

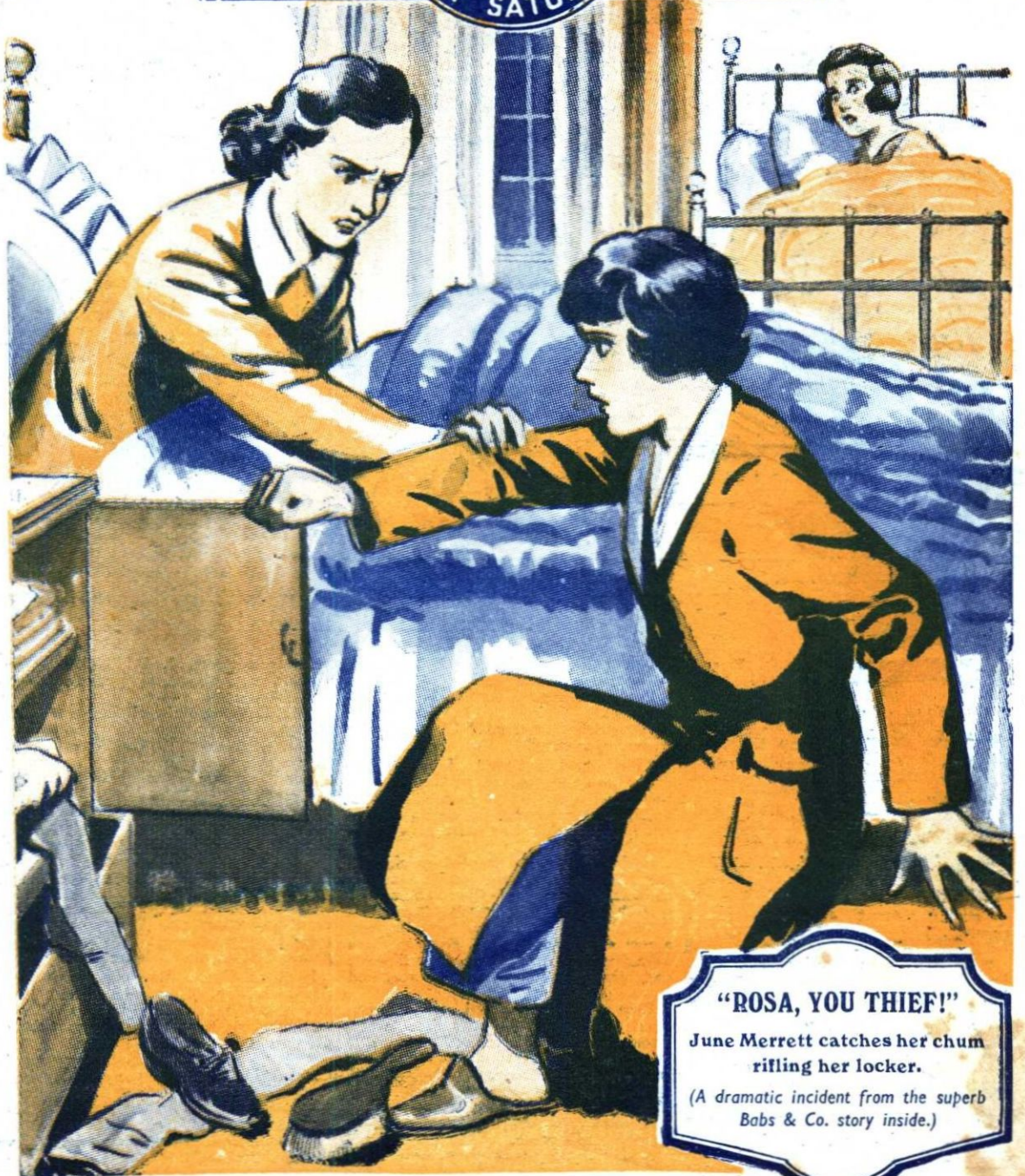
Magnificent Long Complete story of "THEIR QUARREL SPLIT THE FORM!" in this famous Cliff House School issue

THE SCHOOLGIRL

No. 511, Vol. 20.
Week Ending
MAY 13th, 1939.

EVERY 2^D SATURDAY

Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



"ROSA, YOU THIEF!"

June Merrett catches her chum rifling her locker.

(A dramatic incident from the superb Babs & Co. story inside.)

Dramatic Long complete story of Barbara Redfern & Co. of Cliff House School.

THEIR QUARREL SPLIT *the* FORM!



Babs stared at the two furious girls. What on earth had happened between Rosa and June?

Most Mysterious!



"LINE up the relay team," Clara Trevlyn called. "Babs—"

"Here we are!" Barbara Redfern, captain of junior school at Cliff House School, said, peering out of her cubicle. "Just changing."

"Good egg! Janet—"

"Here!" Janet Jordan called cheerily.

"Diana—"

"Yocks! Just getting changed," Diana Royston-Clarke called. "So is Leila Carroll; we're sharing a cubicle together."

"Jean Cartwright—"

A girl bobbed up from the centre of the swimming bath and waved a cheery hand.

"Right here, Clara!"

"Goodie!" And Clara Trevlyn, the tomboy captain of junior games, grinned. "That leaves only Rosa Rod-

worth and June Merrett," she said. "Where are they?"

But there, for the first time, came no response.

"Anybody seen them?" Clara asked a trifle impatiently.

"Well, yes, I have! I saw them going into the study after dinner, and they were scowling at each other like anything, you know," fat Bessie Bunter put in. "I think they must have had a row."

Barbara Redfern glanced quickly at her plump chum and studymate. In class that morning she had sensed something amiss between Rosa and June Merrett. There had been, in fact, a sort of veiled hostility between them ever since yesterday when June Merrett had returned home from long week-end leave.

Rosa and June had never been exactly close friends, but just lately, since Rosa and Brenda Fallace had "swapped" studies and Rosa was now installed as a member of Study No. 2, which she was sharing with June Merrett and Beatrice Beverley, they had shown a greater understanding towards each other.

And the fact that they were both excellent swimmers and had both been chosen as members of the junior school

relay race team, had bidden fair to make that understanding blossom into real friendship.

And Babs, captain of junior school, was particularly keen that there should be perfect harmony in the Fourth Form at the moment.

For the Fourth—the whole school, in fact—was excitedly and most earnestly training for the great Headleiff swimming gala which was to mark the re-opening of the famous open-air bath for the summer season. Cliff House, in fact, had entered for most of the events in that gala, but the one event which excited Fourth Form interest more than any other was the junior relay team race for which Clara Trevlyn, as games captain, had selected eight girls.

Next to Diana Royston-Clarke and Janet Jordan, June and Rosa were easily the most important of those members, and practise without their presence was just unthinkable.

"Babs, you've finished changing," Clara said. "Would you mind going and seeing what's keeping the ninnies? Don't be long, old thing," she added, as Babs groped for her bathing-wrap.

Babs nodded. She donned the wrap. With a fleeting look round the swimming bath, its water thronged with diving and splashing girls, its sides

crowded with interested spectators, she flew off.

Babs hurried through the school—almost deserted now in the interest which the swimming bath assembly held for its girls. She reached the Fourth Form corridor, and tripping along to Study No. 2, halted outside the door. It was slightly ajar.

Rosa Rodworth and June Merrett were there—Rosa seated at one end of the table; June the other. Both had their heads most studiously bent, but even that did not hide the scowl on Rosa's face and the tight-lipped look upon the features of June—June who usually looked so jolly and happy.

As Babs paused, Rosa glared across at her studymate.

"Can't you stop shaking the table?" she snapped.

"I wasn't shaking the table!" June Merrett snorted indignantly.

"Yes, you were; you made me make a blot!" Rosa said, jumping up.

"And you," Janet cried, "have made me make a mark! How the dickens can I get on if you start snapping at me every five seconds?"

Rosa glared.

"Who's snapping?"

"Hallo, hallo!" Babs said in surprise, and pushed the door open. Both of them turned and both, with a look at the other, turned red. "No quarrelling, you know," Babs reproved, with a smile. "That's not like you two. Anyway, what are you doing?"

"Lines," Rosa said. "It was her fault I got them."

"You mean," June said, "it was your fault I got mine! You started the row."

"Row?" Babs stared. "What row?" "Well, we were rowing in the passage and Miss Drake came along and gave us fifty lines each," Rosa said. "June started it."

"No, I didn't!"

"Whoa, whoa!" cried Babs. "Pax, for goodness' sake! Blow the lines, and don't quarrel like a couple of Second Form kids—"

Rosa turned crimson.

"Who's quarrelling like a Second Form kid?"

"Well, you!"

"And what about June?" Rosa asked indignantly.

"I never—" June began.

"Oh, my hat!" Babs gasped. "I'm sorry if I said the wrong thing. Keep your old quarrel if you want to, but in the meantime might I remind you that the whole Form is waiting for you both in the swimming bath? And might I remind you," she added, "that you're both five minutes overdue for practice?"

They both started a little. Then Rosa's lips straightened.

"Well, I'm ready," she said. "But"—and she glared at June Merrett—"I'm not coming if she's coming!"

"Thanks; then jolly well stop away!" June Merrett retorted.

Babs eyed them in despair.

"But you've both got to come, you ninnies!" she said. "You're in the team, and the team can't jolly well practice without you. Anyway, what's the row about?" she added.

"Never mind," Rosa retorted. "Are you going, June?"

"I am."

"Then I stop here!"

And Rosa, as if to emphasise that decision, more fiercely wedged herself in her chair, while June, rather pale but with grey eyes angrily glinting, rose.

Babs stared at them. Easy to see that something was most dreadfully wrong. This was no pin-pricking

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER.

quarrel, but something which both girls felt keenly and bitterly.

A few days ago June and Rosa had been on the most amiable terms. Now they were glaring as if they hated each other. Babs compressed her lips.

"Look here," she urged patiently, "just listen to me for a moment. I don't know what the row is about, and I don't want to know if you don't want to tell me, but it's hardly the time to start being funny, is it? For the sake of the Form you've jolly well got to forget your old footling squabbles and toe the line. It's no use one of you arriving to practise—we want both. Now, Rosa, please be sensible. You're not going to let the Form down, are you?"

Rosa paused, eyeing June. June looked away.

Rosa was headstrong; Rosa, at times, was stubborn, and not for nothing had she earned herself the nickname of the Stormy Petrel of the Fourth Form. But if Rosa was all those things, Rosa yet had a sense of loyalty, and it was not in her make-up deliberately to let the Form down. She bit her lip.

"All right," she said slowly. "But I'm not going down with her. I'll be along in three minutes."

"June, come on," Babs said.

Rosa Rodworth and June Merrett were studymates; they were swimming together in the big gala; they were fast becoming great chums. A happy state of affairs indeed. Then came the bolt from the blue. Apparently without reason, and to the blank amazement of the Fourth Form, a bitter quarrel suddenly started between Rosa and June, a quarrel which grew to amazing proportions, finally involving the whole Form in the greatest feud Cliff House had ever known.

June nodded. Without another glance at her studymate she went out. In the passage, Babs eyed her.

"June, what's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing!" said June uncomfortably.

"But what's happened to set Rosa against you like that?"

"Nothing," June said again. "At least, nun-nothing that's got anything to do with the school. She's a chump, I suppose, but— Oh, well, bother, perhaps I am, too! Come on," she added, almost gruffly, and quickened her step.

Babs hurried after her. She felt relieved, though still a little worried. Still, never mind, she consoled herself; neither Rosa nor June were likely to keep this up for long. The swimming practise should do much to restore their better humour.

There was a cheer as they reached the baths again. But Clara Trevlyn, captain of the swimming team, and never the most patient of girls at the best of times, glared.

"Well, where's Rosa?" she demanded.

"Be here in a ticklet," Babs said hastily. "June, come on; you share my cubicle."

She pushed June into the cubicle in question. Still rather pale, and seemingly utterly disinclined for conversation, June changed.

The swimming bath, always a popular resort on half-holidays, was crowded now, Sixth Formers, Fifth Formers, junior school girls, all crowding for their places in the pool. In five minutes June had changed, while outside Clara could be heard asking Dulcica Fairbrother, captain of the school, for the exclusive use of the pool for the Junior relay race.

"Right, here you are," she said, when they approached. "Rosa's turned up, thank goodness, and is changing. Now out of the bath, everybody, please!" she called. "Junior team practice. Team, forward!" she cried. "June, stand here. Rosa—hey, Rosa, buck up, you old slackerduffs! Oh, here you are," she added, as that girl emerged from her cubicle. "You stand next to Diana, by June."

"Thanks," Rosa retorted, with a dagger-like glare at the girl in question. "I'll stand somewhere else."

"Eh?"

"I'll stand here," Rosa said. "Hey, what's the matter?" Clara glared. "And who the dickens is claiming this team? This is the order, Rosa. Diana starts, you follow Diana, and then June's followed by Janet. Now no footling. We've wasted enough time as it is. June, stand here."

June compressed her lips. She hesitated a moment, then stepped into the place indicated. At once Rosa coldly edged away.

"Hallo!" breathed ill-natured Lydia Crossendale from behind them. "Me-

thinks I smell a spot of trouble! Dear little June and Rosa not on speaking terms, what?"

She chuckled; her eyes gleamed. The snob of the Fourth was not in the gala, of course, but if there was a chance of making any sort of mischief, Lydia was not going to be found wanting. Lydia was like that.

But Margot Lantham, next to her, frowned.

"Silly chumps!" she said. "Pshaw! See that?"

The excited attention of most of the watchers was on Rosa and June then. And Babs, watching also, gave an inward groan of despair. For June, closing the gap between herself and Rosa immediately, received a sharp and angry nudge from that girl, and June, stung to reaction, nudged back.

Rosa's reply was to nudge even more fiercely, with the result that June, taking an instinctive step backwards, trod on the shapely foot of the lordly Diana Royston-Clarke. Diana let out a yell.

"You clumsy goof! What the dickens are you crashing into me for?"

"Rosa, you cat!" June cried.

"Rats, you started it!" Rosa said defiantly.

"Oh, close up, close up!" Clara grumbled. "For goodness' sake stop squabbling. This isn't a football match," she added wrathfully, "so

there's no need for you to charge each other like a couple of full-backs! Now get ready, everybody! Diana—"Ready!"

"Then attention!" Clara cried. "Mabs"—to Mabel Lynn—"got the watch? Time this, please. Go!"

And splash! Away went Diana, executing her usual perfect dive. Girls cheered as, cleaving the surface of the water, she swam up the bath with almost effortless ease, turned, and came back again.

"Get ready, Rosa!" cried Clara. Rosa nodded. She stooped. Everybody was cheering Diana now, realising she was putting up a good time for the two lengths. Up came Diana. The instant she touched the rail Rosa dived, and was away like a streak. A roar went up.

"Good work, Rosa!"
Rosa went. No doubt she could swim. Like a human torpedo she streaked up the bath, touched the rail, and came back. Clara nodded excitedly to June.

"June, ready!" she ordered. But June was there, tensing for her dive. Rosa came on.

And then a gasp went up. For Rosa, instead of heading for June, slackened speed and swam off at a tangent.

"Rosa!" exploded Clara. June glared. Her face was bitter. "Rosa, you cat!" she cried. "Oh bosh!" snapped Rosa, as she clambered out of the water.

Clara ran her fingers through her unruly hair.

"No race!" she announced. "My hat, what's the matter with you two? Now we'll have to start again, and we can't have the whole bath to ourselves for long. Diana, line up, will you?"

"But look here—" Diana protested. "Please, Diana," Clara pressed. "And you two," she added, with a glare at June and Rosa, "don't carry your silly rows into the swimming bath."

June compressed her lips. She was very pale, just as Rosa was very grim.

From the watching crowd came a little murmur—half ironic, half protesting, for if there was one thing Cliff House did hate it was to witness lack of sportsmanship.

At the same moment, unnoticed by all except a few girls near the door, Miss Primrose, accompanied by Miss Valerie Charmant, the mistress of the Fourth, came in.

And at the same moment June, moving forward, happened—quite by accident this time—to nudge Rosa again.

Rosa was quivering now. Tight-lipped and bright-eyed with temper, she stood near the edge of the bath, absolutely radiating an atmosphere of hostility.

Every one of those Stormy Petrel instincts of hers was on the surface then, and Rosa, in that mood, was not the girl to think before she acted.

"You cat!" she cried, and gave June a shove.

A real shove it was this time—no mere nudge. June swivelled, tried to turn at the same moment as she found herself off her balance, and slipped.

"Rosa!" hooted Clara Trevlyn. Then—splash!

June was in the bath! Spluttering, she sank. Furiously she struck upwards again. Out of the bath she scrambled, and, with her own temper completely uncontrolled, angrily she made a rush for Rosa. Just in the nick of time Babs caught her.

"Hey, steady on, steady on!" she cautioned.

"She shoved me!" cried June. "You shoved me first!" Rosa retorted.

"Oh, for goodness' sake keep calm!" Babs said worriedly. "We all saw. Rosa, it was a fatheaded thing to do."

"And a very, very dangerous thing," put in a sharply stern voice, and Miss Primrose came forward. "I saw that. Rosa, you will take fifty lines. And, just to remind you to keep your temper in check, you will leave this bath at once!"

"Oh, but, Miss Primrose," Clara gasped, "we're practising!"

"I'm sorry. Rosa has brought it on herself. Rosa, go!"

Rosa gulped. "And—and what about June, Miss Primrose? She started it!"

"I am concerned," Miss Primrose said stiffly, "only with what I saw with my own eyes! Rosa, do not argue the point with me. Go at once!"

And Rosa, with a black look towards her enemy, stalked away.

A fine start that was to the practise, if you like!

A Tea of Trouble!



A FINE start indeed, to be followed by an inglorious finish. For with Rosa out of the team, the team at once lost one of its strongest members. The practise, from the point of view of a test, was a wash-out.

Everybody knew it was a wash-out, although Miss Primrose, who stopped to watch, professed herself as highly delighted. That comforted no one, however. Whatever the respect and awe in which they might regard Miss Primrose as a monument of learning, they had no regard whatever for her sports judgment.

It was perfectly obvious then that there was a serious split between Rosa and June Merrett.

It was a split, as a whole, which angered the Fourth. Nobody minded two girls quarrelling, but the Fourth felt—with some justification—that when the quarrel affected them all collectively, then something ought to be done about it.

