

"LITTLE DOLORES—ROBBED OF HER HEART'S DESIRE!" Appealing Complete
Cliff House Story
inside:

THE SCHOOLGIRL

No. 481. Vol. 19.
Week Ending
OCT. 15th. 1938.

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**"YOU STOLE MY
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LITTLE DOLORES— Robbed of Her Heart's Desire!

Prefect—and Tyrant!



"DULCIA! Please, Dulcia!" begged Marjorie Hazeldene anxiously.

"Oh, Dulcia, please do give Dolores her chance!" Barbara Redfern pleaded.

"She'd be overjoyed if you told her she was going to be your fag," Tomboy Clara Trevlyn supplemented. "Go on, Dulcia, be a sport!"

"Yes, rather!" Mabel Lynn supported. "She's just on thorns in case she doesn't get the chance."

Dulcia Fairbrother, captain of Cliff House School, laughed as she stared at the seriously anxious faces of the four Fourth Formers confronting her.

A nice-looking girl Dulcia—but never so pretty as when she laughed. A nice-natured girl, too, in spite of her many responsibilities as Cliff House's head girl. There were very few girls in Cliff House who did not like Dulcia; but many simply adored her, and to do anything for Dulcia was counted an honour indeed.

"Well, and now may I have my little say?" she asked pleasantly.

"But, Dulcia—"

"Because, you know," Dulcia smiled, her eyes glimmering with amusement, "I haven't said yet that I won't have Dolores Essendon for my fag. In fact, since I've got to have a fag from the Second Form there's no girl I should like better than Dolores! But wait a minute," she added, as four faces beamed as one, "don't run away yet. You're sure Dolores would like the job?"

"Oh, Dulcia, she'd love it—just love it!" breathed Barbara, who was captain of the Fourth Form.

"She's not already agreed to fag for Helen Hunter?"

"Helen! That cat!" Clara sniffed, and then crimsoned, realising she was talking about a fellow-prefect of Dulcia. "I mean—well, honestly, the poor kiddo would have nightmares at the mere thought! But why?"

"Just nothing—except—" Dulcia paused. "Well, I was talking about the fagging question to Helen a little while ago, and she did rather give me to understand that Dolores was coming to her, and her younger sister Eunice to me; Not that," Dulcia added, with the tiniest frown, as though wondering if the thought were uncharitable, "I'm very keen on having Eunice Hunter as my fag, but—well! Both Helen and I want a fag, and Miss Primrose has named Eunice and Dolores as the next two Second Formers on the fagging list. It only remains for Dolores to say she wants to fag for me, and there you are."

"And—and we can go and tell her?" Marjorie Hazeldene blurted.

"By all means. Ask her to come to see me."

The four Fourth Formers grinned. If they had pulled off some big favour for themselves they could not have been more pleased or joyous, because they all did so love little Dolores Essendon of the Second Form, the youngest girl in the whole school, and almost certainly the sweetest and the shyest. Such a winsome little thing was nine-year-old Dolores, and so very young for her age. "Then—come on!" Barbara gleed. "Whoops! I want to see that kid's face when we break the news!"

And while Dulcia, who had been polishing the lens of her new camera when they arrived, sat down to resume that task, she led the way out of the room, rushing with such breathless haste along the corridor that she almost cannoned into the tall, sulky-faced girl who, most unfortunately, rounded the corner at the same moment.

"Hey! What's this?" And the tall girl grabbed her by the shoulder. "Think this is a zoo or a running track,

Barbara Redfern?" she asked snappily. "Take fifty lines, each of you! And be less noisy in this corridor," she added, with a frown.

"Yes, Helen," Babs said meekly. And Helen Hunter, scowling, strolled on.

Tomboy Clara pulled a face. "Sweet thing!" she breathed. "I'd like to adopt her as a pet—and keep her in a cage! Just fancy fagging for that!"

"Just fancy!" Babs chortled. "But blow horrible Helen! Come on!"

They went on, cheerfulness by no means diminished. It would have taken more than lines from Helen Hunter to have dampened their high spirits then. Breathlessly they hurried along, until, descending the stairs and scuttling along the Fourth Form corridor, they peaced outside the door of the "play-room" which was given up to the recreation of the Second Form.

And Babs, with a smile, pushed the door open.

A dozen small girls at once turned to stare at them.

"Oh!" said Eunice Hunter. "Do you want me?"

Eunice was the oldest girl in the Second Form. In fact, she was of Lower Third age, and would probably have found herself in that Form had she not been such a duffer at her lessons. A plumpish, petulant face she had; was taller by two inches of the next tallest girl in the Form, and spiteful into the bargain. Bully by nature, she rather ruled the roost in the Second Form, and, having a sister who was a Sixth Form prefect, had made herself a sort of unofficial captain.

"We don't," Babs said. "Dolores! Where's Dolores?"

"Please, Barbara, here I am!" answered a shy voice from the other side of the room.

And little Dolores Essendon, her fairy-like little face eager, looked up wonderingly.

Babs smiled tenderly—she always smiled tenderly whenever she saw Dolores. Such a sweet, winsome wisp of a child, with her straight dark hair and those big, deep blue eyes which somehow looked too large for her pretty face. In her arms, as usual, she hugged her bright-cheeked doll, Peggy.

"Dolores," Babs said, and Marjorie smiled. "we've been to see Dulcia."

Dolores caught her breath.

"Oh, how nice! Did—did she say she—"

"She says," Babs laughed, "that you've only to ask her to let you be her fag and the job's yours. She wants to see you now."

"What?" cried Eunice Hunter. "Here, I say, that's not fair!" she cried indignantly. "I'm going to be Dulcia's fag!"

"Says you!" Clara sniffed.

"But I do say so!" Eunice said indignantly. "My sister Helen says so. And my sister Helen," she added defiantly, "is a prefect, and what she says is right! And Dulcia," she added fiercely, "is the captain of the school, and I should like to know who's got a better right to fag for the captain of the school than the sister of a prefect! That's my job!"

There was a murmur from the Second Form. Dolores looked just a trifle uncertain and distressed. Quivering with eagerness as she had been when the news was broken, she now turned a wide, uneasy glance upon Eunice.

Dolores, like the rest of the Second, subconsciously acknowledged the authority of the older, bullying Eunice, even though she had no reason for doing so.

"Oh dear, I'm ever so sorry, Eunice! I didn't know—"

"Neither," Marjorie said, a little angrily, "does Eunice know. My dear, don't look so downhearted. Dolores, it's all right. We've just been talking to Dulcia, and all you've got to do is to go and ask her yourself. Now, please, Eunice!" she added sharply.

"Yes, pipe down, Eunice!" Mabel Lynn said.

Eunice, red-facedly furious, was almost on the verge of tears.

"I'll go and tell my sister!" she threatened.

"Well, jolly well go and tell her," Clara sniffed. "But, for goodness' sake, keep out of this! Dolores, this way," she added and, as the youngster still eyed Eunice uncertainly, she caught her arm. "Come on."

"Yes, Clara, I'm coming," Dolores said. "Can I bring Peggy with me?"

"Peggy? Oh, the doll!" Clara grinned. "Sure," she agreed, and caught the kiddie's hand in hers. "Take her other flipper, Mabs," she added slangily. "Wait a minute! Here's your bag, Dolores. Now, off we go."

"But look here—" howled Eunice furiously.

"Oh stuff! You go and meow to your sister!"

And, without another glance for the little bully of the Second, they led Dolores out.

"Oh dear! Eunice will be ever so cross," Dolores gulped, as they reached Study No. 4, the apartment shared by Barbara, Mabel Lynn, and plump Bessie Bunter—Bessie, at this moment, spending her week's pocket-money all at once in the tuckshop.

"Well, who cares?" Clara cried. "Blessed if I know why you kids kowtow to that little bully! Well, Dolores, we've spoken to Dulcia, as we said we would—"

"That's so nice of you!" Dolores said. "And I can be her fag?"

"All you've got to do is to go and say so," Mabel Lynn laughed, and then laughed again at the radiant, grinning joy on the tiny face. "Happy, Dolores?"

"Oh, yes, I am—very happy, thank you," Dolores said shyly. "It's ever so kind of you all"—and her eyes filled with worship. "Shall I go now?" she added eagerly. "Oh dear, it will be so lovely to be Dulcia's fag, and I'll try ever so to please her! Is my face clean, please?"

"As clean and bright as a new pin!" gentle Marjorie said softly. "Well, now off you go, Dolores, and then come back and have tea with us! Good luck. Here, don't forget Peggy."

"Oh, no!" Dolores said, and gulped. And, hugging precious Peggy to her, she rather tremblingly marched out of the study. To fag for Dulcia, to fag for the captain of the school—ah! How lovely that would be! And Dulcia was so nice, so awfully kind.

She smiled as she went up the corridor and mounted the stairs.

"You're pleased, too, aren't you, Peggy?" she added, and gave Peggy that tilt which made her half close her eyes as though in assent. "And we'll be ever so good and busy, won't we?"

"Mamma!" Peggy bleated as she was squeezed.

Dolores laughed deliciously. Eagerly she hurried on. Here were the Sixth Form studies—oh dear, how frightened she felt all at once—but it was a sort of happy fear. Gulping, she almost held

"You stole it!" Helen said. "I know you stole it, Dolores, so you needn't deny it! Where is it?"

Dolores' lips quivered.

"I haven't got it."

"No? Well, let me look in that bag."

"But—"

And Dolores gave a cry as Helen, with an angry gesture, snatched the bag from her, turning it upside down on the table. There was a farthing, a bright new half-penny, a piece of paper, and a tiny handkerchief. Helen scowled.

"Turn out your pockets!" she commanded.

"Yes, Helen; but I've only got one pocket, you know. Look—"

And Dolores turned the pocket inside out. There was nothing in it at all except a tiny piece of chalk.

"You see, Helen, I haven't got it. I'm dreadfully sorry if you've lost it," she added sincerely. "A shilling is such a lot of money, isn't it?"

Helen didn't reply. She grabbed up the doll on the table. Then, apparently in the act of handing it back, she paused, staring at the kiddie in a way which caused Dolores to quail.

"You haven't got it?" she asked. "It's not in your bag and it's not in your pocket? My word! You're a bigger little thief than I took you for, Dolores! Look at this! Here's my shilling and you stole it!"

And, in front of the youngster's astonished eyes, she plunged her fingers into the pocket of Peggy's pinafore and brought out a shilling.

To fag for popular Dulcia Fairbrother—an honour indeed! And lovable little Dolores Essendon of the Second Form had that chance! How she thrilled; it was one of her dearest ambitions. But harsh, unpopular Helen Hunter, for her own reasons, was determined that Dolores should fag for HER. Why, was a mystery that Babs & Co., staunch champions of Dolores, set out to discover.

her breath as she stepped along the corridor, blinking a little in awe at the doors behind which hid the mighty untouchables of the Sixth as she went on. Then suddenly a door was thrown open. The sulky, unfriendly eyes of Helen Hunter fastened upon her.

"Oh, you!" she said. "I want to talk to you."

"Yes, Helen," Dolores said timidly. "But I'm going to see Dulcia, you know."

"Dulcia," Helen scowled, "can wait! Come in here!"

Dolores blinked. But Dolores, with terrific awe for authority in any shape or form, dared not refuse. She went in. "Sit down," said Helen. "Here, give me that silly doll!" And while Dolores' lips quivered, she snatched the doll and, turning her back, fumbled with it for a moment as she put it on the table.

"You know," Helen said, "that when I came into the Second Form this morning, I showed you that new shilling with a black mark across it?"

"Oh, yes!" Dolores replied readily. "But you didn't tell me how you made that mark, Helen."

"I didn't make it. But that's not the point. Now," Helen said fiercely, "what did you do with it?"

"Dolores' big eyes opened in surprise. "I didn't do anything with it. You put it in your pocket, Helen."

"No, I didn't. I left it on your desk," Helen retorted. "I didn't remember till afterwards. You took it, Dolores!"

Dolores stared.

"Oh, Helen, I didn't, really! I wouldn't think of such a wicked thing!"

Dolores was dumb.

"So that's where you'd hidden it, eh?" Helen's face was accusing.

"That's your artful way of stealing and keeping another person's money? Look! It's my shilling! There's the black mark across the face. You recognise it as my shilling, don't you?"

"Yes, Helen; but I didn't take it—"

"You did! Otherwise," Helen snapped, "how comes it to be here—in your doll's pinafore? You're a thief, Dolores—a nasty, horrid little thief, and I've a good mind to take you to Miss Gilbey. Indeed," Helen added, her own eyes narrowing as she saw the wild alarm which began to fill the blue depths of the Second Former's, "I've a jolly good mind to go further than that. Supposing—"

she paused, and Dolores gave an apprehensive little gasp, "supposing I took you to Miss Primrose!"

rapped Helen.

"Helen!" The kiddie's voice shook.

"Oh, please, please don't do that!"

"Why shouldn't I?" demanded Helen. "It's no good you saying you didn't take that shilling, because I've got proof that you did, see?"

Dolores gulped. Innocent though she was, to her it seemed that she might just as well be guilty. Helen had proof! Helen said so!

Helen, seeing the fear on that little face, smiled slightly.

"Well," she said slowly, "I might let you off, Dolores, but if I do you've got to do something for me. Don't forget, I've got proof that I can take you to Miss Primrose at any time—and

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that will mean you'll be expelled. Do you understand?"

"Oh, Helen, yes. But please, please don't say anything."

"I won't—and you mustn't breathe a word about this, either. But you've got to do as I say. You're going to Dulcia now, aren't you?"

"Y-yes."

"Well, go to her. But go and tell her that you don't want to be her fag."

"But—but I do, Helen!" Dolores looked at her pleadingly. "Please let me be her fag!"

"Bother you! Can't you understand? You do as I say, or I'll tell everyone you took my shilling—and I've got proof, remember. I want you for my fag—understand? Eunice is going to be Dulcia's fag because it's Eunice's right as my sister. Now, for the last time, will you do as I say—or do you want to be expelled?"

Terrible Dolores' disappointment; quivering the fear in her small features. But she could see no escape.

"I—I'll go!" she said.

And, almost trembling, she went out of the study. It was ten minutes later when, timidly knocking at the door of Study No. 4, she entered. The four chums stared at her.

"Dolores, what did Dulcia say?" Marjorie eagerly cried.

Dolores, white-faced, stood and gulped.

"Dolores!" Marjorie cried. "Dolores, what's the matter?"

"I—I—I—" The words stuck in the kiddie's throat. "I—I had to tell her!" she said miserably. "I had to tell her! I wanted ever so much—I mean, I don't want to—so I had to tell Dulcia I—I'm not being her fag—"

"What?"

"Because," Dolores said, and bent her head and tried desperately to control the quivering of her lips, and swallowed the lump in her throat. "I—I'm going to fag for—for—Hel-Helen Hun-Hunter—"

And to the chums' most astonished consternation, she burst into a flood of tears.

The Mystery of Dolores!



"BUT, Dolores, why don't you want to fag for Dulcia?" Babs asked ten

minutes later. Dolores forlornly shook

her head.

"Be-cause I don't," she said.

"But you like Dulcia, Dolores?" Marjorie questioned, her gentle face very anxious and worried.

"Oh, yes, I like her very much!"

"And you don't like Helen?" Mabel Lynn pressed.

Dolores shuddered.

"Then why," demanded Clara, "are you fagging for Helen?"

Dolores' big eyes, so unusually large, fixed themselves upon her. "Please, please," that glance most agonisingly entreated, "don't ask me any more questions!" And Clara, reading that message aright, turned away her head, and a little silence fell upon all the chums as they realised, by their persistence, they were only tormenting her. And yet—what an extraordinary puzzle it was!

"Well," Babs considered, after a pause, "you're a funny girl, Dolores! Still, if you don't want to answer questions, we won't press them," although the look on her face suggested that she was by no means satisfied with what had happened. "Anyway, what about

a spot of tea?" she asked brightly. "We've got some lovely chocolate cake—and some of those biscuits you like. You'd like to have tea with us, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, yes, please!" Dolores cried, thrilled.

And she brightened up at once. For tea with her big friends of the Fourth was a treat indeed!

"Then rustle round and get the chairs!" Babs laughed. "This one here for Dolores."

"Please," Dolores asked timidly, "can—can I sit next to Marjorie?"

"And me!" came a voice at the door, and Bessie Bunter, her plump face wreathed in smiles, appeared. "Oh, I say, Dolores, are you stopping to tea?" she asked. "I say, that's ripping! Yum! Nice spread!" Bessie voted, her eyes glistening behind her thick spectacles. "I'll sit next to the plump tart—I mum-mean Dolores, Babs."

And Bessie, without waiting for consent, plumped her fat frame on the empty chair next to the Second Former.

The chums laughed. Dolores, her wrongs temporarily forgotten, beamed. Once again she looked happy, and smiled at Peggy, who, propped up in the corner, surveyed the scene with a painted and unchanging smile.

"Biscuits, Dolores?" Clara said cheerfully.

"Cake, Dolores?" Mabs beamed.

"Or some of this topping blanc-mange?" Bessie pressed. "I can recommend this, you know, because I made it myself in cookery class. You may know what a dab I am at cooking."

"Or," Babs smiled, "would you like this sandwich, Dolores?"

Dolores laughed.

"Please may I have another lump of sugar in my tea?" she asked demurely. "Miss Gilbey always lets me have three lumps, you know."

Another lump she certainly had. As Clara said, with more heartiness than forethought, she could have the whole sugar basin full if she liked! And so tea, a merry meal, with Dolores expanding more and more every moment, progressed.

Until, suddenly, there was a thump on the door. The door itself was pushed open, and Helen Hunter looked in. Her eyes at once sought out little Dolores, who turned dead white.

"Hey! Thought you were fagging for me!" she snapped.

"We—" began Babs.

"Be quiet, Barbara Redfern! Don't interfere! Well, do you call this fagging?" Helen demanded.

Dolores' hands trembled.

"Oh dear! I'm sorry, Helen, but you didn't tell me—"

"Well, I'm telling you now! Get out of that chair, you lazy little good-for-nothing! Eh? Were you talking to me, Clara Trevlyn?"

"I was!" Clara said bluntly. "I said you ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself, speaking to Dolores like that!"

"Twenty lines!" Helen snapped. "Well, come on, Dolores!" she almost roared. "I can't wait here all day!"

"She's not had her tea!" Babs indignantly protested.

"She can have her tea—with me!" Helen snorted. "And take twenty lines for interfering!" Dolores! she added, stamping her foot.

Dolores sighed. She picked up her doll, and, clutching it to her chest, falteringly followed the tyrannical prefect from the room.

