

"THEIR FRIENDSHIP MEANT SO MUCH!" Dramatic COMPLETE Cliff House School story inside.

# THE SCHOOLGIRL

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Incorporating  
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



**COULD BABS BRING  
HELP IN TIME?**

Or would Miss Primrose's  
prize dog be stolen, after all?  
See this week's grand Cliff House  
story.



Meet once again Barbara Redfern and her chums of Cliff House School. They star with a very likeable lad in this appealing Long Complete story.



## Their FRIENDSHIP Meant So Much!



### Serve Connie Right!



"BRUTUS, you old chump, stand still! Now, then!" And Barbara Redfern, captain of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School, gave the last sweeping stroke to her pet's already shining coat, while Brutus, her glorious golden retriever, wagged his tail. "That will do," Babs laughed, breathing heavily. "What do you think of him, Mabs?" she asked her special chum.

"Lovely!" Mabel Lynn replied admiringly.

"And what," Tomboy Clara Trevlyn, her unruly hair tumbling all over her face as she straightened up from her energetic efforts upon her Alsatian pet, Pluto, glowed, "do you think of Pluto? Isn't he just a picture?"

"Just!" Mabs smiled. "But lul-look at Ting-a-Ling, you know!" plump Bessie Bunter said eagerly—Bessie beetroot-red and very hot after putting the finishing touches to the grooming of her clever little Pekingese. "Of course, Brutus and Pluto aren't bad," she admitted, "but when it comes to rur-real beauty, even you must admit there's no dog in the Pets' House to beat Ting-a-Ling."

"Bow-wow!" Clara sniffed. "Oh, really, Clara! I don't think that's a clever answer at all!" Bessie said indignantly. "If you can't hide your jealousy, you might at least—Hi, Ting!" she added, with an apprehensive wail. "Tut-Ting! Oh crumbs! Lul-look at him now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Babs, Mabs, and Clara simultaneously, and half a dozen other girls joined in.

Really, they oughtn't to have

laughed; for poor Bessie had spent a whole hot and energetic half-hour in grooming little Ting. Certainly Ting did present a picture to make his plump mistress' heart swell with joy, but just as certainly Ting cared little about that. When Ting found himself the focus point of admiration, Ting just had to show off. And Ting showed off now by suddenly rolling on his back, and waving all four paws in the air.

And, of course, Ting, imp of mischief and carelessness that he was, would choose to pick a muddy spot to roll in.

"Ting!" Bessie cried. "Tut-Ting, you bad dog! Oh dud-dear!" She blinked in dismay through her thick spectacles.

"Cheer up, Miss Bunter!" a cheery voice put in. "We'll have him right in no time."

And Boker, the school's cheerful page-boy, recently promoted to take charge of the Pets' House, appeared on the scene.

A nice lad was Charles Percival Henry Boker. A lad, indeed, who was ever willing to lend a hand, to whom nothing seemed too much trouble. Forward he bustled now, and before Bessie had a chance to stammer her thanks, had already commenced re-cleaning operations upon Ting.

Babs laughed; Mabs smiled; Bessie, gulping, looked on, her plump face bright with gratitude. She, like everyone else in the Pets' House, had enormous faith in Boker. Her good humour was restored once more.

But everybody in the Pets' House at Cliff House at that moment was in good spirits. Everybody happy, and everybody most frantically busy. For this week was pets' week at Cliff House, which was to end with the great pets' show on Saturday, which Sir

Willis Gregory, one of the governors, would judge, and in which all sorts of wonderful prizes were to be won.

Girls scrubbing, washing, combing and brushing, made the Pets' House such a scene of activity as had rarely been seen before.

"Soon have him right," Boker said cheerfully, as he washed. "There, Miss Bunter, I've got the worst off, I think. Now where's my brush? Hi, Buck!"

A shaggy little terrier, his own coat gleaming as if every hair had been separately polished, his brown eyes ashine with intelligence and good health, frisked up.

Babs & Co. looked at him with interest. He was new to them.

"Brush, Buck!" Boker ordered. "Wuff!" Buck said, and, with a pleased wag of his tail immediately scampered away, to return five seconds later with the brush in his teeth.

"I say, that's clever!" Babs said admiringly. "Your dog, Boker?"

"Yes, miss. But he can do cleverer things than that," Boker said earnestly. "He can track me down, you know, and—Here, Buck, take this comb and put it on my stool!"

Buck solemnly took the comb between his teeth, and trotted off with it. He carefully laid it on the stool with a number of other "tools" which Boker had been using, and then obediently came trotting back, to sit down and regard his master with an "anything-else-I-can-do-for-you?" look in his bright eyes.

"Jolly good!" cried Mabs. "Did you train him yourself, Boker?"

"Yes, miss," Boker, working on Ting, beamed. "I brought Buck from home last week-end. He's been there since he was a pup, but, seeing that there was distemper in the district, I thought he'd be safer here with me.

Of course, I asked Miss Primrose, the 'admistress, and she told me I could keep him in the school so long as he didn't give any trouble—as if he would," he added fondly. "There, Miss Bunter, I think that will do now," he added, turning from the Pekingese. "If you give him another brush when he's quite dry—"

"Oh, he lull-looks lovely!" plump Bessie enthusiastically said. "And haven't you been quick, Boker. Almost, you know, as quick as I could have been. Thuth-thanks!"

Boker grinned cheerily. "All in the day's work, Miss Bunter," he said. "I like doing it. Can I help you, Miss Redfern?" he added eagerly.

"No, thanks; I've finished," Babs said, but her eyes were on the clever Buck.

"And is he going to stay here indefinitely?" she asked.

"Well, miss, I don't know." And Boker shook his head. "I—I'm hoping so, of course. Buck is such a dear old pal. I—I was wondering, Miss Redfern, he went on, a little awkwardly, "whether you—you might like to—to put in a word for me? There's an empty kennel at the end of the line, and—well, I don't like to ask Miss Primrose myself."

"But," Babs guessed, a twinkle in her eyes, "you'd like us to ask permission for you? Well, of course, Boker. Are you entering Buck for the pets' show, by the way? Servants with pets are entitled to compete."

"Yes, miss. I saw the porter about that, and Buck's in the show all right. I—I've entered him in the cleverest pets' section. I don't suppose," Boker added dubiously, "that he's as clever as Miss Bunter's Ting-a-Ling, but as Miss Bunter won the prize last year she's not allowed to put her dog in that class this year, is she? But—but—"

He flushed, breaking off.

"But what, Boker?" Mabel Lynn put in.

"Well, miss, I—I'd like him to win it—of course," Boker said hesitantly, "not—not because of the honour so much—though, of course, I'd be as proud as Punch. The truth is—" and Boker paused. "You don't mind me mentioning my home affairs, miss?"

"Why, Boker, no!" Babs said, and was all sympathy at once, knowing the poorness of the home from which Boker came. "You mean you'd like the money?"

"That's it, miss! You see, it—it's my mother! She's ill; under the doctor, and my father's out of work; and so we're having a pretty rough time. There's five pounds goes with the first prize, isn't there? That would be a godsend to mum and dad just now—yes, miss, coming!" he added cheerily, as Muriel Bond called him from the other end of the Pets' House, and with Buck trotting at his heels, scampered off.

Babs looked at Mabs. The two exchanged an understanding smile. Poor old Boker! What a cheerful, uncomplaining worker he was—and how both of them, from that moment, wished him the best of success. Most certainly they would do their best to get Boker's pet his kennel in the Pets' House; and most certainly they would do their best to help Boker obtain his ambition. They both realised how much it would mean to him if he won that prize money.

And then suddenly Babs started as, gazing after Boker, her attention was attracted towards the hedge which formed the boundary of the Pets'

House. Was it her fancy, or did she see the face of a strange, rather sharp-featured woman peering in at the scene?

As soon as that face had come, however, it had gone.

"Mabs, who was that?" Babs asked.

"Who was what?" Mabs asked.

"Didn't see anyone, Babs—hallo!" she added, as a sudden voice fell upon her ears.

"That voice, in anything but musical accents, was calling:

"Boker!"

And Connie Jackson, unpopular prefect, stormed into the Pets' House.

"Hallo!" muttered Tomboy Clara Trevlyn, straightening up. "Connie's looking for trouble!"

Trouble it was, obviously, for Connie Jackson, one of the most spiteful-natured girls in the Sixth Form, wore her most bullying look. She glared at Boker as if she would shrivel him.

"What about my shoes?"

"Your shoes, miss?"

"Don't mimic! You know what I mean!" bad-tempered Connie stormed.

"My suede shoes that I got wet yesterday! I thought," she added

**A plot to have Boker, the page-boy, and his beloved pet thrown out of Cliff House in disgrace! A clever plot—a plot which succeeds step by step, with only Babs & Co. to help the cheery young page-boy fight back.**

bitterly, "that one of your jobs was to clean shoes!"

Boker flushed a little.

"Yes, miss, so it is; and I have cleaned shoes," he answered. "I didn't clean yours though because you didn't leave them outside your door this morning! I—I don't usually ask for them, you know."

"That's right," said Clara Trevlyn.

"Eh? Keep your ear out of this, Clara!" Connie rapped. "Take twenty lines for interfering! You should have asked for my shoes," she said, glaring at Boker. "In any case, you should have been in the school when I wanted you! I've spent twenty minutes in chasing after you, young man, and in the end I had to clean the beastly shoes myself!"

"I—I'm sorry, Miss Jackson!" Boker said, colouring to the tips of his rather large ears.

"Connie, give Boker a chance!" Babs put in rather angrily.

"Barbara, take twenty lines for interfering!" Connie snapped. "How do you expect discipline among the school servants if we encourage them to waste their time? Now I'm late for my appointment with the Fields-Crofts—thanks to having to do my own shoes, when there's a page-boy paid to do them for me! And who," Connie glared, obviously in her worst mood, "does that awful-looking animal belong to?"

This as Buck sidled up against Boker's legs.

"Please, Miss Jackson, he's mine!" Boker blurted out.

"Yours?" Connie cried. "And who gave you permission to bring him in the Pets' House?"

## By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

Boker gulped.

"Well, Miss Jackson—"

"Who?" Connie flared.

"Well, no one. But Buck's only helping—"

"Then," Connie said, "you can jolly well take him out—at once! The utter cheek of it! Blessed if I know what you servants are coming to! Take him out!" she added furiously.

Buck began to growl. Boker anxiously caught his collar. But Babs, her own face very angry now, stepped forward.

"Wait a minute!" she said determinedly. "Connie, be fair!" she said indignantly. "Boker hasn't had a chance yet to ask Miss Primrose if she will allow him—"

"Take another twenty lines!" Connie flashed. "Boker, you hear?"

"G-r-r-r!" growled Buck, and darted his head in her direction.

Connie started. Like all bullies, Connie was a coward, and so fond of threatening, herself, was dreadfully taken aback once she was threatened. Buck, sensing in her an enemy to his beloved master, did no more than warningly growl, but Connie, under the impression that he was going to attack, took a step backwards.

And then—

"Look out!" cried Mabel Lynn.

But the warning came too late. For Connie, in stepping back, did not see the piece of soap which Janet Jordan, bathing her beloved Gyp, had left on the ground. Back went Connie's heel upon that piece of soap; back slithered Connie's leg. For one second she executed a mad species of gymnastics in the air, and then heeled over, her elbow striking the side of the bowl which contained Gyp's washing water. Up shot the water out of that bowl like a fountain, completely obliterating the prefect's face in a flying shower of suds and dirty water. Spluttering, she glared.

"You—you—you—" she choked.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled everyone.

Only Boker did not laugh. He ran forward.

"Oh, Miss Jackson!" he cried anxiously, and stretched out a hand.

And then the laughter changed to a murmur as, furious, Connie struck that hand away, at the same time lunging out with her foot at Boker's dog.

"Why, you cat!" cried Clara Trevlyn hotly.

"You—you—" Connie choked, and, shaking with fury, rose to her feet. "You did that!" she raved at Boker. "You and your beastly dog! Take him out—at once—this minute!" Her voice rose to a shriek. "Do you hear?"

"Y-yes, miss," Boker stuttered. "Oh dear!"

"Just a moment, please!" a quiet voice interrupted, and Miss Valerie Charmant, the pretty and admired mistress of the Fourth Form, came walking quickly on the scene. "Really, Connie, I must protest, in spite of your accident!" she said coldly. "I saw what happened!"

"It was that beastly dog!" Connie raved.

"On the contrary," Miss Charmant said deliberately, "it was your own bad temper! Instead of standing there making an exhibition of yourself, I advise you to go back to school."

Connie shook. A few chuckles came



to her ears. One furious look she flung at the Form-mistress; one glare of really savage hate she cast at Boker. Boker—that little lout! Boker, just a mere page-boy, had brought this humiliation upon her! Apart from that, she was soaked through; her appointment at the Fields-Crofts', already overdue, would be unpardonably late.

Savagely she flung herself into the school. Back in her study she ripped off her wet clothes. She hated putting on her next-best blue dress—Paula Fields-Croft had already seen her in that—but in the circumstances there was nothing else for it. With an anxious glance at the clock again, she hurriedly changed and went out.

She reached the gates. And again she scowled. For the bus, which was due, was not in sight.

"That little rotter!" she muttered—Connie had a dangerous habit of talking to herself when disturbed or annoyed. "That awful dog! But, my hat, I'll be even with them—I'll be even with them both! I'll give him Boker, and I'll give his dog Buck! Oh!" she added with a start, and jumped round guiltily as she heard a discreet cough behind her.

At her side stood a well-dressed, rather sharp-featured woman. She smiled.

"I'm sorry; I didn't mean to startle you," she said. "But I couldn't help overhearing what you said. I gather—carefully—"you don't like Boker or his dog?"

"No, I don't!" Connie flared defiantly.

"You'd like, perhaps, to see Boker kicked out?"

"Well," Connie challenged, "what's it to do with you?"

The woman smiled reassuringly.

"Please," she said, "don't bristle! I'm your friend. Because," she added, "I, too, have a reason for not liking Mr. Boker. Perhaps you and I could discuss the question? If you really do feel that way about Boker and his dog, you may be able to do far more about it than I can. I suppose you could use a five-pound note?" she added craftily.

"Five pounds!" Connie's eyes suddenly gleamed. "You mean—"

"I mean," the woman purred, "that the five-pound note is yours—the day Boker goes from Cliff House! Would you like a lift in my car? It's just round the corner."

Connie paused, for one moment doubtful and mistrustful. Then she drew a deep breath.

"Lead on!" she said, with a savage backward glance towards the Pets' House.

For a moment she and Mabs, exchanging a smile, looked at the snoring figure of Bessie Bunter—deeply asleep in Study No. 4's armchair.

"Don't wake her!" Babs counselled. Together they left the study, to be joined in the Fourth Form corridor by Clara Trevlyn, who had just left Study No. 7. Learning their mission, Clara elected to come with them. The trio arrived at the headmistress' study. Miss Primrose's kindly voice bade them "Come in!" as Babs knocked.

She looked up and smiled as the three juniors entered.

Babs informed her of the purpose of their mission—that Boker's dog, Buck, should occupy the vacant kennel in the Pets' House.

"Well," said Miss Primrose a little doubtfully, and paused. "I suppose I cannot really object," she considered.

"But Boker, as you know, is a poor lad, and the rent of a kennel is a shilling per week—"

"Yes, Miss Primrose, we know that," Babs put in. "But we don't want Boker to know it! He's been such a splendid friend to us in the past that we feel it is up to us to help him. Mabs and I and Clara will be responsible for the rent!"

Miss Primrose smiled.

"That is very, very generous and very nice of you," she said warmly.

"In those circumstances, Barbara, you may tell Boker that he is very welcome to use the empty kennel. At the same time," Miss Primrose added, with a slight frown, "I must also ask you to remind him that his duty to my own dog, Deena, comes first. You do not think he will allow his enthusiasm for his own pet to make him lose sight of that fact, Barbara?"

"Not Boker!" Babs replied confidently, knowing how conscientious the page-boy was.

"Because," Miss Primrose impressively went on, "Boker knows this, but you might just jog his memory—Deena is entered for a most important show in London next week, and I expect Boker to take extra special care and pains with him. That will do, girls! You may go now!"

The chums beamed. Good old Primmy! Good old Boker—and how pleased Boker would be when he heard the good news! In the corridor they stopped and grinned at each other.

"Thumbs up!" Babs gurgled.

"What-ho!" whooped Clara.

"Let's go and tell Boker!" Mabs suggested eagerly.

Tea bell was ringing then, but tea, for once, could wait. They all wanted to see the joy on the page-boy's face when they broke the good news. With a whoop they burst into a run, hurrying down the corridor. As they did so a figure suddenly loomed up ahead of them.

"Whoa! Backwater!" hissed Babs. "It's Connie! She'll give us lines if she spots us running in the corridor."

Connie it was—hurrying across the passage at the other end of the corridor. Just in time the Fourth Formers dropped into a walk. Connie, swiftly looking towards them, paused, stopped, and suddenly thrust one hand behind her back. She scowled at Babs.

"Oh, you!" she said. "Where are those lines?"

"Done, Connie!" Babs said meekly. "They're in my study!"

"Then," Connie said, "why aren't they in mine? See that I get them immediately. That applies to you, too, Clara."

And, still holding her hand behind her back, she hurried off. Babs looked queerly at her chums.

"Twig it?" she asked.

"Twig what?"

"Connie had her hand in a handkerchief—or bandage," Babs frowned. "She seemed mighty anxious that we shouldn't see, though—that's why she whipped her hand behind her back when she spotted us! What's the game?"

But Mabs and Clara shook their heads. Though both had noticed Connie's care in keeping one hand hidden, they had not noticed her bandage.

"Ask me!" said Clara. "Still, better take the lines, Babs."

Babs nodded. Off to Study No. 4 they went, where Bessie was already getting tea. Babs caught up her lines, and, joined by Clara with hers, they made their way to Connie's study. Rather to their surprise, however, Connie was not there.

"Put 'em on the table," Mabs suggested.

Obviously, there was nothing else to be done. If the lines were waiting for her Connie couldn't very well grumble. Babs and Clara put them down, and, eager to see Boker, went out again. As they reached the stairs leading to Big Hall, however, there came a sharp yelp from the Pets' House, followed by a cry.

"Hallo! What's that?" Babs said.

"Oh, some clumsy chump's trodden on one of the dogs' toes, I expect!" Mabs said.

Babs and Clara nodded. It was likely enough. It was only as they neared the Pets' House that they became aware that something serious was afoot.

