

In the long complete Cliff House School story inside you will meet—

THE GIRL WHO HATED BARBARA REDFERN!

THE SCHOOLGIRL

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Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



"THAT'S MY FATHER'S PHOTO!"

But Matilda Tattersall didn't care. She meant to hurt the Redferns all she could.

See this week's dramatic story of Barbara Redfern & Co.

An unusually powerful story of the chums of Cliff House School, with Barbara Redfern and her young sister in the limelight.



She Hated BARBARA REDFERN!

The Scene in Study No. 12



"EVERYTHING ready, Babs?" Barbara Redfern laughed gleefully.

"Everything!" she agreed. "At least, everything except the headdress, and I expect by now Tilda will have finished that. Mabs" she turned to her best chum—"just put the dress on a hanger, there's a dear. I'll trot off and see Tilda now."

Golden-haired Mabel Lynn beamingly nodded; Clara Trevlyn grinned; Bessie Bunter stared with adoring ecstasy out of her thick, round spectacles, as excited and rosy-faced Barbara struggled out of the Louis XIV costume dress; and Marjorie Hazeldene, who had been altering the pannier of the costume, glowed. For there was no doubt that Babs had looked simply stunning.

The scene was the Fourth Form dormitory at Cliff House School in Kent, and Babs, surrounded by her chums, had just been trying on the amazingly beautiful costume she would wear in the forthcoming historical pageant at Friardale, for in that pageant Babs was representing a one-time owner of Cliff House—the beautiful Catherine Calais, who, most tragically, had been killed at the age of fourteen while hunting in Friardale Woods.

Much work had gone to the making of that costume—practically all Babs' chums having industriously given a hand. Babs herself had designed the dress and the headdress which went with it; Mabs had made the actual costume; Marjorie had done the embroidery; and Leila Carroll and Janet Jordan had made the framework for the pannier; while Clara Trevlyn had lent the ivory fan. Except for one detail—and that

most important—the costume was now complete.

And the detail—the rather elaborate and extravagant headdress, manufactured from lace—had been entrusted to Matilda Tattersall, acknowledged by the Fourth Form as its best amateur milliner.

Now, with a laugh, Babs scampered off, her blue eyes dancing, her happy face aflashed. If there was one thing Babs liked more than any other, it was wearing pretty clothes, and the costume was undoubtedly lovely. And Matilda, too, was making an excellent job of the somewhat difficult headdress—had, in fact, nearly finished it.

"Clever old Tilda!" Babs gurgled to herself, as she trotted along the corridor and down the stairs. She was

Babs, with a smile, went in. And then she stopped, her eyes opening in rapture.

For in the very middle of the table stood the headdress. And what an exquisitely elaborate piece of work it was! She caught her breath.

"Oh, Tilda, is—is it finished?" she asked eagerly.

Matilda Tattersall, standing by the fireplace, looked at her curiously. A quiet-looking girl was Matilda, with very pretty chestnut hair and brown eyes. She never, at any time, seemed put out or flustered.

But the look on her face was rather peculiar now. Babs, her attention engaged by the headdress, did not notice how her hands were clenched, or how desperately the nails of her fingers were biting into the flesh.

"Oh, Tilda, it—it's beautiful—perfect!" she breathed. "Can—can I try it on?"

"Please yourself!" Matilda said indifferently.

Almost in awe Babs approached that beautiful piece of workmanship; almost reverently she lifted it. And, again, she did not notice Matilda—that strange, intense look in her eyes, that growing bitterness in her face as she followed her movements. Trembling with delight, Babs raised the headdress, fastened it on her brown hair, and approached the mirror.

"Oh, Tilda, does it suit me?"

There came no reply from Matilda. "Tilda, do you think—" And then at last Babs, compelling her attention to switch from headdress to Matilda, turned. For a moment she stood still and stared, shocked into surprise by the spiteful look on the other girl's face.

No longer the mild, almost apathetic Tilda was she then. No longer the hesitantly aloof, shyly retiring girl she had always known; but a girl whose eyes were smoldering with hidden fires; a

By

HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

glad that Tilda had taken a hand in this. Tilda had been rather out of things lately. Tilda had rarely, if ever, taken an active part in the Form's activities. Something of a mystery she was, with her retiring ways, her aloofness, her reluctance always to push herself forward. She was by no means a prominent member of the Fourth, but a girl, Babs was sure, who had a heart of gold, and who, if given the opportunity, would be a real credit to the Form.

Well, here she was, and Babs, halting in the Fourth Form corridor, beamed up at the number twelve on a study door—the room shared by Tilda, Eleanor Storke, and Frances Frost.

She tapped.

"Come in!" a voice said—the voice of Tilda herself.

girl who was trembling as if keeping herself in violent check; a girl whose normally pink cheeks were dead-white and taut and drawn. Hate was in those eyes—in every line of the slim and quivering form.

"Til-Tilda," Babs stuttered, "what's the matter?"

"Nothing!" Tilda said thickly.

"Why do you look at me like that?"

"Nothing!" Tilda said again, not very intelligently.

"Then may—may I take the head—dress?"

The hands clenched again.

"May I, Tilda?"

"In—in a minute." And Tilda, as though moving not of her own volition, but of some impulse stronger than herself, came forward. As Babs, feeling faintly alarmed, lifted the headdress off. Tilda reached out.

"Give me that!" she hissed thickly, and snatched it.

Still as if her actions were uncontrollable, savagely she tore the lace from the wire frame, savagely hurled it into the fire, and then, with even greater savagery, flung the frame on the carpet and stamped a violent foot upon it.

"There!" she cried, her chest heaving.

Babs' eyes were round.

"Tilda, have—have you gone crazy?"

"No! No, I haven't! But"—the hate which was within her, now burst its bounds—"I made that hat for you!" she said. "I made it because I—I liked you! Well, I don't like you—now! I hate you, Barbara Redfern—yes, hate you!" she cried, her voice shrilly rising.

"Tilda—" Babs cried.

"I hate you!" she went on. "And—and I—I'll crush you as I've crushed that!" She pointed to the headdress. "I've been doing favours for you, have I? Favours!" She laughed shrilly. "What a fool I am, when all the time you—"

"Tilda, please, please!" quivered Babs.

"When all the time," Tilda raved, "what have you been doing to me?"

"Tilda, nothing!" Babs said.

"Only—"

"Only," Matilda rapped, "ruining me—yes, ruining me! Not you, perhaps—but your father! Go on! Say you know nothing about that now! I heard from daddy—this morning—" her voice choked. "He and your father were in business together, weren't they?"

Babs blinked.

"Well, I don't know about that. Daddy has a lot of business friends. I believe I did hear him say that he was managing some business for your family—"

"Indeed!" Tilda cried sarcastically. "Managing our business, indeed! Managing!" She laughed again. "You mean your father was swindling us all the time—yes, I know it's not a lady-like word, but swindling I said!" she cried violently, as Babs indignantly flushed. "And not satisfied with swindling him, he ruined him—ruined him down to the last penny—so that we haven't anything left, and I've got to leave Cliff House!"

"Oh, Tilda—"

"And worse than that," Matilda flamed out, "worse than that—yes, you're going to hear it all, Barbara Redfern! Not satisfied with ruining him, Mr. Redfern has forced my father to sell his house—my house—my home! It is a lovely home, but daddy offered it at a ridiculously low price. And who do you think bought it—"

"Who—who did?" Babs stuttered, her head beginning to whirl.

"Your father!" flamed Tilda.

"Tilda, there's some mistake!"

"There's no mistake—none!" Tilda cried. "There it is! My father's penniless—thanks to yours! I've lost my home—to you! I've got to leave this school at the end of the term—through you! And then you expect me to do favours—for you! To make your silly hat!"

"Tilda—oh, I'm most frightfully sorry, but—"

"Don't be sorry, you hypocrite!" Tilda cried, shaking violently. "I've never felt like this before—never! But from the moment I read that letter this morning, Barbara Redfern, I've not been the same girl. I never thought it possible to hate people as I hate you and your Redfern tribe now—you—"

"Tilda!" Babs cried. "Tilda, do think what you're saying! You can't mean it, and you'll be so sorry."

"I am thinking! I do mean it—every word! And I won't be sorry!" The words came hissing from between Matilda Tattersall's teeth. "You've got your way. I'm leaving Cliff House. I've got to go! But I'm not going alone, Barbara Redfern! When I go—perhaps before—you're going with me! You've dragged me down—I'll drag you down—yes, and your young sister Doris in the Third Form, as well!"

Babs fought for self control.

"I'm leaving Cliff House! But I'm not going alone, Barbara Redfern! I'll have you sacked—you and your younger sister!" Vindictive, spiteful words, but Matilda Tattersall of the Fourth Form meant every one of them. Because of a fancied grievance she held against the Redferns, she was now Babs' and Doris' deadliest enemy, and an enemy who knew no scruple or mercy!

"You hear!" Tilda almost shrieked. "I'll have you sacked, Barbara Redfern—you and your younger sister!"

"Yes!" Babs' lips compressed. "I hear, Tilda—and I'm sorry—for you! Some time—when you're in a more reasonable frame of mind—I'll talk to you again! At the moment you're too upset. I'm sorry—most dreadfully sorry—but as I don't know anything about my father's business—except that I know he would never harm anyone—I can't argue. Good-bye, Tilda."

"Good-bye!" Tilda scowled. "Good-bye—and here, take this thing with you!" And as Babs pushed the door open, she snatched up the battered remnants of the headdress and flung it—viciously and violently, so that it flew through the door. "And that," she said, "is what I think of you! Good-bye—and good riddance!"

The First Spiteful Act!



"Oh, my goodness, get—get me a drink of water, will you, Mabs?"

And Barbara Redfern, shaken, white, almost tottered into Study No. 4, which she shared with Mabel Lynn and Bessie Bunter, and catching hold of the arm of the chair, sank into it like a girl in a state of collapse.

Mabs, who was in the act of pouring out a glass of lemon water, stared,

"Babs—great goodness! What on earth's happened?"

"It's Tilda!" Babs gasped. "Tilda! Mabs—please!" she added, and caught at the glass. With fingers that trembled, she put it to her lips and swallowed. "Oh, thank you! That—that's better," she mumbled. "Phew! Oh, help!"

Mabs stared at her in concern.

"Babs, what is it?"

Babs shook her head.

"I—I don't know. Tilda—Tilda's got some idea that—that—oh, goodness! How can I say it? I'd never believe it possible for a girl to change round so suddenly. But Tilda says—she says—" And then, in gulping gasps, still dazed and still shaken by the memory of that violent storm in Study No. 12 she blurted out the story as far as she knew it. Mabs' eyes opened in horror.

"But, Babs, your father would never do that?"

"No," Babs said. "Of course he wouldn't, the darling. But I don't know anything about his business, and neither does mother, and—and I can't get in touch with him now, because he's on the Continent somewhere. But Tilda seems convinced, and—and if she believes it as she appears to do—well, then, perhaps there is a reason for her to get so upset. I'm sorry—terribly sorry—for her, Mabs, but—but what can I do?"

"Oh, Babs, I don't know!" Mabs bit her lip a little. "Cheer up!" she

added consolingly. "Tilda will come to her senses presently. I expect she'll find it's all a mistake. Oh!" she added, as the door came open and Connie Jackson, one of the Cliff House prefects, looked in. "Hallo, Connie! Do you want me?"

"No. But Miss Primrose wants Barbara Redfern," Connie said sourly. "Better jump to it," she added.

Babs sighed. She would have preferred to rest. She wanted to think out this amazing, shattering thing, this astounding change in the girl she had liked. But Miss Primrose was headmistress of Cliff House, and as such Miss Primrose must be obeyed instantly. Still feeling strangely unreal and dazed, she left the room.

Miss Primrose, her kindly face over-shadowed, welcomed her with a faint smile.

"Barbara, come in. Sit down," she said. "I want to talk to you—first in your capacity of captain."

"Yes, Miss Primrose?" Babs wondered what was coming.

"And particularly about Matilda—Matilda Tattersall." Babs started. "You have heard the rather dreadful news, Barbara?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose. You don't believe—" Babs faltered.

"I am afraid," Miss Primrose said sadly, "I have no alternative but to believe it. I have had a letter from Mr. Tattersall. Some business he was interested in has crashed. I suppose you know no details of it, Barbara?"

"No," Babs said numbly, and

breathed relief, because it became obvious then that Mr. Tattersall had not mentioned her father's name in that letter.

"It is rather tragic—very, very tragic," Miss Primrose sighed. "I am sorry it means that Matilda must leave. The girl must be feeling rather down-hearted and hurt, Barbara, and I do hope—this is what I called you in to say—that you will make her last few weeks at the school as bright as possible. If she is leaving Cliff House, Barbara, there is no reason why she shouldn't leave with happy memories; and I'm sure, my dear, that you are better fitted than anyone else to see that my wishes are carried out."

Babs nodded, though her heart knew a pang.

"I'll do my best, Miss Primrose," she mumbled.

"Thank you, Barbara. I am sure you will. Now," Miss Primrose added—and her expression underwent a subtle change—"I have another matter I would like to discuss with you—a more personal one. This concerns your sister, Doris, in the Lower Third."

Babs glanced at her quickly—a little apprehensively. Very fond of Doris was Babs; but it was to be admitted that the high-spirited Doris gave her a great deal of anxiety at times.

"I am not, of course, making you responsible for Doris' actions," Miss Primrose said, "but I do think, perhaps, that a word of sisterly advice might do a great deal more at the moment than a lecture from me. I am not satisfied with Miss Drake's reports of her work in class, and twice this week Doris has had to be punished for being late—once at lessons, and the other"—sternly—"for not being in when gates were closed. I do hope that this does not mean that Doris is on the verge of one of her outbursts of disregarding discipline. Please, Barbara, you will speak to her, won't you?"

"I certainly will—thank you," Babs said.

"And you will make things as bright and cheerful for Matilda as you can?"

"Y-yes," Babs promised—a little less certainly.

And with that, she left, more troubled than ever in her mind now. The news about Doris, of which she had been entirely innocent until this moment, vaguely disturbed her. Whatever new little game that imp of mischief was up to now must be nipped in the bud at once. And Tilda—

Babs shook her head a little. Remembering that girl's outburst she shuddered. But that was over now. Silly Tilda! No doubt she was already sorry at having so far forgotten herself.

Well, Babs would certainly forget it. After all, it was jolly rough for Tilda! It was too dreadful to have been plunged from wealth to poverty, and in the anguish of that blow it was only natural that Tilda must find an outlet for her bitter disappointment. Poor Matilda! To have to leave the school! To be penniless!

What could she do for her? How to prove to her that she had forgotten her outburst, that really and truly she wanted to make her life as bright and happy as possible.

Babs pondered the problem as she descended the stairs. Then suddenly she had an idea. Truly enough, it was an idea—for Babs was only human, after all—which she pondered with some reluctance. It was an idea which involved a sacrifice she would not have willingly made for any other reason.

But it was right. It was fair. Tilda, after all, was entitled to every scrap of

A REMINDER!

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happiness she could squeeze from her last few weeks at school. And that lovely Louis XIV dress would fit Tilda to a T. And she could make another headdress for it. Tilda should represent Cliff House in the pageant!

She'd give that job to Tilda—now! She smiled a little as she hurried on, eagerly intent upon carrying out that idea. And then, reaching the bottom of the stairs, she paused.

A girl, younger than herself, but strikingly like Barbara, except that her face seemed to be overshadowed by some strange worry, looked up at her. It was Babs' own sister, Doris!

"Hallo!" said Babs, and noticed the ill-at-ease, nervous expression of the younger girl at once. "Doris, I want to talk to you," she said.

"Oh, look here, Babs, if you're going to lecture—"

"I'm not going to lecture. But"—Babs shook her head—"Doris, I've just come from Primmy. Primmy's been telling me things. What sort of scrape have you got yourself into this time?"

"I—I'm not in any scrape!" Doris blurted.

"Then why," Babs demanded, "did you miss gates the other night?"

Doris looked uneasy.

"Oh, nothing! Oh, Babs, don't look at me like that!" she pleaded. "I—I only went out, and—well, I hadn't got my watch, and I forgot the time! There's nothing for you to worry about—honest," she added.

Babs stared at her—hard. Doris, a little uncertainly, smiled back. She sighed.

"Well, I hope you're right, that's all," she answered dubiously. "In the meantime, if there is anything on your mind, you'd better unload it, so that we

can straighten it out together. Were you waiting for me?"

"Y-yes, Babs. I—I was going to ask you if you'd lend me those rubber overshoes of yours."

"What for?"

"Nothing. I—I just want them, that's all. I—I'm going for a walk, and—well, you know how wet the grass is? If you wouldn't mind, Babs—"

"Oh, you can have them! They're in the dormitory. Better come and get them now," Babs said, and with a nod led the way along the Fourth Form corridor. "Oh—er—just wait a minute," she added, as she came abreast of Study No. 12, and, leaving Doris in the corridor, tapped on the door. "Tilda, are you there?" she called.

"Well?" came the growling voice of Matilda Tattersall from behind the panels.

"Golly! She sounds crabby," Doris grinned.

Babs pursed her lips a little. She pushed open the door and entered. Matilda, rummaging through the drawer of her desk, turned.

"Oh, you!" she snarled. "Get out!"

"Tilda!" Babs said, forcing herself to keep calm. "No, please hear me out! I've been thinking over things and—"

"Wonder your conscience would bear it!" Tilda sneered.

"And," Babs said, forcing her voice to keep level, "no, please, Tilda, don't let's argue about the other matter! But if you'd like to be Catherine of Calais in the pageant, instead of me—"

"Eh?" Tilda asked incredulously. "I'd love you to have the part," Babs finished.