The five chums looked at each other. "Oh, I say, what a beastly bully!" Bessie said indignantly. "I've a jolly

good mind to tell her what I think of her!"

"Well, what's it mean?" Babs asked, eyeing her chums.

"I don't know," Mabs said, and shook her golden head.

"It's just not natural!" Babs broke out. "There's some trickery here. Dolores was as keen as anything to be Dulcia's fag. Though she's too kind a little thing to say so, she just hates the idea of doing things for Helen. But Helen, somehow, has got the whip hand over her. How?"

"Yes, how?" plump Bessie glowered indignantly.

"But—but what can we do about it?" Mabs asked uncertainly.

"We can do one thing, and we'll do it now!" Babs said quietly. "We can see Dulcia—she may be able to throw some light on the mystery. Dulcia likes the kiddie, as we know. Who's for going to see Dulcia?"

"Well, I am, you know!" Bessie said.

"No, you won't! You stop here and clear up the tea!" Clara said. "No sense in going in a crowd. Babs, you and I will go. Come on."

Babs nodded. As Clara strode towards the door, she stepped after her, leaving Bessie, Marjorie, and Mabs staring at each other. Straight to the Sixth Form corridor they went, and there, pausing in front of Dulcia's door, Babs raised her hand to knock. At the same time, however, she gave a gasp.

For the door was slightly open, admitting a view of a section of the room. That section showed the window. It showed, also, the figure of a small, rather podgy-faced girl, who had Dulcia's new camera in her hands, and who, in the full glare of the afternoon sunset, was fumbling with the catches of the camera in order to open the back. The girl was—

"Eunice!" Babs cried, and darted into the room.

Eunice Hunter, near the window, jumped round with a start so violent and guilty that she almost dropped Dulcia's precious new treasure.

"You little chump!" Babs cried, and snatched the camera from her, quickly snapping to the catches. "Don't you know, if you open this, you will ruin the films inside it?"

Eunice gasped. Her face was scarlet. "I—I—" she stammered.

"What were you doing?"

"Nothing!" Eunice retorted sulkily. "Anyway, it's not your business," she added, finding her spirits and her cheek. "I'm Dulcia's fag, aren't I, and I'm looking after Dulcia's things and Dulcia says I'm to keep her room nice, and clean things, and all that, so what are you meddling for? I'll tell Dulcia!" she shrilled.

"Why, you awful little podge!" Clara gasped. "For two pins—"

"Hallo! What's this? What's this?" And Dulcia herself, frowning a little, strode into the room. "Eunice, what is—Barbara, what are you doing with my camera?" she added.

"Just saving your films from being ruined, Dulcia! Your new fag was busy opening the back of the camera as we came in!"

"Oh, I wasn't!" shrilled Eunice.

"Thank you!" Dulcia outstretched her hand. Anxiously she looked at the camera, and then sighed in relief. "There is a rather special collection of views in that," she said. "Views I am taking for Stella Stone, our old captain, who is writing a book about her school-day experiences, and wants to illustrate it with photographs of

certain interesting spots in the neighbourhood. Eunice, that was a very silly thing to do," she added severely. "Don't you know, if you open a camera, that the light gets in, and if the light gets in, the film is completely ruined?"

Eunice bit her lip. "Y-yes, Dulcia. I—I'm sorry!" she blurted; but she threw Babs a dagger-like glance.

"Very well. Fortunately, no harm has been done. Now, please go to the school shop and buy me two yards of one-inch tape. Here is the money. Well, Barbara?" she added, as Eunice disappeared. "Oh, wait a minute, I think, for safety's sake, I will keep this camera locked up, as I have still three more films to expose"—and she turned to her desk. She put the camera in a drawer, and, locking it, placed the key in her pocket. "Now, what is it?" she asked.

"It—it's about Dolores," Babs said, rather hesitantly. "Oh, Dulcia, what happened? Why can't she fag for you?"

Dulcia shook her head. "Well, she says she doesn't want to." "But she does, really!" Clara interrupted.

Dulcia looked a little worried. "All the same," she pointed out, "I haven't any power to make a girl who doesn't want to fag, fag for me. Apart from which, she has already chosen Helen."

"But—oh, Dulcia, I'm sure," Babs said vehemently, "she doesn't want to fag for Helen. You say yourself that you'd rather have her to fag for you than anybody else."

"I did. And," Dulcia said, "I still feel that way. But what can I do? Dolores told me that she'd already decided to become Helen's fag. On the other hand," she added, "if she likes to change her mind now, she can still come to me. I'll have a talk with Helen later, and see if we can fix it up."

Trouble in the Play-room!



FEELING a little happier, Babs and Clara went out.

Dulcia was as good as her word. Five minutes later she saw Helen Hunter passing her door. She called her in.

"Helen, I won't beat about the bush," said the captain quietly. "I've been thinking about this fagging business. I do think, you know, that it would be a better idea to let Dolores fag for me while you have your sister."

"You do?" Helen asked, with a stare.

"Well, don't you?" "No, I don't!" the other bluntly said. "You ought to know, Dulcia, that Eunice would only try to take advantage of working for me. Apart from that, I fancy you'd be a bit more than sorry if you took Dolores on. The kid's simply dreadful!"

"I'm willing," Dulcia said quietly, "to risk that. Helen, why are you so keen to have Dolores?"

"Keen?" Helen's brows arched in pretended surprise. Then she laughed. "Keen!" she said, infusing mockery into her tone. "Keen to have that little good-for-nothing? If you can get her to come to you, well—jolly well take her—and find me someone else a little more efficient! Come along now and ask her," she added indifferently.

Dulcia gazed at her. If Helen was acting, she was certainly acting well.

"Very well," she agreed.

Helen shrugged. Turning, she led the way along the corridor. She thrust open the door of her study where Dolores, in the act of preparing tea, looked up. Her face turned a fiery red as she saw Dulcia.

"Dolores," Helen said, but took very good care to get between the captain and the fag so that Dulcia should not see the expression which accompanied her words, "Dulcia says that if you'd like to fag for her, you can."

"Yes, Dolores," Dulcia said softly. Dolores gulped. For a moment her face became radiant. She almost blurted out: "Oh, Dulcia, I do want to be your fag!" Then she looked at Helen—Helen, whose face, hidden from Dulcia, was scowling and threatening.

And she said, turning her unhappy face away:

"But—but I—I'm Helen's fag." "You mean you don't want to come to me?" Dulcia asked, just a little sharply.

"N-no," Dolores faltered, and could have broken down and cried as that little fib left her lips. And Dulcia, stung a little at having been refused a second time, turned pink.

"Then, in that case, there's nothing more to be said. So-long, Helen!"

Helen laughed. Dolores, with a sensation of seeing her most cherished ambition stepping out of her reach, gave a little choking cry as the door closed behind her Sixth Form idol. Helen grinned.

"Good for you!" she gloated. "You know what would have happened if you'd said 'yes,' don't you? Well, finish laying that table, and then you can go. And pull your socks up!"

Dolores gulped, but she got on with her work.

Greatly to her relief, Helen went out again while she was completing her preparations, and, with a sigh of most thankful relief, Dolores laid the last knife and fork. Well, that was that!

She glanced round, fearful that she might have left something undone. Child as she was, she had a strict sense of duty, and a horror of not doing any job properly. Just an inch she moved the salt-cellar. Yes, everything looked lovely, she thought. But, oh, if she had only been doing this for Dulcia! She went to the door. With the relief of a

prisoner escaping from his cell, she hurried along the corridor and down into the play-room.

She pushed open the door of the room, to be greeted by Eunice Hunter's shrill voice.

Eunice, having an argument with Dolly Drew over the ownership of a piece of chocolate which had been left on the desk, had just snatched the chocolate from Dolly's grasp; and Dolly, almost a head shorter than the young bully, was nearly in tears.

Apprehensively, uneasily, the rest of the Form was grouped round the combatants; but, as usual, Eunice—self-proclaimed leader of the Second—invested with all the authority of being a prefect's sister, and now invested with the greater glamour of being the captain's fag—was having things all her own way.

"Well, it's mine!" she said, and popped the chocolate into her mouth. "Now come and get it—if you can!" she sneered, and turned. "Hoo! Whoopee!" she jeered. "Here's cry-baby doll-carrier! Ha, ha, ha! What price fagging for the captain of the school now, young Dolores?"

Dolores gazed at her; then she turned her head, walking quickly to her desk. Eunice's plump face darkened. She caught her by the shoulder.

"Here, you," she cried, "answer me when I talk to you! What price fagging for Dulcia Fairbrother now?" she repeated spitefully. "What price your silly pals in the Fourth? 'Oh, yes, Dolores, you shall be Dulcia's fag!' she mimicked. "'We'll see to that. Never mind Eunice Hunter; she doesn't count.' Well, do I count now, cry-baby?" she added viciously. "Who's cock of the walk? Answer, you little beast, or I'll pull your hair!"

"You leave my hair alone!" Dolores protested indignantly.

"Well, answer!" "I won't answer!" Dolores said spiritedly. "And I think you're mean and horrid to be so spiteful! Let me go!"

But Eunice, gloating and glowering little bully, had no intention of doing that. She made a dart at Dolores.



"HERE'S my shilling, and you stole it!" said Helen Hunter, and from the doll's dress she produced the coin. Little Dolores stared in wonder and fear. How the shilling had got in her doll's pocket she had no idea. But the prefect knew!

But, for once, Eunice had mistaken her victim. Dolores, despite the peaceful placidity of her nature, had had just about enough. As Eunice, with a glare, darted towards her, she spun round; her hand closed upon the wet sponge used for wiping the blackboard.

"Here," screamed Eunice, seeing too late her danger, "don't you—"
But Dolores had. She had thrown it! And Eunice, charging on, stopped dead with surprise as the wet sponge squelched into her face.

From the Second went up an amazed gasp of awe; and Dolores, rather scared then at her own action, shrank back.

Eunice let out a spluttering cry. "You little cat! Why, I'll—"

She made to rush again, but just at that moment the door opened. Helen Hunter looked in with a frown.

"Hey! What's this?"
"Oh dear!" Dolores said. "Please—please—"

"That—that little cat threw a wet sponge at me!" Eunice hooted furiously, and wiped her face. "She—"

"Dolores, did you?"
"Well," Dolores said spiritedly, "she was going for me!"

"I didn't ask for explanations; I said 'Did you?'" Helen repeated.

"Yes."
"Then take twenty lines!" she snapped. "Eunice, wipe your face and come with me; I want to talk to you."

Eunice glowered. With a fierce look at Dolores, she went out.

"That little cat!" she choked.
"All right—all right!" Helen said, with a scowl. "Pay attention to me now. Did you get hold of that camera?"

"Well—"
"Did you?" Helen asked snappily.
"Well, I did get hold of it—yes," Eunice retorted.

"And did you expose the films, as I told you to?"

"No. Those cats Babs and Clara came in just as I was doing it!" Eunice glowered. "Then Dulcia came in, and they told her what I'd been doing. Oh, you needn't glare like that!" she added sulkily. "It wasn't my fault, and I was trying to carry out your orders. But I couldn't be expected to know those pigs from the Fourth Form would come in, could I?"

Helen looked alarmed.
"And Dulcia—did she suspect?"
"No. I told her I was cleaning it. She locked it up, though."

Helen heaved a sigh of relief, but her eyes were glittering a little.

"Babs and Clara—oh?" she said. "Those little cats! Interfering, as usual! All right, I'll jolly well attend to them! Where's Dulcia locked up the camera?"

"In the drawer of her desk," Eunice said. "She's got the key, so if you expect me to get hold of it now—"

"Oh, be quiet!" Helen said. "Eunice, listen to me! You've got to get hold of it! Do you understand? I planned to get you made Dulcia's fag simply so that you could do that little job for me. You've got to grab that camera. You've got to spoil the films that are in it! Understand?"

"But how?"
"I don't know. That's up to you."
"All right," Eunice said sulkily. "All the same, I don't see—"

"Don't argue! Now, listen to me again—if you want to keep your job! You don't want Dolores to get it, do you?"

Eunice's eyes smouldered.
"But she can't; I've got it."

"Well, don't be so sure of keeping it!" Helen sneered. "I've got more than half an idea that Dulcia still prefers her to you. What we've got to do," she went on, her eyes glimmering, "is to make Dulcia so fed-up and disappointed with Dolores' idea of fagging that she wouldn't even look at her even if Dolores asked. You see?"

Eunice smiled craftily.
"Yes, I see! Well, what do we do?"
"Just this," Helen said, and, with a swift glance up and down the passage, spoke in a low whisper for several minutes. And at the end of that time Eunice's spiteful little face was twisted in one big grin.

"Oh, good!" she breathed. "Jolly good! Yes, yes, I'll do that all right—you just give me the wink every time! But, Helen"—and she stared up into her sister's face—"what do you want to spoil Dulcia's films for?"

"That," said Helen tartly, "is my business! Now get back to the play-room."

And Eunice, sulkily glowering, got back. But her eyes were alight with the glitter of mischief to come.

It Couldn't have been Dolores!



"D O L O R E S !
Dolores Essendon! Where the dickens is Dolores Essendon?"

It was the next morning. Babs, Mabs, Marjorie, Clara, and Janet Jordan, discussing hockey, before lessons, in Study No. 7—the apartment shared by the latter three—looked anxiously towards the door as that bad-tempered voice resounded in the corridor.

"Helen!" muttered Babs.
"And on the warpath!" Janet Jordan said.

"After little Dolores!" Mabel Lynn added, a trifle anxiously. "What the dickens does she want?"

"Dolores!" repeated the angry voice.

Marjorie Hazeldene, biting her lip, moved towards the door—for Marjorie was very, very fond of Dolores, and had worried more than a little about her since last night. She opened it just as Helen, red-faced and glaring, came abreast of the door.

"Is Dolores here?" she demanded.
"No, Helen," Marjorie gulped. "She's in the play-room, I expect. But—
—but is there anything I can do?"

Helen glared.
"No, you jolly well can't. Just wait until I get hold of her!"

"Why, what's she done?" asked Clara Trevlyn.

"What's she done?" Helen furiously repeated. "What has she not done? Dolores!" she vibrated, her voice echoing down the corridor. "Hi, you, Pansy Carter, go and get hold of Dolores!"

"Y-yes, Helen," Pansy Carter of the Third Form said, with a nervous blink, and scooted off just as Dulcia Fairbrother came along the passage.

"Hallo! What's this?" Dulcia asked. "Who's shouting Dolores at the top of her voice—Helen?"

"Yes," snapped Helen. "I want her."

"Hardly need for all this commotion, though, is there?" Dulcia asked, a little tartly. "Really, Helen, as a prefect—"

"As a prefect, my foot!" Helen snorted. "Have you seen my study? But no you haven't! You don't know what that little shirker has done. You'd cause a commotion if it was your

study, I'll bet. You—but come and have a look at it!" she cried.

"You mean you wish to make a complaint against Dolores?" Dulcia asked steadily.

"Yes!" cried Helen.
The chums looked at each other, quick anxiety registered in each face. What had Dolores been doing?

"Come on," Babs said, as prefect and captain moved off.

The chums nodded. They needed no second bidding. While the furious Helen stamped off with Dulcia, they followed behind. Helen never appeared to notice them, so great was her fury. She reached the Sixth Form corridor. There, violently, she flung her door open.

"Look at that!" she shrieked.

Babs & Co. heard a gasp from Dulcia, and the prefect and the captain stepped into the study. A few quick strides and they were there, too.

And then, hardly knowing what they expected to see, they stood rooted.

Helen was in the study furiously flinging out her arm in an embracing gesture; Dulcia, her eyes wide and incredulous, was standing by her side. But the study itself!

On the hearth were coals—wood—pieces of torn paper—just as if in fact, somebody had collected those things for making a fire and then had joyously played football with them. The table, containing Helen's untouched breakfast things, was a wreck—jam upset on the cloth, the teapot overturned, one plate broken, and eggshell smashed in small pieces and scattered all over the place. A shelf of books from Helen's case had been dumped on the floor.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Babs.
"But Dolores would never have done this!" Marjorie cried, her eyes round with horror.

"And that," Helen was saying, with bitterness, "is my fag, Dulcia! That's the girl you're so keen on. This is how she does her work—just look at it!"

Dulcia's lips compressed.

"I will certainly have a word with Dolores," she said. "Disgraceful. Send her to me as soon as you see her." And then, turning, she frowned as she saw the five Fourth Form chums in the doorway. "Really, Barbara—"

"Dulcia," Babs cried, "you don't really mean to say you believe Dolores did that? Why should she?"

"Because," Helen cried, "she's just a little spitefire, that's why! Because I made her do one job again last night because it wasn't done properly. Anyway, who told you to poke your nose in?" she raved. "Get out of here!"

"But Dolores—"
"I'll deal with Dolores!"

"Yes, please, Barbara, all of you," Dulcia said tersely. "Please go away. This doesn't concern you—"

The chums looked at each other. Not for a moment did any one of them believe that Dolores—shy, timid little Dolores—could have been guilty of such an act. Somebody else had done that—but who?

Obviously, however, this was neither the time nor the place to argue the question. Reluctantly they turned; reluctantly they left.

But reaching the corner they almost cannoned into a breathless, scurrying little figure who, her face alive with anxiety, stared up at them.

"Dolores!" cried Babs. "Oh, here you are! Dolores, what's been happening in Helen's study?"

"I don't know!" Dolores looked at them in surprise. "Oh, please, is Helen cross again?" she asked tearfully. "She

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did tell me, you know, to leave the breakfast things.”

“And the fire?” questioned Babs.

“Well, I laid that, you see—ever so neatly and nicely. I didn’t light it because I couldn’t find any matches.”

“You mean,” Clara asked, “you didn’t leave the stuff on the carpet? And you didn’t upset the jam and things on the table? Nor pull books out of the book-case?”

The horrified bewilderment in the child’s eyes showed that she had no knowledge of that.

“Oh, no! Of—of course not!” she said. “That would be a very wicked thing to do, wouldn’t it? Oh dear!”—and she positively leapt as the infuriated voice of Helen came roaring down the passage.

“Oh, please ex-ex-cuse me!” she panted. “I think that’s Helen calling!”

And she scuttled off.

“Well?” Clara asked.

Babs’ face was grim.

“Of course the poor kid knows nothing about it,” she decided. “Somebody has ragged Helen’s study and Helen, spiteful cat that she is, is just fastening it on to Dolores. Poor kid! What can we do?”

“I’m going back,” Marjorie cried. “Babs—no, I can’t let Dolores get into a row for that. It’s not fair—”

“It isn’t!” Clara said. “Come on, let’s all go back.”

