

Dramatic times for Barbara Redfern & Co. when a girl who is their enemy becomes:—

"THE WORST CAPTAIN AT CLIFF HOUSE!"

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Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



"QUICK, MABS! SHE'S COMING!"

For Mabel Lynn's disguise must be completed before the sneak arrived.
(See this week's superb Babs & Co. story.)

Story No. 2 in the Powerful Series starring two-faced

The WORST



By
**HILDA
RICHARDS**

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

Out of Their Hands!



"IT'S got to be good-jolly good!" Barbara Redfern said seriously.

Mabel Lynn, Babs' greatest chum at Cliff House School, nodded her head of golden hair. "It's got to be better than anything we've ever done," she agreed.

Whereupon, fat, bespectacled Bessie Bunter puffed out her chest.

"Yes, rather, you know. That's why you ought to make me leading lady."

From Babs & Co. and the several other Fourth Formers, including Tam-boy Clara Trevlyn, who were crowded into Babs' study, No. 4, in the Fourth Form corridor, there came chuckles of amusement. Then Clara snuffed.

"If you say that again, fatima," she threatened, "I'll stun you! You've got your part—the cook. Now, Mabs, what do you want me to do?"

"Well, you'll be the aunt," Mabs said. "Leila, you're the grown-up sister. Marjorie, you'll make yourself responsible for costumes, and so on, won't you? I'll do the producing, and Babs is the heroine. Is that agreed?"

"Sure!" Leila Carroll, the American junior, agreed. "There's just one thing, though. I kind of guess we'll have to get permission from Miss Venn

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before we start rehearsing. Think she'll allow it?"

All the girls—forming the casting committee of the Junior Dramatic Society at Cliff House—dubiously regarded each other then. Until that moment that aspect of the question had not occurred to them.

Very eagerly and enthusiastically the committee had got together to put into working order the performance of "Daughter of Long Ago," the one-act

Having ousted her cousin, Barbara Redfern, from the Junior School captaincy, Faith Ashton, deceitful, treacherous, seeks to add to her triumph by taking over the leadership of the Amateur Dramatic Society. Coolly she announces that she will produce the play for the Annual Drama Festival—and take the leading role herself. "Faith is not going to get away with it!" Babs & Co. determine, and so . . .

play due to be performed on the following Saturday in the great Schools Drama Festival which was taking place at the Courtfield Grand Theatre.

That play, together with the Grecian play which the Sixth Form was supposed to be performing in the same festival, had been under discussion before the break-up for the Christmas holidays. It

really should have been begun before this.

But things of a rather disturbing nature had been happening at Cliff House since the beginning of the new term, completely upsetting the school's usual social activities.

In the first place, Cliff House had a new and a very strict headmistress, whose rules and methods had already taken the school to the brink of rebellion. In the second place, Barbara Redfern, for so many terms captain of the Fourth Form, was no longer captain—at least, not officially, though secretly her loyal chums still adhered to her leadership. Her captain's position had been stolen from her by her sly and shameless cousin, Faith Ashton.

And now they all wondered what, in the light of her stern rule and measures, would Miss Venn say about the projected play?

"Well," Clara said, breaking a heavy and uneasy pause, "I don't see how she can help but give us permission. After all, we entered for the drama festival long before she was ever thought of! If she scotches the entry now it will be the first time for years that Cliff House hasn't been in it—"

"And the first time for two years," Marjorie Hazeldene put in quietly, "that Cliff House hasn't won the drama trophy. Oh, of course she'll let us go through with it! She'll have to. If we scratched now, Cliff House would never be able to hold up its head again. Hallo, what's that?" she added, as a knock came on the door.

"Come in!" Babs cried.

The door opened. Into the room came a girl. It was a girl at the sight of whom all the chums stiffened immediately—a girl with a pretty, cream-white oval face, wide, innocent blue eyes, and flaxen hair, which gave for the moment an impression of a most strikingly pretty doll.

It seemed just utterly impossible, regarding Faith Ashton, as she appeared then, to believe that she could be guilty of the treachery, the duplicity, the cunning which she had used to depose Barbara Redfern. No wonder that most

people, meeting Faith for the first time, were completely carried away by her sweet personality; no wonder that Miss Venn, upon whom Faith had used all those endearing wiles, had been deceived—and still was being deceived.

But not the chums—not any girl in Cliff House.

"Oh!" Faith said, and simpered at

Faith Ashton at war with Barbara Redfern & Co.

CAPTAIN *at* CLIFF HOUSE!

the group. "Holding a meeting?" she inquired sweetly.

"Your business?" Clara grunted.

"Well, yes, of course," Faith said, and glanced at the captain's badge which was pinned on her tunic. "Naturally I don't want to be officious—"

"We've noticed that, I guess," Leila put in, with a curl of the lip.

Faith shook her head reproachfully at the girl from New York.

"I don't know what you mean, Leila. I haven't been officious, as far as I'm aware. But as captain of the Junior School I have my duty to do, and my duty is to carry out Miss Venn's orders. Of course, there's no objection to your having a meeting, as long as you get permission first. Have you got permission?"

The chums exchanged glances. They'd never even thought about that.

"Supposing," Babs questioned, "we haven't?"

"Well, then, you'll have to, you know. I can give it to you, as you know; but first, of course, you'll have to tell me what the meeting is about."

"Then jolly well go!" Clara snapped, but was silenced in mid-sentence as Babs fiercely tapped her ankle with a foot under cover of the table.

"Well, that's right," Babs said hastily. "Yes, of course that's right!" And while her chums stared at her in some amazement: "We were holding a meeting about the drama festival," she volunteered.

"Oh!" Faith looked interested at once. Among the things she fancied she

could do rather better than most other girls, was acting. "Oh, yes, of course! I remember now. You're going to do

"Daughter of Long Ago," aren't you?" "That's it," said Babs.

"Then," Faith laughed, "let's have the meeting, shall we? But I'll have to be present, you know. That is the only condition Miss Venn will allow a meeting to be held—and, well, as I'm captain, and this does affect the Form, I ought to know all about it, oughtn't I?"

Babs smiled. She nodded. The chums, still only partly understanding, gazed at her again, but with implicit trust in her moved up so that Faith could take her place at the table.

But Babs knew what she was about. Faith, who had the implicit trust of Miss Venn, could make or mar the play from the outset. Antagonise Faith and, most certainly, the play was foredoomed before it was begun. It was vitally necessary, if their plans were to go forward with official sanction, to make a friend of Faith.

Afterwards—when they had permission—

"Well, thank you!" Faith beamed, and simpered at them all. "This is nice, isn't it? You know, I think it's a very, very good idea," she said, "and I shall be ever so pleased to take the leading part!"

"The—the what?" gasped Mabs.

"Well, don't you mean me to?" asked Faith, wide-eyed.

"Oh, wait a minute!" Babs said hastily—this, definitely, was no part of

her plan. "We've already cast that I'm to be the lead—"

Faith pouted.

"But as captain of the Form—"

"Being captain of the Form," Mabs told her, a little sharply, "has nothing to do with this. It doesn't mean to say, because you're captain, that you're an actress. This is a play, Faith."

Faith looked stubborn.

"Well, how do you know I can't act?" she asked. "I can—so there! You don't think, surely, that the captain of the Form is going to take a sort of chorus part?"

Six gimlet glares were fastened upon Faith. Babs was crimson—for she had not expected this attitude, had not expected, indeed, that Faith, apart from being flattered by the invitation to the meeting, would have demanded taking a part at all.

"But look here, you don't understand—"

Mabs protested. "I don't see what there is to understand," Faith said offensively.

"But we've cast the lead—"

Marjorie Hazeldene gently pointed out. "Well, you had no business to cast the lead without permission," Faith pouted.

"If you'd already cast the lead, that meant you'd started the meeting without permission. I didn't give you permission to hold a meeting you've already had."



In angry consternation the chums glared.

"But look here—" hooted Clara.

Faith rose.

"I'm sorry," she said stiffly, "but if you don't agree with my decision, I shall have to consult Miss Venn. Miss Venn—"

She stopped as there was a knock at the door, which opened to admit the thin-lipped, heavy-featured Miss Venn herself.

"Oh, Miss Venn, here you are!" she burst out gushingly. "I was just coming to see you. Miss Venn, we want your ruling on a question—a question which concerns the school."

"Oh!" Miss Venn said, and stared at the chums, but smiled very gently at Faith. "First of all, Faith, I want to see you," she said. "I have just received a telephone message from one of the school governors—Sir Willis Gregory, who apparently is anxious to know the details of some theatrical venture for which the school has entered, and—"

"But, Miss Venn, that is just what we are talking about!" Faith cried.

"Oh! What is it?" Miss Venn asked. Faith, in her usual gushing manner, explained, while the chums eyed each other. With interest Miss Venn listened, nodding approvingly from time to time.

"I see," she said, at last. "I am greatly pleased, Faith, that the school is to be represented. Sir Willis is very enthusiastic about the project, and, of course, we must keep up the splendid reputation Cliff House has already earned for itself in this sphere. That prize," Miss Venn said, frowning almost as if she were uttering a threat, "must come to Cliff House!"

"Yes, rather!" cried Mabel Lynn. "Mabel, silence, please! I have told you before not to speak unless you are requested. Faith, as captain of the Fourth Form, I leave you to organise the whole thing. You will immediately take charge, cast the play, and hold rehearsals—"

"Oh, but, Miss Venn—"

"Barbara, be quiet, please! Did you not hear what I said to Mabel Lynn?"

"Yes, but, Miss Venn, this—this was our idea!" Babs blurted indignantly. "And Miss Primrose—"

"I am not interested," Miss Venn retorted starchy, "with any contract you might have entered into with your former headmistress. My orders will, as usual, be obeyed. Faith, as captain, will take charge of this play from now onwards, and I shall expect you girls to give her your fullest support. Dramatics, like everything else, must be conducted with discipline. Faith, I wish you luck," she added, her face melting into a smile. "And, needless to say, I shall keep a very, very interested eye upon your progress."

She swished out. Faith smiled—a slow, sympathetic, wistful smile, while the chums, with feelings too deep for words, gazed at her. Then she spoke.

"I think," she said softly, but with a sort of mocking emphasis upon every word, "I'll just go along to my study now and work out the cast. See you in the Common-room in ten minutes, girls."

And, with a bright smile and tripping step, she quitted the room.

flowing handwriting of Faith Ashton. In glowering indignation, the Fourth Form had just absorbed it.

"CAPTAIN'S NOTICE:

The following girls are ordered to assemble in the Common-room at 5.30 for the first rehearsal of 'Daughter of Long Ago.' The parts, with the permission of Miss Evelyn Venn, have been assigned as follows:

LUCILLE, the daughter: Faith Ashton.

MRS. GRANT, the cook: E. G. Bunter.

AUNT ELSIE: Clara Trevlyn.

JEAN GRANT: Barbara Redfern.

POSTMISTRESS: Mabel Lynn.

SCHOOLTEACHER: Leila Carroll.

Villagers: Jemima Carstairs, Joan Charmant, Freda Ferriers, Frances Frost, Brenda Fallace.

Schoolchildren: Gwen Cook, Terraine Twins, Beatrice Beverley, Christine Wilmer, Lorna Millerchip, Muriel Bond, Rosa Rodworth, Lydia Crossendale.

THE PLAY TO BE PRODUCED BY FAITH ASHTON.

(Signed) FAITH ASHTON

Captain Junior School,
(Countersigned) EVELYN NORTHCHURCH
VENN, B.A., B.Sc. F.G.A., etc."

"School-child—me!" snorted Rosa Rodworth. "I'll see her in Greenland first! Who the dickens gave her the idea she was an actress?"

"And a producer, look you!" shrilled excitable Lucy Morgan from Wales.

"Whose beastly play is it, anyhow?" Christine Wilmer wanted to know. "My hat, the cheek of that girl! Just look at it! Faith Ashton—leading lady! Faith Ashton—producer! Faith Ashton—Form captain! Wonder to me that Faith Ashton doesn't do all the parts and paint the scenery as well! Anyway, I'm not going to take part in it!"

"Nor I!" Gwen Cook affirmed. "It'll be the ghastliest mess ever!" opined Joan Charmant.

"Blow Faith Ashton! Mabs is the one for this!" Margot Lantham cried. "Mabs! Where's Mabs? I say, Mabs, you're not standing for this, are you?"

But Mabel Lynn, looking very worried indeed as she stood in a little group with Clara, Leila Carroll, and that strange, monocolled Fourth Former, Jemima Carstairs, shook her head.

"Well, what can I do?" she asked hopelessly. "The law's just been taken out of our hands."

"You mean you're going to play under Faith Ashton?" Diana Royston-Clarke asked incredulously.

Mabs shrugged.

"I—I don't know."

"But," Babs said, stepping forward, "I do! No; wait a minute, please! All listen to me!" And immediately a silence fell, for Babs, if officially deposed, was still regarded by the Fourth as their leader. "Let's look the facts full in the face," she said quietly. "We tried to cast the play, as you know. Faith interfered; Faith, with Miss Venn, has taken the job out of our hands."

"Then," said the Hon. Beatrice Beverley, "let them do the rotten play between them!"

"No—please!" Babs begged. "Do be sensible! It's not so much a matter of backing up Faith as backing up the school. For all we know, Faith may be a jolly good actress; but leave that to prove itself. This is the position as I see it. We've entered the drama festival, and, having entered, we've got to see it through—"

"With Faith as head cook and bottle-washer?" Rosa Rodworth sneered.

"If we refuse to go through with it," Babs went on, "what's going to happen? We're out of the show; and don't forget we've collared the prize two years in succession. The honour of the school demands we shan't scratch; and if we do scratch, you can guess what Courtfield High School and the others will say. I don't agree with the new rules any more than you do, but I do think that, until we've seen how things are going to shape, we ought to put our backs into it. Team spirit, and all that sort of thing."

"What-ho! Long live the old school tie!" Jemima Carstairs burred.

"And if Faith can do it—well, jolly good luck!" Babs said quietly. "Let her have a stab at it, anyway. If she can't do it—well, then"—and she shrugged expressively—"we'll have to think up something else. Meantime, as I say, it's not so much a matter of backing up Faith as backing up the school."

There was a silence. Girls eyed each other as those words sunk in. Well, blow Faith Ashton! They didn't like her—not even Lydia Crossendale & Co., who had showed some disposition to support her, really liked her—but what Babs said was true.

"Then—then we do it?" Elsie Effingham asked.

"What else? But—shush! Here comes Faith!"

Here came Faith indeed. Faith, strolling down the stairs, a broad smile, which received no response, upon her features, pretended not to notice the stony glares which fixed her. She laughed.

"Oh, here we are! Read my notice, girls?"

"Notice?" Jemima looked blank. "Oh, I see! You mean that proclamation of egoism on the board? Oh, yes; we've read that! Priceless piece of literature—what?"

There was a titter. Faith looked suspiciously at the blank, unsmiling face of the enigma of the Fourth. Having no ready reply, however, she let the sally pass.

"Well," she said, "now you know what you've all got to do. So please follow me to the Common-room."

The Fourth did, glaring and muttering, and Faith got busy.

"Here are the parts," she announced. "Babs darling, here's yours! You, Clara, here you are! Now, I'm producer—"

"Says you!" Leila Carroll sniffed.

"And, first," Faith said, "we'll read the parts. Bessie, you stand here. You're going to the village to buy food—"

"Oh crumbs! Am I?" Bessie brightened. "But, look here, I haven't got any money, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bessie, please, darling, don't be stupid!" Faith protested. "I mean—in the play, of course! You come across the heroine—that's me!"

"Crashing chord there—what?" Jemima murmured.

"I'm lying in the snow, half-dead—"

"Oh, only half?" Rosa Rodworth asked regretfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Faith turned reproachfully.

"Really, Rosa, that—that's very unkind!" she said. "Now, please—Oh, don't keep talking, all of you! Now, Bessie, got your part?"

"Yes, Bessie said uncertainly.

"Well, here I am"—and Faith lay down, propping her chin up with one hand. "Now we start. I speak first."

"But you're not lying down," Mabs said anxiously. "You're just reclining!"

Not a Success!

"WHAT!"

"Well, of all cheek!"

"Just look at it!"



But two-thirds of the Fourth Form at Cliff House were looking at "it"—the "it" being a new notice on the board in Hall in the bold,

If you're supposed to be half-dead, you huddle on the floor."

Faith glared.

"Look here, who's producing this show?"

"You are. But I'm only—"

"Then, please," Faith snapped, a sudden flame in her eyes, "stop sticking your nose in! If you can't stop, you can jolly well get out of the play altogether!"

Mabs flushed. She drew back while the girls exchanged rather angry glances. Once again Faith lay down.

"Now I speak," she announced, and read from her script. "Oh dear, how cold, how hungry I am! I cannot go farther—I cannot, I cannot! Now I become unconscious," she said, and dropped her head.

Mabs shook hers.

"But, Faith—I'm sorry, but I really must speak. After all, this is a matter which concerns the whole school. Don't you think you ought to become completely prostrate? If you're unconscious, you'd hardly remain sitting up."

Faith glared.

"I told you to mind your own business!" she said. "All right, if you won't, I'll jolly well make you. Lydia—where's Lydia Crossendale? Oh, there you are! Lydia, you take Mabs' part!"

Mabs started back.

"But—"

"You're out of it!" Faith flamed. "You hear? You're out of it! You wouldn't think of interfering with Miss Venn, so why should you interfere with me? I'm in charge!"

Mabs turned angrily pale.

"Well, thank you!" she said. "All right. I was only trying," she said bitterly, "to prevent you from making an utter fool of yourself—but go on—go your own silly way! I'm off!"

"And so," Clara Trevlyn blazed, "am I!"

Faith sneered.

"You're welcome!" she sniffed.

"I guess that goes for me, too!" Leila Carroll said angrily. "Here, you can get somebody else to take my part!"

"But, Leila—" Babs cried.

"Oh, shucks! Let her get on with it!" Leila said huffily.