Tilda paused at that. She eyed Babs strangely. Doris, a little nettled at the other's retorts, had appeared at the door and was staring angrily at Tilda. But for a second Matilda did not see her.

Her cheeks flushed. To be Catherine in the pageant! To take that honour which half the Form would have given a term's pocket-money for! Just for one moment—but only one—she was tempted.

Then her eyes glittered again as her worst instincts came uppermost.

"Oh, and what's the idea?" she sneered.

"Idea?" Babs repeated.

"You're trying to get round me, I suppose?" Tilda sneered. "You're not feeling too easy about your swindling father, now that you've brought me to the gutter, eh? If this is your feeble way of trying to make up to me, Barbara Redfern, you can forget it, and take your hateful charity somewhere else!"

"Matilda Tattersall, you mean cat!" Doris burst out indignantly.

"Doris, be quiet!" Babs cried. "Tilda—"

"Rats! I'm not going to be quiet!" Doris said warmly. "I'm not going to stand by and hear daddy called a swindler, and I'm not going to stand by and hear you called beastly names! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" she cried hotly.

"Ought I? Ought I?" Tilda glared. "And who told you to stick your ear in?" she ground out. "You can shut up, for a start!"

"I won't! I'm not going to hear—"

"You," Tilda vehemently put in, "are going to hear what I like to say! Anyway, you can get out, both of you! I hate the pair of you! And don't," she raved at Doris, "come sticking your nose into my business again; otherwise, there'll be trouble!"

"And you'll make it, I suppose!" Doris retorted contemptuously. "I'll make it all right—you wait!" Tilda's eyes narrowed. "I'm not blind. Anyway, for a start, who broke bounds the other day?" she gibed. "Who was in Farmer Nicholls' nurseries?" "What?" cried Babs, while Doris turned suddenly pale. "Oh, she hasn't told her dear big sister that, has she?" Tilda laughed shrilly. "But she was in Nicholls' Nurseries, and she got chased off by the watchman. Didn't you, Doris dearest? Why haven't you told loving big sister all about it?"

"I—I—" Doris started. "Anyway, who says I was?" she flared out. "I do. I saw you. And I saw the watchman, who thought at first I was the trespasser. I didn't let on then that it was you, because I didn't want to get you into a row. But now that's all changed."

"Doris, come on!" Babs said. "But—" "Come on!" Babs cried almost fiercely.

And she tugged her younger sister by the shoulder. Doris, gulping a little, looking just a trifle dazed, allowed herself to be dragged into the passage. Babs eyed her.

"Doris, you know those nurseries are out of bounds. Why were you there?" "Oh, nothing!" Doris muttered.

"Now, Doris—" "Oh stuff, Babs! Don't look so sillily serious!" Doris said petulantly. "I wasn't doing any harm."

Babs shook her head. "Doris, please!" she begged. "You know Farmer Nicholls doesn't like Cliff House. You know that he's always out to make trouble if he can. You know as well as I do that one of the strictest rules of the school is that girls shan't trespass on Nicholls' ground—and particularly in his precious nurseries. Doris, I don't want to give you a sermon—"

"Well, why do it?" a voice rasped; and the door of Study No. 12 flew open, and the face of Matilda Tattersall appeared. "Why the dickens are you two holding your feeble family quarrels outside my study? Push off!"

"Come on, Doris," Babs muttered. And, with rather a scornful glance at Matilda, she led her younger sister off down the passage. Tilda glared after them.

"You cheats!" she hissed. "You and your family!"

"Oh, my hat!" Doris said. "Babs, if—"

"Doris, come on!" Babs cried, her ears burning. "Take no notice."

But Tilda, seeing them hurry, fancying she was gaining the upper hand, and eager to push her spiteful advantage, hurried after them.

"Yes, cheats!" she cried. "And cowards!"

"Just let me go a minute—" breathed Doris.

"Quick—in here!" Babs said, and, reaching the door of Study No. 4, hauled her younger sister in, and then followed herself. But Tilda, with a sprint, quivering with fury, was on their heels then, and as Babs turned to close the door she viciously smacked it open. She glared.

her some deep and searing insult, she glared at it.

"Tilda!" shrieked Babs, as Tilda moved.

But Tilda then was deaf and blind to everything but that photograph. Three swift strides she took towards it. Quivering with the hate that consumed her, she caught it up.

Too late Doris made a dive. Up went the photograph in both Tilda's hands, and down with a crash it came, splintering into pieces.

"Tilda, you hateful thing!" shrieked Doris, as Tilda made to stamp on the photograph. "That's my father—"

For one moment Tilda gazed stupidly at the shattered remains, and then she broke into a derisive laugh.

"It's smashed!" she shrilled, "Look at it! Smashed—like my home! And that's what I'll do to you—all of you! Here, Barbara Redfern, what are you doing?"

For Babs, pale with anger now—even her resolve forgotten at that insult to her father—had caught her by the arm.

"Get out of this study!" she cried, her voice deadly quiet. "Get out! Tilda, I'm sorry—I'm trying to remember—but, for goodness' sake, get out!" And as she caught her she gave her a little push towards the door. "Will you go—get out?"

"Why, you—" "Go!" Babs stormed.

And then Babs fell back. For the door had opened, and on the threshold stood a majestic, awe-inspiring figure. It was Miss Primrose.

One look Miss Primrose gave at the scene. Her voice quivered.

"Barbara, you! Unhand that girl at once!" she cried. "Really, I am ashamed! Is this what you call being kind to Matilda?"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Babs.

"She—" flamed Doris.

"Doris, leave this study at once—at

once, I say!" Miss Primrose cried. And as Doris, with a glare at the twistedly smiling face of Tilda, went, she turned angrily upon Babs again. "I really thought, Barbara, that out of all the girls in the Fourth Form, I could expect you to show kindness and understanding! Apparently," she added curtly, "I am mistaken! I am disgusted, Barbara!"

And before stuttering and scarlet faced Babs could frame a reply the headmistress turned frigidly and left. Tilda, with a satisfied chuckle, followed after her.

Accused before the Form!



BUT Doris Redfern, thus summarily dismissed from Study No. 4, had not gone far.

Doris was younger than Babs, and possessed but little of that understanding which belonged to her elder sister. She was now in no mind to let Matilda Tattersall get away with her insults.

If there was one quality which Doris possessed in fullest measure it was a deep, unwavering loyalty—especially for her elder sister—and though she was often perkily cheeky to Babs, there was no one else quite like her, in Doris' view, in the whole world.

And Doris was now going to tell Tilda what she thought about her!

So Doris, instead of going back to the Third Form Common-room, went to Tilda's study. She'd jolly well wait in there for her. And because Doris was in quite a quivering little paddy by that time, she flung the door open rather roughly, and the door, catching the edge of the bureau drawer which Tilda had left open, immediately sent it crashing to the ground.

Too late Doris heard the crash; too



"I SUPPOSE this was an accident as well?" cried Matilda, and swept two vases from the mantelpiece. "And this was an accident," she added, as she pulled another drawer from her desk and upturned it on the floor. Doris Redfern's eyes were wide with horror. So amazed was she, that she did not realise the spiteful purpose behind the other girl's actions.

late tried to pull back the door. There came a rattle of things over the floor, and with a swift, desperate look down the corridor, she jumped into the study. Oh, goodness, what had she done?

All at once she forgot her anger. She stared in dismay at the wreckage she had accidentally caused. The drawer was full of odds and ends, now strewn in confused disorder over the carpet; but among them was a box with a glass top which had contained specimens of the small sea-shells which Matilda had collected on the beaches of Pegg and Sarmouth.

The glass was smashed, together with several of the shells crushed by the weight of heavier things. Hurriedly Doris stooped to retrieve them, breathlessly bundling them into the upturned drawer. She was in the midst of that feverish operation when the door burst open and in came Tilda herself.

Her eyes flamed as she saw the wreckage.

"Why, you—you spiteful little microbe!" she gasped. "Look at my shells!"

"Oh crumbs! I—I'm sorry," blurted Doris. "It was an accident!"

"An accident?" Tilda choked. Then suddenly her eyes seemed to narrow. "And I suppose," she cried, stepping to the table and crashing over the vase of flowers on it, "that this was an accident, too? I suppose this was an accident, as well"—and she swept two vases from the mantelpiece. "And this was an accident," she added violently, as she pulled another drawer from her desk and upturned it on the floor.

Doris' eyes were round with horror. "Tilda—oh, my hat! Are you off your rocker?"

"Look what you've done!" shrieked Tilda.

"Why, you know I never—"
"Yes you did! You know you did! Jolly lucky I came along in time, otherwise you'd have made the study a total wreck! Oh!" she added, and turned in pretended surprise as the door came open again and Miss Primrose, accompanied by a staring-eyed Babs, appeared at the door. "Oh! Miss Primrose!"

"What is all this commotion?" Miss Primrose asked, and then, seeing the wrecked articles, gasped. She looked at Doris, white now with anger, with disgust. "Doris—"

"Doris did it!" Matilda said spitefully. "I just came in in time to stop her from wrecking the whole room!"

"I didn't!" Doris cried. "I—I only upset the drawer! Tilda wrecked the other things herself!"

"Doris, please!" Miss Primrose cried sharply. "Do not be ridiculous! How dare you suggest that Tilda would deliberately destroy her own things! In any case, what were you doing in this room?"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Doris.
"And on your own admission you upset that drawer!"

"That—that was an accident!" Doris stuttered.

"And a very, very extraordinary accident," Miss Primrose said grimly. "I am sorry. I cannot take your word. It does seem to me, Doris, that you are deliberately going out of your way these days to be troublesome. Tilda, I am sorry, my dear. If you will leave this study, I will get one of the maids to clear it for you. Meantime, Doris, your pocket money will be stopped until you have paid for this damage. And tomorrow, which is a half-holiday, you will do a special detention task in your Form-room."

"But, Miss Primrose—" cried Barbara.

"Barbara, be silent! Doris, please go!"

Doris threw Tilda a bitter look. Her face red, her hands clenched, she went. She did not look at Miss Primrose, but she looked at Babs as she passed, and Babs, seeing the burning anger, the indignation in her blue eyes, paused a moment and then hurried after her. At the bottom of the stairs, she caught her up.

"Doris—"
"Do you think I did it?" Doris demanded.

"Doris, don't shout! And don't," Babs said, "be a goose! Of course, I don't think it. But why, you chump, did you go into Tilda's room?"

"Because," Doris said, between her teeth, "I was going to tell her what I thought of her—for being so mean to you! I did knock over the drawer by accident, but she herself did the rest of the damage—simply," she added, "to get me into a row! My hat! To think of the cunning of that girl! I could never believe a girl could have changed— But she's not going to get away with it! She's not going—"

Babs bit her lip.
"Doris, please!" she said wearily.

"Don't make things worse than they are! You're in trouble enough, goodness only knows! Leave Tilda to me, Doris, you hear?"

"But why—" Doris began sulkily.

"Please, kid!" Babs shook her head. "You can do no good by getting up against her—no possible good. Tilda will come to her senses before long—meantime, let me handle her. Now buzz off, and for goodness' sake keep out of her way! I'll see to this matter."

Doris shrugged.
"Well, if she plays any more hanky-panky with me—"

"She won't!" Babs promised. "I'll see to that. She's just a bit worked up at the moment. Just inclined to be spiteful because she's got a dippy idea that daddy has helped her own father to lose all his money. I'll go and see her now."

She nodded to her sister, and Doris, not with any great joy, went off, making her way to the Third Form quarters. Babs, retracing her steps, hurried back to Study No. 12. Tilda was not there, but Eleanor Storke was. She regarded her rather curiously.

"Tilda? She's gone into the Common-room," she said.

"Thanks," Babs said briefly.
She strode off in that direction.

The Common-room, as was usual after tea, was crowded. A full twenty of the girls belonging to the Fourth Form were gathered there, among them Matilda herself, who was standing by the fire talking to Lydia Crossendale, Freda Ferriers, and Frances Frost, three of the most disliked girls in the Fourth. Babs immediately crossed over to her.

"Tilda, can I have a word with you?" she asked quietly.

Tilda's look was icy.
"You can't!" she said, and went on talking to Lydia Crossendale, who chuckled.

Babs clenched her hands. Her lips trembled a little. But before she could make a retort, the door burst boisterously open, and into the Common-room, rattling a collecting-box, came cheerful Clara Trevlyn. She chuckled.

"Aha! Tracked you slackers down!" she said. "Janet, close the door! Let nobody out until much hard cash has been paid! What-ho, Babs! This," Clara announced, rattling the collecting-

box, "is in aid of the Friardale charities. I've been asked by Miss Charmant to collect. Get your sixpences, shillings, and pound notes ready, Bessie, you first!"

"Oh crumbs!" said Bessie Bunter. "I sus-say, you know—"

"Good cause, Bessie!" Clara said cheerfully.

"Well, I've only gig-got twopence!" "Then a penny will do," Clara said, and Bessie, with a sigh, placed one of her two coppers into the box. "Now, Jimmy!"—and Clara turned to Jemima Carstairs.

"A boblet from me, for I'm feeling generous," Jemima Carstairs said.

"Fine! Rosa?"
"Oh, here's sixpence!" wealthy Rosa Rodworth said disdainfully.

"Good egg! Diana?"
Diana Royston-Clarke sneered.

"Anything in a good cause! What's the biggest donation so far?"

"Half-a-crown—from Miss Charmant."

"Then," Diana said—Diana did so like going one better than anyone else—"here are three shillings."

"One of the jolly old times when conceit is a virtue, what?" Jemima burred, fortunately not overheard by Diana.

Clara laughed. She was doing well. From Mabel Lynn she collected threepence; from Jean Cartwright fourpence. She approached Babs, who dropped a sixpence into the slot. Then she rattled it under the nose of Matilda.

Tilda shook her head.

"Sorry—broke!" she said briefly.

"Bad luck," Clara sympathised. "See you on pocket-money day."

"And it's no use," Tilda said, with a spiteful glance at Babs, "seeing me then. I shall still be broke. In fact," Tilda announced, on seeing she had the attention of the room, "it's no good calling to me at all in future. I shall never have any more money. I suppose you've heard—about my father? My father has been swindled out of all his money."

"What?" Clara cried.

"It's a fact, isn't it, Barbara?" Tilda said mockingly. "Because, you see," she added, as she found the wondering eyes of the Form on her, "dear Barbara knows all about it! It was her father who swindled my father; her father who has made him bankrupt; her father who, forcing him to sell our house at a fraction of what it's worth, snatched it up at that price—"

"Oh, I say!"

"It's not true, girls!" cried Babs.

"It's not!"

"No? Can you deny it?" Tilda spitefully flamed up. "My father wrote and told me all about it. He invested all his money in some concern which Mr. Redfern advised him to try. Mr. Redfern handled the money for him, and then lost it—but, mind you, Mr. Redfern didn't lose his own—oh dear, no! Yesterday we were well off; to-day we're penniless—"

"Oh, my hat!" Lydia Crossendale cried. "What a dreadful shame!"

"And as a result," Tilda went on, "I haven't a home. Also, I've got to leave this school at the end of the term—simply because there'll be no money to pay my fees. And yet," she added witheringly, "you come asking me to contribute to charities! Ask Barbara for my contribution; she's got all my money!"

Babs stood back, feeling pale, sick. In the Common-room there was a sudden deathly hush. Sympathy for a moment was reflected in every face. That was every girl's immediate re-

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action to that terrible tale of woe. But sympathy was immediately succeeded by other emotions. Clara frowned a little.

"Here, I say, that's a pretty beastly thing to broadcast!" she protested.

"Well, it's true!" Tilda cried.

"It—it's not true!" Babs panted. "I tell you it's not true!"

"You can prove it, of course?" Lydia gibed, always glad to have a thrust at Babs.

"No, I can't!"

"Then how," Frances Frost wanted to know, "can you say it isn't true? What does your father say about it?"

"I don't know. He's in France—"

"Spending my father's money in posh hotels!" Tilda jeered.

"Oh, don't talk rubbish!" cried Mabel Lynn. "Tilda—"

But there was uproar then. Instinctively Lydia, Frances, Freda, and Tilda had grouped together.

Always at daggers drawn with Barbara Redfern & Co., it seemed to Lydia and her cronies a good opportunity of creating bad feeling. Whether Babs' father were guilty or not did not matter a hoot to Lydia & Co. Anything that would hurt Barbara was always acceptable to them.

"But, I say, it's a bit thick!" Gwen Cook said doubtfully. "Poor old Tilda!"

"I'm as sorry for Tilda as you are!" panted Babs. "But will you believe me when I say I am certain that my father had nothing to do with it?"

"Well, you've got no proof of that; Tilda has, look you!" Lucy Morgan pointed out. "And, after all, Tilda should know."

"Well, you speak about somebody you know something about!" Clara snorted. "We all know old Babs' father, and we all know he wouldn't stoop to do anything dishonest."

"No, rather not, you know!" Bessie Bunter warmly supplemented. "He once gave me half-a-crown! All the same, I—I'm—sus—sorry," she added, blinking at Matilda. "Oh, crumbs! It must be awful for you!"

"And that," flared Frances Frost,

pointing at Babs, "is the girl we have for captain!"

"The girl who's representing us in the pageant!" Freda Ferriers jeered.

"Daughter of a crook!" Matilda cried.

Babs clenched her hands. The noise was growing into uproar now. Sympathy for Matilda, whatever the cause of the disaster, was swaying the Form. And Lydia & Co., anxious to cause a scene at Babs' expense, were pressing hard. It was plain, in another two minutes, that a first-class row would be in progress. Another second, and a mistress or a prefect would be on the scene—which would certainly mean a detention for the whole Form.

