

Thrilling and dramatic times for Barbara Redfern & Co. when they meet the:— **“MYSTERY GIRL OF THE WOODS!”**

THE SCHOOLGIRL

No. 508. Vol. 20.
Week Ending
APR. 22nd, 1939.

EVERY **2^D** SATURDAY

Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



“I WARN YOU, BARBARA REDFERN!”

What did the strange young gipsy fortune-teller mean?

A gripping incident from this week's superb story of Cliff House School.

Magnificent LONG COMPLETE Cliff House School story, featuring world-famous Barbara Redfern & Co., an intriguing Gipsy Lass, and a strange—



MYSTERY GIRL *of the* WOODS!

The Girl Vanishes!



"EGGS?" asked Barbara Redfern, captain of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School.

"Present, skipper," monooled Jemima Carstairs returned cheerily.

"Bread-and-butter?"

"Here we are, Babs," returned Mabel Lynn, Babs' especial chum.

"Cress sandwiches? Jam? Cake? Yes, we've got them all, I think," Barbara said thoughtfully. "Oh, don't forget the pie! Where's the pie?"

It was Leila Carroll, the American junior, who answered then.

"I guess the pie's right here, sister. I'm just cutting it."

"Well, everything's ready, then," grinned Tomboy Clara Trevlyn, and looked with hungry approval at the really noble picnic spread laid beneath the overhanging branches of an ancient chestnut-tree in Friardale Woods.

"Where's that duffer Bessie, though?"

"She's gone down to the spring to wash an extra cup," Babs said. "The silly jam got into it. Still, looks fine!" she added approvingly.

Look fine it certainly did—an appetising spread in very truth.

In the little glade in Friardale Woods the famous Fourth Formers had picked an ideal spot for their half-holiday picnic, and they had also chosen ideal weather. The sun was pleasantly warm, and the trees, bursting with bud, and bright here and there

with blossom, seemed to hum with woodland life.

"Well, we're all set," said Mabel Lynn, "but old Bessie. I say—" And then she stopped, gazing startledly at her chums. "Oh, great goloshes, what's happened?"

For suddenly, from the direction of the stream where plump Bessie Bunter, the sixth member of the party, had disappeared, there had come a tremulous shriek.

"Help, help! I'm slipping! I'm drowning! Help—"

"Bessie!" cried Babs.

"Help! Help!"

"Come on!"

With one accord the five dropped

ging. Suddenly, despite Bessie's really terrific weight, she was jerked upwards, to lie floundering on the rocky bank.

"Phew! Some strength, I'll say!" Leila said. "But look at old Roly-polykins—she's smothered in mud. Say, stranger!" she called.

The girl looked round. Bessie, like a landed fish, was still panting on the bank.

For the first time then Babs got a glimpse of the stranger's face—a decidedly good-looking face, crowned by pretty, brown, bobbed hair. She paused as she saw them, strangely and huntedly looked right and left, and then, as they came up, straightened.

"Oh, phoo!" Bessie gasped. "I sus-say, you know, I mum-might have ddd-drowned!" she said. "I sus-slipped on the bank, you know, and went up to my chin in beastly mud!"

That, like most of Elizabeth Gertrude's statements, was a bit of an exaggeration. Bessie had certainly been up to her knees in mud, and must have received a most terrific fright. Except for a pair of mud-encased stockings, however, she was none the worse for her experience.

"And if it hadn't been for this girl I mum-might have drowned to death!" Bessie grumbled. "She came along just as I was going down for the third time, you know."

The chums grinned. The girl smiled. Then she flushed a little as she found Babs' eyes upon her.

"I'm afraid," she said, "your friend exaggerates a little. There was no danger really." Again she looked round a little furtively. "Well, I'll be going," she said abruptly.

By

HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

whatever they were holding, and, in fluttering dismay, rushed off, tearing through the trees. Here the ground sloped steeply towards the spring-fed stream in the tiny valley, and even as they burst in sight of that valley they paused. For there was Bessie—truly in the water.

There also was another girl, slightly older than the Cliff House girls—a rather slim, good-looking girl, who, at this moment, was performing a prodigy of strength.

Stretched full length on the bank, the girl had plump Bessie gripped under the armpits, and was straining and tug-

"Oh, no!" Babs said. "No, please. We haven't thanked you—"
 "Please don't," the girl said.
 "Well, what about a spot of tea?" Jemima countered. "Jolly nice little brew going on in the glade yonder. Hot work, rescuing our one and only Fatima! Do join us."

The girl hesitated. Again she looked at Babs, and meeting the frank friendliness of her gaze, smiled. Babs herself smiled in return, instinctively warming towards her.

"Please!" she begged.
 "Well, thank you." The girl laughed. "I—I'd like to—awfully. Yes, Miss— Oh dear! Isn't it silly not knowing each other's names? Mine's Elaine," she volunteered.

"Jolly nice," Clara said. "Lovely name. Elaine what?"

"Well, just Elaine," the girl said, with a slight blush. "Shall we leave it at that? You're from Cliff House, of course," she added. "I've seen such a lot of your girls about."

Babs smiled again. Natural courtesy prevented her from asking questions, but she wondered why she had not seen this girl before, stranger to the neighbourhood though she was. She wondered, too, why she did not give her other name. Still, she was nice. They all liked her. They all felt, with Bessie, very grateful for what she had done. Odd, though, that nervousness of hers.

They introduced themselves. Then, with Bessie squelching mud at every step, they ploughed back to the picnic spot. Elaine's eyes sparkled as she saw the spread laid beneath the chestnut-tree.

"Oh, I say, how marvellous!" she cried. "What lovely sandwiches! Can I make the tea?" she added eagerly. "I love making tea!"
 "Oh, but you're the jolly old guest, what?" Jemima demurred.

"No, please let me help," Elaine pleaded.

And she did help, so thoroughly and obviously enjoying it, that Babs & Co. could not possibly feel they were imposing on her.

Tea was made, cups and plates laid, and while Bessie, wrinkling her nose in disgust, peeled off her muddy stockings, preparations were at last complete.

"Oh, here we are!" Babs said. "Elaine, will you sit there—next to Clara? Bessie, leave those stockings out to dry. Now—" And then she stopped, staring. "I say, what's that?"

For suddenly, surprisingly, from the depths of the woods, came the deep, sonorous peal of a heavy bell.

Clang, clang, clang!
 Babs blinked. She glanced at Elaine, and again she was conscious of a sense of shock as she saw that girl's dilated eyes, the look of sudden and most frightful consternation upon her face. The bell tolled again—rapidly, on a more urgent note this time.

Clang, clang!
 "Where's it coming from?" Mabel Lynn asked.

"Over there, I think." And Babs pointed dubiously. "Behind those trees there it sounds like. Hallo! It's stopped now." And then she jumped. "Mum-my hat!" she cried. "Elaine has—"

"Elaine?" Clara said puzzledly.
 "Look!" Babs cried. "She's gone!"
 Only too true. Of their mysterious friend of the woods who, less than half a second ago, had stood by Babs, there was now not a solitary sign.

Very, Very Puzzling!



"RUM!" Jemima frowned. "Not to say uncanny." And she adjusted her monocle and stared this way and that. "First time in all my jolly old

experience that I've been in the presence of a girl capable of vanishing into the merry old invisible blue!" she said thoughtfully. "We didn't dream we met Elaine, did we?"

The tolling bell had stopped now. The chums were still blinking, taken aback by the disappearance of their new-found friend.

One half-second she had been among them; the next, as Jemima had said, she had vanished into thin air. But how? Not one of them had heard a sound. There was no place in which she could have hidden. Impossible, if she had run away, that they should not have seen her or heard her.

"Mystery!" Babs decided. "Jolly, jolly funny!" But that bell had something to do with it," she added shrewdly. "I saw Elaine's face when it started to ring, and she looked absolutely scared. Well, let's hope she'll

and allowed the ball to run on, to be smartly fielded by Babs, who, just as smartly, returned it to Leila.

Smack! Sure and safe, the ball flew to Leila's hand, and Leila, with a yell, tossed it to Jemima. But Jemima, as usual, was unalert. Too late, she saw the flying ball; too late, she jumped upward. She let out a yelp as her fingers just flicked it, and the ball, deflected from its course, shot off at a tangent up into the air.

"Jimmy, you muff!" hooted Clara. "Oh, my hat! It's gone over the wall!"

"Wumps!" Jemima said, sucking her fingers.

In dismay, they gazed at the wall. It was a formidable wall, stout and solidly built of flints, a good ten feet high, with a top strewn with broken glass. Clara pulled a face.

"No scaling that," she said. "Oh blow! Jimmy, did you hurt yourself?"

"Oh, nothing to speak of!" Jemima returned carelessly. "Apart from nineteen broken fingers and five smashed wrists, I'm all here! Shall we totter Butnerwards again?"

"No; we jolly well won't!" Clara disagreed. "We're going to get that ball! Come on! Let's scout round! There's



One moment the famous chums— Babs, Jemima, Bessie, all of them—were making merry in true picnic fashion. The next—they had been plunged into drama, and a moment later, baffling mystery. Why did the Mystery Girl of the Woods, who rescued Bessie from the river, bolt in terror at the sound of a distant bell? What was the meaning of that bell? And what part did the queer young gipsy fortune-teller play in the whole amazing puzzle?



come back!" she added. "Keep her place there, Clara. Tea forward, Bess."

Still puzzled, they sat down, half-prepared for their mysterious friend to reappear at any minute. The meal dragged on. Half an hour lengthened into an hour. Of Elaine no sign.

"I guess she's gone for good," Leila said. "Pity! Sure would have liked to see more of her."

That was a sentiment they all shared, but it was one, obviously, which was destined to go unsatisfied.

With tea over, Clara, who was the junior captain of games at Cliff House and ever an opportunist, suggested finding some place near by and playing catchers—Clara, with that idea in mind, having concealed a cricket ball in the tuck hamper. As Bessie's stockings were not yet dry, and as the chums had nothing else to do, the suggestion was received cordially enough, and after having packed up the picnic things and hidden them in a bush the chums strolled off. It was some time, however, before they found a clear enough spot for their purpose.

That was near a house, set deep in the woods and high-walled, which was known as the Turrets.

"Well, here we are," Clara said. "Mabs, you want some practice in this. So do you, Jimmy. Stand here; Babs, you there. Now, Mabs, catch!"

And whiz! went the ball, and "Butterfingers!" went up a howl from Clara, as Mabs jumped, failed to catch,

bound to be a gate or something in it; and if we ask nicely—"

Jemima sighed. But Clara, once she had set her mind upon anything—and Clara had definitely set her mind on that game of catchers—was as obstinate as could be. Impatiently she led the way, gazing anxiously at the wall as she went—a solid, unrelieved expanse which seemed to have been built to resist invasions. They reached the corner, following the wall round. Then Babs suddenly let out an exclamation.

"Look! A door!"
 "And locked, by the look of it, I guess," Leila said.

A door there certainly was, and a door which, in keeping with the wall, was of stout, solid oak, painted brown. Clara approached it. She lifted the latch. Then she chuckled.

"Luck, kidlets!" she gleed. "It's open. Come on! Let's go and find the owner of the place and ask for the ball."

She pushed the door open, peering into the rather wild and decidedly woodland garden which met her gaze. A hundred yards from the gate the Turrets, a rather grim-looking structure of black flints and red brick, frowned at them through the foliage of the intervening trees. There was a winding path leaning to the house, but no sign of anyone else.

"Well, coming?" Clara asked.
 "Lead on!" sighed Jemima. "Only hope," she added thoughtfully, "the old

ball hasn't brained the own—I Might be a bit peeved if so—what—"

Clara made a face, but led the way on. In a body the chums tramped down the garden path towards the house. Then suddenly:

"Oh, my hat! Look out!" shrieked Babs.

They all stopped dead in their tracks, momentarily paralysed. For, full in their path, charging at them, with dripping tongues and gleaming fangs, crashed two enormous bull-mastiffs, so menacing, so terrifying their appearance, that for one moment the chums could not move. With a rush, the dogs came on.

Then:
"Scout!" shrieked Mabs.
She turned. But it was hopeless then. No human being could have out-paced those two savage-looking beasts. Another moment, and the dogs would be upon them; another moment, and—

But, even as the chums braced themselves desperately to meet the threatened assault, there came an astounding interruption.

For from somewhere—nobody saw—a girl's clear voice rang out:
"Rufus! Rolfe! Halt!"

Astonishingly, at the sound of that voice the dogs jerked to a standstill, baring into each other. While the chums watched, they turned, with heaving flanks and dripping tongues. Came the patter of footsteps, and a figure moved among the bushes. Then a girl, dressed in white satin blouse and tiny black satin shorts, came rushing on to the scene.

Mabs gave a cry.

"Oh, Jehoshaphat, look! Elaine!" Elaine, their mystery friend, it was. But Elaine dressed like that, and with such sure mastery over these two ferocious, savage-looking animals that they were cowed by a single command!

Down she raced, and, as if they had suddenly melted, the dogs cringed into the path.

"All right! Good dogs, then!" she said, as they looked up at her, and, all flustered and breathless, she turned to the chums. "I—I saw you," she said, then abruptly stopped. "Rufus! Rolfe! Go back to the house!"

The dogs rose. Without another look at the chums, they turned and slunk away. Babs blinked.

"But, Elaine, you—"
"I," Elaine said, and bit her lip. "I—I'm frightfully sorry you had such a scare!" she said. "But I don't think really they would have hurt you! They're not exactly man-eaters. But—how did you get in?"

"Well, through the gate, I guess."
"It was left open?" Elaine cried sharply.

"Sure."
"Oh!" Elaine looked stricken for a moment. "I—I suppose I—I forgot to bolt it," she said. Again she looked at them—sharply, entreatingly. "Did—did you see anything?" she asked quickly.

"Anything?" Babs looked puzzled. "Only the dogs. What else?"
"You're sure?"

"Yes, of course. What should we see?"
Elaine gulped. Was it relief they saw on her face?

"Nun—nothing," she said—"that is, I thought— Well, never mind. But, please, if you did see anything—whatever it was," she added—"promise me you'll say nothing about it! And promise me that you won't tell anyone that I live here!"

The chums blinked, their terror of the dogs giving way to amazement at the

extraordinary behaviour of this girl. What was it she was terrified they might have seen? Why was she living here—in these old grounds, with those two animals? And why was she dressed like this?

Amazing!
"Well, of course we promise," Babs said. "We had no idea of trying to poke our nose into anything. You see, we lost our ball over the wall. But where did you get to when that bell tolled, Elaine?"

Elaine shook her head.
"I—I had to go—suddenly," she said in confusion. "There was something—someone— But no matter," she added hastily. "I'm sorry you had such a scare, and—thank you for your promise. Whereabouts did you lose the ball?"

"Over there," Clara said. "But—"
"Shall we go and find it?" Elaine asked.

And, as if to avoid further questioning, she stepped forward. But she did not immediately step in the direction Clara indicated. Instead, rather hurriedly she raced to the gate. There, with one swift, strong push of her fingers, she slipped the formidable bolt which was fastened to its bottom into place. She came back looking a little relieved then.

"Now," she said, with a laugh, "let's find the ball."

That, at least, was no hard job, for the ball—a new one—was a most conspicuous red, and was soon spotted by Clara lodged in the gutter of an out-building some nine or ten feet high. She pointed it out.

"Have to get a ladder," she said. "Unless," she added, "you give me a bunk up, Elaine."

But Elaine, to the chums' astonishment, ran forward. While they watched she made a sudden upward leap—a leap so graceful, so light, and fairy-like—that for a moment it seemed that she had no connection at all with the earth. And as she leapt her hand shot towards the ball. At the very apex of the leap she grabbed it, held it, and then, light as thistledown, landed on her feet again, laughing as she did so.

Clara blinked.
"My hat! What an athlete!" she breathed. "Elaine, where did you learn to jump like that?"

"Jump?" Elaine said, and then swiftly crimsoned. "Oh goodness!" she gasped, and for a moment looked almost guilty. "Well, I just thought I could reach it," she said, "and so— Well, I did, didn't I? Here it is. Now, will you go, please?"

"Elaine—no; wait a minute!" Babs looked at her reproachfully. "Elaine, we aren't going to let you go like this. Twice this afternoon you've done us jolly good turns—"

"Oh, please! Neither of them was anything," Elaine said. "Apart from that, I couldn't watch you being set upon by my dogs, could I? Let's say no more about it."

"But we want to say more about it," Babs insisted. "Elaine, we're not going to let you go like this. We want to see you again—of course. What about coming over to Cliff House?"

"Well, thank you!" Elaine gulped. For a moment she smiled—very wistfully, almost sadly, Babs thought. "That is nice of you," she said softly, "and I really would love to come. But not before Saturday. Any day after next Saturday."

"But why not come on Saturday?" Leila put in eagerly. "Saturday is going to be a big day for Cliff House. You've heard of the Courtfield Charities Fair?"

Rather curiously Elaine smiled.

"Yes."
"Well, we're running a stall there," Leila said. "Great fun, I guess. Why not come and make one of us?"

But again Elaine shook her head.
"I'd like to, but—I can't," she said. "Truly. After Saturday—yes, I'll be pleased to come to Cliff House as often as you like to invite me. I—I like you," she added. "Perhaps, later on, there's something I'll tell you. But, after all, it's an early day yet, isn't it? Now, will you please go?" she added, with an anxious glance at the house. "This way."

Quickly she led them forward. At another gate similar to the first she stopped, withdrawing the bolt. Rather feverishly anxious she seemed to get rid of them, and as soon as they were on the other side she nodded quickly and shot the bolt. The chums stared at each other.

"Well, of all the mysterious packets," breathed Clara. "Babs, what do you make of all that?"

But Babs shook her head. Perplexed, puzzled, she did not know what to make of it. The whole thing was like a jigsaw puzzle to her. Mystery of a strange sort seemed to surround Elaine, and Babs had more than an impression that she was in some sort of grave trouble.

Odd girl—very!

Enter Ziska!



AN odd girl Elaine certainly was, mysterious and baffling the circumstances which surrounded her. But she had appealed strongly to the

chums. Not if they knew it were they going to lose sight of Elaine again; and if they could possibly help her as she had so readily helped them, they meant to.

Strangely enough, they had the feeling that Elaine needed help.

Intrigued by her, it was small wonder that they talked of nothing but that girl as they made their way back to the picnic spot at which they had left their things.