They turned. Back they went. But when they reached Helen’s study it was to find the door locked and to hear Helen’s upraised voice inside accompanied by the tearfully protesting tones of little Dolores.

Clara thumped violently.

“Helen! Helen!” she cried.

“Go away!” Helen cried. “Go away! How dare you interfere? Get this study to rights,” they heard her storm at Dolores. “What? What’s that? You’ll be late for lessons? Well, jolly well be late for lessons—and serve you right! And don’t cry, baby-face! Get that broom and pan.”

“Oh, my hat!” Clara breathed.

“Helen!” she hooted.

Crash! Open came the door. Helen, with a furious face, confronted them—just as Miss Bullivant, the acid-tempered mathematics mistress and mistress on duty for the day, came up the passage. She stared, quickening her step.

“My goodness gracious me!” she cried, astounded. “What a commotion! What is all this?”

Helen’s eyes glittered.

“I’m sorry, Miss Bullivant, but these girls seem to think they have a right to interfere with Dolores, who is my fag. In fact,” Helen went on spitefully, “they have done nothing but interfere and make rows since I made Dolores my fag.”

“Indeed!” Miss Bullivant’s lips compressed. “Barbara—”

“Miss Bullivant, we haven’t interfered!” Babs cried indignantly. “We only want to see Dolores gets fair play!”

“And do you suggest,” Miss Bullivant asked, “that she is not being treated fairly?”

The chums were silent, realising suddenly the dangerously thin ice upon which they were standing. After all, what evidence had they against Helen?

“You will each leave these quarters,” Miss Bullivant said, “and take twenty-five lines for causing such a commotion! And please,” she added, “do not in future interfere with matters that do not concern you. Go!”

And the chums, fuming and quivering, had to go. Miss Bullivant nodded to the prefect.

“Very well, Helen. I hope,” she said graciously, “you will find no further cause for complaint. If those girls get out of hand, report them to me.”

“Thank you, I will,” Helen said, and with a thin-lipped smile, walked back into her study.

Dolores was there, clearing away the debris on the table. She looked up with pleading eyes.

“Oh, please, Helen, can I go now?” she asked. “I shall be late for lessons and Miss Gilbey will be ever so cross. Miss Gilbey gives us black marks if we are late for lessons, you know.”

“Get on with the work!” Helen snapped.

“But Miss Gilbey—”

“And bother Miss Gilbey! And bother your black marks!” Helen ground out. “You should have thought of that before you made all this mess!”

“But, Helen, I didn’t make it.”

“You did!” Helen barked. “And don’t,” she glared as Dolores, trembling, backed away, “attempt to argue with me! Now get a move on! You haven’t half finished yet.”

Poor little Dolores! Tremulously she got on with her task, but her eyes were frightened as she looked at the clock. Another ten minutes and she would be due in class, and if she wasn’t in class—

“Oh dear!” she sighed forlornly.

She bustled about, her little heart throbbing with anxiety now. Never yet had Dolores been late in class, and Miss Gilbey was so nice and so kind always, and Dolores did so love her, that she would hate to earn her disapproval. Yet, frantically as she worked, the minutes ticked away.

“Helen, I—I’ve cleared the table,” she ventured. “Can I—I go now?”

“No, you can’t!” Helen snapped.

“Put that fire to rights and—here’s a box of matches—light it. I’m going out for a little while, but I shall be back in a few minutes, and woe betide you if this place isn’t as clean as a new pin!”

Dolores gulped. Feverishly she grabbed the paper. She’d be late. Oh dear! What would Miss Gilbey say? But she mustn’t be late.

She stuffed paper into the grate. She caught up the wood. Then she looked at it again.

It was wet. Somebody had deliberately damped the wood!

Meantime, Babs & Co. had just reached the Fourth Form corridor. First lesson bell was already ringing then, and books had to be collected. But Babs was not thinking about lessons as she entered her study. She was thinking of Dolores.

Then she started as, entering the

study, Miss Charmant—recently returned from her rest and looking very pretty and certainly much better for it—turned from the table.

"Ah, Barbara!" she said. "I was just leaving these books here with a note. Will you take them to Dulcia for me, please? She has agreed to look through them. You are excused first five minutes of lessons," she added.

Babs smiled. She glanced at the books. Never did Babs mind doing a favour for Miss Charmant, and to get off lessons for five minutes made the favour doubly worth while! Willingly she caught up the books and trotted off. She knocked at the door of Dulcia's study, and receiving a rather curt invitation to "come in!" entered.

Dulcia Fairbrother was standing before her desk, which was placed near the window. She looked round.

"Oh, are those Miss Charmant's books?" she asked. "Dump them on the table, Barbara. I suppose," she added, with a little frown, "none of your Fourth Formers has been playing about in here?"

"Why, no!" Babs said. "What's the matter, Dulcia?"

"Oh, nothing! But somebody," Dulcia said, "has been trying to force the drawer of this desk. Look at it!"

Babs approached. In consternation she stared at the polished mahogany of that drawer, its edges chipped and broken.

"My goodness! It looks as though a burglar's been at it," she said.

"And a burglar," Dulcia announced grimly, "who uses my own tools!" She held up a screwdriver. "I found that near here, though what the dickens they were after—I say," she broke off, sniffing, "what's that?"

Babs sniffed, too, at the same moment; not that there was any great need to. A smell of woody smoke filled the air.

"Something on fire?" she suggested.

At the same time there came a cry from farther up the passage in excited Myra Brownlow's voice.

"Fire!" it shrieked. "Fire! Oh, my goodness! Helen Hunter's study is on fire!"

Nothing but Trouble!



"OH dear! Oh phoo!" gasped little Dolores Essendon distressfully, and backed away with smarting eyes from the grate of Helen Hunter's study. "Oh, what shall I do?"

She looked, with eyes round with fright and dismay, at her cherished fire. What had gone wrong with it?

Everything that could have gone wrong with it seemed, in fact, to have done so. The wet wood, after many frantic attempts on Dolores' part to light it, had caught at last. But the wood was still damp, and, being damp, was giving off clouds of smoke and smuts.

That smoke was rolling on through the door which Dolores had, in her panic, opened.

Dolores did not know that the damper above the fire had been closed by some unknown hand, which meant that the smoke and smuts, instead of disappearing up the chimney, were just finding a willy-nilly outlet into the study itself. It just seemed to Dolores as if the whole world had gone wrong for her that morning.

And already she was late for lessons—dreadfully late.

In big-eyed dismay she regarded the fire. Oh goodness! The flames were coming out now. She looked hunted round the room. What could she do? A jug of water stood on the table. Tremblingly she shot its contents on to the fire. And then the door burst open and Barbara Redfern rushed in.

Dolores gulped. "Oh, Barbara, the fire!"

"Somebody has left the damper down!" gasped Babs.

She darted forward and grabbed the poker. Braving the choking smoke, she knocked up the damper. At the same moment Dulcia entered the study.

"Oh, my hat, what a fog!" she choked. "Dolores, did you do this?"

"Please, Dulcia—"

"A frightful mess you've made!" Dulcia gasped. "Oh phoo! Thanks, Barbara! What ever were you doing, Dolores?"

"Oh, please, Dulcia, I was only lighting the fire! Helen told me—"

"Then Helen," Dulcia decided, "ought to have known better than to entrust such a job to a kiddie like you. The place is reeking with smoke. At the same time—" Dulcia added sternly, and then, catching Babs' beseeching glance, broke off. "Well, get to your class-room," she said.

"Y-yes, Dulcia," Dolores faltered.

And, smoke-begrimed as she was, she raced away.

But her little heart was anxious. Oh dear, wouldn't Miss Gilbey be cross now! In her anxiety to please Miss Gilbey, she forgot the dreadful sight she must have looked, and breathlessly dashed into the Second Form class-room.

The Second, of course, were already deep in lessons; but everybody looked up, and everybody suddenly burst into a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Dolores halted.

"Oh, my hat! Look at her!" hooted Eunice Hunter. "He, he, he! Where have you been, Baby-face? Up a chimney?"

"Eunice, please!" Miss Gilbey cried sharply, and gazed with some vexation at Dolores. "Dolores, you are very, very late," she said. "And what do you mean by coming into class in that state?"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Dolores, and gazed down at herself, and, becoming aware for the first time of her appearance, flushed a deep red under her grime. "Oh dear!"

"Dolores, how did you get in that state?"

"Please, it was Helen's fire," Dolores quivered. "Helen made me light it."

"Sneak—sneak—sneak!" chanted Eunice.

"Eunice, take ten lines!" Miss Gilbey snapped. "Dolores, you know you ought not to enter a class-room like that. Please go away and clean yourself at once, and then come back and explain. I have already marked you late, which means, of course, that you receive a black mark."

"As if," Eunice whispered; "she hasn't got enough already!"

Dolores quivered. A great choking lump rose in her throat. After all she had been through—to receive this reprimand, to make herself the laughing-stock of the Form, to be disgraced in her favourite mistress' eyes! It was too much. A little sob escaped her.

"Cry-baby!" Eunice jeered. "Cry-baby! Trying to wash the soot marks off with silly tears, that's what you are! Cry-baby!"

"Eunice!" Miss Gilbey sharply began, and then jumped. "Dolores!" she exclaimed.

For that last gibe had been too much even for Dolores. Quivering and furious, she grabbed the first thing handy—a piece of chalk. Quickly she threw it at the grinning face of her tormentor.

But Dolores' aim was bad. She released the chalk too soon, and it struck Miss Gilbey between the eyes.

Miss Gilbey leapt up.

"Dolores," she cried, "you are a bad, wicked child! Now go—go and get yourself clean. And when you come back," she added, "you will do an extra half an hour's lessons!"

And Dolores, after one awestruck look of consternation, turned. Like a scared little rabbit she bolted from the room.

Clara Saves the Day!



FIVE pairs of anxious eyes—belonging to Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn, Bessie

Bunter, Clara Trevlyn, and Janet Jordan—hopefully and eagerly surveyed Marjorie Hazeldene as she drifted into Study No. 4 shortly before dinner that same day. And Babs asked eagerly:

"Marjorie, you saw Helen?"

"Yes," Marjorie answered, with a suspicion of a quiver at the corners of her lips.

"And you told her we'd clear up the mess in her study?"

"Yes."

"What did she say?"

"She said," Marjorie answered, "that she wouldn't dream of it, and that she's had too much interference from us already, and— Oh dear!" she added.

"What else?" asked Babs anxiously.

"I—I just met little Dolores," Marjorie went on. "She was coming out of class after doing half an hour's detention, and she was so white, so miserable, that—that—" And gentle, tender-hearted Marjorie's eyes filled with tears. "Oh, Babs, she's having a dreadful time—a really dreadful time! Can't—can't we do something to cheer her up?"

"Let's take her to the tuckshop and give her a feed!" suggested Bessie Bunter.

But the chums shook their heads.

"There's one thing we can do—one thing she'd like," Babs considered, after a pause. "Dolores is frightfully fond of fairy tales, isn't she? And there's that new coloured cartoon on at the Courtfield Grand Cinema this afternoon. What about taking her along?"

"Oh, ripping!" Marjorie cried, her eyes lighting up. "But, Clara, you've got hockey practice!"

Clara shrugged.

"In a good cause, even a hockey practice can go west," she decided. "Marjorie, go and tell her to be ready after dinner, will you?" she added.

But Marjorie already was joyfully making towards the door. With a smile on her face, she scampered towards the play-room. Eunice, there, scowled round as she entered.

"Hallo! Do you want me?"

"I don't!" Marjorie said. "Dolores—oh, Dolores, there you are! Dolores, what are you doing this afternoon?"

Dolores shook her head.

"Nothing, please, Marjorie."

"Then," Marjorie cried—"oh, Dolores, how would you like to come with us and see that new coloured cartoon at Courtfield—you know, the one about the witch and the fairy princess?"

Dolores' eyes glistened.

"Oo!" she breathed, "I—I'd love to!"

"Fine!" Marjorie said, and beamed. "Be ready after dinner."

"Here, but what about me?" Eunice indignantly put in. "I'm captain of this Form! What about taking me?"

But Marjorie gave her one distasteful look and went out of the room, leaving Eunice scowling and Dolores radiantly joyful once again.

"O.K.?" Clara asked, as joyfully Marjorie re-entered Study No. 4.

"O.K.!" Marjorie laughed.

"Then," Clara said, with a big grin, "this is where I go and finish my lines. It would be just like Helen to ask for those and mess up the afternoon! In fact," Clara added, "I think we'd all better do it—just in case. So-long! Come on, Marjorie and Janet!"

They quitted the room. The warning, anyway, was worth heeding. Just like Helen to find some excuse for spoiling their afternoon's holiday, especially as Helen herself was duty prefect for the day, and as such she must remain within boundaries herself.

Mabs and Babs got down to their lines, all partly finished. But they had not been writing more than five minutes when the door was pushed open.

Dolores Essendon, her little face tearful and woe-begone, looked in.

"Oh, Barbara," she faltered, and there was a break in her voice—"Barbara, I—I can't come!"

Babs started up.

"I—I can't come!" Dolores repeated, her voice choked with tears. "Eunice went and told her sister that you were taking me to the cinema, and Helen says that before I go anywhere I must clean her study right up! And it's in an awful mess!" Dolores added. "All soot and black stuff everywhere, you know, and it will take me all afternoon to clean it; and Helen says she's going to sit in the study to see that I do it properly!"

She broke down. Babs, Mabs, and Bessie looked at each other grimly. They might have guessed something like that, of course; and, remembering the appalling condition of Helen's study, Babs felt her own heart give a throb. To impose all that work on young Dolores! To rob her of her afternoon!

Her eyes flashed as she put a comforting arm round the Second Former's trembling shoulder.

"There, kiddie!" she said. "Cheer up, now! Don't take it to heart! We'll find some way out. Mabs, just look after her," she muttered. "I'll pop along and see Clara. There must be some way out of this."

Marjorie, Clara, and Janet, busily scribbling lines, looked glum when they heard the news. Clara snorted.

"That cat—she would think up something like this!"

"Supposing," Marjorie suggested, "we all helped and did the work? We'll have to get Helen out of it first, though. If the work was done she couldn't very well complain, could she?"

"But how," Janet argued, "can we get her out of it?"

Suddenly Clara had a brain-wave.

"Wait a minute!" she breathed. "I've got an idea. And if the idea's good, I'm going to carry it out. Helen's prefect on duty to-day, isn't she?"

"Yes."

"And that means that if one of us were detained, Helen would have to look after us?"

"Well, yes."

"Then," Clara said, her eyes glinting, "here goes! I'm going to be detained. It will be rotten, of course, missing the afternoon, but anything to make that kiddie happy. Never mind how I'm going to do it. Leave it to me."

"But, Clara, no! Let me do it?" Marjorie cried.

"No fear! It's my idea!" Clara said. "Anyway, the kid likes you. Leave it to me."

And leave it to Clara they did, though there was not another one of the chums who would not have willingly tackled the job. But it was fine of Clara, sweet of Clara; and only the chums, who knew how much the Tom-boy revelled in these fine afternoons, could appreciate the generous nature of the sacrifice she intended to make.

Shortly before dinner, Clara, with a most demure expression on her face and a sheaf of lines in her hands, knocked on the door of Miss Bullivant's study. Miss Bullivant, who had had a rather unhappy time trying to instil the elements of mathematics into a reluctant Lower Third Form that morning, was not in the best of tempers as she called out "Come in!" Clara smiled.

"Yes, Miss Bullivant," Clara replied. And, grinning to herself, went off at once to Helen's study, where Helen was in the act of thrusting a brush into the gulping little Dolores' hands.

"Miss Bullivant wants you!" she said.

Helen scowled.

"All right. And now, mind you get this place like a new pin!" she snapped at Dolores. "Don't you dare leave it until it is! What's the Bull want?" she asked of Clara.

"Come and see!" Clara chuckled. Together they entered Miss Bullivant's study.

"Helen, you are prefect on duty, are you not?" the mistress said. "You will take Clara Trevlyn to the detention-room, and there you will set her a special detention task. And please," Miss Bullivant added, "see that she does it."

"But, Miss Bullivant—" Helen protested.



BABS burst into the study, just as Dolores hurled a jug of water at the smoking fire. Babs gasped. What on earth was causing so much smoke? Whatever the reason, this would obviously mean that Dolores would get into more trouble with Helen Hunter.

"Please, Miss Bullivant, I've brought the lines you gave me yesterday!"

"Oh!" Miss Bullivant reached out a hand. "Thank you!" she said. "I hope, in future, you will cease to interfere in Helen's business. 'You—' And then she jumped. "Clara, what is this?"

"Lines, Miss Bullivant!" Clara said meekly.

"You are aware," Miss Bullivant thundered, looking up, "of what you have written? Why, goodness gracious me! Clara, I did not tell you to write twenty-five times 'Helen Hunter is a mean and spiteful cat!' How dare you, girl?"

Clara shook her head.

"Well, I—I had to write something," she defended. "You didn't tell me what to write."

"And so," Miss Bullivant said, "you wrote this—this insult! Very well, Clara. Go at once and fetch Helen, and return here with her!"

"Please!" Miss Bullivant said, in a tone which brooked no argument.

Helen glared. It was a glare which told Clara that she was going to have anything but a happy afternoon. Together they went out.

"You would!" she said bitterly to Clara. "Isn't it just like you to get a detention when I—" She broke off. "Oh, bother you, go and get your books!"

"Yes, Helen," Clara said meekly.

And, chuckling, she flew back to Study No. 7. Babs & Co. were all collected there.

"Worked like a charm!" the Tomboy gurgled. "I'm in for the afternoon—and Helen with me! Now's your chance! Give Dolores a good time."

"Oh, Clara, you brick!"

"Bow, wow!" Clara said cheerfully.

Grabbing her books, she scooted off again, while Babs & Co. held a hurried council of war. Marjorie was sent to scout out the lie of the land. Coming

back five minutes later with the information that Helen, in a towering temper, was already with Clara, in detention, they armed themselves with brushes, brooms, and dusters, and, in a victorious body, swooped down upon Helen's study. Little Dolores, working there, blinked at them in wide, blue-eyed wonder.

"Oh, Barbara, you—you'll get into awful trouble!"

"Not us!" Babs said cheerfully. "Helen's engaged for the afternoon. We've just come along to give you a hand, so that we can all push off! Now, kids, wade in!" she cried. "Up the broom and dustpans, as Jemima would say! Dolores, you buzz off and get yourself ready. Meet us in the cloisters in half an hour!"

"Oh, Barbara—" Dolores faltered. But she went, her face flushed radiant and happy again. And Babs & Co., working diligently and cheerfully, within the next half an hour performed wonders, even Bessie doing an energetic and manful best. Drab and soot-besmirched as the study had been when they entered, it looked bright, clean, and shiny when they had finished. Babs grinned.

