cousin George. He asked me not to speak to this boy, and to treat him as a stranger. He's not supposed to speak to me, either."

The man tightened his grip on George, who looked, wide-eyed with horror, at Hetty. It was the first time Hetty had ever obeyed his orders so implicitly.

"Well, and what have you to say for yourself before I give you the thrashing of your life?" asked the man.

Cousin George gaped at the Imp.

"Hetty," he choked, "you-you're not going to let him set about me?"

"Why did you come to my house?" asked the man sternly.

"Because—because I thought you'd taken some of our stuff. Our silver," said Cousin George.

"Perhaps he thought you were Mr. Snorram," said Hetty mildly. "He may have thought you were breaking into your own house. He isn't very bright."

Cousin George nearly choked.

"I did think you were breaking into your house," he said hurriedly, as the man tightened his grip. "I thought I'd get you red-handed. I thought you were a thief—and I do live here!" he ended, his voice rising. "Gosh! If only Hetty would tell you, you'd know."

"My Cousin George is coming back at any minute," the Imp said. "I think he's taking me to a picnic. Do you know if he is?" she asked Cousin George.

Cousin George swallowed hard and fixed her with a fierce look. But he was trapped, cornered, and knew it.

"Yes," he said, "he—he is. He is taking you to a picnic."

"You've made up the quarrel?" said Hetty eagerly.

"Yes!"

"And I suppose you couldn't get an answer just now and were going to break in to tell me to come to the picnic?"

"Yes, that—that's it," said Cousin George through his teeth.

Hetty smiled at the puzzled man.

"It's all right then. If this boy and Cousin George have made up their quarrel I can speak to him, and it's all right about his trying to break in. As for his getting into your house, he was looking for the man who came here and was supposed to have stolen the silver."

The man frowned doubtfully.

"You're sure this is all right and he's not frightening you into saying it?" he asked.

The Imp shook her head.

"Oh, no! If he does try to intimidate me I'll give a yell," she said. "But you'll see us go out of the gate the best of friends in a minute. And, anyway, if you want proof I've a photo of him here my aunt had taken."

Hetty returned with a silver-framed photograph of Cousin George, and the man nodded. It seemed proof that the boy was known to the household.

"All right," he said, with a nod. "But if he tries to take vengeance for your not letting him in, just tell me, my girl, and I'll deal with him."

Then he gave George a final word of warning.

"In future, young fellow-me-lad, think before you act," he said. "And don't jump to the conclusion that someone getting through their own window is a thief."

He gave a nod to Hetty and strode away, carrying the stick. Remembering it, he turned just as Cousin George was shaking his fist at Hetty.

"Here comes the man," she breathed. Cousin George gave a start of alarm,

not guessing the reason for the man's return.

"Er—pray stand aside, Hetty," he said with dignity.

But the man with the ginger moustache was not to be deceived.

"I saw you," he said grimly.

While the Imp giggled to herself at George's sudden change of expression, the man raised the stick menacingly.

"And I'm not so sure even now that I oughtn't to hand you over to the police, my boy! Just about to strike a girl, indeed!"

Cousin George gaped, and then assumed his most lofty expression.

"Strike a girl?" he repeated. "My dear man, I'm quite above that sort of thing!"

That didn't convince the man, who was rather officious and who found great difficulty in changing his mind once it was made up. He still pondered whether to phone for the police, and had not Aunt Miriam arrived on the scene at that moment he might have done so!

"Dear, dear! What is all this?" demanded Aunt Miriam, scurrying up the drive like a frightened rabbit.

Aunt Miriam was a nervous lady, and the silver-plate was never out of her mind.

"Who is this gentleman, George? Not—not a burglar?"

George gulped and looked sheepishly at Hetty. Hetty affected her most disarming smile, while the man with the ginger moustache goggled at the latest arrival.

"This gentleman?" she said sweetly. "Oh, Mr. Snorram, you know!" While George scowled his blackest scowl.

"Cousin George lent him his walking-stick, didn't you, George?"

George grasped at the excuse like a drowning man clutched at a straw.

