

There are Stirring Happenings at
Cliff House School when:—

“FAITH ASHTON SCHEMES ANEW!”

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Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



**“BARBARA—YOU HAVE
RUINED MY CAR!”**

A dramatic incident from the
superb Barbara Redfern & Co.
story inside.

Magnificent LONG COMPLETE story of the chums of Cliff House, featuring



An Unexpected Heroine!



"HALLO, Bessie! Has my letter arrived yet?" Barbara Redfern asked.

And the popular captain of the junior school at Cliff House looked eagerly at her fat chum. Bessie Bunter, however, blinking through her spectacles, shook her head.

"No, Babs," she said. "And there isn't even a letter for me, you know. Were you expecting one?"

"You know I was expecting one. Been expecting it two days," Babs said; and she frowned a little in disappointment. "From Aunt Stephanie," she explained. "You remember?"

"Oh, yes, of course!" Bessie nodded. "Well, there isn't one, you know, Babs, because I looked specially in the letter-rack. Even Mabs hasn't written, you know. And, would you believe it?" Bessie added, in shrill indignation. "My postal order hasn't arrived yet."

Barbara Redfern, seated in an arm-chair in Study No. 4 of the Fourth Form corridor, smiled faintly, for only plump Bessie really believed that that expected-by-every-post remittance would ever arrive. Still, Aunt Stephanie should have written by this time.

Miss Stephanie Redfern, an old Cliff House girl herself, had just returned to England after ten years' absence abroad, and, anxious to recapture old schoolgirl thrills, had obtained permission from Miss Primrose, Cliff House's headmistress, to spend a whole fort-

night at Cliff House during the great charter celebrations at Courtfield. In days gone by Aunt Stephanie, like Babs, had been captain of the Fourth Form, and, like Babs, possessed that same gift of organisation. Nice, Aunt Stephanie. Babs loved her.

She had already met her two weeks ago when, with her cousin, Faith Ashton, also of the Fourth Form, she had been granted leave of absence to go home and meet Aunt Stephanie.

Miss Redfern, of course, had been all agog at the prospect of the charter celebrations, for Cliff House, coming

sophically. Perhaps aunt's letter would come by the midday post. She sighed.

"Better get our books ready," she said to Bessie. "Put those things of Mabs' in the corner," she added, for Mabel Lynn, their study-chum, was away on leave, having gone off yesterday to attend the first night of her famous father's new play at the Mercury Theatre, in London. "Thank goodness it's a halfer this afternoon!" she added, looking through the window of the study where the bright sunlight splashed its golden glory on the bright green lawns and playing fields. "I wonder—Hallo!" she broke off, as the door was boisterously thrown open.

"Hallo!" grinned Tomboy Clara Trevlyn. "Say, Babs, seen the news?" And she flourished a copy of the "Courtfield Times."

"No. About Mabs' play?" Babs asked.

"The play—bother it! I forgot to look for a report of the play. No, it's something more important than that even. It's Faith Ashton, Babs—your cousin. She's in the news!"

"What?"

"Look!" Clara grinned.

Babs blinked as Clara threw the paper on the table, stabbing a paragraph with her forefinger. She looked neither excited nor pleased, for if she and Faith Ashton were cousins and Form-mates at Cliff House, there was no love lost between them.

Faith, with her doll-like face, and her big, wide, innocent blue eyes, had been a thorn in the side of the Fourth Form, particularly Babs, ever since she had come to Cliff House. The treachery and hypocrisy, hidden by

By

HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

in the Courtfield borough, had been invited to take part in the procession and the pageant which would be held on the day.

At once Babs' aunt had offered to finance the Cliff House effort, her only stipulation being that she should have some actual part in it herself. In view of that, Babs was rather anxiously awaiting her arrival now, for obviously any idea for the pageant would have to be discussed with her aunt beforehand. And time was getting on.

The seniors already were getting on with their tableau, which was to represent the visit of Mary Queen of Scots to Courtfield during the days of old. The Fourth hadn't done a thing.

Babs frowned a little. Well, it was no good worrying, she thought philo-

the most deceitful, treacherous girl who ever belonged to the famous school.



FAITH ASHTON SCHEMES ANEW!

that lovely face of hers, were a byword in the school.

Before ever Babs' eyes scanned the paragraph, she thought that Faith had been getting herself mixed up in some disgraceful scrape once more. That would be like Faith.

But she jumped when she read the headline:

**"MODEST HEROINE FROM
CLIFF HOUSE TRACKED
BY OUR REPORTER."**

That wasn't Faith, surely?

But it was. Babs could hardly believe her own eyes, then. Yesterday afternoon, near Courtfield Station, a Cliff House girl had plucked a child from under the wheels of a skidding motor-bus, and, after hurriedly handing the child into the care of its stricken father, who was just emerging from the tobacconist outside which he had left the child, had bolted into the blue. Mr. Cromer was the name of the father.

"Cromer—Cromer?" Babs muttered. "My hat! Yes, I know that name! He's one of the local J.P.'s, isn't he?"

"That's it," Clara said. "And he's also the judge who will award the prize for the best tableau in the charter procession. But read on."

Babs read on. The "Courtfield Times" reporter had happened to be near the spot. He had seen the girl dodge away. Then, searching round, he had found in the gutter a brooch with the initials "F. A." upon it, and in a near-by cafe had tracked Faith Ashton down. Thus caught, Faith had been unable to deny her act of heroism, though apparently she had been very reluctant to acknowledge it.

"Well," breathed Babs, and, staring at Clara, shook her head. "And—and she never said a word."

"Not a syllable," Clara replied. "A bit of a stammerer, eh?"

A "stammerer" it was. Even now Babs could hardly believe it. Faith, her cousin—Faith, the graceless hypocrite, who had earned the enmity of the whole school. But there it was. No getting away from that at all. Babs shook her head.

her milk and white complexion, her fluffy, bobbed fair hair, and that doll-like face of hers. Even knowing Faith for the girl she was, Babs, breaking in upon her unexpectedly like that, always had a sensation of wonder that such a marvellous child-like beauty could conceal such a hard, cunning and hypocritical nature. No fairy-faced doll ever looked more incapable of mischief than the shyly innocent-seeming Faith.

"Oh!" she said; and then, seeing the

"What a dear, generous-hearted girl she is!" That is what everyone thinks the first time they meet Faith Ashton. For Faith, a past-mistress at deceit, can wheedle her way into anybody's affections—until they find her out. But always with a selfish motive. And there was a very selfish motive behind Faith's determination to get into the good books of Miss Redfern, her own and Babs' aunt; a heartless motive, too, because it meant blackening Babs' good name and robbing her of a most important honour.

"Well, she jolly well deserves the credit," she said generously. "Come on, let's go and congratulate her."

Together, leaving Bessie to collect the books, they went along to Study No. 12, which Faith Ashton shared with Frances Frost and Eleanor Storke. Babs knocked. It was Faith's own voice, very sweetly musical, which called "Come in!"

They went in.

Faith was standing by the table, her big blue eyes fixed upon the door. Very pretty she looked, as usual, with

paper in Babs' hand, blushed. "Oh, dear, I—I hope you're not going to make a fuss about that, Barbara!" she said falteringly. "I told the reporter man not to say anything about it, you know."

"Well, he has," Babs said, "and I must say he's every right to say everything about it. Why didn't you tell us yourself, Faith?"

The heavy, wax-like lids of Faith's eyes dropped modestly.

"Well, why should I? It—it was nothing," she said humbly. "You'd

have done it in my place, wouldn't you, Barbara dear? Or Clara—or any of you. After all, there wasn't a great deal of risk," Faith said, and picked up a box of chocolates which lay upon the table. "Mr. Cromer—he was the little girl's father, you know—sent me these," she added. "The reporter man apparently told him as soon as he tracked me down. Barbara, do have one," she added.

Babs paused, staring at her cousin. Then she flushed again. Really, it was mean of her to start feeling suspicious. Faith was so charming and sincere about the whole thing that Babs felt quite paltry.

She took a chocolate. It would have been churlish somehow not to have done so. Clara took one, too.

"Thanks," Barbara said. "Yum, nice! Well, we've come along to congratulate you, Faith. It's a bit of a change to—I mean, we're jolly glad you did do it," she added, flushing. "You—you didn't hurt yourself or anything?"

"Not a scratch," Faith laughed. "Nothing. I do think you're all making a dreadful fuss over nothing, you know, but I'm pleased—in a way. You know," she added yearningly, "although we're cousins, Babs, we don't seem to have hit it off very well, do we?"

"No," Babs acknowledged.

"And—and—well, I know the fault's been mine," Faith said slyly. "I have been a horrid little cat in the past, and I don't blame you for not being friends with me, Barbara—or you, Clara. But honestly, Barbara, I—I have been trying to turn over a new leaf and—be like you other girls, and—and if this means you're willing to be friends now—why, then," Faith added, with an earnest flush, "I wouldn't have minded, you know, if I'd been half-killed! It seems dreadful for us still to be at loggerheads, with dear Aunt Stephanie coming over, doesn't it?"

Again Babs eyed Faith keenly. Could she believe her? Was Faith, this time, in real earnest? Every line of her suggested it, every yearning expression in that sweet face of hers seemed to be appealing.

For once Babs really had a feeling that Faith was being straight.

"Well, if it comes to that—well—" she stammered. "Faith, you know I'm willing to be friends—all of us are. If you really mean it—"

"Barbara, I do—ever so," Faith said eagerly. "Oh, please can't we be friends? Clara, you believe me, don't you?"

Clara flushed.

"Well, I don't see there's any call to disbelieve you," she said. "For my part I'm willing to forget old rows. But fair dinkum, Faith?"

"Oh, yes!" Faith said, and her eyes shone.

Babs smiled.

"Right—ho," she said. "Then we'll call the hatchet buried—from this moment. Anyway, I'm pleased, Faith, and I congratulate you. By the way, you haven't heard from Aunt Stephanie?"

"No, Barbara dear. She said she would write to you, didn't she?" Faith asked. "But I shouldn't worry, you know; perhaps she's busy in London—she said she would be, didn't she, because she's going to buy that new car she's set her heart on. Oh, Babs, it is lovely to feel that we're friends again," she added mistily. "And I promise I'll never let you down again. I say, what are you going to do about the

pageant?" she asked eagerly. "Have you any idea yet?"

"Not yet," Babs confessed. "We rather want to see Aunt Stephanie first. Perhaps she'll write by the midday post."

"And if she doesn't," Faith said, "that means there's no chance of hearing again until this evening, is there? I—I was wondering, Babs—that is, if you've no other suggestion, you know—whether we could make up a picnic party for this afternoon and go into the woods? It seems ages since I went to anybody's picnic," she added, with a wistful sigh.

"Not a bad idea," Clara approved. "Yes, we'll do that. Can't waste a halfer hanging about for a letter. But whoa, there goes first lesson bell! Come on, Faith."

Faith laughed. Bright and sparkling her eyes; bewitching the flushes in her animated cheeks. Babs, looking at her, felt herself ungenerous even to doubt Faith's word. Every atom of the girl seemed to radiate her happy sincerity.

Laughing, she accompanied Babs and Clara as they went out, to call at Study No. 4, where Bessie had already collected the books. Marjorie Hazeldene was with her, Marjorie having looked in on her way to class. She smiled as she saw Faith.

"Oh, Faith, I've just been reading—"

"Oh, please!" Faith said, and blushed. "It doesn't matter. I know what you're going to say, but spare my blushes, please! Still, we're friends again now," she added, "and that's just marvellous, isn't it? Hallo, here comes Janet."

Janet Jordan it was—with Jemima Carstairs. They both nodded to Faith.

"Hallo, Faith. Just seen the news," Faith laughed again. She was radiant now. Much as she detested her act of heroism having been printed, she was clearly delighted by the popularity it had brought her. Everybody, it seemed, had seen that paragraph; everybody, in view of that paragraph, was willing to believe in Faith once again, to give her that one chance for which she had asked.

In class Miss Charmant further congratulated Faith upon her act of heroism, while towards the middle of the morning Miss Primrose, Cliff House's popular headmistress, called for Faith, and in her study congratulated her.

Laughing to herself, Faith left Miss Primrose, making her way back to the Fourth Form class-room. It was then that the telegraph-boy from the village post office, coming up the steps, confronted her.

"Morning, Miss Ashton," he said, and eyed her in worshipful wonder. "I read about what you did yesterday," he said.

"Oh, good!" Faith laughed. "I seem to be quite famous. Is that telegram for me?" she added.

"No, Miss Ashton. It's for Miss Redfern."

"Oh!" And Faith, all at once, paused. "Any answer?" she asked.

"No, miss."

"Then," Faith said, "you may give it to me. I shall be seeing Miss Redfern in a moment, and I'll hand it to her."

The boy nodded. Willingly enough he handed the telegram over. Faith took it, smiling sweetly, and the lad, utterly charmed by her smile, went off looking at least two inches taller. But once he had gone, Faith looked at the telegram again.

And her eyes swiftly narrowed.

"Now, I wonder—" she muttered. She hesitated a moment. Then

swiftly slipping into the nearest study, she closed the door. Deftly she extracted the telegram. And she heaved a deep breath.

"From aunt!" she said. "So this is why she didn't write!"

She paused a moment, looking at the door, and it was a very, very different Faith which took the place of that sighing, sincere girl who had earned Babs' friendliness earlier that morning. A very different light came into those big, wide eyes as, with a sudden irritated gesture, she crunched the telegram in her hand and thrust it into her pocket.

Then she laughed.

"Dear old luck!" she murmured to herself. "It seems to be playing into my hands at last! Perhaps, dear cousin Barbara, you're not going to have it all your own way this time."

And, a queer little smile playing about her lips, she wended her way back to the class-room.

"Barbara—I'm Ashamed of You!"



"WELL, that's settled!" Babs said.

"No letter from Aunt Stephanie. That means now that we shan't hear until this evening, if then—"

"And dud-does that mean," Bessie Bunter questioned eagerly, "the picnic is on?"

"Yes."

"Hurrah!" Bessie cheered. "I suspect, Babs, shall I go and tell Faith?"

"No need," came a voice at the door of Study No. 4, "Faith is here." And there Faith was, her face alight with pleasure. "Heard from Aunt Stephanie yet, Barbara dear?"

"No, I haven't," Babs said. "That's what we're just discussing. I hope there's nothing wrong," she added, a shade of anxiety in her tones. "Anyway, can't be helped, I suppose, though time's getting desperately short. Now, about the picnic—"

Faith bit her lip.

"Oh, Barbara, I—I wanted to see you about that—"

"Yes?" Babs asked.

"I—I wonder if—if you'd mind if I don't come, after all?" Faith said. "You see, I—I was so excited when I suggested it that I forgot all about another appointment I'd made. Silly of me, of course, but I'm afraid I can hardly get out of it, you know. Barbara, do you mind?"

Babs shrugged. But she eyed Faith steadily, remembering that the picnic had been Faith's suggestion.

"Well, if you can't come, you can't," she said. "I'm sorry! All the same, if you find you've got any time to spare give us a look in at the round pond in the woods. That's where we'll be."

"Oh, thank you," Faith said. "If I can, I will. The appointment may not take me long," she added. "It all depends. Sure you don't mind, Babs?"

"Of course not!" Babs said.

Faith flashed her a smile. She went out. Bessie, who was packing the hamper in Study No. 4, gurgled a little, for the absence of Faith meant, of course, that there would be more grubbins for Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter. But Babs, perhaps with justification, felt plainly annoyed. It was careless, to say the least, that Faith should not have remembered that more urgent appointment when she suggested this method of spending the afternoon.

Still, it didn't matter, though, to be sure, Clara, Janet, gentle Marjorie Hazeldene, and Leila Carroll, the

American member of the Co., who were joining in the picnic, professed themselves disappointed.

Still, these sort of things did happen, and perhaps it was natural that Faith, in the first flush of pleasure and excitement at finding herself welcomed back into the ranks of Babs & Co., should have overlooked the appointment.

So after dinner Babs & Co. went off without Faith. Though they were not aware of it, Faith watched their departure from the window of her own study. And as soon as they had gone she sped along to Study No. 4. There, fishing out the wastepaper-basket, she placed it in a conspicuous position in front of Babs' bureau, and on top of the litter with which it was half-full dropped a crumpled telegram.

"So far, so good!" she chuckled.

A pleased smile upon her face, she went out, and was in the act of tramping down the stairs, when the voice of Miss Belling, Cliff House's assistant mistress, reached her ears. With a letter in her hand, Miss Belling came hurrying towards her.

"Oh, Faith," she said, "do you know if Barbara has gone out?"

"Yes, Miss Belling; she has," Faith said.

"Oh!" She looked annoyed. "One of the maids has delivered a letter of Barbara's with mine," she said. "Looks as if it's from Mabel Lynn. That's her handwriting, I should think."