Babs hopelessly turned away. She threw one appealing look towards Matilda. Then silently she drifted towards the door. If she stayed in that room another moment she knew that she might do something she was sorry for. She knew, anyway, that while she remained the hubbub would go on.

"Here, Babs," Clara cried, "where are you going?"

But Babs shook her head. She had reached the door then; pulled it open. And as she put one foot into the corridor, Tilda's voice followed her.

"You see, she can't stop and face it out! Coward!" she cried.

Babs hurriedly shut the door. With hopeless misery in her heart, and a choking lump in her throat, she drifted off to her own study.

Insult on Insult!



THOUGH Babs had retired from the Common-room with the best of intentions, that action by no means made a good impression on the Form. Eagerly Lydia & Co. seized upon it. Girls who had wavered, found themselves, out of sheer sympathy for Matilda, and uncertainty of Babs, agreeing with Lydia and her cronies. Only Babs' chums, indeed, Clara Trevlyn, Mabs, Bessie, Janet Jordan, Mar-

jorie Hazeldene, Jean Cartwright, Leila Carroll, Christie Wilmer, Jemima Carstairs, and one or two others, remained anything like staunchly loyal to her.

And for the larger part of the evening Babs remained in her own study—worried, anxious, her heart turning over as she thought of the suddenly dramatic course events had taken. If she could only get hold of her father. If only he could explain.

But her father was away—in France. Even Stanford, his secretary, did not know where he was at the moment. Meantime, her very ignorance of the circumstances gave her no opportunity of denying Matilda's hideous accusations.

Not a happy evening that for Babs. She was glad when at last bed-time came.

There she had to face again the sneers of Lydia Crossendale & Co., but for the sake of peace and quietness, she endured it all.

In the morning, feeling singularly restive, she was up betimes; but though she rose before the bell, she noticed that Matilda's bed was empty—Matilda, apparently, having risen before her. Babs went down to her study.

And there she halted, her breath coming in a sharp hiss as she gazed into Study No. 4.

Once again Matilda had been at work. The whole study was made hideous with chalked insults. On the mirror was scrawled "Swindler." On the seats of the chairs, "Thief." On the front of the bureau—a huge "Pickpocket." Even across the hearth, "Cheat."

"Oh, how could she!" Babs choked.

She trembled then. Perhaps it was just as well that Matilda did not come along at that moment. Red with anger, choking with humiliation, Babs rushed off to the cloak-room. There, getting a pail of water and a rag, she wiped off the offending and offensive words. By that time, rising bell was ringing, and girls were trooping downstairs.

Babs shook her head a little. She was finding it desperately hard now not to give way to anger. She was finding

it increasingly difficult to keep on telling herself that Tilda, after all, felt that she was justified—that, however hard Tilda might be hurting her, she herself had been hurt a million times more.

She must remember that. Must remember her promise to Primmy; remember what she had said to Primmy, and what, in her own heart, she wished—to make these last weeks at Cliff House as bright and brimful of happiness as possible for Tilda.

Ah, but it was difficult—difficult! How could you have kind feelings towards a girl when she was doing such contemptible things?

"Oh dear!" Babs sighed.

And then she had an idea. Well, supposing she wrote to Tilda. It was rather a silly idea, but at least Tilda would be forced to read a letter.

No sooner had she got the idea than Babs sat down. For a moment she thought. Then, rapidly, commenced to write.

For fifteen—twenty minutes she scribbled on. Then she smiled as she read the letter through. It was plain, straightforward; it was simple. It told Tilda how sorry Babs was at her misfortune. It told her that she, Babs, was ready and willing to help her in any way possible; it begged her to take the principal part in the Friardale pageant. Only one favour Babs asked.

"I am sure, Tilda, when you have thought over things, that you will see how silly it is for us to be at loggerheads," she had written. "I am not asking you to believe what I say over what has happened. But I do ask you to try to be friendly until I hear from my father—or, better still, until my father arrives in England, and can therefore speak for himself. Until then, please believe that I'm most dreadfully sorry about everything, and would love to forget all that has happened, and be friends."

Very sincere was that letter. Babs had written it with thoughtful care. She folded it, put in an envelope, just as Bessie came in.

"Oh, hallo, Babs! Anything I can dud-do for you?" she asked.

"Bessie, yes, please!" Babs said eagerly. "Take this to Tilda, will you?"

Good-natured Bessie gave her a blink, and ambled off with the letter. And somehow Babs felt happier, more light-hearted then. Tilda could hardly fail to respond to that. She half-expected Tilda to come rushing along, but in vain she listened for her footsteps. Breakfast bell rang presently.

Still feeling happy, wondering how Tilda had received her letter, Babs went into the dining-hall. She caught sight of Tilda, looked at her, and smiled. But Tilda, apparently in deep conversation with Lydia Crossendale, appeared not to notice her. Babs took her seat at the table.

And she stared. For under her plate was a folded piece of paper.

She dimpled a little. With a smile, she glanced towards Tilda again. Tilda smiled back—but it was a curiously twisted smile, and with interest she watched as Babs raised her plate from the paper. And then Babs bit her lip. For a moment her hand shook and her face turned dead white. For the paper was her own letter, and across the face of that letter, in blue ink, was written one word:

"PIFFLE!"

Angrily she crushed it in her hand. She did not look towards Tilda again. But once more she felt anger rising. That morning she had little appetite for breakfast. After breakfast came

assembly; after assembly lessons. With the rest of the girls she took her place in the Fourth Form class-room; quietly, when Miss Charmant came in, got out her history book.

Miss Charmant regarded the class. "Now please turn to page 166," she said.

Babs turned. And as she did so, a slip of paper fell out. It was inscribed with a single word:

"Thief."

Heavily and angrily Babs breathed then. This was going too far. She heard a chuckle from the desk beside her, and turned for a moment, gazing with angry, blazing eyes into the sneering face of Matilda.

"Well?" Matilda grimaced. "I think you've gone far enough!" Babs choked.

"Barbara, please stop talking!" Miss Charmant said severely. "Now pay attention, girls! The subject of the lesson is 'England under the Danes.' I want you to read through the chapter in your books; then, from memory, draw a map of England showing how it was divided. To help you with the drawing, I have already prepared an outline map of England which you may copy—filling in the divisions yourselves, of course. Barbara, will you please come forward and turn the blackboard over?"

There was another titter from Matilda as Babs walked out. Without interest the class watched as she lifted the board and carefully placed it upon the pegs in the easel. Then there was a gasp.

"Oh, my hat! Look!"

For Miss Charmant's outline map of England was no longer on the board. In its place was chalked a sentence. That sentence ran:

"BARBARA REDFERN OUGHT TO LEAVE CLIFF HOUSE."

Babs blinked. Her face turned scarlet. Miss Charmant looked round, stared at the sentence, and then her eyes flashed. Angriest she faced the class.

"Who wrote this?"

No reply.

"Barbara, have you any idea who wrote it?"

Babs looked at Matilda, idly toying with her pencil. She had an idea—most certainly. But being Barbara Redfern, she did not tell. Miss Charmant repeated the question.

"Very well," she said when again there was no reply. "I will not punish the whole Form for the insolence of one girl, but be sure I shall do my best to find out. Barbara, you may go back to your seat. Brenda Fallace, come forward and wipe out this absurd phrase. Now, please, to your work, girls, while I re-draw the map!"

Red-eared, choking down her wrath, Babs went back to her place. Girls glanced at her—some sympathetically, some curiously, some triumphantly. As Babs plumped into her desk, she glared at Matilda.

"You wrote that!" she accused. "Well, if the cap fits—" Matilda said insolently.

"Matilda! You are talking!" Miss Charmant rapped.

"Yes, Miss Charmant," Matilda's eyes glittered. "Well, I had to talk; Barbara Redfern was insulting me!"

"What!"

"She was accusing me of writing that insult on the board, Miss Charmant!"

"Barbara!" Miss Charmant cried. "Barbara, what is this? I understand that Miss Primrose has asked you—well, you know very well what she has

asked you. That is hardly carrying out her wishes, Barbara! Please be a little more friendly towards Matilda!"

To the roots of her hair Babs flushed then. Miss Charmant did not suspect Matilda. Matilda, because of her misfortune, seemed to be getting away with everything.

Almost trembling, she started her work. She read, but the words swam in front of her eyes. By the time the order came to put books away, she had absorbed nothing of what she had read, and falteringly started to make the outline drawing of the map. Then suddenly there was a movement beside her; a slip of paper fluttered on to her desk.

Babs took one look at it. Her eyes flamed.

For the paper contained a caricature—a crudely drawn thing but one which left no doubt as to its meaning. It depicted Babs herself dressed in her Catherine of Calais costume, with handcuffs on her wrists and a convict's cap on her head. It showed a stern-faced warder in her rear, and it showed Doris Redfern, dressed from head to foot in a frock decorated with broad arrows, with one hand in the pocket of the warder; and in the other a watch and chain, and a purse, obviously having been filched from the pocket of the warder. Nearby was a man, intended to be Babs' own father, sneaking away on all fours with some sort of a box under his arm. The box was labelled "Stolen Property."

Angrily Babs regarded it; passionately she crushed it into a small ball in her hand. That insult was not just an insult to herself—it was an insult to her whole family. For the moment she forgot her good intentions; for a moment completely forgot where she was. Furiously she spun round upon the grinning Matilda.

"You—you mean, insulting thing!" she cried.

"Barbara!" exclaimed Miss Charmant.

Too late, Babs remembered. She spun round.

"Barbara, how—how dare you?" Miss Charmant looked thunderstruck. "How dare you speak to Matilda in that way? The very idea! Barbara, is this what you call being friendly to Matilda? Is this how you show your sympathy for a girl who is spending her last term at school?"

"Yes, rather! Play the game!" Lydia cried.

"Lydia, silence, please! Barbara, stand up!" Miss Charmant looked really angry then. "What have you to say?"

For a moment Babs was tempted to show the crushed-up insult in her hand. But she didn't.

"I—I forgot!" she stammered.

"You forgot indeed! Barbara, I am surprised at you!" Miss Charmant said, shocked. "For such an insult you will be confined to school bounds this afternoon. Now sit down!"

And Babs, amid a buzz from the class, sat down. For once she felt utterly beaten, utterly baffled. What could she do against the relentless spite of such an enemy?

No End to Her Treachery!



AFTERNOON.
It was a half-holiday at Cliff House.

And an unusually sunny half-holiday, too—a half-holiday which had turned out, despite the lateness of the year, to be quite warm. Half the girls were already out

enjoying themselves in the fields, or the woods, or by the sea. Most of the other half were either watching or participating in the various hockey practices taking place on Junior or Senior Side. Everybody, in short, seemed to be enjoying themselves.

But there were two who were not.

One was Barbara Redfern, who, feeling unusually unlike hockey that afternoon, stood on the sideline watching a vigorous tussle between a Clara Trevlyn eleven made up from the Fourth and Third Forms, and a Diana Royston-Clarke eleven, also made up from those two Forms. The other was Doris Redfern.

Doris should have been in one of those practice sides, but Doris at this moment was in detention. In front of her lay her detention task—as yet untouched. The door was locked and under the desk, Doris, a strangely apprehensive and anxious look on her face, was counting beads—beads of a rather valuable order.

stooped and slid the impot paper beneath the door; she pressed the penholder into the key hole, rotating it against the key, which was in the outside of the lock. A few deft turns, and there was a sudden plop as the key fell on the corridor side of the door on to the impot paper, and Doris, drawing that paper back under the door, drew with it the key.

Doris, a great reader, had learnt this trick from the latest adventure book she had read. Trembling now, she fitted the key into the lock.

She flung open the door, furtively peering down the corridor outside. All was well!

Now she was out. Quietly she returned the key, locking the door on the outside again. That, at least, would allay the suspicions of any prefect or mistress who came along. And breathlessly she flew.

Through the servants' quarters she went, emerging cautiously into the sun-

claimed that these forcing-houses formed part of Nicholls' Famous Chrysanthemum Nurseries.

For a long, long minute Doris stood, anxiously, and somewhat fearfully scanning the nurseries. No one seemed to be about—at least, as far as she could see, though had she looked behind her she might have espied the cautious face of Matilda Tattersall curiously peering at her.

In front of Doris was a five-barred gate, set in the middle of a barbed-wire fence, and, like the fence itself, covered with barbed-wire to prevent its being scaled.

Doris gulped a little. Then, half-crouching, she crept towards the gate. With an anxious blink to right and left, she slipped back the catch, pushed the gate open, and hurried up the footpath between the glass-houses. Not until then did Tilda emerge from her hiding-place. She gave a soft chuckle.

"And this, Miss Doris Redfern, is



"I'm broke!" Matilda told Clara Trevlyn. "Barbara knows all about it," she added vindictively. "It was her father who swindled my father. Ask Barbara for my contribution; she's got all my money!"

They were, in fact, pearls—not first water pearls, but pearls sufficiently valuable to worry Doris Redfern.

"Twenty-one, twenty-two." Doris came to the end of the counting. She had done that at least six times that afternoon. "Two missing!" she muttered. "Oh dear! They must—they must be in Nicholls' Nurseries. And the day after to-morrow, Grace—"

She didn't finish. She gathered the pearls into a piece of paper, and screwed it up again. Then, longingly she looked towards the windows which, however, in the Third Form class-room, were too high up to be reached without the aid of a ladder, or a pair of steps.

Her lips compressed. Once again she looked at the little packet in her hands. Then, restlessly, as if led by something stronger than herself, she rose, and, taking a piece of impot paper and a pen from her desk, tiptoed towards the door. There for a moment or two she stood listening.

No sound.

Doris drew a deep, deep breath. She

light by the cloisters. Her luck held. No one was in sight.

But there Doris made her first miscalculation. For even as she sprinted across the cloisters toward the hedge, a girl appeared from around the corner of the school building. The girl was Matilda Tattersall.

"Aha!" muttered Matilda, and caught her breath.

She watched. She saw Doris reach the gap in the hedge; she saw her squeeze her way through it. Then, with a peculiar look on her face, she followed, more slowly. Doris, with no thought of danger now that she had won free of the school, plunged into the lonely field, quickly hurrying across it in the direction of Peggy.

Once she reached the south cove of Friardale Woods, her hurried step dropped to a walk. Threading her way through the trees, she eventually reached the edge of the wood, and in front of her, gleaming in the afternoon sunshine, stood two long rows of glass forcing-houses. A notice nearby pro-

where you get it in the neck!" she murmured.

She darted away, taking care to keep out of view of the gate. On the outside of the barbed-wire barrier she ran until, having negotiated the whole length of the nurseries, she came to the watchman's shed. The door was open. In it two people were talking.

"What luck!" Matilda breathed. "Old Farmer Nicholls' himself!"

Old Farmer Nicholls, the irritable enemy of Cliff House, it was. He saw the movement outside the door, and his battered, pugilistic face took on a furious scowl as he spotted the Cliff House girl. He came to the door.

"Hey! What be you wanting here?"

"It's Farmer Nicholls, isn't it?" Matilda simpered. "I thought you'd like to know, Mr. Nicholls, that a girl is trespassing in your nurseries."

"Hey?"

"It's a fact!" Matilda went on.

"Sh-o!" the farmer growled. "This isn't a joke?" he added suspiciously. "Who are you? What's your name?"

"Please, I'm Matilda Tattersall, of Cliff House," that girl answered meekly. "And the girl who is trespassing is Doris Redfern. I advise you to hurry, though," she added, "if you want to catch her."

Belligerently the crusty farmer glared at her. Then he signed to his watchman, and, grabbing up the thick, gnarled stick he always used, strode off. Meanwhile, Doris, growing desperation and anxiety on her face, was searching the ground between the glass-houses with anxious eyes.

"They must be somewhere about here," she muttered distractedly.

This way and that she peered, deaf then to all sounds, every atom of her attention concentrated on her search. She did not see the two figures which suddenly appeared from the path between two of the glass-houses; did not see the sudden fury in the face of Farmer Nicholls. But she gave a stifled gasp as his strong, horny palm fell upon her shoulder, whirling her round.

"Trespassing, eh?" barked the farmer. "Trespassing on my property! Come on, young lady!"

"Oh dear! I—I'm sorry!" Doris blurted nervously. "I—I wasn't doing anything! Please—please let me go!"

The farmer's face was grim.

"Come on!" he growled.

"But—but where are you taking me?"

"I'm taking 'ee," Farmer Nicholls said, with a furious glare, "back to your headmistress, young lady!"

And Doris was dragged forward.

While, from a safe distance, the watching Matilda chuckled softly.

Triumph for a Schemer!



"BABS—Babs, I sus—say—"

Bessie Bunter, with an apprehensive blink, rolled towards Barbara Redfern as moodily

she watched the game between the Trevlyn and the Royston-Clarke elevens.

"Well, old Bessie?" she asked. "Oh crumbs! Bib-Babs, there's some trouble!" Bessie blurted, staring towards the school. "Doris—"

"Doris?" Babs was immediately alert. "What's happened?"

"Dud-Doris was brought back by—by Farmer Nicholls, you know," Bessie stammered. "She—she broke detention, or something, and the fuf-farmer caught her in his nurseries. Now she's going through the mill like anything in Primmy's study. But—Babs, I sus—say, Babs!" she called.

But Babs was already pelting towards the school.

Doris, breaking detention! Doris—after her warning—in Farmer Nicholls' nurseries again! Oh, goodness! The little chump!

What Babs intended to do she did not know. She only had the vaguest idea of intervening. But as she reached the steps of the schoolhouse, a furious-faced figure came clumping down them.

"Mr. Nicholls—" Babs gasped. "Get out of my way!" the man growled.

"Mr. Nicholls—no, please!" Babs faced him desperately. "I—I want to ask you something—please," she begged, "about my younger sister, Doris Redfern—"

"That young scallawag!"