"Y-yes, of course, mother," he said weakly, but with enough presence of mind to take the stick from the amazed but now satisfied man. "Thank you"—and when the man, after raising his hat to Aunt Miriam, was out of earshot—

"Mr. Snorram!"

For a moment they watched him go, and then marched into the house. Looking into the sitting-room, he saw his precious cups and the cigarette-box in position. Grim-faced, he strode to the kitchen, where Hetty was already packing the picnic stuff.

"I suppose you think you were very clever?" he asked.

"Clever, Cousin George?" said Hetty. "Oh, no! But you did ask me to treat you as a stranger, and I'd vowed to obey you, you see. But, anyway, you started it all by inventing Mr. Snorram. I call that a silly trick for a grown-up boy."

Cousin George did not reply, because he could think of no impressive denial. Viewed from any angle now, it seemed a particularly feeble dodge that had failed most ignominiously.

For some time Cousin George was gruff and gloomy, until they were actually with the picnic party, in fact, and then, when Violette had commented that he was behaving like a bear and asked Hetty how she put up with him, George brightened. Towards the end of the day, indeed, he was the life and soul of the party.

The Imp, in holiday mood, spent a really merry afternoon, finding that the cakes and buns and all the other supplies tasted just as good as they looked.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

DON'T forget to meet this delightful pair again next week, will you?

Our superb story of the romantic Golden West.

GIRL RIDER OF THE BLUE HILLS!



By
**DORIS
LESLIE**

FOR NEW READERS.

FAY THORNTON lives on the Flying H Ranch in Texas with her father, ROBERT THORNTON, and her two little brothers, Ted and 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. The Hamp-tonians aim another blow when Lucille steals money from the Thorntons. But Fay recovers the money and happily works on her job of organising a big social affair which is shortly to be held in the nearby township, Redland Gulch. In the midst of a rehearsal at the Flying H Ranch-house, John Hampton rides up with some of his cowboys, and actually accuses Fay of having robbed his daughter of the money which Lucille in the first place stole!

(Now read on.)

Hampton's Trump Card!

"COME on, now. Where's that money? You robbed my daughter of close on a hundred and fifty dollars and I want it back—otherwise, I go to the sheriff!"

At first, Fay Thornton was almost paralysed with shock at John Hampton's words. They were so extraordinary, so fantastic. She robbed Lucille! Why, it had been the other way about. Lucille had robbed her and daddy. True, she had recovered the money from Hampton's daughter, but that hardly constituted theft, considering it was their money all the time.

Incredulously she looked at the swarthy-faced man who sat astride the raw-boned horse in the yard of the Flying H Ranch.

Her eyes flashed. It was a plot; a plot to ruin her and daddy; a plot to disgrace them in the eyes of the good folk of Redland Gulch, of whom more than thirty, gathered here for a rehearsal of to-morrow's gala entertainments, were now looking on in frank amazement. A fierce retort trembled on Fay's lips.

And then, as she again realised how utterly ridiculous Hampton's accusation was, her feelings underwent a change.

"Well, if that isn't the limit, Mr.

Hampton," she cried, a grim little smile on her lips. "I robbed your daughter! Just as though you didn't know that it happens to have been the other way round; that she robbed us and I merely got our money back from her!"

"What?" Hampton exclaimed. He managed to look convincingly staggered. "Wha-at?" he repeated, and then, as Fay's father rode up, together with Douglas Lessiter and the rest of the Flying H outfit, Hampton seemed to recover himself. "My dear Miss Thornton," he exclaimed, with a scoffing laugh, "I'm not the sort of man to waste my time bringing a charge of this nature against you if your amazing suggestion happens to be correct. Indeed—"

"What's th' trouble, honey?" asked

A STRANGER IN THE BLUE HILLS . . . THE MAN WHOSE CAPTURE WOULD CLEAR FAY'S FATHER'S NAME!

Fay's father, reining in beside her and flashing a dangerous look at Hampton.

Fay told him, speaking as quietly as she could so as not to rouse daddy more than could be helped. But Robert Thornton had had to contend with so much from this enemy of his. Eyes blazing, he whirled upon the wealthy rancher.