"A right merry and cheery beginning,

what?" Jemima murmured. "Three of the jolly old stars sacked in the first three minutes! We live in hectic times, henlunen!"

But nobody heeded Jemima. All eyes were fixed on Faith now. Faith sneered.

"All right, jolly well get out of it!" she said. "Freda, you can read Clara's part. Frances, you read Leila's. Now let's start again."

Silence now. Angrily the Form was glaring. Babs shook her head doubtfully. If this were going to be a sample of Faith's producing, then it looked as if the play were going to be a wash-out from the word "Go."

Again Faith spoke her opening lines—in a thrilling sort of whisper which was rather weird, coming from a girl supposed to be on the verge of exhaustion. Then Bessie Bunter came on, and Bessie, mumbling her lines, stepped forward—straight on to Faith's palm, which was flat on the floor.

Faith gave a howl.

"You clumsy great idiot!" she roared.

"Hem! Look here, that's not in the script!" Bessie protested warmly.

"You trod on my hand!"

"Did I?" Bessie glowered. "Well, if you will put your silly hand where it's going to be trodden on, I don't see how you can blame me!" she said impatiently. "I can't see hands lying about when I'm reading my script, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Fourth.

"Get out of it!" raved Faith. "You—you elephant! This is supposed to be serious! You're out of it, Bessie Bunter! Margot, you read her part."

"No, thanks!" Margot Lantham said scornfully.

"But, really, Faith," Babs protested, "I don't see how you can blame Bessie!"

Faith glared.

"Are you telling me what to do?"

"Well, poor old Bessie—"

"I see! Still hanging together, eh? Trying to put the blame for that fat idiot's mistake on to me? All right, you're out of it, too! Elsie Effingham, you can read Barbara's part."

Babs bit her lips. She stepped aside. Even her anxiety for the school would

not allow her to put up with those insults. The play began again.

"Oh, awful!" muttered Mabs.

She and the other expelled members of the cast watched as it progressed. Once or twice Mabs shuddered. With the chief acting talent of the junior school already out of the thing, it stood a poor chance indeed—but with people like Lydia & Co. in their places it was hopeless. Too late, Faith realised that hopelessness, and, in her endeavour to make up for the weakness of her cast, threw herself into her own part with a dynamic vim and vigour which would have been commendable if it had not been so misplaced. Some girls grinned at her intensity; Babs frowned; Mabs writhed.

But, somehow, the first scene, where the exhausted girl was found by the kindly cook and taken to Jasmine Cottage to be adopted, was got through. Then came the second scene, in which Faith discovered that her adopters were villains, and that she was their daughter. If Faith had been terrible before, she was simply ludicrous now. In attempting to act the part to what she considered perfection, she strutted the "stage" like some Victorian queen of melodrama.

The Fourth had settled down now. Most of them were watching with cynical amusement. Then came Faith's most dramatic line.

That was when she had discovered the papers relating to her birth.

"If they only knew who I am," Faith was supposed to whisper in shaken accents.

But Faith, glaring at the papers, affected a dramatic pose. Then, looking up with a sharp toss of the head, she dramatically staggered back, one hand to her chest.

"If only—ah! If only—they knew who I am," she hissed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" went up a yell.

"If only they knew who I am!" shouted Faith defiantly.

"Well, who are you?" gurgled June Merrett.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Faith glared.

"Look here, stop interfering!" And

back went her head again. "If only,"



"If only—ah! if only—they knew who I am!" Faith hissed dramatically. The Fourth-Formers chuckled at her ludicrous over-acting; but Babs & Co. swiftly became serious again. If this were the best Faith could do, she was going to ruin the school play.

she announced challengingly, "they knew who I am!"

"Sure, and wouldn't the ceiling fall in, begorrah!" cried Irish Bridget O'Toole.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Fourth. But Babs & Co. were looking grim. It was no laughing matter when the schools' prestige stood to suffer by all this!

"Be quiet!" shrilled Faith. "Be quiet, all of you! If only they knew who I am!" she bellowed.

"Oh, my hat! Come on, let's get out of it!" Mabs said. So intense was her feeling that she was actually perspiring. "If I see much more of this I shall swoon or shriek—or both! But look here," she added, when she, Babs, Leila, and Clara were in the corridor, "we can't let this go on—we just can't! If Faith puts that thing on we shall be the laughing-stock of the festival!"

"But what," Clara asked dubiously, "are we going to do?"

"Babs, can't you think of anything?" Mabs pleaded. "Oh, my hat, if only Faith weren't captain! She's terrible!"

Babs bit her lip. She shared Mabs' fears. Nothing more certain than that if the play went on as it had started it would resolve into the most humiliating scream that Cliff House had ever put on.

"There's one thing—one thing only," she said dubiously. "See Miss Venn!"

"But she—" objected Clara.

"Miss Venn might be wrong in her handling of us," Babs said slowly, "but I'll give her the credit of saying that she's got the school interests at heart. Don't forget, either, that Sir Willis Gregory is interested—and as Sir Willis is vice-chairman, he's got to be considered. Even Miss Venn wouldn't like him to see a howling flop. Anyway, there's no harm to be done in pointing it out to her—"

"Then," Mabs said, desperate enough now to face a dragon, "let's go!"

And off, at once, they went. In a body they arrived at Miss Venn's study, and Babs, knocking, opened the door as the new Head's stern voice bade them enter. Miss Venn stiffened as they all tramped in.

"And what," she demanded, "is the meaning of this intrusion?"

"Miss Venn, it's about the play—" Mabs began desperately.

"Ah, yes! Then why do you come to me? Faith is in charge of the play."

"That—that's just why we've come to you!" Mabs blurted. "Miss Venn, we—we don't want to say anything against Faith, but we all feel—"

Miss Venn's eyes glittered.

"Are you trying to make a complaint against Faith?" she asked.

"Well, not exactly," Clara said. "But we're thinking of the school. We—we don't feel Faith is the right girl to produce it!"

Miss Venn jerked sharply upright.

"Oh!" she said, and glared. "You don't think! And what, pray, about me? Have you forgotten that I have appointed Faith to produce the play? Really, this is rank insubordination!" She glared again. "If," she added biting, "you can't agree with Faith, then you may leave the play. I have complete confidence in Faith, and I will not tolerate any interference. Now go away, all of you!"

"And write out twenty times, 'I must not be disobedient,'" she said, as an afterthought.

In angry, sick dismay, the chums withdrew.

The Secret Players!



"I WONDER!" Barbara Redfern said suddenly.

Mabs, in Study No. 4, busily scribbling the lines she had just been awarded, looked up distractedly.

"Oh, Babs, don't wonder anything! For goodness' sake, don't let's think about it!" she protested. "I only hope I'm a hundred miles away from Cliff House when the drama festival comes off!"

"But—" And Babs looked at her. "My hat, I've got an idea!" she cried.

"Mabs—yes, Mabs, old thing, look at me! Listen," she added excitedly. "We can save the situation—yet! Mabs, remember that old play of yours—the one we performed three terms ago—'The Little Lady of Luxor'?"

"Well, what's the good of that?" Mabs asked hopelessly.

"What's the good?" Babs laughed excitedly. "Mabs, it was a fine play—a ripping play—and, outside Cliff House, nobody's seen it. Mabs, here's the idea. We've got to do something—just got to, old thing, to offset Faith's awful flop. What about rehearsing 'Little Lady' in secret?"

"And put in on in place of Faith's, you mean?" Mabs asked incredulously.

"No, chump, we can't do that! But listen!" Babs' eyes gleamed. "You remember, at the same time as you entered the Junior Dramatic Society for the festival, Sarah Harrigan entered the seniors for it, too?"

"Well, yes?"

"Well," Babs glowed, "Sarah hasn't come back since the Christmas term. As far as I know, nothing's been done about the Sixth Form entry. You know jolly well that nobody in the Sixth ever troubles about the shows except Sarah herself, and because Sarah isn't here the Sixth's entry has become forgotten. Mabs, suppose we entered your 'Little Lady of Luxor' in place of the Sixth Form thing?"

Mabs blinked a little dazedly. Really, old Babs was quite breath-taking at times!

"But—oh, half a ticklet!" she cried. "I can't get the hang of this. How can it be done? We just couldn't say we're the seniors!"

"Well, who says we should?" Babs laughed, and coming round, sat on the edge of the table. "Mabs, listen—this is the wheezelet!" she said. "Supposing the Sixth Form are doing nothing—well, that means the Drama Festival are still waiting for their details. We're representatives of Cliff House. As soon as we find out, we can cut down to the theatre and enter your play—but not under the name of the Cliff House seniors. We'll find some other name that's got no connection with Cliff House at all."

"It's easy—dead easy!" Babs cried. "And, Mabs, just before we do anything else, I'm going to find out now. In the meantime, ask Leila, Clara, and Jimmy to pop along."

"Yes; but, Babs—" But Babs, with a laugh, had flown, and all a-quiver now with her new idea, reached the Sixth Form quarters. The rather weary voice of Dulcia Fairbrother, head girl of Cliff House, bade her enter as she knocked on Dulcia's study door.

Dulcia, snowed under a pile of papers, looked up.

"Well, Barbara? I'm rather busy—"

"I won't keep you a minute, Dulcia."

I just wanted to ask you if you know what play the Sixth are putting on for the Drama Festival?"

Dulcia shrugged. "As far as I know, nothing," she said. "The whole of those arrangements were in the hands of Sarah Harrigan. And it's no good," she added, gazing at the pile of papers in front of her, "asking me to do anything about it. I've got about six times as much work as I used to have as it is!"

"Poor old Dulcia!" Babs said, but smiled inwardly and hugged herself as she darted back to Study No. 4, where Mabs had gathered Clara, Leila Carroll, and Jemima Carstairs. "Whoops, it's O.K., girls!" she cried. "You mean, the entry still stands open?" Mabs asked.

"Yes."

"But how—" Leila began.

"Wait a minute, Jimmy, shut the door, will you? I say, we're in luck!" Babs gurgled. "Everybody seems to have forgotten the Sixth Form entry except us. Now, listen—here's the wheeze. As Cliff House girls, we can fill up that entry—but we've just got to find a name for ourselves, so that there'll be no questions asked when we appear on the programme. And, golly, here's the name!" she cried.

"The Understudies!"

"The Understudies!" Mabs' face lit up. "Oh, that's ripping!"

"So now," Babs went on, "we strike while the iron's hot. Mabs, you and I will go along to the theatre and see the festival secretary, Clara, will you pass the word around? But remember, we've got to keep this quiet. Faith and her party mustn't hear a whisper of it. In fact, not a word to anybody who's not actually going to take part in the play. Mabs, we've just got time before call-over. Come on!"

And off in high glee she and Mabs rushed.

They caught the bus outside the school, and half an hour later were talking to Miss Marston at the Grand Theatre, Courtfield, who was superintending the programme for the great day. She smiled.

"To tell you the truth, I was beginning to wonder when I was going to hear from the Cliff House seniors. But this, of course, clears the matter up. But, tell me, why are you entering under the name of 'The Understudies'?"

"Oh dear! No objection, is there?" Babs asked quickly.

"No, of course not. I'm interested, that's all."

"Well, it—it's just to make it sound different, you see," Babs said. "The Junior Dramatic Society are entered under its own name. We thought it would look better if the two Cliff House entries weren't billed as such."

"Oh, I see! Quite a good idea!" And Miss Marston, a small, grey-haired woman, wearing heavy horn-rimmed spectacles, smiled.

And so that was fixed up. Grinning, Babs and Mabs fled back to Cliff House. Just time then for a hasty, secret discussion with the cast before call-over, and in that discussion details were discussed, costumes and scenery planned. Mabs beamed.

"And we'll hold the first rehearsal," she said, and then jumped.

For suddenly the door came open and on the threshold stood Faith Ashton, glaring at the crowd assembled in Study No. 4. A silence of consternation fell.

"And what," Faith said, "are you all doing here? And why," she added, turning to Mabs, "were you talking rehearsals? Rehearsal of what?"

No Luck for Faith!



JUST for a moment they were all taken aback. Just for one instant there was an awkward pause. Then Babs quickly stepped into the breach.

"Well," she asked disarmingly, and smiled, "what rehearsal should we be talking about?"

Faith stared. "You mean—'Daughter of Long Ago'?"

"Well, what else?" Babs fenced. "You see, we were rather wondering when the next rehearsal was and when it was to be held. Is everything going as well as you expected it would go, Faith?"

Faith tilted her chin loftily. "Well, of course it's going well," she replied.

"Oh, so pleased!" murmured Jemima, and thoughtfully commenced polishing her monocle.

"And the next rehearsal is after call-over," Faith said. "And don't think you're going to mess it up. Anyway, you can break up now. You know Miss Venn has forbidden meetings."

The chums glared scornfully. What a captain! Certainly, Faith was about the worst the Fourth had ever known.

As it happened, the bell for call-over itself rang at that moment. Faith, her brows knitted, a rather petulant pout on her pretty lips, went off, frowning to herself. She was far from reassured, and perhaps, told by her inward sense that her play was far from being a success, she was unduly suspicious. That had been a meeting of some sort. But a meeting about what?

She'd jolly well keep her eye on Babs & Co.

Meantime, there was this rehearsal. Faith was worried about that, too. Though she was supremely confident in her own ability as an actress, she was far from satisfied with the efforts of Lydia Crossendale & Co.; and she wished to goodness Miss Venn would put off her inspection until she had had time to polish things up.

Rather to Faith's alarm, Miss Venn had suddenly displayed a most profound and keen interest in the junior dramatic society. Having discovered that Cliff House had won the festival prize two years in succession, Miss Venn was most determined that they should score the hat trick under her headmistress-ship this term.

No, not too happy was Faith Ashton as she went into Big Hall for Call-over, dismayedly feeling now that she had bitten off more than she could chew; and far from happy was she when, after the end of the rehearsal in the Common-room, with Miss Venn watching everything with an anxious and critical eye, she was summoned to the headmistress' study. Miss Venn, gazing at her, shook her head.

"It—it isn't very promising, Faith, my dear," she demurred. "Naturally, having given the reins of production into your hands, I am loath to interfere. Are you sure, Faith, that you can't find a little better talent among the form?"

"Interfering old cat!" was Faith's private opinion—masked, however, by the innocently worried look upon her face. She said:

"Well, it—it's early yet, Miss Venn."

"I am aware of that, Faith. On the other hand, you have only a week in which to make the play perfect. I advise you, my dear, to try other girls in the leading parts. If this is not a success I am afraid Sir Willis Gregory will be very, very disappointed—and Sir Willis, Faith, is a powerful man on the board of governors."

Faith left her with a simpering smile, but inwardly savage and very ill-at-ease. For the first time, she began to regret her hasty conduct towards Babs & Co. She had been a fool, now she saw, to pitch Babs and Mabs and the others neck and crop out of the cast. On the other hand she could hardly countermand her orders and invite them back.

The rest of that evening was a very worried one for Faith Ashton. The more she thought about her new responsibilities the more was it made clear to her that her one chance of success was to gather Babs & Co. back

you something. I've just had a remittance from my aunty, and I'm going to stand treat at the tuckshop tomorrow, after morning lessons, just to toast success to the play."

"Oh, I say, what a ripping idea!" plump Bessie Bunter exclaimed.

"So you'll all come along, won't you?" Faith gushed. "Barbara, will you?"

Babs eyed her. What new little game was Faith playing now?

"What time?" she asked cautiously.

"Oh, about half-past eleven!" Faith replied. "I shall expect all of you, you know," she added archly. "Half-past eleven. Don't forget, will you, Barbara? Nor you, Mabs. Nor any of you."

And she smiled and went out. But Babs & Co. looked at each other.

"And what," queried Jemima, "is the little scheme now, comrades? Methinks Faith hath not produced this

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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 Bett 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.



into the fold of "Daughter of Long Ago."

Suddenly she had an idea. Well, what about inviting Babs & Co. and all of them to a feed in the tuckshop tomorrow morning, after lessons—lessons being concluded an hour earlier than usual as that day was Friday? That would thaw the ice. By being nice to Babs & Co., by tactfully letting them know that they would be welcomed back, she might very well recast the play without loss of dignity.

She strolled into the Common-room, a pleased smile on her face. Babs & Co., in company with most of the Form, were there.

"Oh, hallo!" Faith said cheerily. "I say, Miss Venn is rightfully pleased with the rehearsal—"

"Pleased?" June Merrett grinned. "You don't mean peevish?"

"He, he, ho!" tittered someone.

"Well, it might have been a bit better, of course," said Faith hurriedly. "But, dash it all, we've only done the thing twice, haven't we? But never mind rehearsals, girls. I want to tell

sudden streak of generosity without some axe to sharpen."

"But what," chuckled Babs, "a break for us! With Faith standing treat in the tuckshop, that leaves the way beautifully clear for our own rehearsal. No need to worry about her spying. Pass the word round—rehearsal tomorrow at half-past eleven in Attic No. 5."

The chums chuckled. If Faith had only known that she was making for them the very opportunity they sought! But Faith didn't.

And Faith, fostering her new idea, set out to be particularly nice to Babs & Co. from that moment onward. It seemed sincerely that she was trying to make friends. Had Babs & Co. not known her true nature they might have been deceived, but the more sincere Faith seemed to be the more suspicious they were. Nevertheless, at Babs' suggestion, they played up to her.

By morning Faith felt easy again. Of course, she told herself, Babs & Co. would simply jump at her offer when, over the fizzing ginger-beer in the tuck-

shop, she threw out the suggestion of their rejoicing the cast.

Faith was happy that morning; happier still at Assembly, when, smiling her most charming smile at Babs & Co., she received in return the most winning of all smiles from Babs herself. Without a single doubt in her mind, she trotted off to the tuckshop after morning lessons, expecting to find that place crowded. But it wasn't. Only Brenda Fallace and Lydia Crossendale were there.

"Oh, haven't the others come?" Faith asked.

"Well, does it look like it?" Lydia grinned. "Do we start the feed with or without them?"

