

**"JUST THE FIREBRAND'S WAY!"**

Fascinating LONG COMPLETE  
story of Cliff House School  
inside.

# THE SCHOOLGIRL

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EVERY **2<sup>D</sup>** SATURDAY

Incorporating  
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



**"I'LL COMPETE FOR  
CLIFF HOUSE—BUT ON  
MY OWN TERMS!"**

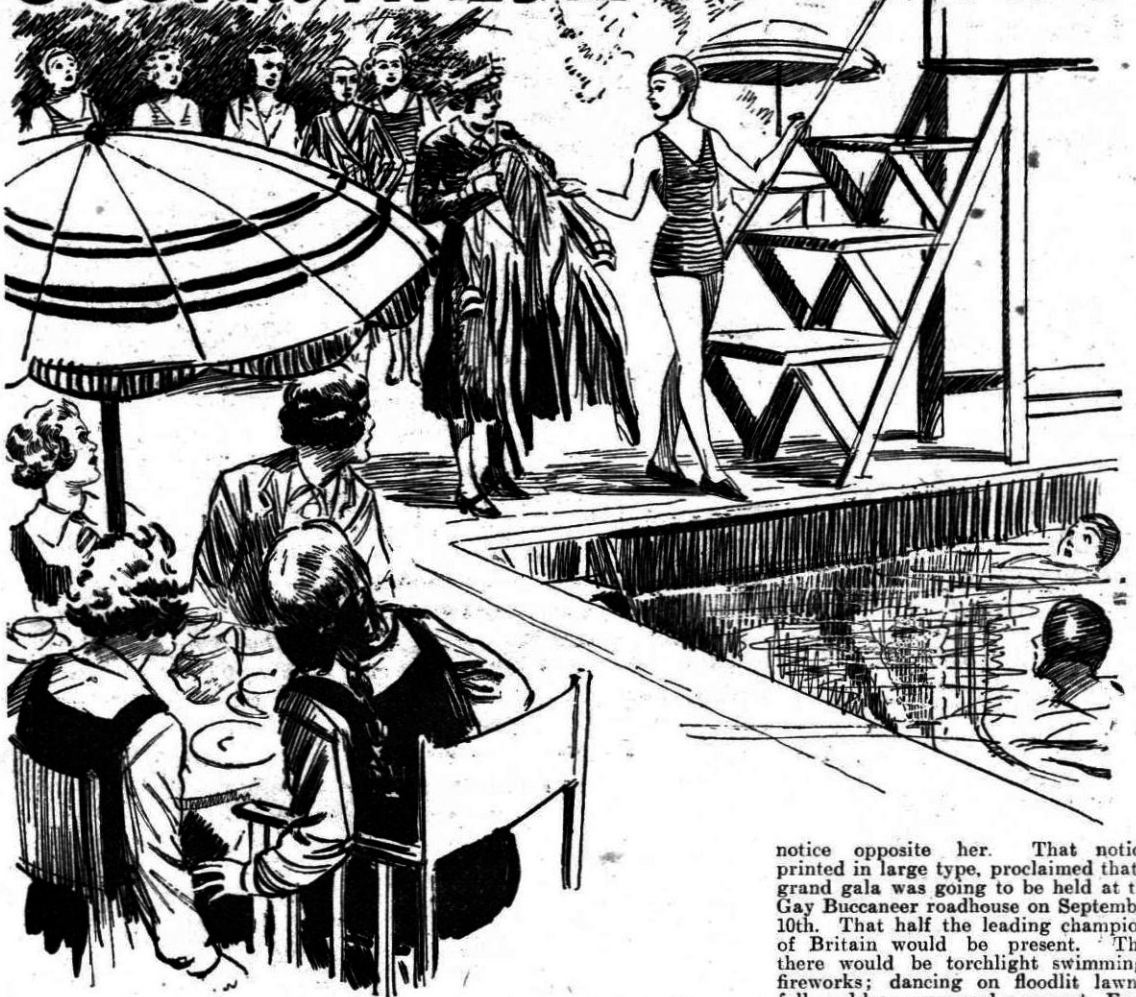
Haughty Diana, defying even  
mistresses to get her own way.

See this week's fine Babs & Co.  
story.



Magnificent LONG COMPLETE Cliff House story, featuring Barbara Redfern & Co., the chums of the Fourth Form, and stormy, spectacular Diana Royston-Clarke.

# JUST *the* FIREBRAND'S WAY!



## Diana is So Patronising!



"WELL, it's certainly going to be marvellous," said Barbara Redfern, captain of the Cliff House Fourth Form, with a sigh in her voice. "And if we can't compete, girls, we can watch. Who says buying tickets afterwards?"

"What-ho!" supported Tomboy Clara Trevlyn. "All the same, I do think they might have stretched a point. Why fix the age limit at seventeen? There must be hundreds of girls under that age who'd just love to take part in the gala."

Golden-haired Mabel Lynn, Babs' especial chum, nodded agreement.

"Which," she observed, "is probably the reason why they have fixed an age limit. Still, it does look like being a good show. Worth watching, anyway. The dancing and fireworks will be fun, too."

"And the supper," said fat, bespectacled Bessie Burt. "Dud-don't

forget the supper, you know! If you get the tickets, Babs, don't forget to get the supper tickets!"

Barbara Redfern smiled. But her eyes, fixed upon the flamboyant notice on the other side of the magnificent swimming pool at the Gay Buccaneer roadhouse, were still a little misty. In the pool, between them, four other Cliff House girls splashed with merry glee.

The occasion was a half-holiday at Cliff House School, and Babs, Bessie, Mabs, Clara, Janet Jordan, and Christine Wilmer of the Fourth Form had decided to spend it at the roadhouse pool. Under one of the shady parasols on the bank, Babs, Bessie, Clara, and Mabs were just finishing tea. Janet and Christine Wilmer, as fond as fish of the water, were still playing an hilarious game of water leapfrog, with Georgina Skeppington and Joan Carson, of Cliff House's Lower Fifth, joining in. Good swimmers these—all four of them—especially Fourth Former Janet Jordan and Georgina, whose high diving was considered as being second only to that of Diana Royston-Clarke.

But Babs was not watching them. Rather wistfully she was staring at the

notice opposite her. That notice, printed in large type, proclaimed that a grand gala was going to be held at the Gay Buccaneer roadhouse on September 10th. That half the leading champions of Britain would be present. That there would be torchlight swimming; fireworks; dancing on floodlit lawns; followed by supper and a concert. From two o'clock until nearly midnight the fun would wax fast and furious.

As Mabs remarked, it would be worth watching. Most certainly they would watch. On the other hand, it was a great pity that entries were limited to girls over seventeen, for Babs & Co., and Georgina and Joan, fell very far short of that limit. Wouldn't it have been grand to take an active part? Wouldn't it—

"Hey!" Clara said suddenly. "What do I see?"

She jerked her head towards the deep end of the bath. From behind a cubicle half a dozen girls and a woman emerged. Five of the girls and the woman wore the well-known and highly respected costume of the Neptunian Swimming Club of Courtfield—a most exclusive and famous organisation which rightly prided itself upon having turned out more champions than any other club in the country.

It was the sixth girl of the party, however, which immediately captured the chums' interest.

She was not dressed in the Neptunian costume. More striking, more con-

spicuous than anyone else was she. Her costume was a combination of red, white, and green stripes, clinging to a figure which was perfect in its shapeliness. On her head she wore a shimmering cap that glistened with a golden hue, yet, cunningly matching her costume, was edged with red, white, and green. From out of the cap peered a face perfect in its oval outlines, creamy-pink in its complexion, its compelling blue eyes dancing yet supercilious.

"Dud-Diana!" breathed Babs.

Diana Royston-Clarke, the stormy firebrand of the Fourth Form, it was—Diana, obviously revelling in her new role. Diana, the over-riding and over-bearing, but still Diana the regal, Diana the incomparable.

"But—but what," asked Mabel Lynn, "is she doing with the Neptunian crowd?"

That was the question. There she was—obviously on the friendliest of terms with the aristocratic swimmers of the famous Courtfield club.

For a moment she looked towards the Cliff House group and gave a slight start. Then her lips parted in a gracious smile, and languidly she raised a hand and waved it in acknowledgment. Janet, scrambling out of the bath, blinked.

"I say, that's Diana!" she said. "But gee! What a costume! Babs, she doesn't belong to the Neptunian, does she?"

"How can she belong to the Neptunian?" Clara retorted. Clara was a mine of information on all local sport. "The Neptunian's a club for girls over seventeen. Diana's only fifteen. Not that yet."

Which was true. Diana, indeed, was several months short of fifteen, though she had often been mistaken in the past for seventeen, and even more.

Christine, Georgina, and Joan, who had seen the appearance of Diana, now came scrambling out of the bath. Watching Diana was a pastime of absorbing interest at most times. They saw the woman—obviously an instructress—talking to her. They saw her beckon one of the other girls—a tall, thin, spare girl, not too good-looking, but whose supple frame suggested good swimming possibilities. They saw Diana give a careless nod, and, with another glance towards them, mount the steps which led to the high diving-board.

"Swanker! Cadged a practice with the Neptunians!" Clara sniffed. "Just like Di's conceit to single out the crack local swimmers!"

"Shush! Watch her," said Babs.

They were all watching. Up, up Diana was climbing. Ignoring the first diving-platform, she climbed on towards the top, and, reaching it, languidly patted her cap and tripped towards the edge of the board. The chums, in fascination, strained their necks upwards.

"Oh crumbs! I—I hope she doesn't fuf-fall off!" Bessie stammered.

Babs smiled. No fear of that. Diana, a monument of graceful confidence, was not acknowledged the best diver in Cliff House for nothing. Now she was putting her hands together, inclining her graceful body forward. Now! And they all gasped as she took off, gliding through the air like some wingless bird. She hit water, and with a few effortless strokes forced herself upwards again. From the Neptunians went up a clap. It was followed by a cheer from Babs & Co.

"Oh, my hat!" said Georgina Skeppington. "What a dive! Did you ever see anything more beautiful in your life, Babs?"

## By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

Babs hadn't. She was still quivering to the thrill of it even now. Diana, with a laugh, scrambled out of the bath, her face flushed, triumphant, and for a moment she turned towards them. Another burst of clapping went up from the Neptunians as she approached, but Babs noticed that the tall, thin, spare girl did not join in. She, in fact, seemed rather resentful.

Now there was a discussion among the Neptunians. The instructress was pointing. And then, as the chums watched, the thin, spare girl mounted to the top diving-board, and, placing her hands together, dived downwards. It was a good dive, an expert dive.

"But not so good as Diana," Georgina Skeppington said, with a shake of the head.

She was right. Good diver though the girl was, she had neither Diana's coolness nor grace.

Another discussion. Diana was laughing now. Easy to see she was pleased and thrilled. For the second time she mounted the board. This time she hurled herself outward, and the chums gasped as she turned a somersault in midair, straightening out just in time to cleave the water in an almost perfect

wants? Pretty good, wasn't it? See the instructress? She's Miss Cannon!"

"My hat! The champion high diver of England?" gasped Georgina.

"Just that," Diana smiled. "Makes you stare, doesn't it? And that girl, Cathy Jerrold, who I've just been diving against, is the club's champion. So-long, now! See you later!"

And she strolled away, while Cathy, with a far from pleasant look on her face, heaved herself out of the water.

The chums blinked. They remembered Cathy herself now. Cathy Jerrold, the Neptunian champion—Cathy, who Diana had so obviously beaten. Swank Diana might, but perhaps there was some justification for her swank when she had performed so marvellously against a champion.

"Oh, that we were only in the gala!" sighed Joan Carson.

Oh, that they were! But, as Babs pointed out again, they were all under age. It was a great shame, really, with girls of the calibre of Diana Royston-Clarke, Georgina Skeppington, and Janet Jordan, who was the fastest swimmer over half a mile that Cliff House possessed. But there it was. Cliff House—except, of course, for a few senior girls—was doomed, for once, to watch.

The chums were talking of the pity of it as, having dressed and grabbed up their bicycles, they all rode back to school again.

But there a surprise awaited them. Miss Belling, the pretty assistant

**Diana in her element! Lofty, conceited, she regally lords herself in an exclusive swimming club, far more anxious to represent them in an important gala than her own school. No wonder Babs & Co. are resentful. But the time comes when Diana is only too ready to turn back to Cliff House for a chance to win coveted honours—and then it is that her pride suffers a terrible blow. What does Diana do? Well, hot-tempered as ever, Diana fights back—in the most surprising fashion!**

dive, and, shooting in a great arc beneath it, to come up in the middle of the bath, laughing all over her face.

"Pretty good, eh?" Babs said.

"Could you better that, Georgina?"

"I couldn't," Georgina said frankly.

"I don't think even a professional could. Well done, Di!"

Diana laughed at her. But again the thin girl was ascending the steps. A moment's pause as she steadied herself on the edge of the board, then—whiz! down she came. Again the somersault was executed; but there was none of the perfection of Diana's timing about it, and the girl made rather a clumsy recovery just as she hit the water.

Diana laughed.

"Hard luck, Cathy!" she said. "Like me to show you how to do it?"

Cathy, treading water, scowled. She glared at Diana.

"No love lost between those two, eh?" Clara Trevlyn grinned.

"Hey, Diana!"

Diana, scrambling out of the bath, turned haughtily.

"Talking to me?" she sneered.

"Of course I'm talking to you, nunny!" Clara said. "Pretty good spot of diving!" she added. "But what's the big idea—diving with the Neptunians? I thought—"

Diana threw another nervous glance towards her new friends.

"But why shouldn't I dive with the Neptunians?" she asked. "I suppose one can dive with one's friends, if one

mistress who acted as the school's swimming instructress, came bustling to meet them as they walked from the cycle sheds.

Her face was beaming with smiles.

"Oh, Barbara—Janet—all of you!" she said. "I've got some news for you. You've heard of the gala at the Gay Buccaneer?"

"That's the only thing we can talk about," Babs laughed.

The mistress broke into a rippling laugh.

"Well, then, here's the news!" she cried. "You can take part! No, wait a minute. Don't overwhelm me with questions! Let me explain. You know, of course, that the roadhouse is organising the gala—with the assistance of the Neptunian Swimming Club. The gala purposely fixed the age limit, in the first place, because they would have been overwhelmed with entries from the neighbouring schools; and in that case, of course, they would never have got through the programme—"

"But—but didn't you say—"

Clara stammered.

"Yes; I'm coming to that. We all thought it was rather a pity—myself and other mistresses, I mean. So we set an agitation on foot, and to-day, at a meeting of the gala committee, we drew up a plan. The gala, in consequence, is to be thrown open to girls between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, but to avoid being overwhelmed, the committee has decided to limit the



entries to one team per school—a team being composed of eight girls."

"Oh my hat!" Clara said. "And you—"

"I," Miss Belling smiled, "have the arrangements for Cliff House in hand. I've already made a rough draft of the team, though, of course, it will not be final. Janet, I shall want you for the half-mile."

"Cheers!" sang Clara.

"Barbara, you for the quarter-mile. Flora Cann for the hundred yards. You, Clara, for the long distance—you did well in the school sports, didn't you? Rosa Rodworth for the fancy diving; Tonie Christy for the 200 yards breaststroke; Christine, you for the 150 yards backstroke. The only position to fill," Miss Belling went on thoughtfully, "is the candidate for the high diving. That rests between you, Georgina, and Diana."

Georgina flushed, while the chums exchanged excited, gleeful glances.

"Well," Georgina unselfishly said, "Diana won the championship of the school—"

"But you, my dear, were a very, very good second," Miss Belling said sweetly. "And I have noticed Diana has not been practising so much as you have lately."

"Well, she was practising this afternoon, and she was just stunning!" Georgina said. "I—I'd like to be in the team—awfully; but I'm not up to Diana's form, Miss Belling. After all, we do want the best possible team we can scrape together."

"I say, that's sporting!" Babs said; and looked admiringly towards Georgina, knowing in her heart what that sacrifice must have cost the girl from the Lower Fifth. "All the same—"

"You think Georgina as good as Diana?" Miss Belling questioned.

"Well, I—I wouldn't like to say," Babs flushed. "At the same time, I shouldn't say there was much to choose between them. Perhaps, if anything—"

"No, Babs, please say it!" Georgina begged.

"Well, per-haps Diana is just a wee bit better," Babs said. "Georgie, I don't mean—"

"No, of course," Georgina smiled. "We've just all got to think of the school, haven't we?" she earnestly added. "If—if Diana doesn't want to dive, then I'll do it with pleasure. But I do think she ought to have first chance."

"Very well," Miss Belling said; and glanced with glowing appreciation at the Fifth Former. "I'll put Diana down. Tell her to come and see me as soon as she comes in."

She strolled off, with a smile. Babs & Co., excited, over-bubbling, made their way into the school.

There they found great excitement. Everybody had heard by this time of the gala committee's concession; everybody, also, had their idea of the composition of the team. In the main, Miss Belling's choices were approved, though to be sure there were some girls who privately thought themselves better than any selected. But the majority were agreed on the subject of the high-diving representative.

"Diana it is, then," Babs said. "Diana's our champion. But where," she added, staring round, "is Diana?"

"Yoicks! Here!" a voice said, and into the crowded Big Hall strolled the languid figure of the firebrand. "What's the matter? School on fire or something?" she added. "What's the fuss?"

"Diana, it's you! You've been

selected to represent the school in the high diving," Babs said. "Miss Belling's got a junior team together for the gala, and you're in it! Now what about that?"

Diana shrugged.

"I know," she said. "I've just seen Miss Belling—in the quad. Rather nice, eh? Very complimentary. But—"

Diana added, frowning mysteriously, "I'm awfully sorry—"

"Sorry?"

Everybody stared.

"Because," Diana said softly, "I may not be able to accept the honour!" And smiling at the flabbergasted faces which stared at her, she shrugged. "I may," she said loftily, "have something bigger and better to do than pull Cliff House's old chestnuts out of the blazing fire! Sorry and all that, but there it is!"

While everybody stared as if they could not believe their eyes, Diana carefully peeled off her gloves. "If I can help, I will," she said patronisingly. "But don't rely on it, that's all! Bye, bye."

"But look here—" Clara hooted.

But Diana, with a quick smile, had skipped off up the stairs.

### A Double Blow for Diana!



"WELL, of course, we might have guessed something like this would happen," Clara Trevlyn said wrathfully.

"Trust Diana to be mysterious. She just wants to be made a silly fuss of, and this is her way of doing it! Might not be able to accept indeed! The cheek of that!" And furiously Clara gazed. "What the dickens else does she think she's going to do?"

Babs, Mabs, Marjorie, Bessie Bunter, and Janet Jordan, who were seated with the Tomboy in Study No. 4, frowned.