"Now see here, Hampton, you can say what you like 'bout me," Mr. Thornton said threateningly, "but leave my daughter out of it!"

"Oh, I'm not exactly blaming your daughter," Hampton returned smoothly. He studied his finger-nails. "One can't expect too much from the daughter of a suspect cattle-thief, can one?"

A murmur, like a rustling breeze, passed over the gathering. The social workers from Redland Gulch, mostly women, shrank away in sudden alarm, leaving the two rival factions to face one another across the yard—Hampton and his little army of cowboys, and Fay's father and his loyal band of helpers.

One of the Hampton contingent slyly reached for his gun holster. With a cry, Fay flung out her arm. But even before she could utter a sound Tiny Shaw, the lanky foreman of the Flying H, whipped his hand down in one lightning movement.

A glint in the sunshine and there was Tiny, face hard and eyes narrowed peering over the barrel of a six-gun as he covered the Hampton crew.

"Better not, boys," he drawled coolly. "We kin settle our affairs without shootin', I guess."

Very white, very trembly, Fay moved in between the factions.

"Please," she cried, holding up her hand. "Let—let's be sensible for goodness' sake. Tiny—put that away!" she ordered, quite sharply. "Please! Thanks," she said, her voice softer, as Tiny reluctantly complied. "Now, Mr. Hampton, let's get this sorted out!" she went on. "You say I robbed Lucille of that money?"

"I do. And these boys of mine were witnesses!"

It was Douglas Lessiter, the young Englishman, formerly a guest at Hampton's palatial ranch, who intervened at this point.

"A fine bunch of witnesses they are," he declared scornfully. "Offer them ten dollars and they'd witness anything."

Hampton's swarthy face went darker than ever.

"You keep out of this, you treacherous pup!" he barked. "A fine specimen you are, pretending to be my friend, accepting my hospitality, and then, at the first opportunity, going over to these—these twisters!"

"I think I've a pretty good reason for what I've done, Mr. Hampton," Douglas returned. "And perhaps you won't need to rack your brains to know what I'm driving at."

Fay, watching Hampton, saw his features tighten, and then, as she glanced at Douglas, suddenly conscious of the significant tone he had used, she became aware of a strange, meaning look in his eyes as he held Hampton's flickering gaze.

Her heart beat queerly. Once again she found herself wondering—was Douglas exactly what he appeared to be, or was he nursing to himself some mystery, some secret?

Undoubtedly Hampton had been disconcerted by Douglas' words, and—but Fay mentally shook herself. That could

wait. She had got to explode Hampton's preposterous charge against her!

"O.K.," she said, nodding. "I'll admit it. I did take that money from Lucille—because," she added, her voice rising with sudden anger, "it belonged to us and she'd stolen it from our ranch. What would you say if I proved where we got the money from in the first place, Mr. Hampton?" she finished challengingly.

Fay looked at the social workers, and her heart leaped as she saw some of them nod, and heard what some were saying.

"Reckon there wouldn't be much doubt then!"

"Well, all right," said Hampton coolly. He folded his arms. "Where did you get the money?"

"From Abe Preston, at Fort Dallas. We sold him some cattle."

"Sold him cattle? When?"

"A few days ago," Fay returned evenly.

"A strange smile flickered across Hampton's face.

"Queer. You don't seem to have got rid of any."

"They aren't due to be delivered until Monday," said Fay.

"What!" he exclaimed. "You mean to say Preston paid you in advance? A likely yarn!"

He turned to the crowd appealingly.

"Now I ask you, folk—does it sound feasible? A hard-boiled, matter-of-fact business man like Preston gives a hundred and fifty or more dollars to the Thorntons—when he must have heard a few things about them," Hampton added meaningly, "and doesn't want anything in return for nearly a week. It's the most ridiculous yarn I've ever struck!"

Fay clenched her hands.

Only too plainly Hampton's words had taken effect. People were whispering among themselves, looking at her doubtfully. But wait! Hampton hadn't won yet. Cunning though he was, he made a ridiculously foolish mistake.