"Oh, let's wait!" Faith said. They waited. Frances Frost strolled in. After her came Freda Ferriers. Five minutes later the timorous-looking Terraine twins entered. But no sign of Babs & Co.; no sign—amazingly—of even Bessie Bunter.

"Well, where's the feed?" demanded Frances Frost.

"Oh dear! You—you haven't seen Babs & Co.?" Faith asked.

"Eh? No! The feed isn't in Babs & Co.'s honour, is it?" Frances asked. "You invited the whole Form. Come, let's get on with the washing. Order up, Faith!"

Faith, with a backward glance at the door, ordered up. Twenty to twelve now. At a quarter to twelve Elsie Effingham strolled along. Ten to twelve saw the arrival of Eleanor Storke and Jane Mills.

It began to dawn on Faith then that her projected feed was going to be as big a wash-out as her projected play. The smile she had summoned for the occasion became a rather fixed grin.

By twelve o'clock the grin had turned into a scowl; by ten past—

"Look here, I'm going!" she announced.

"Oh stuff! We've only just started!" Eleanor Hawke protested. "What are you worried about?"

"Where are Babs & Co.?" "How should I know?"

Faith set her lips. Then, unable to control herself longer, she hurried out, and back into the school. To Study No. 4 she went. No sign of Babs & Co. there. In study No. 7 she also drew blank.

Where were they?

Faith's eyes glimmered now. She began to suppose that Babs & Co. were playing some trick, and she was remembering with sudden perturbation the meeting she had interrupted last night, when she had caught that word "rehearsal" falling from Mabs' lips. Was there any connection between that meeting and the unaccountable absence of Babs & Co. now? Were they having another meeting somewhere—without her knowledge?

She stepped back into the corridor, jumping round with a start of hope as she heard a footstep. But it wasn't one of the Co. It was only Connie Jackson, the bad-tempered prefect of the Sixth, looking more bad-tempered and worried than usual.

"Oh, Connie, have—have you seen Barbara Redfern & Co.?" Faith asked.

"No, I haven't!" Connie snapped.

"But—but they must be somewhere!" Faith protested.

"Yes, well find 'em," Connie said curtly. "You don't think I keep them in my pocket, do you?"

Faith pouted as the prefect went off along the corridor.

"Surly cat!"

But this wasn't finding Babs & Co. Where the dickens were they?

She went to the music-room. No luck.

In the library she drew blank, and was returning along the corridor when she met Mrs. Carey, the housekeeper.

"Mrs. Carey, have you seen Barbara Redfern?" she asked.

"Miss Redfern—no!" Mrs. Carey shook her head. "But Miss Carstairs—she's a friend of hers, isn't she?"

"Yes—yes?" Faith asked eagerly.

"Miss Carstairs is upstairs—in the attics," Mrs. Carey said. "Perhaps she can tell you where Miss Redfern is!"

Faith nodded. Jemima Carstairs was usually to be found with Babs & Co. Anyway, Jemima was one of those who hadn't turned up. Towards the attics Faith made her way.

She reached the stairs, never spotting the sleek, ebon-cropped head which was peering over the banisters above. But Jemima, seeing her, quickly nipped back to Attic No. 5, where Babs & Co. were rehearsing the first run through of the "Little Lady of Luxor."

"Danger, comrades!" she hissed. "Faith storming the stairs!"

"O.K.!" Babs chuckled.

Jemima, with a wink, nipped back, just in time to meet Faith at the head of the stairs.

"What cheer?" she greeted breezily. "Nice morning we're having, what?"

"Where are Babs & Co.?" Faith demanded.

"Babs? Babs? Oh, yes, your cousin!" Jemima beamed. "I think," she said, "you'll find them in Attic No. 5. Pretty busy, what?"

Faith threw her a suspicious glare. Then she had brushed past the bland Fourth Former, and furiously striding towards Attic No. 5, banged the door open.

Babs & Co. were there, and, as Jemima had said, were "pretty busy." Half a dozen wicker hampers containing cast-off clothes and other oddments were open, and on the floor was a bundle of articles which had formerly graced the figures of Cliff House girls.

Babs & Co. were solemnly marching with several of these articles across to another hamper and neatly packing them inside. Faith stared.

"What are you doing?" she asked suspiciously.

"Oh, look, it's Faith!" Babs cried, in pretended surprise. "Faith, do come and help, will you? We're looking out a few things for the school rummage sale."

Faith looked more suspicious. "Oh! But the rummage sale is a month off," she protested.

"Well, better early than late, I guess," Leila Carroll said easily. "We're trying to bag the best of the things before the hunt gets hot. Babs, how much do you think this petti with the seven moth holes will fetch?"

"You mean to tell me," Faith persisted, "that you've been here since lessons!"

"Just that," Mabs retorted.

"Oh, and what about my feed? I thought you were coming to the tuckshop?"

"Oh dear! Was that this morning?" Christine Wilmer asked. "Well, fancy that, girls! And we forgot all about it!" she added, in mock dismay.

Faith's eyes glittered. She wasn't deceived. That did sound a little too much like play acting. The fact that Jemima was wandering about in the corridor looked suspiciously as if Jemima had been put there to keep cave. Hardly likely, with a free feed in the offing, that these girls could spend the sunny morning rummaging among old clothes, either.

"You've been having a meeting!" she accused.

"Oh, Faith!" Clara exclaimed, shocked. "Why should we?"

Faith bit her lip.

"Well, you were having a meeting last night—oh, yes, you were, even though you wouldn't let on! Anyway, I think it's pretty shabby of you not to come to my feed. And—and I did want to talk to you, too," she added, remembering that her mission was still unaccomplished.

"Well, here we are, all merry and bright, what?" Jemima beamed benevolently. "Talk away, my bright and beautiful!"

"About the play—" Faith said.

"Oh, what about the play?"

"Well—" Faith gulped. But she had to plunge. "I was going to say, if you'd like to come back into the cast, you can," she said hopefully.

There was silence.

"Will you?"

"That depends." It was Mabs who took the leadership now. "We'll come—and pleased," she said—"but only on condition that you let Babs have the lead—"

"And," Babs chipped in, "Mabs does the producing."

Faith glared.

"And what," she asked bitterly, "do I do?"

"Oh, you can take one of the other turns, you know—the aunt, or something. Well, is it a go?"

Faith almost quivered. The cheek of it!

"It is not a go!" she said, biting out the words. "And I think it's like your rotten cheek even to suggest it. I'm responsible for the play, aren't I? I'm Form captain, and you—you try to dictate to me! If you jolly well come back you come back on my terms—not yours! Well, are you going to?"

"That final?" Babs asked.

"Definitely!"

"Then the answer," Babs said contemptuously, "is no! Come on, girls, put this stuff away! Let's go!"

And while Faith, quivering with indignation, watched, they packed the sorted garments into the big hamper and, strolling out of the room as if Faith did not exist, marched sedately down the stairs. But as she went Babs grinned.

"Poor Faith!" she chuckled. "She's beginning to realise she's taken on a bit too much. Pass the word round, Clara. Second rehearsal this afternoon in the woodshed at two!"

An Unfortunate Mistake!



"NOW what," Faith Ashton savagely mused, "are Babs & Co. up to?"

Even Faith was not conceited enough to feel that her play was going to be an unqualified success—though, to be sure, her conceit did not allow her to blame herself for that.

The fact, however, that Miss Venn had promised to keep a watchful eye upon its progress worried her; but what was more worrying was that Babs & Co. had refused to come back into the cast, except on their own—unthinkable—terms. Even more worrying was the fact that Babs & Co., for all their loyalty to the school, seemed to be taking their exclusion so lightly!

Babs & Co. were playing some game. Faith was no fool. Crafty-minded herself, she was quick to suspect. Last night she had caught the chums holding a meeting. This morning they had sacrificed her tuckshop feed in order to



FAITH had sneaked up to the attics, expecting to find Babs & Co. holding a meeting. But instead they were marching along with a collection of ancient garments. "What are you doing?" Faith asked suspiciously.

hold another. Why? For what purpose? And why, in spite of all the setbacks she had engineered for them, were they looking so jolly cheerful and behaving as if they hadn't a care in the world?

Faith started up suddenly. She had been sitting by the window in the room next to Miss Venn's. That window, placed at an angle in the wall of the south wing, gave a view of the playing fields, the woodshed, and a portion of the cycle-sheds. Now, watching, Faith suddenly saw Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn. They had halted by the woodshed, were looking round. She saw them nod and disappear round the back of the woodshed.

"Hal-lo!" breathed Faith.

She stared at the woodshed—a large, roomy building. Unfortunately from Faith's point of view, both its door and its windows faced the road, which meant that the back rear wall of the structure hid everything which might be going on within. But wait!

Faith stiffened as from the drive three other figures cautiously appeared—the figures of Jemima Carstairs, Leila Carroll, and Bessie Bunter. They all disappeared round the path which led to the door of the woodshed.

Another meeting—for a certainty.

Now two other figures came into view—Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara. In the same direction they disappeared, to be followed a few minutes later by Christine Wilmer and Janet Jordan. Then for five minutes nothing happened. The meeting, obviously, was in progress.

Faith's eyes gleamed. Right! She'd nip this in the bud—now!

She rose. To the room next door she went. There came an exclamation from inside as she knocked, and Faith, going into the room, found the headmistress sitting by the fire, a handkerchief to her nose, a rather watery and reproachful look in her eyes. In a thick and muffled voice which had only a note of its usual stridency she said:

"Well, Faith, what is it?"

"Oh, Miss Venn dear, you have a cold!" Faith said, false concern at once lighting up her lovely eyes.

"Yes, it's wretched." Miss Venn sniffed. "I do not know how I caught it. But do not worry about that, my dear. It will soon pass. Colds with me

never last more than twenty-four hours. But what is it, my dear?"

Faith bit her lip.

"I—I thought I ought to tell you, Miss Venn. Barbara Redfern—"

"Barbara! What has she been doing?"

"She and her friends are holding a meeting in the woodshed, Miss Venn. And this," Faith went on, "is not the first time. Twice in the last twenty-four hours I have caught them and warned them."

Miss Venn stornly rose. Very, very strict had her order been on the subject of unprivileged meetings, and woe betide any girl who was caught disobeying those orders.

"In the woodshed you say, Faith? You are sure?"

"Yes, Miss Venn. They are all there now."

"Then," Miss Venn said, and coughed, "Faith, get my coat, please. I will attend to this myself. And—Ahem, ahem! Oh, bother this wretched cold! Faith, do not forget to bring me a scarf," she added thickly.

And Faith, with a grin, left. Now Babs & Co. would catch it hot!

"**A**LL HERE?" Babs asked.

"All!" Jemima said brightly. "O.K., then! Brought the parts, Mabs? Good egg! One thing," Babs said gleefully, "we're not overlooked by the school, and I don't think anybody saw us come in. But just in case of accidents, Clara, put a log of wood against the door."

Clara grinned as she took one of the logs stacked in the shed and wedged it beneath the lock of the door. To be sure, the woodshed was not the ideal place in which to hold a rehearsal, but it was far enough from the beaten track to make it a safe retreat.

"Right-ho! Now we can start," Mabs said. "Babs, will you sit on the pile of logs there? That will have to be your throne for the time being. Clara, as the Priestess, will you sit here? Ladies-in-waiting—Christine and Jemima—will you stand behind Babs? Right-ho! That gives us a rough layout for the time being," Mabs said. "Now we can get down to work. O.K., Babs! Fire ahead!"

And Babs enthusiastically fired

ahead. Eagerness, determination, to see this thing through inspired them all now, and the fact that they all had a considerable working knowledge of the play helped more than a little. Nevertheless, it was not an easy play, and, with only a few days in which to rehearse, make costumes, and overcome the restrictions imposed upon them, it was going to take every moment of all the time they could spare.

"That's fine!" Mabs said, when Babs came to the end of her opening speech. "Now, where's Charmion? Bess, you're Charmion. Right-ho! You stand here, and please do try—everybody—to get your lines off by heart for the next rehearsal. Now, Bessie!"

"Yes, rather, you know," Bessie said, and simpered. Peering at her lines, she began.

"Fine! That's ripping!" Mabs glowed. "Now, Christine, move just a little forward, old thing. That's right. No, don't point upwards when you mention the stars. Remember you're in the temple, and there'll be a window, left. Point towards that. Now—" And there Mabs jumped round as from the door came a sudden, terrific thump.

"Hallo!" muttered Clara.

"Open this door!" came a muffled, but faintly recognisable voice.

"Oh, my hat! M-miss Venn!" Bessie stammered.

"Open this door!"

The chums looked at each other. Then Mabs' eyes glinted.

"Wait a minute, that's not Miss Venn!"

"Will you open this door?" raved the voice thickly.

"That," Babs said, and her eyes glimmered, "is Faith. She's putting it on, trying to mimic Miss Venn."

"And a rotten job she's making of it, too, I guess," Leila said.

Bang! came a thump at the door again.

"Will you open this door?" cried Miss Venn.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" sniffed Clara.

"What! How dare— If you do not open this door. I—I'll break it down!"

"Carry on, Samson!" Leila retorted cheerily.

They were all grinning now. They had no doubt, knowing nothing of Miss Venn's sudden cold, that Faith was playing a new little game. Once before Faith, using her powers of mimicry, had caused trouble for the chums, and the chums did not intend to be caught twice with such an old trick.

From outside there came a furious exclamation.

Then crash! The door shivered, and this time something on the shelf just above it clattered to earth with a thud, and an array of pots and pails there jumped dangerously. Crash! once more, and this time the prop beneath the lock jumped forward, at the same time as the pail of fertiliser just above the door heeled over. The door flew open.

And then—

"Oh, my hat! It—it is Miss Venn!" stuttered Bessie. "And—I say, look out!" she shrieked.

The warning came too late.

And too late they all started forward as Miss Venn, a quivering figure, with a handkerchief to her nose, stood framed in the now open doorway.

Just for an instant she paused. Then, clatter! The pail came rattling down, shooting its contents full upon the headmistress' head!

The Spy at the Window!



"THERE can be no explanation—none. I will not listen!" Miss Venn almost shrieked. "It was a booby-trap—a deliberate booby-trap! Each of you will write out two hundred lines before call-over to-night. To-morrow morning, immediately after breakfast, you will go again to the detention-room, and do a special task until midday. Dismiss!"

"But—" Babs stuttered.

"Dismiss!" Miss Venn raved.

And the chums, giving up the attempt to defend themselves, turned towards the door of Miss Venn's study, and went.

In the corridor they gazed at each other expressively.

"What a cat!" cried Clara Trevlyn.

"Wouldn't let us get a word in edgewise," said Christine Wilmer.

"She might have, at least, given us a chance to explain," Babs said indignantly. "Naturally, you couldn't expect her to be in the sweetest of tempers after being swamped with that fertiliser."

"Well, it was her own fault!" growled Clara.

It might have been, but that didn't alter the facts of the case. They didn't mind being punished, but they did, all very resentfully, mind being punished without being allowed a chance to speak up in their own defence.

The two hundred lines would have been more than adequate punishment for what they had been guilty of. But a detention to-morrow morning—to-morrow, a whole Saturday holiday at that!

Mabs shook her head despairingly. "Well, I suppose there's no way of getting out of it," she said. "But this completely messes up the rehearsal I had planned. How the dickens are we going to rehearse?"

Nobody had an answer to that. They all felt rather sick and fed-up. That sickness was not improved when, meeting Faith at the end of the cor-

ridor, they received a triumphant smile, revealing very plainly that Faith had had a hand in their downfall.

"Oh, Barbara, darling, I hope you didn't catch it too hot?" she said. "What were you doing in the woodshed?"

"Find out!" retorted Babs.

"I suppose you won't be coming to my rehearsal this afternoon?" Faith went on, with sweet mockery.

The chums just glared and passed on.

And Faith, watching them, laughed a little, though as soon as they had disappeared, she frowned. It amused Faith to see her enemies catch it hot; but as far as finding out what Babs & Co. were doing, she was still no better off.

Still, there was one gleam of comfort on the new Junior School captain's horizon, and in some measure she had Babs & Co. to thank for that. For Miss Venn, owing to her cold, followed by the shock of her experience in the woodshed, was in no mood to interfere in matters concerning the play.

After lessons that afternoon, and long after tea, the weary Co. scrawled the lines imposed upon them, while Faith, gathering her cast, rehearsed with desperate energy in the Common-room.

Call-over came—the lines were handed over to Miss Venn, and the chums at last went to bed.

The following day was Saturday—the only real day's holiday before the show itself. Sunday, owing to Miss Venn's severe religious routine, could not be counted.

The chums were worried. But most worried of them all was Mabel Lynn, who, as producer of the play, realised the really colossal amount of work involved. Early next morning she was up, but with the suspicious eye of Faith upon her, it was impossible to get the cast together for even a slight rehearsal. After breakfast, just before detention, she strolled out with Babs and Jemima towards the gates.

"I don't know how we're going to get through," she said despairingly.

"If only we could—" And then she paused. "Hallo, there's Connie Jackson!"

Connie Jackson, the ill-natured prefect of the Sixth it was. But Connie was with a companion. Connie was in the road talking to a woman they all recognised at once as Madame Judith, a dressmaker from the village of Friardale, who was not above allowing the Cliff House schoolgirls to have dresses on credit, and who, in fact, had been put on the Cliff House list of undesirables.

From where the chums stood, looking out into the road, they could see her plainly, though the high wall sheltered Connie and her companion from the view of anybody in the school grounds. Madame Judith was looking rather thin-lipped and angry; Connie utterly desperate.

They saw her stretch out her hands in hopeless gesture. Madame Judith shook her head.

"I'm sorry, Connie, I've waited long enough!" came her sharp voice.

"Either you pay me the pound you owe me by midday, or I shall come to the school and see your headmistress."

"Gazooks!" Jemima Carstairs breathed.

"Eh?"

"I say, come on!" Babs said hastily and uncomfortably, for she realised then they were listening to a conversation not intended for their ears.

"Come on, in truth," Jemima

chuckled. "Babs, look at me!" she implored. "Tell me, forsooth, if you can see strange farawayness in my face? I've just been struck with a brain-wave!"