They were all feeling nettled. At the same time, they were also feeling a little anxious, for only ten minutes ago Miss Belling had been in that study asking for Diana—Diana, apparently, having vanished again. Now that it was official news that Cliff House would take a junior team to the gala, they were, of course, all anxious for Cliff House to have the best team possible. Even more anxious were they that Diana Royston-Clarke should be in it.

"But what," Mabs asked, "could she possibly be doing otherwise? It's not like Diana to miss a chance like that."

Gentle Marjorie Hazeldene, a study-mate of Clara's, shook her head. Who could ever be sure of the strange workings of Diana's stormy mind?

They would have been astonished if they could have guessed the secret Diana was nursing at this moment.

For once Diana had spoken no more than the simple truth when she said she might not be able to accept. Diana, this time, was aiming at a far, far greater object than representing Cliff House. Nobody knew the fact yet—but what an eye-opener when they did learn it! What a shock, not only for Babs & Co., but for the whole of Cliff House, when they discovered that she was a member of the famous Neptunian Swimming Club!

Diana, swinging along on her way to the club, chuckled pleasantly as she visualised that prospect.

For Diana liked to create sensations. Diana liked to be the centre of attraction.

She had had to pay a staggering entrance fee to become one of its exclusive circle; but as Diana's father

was well on the way to becoming a millionaire, and was, perhaps, just a little too indulgent where his only daughter was concerned, that was a fact of small account. Easy enough for her to pass for seventeen; and Diana, to gain her ambition, had had no compunction in blurring that fib when she had applied for membership, even though it was against the club's strictest rule.

And now she was in the club. Now she was one of its members. Now she rubbed shoulders with champions. Now she attended all those gorgeous functions for which the Neptunians were renowned. But better was to follow. To-night, at the meeting of the selection committee, she would learn that she was nominated to represent the club at the gala in the high-diving competition.

Diana laughed softly and musically again. Her pink-and-cream cheeks glowed.

It was all settled—privately. The last test, unknown to Babs & Co., had been passed that afternoon at the Gay Buccaneer swimming pool. Cathy Jerrold was the club champion, but Diana knew that she had deposed Cathy. So what stood between her and selection now? An unconscious jauntiness came into her stride as she thought of it, the smile on her face expanded into a pleased grin. She—to be champion diver of the Neptunians! She—to win the gold medal that would be offered in the competition at the gala!

Would Cliff House gape? Would they stare?

"Ha, ha!" Diana chuckled.

Pleased indeed was Diana, counting her chickens in advance. Almost without realising it she reached Friardale, and there, ordering a car from the garage, was taken on in state towards Courtfield.

The rosy, uniformed commissioner outside the doors of the club bowed as she swept past him and in. A dozen or more girls acclaimed her as she stepped into the lofty, plush-covered hall. Jessie Davidson, the twenty-year-old captain of the club, who was going to attempt to swim the Channel next year, pounced on her eagerly.

"Di, come on; we're waiting for you! The selection committee is in session now. But it's practically certain," she added, "that you'll be our High Diver No. 1. And what a record for you, old thing, considering you've only been a member of the club three weeks!"

Diana thrilled. This was the sort of company she liked to find herself in. All girls older than herself—some of them her senior by ten years—but unanimously accepting her as their equal. If only they guessed she was not seventeen—But rats! They couldn't and they shouldn't—not, at least, until she won that championship, and then it just didn't matter two hoots!

Down the corridor she went. The door of the council-room was jerked open. In the hall were two or three dozen girls already, and among them was Cathy Jerrold, who swirled round at Diana's entry, and then, with a quick scowl, looked away again.

In front of them was a round table, presided over by Sir Richard Morrabby, the president of the club. A tense and eager silence reigned as he stood up.

"The committee," he said, "have now made their final selections for the gala. First, the long distance. Miss Jessie Davidson."

There was a cheer. Jessie beamed. "Next—" And he read out another name. Another cheer. Then the next,



and the next; while Diana, craning forward, her whole being in her eyes, and her heart jumping, waited in ecstatic suspense for her own name to be called. "The next," he said, blinking at the paper in his hand, "is the high-diving event—and I have no need to tell you girls that the member selected for this event automatically becomes champion of the club—is"—he peered forward, while Diana's hand clenched—"Miss Diana Royston-Clarke!" he cried. "Hurrah!" yelled everybody, and girls peered round at Diana's beaming face; hands reached forward to grasp hers and frenziedly shake them.

But all at once—"Please—wait!" And, to everybody's surprise, Cathy Jerrold, quivering like a shaken reed, jumped up in her place. "I have an objection, Mr. President!"

"Indeed?" There was a buzz. "I object," Cathy said fiercely, "to the nomination of Diana Royston-Clarke, on the ground that she joined the club under false pretences!"

"Miss Jerrold, what are you saying?" Diana stiffened. "The rules of this club," Cathy went on steadily, "say that no girl under seventeen years of age is to be admitted. Diana Royston-Clarke is not seventeen—or anything like it! She is, indeed, not yet fifteen!"

In a moment Diana, flaming, was on her feet. "Prove it!" she hooted.

"Easy enough!" While everybody blinked, confounded and dumbfounded, Cathy casually produced a copy of the new term "Cliff House Magazine" from her pocket. "This is a school magazine," she said, "of the school to which Diana Royston-Clarke belongs, and it contains a list of the girls, together with their ages, their position, and so forth. Mr. President, would you like to see it?"

"I tell you—" mouthed Diana. But everybody was staring at her now, and those faces, so congratulatory a moment before, were coldly hostile. The Neptunian prided itself upon keeping to its rules—and the rule of age was one of the most sacred among them.

As Cathy casually strolled out to the front of the hall Diana clenched her hands.

"That cat! That awful, sly cat! She caught in her breath. In a moment she saw triumph slipping away from her. Amid a dead silence the president blinked at the magazine; then, shaking his head, he looked up.

"Miss Royston-Clarke, what have you to say about this?"

Diana, fuming, hesitated. Hot-headedly she had been on the point of denouncing the whole thing as a lie. But she saw that would not avail. She braced herself.

"Seeing," she said bitterly, "that Miss Jerrold's gone to such an awful lot of sneaking pains to prove it, I don't deny it! Yes, it's true! I may as well admit it, I suppose! But that doesn't make any difference to the fact that I'm the best diver in this club! That doesn't make any difference to the fact that I can dive Cathy Jerrold's head off, and she knows it! After all, what is a year or two?"

"A very serious matter," The president looked stern. "Miss Royston-Clarke, we do not make rules to be broken. You entered this club on false pretences. That, from our point of view, is a serious offence—"

Diana clenched her teeth. "And it means?" she asked.

"It means, I am afraid, that you are expelled from the club at once!" Diana breathed fiercely. This, after all her pains! This, after all her visions of triumph. That that pale-faced wretch should humble her to the dust like this. She, who had planned to be queen of the gala, thwarted by Cathy Jerrold!

With every firebrand instinct a-quiver, she was on her feet.

"And that sneak?" she cried. "Please, Miss Royston-Clarke, will you go now?"

"Yes, I'll go! Oh, I'll go!" Diana's face was bitter. "But before I go, let me tell you upstarts a thing or two! Let me tell you what I think of you, with your mealy-mouthed rules. I'm dropped because I'm not old enough, am I? But I notice you don't drop that cat!"

"Miss Royston-Clarke—" the president cried angrily.

"Rats! I'm going to say what I think! And if you— Here," she added, "don't you touch me! Don't you dare!"

"Miss Clarke, this way, please," said the commissionaire who had approached at a signal from the president.

"Hang you, man, take your unwashed hands off me!" Diana cried. "And don't call me Clarke! My name's Royston-Clarke—spelt with a hyphen and a final 'e.' All right," she added, as the grip grimly tightened. "I'll go—oh, I'll go! But just wait, Cathy Jerrold, you sly sneak, I'll make you sorry for this!"

And bang! the door slammed behind her, Diana, her face scarlet, shaken and quivering, dashed into the hall. A taxi came crawling by. She hailed it, stormed in, and was driven off.

Stormy, warring Diana. A strange and changed Diana from the girl who, less than twenty minutes ago, had tripped through the proud portals of her exclusive club to become its champion.

Cathy was champion now, was she?

A bitter smile played on Diana's lips. Well, she knew what she was made of. The championship should be hers yet—and at Cathy's expense. Up at Cliff House they were waiting to make her their diving champion. They were waiting to put her into the Junior School section which would compete against those high and mighty Neptunians! They at least wanted her!

That was all right; yes, that was all right, Diana told herself softly, but with a glint in her fine eyes. Wouldn't it be just lovely to dive against that Cathy cat? Wouldn't it be just lovely to show her up? If Cathy was champion of the Neptunians, she was champion of her school—and what a humbling moment for the Neptunian's proud spirit when a mere schoolgirl made their champion look like a baby in arms.

Suddenly, utterly, the most dominant ambition in Diana's life became to represent Cliff House.

Reaching the school, she swept inside. Purposeful her step, her chin held high with determination. Barbara Redfern, coming down the drive, stopped. There was a rather peculiar expression on her face.

"Oh, Diana—" "Is Miss Belling in her room?" Diana asked.

"Yes; but—I say—" But Diana, with a supercilious toss of her head, had swept on. Into the school she strode, conscious of her own supreme dominance, feeling the power of the favour she was going to confer on Miss Belling and Cliff House in general. She tapped at the mistress' door, and when the invitation to come in sounded, strode haughtily into the room.

Miss Belling, turning from the window, glanced at her. "Well, Diana, what is it?" she asked, with a shade of impatience.

"I've just come to tell you," Diana said grandly, "that I've decided, after all, to be in the Cliff House team for the gala. Is that all right?"



"WHAT have you done with my pound note, you awful little thief?" raved Cathy Jerrold, bursting into the hut. Then she broke off with a gasp. It was not the young attendant whom she was confronting. It was Diana, her enemy—smiling, serene, triumphant!



Miss Belling looked at her peculiarly. Then, to Diana's stupefaction, she shook her head.

"I am afraid," she said quietly, "it is far from being all right, Diana; because, you see," she added gently, "being rather tired of your tantrums, I have asked Georgina Skeppington to represent the school!"

### Still Defiant!



**I**NCREDULOUSLY Diana stared at the calm-faced mistress.

"Ge-Georgina?" she stammered.

"Georgina," Miss Belling nodded. "I am sorry, Diana; it is your own fault. You were an almost automatic choice in the first place, but since you chose to be so disdainful of the offer to appear in the team, I have had to make other arrangements. You see," Miss Belling added, while Diana's jaw dropped, "there are such things as preparation and practice."

"But—but I'm the champion!" Diana gasped.

"Of that fact I'm perfectly aware," Miss Belling said, with just a little mischievous gleam in her eyes. "At the same time, Diana, that does not entitle you to play fast and loose with the whole school. Georgina is an excellent high diver, as you know, and she is at least anxious to practise."

"And you prefer her to me?" Diana hooted.

"Please, Diana, modulate your tone!" Miss Belling said severely. "It is not a case of preferring anyone to you. Had you acted sensibly in the first place there would have been no question of preference. You may practise with the team, Diana. If you show yourself worthy, if you satisfy me that you are better than Georgina and submit to orders, I may change my mind. Only on those conditions, however, will I consider you."

Diana stared. Her face had turned white now. Not for one single instant had she imagined there would be difficulties in the way of her getting into the school team. But the indignity of this! The humiliation of it!

Suddenly Diana's proud, purposeful, unreasonable spirit rose in bitter rebellion.

"Then," she said curtly, forgetting that she was speaking to a mistress, "you can jolly well go on considering!"

"Diana, please, that is enough!" Miss Belling looked angry now. "It is obvious," she said, "you are in no mood to be reasoned with. You will please go to your study, and there you will write out a hundred times, 'I must not be rude.' When," Miss Belling added curtly, "you have regained your composure you may come and see me. Good-bye!"

Diana shook. The look she flung at Miss Belling should have made that mistress wince, but it didn't. Very firmly Miss Belling held the door open; very steely she glanced at the Firebrand, as, choking with wrath, she went out. The door closed behind her.

What a mess, all at once, everything was! Two hours ago she had the world at her feet. Now—

Diana choked. The cheek of it—to put her in competition against Georgina! Georgina was all right, of course; but Georgina couldn't hold a candle to her. Miss Belling was mad—just goofy! Miss Belling—

Babs, Clara, and Leila Carroll were coming down the stairs as she started

to climb them. Rather anxiously they paused.

"Diana, have you seen Miss Belling?"

"I have!" Diana ground out.

"What did she say?"

"She said," Diana retorted, "take a hundred lines—"

"Oh, my hat! Aren't you going to dive for the school?"

"No!" Diana roared, then tempestuously flung herself on, leaving the three chums blinking.

"Gee! Are we het up?" Leila Carroll murmured. "Say, what happened?"

"Perhaps," Babs said, a little worriedly, "Miss Belling can tell us? Come on, let's go and ask her."

And while the three chums strolled off to see Miss Belling, Diana, savagely raging, burst into Study No. 10, which she shared with Margot Lantham. Margot, perhaps luckily for her, was not in.

Bitter, indeed, was Diana, never, as usual, counting herself to blame for her misfortunes. She blamed Miss Belling for favouritism. She blamed the Neptunians for snobbish, bad sportsmanship. In her own heart she knew that neither was true; but when Diana was in one of these stormy, firebrand moods, she never listened to the dictates of her own heart. Everybody was against her; everybody plotting to thwart her, to cheat her of her rights. Bah!

Tap!

"Oh, come in!" Diana scowled, swivelling towards the door.

And then she frowned as that door opened and a girl, who might have been seventeen or eighteen, appeared.

"Who are—?" Diana said, and then stared.

For a moment she had not recognised the girl, never before having seen her dressed in anything but a uniform. Sweet and gentle her face, grey and just a little timid the eyes which regarded Diana. Cheap though her clothes most obviously were, there was that about them which showed they had been well cared for, and the brown hair which peered beneath the brim of the close-fitting hat was decidedly curly and pretty.

"Oh, hallo!" Diana said. "You're the bathing attendant at the Gay Buccaneer, aren't you?"

"Yes, miss," said the girl.

"Well, what do you want?" Diana snapped.

"I—I brought this back—" The girl held out something wrapped carefully in a piece of tissue paper. "You— you left it in your cubicle, Miss Royston-Clarke."

Diana, with a stare at the girl, took it. She opened the paper. Then she caught her breath a little as she saw her gold wrist-watch—the watch her father had given her on her last birthday, and which Diana counted among her most treasured possessions. Just fancy, now, not having missed that until this moment!

"Well, thanks!" she said, and eyed the girl again, reflecting how easy it would have been for her to keep it; how badly, by the looks of her, the money she could have got for it might be needed. "That—that's nice of you," she said. "Wait a minute!"

Impulsively she snatched up her handbag. But the girl, with a swift flush, shook her head.

"Miss Royston-Clarke, please—no!" she cried. "I—I don't want anything. I only wanted to see that it got back into the right hands. Good-bye!"

Flustered she moved towards the door. But, in a moment Diana had stepped forward.

"Wait a minute!" she commanded. "Don't rush off like that! One good turn deserves another, you know, and Diana Royston-Clarke isn't a girl to forget her debts! If you won't accept money, let me give you something else!"

"Thank you, miss, but—but I don't want anything."

"Funny you!" Diana said, and laughed, her troubles magically forgotten in the attraction of this new interest. "What's your name?"

"Madge Forshaw, miss."

"New to the Buccaneer, aren't you?"

"Yes, miss; I—I've only been there just over a week."

"Sit down," Diana invited, interested now, in spite of herself. She smiled. "Smoke! No? Right-ho! Then I won't, either. Have a chocolate? I can recommend these. They cost six shillings a pound, you know. Don't be a nervous chump! Nobody's going to eat you! How did you get a job at the Buccaneer?"

Madge Forshaw smiled a little. She was rapidly melting now. Diana had a way of putting others at their ease—of making them talk, too. And Diana, really and deeply interested in the girl who had done her such a good turn, was anxious to find out more about her.

Diana talked; Madge talked back. Before long, her little story was all told. An accident had deprived her of her father, two years ago, since when her mother and herself, living in two rooms in Courtfield, had had a hard fight to make a livelihood. An excellent swimmer, apparently, she had been the champion of the Courtfield Parochial Old Girls, and there had won her life-saving certificate. Through the influential good offices of the Parochial Old Girls' Association, she had got this job at the Gay Buccaneer.

"And you like it?" Diana beamed.

"Have another chocolate!"

"Oh, yes; I like it—ever so!" Madge smiled a little. "Everybody is so kind—except one or two of the girls. But the management is very strict, you know."

"Yes; they have to be," Diana said.

"You know Cathy Jerrold?"

For the first time a slight shadow crossed Madge's face.

"Yes."

"You like her?"

"Well, n-no." Madge shook her head. "Oh, dear! I hope I haven't said anything wrong! She—she isn't a friend of yours, Miss Royston-Clarke?"

"Friend?" Diana laughed harshly.

"I'll say not! But why don't you like her?"

"Well, it's—it's not so much that, as her not liking me," Madge said worriedly. "Though goodness knows what I've done to offend her! But she's always complaining, always trying to get me into trouble with the management; and—as her father is one of the directors of the roadhouse, they— they, of course, take her word. But I must go now," she added, with a swift, alarmed glance at the clock.

"Mother isn't very well, you know, and—and I promised to get home as early as I could, especially as it's my late afternoon to-morrow. Good-bye, Miss Royston-Clarke!"

"Good-bye!" Diana said softly.

"Though I shall see you again. And, Madge—"

she called.

"Yes, Miss Royston-Clarke?"

"Please remember this—you've done me a good turn. That's something I owe you. I want you to promise me that if ever the opportunity crops up you'll let me pay it back."



"Thanks, Miss Royston-Clarke!" Madge said, a whole wealth of worshipping admiration in her eyes.

Diana smiled as the door closed behind her. Somehow she felt better for having had that chat with the girl. Poor kid! Characteristically Diana must think of her as "Kid," even though Madge must have been nearly three years older than herself. She'd like to help her, like to do something for her. And Cathy—

That pig! She would, of course, choose someone in a more helpless position than her own to persecute.

There came another tap at the door. It opened. This time it was Barbara Redfern who appeared. She had a towel on her arm.

"Diana, the team's practising. Are you coming?" she asked.

"Me? I'm not in the team!" Diana said, with a swift scowl.

"But, Diana, if you'll only practise, Miss Belling will change her mind, I'm sure," Babs said anxiously. "Oh, don't be a goose! Come along!" she urged.

"Oh, leave me alone!" Diana snapped.

Babs gazed at her. She shook her head. Then quietly she drew the door to. Diana, left to herself again, clenched her hands. Practise? Why should she practise? Rats on the practise!

And yet—she wanted to be in the team.

