

Magnificent New-Term
Story Featuring Barbara
Redfern & Co.

"THEY DARE NOT TRUST FAITH ASHTON!"

THE SCHOOLGIRL

No. 494. Vol. 19.
Week Ending
JAN. 14th. 1939.

EVERY **2^D** SATURDAY

Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"

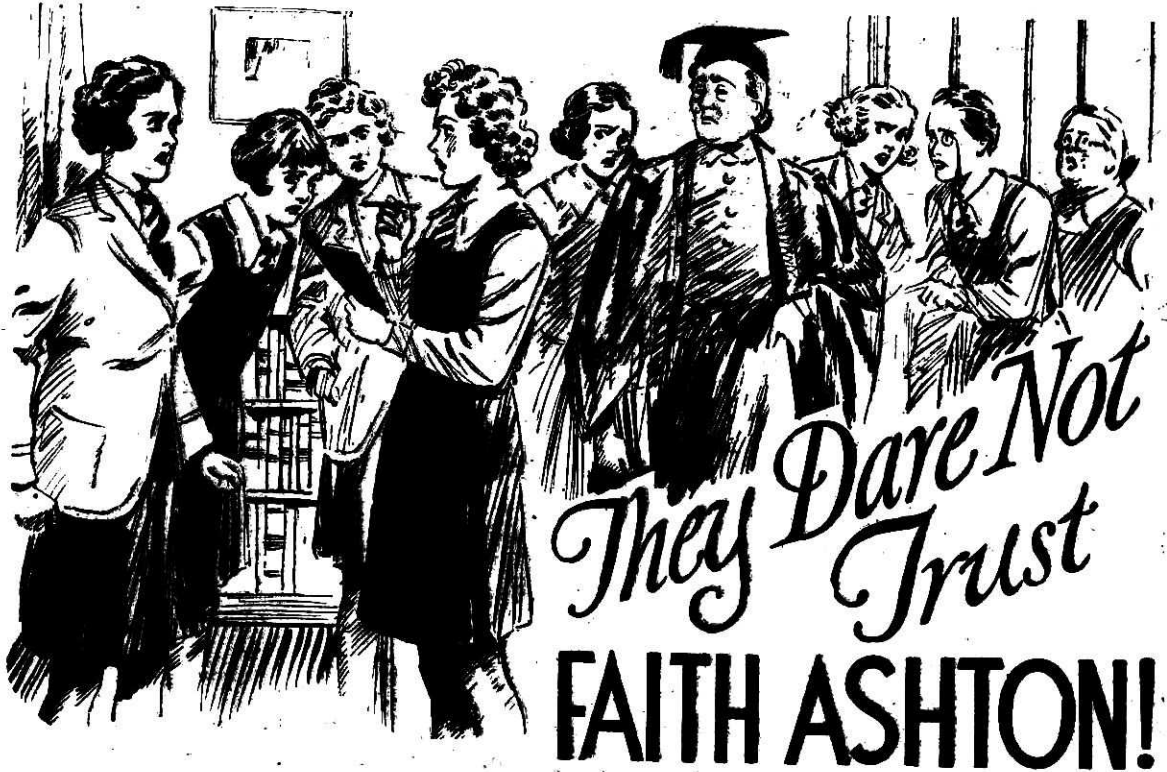


**"YOU DREW THIS
YOURSELF, FAITH ASHTON!"**

Barbara Redfern discovers her cousin
is guilty of the insult that brought
punishment to the whole Fourth Form.

(See the grand **LONG COMPLETE**
Cliff House story inside.)

Magnificent LONG COMPLETE New Term story of Barbara Redfern & Co., starring once more that unusual character, Faith Ashton.



They Dare Not Trust FAITH ASHTON!

What a Difference!



"BABS! Babs, here she is! Babs, heard the news?" Barbara Redfern, captain of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School, laughed a little breathlessly.

"Well, ninnies," she said, "I've only just come back from hols. I haven't heard anything. Never mind the news yet, though. Tell me first! How did you enjoy Christmas?"

"Oh, fine, Babs! But the news—" Babs stared a little. Her three chums—golden-haired Mabel Lynn, the eldest of all, Tomboy Clara Trevlyn, and plump Bessie Bunter, who had entered the Common-room with her—also stared.

Quite an excited-looking crowd of Fourth Formers were gathered in the Fourth Form Common-room at Cliff House—not unusual that, for on the very first day of the term girls were usually rather excited. But it was unusual, to say the least of it, that their very first enthusiasm was not for the holidays from which they had returned. School news, such as it was, was normally only discussed long after the experiences of Christmas had been exchanged.

For once, however, it seemed that the old order was reversed. Nobody, apparently, was interested in holidays. The clamour was all for school news.

"Babs, we've got a new head-mistress!" Jean Cartwright blurted.

Babs stared. "A new one? But what about Miss Primrose?"

"Miss Primrose has been ordered a rest," Margot Lantham put in. "How

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long, nobody knows, so we've got a Miss Venn in her place."

Clara frowned. "Miss Venn? Who's she?"

"Damn. Came from a frightfully strict school up in the North of England. She looks a real tartar, too! But that's not all," Muriel Bond gabbled breathlessly. "Faith, your cousin, Babs—Faith Ashton—"

"Well?" "Faith is back in the Fourth." "And," scoffed the Hon. Beatrice Beverley, "isn't she just giving herself airs!"

Babs blinked at that. Clara looked at her quickly. Faith Ashton—returned to the Form—Faith, that doll-faced, hypocritical cousin, who had always been such a thorn in Babs' side from the moment of her entry into Cliff House! One of Babs' most relieved moments last year had been when Faith was transferred to the Lower Fifth. Now she was back in the Fourth again!

"But—but why?" she stuttered. "Ask me!" retorted Jean Cartwright. "Nobody knows. She seems a rare favourite with Miss Venn, too."

"And so," Miss Redworth put in disdainfully, "she ought to be! Faith, if you please, arrived yesterday—a whole day before anyone else!"

"And spent the time," Mabel Lynn guessed, "in getting in the new Head's good books?"

"What else?" Babs looked grim. "That certainly did sound very much like Faith Ashton. Easy enough for Faith to ingratiate herself with people who did not know her. That lovely, wide-eyed, innocent face of hers had deceived the whole of Cliff House once upon a time. Those sweet, honeyed, forgiving ways of hers had endeared Faith Ashton to every-

one with whom she had come in contact, until they had found her out. But Miss Venn would not know Faith Ashton, and Faith was certain to have been working her charms upon her.

"Well, if she starts any of her old hanky-panky again—" Clara Trevlyn said grimly.

"She'll get to know all about it, I guess," agreed Leila Carroll. "But I say, what's this Miss Venn like?"

"Awful!" Bridget O'Toole retorted. "Haven't you seen the notice-board?" "And haven't you seen—"

And then there was a silence as the door squeaked open and another girl came on the scene—a girl at the sight of whom Babs stiffened a little, and the others gave a little warning hiss.

A striking-looking girl, in truth. A lovely girl. Big blue eyes, glowing un-naturally large in an exquisite oval face, crowned with a mass of fluffy, golden hair, gave her an appearance most startlingly like some beautiful doll. Impossible to believe, glancing at that face, the deceit, the cunning, the treachery, and the scheming of the mind it hid. Nine hundred and ninety-nine people out of every thousand immediately adored Faith Ashton the moment they saw her.

But not the Fourth. The Fourth had been deceived once—never again.

Faith smiled. "Oh!" she said "I say, you were making a lot of noise in here, you know?"

"Your business?" asked Clara Trevlyn.

"Why, Clara dear, so you're back!" Faith squealed in delight. "I'm so pleased to see you. Well, of course, it isn't my business really, but Miss Venn—oh, she's such a dear!—has asked me to keep a little order, you know. As the oldest girl in the Form

now—I say, isn't it jolly being back among you?—I had to agree, of course. But, Barbara—” She broke off then in rapturous delight. “Babs darling, I didn't see you. Oh, how did you enjoy your holidays?”

“All right,” Babs said, without enthusiasm, and stepped back as Faith would have embraced her. “But why,” she asked, “are you back in the Fourth?”

Faith shook her head.

“Oh dear, I don't know! Miss Venn just put me there, you know. She said that she thought the Fourth ought to have an older girl in it, and, naturally,” Faith simpered, “I didn't say no. Because, Barbara dear, you do know, don't you, how dreadfully miserable I've been away from you?”

Babs' lips set a little grimly.

“And Miss Venn,” she asked, “has put you in charge of the Form?”

“Oh, Barbara darling, no; she just asked me to keep an eye on things, that's all. And, Barbara, that reminds me. She told me to tell you, as soon as you came in, that she wanted to see you. Will you go, please, Barbara dear?”

Babs nodded. She was by no means averse to that. The sooner she saw Miss Venn, she was thinking, the better. Decidedly she did not like this appearance of authority which had been given into the hands of the simpering Faith. Apart from which, she was rather anxious to make the new Head's acquaintance. She turned, leading for the door. Faith turned with her.

Babs glanced at her sharply.

“Look here, you're not coming, too?”

“But, Barbara, I must!” Faith said. “Oh dear, don't look at me as if you don't trust me, darling! I know I haven't been all I should be in the past, but, honestly, I'm going to change all that. Miss Venn made a special point of asking me to bring you, you know.”

Babs shrugged. Well, in that case, she had no objection; though she didn't for a moment believe that Faith Ashton was any more capable of changing her spots than the celebrated leopard. Out in the corridor she strolled, Faith trotting at her side.

Faith smiled uncertainly.

“Babs, you do trust me, don't you, dear?”

“I don't!” Babs said flatly.

“But, Barbara, I really have turned over a new leaf. Honestly, Barbara, I do so want to be friends with you and your chums.”

“Then,” Babs said, “wait till you've proved it. We've taken you on your word too many times, Faith.”

Faith, with wistful soulfulness, sighed. A little sob came from her throat as silently she walked on at Babs' side. But Babs did not look at her. She knew that soulful little sob; and even her tender heart refused to be moved by it.

Up the Head's corridor they went, to halt in front of the Head's study door.

That door, usually graced with a small, neat label, bearing the announcement “P. Primrose, Headmistress,” now bore a rather flamboyant ivory plate, on which was aggressively engraved in black:

“EVELYN NORTHCHURCH VENN,
B.A., B.Sc., F.G.A., etc.,
PRINCIPAL.”

Faith knocked, forestalling Babs, who had reached up a hand to perform that office for herself. A rather sharp voice bade them “Come in!”

They went in, Faith wearing her most

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

simpering smile, Babs rather curiously wondering what sort of person she was going to meet.

From the other side of the desk a rather square-featured woman, with sharp eyes and a thin mouth, her greying hair severely parted in the middle, looked up. She flashed a smile at Faith, but there was no smile for Babs.

“Well, Faith, who is this?”

“This, Miss Venn, is Barbara Redfern,” Faith murmured. “My dear cousin, the captain of the Fourth Form.”

“Ah!” Miss Venn put down her pen. For a long moment she stared at Babs—so long a moment indeed that Babs shifted under the scrutiny and turned red. Then she rapped out: “Where is your captain's badge?”

“Ba-badge?” Babs stammered

“As captain of the Form you are supposed to wear a badge, are you not?”

Babs coloured a little. She knew, of course, to what the new headmistress referred. Her captain's badge she had all right, just as she had her captain's shield; but it was not Babs' way to vaunt her authority, and except for

stage, going to introduce other reforms than those I think immediately necessary, but I must warn you, Barbara, that I am not satisfied. Your own record, in my opinion, is not the blameless one that a girl of your responsibilities should have—”

Babs gulped.

“Yes, Miss Venn; but—”

“Silence, please! Barbara, do not let me have to remind you not to speak out of your turn again. I repeat, I am not satisfied, but I am not entirely blaming you. I believe a custom exists here of allowing the girls to elect their captain and other officers. That is so?”

“Y-yes, Miss Venn.”

“A foolish and short-sighted system”—Miss Venn frowned—“a system, as I see it, open to a great deal of abuse. A system which means that the girl who has most friends in the Form has the best chance of being its captain.”

“My own opinion is that the oldest girl in the Form should be its captain.” And here Babs looked sharply at Faith. “Before I do anything in that matter, however, I will see for myself how the system works. If you wish to prove to me, Barbara, that you are fitted to continue as the responsible leader of the Fourth Form, let me see it reflected in your own behaviour and the behaviour of the Fourth.”

“If you do not—” She paused at that word of warning, and a significant

Back to Cliff House School for the new term! Eager, excited and happy are Barbara Redfern & Co. But surprises await them. There is a new Headmistress, with her own ideas of discipline; and there is Faith Ashton back in the Fourth Form. Faith, the cry-baby hypocrite, having wheedled her way into the new Head's favour, is craftily planning a stunning shock for the whole form.

ceremonial occasions, when the display of symbols of authority was compulsory, she rarely wore it. She said:

“It—it's in my study drawer. You see, Miss Venn, we—we don't usually wear them.”

“No?” snapped Miss Venn. “Then what,” she asked coldly, “do you think they have been given to you for? In future, Barbara, you will wear that badge on all occasions.”

“Y-yes, Miss Venn!” Babs stammered. “And will you please stand to attention when you talk to me?” Miss Venn went on. “I am accustomed to it. How old are you?”

“Nearly fifteen, Miss Venn.”

“I know that! Give me the age in years and months, please. When I ask for information, I want that information to be as full and concise as possible.”

Babs, ears burning, gave the information.

“Thank you,” Miss Venn said, rather sourly. “Now please look at me. I have been going into the record of your Form, Barbara”—here, for some reason, she looked at Faith, who turned her head away a little—“and I may state right now that I am far from being satisfied. Comparing,” Miss Venn said heavily, “the record of the Fourth with every other Form in the school, it is easy to see it is the most loosely disciplined.”

“But, Miss Venn—” Babs blurted.

“Silence, please! Speak when you are asked to speak! Naturally,” Miss Venn went on, “I am not, at this early

look passed between her and Faith

“You may go!” she added abruptly.

“Yes, Miss Venn. But please may I say something?” Babs pleaded.

“My word was—go!” Miss Venn said sharply. “Please observe it, Barbara. Faith, my dear”—and Babs was quick to notice that “my dear”—“I wish to talk to you about this.”

She indicated something on her desk. Babs, with a stifled feeling, walked towards the door, followed by a look of deep and sighing sympathy from Faith. She reached the door; with a sensation of one escaping from a prison, she gulped gratefully at the free, if warm, air of the corridor. Phew!

Whoever had said Miss Venn was a tartar was right. What a change from gentle, kind Miss Primrose!

And Faith—

Babs set her lips a little. She had observed enough in those last few moments to understand that there was something more than disciplinary relations between Faith and the new headmistress. That reference to the oldest girl being best fitted to be the Form captain—that, at least, was ominous. Significant, too, that Faith, apparently most willingly relegated from the Lower Fifth, was now the Fourth's oldest girl. Was this some new game Faith had embarked upon?

From that moment, Babs, knowing her cousin, mentally resolved to keep a close eye on Faith Ashton. Meantime, however, her indignation was stirred. It was unfair for Miss Venn, anxious as she might be to reform the Fourth, to storm at her without even a hear-

ing. It nettled her to feel that Miss Venn had such a poor opinion of her own and the Form's sense of responsibility.

Babs had a sense of impending trouble—big trouble.

Going to her study, she put on her captain's badge and went off. When she reached the head of the stairs leading down into Big Hall, she saw a crowd of girls, seniors as well as juniors, collected around the notice-board. As Babs, biting her lip, went slowly down the stairs, Janet Jordan's voice reached her.

"Babs! Babs, I say! Come and look at this!"

"What?"

"Well, look!"

Girls made way for Babs, who in a few moments found herself before the notice-board. And as she read the typewritten notice pinned up there that sense of impending trouble became even more emphatic. The Fourth—the whole school—would never stand for things like this!

For on the board was a flamboyant notice, strangely reminiscent somehow of that staring ivory plate on the new headmistress' door. It read:

**"NOTICE
TO BE READ BY EVERY GIRL IN
THE SCHOOL.**

"The following alterations in the time schedules are introduced herewith, and will come into force from to-day."

There followed a list of revised times. Rising-bell one hour earlier; breakfast one hour earlier; gates one hour earlier; and bed-time one hour earlier. That, in turn, was followed by:

"Girls are reminded that amenities like studies, common-rooms, recreation-rooms, games, dramatic clubs, etc., are purely privileges to be merited only by good behaviour. Any girl earning more than a hundred lines in one day or receiving more than one black mark is liable to forfeit one or all of these privileges. Meetings without the consent of the headmistress are strictly forbidden. Laughing, shouting, or playing games except in the rooms provided for those pursuits will be heavily punished. Running, talking, or laughing in corridors is also strictly forbidden."

(Signed) "EVELYN NORTH-CHURCH VENN, B.A., B.Sc., F.G.A., etc., PRINCIPAL."

"Nice, eh?" sneered Rosa Rodworth. "We are going to enjoy ourselves, playmates! An hour earlier to bed—my hat! Just like kids in the Second Form!"

"And no laughing, no talking, no breathing!" Diana Royston-Clarke chipped in.

"And don't forget your study is a privilege!" Bridget O'Toole mocked.

"And your Common-room!"

"And games!"

"What the dickens does she think we are?"

The Fourth glowered. Voices were buzzing; girls were most strongly exclaiming. It was thick, to say the least of it! It smacked of utter dictatorship. So long had they enjoyed these things Miss Venn called privileges at Cliff House that they had come to accept them as their natural rights.

"Well," Diana stated fiercely. "I'm jiggered if I'm going to bed an hour earlier!"

"And just let her," threatened Rosa Rodworth, "try to turn me out of my study!"

"Or," Clara Trevlyn snorted, "interfere with my games! Primmy would never have dreamed of doing it!"

"Oh, but wait a minute!" Babs cried. "Don't fly off the handle just yet! Naturally, being new, she's got some new ideas—"

"I'll say she has!" cried American-born Leila Carroll.

"New ideas be hooted!" said Jean Cartwright; and then stopped, gazing towards the top of the stairs, from which a peremptory knock had sounded. And everybody, glowering, looked up to behold Faith Ashton.

"Really—please, girls!" Faith said. "Would you mind making a little less noise? Miss Venn is frightfully annoyed!"

"And who," glared Clara Trevlyn, "asked you to put your spoke in?"

"Well, Miss Venn told me, you know."

"Yes? Well, you go and tell Miss Venn to go to pot!" Clara snapped. "We don't want your interference, thanks! If you are the oldest dunce in the Form, you're not skipper here. Go and chop chips!"

"But Miss Venn—" Faith cried.

"Rats! Blow Miss Venn!"

"What? What?" came a vibrant voice behind Faith; and then, to everyone's consternation, Miss Venn herself stepped on the scene.

Grimly she stood for a moment at the top of the stairs, and then, singing out Clara, folded her arms and marched into the Hall. Amid a breathless silence she walked straight up to Clara, fixing her with a forbidding eye.