"It is," agreed Faith. "And Barbara, I know, was expecting a letter, Miss Belling. I may be seeing her this afternoon. In fact," Faith said, "I shall be seeing her. Would you like me to give it to her?"

"Oh, Faith, if you would!" Miss Belling said, in relief.

And she handed over the letter, which Faith carefully put in her pocket. She wandered on to the cycle sheds. Once she reached the sheds, she took the letter from her pocket again, and, without even hesitating, slit it open and read it. Then she laughed purringly.

"Dear old Mr. Luck is playing into your hands, Faith," she said. "Phew! What a stroke of luck!"

With a light laugh she slipped the letter back into her pocket, and, gazing at her wrist-watch, mounted her bicycle and leisurely pedalled away. Important as her professed appointment was, she seemed in no hurry.

In fact, she almost dawdled her way to Courtyard.

Normally, that ride took twenty minutes. Faith hung it out to forty. It was three o'clock when she reached the Market Cross, and there paused by the side of a powerful-looking car, whose polished bodywork was extracting a great deal of admiring comments from passers-by. A woman of about thirty, very smartly dressed, and obviously the owner of the car, was talking to a constable nearby.

Faith, as she saw her, suddenly gave an excited exclamation.

"Aunt!" she cried. "Aunt Stephanie!"

Miss Stephanie Redfern turned. Her good-looking face was flushed and annoyed. But her eyes lighted up at the sight of the hypocrite of the Fourth Form.

"Why, Faith, my dear, where is Barbara?"

"Barbara?" Faith questioned.

"Were you expecting to meet her?"

"This morning," Aunt Stephanie said, "I sent Barbara a telegram. I asked her to meet me here at half-past two. Since half-past two I have been waiting. I didn't come on to the school

in case I missed her. Faith, do you know if she got my telegram?"

Faith shook her head.

"I know she was expecting a letter from you," she said. "But I never heard anything about a telegram. Still, telegrams don't go astray, do they? Oh, aunt, dear, I'm so sorry! Do you really mean you've been waiting here a whole half-hour?"

"I have," her aunt said. "And it looks," she added a trifle grimly, "as if I shall wait here another half an hour."

Faith bit her lip.

"Perhaps she forgot the appointment," she murmured.

"Forgot?" Aunt Stephanie looked really angry. "Does Barbara, then, get so many telegrams that she is liable to forget? I'm sorry, Faith, I can't accept that statement, though it is generous of you to try to make excuses for her. Still, I will give her another half an hour. Constable—"

"Yes, madam?"

"May I leave my car here for another half an hour?"

"Certainly, madam."

"And, constable, if you see my niece, Miss Redfern—you say you knew her, didn't you?—will you tell her to come along to the cafe on the corner there? Faith, my dear, we will go and have a cup of tea while we are waiting. I am so glad that you came along."

Faith flushed.

"Oh, please," she said, "don't give me credit for that! I assure you, aunt, I knew nothing at all about the appointment. I—I've just been to keep an appointment of my own. It was only the merest accident that I ran into you. Still, please don't blame dear Barbara," she added anxiously. "I'm sure there must be some misunderstanding."

Her aunt smiled. Really it was impossible, however angry one might be, not to smile at Faith when she looked so meltingly anxious as that. Such a kind, sweet girl—so anxious always to make peace.

Or so Miss Redfern thought. Most people thought on those lines about Faith Ashton until they really got to know her.

"Faith," she said, "you have one fault—just one, my dear. You are too utterly generous. But let us have this cup of tea," she added.

She led the way into the cafe. Faith followed her, smiling a little, her eyes agleam now. She knew she was playing her cards well, and she was thinking of the cards she had still to play.

They sat down to tea.

"I see you've got your new car, aunt."

"Yes. Isn't she a beauty?" Aunt Stephanie said. "That is the one I told you and Barbara about. But tell me, Faith, about the pageant. Has Barbara any ideas yet?"

"Well, I—I don't know. I think she's waiting for you," Faith said. She sighed a little. "To tell you the truth, aunt, Barbara doesn't confide very much in me. You see, until this morning we've never been very good friends."

Her aunt's brows lifted.

"Faith, you surprise me!"

"I—I know," Faith faltered. "But—but it's not Barbara's fault, aunt. You mustn't blame her. I—I have played some—well, I blush to think about them now—but I have played some rather nasty little tricks in my time. Of course," Faith said, "I never intended them to turn out as some of them have."

Her aunt fondly took her hand.

"I'm sure, my dear, whatever others

may say about them, that they were not malicious tricks," she said. "Of course, we all do things we are sorry for; and I admire you, my dear, for telling me about them. But you mustn't worry, you know. Are you taking part in the pageant?"

"I—I don't know," Faith said.

"But, my dear—"

"Well, you see, aunt, most of the girls in the Form are Barbara's friends, and, because they're Barbara's friends, they've always been against me. But not now," she added. "I'm so happy that when I think about it I want to be silly and cry. This—this morning Babs and I made it up. She really is a very dear girl, aunt."

Aunt glanced through the window towards the waiting car.

"I'm sure she is," she said, but not with any great enthusiasm.

"But—but if Barbara hasn't an idea for the pageant, I have," Faith said. "Your car has given it to me, aunt. It just came to me like—like a flash," she added. "The Spirit of Speed!"

"What?"

"The Spirit of Speed," Faith laughed eagerly. "The idea is this," she said.

"Decorate the car with wings and all that sort of thing, you know. In the back of the car we could erect a platform, draped with all sorts of speed emblems and so forth. On the platform there could be a girl dressed up in fancy costume to represent speed. She'd be the Spirit, you know. I've an idea for the design of the dress already," Faith added.

Miss Redfern's eyes sparkled.

"Faith, go on. This sounds marvelous," she said.

"Of course, the idea's just rough yet—but perhaps, if Babs likes it, we may get together and talk about it. Then behind the car—it will only move at a snail's pace in the procession, of course—we have the girls following—some dressed as airwomen, some dressed as motor racers; some in fancy costume representing a railway, aeroplane, and all that sort of thing, you know. Then behind them we may have several girls cycling, and half a dozen riding on horseback."

"Oh, Faith!" her aunt breathed.

"You like the idea, aunt?"

"Like it?" Miss Redfern's eyes were sparkling. "I think it's lovely—lovely!" she cried. "Brilliant, Faith! We'll get busy on it at once."

"Oh, aunt, I'm so pleased! But who," questioned Faith, a little anxiously, "will you have for the Spirit of Speed? That's the most important part, you know—except, of course, the car," she added hastily.

"Oh, well, you—or Barbara. I don't know," Miss Redfern said quickly. "We'll thrash that out later. Apparently," she added, "Barbara is not going to turn up. We'll go and see what's happened. Come, Faith!"

"Yes, aunt. Shall we take the wood road back?" Faith asked. "I'm sure you'd love that way: the high road is sure to be a bit crowded this time of the afternoon."

"Faith, you shall be my guide," Miss Redfern laughed.

She paid the bill, leaving behind a generous tip for the waitress. Followed by the cherubic-looking Faith, she led the way to the car, staring round for a moment with a little frown before climbing into it. Barbara, of course, was still not there.

They started off, Faith, sitting beside her, acting as guide. As Faith suggested, they took the less-frequented road that ran to the west of Friardale Woods—a pretty enough road, though a bit bumpy and narrow in places.

"Nice road," her aunt laughed, regarding the scenery. "Can't congratulate your borough council on its comfort, though. Hallo," she added suddenly, "is that a picnic party I see by the pond there?"

Faith craned forward. "Why, yes," she said. "Cliff House girls, too, and—wait, I believe it's Barbara and her friends."

"Picnicking?" Miss Redfern cried, frowning.

The car went on. Then it stopped. Babs & Co., well into their picnic now, looked round as the two figures stepped out of it, and then Babs gave a shriek.

"Aunt!"

"Mum-my hat!" spluttered Bessie. "Aunt!" Babs cried delightedly, and was at once on her feet rushing towards the car. "Aunt—why, I never guessed!"

Miss Redfern looked just a little severe.

"You never guessed what, Barbara?" "That you were coming this afternoon—of course!" Babs laughed. "But this is great! Aunt, come and join the picnic! Hallo, Faith!" she added.

"How did you meet aunt?"

Faith flushed a little.

"Well, quite by accident," she said.

"I finished with my appointment sooner than I expected, and found aunt waiting for you by the Market Cross in Courtfield."

"Waiting?"

"Waiting." Miss Redfern frowned again.

"I had been waiting half an hour," she said. "Did you get my telegram this morning, Barbara?"

"Why, no!" Babs said in astonishment.

"I sent one."

"Then—then I'm sorry," Babs shook her head. "I had no telegram, otherwise I shouldn't be here. Queer," she added puzzledly. "It must have gone astray."

"Well, of course, that's just what has happened," Faith said, with apparent relief. "I'm so glad the mystery's cleared up. May we join the picnic, Babs?"

"Come on," Babs invited.

And, she and her chums hospitably making way for the newcomers, introductions were effected all round, and the picnic was resumed in earnest. Miss Redfern, obviously satisfied about the telegram, was gay and sparkling now. They ate sandwiches and cake, made fresh tea and chatted.

And presently Miss Redfern told Babs of Faith Ashton's idea.

Babs stared a little. Just for a moment she looked sharply at Faith. That didn't sound like one of Faith's ideas, but obviously it must be so if aunt said so, and on the surface it certainly sounded a jolly good one.

"Well, it's a ripping idea," Babs said generously. "Just spiffing, in fact. But we'll have to work hard—"

"And," Miss Redfern laughed, "no time like the present. If only that silly telegram had arrived we could have started this afternoon. But let's get back now," she added enthusiastically. "Barbara—and you, Bessie—will you come in the car? Bring the hamper, too. Sorry I can't take you all, but you don't mind, do you? Meet you at the school."

The party broke up. Babs laughed. With Bessie she jumped into the back of the shiny car—what a thing of power and beauty it was, to be sure! The car whirred away.

Faith, turning from the front seat, beamed.

"Like it, Babs?" she asked.

"Lovely!" Babs laughed. "Doesn't

it make you long to grow up—so that you could have a car like this? But what luck you meeting us," she added.

"Funny, you coming that way."

"Yes; wasn't it?" Miss Redfern smiled. "Quite a coincidence, though I'm afraid the road's going to be rough on my new tyres. It was Faith who suggested it. She might have known you'd be there, mightn't she?"

Sharply, quickly, Babs looked at Faith, remembering that Faith certainly did know they would be there, since she had been invited to join the party. But Faith's smile was bland and disarming.

Five minutes' later they had purred into the drive of Cliff House School. Miss Primrose was there to welcome Miss Redfern and show her the garage she could use, and Babs, Bessie, and Faith stood admiring the car while aunt and the headmistress chatted. Then, of course, the car had to be garaged, and by that time Clara, Leila and the others had arrived by bus. Miss Redfern, rejoicing them, laughed.

"Funny," she said. "You know the old place hasn't altered a bit. Nor has Miss Primrose. She's just a shade older perhaps, but still the same old dear as when I was at the school. Now, Barbara, lead us to the study," she added eagerly, "and let's get down to business. I'm as keen as mustard to begin!"

Miss Redfern's eyes sparkled when she stepped into Study No. 4.

"What a snug little room!" she said.

"Everything you want, and—" Suddenly she paused, looking at Barbara. "Barbara, I—I hate to bring the subject up again, but are you sure you didn't get my telegram this morning?"

"Why, aunt, of course!" Babs said, a little startled by the rapid change in her aunt's voice. "Why?"

Her aunt, however, did not reply in words to that question. She lifted the wastepaper-basket and from the very top of the pile of rubbish picked up a crumpled orange envelope and a telegram form.

Babs jumped as she straightened it out.

"Why—what—what—"

Miss Redfern, her eyes full of sudden suspicion mingled with a certain hardness, turned towards her.

"Barbara, this is my telegram," she said.

"But—but—but—" Babs stuttered.

"Aunt, I'm sure—"

"It was delivered here at eleven o'clock," Miss Redfern went on, a trifle more flintily. "Barbara, you have fibbed to me."

Barbara turned red. But Faith hastily interposed.

"Oh, aunt, please!" she reproached. "I'm sure Barbara would never dream of fibbing—would you, Babs, darling? I—I expect Babs forgot," she added helpfully. "Babs, you did forget, didn't you?"

Crimsonly flabbergasted, Babs turned—and just for a moment her eyes caught and held Faith's. Simple and innocent Faith's expression, but there was that in her eyes which belied the outward appearance of her face, that which, like a sudden flash of inspiration, stabbed home to Babs.

And in that moment she knew, as surely as if it had been proved to her, that Faith had planned this. Faith was playing some new, deep game, calling once again to her aid that cunning deceit and hypocrisy of which she was such an arch-mistress. Faith had received that telegram; Faith had brought aunt to the spot—not by acci-

dent, but by intention—and Faith had planted that telegram here.

Babs caught in her breath.

"No, I didn't forget!" she flung back. "This is a trick! Faith planned this, and Faith planted that telegram! She never intended me to keep the appointment. Somehow she intercepted the telegram—"

"Babs!" Faith quiveringly cried.

"Well, isn't it true?" Babs flashed.

"Babs, how—how can you!" And Faith clutched at her chest.

"Oh, Babs—Babs!" she cried. "Aunt, please—please don't take any notice of what she's saying!"

But Miss Redfern's eyes were grim now. She was remembering what Faith had told her in the cafe.

"I think," she said straightly, "that if Barbara can only excuse her own unfortunate neglect and discourtesy by blaming someone else, we had better postpone this talk. I might say, Barbara, that I was deeply disappointed at not seeing you after expressly making the appointment. I might say," she added, her voice gathering anger, "that I was more than a little shocked to find you enjoying yourself at a picnic when you were supposed to have been meeting me. Faith, on the other hand, has done everything a girl might be expected to do. And until," Miss Redfern ended, "you apologise to her, I shall feel very badly about you, Barbara!"

Babs gasped. Clara glowered.

Leila set her lips. For all realised now that their chum had been caught in a trap.

"Well, Barbara, will you apologise?"

Miss Redfern asked.

"Barbara—please!" Faith said.

"Oh, darling, don't look at me like that! You know, dear, I wouldn't do you any harm at all!"

"You—your awful cat!" Babs choked.

"Thank you," Miss Redfern said curtly; "that's enough. Barbara, I am ashamed of you! Faith, I am sorry, my dear, to find proof of what you have told me so soon. I think," she added, with a withering look round the study, "that we will leave this matter in abeyance for the moment. Barbara, when you have come to your senses I will see you. Until then—"

She turned towards the door, angrily flung it open, and, nodding to the forlorn-looking Faith to follow her, flounced through.

So That Was Her Idea!



"FAITH is up to her old games again, I guess!" Leila Carroll announced. "Question is, what's the little axe she's trying to grind this time?"

Babs' eyes were gleaming and bitter.

"What axe has she always to grind?" she asked bitterly. "She wants aunt's favours, of course. She put this idea of the Spirit of Speed forward so that she can be in the centre of the limelight. Aunt doesn't know her. But," Babs vowed, "she's not getting away with it!"

An uneasy, rather angry silence settled upon the occupants of Study No. 4.

The scales were peeled from all their eyes now. Not in a hurry would Faith deceive them again.

Questioningly they looked at their leader. To vow that Faith was not going to get away with fresh duplicity was one thing—how to combat that

duplicity was another. Faith had the affections of Aunt Stephanie on her side. People like Miss Redfern, who did not know Faith, were always so ready to believe in her. Until strangers got to know Faith, they were invariably deceived. And Faith, obviously, was playing again all her old winning cards.

"But how?" added Marjorie. "There's one way—and only one way," Babs said. "Aunt's got to be told what sort of girl Faith is. There's no question of sneaking in that. And I," she vowed, her chest beginning to heave, "am going to tell her—now!"

"That's the stuff!" approved Clara. Hot on the heels of that decision Babs acted. Out of the study she went, and with her hands clenched strode down the corridor to the guests' room. She knocked. Her aunt's voice bade her come in.

Aunt Stephanie was there. But there was no welcoming smile on her face when Babs came in. Almost as grim as Babs' own was her expression.

"Well, Barbara, have you come to your senses?" she asked.

"I've come to tell you, aunt, a few things you ought to know about Faith," Babs said.

The expression did not relax. It seemed, indeed, to grow a little flintier.

"Then, Barbara, save yourself the trouble; I know."

Babs blinked. "You know?"

"I know," Aunt Stephanie replied levelly, "that this is the sort of thing I should be hearing from you. Faith herself warned me." And then, as Babs looked startled, her lips came together. "I am aware, Barbara, that Faith and you have never agreed. I am aware that Faith has done things in the past about which she does not feel happy—yes, Faith herself told me about them. I rather expected this." Miss Redfern went on steely, "and I may say, Barbara, that I do not admire you for it. I refuse to listen to back-biting spite against Faith!"