Like anything now she wanted to be in that team. She felt that her diving prowess was in question. That hurt. That stung. If Georgina competed in the gala it would be she, not Diana, who would afterwards be considered the best diver in the school.

Apart from that, there was the gala itself. Hadn't she openly boasted at the Neptunian Club that she would be there? Wasn't it just her one chance to humiliate Cathy Jerrold?

She thought for a moment. Should she practise? Then again the proud, rebellious spirit came uppermost. Yet wait—there was one way.

If she practised after the official practice while Miss Belling was there! If, without giving in to Miss Belling, she proved by demonstration that she was the more fitted to represent the school? She'd lose nothing then. Miss Belling, on the other hand, couldn't help but waive her objections.

Diana, laughing gleefully, ran off to the dormitory. There, glowingly, she changed into her school costume, and throwing her bathing-wrap around her, sauntered off to the bath.

The practice was in full swing when she reached there; Georgina was in the act of climbing up to the high diving-board; Babs & Co. were clustered round Miss Belling.

Babs beamed as she saw Diana.

"Oh, Di, have you come to practise?"

Diana shrugged.

"What do you think?" she replied. "I've come for a swim. Still, I don't mind watching you saps for a while," she added patronisingly, and fixed her eyes on Georgina, who was now bracing herself to take off from the top platform. "What does she reckon she's going to do?" she added.

"Shut up!" murmured Clara distastefully. "Oh; bravo, Georgina!"

For Georgina had dived—a neat, graceful dive. With a splash she hit the water, and swimming along the middle of the bath, came up half-way along its length. The chums clapped; Diana clapped, too. The dive had been a good one—though not so good as she could do it. Miss Belling nodded.

"Very good, Georgina! That finishes it, I think. Well, girls, you may get dressed now, if you like, and to-morrow we'll practise at the roadhouse itself. Go to your cubicles, please. I'll wait here for you!"

The girls scampered off. Diana smiled. This was her chance—her cue. This is what she had planned. While Babs & Co. scampered off and Miss Belling—in an attractive summery ensemble—remained at the end of the bath, Diana climbed leisurely to the top diving-board. She saw Miss Belling watching her.

Yoicks! Now she'd show her something!

With a casual gesture she dropped her bathing-wrap. Then she approached the edge of the board. She saw Miss

Belling's face turned towards her. She grinned again. Deliberately she turned her back on the mistress, and then, throwing her arms up in the air, allowed herself to fall backwards over the edge of the board.

If Diana had been some well-timed and superb machine, she could not have dived more gracefully, more beautifully. In midair she twisted. And as she touched the water, it seemed to open and close to receive her.

A perfect dive.

Diana inwardly knew a sense of triumphant elation. As she scrambled out of the water, she saw Miss Belling's eyes upon her; and she could tell from the expression on Miss Belling's face that she was impressed.

"Good-evening, Diana."

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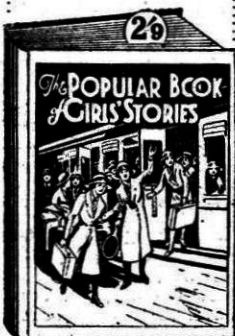


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"You saw me diving?" Diana asked.

"I did."

"Pretty good, wasn't it?"

"It was," Miss Belling admitted, "very good, Diana."

"Good enough, for instance, to be in the team?" Diana asked.

"Quite," Miss Belling looked at her. "But in a team, Diana, discipline as well as good diving is necessary. Your exhibition was very good; but if it was put on to impress me, Diana, I must tell you that I still adhere to my decision. Practise properly with the rest of the team; show yourself as amenable to discipline, as they are, and I will consider you with pleasure. If, however, you don't—"

"Thanks!" Diana retorted sullenly. "You needn't go into the rest of it. Well, bother you—bother you all! If you don't want me on my own terms, then Cliff House can jolly well do without me, that's all!"

And without giving the angry mistress a chance to retort, she stalked away.

### Diana Enjoys Herself!



"HALLO!" Barbara Redfern said. "There's Diana!"

The scene, once again, was the Gay Buccaneer roadhouse, the time the following afternoon. Babs, Clara, Janet, Christine Wilmer, and Rosa Rodworth of the Fourth Form, and Georgina Skeppington, Joan Carson, Flora Cann, and Tonie Sunday of the Lower Fifth, had just arrived at the swimming pool in company with Miss Belling for the afternoon practice.

Since yesterday the Gay Buccaneer had undergone a change. Lovely at all times, it was looking positively beautiful now.

On the lawns surrounding the swimming pool an army of workmen were busy erecting the huge sets for the grand firework display. Others were strewing the ground and trees with fairy lights. The air hummed and vibrated to the whir of electric mowers. Everywhere flapped gay flags, bright coloured bunting and festoons.

There were quite a few people in the swimming pool, happily splashing about. At the opposite end of the bath Diana, dressed in her most vivid bathing costume, her face wreathed in smiles, was talking to a rather worried looking girl attendant.

"Di!" Babs exclaimed.

Diana turned. She saw them. Coolly she nodded, and then, as though they did not exist, went on talking to Madge Forshaw. Babs frowned a little. Clara sniffed. Miss Belling brought her lips together. Georgina flushed.

Truth to tell, Georgina, in spite of the glorious chance which was hers, was not feeling too happy. For Georgina, like everybody else who had seen Diana's performances on the diving-board, knew that she was only Cliff House's second best.

And Diana's place was still open to her. Miss Belling, at the first sign that Diana was willing to fall into line with the rest of the team, would have gladly given her her chance. But Diana had not hinted, either by word or sign, that she was willing to avail herself of that chance.

Diana, rightly or wrongly, was playing her own game. Miss Belling, she had vowed, should come to her!

Which was one of three reasons why Diana was at the Gay Buccaneer to-day. Once again Diana had determined to

give Miss Belling a private demonstration. The other reason was her desire to see Madge Forshaw again—strange how that girl had captured her sympathy and her imagination. A third reason was that Diana had heard that the Neptunians' Swimming Club was going to rehearse.

But, at the moment, Diana was more interested in Madge than either Miss Belling or the Neptunians. She shook her head.

"And you say your mother was taken ill this morning?"

"Yes." Madge gulped a little; her face was very worried. "I—I called the doctor in," she said. "He—he hasn't diagnosed the complaint yet; but I'm sure it's serious. He—he said that he would ring me up if she took a turn for the worse; but if he does ring me up, what am I to do? I can't get away from here—not until eight o'clock."

"Well, perhaps he won't ring up," Diana said soothingly. "Perhaps it's not so serious as you think, old thing. All the same, if he does, come and tell me, will you? We may think up something between us. We—"

And then she turned as another girl came on to the scene—a girl at the sight of whom the Firebrand instantly drew herself up; a girl in the costume of the Neptunians. It was Cathy Jerrold.

"Here, you!" she said roughly to Madge. "Why the dickens aren't you in the cubicle? Our clothes are there, and they're not locked up or anything. Are you asking for the sack?"

Madge turned pale.

"Miss Diana, I must go."

Diana was staring at the Neptunian contemptuously.

"And," she said, "it won't be your fault if she doesn't get the sack, will it, Cathy sneak?"

"Mind your own business!" Cathy blustered.

"It is my business," Diana said. "Because, you see," she added, as Madge ran off, "that girl happens to be a friend of mine."

"I say, are those two rowing?" Tonie Sunday asked from the other end of the bath.

Babs shook her head. From that distance she couldn't hear what was going on, though it was plain from the attitudes of the two girls that their conversation was the reverse of friendly. Whatever was happening, however, was interrupted then by the arrival of Miss Cannell, the Neptunians' instructress, and Jessie Davidson, the captain of the club. Babs noticed how they both stared at Diana; how, rather coldly, they drew away. Then Diana, with a casual shrug, had sauntered to the other corner of the bath.

"That's Cathy Jerrold," Flora Cann breathed, "diving champion of the Neptunians. She's been elected to compete in the gala, Georgie, so you'd better watch out! I should say she'll be your toughest nut to crack."

"And, look, they're going to practise!" said Rosa Rodworth, as Cathy, at a nod from Miss Cannell, commenced to mount the diving-platform. "Miss Belling, can we watch this?"

"Watch by all means," Miss Belling said. "The more hints you can pick up from better swimmers than yourselves, the better

Interestedly the Cliff House party settled down, while Diana, with a disdainful pout of her lips, watched from the opposite end of the bath. Cathy, perched on the top of the diving-board, looked down.

"Swallow dive, Cathy!" Miss Cannell called.

Cathy nodded. With a quiet smile she lifted her hands, shifted to get a grip with her toes on the edge of the board. Then, swoosh!

A good dive; a fine dive. Miss Cannell nodded.

"Very good," she said—"very good!" And then: "Diana—Diana, what are you doing?"

For Diana, suddenly running forward, was mounting the steps.

She turned.

"I'm going," she said, "to show your rotten champion how that dive should be done—"

And she flew on. Miss Cannell, crimson, stepped back. Miss Belling frowned. But Diana, without any further ado, climbed to the top of the board. There, a figure of superb grace, she stood poised. A smile wreathed the corners of her lips.

"Swallow dive, Di, old girl!" she loudly announced.

And—woosh!—outwards she launched herself. Resentful at Diana's conduct though they all may have been, it was impossible not to stare in awe and wonder. Like an arrow, her body one graceful line from the toes of her feet to the point of her bathing-cap, Diana sped down; with an ease that was effortless, she slid beneath the water, gliding along half the length of the bath before, with a quick, athletic twist of her body, she clove the surface again. A deep silence fell. Georgina caught her breath.

"Oh, marvellous—marvellous!" she breathed.

"Beat that Cathy—easily!" Tonie Sunday said. "Oh, my hat! Why the dickens isn't she in the gala?"

Babs glanced at Miss Belling. Even she was looking a little thoughtful now. She looked at Cathy, again on the board, glaring daggers at Diana, who, meeting the gaze, merrily and contemptuously waved a hand. Again Cathy mounted. Miss Cannell called:

"Somersault!"

Again Cathy launched herself outward, but even as she was in the air Diana was lightly mounting the steps. Again she stood there, a picture which any artist would have been glad to paint. She called: "Somersault, Di, old girl!" Again she took off.

Once more everybody gasped.

Oh, no doubt about it! Diana had the Neptunian champion utterly beaten.

Diana was enjoying herself.

Every time that Cathy was called upon to perform, Diana also performed—but she performed just a shade more skillfully, with such greater charm and grace that there was no doubt who was the better of the two.

At the fifth attempt Cathy, going to the platform, furiously turned upon Diana.

"Will you stop trying to make a fool of me?" she roared.

"Just impossible!" Diana told her sweetly. "Nature's already done that!"

Jessie, who overheard, managed in time to change her snigger into a cough. Cathy quivered. One hate-filled look she darted at the Firebrand, then, trembling with temper, she made her way to Miss Belling.

"Will you keep that kid in order?" she bawled.

Miss Belling stiffened.

"Miss Jerrold—"

"Because," Cathy went on savagely, "I've just had about enough of her. If you can't stop her from joining a club under false pretences, you might at least restrain her when she's in public."



"False pretences?" Babs said, staring. "What do you mean?"

"Didn't you know? But no—of course, you wouldn't!" Cathy flung a look at Diana, who was now unconcernedly strolling towards the scene. "I mean what I said," she said. "She joined the Neptunians. Told us her age was seventeen when all the time it wasn't fourteen! Well, we found out before it was too late. She was expelled from the club, and, if you ask my own opinion, you ought to expel her from the school."

"My giddy aunt!" Clara gasped. "You don't mean to say—"

"She does," Diana, strolling up, calmly nodded. "It's true—oh, quite true! But Cathy," she said, with a gibe at that girl, "hasn't told you all the story. Hasn't told you that, because I was selected as the Neptunian champion, she sneaked on me—in order, of course, to pinch my place. That's right, isn't it, Cathy—"

But Cathy, with a bitter look, had flung off.

"They—they made you champion!" Clara stuttered.

"They did." Diana cast a triumphant look at Miss Belling. "You may as well know now," she said, "that that was the reason why I wouldn't give my decision to appear in the Cliff House team first. I thought the Neptunians might want me, you see. I hope, Miss Belling," she added "you'll think about that."

And she walked away, head in air.

She was chuckling a little amusedly, grateful to spiteful Cathy for having spilled the beans. To have belonged to the Neptunians at all events gave her prestige; but to have actually been nominated their champion—even though she had been expelled immediately afterwards—Yoicks! But that added glamour to the prestige if you like!

Let Miss Belling chew over that. Let Miss Belling say now if she dared that she'd still got to compete with all the Toms, Dicks, and Harrys!

Rather pleased with the way things were turning out was Diana as she stalked back to her own cabin. And then, passing the small hut labelled "Attendant," she paused.

For from inside the hut came the sound of a choked sob.

Diana looked anxiously at the door. That hut, she knew, was Madge's. Quickly she pushed the door open and went in. Madge, a handkerchief to her eyes, spun round guiltily.

"Oh, Miss—Miss Royston-Clarke—" "What's the matter?" Diana abruptly asked.

"My—my mother. I—I've just heard from the doctor. They—they're taking her to hospital right away. She—she's asking for me."

"Oh!" said Diana, vaguely disturbed.

"And you can't get away?" "N—no. The manager's not in, and there's nobody to give me leave of absence."

Diana's heart smote her. Poor, poor Madge! How frightfully cut up she did look, to be sure. What an awful tragedy! Diana came to a quick decision.

"Wait a minute; I've an idea," she said. "Madge, let me take your place!"

"But, Miss Diana—"

"I can do it," Diana said. "I'll hold the fort till you get back. Come on! Off with those clothes! Give me the keys and things—there's practically nothing to do, is there? No, don't stare; I mean it! Dash it all, you can't



"STOP that—stop!" Diana cried, and tore forward. But she was too late. The mystery figure was already setting fire to the elaborate firework set-piece.

let your mother go to hospital all alone!"

Even as she spoke, Diana was divesting herself of her wet bathing costume. Rather nervously, as if almost against her will, Madge followed suit. In a few moments, the exchange was effected and Madge, in her ordinary clothes, was staring at Diana in the attendant's uniform.

"Oh, Miss Royston-Clarke, you're sure you don't mind?"

"No, no; buzz off!" Diana said impatiently. "Here, what do I do?"

"Just take these keys. Open the cubicles when you're asked. If anybody wants anything—well, just get it for them, that's all! I won't be any longer than I can help," she promised.

Diana nodded. She chuckled a little, wondering what Cliff House would say if they could see her now. Casually she took Madge's seat, glancing over the pages of a magazine Madge had been reading. Nice, easy sort of job, this, she thought—wouldn't mind being a bath attendant herself if she ever came down in the world. Nice photograph of Madge that—hanging on the wall. And phew—here was her life-saving certificate.

Then suddenly she started as a shrill voice sounded outside. It was the voice of Cathy Jerrold.

"I tell you that little thief of an attendant must have stolen it. She's got the key, hasn't she? I saw her five minutes ago stepping out of my cubicle. It must be she who took the pound note out of my bag! Mr. Hay, you ought to sack her for this!"

"Hel—lo!" muttered Diana.

She straightened up. Then crash! The door came open. Cathy, accompanied by the manager who had evidently just returned, glared into the apartment. Quickly Diana stepped into the shadow, a grim smile of amusement on her face. Cathy, seeing her shadowy figure, pointed.

"You awful little thief! What have you done with that pound note in my bag?"

"I?" Diana said; and stepped into the light.

Cathy's jaw suddenly dropped, her eyes bulged. The manager, behind her, blinked a little, staring round for a sign of Madge.

"Are you accusing me, Cathy Jerrold?" Diana asked lightly.

"No, I'm not. I'm accusing Madge Forshaw. I saw her!"

"Five minutes ago?" Diana asked contemptuously.

"Yes!" Cathy blared. "Anyway, what business is it of yours?"

"I think," Diana said sweetly, "every business! Because, you see, Madge Forshaw went home a quarter of an hour ago, so she couldn't very well have stolen your cash, could she? I'm sorry," she added to the manager, frowning now, "I took Madge's place. She received a message that her mother was being taken to hospital, and I thought if I kept the pot boiling for her, no harm would be done. Rather bad luck for you, isn't it, Cathy? Too utterly tough you can't get Madge the sack!"

Cathy's face was livid. "What do you mean?" "I mean," Diana said, her eyes narrowing, "that you trumped up this charge! It's pretty plain, isn't it, that you've got your knife into Madge!"

The manager looked at her. "Miss Jerrold—"

"Per—perhaps I made a mistake, then," said Cathy sullenly.

"You did!" Diana mocked. "You thought you had Madge to deal with instead of me! Why, by the way, have you got your knife into that girl?"

But Cathy, with a bitter look, had slunk back. The manager eyed her grimly.

"I will speak to you, Miss Jerrold, later on," he said. "Meantime, Miss Royston-Clarke, I must protest against your action. Miss Forshaw had no business to go off leaving someone else in charge."

"Oh, my hat! You—you won't sack her?" Diana asked. "No, please! It was my idea, Mr. Hay! Madge didn't really want to do it. Please, please don't sack her!" she pleaded.

The manager paused, staring rather strangely at the Firebrand. Finally he nodded.

"Very well," he said. "This time I will overlook it. But I shall certainly see Miss Forshaw when she comes in

and if anything like it happens again—then, despite any pleading, Miss Royston-Clarke, I shall have no recourse but to dismiss her. Now kindly take off those garments, please! I will put another girl on duty here until Miss Forshaw returns!"

And Diana gave a smile. Once the manager had gone, she peeled off her borrowed uniform, getting back into her own clothes. Thank goodness she had saved Madge!

But why had Cathy Jerrold so deeply and so vengefully got her knife into Madge Forshaw? Well, perhaps in the very near future she would discover the answer to that.

In any case, from this moment, she was going to watch Cathy Jerrold with all eyes.

## Two Problems to Tackle!



**B**ABS & CO., together with several other Cliff House girls, stood and stared.

"There is no doubt that, as usual, the Neptunian Swimming Club will run off with most of the prizes at the forthcoming gala at the Gay Buccaneer roadhouse. The only candidate who is likely to give them trouble, as far as we can judge, is Miss Janet Jordan, of Cliff House School, who may just beat Miss Pansy Withers in the half-mile. As far as the other events are concerned, it does seem, on paper, that they are already in the Neptunian bag, and there is nothing so sure than that that incomparable diver, Miss Cathy Jerrold, will add to the many honours she already holds. Miss Georgina Skeppington, of Cliff House School, is her most serious rival for gala honours; but we do not intend to belittle Miss Skeppington's efforts when we say that, even at her best, she is scarcely on a par with Miss Jerrold—"

That was the paragraph cut from the "Courtfield Times" and posted up on the school notice-board by some unknown hand. Perhaps it was rather biased in tone, but there was no doubt that it was giving the crowd of girls who stood before it, a great deal of food for thought.