"Well, there we are!" she said. "I think that finishes it, children! Poor old Helen! She just won't have a single thing to complain about! Now, let's scoot!"

They scooted. After washing, they went down to the quadrangle. There, almost dancing on tiptoe in excitement, with her beloved Peggy in her arms, little Dolores was waiting to greet them.

"And now," Babs smiled, "in the words of the old song, 'we'll all have a jolly good time!'"

And a jolly good time was what they had in all truth. It was difficult to say which they enjoyed most—the great colour film or Dolores' happiness and excitement. Certainly, for the time being, the little fag of the Second had put her troubles behind her. Happy afternoon that for Dolores. Going back to Cliff House, Babs smiled at the little one.

"Like it, Dolores?"

"Oh, Barbara, it was lovely!" Dolores ecstatically breathed. "Peggy liked it, too! But, Barbara, why didn't Clara come with us?"

"Oh, Clara? She—she's busy," Babs said. Then she started.

"Hallo, here's Dulcia!"

Dulcia Fairbrother, it was, walking down the road with her treasured camera in her hand. She smiled as she approached them.

"Just," she said, "the very girls I was thinking of! Barbara—all of you—will you pose for me? I've just got one more film to expose before I take the roll to the photographer's to get it developed; and I know Stella would love a picture of you five—and Dolores," she added, smiling at the child, who, with worshipping eyes, was regarding her. "Dolores, dear, you'll be in the picture, too," she said. "Will you stand over by the old oak there?"

"With Peggy?" Dolores eagerly inquired.

"Yes; with Peggy."

They stood by the old oak, Dolores' face bright red with the pride she felt. Then snick! went the camera. And Dulcia laughed as she wound off the reel.

"Thank you," she said. "That finishes the roll! Now I'm to the photographer's, and when I get the prints I'll show them to you. Had a nice afternoon, Dolores?" she added.

"Oh, lovely!" Dolores breathed.

"That's good! Well, so long!" And Dulcia walked on. Dolores beamed.

"Oh, she is nice, isn't she?" she sighed wistfully. "You like her, don't you, Marjorie?"

"Just love her!" Marjorie said enthusiastically. "But, Dolores, why don't you fag for her?"

And was immediately sorry she had asked the question at the sight of the first shadow which overcast the little one's face.

They reached school. Up the drive they marched. And then they all stopped, and Dolores shrank back at the sight of Helen Hunter, who, obviously waiting for them, was standing on the steps.

"Oh, so you've come back?" she said.

"Yes, please, Helen," Dolores said simply. "And I've had a lovely time."

"You got through your work jolly quickly!"

"Yes, Helen; but I didn't do it all, you know," Dolores said, with childish innocence. "Dear Barbara and Marjorie, and these other nice girls, helped me."

"So!" Helen said, and her eyes glittered. "Clever, aren't you?" she sneered. "Anyway, Dolores, you can buzz off now and get my tea ready. Well, anything to say, Barbara Redfern?"

"We were going to ask Dolores to have tea with us," Babs said.

"Then ask some other time," snapped Helen. "Dolores, get on with it!" she thundered.

"Oh, y-yes!" Dolores cried, and hurried away.

"Come to Study No. 4 when you've finished, Dolores," Babs sang after her.

And they went in, pushing past the still scowling Helen. In Study No. 4 they found Clara, grinning quite cheerfully, laying the tea.

"Meet Helen?" she asked.

"Yes, rather!"

"Like a bear with a sore head, isn't she?" Clara chuckled. "And so mad, kiddets, because all the afternoon I was on my very, very best behaviour, and didn't give her a chance to pick on me once! The kid enjoy the show?"

"Just didn't she?" Marjorie glowed.

"We'll tell you about it over tea."

And talk it over tea they did; and halfway through the meal, to their surprise, Dolores came in. Her little face was happy.

"Oh, Barbara, you said I might come and have tea, didn't you?" she asked.

"And I've done everything Helen asked me to do. She said that I could go when I'd finished it, you know, so I worked like anything to finish it and come here! Oh, you've got some more chocolate biscuits!" she cried rapturously.

"Rather!" smiled Marjorie. "Come on! Sit here by me. Now, what will you have?"

Dolores beamed. Bright-eyed, she selected a chocolate biscuit. The chums, glad to see her so happy again, smiled at her. Cups clinked merrily. The cheerful meal was at its height when—

"Is that fag of mine here?" a ferocious voice asked, at the door.

"Dolores, you little wretch, what do you mean by messing up my tea?"

Dolores swung round, and at the sight of Helen Hunter's flushed and angry face, looked very apprehensive.

"But I didn't mess up your tea, Helen—I didn't, really! I did everything ever so carefully."

"Yes," Helen ground out. "You did, did you? Cut bread like doorsteps, mixed the salt with sugar. And you didn't, I suppose, empty the jam on the

butter, and spill the vase of flowers all over the cloth? And you didn't make the tea with cold water?"

"Oh, Helen! No, I didn't!" Dolores cried.

"I'm sure she didn't," Babs put in indignantly.

"Nobody's talking to you!" Helen snapped. "Perhaps," she added spitefully, "you put it into her mind, anyway. Dolores, get off that chair!"

"But look here—" Marjorie objected.

"Take twenty lines for interfering!"

"But Helen—" Dolores quivered.

Helen, her patience spent, caught the youngster by the shoulder. While Dolores struggled desperately not to cry out, she led her out of the room. Babs jumped up angrily.

"I don't know who ragged her study, but it serves her jolly well right!" she said. "Anyway, come on, we're not going to let Dolores get blamed for the work of some other practical joker."

The chums pressed after her as she led the way out of the study. Grimly they pushed on up the corridor till the Sixth Form quarters were reached. Outside the door of Helen's room—slightly ajar—they paused. Dolores—protesting, tear-laden voice came to their ears.

"But, Helen, I didn't do that, you know. I left everything ever so nice, and—"

"Don't tell fibs!" came Helen's snapped retort. "Anyway, clear everything off this table and set it again. I—hallo!"

She glared as Clara appeared. "Who the dickens told you to poke your nose into this? Get out!"

"Rats! Give the kid a chance!" Clara said scornfully.

"Play the game!" indignantly added Babs.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" Marjorie cried.

"I ought, ought I?" Helen's eyes flamed. "Look here, I'm just about sick of you kids interfering. If Dolores doesn't do her job properly she's got to do it again. Now get off, all of you, before I send for Miss Bullivant!"

"I don't think," a tart voice behind them put in, "that there is any need to send for me, Helen!" And the chums, spinning, blinked in dismay at the decidedly angry features of Miss Bullivant. "I thought I told you girls that I wouldn't have you interfering in Helen's affairs?"

"Well, it's Dolores," Babs said.

"Dolores," Helen broke in, "has been playing practical jokes on me, Miss Bullivant. These girls—"

"Thank you," Miss Bullivant said. "Each one of you," she added, "will take fifty lines. And this time, Clara, you will write out: 'I must not interfere in matters that do not concern me.' Apart from that," Miss Bullivant rumbled, "I absolutely forbid any of you, in future, to use this passage, except for purposes strictly connected with your school work. Now go!"

The chums looked at each other in sickly dismay. Helen flashed them a spiteful grin. But there was nothing else for it then. Helen, once again, had scored a triumph. They went.

Half an hour later, however, the door of Study No. 4, where they were just clearing tea, opened. Dolores, looking forlorn, came into the room, clutching her precious Peggy.

"Hal-hallo!" she said hesitantly.

"Oh, dear—"

"Finished with Helen?" Babs asked brightly.

"Yes, Barbara. She—she was ever so horrid, though." The little one choked a little. "She says I can go now till

to-morrow morning, when I've got to go and lay her breakfast and clean up the study for her. But I didn't make that mess, you know," she added. "And I do think it's dreadfully mean of Helen to tell Dulcia about it."

"Dulcia?" Babs questioned.
 "Yes; she fetched Dulcia, you know, to—show her the mess." The soft lips quivered for a moment. "And Dulcia was awfully cross. I don't think," she added, with a little sigh, "that Dulcia likes me very much now, you know. Every time anything goes wrong," Dolores added, "Helen always fetches Dulcia. Why does she do that, Barbara?"

But Babs shook her head.
 "I don't know, Dolores. But have you any idea who messed up the study?"

Dolores hesitated.
 "Have you?" Babs quickly pressed.
 "Well"—Dolores looked at them troubledly—"I haven't got any proof."
 "But you've a suspicion?" queried Babs.

"Yes. It—it's Eunice! When I came out of the study Eunice was in the passage, and she laughed like anything when I came by, you know, and said, in ever such a horrid way: 'How do you like doing your work twice, Baby-face?' And I said to her: 'Did you make that mess?' And she just laughed, and laughed again, you know, as though it was all dreadfully funny, but didn't answer. Then I said: 'I believe you did it, Eunice,' and she said: 'Wouldn't you like to know?' She's a very spiteful girl," Dolores finished, with a flash in her eyes.

Babs' own eyes glinted then. Unfortunately for further questioning, prep bell rang at the moment, and Dolores had to go off. But when she, Bessie, and Mabs had settled down, she spoke.

"You know," she said slowly, "there's something more in all this than meets the eye. It would be just like Eunice to go and undo Dolores' work—and what glorious chances she's got, being in the Sixth Form corridor all the time."

"But why?" Bessie objected. "I mean, Helen's her own sister!"

"Y-yes. But it's funny, isn't it, that Helen should bring Dulcia on the scene every time Dolores is supposed to have done something wrong? Almost," Babs considered, "as if she wanted to disgrace the kiddie in Dulcia's eyes. We haven't found out yet why Dolores decided to fag for Helen instead of Dulcia—but there's a mystery there somewhere, too, because it's pretty plain that Dolores, even now, doesn't want to fag for Helen."

Mabs nodded.
 "But what," she asked despairingly, "can we do?"

"We can do one thing—and we will," Babs said, her eyes flashing. "We'll nip Eunice's little game in the bud! Wait a minute; we'll call Clara & Co. in on this. I've a glimmering of an idea. If Eunice is still going on undoing Dolores' work, she'll be at it again to-morrow morning after Dolores has laid Helen's breakfast. Well"—and Babs drew a deep breath—"we'll be in on it. As soon as ever Dolores leaves that study, we nip in and hide. If we catch Eunice in the act—"

"We will," said Mabs determinedly. "But what about Miss Bullivant's ban?"

"Yes, you know," said plump Bessie, blinking seriously. "If she catches any of us again, she'll be jolly wild."
 "We'll risk that," Babs said shortly.

Babs & Co. take a Hand!



"I THINK that's very, very nice, Peggy, don't you?" Dolores asked, and glanced anxiously around Helen's table which she had just laid. "I think Helen ought to be pleased! Now, let's go and have our own breakfast, shall we?"

And Dolores quitted the prefect's room.

Hugging Peggy, she darted along the Sixth Form corridor. Though she had done her job well, she felt none of that satisfaction which comes from having done one's best.

Helen was horrid; Helen was a bully. If only—oh, if only she could be Dulcia's fag instead!

Almost without realising it, she found herself opposite the door of Dulcia's study. Wistfully she approached, to stare in. And then she saw Eunice, a smile on her plump face. She saw Dulcia offering a chocolate to the fag out of a box. What a nice, kind fag-mistress Dulcia was! Lucky Eunice!

Then, catching Eunice's gloating eyes upon her, she hurried on, a queer little choke in her throat.

At the end of the passage, Mabs, Babs, Clara, Bessie, and Marjorie were waiting.

"Here she is!" Babs muttered. "She's finished now. Now's our chance, Dolores!" she cried.

"Oh, Barbara, good-morning!" Dolores said brightly.

"Have you finished in Helen's room?"

"Yes."
 "Good! Come on, kids!"

And, watched by the wondering-eyed Dolores, they scooted up the passage. But, alas, luck was not with Babs & Co.! For almost as soon as they rushed along the Sixth Form corridor, a figure loomed up at the other end. Too late they turned to retire.

"You girls!" Miss Bullivant cried as she came up. "I thought I had forbidden the use of these quarters to you? Barbara, how dare you? You, captain of the Form, a ringleader in this lawlessness! You will go back to your own quarters immediately, and there you will write out, fifty times: 'I must obey mistress' orders.' Now go!"

"Dished!" muttered Clara savagely. And while Miss Bullivant swept into Dulcia Fairbrother's study, they reluctantly turned back down the stairs.

"But," Babs said, when they had reached the bottom, "we're not beaten yet! We were jolly unlucky that time, but we're not giving in. I vote we hide till the Bull's come down—she's bound to use these stairs, being nearer to Dulcia's study. Once she's off the scene—"

"Oh goodie!" Clara breathed.
 In the ante-room at the bottom of the stairs they waited. Five—ten minutes went by. Then, suddenly, there was a step.

"She's coming!" Babs whispered. Coming Miss Bullivant was—but with irritating slowness. As if she had the whole day in which to do it, she stepped leisurely down the stairs, passed the ante-room without a glance, and swept along the corridor. No sooner had she disappeared, than Babs was out of the door.

"Come on!"
 And up the stairs they spurted, just in time, on reaching the Sixth Form passage, to see a small figure disappearing at the other end.

"Eunice!" Clara said, gritting her

teeth. "And, by the looks of it, she's just come out of her sister's study! Now we'll see if any mischief has been done!"

Together they all hurried along the deserted corridor. Anxiously Babs pushed open the door of Helen's study. And they all stopped, faces flushed with indignation and anger.

The study, as yesterday, was chaotic! "That little cat!" Clara grieved. "So it is she who's doing it! Oh, great goldfishes, what a mess! What do we do now?"

"Clear it up!" Babs said. "It will mean one row less for Dolores, anyway! Come on; it won't take the five of us more than a few minutes."

There were nods. To save Dolores from trouble was their one aim, though Clara was grimly counting on reckoning with the sly Eunice. Furiously they grabbed brushes, brooms, dusters, and ash-pan; feverishly they set to work. In a very few minutes, chaos once again was turned to order. Actually, they were just putting the finishing touches to their work, when:
 "Oh, my hat! Somebody's outside!" Clara gasped. "Quick! Behind the screen!"

One rush the five made as footsteps paused outside the door. Not a fraction of a second too soon, they dived behind the screen. The handle of the door turned. Then they heard Helen's voice.

"And this," she said bitterly, "is the way Dolores leaves my room! Just a pigsty! Look at it! Look—"

And then Helen's voice surprisedly and stutteringly died away. The chums looked at each other, and Clara threw up a quick hand to smother the chuckle which rose to her lips as Dulcia's reply, frigid, came:

"Really, Helen, I don't see anything to complain about. The room is perfectly tidy. If this is the way Dolores is doing her work, she's doing it very well. Much better, in fact," Dulcia added coldly, "than your sister does hers."

Babs, picturing Helen's stupefied and enraged features, grinned. But at the same time her lips curled a little in contempt. Strange that Helen, without having inspected the room after Dolores left it, should expect to find chaos. Strange that—

A startling suspicion leapt into Babs' mind.

Could it be that Eunice was hand in glove with her sister over this? Could it be that Helen had put her up to it?

In the silence which followed, the whole position flashed with startling clearness into Babs' mind. Obviously, Eunice had done this. Obviously now that Eunice had informed her sister that she had done it, Helen, without troubling to look for herself, anxious only to get little Dolores further and further in Dulcia's bad books, had immediately dragged Dulcia on the scene. Otherwise, why should she have entered the study, so confidently expecting an upheaval where order now reigned?

"Well," Helen said feebly—"well, what—"

"I hope, Helen," Dulcia said, with some disdain, "that before making accusations against Dolores in future, you will see there is ground for their justification. Good-bye!"

"Oh, my hat!" Clara gurgled. "Oh, corks!"

"Shush!"

(Continued on page 14)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

No wonder *PATRICIA'S* weekly chatter is so popular with schoolgirls. It is gay, helpful and friendly—written by a delightful young person who understands so completely all those things so near and dear to a schoolgirl's heart.



HALLO, my chicks, this is your Patricia here—as I expect you've guessed!

We have just had some new curtains made for the bath-room at home—and they're causing great excitement, because they are made of patterned oil silk.

They're so pretty, of pale green, decorated with blue and gold little fish—the sort you'd never find in an aquarium, I'm thinking.

"Makes the bath-room look quite luxurious, doesn't it, Pat?" said mother to me as we admired them together.

I agreed, though actually, of course, our bath-room is the most ordinary place.

The bath is always hung with festoons of face-flannels—a different colour for each member of the family. And in the tooth-rack are the most homely-looking toothbrushes, ranging from father's all-white, to my pale blue one and my small brother's Mickey Mouse one.

But we do possess an enormous jar of bath-salts—which gives a most film-starry look to the bath-room.

● Such Luxury

Do you ever indulge in "luxury" thoughts when you're day-dreaming? Thoughts of what you'd have if you were a millionaire.

After having thought of gifts for mother and all the people you love, I wonder what you'd select for yourself?

I know what I'd like.

A fur coat with a muff to match—made of nutria, which is a brown fur, but oh, so gloriously soft and silky.

One of those heavenly evening dresses that seem to stay up by magic—for they've no shoulder straps at all!

A kidney-shaped dressing-table with a pleated "petticoat" around it.

Oh, and a black marble bath with gold taps.

When I was a bit younger—at your age—I'd have liked.

A down-to-the-ground party frock.

A real party cloak or coat.

A handbag that had lots of fittings inside—from mirror to comb pocket and diary compartment.

Lots of whipped cream walnuts. (Mind you, I'd still like these—though perhaps not quite as many!)

A school hat that I could wear turned up all the way round.

Real silk stockings with cobwebby heels and toes for 'best.'

Hankies that had lace round them.

Coloured sheets on my bed.

dressing-gown. (Mine might just as well have been my brother's. It was a hideous thing, and just refused to wear out!)

If I go on like this, I shall have thought of everything under the sun that I'd have liked as a schoolgirl—and that won't give you a chance.

I wonder how your list now would compare with mine at your age?

● A Pencil Stand

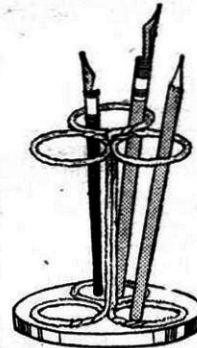
If the youngest member of your family has been extra sweet lately, here's a little present you can make him—or her. A pencil stand.

You'll require just three of father's pipe-cleaners (unless he smokes only cigarettes, in which case you'll have to buy a penny packet of them), and a circle of thick cardboard.

Bend each of the pipe-cleaners so that it has a circle at each end. Stand all three together and tie the circles together with cotton to match the pipe-cleaners.