Babs could only stare, helplessly and stupidly. That Faith should cut the ground from under her feet like this—the utter hypocrisy of it!

"I am not pleased," Miss Redfern went on. "In fact, I may say—Er—yes, come in!" she added irritably, as a knock came at the door.

The door opened. It was Faith herself who stepped in, starting slightly at the sight of Barbara. She paused.

"Oh, aunt, if I'm not intruding—" she said.

"Come in," Miss Redfern said, and Babs winced at the soft change in her tone. "You are not intruding, Faith. Barbara and I were just talking about something which concerns you—which concerns all of us. Now that I have you both here, perhaps this is a good opportunity to clear the air. Faith, you did not, as Barbara suggests, intercept my telegram this morning and place it in her wastepaper-basket?"

"Oh, aunt, of course not!" Faith cried anxiously. "Barbara darling, you don't still really think that, do you?"

Babs compressed her lips. She did not reply.

"Well, never mind," Miss Redfern said, more kindly. "Let it pass. I'm sorry now that I didn't come straight to school without warning you at all. In fact," Aunt Stephanie added, just a little irritably, "perhaps I should have been wise to remain away altogether!"

"Oh, aunt!" Faith cried, in an inexpressibly shocked voice.

Babs bit her lip. She felt guilty

suddenly. Understandable that disappointment of Aunt Stephanie—she wondered, for a fleeting moment, how she would have reacted to the extremely doubtful welcome she had so far received.

"I—I'm sorry," she said. "Aunt, don't speak like that, please!"

"Dear Barbara!" sighed Faith, with a meltingly loving look in her direction.

"Well, I hope you are." Miss Redfern nodded. "At the same time, Barbara, I should like to see some evidence of your regret. I have come here, as you know, to help you with your pageant. At the moment I frankly confess my enthusiasm damped by the antagonism you two are showing towards each other. Now don't you think—both of you—and this time her eyes went from one to the other—"that we should all work together for the common good?"

"Yes, aunt, of course we should!" Faith said enthusiastically. "That's it, isn't it, Barbara darling?"

was not of herself nor of Faith she was thinking then. It was her aunt.

More slowly her hand came up and clasped the cool, white palm of the other. Faith simperingly sighed.

"Dear, dear Barbara!" she said softly. "Oh, Barbara, how happy I am again! Friends!" she said. "Friends now and for always, eh, Babs dearest?" And suddenly she bent forward, and, to Babs' scarlet embarrassment, kissed her on the lips.

And Babs then had the greatest difficulty in repressing the shudder that ran through her. For that kiss, she knew by the mocking light in the great blue eyes as they approached her own, was the kiss of a traitress.

"AND NOW," Miss Stephanie Redfern said, "there's just one question remaining to be settled before we break up. That question is, who is to represent the Spirit of Speed?"

The time was an hour later; the scene Babs' study. The committee—comprising Babs, Faith, Clara, Leila, Marjorie



WITH a cry, Miss Redfern snatched up Babs' waste-paper basket. "Why, Barbara! This—my telegram!" she exclaimed, in angry surprise. "And you told me you hadn't received it." Babs was dumb-founded—until she saw the artful smirk on Faith Ashton's face.

"That—that's it," Babs agreed.

"Thank you!" Aunt Stephanie nodded. "Well, now, Barbara, don't you think you might show that spirit and patch up this silly quarrel with Faith? It's no use our going on while you two are at loggerheads. Harmony we must have if we're to make a success of things, and the keynote to that harmony is friendship between you two."

"Yes; that's right!" Faith nodded seriously. Then she fixed her big, wide eyes upon her cousin. "Barbara darling, you know I'm willing—ever so—to be friends. We can't spoil dear aunt's little holiday, can we? Barbara, let's be friends?" she added, with that impulsive frankness she could so well command. "There—"

And out shot her hand towards Barbara. Miss Redfern smiled approvingly. For a moment Babs hesitated, feeling herself a traitor for the act of appeasement she must now accomplish. But it

Hazeldene, and Bessie Bunter—was in session, and so far, at least, all had worked in perfect harmony together. Faith, indeed, had been most charming.

The meeting had been an unqualified success, and a great deal of spade-work had been accomplished. Whatever Babs & Co.'s private opinions of Faith Ashton might have been, they were all agreed that, out of courtesy to Miss Redfern, they had got to put up with her—and, really, it was quite a pleasure to put up with Faith when she was on her very best behaviour. No doubt she was keen. No doubt, like the rest, she was enthusiastic—and most helpful into the bargain.

The idea for decorating the car had been discussed—the scheme to be largely the one advocated by Faith, who had brought along several carefully drawn diagrams. Babs, Clara, and Leila were going into the question of cost and materials for that; Marjorie and Leila had been deputed to get hold of the

costumes which would be required. Babs was to make arrangements for the necessary rehearsals. The question of the costume for the Spirit of Speed had been settled, again the main suggestion coming from Faith, with several embellishments from Babs.

That costume, certainly, would be one of the show-pieces of the pageant. The dress was to be a Grecian gown of gold, with a gold and silver headdress ornamented by two sweeping wings. Silver sandals would be worn on the feet, and to the heels of those, tiny wings would be affixed, the ensemble being completed by the emblem of speed which the wearer was to carry—a long gold arrow.

"Well?" Miss Redfern asked, as there was a pause.

"Hem!" Bessie said modestly. "Ahem! I—I hate pushing myself forward, you know, but what you want is a gig-girl of grace and—and beauty!"

"Quite!" Miss Redfern smiled. "Then what about me?" Bessie asked, and glared at the titter which went round. "Well, bib-bothered if I see what there is to snigger about!" "Look in the mirror!" Clara chuckled.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I think," Faith said, "that Barbara should be the Spirit of Speed. After all, Babs is captain of the Form—"

"But the idea is yours, Faith," Miss Redfern said.

"Yes; that's so!" Leila agreed. "Barbara, what do you think?"

Babs flushed a little. "Well, as you say, it's Faith's idea," she agreed, "and we ought to show some appreciation of that. But—"

And she paused then, hesitating at the thought which naturally followed—that the Fourth, as a whole, would not be very pleased to find Faith as the star of the show.

"But what?" Miss Redfern asked. "Well, I—I was thinking about the rest of the Form," Babs said. "After all, they're all in it, aren't they? Don't you think, aunt, we ought to get their ideas on the subject?"

Miss Redfern pursed her lips. "Well, yes," she said; "and then—no. I'm thinking of the costume. Whoever wears that has to be measured for it. Haven't any too much time as it is."

"That's right!" Faith nodded. "But I do think, you know, aunt, that Barbara ought to be the Speed Spirit. Still, if it's agreed that either Barbara or I take the part, why worry? After all, Barbara and I are of a size, and if the dressmaker gets on with the costume, we can settle who is to wear it later. Let's leave it like that, shall we?"

"Sure. Good idea!" Leila agreed. And a good idea it was. Not one of them wanted Faith as the Speed Spirit, for none of them trusted her. Faith's every effort, for the time being, was to impress her aunt by her sweetness, and her thought for others.

"Right. Then we leave it at that," Miss Redfern suggested, and looked at her watch. "Phew! Half-past six—and I'm to dine with Miss P. at seven. Better pop off and get dressed, eh? Well, to the chores, girls!" she laughed. "Get busy. Don't hesitate to come and consult me about any points which might crop up."

She nodded cheerily, and, with a kind smile for Faith, left the room.

Faith sighed. "She's such a dear, isn't she?" she said. "And she's so very happy now that we all understand each other again. But, Barbara, what about the wings to

decorate the car? Have you any suggestion where we could get those?"

"Hollands," Babs said. "I was just thinking of one of their display windows. Clara, you remember it, don't you? The window that was given over to Mercury stockings."

"Why, yes!" Clara said. "Oh, yes, I remember, too!" Faith put in. "They used two perfectly enormous aluminium wings in the window-piece, didn't they? Oh, Barbara, what a marvellous idea! Do you think we could get hold of them?" she asked eagerly.

"We can try," Babs said. "I'll phone up Lucy Holland. She manages the display department for her father. And I might as well do it now," she added, rising.

She quitted the room. In less than five minutes she was back again.

"O.K.!" she chuckled. "Lucy says we can buy them for three pounds. I haven't ordered them officially, of course; better consult aunt before we start spending her money. Still, we'll tackle her as soon as she's finished dinner with Primmy. Oh, going, Faith?" she added, as that girl rose. "Yes," Faith said. "You don't mind, Barbara, do you?"

"Not at all," Babs said—most truthfully. "See you later then."

And Faith went out. With the problem of the aluminium wings disposed of, the committee settled down to work in earnest. A meeting had to be called at once, and there the various parts which girls would take in the procession were allotted, measurements taken for costumes, and notes made. Marjorie, as head of that particular department, had her hands full.

After dinner, Babs saw her Aunt Stephanie and told her of the wings. Miss Redfern dimpled.

"Splendid!" she said. "And for three pounds! Good work, Barbara, my dear. We'll run along to-morrow and collect them. By the way, where's Faith?" she added.

But nobody had seen Faith. The disappearance of Faith became a minor sensation before that evening was out. She was not in when prep bell sounded; she did not come into Big Hall for call-over.

With call-over dismissed Babs and Clara wandered out in the quad for a last breath of fresh air before dormitory bell rang. Miss Redfern, standing there, joined them as they came out.

"Hallo, Barbara!" she said. "I suppose you haven't seen Faith yet? I confess I'm a teeny bit worried about the child. She—"

And she broke off. "Goodness, that is Faith!" she cried, staring towards the gates.

Faith it was—being let in by Piper, the porter, who, by this time, had already closed gates for the night.

"Why, Faith, my dear," her aunt cried as she came up, "where ever have you been?"

"Courtfield, aunty," Faith said. "Oh dear, I'm sorry I'm so late! But I had to go to the post office first, you see, and then I got held up at Hollands."

"Hollands?" cried Babs. "Yes. I've bought the aluminium wings."

"You—you bought them?" stuttered Clara. "Yes, of course." Faith looked at her. "You see, I was so awfully afraid that somebody else might get hold of the idea that I just had to buy them and make sure. And—and so I went to the post office and drew out my last three pounds. Apart from that," she added, "I did so want to do something

practical for the pageant—dear aunt is paying out such a lot of money, you know."

Clara compressed her lips. Babs looked a little grim. They saw the artful wheeze now. Faith was buttering up to her aunt, and to announce the fact and make herself a little martyr over it, had deliberately stayed out in order to get herself punished. An old trick of hers, that one; but one which never failed to get over on people who did not know that scheming nature of hers.

Miss Redfern looked touched. "But, Faith, my dear," she said, "you shouldn't have done it. As if I want you to spend your money—and your last three pounds at that! Faith, you must let me give you back that money— No, dear, I insist—really! And you mean to tell me you've run all this risk because of that, Faith, my dear?"

"Well, I just had to make sure," Faith said. "It would have been awful if somebody else had stepped in and snapped them up, wouldn't it, Barbara?"

"Just too bad," Babs agreed, a trifle contemptuously. "Still, it wasn't necessary, was it? I'd already told Lucy Holland to keep them by until she heard from us again."

Faith bit her lip. "Oh, Barbara, you—you don't sound very pleased," she faltered.

Miss Redfern frowned. "Barbara, that is hardly generous," she said warmly. "After all, it is understandable that Faith should want to make sure. Apart from that, Faith has saved you a great deal of trouble. You should be pleased."

"Should!" Clara murmured. "I beg your pardon?"

"Oh, nun-nothing!" Clara said. Faith sighed.

"I—I'm sorry," she said. "I—I only thought I was helping. Babs dear, why do you look so cross—just as if—as if you thought I had some ulterior motive in buying those wings?"

"Well, hadn't you?" Babs retorted before she could restrain herself.

"Barbara, that is enough!" Miss Redfern said sharply. "I will not stand here and listen to you insult Faith because she is doing her best to help us. I always understood, Barbara, that you were a girl incapable of jealousy, but frankly, I am beginning to change that opinion now. Faith, my dear, you are crying," she added, as Faith gave an audible sniff.

"Nun-not really, aunt," Faith said. "I—I—oh dear! Please forgive me. I—I shall get over it in a minute. Barbara, darling, why are you always so jealous?" she added tearfully. "And why do you and your friends never believe that I can do anything right—or good?"

"Because they know you!" Clara snapped.

"Clara!" Miss Redfern cried. "Well, it's true," Clara said. Clara could never juggle with words, and always had to say what she meant. "You don't know her like we do. And perhaps when you do you won't trust her any more than we do."

"Clara, that is enough!" Miss Redfern cried angrily. "My dear," she added tenderly, and put one hand on Faith's arm, "do not upset yourself. Come along to my room and have a little chat with me. Ahem!" she added as Miss Charmant appeared. "Good-evening."

"Good-evening," Miss Charmant said. "Faith, why were you late?"

"I—I went to Courtfield," Faith said. "You had a pass?" "Nun-no; I forgot it."

"Then," Miss Charmant said, "you can take fifty lines for going out without a pass, and for being absent from call-over you will be detained for an hour in class to-morrow afternoon."

Faith sighed again. Miss Redfern set her lips.

"I don't want to interfere, of course," she said, "but don't you think, Miss Charmant, that is rather severe? Faith, after all, was doing no harm in Courtfield."

"Faith," Miss Charmant retorted, "was out of bounds and out of gates."

She stared hard at the hypocrite of the Fourth, who, with quivering lips and downcast eyes, was looking utterly forlorn.

"If Faith objects to the punishment, she has the right to complain to Miss Primrose," she added. "That is enough."

Miss Redfern turned rather red. "Well, I certainly think—" she began, when Faith touched her arm.

"Aunt, please!" she begged. "Don't upset yourself. It's all right—really. I—I don't mind. If I did," she added, with a brave little quiver of the lips, "it wouldn't make any difference. I don't know why it is, but even Miss Charmant seems to be against me."

"Why, you cat!" Clara burst out. "I think," Miss Charmant said steelily, "you had better go, Faith. Miss Redfern, kindly oblige me by detaining her no longer."

And while Miss Redfern glared rather angrily, the mistress took Faith's arm.

Forestalled!

BARBARA, if you continue to stare through that window I shall give you fifty lines!" Miss Wright, the English mistress, announced. "Clara, that remark applies to you also. Lydia Crossendale, look this way, please! The whole class—please pay attention! What is going on through that window?"

For the window in question that next morning certainly was an irresistible centre of attraction for the Fourth Form at Cliff House.

All the girls on the raised desks at the back of the class could see through, and one and all had their eyes fixed upon it. And to judge from the expression on their faces something pretty exciting was happening beyond the window.

It was. For that window afforded a sweeping view of the playing fields, and beyond the playing fields the brick-built garages, one of which now housed Miss Redfern's famous aluminium car.

That car, shining in the light, was in full view, and round it four workmen were busy drilling and hammering. The workmen had arrived not ten minutes ago, and were in the act of fitting two gleaming wings, which were rapidly transforming the car into a strange-looking bird. Also, in the back of the car, the workmen were preparing to erect the platform on which the Spirit of Speed would take her stance in the forthcoming Courtfield Charter celebrations.

So perhaps it was no wonder that the Fourth were inattentive; no wonder that mild Miss Wright was in a mood of most unusual exasperation.

With such a reminder of the pleasure to come glittering in front of their eyes,

it was no wonder the Fourth could not think of verbs and split infinitives.

"You will pay attention," Miss Wright said. "Really—" She herself went along the alleyway and peered through the window. "Oh, ha, hum!" she said, and, understanding at last, frowned. "It is very nice," she considered.

"It's beautiful, Miss Wright!" Babs said.

"Yes, yes—very!" Miss Wright looked impressed. "Your idea, I believe, Faith? Congratulations upon it. Still—Ahem, ahem!" she added hastily. "Barbara, I really think you had better draw the blind."

The Fourth Form gurgled. Dear Miss Wright! Babs drew the blind, shutting out the tempting view, but it is to be feared that subsequently the Fourth's imagination was more concentrated upon building up the scene going on outside than in their work. For the Fourth were quivering with excited anticipation now.

Nearly every one of them was taking some part in the pageant, preparations for which were in full swing.

To be sure, the Fourth were not too keen to find Faith Ashton playing a leading part in those celebrations. The Fourth, as a whole, did not trust Faith Ashton, having had too many experiences of her two-faced treachery in the past; but the fact that Faith was, after all, a niece of Miss Redfern, and had presumably thought of the big idea, made them tolerant—especially, as yet, the question as to who should be the Spirit of Speed had not been decided. That it would be Faith or Babs was accepted, but it was Babs who had the Form's support.

Lessons dragged on. Interminable they seemed that morning, even though the class liked Miss Wright. It was more a gasp than a sigh of relief which went through the room when eventually dismissal-time came, and eagerly they all scampered outside to get a close-up of the shining monster which was to be their piece de resistance in the pageant. And there the shining monster was, looking utterly thrilling, with the sunlight striking brilliant glints from its polished body.

