

"THE MISTRESS WHO COULDN'T KEEP ORDER!"

Magnificent LONG COMPLETE
Cliff House School story inside.

THE SCHOOLGIRL

No. 509. Vol. 20.
Week Ending
APR. 29th, 1939.

EVERY 2^D SATURDAY

Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



**"DO THOSE LINES,
LYDIA CROSSENDALE!"**

The meek and mild new mistress
could not keep the sneak in order,
so Babs & Co. determined to.

See this week's superb story of the
famous chums.

Magnificent LONG COMPLETE Cliff House School story, featuring world-famous Barbara Redfern & Co., and timid, easy-going Miss Wright—



The MISTRESS Who Couldn't KEEP ORDER!

Unfair on Miss Wright!



"HALLO, Babs! Heard who's taking us in class for the next few days?" Clara Trevlyn asked genially.

Barbara Redfern, junior captain of Cliff House, laughed as she looked at her Tomboy chum in Study No. 4 in the Fourth Form corridor.

"Well, to judge from the expression on your face, it's not the Bull," she said. "You wouldn't be looking half so happy if it was."

"Right first time!" Clara grinned. "The Bull nearly did get the job," she said. "But I hear that as Miss Primrose is extra busy, she's leaving most of the running of the school to the Bull. No, for once the Fourth is going to have a break. We've got Miss Wright."

Barbara Redfern smiled at that. The slightly anxious look impressed on her face when Clara asked her question changed to one of relief. For as captain of the Fourth Form the appointment of a new mistress was of great concern to her. To judge by the expression on her face, the choice of Miss Wright found as great a favour in her eyes as in the eyes of Clara Trevlyn.

Miss Charmant, the Fourth's own adored mistress, had been granted extended leave of absence in connection with her voluntary National Service duties as an instructress in the women's Courtfield Air Corps, and would be absent from Cliff House for the next few weeks.

That meant, of course, that a new mistress was to be selected in her

place. Most of the Fourth had dreaded the choice of tyrannical Miss Bullivant. But all of them liked timid, mild-mannered, innocent little Miss Wright. Easy enough to get on with, Miss Wright—sometimes almost too easy, Babs often thought—for Miss Wright was so gentle in manner, so mild in her punishments, that more unscrupulous girls often took advantage of her.

"Well, jolly good," Babs enthused. "She is rather a dear, isn't she? And such a good sport, I always think, in spite of her shyness."

Clara nodded.

"Looks," she said, "as if we're

things are ready for her. And Clara, just give Lydia a word of warning, old thing. We don't mind a bit of mild leg-pulling, but Lydia never knows when to leave off. Miss Wright is too nice a little thing to hurt."

"Hi, hi, skipper!" Clara grinned.

With her books under her arm, Babs rushed off. It required five minutes to second lesson bell, and Babs had to see that Miss Wright had everything placed in readiness for her. Along the passage she flew, breathlessly bursting into the Fourth Form class-room. As she did so two girls, bending over the chair in front of the mistress' desk, jerked round with a start.

"Oh!" Lydia Crossendale said in relief.

"Only Babs," breathed Freda Ferriers, her crony. "I thought for a moment it was the Dormouse herself!"—using the extremely appropriate nickname which had been given to Miss Wright.

Babs gazed at them. There was no love lost between Lydia Crossendale and herself—traditional enemies as they had been for terms.

"What's the game?" she asked bluntly.

"Just a little surprise for the Dormouse," Lydia grinned. "Oh, don't stare! We haven't put a bomb or anything under her chair. Perhaps, as Form captain, you'd better know nothing about it," she suggested.

Babs shrugged. As Form captain, she did not want to know anything about it. There was no harm in playing a mild joke on Miss Wright.

"Well, you'd better beat it," she said. "I'm not interfering unless things start getting too hot. Now, where're the chalks?"

And leaving Lydia and Freda to

By

HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER.

going to have fun. Hallo, here's Mabs and Bessie. Heard the news?"

Mabs—otherwise Mabel Lynn, Babs' special chum, of the golden hair and the sparkling eyes—and plump, short-sighted Bessie Bunter were the sharers with Babs of Study No. 4. They had both heard the news, and both were looking no less elated than Clara and Babs.

"Most of the Fourth have heard the news," Mabs laughed. "Lydia Crossendale & Co. are already plotting something, too. There's a great deal of chucking going on in the Common-room, and Lydia's got one of those squeaker things. Whoopee! There goes first lesson bell," she added, as the summons to morning classes rang out. "Babs, give me my books, will you?"

"Here we are," Babs said. "I'll just have to fly and see if Miss Wright's

their own devices, she bustled around on her duties.

There was a tramp of feet along the corridor. Diana Royston-Clarke, Jemima Carstairs, Margot Lantham, and Muriel Bond came in. After them came Christine Wilmer, the Terraine Twins, and Sylvia Sirrett, accompanied by Janet Jordan and Marjorie Hazeldene. Then Bessie and Mabs arrived, and after them, in a body, Frances Frost, Faith Ashton, and Bridget O'Toole and Lucy Morgan.

Babs, in front of the class, nodded. "Take your seats," she said. Meekly, but with eyes glimmering with the prospect of fun to come, the early arrivals obeyed. Now second lesson bell started tolling. In twos and threes more girls tramped in, until finally there was mustered the whole thirty-four girls which the class comprised. Babs, as was her duty, stood by the mistress' desk.

Then the door opened. A rustle of expectation went through the class as Miss Dora Ratcliffe Wright herself appeared.

A small, demure, by no means unattractive person of about thirty-five, she blinked nervously through her spectacles.

"Good-morning, girls!" she said. "Good-morning, Miss Wright!"

"Thank you. You may sit down. Barbara, are all present?"

"All present, Miss Wright."

"Thank you. You may go to your place. Ahem, ahem!" Miss Wright blinked a little, coloured, smiled, and then, as if remembering she shouldn't smile, frowned. "Well—er—er—get out your books, girls!"

"Yes, Miss Wright," came a chorus. Miss Wright blinked again, but she was obviously pleased at the accord which she seemed to have immediately struck with the Form.

Babs, with a smile, went to her place. Dear little Miss Wright! What a small little thing she was—and how frail and pale, somehow!

"I—I hope," she ventured, as she mounted the platform on which her desk was placed, "that we are going to be good friends, girls?"

"Oh, Miss Wright, I'm sure we are!" Rosa Rodworth said.

"Thank you. Er—" With a nervous smile Miss Wright sat down, only to jump up immediately as from somewhere there came a squeak. "Dear me, a mouse!" she cried, and for a moment looked round in terror.

"Ha, ha, ha!" sniggered Lydia. "Ahem!"

Miss Wright sat down again, and again came the squeak, followed this time by a fat chuckle from Bessie Bunter.

"Dear me!" Miss Wright said, amazed and flushed. "Bessie did you make that sound?"

"Oh, num-no, Miss Wright!" Bessie protested.

"Perhaps," sniggered Lydia, "it's another mouse, Miss Wright."

Miss Wright looked at her suspiciously. "I can't believe that it is a mouse—now," she said. "Lydia, you are not responsible for that sound?"

"Oh, really, Miss Wright!"

"I see that you are very ready to laugh," Miss Wright said.

"Well, there's no charge for laughing, is there?" Lydia cheekily retorted.

"No, my dear, laughter is very, very desirable in its right and fitting place," Miss Wright said. "But class is not a place for laughter."

Babs, who had grinned with the others, was feeling a little sorry—and

a little guilty—now. Miss Wright obviously knew she was becoming an object of ridicule. She stood up.

"Miss Wright, I think, if you look under your cushion, you'll find the noise," she said.

"Eh? What—oh, thank you."

Miss Wright smiled gratefully, then, while Babs sat down and Lydia threw an ill-natured, dagger-like glare towards her, she removed the cushion and held up the rubber bladder which had been responsible for the trouble. For a moment she stared at it.

"Dear me!" she said. "Dear, dear me!" And as she pressed it by accident, producing another squeak, the class almost shrieked at the suddenly surprised look on her face. "Oh, I—I see!" she said. "Ha, ha! A—a very good joke. All the same," she added, with mild reproof, "I cannot approve of these jokes being played in class. If the girl who owns this will ask me for it after class she shall have it, but I really must warn her against making use of it again."

Babs looked at Mabs. They smiled at each other. That was sporting, if you like.

There was a little murmur from the class, followed by a titter as Miss Wright, in placing the bladder on her

desk, allowed it to roll off without noticing the fact. She moved again. This time she trod on the bladder. A really alarming squeak came from beneath her feet, and the class just yelled as Miss Wright leapt six inches into the air.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And then—

"Cave!" hissed a voice.

For the door opened, and just as Miss Wright was crimsoned-facedly picking the bladder up, in came Miss Bullivant, the acid mathematics mistress of the school, who was deputising for Miss Primrose, the Head.

"Silence!" she said, and glared.

"Miss Wright, is this the way you conduct order?"

"Eh? Oh dear!" Miss Wright blinked. "I am sorry, Miss Bullivant."

"What is that thing you have in your hand?"

"This—this—" Miss Wright gulped. "It—it is a toy—some foolish girl put it under my chair," she said mildly.

"Just, of course, for a joke," she added hastily.

"A joke?" Miss Bullivant frowned.

"Who placed this thing under your chair?"

Miss Wright helplessly nodded.

"Really, Miss Bullivant, I do not know."

"You mean you have not attempted to find out?"

"Well, no. I—I thought. You see," Miss Wright said weakly, "it—it is such a harmless joke. Oh dear!" she added quiveringly, as she met the Bull's ferocious glare.

"Jokes, harmless or otherwise, have no right to be perpetrated in class," Miss Bullivant said harshly. "It is your duty, Miss Wright, to discover the perpetrator of this joke and punish her as a warning not to play the same sort of prank again." She glared at the class. "Who put this—this thing under Miss Wright's desk?"

Miss Wright blinked almost apologetically at the class. But there was no reply. Miss Bullivant's eyes seemed to snap.

"If the girl who perpetrated this joke does not confess within a minute," she said, "I will detain the whole of the class. Now—"

Grim, the silence which then descended. One and all, from that moment, felt that the joke had gone too far. A battery of glances were turned upon Lydia, who, however, pretended to be unaffected.

"Very well." Miss Bullivant's lips compressed. "Lydia, stand up."

Lydia started.

"I, Miss Bullivant?"

"You." Miss Bullivant pursed her lips. "I am not a fool. I can read signs and portents, I hope. It is your doing, is it not?"

Lydia glared. But she saw that she was bowled out.

Everybody loved Miss Wright, mistress of the Lower Fifth Form. She was so mild, so easy-going, so timid. It wasn't her fault she had to punish Lydia Crossendale severely in class—it was Miss Bullivant's. But Miss Wright had to suffer. From that moment onwards Lydia became a bitter, vengeful enemy, mercilessly persecuting the nervous little mistress until she had lost every atom of control over the Fourth Form, and it seemed that not even Babs & Co. could save her from dismissal.

"Well, it was only a joke," she said surlily.

"I am aware of that. But jokes," Miss Bullivant said, "must be punished. Miss Wright, you will punish Lydia."

"Oh dear! I—I—oh dear!" Miss Wright said, and was so flustered all at once that she accidentally knocked the spectacles off her nose while nervously fumbling with them. "Ahem! Lydia, my dear girl, you will take twenty lines," she said.

"Wait!" Miss Bullivant cried.

"Well, Miss Bullivant—"

"Lydia, sit down," Miss Bullivant rapped. "Barbara, come out here for a moment and take charge of the class. Miss Wright, I will speak to you outside," she said, and as Miss Wright gave a dismayed blink she swept an indicative hand towards the door.

"Come!"

Miss Wright, biting her lip, followed her out, while Babs, with a sympathetic look towards the terrified little mistress, stepped in front of the class. Once outside Miss Bullivant, towering above the Dormouse, glared.

"Miss Wright, I do not think you have yet realised the importance of keeping a stern rein upon girls—and especially girls of such an unruly nature as these Fourth Formers. Not only myself, but Miss Primrose has had occasion to remonstrate with you upon this question in the past. I am right, I think, in stating that was one of the primary reasons why you were relieved of your responsibilities as far as the Lower Fifth was concerned?"

Miss Wright winced.

"It will not do," Miss Bullivant went on. "Miss Primrose has given you this chance, Miss Wright, to correct your past mistakes. I think you understand as well as I do that it is your last chance—Miss Primrose, indeed, has asked me to keep an extra-special supervision upon you. I am warning you only for your own good, Miss Wright—please understand that."

"Yes, Miss Bullivant."

Miss Wright blinked. Just for a moment her lips quivered. She knew. Inwardly, she groaned. Inwardly, perhaps, she reviled that timid but very kind streak in her make-up which made her so hate doling out punishments of any description. But Miss Bullivant, if stern, was right. Because the Lower Fifth had got out of hand under her tuition, she had been relieved of her duties there, her task being taken over by Miss Ayres. She knew, too, this was her last chance. And if she failed to make good—

There would be no more chances. The next step, if she failed in this, would be resignation. And then—

Tremulously Miss Wright's lips quivered as she looked at the stern-faced Miss Bullivant. She gulped, clasping her hands.

"Oh dear! Then—then, what do you suggest?" she asked.

"I suggest," Miss Bullivant said, "one hundred lines and a black conduct mark. Now, Miss Wright, go back and attend to it."

Miss Wright nodded. But she seemed to shrink. It seemed awfully harsh, such punishment. But she was Miss Bullivant's subordinate, and Miss Bullivant must be obeyed. She went back, and while Babs, with a sympathetic smile, surrendered the class to her, she stared at Lydia.

"Lydia, stand up!"

Lydia lounged to her feet.

"Lydia, I—I am going to punish you severely," Miss Wright said, though she did not look at Lydia. "For playing that joke you will take one hundred lines—"

"Oh, but, really, Miss Wright—"

Lydia said.

"And you will put a black conduct mark in your book?"

Lydia turned livid.

"But you've punished me already!" she cried.

"Lydia, do as I say!"

"But—"

"If you do not," Miss Wright said, with a half-scared glance towards the door, "I shall double the punishment. Now, Lydia—"

"But look here—"

Lydia hooted.

"Sit down!"

Lydia, crimson and reproachful, sat down. She gritted her teeth. Lydia knew, as they all knew, that it was Miss Bullivant who was really punishing her. But that made no difference to the snob of the Fourth. A hundred lines and a black conduct mark from the inoffensive mistress whom she had looked forward to japing to her heart's content!

Lydia fumed.

"The little prig! The scared little cat!" she breathed vengefully to the suddenly resentful Freda Ferriers next to her. "But let her wait! Just let her wait! I'll make her sit up! I'll show her she can't treat me like this! Just let her wait!"

And Lydia glared.

Babs, meeting that glare, her heart stirred by pity for the reluctant-to-punish Miss Wright, felt disturbed. If she interpreted that look rightly, Lydia, from that moment, had declared a bitter war on Miss Wright.

Babs' Ultimatum!



LYDIA'S punishment did some good, however; it had a salutary effect upon the Fourth Form.

Not one of them was under any illusion as to whose the punishment was—except Lydia, of course, who, burning with a desire to be revenged, would much rather concentrate upon the comparatively harmless Miss Wright than upon the formidable and harsh Miss Bullivant. Miss Wright herself was very unhappy about it, that was plain for all to see; and when there were minor incidents—as when Frances Frost poked a pen in the nape of Bessie Bunter's neck and when Marcelle Biquet was caught whispering to Jemima Carstairs—Miss Wright passed them over with a mild reproach.

But at break—

Lydia, all the floodgates of her vengeful spite opened now that they could find expression, was aflame. Babs, wending her way with Clara and Mabs towards Little Side for bowling practice at the nets before dinner, heard her declaiming:

"That awful, shrinking, scared little upstart! Thinks she can wield the big stick on me, does she? But we'll see—oh, we'll jolly well see! I'll make Miss Wright squirm so much she'll want to run away from this beastly school! Just wait!"

"Nice, kind, catty little Lydia!" Clara Trevlyn said.

"Rats to you! Keep your long nose out of it!" Lydia snapped.

"But don't you think," Babs said, "you're making rather a mistake? You deserve to get it in the neck, anyway; but Miss Wright wasn't going to be hard on you. It wasn't her fault—"

"And you can shut up, too!" Lydia snapped.

"But—"

"Rats!"

And Lydia, perhaps because she realised she was in the wrong, stalked off. Babs looked at Clara.

"On the warpath," she said. "It's not fair, though," she broke out indignantly. "Miss Wright's no more to blame for her punishment than I am. I hope Lydia doesn't jolly well go too far."

Clara grunted.

"Give old Lydia enough rope and she'll hang herself," she said. "Anyway, blow Lydia and her piffing vendetta! Let's get to practice."

They got down to practice; but Babs, for some reason, found her attention rather divided. Almost without being aware of it, that little battle between Miss Bullivant and Miss Wright in the Form-room that morning had upset her.

Practice over, she and her chums turned in to dinner, where Lydia and Frances Frost and Freda Ferriers were talking together, as they looked at the shy, timid Miss Wright, now seated at the head of the table. It seemed to Babs, who knew those signs, that Lydia was making some new ill-natured coup against the temporary Form-mistress.

Lydia was.

Meek, mild, and bland was Lydia's expression when, after dinner, she rose with the rest of the Form, to wish Miss Wright the customary "Good-afternoon!" Glittering her eyes and smothered the grin she gave when Miss Wright, with a beaming smile, moved towards her desk, then started, as she saw on it a neat brown paper package, to which was attached a neat label.

In some curiosity Miss Wright picked it up.

And she blushed as she read the label, which said:

"A present from your loving Form."

"Oh!" said Miss Wright, and blinked happily over the watching class. "Ah! Thank you, my—my dear girls! Thank you very much! This—this is indeed good of you!"

"Oh, Miss Wright, please open it!" Freda Ferriers pleaded innocently.

"Ahem! Well—well, yes, I will."

And Miss Wright took her scissors, severed the string, and turned the parcel over.

While the Form watched she unfolded it; and then, with a shuddering cry, held up her hand in horror.

From Lydia, Freda, and Frances came a peal of laughter. For one moment the class stared before a great roar rocked through the room.

For the parcel contained—a broken bottle of gum. And most of the contents of that broken bottle, probed by Miss Wright's unwary hands, had now become transferred to her fingers. A great blob of sticky gum spread from those fingers to the desk itself; great pools of gum were running out of the parcel over her desk; splashes of gum were falling to the floor. Meanwhile, Miss Wright looked utterly helpless.