Bessie, by that time, was pleased to find her stockings dried—but she also found something else, near the spring.

That discovery was a bracelet charm attached to a ribbon band, the charm itself being a silver circle enclosing a capital "T" made of blue enamel.

"It's Elaine's, you know," Bessie said. "She must have lost it when she rescued me."

"But Elaine's initial is 'E,' chump; not 'T,'" Mabel Lynn protested.

"Well, it jolly well is hers," Bessie said decidedly, "because I remember noticing it when she pulled me out of the mud, you know. It was on her wrist then; and she must have broken the strap, you know, in hauling me out."

Babs pursed her lips.
"Funny, though, the initial not being hers," Clara said.

"Maybe it's the first letter of her surname," Leila Carroll opined. "Thomas, or Thompson, or something like that. I figure she'll be a bit het-up when she finds she's lost it," she added. "Hadn't we better take it back, Babs?"

"Ahem!" said Jemima, with sudden loudness. "Ahem! Yes, jolly nice day, what? Pretty topping, and all that. As I was saying, about Bessie's photograph—"

"Eh? Who the dickens is talking about Bessie's photograph?" Clara snorted. "Have you gone crackers?"

"Bessie's photograph," Jemima insisted firmly. "This—" And she produced a card from her pocket. Then: "Hist!" she whispered fiercely. "Don't look round, and don't, beloveds, speak about Elaine. 'Ware spy! Peer at the bushes two o'clock from me."

The chums blinked. But they understood then. Jemima always had reasons for her bursts of insanity, though strangers were usually inclined to regard Jemima with alarmed suspicion. With one accord they turned their heads.

And then they tensed. Just for a moment they saw that face which peered at them from out of the bushes. A dark, gipsy-looking face it was, with strangely gleaming eyes. An instant it was there; then it had disappeared. "Hey!" Clara cried.

She ran forward. Babs & Co., stung to action, darted after her. They reached the bushes, forcing their way through them—just in time to see a lithe figure in a red spotted head scarf, plunging into the copse at the farther side of the clearing.

They stopped. "Well, who the dickens was she?" Babs breathed. "Jimmy, when did you spot her?"

"A minute ago," Jemima said. "Out of the corner of my all-seeing eye I saw her. Spy she was, and spy she is, and undoubtedly interested, henchmen, in our dear old friend Elaine. But I don't think," Jemima said shrewdly, "she got much change for her pains. What about the old fobbie-wobs? Do we return that now, or stagger homewards?"

They were all for "staggering homeward" after some discussion. The fob, Babs said, they would return tomorrow. It would give them a good excuse to visit Elaine again. Apart from that the time was nearly half-past five. Babs, at least, as captain of Cliff House junior school, had a great many duties to attend to before prep at seven, and not the least of those duties—though, perhaps, the most pleasant—was the meeting she had called for half-past six in the Common-room to discuss the stall which the Fourth Form was sponsoring on Saturday in aid of the Courtfield Charities Fair.

In addition, both Clara and Bessie had lines to do; Mabs had the costumes which had been used in the recent opening of the Marsh Manor Orphans' Home to re-pack, and Leila several letters to write.

So homeward, carrying the tuck hamper between them, they "staggered," to find the school pretty well deserted, except for the crowd on Senior Side, who were watching the hockey match between Cliff House Seniors and Claremont.

In Study No. 4, which Babs shared with Mabs and Bessie, the six chums foregathered shortly before six.

"Well, everything's ready, I think," Babs laughed. "Mabs, bring the notepad, will you, and make a list of the things promised for the stall? Seems to be a bit of a commotion in the Common-room," she added, as a sudden burst of laughter came from the room. "Come on!"

In a body they tramped off, and Babs, approaching the Common-room, flung the door open. Then she paused, blinking a little, for it was obvious at once that something unusual was afoot. Twenty or thirty girls were congregated in one corner of the room. As Babs watched, there came a cry.

"Oh, jolly good! That fits you, Lydia! Oh, hallo Babs!" Rosa Rodworth added. "Come along and have your fortune told by Ziska."

"Ziska—who's she?" Mabel Lynn wanted to know.

"A gipsy girl I met in the lane this afternoon," Rosa said enthusiastically. "Marvellously clever she is, too. Jolly nice girl, and she's going to tell fortunes just for fun at our stall on Saturday—"

"What, for us?" Babs asked.

"Yes. And all free, too!" Rosa chuckled. "What do you think of that?"

Babs dimpled; her eyes sparkled then. Keen on getting some sort of super attraction, that certainly sounded marvellous—and Rosa, for once, had done well.

"Whoops!" Babs laughed. "Let's meet her."

"This way," chuckled Rosa. She pressed forward. Rather proud and rather pleased of herself was Rosa. Not very often recently had Rosa been in the Fourth Form limelight, and Rosa, fond of limelight, was all out to make the most of this opportunity. Impatiently she now elbowed girls aside, and, with Babs & Co. in her wake, reached the centre of the crowd.

Curiously Babs stared down. A figure with a red and white spotted scarf over her head was seated cross-legged on the floor, her eyes downbent. On a chair in front of her sat Lydia Crossendale, the snob of the Fourth, and Ziska, the gipsy girl, had Lydia's slim fingers in her own. There came a pause as girls thronged eagerly forward to listen.

"Your parents are rich," Ziska said. "You have plenty of money."

"Well, that's true, anyway," Margot Lantham said.

Babs smiled. Seeing the gold watch which glittered on Lydia's wrist, and the expensive clothes and shoes which Lydia wore, it was not hard to deduce that, she felt.

"You have excellent taste," Ziska went on, without looking up. "You are fond of dainty things. But beware, Miss Crossendale, you are very vain, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled June Merrett.

"And your vanity is likely to lead you into trouble," Ziska went on. "Not big trouble—at least, not yet. For vanity's sake, however, you are often inclined to break rules."

"Well, that's true, I'll say." Leila nodded.

It was. Babs frowned. Babs did not really believe in the power of people to tell others' fortunes; but that certainly was uncannily near the mark. To be sure, it was no hard task to diagnose vanity as one of Lydia's incurable failings. All the same, that bit about breaking rules was clever, until Babs reflected that Lydia, at the very moment, was breaking Cliff House rules by wearing those cosmetics.

"And before long you will go on a long journey," Ziska went on. "The journey will be across water—to a country you have never visited before. When you grow up you will marry a tall man who will be connected with the Army, and you will become a famous Society hostess. That is all at the moment," she finished, and Lydia, with a pleased purr, withdrew her hand.

Lydia, always ready for flattery, felt considerably bucked by Ziska's prediction that one day she would become a famous Society hostess.

"Anyone else?" Ziska asked, with a smile.

Then she looked up, and for the first time Babs saw her face. And Babs stood for one instant perfectly still, with a sensation of catching her breath. For the dark, olive-skinned face of Ziska, and those great, searching, peering eyes, she had seen once before this afternoon. Ziska and the girl who had spied upon herself and her chums in the woods were one and the same!



BABS, leading the way into Study No. 4, pulled up sharply, staring in astonishment at someone over by the desk. It was Ziska, the gipsy girl. She started round guiltily and something fell from her hand—the fob belonging to Elaine, the mystery girl!

Strange Doubts!



JUST for an instant there came a flicker to the gipsy girl's eyes, but it was gone the moment it appeared. Quite calmly she stared at Barbara and her chums.

"Ah, Rosa, you have new friends for me?" she asked pleasantly, and smiled as she stretched out her hand. "I am pleased to meet you," she added.

Babs stared.

"But we've met before," she said.

"Us?" Ziska shook her head. "Surely not. How and where did we meet?"

"In the woods this afternoon," Clara said.

Ziska made a gesture of denial.

"I am sorry, but I have not been in the woods this afternoon," she replied. "Perhaps you are confusing me with some other girl you saw? My friend Rosa and I have been with my people in the camp on the edge of the common in Friardale Lane, where we are preparing for the fair on Saturday. But you"—and she smiled at Babs—"you sit here, please, and I will tell your fortune."

Babs paused. She felt just a little doubtful for a moment. Was this the same girl—or had she and her chums blundered? But no. Fleeting as the glimpse of the gipsy girl had been, there could be no mistake; those bold, big, flashing eyes were not met twice within such a short time. Apart from that, the girl wore the same red-spotted headress.

"Oh, go on!" Rosa said gruffly. "Bother it, why all the fuss? If Ziska says she didn't see you, then Ziska didn't jolly well see you. Anyway, if you did see her, that's no crime, is it?"

There was a murmur from the girls around. Perhaps they sensed the suspicion in the attitude of Babs & Co. It was plain that Ziska, whatever Babs & Co. might think, had already made a hit. Which was as it should be, seeing that Ziska was giving her services free of charge to help the Fourth Form stall.

Babs hesitated. She could see that feeling was against her. She caught the challenging, almost mocking flash of Ziska's eyes, and steeled herself.

"Well, are you going to have your fortune told?" Rosa Rodworth asked impatiently.

"Yes, of course our friend is going to have her fortune told," Ziska said, with a smile. "Your name—let me see—it is Barbara Redfern, is it not? And everybody gasped. "No, that is not fortune telling," she smiled. "I remember the name because I saw your Form's photograph in the great hall downstairs, and underneath that photograph the names of the girls were printed. Sit, please," she invited.

She pointed to the chair in front of her. Babs, curious to get in closer touch with Ziska, took her seat. Ziska caught Babs' hand, making strange passes over it with her own fingers.

"Ah, you are ambitious," she said. "You have a great, great future in front of you. I see much happiness for you, Barbara Redfern. I see great honours for you."

Babs smiled. Easy enough to prophesy all that.

"But," Ziska went on, "I see something else—a shadow. This shadow is newly born, and though you do not know it, is descending upon you. This afternoon, perhaps, you met a girl—a strange girl, did you not?"

"Oh crabs! Yes, she did, you

know!" Bessie put in, and the girls gazed excitedly at each other.

"The girl," Ziska went on, staring at the palm, "is an older girl than you are. Her name—no, I cannot see. But it begins with an 'E,' does it not? Also, this girl has another name which begins with a 'T.'"

"Mum-my hat!" stammered Bessie. "I say, that's— Oh, wow! Jimmy, you cat, you dug me in the ribs!"

"Just," Jemima said blandly, "to attract your fatuous attention, Fatima beloved. I have here a boblet, and I would fain feed my warped and starving system on a bar of ye old chocolate from the tuckshop of Aunty Jones. One of those sixpenny bars—you know!" Jemima said. "A boblet will buy two sixpenny bars, meaning that one is for thee and the other for me."

"Oh, thuth-thanks, Jimmy!" Bessie stammered.

Bessie gulped. Interested in Ziska's fortune-telling though Bessie might be, the call of the tuckshop was always stronger than the call of curiosity. With a gurgle of delight she took the shilling, and with a beam at Jemima, hurried off. Babs, looking up, nodded slightly.

For Babs knew why Jemima had executed that little manoeuvre. Bessie was likely to blurt things out—and they had promised not to mention Elaine's name or whereabouts.

"Am I right?" Ziska asked.

"Go on," Babs said grimly.

"This girl," Ziska went on, "has a secret—a dark and terrible secret. I warn you against her. If you are not careful she will bring ruin to you—and not only to you, but your friends. When you met her you had with you five friends, had you not?"

"I say," Rosa murmured, "that's pretty marvellous. You did go out with Clara, Bessie, Mabs, Leila, and Jemima this afternoon, didn't you, Babs?"

"I did," Babs said. "Well, go on, Ziska."

"This girl," Ziska said, "has impressed upon you to say nothing about her—not even to tell her name. She fears the police; but if you would be wise you will tell both her name and her whereabouts here and now, otherwise the police may also be looking for you ere long. I warn you, Barbara Redfern, for your own good. This is serious. This is grave," and she glanced up at Babs. "Is not all I have said true?"

There was an impressive pause. Babs looked at Ziska cautiously.

"We met a girl—yes," she admitted. "But that's not fortune telling—that's just guesswork. If that's fortune telling, I can tell fortunes, too!"

"Says you!" scoffed Rosa.

"Try me," Babs said. "Ziska, please"—and suddenly she caught Ziska's hand and bent towards it. "Ah! Now what do I see," she said. "I see a girl—you, Ziska—sneaking through the woods. I see you pause by some bushes where my chums and I are talking. I see you listening. I see you run away."

Indignantly Ziska snatched her hand away.

"Barbara, you make fun of me!" she cried, springing to her feet.

"And then I see you—" Babs said.

"Oh, chuck it!" Rosa growled, jumping forward. "Dash it, don't be a cat!" she cried.

There was a murmur.

"Well, it's true, isn't it?" Babs challenged.

"It is not true!" Ziska looked at her angrily. "Have I not said already that I have never seen you before? You are insulting me!"

"Yes, draw it mild," Freda Ferriers put in angrily. "Hang it all, that's as good as calling Ziska a fibber!"

"Fibber—yes!" Ziska's eyes flashed. "Never in my life have I been called a fibber! Plainly I am not wanted here. I will go."

"No you jolly well won't!" Rosa said. "I invited you, and here you're jolly well going to stop. And the least you can do," she added, with an angry glare at Babs, "is to apologise!"

Babs set her lips. "I shall not apologise," she said firmly.

"Then I think you're a mean, ungrateful cat!" Rosa flamed out.

"Thanks. And if you want to know what I think," Babs returned. "I think you're a fool. You ought to mind your own business."

"It is my business!" Rosa hooted. "Who brought Ziska into the school?"

"And who," Babs flashed, "gave you permission to bring strange girls into the school?"

"Miss Bullivant!"

"What?"

"Miss Bullivant," Rosa sneered. "Bit of a shock that, isn't it, Miss High and Mighty? You didn't know that I'd asked permission, did you? Well, as it happened, I met the Bull when I was coming back. I told her all about Ziska, and how Ziska had offered to help the stall, and the Bull, naturally, gave her permission at once. And if," she added bitterly, "you don't believe that, you can go and ask Miss Bullivant yourself!"

"I do not think," a voice put in at the door, "there is any need for Barbara to come and ask me!"

And while the chums stared round, Miss Bullivant herself rustled into the room.

"There seems to be some dispute here," she said, frowning, "and you, I perceive, Barbara, are the centre of it. If there is any question as to who gave Ziska permission to come into the school, that question should be referred to me. Well, Barbara—"

Babs crimsoned.

"I'm sorry. I didn't know—" "You were not turning this girl out?"

"No, Miss Bullivant." It was Ziska who spoke. "Not that. I was going—of my own accord," she said. "Thank you for allowing me to come, but I did not expect to be insulted, and perhaps it would cause less trouble if I left."

"Oh!" Miss Bullivant's eyes gleamed. "And who, my dear child, has been insulting you?"

Ziska did not reply. She looked directly at Barbara.

"I see," Miss Bullivant set her mouth. "Barbara, I am surprised. Ziska is a guest at this school. Most generously she has offered to help us with the stall on Saturday. The least you can do, Barbara, is to treat her with respect."

Babs coloured; her chums looked sheepish.

"And if you have, either wittingly or unwittingly, offered Ziska an insult, Barbara, it is your duty, here and now, to apologise."

Babs gulped.

"Well, I—I'm sorry," she mumbled.

"Thank you. Then that ends the matter," Miss Bullivant said graciously. "Ziska, my dear, do you accept the apology?"

Ziska smiled.

"Of course," she said, "of course. I'm sure that Barbara did not mean the insult. After all, we all make mistakes, do we not? In any case," she added, "I must go now, though I will return, if I may, on the morrow."

Thank you, girls, for inviting me. Rosa, may I collect my coat from your study? Good-night, all."

She went out, flashing a bright smile round. Rosa, with a triumphant grin at the defeated Babs & Co., went with her. Miss Bullivant, with a freezing glare, followed them, leaving the chums to face the rather indignant glances of the rest of the Form.

The meeting which followed had none of that cheery enthusiasm which Babs had expected; some of the girls, indeed, seemed deliberately disinterested, for not easily could they forget what they considered the churlish treatment of the helpful Romany stranger whose apparent powers had so intrigued them.

Babs, in fact, was glad when it was all over.

"Well, thank goodness for that," Mabs said, as she and her chums went back along the corridor. "Funny, though, meeting her in the school after the business in the woods. Queer coincidence, isn't it?"

"Quite," Babs agreed grimly; but wondered if it was a coincidence, after all. "Well, anyway, I'm glad she's gone," she said, as she turned the handle of Study No. 4's door.

And then, opening that door, she stopped; and Mabs, by her side, let out a gasp.

For a girl who stood over by the bureau in which Babs kept her things, spun round to meet them. As she spun she dropped something which she had been putting back on to the desk. That something, Babs saw at once, was Elaine's job.

And the girl herself—

"Ziska!" Babs cried, and stepped into the room. "What are you doing here?"

A Denial and a Scare!



FOR a moment the gipsy girl's olive face turned pale. Then she stiffened, shaking her head.

"I—I'm sorry, I—I made a mistake," she said. "I forgot something I left in Rosa's room, and turned back. But you have so many rooms in this corridor, and I had forgotten the number on the door. I am afraid I stepped into the wrong room."

"And to find that out," Babs said, with a curl of the lip, "you had to search my bureau?"

Ziska looked indignant.

"I was not searching your bureau," she replied hotly. "I was merely looking through the window. If you are hinting, Barbara Redfern, that I am a thief as well as a fibber—"

"Please get out," Babs said quietly.

Ziska hesitated. Her lips moved as if she were about to say something else, and then, evidently changing her mind, she marched to the door. Babs and Mabs gazed at each other as her footsteps died down the passage.

"That was the fob," Mabs said. "Of course it was the fob," Babs frowned. "She came back here to spy—as she spied in the woods. And she found that fob—now why should she be interested in the fob? Because it belongs to Elaine?"

Mabs shook her head.

"Oh, Babs, you know I'm no good at those sort of riddles!"

"Neither am I at the moment," Babs said. "I don't understand. But there's some mystery connected with Elaine, Mabs, and Ziska's up to no good. She knows that we've been in contact with Elaine, and she's jolly well trying to

find out where Elaine is. And that might account," Babs added shrewdly, "for the promise Elaine made us give not to say anything to anyone about having met her or where she lived."

Mabs looked at her.

"You mean—Ziska means her harm?" she asked.