"Brain-wave?"

"What-ho! Correct, Barbara mine, if I am wrong, but is not our beloved Connie taking us in detention?"

"Well, yes!" Babs agreed.

"And if our dear Connie," Jemima said thoughtfully, taking from her bag a new, crisp Treasury note, "suddenly found herself in possession of a whole poundnote, what, forsooth, would she do?"

Babs paused.

"Well, considering what we've just heard, she'd bunk off right away to pay Madame Judith."

"And if she bunked off right away, what about us in detention? We'd be left alone—to our own devices, what? And if those devices happened to be the rehearsing of the play—"

"Oh, my hat!" cried Mabs, with a jump. "Jimmy!"

Jemima grinned.

"Good wheeze, yes, no?" she chattered. "Trust Uncle Jimmy to think 'em up! Now," Jemima said, "the one thing to do is to give this pound-note to dear Connie—a very good turn, my henchman, for while it gets us out of difficulties, it solves that pressing problem which must be worrying Connie. Afterwards I will collect from my fellow playfellows their share and portion of this. Meantime, I must be busy."

And Jemima, with a bright nod, scampered off into the school. Meantime, Connie, having left Madame Judith, was returning slowly into the school. If her face had been worried before, it was almost sharp in its haggardness now. Short shrift, indeed, for Connie Jackson if Madame Judith kept her threat. Even with the kindly Miss Primrose it would have gone hard with Connie Jackson. With Miss Venn—

Connie shuddered. What could she do? But there was nothing Connie could do, as far as she could see. Desperately she had tried to borrow that pound—without avail.

Moodily she entered her study. Slowly she closed the door behind her. Glowering, she glanced at the table, and then frowned as a white envelope, lying on the cloth, attracted her attention. Wonderingly she went forward. On the face of the envelope, in neat capitals, were these words:

"A GIFT FROM YOUR WELL-WISHERS."

Suspecting a leg-pull, Connie slit it open. And then her eyes widened, her face became full of incredulous joy as she saw its amazing contents. A crisp pound note!

"E—s—t—r—d—o—w—n, girls; get out your books!" And Connie Jackson, in charge of the Fourth Form delinquents, smiled almost radiantly. "You will copy out the first five pages of Pope's translation of the Iliad," she said. "And, Barbara—"

"Yes, Connie?" Babs said meekly.

"I—er—want you to take charge here for—a few minutes," Connie said. "I shall lock you in and take the key, so please see there's no nonsense. I—I have an appointment," Connie added.

"Yes, Connie."

The prefect went out, locking the door behind her. No sooner had she gone than Babs chuckled.

"O.K.!" she said. "Connie will be away an hour, at least. My hat, worked

like a charm, didn't it? All brought your parts?"

"What-ho!"

"Come on, then, let's get busy on the rehearsal."

And the chums, chuckling, stepped out of their places. This was fine. This was ripping. Good old Jimmy for thinking of that brain-wave.

With a will, they got to work—most of them word perfect now. And while Connie, in a transport of joy and relief, hurried off to Friardale, they went through the whole piece, and, having ended, started again.

In the Common-room Faith Ashton was rehearsing, too—but Faith's rehearsal was by no means going too well, for both Lydia Crossendale and Frances Frost, apparently having forgotten they had been summoned, had gone off on a jaunt of their own. With a glare, Faith gave it up at last.

"Oh, rats! It's no good!" she said crossly. "We can't do the thing without Lydia and Frances. Tell them I want to see them when they come in," she added grimly.

She went out, leaving her cast scowling at themselves. If only Babs and Mabs were in the piece! And then, thinking of Babs and Mabs, Faith remembered they were in detention, and an involuntary grin came to her lips as she thought of that.

Bit of fun, Faith reflected, to peep in at the class-room window and pretend to sympathise with them. Wouldn't that just make them ratty?

And Faith hurried towards the Fourth Form class-room window. She reached it, and, favoring herself up, peered in. But her smile faded, the peer became a wide-eyed stare of astonishment, as she saw what was in progress there.

The chums were not doing detention, and of Connie Jackson there was no sign!

What was this?

Faith blinked. Every one of the girls was in front or class. On the dais Connie should have been occupying Barbara Redfern sat, a pointer in her hands. Behind her stood Christine and Clara, fanning her with exercise-books. In front of her, kneeling, was Leila Carroll, while other girls were grouped round.

What was it?

And then suddenly back came a certain word into Faith's mind—rehearsal! Rehearsal! Oh goodness! Were they rehearsing a play of their own?

Faith's grip upon the window-sill became fierce. That was it! That was it, of course! Look, now! Babs was rising; Babs was coming forward; Babs, with the pointer, was touching the kneeling Leila on the head. She was saying something—what Faith could not make out. Now Leila was cringing away. They were play-acting!

But why—why?

And then suddenly Mabs, looking up, saw her. There came a hiss from her lips. She made a gesture, and the chums, as one, finging round, became transfixed as they saw Faith's face at the window for a moment. Only for a moment. The next, she had disappeared.

Grimly they looked at each other.

"She—she saw!" Clara said.

"She knows!" Mabs cried.

"Oh, my hat! Why didn't we put a guard on the window?"

"Oh shucks! Perhaps she only thought we were playing some game!" Leila said; but she said it in tones which suggested that she was rather expressing a wish than an opinion. "Anyway, supposing she has spotted what we're up to. What can she do?"

Babs shook her head frowningly. She

knew that Faith was very capable of adding two and two together, and, feeling somehow that her own play was menaced, would immediately go about finding how it was to be menaced. From that it was only a small step to the discovery that the Sixth Form entry was still standing open.

"But if she finds out," Mabs said desperately—"if she does? Then—then—Oh golly, why didn't this happen to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" gasped Clara.

"Yes; because by to-morrow it would have been too late," Mabs said. "Don't you realise—the date? This is the last day for accepting entries. Entries that aren't cancelled by this date just have to stand. Those are the rules of the competition. If Faith had found out to-morrow instead of to-day it would have been too late for her to do anything—"

"Shush! Here's Connie!" whispered Christine. "Back into your places!"

answered; and, with a nod, strolled off, little guessing the consternation in the minds of the girls she left behind.

Mabs to the Rescue!



"FAITH still with the headmistress?" Mabs asked anxiously.

"Yes."

"Right! Then Faith herself will probably take the letter of cancellation down to the theatre," Mabs said.

"Well, I suppose so," Babs answered, a little puzzledly. "But why?"

"Never mind—never mind!" Mabs' face was flushed. "I think there's hope, even now," she said. "No, I can't explain, but I've got a wheeze—a desperate wheeze. It all depends on whether Miss Marston will be out at

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.

And into their places they scooted. A few minutes later, Connie, looking really happy and cheerful, came in. But the chums were far from cheerful. Had Faith found out?

The question was soon to be answered. For as soon as detention class was finished the first girl they met was Dulcia Fairbrother, and the head girl stopped Babs with a frown.

"Oh, Barbara, you remember speaking to me about the Sixth Form entry in the drama festival the other day—"

"Yes," Babs said, her heart giving a jump.

"I suppose you didn't do anything about cancelling it?"

"No," Babs said. "Why?"

"Oh, Faith Ashton has been worrying about it, that's all. Faith has found out that the entry is still open, and we've done nothing about it."

The chums looked significantly at each other.

"And—and where's Faith now?" Mabs asked, in a small and strangled sort of voice.

"With Miss Venn—getting her to approve a letter of cancellation," Dulcia

lunch. The cancellation will have to be taken to her. Babs, you come with me. Jimmy—Clara—"

"Here! But what—"

"When Faith comes out, delay her—somehow—I don't care how. Keep her for half an hour if you can; that will give me time. Babs, come on!" Mabs cried urgently.

"Mabs, what is it?" Babs gasped, as they breathlessly flew.

"Tell you on the bus!" Mabs puffed.

"Babs, get our coats from the cloak-room, will you? I'll nip along and get my make-up box."

"But, Mabs—"

"Oh, Babs, quickly!" Mabs urged.

Babs nodded. While Mabs rushed off in one direction, she darted away in the other. In two minutes they met again at the end of the corridor.

"Now," Mabs said, "the bus. Look, there's one coming up the road! Hurry!"

Hurry they did. Just by the skin of their teeth they caught the bus, and, gazing into the school grounds as it

(Continued on page 14)



OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

As you all know, *PATRICIA* is your very own friend—young enough to understand all schoolgirl joys, yet old enough to be helpful and wise over schoolgirl problems. She writes for you week by week in these pages, telling you of her own doings, of things to do and things to talk about—all in that chummy way so typical of her.

● The Tallest Tree

'Tis said that the world's tallest tree has now been found—in America, of course!

This tree, which is in the state of California, is 364 feet high.

If, like me, you find it rather difficult to imagine any height over six feet or so, here's how you can get an idea of this tree's size:

The top of the cross on St. Paul's Cathedral, London, is 365 feet above ground level.

So now you can just imagine how impressive that tree looks!

● Do You Know?

Now, here's a "do-you-know" for you—one that you can try on your chums.

Do you know what the word London really means?

You don't? It is said to come from two Celtic words meaning "city of ships."

I think the people who gave this name so many, many years ago, must have been very far-seeing, don't you?

● For Writing Home

If any of you young people are lucky enough to be off to boarding schools for the new term, you simply must make yourself a handy little case for holding notes, paper and envelopes

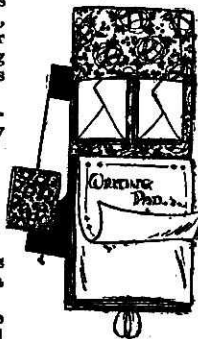
—unless, of course, you received a super writing-case among your Christmas presents.

This one, of cretonne, is so easy to make.

You'll want a strip of cretonne that is an inch wider than your writing-pad, and twice as long—plus eight inches extra for the pockets.

Sew the cretonne all round, and fold up the two ends into four-inch pockets. Tuck the envelopes into one pocket, and the cardboard back of the writing-pad into the other.

Fold in half, and fasten with a button and loop made of cotton, or the cord from a Christmas card.



● For An Autograph Album

I've just discovered another rhyme for you that would, I am sure, be welcomed in a chum's autograph album—

especially if she were keen on games and sports.

"In play there are two pleasures for your choosing; the one is winning—and the other losing."

And the author of those lines was Lord Byron.

● Simple Trimming

I wonder if you remember my telling you about "bias binding" some time ago.

It is a long, narrow strip of material—cut on the cross, or "bias"—all pressed and folded ready for binding or trimming. It costs sixpence a card, and can be bought in all sorts of pretty colours from any drapery counter.

It would make a very bright touch to a plain-ish frock that could just do with a spot of cheering up these winter days.

Hem the bias binding neatly round the neck, sleeves, and across the pocket-tops—and you'll be delighted with the result.



Hem the bias binding neatly round the neck, sleeves, and across the pocket-tops—and you'll be delighted with the result.

● Staggering!

I wonder if you ever get a mood at school when you try to think of long words, and ask your chums if they know how to spell them.

We used to, often, and lots of argument would result, until we had to ask our English mistress what she thought about it.

Of course, some girls would dig up foreign words—which wasn't exactly fair, especially as some in German are perfectly staggering.

Here's one that you might like to spring on your chums when you're feeling in this mood. I can't promise it's the longest ever, but it's certainly long enough for most people.

NONCONTRANSUBSTANTIIONA BLE ENESS.

Looks pretty baffling at a glance, doesn't it? But it's not really so impressive when you break it up into syllables—"Non-con-tran" and then substantiion-ableness."

Bye-bye now until next week, my pets,
Your own,

Patricia

DOES your mother just adore "The Sales"?

Your Patricia's mother does. I think she'd as soon miss the after-Christmas sales as she would miss taking down the decorations on "Twelfth Night"—or sooner, perhaps!

She spent a day "Up West"—as she calls the shopping district of London—with her friend, Mrs. Lane, who lives in the house next to us.

These two must have had a glorious time—for they came home absolutely worn out, yet proud of all their parcels.

● Bargains

There were very uninteresting vests for father, and new pyjamas for big brother Brian. "They were ridiculously cheap, dear, too!" mother sighed happily. "And pure wool!"

For small brother, Heath (or Heather-ington in full) there was a new pair of leggings—which frankly bored him, I'm afraid.

But mother herself seemed so pleased with all her purchases that I decided there must be something in this "Sales" business. So I determined to go bargain-hunting myself.

What I really wanted was a piece of silvery brocade material to make myself an evening blouse for semi-party wear.

So I took small brother Heath along to the shops, and we snopped around—until finally I spotted the most luxurious scrap of material.

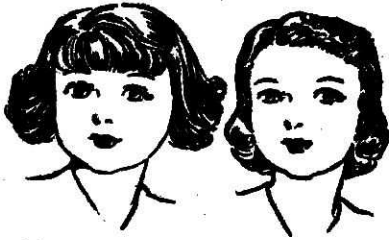
This had on it a ticket which announced that once it had cost 14s. 11d. a yard, but was now most pitifully reduced to 3s. 6d. Home I took it in triumph—and set to work to cut out my blouse.

Alas—that lovely material would have been enough to make about two sleeves and perhaps a back only!

Your foolish Patricia had bought a bargain—but had been so pleased with herself that she hadn't even thought about yards and inches!

I was frightfully fed-up, I can tell you. But, fortunately, I realised my mistake before I had started to cut.

So now, mother's favourite cushion in our sitting-room has a new, silvery cover. And your Patricia is still wanting a new blouse!



Notice how the hair style on the left makes the owner's round face rounder still. On the right you see what a charming difference can be made.

HAIR-STYLES TO SUIT YOUR FACE

A really helpful article that will aid you in making your hair an attractive frame for your face, whatever its shape.

“OH, how SHALL I do my hair?”
Isn't that a question that you often demand of your reflection in the mirror?

So here's where I'm going to try to help, for I think we all realise by now that the way you do your hair can actually appear to alter the shape and prettiness of your face. Just look at the top pictures here, for example.

THE ROUND FACE

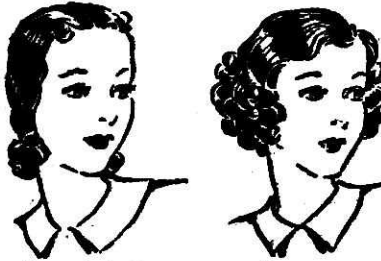
The girl on the left has a round, baby face—very sweet. She obviously hasn't bothered much about her hair. She wears a fringe—perhaps because she always has. She has a tiny suspicion of a wave—but that doesn't worry her. She just combs her hair down—and leaves it.

You can't help noticing that that fringe makes that round face look rounder still, while the “sticky-out” hair at the sides adds extra width to her already wide cheeks.

Now see her again on the right.

That fringe has gone and she has a side parting now. She has allowed her hair to grow a little longer, and spends some time when her hair is wet coaxing the waves into place—with perhaps an occasional curler at the ends.

The fringe is swept back to show off that forehead—which gives her face extra length. But as the fringe will take some time to grow, “Baby-face” curls it up twice a week, and keeps the curls in position with a hair-grip—which is invisible.



Very sleek, but not very flattering to the long face is the style on the left. How much prettier are the curls on the right.

THE LONG FACE

The second pictures show the girl with the long, thin face. But note how the smooth, sleek hairdressing and middle parting on the left, makes that face look even longer and thinner.

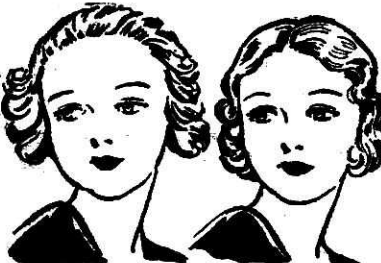
Now if my face were like hers, I'd shun the rather long bob—unless it were very fluffy.

Instead, I'd do it as in the picture on the right.

The parting would promptly go to one side—the very next time I washed my hair, and I would comb the side hair in deep waves.

If the ends were not naturally curly, I'd most certainly curl them up at least twice a week—which I think would be sufficient unless my hair were poker-straight—and fluff them out around my ears.

This gives the cheeks added width, and quite takes away that “long” look.



That high expanse of forehead makes the face on the left look too big. Notice the effect of the middle parting on the right.

THE HIGH FOREHEAD

The girl with the too-high forehead can sometimes give herself rather a “bald” look if she scoops her hair right off her brow as the girl on the left in the third pictures has done.

She is the girl who can wear that attractive middle-parting with distinction, allowing her hair to fall gently towards the sides of her forehead.

This gives that calm, serene look which is particularly admired on the schoolgirl who doesn't even pretend to be a tomboy.

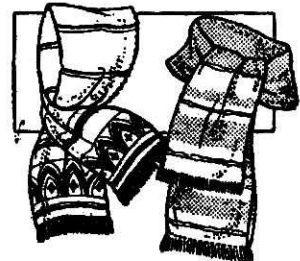
So now, just experiment, will you, the very next time you wash your hair.

Remember always to think of your face as a picture to which your hair is the frame that enhances its charm.

A COSY HOOD-SCARF

and a Muff-Scarf, Too

Straight from the Winter Sports come these two snug ideas for the chill, outdoor days.



HOW snug these latest scarf-hoods are! For walks on chilly days, to wear in the family car—in fact, for sheer cosy comfort, they are unbeatable!

And incidentally, schoolgirls look perfectly sweet in them!

If you have a plain, woollen scarf, you can make the hood in a twinkling. You fold it in half, and oversew the back two edges together, as shown, for about eight inches.

This part slips over your head as a hood, and the ends are thrown carelessly (or so we pretend!) around your neck.

All very casual and sporting—but so attractive!

Supposing you have a second scarf—and supposing it is your hands which get extra cold, even with gloves on—then, you really must make the muff-scarf, too.

You simply turn up one end of your scarf and hem it, leaving the sides open. Or if your scarf isn't quite long enough for that, or it has a pretty fringe which you want to keep, then sew a piece of thick material there instead.