Both Rosa and June were vitally necessary to the relay team, and it was vitally necessary, if that team were to be successful, that they should sink their own idiotic differences and work together for the good of all.

The practise, in consequence, pleased none except kindly and non-understanding Miss Primrose, and Clara, at least, was frankly in despair.

"Well, if this is how we're going to go on, then what chances in the relay race?" she fretted gloomily in Study No. 4 afterwards, the room shared by Babs, Mabs, and Bessie Bunter. "Something like this would happen just when everything seemed set. Babs, what can we do about it?"

Babs sighed. "Well, what? Dashed if I know! We don't even know yet what the quarrel is about. Whatever it is must have blown up since June came back yesterday—though I'm blessed if I've heard of anything that could lead up to such a row. Supposing," she added, "we invite them to tea?"

"And proffer the olive-branch sandwiches, you know!" Bessie Bunter giggled. "He, he!"

But no one laughed at the plump duffer's bright shaft of wit. They weren't in the mood for it.

"Get them together in front of a

good spread," Babs mused. "Start the chatter—just pretend nothing has happened—and then, perhaps, it might come out, and we can help put matters right. But I don't think," she added, "we'd better let one know the other's coming until they actually meet. Mabs, what about you trotting off and finding June? I'll go and tackle Rosa. Clara—Bessie, will you get the tea?"

"Yes, rather!"
"Dinner, supper, and breakfast, too," Clara said fervently, "if it will only bring sense into the two coconuts those chumps call brains!"

"Then come on, Mabs!"
Babs and Mabs quitted the study. June, they learned from Lydia Crossendale, whom they met in the passage, was in the music-room; Rosa busy with her newly earned lines in her study.

To Study No. 2, therefore, Babs made her way, and, entering, found Rosa savagely scrawling at the table. She flushed a little as she found Babs' inquiring eyes upon her.

Babs quickly closed the door. "Rosa—"

Rosa looked away. "Don't look so queer," Babs smiled. "I haven't come to lecture you."

"Well, thanks for that," Rosa said a trifle bitterly. "You're the first one in the Form who hasn't come to say something beastly since the swimming bath business! Babs, I—I'm sorry about that, really and truly," she added, with sincerity. "I suppose I was a hot-headed idiot, but—but—"

"But what?" Babs asked. "Oh, nothing! I just saw red for a moment, I suppose."

"But, Rosa, why should you see red? I'm sure June doesn't want to be bad friends with you."

"No?" Rosa scowled a little. "Well, you can't say she's acting as if she jolly well loved me!" she retorted. "If it hadn't been for her, my cousin— But never mind. If you didn't come to chin-chin about June, what did you come for?"

"I was just wondering," Babs said, "if you'd like to come to tea in Study No. 4?"

Rosa's face brightened. "Honest?"

"Of course."
Rosa laughed. She looked very pretty when she laughed, and for a moment all the bad temper and the bitterness was banished from her face.

"Then—thanks," she said. "Yes, I'd like to come. Love to, in fact. What time?"

"Shall we say about ten minutes?" Babs asked.

"Topping—yes, be finished then." And Rosa laughed again. "Be there to the ticklet!"

And Babs, feeling that she had taken one decided step towards restoring harmony between friends, trotted out, to rejoin Mabel Lynn, who had a story of equal success to report regarding June Merrett.

For the next ten minutes there was a scene of almost feverish industry in Study No. 4.

Fortunately, that day, both Mabel Lynn and Barbara Redfern had received remittances, and so Study No. 4 was in funds.

When Study No. 4 was in funds the cupboard was always well stocked, and to Bessie Bunter's beaming joy, Babs and Mabs had laid in generous supplies.

At the fire Bessie was cooking chipolata sausages and toasting muffins. Clara and Leila Carroll, who had also been invited, were cutting mountains of bread-and-butter to form sandwiches.

Babs at once rushed off to wash the

salad while Mabs opened two tins of peaches and a carton of cream.

In ten minutes everything was ready. And what a change, what an appetising smell pervaded Study No. 4, with its snow-white tablecloth, its gleaming cutlery, and its pile of good things! Rosa, coming in just as the last slice of bread was cut, glowed.

"Whoops! This is something like a feed!" she said. "Yum, makes you feel hungry just to look at that table, doesn't it—and chipolatas, too! Is that strawberry jam, Babs?"

"Well, says so on the jar," Babs laughed. "That's your favourite jam, isn't it? This is blackcurrant. June's fond of that, isn't she?"

"Is she?" Rosa asked shortly. "Where do I sit, Babs?"

"Here, old thing, next to me."

"Oh, goodie!"

And Rosa, with a laugh, seated herself while the chums grinned slyly at

"Wait a minute, you hot-headed idiots!" she cried. "I'm sorry. I suppose we should have told you that we were inviting both of you, but now you're here you're jolly well going to stop! Rosa, sit down!"

"No, thanks; I'll go."

"June, you sit down! For goodness' sake, one of you, make a move."

But Rosa and June, across the table, stood glaring at each other.

"Oh, sit down!" Clara snorted, and she pushed the chair under June's legs.

"Now, you ninny—there!" she added. "Babs, let Rosa sit at the head of the table."

"But I tell you—" Rosa protested.

"This way, please!" And Babs gently forced her into the chair. Rosa, glowering resentfully, sat down.

"Bessie, muffins for Rosa, please! Mabs, pour out some tea," she added hurriedly.

"June, dear, would you mind passing the bread-and-butter to Clara? Right.

fully' posh affair," ventured Leila Carroll, the American junior.

"Do they?" June asked, looking at her plate.

"The mayor himself is entertaining us, you know," Bessie Bunter importantly put in. "Did you hear about that, Rosa?"

"I did," Rosa returned. "Er—I think I'll go and get my handkerchief."

"Oh, no, please don't worry," Babs said hastily. "Borrow one of mine. They're new ones—and awfully soft, too. My mother sent them along only yesterday. I say, Rosa, Clara and I were talking only this morning; what is your fastest time for the half-mile?"

"Don't remember," said Rosa.

Babs looked helplessly at her chums. For the first time she was regretting her generous scheme of bringing these two girls together. It seemed plain that neither Rosa nor June were to be



"YOU cat!" cried Rosa furiously, and rounded on June. The next second, just as Miss Primrose and Miss Charmant entered the baths, Rosa pushed. Into the water sprawled June.

each other. Then the door opened again.

"Phew, what a lovely smell in here!" June Merrett laughed. "And I say—" she added, her eyes sparkling as they surveyed the table. "Thanks for inviting me. This is going to be jolly—" She saw Rosa then, who had immediately risen, her dark blue eyes suddenly glinting. "Oh!" she broke off.

Rosa's lips set.

"Is she coming to tea?" she gritted.

"Well, yes—" Babs flushed. "You see—"

"Then, thanks, I'll go!" Rosa said at once.

"But, you ninny—" "No, never mind, I'll go!" June faced her studymate bitterly. "I'm not staying where I'm not wanted," she said. "If I'd known she would be here—"

She turned towards the door. But Babs, with a despairing look at her chums, headed her off.

looking for one thing only then—that was to find themselves on the other side of the door.

"Nice chipolatas, aren't they?" Babs asked. "Like some, June? Bessie, do see that Rosa has all she wants, won't you? I do think," Babs chatted feverishly, "that tea-time is just about the happiest hour of the day, don't you? Rosa, dear, are you comfy—" as Rosa half-rose.

"Eh—oh, y-yes. I—I suppose so," Rosa stammered, subsiding.

"Like a muffin, June?"

"No—er, yes, please," June said confusedly.

"I suppose," Mabs broke in, "you're looking forward like anything to the gala, Rosa?"

"Yes," Rosa said without enthusiasm.

"Are your people coming down, June?"

"I—I think so," June replied, glancing at Rosa.

"They say it's going to be a fright-

thawed out of their hostility towards each other.

The tea, excellent though it was, was far from being a success.

So far, indeed, from pouring oil upon troubled waters, it seemed that little party only seemed to increase strained relations.

Neither June nor Rosa would relax for an instant. Both of them, desperately striving to avoid each other's eyes, just glared when those eyes happened to meet.

The effort of sustaining a conversation in which the two principal guests seemed in no whit interested was too exhausting to be kept up. Conversation flagged. Suddenly Rosa rose.

"Well, thanks for the tea," she said. "I hope you'll come and have tea with me in Study No. 2. That is—" she added, with a glance at June.

"When I'm not there!" June flashed bitterly.

"I never meant to say that!"

"Well, you were jolly well thinking it!" June burst out. "And if you want to know what I think, Rosa Rodworth, I think you've been mean and childish to spoil the party like this!"

Rosa's eyes flamed.

"I spoil the party!" she shrieked indignantly. "I like that! Is it my fault if you like to sit there like a tin goose stuffed with porcupine quills? I came here to enjoy myself—"

"And so," June flashed, "did I!"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Babs. "Here, I say—"

"And if," Rosa flamed, "I'd known you were coming I wouldn't have come within a thousand miles of the place! Babs, I'm going!"

And she went—bang!—slamming the door in her quivering fury with such force that the crockery on the table rattled, and milk slopped out of the jug on to June Merritt's navy blue drill tunic. June let out a cry.

"Rosa, you—"
And outside:

"Rosa!" an indignant voice cried—Miss Primrose's voice. "How dare you slam a door in that violent manner! You will return immediately into Study No. 4, and apologise for such a show of bad temper!"

And back swung the door; and just as June was picking up a napkin to wipe the clinging milk from her tunic, Miss Primrose came in with Rosa.

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed, staring at June. "June, what a clumsy girl you are!"

"It wasn't my fault, Miss Primrose!"

"No?"

"It—it was—"

And then June bit her lip. Rosa sneered contemptuously.

"Oh, go on! Don't mind me if you want to sneak!" she said.

"Rosa!" Miss Primrose swung round. "Not another remark like that, please! This is the second time this afternoon I have caught you girls so violently quarrelling! Rosa, apologise to Barbara for slamming the door!"

Rosa gulped.

"Well, I am sorry for that—yes!" she said sincerely. "I didn't mean to do it, Babs!"

"Then" — Babs smiled — "don't worry."

"But she must worry," Miss Primrose put in. "Bad temper is one of the things I will not tolerate in this school, and I am warning you, Rosa, that if I have any more of this I shall give you a lesson you will not forget! Now go! June, you had better go, too, and clean that milk off your tunic properly. Barbara, as captain of the Form, I look to you to keep a little more order in this study!"

And off went Miss Primrose, and off, with a shrug, went Rosa, leaving June crimson-facedly dabbing her dress. Despairingly she shook her head.

"Oh, what a fool—what a fool she is!" she said. "Now, of course, she'll blame me!" Her voice quivered a little. "Babs, I'm sorry—frightfully!"

Babs shrugged despairingly.

"So am I. But it's certainly not your fault, is it?"

"But if you hadn't invited me with Rosa—"

"That," Babs sadly confessed, "was the idea. You see, we want you to be friends. The brain-wave was that if we brought you together over a good feed you might enjoy yourselves so much that you'd patch up your differences. But what," Babs asked, "is the cause of the row? I thought you and Rosa were going along swimmingly until you went home on week-end leave?"

June flushed a little.

"Well, I—I don't know what I can say," she said. "You see—" She paused. "Well, let me put it to you like this," she said. "Supposing you saw somebody—a boy—"

"Yes?" Babs encouraged.

"And supposing you saw this boy in the act of throwing a cricket ball at a master whose back was turned? Supposing you knew that boy? Would you shout out?"

"I should jolly well think I would!" Babs said.

"Well," June said simply, "that's what I did. Oh dear! I—I'll go now."

"But—"

"No; please don't ask me to say anything else," June said, and rather hurriedly left, leaving the chums staring at each other.

"Now, what," Leila murmured, "do you make of that?"

Babs shrugged.

"Not much," she said. "The boy, obviously, was somebody to do with Rosa. All the same, it was a cad's action, and I should think Rosa would be one of the first to condemn it. I think," Babs said, "I'll just pop along and have a yarn with her. We may get something to work on between the two of them. Mabs, will you come along, too?"

"Right ho!" Mabs agreed at once.

They went off, leaving Clara, Leila, and Bessie to clear up.

They found Rosa in her study, moodily staring out of the window. She flushed a little as the two girls came in. Bluntly Babs came to the point.

"Rosa, old thing, we're just trying to help. We want, if possible, to get things cleared up between you and June—"

"And that," Rosa said, "you'll never do!"

"But what the dickens has she done?" Mabs demanded.

"To me—nothing." Rosa's eyes smouldered. "But to somebody else—yes. She's sneaked! She's told lies! It's because of her that somebody I'm frightfully fond of is jolly well going to be expelled!"

Babs started.

"Expelled—through June?"

"Yes!" Rosa clenched her teeth. "She told lies about him! She said that he—he— Well, never mind! You don't know the boy in question, Babs, but I do, and I just know it's absolutely impossible for him to do the thing June said he did! Supposing,"

Rosa went on, "you had a boy friend or relative. Just think for a moment of Jimmy Richmond at Friardale School. Supposing somebody told you that Jimmy Richmond had deliberately tried to injure a master. Would you believe it?"

"No, I shouldn't," Babs said at once.

"And supposing," Rosa went on, "that I was the girl who said I'd seen Jimmy do it. Would you have me for a pal after that?"

Babs flushed.

"Well—"

"Well, what?"

"Well, no, of course not! But I'm sure there's some mistake—"

"There's no mistake—none!" Rosa's eyes flashed. "Well, that's what happened. The boy in question is my Cousin Brian. The master in question is Mr. Simms, who is now in hospital. During the week-end June swore she saw Brian chuck a cricket ball at him, and because of that Brian will probably be expelled!"

"And nobody else saw it?" Babs asked.

"No."

"But June must have thought—"

"June thought nothing. June just had a down on him. June saw the chance of getting him into a scrape, and she took it—took it by telling rotten lies! You've said yourself, in my place, you couldn't be pals with her—"

"And," June said, suddenly appearing at the doorway, her face white, "I wouldn't blame Babs for not being chums with me if I told lies! But I didn't tell lies!"

"You did!" flamed Rosa.

"I tell you I didn't! All I told was what I actually saw—"

"What you saw!" scoffed Rosa. "What you saw! But nobody else saw it, did they? It just rests on what you said, without an atom of proof!"

"Who says I haven't got proof?" June cried.

Rosa started.

"You haven't!"

"Well, if you want to know, I have!" June flamed out. "I've got proof! I've got it here—in this school! I haven't jolly well sent it away because—well, because I know if you want to know, that if they had that proof there'd be no hope at all for your rotten cousin!"

"Where is it?" Rosa glared.

"Find out!"

"You haven't got it?"

"I have!"

"Oh, please—please!" Babs cried. "Lydia, go away!" she added, as the curious face of the snob of the Fourth peered in at the door. "We don't want Primmy here again. Now, for goodness' sake, you two," she added desperately, "do stop! Let's try to get things right! Rosa, where did you get this news from? Your cousin?"

"No. His friend, Tony Jones, wrote and told me," Rosa said.

"Well, why not write to your Cousin Brian himself, and ask him what happened?" Babs asked. "In the meantime, June, what about handing that proof—whatever it is—over to Rosa? Rosa, do you agree to that?"

Rosa paused.

"Well, yes," she agreed.

"That's it," Babs said. "Now come on, be sensible."

"All right," June looked at her studymate. "If Rosa apologises first for calling me a liar and sneak."

"Likely!" Rosa said scornfully.

"Then," June said, "I stick to the proof."

"Which you haven't got!"

"Go on, go it!" chuckled Lydia, from the doorway. "My hat! I say, come and listen to the band playing!" she cried at someone else in the corridor. "Oh, go on, Rosa darling, kiss and make friends!"

"Shut up!" snapped Rosa. "Well, are you going to hand over that proof, June Merritt?"

"Are you going to apologise?"

"No!"

"Then," June said, "I stick to the proof—that's all. And if," she added bitterly, "you're not jolly careful, I'll send it to the place where it belongs! Let me get out of this; I'm fed-up!"

And June, brushing past Babs, brushing past Lydia, now reinforced by quite a number of girls in the corridor, stormed out of the room.

The quarrel, it seemed, despite all Babs' efforts, was worse than ever before.

The Fourth Divide!



IT was. The quarrel, in fact, spread after that to alarming proportions.

For Lydia Crossendale, never one to sit idly by when there was a chance of making mischief, was in her element.

Lydia Crossendale had always hated Barbara Redfern, and had always been most pleased to make difficulties for Babs. In this quarrel she saw her chance.

Apart from that, Lydia, one-time ally of Rosa Rodworth, had never forgiven the Stormy Petrel for the blazing row which had resulted in Rosa

leaving Study No. 1. A fine chance for Lydia to pay off two old scores.

And Lydia had lingered long enough outside Study No. 2 to get the gist of the cause of the quarrel. Before that evening was out the whole of the Fourth Form were in possession of the facts.

The question then was—what would the Fourth do? Side with the girl who had only done what she considered her duty, or sympathise with the girl whose cousin had been made a victim of that sense of duty?

A good many girls knew Brian Rodworth and liked him, and they were on Rosa's side, and against June because, in their opinion, June had sneaked.

Other girls, thinking of the attack on a defenceless master, backed up June.

In the Common-room that evening arguments hot, strong, and loud waged as these points were debated. For once everybody seemed to be taking sides—even the normally quiet and reserved Terraino Twins. So great did that quarrel become, indeed, so loudly were voices upraised, that Babs, at last, had to insist upon order.

"Look here!" she cried. "If this jolly well goes on we're going to have a mistress down on us! Will you be quiet, ninnies?"

"Rats! I say Rosa's in the right!" declared Lorna Millerchip.

"And I say June's in the right!" said Lydia Crossendale. "If anybody ought to climb down, it's Rosa!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bosh!"

"Look here——"

"Piffle!"

"Will you stop it?" shrieked Babs. "Stuff! Why should we stop it? Anyway, what about yourself? Who do you stick up for?"

"It's not a matter of sticking up for either," Babs said. "It's just a matter of using a little common sense. There are two points of view, and they both seem sound in a way. I'm not taking sides in this matter, but I'm jolly well insisting on order, unless you all want to find yourselves gated for Saturday, instead of going to the gala."