"Either that—or Ziska is acting for someone else who means her harm. There's something jolly funny about all this. I don't trust Ziska. She's a sneak, a spy. And if you ask me, it isn't just because she wants to help with the stall and chum up with Rosa Rodworth that she's found a footing in Cliff House. Anyway, to-morrow, when we take that fob back, we've got to tell Elaine all we know. Perhaps then she'll let us help her," Babs added. "In the meantime, of course, don't mention her name. Which reminds me to give old Bess a jolly good talking to on that subject."

And there, that evening, Babs did give Bessie a good talking to on the subject, hoping that Bessie understood. And in the morning, immediately after lessons, she, Mabs, Clara, Leila, Bessie, and Jemima set off for the Turrets, in Friardale Woods. They had not gone very far, however, when Jemima, who had been rather thoughtfully polishing her monocle as she walked, gave the warning cough which Babs knew always meant she had something important to say.

"Carry on, old Spartans, but don't walk fast," Jemima murmured, still staring at her monocle. "It may interest you to know that we are being followed—the followers being a gipsy man and woman."

"But, say, what are we to do?" Leila asked. "We mustn't lead them to the Turrets!"

"Rather not. Still, pretty inhospitable, seeing they are honouring our jolly old footsteps, not to lead them somewhere," Jemima said. "I have a notion, fair comrades. Yonder is the copse. When we reach there, you four—Leila, Babs, Mabs, and Bessie—hide in the bushes. You and I, Clara, old-timer, will walk on, talking loudly and blithely in order to lure them off the track. Once they've gone, Babsie, then make all speed to the tottering old Turrets, and there warn its inmate of the danger. Good egg?"

"Jolly good!" breathed Babs.

"Then get ready to do your stuff, Spartans."

The chums nodded, tensely excited now. A few steps took them to the copse—a rather dense patch of scrub encircled by the path on which they were treading. No sooner had they turned than Jemima nodded.

"Right!" she said softly. "Plenty of time. Come on, Clara. Keep low, Babs," she murmured.

Babs smiled—a little grimly. With Leila, Bessie, and Mabs, she darted for an opening in the thick patch of scrub and crouched down. Jemima, whistling, blithely went on, taking Clara's arm in her own and striking off at a tangent through the woods. Babs, Mabs, and Leila waited.

"Coming?" whispered Leila.

"Shush!"

They held their breath as they peered out through the undergrowth. There came the swift tramp of cautious footsteps, the murmuring of voices. Then along the path appeared a swarthy, heavy-moustached gipsy, followed by a woman who wore a red shawl over her head.

The two passed on, but stopped some five yards away.

"No sight, Maria," the man said, "and the path branches here. Now, which way have they taken?"

As if in answer to that question, there came a sudden laugh fifty yards away in Clara Trevlyn's voice. It was followed by a hail from Jemima.

"Cheerio, me hearties! On, on, Life grows short, and times are fleeting—and all that sort of merry old rot, you know! Best leg forward, Spartans."

"Tis they, Jacob," the woman whispered. "To the right."

"Come," Jacob said.

And, to the infinite relief of the watching girls, the couple plunged on.

"Worked!" Leila chuckled. "Good old Jimmy! I'll say that girl's got brains. Ready, Babs?"

"Yes. Let's go."

They rose, halting a few moments just in case there should be other followers. To the right they heard Clara's laugh again. The coast seemed clear in their own direction, however, and cautiously treading the path again, they walked swiftly in the direction of the Turrets. Now and again Babs stopped to look round. Once or twice they paused to listen, but there was no sight or sound of pursuit.

"O.K.!" breathed Mabs. "We've tricked them this time. You think Ziska put them up to it, Babs?"

"Who else?" Babs asked. "Pretty obvious, if you ask me, that they're trying to get on Elaine's trail through us. And it's also pretty obvious," she added, "that these are the people Elaine's afraid of. They spell danger of some sort to her, and we've got to warn her. Come on."

They hurried on. Presently they came in sight of the Turrets' big wall again. This time, however, they skirted the wall until they arrived at the main entrance to the house—a pair of rather grim-looking iron gates facing a gravelled road. Dangling from the pillar was a rusty bell-pull, and Babs gave it a tug. A bell rang with a muffled sound in the house, to be followed immediately by the clamour of the two bull-mastiffs. Almost at once the barking faded, however.

Then suddenly from a clump of shrubs on the right there were footsteps. A little woman with fierce eyes and greying hair appeared with a garden fork in her hand. Through the bars of the gates she glared at the three girls.

"Who are you?" she snapped, and then her eyes glittered. "Oh, Cliff House girls! Go away—go away this instant!" she cried.

"But we—we want to speak to Elaine," Babs protested.

The woman frowned.

"Elaine? Who is she?"

"But—but she lives here!" Babs exclaimed, staring.

"You are making a mistake. There is no Elaine living here," the woman said. "I live here—and I live here alone. Now be off with you!"

"But this is urgent!" Mabs cried.

"Urgent or not, be off!" The woman glared. "If this is an excuse to gain admittance into these grounds, you are wasting your time. If you do not go," she added fiercely, "I will set my dogs on you. Rolfe! Rufus!" she called.

There was a growl as two tawny shapes slunk out from the shrubbery, baring their fangs as they saw the girls. Despite the iron gates, Babs backed away.

"Now will you go?" the woman said. "Oh, please won't you understand?" Babs panted. "We are Elaine's friends. We have something to tell her—"

Grimly the woman put a key in the lock of the gates.

"I give you," she said, "three seconds in which to go. If you have not gone in that time I shall unlock

this gate and let the dogs loose.

"Now—"

"But—"

"One—"

"But, please—"

"Two!" the woman said grimly.

"Elaine—"

The lock clicked back. The woman

looked down at the dogs.

"Oh, my hat!" Babs shouted.

"Scout!"

Obviously, that was the most sensible

advice, in the circumstances.

In any case, they could not afford to take the risk of remaining. Rather crimson, utterly humiliated, the chums broke into a run as the woman opened the gates a little farther, the dogs whining impatiently now to be let out. Not until they were a hundred yards or more from the house did they halt.

"Well, of all the feather-brains!" gaped Mabs.

"Of all the high-falutin' idiots!" Leila breathed.

"But who is she?" Babs demanded. "What is she doing in that house? I thought Elaine lived there alone."

"Well, Elaine didn't say she lived there alone, did she?" Mabs asked. "We rather concluded that. All the same, if that's her mother or some other relative it seems funny Elaine didn't mention her. And a fat lot better off we are now!" she glowered. "We haven't seen Elaine; we haven't given her back her job—"

"Checkmate all round, I guess," Leila said resentfully. "Well, what now, Babs?"

Babs bit her lip.

"But we've got to see Elaine—"

"Sure! But how," Leila wanted to know, "are we going to see Elaine when Elaine is guarded by two dangerous dogs and one dangerous woman? Wants some figuring, and— Whoops!" she added, with a yell of alarm. "Scout, sisters! Here's one of the dogs!"

For one single instant they stood petrified as they saw the great, tawny shape of either Rufus or Rolfe leaping towards them; then they turned.

"Run!" shrieked Babs.

They ran. The dog gave a yelp. On he came with a swift, loping stride that made their own hurrying efforts seem utterly feeble. Babs cast a hunted glance round. The dog was less than twenty yards away. Then—

Crash!

Too late, Babs tried to recover as she felt her foot kick against the half-hidden branch which lay in her path. With a gasp, she went sprawling forward, arms outflung, hitting the grass with a thud. In terror, she squirmed round, stifling a shriek as she saw the great dog almost upon her. Then—

For one second Babs closed her eyes, giving herself up for lost. Her heart seemed to turn to water as she flattened herself to the ground. Nothing on earth, it seemed, could save her now.

Then—then she blinked up. There was the huge dog, flanks heaving, his four paws splayed out on each side of her, his heavy jowl within two inches of her face. But there was no enmity in his eyes, only a sort of doggy surprise. And, as her gaze met his, the tip of a pink tongue appeared and licked her chin, and the great tail whisked.

Babs laughed.

"It's all right," she said. "He's friendly. Oh, my hat, though! What a fright! Hallo, boy, then! Good old doggy-wogs!" And she reached up and patted the glossy, fawn back, while the dog wriggled as if in ecstasy. "Nice

boy, then! Come on! He's perfectly O.K., and— Here, I say, what's this?" Babs added, as she sat up.

For her eyes had suddenly caught sight of something fastened into the dog's great collar—a folded strip of paper.

Cautiously Mabs, Leila, and Bessie returned, still blinking a little apprehensively. The dog wagged his tail pleasantly for them to approach, and they patted him. Babs, at the same time, had grabbed the piece of folded paper.

"Oh, a message!" Leila said. "Shucks! So that was why he was chasing us—to bring us this! What is it, Babs?"

"Look!" Babs said.

She passed it to them. Heads together, they read the pencilled script inscribed on the sheet:

"Sorry aunt did not understand who you were. Will meet you to-night at six under royal oak in woods and explain all.—E."

"Elaine!" breathed Mabs. "And that woman—"

"Was her aunt," Babs said, mystified.

"Say, can you beat that?" Leila wanted to know.

Babs nodded, relieved now, though still vastly puzzled. Still, speculation could come afterwards, and, thoughtfully putting the note in her pocket, she patted the dog.

"Go on, boy—home!" Babs laughed. "You can tell your mistress we'll be there."

And the dog—Rolfe or Rufus; they did not even now know which—turned swiftly, and, with long, loping strides, padded back towards the Turrets.

Jemima Uses Her "Brain-box"!



"HALT, sturdy comrade! We come to journey's end!" Jemima

Carstairs announced, and winked at Clara as she reached the edge of Friar-dale Woods. "We will e'en await our trusty followers," she decided.

Clara grinned. The "trusty followers," they guessed, were not far behind, although they would probably be in a paddy when they discovered how they had been tricked. For twenty minutes Jemima and her henchman had led them on.

If it had not dawned upon the trusty followers that they had been hoodwinked before, it would certainly dawn upon them now, for Jemima had halted near the main road, where the woods joined the common, and not very far away was the gipsy encampment where Rosa Rodworth had met Ziska yesterday.

Jemima, with a bland smile, seated herself on a fallen tree-trunk, with Clara beside her. Innocently both stared into the woods as they heard footsteps; then suddenly the dark-faced gipsy and his female companion emerged, to stand gazing at them, the man's face savage.

Jemima nodded cheerily.

"Afternoon!" she said.

Woman and man looked at each other.

"Afternoon!" the man growled, and paused. "Aren't you the gals that were in the woods just now?"

"We were—quite!" Jemima nodded agreeably. "Little nymphs tripping along the springy sward—what?" she blathered. "Did you see us, fair sir?"

The man gazed at her.

"We did; but we thought there were six of you."

"Six there were, as ever was," Jemima agreed heartily. "But one went to dive, and then there were five, you know. Then one felt sore, and so there were four; and one went to sea, leaving but three; and one felt blue, so there were only two. Tragic—what?"

The man and woman were gazing at Jemima rather as if she were a visitor from another planet.

"You mean, the other four left you?" the man asked.

"Left us—boo-hoo!" Jemima sobbed.

"Left—and never called me 'mother'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Clara.

The man grinned. It was quite obvious now that he imagined he had an utter fool to deal with. Most people imagined that upon making Jemima's first acquaintance.

"And where," he asked, "did they go?"

"Aha! They went. Ships that pass in the dark and dreary night, you know," Jemima said seriously. "Sad life, what?"

The woman muttered something.

"Oh!" the man said, and looked at the chums again. "Well," he said—"well—"

"Profound and most learned observations," Jemima remarked. "Fair sir, I thoroughly agree. We were just admiring the view," she added. "Prithee, my wanderer, couldst tell us the name of the owner of yonder noble domicile?"

"You mean that caravan?"

"The same, good sir."

"Well, I reckon we can tell you that, all right. That's ours," the man said, and again looked at the woman. "Maybe you'd like to come across and have a look at it? Maybe," he added encouragingly, "you'll be feeling a bit hungry-like now. My wife and I are about to have a snack, you see. We'd be pleased if you'd join us."

"Would you like to?" the woman asked, with a smile.

"Madam," Jemima said, "it has been my ambition ever since I was a puling infant, struggling lustily in the arms of my dear old fondly remembered Nurse Anasia, to dine and wine in the haunts of Nature. Lead on! Willingly we totter!"

The man grinned again. But the look he gave Jemima certainly suggested he thought she had escaped from somewhere. Clara grinned. Actually, she and Jemima were curious to see the encampment, and the long walk through the woods had certainly given them an appetite.

The gipsy and his wife seemed most affable now.

"Perhaps," he said presently, "you know my daughter—Ziska? I see you belong to Cliff House, and she has some friends at Cliff House."

"Ziska—that dear che-ild!" Jemima sighed. "Oh, yes, we know her! Very well, what? A daughter to be proud of, if I may venture the suggestion, good sir."

"Ay, she is that!" the man nodded. "Sorry she isn't here now, though," he added, as they reached the encampment. "Here's the caravan. Come in!"

They went inside the twin motor-van, staring round admiringly. Certainly, the caravan was roomy—and comfortable.

"Nice bit of car-work, what? Speedy?" Jemima asked.

"Oh, not very!" the man said.

"Why?"

"Nothing; just wondering!" Jemima nodded. "Interested in caravans, what?" she asked. "Mind if I have a look round outside?"



"WE—we want to speak to Elaine, please," Babs said, disconcerted by the hostile attitude of the woman behind the gates. The woman's reply filled the chums with utter astonishment. "There is no Elaine here. I live here alone. Now be off before I set my dogs on you!"

"Help yourself," the man said, with a guffaw at his own joke.

Jemima nodded. She went outside. Presently she came back, wearing a rather thoughtful air.

"Nice!" she said. "Like it. Ah, that I had a caravan to fly away on the wings of adventure! What speed did you say she'd do, fair sir?"

"Oh, I don't know; we never travel fast!" the man said. "She looks good, but she's getting a bit old, you know. Not more than twenty-five or thirty at full stretch. But now, what about these four friends of yours? Where did you say they went?"

Clara grinned a little, knowing full well then that the hospitality extended to them was simply a bait to trap them into talking.

"Well, who knows?" Jemima said.

"They went for a walk, you know."

"But didn't you say," the woman asked eagerly, "that they had gone to meet a friend?"

"Did I?" Jemima said, looking surprised.

"A girl friend!" the man put in.

"Clumsy!" murmured Jemima.

"Eh?"

"Oh, beg the old pardon! Thoughts, you know!" Jemima explained. "Thoughts—my thoughts—have a habit of spurting out of the old brain like that. Well, well, thanks for the tea, likewise the merry old cakes. So nice and kind and good and generous of you. But we'll have to be beetling now, I'm afraid."

"But your friends—"

"Oh, they'll be back at school by this time!" Jemima said blandly. "So long. Come on, Spartan Clara!" And the glance she gave Spartan Clara plainly said: "Hurry!"

For Jemima, most decidedly, did not like that ugly look that passed between man and woman.

Clara was already walking away, and the man paused, as if contemplating holding them back by force; but if that thought crossed his mind, he hastily banished it. Instead, he nodded.

"Come again!" he invited. "Get Ziska to bring you!"

"Thanks!" Clara returned; and as she and Jemima hurried beyond earshot, she looked at her Eton-cropped

chum. "Well, Jimmy, what do you make of that lot?"

"Tea, good; cake, good," Jemima said. "Caravan, nice—but a subject, I am sadly afraid, my dear old Spartan, of the most shocking prevarication. They were fishing, of course; but the only bait the old fish swallowed was cakes and tea—and very nice, too. Hallo!" she added suddenly. "There are the other Spartans up the road—returning, apparently, from ye old and ancient Turrets. Crawl on, comrade, and let us exchange the merry anecdotes. I am hungry for news of our dear Elaine!"

"Whoopee!" cheered Clara. "Babs—ahoy!"

They broke into a run. A hundred yards ahead four girls, bursting through the woods, had stepped on to the road. Babs, Leila, Bessie, and Mabs it was—just returning from their almost fruitless visit to the Turrets.

They stopped as they saw Jemima and Clara.

"Luck, meeting you," Babs said.

"What news?"

In a few moments it was told. Babs chuckled.

"Good work!" she observed. "The honours certainly went to you. We haven't been so lucky!" she added, and then explained what had happened, showing them the note which made the appointment to meet Elaine under the royal oak at six o'clock that night.

"Pretty obvious now, though," she added, "that Ziska's whole family is on the track of Elaine. But why?"

"And why," Jemima said thoughtfully,—"why, old Spartans, do they tell such whoppers about the old caravan?"

The caravan, they say, is decrepit and old. Thirty miles an hour Mr. Ziska gave as its maximum speed. But by strenuous use of my old brain-box I reckon that caravan can do sixty, if a mile."

"How do you know?" Clara asked.

"Because," Jemima said softly, "I had a look at the engine. The engine, fair Spartans, is practically brand new, and is a twelve-cylinder Conway. The sort of engine," Jemima added, "which could challenge the Scotch express. Now, I wonder," she added profoundly,

"why such a speedy monster is required?"

Babs eyes gleamed. "Jimmy, you've got some idea?" she accused.

"Only one," Jemima said solemnly. "Just one, old Spartan. And that one—well, it lines up in mind with clanging bells, and fierce dogs, and the need, maybe, for a quick and rushing getaway to some remote corner of this terrestrial globe. Vague, what? And vague, fair henchman, will it have to be until we can get Elaine's angle on the matter. And that," she added cheerfully, "we shall have to-night at the rendezvous under ye royal and ancient oak. Let us possess our pretty souls in patience and peace until that moment arrives!"

Right Into The Trap!



"HALLO!" Barbara Redfern cried, and her lips compressed a little. "Ziska!"

Afternoon lessons were over, and Babs, Mabs and Clara, strolling towards the tuckshop to buy supplies for tea, stopped.

Outside the tuckshop was a crowd of laughing, excited girls, conspicuous among them Ziska, the gipsy girl, who had a basket on her arm. Rosa was with her, so was Lydia Crossendale, and fully a dozen others, all eagerly clustering around that basket, all apparently admiring and excited. Quietly, shyly, and modestly Ziska was smiling.

"Seems popular," Clara commented. "Wonder what she's got in the basket?"

Babs shook her head.

It was plainly patent now that Ziska's object was to find Elaine, just as Elaine's object, it seemed, was to keep her identity and whereabouts a close secret.