Miss Redfern, who had just strolled down to see the work, was almost jumping with excitement.

"Isn't it just marvellous?" she cried. "Faith—where's Faith? Faith, my dear, do allow me, once again, to congratulate you upon the idea. What do you think of it?"

"I think it's lovely, aunt," Faith said modestly, "and—and I'm so glad you're pleased with it. I—I hope it will win one of the prizes."

"It will," Miss Redfern said confidently. "And that, whatever it is, Faith, shall be yours. You deserve it. And—Oh, the workmen have left some marks on the car, though!" she added anxiously. "To-morrow I'll get the whole thing thoroughly cleaned up, and then we'll hold our first rehearsal. Barbara—Ah, here you are! You will arrange that, will you?"

"Yes, aunt, of course!"

Miss Redfern laughed. She had forgotten even her constraint in the pleasure of the transformation of the car. Babs smiled, too. Aunt was such an excited thing—so very much a schoolgirl at heart, in spite of her adult years.

"And very, very soon," Miss Redfern said, "we shall have to decide the identity of the Spirit of Speed, Barbara. You will not forget that, will you?"

"No, aunt," Babs said.

Conversation was interrupted then by the arrival of Miss Primrose, who had

also come to inspect the shining wonder. The car, in fact, was attracting the attention of the whole school.

Seniors and mistresses, Second and Third Formers were all streaming towards the scene, and even one or two of the servants hung on the fringe of the admiring throng. Several girls, ever opportunists, had brought their cameras along and were taking snapshots of the car.

"Well," Babs said, "we'll save aunt one bit of trouble, girls. There's no need for her to go to the expense of having it cleaned while we've got a half-holiday. The wings and platform are quite easily removed, so—What about a car-cleaning party this afternoon?"

"Whoops! Good wheeze!" Clara approved.

"But say nothing to aunt. We'll just give her a pleasant surprise," Babs said. "Everybody agreed?"

Everybody was, except Faith. She frowned.

"But don't you think you ought to ask aunt's permission first?" she protested. "After all—"

"Oh stuff! Aunt will be pleased," Babs said. "You weren't so jolly anxious to consult her before you pushed off and bought those wings yesterday," she pointed out. "And she wasn't exactly offended by that, was she?"

"No, of course not. Of course, Barbara dear, you know best," Faith said. "But I shan't be with you, you know. I've got to do that awful detention."

Nobody looked sympathetic. Clara, in fact, most heartlessly grinned. For once, detention was a punishment which had their full approval.

But dinner-bell was clanging then, and excitedly the girls broke up. Leaving Faith to plough her own way back to the school, Babs & Co. dived into the garage and hastily dismantled the wings from the car in readiness for the afternoon. Then they tramped into dining hall, where Miss Charmant was already seated at the head of the table.

Happy meal that, with much good-natured banter. Very silent Faith sat through the first half, and it showed the Fourth's feelings towards her that nobody even thought of speaking to her. After the main course, however, she rose. She went to Miss Charmant and whispered some remark in her ear. Rather distantly Miss Charmant nodded.

"Very well, Faith, you may go. But please remember you are due to report for your detention at two o'clock."

"Yes, Miss Charmant," Faith said.

She went out, watched by her curious Form-mates. But Babs noticed the peculiar glimmer in her eyes as she closed the door and wondered. Babs had seen that glimmer before and did not like it.

Still, there was nothing she could do then, though she resolved to investigate Faith's activities as soon as the meal was finished. That, however, owing to some accident in the kitchen which held up the sweet course for the Fourth Form, was rather later than usual—indeed, it was ten minutes to two by the time Miss Charmant gave the order to disperse. Faith had not returned by that time.

"I'll go along to the garage," Babs said to her chums in the corridor. "Clara, will you rustle up some cleaning things from the housekeeper? We shall want metal polish, of course; brushes, rags—but you know. Get along as quickly as you can," she added.

Clara nodded. Babs, alone, walked off, and, reaching the steps of Big Hall which led down into the lawns and garden, she started. For a girl was hurrying across the ground from the garage. It was Faith.

Babs' eyes narrowed. Faith had been over there. Faith—

She stepped down, meeting her cousin as she stepped into the drive.

"Hallo! Where have you been?" she asked. "And what the dickens have you got on your hands?"

"My hands?" Faith started. She looked at her hands—stained with some dirty-looking white stuff. "Oh, that—that's nothing!" she said.

"But where," Babs repeated, "have you been?"

"Just—just to see somebody," Faith muttered. "But don't stop me now. I've got to go to detention. I—I hope you'll enjoy yourself cleaning the car," she added.

And, without giving Babs time for further questioning, she hurried off, meeting her aunt as she stepped into Big Hall. Her aunt smiled.

"Faith, my dear—"

"Oh, aunt," Faith said, but she took good care to place her hands behind her back, "did—did you tell Barbara to do anything to the car?"

"Why, no, Faith!"

"Be—because Babs has gone into the garage," Faith said anxiously. "Of course, I don't suppose she's doing any harm. But Barbara doesn't understand cars, you know, aunt, and—and—well, I was just wondering, that's all. But I can't stop now," she added. "I've got that awful, beastly detention!"

"Poor Faith!" Aunt Stephanie sympathised. "Still, never mind, my dear. Come and have a cup of tea with me when it's finished."

Faith, smiling mistily, hurried on. Miss Redfern looked after her fondly, shook her head, and, then, remembering Faith's warning, turned towards the garage. Babs, meantime, had just reached it.

The door was open, and the car inside. With a smile Babs approached it, and then halted as her foot kicked against something near the front wheel. She picked it up.

It was an empty tin marked "Aluminium cleaner," and some of its contents—a white, sticky fluid—was still running down the sides.

"Hallo!" Babs said. "Who's been here?"

And she frowned; for the tin, if empty, had been recently used. Then she remembered Faith and those white stains upon her hand. Those stains had been made by this stuff—why, the same stains were upon her own hands now.

So Faith had been trying to forestall them, had she? Faith had made some excuse to get away from dinner to come and clean the car? But—no! That hadn't been Faith's idea, as Babs realised when, going nearer, she opened the door.

Rooted to the spot she stood then. For she knew what Faith had done. The beautiful shiny leather-work of the car was in a terrible mess. White aluminium cleaner ran down the back of the driving seat; the leather seat was smothered with it. There was white cleaner on the carpet, streaks of it all over the place. And it was obvious at once that the cleaner wasn't stuff which could be just wiped off. The car looked hideous.

"Mum-my hat!" Babs breathed.

Then she jumped as her aunt's voice sounded at the entrance to the garage. Looking just a little anxious, Miss Redfern stepped into the garage. The

tin of cleaner in her hand, she swung round.

"Aunt!" she gasped in dismay.

"Barbara, what on earth—" her aunt began, jumping as if she had received a sudden charge of electricity. "Who has done this? Barbara, you foolish, wicked girl! What have you been doing?" she vibrantly cried.

The Fourth Take Action!



BUT before the utterly astounded and dismayed Babs could answer, Clara, Leila, and Marjorie appeared on the scene, heralded by Clara's boom-

ing, cheery:

"Hallo, Babs! Where are you?"

"Barbara," Miss Redfern said tensely, "is here. Come in, all of you. Look at this!"

"My hat!" Clara said, and looked at Babs. "An accident—eh? Oh crumbs!"

"It wasn't an accident!" Babs cried. She had found her breath at last. "I never did it! I've only just this minute come into the place!"

They all blinked. But Miss Redfern's lips set.

"Barbara, do not tell fibs about it!" she said angrily. "If you have had an accident, own up to it! Though goodness knows," she added, with a groan, "how on earth I am going to clean that stuff off the upholstery! It is useless your trying to deny it!"

"But I do deny it!" Babs said. "I tell you I know nothing about it!"

"You're not suggesting," Miss Redfern asked, with faint contempt, "that the stuff got there of its own accord?"

"No, I am not. But I didn't do it!" Babs said.

"Indeed! When I practically caught you in the act?" Miss Redfern looked scornful. "Why, you still hold the empty tin of cleaner in your hands! Really, Barbara!"

"All the same," Babs panted, "I didn't do it, I tell you! I found this tin on the floor. Somebody else did that!"

"Indeed!" Miss Redfern looked at her. "What are you trying to suggest? If you didn't do it, who did?"

Babs bit her lip.

"Well, yes, who did?" Clara asked. "If Babs says she didn't do it, we believe her. At the same time," Clara said angrily, "somebody has done it, and, if you ask me," she added, with a keenly critical look at the damage, "it wasn't much of an accident. Looks as if that stuff has been shied over the leatherwork."

"In which case," Miss Redfern said, "if Barbara knows who did it, she ought to tell. Either that, Barbara, or you must expect me to believe the fault is yours. The car was certainly all right when I put it in the garage before dinner. Who else could have been here except yourself?"

Rebellion welled up within Babs. Her aunt plainly suspected her, and refusal to mention Faith would only turn that suspicion into conviction. Well, she wasn't going to suffer for nothing.

"Faith!" she said, tight-lipped.

"Faith?" Miss Redfern's eyes gleamed. "Barbara, how dare you! Faith is incapable of such an action!"

Babs turned white. Clara glared.

"But hold on a minute," she said.

"Babs wouldn't just accuse Faith without some reason. Babs, you're sure?"

"Perfectly sure!" Babs declared.

"Faith left the dining-room in the

middle of dinner," she said. "I caught her coming out of this garage, and she had white stain on her hands."

"Well, I guess that sort of clinches it," Leila said.

"Does it?" Miss Redfern flung round on Leila. "You dare accuse a girl who is not here to defend herself!" she cried. "You are as bad as Barbara! I do not think," Miss Redfern angrily burst out, "that I have ever met a more selfish set of friends! Cannot you all see, as I can plainly see, that Barbara hates Faith? What possible reason should Faith have for damaging my car? No, no!" she added. "I will not listen to another word against Faith. Now, Clara, out, please—all of you!"

"But, aunt—" cried Babs.

"Go!" Miss Redfern quivered.

Babs, realising the uselessness of further argument, looked at her chums. "Come on!" she said thickly.

While Miss Redfern stood frigidly aloof, they tramped outside. But once they had reached Study No. 4 again—

"This," Babs said, "has gone far enough. Faith did it, and, as usual, everything fell out as she planned it to fall out. It's pretty obvious now she planned it all beforehand, and it's pretty obvious," Babs angrily went on, "that if Faith has her way the whole show's going to be ruined. We're jolly well going to deal with Faith," she added.

"And how?" Leila wanted to know.

"Summon her before a meeting of the Form."

The chums nodded, approving the suggestion at once.—Not often were girls summoned before the Form, and it was safe to say that any girl would rather have been summoned before Miss Primrose than before a tribunal of her own Form-mates. To be summoned before the Form was a mode of discipline usually reserved for the most serious cases.

But Faith was a serious case.

Grim and earnest the chums were then. From that moment they were standing no nonsense.

At once Clara, Leila, and Marjorie darted off to get the girls together in the Common-room, and, with all the available Fourth-Formers assembled there ten minutes later, Babs addressed them.

The Form listened.

"Well, we've got to deal with Faith," Babs concluded an explanation of the position.

"And we will!" Jean Cartwright vowed.

"Yes, rather!"

"Bring her before the meeting!"

But three Fourth-Formers had already been deputed to wait on Faith outside the detention-room, and five minutes later Faith came in, looking round with that big, wondering-eyed stare of hers. A silence fell as she was brought before the desk which Babs occupied.

"Faith Ashton, you are summoned before a special meeting of the Form," Babs said. "I hope you realise the significance of that. Joan," she added, addressing Joan Sheldon Charmant, "read out the complaint."

Joan stood up. She read out the complaint, and Faith sighed. She shook her head.

"But—but you're misunderstanding me," she protested.

"It's not a question of misunderstanding," Babs said. "And please don't waste the time of the Form in pulling your funny tricks. You're too well known here, Faith Ashton. So far, you've done your best to put Aunt Stephanie's back up against me, and

against the whole Form. We don't like your treachery, and we don't like your trickery!"

"But, Barbara dear—"
"Nor," Babs said curtly, "your hypocrisy!"

Faith's lips quivered.
"Then—then what do you want me to do?" she asked.

"We want you," Babs said, "to give your word of honour in front of the whole Form that there shall be no more of it. If there is—"
She paused.

"Well, if there is, Faith, the next step will not be a Form meeting summons—it will be a Form trial. Make up your mind."

Faith winced.
"I—I see," she said, in a low voice. "In other words, you don't want me in the pageant."

"Please yourself," Babs said. "What we don't want is any more of your tricks. Well, what are you going to do?"

Every eye was on Faith then. She looked down.

"I can see," she said mournfully. "I'm not wanted. You're all against me. You just want me to resign."

Girls looked quickly at each other.
"There's no necessity to resign," Babs protested. "All we're asking you to do is to play the game."

"But if I do, you wouldn't believe I was doing it," Faith said, blinking miserably. "All right, I resign. And now, please, can I go?"

a whole batch of thrills which temporarily relegated the hypocrite of the Fourth to the back of everyone's mind.

In the first place, the costumes arrived. In the second, the men came again, to clean the car and add the final fitting to the platform which was destined to accommodate the Spirit of Speed. And in the third place, there was news of an exciting nature which only reached the ears of Babs and her chums. That news came from Mr. Fields-Croft of Friar's Gables, who paid a visit to the school that morning to see Miss Primrose. He met Babs in the quad on his way out of school, and knowing and liking her, paused for a chat. Of course, Babs wanted to know what the famous Fields-Crofts were doing in the pageant.

"Well, I've got rather a new sort of job," he said. "You know Myrtle Cottage?"

were executing in order to get costumes to rights. "My word, it's like the first day of somebody's dress sale!" she said. "But—Barbara, what a lovely frock that is!"

"Yes, isn't it, aunt?" Babs asked. "You are going to be the spirit, then?" her aunt asked.

Babs paused. Until that moment she had never thought of that. But Faith, of her own choice, was out of it now, and the vote of the Form had given her the leading part. She nodded.

"Well, yes," she said. "The—the Form wants it, you see."

"And Faith—does she agree?"

Babs flushed.

"I don't know," she said. "You see, Faith has resigned."

"Resigned?" Miss Redfern's eyes widened. "When was this?"

"Yesterday."

"Oh!" Miss Redfern said, and gave



GENUINELY startled now, Faith Ashton was hauled before Babs. "Oh, Barbara dear," she simpered. "You don't understand—"
Curtly, Babs interrupted her scheming cousin. "The Form have had enough of your tricks, Faith Ashton!" she said grimly. "They've got to stop. If they don't—we'll take the law into our own hands!"

"Why, yes," Babs said. "That's where Grandma and Grandpa Crawley live."

"That's it!" he said. "The cottage is on the procession route. Somebody had the idea of broadcasting a commentary on the procession, and would you believe it, I've got the job of commentating. We've got a licence to transmit, and are fixing up the front bed-room of the Crawleys' cottage as a station. I'm broadcasting at ten o'clock on a short wavelength. You'll learn what it is later from the local paper."

Babs' eyes shone. What a thrill that was! Off she rushed to tell her chums, but the chums, so desperately busy trying on costumes in the dormitory, hardly heeded her. In any case, she had her hands full herself, for the rehearsal was to take place in the quad in half an hour's time, and Marjorie was already waiting for her with the Spirit of Speed costume spread out. Of Faith there was no sign.

But nobody was missing Faith. Nobody even gave that girl a thought. From end to end the dormitory was an excited buzz. Girls chatting, laughing, excitedly talking. In the middle of it all Miss Redfern came in.

"Oh!" she said, and laughed as she saw the various contortions which girls

Babs a penetrating scrutiny which made her flinch. "I see!" she said. "Very well, carry on. But please, Barbara, do not hold the rehearsal until you have seen me again. I want to talk to Faith first."

She rustled out, down to Faith's study, where she found Faith sitting in the armchair, quietly sobbing. Miss Redfern's face worked a little as she went forward.

"Faith, my dear—"
"Oh, aunt!" Faith said tenderly.

"Oh dear—"
"Faith, what is this I hear about your resigning? Is it true?"

Faith nodded, gulping as she did so. "But why, my dear?"

"Be-cause there was nothing else left for me to do," Faith sobbed. "I—I didn't tell you before because I didn't want to upset you, and—and if I had told you it would have seemed as if I was trying to get Barbara into trouble."

Miss Redfern's eyes clouded.

"But, Faith, I was bound to know eventually!"

"Yes, I—I suppose so," Faith forlornly admitted. "But—but it's over now. It—it was the best way, aunt. Babs called the whole Form against me, and I had practically no

"And I vote," Clara said, "that the resignation be accepted."

"Hear, hear!"

Babs looked round.

"Are we to accept that resignation?"

"Yes."

"Then," Babs said, "the resignation is accepted, Faith. You may go."