"Just a minute, Mr. Hampton," Fay said slowly. "You say you don't believe we were paid two hundred dollars by Preston?"

"Is anyone here lunatic enough to believe it?" Hampton sneered.

"Then, supposing I prove we were?" Fay challenged. "Supposing I ride over to Fort Dallas and bring Preston here to back up what I say?"

And a smile spread over her face, for naturally that would be the last thing Hampton would want her to do, considering that his accusation was just the wildest of lies.

Her words, spoken quietly, nevertheless had held a ring of determination and sincerity that was unmistakably convincing. All but a few of the townsfolk began to have their doubts about Hampton's charge.

"Waal, I guess young Fay seems to mean what she says," one woman murmured.

"Sure you ain't mistaken, Mr. Hampton?" asked a man. "It's a pretty strong accusation you've made."

And Hampton? Well, smiling, he gave a little shrug.

"Oh, I'm not making any mistake!" he said suavely. "The girl's a thief all right. But if she thinks she can stall me off until the morning by pretending to call on Preston, I'm willing to let her try it. All right!" he said, looking at Fay. "I'll be here at nine o'clock to-morrow morning—sharp! It ought to be mighty interesting to see what sort of a story you've had time to concoct by then. Come on, boys!" he jerked to his henchmen.

Abruptly he turned his horse and rode out of the yard. After a final

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

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—Thank you all so much! For what? Why, for the scores and scores of delightful postcards you have sent me during the past few days.

They're really lovely, not only because of the friendly things you say on the back of them, but because of the attractive fronts. Most of them depict a scene at your own holiday resort; a few of them are graced with an illustrated joke, all most gaily coloured, and often very funny.

I'm delighted to know you're enjoying yourselves so much. I can just picture you lucky young things now, bathing in the sparkling sea, or lolling comfortably in a nice deck chair, listening to the band, or strolling down some pretty country lane.

Well, go on making the most of your holiday, won't you? And then you'll return to school again feeling more like tackling the more serious things.

Which reminds me—your Cliff House favourites return to school next week. As a matter of fact, Babs & Co., thanks to all those thrilling adventures in quest of pirate treasure, arrived several days after the new term had commenced—not that they are very upset on that score. So far as Bessie is concerned, she wouldn't mind being five or six years late!

But once they are back at the old familiar, beloved school, something happens which drives everything else from the chums' minds. It concerns Janet Jordan.

An amazing transformation has come over Janet. Not only has she money to spend—her father having suddenly become wealthy—but, never one to dote on dress, she is now clad in the height of fashion, and her hair is dyed. Moreover, she is accompanied by a very ultra-modern, very sophisticated and vivacious young Frenchwoman whom she met on holiday.

Charming enough her friend appears to be. Babs & Co. find themselves adoring her. All that is, except Tom-boy Clara Trevlyn, and she discovers something which tells her Janet's new-found friend is not what she appears to be; that she is, in brief, not a genuine friend at all.

Janet, however, won't hear a word said against the Frenchwoman. Defiantly she challenges Clara, for so long her dearest friend. And so there is drama, suspicion, and more than one big thrill; but even so there is quite a lot of gaiety.

Don't miss this grand story. It reveals Hilda Richards at her best.

As usual, of course, next week's issue will contain another topping COMPLETE "Cousin George and the 'Imp'" story, further fascinating chapters of "Girl Rider of the Blue Hills," and more of Patricia's Bright and Interesting Pages; so order your copy well in advance.

With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

glaring match with Mr. Thornton's outfit, the Lazy T punchers followed their boss.

Thoughtfully Fay watched them go. Straggle, she was thinking, with a puzzled frown. Hampton must know that Preston could shatter his accusation. And yet he had shown no alarm, no dismay. Readily he had agreed to give her time.

As the clatter of the Lazy T men's horses slowly died away along the trail, and little clouds of dust eddying in their wake, there came a cry from nine-year-old Ted.

"Golly, he—he called you a thief, sis!" the youngster burst out furiously. "You ain't gonna stand for that, are you, sis?"

And Ted, looking both quaint and businesslike in his Redskin outfit, gripped his wooden tomahawk as though longing to get to work with it on their wealthy neighbour.