"Mr. Nicholls, what was she doing in your nurseries?"

"How do I know what she was doin'? Up to mischief, you can be bound! Well, I caught her before the mischief had happened, whatever that was going to be, thanks to another friend of yours—a girl named Matty Tattersall, or something like that. Your sister won't say why she was in the nurseries, but next time I catch her she'll go to the police station, not back to school!"

Angrily he stumped away, while Babs, her face white, gazed after him. So Matilda Tattersall had sneaked upon Doris, had she! What a cat—what a spiteful, trouble-making cat the girl was! Was there no end to the mischief she was seeking to create?

But Doris—
And with a gulp, Babs darted into Big Hall, racing up the stairs towards Miss Primrose's study. But she never reached that study, for down the corridor, her face white, her blue eyes troubled, came wandering a forlorn and lonely-looking figure. Babs stopped.

"Doris—"
Doris looked up.
"Doris—oh, you little idiot!" Babs cried. "No, don't run away!"—and she caught her. "What's all this? Why did you break detention to trespass on Nicholls' land?"

"I—I was only looking for something," Doris blurted.

"What?"

"Nun-nothing!" Doris mumbled. "Please, Babs, don't lecture me now!" she said appealingly, and Babs winced as she saw how nearly she was to tears.

"I—I've had enough for one afternoon."

"But, Doris, old kid, what's the trouble? Tell me. If I can help—"

"You—you can't."

Babs sighed.
"What did Primmy say to you?"

Doris' lips quivered.
"She—she's going to report me to daddy and mums, and—and I'm detained again, of course, and—"

"And what?"

"She—she says next time she will expel me."

Babs gazed at her. Doris, struggling hard to keep the tears back, commenced to walk on. Mechanically Babs fell into step by her side. Her head buzzing, she was reviewing the situation with sick dismay. Her younger sister already in Primmy's black books, due for a bad report home, threatened with expulsion! And all because of the treachery of another Cliff House girl! Matilda Tattersall.

Oh, wait till she saw Tilda! Very grim, Babs' expression then. Whatever Tilda's grievances, there could be no possible excuse for such treacherous cattiness as this.

And then, passing the window on the landing, she did see her—Tilda just entering the gates with Lydia Crossendale, Frances Frost, and Freda Ferriers.

Tilda had just returned from Nicholls' Nurseries, and had fallen in with Lydia & Co. on the way back to Cliff House. She was listening rather interestedly and thoughtfully to what Lydia was saying as they strolled up the drive.

"And I think," Lydia said indignantly, "that Barbara Redfern's treated you about as shabbily as it's possible for any girl to treat another. And that, mind you, after her father has swindled yours out of all his money! If you ask me, it's about time we had a new Form and Junior School captain!"

"Yes, rather!" applauded Freda Ferriers.

"And that," Frances Frost said bitterly, "is the girl who's going to queen it at the pageant: the daughter of a swindler and a thief! A fine old

show up for Cliff House! If anybody deserved that honour," Frances went on indignantly. "I should say you, Tilda! Tilda, why don't you take the job on?" she added eagerly. "You've got practically the whole Form behind you, and everybody would be jolly glad to give you a leg up to celebrate your last term."

"You think so?" Tilda asked thoughtfully.

"Sure!" Lydia said. "Why not try it?"

Tilda smiled—craftily, cattily. She did not think it necessary to explain then that she had already been offered the star part in the pageant and had turned it down. Yet, ever since she had refused Babs' generous offer, she had regretted it.

It would be a memory to take away with her; it would be something to look back upon—apart from which, why should one of those hated Redferns queen it in glory while she, their victim, buried her light under a bushel? Babs had offered that job to her once; Babs would give it to her again—that silly namby-pamby! And as Lydia said, she had the backing of the biggest part of the Form.

For the Form, of course, was still sympathetic towards Matilda.

"Well, why not?" Tilda considered, and grinned. "First of all, though, we'll give Barbara a chance of handing it over on her own. Come on. Let's go and see her now."

The four quickened their step, little guessing that grim-faced Babs was hurrying to meet them, too. In the Big Hall they met.

"Tilda—" Babs broke out.

"Oh, Barbara, I want to speak to you—"

"And I," Babs retorted, "to you! What do you mean—"

"One thing at a time, please!" Matilda answered. "We've been talking over things—Lydia and I. And we, you know, all think it would be a pretty good idea if you climbed out of the pageant and handed over the big part to me!"

Babs stared.

"Oh, you do?"

"Well, don't you?" Matilda asked.

"After all, it's my last term."

"And," Babs broke out, unable to hold her temper in check, "it won't be your fault if it's mine too, will it? Or Doris? You're not doing your best to get her expelled—oh, don't look at me like that! You know jolly well to what I'm referring! Well, here's my answer. I offered you that part once; you wouldn't take it. And now," Babs added, her eyes flashing, "I'm jolly glad you wouldn't, because nothing on earth would make me hand it over!"

"Not even," Lydia sneered, "if the Form wanted it?"

"Not even if the Form wanted it!" Babs said angrily. "And this doesn't concern you, girls, anyway!"

"No?" sneered Frances Frost. "And I suppose your catty conduct doesn't concern us? From the moment you heard that Tilda had lost her money you've had your knife into her. From the moment you knew she was to leave school you've done all in your power to make her life a misery. I think," she added, her voice rising, "it's the least you can do, Barbara Redfern, if only to make up for your rotten treatment of Tilda!"

"I haven't treated Tilda rottenly!" Babs cried. "I haven't! Anyway, that's neither here nor there. I wouldn't hand over the part in the pageant now if Tilda was the only girl left to take it! She's a mean, awful sneak!"

"Look here—" Tilda cried. "One moment!" a voice put in, and rustling down the stairs came Miss Primrose—Miss Primrose, who had obviously overheard all the latter part of that conversation, whose lips were trembling with anger. "Barbara, I could not help hearing what you said then," she said, "and I think it is mean, despicable, and uncharitable of you! What is all this argument about?"

Tilda flushed, but Lydia boldly spoke up.

"Well, we thought, Miss Primrose, as Babs has been behaving so rottenly towards Tilda, that she might like to make it up by offering her the part of Catherine in the pageant. After all," Lydia said, putting on her most compassionate expression, "we all do feel that it's up to us to make her last term at school happy."

Miss Primrose nodded. "A very praiseworthy and unselfish thought, Lydia," she said. "And, Barbara, what did you say?" "I said 'No!'" Babs replied steadily.

"Indeed! You are not willing to make such a small sacrifice?"

"I don't mind making the sacrifice, Miss Primrose. In fact," Babs blurted, "I've already offered the part."

"Oh, Barbara!" Tilda exclaimed. "Miss Primrose, she really hasn't!"

"I see!" Miss Primrose's lips compressed. Angrily, sternly she regarded the Junior School captain. "Barbara, I really am surprised—and disappointed," she said. "I really thought you would do your best to please me when I asked you a certain favour yesterday. So far from doing that, you seem to have gone out of your way to be as rude and as horrid as possible."

Babs turned crimson. "But, Miss Primrose—"

"And in the circumstances," Miss Primrose went on, "I tend to agree with Lydia's suggestion. Barbara, don't you think you might do this?"

Babs choked. "Oh, if Primmy only knew! If only!"

"I—I'm sorry, Miss Primrose, but no!" she stated firmly.

"That is your final answer?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose."

"Then I, too, am sorry," Miss Primrose's lips curled a little. "Now, please, Barbara, listen to me. Since you have shown yourself so unworthy of representing the school, I am afraid from this moment I withdraw permission for you to act as Catherine. Lydia, you will kindly inform the Form of that, and ask them to elect another representative. Barbara, you hear?"

Babs did hear. But so trembling, so utterly sick was she, that for the life of her she could not have spoken in that moment.

The Big Blow Falls!



"Oh dear!" The words, in a voice of sighing anguish, came from Doris Redfern.

It was night—a bright, brilliant moonlight night, its frosty air clear and sparkling. The silver radiance, filtering through the wide window of the Third Form dormitory, transformed darkness almost into day.

Eleven o'clock had just boomed from the old clock tower, and its reverberating echoes were in the act of dying away as Doris muttered those words.

The Third was asleep, fast and bliss-

fully; but Doris, although she had been in bed hours, was still wide awake. How could she sleep with all the worries that were on her young mind—her mission in Farmer Nicholls' nurseries still unaccomplished; Babs now in deep trouble?

She bit her lip. Indirectly that trouble had been caused by her. The whole school, during the evening, had rung with the news that Babs, deposed by Miss Primrose from the leading part in the pageant, had had the mortification of seeing the Form hand that honour to her enemy. She had been the indirect cause of that, because Babs had been sticking up for her.

"Oh dear!" sighed Doris again.

If only—oh, if only she could find what she wanted! If only her own great trouble was lifted from her mind; And yet the only way that could be lifted was to pay another visit to Farmer Nicholls' nurseries; the only

her lips she tiptoed towards it. Doris, running then, was making for the gap in Lanes' Field. Without a thought that she was being followed, she trotted on to Nicholls' Nurseries. Here the light, reflected by the glasshouses, was as bright as floodlight.

Cautiously, making sure that no one was about, Doris pushed open the gate. She wandered along the main path through the glasshouses, peering this way and that. And then suddenly she halted, spinning round with a gasp of fright. Near by came a sudden splintering crash.

Then a voice—a gruff voice.

"There she is!"

Doris did not know that Matilda Tattersall had thrown the stone which broke the window. She did not know that it was Tilda's voice, disguised for the purpose, which rang upon the still night air then. In palpitating panic she fled.



BABS' face turned white as she saw the piece of paper under her plate. It was the letter she had big-heartedly written to Matilda. This was Matilda's answer—the letter returned with that one bitter word scrawled across it.

answer to her pressing problem lay in that forbidden spot. Supposing—supposing she tried—now?

She jerked upwards, shivering in the frost-laden air as the bedclothes slipped from her shoulders. It was light—brilliantly light—light enough for her purpose. Well, why not try it?

And suddenly Doris came to a decision. She flung the bedclothes from her, and just as Matilda Tattersall, in the Fourth Form dormitory, was getting up also, Tilda, with some vague idea of repainting her insults in Study No. 4—she slipped into her shoes. In a few moments she was dressed. She tiptoed towards the door and went out. Down the corridor she stole.

But again she did not see the figure which, softly creeping down the stairs as she crossed Big Hall, suddenly drew back into the shadows, watching.

"Aha!" breathed Matilda Tattersall.

"Doris, eh?"

Her eyes glistened as she heard the lobby window go up. With a smile on

"HALLO!" MUTTERED Clara Trevlyn. "What's Primmy doing with that hat?"

Barbara Redfern, wearing a worried expression, looked up. She looked up without any particular curiosity, for Babs' mind was loaded with too many troubles to be surprised in the picture of Miss Primrose arriving at assembly with a girl's school hat in her hand. But the rest of the school, gathered in Big Hall before morning lessons, blinked a little.

For it was obvious, apart from the unusual spectacle of Primmy carrying one of their hats, that there was trouble in the air.

The headmistress' face was pale; her lips were set in that thin line which had taught Cliff House to expect news of a serious nature. Quite a rustle went round as Miss Primrose stepped to the front of her platform, for a moment gazing at the curious faces of the girls.

(Continued on page 14)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS



Always interesting, chummy and helpful is Patricia's weekly letter to you all. No wonder she is such a popular young person. Young and gay, cheery and with a delightful sense of humour all her own—she is a friend after your own schoolgirl hearts.

"Well, there's my new eider-down, Pat," she said to me. "I do like that. Then there are clothes to be considered—and food."

So finally mother's first choice was her precious eiderdown, though what she'd do with that on a tropical desert island I don't know. Next is her sewing basket, which I thought was quite a brainwave, though a bit cheating, for it contains so many useful things. Finally, she said she'd take a box of matches, until she had learned to make a fire without.

Just for fun, I asked my small brother, Heath—whose real name is Heatherington—what he'd take.

"Oh, I'd take my fairy bike, an' a big tin of toffees, an' my Red Injun outfit—that's three, isn't it?" he said, all in one breath.

"But why your Red Indian outfit?" I asked, mentally deciding that his other answers were quite bright for a young 'un.

"'Cause I can fight lions and tigers and snakes an'—an' mice an' things with that," he said simply—which didn't seem a bad idea at all.

My own list isn't nearly so simple. So far, I've thought of a book—the biggest one I can find. Then there's a wireless set, a gramophone, a fishing rod and line, a pair of scissors, a stout pair of walking shoes because of prickles, a pencil, a typewriter—oh, and I don't know what else.

But I certainly think I'll include that pencil, for it would be so useful for writing a message for help, to tuck into a bottle (if I had a bottle) to throw out to sea!

Now try to make out a list of three for yourself—it's quite a lot of fun!

● With Fur Trimming

Having spent so much space of my letter to you all this week worrying about desert islands, what about your Patricia being a spot more practical, for a change?

Wouldn't you just adore a little autumn suit (or costume, if you prefer the word) like the one in the picture here?

I know jolly well you would.

Of course, it is the fur that makes it look so luxurious. But do you realise that nowadays you can buy the most real-looking fur fabric edging that looks exactly like the real fur?

This edging costs six-pence for a quarter of a yard, in many

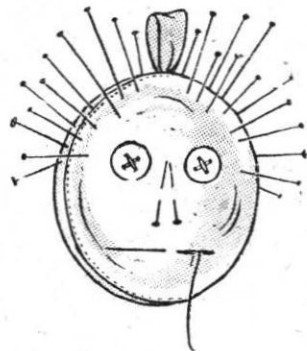
colours. There is imitation sable and American broadtail, both of which are brown furs. There is imitation Persian lamb and Indian lamb, both of which are black.

Half a yard of any of these fur edgings would very quickly give a coat and skirt you might already have a most cosy and expensive look.

Sew a strip to the collar and two more strips across the tops of the pockets. It would look marvellous—and so expensive!

● So Quaint

This quaint needle-and-pin cushion—which would be the very thing for your



This is "Mr. Pins."

workbag, either at home or at school—is Mr. Pins.

He is made from two circles of material sewn together round the edges and stuffed with bran. (You could snaffle a little from your bunny rabbits' store for this, couldn't you?)

The opening is sewn up, and then comes the arrangement of the pins. They are jabbed in at the top for hair, and they make the nose as well. A needle makes the mouth, and two white buttons are sewn on for the eyes.

A loop of ribbon can be sewn to the top so that you can hang it up, if you would like to.

● Thank You

Now I must just say thank you very much to Veronica Wilson for the very pretty little hankie she sent me. Why didn't you give your address, Veronica? For then I'd have replied by post. All the same, thanks most awfully; it was sweet of you!

Bye-bye all, until next Saturday.

Your friend,
PATRICIA,

I SUPPOSE you high-spirited youngsters are looking forward to Guy Fawkes' Day, aren't you?

You'll probably think I'm a frightful coward if I confess to you that, much as I like fireworks myself, they certainly do give me some starts and jumps as they go off pop and crackle!

But, mind you, I wouldn't tell anyone else that for worlds!

● Table Games

This October weather has been reminding me of the games we used to play at school—a dinner-table game, that is.

Of course, we played Truth as we tucked-in to our boiled beef, followed by rice pudding and prunes, asking the most ridiculous questions and receiving some very blush-making as well as complimentary answers, too, at times!

Who do you think has the prettiest hair in the Form? Who do you think is best at singing? Tell me three of my faults and three of my virtues? All these were very favourite questions—and I expect they are with you, too.

● "Desert Island"

But another game that's lots of fun, though much less personal—which is, perhaps, just as well—is "Desert Island."

Supposing you were stranded on a desert island and could only take three articles with you, which three would you choose? That's the game.

You give everyone time to think, and then come the answers.

They're often astounding and nearly always most amusing.

"I'd take a frying-pan, my golf clubs, and my camera," said my father promptly when I put the question to him.

Then, when I pointed out that his camera wouldn't be much use without a chemist or the apparatus to develop the film, he had another think.

"A wood-chopper, then," he grinned, and I gave him ten out of ten for a really sensible reply.

For with his frying-pan he can cook, we'll suppose, providing there is animal life on the desert island. With his golf clubs he can always be amused. And with his chopper he can build a house, or even make a (very comie!) golf course.

● Different Answers

Mother was rather worried by my questions.



COLOUR CHART FOR SCHOOLGIRLS

I HAVE spent such a long time planning out this chart for you—so, naturally, I am most anxious that you will ALL find it useful. Most mothers, in these days, I think, will consult their schoolgirl daughters when they are going to have new clothes this autumn. And you school-girls yourselves have decided ideas of your own on the subject, now haven't you?

This chart is intended as a *guide* to your choice. For if you select the right colour garment it is, first of all, an economy, for it will "go" with your other clothes. Secondly, and very important, the right colours worn together mean that you always look well-dressed.

I know that this means a lot to the modern schoolgirl who values her appearance, especially in these days when good-looking clothes are not expensive, and to be well dressed is not a matter of money but of good taste.

HOW TO USE THE CHART

I expect now you'll glance along the top line of the chart and gasp: "Golly, I'm not going to have all those new clothes this autumn!" Of course you're not.

But I'm pretty sure that you'll be having SOMETHING new—whether it is a lovely new day dress or just a pair of new gloves.

But whatever you are having new, it should "go" with the rest of your outfit.

As your winter coat is probably the biggest item of your winter wardrobe, you will see that I have planned the chart for the clothes to "match up" with this.

The most colourful items of the wardrobe, you will notice, are the jerseys to go with your week-end skirt—and the hats. To each coat, there is a choice of at least two colours in hats (and three, if your coat is navy or brown).