Babs could not even hazard a guess as to what lay behind it all, but she was shrewd enough to have reached a conclusion. She did not believe for a moment that Ziska had chummed up with Rosa & Co. because she liked their company; she did not believe

that Ziska had the slightest real interest in the forthcoming fair. Ziska's real object, she was sure, was themselves, because Ziska knew now, beyond doubt, that they were in communication with Elaine, and through them hoped to trace Elaine.

Ziska, at that moment, looked up. She saw the chums, and gaily waved a hand.

"Barbara!" she cried. "Come! See what I have!"

"Might as well," muttered Clara.

"Some new game, eh, Babs?" Babs nodded, and as they approached Ziska, her basket on her arm, turned to meet them.

"Oh!" she said, and laughed. "Hallo, Barbara! Hallo, Clara and Mabel! See? I am anxious to know what you think, Barbara, for I have made them all myself with my own hands. Are they not pretty?"

"They're lovely!" Rosa glowed. The three chums blinked as they found themselves gazing at the basketful of little peg dolls which were revealed to their gaze. Certainly they were pretty; certainly they were attractive. But Babs looked at Ziska sharply. For Babs had seen a consignment of these same dolls in a Courtfield shop, which was selling out cheaply because it was closing down. She picked one up.

"You made them?" "Yes, she did—every one," Rosa said. "Natty, aren't they? And she jolly well made them for us, too!"

"That is so," Ziska smiled modestly. "I brought them, Barbara, to give to you, as you are in charge of the stall at the fair. Are the dolls not pretty?" she added anxiously. "They were all my own idea, too you know."

"You're sure you didn't copy them?" Babs asked.

"Why, no! Why should I copy them?"

"Nothing, except—" And Babs shrugged. "Well, I happened to see a whole collection of these very same dolls being sold off in a shop in Courtfield. They were the same—yes," she added. "Same faces, same clothes, same everything, in fact. Sure you didn't buy them, Ziska?"

For a moment Ziska's dark eyes flashed, and she bit her lip. Then she shook her head reproachfully.

"Oh, Barbara, why do you always question what I do?" she asked sadly.

"How could you? I tell you I made them. I made them because I wanted to please you and help your stall. It is unfair to make out that I have some ulterior motive in giving them to you, and—"

"And jolly shabby, too," Rosa put in, with a scowl. "I must say you're beastly ungrateful, Babs! You ought to be pleased, instead of trying to pick holes."

Babs flushed.

"Well, I only saw—"

"You mean, you thought you saw?" Lydia sneered. "Rats! Why should Ziska tell lies about making the dolls?"

"I only did it," Ziska said, "to please you, Barbara."

Babs crimsoned a little. Realising she had been put in the wrong, she felt nettled. Resentment and contempt shone in the faces of the girls surrounding her. Ziska, stranger though she was to them, had already done more than anyone else to ensure the success of the stall, and Babs, who was in charge of that stall, should have been overwhelmingly grateful. So they thought, and so Babs herself would have calculated in different circumstances.

But she was certain Ziska had not made those dolls.

"You're just being mean and spiteful!" Rosa cried hotly.

"I'm not being mean, or spiteful!" Babs indignantly protested.

"No? It doesn't look like it!" "I only just happened to say—"

"Wait! What is this?" And at the sound of that sharp voice Babs wheeled swiftly, to view the stern, vinegary features of Miss Bullivant. "Upon my word, what pretty dolls! Ziska, my dear, did you make those?"

"She did," Rosa put in. "And she brought them along to give to Barbara for the stall, Miss Bullivant."

"But Barbara," Ziska said, with a sigh, "does not want them."

"Barbara—"

"I never said I didn't want them!" Babs said, crimsoning.

"Barbara said I did not make them," Ziska said reproachfully. "Nothing I do for Barbara pleases her. But please," she added, "do not be harsh, Miss Bullivant, for I am so very anxious to be friends with Barbara, even though she does not like me."

"That is very, very generous of you, my dear," Miss Bullivant said. "At the same time, Barbara I cannot let this pass. Ziska is a guest here. Perhaps if I give you fifty lines, Barbara, it will help you to remember that."

"No, please, Miss Bullivant, do not punish her," Ziska pleaded earnestly. "Barbara did not mean it, I am sure. I should not like to get her into trouble on my behalf, because," she added, "I have come to invite her and all of you to my father's encampment, where we are to hold a gipsy dance. Barbara, will you come?"

"Oh, I say—" cried Rosa.

Babs paused.

"Well, I'm sorry—"

Miss Bullivant's eyes narrowed.

"If you are contemplating refusal, Barbara, I should think a second time," she said. "The least you can do is to make some gesture of graciousness."

Babs bit her lip, and gazed rather narrowly at Ziska. She saw through the scheme then. Ziska had come laden with those dolls in order to make certain of her invitation being accepted—the idea being the intention, of course, to ensnare herself and her chums into a betrayal of Elaine.

Her eyes gleamed.

"Perhaps," Ziska gently suggested, with a shrewd look, "Barbara has some other appointment?"

"Thanks," Babs returned. "I haven't—at least, nothing that will interfere. Thank you, I'll come."

"Aha! That is nice. That is better," Ziska laughed. "And your friends, too, of course—all of you—yes? Miss Bullivant, may we all go now?" she asked. "For I promised my parents I would get back as soon as I could. We may leave the dolls in the tuckshop, perhaps?"

"You may leave the dolls with me," Miss Bullivant said graciously. "And allow me to express my gratitude at the same time on behalf of the whole school. I hope you have a very, very good time, girls," she added, "as I'm sure you will. Barbara, try to remember for once that there are such things as friendship and gratitude."

"And now we go," Ziska said eagerly. "Barbara, will you get your other friends?"

Babs nodded. She felt nettled, resentful, once again conscious that Ziska had been too clever for her. Anyway, there was no harm done. She was on her guard now, as were all the chums, and if Ziska wanted a lot of

trouble for nothing, she could jolly well have it. The only thing she'd have to remember was to keep an eye upon the time. There was that all-important appointment with Elaine to be thought of.

She found Jemima and Leila—Bessie, she discovered, was in cookery class, helping Miss Plummy to clear up after the lessons that afternoon. Well, that was to the good, too. Bessie, good-intentioned old duffer though she was, had a habit at times of letting cats out of bags without intending to do so, and was always rather a cause for anxiety.

"We've got to watch out," Babs told Leila and Jemima. "And don't forget to break away about a quarter to six. In the meantime, just act as if nothing was happening."

So with that little plan of campaign all cut and dried, they joined Ziska and Rosa and the rest at the tuckshop. Ziska was in a happy mood. She stuck very close to Babs going down the road.

"I am pleased," she said, "that we are friends. We are friends now, aren't we, Barbara?"

"Well, you say so," Babs said non-committally.

"And will you dance with me?" Ziska asked eagerly.

"Yes, if you'd like me to."

"Nothing than that I should like better," Ziska said, and laughed.

And when they reached the encampment it was Babs and Ziska who partnered each other in the first dance, with Ziska's father playing a piano and her mother a violin. Certainly the gipsies could play well, certainly Ziska could dance well—and nothing could have been more joyous and happy than the scene around the blazing campfire on the soft, close-cropped turf on the common. After the dance Ziska smiled.

"Thank you," she said breathlessly.

"Now I go and make the drinks for us all. Barbara, we shall have another dance afterwards, shall we not?"

"If you want one, of course," Babs said. Ziska disappeared. Her father and mother disappeared after her. Thoroughly enjoying themselves now, the Cliff House girls danced together, until ten minutes later the Ziska family returned, carrying glasses and steaming jugs of some herb wine which was very warming, sweet, and enjoyable. Then another dance, followed by another. Babs glanced at her watch.

Twenty to six now.

She made a prearranged sign to her chums.

Now came the ticklish part of the business—getting away without being observed.

So far, at least, neither Ziska nor her parents had made any attempt to pump Babs—a fact which mildly surprised her. She waited until the next dance began, and then slipped behind the caravan. In a moment Leila had joined her, then Mabs; after her Clara, and finally Jemima.

"All here," Babs said. "Got away easier than we expected. Jimmy, keep an eye open while we dive for the woods. If anybody attempts to follow, keep them in conversation till we get away. If we aren't spotted, come on yourself. We'll meet you at the pond."

"Leave it to Uncle Jimmy, old Spartan," Jemima said. "Now trickle. Anybody looking?"

Babs, Mabs, Clara, and Leila darted away. In a moment they were in the woods, flying up the path. Near the pond they waited.

"Quarter to six," Babs said. "Just be in time. Hallo, here comes Jimmy! Jimmy, you weren't followed?"

"Not even seen," Jemima chuckled.

"Then come on."

They went on, pausing at intervals to listen for sound of pursuit. Amazing as it was, it seemed they had got clear away, however.

Deeper and deeper they penetrated into the wood. Now they had reached the old overgrown road which had once served as a thoroughfare through the woods. Ahead of them they saw the old abandoned labourer's cottage had grown over from foundations to roof with thick ivy creeper. Barely a glance they gave it as they approached. But as they drew abreast—

Babs halted.

"What's that?" she cried. "Listen!"

They stopped, staring towards the cottage, each of them strangely tingling. Then again came the sound which had brought Babs to a halt!

into place outside. Too late Jemima turned, tugging at the door.

They were prisoners!

Grimly they exchanged looks.

"So that," Jemima said softly, "was why we were allowed to get away so easily."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," Jemima said, and shrugged, "that for once we haven't been very clever old Spartans. It was a trap—and we jumped into it with both size sevens. Somehow Ziska & Co. got wind of the jolly old appointment with Elaine—"

"And—and they've done this to prevent us keeping it, I guess," Leila added.

"That's it."

"But—but how did they know?"

Babs asked; then, suddenly remembering, plunged her hand into her pocket.

Elaine's Secret!



EASILY said—but how much harder to carry out. Ziska & Co. had certainly chosen their prison well. The outer door, if old, was firm and stout, and every window was boarded up and secured with screws which had long since rusted into the woodwork.

Peril, grave and desperate, confronted Elaine now, they were sure. While they were here penned up, things would be happening to her. Through them Ziska & Co. had found Elaine. Through them, if it was humanly possible, Elaine must be saved. With only nail-files and penknives to help them, they started the well-nigh hopeless task of unscrewing the windows.



"MY hat! It's a message—from Elaine!" Babs cried, and excitedly removed the piece of paper from the dog's collar. Then, while her chums drew close, thrilled and intrigued, she quickly smoothed the paper out.

It was the sound of a voice—a girl's voice—Elaine's voice. And it was crying:

"Barbara—Clara—all of you—quickly! In here!"

"Well, mum-my hat!" stuttered Clara.

For a moment they stared. Then, with a swift look at her chums, Babs ran up the little grass-grown path.

"Elaine!" she cried, as she reached the door.

There was no sound.

"Go on—in!" Clara cried.

Babs plunged in, her chums upon her heels. She paused in the dark interior, blinking. Moist, dank, and noisome the old place smelt—chilly, too, after the warmth of the air outside. In what had once been a sitting-room, they bundled together.

"Elaine!" Babs shouted.

Behind them came a sound. Babs turned. But even as she did so the door shut with a slam. There came the clatter of a heavy bar dropping

"The note!" she cried, and stared in utter consternation. "It's gone!"

"Gone?"

"Gone!" Babs gulped. "That's it!" she cried, with sudden bitterness. "My hat, I see the game now! No wonder Ziska wanted to dance with me. No wonder she was keen on inviting us all back to the camp. She must have stolen the note while we were dancing together. She and her people know now that Elaine will be at the Royal Oak by six o'clock. Elaine will be there, while we—"

The chums' faces whitened as they sensed the terrible danger to which their own carelessness had exposed Elaine. For a whole half minute there was silence.

Then Clara, speaking through teeth that were half clenched, said:

"Well, come on! There may be time to nip the scheme—whatever it is—in the bud. We've still got a quarter of an hour, and we've just got to get out of this!"

Files bent and blades snapped. Five—ten minutes went by, and they were no better off than when they started. Clara, desperate, made a survey of the chimneys; but they were choked with creeper which had grown down them, and filled with rubble and rubbish of decaying brickwork.

What were they to do?

Three minutes to six, and here they were, breathless, desperate, dishevelled, but no nearer escape than when they had started. Then Leila had an idea.

"Wait a jiffet!" she said. "There's a cupboard door here. Hinges pretty rotten, too, I guess. If we could wrench that off—"

"Well, and what?" Clara wanted to know.

"Use it as a battering-ram at the window," Leila suggested.

"My hat! That's a wheeze!" Babs cried. "Come on!"

Almost before the words were out of

(Continued on page 14)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

A friend after your own schoolgirl hearts is your **PATRICIA**. Week by week she writes to you on these pages. You all love her chummy, newsy letter and find her really sensible articles on *Good Looks* and *Schoolgirl Charm* most helpful.



special guest arrives unexpectedly, isn't it?

● Swing High

Father has fixed up a swing in the garden for my small brother, Heath (whose full name is Heatherington).

Heath simply loves it, as you can imagine—and so do I for that matter.

There's only one snag, and that is, that Heath will keep calling me, or mother, or our Olive, to come and give him a push.

As you know, this can be pretty tiring—for the "pusher." So I'm trying to teach Heath to "work himself."

He's getting on quite well, and looks as if he'll "work" so high that he'll go right over the swing and down the other side before very long!

WELL, my pets, and did you all have a happy Easter?

We had so many chocolate eggs in our family that I'm afraid we shall all be "coming out in spots" if we aren't very careful. Except father, of course, who wouldn't dream of eating chocolates—though he's quite keen, secretly, on "liquorice all-sorts."

● A New Way With Cheese

My mother was very pleased with her large daughter, your Patricia, over the week-end. And now I'll tell you why, then perhaps your mother will one day be as pleased with you—for the same reason.

It was Monday evening. And you know how stale everything tends to become over Easter, when you have to shop for several days in advance.

Well, we were unlucky enough to forget to buy fresh cheese.

It wouldn't have mattered, except that Aunt Monica—who isn't really an aunt at all, but my small brother's godmother—dropped in for supper on Monday.

Now if there is one thing that Aunt Monica likes it's cheese.

"I'll put the cheese on the table, mother," I said, for Olive, our maid, was out.

I went to the larder to get it. Then: "Oh!" I gasped.

For the cheese looked dreadfully stale, dry, and cracked.

"Looks about as tasty as the Sahara desert," groaned mother.

Your Patricia frowned thoughtfully—and then came an idea.

I fished the vegetable grater out of the cupboard, and grated the cheese into a pretty little glass bowl. At supper we put it on to the table like this, and when Aunt Monica came to it at cheese-and-biscuit time she was delighted.

"What a marvellous idea!" she said. "I must try grating my cheese some time."

So that tragedy ended very well, didn't it?

In case you're going to tell your mother about it one day, I must explain that you place a spoon in the bowl of grated cheese, and when helping yourself you take a teaspoonful or two on the side of your plate. It spreads very easily—and somehow seems more exciting this way.

Worth remembering when a rather

● A Pretty Jacket

I'm so pleased with the little bolero jacket and belt to match, which is shown below—and which I've just made myself—that I thought you might like me to pass the notion on to you.

The bolero jacket is made very easily from a last year's dress that is on the small side. You snip the skirt part off, leaving a short little bodice. Then you cut off the collar part and make an opening down the front.

Hem all the raw edges and it is complete. If you have made the jacket of plain material, then you should wear it over a patterned dress. But if the jacket is patterned, then it should be worn over a plain dress.

You should have a belt to match the jacket, though—for this makes it look as if the jacket were part of the dress, and not just odd.

My belt happens to be a fairly wide one that laces up in the front, because corselet belts, as they are called, are a new idea. You can make it either like this, or a perfectly plain belt fastening with a buckle as shown in the picture.



You know the "pinafore frock" that we're always deciding is so charming for schoolgirls? Well, it has now been snaffled by the grown-ups, who've gone crazy on "little" girl styles.

And so popular is the idea that even shorts and slacks now have shoulder straps—or "suspenders" as they call them in America, where all the college girls are wearing "pinafore styles."

● For Film Fans

You all liked that "Pocket Money Record" book that I told you about so much, that I've planned another for you. This time a "Pictures I Have Seen" book.

You'll want a large piece of cardboard—not too stiff—measuring about 12 inches by 8. Then you'll require some sheets of foolscap paper or drawing paper the same size. Fold the cardboard in half, then

the paper, and place inside the cardboard covers.

Keep in position with a piece of cord, or ribbon.

On the front cover paste some pictures of a favourite film star or a pretty scene from a film, and write or print the words "Pictures I Have Seen."

Inside the book you keep a record of your visits to the cinema. Write the date, the name of the picture, the stars, and then any comments you have to make about the film.

You'll find it a most interesting hobby.



● Poor Bird!

Such an extraordinary thing happened this morning. A starling came down our sitting-room chimney.

We heard much fluttering and squawking, and hurrying in to see what was happening, found the poor bird dashing itself against the closed window. He was absolutely terrified, so hastily we opened the window and let him out—to his home on the top of our chimney-pot, I suppose.

And you should just have seen the pieces of twig and soot he had dislodged into our hearth.

Mother was a bit dismayed, as a matter of fact, because some of the soot had gone on to her precious carpet. But we sprinkled salt down first before sweeping it up, and it didn't leave any marks at all.

Father declared we should have to get on to the roof and remove the nest, but mother and I (and young Heath) firmly said no. After all, such an accident isn't likely to happen very often, is it?

Oh, and wasn't it a good thing that there was no fire in the grate? We don't light the fire until the afternoon or evening this weather, you see.

Bye-bye until next week, pets.

Your friend,

PATRICIA.

HATLESS DAYS

How to make your hair look its very best to greet the sunny days in store.



ISN'T it amazing how the spring-time makes us critical of ourselves—especially of our Good Looks?

There's something about the sunny days that tells us we've simply GOT to improve our complexion, our hair—and our appearance generally.

Last week we discussed, you remember, those horrid "spots" that can worry schoolgirls—and grown-ups, too—so much.

So this week, we'll talk about hair, shall we?

Take a good look in your mirror first, will you? Not a vain look, at all. But a really serious one.

How is your hair looking?

Is it dull? Is it too greasy? Is it too dry and brittle? Is it dandruff?—which is a polite word for scurfy.

After the winter days, when we have worn close-fitting hats, snuggled over fires—perhaps even had days in bed with flu and colds—no one's hair is really at its best.

So it must have a really bracing spring "tonic" to put new life into it.

One of the very finest of these tonics is a **Brushing**—with a capital B.