They heard Connie's voice:

"I tell you, the dog bit me!"

And Boker's:

"But he wouldn't, Miss Jackson! I tell you he wouldn't!"

"Hal-lo!" Babs cried, and they hurried forward.

Passing through the gate, they stopped, staring at the scene which met their gaze.

For there was Boker, his face a fiery red, holding to Buck by his collar—Buck, who was certainly straining towards Connie and showing his teeth. And there was Connie, keeping a safe distance, looking furious as she held up her hand, round which was wrapped a handkerchief. And there also was Miss Bullivant, the stern mathematics mistress of Cliff House, her lips compressed as she gazed, first from the prefect to the page-boy.

"Oh, goodness!" Babs cried. "What's the matter?"

"You keep out of this!" Connie said savagely. "If you want to know, that awful dog bit me!"

"He didn't!" cried Boker indignantly. "Miss Redfern, you know he wouldn't," he added appealingly to Babs. "My Buck's never bit anyone."

"I tell you he bit me!" Connie raved. "Do you think I've done this for fun?" And she whipped off the handkerchief, to reveal a wound at the base of her thumb. "Look at my hand! That's what comes of letting that dangerous animal run loose in the Pets' House! That's what comes of not obeying my orders to take him out! Miss Bullivant, I appeal to you—"

"But—" Babs cried.

"Barbara, silence, please!" Miss Bullivant frowned.

Rather more sympathetic towards Connie than Miss Charmant was Miss Bullivant.

"The dog, apparently, made an utterly unprovoked attack on Connie while Boker's back was turned—"

"He didn't," Boker heatedly protested.

"Really, Boker, did you see?"

## A Very Cunning Trick!



"AND we're going to ask Primmy—now?" Mabel Lynn asked.

"Now!" Barbara Redfern assented with a firm nod.

"After all, we did promise Boker! Anyway, he deserves to be helped—and we're the ones to do it. It must be an anxious time for him with his mother ill. Another thing, Mabs—he'll probably have Connie Jackson down on him whenever she gets the chance now. You know what she's like. She won't forget to-day in a hurry."

Mabs nodded.

"Well, she's not going to bully Boker if we can help it," went on Babs determinedly. "But come on, old thing."

And Babs made a neat pile of a sheaf of papers, for she had just finished the lines Connie had given her.



"N-no!" Boker admitted. "But I haven't had Buck for two years without knowing—"

"Thank you, that will do!" Miss Bullivant said curtly. "Dangerous animals such as that dog have no right in the Pets' House—"

"Apart from which," Connie triumphantly sneered, "Boker's not even got permission to keep him here!"

"Miss Bullivant, please!" Babs cried, and in spite of the mistress's gimlet-like glare, she spoke on. "Boker has got permission to keep Buck in the Pets' House!"

"Barbara!" "Because," Babs went on—and found time, even in the stress of the moment—to flash a smile in response to Boker's bewildered look of gratitude—"Mabel, Clara, and I have just been to ask permission!"

Miss Bullivant paused. "Ahem! In that case, Connie—"

she demurred. "In that case," Connie retorted between her teeth, "I suppose the beastly dog is going to be allowed to run around biting who he likes! Miss Bullivant, it is not right!"

"It is not right—no!" the mistress said. "Boker, you will tie that dog up, and keep him tied up until I have seen Miss Primrose about this."

Boker gulped helplessly. He looked at Buck. Buck, as if understanding, gazed at Miss Bullivant, appeal in his eyes. Quietly he turned as Boker pulled at his collar, obediently trotted away. Connie scowled.

"And what about my hand?" she cried.

Babs gazed at her, suddenly remembering the bandaged hand which Connie had been so careful to hide a few minutes ago.

"Perhaps," she suggested, "you'll let me have a look at it! After all, I have got a Junior First Aid badge! Please, Connie!" she added swiftly, and before Connie realised what was happening, had caught the injured hand.

Only a glimpse she got of it before Connie, her face suddenly livid, had snatched it away. But that glimpse near to was sufficient. If the wound had been caused by a bite, it was a very strange bite! It was thin, and narrow, and clean.

"Miss Bullivant!" quivered Connie. "Barbara, how dare you?" Miss Bullivant rapped. "You might have hurt Connie. My dear," she added to the prefect, "you had better go to the matron and get the wound washed and bandaged. Boker, have you chained up that dangerous animal?"

"Yes, Miss Bullivant."

"Very well. And don't dare, my boy, to release him without permission! Now go to your quarters."

"Yes, Miss Bullivant. Can I speak to Miss Redfern first?" Boker asked.

"You will obey orders," Miss Bullivant flintily informed him. "Now go!"

And Boker, with a despairingly unhappy glance towards the sympathetic chums, strode off.

"And you," Miss Bullivant said, frowning at them, "had better go, too! Connie, my dear, as soon as you have had that injury attended to, come to Miss Primrose's study. I shall report this at once."

Connie nodded. The chums turned away. In Big Hall they paused. Babs' eyes were gleaming.

"Connie made that up!" she said angrily. "Buck no more bit her than I did. That wound wasn't a dog's bite. Connie got that cut somewhere else. Remember we saw her in the passage with a bandage on?"

"You—you mean that she cut herself

accidentally, and then thought of the scheme of pretending Buck bit her?" gasped Mabs.

"What else?" asked Babs quietly. "And, girls, I'm just a bit puzzled at Connie going to such lengths. We know she's spiteful, that she's got her knife into Boker, but a trick like that just out of revenge is a bit steep—even for Connie! Still, I don't see what other reason she could have, except revenge."

"Doesn't matter what the reason is," said Clara furiously; "it's enough that Connie is out to get poor old Boker into trouble. Well"—and the Tomboy's jaw grimly squared—"if Boker can't fight Connie—"

"We can!" Babs finished. "And," Mabs added, a flash in her eyes, "we will! Boker's been a jolly good little sport to us in the past. It's our turn now to stand by him."

Boker, hat in hand, his face rather forlorn, shook his curly head, as slowly he stepped into the room. Boker, at Babs' request, had returned from Miss Primrose's study to give his account of what had happened as a consequence of Miss Bullivant's report.

"It's no good!" he said sighingly. "Miss Primrose believed them! I hadn't got half a chance with the two of them arguing against me."

"And—and you've still got to keep Buck on the chain?" Babs asked.

"Yes!" "Oh, poor old Buck! What else did Primmy say?"

"She said," Boker replied, and nervously fidgeted with his cap, "that if I didn't look after him better she'd send him away altogether. And I don't think it's fair," the boy blurted indignantly, "for Miss Jackson to say that I'm



"FIVE pounds!" Connie's eyes gleamed. "You mean—," The woman smiled craftily. "I mean," she purred, "that the five pounds is yours—the day Boker goes from Cliff House!"

A Slight Mistake!



"THERE'S something wrong," Bessie Bunter announced gloomily.

"I'll say there is—something jolly wrong!" Clara Trevlyn said warmly.

"I'm juj-jolly suspicious, you know," Bessie added anxiously.

"And so," Barbara Redfern grimly said, "are we! That cat Connie—"

"Oh, really, who's talking about Connie?" And Bessie resentfully blinked up from her easy-chair in Study No. 4 at Babs, Mabs, and Clara, who, for some reason, were all expectantly looking towards the door. "I was talking about Ting."

"Here he is!" Mabs said suddenly.

"Eh? Ting?" And Bessie, as if electrified, jumped out of the chair. "Where? Ting, Ting!" she called anxiously. "Here, I sus-say, he isn't here! Look here, you cats, if you're pulling my leg—"

But nobody was heeding Bessie talking at cross purposes with the rest of them; they were all eagerly gazing at the door now, outside which a soft footfall had halted, to be followed by a hesitant knock. Babs at once sprang towards the door; she threw it open.

"Boker!" she cried. "Come in! Boker, what did Primmy say?"

neglecting Miss Primrose's dog because of my own! That's what she did say!"

The chums looked at each other. It certainly did seem that Connie was absolutely going out of her way to disgrace Boker and his dog.

Poor, poor Boker!

"I do hope nothing else happens," Boker went on worriedly. "I—I had a letter from dad by the post, and—and he says that mother's worse. I'm sort of hoping to get that prize, you see—just for mum's sake. But if things go on at this rate, it looks as if there won't be any Buck in the show at all! Miss Redfern, you—you don't think they'll refuse to let him enter the show now?" he added beseechingly.

Babs gulped a little.

"No, Boker! Don't worry!" she soothed.

"But if they did—"

"They won't!" Clara said grimly.

"We'll attend to that! Don't worry, old Boker!"

But Boker obviously was worried.

"Poor chap, he's in a frightful stew!" Babs said, when the page-boy had gone. "Wish we could do something to help!"

"The only thing we can do," Clara said, "is to see that Boker gets his chance in the show and wins that first prize. Hallo! There he is!" she added. "Giving Primmy's dog a run."

Babs joined her at the window. It

was almost dark outside now, but there was sufficient light to show Boker tramping away from the Pets' House with Miss Primrose's beautiful Deena on a lead.

A magnificent, high-spirited Borzoi was Deena, worth goodness knows how many hundreds of pounds, who had the distinction of having taken prizes in every show in which he had been exhibited, and was already a champion half a dozen times over. He was gambolling round Boker's feet as the page-boy led him through the gates.

She turned away a little restlessly as he disappeared. Bessie, still in the armchair, blinked up.

"Oh crumbs! I wuw-wish I'd asked Boker to look at Ting!" she said apprehensively. "You know, Babs, I'm sure there's something wrong with him; the poor little mite was shivering like anything."

Babs smiled a little; she was far from sharing Bessie's anxiety. The one hasty glance she had taken at Ting before leaving the Pets' House had assured her that there was nothing wrong with Ting-a-Ling. The Pekingese, as artful as any human being, was a past-master in the art of pulling his fond though unsuspecting mistress' leg. In any case, as Babs pointed out, the vet would arrive for his weekly inspection to-morrow: Bessie could complain about her pet's ailment then.

But Bessie was not satisfied with that. Rightly or wrongly, the plump duffer had convinced herself by this time that Ting was on the verge of some mysteriously serious collapse. She was still thinking about Ting when she went to bed; she was thinking about him long after lights had been put out; and the more she thought, the more truly and deeply did Bessie become convinced of the disaster hovering near her pet; the more vividly her imagination, fed by the darkness, grew.

"Oh crumbs!" she murmured unhappily; and, suddenly sitting up, blinked into the darkness. "B-Babs!" she muttered.

"Well?" came the sleepy answer from her chum's bed.

"B-Babs, will you come with me? I—I can't sus-sleep for thinking about Ting, you know. I'm going to see him."

"Oh, Bess, don't be a goose!"

But Bessie was determined; Bessie was in earnest. Once Bessie had an idea in her head, she could be more stubborn than a mule; and the fact that she—usually the first to go to sleep—had not yet closed her eyes told how much this worry was weighing upon her.

"With a sigh, Babs threw back the bedclothes.

"Hallo! What's the matter?" Clara Trevlyn asked suddenly, waking up.

"It's old Bess—and Ting," Babs explained. "Bessie's got an idea that the little spoofer is dying, or something! We're just going to see how he is."

"Oh," Clara said, "then, in that case, I'll come with you!"

Together the three of them dressed. Led by Babs, with Bessie rather shiveringly following, they tiptoed downstairs. All was quiet and silent in Cliff House then, and the booming stroke which tolled from the clock tower as they pushed open the lobby window proclaimed the hour to be half-past ten.

Up slid the window. From the Pets' House across the ground came a sudden bark, followed by a restless stir.

"Hallo! That's Duck!" Clara muttered.

"Come on!" Babs said. "Here, Bessie, let me give you a hand."

Outside the window they stood, shivering in the cold air.

"Gig-get on!" stuttered Bessie.

Babs got on, leading the way across the darkened lawns. Silence in the Pets' House now. They reached the gate, and Babs, cautiously peering along the line of kennels before she opened it, suddenly stiffened. She touched Clara on the wrist.

"Clara, am I seeing things?" she breathed.

The Tomboy stared. Then she, too, stiffened.

In the grey darkness they saw the form of a woman or some senior girl, half-crouched above the door of Deena's kennel. Her back was towards them, and in that light it was impossible to recognise her. But one thought leapt to three minds simultaneously.

"Connie!" breathed Clara.

Babs' eyes glimmered. What was Connie doing there? Connie, who seemed to be going to such amazing and extraordinary lengths to vent her spite upon hapless Boker! Connie, out at this time of night! With a softly breathed "Shush!" she caught hold of the door just as Deena, with a low whine, appeared in the run in front of his sleeping quarters. She pushed.

The rusty, weather-exposed hinges gave out a sudden squeal.

From the figure bending over Deena came a startled gasp. Babs realised in a moment she and her chums were spotted. She flung open the gate.

"Connie—"

The figure turned. Then it uttered an exclamation. And Babs, even as she ran forward then, saw disaster happening. For on top of Deena's kennel was a pail—left there, presumably, out of reach of the dog. The intruder, who had been resting one hand near the pail, struck it with her fist as she turned to fly. There came a sudden clatter, a swish, a terrified yelp from Deena, followed by the crash and swish of some liquid and a clanking as the pail clattered on to the cobblestones. But by that time the figure had gone.

"After her!" cried Babs.

She and Clara sprinted. Bessie, bewildered, not quite knowing what to make of it all, stood and blinked. And at once the disturbed pets, jerked out of their rest by these happenings, awoke to vigorous and clamouring life. Clara, running, turned.

"Oh, my hat! Quiet!" she hissed.

"Quiet, all of you!"

The pets, recognising the voice of a friend, were silenced, but there was still a throaty growl from one or two of them.

"Babs, found her?"

Babs, who had raced towards the hedge, came running back.

"No! She got away!" she panted.

"Through the hedge, I think. But what on earth was her game? Oh, my hat! Look at Deena!"

Clara looked, and gasped. Bessie, by that time, was snuggling Ting-a-Ling to her. Deena blinked up sadly and reproachfully. He was wet and shivering, and in the pale beam of the moon, which that moment had put in a tardy appearance from behind a cloud, he looked a fright. Gone was that beautiful whiteness of his silky coat; gone those crisp and rippling curls which were the pride and joy of Miss Primrose's heart. Soaked by a deluge of dirty water from the pail, Deena now looked, indeed, as if he had been dragged through an extraordinarily muddy pool.

"Connie!" Clara said, her lips tight.

"Twig the idea? This is another of her little games—messing up Deena just to get old Boker into a row with Primmy! Well, come on! For once this little plot doesn't succeed! Bessie, put that

bicycle bell of yours down. You're in this!"

"Oh crumbs! What are we going to do?" Bessie asked apprehensively.

"That's the wheeze," approved Babs. "Clean up Deena and prevent old Boker getting into a row!"

Bessie nodded. She had reassured herself about Ting now. Ting, a warm, snug little bundle of fur, had probably forgotten his latest leg-pull on his mistress' behalf, and showed no greater desire than to be tucked back into his warm kennel again. While Babs went to collect brushes and fill the pail with clean water she ambled across.

"Oh crumbs, what a mess!" she said. "I say, poor old Deena! Sus-someone ought to speak to Connie about this, you know!"

"Come on! Hold his head. Connie will get spoken to all right!" Clara returned angrily. "Of all the mean tricks! Now, Deena, don't move, you wash-out! Babs, got the brushes?"

"Yes," Babs said, hurrying back. "And we'll soon—I say!" she broke off excitedly. "Look!"

They all tensed, straightening up. And then Clara caught in her breath with a hiss. For just entering the gates was a shadowy figure—quite recognisable this time, though it did only show against the faintly moonlit sky as a silhouette. Connie Jackson without doubt!

Connie was spying on them!

In the darkness Babs' eyes gleamed. Clara's lips came together in a thin line. Even Bessie, usually the most peaceful of juniors, glared.

And then Clara acted in that impulsive way of hers.

In the darkness her hand, gripping a wet rubber sponge, came up. Carefully she took aim. There was a soft whiz, followed by a squelching impact, and then a strangled yell as Connie, hit in the face, tottered and came down with a bump.

Bessie Bunter chuckled.

"He, he, he!"

"Serve her jolly well right!" Babs said contemptuously. "If only—My hat—"

She broke off, her jaw suddenly dropping. On the gravel path outside there was a sudden crunching of feet, a surprised exclamation. And just as the moon peered out again from behind the clouds a well-known voice rapped out:

"Connie!"

"Primmy!" muttered Babs. "Oh golly!"

A moment later Miss Primrose's figure appeared on the scene. Connie, gasping, rose to her feet.

"Miss Primrose—"

"Connie, please!" Miss Primrose said sternly. "What were you doing in that ridiculous posture? And why, bless my soul!" she added, as she became aware of Babs, Clara, and Bessie. "What are you girls doing here, and what—?" And then she gave vent to something which was almost a scream. "Deena!"

Deena, miserable and wet, mournfully wagged his tail.

"Who—who on earth," Miss Primrose choked, "has left him in that awful condition? Clara—Barbara, what are you doing with those brushes? Is this some joke? Have you done this to Deena?"

"No, we jolly well haven't, Miss Primrose!" Clara retorted.

"Then who has? And please modulate your tone, Clara!"

"Ask Connie!" Babs replied grimly.

"Connie!"

"I don't know anything about it!" Connie gasped. "All I know is that I heard a sound in the Pets' House; I was just on the point of investigating when



one of these girls threw a wet sponge at me!"

"And what about the time before that?" demanded Clara furiously. "What about when you upset a pail of dirty water over Deena ten minutes ago?"

"I?" Connie stiffened.

"Yes, you! We all saw you!"

"But I've only just this minute come in!" Connie howled. "Miss Primrose, I—"

Miss Primrose's lips compressed.

"I fail to see," she said coldly, "what all this fuss is about! And if, Clara, you are trying to make me believe that Connie was in the Pets' House ten minutes ago, and threw a pail of dirty water over Deena, I can only say that it is utterly untrue. Connie," Miss Primrose added weightily, "has been to Friardale on an errand for me, and ten minutes ago I met Connie as she was leaving the village."

"Oh kik-crums! Bub-but there was someone here, you know!" Bessie stammered. "We were all sure it was Connie!"

Clara and Babs blinked at each other in bewilderment. Whatever they might have thought about Connie's protestations, there was certainly no gaining the testimony of their headmistress, and if Miss Primrose spoke truth—which, of course, she did—Connie had no more connection with that first mysterious figure than Miss Primrose herself. Then—who was it?