Fix the bottom circles to the piece of cardboard, either with stitches or with those "stabby" paper clips—

and the pencil stand is complete, ready to receive any gifts of pens, pencils, or crayons.



● Hair Styles

I expect you've read all about the new Edwardian style of hairdressing, haven't you?

It can look so pretty, with masses of curls piled high on top of the head.

But I'm afraid it isn't suitable for you nice schoolgirls—for it requires expert "setting" at the hairdressers. And hats simply ruin it!

A good many of the very richest people who can afford to spend a guinea or so at the hairdresser as often as they like, have the Edwardian style for the evening. But they stick most faithfully to the "page-boy" or other simple yet effective style for the daytime.

Which reminds me, that next week I'll show you how the "page-boy" style is

done. For I'm quite sure it is here to stay—and it is particularly suitable for schoolgirls.

Especially for you whose hair is on the straight side!

● A Pretty Two-Piece

Don't you like the two-piece outfit in the picture here?

If you saw your chum wearing it, you would never believe that it had been made from a plain frock, now would you?

Actually, the frock was too tight in the bodice, that was why an "alteration" brainwave was required.

So the bodice was cut from the skirt, and a belt added to the top of the skirt—just to add a note of colour.

The collar was cut off the bodice, and an opening made all down the front.

The raw edges were bound on the inside—and the result was the very useful little jacket to match the skirt.

A gaily-coloured blouse was worn tucked into the skirt (perhaps the blouse was the top part of a too-short summer-holiday frock). The bow matched the belt. And the result was as you see it.

Any schoolgirl who is clever with her needle could copy the idea.



● A Rest Cure

And now, just to finish, there is something I want you to try to do at least once a day—particularly on a fine day.

It is to gaze for two minutes—or more, if you can spare the time—at the sky, blinking as often as you like.

You won't stand facing the sun, will you? For that would be foolish. But to gaze at the distances of the sky is said to be very eye-resting. Particularly good for schoolgirls who have such a lot of close work to do.

The same expert says we should not read in buses, trains, or moving vehicles. But—since this is one of my favourite occupations, I'm afraid I'm going to pretend I don't understand.

All the same, I pass it on to you.

Your friend, *PATRICIA*.

THE TEA-PARTY

was SUCH A SUCCESS

—BECAUSE Mary had planned it well in advance, and talked plans over with mother, so there was no last-minute hurry and flurry.

—BECAUSE Mary chose her young guests carefully. Much as she liked Pearl, she didn't invite her. For you see, Pearl always managed somehow to rub Mary's other friend, Jane, up the wrong way. Mary wisely realised that inviting girls who all get on well together is half the success of a party.

—BECAUSE she invited her four chums two weeks before the day of the tea-party. This meant that they had good time to consult their mothers and arrange to be free on that day.

—BECAUSE Mary said quite clearly: "I'll expect you then about four o'clock."

—BECAUSE Mary herself was all ready and waiting for her guests at a quarter to four. The table set; the games were planned; the wireless was tuned in to soft and welcoming dance music.

—BECAUSE Mary wore a simple dress. It was pretty, but not new. For Mary knew that if she "dressed-up" too much, Betty, who wasn't very well off and rather shy, might feel "out of things" right from the start.

—BECAUSE she made each girl feel as if she was really pleased to see her as her chums arrived. Jane came with Snips—whose real name was Sylvia. Betty arrived by herself. Then came Honor.

—BECAUSE Mary took them into her bed-room to remove their coats, and talked to them while they were arranging their hair. She admired Jane's, Snips', and Honor's frocks—then could have bitten her tongue out. For Betty was wearing her school tunic. But she didn't draw attention to it. Instead she said: "I wish my hair would look as nice as yours just after it's washed, Betty. Yours really is ripping!" And Betty blushed with pleasure and forgot about the tunic.

—BECAUSE Mary knew exactly where each girl was to sit at tea. "You're going to sit on my right hand, Betty," she said laughingly. "In the place of honour, so that I can keep an eye on you." Snips and Jane sat together to "keep each

other in order," while the stately Honor was at the foot of the table.

—BECAUSE Mary did the "pouring-out" and made Honor and Betty pass the bread-and-butter and paste and jam—so that all felt quite at home. She knew it was no use to keep saying "help yourself," to shy Betty, so she didn't. Instead, she and Honor, between them, kept Betty well supplied.

—BECAUSE Mary, much as she liked tea, and although she had finished her "first cup" first, didn't pour out a second for herself until she had asked the others if they would like some more.



—BECAUSE she kept the talk general for a start. It wasn't any use getting on to school topics to begin with, for Snips went to a different school from the others—and she wouldn't like to be left out of the talk. So they discussed films and film stars, books and games—until all were taking part in the conversation.

—BECAUSE Mary said she'd clear away while the others went upstairs to wash. But as Honor insisted on helping with the washing-up, Mary let her. And, of course, Betty wanted to lend a hand, too.

—BECAUSE in ten minutes they were all ready to gather round the fire. Mary passed the sweets and they all chatted and looked at her holiday snaps.

—BECAUSE Mary had a game ready to suggest immediately she sensed they felt more energetic. So they had some guessing games, and then played "Donkey" and "Sevens" at which Betty was surprisingly good.

—BECAUSE at going-home time, Mary took her chums to her bed-room again and helped them on with their coats. And when they said they'd had a lovely time, Mary said she had, too! And when she said, "You must come again," they chorused together: "We certainly will!" Gaily Mary waved as Snips and Jane went off in one direction, and Honor and Betty in the other. Then Mary smiled happily to herself as she noticed that Honor was holding Betty's arm. "I'm so glad, for Betty's a dear," Mary murmured.

And that was exactly what Betty and Honor were saying about Mary at that moment!

A Last Peep

Always, before you set off anywhere special, you should take a last peep at yourself in a long mirror—just to make sure you are perfect.

IS your hat on quite straight? If the hat-badge is in the centre—in a direct line with your nose, it should be.

ARE the flaps of your coat pockets in or out. As long as BOTH are in or BOTH out, that's all right, but one of each won't look very well-groomed.

IS your belt through both slots of your coat, and the buckle dead in the middle?

Now turn.

IS your dress or blouse collar showing? If so, tuck it in.

IS your petti, drooping? (A pin-up on the shoulders will put matters right if you're in a desperate hurry. But that's only temporary, mind!)

IS your belt twisted at the back?

ARE your stocking seams straight? (Legs look more shapely if they are!)

Are your gloves ON? And have you a clean hankie?

All c'rect? Then off you go!



FOR YOUR OWN ROOM

Wouldn't this look sweet on the mantelpiece in your room? It can be made so simply.

WOULDN'T this decorative little pot make a bright ornament for the mantelpiece or dressing-table of your very own room?

It's so very easy to make, too!

First you want a fair-sized cream carton—one without a pattern on it for preference. After wiping out the carton to remove all traces of cream, just fish out your paintbox and paint multi-colour lines all over the outside of the carton. This will very quickly give it a gay, "modernistic" pattern.

Now fill the carton with sand or fine earth.

Then you must look for a suitable twig, either in the garden or on a country walk, and stick this into the sand or earth.

Finally, the "flowers." These are made of silver paper—which can include goldy paper as well, of course—and are tied on to the twigs.

The result is such a cheery little ornament, that it wouldn't surprise me at all if mother and various aunts didn't ask you to make one for them as well!

(Continued from page 11)

The door slammed. They heard Helen catch in her breath.

"Oh, Eunice, you little washout! Just you wait!" she gritted. "Leading me up the garden—"

"Oh, my hat! Hold me!" Clara giggled. "I'm going to explode! I—I—Ha, ha, ha!"

She could not help it. It had to come. Imagination, at all times is more powerful than reality; and the mental picture which danced in front of Clara's eyes of Helen's furious, astounded face, was just too much. In a moment the mischief was done; and in a moment the screen was whirled aside. Helen, her cheeks quivering, stood glaring at them.

"You!" she said thickly.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" gasped Clara. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you cleared up the mess!"

Helen ground out.

"Ahem!" said Babs.

Helen glared.

"Take a hundred lines, each of you!

And be sure," she stormed, "I shall report this to Miss Bullivant!"

Babs gazed at her coldly.

"Will you?" she asked. "Think again, Helen. Because," she added softly, "if you give us lines, or you report us to Miss Bullivant, we shall have to tell, you know, that you put Eunice up to wrecking your own room! She might want to know the reason then, mightn't she?"

Helen took a step back. For a moment her face expressed fear.

"Who says I put Eunice up to it?" she blustered.

"We do. Because, you see," Babs explained, "we've been keeping watch. Pretty dirty trick, isn't it, to try to get Dolores disgraced in Dulcia's eyes? Well, do we get reported to Miss Bullivant, Helen?"

"Get out!" Helen said savagely.

"And do we do the lines?" Clara mocked.

"Oh, go on! Get out!" Helen quivered.

And the chums, feeling decidedly they had won the day, got out, still chuckling. But, going down the passage, the first person they came in contact with was Dulcia.

"Oh, here's Dulcia herself!" Clara said. "And here goes for telling her all about it! Dulcia—" she added.

Dulcia looked up.

"Oh, hallo!" she said abstractedly.

"Barbara, I suppose you haven't found my counterfoil? It's funny! I could have vowed I left it under the paperweight on my desk."

"Dulcia, what counterfoil?" Babs asked.

"The counterfoil I got from the chemist's yesterday—the receipt for my photographs. They'll be ready by dinner-time, you know. But, of course, I can't possibly claim them until I have found the counterfoil. I suppose I must have dropped it somewhere—although I could have vowed—Barbara, what is the matter?"

For Babs had given a sudden start.

Almost unbidden a thought had flashed into her brain. Mention of the photographs recalled memories of Dulcia's camera. She was remembering suddenly how they had found Eunice trying to open the back of that camera. She was remembering, in the same instant, how somebody had tried to force the drawer of the desk in which Dulcia had locked the camera, with a tool which could only have been found in Dulcia's own study.

Supposing those two incidents were associated with this third; for, of course, it was nearly impossible, if Dulcia remembered so clearly having put the counterfoil under her paperweight, that she should have lost it somewhere else.

Eunice, obviously, had clear access to that counterfoil. Eunice, having failed to destroy the films, might have taken it in the hope of getting hold of, and destroying the prints.

And if that was so—if her suspicions were right—

Did that have any bearing upon Helen's anxiety for her sister to be Dulcia's fag?

Babs caught her breath. But, for a moment, she did not reply. After all, it was only a suspicion. She just said:

"Well, I—I was wondering if Eunice knew anything about it, that's all. She's your fag, isn't she?"

"I have asked Eunice," Dulcia replied. "She says she hasn't seen it. In any case, what earthly use would it be to her? You don't suggest that Eunice, surely—"

"No," Babs replied. "I'm not suggesting anything—yet. But I do suggest, Dulcia—and I think it's only fair that you should know, now that we've found out—that it's Eunice who has been messing up all Dolores' work in Helen's study, to disgrace Dolores in your eyes."

And then, while Dulcia gazed at her strangely, she told the story. The captain's lips compressed.

"I see," she said slowly. "Thank you, Barbara! Well, I'll have a talk to Eunice—just as soon as I've found this counterfoil. But you'd better hurry now. Lesson bell will soon be going."

The chums hurried off, rather glad of that encounter, and on the way Babs told them of the startling suspicion which had flashed into her mind. Clara looked at her quickly.

"You mean Eunice wanted to get hold of those prints? But why?"

Babs shrugged.

"Ask me!" she said. "But if I'm right, she wanted them to give to Helen."

"Phew!" whistled Babs.

Clara nodded, and looked very thoughtful.

No time for more then, however. They had already reached the Fourth Form corridor.

"In that case," murmured the Tomboy, as they entered the class-room, "those prints may clear up the whole affair."

Sack for a Sneak!



"EUNICE"—and Dulcia Fairbrother very seriously eyed the pasty, plump face of the girl opposite her—"be frank with me. Have you seen anything of that counterfoil?"

"No," Eunice said boldly, reflecting that the counterfoil was safely in the pocket of the tunic she had changed before lessons that morning.

"Thank you! Now sit down. Eunice, I want to ask you something else—something rather more serious. Why," Dulcia asked, "have you been taking the trouble to mess up all Dolores' work in your sister's study?"

"Ooo, I haven't!" Eunice indignantly declared.

"Eunice, please be careful. I happen to know differently," Dulcia said.

Eunice blinked. But Eunice, crafty as she was, was not proof against that steady look in the captain's eyes. She flushed; her own flickered.

"Why?" Dulcia insisted.

"Well, I haven't, so there!" Eunice said defiantly. "And if I have, it was only a joke!"

"You mean you did it for a joke?" Dulcia asked steadily.

Eunice gulped.

"Well, she was hateful to me!" she burst out. "She plays jokes on me," she lied desperately. "So why shouldn't I play jokes on her? And it doesn't matter to you what I do to her, does it?"

Dulcia's lips compressed a little. She rose.

"I am afraid," she said sternly, "it matters quite a lot, Eunice! I do not like little girls who play horrid jokes upon other little girls. I do not like spitefulness. You may go—and please," she added, "do not come here again."

Eunice glared.

"You mean you don't want me for fag any more?"

"I do not!" Dulcia said sternly.

"But look here—"

"Please go."

Eunice's face became livid.

"But you can't sack me like that!" she cried. "I see what it is! That little cat Dolores has been telling lies about me, and she's put you against me; and now you're throwing me out so that you can have her for your fag the same as my sister Helen said you would! Well, I won't go! I won't let her be your fag! I won't be the laughing-stock of the Second, with everybody laughing at me and that awful little cry-baby gloating over me! I won't! Here, what are you doing?" she shrieked.

"Just," Dulcia said, suiting action to the words, "putting you where you belong, Eunice—outside!"

And slam! went the door, and Eunice, choking with rage, and with the tears of mortification starting to her eyes, stared at it.

Sacked—she, the captain's fag! Sacked because she had just carried out her sister's orders! Dolores had done it, of course—that baby-faced little cat, the doll-hugging little telltale! Oh, but wait till she found Dolores!

Quivering still, she stamped off. With furious clatter, she raged down the stairs, running along the Fourth Form corridor. Babs, Mabs, Marjorie, and Clara, happening to stroll along at that moment, saw her and paused.

"Hallo! And what's bitten sweet little Eunice?" Clara inquired pleasantly.

Eunice glared.

"Do you know where Dolores is?" she demanded.

"Not a ghostly, my dear child!" Clara said. "Why?"

"Nothing. But wait!" stormed Eunice. "Just wait! Wait till I see that little cat! I'll make her sit up! She got me the sack," she continued bitterly, "with her sneaking little tales—and you've been backing her up!" she flamed out. "Wait till I see her!"

"But," Eunice—here, wait a minute!"

Eunice, however, with an angry thrust of her plump little body; had pushed her way through them. Clara looked at the others.

"Trouble!" she whistled softly.

"But, phew! good old Dulcia! But come on! If that little wretch lays her hands on Dolores, there'll be the dickens to pay!"

They turned, hurrying down the corridor. But Eunice had disappeared now. She flew to the Second Form play-room; and entering with a noisy crash of the door, she strode straight up to Dolores. Raging, she tore Peggy out of her grasp, and then slammed the doll on the floor. Dolores let out a gasp.

"Eunice, you wicked thing!" "Wicked thing?" Eunice sneered, and upon the Second Formers fell the hush that is the centre of a storm. "Wicked thing yourself!" she gibed. "You sneaking, spying, dreadful little thief! Yes, thief! You're a thief—that's what you are!" she screamed, anger getting the better of her, and too reckless in that moment to remember that she had promised her sister to say nothing of this. "Who stole my sister's shilling?" she shrieked. "Who hid it in her silly, beastly, idiotic doll's dress? You did! You know you did! And Dulcia's sacked me because of you! Thief!" she shrilled.

Dolores, eyes wide with terror, had given back. On the Second Form had fallen an astounded silence.

"Dolores you realise the serious accusation that has been made against you?"

"But—but—but—" Dolores tearfully quivered, and tears were rolling down her cheeks. "I—I didn't mean—I mean— Oh, please, I—I don't know what I mean—"

"Miss Primrose—" Marjorie Hazeldene said anxiously.

Miss Primrose's lips compressed.

"Please, Marjorie, do not interfere. This is a most serious matter. Go and fetch Helen, please. Ah, Helen, here you are!" she added as that girl came into the room. "I do not understand the details; but Eunice has accused Dolores of stealing something, apparently, which belongs to you."

Babs caught the dagger-like look the prefect cast at her sister. Clara Trevlyn, a curious look in her eyes, suddenly slipped from the room.

"Well," Helen said reluctantly, "I'm sorry, Miss Primrose."

"Is it true?" "Well, yes. Though, of course, I didn't intend to say anything about it—"

Then she blinked through her own mist-filled eyes. Where was Clara?

FIVE—TEN—fifteen minutes. The atmosphere in the play-room was electric.

Nobody spoke; awed and hushed the Second Formers stared towards the headmistress. Babs & Co., wondering in a vague way what was happening in the interval—they were not wondering what had become of Clara—shifted restlessly. Helen stood anxiously; Eunice her head hung.

Sixteen—seventeen minutes. Miss Primrose moved. Then a step was heard in the passage, and Dulcia, her face overshadowed, still leading a violently agitated little Dolores, came in.

Miss Primrose looked at her. "She—she has told you, Dulcia?" "No," Dulcia said worriedly. "She seems frightened about something, and I couldn't get anything coherent out of her."

A sigh of relief went up from Helen. Miss Primrose's lips compressed. "Dolores," she said, "look at me,



"AND this," started Helen bitterly, "is the way Dolores leaves my room! Just a pigsty. Look at it! Look—" Her voice trailed away as she looked at the room. "Really, Helen," said Dulcia coldly, "I don't see anything to complain about. The room is perfectly tidy." Behind the screen Babs & Co. suppressed their mirth. Thanks to their efforts, Helen's scheme to get little Dolores into further trouble had failed.

"I—I—I—" Dolores stuttered. "There she is, denying it! Fibber!" jeered Eunice, beside herself. "Thief! Thief! That's what you are! You stole my sister's money! I'll pull your hair! I'll—"

"Wait!" cried a stern voice at the door.

And while Eunice, her voice dropping and Dolores, trembling, swivelled round, Miss Primrose, arriving at the door a fraction after Babs, Mabs, Clara and Marjorie, entered the room. Dulcia Fairbrother was with her.

"Eunice—" The headmistress frowned. "What is this I heard you saying about Dolores being a thief?"

"Well, she is a thief!" Eunice blurted, trembling herself now.