"Oh dear! Oh really! This—this—"

she stammered. "Barbara—"

"Oh, Miss Wright!" Babs cried.

She, too, had been amused at first, but on realising the messy plight in which the mistress was, the smile had faded from her face. Really, it was a beastly sort of trick to have played. She jumped to her feet.

"Miss Wright, let me help!" she said.

"Barbara, sit down!" came a voice at the door, and Miss Bullivant entered.

One furious, gimlet glance stilled the titter immediately. And then she gave a violent start as she looked at the flustered Miss Wright. In two strides she had reached the desk.

"Miss Wright—"

"Oh dud-dear!" Miss Wright stammered.

"I see! Another practical joke, I presume!" And Miss Bullivant glared round. "Who has done this?"

Nobody moved.

"Who has done this?" Miss Bullivant repeated. "Lydia, do you know anything of it?"

"No," Lydia blandly lied.

"Then who—"

"Ahem, ahem!" Miss Wright coughed. "Please—please, Miss Bullivant, do not punish the girls," she said. "It—it was no one's fault but my own. I—I had an accident."

The Form sat still then. They all stared.

Miss Wright was deliberately shielding them—Miss Wright, with her hatred of punishment, was trying to prevent them all from suffering for one girl's crime. Something welled up within Babs—a strange sort of emotion in which pity and admiration for Miss Wright swamped her with a sense of shame for ever having allowed this thing to happen. Dash it, the woman was a sport—a brick. It was a shame to play such tricks upon her; a dreadful, caddish, sneaking shame to put her in such a position.

Miss Bullivant glared. But she did not look any the less annoyed.

"Then, Miss Wright, I am sorry to have to comment in front of the girls upon your carelessness," she said angrily. "Look at your desk. Look at

the carpet. Accidents, like jokes, should not be allowed in a class-room. Please go and clear that mess from your hands Lydia, as you seem to be so amused by this accident, you can come and clear it up. Miss Wright—go! I will send for you when I want you."

"Yes, Miss Bullivant."

"Please go!" Miss Bullivant snapped.

Miss Wright gulped. Rather like a puppy who has been hit, she went towards the door, holding her hand with half-crooked fingers in front of her and accompanied by a sticky trail of gum. Lydia came out. And while the class sat silent and grim, some of them feeling heartily ashamed of themselves now, Miss Bullivant, glittering-eyed, faced them. Her lips compressed.

"Lydia, hurry!" she snapped. "Bessie Bunter, remove whatever is in your mouth and take fifty lines! Barbara Redfern, fifty lines for gazing at the door. Leila Carroll, fifty lines for making a face at Lydia. I can plainly see," Miss Bullivant said, warming to the task of a disciplinarian, "what this class needs to bring it to a sense of its responsibilities. Get out your maths books."

The Form groaned.

But the maths books were got out, and Miss Bullivant, turning to the blackboard, picked up a piece of chalk. Then she glared as the chalk broke in her fingers.

"Who has been wetting this chalk?" she asked.

Nobody replied.

"The whole class," Miss Bullivant raved, "will take fifty lines. Barbara, get me some new chalk!"

Babs got it. Very quiet the Form sat as Miss Bullivant chalked a problem upon the board. She flashed round to the class again.

"Copy that," she said. "Then find the answer. Barbara, you may go and find Miss Wright and tell her I am ready to hand over to her now. Hurry, girl."

"Y-yes, Miss Bullivant."

And Barbara almost ran out of the room as she found the Bull's piercing frown upon her. Phew, what a tyrant! What a change from Miss Wright! But poor Miss Wright. Babs could guess what a time she would have at the Bull's hands after lessons.

Rotten trick that of Lydia's, though; just a little beyond a joke, that. Wait till she got a chance to have a word with Lydia.

She approached Miss Wright's room. Outside the door she halted, knocking.

A strange sort of sound came from inside. Babs knocked again.

There was no reply. With a frown Babs turned the handle. She went in. And then she stopped, her heart giving a frightful leap.

For Miss Wright was there—Miss Wright was at her table, indeed. She sat sideways to Babs and did not hear her come in, but her face was buried in her hands, and that face wore the most wretched, miserable look Babs had ever seen. Her lips were quivering a little, and as Babs halted, she spoke.

"How can I do it—oh, how can I do it?" she was half-sobbing to herself. "I can't go on—I can't! I shall have to leave! Oh dear! What—what is going to happen to me?"

"Miss Wright!" Babs cried.

Miss Wright spun round. Her face turned crimson.

"Oh, Bar-Barbara!" she faltered.

"Miss Wright, I—I'm sorry," Babs said gently, and went and looked down at her. Suddenly she had to fight an impulse to put a compassionate arm round those frail and shaking shoulders. "Please—please don't upset yourself,"

she pleaded. "But—but— Oh, something's wrong!" she cried.

Miss Wright sat very, very still.

"Yes," she said, almost as if speaking to herself, "something's wrong!"

"Miss Wright, can—can I help you?" Babs cried.

Miss Wright heaved a deep, deep sigh.

"I—I am afraid not," she said.

"Only one thing can help me, Barbara—and—and that is to be a different woman. But, oh, Barbara, I am so dreadfully worried and upset. If—if you could do something—as captain of the Form—to persuade Lydia to cease her foolishness, that would help. I only ask, Barbara, to work in harmony and in peace with the Form. But what did you come for?" she added, sudden alarm in her voice. "Did Miss Bull—"

"She sent me along to ask you to come and take over," Babs replied.

"Oh, my goodness!" Miss Wright cried. "Barbara, let us hurry!"

Quite panic-stricken she became then. Obviously the mere mention of Miss Bullivant terrified Miss Wright. It hurt Babs, somehow, to see her; it filled her with a sudden gust of anger against Miss Bullivant; and it braced her with a determination to put a stop to Lydia Crossendale's ill-natured little games.

Like some agitated sparrow, Miss Wright fluttered off, Babs following her. Anxiously she entered the class-room, but Miss Bullivant for once made no comment. Before she went, however, she frowned severely at the class.

"I shall come again," she threatened.

"And if there is any more commotion in this room there will be trouble. You may resume, Miss Wright."

"Thank you," Miss Wright gulped, and looked appealingly at Lydia, as though beseeching her to refrain from further jokes.

Lydia grinned sneeringly. She felt she had established the upper hand now. But there were no further major disturbances—perhaps because Lydia sensed that the leg-pulling of Miss Wright would not be popular entertainment that afternoon, most of the Form, like Barbara, feeling rather shabbily ashamed of its treatment of the new mistress after her noble little sacrifice to save them from punishment at Miss Bullivant's hands.

After lessons Babs held a council of war in Study No. 4. Present at that council were herself, Mabs, Clara, Bessie, Leila Carroll, the American

junior, and that strange, monocled Fourth Former, Jemima Carstairs.

Determinedly Babs faced them.

"We're going to stop Lydia Crossendale," she said. "Leg-pulling is all very well, but Lydia is taking it too far, as usual. There's such a thing as fair play as well as fun, and though Miss Wright is doing her best to give us a square deal, we're not doing the same by her."

"Well said, beloved!" Jemima approved.

The others nodded.

"Well, this is where it ends," Babs said. "Instead of japing Miss Wright, we're really going to rally round her. The poor thing was almost breaking her heart when I looked in at her study this afternoon, and it made me feel—well, just mean. Jokes that are going to get her into trouble with the Bull and Miss Primrose, just aren't jokes; they're caddish conspiracies. I believe if we put it to the Form, we'd find that they thought the same."

"I guess they do," Leila said. "So what do we do?"

"Just," Babs said, "let Lydia Crossendale know that it's got to stop. We're the Fourth's committee. Lydia's just got to take notice of us. If she doesn't—Babs' brow set—"if she doesn't," she said, "then we'll call the Form together and sit on her that way. We— Oh, yes, come in!" she added, as a tap came on the door.

The door opened. They all smiled as Miss Wright herself nervously looked in.

"Oh!" she said. "Ahem! I had no idea you had friends, Barbara. Er—I—I was wondering," Miss Wright said, a little flustered, "if—if, as Form captain, you would remind Lydia that her lines are expected in after tea. And—and, talking about tea," Miss Wright added, with a faint blush, "I was wondering if you would like to have tea with me in my study? And, of course, bring your friends!" she added, with a mild blink at the six.

The six looked at each other. Babs smiled.



BABS pulled up in the doorway of Miss Wright's study, suddenly startled and embarrassed. For the mistress, her face resting between her hands, was murmuring brokenly to herself: "I—I can't go on. I can't. I'll have to—leave!"

"Thank you, Miss Wright!" she said. "We'd love to come, wouldn't we, girls?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then," Miss Wright said, "can I expect you in half an hour?" And she smiled—such a warm and radiant smile that her face was transformed. "And—and you won't forget to remind Lydia, will you, Barbara?"

She went out. Jemima shook her head.

"Poor old truffle-wuffles!" she said sadly. "Always trying to do the nice things in life—what? Pity she hasn't got a bit more of the old bulldog spirit! Anyway, what about Lydia?"

"Come on! We'll tackle that now," Babs said.

The chums nodded. In a body they went off. They reached Study No. 1, shared by Lydia, Rosa Rodworth, and Freda Ferriers, and it was Lydia's drawing voice which bade them come in. They went in, to find Lydia sprawled sulkily in the easy-chair, with a fashion magazine spread across her knees. She regarded them with a faint sneer.

"Hallo! If you've come to borrow anything I haven't got it!" she said. "Good-bye!"

Babs eyed her grimly.

"Lydia, I want to speak to you."

"About what?"

"Miss Wright."

Lydia's eyes glittered.

"Oh, championing the oppressed stunt again—eh?" she scoffed. "What about Miss Wright?"

"You know what about Miss Wright," Babs' lips set. "We've just come to warn you, Lydia, as the Form committee, that in future all japes on Miss Wright are off. You've had a pretty good innings, one way and another, to-day, and Miss Wright has been an awful sport. Now let her alone."

"And that," Lydia asked, with a curl of the lips, "is all?"

"No, it isn't. There's another thing. Have you done those lines Miss Wright gave you this morning?"

"I haven't!" Lydia retorted defiantly. "You know she is expecting them after tea?"

"No harm in her expecting!" Lydia retorted. "I haven't done them, and I don't intend to do them! Got that? Close the door as you go out!"

"And supposing," Babs asked, "she reports you for not having done them?"

"She won't. She's too scared!" Lydia sniffed. "Is it any business of yours?"

"My business it is," Babs declared. "Miss Wright has asked me to remind you—"

"Then tell Miss Wright to go and eat coke!" Lydia scowled, rising to her feet.

"And we, as Form committee, have come to jolly well see that you do them!" Babs said fiercely. "No, you needn't glare. We're in dead earnest now. You may think you're jolly funny and clever to make trouble for a woman who wouldn't hurt a fly. You may think it's big to pit yourself up against Miss Wright simply because Miss Wright is too jolly nice-natured to be anything like the sort of cat you are yourself! Well—don't talk; I'm talking—well," Babs snapped, her chest beginning to heave, "we've just come to tell you that you're going to toe the line with the rest of the Form! Clara," she added, "pen, ink, and paper, please!"

Despite Lydia's protests, those writing materials were put on the table, and she herself, seized by the sturdy

Tomboy, was thrust into a chair in front of them.

"Look here——" Lydia hooted.

"Now, then," Babs cut in, a hand on Lydia's blazer collar, "you'll do those lines, Lydia Crossendale, or——"

"Or what?" Lydia snarled.

"Or I'm going to call a Form meeting! And if I do call that," Babs added, her eyes steely, "I shall jolly well recommend sending you to Coventry! Now, will you do those lines?"

Lydia hesitated, her eyes going quickly from one face to another, reading in each the grim, disgusted determination that she read in Babs'. Babs had power; Lydia knew that. However she might feel like trifling with Babs herself, to trifle with the Form committee, which was backed by the whole weight and authority of the girls themselves, was an entirely different matter. She scowled.

"Hang you! Get out!"

"Well, will you do them?" Babs asked.

"I'll do," Lydia flamed, "exactly what I like! Get out!"

"All right!" Babs clenched her hands. "We're going. But just remember, Lydia, we're not joking! You're going to toe the line, whether you want to or not, and stop persecuting poor Miss Wright! And you'll start," Babs threatened, "by doing those lines for her! If those lines aren't handed in before six, then I'll call the meeting! Come on, girls!"

And the committee, with a warning nod to the flaming-faced Lydia, followed Babs as she pushed open the door and led the way outside.

Her Last Chance!



"It is very, very nice to have you all here," Miss Wright said, and beamed quite happily. "It is such a long time since I had any sort of company," she added, with a sigh.

"Bessie, my dear, would you like another cake?"

"Oh, yes, please, Miss Wright! The large one—may I? Thuth—thank-you!"

Tea in Miss Wright's study was at its height.

A very pleasant tea in a very pleasant little room it was, too, and Miss Wright really was the dearest of hostesses.

"I wish—oh, I wish," she went on, with a sigh, "I always had charge of you girls. Not, of course," she added, with a blush, "that I would dream of depriving Miss Charmant of the pleasure—she is always so awfully nice, isn't she? You think a great deal of Miss Charmant, don't you, Barbara?"

"Oh, yes, rather! Heaps," Babs said glowingly.

"And she is very, very fond of you," the mistress said wistfully. "You know, when Miss Charmant speaks of you girls, she almost speaks as though you were her own sisters. It must be lovely to command such respect and be so admired. I wish I was like her."

"Oh, Miss Wright, we all like you, top, you know!" Bessie put in valiantly.

"Do you, Bessie, dear?" Miss Wright smiled. "You girls do—yes, I believe that. But the others—Lydia, for instance," she sighed. "No, I am afraid I shall never be lucky enough to be liked as Miss Charmant is liked. She—she is so different from me, you see. She has so many qualities I lack. Perhaps," she added, shaking her head,

"I am weak—I don't know. More tea, Barbara?"

"Oh, please, Miss Wright!"

Miss Wright was pouring out the tea when there came a knock on the door. She looked up.

"Oh, yes? Come in, please," she said.

The door opened. A sallow, bad-tempered face peered in, staring upon the merry little party grouped round Miss Wright's table. It was Lydia Crossendale.

"Oh!" she said, and bit her lip. "I didn't know you had visitors, Miss Wright. I—I've brought my lines," she said, with a glare at Babs, who smiled.

"Thank you, my dear. Will you put them down on the desk there?" Miss Wright said. "Er—you wouldn't care to join us in a cup of tea, Lydia?"

"Thanks," Lydia retorted tartly, and, putting the lines down, retired with a grimace.

Miss Wright flushed.

"I do wish," she said, "that Lydia would be a little more friendly. Still, I am pleased she has done her lines. Did you remind her, Barbara?"

"I did," Babs said grimly, and looked at the others.

They settled down again, Miss Wright looking positively happy now, and the chums relieved that Lydia, in view of Babs' ultimatum, had apparently come to her senses. Then, presently there was another knock on the door.

It was Miss Bullivant who entered this time. She looked extremely disapproving as she saw Miss Wright's Fourth Form guests, but she made no comment. Miss Wright flusteredly arose and sat down again.

"All right," Miss Bullivant said. "I just called in to ask you if Lydia has done her lines."

"Why, yes, Miss Bullivant!" Miss Wright said. "Lydia has just delivered them. Here!"

She picked them up, and Miss Bullivant, pausing, frowned, and then took them. Then she looked at Miss Wright.

"You have examined these?" she asked.

"No, Miss Bullivant—not yet."

"But you know that it is your duty to inspect them before allowing the junior to go," Miss Bullivant said.

"Miss Wright, really—these lines are a disgrace. Miss-spelled, badly scrawled, and—yes, I thought so," she added, thin-lipped, as she flicked through the pages, "grossly underdone. There are no more than eighty lines here—if that. And the work is atrocious."

Miss Wright coloured.

"Oh dear! I—I'm sorry, I didn't know."

"It is your business to know!" Miss Bullivant snapped. "Perhaps, Miss Wright, had you been less busy entertaining these girls, you would have found more time for your work. I will take them," she added curtly. "I will go and see Lydia and ask her what she means by having the impertinence to turn in such disgraceful work. Meantime, Miss Wright, come and see me when you have had your tea."

She gave a glare round. Then she went out, leaving Miss Wright looking most distressed.

"Oh dear!" she murmured.

Babs bit her lip. A little silence fell on the party. One and all felt annoyed with the Bull, but the real focus point of their annoyance was not Miss Bullivant, but Lydia.

From that moment the happiness seemed to die out of the party. Miss

Wright, obviously, was nervously apprehensive, and when suddenly there was a knock at the door she gave such a start that she might have been shot. It was Sally, the maid, who appeared.

"Miss Wright, Miss Bullivant would like to see you," she said.

"Oh dear, yes!" Miss Wright said, and agitatedly rose, though it was obvious she had been dreading some such sort of summons. "My dears, excuse me," she said. "Perhaps, if you have finished your tea, you had better go. I—I am sorry."

And she fluttered in panic towards the door.

"Poor old thing!" Leila said feelingly.

Poor old thing, indeed. If sympathy had stirred the hearts of Babs & Co. before, it was an almost burning pity which filled them now. At Babs' suggestion they cleared the table and put the study to rights. A quarter of an hour went by.

But Miss Wright had not returned. "Going through the mill," Jemima said, with a sigh. "Well, we can't do much stopping on here, and loth as I am to desert a damsel in distress, I ain't would be absent when the dear old Dormouse returns. Let us totter."

The chums nodded. They all felt rather like that. Perhaps instinct told them, too, that Miss Wright would prefer to find the study empty when she returned. Regretfully they trailed out.

They went to the Common-room, where quite a few of the Fourth were gathered, Lydia Crossendale among them. Babs went straight up to her.

"You sneaking cat!" she cried. "A pretty dirty little trick that was! You knew the Bull would ask to see those lines! You might have known that Miss Wright would be hauled up on the carpet for accepting them!"

Lydia glared. "Aro you talking to me?" "I am! And if you want to know what I think—"

"I don't!" Lydia scowled. "Hang you, why must you always be putting your interfering oar in? I did the lines, didn't I? Just to jolly well please you I did them. And then what happened?" Lydia flamed. "Miss Wright went and reported me to the Bull for not doing them properly!"