"You, girl? What is your name?" she snapped.

"Kik-Clara Trevlyn."

"Clara Trevlyn! Trevlyn, eh? Yes, I know. I have been through your report. Not," Miss Venn said acidly, "exactly a credit to your school, are you, Clara? How dare you insult Faith?"

"I—I—I—" Clara faltered.

"Silence! Speak when I command! I heard, apart from your insult to Faith, what you said about myself. Clara Trevlyn, you will report for punishment at call-over. All you other girls"—and with her arms still folded, she glared round, "go to your rooms!"

"But—" protested Diana Royston-Clarke.

"Miss, how dare you? Go, I say!" She turned. Then, to the chums' utter consternation, she smiled at Faith.

"That, of course, Faith dear, does not include you," she said, with such an utter change of tone that the girls blinked. "I sincerely hope, for their own sakes, that these girls in future will learn to obey when you are acting under my orders. Come, my dear."

And with a nod to the simpering Faith, she led the way back, while the girls, shuffling angrily towards their own corridors, glared after them.

It seemed that it was going to be a far from happy new term at Cliff House.

From Bad to Worse!



FAITH, following Miss Venn into her study, smiled sympathetically.

"Oh dear, Miss Venn, I'm so frightfully sorry! It—it must be terribly upsetting for you."

Miss Venn did not look terribly upset. In fact, she smiled.

"Thank you, Faith; that is a very sweet thought of yours. But I am not upset. No, I fancy," she added, with certain grimness, "I can deal with these

situations. I have handled too many of them in the past, Faith. We must have discipline—we will have discipline."

"Yes, Miss Venn, of course. How can you run a school without discipline?" Faith agreed. "But I'm sure the girls do not mean to be naughty, you know. It—it's just that they have had too much freedom in the past."

Miss Venn set her lips. She did not reply directly to the observation, but the expression on her square face rather suggested that freedom for Cliff House girls was a problem to which she was going to give concentrated attention in the near future.

"I have seen enough," she said, "to know now that all the remarks you made to me yesterday on the subject of discipline in the Fourth are more than justified, Faith. I am grateful, my dear, for your suggestion that you should voluntarily descend from the Lower Fifth in order to inculcate a little discipline into the Fourth's ranks. It is obvious that Barbara Redfern, despite her captaincy, has little or no control over them."

Faith shook her head.

"Dear Barbara; she does so try to do her best," she said mournfully. "But one can't give orders to one's friends, can one, Miss Venn?"

"In the interests of discipline, friendship is no factor," Miss Venn returned.

"However, we will not discuss that now. Barbara, for the time being, may remain captain. I will give her a fair chance to prove her worth, but meantime I wish you to carry out my own private orders. And, Faith, my dear, I wonder if you would do a little something for me?"

"Why, with pleasure, Miss Venn!" Faith purred.

"As you know, I am very keen on compiling my list of statistics. Will you go round then, Faith, and make out a list of every girl, together with her exact age?"

"Why, of course, Miss Venn! I'll start now!"

And Faith, with a smile on her doll-like face, went out, leaving Miss Venn shaking her head and looking rather fondly at the door through which she disappeared. Such a dear girl! Such a willing, understanding girl! And how helpful that chat she had had with her yesterday before anybody else had arrived!

But outside, Faith, closing the door, chuckled.

Despite her affected protestations, there was no love lost between her and Babs. Bitterly vindictive, in spite of her sweet innocence, was Faith Ashton, and the girl she hated most in all the world was Barbara Redfern, who in the past had so often bested her. It was Babs who had shown up her real nature before the school; Babs who, when the Fourth Form captaincy had been within her reach, had wrested it from her. But Faith, in those days, had had no powerful ally like the headmistress of Cliff House.

Now—

Now—what a chance, if she played her cards carefully and well, to settle old scores! And what a fool this silly headmistress was! She hadn't seen through her! She never would see through her! She could twist her round her little finger!

Glowing with satisfaction, Faith reached the Fourth Form Common-room. From behind that door came a buzz of voices. Some were angry—most of them condemning—and she paused for a moment to listen. Mabel Lynn's voice came to her ears.

"Well, there we are! Either we've got to grin and bear it, or we've got to fight for it!"

"And," cried Clara Trevlyn, "we're jolly well going to fight for it!"

"Yes, rather!" squeaked Bessie Bunter. "But I say, girls, what about the dormitory feed, you know? Are we still going to have that?"

"Well, who says we aren't, ninny?" came Janet Jordan's voice. "Of course we're jolly well going to have it! And that reminds me," Janet went on, "we haven't passed the hat round for the tuck!"

Faith smiled. Her eyes glimmered a little. She waited a few more moments, and then, pad and pencil in her hand, apologetically stepped in. Janet Jordan, in the act of holding out a chocolate-box before the owlsh Terrain Twins, into which the twins were solemnly dropping sixpences, swivelled round.

"Cave, toady!" hissed somebody. Too late, Janet tried to hide the box.

Faith looked hurt. "That is unfair!" she protested. "I'm not a toady! It's not my fault if Miss Venn gives me things to do. After all, I can't defy her, can I? I do wish, you know, that you'd try to understand," Faith went on wistfully, "because, whether you believe it or not, I do want to be friends with you all!"

"Says you!" sniffed Leila Carroll. "And—and, if you don't mind, I'd like to come to the dormitory feed," Faith went on. "I heard you talking about it as I came in. Janet, can I put my contribution into the box, please?" she added eagerly, and held out a coin.

Janet paused. One or two of the other girls blinked for a moment, astonished.

Faith spoke so simply, so sincerely, that even though they suspected everything she did and said, they found themselves wondering. Well, perhaps after all they were being just a little unjust to Faith. Naturally she'd got to obey Head's orders.

"You know what will happen if we're caught?" Janet warned.

"Oh, yes, of course! But, Janet, I'm

one of the Form first, aren't I? We must all stand shoulder to shoulder, and—and all that," Faith said. "Please let me contribute!"

Janet shrugged. She held the box out. Smilingly Faith dropped a half-crown in it, thereby, in the Form's eyes, committing herself to the lawless project being planned. That, at least, seemed proof enough of Faith's good intentions.

"Thank you," she simpered. "And now would you mind helping me to do this job for Miss Venn? I don't want to do it, really. But Miss Venn has asked me, you know, and she just won't take no for an answer. I've got to get out a list of exact ages—"

Babs looked up sharply. "But that's my job," she said. "I know. I—I told Miss Venn that. But Miss Venn insisted, you know. Please, Barbara, don't make things more difficult for me!"

"No; give her a chance!" Lydia Crossendale put in.

Babs bit her lips. She was sure that Faith was a girl who couldn't be trusted—that she and the others dare not trust her.

But for the moment, at least, Faith had captured the sympathies of the Form, and they were ready to give her a chance.

"And after all," Lydia gibed—Lydia had always been, and always would be, on the side of anyone up against Barbara Redfern—"she is your own cousin."

Babs flushed again—hotly. She had a feeling of being a churl. Was she misunderstanding Faith? she wondered. Was it possible, after all, for Faith to be honest and sincere? And yet—and yet— She could not forget that "My dear" of Miss Venn's. She could not help but wonder why Faith had been put down from the Lower Fifth. Why had she turned up at Cliff House yesterday, twenty-four hours before the first arrival to-day?

"And—and just to prove it," Faith said, with a sudden bright smile, "I'll let you do the job, Barbara. After all, it's only right, isn't it? You are captain, and you do know so much more about the girls than I do. Here we are, Barbara. You make out the list."

"Oh rats! You've been asked to do it; do it," Babs said gruffly.

"But—but you won't mind, Barbara?"

"No," Babs said. Faith smiled. Lydia Crossendale tittered. Babs clenched her hands, hating to have this feeling of being in the wrong, when some instinct was warning her all the time that she was dead right.

And so Faith got out her list, girls readily and willingly answering her questions in turn. While that was happening, however, Babs and Clara and Janet, glad to get away, departed to the tuckshop for the dormitory supplies. Without adventure those supplies were gathered and, in their box, safely hidden under the bushes near the lobby window for further transportation to the dormitory when the time came. Then a bell rang.

"Hallo, what's that?" Clara asked. "Call-over," Babs said briefly. "You know, it's an hour earlier than usual."

Clara grunted, remembering then that she had been ordered to report for punishment at call-over.

"Come on, then, let's go!"

They went in. Call-over, as usual, was taken in Big Hall. Miss Venn was already on the rostrum, gazing with a stern and disapproving eye at the confusion going on in the body of the hall. Thanks to the earliness of the hour, a great many of the girls had forgotten call-over's new time, and, summoned by the bell, were breathlessly rushing into hall from all corners of the school.

"I shall expect," Miss Venn said icily, when at last order had emerged from the chaos, "to see the school more promptly assemble next time. Call the rolls, mistresses, please!"

The mistresses called the rolls, pretty Miss Valerie Charmant, of the Fourth Form, looking just a little hurried and flustered. The headmistress received the "all present" report with a curt nod, and then went on to address the school in rather flinty tones.

"I shall expect," Miss Venn rumbled, and promptly reeled off a list of expectations.

They knew it all already—good behaviour, perfect obedience, no laughing,



"I'd love to come to the dormitory feed," Faith simpered, widening her blue eyes. "Do let me contribute." And to everyone's astonishment she held out a coin for the collecting box.

no talking, and all the rest of the r-marble. She paused amid a dead silence, then characteristically folded her arms across her chest.

"And now, please, step out all those girls who have been ordered to report for punishment."

One stepped out—Clara Trevlyn. "Come here," Miss Venn ordered, pointing to a spot near her desk.

Clara shuffled there, her cheeks burning as she felt the eyes of the whole school upon her.

"Clara Trevlyn, you have been guilty of the most disgraceful disobedience!" Miss Venn said. "Not only have you been insulting to a girl in whom I have vested authority, you have had the temerity to use slanders as far as my own person is concerned. For that, Clara Trevlyn, you will write out two hundred lines!"

Clara gulped. "And since," went on Miss Venn sternly, "such an imposition entails the cancelling of a privilege, you are forbidden to take part in the next hockey match. Go to your place."

But Clara did not go to her place—not immediately. With suddenly startled, incredulous face she was staring up at the Head, while throughout the school she could hear the swift catch of breath as girls gasped. She, the captain of Junior School games, barred from playing in the next match—and that match easily the toughest proposition of the second half of the season, against Claremount, their old and doughty rivals!

"But—but, Miss Venn—" Clara stammered.

"You heard, girl—go to your place!"

"But—but the hockey match?" Clara blurted. "Miss Venn—no, no, please!"

she cried. "I've got to play!"

Miss Venn breathed deeply.

"Clara, go to your place, please!" she thundered. "Go! Another word, girl, and I will order you to report for punishment to-morrow!"

There came a murmur from the school. Faces—especially among the Juniors—flushed. Punishment might be deserved, but surely this method was unjust! As Clara still hesitated, the fierce roses of mutiny suddenly gathering in her cheeks, Miss Charmant, her face agitated, rustled forward.

"Miss Venn, may I speak?" she asked.

"You may," Miss Venn said stiffly.

"About—about Clara. Miss Venn, I do not think you understand. Clara is junior games captain."

Miss Venn's eyes glinted.

"I have already," she retorted curtly, "taken the trouble to find out what Clara is and is not, Miss Charmant. It is because she is games captain—because she is so fond of her games—that I am giving her this punishment. When girls like Clara are made to realise that if they do not behave they may lose their dearest privileges, then perhaps we shall have discipline in the school—and especially discipline in your own unruly Form, Miss Charmant! It is enough! Clara, go!"

Just for a moment Clara fiercely clenched her hands. Then she saw the crimson, humiliated face of Miss Charmant, and realising, even in that moment of anger, that she might bring further wrath upon that beloved head, she turned. Gated for her match! She—the captain of the team!

Her eyes blazed.

But Clara, even as she shuffled back to her place, had made up her mind. Come what might, Miss Venn or no Miss Venn, she would play against Claremount!

Sneak!



"GIRLS!" Barbara Redfern cried distractedly.

"Bosh!" "But look here—oh, for goodness' sake make less

noise!"

"Rats!"

The Fourth Form at Cliff House was utterly out of hand. About as useful, in that moment, to tell the Fourth to stop making a noise as to try to stop the rolling of an avalanche.

The Fourth were indignant, resentful and furious.

For the Fourth had just returned from Big Hall, and, smarting under the unfairness of the punishment meted out to Tomboy Clara Trevlyn, were in no mood to be either quiet or orderly. What had happened to Clara, they said, might at any time happen to any one of them.

"I say we've got to do something about it!" Rosa Rodworth roared. "It's not fair! Games aren't a privilege, anyway—games are in the school curriculum!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yes, yes, I know; I agree," Babs said hurriedly. "But please, for goodness' sake, talk a little less loudly! We can't do anything by just shouting our heads off. We can't—and she paused as a face looked in at the door and then swiftly vanished—the face of Faith Ashton.

"We can't," sneered Lydia Crossendale, "do anything that might offend Miss Venn! Is that what you mean, Barbara?"

"You know jolly well I mean nothing of the kind!" Babs retorted. "What I'm saying is that we've got to do something. But we can't do it by just stamping and shouting."

"Well," giped Frances Frost, "what are we going to do?"

"I don't know yet—"

"And you call yourself a captain!"

jeered Freda Ferriers.

Babs compressed her lips. "Freda, that's unfair," she said. "I can't do anything on my own, can I? If you noodles will only be quiet and get together—"

But her plea was drowned in a shout. Later, perhaps, the "noodles" would be quiet and get together. But just now indignation was so red-hot that it simply had to find an outlet. To be sure, nobody had the faintest idea what to do; nobody, in that moment, was really thinking about what was going to be done. But it was a great relief, somehow, to be able to exchange their several opinions of Miss Venn.

Babs, had she obeyed her own inclinations, would have unhesitatingly joined in; but Babs was thinking first of her responsibility to the Form. That responsibility, obviously, lay at the moment in reducing the Form to order and saving them from getting themselves into further bother.

"Girls!" she shrilled. "Girls—you ninnies! Listen to me—"

Then:

Crash! Back went the door. But so great was the noise, that nobody except Babs noticed it for the moment. Over the threshold, her face like a thundercloud, strode Miss Venn, and trailing behind her, her big blue eyes wide and scared, came Faith.

"Girls!" the headmistress boomed.

"Oh, rats!"

"What? Girls!"

"Cave!" hissed Babs.

That whisper went round. At last the astonished Fourth became aware of

their new headmistress. An utter silence fell.

Miss Venn folded her arms. Her face was grim.

"So this," she said, "is how you behave immediately you are left to your own devices? And this," she added, gazing at Barbara, "is the way you keep order in the Form! Faith, take every girl's name in this room!"

The girls glared. Faith coughed.

"Oh—er—I—I'm sure they didn't mean to make a noise," she stammered, and smiled so meltingly at the girls that it was just impossible to believe that she was playing an artful part. "After all, it—it's only the first day of the term—"

Miss Venn pursed her lips.

"Faith, dear, you will do as you are told," she said. "I order you! Take every name here, and every girl whose name is taken will report for punishment at Assembly to-morrow morning," she added. "Barbara, that also applies to you."

"Y—yes," Babs muttered faintly.

Faith, biting her lips, a look of apologetic regret on her face, moved forward, amid utter silence, while Miss Venn, arms grimly folded, stood by the door.

But Babs, watching Faith, wondered. She could not quite forget that, just before Miss Venn's advent, Faith had taken a quick peep into the room. Had Faith, seeing the commotion then, brought Miss Venn on to the scene?

Or was that a suspicious, unworthy thought?

Somehow Babs could not feel ashamed for thinking it. But, because she could not prove it, she said nothing, and when Faith approached her, sighing and regretfully shaking her head, she stood silent.

With the list at last finished, Faith slowly crossed the floor to Miss Venn again. The headmistress glared round.

"One more sound from this room, and you all go to bed without supper," she threatened. "Faith, come!"

She swept out, leaving the Fourth looking at each other with furious, sickly faces. There was a mutter in the room, but fortunately, before it could grow into anything louder, there was a fresh interruption. The interruption came in the shape of a rather worried Dulcia Fairbrother, the head girl of the school. She had a somewhat bulky envelope in her hand.

"Barbara, this is for you. Just come by special messenger," she said.

"Oh, thanks!" Babs said.

She took it, while Dulcia, with a look round, went out. Babs slit the envelope open, and then her eyes widened. Immediately, as though they had never been, her troubles, her suspicions vanished. She uttered an excited exclamation.

"Oh, my hat! I say, girls, gather round—all of you! This concerns everybody. You remember the film we helped to make last term?"

"Yes, Babs?"

Eagerly they clustered round then, for the whole of the Fourth had been in the production of "Playground of Youth."

"This," Babs said, her face red with excitement, "this is a letter from Mr. Ranniman, the producer. The film is to have its premiere on Saturday afternoon at the Courtfield Grand Cinema, and—"

"Yes? Yes?"

"And," Babs cried, "we're all invited!"

"Geewillikins!" gasped Leila Carroll.

Like magic, faces cleared. Crimson excitement flooded every cheek. Many, many times since the making of the film had they wondered what had

become of it. Now it was finished—now, at last, they were to see themselves as screen actors!

Babble again broke out—but of a happier kind this time. Babs laughed. "But wait a ticklet," she cried. "You haven't heard it all. Here's a letter from Mr. Runniman, thanking us all, and hoping we can all come. And he says in it that there are going to be special souvenirs for all the girls who took part."

"Oh, what?" Bessie asked eagerly. "I sus-say, is he going to give us a cake each, or something?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the exact nature of the souvenirs Mr. Runniman had not divulged. That, obviously, was going to be his surprise.

From that moment spirits bounded. In the happy excitement of this new thrill, they could all afford to put Miss Venn on one side for the moment. Apart from that, they had the great dormitory feed to look forward to—a sufficient compensation in itself for the curtailing of the hour at which they were to retire. Even Clara was beaming again now.

Almost thankfully they tramped up to bed when the time came. When Miss Venn came round, accompanied by Mary Bull, to turn out lights, there was not one of them out of bed. In whispers and gurgles they talked and laughed, until at last ten o'clock struck from the clock tower.

Then Babs sat up. "All right, everybody! Who's volunteering to come and get the tuck?"

"I will!" Mabs said at once. "No—me!"

"No—me!"

"Now," Babs said, "we can't all go. Mabs spoke first, so Mabs it is! Everybody else get the things ready. Clara, you bought the candles?"

"Rather!"

"And, Bessie, you've got the knives and forks and glasses, and all that?"

"Oh, yes, you know!"

"O.K., then! Step on it, Mabs! But shush, not a sound! There may be a mistress still about!"

In the darkness, Babs and Mabs got up. Slipping their coats over their pyjamas, and their feet into their slippers, they stole towards the door. And then Babs started.