Wear this round your neck, slip your hands into the muff part—and you'll feel

like embarking on an expedition to the Arctic!

I need hardly add how smart both these snug articles are for wear on the ice, need I?

IF YOU FEEL THE COLD—

Then do the “cabby” exercise, flinging your arms round yourself with hearty slaps. It's most warming.

Hold your arms straight out in front of you, and shake your hands from the wrists. Grand for keeping chilblains at bay.

(Continued from page 11).

passed the gates, saw Faith Ashton in the act of descending the steps. Then, and not till then, did Mabs relax.

"Thank goodness!" she said. "That gives us a quarter of an hour, even if Jemima & Co. don't succeed in stopping her. She'll have to wait till the next bus comes along."

"But, Mabs, you giddy mystery, what's the wheeze?" Babs asked.

"I'm not certain—till we get there," Mabs said. "I'm banking on Miss Marston being out at lunch. If she isn't, we'll have to find some other way of getting rid of her—"

"But why get rid of Miss Marston?" "Because," Mabs answered, "when Faith comes along to hand over the cancellation letter, I'm going to be Miss Marston!"

Babs jumped. "You mean, make up as Miss Marston?"

"Make up like her," Mabs corrected. "Faith, after all, doesn't know Miss Marston. If she thinks I'm Miss Marston, she'll give me the letter of cancellation."

Babs stared. "And—"

"And," Mabs said grimly, "I stick to it. You see?"

Babs did. She glowed. What a breath-taking wheeze—if only it could be worked. Mabs, with her extraordinary art in making-up, could easily deceive Faith—especially in that rather dim-lit room in which Miss Marston worked.

Here was Courtfield. Now they were hurrying towards the theatre. And then suddenly Mabs gripped Babs' arm.

"Babs," she hissed excitedly, "look—over there—the Anglo-American cafe!"

Babs looked. And her heart gave a leap. For on the point of entering that cafe was no less a person than Miss Marston herself.

"Whoopee! Luck's in!" she said. "Come on!" Mabs gleed.

Off to the theatre they rushed. At the stage door the doorman, quickly putting down the sandwich he was eating, came forward.

"Please can we see Miss Marston?" Babs pleaded. "It's about the Festival."

"Miss Marston," he told them, "has just gone out to lunch."

"Oh dear! Then—then can we wait in her room?" Babs asked.

"Well, I suppose you can," he said, staring at them, for the hall was very dimly lighted. "I don't know how long she'll be, though," he added. "You know her room, don't you?"

"Thanks!" Mabs gulped. The wheeze was working with almost unbelievable smoothness!

Breathlessly they hurried along the corridor. Thank goodness they knew where Miss Marston's room was situated. They opened the door and went in, rapidly closing it behind them. Then Mabs put her make-up box on the table.

"O.K., so far," she said. "Hope to goodness, though, Miss Marston doesn't come back until Faith has been! While I'm making-up keep a watch on the window, will you? Let me know as soon as Faith or Miss Marston appears."

Babs nodded. She crossed to the window, and Mabs, working furiously with the aid of the mirror, commenced to make herself up. Very skillful and very quick was Mabs with her make-up box, and in ten minutes she was ready and so amazingly transformed that even Babs blinked.

"My hat! I—I could almost think

you were Miss Marston herself!" she said.

"Easy to copy!" Mabs smiled. "But phow! Wait a minute, though, Babs—I'll have to see that hall porter fellow. If Faith comes along and he tells her Miss Marston's not in, she may hang about outside. It'll be a test for the make-up, too."

"Here, I say, Mabs—" Babs cried in apprehension.

But Mabs had vanished.

She went along to the door. There, where the light was dimmest, she stood. The doorman gave a jump as Miss Marston's voice fell upon his ears.

"If anyone calls, will you send them along right away?"

"Yes, Miss Marston. I—I didn't know you were back," the man stammered. "I—I didn't see you come in."

Mabs smiled.

"Well, you know now?" she said.

"Yes, miss," the dazed porter muttered.

And Mabs went off, hugging herself. The trap was prepared. Would Faith Ashton fall into it?

Into the Trap!



"I N the crypt, you know!" Jemima Carstairs said, loudly but mysteriously.

"No, you don't say?"

Clara Trevlyn asked breathlessly.

"It's a fact; I saw it myself," Jemima nodded. "You saw it, too, didn't you, Leila?"

"I sure did!" Leila said. "Funny, I guess! Do you think, Jimmy, we ought to tell Miss Venn about it?"

Faith Ashton, dressed for going out, paused on the steps which led down to the school lawns, eyeing the three girls at the foot of those steps with sudden curiosity.

On Faith's face was a look of triumph. In Faith's hand was a letter.

It seemed that Faith was in a hurry, but even the need for hurry could not kill that very large streak of suspicious curiosity which was part of her make-up. Leila, Jemima and Clara seemed in such deadly serious earnestness.

"Well, what's the matter with the crypt?" she asked, joining them.

"What do you mean to say you don't know?" Jemima asked incredulously.

"Haven't you seen it?" Leila asked.

"Well, what?"

"Something ought to be done about it, I should think," Clara Trevlyn said seriously.

"But what?" cried Faith.

"Well, what's the good of telling you, I guess, if you haven't seen it yourself?"

"What is it?" almost shrieked Faith. The chums looked at each other.

"Ought we to show her?" Clara asked dubiously.

"Well, as captain of the merry old Form, she's entitled to see—what?"

Jemima murmured. "Would you like to see it, Faith?"

"But what is it?"

"Oh, I don't know that we could explain what!" Jemima said seriously.

"It has to be seen to be believed, you know. Jolly old mystery—what?"

Faith glared. But she was interested now. In any case, she wasn't in such a desperate hurry, she told herself.

"Well, let's go," she said.

"Got a torch?" Jemima asked.

"No."

"Well, go and get one, otherwise you'll never see it."

Faith glared. But she went off, leav-

ing the chums chuckling. In three minutes she had returned.

"Now—" she said impatiently. "Follow us!" Jemima beamed.

Faith followed them. Slowly the chums led the way, walking with such exasperating slowness that Faith felt inclined to kick them. The entrance to the crypt was reached. Slowly Jemima led the way down, hissing warningly at every step.

Leila took the lead then, trailing the wide corridor on the left with stealthy slowness. Faith glared.

"Look here, we've wasted a quarter of an hour on this stunt! Where is it? And what is it?"

"Five minutes more," Clara promised her.

And then, creeping along, they came at length to the end of the corridor—a blank wall.

"Shine your torch, Faith," Jemima bade. "This is it."

Faith, quivering, shone her torch. It revealed a wall of solid brick.

"Well?" she asked.

"Don't you see it?"

"Don't I see what?"

"In the middle there. You see that yellow brick among all the red ones?"

"Well, yes."

"Well, what we want to know," Jemima said gravely, "is why the builders used a yellow brick instead of another red one? Mysterious, if you ask me!"

Faith almost fell down.

"And—and is that what you fetched me down here for?"

"Well, now, we didn't fetch you. You wanted to come," Jemima gently reminded her. "It's not our fault if you will butt into our conversations. All the same, it is jolly intriguing, isn't it? What do you think of it, Faith beloved?"

"I think," Faith cried, her voice quivering, "that you are the biggest idiot ever born! And you—and you!" she cried furiously at Leila and Clara.

"Making me waste my time like this, you—you gumps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Leila and Clara.

Faith threw them a bitter look. Infuriated, quivering, she tramped off. And as she went, fumingly gritting her teeth, a chorus followed. That chorus was:

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, poor old Faith! Faith de-ar, ever been caught?"

"MABS, FAITH'S coming!" Babs hissed. "Quick—quick!"

"Good enough!" Mabs rapidly adjusted the wig of grey hair. "Babs, behind the screen near the window—quickly!" she said. "Keep a look-out for Miss Marston! If you see her—"

Oh, Babs, what can you do if you see her?"

"I'll kick the wall," Babs suggested.

"It'll sound then as if there's somebody doing things in the next room."

"Good idea!" Mabs nodded.

"Quickly! She's coming!" And she sat down at Miss Marston's desk just as Faith knocked. "Come in!" she said.

Faith came in, with a beaming smile. She glanced at the disguised Mabs, who, with her back towards the light, had her face in shadow.

"Yes, my dear?" she said mildly.

"Miss Marston—it is Miss Marston, isn't it?" Faith gushed. "I've come from Miss Venn, our headmistress. We just discovered to-day that the Sixth Form's entered for the drama festival; but, as the Sixth Form has no play ready, we want to cancel the entry."

"Oh!" Mabs looked serious. "This is the very last day for cancellations," she said. "Have you brought the notice in writing?"

"Yes. It is here."
 "Very well," Mabs said, and jumped as from behind the screen in the corner there came a muffled thump. "Oh, my—I mean—well, of course, I cannot refuse to take it! Thank you ever so much!"

"And you'll see that the entry is cancelled," Faith asked anxiously, "leaving only the juniors in?"

"Only the juniors shall remain in," Mabs assured her hastily—and truthfully. "Now, would you mind—I am rather busy!"

Faith pouted.
 "But I wanted to talk about—"
 "Please!" Mabs said agitatedly; and Babs, behind the screen, broke into a cold perspiration.

For Babs, spotting Miss Marston returning from lunch, saw her entering the theatre now; saw her disappear. Another minute, and she would be here.

"Please!" Mabs said. "Please! I—I am very busy! I can't have my time wasted! Please!" she added, and caught the bewildered and pouting Faith by the arm, propelling her towards the door. "Come out this way," she said—"along the passage and down the stairs."

"But I came in this way—"
 "This way!" Mabs said firmly. "I am sorry, but that entrance is not to be used for a little while. Now, please!" she said, and, with an agonised backward look as she heard footsteps, almost pushed Faith along the corridor, while Babs, anxiously snatching up Mabs' make-up box, bolted for the door. "There," Mabs said, "down the stairs, please! Good-day! I will see about your cancellation."

And Faith, furious, went downstairs. Mabs darted into the corridor again just as Babs, almost white, joined her.

"Phew! Near thing!" she panted. "I was afraid for a moment I was caught. But Faith—"

Mabs chuckled as she showed the letter of cancellation in her hand.

"Faith," she said gleefully, "thinks she's beaten us. But oh, if she only knew!"

And the two chums, beaming at each other, chuckled.

rehearsals, making excuses that she had a cold, that Lydia could not turn up, and, as far as possible making her rehearsals coincide with those periods in which Miss Venn was either too busy to attend the performance or was absent from the school. And so, at last, the great day came.

And Miss Venn, assured by Faith that Cliff House simply couldn't fail to win the Drama Trophy, went, with half the school, to see the show.

Babs & Co. went, too, rather mysteriously carrying four suit cases between them. Faith, meeting them on their way to the gate, paused.

"Coming to the show?"
 "Oh, yes!" Babs said sweetly.

"Well, I hope," Faith sniffed, "you'll get a few tips on how to stage your future shows—if ever you do any

'Daughter of Long Ago!'" Miss Venn beamed, and Sir Willis polished his glasses. The audience settled down. Now.

Up went the curtain, showing Faith, having profited by Mabel Lynn's advice, lying prone upon a snow-covered floor.

Then Faith spoke:
 "Oh dear, how cold, how hungry I am—I cannot go further—I cannot!"

The audience blinked.
 "A little full-toned for a girl lying exhausted in the snow!" Sir Willis muttered anxiously.

Babs & Co. chuckled. The audience stared.

And then as Lydia, taking Bessie's original part, entered, they chuckled anew. For Lydia, dropping her basket, was heard to mutter an exclamation certainly not in the play. That unfortunate little mishap was by no means



"YOU see that yellow brick among all the red ones?" asked Jemima.
 "Well, what we want to know," she added gravely, "is why the builders used a yellow one instead of another red one. Mysterious, if you ask me!" Faith nearly fell down. "And—and is that what you fetched me down here for?" she gasped.

The Great Day!



AND Babs & Co. were very careful as time went on, to allow Faith Ashton to think that she had beaten them. Not that Faith, assured in her own mind that she had made it impossible for Babs & Co. to do anything about the festival, really troubled.

With zest and energy she flung herself into her own production, and particularly into the terrifically overacted part of the heroine. Mabs, careful that the Fourth Form secret rehearsals coincided with the ones which Faith called for, had little trouble in bringing her production to perfection.

Meantime gentle Marjorie Hazeldene, in Study No. 7, was altering costumes. They had already discovered that the stock scenery at the theatre would fulfil their purpose, and all in secret was ready for the great day.

And that day eventually came, though it could not be said, outside the secret rehearsalists, that Cliff House looked to it with enthusiasm. Miss Venn did, however. Miss Venn had been invited by Sir Willis Gregory to go and see the show, and with her cold almost gone now was most fervently hoping that Faith was going to stage a triumph.

Cunningly, Faith kept her away from

more!" she added spitefully. "What is in those bags?"

"Oh, just things we might want, you know!" Babs answered truthfully.

Faith shrugged. With a lofty, superior smile she walked off. The chums, catching the bus, went on more slowly, arriving at the theatre just in time to see the curtain go up on "Highways and Byways," performed by their rivals, Whitechester School.

The hall was packed. There were many representatives of neighbouring schools there. There were also a number of townspeople of Courtfield. Miss Venn sat in a box with Sir William Willis, now and then consulting her programme.

"I wonder," she said to Sir Willis, "who the 'Understudies' are. I have never heard of them before."

"Nor I," assented Sir Willis jovially. "Some local school society, I expect."

If Babs & Co had heard that they would have smiled.

Now the curtain was ringing down on "Highways and Byways," amid a burst of applause. Now here was the announcement—and a flutter went through the Cliff House faction—"The Cliff House Junior Dramatic Society in

minimised by the glare which Faith cast her.

"Fool!" she hissed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the stalls. They heard that.

"Tut, tut, the girl knows little about stagecraft!" Sir Willis frowned, while Miss Venn turned red. "Was she the best you could get for the part, Miss Venn?"

The headmistress did not reply.

But now the play was proceeding. The audience, far from being carried away by its pathos, however, were tittering. Lydia made a hefty but somewhat clumsy job of lifting Faith up, stepping into her basket at the same time. There was a howl of laughter at that. There was a further howl later on when Faith, climbing through the kitchen window, fell into the kitchen with the frame around her neck. The audience shrieked.

Then, when Faith made her most valiant bid for the laurels of dramatic fame, by shouting the lines, "If only they knew who I am—" a perfect yell went up.

From that moment the play was a riot. Miss Venn turned from scarlet to white.

The players themselves, badly taken by nerves, did everything except the right thing. Several times Brenda Fallace completely lost her words.

Miss Venn tremblingly arose. She could stand no more.

"I—I think, Sir Willis, if you don't mind, I'll go," she said.

Sir Willis didn't mind. Burning with shame himself, he was thinking much on those lines himself. In an agitated flurry Miss Venn left her box just as, amid a final howl, the curtain rang down.

But Faith, behind the scenes, was sick and furious. The whole play had been a huge farce—with Miss Venn looking on.

Furiously she turned upon her supporters; violently they turned upon her, until it seemed at one time as if a free fight would break out. So great was the din at one time, indeed, that the stage manager had to pop his head in at the door and strongly ask them to make less noise as their voices could be heard in the auditorium.

Faith gritted her teeth. For once she felt utterly beaten. If there was one gleam of satisfaction in her efforts it was that she had prevented Babs & Co. from having their success. Better for her to mismanage a play than Babs & Co. to have scored a triumph.

She flung out of the dressing-room, and then stared. For coming up the stairs were Babs & Co., their bags in their hands.

"Here, what are you doing backstage?" Faith asked.

"Darling, go to the front, watch, and you will see," Jemima retorted sweetly. "Oh, comrades!" And leaving the bewildered Faith scowling, they cheerfully marched on.

Well, Miss Venn should know about this! And Faith, making her way to Miss Venn's box, encountered Sir Willis Gregory. He looked far from pleased as he regarded her.

"Miss Venn," he said, "has gone—gone, and I don't blame her, after the dreadful performance Cliff House put up! I'm going, too, when I've seen this next play—by a society called the 'Understudies.' Do you know who they are?"

"No," Faith said sulkily.

She sat down. Angrily she glanced at the programme. The next item was given out there—the "Understudies" in "The Girl Queen"—Mabs having altered the title for the occasion. Then, suddenly, music filled the air. The curtain rang up. Faith almost shouted.

For on a glittering stage were—

Babs, Mabs, and all the rest of them! "Aha!" murmured Sir Willis. "Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn! Why didn't Miss Venn tell me they were in this?"

Faith stared. What had happened? She thought she had foiled Babs & Co.—now here they were! How had they got into the festival?

But look at them—oh, just look!

Hardly need to look. The very atmosphere of the theatre spoke of the enraptured interest which had gripped the audience. Perfect, that performance, and helped by the glittering costumes of olden times, how utterly colourful and impressive.

The first scene ended. The applause filled the hall. Sir Willis banged his hands together with enthusiasm. He turned to Faith.

"Splendid, magnificent!" he cried. "Miss Ashton, this will bring the prize to Cliff House."

Faith gritted her teeth.

Hang Babs! Hang them all! She hoped they wouldn't get the prize!

Vain hope—vain, indeed. The first scene established Cliff House as the trophy owners. By the time the final curtain rang down the house was applauding madly. Five times the cast appeared before the house, and what a cheer the fifth time when the M.C. came forward, handing the huge silver cup to Mabs. Cliff House went wild.

For Cliff House, after all, had won the dramatic prize!

"Oh, it was fine, fine, fine!" Mabs said breathlessly in the dressing-room. "It was a success from the start—and it all went marvellously! And we've won—we've won! And Faith—"

"I'll bet," grinned Leila, "she's feeling sick!"

"And so," Babs said, "is Miss Venn. Poor old Miss Venn. You know, I feel quite sorry for her. She was so looking forward to this; so wanted us to win it—"

"Well, we have," Gwen Cook said. "Perhaps this will teach her a lesson. I say, kiddlets, what a lark! Let's go back and give her a shock! Let's present her with this cup on behalf of the school."