"Well, that's nerve, if you like!" said Clara Trevlyn explosively. "I suppose," she added, "that was written by a Neptunian?"

"Looks like it!" glowered Rosa Rodworth. "Anyway, what the dickens do they know about us?"

"Well, as far as Cathy Jerrold's concerned, it's true enough," said Georgina. "I could never do that somersault backwards like she does it. Diana's the only one who could possibly beat her."

"And Diana, the idiot, is still riding the high horse!" Mabs said.

"Diana, the idiot, is walking in Big Hall!" a scoffing voice put in behind her, and Mabs, with scarlet cheeks, turned to see the haughty Firebrand standing at her side. "But what's all the excitement?"

"It—it's the gala, you know!" Bessie Bunter put in.

They made way for her. Diana approached. She was reading the offending paragraph, and her eyes glistened. So that was what they thought, was it—Cliff House were a lot of mutts, the swanking Neptunians once again were going to walk off with everything? "Miss Cathy Jerrold will add to the many honours she already holds—"

Something like a hiss came from between Diana's lips.

Cathy—that cat! But would she? Would she? More than anything else, Diana wanted to depose Cathy Jerrold. Second to that, she wanted the Neptunians to bite the dust. The beastly conceit of this! The jibe at Cliff House! Her cheeks suddenly reddened. She swung round.

"Well, Diana?" Babs asked. "What do you think of it?"

"I think," Diana said, "it's a dashed lot of swanking conceit! Give us a chance, and we'll make hay of the Neptunians."

"A fat lot you're doing towards it!" Clara put in scornfully.

"Well, is it my fault?" Diana began to flare.

"Diana—please!" Georgina came forward. "Diana, listen to me!" she pleaded. "I know you're fed-up because I've been put in the place which you think should be yours, but, honestly, Di, I'd rather you were in the team! Won't you go to Miss Belling and tell her that you'll be in the team—on her terms?"

Diana stared at her, her big eyes wide open then. Georgina meant that; sincerity radiated from her face. The unselfishness of that sacrifice touched Diana.

She'd got to be in the team! For Cliff House's sake! For her own sake! For Georgina's sake now—and for the pleasure of humbling those proud Neptunians, for the sake of making that bullying upstart Cathy bite the dust. Something fine flashed in Diana's eyes suddenly.

"Thanks!" she said. "That's sporting of you, Georgina. I'm off to see Miss Belling—"

"You mean you'll practise?" whooped Babs.

"Yes!" Diana snapped; and strode off.

But she left a buzz behind her—a buzz of excitement, of happiness. If Cliff House had been feeling resentful against the writer of that news paragraph, they were ready to cheer him now. Diana was going to be in the team. Diana, champion of the famous Neptunians, was going to represent the school! Now would the "Courtfield Times" eat their words!

Miss Belling was in her room when Diana arrived. She looked up rather coldly.

"I've come," Diana said steadily, "to tell you that I'll practise in the team."

"Thank you!" Miss Belling nodded. "The next practice is at three o'clock this afternoon in the school bath."

"Then that means I'm diving in the gala?" Diana asked.

"Not exactly," Miss Belling frowned.

"I'll let you know when I've seen you perform. In any case, I shall not make up the complete team until to-morrow. You may go, Diana."

For a moment Diana paused, angrily flushing, on the verge of a new outbreak. But, no! She'd got to remember. Somebody had to wipe out that insult in the "Courtfield Times."

"All right!" she said. "I'll be there."

And she went, to be pounced upon by an excited, eager, and jubilant Babs & Co. Perhaps Babs & Co. were just a little dashed when they heard Diana had not been made a member of the team outright; but they had no fears. It was perhaps only just that Diana should receive a small dose of her own medicine from the mistress to whom she had meted out so many doses herself.

But everyone was confident and joyful

now. Nobody had the slightest doubt that Diana would be chosen.

That afternoon Diana was the first at the baths. Her diving was of such a quality that even Miss Belling, forgetting her disciplining of the Firebrand, involuntarily cheered. Nobody had ever seen anything like it.

Diana's heart glowed. It was good to feel herself in the limelight—good to know that she was being talked about, stared at. The school was looking to her; she wouldn't let them down. All the honour and glory she had failed to find with the Neptunians should be hers at her own school. In the meantime, what of Madge?

She would like to see Madge again—just to hear what happened last night when she returned; how her mother was getting on.

With characteristic impulsiveness, she dressed in her outdoor things on returning from the bath. Catching the bus from the gates, she went on to the Gay Buccaneer roadhouse. But as soon as she saw Madge, she knew there had been trouble. Madge's eyes were red and swollen; her face was pinched and white.

Diana's heart smote her.

"Madge, what's happened?"

"I—I've got the sack!" Madge stammered.

"What?" Diana gasped.

"Well, a—a week's notice," Madge said. "I—I've got to leave next Wednesday—after the gala. They—they warned me last night, and—oh, Diana, mother is so dreadfully ill!"

"But tell me what happened," Diana said.

Madge, in halting accents, did tell. This morning, while the Neptunians had been practising, she had missed her keys. One of the keys, apparently, was the key which opened the door of the sluice-house, a strictly private apartment, used only by the members of the staff.

In the sluice-house was all the mechanism for filtering, emptying, filling, and draining the bath, and while the Neptunians had been practising someone had been in there, and, tampering about with the mechanism, had utterly drained the bath, leaving the Neptunians high, dry, and stranded. Cathy had lodged the complaint. Cathy had said that she had seen Madge entering the sluice-house. Madge had been tackled—had told how she had missed her keys; but when the manager had accompanied her to her hut there, to her astonishment, were her keys hanging in their accustomed place on the wall.

"And—and so it—it just looked as if I'd been telling lies!" Madge faltered.

"Cathy says that I did it out of spite because she had complained against me. The—the management believed her, and—and—"

"And so," Diana said, her brows coming together, "you've got a week's notice—all because of that cat Cathy! She did it! Madge, why does she hate you so?"

"I—I'm sure I don't know, Miss Royston-Clarke!" Madge said miserably. "But—oh dear! What shall I do?"

Diana's lips were grim. It was unfair, dreadfully unfair. All the same, it wasn't going to happen if she could help it. Cathy wasn't going to get away with this—not likely!

Without a word to Madge, Diana tramped off to Mr. Hay's office. His voice bade her "Come in!" when she knocked.

"Well, Miss Royston-Clarke?"



"I want to talk to you about Miss Forshaw," Diana said.

"If that means," Mr. Hay said, frowning, "you are going to try to intercede for her, Miss Royston-Clarke, I beg you to save your breath. Miss Forshaw is under notice, and will leave this club next Wednesday!"

Diana clenched her hands. The old fool! Still, hammering at him would only make things more difficult for Madge, and poor Madge was in enough hot water at the moment. But Cathy wasn't going to triumph. She'd got to have proof, and there was only one person who could give that proof—Cathy herself. Very well, Diana suddenly and fiercely vowed; she would see Cathy!

In high dudgeon was Diana Royston-Clarke. She did not go back to Madge; instead, she stormed out of the road-house and went raging down the road. That cat! What an awful, scheming, fibbing thing that Cathy was! But why—and even in the midst of her ragings this thought intruded—why, in the name of everything, was she so anxious to get Madge the sack?

Quickly Diana walked, her steps keeping pace with the swift, grimly vengeful thoughts that whirled through her brain. Very soon she had reached Courtfield. There, haughtily she ordered a taxi, and was driven to the palatial headquarters of the Neptunians' club. The commissioner, stepping forward to open the door, stood frozen when she stepped on to the pavement. One withering glance Diana threw at him, haughtily paid off the driver, and then stepped across the footway towards the door. The commissioner hurried to her side.

"Miss Royston-Clarke, I'm sorry—you can't go in there," he said.

Diana glared.

"Who says I can't?"

"Orders, miss! No expelled member is ever allowed to enter the club."

Diana breathed hard. For a moment it looked as though she contemplated measuring her strength against that of the commissioner's. But obviously he had his orders.

"All right," she said sharply at last, "I'll wait! You haven't bought the pavement as well, by any chance, have you? I suppose I can remain here?"

"Please yourself, miss."

Diana stood still. Well, she'd show them! One thing she had made up her mind about—and that was seeing Cathy. Furiously she strode up and down the front of the club. Minutes went on; no Cathy appeared.

Diana fumed. Never a one to wait was Diana; and never a one, once she had an idea in her mind, to give it up without a struggle. Then suddenly she had an idea.

"All right," she said impatiently to the commissioner, "I've got to get back to school. Good-afternoon!"

"Good-afternoon, miss!" the commissioner said with relief.

Diana walked on. Round the corner she disappeared, but she did not go far. In the shelter of the side street she halted, gazing up with measuring eyes at the crumbling wall which separated her from the courtyard of the club. If she could scale that?

If? Diana never stopped to consider that. With one swift look to right and left, she leapt. Her hand caught the edge of the wall, tearing her fine lace gloves. One daintily shod toe found a foothold where a brick had been dislodged, and in another second Diana, breathing heavily, had dropped to the other side of the wall.

She chuckled a little. Well, so much for commissionaires! Cautiously she crept towards the back entrance of the club. Gingerly she stepped into the stone-flagged hall, creeping along the corridor.

Now she had reached the staircase. Upstairs there came sounds of laughter, of cries. Unmistakably from the direction of the gym she heard Cathy's reedy voice, and grimly she clenched her hands. Sooner or later Cathy must come out; then she'd have her.

A step behind her caused her to wheel round. Too late she darted behind the balustrade. Sir Richard Morraby, suddenly emerging from the reading-room downstairs, glanced up in surprise.

"Why, upon my soul, Miss Royston-Clarke! How did you get in?"

"I want," Diana said steadily, "to see Cathy Jerrold."

"Then," Sir Richard said, mounting the stairs towards her, "you can wait outside. You know you have no right on these premises. Please go at once."

But Diana stood still, mutiny flaming in her eyes.

"I'll go when I've spoken to Cathy—not before!"

And suddenly she turned, making towards the door of the gym. Sir Richard cried:

"Diana—"

But Diana was at the door. Furiously she flung it open. A dozen girls, all older than herself, turned at her entry. A gasp of astonishment went up. For one moment Diana stood glaring round; then, spotting her prey at the parallel bars, she took three swift steps towards her, catching her by the arm.

"Here, what the dickens—" Cathy cried in alarm.

"Come on, you slandering cat! You're coming with me!" Diana said, between her teeth.

"Diana—" cried Jessie Davidson. "Diana— Oh, my hat! Diana, you idiot!" she shrieked, as Diana, with a strength lent to her by her anger, dragged the hapless Cathy across the room. "Are you mad? Are you— Rescue, girls!"

"Stand aside!" bawled Diana.

But the incensed Neptunians were not standing aside. As one they closed round the furious Diana. Somebody gripped one arm; somebody another. There was a shout of "Take her out!" And Diana, furiously but futilely struggling, was dragged towards the door. Then suddenly that door came open again. Sir Richard, his face red with anger, stood in the doorway, accompanied by the no less furious commissioner.

"Take her!" he said. "Shut her in the library! Diana, I am going to phone your headmistress!"

"Do what the dickens you like!" Diana stormed. "Here, don't you dare touch me!"

But the commissioner was daring. Heavily his hands fell upon the Firebrand's shoulders. Diana, choking with fury, was whirled away. The door of the reading-room was locked upon her, and she sank panting into an armchair. Beaten! Beaten again!

### The Firebrand's Good Turn!



"I AM sorry, Diana," Miss Primrose said gravely, "but I cannot accept your explanation. You have behaved in a manner which is utterly unworthy of a Cliff House girl, and I have no recourse in the circumstances but to report the matter to your

father. In addition, you will take five hundred lines. Now go!"

Diana nearly grinned at that. A parent's report at Cliff House was deemed to rank second to suspension in punishments. Most girls would have given a term's pocket money to avoid it, but Diana did not care. Diana, supremely confident in her power to overrule old Curmudge—as she called her father—dreaded that punishment not at all. He would believe her. He always did.

The five hundred lines hurt her five hundred times more than the threatened disgrace of being reported to her parent.

Almost jauntily she stepped out of the headmistress' study, chucking a little as she closed the door; and then stopping, as, reaching the end of the corridor, she came face to face with anxious Babs & Co., who had seen Diana brought back to Cliff House by Miss Primrose, and heard all about it.

"Di, what happened?"

"Nothing," Diana said airily. "Parent's report and five hundred lines! But that means nothing—except the lines," she added.

A sigh of relief went through the crowd.

"But what," Clara demanded, "were you doing inside the Neptunian headquarters? I thought you'd finished with them?"

"My business," Diana answered loftily, "is my business! Anyway, as it happens, no harm's done. But what are you ninnies hanging around for?"

"Well, we were anxious," Babs said. "Dash it all, isn't it like you to go and get yourself into some scrape when the school's depending on you? But we've news," she added, her voice thrilling with excitement. "Guess who's going to preside at the gala, Di?"

"Who?"

"Mr. Torrance!"

"Oh, yoicks!" breathed Diana; and her face suddenly shone.

For Bernard Torrance, the wealthy and famous veterinary surgeon, was a particular friend of Diana's.

"And," Babs gulped, "the team's up, Di. It's on the board now. And you're in, old thing! You're our diving champion!"

Diana laughed. Then she looked at Georgina.

"And you, Georgina?"

"I—I'm only reserve," Georgina said, with a smile. "Still, I'm jolly glad, Diana."

"Good sport!" Diana said softly, and really was touched. "Bother it, Georgina, I almost feel a sneak for taking it from you!"

But Georgina shook her head. She was glad—for the school's sake, if sorry for her own. She was as glad as the rest that Diana had escaped; and now that it was officially known that Diana would be competing, Cliff House was jubilant. If Janet won the half-mile and Di won the diving, they would be satisfied.

Diana was confident. She knew the quality of the girl she was up against. Cathy! That cat! She'd humble her! She'd make her look a veritable fool! All the same, she hadn't finished with her yet, and wasn't going to be finished with her until she'd got to the bottom of her antagonism for Madge. Should she go and see her again?

Babs, as if reading the thought that was passing through her mind, touched her arm.

"Di, please, please don't do anything else silly," she pleaded.

(Continued on page 14)

# OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS



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

HERE is your Patricia—back home again after her most marvellous holiday in the South of France, feeling fit enough to push Pyramids over, and with a tan which is the envy of our district.

It was dreadful having to say good-bye to all the friends I had made there, but it was simply heavenly to be welcomed back home by the family—bless it!

And now we have all settled down to normal life once more—with only a host of snaps as a reminder of good times on the Golden Riviera.

Oh, I must tell you how thrilled mother was with the present I brought her back.

## ● Popular Presents

It was a huge bundle of lavender—which I had actually picked off the mountainside myself. Mother could hardly believe it when I told her. But her surprise was nothing compared with father's when he saw the plants I had brought him for his precious rockery! These rock plants, which would cost about 1s. each in London, I had also dug out of the mountainside.

Now mother has persuaded me to make some little *ninon* bags to hold the lavender, and these are going to be distributed over the house.

While this morning at breakfast father informed us that he would be planting the rock plants this evening—so that, I suppose, means that the whole family is expected to gather round and admire.

The present I brought young Heath (he is my small brother with the long name—Heatherington in full, you know) is a very unusual-looking money-box shaped like a submarine.

The only snag is that, being a French money-box, it does not take pennies—but only shillings or sixpences, so at this rate Heath looks like being a multi-millionaire well before Fireworks' Day!

## ● Quaint Endings

Among the things that amuse me, are the quaint ways in which some people end their letters.

I expect you've even received a letter yourself which ends: "Yours till the sands of the desert grow cold, Peggy," now, haven't you?

The one that makes me laugh is: "Yours till sardines wear wrist-watches," which will certainly not be in my lifetime—or yours!

"Yours till Niagara turns to lemonade,"

might make a suggestion for a humorous ending to a Canadian girl's letter. Niagara Falls have done all sorts of wonderful things, I know, but I don't think there's much fear of their ever turning into our favourite summer beverage!

But laughable as all those endings are, I still have one which is my very special favourite: "Yours till centipedes wear spats." Doesn't it make you chuckle even to read it?

You'll now probably expect me to end my letter to you this week with some sort of comic saying. But I assure you I shall not, for though I like to laugh over such letter-endings, I never actually use them myself.

## ● For Chilly Evenings

I would hate to put winter or even autumn thoughts into your nice schoolgirl heads yet awhile, but we can't ignore the fact that in spite of summery September days, the evenings can be a little chilly.

So here is a very smart little jacket in the fashionable bolero style which you can make for yourself to slip over a cotton frock.

I'm sure you have a jumper that has become too tight, yet that is perfectly good in other ways. So rather than discard it, I want you to cut out the sleeves and up the centre front of the jumper.

Bind all the raw edges with bias binding and sew your initial on one side with the binding. This will look very smart and will be admired by all your chums.



## ● Very Simple

I expect you have been eating extra well on your holiday, tucking into all sorts of delicious things that, while they may be irresistible, are, nevertheless, somewhat plump-making.

This, of course, is all very well for you young things as slender as willows, but not so welcome for those built on more sturdy lines.

I don't know which part of the body is the first to show any excess weight, but I do know that a double chin is most unflattering to a pretty face.

Even energetic schoolgirls sometimes acquire a suspicion of two chins, and they'd like to get rid of one, of course. But it must be an easy way and not expensive, naturally, so here is where your Patricia comes to your rescue with an idea that is wonderfully simple—as all good ideas are, we agree.

You must stand in front of the mirror

in your bed-room and say to yourself "Q.X." at least a dozen times.

That's for the first time. Afterwards you will be able to practise in any odd moment, saying "Q.X." to yourself as you admire the flowers in the park, or even muttering it instead of "Bother!" when you spill ink over your new exercise book.

Incidentally, this is a two-way exercise, a double beautifier, for in addition to slimming the chin, it also improves the shape of the lips.

## ● A Smiling Word

The next brain-wave I have for you concerns photography.

(You are probably saying that I might have given you the tip earlier, if it is a good one. Actually I only discovered it myself the other day, but I am going to make use of the notion while this camera weather lasts.)

When you are taking a picture of a friend who finds it very hard to smile to order, just say to her "Cheese!"

At first she may be a bit huffy, and it is then you must explain you were not calling her names, but that you want her to say "Cheese!" as her photo is being taken.

Just try it yourself. There, doesn't the saying of the word "Cheese," make you give a lovely smile?

## ● And a Cross One

And now, just to be different, perhaps you would like to know a word which doesn't make your face look attractive as you say it. That word is "Rhubarb"—a very cross word, which, I have heard, is the one film players in "crowd scenes" use when the director wants them to look angry and threatening.