"Hallo! I say, anyone see Faith go out?"

"Faith?"

For answer, Babs pointed at the empty bed near the door.

Mabs blinked. That bed was certainly Faith's—and most certainly Faith had retired with the rest of the Form. But the bed was tumbled and disorderly now—and empty—too!

"Must have slipped out while we were talking," she guessed. "The silly fool! Does this mean she's up to her old games again, Babs?"

Babs shrugged. She really did not care. Faith, in spite of her sweet, melting innocence, was no goody-goody. With her craze for dancing, she was by no means above breaking bounds at night, and several times in the past had been caught doing it. It did seem as if Faith had returned to her old bad ways.

"Silly chump!" she muttered disgustedly. "Still, it's her funeral! But why the dickens," she asked, "was she so keen on coming to the feed, if she knew she was going off somewhere else?"

"Perhaps," Mabs suggested, "the invitation to the dance, or whatever it is, came after she had decided on the feed. Anyway, who's worrying? Come on!"

They went on, cautiously stepping down the stairs. Luck, for once, was with them. They reached the lobby in

safety, flung the window open, and in a few minutes, carrying the box of tuck between them, were returning to the Fourth Form dorm.

There candles had been lit. Girls in dressing-gowns were flitting about in the yellow glow, chucklingly opening bottles of ginger-beer and American cream soda. Beaming Bessie, in the centre of the floor, had already laid a sheet in place of a cloth, and everything was waiting to begin.

"O.K.! Here we are!" Clara chuckled, as Babs and Mabs came in.

"What-ho!" beamed Jemima Carstairs, that strange girl with the monocle and Eton crop. "Bring forth the fatted calf, henchmen!"

Eager hands helped to unpack the tuckbox as it was unwrapped. Presently there was a tempting array of tarts, jellies, cakes, and biscuits piled up on Bessie's tablecloth.

ing beneath the door showed her that Miss Venn was there, and again Faith's blue eyes glimmered. Silently she stooped. With one swift thrust of her fingers, she slipped the folded sheet into the room, and Miss Venn, looking up, with a frown, at the faint noise it made, started.

While Faith breathlessly flew back along the corridor, she rose from her seat at her desk and picked the paper up. Then swiftly she flung open the door, gazing along the corridor. But of the sender of that mysterious note there was no sign.

Miss Venn unfolded the paper. Her lips came together as she read. What was this? But, obviously, she could not ignore such a message, anonymously sent as it was. She grabbed for her gown. She put it on. Then she strode off.

Two Topping Treats

for

1939

You can still obtain these gorgeous story-books, so if YOU have yet to sample them hurry up at once, won't you? On sale at all big newsagents and bookstalls.



This really is a "Golden" book, full of stories to suit all tastes, from humorous to thrillers, and from adventure to romance.



The return of Morocco! That is one of the chief appeals of this superb all-story book, which is most lavishly produced.

In great and excited good humour, the Fourth sat down to enjoy its forbidden feed. Plates clanked; lemonade gushing into glasses blended with the sounds of revelry and laughter. The absence of Faith Ashton, for the time being, was completely forgotten.

Yet, had they known it, Faith Ashton was not far away.

Faith, at the moment the feed commenced, was at the door, with one eye glued to the keyhole. Rather grim the nod she gave as she peered into the room. Then, with a sly chuckle, she straightened up and flew away. Down to Study No. 8 she fled, having been assigned temporary quarters there in the place of Lorna Millerchip, who had not yet returned to school. Quickly she grabbed up a sheet of impot paper and a pencil. On the impot paper she scrawled one line in block capitals:

"YOU ARE WANTED IN FOURTH FORM DORMITORY."

Faith chuckled. Quickly she folded the paper up. Into the corridor once more she sauntered, but this time her steps took her in the direction of Miss Venn's study. A crack of light gleam-

Only Faith Ashton Escapes!



BABS & CO., merrily feeding in the dormitory, their thoughts as far from Miss

Venn as from the North Pole, had the shock of their that woman suddenly swept on to the scene. So did Miss Venn, apparently.

"Great goodness!" she cried. "What is this? My goodness gracious! Food! Drink! And, Barbara, you here—you, captain of this Form, condoning this, joining in with it—yes, actually, I believe, enjoying it! Stand up!"

Babs, sick with dismay, rose to her feet.

"Oh dear—"

"And do not speak, Barbara, until you are spoken to!" Miss Venn rapped, and glanced round in unbelieving horror. "Now, Barbara, what have you to say?"

"Nun-nothing, Miss Venn," Babs stut-tered, "except that we—were—"

"Enjoying it!" put in a voice from the back of the room; and there was a titter.

"I see!" Miss Venn's eyes flashed,

"Very well! Every girl taking part in this disgusting orgy will report for punishment at assembly to-morrow morning! Meantime, I will have this mess cleared away! Go to bed, every one of you! Faith— She turned, and then, staring at that girl's empty bed, blinked. "Where is Faith Ashton?" she cried.

Silence!

"Barbara, go to the head of the corridor and press the bell for the housekeeper!"

Babs sighed hopelessly. In that moment she could even feel sorry for Faith—Faith caught out of bounds; Faith, the idol who most certainly now would prove to have feet of clay. While Miss Venn stood quivering in the centre of the room and girls climbed sheepishly back into beds, she went along the corridor and touched the bell. In a few moments Mrs Carey, the housekeeper, appeared.

"Two servants, please," Miss Venn snapped, "to clear this rubbish away!"

Mrs. Carey coloured a little.

"Ahem! The servants are in bed, Miss Venn!"

"Then," Miss Venn snapped, "get them out of it! And please, madam, do not question my orders!"

"Nice woman, isn't she?" murmured Peggy Preston.

Mrs. Carey, bridling a little, rustled out. Babs crept into bed. Presently Sally and Therese, two of the maids, came along. With looks of sympathy at Babs, they gathered up the sheet and its contents and took it out. Miss Venn glared.

"I will make it my business," she threatened, "to visit this dormitory again before I go to bed! Now go to sleep!"

Out went the light—snick! The Fourth apprehensively settled down. Now there was going to be trouble, bags and bags of it; but there was a gleam of satisfaction, anyway—they had at least disposed of the bigger part of the feed before the interruption!

"But I wonder," said Christine Wilmer, "where Faith's got to? Wouldn't give much for her chances when she comes back!"

They were all thinking that. Even if they did not whole-heartedly trust Faith, they could feel sorry for her now. Faith, the favourite, was hardly likely to keep her place in the Head's good books after this.

If the harshness of the punishment doled out to Clara Trevlyn was anything to judge by, it looked as if Faith would be expelled.

Perhaps Miss Venn was thinking on those lines, too, as, with a face like a thundercloud, she whisked back to her study. She liked Faith, as everybody liked her on first acquaintance.

"The foolish, foolish child!" she muttered to herself.

It hurt her acutely to have caught Faith out. That girl, so sweet, so gentle, so adoring of her own astute self, had struck a chord in Miss Venn that not often responded. Faith was no better than the rest of the Fourth. Her lips came together a little; her eyes flashed. Well—

And then, pushing open her study door, she jumped.

For in the room was Faith Ashton. Faith, looking rather wan and weary, but a Faith who beamed in immediate delight at seeing her. She had a sheaf of papers in her hands.

"Faith—you! Why aren't you in your dormitory?"

"But, Miss Venn, you asked me to get out this list!" Faith replied, wide-eyed.

"I thought it was urgent—"

Miss Venn started.

"You mean you have been doing that?"

"Why, Miss Venn, yes!" Faith said. "Oh dear! You aren't cross with me, are you? My only chance of finishing the list was by doing it in my own time, you see, and I knew you wanted it most urgently so—so what else could I do? Oh dear! I—I'm sorry if I've done wrong!" she added confusedly.

Miss Venn laughed.

"Why, Faith, you foolish girl!" she said. "My dear, don't look so apprehensive! Of course I am not cross with you. I just thought for one moment— But no matter," she added hastily. "You should not have remained up without permission. But I cannot blame you for that, can I? Thank you, Faith! It is very, very kind of you. My dear, you really should not have done it. You look worn out, you know. Go to bed now, please!"

"Yes, Miss Venn. Oh, dear Miss Venn!" Faith sighed, and there was such adoration in her eyes for a moment that Miss Venn's face turned pink.

"Good—good-night, Miss Venn!"

"Good-night, Faith dear!"

And Miss Venn smiled.

When Faith had gone she sat down, looked at the door, shook her head, meltingly sighed again; and then, for some reason, sighed. What a dear, dear girl! How marvellous to have the affection of someone so willing, so utterly understanding!

In the corridor, however, Faith stopped. She grimaced at the door as she closed it.

"Old fool!" she said contemptuously. With a chuckle on her lips, she stepped along the corridor. But she did not go at once to the Fourth Form dormitory. She went back, instead, to Study No. 8. There she picked up a sheet of paper which contained a rough drawing from the table, and with that paper in her hand marched off to the Fourth Form class-room. For ten minutes Faith was busy there, transferring from the paper a copy of what was drawn there on to the blackboard itself. Not till that was done did she return to the dormitory.

Several girls, still awake, turned as she came in, Babs among them. Babs peered at her sharply.

"Faith, where have you been?" she asked. "Do you know Miss Venn has been in here?"

Faith bit her lips.

"Yes. I—I just met her," she said.

"Oh, my hat! Was she wild?"

"Wild as a she-cat!" Faith mumbled.

"And what's she going to do?"

"I—I don't know," Faith said hesitantly. "She—she didn't say. But why, you ninnies, did you allow her to catch you having your silly dormitory feed? If she hadn't caught you she wouldn't have caught me."

"Well, you don't think we asked her to catch us, do you?" Margot Lantham sniffed. "Anyway, why the dickens did you sneak out of the feed?"

"I—I had to go somewhere," Faith faltered.

"A dance?"

"Yes—no—oh, never mind; I'm tired!"

Silently she undressed; wearily she climbed into bed. Babs shook her head, feeling sorry in spite of herself, and shuddered a little to think what would happen to her on the morrow. For once Faith had all her sympathies.

She fell asleep presently, to be awakened while it was still dark by the clamour of the new early-rising bell. Grumbling and unrefreshed, the Form, unused to such hours, rose. In a kind of semi-stupor they set about their toilettes, and not until she had washed

and dressed, and was feeling more like her old alert self, did Babs notice that Faith's bed was empty. Poor old Faith! She couldn't have had much sleep last night.

Too often in the past had Babs suffered at Faith Ashton's treacherous hands, but Babs was never a girl to bear malice. Poor Faith! She must be feeling rather down in the mouth. A word from her might help to cheer her up.

With that generous impulse urging her, Babs left the dormitory. She went downstairs, and at the bottom paused at sight of the slim, pretty figure which stood there. It was Miss Charmant.

She saw Babs at the same moment that Babs saw her, and broke into a smile.

"Why, Barbara!"

"Good-morning, Miss Charmant!" Babs said. "Oh, Miss Charmant, have you seen Faith?"

"Faith? Why, no, my dear!" For some reason Miss Charmant frowned for just an instant. "But, Barbara, I wanted to talk to you," she added.

"Dulcia tells me that Mr. Runniman has invited the whole Form to the film premiere on Saturday afternoon."

"Oh, yes, Miss Charmant!" Babs replied eagerly. "Are you going, too? You were in the film, weren't you?"

"I was; but I'm sorry," Miss Charmant answered in tones tinged with regret, "that I shall not be able to go, Barbara. There is a rather important meeting of the Women's Civil Air Corps over at the Stadium Aerodrome, and as you know I am chairwoman of the local committee, and so just have to attend. But I shall expect you to tell me all about it," she added, "and, if possible, bring me some stills of the show itself. I do hope you have a good time, Barbara—all of you."

"We shall!" Babs beamed. "The whole Form's just living for Saturday!"

Miss Charmant laughed. With a graceful nod she went off. Babs, still thinking of Faith, went along to Study No. 8.

But no Faith was there.

Babs, frowning, went to the Common-room. Still no Faith. She went outside. No Faith there. Funny! What had happened to the girl?

Not until breakfast did she see her again. Faith, as she expected, was looking downcast and ill at ease.

"Hallo, Faith! Been looking for you," Babs greeted. "Cheer up, old thing! It might not be so bad as you expect."

"Dear Barbara!" Faith murmured. "Keep the old pecker up—what?"

Jemima said.

Faith faintly smiled. With the rest of the Form she sat down.

There was a great deal of chatter before Miss Charmant came in, for the hour of assembly was near at hand, and though everybody was sorry for Faith, they were all rather uneasily wondering what was going to happen to themselves. Those who were not thinking of that aspect of the near-future situation were thinking with excited glee of the film treat on Saturday.

Breakfast came and went. The Fourth, still chattering, dismissed, to get ready for Assembly. With growing uneasiness they heard the bell at last ring for that function.

"Now brace up!" Mabs said.

They tramped off to Big Hall. On the way Babs caught Faith's arm.

"The best of luck, old thing!" she muttered.

And again Faith smiled—sighingly, forlornly.

In their places the Fourth gathered. As last night, Miss Venn was already

there, watching the proceedings with a stern eye. Swiftly the rolls were called, and silence fell as Miss Venn commenced to deliver her address for the day.

The Fourth shifted. Faith, with downcast eyes, looked studiously at the floor.

"And now," Miss Venn said, when the address was finished, "stand out all girls ordered to report for punishment."

As one the whole of the Fourth stepped forward—all, that is, except Faith, who remained, crimson-checked, looking at the floor.

"Aha!" Miss Venn said; and repeated "Aha!" Then she folded her arms. "There are two counts against you, are there not? One, making a disturbance in the Common-room; the other, of eating and drinking in your dormitory last night. Faith—"

Faith looked up. The Fourth tensed. Now it was coming. Poor old Faith!

"Faith," Miss Venn went on, "will you give me the list of names you took in the Common-room?"

The Fourth stared. What was this?

"Yes, Miss Venn—certainly, Miss Venn!" And Faith, with a smile, came forward. "Oh dear, Miss Venn, d-don't be too harsh!"

"Thank you, Faith!" Miss Venn took the list from her. "Do not add your pleas for these unworthy girls—they do not deserve it. You may go back to your place, my dear girl."

"Yes, Miss Venn."

Faith fairly simpered as, with a sympathetic look at the Fourth, she tripped back. But the Fourth Form, from Barbara Redfern downwards, stood and stared, and stood and blinked, too utterly astounded for the moment to think of their own possible fate.

What was this they were seeing? What was this they were hearing? Faith, the girl caught out of bounds by the headmistress last night—Faith, the girl they all expected to be punished this morning, was apparently as big a favourite as ever! Not a single word against her offence!

"Well," Miss Venn snapped, "what are you all staring at? Brenda Fallace—"

"Well, Fuf—Faith—" Brenda Fallace stuttered.

"What is wrong with Faith?"

"Eh?" Brenda's eyes were wide.

"Oh, nothing!" she said hastily. "I presume," Miss Venn said, with a sneer, "it astonishes you to find that there is one girl in this lawless Form who really does know the meaning of discipline. Yes, you may well stare at her! You have my permission to stare! Faith, look up, my dear! If you wish to please me you will all follow Faith's example and become more like her. Now step aside all these girls."

It was amazing, incredible! What the dickens had happened? How in the name of all that was wonderful had Faith got round Miss Venn?

Or—the thought came to Babs almost unbidden—or had she got round Miss Venn? Might not the whole thing have been one of Faith's famous hoaxes from beginning to end?

Miss Venn read out the list of names Faith had reported, Babs among them. Red-eared, the culprits shifted to one side.

"For taking part in the disturbance in the Common-room, all you girls are forbidden the use of that room to-day," she said. "Barbara Redfern, for failing to maintain order, you are further punished with fifty lines!"

"Oh, I say!" cried Clara. "Babs was trying to keep order!"

"Girl, how dare you? Take fifty lines, too!" Miss Venn raved. "And

now," she added grimly, "I will deal with the dormitory offence, in which the whole Form, except Faith Ashton, took part. And for that"—she paused grimly—"for that," she added, "you are all confined to school bounds for next Saturday, which is a whole holiday!"

The Fourth looked thunderstruck.

"But, Miss Venn—" cried Babs. "Miss Venn, we—we are going to our film premiere!"

"Silence, girl, silence! How dare you?" Miss Venn raved. "Well?" she added, as Miss Charmant came forward.

"Ahem! Miss Venn, I should like to say a word, if I may. It is true what Barbara says. The Form has been invited by Mr. Runniman to attend the film premiere at the Grand Cinema at Courtfield. I do not ask you to let them go unpunished, Miss Venn, but I would ask you if it is possible to find some alternative—"

"My business, Miss Charmant, is to maintain discipline in this school—and I would like to remind you," Miss Venn

punishment which now threatened that project, there was the question of courtesy to the man who had extended the invitation. The Fourth had put up with enough from Miss Venn.

So the Fourth said.

It was rather difficult, they admitted, on quieter reflection, to see what was to be done. As headmistress of Cliff House, Miss Venn held unchallenged authority.

But something was going to be done about it. Not if the Fourth knew it was such a treat to be missed.

Between Assembly and lessons there was something very much like a new indignation meeting in the cloisters adjoining the quad—that venue selected because the Common-room to-day was now barred to half the Form. Babs was at that meeting, and Babs, as captain, was the focus-point of attention. The Fourth wanted to go to the premiere. They were looking to Babs to make it possible in some mysterious way.

"If you're a real skipper, now's your chance to prove it!" Lydia sneered.

Babs set her lips.

"Well, please leave me to think something out," she said.

"And see that you don't waste it," Frances Frost sniffed. "Hallo," she added, "here's Faith Ashton!"

Faith Ashton it was. A little silence fell as she came hurrying towards the group.

"Hallo!" she said. "I say, I shouldn't make too much row, if I were you. Miss Venn might hear—"

"Perhaps she's told you to come and tick us off about it?" Rosa sneered.

"No! Oh, Rosa, please!" And Faith looked at her reproachfully. "I—I don't want you to get into trouble, that's all," she said. "You know what she is."

For once the Fourth did not fall for that, however. They were all remembering, now that their own troubles were temporarily out of their minds, the astonishing thing that had happened at assembly that morning.

"We know," Clara Trovlyn remarked, "what she is as far as we're concerned, just ready to jump on us for twitching little fingers. But apparently the laws that govern us don't apply to you. How did you get out of breaking bounds last night?"

Faith bit her lip.

"Oh, Clara, please! I—I didn't get out of it."

"No?" Leila Carroll looked disbelieving. "Then why didn't Miss Venn say anything this morning?"

"I—I don't know."

They stared incredulously.

"You mean," Babs asked, "she never mentioned it again?"

"And yet," Clara sniffed, "she jolly well came down like a ton of bricks on the whole Form!"

"And held you up as an example!" Beatrice Beverley cried.

"Well—" Faith gulped. "Well, I—I'm sorry, but there it is! I didn't ask her to hold me up as an example."

