

There are troublesome times for Barbara Redfern & Co. when they meet

“‘CRY-BABY’ LORNA Headmistress’!”
Favourite

THE SCHOOLGIRL

No. 489. Vol. 19.
Week Ending
DEC. 10th, 1938.

EVERY 2^D SATURDAY

Incorporating
“SCHOOLGIRLS’ OWN”



“TAKE DOWN THOSE DECORATIONS AT ONCE!”
Without a word the Fourth Form turned their backs. They were in open revolt against their tyrannical mistress.
(See this week's grand story of Cliff House School.)

Magnificent LONG COMPLETE Cliff House School story, featuring Barbara Redfern & Co., their popular Form-mistress, Valerie Charmant, and an amazing new girl—



CRY-BABY LORNA *Headmistress Favourite!*

Enter—the New Girl!



CLANG, clang, clang! Breaking the peaceful silence of the Fourth Form dormitory at Cliff House School, rising-bell clanged out with nerve-shattering clamour.

"O-o-h! Aw-yaw! Aw!" yawned Barbara Redfern, captain of that Form.

Yawning, she rose and stretched her arms, and then, caught by the nip in the frosty air, hastily pulled the sheet up to her neck again.

"I say, girls, rising-bell! Up you get!"

Mabel Lynn, Babs' chum, turned over.

"Blow rising-bell!" she grumbled.

"Brrrr! Oh, I sus-say, you know, I'm juj-jolly well f-f-frozen!" came a shivering bleat from an adjoining bed.

And fat Bessie Bunter, a mountainous heap beneath the drawn-up bed-clothes, gave a convulsive wriggle and settled down again.

Cold it undoubtedly was; healthily cold.

Babs, grinning, reached out with one arm.

"Come on, slacker!" she said. "Leap to it, Bessiekins!"

The three great chums of Cliff House were not the only ones already awake, for that strange girl, Jemima Car-

stairs, with the neat Eton-crop, sat up then, and, popping her monocle into her eye, beamed about her.

"'Tis a weary life and chilly with all these damp December mornings," she observed brightly, "but be Spartans, you two! Up with the lark may not be much of a lark; but whos, steady!"

For at that moment bad-tempered Lydia Crossendale, peevish at Jemima's flippancy, when all she wanted to do was to snatch another few moments' rest, sent a pillow skimming towards the monocled one.

Jemima, ducking, watched with mild interest as the pillow flew on, fairly and squarely catching Tomboy Clara Trevlyn, who had just sat up in bed. "Bullseye!" Jemima cheered.

But Clara did not cheer. She caught the pillow and glared.

"Who threw that?"

"Please, Clara beloved, Lydia did," Jemima simpered.

Clara snorted. Nobody could throw a pillow at Clara Trevlyn with impunity. Back it went with a rush; and, just as Lydia's aim had been bad, so was Clara's good. Slap into the middle of Lydia's haughty features that pillow landed. Lydia gave a smothered yell. Under the impression that it was Jemima's hand which had hurled it, she fiercely pitched it back.

But again Lydia's aim was worse than her intention. This time the missile shot in a wild semicircle across the room. Unfortunate it was that lordly, lofty Diana Royston-Clarke

happened to be at her wash-basin pouring out cold water from the carafe into the glass, preparatory to cleaning her teeth.

Whiz! came the pillow.

"Yoicks!" went up a wail from Diana.

Crash! went the smash of glass; and Diana, spluttering fury, with the contents of the glass splashed right down the front of her lovely pyjamas, fiercely caught up a wet sponge and hurled it—

Right into the ear of Frances Frost!

"Wow!" mouthed Frances.

Grabbing up the sponge, she hurled it back. Again there was a yell from Diana as it smote her on the nose. Savagely she caught it; savagely threw it back at Frances, missing her, and sweeping Bessie Bunter's spectacles from her bedside-table into the bed of Mabel Lynn. By then the dormitory was in an uproar.

"Oh, my hat! I say!" yelled Babs, mindful of her duties as captain of the Form. "You silly geese! Do you want the Bull here?"

But the Fourth Form was deaf then to the voice of Barbara Redfern. Every girl was awake now. Those who had had no part in the original hostilities were taking it now—just for the fun of the thing. Pillows were flying as thick and as merrily as leaves in an autumn gale. The uproar, naturally, was terrific. Until—

"Girls!" shrilled a reedy voice.

"Zounds! Have at thee, varlet!" Jemima sang. And whiz! went Jemima's pillow.

From the figure who had screeched that horrified "Girls!" there came a splutter as the pillow, catching her amidst, almost doubled her up.

"How dare—Ooch! Oh, my goodness gracious me! Girls!" the figure almost screamed.

"Gadzooks!" breathed Jemima. "The Bull!"

And as the awe-inspiring figure of Miss Evelyn Bullivant was at last sighted, hostilities ceased as if there had been a sudden explosion in the room.

For at all times Miss Bullivant, maths mistress, and second-in-command at Cliff House, was a mistress to be feared and respected.

Considerable as was the power Miss Bullivant ordinarily wielded as assistant headmistress at Cliff House, her power just now was even more formidable, for Miss Bullivant, during the absence of Miss Primrose, was in sole charge of the school.

In trembling consternation the Fourth Form stared at her as she recovered her breath.

"So!" Miss Bullivant rasped, and her small eyes gleamed like angry needle points. "So," she added, in a quivering voice, "this is what I find, is it? Horseplay! A dormitory being treated like a bear pit! Barbara, you are captain of this Form?"

"Y-yes," stammered Barbara.

"Why do you not keep order?" Miss Bullivant demanded, glaring round. "Every girl in this dormitory will take a hundred lines! You, Barbara, for failing to keep order, will take two hundred lines! Jemima, for throwing that pillow at me, you will take an additional hundred lines, also! I will—yes, indeed I will—speak very seriously to your Form-mistress, Miss Charmant, about this! Now get dressed—all of you! Barbara, when you are dressed, come to my study! You hear, girls?"

"Oh crumbs—yes! I m-m-mean c-certainly, Miss Bullivant!" Babs gulped.

With a glare Miss Bullivant rustled off, leaving behind a glowering silence. Smarting under their punishment as they were—and there were several of them, having taken no part in the fracas, who had most certainly not earned those hundred lines—they were more concerned at that moment for Miss Charmant, their Form-mistress.

Even girls like Lydia Crossendale & Co., by no means the most popular in the Form, admired Miss Charmant, and always Miss Bullivant and Miss Charmant, differing so widely in their methods, had been something of enemies.

Mabel Lynn bit her lip.

"Well," she said expressively, "a nice thing we've done."

"Yes, rather! You've jolly well got me a hundred lines for nothing, you know!" Bessie Bunter glowered. "And the only thing I did was to have a wet sponge buzzed at me!"

"The Bull will go for the Charmer," said Muriel Bond.

The Form looked a little grim. Not one of them had any doubts about that. Not Miss Bullivant to miss an opportunity of getting a dig at their idolised Form-mistress, but, as Margot Lantham said, what could be done now? Actually, of course, the Charmer wasn't to blame; but that would make no difference. Miss Bullivant, when in charge, had a habit of making mistresses of Forms responsible for the sins of members of those Forms.

Babs herself sighed. Perhaps of all the girls in the Fourth Form, with the sole exception of Valerie Char-

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

mant's sister, Joan Sheldon Charmant, she adored Miss Charmant most.

More slowly she dressed, wondering now what the irascible Miss Bullivant could want to see her about. Apart from the fracas, Babs, at the moment, had nothing on her conscience, being, indeed, far too busy with the forthcoming Christmas games party to get into mischief. All the same, Miss Bullivant's voice seemed to hint at trouble.

Five minutes after the mistress had quitted the room she went out. Uneasily she trotted down the stairs, rather nervously finding herself at last in the corridor which led to the Head's study. As she entered it, a shapely, athletic figure emerged from the door of the room normally tenanted by Miss Primrose, but now taken over by Miss Bullivant.

"Miss Charmant!" Babs breathed.

"Oh!" Miss Charmant stopped. Her face was rather red; her lips rather more firmly set than usual. "Good—good-morning, Barbara," she said a little unsteadily.

"Miss Charmant, I—I'm sorry!" Babs

at the door. Almost holding her breath, she waited for Miss Bullivant's "Come in."

It came.

Babs went in, rather dimly wondering how many more lines she was to receive before she came out. Miss Bullivant, sitting at her desk, had a framed photograph in her hand and for a moment did not look up. Babs blinked at the expression on her thin face—an almost radiant expression it was, while those grey eyes of hers that could gleam like gimlet points were soft and affectionate. She coughed a little.

"Ahem! Sit down, Barbara." And Barbara, hearing the mellow kindness of her voice, wondered for a moment if she were dreaming. "I—I want to talk to you, Barbara."

"Y-yes, Miss Bullivant," Babs said, gingerly seating herself on the edge of the visitors' chair.

"About—about"—Miss Bullivant glanced at the photograph again. "Barbara, my dear, do not look so scared," she said. "What is the matter with you, girl? Barbara, you have heard me speak of a niece of mine—Lorna Millerchip?"

"Why, yes!" Babs admitted.

She knew that Lorna Millerchip, the daughter of Miss Bullivant's married sister, was a girl of whom the Bull was most extraordinarily fond. But Lorna

Spoiled and pampered, a niece of stern Miss Bullivant, acting headmistress, Lorna Millerchip was determined to have her own way at Cliff House. And when Babs & Co. and their popular mistress, Miss Charmant, rightly resisted her tantrums, Lorna just burst into tears. It didn't deceive the chums—but it deceived Miss Bullivant, with the most serious results for the chums and their beloved Form-mistress.

blurted, guessing the reason for the mistress' stiffness. "We—we didn't mean any harm."

"If you are referring to what happened in the dormitory, Barbara—"

"Yes, Miss Charmant."

"Then," Miss Charmant said, "don't worry. That is over, Barbara. I am sorry to find myself in opposition to Miss Bullivant, but—but I think we understand each other now. I know, Barbara, it is not always easy, but I do hope, my dear, that as captain of the Fourth, you will do your best to control the girls' high spirits a little more while Miss Primrose is away. By the way, Barbara, have you finished the designs for the Common-room decorations?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Charmant!"

"Then may I see them—after breakfast?" Miss Charmant added with a smile. "I believe all the stuff has arrived now, and this afternoon we shall have to get busy on them. Now, my dear, you had better go and see Miss Bullivant. She is expecting you, I think."

And with another smile she swept off down the corridor, leaving Babs a little flushed. What an adorably generous woman Miss Charmant was! It made one glad, somehow, just to come in contact with her.

And though she had obviously had some sort of a wiggling from the irascible Bull, not a breath against the woman!

Babs went on. Now she must face the Bull—and a pretty old war she would be in after having dressed down Miss Charmant. Bracing herself, she knocked

Millerchip had been nothing but a name to Barbara before this.

"She is a dear girl—a dear girl," Miss Bullivant went on with sighing satisfaction. "And I am sure, Barbara, you will find her a credit to the Fourth Form."

Babs started.

"Oh crumbs! I m-mean—oh dear! You—you mean, Miss Bullivant, she is coming to the school?"

"I mean," Miss Bullivant said with a smile and another glance at the photograph, "that she has already come to the school, Barbara. She arrived last night and, at my invitation, spent the night in Miss Primrose's private house. This morning," Miss Bullivant added, "I have spent in showing her round the school—I got up rather earlier than the rest of you, Barbara—and from this moment she will take her place in the Fourth Form."

"Oh!" Babs said, rather wonderingly.

"And I have sent for you," Miss Bullivant went on softly, "because I realise that you, more than anyone else, can make things easy for her, Barbara. As captain of the Form I want you to do your best for her. Naturally, even though she is my niece, I am not going to show her favouritism."

"N-unno!" Babs stammered, and blinked as Miss Bullivant laid the photograph, face upwards, on the table.

"Is—is that her, Miss Bullivant?"

"That," Miss Bullivant said firmly, "is Lorna. If you wish to look at the photograph you may—though, of course, you will be soon meeting the original."

4 "Cry-Baby" Lorna—Fleadmistress' Favourite!"

She passed the photograph over. Babs studied it. A nice-looking girl—yes. Not a bit like Miss Bullivant, except perhaps, a certain thinness of nose, but very cheery, and possessing an awfully nice smile and big, wide open eyes.

"She is rather different from the rest of the girls in the Form," Miss Bullivant went on softly. "That is why, Barbara, until she feels her feet, I want you to keep a special eye on her. May I have the photograph? Thank you."

"But—but where is she?" Babs asked. "At the moment she is in your own study," Miss Bullivant said. "I thought it best that you and she should meet without the embarrassing presence of an adult. I left her there a few minutes ago, and there she will be waiting for you when you return. You will see that she is introduced to the rest of the Form, Barbara, and—oh, yes!—she is to share Study No. 8 with Jean Cartwright and Gwen Cook. When you have had a chat with her you might take her along there, will you?"

"Oh, yes! With pleasure, Miss Bullivant."

"Thank you, Barbara." Miss Bullivant smiled graciously. "And, meantime, help her to settle down as quickly as possible. Introduce her to the life of the Form. Let her feel, from the moment she meets you, that she is part of that life. Ah, yes, Barbara! I believe you are starting on the decorations to the Common-room to-day?"

"Yes, Miss Bullivant." "Then, my dear, perhaps you would find something for Lorna to do in that?" Miss Bullivant suggested. "I am sure you will find her very quick and very intelligent. And with a very, very good sense of the artistic. Yes, that would please her, I am sure," she added fondly and thoughtfully. "I think, Barbara, that is all."

Babs rose. Dazzled by the smile which the Bull flashed at her, she left the room. A new girl—so late in the term! And that new girl the Bull's own favourite niece! Phew!

Still, she thought with a grin, if the new girl was going to have this softening effect upon Cliff House's tyrant, perhaps her presence would spell a happier regime for Cliff House.

Eagerly she hurried along, her face shining now. Of course she'd do her best for Lorna—as she would have done it for anybody. And if Lorna was as keen an artist as Miss Bullivant said, then she would be just the very girl to help in the decoration of the Common-room. The designs, completely finished now, were in the study. It would be quite a good breaking ground to friendship with the new girl to discuss them with her.

She reached Study No. 4. Cheerfully she flung the door open.

"Lorna!" she cried, and then stopped. For Lorna Millerchip was certainly there. But she was not, as Babs half expected, waiting rather nervously in the armchair. Lorna, straight, tall, and thin, naturally good-looking except for her thin nose, was standing at Babs' own working table under the window; in her hand a paintbrush, and beneath her several of Babs' cherished designs. Another, apparently unnoticed, was on the floor with Lorna's heel upon it.

Rather casually she stared round; as if she had known Babs half her life, she nodded.

"Oh, hallo! Come on," she said. "Are you Barbara Redfern?"

"Yes, But—"

"Then," Lorna said, dabbing a blob of paint on the sign in front of her, "perhaps you can tell me what half-wit drew these designs? If this is a

sample of Cliff House's art, it's about time they started teaching drawing!"

"Oh!" Babs said.

She started a little, her cheeks turning red. The cool nerve of the girl! The impudence! And she choked as she saw her beloved design, now embellished by blobs of red and blue, rendering it quite hideous. She gulped.

"And—and what are you doing?"

"Just," said Lorna, casually inclining her head, "trying to improve them a bit—though, goodness knows, they're pretty awful! Who the dickens drew them in the first place?"

"I did," Babs said.

"You?"

Lorna stared at her. Then, throwing back her head, she just stood and pealed with laughter.

Babs clenched her hands.

"Well?"

"Well?" Lorna gurgled again. "I say, it's funny!" she cried.

"Funny?" Babs glared at her ruined design. "It doesn't strike me as particularly humorous!" she retorted.

"Not the design—that's too awful to be funny!" Lorna laughed. "But my faux pas, I mean! Fancy me slating these designs to you when all the time you were responsible for them! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed Babs savagely, and then the anger burst its bounds within her.

The designs were good, she knew it—for both Miss Charmant and Miss Ayres, the drawing mistress, had congratulated her upon their composition. Now they were ruined—and this girl just thought it was funny!

Babs forgot her mission. Abruptly, with that peeling laughter in her ears, she stepped forward. Tempestuously she snatched at the drawings. Lorna turned round.

"Here!" she cried. "What are you doing?"

"You—you awful little wretch!" gasped Babs.

"Give me those!" Lorna cried furiously, starting up.

And then, her face suddenly displaying her bad temper, she also made a snatch at the drawings. Just in time Babs whisked them out of her grasp. Lorna, plunging on, tripped over the carpet and plumped into the armchair.

"You tripped me!" she shrielled.

"I didn't trip you, and you know it!" Babs gazed at her in scorn. "And I must say," she added witheringly, "that if this is a sample of the humour you're going to show in the Fourth Form, the sooner it improves the better. You'll soon find out, Lorna Millerchip, that you can't do exactly as you like at Cliff House! You may be the niece of Miss Bullivant, but that doesn't count for anything here!"

Lorna Millerchip looked at her. And then suddenly, magically, her face underwent a change. She feverishly snatched a handkerchief from her pocket and then, without warning, burst into tears.

"And this—" she sobbed. "Is—is this the way I'm to be treated at Cliff House? Oh—hoo-hoo! Booh-hoo! Why dud-didn't I stop at home?"

Rough on the Charmer!



A MAZING, astonishing girl! Yelling with laughter one moment, furious the next, now sobbing as if her very heart would break.

Something new in the experience of Barbara Redfern was Lorna Millerchip.

The girl was putting it on—surely? But Lorna continued to sob just as if her heart would break.

Babs gulped. Then, all at once, she found herself analysing her own actions. Well, she had been hasty. Dash it all, the girl was new! The girl, perhaps, had only been trying to help—even though misguided. And she had been asked by Miss Bullivant to keep an eye on Lorna.

Slowly she put her defaced drawing down.

"Lorna—" she said.

"Boo-hoo-hoo!" howled Lorna.

"Oh, my hat! I mum-mean—Lorna, look at me!" Babs pleaded. "Don't cry, for goodness' sake! Lorna, I didn't mean anything!"

Lorna looked up.

"You—you mean you're sorry?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Then that's all right." And Lorna, with a few further sobs, dabbed her eyes. "I—I only thought I was helping," she said. "But you were a cat to go for me like that! Still, I—I forgive you," she said nobly. "As long as you really are sorry."