And, Faith dejectedly shuffling out, the meeting broke up. That was the end of Faith, they felt, though Babs wondered. Even now she felt there was some motive behind that resignation of Faith. Even now she did not trust her. But Faith herself had chosen her course.

For the rest of that day nobody in the Fourth saw Faith again. In the afternoon she had tea with her aunt, but when Babs met Aunt Stephanie in the evening, Miss Redfern did not mention Faith, and it seemed that Faith had not conveyed the news to her.

At call-over they saw Faith, looking very subdued. At bed-time they saw her again, but as she did not speak, nobody spoke to her, either. Then came morning, and with the morning

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

PATRICIA is your very own friend—young and gay, yet old enough to be wise and helpful, too. She writes to you each week, in that typically cheery way of hers, telling you about herself, her family, things to do, and things to talk about. In fact, hers is the sort of letter schoolgirls love.



DON'T you just love the month of May?

This Patricia of yours does. Partly because it's my birthday month, I expect. (No, I'm not a May Queen—but not very far away!) Also, I love the May flowers so much.

We have a particularly fine laburnum tree in our garden. It's so beautiful, looking rather like a golden waterfall, when it is in full bloom.

Oh, and now we have a sundial as well! We've had a plinth—or pedestal—for some time, and father has bought a brass sundial to fix on top.

So instead of consulting the clocks when we want to know the time, the family keeps rushing out to the sundial!

But I expect the craze will wear off—especially when one of us has missed a train through telling the time by this method.

Also, of course, we have to take an hour off the sundial time—because of summer time.

I've tried to explain why we must do this to my small brother, Heatherington (Heath for short). But I'm afraid he's frightfully baffled. He can't understand Daylight Saving a bit.

So I cheered him up by telling him that there are still quite a number of people in this country who take no notice of it, either.

I'm quite certain they are not people who have to catch trains, though!

● Very Difficult

Does mother sometimes allow you to use her machine—especially to make some of your own summer frocks?

If you're like me, you just adore machining. It's so exciting, somehow, to see seams simply speeding along, instead of taking the time they do in needlework lesson at school.

As I expect you know, the bottom hems of summer dresses should not be machined. These should always be done by hand. And not in tiny hemming stitches, either, but in fairly big slip-stitching. The idea being that the stitches shall not show on the right side.

I remember the first dress I made for myself as a schoolgirl; mother didn't help me with it at all—at my own request.

She warned me that the cutting out would be the most difficult part, but I

pleaded to do it by myself—and mother agreed.

But alas! In cutting out the back of the bodice, I cut from the selvages instead of from a fold. And the result was I had an opening all the way down the back!

You can imagine how unhappy I was. But I didn't say anything to mother. Then, when it was all finished, I put it on and showed it to her.

"What a pretty idea," mother said, "to have those buttons down the back, Pat. I didn't see those on the pattern."

And then I explained about that opening. You see, I sewed it up again, and to conceal the join, had sewn a row of tiny buttons right down it. (These buttons, by the way, were ordinary linen ones which I had laboriously covered with oddments of the dress material.)

As you can imagine, after that I always spent much more time on the cutting out, for it really is the most difficult part.

Some people actually go to the trouble of tacking the paper pattern on to the material first, just to be sure. Others, of course, pin the pattern in position.

But if you're in a hurry to make anything from a pattern, it's a positive brainwave just to press the pattern on to the material with a warm iron. This makes it cling most magically, so that it doesn't slip around.

You might like to pass this tip on to your mother if she does quite a bit of dressmaking.

● Aprons So Dainty

All the shops are showing the daintiest little aprons these days, I've noticed.



The tiner they are, the smarter I have even seen them for wearing at cocktail parties!

So if mother's piece-bag should reveal some rather pretty scraps of material to you, you should certainly make yourself a "baby" apron when you feel like doing a spot of sewing.

They certainly do help to keep summery dresses clean—and they look so charming, too.

You need only sew the scraps of material together until you have made

a perfect square. Then you gather the top part into a long band of material. Finish off all the raw edges—and it's done.

When thinking about new clothes—whether 'tis a new bathing suit you are having or a whole new outfit—the question of colour is a bit of a problem, isn't it?

Especially for red-heads!

A good many red-heads think that green, and green only, is their shade. So I want to tell them that this isn't so at all.

Royal blue and pale blue look sweet on you auburns. Nutty brown or London tan are also very becoming, and so is beige. All shades of green are right for you—and you look sweet in white.

About the only two shades red-heads would be wise to avoid are yellow and pink.

So don't let me hear you moaning again that you don't know which colours suit you!

● Cuckoo

Did you make a note in your diary when you first heard the cuckoo this year?

I'm afraid I haven't been keeping my diary, but I remember I heard it on Easter Sunday. That wasn't near London, mind you—but in Dorset.

I always think that song about the cuckoo-bird is very clever.

"In April I open my bill,
In May I sing night and day.
In June, I change my tune . . ."

And so on. In the country, the cuckoo certainly is singing night and day now. And just you listen for him next month when you are out for a hike in the woods. His note will be completely different.

● A Mend-in-time

Here's a very useful little needlecase that would be just right to pack into your school case or to take with you on a hike.

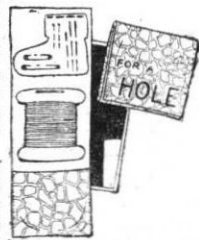
It's made from an old leather belt.

Cut a piece about eight inches long from the belt. Fold up two inches at one end to form a pocket and slip a card of mending silk or cotton into this.

Stitch a piece of flannel, cut to the shape of a funny little sock, at the other end, and on this fix needles or pins required.

Fold it over and fasten with a button and a loop and print the words "For a Hole" on it in Indian ink or that enamel paint which you can buy for twopence a tin.

Bye-bye now until next week, my pets.
Your friend, PATRICIA.



THE WAY THEY DO THEIR HAIR



Miss Hilda Richards and Patricia have planned this little feature between them. During the next few weeks they will describe Fourth-Formers' hair styles. Some of you may find the ideas helpful. But even if they're not, they're fun to read about!

This
Week :
MABEL
LYNN.

AS Mabs is fair, she washes her hair more frequently than Babs. Once every fortnight at least, Mabs has a shampoo, and sometimes once in ten days. At one time Mabs used a camomile shampoo for this hair-washing. But she has now realised that her hair is inclined to be over-dry. This meant that she simply couldn't do a thing with it for about four days after it was washed. So now Mabs uses an oil shampoo,

which she buys in a bottle, and she finds her hair has improved in texture since she has changed over.

There was just one snag, though. The camomile, you see, was made specially for fair hair, and Mabs wondered if the oil shampoo would tend to darken it.

So to be certain, she makes a point of buying a lemon from the school tuckshop on hair-washing days. She uses the juice of half this in her last rinsing water. (The other half she gives to Diana Royston-Clarke for her use, or to someone who wants half a lemon for their hands.)

This lemon-juice-rinse definitely helps to keep the fair glints in Mabs' hair—so she's sticking to this method for the present.

Mabs' hair style is not unusual at all. She parts it on the left and combs it over towards the right.

But this really does suit her, because her waves are very pretty.

If, for any special reason, she wants her hair to look a bit different, Mabs makes some little "ha'penny curls," as she calls them, beside her ear.

She does this by taking one wisp of hair at a time, and damping it slightly with setting lotion. (This belongs to Jemima, as a rule). Then Mabs twirls each wisp up separately—into the ha'penny curl—and keeps it in position (with two hair-pins).

If she does this last thing at night, the curls are perfect when combed out in the morning. But Mabs doesn't do it often. "It's too much fag," she says. "And the pins dig into my head in the night."

All the same, it's quite easy if you have wavy hair like Mabs', and would like to try it. You may not be very successful the first time, but you soon would be.

(Next Week : CLARA.)

IT'S SMART TO SHOW YOUR PETTI

WITH a swirl and a flounce the homely petticoat has come peeping its way into fashion.

Here they are, actually allowed to show beneath our dresses!

In the lower picture you see one of the latest waistlength pettis. You could very easily make one from a last year's summer dress. Just use the skirt part, making a hem at the top and threading elastic through. Then from oddments of the bodice make a long frill, and sew this all round the hem of the petti.

Now look at the top picture.

Over the frilled petti you wear one of your plain summer dresses, allowing that frill to peep coyly from beneath.

But just to complete the picture—so that the petti really does look as if it's there on purpose—you should add a bow of matching material to the neck, and a tiny square of it to make a hankie in the bodice pocket.

It's quite a bright notion for a frock that's grown too short, isn't it? And of course—the height of fashion!

ANOTHER WAY

If you like this idea of showing your petti very much, but find you haven't a dress to spare that may be cut up for the purpose, there is another way of obtaining the same effect.

At all drapers, and on the drapery counter of the sixpenny stores, you can buy frilling in all colours and in all widths.

So you can take your choice, for about sixpence a yard, selecting either a narrow frilling or a wider one—according to how much you want to show.

This can be sewn to the inside hem of the dress with tacking stitches.



EVERYONE LIKES PAMELA

—Because she is gay. You never see Pamela down in the dumps for long.

—Because she is sympathetic. If anyone is unhappy for any reason, however small, she can always be sure of an understanding listener in Pamela.

—Because she doesn't try to be sarcastic at another girl's expense. If Pamela wants to say something she says it straight out, without any veiled sting in the words.

—Because she knows how to be tactful as well as outspoken. When frankness would be hurtful, then Pamela uses tact instead.

—Because she is generous—not only when passing sweets around, but with compliments. She doesn't hesitate to say: "Don't you look nice to-day!!" to a chum who's feeling on top of the world.

—Because she doesn't fuss. When things don't go according to plan, Pamela doesn't get all het up and let it spoil her whole day—and everyone else's as well. She makes the best of what's happened.

—Because she doesn't criticise other girls. Pamela realises that what may seem a bit odd to her, may seem perfectly charming to others. She has learned that if we all thought alike, life would be very dull.

—Because she has a sense of proportion—which is something the same as a sense of humour. She doesn't think the world's coming to an end just because she's lost her gym shoes. She sets to work to find them, or borrow some more, without moaning.

—Because she is particular over her appearance. Pamela is certainly not vain, but she does like always to look trim and well-groomed, knowing that this gives pleasure to others as well as to herself.

—Because she has nice manners. Small acts of courtesy do make school a much friendlier place somehow.

—Because she's certainly not perfect. But Pamela's faults are all very human ones, so we won't mention them.



(Continued from page 11)

alternative. There's never any mercy for me when Babs gets the Form behind her," she added, "and—and to save trouble I—I just had to resign."

Miss Redfern started up. Her face was sharp with anger now.

"Faith," she said, "come with me!"

"But, aunt, you can't do anything," Faith whimpered.

"Come!" her aunt said.

She took Faith's arm, and, grim-lipped, led her out of the room.

Faith dabbed her eyes and sniffed by turns, but behind her aunt's back she gleefully grinned, hastily changing the grin to a sob as her aunt entered the dormitory door.

At once there was silence as Faith was spotted.

"Barbara," Miss Redfern said, "why did you force Faith to resign?"

"She didn't force her!" Jean Cartwright broke in. "Faith decided that for herself!"

"It comes to the same thing," Miss Redfern said. "You didn't give her much chance, did you?" Her eyes went scornfully round the room. "It may strike you all as being loyal to back your Form captain in everything she does, but backing even a captain has its limits, and when that captain's goal is just a spiteful persecution of a girl, then I say you are all tarred with the same spiteful brush!"

There was a murmur. Girls flushed.

"But, aunt—" quivered Faith.

"Faith, please! I am doing the talking!" Miss Redfern said angrily. "I hate to remind you girls of it, but it is my money which is financing this pageant, and I demand some voice in the way it is conducted. The idea of the pageant is Faith's, and it is my wish that Faith should take a leading part in the affair, not to be cheated out of her rights, as Barbara has cheated her—"

"Well, dash it—" Clara said angrily.

"And unless," Miss Redfern said, "you accept Faith into the show again I withdraw my support!"

"Oh crumbs!" Janet Jordan gulped. "That's mean—no show!"

There was a buzz, a murmur. Some girls looked dismayed, but most looked angry. Very firmly Miss Redfern had thrown down the gauntlet. They did not blame her, for in the past there was not one of them who had not been deceived by Faith. But the Fourth objected to ultimatums—and more especially did they object when they felt they had right on their own side.

Rosa Rodworth began to peel off her costume.

"Well, in that case," she said bitterly, "I'm hanged if I want anything to do with it, either!"

"Or me," said Diana Royston-Clarke. Miss Redfern's lips came together.

"I mean what I say," she announced. Another pause. Girls looked at each other, an air of tension and rebellion sweeping through the room.

Then, to everybody's consternation, Babs strode forward.

"Please!" she cried. "Don't do anything rash, girls! Aunt," she added, "I'm sorry. I suppose it's no use our trying to convince you that you're wrong, but we can't let the pageant suffer at this stage. Rather than that should happen," she went on levelly, "I will stand out."

"Babs—" almost shrieked Clara.

"I know what I'm talking about," Babs said. Very deliberately she lifted the winged headdress and placed it in Faith's hands. "There," she

added scornfully. "You can have that! In a few minutes you can have the dress, too. I'm standing out, aunt. Faith shall have my place."

And while everybody dumbfoundedly stared, Babs began to peel off the dress.

Babs the Mysterious



IT was amazing, incredible—but true!

Babs really meant what she said.

The Form glared, hardly knowing what to do now.

They had been willing to back up Babs to the bitter end—yes, even to the extent of cancelling the pageant. And yet it was she herself who was handing over the spoils of victory to the one girl who had tried to cheat her all along the line.

With the dress at last discarded, Babs left the room. Half a dozen girls followed her, hurling questions, but not until Study No. 4 was reached did Babs stop even to reply to them. Then she locked the door and faced them.

"Take it easy," she advised. "Leave this to me. None of us wants the pageant not to take place. That was what was in danger of happening. We can't let my aunt spend all that money for nothing."

"And you mean," Rosa Rodworth snorted, "we've got to play up to Faith?"

"Exactly."

"Then I'm hanged—"

"Steady, steady!" Babs advised. "Is this backing me up?"

"But how can we back you up if you're not leading?"

Babs sighed.

"Have you ever heard the saying about fighting the enemy with its own weapons?" she asked rather cryptically.

"That's what I'm doing—or going to try to do. You can still back me up by not making a fuss about my resignation, and meantime leave me to do something I've got in mind. The game's not played out yet," she added grimly. "Wait until you see the last act before you do anything rash."

And that was all she would tell them. They sighed, shaking their heads. A jolly funny game it was which Babs was playing, they considered, but Babs by no means seemed to suggest the day was lost, and while she had that marvellous something up her sleeve they were still willing to give her her head. Only one of them stayed behind. That was Clara.

"But, Babs, what is the giddy game?" the puzzled Tomboy wanted to know.

"The game," Babs replied, "is this. As everything else has failed I'm going to try to show Faith that she's not the only one who can be tricky. It's a risk, and it may not come off; but Faith isn't afraid to take risks, and, as most of hers do come off, I'm going to have a shot, too. I shall want your help—a lot. Meantime," Babs announced, "I'm going out."

"But the rehearsal—"

"Never mind the rehearsal!"

"But where are you going?" Clara cried.

"To see Mr. Fields-Croft." Babs smiled mysteriously. "I want to ask him to let me see the broadcasting station they're fixing up at Grandma Crawley's!"

Clara gazed at her hopelessly. She didn't understand. But Clara's first quality was loyalty, and Clara had a most stubborn faith in her leader. She

went off to the dormitory, where Faith, now dressed in the Spirit of Speed costume, was happily preening herself in front of a mirror. She turned as Clara came in.

"Oh, Clara, how do I look?" she asked.

"Rotten!" Clara said.

Faith scowled. The others tittered. But Faith did not mind—why should she? She had got her way. She was satisfied. By playing her cards with subtle cunning she had got what she had set her mind on all along—she was to be the star of the pageant on the morrow. What else mattered?

The rehearsal took place. Excitement was rife. The Fourth were still grimly hostile to Faith, but, after all, it was their pageant as much as hers, and they were all out to make the most of it. As far as it went the rehearsal was a success, though the posturing of Faith filled everybody with disgust. What silly game was Babs playing at, they wanted to know?

But Babs' game, whatever it was, was cloaked in mystery.

They did not see her at rehearsal; they did not see her that afternoon. Not till evening did Babs again appear, and by that time the Fourth were almost resigned to having to go through the pageant without her. Meantime, Faith was having dinner with her aunt and enthusiastically running through the details of the show which was to take place to-morrow morning.

Those details, in fact, had already been settled, but Faith loved lingering upon them. At nine o'clock the Cliff House section of the procession would commence. Very gleeful, very excited, and very, very triumphant was Faith that evening.

But perhaps she would not have been so contented if she had overheard a certain conversation which was taking place in Study No. 4 between Barbara Redfern and Clara Trevlyn. For Barbara and Clara were also making plans for the morrow.