But there was no time to think that out then. Connie, wildly furious, was protesting to Miss Primrose; Miss Primrose, shaken by the condition of her Deena, annoyed to have been alarmed, and still more annoyed to find three girls who should have been in bed, out of it, was in an unusually angry frame of mind. She stared at Babs.

"Now, perhaps, Barbara, you will explain what you were doing to Deena?"

"Oh crumbs! We—we were only trying to get him clean," Babs mumbled. "We—we thought that Connie—that—that is, we thought we—we'd better do something!"

"I fail to see," Miss Primrose said stiffly, "that you were called upon to do anything. This is Boker's business. By the way, where is Boker?"

"He—he's not here, Miss Pip-Primrose!" Bessie stammered.

"Thank you! I have already observed that fact for myself!" the headmistress said stiffly. "Barbara, go at once to Boker's quarters. Tell him I want him."

"Y-yes, Miss Primrose!" Babs stammered.

She flew off. Boker's quarters, not far away, was a small lodge which he shared with Mr. Merryweather, the gardener. She banged at the door. Mr. Merryweather, in a nightcap and nightshirt, peered out.

"Boker?" he said, in answer to Babs' question. "No, Miss Redfern, he ain't here. Boker went off about nine o'clock. Said he was going to Courtfield, he did! Sorry!"

Babs flew back to deliver the tidings. Miss Primrose's lips set.

"Boker," she pronounced angrily, "had no right to go out without permission! You have no idea where he went, Barbara?"

"No, Miss Primrose."

"But," Connie spitefully chipped in, "I have, Miss Primrose! I hadn't meant to tell you because I wasn't positively certain; but I'm sure now that when I was in Courtfield I saw Boker going into the cinema." That was a lie, but Connie knew it was a useful one. "And, I think," she went on, with a glare towards the chums, "that it's

pretty evident now what happened. These girls, as you may know, are great friends of Boker—"

"I am aware of that," Miss Primrose said.

"And so," Connie continued, while Babs and Clara blinked, "they let Boker go off, and came down here to do his job for him! That is how he does his duty!"

"Well, of all the——" Clara gasped. "Connie!" Babs cried indignantly.

She broke off. They all turned, as a footfall sounded behind them. And there, with Buck trailing on the end of the lead, his face the picture of lively apprehension and mystification, was Boker himself.

He was interrupted by a scoffing laugh from Connie.

"My hat! That's a good story!" she said. "That is a good story! You didn't go to the cinema, of course?"

"No, Miss Jackson."

"And you didn't leave Miss Redfern and these girls to do your work?"

"No, he jolly well didn't!" Clara flamed out.

"Clara, silence, please!" Miss Primrose rapped. Her face was stern. "Boker, I am sorry. I cannot altogether believe you," she said. "In any case, you had no right to neglect your duties. I observe," she added a trifle bitterly, "that wherever you went you

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"Boker!" cried Miss Primrose. "Boker, where have you been? And why, sir, did you not obtain permission before you went?"

Boker gulped.

"Well, Miss Primrose, I—I did try to!" he blurted. "But you wasn't in at the time. You see, I had a telegram!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes, Miss Primrose. The telegram from my father asking me to go to Courtfield Station and meet him at half-past nine. But—but when I got there," Boker went on, "dad wasn't there!"

"You mean," Babs said, and looked suspiciously at Connie, "the telegram was a fake?"

"Yes, Miss Redfern. It must have been—"

did not forget to take your dog with you!"

Boker reddened.

"Well, Miss Primrose, I—I only took him for a bit of company like!"

"The fact remains," Miss Primrose said, "that you took him! Apart from that, you have neglected your duties here. Whatever your motive in being out with that dog, the fact remains—you have done wrong. While you were out exercising your own dog, your real charge, Deena, has been assaulted! I am sorry, Boker, but I must teach you a lesson. Perhaps," Miss Primrose said angrily, "you will devote more time to your real duties and less to your private ones if I cancel your dog's entry in the pets' show!"

A cry came from Boker.

"Miss Primrose, don't—oh, please don't do that!" he cried.

"I am sorry, Boker. You have brought it on yourself."

"But, Miss Primrose—" Babs cried.

"Barbara, silence!"

"But, Miss Primrose, let me speak! Miss Primrose, you don't know what the show means to Boker!"

"Barbara, will you please be silent?"

Miss Primrose cried. "Boker, you have heard! You may chain up your dog, and then, sir, clean Deena!" She frowned round. "You three girls," she said, "will do a special detention task to-morrow afternoon—Connie, you will see that they do it! Now, all three of you get to bed!"

"And quickly!" Connie put in.

"Why, you cat—" Clara flamed.

"Clara, take fifty lines for that insult! Now go—all of you!"

And they went.

Poor Boker!

Poor Boker, indeed! For as Boker dejectedly led his sympathetic pet back to his kennel, the tears were not far from his eyes. What hope now to help the poor people at home by the winning of the first prize? What, now, of his hopes, his ambitions?

The world at that moment was a dark and dreary place for Charles Percival Henry Boker.

### The Mystery Woman Again!



PERHAPS, no less so, was the world a dreary place to Babs and Clara and Bessie

Bunter at that moment; they, having promised to help Boker, had witnessed the blow which had robbed him without even being able to lift a hand to ward it off.

In the morning they held a consultation in Study No. 4. Mabs, who had heard the details of the night's adventure, shook her head.

"It's queer!" she said. "Jolly queer! You've no idea who the first figure was, Babs?"

"None!" Babs said. "But, obviously, it couldn't have been Connie!"

"And yet," Mabs said, "Boker did receive a fake telegram. That would be Connie's trick, wouldn't it—to get him out of the way while she messed up Deena—or got somebody else to mess Deena up for her? It strikes me," Mabs said, by no means expressing an original idea, "that there's something more in all this than Connie wanting to score off poor old Boker. It almost looks," Mabs added, "as if she's trying to get him the sack!"

"And it almost looks," Babs said angrily, "that she'll jolly well succeed! All the same, I don't see why Connie should want to employ someone else to do her rotten work for her! Look here," she added, "let's trot down and see if we can cheer up old Boker a bit!"

The four of them drifted down to Boker's quarters after breakfast, there to find the page-boy sitting on a chair forlornly fondling the ear of Buck as that faithful companion, squatting on his haunches, looked up in his face.

He did not see them, but they heard his words.

"And now it's all U P, old Buck—all up! You'd have won that prize, wouldn't you, old chap? And wouldn't mum have been pleased with both of us? Dad says in his letter that if she doesn't go away to the country soon she'll have to go to hospital. You don't know what that means, do you, Buck? It just means she'll have to

have an operation and go on being ill for years and years! Oh, Buck, old boy!"

"Come—come away!" Babs said, in a choked whisper.

It would have seemed sacrilege somehow to intrude. They crept away. What to do? How—how possibly could they help Boker?

They were still trying to plan ways and means when break came, and dinner followed, and afterwards Connie, in her usual bad temper, came to round them up for detention.

"Get out your exercise books!" she snapped, when the three were settled at their desks. "You will each write an essay on observance of school rules. Let me see one of you slacking, even for a moment, and you get a black mark!"

"Oh crumbs!" sighed Bessie.

With a smothered groan the chums started work. Punctuated by gladsome shouts from the distant playing fields, they wearily scrawled. Connie, with a book in front of her, got down to read, glancing sourly at the trio from time to time. Half an hour—an hour went by. Then suddenly Connie's book closed with a snap.

And, for the first time, Babs looked up.

Connie's eyes were fastened on the window. As Babs gazed she saw her lift one finger and wag it as if in a signal, and, turning her head, almost cried out as she spotted the cause of Connie's sudden activity. For, peering through the hedge some distance away, was a face.

It was the face of the woman Babs had observed peering in at the Pets' House yesterday!

Just for a moment it showed, and then as quickly disappeared.

Who was the woman? Who—

"Barbara!" Connie snapped.

"Yes, Connie?"

"I—I have to go out for—for a few minutes," Connie said. "You will take charge here till I return."

She went out, and with a sigh of relief the trio immediately downed pens and lolled back.

"Well, thank goodness for that!" Clara sighed. "But why the sudden flutter? Where's she gone, Babs?"

"Look!" Babs said.

She pointed through the window. The chums looked. They saw Connie striding towards the hedge; for a moment they saw a figure behind the hedge move as Connie pushed her way through it. Clara stared.

"Who is it?"

Babs explained.

"But," Clara questioned, "who is she? And what on earth is Connie so anxious to meet her for? I—My hat!"

And suddenly she looked startled. "Babs, do you think that she was the mystery figure we saw in the Pets' House last night?"

But Babs was not replying, although that question had leapt to her own mind. Was Connie in league with the woman? And if so, what was their object in bearing all their energies to the betrayal of a poor page-boy? It seemed fantastic, absurd; and yet there was no denying that Connie was acting with more than ordinary spite.

"Hallo!" she muttered suddenly.

For Connie had returned. But she was not coming back towards the school. She was hurrying—in the direction of the Pets' House.

"Looks as if she's going to see Boker!" said Clara. "What's the latest little game?"

Justified was that remark, for now

all their sharpest suspicions were directed at Connie.

But what Connie was doing, what she was saying, was to remain a mystery for the time being. Five—ten minutes went by, and then the prefect reappeared.

The chums got on with their work. But only ten seconds after they had resumed—

"Hallo!" cried a voice.

"Look at that dog!"

"Who let him in?"

And then suddenly—uproar! Girls hurrying, scurrying, fluttering; a dog yapping excitedly; girls shouting and crying out.

Up jumped Connie. The three chums, stopping work, gazed at each other with startled faces. Then came Miss Bullivant's quivering voice.

"Catch that dog! Catch him! I have never been so disturbed in all my life! Whose is the animal?"

"Please, Miss Bullivant, it's Boker's!" came the voice of Freda Fefriers.

"Then send Boker to me—send him at once!" Miss Bullivant's voice quivered. "I understand that Boker has orders to keep this animal on a chain. Look at me!" Miss Bullivant almost screamed. "My frock—absolutely ruined!"

Babs jumped up.

"Come on!" she said determinedly.

"But detention—" quivered Bessie.

"Blow detention! We're going to see what's happened."

Clara rose at once. Bessie, more fearful of consequences, remained behind. They hurried down into Big Hall, and then paused.

For there a score of excited girls were gathered, with Rosa Rodworth holding Buck by the collar and Miss Bullivant, her face aflame, anxiously dabbing at a blotch of black ink on the front of her dress. Even as the chums paused, there came a rustle from the Head's side of the Hall, and Miss Primrose herself appeared.

"Miss Bullivant—w h y, goodness gracious me! What is all this?"

"This," Miss Bullivant choked, and pointed at Buck who, with his head on one side, was regarding her with friendly interest, "is the fault of that—that animal, Miss Primrose! He was loose in the school and chased a cat, or something, terrifying the girls here. Unfortunately," Miss Bullivant thundered, "I was in the act of pouring ink from a bottle into my inkwell when the commotion suddenly set up. I was startled and spilt the ink."

"And," Miss Primrose said angrily, "where is Boker?"

"Please, Miss Primrose, here I am!" said a voice, and Boker, his face bewildered and red, came into the school. "Why, Buck," he gasped in astonishment.

Miss Primrose angrily tapped the toe of her foot upon the floor.

"Boker, what is your dog doing off the chain?"

Boker shook his head.

"Please, Miss Primrose, I—I don't know! He was on the chain all right when I left the Pets' House ten minutes ago to go to the garden shed!"

"You suggest, then," Miss Primrose said, "that someone else let this dog off the chain?"

"Well, I don't see what else could have happened, Miss Primrose. And—and it seems funny to me," Boker went on warmly, "that Buck should have come into the school! If he'd got himself off the chain he would have come to find me!"

"Miss Primrose is not," Miss Bullivant broke in angrily, "asking you for



a resume of your pet's habits, Boker! You are responsible for him as for every other dog in the Pets' House. You should have seen that he was properly chained up!

"As it is—as it is," Miss Bullivant choked, "either you have no control over the dog or you are deliberately disobeying orders! Not satisfied with allowing him to bite Connie the other day—"

"Which he didn't!" protested Boker sturdily.

"Hear, hear!" championed Clara.

"And not satisfied," Miss Primrose put in, with a reproving glance at the flushed-faced Tomboy, "with going out with him against orders last night—"

"But that wasn't Boker's fault, Miss Primrose!" cried Babs.

that Miss Primrose was his superior. Rather, defiant was his earnest face as he looked at Miss Primrose.

"Buck," he said, "hasn't done any harm. And Buck," he added sturdily, "didn't get off that chain, because if he had he wouldn't have left the Pets' House! Everybody's against him—everybody has been against him ever since I brought him here—except Miss Redfern and her friends—"

"Boker!" stormed Miss Primrose.

"Well, it's not fair!" Boker blurted.

"Boker—Boker! Why, bless my soul!" Miss Primrose cried, scandalised. "Do you realise, young man, what you are saying? Really, Boker, this is going too far! How dare you accuse me of unfairness!"

the scene. "What were you saying, Clara Trevlyn?"

"I was saying," Clara retorted—for once Clara had taken up a stand, even if she was in the wrong, she was hard to budge—"that you jolly well let Boker's dog off the lead! Oh, don't stare! We jolly well saw you through the window—first talking to that woman, and then marching off towards the Pets' House!"

"And you saw me, I presume, still through the classroom window, unhook the dog?" Connie sneered.

"But, Connie, why did you leave the detention-room?" asked Miss Primrose.

"Because," Connie said, "I saw a poor old beggar woman beckoning me through the hedge. I went out. She was in very, very poor circumstances,



"THAT awful dog bit me!" cried Connie furiously. "Look at my hand!" As the chums raced up, Boker desperately protested his pet's innocence. But it was obvious that the mistress believed Connie's story.

"Well, isn't it true?" Boker asked.

"It is most certainly not true!" Miss Primrose said. "I am astounded! I always thought, Boker, that you were one of my most disciplined servants; now I see I am making a mistake! You will take the dog away, Boker—where, I do not care. And," Miss Primrose added, her voice vibrating with wrath, "you yourself will take a week's notice! Now disperse, girls!"

Boker stood as if he had been stunned. Then Clara burst forward.

"But, Miss Primrose, you can't sack him—"

"Indeed! Clara, are you telling me what I can do?"

"But you can't!" Clara declared wildly. "Boker's right! We jolly well know it! Somebody else let that dog off the lead!"

"Who?"

Clara spoke again before she thought:

"Connie Jackson!"

"Hallo! Somebody calling me?" put in a serene voice, and Connie, who had been absent all this time, strolled on to

Miss Primrose, and asked me if I had a pair of old shoes I could give her. Clara says she saw me disappear towards the Pets' House; but Clara was wrong. Where I went was to my study to get the shoes."

"Well, of all the awful whoppers!" gasped Babs.

"Barbara!"

"Well, it is," Barbara said. "We were watching! And," she bit out, stung into flaming anger at the sight of Boker's miserable face, "if you came back with those shoes, how was it we never saw you?"

"Barbara!" cried Miss Primrose

"Well, let her answer that!" Babs cried.

"I can and will!" Connie smiled sneeringly. "Because," she added, "I told the woman to go round to the servants' entrance, Miss Primrose. I took them down there."

Miss Primrose's face cleared a little.

"Thank you, Connie! I am not sure an explanation was needed, however! Boker, take that dog away at once! Barbara and Clara," she added, while the girls in the hall nudged each other as the two chums stood confronting her, "I am very, very disappointed with you. I understand how you feel about Boker, but your sympathy for Boker by no means warrants throwing out such wild accusations against a girl whose position you should respect."

Babs bit her lip.

"And since," Miss Primrose went on, "all this trouble has arisen because of the pets' show, I shall now cancel your own entries for the show!"

"But Boker—" cried Babs.

"I have nothing further to say about Boker!" Miss Primrose said coldly, and turned away.

"Barbara, take twenty lines! How dare you interrupt! Boker, I am sorry, but since that animal has been in this school there has been nothing but trouble. It is a strange thing, if you yourself are not responsible, that so many apparent accidents have happened in so short a space of time. Boker, I cannot and will not have the serenity of the school upset in this way. You will take that dog away from the school, and you will take him away at once!"

Boker stood as if turned to stone.

"But, Miss Primrose—Miss Primrose," he cried, his voice quivering, "please give him a chance!"

"He has had too many chances! Boker, you hear?"

Babs clenched her hands. Clara drew a deep, deep breath. For one moment Boker stood still. Even Boker, for all his dutifulness, his courtesy, and his respect, was only human, and the worst insult anybody could have offered to Boker was to accuse his beloved pet. Perhaps even he forgot for the moment

## Amazing Behaviour of Connie!



"WELL, we've got to do something—and we're jolly well going to do something!" Clara Trevlyn said savagely, and angrily fiddled with her unruly forelock. "I don't care about being chucked out of the pets' show myself, but I do care about old Boker!"

"But, Miss Trevlyn," Boker said heartbrokenly. "Miss—Miss Trevlyn," he repeated, "don't do anything else! You've got into enough trouble because of me as it is!"

"Well, who cares?" Clara snorted. "Blow the trouble! The fact remains, we promised to stand by you, and how have we stood by you? By letting that cat, Connie, do as she likes! Getting you into mess after mess until now you've got to take old Buck away and are under notice yourself! Well, it's not going to happen—not if we know it! It's not fair! It's not right! It's just a downright disgrace to the school, isn't it? Well," she added, with a glare at Babs and Mabs, "why doesn't somebody say something?"

The scene was in Study No. 4. Babs, Clara, and Bessie had just been dismissed from detention. Bessie at the moment was down at the tuckshop laying in supplies for tea. Clara and Babs had been joined by Mabs, and with them was also Boker, his face shadowed with tragedy.

None of the chums, for the moment, could think of anything to say to the Tomboy's demand. In fact, before another word was said, there was an interruption.

It came in the shape of Sally, the maid.

"Oh!" she said. "Oh, there you are, Boker! Boker, Miss Jackson would like to see you in her study!"

"What for?" flamed Clara.

"Please, Miss Trevlyn, I don't know! Boker rose nervously.

"I—P'd better go," he said. "Please excuse me."

He left the study. As his footsteps trailed listlessly down the corridor, Babs looked at her chums.

"I don't like the sound of this, girls," she said grimly. "I don't trust Connie. If this is some new game of hers, we're jolly well going to be in it! Come on!"