"Lorna, yes! I—I naturally was a bit peevish!" Babs gulped. "You see, I've spent nearly all my spare time for a week on those designs, and I've got to show them to Miss Charmant this morning!"

"Who's Miss Charmant? Oh, yes, I've heard about her!" Lorna, putting her handkerchief away, looked as dry-eyed all in a moment as if she had never shed a tear. "Auntie doesn't like her very much, does she? Not, mind you," she added hastily, "that auntie said so! I just gathered it. She's rather a cat, Miss Charmant, isn't she?"

"Miss Charmant," Babs said, with some heat, "is just the best mistress in the school, and—and—"

But at that moment, perhaps fortunately, there was an interruption. For the door opened and Mabel Lynn, her bright golden curls gleaming in the morning sunlight, and Bessie Bunter, her round, fat face expansive and happy, stepped into the room.

"Oh, here you are!" Babs added.

"Lorna, this is Mabel Lynn. This is Bessie Bunter. Girls, this is Lorna Millerchip!"

"What, a new girl?" Mabs asked.

"Yes."

"Then cheers!" Mabs laughed, and at once extended her hand. "Pleased to meet you. Can you act?" she added eagerly.

"Act? On the stage? Well, yes, of course!" Lorna said, in a way which rather suggested she could do anything if called upon. "But I say, how nice your hair looks! I didn't think they allowed bleaching and brightening at Cliff House!"

"What?" Mabs gasped.

"Well, it's artificially done, of course!" Lorna considered, staring at the hair in question.

Mabs flushed a little. With every good reason she was very, very proud of her hair.

"I don't bleach it, or brighten it," she retorted. "I give it an occasional shampoo, that's all."

"Peeved, eh?" Lorna laughed. "All the same, you can't kid me. Hallo, you're Bessie, aren't you?" she added, with a grin. "My hat! I haven't seen anything like you since I giggled over the fat baby adverts. How do you carry all that about?"

"Kik-carry what about?" Bessie blinked.

"That fat. You must have twenty stone of it, if an ounce! Do they make

you pay for three or only two when you go to the pictures?"

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Babs.

Bessie turned red.

"If," she said, with dignity, "you're referring to my figure, I refuse to discuss it with you! I may be a bit plumper than some of the skinny girls you see in this school, but that's only because I'm well nourished. And if you want to know what I think," Bessie added warmly, "I think you're being jolly personal for a new girl—or an old one, too!"

"Lorna," Babs put in hastily, "would you like me to show you your new study?"

"What, anxious to get rid of me?" Lorna scoffed. "Oh, all right, then"—and she pouted both at the indignant Bessie and the aloof-looking Mabs—"come along. But I hope," she added offensively, "my study's a better one than this dingy hole!"

Mabs glared. Bessie choked a little. Study No. 4 at Cliff House was the happiest of little homes to the three girls who shared it, and again Babs had to clench her hands to restrain herself from uttering the retort that was trembling on her lips. With no other desire in the world now than to get rid of Lorna Millerchip, she piloted her down the passage, halting at the door of Study No. 8. Jean Cartwright, who was in that study, spun round.

"Why, Babs, old thing!" she cried joyfully; then paused at the sight of the other girl. "Oh," she said, "who's this?"

Babs introduced Lorna, who stared appraisingly round the room. It was a cheerful, sunny room, facing south, and with slightly larger windows than Study No. 4.

"Well," Jean said, "I hope you'll be happy here, Lorna!"

"Oh, don't worry; I shall be!" Lorna airily replied. "Not a bad room. Whose is the desk under the window here?"

"Mine," Jean said.

"Then I think," Lorna said thoughtfully, "I'll have that. You can shift over to that other desk in the corner."

"Really!" Jean looked at her steadily. "Pretty cool for a newcomer, aren't you? That desk," she said firmly, "is my desk, and if you don't jolly well like the idea you can clear out before you've moved in!"

Lorna stared.

"Look here, are you talking to me?"

"I am."

"Barbara, you speak to her. You're captain of the Form."

"I'm sorry!" Babs gazed at Lorna with unconcealed contempt. "It's not my business to interfere in these matters. Gwen and Jean have the first rights in this study."

"But I want that desk!" Lorna cried peevishly. "There's more light. If I don't have it, I shall speak to my aunt about it," she added petulantly.

Jean sniffed. Babs regarded Lorna angrily. What a girl this was! Spoiled, self-willed, just wanting her own way in everything. She felt sorry for Jean in that moment, and correspondingly glad for her own little coterie in Study No. 4, that this objectionable girl was not going to be dumped on them. She could almost feel a little sorry for Lorna, too, despite her arrogance. If Lorna was going on behaving like this, then stormy and turbulent times indeed awaited her in the Fourth Form.

She stepped out, leaving Jean and Lorna to argue the point between themselves. Breakfast-bell would soon be ringing now, and she had other duties to which to attend.

With the workmen in for annual re-

decorations, Dining Hall at the moment was only in part use, and the Fourth Form were to use the guest-room on the ground-floor as a temporary dining-hall until they could be moved back again. It was Babs' duty to warn the Fourth five minutes before the bell rang.

Along the studies she went, popping in at each in turn. By the time she had reached Study No. 1, the apartment shared by Lydia Crossendale, Rosa Rodworth, and Freda Ferriers, the first bell was already ringing.

Babs went off to the dining-room. A few early arrivals were already there, among them, of course, the ever-hungry Bessie. And Bessie, obviously, had been saying things. There was a chorus of cries as Babs came in.

"I say, Babs, where's the new girl?" Muriel Bond asked.

"Bit of a rotter, isn't she?" asked the Hon. Beatrice Beverley.

"Is she really the Bull's niece?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" Babs said breathlessly. "But give her a chance. She's not quite got the right ideas yet, but she'll settle down. Now, please, get into your places," she added, and herself stood by Miss Charmant's chair at the head of the table, while the numbers, swelling with every moment, shuffled into their places. "Now, all seated? Hallo! Where's Lorna?"

"Who's asking for me?" that girl said, as she sauntered into the room. "Hallo, everybody! I'm Lorna Millerchip. Babs, where do I sit?"

Babs frowned.

"Oh crumbs, there isn't a chair! Wait a minute, I'll get you one."

"Oh, don't worry!" Lorna shrugged. "I'll have this chair," she said, indicating Miss Charmant's, which, unlike the others, had a pair of arms. "Looks jolly comfy to me! Can I sit here, next to Bessie?"

"But, Lorna, that's Miss Charmant's chair!" Babs protested.

"Well, what about that?" Lorna

shrugged. "I've got to sit somewhere, haven't I? And, anyway, I like this chair. If you want to get another chair, get it for her," she added disparagingly. "Anyway, this is mine."

Girls looked at each other as she grabbed the chair, placed it next to Bessie Bunter's, and sat down in it. Clara Trevlyn's eyes glinted.

"Here, I say—" she said. But she did not finish what she was going to say, for at the same moment Miss Charmant came into the room. She looked at Barbara and smiled; she looked at the chairless place at the table, and then looked at Lorna.

"Lorna, my dear, do you know you have my chair?" she said gently.

"Well, there wasn't one for me," Lorna retorted sulkily. "And I suppose I've got to sit down, haven't I?" Miss Charmant's lips compressed a little.

"Another chair will be found for you, Lorna," she said. "Please give that one up immediately."

Lorna shrugged. The eyes of the whole Form were upon her now; some curious; some contemptuous; but the majority condemning. Any snub to their beloved Miss Charmant was a snub to the Form as a whole.

"Lorna!" Miss Charmant cried. "Will you please give up that chair? Do not be absurd, girl—"

But Lorna, as if to proclaim her establishment of the hold she had on the chair, fiercely gripped the arms.

"Give it up, you wash-out!" hissed Clara Trevlyn.

"Rats!" Lorna said contemptuously. Miss Charmant reddened. Then, her eyes glimmering, she leaned forward and put one hand on the back of the chair.

"Lorna, please, for the last time—" "Well, it's my chair!" Lorna mouthed furiously. "Here, what are you doing? Let go!"

But Miss Charmant, angry herself



BABS, about to greet Lorna in friendly fashion, suddenly stopped short. For Miss Bullivant's niece was daubing Babs' precious designs with paint. "Oh, hallo," said Lorna, looking up. "You, Barbara Redfern? Then perhaps," she went on, resuming her destructive work, "you can tell me what half-wit drew these designs?"

now, was tugging at the chair. Lorna fiercely gripped the arms, passionately kicking her feet together as she did so. "It's mine, mine, mine! I won't give it up!" she sobbed. "I won't! I've got nowhere to sit—"

Miss Charmant gave a jerk—a very angry jerk. The chair moved, and Lorna, turning furiously, looked as if she were on the point of screaming. Just for a moment she relinquished her hold upon the arms, and in that moment Miss Charmant, anxious at all costs to end this humiliating scene, gave another sharp tug at the chair.

Perhaps the tug was stronger than she intended, or perhaps Lorna had just seen the door opening and discerned Miss Bullivant. But she twisted somehow. With a crash the chair came back, and Lorna went with a bump on the floor.

"Boo-hoo-hoo!" she howled. "Boo-hoo-hoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled everybody. "Serves you jolly well right!" And then: "Oh, my hat! Cave, everybody! The Bull!"

The Bull it was, standing like one electrified, with the door handle in her hand, and her eyes glaring.

"Miss Charmant, how dare—how—Lorna, my dear, get up. Are you hurt?"

"N-no!" sobbed Lorna. "I mean, yes!"

"Miss Charmant—"

Miss Charmant was pale. "I am sorry, Miss Bullivant. I had no idea of upsetting Lorna."

"But," Miss Bullivant said, "you did upset her! I must say, Miss Charmant, that this is hardly the way to treat a new girl."

"The girl had my chair—"

"Well, it—it was a mistake," Lorna whimpered. "How was I to know it was Miss Charmant's chair? There wasn't a chair for me that was unoccupied, so, naturally, I took it."

"Well, my hat!" cried Clara Trevlyn.

"Clara, take twenty lines! Miss Charmant, that hardly justifies you in using the undisciplined methods I saw of regaining possession of the chair."

"But, Miss Bullivant—" Babs hotly cried.

"Barbara, be silent! Twenty lines!" "Oh heck! I say, what a ticklet—" Leila Carroll cried hotly.

"Leila, how dare you interrupt? Take twenty lines! Miss Charmant," the Bull went on, and she was quivering now, "apparently inspired by your own lawless example, your Form are getting out of hand. Please keep them in order, and after breakfast come and see me. Barbara, go and get Lorna a chair immediately. And please"—she added—"let there be no more of this."

Miss Charmant bit her lip. The glowering Form, realising that further demonstration would only heap up the coals of fire on their beloved mistress' head, fell into an anxious, glowering silence.

While Babs went for a chair, Lorna sobbed softly, looking with fawn-like eyes at her fond aunt, who shook her head. Rather white-faced, Miss Charmant went to her place at the head of the table, and when Babs came back with a chair, motioned her to place it for Lorna. Not till then did Miss Bullivant go.

But there was a murmur—a hot, sulphurous murmur from the Fourth, and thirty dagger-like glances were fixed upon the astounding new girl.

"Please!" Miss Charmant begged.

"Please, girls, do not take any notice. Proceed with your breakfast!"

The girls fought back their wrath. In silence the meal was eaten. If those girls had been contemptuous of Lorna before, they were filled with hatred now, and Babs felt her cheeks burning. Already that morning Miss Charmant had received one wiggling at the hands of the Bull. Now she was in for another—and to judge by appearances—a much worse one. Immediately the meal was over and Miss Charmant went out, she touched the sulky-faced Lorna on the shoulder.

"Don't you think you'd better do the decent thing?" she asked.

"What do you mean?"

"You know that Miss Charmant has to go to see your aunt. You know that your aunt has an utterly wrong idea of what really happened about that chair. Lorna, I'm sure," Babs added, in an earnest appeal to the girl's better nature, "that you wouldn't like her to get into a row for something which, after all, was your fault. Why not trot along and explain the real circumstances to your aunt?"

"And save Miss Charmant getting a wiggling?" Lorna asked, with a curl of the lip.

"Yes."

The whole Form waited on her reply. It came.

Lorna laughed.

"Well," she said, with a glare of defiance, "rats to that! She interfered with me, so jolly well let her get it in the neck! And I only hope," she added viciously, "my aunt makes it hot for her!"

Everyone Was Against Her!



PERHAPS it was just as well for Lorna Millerchip that at that moment Lady

Patricia Northanson, duty prefect for the day, popped her head in at the dining-room to tell Lorna that Miss Bullivant wanted her. The sudden appearance of a prefect had a steady effect upon the Fourth.

But when she had gone:

"The rotter!"
"The beastly little cat!"
"The awful cry-baby!"

Those were some of the things said about Lorna Millerchip. Not even Lydia Crossendale or Freda Ferriera, the meanest girls in the Fourth, had a good word to say for the girl who could treat their popular Form-mistress in such a way.

The fact that Lorna was Miss Bullivant's niece counted not a jot with the Fourth. Chummily ready to welcome her into their ranks they had been—but only if Lorna had showed herself a decent girl. So far from showing herself in a good light, she had aroused everyone's ire.

But by dinner-time the girls' tempers had cooled. Lorna, for some obscure reason, had failed to put in an appearance for morning lessons. Neither did the Fourth see Miss Charmant that morning, because Miss Ayres took charge of the Form in the Studio for the first session, and the second period was gymnastics, under the eagle, sergeant-major eye of Miss Keys.

But they heard rumours—rumours that Miss Bullivant had most bitterly attacked Miss Charmant, and that Miss Charmant, upset by the scene, had spent most of the morning resting in the Mistress' Room. Certainly, at dinner, she looked pale and constrained, not a bit like her usual cheerful self.

Lorna, on the other hand, seemed filled with inward glee. Babs, at least, did not miss the darting glances of spiteful triumph which, from time to time, she shot at the mistress.

Dinner ended. The Form was agog then.

This afternoon was a half-holiday, and the whole Form were to take part in fixing the decorations for the forthcoming end-of-term games party in the Common-room. The decorations had arrived during the morning—stacks and stacks of holly, and garlands, and festoons, bright lanterns, strings of coloured fairy-lights, and a huge Christmas-tree.

Immediately after lunch off they went, an eager swarm, to the Common-room. Lorna, uninvited, went with them.

Then what exclamations of excitement and delight as they saw the great stack of decorations awaiting their attention! What thrilled eagerness! Christmas from that moment was already in the air.

"Come on, Babs, tell us what to do, look you!" Lucy Morgan, the Welsh girl, cried excitedly.

"No, please don't touch anything yet!" Babs cried. "Let's work to some sort of plan. Wait a minute! Here are the rough designs. Mabs, supposing you do that side of the room, with five others to help you?"

"Yes, rather! Jolly good idea!"

"Diana, will you take the other side?"

Diana Royston-Clarke, who could be so superior at times, was in her friendliest mood.

"Count it done!" she glowed. "Jemima, you take the other side. I'll take this. Marjorie, I'm sure you'd like to decorate the Christmas-tree!"

"Oh, Barbara, I'd love it!" Marjorie Hazeldene smiled.

"But where," growled Lorna, "do I come in?"

"You can watch," said Babs shortly.

"Watch!" Lorna flushed. "Well, I'm not going to watch!" she cried. "My aunt told you to give me things to do in the Form, and I want to do things!" She stamped her foot petulantly. "Anybody would think I was an outsider!" she cried.

"Which, I guess, is a jolly good name for you!" Leila Carroll retorted dryly.

"I'll tell my aunt!" Lorna shrieked.

"Then dashed well tell her! Cry-baby! Sneak!" snorted Clara. "Come on! Whose squad am I in?"

"Mine!" Babs cried. "There, leave the ladder up against that wall, Clara."

"I demand something to do!" cried Lorna.

Babs gazed at her contemptuously. She wasn't troubling at all about Lorna Millerchip now. A girl who had sacrificed the good opinion of her Form-fellows as Lorna had done deserved no consideration. If Lorna had showed herself willing to do the decent thing, then she would not have found a more ready or steadfast helper than Barbara Redfern. But Babs, in common with the rest of the Form, had no use whatever for such a treacherous sneak as Lorna Millerchip had proved herself to be.

In rising anger Lorna watched as the four leaders, gathering their teams, tackled the task of decoration. Again she stamped her foot.

"Look here—" she began.

Nobody heeded her. Everybody was too delightedly busy.

Then quietly the door came open. Miss Charmant entered. Her eyes travelled appraisingly around the busy room, and she laughed when Bessie, standing under the ladder which Babs

had just erected, gave a shriek as a wreath of holly fell down, completely crowning her.

"Bessie, my dear!" she said. "You are not hurt?"

"Nun-no," Bessie said ruefully. "Crumbs! Why can't they make this stuff without prickles, you know? Oh crumbs! There, I've pricked my finger now!"

Lorna, her eyes gleaming, strode across the floor.

"Miss Charmant!" she cried passionately.

Miss Charmant looked at her steadily. "Well, Lorna?"

"I protest!" Lorna cried hotly. "I'm a member of this Form, aren't I? My aunt said I was to enjoy the same privileges as the Form. Well, look at me enjoying them!" she said bitterly. "Here's everybody having a good time and I'm not allowed to do anything."

"Oh!" Miss Charmant paused. The momentary expression which fitted across her extremely pretty face seemed to suggest that the Form had her sympathies; but Miss Charmant, at all times, was the model of fairness, and though she had already suffered so much at this girl's hands, she did not allow that to interfere with her sense of fair play. "Barbara—" she beckoned quietly.

Babs, her face flushed, looked round from the top of the ladder, where she was struggling with a great mass of holly and string.

"Barbara, can't you find something for Lorna to do?"

Babs paused. She was not proof against the appeal on the Form-mistress' face.

"Well—" she said, and thought. "Well, yes," she admitted reluctantly. "If Lorna really wants to help, she can put the bulbs into those fairy-light strings. I shall be wanting them as soon as I've got this fixed."

Lorna pouted. "But that isn't a job!" she protested. "Any silly idiot can do that! Let me put those decorations up, instead. I can do it twice as well as you are doing it," she added.

"You will do as you are told, Lorna," Miss Charmant said, a little exasperatedly. "If everyone refused to help because they wanted to do the most spectacular tasks, then we should get nothing done. Barbara is in charge here. If you really wish to lend a hand you will obey Barbara's orders. She is captain."