There was a murmur then.

"And as," Babs said, "you can't agree, anyway, I vote you cut short the argument. If you can't cut short the argument, then the next best thing, I suggest, is that you split yourselves up, and get together on opposite sides of the room to prevent further argument."

"My hat! That's an idea!" gurgled Lydia Crossendale. "That's it, girls! Come on! Who's sticking up for June?"

"I am!"

"And me!"

"Then this way!"

"And who," shouted Christine Wilmer, "sticks up for Rosa?"

"I do!"

"But, look here——" Babs cried.

And she blinked a little in dismay. She had not really made the last suggestion because she expected to see it carried out. But the temptation for Lydia, at least, was too great. Lydia, perhaps, felt that the credit—if it could be called such—of starting this argument was all hers, and it was vital to her curiosity that she should wish to see how many supporters she had. In any case, the suggestion was too novel to be ignored.

At once a bunch of girls crossed over to Lydia's side. Almost an equal amount crossed to the other side. Babs, Mabs, Bessie, and Clara stood in the middle of the two factions.

"Well, here we are!"—Lydia chuckled. "Down with Rosa Rodworth!"

"Hurrah!"

"Fair play for Rosa Rodworth!"

rallied Christine Wilmer.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Deafening, tremendous the din all at once. Too late Babs regretted her rash impulse of dividing the Form. She stood on a chair, frantically waving her arms.

"Girls, girls, girls!"

"Rate!"

"Hurrah!"

"Look here, you geese——"

"Pipe down!"

"Rah, rah, rah!"

With such an uproar all at once it was impossible for it to go on without bringing someone in authority upon the scene.

Excitedly quarrelling among themselves, each faction openly defying and taunting the other, the din in the Common-room was one of the most terrific that had ever been heard. And suddenly, with a crash, the door went open.

Into the room stormed Dulcia Fair-

Alarm in the Night!



THAT was the start of the great argument which, before it was done, was to split the Fourth Form from end to end.

In that start neither June nor Rosa had any part, but the rival factions, now firmly established, thought collectively as the two principal combatants thought.

No doubt there was justification from both points of view. No doubt the problem as to who was right—Rosa or June—was desperately difficult to solve.

The scene in the Common-room had opened the split; Miss Primrose's punishment of every girl had given it a rankling bitterness which was likely to smoulder and to flare for some considerable time. Not, it seemed, until the two principal actors in this quarrelsome drama had patched up their differences would peace come to the Fourth.

But both Rosa and June, when they knew about it, were characteristically sorry.



FAITH ASHTON

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brother, captain of the school, closely followed by Miss Primrose and Miss Charmant. Miss Primrose was almost quivering with anger.

"Girls!" she cried. "Girls! Barbara, how dare you, standing there encouraging the Form to this disturbance! Get down, girl—and take fifty lines! I have never," Miss Primrose breathed, "heard such an outrageous uproar in my life! Barbara, I am ashamed of you if this is the way you imagine order is to be kept in this Form!"

"Oh crumbs!" muttered Christine Wilmer. "But, Miss Primrose——"

"Silence, please, all of you! Every girl in this room will go to her study at once and write out twenty times: 'I must keep order in school.' Apart from that," Miss Primrose added, "the Common-room is now closed for the rest of the evening."

"And I warn you," she added, with a furious glance round, "that if I find this antagonism in the Fourth persisting, I shall take sterner measures. That is all. Fare out."

And the rival factions, with dismay in their hearts, but with bitter, glowering angry glances at each other, filed out.

There was no doubt about it, June and Rosa's quarrel was no longer their own. The Form was at loggerheads now, and how it would affect the forthcoming swimming gala Babs did not care to think!

"Well, I didn't mean to make the row a Form affair," Rosa said. "In fact, I think the Fourth's got cheek to make it their affair. At the same time, I'm not having that cat holding a threat over my head—or, rather, my cousin's head. If she likes to hand the proof over—that is, if she's got it—all well and good. Babs, do you think she's got it?"

Babs looked up from the table of Study No. 4 where she was writing with Bessie and Mabs.

"If June says she's got it, she has," she replied quietly.

"Oh!" Rosa said.

And she winced a little. And though Babs did not notice it at the time her face became rather shadowed and thoughtful—and worried, too. She went out.

Later, came June Merrett.

"Oh, Babs, I—I'm sorry for what happened!" she said. "I'd no idea the row was going to spread through the Form. I—I suppose there's nothing I can do about it?"

"Just one thing," Babs said firmly. "Make your peace with Rosa."

But June frowned at that.

She, too, left, and in the studies up and down the corridor girls ground out their lines. Prep came, and after prep, call-over, in which the whole school was assembled in Big Hall.

There again June and Rosa stood together, and there again was a new incident when Rosa, happening to brush against June, received a nudge

back. Up went Rosa's temper at once, back went Rosa's shoulder, and crash went that shoulder against June, June flamed round.

"You cat—"

"Rosa—June—fifty lines for talking!" Miss Bullivant rapped.

"But dash it," Lydia Crossendale cried, "it wasn't June's fault!"

"Yes, it was!" Christine Wilmer retorted.

"Lydia—Christine—fifty lines each for talking!" Miss Bullivant added: "Let there be no more of this."

Lydia scowled. Christine glowered. Their supporters glowered, too, while June bit her lip and Rosa shook her head. On tenterhooks Babs waited for call-over to finish, expecting any moment a fresh outbreak.

Fortunately there was none, and the Fourth Formers, groaning because they had no Common-room to retire to, tramped off to studies again. Perhaps it was just as well, with feelings running so high, that they had no communal meeting-place that evening.

Bed-time came, hostility stiffening. You could sense it as soon as you stepped into the Fourth Form dormitory; you saw it in the glances girls flung at each other.

Babs, watchful and alert, sensed that the smallest incident would set trouble going again, and thus tried to turn the conversation into safe channels. There was, at least, one safe channel—or so Babs thought.

"Early to bed, early to rise," she chirruped. "Don't forget, girls, we've got to practise hard for the swimming gala. Half an hour in the baths before breakfast will help a lot."

"Yes, rather!" Clara leaped to her support. "And mind all the team is there at seven! No slacking, you know."

"Will Rosa Rodworth be there?" Jean Cartwright wanted to know.

"Well, of course."

"Then," Jean said, "I'm not sure I'll be!"

"And if," flamed up Diana Royston-Clarke, "June Merrett is there, that remark applies to me, too! I'm not running around catching more lines because I happen to be in their company!"

"But look here—" Clara cried.

And then, catching a warning look from Babs, she subsided.

The matter was not allowed to go further, and presently, with lights out, the Fourth dropped off to sleep. Chattering died to drowsy murmurs, and presently the long dormitory was filled only with the peaceful breathing of its inmates.

Babs herself dozed off, then suddenly started up as a thudding sound fell upon her ears.

And at the same moment—

"Rosa, you thief!" came a panting voice from June Merrett's bed.

"Let go of my arm, you cat!" came Rosa's reply.

Babs started up—just in time, by the moonlight that filtered through the window, to see June, a fierce grip fastening on Rosa's arm, leaping out of bed.

Rosa was kneeling in front of June's locker, and the door of that locker was up, and round about Rosa were scattered June's belongings. It was obvious at once what had happened. Rosa, sneaking out of bed, had been raiding June's locker. June had wakened and caught her in the act.

As June leapt out of bed Rosa rose. There was a brief struggle between the two, and June, with a cry, was pushed

back to the bed of Lydia, next to her. Lydia at once woke with a yell.

"Here, what's this? Whoosh, 'get up! Here, I say—'" she shouted, and heaved upward with her knees, and sent June reeling.

With a cry June slipped to the floor, at the same time crashing against the small table which stood next to Bessie Bunter's bed, and on which reposed a glass of water. The water upset, shooting all over the sleeping Bessie.

Up with a howl started Bessie.

"Ow, I'm drowned!" she cried. "Fetch the lifeboat! Help, I'm giggling down for the third time!"

"My hat!"

"What the—"

"Who the merry dickens—"

And in a moment, it seemed, the whole dormitory was awake. Somebody leaping out of bed switched on the light. Other girls sat up, glaring at the scene of commotion.

"Oh!" Lydia said. "So that's the game, is it? Thief in the night, girls. Rosa's been trying to pinch June's things!"

"I haven't!" fumed Rosa.

"Well, what else?"

"I tell you I haven't!" Rosa faced them. "I—I was only looking for something!" she cried.

"But what?" cried Babs.

"Nothing!"

"Rosa—"

"Well—well— Oh, bother you!"

Rosa flamed, and apparently feeling herself in the wrong, turned upon them. "Well, if you want to know, I was looking for the proof she says she has! You don't think I'm going to let that cat get my cousin expelled, do you?"

"Rather not!" chipped in Jean Cartwright.

"And you found it?" Babs asked.

"No!"

"Well, then, for goodness' sake get into bed!" Babs cried. "And put that light out, somebody. All the same," she added, frowning at Rosa, "you had no right to take the law in your own hands like that, Rosa!"

"Oh, stuff to that!" Diana Royston-Clarke cried. "Why hasn't she the right? She's got as much right to take the law into her hands as June had to sneak on her cousin and get him expelled, hasn't she?"

"Yes, rather!"

Everybody was wide awake now. Bitterness again was spreading through the room. No one knew what time it was. Nobody even troubled.

June stood pale by her bedside, Rosa glaring at her. Then suddenly there was a hiss.

"Cave!" somebody said.

Too late. The door came open. Through it, her face like a thunder-cloud, came Miss Primrose.

"Really, really!" she cried. "At midnight, too! Who put this light on? Why are you girls out of bed? Stand still, everybody; don't dare to move a step! Barbara!"

Babs, with a groan, stepped forward.

"Y-yes, Miss Primrose?"

"What is the meaning of this?"

Babs cast an almost hunted glance at the two principals in the trouble. But quickly she stood between Miss Primrose and June's ransacked locker, so that the headmistress should not see what had been going on there. That would have meant trouble of the most serious nature for Rosa Rodworth.

"Just—just an argument, Miss Primrose," she stammered feebly.

"An argument?" Miss Primrose frowned. "It sounded more than that to me. Every girl out of bed will take a hundred lines; every other girl

awake will take fifty. And this," she added sharply, "is the last time I shall treat this Form lightly. Now 'get to bed.'"

She stood by the door while the Fourth, bitter and smouldering, got into bed. She turned off the light, and with a rather snappish "Good-night!" went off. But hardly had her steps died down the corridor when the argument broke out afresh.

"A hundred lines!" bitterly complained Freda Ferriers. "All through that cat Rosa! My hat, it's coming to something when two idiots can't have a row without getting the whole Form punished!"

"Well, if June had only played the game," hotly retorted Christine Wilmer, "it never would have happened."

"And I suppose," sneered Lydia Crossendale, "you call it playing the game on Rosa's part to try to pinch June's things during the night?"

"I wasn't trying to pinch anything," Rosa flamed back.

"Please!" gasped Babs. "Oh goodness, don't start again!"

"Well, the least Rosa can do," Lydia cried, "is to apologise!"

"Yes, yes!"

"Go on, Rosa, apologise!"

"Rats!" retorted Rosa.

"Aren't you sorry for getting the whole Form punished?" challenged Lucy Morgan.

"Rats to the Form! I didn't jolly well ask it to interfere!" Rosa retorted.

"Right!" Lydia crowed. "Then we won't! There's only one thing to do, you girls—leave her alone—and anybody else who backs her up, too! I vote," Lydia cried, "we send Rosa to Coventry!"

"Yes, rather, and her supporters!" shrielled Freda Ferriers.

"And I vote," flashed back Christine Wilmer, "that we send June Merrett to Coventry—and her supporters!"

"Hurrah!"

"But— Oh, my hat, look here!" Babs cried. "You silly idiots—"

"Stuff! Who says Coventry for Rosa?" Lydia cried.

"We do!"

"And who," flashed back Christine, "says Coventry for June Merrett & Co.?"

"We do!" came a howl.

Babs gave a groan. From that moment, it seemed, the Form, caught up in the quarrel of two girls, was split as it had never been split before.

Clara Takes a Strong Line!



EARLY evidence of the fact was to be had the following morning.

It was ridiculous, of course. Silly—that one half of the Fourth should send the other half to Coventry. Each section, however, believed itself to be in the right; each section blamed the other.

Surprisingly enough, most of the Form was up before rising-bell the next morning—and that in spite of their disturbed night. Dagger-like and hostile were the glances which went from one rival to another.

Everybody, perhaps, was curious to see how the Coventry sentence would work out, and perhaps everybody was interested and eager as to what would happen at the swimming-bath when the team, half on June's side and half on Rosa's, were requested to practise together. An intriguing, not to say exciting state of affairs.



"WELL, it's your last chance!" cried Clara angrily, facing the mutinous Form. "Are you going to work together—or is that letter to be posted?" There was no answer. "Very well," said Clara. "Bessie, go and post that letter!"

When the team tramped down to the bath, most of the Form followed them, and when Clara called out the names of the team they all obediently stepped forward. And then came deadlock.

"Take positions as yesterday," Clara said. "Diana, you here!"

Diana stepped into place.

"Rosa, you after her."

Rosa also stepped forward.

"Now, June."

There was a pause. Then June, shaking her head a little, also stepped forward. But she did not immediately take her place.

"Janet!"

"I'm sorry, but if June's in this I'm not practising," she said.

Clara glared.

"This," she said sarcastically, "isn't a Fourth Form row, this is a practice. Get into place."

"I'm sorry!" Janet said, stiff-lipped. "I don't practise with girls I've sent to Coventry."

"All right!" Clara said; but her eyes gleamed. "Jolly well stop out—Leila—"

Leila looked uncomfortable.

"Well, I guess—"

"I guess you've come here to practise, haven't you?" Clara glared.

"Sure. But—"

"Well, step into place."

"Leila, please!" Babs begged.

But the American junior hung back, her face flushed.

"I'm sorry! I guess I bear no quarrel with you two," she said uncomfortably.

"But when you've sent a girl to Coventry I sure figure the next thing you do is not enjoy yourself splashing about in a bath with her."

"Hear, hear!"

"But this is practice!" Clara almost hooted.

"I'm sorry, I guess."

Clara set her teeth. She placed her hand upon her hips and glared at the mutinous faces in front of her.

"Look here, let's get this straight," she said. "If you must take sides, jolly well take sides, but please consider me. My job is to get this team going. To get the team going we've got to practise together—or aren't we going to practise together?"

Silence.

"Will you toe the line?"

"Not," Diana said, "with June Merrett's crowd."

June winced.

"Clara, please let me drop out!" she cried.

"Well, if the row's going to be about me, I'll drop out, too," Rosa volunteered.

"And if you jolly well do, we drop out with you!" Janet Jordan said.

"Meaning," Babs cried bitterly, "that you all drop out?"

"Well—"

"Well!" Clara exploded. "Well, that does help, doesn't it? Blessed if I know why I bother about you!" she cried irritably. "Why the dickens should I? Look here, do you want this gala to take place?"

"Of course!"

"Then," Clara said, between her teeth, "you'll jolly well do as you're told. If you don't do as you're told I'll jolly well wash my hands of you. Now—"

Angry, mutinous faces confronted her. Then Diana, with a shrug, picked up her wrap.

"Well, thanks!" she retorted icily. "But I, for one, am not practising with girls I've sent to Coventry—and that's flat! Good-bye!"

"And that, I guess, goes for me, too!" Leila supported. "Sorry, Clara!"

Clara fumed. Her temper was wearing thin. But there were murmurs from the crowd of Fourth Formers who had come to watch, and it was obvious, silly as it might be, that the rebel factions had made up their minds.

Clara snorted.

"Right-ho!" she said bitterly. "Then, if that's the game, jolly well go! Thankless job, it is, I must say, to try to skipper this crowd. Practice is off!" she announced briefly. "I'm blessed if I'd skipper you now if you asked me to. When you've come to your silly senses—that is, if you have any—let me know!"

"But—but what about the team?" Babs faltered.

"Well, if they don't care about the team, why should I?" Clara demanded.

But Clara, of course, did not mean that. Clara was talking in the heat of the moment, for she had set her mind upon winning the relay race.

All the same, it was obviously impos-

sible to bang one's head against a brick wall, and that was what trying to reason with the Fourth in its present obstinate mood amounted to. Let them cool down—let them come to their senses.

And so there was no practice that morning. Team and would-be supporters melted away. Babs was one of those who, with Clara, remained behind, but though they swam and dived in the water, there was no joy in the exercise, somehow. It was with heavy hearts and anxious brows they at last dressed, and as it was nearing breakfast-time, eventually wandered away in the direction of dining-hall.

Breakfast was not a happy meal.

The rival factions sat in the two groups, linked by Clara and Babs. Miss Charmant was quick to notice that, and so, when she came round to ask for any complaints, was Miss Primrose.

Rather sharp was the glance she sent flashing over the table, and understanding the look she threw at Barbara. But she made no comment on her observations. All she said before she left was:

"Barbara—and you, Clara—I should like to see you in my study immediately after breakfast."

And after breakfast Clara and Babs made their way to Miss Primrose's study, to find that scholarly looking lady looking just a little worried, but very severe.

She nodded to them to sit down.

"Perhaps," she said, "you can guess why I have sent for you, Barbara and Clara? I have sent for you in your respective capacities as leaders of the Fourth Form. I have observed—the whole school has observed—the spirit of hostility which has broken out in your Form these last few days, Barbara, and I want to know the reason."

Babs flushed.

"Well you see, two girls had a quarrel—"

"June and Rosa?"

"Yes," nodded Babs, flushing still more. "And—and the Form seems to have got caught up in it."

"I see," Miss Primrose gazed at her keenly. "The Fourth, in other words, have split themselves into rival camps? A very, very deplorable state of affairs, Barbara! Very bad for discipline, and very, very bad for the girls themselves!

"I do not, as you know, like to interfere in the private affairs of girls, but I am warning you now," Miss Primrose added, "on behalf of the Form, that if there are any further scenes my next step will be to cancel the Form's entry in the gala!"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Clara. "I am sorry, but discipline must be maintained. I sincerely trust," added Miss Primrose, "that such a remedy will not be necessary. In the meantime, I look to you girls to see what you can do. Now you may go."