Haven't you often wondered what they do really say among themselves?

## ● Pretty Collars

One of these evenings, or on a Saturday afternoon when you find yourself with nothing to do, I think it would be a grand idea if you fished out any spare white collars that you might have, and considered ways of decorating them.

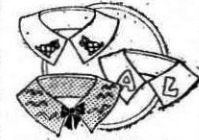
Small pieces of gingham, from mother's piece-bag, can very quickly be cut to the shape of a rather square-looking dog and sewn on to the corners of the collar.

Your initials also would look very dashing, particularly if they were in a cheery colour, to contrast with the white.

Zig-zag stitches in coloured embroidery silk or wool is another notion that would be very simple to carry out.

Good-bye all, until next week.

Your friend, PATRICIA.





# A GAY GARDEN PARTY

Your party out-of-doors will be a success from the moment the first guest arrives—if you follow Patricia's helpful suggestions for making things go with a swing.



item you will have to plan beforehand. This should be of the "running buffet" variety.

Arrange a long table or several small tables out in the garden, and on them display your selections of good things.

Sandwiches are always very popular, and it is surprising how tempting they can be made.

### MANY VARIETIES.

Instead of the old-fashioned ham and beef variety, try the more dainty kind, cream cheese and thinly sliced cucumber, for example; mashed sardine and water-cress. Both are delicious, but you must not forget the sprinkling of pepper and salt on these savoury sandwiches.

Now for some sweeter ones. Sliced apple and honey sandwiches are perfectly delicious: so are banana and seedless raisins, while date and nut sandwiches would be a sensation.

Apart from sandwiches, I think some plain and fancy cakes or biscuits should be set out daintily on the table.

Then, of course, there should be "the treat" to wind up with.

A delicious trifle is always very popular but then so is an elaborate jelly, especially when it is served with lashings of cream. Or perhaps you may prefer a luxurious creamy cake, which would certainly be popular, especially with the youngsters, of the party. Ices, too, bring forth whoops of delight.

### FAVOURITE DRINKS.

The grown-ups of the party will, of course, insist on tea to drink, however hot the day, but please don't forget to offer them the luxury of very weak tea served without milk but with a slice of lemon instead.

If the "babies" are supposed to drink milk, don't forget to give them straws to drink it through; it will make it much more exciting for them.

For your elder schoolgirl guests, I suggest the old favourites, such as lemonade, orangeade, and lemon-barley water.

These have the added advantages of being inexpensive, for if you do not want to use the fresh fruit, very tasty drinks can be made from packet crystals. I do think, however, that just a slice of the fresh fruit floating in the top of each jug does add a note of costliness to the appearance of these delicious summery beverages.

### FRIENDLY GAMES.

Races and competitions are always great fun at a garden party. Three-legged Race, Egg-and-Spoon Race (with a pebble instead of an egg), and Wheelbarrow Races are old favourites. These are made even more exciting if a small prize is given to the winner in each race.

If you want to add a note of real distinction to your party, a few fireworks to wind up the fun will do this, and your chums will say good-bye and thank you, wishing that you had a party every day!

If your birthday falls about this time of the year, wouldn't it be a good idea to have an out-of-doors party in celebration?

Or even if you haven't a birthday, I am sure mother and you between you could find some excuse for such a party.

There is something about a party in the garden that is somehow so carefree, so friendly, and so different.

But, of course, it takes some planning for it to be a big success.

When you send out invitations, remember that the "more the merrier" is the rule for the open-air party. Even a smallish garden will hold fifteen to twenty guests comfortably.

Tea, I suppose, is the most important



## CORK MASCOTS

Only corks—but they quickly turn themselves into these novel mascots.

I EXPECT you have noticed how popular "fobs"—those little mascots worn in coat lapels and on frocks—have been this year. When you were on holiday you may have seen some novel ones you would have liked to buy, but which were too expensive. But then, nice things are always costly, aren't they?

There is one exception. That is, when you make a thing yourself.

I am sure you will enjoy making one or all of these quaint little fob mascots here. Your friends also will clamour to have one, I'm certain.

For these you need two or three ordinary corks—and I'm sure mother saves all these that come into the house. Also some beads are required—round ones for the head parts of these "little men" and longish ones for the arms and legs. Then you will need some odd lengths of brightly coloured cord or embroidery silk.

The first "mascot" has a round bead for his head, which is joined to the cork "body" with a piece of the coloured cord or silk. The arms and legs are attached in the same way.

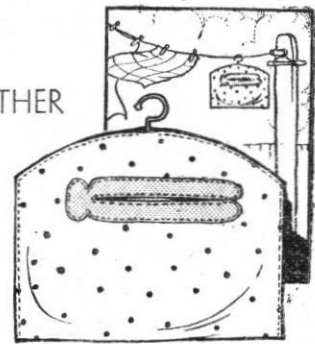
The next one is made from two slices of cork. You bore two holes in each slice with a knitting needle, then join the two together with cord or silk, whichever you are using.

Now decorate one piece of the cork with a comic face. Cord makes arms and legs. The third "animal" mascot is made like the first, you'll see.

The cords are attached by little goldie safety pins to your dress or coat.

## A PEG-BAG FOR MOTHER

Just what mother has been wanting. Do make it for her.



AS you have probably just returned from a lovely holiday, I expect at the back of your mind is the thought that you would like to give mother a little present to show her your appreciation.

So why not make her this useful and original Peg-Bag? It would swing merrily on the line on washing days—the admiration of all the other mothers in the road.

To make it, you will first require a plain wooden coat-hanger. If you have not one to spare from the wardrobe and did not bring back an extra one by mistake from your holiday, you can buy one for a penny from your favourite shop.

Next you will need a piece of cotton material measuring about eighteen inches by twenty-four inches. This can come from mother's piece-bag or from an old summer frock.

### QUICKLY DONE.

Fold the material in half and cut the top to the shape of the coat-hanger. Join all the sides together securely and cut a slit in the centre of the bag.

Then slip the coat-hanger into place, so that the hook pops through the top seam.

Cut out the shape of a big peg in a contrasting material. Sew this—with a glance at the picture—over the opening you have made in the centre. Then slip the hanger into position, and mother's present is complete.

(Continued from page 11)

Diana smiled.

"I won't," she promised.

And she meant that. She must keep within the bounds. No sense now in losing the chance she had worked so hard for; the chance to put the Neptunians in their place. Full of good resolves that evening was Diana, but characteristically those resolves all went to the wind when, just after call-over, she was summoned to the telephone. It was Madge's voice, broken, agitated, which reached her ears.

"Diana, it's about mother. You—you said once that if you could ever do me a good turn—"

"Spill it!" Diana tersely advised.

"They—they're operating on mother at half-past ten to-night," Madge said. "The doctors say it will be touch and go. I—I daren't ask for leave in the circumstances. Thanks to Cathy Jerrold, everybody here thinks I'm just playing with my job, and—and, as you know, I'm under notice. But, Miss Royston-Clarke, I've got to get away."

"Of course," Diana agreed. "What do I do?"

"If—if somehow you could get over here; if you could relieve me for just half an hour so that I could go and see mother? I don't think anybody is likely to detect you; there's a dance on in the house, and usually I'm left alone from ten till midnight. It—it's only to see that nothing goes wrong."

"Right, I'll be there," Diana said. "But supposing I'm caught?"

There came from Madge a weary sigh.

"I—I'm afraid there is a risk of that, of course, but they can't do more to me than they have done—unless they sack me out of hand. They wouldn't do that, unless something dreadful happened. Di, will you come?"

"Expect me," Diana said.

And she was as good as her word, though it meant breaking bounds to go. At half-past ten she arrived at the roadhouse.

"Oh, Di, I—I'll never be able to thank you!" Madge gulped. "But here are the keys. Everything's all right, I think. All you've got to do is sit in the hut. I won't be any longer than I can help."

Diana nodded. She took her place in the hut. Poor Madge, she thought. What a dreadful time she was having. The minutes ticked on. A quarter of an hour, half an hour, three-quarters. Then hurriedly Madge came in again.

"All right?" Diana said.

"Yes, I—I think so. The doctors say she's got a good chance of recovery. Oh, Miss Royston-Clarke, I can never, never thank you. The first thing she asked for when she came out of the ether was me, and oh, she was ever so glad to see me! Nothing happened?" she added.

"Nothing," Diana assured her, cheerfully glad that everything had gone off so well. "Well, I'd better be getting along. So long, old thing! See you to-morrow."

She sauntered out, feeling somehow quite happy in the knowledge of her good turn. Into the darkened grounds she strode, silent now except for the strains of music which came from the dancing gala of the roadhouse. Cautiously she made her way towards the winter garden, crossing the field in which the firework sets were situated to do so.

Then suddenly she paused.

"Yoicks!" she muttered, straining her eyes.

What was that?

Twenty yards in front of her she saw a shadowy figure. The figure was stooping beneath one of the great firework sets. Even as Diana watched, a match blazed out, revealing the outlines of a macintoshed form—whether man, woman, or girl it was impossible to tell. Then—

"Hey!" Diana cried.

For, too late, it dawned upon her what was happening. Some vandal was setting light to the fireworks!

The figure turned. Diana heard a hissing exclamation. Then the figure started running, and the end of the huge set began to stutter and fizzle. Diana, with some desperate idea of stopping it before it set the whole set ablaze, sprinted desperately forward. She came up with the spluttering end of the huge set.

And then—

Even as she stretched out a hand, it happened. There came a crack, a spluttering explosion; a shower of sparks flashed into Diana's face, sending her backwards. Her hat whirled from her head. Then the set was ablaze.

From the roadhouse came a cry as a firework banged.

"Look—look! Somebody's started the fireworks off! And look, there's a girl there! She's done it!"

Even in her confusion, Diana realised she was spotted, and suddenly, horribly, it dawned on her that if she were found here she would be accused. She wasted no time. She did not stop to think. She turned and crashed through the hedge, leaving a glittering display of fireworks extinguishing themselves skywards.

## A Worth-while Sacrifice!



"HALLO! Something up!" remarked Clara Trevlyn uneasily.

"Look at Primmy's face!"

Everybody was looking at Primmy's face.

The scene was Big Hall, and the occasion was assembly next morning. Miss Primrose, after the usual routine of calling names and delivering orders for the day, had just stepped on to her dais in front of the fully assembled school. Now, her face grave in the extreme, she began to speak.

"Last night," she said grimly, "an outrage of a particularly disgraceful nature took place at the Gay Buccaneer roadhouse, where the swimming gala is to be held to-morrow. Some vandal set fire to the fireworks there! And that person, I regret to say, was a Cliff House girl!"

Girls looked at each other in thunder-struck amazement.

"Mr. Hay, the manager of the roadhouse, saw her running away, and afterwards found a Cliff House hat on the spot at which she was first seen. I ask that girl—she must be in this Hall—to step forward."

Diana flushed a little, but she did not move. Nobody moved.

"Very well," Miss Primrose shook her head. "I am determined to investigate this matter. I have promised Mr. Hay that the culprit shall be brought to book. I hate, as you know, to punish the whole school for the errors of one, but this is a matter which deeply affects both our honour and our prestige. If the girl who is guilty will not come forward on her own account, perhaps she will for the sake of the school." Miss Primrose paused. "If she does not," she added, "I shall ban the whole school from attending the gala in any capacity to-morrow."

There was a concerted gasp. Deep dismay filled every face.

Diana caught her breath. Still she stood. She wasn't guilty, but she was the owner of the hat. It was to her that Miss Primrose referred.

It wasn't fair! It wasn't fair! Why should she take the blame?

And yet, if she didn't, the school would suffer. The whole school would be punished for the crime which she had tried to prevent. All Cliff House's hopes would be shattered. Cliff House, in spite of her taunt to the Neptunians, would not be represented. The whole school—or her—

"For the last time—" Miss Primrose thundered.

"All right!" Diana said resignedly, and, to everyone's consternation, stood out. "Don't worry. The school shan't suffer. That's my hat, and I was there, though it wasn't me who let those fireworks off."

Miss Primrose quivered.

"You confess, Diana, that you were out of school at eleven o'clock?"

"Yes," Diana said.

"Why?"

"Because," Diana began, while the whole school stared, and then shut her lips, remembering that if she gave the reason Madge's temporary absence might be reported. "Oh, nothing!" she said irritably. "Well, here I am! I've owned up, haven't I? The gala's not banned now, is it?"

"The gala," Miss Primrose said, "is not banned. The school may dismiss. Diana, you will remain here. I demand a full revelation of all the circumstances. Please, girls, do not loiter!" she added sharply. "Dismiss!"

The girls dismissed, and Diana mutely watched them go. They would go to the gala. They would enjoy themselves, while she—she—

Expulsion, perhaps. Detention, at least.

Oh, she was a fool! Why had she owned up? Look what she had thrown away! Look at the triumph she had given to Cathy! Georgina would take her place, but Georgina would be nowhere. Robbed of her triumph, robbed of her medal, robbed of everything!

What was the matter with her? Hang it, it wasn't as if she were guilty!

But she had a hard job to convince Miss Primrose of her innocence, especially as she would not say why she had been in the roadhouse. She felt almost sick when Miss Primrose announced:

"Very well, Diana, since you persist in your innocence I cannot accuse you of being guilty. At the same time, while the inquiry into this matter is being held you will remain within school bounds, and under no circumstances are you to go to the Gay Buccaneer again."

"Which means," Diana asked quietly, tensely, "I shan't swim?"

"Most certainly you will not swim! Diana, go now!"

Diana went, her hands clenched. She went, to find a seething crowd of girls awaiting her—a crowd partly disgusted, partly glad because she had saved them, partly curious. To their questions, however, Diana angrily waved her hand.

"Oh, shut up!" she stormed. "Shut up! Where's Georgina?"

"Diana, I'm here!"

"Then listen to me," Diana said. "I'm not guilty. I took the blame to get you idiots off. But listen to this, Georgina. You're in my place now. dash you! You've got to be me. I wanted to dive—not only for the honour, but because I wanted to show that cat Cathy up! Well, that's your



job now. You've got to do your utmost, see? Whatever you do, don't let that cat get away with it!"

"But—but, Diana—" Georgina faltered.

"Remember that!" Diana said, turning away. "And now let me go, you awful ninnies! I'm fed-up!"

**GALA DAY!**

The cheerful sun smiled down on the gaiety of a colourful, glamorous scene. Half Cliff House was there; half the other schools in the district, and a jostling mass of other people as well.

Babs & Co., not yet having been called upon to perform, were with their friends near the president's chair. The president himself, genial Bernard Torrance, surrounded by a crowd of admirers, was watching closely as the events took place. The Neptunians, thanks to the prowess of Jessie Davidson, had already won the long distance; but they had been beaten in the water

attitude to suggest she had done wrong. Her handsome face was wreathed in smiles, her eyes gleaming with pleasure, as she chatted animatedly to her friend, Mr. Torrance.

She was asking for expulsion. She knew it. But Diana, reckless, did not care. Why should she suffer for a crime she hadn't committed? Apart from that, she wanted to be on hand when Georgina performed. She wanted to see Madge. She wanted a chance to have a final jeer at Cathy Jerrold.

Her eyes were roving the bath as she talked. Where was Madge?

Then suddenly Cathy Jerrold was before her. She glared at Diana and smiled with honeyed sweetness at the president of the gala. Mr. Torrance smiled in return.

"I just want to tell you, Mr. Torrance," Cathy said, "that the high diving will be the event after the next. The next event is the fancy diving. You

couldn't have been anyone else, could it?"

"You don't seem very sure," Diana reminded him.

"Well, I had a sort of idea that—but no, I won't say it! It sounds ungrateful. All the same, I could have sworn the girl who saved me had grey eyes. What's the matter, Diana? What are you staring at?"

For Diana, in sudden excitement, had straightened up. Grey eyes!

Madge had grey eyes. By Jove—by Jove! Would this explain Cathy's hatred of that girl? Would this explain why Cathy was so anxious to get her the sack—so that, of course, she would not be here on gala day?

"Mr. Torrance," she said, with a sudden intensity which made the man stare, "if—if it had been anyone else do you think you'd recognise her?"

"Why, of course! But—" And he blinked. For Diana had moved aside. Her heart was throbbing



**THERE** was a great chorus of cries as Diana toppled into the pool. Babs & Co. looked astonished. To them it seemed as if Diana had deliberately fallen in. So Diana had—for a very noble purpose.

polo match by Courtfield Spartans, and were now competing in the hundred yards, in which Flora Cann was Cliff House's representative. There was a yell as that race finished.

The Neptunians won, but Flora, putting on a tremendous spurt, was barely a yard behind the winner.

"Good stuff!" Babs laughed at Clara. "Not having it all their own way, are they? I wonder," she added, "what Diana is doing now?"

She shook her head. In spite of her anxieties she could feel sorry for Diana, mooning round the empty school which Cliff House at this moment must be. Clara, by her side, let out a low whistle. "My giddy aunt! Look!"

Babs looked. Then she jumped. For Diana, whom everybody fondly imagined to be in detention, was here! "The silly chump—she's broken detention!" Clara breathed.

Diana had. But Diana didn't care. Certainly there was nothing in her

good luck," he added jovially, as Cathy, with another jealous look at Diana, drifted off.

Diana scowled a little. "I didn't know," she said, "you knew her, Mr. Torrance."

"Egad, and neither did I a fortnight ago! All the same, you can't very well get fished out of a river by someone and then remain a stranger!"

"Cathy—she fished you out of the river?" Diana cried incredulously.

"Well, yes. At least, she says so! I was fishing," he explained. "I had a punt in the middle of the river with a chair on it. I caught a perch—my, was that a giant! Pulling the beggar in, I fell off the chair. Well, you know I can't swim. Apart from that, I'd hit my head on the edge of the punt and was dashed near unconscious. I just remember seeing a girl swim towards me before I went under. When I came to there was Miss Jerrold on the bank, giving me artificial respiration. So it

now. Had she hit upon something? Had she found the secret of Cathy Jerrold's hatred of Madge? Straight to Madge's hut she went. There she found that girl, her face heavy with misery.

"And why," she demanded, "aren't you in the grounds?"

Madge shook her head. "I—I've been told to stop here," she said. "Cathy Jerrold—"

"She's fixed it, eh?" Diana looked grim. "Afraid of you going to the pool?" she guessed. "All right, don't stare. But, Madge, answer me one question—truthfully. A fortnight ago a man fishing from a punt fell into the river—"

Madge started. "How do you know?"

"Never mind. You rescued him, didn't you?"

"Well, y-yes," Madge blushed. "But—but I didn't say anything. Who was he, Diana?"

Diana's eyes flamed. "Never mind," she said. "Although I must say," she added witheringly, "you're a goose! Why didn't you stop till he regained consciousness?"