"And I," Lorna countered, "am the headmistress' niece!"

"Lorna, please!" "Well, haven't I—" And then Lorna stopped. To Miss Charmant's utter consternation and bewilderment, she dragged a handkerchief from her pocket and began to sob. "Nun-no one wants me here!" she blubbered forlornly. "I'm just an outcast. Everybody's got a down on me!"

"Lorna, do not be a silly child!"

"Boo-hoo!" howled Lorna. "Shucks! The tap's on again!" Leila Carroll chuckled. "Oh, great stars and stripes and Uncle Sam!" she breathed. "Look who comes!"

But nearly every girl in the Common-room had spotted the arrival of Miss Bullivant who, in violent agitation, was striding towards the sobbing Lorna.

"Lorna!" she cried. "Oh, aunty!" Lorna faced her with the tears trailing down her cheeks. "Everybody is being so horrid to me!" "What?"

"Lorna is exaggerating," Miss Charmant said, compressing her lips.

"Indeed!" Miss Bullivant looked at her sharply. "Lorna, my dear, what is the matter?" she said.

"Well, I—I wanted to help," Lorna sobbed, "and—and they wouldn't let me!"

"Indeed!" Miss Bullivant said, with a glare. "Why?"

"And—and when I complained to Miss Charmant, she told me that Barbara was in charge, and Barbara

liking for my niece. I am aware, madam, that you and I do not see eye to eye, but I must protest most indignantly at your passing on your dislike of me to my niece!"

Miss Charmant turned crimson. There was a mutter among the girls.

"Miss Bullivant, I assure you that the facts have been utterly misrepresented."

"As," Miss Bullivant retorted steely, "you assured me over the

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS—

These Four Enchanting story-books make ideal presents to give or to receive, and you can buy them NOW, at all newsagents and stationers.

FOR ADMIRERS OF BABS & CO.

the SCHOOL FRIEND ANNUAL, shown on the right, is a perfect treasure-trove of fascinating reading, in which you will meet all your old favourites—Babs, Mabs, Clara, Bessie, Jemima, Diana, etc., etc.—again and again, as well as a host of new favourites. Naturally, HILDA RICHARDS is well to the fore. And the price? Why—

ONLY 3s. 6d.

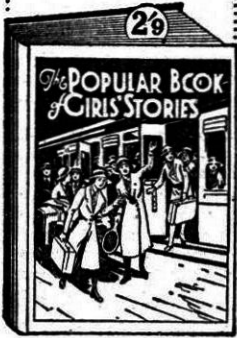
The other three Annuals are just as exciting in their own particular way.



Simply packed with every kind of story, each of which has been specially written by authors whose work you know and adore.

A "Golden" book indeed! It contains stories to suit all tastes, from humorous to thrillers, and from adventure to romance.

Morcover Once More! That is the chief attraction of this grand Annual, for Betty Barton & Co. are revived in its pages by Marjorie Stanton.



just refused to let me do the decorations—"

"Well, my hat!" gasped Clara.

"Clara, be silent!"

"And—and then I appealed to Miss Charmant again, and Miss Charmant just—just went for me!" Lorna sniffed.

"Miss Bullivant—" Miss Charmant angrily interposed.

The temporary head stiffened. "I see!" she said bitterly. "I see! Miss Charmant, I have already observed that you seem to have little

dining-room incident. I am not satisfied, Miss Charmant. I really do think," she added, with an angry glare round the room, "that this Form is behaving incorrigibly as far as this child is concerned. Lorna, my dear, do not weep," she added gently.

"I—I only wanted to help!" Lorna quivered.

"Miss Charmant, why did you not order Barbara to give Lorna something to do?"

Miss Charmant was trembling now.

"It is not my duty to interfere in the girls' privileges," she said. "I was not here at all in an official capacity. In any case, I did speak to Barbara."
"And," Babs supported, "I did give Lorna a job."

"Pip-putting bulbs in electric lights," Lorna wailed. "That isn't a job. I only asked to take part in putting up the decorations, but Miss Charmant had already given that job to Barbara, and Barbara wasn't a bit willing to share it!"

"Why, you——" Babs gasped.
"Barbara, please control yourself!" Miss Bullivant said; though she appeared in need of that advice herself, for she was plainly beside herself with anger. "I am still not satisfied, Miss Charmant," she said tartly, "and I cannot accept your plea of having no official duty in this matter. A mistress at all times is on duty; at all times it is a mistress' business to see that fair play is done."

Miss Charmant turned deathly white. "You accuse me, Miss Bullivant, of not seeing fair play is done?"

"I am judging," Miss Bullivant said, "on the evidence of my own eyes. I am sorry if I have to answer your questions in the affirmative."

The Fourth breathed heavily, deeply, fiercely. If looks could have withered, both Miss Bullivant and her adored niece would have shrivelled on the spot. And then everybody gasped as Miss Charmant, with an angry look at her superior, turned on her heel.

"Miss Charmant, where are you going?" Miss Bullivant rapped.

"I am going," Miss Charmant said, her voice trembling with humiliation and anger, "to my room. And I really think, Miss Bullivant, that if you wish to continue this discussion, my room would be the more dignified place in which to do it!"

And while the Form felt inclined to cheer at that parting shot, and Miss Bullivant, realising for the first time where she was, turned a vivid crimson, the Form-mistress gracefully walked out of the room.

"Er—er—I—I think—er— Well, get on with it, can't you?" she blazed out at the watching girls. "Really, —I— Oh goodness!"

And Miss Bullivant, for once in her life completely confused, shot out of the room like a rabbit chased by a dog.

A Complete Outsider!



"PRETTY grim!"
And with that brief summing-up of the case,

Barbara Redfern, grim herself, eyed Mabel Lynn and Bessie Bunter in, Study No. 4 next morning.

Pretty grim it was. But it was not of themselves the chums were thinking then. Miss Charmant, as ever, was in the forefront of their minds, and the grimness referred to the situation which had arisen between her and Miss Bullivant.

There had been another row between the two last night, following the Common-room incident. As a result of that, Miss Charmant had not taken call-over, and there had been a rather sharply worded notice on the board in Big Hall this morning, patently aimed at Miss Charmant, reminding all mistresses that showing favours to certain girls was against the school rules and must in no circumstances be encouraged. Had the position not been so serious,

it would have been frankly comic, considering the marked preference Miss Bullivant was showing for her own niece.

But Miss Bullivant, of course, did not think on that subject as the rest of the school thought.

It was apparent now to the whole of Cliff House that there was a definite cleavage of opinion between Miss Bullivant and Miss Charmant—the one stern, strict, a martinet; the other lovable, fair-minded, generous even to the girl who had caused her so much distress.

Truth to tell, after the row in the Common-room, the Fourth had not been too gentle in their treatment of the new girl. They had been rather bitter, and some of them most scathing. As a result, Lorna had told her aunt that she was afraid to sleep in the same dormitory, as her new Form-mates had hinted, indeed, at all sorts of threats—some of which were justified.

Very angrily Miss Bullivant had collected the Fourth together and told them what she would do if she caught them being unfair or bullying.

All the same, Lorna had not slept in the Fourth Form dormitory last night. She had slept, as on the night of her arrival, in Miss Primrose's house.

And now here it was, after breakfast, and the poor Charmer, for whom every heart ached, about to encounter her girlish enemy in the Form-room once again.

"Well, if there's going to be any more funny business——" Mabs said darkly.

"We'll j-j-jolly well sit on her, you know!" Bessie prophesied.

And in Bessie's remark, the fat but lovable duffer expressed the attitude of the whole Form.

When lesson-bell rang it was in a determined frame of mind that they all crowded into the Fourth Form Room, to be greeted by a nod and a pale smile from Miss Charmant, but to find—perhaps to their relief—that Lorna Millerchip was not there.

"Sit down, please, girls," Miss Charmant said, "and please get out your 'Modern Histories.'"

Then she turned her head as the door opened, and Lorna, a defiant look in her eyes, came in.

It was obvious from the expression on Lorna's face that she expected to be ticked-off for being late. It seemed, indeed, that she would have been rather glad to be ticked-off, thereby, perhaps, starting another scene. Miss Charmant's silent reception of her took all the wind out of her sails, however.

With a shrug, she flounced jauntily to her desk and sat down. Miss Charmant turned her head away.

"Now," she said, steadily ignoring the late-comer, "turn to the Great War. You remember we reached the preparation for the great Somme offensive. Bessie, please tell me the date on which the first battle of the Somme was fought."

"Oh kik-crumbs!" Bessie stuttered.
"I know!" shrilled Lorna. "July the first, 1916!"

"Lorna, please answer when you are spoken to," Miss Charmant said.
"Bessie——"

"Oh crumbs! I—I've forgotten, you know!" Bessie stuttered.

"But I've just told you!" Lorna cried.

"Shut up!" hissed Clara Trevlyn.
"Barbara——"

"July the first, 1916, Miss Charmant," Babs responded.

"Thank you. That is correct. Now the Somme was the first of a series of great battles on the Western Front, was

it not? Brenda, will you tell the class the name of the next great British offensive?"

Brenda Fallace looked flummoxed. But before she could answer Lorna had once more leapt up in her seat.

"Please, the Ancre!" she said.
Again Miss Charmant ignored her.
"Clara, will you tell Brenda?"

"Well, it—it was the Ancre," Clara answered, with a darting glare at the interrupter.

"Just what I said!" Lorna cried.
"Lorna, will you please be silent?" exclaimed Miss Charmant.

"Yes, shut up!" cried Jean Cartwright.

"Well," Lorna cried pettishly, "why don't you ask me something?"

"Very well," Miss Charmant looked grim. "Perhaps you will tell me, Lorna, on what date Great Britain declared war on Turkey?"

Lorna blinked.
"Well, Lorna?"

"Oh, really!" Lorna looked resentful. "That's not an easy one like you asked the other girls!"

"You do not know?" Barbara, will you tell her, please?"

"Yes, Miss Charmant. November 5th, 1914. I remember that because it was Guy Fawkes Day," Babs answered.

The Fourth Form tittered. Not at Babs' aid to knowledge, but at the furious scowl which overspread the too-well-informed Lorna Millerchip's face. Miss Charmant herself smiled faintly.

"Clever stick!" sneered Freda Ferriers from behind her.

Lorna crimsoned. She flung a glare at the chucking Freda. She looked with a dagger-like hate at Miss Charmant, who was then turning the board in order to sketch a map. And quite suddenly a gleam shot into her eyes. Quickly she tore off a corner of her blotting-paper, soaked it in ink, and rolled it into a pellet.

"Lorna!" hissed Babs.
"Rats!" Lorna retorted.

"Less talking, please!" Miss Charmant said, still busy at the blackboard.

Lorna chuckled. Half the eyes of the Form were on her now. They saw her pick up her ruler—saw her put the pellet on the end of it and bend that ruler back. A low hiss came from Babs as she realised that the intended target was Miss Charmant, and just at the moment the pellet would have whizzed on its way she flung out an arm.

"You cat!" she hissed.

Whiz! the pellet went. But as its aim's arm was deflected it went astray. It went, in fact, no more than three feet, smacking full into the ear of unsuspecting Bessie, in the desk in front. Up to her ear went Bessie's hand; up from Bessie went a shout.

"Why, you rotter!"

"Bessie!" Miss Charmant cried.

"That cat!" Bessie choked. "Look at my ear!" she hooted.

"Lorna!"

"Well, I didn't do it!" Lorna said indignantly.

"Why, you whopper!" cried Babs.

"You did!" howled half a dozen voices.

"Yes, rather! And it was intended for you, Miss Charmant!" Freda Ferriers, the sneak of the Fourth, piped up.

"Lorna!"

"I tell you I didn't—I didn't!" Lorna looked round wildly, and then, finding all the accusing glances confronting her, broke down.

"I—I didn't!" she sobbed. "It's a plot! These girls are making it up!"

"Why, you little fibber!" cried Rosa Rodworth.

"Please, please, girls!" Miss Charmant cried. "Lorna, step out!" "I won't! I—I didn't do it!" Lorna cried, relapsing into tears. "I don't see why I should be blamed for everything that goes wrong! If you want to know who it was," she added, with a spiteful glance at Joan Charmant, "it was your own sister!"

"What?" gasped Joan. "But it wasn't!" Half a dozen girls were hotly on their feet now. "We all saw it, Miss Charmant! Joan had no more to do with it—"

And then they all stopped; every eye became focused on the door, and the girls hastily shuffled back into their places as the door came open and into the room appeared the tall, angular figure of Miss Bullivant.

"I heard a noise," Miss Bullivant said. "I really do think—" And then she jumped. "Lorna, my child! What are you crying for?"

"Boo-hoo!" Lorna sobbed. "Lorna, my dear—" "They—they've been at me again!"

utterly out of control, Miss Charmant. I really must warn you," Miss Bullivant went on, while the class sat in glowering, fidgeting silence, "that if things continue at this rate I shall be forced to consider the desirability of allowing you to remain in charge. As it is, I feel very strongly inclined now to give over control to someone else—"

Miss Charmant turned white. "But, Miss Bullivant—"

"However," Miss Bullivant unheedingly went on, "I cannot see my way clear to do that at the moment. I have just received an intimation that the board of governors will be visiting the school to-morrow, which throws a great deal of extra work on my shoulders. But please, Miss Charmant, consider this as a warning. And you girls, too!" she added, with a fierce glare at the class. "Lorna, you are recovered now?"

"Y-yes, aunty," Lorna sniffed. "Very well. Let there be no more injustice," Miss Bullivant said, and, with a warning glance left the room, while Miss Charmant, looking crushed and humiliated, went to her desk. "This is my last warning—remember!"

before lessons that morning, the Fourth now was utterly sick and disgusted with her. Seeing that it was impossible for Miss Charmant to do anything with Lorna, then the Fourth was going to dispense its own brand of justice.

At the moment, it was felt, Lorna, owing to the undoubted partiality which Miss Bullivant was showing for her, was the uncrowned queen of the Form. She had Miss Charmant utterly under her thumb.

So round those whispers went. And with everybody most heartily approving they were passed on until, by the time the bell rang, there was not a girl in the Fourth who did not know that a Form trial was to be held.

Rather jauntily Lorna strode into lessons that afternoon—late again—and apparently unaware of the glowering faces which greeted her. Again Miss



MISS CHARMANT gave her chair a jerk and Lorna, either accidentally or deliberately, slumped to the floor. "Boo-hoo-hoo!" she started to howl. "Boo-hoooo!" Everyone was too amazed to notice Miss Bullivant's arrival on the scene.

Lorna sobbed. "They all hate me! Somebody hit Bessie Bunter in the ear with—an ink pellet, and Miss Charmant is trying to blame it on to me!"

"What? Miss Charmant—" "Miss Bullivant, I assure you—" "She—she wouldn't let me answer questions, either!" Lorna sobbed. "Oh, aunty!"

Miss Bullivant looked grim. "Miss Charmant, is this true?" Miss Charmant drew herself up. "Lorna," she said, "is, as usual, misrepresenting the facts, Miss Bullivant. I refused to allow her to answer the questions because she was not asked."

"It is rather peculiar, is it not," Miss Bullivant asked angrily, "that every time Lorna is misused she is accused of misrepresenting facts? I am sorry, Miss Charmant, that I cannot accept that explanation."

"But, Miss Bullivant—" Babs protested with hot indignation. "Barbara, take twenty-five lines for interfering!" Miss Bullivant snapped. "It is quite apparent," she said tartly, "this Form, under your leadership, is

The door closed upon her. And as Miss Charmant turned, Lorna, magically recovered, grimaced at her back, and put her fingers to her nose.

The Fourth looked at each other. It was a pity for Lorna that she could not read the significance in those looks.

Charmant glanced at her, but said nothing, and again lessons commenced.

Rather to Lorna's chagrin it was an essay, which meant, at least, she could not interrupt while Miss Charmant was questioning other girls. All the same, she did her best to keep the mistress worried by continually popping up and asking how so-and-so was spelt? Should she put a colon or semi-colon after a certain phrase?

Miss Charmant, refusing to be disturbed, answered all those questions quietly.

But the Form did not miss them. Had Lorna known the Fourth Form better she might have felt a little alarmed at their silence, their lack, apparently, of concern with what she did. Not even when she dropped a rubber down Bessie Bunter's neck, or kicked the heels of Brenda Fallace under the desk, did the Form say a word. But as soon as lessons were over—

Strolling into the corridor, Lorna was surprised to find herself surrounded by half a dozen girls. While

Miss Bullivant Strikes Back!



"**F**ORM trial at four-thirty. Pass the word around." "Oh, who's going to be tried?" "Cry-baby Lorna Miller-ship!"

"And a jolly good job, too!" Those comments, unheard by Lorna, who was dining with her aunt, were being passed in hissing mutters through the Fourth Form's ranks at midday break.

For if the Fourth had been restless and exasperated by Lorna Millerchip

she stared, Clara Trevlyn gripped one arm, Leila Carroll the other. Mabs and Bessie formed up behind her, Jean Cartwright, and Jemima Carstairs in front. Lorna stared.

"I say, what's this?"
"Quick—march!" Clara ordered grimly.

"But, look here! I say, let me go! If you don't let me go, I'll scream the place down! I— Oh, g-r-r-r!"

The utterance came to a gurgling end as Clara clamped her hand across her lips. Lorna, thoroughly alarmed now, was dragged, rather than led, along the corridor to the still half-decorated Common-room.

And there she blinked. Here, for the first time, perhaps, she knew a stab of dread. For the Common-room, though untidy with decorations, presented a new and startling appearance to Lorna Millerchip. On the dais at the far end a desk had been placed, and behind that desk, looking very grim, sat Barbara Redfern, with a very legal-like wig on her head. At one side of Babs stood Joan Charmant, in black gown and wig, and at the other side Amy Jones. Others of the Form were grouped round the walls.

"Look here! What's this?" cried Lorna.

"Come here! Get in there!" Clara Trevlyn ordered, and forced her into a dock made by three chairs, standing corner to corner. "Your honour, this is the prisoner," she added to Babs.

"But, look here—"
"Silence!" ordered Diana Royston-Clarke. "Bridget, lock the door!"
Bridget O'Toole locked the door. Babs lifted her pen.