"Lydia, you know that's a fib!" "No, it's not!" Lydia cried. "And now you can jolly well go and eat coke! Anyway, if it's any satisfaction to you, the beastly Bull has given me the rotten lines to do all over again—with fifty more to add to them! If you expect me to go crying because that scared little nitwit is getting it in the neck at the same time, you can go on expecting! Anyway, let her wait. I'll get my own back."

Contemptuously, Babs & Co. gazed at her. Perhaps it was fortunate then that Dulcia Fairbrother came in.

"Barbara, Miss Wright would like to see you in her study," she said.

Babs went off. She found Miss Wright quite haggard. Easy to see at once that she had been having a bad time of it.

"Oh, Barbara, thank you for coming!" she said. "I—I felt I ought to apologise for having been forced to break up our little party. I hope you and your friends did not mind?"

"Miss Wright, of course not!" Babs said, and again felt a faint sort of little lump well in her throat at the mute misery depicted upon the little mistress' trembling features. "If—if there is anything we can do to help—"

"Thank you, Barbara. It—it is very

kind of you; but—but—" And Miss Wright shook her head forlornly. "Just please apologise to your friends for me," she begged. "And, Barbara, I—I wonder if you would mind posting these for me?"

"Why, certainly, Miss Wright," Babs said, as the mistress picked up a bundle of letters.

She took them, smiling fondly at the shy little mistress. If only she could help. But how could she? It was Miss Wright's shyness, her tenderness, her very kindness which was against her. If she were just a little ruthless with girls like Lydia Crossendale then Miss Wright would be a great success.

Still, that was impossible. Miss Wright, obviously, was not made like that, and one couldn't change human nature. All the same, it would do girls like Lydia a bit of good to see a sharper, steeper side to Miss Wright.

Thoughtfully she wandered down the passage. At the postbox in Big Hall she paused.

Miss Wright had given her half a dozen letters, and Babs, careful as usual, posted each one separately until, coming to the last but one, she paused. What was this? she thought, as she found herself gazing, not at a super-scribed envelope, but at a letter itself—Miss Wright obviously having written that last and, in the distress of the moment, included it in her to-be-posted correspondence, forgetting first to enclose it in an envelope.

Babs, without meaning or intending to read, took in the first few lines of the letter.

"My dear Carrie. At last I have got another chance. I have been put in charge of the Fourth Form. Miss Priurose, our headmistress, says that if I make a success of this Form she will re-instate me in my old position; but if I do not do so it is definitely my last chance at Cliff House. I do not know, my dear, what I shall do if this last chance fails me—"

That much Babs read, and then, realising she was reading, turned crimson. In a moment she was fiercely calling herself a sly eavesdropper, ignoring the fact that what she read had been gleaned almost mechanically. Hastily she folded the letter again, and posting the remainder, hurried back with it to Miss Wright's study. Miss Wright, fortunately, was out, so Babs left it on the desk.

But she was thinking as she went back to Study No. 4. Miss Wright's last chance! If she did not make a success of it, then it was the end for Miss Wright. And Babs, her heart aching for the little mistress whose kindness was her own undoing, shook her head. Would Miss Wright make a success of that chance?

All present indications seemed to point to the contrary.

It Seemed So Hopeless!



"LYDIA," Clara opined with a steely glint in her eyes, "is up to some new mischief, Babs. I was watching her during assembly, and she was tittering like anything. Have you heard if any new stunt is afoot?"

"No, I haven't," Babs said. "But if it's against Miss Wright— Lydia is going to hear from me. But come on," she added, as the last lesson bell rang.

The time was the following morning, and the scene Study No. 7, which Clara shared with Janet Jordan and Marjorie Hazeldene, and where Babs had called on her way to the Fourth Form

class-room. Since last night quiet and peace had reigned in the ranks of the Fourth Form, and as far as Babs knew, at all events, peace and quietness of sorts had come to Miss Wright. But Babs herself had noticed that gleeful, gloating, spiteful look upon the face of Lydia Crossendale in assembly that morning, and herself half-expected something to happen. Well, if it did—

She grabbed up her books, and, with Clara and Janet, trotted off to the class-room. Most of the Form were there awaiting the arrival of Miss Wright, and Lydia, staring across at Freda Ferriers, was in the act of whispering something as Babs came in.

Babs glared. "New mischief?" she asked tensely. "Mind yours!" Lydia said, and made a face.

Babs breathed heavily. But from that moment she was on her guard. She gazed towards Miss Wright's desk, shining with polish, and with a vase of new flowers placed upon it. Her eyes rested for a moment on those flowers, and she wondered a little; for though it was not unusual for girls in the Fourth Form to present a mistress with flowers, it was unusual to find attached to the flowers a label, and in this case a label stood out white and conspicuous. But before Babs could investigate that the door opened and Miss Wright came in.

"Good-morning, girls!" she said, in response to the usual greeting, going to her desk.

Then she saw the flowers, blinked a little, and toyed with the label. Her face lighted up, and she looked at Babs and smiled.

"Thank you, Barbara!" she said. "I beg your pardon," Babs said.

"They are beautiful," Miss Wright said fondly, and, lifting the flowers, put them to her nose.

From Lydia went up a titter.

And then— Suddenly Miss Wright's face changed. She screwed up her nose, lifted her head, and then jerked it forward in a most devastating sneeze.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Lydia.

"Atishoo! Atishoo! Atishoo!" sneezed Miss Wright.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled half a dozen other girls.

"I—I—I— Atishoo! Oh dear! Atishoo!" Miss Wright gasped. Fumbling for her handkerchief, she dabbed her suddenly streaming eyes. "Really, Barbara, that—that is not a—atishoo—nice sort of trick to play!"

"Trick—trick?" Babs started up. "Miss Wright, I have played no trick!" she cried. "What is the matter?"

"The—the flowers— Atishoo! They are peppered!" Miss Wright said weakly. "Oh dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Half the class was yelling now. Even girls whose sympathies were on Miss Wright's side were tittering. But Babs wasn't. Babs, all at once, became furious. She knew what had happened now. Lydia had peppered those flowers. Lydia had fixed the label, making it appear that the flowers had come from her. In a moment her fury flamed up.

Without thinking, she raced out of the class, furiously grabbed up the flowers, and ran over to Lydia. Lydia, holding her sides, her head flung back, was fairly convulsed with laughter. But the convulsion abruptly changed to another sort as Babs fairly and squarely rammed the peppered flowers in the other's face.

"There! As you're so jolly fond of

peppering flowers, smell those!" she panted.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the class. "Good, Babs!"

Lydia gave a splutter. Crimson, she turned. One frantic grab she made at the flowers before a first terrific paroxysm of sneezing seized her. With a furious yell she flung them back at Babs.

Then she sneezed, while the flowers, falling apart as they flew through the air, scattered a shower of petals and pepper about them, causing half a dozen other girls to start sneezing, too. Those not sneezing just held their sides and howled.

"Girls, girls, girls!" shrieked Miss Wright. "This—this— Oh— Atishoo! Oh dear! Girls—"

"Oh, my hat! I say—" shouted Babs.

"Cave!" hissed a voice.

The warning went unheeded and unheard. Slam! went the door. That, also, passed unheard in the general din. But the voice which shrieked out had better effect, and girls, suddenly ceasing from laughing or sneezing, stared, blinked, and gasped. For in front of the class, towering above Miss Wright, stood—The Bull!

To a girl the Fourth Form froze! "Girls!" Miss Bullivant shrieked. "Girls, how dare you! Miss Wright, this is intolerable—intolerable! I shall report this to Miss Primrose!"

Babs jumped up in her seat. "Oh, no, Miss Bullivant—no!" she cried desperately. "It isn't Miss Wright's fault—"

"Barbara, will you sit down?" Miss Bullivant barked.

"Yes, Miss Bullivant. But I think you ought to know it's not Miss Wright's fault. It—was mine."

"Yours? Then you will take one hundred lines!" Miss Bullivant glared. "That does not, however, alter the fact that Miss Wright is here to maintain discipline. Now sit down!"

"Yes, Miss Bullivant!" Babs was white to the lips now. "But please let me tell you—"

"Barbara, you are detained!" Miss Bullivant rapped. "Another word, and I will report you to Miss Primrose! Miss Wright, you will report to Miss Primrose immediately after lessons. Apart from that, every girl in this class will take fifty lines! Now," Miss Bullivant glared, "let this nonsense stop!"

And, with a glare, she fumed out. Over the class developed a deep, angry, guilty silence. Miss Wright, looking really frantic, shook her head, fumbled at her spectacles, knocked them off, and put them on again, and then eyed the class. She gulped.

"I—I am extremely sorry," she said. "Oh dear! Barbara, you say you did not pepper those flowers?"

"No, Miss Wright."

"But they had a label on them, Barbara—saying they were from you."

"I can guess that!" And Babs glared angrily at the sneering Lydia.

"That was just a cat's trick to try to get me the blame," she said.

"Oh!" Miss Wright again shook her head. "A very, very despicable trick!" she said, with just a hint of anger in her voice. "I hope the girl responsible is sorry. But—but—very well, Barbara, I accept your explanation, of course. Will you kindly get out your books?" she added sadly.

"Scared little wretch!" Lydia muttered. "My hat! Fancy—"

furious glances fixed upon her from every side of the room. The Fourth, incensed because they had suffered, were in no mood to share Lydia's mocking amusement. The Fourth, as a whole, were disgusted with Lydia. Many of them, like Babs, dearly wished that Miss Wright was more strict.

The morning wore on. But it was obvious that Miss Wright was most dreadfully upset.

Babs, torn between anger against Lydia and pity for Miss Wright, thought again of the poignant letter she had read last night.

What would Primmy say when she read the Bull's report?

Lessons came to an end. Miss Wright, with rather a wistful look in her eyes, saw her class out of the room, and then, bracing herself, went off to Miss Primrose's study. In the corridor, Babs turned upon Mabs and Clara.

"Look here, it's not fair," she said. "We just can't let Miss Wright get it in the neck without doing something! She wasn't to blame; I was."

"Lydia was, you mean!" Mabs said.

"Well, Lydia started it," Babs admitted. "But if I hadn't lost my temper and bunged those flowers at her we shouldn't have had all that rumpus when Miss Bullivant came in. I'm going to see Primmy and tell her what happened."

And without waiting to discuss the matter further, she turned on her heel and hurried away.

Reaching Miss Primrose's study, she found the door ajar, and at once heard Miss Primrose speaking in severe tones.

"And I tell you, Miss Wright, that I am far from satisfied. Girls come to this school not only to gain knowledge, but to become acquainted with discipline. It is your duty to command obedience, as well as to teach!"

"Yes, Miss Primrose!" Miss Wright said weakly.

"I am afraid, if this sort of thing happens again, Miss Wright," Miss Primrose went on, "the only alternative I shall have is to ask you to resign. That is all! Yes, come in!" she added, for Barbara, screwing up her courage, had knocked on the open door.

Her heart seemed to turn to ice as she saw the wrung expression upon the little mistress's face; the tears which glistened in her eyes. Miss Wright, taking her departure, was so overwrought, however, that she never even glanced at Babs.

Babs gulped.

"Miss Primrose, it—it's about Miss Wright that I came to see you. Please—please don't blame her for what happened this morning. It wasn't her fault."

Miss Primrose stiffened.

"Barbara, I have already had a report of this business, and in it your name figured largely. I do not think there is anything more to say."

"But, Miss Primrose, there is!" Babs said. "Please hear me out. I didn't play the joke of the peppered flowers on Miss Wright, but I did throw the flowers at the girl who played the joke, and that's what really started the uproar. I'm sorry I lost my temper, but—but—well, I was being blamed for the joke, and I just forgot myself. But Miss Wright—"

"Miss Wright," Miss Primrose said, "was in charge of the class, Barbara. It was her duty to prevent such a commotion. Thank you for your straightforward confession, but I'm afraid it does not alter the moral of the case, which is that Miss Wright is not a

woman sufficiently stern in character to have control of a Form. If you wish to help Miss Wright you can do so by restraining your own temper and the unruly elements of your Form. You may go, Barbara."

And Babs went, with a feeling of bitter helplessness. She could not help but see Miss Primrose's point of view, just as she could not help but see Miss Wright's. But Primmy was wrong in one respect. It was not downright weakness on Miss Wright's part which allowed girls like Lydia Crossendale to get all their own way in class. It was Miss Wright's own agreeable, shy, good-nature.

"And if," Babs told herself as she tramped back to Study No. 4, "oh, if only we could make Miss Wright forget that side of herself for a while! If only she'd come out in Miss Bullivant's mood and tick Lydia off! Now—"

And then Babs' eyes glimmered. Suddenly she halted in her stride as a great, breath-taking wheeze came to her.

"My hat!" she murmured. "My only Sunday cellophane hat! I wonder if it could be worked?"

"So That's Their Little Game!"



"MABS, could you do it?" Babs asked eagerly. "Easily," was Mabel Lynn's confident reply.

"But the voice—"

"Well, listen to this."

And Mabs, coughing, struck an attitude in the centre of Study No. 4.

"Er—thank you, Barbara—thank you very much! I have come to the conclusion, however, that you are an extremely ill-natured girl, and I am going to detain you for the next few thousand half-holidays! How's that?"

Flames of merry enthusiasm ran up in Babs' laughing cheeks. She looked utterly delighted. For the voice, its every tiny inflection, was that of Miss Wright's. Truly Mabs was living up to her reputation as the finest actress at Cliff House.

"Well, that's just grand!" Babs declared. "But what about clothes?"

"Just a mistress's gown," Mabs said.

"I've got one in the props cupboard. I can easily get a wig like Miss Wright's hair, and a bit of make-up and a touch with a pencil will make a marvellous difference. Oh, yes, I can dress up as Miss Wright, all right, and I can imitate her voice. There are only two problems," Mabs added thoughtfully. "One—to get Miss Wright out of her room, so that I can take her place. Two—to get hold of Lydia Crossendale."

"Lydia's all right. I'll ask Clara to get her for cricket practice after lessons," Babs said. "But Miss Wright—wait a minute, though. Miss Wright is a friend of the Fields-Crofts, isn't she?"

"Well, yes."

"A ticket!" Babs chuckled. "I'll see if I can find something."

She flew off, while Mabs frowned after her. To Dulcia Fairbrother's study Babs went, and there, finding Dulcia at home, asked permission to use the telephone in the prefects'-room. Dulcia gave the permission at once.

Babs chuckled as she called up Friar's Gables and got into connection with Paula Fields-Croft, one of the daughters of that family, whom she knew through Margot Lantham.

"Paula," she said, "Miss Wright is a friend of yours, isn't she? Yes, I thought so. I was wondering if you

could ring her and invite her to tea this afternoon."

"Aha! I smell a wheeze!" Paula laughed. "Quite possible—yes. But what's the idea?"

"Tell you later," Babs said. "Actually, we want to do a good turn to Miss Wright, but we don't want her to know about it, so for goodness' sake don't let on. Will you do it?"

"Of course!"
"And will you ring me back, telling me what time she will be leaving the school?"

"In three minutes," promised Paula. And in three minutes the call came back.

"O.K.!" Paula chuckled. "Go ahead with the old wheeze. I've fixed it. She'll be coming along about five."

Excitedly thanking her, Babs ran off to find Clara Trevlyn. Clara, put in possession of the details of the scheme, grinned and went off at once to inform Lydia that she was required for practice at the nets immediately after afternoon lessons. Mabs, meanwhile, had unearthed a mistress' gown and make-up box, and, leaving everything in the study, the two conspirators tramped off to the classroom.

To Babs' relief nothing untoward happened during lessons that afternoon, and at the finish she and Mabs hurried to Study No. 4. There they watched the gates, and presently grinned when they saw Miss Wright go out, evidently on her way to Friar's Gables. Then they saw Lydia, with Clara, strolling towards Junior Side.

"Now's the day and now's the hour," Babs quoted softly. "Come on, bring the things."

The "things" were the gown and the make-up. With a soft chuckle the two went off. Miss Wright's study, of course, was deserted. Quickly Mabs made up and donned the gown. Then she grinned.

"How do I look?"
"Marvellous!" breathed Babs, her eyes shining. "Blowed if I wouldn't be deceived myself if I didn't know. Right-ho," she said. "Take your seat. I'll send somebody for Lydia, and then I'm going to hop behind this screen. I wouldn't miss this for a term's pocket money," she added, with a chuckle.

She went out—but not far. Little Letty Green, of the Second Form, happened to be strolling up the corridor. Babs stopped her.

"Oh, Letty, go and tell Lydia Crossendale she's wanted in Miss Wright's study, would you?" she asked kindly.

"Yes, Barbara," Letty said, with an earnest smile.

She ran off. Babs, returning to Miss Wright's room, took her stand behind the screen. Presently there was a knock, and Mabs, clearing her throat, called in Miss Wright's rather squeaking accent:

"Come in!"
The door opened. Lydia, with a bad-tempered scowl on her face, lounged in. "Want me?" she asked insolently.

"I do." Mabs gazed up, her heart thudding a little. But meeting Lydia's eyes she knew that Lydia suspected nothing. "And please," she added, "do not speak to me like that, Lydia Crossendale! Go outside and walk in properly!"

Lydia started.
"Eh?"
"And take fifty lines for saying 'eh!'" Mabs rapped. "Now do as you are told!"

If the room had suddenly fallen about her ears, Lydia could not have looked more utterly flabbergasted.

Mabs grinned as she went out again.

Babs, behind the screen, chuckled. The scheme was working beautifully.

Once again Lydia came in. But she did not lounge this time. She stood rather mutinously still.

"That's better," Mabs said severely. "I hope, Lydia, you will remember in future the respect due to a mistress. I have been thinking of you—and not kindly. I realise, Lydia, that I have been foolish in trying to treat you with kindness and consideration. This morning, Lydia, you got off scot-free after peppering those flowers—or thought you had. But you haven't. You will take two black conduct marks, a hundred lines, and will be detained for the next three half-holidays!"

"Phew!" Babs whistled silently behind the screen, while Lydia jumped and almost turned green.

"But—but—but—" she gasped.

screen. "Mabs, you're a wonder! She swallowed it whole, too!"

"You—you don't think I laid it on too thickly?" Mabs asked.

"You did—but no matter. She deserves it. I don't think," Babs chuckled, "we shall hear much more from Miss Lydia Crossendale! But now get off those things. Better take them back to the study and hide them in the cupboard."

Mabs, feeling quite elated, disrobed. With many a suppressed gurgle the two fled back to Study No. 4, where Bessie was preparing tea. Before prep they looked in at Study No. 1.