"Don't you worry, old man," Fay said. She smiled and patted Ted's arm. "Just you run along and have a game—you, too, Bobbie!" she added, ruffling the younger boy's curly hair. "Go and do some hunting on the other side of the corral, there's good chaps!"

Only too glad of the chance, the boys tore away. Then Mr. Thornton, leaping from his horse, came to Fay's side. The others moved close.

"Hampton must be crazy, honey!" her father snapped. "He knows we never stole that dough. An—an' I'm sure proud of yoh, th' way yoh stood up to him, lass!" Mr. Thornton said, pressing her shoulder.

"Oh, that wasn't so very hard—it never is when you're in the right, I guess," Fay said simply. "But look, daddy. We don't want to waste time. I'll ride over to Fort Dallas right now. I'd like to clear this up myself."

Ten miles there—ten miles back; that was, if she took the short route through the Blue Hills. Why, it was easy. Hampton must be crazy, as daddy said.

She turned towards the social workers.

"You folk can carry on without me, can't you?" she said.

"Waal, yes; seein' how well yuh've planned everything," one of them agreed.

"Thanks!" Fay said, and forced a smile.

She had to force it. It was a bitter disappointment for her to neglect the rehearsal, for this spectacular set-piece, depicting the attack on a ranch by a band of redskins, and culminating in the arrival of help just as the little homestead burst into flames, was to be the big event of the great gala day to-morrow. But it could be managed without her. Everyone knew their duties to perfection.

It was less than ten minutes later that Fay, looking extremely businesslike and yet attractive in her broad-brimmed stetson, checked shirt, serviceable riding-breeches, high-heeled topboots, and frilly gauntlet gloves, sprang on to Starlight's back outside the corral.

Her father, grim, but smiling, clasped her hand proudly as she reached down towards him. Douglas grinned cheerily up at her. Tiny Shaw, Lefty Mason, the rest of the outfit, and all the social people were there, too.

For one and all realised that, although the journey to Fort Dallas was comparatively simple, its purpose meant all the difference between honour and disgrace to the Thorntons.

"Well, so long, everybody. See you later."

And Fay, with a gay little laugh and a wave of her stetson, cantered away over the yard.

AT ALMOST that identical moment, John Hampton, riding abreast of one of his men just past the fork in the trail, gave a deep chuckle.

"I'll bet that Thornton girl thinks she's got me on the hop. Me, Seth? Huh, huh, huh!" He flung back his head. "Ain't that just too rich? She's going to look pretty sick, Seth, when she discovers what my trump card is—just how neatly she's been tricked! A pity we shan't be at Fort Dallas to see her face. And in the morning," he added, his face hardening. "I'll sure have the Thorntons where I want them."

He laughed again, and the rest of the riders, exchanging grins, joined in!

Starlight's Vital Race!

"GEE, old man, you sure were thirsty. But you feel a whole heap better now, I guess!"

And Fay, reaching down, affectionately patted Starlight's damp neck.

It was an hour later, and they were on the other side of the Blue Hills, enjoying a brief halt at a small, bubbling stream, where Starlight was slaking his thirst.

A soothing breeze played about them. Deepening shadows told of the near approach of night.

With a final, noisy gulp Starlight lifted his head, turning it as though asking for another caress. Willingly enough Fay patted him again.

"Good boy!" she said. "You're doing swell. And now you're eager to get going again, eh? Well, I'm ready."

And Fay swung up into the saddle. The next mile was over sandy country, where cactus grew in such profusion that Fay donned the leather chaps fastened to her saddle to protect her legs from the prickly plants.

Hot and dusty, they reached a valley, and, passing through it, steadily ascended a long slope until at last they struck a worn trail.

And there Fay's eyes, scanning the distance, lit up.

Fort Dallas!

At last they were within sight of it. There it was, down in the valley, a multitude of twinkling lights, like fireflies.

"Down we go, old boy!" Fay cried cheerily.

And down they went, swiftly, unflatteringly. In parts the trail was steep and the stones loose and treacherous, but Starlight trod them easily enough, as sure-footed as a mountain-goat.