And on that morrow a shock awaited Faith. As soon as she got up she went immediately to the cupboard in the dormitory where she had hung the precious costume the night before. But—

The costume was no longer there! "Hey," Faith wanted to know, "who's pinched my costume?" She glanced round the dormitory, and her eyes gleamed as she saw that Babs' bed was empty. "That cat Barbara!" she cried. "I might have suspected something like this! She's taken it! Where is she?"

"Find out!" sniffed Rosa Rodworth. Faith, absolutely frantic, went to find Babs, but Babs, for some mysterious reason, had vanished. Not until breakfast, indeed, did she see her.

And then, entering the dining-room, she found Babs serenely sitting at the table. Up flamed Faith.

"What have you done with my costume?" she screamed.

"I beg your pardon?" Babs said.

"My costume, you cat! You've taken it!"

Babs smiled calmly.

"And supposing," she asked, "I have? What are you going to do about it?"

Faith's eyes glittered. She looked far from pleasant.

"I'll complain to Miss Primrose!" she threatened.

"Well, go and do it," Babs said. "If you do complain it won't get you your costume back, will it?"

Faith gritted her teeth.

Faith paused. In that moment she came near to striking Babs, and probably would have done so if Miss Charmant had not put in an appearance. Trembling, fuming, she sat down, while Clara, taking a seat next to Babs, grinned.

Immediately breakfast was over Babs rose, to be accosted at the door by Faith.

"Look here, are you going to tell me where that costume is?" Faith asked.

"The answer," Babs informed her, "is in the negative! Excuse me," she added, and giving Faith a slight shove, causing her to cannon against Clara, slipped away.

"Here, who are you pushing?" Clara said resentfully, catching Faith's arm.

"Let me go!" Clara let her go—eventually—and Faith darted off down the passage, frantically looking for Babs. But of Babs there was no sign.

Faith fumed. Time was getting on. In half an hour she should be ready and dressed in the quad—and still no costume. Hastily she darted to Study No. 4. No Babs there. She rushed up to the dormitory. No Babs there.

Then, rushing down again, she encountered Clara Trevlyn. Clara grinned.

"Still looking for Babs?" she asked. "Where is she?" "Peep through the window," Clara invited.

Faith took a hunted look through the window. Then she jumped. For there, hurrying down the drive on her bicycle, a case strapped to the carrier, was Babs herself.

"She's there!" Faith shrieked. "And she's got the costume in that case! Get out!" she cried at Clara, and with a swipe of her arm pushed the Tomboy aside.

Then she went leaping down the stairs. The Tomboy strolled off, first to the Fourth Form Common-room, where she carefully set the wireless at a certain wavelength, and after that to find Miss Redfern.

Miss Redfern was in the act of finishing dressing in her new, white, driving suit when Clara appeared. She smiled a little strainedly.

"Well, Clara?" "I was wondering if you'd come into the Common-room for a few moments," Clara said. "There's something that I'm sure will interest you. Would you Miss Redfern?"

Miss Redfern glanced at her curiously. But she nodded.

"Yes, certainly," she said. "I can spare you a quarter of an hour, Clara." "That will be ample," Clara said: but she added, beneath her breath: "If everything goes off as it should do!"

Such An Ingenious Trap!



"GRANNY, there's a girl—Faith Ashton—following me!" Barbara

Redfern almost panted as, with trembling fingers, she untied the suitcase from her bicycle carrier. "When she arrives detain her until you hear me give a knock on the floor of the room upstairs, and then let her come up. You understand that?"

"Why, yes, my dear," said Grandma Crawley, with a little blink.

"Thank you."

And Babs bolted into Myrtle Cottage. This was Babs' second visit to Myrtle Cottage since yesterday—the first in the

company of Mr. Fields-Croft, who was to broadcast the procession at ten o'clock. Mr. Fields-Croft, very pleased to demonstrate everything, had found Babs an unusually attentive admirer, and for twenty minutes had been utterly in his element. He would have been surprised if he had seen how Babs had profited by that lesson.

Up the stairs Babs bolted, to unfasten the door of the broadcasting-room and slip inside.

Certainly, at first glance, there was nothing in that room to suggest that it was to provide a commentary to which everybody in England who was sufficiently interested could listen.

A table, two chairs, and a microphone on the table were all that the room contained, and on the wall was a little switch.

Babs at once ran towards that switch and pressed it down. Quickly she carried the microphone to a small bookcase,

words with you. You cheated me out of the pageant!"

"Well, hang you, what if I did cheat you out of it?" Faith panted. "You're always cock of the walk! You'd have been cock of the walk with aunt, too, if I—"

"If you hadn't planted that telegram!" Babs said scornfully.

"Well, supposing I did? You can't prove anything!"

"No," Babs said. "But I'm rather interested to know things, Faith, and before you get that bag you're going to tell me them! You admit planting that telegram?"

"To you, yes!" Faith said scornfully.

"And you admit leading aunt to the picnic party so that she'd think I'd deliberately neglected to meet her?"

"Oh, bother! Well, yes!"

"And perhaps you admit now," Babs said steely, "that you purposely messed up aunt's car; that all along



"WHAT have you done with my costume?" Savagely Faith hurled the question at Babs. "You—you've taken it!" There was an almost mocking smile on Babs' face as, very calmly, she folded her arms. "And supposing I have taken it, Faith?" she returned lightly. "What are you going to do about it?"

hiding it behind a vase of flowers. Then came Faith's furious voice from downstairs.

"I tell you she's here—I saw her come here! She was carrying a suitcase! You are hiding her! Where is she?"

With her heel Babs tapped on the floor.

"Really!" old Mrs. Crawley said. "Then if she is here she is upstairs! Yes, she must be upstairs. I think I heard a sound—why, goodness me!"

For Faith, with a furious snort, had banged the door behind her. Her feet sounded on the stairs, and Babs braced herself, facing the door as it came open, and Faith, her eyes glaring, stood there.

"You cat!" she cried. "Thought you could dish me, did you!" Her eyes fell upon the suitcase. "Now deny you took that costume!"

She made a dive for the bag. But contemptuously Babs caught her.

"I don't deny it!" she said. "But just steady on a minute, Faith, before you grab that bag! I want a few

you plotted and planned to put aunt against me—and not only against me, but the Form as well?"

Faith glared.

"Well, what else was I to do?" she asked. "Would you have given me the lead in the pageant—even though it was my idea? And I didn't plan—not all the time," she added. "Being just a bit cleverer than you, I took advantage of the circumstances which came my way."

"Like resigning from the pageant, for instance, so that you could blame me?"

"Oh, bother—well, yes, if you like! Look here, give me that bag!"

Babs gazed at her. Then she smiled. She picked up the bag.

"Clever Faith," she said. "Just being a bit cleverer than I am, aren't you? Well, here's the bag—you can have it—but you won't find the costume in it. If you want the costume you'll find it where I've hidden it—under your own bed in the dormitory! Look in that bag!"

But Faith was already looking in. A startled exclamation left her lips as she threw the lid open and disclosed a pile of old dusters. Furiously she glared.

"What's the game?" she hissed. "Go back to school and find out!" Babs said contemptuously.

Faith threw her a look of bitter hate, and then, flinging round towards the door, savagely pelted downstairs. Once she had gone, Babs chuckled.

"I wonder," she murmured, "if it worked?"

She went to the switch and snapped it back. Then she placed the microphone in its original position on the table. Meantime, Faith, quivering with fury that almost stopped her heart, was rushing back towards Cliff House.

She came within sight of the gates. Thank goodness it still required ten minutes to nine o'clock! But she blinked as she reached the gates, wondering for a moment at the crowd of girls gathered there, and among them her aunt. She stopped, breathlessly panting.

"Oh, aunt, I'm sorry! But that silly girl Babs—"

"I know," her aunt said. "Know?" Faith blinked. "Know what, aunt?"

"I know," Miss Redfern said, "that you have met Barbara. I know, indeed, every word that you said to her!"

Faith started. She eyed her aunt as if she suspected she was dreaming.

"You—you know?" she stuttered. "But that's silly! I mean, it's impossible!"

Clara Trevlyn chuckled. "It's not impossible, darling, if you shout into a microphone from a transmitting station," she said.

Faith glared. "What?"

"I mean," Clara said sweetly, "that Babs, for once, was just a bit too clever for you, sweetheart! In Grandma Crawley's cottage there is a room fixed up as a transmitting station. Rather cute of Babs to lure you there, wasn't it? And frightfully cute of her to make you blurt out a confession so that Miss Redfern could listen to it all on our radio in the Common-room!"

Too late, Faith realised the trick which had been played on her.

"I—I—I—" she stuttered. "It—it was a fake—a fake!" she panted. "They've deceived you, aunt! Anyway," she blared out, "it doesn't make any difference. I'm still queen of the pageant, and it was my idea in the first place—"

"Says you!" a voice put in. Faith turned with a start. Two figures, having just cycled up the road, had dismounted behind her. They were the figures of Miss Belling, Cliff House's assistant mistress, and Mabel Lynn—Mabs, who had returned in the hope of taking part in the pageant, and had met the mistress en route from the station.

"The idea," Mabs went on scornfully, "was mine, and you know it, Faith! Miss Belling has just been telling me that she gave you the letter in which I explained it to Babs, but I'll bet Babs never got it!"

"No, she jolly well didn't!" Clara Trevlyn put in.

Faith staggered. Miss Redfern's eyes narrowed a little.

"What is this?" she asked.

"I am afraid it is true, Miss Redfern!" Miss Belling spoke up. "As a matter of fact, this is not the first time Faith has played a similar trick. Mabel, naturally, was anxious to know

if Barbara had accepted her idea, but when I told her that Faith had thought of the idea and explained it to her—well, then the truth came out. Perhaps I should have known better in the first place than to give the letter to Faith. Ah, here is Barbara!" she added, as that girl cycled up.

Miss Redfern's face was a study. Her lips were trembling now.

"And so, all along, you have deceived me, Faith? All along you have played the hypocrite, the traitor! Barbara, my dear, I am sorry—but at the same time let me congratulate you upon your extremely clever idea of showing up this girl in her true colours before she could reap the reward of her treachery. You are a fraud, Faith—a two-faced, hypocritical fraud—and I was a fool not to have seen it!"

"But—but—but—" Faith stuttered. "And as for you taking the lead in the pageant—well, I would rather cancel it at this moment than have you even taking a part in it!" her aunt said crushingly. "Barbara, my dear, I don't know how ever I can make it up to you for the unkind things I have said. But will you, now, be the Spirit of Speed?"

"She will!" Clara Trevlyn chuckled. "We're all ready to dress her. This way, Babs!"

AND so Faith, for all her scheming and plotting, rendered no more harm to the pageant than slightly delaying it.

The Form, wildly enthusiastic and excited now that they had their leader back among them, spared her not a thought. It was Babs who took the part Faith had earmarked for herself, and Mabs, as the originator of the idea, who occupied the driver's seat next to Miss Redfern.

Faith, who had not even a walking part in the procession, was forced to watch jealously from among the crowd.

The procession was a great success, as were the celebrations in the Courtfield Town Hall which followed it. Glittering and gay, the great procession moved along its route, every foot marked by a storm of clapping and cheering. But loudest among the tumult was the applause reserved for the gleaming,

winged monster which proudly carried the Spirit of Speed.

Never in her life had Babs looked prettier or more regal.

From a thousand angles Babs was photographed by eager photographers. A dozen times she was besieged by local journalists anxious to make copy for their newspapers.

But Cliff House's greatest triumph was that evening when the prize-winning tableaux in the procession was announced.

For the Spirit of Speed was easily the first.

Faith saw all that, and scowled, her heart overflowing with bitterness. She was present later on at the prize-giving, but it was not Babs who went to receive the prize of a silver torch—it was Mabs, as it was established beyond all possible doubt now that the idea was hers.

Blushingly she went up and curtsied before the judge, and the judge, in the act of handing out the prize, stopped and started, and then gave a cry.

"Why, you!" he cried. "My dear, I have been waiting to meet you! Don't you recognise me?"

Mabs blushed.

"Mr. Cromer," she said. "Mr. Cromer—yes. The father of the little girl you pulled from under a motor-bus last Saturday! But I noticed your name was reported as Faith Ashton. How was that?"

"Well, my hat!" cried Clara.

And there was a buzz then. It was a buzz followed by a shout as Faith, white-faced, was seen scrambling towards the door. The last bitter truth was out now, the last scanty robe of good action torn from her. Faith, not content with trying to steal Mabs' idea, had also stolen the glory which was hers for her heroic action.

"Hey, Faith! Bring her back!" cried Leila Carroll. "Faith, you cat—"

But Aunt Stephanie shook her head. "Let her go," she advised. "We'll all be happier without her."

Faith, slinking through the door, heard that, and her heart really did break then. What a bitter, biting indictment from the woman who yesterday had been ready to champion her against the whole school!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.



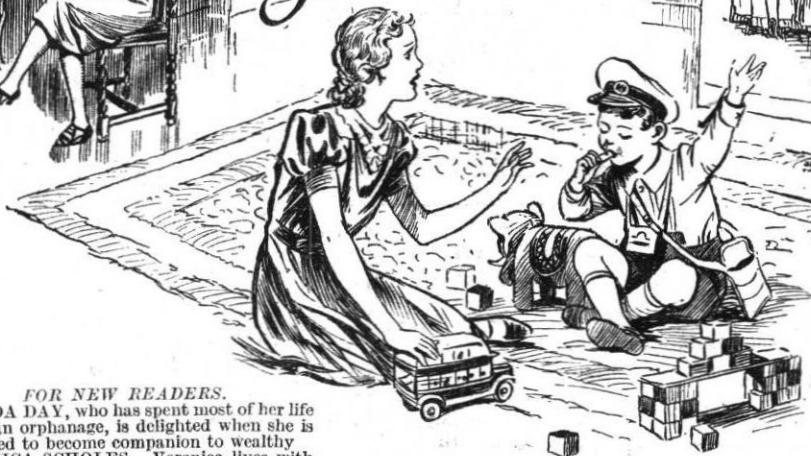
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Brenda's Task of MYSTERY!



By
**Margery
Marriott**

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 consists of looking after the lovable youngster.

On arrival at Fernbank, the Scholes' house, she meets a mysterious boy, **RONALD BENSON**, who tells her 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 are friends and working together.

Brenda borrows from Fernbank a family group photograph which Ronald for some reason wishes to see. She slips away from a pageant rehearsal with the photo to meet Ronald. Dickie and Veronica are also at the rehearsal and Veronica sees Brenda slip off. Puzzled and intrigued by her companion's mysterious behaviour, Veronica stealthily follows her.

(Now read on.)

Desperate Moments!

A FLUSH of excitement on her face, and a determined light in her eyes, Brenda Day hurried down Featheridge High Street.

She could not help feeling excited, for everything had worked out just as she wanted. She had been able to slip away from the pageant rehearsal in the town hall, and in a few minutes she would be meeting Ronald, her mysterious boy friend and helper.

Instinctively Brenda's hand went to something in her coat pocket. She touched it. A photograph. A most puzzling photograph, too, for it merely showed a family group of several years ago, and to Brenda had not the slightest significance beyond the fact that she had taken it from Fernbank.

And yet Ronald, in that intriguing, mystifying way of his, had said it might be of the utmost importance to Brenda!

"To me," Brenda murmured. She shook her head puzzledly as she went down a side turning towards the spinney. "Golly, but I wish Ronald wasn't so tantalising. If only he'd tell me just a little of what it's all about. He won't say anything except that nobody must suspect what we're doing,

or that we're even friends—and that's not much consolation."

About the only consolation at the moment, Brenda mused, hurrying along a winding country lane, was her successful departure from the town hall. Quite a little triumph, that, considering she had had to give the slip both to Dickie—the little dear; and she'd bring him back some sweets—and her own young mistress of the conflicting moods, Veronica.

But there was no time to waste. If possible, she must get back before her absence was spotted! So Brenda strode out more athletically than ever.

Eager to reach the spinney and to tackle once more, no matter how

Had Ronald already arrived?

Brenda discovered the answer to that question even before she reached the spinney, for a figure suddenly appeared, knee-deep in bracken, and beckoned her.

Recognising her friend at once, Brenda made for the spot. Ronald did not say much then beyond a cheery "Good girl," but seizing her hand, piloted her deeper into the spinney. At last, in a little clearing, he stopped before a fallen tree-trunk.

"May as well be comfy," he said, brushing a spot for Brenda to sit. "Well," he went on, suddenly very tense, as he took a place beside her. "Did you get that other photo?"

Smiling, Brenda produced it. Still smiling, though more puzzledly, she watched the young fellow as he took it from her and began to examine it, for he did not even glance at the photo side, but at the back.

"By gosh, but this is great!" he cried suddenly.

"But," Brenda protested, "that's only the photographer's name and address, isn't it?"