Lydia was there, her face white and savage. In front of her was an immense pile of impot papers, and she was scribbling furiously.

"Hallo! Writing lines?" Babs asked pleasantly.



STERNLY, the disguised Mabel Lynn regarded Lydia Crossendale. "Lydia," she rapped, cleverly imitating Miss Wright's voice, but giving it a ring of authority it had never had before, "you will take a hundred lines, two black conduct marks, and be detained for your next three half-holidays!" Lydia nearly collapsed—and so did the hidden Barbara, bursting with merriment.

"Do not stutter, girl. I dislike it," Mabs said. "Take a further twenty lines for stuttering. I just want to warn you now that the very next time you attempt to make trouble for me, Lydia, I shall report you to Miss Primrose, and I shall ask Miss Primrose to allow me to write a report to your parents."

Lydia gasped. She looked utterly stupefied.

"You will start on the lines at once, Lydia!" Mabel resumed severely. "I shall expect them all by break tomorrow, otherwise I shall double them. Now go."

"But—but— Oh my hat! But, Miss Wright—"

"Say another word, Lydia, and I will give you a further hundred lines," Mabs said thunderously.

Lydia, like a girl in a dream, groped her way to the door and stumbled, utterly cowed, completely subdued.

"Oh, my giddy golliwog!" Babs gasped, emerging from behind the

"Oh, get out!" Lydia flared. They got out, stifling their mirth. After prep they looked in again. Lydia was still writing lines.

"Goodness gracious!" Mabs said. "Still scribbling, Lydia?"

"Will you get out!" Lydia roared.

The next time they saw Lydia was at call-over, when Miss Wright called the roll. And at her name she answered so quickly and sharply that several girls stared round in surprise.

"Working like a charm," Babs murmured to Mabs.

It was, Lydia, indeed, seemed glad to get out of Miss Wright's sight. In the morning she was up before anyone else—desperately working to complete her monumental task by the appointed time. At class she was one of the first to stand up, and though to be sure she did not wish Miss Wright the same hearty good-morning that the others wished her, she was such a model of good behaviour that Miss Wright beamed. She smiled at her.

"I am glad to see, Lydia, that you

appear to be concentrating more upon your lessons," she said.

Very smoothly, very harmoniously lessons progressed that morning, and the class was at its well-behaved best when towards break Miss Bullivant came suspiciously into the room. She looked round.

"Hum!" she said. "Apparently you have learned at last how to compel law and order here, Miss Wright. I congratulate you upon the industriousness of your class."

"Thank you," Miss Wright beamed. She smiled gaily at them. She was happy. A word of approval from the Bull was more valuable to Miss Wright than a pound note to a beggar, and Babs and Mabs, glancing at each other across the desks, chuckled. It seemed, at last, that peace had come to the Fourth Form and Miss Wright.

But they had forgotten one thing. They had forgotten that Lydia would take those lines in to Miss Wright, and that was exactly what Lydia did immediately break came. Hardly a minute of her spare time had Lydia wasted since receiving that imposition, and even so she barely scrambled it in on time. With a perfect pile of lines under her arm, she knocked at the door.

"Yes, my dear, come in," Miss Wright said.

Lydia went in. "Ah, Lydia!" Miss Wright said, with a bright and happy smile. "How nice of you to call upon me, my dear. Dear me, what are those?" she added in surprise as Lydia laid the imposition on her desk.

"Your lines, Miss Wright."
"My lines?" Miss Wright blinked. "What a colossal number of lines! Dear me! They must have made your arm ache. But what do you mean by saying they are my lines, Lydia? I never gave them to you."

Lydia glared.
"You gave them to me yesterday," she said. "You gave them to me in this room. And you said," she added bitterly, "that if I didn't get them in by break to-day you would double them."

Miss Wright looked amazed.
"Lydia, my dear, you are dreaming! I never even saw you in this room yesterday!"

Lydia's lips compressed.
"Well, you don't think I'd do them for fun, do you? And if you remember, you also gave me two black conduct marks."

"I?" Miss Wright looked shocked.
"Miss Wright, really—" Lydia said exasperatedly.

"But, Lydia, please wait a minute. Dear me!" Miss Wright faltered. "I have no memory of this—none whatever. I cannot even remember you coming to this room yesterday. About what time was it, Lydia?"

"About tea-time," Lydia said.
The mistress smiled very gently.
"Then, Lydia, I regret to say you have made a mistake," she said. "I was not here at tea-time. I left the school almost immediately after afternoon dismissal to go to tea with my friends the Fields-Crofts, and I did not return until half-past seven. Either, Lydia, you have made a mistake, or someone has made you the victim of a practical joke."

At that Lydia jumped as if she had received a sudden charge of electricity. She stared at the little mistress, her face changing from pink to dead white with fury; for she understood then. No wonder, she told herself bitterly, that she had been knocked sideways by the Dormouse's stern attitude yesterday! She had been fooled.

And who had fooled her?
Lydia set her teeth. She could guess that. Only one girl in the Fourth was capable of carrying out a wheeze like that—Mabs. Mabs and Babs last night had looked in twice to see her getting on with those lines. That explained those sly glances she had intercepted from time to time between the two. So that was it, was it? Mabs had impersonated Miss Wright!

What a fool she was to have fallen into the trap!

And what a laugh Babs & Co. and this woman had been having at her expense!

Fury boiled up within her.
"I see!" she burst out—and it was the old Lydia talking again now. "A fine scheme—a marvellous scheme!" she cried. "I suppose you put them up to it?"

"Lydia, my dear, what are you talking about?"

"Well, never mind!" Lydia said, her eyes glinting. "Never mind! All— all those lines I've done!" she said, between her teeth. "Well, there they are—more fool me! Take them!"

"But, Lydia—"
But Lydia, with a glare, stormed out. Down the passage she raced towards Study No. 4. Violently she flung the door of that apartment open, and, with a "You clever cats!" on her lips, burst tempestuously into the room. But at once she stopped; for of the inmates of Study No. 4 there was no sign.

Lydia gritted her teeth.
Furiously she flung back towards the door again. And then she paused as she saw, neatly folded on a chair, a black garment. She snatched it up, shaking it out. And her eyes flamed as she saw what it was.

A mistress' gown. If she had required any proof of her suspicions she had it then.

"Clever!" she sneered. "Very, very clever! So that's their little game, is it? They thought they'd make me squirm. They thought they'd make me knuckle under to that tame little mouse? Well, all right, you rotters, I'll jolly well show you what's what. We'll see if Miss Wright can tame me or not! Two can play at practical joking, and now it's my turn, Barbara Redfern!"

And, tossing the gown back, she strode out of the study.

Open Warfare!



"TWO minutes before lights-out, girls," Barbara Redfern said, "and Miss Wright is duty mistress to-night, so do buck up and get into bed."

"Otherwise," Lydia Crossendale sneered, "you might get four hundred lines!"

Babs glanced at her sharply. There was a meaning note in that sneer which seemed to suggest that Lydia knew a little more than they had imagined. Not since lessons had they seen Lydia, and so they knew nothing yet of what had transpired. Lydia, contrary to her first mutinous impulses, had kept clear of Babs and Mabs.

"What do you mean?" Babs asked.
"You know—or don't you?" Lydia scoffed. "Perhaps you thought I was the fool. But if leopards don't change their spots, neither do timid little dormice suddenly grow into roaring lions! I suppose," she added bitterly, "you thought you were putting an imitation across, Mabel Lynn?"

Babs almost groaned.
"So you found out?" she asked.
"Rats!" Lydia sniffed. "Anyway, just watch out for yourselves!"

"We will!" Babs eyed her grimly.
"Whatever you got you jolly well asked for," she replied. "And if you're thinking of any more funny stunts against Miss Wright, Lydia, I advise you to soft-pedal. We—" But she stopped as the door opened and Miss Wright herself blinked in. "Oh, good-evening, Miss Wright!"

"Good-evening, girls! Not in bed yet?" Miss Wright asked mildly. "It is time, you know. Please hurry, my dears. I am a little late as it is, and Miss Bullivant is following me round. I—" And then suddenly she stood stock still, and her eyes became saucer-like with fright. "Oh!" she gasped, clutching at her heart. "Look! A— a mouse!"

A mouse it was. It had suddenly run from the direction of Lydia Crossendale's bed right across Miss Wright's path. For one moment Miss Wright, who was notoriously afraid of mice, stood petrified and numb, and in that moment Lydia acted. With a shriek, she leapt on to her bed.

"A mouse, a mouse!" she gasped.

"Oh, help, help!"

"Help!" shrieked Freda Ferriers.

"Oh, look!" howled Frances Frost.

"Catch it!" yelled Lydia. "Save poor Miss Wright!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And immediately there was a commotion. Girls were jumping on beds, others were groping for shoes and other missiles. A pillow flew towards the mouse—a clockwork one, of course. A bar of soap followed it. Then Miss Wright, bracing herself with a terrific effort, flung up a hand.

"No, no!" she cried. "Girls, do not be alarmed. I—I will catch it!"

"Miss Wright—" cried Babs. "Oh, my hat! I say—I say—"

But Miss Wright did not hear. Really believing the mouse was real, it said much for her pluck that she could overcome her own terror so rapidly. She darted forward.

Just as she grabbed the mouse, however, she slipped on a piece of soap and shot towards the door, her spectacles dropping from her nose and hanging from one ear. And at that most unfortunate moment that door opened, and in came—Miss Bullivant!

She gave quite a jump of horrified surprise as she gazed down at the distraught little mistress.

"Miss Wright—" she gasped.

Miss Wright blinked in dismay.

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Miss Wright, get up—immediately!" Miss Bullivant's eyes blazed.

"Upon my word, never have I seen anything so ridiculous, so utterly humiliating! How dare you, madam!"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Miss Wright.

"Get up—at once! You will come with me to Miss Primrose!"

"But, Miss Bullivant!" Babs cried.

"Miss Bullivant—please! Miss Wright was only—"

"Barbara, silence! Silence, all of you!" Miss Bullivant was quivering with wrath now. "It may please you all to make a laughing-stock of your Form-mistress, and it may please your mistress to join in your foolish pranks, but this is enough! I forbid any one of you to say a word!" she added.

"Any explanation required can come from Miss Wright herself! Miss Wright, are you ready?"

Miss Wright looked on the point of fainting.

"But—but, really, Miss Bullivant, I assure you—"

"You need not trouble!" Miss Bullivant said tartly. "Miss Primrose is the one you will assure! Now, get to bed, all of you! Miss Wright, go!"

Miss Wright, with face ashen grey, went. Miss Bullivant stopped to see the girls into bed, and switched out the light. There was silence in the dormitory for a moment, then Babs' bitterness overflowed.

"Lydia, you beastly, awful cat!" she cried.

"Ha, ha!" came from Lydia Crossendale's bed.

"I suppose you know," Babs went on, "that this will probably mean the sack for her?"

"Well, serve her jolly well right!" Lydia retorted.

"Oh, shut up!" cried Clara Trevlyn. "Rats! Why should I shut up? You all thought you were jolly clever,

help her to get kicked out of the school and lose her job!"

"Oh, I sus-say—" stuttered Bessie Bunter.

"Well, that's true, I guess!" Leila Carroll put in.

There was a murmur. The thrust had gone home. Even girls like Freda Ferriers and Frances Frost were not feeling too happy now. It was one thing to have fun at a mistress' expense, but it was another thing entirely to deprive that mistress of her means of livelihood. A growl went through the dormitory.

"But," Babs went on, "it may not be too late yet. There's one thing you can do, Lydia Crossendale, and if you've got the slightest sense of decency you'll do it! You've had a jolly good run for your money! It's up to you

cares? And just," she added, a flash of venom in her voice, "mind your p's and q's, Barbara Redfern, because the hotter you try to make it for me, the hotter I'll make it for her! That's all! Well, am I in Coventry now?"

"Is she?" asked Babs. And, without a dissenting voice, the answer rang out furiously, scornfully: "Yes!"

Babs Leads the Way—Too Late!

FROM that moment onwards Lydia Crossendale was in Coventry.

The Fourth had no use whatever for the callous, vindictive snob in their midst. A ban of Coventry passed by the whole Form was a ban more bind-



"HELP! Help!" shrieked Lydia, leaping on to the bed, and she pretended to be thoroughly terrified. Helplessly, Miss Wright stood there, staring at the clockwork mouse. The Fourth roared. Confusion reigned. But Babs & Co. were furious. This was one of Lydia's schemes to make things worse for Miss Wright.

didn't you? You thought you'd got me on a bit of toast? Well, this is where I smile!" Lydia said vindictively. "Anyway, who cares whether she's sacked or not—the scared little rabbit? We can do without mistresses like her!"

"Well, my hat!" breathed Janet Jordan.

There was a mutter from the Form. Babs sat up.

"And we can all jolly well do without rotters like you in the Form!" she blazed. "From the first moment you've been against Miss Wright! What has Miss Wright done to you? Nothing! What has she done to any of us? Nothing! She's tried to prove herself a sport. And she has. She's jolly well shown her pluck, and tried to get us out of scrapes! And our gratitude for that," Babs went on bitterly, while faces in the dormitory burned, "is to

now to try to get Miss Wright out of the mess you've put her in!"

"Says you!" sneered Lydia.

"Says me!" Babs affirmed grimly. "And you can jolly well do it first thing to-morrow morning. Girls, have I got you all on my side?" she appealed.

"Yes!" came a chorus in the darkness.

"Right-ho, then! To-morrow," Babs said grimly, "you're going to Miss Primrose, Lydia Crossendale! You're going to tell Miss Primrose that it's your larks that have been responsible for getting Miss Wright where she is!"

"And get it in the neck! No thanks!" sniffed Lydia.

"Well, you'll get it in the neck, anyway!" Babs retorted. "I'm speaking for the Form now! Either you go and own up to Miss Primrose, or the whole Form sends you to Coventry, Lydia Crossendale! Now, are you going to do what the Form orders?"

"No!"

"It's your last chance!"

Lydia's eyes glittered in the darkness.

"And the answer," she retorted, "is still 'No'! Do your worst! Who

ing its way than any given by Miss Primrose or Miss Bullivant, because the whole Form were in constant attendance to see that it was enforced. The next morning Lydia Crossendale woke up to find herself the loneliest girl in Cliff House.

Not even Lydia's own cronies dared speak to her. Defiance of the Form's ban meant incurring the ban themselves. All very well to support Lydia when there was nothing to be feared, but Lydia's cronies had none of those attributes which made for loyalty.

Lydia scowled and fumed. Nobody took any notice. Nobody replied when she spoke. Girls looked through her, and passed by just as if she had been utterly non-existent. That hurt, that goaded, that stung. But it did not bring Lydia to heel.

It increased her bitterness, her hatred of Barbara Redfern, of Miss Wright. It made the whole Form her enemies.

But perhaps that action by the Fourth Form came too late. There were whispers flying around during the

(Continued on page 14)

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

Week by week PATRICIA writes to you on these pages. Her letter is just what you'd expect a friend's letter to be—newsy and friendly. It is helpful, too. No wonder then that she is so popular with you all.



I HAVE an idea that your Patricia's spring cleaning wasn't quite as thorough as it should have been.

For mother asked me to find an old suitcase that was tucked 'way back in the cupboard under the stairs. And, believe me, in looking for it, I found my old camera.

Honestly, I shouldn't think I've seen this for years. But I was frightfully proud of it as an Upper-Fourth (which was the year it was new).

As soon as my small brother Heath (whose full name is Heatherington) saw what I had unearthed (or should it be "uncupboarded"?) he dashed off.

Then back he came, clasping his beloved puss-cat, Minkie, to him.

"Pat, I want you to take a snap o' Minkie an' me—please!" he said. "Cause Minkie's never had a snap taken, you see."

So out into the garden I hustled my small brother. I posed him very carefully, with an attractive background, made sure the sun was behind me, looked carefully into the view-finder, and then, Snick!

The snap was taken. Minkie hadn't even wriggled; Heath hadn't even squirmed.

"That should be a jolly good picture, mother," I said afterwards. "We ought to send it in for a child and pet competition."

Mother was looking—as I thought—fondly, at the camera.

"You've had this several years now, Pat, haven't you?" she murmured.

"Yes, you and father gave it me for my fifteenth birthday, don't you remember?" I said. "I must take the spool round to the chemist to-night to be developed."

"I don't think you need bother," said mother.

I stared at her.

"You see, there isn't any film in the camera," she chuckled. "You were so pleased with yourself at finding the camera, it didn't even occur to you to look."

You can just imagine how silly I felt!

● Camera Care

So mind you don't let this happen to you when you fish out your camera for the first time this summer.

Have a good examination of it first—inside and out.

Glue down any pieces of the outer cover that may be sticking up and polish it all over with furniture cream.

Dust the lens thoroughly, and see that there is no dust in the inside. Make

certain the winder is working BEFORE you place the new spool in the camera—and then you're all set to take some really happy, snappy snaps.

● A Useful String Box

What have you done with all those Easter eggs you received?

Yes, of course, I know you've eaten the chocolate ones—and the marzipan ones!

I meant the cardboard ones that contained little "somethings."

What are you doing with the cardboard eggs?

They do make the most fascinating string boxes, you know.

You must join the two halves together. Then, for the "face" on the front half, you must cut pieces of string or coloured cord and stick them in position to make the comic features.

A hole is made for the mouth, to allow the string to come through. A pipe cleaner or piece of wire is pushed through two holes in the back part of the egg, and bent to

form two little hooks. On these you can hang the scissors that are always so useful in any room of the house.

On which side of the carriage do you like to sit when going on a train journey?

My mother always tells me to sit with my back to the engine. For a long while I couldn't make out why this was always considered the better side. For, as a matter of fact, I don't like sitting that way. The scenery always seems to be moving the wrong way—away from you, instead of towards you.

I like sitting so that I can see what is coming. But in this weather, when quite often a carriage window is open, I do realise that to sit "facing the engine" is quite the easiest way of getting smothered in smuts.

For the smoke blows in on the person facing the engine—and the one with her back to it, escapes.

So there you are! Is it better to watch the scenery going backwards and keep clean, or to watch it going the right way and be grubby?

I simply can't decide, so I'll leave it to you, then perhaps you'll work it out next time you go on a fairly long journey by train,

● Keeping Its Shape

Berets have been popular with school-girls for a long time now, haven't they?