The frock in each case is selected to match the hat, you'll notice—so that if you should take your coat off, leaving your hat on, the hat and dress will look well together.

The colour suggestions for everyday dresses, too, are quite varied. Remember that a plain-coloured dress can always be made gayer with the addition of contrasting trimming.

It's quite a good rule to remember that all trimmings—or accessories as they are called in the dressmaking world—should match the hat as far as possible.

White collars and cuffs will always look right, of course, but these can have multi-coloured stitching on them, while belts can either match the hat or be of the same material as the dress.

Handbags (if you like them) also come into the "trimmings" class, you'll notice, so these, too, should match your hat.

There, I think that explains the chart quite fully.

If you keep it by you, I think you will find it helpful when you are considering new clothes. If you do, I shall be very happy.
PATRICIA.



WINTER COAT	HAT	EVERYDAY DRESS	SKIRT or PINAFORE DRESS	BLOUSES or JUMPER	SHOES	HANDBAG (if any)	GLOVES
NAVY BLUE	Red	Red or Navy	Navy	White, Blue, Clover Pink or Canary Yellow	Black or Navy Blue	Red or Navy	Navy or Natural
	Navy	Clover Pink					
	Clover Pink	Navy					
BROWN	Brown	Rust Red	Green	Maize Yellow	Brown	Brown	Brown or Yellow
	Green	Greenish tweed	Brown	Green		Green	
	Rust Red	Brownish tweed	Brown	Rust Red		Rust Red	
NATURAL CAMELHAIR	Brown	Brown or Green	Brown	Green or Natural	Brown	Brown	Brown
	Navy Blue	Red or Navy	Navy	Royal Blue, Purple or Red	Navy	Navy	Navy
GREEN	Brown	Brown	Green	Rust Red	Black or Brown	Brown	Brown or Natural
	Rust Red	Tartan or Rust Red	Brown	Natural or Rust Red		Rust-Red	

REAL LEAVES MAKE THESE PICTURES

AUTUMN leaves make such pretty pictures for your very own room, or to sell at a pet charity bazaar.

First you must collect the leaves. Beech, ivy, creeper and pine are all suitable.

Place the leaves between two sheets of blotting paper and press them under a good, heavy book.

When they are dried and flattened, they must be glued very lightly on to paper—either drawing or cartridge paper—arranging them artistically as you do so.

They are then ready for framing. If mother hasn't any spare frames in the loft, or elsewhere, you could quite easily make the frames yourself from passe-partout, couldn't you?

After making one of these leaves-pictures successfully, you'll probably be a little more ambitious over the second.

If you are good at drawing you can paint a silhouette picture of a house in Indian ink to make a background for the leaves. But even if drawing isn't your strong point, why then you could trace a picture, couldn't you?



(Continued from page 11)

She came straight to the point. "Before we proceed with the usual routine this morning," she said, "I have a very, very serious announcement to make. Not many minutes ago I had a visit from Farmer Nicholls."

Babs, jerked back to reality, gave a startled look towards the Third Form ranks, in which Doris, pale, but upright, was staring directly to her front.

"Farmer Nicholls' Nurseries, as you all know, are at all times strictly out of bounds. For a girl in this school to be found in them in any circumstances is a serious offence"—she looked at Doris. "For a girl to go there at night when school gates are closed is an even more serious offence; but for a girl to do deliberate damage is an offence which can only be punished in the sternest manner possible."

"Last night," Miss Primrose rumbled on, "one girl in this school did go to Mr. Nicholls' Nurseries. That girl not only smashed a valuable window of one of the glasshouses, but"—and here she shook her head—"not only smashed a window," she added, her voice gathering a sort of quivering strength, "but deliberately opened both doors of one of the big glasshouses to admit the frost!" "Oh, my hat!" muttered Clara Trevlyn.

"You may or may not be aware," Miss Primrose went on, "that Farmer Nicholls raises prize chrysanthemums. This glasshouse, as it happens, contained his best and most delicate specimens. Those specimens, completely ruined by the frost, are now as good as dead, and Mr. Nicholls estimates the damage done at fifty pounds."

There was a gasp from the school. "The farmer, naturally, is furious. He is threatening to sue the school for the damage. That, however, is a matter of secondary consideration. The main fact is this—here, for the first time, she held up the hat—"whatever girl did that damage, whatever girl was out of bounds and entered the nurseries, left this hat behind. Unfortunately, there is no name in it by which she might be identified. I demand," Miss Primrose finished, her face pale with anger, "to know who that girl is!"

Again Babs glanced at Doris, and felt a wave of faintness sweep over her as she saw how suddenly white she was, how her hands were clenched. But there was no reply.

"Perhaps I had better make myself a little clearer," Miss Primrose added. "If the girl will come forward of her own free will, if she will own up, I may not, after considering all the circumstances, expel her as I have a mind to do. If she does not come forward, if I have to trace her by other means, then I shall most unhesitatingly expel her when I have found her out. Now, for the last time—will she step forward?"

Doris drew in her breath with a hiss; but she remained firm. Though she had been in Farmer Nicholls' Nurseries last night, she had done no damage, so that she couldn't possibly be the girl referred to; and she had returned with her hat.

"For the last time!" Miss Primrose cried.

A sort of sigh went through Big Hall. But there was no movement.

"Very well!" Miss Primrose looked angry. "Then," she said, "I shall have to adopt other methods. One of you girls here is the guilty girl. One of you has brought this disgrace upon the school. I hate—I hate most dreadfully—to punish the whole school for the fault of one—but you leave me no alternative. If the girl herself will not own up,

I can only satisfy our own and Mr. Nicholls' interests by seeing that none of you goes near those nurseries again. The only way I can do that is to confine all of you—seniors and juniors as well—to bounds until the guilty party owns up."

There was a gasp; an angry mutter. "Now," Miss Primrose said, "will the girl own up?"

Silence.

"Very well!" Miss Primrose said. "In that case, I am left with no alternative—Matilda—Matilda, really!" she cried, as Matilda furiously burst from the ranks and, panting, clambered up on the platform. "What are you doing?"

"I'm doing," Matilda cried, "what the girl who ruined those plants last night is afraid to do. I know the girl who did it. I saw her from the window when I went to get some aspirin for my headache, coming into the school without a hat! That was well past midnight. And that girl!"—she raised her arm and pointed a quivering finger at the ranks of the Upper Third—"that girl is Doris Redfern!" she cried.

The Truth—Too Late!



EVERY eye fastened upon the athen, trembling Doris, standing there almost as if on the verge of collapse. And Miss Primrose's voice rang out sternly:

"Doris, step this way!"

Babs gave a cry. As Doris stepped from the ranks, she ran forward.

"Doris—" she cried. "No!" she added passionately to Connie Jackson, the prefect, who tried to stop her. "Leave me alone—please! Doris—Doris—" she cried, and her voice choked. "Doris!"

"Barbara, please leave Doris alone!" Miss Primrose commanded.

Doris, white as death, went forward; but Babs followed. Miss Primrose glanced at her, paused, and then nodded her head as though agreeing to let Barbara share the platform. Babs put a hand round her young sister's trembling shoulders.

"Doris, what have you to say?" Miss Primrose asked sternly.

"Only that I—I didn't do it!" Doris cried wildly. "It—it wasn't me! I heard the glasshouse crash! I mean—Miss Primrose, I—I didn't do it!" she cried.

"But you admit to entering the nurseries?"

"No—I mean— Oh, what do I mean? Y—yes!" Doris stuttered.

"And you were there when the glasshouse was smashed?"

"Well, I heard something. But it wasn't me, because I—I didn't lose my hat!"

Miss Primrose turned to Connie Jackson.

"Connie, please go and see if Doris' hat is on its peg in the cloak-room!"

There was a breathless hush as Connie hurried away. For a moment dead silence. Babs looked with stinging contempt at Matilda Tattersall. Doris gave a choked sob.

Then Connie came back.

"Doris' hat is not on its peg, Miss Primrose!" she said.

"But it is! I left it there!" Doris cried wildly.

"Doris, please!" Miss Primrose's face was angry now. "Why persist in these falsehoods? It is obvious now that having a grudge against Farmer Nicholls, who caught you trespassing on his property yesterday, you have taken

your revenge. You would have stood in silence, allowing the whole school to suffer for your crime, had it not been for the courage of Matilda in speaking out. I am sorry—deeply sorry—but I rather feared that your new outbreak of lawlessness would lead to something like this. Connie, take her to the punishment-room! To-morrow, at assembly, Doris, you will be expelled!"

"Oh, no, no!" cried Babs.

"Barbara—" Miss Primrose said. "No!" cried Babs. "It's all a mistake—a dreadful, horrible mistake! Miss Primrose, Doris wouldn't tell lies! But that girl"—and she pointed firmly at Matilda—"she has told them! She told them deliberately!"

"Barbara!" gasped Miss Primrose. "How dare you?"

"I tell you—"

"Barbara, this instant!" Miss Primrose quivered. "Be quiet! Connie, take Barbara with you! Perhaps," she added, "one hour's confinement with this lawless sister of yours will bring you to reason! Connie, Barbara is to be left in the punishment-room until ten o'clock. Then, and not until then, may she be released!"

There was a murmur in the body of the hall. But Babs didn't care then. Her heart was breaking; fury at the treacherous spite of Matilda was shaking her.

Up in the bleak, barely furnished room at the top of the East Tower, she faced her sister.

"Now, Doris, tell me!" she said. "You didn't do it?"

"Babs, no!"

"Then why," Babs asked, "did you go to Nicholls' Nurseries?"

Doris bit her lip.

"Babs, must I tell you?"

"Oh, you old chump, of course you must!" Babs cried.

"Then—then—" Doris hung her head. "It was to find two missing pearl beads that belonged to Grace Camperhill's necklace," she said.

And in a gasping voice she explained—a story simple and understandable enough in all conscience. Doris was the wealthy Grace Camperhill's fag. A week ago Grace had gone on leave to see her parents who were off on a six months' health cruise abroad. Grace had broken her necklace; she had given it to Doris to rethread the beads on the very day that she left the school.

"And—and I did it," Doris said at this juncture. "And—and—well, you know that party they had at the Willows? I went to it, and I was so late in getting back that I risked the short cut through Nicholls' beastly Nurseries! Well, the watchman chased me. I fell down, and the—the necklace broke. I thought then that I had collected all the beads, until I came to count them up. Then I found two missing."

"And that is why you've been visiting the place ever since?" Babs asked. "Doris, why didn't you ask me to help?"

Doris' big eyes were fixed upon her. "Well, I didn't. Be—because I knew, if I told you, that you'd go to Nicholls' Nurseries as well to search—and that—that would only have meant trouble for you, wouldn't it?"

"You—you silly dear old kid!" Babs said chokily. "But, Doris, the hat?"

"I don't know!" Doris miserably shook her head. "The only thing I can think of is that Matilda followed me. Somebody must have thrown that stone through the window, and somebody must have opened those doors. But I had the hat—really and truly!"

Babs nodded. Her own eyes narrowed

then. She accepted that explanation, and taking it a little further, could guess what had happened. Matilda, having done that mischief, must have planted the hat there afterwards—probably early this morning—for Babs suddenly recalled now that Matilda's bed had been empty an hour before rising-bell.

But there was no proof against the spiteful schemer. What could she do?

Her head ached with trying to find an answer to that question. It was still aching when Connie came to release her. Her white-faced entry in the Fourth Form was greeted with a sympathetic glance from Mabs, and Clara, and Bessie, and her chums; with rather angry or curious looks from the others. Without looking at anyone, she took her place, ignoring the spiteful little giggle of Matilda beside her. Lessons dragged through.

She was hardly aware when break came. Almost mechanically, she rose with the rest of the class for dismissal.

And at once Clara, Mabs, Jessie, Jemima Carstairs, and Janet Jordan surrounded her.

"Babs, old thing—"

"Babs, don't take it to heart—"

Babs shook her head. Miserably she drifted into Study No. 4, and there she stared at the letter, unopened, which lay on the table. The letter was for her. It was in her father's handwriting, and was postmarked Dover.

So daddy was back! Daddy, just in time to hear—

She choked as she slit it open. Then she blinked as she read. What was this? What—

And suddenly she found herself trembling.

For her father had written:

"I am sorry to have kept you without word so long, Barbara dear; as it happens, I have had a lot of running about on the Continent to do to save the father of a friend of yours in the Fourth Form from ruining himself—I refer to Bryan Tattersall. As you know, I have been managing Tattersall's estate and money for him, and—don't tell this to Matilda, for goodness' sake!—but the fellow is such a hot-head that he would have lost everything had he been left to please himself—"

And then Babs read the details which followed—her father always wrote her very long and informative letters. And as she read the colour flooded back to her cheeks, for at last she had an answer to those base charges of Matilda.

For her father, as he said, had managed the Tattersall affairs. The Tattersalls were not rich—just comfortably off. Mr. Tattersall, apparently wanting to make money in a great hurry, had deposited his whole fortune with Mr. Redfern, asking him to invest it in a certain company.

Mr. Redfern, without knowing much about it at the time, had agreed that the prospects sounded excellent. He had, he said, advised it.

But before actually spending any of the Tattersall money, Mr. Redfern had taken the trouble to make inquiries about this company. Those inquiries had taken him to France. The results of those inquiries had shown the company to be a swindling concern, and it had crashed. Mr. Tattersall, hot-headed as usual, believing that he was ruined and urgently in need of money, had put up his house for sale at a ridiculous figure.

Mr. Redfern, hearing of that from his secretary, had instructed that the secretary buy the house to keep anyone else from having it until his return. Now, apparently, everything was all

right again. The Tattersalls' fortune and house, so far from having been taken by her father, had been saved by her father. Matilda was no worse off than she had ever been.

And all the time her hate was inspired because she thought the Redferns had ruined her—

"Oh, my hat!" Babs gasped, and sank weakly into a chair.

She felt dazed, numb suddenly. So that—that was the explanation. While her father had been accused of swindling, he had only been saving Tattersall from his own folly. While Matilda had conducted her hateful, spiteful campaign against her and her sister because she believed in that swindle, her father had been working might and main to save the Tattersalls, and had succeeded!

For one moment Babs sat, her brain whirling. Then, with a new light in her eyes, she leapt up, and rushed off to Study No. 12.



DORIS REDFERN spun round with a gasp of fright, as there sounded that sudden splintering crash. What trouble there would be now! She didn't see Matilda Tattersall slip away in the darkness.

She had got to find Tilda, and tell her. But she didn't find the girl. Eleanor Storke, sharing Tilda's study, told Babs that Tilda had gone to Hollands' stores to have her photo taken in the Catherine of Calais dress.

And even at that moment, in fact, Matilda, feeling very triumphant, was nearing Courtfield on the bus.

And then, alighting at the Market Cross, she turned with a violent start as she heard her own name surprisedly called; as a man, hurrying across the pavement, came towards her.

"Father!"

Her father it was.

"Why, Tilda!" he cried, and laughed, and Tilda noticed, in spite of his great blow, that he looked happy. "Oh, kiddie, news—news!" he breathed. "I was hoping to run into you. I was hoping to see you. Redfern has saved us—"

Matilda stared.

"R-Redfern?" she stuttered. "Mr. Redfern?"

"Mr. Redfern, yes!" He beamed.

"Kiddie, I was a fool—a real silly, hot-headed fool! I'm sorry that I wrote that letter to you. If there was any criminal in my misfortune, I was the criminal for going off as I did about poor Redfern! He put everything right—everything—and there's no need to worry any more!"

But Tilda was not listening then. Her head was spinning, spinning. This—after all her persecution of Babs and Doris; after her mean, spiteful, vindictive revenge! She had brought Doris to the brink of expulsion; she had robbed Babs of her greatest prize; she—

What a terrible fool she had been!

But now—now what was she to do?

She couldn't make up her mind. She heard her father's voice as from a distance. A question presently rallied her to herself.

"Dash it, kiddie, you don't seem a bit pleased!" he said peevishly. "And I haven't got many minutes to spare because I've got to rush off and see

Redfern again—he's coming down here, you know. By the way, how are his two girls getting on at the school? I hope there's been no fuss with them about this affair."

Tilda gulped. Well, what to do now? Should she tell her father of her share in Doris' and Babs' downfall? But, no. Why should she? After all, it had been a mistake. After all, that little cat Doris had trespassed. In any case, she had gone too far along the line to withdraw now. She daren't—she couldn't—own up! If she did, it would be herself who was expelled from Cliff House.

She'd just got to put a bold face on it. Nobody would ever know what she had done.

So, putting the bold face on it, she told him about Doris' disgrace.

But something happened to her when her father had gone. Mean, guilty, she felt. Without any buoyancy, she stepped into Hollands'; without happiness arrayed herself in her costume for the photograph, and sat under the

lights. Babs should be here. She had cheated her. She had got her sister expelled. If only—if only—

"Look this way, please!" the photographer said. "Now, smile, please!"

But Tilda, impelled by something stronger than herself, had jumped up. And, suddenly quivering, she was facing him, her hands over her face. A gasping sob came from her lips.

"No, no, no!" she cried. "Don't—don't do it! I shouldn't be here—in this dress! I shouldn't! If you only knew! If—if—"

And then, to the photographer's consternation, she made a rush across the floor of the studio, banged the door, and was gone.

Up for Expulsion!



"I CAN'T! I daren't! I won't! I've got a right to stop at Cliff House! I've got a right to be in the pageant!"

In distracted mutters those words filtered through the silent Fourth Form dormitory.

They came from the bed of Matilda Tattersall.

Many hours the Form had been asleep, but to Matilda sleep would not come. Not all that long night, indeed, did she do more than fitfully doze, and in the morning it was a very sleepy and red-eyed Tilda which rose with the rest. At once her eyes sought out Babs; but Babs, already up, had gone downstairs.