See that your hair-brush is clean and stiff, and then spend half an hour next half-holiday or Saturday morning, brushing away in front of an open window.

rush as if your life depended on it—upwards and downwards. Now flop your head forward and brush the underneath hair up and down, around and about.

Your hair will probably stand on end after this—but it'll feel so good.

TOO GREASY?

Now you can give it a very special "treatment."

First the treatment for the girl who's decided her hair is too greasy, tending to look "stringy" even a few days after washing it.

Treat yourself to a bottle of hair tonic that contains Bay Rum. This will cost threepence or sixpence, but it will last, so it's worth it.

Comb little partings all over your hair, and sprinkle a few drops of the tonic into these, then brush it for a few seconds.

Next place your fingers—of both hands—claw-wise into your hair, and rub the scalp thoroughly. Rub from your forehead, right to the back of your neck, using a circular movement as you go.

Then work back again, from your neck to your forehead. Now do the same, travelling from ear to ear.

Brush the hair again, and arrange it. That completes the pre-shampoo treatment for the girl with greasy hair. The next step is the shampooing, which we'll discuss in a moment.

TOO DRY?

The girl whose hair is too dry, never seeming to settle down even a week after it has been washed, must also give her hair and scalp a tonic.

You must carry out the same treatment as the one I have described, but instead of using the Bay Rum tonic, you must use Olive Oil.

Perhaps mother will spare you some salad oil for this—which is very pure and good. But do rub it well in, won't you? And remember to protect the pillow at night, if you're not washing your hair until the next day.

THE SPECIAL SHAMPOO

Then comes the shampoo, a day after the "tonic treatment." I suggest a powder shampoo, or pure Soft soap for the girl with too-greasy hair. This will make her crowning glory wonderfully soft.

A shampoo containing oil is perfect

for the girl with the too-dry hair. There are plenty of these on sale, for very little—containing Olive Oil, Coconut Oil, and all sorts of other oils that are good for the hair.

The girl who knows her hair contains a lot of dandruff—or scurf—should also use the pre-shampoo treatment, either oil or Bay Rum, according to whether her hair is too greasy or too dry.

And for shampooing, she should use Pine Tar—which is on sale everywhere, already prepared for use.

If you follow the directions on the packet or bottle of shampoo, you will find washing your hair a most luxurious treat.

Remember that two latherings are good for the hair, with a rinsing between each, and several rinsings in clear water to finish off.

For the final rinse, the fair-haired girl can add two teaspoonfuls of lemon-juice to the water. This will not only remove all traces of soap, but will give glints and golden tones to the hair, that had tended to darken during the winter.

The brunette may add two teaspoonfuls of vinegar to her last rinsing water. This is extremely refreshing, and will bring out unsuspected "lights" that make the hair shine as if it had been burnished.

A CHANGE IS GOOD

After this extra-special shampooing, you might like to try a new parting to your hair. It is said to be very good to make a change every now and again. And while the hair is wet is the time to do it—otherwise it can hurt so, as I expect you know.

A new parting will probably make you sigh for a new hair-style, so you might try that as well while you are about it. But do choose something simple and easy-to-keep-neat, won't you? (I don't think anything is less attractive than an elaborate collection of curls which look as if they're never combed out or brushed, for fear of disturbing them.)

A new parting and new style may give you—and the family—a bit of a shock just at first, but you'll soon get used to it, and like it, I'm sure.

For a change is good for us in the spring—everyone agrees.

For the Girl Who Thinks She's Too Thin

YOU'LL LOOK PLUMPER—

IF you have the new "shrug shoulders" to your dresses—those that stick outwards and slightly upwards where the sleeve joins the dress.

IF you have dresses with short, "swing" skirts. Flares, lots of pleats, gores—and anything that makes for fullness—can be worn by you with charm. The drindl (or peasant-style) dress is particularly becoming.

IF you select light colours and bold patterns for the material of your dresses.

IF you avoid the downward-running stripes. Select those that go cross-wise, particularly on the bodice and shoulders.

IF you tuck a gaily-coloured scarf into a dress or jumper that has a V neck. This will hide "salt-cellars" if any.

IF you wear wide belts, as decorative and vivid as you like.

IF you don't scrimp your hair too flat to your head. Keep it fluffy at the back and sides.

IF you wear frilly collars and cuffs on your dresses.

IF you keep to short sleeves when possible.

IF you have plenty of patch pockets on your dresses and coats. Two on the

bodice and two on the skirt part are not too many. And so useful!

IF you wear skirts and jumpers—skirts and blouses. Not only are these always becoming, but they're so flattering to the very slim.

IF you smile a lot—yes, really. Haven't you noticed that serious-faced people always look thinner than they actually are?



(Continued from page 11)

her mouth, she had leapt to the door. Willingly her chums jumped to assist her. The cupboard door was lighter and narrower than the outside door, and the hinges, rotted through with rust, snapped at the first fierce onslaught. In half a minute they had torn it loose. "Right!" cried Babs. "Now, Clara, and you, Leila, grip hard. There's no room for more of us. And when I say charge—"

"Over the top with the best of luck!" chirruped Jemima. "What-ho! Forward the tanks! Go it, Spartans!"

"Ready?"

"Ay, ay!"

"Then—charge!" Babs cried.

While Mabs and Jimmy stood aside, the three of them, using the door as the ram, rushed on to the window. Crash!

They reeled from the impact, but they all whooped when they heard the ominous crack. Back again. Charge again. Then for the third time—and with such will and such gusto was the third charge made that the battering-ram went clean through the splintered woodwork, and almost carried them outside with it.

"We're out!" Clara cheered.

She jumped forward, tearing at the last splintered stave. Over the window-

sill they clambered, collecting a myriad spiders' webs from the trailing creeper outside. But nobody noticed that then—not even Jemima, usually so fastidious about such things. They were out. But would they be in time to save Elaine?

Across the wood the clock of St. Mary's church was already chiming six. A slight drizzle of rain was beginning to fall. But they cared nothing for that, either, as they raced through the wood, hearts pumping madly, the great fear for Elaine's safety pressing upon their minds. And then, at last, they came in sight of the old oak.

"Not there," Babs said.

They paused. For of Elaine, at the rendezvous, there was no sign.

"Then—then it's happened," muttered Leila. "They've captured her!"

"Perhaps not," Jemima shook her head. "Perhaps," she suggested hopefully, "Elaine herself scented the jolly old mouse—or perhaps that hard-bitten old aunt of hers did. Best thing," Jemima added, "is to go back to the old house of the tolling bell."

It was a sound idea. Obviously there was nothing to be gained by waiting there. So back to the house they rushed, reaching there just as the gates opened, and out of the drive came purring a rather ancient-looking saloon car.

A fierce little woman at the wheel glared at them. It was Elaine's aunt. "You!" she cried. "Where is Elaine? She went off to meet you."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Babs. "Then—then—"

"What's happened?"

"We—we don't know," Babs was breathlessly bewildered. "Ziska & Co. shut us up. Ziska & Co.—" She paused as she saw the woman's face whiten. "Miss—miss—whatever your name is—is Elaine in any sort of danger?" she cried.

"Danger!" the woman snapped. "You fools—fools!" she cried bitterly. "Pool I am, too, to have allowed Elaine ever to come in contact with you! Why do you think I have been taking all these precautions to prevent Elaine from meeting people? To-morrow, if Elaine is not at the fair, Elaine's chance has gone—gone! Didn't Elaine tell you that?"

"She told us nothing," Babs said.

"No? Then I will tell you. The woman looked grim. "You know who Elaine is?" she asked. "Elaine is Trapezia—you have heard of Trapezia, haven't you? The famous girl high-wire star. Elaine and Ziska were rivals in the same company not long ago. The company broke up—never mind why. Both Elaine and Ziska were promised a new contract in the International Circus, if, by to-morrow, one of them put on a new act which would satisfy Hans Welsen. Welsen is the owner of the International, if you must know, and he is coming to the Courtfield Fair from abroad to-morrow."

"But—but—" stuttered Babs.

"Listen!" the woman said fiercely.

Welsen, she explained, who wanted a juvenile star turn for his new show, had promised either Elaine or Ziska the contract when he had seen them perform to-morrow. Elaine, in secret, had been rehearsing a new show in which she performed gymnastic marvels on the high-wire on a special pair of roller skates, each fitted with two wheels. Her aunt had been training her.

"That," she said, "is why I took this house—to keep the training secret. That is why I have never allowed Elaine out of my sight—until you came. All the time Ziska and her people have been prowling around. One of them has to have the contract to-morrow—for Welsen is only stopping in England for one day, if Elaine is not here, then Ziska gets it."

"You—you mean, then, that Ziska has kidnapped Elaine?" Babs breathed.

"I mean that—yes. But come, don't stand there gaping!" she added harshly. "We've got to act. Elaine's now in Ziska's camp. Jump in!"

Breathlessly the chums jumped into the car. Now they knew. Now they understood.

So that was the reason for Elaine's great secrecy. That was why they had recognised in Elaine an exceptional athlete. They had heard of her, of course. They had all seen pictures of her former wonderful act when she had been known as Trapezia, the jungle wonder.

Now they knew why she had remained in the high-walled house, guarded by the two great bull-mastiffs; knew, too, that when Ziska was about she was warned by the bell her aunt, watching from the turret window, always tolled.

But how the aunt drove!

The car was old, but fortunately it was in good condition. With the drizzle settling down into steady rain, it hurled on—now and again leaving

Greetings to You All from—

HILDA RICHARDS

who here replies to a few of her many correspondents.



"AN ADMIRER OF CLARA" (Loxley, Sheffield).—What a nice, newsy letter! You would be in the Fourth if you were at Cliff House—and I'm sure you would have a grand time. Yes, even the youngest girls at C.H. may go for rambles, if the weather is fine, on half-holidays.

NOELA KENNETT (Brisbane, Australia).—Here's that reply in print you were anxious to see, my dear. Yes, I do get many letters from Australia—and charming letters they are. I think Babs & Co. are very popular "Down Under."

NOELINE STEPHEN (Machen, Monmouthshire).—How lucky to live on a farm with such lovely pets, Noeline! I'm sure lots of my readers would like to be in your place. You would be in the Second Form if you went to Cliff House.

MARGARET HINETT (Sedgley, Worcs.).—So glad to hear from you again, Margaret, and to know you have been enjoying my latest stories. I passed on your compliments to Patricia, and she asks me to send you her love.

BABS LAWSON (Larne Harbour, Ireland).—Thank you so much for your charming little letter, Babs. I was delighted to hear from you once again. What lovely presents you had at Christmas! You must be a very popular young person. Write again, won't you?

MARY BRADBURN (Wishaw, Scotland).—Thank you so much for your sweet little letter. You would be in the Second Form, Mary, if you went to Cliff House. Yes, you can send your letter for Pat to this office. I'm sure she will be delighted to hear from you!

PADDY RENSBURG (Petrus Steyn, South Africa).—Many thanks for a very charming letter, Paddy. You would be in the Upper Third at Cliff House—with Doris Redfern, Madge Stevens, and their chums. Yes, Frances Frost is still in the Fourth.

ELFRIEDA MACSON (Bournemouth).—So glad to hear from you again, Elfrieda. Jean Cartwright certainly is taller than most schoolgirls—she is, in fact, the tallest girl in the Fourth. Dulcia is eighteen years and three months old. Yes, Lady Pat is a prefect. Fay Chandler is still at Cliff House. Give my love to your sister, won't you, Elfrieda?

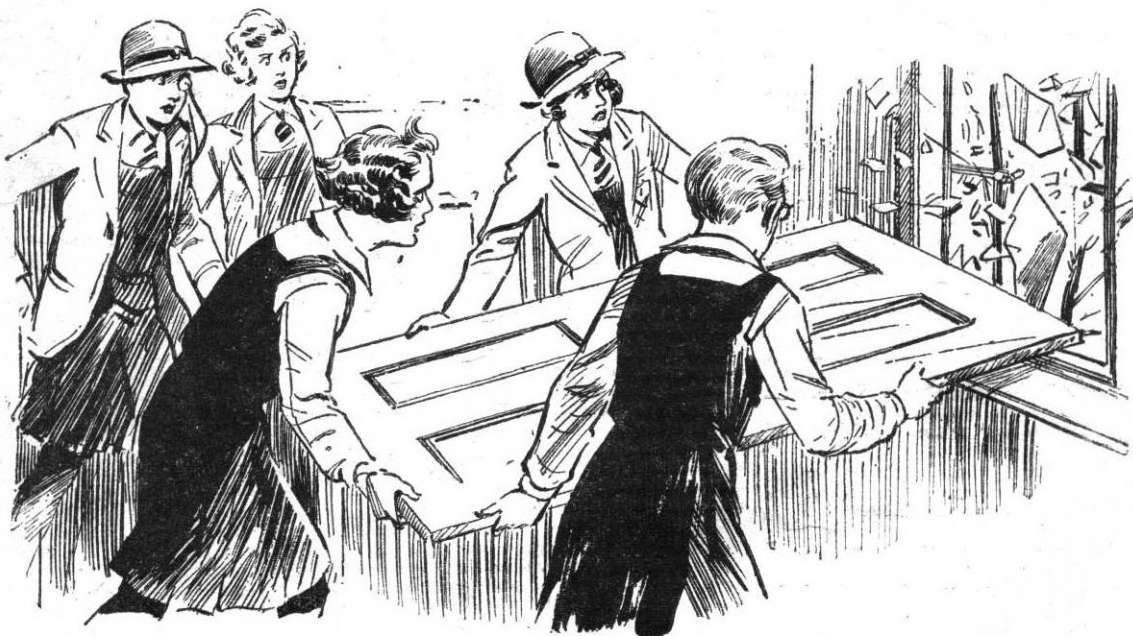
VIRGINIA MARINAKIS (Ranfointein, South Africa).—Here's the letter you were so anxious to see, Virginia! Thank you so much for your many story suggestions; I shall no doubt be using some of them in the near future. So glad you enjoyed the "School Friend Annual" so much.

J. C. H. (Castleton, Lancs).—Delighted by your letter—it was short, but so sweet! Yes, you may be sure I shall feature all your Fourth Form favourites in future stories, my dear, and I do hope you will thoroughly enjoy them.

JEAN CRIERSON (Galt, Ontario) and SADIE HIRAHARA (Victoria, British Columbia).—Just a note to thank each of you for the charming Valentines—which were a really delightful surprise! And now I hope I shall receive nice long newsy letters from you both.

EILEEN FLAGG (Dartford, Kent).—Another not-very-long letter—but so enthusiastic! You'll make it an extra-long letter next time, won't you, Eileen? I shall be featuring popular Doris Redfern in many more stories, and I hope you will enjoy them. Bye-bye for the present!

BETTY BROWN (New Delhi, India).—I've managed to squeeze in a printed reply this time, Betty, as I promised in my letter! Congratulations to your school on their grand results in the exams. Your pets must be darlings! Juno sends them a tail-wag each.



HOLDING the cupboard door like a battering-ram, Babs, Clara, and Leila charged at the window. Tensely, Mabs and Jemima watched. With a shattering crash the window smashed to pieces. A way of escape lay before them, but—would they be in time to save Elaine?

the road altogether, more than once throwing them in a heap.

"I wonder?" Jemima presently murmured.

"Wonder what?" Babs asked.

"If," Jemima said, "they've already started, I'm wondering about that caravan—with its nice new twelve-cylinder engine. Methinks, Barbara beloved, I see the reason for such a powerful bit of locomotion now. If the plan all along was to kidnap Elaine, naturally they'd like an engine that would make the getaway quickly. And I'm afraid," Jemima said, "if the caravan's gone, our hope of finding Elaine has gone with it. But, oh, here is the camp!"

And then they all gave a groan of dismay. For the camp was deserted. The fire still burned, and there were a great many odds and bits of litter lying around. But of the caravan and its owners there was no sign.

Elaine had gone—been carried off into the blue!

Such a Hectic Chase!



"WELL," Miss Harding grated—they had learned the name of Elaine's trainer aunt now, "what's to be done? They've got her."

"How—how much did it cost?" Clara said.

"About sixty, I should say," Jemima replied thoughtfully. "An aeroplane might be useful, but—Heigh-ho, wait a minute though!" she cried, as she stared at the ground where the caravan had been parked. "Here are its wheelmarks. It backed into the road and headed off towards Eastbourne."

"Well, does that help us?" Miss Harding demanded gruffly.

"It does, it doth," Jemima smiled softly. "There's a chance," she said.

"If the caravan is powerful, it is also big. That means, fair children, that it will have to keep to the main road. Now we, in a small car," Jemima

added, "need not keep to the main road, and, seeing that the main road makes a considerable curve towards the Haywards Height roundabout, I suggest, dear old Miss Harding, that we take the by-road and head it off. If we do that—"

"Hold tight!" Miss Harding snapped, her eyes suddenly gleaming. "I hope I don't hurt you, but we're going to catch that caravan if it's the last thing we do!"

And crash! went the gears; and thump! went the chums, sprawling in a heap as the car shot off.

"Methinks," Jemima murmured, "we're in for something. Give my love to mother!"

Nobody laughed. Nobody even heard. The machine was screaming now; the tyres slithering as the first corner was turned. And down pelted the rain—accompanied by a sinister rumble of approaching thunder.

Grimly they held on, while the car hurled onwards like a bullet. Shriek!—and round another corner they went. Whiz!—and they rushed up a bend, the car leaning over at a giddy angle before righting itself and shooting through a puddle in a shower.

What a drive! What a nightmare!

To make matters worse, lightning soon began to play in the sky; the rain turned to a drenching downpour. Shrieking tyres and thudding engine mingled with the piercing tumult of the storm as the car ploughed and rocked its way onwards. Five—ten—fifteen minutes passed by, and it was as dark as pitch.

Another corner. They missed a deserted cart by a hairsbreadth. Across a crossroads they flew, just whizzing by in time to prevent a collision with a man pushing a barrow homeward. Then on again.

"My hat, what a nerve the woman's got!" Clara gulped. "Miss Harding—"

"Be quiet!" Miss Harding snapped.

"Can't you see I'm concentrating?"

She was. On, on the car ploughed through the blinding downpour, with the lightning darting out of the skies,

with every corner an unknown adventure and every telegraph-post or tree missed, it seemed, by inches.

"Hallo!" Jemima said suddenly. "Look! We're coming to the Hayward Height crossroads!"