Mabs and Clara nodded. In a body they hurried along to Connie's study. After a quick tap on the door, Babs jerked it open. And then she and her chums stopped and gaped.

For there in the centre of the study stood Boker, looking rather dazed, with Connie beaming kindly down on him, one hand on his shoulder.

"What—what—" stuttered Babs.

Connie looked round at them. For a second her eyes narrowed.

"What do you girls want?" she asked.

"Boker's our friend," stated Clara bluntly, looking curiously at Connie. "And seeing you've done your best to get him sacked, we want to know what the latest idea is."

"Oh!" said Connie. A scowl started to her face, then immediately disappeared. To Babs', Clara's, and Mabs' astonishment she smiled sweetly in a manner totally unlike the Connie they knew. "Well, that's all right," she said with a friendly nod. "Come in by all means. I had just started to tell Boker how sorry I was."

"You—sorry?" cried Clara.

"Yes, sorry—I mean it—frightfully

sorry, Boker! You know, Boker, I've always liked you—"

"I—I—" Boker stuttered in astonishment.

"And—well, I don't want you to run away with the idea that I've had anything to do with this latest development," Connie seriously went on. "I'll own I was mad with you in the Pets' House yesterday—but I'm sorry for that. But you know now that I didn't have anything to do with messing up Deena last night—"

"And you didn't," Babs put in scornfully, "bring his dog into the school to create a rumpus this afternoon?"

"I didn't! I'm sorry, but you've got entirely the wrong idea about that. What I told Miss Primrose was the truth and nothing else. Still," she added worriedly, "I do feel, Boker, that I haven't been treating you quite fairly—"

Boker flushed, but his eyes were still full of wonder.

"And—and if I can, I'd like to help you!" Connie went on.

The chums stared. Connie! Was this Connie?

"Because," Connie said, "I don't—I really don't, Boker—want you to go on thinking that I've been plotting your downfall. If there is anything I can do to help—"

"Well, you can!" Babs swiftly put in. She looked at Connie, so apparently sincere, so apparently troubled, that she began to wonder if she had made a mistake. "There are two ways in which you can help Boker," she stated. "Miss Primrose has listened to you and not to him. She's given him the sack; she's ordered him to take his dog away. If you're so jolly keen to help Boker now, prove it by going to Primmy and asking her to change her mind!"

Connie glanced at her queerly.

"You—you think I might do some good?"

"Well, you've done plenty of harm, so why not try the other thing for a change?" Clara snorted.

Connie shook her head. She did not look offended, though on another occasion Clara would have earned fifty lines for that remark.

"Well—" she said at length, "well, I'll try." And as Boker's face radiated with sudden joyful hope, she smiled again. "Perhaps," she considered, "Miss Primrose might be inclined to give you another chance, Boker, if I put in a word for you, but I don't think—remembering all that Miss Primrose has said to me about the dog—that it will be wise to broach the subject of Buck.

The best thing you can do, I think, is to accept his dismissal. By the way, have you anywhere to take him?"

"No, Miss Jackson," Boker said miserably.

"Surely," Connie said, "Barbara and her friends can help you in that? Barbara, what about those friends of yours—Mr. and Mrs. Crawley, at Friar-dale? Would they take the dog in for a day or two?"

Again Babs stared, becoming convinced almost, in spite of herself, of Connie's sincerity. The suggestion was a good one.

"Well, yes; they'll take him like a shot," she agreed. "My hat! Why didn't we think of that before? Boker, I'll go with you."

But Connie shook her head.

"No, Barbara; don't go and spoil things," she said. "We're all working now for Boker's benefit; one false move might spoil everything. You're not exactly in Miss Primrose's good books, remember. She has accused you, hasn't she, of championing Boker against her?"

Give Boker a note or something; let him take the dog himself. And, if you ask me," Connie added thoughtfully, "I should take him now, Boker, before I speak to Miss Primrose. It will count in your favour if she knows you have obeyed her first order."

Even Clara nodded at that, though she was staring at Connie in bewilderment. That certainly was sound common sense.

Boker gulped a little.

"But—but what about Miss Primrose's dog, Miss Jackson? I'm supposed to be exercising him now."

Connie laughed.

"Have I got to clear up everything for you?" she cried. "Well, what's the matter with exercising him? You can take both Buck and Deena with you, can't you? Once you've left Buck, you can bring Deena back through the woods and give him his exercise then." She glanced at the clock. "Well, if that's all settled, Barbara, perhaps you will write the note now?"

Willingly and gladly Barbara wrote the note, amazed, but very happy. Boker took it. Almost too grateful to speak, he disappeared.

"And now," Babs said, "what about going to Miss Primrose, Connie?"

"At once!" Connie agreed.

They all rose. But Babs, in spite of this amazing change of front, could not altogether forget her old distrust. She glanced expressively at her chums.

"Er—mind if we come with you, Connie?"

For just a second Connie paused. Then she shrugged.

"Not at all," she said.

Marvelling, they went out, even now inclined to believe that there was a trick in it somewhere. Off with a firm, confident stride went Connie, surrounded by the chums, and, reaching the Head's door, knocked. From the other side of the door came Miss Primrose's voice:

"Come in!"

Connie smiled at the chums. She went in, leaving the door a little ajar. They heard her say in her most honeyed and winning tones:

"Oh, Miss Primrose, I hope you'll excuse me, but I've come to speak to you—about Boker—"

And then the door closed, and her voice dropped to a low, unintelligible murmur. Babs drew a deep, relieved breath.

"Well," she said, "well, I suppose I'm not dreaming, you kidlets? That was Connie, wasn't it?"

"It was!" Clara said dazedly.

"Doing," Mabel Lynn put in, "the right thing at last! But why," Mabs asked, and shook her head, "why the dickens, if she's come to her senses now, has she been so dead set against Boker all along the line?"

But Babs and Clara, mystified, shook their heads. It was beyond them.

**B**UT if they could only have been present at the conversation which was going on in that room! If they could have seen the strange change which overcame Connie's face when she dropped her voice as she approached the headmistress' desk! And while Miss Primrose, staring at her in mild surprise:

"I—I felt I had to come and warn you, Miss Primrose!" Connie said in an agitated voice. "Boker has just now taken your dog Deena out; and Boker, up in arms because you have given him such a well-deserved week's notice, is threatening that he will have his own back on you—and on Deena! Miss Primrose, I fear that he means harm either to you or your dog!"



## Worse and Worse!



"BARBARA!" Miss Primrose spoke sharply and agitatedly.

The scene was Big Hall; the time just after call-over. Outside it was dark, and gates for the night were officially closed. Babs & Co., dismissed from assembly, were congregated on the steps of the school, staring rather anxiously into the moonlit gloom of the quad. But Babs turned as Miss Primrose's voice fell upon her ears, guessing in advance what the question was going to be.

"Yes, Miss Primrose?"

"Have you seen Boker or Deena yet?"

"No, Miss Primrose."

Miss Primrose frowned. She looked extremely worried.

"Let me know the minute they turn up," she added, and rustled away. Babs & Co. glanced at each other. They, as well as Miss Primrose, were disturbed.

It was over two hours now since Boker had gone to Mr. and Mrs. Crawley's cottage, and, though he should have returned a good hour ago, he seemed to have vanished into the blue. What had become of him?

The whole school by now had heard of the disappearance of Boker; the whole school knew that he had gone, taking Miss Primrose's extremely valuable dog with him. Consternation was widespread.

"Bother it! He can't have bolted into the blue!" Babs said worriedly. "Something's happened to him!"

"You've heard what they're saying, I guess?" put in Leila Carroll, the American junior. "That Boker, out of spite, has run off with Primmy's dog!"

"Which," Clara snorted, "is utter rot! For one thing, Boker isn't spiteful; for another, he had every reason, believing that Connie was speaking up for him, to get back as soon as he could and hear the news. But it's funny—dashed funny!" she said uneasily. "I wonder if he ever got to Grandma Crawley, Babs? Do you think we ought to tell Primmy where he went to?"

"Good idea!" Babs said. "We will. Look! There she is, talking to Miss Charmant! I'll go and tell her!"

She strolled across. Miss Primrose looked sharply as she gave a polite "Ahem!"

"I—I was wondering," Babs said, "if it was any good inquiring of the Crawleys at Myrtle Cottage, Miss Primrose? We know Boker was going there."

"Then why didn't you say so?" Miss Primrose cried. "Of course it is of some good! Of course—of course! I was just debating with Miss Charmant whether to ring up the police. Barbara, you know these people, do you not? You shall come with me. Go and get your hat and coat on, and meet me at the garage—at once!"

"Y-yes, Miss Primrose!" Several of the girls around heard that. While Babs ran off, a concerted move was made towards the quad, and a dozen girls, all quivering with excitement, hurried down towards the gates to witness the departure of the Fourth Form captain and the headmistress. When Babs, five minutes later, arrived there, she found an eager swarm.

In a few moments Miss Primrose, her lips twitching with agitation, loomed up.

"Barbara, are you here? Jenkins, the car, please—and quickly! Why, bless my soul!" she added, starting as

a hoarse voice came from the gates. "Piper? Is that you, Piper? What are you saying?"

"Which I'm saying he's here, Miss Primrose!" Piper the porter called back. "Boker!"

"What?"

"Which I'm just opening the gates to 'im, Miss Primrose!"

Miss Primrose hastened, with Babs and the crowd at her heels, in the direction of the gates. Then she gave a cry.

"Boker!"

Boker it was, his face white beneath the light which shone above the gates, his cap gone, and thick mud upon his coat. Boker—but without Deena.

"Boker, where is Deena?" Miss Primrose tremblingly rapped.

There was a long moment before Boker replied. For a moment he hung his head, his lips quivered. Then, in a pent-up breath, the words falteringly came:



THE chums blinked in dismay at Deena's bedraggled condition.

"Connie!" Clara said, her lips tight. "Twig the idea? This is another of her little games—messing up Deena just to get old Boker into a row!"

"I—I've lost him, Miss Primrose!"

"Lost him?" Miss Primrose started.

"Boker, what do you mean?"

There was a breathless silence.

"I mum-mean," Boker said, gulping,

"that when I was bringing him back from Myrtle Cottage through the woods somebody threw something at me. I dunno what happened then, but whatever it was that was thrown hit me on the head, and I must have gone out, 'cos it was dark when I came to. And—and Deena," he added falteringly, "had gone!"

He stared beseechingly at Miss Primrose's horrified face as he blurted the confession. He stared wildly at the faces of the girls—some frowning, some sympathetic, some utterly disbelieving. The story sounded altogether too tall; altogether too astonishing. The silence was broken by a scoffing laugh.

"And you haven't, by any chance," Connie Jackson gibed, "hidden him, or

sold him, or done something to him?"

"Eh?"

"You heard!"

"Connie!" shrieked Babs.

"Connie, you—you rotten traitor!" gasped Clara Trevlyn.

Connie scornfully laughed. Boker blinked, even in the moment of his own humiliation struck into speechless astonishment at the audacity of this girl who two hours ago had posed as his friend. But the mask was off now, and Babs & Co., as humiliated as Boker himself, realised that they had been betrayed. Too late they saw the cunning of the girl they had half trusted; too late guessed at the treachery which had been at work.

"Clara, silence!" Miss Primrose cried. "Boker, please answer that question," she said. "What have you done with Deena?"

"I only know what I've told you, Miss Primrose!" the unhappy Boker blurted out.

"Boker, please!" Miss Primrose's eyes flashed. "You will not deny, I presume, that before going out you made threats against myself and Deena? Or perhaps you weren't aware that anyone overheard them; but Connie did, and Connie, as was her duty, faithfully reported them to me. I cannot believe your story, Boker; it is altogether too wild and too fantastic. Now, please, sir, tell the truth!"

"He is telling the truth!" cried Clara.

"Clara, please remember yourself!"

"But—"

"Miss Primrose, please listen to me!" Babs cried. "It's all a plot—it must be! It was Connie who pretended that Boker—"

"Barbara, I will hear what you have to say afterwards. Dulcia," she added, spying the head girl of the school, "will you kindly remove Clara and

(Continued on page 14)



# OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

*Week by week Patricia writes for you in that cheery, charming, and helpful way so typical of her. Whether you are "down in the dumps" or feeling "on top of the world"—Patricia is the ideal friend. For she is young enough to understand all schoolgirl joys, yet wise enough to be helpful over schoolgirl problems.*

**I** SUPPOSE you are all beginning to think about Christmas now, aren't you?

What with Christmas plays, Christmas bazaars, and Christmas collections at school—you have to start early to be ready in time for all the festivities, don't you?

At our school we used to have a Nativity play at the end of each Christmas term. The seniors took part in this, while the rest of us used to provide the "carolling voices" from the room that led off the school hall.

Then another feature was Christmas Tableaux—in which we were dressed up and posed to depict well-known religious pictures.

I can distinctly remember being a cherub one year, dressed in white and with all my hair curled up on end.

Mother, who came—with all the other parents, of course—to see the Tableaux, thought I looked marvellous—angelic, in fact.

But she wasn't nearly so impressed when I caught a cold as a result of my flimsy clothing!

## ● Present-Planning

My young brother, Heath (whose full name is Heatherington) is already saving up his ha'pennies for Christmas presents.

"I think I'll buy you some coloured chalks, Pat," he said to me, with a wide-eyed expression of generosity.

"But I'm not a pavement artist," I protested. "I'd much rather have a bottle of ink, or a typewriting rubber."

This seemed rather to dampen his ardour.

"Oh, all right," he pouted. "I'll buy Brian the chalks, then p'raps he'll buy me a down-the-chute, like they have in the park!"

And grimly then, Heath got on with his drawing—of which he is absurdly fond.

Mother says she thinks he'll grow into quite an artist later on, but I remind her that I used to adore washing-up when I was his age. And you should see me try to dodge it now!

## ● Lucky Pincushions

Talking about school bazaars—as we were—don't you find it a puzzle to know what to make as your contribution to a stall?

Naturally, schoolgirls can't afford to make things that are going to cost a lot of money in materials—even if they have the time.

So the ideal article for the stall is something novel, that will catch the buyer's eye and sell well. Something easy-to-make, so that it doesn't interfere too much with

homework and family plans. And something fairly easy—just because we're not all expert needlewomen yet.

That's why I think these Lucky Pincushions in the picture here would be ideal to make for a bazaar.

You'll notice they are real "good luck"



gifts, for one is made in the shape of a horseshoe and the other in the shape of a four-leaved clover.

Ask mother if she can spare some scraps of silk for you, and then cut out two pieces to the shape of the horseshoe.

Sew these pieces together and then fill with bran (or sawdust would do) and join the opening you left for this filling.

Add four cross-stitches in pretty silky cotton—just to keep the shape

firm, and then at the top stitch a bow of ribbon so that the pincushion can be hung up.

I can imagine this in blue material with pink stitches and ribbon, or cherry-pink material with mauve ribbon trimmings.

The four-leaved clover is made in exactly the same way, except that you may find it more difficult to keep your seams on the right curve. So I suggest you mark these out in pencil, very lightly, first, and then the shape just can't go wrong.

A four-leaved clover pincushion must be made in green material, of course, and trimmings could either be a paler green, or rust, or a holly-berry red.

Aren't Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret Rose lucky to have a swimming pool of their very own in the grounds of Buckingham Palace! It is quite a new one, so I expect they're both very thrilled about it.

Princess Elizabeth, of course, is a very good swimmer indeed, so she'll simply adore it, I'm quite sure.

I did read of a swimming pool the other day that had a lift to take swimmers to the high diving board!

Wouldn't you love to see it?

## ● In Highland Mood

Here's very bright news for you Scottish readers. Tartans and plaids are

the very newest rage for cosy winter dresses.

Tartan skirts for schoolgirls have also come right into fashion again, so if you have one, you're smart indeed. They must have lots of pleats, of course, which makes the skirt go with a real Highland swing.

Jerseys to go with these skirts should always be of one of the colours in the skirt itself—generally, yellow, deep red, deep green, or beige.

It looks as if Winter's going to be a very colourful season this year, doesn't it?

And I must say, I'm glad, for it makes life look so much more cheery.

## ● A Luxury Blanket

Now here is something that you can pass on to mother—particularly if she is a keen knitter.

It is quite possible then that she has a really fine collection of odd wools, and isn't quite sure how to use them up.

Tell her that the latest idea is to knit them into ten-inch squares, and then join them with crochet. When a good many squares have been made, she'll find that she has a lovely, warm blanket for her bed. And if it is bound with silk or satin round the edges, it would be a lovely thing indeed.

## ● For the Youngsters

If there is still quite a load of conkers tucked into odd corners in your house, here is a quaint little toy you can make with them. It will certainly amuse the young members of the family.

Choosing a big conker for the head, make two holes through this and those

you require for the "body" part. Thread string through these holes so that it is double where the legs join.

Knot it here, and then thread one piece of string through the conkers of one leg and one through the other.

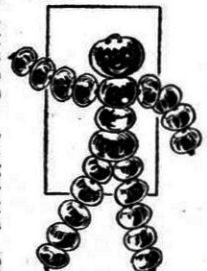
The arms are one longish string of conkers, knotted where they join the "body" part, just below the head.

As a finishing touch, a face can quite easily be painted on to the top conker.

Bye-bye until next Saturday, my pets!

Your friend,

*Patricia*





# A LOVELY VOICE

*"Sweet and low"—never harsh and shrill—  
that is the voice that lingers in the memory.*

I'M going to start with a tiny story. Once there was a schoolgirl—yes, it is a true story—whose voice was so jarring that when the class was asked to recite in unison the teacher would ask her to be silent.

You can imagine this schoolgirl's feelings! She knew that her voice was considered so harsh and unattractive that she would spoil the recitation of the whole class.

Some girls would have been terribly annoyed and very unhappy if this had happened to them, wouldn't they?

This schoolgirl was unhappy—but she was not annoyed. Instead, she resolved to make her voice as lovely as it could be.

That's the story—though not the end of it.

Here's how to tell whether your voice is attractive in all its moods.

Stand in the corner of a room, facing the wall, and recite some favourite lines from Shakespeare: "The quality of mercy is not strained . . ." for example. You all know that famous speech from "The Merchant of Venice," don't you?

While reciting you are hearing your voice at its very best. Now try to give an imitation of yourself in a temper, shrill and noisy.

That is your voice at its ugliest. There, having discovered any imperfections, I am sure you will resolve to yourself that these shall be conquered. So that before very long you may deserve the praise that King Lear gave to his beloved daughter:

*"Her voice was ever soft and low,  
An excellent thing in woman."*

## CORRECT BREATHING

The first step towards this is to breathe correctly. You have only to ask famous stage actresses and prima-donnas about this. They all know the value of deep breathing, and would as soon forget to eat each day as forget their breathing exercises.