The chums glowed. It was a good suggestion—quite calculated to melt the heart of even Miss Venn. They could feel a measure of sympathy with her, in spite of her harshness. They could all imagine her bitter disappointment. After all, they had entered in the school's name. The trophy was Cliff House's.

"We'll do it," Babs said.

And off they went. Faith, sick at heart, had gone before them. In triumph they entered Cliff House. In triumph and in a body went to the headmistress' study—to find Faith there. Faith was looking a little pale, a little shaken, and it was obvious that her interview with Miss Venn had not been pleasant. Miss Venn started up, however, when Babs, coming forward, placed the cup on her table.

"Miss Venn, we've won the prize. There it is," she said.

Miss Venn looked thunderstruck.

"But, Barbara, how did you get this?"

"We played in the festival," Babs said. "We took the Sixth Form's place."

"The place," Faith put in, "you cancelled, Miss Venn!"

Miss Venn started.

"Barbara, explain that!"

"Well," Babs laughed, "we played a

little trick," she confessed. "I'm sorry, but for the honour of the school, Miss Venn, we had to do it."

"I see!" Miss Venn rose. She folded her arms. No look of pleasantness on her face then. "And you have the effrontery to tell me this!" she rumbled. "You confess to your deceit? Your duty, Barbara, was to support your captain—not to run a play on your own. You should have followed Faith."

"But, Miss Venn—" started Babs. "Enough! I am not pleased. Remember always that your duty to your captain comes first. For such an act of disobedience and disloyalty you are all detained for the week-end!"

The chums, staring, staggered back. Then Clara stepped forward.

"But, Miss Venn—well, dash it!" she said. "We've saved the school from becoming a laughing stock—"

"I'll say they have!" chimed a voice behind them, and into the room came Sir Willis Gregory. "A fine performance, girls—a magnificent performance! Congratulations! You saved the school. Miss Venn—"

"Sir Willis, I am just punishing these girls for their disloyalty. Do you know, they entered that competition under false pretences?"

Sir Willis stared.

"I do not care how they entered it," he said. "I am only desperately thankful, Miss Venn, that they did enter it, and so saved the school from being held up to utter ridicule. If 'Daughter of Long Ago' had not been offset you would have found the whole countryside bawling with laughter when it read its paper to-morrow. And so far," he added, while Miss Venn turned white, "from allowing you to punish these girls, I am for once going to take the law into my hands. Girls, I want you this afternoon to come down to my children's home at Eastbourne and give that performance all over again. You will spend the night, of course—"

"But, Sir Willis—" cried Miss Venn, while Faith glared. "Those," Sir Willis said curtly, "are my orders, Miss Venn. Please see they are carried out."

And he beamed at the glowing chums, and he frowned at the stiff Miss Venn and threw a look of dislike at the scowling, doll-faced Faith.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

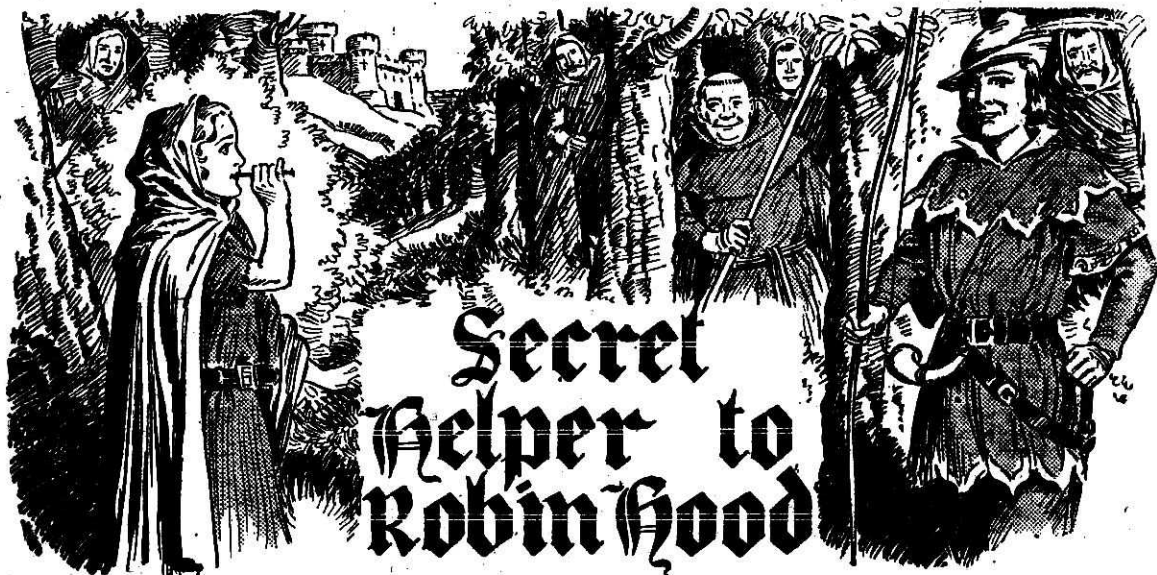
The NO-SURRENDER TOMBOY!



Faith Ashton versus Clara Trevlyn! Cunning, deceitful headmistress' favourite against the frank, blunt Tomboy of the Fourth Form! Faith, triumphant in almost every way, now that she has ousted Barbara Redfern from the captaincy, tries to run the Form's hockey team. Up rises Clara at once. She's captain of the team—it's her job to run it. But then Clara does not fully realise the tremendous power which Faith, backed up by Miss Venn, is capable of wielding; does not realise it until too late. You must read this magnificent Hilda Richards story, featuring all your Cliff House School favourites. It appears next Saturday.

Another fascinating
COMPLETE story of

Merrie England in the Days of Richard Lionheart!



Secret Helper to Robin Hood

Robin Hood Should Know!

By IDA MELBOURNE

"HURRAH!"
"Here comes the procession!"

Cheering with the others, the young Lady Fayre, heiress of Longley Castle, pressed forward, wrapping her ragged cloak about her, and pulling her hood so that it should hide her face as much as possible.

It would not have done for any of the villagers to know that she was the young Lady Fayre; and even though her face was stained with berry juice, there were some who might have recognised her.

While her tutor dozed, Fayre was stealing freedom; and although many in this crowd envied the rich girl at the castle, Fayre was a good deal happier in these shabby clothes than in the rich red, gold-embroidered velvet frock she had worn half an hour ago.

"Canst see the Lord Bishop yet?" she asked the girl who stood beside her. It was the daughter of the local mercer—the equivalent of a modern draper.

"Not yet," said the girl. "But it is the Lady Fayre I would see. It is said she may be riding to meet the bishop; for he will stay at the Castle."

Fayre smiled to herself, but said nothing. She was thinking of the rage her uncle, the baron, would get in if he should learn that she were playing truant from the castle.

"Here they come!" she cried. "What wealth—what display—"

It was a bishop who came, one journeying to London, who was to accept the baron's hospitality at Longley Castle for a day or two.

Cheers arose from the villagers as the head of the procession arrived. The tap of drums and the blare of trumpets heralded the bishop's approach, for he was a rich man; and in those days a man had to emphasise his importance with as much pomp as possible.

Troubadours, dancers, jesters, a man with a chained bear; some monkeys quaintly jibbering and leaping about; dogs, soldiers, arrogant pages, and hangers-on. Jewels uparked; there was a riot of colours, red, gold, bright blue; there were velvets and silks.

Amongst the crowd were beggars, some standing with hands outstretched, others kneeling—but all pleading for alms.

The Lord Bishop, a fat man who rode a white horse, had an ornate canopy over his head. Four outriders supported it, and with the flats of their swords beat back those who rushed to touch the bishop for luck.

"'Tis grand indeed," sighed the mercer's daughter, next to Fayre. "Such jewels—such riches! Father—look!"

The girl beckoned her father from his shop. A grey-haired man, he had a frail look, and Fayre noted that the girl took his arm tenderly and led him forward as though he were an invalid.

There was a poor prisoner in the dungeons of the young Lady Fayre's castle home. Only one person could rescue him—Robin Hood, the outlaw. But only one person could help Robin Hood—and that was Fayre herself!

"'Tis a fine sight!" she agreed.

"Come—take my place, sir!"

"Fine stuffs indeed!" murmured the mercer, and added proudly "But in my shop I have rich velvet from Lyons that is its match—ordered for the baroness—"

He fell back as a horseman came clattering down the edge of the road, and Fayre herself only jumped back just in time to avoid being ridden down.

"Take care!" she said indignantly to the rider.

He was a young man of insolent mien, clad in bright blue with gold-embroidered cloak and a sword in a jewelled scabbard at his side.

"You speak to me?" he asked curtly.

"Yes, I do. You've no right to ride along like that!" said Fayre; for, not being a peasant girl, she did not treat this young fellow with respect just because he was one of the bishop's squires.

"Know you," said the fellow, swinging from his horse, "that I am one of the Lord Bishop's squires, wench!"

"And know you," said Fayre indignantly, "that I—"

But she had to swallow her words; she could not reveal who she really was—one of greater rank than his own, but in disguise.

"You!" he said, and drawing off a richly made glove, he swung it at her face in contempt.

Only the fact that the mercer's daughter saw the movement coming and pulled Fayre back in time saved her from a cruel blow.

Pushing the girls aside, the young page confronted the mercer.

"'Tis your shop?" he asked.

"Yes, young master, 'tis so!" said the mercer.

"Then bring out a roll of rich blue velvet for the Lord Bishop."

Fayre's eyes burned as she looked at this haughty, overbearing young fellow,

and she wished that he could be taught the lesson he needed. Robin Hood would have taught him.

"If he were but here!" said Fayre fumingly.

But now the young squire was examining a roll of velvet the mercer had brought out.

"Yes. I will have it," he said, and signalled a young page forward. "Take it, boy," he said.

But the mercer held on to it.

"First, young sir, the money," he said.

"The money?" was the scornful rejoinder. "It is for the Lord Bishop. In due course send an account. Here is authority to buy!"

He flicked a roll of parchment at the mercer, who, not being able to read, shook his head at it. Fayre unrolled it. She, at least, could read, and one glance at that parchment brought a flash to her eyes.

"'Tis but a receipt for the sum of five pounds from an armourer," she said. "This is no authority!"

The young page sought to tug the

Your Editor's address is:—
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Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS.—Such a lot to talk about this week that I scarcely know where to begin. I think I'd better "Eenie, meenie, miney, mo," don't you? Ah, that's better! Now I DO know where to start. What do you think of "Secret Helper to Robin Hood"?

Don't you agree that Ida Melbourne's latest series is most refreshing and unusual? Please write to me about it, won't you? And, meanwhile, of course, don't forget to mention it to your friends, because they're bound to love these refreshing stories just as much as you.

And now for the second item on my little agenda. Next week we say good-bye to Pamela, who has had such enthralling adventures as temporary princess in Leiconia. I know you'll all regret Pamela's adieu. It isn't pleasant to take farewell of old friends, but you don't mind so very, very much when you have equally fascinating friends to take their place, do you?

And you, readers all, are going to have three topping friends to take Pamela's place, one of them original, quaint and charming.

Her name? Yin Su. For, yes, she is a girl from China. A bit of a problem, a bit of a responsibility, as two English girls who have the task of conducting her round England speedily discover for themselves. But they adore Yin Su, and she adores them. I'm not going to say that I hope you adore her as well, for I know you will. Yin Su is the kind of character you simply can't resist.

So make sure that you join those two English girls

"ON TOUR WITH YIN SU,"

by ordering next Saturday's SCHOOLGIRL well in advance. There's plenty of fun and excitement in store for you—and mystery, too.

No. 3 on my list—but not the third in importance, naturally!—is next week's magnificent LONG COMPLETE Cliff House School story. And here again I want to ask you a question. How are you enjoying the latest Faith Ashton series?

In the third story of the series you will read what happens when Faith, on top of the world, comes into conflict with Clara Trevlyn. Imagine the situation. Blunt, outspoken Tom-boy, as frank as the day, versus the crafty, subtle, vindictive new Form captain.

Faith deliberately poaches on Clara's preserves, arranging a hockey fixture behind Clara's back, selecting the team in secret, and—infuriating point this with the Tom-boy—actually appointing herself as captain of that team in Clara's place!

I'm sure there's no need for me to tell you that Clara hits back. She does—as strongly as she can. But Clara lacks Faith's finesse, lacks her cunning wiles, and, above all, Faith's support from a doting headmistress. Clara finds herself fighting against tremendous odds, and, even though Barbara Redfern and all her other chums loyally rally to her cause, there is a long and desperate struggle for mastery.

I won't tell you what the outcome is. You must learn that for yourselves when you read Hilda Richards'

"THE NO-SURRENDER TOMBOY!"

As usual, our next programme will include another charming story featuring the young Lady Fayre and gallant Robin Hood, and more of Patricia's Bright and Interesting Pages. So, cheerio until then!

With best wishes.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

roll of velvet from the mercer, who, aided by others, wrested it away and swung it round.

By ill-luck it caught the squire, knocking him back so that he tripped and fell full length.

At once there was uproar. Two soldiers rode up, with swords drawn and ferocious mien.

"Take care—run!" whispered Fayre to the mercer.

"Seize that man! Take him to the baron's dungeon!" snarled the squire.

Beating back the mercer's friends, the soldiers seized him. His struggles were but feeble, and, dragged down the road, he was forced into the procession, tightly held.

Fayre stood speechless with rage and indignation.

"Why, 'tis robbery!" she cried. "They have the velvet, too! Stop them—rescue him!" she cried to the crowd.

But although the crowd murmured angrily, not a man moved forward. They knew too well the penalty; for it would be said that the crowd was attacking the Lord Bishop, and whoever might be injured would be him-

self to blame for taking part in a lawless attack.

"Oh—oh, what will happen to my poor father?" cried the mercer's daughter in terror. "He will go to the dungeon. Oh, is there no justice in this England of ours?"

Fayre caught her arm.

"Do not fear," she said. "He shall be freed. I swear it—"

"You? A village maid, as I? But what can you do?" the mercer's daughter answered, amazed.

Fayre did not explain. For, truth to tell, she did not even know what steps she could take to free this unfortunate man, who not only had been robbed, but in addition had been arrested for attempting to save his property!

"But there is one who can save him!" she cried.

"Who then?" asked the mercer's daughter, her cheeks white, her eyes tear-brimmed.

"Robin Hood!" said Fayre eagerly. "He has the courage, the daring. He alone can save your father!"

And Fayre, not staying to see the tail end of the procession, struggled back through the crowd, and a moment later was running into the wood, where

the gay outlaw Robin Hood, friend of the poor, had his lair.

The villagers were afraid of the power of the bishops and nobles; but Robin Hood was not. And Fayre, having invoked his aid before, and having earned his gratitude for once saving his life, now began calling his name.

"Robin Hood—Robin Hood!" she cried.

Then, remembering the lurking wolves, and how the whistle he had given her had scared one away, she put it to her lips.

For close on half a mile she ran, sounding the whistle, and then, a short distance away, came an answering call—Robin Hood's hurrying-horn.

Next moment from amongst the trees appeared the outlaw himself, in one hand his trusty bow!

To the Rescue!

"ROBIN HOOD," gasped Fayre, "I need your aid!"

Robin Hood bowed, whisking off the quaint, feathered green cap he wore. He was handsome and smiling, quite different from the terrible picture of him which the nobles had painted. But then they had reason to fear him.

"My aid shall be yours, fair mystery maid," said Robin Hood. "Does a wolf pursue you? What ails?"

Recovering her breath, Fayre explained how the arrogant, bullying squire had seized the mercer's roll of velvet, and then the mercer himself.

"And once he is in the baron's dungeon, Robin Hood," she said, "he may well stay there for a year!"

Robin Hood was grave at once.

"Such a wrong shall he righted," he said. "And as a lesson, the young squire himself shall suffer. Lead me to the procession!"

Sounding three blasts on his horn, he brought the men from their merry-making near by. They had been holding a glee party after some sport of quarter-stick combat; but hearing the summons they obeyed instantly, fat Friar Tuck, Little John, Red Robin, and the rest.

As they saw Fayre they greeted her with deep bows and cheery hallos. Not one of them knew that she was the young lady from the great castle, their enemy's niece. She was to them but a mystery maid of the woods. But Fayre had won their hearts by her friendship for the poor, and her daring.

"Merry men, we go to rescue a mercer," said Robin Hood. "And haste is needed; for it cannot long be before the baron's men come to greet the procession."

"Ay, ay!" came the response.

"And I may go, too?" asked Fayre eagerly.

"If you wish to watch the merry-making, why, yes," said Robin Hood. "And you shall show me the rascal who did make a pass at you with his glove. The same shall be his fate."

Five minutes later, hurrying through the wood, they saw the pennants of the knights' lances and the bishop's canopy.

Climbing a tree, Robin Hood surveyed the procession. Then, with the aid of Little John, who lifted her as though she were but a puppet, Fayre gained a vantage point in the tree.

"Where is the prisoner?" asked Robin Hood.

Fayre looked at the soldiers amongst whom the mercer had walked. But he

was not to be seen now. In the distance, nearer the castle, men were approaching, led by her uncle the Baron le Feuvre. A few yards from them rode two men, dragging by the wrists another on foot, who stumbled and tottered—the mercer.

"Why, there he is! They have ridden him to the baron!" she cried.

Already the unfortunate mercer was being taken in charge by the baron's men. The baron had brought a small army, two hundred strong, to greet the bishop. Swords and chain-mail flashed in the sun; and in open combat, against such an army, Robin Hood's tiny band would have stood no chance of victory.

"Too late!" said Fayre unhappily. "But there is the rascal who struck a blow at me, who ordered the merchant's arrest and robbed him! And behind is the page—even now carrying the roll of velvet."

"Wait you here," said Robin Hood. He swung from the tree, and Fayre waited, aquiver with excitement. The next thing she saw was a horde of men in green leaping the hedge. The sudden attack took the procession un-awares.

A mighty stone was flung on to the bishop's canopy so that the bearers had to struggle violently in vain effort to prevent its collapsing over the bishop.