But even they, ready as they were to give her a chance, could not swallow that. Unlikely, even if by some preposterous stretch of the imagination Miss Venn had forgiven Faith for her exploit last night, that this morning she would hold her up as the good girl of the Fourth!

Babs looked at her narrowly.

"I suppose," she said slowly, "you did break bounds?"

Faith flushed.

"Oh, really, Barbara! Of course I did!"

"Because," Babs said, her eyes gleaming a little, "now I come to think of it, it would have been wet outside, wouldn't



THERE was a malicious gleam in Faith's eyes as she scrawled the message for Miss Venn. This was the very opportunity she wanted to hit at Babs & Co.

said harshly, "that is also your business! I will not brook interference with my decisions—neither from you nor anyone else. If," she added, with a half-sneer, "you are so keen to protect your Form from the consequences of its misdeeds, do so by instilling a little obedience into them!"

"Oh, the—" muttered Joan Charmant, the mistress' Fourth Form sister, clenching her hands.

"Meantime," Miss Venn went on, while Miss Charmant, white-faced, retired, biting her lip, "my punishment stands. Film premiere or no film premiere, the Fourth Form remains within bounds on Saturday!"

Who is the Culprit?



THE Fourth weren't going to stand it! They'd been invited to the premiere. They meant to go to the premiere.

Apart from the severity of the

it? And your shoes, Faith, were perfectly dry when you came in the dorm!"

Faith gasped.

"I—I wasn't in bed, was I? And—oh, excuse me!" she added in a flutter, and breaking away, rushed off to meet a boy armed with a huge oblong box, who was just coming in at the gates. The chums eyed each other.

"Rummy!" Clara frowned. "Rummy about that shoe business, I mean! That's a point, certainly. I noticed that her shoes weren't wet, too."

"Which means to say," Mabs put in, "that all the time she was in the school. Hallo, that's the flower-boy from Hollands' Stores in Courtfield, isn't it? Look, she's taking that box from him!"

They all turned to stare. What Mabs said was true. The boy with the box—a long box, obviously containing flowers—had been stopped by Faith, who was now taking the box and handing over some money. They saw the boy touch his cap, they saw Faith hurry on into the school.

"I wonder," Rosa Rodworth mused, "if dear little Faith has bought those flowers for our sweet little headmistress!"

"But why," Lydia Crossendale demanded, "should she?"

"Why not?" Rosa Rodworth grinned scornfully. "Pretty obvious, isn't it, that she's buttering up to Miss Venn? She's wriggled out of being out of the dormy last night, and whether she broke bounds or not, the fact remains that she was out of bed. If it had been one of us, we'd have been hung, drawn, and quartered. Because it's dear Faith, she gets held up as the good little Erica of the Form!"

Babs frowned. It was quite clear now that something had happened last night—something which, so far from disgracing Faith, had put her more than over in the new Head's good books. In any case, there was no time to do more talking then, for first lesson bell was already ringing.

Rather disgruntled, but by no means appeased, the Fourth broke up, strolling off towards the school. It was as they reached the quad that Marjorie Hazeldene gave a sudden exclamation.

"Oh, my goodness, look!"

She was staring up—at Miss Venn's study window. There, clearly revealed behind that window, was Faith Ashton. And Faith was arranging flowers in a vase. As they watched, they saw Miss Venn come forward. They saw her smile and put one hand affectionately on Faith's shoulder; then Faith, happening to gaze out, saw them, and hastily moved out of sight behind the curtain.

"Well, there you are!" Rosa scowled. "She did buy those flowers for Miss Venn!"

"Rotten trick!" sniffed Clara Trevlyn. "There seemed to be no doubt about it now."

Most contemptuous of the feelings of the Form then. If they had been willing to give Faith a chance yesterday, this utterly drained their tolerance. They could have sympathy for a girl forced to give orders, even if those orders were against themselves, but they could have no sympathy with a girl who, in defiance of the unwritten law of the Form, deliberately set out to win the headmistress' regard by buying her favours.

In burning resentment against Faith Ashton, they all tramped into the Form-room, where Miss Charmant was awaiting them. Faith, everybody was quick to notice, had not yet turned up.

Miss Charmant frowned as she noted the empty seat.

"Does anyone know where Faith is?" she asked.

"Yes; with the Head," Rosa Rodworth answered.

"I see. Thank you. Please sit down, Rosa." Miss Charmant said quietly, and turned to the blackboard, which was covered with a duster. "Get out your books, please." And with that command she unfastened the duster and flicked it away. Then she started.

And the class, looking at the caricature revealed by the removal of the duster, burst into a simultaneous peal of laughter.

For on the blackboard was a caricature—a really clever caricature. It depicted an easily recognisable, though very overdrawn, Miss Venn, clasping a girl round the neck with tears streaming from her eyes. It showed the girl, easily recognisable as the doll-faced Faith Ashton, with her head on one of the headmistress' enormously bony shoulders, looking with utter rapture up at the stars. Above the caricature was printed one word, in huge letters: "TOADY!!!"

Even Miss Charmant, for a moment, smiled. Then she swung round.

"Girls, silence, please! Who did—"

She got no further. For at that moment the door flew open, and into the room, followed by Faith, stepped Miss Venn herself. Miss Venn's voice, like a knife, cut through the silence of consternation which had descended.

"And who," she stormed—"who perpetrated this insult?"

Silence!

"I demand the girl's name!"

Again silence!

"Very well!" Miss Venn's teeth came together. "It is a very brave thing, is it not, to insult me and the one girl in this Form of whom you ought to be proud? But I notice," she added, with a sneer, "that the artist's caricaturing courage is not sufficient to allow her to acknowledge her work! One of you is guilty, and as that one will not own up, I shall punish the whole Form. Miss Charmant, you will kindly make it your business to see that every study in the Fourth Form corridor is locked for the day and the keys given to me!"

"But, Miss Venn, do you think—"

Miss Charmant demurred.

"And please," Miss Venn boomed, with a glance of distaste at the Fourth Form's pretty mistress, "do not interfere! Those are my orders!"

The Form shifted restlessly, feverishly. It wasn't fair! It wasn't right! Half of them already deprived of the use of the Common-room—now the whole of them deprived of the use of their studies!

"And you, Faith, please come with me," Miss Venn added more mildly. "I came in to tell you, Miss Charmant, that Faith is excused lessons to-day. The ban on studies does not, of course, apply to you, my dear, though it most certainly applies to the girls who share it with you! Miss Charmant, rub that offensive caricature out," she said angrily, "and please see that the keys of the studies are delivered up to me within ten minutes!"

And with Faith in tow, shaking a regretful and rueful head, she went out. The Fourth glared; the Fourth glowered. Punished—for one girl's misdeeds! And who was that girl?

Proof to Them, But—



"ONLY three girls," Barbara Redfern announced grimly, "could have drawn that cartoon! One is me!"

"Well, did you?" sneered Lydia Crossendale.

"I didn't! The other two," Babs went on, "are Peggy Preston—"

"And it certainly wasn't me!" Peggy Preston put in indignantly.

"And," Babs finished, "Faith Ashton!"

The knot of girls—about a score of them—gathered in the pavilion on Junior Side after afternoon lessons gazed at each other.

"Well, if it wasn't Peggy and if it wasn't you, you don't suggest it was Faith herself?" Freda Ferriers put in. "That's rot! Why the dickens should she insult herself? What has she to gain by it?"

That certainly was a point. In naming the three artists of the Form, Babs had narrowed down the circle of suspects. Babs herself was not guilty, neither was Peggy Preston. That left only Faith Ashton.

Yet, as Freda said, why should Faith insult herself?

"Well, then, it must have been someone in another Form," Bessie Bunter put in.

Babs frowned. But who else? That was the point.

"I think," she said, "I'll go and have a talk with Faith."

"Oh, stuff!" said Clara Trevlyn. "What's the use? She'll only lie."

"All the same, I might trap her into saying something if she did do it," Babs said. "No, don't any of you come with me; I'll go alone."

She sauntered out. The girls, remaining in the pavilion, glowered. Deprived of Common-room and studies, with meetings forbidden all over the school, the only place they had been able to foregather with any reasonable degree of safety was the pavilion. But the pavilion was not the coziest place on earth. It lacked a fire, and, though it had electric light, that did not compensate for the cheery warmth of studies.

Into the school Babs tripped. Up the stairs she went, along to Faith Ashton's study. She knocked.

There was no answer.

"All right," Babs thought, "I'll wait."

She let herself into the room. The dying condition of the fire seemed to suggest that Faith had not tenanted it for some time. With a shiver, Babs crossed to the fireplace—very littered and disorderly, for Faith was by no means a tidy girl—and picked up the poker to stir the embers into flame. As she did so a crumpled sheet of paper, bearing a portion of a design, attracted her eye.

"Hallo!" Babs said.

She put the poker down. The piece of paper she picked up. She smoothed it out, her eyes gleaming suddenly, and then a sharp exclamation left her lips as she saw the drawing that was on it. It was, in fact, a hurried copy of the caricature which had been chalked on the blackboard in the Fourth Form quarters that morning.

So Faith—Faith had done it! Faith had made this preliminary sketch first; then had copied it!

Rather grim Babs' face then. No longer did she want to see Faith Ashton. Here was proof—incontestable proof—that Faith and no other had been responsible for the caricature for which the whole Form had been punished. Well, the Form had a right to know about it. The Fourth should know about it!

Babs stepped to the door. She opened it. And then she stopped as she faced the girl sauntering up the corridor. Faith Ashton herself.

"Why, Babs!" Faith exclaimed. "Were you looking for me?"

"I wanted to see you," Babs retorted. "I wanted to ask you why you drew that caricature on the blackboard this morning and let the whole Form get it in the neck!"

"I?" Faith's eyes were big. "But, Barbara, what a ridiculous idea! Of course I didn't draw it! Why should I draw it?"

Neither of them saw the figure which had suddenly appeared at the head of the stairs—the figure of Miss Charmant.

"You," Babs said, "should know that. But you did do that cartoon, Faith—and you jolly well know you did! And if you want proof of it, what about this?" she added and held out the crumpled copy. "I found that in your study!"

Faith, staring at that sheet of paper, did start then. For a moment her guilt showed itself in her face. With dismayed and horrified eyes she gazed at the paper as Babs grimly held it towards her. Then suddenly she made a grab.

"You cat! Give me that!" she panted.

But Babs, half expecting that move, contemptuously whisked the paper behind her back.

Faith, almost snarling, gripped at her hair. Babs gave a yell.

"Why, you—"
"Please, please!" came a voice. "Faith! Barbara!" And Miss Charmant hurried on to the scene. "Faith, how dare you!" And as they fell apart, gazing with dismay at the mistress, Miss Charmant looked at Babs. "Barbara, let me see that paper, please!"

Babs hesitated, but she could hardly refuse to obey; she handed it over.

"And this," Miss Charmant said, her eyes going to Faith, "you found in Faith's study? A pretty contemptible sort of trick, Faith!" she added scornfully.

Faith gulped. "I—I didn't do it!"

"No? Then how do you explain its presence in your room? I am sorry, Faith, I cannot believe you!" Straightly she eyed the girl, her lip curling in scorn. "I think, Faith, that the only possible thing for you to do now is to go to Miss Venn and own up."

"But I tell you," mouthed Faith, "I—I didn't do it—!" And then she broke off as another step sounded, and Miss Venn herself came rustling on to the scene. "Miss Venn—" she pleaded.

Miss Venn stopped, frowning. "Miss Charmant, what is this disturbance?"

Miss Charmant looked angry. She, in company with the rest of the school, knew Faith—knew her record, her character.

"Look at that!" she said, holding out the paper.

Miss Venn looked at it. "Well?"

"That was found by Barbara in Faith's study," Miss Charmant said quietly. "I think it proves the identity of the author of the insult for which my Form is being punished now, Miss Venn."

Miss Venn stared. "You mean—"

"I mean," Miss Charmant stated quietly, "that the girl who drew that insult on the blackboard was Faith herself."

"But I didn't—I didn't! Miss Venn—" Faith cried, and in the ready way of which she was such a past mistress, forced welling tears to her eyes. "Miss Venn, you wouldn't—you couldn't—believe that of me!" she entreated. "It's—it's a cruel lie! It's—

it's just a plot to fix it on me, Miss Venn!"

Miss Venn looked a little shaken. "But where," she asked, "did this come from?"

"I—I don't know!" Faith sobbed. "I don't know! The—only thing I can think of, Miss Venn, is that Barbara drew it, and then pretended to find it in my study!"

"Why, you—" Barbara began.

"Barbara, silence, please!" Miss Venn snapped. "That," she said, her lips a little tight, "sounds quite a likely story. Barbara, did you draw this?"

"Well, my hat!" cried Barbara.

"Miss Venn, please!" Miss Charmant faced up. "I do not think," she protested, "that it is quite fair to ask such

Miss Venn turned almost purple. "Very well!" she said. "Very well! Do you realise, Miss Charmant, that your attitude is encouraging these girls to mutiny? Either you apologise this instant, or—"

Babs held her breath. "Or what?" Miss Charmant asked.

"I shall suspend you for three days!" "Miss Charmant—" gasped Babs.

But Miss Charmant braced herself. She hardly attempted to hide the contempt in her eyes as she faced the headmistress.

"Thank you!" she said quietly. "I accept the suspension."

And—leaving Miss Venn gasping a little, and Faith still softly crying—she swung on her heels.



MISS VENN started as she saw Faith. "Why, Faith!" she said in surprise. "Why aren't you in your dormitory?" Faith put on her most innocent look. "Oh, but, Miss Venn," she murmured endearingly, "you—you asked me to get out this list and I—I knew how much you wanted it!"

a question. I have known Barbara many, many terms now, and I can vouch for her fairness and her honesty. Barbara is incapable of such a trick." "By which," Miss Venn said, "do you infer that Faith is guilty, Miss Charmant?"

Miss Charmant flushed. "Since you ask me, I must reply. I do think Faith capable of such a trick. You do not know this girl as we know her, Miss Venn—"

"Thank you, that is enough!" Miss Venn's cheeks flamed. "I pride myself, Miss Charmant, on being a judge of character. Because Faith regards school discipline with a little more seriousness than the rest of our Form, she is not popular. I hardly expected." Miss Venn went on acidly, "to find that Faith's own Form-mistress would join in the antagonism of the girls. I think, Miss Charmant, that an apology is called for!"

Miss Charmant stiffened. "I am sorry, but I cannot do that."

"I demand it!" Miss Venn flushed. Miss Charmant, very stiff and very pale, looked the headmistress straight in the face.

"I refuse!" she said distinctly.

The Fourth's Way Out!



MATTERS were reaching a breaking-point in the Fourth.

The Fourth were seething. The Fourth, when it heard of the treachery of its adored Form-mistress, were dangerously near the brink of open rebellion.

Rosa Rodworth, backed up by Diana Royston-Clarke and one or two others of the more headstrong members of the Fourth, were all for walking out of the school there and then. It took Babs' strongest persuasive powers to put a stop to that dangerous idea. But no longer, the Fourth declared, would they go on putting up with it.

One good thing—if it could be called a good thing—had emerged from the crisis. They knew now exactly where they stood as regards Faith Ashton. They knew that Faith was the traitor, the toady. Even Lydia Crossendale & Co. had not a good word to say for her after Babs had given her report in the pavilion.



OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

A New Year often brings new friendships. But old friends are still the dearest, so do remember that PATRICIA, who writes this page for you every week, is your very own friend—always!

I WONDER how many parties you have been to this holiday? That's what all the girls at school will ask you when you return, isn't it?

So I hope you'll have lots to tell them, for even if you haven't been to a single party, you mustn't forget to dazzle them with descriptions of the pantomime or the circus.

Your Patricia's very best party this year, was one that perhaps you wouldn't call a party at all, for it wasn't at home.

You see, I was invited by my rather rich friend, Esmee and her parents, to accompany them to a wondrous "West End" hotel, for supper and cabaret.

I'm sure you can just imagine how excited I was. I wore my new ice-blue evening dress, and my plum-red velvet evening cloak. I pinned flowers in my hair, borrowed mother's evening bag—and in general tried to look like a "million dollars."

● A Wonderful Time

Father was a pet and treated me to a taxi as far as Esmee's home, where a specially hired luxury car was waiting.

Esmee looked perfectly sweet, as she always does. She isn't particularly pretty, you know, but having such expensive clothes and charming ways, you somehow don't notice her looks.

Then a very nice young man was introduced to me—a young man who looked resplendent in top-hat, white tie and tails (not to mention white carnation!)

He, it appeared, was a clerk at Esmee's father's office. Esmee's father is a prosperous solicitor, you see—and had invited the young man to stay with them for Christmas.

Into the luxury car the five of us went, and purred away to the gay "West End." It was a truly magnificent hotel—no wonder all the film stars love it!

We had a banquet of a meal, after leaving our cloaks in a room that resembled a royal boudoir, and danced between the courses—which seemed never-ending.

Then later—about midnight, if you please—there was a superb cabaret show—with the loveliest girls that I have ever seen, taking part.

As you can guess, I was absolutely enthralled by it all, and hardly knew how to thank Esmee's father and mother enough for giving me such a lovely time.

The only one of our party who didn't seem to be noticing the splendour around him, was Mr. Armstrong—Martin Armstrong, the young man.

He seemed unable to take his eyes off Esmee! And she didn't seem to mind, either!

● Stocking Shades

Now for some very sad news for you! Not really, though. It is just to tell

you that there will be only fifteen shades of stockings to choose from in the medium priced range this spring! Only fifteen!

Perhaps you'd like to know some of the names of the colours, for even if you don't buy silk stockings yourself, I think colour names are always fascinating.

So here goes. There are: Carefree, Dryad, Popcorn, Burnt Nude, Tango, Cameo, Copper-skin, Newmarket, Mist-beige, Graphite, and Dark Metal.

I think Popcorn and Carefree should be rather sweet, don't you? Though, personally, my favourite is Mist-beige—it's such a useful shade.

Graphite and Dark Metal, by the way, are darker shades, more suitable for wearing with black.

Meanwhile, for schoolgirls' colours are—as ever, black, brown, and various shades of beige. No fancy colours for you, my pets!

● For the Kiddies

Now I want to describe two more fancy dresses for you—not for yourselves this week, but for those younger members



Fancy dresses for the "babies" of the family.

of the family who adore dressing up every bit as much as their "elders" do.

A small boy would love going to a party as a goliwog, I'm quite sure.

For this outfit, you could quite easily alter a pair of his pyjamas. The trouser part remains as it is. But the jacket should have a deep hem made all round, to shorten it. (This hem can be taken out again later, of course.)

The neck should be fastened close up to the throat, and a bright ribbon bow fixed there. The jacket buttons should be covered with material to match, or

contrast with, this bow—just to add an extra note of gaiety.