"Only?" said Ronald, looking up with shining eyes. "My dear old thing, it's just what I was hoping for."

Brenda pretended to be flippant, though she was burning with curiosity, longing to understand just a little of the inexplicable web of mysteries which this pleasant young chap was weaving about her.

"Well, if that's all you got me to run this risk for, Ronald Benson," she said, in dignified annoyance, "you can jolly well do your own errands another time. Unless," she added, trying to maintain her pose, "you care to bribe me by saying what it's all about."

Ronald, slipping the photo into his breast pocket, looked at her regretfully.

"I've told you, Brenda, I can't say much. It wouldn't be fair to you if I did. You see, it might only be raising your hopes about—about—" He shrugged. "Well, about something that can mean a tremendous lot to you. You've got to go on trusting me."

"It's absolutely vital that you stay on at Fernbank," Brenda's mystery friend told her.

And an hour later it seemed almost certain that she would be dismissed in disgrace!

briefly, the extraordinary mystery which seemed to surround her, Brenda did not glance round. But even if she had it was scarcely likely she would have suspected anything like the truth.

For the truth was she was being cleverly shadowed!

Her departure from the town hall had been noticed. Veronica, seething with curiosity, remembering the several rather puzzling incidents in which Brenda had been concerned since her arrival at Fernbank, was trailing her every yard of the way.

On and on Brenda strode, quite oblivious of the danger that stalked behind her. She turned a bend in the lane, and her eyes lit up. Nearly there at last! Here was the stile; beyond it was the ribbon-like path that wound across the rising slope of the field; and away up there was the spinney.

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Brenda sighed, but she smiled and nodded.

"All right," she said. "I'll go on trusting you. Why, of course I will," she added earnestly. "And I'll try to be more patient, Ronald. Only you must know how puzzling and teasing it is for me."

"I think you've earned a few dozen bouquets already," Ronald declared. Then he looked at her with interest. "But how did you wangle time off?"

In a few words Brenda explained. Ronald grinned.

"Neat work," he observed. "Very neat work. But you'd better not hang about here long. You've got to keep on the right side of Veronica, you know."

There was a strange note in his voice that caused Brenda to regard him sharply.

"Veronica?" she said. "But why should I keep on the right side of her?"

"Oh, you know!" said Ronald, with a gesture. "Not upset her or give her cause to complain. After all, she's your boss sort of thing, and—"

"But you didn't mean that," Brenda gently intervened.

"Well, what else could I have meant?" Ronald parried. "Of course I meant that, and if you think things over you'll understand why I said it. Veronica's a queer sort of girl, Brenda, full of all sorts of funny moods, and so changeable that even her best friends sometimes can't make her out."

Brenda slowly nodded. No doubt about that. She'd already experienced some of her young mistress's moods.

"I'll be careful, Ronald," she assured him. "Why, it's only natural I should want to keep on her right side, isn't it, when I'm earning my bread and butter in her home?"

Ronald looked grim.

"If you got the sack it would pretty well wreck everything!" he declared. "It's absolutely vital that you stay on at Fernbank! But who's talking of the sack? You've only just started at Fernbank, and I know you'll do your job well and keep out of trouble. I

wasn't really thinking of that. I was thinking of—us!"

"Meeting like this?" Brenda put in. "When we're supposed to be anything but friends."

Brenda pursed her lips. She knew, of course, to what Ronald was referring. At the squire's party they had pretended to be at loggerheads so that nobody should suspect the truth about them. It would certainly seem highly suspicious if they were found together, in secret, on obviously friendly terms.

"So long as we're not actually caught," Brenda said, "we can still go on pretending to dislike each other."

He smiled and nodded.

"I may want to see you about this photo soon," he said keenly. "If I am on the right track, as I think, we're nearing big things, Brenda, and soon I may be able to tell you quite a lot. Only mum's the word! If Veronica knew how you'd tricked her, and that the photo she took back to Fernbank isn't the one that belongs there—sssh! What's that?"

Grasping her arm, he whirled round, eyes darting to the undergrowth.

Brenda was staring there, too, her heart suddenly beating wildly. For an ominous sound had cut Ronald short. A sharp, cracking sound, like the snapping of a twig.

And suddenly, glancing a little away from the spot where the sound had come, she felt herself go cold with fright.

Veronica! Veronica, her young mistress, the girl who, above all people, must never know of her mysterious friendship with Ronald, was standing in the undergrowth just beyond the edge of the clearing!

In quivering relief, Brenda realised that so far the girl had not noticed the clearing. But in another few seconds, unless she abruptly turned aside, she would emerge right into it. She would see them—would see her and Ronald; would know that their apparent enmity was all a pose; would be astounded, suspicious—

In a flash Brenda had acted. She

grabbed at Ronald's arm and, heaving with all her might, dragged him down behind the tree-trunk.

"Gosh!" he gasped, sprawling on the ground. "Here, I say—"

But one word from Brenda, tensely, dramatically whispered into his ear, drove away his spluttering indignation.

"Veronica?" he echoed.

"Over—over there. And, Ronald," she went on tremulously, "she's coming towards us. She'll see us together!"

"Not if I know this place," was Ronald's determined reply.

Gesturing her to keep out of sight, he wriggled full-length to the end of the tree-trunk. While Brenda watched him, crouched and apprehensive, he peeped out. Almost at once he came squirming back to her.

"We'd better part, Brenda," he whispered tensely. "I'll go first. As soon as I'm clear I'll make a row and draw her after me. Oh, she won't see me," he soothed Brenda's sudden qualms. "I'll lead her the dance of a life-time. But you—you wait until she's started after me, and then race back to the hall for all you're worth! And think up a pretty good excuse for being here because it looks as if she followed you!"

Next moment, Ronald, regardless of the damp ground, had gone wriggling away in snake-like fashion for the nearest part of the undergrowth. Brenda, holding her breath, saw him disappear. She waited while seconds of suspense ticked by.

Then she heard a commotion as Ronald put his plan into effect. And when, from the direction of Veronica, there came a similar disturbance, she guessed that the girl had fallen into the trap. Now was her chance to get clear!

Bent almost double, Brenda crept away.

Triumph—and Disaster!

WITHIN five minutes, stopping every now and then to make certain that Veronica was not coming after her, Brenda had reached the limit of the spinney. And very soon after that, she was in the lane again, on the other side of the stile.

Clearly, she had made good her escape, for there was no sign of Veronica. She'd got away—yes. But it was a sorely troubled, apprehensive girl who hastened back towards the town.

Veronica must have followed her. How much did she know? How much did she guess or imagine? And supposing she had seen Ronald, after all, in spite of his airy confidence?

Grim indeed were Brenda's features as she turned into the High Street.

Everything might depend upon Ronald's elusiveness.

"And I've landed myself in a nice little pickle in any case," Brenda murmured wryly. "Veronica's going to get into one of those nasty moods of hers when she sees me again!"

Too late for regrets now! Brenda knew she had done wrong in leaving the rehearsal without a word to Veronica. And Veronica, if nothing else came of this afternoon's affair, would be righteously indignant at her neglecting her duty.

Brenda grimaced then. But, worried though she was, she did not forget young Dickie. How could she when the little fellow had already captured her heart so completely? She bought him some tiny sweets, cut into the letters of the alphabet.

Dickie came tearing across to her the moment she appeared in the crowded town hall.

"Am I going to be a wasp, Aunty Brenda, instead of a nasty dragonfly, in the pageant?" he asked eagerly. "You did go an—an' see about it, didn't you? I sawed you when I was looking out of the window."

Brenda stooped, taking his hands in hers. So this was how Veronica had known she had left the hall! But she did not betray anything of her thoughts, and certainly she did not attach the slightest blame to Dickie. Smilingly, she shook her head.

"Not this time, Dickie," she said. "But—look!" And she produced the bag of sweets. "A's and B's and C's—right down to X, Y, Z, Dickie! And you can make your own name, like this."

She arranged the appropriate letters on a chair, while Dickie, hopping first on one leg, then on the other, and delving into the bag to add unnecessary letters of his own, registered all the signs of childish glee.

"There, now," Brenda said at last. "D-I-C-K-I-E! Isn't that lovely?" "Oooo, yes! And—please can I eat them, Aunty Brenda?"

Laughingly, Brenda gave permission, and, of course, that was lovelier still—for Dickie. The loveliest thing of all for Brenda was the way he suddenly flung both arms around her neck and gave her a resounding kiss before, clutching at the bag, he rushed away to share his good fortune with all his little pals.

A fond light in her eyes, Brenda watched him pushing and dodging in and out of the grown-ups. She sighed. Darling Dickie! She felt better already. She wasn't nearly so worried, and—

"Oh, there you are, my dear," said a breathlessly relieved and very pleasant voice in Brenda's ear. "I've been looking all over the place for you. Would you help us out of a little difficulty?"

Brenda, turning, found herself confronted by a distracted-looking lady bearing some typewritten sheets. Instantly she smiled, her head questioning on one side.

"Why, certainly I'll help you if I can," she said. "What is it?"

"Thank goodness for that," the lady said, breathing deeply. "I'm the producer of the pageant, Mrs. Venables, you know. Such a vexing thing has happened. Just at the moment when she's needed, Veronica disappears—goes clean out of sight—can't be found anywhere. And as Veronica has the leading part in her section of the pageant, we simply must have someone to run through it. Of course, the pageant isn't for some weeks yet, but we don't want to waste any time in running through the parts."

"And you'd like me to try Veronica's?" said Brenda.

"Only roughly, my dear, if you will. Just to enable everyone else to rehearse. I'm afraid there's not a single other person available, so if you don't mind, I—"

Brenda's face glowed.

If she didn't mind? Why, goodness, she'd simply love to help. It would be topping sport. And not only would it also take her mind off worrying about Veronica, but it might help to relieve that girl of the soreness she probably felt about her. For Veronica could hardly fail to be thankful that the rehearsal—her rehearsal—had been saved, after all.

"Oh, rather, Mrs. Venables!" she said eagerly.

Scarcely were the words out of her mouth than Mrs. Venables, cramming the typewritten sheets into her hands, whirled her off to the stage. Brenda found herself ushered into the midst of

an impatient cast. Then Mrs. Venables, a triumphant ring in her voice, announced:

"Brenda is going to read the part."

Magically faces brightened. Everybody turned towards Brenda, and everybody started to thank her. Quite a few of them, whom she had met at the squire's, came forward to greet her like old friends, and one girl, drawing her on one side, suggested a quick skim through her part.

"I'll explain anything that's not quite clear, and then you'll have a pretty good idea what it's all about," she said. "We don't come on straight away. Now, first of all, you—that is Veronica—are supposed to be a young lady of the aristocracy in the time of the Cavaliers and Roundheads."

Intently Brenda listened. She was delighted with this chance to join in the fun; she was deeply grateful to this kindly girl for the trouble she was taking; and as the idea behind the part was gradually unfolded, she became quite thrilled and attracted by it.

Lucky Veronica! she began to muse. What any girl would be crazy about. What a chance to act!

It was the story of a courageous young girl who sheltered a band of hunted Roundheads in her home, and how she tricked the searching Cavaliers, even submitting to ill-treatment rather than betray the fugitives.

At first a little nervous and hesitant, Brenda soon warmed up. She did not notice it, but others exchanged meaningful looks. So-ho, they were musing, this girl was pretty good! More confident, more enthusiastic than ever Brenda became. The first scene ended to a little ripple of applause. Brenda, flushing happily, was warmly congratulated.

And then something happened that drove away the haunting apprehension that had been lurking at the back of her mind. Ronald popped his head in at the door of the hall, gesturing until he attracted her attention. As she glanced at him, he raised his thumbs, grinned, and nodded vigorously, then vanished.

It told Brenda all she wanted to know. He'd given Veronica the slip!

"Oh, thank goodness!" Brenda murmured fervently, and when the second scene began tackled it as though she were really living the part!

SAVAGELY VERONICA stamped down the High Street towards the hall. Her stockings torn by brambles and coated with mud, her expensive coat grimy and creased, she looked almost disreputable—and certainly she was in the blakest of moods.

Brenda—her own servant—that little wretch, up to her puzzling games again—she was the cause of this! She'd gone to the spinney—goodness knows what for—and had lured her into following!

Veronica's lips tightened more viciously than ever then. And not only that, but she'd tricked her into the muddiest, thickest part of the wretched place.

For Veronica, having seen Brenda enter the spinney, and then failed to catch sight of her again, was firmly convinced it was she who had led her on a wild-goose chase.

Just past the post office Veronica halted. A middle-aged man, tall and dark, and well-dressed, was approaching her with quick strides. He stopped.

"Well, well!" he ejaculated, staring her up and down. "Been cross-country running?"

"Don't rot!" Veronica flamed. "Yes, I have, and not through choice. That confounded companion of mine—the one I told you about. Come in here!" She drew him into the shelter of a doorway, and then, her voice low and tense, resumed: "There's something strange about her. I can't make her out!"

"Strange?" said the man, his eyes narrowing. "How do you mean?"

Fiercely, tensely, Veronica recounted the incident of the borrowed photograph; Brenda's feigned ignorance of the little sensation at the railway station; and finally the reason for her present discomfiture.

The man smiled—almost with relief.

"Pah! You're worrying about trifles," he said. "What's that got to do with us? Unless," he added sharply, "the girl's likely to prove a nuisance to us? Is she?"



"**BRENDA!**" Veronica cried in a trembling voice. "Come down from there at once! Trying to steal my part, you—you wretch!" Brenda whirled and stared down at her young mistress in utter dismay.

"Good gracious, no!" exclaimed Veronica, as though amused.

"Well, then, be careful what you're up to," was the warning advice. "You've quite enough to do on our account without bothering your head over the behaviour of some orphan kid. So long, my dear!"

A last significant glance between the two of them, and then Veronica had gone hastening away into the hall.

"Hallo, everyone!" she began breathlessly. "Sorry I'm so late back. Hope I didn't—" And then she broke off in gasping amazement. "Why, what—what's all this?"

For a dozen people gathered before the platform had whirled round towards her with sibilant hisses; a dozen hands were fluttered for silence. Veronica's eyes darted to the stage. She started.

Brenda—that little nonentity—actually playing the part. And she'd been rudely told to shut up!

Veronica lost her head. Furiously she stormed to the platform, shouldering and elbowing everyone from her path. She stopped just below Brenda, who, script in hand, immersed in the role, was so far unaware of her young mistress' return.

"Brenda!" Veronica cried in a trembling voice. "Brenda! Stop it! Come down from there at once! Trying to steal my part, you—you wretch!"

Dismissal!

THERE was an electric silence following Veronica's half-hysterical outburst. Startled, incredulous, people stared.

Brenda lowered her script, looking almost dazed.

She saw her young mistress, muddy and dishevelled.

Oh, poor old Veronica! No wonder she felt sore. That was Brenda's first reaction. And then, with a start, she realised the meaning of Veronica's passionate outburst.

"Trying to take your part, Veronica?" she said, with a fleeting little smile. "Oh, but that's all wrong! I was merely asked to take your place as you weren't here, and as I'd nothing else to do I—"

"Except trick me to the spinney, and get me in this disgusting state, which is the reason I wasn't here," Veronica retorted.

"Veronica, my dear, please, please be reasonable!" begged the agitated Mrs. Venables, fluttering forward like an embarrassed hen.

"Reasonable? Reasonable? When that girl—my own paid companion"—Veronica flung out a shaking arm—"gets me lost in the spinney, and then rushes back here to try to collar my role?"

Brenda found wondering eyes turned upon her.

"Surely this can't be true, my dear?" asked Mrs. Venables.

"Of course it isn't!" Brenda said swiftly.

Utterly dismayed and disconcerted though she was, she did some rapid thinking. Somehow she must find a plausible excuse for her visit to the spinney.

"I did go to the spinney for—for a walk, I'll admit," she confessed. "I also bought some sweets for Dickie. He's got them now. And when I was at the spinney I heard someone else creeping about the undergrowth. As a matter of fact," she said, with a laugh she desperately tried to make natural, "I—I got rather scared. I

thought of all those bandits you read about, and so I slipped off just as quietly as I could."

"A likely tale!" Veronica sneered.

"But I'd no idea of playing this part, as you all know, until Mrs. Venables asked me. Veronica"—she looked entreatingly to her young mistress—"you—you must believe me, please. I was only reading for you. Look! Here's the script! You take it, Veronica! I don't want to keep it."

She held out the script. Veronica stared at her, suddenly very sullen, suddenly acutely aware of the ugly, contemptible figure she was cutting. In another second the script would have been in Veronica's hands, and all would have been well.

But from the back of the hall came an indignant, disdainful voice:

"Don't you give it up, girlie. You're tons better than she'll be."

There came murmurs of agreement, and Veronica, cheeks flaming, withdrew her hand as though it had been stung.

"So that's how you all feel, is it? Well, you can have her. There she is!" She struck the script from Brenda's grasp. "Take her; and I hope she lets you down as she's let me down!"