"Well—" Madge faltered. "Miss Jerrold came up. Miss Jerrold said that the man was her relation and she'd look after him. But, Miss Royston-Clarke,"

she cried, as Diana suddenly caught her arm. "what are you doing?"

"Come with me," Diana gritted, and lunged her to the door. "You're going to the pool."

Diana was unconquerable then. Madge just had to go her way, and very soon found herself on the edge of the bath, where the fancy-diving event had just finished.

"Now," Diana said swiftly, "rescue me!"

"But—oh, Miss Royston-Clarke! Miss Royston-Clarke!"

Madge gave a scream as Diana, spinning round, seemed to fall. Everybody screamed. Everybody, in a moment, was up in their seats. Over the edge of the bath Diana went, eyes closed, apparently having struck her head. There was a splash. She disappeared under the water.

"My hat! It's Diana!" Babs cried.

"Here, let me—"

"Look!" cried Clara as Babs made a jump forward.

For Madge, as alarmed as anyone else, had jumped, fully dressed as she was, into the water. Three swift strokes took her to Diana's log-like form. She caught her by the hair.

Diana's eyes blinked open.

"Easy on!" she said. "Easy on! That's my coiffure you're disarranging!"

"You—you did that on purpose!" Madge gasped.

"Of course I did! Now life-save me, you idiot! No, don't swim that way! Swim towards the president. I want him to see you. Do as I tell you!" she added fiercely.

Madge, blinking, got Diana on to her back. A cheer went up as, paddling water, she commenced to swim. The president jumped up.

"Egad, plucky, that!" he glowed. "Hey, give her a hand, can't you? Bring her to me. And then, as half a dozen girls, Clara and Babs among them, jumped to lend a hand, he rose in his seat. "Egad!" he cried, his eyes starting. "Egad! That girl—"

"Diana!" gasped Babs. "Oh, Di, you idiot, what did you do that for?"

"Just," Diana said, with a smile in Mr. Torrance's direction—and to Babs' amazement, burst into a laugh—"just to give everybody an extra thrill for their money—what? All right, you idiots, don't touch me! I'm all right!" And to everybody's stupefaction, Diana calmly clambered out of the bath. "Madge!" she said, extending a hand.

Madge, gasping, clambered out. Mr. Torrance, his face flaming with excitement, was in front of them. He stared at Madge.

"You—" he choked. "You, egad, you! You're the girl who saved my life! Yes, you—you—you! Hey, where's Cathy Jerrold?" he cried. "Cathy, what do you mean by telling me you saved my life, and taking the credit from this girl?"

Cathy, coming forward, suddenly shrank back a pace as she found Mr. Torrance's accusing eyes upon her.

Diana smiled. "I wonder," he said to the bewildered Babs, "how a girl must feel when her face has turned as green as Cathy Jerrold's? Just look at her!"

**SENSATION, THEN,** followed swiftly by a new sensation.

For Mr. Torrance, having recognised his rescuer, insisted there and then upon the whole matter being cleared up. Cathy, green, sickly, was brought forward and forced to own up. Diana was there, too, and Diana, hating this girl, was not mindful, in this moment of her humiliation, to let her off easily.

"And to prevent Madge meeting Mr. Torrance, you tried to get her the sack?" she asked contemptuously.

"You accused her of theft. You accused her of emptying the bath. You would," she added, her eyes blazing, "have let it be thought that she set the fireworks off, but I accidentally spoiled that little game for you, didn't I? You sneaking cat! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"And aren't," a trembling voice put in at her elbow, "you ashamed of yourself, Diana? How dare you break detention?"

And before the amazed chums, Miss Primrose loomed on the scene.

"I guessed I would find you here," she went on. "Diana, how dare you? After this, there can be no further leniency. You will be expelled!"

"Eh? What's that?" exclaimed Bernard Torrance, and jerked to his feet. "Miss Primrose, wait a minute!" he cried. "You can't expel a fine girl like Diana! You can't expel a girl for befriending another. You can't expel her for showing up a girl who all along the line has been acting a lie! Miss Primrose—"

"Oh, never mind," Diana said. "Let her get on with the expelling. I don't care! Why should I care? I've done what I set out to do. I've got my own back on Cathy, and I don't think the proud Neptunians will be so proud in the future! And you, Madge—"

"Oh!" Madge said. "Miss Primrose, please don't expel her! Diana has been splendid—just splendid!" And then, before even Mr. Torrance could speak again, she blurted out the story.

Miss Primrose looked taken aback. Very grimly she regarded the Firebrand of the Fourth.

"Oh!" she said. "I—I didn't understand. Very well, Diana, you are not expelled; but be sure I will talk to you when we get back to school. You may stay—yes, you may stay," she added

graciously. "And—and, Diana, if you would care to compete in the gala—"

"Diana, yes!" Georgina cried eagerly. "Please—please, take my place!"

But Diana, with a glance towards the green and shivering Cathy, now lining up with the rest of the competitors for the high diving contest at the other end of the bath, smiled contemptuously.

"Thanks!" she said. "I've given you the job. Carry it out! I don't think," she added, her mocking eyes upon her sick-looking rival, "that you'll have any difficulty in beating Cathy. Let her see what Cliff House is made of!"

And Georgina did, though, to be sure, the shunned and unpopular Cathy could not have dived in those moments if she had been offered a king's ransom. Her performance, to say the least of it, was piteous. Georgina won, hands down.

"Which," Diana said, at the end of the event, "is just as it should be! Congratulations, Georgina. It's not, of course, half as good as I could have done, but you're coming on!"

Georgina smiled. Madge, shaking her head, smiled, too.


"Conceited Diana!" she said teasingly.

Conceited, Diana might be, but a very pleased Diana, especially when, later, Janet Jordan won the half-mile and Tonie Sunday, contrary to all expectations, won the two hundred yards breast stroke. More happy still was Diana when, after an interview with Mr. Hay and Mr. Torrance, it was announced that Madge was fully reinstated in her position.

But what a heart-throb, what a pang she knew that evening as the gold medal she had hoped to wear upon her own tunic was presented to Georgina Skeppington!

That, indeed, was Diana's one and only bitter moment!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.



**Their HEROINE UNDER SUSPICION**

Miss Charmant, the adored mistress of the Fourth Form, a thief? Why, it was absurd, incredible! Babs & Co. just couldn't believe it. Neither could anybody else at Cliff House—at first. But strange things happened; disturbing things, which seemed to prove beyond all doubt that "The Charmer," respected and beloved by the whole school, was dishonest. And finally Babs & Co. were the only ones willing to fight to clear her name. Don't miss this magnificent story. It is complete, by **HILDA RICHARDS**, of course, next Saturday.

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All the Thrills and Glamour of the Golden West—

# GIRL RIDER OF THE BLUE HILLS!



By  
**DORIS  
LESLIE**

**FOR NEW READERS.**

FAY THORNTON lives on the Flying H Ranch in Texas with her father, ROBERT THORNTON, and her two little brothers, Ted and 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. During a big gala day at the little town of Redland Gulch a cowboy rides in with the news that cattle thieves have been at work again, and he says that one of the thieves was Robert Thornton. Fay is certain this cannot be true, but the sheriff and his men ride off, determined to arrest her father. Fay sets out on her own horse to warn him of his danger.

(Now read on.)

danger; she must help him to get away to some place where he would be safe from discovery, safe from capture, until a way of proving his innocence was found. Fortunately Fay knew exactly where her father was; the posse didn't. She was able to take short cuts.

On and on they tore; nearer and nearer loomed the Blue Hills.

The face of those hills was scarred with narrow passes. Fay knew which one to take.

Broad-brimmed hat pulled down tightly to resist the rush of wind, she tore for a pass this side of a waterfall. And then, just as she was slowing down, just as she was gently tugging the reins to turn Starlight into it, she saw something—something that made her rein in sharply.

A quarter of a mile away a number of men were riding, spaced out in a

and came racing towards her. As they met, she panted out her warning.

"Quickly, daddy! Into cover. Those men are after YOU!"

"What!" Mr. Thornton ejaculated. "After me? But, listen, girlie—"

But Fay refused to listen. She tugged at his reins herself, and so obvious was her alarm that her father, frowning in wonderment, galloped beside her for a cluster of rocks. There, sheltered and shadowed, and safe for the moment from detection, Fay blurted out a recital of the sensational happening in town.

She told her father of the dramatic appearance of the injured cowboy; of his startling story—that rustlers were at work in the district again; that he had come upon them, given chase, actually got to grips with one and managed to snatch a scarf from off the man's face. And finally, her eyes flashing and her voice charged with anger and apprehension, she told how the cowboy had said it was he—Thornton—whom he had unmasked, an accusation which had been terribly substantiated by the scarf in the man's possession.

"It—it WAS your scarf, too, daddy."

"My stars!" Mr. Thornton broke in fiercely. "So—so that's why they did it?"

"Did what, daddy?"

"Listen, lass." He laid a hand on her shoulder. "We're O.K. here for th' moment, so I can tell you my story now; tell you WHY I was makin' for th' sheriff just then. Girlie," he said, in a grim voice, "I was set on by a pack of rustlers an' robbed of my neckerchief 'bout two hours ago!"

Fay stared at him, utterly astonished.

"Daddy!" she gasped. "Robbed of your scarf? But—but—" And then, in sudden concern: "Oh, daddy, you're—you're all right? They didn't hurt you?"

"Not much, lass," he said, with a fond pat of her cheek. "Thorntons take some killin', I reckon. They laid me out for a while, that's all. I had no chance. They pounced on me like a pack of coyotes—'bout a dozen of them, all masked. I don't mind confessin' I thought I was for it," he added grimly, "but it wasn't me they were wantin'. It was the neckerchief. As soon as they'd got it they clouted me over th' head with something, an' that was all

## Her Father Explains!

**C**LIPPITY-clop, clippity-clop! With a drumming of hoofs, and little clouds of dust eddying in her wake, Fay Thornton rode out of Redland Gulch at a speed she had never ridden before.

From the well-worn trail she swung her range pony Starlight. Over rough ground they streaked.

To the Blue Hills!

To that range of towering, rugged heights that lay straight before her, wreathed in a mantle of glorious colour as the Texas sun sank to rest behind them.

For daddy, who had remained in the hills on the watch for a cattle thief, was in terrible danger. She had got to see him; she had got to warn him.

Fay's lips set as, crouching low over her pony's neck, she stared back through the gathering twilight towards the other end of Redland Gulch.

A score or more of horsemen, strung out at intervals, were streaming along the trail. One by one they disappeared around a wall of rock, and Fay felt her heart pounding.

Sheriff Martin and his posse, also bound for the Blue Hills, bent on capturing daddy.

It would be a race between them, with daddy's liberty at stake!

Not only must she warn him of his

## Fay must take food to her outlawed father, but men are watching the ranch, waiting to follow her.

wide semi-circle. The posse—and racing towards those men was a solitary rider, much nearer Fay; so near that she had no difficulty in recognising him.

"Daddy," she breathed. And then, in a spasm of dread: "Daddy! Oh, my—my golly! He'll ride slap into them. Why, that—that's what he seems to be wanting. I believe he's seen them! Quick, Starlight," she cried.

She swung the pony round and went tearing across to intercept her father.

Luck was on her side. From a higher altitude she had been able to see both sets of riders. But a ridge of rock was screening her father from the posse, who had not yet spotted him, and if only she could attract his attention before he topped the rise—

"Daddy—daddy!" she shouted at the top of her voice, and, standing up in the stirrups, waved her hat.

Her father, hearing her voice, turned

I remember, I guess—oh, except that I managed to give one of them a smack on the face with my fist!"

"Daddy," Fay said tenderly. But suddenly her eyes narrowed, she looked up at him.

"A frame-up, daddy!" she said fiercely. "That's why they took your scarf—so that chap could ride into town and spin that story about you."

"Sure, a frame-up!" he agreed, his face darkening. There could be no possible doubt about that. The rustlers had stolen his scarf in order to incriminate him. And almost certainly the injured cowboy who had ridden into town was one of her father's assailants; perhaps the very man he had struck.

"Daddy," Fay said keenly, "what was that fellow you hit like?"

"Why, average build, so far as I can recollect, lass, with a red shirt, ordinary trousers, a six-gun, yep—an' dark hair!"

Fay's eyes were gleaming.

"That's the fellow, daddy!" she exclaimed. "It's the same one all right. But what," she went on, frowning perplexedly—"what ever could have been the idea? There was no need to fix any blame on you, as they seem to have got away, unless—"

She snapped her finger. "My golly! Daddy, I wonder—could it have been—"

Gleaming-eyed, she looked at her father.

"John Hampton!" she ended dramatically.

"Hampton?" Robert Thornton started; then his face hardened. "My stars, lass, I believe you're right! That fellow I hit did remind me of one of Hampton's outfit. Hampton!" he repeated, husky with anger. "Why, th' low-down cur, I—I'll—"

Shaking with emotion, Fay's father turned his horse's head.

"Daddy, where are you going?" Fay cried in dismay.

"To tell Sheriff Martin th' truth!" was Mr. Thornton's resolute reply.

In another two seconds he would have emerged into the open; but Fay sent Starlight jumping forward and clutched at her father's arm.

"Daddy, you can't!" she cried. "They wouldn't believe a word of it. Oh, can't you see, daddy," she went on entreatingly, as he stopped, hesitating—"can't you see how funny it all sounds? Not a bit like th' truth! I guess nobody—nobody, except those who know you like I do, an'—an' love you as I do, daddy," she added, a little tremor in her voice—"would be able to believe it. There's only one thing you can do."

"You mean—" said her father slowly, jerking his head towards the shadowy recess behind them.

"Yes, daddy," Fay said swiftly. "Hide! Keep out of the way until we've got evidence everyone will believe. And we'll do it! There's me and—Douglas, too, I guess; and some of the cowboys—Lefty and Tiny. They believe in you; they'll help."

"Follow me!" she added excitedly. "I know the very place to hide."

They turned their ponies and rode deeper into the recess in the mountain. Other recesses branched off on both sides, but Fay kept on for over half a mile until she turned into one.

A quarter of a mile farther along, climbing steadily up a steep hill, they came to a number of caves which, fronting a narrow ledge, commanded an uninterrupted view of countless miles of now dusky scenery; and they were conveniently shielded by rock and straggly brushwood.

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



**BETWEEN OURSELVES**

MY DEAR READERS,—Once again our lovely Annuals are on sale. On page 7 of this issue you will find them all reproduced, with a few words about each, but I want to add just a few words of my own.

Now, first of all, OUR Annual—

"THE SCHOOL FRIEND ANNUAL."

Price 3s. 6d. A book to gladden the heart of every lover of Babs & Co., for the Cliff House favourites are featured in its enthralling pages again and again. Here in addition, you will also meet "Gipsy Joy"—the Rich Girl Romany," by Ida Melbourne, all those delightful characters in "At School in the South Seas," by Elizabeth Chester, and a host of other fascinating heroines.

Here are a few of the famous authors who have contributed to make the 1939 SCHOOL FRIEND ANNUAL the loveliest treasure-trove of reading ever published: Hilda Richards (of course!), Ida Melbourne, Elizabeth Chester, Margery Marriott, Mavis Page, etc.

"THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN ANNUAL,"

at six shillings, is beautifully produced and simply crammed with gorgeous feature. Naturally, the Moreove chums are well to the fore, but there are heaps of other stories to please everyone.

"THE POPULAR BOOK OF GIRLS' STORIES"

costs two-and-ninepence, and is really wonderful value for money. Just look at some of the people who have contributed to it this year: Renee Frazer, Elizabeth Chester, Ida Melbourne, Louise Carlton, Margery Marriott, etc., etc.

"THE GOLDEN ANNUAL,"

also 3s. 6d., has always been known as the book that caters for all tastes. It still does, for its many pages contain stories that range over a wide variety of themes—modern adventure, historical, humorous, sporting, mystery, romance, etc., etc.

Well, there you are, readers all. Four really wonderful books. If you cannot afford to buy them all yourself, why not reserve them for birthday or Christmas presents?

But now I must hurry on to next week's SCHOOLGIRL programme.

"THEIR HEROINE UNDER SUSPICION!"

That is the title of the magnificent COMPLETE Cliff House story, and it tells what happens when Miss Charmant, the adored mistress of the Fourth, behaves in a manner which convinces almost everyone that she is a thief. Even Babs & Co. are racked with doubt. The Charmer a thief? Oh, she can't be! And yet—

But I will leave you to discover for yourself whether the Co.'s idol has feet of clay after all. In addition, our next issue will contain further thrilling chapters of "Girl Rider of the Blue Hills," another delightful COMPLETE "Cousin George and 'The Imp'" story and more of Patricia's interesting pages—so order your copy now. With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,  
THE EDITOR.

The moment her father was inside the largest cave, high enough and wide enough to accommodate his mount as well, Fay gasped his hands.

"I'd better go now, daddy," she said, feeling so relieved to know he was comparatively safe. "But I'll be back later to-night, when the coast's clear, with food and blankets."

"Better not risk it, lass," Mr. Thornton demurred. "I'll be all right."

"You won't without food, daddy. And you look all-in. You must be hungry. Why, you've had nothing since early morning. Don't you worry; I'll manage."

It was a tender, lingering farewell that father and daughter bade each other. Then Fay, tearing herself away, swung into the saddle and went riding off down to the valley.

She was well into the open country when the sudden clatter of hoofs made her look up. And, in consternation, she found herself face to face with a group of horsemen.

Sheriff Martin and his posse!

### Did Lucille Suspect?

SOMEHOW Fay recovered herself in a flash. She forced a little smile to her face, and, apparently perfectly calm and composed, rode up to meet the men, as, with sudden shouts, they spurred their horses towards her.

"Howdy?" Fay said, reining in. The sheriff scanned her face with dark, penetrating eyes.

"Got here pretty quick, ain't yuh?" he remarked sharply. "What's th' idea?"

"Pretty obvious, if you ask me," one of the posse snapped. "Warnin' that rustler father of hers! Grab her, sheriff! Make her spill where he is! If you ask me—"

"Nobody is asking yuh, Johnson!" Sheriff Martin snapped, darting the man a disapproving glance. "I'm runnin' this show, if yuh don't mind! Now, see here, Miss Thornton," he went on in kindly tones, turning back to Fay, "we don't want to upset yuh an' those two kid-brothers of yours any more than we can help. But we want your father; an' if you know where he's hiding, then it's your duty to tell us where he is."

Steadily Fay returned the sheriff's unflinching gaze.

"My duty, sheriff?" she said quietly. "As an honest, law-abiding citizen," the sheriff replied.

"And what of my duty as a daughter?" Fay countered. "What if I know my father's innocent?"

"That's only one right in a case like this," Sheriff Martin said in a harder voice; "and that's to do what th' law demands!"

"Just a minute, boys!" exclaimed a clear voice; and another horseman rode up behind the posse.