It's the goliwog wig he'll like wearing best of all. This can be made from a strip of fur (which mother might have) sewn on to elastic which he can slip round his head. If no fur is available, some clipped knitting wool, stuffed out as you would if you were making a baby's ball, would do the trick almost as well.

If the young scamp should insist on having his face blackened, and mother lets him, then he should wear black gloves as well.

● A Pretty Doll

The little girl is dressed as a doll—always popular.

For this she should wear a stiffly starched summer frock, with a wide, bright sash of ribbon round her small middle, tying at the back in a big bow.

Another bow at the neck, and two more on her shoes will make her feel she is really "dressed up."

The hat is any favourite summer bonnet—with another matching bow around it. And, of course, if small sister should like to take a doll along with her to the party—dressed exactly as she is—well, what could be more winsome?

● A New Idea

You know that for years we have only been able to buy press-studs in either black or white.

I expect you, like me, have thought this was rather mean at times.

How much nicer, I have often thought, it would be if I were able to fasten the cuffs of my green dress with green press-studs instead of black ones.

And now, at last you can buy them in colours! Do tell your mother this if she is keen on dress-making. I'm sure she'll agree with me that it is one of the nicest inventions for a long time.

● Just a Dream

I was reading about dream-meanings the other day, and do you know what dreaming of SCHOOL is supposed to mean?

That you will meet a friend you have almost forgotten!

I wonder how often you all dream of school? I know I do quite frequently—but I don't find I have forgotten many of my friends!

So I don't think we'd better take that dream-meaning too seriously, do you? Good-bye now all, until next week.

Your friend,

Patricia

NEW YEAR—NEW BEAUTY

Now is the time to make some good resolutions that will ensure added good looks throughout 1939.

I CAN think of no better time than the present for us all to make some really sensible plans about this Good Looks question—plans which, if we carry them out faithfully, will certainly see a "loverly us" this year.

The first thing we must all realise is that beauty comes from within.

And in more than one way!
As you know, a clean, healthy tummy means that you have rose-red lips, sparkling eyes, spot-free skin and shining hair.

But also, a happy temperament adds the charm to those eyes, a radiance to that skin, and a soft, vivacious look to that mouth.

That extra "bloom" of loveliness which comes from a happy nature, is one that I cannot give you. For it is in your own heart.

But I can tell you you have to have a good foundation for it.

FROM WITHIN

That healthy tummy is the result of exercise, and wise eating and drinking.

If you have a nice long walk to school each day—that's fine. Especially if you have plenty of gym and games as well.

But if you feel that really you do not get enough exercise, then you must make a little extra for yourself.

Some energetic gardening at week-ends; walks in the country, a run with the dog every night, or some skipping in the garden before breakfast.

These do not sound like "beauty treatments," but they certainly are!

Your food, as you know, should be varied—but this is up to mother. It should, for good health, however, include fresh vegetables and fruit every single day.

Strong tea and coffee should be avoided by the schoolgirl who values her looks. Have it weak, by all means. But remember that strong tea is one of the causes of those tiny red and broken veins you often see in older people.

I know you like drinking water, so you should rejoice to know that this is one of the greatest aids to a lovely complexion.

Drink six glasses a day if you can manage it. One on rising, one on going to bed, and the others at least an hour before or after meals.

Now what about the outer aids to beauty.

Having got a lovely complexion, bright hair, and so on, you must take care of them.

REGULAR CARE

Wash your face gently, always. Use a good soap twice a day if you like—though to use it only once is better if you find you can get clean with just water and a face-flannel.

Always rinse your face in very cold water after washing. This will close the pores of the skin and so prevent dirt entering—which causes blemishes. It will,



at the same time, bring the colour to your cheeks.

Give your hair at least fifty strokes with your Christmas-present hairbrush night and morning. Go without a hat as often as you like at week-ends, and wash your hair every fortnight or three weeks in a shampoo of pure soft soap, or any of the other good-quality preparations that are sold specially for the purpose.

Should your hair worry you because it tends to be over-greasy, then treat yourself to a bottle of bay-rum tonic, and use this as directed.

If on the other hand it is over-dry, and unmanageable, resolve to rub pure oil into the roots regularly.

You'll be rewarded amply for this little extra care.

BABS & CO'S WINTER DRESSES

This is the last of the series in which Miss Richards and Patricia give you a peep into some famous Fourth-Formers' wardrobes.

Diana Royston-Clarke.

Clothes must be striking — even bizarre—to delight our high-and-mighty Diana!

But please don't let that convey to you that she lacks good taste in dress. For definitely Diana has an "eye for clothes," and hers are always smart, always expensive and always much-admired, even though they may be a bit too dashing for other girls.

Diana does love to wear slacks—possibly because she knows she looks very attractive in them, for she has a delightful figure. She has a pair in brick red, a pair in royal blue and a white pair. But it is in white that Diana likes herself best, and she always manages to look marvellous in it, too.

But for school wear in the winter, even Diana has to conform to more conventional clothes. Yet in her everyday royal blue dress, Diana still manages to look "different."

It is a very simple, almost plain dress, but beautifully cut, of expensive wool material (for our Diana feels the cold, even though she wouldn't admit it!) Down the front, instead of ordinary buttons, she wears the initials of her Christian name. These were specially made for Diana—even though initial buttons can be bought for twopence each.

Her transparent mac was quite a sensation when she first had it sent from London. It rolls up into a handful and the hood can be worn over a hat or not.

Diana said hers was very expensive. So you can imagine how peeved she was when she saw them in Courtfield selling for five-and-sixpence!



FORTUNE'S FLOWERS

I expect you know that each month of the year has its own flower. But do you know them — and their meanings?

I EXPECT you will remember that I told you about the lucky stones for each month of the year. Now here are the lucky flowers. See which one is yours.

JANUARY—Snowdrop. One of the first flowers of the year; it signifies "Hope."

FEBRUARY—Violet. As you have all guessed, this flower stands for "Modesty" because of the way it hides beneath its leaves.

MARCH—Daffodil. This means "Chivalry"—as charming a virtue in a girl as in a boy.

APRIL—Primrose. "Truth" is the meaning of this flower.

MAY—White Lily. This could only stand for "Purity."

JUNE—Wild Rose. It means "True Friendship."

JULY—Carnation. This lovely flower represents "Pride" and "Fragrance."

AUGUST—White Heather. "Courage" and "Good Luck" are attributed to this.

SEPTEMBER—Michaelmas Daisy. "Generosity" is what this autumn favourite means.

OCTOBER—Rosemary. "Remembrance" is what this conveys to us all.

NOVEMBER—Chrysanthemum. This has a lovely meaning, "Lasting Affection."

DECEMBER—Ivy. This has always been a symbol of Christmas and stands for "Constancy and Fidelity."

(Continued from page 11)

And for the rest of the day Faith was very careful to steer clear of her Form fellows, though she could not escape the hisses and the insults which greeted her in the dormitory that night. For once Faith did not break down and protest her innocence; perhaps she realised how utterly useless that would have been to these girls who knew her true character so well. Ignoring the taunts, she quietly undressed and got into bed.

The following day—Saturday—found the Fourth's mood no less mutinous or stormy. This day was to have been the day of the promised film treat, and, so far, nothing had been done about that. Immediately after breakfast, in defiance of Miss Venn's orders, a meeting was held in the Common-room.



"Thank You So Much,"

HILDA RICHARDS SAYS

to ALL her correspondents. And here our popular author replies to just a few of them.

charming letters, my dears. Goodness, what a lot of story requests you have to make! But I've made a note of every one of them, and I will try to feature your favourites whenever I can.

VERA PEARCE (Lakes Entrance, Australia).—Yes, you'd be a Fourth-Former if you went to Cliff House, Vera. So now you have left school? I wonder if you've started in business yet. Do tell me all your latest news next time you write, anyway! I shall look forward to your letter.

"THELMA" (Jamestown, St. Helena).—Delighted to hear from you—once again, Thelma. Are you going to South Africa, after all? If so, I'm sure you must be feeling most excited about the trip! I hope you'll continue to read our paper—and to write such nice letters to me, as well!

BERYL ADAMSON (Colwyn Bay, Wales).—Thank you so much for another of your usual cheery letters, Beryl. You would be in the Upper Fifth if you went to Cliff House now. I shall be featuring Diana next week, as it happens, Beryl, so do tell me what you think of the story.

MONICA BUTLIN (Nakusp, B.C., Canada).—Here's the reply you wanted, my dear. You would be a Lower Fifth-Former if you went to Cliff House. Your town—I hope I've spelt its name correctly—must be a very pretty little place, and I should like to be able to visit it!

CHRISTINA ANDERSON (Perthshire).—So glad to hear from you again, Christina. I don't think I did receive the letter you mentioned—but that doesn't matter, for I loved your other two newsy letters, for I think your friend must be rather like vivacious Marcelle Biquet in appearance. I passed on your beauty hint to Patricia, who is very grateful, and sends her love.

"WATTLE" (Adelaide, S. Australia).—Many thanks for writing again, my dear, and telling me all your latest news. What did you think of the SCHOOL FRIEND Annual, after all? Clara Trevlyn is 14 years and 7 months old. I'll certainly keep your story suggestion in mind.

IDA YEATES (Belfast).—Delighted to have another letter, Ida. I think there must be a good many Cliff House fans in Northern Ireland, for I receive lots of enthusiastic letters from there. June sends a pawshake to Pop, and one to you, too.

LINDA AND LUELLE LEE (Angus, Scotland).—Thank you both for your

"Meeting at Seashore Hotel at 3.30 p.m.," it read. "Your attendance requested."

It bore the name of Major-General Mabbeson, the chairman of the Cliff House board of governors.

By Jove, then that meant that Miss Venn would be away from the school this afternoon when the Fourth was due for its premiere!

The door opened. Miss Venn came in, frowning at the sight of the Fourth Form captain.

"Well, Barbara, what do you want?" "I want," Babs said steadily, "to present this to you, Miss Venn. It is a round robin from the Form. The Form is particularly anxious—"

"Thank you! Give it to me!" The new headmistress almost snatched the missive from Babs. She opened it; read it. Then, with a thin-lipped glare, she deliberately tore it in two.

"That, Barbara, is my answer to the Form's impertinent request! You may

tell them from me that when they learn to respect my rules they shall have privileges, and not before! And while," she added, "I am about it, I may tell you, Barbara, that I do not encourage communications of this sort. I notice your own name was among those there."

"Yes, Miss Venn." "Meaning," Miss Venn said, "that you condone the lawlessness of your Form?"

Babs flushed. "Well, Miss Venn, it is not often the Form asks—"

"You put the feelings of your friends very much higher than the dignity or the discipline of the school, don't you?" Miss Venn sneered. "I may tell you, Barbara, that what I have seen of your leadership has not impressed me. To me you seem as bad as the rest of the Fourth, and I warn you frankly that I shall not hesitate the very next time I find you associated with any new lawlessness in your Form to take your captaincy away from you! Now please go!"

And Babs went, just as Faith came in.

In glowing wrath the Fourth learned of the fate of their round robin.

"Well, and what now?" Diana Royston-Clarke asked.

Babs' eyes glistened. "Shut the door," she said. "Lock it. Don't let anyone come in. I've got an idea—thanks to the round robin. It's an idea I think we can carry out quite safely. This afternoon," Babs went on, "we're confined to bounds—"

"Oh, go on! Tell us something we don't know!" growled Lydia Crossendale.

"That means," Babs said, "that we're not detained in class-room; we're free to roam about the school. Right! Well, as it happens, Miss Venn will also be out of the school, and won't be back. I shouldn't think, until late to-night. I happened to see a telegram." And Babs explained. "So why," she added, "shouldn't we go to our premiere without Miss Venn being any the wiser?"

"Phew!" whistled Jemima Carstairs. "Babs has got it! Why not, mon comrades?"

Why not, indeed? The Fourth flamed. The Fourth seethed. It would be one up on Miss Venn. To defy Miss Venn's orders without her ever knowing! Something to chuckle about afterwards—to think that they had had their treat, and Miss Venn knowing nothing about it.

"What we've got to do," Babs went on, "is to watch for Miss Venn's departure. Then, when she's gone, to sneak out through the gap in Lane Field, and make our way to the woods. We'll go in groups, of course, just so that we shan't attract attention. We'll meet by the old oak. But not a word, mind. And not a word, particularly, to Faith Ashton!"

"That beastly sneak!" sneered Rosa Rodworth. "Hallo! There's a knock on the door!"

"I say, let me in!" came Faith Ashton's voice from outside. "What's happening?"

"Find out, sneak!" called Margot Lantham.

"Look here—"

"Rats!" Faith, in the corridor, flushed. Her eyes gleamed a little. What was going on there? What was this meeting from which she was excluded? Something on, obviously.

"Oh, all right, bother you!" she cried.

"Well, we're going," Rosa said. "And if we can't go with Miss Venn's permission, I vote we go without it." "And a fat chance," Babs said scornfully, "we should have of doing that."

"Well, can you think of anything better?" Rosa sniffed.

"I've got one suggestion—only one," Babs said. "If that fails—well, we'll have to take the law in our own hands. I've thought of a deputation—but I don't think that would act. The next best suggestion is a round robin."

"What about telling her that if she doesn't give us permission, we'll take it?" Lydia Crossendale inquired.

"No. The round robin's the best way. We'll just ask her as a reasonable human headmistress who has the welfare of her girls at heart to postpone her punishment until some other time. Explain to her that this was a privilege which Miss Primrose would have granted if she had been here, and something, in fact, which Miss Prim-

She walked off. But she had by no means given up her attempt to find out what was going on. Faith was nothing if not clever, and, remembering that the Common-room windows were open, and that they overlooked the narrow passage between the school and the gym, she tiptoed to that spot. There, planting herself under the window, she listened.

And a sly, crafty smile overspread her face at what she heard.

The Real Cunning Motive!



"H AS she gone?"
 "Yes."
 "Oh, goodie!
 Now's our
 chance!"

And Babs, Mabs, Clara, and Bessie Bunter chuckled as they watched, from the window of Study No. 4, Miss Venn's car roll out through the gates of the school.

From a dozen other windows in the Fourth Form corridor that departure

mistresses, lingering over lunch, were not yet in the school grounds.

In groups of three and four the Fourth made their exit, until, at last, with the exception of one girl, there was not a member of the Fourth Form left in the school.

That girl was Faith Ashton! From the study window, however, Faith was watching. She was watching with rather a grim smile on her doll-like face. That window afforded an unrestricted view of the gap which gave access to Lanes Field, and Faith was counting the girls as they crept through that gap. Thirty-one—thirty-two. There was Gwen Cook—the last of the crowd. Faith chuckled. She reached for the telephone by her side.

And when the operator's voice came through:

"Will you please give me Courtfield railway station?" Faith asked.

"WELL, WELL, it's nice to see you, Barbara—and all of you!" Mr. Langley Runniman, the film producer, beamed. "I think we can offer you a

gilt-edged book, containing many photographs of themselves, and a glowing letter of thanks to the mistresses and girls of Cliff House School who had made the film possible. Each copy was autographed by the producer and the leading lady.

Wasn't it all worth breaking bounds for?"

And now, thrilled with anticipation, they found themselves being conducted into the lobby of the hall. There seats had been reserved for them, and as they and a large number of other people crowded in the orchestra was already playing the overture.

Laughing, they seated themselves. Now for the great event! One and all grinned towards Babs, who had made this treat possible, and Babs, herself happily radiant, smiled back. But look! The lights were fading—now on the screen flashed the first picture—a news reel, showing the events of the day. It was followed by an uproariously funny cartoon. Then—

The Cliff House contingent bent



BABS & Co., thoroughly enjoying the film of their own activities, suddenly sat up with a start as a notice was flashed on the screen.

was also being watched with glee. Miss Venn had taken care to keep her visit a dead secret. But if she only knew that the Fourth Form knew!

The Fourth were grateful. Thanks to Babs, their privilege was made possible at last, and the best of it was they could attend it without any fear of reprisals afterwards. Only one girl in the whole Form was thinking seriously of possible consequences.

That was Babs.

For Babs, of them all, had the most to lose. If anything went wrong, then away went her captaincy.

But Babs did not falter. In any case, what could go wrong? The thing had been kept a dead secret. Not a word of the adventure had been breathed outside the Fourth. By the time Miss Venn returned the whole visit would be over and accomplished. In any case, she couldn't let the Form down.

"Well, come on!" she said.

She went out, accompanied by her chums. Easy enough to creep through the gap in the hedge and dart off. The prefects, fortunately, had a hockey match on Senior Side which had attracted most of the school, and the

very, very good afternoon's entertainment."

The scene was the foyer of the Courtfield Grand Cinema. And there, in evening dress, accompanied by his leading lady, Miss Miranda Jollibell, and his juvenile lead, Dawn Brandon, Mr. Langley Runniman, an expansive smile on his face, was waiting to welcome the chums as they came in.

In a body, the Fourth Form, having met by the old oak, screamed in. The foyer now was alive with them. Every girl was laughing; everyone filled not only with eager anticipation, but with a glowing sense of triumph that she had, after all, arrived for the treat which was to have been cancelled altogether. If the Fourth needed cause for satisfaction, they certainly had it that afternoon.

Now, at last, here they were. Nothing now could mar their treat.

"You will find your places in the stalls," Mr. Langley Runniman went on. "But first I want you to go to the booking-office. There you will each collect the little souvenir which has been made of the film."

The chums laughed. Excitedly they tripped off. At the booking-office they received their souvenir—a beautiful

eagerly forward. For on the screen came a title:

"PLAYGROUND OF YOUTH."

"This is us!" gurgled Mabel Lynn.

With a thrilling sense of adventure they watched. Now came the first scene—old Cliff House in the background, girls walking about the school.

"Look!" cried Mabs. "There you are, Babs!"

"And look!" cried Marjorie. "There's me."

They laughed. It was a thrill to see themselves walking about. A suppressed cheer went up as Miss Charmant was observed. Then silence as the real story commenced, with the fear-stricken juvenile lead and the leading lady talking at the gates of Cliff House School. There was a chuckle for a second as Piper, the porter, was seen peering out of the window of his lodge.

"Oh, this was good! This was topping! Wasn't it just fun to see oneself walking about on the screen?"

Breathlessly they watched. Not one of them would have missed this for a whole week's detention. Now the film was developing—look, here was the great fire scene! And how they all

tingled to feel they had helped in making that scene! Now here came the great emotional scene!

Oh, lovely!

And then suddenly there was an interruption. Without warning the picture faded.

"Hallo, breakdown!" Babs murmured.

But it was not a breakdown. For a second later a message was flashed on the screen.

And the Cliff House chums, gazing at it, sat up in consternation.

For the message said:

"Will all Fourth Form girls belonging to Cliff House School report in the foyer immediately to their headmistress, Miss Venn?"

"Oh corks!" gasped Bessie Bunter.

"My hat, she—she's here!"

The message flickered, faded.