"Lorna Millerchip," she said seriously, "this is a Form trial! You stand accused of creating strife between your aunt, Miss Bullivant, and our Form-mistress, Miss Charmant. You stand accused of being an outsider and a sneak, and you are to be tried by the Form. If you would like anyone to defend you, Jean Cartwright will do it."

Lorna's lips curled. She felt a little reassured now that she fully understood.

"Oh, just silly kids' play, eh?" she sneered. "Thanks, I don't want anybody to defend me! I can defend myself."

"Very well," Babs nodded to Jean. "That lets you out," she said grimly. "Joan Charmant, as counsel for the prosecution, read out your charge."

Joan got up. She read out the charge, while Lorna smiled disdainfully. Babs gazed at her.

"You have heard, Lorna Millerchip? Can you offer any just reason why sentence should not be passed upon you?" Babs asked.

"Oh, don't be idiots! What sentence can you pass on me?" Lorna wanted to know. "Just you wait, you ninnies, till I see my aunt about this!"

Babs compressed her lips.
"The court," she said, "find you guilty, Lorna Millerchip. This is the order of the court. That you must go to your aunt, and in the presence of two witnesses, to be named by the court, tell her that you have just been indulging your spite against Miss Charmant and the Form."

Lorna laughed sneeringly.
"And what else?"

"And then," Babs added, "in the presence of the same two witnesses, go to Miss Charmant and apologise to her. Do you accept this order?"

"Oh, don't be a fool!" Lorna said roughly.

"Do you accept this order?" Babs repeated.

"No."

"Very well." Babs drew a deep breath. "In that case you will be punished," she said. "The Form passes sentence. From now until this time tomorrow, Lorna Millerchip, you are sent to Coventry. At that hour you will appear before this court again. The sentence," Babs added, looking round, "commences from this moment. That is all. The court adjourns. Open the door again, Bridget."

"But look here—" Lorna cried furiously.

But Babs, as if she did not exist, carefully doffed her gown and wig.

"And now," she said, "we'll carry on with the decorations."

"But I want to say—" shrieked Lorna. "Clara—"

Clara turned her back.
"Well, Bessie, then! Bessie, look here, make them listen to me—"

Bessie blinked at her, then hurriedly remembered an appointment at the other end of the room. Lorna clenched her hands.

"All right," she said, "all right! I'll jolly well make you talk to me if I want you to! Little high and mighties," she sneered. "Beastly little prigs! Here, Clara, you rotter, what are you doing?"

"Open that door, twins," Clara said levelly.

The owlsh Terraine Twins smiled. While Ermytrude pulled the door open, Frisilla stood primly aside. With beaming faces they watched as the furious Lorna, in the iron grip of Clara Trevlyn, was marched towards the door. With a thrust of the arms Clara sent Lorna breathlessly staggering into the passage. Then the door closed.

"Look here—" Lorna cried. She glared at the door. Then, suddenly pulling out her handkerchief, she burst into tears, and, sobbing as if her heart would break, ran off to her aunt's study. Miss Bullivant, in the midst of her term reports, jumped.

"Lorna, my dear child, what's the matter now?"

"It—it's the Form again!" Lorna sobbed. "I'm sure Miss Charmant told them to do it, aunty. They—they've sent me to Coventry. Nobody will speak to me. I—I'm worse than a leper. Boo-hoo!"

Grimly Miss Bullivant touched a bell on her desk. Sally, the maid, appeared.

"Sally, ask Miss Charmant and Miss Redfern to step this way at once!" she ordered. "Lorna, my dear, tell me what has happened."

And Lorna, sobbing, told. Miss Bullivant looked furious. Five minutes later Miss Charmant, clearly worried and distressed, came in, to be joined a few seconds later by Babs. Miss Bullivant regarded them.

"I have sent for you both," she said, "because I have something to say. Please listen to me while I say it, and then, if you can, defend yourselves. Miss Charmant, I have already had occasion to speak to you on the score of the persecution of Lorna—"

"I am not aware," Miss Charmant answered, "that Lorna is being persecuted."

"But," Miss Bullivant said harshly, "you condone the conduct of your Form in dragging this poor girl to a humiliating trial and suffer your Form to punish her?"

Miss Charmant looked rather surprised.

"Really, Miss Bullivant, I know nothing of this!"

"Very well," Miss Bullivant faced Barbara. "Barbara, you, I believe, are the ringleader in this persecution—and

that, in spite of the request I made to you that you should look after Lorna. Do you deny that, in holding Lorna to ridicule in the Form-room, you were acting out of sympathy for Miss Charmant?"

Babs drew a deep breath.
"Our sympathy, yes; but not under Miss Charmant's orders," she said. "It was the Form who took action, Miss Bullivant. Miss Charmant knew nothing about it."

"And you sentenced Lorna to Coventry?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps," Miss Bullivant almost barked, "you will tell me on what grounds?"

"I will." Babs faced up squarely. "Because she refused to obey the Form's demand that she should own up to you and apologise to Miss Charmant."

Miss Bullivant looked at Babs in mingled anger and amazement.

"And what, pray, has she to own up to me about? And why, in the name of goodness, should she apologise to Miss Charmant?"

Babs looked at Miss Charmant, who was shaking her head.

"Well, Miss Bullivant, if I must speak, I will. The Form felt that Lorna was making a dead set at Miss Charmant."

"Barbara, how dare—"

"And the Form felt that she was just influencing you to go for Miss Charmant," Babs said boldly.

Miss Bullivant choked.

"Enough! Enough!" she cried. Her face was livid. "The impudence—the utter audacity! And you, Barbara, my Form captain—you, who are supposed to set an example to the others! Barbara, from this moment you are suspended from the captaincy!"

"Miss Bullivant—" Miss Charmant cried.

"Well?"

"Don't—don't you think you are being unusually severe?" Miss Charmant faced her levelly. "Barbara only acted because the Form desired her to act—"

"And you, Miss Charmant, condone it—yes, you do!" Miss Bullivant flared out. "Miss Charmant, I am tired of this. Ever since Miss Primrose went away you have done your best to handicap me in my duties. Through this niece of mine you have done your best to set your Form against both her and myself. And you have succeeded. Miss Charmant," she added, trembling, "I am loth to deal with you in this way, but I plainly perceive now that this question between us has come to a head. To-morrow the board of governors will be here. I shall put before them the facts, and I shall ask, madam, for your suspension."

"Miss Bullivant—no!" cried Babs. "Miss Bullivant, you're wrong! It's all a terrible mistake! If only you'll give me a chance to explain—"

"Barbara, leave this study!"

"But I want to tell you—"

"You have told me enough. Now," Miss Bullivant ground out, "I will take action! You are suspended, Barbara. Apart from that, I shall send a special report to your parents at the end of the term. As for the Form themselves, they, too, shall be punished—how, I will decide later. Now please go. And you, Miss Charmant."

"I think," Miss Charmant said, white-faced and unsteady, "we had better go, Barbara. Come, my dear."

And leaving Miss Bullivant almost foaming at the mouth, pupil and mistress went.

On the Brink of Rebellion!



BARBARA REDFERN suspended from the Form captaincy! Miss Charmant to face the board of governors meeting, with Miss Bullivant acting as a sort of prosecutrix!

It was not long before that staggering news filtered through the school. By six o'clock all Cliff House was ringing with the news.

Indignation was expressed on every side, but in no other section of the school was indignation so red-hot as in the Fourth—that Form still awaiting its threatened punishment.

That night after prep the Form met in a body to continue the work of decorating the Common-room. There was precious little decorating, however; the Form was in too much of a seething ferment for that.

"Well," Mabs cried grimly, "suspended or not, Babs is still our captain, girls!"

slinking in Miss Bullivant's wake, a hiss went up.

"Silence! How—how dare you?" Miss Bullivant choked. "Who did that?"

"Napoleon!" said a voice.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who said that?"

There was no reply.

"All right!" Miss Bullivant gathered herself. Her eyes, glistening with anger, darted round. "I plainly perceive that you are altogether out of hand," she said, "and small wonder, considering the example set you by your mistress and your Form captain! Many times in the past I have had to speak about the unruliness of this Form. Lorna is the only decent girl among you—the one from whom you should take an example." She stopped, and a sarcastic titter went round. "In the meantime," she added, "every girl here will take a hundred lines. Apart from that, since you have shown yourselves so unworthy of privileges, there shall be no games party."

soon as Miss Wright had put out the lights, Rosa Rodworth sat up.

"Well, kids, are we taking those decorations down?"

"Not until we've jolly well got justice!" cried Clara Trevlyn. "We're going to see the governors first!"

"And what about Miss Charmant? I vote we jolly well send an ultimatum to them!"

"No good," Babs decided. "Don't let's do anything silly. Remember, the worse behaved we are, the blacker the case will be against the Charmer. We'll see the governors all right, and we'll put our case before them. But we'll do it in an orderly manner, because if we are reasonable we shall have every right to expect them to be."

"In the meantime?"

"Wait—and watch," Babs counselled. And wait and watch the seething Fourth prepared itself to do, though in all-consuming impatience.

Next morning, when Miss Charmant came in the class-room, they almost cheered, and when Lorna, a minute later



STRUGGLING, panting, Lorna was dragged into the Common-room and taken before the bewigged Babs. "Your honour," Clara cried. "Here is the prisoner!" "Then lock the door," Babs ordered. The Fourth meant to deal with the spiteful "cry-baby" themselves!

"Yes, rather!" Beatrice Beverley chimed in.

"Rather not!"

"And whatever the Bull says or does, Lorna Millerchip is still in Coventry!" Margot Lantham cried.

"Yes."

"And if anything happens to Miss Charmant, I vote we all go on strike!" Rosa Rodworth hotly suggested.

"And we're not letting Miss Bullivant get away with it at the board meeting to-morrow?"

"Hurrah!"

The Form was almost on the brink of rebellion then. Even those girls usually against Babs were all for her now, especially as there would be no time in which to hold a Form election before breaking-up day, which meant that they could not profit by her downfall. It was unfortunate, perhaps, that when the indignant meeting was at its highest, Miss Bullivant should choose to pop in. Behind her was Lorna.

Everybody turned. For a moment there was silence, but it was not the silence of respect or even fear this time. The Fourth were too strongly worked up for that. And as Lorna was spotted

Something like a hiss went through the Form.

"And," Miss Bullivant added, "you will at once take down these decorations."

The girls turned their backs to her deliberately.

"At once!" Miss Bullivant repeated.

Not a movement.

"Barbara—"

Barbara faced her.

"I'm sorry, Miss Bullivant, but as I am no longer captain I am not in a position to do anything," she said steadily. "In any case," she added, as a bell clanged, "I don't think we could do anything now, Miss Bullivant. There's call-over."

Miss Bullivant gritted her teeth.

"Very well," she said. "Very well. But I will see that you do obey me. To-morrow, immediately after lessons, you will gather here. You will take down these decorations, and if they are not all removed by two o'clock I shall detain you for the next three half-holidays. Now, go to call-over."

The Form, without caring, trotted out, glaring daggers at Lorna. They went down to call-over; from there to bed—Lorna again not amongst them. As

came in, they hissed. Perhaps Lorna sensed the atmosphere of the Fourth then, for strangely enough she settled down and went on quietly with her lesson. Then, about half past ten, there was a stir. Babs, glancing through the window, saw five gentlemen stalking up the drive.

The governors had arrived!

A quarter of an hour later, Boker, the page-boy, came into the class-room.

"Miss Charmant, you're wanted in the governors' room," he said. "Miss Fairbrother is going to take charge of the Form!"

Miss Charmant went out, not daring to look at her class, but with everybody's sympathies going with her. Dulcia quietly came in. The Form, with a look at Lorna, went on with lessons. But nobody was thinking of lessons then, and Dulcia, perhaps realising their frame of mind, was easy and lenient.

Time dragged on. Miss Charmant did not return. Lessons came to an end.

"She's still there, in the governors' room," Babs said. "My hat! I'll bet she's been through it. But come on. We're jolly well going there, too—and

(Continued on page 14)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS



Patricia is a friend indeed—young, charming and understanding. With a delightfully happy knack of knowing just the sort of things which appeal to YOU, she gives you each week the most helpful suggestions on all sorts of schoolgirl topics.

I WONDER what you think of the new vogue for Victorianism which is invading all fashions these days?

Crinoline dresses and high-up hair started it all, and both look as if they're here to stay the winter, at least.

The low-cut dresses and full skirts I adore, don't you? They are especially attractive on plumpish girls and women, and I've an idea that you'll see many of them at Christmas parties this year.

Some girls will look divine in their dresses, while others will look—well, rather like tea-cosies! Which is very sad, but that's what the fashion can do, I'm afraid.

It's the same with the hair-up style. On some girls it is simply ravishing, but on others the hair just succeeds in looking rather like a bedraggled bird's-nest, and even four combs and a score or so of hairpins will not keep it in position.

All of which only goes to prove, just once more, that it's much better to wear what we know suits us, rather than to follow fashions slavishly.

All the same, there's no reason at all why we shouldn't follow the trend of fashion, and ignore its exaggerations, is there?

● Party Dresses For The 'Teens

So I've been looking at Christmas-party dresses for you in all the most up-stage and high-hat schoolgirl shops, so that I could tell you just what the newest notions are.

To-the-ground dresses are definitely being worn by any young miss who has had her thirteenth birthday, or earlier if you happen to be tall and biggish for your age.

Taffeta, which goes "swish-swish" as you walk, is a very popular material for the older girl, and can be obtained in goblin green, petrol blue, and candy pink, as well as all the other favourite colours.

One beauty that I saw was blue, and it had a neck which can be worn fastened up at the back or opened and turned back to form a V and show the contrasting pink lining.

The older girl will also be wearing net this year—crinoline style—over a taffeta slip, which is actually part of the dress.

I saw this dress in turquoise, with a marvellous cyclamen-pink sash and trimmings.

● The Up-To-Twelves

The youngsters—up to twelve—are still wearing knee-length frocks for parties, and a jolly good idea, too, I think, for a longer frock can get in the

way when you're trying hard to win at Musical Chairs, can't it?

Dainty colours still seem to be the rage, all these pretty pale hues, such as might be seen on fairies' wings!

● Simple Collars

Goodness, I seem to have talked all about parties and party things so far this week, so we'll come down to earth for a few moments, shall we?



I just want you to look at the little picture on the left and admire the collars on the dresses there.

As you can see, they are just triangles. The first collar consists merely of two triangles of silk stitched around the edge and tacked into the neck of the frock.

The second collar is made of triangles of knitting.

If you make three triangles, all the same size, two will make the collar, and one will make a cute little pocket to sew on the bodice of your dress.

Just a bright touch to cheer up your everyday dress while you're waiting for Christmas.

● A Reminder

Your Editor has asked me to remind you that the four ripping Annuals—you can read about them on page 7—are selling out very quickly. And since we'd all hate our own special readers to be disappointed by not receiving them, they really should be ordered right away in time for Christmas. So do ask fond parents and aunts and uncles if they'd be angels and do this for you.

I'm perfectly sure you don't need me to tell you how to make a shoe bag for school. But I do think it's quite a bright idea to sew a little pocket on to the front of the bag itself. For in this you can keep a secret comb, or a tiny mirror.

● A Birthday Gift

"What shall I give my sister for a birthday present?" a boy asked me the other day. A boy, mark you!

So after deciding to myself—though naturally I didn't tell him so—that the sister was a jolly lucky kid to have such a kindly brother, I asked how old she was.

"She'll be fourteen," he said.

"What sort of things does she like?" I asked him.

He looked thoughtful.

"She likes everything. Though mostly my aunts and people like that give her

knitting and sewing sets or something," he said, rather vaguely.

"A girl of fourteen!" I gasped. "Why not a pair of rompers, or a bead frame for learning to count!"

He grinned.

"I know—they do sound dull," he said apologetically. "That's why I thought I'd ask you. She's a good kid, and I would like to give her something she'd really like, now that I can afford to spend about five shillings on her."

Bless the lad, I thought, and then said: "Well, what about a manicure set—a real one. A fountain-pen or a camera?"

He nodded.

"And you might like the idea of a real party-bag," I went on. "You can get little beauties for two-and-six or so, all covered in tiny beads—just the thing for a schoolgirl to take along with her to a party when she's wearing her best dress."

"She doesn't go to many parties," he said rather doubtfully.

"Of course she doesn't," I replied. "And neither do you play cricket all the year round, do you? But you like



to have your white flannels so that you're like the other fellows, don't you?"

"Well, naturally—"

"And so would your sister like to have a party-bag—even if it is only for her school party," I finished.

The result is that the young sister has the party-bag, and though you wouldn't exactly call it a "useful" present, to be used every day of her life, she's simply thrilled by it.

For it's one of those "luxury" presents that make birthdays and special occasions so much more exciting, somehow.

Bye-bye now, my pets, until next week!
Your friend,

PATRICIA.

IMPORTANT P.S.—I had meant to tell you about Clara Trevlyn's winter dress to-day, but I found I simply couldn't squeeze it in owing to the Christmas Presents page—which I knew you'd want this week in order to have plenty of time to get the gifts made. So you shall read about Clara's outfit next week instead—promise.

GIFTS TO MAKE FOR CHRISTMAS

If you are thinking of making some of your Christmas presents this year, you will want to start right away. So here Patricia gives you some suggestions that are simple and inexpensive—yet attractive.

SOMETHING you've made yourself!

Isn't it amazing how everyone loves a present that has actually been made by the giver? And yet it isn't, really, for I know I love a "made" gift, however tiny. There's something so personal about it, somehow, something that suggests it was made for you and you alone.

So if your family and friends feel this way about presents, then you'd better get down to the making of some right away, for Christmas is only three weeks off now, you know.

Those presents here, you'll notice, cost very little indeed in materials. I have purposely kept them inexpensive, knowing what a lot of things schoolgirls have to do with their pocket money. So if you can explore mother's piece-bag, and it proves a mine of treasure, you'll be lucky indeed, for then there will be practically no cost at all.

Now then:

COAL-GLOVE AND KETTLE-HOLDER

Just what mother or an aunty would like to hang by the side of the fire and by the gas-stove.

The coal-glove should be made from two pieces of black material—velvet or velveteen would be lovely—each measuring 9 inches by 6½.

Cut out a shape that resembles a baby's glove—with no fingers—and then seam around. Embroider the word "coal" and the scuttle in simple running stitch on the front.