"Dolores—"

Horror came over Dolores. She remembered anew what Helen Hunter had said—remembered the "proof" Helen had of her guilt.

"Dolores, answer me!"

"I—I—I—" Dolores stuttered.

"Dolores!" "I didn't!" Dolores quavered. "Oh, I didn't! I didn't!" "But, Dolores, you know it's true," said Helen.

Dolores sobbed again. Dulcia, her face working a little, took a step forward.

"Miss Primrose," she asked quietly, "will you leave this to me? Perhaps," she added, "Dolores will tell me—for naturally—with a look at Helen—the thing has to be heard from both sides. Dolores, my dear," she added kindly, "come up to the dormitory with me. I'll talk to her," she added, with a look to Miss Primrose.

And Miss Primrose, understanding, nodded.

"Very well, Dulcia, I will wait here," she said.

And Dulcia and the sobbing fag went out, and Babs, her eyes misty, looked round—at Marjorie weeping softly; at Mabs, with a most wrung expression on her face; at—

child. I am going to give you one last chance of explaining. If you do not clear up this matter to my satisfaction, I am afraid I shall have no recourse but to ask your parents to remove you from the school! You are accused of having stolen money. Dolores, tell me frankly; are you a thief?"

"No!" cried a voice at the door. "No, she isn't!" And while Miss Primrose twisted round, Clara Trevlyn, red-faced, breathless, frantically came hurrying in at the door. "She's no more a thief than I am, Miss Primrose!"

"Clara—"

"And," Clara added, excitedly unheeding, "I can prove it! If anybody's a thief, it's that little cheat there"—and she pointed to Eunice. "Oh, even I can put two and two together now! The whole thing," Clara said furiously, "is a plot from beginning to end. Somehow, Helen tricked Dolores, frightened her—"

"Clara!" cried Miss Primrose.

"Well, she did—and why? Because she wanted to get Eunice in Dulcia's study! She could only do that by forcing Dolores to be her fag so that Eunice would get Dolores' job! And why?" Clara blazed, while Helen, her face pale, took a backward step.

"Why? Because she wanted Eunice to get hold of Dulcia's camera and ruin the film in it!"

There came a gasp.

"Clara, what are you saying?"

"I'm saying the truth!" Clara replied hotly. "And there was a reason. First Eunice tried to expose that film: We caught her at it. Then, after Dulcia had locked it up, she tried to break open the drawer. Then Dulcia took the last of the roll of film, and this morning Eunice stole the counter-foil!"

Eunice glared.

"I didn't!"

"Babs—Barbara—suspected Eunice," Clara went on, "and I decided that that film would probably clear up all the trouble. When Eunice accused Dolores a little while ago I dashed off and searched Eunice's locker. I found the counterfoil, and I've just been to get the prints. And I think, Miss Primrose," she added grimly, "that there's one of them that tells its own story! Look at that!"

"Clara, you dare!" cried Helen, leaping forward.

But the print was in Miss Primrose's hands then, and Miss Primrose was staring. The print was a perfectly clear and sharp photograph of the Market Cross in Courtfield, giving a view of the Palais de Danse—out of bounds to Cliff House girls—in its rear. Through the first floor window of that place, the unmistakable face of Helen Hunter was peering.

"Why—why," Miss Primrose said. "Helen, this is you! You—a perfect—out of bounds in this dance hall!"

"I—I—" stuttered Helen.

"Dulcia," said Miss Primrose, "look at this."

Dulcia did so.

"I took this—certainly," she said; "but I didn't notice Helen at the time."

"But she," cried Babs, "certainly noticed you—she jolly well knew you had snapped her! She was frightened, obviously, of being found out when the snap was printed, and so—"

"And so," Mabs finished, "she tried to destroy it! Eunice, you little wretch!"

"It—it wasn't my fault!" Eunice cried, breaking down as every eye was fixed on her. "I only did what I was told. Helen told me to spoil the roll of films, and because I couldn't do that she told me to get hold of the counter-foil. I didn't know why. I wanted to be Dulcia's fag, and Helen said if I wanted to keep on being Dulcia's fag I should have to get Dolores into trouble, so that's why I had to mess up her study!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Babs. "Then it was you who made Dolores think she stole that shilling?"

"No, I didn't," Eunice said desperately. "that was Helen, too. She hid the shilling in the doll's dress and then made that little cat believe she'd stolen it. I—Ow!" she yelled.

For Helen, with a sudden, furious leap, had given her a smack across the face.

"Helen, please!" Miss Primrose cried angrily. "Helen, go to my study—at once! Never, I think, have I heard of such a detestable, such a mean and callous plot! Dolores, my dear, I am sorry!"

"And—and I won't be expelled now?" Dolores asked quiveringly.

"My dear, no!"

The sudden happiness which flooded the little Second Former's face then made Babs' heart leap. Oh, it was grand to know that she and her chums had been able to help to cause that happiness.

"I'd just like to see anyone saying you're going to be expelled," said Clara stoutly. "All that's past, Dolores."

"Rather," said gentle Marjorie softly. "Why, Dulcia herself will tell you that—"

And she glanced at the head girl.

Dulcia smiled tenderly.

"Dolores, we are all sorry," she said.

"But thanks to Clara and Babs we've found everything out. Nobody is accusing you any more of being a thief. Nobody will ever be unkind to you again. Oh, you silly child, why didn't you tell me in the first place? Dolores, dry your eyes, my dear. Here's your dolly. Now are we all right again?"

"Y—yes, than you," Dolores said happily. "But, Dulcia—"

"Yes, my dear?"

Dolores flushed. Shyly she eyed Babs. "Barbara, you tell her, please?" she beseeched.

Babs, guessing what was in the little one's mind, laughed.

"She wants to know, Dulcia, if she can be your fag?"

"My fag?" Dulcia laughed. "Dolores, haven't I said all along that you could always be my fag? And you are my fag now, Dolores—from now onwards. Now are you happy?"

BE PREPARED

Do you remember Jungle Jess, that romantic jungle girl Babs & Co. met on Pirates' Isle during their treasure-hunting holiday—the girl whose pets are giant leopards? Well, very shortly now—

JUNGLE JESS IS COMING TO CLIFF HOUSE

"Oh, very, very happy!" Dolores said rapturously. "Oh, Dulcia, isn't everything nice and everybody nice again now? Dulcia—" she added pleadingly.

"Yes, my dear?"

"If—if I'm your fag, can Babs, and Mabs, and Clara, and all the other nice girls come to tea to-morrow?"

"They can and shall and will!" Dulcia beamed. "And Peggy, too!" she added, as she stooped and, to every Second Former's jealous envy, kissed the happy little face and glanced at the scowling Eunice, now sulking in a corner.

"I think," Babs murmured, "it's time for us to go."

And they went, to find out later that Helen Hunter had been suspended from her prefectship for the rest of the term.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

....."I'll Take Your Place at Cliff House!".....

And those words put into being one of the most amazing incidents of Cliff House School! They were spoken to that dear plump duffer, Bessie Bunter—spoken to her by a girl who was her exact double! "And you, Bessie, can take my place where I work—just for a day," went on her double. "It'll be a grand lark." So thought Bessie, too. Thus the great imposture began.

Quite unknown to Bessie, however, her double had a very secret and serious reason for wishing to enter Cliff House!

This Long Complete masterpiece is of course by Hilda Richards, and she tells a story full of laughter, original surprises and drama, in her own incomparable way. Here is the perfect treat for all Bessie lovers.

Complete in Next Saturday's "SCHOOLGIRL"

Further gripping chapters of our Great New Thrill and Mystery Serial.

Guests at Mystery Manor!



FOR NEW READERS.

HILDA FARREL, with her chums, BERYL LORIMER and JUDY BROUGH, and her clever dog MARCUS, go to Hawsley Manor for a holiday as paying-guests. The Manor is owned by the father of LAVENDER MORTIMER, with whom the girls become friendly, and is the Mortimers' means of livelihood. Mysterious things have been happening. A strange figure has been "haunting" the house, driving away all the guests. Hilda & Co. set out to run it to earth, for it will ruin the Mortimers' business. They chase the figure, which vanishes into a room. But Hilda and Marcus see it emerge from a secret panel. Like lightning Marcus bounds forward.

(Now read on.)

By
**ELIZABETH
CHESTER**



she had just heard another deep bay from Marcus.

Something exciting was happening!

Ahead of her, Lavender had reached Hilda, while Hilda was still stumbling and groping her way along the narrow corridor, now and again walking sideways, very slowly indeed.

"Marcus—Marcus!" Hilda called.

He barked, and she heard him scratching at the wall just ahead of her, as though he had run the woman to earth but his way was barred by another secret panel.

"Got you!" murmured Hilda presently, as she stretched out a hand and touched his sleek coat. "Good boy—where is she?"

The corridor had reached a dead-end, and quite obviously there was another panel.

"I say! This is simply amazing," murmured Lavender. "I didn't know

On the Track!

"QUICK, all of you—quick!" Hilda Farrel shouted excitedly to her friends as her setter, Marcus, hurling himself at the secret panel in the wall, prevented it from sliding to.

In another moment Hilda expected to see the mystery woman who, thinking that Hilda had gone out of the bedroom with the others, had unguardedly opened the panel.

"All right, old boy, I'll help," said Hilda, already at his side, trying to force the panel open. "We've got you, you trickster!" she called to the unseen intruder.

Back into the room came Judy, Beryl, and Lavender, wondering whatever was happening; but a glance was enough for them without the need of words. That open panel told its own story.

Marcus, whining with excitement, scratched frenziedly, and then suddenly gave a howl as his paw was pinched between the edge of the panel and the beading.

"Oo, poor chappie!" gasped Hilda, and with all her strength tugged to free him.

The panel was not a kind of door, but a sliding affair, so that straight-forward pushing did not help to open it. A sideways tugging movement was needed, and, of course, Marcus, clever dog though he was, could not make such a movement, nor even realize that it was necessary.

"All together," cried Judy.

It was the sudden boisterous tug she gave that finally jerked the panel back with a sharp, pistol-like report, seeming to indicate that a secret spring had broken.

As the panel slid back, Marcus, whimpering slightly, pushed through into the darkness, and they heard his excited bark echoing in the hollow wall.

Hilda crouched to crawl through after him, only Beryl seized her arm.

"No, Hilda, don't—don't!" gasped Beryl, quite horrified. "That woman may attack you, or there may be pitfalls, or a real ghost."

"Don't be silly," retorted Hilda. "It was a real woman we saw, wasn't it?"

She tugged her arm free from nervous Beryl, and followed her dog, far more anxious about his safety than about her own.

The place in which Hilda found herself was dark and dusty, with a queer musty smell. It was a recess behind the wall, very narrow, with only just room

IN VAIN THE CHUMS GIVE CHASE TO THE UNKNOWN PROWLER—BUT THEY FIND, INSTEAD, A CLUE TO HIDDEN TREASURE!

enough for her to stand upright, and pitch dark save where the light from the room shone through the open panel. But its range was too slight to be really helpful, and presently she had to grope her way uncertainly.

Meanwhile, in the bed-room there was excited talk, Beryl alarmed for Hilda's safety, and Lavender completely bewildered and puzzled to know who this mystery woman was, and why she was there, sneaking along a secret passage.

"I think I had better go after Hilda," she decided. "The secret corridor or whatever it is may not be safe."

On the mantelpiece was a box of matches, and taking it, she stooped and went through the open space into the passage.

"Me, too," said adventurous Judy.

"This is grand fun."

"And leave me?" wailed Beryl. "Oh, you can't! Don't be so horrid—"

She caught at Judy's arm, but Judy tugged herself free; for although she did not want to desert a nervous friend

this corridor existed. Fancy a stranger knowing!"

"Where is this?" asked Hilda eagerly. "Where do you think this panel can lead to? Another room?"

Lavender struck a match and by its yellow glow they saw the dusty inner walls, and in front of them the end of the secret corridor, a panel, to the side of which was rusted mechanism.

"Aha!" said Hilda in delight, her eyes shining. "Now we can open the panel. And look," she added. "Although it's still rusty, someone has oiled it lately."

More puzzled than ever, Lavender struck another match and saw that Hilda was right. There was fresh oil on the rusted mechanism, giving evidence that the woman who had just escaped them had planned the use of this corridor; and had prepared for silent entrances and exits by means of the panel.

"Here—this is where we need Judy," said Hilda.

"Me?" said Judy, drawing near.

"Why?"

"You've got a mechanical mind," Hilda explained, "and I don't quite see how this—"

Before she could finish the sentence, Marcus, growing impatient, struck out with his paw. It was by absolute luck that he hit the mechanism in the right spot, and no one was more surprised than he when the panel flew back.

Click! It was a pistol-shot sound, and Marcus nearly knocked over Hilda as he jumped away.

But the panel shot back, letting in vivid light that for a moment almost blinded them.

First through was Marcus, leaping forward without hesitation.

After him went Hilda, while Lavender paused a little, noting that they were in one of the side corridors of the first floor.

But although Hilda ran quickly she could not keep Marcus in sight as he swung round the bend of one corridor into another.

"Wait for me!" she called.

A yelp came from Marcus, then a snarl, and guided by the sounds, Hilda opened a bed-room door, and then pulled up in dismay.

Marcus had been defeated. Just inside the bed-room he rolled on the floor, entailed in a heavy counterpane that had been dragged from the bed.

"Oh, poor boy!" gasped Hilda, and quickly and easily unwrapped him.

Marcus, looking a little sheepish, shook himself, ran to a wall, turned away puzzled, and then, just as Judy arrived behind Lavender, went into the corridor.

"He's lost the scent," said Judy, disappointed. "Oh, Marcus!"

"Well, he's done jolly well so far," defended Hilda almost indignantly. "If it hadn't been for Marcus we shouldn't have got on that woman's track at all. It wasn't his fault, poor old chap, that he couldn't unwrap the bedspread."

Marcus looked up at her.

"Woof!" he said.

Then suddenly he went into the room, sniffed about the floor, snatched up something from under one edge of the counterpane, and, holding it in his teeth, looked at his mistress with pride-shining eyes.

"A piece of paper!" cried Hilda. "A clue! Marcus! Well done! Hurrah—a clue!"

Thrilling Plans!

A CLUE!

As Hilda took the piece of paper she had great hopes; and Lavender, too, felt a weight lifted from her mind. Yet more than they were delighted, all three girls were intrigued, fired with inquisitiveness.

Who was the mystery woman? Why had she used the secret corridor? Why was she in the house? And why had she warned the girls against it?

To Lavender it was quite bewildering that someone—an utter stranger for all she knew—should be so well informed about the secret corridors in the house. She could think of no woman likely to have such knowledge, nor one who would have a reason for wanting the girls to stay away from the house.

"Let me look!" she begged eagerly.

Together they studied that scrap of paper. It was old-looking, faded, brown and musty, as though part of an old document, or a leaf torn from an old book, and the writing on it was age-worn, too, with the angularity of

AFTER LESSONS—LEISURE

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former ages, the flowing flourishes, and quaint affectations.

Slowly Hilda read it aloud:

"Should my wayward and prodigal son show not the needful wit, nor even diligence sufficient to pursue to its end the hunt for the aforementioned valuable treasure, then—"

There, at the most exciting point the message ended, but even so there was enough to thrill them.

"Buried treasure!" gasped Lavender. "Why, surely that can't be the old miser's treasure hidden here?"

"It's treasure of some kind," said Judy excitedly. "And, if you ask me, that's why the woman's roaming round these corridors—to find it."

"Buried here!" breathed Hilda. "Golly, if only Marcus could have followed the trail!"

They were momentarily silent, busy with their thoughts, and Lavender, eyes sparkling, took the paper and studied it anew.

"I must show my father," she said. "Oh, goodness, if only there really is treasure, and we can find it! It would just solve all our worries. Then we needn't fear having to sell the old place. I shouldn't care if the ghost was—"

From the corridor came Beryl's voice, shouting anxiously:

"Hilda—Judy! Where are you?"

Hilda jumped into the corridor.

"Here! Anything wrong?"

Beryl was quite white-faced as she pulled up, obviously relieved to see them again.

"That panel!" she said "It closed again from the other side. I heard soft movements, and I got frightened, and backed away. Then it slid to. I was frightened you might be trapped."

"Shut? The woman's in there, then!" exclaimed Hilda. "Now, how did she get back there, I wonder? But never mind that for the moment. We can explore those passages, and take electric torches with us. First, though, I think your father ought to be told."

"Yes, rather! I'll take this paper to him now," said Lavender; and she hurried away at speed, greatly excited by this amazing discovery.

Hilda, Judy, and Beryl, then tapped the panels in the bed-room, while Marcus, puzzled, the scent lost, wandered about the room, and up and down the corridors.

The woman had baffled even Marcus, and the friends realised that for the time being, anyway, they must give up the chase.

Meanwhile, Lavender had found her father. Still acting his butler part, he was in the pantry, polishing glasses. The real butler had fled the house after seeing the apparition, and so, as there were paying-guests to be considered, Lavender's father had undertaken the butler's duties.

Lavender, for all her excitement, sighed a little when she saw him at work; for he was not used to this sort of thing.

"Poor daddy!" she murmured tenderly. "I'll polish the glasses."

"You? You've had enough to do," he said, shaking his head. "Besides, I have good news—"

"And so have I," smiled Lavender.

"But you'll never guess what, daddy."

"Oh, no?" he answered teasingly.

"More paying-guests?"

"No. Wrong—miles wrong!"

"Well, anyway, here's my news," he went on. "There are three people coming this evening—a man, woman, and their daughter. How's that for news? They sent a telegram."

Lavender was surprised and delighted.

"Oh, grand! The more the merrier!" she said eagerly. "And if only they'll stay— Oh, daddy, we'll run the place at a profit! But wait until you hear my news," she ended.

Then, with no more ado, she showed him the scrap of faded paper, and stood back watching his face.

Intently Lavender's father studied it, a most perplexed expression coming to his kindly face.

"Why, where on earth did you get this?" he cried, amazed.

"Where? In one of the rooms, daddy," Lavender said breathlessly; and then while he listened in wonder,

she told how the girls had seen the mystery woman—how they had heard the scream, and how Marcus had trailed her through the secret passage, lost touch with her, but ended by producing this slip of paper.

"A woman—at large in this house!" exclaimed her father. "But how can she be? What on earth is she doing here?"

Lavender's eyes gleamed. "Playing the ghost. Frightening our guests. It was she who scared the other people away. Yes, and the silly butler, too."

"But—but why?" said her father blankly. "Who could wish to harm us?"

Lavender shrugged her shoulders. "I can't say, daddy," she replied. "But just tell me what you think of that scrap of paper. Treasure—do you see? Gold! Hidden years and years ago!"