Stand in front of your open window first thing in the morning. Place both hands on the lower part of your ribs. Then take a deep breath through your nose, feel your lungs expanding slowly, while you count five to yourself. Then let the breath out through your mouth slowly again, while you count another five.

Do this five times to begin. But after a day or two try to breathe-in while

counting six, and out while counting the same number. Each day then you should try to breathe in more slowly still until you are counting up to ten.

Not only will this help to improve your voice, but it will also do your health lots of good, and you'll find you get fewer colds.

Quite a number of girls—and grown-ups, too—do not open their mouths wide enough when speaking.

Put your first and second finger together, then open your mouth and place them—sideways—between your teeth. That is the width your mouth should open when you are speaking.

Reading aloud and reciting in spare moments are also great aids to improving your voice. In addition, these exercises are very good for adding to your self-confidence, so shy girls in particular should try it.

Saying tongue-twisters aloud makes you nimble with your words—especially if a kind chum will listen to you and tell you honestly whether she understood every word—particularly when you recite the tongue-twisters quickly.

Another good test is to hold a cork between your teeth and then try to talk in clear, understandable tones.

## TEST YOURSELF

Talking through the nose is a frequent fault.

Perhaps you are not sure if you are guilty of this. So to test yourself, pinch your nose (not too hard!) and recite the alphabet through.

If your voice is good, then only the letters N and M will sound nasal.

Regular gargling is a great aid to voice beauty.

This should be done every morning. A good pinch of salt—cooking salt for preference—in a tumbler of warm water, makes an excellent gargle.

Throw your head well back so that the solution really cleanses your tonsils, and trill up and down the scale as if you were enjoying yourself.

For you who know—without being conceited—that you have an attractive voice, here is a game to try in order to test it for dramatic qualities.

You can tell from this whether your voice has the feeling and emotion which is so essential if you have yearnings to become a real actress.



Get one or two of your understanding chums to join in this "game" if you can. They'll all roar with laughing—but, then, that's part of the fun.

What you must do is to choose a simple sentence among yourselves—let's say: "Will you come to tea with me?"

Having decided on this, you must now say, "1234567," using your voice so expressively that your chums can tell what you really mean—"Will you come to tea with me?"

It's grand fun after you've got the hang of the idea, and as you must all try it—why, then it doesn't matter if you do raise some laughs.

Now you must try it again on a more dramatic note. What about: "I'm sorry, but I must go now"? If you can make "1234567" sound like that, with real feeling in it, then your voice is well on the way to being the lovely thing it should be.

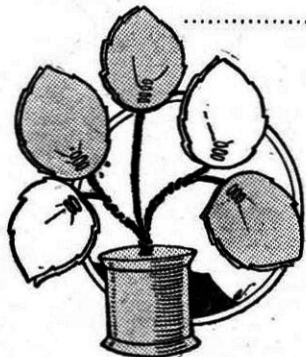
And when next girls are being chosen to take part in Christmas plays and carols I hope you will be among them, so that afterwards your visitors may say with Shakespeare:

*"I thank you for your voices, thank you—  
Your most sweet voices."*

## THE END

Now for the end of that story. That schoolgirl I told you of is now grown-up. It took her months, even years, to improve that voice of hers. But she did not give up.

And now she has a voice that people love to hear, one that has made her many friends—friends that she will keep for ever. For that voice will remain beautiful even when she herself is no longer young.



# THE PENWIPER TREE

*Something to make for the writing desk at home, or for a present.*

complete, that I'm quite sure you'll want to start on it right away.

Your requirements are quite easy to obtain. They consist of one empty cotton reel, two or three pipe-cleaners, and some small pieces of felt.

Coloured pipe-cleaners would look gayer than the white ones—unless, of course, you have a "modernistic" room at home that simply demands white ornaments.

Twist the pipe-cleaners together to form a tree-trunk with branches, and fix them into the hole in the cotton reel.

Cut out the leaves from felt—perhaps from an old hat or beret, or old bed-room slippers. Then place two leaves together and sew them to the branches, as in the picture.

Lastly, you can colour the cotton reel in any gay hue to match the felt you use

NO more "blobby" writing, with this penwiper stand in the house! It's so beautifully easy to make, and such an attractive-looking thing when

(Continued from page 11)

Barbara this instant, and any other-girl who interferes? Boker, you will tell me the candid truth, otherwise, I shall have no alternative but to call in the police. For the last time, what have you done with Deena?"

And Clara and Babs, as they were marched away in the grip of the head girl, heard his choked, faltering, utterly heart-broken reply:

"N-nothing, Miss Primrose!"

### Up to Boker's Pet!



"IT'S rot—utter, idiotic, trifling rot!" Clara Trevely'n declared fiercely. "Why, if

Boker had done Deena an injury, should he come back to the school at all? It's Connie who thought it all out, and Connie, if you ask me, who's got something to do with Deena's disappearance!"

It was next morning—very early next morning, as a matter of fact—and Babs, Clara, and Mabs were holding a council of war in Study No. 4, whither they had gathered before rising-bell.

Boker, still protesting his innocence, had been confined for the night in Miss Primrose's private house and there told that unless he confessed absolutely by eight o'clock that morning he would be handed over to the police.

"There's just about one thing we might do," Babs said worriedly. "If we go to the spot where Boker was knocked out in the woods we might find the stick, or whatever it was, that knocked him out—and that, at least, would help prove his story."

Clara nodded.

"There's something in that," she conceded. "But how are we to find the spot?"

"By just," Babs smiled, "taking Boker! No, don't interrupt; listen to me! It's a risk, releasing him, but we've just got to jolly well take the risk. It's a good thing that Mrs. Murphy, the Head's housekeeper, is deaf; and it's a jolly good thing that Boker has spent the night in Miss Primrose's sitting-room. Nobody will be up yet, except Mrs. Murphy—"

"Oh, my hat!" Mabs stared. "You mean—"

"I mean," Babs said decisively, "I'm going to try to get him out. No, don't all come. Three of us would only make a mess of it. I'll go alone!"

And she went before either of her chums could object; and, reaching the Head's house, she carefully trod the drive that led to the servants' quarters, carefully peered into the kitchen, where buxom and deaf Mrs. Murphy was busily lighting the fire.

Heart in her mouth, Babs tiptoed to the door, behind which Boker was a prisoner. Holding her breath, she turned the key and slipped in.

Boker, just risen, his face pale and haggard in the morning sunlight, stared.

"Miss Redfern—"

"Boker, come—quickly!" Babs hissed, holding the door open.

"But—"

"Quickly!" Babs repeated, and in the tone of her voice there was a compelling urgency which brooked no delay.

Boker gulped. Still with one wary eye on Mrs. Murphy's back, Babs stood with her arm against the door. No longer did Boker hesitate, but with a wondering, half-scared glance towards his rescuer, shuffled out. Babs pattered after him.

"Now," she said, "go to the woods—and, for goodness' sake, keep the shrub-

bery between yourself and the house! Clara and Mabs and I will meet you in five minutes' time by the old oak!"

"But, Miss Redfern, you'll get into awful trouble—"

"Go!" hissed Babs, and gave him a push.

And while Boker hurried off, she flew back to her chums.

"All serene!" she breathed. "Easy, in fact! Now, kiddlets, we've got to work—and work swiftly! Rising-bell will be ringing in half an hour's time, and the hue and cry for Boker will be up then. Come on!"

No need to tell Mabs and Clara to come on. Eager, thrilling, they left the school. Five minutes later saw them at the rendezvous Babs had named in the woods. But of Boker—

"Where is he?" Clara cried. "Babs, you're sure he understood?"

"Quite sure!" Babs replied. "He was—" And then she stopped. From the ground she picked up a handkerchief. It was a handkerchief which had the initials "C. B." on it, and the perfect dryness of its condition, contrasted with the dew-soaked ground around, told that it had been recently dropped.

"He's been here!" Babs breathed. "And here not many minutes ago! Something's happened! What?"

In questioning startledness they glanced at each other. Then anxiously they scouted round. No sign of the missing page-boy.

"Well, there's one thing we can do—only one thing!" Babs said. "If we can't find him, perhaps Buck can. Remember Coker said that Buck could track him? Mabs, put that handkerchief back where you found it. Clara, will you scoot off to Grandma Crawley and get Buck? You're fastest. If anybody can track Boker down, Buck can! But, for goodness' sake hurry!" she cried apprehensively.

Clara, however, was hurrying before she had finished her instructions. In anxious, chafing silence, Babs and Mabs waited. Five—ten minutes went by; the minutes lengthened to a quarter of an hour. Then Clara, leading Buck on the lead, and panting from the long run to Myrtle Cottage and back, appeared triumphantly on the scene.

"Got him!" she cried.

"Good old Clara!" Babs enthused. "Now, Buck, quiet, you silly animal. Look at this; sniff it. Got it? That's good! Find master!" she urged. "Find master!"

For a moment Buck did not seem to understand. He thought, obviously, that this was some new and delightful game. At first he caught the handkerchief between his teeth and furiously shook it. Then suddenly, appearing to become aware of his master's non-appearance, looked up. Babs deliberately pressed the clue to his muzzle.

"Buck, find master, then!" she urged. "Master—where is he?"

And then, at last, Buck seemed to understand what was required. With an eager yelp he sat up, cocking his ear in the direction of the South Copse of the woods. Then, with a whine, he scurried off.

"Come on, he's on the trail!" Clara jubilantly cried. "Hi, Buck, don't run too fast!"

But Buck was scampering. Breathlessly, the chums followed. Heedless of thorns and prickles, they pushed on in his wake.

"Oh, my only Sunday bonnet!" Clara gasped.

"Come on!" Babs panted. "Must keep up with him!"

Ahead of them, Buck disappeared into a clump of bracken.

"Buck!" they shouted.

Buck did not appear. They searched for him, calling again and again. But it was in vain.

"Dished!" Clara cried. "And after this chase! The little beggar's goodness knows where by this time! And—Hallo!" she added, and straightened up, her face suddenly startled. "Babs, hear that?"

Babs had heard it—and Mabs. It was a suddenly joyful yelp near at hand, followed by the happy yapping bark of Buck.

"The first bark was Deena's!" Mabs cried excitedly. "Buck's found him! It came from the direction of Tithe Farm! Come on!"

Each heart beating high with hope now, they ran on. Tithe Farm, long since abandoned by its former owner, was two hundred yards away to the right. Even as they ran they heard Deena's bark again.

Now they were out of the woods, and in the valley beneath they saw the farm, gleaming in the morning sunlight. They saw Buck frisking round a kennel, and then they all shouted as they saw, straining on the end of a chain, Miss Primrose's prize borzoi. And even as they ran they saw two people emerge from the farm—one a man, carrying a heavy stick; the other a woman, whose face Babs instantly recognised.

So she had been right! The woman was the one she had seen talking to Connie Jackson through the detention-room window yesterday—the woman who had peered through the hedge. These people had stolen Deena!

The three chums sprinted down the hill. While Buck barked furiously, the man was approaching the barking Deena. They saw the stick upraised; and they heard Deena's howl of pain as the blow struck home.

"The—the cad!" exploded Clara. "Hi, you beast!"

Man and woman had turned now towards them. Hot with anger, the chums rushed on. Now they were near the gate, wide open; now they were rushing through it. And then came a sudden gasp from Babs, as, catching her foot against a taut wire stretched from post to post, she went sprawling. Almost simultaneously came a cry from Mabs, and she went flying after her; and Clara, stumbling over them both, struck her head against the post. The next moment—

"Got you!" snarled the man.

And Babs found herself gripped in rough fingers. Mabs, turning, was seized by the woman. Clara, with a gasp, slid against the post, momentarily stunned by her fall. They were captives!

### Babs' Getaway!



"MY goodness, look!" breathed Barbara Redfern.

It was ten minutes later.

In a bleak room on the first floor of the house the three chums were prisoners.

There were no furnishings in the room, and the walls, cracked and broken, were already in a state of dereliction. Two grimy windows, one facing the wood, the other at right angles, facing the fields, revealed the litter and the dust of ages. Except, indeed, for a couple of big sacks in the corner, there was nothing.

Dazed, bewildered, they had been forced into this apartment, the stout door locked and bolted upon them.

Clara, thank goodness, had recovered now, and Babs and Mabs, having got



over the first shock of finding themselves in captivity, were keeping a look-out at the window overlooking the farmyard.

To be sure, there was plenty of activity going on there, for suddenly, out of one of the outhouses, a car had appeared. It now stood in the middle of the yard, facing the road, its engine throbbing.

Of Buck there was no sign. Deena, watchful and panting, still lay at the end of a chain in front of his kennel.

But it was not those things which had brought that thrilled "Look!" from Barbara Redfern's lips.

Something was wrong with the car. The man was tinkering with the engine; the woman was inside the car, apparently straightening things up. But suddenly a new figure had appeared on the scene—a creeping figure which, with one wary eye on the car, was sidling towards Deena. It was Boker.

"Boker!" breathed Babs. "He must have got on the track of these people. He left his hanky by the oak to tell us he'd been there. Oh, good old Boker!"

Tensely they watched. Very obviously Boker's aim was to reach Deena without himself being seen. Slowly, cautiously, he crept along the wall. Now he had reached Deena's kennel; now he was freeing the chain.

"He's doing it!" gasped Babs. "He's done—"

And there her voice ended in a wail of dismay. For Boker actually had done it. Deena was free, with Boker's hand under his collar. But Deena, delighted to be free, had given a glad little wuff. Out at once popped the head from under the bonnet. The man gave a shout.

"Hi! Leave that dog alone!" But Boker, holding Deena's collar, was making towards the gate. The man gave a roar, and ran to head him off, just as the woman climbed out of the car.

"He's trapped!" cried Clara. "He'll never race that man to the gate!"

Boker suddenly changed his tactics. Still clutching the dog, he bolted into the shed from which the car had emerged. Ten yards behind him rushed the man.

And then a surprising thing happened.

Round the angle of the building sounded an angry bark, and then a shaggy little form appeared. Straight at the man it flew, barking shrilly, and snapping at his ankles as it barked. It was Buck!

The man halted. While the chums breathlessly watched, they saw him give back. Buck, still barking, snapped furiously, never noticing the woman, who had picked up a heavy block of wood from the floor of the yard. Meanwhile, Boker, having entered the shed, now slammed the heavy door. There came a rattle of bolts from inside.

And then—

"Buck!" shrieked Mabs. "Look out!" But Buck did not hear, and, in any case, it was too late. Swift and unerring the missile flew from the woman's hand; the excited Buck's yelp was strangled in midair, and Buck went rolling like a little ball across the yard. They saw the man signal to the woman; they saw the woman disappear into a near-by shed, emerging a moment later with an axe. Then, together, the two converged on the shed.

"Oh, golly! They're going to chop open the door!" Clara cried.

The chums paled, staring apprehensively. Boker in there—Boker, the hunted, the outcast, who had done most to save the dog which he had been accused of hiding. It was easy to see what had happened now—easy to guess how, with Connie's aid, the scoundrels had got hold of the dog and were, most evidently to judge by the preparation of the car, about to run off with him.

Babs' eyes flashed as the first resounding crash of the axe vibrated the air.

"Come on! We've got to help Boker!" she said. "One of us! Clara, tie those two sacks together—quickly! I'm going to get help!"

"But how—" Clara started. For answer Babs crossed to the window, and heaved on it. Squeaking protestingly, it opened.

sounded like Buck to me. It seems clear now that it's they who helped Boker to escape—they who went off afterwards to meet him. Miss Primrose," she said urgently, "let me take the police officer to the spot I saw them disappear."

Miss Primrose, almost frantic—for by this time the escape of Boker and the absence of Babs, Mabs, and Clara were known—looked doubtful.

Sergeant Silbey, of the Courtfield Police, who, in response to her telephoned message, had turned up at Cliff House, spoke up then.

"I really think, Miss Primrose, that would be a good plan," he advised. "And every moment we stand arguing here is a moment lost. If Miss Jackson would be so good—"

"Connie, please—go!" the head-mistress said agitatedly.



CONNIE JACKSON looked round as the chums burst in. "Come in," she said pleasantly. "I had just started to tell Boker how sorry I was." The chums almost reeled. After all her plotting against Boker, Connie's sudden change of front was certainly amazing.

"Clara, got the sacks?" "Yes."

"Then," Babs said, her face white, "hold it. No, never mind. I know what I'm about." And as Clara gripped it; she climbed over the sill, catching up the loose end, and taking it with her. "Now, hold tight," she said, and, slithering over the sill, used the knotted sacks as a rope, and swarmed down them until her feet were dangling eight feet from the ground. Then she dropped, taking the sacks with her.

And while Clara and Mabs watched from the window, while the man battered on the shed door, which Boker had made into a prison for himself and Miss Primrose's dog, Babs breathlessly headed across the field and gained the road outside.

"BARBARA, MABEL, and Clara have something to do with it, Miss Primrose," Connie Jackson said. "I'm sure of that. When I was dressing this morning, I happened to glance out of my study window, and I saw them all trailing off into the woods. After that I'm sure I heard a dog yelping. It

Connie nodded. No further bidding did she require. With a swift look at the sergeant, she trotted out of Miss Primrose's private house where this meeting was taking place. They were joined by two of the sergeant's men, and watched by a crowd of chattering, wondering, excited girls, Connie led the way across the road, plunging into the woods, where footprints were soon found leading to the old oak. There the sergeant paused.

"And here," he said, "they were joined by a dog. This is the way—towards Tithe Farm. I think we're on the track, men!"

Connie glowed. She hoped they were. Connie had no doubt whatever that Babs & Co. had helped Boker to escape; had no doubt now that if the police found Babs & Co., they would also find the page-boy.

She kept at the sergeant's side as he found his way through South Copee, eventually emerging on to the road which ran down to Tithe Farm. And then the sergeant stopped.

"Miss Jackson," he cried, "who is this?"

For a figure, panting, dishevelled, was running towards them. Connie gave one startled glance, and then whooped.

"It's Barbara Redfern—Barbara herself! Quick, sergeant, grab her before she gets away!"

But Babs made no attempt to get away. Excitedly she waved an arm, and pointed back along the road.

"Quick—quick!" she yelled desperately.