Fay's heart leaped as she recognised the spruce, clean-cut figure of Douglas Lessiter, the young Englishman who now worked for the Flying H. Funny how comforted, how much more brave she felt, now that Douglas was here to support her.

And Douglas did not wait to rally to Mr. Thornton's defence.

In brisk, businesslike tones he told that grim, purposeful body of men that he knew why Fay's father had gone into the Blue Hills—that he had gone there early that morning to try to get on the track of the genuine rustler whom Fay had detected in the hills an

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hour or so before: and, finally, that he knew enough about Thornton, in any event, to disbelieve the charge against him now.

But it was no use. Impressed though the sheriff undoubtedly was by Douglas' straightforward defence of the wanted man, the evidence against Thornton was too strong. And Douglas' story broke down in the minds of his audience when he had to confess that Thornton had been left by himself in the hills from late afternoon onwards.

"He'd plenty of time to do that rustlin' then," Sheriff Martin declared. He turned towards Fay.

"Are you willin' to speak?" he said. "Nope?" as Fay gave a defiant shake of her head, trying so desperately to look brave. "O.K. then! But don't blame me, my girl, if things are pretty unpleasant for yuh. Come on, boys! We'll scour these hills till we do find that guy if it takes a month!"

The posse rode past, some of the men glaring at Fay as they went by.

"Chin up, old thing," said Douglas gently. "You're doing all right so far. Try to keep going for a little while longer." Then, anxiously: "Your dad's safe?"

Dumbly Fay nodded. In silence they rode back towards the trail that would take them to the Flying H Ranch. All Fay's relief at the successful outcome of her race to the Blue Hills had been shattered by her encounter with the sheriff and his men.

Would they find daddy? Would they see the caves—suspect—investigate?

Almost fiercely Fay checked those disturbing fears. She mustn't get panicky. She must keep calm. The calmer she was the better would she be able to set about finding proof of daddy's innocence—in other words, proof that someone else, whether John Hampton or another, had deliberately framed him.

When she told Douglas what she knew the young fellow became strangely moody, staring straight ahead of him as though seeing nothing. Nor did he say a word until they were in sight of the Flying H, and then it had no direct bearing on her father, or Hampton.

"Oh, I got the youngsters to bed, old thing!" he suddenly announced.

"They don't know about what's happened?" Fay asked anxiously.

"Well, they wondered where you'd gone, of course, and wanted to know why your father wasn't back," Douglas said, "but I managed to put them off. I had a romp with them to make sure they were tired out. They'll sleep well to-night."

"You ought to have been a nursemaid, I guess," Fay said, with a wan attempt at humour.

It certainly seemed like it, for when Fay peeped into the youngsters' room they were sleeping as peacefully as could be.

Tenderly Fay looked at them in the dimness. Dear boys. She sighed. Thank goodness they didn't know about their father.

"Douglas," Fay said with sudden decision, when they were back in the kitchen, "I'm going to visit daddy again to-night to take him some things. Do Tiny Shaw and the other cowboys know what's happened?"

"Yes, old thing. And they're one hundred per cent with us!"

Fay smiled. A little shakily she drew in her breath. But before she could say another word Douglas resumed.

"You won't be going yet, will you? All right, then I'll just run along—I've a little job to do. I'll be back before you start. You may need company."

And, with a cheery little grin, he strode off.



FAY turned with a gasp as she heard Lucille Hampton's mocking voice from the doorway. Did her enemy suspect that she was preparing food to take to her fugitive father?

Fay did not waste a moment, but set to work with feverish haste to prepare supplies for her father.

Into a couple of large saddlebags she crammed two bottles of water, some blankets, matches, tins of soup, beans, and peaches.

Out came a cold joint, some pie, and an appetising-looking ham, and soon she had prepared quite a pile of mixed fare.

"I reckon that'll do fine," she mused, speaking aloud.

"I should say a little too fine."

Heart fluttering, Fay whirled round at the sound of that soft voice speaking from the door. Then, as she saw the elegant figure who, dressed in immaculate riding habit, lolled against one of the supports, a half-mocking, half-amused smile wreathing her lips, she clenched her hands.

Lucille Hampton! And a Lucille who, plainly enough, had come here to gloat. But an extremely dangerous Lucille, too, for if she chanced to guess for whom these preparations were being made—

Quickly and yet apparently quite naturally Fay stepped in front of the saddlebags. Calmly she looked at her enemy; calmly she spoke.

"Is there anything you want?"

"Oh, not really! I only wanted to see how you were managing now that your father's got himself into such a mess," was Lucille's airy reply.

"You mean now that someone's got him into a mess!" Fay retorted, keeping her temper by an effort.

Lucille's eyes glittered.

"Very clever, Fay Thornton, only I don't know anyone who'll believe that. Nice little spread you're getting ready," she commented, nodding towards the table.

"Isn't it?" said Fay, and took care not to budge from before the saddlebags. "A nice little spread for a nice lot of cowboys. Care to stay and join them?"

It was audacious bluff, but gloriously successful bluff, for the last thing the haughty Hampton girl wished to do was to share a meal with a pack of cowboys. As Fay had hoped, she disappeared, and from the window Fay watched her ride away.

"So much for her," she chuckled.

"But I'd better be ready when Douglas gets back."

Fay was ready, with the saddlebags fastened, when Douglas Lessiter put in an appearance. But at once she saw that something was wrong, for he looked grim and perturbed as he strode into the kitchen.

"Why, Douglas, what is it?" she cried. "Daddy—you don't mean they've found him?"

"No, old thing," he said tersely—"not that. But they're doing their darndest to succeed. Come over here." Taking her arm, he led her to the window. "Look!" he said, pointing.

In the moonlight, Fay saw a figure on horseback at the entrance to the yard, another some distance down the trail, two others, like sentinels, perched on a high ledge of rock.

"Watching this place," Douglas whispered tensely. "I think they're Hampton's men. And that means if you visit your father you'll be followed every inch of the way."

### Handicapped by the Kiddies!

"SO Lucille put them up to it? She must have guessed—well, suspected, at all events?" asked Douglas.

Grimly, Fay nodded. "I didn't think she would," she said. "I'm sure she didn't spot the saddlebags. But I might have known she wouldn't take any chances," she added bitterly.

It was five minutes later.

Seated at the kitchen table, the saddlebags on one side, Fay and Douglas were discussing the startling development that had taken place. The ranch being watched! There was no doubt in their minds that Lucille was responsible for those men being stationed there. But what were they to do?

Food and supplies must be taken to daddy.

Fay suddenly looked up with a little cry of excitement.

"I believe I've got it!" she cried. "Supposing someone set off on a false trail, leading those fellows after him?"

Then I could slip away when the coast was clear—"

"By jingo, what a wheeze!" Douglas sprang to his feet, eyes sparkling. "That's it, Fay—that'd do it! Look here, I'll start off with a fake set of saddlebags, and when you reckon—"

"Oh, but I was thinking of Tiny or Lefty," Fay demurred. "It's mighty decent of you to offer, Douglas, but it'll be dreadful dangerous—and 'sides, you don't know this sort of country very well, do you?"

"I may seem rather a tenderfoot, old thing," said Douglas, with a curious smile, "but I reckon I know enough about this country to lead those chaps quite a lively dance. I didn't do so badly an hour or so ago, anyhow—managed to find out something that may help your father no end. By the way, I'd tell him if I were you—it'll cheer him up!"

Queer fellow, Douglas! Not that she doubted any longer that he was her friend. But once again she found herself being puzzled by him; once again she recalled all those strange little incidents which had implied he wasn't quite what he appeared to be.

And what did he mean—he'd found out something that might help daddy?

"Why, Douglas—" she began. But Douglas, with a sudden laugh, turned and sped out of the kitchen. When he came back he was carrying his own saddlebags.

"You fill this one—I'll fill the other," he ordered. "Anything will do so long as they look nice and bulky. Fine!" he commented, when they were stuffed with newspapers and old rags. "And now for something really incriminating."

"Here you are!" said Fay, and with a little laugh that reflected the sudden change in her feelings, tossed over a blanket. "That ought to do the trick if you just sling it across your horse."

A moment later she was wishing him a fervent "good luck!" As soon as he had slipped away she turned out the oil-lamp and, skirting the shaft of moonlight that streamed in through the window, darted to the side and peered out into the yard.

Her heart beat in a wild tumult as she saw Douglas sling the blanket over behind his saddle, saw him fasten the saddlebags, and then, swinging up, go riding away. It beat even more tumultuously as she saw each of the watchers turn to gaze after him, then set off in stealthy pursuit. One by one, they left their posts until all were gone.

"Oh, gee, how grand!" she breathed, her cheeks flushed. "He's done it!"

She waited, keyed up with suspense and impatience, for five minutes—ten—fifteen. Then she ventured outside. No one in sight. Round to the back of the ranch-house she sped, and then swiftly dodged into the shadows as she spotted a group of horsemen gathered under some trees.

Another party of watchers here! At first, she regarded them in dismay, and then a slow smile overspread her face. These men, evidently having seen Douglas pursued by their companions, were not keeping a strict vigil. They seemed to be engaged in casual chatter, and she caught more than one sudden laugh.

"Nothing much to fear from them," she mused, slipping away, "if I don't make much noise. They can't see me at the front."

And now—now for the genuine mission!

Someone must be ready to keep an

ear for her young brothers, in case one of them should wake, so she sought out Tiny Shaw, the long-legged foreman, who readily agreed to act as night-nurse. He'd finish a game of cards, he declared, and then "shake down" in the kitchen so as to be on the spot.

Tiny would have said a great deal about how he and the rest of the boys were standing by Fay, but there was no time. Fay, thanking him for his loyalty, and telling him to express her gratitude to the others, hurried off.

Her own loaded saddlebags fastened into position, she prepared to mount. She caught hold of the reins, put a foot in the stirrup, braced herself for an easy swing into position, and then—

Then she froze, heart standing still, as a shadow crossed her path. Startled, she turned, round-eyed, she stared at the small but familiar figure who, dressed in dungarees, stood behind her.

"Ted!" she cried. "Why, Ted, how is it you're not in bed? You ought to be asleep!"

Doggedly, nine-year-old Ted shook his head, so that a wisp of unruly hair fell across his brow, and his eyes blazed in a way that Fay had never known before. "I'm not going back to sleep, sis,"

## A LOVELY SURPRISE FOR YOU

Such a glorious surprise,  
in fact, that you'll  
want to tell all your  
friends about it.

Further details next  
week, and the surprise  
itself very, very soon.

Don't miss next  
week's issue.

he said determinedly. "I'm going to help daddy!"

Fay drew in a sharp breath. "You—you know, Ted?" she whispered.

Ted threw up his head, the moonlight playing upon a face that, despite its boyishness, was strangely determined.

"Yes, sis. I guess I woke up and heard you and Douglas talking—and I know that daddy's wanted for rustling, and that he's hiding out there in the hills from the sheriff. Well, I know he's not a rustler, same as you," the youngster added fiercely, "and I reckon he'll be needing help. So I'm going to join him!"

In sudden agitation, Fay stepped towards him. This was a most alarming complication.

"Now, please, Ted," she began imploringly, "listen to me for just a moment. I'm in a dreadful hurry. Please go to bed."

But that was as far as Fay got, for suddenly a frightened cry came from the ranch.

"Oh, Fay—Fay! Where are you, sis? It's all dark, and—and I can't find Ted. Fay—Fay!"

"Bobbie!" Fay gasped, and all thought of Ted and his problem momentarily thrust from her mind, she went racing indoors.

Her six-year-old brother, sitting up in bed, clung to her fiercely as she bent over him. Sobbing as though his heart would break, his little frame shaking and quivering, he gripped her with all the strength of sudden terror.

"Don't leave me, sis!" he choked. "You—you're not going out, are you?" he whispered, his tear-filled eyes widening in new alarm as he looked at her. "Don't go away, sis—stay with me! Oh, please, don't go away! I'm so frightened, and I can't find Ted—"

Gently Fay held him to her. Soothingly and consolingly she spoke to him, rocking him in her arms as she did so.

"There, there, old chap!" she said. "You'll be all right. And Ted's all right, too. He—he got out of bed to come and see me. Just you lie down and go to sleep again."

But Bobbie, gulping, shook his head.

"I'm not going to lie down! You are going to leave me—I know you are, 'cos you've got your hat and gloves on, and—and— Oh, sis—sis!" A white, tear-stained little face, so full of pleading, so full of trust, was turned up to hers. "Don't go out, please—please! I'm so awfu' scared!"

"But there's no need to be scared, really, Bobbie," Fay said, forcing herself to give a cheery smile. "You'll be all right here. Look! I tell you what I'll do. How would you like Tiny and Lefty and one or two of the other cow-boys to come in here with you?"

Bobbie gave a little pout. "Don't—don't want Tiny and Lefty!" he murmured.

"But they'd play with you, Bobbie—all sorts of lovely games. You like that, don't you? I'll send Ted to fetch them."

And Fay, pretending to be almost excited at the idea herself, and hoping that Bobbie would be swayed in that way, turned towards the door.

"No, sis! Oh, please, I don't want them!" Bobbie cried. More fiercely than ever, he clung to her, his little body shaking with terror. "Please don't go out, sis! Stay with me, please—please!"

No one could have ignored the passionate entreaty in that plea, least of all she, to whom this frightened child meant so much. Her heart glowed with pride and affection to think of the faith and confidence he reposed in her, and yet, when she remembered her father and his plight at this moment, she felt an icy pang.

She stared towards the moonlit window. Drawn and worried was her face, trouble-filled her eyes.

Oh golly! What a predicament! Daddy needed her, out there in the Blue Hills, a fugitive, hungry and alone, who dared not leave his hiding-place for fear of capture. And yet this wee fellow here needed her just as much in his own small way!

What ever could she do? She had got to see daddy, and yet Bobbie must be pacified first. If he wasn't, then the commotion might reach the ears of the watchers at the back of the ranch, and once that happened it would be utterly disastrous to her plan.

For those men, their suspicions aroused, would keep the front of the ranch under observation, too, and gone would be her every hope of visiting daddy without betraying his whereabouts.

**WHAT now? What is Fay's solution to this terribly worrying problem? You really mustn't miss next Saturday's instalment of this grand serial.**



COMPLETE this week. Another delightful laughter-story featuring—



# COUSIN GEORGE *and the Imp*

Gallantly Cousin George helped the old lady to alight. He wouldn't have been half as gallant if he had known that the visitor was actually the Imp in disguise—bent on teaching him a lesson.

## No Cheating the Imp!

**H**ETTY, here is half-a-crown. Go out and enjoy yourself." Hetty Sonning, known to friends and intimates as the Imp, gave a violent start, and nearly fell out of the hammock in which she was reclining under a shady tree in the garden.

At first Hetty thought that she must have fallen asleep while reading her book, and that she was now dreaming. For the voice that addressed her was her Cousin George's—and there he stood just beside her, holding out in his right hand a shiny half-crown. "G-golly!" said Hetty in surprise, and she could say nothing else.

Time and time again the Imp had tried to borrow half-a-crown from her Cousin George, and she had failed ninety-nine point nine recurring per cent of the time. Yet here he was actually offering her that valuable coin.

It was a Wednesday, and a half-holiday from school. There was no tennis, no other fixtures, and as the Imp lacked money, she was, practically speaking, tied to the house.

"Cousin George," she gasped. "You don't mean it! It's a trick half-crown, I suppose?"

Cousin George frowned heavily; for he was a serious-minded youth, who did not play silly jokes of that kind. A prefect at his school, two-and-a-half years Hetty's senior, he had put away childish things.

"I am offering you half-a-crown," he said in his loftiest tone. "If you don't accept it before I count three—"

The Imp snatched it before he counted one, and her eyes glimmered. Then, rising from the hammock, she almost hurled herself at him, and gave him a giant hug, kissing him on the cheek.

"Cousin George, you're a pal. You're a brick," she said. "It's just

what I want. Now Jill and I can go to the pictures this evening."

But her Cousin George's manly brow became slightly ruffled.

"This evening? I'd rather you went this afternoon," he said, shaking his head.

"This afternoon? Oh, it'll be too hot!" said the Imp. "Besides, this is a jolly good book—and what's more, aunty has ordered in some lovely cakes for tea, and I saw some strawberries in the frig. In fact," added Hetty, "I thought of asking aunty if I could invite a few friends to tea. There'll be enough to go round, and the girls do like strawberries."

Something in her cousin's expression warned the Imp that all was not well; and with quick wit she guessed the truth.

"Golly—a tea-party!" she said. "Is that it?"

And the thought that came, but which she did not utter, was that Cousin George was bribing her with a half-a-crown to go out!

"Listen, Hetty," he said quietly. "It is not the kind of party you'll be at all likely to enjoy. The fact is, that mother's old headmistress is calling."

The Imp gave a jump at that; for to her the mere mention of headmistresses was as a red rag to a bull. Hetty had fallen out with the headmistress at her boarding-school, and in consequence was now attending a day school near by. Even the new headmistress was not what she would have called a pal.

But somehow or other the thought of Aunt Miriam's headmistress tickled her, and she smiled.

"It's nothing to grin about," said Cousin George severely. "She is quite aged, and she won't want to hear your

silly chatter, Hetty. The best thing is for you to be out of the way."

The Imp put the half-crown into her blazer pocket, and looked thoughtful.

"I'd rather like to see aunty's headmistress," she mused. "Wonder if she'll forget they're not still at school, and tick aunty off!"

"You'll have to go on wondering," said Cousin George coldly. "We want this tea-party to be a success, so you'd better go and have tea somewhere else, Hetty. It'll be worth half-a-crown to have you out of the way."

"Five bob," said the Imp, shaking her head. "I don't think half-a-crown is enough, considering the slang I use, Cousin George. Make it five bob, and I'll think it over."

Cousin George drew up—his eyes almost bulging.

"Give me that half-crown back," he said.

The Imp moved away discreetly. "Hetty! Give it to me!" George snapped.

He spoke with an air of authority, for since Hetty had come to stay in his mother's house—and with such a bad school reputation—he had put himself in charge of her. He was her guide, philosopher and friend.

And the Imp had to obey! Only on condition that she was tractable, obedient, diligent and willing to turn over a new leaf was she allowed to stay. The alternative, alas!

"Just my fun, Cousin George," she said meekly.

"Give me that half-crown, Hetty," her cousin ordered.

With a heavy sigh, the Imp gave it back.

"And let this be a lesson to you. Out of sheer generosity and kindness," said Cousin George in an almost hurt tone. "I offered you the half-crown so that your afternoon should not be too dull. But as you have seen fit to barter—yes, even to demand money by threats—you can do without it. And you can still make it your business to be out when Miss Borely comes."