They went, both filled with dismay. Clara, in fact, looked quite white. To lose the Form's chance in the gala—to lose it because two silly nitwits were having a silly row which had spread and split the Form—it was preposterous!

But it was a fact. "Well, and what are we going to do?" Clara glumly wanted to know, back in Study No. 4. "We can't make the Form see reason, it seems!"

"But the Form," Babs said, "will be jolly mad if the gala's cancelled! Especially," she added, "as half of them have already invited their parents along. The only thing to do is to call a Form meeting and jolly well put it to them!"

"And let them decide their own fate?" Clara suggested.

"That's it." It seemed the most sensible thing to do, and before morning lessons Babs had sent forth the summons to a captain's meeting in the Common-room, to be held immediately after dinner. Before that happened, however, she and Clara had a long conversation together.

"It's no good just putting it to the Form and asking them to behave like good little girls," Clara said sensibly. "We've got to jolly well bring them to their senses. What we've got to issue, in some shape or another, is an ultimatum."

"But what?" Babs asked. "I've got an idea!" Clara looked grim. "I don't want to do it, but it's the one thing which might cause them to think a bit. What I'm going to do," Clara added, "is to write out a letter now scratching the relay team from the gala."

Babs started. "And we'll jolly well open the meeting by reading out that letter and ask them if they want it sent off!" Clara announced.

Babs whistled. "And—and if they don't agree?" she asked.

"Well"—the Tomboy's jaw set obstinately—"it's their own fault. The letter goes," she added. "I'm not bluffing. I'll own, between you and me, that it will be a pretty stiff blow to me. Still, what else can we do? You can't have a team that is always squabbling and won't act together!"

Babs nodded. She saw that. Obviously the quarrel in the Fourth had gone past the stage when persuasion would be of any avail. Clara's methods, if blunt and unbending, were more likely to crown their efforts with success than any amount of argument. "And you'll do the chin-wagging?" Babs asked.

"I'll do it," Clara said. "But not a word, of course— Oh, hallo, Bessie!" she added, as the door opened and Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter entered the room. "What's biting you?" she added. "You look pleased."

Bessie did look pleased, for Bessie, for once, had received a remittance from home. True the postal order was only for half-a-crown, but if it had been

for five pounds Bessie could not have been more excited. She carried the letter with her now.

"My pater's sent it," she said. "He can't come to the gala, you know, so he's sent me the remittance so that I can have a good time. Of course," Bessie said, "he really meant to send a pound, you know, only he hadn't change for a hundred pound note when he went to the post office!"

Babs and Clara grinned at the plump duffer's little touch of exaggeration.

Complacently Bessie tucked her letter into her pocket, for once really resolved to save that postal order for the gala.

Lessons then; and after lessons the meeting at which the whole Form turned up, the two factions taking opposite ends of the room. Very grimly Clara got up.

"There's going to be no beating about the bush," was her beginning. "You're called here to be asked whether you want to go on with the gala or whether you don't? Personally, I don't care tuppence which side you're on, but I do care about the relay team, and that's what I want to talk to you about now. And just for a start," Clara said, and picked up the letter she had written, "this is to the gala committee. Listen to it!"

Faces fell and looked a little startled as she read out the letter scratching the fixture.

"That's it," Clara said, and put it back in its envelope. Then she sealed it. "Either you all agree to drop this silly quarrel now and stand together for the good of the Form, or that letter leaves by the next post!" she threatened. "I don't want to send it; I'm jolly sure you don't want it to be sent, but there it is. Stop playing the giddy goat and I'll tear the letter up in front of your eyes. Now are you going to be sensible?"

Grim and resolute the tone in which those words were uttered. For a moment there was an uneasy silence. Clara waited.

"Well, is it going to stop?" she asked.

Then from Lydia Crossendale broke a sneering, scoffing laugh.

"Bluff!" she said contemptuously. "I'm not bluffing!"

"Well, bullying, then!" Lydia retorted. "You're just trying to frighten girls into doing what you want them to do. Rats to your threats! If you haven't any principles, we have, and we aren't going to be bullied into being pals with Rosa Rodworth!"

There was a murmur. Lydia had struck the right note of retort there. But Clara stuck to her guns.

"I'm not speaking to you, Lydia—I'm speaking to the Form! What does the Form say?"

"Well, this part of the Form says 'Rats!' Lydia cried. "Don't we, girls?"

"Yes, yes!" "And what does the other part of the Form say?" Clara asked.

"Well, I say none of us are keen to see the gala going west," Diana Royston-Clarke said. "At the same time, we're jolly well sticking to our principles. And I do think," she added resentfully, "that it's a bit thick trying to threaten us!"

"Meaning," Clara asked, "you're not going to work together?" "Well, if Lydia & Co. like to say we're in the right—yes, we will!" Diana answered.

Lydia broke into a laugh. "And if Diana & Co. like to humbly beg our pardon and say that they were

wrong—then I reckon we'll toe the line!"

"You've got a hope!" "Well, what about—" "Oh, quiet—quiet!" cried Babs, as the quarrel began again. "Please, girls, quiet! There's no question of threatening. But we've got to do something. Think of the Form. Think of the team. Think of the jolly good time we're going to have! Now please get together. Let's show hands!" she added eagerly. "Hands up all those in favour of dropping this row and working in peace together again!"

But not a hand was raised except that of Bessie Bunter. Clara's face became red.

"O.K.!" she said. "Well, don't blame me. You've had your chance, and an ungrateful set of nitwits you are, I must say! Bessie, take this letter, will you?" And as Bessie came forward, she handed it to her. "Well, it's your last chance!" she cried. "Are you going to work together, or is that letter to be posted?"

Sulky, mutinous faces met her. Not a voice was raised.

Clara heaved a deep breath. Had the Tomboy been a girl to give way, she would probably have burst into tears under the effort the next words caused her. She said, very quietly, but with a steeliness in her voice which left no doubt as to the firmness of her intention:

"Bessie, go and post that letter!" And Bessie, letter in hand, drifted out.

Rosa and June to Go!



AND so the decision was taken, so the blow was struck, and not until later did the Fourth, seeing that decision in its every aspect, begin to realise all that it meant.

The gala to which they had all looked forward was no more for them. The parents they had written to invite down were to be disappointed; the team split up.

A period of quiet followed the incident, while the Form slowly digested its consequences. A surge of anger against Barbara Redfern and Clara Trevlyn, who they felt had led them into the trap, followed it.

That again was followed by a deepening of the feud between the two rival parties, and the Coventry ban became forgotten in the need for voicing the bitterness those rival factions felt towards each other. Girls could hardly meet without exchanging some sarcastic remarks.

The Fourth was out of the gala. Babs was downhearted; Clara, regretting her action now, went about pale-faced and tight-lipped. In the general storm which spread through the Form the principal contestants became lost sight of; but both Rosa and June were showing signs of the strain, and perhaps the knowledge that they were at the bottom of the Form's troubles tended to strengthen the extreme bitterness they felt towards each other.

No longer they spoke. When they passed each other they simply glared.

Rosa, to be rid of June, moved into Study No. 13 on her own. June, at Babs' suggestion, changed her place in class to be as far away from Rosa as possible.

But even that did not prevent incidents. And that night the quarrel once more came to a head when June, stepping into the Fourth Form class-room, found Rosa looking through her desk,

and, acting upon the rash impulse of the moment, smacked her face, just as Miss Bullivant came in.

That meant another row—with both girls once again reported to Miss Primrose. But by the last post, Rosa received a letter, for Rosa, acting upon Babs' advice, had written to her cousin Brian. The letter was from Brian, and Babs came across her when she was reading it. Rosa's face was rather peculiar.

"Rosa, is it—from your cousin?" Babs asked quickly, recognizing its importance.

Rosa nodded.

"Oh, what does he say?"

"Nothing," Rosa mumbled.

"You mean that he's not to be expelled?"

"He doesn't say," Rosa said.

"But surely," Babs argued, "that's good news? Dash it all, if he were going to be expelled, he'd be bound to mention it. What does he say about June?"

"Nothing."

Babs blinked.

"Nothing? My hat, what's this?" she cried. "You mean to tell me there's been all this trouble—for nothing? Didn't you ask him to tell you about it in your letter?"

"Well, I did—yes!" But Rosa's eyes gleamed. "But you don't know Brian. Brian, at least, isn't a rotten, sneaking thief. Brian doesn't whine and whimper, and it's pretty obvious he's only trying to put a bold face on it. That's like him. Dear old Brian would never say anything—not even against a girl like June Merrett. He's grinning and taking the medicine which doesn't belong to him."

Babs shook her head. Somehow she could not line that up in her own mind, whatever heroic principles Brian might have. Funny that—but all the mischief was done now.

She drifted off to collect a letter for herself, gulping as she read it because it was from her parents, who, looking forward to the gala, professed their utter delight at the prospect of Cliff House winning it.

Other girls in the Fourth Form received similar letters. Now that the die was cast, now that the letter scratching the relay-team had been sent off, gloom and despair settled upon them once again. For the first time there was wavering in the ranks of the rival supporters.

Everybody seemed suddenly to realise how badly they wanted to go to the gala; everybody became conscious suddenly of the treat they were missing.

In the Common-room that evening there were gloomy looks, resentful glances, and it was noted by Babs that when Rosa's or June's name was mentioned, girls abruptly turned away, as though sick of the very sound of those names.

"The Form's coming round," she told Mabs after prep. "I jolly well believe now it wouldn't take much to bring them all together again."

Mabs shrugged.

"You mean, if we hadn't scratched the fixture, they'd be willing to train again?"

"Yes."

But there it was. The fixture was scratched. The letter, by this time, would be in the hands of the secretary, and, anyway, the gala was taking place to-morrow. Towards call-over Rosa Rodworth came in.

"I—I suppose it's official about the fixture being scratched?" she asked.

"Thanks to you and June!" Babs said, a little bitterly.

Rosa flushed.

"Well, I'm sorry—but I didn't ask the Form to take up sides, did I?" she asked. "If June had only done the decent thing, it would never have happened. She—she hasn't said anything to you about—about that proof, I suppose?" she added.

"No," Babs said, rather shortly.

Rosa drifted out again. But she hadn't been gone ten minutes when June, her face strained, came into the room.

"Babs—" she said.

"Well?" Babs asked resignedly.

"Can I see you—alone—for a minute? I've got something to show you."

Babs sighed.

"What?"

"Come and see."

With a wondering glance at Mabs, Babs followed June out. June, very

sailing past her head, passed through the open window into the quadrangle. Instantly there came a startled cry in Miss Bullivant's voice.

But June, her own temper called immediately into play by the blind fury of that action, was equally impulsive. She caught up a tennis ball which had been carelessly put on top of the mantelshelf near by, and then threw.

Whiz!

And this time Rosa ducked and the ball went through the open door. There came a cry from the corridor.

"Bless my soul—"

"Oh, my hat, Rosa!" gasped Babs.

"You—you idiots!"

June and Rosa, caring nothing, stood glaring at each other.

Then into the room came Miss Primrose, adjusting her glasses which



"JUNE, look out!" cried Babs. Fortunately, June was swift to duck as Rosa furiously hurled the book. But, not so fortunately, Miss Bullivant was passing outside, and the book whizzed straight at her.

stiff-lipped, led her up the corridor, halting outside Study No. 2. Then she flung the door open.

And Babs jumped.

"Rosa!" she cried.

Too late Rosa spun round. Rosa was in front of June's bureau. There was a flushed, feverish look upon her face.

On the floor at her feet lay a couple of drawers from June's desk, their contents strewn all over the floor. Rosa was in the act of feverishly searching through them. She jumped round.

"Rosa!" Babs cried again.

"You—you thief!" cried June.

"What do you mean by ransacking my desk?"

Rosa was panting then. The knowledge that she had been caught once again searching for the elusive proof which June had said would clinch her cousin's expulsion, made fury burst its bonds all in a moment.

She did not speak. But she stooped, and swiftly she grabbed up the first thing that came to hand—a book. Babs cried out.

"Rosa! June, look out!"

For whiz! went the book, and just in time June dodged. The book,

had almost been knocked off. She was quivering with anger.

"So!" she said. "So! Still quarrelling! And you, Barbara, looking on! Rosa, I have warned you—I have warned you, too, June. This is the end. I am tired of your endless feud. I am tired of the spite that feud has created in the Form. Since you cannot agree at school, perhaps a period away from school and from each other will bring you to your senses! You will both leave to-morrow morning."

Rosa bit her lip. June turned white.

"But, Miss Primrose—"

"Those are my orders!" Miss Primrose snapped.

And wrathfully she whisked out. Babs gazed at the two and shook her head.

"Well, you ninnies, you can't say you didn't bring it on yourselves," she said. "Perhaps," she added, "that will teach you to be friends?"

"With her!" Rosa scoffed bitterly.

"I'd rather—"

"You needn't!" June retorted. "I think I'd rather be expelled than be



OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

Always cheery, chummy and helpful is PATRICIA'S weekly letter to you all. She talks gaily of herself, of things to do, things to make and things to talk about—all for schoolgirls. No wonder she is so popular with you all.

I EXPECT all you young tennis experts are frightfully pleased with yourselves because of the opening of the summer tennis season, aren't you?

I have only one problem connected with this tennis question—apart from improving my game, of course—and that concerns clothes.

What I want to know is: What is the correct garment to wear over shorts?

This is something that I really think our dress designers must have overlooked.

If it's a chilly day, the answer's easy. You wear your big coat, of course. But if it isn't, what do you wear then?

You don't feel like walking through the streets to the park wearing just your shorts and blouse—except at the seaside, of course. Your big coat's too heavy, and a blazer wouldn't quite do, somehow. The only solution I can think of is to sling your big coat just around your shoulders. Can you think of any other?

● Court Styles

My tennis racket, I'm afraid, is looking a bit worn. I've polished up the handle with furniture cream—yes, rubber "grip" as well. There were a lot of scratches on the wood at the opposite end, so I rubbed linseed oil into these. ('Tis said that a brazil nut—after it's been shelled, of course—rubbed into the wood, removes scratches. But I didn't try this, because we hadn't any brazils.)

Some girls I've seen, have been wearing scarves tied under their chins, gipsy style, to keep their hair tidy while playing tennis.

This certainly looks very sweet, but it can interfere with the game. For the scarf somehow gets in your way when you want to turn your head sharply.

So if you insist on wearing a scarf, remember to tie yours "coal-black mammy" style for this very energetic game.

And if you prefer an eyeshade and net combined, try wearing it at a gay angle—like Kay Stammers does. They look so much perkier this way, and still do their job properly.

● New Names

At a country school in a place called White River in America all the pupils are named either Smith or Brown.

That really is perfectly true—unless they've had a new girl or a new boy by now—with a different name.

It reminds me, that one very famous big store in London has found it necessary to give their staff what they call "store-names."

So if you go there, and your name is Jones, they give you another name. Then when you meet the other girls working there, they say: "What is your name!"

You say: "Alice Jones," or "Miss Jones," if you prefer it. "But my store name's Miss Montgomery"—or something like that.

And it's as Miss Montgomery that you are always known while at work.

A lovely way of getting a new name if you're a bit tired of your old one, isn't it?

● A Good Idea

I think most of us like light colours in wallpaper these days, don't we?

They make the house look so much airier and brighter, somehow.

The only disadvantage is that mothers find pale colours have a way of showing up every little mark.

Of course, you can clean these off from time to time, with an ordinary india-rubber (no, not an ink one) or a piece of stale bread.

A handful of dough, left over from the cooking will also remove marks from walls in quite a clever way.

One of the secrets of keeping walls nice is not to rest things against them—things like brooms, mops, and so on. For these really can leave marks that are an awful bother to remove. As you can imagine, an excellent way of preventing this is to have rubber covers to the handles.

That sounds very luxurious, I know. But it isn't really.

For you see, those rubber covers that you have on the handlebars of your bike would do the trick beautifully. And, as you know, you can buy these for sixpence a pair.

Tell mother, and see if she doesn't think it a good idea. Mine does.

● The Dirndl

By now, I expect the word "dirndl" is quite familiar to you. You must have seen it in magazines, in shop windows—in fact, all over the place.

As you know, "dirndl" is a particular style of dress—and the perfect style for schoolgirls. (Grown-ups like it also—for the simple reason that it makes them look young!)

Generally, these dirndls have rather close-fitting bodices, and skirts that are quite full, gathered into the waist-line.

Very simple—and very flattering. So I've been thinking. The very next

pinafore dress mother and you decide to make from a winter's dress that looks as if it won't fit you again next year, you must make it in dirndl style.

If you have a dress like the very small diagram here, then it's easy. You snip around the bodice part—as shown by the line at waist. Then hem this neatly.

From the sleeves—or the other part of the bodice—you cut shoulder straps so that the dirndl skirt is kept in place.

● Bright Buttons

I can't throw away buttons. I keep them all in my little button tin, thinking to myself: "They'll come in useful—some day."

If you have a secret hoard like this, here's a way in which to use some of those buttons to make a very cheery trimming to a simple, summery dress.

Sketch your initials—very lightly in pencil or chalk—on the pockets, and then stitch the buttons over the marking. Initials are always smart—and the buttons can add just a gay note of colour.

If the belt to the dress is plain, you can make more button trimmings there, too, if you like—so that they look like the latest thing in buckles.

● Those Lucky Days

You remember that some weeks ago I told you how to discover your lucky number from your birth-date. Then from this number, I explained how to find your lucky dates of the month.

Well, a good many of you have found your lucky number to be 1—and you've been wondering which are your lucky days.

At first, you might think all the days are—the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and so on, as these are all multiples of the figure 1.

But no, you can't have all that much good fortune!

Actually, for girls who find their lucky number is 1, the lucky days of the month are the 11th, 21st, 22nd (because that's two 11's), and the 31st (when there is one in the month).

And now bye-bye until next week.

Your friend,

PATRICIA.



THE WAY THEY DO THEIR HAIR

This week: **Barbara Redfern**

Miss Hilda Richards and Patricia have planned this feature for you between them, and hope it will interest Cliff House admirers who are looking for some hints on hair-styles—or even those who are not!



BARBARA REDFERN is lucky because her hair will stay in place without "slides," or even hair-grips—for which she's very grateful.

As you know, she has deep, natural waves in her brown hair.

Babs is a great believer in brushing for the hair—particularly when it has just been washed. She says it helps the hair to "settle down" again.