A squire was dragged from his horse; another horse was caused to bolt. Friar Tuck, charging like a bull with his quarter-staff, sent down one soldier, who tottered back on to his fellow, and confusion reigned.

"My pardons," said Robin Hood, and snatched a gold chain from a richly clad man.

Then, his bow behind his back, using a quarter-staff, he smashed aside the sword which the bullying squire drew, and drove the staff with such force into the other's chest that he was unhorsed.

Two men snatched the squire, and frog-marched him to the hedge, where Friar Tuck heaved him over.

"Hurray!" cheered Fayre. Then she laughed as the bishop subsided in the folds of his canopy. The sudden attack was over two minutes before the baron's men charged to the rescue.

The last Fayre saw of Robin Hood, he was challenging the bullying squire to combat, striking him across the face with the same glove that the bully had used to insult her.

The squire and the velvet had been taken; but what of the mercer?

"'Tis for me," said Fayre, as she clambered down from the tree. "For if the mercer is in the castle, now is the time for the mystery maid to dress in rich velvet."

Fayre knew the dungeons well. On one occasion, taking advantage of a sleeping warden, she had borrowed a dungeon key to explore. As he had found a duplicate, Fayre had the key still.

"Why, it should be done with ease," she told herself.

And with all speed she made for the castle, none paying her heed, since she looked but a simple peasant maid.

Well ahead of the procession, which was still in confusion, and of the baron's men, who were loitering to chase Robin Hood and recapture the squire, Fayre reached the mighty castle.

But there were guards mounted at the barbican. The drawbridge was up; and before it was lowered, there would be pomp and ceremony to impress the bishop.

"Pray allow a simple maid in," said Fayre, knowing that the soldiers did

not know her well enough by sight to pierce her disguise.

But a shock awaited her. "Stand back, girl," said the officer of the guard curtly. "None may enter the castle in advance of the Lord Bishop and the baron."

Fayre bit her lip. Could she but admit that she was the Lady Fayre, she could have gained entry; but such a thing was unthinkable. The guard would be amazed; the story would go the rounds and reach the ears of her aunt, the baroness! Then, never again would she be allowed free. Moreover, her punishment for such wickedness might be severe, the dungeons, the stocks!

Fayre stood back, baffled and afraid. For soon she would be sought in the castle. The baroness would want her to prepare herself to meet the bishop. There would be a hue and cry.

In growing alarm, she stood back as the baron's men came into sight, drums tapping, flags flying. All she could hope for was that she might smuggle herself into the castle with the procession.

But when the last man had ridden in and the drawbridge was raised, Fayre was still shut out; for the guards had kept careful watch. There were gate-crashers even in those days.

"What news of the mercer?" asked Fayre, addressing one of the guards.

"The mercer? In the dungeons." But a shout came then from the crowd as a new arrival was seen, a galloping horseman, wearing the uniform of the bishop's entourage, a squire who flashed his sword aloft.

"'Tis a young squire—the one Robin Hood attacked," said a woman who had heard the story from one of the baron's men.

But Fayre knew better. Round-eyed,

she recognised that gaily clad figure who, reining up his horse, looked at her and winked.

Robin Hood! Robin in the squire's clothes.

Daring, reckless Robin Hood, thus disguised, wheeled his horse for the drawbridge. With hardly a thought of his own peril, he was intending to ride in—right into the baron's courtyard, into the lion's den. But not alone.

Pointing to Fayre, he shouted. "That wench aided the mercer! She is my prisoner."

And leaning over, he threw out his hands to Fayre.

For a moment her courage failed her; and then, her eyes sparkling, thrilled by this daring, she let him take her wrists, and with a lithe, graceful swing leapt on to the horse behind him.

With clatter of hoofs they crossed the drawbridge into that part of the courtyard known as the outer bailey, where the baron's soldiers were lined up.

A Lesson for a Bully!

"STRAIGHT to the keep," urged Fayre breathlessly. "Stop for nothing—for no one."

Robin Hood nodded his head. He knew well enough that he might be recognised by some of the baron's men; or if not, there was the equally great peril that the bishop's other squires would know him for an impostor.

Riding hard, he crossed the bailey, heedless of shouts. Another horseman went after him, but Fayre slipped from the horse, and dashed into the open doorway of the castle well before that other horseman arrived.

"The dungeons?" he jerked out to Fayre.

"PRAY allow a simple maid into the castle," said Fayre, halting before the guard. To her dismay the man barred her path. When so much was at stake, she was shut out of her own home!



"The stairway here—" she answered.

They reached the stairs just as two soldiers advanced, having flung the mercer into a dungeon; Robin Hood swung past them with such confidence that they did not attempt to bar his way.

Below, guarding the dungeons, was the portly warden, a sword at his side and keys jangling at his belt. Hearing Robin Hood's steps, he wheeled.

"Set the mercer free," said Robin Hood.

Fayre crouched back in the shadow of the wall. The warden of the dungeons knew her too well for her to risk his seeing her face, dirty though it was.

"The mercer—by whose command?" exclaimed the warden.

"By mine."

"And your permit."

"This," said Robin Hood, and drew his sword.

The stout warden whipped out his sword, turning pale.

"Help—help!" he yelled, and guarding himself from the slashing sword, which Robin Hood wielded to frighten, not to injure him, backed to the warning bell.

Fayre sprang into action; if that bell-cord were pulled, a dozen men-at-arms would come scurrying down the stairs, and Robin Hood would be trapped.

Deftly she swung the bell-rope away as the warden groped for it.

"I know you, Robin Hood!" the man gasped. "Rascal, rogue, vagabond!"

"Old man, I will not hurt you," said Robin Hood, lightly dodging back so that the warden, swinging his sword, spun round.

Slapping him with the flat of his sword, Robin Hood chortled merrily.

"I am here—I am here," he said. "Fight on!"

Then, as Fayre pointed to the keys at the warden's belt, Robin Hood parried a blow of the warden's sword and by sheer strength forced it back.

Fayre, watching those sharp swords warily, slipped the keys off the warden's belt; then in panicky haste she rushed to the dungeons, and, seeing the mercer staring from the grid of one, made for it.

"Keep cool," she whispered. "When I open the door run to the left; there is a trapdoor in the floor, a boat in the moat below."

The clash of swords must surely be heard soon, or the warden's wild shouts; and soon not only would the mercer be unable to escape, but, being recaptured, his punishment would be worse than before.

Finding the key, Fayre unlocked the door, but even as she did so she heard the warning bell. The warden had found the rope.

The mercer, tremblingly emerging from the dungeon, took Fayre's arm.

"I am an old man," he muttered; "but give me a sword and I will fight for your life as though you were my own beloved daughter."

"There will be no need," said Fayre.

Running, she led him to the trapdoor over the moat. A trailing rope led down to a small boat; and Fayre, trembling as she heard the shouts of soldiers behind her, helped the mercer down.

"Row to the far side, but be speedy," she said; "for there are archers on the battlements who might shoot at you. They do not miss."

The mercer landed on all fours in the rocking boat, steadied it, and, breathing thanks to Fayre, rowed softly for the far side of the moat.

Fayre's face was that the watchers on the battlements, attracted by the

display in the bailey and expecting no attack, would neglect their vigil.

Listening until she heard the rowing stop, she awaited the soft whistle that would tell her that the mercer had landed safely.

The moment it came Fayre ran back, quaking as she heard wild yells and the clash of swords; but above all rose the voice of Robin Hood shouting:

"Look for Robin Hood—the rascal in green!"

Fayre peered round the corner amazed. The warden was not in sight, although his sword lay on the ground; but a dozen soldiers were there, and others were running down the stairs.

"Search the lower corridors!" roared Robin Hood.

His daring held Fayre spellbound. Knowing that the baron's men could not know whether he was the squire or not, he was bluffing them, sending them on a wild-goose chase.

As quickly as she could, Fayre sped towards Robin Hood.

It was then that she saw what had happened to the warden. He was imprisoned in one of his own dungeons, hammering and kicking at the bars and yelling at the top of his voice, but such was the din that his efforts to attract attention passed unnoticed. Pell-mell, the soldiers darted for the corridors, quite unsuspecting.

Reaching Robin Hood, Fayre plucked his arm.

"The other staircase," she said.

The baron, knowing Robin Hood by sight, would have him at his mercy. Robin Hood—quick thinker, as he had learned to be—needed no second bidding.

"Up the stairs!" he roared to the men, and as they, rushing back from their fruitless search of the corridors, turned towards the main flight of stairs, Robin Hood turned, too—only in the opposite direction.

The other staircase led only to battle stations on the outer wall, and thence to the guard-rooms, but it would serve for the moment.

"Methinks we are trapped," said Robin Hood lightly. "A duel with the baron should settle the matter, if he has the heart of the lion he wishes he had."

"Can you swim?" asked Fayre.

"Why, yes—"

"Then the moat is your only escape. Leave me that cloak and helmet—then from this next landing you make your jump."

Robin Hood knew that the advice was sound. Flinging Fayre the cloak, he left her with the sword, yet paused to ask her own intentions.

"You, mystery maid? How can you escape?"

"The Lady Fayre—I have to take her a message," Fayre answered. "But quick—quick—"

Robin Hood sprang on to the archer's embrasure, struggled through, looked down at the silent, murky water of the moat, thirty feet below, and jumped.

It seemed to Fayre a whole minute later that she heard the splash; but she could not then glance through to judge his fate. At the next landing, however, she looked through the embrasure and saw him scrambling up the steep bank.

The cloak and sword, left on the lower landing, told the soldiers how he had escaped; and there they paused, giving Fayre a chance to run on to her room.

She hurled off the shabby clothes, pulled on her rich, red, velvet frock, and ran at once to obtain a view of the moat.

The view she had was extensive, and included the fields beyond the castle. She saw the lane, and fat Sir Rufus riding to the castle to pay his respects to the bishop, and she saw Robin Hood climbing over the hedge towards the noble.

A tug from Robin Hood unhorsed Sir Rufus, whose wild shouts came to Fayre as Robin Hood, mounting the borrowed horse, went clattering off.

Arrows hissed, but the range was too great, and Robin Hood, blowing kisses, went past the castle's barbican before the guards could be ordered to lower the drawbridge.

Then the wall cut off Fayre's view, so that she did not see Robin Hood pause to give the mercer a lift back to the village.

"Fayre!" came the baroness' voice. "What do you here? Already the bishop has arrived—your hair—is it arranged? No. Then go to your chamber, stupid, idle girl."

"Yes, aunt," said Fayre meekly, dropping a curtsy. "But strange noises of strife came—"

"'Tis nothing. The bishop has arrived, and all his men!"

All but one! That one, the squire who had insulted Fayre, well trounced, did not arrive until the banquet was over and darkness had fallen; for his plight and appearance were such that he preferred darkness.

The Lady Fayre, presented to the bishop, kissed his ring and made obeisance, receiving a pat upon her head.

"There is indeed a difference between the young lady of the castle and village maids," said the bishop. "It would be impossible to mistake one for the other."

"Aha, yes!" smirked the baron.

Fayre modestly lowered her head and managed not to laugh.

"My lord bishop," she said softly, "dare I beg a favour?"

"Why, yes, little lady," said the bishop.

"It is but that the unhappy mercer shall not suffer because he would not allow your young squire to rob him of the velvet," said Fayre.

There was a silence, and the baron scowled heavily. But the bishop made a gracious movement of the hand.

"A kindly thought which does you credit," he said. "It is the young squire who shall be punished; for my good name shall not be brought low by such rascally conduct. By all accounts he is punished already by this Robin Hood. A daring knave!"

The baron—who had heard all the happenings below stairs—gave a rumbling growl; and Fayre, as she backed away from the bishop, feeling that leniency deserved reward, murmured:

"A daring knave, but methinks he goes in trembling dread of the baron, my uncle."

The baron, bracing himself, smirked; the baroness smirked, and the Lady Fayre laughed right merrily—but, of course, only when the privacy of her own room was reached; for as she rightly guessed, Robin Hood at that moment was not trembling, but making merry in the woods.

A length of material for a new green cloak was his reward from the mercer, and with it enough stuff for another cloak, to be presented when next he saw her to the mystery maid of the woods!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

THERE will be another fascinating COMPLETE story featuring the young Lady Fayre and Robin Hood in next Saturday's SCHOOLGIRL.

Powerful concluding chapters of that Wonderful Romantic story—

Princess to Save Leiconia!



FOR NEW READERS.

PAMELA COURTNEY, an English girl living in the romantic little Balkan kingdom of Leiconia, is asked to impersonate the Princess Sonia. Sonia must go abroad in order to save the country—but nobody except Prince Alphonse must ever suspect that Pamela has taken her place. Thrilled beyond measure, Pamela agrees. She is so like the princess that a wig makes her Sonia's double. Her chief adviser is the Grand Duke Bernard, who 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 against the grand duke until the latter at last suspects that Pamela is an impostor. Then Paul is captured and thrown into the dungeons. Pamela goes to rescue him, but the grand duke and his niece Juanita suddenly appear and Juanita snatches off Pamela's wig.

(Now read on.)

The Flight from the Dungeons!

WHITE-FACED, Pamela stood there in the dim, lamp-lit dungeons, appalled by the disaster which had overtaken her.

Exposed! Her masquerade discovered!

For several seconds none of the persons in that tense little tableau moved even an inch.

Juanita, her face whiter than ever now with suppressed exultation, still held the dark, shimmering wig aloft in one hand. The grand duke's eyes held a light of blazing triumph, and Paul, helpless inside his cell, gripped the bars in sheer frozen horror.

Of them all, it was Pamela who seemed the calmest; but that was because she was momentarily stupefied by what had happened. Even though it was something she had feared for weeks, something she had schemed to avoid hour after hour during the past few days, the unexpectedness of her exposure now left her paralysed and utterly dazed.

And so she might have remained for second after second, had not Juanita's rising exultation at last burst out into words.

"It—it isn't Sonia! It's someone else. Uncle, we were right. It's another girl!"

The spell was broken as Juanita's

almost hysterical voice rang through the dungeons.

Pamela moved. The others, as though actuated by some common spring, moved as well. Juanita hurled herself upon Pamela; the grand duke dodged to cut off her retreat.

Both of them failed—Juanita because she slipped on the stone floor and went sprawling on hands and knees, the wig flying from her grasp; the grand duke because, unmindful of the prisoner in this moment of complete victory, he went too near the cell.

In a flash Paul had reached through the bars and encircled his arms about the grand duke.

"Pam—quick! Bolt for it!" he panted.

PRINCESS PAM

A FUGITIVE!

And yet, to save Leiconia she must re-enter the Palace.

For the barest fraction of a second Pamela hesitated, hating with all her heart the thought of leaving Paul like this. But there was no other way of saving Leiconia—no other way of saving him.

She darted forward, snatching up the wig. Even before Juanita, grimacing with pain, tried to scramble up, one hand clasping her ankle, Pamela had dragged the wig over her own golden hair and was tearing for the staircase.

As she tore up them she felt sick with dread lest Juanita should overtake her, or one of the guards, having heard the skirmish, be suspicious. But, no! One sentry after another she passed; one sentry after another smartly saluted.

She reached the doorway. The palace grounds, bathed in moonlight, stretched before her.

And Pamela, running as she had never run before, made a bee-line for the secret door in the castle wall, beyond which was the secret passage leading to Tolari Forest.

"You doe!" said the grand duke, in a vicious snarl. "How does that feel, eh? And that—and that!"

Again and again he slapped his hand across Paul's face, and again and again the lad, gritting his teeth, forced himself to smile contemptuously.

Goah, but if only he weren't roped up like this! He'd have made this bullying traitor sorry for himself! Even the Civic Guards who crowded his cell wouldn't have prevented that.

Paul's contempt infuriated the grand duke.

"Perhaps you think," he sneered, "that because your confederate has escaped, for the moment, you have grounds for satisfaction? But wait, my friend, until you face a fring-party!" Paul's face whitened, but his expression did not alter.

"Like father, like son, eh?" he said passionately. "You drove my father to his death, and now you want to do the same to me. But you won't make me beg for my life—not if it is to save Leiconia."

"But that is where you are under an illusion, my friend," was the suave reply. "Leiconia is not safe—in the way you mean Leiconia is doomed. These men here are my men. I have hundreds of others, loyal to me and my cause, scattered about the country. At a word from me they will rise in rebellion. Hitherto I have been balked by two young people—yourself"—completely self-assured now, he bowed—"and her Royal Highness, so-called. But you, my friend, are no longer of account. To-morrow I shall be ruler. At dawn the following day you will face a fring-squad. And that most ingenious little impostor—"

"Will not be exactly idle, you know," said Paul, trying to sound more hopeful than he felt.

"What can she do?" the grand duke asked mockingly. "She is a fugitive now. My agents will be on the lookout for her in every part of Leiconia." He laughed. "Nothing, my friend—nothing on earth can now prevent me from becoming ruler of Leiconia!"

Outwardly scornful and contemptuous though he seemed, Paul's heart sank. What could frustrate the traitor now? Could Pamela, alone, unaided, a fugitive as she was?

By

DORIS LESLIE

The grand duke withdrew through an avenue of soldiers. Outside the cell Juanita and his chief henchman, Ricardo, were impatiently awaiting him. "Come, my friends, I have something to tell you."

"You have learned where Sonia is?" asked Ricardo keenly, as he and Juanita hurried away with the duke.

"I have a shrewd idea," was the nodded reply. "You remember that American oil concern who visited us some months ago? Well, I'm inclined to think Sonia's absence is connected with that. But that's not what I want to speak to you about. Everything has worked out perfectly for a quick victory on our part, and I've realised the way to achieve it!"

"How?" asked his companions in one breath.

But the grand duke, with a tantalising smile, would not explain until they were together in his own magnificently appointed study.

For the Last Time!

PAMELA looked cautiously out of the hollow oak-tree in Tolari Forest. Keenly her eyes scanned patches of moonlight and shadow.

Not a movement; not a sound. She'd outwitted pursuit. Good! Now to find some refuge place for the night, so that she could work out her plans and try to snatch a little rest.