### The Heroism of Boker!



**C**RASH! Crash! Clara and Mabs, their hearts in their mouths, hands

clenched by their sides, watched anxiously as the attack on the door of the shed which sheltered the plucky Boker and Deena continued.

In the yard the car's engine still throbbed, and at the foot of the wall lay the plucky Buck, the only sign of life he evinced an occasional twitch of the limbs.

Terrific that onslaught upon the door. It seemed only a matter of moments now before the precious pair would be in.

"Oh, my hat!" Clara groaned.

"Mabs, can't we do something?"

She stared round desperately. But what could they do?

And—where was Babs?

In despair they watched the pair again. And this time there came a loud splintering crash, and a hoarse cry from the man as at last the door gave way. The man and woman rushed inside.

What, then? Clara gazed in frightened anxiety; Mabs felt her cheeks turn white. Now they heard the snarling of Deena; now they heard a shout in Boker's voice, followed by a yell from the man, the sound of a scuffle, and out into the yard came Boker, pulling Deena. Clara let out a cheer.

"Boker! Good old Boker!"

"Boker—look out!" shouted Mabs.

After Boker came the man, a length of stout wood in his hand.

But at that moment Buck recovered consciousness. Even as the man swung up his weapon, a yelping little form rushed forward and leapt. Buck's teeth fastened upon the man's wrist, and with a yell the scoundrel staggered.

Boker scrambled to his feet.

"Buck! Good Buck!" he cried.

"Deena, come on!"

And tugging the dog, pursued now by the woman, he rushed towards the gate.

"Oh, my hat! Look now!" Clara shrieked, and cheered.

For through the gateway, just as Boker reached it, came five rushing figures—the figures of Babs, of Connie Jackson, and Sergeant Silbey and his two men. Boker, bolting recklessly, almost cannoned into Connie, and Connie, with a whoop, caught him by the shoulder.

"Boker!" she yelled. "Boker! Sergeant, this is the boy; there is the dog. Here he is, caught red-handed in the act of stealing Deena! Sergeant, arrest him!"

Then Babs came forward. Scornfully she snatched Connie's hand away from his shoulder.

"Wait a minute!" she said. "Just wait a minute! Before you talk about arresting, Connie Jackson, what about your own pals being arrested?" And she pointed to the woman who, her face ashen, had stopped dead in her tracks.

"It wasn't Boker who tried to steal that dog—it was that woman!" she cried. "And you—yes, you, Connie Jackson—were in league with her!"

"I—I wasn't!" Connie stammered.

"I— And she gasped as the sergeant, running forward, secured the woman, and the two constables seized the man. "T—that woman!" she said.

"Oh, my hat! Then—then who is she?"

The sergeant, one hand on the woman's shoulder, came back.

"I think," he said gruffly, "I can answer that question. She is Sylvia Crane, and her husband's there—

Herbert Crane. They are the two most notorious dog thieves in the country. A champion like Miss Primrose's borzoi was a real prize to them. And if you've been mixed up with them, Miss Jackson," he added grimly, "I think you'll have some explaining to do to the police. Meantime, my lad"—

and he smiled at Boker, who breathlessly grinned back—"I want to thank you—and Miss Redfern here—for helping us to make the catch of the year!"

"MISS PRIMROSE, I didn't—I didn't!" Connie said wildly. "I had no idea that those people meant any harm to Deena! I never met the man before! I was mad with Boker, and this woman said she'd give me a five-pound note the day Boker was dismissed from the school. And that," Connie declared desperately, "is the truth!"

Miss Primrose frowned.

The scene was in her study, and Boker, Babs, Mabs and Clara were also present. The Cranes had confessed that they had used Connie to plot against Boker, solely because Boker, as custodian of the Pets' House, was an obstacle in their plan to steal Deena.

"Well," said Miss Primrose, "if I believe that, Connie, I can't forget the part you have played. You will this very night pack up your belongings and leave this school, and not return until the Spring Term—by which time, I hope, you will have repented the spitefulness of your ways."

"Y—yes, Miss Primrose," Connie said, and with downcast head and a face hot with shame, left the headmistress's study.

"To you, Boker," said Miss Primrose gently, facing the page-boy, "I can never sufficiently express my regret. Naturally, in view of the story I have heard now, I withdraw my notice of

your dismissal. Buck most certainly can remain in the Pets' House, and you may consider his entry in the pets' show as still standing. Boker, I am proud of you—and," she added gently, "I am no less proud of your dog."

Boker flushed deeply.

"Thank you, Miss Primrose. But please don't forget that Miss Redfern and her friends had as much to do with it as I did—"

"I am not forgetting that," Miss Primrose said gravely. "I am proud to think such girls are in my charge. Needless to say, all your outstanding punishments are cancelled, and your withdrawal from the pets' show cancelled. I hope," she added, looking at Boker, "to have more to say about this when the pets' show occurs."

And she did. For two days later the pets' show occurred. Sir Willis Gregory was the judge, and to Boker's great delight Buck was named as the winner of his class. Amid cheers he went up to receive his cup and the crisp five-pound note which accompanied it, Buck frisking at his heels. In that moment Boker's thoughts were all for his mother; what this would mean to her! And when that presentation was ended, Miss Primrose came forward.

She smiled.

"Boker, please wait a moment," she said. "Girls, I wish to announce another class in the show for this year. It is a class in which there is only one competitor, and that competitor"—she stopped and patted Buck's head—"Boker's dog! The class is," she added, "the Pluckiest Dog in the Show—"

"Hurrah!" cheered Clara Trevlyn.

"And the prize," Miss Primrose smiled, "the prize is this: Boker, come forward."

And while Boker, hardly knowing what to do or say for his tingling amazement, stepped forward, Miss Primrose pressed another five-pound note into his hand.

"That is yours, Boker," she added.

"Girls, may I ask you to give three hearty cheers for Boker, our plucky page-boy, and his no less plucky pet, Buck?"

And the cheers were given in the best Cliff House tradition, while Boker, dazed and bewildered by his good fortune, gulped, and Buck set up a lusty bark.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

## The SECRET of the PHANTOM BOAT!



Through the grey sea—  
mist it came, swift and  
ghostly—straight for the  
Cliff House chums!

That was the commencement of one of the most exciting adventures that ever befell Barbara Redfern & Co.; an adventure that brought with it drama and pathos, as well as plenty of excitement. For the Phantom Boat was playing a strange part in the affairs of a certain fisherlass whom the chums befriend!

Don't miss this absorbing Hilda Richards story. It appears, COMPLETE,

Next Week.



Romance, Glamour and Breathless Excitement in this Fascinating Story.

# Princess to Save Leiconia!



## FOR NEW READERS.

**PAMELA COURTNEY**, an English girl living in the romantic little Balkan kingdom of Leiconia, is asked to impersonate the Princess Sonia. Sonia must go abroad in order to save the country—but nobody, except Prince Alphonse, must ever suspect that Pamela has taken her place. Thrilled beyond measure, Pamela agrees. She is so like the princess that a wig makes her Sonia's double. Her chief adviser is the Grand Duke Bernard, who does not know of the masquerade and whom she dislikes and suspects. She learns from a young Leiconian, **PAUL NALDI**, a secret helper of Princess Sonia, that the duke is plotting to seize the throne. The grand duke deliberately withholds from Pamela papers which will relieve the local peasants of certain taxes. The grand duke's motive is to infuriate the peasants against the princess. Learning of this from Paul, Pamela searches for the papers in the grand duke's room. She is interrupted by a young stranger, **Juanita**, who, although appearing friendly, is really a spy for the grand duke.

(Now read on.)

## Clever Juanita!

"I BEG your pardon," Pamela said.

And she looked at the newcomer with a pleasantly inquiring little frown, as much as to add: "Who did you say you were?"

But there was no real need for that question. Pamela had heard the girl's self-introduction all right. She wanted time to think—time to collect her scattered wits.

Juanita Borgioli! Who ever was she?

Pamela had never even heard of the girl before, but the girl obviously knew her, and expected to be known in return. She must watch her step. One false move and she might betray herself as an impostor.

"I'm Juanita," the girl repeated, laughing. "Juanita Borgioli!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Pamela, in a tone that might have meant anything—surprise, puzzlement, or sudden recognition. Not normally a nervy sort of a girl, she could not help being disturbed by the appearance of a perfect stranger at the very moment when she was rifling the grand duke's desk to try to find the vital papers to smuggle to the peasants.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry if I've disturbed you—barged in at the wrong moment, and all that," the girl went on apologetically. "Weren't you expecting

me? Of course," she added breezily, "you wouldn't really know me. I'm a sort of twentieth cousin of yours, six and a half times removed, or something. But I know you—naturally!" Again she laughed. "Who doesn't? You're the princess. I'm just a dreadfully ordinary girl who's been asked to come here and be your—well, be your friend. If you'll have me," she finished ingenuously.

Once more she laughed, gaily, infectiously. And Pamela's qualms vanished. She liked this girl. There was something frank and charming about her. And she plainly didn't suspect anything—

## TO CLEAR HERSELF OF AN UNJUST CHARGE THE PRINCESS GOES TO THE PEASANTS' FESTIVAL IN SECRET.

But that was where Pamela was being deceived by Juanita's consummate acting. Never for one moment did she imagine that Juanita was a niece of the Grand Duke Bernard and that she had been sent to the palace to spy upon her; to discover the identity of her accomplice; and, if possible, bring about his arrest! Pamela's eyes twinkled. The fact that she wasn't supposed to know Juanita made all the difference in the world.

"Hallo, Juanita," she said. "I know it's rather late in the day to say it, but 'Hallo!' all the same. Come and sit down. Now," when they were side by side on the settee, "what's all this about coming here to be my friend? It's the first I've heard about it."

"That's just like the grand duke. He would suddenly spring it on you. I—I thought you knew, your Highness—"

Juanita looked suddenly awkward, but Pamela's friendly touch on her arm instantly put her at her ease.

"Don't you call me 'your Highness,' for goodness' sake," Pamela pleaded. "You'll be about the only one who doesn't." She laughed. "Why, I'd love to have you here, Juanita.

I think it's topping that you've come like this. But—" and she just managed to resist frowning—"you say the grand duke fixed it all up?"

"Yes, your—yes, Sonia. Days ago."

"Well," said Pamela slowly, "that was decent of him—"

She spoke slowly because she was thinking something totally different. Was it as decent as it seemed, or was there some cunning, underhanded motive behind her enemy bringing Juanita to the palace?

All at once, Pamela felt a spasm of shock. Oh, golly! What a dismaying complication this was! It didn't really matter whether Juanita's visit was as innocent as it appeared, or not. The most important thing was this; her very presence at the palace would be a menace to the activities of Paul and herself.

Juanita, now thoroughly at home, was chattering away for all she was worth.

"You were looking for something when I came in, weren't you?" she asked brightly. "Some stuffy old state papers, I expect. Poor old you. I'm glad I'm not a princess. I bet you don't ever have a minute to yourself. And I know how the grand duke likes to boss everyone. Oh dear!" Juanita gasped and looked dreadfully confused. "Oh, I say, I—I'm awfully sorry. I didn't mean to say that. It just—it just sort of slipped out, you know."

Pamela was amused. "He certainly does like to boss people," she admitted, cautiously adding: "but then he is the grand duke, after all. Look, Juanita! I wonder if you'd have a stroll in the grounds while I find what I want. I shan't be a minute."

But Pamela's hopes of getting rid of Juanita for a few precious moments were rudely shattered. Juanita's friendliness could go to the most embarrassing lengths, apparently.

"Let me help you, Sonia," she begged.

"Oh, no, really," Pamela protested quickly. "I can manage it—"

"Please! I'd love to."

Pamela had to force a smile then.

By

**DORIS LESLIE**

There was no way out, short of being rude to Juanita. The girl would have to be allowed to assist—but Pamela, moving over to the desk, made a strong mental vow that she wouldn't let the girl have the slightest suspicion of what she was really after.

It so happened, however, that the search was interrupted again almost as soon as it had been renewed. The white, eagle-crested doors were flung open by a couple of flunkies, and the thin figure of the grand duke strutted in. Behind him, taller and more dignified, loomed the bearded Prince Alphonse.

Pamela, warned in time by the noise of the opening doors, was away from the desk with an agile leap by the time the grand duke, pulling up short, stared at her.

"Sonia!" he exclaimed. "And you—Juanita!" Frowning, he slowly approached them. "What are you girls doing in my study?" he demanded.

"Well, uncle," Pamela began, desperately racking her brains for some plausible excuse, "you—you see—I—well, Juanita and I—"

"I was shown in here, your Excellency," said Juanita quietly. "I asked the guards for you. That's how it happened."

She bobbed a curtsy. The grand duke, apparently satisfied, turned to the prince and introduced them to one another. Pamela looked at Juanita gratefully. The girl, apparently unknowingly, had saved her from a very awkward predicament.

But there was still the problem of the papers to be solved. As soon as she could, she must slip in here again and find them. They had got to be handed over to Paul to-night. Seven o'clock was the time she had promised. And it was almost six now!

Introductions finished, Prince Alphonse took Pamela on one side.

"Just a small matter, my dear, about the opening of the new road between here and Bada," he said gently. "I've promised that you'll conduct the ceremony. There's plenty of time—three or four months." He lowered his voice. "What do you think of Juanita? I confess I was most surprised when I heard, but she seems—well—"

"A jolly decent sort, uncle?" Pam, glancing at the girl as she stood talking to the grand duke, nodded earnestly.

"I'm sure she is. I like her, and I think we'll get on toppling together."

Meanwhile, the grand duke and the charming Juanita—

In tense, guarded tones they conversed on the other side of the room.

"What were you really doing in here, my dear?" asked the grand duke keenly.

"What was she doing, you mean?" Juanita hissed, darting a sidelong glance at Pamela. "I caught her burbling your desk!"

The grand duke began a violent exclamation, converted it in the nick of time into a cough, and narrowed his eyes.

"So that's her game, is it? Prying around, nosing into my things! If she's getting suspicious—" He broke off, to grasp Juanita's arm. "She didn't find anything?"

"Not so far as I know."

The grand duke breathed his relief.

"Thank goodness for that! Not that there's anything in here that could tell her much," he went on complacently.

"Some papers referring to a peasant deputation over taxes, that's about all, and she wouldn't know anything about them. But I'm taking no chances, Juanita. Ricardo's fool enough to leave

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anything lying about. Look here, my dear—"

His voice lowered.

"Keep her out of the way while I look round her room to make certain she's hidden nothing there."

"With pleasure. But—" Juanita shrugged. "How?"

The grand duke answered that question with one of his own, which made Juanita stare.

"Been to the opera lately?"

"The opera? Why, no. But—but I don't see—"

"You will!"

And then, coughing to attract attention to himself, and with the most engaging of smiles on his face, Leiconia's arch-traitor strode across to the unsuspecting Pamela.

"My dear Sonia," he said suavely, "I have a surprise for you!"

"What—another?" said Pamela coolly.

"I am sorry, my dear," said the grand duke. "Juanita's arrival in such an unexpected manner was an oversight on my part. I apologise. No, this is a genuine surprise. It'll give the two of you a chance to become thoroughly acquainted straight away. There's nothing better than a show to do that, so I've arranged for you both to visit the opera to-night!"

Pamela's smile froze. The opera—to-night! To-night, of all nights, when she had such a vitally urgent task to perform!

"The opera, uncle?" she breathed.

"The opera," repeated the grand duke. Quick to perceive her dismay, he turned to Prince Alphonse. "An excellent opportunity for them both to patronise our country's art and at the same time cement their friendship. What do you say, Alphonse?"

And Alphonse, not understanding in the least the grand duke's motive, gave a nod.

"Excellent in every way, Bernard!" he agreed.

### Surprises at the Opera!

"BUT—but, Uncle Alphonse," Pamela burst out before she could stop herself, "there's something I—I wanted to do to-night! Oh, uncle—and she looked entreatingly at the prince—"couldn't we go to-morrow night? Juanita, you wouldn't mind, would you? Only, you see—"

"There is no opera to-morrow," interposed the grand duke.

Juanita clasped her hands ecstatically. "Oh, Sonia," she cried, her face radiant. "I'd just love to go! Gracious! The opera! I've never seen one! I've seen all sorts of other shows, but never an opera. Oh!" Her sudden wild excitement faded. "But—but, of course," she added, with the bravest of unhappy smiles, "if it's really important, Sonia, perhaps we could go some other time."

"You will go to-night!" insisted the grand duke grimly. "Enough of this nonsense, Sonia! Whatever it is you want to do, it can only be of the most trivial nature. If it isn't, then tell us what it is!"

Pamela, lips compressed, remained mute. That was something she could not do. And suddenly, seeing Juanita's disappointed face, her heart smote her. It did seem churlish to hurt the girl at the very beginning of their friendship, and yet she must think of the peasants.

Pamela swiftly made up her mind. She would go to the opera, yes—because that was unavoidable. But at the first opportunity she would slip away! Paul would surely wait for her.

"I'm sorry!" she cried, forcing herself to smile. "Of course we'll go to the opera. The other old thing can wait. You've told opera house we're going?"

"Two hours ago, my dear," said the grand duke—and made a mental note to correct that untruth the moment he was alone.

Then Pamela and her treacherous companion had disappeared.

### The opera!

What a scene of splendour and magnificence! Beautifully gowned and jewel-bedecked ladies, immaculately dressed gentlemen, tier upon tier of them. And the opera house itself, a blaze of lights when Pamela was ushered into the royal box. As she stood there, while the national anthem was played, a little thrill ran through her veins.

And then, when the anthem finished, and she sat down, there was a storm of applause to warm her heart; the sight of a thousand heads craned up towards her to deepen the flush of her cheeks.

Thrilling to know that she was held



in such affection, such esteem! To think that her subjects felt such genuine, spontaneous loyalty—that they—

And then Pamela returned to earth. With quite a jolt, she remembered. The peasants! Many of them didn't feel like this towards her. Thanks to the grand duke, they believed her a girl without scruples—a tyrant who had no concern for their sufferings. One tiny spark might set them ablaze.

Those papers in the grand duke's study would extinguish that spark in time—if only she could lay her hands on them.

Pamela, glancing at Juanita, writhed with impotence.

Not a chance had she had to slip away since they had left the grand duke's study. Juanita had clung to her side like a limpet. Even now, as if desperately anxious to please, she hugged Pamela's arm and leaned over the box.

"Oh, look!" she cried excitedly. "They're going to start!"

The house lights dimmed; the footlights flared; the hum of conversation died away. And then, amid the silence of utter attentiveness, the opera began. It was a simple story of rugged hates and jealousies. The music was magnificent—the singing superb.