Once in three weeks Babs washes her hair—or gets Mabs to do it for her. She uses a shampoo which costs fourpence a packet and which lasts for two "washings."

With it, there is a special "rinse" for brown hair. After three rinsings in clear water, Babs has this "special rinse" poured over her hair—which makes sure that the last remnants of the shampoo are removed from Babs' very thick hair.

She does not have her hair trimmed often. Sometimes it grows quite long. But when she does, she asks for a piece at the side to be cut shorter than the rest of the hair.

On special occasions, she can curl this piece upwards to make a sort of "cocks-comb"—or it can be combed straight

down with the rest of the hair, without making any difference to the style.

Babs changes her parting occasionally to the other side, but she likes it best on the left. (She thinks her waves are stronger on the right, you see.)

When combing her hair, Babs sweeps it slightly backwards first, and then pulls the comb down to one side so that the hair falls softly over her ears.

Next week: **Mabs.**



PERHAPS you never even spare a thought for your arms when this question of good looks arises.

Hair and eyes, complexion, and hands—yes. But arms are, somehow, often forgotten.

Yet what a difference pretty, well-kept arms do make to a schoolgirl's appearance—particularly in the summer-time when they are so much on show.

Next time you see a girl in a sweet little summer dress with short sleeves, just take a peep—when she's not looking—at her arms.

OFTEN FORGOTTEN

Elbows are often red and rough-looking—though the owner might not even be aware of this. It's only the onlooker who sees. The upper parts of the arm—at the back—are quite frequently spoiled by goose-flesh, which is so red and unpretty.

Having noticed these things on someone else, you must now, of course, have a very critical look at your own arms, with the aid of a very candid friend, or a long, and very frank, mirror.

If you don't discover any blemishes—of course, you needn't read any farther. But if you do—

Then we must do something about them. We'll take goosey-flesh first.

PRESENTING ARMS

—with a little about backs, too. For arms and backs are going to be very much on view this summer—and they must be perfect.

BRISK FRICTION

This is a sign of sluggish circulation, and it's friction that is required to cure it.

You can rub the backs of the arms with your hands any old time that you have a spare moment.

Then when you wash—and particularly when you bath—you must give the goosey-skin a special little treatment to itself.

Wash it first in warm water. Next rub soap plentifully on to the nail-brush or loofah (that thing that looks like the inside of a mattress). Then rub this briskly up and down and back and across the arm.

Apply more soap and keep on rubbing. Your arms will certainly tingle—but the good work is being done.

Rinse off the soap and pat dry with the towel. To your horror, you'll find your arms are very red and angry looking. But never mind, this will go off after a few minutes.

And just to help the good work, you might like to dab them with a spot of bath powder—or good old boracic powder.

If you give the arms this scrubbing treatment each day, I promise you, you'll notice an improvement on the second day. By the third, the goosey-flesh will probably have vanished. But four days should certainly do the trick even in the most stubborn cases.

PRETTY ELBOWS

Elbows don't care for the same sort of treatment.

They don't want to be treated roughly like this at all. They want gentle soothing.

So wash them first, using a face flannel and your nicest soap. Dry them, and then rub in some cold cream, some Vaseline or some olive oil.

Work this well into the skin, until the grease has all disappeared—and they'll be much softer and smoother.

If they seem yellow and discoloured, you can dig your elbow into half a lemon (after having squeezed it for lemonade)

But I must be honest and warn you that lemon-juice dries the skin. And as this is not good for it, you must make up for the bleaching and drying action of the lemon, by being certain to smoothe cream (or oil) into the skin afterwards.

A piece of cucumber, or tomato, are also very good at restoring whiteness to discoloured skin—so you might remember this when these "salad items" are at their cheapest.

BACKS TOO

Although, strictly speaking, it isn't anything to do with arms, I must just mention schoolgirl backs—for these also are very much on show these summer days, what with sunbathing dresses and fairly low-cut bathing-suits.

Quite a number of girls find they get "spots" on the back. And very annoying they are, too—especially as they're so hard to get at.

The best thing is to get mother, or your sister, or even your best friend, to give you a hand with these.

Ask mother if she'll give your back a scrubbing with a nailbrush containing lots of soap, next time you're in the bath. And also ask her to give it a really brisk rubbing afterwards with a rough towel.

If the spots tend to be dry and flaky, get someone to dab some oil between your shoulder blades and rub this in for all they're worth.

A little sulphur ointment applied to the spots if they are really bad, or some calamine lotion, will very soon clear them away for you.

Then by the time the really hot, summery days are here, you'll be able to enjoy your sunbath in carefree style, knowing that "all of you" is looking its very best.

(Continued from page 11)

your friend! Well, thank goodness," she cried, "I shall be rid of you for a while, at least! Now get out of this study!"

And Rosa, with a glare, went. But as soon as she had gone, June subsided. And then, to Babs' utter astonishment, she burst into a flood of tears.

Thanks to the Duffer!



FURIOUS, sick, fed-up was the Fourth. Some of the girls were utterly desperate because, owing to the rapidity of events at Cliff House, they had not had time to write warning their parents that, as far as the Fourth



ESME MAARTENS (Bloemfontein, South Africa).—I was delighted to receive another nice letter from you, my dear. Yes, I do love hearing from my loyal readers overseas; they always write such charming long letters, telling me all about themselves and the countries where they live. Give my love to your sister Yvonne. I hope I shall be hearing from both of you again soon.

SYLVIA FISHER (Hendon, N.W.4).—Many thanks for a very sweet little letter, Sylvia. But you must tell me more about yourself next time you write! The Lower Third Formers do not have studies, but have two very bright Common-rooms. This also applies to the Upper Third. Does your little sister read our paper yet? You must introduce her to it!

CELIA KELLY (Spennymoor, Co. Durham).—Thank you for another most enthusiastic letter, Celia. I was so pleased you liked my last letter. Yes,

deemed now to be torn apart, were thinking of those things, too. It had been their quarrel which had led to the split in the Form; their fault that all this disaster had piled upon the heads of their Form-mates and themselves. If they had only tried to understand each other's points of view this would never have happened. But it was too late—much too late. Everything was too late—now.

In the morning they were the first up. Babs was up shortly after them. Resigned now to the fate which had befallen the Form, Babs was anxious about Rosa and June. Seeing both their points of view, she was anxious that they should not part bad friends.

She liked both girls in different ways. She had been pleased at the prospect of friendship ripening between them. It would be a thousand pities if they both parted at loggerheads.

Greetings to You All from—

HILDA RICHARDS

who here replies to a few of her many correspondents.

I'm sure you're right—dear old Bessie Bunter must be everyone's favourite! I've a specially soft spot for Bessie, I know. Remember me to your chum Connie, won't you, my dear?

CHRISTINE MARSHALL (Long Buckley, Warwickshire).—What did you think of the "Library" book you were reading, after all, Christine? You seemed most enthusiastic about it in your very nice letter! Don't forget to write to me again when you've time, will you? I shall look forward to hearing from you, you know.

ILMA CHAD (Sydney, Australia).—I thought your drawings were really delightful. Ilma. Mr. Laidler, the clever artist who illustrates my stories, said he thought they were excellent, too, and we both send our congratulations. I can see you are very keen on drawing, and I should love to see more of your sketches. I mustn't forget to thank you for telling me all about Sydney. Write and tell me more about yourself and all your activities some time, won't you?

"MARGARET AND PEGGY" (Chepstow, Mon.).—Here's the printed reply I promised you in my letter, my dears. I've already answered all your C.H. questions, I think. I wonder if Margaret has her new pet yet. I'm sure my Juno was very thrilled to think that she will be named after her! My love to you both—and to the new Juno, if she's arrived!

Form was concerned, the gala was off. There was a great deal of grumbling in the dormitory that night. Everybody by that time had heard that Rosa and June were to leave in the morning, but the news was received almost with indifference. The Fourth felt too full of its own woes to worry about the affairs of Rosa Rodworth and June Merrett.

Babs herself was among those too late to notify her parents that there would be no Fourth Form part in the gala to-morrow, and Babs was looking forward without pleasure to receiving her parents at Cliff House School and breaking that news to them.

Too late she was regretting that she had ever decided on the step Clara had taken by throwing down that challenge to the Form, and Clara, in her bed, was regretting it, also. No gala. No treat for any of the Fourth on the morrow. Oh, if only the wrong could be undone!

But it was too late.

In their own beds, Rosa and June,

hand, strode out of the dormitory. June looked after her, biting her lip.

"Touchy idiot!" She frowned at the door.

Babs eyed her. "June, you don't want to part bad friends with her?"

"No," June admitted slowly. "Actually," Babs suggested, keenly eyeing her, "you like Rosa Rodworth?"

"I do," June replied shortly.

"June—" Babs touched her arm. "June, look at me just a moment," she said worriedly. "Dash it all, there's enough trouble about. I like you—like you both—and I hate—yes, I really do hate to see you going off still at loggerheads with each other. June, why not do the decent thing? Why not swallow your pride and make up with her—before you go?"

June paused. "Well, she'd never make it up."

"But she would," Babs said. "I'm sure she would, June. I know Rosa. I bet you she's feeling as down in the mouth as you and the rest of us about everything. June, you know she's after that proof. Why not do the big thing now and give it to her? Or, at least," Babs added, "tell her what it is."

But June did not reply to that. Meanwhile, Rosa, having reached the celebrated Study No. 13—well-named the "unlucky study," since she was to be turned out of it almost as soon as she had taken it over—was frowning through the window.

What a mess—what a beastly, horrible mess everything was!

And June—she was the cause of it—June, the girl with whom she had felt, a few days ago, she was getting on so nicely. June had betrayed her cousin. June, all the time, had been up against her and taunting her with the proof she had concealed away somewhere, increasing her bad temper and her anxiety. Because of June she was to leave the school; because of June there would be no swimming gala for the Fourth Form to-day, and no joyful thrill for her or any of the relay team in their attempt to wrest the honour for Cliff House. Hang June!

A knock came at the door, and Rosa stiffened as June stood there.

"You!" she snarled. "Me," June affirmed. She eyed her levelly. "I've just come to tell you I'm going."

"Well, good riddance!" Rosa scowled.

"And I've just come," June levelly went on, "to tell you about your cousin. You thought I gave him away? I did—but I didn't mean to. When I saw him buzzing that cricket ball at Mr. Simms, I cried out, and—well, Mr. Simms heard me call his name, that's all. As soon as your cousin had thrown the ball he ran away, but in running away the wind blew his cap off—"

Rosa stared. "And that's the proof?" she asked.

"That's it—yes." June's lips curled a little. "I found it. I picked it up. I never intended to use it, really; I only picked it up because I didn't want anybody else to find it, because if they had it would have completely proved the case against him. But I'm going now. And before I go—there's the proof of your cousin's guilt!" she added, and tossed something on the table. "Good-bye!"

And out she went, while Rosa, like some girl in a dream, stared at the thing she had left behind.

It was her cousin's cap. There was his name—"Brian Rodworth"—marked in ink on the lining.

Steadily Rosa regarded it, catching

But Babs' efforts were destined to receive a rebuff even at this eleventh hour.

For while she was dressing, Rosa and June, without looking at each other, were packing. And suddenly Rosa glared round at her rival.

"What time train are you leaving by?" she asked.

"Eh? Ten o'clock," June said.

"Why?"

"Thanks for the information." Rosa's face was bitter. "If you're going on the ten o'clock, I'll go by the ten-thirty."

"Oh, my hat!" Babs said.

"Rosa—"

"Rats!" Rosa said shortly.

"But you can't keep this up!" Babs cried.

"No?" Rosa scowled. "Well, she's keeping it up, isn't she? Oh, bother, don't interfere!" she added irritably as Babs opened her mouth again.

And she slammed down the lid of her case, and picking up that case in her

her breath a little. This was what she had been searching for. The knowledge that this was in June's possession had constituted that threat which had increased her bitterness against June. All the time June had had it—June had been keeping it.

Now, in the eleventh hour, June had handed it back—the one vital link of proof beyond her own word which could prove the case against Brian!

She knew then. She knew that June was true blue. She knew she had only blurted Brian's name out by accident, that she would never have used this proof. It was her fault—her fault for jumping to conclusions, her fault for calling June a sneak, a liar!

Then—No, no! She could not let June go like this! Even if they both had to leave, then surely she could leave on friendly terms? She caught up the cap. She darted out, almost cannoning into Babs.

"Babs! June—where is she?"
"Went out just now," Babs said. "I think she's on her way to the station. But why—"

"Babs, I've got to find her now!" Rosa said. "I've just got to make it up with her! Oh, my hat! Come on!"

"But—"
"Hurry!" Rosa gasped fiercely. And she caught Babs' arm.

Babs looked. Babs, at the moment, was on her way to the gates to meet her parents, who had promised to arrive by the same train as June would be catching. She didn't understand—but she saw at once that something of vital importance had happened.

Breathlessly she followed the frantic Rosa as she flew along the passage and down the stairs. Girls turned to stare after the two as they pelted past them.

Down the stairs at a rush went Rosa, almost cannoning into Bessie Bunter, who was awaiting the postman.

They reached the quad, where girls, excited, already dressed, were hanging about in groups of twos and threes, waiting for cars and coaches to take them—and fond parents—to the gala.

Everybody except the Fourth Formers there seemed to be in high good humour and dashing spirits. Even in that flurried moment Babs' heart smote her. Her own parents would be here presently. This was the treat that she and the Fourth as a whole should be enjoying—

Then they saw June hurrying towards the gates. Rosa shouted:

"June—"
June looked round. She saw them and broke into a run.

"June, you idiot!" panted Rosa.
"June—Oh, my hat, she's running! But she's not going to get away!" she cried fiercely. "Not like this! She—Babs, look!" she cried. "Brian!"

For as June reached the gates a boy had come through them—a rather handsome boy. Babs had never seen him before, but she guessed at once who the newcomer was. Rosa's cousin.

He saw June and made to head her off. June made a dash past him, but easily he caught her arm. Then he saw Rosa, and grinned, and with a laugh he held the crimson and humiliated June, while Rosa and Babs, followed by half a dozen interested Fourth Formers, now rushed up.

"Brian, thanks!" Rosa panted.
"June, you goose—"
"Good-bye!" June snapped.

"Say, what's this?" Brian Rodworth said. "What's the giddy lark? June, I came down to see you—and Rosa here. I made the journey on purpose."
Rosa blinked.

"You mean—you're expelled?" she breathed.

"Expelled?" Brian Rodworth looked at her. Then he went off into a peal of laughter. "Rather not! That's what I came to see you about. You see, I read your letter. I'm afraid—I answered it in a bit of a hurry, and looking through it again yesterday I seemed to read between the lines that you and June had had some sort of split. So here I am," he added blandly.

A crowd had gathered now, among them Clara Trevlyn, Mabs, Janet Jordan, Lydia Crossendale, Bessie Bunter, Diana Royston-Clarke, and Jean Cartwright. They all stared at the boy.

"But—but I don't understand!" Rosa stuttered. "June—June says she saw you. June found your cap—this cap," she added, producing the cap in question.



"BEFORE I go," said June steadily, "there's the proof of your cousin's guilt!" Rosa stared at the thing June contemptuously tossed on to the table. It was her cousin's cap. No doubt of that.

"That cap," Brian Rodworth said, "is mine—yes. Don Brandon took it by mistake from the rack. Don Brandon was wearing it when he biffed Simms. You see," he added, "Don Brandon is a bad egg—but, unfortunately, he's rather like me from a distance, and so when June saw him that is why she blurted out my name. But Don, if he wanted his revenge on Simms—Simms had been rowing him, you know—had a sence of decency, and when he heard I'd been accused, he came forward like a man and owned up."

"And, of course," Brian added, "June was right in the first place. I think, if I'd seen a fellow buzzing a ball at Simms I'd have cried out."
Rosa's face was a study.

"Then—then it—it's all been a mistake!" she cried. "I thought—I thought—" And then she choked.
"Oh, my hat! And—and to think we've been through all this! To think that we've both been sent home!"

"And to think," Clara Trevlyn bitterly groaned, "we've scratched the relay team!"

Bitterness, dismay, the realisation of things done which need never have been done was in all their faces then. Babs had been right when she had said that there was a mistake. June had been right in her point of view, and Rosa had been right in hers. And because they had been right, they had brought all this misery upon their own heads.

Brian stared wonderingly at them, and Babs explained, at which the boy looked equally dismayed.

"Well!" Diana Royston-Clarke said. "Well!" she repeated, after a pause. "And so all ends in spluttering smoke! Yoicks! If we'd only known this all along—"

"Rosa and June would never have quarrelled," said Jean Cartwright.

"And I'd never have sent that letter scratching the gala!" Clara Trevlyn repeated. "Oh, what fools—what fools!"

There was a glum, angry, despairing silence. With feelings too utterly deep for words, the Fourth Formers stared at each other. In the midst of that silence there was a step, and suddenly Granger, the postman, stood among them.

"Morning, young ladies!" he said cheerfully. "Fraid I haven't anything for any of you this morning except Miss Bunter."

"Oh, good!" cried Bessie eagerly. "Is that another postal order?"

Granger, with a smile, passed her a letter. But nobody was paying any attention to Bessie. Then Bessie blinked at it.

"I sus-say—" she said.
"Oh, shut up!" Clara snapped.

"But—but—Bessie blinked again. "I say, you know, this letter's open!" she protested.

"That's right, miss," Granger said.

"But, look here—"
"Because," Granger informed her gently, "it was a letter you've already received, Miss Bunter. You must have posted it back to yourself by mistake!"
Bessie goggled. Babs glanced at her.

Still not understanding, the plump duffer took the letter out, and, as she did so, a postal order dropped from it. Babs picked it up. It was a postal order for half-a-crown.

"Why, this is your father's letter you got the other day!" she said. "Bessie, you chump! What made you post it back to yourself?"

"But I didn't, you know—I didn't, really!" Bessie said sincerely. "I haven't written a letter since I had this one, so how could I post it back?"

"Phew!" Babs said.

"Eh?"

"Bessie, listen!" Babs' face was suddenly working with excitement. "Oh, my hat! Half a minute! You have posted one letter!"

"But I haven't!"

"Yes, you have—the letter which Clara gave you in the Common-room the other day!"

Bessie stared.

"Yes, I posted that; but that wasn't a letter of mine, you know."