They sat tight, feeling and looking rather green then. Hayward Height was not only a crossroad, but a circular roundabout built round the War memorial of the near-by village. That memorial was floodlit now, and therefore a conspicuous object for miles around. It was at this point that the by-road they were on joined the main Eastbourne road.

"And look!" cried Clara, pointing.

They were running almost parallel with the main road now, and along that road a vehicle with two great headlights was travelling at speed.

"Ziska's caravan!" yelled Babs. "Miss Harding, hurry—hurry!"

Miss Harding nodded. She had seen. Down went her foot on the accelerator pedal until the board beneath it groaned and squeaked. Now they were running neck and neck. Now they were gaining; now they had fallen a little behind; now another slight gain.

"They'll beat us!" Jemima groaned. "If they get round the roundabout first nothing on earth will catch them!"

"Watch!" Miss Harding shrieked. "Now hold tight!"

Then they tore on. With hair-raising speed the roundabout shot towards them. Could they do it? Could they?

If they could it would be by seconds.

Then—

"Hold tight!" Miss Harding yelled. "I'm going to crash the car! Don't worry; you'll be safe. I've done this in the circus!"

"Oh, great. Jehoshaphat!" breathed Leila.

Whiz! The roundabout was fifty yards away. The memorial seemed to be rushing upon them. Faster, faster went the car. Came a warning yell from Miss Harding. Then—

Crash! Smash! The car slithered, jumped, and then seemed to buck like a horse, throwing them all in a heap. There came a powerful smell of burning rubber. Sprawling and bruised the

chums were, all the breath knocked out of their bodies. They felt rather than saw the great caravan bearing down upon them. Then a shriek, a yell, a furious shout of alarm, and a terrific squeal of quickly applied brakes.

Babs staggered up, ashen.
"Mum-my hat! Are we all here?"
"We are," Miss Harding said.
"And look—"

The caravan had come to rest now, half a dozen yards away from them. From the driver's seat Ziska's father emerged, and Ziska herself followed, their faces alight with fury. They could go no farther, for Miss Harding had very cleverly crashed the car in such a way that it blocked the rest of the road. She turned quickly to the chums.

"Now," she said, "get Elaine. I'll attend to these scoundrels!"
"Oh, shucks, come on!" gasped Leila.

They scrambled out of the car, which Mr. Ziska, roaring at the top of his voice, was approaching now.

Babs nodded.
"Come on; back of the caravan!" she gasped.

They crawled round the back of the car. The gipsy, thanks to the darkness and the pelting rain, had not seen them. While they came on, the chums stole to the back of the caravan. A white face looked out at them.

"Elaine!" cried Babs.
"Babs!" Elaine's eyes widened.
"How did— But I can't get out! The door's locked!" she said.

"Window!" cried Babs. "Elaine, hurry!"

Elaine nodded. Babs looked round. Clara, Mabs, and Leila were with her, but of Jemima there was no sign. From the front of the caravan came the sound of upraised voices. White-faced, Elaine reached the window. They saw her fumbling with the catch; saw the window lifted open.

"Elaine, come on!" Babs said anxiously.

She reached up, lending the girl trapezist a hand. But Elaine laughed then. Athlete as she was, she needed no assistance. Through the window she wriggled, landing among them. Down the road came a faint hoot.

"Saved!" cried Babs. "But Jimmy—where's Jimmy?"

"What are you doing?" put in a savage voice; and round the side of the caravan came Ziska's father.

"Come on, scoot!" cried Clara.

But too late. For even as Clara caught Elaine's right arm, the brawny gipsy made a lunge forward, catching at the other.

"Let go!" Elaine panted.

"I won't!"

"Help, help!" Elaine shrieked.

"Stand back!" the man roared.
"Stand back—all of you! By gum, if you don't, I'll—" He pulled out a short stick. "Girl, let go!" he cried.

But at the moment there came a shout from behind, and two headlights pierced the gloom, as a car jerked to a standstill on the gleaming road. Then, as if from nowhere, Jemima appeared.

"Ha, ha!" she said. "Enter the flying squad! Methinks fair comrades, this is the end of the journey. My friends the police, it seems. I've just been phoning them from the A.A. box."

"The police!" shouted Babs.
The gipsy gave a cry.

"Quick, back to the caravan!"
But it was too late. For even as Elaine, gasping, was jerked back into the midst of the chums, the foremost officer stepped forward. He caught the gipsy's hand—just as Miss Harding appeared.

"Thank you!" she snapped.
"Officer, you can arrest that man and his wife and daughter. I give them in charge for attempted kidnapping, and"—with the first gentle look the chums had ever seen on her face—"they would have probably got away with it if it hadn't been for these girls. Bye-bye, Ziska! We'll remember you to-morrow when we see Welsen."

But Ziska seemed too terrified to be conscious of anything!

THERE WAS no Ziska, after all, at the fair on the morrow, but there was Elaine, the girl high-wire wonder, and what Ziska failed to do in the way of attracting customers to the Cliff House stall she more than made up for it.

In the first place, the local papers that morning were full of Elaine's breathless adventure of the night before, and Babs & Co., who had played such a large part in that adventure, were the heroines of the hour.

The stall, in fact, had to close down an hour after it had opened—sold out to the last peg-doll which Ziska's plotting had left them as a legacy.

And in the afternoon—what excitement then! How the chums thrilled when Elaine did her turn on the two-wheeled roller skates high above the fair! And how they cheered when the

foreign-looking gentleman named Welsen came forward, and taking Elaine by one hand, put a fountain-pen in the other, and asked her to sign on the line provided for her signature. Then he smiled.

"That contract, Elaine, binds you to the International for five years at a thousand pounds a year," he said.
"Are you satisfied?"

"Satisfied?" Elaine laughed. "Satisfied?" she cried. "Babs—Jimmy—Clara—aunt—all of you! Satisfied!" And she danced. "I've got it—got it—thanks, aunt, to you; thanks to Barbara and my other friends. No more mystery, no more secrecy. Aunt, may I got back with Babs to Cliff House?"

"Of course," Miss Harding said readily. "But first you are all coming back with me to the Turrets. Because," she added, smiling, "I want a hand in the celebrations, and we are all going to have the loveliest feed you ever saw in your lives. We're all going to celebrate. I, too, want to thank your friends, though I must say that they acted like fools in letting Ziska get hold of that note."

Babs blushed.
"And we," grinned Leila, "also want to thank you, Miss Harding."

"Me? What for?"
"For the buggy ride last night," Leila replied, and there was a laugh.

But this time it was Miss Harding's turn to blush.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.



The MISTRESS Who Couldn't KEEP ORDER!

Dear little Miss Wright, of the Lower Fifth. Everybody loved her, she was so mild, so gentle, so timid. But, unfortunately, those very qualities of hers proved a handicap when it came to controlling girls. And when placed in charge of the Fourth Form, she made an enemy of spiteful, vindictive Lydia Crossendale, Miss Wright was soon facing the biggest crisis of her career. It seemed that she simply could not maintain discipline. And when Babs & Co. valiantly went to her rescue—well, Hilda Richards will tell you what happens in next week's SCHOOLGIRL. Order your copy now.

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SECRET HELPER to ROBIN HOOD

"Seize That Girl!"

THE young Lady Fayre leaned from the school-chamber window and looked down into the courtyard of Longley Castle, chin cupped in hands, and was entranced.

In the centre of the courtyard was the burly, beefy figure of Fayre's uncle, the Baron le Feuvre, lord of this fine castle—although, strictly by law, for what that mattered, the castle was Fayre's inherited property.

The baron looked wonderful in his armour. Nothing could be seen of his red face, nor of his fearsome beard; indeed, nothing could be seen of him but the shining, elaborate armour, of such fine workmanship that not even a dagger could be thrust through it.

But at the moment the baron was a spectator while two knights engaged in playful combat on their magnificent war-horses, which were bedecked with red and gold cloth, spiked headpieces, and gilded harness.

"On, on, Sir George!" cheered Fayre.

The horses thundered; the knights, with their lances thrust out, aimed at each other.

Crash! A yell rose, and, while Sir George rode on, Sir Walter did a somersault from his horse, and there was a mighty metallic crash.

Once again Sir George had won!

Fayre clapped her hands in delight.

Then came the baron's voice, as he lifted his vizor.

"Hah! Sir George, were I a younger man," he thundered, "you would be soon on your back! E'en now—for a lady's gauntlet; yes, for a lady's gauntlet, flung at my feet—I would challenge, you!"

As Fayre heard that, a glint of mischief came into her eyes. For she very much doubted really whether the baron would be true to his word. There was no chance of a lady's gauntlet being flung at his feet!

Or so, in Fayre's estimation, thought the baron, who was jealous of Sir George's success.

Turning back from the window, Fayre lifted the lid of her school-room desk.

Inside was a pair of gauntlets. Rolling one into a ball, Fayre turned back to the window and then hurled it.

"Hurrah!" came a cheer, as it reached the ground.

"A lady's gauntlet!"

The Baron le Feuvre tried to look up, but he could not do that in his armour, so he looked down at the gauntlet. What he felt and thought, Fayre did not know, but she heard the roar of delight from the soldiers.

No man faced with that applause could back out, and the Baron le Feuvre, whatever his shortcomings, was no coward.

"So—a lady's gauntlet!" he roared.

"Sir George, your doom is sealed!"

Fayre leaned out and held her breath. She could guess whose doom was sealed, and she had a shrewd idea that the baron was not as confident as he sounded.

She was not devoted to her bullying, blustering uncle, who made the lives of the poor a misery, and used his power

challenge. A knight had it, and with a bow gave it to the baron.

"Huh! The Lady Fayre!" snarled the baron. "For the amusement of my merry niece I have been made to clown?"

He looked up at the window, and Fayre bobbed out of sight. Then hurriedly she went to her desk and started to write, busying herself with copying the programme of events, at the tourney.

But before very long her uncle appeared, strode up to her, and flung the gauntlet to the floor.

"So, Fayre," he snarled, "you make mock of me! Very well, I'll make the same of you, my girl. To-morrow, instead of coming to the tourney, you shall stay here—in a dungeon!"

Fayre, pale-faced, jumped to her feet.

"Oh, my lord uncle!" she protested, in dismay. "I did but throw—"

"YOU SHALL TRAP ROBIN HOOD!" DECLARED FAYRE'S UNCLE, THE BARON, NOT RECOGNISING HER IN HER DISGUISE. "THIS BEGGAR WILL HELP YOU!" BUT—THE BEGGAR WAS ROBIN HOOD HIMSELF!

to serve his selfish ends; and if he were defeated she would give a soft cheer.

She had an idea that the troops would cheer softly, too; and that that was why they were so excited now.

The baron, taking a lance, rode back to regulation distance, and Sir George did the same. There was a hush. Then—

"They're off!" came a murmur. The thunder of hoofs—the hush of the crowd, and then, clash!

Fayre, spellbound, watched, as both parried and rode on. Then once again the charge—thunder of hoofs—a yell. A roar—and the Baron le Feuvre spun round, twisted in the air, and crashed to the ground with a clang.

Sir George rode on, lance upright, cheered to the echo, while six men ran to help the Baron up. Then the cheering suddenly died.

The baron removed his helmet, and instantly demanded to be given the lady's gauntlet that had been thrown in

"Silence! Have you the effrontery to bandy words?" he demanded.

Fayre sighed heavily. It was ever the same. If she stood silent before his tirade, then she had nothing to say for herself, and was therefore guilty. If she spoke she was adding to her offence by "bandying" words.

"You do not go to the tourney," he added. "And, what is more, you will miss the sight of Robin Hood whipped at the tail of a cart. It is a treat I have planned for the common people."

Fayre's heart missed a beat. "You—you have captured Robin Hood?"

The baron made a sound of contempt and snapped his fingers.

"The trap is set; he will walk into it," he mocked; "he who has boasted that he will win my gold chalice. That gold chalice will be won by one of my

By IDA MELBOURNE

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archers, or, by my halidom, every archer here will be flogged!"

He swung round, but Fayre moved after him.

"Uncle," she cried, "oh, please, if I may not go to the tourney, may I see Robin Hood captured?"

She knew what the answer would be, but she hoped that he might in reply give some clue as to the trap that would be set for her hero—Robin Hood.

"No!" snorted the baron. "Unless you would play the part of the damsel in distress this brave hero will attempt to rescue."

Fayre hid her excitement at those revealing words. In a flash she knew the plan. A girl was to cry for help somewhere in Robin Hood's hearing, and he would go to her aid; then he would be captured by men lying in ambush.

"Hah! He will get his deserts," said Fayre.

"He will indeed!" retorted the baron harshly, and strode off.

The moment he had disappeared Fayre slipped along to her room, going at once to the large oak chest. Opening it, she pulled out a shabby, ragged green frock and a worn, hooded brown cloak.

They were strange clothes for the Lady Fayre to possess; for her wardrobe was rich and luxurious, of the best materials and workmanship. Nevertheless, there were times when Fayre much preferred this shabby frock. Wearing it, she could be free; could pass as a peasant girl, and go where she pleased, do as she chose.

That was why she intended to wear it now. Slipping off her own lovely garment, she soon changed into it; then, with the hood pulled well over her face, she hurried down the stone stairway of the castle to the mighty, impressive hall, and as there were so many people moving about the castle—servants, soldiers, friends, and retainers—she was hardly noticed.

At a trot she crossed the courtyard, a basket on her arm, but when half-way across she hesitated.

The baron—no longer in heavy

armour, but in light chain mail—was there on horseback, with a posse of armed men, and standing before him was a man in ragged garments who cringed humbly.

"Well, you can lead us near to Robin Hood?" demanded the baron.

"My lord—my most noble lord—yes," said the spy, whom Fayre regarded in scorn.

"If you mislead us, rascal, it will go ill with you," the baron warned him.

"How many ears have you now?"

"Tu—two, mighty lord."

"Hah! Then preserve them both by leading us to Robin Hood—or, by my trusty lance, fellow, you shall learn to hear with one!"

The cortege moved through the gates; and Fayre, planning to take a short cut across the fields to the woods where Robin Hood and his merry men had their lair, let the baron get some yards ahead.

Without question she crossed the drawbridge and passed through the gate of the barbican, but in the road she halted again. The baron, ahead, had halted, too.

"That wench," he cried, pointing at Fayre—"seize that girl! She will do!"

Fayre drew back, but she was too late; the wardens of the barbican ran forward and held her arms.

Never had she known such fear as now; for she dared not even imagine the baron's wrath if he should learn that this ill-clad girl was his own niece. It would be not only the dungeon as punishment, but the stocks, too.

"Oh, no! Spare me!" cried Fayre, and put her right arm to shield her face as though from a blow, but in truth from a keen, searching scrutiny.

Pushed by the wardens, she had no chance of escape.

The Other Prisoner!

"HAVE no fear, maid," said the baron roughly, as Fayre, trembling, stood with arm half-raised and head bowed, before him. "You shall not be hurt.

Walk behind, and do not try to run. You shall trap Robin Hood. This beggar will help you!"

The baron rode on; the soldiers marched; and, quaking, Fayre walked behind, with one of the soldiers following her, carrying a pike in threatening manner to warn her that to run would be to endanger herself.

With sinking heart Fayre realised that she was to be used to trap Robin Hood. She, his friend, was to lure him into capture.

But what else could she do? For half a mile they walked along the road, and then the loathsome spy—a man with wrinkled face and half-grown beard—halted.

"Well, it is here?" asked the baron. "Take the girl forward."

Fayre approached the spy. How she hated him for his treachery! For if he knew Robin Hood's hiding-place, he was in his confidence; therefore, he was a traitor.

Fayre looked him in the face and tried to convey her scorn; but, instead, she gasped in surprise, round-eyed; and the spy looked down.

Well might he look down! For Fayre in that one keen glance had recognised him as—Robin Hood himself!

Instantly, realising his deadly peril should she give the slightest sign of knowing him, Fayre bowed her head and walked forward to the wood.

Daring Robin Hood croaked out to the baron.

"Good, my noble lord! 'Twill be some hundred paces ere we are near to the rascal's stronghold."

"Then give the sign," commanded the baron.

Some four hundred yards farther on Robin Hood halted, a short way from a solid-looking three-planked bridge.

"Now," he said.

"Good! Wench," called the baron to Fayre, "run and yell—and if you yell not loudly enough this ruffian will belabour you with his staff!"

Fayre looked at Robin Hood, and then ran. After her he went, dealing imaginary blows; and she yelled.

"Robin Hood—help—help!"

"Jump the ditch," said Robin Hood. "Can you?"

Fayre took a running jump, and cleared the wide ditch—but only just. Robin Hood, following, no longer troubled to live up to his disguise, and made a glorious leap.

"Hey! Stop! Come back, you fool!" roared the baron.

Then, spurring his horse, he charged on at the solid-looking bridge. At a clatter he reached it, but no sooner were his horse's forefeet on it than the bridge—sawn through, save for a mere quarter-inch—snapped with pistol-like report.

Down went the horse, and over its head sailed the baron.

As he fell flat, the undergrowth became alive with men in green, and every one dealt a blow with his stave at the recumbent baron. Nor were the blows light.

The staggered, startled soldiers rushed forward, drawing swords, and carrying their pikes like lances. But, carrying the weight of arms and chain mail, there was not one able to jump that ditch. Two jumped into it, but the others held back.

The baron scrambled up, and Fayre, breathing heavily, stood near to Robin Hood.

"Wait!" he murmured.

Then, very smartly, Robin Hood took a bow from a waiting outlaw, extended it, and aimed an arrow at the baron.

"Let every soldier step back six paces

from the ditch, or by truth, I'll let fly at the baron!" he said.

The soldiers stepped back, and the baron, for all his courage, paled. Robin Hood, vaunted as the cleverest archer in all England, could not miss a farthing at such range, and the baron was a man of bulk.

"Back to the tree, baron!" mocked Robin Hood. "I have sworn that I will win your gold chalice to-morrow, but word has been told that I am to be whipped at a cart tail." "And so you shall be!" roared the baron.

Zip! went an arrow. It sailed over the baron's head and hummed in the tree, but an inch from his scalp. Zip! went another, that shaved his ear; and another flew before the first had finished its soft, murmuring hum.

The baron, with an arrow above his head, and one almost touching either cheek, stood still as another was strung in the bow.

"Would you kill me?" he choked. "Nay," smiled Robin Hood, "but you shall stay here as hostage, while Robin Hood goes to the tourney. If your soldiers do not let me return here, why, then you shall not return to the castle."