"But how," Diana Royston-Clarke wanted to know, "did she find out?"

"Only one way she could find out," Rosa Rodworth said between her teeth.

"Faith Ashton got the wind of it somehow—and sneaked! Anyway, are we going?"

"No!"

"Babs—"

Babs was biting her lip, but there was a flash in her eyes.

"In for a penny, in for a pound," she whispered softly. "Hang together. We've got to face the music, so we might as well go through with it. Let her wait! We'll go as soon as the film is finished!"

The Fourth looked at each other. One or two of the more timorous girls shifted nervously. But Babs was taking the lead; Babs was their captain. What Babs said was true. They were in for it in any case, so why not extract the most enjoyment they could? And yet it was little enjoyment which remained. With growing uneasiness and little enthusiasm, picturing their tyrant awaiting them, they sat uneasily through. The film came to an end.

Babs glanced at her followers.

"Well, come on!" she said.

"Oh heck! What are we going to say?" Leila Carroll asked.

"Just nothing!" Babs replied.

"Just come!"

And in an apprehensive, crestfallen body, hearts filled with dread, they went.

But the greatest dread of all was in the heart of Barbara Redfern. For too well Barbara knew what this was going to mean for her.

"AGAINST MY orders! Against my wishes! Against my strictest commands, you disobeyed me!" Miss Venn raged. "By a trick unworthy of a great and dignified school such as this, you plotted to avoid that punishment which you so justly earned. Had it not been for the loyalty of one of your number, the plot would have been carried through without my being aware that it had ever happened—"

Dagger glares of contemptuous dislike were flung at Faith Ashton, standing, rather pale, by the headmistress' desk.

The scene was call-over the same day.

Miss Venn was facing an uneasy school. On the dais the whole of the Fourth were ranged up. But the Fourth, so far from appearing guilty, were glaring and red-faced. They had had their fun. Now, thanks to the treachery of Faith Ashton, they were to face the music.

"And from what I can gather," Miss Venn went on in a quivering voice, "the main-spring and the leader of this outrageous mutiny was the one girl above all others who should have been a shining example of obedience to the Form. Barbara Redfern—"

Babs licked her lips.

"Because of your lawless leadership, Barbara," Miss Venn went on, "the Form is confined to bounds, with a special detention task for one whole week. The Form may dismiss. You, Barbara, remain behind."

The Form, with many a sympathetic look at the white-faced Barbara, shuffled back into their places. Miss Venn's lips compressed.

"One of the first things which was brought to my notice when I arrived at this school," she said, "was the very unfavourable system of electing the school officers. Being just and fair-minded, I waited to see how that system worked before I made any alterations. You see how it has worked—you see how this disgraceful girl, Barbara Redfern, elected by the popular vote of her friends, carries out her duties! Barbara Redfern, stand forward!"

Babs stood forward. Faith looked down at her feet.

"Take off that captain's badge!" Miss Venn commanded.

"But, Miss Venn—"

"Take it off!"

There was a mutter among the Fourth. Babs, giving a deep breath, took it off.

"Thank you," Miss Venn snatched it from her. "Barbara, you are no longer captain!" she said. "I will not tolerate a girl in authority behaving as you have done. Faith Ashton—"

"Y-yes, Miss Venn?"

"Step forward!"

Faith stepped forward. There was a hiss from the Fourth as Miss Venn pinned the badge on her blouse.

"Faith, look at the school!" Miss Venn commanded. "Fourth Form, look at your new captain!"

"New what?" came a derisive voice.

"Your new captain!"

"But we don't want her! Sneak! Toady!" came hisses.

"How dare you! Girls!" Miss Venn's eyes blazed. "Girls—be quiet—be quiet!" she cried. "How dare you, I

say! What you want does not matter. What does matter are my orders, and my orders from this moment are that you give Faith that obedience which is due to her. Whatever you say, whatever you do, Faith Ashton is your captain!"

But the Fourth angrily glowered. Faith simpered.

And Babs, looking at her, angry, sick dismay in her heart, understood at last what Faith's game was. She understood now why she had toadied to, and fawned upon, the headmistress. She understood all those artful moves which had been used by Faith to put Miss Venn up against the Form. With her usual sneaking treachery Faith Ashton had wrested from Babs the greatest honour in the Lower School.

This time, it seemed, there was to be no wresting it back from her. Just for a moment Faith turned, not even she capable of hiding the triumphant elation she felt.

Babs stiffened. The Fourth Form glowered. The looks they turned upon Faith seemed to suggest that Miss Venn, so far from having settled a problem, had only started one that was going to be of far-reaching and burning intensity in the Fourth Form. If Faith was their official captain, she was the girl they regarded with the greatest contempt.

Babs, by virtue of the sacrifice she had been compelled to make, was elevated at the same time to the position of the heroine. Clara Trevlyn, recklessly defying the Head's wrath, turned and called:

"Who says Faith is captain?"

"Nobody!" yelled the Form.

"But who," yelled Clara, while Miss Venn fiercely shouted to make herself heard, "is our real captain?"

And thunderingly came the answer, drowning every other sound:

"Babs, Babs, Babs! Good old Babs! Hurrah, hurrah! Babs for captain—every time!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.



The Worst Captain at Cliff House!

Faith Ashton triumphant! Barbara Redfern, the cousin she hates, deprived of the Fourth Form captaincy, and she herself in that coveted role, supported by all the power and authority of the tyrannical new headmistress. And Faith sets out to run things exactly as she likes. Unfortunately, Faith is as incompetent as she is deceitful and vindictive. When she takes charge of a play which the Fourth Form are to perform in an important drama festival, Babs & Co. are utterly dismayed. The affair will be a terrible farce; Cliff House will be humiliated. And then—Babs gets inspiration. They'll rehearse another play—in secret! Babs & Co. do, dogged the whole time by a spying, suspicious Faith.



This magnificent LONG COMPLETE Hilda Richards story, featuring your Cliff House favourites, appears next Saturday. Don't miss it.

Merrie England in the Days of Richard Lionheart! That is the setting of this fascinating new series.



Little Lady of the Castle!

"HARK!" said the young Lady Fayre, lifting her right hand, which held a quill pen. "I hear a commotion in the courtyard."

And Fayre—her pretty, girlish head of fair, long plaits held on one side—listened intently.

There was certainly a hubbub and commotion below in the courtyard of Longley Castle; but as it was lesson-time Fayre should have paid no heed. Her long-bearded tutor, the Venerable Brie, was trying to teach her the art of polite letter writing, but to Fayre the commotion in the courtyard was of much more interest.

She dropped her pen, jumped up from the cloth-covered table, and ran to the large window.

"A blot!" cried the Venerable Brie in horror as her pen splattered ink on the cloth.

Fayre, pretending not to hear, looked out of the window.

In the courtyard, sixty feet below, was her uncle, Baron le Feuvre, who had recently returned from the Crusades, and with him were some of his men. In the midst of the group was a girl, who carried a wicker basket.

"The washer-girl," said Fayre, frowning. "They are cross with her; they shake her."

She called down then, cupping her hands:

"Aho, there! What is amiss?" Her uncle looked up. He had a red face; dark, heavy brows; and a black, pointed beard. Bad-tempered, he had no mercy for poor people at the best of times, and even with his niece he did not trouble to be polite.

"Away with you!" he roared. "Back to your work, young lady! It is no affair of yours what happens here!"

Fayre was about to reply, when someone took her arm and swung her round. "Oh!" said Fayre, as she saw, just behind, her aunt, the baroness. Tall and stately, in purple robe hemmed with gold embroidery, the baroness looked as important as she was.

"By what right do you call out from the window?" the baroness demanded grimly.

Story No. 1

By IDA MELBOURNE

"I wanted to know what was happening down there," said Fayre as meekly as she could, curtsying.

"It is not your concern!" snapped the baroness. "But, since you ask, the washer-girl has been robbed, so she states, by that young outlaw Robin Hood."

Fayre's eyes shone with excitement.

"By Robin Hood!" she cried. "The merry outlaw? The washer-girl has seen him? What good fortune! Oh, please let me have word with her! Everyone says that he is so merry and gay, this Robin Hood. But surely," she added in surprise, "Robin Hood does not rob the poor? It is the rich he robs."

The Young Lady Fayre, living with her uncle, the rich but bullying Baron, yearned for a chance to help those less fortunate than herself. So did another—a daring young man known as Robin Hood. That was why Lady Fayre, pretending to be a peasant lass, became an ally of the world's most romantic outlaw!

"Robin Hood shall be captured," said her aunt, her eyes flashing. "It is not the washer-girl's things he has taken, but the baron's; it was his newly embroidered cloak she was bringing with her."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" sighed Fayre. "Glad! Glad that your uncle has been robbed, you heartless child?"

"Nunno, not glad of that," said Fayre, with a faint smile; "I am glad that he did not rob the poor washer-girl. Uncle has many cloaks. One more, one less—poof! He should not mind, I think. Perhaps Robin Hood has no nice cloak; or perhaps he will give it to some poor man who is cold, or—"

"Enough!" was her aunt's shocked and furious reply. "This Robin Hood is no hero. You would not be so pleased

should you venture alone in the woods and meet him."

Fayre shook her head.

"Alas, I am never allowed to venture out in the woods!"

The baroness, head in air, flounced away; and the Lady Fayre sighed.

For a moment she remained deep in thought; and then, smiling, an eager light in her eyes, she crossed to the archway.

"Come, what are you thinking of doing?" said the Venerable Brie sharply.

Fayre did not tell him; but, lifting the gold-embroidered hem of her long red frock which would have slowed her, she tripped lightly from the room; and before the old tutor could stop her she was hurrying down the stone gallery to the spiral stone steps.

She passed the lower floor, where the castle guard had its quarters, and then went down to the store-rooms. Below

these were the dungeons; and if the washer-girl had offended her uncle she might be there, poor girl—a prisoner.

The dungeons had been empty for a week. Fayre knew that, for she had taken the warden's key from his ring one day while he dozed. She still had that key, for he had awakened before she could return it; and as he had a duplicate, she had not troubled since to let him have it.

The baron's booming voice came to Fayre as she reached ground level.

"Let the washer-girl stay in the dungeons! The gold piece she had is proof that she sold my cloak. A week in the dungeon, with nothing but bread to eat and water to drink, will loosen her tongue; and we shall find who bought my cloak for the golden piece. The rascal! He'll rue it!"

Fayre crouched against a stone wall, hardly breathing, until she heard her uncle walking away.

"Dare I? Dare I?" she asked herself, as she took from the long loose sleeve of her lovely frock the ornate key of the dungeon. "Yes," she decided all at once, "I will!"

There were no sentries; for the moat and drawbridge kept out all enemies; while the look kept in the prisoners. So no one was there to see the young Lady Fayre.

Before the massive iron-bound door of the dungeon Fayre stopped. She inserted the key in the lock, turned it, so that the tumblers clinked, and thrust the heavy door inward.

Only a little light came through the small windows of the dungeon; and the stone walls were cold and damp. There was just one three-legged stool, and a rough-hewn table inside for comfort—and, for the very reverse, in one corner, stocks.

Mathilda could not mistake Fayre's friendliness, and her fears vanished. She, too, admired Robin Hood, and that formed a bond between them.

"Why, yes; it was young Robin Hood, my lady," she said excitedly. "But he did not rob me of anything that was mine, for I have nothing. It was the baron's cloak he took, which I had cleaned. He gave me a gold piece—gold!" she added, in awe.

"And did my uncle take it?" asked Fayre.

"Yes; he did!"

"Then he is as much a robber as Robin Hood," said Fayre indignantly. "But so he is; for he has robbed people of their lands, which, when I come to own this castle, as I shall, they will be returned to them."

"It will be a happy day, my lady," said Mathilda. "Ah, if you could plead now with him to let me go!"

Fayre soothed her, sympathised; and there was a flash of anger in her eye at

frock, and then at the ragged one Mathilda wore, an idea jumped to her mind.

"I have it!" she cried in delight. "It is clothes that make the lady. Give me your frock, and I shall be a peasant girl, then I can see Robin Hood in safety. 'Let us change—now! And who will bar my way then?'"

In a moment she had slipped off that lovely frock. And Mathilda, although she doubted the wisdom of it, could not argue.

Swiftly they changed clothes, and then Fayre, gazing at the ragged frock, laughed, and wrapped the hood about her face.

"A peasant girl. I go where I please—yes, even I can meet Robin Hood," she said, in quivering excitement. "Tell me, tell me; where shall I find him?"

A little reluctantly, Mathilda told her of the path that led into the wood, of the glade where it was said he and his men danced and made merry.

"Should anyone come to this dungeon door, stand back," warned Fayre. "Stand behind the door; and it may be thought that my uncle has had you freed."

"But you—you are too kind, my lady," the washer-girl said softly. "I am afraid for you—"

Fayre, finger to lips, opened the door, closed it behind her, and slipped away.

No longer was she a lady, but a peasant girl. Without hindrance, Fayre reached the barbican, the outer defence of the castle, guarded by two men. And there she paused as the men sprang up.

"The washer-girl!" cried one. "She has escaped!"

The other jumped to the windlass that raised and lowered the portcullis, a large, iron, grate like grid. With a rattle of chains and a clatter of iron it came down, and the spikes thudded down into position.

"Hold her!" said the man at the windlass; and before the horrified Fayre could dodge, the other had gripped her by the arm.

A Plan with Robin Hood!

FAYRE did not struggle, but her heart was thumping so that she could hardly breathe.

She was captured, would be taken to the baron, and the washer-girl would be punished for taking part in this plan. Fayre, too, would be punished. Perhaps, she told herself with dread, she might be sent to another dungeon and left there with only bread and wafer for days. The baron had threatened it more than once.

"Oh dear, I—I'm not the washer-girl!" said Fayre desperately.

One of the bearded men looked at her closely.

"By my halidom, it is not the girl!" he jerked out.

"'Tis another," said his friend. "Yet looks much the same."

Fayre breathed in relief. They had not recognised her. Perhaps they had never seen her close to; and, of course, they would not suspect that the young Lady Fayre would wear such ragged clothes as these.

Her confidence returning, she threw back her head and spoke in scorn.

"You would bar the way to a messenger of the Lady Fayre?" she asked. "Her anger will fall on you if the new frock has not its embroidery in time."

"The Lady Fayre!" said one of the men, with a nervous glance at his companion.

ONE GOOD RESOLUTION it is not too late to make

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every month during 1939. You are certain to make sure of getting the superb book-length story of the early adventures of your Cliff House favourites, which comprises one of each month's issues, of course, but you'll find the other three numbers just as absorbing in their own way.

The JANUARY Cliff House story, No. 664, is shown on the right. Here are brief details of the others:

- No. 665. "Not Fit for Morcove!" an early exploit of Betty Barton & Co., by Marjorie Stanton.
- No. 666. "If Her School Friends Only Knew." by Joan Inglesant.
- No. 667. "Stella and the Sheik of Mystery." by Renee Frazer.



Mathilda, the washer-girl, leaned against a wall, hands covering her face, sobbing bitterly. Unlike Fayre, she was not dressed in gold-embroidered silk, but wore a simple frock of dark green, with a brown hood. The frock was ragged, and sadly worn, her legs bare, and tattered shoes with thinned soles, told of many wearily trudged journeys.

As she heard the door open, Mathilda lowered her hands, and crouched back against the wall; then, seeing who had entered, stood spellbound.

"Sssh!" breathed Fayre, closing the door. "I come as a friend."

"The Lady Fayre," Mathilda breathed.

"That's my name," nodded Fayre.

"And yours?"

"Mathilda. I am a washer-girl. Oh, my lady, please beg mercy for me. I have done no wrong, except be robbed; and if Robin Hood had known how it would cause me suffering—"

Fayre's eyes gleamed with eagerness.

"Robin Hood. It was he, then? Oh, is he brave and handsome? Is he merry, as they say? I thought he did not rob the poor."

the thought of her uncle's cruelty. Yet she could not enable this girl to escape. There were too many sentries elsewhere.

"Or if someone could tell Robin Hood where I am," Mathilda went on. "Then he would be noble and kind; he would give back the cloak."

Fayre gave a quick start at that, and her eyes sparkled.

"Why, yes! And if he did but prove that he had stolen it from you, you would not be blamed. It is Robin Hood alone who could save you. But where is he?"

She saw that Mathilda hesitated, and looked confused.

"If you tell me, I will tell no one else," said Fayre softly. "I am no traitor. If he can be found, then—then I will find him!"

"You?" gasped Mathilda. "But you are a lady. You cannot go into the woods. Why, in that lovely frock—there are robbers, who know you. They would take your golden chain. They might, indeed, make you prisoner, to hold for ransom!"

It was only too true.

But as Fayre looked down at her

"She will tell the baroness," went on Fayre. "I will go now and tell her of this rudeness."

She swung round, but at once the two guards called softly; for the baroness was feared in the castle.

"Tast! Here—we will let you out!"

Fayre turned back, and managed to keep a straight face, even a lofty mien of disdain, as the rattling windlass raised the portcullis and the draw-bridge was lowered over the shining blue water of the moat.

She was free. Dancing into the lane in the bright sunshine, she skipped with joy as she passed the English hedgerow to the wood beyond.

Unless there was special reason to go into the woods, the village girls kept to the lane; for there was always the fear of wolves. The young Lady Fayre had no such fear, and, reaching the wood, stepped in amongst the trees.

For twenty minutes she walked and danced, picking flowers, confident that soon she must reach the glade where it was said that Robin Hood and his merry men met.

But as the minutes passed, she grew uneasy. Presently she took to looking behind her warily. And when the path ended at a small pond she stopped.

The singing birds ended their song suddenly and fluttered away. A tiny rabbit scampered to safety, and from a bush near by came a rustling.

The stillness frightened Fayre. She suddenly remembered stories of those who had been lost in the wood and never found.

Then, looking to her right, she saw a bush part, and through it came a head, like a dog's, and yet more fearful. Red-glinting eyes showed, and bared white fangs. It was a wolf!

Fayre was numb with fright. The wolf stared at her, unwinking, but with malevolence in his glare, and awful threat in his fangs.

Suddenly, head down, he loped forward.

Fayre swallowed hard, and then, coming to as from a nightmare, she ran. As she ran she screamed, hearing the wolf padding behind her.

She knew that it could catch her, and help was far away. She was miles from the lane; calling out would bring no friend, not even a woodman, for she had not heard the ringing of a woodman's axe nor any voices.

In a panic she ran on, gasping for breath, and her legs seeming like lead, so that she could hardly lift them. Twice she stumbled and all but fell; and presently she knew the end must come.

Then, all at once, so that she thought she must be dreaming, she heard a voice cry out:

"Fall flat! For your life, flat on your face, damsel!"

It was a voice of command, and Fayre fell forward on to hands and knees, rolling over. With chest heaving, every vein throbbing, she waited.

The sound of an arrow's humming drone came then, a sound she had heard too often to mistake.