At any other time Pamela would have been enthralled by it all. But now she thought only of how she could slip away.

Near the end of the first act, when she was still far from a solution to her problem, there was a tap on the door of the box.

It opened to admit a heavily moustached attendant. He bowed deeply.

"Pardon me, your Highness!" he said, and held out a note.

Pamela took it. She did so through force of habit, never for one moment dreaming that it might be for her companion. But it was. Plainly as surprised as Pam, Juanita took the note and, while the attendant discreetly hovered in the shadowy background, unfolded and read it.

Watching, Pamela saw Juanita's cheeks flush—saw her look up swiftly.

"Thank you!" she said. And then, when the man had bowed himself out, she turned eagerly to Pamela. "Oh, please excuse me!" she begged. "I won't be a jiffy, only—only someone wants to see me. I'll be back as soon as I can."

Next moment she was gone.

So swiftly had it all happened that several seconds passed before Pamela realised the miraculous truth. At last she was alone! At last she could escape!

Up she sprang. Her every nerve tingling with excitement, she slipped out of the box. No sign of Juanita in the corridor beyond.

Lifting her long, trailing white satin skirt, Pamela sped along it. She was passing a curtained recess when an arm shot out, grabbed hers, and tugged her back.

"Not that way! Down here—to the stage door!" hissed a familiar voice.

Startled, Pamela whirled round, finding herself being dragged, willy-nilly, down another corridor by the very attendant who had just delivered the note.

"Let me go!" she panted. "How dare you—"

"Shurrup!" the attendant hissed again, and lifted the moustache.

Pamela almost collapsed.

"Paul!" she gasped.

Staggered though she was by the shock, it did not rob her of her wits or her agility. Beside him she raced down

a narrow, winding flight of iron stairs. They reached another corridor studded with the doors of dressing-rooms. At one Paul halted and gently ushered her inside.

"Clothes—peasant's clothes—you'll find them on the table!" he said urgently. "Change into them—like lightning!"

Excitedly Pamela slipped into the room. With the door locked, she discarded the gorgeous raiment of the Princess of Leiconia for the humble but gay and colourful garments of one of the peasantry. A long coarse skirt, a richly embroidered white blouse, a tight-fitting black velvet corset, and a shawl to drape over her distinctive hair, and she was ready.

So was Paul Naldi when she stepped outside again. Her young ally was now also in peasant attire.

"So you wrote that note, Paul?" she whispered. "You learned where I was—why I couldn't turn up at the oak?"

Paul nodded, holding her arm.

"Yes. But—'Sssh!' he warned. "I'll tell you about it later. We've got to hurry. And keep your head down as we go past the doorman."

A minute later they were in the twilight square at the side of the opera house. Two horses were tethered to a stake beside the fountain.

Paul, helping Pamela to mount one, untethered it, saw to his own, and then, leaping up beside her, led them in a clatter over the cobblestones.

"The papers, Paul!" Pamela cried, as they swung into the main street. "I haven't got them. We'll have to go to the palace first."

"Right!" said Paul briskly. "This way!" He cut down a narrow alley between quaint, overhanging houses. "We'd better use the secret passage from Tolari Forest into the palace."

With the cool evening breeze fanning their faces and the clippity-clop of hoofs beating a never-ceasing tattoo, they rode away on their vital mission.

### "By Order of Princess Sonia!"

As they swerved in and out of the forest giants, ducking low to avoid trailing branches that might have swept them from

their saddles, Pamela and Paul exchanged explanations.

Paul, it appeared, worried by Pam's non-arrival at the hollow oak, had hurried towards the palace. On the way he had seen her being driven to the opera house. Guessing something was wrong, he had obtained an attendant's suit from the stage-door keeper—a friend of his—and—

"Well, you know the rest," he concluded. "I scribbled that note and popped in with it."

"But what ever did you say in it?" Pamela asked, eyeing him admiringly.

"Oh, a lot of mysterious drivel that would have got anybody! 'Must see you in the lounge. 'Vitaly important. Don't tell the princess.' And I signed it 'A Friend.'" Paul chuckled. "It got her all right, anyway. But who is she, Pam?"

It was Pamela's turn to explain then. Paul, nodding occasionally, listened in silence, and at the end merely remarked "H'm!" in a thoughtful tone, then stared ahead through the dusk-enshrouded trees.

At last they reined in beside the hollow oak, made their mounts secure to another tree, and then, with Paul leading the way, aided by a torch, descended the steps to the underground tunnel.

For safety's sake, they did not speak, so Pamela found time to think. She felt a little pang of self-reproach at having left Juanita in the lurch like that.

"It'll take some explaining, but I'll think of something," she decided. "And I'll get Juanita a present of some sort. Poor old Juanita!"

"Poor old Juanita" at that moment was seething with rage and chagrin to discover that she had been tricked by a ruse, and her "victim" gone. But, then, Pamela didn't know that.

At last she and Paul reached the secret door in the palace wall. Cautiously Paul peered out, surveying the grounds. When he beckoned Pamela squeezed past him.

"Best of luck!" Paul said fervently.

A clasp of the hand, and Pamela was creeping towards the french windows of the grand duke's study.

Best of luck—yes! She needed it. So



AS Juanita opened the note, Pamela watched her closely. Would this be her chance to slip away from the theatre and go to the all-important festival?

much depended upon the outcome of her quest during the next few minutes. If she found the papers, her name, her honour—or, rather, Princess Sonia's—could be set high in the peasants' esteem once more; if she failed to find them—

But Pamela didn't fail. She let herself in through the windows, tiptoed to the desk, with fast-beating heart, went straight to the drawer she had been searching when Juanita had interrupted her, and there, thrust right at the back, obviously discarded as of no import, were the vital documents.

Eagerly snatching them up, Pamela made to study them. But at that moment she heard voices from beyond the eagle-crested doors.

Like lightning Pamela spun round and darted to the windows. A leap, and she had reached the ground beyond; a push, and the windows were shut. Then she went streaking away for the secret passage, the papers clutched in her hand.

Gasping for breath, she rejoined the anxious Paul.

"Got them?" he cried. "Oh, cheers! Good old you! Why, what's wrong?" he added sharply.

"Nothing much. Someone came in, but they didn't see me," Pamela panted, eyes shining. "Let's go."

And "go" they did, back to the hollow oak, their horses, and, finally, after another gallop through the deepening dusk, to the large glade in the forest, where the peasant festival was being held, during which Paul meant to hand over the vital papers.

It was a scene of unforgettable enchantment for Pamela. Long before they reached the glade a myriad torches and bonfires beckoned them on like enormous fireflies. The sound of music and singing grew steadily louder. There was laughter, shouting, and revelry.

On the fringe of it all, Pamela dismounted, breathless with excitement.

Someone ran forward. It was a young peasant girl, carrying two enormous garlands of flowers. Merrily the girl draped one about Pamela's neck, and the other about Paul's. Next instant, she was flying away to greet some other late arrivals in the same friendly fashion.

The glade was alive with people—people who, brandishing torches, singing, shouting, and dancing, had given themselves up to the spirit of carnival. A peasant band, clustered beneath the trees, was playing for all it was worth.

"Oh, Paul, isn't it lovely?" Pamela exclaimed. "Everyone so gay! And they've flags and streamers and flowers galore. Why, the stalls—"

"Sideshowes, like those of travelling fairs," Paul explained, commencing to shepherd her into the thick of the jostling throng.

"And things to eat!" Pamela cried, looking to right and left.

"Well," smiled Paul, "even peasants get hungry at times, you know."

"Really?" teased Pamela, and then all at once she gave Paul an anxious look. "Oh, the chief! Oughtn't we to find him? These papers—"

"I hadn't forgotten. We're going there now," was Paul's quiet reply, and he steered her towards a line of gaudily coloured caravans.

But the chief, or mayor, of these particular peasants, was not there. He had been called off to attend to some urgent business, and would be back presently.

"Well, it doesn't matter all that much, does it?" was Pamela's gay comment, as they turned away. "We've got the papers—that's the main

thing. And there's so much I want to see—to do—"

"Then let's jolly well do it!" Paul cried. "Come on! A dance!"

So a dance began their round of enjoyment. Then followed a caper around the maypole, hanging on to one of the coloured ropes and jostling and joking with everyone else; a visit to the sideshows to try their hands at queer games of skill and chance, and, finally, a pause for delicious cordial drinks, and luscious fruits and cream.

By then Pamela, radiant-faced, though a little tired, was in the mood to become a mere onlooker for a while.

With Paul, she squatted on the grass, watching some of the exhibitions. There were processions, displays of acrobatics, folk dancing; needlework and embroidery competitions for the womenfolk, and more vigorous contests—wrestling, fencing, archery, and rifle-shooting—for the men.

Suddenly a space was cleared near some young saplings on the edge of the glade, and Pamela was astounded when Paul began peeling off his coat.

"Paul," she cried, "what ever are you going to do?"

"Give you six guesses," Paul teased, and, winking, strode away.

But Pamela's puzzlement was soon satisfied, and she jumped up excitedly. For Paul and several young men, their sleeves rolled up, had each taken his stand before one of the saplings, grasping a long-handled axe.

"A tree-felling contest," Pamela breathed.

Hands clasped, she watched as Paul and his rivals, at a signal, set to work. But she had eyes only for him, and when with a mighty swipe he sent his tree toppling to earth before any of the others, her shout of acclamation was loudest of all.

"You clever old thing," she congratulated him, helping him into his coat. Then, so as not to sound too flattering, she added: "So that's why you were so energetic this morning—practising!"

"Not at all," chuckled Paul. "I just like being energetic."

Laughing, they moved off to join in a sing-song round the main camp-fire. That laughter did not last long, for angry mutters were being exchanged by a group of peasants near where he and Pamela sat down.

"The prisoner escaped, didn't he?" a man was saying fiercely. "The princess had nothing to do with it. I say, what about our taxes?"

"She knows we can't pay them."

"She's had those papers for weeks, and—"

"And ignored them!" hissed a woman.

White-faced, her head lowered, Pamela glanced up at Paul.

"Oh, Paul, they're talking about me!" she whispered.

"The hot-headed fools!" Paul said furiously, and sprang to his feet and gestured for silence.

"Stop! Listen, all of you! Listen to me!" he shouted. "I've something to tell you—something about the taxes, the papers!"

Pamela kept her face lowered away from the firelight, just in case she should be recognised. She heard someone shout "It's young Naldi!" and then heard Paul's ringing voice resume.

"I know enough to be able to assure you all that the princess has done nothing of which she need be ashamed!" Paul declared. "The papers are already waiting for our chief!"

"You know that?" sneered someone from the back of the crowd. "I'll

admit you generally know quite a lot, young Paul, but you're presuming to be very well informed in this matter."

"Perhaps he's the grand duke in disguise!" laughed a voice.

The crowd, amused by this sally, were put in a more reasonable frame of mind, and Paul, seizing his opportunity, had no further difficulty in gaining their attention.

He told them one thing only. The papers were even now in the camp. How did he know that? He refused to say. But he did know on absolutely unquestionable authority. The papers were there, waiting to be given to the chief.

"Before the festival ends—directly he arrives—he will have them!" Paul vowed.

There was no mistaking the way everyone respected him. When Paul sat down there was a ripple of applause, and even a few cheers for the princess—for herself. A moment later the whole crowd had plunged once more into the merry-making.

"Oh, thank you, Paul!" Pamela whispered. "It was grand of you!"

"It was nothing, Pam," said Paul quietly. "But let's go and listen to the band, shall we?"

Readily Pamela consented. She found the music most fascinating. Sometimes it was soft and soothing; sometimes loud and stirring. And how the peasants danced then; while Pamela laughed and danced and sang as exuberantly as anyone!

Oh, it was glorious fun! Seldom had Pamela enjoyed herself so much. But presently, remembering those vital papers, she turned to her companion.

"Paul—" she began, then broke off, staring, for there was an extraordinary expression on his face, and his head was cocked to one side. "Why, what's the matter, Paul? What is it? You look startled."

"Listen!" said Paul tensely. He laid a hand on her wrist. "Listen!" he repeated. "Can you hear anything—above the music, I mean?"

Wonderingly Pamela strained her ears. At first she was conscious of nothing save the sounds of revelry. But suddenly she detected something else—a drumming sound, getting closer and closer, and like a flash understanding burst upon her.

"Horses, Paul!" she cried.

"Lots of them!" Paul jerked. "What on earth does it mean?"

Before Pamela could reply the mystery riders loomed into sight. She caught a glimpse of the familiar scarlet jackets of her own Civic Guards as, one after another, they appeared at the back of the crowd, completely encircling the glade.

And then, scattering people to right and left, a captain, with drawn sword, rode through the throng.

"Disband!" he shouted. "Back to your homes! We have an order to arrest all who resist us! This glade must be cleared ten minutes from now!"

Stunned, stupefied silence followed those dramatic words. Everything came to a stop. It was Paul who recovered first.

"Order!" he cried. "Whose order?"

The captain's reply brought a cry of incredulous horror to Pamela's lips:

"By the order of her Royal Highness the Princess Sonia!"

**T**HERE is some amazing mistake here—or is this further cunning of the grand duke? New and very unusual adventures come to Pamela in next Saturday's instalment. Prepare for surprises.



Further gripping chapters of our great thrill and mystery serial.

# Guests at Mystery Manor!



**FOR NEW READERS.**  
HILDA FARREL, with her chums BERYL LORIMER and JUDY BROUGH, and her clever dog MARCUS, go to Hawsley Manor for a holiday as paying-guests. The manor is owned by the father of LAVENDER MORTIMER, with whom the girls become friendly, and is the Mortimers' means of livelihood. A strange woman is "haunting" the house, using secret passages, in one of which the girls find a paper referring to hidden treasure. A woman detective, THELMA HARKNESS, arrives to solve the mystery, and soon has Hilda & Co. under suspicion. Marcus finds a tunnel leading into the mill, and while Hilda starts to follow him her chums try to lure the detective off the scent.

(Now read on.)

By  
**ELIZABETH  
CHESTER**

She walked round the room, looking down at the floor, wondering if the hiding-place of the treasure might be there. Unfortunately, there was no clue that would help her.

To make a thorough search of the place would undoubtedly take hours and hours, and Hilda went to the window to see what

was happening outside. Hearing her friends' voices, she called to them.

"Where's Thelma Harkness?" she asked, not seeing her.

"Gone!" said Judy. "She hurried off in a fury. I rather think that she has gone to tell Mr. Mortimer, you know."

"Oh! That's bad!" frowned Hilda. "We don't want him to think that we are defying him, and being nuisances. I say! Can you come in? It's just a drop through the bush, and there's a short tunnel."

Judy and Beryl found the opening to the secret tunnel, and presently held a conference to decide where they had better begin searching.

## The Detective's Surprising Offer!

**A**s Hilda Farrel crouched down by the secret entrance to the Old Mill, Judy and Beryl rushed to the woman detective to distract her attention.

They had no intention of sharing the newly discovered secret with her. If she was really a clever detective, then she could find her own clues, without making use of theirs.

Judy, pointing to something behind the woman, had called out:

"Look!"

Involuntarily the woman turned—and that gave Hilda a chance to bob down into the hole.

"Look at what?" asked Thelma Harkness sharply, turning her head.

Judy did not know what to say. She was not so quick as Hilda at finding excuses, and she was for a moment nonplussed, because she did not want to arouse the detective's suspicions.

"Well, what were you pointing to?" demanded the woman again.

Beryl answered quickly.

"At the bushes."

"What about the bushes? Are you trying to fool me? Where is your friend?" Thelma Harkness cried, and strode forward to the spot where Hilda had last been seen. "You girls are up to something, I know. I have already suggested to Mr. Mortimer that I think you are partly, if not wholly, responsible for the supposed ghostly manifestations at the manor house.

Judy stood her ground then.

"Oh, what rot!" she cried indignantly, still hoping to gain time for Hilda—but sincerely feeling the ringing indignation that showed in her voice. "We're keen to solve the mystery—and to find the treasure, too!"

"Then let me tell you," was the hot retort, "that those things are my

business, not yours, and I do not intend to let you interfere! Where has your friend gone? Tell me that! Is it into the Old Mill?"

But Judy, annoyed by Thelma Harkness' manner, turned and called Hilda, deliberately misleading the woman.

Meanwhile, Hilda had followed Marcus along the short tunnel. Marcus was already in the Old Mill, barking excitedly, because he had found his bone, which Hilda had thrown through as bait.

He knew nothing about treasure, and having got the bone, was perfectly contented.

Presently he heard his mistress' voice, and thumped his tail in delight.

**"WE'LL TELL NO ONE OF OUR PLANS FOR FINDING THE TREASURE,"** whispered Hilda to her chums. **BUT—SOMEBODY HAD ALREADY OVERHEARD THEM!**

"Well done, darling!" said Hilda. "Well done! You've led me in—good doggie! But quiet! The old tec is listening!"

Marcus looked a little perplexed for a moment. Then, with obvious enjoyment, he got on with the bone, leaving Hilda to get on with the searching.

Quite where she was to start, Hilda did not know. She found herself in a large room where, many years before, sacks had been kept. Now, although it was quite empty, it was surprisingly clean.

Someone had swept and tidied this empty room, and it occurred to Hilda that whoever was responsible was anxious that the dust should not leave traces of foot or finger prints.

"H'm, getting near something!" Hilda mused. "But my golly! Where am I to start searching?"

"What a thrill if we did beat this woman 'tec at her own game!" murmured Hilda. "I should laugh and laugh!"

"Let's hope we do, anyway," smiled Judy. "If we can find that treasure, just think what it will mean to Lavender and her father. I suggest we search the boards—"

"Lift the floor up," nodded Beryl. "But we shall need tools and things—like burglars!"

"Yes, we shall need something," Hilda agreed. "And I suggest we try to find traces of loose boards, because if someone else really has been searching here, then they are certain to have left marks of some kind."

Although they could not explain to Marcus just what they were seeking, he suddenly became a little peculiar in manner, as though he realised that

there was serious work afoot, and sat in a listening attitude.

"My goodness, he can hear something!" said Hilda.

A rumbling growl came from Marcus as he looked at the swinging door panel through which he had escaped, but which was now fastened securely from behind.

"Someone coming!" said Hilda, as she went to the wall and listened.

The three girls were silent, excited, and eager to find out who it could be making the soft sounds which they could hear.