Red-eyed was Babs herself, knowing what the next few hours were to bring forth. Heavy her heart as she sat in Study No. 4. Doris—to be expelled! Doris—

She choked. She couldn't stand it! Clara Trevlyn came in.

"Babs, old thing, I—I'm frightfully sorry!" she muttered.

Babs smiled.

"Thanks, Clara!"

"Babs, are—are you all right?" Mabs asked anxiously, following Clara in. And there was plump Bessie behind Mabs, her own eyes misty behind her thick spectacles.

"Y-yes, thanks!" Babs said.

But she wasn't. Something had gone out of Babs that morning. One by one her friends trooped in. With difficulty Babs restrained herself from bursting into tears. She dreaded, and yet was almost glad, when assembly-bell put an end to the tension which was well-nigh becoming unbearable.

With the others she trooped into Big Hall.

Low whispers filled the Hall when she arrived there; every eye was immediately fastened upon her. She saw Matilda gazing at her. A bitter smile wreathed her lips as she caught her glance, and then, turning her head away, she went to her place. In a subdued voice Miss Charmant called the roll. Almost in a whisper Babs answered her own name.

Then there was a rustle—a sigh. And suddenly electric tension as the door at the far end of the Hall opened, and on to the scene stepped Miss Primrose, followed by Dulcia Fairbrother, captain of the school, and a wide-eyed, white-faced Doris.

Babs almost cried out.

"Girls," Miss Primrose said, and her own voice trembled. "Girls, I—I will not make this most dreadfully painful task unduly protracted. You all know why we are gathered here this morning. Doris, come forward!"

Doris, with flagging steps, stepped to

the front of the platform. Babs clenched her hands.

"This girl," went on Miss Primrose, her voice quivering, "has disgraced the school. She has done wilful damage as an act of revenge. To the last she remains defiant, refusing to admit her offences, and giving me but one alternative—to expel her!"

She stepped forward. The school held its breath.

"Doris Redfern, I declare that you are ex—"

No farther she got. For suddenly a wild, anguished cry came from the middle of the Hall, and Babs, feeling herself swaying on her feet, jerked round as she saw Matilda Tattersall, her own face white now, standing there, all trembling.

"No!" Tilda cried. "No! Miss Primrose, you can't, you can't! I can't bear it! I can't bear it, I tell you! Doris didn't do it! I did!"

A great gasp rang through Big Hall.

"I did!" Matilda cried. "I did it for revenge! I hated her and Babs—I hated them because I thought they had ruined my father! I meant to let things go, but I can't—can't! Let me tell the school!"

And she went forward, trembling but glad. Yes, glad now—glad that she had found the courage to confess. There was no hesitancy as clearly she spoke the words which sealed her own doom. And at the end of it there was a dead, dumbfounded silence.

Miss Primrose broke it.

"Doris, I am sorry. You—you may go," she said. "Matilda, I shall get into communication with your father at once—and when he arrives, you will leave the school with him. I am glad for the sake of your own conscience, that you have owned up; but I must say that I think you have been detestable and wicked! Dulcia, take her to the punishment-room. Doris, you may go."

And while Matilda, head bowed, was led off, Doris, dazed but relieved, stepped down into the Hall again. Babs rushed at her, caught her, held her, and whispered incoherently.

And the school cheered; in a great ferment the school tramped outside. And then Babs started again, for

coming up the drive were two people—her own father and Matilda's.

The story was blurted out—this time by Bessie—Bessie wild with delight—and Mr. Redfern stared in dismay, and Mr. Tattersall stood like a stricken man.

"I think," Mr. Redfern said. "we had better go and see Miss Primrose. Head up, Tattersall, old man. Babs—Doris—you come with us."

They went. And presently Matilda, fearing to look her father in the face, was sent for. In a halted, broken voice she told her story again. Her father's lips compressed.

"Well," he said quietly, "after this, of course, you will leave Cliff House—I shall take you away at once. But I'm glad—glad that in the end you had the strength of character to own up."

Tilda gulped. She looked up.

"Miss Primrose—" she said.

"Well, Matilda?"

"May—may Babs still be 'Catherine' in the pageant?"

"She may."

"And—and Doris—" And Tilda flushed. Then she dived her hand into her pocket. "I think," she said, "you have been looking for these. I found them the day I put the farmer on your track, but I've stuck to them ever since. I'm sorry—dreadfully sorry! There! And with relief she put into Doris' hand two shiny pearls. "Have—have I done enough?"

"Tilda, yes—yes!" Babs said softly.

"Thank you!"

"You—you forgive me?" Tilda blurted.

"Everything—everything!" Babs said. "I'm sorry, too. Miss Primrose, please won't you give her another chance?"

Miss Primrose paused. But Mr. Tattersall shook his head.

"She shall have another chance—yes," he said. "But another chance at another school."

And that decision he stuck to. And that morning Matilda Tattersall left. But she left not in the disgrace she had expected. For Babs, touched by that good streak which had forced her conscience to awake at the last moment, lined up the whole Form at the gates to give her a rousing send-off, a Cliff House good wish for her future happiness and success!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.



—AND WHAT A SENSATION SHE CAUSES! AT SCHOOL WITH HER OWN PET LEOPARD; STRANGE TO THE WAYS OF CIVILISATION; IGNORANT OF THE THINGS SHE MUST NOT DO AND UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND WHY SHE MUST NOT DO THEM; AND YET ANXIOUS TO HELP BABS & CO., HER FRIENDS.

For Babs & Co., in conflict with an unpopular prefect, need help. But Jungle Jess, unfortunately, only makes things worse with all the quaint, original things she does, though more than once her efforts are very, very amusing.

You'll revel in this grand story. Hilda Richards has not only packed it with fun and drama, but given it a host of really novel incidents. Order next Saturday's SCHOOLGIRL without delay.

Glamour and Excitement in this unusual 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. Pamela arranges to meet Paul, who has important news for her, in the Palace grounds. But that night, when she slips into the grounds, she loses her wig. She is caught by one of the guards who, not recognising her, means to take her before the grand duke. If the grand duke sees her, he will realise the imposture and all will be lost.

(Now read on.)

Paul Brings Vital News!

FRANTICALLY though Pamela struggled, it was useless. The Civic Guard's grip was too strong.

"It's no use your trying to escape, my girl," he said curtly, pushing her on. "You'll only hurt yourself."

It was the most terrifying moment of Pamela's life. The huge white facade of Tolari Palace drew nearer in the darkness. The grand duke had but to see her; had but to hear the guard's story, and he would realise the startling truth. The frock she was wearing would betray her.

"Oh, let me go! Please let me go!" she begged.

"Get on!" snapped the sentry. "I've told you— His harsh voice abruptly died away.

A figure appeared from the bushes. Like an arrow it hurled itself at the Civic Guard.

As her captor, releasing her, whipped out his sword with a cry, Pamela had to thrust one of her newly freed hands to her mouth, or she would have blurted out in startled tones:

"Paul!"

Paul it was—a fighting Paul! No need for Pamela's sharp intake of breath as she saw the guard lunge forward, blade glittering in the moonlight.

Calmly Paul side-stepped the thrust;

then he leaped in to the attack. Two swift, slashing blows with bunched fists, and the sentry had crumpled up.

Paul dropped to his knees beside the man. Quickly he removed the sword from his nerveless fingers.

"Sorry, old chap," he muttered; "I had to do it. But you'll be all right." Then, springing up, he seized Pamela's arm. "Come on!" he cried. "Run for your life!"

Pamela was jerked out of a sort of daze. As Paul dragged her away towards a side wing of the palace, she glanced back over her shoulder. Poor sentry! Despite his bullying attitude towards her, he had only been doing his duty—guarding the princess!

And now—

It seemed as if Paul was leading her in circles; but at last, breathing heavily, he stopped under an arch close

Pamela plans to rescue a prisoner from the castle dungeons. But it must be done secretly. No one must suspect . . .

to the side of the palace. In the moonlight she saw that he was grinning ruefully.

"Nice kettle of fish you got yourself into," he remarked. "Good job I happened to be handy."

"Oh, Paul, thank goodness you were!" Pamela said fervently. Then: "Oh," she cried, a hand to her head, "my—my wig! It's still on that bush!"

"I'll get it."

"No, Paul, you can't! Come back! Paul—Paul—"

But Pamela might just as well have commanded the palace itself to turn upside down. Paul had already disappeared. Tremulous with suspense, she waited for his return. Supposing the sentry had recovered? Supposing one of the other sentries saw the intruder, and—

"One black wig for one careless damsel in distress," said a cheery voice in her ear.

And there was Paul again, proffering that vitally important object with a mocking bow.

Hands shaking, Pamela adjusted it, looking anxiously at her young rescuer at the same time.

"That poor fellow, Paul, how is he? You gave him two awful blows!"

"Oh, he's dozing, that's all!" was Paul's reassuring statement. "In ten minutes he'll be as right as rain, though more hot-tempered. And by then you'll be inside the castle, and I shall have vanished—like this!"

Pamela, fascinated, watched him step to the palace wall. For the first time she became aware of a tiny hole like a lock. Paul inserted the end of the sword, gave a deft twist, then gestured.

"Presto!" he said, and a portion of the wall swung back. "Have a look inside. My very own front entrance. And a bolt-hole, too," he added, as Pamela peeped inside, explaining that it led to two different passages, one of which went to one of the palace art galleries, while the other emerged,

half a mile away, in a hollow oak in Tolari Forest.

A thrill shot through Pamela. It was all so romantic, so glamorous. She laughed. Her composure was returning now.

"My front entrance, you mean," she corrected. "But, Paul"—and her voice grew serious—"why did you come here to-night, risking capture, perhaps imprisonment?"

Paul's lips set firm.

"I came here to warn you, Pam."

"To warn me?"

"Yes. Of a plot against you!" was Paul's startling reply.

Pamela felt her nerves tingle.

"A—a plot?" she burst out. "But what sort of plot?"

"A cunning, ingenious plot to discredit you in the eyes of the people."

By
DORIS LESLIE

said Paul, tight-lipped. "Listen!" He glanced about him in the darkness, then drew her into the shadows. "A young man in one of the villages had been arrested on a charge of treason. Actually, he was seeking work. The treason charge was faked—framed-up against him. But it'll be convincing enough to get him imprisoned for a year or more."

"Oh, the poor chap!" Pamela exclaimed, stricken with compassion. Then she frowned. "But who faked this charge?"

"The grand duke," said Paul quietly. "But you'll get the blame."

Pamela held her breath.

"Go on, Paul!" she said then, though her eyes were smouldering.

Paul told her all.

Already the villagers believed she had authorised the arrest.

"The grand duke has seen to that, too!" Paul fiercely explained.

They were seething with resentment, and if the unfortunate prisoner was sent to gaol, according to plan, there would be trouble. Nothing serious, perhaps; the authorities would soon quell it. But it would be the first roll of the ball towards revolution.

"And that poor chap's booked for the dungeons; I know that," Paul ended, through half-clenched teeth, "just as I know that it's the grand duke's plan to get you blamed!"

"If—if he can!" Pamela burst out hotly.

"As he would have done if I hadn't got wind of the whole rotten business," Paul told her quietly. "This is what would have happened. To-morrow you sign more State documents. Oh, I know that all right! And I also know that you rarely have time to read them all. When you came to the document authorising this fellow's imprisonment the grand duke would have made some excuse, and you'd have put your name to it, never realising exactly what you were doing."

"And everyone," Pamela muttered, "would have said: 'The princess is a tyrant.'"

"Everyone! And they'd have believed it," said Paul. His chin hardened. "Your enemies—Sonia's enemies—would have increased tenfold—just as the grand duke wants!"

Pamela, breathing heavily, nodded to herself. No need to tell her of the danger she was in. Danger was an ever-present part of the daring role she was playing.

"I won't let you down, Paul!" she said steadily. "I won't let us down, or Sonia, or Leiconia! To-morrow," she cried, "when I sign those documents"—her eyes were gleaming—"I'll be ready for the grand duke's little game. That young man shall be free this time to-morrow! I vow it, Paul, with all my heart!"

The Document She Must Not Sign!

"GOOD-BYE for now, Paul! And do, please, be careful, won't you?"

"Your Highness' request is a command. I will be careful," Paul promised. "And, by the way, I'm staying at the White Deer Inn!"

Next moment he had dived through the secret opening in the castle wall. The sliding door had softly closed into place. He was gone.

Pamela drew in a little sigh.

It was so comforting, so inspiring to have such a valuable ally.

In her boudoir, as she undressed, with her personal maid, Rowena, hovering in attendance, she became more grim.

"To-morrow," Pamela murmured, lying amid the soft, yielding bedclothes—"to-morrow I shall be fighting not only for the liberty of an innocent young man, but for the happiness of the whole of Leiconia! I mustn't fail—oh, I mustn't—I mustn't!"

AND WHEN to-morrow had dawned but a short while—

"Oh, it's lovely!" Pamela said in a rapturous whisper. "I just don't want it to end! I want it to go on for ever and ever!"

Chin cupped in her hands, she stood on the balcony outside her boudoir in the early morning, resting her elbows upon the balustrade.

"And to think," she went on, stretching out her arms in quite a possessive little gesture—"to think all this belongs to me—for the time being, anyway!" she corrected herself, with a smile.

The grounds, with their profusion of flowers and lawns; their trees and shrubs; the great, grass embankments which stretched down from the palace in a series of sloping terraces and steps to the swiftly flowing river; even the distant mountains, in their halo of pale blue mist—all were hers!

No wonder Pamela, giving a delicious little sigh, momentarily forgot such things as treacherous grand dukes and duties of State!

It was the sound of heavy footsteps on the terrace immediately below that made her lean over the balustrade, peering down. Clattering past was one of the gardeners, a number of tools, wrapped in some sacking, slung over his shoulder, rifle fashion, and—Pam's eyes widened at the unusual sight, considering that he was plainly going on duty—a bunch of flowers in his hand.

"Good-morning!" she called gaily. "You're busy very early to-day."

The gardener stopped. He looked up. And then, an expression of amazement and embarrassment filling his face, he got into a fearful tangle trying to bow and raise his battered slouch hat at the same moment.

"Your—your Highness!" he stammered. "Oh, good-good-morning!"

"And the flowers," Pamela asked, with just the right amount of dignity—"you're not going to plant them, surely?"

And she laughed, hoping it would put him at his ease.

"Your—your Highness—" he began, dropping the tools to the ground. "The flowers are"—he gulped, and dragging off his hat, jammed it into his pocket—"they're for you, your Highness!"

And he held them up. Then, realising how stupid it was to offer them like that when she was far above him, he became more confused than ever.

"For me?" Pamela cried. Her eyes sparkled. "Why, that's—that's awfully nice of you!" she said, trying not to sound half as thrilled as she felt.

"Maybe you don't remember me, your Highness," the gardener went on more boldly. "I—I'm the man who was dismissed. You got—got me my—got me reinstated, your Highness! I—I thought," he went on, getting flustered again—"I thought some flowers—my own little garden, your Highness—I—I could think of nothing else, and—and so—so, you see—"

Pamela did see, perfectly. Her heart warmed. This was the man whom the grand duke had discharged in a spasm of rage, and she had ordered to be reinstated. And the flowers, from the man's own garden, were an offering of gratitude.

"Oh, thank you!" she said softly. "Look! You've a ball of string there. Throw it up to me." And when the

man had wonderingly done so, she let down one end to him. "Now then, you can tie the stalks of the flowers to it, and I can draw them up. There! That's fine!"

In no time the little gift was in her hands.

"They're the loveliest flowers I've ever had," she said, and those words came from her heart. "Thank you—so much!"

And then, with a wave of her hand, she withdrew into her boudoir, while the gardener, radiant-faced, picked up his tools.

That little incident, so expressive of genuine affection for her, strengthened Pamela in her decision to oppose with all the determination at her command the grand duke's latest attempt to undermine her popularity with the people.

She breakfasted in her boudoir, Rowena, as usual, appearing with a silver tray. While she ate, Rowena laid out the clothes she elected to wear that day—a neat grey costume with a most adorable blouse of Hungarian design, and the softest, silkiest undies Pamela had ever seen.

After dressing, Pamela left her suite of rooms. She took with her the gardener's flowers.

Down flight after flight of broad, curving marble steps Pamela went, regal, dignified, and yet with a smile for each servant and Civic Guard she met—a smile and a word of greeting.

And so at last Pamela approached a white double door, bearing the twin-eagled crest of Leiconia.

Two members of the Civic Guards leaped to fling the doors wide. A moment later she had passed through into the study.

"Oh, please," she said, turning to the nearer man—"some vases!"

They were forthcoming almost at once. Almost reverently Pamela handed them, while arranging the flowers.

Such precious, delicate works of cut-glass they were. She put one on the polished desk, another on the elaborate mantelpiece, and a third near the french windows, for the sun to brighten the colouring even more attractively.

With shining eyes, she was admiring the effect when the doors opened again, and in came the prince, slim and aristocratic, and the grand duke, tall and debonaire, bearing a sheaf of papers.

Prince Alphonse greeted Pam affectionately; the grand duke with a curt "Good-morning, Sonia!" strutted over to the desk, dumped the papers there, started, frowned, and then swung round.

"Flowers!" he exclaimed. "Who had these put there?"

"Nobody," said Pamela quietly. "I put them there myself. Do you object, uncle?"

"Strongly. I dislike the smell of flowers!" he snapped. "However, I need not endure them long. Come, Sonia; there is work to be done!"

Pamela, seating herself at the desk, picked up the quill pen, and prepared to sign the documents placed before her.

One thing puzzled her.

Why had neither the prince nor the grand duke referred to the incident in the grounds last night? She could only suppose that the grand duke had been informed, and, for reasons of his own, was keeping silent.