The kettle-holder is made from several circles of material measuring 7 inches across. Place these all together and then bind or buttonhole-stitch around the edge. Embroider the outline of a kettle and the word "holder" on the front.

SCISSOR CASE AND THIMBLE CASE

Anyone who treasures a sewing-basket would love these novelties.

Felt is the best material for making them, but if you haven't an old beret or an old hat of mother's, that can be cut up for the purpose—and don't want the expense of buying a quarter of a yard of felt material—then any fairly thick cloth would do.

For the scissor case, place the scissors on to a piece of paper and mark around them, making a paper pattern first. With the aid of this pattern cut the shape out of your material—not forgetting the flap-over part. Then stitch around the edge, make a loop on the flap so that it will fold over and fasten to a button.

The thimble-case is made from two pieces of material, cut hat-shape, and joined together. You slip the thimble into the crown.

CHRISTMAS PENWIPERS

Just a tiny gift for a chum, instead of a card, or to hang on the Christmas tree if you're having a party this year.

A holly leaf is cut out of a piece of dark green, silky material, and then several pieces, exactly the same, from different, thick material. Stitch them together down the centre, as if it were a leaf "vein."

The top leaf of the mistletoe is made from pale green material, and the other

thicknesses can be of other suitable material.

After cutting all the leaves to shape, join them with a white bead, leaving a thread of green cotton or wool to represent the stem.

A SHOPPING LIST AND COMB CASE

A chum, an aunty, or a big sister would like one or both of these, I'm sure.

Buy a penny notebook and then make a cover for it, either with felt, cretonne or casement cloth. Make it an inch wider than the notebook at each side, so that the extra cloth folds over to make pockets into which you slip the covers of the little book.

Either paint or stick on the front a picture of a shopping basket.

The comb-case is quickly made, from any chosen material—felt would again be ideal, for so little sewing is required on this. Just fold a strip over and stitch it up the sides.

Then take some strands of brown or yellow wool and plait them like a real Bessie Bunter plait. Tie a bow of ribbon on the end, and fasten the top end of the plait to the case. Slip a comb inside to fit before you give it away, won't you?

A DOLL HAIR-TIDY

She'd look sweet on the dressing-table. You require a small celluloid doll, a hankie and a length of ribbon.

Gather across the corners of the hankie (as shown in the diagram) and pull up, then fasten it around the neck of the doll. Pull the corners of the hankie over daintily and tie it around the neck firmly with ribbon, fastening with a big loop for hanging the dolly up.

A SPECTACLE CASE

For granny's Christmas present. Make it from a piece of gay felt or imitation leather—which costs sixpence for a quarter of a yard and is easy to sew on.

A piece measuring 5½ inches by 6 is folded in half. You must stitch up the sides and then sew a zipp fastener along the top. Mark G for granny with simple running stitches in one corner.

SMOKERS' JOY

Here is something to hang beside father's chair. It is just a piece of cardboard covered with brightly-coloured paper. A pipe is cut out of material and stitched on to the cardboard. Pipe-cleaners are tucked into the bowl part of the pipe, and a packet of book matches slipped under the stem part.

PARTY-BAG AND HAIR-BAND

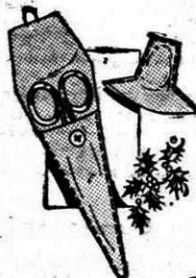
How a best chum would love this two-in-one present! First you must buy two inexpensive sprays of artificial flowers. Sew one spray on to a piece of narrow silk ribbon that is nearly a yard long for the party hair-band.

The bag is made from a wide piece of ribbon to match, about 5 inches wide and 9 long. Fold it up, and cut off the top corners for the flap. Seam up the sides, hem the flap, and sew on a press-stud fastening, then stitch the second spray of flowers along the flap.

This present would be sweet in pink, green or blue, to match your chum's party dress. But if you are in doubt which colour to choose, then make them in white to be on the safe side.



(Above)
A useful Coal-glove and Kettle-holder.



(Above)
Scissors case and Thimble case.



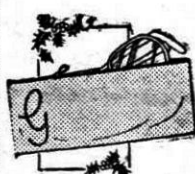
(Above)
Holly and Mistletoe Penwipers for a chum.



(Above)
Shopping list, and a Comb case with a real plait on it. Just right for the handbag.



(Above)
A very useful "tidy" for the dressing-table, made from a tiny doll and a hankie.



(Above)
Granny would love this case for her specs.



Just right for hanging by father's chair is the novelty on the right.



(Left)
Hair-band and party-bag to match.

(Continued from page 11)

somehow we're going to let the governors know what we think. But no nonsense, kids!"

There were nods. More than half the Form started off to the governors' room. In the passage outside they grinned while Freda Ferriers, sneak as she was, applied her eye to the keyhole. She passed back whispers.

"My hat! The Charmer's there, white as chalk; she's saying something."

"What?"

"She's saying she had no intention of making the Form mutiny. With her's the Bull; she's talking and— Goodness! Isn't she lashing at the Charmer! I say, the governors look serious about it!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Now here's the Charmer again. She's almost in tears."

Girls clenched their fists.

"Now the Bull. Listen to what she's saying! She's saying that it's impossible to work with a mistress who is undermining her discipline."

Girls gulped. It sounded serious. Everybody was on edge then; everybody dying to burst into that room and say what they thought. There was a movement; then Freda gave a gasp.

"Oh, listen!"

"What?"

"Wait! Wait! I can't hear! Yes, I can! She—she—" And Freda bent forward. For a moment she stiffened, while the Form stood on tiptoe. "They're muttering to themselves; they're comparing notes," she said. "Now the Charmer is speaking and— Oh goodness!"

She straightened up, her own face pale and startled.

"Freda, what—"

"They—they've suspended Miss Charmant!" Freda choked.

For an instant there was an electrified silence, then Rosa Rodworth snorted.

"Oh, come on!" she rallied. "This is where we stick our ear in!"

Her restraint snapped at last; Rosa made a lunge forward. But hardly had she taken the first step when the door of the governors' room opened and Miss Bullivant came out.

"You—you girls," she cried, "what are you doing here?"

"We want," Rosa said violently, "to see the governors!"

"Indeed! What for?"

"We want to tell them what we think!" Rosa said fiercely. "We want to show them that Miss Charmant, at least, has the backing of the Form!"

"Rosa, how dare you!" Miss Bullivant cried. "And how dare any of you flock into this passage! I refuse to allow you to see the board of governors! The very idea! You will go to the Common-room immediately—and there you will pull down those decorations, as I ordered last night!"

"We want to see the governors!" cried Diana Royston-Clarke.

"I refuse! Go—go this instant! If you don't go," Miss Bullivant raved, "I will fetch the board of governors to see you! If they require any further evidence of the uncontrollability of Miss Charmant's Form they surely will have it here!"

Girls looked at each other and raged anew. Miss Bullivant had them there. Every one of them was quick to see the advantage she held. Miss Bullivant, having made out her case against Miss Charmant, could easily support that case by drawing the governors on to the scene at this moment. Rather flabbergastedly the Fourth looked towards Babs. Babs jerked her head.

"Come on!" she said tersely.

"Where—"

"Come on!"

And Babs herself led the way; while Miss Bullivant, with an angry purse of the lips, stalked along the corridor that led to her own room. Without question the Form followed their suspended leader until, reaching Big Hall, Babs turned and faced them. Her cheeks were pale; her eyes flashing anger.

"Well, just wait a minute," she proposed. "We've got to see this thing through. No sense now in barging in to see the governors. The Bull has won her case, and the only way we can beat her is to prove her wrong; and there's only one way to prove the Bull wrong, because the Bull herself thinks she's dead right," Babs finished.

"And that, look you?" Lucy Morgan shrilled.

"To find 'Cry-baby' Lorna and make her own up. In the meantime," Babs said, "we're carrying out none of the Bull's orders!"

"Hurrah!"

"Come on, let's find Cry-baby!" Frances Frost shrilled.

Nobody knew where Lorna was; and now Babs remembered she had not seen her since lessons. The obvious place in which to look, however, was Lorna's study. With Babs and Clara at their head, the Form grimly tramped in that direction.

Like some avenging army they marched into Big Hall, Babs and Clara leading the way up the steps which gave on to the Fourth Form corridor; then all at once Babs gave a yell:

"Lorna!"

Lorna it was—just entering the top landing from the corridor on the right. She paused as she heard her name shouted, and gave a violent start as she saw the marching mass of girls ascending the stairs.

"Oh!" she gasped.

"Lorna, we want you!" Clara Trevlyn called furiously.

But Lorna was not stopping. Just for one instant she stood. In that instant Babs wondered at the twitching excitement on her face; wondered still more at Lorna's appearance. For Lorna had on a new white blouse splashed with some dark-coloured stains; there were stains on her hands, and a blob of the same stain on her cheek. The next moment she had fled.

"Come on! After her!" Clara cried. And up the stairs they all rushed, to go tearing along the Fourth Form corridor.

But when they flung open the door of Study No. 8 Lorna was not there; nor was she in the adjoining corridor, which was a cul-de-sac.

"Gone to her beastly aunt's study, I expect!" Mabs opined. "Anyway, never mind; there's not all that hurry. The governors are bound to stop for lunch now that they're here; and we can grab her at dinner. I vote we all go back to the Common-room and hold a council of war."

"Hear, hear!"

So back to the Common-room they went. Babs, leading, flung the door open, and then gave back, with a warning hiss of "Cave!" For in the centre of that room—utterly deserted, except for herself—stood Miss Bullivant.

"Ah!" the mistress said. "Come here, all of you!"

Babs halted; then boldly she marched forward. The Fourth had ceased caring about Miss Bullivant. Almost contemptuous of their temporary headmistress in their present frame of mind, they stormed in. Miss Bullivant's eyes glittered as they fastened upon Babs.

"Barbara—I suppose I must address you, since you still appear to be the

chief rebel among your unruly class mates—why hasn't my order been obeyed? I thought you understood that you were to take these decorations down immediately after lessons."

"Yes, Miss Bullivant," Babs replied.

"Then why is it not done?"

Boldly Babs faced her, while a murmur of encouragement came from the girls behind.

"I am sorry, Miss Bullivant," she replied levelly. "We don't want to disobey you—"

"Then take these decorations down at once!" the Bull raved.

"But," Babs went on, unheeding, "we don't think we are being fairly treated—"

"What? Barbara, how dare—"

"And until our wish to see the governors is granted we are refusing to obey orders," Babs went on.

"Hear, hear!" came a growl.

Miss Bullivant goggled and gasped. From livid to a shade of purple her face turned; incredulously she stared at the mutinous Fourth Form. For a moment, indeed, her fury was so great that she could only splutter inarticulate words. And in the midst of this the door opened, and Miss Charmant, her face white and wan, bearing unmistakable traces of the strain under which she was labouring, came into the room.

At once Babs saw something else. Just near Miss Charmant was the curtain screening the alcove in which the portable tennis table and its accessories were kept, and Babs saw that curtain move. Then a hand appeared, followed by a furtive face, which disappeared again almost the instant it showed itself!

"The Guilty Girl is—here!"



BABS' eyes glimmered. Then Miss Bullivant recovered herself.

"Barbara, you—you—" she raved. "I will have you expelled for this! I will confine you all to bounds for the rest of the term! Do my bidding at once!" she ordered fiercely. "Take down those decorations!"

Babs stood firm. The Form stood firm.

"Barbara, do you want me to send you to the punishment-room?"

"I'm sorry!" Babs said defiantly.

"Then—"

And Miss Bullivant turned as Miss Charmant hurried forward. Miss Charmant was shaking her head, her pretty, troubled face very sad, but very disapproving.

"Please," she said to Miss Bullivant. "let me talk to them! Barbara—all of you," she pleaded—"please—please do not get yourselves into further trouble. I know you are doing this for me, but it is too late now! I have already resigned!"

There was a murmur. Babs flushed.

"Then," she said, "that's all the more reason why we should strike, Miss Charmant! It's not fair! All we want is justice for you—"

"Miss Charmant!" Miss Bullivant raved.

"Please!" Miss Charmant faced her with a steely look. "Girls," she appealed, "please, for my sake! You will not get justice by refusing to obey orders, whatever you may think of the orders. You do not, surely, want me to leave you knowing that you are in the deepest disgrace? Now, girls, please!" she added. "Let's all work together. Will you help me if I start?"

She smiled, hurrying towards the

ladder, which was still propped up against the farther wall. The girls looked at each other, caught off their guard now, while Miss Bullivant just blinked as if she could not believe her eyes.

"This—Miss Charmant? This the mistress who, this morning, she had accused of having no control? Was this the mistress she had accused of urging the Form to rebel?"

Quite plainly Miss Bullivant was utterly confused. And quite plainly, for a moment, the Fourth were, too. Not a great many of them there believed in returning good for evil, but hardly one of them could be blind to that inspiring example, or deaf to that unselfish and noble request.

As Miss Charmant put her foot on the first rung of the ladder, Babs turned.

"Come on!" she said. "For the Charmer's sake, girls!"

"Hurrah! Miss Charmant, we'll help!"

The Charmer, half-way up the ladder now, stopped, throwing back one of her loveliest smiles. Then she climbed on, while Miss Bullivant still stared like some woolly-headed sleeper awakening from the effects of a trance.

She saw Miss Charmant, now on a level with the great ledge, concealed by a great mass of holly and rosettes, plunge her hand among those decorations to find the string with which they were attached to the wall. With a laugh she found it, caught it, tugged.

And then—
"Hey!" called Clara Trevlyn, halting dead in her tracks, and the next moment: "Oh, my aunt! Miss Charmant! Miss Charmant, look out!" she shrieked.

The warning came too late. For even while it was being uttered the thing happened. Concealed by the floriferous mass, a bucket, hidden and cunningly balanced on the ledge, heeled over. There was a sudden swishing sound as a deluge of blacky-blue fluid swept down; a startled gasp from Miss Charmant as it went full upon her up-turned face, and then a clank as the bucket came clattering after it.

Too late Miss Charmant, half-blinded, put out a hand. The bucket, catching her on the side of the head, sent her reeling, and, with a crash, she hit the floor.

There she lay, very still, while on the room descended a breathless and most terrified silence.

Then—
"Miss Charmant!" cried Babs, rushing forward.

"Miss Charmant!" gasped the Bull, anxiety working in her face.

Together they bent over her, and while Babs raised her head, Miss Bullivant touched her face, then breathed with relief to see the eyelids faintly flicker.

"This—this—" Miss Bullivant gasped. "This is a booby-trap! Miss Charmant, are—are you all right?" she added, as the mistress' eyes dazedly flickered open.

"Miss Charmant, can you get up?" Babs said anxiously.

Miss Charmant could, though she leaned heavily on Babs. Leila came rushing forward with a clean duster, and they wiped the mistress' face. Miss Bullivant was choking then. Her eyes swept the room.

"Who did this?" she rapped.

Silence!
"Who did it?"

Again silence. Not a girl moved. But Babs' eyes were glimmering.

"I don't think, Miss Bullivant," she said, "that you can expect the girl to own up."

"Barbara, was it you?"
"My hat, no!"
"Then perhaps," Miss Bullivant glared, "you can tell me who it was?"
To everybody's astonishment, Babs nodded.

"I think," she said softly, "I can." Her face was rather grim. "But I'd rather not mention names. Miss Bullivant, for a reason you will understand later. But if I may make a suggestion—"

"And that?" Miss Bullivant queried.
"This stuff," Babs said, indicating the stained duster, "is a mixture of soot and ink. The ink is indelible, which means the girl who prepared the booby-trap probably carries some stains of it on her fingers. I suggest, Miss Bullivant, you line up every girl in this room and examine her hands."

Miss Bullivant paused. She was not

awful stuff from her features, and shrugged.

"Very well, then. Fetch my niece. Does anyone know where she is?"

"Yes," Babs said. "I do. She is here—" And then, with one bound, she was at the curtain. With a terrific wrench she had torn it down. "Here!" she cried ringingly.

Miss Bullivant gasped; the whole Form shouted. There, her hands and face spattered with blue-black spots, her blouse spattered, too, was the utterly flabbergasted and astonished Lorna!

For one moment Miss Bullivant could hardly find her voice. For one moment, indeed, it seemed that she was going to have a fit as she stared at her shrinking niece and saw, in horrified understanding, those betraying stains upon her. Lorna averted her eyes.

"Lorna!" Miss Bullivant's voice



AS Miss Bullivant started to inspect the girls' hands, seeking one with an ominous stain, Babs suddenly spoke up. "One moment, Miss Bullivant," she said quietly, her eyes gleaming, "one girl is missing—your niece!"

used to accepting suggestions from juniors, but at this moment she was deeply incensed and angry. Whatever her personal feelings against Miss Charmant, her duty as headmistress came first, and it was manifestly her duty to clear up this matter as soon as possible. She nodded.

"Very well. Line up, girls! Hold out your hands!"

In a body the girls, consciences clear, lined up. A row of thirty odd pairs of hands were stretched out for Miss Bullivant's inspection.

"Ahem! One moment, Miss Bullivant," Babs said, and edged nearer to the curtain. "The whole Form is not here!"

"What? Who is missing?"

"Your niece, Miss Bullivant."

"Barbara!" Miss Bullivant jumped.

"Are you suggesting—"

"I am suggesting nothing," Babs said levelly. "At the same time, Miss Bullivant, it's only fair that every girl should be treated alike."

There was a murmur of approval. Miss Bullivant looked at Miss Charmant, still frantically wiping the

quivered. "Lorna! Did—did you do this? Lorna, answer me!"

For answer, Lorna burst into tears.

"Lorna, you—you wretched child! Answer me!"

"Oh, aunty!"

"Lorna, did you? But do not deny it, girl, I can see with my own eyes! Why did you prepare this—this dreadful trap?"

"I—I only did it for a joke!" Lorna whimpered. "Oh, aunty, it—it was only fun! The—the Form sent me to Coventry; I—I wanted to make them sit up when they took the decorations down. I—I didn't know Miss Charmant would catch it."

"What?"

"Aunty, I only did it for a joke—really!" Lorna said desperately.

"And," Babs said swiftly, "it was only for a joke you told lies about what happened in the dining-room, wasn't it?"

"Yes—n-no!" Lorna cried, her nerve completely gone.

"And it was only for a joke," Babs went on scathingly, "you armed an ink pellet at Miss Charmant and hit Bessie Butner in mistake!"