Not one of the soldiers dared move to the baron's rescue for fear Robin Hood let fly a deadly arrow; but Fayre, watching them, saw that one had moved. He had crept sideways, and through the undergrowth she saw the flash of a sword.

"Look out!" she gasped. She jumped, and pushed Robin Hood. Even as she did so a well-flung sword whistled through the air, sang past the spot where Robin Hood had been, and thudded six inches into the ground.

The baron jumped from the tree, dodged sideways, and moved behind it. Half a dozen swords were flung, and the pikemen, jumping into the ditch, rushed through it.

With a scream Fayre jumped back to the cover of the bushes as Robin Hood, shouting to his men, charged at the soldiers.

What happened in that fight Fayre did not see; she ran on to Robin Hood's lair, while the baron, recapturing his horse, rode to the castle for more soldiers.

Fayre, breathless from running, reached the secret lair but a few moments before Robin Hood and his men returned, some slightly wounded, but all in triumphant mood, having beaten off the attack and, by cunning manoeuvring, outdistanced the soldiers.

"Mystery Maid," said Robin Hood, going at once to Fayre, his hand outstretched, "you did save my life."

"I saw him in time," breathed Fayre. "I'm so glad."

"I, too," smiled Robin Hood. "But now—now Robin Hood has failed; for I vowed that to-morrow, before Prince John and the grand nobles and ladies of his court, I would win the baron's gold chalice for the best archer of all England."

Fayre sighed. "It is too grave a risk to run, Robin Hood," she said. "Moreover, though I do know you are the greatest archer, the contest will not be what is claimed. The baron is determined that the gold chalice shall stay in his castle."

Robin Hood pursed his lips. "No; I must win it! I have vowed to—and I have promised that the chalice shall be melted down for the poor," he said firmly.

"There is one other than you likely to beat the castle archer—Fat William from Kent," Fayre said.

Robin Hood started.

"Fat William?" he asked.

"So—so the Lady Fayre has said," murmured Fayre, who had never given him a chance to guess her true identity.

"And the Lady Fayre will be there to watch?" he asked.

"She will, instead, be in a dungeon," said Fayre, and told the sad story of the gauntlet. Sad—but to Robin Hood a merry jest.

"I like the Lady Fayre," he smiled, "and could I but save her from the dungeon I should be happy."

"Alas, no!" sighed Fayre—for the baron would not forget, and the castle was too well guarded to allow Robin Hood, daring as he was, to effect a rescue.

Robin Hood sighed. "I am sad," he said heavily, "for I have never wanted anything so much as to be champion of all English archers, trying my skill before Prince John."

"I, too, would wish it," agreed Fayre. But wishing would not help. Robin Hood had to be content to forego the honour—and Fayre to stay in the dungeon.

In sad mood, she returned to the castle, her only consolation that on the way back, from the cover of a hedge, she saw the baron riding a wasted journey to try his luck again against Robin Hood in the woods.

Inside the castle, she hurried to her room, and there changed again into her gorgeous frock. Hardly had she done so than a serving-maid at the door called to her.

"My lady, the warden of the dungeons would have word with you," she murmured.

In the corridor the warden—a genial, kindly man, with whom Fayre had often had long talks—awaited her sadly.

"M'lady," he said, shaking his head, "I have sorry news! To-morrow at the prime of day the baron rides forth with all his knights to the tourney, and—and—ah, me—I have the sad duty to confine your ladyship to a dungeon."

Fayre grimaced. "Perhaps the door need not be locked?" she asked.

The warden shook his head. "There will be the evil-faced page,

Lucien, to spy," he said. "But, m'lady, you shall choose the dungeon, and it might be that comforts can be arranged."

Fayre sighed sadly. "You are kind, warden," she said. "If I must indeed be in a dungeon I would rather choose it."

Down to the dungeons she went with him, below the ground, where the air was dank and chilly, and sentries stood guard. But to-day its silence was broken by a wild shouting.

"Who is that?" Fayre asked. The warden gave her a sly look.

"'Tis a knave claiming to be Fat William of Kent, champion of that county, an archer, I hear. But he lies."

Fayre gave a jump of dismay. "What! Is the baron so base he would lock in the rival archer?"

"No, no! 'Tis but a poor fool who pretends," said the warden.

But at the top of his voice the prisoner was shouting that he was Fat William, that Prince John should hear of it, and that there would be a hue and cry.

The warden, halting before the door of the man's cell, winked.

"Fat William will be there," he said—"one as fat as you, knave, and as black-bearded; a poor archer, too."

"You will send some fool in my place to dishonour my name?" howled the outraged Fat William; for, as Fayre guessed, it was indeed the Kentish champion, held prisoner lest, in fair contest, he defeated the baron's man, and so won the gold chalice.

But Fayre, as she looked at the angry, unhappy, bearded man, gave a startled gasp at an idea that had come to her. What it was she did not say. She went with the warden and selected for herself the best dungeon, and until she should be locked in at nine, the prime of day on the morrow, she had the key.

She yearned to get the key to Fat William's dungeon; but every key was different, and the warden guarded them too well for such a ruse to succeed.

Nevertheless, in Fayre's mind a plan dawned—a plan that should save the honour of Fat William and of Robin Hood.



TOO late, Fayre tried to warn her secret friend. Even as the disguised Robin Hood stepped forward to receive the archery trophy from Prince John, the baron snatched off the fake beard. "A fraud!" he roared. "An impostor! Why, 'tis the villain Robin Hood himself!"

Sensation at the Tourney!

IT was before nine o'clock the following morning that Fayre went down to the dungeon in her best red robe, bearing a large bundle under her arm—a bundle of comforts which the warden pretended not to see.

Five minutes later a girl in a shabby green frock and ragged, hooded cloak left the cell, locking the door behind her. Seven minutes later she was slipping through a trapdoor in the floor round the corner, dropping into a boat moored there secretly in the moat.

At nine o'clock the warden went along to the dungeon, found the door locked, and stared through the grille, surprised to see what he took to be the Lady Fayre.

"My lord, seek no more. Her ladyship is here," he said.

The Baron le Feuvre, clattering down the stairway to the dungeon, glowered through.

He saw what was really a sack of straw dressed in a red frock sitting in a chair. Under the red frock peeped two shoes. On the frock rested a book. Above the frock, supported by a broom-handle, was a bladder, from the back of which—and he could see only the back—hung down flaxen hair.

"Hah! Obedient at last, then?" he mocked.

The Baron le Feuvre had not good eyes, as Fayre well knew, and this was some sixty years before Roger Bacon invented glasses to aid sight.

Consequently, the baron did not know that he looked at a dummy.

"Be silent, then, sullen girl!" he jeered. "It will be a great day at the tourney." And the gold chalice shall come to the castle."

No answer came from the sack of straw, and the baron, muttering, turned away.

"See that the door is not opened! Give me the key!" he snarled to the warden.

The warden did not know where the key was; but, not daring to say so, gave the baron another, with which, since he did not trouble to try it in the lock, he was well satisfied.

The moment he was gone, the warden spoke to the sack, sought its attention, and asked for the key. Then, not suffering with bad sight, he realised the trick that had been played.

"Aha!" he murmured. "So—"

And then he chuckled in his chest, winked at the wall, and turned away; for even the warden of the dungeons was glad when the artful baron was fooled. From that cell he turned to Fat William, who, although hoarse, still raved and pleaded to be free. But he raved in vain. It was more than the warden's life would be worth to set him free.

In merry mood, the baron rode to the tourney, which was to be held in a place three miles from his own castle; and there, too, with other villagers in a cart, went a girl in a shabby frock, happier even than he.

The Lady Fayre was in singing mood. The other girls were merry, too, and, with a gold piece she had taken from her purse, Fayre had brought cakes and dainties and sweetmeats to share with her companions.

She was far happier than she would have been with the stiff-necked, hard-faced baroness, minding her p's and q's and nagged the whole time. But the other girls sighed a little, and more than one said that she would give her life to be the rich, noble Lady Fayre.

From all parts of the country people thronged to the tourney on foot, on horseback, in carts. Hundreds had

slept the night in the open near by. Every hostelry, every cottage had its fill of visitors, and there was such gaiety and hilarity as Fayre had never seen before.

With the others, she took her position, right on the fringe of the field.

"'Tis a pity Robin Hood cannot vie with the archers!" she heard on all sides.

"Fat William of Kent should win!" "Ah, no, no! The castle archers will have the chalice!"

So ran the arguments. And then, when the tourney began, when knights jostled, when there was the tilting at buckets, thrills and laughs came in plenty; sword-play, dancing, pikemen showing their skill, wrestling, and, finally, the archers.

The butts were brought out, the brightly ringed targets, and then the archers lined up before Prince John.

Never had Fayre seen a grander sight than the royal canopy, with the prince wearing a golden crown, clad in a fine robe over chain mail, the lions of England bright upon it; and all around were fair ladies with gorgeous frocks, knights in shining armour, horses gaily bedecked.

But it was the archers who had the attention now, as a herald announced them and sang their praises. Cheers rose for everyone.

"Fat William of Kent! Champion of Kent!" he announced.

Fayre, a twinkle in her eyes, held her breath. Fat William of Kent was in the baron's dungeon; and she wished she could now see the baron's face.

The baron, sitting beside Prince John, nudged him.

"'Tis not the fat fool!" he said, and chortled.

"Huh? Not so, eh? The castle archer will win?" said the prince, with a leer.

"'Tis so. Wager it with clear mind, my prince."

Whereupon the prince turned to Earl Godwin and laid a wager.

"Fat William will win!" snorted the earl. "I know him well."

The Baron le Feuvre chortled with glee, and Prince John, whose later reputation for evil was not earned in vain, gave him a leering smile and wink as the earl wagered a thousand gold pieces that Fat William would win.

Now Fayre watched, enthralled, unable to take her eyes from the archers. She knew as well as the baron did that the man dressed in the long red robe, portly and black-bearded, was not Fat William.

But she also knew that he was not the fat man hired by the baron to play the role. For that fellow was bound with ropes in the greenwood guarded by Friar Tuck.

No, no—the man dressed as Fat William was none other than Robin Hood!

That was why Fayre watched as the arrows flew and the scores were announced. The excitement rose. The castle archer shot with skill and was leading when Fat William took his stance.

Fayre hardly breathed. The first shot, straight and true, went into the bull. The second skimmed through the feather of the first. The third, following hotly, went between them.

The crowd roared. Prince John, muttering, clutched the arms of his gilded seat, scowled and turned upon the gaping baron.

"What trick is this you play me, wretch?" he demanded.

The baron was speechless. The

crowd, on the other hand, yelled and cheered. For Fat William's next shot was jammed in the arrows already in the butt. Never had such archery been seen before.

Three more trials there were, but Fat William held his lead. He shot fruit from men's heads; he shot a falling ball but a foot before it reached the ground. Every known trick of archery he exhibited, shooting up an arrow and smashing it in flight with another.

And both Prince John and the baron knew that no trickery could now rob him of the prize. The crowd would go crazy.

Fayre cheered herself hoarse, laughed and danced.

"What—are you for Kent?" cried her neighbour in surprise. "Turncoat, when our champion is beaten!"

"Wait—" breathed Fayre.

And when the prize-giving came she was on tiptoe.

"Fat William of Kent!" called the crier.

The fat man stepped forward and saluted Prince John, who held out the golden chalice. Then up sprang the baron.

Fayre tried to warn Robin Hood that he was in danger, but she was too late.

"A fraud!" the baron cried. "An impostor!"

And so saying he sprang forward and tore free the false beard. For a moment, looking at the features underneath, at the clear, mocking eyes, he was spellbound. Then he shouted:

"Why, 'tis the villain, Robin Hood, himself!"

But with a quick snatch Robin Hood seized the chalice, jumped back, mounted a riderless horse standing for Prince John's departure, and rode forward even as the crowd swept in to learn what all this meant.

Off he jumped, swung the red robe from him, and then, surrounded by a swarm of friars, whose robes hid outlaws' green garments, he wrapped himself in sackcloth like theirs, and soon, scattering with them, was lost in the crowd.

Not until three hours later did Fayre see him again—in the greenwood; and there, laughing merrily, she drank from the chalice, toasting him and all archery.

Then back to the castle she slipped, and, biding her time, entering by the secret way, she entered the cell when the warden was arguing with Fat William. Changing into her rich clothes, she tied the shabby ones in a bundle. There the sullen baron found her and was too dispirited to mock her.

"To bed, child!" he grunted, as the warden, finding the key outside the dungeon, picked it up and unlocked the door.

To bed Fayre went; and then, on the morrow, Fat William being freed, she led him, in her peasant's disguise, to Robin Hood. Before a crowd of outlaws and trusted villagers, Fat William and Robin Hood shot for the cup. But splendidly and true though Fat William sent his arrows, Robin Hood beat him fairly and by a good margin.

"The best man won," said Fat William. "The cup is fairly yours!"

But that golden cup, melted down, was the property of the poor, shared amongst them. Robin Hood had the honour—they the reward!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

ANOTHER fascinating story featuring the young Lady Fayre and galliant Robin Hood next Saturday. Don't miss it, will you?

More fun and excitement for you—

ON TOUR with YIN SU



FOR NEW READERS.

MAY JOLIPHANT, a cheery English girl, and her less daring chum, **DAPHNE YARDLEY**, have the task of conducting around England a quaint, high-spirited but most likeable Chinese girl, **YIN SU**. Yin Su's governess is apparently too ill to accompany the girls. After various adventures, they discover that a mystery woman wearing an emerald ring, whom they call **MADAME X**, is scheming against them. They join a dancing troupe who are short of members. Yin Su's Chinese dance will save the show, but a note is delivered warning her not to appear. May believes the mystery woman sent it. A governess, **MISS SIMPSON**, comes to take charge of them. May is sure she is a dupe of Madame X. To test this, May tries to get in touch by telegram with the original governess at two addresses. Back come replies—the woman is not known at either place!

(Now read on.)

Strange Happenings!

“WHERE on earth can Miss Vesey be?” May Joliphant looked blankly at Daphne, and then at Yin Su. She was completely bewildered by the telegrams she had just received, for it had not occurred to her that both could be negative in reply.

“No reply,” she said to the page, but she asked Freda if she would be sweet enough to run down with a half-crown for the call-boy from the theatre who had brought on the telegrams.

The tea-table was hushed as everyone realised that something intensely dramatic had happened. Daphne's face was quite white, and even Yin Su's Oriental mask-like face now showed dismay and some alarm. The six members of the Novelty Nine realised that something was seriously amiss, but they could not, naturally, appreciate the full drama of the situation. Nor could their dancing mistress, Miss Anderson.

Miss Simpson, quite at sea, was seemingly stunned.

“You must all be very mystified and wondering what this is about,” May said to Miss Anderson and the dancing troupe as she dropped back into her chair. “But I can soon tell you. We three, Daphne, Yin Su, and I, under-

stood we were to be taken round England by a governess named Miss Vesey. Yin Su had met her, but we had not. At the junction where we were all to meet, a telegram came from Miss Vesey to say that she had been taken ill.”

“And,” resumed Daphne quickly, “that's the last we have heard of her—and even that telegram may have been a fake sent by someone else. Anyone can send a telegram and put what name they like.”

There was a silence for a moment, and then Miss Anderson, the dancing mistress of the Novelty Nine troupe,

said. “Miss Vesey has disappeared completely—vanished. But someone has sent us in all ten pounds!”

“And what are we to do next?” asked Daphne.

“Well, ring them up,” said Miss Simpson. “But meanwhile don't worry. I am in charge of you. Fear nothing.”

Several of the dancing girls giggled, for they all looked upon the little governess as a joke. They did not seriously think her capable of looking after a tame rabbit, let alone three girls. Although, of course, May, Daphne, and Yin Su did not think they needed looking after:

“Something will have to be done,” May admitted worriedly. “We can't just—”

She looked up then, for the page-boy was returning bearing another message on the salver, a blue envelope.

At sight of that blue envelope, May gave a start. She suddenly remembered having seen envelopes such as that before. One had been delivered to them after a handbag of theirs had been taken mysteriously by the woman with the emerald ring in another hotel. And now the sight of it reminded May that the letter of instructions announcing the arrival of Miss Simpson had been enclosed in a precisely similar envelope.

“Page—who gave you that?” she said sharply.

Taken aback, he gave quite a start. “Why—a lady, miss.”

“Tall—slim?” asked May.

“Well, yes, she was rather, miss.”

“Ah! And you didn't happen to notice,” said May, as she took the envelope, “if she wore an emerald ring?”

The page-boy shook his head.

“No, miss; she's just gone out. But that letter is to a Miss Simpson.”

“For me,” said the governess sharply. “Ah!”

May looked behind her, and then took the page-boy on one side.

“Listen,” she said softly, showing him a shilling. “Take me to where the lady was sitting, will you, please?”

THE CHUMS BOARDED THE LUXURY YACHT TO WAIT FOR YIN SU'S UNCLE—BUT INSTEAD THEY RECEIVED A STAGGERING SHOCK!

May's guests at tea in the palm lounge of the big hotel, said what was in everyone's mind.

“Then you girls are stranded?”

“No, not quite stranded,” said May slowly. “We have some money. You see, we were told in that telegram to go to a post office and collect instructions, and that we would have other instructions forwarded. The instructions we got were that Miss Simpson here was to be our new governess. Those instructions came from a nursing-home—where Miss Vesey is supposed to be. But no such place is known.”

“Oh, my golly!” gasped Vera, leader of the dancing troupe. “That's pretty queer. But doesn't Miss Simpson know—”

“I know nothing,” said the flustered little governess. “Nothing, except that I was engaged by a woman with an emerald ring who told me that May would be waiting for me at the station—and she was.”

May gave a short laugh. “Well, this is a nice mystery,” she

—BY—
ELIZABETH CHESTER

The page-boy complied, and May found that the sender of the note had been sitting only a few tables behind them, but out of sight.

Wondering who this mysterious woman could have been, May returned to the table to find Miss Simpson reading the note.

The chums had made a pact with the new governess. Since she had been employed by the woman with the emerald ring, she clearly had no authority over them, but they were, nevertheless, accepting her as governess provided she helped them to solve this mystery—and to let them know the orders she received from her mysterious employer. Consequently, May expected to be told the contents of this note.

Miss Simpson read it, her lips moving as she muttered the words to herself. Then, lowering it, she looked almost goggle-eyed at May.