Thank goodness he could hardly suspect her!

Bending over, she began to sign.

It was all very thrilling and fascinating, even though she had done this before.

Most of the documents related to matters of State, and could be recognised as such at a glance. But Pamela studied them keenly, waiting for the most important of them all, and at last she spotted it.

At the same moment the grand duke leaned towards her.

"There is no need to read any more, my dear," he said, in a gentle voice. "Spare yourself. Your signature is sufficient."

Pamela, fighting to retain her affected indifference, smiled.

"Very well," she said. "But"—and she indicated the topmost document—"what is this?"

"Merely an order for the imprisonment of a criminal," was the swift reply.

"A criminal?" Pamela repeated, in surprise. "But it says here that the young man was seeking employment. Is that a crime in our country?"

The grand duke's eyes began to smoulder.

"The man spoke words of treason against your Highness, as though you were responsible for what he called his misfortune."

Pamela, appearing to consider, bit her lip. So the grand duke was inflexibly determined to go through with his scheme? Then she must just as inflexibly oppose it, no matter what the outcome.

"Who caused his arrest?" she asked quietly.

"I, your Highness. I was passing at the time of the offence."

That was a lie, as Pamela knew full well, and her eyes gleamed.

"Uncle, I think—" she began.

But there came a diversion at the doors, which opened to admit one of the Civic Guards who, approaching the desk, drew up to the salute.

"Your Highness, one of your subjects craves audience with you!"

"Oh!" said Pamela, intrigued.

"His name and business?"

"It is," said the soldier hesitantly.

"a Madeleine Comorra, mother of one who has been sentenced to the dungeons. She begs—"

"Tell her that beggars are also criminals in Leiconia!" rapped the grand duke. "Send the woman away, man! If she persists, arrest her, too!"

Pamela rose to her feet. She was rather pale, and trembling slightly, but her whole demeanour was one of authority.

"Show her in, Luigi!" she ordered.

"Sonia—" began the grand duke, in something like a snarl.

"I said show her in!" Pamela repeated keenly. "You heard what I said?"

as the soldier, bewildered, looked from one to the other of them.

"Show her in at once!"

The Grand Duke Wins!

THERE was a moment's silence after the Civic Guard had withdrawn. The grand duke, red-faced, scowled in choking rage and chagrin. It was Prince Alphonse, perplexed and worriedly stroking his trim imperial beard, who spoke first.

"Sonia, my dear," he began entreatingly, "do you know what you are doing?" His back to the grand duke, he frowned significantly. "If this man has been treasonable—"

"But has he?" Pamela inquired



WITH a deft twist of the sword, Paul unlocked the secret door. "Presto!" he said gaily, flinging it wide and gesturing for Pamela to enter. With fast-beating heart, Pam stepped forward.

quietly. She dropped back into the chair. "Uncle Bernard may have misunderstood what was said."

And she gave the prince such a meaningful look that, with rounded lips, he drew back. For the first time he began to understand.

"Sonia, how dare you?" the grand duke burst out. "With my own ears I heard that man Comorra, in the public square. He has been sentenced! It remains for you to sign."

Pamela thought quickly. At all costs she must prevent the grand duke from suspecting the exact reasons for her opposition. A new line of attack was needed.

"The prisoner pleaded not guilty, uncle," she said, studying the document before her.

"What prisoner does not?" retorted the grand duke.

"And he had witnesses in his defence?"

"Naturally. But I do not see, Sonia—"

"I rather think, uncle, that we should give him the benefit of the doubt," Pamela said, putting on her most endearing smile.

The grand duke, a figure of tremendous rage and determination, folded his arms. Fiercely he glared at Pamela.

"I refuse to give him the benefit of any doubt!" he cried. "The prisoner has been found guilty by one of your own courts, Sonia. He must pay the penalty!"

"Subject to my consent," Pamela pointed out.

Gentle though her voice was, to conceal the tumult that raged within her, it seemed to infuriate the grand duke more than ever. Savagely his lips twisted.

"With or without your consent, you meddlesome, irresponsible child!" he raved. "Oh, I know she's the princess," he went on, with half a sneer, as Prince Alphonse, frowning, uttered a word of protest. "Her word is law—of course. But even laws may be altered, and I tell you this, Alphonse—unless Sonia abandons this deliberate defiance, I shall summon a meeting of the council

and propose that we sanction this sentence, whether the princess is in agreement or not!"

There was silence after those dramatic words.

Pamela, shaken, but somehow more determined than ever by them, looked at the prince. Then her heart went cold. She saw pity on his kindly face; pity and regret. But no longer support.

"Why, uncle—" she began tremulously, putting out a hand toward him.

He took it in his, turning his back to the grand duke.

"My dear," he said, squeezing it comfortingly, "Bernard is right! Not even you should go against the findings of your own court, even though you feel you are justified in so doing, and you have the authority. In some things you are a figurehead, Sonia. This is one of them. Your ministers, your judges, your soldiers, manage the machinery of the State. You, my child—in this affair at all events—must give your acquiescence whatever your secret feelings are."

And then, leaning towards her and lowering his voice, while at the same time giving her a significant frown, he added:

"Besides, Pamela—you're playing with fire this time! Give in now, and we may be able to effect the prisoner's pardon—new evidence, perhaps. But persist in his defence and the grand duke may become suspicious."

Prince Alphonse, patting her cheek, stepped back.

"There, Sonia!" he exclaimed. "Am I not right?"

Pamela hesitated. It seemed that she stood there, looking at the man she admired and respected more than anyone else in the palace, for an eternity of haunting suspense and dismay. And then, very slowly, she nodded.

Yes—the prince was right! She was playing with fire. Far better to accede to the grand duke's demands now, placate him, lull him into thinking he had scored a victory—and then try to devise some means of getting her own way.

New evidence in the prisoner's favour was certainly one possibility. And there might be another way out, why—Pamela's heart leaped to a sudden breath-taking idea!

Humbly, contritely, she turned to the grand duke.

"I'm sorry, Uncle Bernard," she said quietly. "It was rash of me. I—I—well, yes, I'm afraid I let my feelings run away with me. But you know more about the case than I do, naturally. I withdraw my objections!"

The grand duke's eyes glittered triumphantly.

"Then the prisoner goes to the dungeons?"

"Yes," said Pamela.

And she turned away, not daring to trust herself to the grand duke's exultant stare. For self-reproach and grief were gnawing at her heart. And her lips were aquiver.

To think that she had condemned an innocent man to those cells of darkness and solitude in the heart of the ground beneath the luxurious building in which she lived in splendour and magnificence!

Sick at heart, Pamela wanted to get away. But at that moment the doors were flung wide and one of the Civic Guards came in. Smartly, he drew up before Pamela and saluted.

"Your Highness, the peasant woman who desires audience with you—the mother of the prisoner sentenced for treason—waits your indulgence!"

"Tell her," interposed the grand duke coldly, "that her desires are incapable of fulfilment, and that unless she is off the palace precincts within five minutes she will find herself behind bars, as well as her treacherous son!"

The soldier, saluting again, made to carry out the order. But Pamela caught his arm.

"Wait!" She whirled upon the grand duke. "Uncle, couldn't we hear the woman?" she begged. "After all, we did ask her to be shown in—"

She stopped. The grand duke was regarding her with narrowed eyes.

"You seem strangely anxious for the young man's innocence to be established, Sonia. No!" His voice became a bark. "Do as I say," he ordered, gesturing

to the Civic Guard. "Have the woman removed."

"Very well, your Excellency!"

Saluting, the soldier briskly about-turned and marched for the door.

But before he could reach it there came the sounds of a tremendous commotion outside.

There was the stamping of heavily-shod feet, the shouts of men's voices, angry and alarmed, and the shrill, penetrating cries of a woman.

"Let me go—let me go! I must see her. I must, I say—"

Then the door burst open and a woman lurched into the room. Dishevelled and breathless, she eluded the clutch of one of the guards, looked about her with wide eyes and, seeing Pamela, tore towards her, to drop to her knees and clutch at Pamela's skirt.

The sight of her haggard, tear-stained face wrung Pamela's heart.

This was the mother of the youth she had sent to prison!

"Your Highness," the woman sobbed. "Oh, I beg of you—my son—the prisoner Comorra—he is no traitor. He is as loyal as any in your kingdom. But we are in want, and because my son is too proud to live on the charity of friends, he is sent to the dungeons. But you—your Highness, can release him! I implore you—send him back to me!"

Pamela gulped. She glanced at Prince Alphonse. With a shake of his head, denoting his own utter helplessness, he turned away. Desperately Pamela glanced at the grand duke.

"Uncle—" she began. "Enough of this melodrama!" said the grand duke curtly. He beckoned the watchful guards. "Take her away!"

"No, no, no!" the woman screamed, at the top of her voice.

But the Civic Guards stepped forward. Struggling, kicking, shrieking protests and angry words against Pamela, she was borne from the room. Her screams continued, getting fainter and fainter, long after the door had shut.

And for Pamela they were still ringing inside her brain when, half an hour later, she went to her boudoir.

There, dismissing Rowena, she slumped into a chair and began to think.

Victory for the grand duke; defeat for her! And that meant danger. Quite apart from the suffering that had been inflicted upon an innocent youth and his devoted mother, the grand duke's scheme had struck a blow at the prestige of the princess. The peasants would be incensed when they learned what had happened. As Paul had said, it would be the first step towards open rebellion against—her!

Pamela's face grew desperate. She clenched her hands. There was only one thing to do.

"Let the prisoner escape," she whispered.

She sprang to her feet, eyes bright with excitement. Yes, that was the best plan—indeed, the only plan. But, with a jolt, Pam's impetuous rush of thoughts came to a stop. But how to release him?

A problem, that. How to visit the dungeons unrecognised, unsuspected?

For it would be fatal to her plans, as Pamela knew, if the grand duke discovered what she had done. Even if her scheme were to succeed, no one must know it was the princess who had engineered the prisoner's escape—not even the prisoner himself!

That would be playing right into the grand duke's hands.

"The grand duke would get more suspicious than ever," Pamela told herself grimly. "No!" She began to rack her brains. "If only I knew more about the dungeons; how they're guarded; what the gaolers do; where they keep their keys; when—"

She broke off, drew in a great breath, and then ejaculated:

"Rowena! Why, she'll know! She'll be able to tell me!"

Rowena—yes. And Paul, too—he would have known everything she wanted to discover. If only he would appear now, in the miraculous way he had, just whenever she needed him.

But to-day, as it happened, Paul was doing his duty to her elsewhere. In the mountains, he was frantically trying to stem the wave of indignation and contempt which had been started against her by the return of the distracted mother.

Pamela, unaware of this, tackled Rowena when she was being dressed for dinner that night. She did so cleverly, and managed to extract from her maid a host of vital information.

All through dinner Pamela was filled with suppressed impatience, yearning to get away to begin her scheme. And all the while she turned over in her mind what Rowena had told her.

The dungeons were situated beneath a far wing of the palace, and were reached by a long, narrow flight of winding, stone steps, guarded at intervals by sentries stationed in natural alcoves in the walls.

There were two gaolers, one by day, and one by night. The night gaoler was an elderly man, who took over his duties at eight o'clock. And at one in the morning—

Pam's heart thumped whenever she thought of this.

At one in the morning a hot meal was brought him by his niece, the daughter of one of the gardeners.

This girl was a vital factor of Pamela's audacious plan. For Pam intended to intercept her on her way to the dungeons, and take her place.

She might have to shut the girl up in one of the numerous outhouses and stables. Pamela hoped that drastic measure would be unnecessary.

But even if it were unavoidable, the grand duke would have no evidence against her. He'd know that someone—and a girl at that—had helped the prisoner to escape, but there'd be not a vestige of proof against the princess.

At last, trembling with excitement, Pamela left the grand duke and the prince, and hurried up to her boudoir.

From under her mattress she took a uniform of the Civic Guards, which she had obtained from one of the store-rooms. It would enable the prisoner to get past the other guards. She made it into a parcel.

As swiftly as she could, Pamela changed into some of her oldest clothes, donned a shawl and a scarf to conceal her features, and then, when the palace was wrapped in silence, stole on to her balcony.

She swarmed over the balustrade, parcel under one arm. As she cautiously descended, the clock of St. Benvenuto's chimed a quarter to one.

Five seconds later she was on solid ground.

A glance about her, and then, thrilling in every vein, heart pounding furiously, she was streaking away through bushes and trees to lie in waiting for the gaoler's niece.

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(Now read on.)

By
**ELIZABETH
CHESTER**



voices—Hilda Farrel's, the butler's, and that of a woman—a quite unfamiliar voice.

"Don't scream!" Hilda was saying sharply. "The dog won't hurt you—"

A moment later Lavender joined the group in the bedroom, to find Marcus, Hilda's retriever, guarding a woman,

who stood crouching back against the dressing-table, obviously scared of him. "Here, Marcus!" called Hilda, and took her pet by the collar.

Then she turned to Lavender and Mr. Mortimer.

"This woman claims that she is Thelma Harkness, the detective," said Hilda. "But I caught her in here just after the secret panel had been opened! I say that she is the mystery woman."

Lavender pushed forward then, and her eyes rounded.

"You've caught her, Hilda! Oh, cheers—how wonderful! And look!" she cried, pointing to the floor. "Mrs. Bates' missing coat! Oh, well done—well done—"

And Lavender turned to her father, expecting him to echo her praise. Hilda, too, expected him to be pleased. But instead, he looked down his nose a little, frowning, and embarrassed.

"I'm afraid there's a mistake," he demurred. "You have not caught the mystery woman, Hilda, but Miss Thelma Harkness, the detective. Perhaps I should have warned you all, but I thought it best to keep it secret. She came into the house just before dinner, and started work at once."

While Hilda & Co. started, the woman took off her glasses. Cold, grey eyes glared at Hilda.

"You little idiot!" she said, in ringing scorn. "I told you I was not that other woman. Now, because of your interference, she has escaped."

Hilda at that moment felt a complete chump, and her face crimsoned with shame. But, after all, she had done just what Lavender or any one of them would have done, considering that they had not known that the woman detective was in the house.

"I'm sorry," she faltered. "I just didn't believe you. I didn't know there was a woman detective here—"

The Mystery Woman's Identity

BR-R-R-R!
As Hilda pressed the bed-room bell it was heard in the manor House dining-room, where Lavender Mortimer was being hostess to the paying guests, and her father was acting the part of butler really well.

Instantly all conversation ceased, and Judy and Beryl exchanged anxious looks, knowing that Hilda had gone upstairs to hunt for the mystery woman.

"Is that the front door-bell?" asked Judy uneasily.

"The front door-bell, no," said Lavender, obviously perplexed. "At least—"

She looked at her father, who was already moving to the door.

"I will see," he said, just as puzzled as she as to why the bell was ringing at all.

Lavender's great concern was with the Bates family—father, mother, and daughter, who had stopped talking, and seemed aware that something was amiss.

"Probably a bell jammed," smiled Lavender.

"I've known bells ring themselves," put in Beryl, trying to be helpful. "One at home did. It used to ring itself in the middle of the night sometimes, and at first we thought it was a ghost. We—ow!" she ended.

And Beryl, who was one of the sweetest girls it was possible to meet in a day's journey, but who lacked imagination, gave her friend Judy a puzzled stare.

"You kicked me!" she reproved.

"Did I, dear?" said Judy, going a little pink; and she tried to give Beryl a warning scowl with one half of her face, while smiling disarmingly at the Bates family with the other.

"Just an accident," cut in Lavender hurriedly. "Electricity isn't always a blessing," she went on.

But Mrs. Bates intervened, frowning. "I trust you have no bells that ring themselves here," she said anxiously. "And as for ghosts, I wouldn't willingly spend ten minutes in a haunted house, let alone a fortnight."

Beryl suddenly saw where she had blundered, and why Judy had given her that tactful little kick.

"Er—hum! No ghosts here. Nothing like that," she said. "And no mystery people lurking about behind secret panels either—"

Judy groaned. Just like Beryl, over-doing things, and arousing suspicion! But as it happened, even without

An intriguing new problem for Hilda Farrel and her chums :— DOES THE OLD MILL HOLD THE SECRET OF HAWSLEY MANOR ?

Beryl's unintentional aid, Mrs. Bates would have been made suspicious. For there suddenly came from above a sound that chilled them all.

It was a scream—just one wild scream!

Beryl jumped out of her chair, white as a sheet.

"That's Hilda, of course!" she gasped. "The mystery—"

Judy put a hand over her mouth quickly. In another moment Beryl would have mentioned the mystery woman, and then indeed, the fat would have been in the fire.

Lavender, taking advantage of the momentary confusion caused by the scream, hurried out of the room and into the hall.

From above came the sound of

Running footsteps sounded in the corridor, then, and Judy burst on to the scene, panting and excited, but when she saw the still-cloaked woman detective, she drew up, thrilled.

"Caught, eh?" she said. "Hurrah! Jolly good!—I came running up to say that the other guests are just galloping up to find out what's wrong."

Beryl was next in, and let out a gasp. "The mystery woman!" she jerked out. "Caught!"

"Shush—shush," implored Mr. Mortimer, raising his hands. "Not so loudly. The others must not hear. This is Miss Harkness, the woman detective."

"Detective—" echoed Beryl. But Judy's ready hand went again over Beryl's mouth—and only just in time.

"Quiet, duffer!" breathed Hilda. "They mustn't know who she is."

Thelma Harkness whipped off her cloak, and they saw that she was dressed in an attractive, simple, dark-blue frock.

"All that the other guests need know is that I am Miss Harkness, another paying-guest," she said crisply. "And you girls had better mind what you say in future. You have done enough mischief, letting that woman escape," she added bitterly, with a look at Hilda.