I like light-coloured berets very much, don't you? Pale blue, yellow, and white are so gay-looking, somehow. In fact, they always remind me of a glorious holiday cruise.

The only snag about the light colours is, of course, that they will show the dirt so.

But the joy of a beret is that it can be washed—which is more than you can say of the most friendly hat, after all.

You wash them just as you would any other rather precious article. Use water that is only lukewarm, in which soap-flakes have been sprinkled to make a lather. Then squeeze the beret quickly in this, rinsing thoroughly afterwards.

But for the beret to keep shape, there must be very careful drying. No, don't peg it out on the clothes line. Slip it over the bottom of a pudding basin or over a suitable-sized plate to dry—and it will look as good as new when you come to remove it.

● A Dash of Colour

Doesn't this jolly waistcoat in the picture look gay and summery worn over a darkish dress?

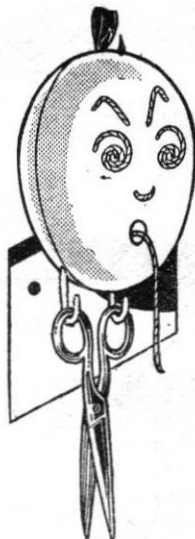
It's the very thing to wear on those days when the sky is bright, and yet there is a nip in the air. Just the day for a warm frock, really—but you feel you'd like to add a touch of spring to it, as well.

If you have an old summer dress that's worn out in several places, you could very quickly make this colourful waistcoat from it. You cut off the skirt part—below the waist. You snip out the sleeves and the collar part.

Then you hem all the raw edges—and it's complete. A jacket that would look just as pretty over a woolly frock as over a summer frock.

Bye-bye now, my pets, until next week.

Your friend,
PATRICIA.





ROUND about this time of the year we all pay very special attention to our good looks, don't we? There's something about the spring-time that tells us to "wake up" and make the best of ourselves.

We've already talked about clothes, about good looks, problems connected with our complexion and with our hair. But this week we're going to discuss—feet.

Somehow, we don't take much notice of them during the winter—unless we have chilblains. They just serve us uncomplainingly.

Then comes the first heat-wave of the year—always unexpected. And to our surprise, one day our feet give us a twinge, and we feel so tired, that we just have to rest them.

Now "warm-weather feet" can be a frightful worry. They can prevent a girl from concentrating as she should on her lessons. They can spoil a game of tennis, or a holiday hike. They can also make wrinkles in the smoothest of school-girl faces.

So they are very important, and do deserve a little extra care—especially at this time of the year when heat-waves have a habit of arriving unannounced.

SPRING IN YOUR STEP

Happy feet mean happy faces! Here Patricia tells you how to guard against aching feet, if a sudden heat-wave should catch you unawares.

To soothe hot and tired feet, you shouldn't wash them in cold water, much as you may long to cool them.

No, bathe them in hot water to which you have added a tablespoonful of kitchen salt. Soak them for a few minutes, then dip them into cold water and dry them. The hot water removes the ache, you see, and the cold braces the feet up again.

A FREQUENT CHANGE

The girl who suffers from achy feet should make a point of changing her stockings as often as possible. To have clean stockings every day may sound very luxurious, but it honestly is most comforting—and healthy.

Foot experts also say that you shouldn't wear the same shoes every day. I know you can't have new shoes for every day of the week, but if you have two pairs of school shoes, it is a good idea to wear one pair one day, and one the next. They won't wear out any more quickly this way, and it is good for your feet—and your shoes.

A sprinkling of boracic powder on your feet when they are tired, or when you have a strenuous day in front of you, is very comforting.

You can dab this between your toes, and rub it well under your instep. Apply a little to the soles of your stockings, or socks, too, and you'll feel as if you're walking on air.

If there doesn't appear to be any boracic powder around the house, a little starch will do as well. (Yes, the washing-day sort.)

On some days feet get more tired than on others. Not only do they ache so abominably that you simply have to kick your shoes off—but you find it's really an effort to put your shoes on again.

There is only one cure for this—and that is rest.

Just sit down in a chair and place your feet on another. It's keeping the feet up

like this that takes away that hot swelling—and after a few minutes' rest shoes are quite comfy again.

But I do want to advise you not to kick your shoes off just any old where. A girl I know did this in the pictures one very hot day—and couldn't, just couldn't, get them on again. She actually had to leave the cinema in her stockinged feet. Fortunately she had enough money with her to get a taxi to the station where she was going. And in the taxi she wisely put her feet up and gave them the rest they needed.

But I still can't imagine what would have happened if she hadn't had that taxi-money on her, for she couldn't have walked through the streets of London without shoes!

A GREAT TREAT

It sounds very extravagant to waste cold cream or even Vaseline on your feet, I know. But if your feet do make you feel tired and cross in warm weather, then I think they should be made to feel fresh and frisky again, at all costs.

And there is no treat they like as much as a "massage" with cream or oil.

You smear the cold cream, Vaseline or olive oil on to your hands, and then massage your feet, one at a time. Rub the cream or oil all over your foot, on the upper part and underneath, smoothing towards your ankle.

It will absolutely astound you how the grease will vanish into the skin—which will prove how badly it needed this extra nourishment.

Wipe off any surplus grease, and then sprinkle lightly with batheau-de-Cologne (that's the cheap sort, you know) and your feet will feel so good that you'll go skipping around like a frisky lamb, without a care in the world.

What is more, this foot-happiness will show in your face, and make you prettier than before.

SHE'S A NICE GIRL

GOODNESS me, what is young Beryl doing on this page? She's a nice girl, but—

Beryl is hopelessly untidy. I'm not going to say the picture doesn't exaggerate Beryl's faults. It does.

All the same, the faults that you can pick out there do belong to Beryl at some time or another. So let's check up on them, to make sure that not one of them is ours, shall we?

She's a nice girl, as I said, but—

Her hair. It's very pretty, really. Why, then, can't Beryl take the trouble to plait it properly—that is, from the back, so that the plaits hang down neat, and straight, and business-like.

For week-ends, and going-out occasions, they can hang over her shoulders, in which case they should be plaited from the front.

A hair-grip would keep that untidy end in place, particularly if she bought gold-coloured ones the same tone as her hair.

She might make sure that both her hair

ribbons are tied, and that the bows face outwards.

She's a nice girl, as I said, but—

Her uniform. The neck of her blouse is certainly fastened, so that's something. But why isn't her tie *inside* her tunic? I expect scatter-brain Beryl forgot.

Her tunic is nicely pressed (thanks to mother, not to Beryl), but that girdle should not be swinging at the back like a tail. It should lie along her left thigh—after the twist has been taken out and it has been re-tied, of course.

I suspect those cuffs are not done up because there are some buttons missing. And they're missing because Beryl will just shove her sleeves up when washing, instead of unfastening them.

Her stockings aren't exactly elegant. They were quite straight when Beryl put them on this morning, so why are they wrinkled now?

I'll tell you. Her suspenders are too long. So, please, Beryl, shorten these as soon as you can, and then your gym

stockings will look the trim athletic things they're meant to be.

A shoe lace undone, Beryl! That's bad, for you might trip over it!

Yes, I know you did them up in the cloak-room. But you should give a double twist to the laces before you tie the bow, you know. This keeps them securely in place.

There, I think that's all the fault we have to find with you to-day, Beryl. Sorry to be so picky, for you are a nice girl, as I keep saying, but honestly, you don't know how easy it is to spoil your appearance just through carelessness.



(Continued from page 11)

morning that Miss Wright had been told to resign.

When she came in at lessons her face was dead white, her lips twitching; but her eyes were burning with a sort of strange, feverish light that nobody in the Fourth Form class-room had ever seen there before. Some change seemed to have come over Miss Wright.

It had. The Form had electrifying evidence of it before lessons were five minutes old.

"Sit down, girls," she said. "We are going to examine a chemical formula. This afternoon we will try out this formula in a practical way in the laboratory. Lydia Crossendale, did you not hear what I said?" she asked, as Lydia insolently remained standing. "I said sit down!"

"Oh, did you?" Lydia said, without attempting to do so.

"I did!" Miss Wright's eyes glimmered. "And for not sitting down, Lydia, you will take fifty lines!" "Hey!" cried Clara Trevlyn.

Lydia blinked. She looked at Miss Wright. Then she looked at Mabel Lynn, perhaps thinking for a moment that this was some new joke. But it was Miss Wright who had given that punishment, and for once there was no apology on her face for having given it. She looked, in fact, quite hard.

Lydia, in pure surprise, sat down. "Now, pay attention," Miss Wright said. "Freda," she added, "you are combing your hair."

"Yes, Miss Wright," Freda tittered, "that's right. I'm combing my hair with a comb."

"Then take twenty lines for not having combed it before you came in, and fifty lines for trying to be impertinent!" Miss Wright said, and Freda crumpled.

Babs glowed. Delightedly she gazed at her chums, overcome with wonderment like the rest, but glad—glad! Was it possible, at last, that Miss Wright had overcome her timidity?

Or was this just a flash in the pan?

It wasn't. Before another quarter of an hour had gone by Frances Frost earned twenty lines for shuffling her feet. Immediately after that Diana Royston-Clarke was awarded twenty for banging the lid of her desk. A breathless hush settled over the Form. Miss Wright had got the upper hand at last. From that moment the Fourth were as silent and as respectful as if Miss Bullivant had been standing in front of them.

Inwardly, Babs hugged herself. Whatever had happened since last night had clearly had its effect on the hesitant, shy little Dormouse of the Fourth. Stern was Miss Wright, forbidding was Miss Wright; but there were moments when Babs caught her looking wistful and disturbed, her lips

quivering. Break came at last, and Miss Wright dismissed the class. But Babs hung behind.

"Oh, Miss Wright—" she said softly.

"Yes, Barbara, my dear?"

"I—I'm so glad," Babs said, "that—that— Oh, Miss Wright, you know!"

Miss Wright's eyes softened. She looked suddenly very frail.

"I know, Barbara—and thank you!" she said in a choked little voice. "But I am afraid, my dear, I have started to manage the Form too late. If—if I had my time over again I fancy now I should know what to do. It is a regrettable thing, Barbara, that in certain circumstances one must repress one's kindest instincts, but obviously Miss Bullivant and Miss Primrose are right. I suppose you have heard, Barbara, the—the news?" she added, averting her face.

"Miss Wright, no—what?"

"I—I shall not be with you after to-day. Miss Primrose has requested my resignation," Miss Wright said, and suddenly her face twisted, her brown eyes swam with tears. "Please, please, Barbara, do not sympathise," she cried a little brokenly. "Do—do not say anything, my dear, I—I couldn't bear it. Go now."

But Babs stood there, shocked, agast.

"Oh, no, Miss Wright, no!" she cried. "You can't go!"

"I have to go, Barbara. Please leave me," Miss Wright said.

Babs gulped. She felt numb and sick. Miss Wright leave? Miss Wright sacked—just when she had learned her lesson, just as she knew how to handle the Form? Had she recovered herself—too late?

Babs' eyes burned. No. It wasn't too late. It shouldn't be. They had to do something. They should do something. Miss Wright had not left the school yet, and if she could help it Miss Wright should not leave it at all. Babs, hurrying away, immediately called a meeting of the whole Form.

And in the Common-room she broke to them the dismayed news which, up to that time, had only been a vague rumour.

"But," she said, "we can help—we will help. It's our fault that this has happened. It's up to us to put things right. Miss Wright must have another chance."

"But how," Mabs wanted to know, "are we going to get it for her?"

"First," Babs said briskly, "a deputation of the Form. Next, draw up a petition. Every girl in the Fourth Form will sign that petition—and the deputation will go to Miss Primrose now and present it. Come on; get busy."

Excitement then. Everybody was willing at once. Remorse for their own part in Miss Wright's downfall spurred them on.

Babs drew up the petition, beginning:

"We, the undersigned members of the Fourth Form, hereby plead with you, Miss Primrose, not to accept Miss Wright's resignation and assuring you and her of our fullest and most respectful support in the future—"

Fountain-pens were produced, one after the other girls came forward, and one after the other signatures were added. Except one. That was Lydia Crossendale.

Lydia could not be found though Lucy Morgan volunteered the information that she had seen her catch a bus for the village.

Still, it did not matter about Lydia.

"Thank You So Much," says

HILDA RICHARDS

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



BETTY DAWES (Birmingham).—I've answered all your Cliff House questions by post, my dear, but here's the printed reply I promised you. How is Tiger, your large cat? I do hope he's keeping well, and not having too many scraps with other cats—or dogs! You'll write again when you have time, won't you? Bye-bye, for just now.

AUDREY CRUICKSHANK (Shirley, Warwickshire).—You would be in the Upper Third if you went to C. H., Audrey, and your chum would be in the Lower Third. Of the Fourth Formers, I think you most resemble Clara in appearance. Patricia asks me to send you her love, and our Editor adds his good wishes.

JOAN LEARY (Hobart, Tasmania).—A little note to thank you, Joan, for your kindness in sending me the lovely photographs of Hobart. I haven't your full address, and so I cannot write to you personally, but I do hope you will see this, and know that I appreciated your little gift so much. Hobart must be a really beautiful city, and I should love to come and visit it some day.

DORIS BAYNE (New Barnet, Herts).—Thank you so much both for your very charming letter, and for the interesting suggestion you sent along. I've passed it on to your Editor—who deals with these things, you know—and while he naturally cannot make any promises, he is going to consider the suggestion carefully. Jump thanks Sam for his doggy greeting, and sends him a pawshake, not to mention a chummy "woof!"

"JOAN" (Dagenham, Essex).—So glad to have another nice, newsy letter from you, Joan. And I was glad you did see my last reply to you, even though it was rather late in appearing! Isabel Drake will be nineteen next birthday. Yes, I shall be featuring her and other prefects in future stories.

JOAN MILTON (Bramhall, Cheshire).—I can see you are an enthusiastic fan of Clara's, my dear! She is 14 years and 7 months old, and 5 feet 4 inches in height. Her form-position is 19th at present—it varies from term to term, of course. She usually takes at least size 6½ in shoes! Yes, I shall be writing many more stories about your pet Fourth Former, and I hope you'll enjoy them!

"ME" (Wiltshire).—Thank you very much for your interesting suggestion. You evidently have a clear idea of the new Fourth Former you'd like to see introduced to Cliff House! Although I cannot make any promises, I've already made a large note of your idea, and will keep it in mind when planning future stories. Write again, won't you?

MARIAN HARRISON (Montreal, Canada).—Delighted to hear from you again, Marian, and to know you're still such a keen reader of our paper. I shall be featuring Diana many more times, you may be sure. How lucky you are to be having a new bicycle this spring! I expect you'll want to go for rides every day. Bye-bye for just now; Patricia sends her love.

MARJORIE POTTER (Liverpool).—So glad to hear from you again, Marjorie. Have you heard the results of your scholarship exam, yet? I do hope you'll be one of the successful candidates! I'm not at all surprised to hear you are looking forward to the summer holidays so much. I think everyone must be making holiday plans just now! I hope to hear from you again soon—so make it a long, newsy letter, won't you?



FRANTICALLY, Babs & Co. fought the flames. Miss Wright looked on, stupefied, and Lydia shrank back in terror. For it was her ill-natured jape which had caused this calamity.

In any case, Lydia was out of the Form's council now. With thirty-three signatures affixed to the petition Babs, forming herself, Mabs, Leila, Jemima, Jean Cartwright and Janet Jordan and Clara Trevlyn into the deputation, marched off to Miss Primrose's study. Kindly enough, Miss Primrose received them; graciously she listened to what they had to say, accepting the petition and reading it through. Then she shook her head.

"I am sorry," she said.

"But, Miss Primrose, we're only asking for one more chance for Miss Wright," Babs pleaded. "Just one. We all know why she has been asked to resign. But it wasn't because she was incapable of running the class; it is only because she—she is so awfully good-natured. Well," Babs went on earnestly, "we all saw this morning that she can be stern, and now she's—she's found herself, Miss Primrose, we are asking you to give her this last chance. We like her; we're all going to stand by her. Miss Primrose—"

But Miss Primrose again shook her head.

"I—I'm sorry," she said, then added: "Because, you see, Barbara, the matter is entirely out of my hands now. I have passed on Miss Wright's resignation to the board of governors, and the board is meeting here this afternoon to accept it!"

When Miss Wright Kept Cool!

WELL, there's still one stone to be turned," Babs said after dinner. "And that is to see the board of governors and put our case before them. They'll be sitting during lessons, and we can jolly well see them afterwards. Providing nothing happens in the meantime—"

It was difficult, however, to see what else could happen. The worst, as far as Miss Wright was concerned, had already occurred. Miss Wright's resignation was in the governors' hands.

The governors, that afternoon, were sitting to discuss and accept it.

But Babs had hope. The Fourth had hope. Appealing to the board of governors was an unheard of thing, but desperate circumstances required desperate remedies. Babs had already warned the deputation to stand by after afternoon lessons.

Filled with a sense of its own shame the Fourth was loyally backing up Barbara. With Babs to plead for Miss Wright, they all had hopes. As Babs said, providing nothing happened while the governors were on the school premises, they could hardly fail to listen to the deputation. Their every hope was pinned upon the visit to the governors. But would that visit bring forth the fruits expected of it?

Babs shook her head. Not if her efforts could prevent Miss Wright leaving should that catastrophe happen. Meantime, however, there were lessons.

In the classroom the Fourth Form settled that afternoon—a drab afternoon, with chilly, misty rain falling outside, and Miss Wright, miserable, white-faced, confronting them. It was obvious that Miss Wright was labouring under considerable mental stress. And yet, despite that, there was still that hint of new sternness in her kindly little face.

"We are going to the laboratory to test out by experiment the formula we discussed this morning," she said. "Barbara, you will lead the Form, please."

Babs gulped. Very quietly and demurely the Form marched out after her. But for a moment Babs looked at Lydia Crossendale, her eyes-narrowing as she recognised that smirk on her face. Up to the big laboratory they went, grouping themselves round the long experimenting table in the centre of the room. Miss Wright nodded.

"Very well. First erect the balances, girls. Er—did you speak, Lydia?"

"Yes, Miss Wright," Lydia said, and shivered. "I—I just said it's jolly cold up here. Could we have the fire, please?"

Miss Wright paused. She glanced along the rows of girls. Certainly the

temperature was low, though none of the girls would ever have thought of the fire if Lydia had not mentioned it. But now there was a nod here and there.

"Very well, then," kindly Miss Wright said. "A fire, if not absolutely necessary, is always welcome. Wait a moment, girls."