Fort Dallas loomed larger and larger. Buildings began to take shape—the bank, the town hall, a big hotel.

It was nearly two years since Fay had visited the place, and she found much to interest her as she rode through, for Preston's home was a couple of miles out of town.

Mrs. Preston opened the door to her when eventually she arrived at the house of the cattle-dealer.

"Hallo!" Fay said, with a cheery smile, as Preston's pleasant young wife regarded her in astonishment. "Guess it is sorter unexpected, my popping up like this, Mrs. Preston, but could I see Mr. Preston?"

"My dear, he's not here," Mrs. Preston began. "The day before yesterday he set off to visit some of the ranges, and—"

"Oh, of course!" Fay said. "I remember. He always does that at this time of year, doesn't he? But none of them are very far, are they? Do you know which one he'd be at now?"



AT speed Fay rode alongside the moving train. "Mr. Preston!" she shouted breathlessly. "I've got to talk to you!"

It was then that Mrs. Preston dropped her bombshell.

"He won't be at any, Miss Thornton. He's finished visitin', I guess—reckoned on doin' that by this morning. He's going east for several days; catching the eight o'clock train from Symonsville!"

"Symonsville?"

Fay echoed the word in a tone of stricken dismay.

Symonsville! Oh golly! But—but that was over twenty miles from here.

And Preston was catching a train at eight o'clock; he'd be away for days!

"Oh, Mrs. Preston, please," she cried, "what time is it now?"

The woman glanced at her watch.

"A quarter to seven. You'd never do it, Miss Thornton. I'm dreadfully sorry. If Abe had known he'd have waited till to-morrow, I'm sure. Although he's off on business for Hampton it's not urgent, an' I know, as you're old friends of ours, he'd—"

But Fay did not want to hear any more. Convulsively she had clutched at the woman's arm. Almost fiercely she said:

"Hampton! He knew Mr. Preston was catching that train?"

"Why, sure! Abe told him two days ago—"

Fay set her lips. Anger and resentment welled up within her. She could understand now why Hampton had not minded her riding out here. He had known all along that Preston was going east; had been convinced she'd be too late to catch him.

But she wasn't! She'd get Preston even now!

"Please," she cried, "can you get a message to my dad?"

"One of our boys is riding to Redland Gulch shortly, but—"

"Then please, Mrs. Preston, ask him to tell daddy I'm all right. Ask him to explain what's happened and say I've gone after your husband and I'll be back as soon as I can. And—and— Oh, that's all, I reckon, except thanks so much, and—so-long!"

And next moment, while the startled woman was still trying to say something, Fay darted towards Starlight, leaped into the saddle, and went tearing away like the wind.

Over twenty miles to go, and an hour and a quarter in which to do it! It seemed almost madness to try. But she'd got to try. If she didn't, if she failed to reach the railroad in time to get hold of Preston; Hampton would be able to force his false charge against her.

mile upon mile was blazed away beneath Starlight's pounding hoofs. Never had the range pony shown such fortitude, such courage, such devotion to the call of his mistress. And never had Fay taken such risks, daring precipice, canyon, treacherous bog and marsh—everything that stood in their way.

At last—Symonsville! Into the main street, brilliantly illuminated, they clattered on their desperate race.

People stopped on the pavements to stare at them; others, leisurely crossing the road, suddenly became galvanised into leaping, springing figures making a frantic dive out of the way.

With a flurry of dust, Fay sent Starlight around a corner. The railroad showed a quarter of a mile ahead. As they tore towards it the night air was rent by a screech.

The whistle! Almost eight o'clock.

"Faster, old boy—just for a little while," Fay begged desperately.

There was no platform at the railroad, and Fay, riding up, made for the rear of the train. It was about to start. Not a sign of Preston among the staring crowd. Not a sign of him on the observation car of the train. Riding slowly towards the engine, she scanned window after window.

A commotion broke out behind her.

"Stand away, thar! Hi, is that gal crazy? Collar her, some of you guys!"

From various directions people started towards Fay. At the same moment, with another piercing screech and a sudden lurch, the train started on its journey.