Removing her wig, she clambered out, to go stealing away through the trees and bushes, and presently she discovered the very spot she sought, a steep hollow, the sides of which were thickly covered with long grass and shrubs.

It was ideal for her purpose, and she felt much safer when she knew she was entirely screened from view.

But what now? She was a fugitive. She dared not venture anywhere that would bring her into contact with other people, for the grand duke was certain to have sent out spies, primed with details of her appearance, to scan everyone in all the near-by villages and encampments.

But here Pamela felt safe; felt capable of going over the whole situation calmly and unhurriedly.

The grand duke had almost

triumphed. Her flight had given him a tremendously powerful new weapon. Leiconia was virtually without a princess; without a ruler. Now was his chance, of course.

"I can just imagine the pack of fairy-stories he'll tell the council—and the peasants, too—when they want to know where I am," Pamela reflected, nodding slowly. "Something that'll make me seem pretty black, and himself pretty white—"

Her eyes suddenly brightened as her fingers touched something hard and cold in her pocket. A key—the key! The key to Paul's cell.

Thank goodness she had that, she mused. It was the one thing which could save Leiconia and frustrate the grand duke even now. For with it she could release Paul. She must release Paul! For two reasons his liberty was absolutely vital.

Firstly he could meet the real Princess Sonia when she arrived at the border to-morrow on her return to the country, and prepare her for the terrible state of affairs that now existed there, and secondly, he had such influence among the peasants that he might be able to stem the revolt which, thanks to the grand duke's campaign of lies against her, was ready to break out at any moment.

Paul must be freed. But how—how? In the morning she could return along the passage from the hollow oak to the palace—but once there, how could she get down into the dungeons without anyone suspecting?

After racking her brains for some time, Pamela at last fell into a fitful sleep.

She awoke in the morning to the sound of voices—voices from near by.

Her heart went cold. Searchers—enemies?

She did not stop to ponder, but, on hands and knees, crawled to the top of the hollow, to fling herself prone all at once and part the long grass, peering through it.

Less than fifty yards away was a great gathering of peasants. Some sort of meeting was in progress, for one, mounted on a tree-trunk, was addressing the rest, gesturing and brandishing his fists. From time to time his audience responded with wild shouts.

And Pamela, distinguishing some of these, felt the queerest of thrills.

"Down with the princess!"

"Tyrant—traitor!"

"Storm the palace! We'll free Paul Naldi ourselves!"

"And put the princess in his place!"

As though mesmerised, Pamela found herself drawn towards the scene. Almost unconsciously she made sure her dark wig was firmly tucked in her pocket. Nearer and nearer she drew to the back of the crowd. They were blaming her for Paul's imprisonment. The grand duke had struck again! And now revolt was simmering on the brink, ready to overflow at any second.

Not until she had reached the crowd was Pamela noticed. And then, to her horror, a woman, seeing her, grasped her arm.

"What say you, my girl?" she cried. "Isn't the princess a tyrant? Shouldn't we drag her off her throne? One of our young men—she has clapped him into the dungeons for no reason at all. Isn't she a traitor to you and me?"

Pamela kept a white face as averted as she could.

"Y—yes," she stammered. "Down—down with the princess, I say!"

"Down with the princess!" shrielled the woman, flinging up her arms.

"Down with the princess!" echoed voice after voice.

And then the crowd began to move. Pamela, helpless, was borne along with it. Terrified lest at any moment someone would suspect her identity; lest one of the grand duke's own spies should be here, on the look out for her, she could not escape from that surging mass of angry people.

Again and again she tried to break through. The hollow oak! Oh, great goodness, she was getting farther and farther away from it, and it was her one chance of freeing Paul. She must get away—she must—she must.

But it was useless. She was hemmed in on every side, buffeted this way and that. Somebody linked an arm through one of hers; somebody else linked an arm through the other. On and on she marched, the centre of a shouting, determined body which increased every yard of the way as other peasants came flocking from encampments and lonely cottages.

On and on—the forest far behind—now swinging down a dusty, winding lane—now entering the main street of Tolari—now sweeping startled, helpless Civic Guards out of the way—now approaching the elaborate, Eagle-crested gates of the palace—halting for a brief spell while the leaders demanded entry into the palace grounds—and finally, with the hopelessly outnumbered soldiery giving way, streaming across those beautiful lawns to the very balcony from which she had acknowledged these same people's cheers not many days ago.

It was all like a nightmare to Pamela. She was horrified at her failure to reach the hollow oak, and still dreading that at any instant she might be recognised. The crowd, gathering beneath the balcony, set up a thunderous chant.

"Down with the princess—down with the princess! Release the prisoner—release the prisoner!"

Suddenly there was a skirmish. Civic Guards had appeared on the scene. Swords and bayonets glistening in the sun, they tore up from every direction, trying to form a ring around the crowd.

But the peasants, ignoring the pleas of their leaders, broke away and went scattering over the grounds. In a moment all was confusion. The guards, helplessly outnumbered, and obviously refraining from the use of their arms under orders from the grand duke, were quite unable to control the crowd.

It was Pamela's chance. Eagerly she seized it, slipping away towards the dungeons, and just in sight of them luck came to her aid.

Another party of soldiers came streaming out of the dungeons to the assistance of their unfortunate fellows. Pam's eyes lit up as she recognised several of the newcomers. They were the dungeon sentries!

"Oh golly!" she breathed, heart racing madly. "They've left their posts. And—why, there's the gaoler, too, come up to see what all the rumpus is about!"

The gaoler, an elderly man, stood talking excitedly to a group of Civic Guards who had managed to round up a party of peasants near the dungeon doors. Greatly daring, Pamela tore up to them.

She had to be daring, for only audacity and courage could rescue Paul and save the day.

"Oh, quick, please!" she panted, faltering to a stop before the officer in command. "Some of the crowd are out of hand. They're breaking windows—trying to get into the palace. Over—over there—"

Shakily she pointed to a corner of the palace, pretending to be almost exhausted and thoroughly scared. And her acting was so convincing that, with-

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out a moment's hesitation, the officer barked an order to his men who, abandoning the peasants, went charging after him towards the purely imaginary source of trouble.

Even before they had vanished, Pamela was speeding for the dungeons. One or two peasants made to follow her, but more soldiers took charge of them. Pamela was unobserved, forgotten.

Stumblingly she tore down the narrow, winding staircase. The bottom at last. She raced for the cells. No. 6, No. 7, and now—now No. 8—Paul's!

Whipping out the key, she feverishly began to unlock the door, while a startled and incredulously delighted Paul sprang towards her.

"After me—as fast as you can!" Pamela cried, when the door clanged open.

Paul needed no urging. Leaping out, he followed her in a breathless scramble up the stairs. In the doorway leading to the grounds Pamela stopped, peering out. The nearest soldier was a hundred yards away, his back towards them.

"Quick!" she breathed. "Those bushes, and we'll be safe!"

They dashed out, hurling themselves for cover. A headlong dive, and they were out of sight, breathless, but elated.

"I'll race to the border!" Paul said swiftly. "I'll meet Sonia, and bring her here just as soon as I can. If only"—and he rammed a clenched fist into his palm—"if only we could hold things up here for a while!"

Pamela nodded. If only they could! But how—how? Together they racked their brains, turning over scheme after scheme. And suddenly she laid a hand on Paul's arm, looking at him with suppressed excitement.

"Paul," she murmured, "you remember that dye you brought for my hair?"

"You mean the stuff you weren't able to use? Why, yes!" Paul eyed her wonderingly. "But what about it?"

"Supposing I used it, after all?" Pamela went on steadily. "It oughtn't to be difficult to get into the palace with all this bother going on. I could dye my hair. I could become princess once more. I could go to the council; see the duke; go on to the balcony and speak to the crowd; bluff for all I was worth. That would hold things up, wouldn't it? And then, when Sonia arrives, she might be able to change places with me without anyone being the wiser."

Her eyes shone now, but Paul was frowning. Paul, in fact, was thinking more of another aspect of Pamela's suggestion, and one which she had purposely refrained from mentioning, for she wanted to forget that it existed.

"It's a marvellous plan," he agreed; "but the risk, old thing! If you were caught—bowed out—"

"Leiconia would be no worse off than now," Pamela said quietly.

"But you, Pam—you know what'd happen. You'd be imprisoned."

"I know, Paul."

Pamela's face was very pale, for she had no illusions about the terrible risk she would be running.

"But don't you see, Paul," she pleaded, a hand on his arm, "it's our only hope? If I don't do it, what else can I do? Nothing. Only hang about here while the grand duke gets his own way. I've got to do it, haven't I?"

Paul nodded. What else could he do? In his heart he knew Pamela was right, and he admired her more than he had ever done before.

And so it was arranged. Pamela

would change into one of Sonia's costumes, a favourite of which the princess had at least one replica. Sonia, she knew, had taken one of them to America. If she returned to the palace wearing it, no one would be able to tell them apart.

Pamela and Paul parted, each to go their own separate ways—he to the border, and she for the secret entrance to the palace.

For the last time Pamela was about to become Princess of Leiconia!

The Greatest Moment of All!

"WAIT, my friends! I have news for you!"

The grand duke stepped to the edge of the balcony, raising his arms for silence. A hush fell over the jostling, seething crowd below. Every eye turned upwards, fastening upon that tall, imperious-looking figure, gorgeously arrayed in uniform, as he stood there, with the council of State hovering behind him.



PAMELA nearly cried out in amazement as she saw her double confronting her. Princess Sonia had returned!

The crowd saw him smile. It was an exultant, triumphant smile, for the grand duke's greatest moment was at hand. Triumph, power, wealth—all would be within his grasp before long.

As the crowd below him felt now, so would the rest of the country feel, too. And if he won these people over to his cause, he would have won the support of the entire populace. No difficult task that. He had already convinced the council of State with his version of the princess' disappearance.

"My friends," he cried again, "I have news for you indeed. Your princess has betrayed you. This morning she fled, taking jewels, gold, everything she could lay her hands on, and thinking nothing of you, her devoted people! But stay!"

He stilled a sudden hubbub with a swift lift of his arm.

"There is no need for fear or panic. The wrongs the princess has inflicted upon you shall be righted—by me! And she, the girl who has flown the country which trusted her—the country which looked up to her for leadership and example—"

"Is here before you!" rang out a

girlish voice that was charged with anger and emotion.

And on to the balcony, stepping through the astounded council to the very side of the staggered grand duke, came Pamela herself!

With a dignity and composure that belied her gnawing, palpitating fears, Pamela reached the balustrade, there to halt, gazing down upon the people below. And while they murmured and whispered among themselves, stunned and bewildered by these extraordinary happenings, she spoke again.

"Be patient, my people, please! There has been"—she paused, glancing at the grand duke—"a rather strange misunderstanding, about which you shall learn everything presently. One thing you shall know now, however. Paul Naldi has been freed! He was imprisoned by no order of mine."

She stepped back, amid a breeze of fierce chatter. The Council of State were still amazed beyond measure; and the grand duke had not yet recovered from his feeling of stupefied shock. Never, in his most nightmarish dreams, had he anticipated this. That the im-

postor should have the audacity to return to the palace!

Dazedly, he stared at Pamela; at her white, set features. And then he recovered himself, and, all dignity and restraint gone to the winds, swung round on the council.

"She lies—she lies!" he said viciously. "This is not the princess! This is an impostor, a girl in disguise, wearing false hair—a wig!" Beside himself with rage and fear, he confronted the chief councillor. "I tell you, Barnato, this girl is a fake. See for yourself. Look at her hair; test it. It's artificial. I know. I didn't tell you just now, but I—"

Pamela, heart pounding, cut him short with an imperious gesture.

"Uncle!" she exclaimed. "You forget where we are. The peasants are watching. If you wish to persist in your—your ridiculous story, then I suggest we withdraw. Come, gentlemen!"

Pamela led the way into the room. Then, with fearlessly unwavering eyes, she regarded the grand duke.

"What is the meaning of this fantastic slander of yours, uncle?"

The grand duke trembled with rage.

Eyes glinting, cheeks deathly white, he stared back at her across the room.

"Enough of this pretence! You are an impostor and you know it. For weeks," he cried, addressing the disconcerted statesmen, "this girl has been masquerading as princess. Sonia herself has fled the country, as I told you gentlemen, but she left this girl in her place. They are remarkably alike in features, but extremely different with regard to hair. A wig made the deception possible—a wig," he ended, with a malicious sneer, "which I had the pleasure of seeing removed from this girl's head only last night, when she was attempting to release the prisoner from the dungeons!"

There was an exchange of looks among the council.

"Surely, then, it should be a simple matter to discover whether this is Her Royal Highness or not," murmured Duke Barnato. "My dear," he added, turning deferentially to Pamela, "if you would permit one of us to examine your hair?"

"Why, not—not at all!" Pamela said, laughing.

"But it was a terribly unnatural laugh. Supposing the dye noticed close to?"

Then she steeled herself. The risk must be taken.

Forcing herself to smile the whole time, she stepped towards Duke Barnato, who gingerly took hold of her hair and pulled.

"Don't be afraid of hurting me. Look! I'll show you!"

And Pamela tugged her own hair so forcibly that the tears started to her eyes. But it was worth the discomfort to see the expression on the face of the grand duke.

"What—what—" gurgled that amazed traitor. "But—but I tell you, gentlemen—last night, in the dungeons, I—"

"Last night, in the dungeons, you must have been sleep-walking, uncle," Pamela remarked lightly. She fluffed her hair into some semblance of order. "Well, gentlemen," she asked quietly, "are you satisfied now?"

"Our most abject apologies, your Highness," begged Duke Barnato.

He bowed; the rest of the council bowed, too. And Pamela, thrilling from head to foot, looked with triumphant eyes at the grand duke.

Never had she seen such chagrin, such savage hatred, and such simmering fear in a man's face before.

Pamela watched as he turned away, muttering. Her face became radiant. And then, as he neared the door, he swung round with a cry.

"Dye!" he cried, a light of understanding stealing into his haggard features. "That's it, gentlemen. Her hair's dyed!" With a laugh, he folded his arms. "Well, gentlemen, there should not be much difficulty about proving which of us is telling the truth now!"

Pamela drew back as every eye in the room became riveted upon her.

Slowly, her horror mounted. If the grand duke was allowed to test her hair for dye, the truth would be known. The grand duke's story, fantastic though it had seemed to his audience, would be substantiated. It would be triumph for him—defeat for her; and for Paul and Sonia, and the country she had grown to love.

Pamela forgot she was near the door; forgot the desperate bolt she had contemplated. She felt transfixed, unable to move or speak.

The grand duke, his face working with exultation, began to approach her.

And then—

Pamela nearly screamed.

Something had settled over one of her wrists as she clenched her hands at her sides; something warm and soft, yet with a grip like iron. Swiftly, she turned her head. But next moment, almost before she realised it, she had been dragged behind the curtains that covered the door, to obtain a hazy impression of three people standing there.

Princess Sonia herself, Prince Alphonse, and Paul—Paul still holding her wrist and grinning despite his obvious anxiety.

In a second Sonia, flashing her a quick smile, had stepped through the curtains, with Prince Alphonse at her back.

"Back again, uncle," Pamela heard her address the grand duke. "Sorry if you thought I was anxious to get away. I heard Uncle Alphonse, and thought he'd better help me convince everyone that you're behaving rather—well, crazily, uncle, to say the least! And," came Sonia's voice, suddenly hardening, "very treacherously, too!"

"Better make ourselves scarce, old thing," Paul whispered in Pamela's ear. "Just in case they spot the two of you together."

And Pamela, still hardly able to realise that she'd saved the day, after all, and the genuine princess was back at the palace again, tiptoed away with her companion.

FROM THE fringe of the crowd Pamela and Paul watched and listened to everything that took place during the sensational minutes that followed Sonia's eleventh-hour arrival at the palace.

A shawl successfully concealed Pamela's identity from the peasants, and, gripping hands with Paul, she stood there, unsuspected, unnoticed.

The grand duke had soon been baffled, humiliated, for Sonia had no difficulty in satisfying the council that she was indeed their princess. In vain the duke persisted in his story. It seemed just too fantastic for belief.

So Sonia came on to the balcony; she

addressed the gathering. She told them of the riches in store for her kingdom when the oil located in Leiconia was eventually exploited; she told them something of the grand duke's treason; she told them of the injustices he had inflicted upon them in her name. And when, to a deafening roar of cheers, she stepped back, Prince Alphonse, taking her place, disposed of the grand duke for good and all.

His guilt, said the prince, was proved by documentary evidence. He did not add that it had been supplied chiefly through Paul. But the duke was under arrest; even now his chief confederates were being similarly dealt with, and the whole unsavoury clique would be banished from Leiconia.

"Which is a dashed sight better fate than they deserve," Paul whispered.

But Pamela felt no bitterness now, only glorious, bubbling happiness.

Leiconia was saved! Peace and prosperity had come to that lovely little country at last. And now, once again, the air echoed with cheers for the Princess Sonia.

"Lucky you," Paul murmured in Pamela's ear. "For they're really cheering you just as much as Sonia, you know."

"Why, Paul, don't—don't be so silly," Pamela chided him.

But she flushed a radiant red. Paul was right. The warm, proud beating of her heart told her indisputably that the acclamation of these people all about her, while directed towards Sonia's graceful figure on the balcony, was meant just as much for herself!

"Oh, Paul," she said in a choky little voice, "isn't it all wonderful? Sonia's back—Leiconia's saved—all the plotters are out of the way—and I—I've lived through the most marvellous dream!"

Paul's hand settled upon her arm.

"You're not sorry it's all over, Pam?"

"Sorry?" Pamela repeated. "Yes, Paul, in a way. But how can I be really sorry when I've made so many lovely friends—like you? I'm just shaky with happiness. I—I think I'd like to cry."

And perhaps Pamela did, for there was a dew-like lustre in her eyes as she smiled at the young man who had so bravely, unselfishly helped her when she was "Princess to Save Leiconia!"

THE END.

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