She produced a box of matches. Babs, looking at Lydia, suddenly wondered at the glitter in her eyes as the mistress stooped, putting the match to the pile of paper and wood in the grate. The paper, caught, flared up.

"There!" Miss Wright beamed, straightening up, but suddenly turned as there came a splutter from the grate. "Why, what ever—" she began, and then jumped.

Everybody else jumped, while Lydia went off into a roar of laughter. For among the flames came an explosion. The fire seemed to shoot upwards, and out from it, hurtling twenty feet across the room, rushed a flaming cracker.

"Fireworks!" cried Babs. "Oh, my hat! Lydia, you cat—"

Bang, bang, bang! The fireworks seemed to be alive now. Whiz! And across the room shot a bundle of fireworks, falling among a pile of silk fibres which immediately caught alight. One or two girls laughed. Babs desperately ran forward, snatching up a duster and smashing out the flames.

Crash, bang, splutter! The room was full of smoke now. Fireworks seemed to be shooting in all directions. Some girls were laughing; some were looking scared.

Miss Wright, for a moment, seemed dumbfounded. Then there went up a shriek.

"Oh, my hat, look! The cellophane screen! The spirits! The spirits!" shrieked Frances Frost.

Faces whitened then. For the last firework, shooting across the room had set fire to the cellophane screen which hid a pile of cans and bottles, most of them containing such high explosive and inflammable stuff as peroxide and methylated spirit. In vain Babs and one or two of her chums beat at the flames. With a roar it went up.

"Girls!" shrieked Miss Wright. "Girls, be quiet, please! Clara—quickly—rush and bring help! Everybody move towards the door! Clara, hurry, girl! What is the matter?" she cried, as Clara frantically pulled at the door.

"I don't know. It—it's jammed!" Clara panted. "I can't get it open!"

There was a scream. Laughter had died now. Everybody, aware of the sudden, awful peril in which they stood, gazed with horrified eyes at the blazing screen in the corner. A fresh wave of heat radiated across the room.

"Girls, please do not be alarmed!" Miss Wright said, and Babs, turning from beating out the flames of the silk fibres, blinked as she saw the little woman—stiff, upright, stern now, not a trace of pallor on her face.

Quickly Miss Wright crossed to the door at which Clara frantically tugged; with one blow of her fist she smashed the glass panel above the lock and, putting her hand through the aperture, opened the door from the outside.

"Clara, go!" she instructed. "Hurry now. Please, everybody, no fuss, no panic! File out in an orderly way."

Somehow there was a new atmosphere in the room from that moment. Girls were no longer afraid. Miss Wright was marvellous.

Then—crash!
The crash came from the corner. It was followed by Lydia's panting tones. "Get out, get out!" she cried. "The bottles are going up! The room will be wrecked!"

"Girls!" exclaimed Miss Wright. But panic had them again then. They could not see Miss Wright for smoke, and as a roaring tongue of flame swept across the room there was a frantic, pell-mell rush for the door. Babs heard a shriek in Lydia's voice. Ashen-faced, she gripped Miss Wright's arm as the mistress hung back.

"Miss Wright—quickly!" she cried. "Look, the bottles are going up!" "Is everybody out?" Miss Wright asked.

"Yes."
"Then let us go."
They hurried to the door. But suddenly Miss Wright tore herself free.

"Miss Wright!" shrieked Babs. "Come back!"

But Miss Wright did not come back. She had seen what Barbara had not seen. Lydia, prostrate, was lying on the floor. In the blind, panic-stricken rush she had led she had been elbowed aside and had fallen, striking her head against the iron legs of the laboratory table.

Babs clung to the door, paralysed for the moment with fear.

Miss Wright, showing no sign of fear, acted with swift decision. She stooped; with unbelievable strength she dragged the half-fainting girl upright so that Lydia fell across her shoulder. Then Miss Wright staggered to the door, just as there came a roaring explosion and a flying bottle smashed against the wall above her head. She looked at Babs, smiled uncertainly, swayed on her feet, and slipped. Lydia, dazedly coming round, was just in time to catch her as she fell.

"Miss Wright!" she choked, a throb in her voice. "Miss Wright—and you—you did it for me. Babs, she saved my life!" Stupidly she stared at the Fourth Form leader. "She saved me—after—after all I've done to her—"

Babs gazed at her grimly.
"Well," she said, "thank goodness you've found a spark of decency at last! Because now you're jolly well going to

save her, Lydia Crossendale. You're coming along to the board of governors to confess to what you've done!"

"And if you don't," Mabel Lynn cried, "we'll jolly well confess for you!"

BUT THERE was no need for anyone to "confess" about Lydia Crossendale's crime.

Lydia, callous, vindictive though she was, could not rid her mind of one haunting thought.

Miss Wright, her enemy, had saved her from a dreadful fate; Miss Wright, the scared Dormouse, who owed all her woes to her, had been the one who in the end had snatched her from certain injury—perhaps worse. Even Lydia had some sense of gratitude, and in the first rush of that gratitude had no hesitation at all in outspokenly telling the governors what she had done. She made it clear that she had been against Miss Wright from the beginning; that had it not been for her malicious schemes none of the troubles which had attended Miss Wright's reign in the Fourth would ever have come about. The governors listened. They conferred with Babs & Co. They conferred together. Then Major-General Mabbesson, the chairman, stood up.

"Miss Wright," he said, "after hearing these girls' testimony the board have decided not to accept your resignation—"

"Hurrah!" cried Babs.

"The girls we shall leave Miss Primrose to deal with," the chairman went on. "We have unanimously agreed, Miss Wright, that you carry on in your present position, and wish you every success," he added graciously.

Miss Wright's lips quivered. Her face beamed. She shook her head at the chairman, and at Babs & Co., seated on the bench at the far end of the governors' room. There was silence for a moment while she stepped down from the platform on which she had been standing, and in the middle of that silence Lydia moved towards her.

Her face was working strangely.
"Miss Wright, I'm sorry. I—I've done my best to make up," she said, "but whatever I've done can't recompense you a hundredth part for all the pain I have caused you. If—if you can forgive me—" Lydia stammered. "Will you shake hands, Miss Wright? I promise on my word of honour that I'll never, never do anything to hurt you again."

Miss Wright smiled softly, tenderly. She took Lydia's hand, then gently drew the girl towards her, and, while Lydia blushed, kissed her forehead.

"Dear, dear Lydia," she said. "I am so glad. I am sure, my dear, that henceforward we will be the best of friends."

And to Babs & Co.'s amazement they saw the tears standing out on Lydia's cheeks.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.



A very dear friend of Barbara Redfern & Co., especially of Tomboy Clara Trevlyn. That has been Janet Jordan's enviable position for a very long time. And yet, all at once

JANET

- becomes rude and ill-tempered.
- strands her chums on an island.
- breaks bounds at midnight.
- starts to smoke cigarettes.
- deliberately destroys a valuable film they have made.
- in numerous other ways is mean and treacherous towards them.

What ever has come over Janet? That is the problem that baffles and worries the famous Cliff House Fourth Formers in next week's dramatic story—a problem which Hilda Richards solves for you in her own fascinating way. Don't miss this grand story. It is full of the most unexpected thrills and surprises.



Another fascinating COMPLETE Middle Ages story featuring young Lady Fayre, the—



SECRET HELPER TO ROBIN HOOD

By IDA MELBOURNE

"Robin Hood! Good-morning!" sang out Fayre gaily.

"Good-morning, fair maid of the woods!" he smiled, and dumped his sack.

"Oh, Robin! More loot?" said Fayre, her eyes smiling, although she wagged a reproving finger at him.

He nodded, and looked grave for a moment.

"Yes; but not taken in combat," he said. "It is food for some of the poor villagers. Times are bad, and there is poverty and great distress. I was looking for some passing friar who might take this sack to the village."

"Let me do it, please!" begged Fayre eagerly. "I'd be happy to be a messenger of such good cheer!"

He shook his head at that, saying that the sack was too great a weight for her small shoulders. But, since he could not go into the village when there were sheriff's spies lurking, and perhaps some of the baron's men watching for him, someone else would have to do the carrying.

Fayre tried the weight of the sack.



Double Robbery!

THE lady Fayre of Longley Castle ran lightly through the woods until, reaching a clearing she well knew, she stopped and put a whistle to her lips.

It was a shrill whistle, and at the sound of it a wolf that had been lurking near turned tail and fled, snarling, for the note of that whistle had been cunningly devised to scare wild animals.

Lady Fayre blew three times, then stopped and listened, but she did not hear the expected response. What she had hoped to hear was the sound of Robin Hood's hunting horn, for it was he who had given her this whistle, to serve the dual purpose of scaring away wolves and summoning him.

There were some—amongst them Fayre's uncle, the Baron le Feuvre—who considered that Robin Hood was not better than a wolf himself. But it was not an opinion shared by the poor of the district. They regarded Robin Hood as their good friend, and, considering the money and goods he gave them from time to time, they had a right to that opinion.

The Lady Fayre, for all that she had been born and bred in the castle, was, like Robin Hood, the friend of the poor. She had no patience with her uncle's bullying methods.

Moreover, she liked to be free, to mix with the people, and join in their simple fun, and that was why she was now dressed in a simple green, shabby garment and a brown, hooded cloak. Her rich red frock, which she wore in the castle, was safely stowed away in her bed-chamber, and to all appearances she was what she wanted to be thought—a village maid.

"Robin Hood!" called Fayre, cupping her hands.

She listened, and from afar heard the sound of his hunting horn. Running towards the source of the sound, she blew her whistle again, and presently she saw him.

Robin Hood, dressed in gay green, a feathered cap on his head, a green cape flying from his shoulders, was carrying a heavy sack. Hearing her call, he turned, and then waved in salute.

Fayre's uncle, the Baron le Feuvre, was a bullying tyrant—but it suited her and Robin Hood to have him hailed as a generous hero!

It was not light; but, on the other hand, by hoisting the thing on to her back, she thought she could manage to carry it.

"You have a kind heart, Marian," said Robin Hood, patting her cheek. "If all girls were as kind as you it would be a happier world. Let me carry the sack to the lane, and perhaps you will find a helper there."

Together, Robin Hood still carrying the sack, they went to the lane, and there made to part. At the end of the lane, where it wound into the village, there was a small white cottage, lying back, amid trees.

"Tis there that the sack must be taken," he said. "The villagers will be told of it, and can call. For if the sheriff's men should know of this they might indeed seize it to find whence it came."

"Have no fear, I will take it there safely," said Fayre.

And bidding him good-bye, she set out on the short journey, the sack hoisted on her back. For a hundred yards she walked without seeing anyone, the sack growing heavier with every step she took. She halted, dumped it, and then was filled with alarm as round the bend

in the lane came a man, cantering on a lean, brown horse. The sheriff!

The sheriff saw her, and reined up his horse. He was a man with glaring eyes, and very shrewd, so that little escaped his notice. The sack Fayre held by the roped neck most certainly did not, and he drew his horse to her side and leaned over.

"What is in the sack, my lass?" he asked sharply.

"Oh, 'tis—'tis but something I did get in the woods," said Fayre lightly.

He dismounted, pushed her aside, and with a dagger taken from his belt, slashed the cord at the neck of the sack. Pulling the neck wide, he put in his hand and pulled out a loaf of bread. He glared first at the loaf, and then at Fayre.

"So?" he exclaimed. "Bread grows on trees now? Ha! A flask of wine, too! A leg of ham!"

He put his strong right arm on her shoulder and glared into her face.

"Robin Hood, the rascal, gave you this!" he snarled. "That thieving rogue and—"

His words ended. An arrow, singing through the air from the trees at the roadside, sent the cap skipping from his head.

"Run, maiden, run!" called a voice, as the sheriff let go of Fayre, to snatch out his sword.

Fayre ducked, and then, lifting the hem of her frock, sprinted for the trees as a dozen men in green rushed into view. Looking back, she saw a cloud of dust farther down the lane, and then, round the bend, came a posse of mounted soldiers.

Their swords flashed in the air, and Fayre, gasping, not daring to watch, ran on through the woods, taking the shortest route possible back to Longley Castle.

"Oh, Robin Hood, take care!" she breathed, as she ran.

For it was her greatest dread that one of these days he would be captured,

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

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—Such a lot of things to write about this week I scarcely know where to begin. A new serial (to which I referred last week); a few replies to letters; and next week's programme.

Well, we'll take the new serial first, I think, don't you—as new serials are an event in themselves. And this serial, which commences next Saturday—

"BRENDA'S TASK OF MYSTERY"

—is going to be an event you'll remember for a long time to come.

It has been written by Miss Margery Marriott, and tells what happens to an orphanage girl, Brenda Day—a most likeable, sporting kind of girl—when she becomes companion to the daughter of a wealthy family. But that is not Brenda's only duty. She is also given charge of a most adorable youngster, a five-year-old boy, with whom you'll fall in love straight away.

And as for the mystery task which Brenda has to undertake—a really fascinating, intriguing task it is, without a doubt. A young fellow begins it. He pops up at the window of Brenda's railway carriage, shows her a china ornament, asks if she's ever seen it before, and then—slips away!

But he reappears in the most dramatic fashion, and from that moment onwards Brenda is involved in all manner of exciting happenings, knowing little of what they really mean, except that, according to the mysterious boy, they vitally affect her whole future.

You simply mustn't miss a word of next week's magnificent opening chapters of this grand serial. They'll intrigue you enormously.

And now, while I've still quite a little space to spare, let's see what Cliff House has in store for you next week.

"SUCH AN AMAZING JANET!"

That is the title of Hilda Richards' latest story of Barbara Redfern & Co., and a most gripping and unusual story you will find it.

What would you say if a very dear friend of yours suddenly became rude and ill-tempered, started to smoke cigarettes for the first time in her life, left you and her other chums stranded on an island, deliberately destroyed some valuable films you'd taken, and in numerous other ways behaved meanly and treacherously?

You'd be hurt and amazed, wouldn't you? Well, that was how Babs & Co. felt when Janet Jordan did all those things. It was inexplicable. They just couldn't understand it. That Janet, of all people, should behave like that—

But undoubtedly Janet WAS behaving like it. Something had happened to change her. What that was Babs & Co. wondered again and again—and that is the question which Hilda Richards answers in her own fascinating way next week.

Well, I've given you two strong reasons for making certain of next Saturday's issue. Here are two more reasons—another topping COMPLETE story of Lady Fayre and Robin Hood, and further of Patricia's Bright, Chummy, and Useful Pages.

And now, in the nick of time, for those

LITTLE LETTERS.

Doreen Brown.—Many thanks for your letters. So glad you are enjoying all our features. With regard to your question, Doreen, if you care to write again, giving me your full address, I will reply through the post.

"Zippy" (Wiltshire).—Delighted by your enthusiastic letter, "Zippy." I passed on your other letter to Miss Richards, who asked me to thank you very much indeed. Write again whenever you like, won't you?

May Hibbert (S. Chingford).—Sorry you've had to wait so long for this reply, May, but the SCHOOLGIRL is printed several weeks before publication, you know. I will see what can be done regarding your suggestion—and many thanks for it. Best wishes!

And now—best wishes to all of you until next week.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

brave and daring though he was. But she consoled herself with the thought that he would not fight a desperate battle with the soldiers, but would escape to the woods and try to get more supplies for the poor-villagers, now that this sackful had been captured.

She eased to a slow walk as she reached the castle, for she dared not attract too much attention to herself. The guards at the barican believed that this raggedly-dressed girl was a village maid who ran errands for the Lady Fayre, and as she always carried a basket, Fayre took small things with her—flowers from the wood, or some other trifle that would give colour to the deception.

To-day the guards paid her no more heed than usual, and she walked past them over the drawbridge into the

courtyard. But there she halted. Something exciting was happening!

In the middle of the courtyard, castle servants were assembled, and before them, as they stood in rows, were loaves of bread, jars, sweetmeats, dainties, pies. Never before had Fayre seen a parade of this kind, and she approached a group of soldiers to find out what it meant.

"So much food?" she murmured. "Is it for the poor?"

"The poor!" was the scoffing retort. "Hearken!" laughed another.

"No, child; 'tis for the bishop!" said a corporal.

"The bishop? Has he no food, either?" asked Fayre, amazed.

There was a roar of laughter at that, and for fear of attracting so much attention that one of the officers might come

on to the scene and recognise her, Fayre slipped away.

She hurried to the keep, and, mounting the stairway, keeping her face well hidden in the hood, reached her bed-chamber.

The reply the soldiers had given had not cleared her bewilderment; for she could not understand why the baron was sending food, of all things, to the bishop. He was not a generous man, and the bishop was not poor. It was odd.

There was only one way in which Fayre could find the answer, and that was to ask the baron. She could not ask him in her guise as a village maid, for she would be quite beneath his notice. But she could certainly do so as his niece, the Lady Fayre.

So she went to the large oak chest in her bed-chamber where she had hidden her rich velvet frock; and, taking it out, shaking it, she slipped it on. It was a magnificent frock, embroidered with gold thread, and wearing it, Fayre looked quite regal.

In the more stately manner that befitted the Lady Fayre, she went down the stairs. From the hall came her uncle's booming voice.

"Hah! A goodly offering, my love!"

He addressed Fayre's aunt, the baroness, who stood surveying some finely wrought silver candlesticks.

"One would be enough," she said grudgingly.

"Bah! Would I be fool enough to lose the favour of Prince John for one candlestick?" he asked.

Fayre, reaching the hall, ran forward. "My lord uncle, what great excitement!" she exclaimed.

He turned to her. Burly, wearing a magnificent red jerkin over chain mail, he frowned.

"Excitement? There is reason for it. The best that we have to offer is to be sent to the lord bishop," he said. "And if ever a man is to be flattered it is he!"

"You are sending food to the poor, uncle? It is said there is great hardship—"

"The poor?" he exclaimed, amazed. "Can the poor win me favour with Prince John? Huh! The poor! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Away, child, with your silly prattling!" said the baroness, with a gesture of impatience. "We have serious matters to discuss. The poor indeed!"

Fayre said no more; but she understood now why there was all this confusion and organisation in the castle. In the absence of King Richard, at the Crusade, Prince John was the person who mattered, and his favour was sought by all the nobles.

Since the bishop of the diocese was a man who held the cowardly prince in his power, he was worth cultivating—or so thought the baron.