"Oh, Barbara!"

"And only for a joke that you made trouble in this room yesterday because I wouldn't give you the biggest job in the decorating?"

Lorna broke down and howled.

"I—I—I—I— Oh, aunt—"

Miss Bullivant's face was working. But its expression was steely.

"I think," she said, her voice tremulous with emotion, "I think—oh, I do not know what to think! Lorna, you have deceived me! You have lied to me. All the time you have been trying to put me up against Miss Charmant and these girls. Why, I do not know. Because of you, Miss Charmant has been suspended—and mine was the influence which got her suspended, because I was foolish enough to listen to your tales!"

She paused, and, biting her lip, looked round at the girls. Then abruptly she crossed to Miss Charmant. "Miss Charmant, I am sorry!" she gulped. "I am most sincerely sorry. I had no idea—"

Miss Charmant faintly smiled.

"But," Miss Bullivant said, "it is not too late to undo the harm I have done. Fortunately, the board of governors is still sitting, and they shall hear of this right away. Miss Charmant, please come with me. You, too, Lorna, and you, Barbara. You girls—" She paused. "You need not pull down any more decorations," she said, in an extremely small voice. "You may carry on with the decorations."

There was a faint cheer. The Bull, with a queer look at her sobbing niece, whisked out of the room, followed by Miss Charmant. Babs gripped Lorna's arm.

"Come on!" she said grimly.

To the governor's room they went. There Miss Bullivant flung the door open. Five surprised gentlemen blinked.

"Why, Miss Bullivant—"

"Gentlemen!" Miss Bullivant said. Her voice was trembling; her face working with agitation. "I have come to ask you to redress a great wrong. I—I have come here to confess to you that I have been misled, made a fool! Miss Charmant, so far from being the subordinate and inefficient mistress I allowed you to believe she was, is, I have found, one of my most loyal mistresses. A woman who—I hesitate to say it, but fairness compels me—has more control and real authority in the Fourth Form than I have. This girl, Barbara Redfern, will tell you what has happened. Barbara, please step forward. And do not, my child, attempt to spare me or Lorna."

But Babs, intercepting a look from Miss Charmant, did. She glossed over, as well as she could, Miss Bullivant's share in the events of the Fourth Form. The governors looked serious.

The chairman stood up.

"It is far from being a satisfactory state of affairs," he said. "Miss Bullivant, we must hold you to blame. I am glad, however, that you have endeavoured to make restitution, and we all most sincerely trust that it will never happen again. It is hardly necessary for me to say that, in view of these revelations, we refuse to accept Miss Charmant's resignation. As for your niece—well, you are headmistress. You will know what to do with her."

"Thank you, gentlemen!" Miss Bullivant said faintly—and then collapsed.

It was Miss Charmant who sprang to comfort her. Miss Charmant, her face gentle, who put her arm round the shaking shoulders of this woman, who had wronged her, led her from the room, and, followed by Babs—Lorna

having disappeared—sat her in a chair in her own study while Babs anxiously applied a glass of water to Miss Bullivant's lips.

"Miss Bullivant, please!" Miss Charmant said softly. "Don't worry. It's all over."

Miss Bullivant gave a little choke.

"You!" she said. "You, Miss Charmant! I—I did all that to you! I—" She broke off. "Oh, what a fool I have been! What a weak, trusting, deceived fool! I am sorry!"

"Miss Bullivant, there is nothing to be sorry for."

"And now," Miss Bullivant went on feebly, "I must do my duty." Her lips quivered a little. "I wonder," she added, "if you can tell what I feel like now—I, so fond of that girl, who now have to expel her? But this time I will not fail!" she added firmly, and rose to her feet.

But very gently Miss Charmant pushed her back. She looked at Babs.

"Miss Bullivant, I do not think," she said, "that there need be any question of expelling your niece. She has learned her lesson. For my part, I am willing to give her another chance."

"That also goes for the Form," Babs said. "I can promise, Miss Bullivant, they will give her another chance."

Miss Bullivant choked.

"You—you really mean that?"

"Of course!"

"Then," Miss Bullivant said, and the

tears glistened on her lashes, "thank you—thank you both! I—" She could not go on. "Barbara, this means, of course, that your suspension as captain is withdrawn. You may tell the Form from me that all punishments are cancelled. But meantime," she said, the old bullish look coming back into her face, "you may tell Lorna that I want her."

"Yes, Miss Bullivant," Babs said, and went and found Lorna.

When an hour later, she met Lorna again, she found that girl looking most dreadfully white, but tremendously fierce.

"Well, and how did you get on?" Babs asked curtly.

"How did I get on?" Lorna flared. "That old cat! She calls herself my aunt! She pretends she's fond of me! But do you know what she's done?"

"What?"

"Gated me for the rest of the term! Given me an hour's detention every day for the rest of the term, and a hundred lines a day into the bargain! And apart from that," Lorna choked, "she's stopped all my pocket-money!"

Babs smiled. If the Bull was sorry for what she'd done to the now happy Charmer, she reflected, she was still the Bull. Not that Lorna didn't deserve every scrap of that punishment. She did—for she was still the same girl, in spite of all!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.



Breaking-up day at Cliff House! Tremendous fun and excitement in the school! Enthusiastically plans for Christmas are discussed. And who more enthusiastic than Gwen Cook of the Fourth Form? What a wonderful time she will have with Babs & Co. at Pellabay Castle! And then comes mystery and shock, for suddenly Gwen announces that she must remain at school throughout Christmas. But why? And what is the reason for her almost horrified agitation when Babs & Co. also remain on for a while? Next week's superb, LONG COMPLETE Hilda Richards' story, featuring the chums of Cliff House, is full of drama and surprises. Be sure not to miss it!

The Most Thrilling and Intriguing Story You've Ever Read.

Guests at Mystery Manor!



By
**ELIZABETH
CHESTER**

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. The chums, who suspect her, are sure the mystery is connected with an old mill, reached from the manor by a secret passage. There is also a tunnel to the mill from outside. A guest, MIRANDA BATES, learning of the treasure, accidentally sets fire to the mill, but the chums save the building. Later, Lavender disappears—kidnapped by a hooded woman and kept in a secret room. She manages to smuggle a note to the chums!

(Now read on.)



people, knew what to do, and just would not leave them. Arguing it out, the girls agreed that when Thelma Harkness found Marcus following her, she would not too obviously force him away, shout at him, or do anything to make him go, for fear of attracting attention.

"And we shadow Marcus?" said Judy dubiously. "Suppose he doesn't lead us back to where she went?"
"No need for him to!" Hilda exclaimed, as the idea developed in her mind. "I'll fix it so that he leaves a trail. Muddy footprints might do it, or perhaps a small bag of soot with a hole in it. Anyway, that's a detail. First, we've got to find Thelma Harkness."

They hurried in search of her, and in the hall saw Mr. and Mrs. Bates talking anxiously.

"If this house is haunted I refuse to stay!" said Mrs. Bates.

Hilda nodded her head.
"We should deserve it, Mr. Bates," she said coolly. "But we have not played ghost; and the house is not haunted."
"Ah! Probably not," he said grimly, "but—"

There came a shrill scream from a corridor leading from the hall, and so startlingly sudden was it that the small crowd was silenced. Everyone stood like statues until Hilda sprang forward to find out who it was had screamed.

Before she had gone more than two steps, however, Miranda came flying into the hall, panting and gasping.

"Miranda, what ever is wrong?" her mother cried.

Miranda, screaming "Help, help! The ghost!" drew up, shot a quick look at Hilda, and then clung to her mother.

"Oh, mummy, I've heard the ghost! Such strange noises! And they came from behind me, in the corridor! It—it was like the jingling of chains!"

Her mother held her tightly, white-faced.

"The place is haunted, then! We must go! I won't stay here another minute!"

"Where did you hear this?" asked Hilda quickly. "Thank goodness, we can't be blamed for it, anyway!"

To Trap the Suspect!

"WHAT we have to do," said Hilda Farrel, when she had led her friends out into the grounds of the manor house—where they would be safe from the attentions of Thelma Harkness, the detective—is to let her know that we've had this message."

"Let Thelma Harkness know?" protested Beryl. "But, for goodness' sake, why?"

"Yes—why?" added Judy puzzled. "That'd only be giving her warning. Lavender has been kidnapped; and she's the one who did it, most likely—in fact, almost certainly."

"THE MANOR HOUSE IS NOT HAUNTED!"

"Just so," agreed Hilda. "And she won't worry about Lavender so long as she thinks none of us know where she is. But suppose she knows that we know that Lavender is hidden in this house?"

"Well, she'll change the hiding-place," objected Judy, after thought.

"Yes, that's what she'd do," Beryl agreed.

And that was just what Hilda hoped that the woman detective would do; for, as she explained, if only they could keep track of her, she would lead them to their missing friend.

It was an artful plan, and Hilda meant to make use of Marcus to do the shadowing.

Marcus, when he was told to shadow

Hilda declared. But at that moment someone screamed:

"Naturally, we shall not stay," Mr. Bates agreed. "But how do we know that it is not just an impish plot of these girls to get rid of us—a silly prank? People with ordinary sense do not play ghost, or send those messages and—"

Then he saw Hilda, Judy, and Beryl, and turned to them, frowning heavily.

"Come here, you girls!" he said. They meekly complied.

"Now, then," said Mr. Bates sternly, "understand this—if you are playing ghost I shall take severe action! I shall insist that you leave this house at once—either you, or us! I shall make it my business to report you to your parents, and if they are normal people they will punish you severely."

"HELP! HELP! THE GHOST!"

"That corridor," fretted Miranda. "Oh, mummy, do let's go!"

The butler came on to the scene then. So far as the Bates family knew, at any rate, he was the butler, although Hilda and her friends were aware that he was Lavender's father—playing a part, taking on the duties of the real butler, who had been scared from the house by the ghost.

Now he hurried forward, greatly perturbed.

"There must be a mistake, madam," he protested, still playing his part. "The house is not haunted. It is a trick. Whoever sent that message at breakfast is responsible. It is a plot to ruin me—to drive Mr. Mortimer and his daughter from this house. If you

leave, if the other guests due to-day leave, the master cannot carry on."

There was such deep distress and appeal in his voice that Mr. Bates hesitated on the verge of making angry protest, as Hilda saw.

"Someone trying to drive us from the house?" Mr. Bates said, frowning. "That hardly sounds likely! An old house such as this is quite probably haunted."

Hilda nudged Judy. "Come on; find Miss Harkness," she said. "No one can say we frightened Miranda. But where's Miss Harkness?"

"Ah, yes! She is about somewhere," said Mr. Bates.

But Hilda's hope that she might turn suspicion against the detective was shattered by Thelma Harkness' appearance from the main doorway.

"What is all this?" asked the woman detective, as grim and forbidding as ever. "More ghost-playing?"

She strode into the hall; and Beryl sighed.

"Couldn't have been her," she said. "I heard the scream as I was crossing the lawns," said Thelma Harkness, and brushed light rain from her tweed jacket.

Hilda looked down at the woman detective's shoes, and took a quick intake

of breath in surprise and triumph mingled.

A thin drizzle of rain was falling, as she saw through the window, and the detective's jacket was slightly bespattered with rain—but her shoes had no trace of mud.

Hilda, without a word, crossed to the doorway through which Thelma Harkness had entered, and then beckoned her friends.

"What now?" asked Judy.

Hilda stepped on to the grass, walking several steps. There had been rain in the early morning, and the ground was soft. Her footprints showed in the grass, and mud clung to her shoes.

"That's that! Another bit of evidence," said Hilda softly. "She said she crossed the lawn. But she didn't; she must have come along this path—it's gravel, and there's no mud, and—Look!" she ended, pointing excitedly. "That open window! Come on!"

The three girls reached the window farther along, and Hilda, glancing down at the flower-bed below it, saw a footprint. Next she placed her own foot down and lifted it. The soft earth did not cling.

Miss Harkness could have trodden in that mould without making her shoes muddy. And by the footprint Hilda judged that the woman detective had

emerged from the house via the window, then walked along the path, entered by the main door, and pretended that she was outside when Miranda screamed.

"She played the ghost," said Judy grimly. "And this is where we denounce her—"

"Not likely," said Hilda swiftly. "It's not complete proof. She could wriggle out. Now's the time to use our plan. Here, Marcus!"

Hilda deliberately ran through a muddy path, and Marcus followed. She ran to and fro with him, despite the thin drizzle of rain, and it was not long before Marcus' feet were really muddy.

Then, stooping, she whispered to him. "When I say 'shadow,' follow," she said. "Now come on, old chap. All depends on you—"

They returned to the house just as Thelma Harkness managed to get away from the Bates family, who were being entreated by the "butler" to stay.

"Well—and what have you been up to?" the woman detective demanded.

Hilda did not at once produce the note, but she, Judy, and Beryl watched the detective's face carefully.

"We have found out that Lavender is a prisoner in this house," said Hilda, blurring it out in order to shock Thelma Harkness.

And she did shock her. The woman's face showed alarm for a moment. Then it hardened.

"Prisoner in the house? Nonsense!" the detective snapped. "Where is your proof of this?"

Hilda showed the slip of paper. "That was found on the plate that had kippers," she said. "The kippers were given to Lavender for breakfast."

They hardly breathed as Thelma Harkness read the note. A minute passed without a word being said, and then the detective crumpled the paper.

"The secret room? If that is so, unless there are two rooms, she can be found," she said. "For only yesterday, tracing the secret corridors, I came upon that room!"

That was a set-back for Hilda. She had not foreseen this. It might be true—or it might be just an artful way out. "Then we can come with you," said Hilda.

"No! You stay in the hall!" snapped Thelma Harkness. "A whole army of us roaming about the secret corridors can only give warning of approach. The best thing you can do is to keep a watchful eye on Miranda Bates."

She went off then, and at a word from Hilda, Marcus followed her, soft of tread. But he did not go softly enough not to be heard by Thelma Harkness.

"Go back!" they heard her command.

Marcus took not the slightest notice. He remained still eyeing her, and then, when she walked on again, he followed, leaving behind him muddy footprints that could be traced quite easily, even though they grew fainter and fainter as he progressed.

An Unexpected Prisoner!

"COME along!" said Hilda softly. "Five minutes up."

Hilda had waited that time, judging it to be enough for Thelma Harkness to reach the secret room; but not enough time for her to remove Lavender to another hiding-place.

The three friends, in stocking feet, followed Marcus' trail, not knowing where it would lead them, but thrilled that he had been able to shadow Thelma Harkness in this way.

Your Editor's address is—
The SCHOOLGIRL Office, Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—Only another three weeks to Christmas! I'm sure you are all beginning to get quite excited at the approach of the festive season, arranging where you will spend it, what you will do, and, of course, what presents you are going to give—and what you hope to receive.

Deciding on Christmas presents can be a very, very difficult problem, but here is a suggestion which may make things easier for you. Why not buy an Annual? That is, if you are going to be the donor and the lucky person is a chum. Or, if YOU are the one who is to receive, why not ask for an Annual?

And if you select one of the four fine schoolgirl Annuals which have been regularly mentioned in these pages for some weeks, everybody is certain to be satisfied. For not only are they reasonable in price, but each of them is simply wonderful value.

Let me tell you something more about them. First of all—

THE SCHOOL FRIEND ANNUAL.

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

THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN ANNUAL,

costing six shillings, is beautifully produced and simply crammed with

gorgeous features. Naturally, the Morocco girls are well to the fore, but there are heaps of other stories to please everyone.

Then we have

THE POPULAR BOOK OF GIRLS' STORIES,

price 2s. 9d. This is really amazing value for money. Just look at some of the people who have contributed to it: Renee Frazer, Elizabeth Chester, Margery Marriott, Louise Carlton, Ida Melbourne, etc., etc.

And last, but able to hold its own with all the others, we come to

THE GOLDEN ANNUAL.

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

Well, there you are, girls. Four really magnificent gifts, just waiting to be handed to some lucky girl! Don't overlook them this Christmas, will you?

But now I must hurry on and deal very briefly with next week's programme.

"LEFT BEHIND AT CLIFF HOUSE!"

the superb Long Complete Babs & Co. story, is in topical vein, for it deals with the breaking-up of the school for the Christmas holidays.

Gwen Cook, a Fourth-former of whom you have heard little, is to spend the festive season with Babs & Co. But when the school breaks up Gwen, for some mysterious reason, has to remain at Cliff House.

But most amazing is Gwen's agitation when the chums' departure is also delayed.

Why does Babs & Co.'s presence at Cliff House worry Gwen?

Hilda Richards has excelled herself in this intriguing story, so don't miss it. And remember that our next issue will contain further instalments of our two enthralling serials, and more of Patricia's Chummy, Useful Pages.

With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

What they wanted was proof of her duplicity; then she could be unmasked before she had time to find the treasure and—as Hilda was convinced she would—get away with it.

"Sh!" warned Hilda, as she fancied she heard a sound ahead.

She was right, for from somewhere ahead they heard Marcus' pattering steps, and only a moment later he came into view.

He looked very solemn and important, and, lifting his head, made a rumbling half-bark that was an attempt to tell Hilda something.

"Go on, boy—where, which way?" Hilda asked him.

Marcus retraced his steps, and halted at the spot where the whole panelling turned to give access to the hidden room.

On the door just in front of it were Marcus' footprints, traced and re-traced fifty or more times, showing how he had paced up and down at that spot.

"My word," said Hilda, thrilled. "This is where she disappeared. We haven't tried this spot before."

"Getting warm," agreed Judy eagerly. "There must be a secret panel here. Let's try all the panels."

Marcus roamed along the wall, sniffing, but he did not halt at any particular panel more suspiciously than at another. Nevertheless, he had led them to the journey's end, and, seeming to realise that, he swaggered a bit, as well he might.

"Good for you, Marcus!" said Hilda softly.

She groped along the panels, seeking a catch, and tapping softly and listening, becoming more excited as she decided that one panel was indeed hollow.

As her chums hurried to her side, Beryl saw something important—a clue.

"I say, Hilda!" she exclaimed. "Look at these funny scratch marks here."

Hilda stooped. On the floor were scratches that formed the arc of a circle radiating from the panelled wall.

"My word, Beryl, you've hit it!" she said, slapping Beryl's back.

"Hit what?" asked Beryl, with interest.