"In any case," Clara put in, "what the dickens does it matter? The fact is—"

"No; wait a minute!" Babs' eyes were gleaming now; there was a flush in her cheeks. "Bessie had her father's letter with her at the same time she posted the letter of resignation," she said. "It would be like Bessie to get them mixed up, and post the wrong letter—her own! And that means, if she hasn't posted any other letter, that she still must have the letter scratching the event, doesn't it?"

"Sounds reasonable," Brian Rodworth agreed, while Clara stared.

"Bessie, feel in your pocket!" Babs cried.

Bessie plunged her hand into her tunic pocket. And, with bated breath now, with a hope they dare not breathe, they watched her as she fumbled. If Bessie had been loaded with flashing diamond rings they could not have been more utterly hypnotised in that moment.

And the plump hand came out, a letter in it. And from Clara went up a whoop that was almost a shriek.

"Bessie!" she screamed, and, to the plump one's utter consternation, fell upon her neck.

"Here—phoo! Oh kik-crums! Oh, I sus-say—" spluttered Bessie.

"Bessie, you wonder girl!" Clara shrielled. "Bessie, you dear old blundering, fat-headed, stupid old duffer! That means," Clara whooped, "that the letter wasn't posted, after all! That means that the relay race isn't scratched! We can go! Thank goodness old Bess hasn't got brains! We're saved!"

"But—but—but—" stuttered Bessie.

"Come on!" Clara cried. "Get together, everybody! Rosa! June! You're in this! But wait a minute! Brian! Babs! All of you! Come along! We've got to see fair play! We've got to explain! We've got to get you two off somehow, though you are the most feather-brained idiots I've ever met! Let's all go!" she cried wildly.

"Hurrah!"

And faces radiant, eyes agleam with hope now, they all rushed off, flocking to Miss Primrose's study in a bunch, almost carrying the breathless and bewildered Brian with them. In astonishment, Miss Primrose listened to the story which was gasped out. But she understood, and, understanding, smiled a little. She looked at Rosa and June.

"I see!" she said. "And a very, very unfortunate misunderstanding it is, but

one, I am sure, which could never have arisen had you not been so hasty at jumping to conclusions, Rosa. Do I understand you are friends again now?"

Rosa gulped.

"If June says so—yes," she replied.

"June's a brick! I'll own now I was wrong. Perhaps, if I'd put myself in her place, I'd have done the same. But June's true blue, even though we have been at loggerheads. She had that proof, and if she'd felt really spiteful she could have used it!"

"And, June, you—"

June smiled happily.

"Well, Miss Primrose, Rosa was right, too. It was right of her to stick up for Brian. Perhaps, if I'd been in her place, I'd have done the same. If Rosa's willing to make it up, I'm sure I am! Rosa, I'm sorry!"

"And me, too!" Rosa said.

Miss Primrose smiled. Everybody eyed her anxiously.

"Then," she said mildly, "I take it the quarrel is completely at an end. In the circumstances, perhaps I, too, had better be generous and give you both a new chance. Rosa—June, you are forgiven! You may go to the gala, and it you really wish to show me that you appreciate my leniency, I hope you will do your utmost to win it for Cliff House! Why, bless my soul!" she added, as Clara, impulsively and wildly, called three cheers for Miss Primrose. "Really, my dears—"

But the cheers were given, and, with Rosa and June arm-in-arm, and radiantly happy now, the Fourth streamed out. The quarrel was over; the feud was ended. Peace was restored once more, and the Fourth reunited.

ND JUST as if to celebrate the re- cementing of their friendship, just



as if to prove to Cliff House that they were both anxious to make amends for the misunderstandings they had caused in the Fourth, Rosa Rodworth and June Merrett that afternoon were the heroines of the gala.

Though the seniors lost their events, the juniors more than made up for their lapse. And it was Rosa and June, from the very first, who were responsible.

Three heats and the final in the race! But what a walk-over for Cliff House! And even the lordly Diana had the grace to confess that she was utterly outswum by the now fast chums of Study No. 2. So fast was the time they made that Cliff House's opponents never had a chance.

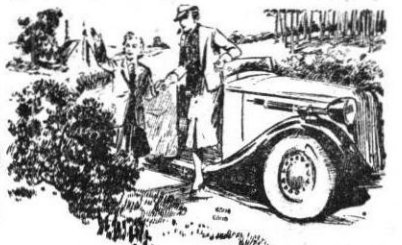
In the second and third heats Rosa and June excelled themselves, if anything.

Then came the final, with Rosa taking the lead and setting such a cracking pace that a Cliff House victory was almost a foregone conclusion from the end of the first lap. The last lap was left to June, who won almost without loss of breath.

A great, a glorious victory—a victory which made Cliff House cheer wildly. For weeks after that June and Rosa, erstwhile enemies, were the heroines of the lower school.

And that great misunderstanding, bitter as it was while it lasted, seems to have forged stronger and firmer links of understanding between Rosa and June. Friends they were before the quarrel, but now, thanks to the lesson they have both learned, they promise to build a foundation of sincere friendship which can only be compared to that which exists between Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn, or Clara Trevlyn and Marjorie Hazeldene.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.



FAITH ASHTON SCHEMES ANEW!

Faith Ashton—"baby-face," as she is sometimes called. An amazing girl indeed. With her lovely features, her bewitching eyes, her simpering, affectionate ways, it is small wonder that she captivates everyone she meets for the first time.

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Further chapters of our dramatic and unusual new serial—

**FOR NEW READERS.**

BRENDA DAY, who has spent most of her life in an orphanage, is delighted when she is asked to become companion to wealthy **VERONICA SCHOLES**. Veronica lives with her aunt and uncle and her five-year-old brother, Dickie. Part of Brenda's duties consist of looking after the lovable youngster.

On arrival at Fernbank, the Scholes' house, she meets a mysterious boy, **RONALD**, who tells her that he is working on her behalf and that for the sake of her future happiness, she must remain at Fernbank and do well in her new position. He warns her to let no one know that they have met. He gives her a photograph of a family group, asking her to see if she can recognize anyone in the group.

That night Veronica takes Brenda with her to a dance. During the car journey to the dance Veronica sees the photograph in Brenda's bag and accuses her of having taken it from Fernbank. She demands to know why.

(Now read on.)

Brenda Bluffs!

"BUT why did you take this photo from the morning-room, Brenda?" Veronica persisted, a note of impatience in her voice.

Brenda tried to seem composed as she looked into her young mistress' curious, rather resentful face, but her heart was filled with dismay.

She dared not confess that this was not the photo of which Veronica was thinking, but another, exactly like it, which her secret friend, Ronald, had given her, and told her to keep it out of sight. There was only one alternative—to "admit" a theft she had not committed, and try, by some ingenious explanation, to excuse herself.

There was a tense silence in the car. Even the low purring of the engine seemed to have become hushed as Brenda and Veronica regarded each other. Then Brenda spoke.

"Oh, I—I just sort of—sort of—well, felt rather intrigued by it," she faltered. "You know how it is sometimes, Veronica. When I—"

"But that didn't give you the right to keep it! And why did it intrigue you?"

As Veronica's dark eyes scanned her face, Brenda steeled herself.

Veronica mustn't be suspicious. Nobody must be suspicious. Ronald had impressed upon her the imperative of never letting anyone know of their friendship, for her future happiness depended on it.

And yet—oh, golly-pips, what ever could she do to allay suspicion now?

"Well, why, Brenda? There must be some reason."

Brenda drew in a quick breath. Inspiration! She'd got it at last.

"I—I know you'll think me silly and all that, Veronica," she said, with a shaky little laugh, "but—well, I got the idea I knew someone in the photo, one of the grown-ups, you know. All sorts of people used to visit us at the

"Talking of the orphanage, dear," she inquired, "were you there long?"

"Ever since I can remember," Brenda said, pleased by such interest. "The matron told me I came there when I was quite a toddler."

"And you don't remember your father and mother?"

Brenda, sighing, shook her head.

"No," she said. "And I don't know whether to be glad or sorry about it. You see—they didn't want me!"

"You mean—they deserted you?" Veronica said.

"Yes," Brenda nodded. "That's what the matron said."

She felt Veronica's hand tighten consolingly, encouragingly over hers. And when Veronica, her voice low and sympathetic, murmured: "Oh, you poor old thing!" Brenda warmed with gratitude.

Dear Veronica! A girl of strange moods. One moment morose, the next engagingly charming; then sharp, suspicious, indignant; and then kindly and sympathetic.

When Veronica, patting her hand, settled down in her corner, Brenda was feeling easier in mind—until suddenly a disturbing thought occurred to her.

That other photo! Why, it must be still in the morning-room. Veronica had only to see it when she went there with the duplicate to realise that there were two of them, and she'd want to know how Brenda had come by hers.

Fiercely, Brenda clenched her hands. Somehow she must prevent Veronica from making that discovery. But how—how? And then her face lit up. Why, by taking the photo from the morning-room so that Veronica never knew the truth.

She would wait until they both returned to Fernbank after the dance, and then contrive some way of getting into the morning-room first.

Convinced that that was the best plan, Brenda forced herself to forget her

A Race Home From the Dance! The Vital Photograph Must Be Concealed.

orphanage, and I thought, maybe, that was where I might have seen this person." She pointed to the family group photo as Veronica held it on her lap. "That—that lady there!"

Anxiously, she watched as Veronica looked down. For this was a sheer invention, of course—and a decidedly risky one. But Veronica shook her head at once.

"I don't see how you could have done," she observed. "That was my Aunt Phoebe—she's been dead years now. It must have been someone like her you were thinking of. Well, I'll keep this and put it back. And, Brenda," she added, looking up, her face set, "please don't do anything like this again."

Brenda trembled with relief. "Oh, no, I won't, Veronica."

"Then let's forget it, Brenda," Veronica said, with a return to the friendlier side of her nature.

She put the photo into her handbag and snapped it shut.

By

MARGERY MARRIOTT

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anxiety, and at last White Elms—Squire Challenor's home—was reached. And how Brenda's eyes roved delightfully about her when she alighted. What a lovely place!

Masters, their own chauffeur, did not descend from the driving-seat to open the door. A tall, thin, deferential butler did that instead. He bowed as Veronica, gathering her wrap about her, stepped down and swept up the broad stone steps; he bowed to the tremblingly elated Brenda.

Up the steps Brenda tripped. Other guests teemed about her. And then she herself was being greeted by the squire and his wife.

A charming couple, of middle-age, they stood just inside the wide-columned porch, welcoming each new arrival.

"Veronica's companion, eh?" boomed the squire. He thrust out a massive hand. "Glad to know you! Make yourself at home. Just do as you like!"

And the squire, turning to greet his friend, Colonel Redmaine, left Brenda to the more tender attentions of his wife.

"I'm so glad to have met you, my dear," the lady said, as she shook Brenda's hand. "We knew you were coming to Fernbank, of course. I'm sure you and Veronica will get on famously together—won't you, dear?"

Veronica, thus appealed to, nodded eagerly.

"We're firm friends already, aren't we, Brenda?" she said. "But let's hurry up and join in the fun!"

As if from nowhere, a trim maid popped up and conducted them to one of the rooms temporarily converted into a ladies' cloak-room. Short though the journey was, it brought fresh thrills to Brenda, for she managed to snatch a peep into several other rooms, and weren't they exciting!

Table-tennis in one; a bridge party in another; billiards and snooker in a third, with a surprisingly large number of ladies taking part, too; dancing in the beautiful ball-room, softly lit and

gay with decorations; and a special cold buffet-room, where guests were helping themselves to the most delectable array of eatables.

"Oh, Veronica, isn't it lovely?" Brenda breathed, starry-eyed, as they swiftly saw to their toilet before hurrying out of the cloak-room.

"Glad you're enjoying it," Veronica said. She added a trace of lipstick to her already bright lips. "Ready, dear? Then off we go."

Brenda happily followed Veronica out of the room. Almost immediately they were seen by a crowd of young people. Cheery greetings went up, and fellows and girls gathered round, all curious to see what Veronica's companion was like.

"How do?" one boy greeted her, saluting.

"What's your name?" asked a girl. "Where do you come from?"

Just a perfect deluge of laughing questions, until Brenda, laughing herself, fluttered her hands.

"Potted autobiography," she announced. "Name Brenda Day; age nearly fifteen; come from an orphanage; arrived by train this afternoon, and here I am! Well," she ended, smiling, "how's that?"

"Excellently put," remarked one fellow. "An orphan, eh?"

"And you arrived this afternoon by train?" said a girl. "What time was that?" And when Brenda told her, she burst out eagerly: "Why, then you must have seen all that shemozzle!"

For a moment Brenda did not understand.

"Shemozzle?" she said, puzzled. "Why, did something happen?"

"Some silly idiot nearly killed himself," another fellow put in. "Just as the train was starting, a chap dashed after it, jumped on the running-board, started chatting to someone in a carriage, and then hopped off between stations. Must have been crazy! Surely you knew about it?"

Brenda felt the blood drain from her

cheeks. Oh, yes, she knew about it—knew far more than they did! For it was her mysterious young friend who had risked his life in that reckless fashion; and she the person to whom he had spoken.

That very first encounter was still a vivid memory in her mind. Even now she could not understand why Ronald had acted so remarkably. But one thing she did know—it must never be learned that he and she were the two figures in that astonishing little drama—it must never even be suspected that they knew each other.

"Oh—that!" she said, conscious of every eye upon her. "Oh, yes, I did see it! Silly fellow, wasn't he? I rather go: the idea, though, that he wanted to give something to someone—something they'd left behind!"

There were understanding nods, then; but Veronica looked at Brenda with something of her recent puzzlement.

"Why, you never told me you'd seen it, Brenda," she exclaimed.

"I—I didn't think it was important," Brenda hastily excused herself.

"Not important, but quite exciting," Veronica said. She frowned. "What a queer girl you are! The photo—and now keeping mum about something most people would be dying to tell everyone. I can't make you out," she ended, shaking her head.

"Well, what does it matter? No harm's been done—not even to that chump who risked his neck!" a boy interposed, smiling. Then he waved his arms. "Carry on with the fun!"

Fun and frolic there was galore. Brenda, already quite at her ease with this friendly gathering, enjoyed every moment of it, and then presently Veronica came across, saying she wanted to introduce her to some of her special friends.

"Here we are," Veronica exclaimed, piloting her to a little group near the door. "Meet Brenda, everybody! And, Brenda, meet the gang! First, Maud Wren. She's captain of our tennis club, and she and—"

But Brenda was not listening; Brenda did not hear. Deaf and blind to everything else, she was staring incredulously at one young fellow in the group.

It was Ronald, her mysterious friend!

On Dangerous Ground!

VERONICA, breaking off her introductions, looked backwards and forwards from Brenda to Ronald.

"Hallo!" she said sharply. "Do you two know each other?"

Brenda roused herself. Nobody must ever dream of that! Ronald had told her it would be fatal to her own interests; that it would wreck the strange, secret work on which he was engaged.

And yet—what ever was Ronald doing here, a friend of all these people, a friend of Veronica?

But, oh dear! What ever was she to say?

It was Ronald who came to the rescue of them both.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry," he said apologetically, taking Brenda's limp hand. "It was my fault, Veronica. I was staring at Brenda. Just interested, you know. Naturally she stared back, so I stared harder, and then she stared harder still, and—well, there we were!"

He laughed. The others laughed. Veronica looked annoyed. But only for a brief instant. Then, with a shrug, she resumed the introductions.

Brenda was conscious of a meaning pressure on her hand before Ronald released it. Thankfully she glanced at him. He'd saved them that time. But why was he here?

And—who was he?
Brenda made discreet inquiries about that score from one of the others.

"Who?" said the girl. "That fellow with the nice hair? Oh, that's Ronald Benson."

"Live near here?" Brenda asked, in a casual voice.

"At the Grove—frightfully posh place. His dad's a lawyer."

"And Ronald's still at school, of course?" Brenda persisted.

"Goodness, no! He left college a year back. Isn't doing anything—"

"You seem very interested in Master Benson, my dear," said Veronica, appearing at that moment.

Brenda gave her the most disarming smile.

"I only wondered who he was," she said. "I'm interested in all the people I've met."

"Really?" said Veronica, and left it at that.

Brenda did some rapid thinking. Perhaps Ronald's disconcerting appearance at the party would prove to be a blessing in disguise, for she could confide in him about the photos. And—why, yes, she suddenly realised, her heart leaping with hope—perhaps she could get him to help her outwit Veronica when that girl went to the morning-room!

There was no chance immediately for a word with Ronald, for he kept well out of her way. And Brenda, realising that he was deliberately averting any chance of suspicion, played up to him by studiously keeping out of his way.

But when someone suggested dancing, Brenda caught his eyes on her from the far side of the room. Making sure no one was watching her, she nodded. Almost imperceptibly, Ronald nodded back.

In two's and three's the crowd drifted off to the ball-room. Veronica, very gratified by the envious remarks of some more friends about acquiring such a topping girl companion, was one of the first to leave. Ronald and some boisterous pals went next. Brenda, surrounded by quite a host of eagerly interested people, came last.

"Can you act?" she was asked.

"Well, a little," she declared.

"Then you'll have to take part in the pageant. Veronica's in it—she's got one of the best parts. You simply must come to the first rehearsal to-morrow."

"Oh, I'd love to!" Brenda cried, her eyes sparkling. "If I can, of course!" she qualified, remembering that she wasn't a free agent, and had to put her duties at Fernbank first.

Inside the gorgeous ball-room she had several dances, and revelled in it all until at last Ronald Benson suddenly appeared before her, asking her for the next dance.

Brenda's heart beat a little faster. They had planned for this moment. To the strains of a lilting waltz they mingled with the throng, and not until both were satisfied that Veronica was unable to notice them did they broach the many questions that teemed in their minds.

"Ronald, what ever made you come here?" Brenda breathed, scarcely moving her lips. "You said we must never be seen together."

"Neither must we—except like this."

Ronald said, also without apparently speaking. He glanced about him. "When I said that, I was an intruder at Fernbank, remember, and I was thinking of that. It's different like this—so long," he added, with a warning look at her, "as nobody ever suspects we're friends, or guesses what we're doing."

"But what are you doing, Ronald?" Brenda asked. Pleadingly she looked up into his brown eyes. "Won't you, please, tell me just a little more of what it's all about?"