And Cousin George turned on his heel. Mournfully Hetty watched him go, but when he had reached the pergola he looked back,

By IDA MELBOURNE

"Before you go, Hetty, you can arrange the cakes and things on the stands. Nellie is out."

Five minutes later the Imp was sadly arranging luscious cream buns, chocolate eclairs, tarts, and some delicious sandwiches which Aunt Miriam had herself cut before hurrying out.

"Where is aunty, by the way, Cousin George?" she asked.

"Out," he said briefly. "I think she has gone to fetch the old girl—I mean, Miss Borely." For Cousin George was careful to pick his words before his younger cousin.

The Imp looked thoughtfully at the cakes.

"Just suppose if she didn't come after all," she mused. "I'd have to ask in Jill and a few others so that the cakes weren't left to go stale. You and I couldn't eat these unaided."

Cousin George was forced to smile.

"My dear Hetty, you won't be here to know if she comes or not," he said. "But if by any fluke she shouldn't, then I shall invite a few friends of mine in."

In none too cheerful a mood, the Imp went upstairs. It was sad to think of that gorgeous tea being wolfed by an ancient headmistress or by George's pals, but there was nothing she could do about it. She could not openly defy Cousin George, so she had to go out. And without her half-crown, too! It was sad.

From the window she saw Cousin George cutting a few flowers at the bottom of the garden. She began to watch, quite indifferently, until all at once the telephone rang. George did not hear it, so the Imp ran downstairs.

"Hallo!" she said. "Oh, yes, Hetty speaking. Aunt Miriam."

Aunt Miriam calling!

"Hetty dear," said Aunt Miriam, "I have met Miss Borely, and we have decided to call in for tea at the country club. However, I dare say you and George can polish off what there is to eat."

The Imp drew in a breath of sheer surprise.

"Why, yes, aunt. Thanks awfully," she said.

"Don't make yourselves ill with the strawberries, though—and you can have a few friends in if you like," Aunt Miriam went on.

When the Imp hooked up the receiver her eyes were shining, and then she frowned in deep thought.

Cousin George was in charge, and he would probably decide that she must still disappear while he entertained his friends. Her friends wouldn't get a look in. Nor would she.

But the Imp was a thoughtful girl who did not just rush at things in a bull-at-a-gate manner; and now she gave her mind time to sort itself out.

Cousin George was still cutting flowers to grace the sitting-room, as Hetty saw through a side window; and, of course, he did not guess that the visitor was not arriving.

Perhaps he might never know if she did not tell him!

"And perhaps," the Imp mused—"perhaps—"

Then her eyes sparkled, and she stifled a giggle of joyous mirth. Keeping a watchful eye on Cousin George, she lifted the receiver, calling Jill's number; and was presently speaking to her friend.

"Jill," she said softly, "can you rake up a party to come to tea here? Strawberries and cream, eclairs, buns, ices, and—"

"Golly! Can't I just!" breathed Jill.

"But is George to be there?"

"He'll be here, yes; but don't worry, he'll be as meek as a lamb," said Hetty.

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"There's just one thing. You remember the Charley's Aunt kit you wore for the Christmas play at school?"

"Rather! Why?" said Jill.

"Have you got it still?" asked Hetty.

"Oh, yes, and the make-up? Why, are you going to be Charley's Aunt—or George's aunt?" asked Jill, chuckling.

"No; just Miss Borely," said Hetty, with a wary glance through the window as she saw Cousin George approaching.

"I'll be right along, Jill. Coming now—"

Into the hall strode Cousin George.

"Oh, you're going to Jill's place?" he said, in relief. "Good!"

But if the Imp had her way it wouldn't be quite so good as Cousin George thought!

### Headmistress Hetty!

Cousin George arranged the flowers for the twentieth time, sampled a strawberry to see that they were not spoiling in the warm room, tested the cream, and had a dip at the ice in the frig.

All was well. But there was no sign of Miss Borely.

At twenty minutes to five the telephone-bell went, and George fell over the chair. He was trying to hurry to the phone, of course. Limping to it, he unhooked the receiver and listened.

"Hallo, hallo!" croaked a voice. "Is that you, Miriam?"

"No; this is George—or—Mrs. Sonning's son," said Cousin George.

"Oh, is it?" croaked the voice.

"Well, little boy, tell me how I get to your house from the station. I can't walk all that way."

Cousin George jumped clear of the ground. Miss Borely!

"Golly—I mean," he gasped—"I mean, didn't mother meet you?"

"If your mother had met me should I be phoning you?" was the testy reply.

"Oh, quite!" said Cousin George feebly, going a little pink in the face.

"Perhaps you could get a taxi from the station—"

Click! went the receiver. Cousin George hung up, he did not look quite so pleased.

For one thing, he did not appreciate being called a "little boy"; and for another, Miss Borely's manner was a little too headmistressly.

"Jolly glad Hetty's not here," he muttered worriedly. "Hope mother comes soon."

Ten minutes or so later a taxicab ground its way up the drive to the door, and Cousin George fairly leaped out.

As the taxicab door opened he helped down an old lady from the tonneau.

She was not only old, but very old-fashioned. She was dressed in black, save for some white stockings which appeared slightly into view as she stepped down, and over her face was a heavy, old-fashioned veil. Ancient glasses shone through the veil, and her face was yellowish and wrinkled.

"That's right, pull me out!" she croaked irritably. "Throw me into the road!"

And, leaning on a long black stick, she went into the house.

Cousin George, about to follow her, was called back by the driver.

"Just a minute—half-a-crown," said the man sharply.

"Er—half-a-crown?" said George, confused. "Oh, yes—quite."

He stepped towards the house to pass on the information to Miss Borely, and then realised that it would be ungentlemanly.

So, paying the fare himself, he closed the taxi door.

Alone in the sitting-room, Miss Borely was doing a hop, skip, and jump with glee.

"Bang goes the half-crown!" she chortled.

For under the make-up, Miss Borely was none other than Hetty the Imp!

As Cousin George entered the room, the dance of glee came to an end, and creakingly, with a rustle of silk, Miss Borely sank into a chair.

"Well, my little man," she croaked.

"And how old are you—nine?"

"I'm seventeen," said George, crimsoning.

"Seventeen? Tut-tut! Why, in my young days, boys of seventeen were practically men!" said Miss Borely, shaking her head.

"Is that so?" said George, frowning.

"Don't stand lolting like that—stand up!" said Miss Borely, in a funny, hoarse voice. "You seem to be a very ill-mannered young man! Have you any sisters?"

"N-no. I—er—have a cousin, though—a girl cousin," said George, hoping to turn the conversation away from himself.

"Ah! That's good! She ought to knock a little courtesy into you," said Miss Borely. "Where is she?"



"She—she's out," said George. "She had to call on a friend."

"What—when she knew I was coming?" said Miss Borely, shocked. "You go and find her, young man. And bring me some of those strawberries. You'd better not have any—they're bad for young people."

George took her the strawberries, gritting his teeth.

"My Cousin Hetty has gone to a friend's house—" he began.

"Then ring her up—and don't stare at me like that! I know my face is wrinkled, but I can't help it."

George, grimacing to himself, went off to phone Jill.

"Oh, this is George Sonning," he said, when he got through. "Will you tell Hetty that Miss Borely wants to see her?"

"Hetty isn't here now, George," said Jill sweetly. "But I'll come if you like—"

George didn't like, apparently, and returned with the glad news to the supposed Miss Borely, who was munching strawberries under her veil.

"Oh! Gone out, eh?" said Miss Borely. "Well, then, tell her friends to come. I want to see some of the young girls of to-day—the modern schoolgirl I've heard so much about!"

"Tell them to come here?" asked George, taken aback.

"Well, that's where I am. No good telling them to go anywhere else to meet me. Are you daffy, boy? Tell them to come here, and the more the merrier—half a dozen of them—there's food enough!"

"But—but—" yammered George. "I—er—um—"

He was about to suggest that some of his own friends might be more suitable when he realised that Miss Borely might be critical of them; and besides, he did not want to have his friends as witnesses when he was picked to pieces and referred to as a little boy.

Miss Borely wagged a white-mittened hand.

"Must I tell your mother that you refused?" she asked.

That settled it! George went to the telephone and made the request.

Jill pretended to be diffident about it; she asked what Miss Borely was like in a most guarded manner, but finally, when George was persuasive, she agreed to come and bring four friends.

Meanwhile, Cousin George, in disgruntled mood, made the tea.

When Jill & Co. arrived he was doing bending exercises, touching his toes. As he had left the door open at Miss Borely's instructions, they walked in unannounced.

Jill, entering the room, giggled. "What ever's this?" she asked.

George scowled at her, red in the face.

"Miss Borely asked me to do it," he said.

"The lad's too fat!" croaked Miss Borely. "He can't touch his toes properly."

"I can touch my toes," said George indignantly.

"You can't put the palms of your hands on the ground!" croaked Miss Borely. "Show him how, my dear," she added to Jill.

Promptly and neatly, Jill gave a demonstration.

"It's quite easy," she said, straightening up.

George, breathing hard, did it, and Miss Borely clucked her tongue.

"Puffing like a grampus!" she said. "But never mind! I don't want you to strain yourself, my little man."

The girls gathered round, and Cousin

George, looking fed to the teeth, bowed greeting.

"Get the girls some chairs, George," said Miss Borely, with a gesture of authority. "And hand them some cakes, like a man."

The girls stood waiting to be fetched chairs, and then took them graciously. Next, Cousin George, looking as though he could eat the girls rather than the cakes, waited on them with two loaded cake dishes.

And he had to do it nicely, too, with Miss Borely criticising him at the slightest failing.

"Now, when you're sure that everyone has had enough, you can sit down yourself. You, my dear," she said, beaming at Jill, "pass the strawberries."

And everyone but George was offered strawberries.

The Imp was enjoying herself, though she kept an eye on the clock. She did not think she would be able to keep this up for long without giggling, and at some time fairly soon Aunt Miriam was likely to return.

"George," she said suddenly, "before you do the washing-up I want you to run an errand to the village for me."

George heard the girls titter, and his eyes glinted.

"Yes, Miss Borely," he mumbled. "I shall be delighted to do so."

"Very well; but say it as though you meant it," the Imp reproved. "I want you to take this halfpenny," she added, bringing the coin from her bag, "and go and get me a ha'penny reel of dark black cotton—not light black—dark black. And remember, a ha'penny reel, not a penny or a twopenny one, young fellow!"

George swallowed a groan and rose, conscious of the giggles the girls were giving. But he could not refuse to run this simple errand, and he took the halfpenny with a bow of the head.

Not until the girls heard the door bang behind him did they give vent to shrieks of suppressed mirth.

"Oh golly—he fell for it!" the Imp gurgled. "And he's gone for a ha'penny reel of dark black cotton. Poor old George! But serve him jolly well right. Do you know, he tried to freeze us out of this gorgeous tea!"

"Shame!" said Jill. "But I say, it

certainly is a jolly good tea. A cream bun, please—"

"Another eclair for me," said Dolly. Meanwhile, frowning heavily, Cousin George strode on to the village.

"Gosh, if I'd known she was like that," he muttered, "I'd have let Hetty take charge! I jolly well would, and if Hetty had cheeked her—"

Well, strictly speaking, George would have been rather glad. But he had not dared to cheek "Miss Borely" himself; he had too much respect for his mother's wishes and for "age."

If he had not been so deeply plunged in gloomy thought he would have noticed as he crossed the High Street that a small saloon car was sweeping round in the opposite direction. Had he given it even a glance Cousin George would have noticed that it was his mother's car and that with his mother was an elderly passenger.

The passenger was not dressed in the manner of the late eighteen-nineties; her attire was quite modern, in fact. Nevertheless, she was his mother's ex-head-mistress, Miss Borely, and in about four minutes' time she would arrive to find her own tea party at its height!

"GOLLY, WAS young Miriam a one, eh, girls?" croaked the Imp, entertaining her friends with wholly imaginary stories of her aunt's school-days. "Why, I remember once calling her into my study—"

She broke off, for she had heard the door bell.

"Ah, there's young George back again!" she said. "Tell him to do the washing-up."

Jill rose and went to the door, opened it, and then nearly swooned as she beheld Hetty's Aunt Miriam and another elderly woman.

"Why, Jill," said Aunt Miriam, "so you are having a party! Splendid! Is George here?"

"G-George has j-just gone out, Mrs. Sonning," faltered Jill.

"And Hetty? Hetty is here, of course. Hetty!" called Aunt Miriam.

Hetty, busy at that moment, showing the girls how they used to do the polka in her young days, gave a jump, paused, looked wildly about her, and then leaped straight for the french windows leading to the garden.



"HURRY up, young man. Serve everyone with cakes!" rapped the "aged" visitor. "And no helping yourself!" Cousin George, inwardly seething, scuttled around. He would probably have fainted if he had known the visitor was the Imp, in disguise!



But the french windows were locked and not to be opened in one frenzied moment.

The Imp dodged back to go behind a screen, clutched at it, and then gave a hollow groan as it toppled.

She was just righting it desperately when the door opened, and Aunt Miriam looked in.

"Ah, here you all are!" she smiled. "And where is Hetty?"

There was a hush! And casting her gaze about the room, Aunt Miriam saw the disguised Hetty, and gave a violent start.

The Imp was cornered!

### Quick-Fire Changes!

HETTY had been cornered a good many times in her chequered school career, and her brain had been trained to work very quickly indeed. She had every need for quick thinking now, for she could not possibly admit that she had dressed up as Miss Borely.

The joke might fall flat; Aunt Miriam might easily not think it frightfully funny, and Miss Borely herself might not be too pleased.

Different people giggle at different things.

"Er—um!" said Hetty, and then inspiration came.

She tottered to Jill and dropped a hand on to her friend's shoulder.

"Don't look so worried, dear," she croaked. "Mrs. Sonning won't mind your great-grandmother coming to tea." Aunt Miriam's eyes widened.

"Your great-grandmother, Jill?" she exclaimed. "Well, well! I am most pleased to meet you," she added.

"It's been nice seeing these young things and the little boy," the Imp said daringly.

"Little boy?" said Aunt Miriam, frowning slightly. "Oh, you mean George! He's not very little."

The Imp decided to slip away while she still had a chance.

"Well, it's been very nice, thanks, but I must go," she said anxiously.

"Oh, no, no! Please stay a little," urged Aunt Miriam. "Where is George?"

The others left it to the Imp.

"He—er—he went out shopping," she said.

"Shopping? What ever for?" asked his mother in surprise.

"Oh, something from the village!" said the Imp diffidently. "Er—er—

could Jill take me into the garden to see the lovely flowers, please?" she asked.

Aunt Miriam was still giving her a somewhat puzzled look, noting the ancient frock and bonnet, which seemed vaguely familiar. She had seen the school play in which they had been worn!

"Why, certainly!" she said politely.

Jill opened the door, and the Imp was led out.

"Phew!" she gasped. "This is where I make a run for it—"

And, picking up her skirts, she galloped round the house.

But as she reached the path that gave a view of the gates she slithered to a standstill. Cousin George was just returning—with a somewhat moodier expression than before. He hated being giggled at in shops! And he had been.

The Imp, dropping the hem of her frock, tottered forward and waved.

"Ooooo-ooo!" she called.

George looked up and gave a start of surprise.

"Oh—er—I brought a penny reel—they hadn't got a halfpenny one!" he said. "And it's just black—ordinary black."

"That'll do," the Imp said quietly.

"It's a little present for your mother. Wrap it up and give it to her with my love when she comes in, there's a good boy."

Cousin George gaped. Even though it is the thought that matters in giving presents, this seemed a strangely mingy gift.

"Um!" he said. "Yes, certainly, Miss Borely. But are you going?"

The Imp was going—going upstairs to her room to change just as soon as she could. But it would not be easy if Cousin George walked into the house and met the real Miss Borely.

And for various reasons she preferred to be Hetty—her plain self—when she met that woman. Moreover, she had to meet her before, George did.

Once again the Imp had need of her fertile brain.

"Oh, Georgie," she croaked. "The girls want to play blind man's buff."

"Yes?" said Cousin George, frowning.

"Now you let little Jill blindfold you, and start!"

George did not want to start, but he could not refuse, and his feeble arguments were soon over-ruled. A minute later Jill, having blindfolded him, was spinning him in circles, three or four times.

Then, while she stood by to see that he did not hurt himself, the Imp tip-toed to the back door, crept in warily, and shot up the stairs.

It was about three minutes later that Aunt Miriam took Miss Borely to see the garden. The other girls followed and saw Cousin George groping blindly in the middle of the lawn, with Jill dodging here and there.

"Ah, blind man's buff," said Miss Borely.

The girls, guessing what was wanted, rushed to play. The Imp, during her hurried changing in her room, looked down.

As she watched, Cousin George caught Miss Borely by the arm, and held on.

He knew that it was not one of the girls, and he gave a triumphant gasp.

"Miss Borely!"

"Why, George, how clever!" his mother cried.

George whipped off his bandage, stared at Miss Borely, goggled, and then looked at his mother.

"I—I—" he yammered.

"Miss Borely, this is my son, George. Do you think he is like me?" purred Aunt Miriam, girlishly. "Some people say he is, and others not."

"There is certainly a likeness to you as you were," said Miss Borely, a white-haired, kindly-faced woman.

"You—you are Miss Borely?" asked Cousin George blankly.

At that moment the Imp, in normal attire, skipped on to the lawn.

"And this is my niece Hetty," added Aunt Miriam.

The Imp smiled, gave a polite little bow, and then looked at Jill.

"Where's your great-grandmother, Jill?" she asked. "I thought she was here."

George swung round to Jill, still agape.

"She went," said Jill.

"Oh, what a pity! A dear old lady," said Aunt Miriam. "Quite picturesque."

"Did you meet her, George?" the Imp asked brazenly.

George blinked, and frowned.

"Of course he did," said Jill. "But I'm afraid she ticked him off, didn't she, George?"

Cousin George went pink, and put the reel of cotton into his pocket.

"Er—yes," he said, with a puzzled look. "Quite—I—thought—"

And then some sense of tact warned him that he had better not say that he thought the ancient old dame was Miss Borely. It would not go down too well, since Miss Borely looked younger, and dressed in a style that was quite fashionable.

But for the rest of Miss Borely's visit, he looked very thoughtful indeed.

"We had a nice tea out, George," said his mother some minutes later.

"A pity in a way that we did not come back here, as I'd prepared everything. However, you and the girls had a good time. And it was nice of you to let Hetty have her friends instead of asking your own."

George's brow wrinkled. There were still one or two points he would have liked cleared up.

"Oh, George is a brick, aunt," said the Imp, taking his arm. "The girls say they had an absolutely grand time. Three cheers for the host, girls!" she called.

And Cousin George was given three rousing cheers.

But if a dim suspicion of the truth dawned in his mind, he did not develop it. It was just one of those sleeping dogs that were best left to lie quiet!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

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