Next followed a wild howl from just behind her; the cry of the wolf in pain. Excitement and wonder gave her the vigour to look back. She looked only just in time to catch the last glimpse of the wolf as it fled howling, tail down, scared but not seriously injured by the arrow which now stuck out from the ground, marking the spot where the wolf had been.

Three paces behind where she lay! The fleeting arrow had grazed the

wolf, despite its quick movement to dodge.

Scrambling up, Fayre looked to see who it was who had saved her. He stood just in front of her, a smiling young fellow, dressed in green, long hose, tunic, small flying cape—and in his hand as he swept it across his chest, bowing, a small, green, pointed cap adorned with a long feather.

"Robin Hood," Fayre murmured, her eyes shining. "Oh! you saved me from the wolf. I might have guessed it was you."

"Had the wolf guessed, he would not have come so near," Robin Hood answered with a jesting note that took the boast from the words. "But how come you here, fair maiden, all alone?"

Fayre, eyes dancing, looked him up and down. He was hardly more than a boy, handsome and athletic.

"How can I ever thank you enough?" she asked, with a sigh.

"Faith! I need no thanks," he said lightly. "I wear no shining armour,

glade, save for the song of the birds, which had returned, now that the wolf had gone.

Fayre waited, hoping that his famed kindness would bring assent.

"The washer-girl will go to the stocks," she murmured.

Robin Hood took the hunting horn which was slung by a green lanyard at his waist, and blew three short, sharp notes to summon his men.

From a tall tree near by came a shout, from a bush, a shaven head peered out, from another tree came answering calls, and there was the crashing of feet in undergrowth.

Friar Tuck, fat and jovial, looked out from a bush; Little John called down from a tree, and Fayre, guessing their names from what she had heard, felt a thrill of excitement.

"My merry men," called young Robin Hood, in ringing tone. "We storm the castle; for the washer-girl is imprisoned there by the rascally baron."

Fayre's smile vanished as she heard



"ROBIN HOOD alone could save me," said the peasant girl, hopelessly. Fayre, her eyes lighting up, darted towards her. "I have it! Let us change clothes—now!" she cried. "Dressed as a peasant girl I can meet Robin Hood. Quick, quick!"

but in my simple way I am a knight in spirit. It is you I should thank for this good fortune; for every knight must rescue some damsel in distress."

Fayre knew then that her mission was not in vain; for had she not come to ask his aid for another damsel in distress?

"If that is so, brave Robin Hood," she said quickly, "would you save a poor washer-girl who has been flung into the baron's dungeon?"

"The baron's dungeon?" he echoed, eyes flashing. "That rascal has imprisoned the washer-girl—"

"Yes, the one who carried his cloak," said Fayre. "He does not believe you robbed her of it; he thinks she sold it for the gold piece."

Robin Hood twanged the string of his bow.

"The baron is a fool," he said. "The fault was mine—although since he has robbed my people of their lands, I account a cloak but a small return."

Fayre did not argue with that, but pressed her point.

"Then please, kind Robin Hood, give me back the cloak that I may take it to the baron," she said.

Robin Hood paused for reply, deep in thought, and there was silence in the

that. She thought instantly of the draw-bridge, the boiling oil, the catapults, archers, and other defences of the mighty castle.

"No, no!" she gasped. "You cannot do that, Robin Hood. Brave as you are, the castle is too strong. A thousand men would be needed."

"My score of men are worth any thousand," he answered coolly. "Am I to leave this damsel to her fate?"

A chorus of "nay" came from his men as they assembled, eager to do battle for the washer-girl's sake.

"Give me the cloak to take back," begged Fayre. "And then—then take it from him, if you would, while he is wearing it." And she added artfully:

"The baron will jeer when he knows you robbed a girl of it."

Robin Hood coloured deeply. "Nay, I did not rob her," he reproached Fayre. "I robbed the baron, and gave my word that he could take it back again had he the courage."

"Besides, I like it well," said Friar Tuck, and there and then swung into view the gorgeous, purple cloak. "If the baron would have it back, he must e'en fight for it."

Fayre's hopes sank. Robin Hood's

desperate plan of storming the castle frightened her.

"Robin Hood," she said, after thought. "If you could but send a message in your own hand to the baron, why then he would know you have his cloak, and the girl would be freed."

Robin Hood laughed. "Wise maiden," he cried. "Thou hast indeed a sharp wit. Friar Tuck! Come, write a message."

Fayre nearly danced with glee as Friar Tuck, the only one of this merry band able to write, produced a flask in which was a black powder well shaken with water, a quill pen, and from a pouch took a sheaf of paper, made, as the custom was then, from cotton.

Sharpening the pen while the message was thought out and discussed, Friar Tuck sat down to his labour. Fayre looked over his shoulder as he wrote, and to the merry men's surprise, helped him with the spelling.

"Thy cloak is mine; if thou wouldst have it, baron, prithee bring a thousand men in full armour to take it; for with me are a dozen of true mettle.—Robin Hood."

To that message, Robin, well pleased, added his mark.

"Let me please take it!" Fayre exclaimed. "There are secret ways of entrance that I know."

"You? A simple peasant girl!" jested Robin. "Not so simple if you can play tricks on the baron."

"Indeed no!" smiled Fayre. "But take great care, Robin Hood. If the baron comes he will wear chain mail!"

"Wolves or barons—they are all one to me," said Robin Hood.

At the mention of wolves, the colour fled from Fayre's cheeks.

"Have no fear," said Robin Hood, as he noticed her look. "Take this whistle. It is shrill; and at sound of it any wolf will fly."

He handed Fayre a small whistle, which he himself had cut; but with his renowned gallantry he insisted that he must escort her himself to the lauc.

"Fare thee well, Mystery Maid," he smiled, halting when they were but a matter of fifty yards from the road. "Make sure that that message is delivered; for we shall make due preparation to welcome the baron."

"I will not fail," Fayre promised. "Farewell, brave Robin Hood!"

When the Baron Returned!

"**H**A, you are in time to see the fun and merriment!"

Thus the warden of the drawbridge, as Fayre, having called from the far side for him to bring it down, crossed it. There was no question now of allowing her through, for the men recognised her as "the messenger for the Lady Fayre."

"The fun! What fun is this?" Fayre asked.

"The stocks are raised in the courtyard; the washer-girl who sold the baron's cloak will be in them."

Fayre, hurrying into the courtyard, paused, heart beating fast with dismay, as she saw a crowd of servants gathered about the stocks, which a carpenter was erecting. Believing this girl to be a thief who had sold their master's cloak to a pedlar, the other servants were ready to torment her, and even, as was the custom, to throw things.

Not far away was the baron himself, talking to an armourer, who was showing him a newly made suit of chain mail. Unobserved, Fayre entered the castle, and stole down the winding steps to the cold, damp dungeons.

The dungeon door was unlocked still, and, pushing it wide, she looked for Mathilda, sighing in relief as she saw the girl hiding behind the door.

Mathilda's intense fright waned at Fayre's return, and colour flooded her cheeks.

"Oh, my lady!" she muttered, in distress. "They go to put me in the stocks. I have heard the shouts; already some serving-girls have passed by the barred windows and shouted mockingly to me. And—and you have not the cloak?"

Fayre was already slipping off the ragged frock.

"Not yet; but I have seen Robin Hood. Have no fear. If I can but get his message to my uncle, you are saved. Be brave, Mathilda!"

With trembling fingers the washer-girl removed the lovely frock, and presently she was in her own ragged garments again, sighing a little wistfully as she looked at Fayre's.

"That is a magic frock you have," whispered Fayre. "If I should do this for you, all I ask is that as soon as may be possible, you bring me another like it in exchange for one of mine!"

Then, slipping from the dungeon, she locked the door.

Above sounded footsteps, her uncle's voice, and the cringing tones of the dungeon warden.

Dodging back behind an immense buttress, Fayre held her breath. Presently she peeped out and saw her uncle, the warden, and two soldiers by the dungeon door, which was then unlocked.

"Bring her out!" cried the baron.

Mathilda, held by two soldiers, was led weeping up the stairs; and not until they were in the courtyard did Fayre move from hiding. But while she had waited, she had made her plans, and now, without hesitation, she swiftly mounted the stairs to the guard-rooms.

All the soldiers had moved to the outer gallery, whence, through the long orifices in the wall, cut for archers, they could see the exciting scene below.

Fayre tripped lightly into the armoury. A hundred bows, a thousand arrows were there; and, seizing the shortest bow of all, and a loaded quiver, she crept out.

The master of archers himself had taught her how to use a bow; and Fayre did not doubt her skill to fire the simple shaft she planned.

Climbing the hundred steps, she reached the battlements, where the baron's banner fluttered in the breeze. Fayre looked down at the courtyard; and such was the height that the figures seemed mere specks. She saw the stocks, the crowd of servants, and the small approaching group with Mathilda, weeping in shame, in the centre.

Taking Robin Hood's message from her golden chain, to which she had fastened it, and piercing it with the arrow barb in such a manner that it would not fly free, Fayre adjusted the bowstring.

But where to aim?

"I must take care that I do not hurt anyone," Fayre muttered.

She took aim at a mighty oak door a full fifty yards from the stocks; and even the poorest shot could not have sent the arrow at the people.

Stretching the bowstring until her hand was against her ear, the arrow just free from her chest, Fayre let fly. The arrow sang down; but, curving in midair, swung away from the door and struck the soft grass.

Shouts came from below as Fayre dodged back out of sight.

"Robin Hood! He has fought an arrow over the walls—"

"Impudent robber!" roared the baron above them all. "Tis Robin Hood who stole my cloak. Bring my charger! My armour! Summon the men to arms!"

"The girl spoke the truth! 'Twas Robin Hood!" went up a shout.

Then came a roaring command from the baron that made Fayre's heart jump for joy.

"Set the washer-girl free!" It was all Fayre could do to control herself and swallow the cheer that rose to her lips; but the baron's next words made that task easier. For they were as a douse of cold water on her hopes.

"The girl shall take us to where she met this rascally robber; and by my halidom, Robin Hood shall take her place in the stocks!"

THE AGED tutor dozed peacefully. He was not aware how long the young Lady Fayre had been absent from the room; for meditating upon the wildness of the modern girl, he had dropped off into a doze.

The young Lady Fayre did not rouse him. Standing at her window, she looked down at the barbican, anxiously awaiting news of the battle. Full forty minutes before, the baron, armed with his mighty sword, clad in his new suit of chain mail, and accompanied by his knights, squires, and men-at-arms, had gone forth to capture Robin Hood.

And with him, free, mounted behind a young knight, had gone Mathilda, smiling again, waving to the Lady Fayre with fervent gratitude.

Now, so long a period having elapsed, the young Lady Fayre herself was not smiling; for her thoughts were with Robin Hood and his band.

Another five minutes passed, and then beyond the castle walls came sounds of commotion, shouting, and laughter. The drawbridge chains clattered, the drawbridge went down, and a horse thundered across it.

It was the baron! Riding so that he was facing his charger's tail, he had his feet tied under the girth, while trailing behind him through the mud was his new sword, broken, and—the cloak!

A crown of leaves adorned the baron's head. But where was his fine new suit of mail? Instead of it, he was clad only in his grey under-tunic and pantaloons!

Fayre, round-eyed, just stared for an instant, and then, laughing, fell back for fear that the baron saw her. Yet laugh she had to. Indeed, the wonder to Fayre was that the baroness did not laugh as she rushed from the castle.

"Oh! You have brought back your cloak, my lord?" she exclaimed. "This is—good indeed. But—"

—the baron's voice sounded like thunder.

"The rascal, the knave! One by one, we were trapped in a narrow defile, our chargers sinking in boggy waste!"

In the Lady Fayre's room, the young mistress of the castle silently did a jig.

Mathilda, the washer-girl, was free; the baron had his cloak again; and gay, daring young Robin Hood, instead of being in the stocks, was somewhere making merry in the wood, clad for a while, as she guessed, in a splendid suit of chain mail.

Well did she know that but for her such things would not have been!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

THERE! Wasn't that one of the loveliest, most unusual stories you have ever read? And don't you adore the young Lady Fayre and intrepid Robin Hood? Meet them again next week in another fascinating COMPLETE story.

Romance, Glamour, Breathless Excitement—all came to Pamela Courtney in her role as

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 is a traitor, and who is plotting to disgrace the princess in the eyes of the people and seize the throne. Pamela is helped by a young Leiconian named Paul Naldi, whom the grand duke has outlawed. Together they fight in secret against the grand duke, until the latter at last suspects that Pamela is an impostor. During a state ball Pamela hears a commotion in the palace grounds. Paul has been caught in the grounds and arrested!

(Now read on.)

Paul's Amazing Action!

"PAUL—oh, my goodness! They've got him; they're taking him to the dungeons!"

Transfixed with shock and horror, Pamela clutched the stone balustrade of the balcony and stared down at the moonlit palace grounds.

There, briskly approaching, was a colourful little cavalcade of people.

First, two gorgeously uniformed Civic Guards; then—the thing which had struck such chill to her heart—Paul Naldi, her lone, courageous helper, in the grip of other soldiers, while beside him, taunting, mocking, and exultant, strutted the treacherous Grand Duke Bernard, and bringing up the rear, more members of the Civic Guard.

Horror held Pamela paralysed for the moment. Remorse was gnawing at her heart, too.

For it was because he had come here to-night to save her from exposure as an impostor that Paul had fallen into the hands of the arch-traitor. She had arranged to meet him outside the palace; obviously he had deemed it better to come to her.

And now—the dungeons! That was the fate which awaited him. Perhaps even worse.

Pamela roused herself. Somehow Paul must be saved. The whole destiny of Leiconia might depend upon his freedom, for if he were a captive and she were revealed as an impostor nothing could save Leiconia from revolt.

Swiftly, she darted along the balcony until she was slightly ahead of that grim, sinister cavalcade. She gripped the stone balustrade again; leaned over; and—

"Stop!" she cried. "Uncle!" she addressed the grand duke, as, with a sudden scowl, he halted, then saluted. "What is this? Who is that young man? Why is he under arrest?"

It was bluff, of course. She was merely fencing, for she knew that the grand duke was fully aware of Paul's identity; fully alive to the fact that he had been her accomplice in many successful schemes to outwit his own traitorous plotting.

But never once had either she or the duke betrayed their true feelings towards each other, and the duke did not break that rule now.

"Your Highness," he said blandly,

PRINCESS PAM'S SECRET HELPER ARRESTED!

Alone now in her fight against the traitors!

"this young ruffian was caught skulking in the palace grounds. Naturally, he refuses to explain, but his motives are clear. Obviously he is an enemy of your Highness. He has been identified as the same intruder who struck down one of your guards not many days ago.

"For the safety of you, your Highness"—once more the grand duke bowed—"and to teach such traitors a lesson," he suddenly grated, jerking his head towards the helpless Paul, "he is being taken to the dungeons!"

There was a ring of command in the grand duke's tone then. The guards began to hustle Paul away. But not yet had Pamela finished.

"Wait!" she cried. "Uncle, he—he does not look like that. You say he refuses to speak! Perhaps there is some other reason for his being here—"

"Whatever it is, it can't be much good!" the duke retorted.

"I'd like to talk to him, uncle," said

Pamela. "I'll come down. Keep him there, please—"

She gathered up her long, shimmering evening dress and turned to dart into her boudoir. The grand duke could scarcely ignore her request, for she was princess, and with her a request was a command. Before members of the Civic Guard not even the grand duke himself dare defy her.

But there came a check from a startlingly unexpected source.

Paul, wrenching himself free of his two captors, darted forward. As Pamela, heart leaping, stopped in her stride, the young fellow swiftly bent down, grabbed at the ground, and then, springing erect, flung back his arm.

"Keep your sympathy, your Most Gracious Highness!" he shouted, in a tone of the utmost contempt. "And keep that with it!"

His arm shot forward, and something came sailing through the air towards Pamela. Instinctively, she ducked, dumbfounded though she was by such extraordinary behaviour on the part of her loyal friend.

Some object, missing her by feet, flew through the open french windows. She heard a faint thud as it landed. A hand to her throat, heart pounding madly, eyes rather wide and incredulous, she looked down at the scene below.

No chance of helping Paul now. By that inexplicable action he had shattered every avenue of hope. Already he was being hauled away.

Only the grand duke remained.

"A thousand apologies, my dear," he called up, unmistakably mocking. "But have no fear. He shall be punished accordingly!"

A click of the heels, another brisk salute, and the grand duke was striding after the prisoner.

Pamela moved as in a trance. With something like a shock she presently realised that she was back in her boudoir. How long she had been there she did not know. She knew nothing at all, indeed, except a most awful sense of remorse and horror.

Paul caught! She now alone to fight the grand duke's treachery. No one to aid her; no one to help her escape ex-

By
DORIS LESLIE

posure. Oh, she wasn't thinking only of herself. There was Leiconia, that beautiful, fairy-like country she had come to love.

Leiconia would be rent by revolt; a revolt inspired by the grand duke, thirsting for power and wealth.

Slowly, Pamela began to pace her room. Seconds passed. She stopped. Again she began to walk in slow, measured strides, off at a tangent this time. But all at once her daintily shod foot struck against something hard; something that went rolling away across the carpet.

Halting, she stared at it. And then, the most peculiar expression coming into her face, she dropped to her knees and picked the object up.

"Oh, Paul!" she choked. "You—you did that—for me!"

This was the missile he had thrown. But it was no stone. She was turning over and over in her shaking hands a small stone bottle. No need to remove the stopper for her to realise what it contained.

It held the dye he had promised to bring; the dye with which she could change the tint of her own hair so that, even with the wig removed, she would

still be the real princess' living image, and thus be able to frustrate the grand duke's chief method of unmasking her.

A little misty-eyed, Pamela rose. She was shaking her head to herself when she became aware of sounds from beyond the door.

Footsteps!

"Oh, my goodness—the grand duke!" she cried. "He mustn't see this!"

Agitatedly, she glanced about her for somewhere to conceal the vital bottle. Of hiding-places there were more than enough. Three strides, and she had slipped the bottle into one of her dressing-table drawers, locked it, and removed the key.

She had just slipped the key into a vase on the bureau when there came a rap on the door.

"Are you there, Sonia?" came the grand duke's familiar tones.

Pamela bade him enter. He strode in, outwardly full of concern for her and raging with anger against his prisoner.

"You were not struck by that young rascal, my dear?" he said, a strange light in his eyes.

"Oh, no, uncle!" said Pamela. She smiled, trusting that she appeared quite

composed. "It missed me by miles. A perfectly awful shot, in fact!"

"I am indeed glad, my dear. No damage done, either?"

The grand duke, stepping farther into the room, looked about him, while Pamela watched in gathering suspense.

She could guess something of the traitor's feelings at this moment. Though suspecting that she was an impostor, he had not quite sufficient conviction to justify a sudden grab for her wig. Her safety lay in seeing that he was never given enough conviction. He mustn't have the faintest idea of the real nature of the object Paul had thrown into the room.