"Good gracious, where do you think we have come?" she asked.

"To the Hotel Metropole," said May.

"No. Or rather, yes," said the flustered governess in shaky tone. "But—but—"

"She didn't write that note just to tell you that!" protested May. "It's written all over the place. Is it from Madame X?"

"Yes." Miss Simpson looked about her nervously. "The letter warns me that we have come to the very place where the mysterious Chinaman is staying. The lady—who signs herself Esme Squire—is very cross, and really quite rude. She wants me to meet her at once in the vestibule."

May's eyes gleamed. At last they could come face to face with the woman. Her name—if the signature to the letter was genuine—was Esme Squire. But it conveyed nothing to the chums.

"Then meet her there, Miss Simpson," she said briskly. "And hurry; and tell us just what she says. But don't give away the fact that we're in league now."

The governess rose, took up a cream bun, and put it down.

"I haven't started my tea," she said mildly.

"Never mind, go—and be careful what you say," warned May anxiously. Miss Simpson put her glasses straight, and seemed conscious of being important.

"Leave this to me, May," she said. "I am a woman of the world. I know how to handle the affair."

And so saying, she tripped over a mat and apologised to a table.

May did not join in the dancing girls' giggling; she groaned. For it seemed that Miss Simpson was bound to do and say the wrong thing. One wrong word, and the mysterious woman who they referred to as Madame X would be on her guard.

As the governess crossed the lounge, however, May followed, moving discreetly, and watching very closely to make sure that she herself was not being spied upon.

A glass swing door led from the palm lounge to the vestibule, but before reaching it, the governess drew up, and then jumped back.

May stood rigid. A moment later she saw who it was had given the governess such a shock. With slow, almost stately tread, the tall Chinaman who had asked at the theatre for Yin Su came along a red-carpeted corridor. He did not notice the governess, but turned to the glass door of the vestibule.

May watched as he pushed it open, and then—he, too, jumped back. He moved aside, and stood pressed flat against the wall as from the other side of the glass door a woman appeared.

She stood sideways and opened the door; but a white fox fur over her shoulder concealed her face, save her eyes, and they were shaded by a hat worn at a slant, tilted down.

But, almost as though advertising who she was, her right hand clasped the door she had opened; and on the third finger was a prominent emerald ring!

Madame X!

Miss Simpson had dodged to avoid the Chinaman, and he—he had obviously dodged to avoid this mysterious woman.

May held her breath as that fact was impressed on her mind. For Madame X had sent a message to Miss Simpson warning her that this man wanted to kidnap Yin Su. And her most recent note had given warning that he was in the hotel.

A short while ago, May had told herself that it was bluff. But now—if the man were not guilty, why had he hidden?

"Miss Simpson!" called the woman with the emerald ring softly.

May could see Miss Simpson pointing and grimacing, indicating the hiding Chinaman—and he, too, saw her, for, turning suddenly, he hurried the way he had come.

Then Miss Simpson darted forward, and May herself moved to hiding, knowing that she had not yet been seen by the woman, and determined that she should not be now.

Miss Simpson, obeying the summons, went through the doorway, and as both she and Madame X turned their backs, May ran forward!

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

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS.—Well, what sort of Easter did you have?

I hope there were lots and lots of lovely Easter eggs—and they're lovelier than ever these days, with all their different varieties to suit all tastes, aren't they?—plenty of fun, and heaps of sunshine.

At the moment of writing Easter is still several weeks away, so I can't tell what the weather will be like—or actually has been like now. But I hope for all your sakes it was really "summery," so that you were able to do those exciting out-of-doors things you'd been planning.

And talking of planning things reminds me of some of our own plans in this office. First of all, as I hinted last week, a wonderful new serial is on the way. It is written by none other than Miss Margery Marriott, and you will learn the full thrilling details next Saturday.

In the meantime, here are a few words about next week's superb programme. Top of the bill, of course, is the Cliff House story. It is entitled

"THE MISTRESS WHO COULDN'T KEEP ORDER!"

and features little Miss Wright, mistress of the Lower Fifth!

Miss Wright, as you probably know, is terribly nervy and timid. She never has been able to maintain any reasonable amount of discipline. And when she is put in charge of the Fourth, and Lydia Crossendale deliberately makes a set at her, it seems that Miss Wright has come to the end of her tether.

Her very position at Cliff House depends upon her handling of that Form. Lydia, caring nothing for Miss Wright's possible dismissal, does all she can to humiliate the mistress. Things go from bad to worse. And then—

Barbara Redfern & Co. rally to the rescue.

It would be a shame to tell you exactly how the famous Co. set to work to help Miss Wright. There would be no element of surprise. But I can say that at first their efforts are very, very effective indeed—only Lydia, artful and cunning girl that she is, unfortunately discovers what they are up to.

Don't miss this magnificent Hilda Richards story, whatever you do.

Next Saturday's issue will also contain another delightful COMPLETE story of the young Lady Fayre and gallant, courageous Robin Hood; more of Patricia's bright and useful article pages; and the concluding chapters of "On Tour With Yin Su."

I know you'll all be extremely sorry to say good-bye to those three likeable chums, but just wait until you learn what is to take their place!

Well, that's all for this week, so I'll say au revoir.

With best wishes.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

Who is Mr. Fu Sen Li?

CREEPING close to the door, May gently pushed it open.

"Amuse the girls until then," came Madame X's voice, quite clearly. "But do try to exercise more authority. Assert yourself."

"Very well!" said Miss Simpson stiffly.

"Those girls seem to be imps," said Madame X. "Now write down the name. Fu Sen Li. He is Yin Su's uncle. Don't let her know that she is going to see him, though. Just say that it will interest her to see the English docks. Once there her uncle will take charge of her."

May held her breath. She had not expected anything quite so dramatic as this. An uncle. She doubted it. By the sound of things, May guessed shrewdly that this was a cunning plot to get them aboard a yacht—in other words, to kidnap them—hold them prisoners! At last Madame X was becoming really dangerous!

"Fu Sen Li. You assure me that he is the girl's uncle?" asked Miss Simpson.

"Of course I do. She knows it, but she had better not be told she is to see him," warned Madame X, "in case, thinking this will mean an end of freedom and fun, she refuses or makes difficulty!"

"I see," said Miss Simpson. "And at what time are we to be at the docks?"

"At seven o'clock. And get them out of here quickly. I saw that Chinaman again. Take them anywhere until seven—a cinema, the ice rink, anywhere. It doesn't matter."

"Very well," said Miss Simpson. "That is all. Her uncle will give you any further instructions. Good-evening!"

May drew back, and when she moved forward again Miss Simpson was just coming through the door. Although May had come to the firm conclusion that Miss Simpson was merely a dupe, she saw no harm in making assurance doubly sure by not letting the governess know that she had overheard that conversation—and so testing whether she reported it accurately.

"Well?" said May. "Sssh! Let's move farther away!" said Miss Simpson.

She was almost shivering with excitement as they passed on, and lowered her voice to a hiss, taking May's arm and looking about her.

"It's a plot! I think it means kidnapping. We are to go to the docks, and meet a supposed uncle of Yin Su's—a Mr. Fu Sen Li."

May sighed in relief. The governess was not acting against them. Her trust in the woman was vindicated.

"Well, we can soon settle if Yin Su has an uncle named that," she said—"by asking Yin Su."

Both excited, they returned to the table, and May let Miss Simpson do the questioning.

"Yin Su, my dear, how is your uncle?"

"My uncle? I have many," smiled Yin Su.

"Er—Mr. Fu Sen Li," said the governess.

May waited for the look of puzzled bewilderment on Yin Su's face. But she did not see it. Yin Su's eyes widened.

"Yes, yes, most noble and illustrious Fu Sen Li my uncle," she said proudly.

"Oh! R-really!" said Miss Simpson, taken aback. "And—and has he a yacht?"

"Indeed he has a magnificent yacht," said Yin Su. "But the all-wise governess—how did she learn this? Ah! My uncle is in England? That is how you know?" she added, with a smile.

Miss Simpson exchanged a bewildered look with May, who then took up the recital.

"Yin Su," she said. "It—it's rather amazing, but Madame X called out Miss Simpson to say that we were to meet your uncle on his yacht in the docks near here. Only you weren't to be told in case you refused to go, thinking it might mean an end of freedom!"

Yin Su was surprised. "But most happy to meet illustrious uncle, and introduce friends," she said.

May just blinked. She could not understand it. Both she and Miss Simpson had suspected that Yin Su's uncle was a sheer invention. But obviously he wasn't.

"Where is the illustrious Fu Sen Li?" asked Yin Su eagerly.

"Well, he'll be at the docks at seven o'clock," said May slowly. "Or—so Madame X says."

Yin Su smiled. "Nice surprise," she said softly. "Very rich uncle, groaning under burden of wealth. Uncle takes money in both hands and flings to winds for all to spend."



TENSELY, May crouched against the wall as a hand appeared from the room. On that hand was an emerald ring. In another moment she would be face to face with their strange enemy!

"What an uncle," murmured Vere. "I'll swap three cousins for him!" There was a laugh and Yin Su looked proud.

"All meet him," she suggested. "Please!"

But the Variety Nine had to return to the theatre at six o'clock.

"But—I tell you what!" exclaimed May. "You can come to the pictures with us. If we do decide to meet the uncle, we needn't start for an hour at least."

"An hour at the pictures? No fun," said Vere, shaking her head. "We should only see half the programme!"

"Well, the ice rink," added May. "There is one here?"

"The ice rink!" came a delighted chorus.

"Yes, yes, splendid!" agreed Miss Anderson, the dancing mistress. "What do you say, Miss Simpson?"

"Well," said the governess meekly, "if you are going to the rink, Miss Anderson, I shall feel happy that my girls are in safe hands. I would rather drop into the art gallery."

If that was Miss Simpson's idea of having a rollicking good time, none of the girls objected—and May, Daphne and Yin Su least of all. But May first wanted to come to some decision in the matter of Yin Su's uncle. She was worried about this suggested visit to the docks, and perplexed, too, despite Yin Su's statement that she had such an uncle, and that he owned a yacht.

"Do you want to go there, Yin Su?" she asked.

"Yes, yes," said the Chinese girl eagerly.

"But it's Madame X's idea," pointed out Daphne.

Yin Su smiled at that. She was not, she said, afraid of her own uncle.

"I don't like the idea, quite," said May; but as she spoke an idea came into her mind.

She did not voice it then, for that could wait until later; but the scheme that occurred to her was that they should arrive in two taxicabs, that Miss Simpson, leaning from a window, should go in one, perhaps with some luggage, and noticeable girlish hats. From another taxicab, following, the girls could watch.

If there was an attempt at kidnapping, the kidnapers would rush at Miss Simpson's cab—and be disappointed. If not—if the uncle arrived—then, all well and good.

Meanwhile, there was the ice rink. May paid the bill, which came as rather a shock; but, fortunately, she had plenty of money, and was only too glad that everyone had had a splendid tea. In fact, the Novelty Nine were looking well pleased with life.

"And you'll come to the ice rink after your romp around the art gallery, Miss Simpson?" May asked.

"Oh, yes, dear! I'll be there!" said the governess.

Miss Simpson loitered after they went, looked at two magazines, and then went to the glass door.

She was just on the point of opening it when a shadow fell across her, and right in front of her stood the tall Chinaman!

"Pardon," he said, smiling, "but a short while ago, the two girls who were in your company outside the theatre passed through this door."

Miss Simpson, quaking, drew back. "Y-yes?" she said.

"I heard the name Sin Yu mentioned."

Miss Simpson knocked at the knees. "Oh, no! No, no, no!" she said.

"But, pardon, I did," he said gently. "I ask because I have a niece of that name."

Miss Simpson suffered such a shock that she really felt as though she would faint.

"You, indeed? No, impossible," she said. "Oh, no! Good gracious! I—How queer!" she stammered, words almost falling from her mouth.

"Queer?" he said, with a smile. "It is not an unusual name."

"Oh, but she isn't your niece!" said Miss Simpson. "Indeed, not! I—I have known all her uncles."

"I am not suggesting that I am uncle to your girl," he said. "My niece is in London at this moment."

Miss Simpson heaved a sigh that was almost a gale.

"Oh, how relieved I am to hear that!" she murmured, as he took a newspaper from under his arm and unfolded it.

"You see," he said, and held out a paragraph to her. "She is my niece. It is a photograph of her. She attended a reception—"

Miss Simpson looked at the picture of a Chinese girl, and saw the name Yin Su underneath, but did not read the other words.

"How interesting!" she murmured. "And she is your niece? What a coincidence—two girls called Yin Su!"

"Most strange," he murmured. "Perhaps to an English lady. However, your friend has gone. As a matter of interest, please to take this paper, and show her with my compliments."

He bowed and turned away, leaving Miss Simpson with the paper in her hand. She did not look at it again, but thrusting it under her arm, hurried out.

If she had looked at it again, she might have seen that the hotel clerk had written the Chinaman's name on it. He had not spelled it correctly, and that was why it appeared as Mr. Few Son Li. Even Miss Simpson would have guessed that the name was really Fu Sen Li. That there were two Yin Su's was strange. That both had an uncle Fu Sen Li was incredible!

In a flash Miss Simpson would have guessed that the tall Chinaman really was Yin Su's uncle. But she not look at the paper.

On Board!

"OH golly! This has been fun!" sighed May.

It had been amazingly good fun at the ice rink for all of them.

Once or twice Miss Anderson had shown anxiety lest the dancing girls should sprain their ankles, or in any way ruin their chances of being fit for the next performance.

Half-way through she had hurried away to interview the girls who were taking the places of the missing three.

And Vere had to go, early in order to rehearse a Chinese dance."

Daphne, although unable to skate herself, had given Yin Su skating lessons, to the intense amusement of the others.

"Of course, you haven't any ice in China," said Daphne. "We Northern peoples have."

Then, clinging to the side rail, Daphne had explained to Yin Su just how to do it. And while Daphne had clattered along, Yin Su, skating easily, had followed.

The girls had shrieked with laughter at that, but Daphne had not seen the joke for some time. Yin Su, with sly humour, had clattered about, too, every time Daphne looked round.

"In the midst of it all, Miss Simpson appeared.

When May, Daphne, and Yin Su had bade sad farewells to the dancers they returned to the governess.

"Well, I suppose we'd better get on to the docks, if we are going," said May. "And if we are, then I suggest a plan."

She told them the plan, and Yin Su was rather surprised.

"Esteemed uncle not kidnap me," she protested. "Most honourable and noble man."

"Um! But he may not be there," said May. "Anyway, if Miss Simpson goes first in a taxi that will test it out."

Miss Simpson thought it a good idea, but she did not intend to admit it to May. She was still peeved.

"Nonsense!" she said. "Either this is a plot or not. If it is a plot to capture Yin Su, we must not go."

May was patient with her.

"But how are we to find out if it is a plot or not until we do get there?" she asked.

That held the governess silent for a while, but she was not without reply.

"Perhaps I have not been wasting my time," she murmured.

Realising that the governess was rather huffed, May suggested that they got their clothes and discussed it outside. Now that the moment for decision had arrived, May found herself in a quandary. She did not know whether it was wise to go to the docks, and could not think of any alternative to her own plan.

Yin Su was so keen to go that May, despite her wariness, began to see that she could not prevent it; but at least she managed to insist on her plan being carried out.

"When you get to the docks lean out of the window. Make sure you will be recognised," said May, "and pretend to be talking to someone inside the cab."

"Very well—I mean I shall act as I fink thit—think fit," said Miss Simpson loftily.

The docks were a few miles from the town, and the cost of two taxi-cabs would not be a light one.

"Honourable high-born uncle most pleased to see English friends of Yin Su," said the Chinese girl happily.

"Uncle speak perfect English like English gentleman."

"Good!" said May. "I hope—"

But now they were in sight of the docks. They could see the funnels of steamers, some masts, and the roofs of sheds, and she fell silent with anxiety.

Into the docks went Miss Simpson's taxi, a hundred yards or so ahead of theirs, and the governess, having no

note of the yacht's name, asked for Mr. Fu-Sen Li's yacht.

"A Chinese gentleman?" asked the dock policeman at the gates. "Berth No. 2 that'll be."

The taxi drove on, and the girls, following in theirs, watched intently. As May saw the governess' taxi halt at a white, smart-looking yacht of impressive appearance, but much smaller in size than the nearby steamers, her heart jumped. She rapped the glass divisions of the cab, and the driver, having been forewarned, stopped.

At the same moment a man on the deck of the yacht stepped to the gangway and came ashore. He was of short stature, a Chinaman, and dressed in sparkling naval uniform—apparently, May judged, the captain.

Miss Simpson stepped from the cab, and the smiling captain, saluting her, pointed to the yacht. Then he approached their cab with Miss Simpson.

Yin Su jumped out before May could stop her, and spoke rapidly in Chinese to the captain, who, saluting again, replied in the same language.

Then Yin Su turned, her eyes sparkling.

"Honourable uncle gone to post letter, return soon," she said. "Meantime, ask ye go aboard where my aunt suffering headache waits. Most charming, gracious aunt!"

May looked at Daphne, who was surveying the trim lines of the yacht, yearning. It spelled romance, the oceans, the East, mystery, adventure.

"I wonder—should we?" demurred May anxiously.

"Oh, yes—yes," said Daphne, moving forward.

Then May saw that it was too late to draw back. Yin Su was already tripping to the gangway.

"Just a minute!" called May.

The captain hurrying ahead showed Yin Su the way to a companion-way that led below to a saloon, and before May could attract her attention she had gone running down.

It was an attractive saloon, furnished as a sitting-room, with a piano, cosy armchairs, settees, Oriental furnishing, bright soft cushions, and home comforts.

"Lovely!" breathed May, her fears eased for the moment. "This is grand."

"Oh, look at the tapestries," sighed Miss Simpson, clasping her hands. "How quiet and calm and soothing."

There was indeed a heavy silence, presently broken by a murmur from below in the yacht—a queer, fluttering vibration.

"What's that?" asked Daphne.

"Sounds—sounds like the engines running!" exclaimed May sharply. "It sounds—My goodness!"

She rushed to the nearest porthole and stared through. She could see the green, sea-washed wall of the dock, ten yards away, and at every moment the daylight between it and the portholes increased. Nor was there any longer a gangway connecting the yacht to the shore.

"My goodness!" cried May, white as death. "We're trapped—we're shanghaied! We're putting out to sea!"

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