Fayre did not run away as her aunt ordered her, but followed them into the courtyard, where now some wagons had been brought. The baron had inspected the food, had kicked or cuffed those servants whose produce he did not think worthy of this cause, and had selected the best to be sent to the bishop. Not only was there offering in kind, but in gold, too; there were even peasants whose services he was offering to the bishop as labourers.

And to convey these gifts, he was forming a procession with soldiers and trumpeters leading the way.

Fayre sighed heavily as she saw the foodstuff being loaded into the wagons. There was enough to feed the whole village.

And then, as an idea flashed into her mind, she ran back inside the castle.

Thanks to a Spy!

WHEN next Fayre appeared, it was in her shabby clothes, her head bent, her worn shoes trudging the ground.

No one paid her any heed, except a leading wagoner, who flicked her with his whip to warn her to stand clear.

Fayre, dodging aside, hurried to the gates, and then through them to the lane. It would be some few minutes yet before the procession moved off, and that would be time enough for Fayre to put her plan into execution.

It was for the woods she made; and, hurrying all the way, she reached the glade in a breathless state—almost too breathless to blow the whistle.

But there was no need now for the whistle. Robin Hood had heard the steps, and came springing lightly through the undergrowth to greet her.

"Ah! You are safe!" he said, with relief and pleasure.

"And you, too!" she smiled. "Was anyone hurt?"

"Oh, a mere cut, a bruise; nothing more," he said lightly.

Fayre put her hand on his sleeve, and her eyes sparkled.

"Robin Hood, would the poor like sides of beef, loaves of bread, honey, fruit, sweetmeats, wine?" she asked eagerly.

"Would they? Why, what else?" he asked. "Have you a secret hoard?"

"I? No! But in a few minutes' time the baron's procession will pass. He is sending rich offerings to the bishop to gain his good graces."

Robin Hood gave a slight jump. "So?" he said, and his eyes glinted. "Perhaps you think Robin Hood will leap from the woods on to the procession and take what there is?"

"And give it to the poor," nodded Fayre. "Such an idea came to my mind, Robin Hood. But it may be dangerous. There will be trained, armed soldiers."

Robin Hood stood silent in thought. There would be enough soldiers to rout a score of outlaws armed only with staves, and bows and arrows.

"I must think," said Robin Hood. "For we, though inferior in arms, are greater in wit."

Fayre had had time to think herself on her way here, and now, hardly daring to believe that he would approve of her plan, she told him what it was.

"Instead of arrows, is there not something less harmful that could be fired at the horses to send them at a gallop?" she said. "For the goods are in wagons. The soldiers will be in front and behind."

Robin Hood gave her a quick look, and nodded thoughtfully.

"You have a keen wit, fair maid," he said. "It is a wise plan."

"And then," said Fayre eagerly, "if it should happen that branches and thick leaves were flung between the soldiers and the wagons, would not their task be made the more difficult?"

Robin Hood whistled softly.

"And if the wood were dry and set fire to—" he murmured. "Ahah! Fair maid, between us we shall make merry at the expense of the gay baron. You run down to a point where you can view the lane, and when the first of the soldiers come into sight, blow your whistle."

Fayre ran to do his bidding, and, finding a suitable tree, climbed it. She had a good view of the winding lane, and kept under observation a bend where the telltale flurry of dust from the horses' hoofs would give warning of the procession's approach.

She waited for a full ten minutes,

and the cloud of dust rose. She whistled, and at the third whistle saw the glint of armour and the gay pennants from the knights' lances.

From Robin Hood came an answering whistle.

Fayre hardly dared breathe as she thought of the danger ahead. Now that it was imminent she had a fearful thought that she had acted rashly. She had imperilled Robin Hood.

Yet, if he won, if the battle ended in his victory, what happiness to come for the poor!

Through the woods, meanwhile, moved men, carrying branches and leaves. Robin Hood, Friar Tuck, Little John, and the archers took position where they would have the clearest aims. Their bows would not send arrows, though, but clay that would sting the horses into a gallop without injuring them.

On came the procession. It marched past Robin Hood's escort. Then, with soft sounds, the large pellets flew. The baron, riding proudly in front, felt his horse jerk. Another pellet hit the animal, and it leaped forward. Another and another horse leaped forward, and in a moment there was desperate horsemanship as the animals reared and plunged and collided.

The confusion was at its height when there broke from the trees a dozen men in green, flinging faggots on to the lane.

Yells filled the air as it was seen that this was a raid by Robin Hood. But the licking flames, shooting ten feet high across the road, formed walls between the soldiers and the wagoners.

To go to the defence of the wagons the soldiers had to climb the hedgerows and encircle the fire. But on the far side of the hedges waited outlaws, suitably armed for this type of fighting. Every soldier who put his head within reach received a hard fist well driven into his face, or a clump with a swinging quarter-staff.

Other outlaws rushed the wagons, pushed off the wagoners, and, seizing what they could—sacks, cases, cloaks, material, sides of beef, hams, bread—ran with them into the woods.

Fayre, watching from her perch in the tree, cheered as she saw the men

running with meat and bread and goods. Robin Hood and another skilled archer stood with their bows, and, as the baron's three archers lined up, let fly. At that range Robin Hood could have sent an arrow into the middle of a farthing. To split another bow was easy. One, two, three—in swift succession the bows of the baron's archers flew from their hands.

"So soon as one of our men falls drop the baron!" shouted Robin Hood.

The baron, clambering over the hedge, paused, for Robin Hood had directed his bow at him. But for all his faults the baron was no coward.

"At them!" he roared, swinging his chained mail arms across his face.

Robin Hood did not send an arrow. He waited until the baron looked up, and shot a chunk of clay full on to his nose. Then, laughing, he turned and ran with his men, leaping the cords cunningly concealed in the long grass amongst the shrubs.

The heavily armed soldiers, flashing swords, ran in pursuit. Their weighty armour slowed them, and they knew nothing of those hidden cords. With tremendous crashings, one after another fell; and the speedy, lightly-clad outlaws, even though they carried burdens, easily slipped away through the woods.

It was victory, and Fayre, coiled up in the tree, hidden by the leaves, cheered softly as the baron ordered his men back.

"To the castle!" he roared. "For this we shall be avenged."

But Fayre herself was first back to the castle. She ran nearly all the way, and quite breathlessly waved to the wardens of the barban.

"The baron—ambush—Robin Hood!" she jerked out. "Help!"

Naturally, she was allowed through, for the guards were too perturbed by the news to worry about her. There was the sound of trumpets, the scurrying of men-at-arms, and the clank of armour. As she rushed up the stairs a horde of soldiers charged down, putting on helmets, buckling sword belts.

Ten minutes later, when Fayre was once again herself in the red frock, the



"ROBIN HOOD gave you this food!" said the sheriff grimly. "You are a friend of the rogue! Come with me—" But at that moment an arrow neatly removed his hat. Fayre's heart leaped. Robin Hood was at hand to save her.

whole army returned, and she was in the courtyard to see them reassembled.

Never had she seen the baron in such a furious rage. He nearly had apoplexy; his face was quite purple. The baroness, asking what ailed him and why he had returned, came as near to being struck with a mailed gauntlet as ever she had been.

"A plan of campaign. This must be the end of the rascal Robin Hood," he raved. "A thousand men shall invade the forest. We'll find him if it takes us a week—a month!"

But although the baron's rage was so great that it seemed to Fayre that it could not be greater, a messenger who ran into the castle some time later brought news that fanned it to even more flaming fury.

"What!" roared the baron, hardly able to believe the messenger. "My offers to the bishop—shared by the poor?"

"My lord, 'tis e'en so. Rich material, food. There is hardly a cottage but has something," said the cringing spy. "Yes, every one has something hidden. There will soon be such roasting of meat as was never known. The whole village will be roaring flame and clouding smoke."

The Baron le Feuvre shook all over so that his chain-mail jingled.

"By my halidom!" he raged. "I'll burn the village. I'll search every home. I'll turn them out—lock, stock, and barrel!"

He paced up and down, and Fayre paled with dread. She had not been prepared for him to discover this so soon.

"But, my lord uncle, 'tis not the fault of the villagers," she quavered. "They are so poor that—"

"Poor, are they?" raged the baron. "Poor! They'll be poorer still for this day's work. They'll be homeless, too. Robin Hood fought me with fire. I'll set fire to the woods—and to the cottages. Every man-jack who has some of my property shall be flogged. Everything in every cottage shall be flung into the lane for inspection by me!"

Fayre's heart almost stopped beating at thought of this horrible outrage. For the baron was in such a fury that he was quite capable of putting it into practice. And who could stop him?

Not even daring Robin Hood, for the baron this time would encircle the village with soldiers; no trick could save the villagers.

Fayre groaned in despair.

In trying to help the villagers it seemed that she had only brought misery to them.

Making the Baron a Hero!

"ASSEMBLE," roared the baron. "Two thirds of the castle's army! Bring faggots, bring torches, bring flares!"

Fayre grew desperate, frantic, and then of a sudden she moved towards a piebald horse, Beauty. It was a horse she had often ridden, and it stood now riderless, the dismounted knight beside it.

"May I hold the reins?" asked Fayre of him.

"An honour, my lady," he smiled.

Fayre led the horse away, and, seeing that the knight was in deep talk with another, and that most of the men were whispering and discussing this projected raid on the village, she suddenly mounted Beauty, and before her daring act was noted was within twenty yards of the gates.

Then—

"Stop her—" shouted the baron.

The guards ran to the controls of the portcullis. A pikeman barred the way. But Fayre, crouching low, rode straight at him, so that he had to dodge.

Over the drawbridge Fayre clattered, and along the road to the village; for there had come to her a flash of inspiration—the one way out!

THE BARON LE FEUVRE rode into the village, more heavily armed than usual, and his face far redder. At his side was his mighty two-handed Crusader's sword, and behind him were knights, officers, men-at-arms, bowmen, archers, pikemen.

Bringing up the rear were men with bundles of faggots and torches. For even though his knights had pleaded with him, entreating him not to take so harsh a revenge, the infuriated baron intended to keep his threat if the villagers defied him.

Naturally, so vast an army was bound to draw attention; but the baron was amazed when he saw at the end of the lane a tremendous throng of people. They blocked the road, and he drew his sword.

"Rebellion?" he asked himself.

But from the villagers came cheers.

"Hurrah for the baron—"

"Hurrah!"

The baron moved forward as villagers, waving scarfs and handkerchiefs, advanced cheering and dancing excitedly.

"What—what—" he spluttered.

An old woman rushed forward, hands clasped.

"Oh, my lord, a noble man you are!"

"Hurrah!"

"Brave, good, kind baron!"

The astounded baron gaped. His rage was changed to confusion and bewilderment; for the cheers were sincere, the people wildly excited. And now there came from amongst them the village priest.

"Silence—silence!" ordered the good man, and then bowed to the baron.

"What is this?" demanded the Baron le Feuvre, blankly.

"Oh, my lord baron," said the priest, "to-day we have reason to be grateful that so fine and noble a man lives in the castle. There have been some have wronged your name; but now it shall ring through the country. When the bishop hears of this—"

"Wh-what?" choked the baron, startled.

"Ah, I shall tell the bishop of this! That holy man's warm heart will be touched with joy," said the priest.

The Baron le Feuvre sank limply back on his horse. Now that he was cooler he suddenly realised that had he burned the village the bishop, instead of singing his praise, might well have ordered Prince John to attack his castle.

"So?" said the baron, frowning.

"Yes, yes. A messenger shall be sent at once to the bishop, who doubted that you were worthy to have power over so many humble folk," said the priest.

And then, amongst them, he saw the red frock of Fayre, as she rode Beauty, the people cheering her, running forward to pat her, and kiss her hands.

"Uncle," she said, a little pale, "I have told them."

"You—you have told them—" he yammered.

"They thought it was Robin Hood they had to thank for the wonderful gifts of food and clothing, and money," said Fayre. "But now they know that it came from your—from your kindness."

"Hurrah!" went up a roaring cheer.

"Long live the baron!"

As the truth suddenly jumped into the baron's stolid mind, a spasm of rage ran through him. Then, calming, he looked down at the priest.

"What was it you said about the bishop?" he asked.

"The bishop shall hear of it. Already a passenger is on his way," said the happy priest.

The Baron le Feuvre sat upright on his horse, and a slow, grim smile dawned on his face.

"Eat well! Make merry, all," he commanded. "My men and I will ride on to the bishop to pay our homage."

He cantered to Fayre's side and looked at her fixedly.

"Uncle, you are not cross?" she asked gently. "Had you burned the village, why, then—the bishop—"

"Huh! 'Twas but a jest child, a jest. I—er—was angry that Robin Hood should seek the praise for these gracious gifts to the humble poor when they were in truth mine. Back to the castle, child."

But Fayre, turning back, rode instead into the wood where Robin Hood and his men were gathered wondering what this vast assembly of troops foreshadowed.

"Robin Hood, I did it to save the poor," said Fayre, whom he did not recognise in this garb. "I am the Lady Fayre. My uncle vowed to burn the village because you gave the poor his goods. But I told them the gifts were not from you but from him. Now there will be no burning; there is happiness. Yet I know that the kind thought was in truth yours."

Robin Hood bowed and doffed his cap.

"I seek not honour, nor glory, nor the good graces of bishops, my lady," he said. "But I am happy to know that the mystery maid of the wood who sometimes serves you was right. You have indeed a golden heart. Men," he called to them, "three cheers for the Lady Fayre!"

Fayre blushed as they yelled and cheered.

"'Twas the mystery maid's idea. Robin Hood. May you ever be free to give happiness to the poor."

Then, her heart light, she cantered back to the castle.

There later, in smirking mood, the baron returned.

"The Earl Lamore will be sorry he did not think to be so kind and generous to villagers," he said. "There were tears in the bishop's eyes when he spoke of my great kindness. 'Tis such men as I, he said, that Prince John needs at his side. Tra-la!"

Fayre's eyes glimmered.

"Yes, uncle, and lest the evil Earl Lamore should say 'twas but a trick to curry favour, it might be well, every Monday morning, to send a side of beef and loaves to the villagers. Perhaps even to those poor people who live on the disputed land."

The Baron le Feuvre's eyes lit up; he rubbed his hands.

"Little Fayre," he murmured, "you have wit and wisdom unusual in your age. It shall be done. Go make me a suit of sackcloth, should the bishop pay a visit 'twould be well to have one to wear."

And Fayre obediently procured the sackcloth, making sure that it was truly coarse and rough as befitted a Christian noble anxious to do penance.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

BE sure to meet the Lady Fayre and gallant, courageous Robin Hood in another delightful COMPLETE story next week.

Thrilling Concluding Chapters of that fine Adventure story—

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 discovers she is a dupe of Madame X, as well as Miss Simpson, are made prisoners on board a yacht.

(Now read on.)

Enter—Madame X!

"WE'RE putting out to sea," May cried. "Shanghaied! Oh, golly, then—then it was a trap, after all, and—we've fallen into it!"

Slowly she turned, looking at Yin Su, who stood stock-still, almost stupefied with surprise; at Miss Simpson, more flustered, more helpless-looking than ever, and then at pale, frightened Daphne, who was near to tears.

"This was the climax Madame X planned," May went on quietly. "It's no use shouting or yelling. The port-holes are shut tight, and not a sound can get through them. The glass is far too thick to break."

May felt strangely calm. It is often so when a storm breaks; its arrival brings a queer form of relief.

"Traacherous uncle?" gasped Yin Su. "It cannot be possible. Can noble, high-minded Uncle Fu Sen Li send false message to simple, trusting niece and friends?"

"Simple friends, if you like," said May ruefully. "Oh, golly, why did I agree to come? What a fool I am!"

"But where are we going?" cried Daphne, in great distress. "Where are they taking us, for goodness sake?"

"China," said May briefly.

Daphne nearly fainted at that, and did actually collapse into a chair; while

Miss Simpson, uttering a squeal, lurched to a divan and flopped down. "They can't be taking us to China," she said foolishly. "I have no ticket—no clothes. I have not let my landlady know."

May gave a short laugh. "Tell the captain that," she said, "and perhaps he will turn back—perhaps! It's not a bit of good groaning. We were warned that there was a gang waiting to take Yin Su back to China. It looks as though they have won the day. That tall Chinaman at the hotel must be behind this, not Madame X."

At the mention of the tall Chinaman, Miss Simpson sat up, and remembered the newspaper he had given her. It

When all seemed lost for the kidnapped chums, timid Miss Simpson astounded everyone—including herself!

was on the divan beside her, and she picked it up.

"Oh, no, no!" she protested. "I cannot believe that. I had a word with him, and he was a most charming man. Most charming. He gave me his reason for being interested in our party. He has a niece of the same name as Yin Su."

Yin Su turned quickly. "My name? One of my name?" she asked, surprised.

Miss Simpson held out the paper. "I knew you'd be surprised. Here is a picture of her. You can see it isn't a picture of yourself, my dear, and the name Yin Su is underneath."

Yin Su took the paper, and May and Daphne went at once to her side, and looked at that photograph. It did not show the girl's face completely, but they knew Yin Su too well to think that it was a photograph of her. Besides, it was a photograph taken the previous day in London, when Yin Su had been in their charge here.

Looking at the inscription underneath it, Yin Su gasped aloud.

"It is myself; the name she has is mine—my title," she murmured, quite bewildered. "And the Chinese person it also mentions—he is of my father's household."

May took the paper, as puzzled as Yin Su was, and hardly heard Miss Simpson's story of the man at the hotel who had given her the paper, and said that the girl was his niece.

May turned the paper over, and saw the pencilled name on it.

"It gives his name here," she said. "Fu Sen Li."

"Fu Sen Li! He is my uncle!" cried Yin Su. "Oh, but how could this paper be my uncle's?"

Miss Simpson staggered from the divan, passing a hand dazedly across her forehead.

"No, no, not your uncle—the uncle of the girl who has your name in London. He was a tall, charming man, who spoke most perfect English—"

Her voice tailed off as she saw the strange look on Yin Su's face.

May saw that look, too—startled, stunned—and gave a sudden gasp. She had a quick mind, and now she jumped to the solution.

"Yin Su! That man was your uncle," she cried. "And that's why Madame X tried to keep us away from him. That's why she didn't want you to meet him. And, because she knew he was near here, she used his name to lure us on to this yacht."

Yin Su clasped her hands, her eyes were sad.

"My uncle. He was but short distance from me in hotel, yet I did not meet him. In mysterious ways the hapless puppets of Fate are pulled by unknown strings," she murmured.

But May laughed at that; she had another idea. She did not think that the strings had been pulled at random or by anyone unknown.