Keenly, she scanned the grand duke's face. He looked puzzled. Well, that was only natural, for he must be wondering why Paul, her friend, should apparently attempt to injure her!

"No, nothing damaged at all, I see," he remarked, finishing his scrutiny.

"What was it, a stone?"

"Why—or-why—" Pamela began, and then, heart aflutter, broke off.

For she suddenly felt at an absolute loss to know what answer to give. And while she was racking her brains, the grand duke walked nearer.

"Well, my dear?" he said. "Where is it? I shall need it as evidence against the prisoner. Show it to me, Sonia, please!"

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

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—Well, I hope most of your good resolutions are still going strong. I say "most" because I quite expect a few of them to have been broken already, but then I always think that some resolutions are exactly like pie-crust in that respect—simply made for the purpose. You know the kind of resolution I mean: The "I-will-never-be-late-for-school-again," sort; and the "I-WILL-keep-a-diary-properly-this-year-really-I-will" variety. It's inclined to be fun breaking those, isn't it?

Your Editor hasn't broken any so far. Not that I'm claiming that as proof of my strength of character. It's just that I only made one. I told you about that last week. It was, you may remember, to give you lovelier programmes than ever during 1939. And I'm determined not to break that. In fact, I'm so enthusiastic about it that I've already prepared another glorious treat for you all.

Please don't ask me what it is now. Just try to be patient until next Saturday, and then, readers all, you shall know everything! But I will say this—you're going to have the loveliest of surprises!

Talking of good resolutions in connection with THE SCHOOLGIRL reminds me at once of other good things—good stories. (Of course!) And good stories instantly makes me think of Hilda Richards, whose latest series of Cliff House tales, featuring Faith Ashton and Babs & Co., begins in this issue.

What did you think of "They Dare Not Trust Faith Ashton"? Or haven't you read it yet? Well, hurry up and do read it, won't you? Because, you know, it's going to grip you from first word to last.

And that is just as true, if not even more so, with regard to—

"THE WORST CAPTAIN AT CLIFF HOUSE,"

—next week's grand Cliff House story, the second in this powerful series.

Faith is triumphant! She's Captain of the Fourth; she's simpered and fawned her way into Miss Venn's good books, so that the headmistress is clay in her hands; and she can practically run things as she likes.

Naturally, Faith does. And the Fourth are not only furious but horrified. For if Faith is a detestable captain, with her sneaking, vindictive ways, she is also quite the most hopeless person ever to be given authority.

Babs & Co. have entered for an important dramatic festival. Mabel Lynn, as the Fourth's finest actress and producer, is to be in charge, of course. But Faith has other ideas. SHE will take charge of it; SHE will produce it and play the leading role. And "Quite right," supports Miss Venn. "Faith is captain. That is good enough."

But to the utter dismay of the chums Faith is an abject failure, and they can see the play being a dreadful fiasco. Instead of praise and congratulation Cliff House's only lot will be jeering laughter. The positions seems hopeless.

And then Babs gets an idea. Why not rehearse another play—in secret? Aren't the Fourth excited then? Oh, great idea! But Faith mustn't suspect. If she does, it will ruin everything. So we have Babs & Co. planning, acting and producing in absolute secrecy; and Faith, suspicious, prowling round trying to learn what they are up to.

Hilda Richards has written a grand, spell-binding story as No. 2 of this memorable series. I know you'll make certain of reading it.

Next week's number will also contain another fascinating COMPLETE "Secret Helper to Robin Hood" story, by Ida Melbourne, further thrilling chapters of Doris Lealie's glamorous princess story—which is now working up to a really amazing climax; and more of Patricia's bright and interesting pages, so—order your copy well in advance.

And now cheerio until next Saturday. With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,
THE EDITOR.

Unexpected Aid!

PAMELA thought at lightning speed.

Disaster was looming towards her. The grand duke's suspicions were strengthening. She could tell that from the hardness that had crept into his features.

But he mustn't suspect—he mustn't, he mustn't!

"But, uncle, I never said it was a stone," she managed to burst out. She gave a little laugh, terribly, horribly forced, it seemed to her. "As a matter of fact, I didn't even think about looking for it, not realising you'd want it."

"Then, in that case," remarked the grand duke shortly, darting her a keen glance, "the object, whatever it was, can soon be found!"

Long, slender figure bent forward, he began to perambulate about the room. So did Pamela, but whereas the grand duke was genuinely and very thoroughly seeking some kind of missile, she was desperately striving to think of a way of tricking him.

And presently she got inspiration! That bowl of ferns over there—why, it was the very thing, filled to the brim with mould. Mould! Golly, what a chance! And the grand duke, prying under one of the settees, had his back towards her.

Pamela sped over to the bowl, dug her hand into the mould and, while the grand duke's attention was still pre-occupied, dropped the mould underneath a chair.

Then, breathing heavily with relief, she resumed her own "search," leaving the duke to make the discovery.

He did so a minute or two later, and Pamela could have laughed at the almost ludicrous expression of chagrin which crossed his face as he pointed to the little heap under the chair.

"Mould!" he ejaculated. "He threw a lump of earth. And you mean to tell me, Sonia," he demanded, swinging round, "that you failed to notice it, here, in this conspicuous spot?"

"Well, you didn't notice it until now, uncle," was Pamela's cool reply.

The grand duke grunted. Making no attempt to clear the debris away, he moved towards the door, hesitated once

as though about to say something further, walked on, and finally paused on the threshold.

Quite plainly he was not sure enough of himself to attempt to unmask Pamela now!

"Well, good-night, Sonia!" he said. "The state ball is almost over, so there is no need for you to return to it. I shall be there until the end, of course. Then"—he permitted himself a sinister smile—"then I shall deal with that young rascal! And you may rest assured, your Highness," he concluded, with a sneer, "that he will bitterly regret his treachery by the time I have finished with him. Good-night!"

He did not bother to salute this time, but swiftly drew the door shut. A moment later Pamela heard him retreating.

It was a different Pamela now from the dejected, remorseful girl who had seen her young friend borne away to the dungeons.

This latest success over her enemy had given her new strength, new confidence, new courage. And the duke's own words on departing had filled her with glorious hope.

He would be at the state ball until it concluded!

"Now's my chance," Pamela thrilled. "My chance to go to the dungeons! Golly, but that's marvellous—the very thing I wanted!"

She did not waste a second, but, slipping out of the room, made for one of the rarely frequented back staircases, and presently, after descending endless carpeted stairs and traversing a maze of narrow corridors, emerged into the moonlit grounds.

Her heart was beating fast, every nerve of her body was strung up as she slipped between bushes and trees, taking a short cut through the glorious flower-gardens for the dungeons.

How she would effect Paul's release she did not know. It was scarcely likely she could smuggle him out. Probably her hope lay in one or two other alternatives—that she could obtain his release by exercising her authority as princess, or that she could secure the keys to his cell from the rather elderly gaoler and smuggle them to Paul, so that he could let himself out at a favourable moment during the night.

"If the guards on duty aren't the grand duke's own special supporters," Pamela mused, "I think a little Royal Highness authority should do the trick! I'll risk what the grand duke does when he learns."

She sped on. There was plenty of cover in the flower gardens, and she made use of it, just in case the grand duke had instructed his treacherous niece Juanita to resume her spying.

But, though Pamela several times halted in alcoves and around the corners of hedge-lined paths, waiting and listening, she could detect no sound of pursuit.

Once she did have a scare as something emerged from some shadows just in front of her, but it was only a peacock, even more startled than herself.

On and on she flitted. The sombre white walls of the dungeons loomed up ahead. And then, emerging from a cluster of bushes, she stopped, with a little cry, as someone came striding straight towards her.

"Who's that?" exclaimed a sharp voice.

Pamela tensed. In the moonlight she saw a tall, uniformed man bearing down upon her. She looked at him in puzzlement. There was something familiar about him, his pose, his dignified bearing. Then, as he came closer, she could



WHILE the grand duke's back was turned, Pamela swiftly threw a handful of mould under the chair. If only the grand duke could be deceived into thinking that the mould had been thrown through the window, all would be well.

see something else, a neat imperial beard.

Like magic her alarm faded. To a rush of glorious delight, she stepped forward.

"Oh, your—your Highness!" she cried, forgetting in that joyful moment of recognition that she was supposed to acknowledge this aristocratic man as her uncle. "Oh, I'm so glad you've come back!"

Prince Alphonse, halting, laid both hands on her shoulders. If he were as surprised at this encounter as Pamela, he was also puzzled and concerned.

"Why, what is wrong, my child?" he asked. "You are trembling like a leaf! There, my little one, be calm, be calm! Now tell me, why do I find you in the grounds like this, alone, when there is a state function in progress? And why," he added keenly, "do you call me 'Highness'—as though you had forgotten your duty, or lost your faith in yourself?"

Pamela smiled wanly, shaking her head.

Perhaps she had lost faith in herself a short time ago. But not now. For if the opportunity of rescuing Paul had given her new hope, this miraculous return of the only other person whom she could trust had fired her with even greater inspiration!

No longer was she alone. Prince Alphonse was here. And she could tell him everything, ask his advice, receive his comfort and guidance.

"Your—uncle, I mean," she began, seizing his arm, "something serious has happened. The grand duke's found out—"

Prince Alphonse started. "You mean, about you? That you are not—Sonia?"

"Yes, uncle—at least, he suspects. But let me explain; tell you everything. It goes back a long time. Come over here!" She drew him into the cover of a rustic summerhouse. "You see, uncle, some weeks ago—"

And there and then, as briefly as she could and yet careful to omit nothing of importance, Pamela recited the events leading up to the present startling crisis.

She told of the grand duke's efforts to foster a spirit of revolt amongst the

peasants by blaming her for injustices inflicted by himself; she told of Paul's courageous work, striving to combat those activities; she told of the grand duke's niece, Juanita, whose hypocritical friendship had caused Paul to become an outlaw and led to the suspicion that Pamela was masquerading as princess; and finally, a note of mingled bitterness and anger in her voice, she recounted Paul's capture to-night.

"Oh, your Highness," she ended passionately. "I—I don't know what to say! It's all my fault, really. I've just made a ghastly failure of everything. But I'm not done yet!" Fiercely her eyes gleamed; resolutely she flung back her head. "I'm going to free Paul. I'll manage it somehow, and—and then—"

Very tenderly Prince Alphonse put an arm about her shoulders.

"My dear child," he said, "you have not failed. There is nothing with which you need reproach yourself. It is I who should be reproached. I underestimated the cunning of the duke. You, my dear, I am sure, have been every whit as loyal and brave and noble as I had hoped."

"Well, I—I have tried," Pamela said, with a little smile. "But if only Paul can be got away," she rushed on eagerly, "I'm sure he could hold things up; prevent revolt from breaking out, for the time being, anyway. The peasants think so much of him, uncle. They listen to what he says. And if he did do that it would give us time."

"All we need, my dear, is twenty-four hours!" said the prince.

"Twenty-four hours?" Pamela echoed, starting. "But—but—"

"Because, my dear," he went on, his voice rising with excitement, "Sonia returns to-morrow. Yes, to-morrow," he repeated, as Pamela gave a little gasp of joy. "That is why I am here, though I must leave at once to attend to several important matters connected with the mission she undertook. And it was entirely successful, my dear!"

Pamela thrilled.

Oh, but this was marvellous! Only twenty-four hours longer to hold out. And Sonia, back in her old place, would be able to announce to the people that the oil located in Leiconia was to be exploited by an American company in

such a way that every single person would be assured of prosperity for the rest of their lives—and for generations to come!

"Oh, how wonderful, uncle!" Pamela cried, starry-eyed. "We'll do it; we'll beat the duke, after all. After all, he only suspects I'm an impostor!" Almost flippant she felt now. "I'll release Paul—"

"A very courageous young man," said the prince. "It was he who sent me information regarding the duke which has enabled me to build up a pretty strong case against that ambitious gentleman. I don't think I shall have much difficulty in establishing his treachery at the proper time. But you, my dear," he added anxiously, "you must protect yourself from exposure at all costs!"

"I'll do that all right," Pamela responded. "Later on I'll use the dye on my hair. But it's Paul I'm thinking of at the moment."

Shortly afterwards she and the prince parted, and at a little run she made for the dungeons. Anxiously she scanned the Civic Guards who were on sentry-go in the alcoves that flanked the stone steps leading below ground. Then her eyes lit up.

Not the grand duke's specially selected men after all, but the usual body of soldiers whom she knew to be loyal to her. Oh, that was grand! She'd be able to smuggle Paul out herself!

Boldly she stepped forward. And ten seconds later, tearing back across the grounds towards the palace, went a slim girlish figure, her pale face even paler now with excitement.

For Juanita, the grand duke's niece had been spying, after all; and she had watched Pamela enter the dungeons!

Unmasked!

"SO-HO," said the grand duke, with a little chuckle. "So she has gone to the dungeons to rescue her confederate, eh?"

He patted the shoulder of the smugly smiling Juanita.

"Splendid work, Juanita. I'll see you're well rewarded for this."

"Well, you'd better get a move on, uncle, or there may not be any reward at all!" Juanita remarked impatiently.

The grand duke dallied no longer, but snatching up a belt, complete with sword, from his desk, began strapping it on as he marched for the door.

As soon as it was secure he broke into a most undignified sprint!

But it's bound to be all right, Jacques—and I only want a few words with the prisoner!"

"Why, yes, your Highness! Certainly, your Highness. Of—of course, only—"

And the elderly gaoler in the palace dungeons twisted his cap in such embarrassment that at any other time Pamela would have been compelled to laugh.

Plainly he was in the most dreadful predicament. He could not refuse the wishes of the princess, and yet there was a very strong reason why he should hesitate; a reason which Pamela naturally guessed.

"Oh, I know my uncle thinks the fellow may try to harm me," she said, with a smile, "but then uncle's so con-

cerned for me all the time. How could the fellow harm me? He's behind bars, isn't he? And the door's locked?"

"Why, yes, certainly, your Highness," the gaoler responded, nodding furiously.

"Well, then, where's the danger?"

Pamela patted the old fellow's shoulder. "I'll be perfectly safe. But I know. Just you go down and make sure the door is locked first. You won't mind then, will you?"

And she gave him her most winsome smile.

Not that Pamela felt at all like smiling at the moment. Never had she been so strung-up with suspense and impatience.

Time was precious, and the minutes had simply flown while she tried to cajole the old gaoler into giving way. For the grand duke had impressed upon him that no one, not even her Royal Highness herself, was to be permitted anywhere near the prisoner's cell. He was too dangerous!

At first Pamela had been horrified. What chance now of smuggling Paul out? For even though they might boldly walk past the guards on the stairway, it was absolutely certain the gaoler would never consent to such a flagrant disregard to the grand duke's instructions, even though it was the princess herself who was involved.

But Pamela had seen a way. The gaoler would have to change places with Paul. It would mean Paul having to gag the old chap, without hurting him, of course; but this was no time for scruples.

Paul's liberty might influence the whole future history of Leiconia!

"You will do that, won't you?" Pamela asked gently, as the old fellow still hesitated.

Suddenly he nodded.

"All right, your Highness," he said. "Only—only not a word to the duke," he added fearfully. "If he knew—"

Pamela was quick to turn this to her own advantage.

"Look!" she said quickly. "While I talk to the prisoner, you go for a walk down some of the corridors, then you'll be able to say quite truthfully, if the duke should ask, that you haven't seen anyone go near the prisoner!"

"Well, that is an idea, your Highness. Thank you. I will," said the old fellow gratefully.

Pamela herself was glad, too. There would be no need to make him a prisoner in one of his own cells now.

"Go on, then," she said, gesturing. "Go and test the door. I'll wait here."

The gaoler ambled off towards one of the huge barred doors. Pamela, never taking her eyes off his broad back, swiftly edged to the table. In a moment she had picked up the huge bunch of keys, and, turning to hide the action with her own body, began to seek out No. 8, the number of Paul's cell.

Ah! There it was. Feverishly she removed it from the ring; spinning round, watching the gaoler again, she replaced the rest of the bunch on the table.

She saw him shake the cell door, glare in at Paul, and then, looking round, nod at her. Then he shuffled off down the corridor.

Pamela, heart pounding, waited until he had vanished around the corner of one of the other passages, and then dived across the stone floor.

"Paul—oh, quick!" she cried. "I've come to let you out."

Paul clutched at the bars. As she put out her hand, he gripped it tightly. Eagerness blazed from his eyes, lighting up his haggard face.

"Hurry, Pam!" he panted. "Before the old chap comes back. But the guards. What about them?"

Pamela answered tremulously, head turned to watch for the gaoler, shaking hands inserting the key in the lock.

"We'll walk past them—pretend nothing's wrong. I'll say something about a mistake—that you shouldn't have played a joke like that, and your father'll be furious. They'll think you're one of my friends, and by the time they've discovered—"

Pamela broke off, every atom of life seeming to become suddenly cold and dead inside her.

For a voice had spoken from her back; a voice charged with an obviously simulated astonishment.

"Sonia! What is the meaning of this?"

The Grand Duke Bernard! Here—behind her—at the very moment she was effecting Paul's release!

Pamela, blanching, acted with the speed of thought; acted almost without realising it. She turned, straightening up, at the same time forcing a look of surprise to her own white features.

"Uncle!" she exclaimed. She gave a shaky laugh. "I'm sorry. I came to speak to the prisoner. I wanted to see for myself what he was like."

"And your verdict, having seen him?" the grand duke inquired mockingly, folding his arms.

Keeping one hand behind her back, Pamela slowly withdrew the key, talking at the same time to drown the slight noise.

"I can hardly imagine him as a dangerous fellow, uncle," she said. "Do you—really?"

The grand duke shrugged.

"Appearances can be most deceptive at times, my dear Sonia," he observed, a meaning ring in his voice.

"Oh, yes, I know," Pamela agreed. "Sometimes!"

She began to edge away, turning so that she was facing the cell. She knew the grand duke had no illusions as to her motive in coming here. He was fencing, just as she was.

"He—he seems a very pleasant sort of fellow to me," she went on. "Look at him, uncle."

As though about to inspect something from an entirely different and vastly inferior world, the grand duke adjusted his monocle. At the same moment Paul gave a cry.

"Pam—look out! Behind you—"

Startled, Pamela stood stock still for an instant before spinning round. By that time it was too late. She caught a glimpse of Juanita, caught a slashing movement that girl made with her arm.

Then Juanita's fingers clutched her wig, tugged, and came away—with that mass of artificial, raven hair firmly gripped.

And revealed for both plotters to see—for anyone who came upon the scene to see—were Pamela's own golden tresses!

NO chance to save Paul now—for at last Pamela is unmasked as an impostor. But what will happen to Pamela herself? Next Saturday's chapters are the most dramatic and thrilling yet to appear in this serial. Don't miss them.