"Why, this is how the thing slides," said Hilda. "Pulls out here, and by the arc of that circle—"

"Golly, this is where geometry helps," frowned Judy. "How do you find the centre of a circle, knowing the circumference?"

"Ha!" said Hilda.

"Find the hole in the paper made by the compass point," Beryl exclaimed brilliantly.

"Duffer—these marks weren't made by a compass," said Hilda, with a soft chuckle, "but by the secret panelling as it was swung open. And I should say—yes," she ended. "It pivots in that spot there—about half-way—"

Judy almost jumped at the other end of the panelling, and, thrilled with excitement, pointed to the far edge.

"It swivels," she said. "But it hasn't gone quite home. If we push—"

She did push, with all her weight, and the panelling moved inwards at her end; the other end swung out, revealing behind it the brick wall of Lavender's prison!

The three girls, spellbound, just stared at that wall, and then, with one accord, moved forward to the door in it.

They expected the door to be locked, but it was not. It opened quite easily, and the three of them, with Marcus, stared into the secret room, built so many hundreds of years ago.



STEPPING forward, Hilda pulled the sheet away from the captive's head. Then she and her chums started. It was not their friend, Lavender, who was bound to the chair; it was—Thelma Harkness, the detective!

They hardly glanced at the furniture, surprised though they were to see it, for in a chair on the far side of the room was a huddled figure, covered by a blanket.

"Lavender," murmured Hilda.

Bound and gagged," said Judy.

"And half-smothered," said Beryl, in horror.

But when they hurried to the rescue they found that the blanket had been flung but lightly over the bound figure.

A rope was wound round and round the prisoner, and a gag fixed about the mouth and chin. But—

Hilda stared speechless; Judy could not move, and Beryl, after one stifled squeal of amazement, stared with rounded eyes.

For it was not Lavender who was a prisoner. It was Thelma Harkness!

Hilda, recovering herself, tore the gag from the woman detective's mouth, and then stooped to untie the knots.

"The woman—after her—Lavender!" gasped Thelma Harkness wildly.

"Lavender's not here," said Hilda.

"Then find her!" cried Thelma Harkness, wriggling free.

"I saw the woman—hooded, cloaked, with old hands folded in front of her. But she must have had help. Someone dealt me a blow from behind with what can only have been a rubber truncheon."

Hilda made a hurried search of the room, seeking another exit from it; but if there was one, it was well hidden. Thelma Harkness, unable to say how her assailants had escaped, considered that most likely they carried Lavender through the door, well before the girls arrived.

"Not likely," objected Hilda, "because Marcus was there. He knows Lavender. He would have barked."

Thelma Harkness, pacing up and down the room, her face pale, shook her head.

"We are up against a very artful, scheming woman, and she has left few clues," she said. "But come on! This must be reported to her father. It is fortunate you came," she added, "or I might have remained there for several hours."

And then with that somewhat curt and ungracious expression of gratitude for being rescued, Thelma Harkness

strode into the corridor, and marched away.

Hilda, Judy, and Beryl watched her go, and then remained to search what had been Lavender's prison.

"It's amazing, staggering!" murmured Hilda. "Fancy Thelma Harkness being tied up! And—and stunned by someone, too!"

"We're up against tougher people than we think," said Beryl anxiously.

The room was very quiet, and Hilda, of a sudden, crossed to the door and pulled it open; but not a sound could be heard outside.

"A jolly good hideout!" murmured Judy. "But not much fun as a prison.

I can understand Lavender's being trapped here, but what beats me is their being able to smuggle her out of it so easily. Or did she escape from them?"

Hilda did not answer. She was thoroughly perplexed. She had been certain that Thelma Harkness was the one and only culprit. But things had taken a different turn now.

"We must have been wrong all along," she said slowly. "There's another woman, after all—and she tied up Miss Harkness. But where is she now? And where's Lavender?"

"Unless," said Beryl—"unless Thelma Harkness tied herself up. Or perhaps Lavender did it."

"Not alone," said Hilda. "Thelma Harkness is too hefty for that—"

But Hilda's voice tailed off, and she crossed to the chair, where the detective had been bound and gagged. The rope was still there, and Hilda examined it critically.

"My goodness!" she suddenly exclaimed. "I wonder if you're right, Beryl? Could Thelma have tied herself up?"

But because they had untied the rope, it was hard to decide now just how the bonds had been made. Nevertheless, Hilda, by experimenting, soon showed that she could quickly bind herself in a slack rope, and then, by pressure of arms and legs, make it seem taut.

"I wonder—I wonder—" said Hilda perplexed. "If only we knew!"

And then, because there were no other clues to be found in the room—and there was a chance that Lavender

might be free now—they went down to the hall.

But there was no news of Lavender—the only news was the arrival of more guests just when the Bates family was debating whether they would leave now, or wait to give the ghost another chance.

New guests meant more work, more cooking. And unless Lavender returned, who was to do it?

"Rally, girls!" said Hilda, to her friends. "Until Lavender is found, it's up to us!"

Marcus Could Help Them!

"WHAT are you doing in my room?"

In furious indignation, and with suspicion in her eyes, Miranda glared at Beryl, who was smoothing down the counterpane on the bed in the former's room.

"Doing?" said Beryl easily. "Oh, just tidying it, you know!"

"When I want you to tidy my room, I'll ring a bell and tell you," said Miranda hotly. "The check! Have you been spying in my cupboards?"

She went to the wardrobe and glanced in to check that everything there was in order, and then made a cursory examination of the other things as though Beryl might possibly be there for the purpose of stealing.

Beryl was not upset; she had very little use for Miranda, so that girl's comments did not hurt her.

"The fact is," said Beryl, in her sweet way, "we are rallying round Lavender. She's such a darling that we all want to help. And there are new people here."

"Oh, I see! You're the new housemaid?" asked Miranda mockingly. "You don't mean you've actually been doing my room—sweeping and dusting it and making the bed?"

"I have," said Beryl. "And if the bed isn't well made I'm sorry. But you can easily make it again yourself."

"Oh, it'll do!" said Miranda, with a shrug, a gleam in her eyes. "But you'd better dust more carefully in future. And I prefer those corners swept out."

"I'll leave the brush and pan here, then you can do it," said Beryl easily.

"I'm not skivvying, thank you!" snapped Miranda. "We are paying well for being here, and we want service; we mean to get it, too!"

Beryl shook out a duster, and Miranda drew back, sneezing.

"I'll just polish over the mirror," said Beryl.

But reaching the mirror, she paused with the duster just short of the glass. The sun, striking the mirror at an angle, brought into relief faint markings on the glass which could not be seen when viewed straight on.

The markings were not just meaningless scratches, however. They formed clearly defined letters and words, and Beryl stood stock-still, duster in hand. From where she stood, she could read the letters easily, even though the chalk with which they had been written had been rubbed off.

Astounded, Beryl read the words, while Miranda sought to drag her away, suddenly aware of what was happening.

But Beryl shouted for Judy, who came hurrying into the room, and seeing Miranda tugging at Beryl's shoulder, went to her friend's rescue.

"What's all this about?" demanded Judy.

"The mirror—there's a message on

it," said Beryl excitedly. "Something about setting fire to the mill."

Miranda, now as white as the chalk with which the message had been written, snatched the duster from Beryl, with the obvious intention of wiping off even the faint marks that remained; but Judy barred the way.

"No, you don't!" she exclaimed. "We're going to see what's written there. Ah! 'You set fire . . . mill,'" she read. "'Never mention . . . take care . . . treasure is mine.'"

Several words were missing, but enough remained to piece together the essence of the message. Miranda had fired the mill!

"You—you set fire to the mill, then?" cried Judy, eyes wide with surprise.

"And kept it secret all this time when we were being blamed," added Beryl. "I say, you'd better go and tell Mr. Mortimer."

Hilda, having heard the sound of raised voices, pushed open the door at

HEAP UP THE FIRE, DRAW YOUR CHAIRS TO THE TABLE, AND BECOME ABSORBED IN THESE ENTHRALLING NEW PASTIMES!

You'll love "Spelling Bee." It's a spelling game that's full of fun and really quite exciting.

And any number of people can play, too—from a pair to a party. For 2s. 6d. you can buy two complete packs of

Spelling Bee cards—112 in all—beautifully boxed, and containing full instructions how to play. One game and you'll be an enthusiastic "Spelling Bee" fan!

"Stak-a-Stik" is that ingenious, fascinating game that recently became the craze of America and the Continent. It looks so easy—until you try it. And once you have tried it you don't want to leave off. Complete with a little booklet containing a host of different ways of playing "Stak-a-Stik," in the following prices: 1s., 2s. 6d., 7s. 6d., and 10s. 6d.

All big newsagents and stationers sell "Spelling Bee" and "Stak-a-Stik." Ask to see them to-day.

that moment, to be rushed at by Beryl and told the story in an excited jumble.

At first she did not realize what had happened, and then, when Judy had added her version, she went to the mirror and, taking a slanting view, read what remained of the writing.

Miranda, biting her lower lip, stood back, white-cheeked, terribly scared at what might be the outcome of this.

"I—I—it was an accident!" she faltered. "The candle fell over—"

"But what were you doing in the mill?" demanded Hilda, turning and giving her a searching look. "And what do you know about the treasure?"

Miranda confessed everything—how she had overheard Thelma Harkness speaking about the treasure to the butler, and how she had investigated herself, creeping into the Old Mill.

"And—a hooded woman looked in at me," she added in awe-struck tones. "I only caught a glimpse of her, but it was she who wrote this message. She thinks the treasure is hers, and—and she threatened that if I told about her she'd let it be known that I set fire

to the mill, even—even though it was an accident."

"The hooded woman!" said Judy, in thrilled tones. "Was she anything like—"

She was about to ask if the woman had resembled Thelma Harkness, but a glance from Hilda silenced her. Hilda did not want to put that idea into Miranda's head.

"What was she like?" Hilda asked. "If it was an accident, and pretty obviously it was, then no one will blame you except for spying."

"And I suppose you're not spying yourselves?" said Miranda hotly. "What do you know about the treasure, anyway?"

Hilda did not argue the point. They were seeking the treasure for Lavender's sake, with her knowledge and consent, which made all the difference in the world.

"You'd better come and tell Mr. Mortimer—yes, and Miss Harkness," she said.

Miranda drew back; but she knew that if she did not go they would tell Mr. Mortimer themselves, and she preferred to give her own version.

Five minutes later she, Hilda, Judy, and Beryl were with Mr. Mortimer. But Miranda did not yet know that he was really Lavender's father and the owner of this house. She thought he was the butler.

He listened gravely to her story, and because of his role could offer no rebuke. But there was stern criticism in his expression.

"I will let the master know this, miss," he said. "Doubtless the matter will have to be discussed with your father."

Hilda felt quite sorry for Miranda at that moment; for she guessed that Mr. Bates would not take it too well, after all he had said about punishing the person responsible for the fire.

"I—I'll tell daddy myself," said Miranda, and then, looking thoroughly ashamed of herself, went from the room.

Mr. Mortimer returned to the chums and smiled wistfully.

"I am sorry" he said, "that I misjudged you, and I apologise. As soon as possible I will let Miss Harkness know the truth. At least now the Bates family will stay, and if the new guests, Mr. and Mrs. Robinson and their son, are made comfortable here—why, all we need is to find Lavender to make our happiness complete—"

He turned to the door then, as a heavy scratching at it was heard, followed by Marcus' bark.

Hilda jumped to the door and opened it, admitting Marcus, who swaggered in, head and ears up. At once he took hold of the hem of Hilda's frock, and gave it a meaningful tug, backing to the door.

"Hallo! What now?" asked Hilda. "What's wrong, Marcus? What have you found?"

Marcus looked up with frowning impatience.

"Don't stand twiddling about," his look said. "The girl friend who gives me nice bones is lying ill on the floor. I will take you to her."

That girl was Lavender; but Marcus could not tell them so—he could only bark and try to lure them to follow.

"Come on; something's wrong!" said Hilda briskly. "Lead the way, Marcus!"

WILL Marcus be able to lead the chums to Lavender? There are thrills galore in next week's fine instalment.

Romance, Glamour, Breathless Excitement—all came to Pamela Courtney when she became—

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. She learns from a young Leiconian, **PAUL NALDI**, a secret helper of Princess Sonia, that the duke is plotting to disgrace her in the eyes of the people and then seize the throne. To outwit the grand duke, Pamela arranges to give a big garden party for the peasants. The grand duke tells his niece, **Juanita**, to try to find out all about Pamela's plans. Pamela does not know that **Juanita** is her enemy. (Now read on.)

The Princess' Birthday!

"YOU know, Sonia, I do think you're lucky."

"Lucky—how do you mean?" asked Pamela.

And she looked at **Juanita** as they strolled arm-in-arm through the beautiful flower gardens of Tolari Palace.

Pamela had been deep in thought—and those thoughts rather clashed with her companion's sudden envious statement.

"Dreadfully lucky. I mean, you know," **Juanita** went on, hugging Pam's arm more tightly than ever, "to be able to do just as you like."

Pamela smiled.

"H'm, I suppose I am, **Juanita**. It is rather nice being a princess."

"I wish I were," said **Juanita**, shaking her head. "Of course, I'm having a gorgeous time now—thanks to you and—everyone else—but it's not nearly so nice at home. I've no friends, you see, and—why, do you know, sometimes—"

And off **Juanita** went into the most breezy, long-winded account of what she did in her spare time, all by herself.

Dear old **Juanita**! Pamela mused. How she did chatter! But a nice girl!

Nice girl! **Juanita** herself would have felt highly amused by that description, for if the truth were known her charming mannerisms were all a pose.

She was, in reality, a dangerous enemy—a niece of the treacherous grand duke—who had come to the palace for the sole purpose of spying upon

Pamela, discovering who Pam's secret helper was and bringing about his arrest, thus making things easier for the duke in his plot to turn the people against Pamela and seize the throne himself!

But Pamela had no idea that her vivacious companion was anything but what she appeared to be. **Juanita** was too clever an actress for that.

She was acting now, very effectively. Pamela had a scheme to frustrate the duke's plans—and **Juanita** had been ordered to learn all about it.

Suddenly ending her string of personal anecdotes with a little sigh, she gazed about the grounds in rapture.

"Oh, isn't it sumptuous out here, **Sonia**?" she breathed. "It was a marvellous idea of yours to give the

PRINCESS PAM'S SECRET HELPER COMES TO THE ROYAL GARDEN-PARTY IN DISGUISE.

But the treacherous grand duke knows the disguise he will wear and means to have him arrested on sight.

peasants a party here—on your birthday. I'm sure not many princesses would do that. They must adore you," she added, and looked at Pamela out of the corner of her eyes.

"Adore me?" Pam said quietly. "If only—"

And then she stopped.

"If only what?" **Juanita** asked curiously.

Pamela gave a little shrug. "Oh, nothing much! I was just thinking, that's all."

But Pamela had been about to say, "If only they did adore me!" For she knew—and so did **Juanita**, though that fact would have astounded Pam—that at least one section of the populace almost hated her.

Thanks to the grand duke, the peasants in the valley encampment a

few miles away believed she was hard and selfish, indifferent to the bad times through which they were passing. Hence Pamela's idea of inviting them to an elaborate garden-party to-morrow in these same luxurious grounds. By treating them on her birthday, and mingling freely with them, she knew she could dispel the belief that she was just a little tyrant.

So did the grand duke—to his chagrin. That was why **Juanita** was trying to learn all she could about Pamela's idea, and what part, if any, her mysterious helper would play in it. But Pamela was far too alert to let anything slip. She whirled her companion off for a game of tennis, and **Juanita**, peeved and furious, had to give up her mission.

An hour later Pamela, rosy-cheeked and breathless, linked an arm through her companion's, and led the way off the courts.

And now—lunch! Immediately afterwards, changing into more serviceable clothes, they hurried down to the lake and took out one of the rowing-boats. All afternoon they disported themselves, rowing, diving, swimming, and languidly sun-bathing.

And to round off a perfectly enchanting time they picnicked beneath the shady trees of one of the tiny islands.

No doubt about it. **Juanita** could be a most congenial companion. Pamela found that time simply flew. Almost before she could contemplate it again, it was her birthday—**Sonia's** birthday.

And what a day of days!

Chock-full of thrills. Presents of all kinds; letters, cards, telegrams, cables, a constant stream of visitors. Why, there was even a telephone call from **Paul**, though he knew it wasn't really her birthday.

"See you this afternoon, at the garden-party, old thing," he had concluded, from his inn retreat at the foot of the mountains. "And don't forget—I'll be in disguise, but wearing peasant togs, with a blue hat that's got a white band and three red feathers in it."

Eyes sparkling, Pamela hung up.

By

DORIS LESLIE

Everything was panning out perfectly. Not the suspicion of a hitch. By mid-day the preparation of the grounds was complete. At two o'clock, shortly before she was due to open the event, she peeped through her boudoir window at the scene.

What a transformation!

The grounds were always beautiful, but to-day, already sprinkled with picturesquely clad peasants, gaily be-decked with flags, pennants, and bunting, and with the sun blazing down from a matchless blue canopy overhead, they looked simply fascinating.

Pamela's heart beat swiftly.

"Oh, I do hope everything goes off all right. But there—it's bound to. I shan't miss Prince Alphonse—Paul will be here to help me and advise me. Nothing can go wrong."

For although Pamela knew that the treacherous grand duke realised her object in staging the affair, she did not see how he could prevent it from succeeding.

Gaily she went downstairs. Prince

Turning away from the french windows and the scene of teeming, expectant peasants beyond, she became aware of voices just outside the lounge door—excited voices which she recognised at once.

"Ricardo—I've got it!" came the triumphant tones of the grand duke. "I've just realised what Sonia and that fellow meant the other night when they were talking. That red feather business that's been baffling us—Sonia's accomplice is going to wear them so that she can recognise him!"

"Wear them? But—but when—"

"To-day—this afternoon—here, at the garden-party! Don't you see, man? It's the most amazing stroke of luck. We can kill two birds with one stone."

Pamela, stricken with horror, leaned against a settee.

"How, Bernard?" asked the grand duke's hireling.

"By instructing the guards to look out for a young fellow wearing a blue hat with a white band—and three red feathers!" was the exultant reply.

Pamela straightened up, drew in a deep breath, and walked across the broad hall to her study.

Once inside it, with the door closed, her sedate manner disappeared. Quickly she turned the key, whirled round, and darted to the desk. A moment later she was speaking into the phone. Five seconds after that she was waiting for a reply from the White Deer Inn.