"Madame X! She is behind it all. She knows that this other Yin Su is an impostor, taking your place!" she declared excitedly.

BY

ELIZABETH CHESTER

"Impostor!" Daphne cried. Then they were silent. Even Miss Simpson had sense enough to know that this was the solution of one part of the baffling mystery.

"Light at last!" exclaimed May, quite staggered by her own idea. "While we wander about the country, an impostor takes your place. You have disappeared as completely as if you were kidnapped. They might have kept us roaming for weeks. But when your uncle came on to the scene, that spelled danger. Once he saw the impostor, or spoke to her—the game was up."

Miss Simpson gave a sharp cry. "What is it?" exclaimed May.

"Why, that's what we must do. We must go back to the hotel—find Yin Su's uncle!" cried the governess. "That's the first thing we must do—"

"Not the first," said May coldly. "Yes, the first. I insist!"

"First," pointed out May, almost wearily, "we have to get out of this saloon, and then off this yacht. I do wish you would lie down and sleep, Miss Simpson."

The governess tilted her chin loftily. "If I am spoken to like this, I will leave the room, May!" she said.

Daphne giggled. "How?" she asked.

The governess turned, and went with dignity to the door, where she tried the handle, rapped the panels, and said that she would call the police if the door was not opened before she counted ten.

When she had reached fifty, May took her by the arm, led her to the divan, and insisted that she stayed there. There was serious business to discuss. Miss Simpson, well-meaning though she was, was no help at all in this crisis. No hammering on the door could help. Only some kind of artfulness, bluff, or trick could save them, as May well knew—and even that might not be possible.

They were helpless on the yacht, and wherever it was going, they would

have to go with it—even to far-off China.

It was an alarming thought, even to Yin Su. To Daphne it was quite terrifying.

"There's only one good thing about it," said May, with a sigh, "and that is that we have seen the last of Madame X. She has played her trump card!"

"Thank goodness for that!" sighed Daphne. "If I ever see that emerald ring again—"

She broke off and turned to the door; for there had come a click from that direction. It was the click of a key in the lock, and almost instantly the door opened.

The girls moved forward at once; but they had taken no more than a pace forward when a hand appeared gripping the door—a hand on which shone an emerald ring. The door opened; a woman entered the saloon, and then, closing the door, stood with her back to it.

Madame X! They were face to face with her at last!

Overboard!

MAY was speechless, stunned. But only for a moment. Then she sprang forward.

Tall, handsome rather than attractive, Madame X faced them with a mocking smile, however.

"Don't rush. The door has been locked again," she said. "There is no escape!"

May, Daphne, and Yin Su drew together, fixing the woman with angry looks. Then all three spoke at once in protest, demanding to be let out.

Madame X held up her ringed hand. She was graceful and aristocratic-looking in a dark, foreign way. Everything about her spoke of dominating character; her strong chin, her keen, piercing eyes, the carriage of her head, her deportment, her decisive movements.

"Well. It had to come to this. I am sorry," she said.

"Not as sorry as you will be when the police get you!" said May curtly. "You can't kidnap us like this!"

"You can't do it!" said Daphne almost shrilly, and gulped.

"It is done," replied Madame X. May folded her arms, determined not to seem weak. They were not beaten yet, she told herself. For the yacht was not clear of the docks; and if only they could get on deck there might still be a chance of attracting attention. Once they were free of this cabin—

"Madame X—for that's the name we gave you," said May quietly. "We know what your scheme is. There is a girl in London impersonating Yin Su. I don't suppose she is doing it for fun, though!"

"No," said Yin Su quietly. "Most despicable plot to harm my country, my father, and to shame my ancestors. My brave, resolute, and powerful father will wreak vengeance!"

Madame X shrugged her shoulders, and her eyes twinkled.

"Too late," she said. "Even tomorrow will be too late!" And she walked slowly forward, and took an armchair. "You will be imprisoned in this cabin until we are out to sea. The yacht's final destination is the upper reaches of a lonely Chinese river. Eventually, of course, you will return to England. Meanwhile, you will be unarmed."

May looked at the door longingly. She knew that it was locked. But—Had this woman the key? Had she locked it from the inside as she stood with her back to it?

At that moment Miss Simpson rose from the couch, quite white and shaky. "I—I have never done anything desperate in my life," she quavered. "but the time has come!"

They all looked at her; and then May gave a shrill cry of mingled horror and amazement. For in Miss Simpson's shaking hand was a small automatic pistol.

Madame X made a movement forward, and then dropped back.

"Take care!" she exclaimed. "Miss Simpson!" cried May. "For goodness' sake!"

"Sssh! Don't shout! If you make me nervous it may go off!" the governess quavered. "I am terrified of firearms. I wish I had never bought this. I never dreamed I might have to use it!"

Madame X, recovering her composure, smiled.

"It is not loaded," she said.

Miss Simpson faced her grimly. "You think I am a fool," she said.

"I am not. I have been silly at times. But I have always wanted to do something really big in life—something that matters—something to save others. And now's my chance. Woman—open that door!"

Madame X did not move; but May, watching her, saw alarm in her eyes. May herself was alarmed; staggered by the change in the governess. Yet Miss Simpson was being true to herself. She was having her big chance in life.

May's first impulse was to make her turn the gun aside. But she decided that it would serve their ends, horrified though she was by the possibility that it might go off without Miss Simpson's meaning it to.

"Miss Simpson! Prove that it is loaded. Fire a shot—at the floor!" said May.

Miss Simpson held the pistol forward. Then, covering her eyes with a hand, she aimed it.

ANOTHER GRAND

BOOK-LENGTH STORY

featuring the early days of

BARBARA REDFERN & CO.

appears in the April Issues of the

SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY

now on sale, price 4d. per volume. You'll revel in this magnificent story. It shows Hilda Richards at her very best, combining drama, mystery, and all the fun of school life. And remember the number—676.



The three other lovely stories are as follows:

No. 677. "Must Morcove Expel Her?" An early adventure of Betty Barton & Co., written by Marjorie Stanton.

No. 678. "The Schoolgirl Hotel Hostess!" A most unusual story, entirely new and original, by Joy Phillips.

No. 679. "Valerie's World-Wide Quest!" Featuring the world-famous girl detective and her clever Alsatian dog.

"Stop—don't shoot!" cried May. Madame X was pale and stiff with fright; for the pistol was pointed directly at her.

Yin Su suddenly moved forward. She held a silk scarf in her hand, and, soft of foot, reached the side of Madame X, who did not take her eyes from the governess.

With a swift movement the Chinese girl swung the scarf over Madame X's head, and even as the woman let out a gasp, pulled it tight, covering her eyes and mouth. On the instant, May moved to Miss Simpson and pushed up her arm.

The trigger clicked. A flame showed. But that was all. It was just a patent cigarette-lighter!

May stood and stared, while the governess, seeing that Madame X's eyes were bandaged, shook with suppressed merriment and gave the cigarette-lighter to May.

May looked at it, amazed and amused; for never had she seen anything more realistic in her life. But after that one glance she returned it to the governess, then flung her arms about her neck. Releasing her, she turned to Yin Su, who now held Madame X's fingers in a strange jujitsu grip. Signalling that the bandage must not be allowed to slip, May then urged the governess forward.

"If that woman opens her mouth—the fault will be hers."

Miss Simpson, grimly smiling, for once the heroine of a situation, stood behind Madame X and put the cold muzzle of the cigarette-lighter to the nape of her neck, as she had seen gangsters do in films.

"You—you're crazy," muttered Madame X.

May tiptoed to the door and listened for a moment, then stooped and looked through the keyhole. But she could not see right through. The key was on the outside of the lock.

Signalling to the girls, she beckoned them to the door; then very gently she rapped on the panels.

A voice answered in Chinese, and Yin Su replied.

The voice had asked "Open, madame?" And Yin had replied "Now, please," in a gruff tone.

The key clicked, and as the door opened the three girls stood behind it, hardly breathing. For a moment nothing happened. Then a Chinese sailorman stepped into the room. He saw Madame X, and then saw the automatic pistol that Miss Simpson aimed at him. Instantly his hands went up.

"Forward!" said May, and gave him a push. "Turn round."

He turned his back to the governess, and May, seizing a cloth from a side-table, flung it over his head. Next moment, in one blind rush, they all hurled themselves from the saloon, Miss Simpson included.

Even as Madame X tore the bandage from her eyes and shouted, May slammed the door and turned the key in the lock.

"On deck, quick as we can," she muttered. "Keep together!"

They reached the deck, and saw that they were still in the docks, although nearing the sea. But there was no one else on deck at the moment.

"Shout—scream!" cried Miss Simpson.

But May turned to Yin Su.

"Hide," she said, "behind a ventilator—anywhere—but hide!"

Even as Yin Su dodged to hiding a sailor, hearing their voices, appeared in view. May knew that there was only one thing to do. It was a desperate way out, but she had the sense to realise



THE cabin door opened and a woman stepped in, swiftly locking the door behind her. For a moment May and her chums eyed her, tense, excited. For this was Madame X, their enemy. Then indignantly they darted forward.

"Let us out!" May cried.

that even were their screams or shouts heard they themselves could be whisked below decks before anyone within hearing could lend much aid.

As sailors appeared, and then the captain, shouting orders, came down from the bridge, May jumped to the taffrail, took one look at the frothing, green-grey water below, and then—dived overboard!

Daphne, chalk-white at the taffrail, leaned over and stared down.

"She—she hasn't come up!" she panted.

But Miss Simpson, shouting in shrill excitement, pointed.

"There she is!"

May, coming up after what seemed a whole year in the cold water, struck out, and then, although a strong swimmer, easily capable of reaching the dock-side, floundered and splashed and yelled.

A lifebelt was flung, and went smack on to the writhing water; the engine-room telegraph clanged, and the engines slowed, then thundered in reverse.

May's trick had succeeded. She had stopped the yacht!

On board it, sailormen were at the davits, swinging out a rescue boat; but someone on shore had seen what was happening, and a boat was putting out from there.

"Leave her; she's safe! Full steam ahead!" snapped the captain.

Then Daphne had a brain-wave. She wheeled to the captain, caught his coat, and, pointing to the water, cried out hysterically:

"The Chinese girl—Yin Su—where is she? My friend—"

The captain, his face white, stared down at the water for some sign of Yin Su. Then he barked an order for another boat to be lowered.

He climbed into that second boat himself, and Daphne followed him as it swung precariously. A second later Miss Simpson went, too, clinging to the ropes and nearly upsetting it.

The boat hit the water with a smack, rebounded, and rolled; then the captain snatched the oars and pushed them into the rowlocks.

Although the dockside had seemed deserted, spectators had gathered, and

a motor-boat came racing to the scene with two men in blue uniform aboard, and on the boat a significant word: "Police"!

The game was up. May, avoiding the ship's boat, yelled to the police, and it was they who, cruising alongside, took her aboard.

"Shanghaied!" gasped May, and pointed to the second ship's boat. "Those two girls, myself, and a Chinese girl who is still aboard that yacht."

It was the end. From the deck of the yacht Yin Su called down, and the police patrol-boat motored alongside, demanding that a rope-ladder be lowered. Down it rolled, and up they went. Almost immediately one returned, followed by smiling Yin Su.

"Now then, what's all this about?" asked the policeman.

"Take us to the shore and we'll tell you; but first arrest a woman on that yacht—a woman with an emerald ring," said May. "She's locked in the saloon and here's the key."

The policeman called the message to his companion, who was still on board, and received acknowledgment.

"All right," he said to May. "That yacht will return to its berth. The whole outfit's under arrest!"

"Here is the Real Yin Su!"

IN a large, magnificently furnished room at one of London's most palatial hotels a slim, frail Chinese girl sat in a high, throne-like chair, while at a polished table in the centre of the room two Chinese men and two Europeans talked earnestly.

One of the Europeans bore a name well known in diplomatic circles, his face familiar to every newspaper reader; but at the moment he was merely Monsieur Vrai, although not French, as his name suggested.

The other, a keen-faced business man, had a name that could honour a cheque drawn to six figures.

"We are satisfied," said Monsieur Vrai. "If the honourable and noble Yin Su has brought this document from her father there is little more to be said."

"I, too, am satisfied," said the business man. "It is a better proposition than we had hoped for."

They both turned to the Chinese girl after a soft exchange of muttered conversation, and she inclined her head without making any change of facial expression. She was not beautiful, but she was elegant in appearance, well-groomed, delicate-looking.

"My most noble and revered father has entrusted me with the document," she said. "Also, it is my most pleasant and honoured duty to bring his salutations and wishes for friendship and peace. All the territory marked in the document shall be yours in return for the gracious and much-appreciated service you have promised."

The two Europeans rose, and bowed. "Your father has signed," said Monsieur Vrai. "It needs now but our signatures, and—"

He broke off as a rap came at the door.

"Who is that?" he exclaimed. "I gave orders that we should not be disturbed. And—"

A flunkey opened the door, stood beside it, and announced:

"The most honourable Yin Su, and the most noble Fu Sen Li."

Into the room, dressed at her daintiest and prettiest, tripped Yin Su, followed by the tall Chinaman, her uncle. She bowed to the men and to the girl, then stood with averted eyes and soft smile as her uncle strode forward.

"Rascals!" he cried. "What is the meaning of this imposture? That girl sitting there is not Yin Su! She is not my brother's daughter! Here is the real Yin Su!"

The two Europeans stiffened and stared, wide-eyed and astounded. Then they turned to the two Chinese men, who with one accord slipped across the thick carpet to the communicating door of the adjoining room. They were gone almost before the words "Yin Su" were uttered.

Yin Su herself turned to the open doorway and beckoned in May, Daphne, and Miss Simpson, who were standing outside.

"See," she murmured, pointing to the stupefied, terrified Chinese girl. "My most debased and despised Cousin Kalsu."

Kalsu gave a little cry of despair, then, covering her face with her hands, ran across to the door through which the men had gone.

"Yin Su," said her uncle gravely, "we are in time. Here is a document bearing your father's forged signature, giving over vast estates of his to European money-makers and trouble-makers."

"Sir!" exclaimed Monsieur Vrai, drawing up in wrath.

"Sir, there is the door!" said Yin Su's uncle, ripping the precious document in two.

Without a word, the two Europeans crossed the room to the door, passed through, and Monsieur Vrai, the last to leave, slammed it.

"Were they parties to the awful plot?" asked Miss Simpson. "I am surprised. One of them had a lovely curly moustache like my father's."

"No," said Yin Su's uncle, "they were not; they were, in a sense, victims. With my brother's forged signature on the document, brought by his supposed daughter, they were satisfied that it was genuine. Once the docu-

ment was signed, the forgery would have been hard to prove. They would have acted on its guarantees—and only after serious disturbances, perhaps even civil rioting, war and bloodshed, could the wrong have been righted. The villains would have reaped their reward in the sales of supplies in the sudden enrichment of certain companies—in a hundred artful ways."

Yin Su clasped her hands and danced.

"But now—all is well?" she asked. "All is well," said May.

Yin Su's uncle smiled. "And you shall all share a splendid celebration luncheon with me. We will take over this apartment, for it is in Yin Su's name."

But there was one other thing. "Poor Miss Vesey?" asked May.

"Ah, Madame X, as you call her, but actually the wife of Monsieur Vrai," said Yin Su's uncle. "She told me what happened. Miss Vesey received an urgent message that the journey was cancelled. She was paid two months' salary as compensation, and offered a ticket for a cruise to the Mediterranean. She is on the cruise now."

May gasped in surprise. "Then we're without a real governess!" she exclaimed.

Miss Simpson clicked her tongue, quite hurt and shocked.

"And what am I, pray?" she asked. "A friend," smiled May, slipping an arm through the little governess'.

"Mostly a meek lamb, but in a moment of peril a raging lion."

"In a moment of peril such that a dragon would cry in whimpering fright, and crawl away in shaking terror," smiled Yin Su. "Most admirable, learned, and high-domed governess, although employed by our dire enemy, Madame X, my most considerate uncle will have great happiness in appointing you our governess."

"Since you are on holiday to enjoy yourselves," he said, "I can think of no one superior to Miss Simpson, who has proved herself competent, courageous, and trustworthy."

The meek, flustered little governess coloured hotly, and giggled.

"Hurrah!" cheered May, and gave her three cheers.

"Come, then!" said Yin Su's uncle. "And over luncheon I will tell you all that Madame X told me."

It was a magnificent meal, and, while they enjoyed it, they heard the full story of Madame X, how she had intercepted their telegrams, trailed them, and searched Yin Su's luggage for certain personal tokens for her impersonator to use.

Everything became clear to them then. They realised that Madame X's object had been to keep them out of the news—away from London. In a sense she had been their guardian, ever hovering near, and her most alarmed moments had been when Yin Su, first at the circus, and then as a dancer, had seemed likely to get her name and photograph in the papers.

Miss Simpson had been sent to keep them from such unwanted escapades, and to give them an assurance that there was nothing really unusual in their roaming the country sight-seeing, to ease their fears about Miss Vesey, and, in general, to regularise the whole affair.

"Well, here's to the emerald ring," laughed May, holding aloft her glass. "Here's to her good judgment in picking Miss Simpson."

"Hear, hear!" said Miss Simpson. "Oh dear, I mean, thank you, girls! But don't think it will be all work. There'll be plenty of fun. I mean; don't think there'll be all fun; there'll be plenty of fun. Oh dear, what do I mean?" she asked.

But whatever she meant they had plenty of fun and no work; for even when Miss Simpson attempted to set them work and give them lessons, that was screamingly good fun. For the rest of the holiday, not only was May a guide to Yin Su, but to Miss Simpson as well. She needed a guide even more than the pretty Chinese girl, who very quickly became as English as they.

THE END.

Magnificent
New Serial
Commences
Next Week!



"Golly, I'm the luckiest girl in the world!" thought Brenda Day, when straight from an orphanage, she went to be companion to a beautiful girl in a beautiful house.

But before she had arrived there, she was also very thrilled and intrigued, for she met a mysterious boy; a boy who, placing her under a vow of secrecy, declared that if she did well at her job, and carried out certain tasks set by him, it would alter her whole life!

MARGERY MARRIOTT has never written a finer, more unusual story than this. You'll like Brenda and her mysterious friend, Ronald, immensely—and as for five-year-old Dickie, whom she looks after—well, you'll adore him right away. So order next week's

SCHOOLGIRL

now and thus make sure of reading the superb opening chapters