But he shook his head as he gracefully steered her between two other couples.

"Sorry, Brenda, but I daren't. All I can do is repeat what I said this afternoon: Your future—your happiness, and the happiness of several other people—depends on something I'm trying to do, and the help you give me whenever I want it. It's tremendously important, Brenda," he added, in slow tones. "It's vast—huge! If I did tell you what I know you'd probably just laugh."

Brenda, realising he was not to be drawn, was about to reply when Ronald suddenly twisted his face into an expression of mingled pain and annoyance.

"Ow! My foot!" he gasped. "I say, you might be a little more careful, you know! That's the second time you've done that!" He lowered his head and hissed into her ear: "Play up Veronica's watching. Pretend you're angry, too!"

"Oh," said Brenda, and instantly made her own expression one of indignation. "Thank you for the compliment to my dancing!" she retorted icily. "I suppose it hasn't occurred to you that you might be at fault?"

Still looking furious, Ronald gave a low chuckle.

"Good girl!" he whispered. "But, I say, did you learn anything from that photo I gave you? I mean, recognise any of the people in it?"

"Oh, Ronald, I've been waiting to talk to you about that," Brenda breathed. "I didn't recognise anyone, no. But I haven't got the photo now. Veronica has."

Ronald looked horrified.

"Veronica?" he repeated, as they

resumed dancing. "Veronica's got it?"

Swiftly explaining what had happened, Brenda tried to reassure him.

"But I've got an idea, Ronald," she said. "If only I can hide the one at Fernbank before Veronica spots it, she need never know there are two of them."

"That's a scheme, certainly," Ronald said, a thoughtful, more hopeful look on his face. "You mean, slip in first when you get back to Fernbank?"

Eagerly Brenda nodded.

"Yes, Ronald. And I was wondering if you could help. The only trouble is that I might not be able to slip away first, but if something happened to delay Veronica—if she was held up, though only for a few minutes, I could get the photo and smuggle it away."

"And I," said Ronald, his eyes gleaming, "know how to hold her up! Look here, I'll persuade her to let me drive her home, with one or two others going that way. It'll be easy to fake a breakdown half-way there, or take the wrong turning. You leave that to me, Brenda. But for goodness' sake, collar that other photo, and—don't get caught by her aunt or uncle!"

Brenda shook her head, all her worry magically disappearing.

"Trust me, Ronald!" she said. "And now, as Veronica seems to be looking this way again—"

"And as the show's over," added Ronald as the dance came to an end, "I get your meaning. Let's resume the scrap."

Side by side, glaring daggers, they walked back to the group of tables shared by their party, both realising that one way of preventing people—and Veronica in particular—from realising they were friends was to pretend to be at loggerheads.

"It would be as well if some people learnt to dance!" said Ronald fiercely.

"I quite agree!" Brenda retorted instantly.

"Oh, you do, do you?" Ronald glared. "Well, in that case—Oh—ahem! Just a little disagreement," he added as the others stared at them in surprise.

"Seems like a stand-up scrap, to me," said one of Ronald's pals bluntly.

"What ever's happened?" Veronica



BRENDA gaped as Ronald clasped his foot. But next moment her mysterious boy friend was whispering tensely: "Veronica's watching. Pretend you're angry, too!" And then Brenda understood.

asked. She put an arm about Brenda's shoulder. "I'm ashamed of you, Ronald!" she cried. "Don't take any notice of him, dear!" she urged, turning to Brenda.

Brenda pretended to look downcast, but her heart was happy. For with the one source of dread removed from her mind—the problem of how to make sure of frustrating Veronica—everything seemed simply perfect.

She saw very little of Ronald. But that didn't spoil her enjoyment. Veronica's other friends did everything they could to make amends for his "rudeness."

Radiantly happy, Brenda at last bade good-bye to her host and hostess, giving her thanks for such a wonderful time.

Someone brushed against her as she turned to follow Veronica down the steps. It was Ronald, looking straight ahead of him.

"Leave her to me," he whispered. "But listen! Meet me to-morrow afternoon. Three-thirty by the spinney. And bring that other photo—the one you're going to get now. I must have it! I think it may lead to something pretty big. Don't forget—the spinney! Cheerio!"

Next moment he had gone speeding down the steps, to overtake Veronica and catch at her arm. Brenda excitedly hurried past them. The spinney—to-morrow!

But first—to reach Fernbank ahead of Veronica—and remove that other photo!

Veronica Investigates!

HOLDING her breath, every nerve atingle, Brenda tiptoed across the hall at Fernbank.

Past midnight! Five minutes ago Brenda, driven by Masters, had arrived home, to be greeted by Mrs. Scholes, to give an excuse for Veronica's absence, and an assurance that the girl was perfectly all right, and would be along at any moment, and, finally, to be conducted upstairs.

But the moment the unsuspecting lady had gone along to her bed-room, Brenda had cautiously slipped downstairs again. And now, pent-up with suspense, she was stealing towards the morning-room.

She found the photograph on the bookcase. It stood in a little wooden mount. Swiftly she plucked it out, replaced the mount on top of the bookcase, and, turning, darted back for the hall.

Five seconds later she was safely ascending the stairs.

Only just in time. Even as she reached the first landing the sound of a car, drawing up outside the front door, and a medley of laughing voices told her that Veronica was here at last.

"But I don't care who's here now!" Brenda thrilled, as she hurried along to her bed-room, and swiftly started to undress.

She had studied the photo without detecting any difference from the other, and was combing her hair in her dressing-gown, when Veronica, fully clothed, peeped in. Veronica, she noticed, looked surprisingly penitent.

"Oh, Brenda dear," she burst out, "I'm so awfully sorry you came home by yourself. That wretched Ronald fellow told me you'd be coming in with us. I do hope you didn't think it was my fault!"

"Why, of course not, Veronica!" Brenda said, quite gaily. "I didn't mind in the least," and she smiled at Veronica, nodding, withdrew.

Brenda did a little dance of sheer delight. Done it! Not only saved herself from a very awkward situation, but also secured for Ronald something which, though it had no significance for her, was apparently of vital importance to his peculiar efforts on her behalf.

No wonder Brenda felt supremely satisfied with her first day's stay at Fernbank. No wonder she was sound asleep the moment her head touched the pillow.

One instant she was fast asleep, and then, seemingly the very instant afterwards Dickie ran into her room.

Brenda struggled up, laughing. She hugged him to her, and then gave a little cry of dismay.

"Oh, goodness, just look at the time! Nearly a quarter to eight! What a bad Auntie Brenda!" she said, throwing back the bedclothes. "She ought to have been up a whole quarter of an hour ago. And you oughtn't to be running about without any shoes or stockings on, young man," she gently admonished. "Come on! We'll go and get you dressed."

Carrying her little charge in her arms, Brenda, having put on dressing-gown and slippers, bore him off to the bath-room.

It was while she was washing Dickie's face that the little fellow, squinting at her intently through the covering of soap, suddenly said in tones of hushed wonder:

"Auntie Brenda, do you have whiskers on your chin in the morning?"

"Golly-pips, no!" Brenda exclaimed, laughing. "Why, Dickie?"

"Well," said Dickie, mumbling as she sponged the soap away, "Uncle Arthur has whiskers on his chin every morning."

"Oh, well, I expect he has them so that he can shave them off," said Brenda, sounding most terribly serious.

"Then why doesn't he shave the whiskers off here?" Dickie pursued, stabbing a finger at his upper lip.

"I expect he likes them there, Dickie," Brenda told him.

"I don't," Dickie shivered. "They tickle."

"Well, perhaps he likes them to tickle."

"Do you think he does, Auntie Brenda?" Dickie said keenly. And then, jumping up and down, he gabbled all in one breathless rush: "Do you think, if I'm a very good boy, and don't make the fairies or Auntie Vera or big sister Veronica angry, that I'll have whiskers under my nose one day?"

"Oh, yes, one day!" Brenda declared, and then jumped as Dickie eagerly demanded.

"To-morrow?"

"Not—not to-morrow, Dickie," Brenda hastily consoled him. "They take an awful long time to grow, you know. Now, leg up! Trousers on!"

Brenda revelled in the time spent attending to Dickie. If this was one of her duties, then it was the most fascinating kind of duty anyone could be set. She took him down to breakfast, to receive a smiling "Good-morning!" from Mrs. Scholes, a warm handshake from Mr. Scholes, tall, good-looking, with greying hair and moustache, and congratulations from them both on Dickie's spick-and-span appearance.

Of Veronica she saw nothing that morning, for her young mistress breakfasted in bed, and then drove over to Featheridge, two miles away, for a permanent wave.

She discovered, on Veronica's return, that she would be wanted at a

rehearsal of the pageant that afternoon, not only to fill one of the minor parts, but also to keep an eye on Dickie, who was also appearing.

There was some argument on this point, Dickie insisting that he didn't want to be a dragon-fly—as arranged by his aunt—but a wasp, instead.

"'Cos wasps go buzz-buzz, and eat jam an' honey an' marm'lade an' lots of nice things, an' dragon-flies just don't!" he confided to Brenda, while she got him ready. "Oh, please, Auntie Brenda, you'll let me be a wasp, won't you?"

"Well, I'll see what I can do, Dickie," Brenda promised, realising she must be tactful. "And now let us fly like the wasps and the dragon-flies do, shall we, or we'll be as late as late!"

Hand-in-hand, they tore out to the car, Brenda determined not to waste a moment. They were due at the social club in Featheridge by three o'clock. That wouldn't give her much time to get Dickie settled, slip away, and meet Ronald at the spinney, more than a mile from the club—as she had discovered from a guide-book of the district—all in the space of half an hour.

"If we can get there a little before three, so much the better," she mused.

They did, as it happened—two minutes before the hour. The club was already the scene of great activity, and Brenda recognised many people, both young and old, whom she had met last night, and who were clearly pleased to see her.

To her relief, the problem of how to dispose of Dickie was solved at once, for he was hauled off by some older children to be measured for his dragon-fly costume.

Brenda, instinctively feeling the photo in her coat pocket, looked round the crowded room. On the stage, at the opposite end, Veronica, smoothing back her recently waved hair, and with quite a superior, dignified air, was paying indifferent attention to one of the organisers.

"Goody, goody!" Brenda mused. "Now's my chance!"

And, dodging behind some scenery, she slipped away.

Unfortunately, her departure wasn't so secret, after all. Dickie, standing on a chair, having a tape-measure run over him, gave a look out of a window. He saw Brenda. He jumped. His little face lit up.

Ooo, perhaps Auntie Brenda was going to see about him being a wasp, after all!

Unable to restrain his childish joy, he rushed off to tell Veronica the moment the measuring was finished. His sister stared, frowning.

"Brenda's gone off—down the street?" she said, and suddenly her eyes narrowed. "Now what's she up to this time?" she mused. "Taking the photo; keeping quiet about that affair at the station, and now slipping off like this? I wonder—"

Giving Dickie into the charge of the juvenile organiser, and hastily excusing herself, Veronica darted out of the club.

Brenda, far down the street, was just turning into a lane. Veronica, face set, broke into a run. No matter where Brenda was heading; no matter how trivial her errand might be, Veronica was telling herself, she'd get to the bottom of it!

VERONICA'S curiosity threatens to be disastrous to Brenda and her mysterious boy friend. Remember to order your **SCHOOLGIRL** early and thus make sure of reading the next instalment of this grand new serial.

COMPLETE
THIS WEEK

Another fascinating story of Merry England in the Middle Ages.

SECRET HELPER

to

ROBIN HOOD

By IDA MELBOURNE



The Bogus Robin Hood!

“ROBIN HOOD, I shall miss you!”

The young Lady Fayre spoke with a sigh; for she counted Robin Hood as her greatest friend.

But the gay outlaw smiled, and, as she stood before him, in ragged, hooded cloak and shabby green frock, he patted her cheek tenderly.

“Mystery maid, I shall not be gone for long,” he said. “’Tis urgent business that takes me, and others beside myself will be richer for the venture— and happier!”

He called her “mystery maid” because, although he had met Fayre here often, when she was dressed like this, he did not know who she was. It had not occurred to him that this shabby girl was really the rich young Lady Fayre of Longley Castle, niece of the rascally, powerful Baron le Feuvre; for she was always on the side of the outlaws in their war on the baron and all-powerful bullies.

“How far are you going?” Fayre asked.

“’Tis yonder—”

Robin Hood pointed through the trees to the distant, sun-clad hills. It was a journey which many might have feared on account of wolves and boars and other perils. But Robin Hood was too expert a bowman to fear attack by an animal.

“Then good luck attend you,” smiled Fayre. “And may the haul be rich. If it is that way you go, then I know it is for the Nottingham road, ten miles away.”

Robin Hood winked.

“Not a word. Let there be no confidence with the Lady Fayre, whom sometimes you serve; for the castle walls have ears.”

Fayre could not promise not to tell herself what she knew, so she passed it off with a laugh, waved farewell, and watched the outlaws depart.

Then, when she had seen the last of

them, she turned and hurried through the woods back to the castle.

Because she was thought to be a village maid who served the Lady Fayre, she was allowed through the barbican without question and over the lowered drawbridge.

It became evident to Fayre at once that there was something unusual happening in the castle. The guards had been doubled, and there were mounted soldiers in war armour that shone and glistened in the sunlight.

But she knew better than to ask, and slipped upstairs to her bed-chamber.

No sooner had she entered it than she whipped off the shabby garments and flung them into the old oak chest in the corner, from which she took her rich red velvet frock—a lovely garment trimmed with gold lace.

Brushing her golden plaits, she hurried downstairs to find out the cause of all this excitement. And, hearing her uncle’s voice from the large living-room, she took the liberty of peeping in.

A soldier, marching up the corridor, signalled her; but, ignoring him, she drew the heavy curtain aside.

At the very moment when Robin Hood needed Fayre’s help most, he believed her a traitor!

Her uncle stood up, red-faced and ominous-looking. Before him in a chair sat a man in rather plain clothes that suggested he was a merchant. He had a rather weak face, with a fringe of beard and over-long hair.

Fayre, recognising him, bobbed back, her heart thumping. For, despite his plain clothes and ordinary appearance, she knew it was none other than Prince John, heir to the throne, and in the absence of his brother Richard at the Crusades, ruler of England!

As Fayre bobbed back, the sentry’s hand dropped on her shoulder and, frowning in reproof, he spoke sternly. “Say nothing of what you have seen!” he exclaimed. “It was wrong to look!”

Fayre nodded, smiled, and dodged away; but not before she heard her uncle give a sharp exclamation.

As she turned the bend of the corridor, she heard her uncle’s voice, raised as usual almost to a shout:

“The Lady Fayre! Find her! By what right did you allow her to enter? Bring her to me at once!”



Fearing her uncle’s wrath, the Lady Fayre hurried on, dodging behind some large packing-cases in which newly wrought armour had been stored. And as she shrank back she heard her uncle’s voice close at hand.

“I fear she saw you,” said the baron. “But it would mean little to her. She is a dull child.”

Prince John’s voice came in reply, drawing, sneering.

“It matters little, except that I did not wish to be seen. It might cause comment we would not wish to arouse, baron.”

They halted, and by the sounds Fayre judged they had turned away. She moved from hiding, turned in the opposite direction, and walked off, but

she had gone only a few yards when the sentry overtook her.

“My lady, the baron wishes to speak to you. Come, please,” he said.

While Fayre quaked with apprehension, he led her down the corridor, drew aside the curtain to the baron’s room, and announced her.

To Fayre’s surprise, her uncle was alone. He wheeled upon her frowning.

“Well, you saw my visitor?” he demanded.

“I did, uncle, but—”

“Then take care that your tongue is wise and lies still in your mouth!” he abjured her harshly. “There is peril abroad for the prince. That rascal Robin Hood might well pounce upon him.”

“Robin Hood? Oh, but he is loyal!” Fayre murmured.

“Silence! Robin Hood is but a rascal outlaw. Never let me hear you utter praises of him, or it will be the worse for you. As to loyalty, I have had word that he intends to attack even his king.”

Fayre gave a surprised start at that; for she supposed that the king was still at the Crusade.

"King Richard? But, uncle, he is at the Crusade!"

Her uncle was suddenly still; and Fayre realised that he had spoken unguardedly, for his face reddened even more than usual. With a gesture of dismissal he half-turned.

"So indeed he is," he grunted. "But keep the thought secret."

Fayre slipped out of the room, and, frowning and perplexed, stood in the corridor for a moment or two, while the sentry, obeying her uncle's summons, went into the room.

She had not stayed to hear what was said, but she could not help hearing the dramatic words.

"An important person will be arriving here towards noon," said the baron. "Let a good watch be kept from the turrets, let all arms be prepared for action."

Fayre moved on. She knew now who that important personage was—King

Richard, home from the Crusade, unknown to his people!

She went to her aunt's boudoir, hoping that her aunt would know of it, and speak more freely. But there she paused, hearing Prince John's drawing voice.

"'Twill be the end of Robin Hood," he said. "We know his evil plan to capture Richard, and hold him to ransom. But a whole army follows, even though my brother is travelling incognito. And the baron is prepared."

More amazed than ever, but hurt now as well, Fayre tiptoed away. In her own bed-chamber she stood with her back against the door, hardly breathing, her mind in a whirl.

Robin Hood, traitor, attacking his king? She could not believe it. And yet, it was strange that he should now be going away.

But there she asked herself if perchance Robin Hood had misled her, not fully trusting her; if he wanted people to think he was moving away; if he wanted afterwards to be able to prove that he had been elsewhere.

Quite cold with fright she felt—horror-stricken at the thought that Robin could possibly plan such a thing. There was only one thing to do. She must see him before he left.

Running to the oak chest, she pulled out the cloak; but hearing steps outside, dodged away before she had time to take the frock.

"Fayre!" came the baroness' voice from the corridor. "Come here, child!"

Holding the cloak behind her, Fayre stepped through the doorway to face her aunt, grim aunt.

"Yes, my lady aunt?" she murmured. "Prepare yourself to meet a visitor of importance in a short while. Ask the Venerable Brie for instructions."

There was no chance for Fayre to dodge back into her room for the green frock, for her aunt loitered in the doorway. So, turning swiftly, concealing the cloak in so doing, she went obediently down the corridor, bound for the school-room, and the Venerable Brie, her tutor.