Impatiently she drummed her fingers on the desk. She could hear the murmur of voices from the grounds behind her. The seconds were ticking by. But when she got through to the inn, back came a reply that made Pamela clutch the phone convulsively.

"He—he's not there?" she cried. "He's left? Oh, my—don't go, please! Listen! How long has he been gone? Couldn't anyone go after him?" And then, quite limply, she sank back in her chair. "No, it—it doesn't matter, thank you," she murmured. "There's no message."

Too late for a message to be of any use. Paul had started for the palace—ten minutes ago! At any moment he should arrive.

There was no time to spare if she was to save him—and she'd got to save him, not only for his own sake, not only for her sake, as Pamela Courtney, masquerading as Princess of Leiconia, but for the sake of the genuine princess and all her subjects.

For if Paul were caught, Pamela would be alone to fight the grand duke. She would have no one to tell her what the people were thinking, doing, planning. There would be no one to battle for her good name among the peasants. No one, as in the past, to get her out of danger, save her from exposure, help her to frustrate her enemies' plans.

She simply must save Paul.

Desperately Pamela racked her brains. And then, quite suddenly, her eyes lit up.

"Golly!" she breathed, and repeated that word in ever-increasing tones of delight. "Golly, golly, golly! It—it's a wonderful idea!"

And simply thrilling with excitement, Pamela raced out of the room.

She tore across the hall to a young captain of the guards.

"Please," she said, touching his arm, "may I have a word with you?" And then, when they were out of earshot of the other soldiers, she explained her plan. "You understand?" she asked.

The captain seemed in a quandary.

"Perfectly, your Highness," he said, with a bow. "But—but—of course, I realise it is not my place to raise objections to anything your Highness may suggest, but isn't it rather—rather—"

"Unusual?" said Pamela, and smiled. "Well, I suppose it is. As a matter of fact, the grand duke and I have had a wager. He said one thing, and I said something else, and this is my way of proving that I'm right. I'll be responsible for everything that happens."

The young captain's expression changed. He had suffered a good many injustices at the hands of the grand duke, and this opportunity of getting something of his own back was far too good to be missed.

"Your Highness," he said briskly, "leave it to me. I'll see that you win your bet."

He saluted smartly and turned away. Pamela, smiling broadly, went to the chief drawing-room, and there found her escort, the grand duke, awaiting her. He, too, was smiling.

"So you're ready, my dear?" he asked, crooking an arm towards her.

"Just!" Pamela said. She linked her arm through his and allowed him to lead her to the windows. "I think

YOU CAN SHARE THE FUN AND EXCITEMENT OF—

Just secure this topping book-length story of the early adventures of the Cliff House chums. It is one of the Four Wonderful December Numbers of the

SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY

Now on Sale. Price Fourpence Each.

The other three absorbing stories are:

No. 661. "Morcove's Christmas Problem," in which Marjorie Stanton tells one of Betty Barton & Co.'s earlier exploits.

No. 662. "The Schoolgirls Who Staged a Pantomime." Specially written for this month's issue by Helen Gibbons.

No. 663. "Molly of Mystery Ferry," by Sylvia Macrae. An exciting adventure story set by the sea.

Buy Your Copies To-day.



No. 660

Alphonse was in the main hall, and came towards her at once, very regretful that state business called him away.

"You'll be able to manage all right without me?" he asked anxiously.

Pamela nodded, and at that moment the grand duke came on the scene.

Arrayed in all the glittering regalia of a Leiconian field marshal, he strutted up to them, gave Pamela the most gracious of smiles, and bowed.

"Excuse me, my dear," he said. He looked at the prince. "Could you spare a moment, Alphonse, before you leave?"

Together they strolled to the main doors, beyond which a black limousine waited to drive the prince away. Pamela went into one of the smaller lounges to have another peep at the laws.

"Wonder if he heard what I said?" she pondered, meaning the grand duke. "Well, it won't matter much if he did. He'll be just as much in the dark as dear old Prince Alphonse is."

But that was where Pamela made a terrible mistake, as she realised when it was too late.

"The moment he speaks to Sonia, he'll be collared—and then Sonia will be without her helper!"

"Oh, yes, of—of course. But, Bernard, that won't do us much good with the peasants, will it?"

"It will if the princess gets the blame for his arrest, my friend. The peasants will dislike her more than ever. But—quick! You see the guards in the grounds. I'll get reinforcements. We'll make no mistake this time—"

Came a laugh, the sound of hurrying footsteps going in different directions, and then—silence!

Trap—and Counter Trap!

SILENCE! It enveloped Pamela as she stood in the lounge.

Paul would walk blindly into a trap!

She'd got to warn him. And there was only one way.

Darting to the door, she cautiously peeped out. Good! No sign of either the grand duke or Ricardo.

we're all going to have a lovely time this afternoon, don't you, uncle?"

The grand duke's smile broadened to a grin as they waited for two liveried funkeys to throw open the windows.

"A memorable afternoon, my dear," he said. "Truly memorable. I have a presentiment we shall all remember it for a long time to come."

Pamela's eyes twinkled. She was revelling in this clash of deception, and quite amused at the pretence they were both maintaining.

But further exchange of pleasantries was impossible. The supreme moment had arrived—her entry into the grounds.

As she appeared on the steps of the terrace, her arm through the grand duke's, a great hush descended upon the grounds. All movement ceased. From left and right soldiers sprang to attention.

Down a broad flight of stone steps leading to the first lawn, and over the grass, finally reaching a raised dais they walked.

The dais, on which were grouped a number of officials, was covered by a striped awning, from which hung the Leiconian flag, a tiny red star set in a blue triangle on a solid yellow background.

Suddenly, the martial strains of the national anthem broke the stillness. Queer how Pamela's veins tingled, then, to the most exhilarating thrill. Her head went back, her smile became more radiant than ever.

If her heart was palpitating, nobody guessed. She seemed so calm, so self-possessed as she stood there on the dais beside the grand duke.

She sat down, and, as the national anthem finished, the officials followed suit. Every eye in the vast gathering that swept like a sea before Pamela, was focused upon her.

At first, she found it disconcerting. She could not forget that these people believed they had reason to be bitter against her.

But during the presentation of outstanding peasant personalities—chiefs, councillors and those conspicuous in the arts and crafts, together with their wives and children—Pamela's composure returned.

She found one and all responsive to her smile and words of welcome. If they halted before her in a mood of hostility, they were smiling with genuine delight when they passed on.

The moment the last peasant had filed by, Pamela sprang to her feet. So unexpected was this move of hers, that even the grand duke had no idea of what was in her mind until she had started to speak.

"Please, all of you," Pamela cried, raising her arms, "I want you to have the time of your lives! There are heaps of things for your entertainment—sideshows, stalls, refreshment buffets, games—just everything!"

She warmed to a murmur of pleasure from the crowd.

"Don't bother about me!" she pleaded, with a gay laugh. "I'm not your princess to-day, you know. I'm just one of yourselves, determined to have all the fun I can. But just one little favour. Please—"

She paused, and then, to a perfect roar of laughter and cheering, added, in the most entreating tones:

"Please leave a tiny portion of ice-cream for me!"

Down she sat. The peasants went on cheering.

Five minutes later they were beginning to take Pamela's advice, and sample all the good things devised for their benefit. While Pamela—

Pamela, slipping down from the dais well ahead of her official attendants, hurried towards one of the stalls. For she had spotted someone, wearing a blue hat, with three red feathers, suddenly emerge from behind it!

But Pamela was not the only one in whom the sight of that significant headgear aroused considerable excitement. The grand duke, who had also been on the look-out for it, positively trembled.

A gesture brought a small army of Civic Guards racing up from various parts of the crowd. His eyes gleaming, the grand duke pointed to where Pamela stood with the befeathered peasant, tugging at his arm as if urging him to bolt. In the background, looking surprised, hovered her "body-guard."

"There's your man!" the grand duke exclaimed. "Get him—now!"

In a body, the guards bore down upon Pamela and her companion. Before either could move, the young peasant

The young man who had been so sensationally unmasked, saluted. He was, remarkably enough from the grand duke's point of view, the young captain of the guards.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, his lips twitching to a smile. "I had no idea I was doing wrong. I was merely obeying instructions."

The grand duke was dumbfounded. "Instructions?" he barked. His eyes narrowing, he spun round. "Did you instruct this man to dress up like this, Sonia?"

It was then that Pamela's apparent dismay found relief in a smile and a shrug.

"Yes, uncle," she said. "I asked him to put those things on. I was going to tell you so, when you said he was an enemy, only you didn't give me a chance. But what ever made you think he was a dangerous enemy?"

And she summoned up the most realistic expression of amazement.



WITH a grateful smile, Pamela handed Juanita the note addressed to Paul. She did not know that Juanita was her enemy, and that by giving her the note she was revealing the identity of her secret helper.

was seized. With a little cry, Pamela stepped back.

"I am dreadfully sorry, my dear," said a silky voice in her ear. "The man is well known to be a dangerous enemy of your Highness."

Wide-eyed, Pamela stared at the grand duke, as he strode up to the struggling captive, whipped off his hat, and made a triumphant snatch at his moustache.

The Mistake Pamela Made!

BY this time, of course, the skirmish had attracted considerable attention.

Peasants had come hurrying to the scene from all parts of the grounds; and so had other soldiers and officials, as well as a good many of the stall and sideshow attendants.

"Huh! Just as I fancied!" the duke exclaimed, tugging off the moustache. "False! But let's take good stock of you."

He stepped back, head on one side, smiling mockingly. Then, all of a sudden his expression changed. The smile froze.

"You!" he gasped. "Why, why are—"

It was too much for the grand duke. People were openly chuckling.

"Away, all of you!" he barked at the guards. "I'll deal with you later, my man," he hissed to the young captain. "And you, Sonia, ought to know better than to play such tricks!"

"But it wasn't a trick!" Pamela protested demurely. "At least, it wouldn't have been a trick if you hadn't had him pounced on like that. I can't understand why you did. He didn't look a bit like a dangerous man to me."

But someone else did—the grand duke. As he abruptly strode away, there was the most fiercesome scowl on his face.

Pamela controlled her delighted merriment. Eyes sparkling, she turned to the young captain, whose worried lines crinkled to a smile of genuine joy at what she said.

"Don't worry; he won't get a chance to deal with you later. I'll have you transferred! And thank you so much for your help. I've won my bet, I think."

And while the soldier stammered out his thanks, Pamela strolled away, followed by her attendants.

Meanwhile, the grand duke had gone into conclave with Ricardo.

"Oh, she's a cunning little cat, all right!" he was saying viciously. "Goodness knows how she guessed we knew about that fellow with the feathers, but she fooled us completely. I wish I knew—"

But that was as far as he got, for Juanita came tearing up in the greatest excitement.

"Uncle—uncle," she cried, seizing his arm, "I've seen them!"

"The grand duke eyed her balefully. "So have we," he said, in ominous tones. "And if this is your idea of making fun, my girl, you'd better think of something else."

"Fun?" Juanita frowned. "I don't know what you mean, uncle, I've just seen Sonia and that fellow—over there!" She indicated a group of trees. "Yes, look! There they are now!"

The grand duke glanced in that direction. Then he jumped.

"You're right! Ricardo, that's the chap! We'll have him this time. Guards—guards!" he bellowed.

And so, for the second time within ten minutes, the guards were provided with free practice in the art of arrest; and also for the second time within ten minutes the grand duke was made a laughing-stock.

His new victim proved to be one of the privates!

"What is the matter with you this afternoon, uncle?" Pamela sweetly inquired, as the private was released. "Is this a new sort of game?"

"Yes," growled the mortified plotter wildly, and stamped off. But swiftly he recovered himself. "I think I see daylight now, Ricardo," he whispered.

"Have you noticed anything? Well, there are at least a dozen blue hats with red feathers quite near us. Sonia's evidently 'arranged' them, 'too.'"

"Then have them all 'arrested!'" suggested Ricardo.

"Fool!" the grand duke said quietly. "We've done enough arresting on suspicion. I've a better plan. We'll get the guards to unmask each man in turn, and any we don't know can be held. At that rate," he ended, with supreme confidence, "we're bound to get the fellow we want. Come on!"

And off they went. "Methinks you're bound to get more shocks than anything else," chuckled a voice behind a near-by refreshment marquee.

Then out stepped a young man dressed, not as a peasant, but as one of the townspeople, with laughing eyes and a mop of ginger hair.

"And now for young Pam," he said, looking about him.

He saw her, hemmed in by eager peasants, beginning her tour of the grounds at one of the houp-la stalls, while a bevy of officials, looking very dignified, tried to keep a space clear for her.

Radiantly happy Pam looked. And she was happy, even if she wasn't enjoying quite as much liberty as she would have fancied. True, she was able to go where she liked, and talk with whom she liked, but she was rather hampered by her attendants, who, though they kept at a respectful distance, were apt to be rather a nuisance.

Paul struggling through to her side, whispered "O.K." in her ear. Pamela started, recovered herself, finished her throws, won a large, floppy giraffe, which she gave to one of the peasants, and moved on with her retinue.

From stall to stall she went, and all the time she and Paul, loudly exchanging pleasantries for the officials to hear, kept up an undercurrent of guarded murmurs.

"Thank goodness you kept out of the way, Paul! I didn't know how to warn you."

"Guessed something was wrong when I saw half the crowd in the same togs as myself. I changed my clothes. I'd already decided to wear a ginger wig."

"The grand duke," Pamela whispered. "He heard us talking the other night, Paul. I phoned the inn to warn you, but 'ould' gone."

"Then he knows who I am?"

"Oh, no! He just knew what you'd be dressed in."

"Thank goodness! But wasn't his face a treat when he arrested that chap?"

Pamela's eyes sparkled as she stopped to buy a trinket.

"You were watching, Paul?"

"Ra-ther! Wouldn't have missed it for anything!"

During the afternoon Pam only caught one glimpse of the grand duke and Ricardo, and that was as the two men, surrounded by perspiring and bewildered Civic Guards, vainly sought fresh blue hats and red feathers to conquer.

When evening drew near she and Paul stood side by side on one of the grassy banks of the river and gazed at the scene of gaiety. For the moment Pamela was free of her attendants.

"Well, everything seems to be going toppling," Pamela sighed. "But, Paul, what do you think? You know the peasants better than I do."

Paul, staring at the festive crowds, nodded thoughtfully.

"I think you're right, old thing—everything's going really well! You've done the trick. I tell you that, though. Can you slip away for a few minutes when it's all over?"

"I think so. But why?"

"Well, if you meet me—say at the White Deer Inn—I can let you know just how everyone feels. It won't take me long to find out."

Pamela's eyes sparkled.

"Oh, what a topping idea, Paul! Rather! I'll be there."

"Good! Let's make it— Paul glanced at his watch. "Seven now," he mused. "The show should be over by eight. Say half-past eight or a quarter to nine. O.K.?"

"O.K.!"

So it was arranged, and Paul went off. Pam watched him go out of sight amid the teeming throng of people, and then, a laugh on her lips, plunged into one last bout of enjoyment. There was more dancing now.

It was easy for Pamela to find a partner; the trouble was to refuse so many offers without causing offence. But everyone seemed delighted, everyone seemed to consider the princess a really endearing young person, and when at last the affair came to an end Pamela's ears rang to a thunder of cheers.

The peasant chief, stepping forward while she stood there, flushed and overjoyed, bowed.

"Your Highness," he said, "on behalf of my people I thank you. You have indeed made this day one which we shall not speedily forget."

"I'm so glad," Pamela said simply. And then she looked at him in mild inquiry. "Why, what is it?" she asked.

The chief appeared to be embarrassed.

"I—I—please, your Highness, if I appear impertinent, but my daughter—you invited her, you may remember. She was unable to come—a cold, you understand?"

"Oh, what a pity!" Pamela said sympathetically.

"I know she was longing to meet your Highness," the chief went on more boldly. "It was a grievous disappointment to her when she had to stay behind. Do you—could you possibly spare the time to come and see her? My home is humble, but we would make you welcome. And I have a car waiting—it would not take long to drive you to the village and back."

Pamela gave a merry little laugh. "Why, of course I'll come!" she said. "I'd love to see your daughter. I'll just get on a coat, and then I'll meet you here."

And away she sped to the palace. She was hurrying downstairs again, dragging on a little coat, when she remembered something. Paul! She was due to meet him within half an hour.

"Oh, well, he won't mind waiting a bit! I'll phone him," she decided.

But, as luck would have it, the line was out of order. There was no reply from the inn, and Pamela was momentarily nonplussed. That was, until she thought of sending a note. There wouldn't be much risk in that, because she could easily get one of the servants to take it.

Swiftly she scrawled a few lines, addressed the envelope "Paul Naldi, Esq.," and went out to the terrace. And almost the first person she saw was Juanita, dressed in smart riding habit, going past on a handsome roan.

"Why, the very person!" Pamela thought at once. "Hi, Juanita!" she called. "Cooceee!"

Juanita, reining up, smiled as Pamela reached her.

And when Pamela asked her if she was going near the White Deer Inn, and, in that case, would she do her a favour, Juanita eagerly agreed.

"Why, only too pleased to, Pamela! What is it?"

"Just take this note and give it to the landlord. There's no reply."

With a grateful smile, Pamela held up the letter, and Juanita, smiling just as charmingly, leaned down to take it.

But for a moment she paused; for a moment she caught in her breath, too stunned at finding her wildest hopes realised to do anything but stare at the name on the envelope.

"Paul Naldi! Paul—Paul! A boy's name. Then—then it must be Pamela's friend; Pamela's accomplice. Oh, of course it was! It couldn't be anyone else. This Paul Naldi, now at the White Deer Inn, was the very person the grand duke needed to make a prisoner. She had only to accept the note and hand it to the duke, and Pamela's only friend would be in their power."

Juanita forced a laugh. Somehow she managed to keep her fingers from twitching, managed to hide the flush of wild exultation that stained her cheeks.

"Why—why, of course I'll take it, dear!" she said, averting her face. "It's as good as there already."

"Good old Juanita! You're a sport!" Pamela said thankfully.

Next moment the note changed hands.

PAMELA has given the important note to one of her deadliest enemies! Disaster seems imminent now. Next Saturday's chapters are very, very exciting, girls; be sure not to miss them.