Almost frantic now, Fay rode beside the train, overtaking coach after coach and scrutinising one passenger after another. And then all at once her heart gave a wild, exultant leap.

Standing in the doorway of one of the Pullmans near the engine, and waving to several ranchers, was the man she had come so far to see.

Wildly she signalled. At the top of her voice she shouted:

"Mr. Preston! Mr. Preston!"

And she went tearing towards him; but not for more than a few yards, because a crowd of determined men, among them a uniformed stationmaster, sprang full in Fay's path, completely barring the way.

The Mystery Gunman!

WITHOUT a second's hesitation Fay made up her mind as to the best thing to do.

If she reined in, Preston would be gone even before she could argue with that mass of men. But if she kept straight on, rode right at them, keyed up to bring Starlight to a slithering halt at a moment's notice, there was still a chance of averting failure.

"At them, boy!" she urged, and rode like an attacking cavalryman.

The ruse succeeded. The men suddenly scattered in all directions, and Fay rode through the gap before they had time to recover. A couple of seconds later she was racing neck and neck with the train, shouting to the astounded cattle-dealer.

"Mr. Preston!" she shouted breathlessly. "I've got to talk to you! That money you gave us for cattle—"

And then, while Preston, clinging to the hand-rail, stared down at her, muttering "Suffering rattlesnakes!" and other choice expressions of astonishment, Fay plunged into details—just enough to tell him the matter was urgent.

Preston didn't waste time once she had finished. Within thirty seconds, using the inner door of the Pullman as a vertical desk, he had scrawled something on the back of a visiting card. Then, leaning out, he thrust it into Fay's hand.

Eagerly she clutched it; tremblingly she stared at it. Not only had Preston written: "Mr. Robert Thornton received two hundred dollars from me on Wednesday, August 6th," but he'd actually added the serial numbers of the notes.

From head to foot Fay glowed. Her whole being seemed transformed. Every vestige of worry and anxiety had vanished. Hampton's latest attempt to ruin them had been frustrated, after all. And now—

"Well done, old boy!" she murmured to Starlight, as they slowed down, and the train bore Preston on his way around a curve. "Now everything in the garden's just gorgeous! Oh, gee, I'm longing to see daddy again! And I'm just dying to see Hampton's face when he learns!—Whoopee!"

Gaily she patted Starlight's neck. No need to hurry now. All was well.

SEVEN O'CLOCK next morning!

Those same Blue Hills were again casting their elongated shadows across the valley, but this time the sun was rising over their peaks, banishing the early mist, and filling everything with new warmth, new life.

And that was how Fay Thornton felt—wonderfully invigorated; full of happiness, and simply longing to get back home and see daddy and the youngsters. And then, of course, the great social event in Redland Gulch.

Only an hour's ride, and she would be back at the Flying H, for Fay had spent the night at Lefty Mason's home

in the Blue Hills, and now, tightening the saddle girths about Starlight, was thanking her hostess for her hospitality.

Lefty himself wasn't there. Lefty spent a good many nights in the Flying H bunkhouse, and last night had been one of them. But his pretty young wife, still unable to conceal her gratitude she felt for the way in which Fay had saved their tiny daughter from a cattle stampede, had more than made up for her husband's absence.

Fondly she smiled at Fay from the doorway of the little shack.

"I'm sure mighty glad everything's runnin' so well now for you and yore dad, Miss Fay," she declared. "A pretty rough time you've been having, from what Lefty has told me."

"Everything's going to keep on running well, too," Fay declared, her eyes sparkling. "Are you coming to see the fun to-day? Oh, goody! Tina'll love it, especially the cowboy and Indian show."

Mrs. Mason nodded eagerly, and then suddenly looked at Fay with serious face.

"I'm glad all that cattle-rustlin' has died off recently," she said. "Pretty queer, wasn't it? I mean, no one seems to have an idea who it really is. It isn't yore dad, I know," she added, with hasty emphasis; "but it must be someone, nat' rally."

Fay nodded. She, too, was looking rather thoughtful now, although the laughter had by no means gone from her eyes.