Her father, infected by her excitement, sat down on a chair, and studied the paper anew.

"Treasure! Gold! Thousands of pounds!" he murmured. "Why, Lavender, this must be the miser's will!"

Lavender nodded her head eagerly. "Yes, just what I thought! Old Sir Godfrey's—"

"The treasure hoard he brought from abroad!" cried her father excitedly. "Still to be found, and we, Lavender—we are the last of his line. Why, if this is found, it's ours!"

"Ours, yes, daddy. And we've just got to find it!" said Lavender. "Oh, think if we do! No more worry! No need to sell the house, or take paying-guests! Oh, daddy! Won't it be just marvellous!"

Her father, beaming, flung out his arms and hugged her.

"Then let's hope we do find it. Let's search. Let's—"

He broke off, for Judy had just arrived at the pantry door, to pull up with a jerk.

"Oh," she said, and then smiled, "have you told your father, Lavender?"

For Judy had forgotten that they were not supposed to know that the butler was really Lavender's father.

"Y-Yes," said Lavender, while her father drew up and gave Judy a little butler-like bow.

"What do you think, Mr. Mortimer?" Judy asked.

It was quite a shock to Mr. Mortimer to be called by his own name, and Lavender was just as surprised. Too late, Judy suddenly realised that she had put her foot in things.

"Oh, golly! There I go again! I've said the wrong thing," she said, biting her lip. "Sorry!"

"So you know that I am Lavender's father?" said Mr. Mortimer, in mingled surprise and disappointment.

"Afraid we did overhear it," said Judy guiltily. "When you were talking, a little while back. We didn't mean to let on—"

Lavender smiled, not thinking that it really mattered whether they knew or not when there was something so important as the treasure to be dealt with.

"Yes, he's my dad—and the grandest daddy in all the world," she said. "Only—don't let the other guests know. There are some coming. Or about the treasure—"

"No fear," said Judy. "What I came to say was that Hilda had a plan for trapping that woman."

"Hurrah!" said Lavender. "Then let's hear it. Daddy, you must hear it, too," she added, turning to him.

Her father hesitated, and then sighed.

"Ah, well! I suppose I'm not a good bluffer," he said. "But never mind. It may be better that you do know, all things considered. But if your friend has a plan to trap that woman I want to hear it. Lead them into the library, Lavender. I'll meet you there."

Judy ran back to Hilda and Beryl, with Lavender at her heels, and presently all four of them went along to the library with Marcus, where Mr. Mortimer, dressed now in a lounge suit, awaited them.

They were introduced, and then Hilda explained her plan.

"Naturally, the first thing to do is to try to capture the woman," she said. "Then, at least, you'll find out who she is, and perhaps where she got that scrap of paper. After that, we can start to hunt for the treasure ourselves—"

"True enough," Mr. Mortimer agreed, nodding his head. "But we must be careful not to do anything reckless; and don't forget that there are other guests coming. Although I am quite eager to hunt for this treasure, I don't really think we have very much hope of finding it; but then," he added with a smile, "I am not so young and optimistic as you. Just in case we don't, Lavender and I must put the comfort of our guests first, including those coming this evening—so we don't want any suggestion of danger or trouble, any commotion."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Lavender. Marcus yawned and stretched full length, rather bored by all this human chin-wagging.

"Agreed!" said Hilda. "So I suggest that we trap her by the secret panel. We'll explore the corridor again, and then leave Marcus on guard," she ended in triumph.

But Mr. Mortimer pursed his lips. "The dog would be frightened," he said in objection. "Or, anyway, he might hurt the woman, and we don't want that."

"What? Marcus?" reproved Hilda. "Oh, no," protested Beryl. "He's a sweet darling, really."

"And he wouldn't be frightened," ended Judy, almost scoffingly. "But

he'd see that the woman didn't escape. So let us try it, please, Mr. Mortimer."

They all looked eagerly at Lavender's father then as he weighed the matter up, and Hilda guessed that he did not really think much of the idea, and really had no hope of finding the treasure, delighted though he would be if they did.

But he was an easy-going man, as anyone could tell by his kindly face.

"All right," he said suddenly. "We'll give it a trial. But when the guests come, no mention of the secret passages, or the woman. And don't forget, Lavender, we must get a woman to do the rough housework as soon as possible, and a housemaid, too."

Leaving father and daughter to discuss the matter of the required servants, Hilda, Judy and Beryl went to put their plan into execution, taking Marcus up to the room where the secret panel was.

"It's up to you, Marcus darling," warned Hilda, fondling her pet's ears. "Don't bark; be good and quiet, and then hold on to her frock. See—like this—guard!"

And Hilda, to make him understand, gave him the hem of her frock to hold.

The difficulty of opening the panel then presented itself, but Judy went down to borrow a screwdriver from Lavender's father, and it was not long before Hilda managed to lever the panel open.

Into the darkness, ears down, but unafraid, went Marcus.

"Quiet!" warned Hilda, and then softly shut the panel.

They stood back and waited. "Now what?" breathed Beryl. "Shall we stay here?"

But that was not Hilda's intention. "No; I think we'd better be on the landing."

"Ready to rush?" said Judy.

"Yes, ready to rush," nodded Hilda. "And it would be a good idea if we made a plan to give the new guests a rousing welcome—a kind of party spirit—make the place look gay. And even though we are paying guests, I vote that we rally round Lavender and her father and help to get things ready. Yes?"



BURSTING into the room, with Lavender at her heels, Hilda pulled up sharply. Marcus was struggling on the floor in the folds of a counterpane. But—where was the mystery woman?

"Rather!" the others agreed, and then made for one of the landing recesses, where they could perch on a window seat and in low voices plan to entertain the newcomers, and so make the Manor House a place where they would want to stay.

The Tables Turned!

MARCUS waited in the dark, secret corridor. He did not know that it was secret, and though he was a very, very intelligent dog, he had no knowledge of treasure or ghosts. But he realised what his duty was.

He had to stay here and listen, and sniff.

Dimly, as he crouched, Marcus was puzzling about the woman he had chased. She was an enemy. His mistress did not like her, and Marcus shared her antipathy. But he did not really like the secret passage very much, either.

A long time seemed to pass, and then, all at once he heard the sound of movement. His hair rose and his lips twitched in a snarl.

Someone was approaching! He could scent that. And it was—the woman!

Marcus remained quite still, ready to jump at the last moment and seize her skirt. But when he had waited, and waited, he gradually realised that the sounds did not come from either side of him, but from above.

Now a soft voice called to him:

"Ssst! Hallo, doggy!"

Marcus snarled, not to be bribed by soft words.

"Nice doggy!" said the voice. "Like a nice bone?"

Something thumped to the ground, and Marcus dodged back, only to move warily forward as a most delicious sniff came to him.

A bone—a luscious, juicy bone, with plenty of meat on it!

Warily he sniffed it, licked it, and then, rather puzzled, glanced up in the darkness. No other sounds came, however, and Marcus gnawed tentatively at the bone. He pulled meat off, holding it down with his paws, and the meat was good.

But Marcus did not derive full enjoyment from the bone, because he had a guilty feeling. Pausing now and then, he growled.

Suddenly came other movements, nearer at hand. He stiffened, and then sprang into the darkness, guided by his sense of smell.

Someone gasped:

"No—no—stop!"

But Marcus caught the hem of a frock and snapped his teeth hard on to it.

From above, the mysterious donor of the bone had climbed down to the floor level, a little away from him. But Marcus was too quick. And now he had his prisoner.

Growling, snarling, Marcus clung on while a woman's hand beat vainly at his head!

"HARK! THAT'S Marcus' growl, surely!"

Beryl was in her bed-room, which she was sharing with Judy, arranging her frock in the wardrobe, when she heard the distinct sound of Marcus' growl.

But when Beryl turned Judy was not there. Unnoticed by her, Judy had slipped out to find Hilda, who had gone down to suggest to Lavender that they

should organise charades for that evening—charades in costume.

It was Hilda's idea to have the party spirit well "under way," so to speak, when the newcomers arrived.

But Marcus' growling made Beryl forget all about festivities.

"That woman!" she murmured in dismay.

Not relishing the prospect of encountering the mystery woman alone, she hurried out of the room into the corridor.

Darkness had fallen, and Beryl, finding herself in the dark corridor, pulled up in dismay, not remembering where the switch was.

"Hilda—Judy!" she cried at the top of her voice.

There came the sound of pattering steps.

"Coming!" cried Hilda. "Where are you?"

"Outside my bed-room. I can hear Marcus growling!" called back Beryl in panic.

At that moment Marcus' growl changed to a bark—an angry, baffled bark.

Beryl, groping along the wall, sought the switch.

"Somewhere here!" she muttered. "Ah—"

She had found the switch!

But at that same moment a hand dropped on to hers, a cold hand that gripped hard.

"Don't put on the light!" hissed the voice. "Stand away!"

Beryl nearly fainted. Numbbed with horror, she could not have put on that light now, even had she been free to. Yet the faint creaking of floorboards should have told her that the woman was backing away.

"Look!" said the soft, hissing voice. "Look!"

With wide eyes, Beryl stared ahead, petrified, unable to believe what she saw. For surrounded by bluish light was a filmy shape that moved as water moves, with a sinuous, flowing waviness—the figure of a cavalier, large, sweeping feathered hat, thigh-length boots, sword at his side, bewigged.

Beryl's blood chilled. A feeling of sickness seemed to grip at her inside.

"The ghost!" she breathed.

She was unable to move, and yet it was the thing she wanted to do more than anything in the world. She wanted to scream; she wanted to run—run.

Very slowly that glowing shape seemed to move towards her, its outline wavering.

The tension snapped. Beryl's lips parted and a terrified cry left her throat.

"Hilda—Hilda!" she screamed.

Then the vision vanished. Yet whether it vanished from the scene or merely from her gaze, Beryl did not know, for she fell in a crumpled heap.

Hilda, running forward, called to her, while, from behind, Lavender shouted that the light switch was on the right-hand wall.

Making for the switch, Hilda had not thought of obstacles, and of a sudden tripped against Beryl's inert form and fell sprawling.

"Oh, look out! Someone here!" she cried. "The torch from my room—quick, Judy!"

Judy dodged into Hilda's room, switched on the light there, and saw the powerful electric torch on the dressing-table.

Snatching it up, she ran back to the corridor and switched it on, to show Hilda rising shakily to her feet, and

Beryl lying in a faint on the floor.

"My golly—Beryl! Oh, what's happened?" gasped Hilda. "Beryl darling, are you hurt?"

Lavender joined them, and between them the three girls tenderly lifted Beryl, while from some distance away came Marcus' barking.

"Water!" breathed Hilda.

Lavender fetched water from a bedroom jug, and sprinkled it on to Beryl's white face, bringing her round in a moment. Shuddering, Beryl opened her eyes, stared ahead, looked sharply at her friends, and then sighed.

"Thank goodness it's you! The woman—she took my hand—stopped me putting the light on. And—the ghost! I saw the ghost!" she panted.

"The ghost? Oh, no, dear, not the ghost!" protested Hilda. "Just the woman fooling you—"

"I saw the ghost!" insisted Beryl.

"I—"

"But the clanging of a bell made her break off in mid-sentence.

"Wh—what was that?" Judy asked.

"The main door bell," answered Lavender anxiously, and crossing to a landing window looked out into the darkness.

Drawn up in the drive before the main door of the Manor House was a large car loaded with luggage, and as Lavender watched she saw a man, a woman, and a girl alight. The new paying guests! At the very worst moment of all they were arriving—just when the ghost had been seen, and Beryl was white and shaky with fright.

"Oh!" Lavender gasped. "They've come—the new people! Oh, please, Beryl—all of you—not a word about the ghost! Nothing that will scare them away!"

Lavender went hurrying off, then, her first duty to the new paying guests, while Hilda and Judy did their anxious best to reassure Beryl.

"But Marcus—why did he let the woman go—and where is he?" asked Hilda, puzzled.

Taking the torch, she ran back to the room with the secret panel, which she opened. Then, with the torch showing the way, she crept forward, calling Marcus, but in vain.

She went the length of the corridor and out by the panel at the far end, finding herself only a few yards from her friends, but still without any clue to Marcus' whereabouts.

"My golly, where is he?" she asked in alarm. "Has she captured him?"

But Lavender came running into view again, holding up her hand to plead for quietness.

"Oh, Hilda—Marcus!" she panted. "Can you get him? The new people are here—daddy's talking to them, but at any minute they'll hear Marcus and wonder what it is, and if we can't let him out they'll be annoyed—"

"Let him out? But where is he?" asked Hilda.

"Behind the wall in the lower corridor, running up and down—trapped there, whining," said Lavender. "How on earth he got in I don't know. But somehow we've got to get in, too, and free him!"

Hilda did not hesitate. Leaving Beryl to Judy she went hurrying downstairs with Lavender, to find, console, and free her imprisoned pet, victim of his own sense of duty!

WELL, that was a thrilling instalment, wasn't it? But wait until you read next Saturday's and discover how Hilda and her chums tackle this dismaying new problem.

Romance, Glamour and Breathless Excitement in this Fascinating Story.

Princess to Save Leiconia!



FOR NEW READERS.

PAMELA COURTNEY, an English girl living in the romantic little Balkan kingdom of Leiconia, is asked to impersonate the Princess Sonia. Sonia must go abroad in order to save the country—but nobody, except Prince Alphonse, must ever suspect that Pamela has taken her place. Thrilled beyond measure, Pamela agrees. She is so like the princess that a wig makes her Sonia's double. Her chief adviser is the Grand Duke Bernard, who does not know of the masquerade and whom she dislikes and suspects. She learns from a young Leiconian, **PAUL NALDI**, a secret helper of Princess Sonia, that the duke is plotting to seize the throne. On the night of the State Ball she sees a footman taking a wallet to the duke, believing it to be his. But it is Paul's, and Pamela realises that if the grand duke sees it Paul will be in danger.

(Now read on.)

Pamela's Great Moment!

PAMELA stood rigid on the staircase.

Paul was in terrible danger! She'd got to save him. For his own sake; for her sake; for the sake of the country she was now serving.

But—how—how?

Already the manservant was within a few yards of the grand duke's apartments. The grand duke was almost certain to be there. Her own entry into that vast, expectant, glittering throng of celebrities was not due for some minutes—and the grand duke invariably chose to delay his own appearances until the last moment, pandering to his vanity.

Oh, yes, he would be there. He would receive the wallet. And having discovered to whom it belonged, would realise that Paul had been in the palace grounds the previous night.

It was not a very self-composed princess who gazed about her all at once. Very charming, yes; and still of regal bearing in her lovely white dress.

But Pamela was desperate. Her eyes, wide and roving, sought some method by which Paul could be saved. And presently she saw something that made her catch her breath.

Just below her was the final landing of the flight of stairs, before they swept downwards to the hall. And resting upon the marble balustrade were bowls of ferns and fragrant flowers.

Pamela swiftly descended to the landing. What she did then brought a

little stab of regret to her heart. She adored flowers, and it seemed a crime to smash any of their delicate petals so ruthlessly. But Paul's liberty was at stake; the future prosperity of Leiconia was at stake. Reaching up, she pushed one of the bowls.

Even as it toppled over, she was speeding back up the staircase. Came a shattering sound from behind her as she tore upwards.

"What's that?" sounded a startled voice from one of the manservants.

Then individual cries were drowned in a perfect hubbub, as liveried men went rushing to the spot from every direction.

And Pamela?

She had reached the upper landing unseen. Panting for breath, she risked

"Her Royal Highness begs that you all remove your masks!" cried the grand duke.

But Pamela had not given that order. And she knew that if it were carried out it would mean disaster to her friend and helper.

a glance over the balcony. The footman with the wallet. Where was he?

Then—

"Thank goodness," she gasped.

For he, like everyone else within ear-shot, had abandoned the occupation of the moment in order to investigate this strange occurrence. Now he was in the midst of an excitedly chattering throng which was gathered about the smashed bowl.

"Phew," said Pamela. "But Paul's not out of the wood yet. I've got to get hold of his wallet. Princess Sonia," she addressed herself, smoothing down her frock and putting a few erring wisps of hair to rights, "this is where you play the heavy indignant ruler!"

And next moment she swept down to the hall.

"What is the meaning of this?" she demanded in a ringing voice.

Like magic, the manservants sprang erect.

"Your Highness, we do not know," said one.

"You do not know?" Pamela exclaimed. She hardly knew how she suppressed a chuckle. "Come, some of you must know something about that!"

She indicated the ugly heap of wreckage.

There were sheepish looks on the faces of her servants as, one after another, they shook their heads.

Pamela felt almost mean. It was a pity to upbraid them like this for something she had done herself. And yet it was the only way in which she could avert disaster.

"Very well," she said, after a long pause. "We will let the matter rest where it is. It may have been one of the palace cats."

And she turned away.

"Yes, your Highness," said the spokesman, then quickly gestured for the litter to be removed.

He bowed. So did the others, making a pathway through which she could walk on her way to the little ante-room beside the ball-room.

But that was not yet Pamela's objective. She stopped suddenly before the footman with the wallet.

"Why," she exclaimed, smiling, "so it has been found?"

"Oh, yes, your Highness!" Nervously the man held the wallet out. "I—I was on my way to the grand duke with it. I thought it was his. I found it beneath the balcony a short while ago."

"Then please let me save you the trouble," said Pamela. "I will see that you are rewarded."

She took the wallet with a thrill of tremendous satisfaction, and walked on to the ante-room.

Once there, she closed the door and darted over to a little bureau. In one of its many drawers she hid the wallet. Then, locking the bureau and slipping the key down her dress, she awaited the arrival of Prince Alphonse.

He was not long in coming. The door opened suddenly, and his familiar voice exclaimed on a note of pleasure:

By

DORIS LESLIE

22 "Princess to Save Leiconia!"

"My dear, you look a picture!"

Pamela spun round from gazing through the french windows at the beautiful moonlit grounds.

"Thank you," she said, and flushed.

Prince Alphonse looked more benevolent and kindly than ever as he strode towards her, after a short, neat bow.

"Well, my dear," he said, patting her cheek. "Your big moment has come. It will be an ordeal, of course. Even for one who is a princess an occasion such as this is always an ordeal. But I have every faith in you, and you must have every faith in yourself."

"I mean to," Pamela vowed quietly.

"So I believe, my dear." Again he patted her cheek, then stroked his trim beard. "You have not forgotten what I told you this morning?"

"No, your High—no, uncle," Pamela corrected herself swiftly. "Just to make sure, I've been going over it in my mind all day long."