The good man was asleep, however, and Fayre, alone in the long corridor, suddenly determined that now was her only chance to settle the terrible doubt in her mind. Wrapping the cloak together about her, making sure that it covered her velvet frock, she went swiftly down the staircase.

If Robin Hood had misled her, and intended to waylay King Richard, he would be in the wood. If he were not, then the baron was wrong.

Fayre walked warily to the wood for fear of showing the hem of her red velvet frock, and kept her head low so that the hood shielded her face. Once in the wood she hurried less carefully, and as she ran blew the whistle Robin Hood had given her as a secret warning of her approach.

As a rule, there came response from Robin Hood—an answering toot on his hunting horn. But none came now, and her heart leaped. The baron was wrong. Robin Hood did not plan to attack the king. He was not here.

And then, reaching the secret glade where Robin Hood had his headquarters, she pulled up in dismay.

Thirty or forty men in green were there, and in their midst a tall fellow with feathered cap and a green cloak like Robin Hood's. By his side was a fat man.

"Well, my merry fellows!" cried the tall man. "Am I not the living likeness of Robin Hood? And is not this worthy friar the equal of Friar Tuck? And if we are not, how should Richard know who has never seen the rascal outlaw?"

The Lady Fayre drew back, her cheeks white as chalk. For this was not Robin Hood's band, but a crowd of impostors!

But her movement was hasty and unwary. A dry twig cracked under her foot, and some of the men turned.

"A spy!" shouted one. "A village maid," said another lightly.

But then there rose from amongst them one whom Fayre knew, a man from the castle, no less a person than the baron's chancellor.

Springing up, he pointed to her. "'Tis the Lady Fayre!" he cried. "See—the red velvet frock!"

Robin Hood Didn't Believe Her!

FAYRE stood stock still, her mind in a whirl.

She knew only the chancellor of these men; the rest, for all that they wore the outlaw green of

Your Editor's address is:—
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BETWEEN OURSELVES



appeals to YOU. Drop me a line—a postcard will do, or you can wait until you start that next letter—telling me which stories, since you first read the SCHOOLGIRL, you still remember and liked, and, if possible, why you liked them.

And so, looking forward to your replies and thanking our Canadian friend for putting me on to this little suggestion, I'll now say a few words about next Saturday's grand programme.

"FAITH ASHTON SCHEMES ANEW!"

That is the title of the magnificent LONG COMPLETE Hilda Richards story, and a most enthralling, dramatic story it is, as one would expect it to be, considering the extraordinary character whom it "stars."

For the benefit of new readers I ought perhaps to give a brief word-picture of Faith Ashton. Faith is as selfish, deceitful, and treacherous a girl as one could wish to avoid. Cousin of Barbara Redfern, she does not care how much trouble and pain she causes innocent people so long as she gets her own desires.

But she is cunning withal. A few tears, tremulous words of simpering remorse or flattery, and even the hardest-hearted person falls a victim to her wiles. So much Faith has learned from experience.

Well, when an aunt of Babs and Faith visits them, Faith plays the hypocrite again, deliberately scheming for her own selfish ends and causing untold trouble not only to Babs herself, but to many other innocent people.

Don't miss this superb tale. It will hold you spellbound. Next week's issue will also contain further fascinating chapters of Margery Marriott's brilliant new serial—and please do tell me what you think of it, won't you?—another fine COMPLETE story of Lady Fayre and gallant Robin Hood, and more of Patricia's Bright and Useful Pages. So—order your copy well in advance to avoid being disappointed.

And now, readers all, I must say au revoir once more.

With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,
THE EDITOR.

MY DEAR READERS,—It isn't often I single out one particular reader for mention in these notes, but to-day I simply must make an exception. A letter I received a day or so ago from a Canadian reader is of such unusual interest that I know you'll love hearing about it.

First, to introduce the reader to you. It is Dot Napper, of Victoria, British Columbia. Not only does Dot write most entertainingly, but she writes with an experience of our paper which goes back many, many years. For Dot, I may as well tell you, is twenty-six, and just as enthusiastic a reader of the SCHOOLGIRL as any of you other loyal supporters.

Naturally, Dot has read an enormous number of stories during all that time. But the interesting point is this: She has compiled a list of the stories she has most enjoyed, dating back to some of the very earliest numbers of our old sister paper, the "Schoolgirls' Own," which was incorporated with the SCHOOLGIRL a few years ago.

A fascinating, illuminating list, I found it. Why, even I had forgotten some of the titles! (For even an editor cannot remember EVERY story he publishes, for ever and ever, can he?) But the titles refreshed my memory, and I was able to recall what the stories were about. I did not need to ponder as to the authors in question, for conscientious Dot had tabulated them, too.

I have learned quite a lot from Dot's list. For instance, I now have a thorough idea of the sort of stories that appeal to her.

And now let me ask you all to do something so that I may have an even more complete idea of what

Robin Hood's band, were strangers to her. The chancellor, clad in a plain robe, had no disguise.

Hand to heart, Fayre shrank back, feeling as though she had walked into a trap. Every eye was upon her, and silence reigned as the chancellor moved to confront her.

"My Lady Fayre, what means this?" he asked sharply.

Fayre flung wide her cloak, since further pretence was unnecessary.

"Why—why this then is—Robin Hood?" she faltered, looking at the impostor outlaw.

The men exchanged looks, and the chancellor smiled grimly.

"Tis so, indeed! But what brings you here, my lady? 'Tis the baron's orders that you do not leave the castle without strong escort."

Fayre, recovering from her first shock, had now time to think. There was a threat in the chancellor's tone that he might tell the baron of this escapade, and if he did it would be a bad day for her. But Fayre had quick wits, and saw her way out.

"Tis not the baron's orders that matter. There is to-day someone of higher rank than the baron who gives orders," she said, leaving them to guess what they liked from that.

It was a speech that startled them, for not unnaturally they imagined that Prince John had sent her.

"Let no one dare ever mention this for fear of royal disfavour," went on Fayre, gaining confidence and courage. "All are assembled, I see. 'Tis that I wish to know. Let no man fear what has to be done."

A murmur came from the men, and Fayre swung round and strode away.

Only too clearly she saw the plot!

While Robin Hood was away these men were to take his place and name and attack King Richard, who did not know the outlaw.

The king would think he had been assaulted by the real Robin Hood, who would be hounded down by royal troops if it meant searching or firing the whole forest. It would indeed, as she had heard Prince John say to her aunt, be the end of Robin Hood.

Yet why was the prince so anxious for Robin Hood's downfall? He had not suffered from the outlaw. Then into Fayre's mind came a more alarming suspicion. It was not merely a plot against Robin Hood, but against the king himself!

The fake outlaws would not only attack the king, but capture him, hold him prisoner; and if, in the fray, worse evil befell him—then the blame would be Robin Hood's.

It was a plot against the king. And Prince John would gain. With King Richard out of the way he himself would ascend the throne.

Fayre trembled at the awful gravity of the plot.

"And Robin Hood? It must have been a false message that took him away," she groaned.

As that thought came she wrapped the cloak about her, and boldly returned to the glade where the mock outlaws were gathered.

Fayre clapped her hands to gain attention, and the talk died to a murmur, then to silence.

"My lady?" asked the chancellor, more deeply respectful than usual, since he believed she had come from Prince John.

"One question I must ask, but forgot," said Fayre quietly. "Is there assurance that Robin Hood will not return?"

The chancellor smiled.

"My lady, Robin Hood is safely on



UNSEEN by the men at the front of the wagon, Fayre climbed into an empty barrel. If only she could remain hidden, she might save Robin Hood yet!

the Nottingham road, awaiting there a rich convoy that is being sent for his amusement! With one stone we kill two birds. By now the convoy is on the road. Doubtless from the top of yonder hillock it may be seen."

He pointed to a hillock a few hundred yards away, and Fayre, after a moment's hesitation, went to it. She climbed the hillock, and, looking to the west, saw the winding road below. And there, headed by two armed horsemen, was a convoy of three wagons.

Gleaming in those wagons were the helmets of soldiers, which puzzled Fayre at first, until she guessed that when near the post where Robin Hood might be in hiding they would conceal themselves until he attacked.

She did not pause a second longer, but, turning back to the trees, sought the chancellor's horse, which she had seen tethered there.

Quietly she freed it, and then, walking it to a safe distance, mounted it and cantered down to the lane. The horse speedily caught up with the slow-moving wagons, and Fayre, dismounting and leaving it to find its own way back, ran parallel with the road, taking cover behind the hedge until she was level with the last wagon.

It was loaded with wine butts of immense size—large enough to hold a soldier in them. But there was no soldier in them yet!

Here was a chance to warn Robin Hood in time! Cautiously Fayre clambered on to the last wagon, and, under cover of the driver and his mate's broad backs, climbed into one of the empty wine butts!

ROBIN HOOD, hidden in a high, leafy tree, nodded grimly as he looked, for he could see the approaching wagons—and, what was more, the flash of helmets.

With a muttered exclamation, he climbed down, swinging with wonderful agility from branch to branch and landing lightly with a spring.

"Men, we are fooled! 'Tis a trap!" he cried. "There are soldiers in the wagons!"

A murmur came from the outlaws, who had expected a rich haul that they might divide amongst themselves and the poor.

"Another rascally plot of the baron," said Robin Hood, with a grim smile. "But as ever he is not clever enough."

While his men gathered about him Robin Hood thought swiftly, and, a plan dawning in his mind, he snapped his fingers and chuckled.

"At the command, half of you let your arrows fly over the heads of the butts—those I order to," he said. "There is not one brave soldier dare raise his head."

The outlaws waited, half of them ready to spring out with clubs, the others with bows stretched and arrows at the ready. The convoy drew level, and at a yelled word the arrows flew, singing and hissing over the butts.

A dozen helmets were hastily lowered before that deadly shower.

Then out leaped Robin Hood and his followers, and as they clambered to the wagons the arrows ceased. A second later up bobbed the soldiers' heads, and down on their solid helmets landed the clubs.

Through those helmets heads could not be broken; but the stunning force was enough to daze every man.

From some butts no head rose, for there were more butts than soldiers; but Robin Hood and his men examined them all.

Little John, peering into one, let out a cry.

"The mystery maid, i' faith!"

Fayre stood up, assured that the flight of arrows had ceased, and Little John helped her out; but in so doing her red velvet frock showed, and a shout went up:

"The Lady Fayre!"

Fayre, her cloak flying, dropped to the ground, and then turned to Robin Hood.

"No; I am the mystery maid. You know me, Robin Hood?" she cried.

"You ride with traitors!" he exclaimed sharply. "No, you are the Lady Fayre. The mystery maid betrayed me more by chattering than ill-will. 'Twas you directed the soldiers here, my lady, but it has not gone as you wished. 'Tis not Robin Hood who is the prisoner, but you."

Fayre eyed him, startled and alarmed. In her eagerness to warn him of the plot she had not thought of her red frock. But now—

"I—I am the mystery maid, Robin Hood! I am indeed!" she protested. "I come with a warning. Go back at once to the wood. At once! My uncle has planned a terrible—"

She broke off, colouring deeply, and Robin Hood laughed.

"Your uncle indeed!" he said. "Yet you are not the Lady Fayre. Stuff!" he added scornfully. "I see it all. Your serving-maid is my mystery maid and you have caught her out. You have borrowed her cloak to deceive me. Only she knew that I was to come here. You wrung her secret from her."

He looked sterner than ever Fayre had seen him before, and, pointing to her, turned his head to Little John.

"Take her prisoner. The baron shall pay dearly for this pretty plot. He shall pay a thousand gold pieces ransom for her ladyship."

And then, ignoring her, he turned away to examine the wagons in case they had something more valuable than soldiers. But there was nothing save the-butts.

"Let timber be nailed across the butts to keep our soldiers in place," he said merrily. "And catch those hurrying hiding wagoners and tie them to their seats. This convoy shall be returned to the baron with my compliments—all but the best of it, the Lady Fayre."

Fayre, held by two outlaws, was led from the road, tears in her eyes. Robin Hood, believing her to be Lady Fayre, and not the mystery maid, thought her a traitor.

"Robin Hood," she cried, a lump in her throat, "please—please listen! I am indeed the mystery maid you spoke to this morning!"

He turned and shook his head at her. "Away, avaunt!" he said. "My lady's long golden hair reveals her—her rich red robe! Next you will say you are the baroness! Come! The truth! Are you the Lady Fayre, niece of my Lord le Feuvre?"

Fayre knew that she must tell the truth now at whatever risk to herself.

"Yes," she said earnestly, "I am! And—"

"Then away with her!" cried Robin Hood, before she could add she was also the mystery maid. "She is a traitor! She shall not be freed until the mystery maid is released from the castle dungeon, where doubtless she lies now that you, Lady Fayre, have learned her secret!"

Ambush!

FAYRE could not speak. The task of explaining seemed beyond her, so strongly fixed was Robin Hood's belief that Fayre and the mystery maid were two different girls.

For that being so, she must be one or the other, not both; and, as she had admitted to being Fayre, then, naturally, the outlaw was certain she could not be his secret helper.

The wagons were turned; the butts were timbered over, and the wagoners tied to their seats, their wrists bound with the reins in their fingers. Then a flick of the whip set the horses on the move.

Fayre, alone of the convoy, remained a prisoner.

In despair, her lips quivering, she yet managed to make one last plea.

"Believe what you will, keep me prisoner, but know this: King Richard is in England!"

Robin Hood drew up, startled, and then stepped towards her.

"How know you this?" he asked sternly.

"My uncle, the baron, spoke of it to Prince John at the castle," said Fayre swiftly. "There is a plot against the king. As he rides to the castle an ambush awaits him—men in green, led by one who calls himself Robin Hood—and you will be blamed!"

Robin Hood fell back, his eyes widening.

"What! Can this be true?" he cried. "No, no! 'Tis a cunning plot to make me return to a trap!"

Fayre raised an imploring face.

"Oh, Robin, I swear it isn't!" she cried. "I am Lady Fayre, but also I am your friend, the mystery maid. I dared not leave the castle as Fayre; thus always I put on poor clothes. There are not two girls, but one only—me!"

Robin Hood and his men were silent. Then Robin Hood pulled her hood on to her face so that it shaded her face, thus by shadows altering its appearance.

"Why, yes! You—you speak the truth!" he cried, amazed. "You are indeed both the Lady Fayre and my friend! But—"

As he stood dumbfounded, Fayre burst forth with her story. She told it all, and the outlaws murmured in anger against the baron and the prince.

"By my troth, then 'tis a plot against the king," cried Robin, "and against me, too! If this should win, then I shall be hounded—shall we all be hounded by all the soldiery of England! And Richard shall be lost to us!"

He took Fayre's hands, and smiled at her.

"Loyal friend, I am sorry!" he said. "Evermore I shall trust you for this brave day's work!—With good speed we can yet save King Richard and our name and honour! And now every man so to work at his best speed!"

And away down the road they went after the slow, lumbering wagons, to free the six horses and mount them, two men on each; while the others, with the king's need as their pretext, seized horses from a near-by manor house.

KING RICHARD, poorly dressed, mounted on a jogging horse, accompanied only by servants, jog-trotted along the road. The mightiest warrior in all Europe, he was not armed in England, since it had been his vow not to bring his sword back to England until it had conquered at the Crusades. Only to save his people from cruel tyrants had he returned in this secret way. But the secret had leaked out.

He was within sight of Longley Castle, travelling through a wood along a broad, winding road, when, with wild yells, there suddenly sprang out a score or more of men in green.

"Robin Hood!" came a yell.

The swarm of men attacked at once. The servants were knocked from their horses, and the king himself pulled down.

Then behind him sneaked a sly rascal with a cudgel. The cudgel rose and fell, and Richard tottered forward, to fall in a crumpled heap.

"Take him to the woods!" cried the leader. "We have won the day!"

Four men raised the king. But immediately they dropped him, as though he had become red hot; for

without warning horsemen cantered into view in a cloud of dust—men in green.

"Rally!" shouted the false Robin Hood. "We must not lose our prize!"

Sword in hand, he faced the attack.

The real Robin Hood, on a borrowed white mare, led the attack. He knelt on his horse's back as it cantered to the scene, and then sprang suddenly upon the waiting horseman, who struck too late.

Both crashed to the ground, and in a minute there was the clashing of blows, yells, and metal ringing upon metal, wood upon heads.

Before the king stirred and, holding his aching head, sat up, the fight was over, with a dozen prisoners taken, and some too dazed to escape.

"Your Majesty," said Robin Hood, "my honour has been to serve you! Here is the rascal who sought your fall—one who called himself by my name!"

The king looked at the impostor, then at Robin Hood.

"And you—who are you, noble fighter?" he asked.

"Robin Hood, outlaw, your Majesty—outlaw and loyal subject! And this," he added, turning to Fayre, whose eyes sparkled at the sight of the famous king, "Lady Fayre, niece of the Baron le Feuvre, who warned me of this terrible plot!"

It was a happy moment then for Fayre as the king kissed her hand in gratitude. And when, a few minutes later, the baron rode upon the scene with a hundred soldiers and Prince John, he slowed up in amazement; for he had expected to find the king a prisoner.

The prince's face was a study in hatred, fury, and chagrin; the baron's in fear.

Prince John, cringing, dismounted. Cowardly and cunning, he was prepared even to crawl now that he had failed. But the king eyed him with scorn.

"Brother, you see the road winding through the wood?"

"Why, yes, Richard!"

"Then go along it! Mount your horse!"

John mounted his horse, his face black with rage; and no sooner was he seated than Richard, slapping the animal's hind quarters, sent it off at a canter.

The baron quaked so that his chain mail jingled.

"Baron," said the king, smiling, "your niece was the means, with Robin Hood's aid, of saving my life! I do congratulate you upon so brave, so loyal a young lady!"

"And noble Robin Hood! Were it to his liking, he should be knighted!" said the king. "Since it is not, then let him and his merry band share our table this day at the castle, and the man whose hand is raised against them is raised against me!"

Not a hand, needless to say, was raised against Robin Hood and his men. With King Richard as merry companion, they banqueted royally as the baron's guests, with the Lady Fayre, in the absence of the baroness, who was unnerved almost to prostration, as hostess.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

THERE will be another splendid COMPLETE story introducing Lady Fayre and Robin Hood next week, so order your copy in advance.