"It sure is mighty strange," she agreed. "But dad and me have got one clue, you know. We found a saddle-bag at the rodeo, and we're plumb certain it belonged to one of the real cattle-thieves."

Without going too much into details, she told Lefty's wife about that saddle-bag; how it had held a running-iron—an implement used by cattle-thieves for changing the brand on cattle—together with a photograph of a man. It was that photograph, as Fay pointed out, which they were hoping would lead them on the trail of the rustling gang.

"Daddy's been making inquiries in Ainsworth, as a matter of fact," she concluded, "and he's still waiting to hear. But I'd better be getting along. Mustn't forget that little appointment with Mr. Hampton at nine o'clock!" she added, a twinkle in her eyes.

With an athletic spring, she landed in the saddle, and then, turning Starlight's head towards the honeycomb of canyon and ravines which cut through the solid rock of the Blue Hills, she gave a brisk salute and rode away.

Goodness wasn't she excited!

Daddy would be so jubilant when she reported her success, so would Douglas and the other hands. And as for John Hampton—

"Oh, gee, I'm just dying to see his face!" Fay mused. "And serve him right!" she added, rather angrily. "It's about time he was made to look small, trying to ruin daddy time after time! Mighty funny, too!" she pondered, and frowned all at once. "Can't see why he wants to. I know he'd like to buy up our little land, but there seems more in it than that, I guess, and—"

It was at this stage that Fay's ruminations came to an abrupt stop.

She had long since entered a narrow, tortuous canyon, to emerge all at once into a spot where it widened. Something in the middle of the open space made Fay slow down, staring.

It was a small camp—a still-smoking fire, some blankets, a saddle-bag, and, grazing at the sparse grass near one of the rugged, towering walls of rock, a solitary horse.

Reining in, Fay regarded the scene in sudden swift interest.

A camp in the Blue Hills was by no means unusual. Travellers, making for one of the distant districts, would often come this way as a short-cut and shake down for a night at such a convenient, sheltered spot.

But there was something about the horse that struck Fay as being queer.

Although it was quite placidly feeding from the few sparse clumps of grass available, and seemed perfectly content to laze, it was plainly saddled up ready for an instant getaway.

Its saddle girths were tightened, other blankets were strapped across its back, and there was a powerful-looking repeating rifle resting in a sling down one of its flanks.

"Wonder what sort of fellow it belongs to?" Fay mused.

Again, she looked at the dying fire, the blankets, the saddle-bag. Naturally, there was nothing about any of those objects to reveal the nature of their owner. Intrigued, Fay looked up; with quite an expectant light in her eyes she stared about her, and then, from the other side of the little valley, saw a man emerge from behind a rock.

In a twinkling, Fay had backed Starlight out of sight behind some bushes.

Tensely, her heart commencing to thump, she parted the bushes and peered out at the stranger.

A startlingly impressive man, in all truth. Instantly, she had been struck by the air of furtiveness about him. But now, as he slouched towards the remnants of the camp-fire, she became aware of other and even more significant details.

He was thick-set and tall. As he walked his long arms dangled at his sides, now and again obscuring from view two objects which glittered in the sun. Fay caught in her breath at sight of them—six-guns, snugly set in well-oiled holsters that were tied down to his thighs.

A gunman! No doubt about that, and one who—Fay's veins tingled to the strangest of thrills as, reaching the fire, he sat down, turning in her direction. His face! She'd seen it before. Oh, she was sure of it! But where—where?

And then, like a blinding shaft of light, remembrance flooded her brain.

This was the man whose photo she and daddy had found—the man daddy had been trying to trace! The man was a rustler!

Sudden fear gripped Fay's heart; but next instant exultation surged through her, momentarily banishing her qualms at the danger she was in should this man discover he was spied upon.

She must get back to the Flying H as soon as possible. This was one of the men for whose misdeeds daddy had been blamed, and if he were apprehended it might lead to the rounding-up of the entire gang of cattle-thieves—and the complete vindication of her father!

AT last a chance to clear her father! See how Fay takes that chance in next Saturday's chapters.