"Ten to one it's someone coming through the secret passage from the manor!" breathed Hilda. "Here—quick! Let's hide—and keep Marcus quiet!"

She gave Marcus his special silence signal, but it was all he could do to obey it. For every now and then he quivered as though starting to growl.

But Hilda, Judy, and Beryl hardly breathed, for whoever it was creeping to the Old Mill knew of the secret tunnel from the manor. It was not the tunnel they had just used, but the one which Marcus had found and used himself to return home!

The mystery woman! The woman who was lurking secretly in the manor house, playing ghost—doing all she could to drive away the paying guests, and at the same time hunting for the treasure.

There was no need for the girls to

speak their thoughts. The same idea was in every mind. If they captured this woman, then there would be no more fear that ghostly manifestations would drive away the Bates, and any other guests that came. Lavender and her father could make the manor house a success.

There came the grinding and squeaking as of bolts being moved. Then a trapdoor in the floor opened and into view came Thelma Harkness, the detective.

"Oh golly!" gasped Hilda.

The woman detective straightened, and looked at them with hardly any expression on her face at all, so that they could not tell how she felt.

"So you are here," she exclaimed.

"I thought as much. Prying—"

"Not prying—just seeking the treasure," said Hilda quite defiantly.

Thelma Harkness surprised them all by smiling.

"Oh, very well—if you are so obstinate," she said quietly, "I had better let you help me, I suppose."

Hilda gave a start at that, the wind taken from her sails.

"Help you—you want us to join in with you?" she said blankly.

Thelma Harkness gave a slight shrug of the shoulders.

"Yes. It is useless our being at cross-purposes. You are likely only to warn the enemy. My suggestion is that we join forces. I have found a slight clue—and I am willing to let you help follow it up on one condition—"

Patricia's bright and useful pages, so take my advice and order your copy well in advance, won't you?

And now to deal with those

#### LITTLE LETTERS.

**Gloria West.**—I also hope your mother is able to do as you suggest, Gloria. I shouldn't like to think of your ever being disappointed. Yes, you would be in the same Form at Cliff House. Be sure to write again just whenever you like, won't you?

**Nora Smith (Harmston, Lincoln).**—Delighted to know that you are enjoying our Princess serial so much. I will certainly pass on your congratulations to Miss Leslie; and also give your suggestion to Patricia. I'm sure she'll be ever so grateful.

**Thelma Lambert (Watford, Herts).**—You will already have received a reply through the post, Thelma, but I knew you'd love me to say a few words like this. Do please write again soon, won't you? And tell me a little more about yourself.

**M. Clayton (Newark, Notts).**—Congratulations on still being a follower of the Cliff House girls after so many years. It was a real pleasure to hear from you. The girls you mention have left Cliff House for various reasons. I should be very interested to know which of the present characters you prefer, and what is your opinion of some of the newcomers, such as Diana Royston-Clarke.

**Molly Shields (Carshalton).**—Oh, yes, there's a Pets' House at Cliff House, Molly—as you will probably have discovered for yourself by now. Dulcia Fairbrother is captain of the school, and a more popular girl never lived. Babs & Co. adore her.

**Muriel Hope (Cork, Ireland).**—I will certainly pass your suggestion on to Hilda Richards, and even if she is unable to make use of it at the moment, I know she will be ever so grateful to you. Best wishes, Muriel.

And now—best wishes to everyone.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

Hilda waited to hear that condition.

"Yes?" she prompted.

"That you tell no one else," said Thelma Harkness. "If the whole house knows, then we are in for trouble. You must promise not to share the clues you find with anyone."

"Lavender?" asked Hilda. "We ought to tell her."

Miss Harkness pursed her lips, and slowly shook her head.

"No. Not even Lavender," she said. "Not yet. And be cautious. Remember the walls of that house have ears."

Hilda looked at Judy and Beryl for their decision, and they both gave quick, approving nods. It was the best way out.

"Righto then, we'll join forces," decided Hilda. "I'll tell you what we know—although it's little enough. We've only found a secret way into this Old Mill."

Thelma Harkness nodded, and smiled faintly.

"Well, I have something more important still," she said. "And to tell the truth, I need your aid. I know where the treasure is likely to be hidden. It is best that several tackle the job instead of just one."

Hilda almost shouted then.

"You know where the treasure is?" she cried.

"With reasonable certainty—yes," said Thelma Harkness. "Under this very floor—three paces from the east wall, and twelve from the north. Then dig down—and down!"

Beryl clapped her hands with excitement, and Judy wanted to start at once. Their eagerness and joy amused the detective.

"Very well then," she said. "Let's get spades and things and begin at once—"

But there was a foxy look on her face which caused Marcus to growl.

"Quiet," said Hilda. "We're friends now. Marcus—shake."

But although Marcus knew quite well how to shake hands, he refused to do so. He glowered at Thelma Harkness, his mouth twitching in anger and scorn!

"Shake hands with you? Never!" he seemed to say.

And his whole manner proclaimed his deep belief that Thelma Harkness was no friend—whatever offers of friendship she might make—but a deadly enemy!

#### More Treasure-Hunters!

"OH, Miss Harkness—do you know where the girls are—Judy, Beryl, and Hilda?" asked Lavender.

She was in the hall of the manor house and the woman detective had just entered. It was half an hour after her talk with Hilda & Co. in the Old Mill, and they were now busy there, taking up the floor-boards, greatly excited.

In the hall with Lavender was Miranda Bates, and she was wearing tennis things. Despite the fact that it was autumn, the morning was sunny, and just suitable for a fast game of tennis on the hard court.

It was for the three to make up a four, that Lavender wanted them. Busy with the house, she had no time to play with Miranda.

"The girls?" mused Miss Harkness. "I did see them roaming off, yes."

"Well, I think it's a shame," burst out Miranda hotly. A spoiled child, she always thought that she should have everything she wanted—and that people should do her bidding. "You advertised tennis—and I brought my things. You

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## BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—I had intended saying such a lot to you this week; that is, to ALL of you. But then a peep into my drawer revealed quite a lot of your letters requiring replies in brief, and so I'm afraid that half the time I shall only be able to address just a few of you.

But, of course, you can all read what I have to say in reply to those correspondents, and you might even find something really interesting for you, mightn't you?

First of all, though, I mustn't forget next week's topping story programme. Top of the bill, as always, is the superb LONG COMPLETE Hilda Richards story, in which your Cliff House favourites set out to solve—

### "THE SECRET OF THE PHANTOM BOAT!"

There, isn't that a thrilling title? But just wait until you read the story. Thrills, drama, mystery—it's packed with them. And there's also a very human theme running through Babs & Co.'s adventures, too.

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As usual, of course, our next number will contain further fine chapters of "Princess to Save Leiconia" and "Guests at Mystery Manor," as well as more of



said there would be other guests. I can't play alone."

Lavender smiled, always good-tempered and tactful.

"Oh, they'll play with you willingly enough," she said.

"Well, can't Miss Harkness play?" said Miranda.

The detective—whose mission in the house was a secret from all but Hilda and her friends—shook her head, and explained that she had some letters to write that had to catch the rather early country post.

"Hilda will play, I know. We'll have to find her," said Lavender, and then turned as Miss Harkness plucked her sleeve.

"Just one moment," said the woman detective.

She took Lavender aside while Miranda, sulky now, went to the doorway, and stood there, legs astraddle, glaring out.

But as she clearly heard the detective's next words, it was all she could do not to turn her head.

"If you can come into the library with me, Lavender," said Thelma Harkness, "there is something I must say privately."

Lavender, puzzled to know what it was, but realising that it must be connected with the mystery, consented at once, crossing to the library. As the heavy door closed upon them Miranda wheeled.

Miranda was sly, and not above eavesdropping—especially when she felt in sullen mood as now. Besides, it seemed to her that there was something to be said which she was not supposed to hear; and knowing that she had been sulky and rude, she quite expected to overhear a comment about that.

If so, she would tell her mother. People had no right to discuss her—and certainly not a girl like Lavender.

And who was Thelma Harkness, anyway, to discuss her?

With those thoughts in mind, Miranda went softly to the library door, and stood against it, but in such a manner that she could move instantly away should anyone walk into the hall.

Although the door was thick, she heard clearly enough what was said.

"It's about those girls, Hilda, Judy, and Beryl," said the woman detective. "I think you should know that they are not trustworthy. At this very moment they are tearing up the floorboards in the Old Mill."

"Really?" came Lavender's quite cool reply. "But why? Looking for the treasure?"

"Exactly!" said Miss Harkness. "Despite my wish that they did not do so."

Miranda gave a little gasp; for this was the first she had heard about treasure, and it whetted her interest. Treasure! It was enough to stir any girl's mind, and she put her ear more closely to the door, hardly breathing.

"I don't mind if they do look for it. They are honourable, I'm quite sure," said Lavender. "I'm not in the least afraid that they will rob me."

"No?" said Thelma Harkness sharply. "Well, then, it's a pity they do it so secretly."

"Oh, they'll tell me!" said Lavender easily. "I've no doubt about that. I can see your grievance, naturally. It would be rather a blow to your professional dignity if they found it first; but, really, I don't care who finds it, or who lays the ghost here."

Miranda drew in a sharp breath. She was hearing things with a vengeance now. Treasure—and a ghost!



TENSELY the chums watched as the trap-door was raised. But it wasn't the mystery woman who appeared to view. It was—Thelma Harkness, detective!

But she stepped quickly from the door as she heard the detective's voice more clearly in a way that suggested she was about to emerge from the room.

And when Thelma Harkness and Lavender did step into the hall, Miranda was strolling about in the most casual manner, swinging her racket.

"I'll find those girls, and suggest they make up a four," said the woman detective.

"And I'll come with you," said Miranda, who did not know where the Old Mill was.

"Do," said Lavender. "Wait here then, please, while I change my shoes," said the woman detective, after a disapproving look at the girl.

Miranda waited in the hall, never dreaming that the woman detective was on her way to the Old Mill, hurrying there from the back of the house as quickly as she could.

She did not go into the mill, but called out to Hilda, who climbed up to the window, and looked through.

"You are wanted to make up a four at tennis," said the detective. "You had better do so, I think, or suspicion may be aroused."

"Oh, what a nuisance! And we're just getting the boards up," sighed Hilda. "Must we really?"

"It is Lavender Mortimer's wish, and the girl Miranda is coming to look for you. Unless you want her spying here, you will be wise and come out."

Inside the mill Hilda held a conference with her friends, and they decided, not without a pang of disappointment, that they had better play tennis.

But, realising that Thelma Harkness was waiting to learn their secret way in—by watching them come out—Hilda decided that they would make use of the secret tunnel that led to the manor house.

It was a thrilling moment when, followed by Marcus, they entered it. But Marcus hesitated and barked.

"Now what?" asked Beryl, turning back, and then saw.

Marcus had dropped his bone into

the hole under the floor, and could not get it out.

"Leave it," Beryl advised. "You can have another, silly. And that one will be all horrid and dusty."

So Marcus, having to choose between leaving his friends and his bone, regretfully left the bone, not really minding how much dust there was on it, of course.

Dust to Marcus was as pepper and salt to humans; and a little grit aided his digestion. However, he was a loyal dog, so where Hilda went he went, too.

Ten minutes later Hilda reached the end of the tunnel, to find a small door in front of her. The locks of the door could be seen, and a moment's study showed her how to work them.

The panel swept open, and, as it did so, Miranda, who was roaming the lower corridor searching for Thelma Harkness, jumped back into a near-by open doorway.

Peeping round, she saw Hilda emerge. Then cunningly she drew back, holding her breath with excitement.

"Careful does it—and quickly," whispered Hilda, "or someone else will find this secret entrance to the Old Mill."

Miranda Bates almost skipped with glee; for now she knew that secret.

And, later, she could do some exploring on her own.

EMERGING, THE chums dusted themselves, and then all three dusted Marcus.

"Now for that awful Miranda," said Hilda. "I suppose tennis won't be bad fun, but it's a nuisance at the moment."

Not until they were in the hall did Miranda emerge from hiding, and join them. Her manner was quite changed, and Hilda thought her really amiable.

It did strike the friends that there was something just a little odd in her manner, but they did not guess the reason.

During tennis, too, Miranda was a little restrained, and obviously played below form, although it was good enough fun.



Indeed, considering that all four minds were on the Old Mill they did amazingly well, and Lavender, arriving to tell them that lunch was served, watched for some minutes and applauded.

For Lavender, not in the least worried about Hilda and her friends hunting for the treasure, was feeling in happy mood.

Everything seemed to be going well. The ghost was lying low. It was a happy household, and more paying guests were expected.

Very soon, it seemed to Lavender, the manor house should be paying its way. She and her father would be out of debt, and perhaps even the treasure might be found.

But whether the ghost was lying low for ever, or merely waiting, only the hours of darkness would tell, and for those hours five people in the house were making plans that did not include sleep. Hilda, Judy, Beryl, the woman detective, and now Miranda. When night fell the manor house would see movement.

### Fire!

IT was a disappointment to Hilda & Co. that they had no opportunity for further treasure or ghost hunting that afternoon. But Mr. Bates suggested a run in his car, which, being a new one, he wanted praised.

Having agreed that for Lavender's sake they would try to please the Bates family so that they enjoyed their stay, Hilda felt that the least they could do was to accept the offer.

Mrs. Bates had pleaded a headache, and Miranda backed out at the last moment with an excuse that she had a letter to write to her grandfather.

Hilda, Judy, and Beryl, therefore, went along, taking Marcus, on the special understanding that he did not

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scratch the leather bark at passing cars, or bite a policeman.

It was not very exciting; but the car was a nice one, and they shopped and had tea in an attractive town. But they reached home so late, owing to Mr. Bates losing his way three times, that there was no chance of further exploration.

After dinner they played darts, and the game continued until Miranda yawned, and said that she was tired. Hilda yawned, too, then, and Judy caught it from her.

Even Marcus, who on account of his good conduct that afternoon had been allowed in the drawing-room, yawned, so it was judged to be bed-time.

"All going well, Lavender?" Hilda asked, when that girl looked in to say "Good-night!"

"Yes, thanks to you three!" smiled Lavender. "You're being perfectly sweet to the Bates crowd; and there's a new bunch arriving to-morrow. I think you ought to stay here free, considering you're all acting as hostesses, too."

"Rubbish!" laughed Hilda. "We're liking it. All we want to do is to make this place go, and when the new people come we shall have to work up a real party spirit."

"Rather!" Lavender agreed. "And how's the treasure-hunt going?"

She noticed the slight hush, and was puzzled.

"Oh, quite well!" said Hilda, a little uncomfortably; for, being a straightforward girl, she did not like being deceitful by saying nothing.

But the detective had adjured silence, and they had practically promised agreement.

"Well, I hope you find it," said Lavender sincerely; "and it's awfully nice of you to try. Take no notice of Thelma Harkness. And, as to dad, I talked him round, although he was a bit cross about last night at first, and rather thought you had tried to frighten the Bates crowd by playing ghost."

"We certainly didn't," said Hilda. They kissed good-night, and Lavender went off to bed.

When she was gone Hilda turned to Judy and Beryl.

"Now, a late night again?" she asked. "We can't keep it up, but I think we ought to follow this clue. I'm not sure that I trust that Thelma Harkness woman with the treasure, even though it may seem a horrid thing to say."

"Nor I," said Judy. "Come on! Let's go as soon as all's quiet."

"Y-yes," said Beryl sleepily. "I suppose so. It would be fun to find the treasure, and, anyway, you have to take Marcus out."

"Then once more unto the breach," said Hilda. "And we'll use our own tunnel, as it's quicker."

Turning out the light, they waited for the time to pass, speaking in whispers.

In her room, Miranda was waiting, too. She had slipped her nightdress over her underclothes and got into bed just to deceive her mother; but now, fully dressed, and carrying walking shoes, she prepared to go down.

As she had no flashlamp, Miranda decided to take a decorated candle that stood on the mantelpiece in the old brass stand, complete with snuffer.

But because the stand was bulky, she took just the candle, wrapping a handkerchief about her hand to save it from being scalded by hot wax.

By the time Hilda & Co. left their

room, Miranda was half-way along the tunnel.

Just for Marcus' sake, Hilda chose the open-air way, creeping from the house, knowing that they could use the other tunnel as the way in.

Marcus, skipping round, had a lovely run, being specially quiet, and then led the way to the Old Mill himself, looking back at them eagerly.

He rushed straight to the bush where the opening to the secret entrance was and there paused. He was puzzled, baffled, for the hole was no longer there.

Stones and earth filled that hole, and Marcus scratched busily.

Hilda and Judy, although close behind, did not notice that, for their attention was directed to the Old Mill, where a flickering light showed.

"Who's there? Thelma Harkness?" breathed Hilda.

"Must be, or the mystery woman," said Judy.

But actually it was Miranda. She had found her way into the Old Mill, and, startled and excited by the trapdoor, was on her knees.

Propping the candle beside her, she looked down.

Silent though she was, she did not hear a movement behind her; but in the darkness a stealthy, dark-cloaked figure moved.

Nearer and nearer it stole forward, and then she had a momentary glimpse of a dark-cloaked figure slipping through the trapdoor, and then she heard the click of a bolt.

The light in the Old Mill quivered and flickered as the candle tottered, overbalanced, and then fell into the gap below the floor, where shavings were littered.

Miranda gasped, drawing back as the candle's flame ignited the dry shavings.

She shielded her face, turned to the trapdoor behind her, tugged in vain, and then, seeing another opening in front, hurried towards it.

But that opening was barred, even as Marcus had found, and now the roaring flames had set light to the flooring.

Horrified, Miranda drew back, not knowing what she could do, conscious only of the fact that she was helplessly trapped beneath the earth!

Outside, Hilda saw that change of light and wondered. Then the truth dawned on her.

"It's alright!—She's set the Old Mill alight! It was the mystery woman, and, my goodness, she's done something desperate at last!"

They could not hear Miranda's wild scream as she groped in Marcus' tunnel.

Flames roared in the Old Mill, and Miranda was trapped, gasping and choking in the thick smoke and fumes.

Outside, Marcus dug frenziedly to clear a way through the tunnel, while Hilda and Judy, rushing to him, saw what the trouble was.

"The detective's filled it in—she or the other woman!" said Hilda. "A ladder! We've got to save Miranda—and the mill! Ladder and water—quick!"

WHAT a startling happening this is! Miranda in grave danger, and the Old Mill, which is such an important part of the mystery, threatened with destruction. What can the chums possibly do? See next week's absorbing chapters.