From the corridor came Miranda Bates' voice.

"What is it? Is anyone hurt?"

Thelma Harkness gave a signal to Mr. Mortimer, and spoke in a whisper.

"Say that the dog flew at me in the corridor," she said. "That will account for the scream."

Hilda, holding on to Marcus, flashed an indignant look at the woman detective then, for it seemed to her a most unfair and unnecessary slander on poor Marcus, who never flew at people without orders.

But after all, it was in one respect true, even though the withholding of the whole truth gave a wrong impression.

Already Miranda was in the doorway, and her parents were not far behind, so something had to be done quickly. Mr. Mortimer, in his role of butler, could not take the lead in calming them, so Lavender took it upon herself to do so.

She explained that Miss Harkness had just arrived, and that Marcus, not knowing that she was another guest, had thought she was a burglar, and snarled at her. Miss Harkness, scared, had screamed.

It was a plausible explanation, which the Bates family accepted, although they all said that Marcus was a dangerous animal who needed to be kept under proper control.

Hilda, never willing to let Marcus be accused falsely, tossed her head.

"Marcus was under perfect control, shut in this room," she said. "If Miss Harkness had not come in here by mistake it would never have happened. Still, no one's hurt."

Then, leaving Marcus in the room, Hilda closed and locked the door, keeping the key.

"Well, after that little excitement," she smiled, "we can get on with our dinner. I'm a course behind most of you, but one up on Miss Harkness."

The woman detective, having to keep up the pretence that she was a guest in the house, went down to dinner with them, but she loitered in order to take Hilda by the arm.

"A word in your ear, my girl," she said in a grim tone. "You had better understand that I am solving this mystery, and I shall not require the assistance of you girls. I have solved more baffling mysteries than this without aid. So the best thing you can

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do is to forget all about the mystery woman, and the buried treasure—and just mind your own business."

Hilda's cheeks burned, and she longed to make an indignant retort. But having plenty of tact and common sense, she wisely held her peace.

After all, it did seem that she had blundered, and allowed the mystery woman to escape, so Miss Thelma Harkness might feel justified in what she said.

But Hilda Farrel had no intention of standing aside and renouncing all interest in the mystery. Having blundered, she was all the more keen now to prove that she was not just a silly duffer; in other words, to make amends.

And with that sentiment, Judy and Beryl agreed.

"Just for the moment, though," Hilda warned them at the first opportunity,

"we've got to get the party spirit going, and as soon as dinner's over, I vote for charades!"

Charades it was to be, for the suggestion, put to the vote, was approved by all!

And Now—Charades!

MARCUS was sulking. He was not really a sulky dog, but he felt that he had had a raw deal. He had noticed how overjoyed Lavender had been when the missing coat was found. And who had found it? That woman? Hilda? Lavender? No. Marcus himself had found it in the secret corridor, and he felt that he really deserved petting.

Yet, instead, he had been scolded and scorned. Even when he had guarded the nasty woman in the cloak, no one had praised him. They had let the woman escape.

Marcus looked gloomily at the woman's cloak, which she had left on the bed. He sniffed it, then pulled it on to the floor.

In his puppy days Marcus would have chewed a few pieces out of the cloak, but he had grown beyond that sort of frivolity, and now sniffed it most carefully in a puzzled way.

Suddenly he saw a little piece of paper projecting from just inside.

Marcus blinked at it, gave it a sharp tug, and drew it out from the coat. To Marcus the paper and the writing on it meant just nothing at all, but he had a dim idea that the paper was something that would please Hilda. The piece he had found earlier in the day had pleased her, and this was just like it.

So, having pulled it from the cloak, he held it firmly in his teeth. For a moment he was undecided what to do with it, and then he decided to regard it as a bone.

The thing to do with valuable bones was to bury them, so Marcus looked about him for a likely spot. He pulled back the carpet, decided that it was not a good spot, went under the bed, out again, and then suddenly saw some shoes under the wardrobe. Those seemed an ideal hiding-place.

He had only just buried the paper when the key clicked in the door-lock, the door opened, and the woman detective stepped into the room.

In her hand was a bone, which she tossed contemptuously to Marcus.

"There, stupid dog!" she exclaimed.

Marcus sniffed at the bone warily, eyed Thelma Harkness, and gave a rumbling growl.

"Keep back!" she snapped. "Eat that bone, and let me take my cloak!"

Marcus did not move as she picked up the cloak, and with innocent eyes he watched her search it. She hunted inside more and more anxiously, and then puckered her forehead, not finding what she sought.

"That's queer!" she murmured. "I must have dropped it!"

She went towards the secret panel, which Mr. Mortimer had closed before he left the room, but Marcus sprang forward with a warning snarl.

Halting, Thelma Harkness shook her fist.

"If you're going to make yourself a pest, I shall have to insist that you are locked up outside!"

But she did not try to go through the secret panel. Instead, she backed to the door with the cloak.

Outside she met the girls. Dinner was over, and Hilda, Judy, and Beryl were taking some tit-bits for Marcus.

"Something will have to be done about that dog," said Thelma Harkness. "He snarled at me when I fetched this cloak!"

Hilda did not like her manner, and made no effort to hide the fact.

"He'll be all right now that you'll have no need to go into my room," she said.

"But I may have need!" the detective retorted. "That is the room with the panel, and I think I shall ask for it myself!"

With that, she walked on past the girls, and Judy looked after her with dislike.

"My golly, talk of swelled head!" she said.

"Anyone would think she was a head-mistress," agreed Beryl. "What an ugly way she does her hair, too; and I can't stand those shoes of hers!"

Hilda couldn't help smiling; for Beryl's view-point was so often centred on the dress question.

"We'll tell her about it some time," she said lightly.

Marcus was delighted to see them, and quite forgot his sulks when he saw the tit-bits arranged nicely on a plate.

"There, old chappie!" said Hilda, petting him. "And if you are good, you may come down later to perform some tricks after the charades. But be a very good dog, won't you, my pet?"

Marcus' reply was to go to the wardrobe with the idea of getting the paper for Hilda. But he had buried it too well, so that it was pushed out of his own reach amongst the shoes.

However, while the girls watched in puzzlement, he brought out a shoe and held it up.

"A shoe? What ever for?" asked Hilda in perplexity.

Marcus put it down, and, scratching underneath, raked out another.

"Here, whoa!" warned Hilda. "That's enough! You'll spoil them, chump!" And then she thought she guessed his meaning; for he had brought out walking shoes. "Why, he wants me to take him for a trot. Is that it?"

"Woof!" said Marcus.

"Later, darling," she said, stooping to put the shoes back.

For a moment Marcus, with head on one side waited—waited for Hilda to see the paper and pull it out. But she just returned the shoes to their former place, patted him, and told him to be good.

"And don't forget—if you do come down to perform tricks, darling, be very nice to Miss Harkness," warned Hilda, as she went out.

Marcus looked after her, pained and surprised that she had not found that precious paper. But no thought of such a thing had entered Hilda's mind.

"Funny old chap," she said to Judy. "Fancy pulling out my shoes because he wants to go tatas. But I'll take him, of course, before we go to bed."

They returned to the drawing-room, where the others were assembled, and Lavender was making arrangements for the game of charades.

A lovely fire was burning in the grate, and, throwing its rays on to the oak beams and white walls, made the scene most comforting and attractive. The Bates family had fully recovered from the effects of Miss Harkness' shriek.

Lavender herself had shining eyes, and looked much happier than before; for there seemed to her real hope, now that the detective was in the house, that the mystery would be solved.

And if they should succeed in laying the ghost, there was every reason to

think that the manor house could be filled with paying-guests and so profitable that she and her father would no longer have anything to worry about.

"Hilda," said Lavender as the three friends entered the room, "we've decided that you three had better act together, and we four will make the other side. Is that all right?"

"Fine," said Hilda eagerly. "And who goes out of the room first?"

"You do," Lavender decided, "as Mrs. Bates wants to finish her coffee by the fire. Oh—and Miss Harkness will be on your side when she comes down!"

Hilda, Judy, and Beryl then went into the hall by the large fire, there to decide what they should act

"Let's make it easy," mused Hilda. "We don't want to peeve these Bates' people. I vote we choose a good old-timer like 'portmanteau.' We can make it 'port,' 'man,' and 'toe; you know—'toe of your foot.'"

"Mine?" asked Beryl.

"Anyone's," smiled Judy.

"That's an idea," agreed Hilda.

"And man—" mused Judy.

"Point to Mr. Bates," suggested Beryl simply.

"That might mean 'rude,'" said Hilda, with a chuckle. "No, let's make it something fair but easy. Beryl's right in a way. We could lead her into the room, Judy, take her up to Lavender, Miranda, and Mrs. Bates—and Beryl shakes her head every time. Then we take her to Mr. Bates, and she nods. It's pretty simple."

"And then the toe?" asked Judy.

Hilda snapped her fingers.

"Got it," she said. "Pretend to be a cobbler, Judy. Beryl and I will bring shoes to be mended. And we'll make it clear that we don't want them heeled—only the toes repaired. Any dummy ought to be able to guess it then. And as to the 'port.' Let's all come in shrugging our shoulders and being French—all except me, that is. The Bates must know that 'porte' is the French word for 'door.' It's dumb charades, so we can't speak. But Beryl can dress in Parisian 'chic' manner."

It was soon settled, and they rushed off to dress for the parts.

Hilda said she would provide the shoes—so in her room, watched by Marcus,

she routed shoes from under the wardrobe.

She had brought out three pairs, when she suddenly saw a scrap of paper and snatched it up.

"My golly! What ever's this?" she murmured.

Amazed she stood up, unfolding the paper under the light.

One glance at it she gave, then in wild excitement she tugged open her door and called her friends.

"Judy—Beryl—quick, quick—see what I've found!" she cried.

The Glowing Cavalier!

JUDY and Beryl hurried from their rooms, and a moment later all three were staring at the paper under the light, while Marcus, wagging his tail, sat with as near to a smirk on his doggy face as he would ever have.

"It's a clue to the treasure—another scrap of paper!" burst out Judy, in thrilled tone. "But, my goodness, however did it get under your wardrobe?"

"Never mind how—here it is," said Hilda. "And—my golly! That's what Marcus was trying to tell me. He wasn't asking me to go for a walk. He knew the paper was there."

Judy, who had been glancing at the paper, gave a sharp cry.

"I can read some of it:

"The Old Mill—"

Hilda peered closely at some writing which, old-fashioned and faded, showed none too clearly on the yellowish paper:

"Fortune's wheel turns even as the sails of the Old Mill. Digest this well so that the inner meaning shall be mastered, for who to-day is poor may to-morrow be rich—"

That was all. And Hilda, Judy, and Beryl could not hide their disappointment.

"But what does it mean?" Beryl frowned. "We all know that it's not a clue at all, unless it means that the money is hidden in the old mill."



"QUICK . . . quick! Look what I've found!" Hilda cried excitedly. Her chums were just as thrilled when they darted to her side. The slip of paper inside the shoe was another clue to the treasure.

Hilda did not speak for a minute, and then pulled herself together sharply. "It's a riddle of some kind," she said. "But we've no time to solve it now. What we have got to remember, though, is that the woman detective will want to see this. Ought we to show it to her? Or can we keep it as our own private clue?"

"Keep it—it's ours," said Beryl quickly. "Let her have it to-morrow," decided Judy, "and we'll go to the old mill to-night!"

"All right; but first we'll jot down the words," said Hilda, and went to her writing-case.

While the others sorted out the shoes for the third syllable of their dumb charade, Hilda wrote out the words from the scrap of paper.

But as they went from the room Thelma Harkness loomed up in the corridor. She came so silently that none of them had heard her approach.

"Oh!" said Hilda, startled. "We're just going to play charades. And you are on our side, Miss Harkness."

"Indeed," said the woman detective, her grey eyes seeming to pierce Hilda, so closely did she stare at her. "I wondered why you were loitering up here."

I trust you are not planning to play ghost?"

Hilda indignantly denied any such intention, and then, as Thelma Harkness was supposed to be a member of their team, she explained the word they intended to enact.

Miss Harkness shrugged as though the whole thing were beneath her contempt.

"A child of three should be able to guess it," she said; "provided that you can convince them you are French when you point at the door for 'porte.' However, I shall not be taking part. I have something more important to do."

"Snubbed," said Hilda lightly, as they hurried downstairs. "And who cares?"

"How I do dislike that woman!" frowned Judy.

"Yes, and I'm not so sure she's as clever as she thinks," said Hilda.

Beryl had dressed herself to look Parisian, and practised shrugging her shoulders and spreading her hands, while Judy, who had found a French-English dictionary in her luggage, consulted it learnedly.

Inside the room Lavender was in the best of spirits, for she had brushed Mrs. Bates' coat, which had been

returned and approved, and the guests were saying how they liked the place.

If only they would stay on now and recommend it to their friends, Lavender felt that worries would be things of the past.

A jolly evening, and the foundations of a jolly holiday would be made, and, judging by the giggling from the other side of the door, Lavender guessed that Hilda and her friends were going to do their best to make the charades good entertainment.

The door opened and Judy walked in first, studying the French-English dictionary.

A moment later Hilda and Beryl followed, pretending to chatter, shrugging their shoulders and wagging their hands, while Beryl affected a mannequin walk.

Beryl and Hilda then pretended to shiver with cold, and looked towards the door, and apparently spoke to Judy, who did not quite understand, but hurriedly looked through her dictionary, obviously seeking the word they had used.

As solemnly as they could then, Beryl and Hilda pointed to the door.

Comprehension dawning upon Judy, she went to the door, pointed at it, and mouthed a word, to which they nodded agreement.

Meanwhile, Lavender and the Bates sat giggling and puzzled.

"Door," said Miranda, "or shut. Ferner is the French to shut—"

"And fenetre is the French for door," said her mother.

That was more than Beryl could bear. "Porte," she corrected mildly.

"I've got it—port!" cried Miranda.

And then Beryl and Judy became aware that Hilda was staring through the door.

In a moment they were at her side. Beryl, pulling up, ceased giggling and gave a stifled cry, while Judy's eyes widened.

The hall light was off, but on the far side a light shone—a strange, eerie light from another open doorway. It was a glow rather than a light, and it had shape—the shape of a Cavalier who seemed to bow.

"Shut the door—quick!" said Hilda, as Judy started to pull it wide.

Lavender started up anxiously.

"What's wrong?" she exclaimed, and moved forward with Miranda, while Mr. and Mrs. Bates rose to their feet in surprise.

In another moment the whole family would see the ghostly Cavalier, and within ten minutes they would be packing their things.

But Hilda Farrel did not lose her head. She jumped into the hall, pulling the door to behind her, and hissed a warning to Judy.

"Pretend it's locked. Keep them in here!"

Then, fast as she could, Hilda rushed across the dark hall to where the ghostly Cavalier shone in the other doorway.

For although the Bates family might think it real, Hilda had no doubt that it was a fake, and if only she ran hard enough she might reach the scene before the apparition could be removed.

ISN'T this a thrilling and dramatic moment? Does Hilda get to grips with the supposed apparition? Be sure to read next Saturday's gripping instalment.

Your Editor's address is:—
The SCHOOLGIRL Office, Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—First of all I must draw your attention to the announcement on Page 4. And I do hope that those of you who have saved the required number of coupons and now intend to send up for the really lovely Parisian Pearl Necklace will be delighted with this little treasure.

I have told you before—so please forgive if I repeat myself—that I'm certain there can be no question of disappointment. The necklace is very, very charming—and looks so expensive!

And now—Cliff House.

Perhaps you recall that in last week's issue I mentioned Jungle Jess, the girl who played such a big part in the series of stories dealing with Babs & Co.'s holiday adventures.

For those of you who did not read the series let me tell you a word or two about Jess.

On tropical Pirates' Island she spent practically all the years of her life. She grew up with wild animals for her companions; in fact, her pets were giant leopards.

But when Babs & Co. found the Pickering treasure, they also discovered that Jungle Jess was the heiress to it. And so Jungle Jess returned to England with the chums. And now—

"JUNGLE JESS COMES TO CLIFF HOUSE!"

That is the title of next Saturday's Cliff House story by Hilda Richards.

It is not hard to visualise, is it, girls, the stir at the school when Jess, who has spent all her life in the wilds, who has had no schooling whatsoever, arrives to take her place in the Fourth Form.

Naturally Jess is not used to school routine, to discipline. There are so many things she cannot understand, so many things she mustn't do, but cannot fathom why she should not do them.

Of course, Babs & Co. are ready and eager to help her all they can, especially gentle Marjorie Hazeldene, to whom Jungle Jess took a great fancy on Pirates' Isle. But the chums have something else on their hands at the time—and they have an unpopular prefect up against them.

No, it is not an easy time for Babs & Co.

So Jungle Jess determines to help them! Her very original methods of doing so will thrill you, even as you smile at Jess' quaint ideas.

Try to imagine an untutored girl from the jungle at your OWN school, and you will have some idea of next Saturday's very unusual story. One extra little tit-bit—Jess brings a leopard to the school with her!

Before I leave Cliff House, let me whisper that the fans of Diana Royston-Clarke, the Firebrand of the Fourth Form, have a treat in store—coming very shortly!

I'd very much like to know what you think of our two latest serials, "Princess to Save Leiconia," and "Guests at Mystery Manor." Especially will your views on the former interest me, as it is, I'm sure you will agree, a very unusual story. Would you drop me a line sometime, girls?

There will be two more of those delightful pages by Patricia next week, of course, and, incidentally, how tremendously popular those two pages have become! Apart from the original hints and ideas they contain, Patricia's own personality is so charming, don't you think?

Well, girls, it's time once again to say au revoir.

Until next week,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

S.C.L. 6

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