"Good girl!" chuckled the prince. "Now just one final word. Remember, you must be regal and dignified without being aloof or haughty, and you must make it plain that you are moved and gratified by the homage of your people without appearing to be flattered. A princess, my dear," he con-

fided, "is never flattered. But enough."

He proffered his crooked arm. "Come, my dear! Your guests are assembled. All your courage. Remember I shall be near you."

With fast-beating heart, Pamela accompanied him out of the ante-room. As they approached the double doors of the ball-room, closed and guarded by soldiers, he squeezed her hand comfortably.

Then the soldiers sprang to attention and saluted. Two of them, galvanised into life, seized the doors and flung them open. A flunkey on the other side, jerking into wakefulness after waiting in fretting impatience for this moment, swung round towards the huge throng beyond.

"Her Royal Highness, the Princess Sonia, and his Royal Highness, Prince Alphonse!"

Came a stir from the interior. Pamela caught a glimpse of a forest of people drawing erect. As if cut off by some magician's wand, the strains of a Strauss waltz abruptly ceased; so did all talking; all sign of movement.

There was utter quietness—a tense sort of hush—for just a few seconds. Then sounded the martial notes of the Leiconian national anthem.

Pamela's veins tingled to an overwhelming thrill. She felt Prince

Alphonse's grip on her hand become tighter, more encouraging than ever.

Her greatest ordeal—it was about to begin.

But she would not let it defeat her. She'd come through it with flying colours. And, what was more, she would have the most glorious time of her life; enjoy every single moment of it.

And so, head erect, eyes sparkling, Pamela passed over the threshold on the arm of Prince Alphonse.

The State Ball!

THE vast ball-room of Tolari Palace was a scene of unforgettable brilliance.

Pamela's eyes were dazzled at first by the myriad scintillating lights, the wide range of gorgeous dresses, the gilt mirrors, and the sparkling cut-glass chandeliers.

And then she forced herself to drag her gaze away from its thrilled wanderings.

She must remember. This was not strange to her. From her birth she had been used to luxury and splendour. She must appear indifferent to the sumptuousness of her surroundings and acknowledge the homage being paid to her.

As she slowly walked across the maple floor, so highly polished that it shone like a burnished mirror, with Prince Alphonse comfortably holding her arm, a lane appeared in front of them.

The women curtsied; the men bowed.

Pamela, playing her part to perfection, steeled her quivering nerves. A gracious smile lighting up her face, she inclined her head in return, first to the left, then to the right, then to the left again—this way and that, time after time, until she had reached the red-draped dais at the far side of the ball-room.

The grand duke was there, dapper, immaculate, in evening dress, with the inevitable monocle glittering from his eye. The lord chancellor was there, too, and a perfect bevy of ministers.

As she seated herself, Pamela found that everyone had turned, and, still silent, now that the national anthem had finished, was looking in her direction.

Breath-taking the thrill that shot through her then.

Five hundred pairs of eyes were regarding her; five hundred people, wealthy, talented, distinguished, were paying homage to her, and showing their loyalty and devotion to the cause she served.

She caught a sign from the grand duke. Instantly the band, in its flower-bedecked arbour, began to play a slow fox-trot.

The grand duke, turning, bowed to her, and then, very courteously, crooked his arm.

"Come, Sonia," he said, "we will commence."

Pamela rose. She took his extended arm and allowed him to lead her on to the maple floor. A moment later, two diminutive figures on that huge expanse of burnished wood, they were dancing. Instantly the guests followed suit.

The grand duke was not the person whom Pamela would have chosen as a partner if the choice had been left to her. He was too great a danger, for one thing, and for another she hated the thought of even pretending to be friendly with a man she was beginning to dislike intensely.

But—he could dance; no doubt about that. And no matter what he was

Your Editor's address is:—
The SCHOOLGIRL Office, Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—I'm just longing to hear what you think of the SCHOOLGIRL's offer of that

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Now to conclude with just a few.

LITTLE LETTERS.

Moirra Lawrence (Perthshire).—Delighted to know you aren't feeling gloomy any more, Moira. Did you enjoy the motor trip? Write again just whenever you like.

Marjorie Wilson (Grimsby).—You ARE in for a treat next week, Marjorie, aren't you? You'll simply adore the Bessie story.

"Two Admirers of Marjorie and Clara" (Lowestoft).—I will see what can be done regarding the suggestion you make. Many thanks for sending it.

Carol Ashleigh (Bradford).—Lucky girl to have had such a gorgeous holiday. I'm sure you'll remember it for ages, won't you? Best wishes!

Pat Bennett (Stoke).—So glad you are pleased with the pencil, Pat. Yes, I have had a very enjoyable holiday indeed, thank you.

"Expectant" (Darwen, Lancashire).—I cannot give a definite promise regarding your request, but I will certainly do my best. Do write again soon.

Suzanne Marcel (Napier, New Zealand).—I don't expect you would remember much about England if you visited it again, would you, Suzanne? But it's still very lovely.

Veronica.—What an enthusiastic reader you are, Veronica! Please let me know what you think of our new features, won't you?

Well, bye-bye, everybody, until next week. With best wishes,

THE EDITOR.

thinking of the events of last night, when Paul Naldi had managed to slip by the civic guards in that amazing fashion, or of their short but bitter clash that morning over the dismissed gardener, he kept his thoughts to himself.

"Your dancing is improving, Sonia," he said stiffly.

Pamela turned a chuckle into a cough.

"Thank you, uncle," she returned, her eyes twinkling. "I have been—practising, you know."

"Not before it was needed," the grand duke observed. "A princess needs to be as talented as most of her subjects," he went on, as if in the mood to deliver a sermon.

"Naturally, uncle."

"She should take her recreations seriously."

"Of course, uncle."

"And pursue her duties relentlessly!" he said with sudden fierceness. His dark eyes peered into her face as they twirled across the floor. "A princess must have no truck with sentiment."

"So I have always been informed, uncle," said Pamela quietly.

"Then why, my child, have you shown such a disinclination during the past few days to follow that excellent creed?" he demanded.

"Oh, uncle!" Pamela exclaimed in shocked tones.

"I sincerely trust that you are at last beginning to come to your senses, Sonia. We do not want a repetition of this morning's most regrettable incident."

"No, uncle."

"Another time, perhaps, you will realise, as I do, that discipline must be maintained at all costs—certainly at the home of the ruler of our country."

Pamela nodded; but she kept silent, for fear of blurring out the hot, indignant words that trembled on her tongue.

The grand duke, cruel and heartless himself, had only one reason for wanting her to follow his lead—so that the people of Tolari should lose their affection for the princess; should believe she was a tyrant; should, when the time was ripe, be enthusiastic followers of the grand duke in his bid to seize the throne.

For he, cunning and stealthy, knew that all injustices and indignities inflicted upon the people were blamed upon the princess, no matter who carried them out.

"But," Pamela decided resolutely, "there are going to be no injustices while I'm princess if I can possibly prevent it."

Wishing to watch the gay, colourful scene at her leisure, Pamela intimated that she would return to the dais. The grand duke, nodding, escorted her there, bowed elaborately, and backed away.

No doubt that he could be extremely gallant, even to someone against whom he was secretly plotting—a necessary attribute for a traitor, Pamela found herself reflecting grimly.

But that was all the reflection she was given time to indulge in; for while she sat there a constant stream of people filed past to pay their respects, discreetly introduced by a whisper from the lord chancellor, at her side.

She was thrilled by it all, and she did manage to snatch a few eager glances at the scene in front of her.

Such a glittering, stupendous scene of pomp and magnificence!

Three gigantic crystal chandeliers were suspended from the roof, bearing a mass of electric lights shaped like candles on the end of a myriad curving arms. Each of them was so enormous



REACHING out, Pamela pushed over the bowl of flowers. It was her only hope of preventing the grand duke from knowing that Paul had broken into the palace grounds.

that twenty people could have stood within the radius of its shadow—only there was no shadow, so ingeniously was it constructed.

And then the ceiling, richly carved and gilded in the most elaborate pattern; the deeply sculptured frieze of deer and stags; the palms, the arbours, and bowers of flowers; the gilt-framed pictures on the expansive walls. And, finally, that gathering of dazzlingly draped women and immaculately dressed men, a few of the latter in gorgeous uniforms.

Pamela would have been content to feast her eyes upon the scene. But—no. She must dance. And dance with young men, whom she was supposed to have met before.

"You are doing magnificently, my child," Prince Alphonse congratulated her once; and Pamela gave a silvery laugh.

Of course she was doing well. She couldn't help doing well, it was all such glorious fun. She was experiencing in this short evening more excitement, colour, gaiety than she had known during all the years of her life.

But presently the grand duke dropped a bombshell.

"Sonia," he said, as he prepared to join in a dance, "your Aunt Gina has just arrived, I see. You had better have a chat with her straightaway."

And he merged into the gay throng.

"Why—Oh, yes, of course, uncle!" Pamela stammered.

Her Aunt Gina! Oh, great goodness! But she hadn't the faintest idea what her Aunt Gina was like. It wouldn't have mattered if Prince Alphonse had been there to advise her; but, as cruel luck would have it, the prince had just been called away. Now there was no one to whom she could turn; no one to indicate—without being startled by her ignorance—which of all the countless ladies present was the one to whom she was expected to pay her respects.

And then, as Pamela stood there, stricken, she heard a cautious, sibilant whisper from her back.

"Pamela."

Round she whirled. Her eyes widened as she saw peeping out at her from behind a cluster of ferns and palms—"You, Paul!" she ejaculated.

The Grand Duke Suspects!

WITH a quick gesture of warning, the fugitive of last night ducked out of view.

Pamela, swiftly glancing about her, noting that the grand duke had been swallowed up by the host of dancers, and that nobody was watching, darted to her reckless young friend's side.

Then she drew up, staring at him, utterly astonished.

What a transformation! No longer poorly clad, Paul was resplendent in a perfectly fitting evening suit. He looked as gallant and manly as any of the other young men in the ball-room.

"Like it?" he chuckled coolly. "Paul!" Desperately she seized his arm. "Oh, Paul, you shouldn't have come here! Why did you? If the grand duke sees you—"

"I had a good reason," said Paul quietly. "And I thought you might need some help, too. Oh, yes, I know all about the danger, old thing; that I'm the son of a former bandit, and if I'm recognised I'll be carted off to some dungeon and never seen again. But you remember our pact?" His hand closed over hers as it continued to rest on his arm. "We've got to save the princess. And if you're rumbled by the grand duke we'll never do that."

"It—it's fine of you to take the risk," said Pamela. "But how you can be of any use to me stuck behind here, I just don't—" Then she broke off, her face lighting up. "No—wait! I've got it!" she cried excitedly. "The very scheme to make sure nobody recognises you. But tell me, Paul," she added abruptly, a frown on her brow, "how on earth did you get in?"

"The same way as I slipped the guards last night—a secret entrance to the palace," was Paul's quiet but dramatic reply.

Pamela held her breath. In amazement, she regarded him.

"A—a secret entrance? But—how did you discover it?"

"When I used to live here." "Oh, of course!" said Pamela, nodding. Then, keenly, she added: "Does the grand duke know of it?"

"No fear, or he'd have followed me last night!" was Paul's chuckled reply. But immediately afterwards he looked grim. "There's only one snag, though, and that's my main reason for risking coming here. I've lost my wallet. I don't know where it went. It might be anywhere. And if, as I'm afraid, it's anywhere in the grounds—"

"It was," said Pamela.
"Was?" Paul looked startled. "Then—then you mean—"

But Pamela soon put him out of his anxiety by explaining how she had managed to prevent the wallet reaching the grand duke.

"Thanks, Pam; thanks a whole heap!" he said gratefully. "I'll get it later. But tell me! What's this wonderful stunt of yours?"

Swiftly, Pamela explained the idea that had occurred to her. A stock of crepe masks had been ordered for the ball. It was so simple. She had merely to give orders for everyone to don a mask, and Paul, his features effectually but inconspicuously screened, could mingle with the rest, undetected.

"Good for you, Pam!" breathed Paul admiringly.

In a few minutes it was done. Then Pamela returned, by a devious route, to her waiting ally and handed him a mask. When both had donned them—and how relieved Pamela felt then!—Paul gave a bow.

"At your service, beautiful fairy princess," he smiled. "By the way, that mask improves your appearance considerably, you know!" he added, as he straightened up.

"I wish I could say the same of you," said Pamela, wrinkling her nose at him. Then she laughed. "But, Paul, I really do need your help. Do you know my Aunt Gina by sight?"

"Rather!" He moved to the side of the ferns, scanned the dazzling throng of dancers for a few seconds, and then suddenly pointed. "Your Aunt Gina happens to be right over there," he said. "See her? In that red flannel frock thing—"

Pamela laughed.

"Velvet, stupid!"

"Well, velvet, then. It's all the same to me. Can you see her?"

Yes. Pamela saw her newly acquired aunt clearly enough as a gap appeared in the dancers. A stout, grey-haired woman of middle age, she was seated on the far side of the ball-room, surrounded by a retinue of younger women whom she was addressing in an obviously maternal fashion.

"Take my arm—walk with me as though we owned the place!" Paul whispered. "And now for a very brief but thorough biography of the dear lady over there."

And Paul, conducting her along the edge of the ball-room, recited all Aunt Gina's traits and fads and claims to social eminence, until Pamela felt quite capable of tackling the lady.

"Finally," said Paul, his eyes twinkling through the slits of his mask, "you had tea with her last Saturday—or at least Sonia did!"

"And how, may I ask, do you know all this?" Pamela countered, suspecting that her leg was being pulled.

But Paul was being perfectly serious. "I'm friendly with your aunt's footman," he explained. "But—sssh! We're nearly there. Keep a stiff upper lip—and best of luck!"

Scarcely daring to breathe, Pamela

advanced towards the lady in red. Frigid, acid-tongued, Aunt Gina had long been embittered by the trick of Fate which had cheated her husband of the throne. She cared nothing for court etiquette, which demanded that she present herself to the princess—and because of her wealth and influence the grand duke pandered to her.

Thankful indeed was Pamela that she had managed to find the lady, even if her reception was cool.

"I have not seen you since Saturday, Sonia," said Aunt Gina, gracefully waving her fan. "How is that, child? And your frock!" she went on before Pamela could answer. "Turn round! Let me have a good look at it. Well—well—"

Pamela smiled, and slowly twirled before her.

"You like it, Aunt Gina?" she asked.

"Charming!" the other conceded. "But, Sonia, my dear, you surprise me. I understood you felt so strongly upon the matter."

Pamela paused, conscious of a tiny thrill of apprehension. To what was Aunt Gina referring? Had she made some slip, done something that the real Sonia would not have done?

"Surprise you, aunt?" she said, with forced lightness. "Why, in what way?"

Again Aunt Gina's eyebrows went up.

"Come, Sonia!" she remonstrated. "Surely you cannot misunderstand me? I am referring, of course, to your dress."

"But you just said you like it, aunt," said Pamela cautiously.

The other clicked her tongue impatiently.

"Are you attempting to tease me, Sonia?" she said, a little snappishly. "You know perfectly well that you have always professed to disliking wearing white at state balls."

Pamela drew a rather shaky breath. She understood now.

"Why, Aunt Gina," she returned, with a smile, "surely a princess may change her mind? I am forgiven, please?"

Aunt Gina gave a tiny sniff, then smiled herself, and the moment passed.

There followed a lot of chatter on family matters, but thanks to Paul's comprehensive priming, Pamela came through the ordeal without a hitch. Then back she went to the dais. More dances followed, some with Paul.

"Who is that young man you were dancing with just now—the tall one, bronzed, with fair hair?" the grand duke suddenly wanted to know.

"Oh, that boy!" Pamela exclaimed. She fought down her qualms; managed to smile. "I—I really couldn't say!" she added carelessly.

"H'm!" said the grand duke, and turned away.

But he was frowning thoughtfully. Pamela waited for a favourable moment, then sought out Paul.

"Danger," she whispered, drawing him to one side. "I'm wondering if the grand duke saw us talking together by the ferns. He wants to know who you are. You know how he suspects everybody. Paul, you'd better go while you're safe. You've helped me no end, but please—for the sake of everything, we're working for—"

"All right, then," he said. "For your sake, I'll do as you say. But not

because I'm afraid of that—that cur!" he added, with sudden anger.

Looking at him, Pamela saw that his face was white, his lips tightly pressed. Poor Paul. She could imagine his feelings. The grand duke was the man who had ruined his father.

She was about to speak when she checked herself, conscious that all movement had ceased, and laughter and chatter faded away.

"Hallo!" said Paul sharply, looking towards the dais. "An announcement!"

"By the grand duke!" Pamela exclaimed, as she saw him raise his hand for attention.

The grand duke's voice rang through the vast room.

"Her Royal Highness begs that you all remove your masks!"

That was all he said. With a bow, he stepped down from the dais. Immediately, there was a great rustling, a great raising of arms. One after another, guests began to uncover their faces.

Pamela looked at Paul, horror dawning in her heart. And he looked at her, his chin squared, hands clenched.

"He suspects—something!" he muttered. "That's for me! He wants to see who I am—"

Pamela did not speak. She was too stunned. Whatever the grand duke suspected, there would be no doubt about it when the mask was removed.

Paul would be recognised as the son of a once convicted traitor; an outcast.

But that was not everything. What of her own position? For once the grand duke's suspicions regarding Paul became a certainty, might he not begin to think strangely about—her?

She felt Paul draw away from her. Swiftly, anxiously, she looked at him.

There was a light of battle blazing from his eyes, and he was looking desperately about the huge room, obviously contemplating a dash for safety.

"No, Paul!" hissed Pamela. "It would be madness! You'd only attract attention to yourself, and you'd never get clear of the palace. Also," she added eagerly, her eyes brightening, "I've an idea. Don't move. I'll be back in a second."

She darted from his side and went to the leader of the band.

"Play a waltz, please," she ordered.

"A waltz," she repeated firmly, as the bewildered conductor hesitated. "Any waltz you like. But play it—now!"

"Cer-certainly, your Highness!" the man stammered.

Then Pamela raced back to Paul.

"Dance, Paul!" she whispered. "Just as though nothing had happened. But, above all—leave the guiding to me!"

"But—but—" Paul began, utterly astounded.

Then he broke off with a gasp as Pamela whirled him away to the liting music, over the shining ball-room floor, in and out of staring couples who, their masks in their hands, were dumb-founded by the princess' disregard of her own orders.

Pamela glanced towards the dais. Her heart fluttered wildly. The grand duke, ramming his monocle more firmly into his eye, was commencing to strut towards her, trying to cut her off before she reached the far side!

AREN'T you revelling in this romantic serial? Can't you imagine the many more thrilling and glamorous times in store for Pamela? Be sure to read next Saturday's chapters.