And, head flung back, Veronica stormed out.

Never had Brenda felt so humiliated, nor so agitated. Her humiliation was soon dispelled, for everyone was most anxious to comfort her and assure her that they didn't believe a word of what Veronica said, and that they'd love her to take the part.

And so Brenda, feeling in a whirl, and frantically anxious to get back to Fernbank, and defend herself before Veronica could make too strong an impression with her aunt and uncle, gulpingly nodded her head.

"But—but please give me till tomorrow to decide for certain," she hastily begged.

For how could she dare to commit herself? Supposing Veronica was furious enough to make it a question of her withdrawing from the pageant, or losing her position as companion?

The girl could be dangerous. Perhaps swiftly changing moods were at the back of her behaviour, but that didn't alter the fact that she could be a formidable enemy.

During the drive home, Dickie was agog with curiosity, for he had witnessed the disturbance from the back of the hall.

"Why was Veronica angry with you, Auntie Brenda?" he piped. "'Cos you bought me A B C sweets? Or was it 'cos you want me to be wasp, an' she—she wants me to be a dragon-fly, an' I don't, 'cos dragon-flies can't buzz, an' they don't like jam an' honey an' marm'lade, an'—an'—"

"Oh, no, dear!" Brenda whispered, hugging him to her. "It wasn't because of you. Veronica just didn't feel well, that's all. And did you have lots of fun to-day, Dickie?"

"Ooo, heaps an' heaps an' heaps!" Dickie gurgled, flinging wide his arms.

"But—but I'd have had heaps an' heaps more fun if I'd been a wasp, Auntie Brenda," he added; in such a plaintive, endearing voice that Brenda, despite her worry, had to laugh.

"We'll have to see about that old wasp, Dickie," she promised. "I dare say it could be fixed up even now. But here we are. Let me get out first, and then I'll give you a pickaback indoors."

With Dickie clinging on for dear life, and yelping with delight, Brenda

raced up the steps. As a trim maid admitted them, Brenda wondered anxiously—

Had Mrs. Scholes heard Veronica's version of what had happened? Would—would she be dismissed in disgrace?

There was no way of telling, for Mrs. Scholes was not in evidence inside the house. But one of the maids, helping Dickie out of his outdoor clothes, gave Brenda a most disturbing message.

"Miss Veronica would like to see you in her room, Miss Day," the girl said pleasantly. "I'll put Dickie to bed, if you like."

"Don't want to go to bed with you, Jane!" Dickie shrilled, clambering on to Brenda's back again. "Want Auntie Bwenda, and Smacker-Squeezeie!"

"All right, you shall have us," Brenda said. "I'll see to him, Jane. And thanks for the message!"

And, with a smiling nod, she began to mount the stairs. But the smile soon changed to a frown. Veronica wanted to see her. Ominous, that! What did it mean—trouble, big, serious trouble?

But there was little chance for Brenda to ponder the matter. Dickie saw to that, scarcely leaving her a single second in which to think of anything but him.

Undressed, washed, put into his nightclothes, told a short story—all these tasks were accomplished. Then Dickie flung both arms about Brenda's neck, squeezed her until it very nearly hurt, and, in the most thrilling voice, breathed:

"Oooo, I do love you, Auntie Bwenda!"

"And I love you, Dickie," Brenda said, her eyes soft and tender.

Dickie, as if to celebrate, hurled himself on to the bed, did a somersault, got stuck up against the back rail, and, when Brenda laughingly extricated him, wriggled between the sheets, only to sit bolt upright with wide-open eyes.

"Smacker-Squeezeie!" he piped. "I want Smacker-Squeezeie!"

"And who's Smacker-Squeezeie, Dickie?" Brenda asked, intrigued.

"Ummm!" grunted Dickie, pointing to an overturned wooden engine.

Something was lying in the tender of the engine. Brenda, retrieving it, found it was a very grimy rubber lion. As she laughingly held it out to Dickie it squeaked, and the little fellow clapped his hands.

"That's Smacker-Squeezeie," he said, and hugged it to him. "Do you know, Auntie Brenda, he always squeaks when you smack him, or squeeze him?"

"And so that's why you call him Smacker-Squeezeie?" said Brenda, in sudden enlightenment. "Why, you are a clever boy, Dickie! And now"—as she tucked in the bedclothes—"let's have a very sleepy boy, shall we?"

Dickie settled, she crept out, leaving the door ajar, for Dickie hated to feel completely isolated.

But Brenda's thoughts were scarcely of that lovable little fellow as she moved away down the passage.

Now to interview Veronica; now to learn what was in store for her. Head up, hands clenched, and trying to ignore the agitated pitter-pattering of her heart, Brenda braced herself for the ordeal.

Certainly it would mean anger, scorn, but would it end in a caution, or dismissal?

A VITAL question indeed, for according to Ronald it is essential that Brenda stays on at Fernbank. In next Saturday's chapters you will learn the answer—one that is bound to surprise you.

Another fascinating COMPLETE story of Merrie England in the days of Richard Lionheart!



The Spy!

THE young Lady Fayre, a large bell in her hand, looked anxiously down the road from the village towards Longley Castle, whence at any moment a troop of soldiers might ride out with flashing arms.

Longley Castle was the Lady Fayre's own home—indeed, it was her property, but her uncle, the Baron le Feuvre, considering might greater than right, had taken to using it as though it were his, rather than hers, and suffering her to be there as his guest. And because of her uncle's treachery, Fayre had no feeling of loyalty towards him, nor did she hesitate to take sides with the outlaws against him.

Indeed, there were times when Fayre considered that justice would be better served were the outlaws to live at the castle while the baron roamed the woods with other wolves.

At this present moment she was keeping guard for Robin Hood, who, taking advantage of the absence of the sheriff from the district, was addressing a meeting in the village square. The burden of his speech was such that were it to reach the Baron le Feuvre's ear, that overbearing tyrant would send down a troop of his soldiers to scatter the villagers and capture Robin Hood.

Even now such a troop might be on its way, for the baron had his spies. But the moment the flash of armour was seen at the far bend of the road, the moment the first pennant was seen in the breeze, the Lady Fayre would swing the heavy bell in warning, and the villagers would scatter back to their cottages.

Meanwhile, surrounded by his merry band of men in green, Robin Hood, himself clad in that colour, stood upon a box and made his speech.

Handsome, daring, and gay, he was the people's favourite; for, although the baron might trample the poor, Robin Hood was their friend.

Indeed, King Richard the Lionheart had but recently pardoned him, but as Richard was now back at the Crusades, his cunning brother, Prince John, ruled England—and he was Robin's enemy.

"My worthy friends," called Robin Hood in ringing voice, "by whose

SECRET HELPER TO ROBIN HOOD

By IDA MELBOURNE

authority has the baron collected your taxes? He says that they are for King Richard—"

"A cheer for the king!" cried Fayre. And a cheer rose, which Robin Hood himself led.

"If the gold was indeed for the king, then glad we should be for him to have it," went on Robin Hood. "But if it is only said that it is for him; and if it is to go to the baron's treasure chest—why, then—"

A deep groan came for the rascally baron.

"Why, then," went on Robin Hood, "we must demand our money, and beg leave to pay it only to the king himself, who lately was in these parts, but is now fighting the infidel. Let us—"

He got no further, for Fayre clanged the bell. She swung it violently, and then rushed to the nearest cottage, threw it in, and dodged out again.

Villagers scattered in every direction, running for their own or friends' houses; and the men in green, knowing



puzzle how to give back to these people the taxes the baron wrongfully collected."

In a moment he was gone; but Fayre lingered in the village to see what happened.

At the head of the troops was her uncle, the baron, in full armour; behind came a hundred or more mounted men wearing chain mail, some carrying lances, others swords.

But the village street was clear before they reached it; and everyone was indoors, and most doors—and windows, too—had been fastened.

Scowling, the baron reined up and looked about him. Apart from a poor cripple, there was only one person out of doors—Fayre.

Fayre, to avoid being recognised by

Robin Hood wounded, a fugitive inside the castle of his enemy, the baron! But Fayre meant to save him—with a bottle of green dye!

that they would be outnumbered by the soldiers, and not carrying swords, did not remain to do battle in such handicapped circumstances.

"To the woods?" said Robin Hood lightly, and paused only to give Fayre his hand to help her clear a box that lay in her way.

"Well warned, my Lady Fayre!" he said, with a smile.

"Sssh!" she murmured, putting a finger to her lips lest some villager's quick hearing should have caught the name.

That the shabbily dressed girl in the green frock and brown hooded cape was the niece of the Baron le Feuvre was an idea which would not naturally have occurred to any of the villagers. But for a most unusual happening, indeed, Robin Hood himself would not have discovered it.

"Softly—softly," he nodded, with a smile. "The baron would not take kindly to his lady niece tolling the bell in warning for Robin Hood, I trow!"

"Nor to my even knowing you, Robin Hood," Fayre murmured, dimpling. "But hasten, before his troops ride in!"

"Farewell, sweet maid!" breathed Robin Hood. "I shall see you anon—when, mayhap, we shall solve the

her uncle, kept her head down and fitted the hood so that it served to conceal her face. Nevertheless, although her disguise had passed muster many times before, she felt a deep throb of alarm when, suddenly swinging round in his saddle, the red-faced baron pointed to her.

"You wench, what goes on here?"

"'Twas but a discussion of sending money to King Richard for the Crusade, my lord baron," she replied in a voice which she tried to make dissimilar to her own.

"So ho? More money for the king, huh?" asked the baron, his eyes glinting. "Then let it be known that all who would send King Richard gold would do well to bring it to the castle—taking care that it does not fall into the hands of Robin Hood."

Then the baron rode on up the street, satisfied himself that there was no meeting taking place in hiding, and turned back towards the castle.

Fayre waited but a moment herself, then hurried after the troop, climbing through a hedgerow so that in the shelter beyond it she could run most of the way without attracting attention, and thus reach the castle ahead of the baron. If he should ask for the Lady

Fayre she would be there to answer life.

But it so happened that on the return a beggar bearing a sack over his shoulder came along the road from the castle, and walking for preference or in all innocence nearer the middle of the road than was to the baron's liking, the man received a buffet from the baron's gloved hand that sent him reeling.

Staggering back, the unfortunate beggar collapsed in a heap by the roadside. The troop rode on, paying him no more heed than if he had been a sack of wood.

Fayre clenched her hands in fury as she witnessed the incident; and, her eyes ablaze, she hurried to the fallen beggar to help him up.

"Kind miss, have they indeed gone?" he faltered.

"They have so," said Fayre. "Pray let me help you stand, good man."

But the beggar sank down again, shaking his head.

"Alas! I am weak for the lack of food," he said. "There is no friend now of the poor!"

"No friend of the poor?" Fayre replied. "Hast not heard of Robin Hood, good fellow?"

"Robin Hood? Ay," said the beggar, with a slow nod of his head. "Even so. But also I have heard of the Saracen, and maybe one is as far away as t'other."

Fayre did not like to hear anyone speak in such a depressed, miserable tone, and she patted the beggar encouragingly on the shoulder.

"Robin Hood is not so far away as you would seem to think," she said. "There is a secret way through the

wood which would bring you to his lair—dare I mention it to you?"

The beggar gave a dry chuckle.

"Ha! Take heed lest I do use the secret way and with my two weak arms set about the outlaws and flay them."

"It was of traitors I had mind," chided Fayre, "not of you. But if you do give me your word of honour not to tell—No," she ended. "Let me tie a bandage about your eyes, and I will then lead you to Robin Hood. Because you cannot know where you are going there will be naught to fear."

The beggar made no protest; indeed, he seemed too glad to have the chance of going to Robin Hood's secret lair in the wood to care how he got there.

Having most carefully bandaged his eyes with a scarf, the Lady Fayre led him from the road to the wood, and, walking slightly ahead, steered him on the tricky, winding course that led to the outlaws' camp.

Blindfolded, the beggar groped, and kept hold of Fayre so that he did not get lost. Yet even though he could not see, he would nevertheless know his way back. For no sooner had he stepped upon the path than his right hand, hiding a knife, had stabbed at the sack he carried on his bent back.

From the torn sack drifted fine grain, marking clearly every inch of the route!

It would go right to Robin Hood's lair from the road. And on the road the baron stood with his hundred men.

For the beggar who had been struck down was a spy; his fall was a pretence, and now, still feigning hunger to earn pity, he had laid a cunning trail for the baron to follow.

The outlaws' secret lair would soon be a secret no longer!

To Robin Hood's Aid!

PULLING the bandage from the beggar's eyes, Fayre pointed to the glade.

Robin Hood and his men were making merry at a game of quarter-staves, to the accompaniment of jests and laughter.

Fayre, watched, smiling, and then, as she had need to be back at the castle, where her absence might already have been noted, she turned to retrace her steps.

For the first few yards she thought only that the sack had been torn by accident. Then, seeing the trail winding on ahead, the terrible truth struck her, and she hurried back to the secret glade.

"Robin Hood, you are betrayed!" she cried. "There is a trail left from here to the road!"

The beggar, giving an alarmed cry, dropped his sack and sprang to escape. But a well-flung quarter-staff, twisting between his ankles, brought him down; and he was seized by outlaws and held.

"Have pity for his age," begged Fayre anxiously. "Twas doubtless the baron's gold that bought him over."

"Easy, men," said Robin Hood. "Let him talk in a minute. Unless we want to lose our secret lair, we have need to think—in a short while the baron may be upon us."

There was not one word of reproach for Fayre, yet she stood there, filled with shame, her cheeks burning. She knew now that she had stepped into the trap; that the artful beggar had traded upon her tender heart for his sole purpose. And if ill befell Robin Hood she would feel for ever that it was she to blame.

"The trail must be swept," said Robin Hood. "Speedily! Every man a broom made of twigs—"

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BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—Isn't it just amazing how the weeks speed by?

It seems only a few days since we were revelling in that gorgeous Easter weather, and now, only a fortnight away, and simply rushing towards us, is Whitsun!

Very soon the whole country will be awakening to summer life; not only will the countryside itself be rich in all its glorious splendour, but everyone in town, city, and village will be thinking and acting in terms of sunshine, warmth, and relaxation.

There'll be carnivals, regattas, camps, tennis tournaments, trips to the seaside and country, cruises, and—why, just all those lovely things without which no summer would be complete, and for whose benefit we hope the sun does its very, very best.

Thought of tennis tournaments gives me an anticipatory thrill, for I'm hoping to pop along to Wimbledon during the big matches this year. I love watching the experts in action, although I always come away feeling that it's so frightfully easy to be a fine player—except when you happen to be me!

Oh, but there's something else that this talk of Wimbledon and the thought of Dorothy Round, Senorita Lizana, "Bunny" Austin, and the like brings to my mind! I mean next week's Cliff House story, for that deals with tennis.

Naturally, none of the Cliff House girls are up to Wimbledon standard, not even Dulcia Fairbrother, Clara Trevlyn, or that amazingly accomplished performer, Christine Wilmer. But Babs & Co. take their tennis very seriously, especially the tournaments they enter for the honour of the famous school, and their own champions could give a good account of themselves in any company.

First of all, let me give you the title of this superb story:

"WHEN CLARA CHAMPIONED THE CAPTAIN!"

And now let me very briefly tell you what the tale is about. Cliff House are competing in the Southern Counties Doubles Championship. Dulcia Fairbrother, captain of the school, is one definite representative, as she stands on a pinnacle alone. The choice of her partner rests between Clara, Christine Wilmer, and Rona Fox, the unpopular prefect. Christine hurts her tennis wrist, and is out of it. That leaves Clara and Rona, and Clara, to the wild delight of herself and her chums, is the lucky girl.

Rona is furious. Vicious, vengeful, she is determined to hit back, not only at Clara, but at Dulcia, in whose hands the decision lay.

Unfortunately, Fate plays right into Rona's hands, for at that time Dulcia, the respected head girl of the school, appears to be kicking over the traces, going to dances, smoking, breaking rules in numerous ways.

That is Rona's chance. Ruthlessly she seizes it. Rumours begin to spread about Dulcia—unpleasant, disquieting rumours that shake the girls' confidence in their leader. But not in Clara's case. Dulcia has always been her idol, and, come what may, always will be.

Staunchly Clara defends Dulcia; loyally she champions her heroine's cause—in vain, it seems. For there comes a time when, despite Clara's efforts, Dulcia is faced with terrible disgrace, and Cliff House's chances in the great tournament seem irreparably ruined.

Don't miss this wonderful Hilda Richards story whatever you do. Next Saturday's issue will also contain further magnificent chapters of Margery Marriott's fascinating and unusual mystery story; another topping COMPLETE tale of the young Lady Fayre and gallant Robin Hood; and more of Patricia's Bright, Useful, and Interesting pages. So order your copy well in advance, won't you?

And now an revoir for a few more days!

Your sincere friend,
THE EDITOR.

But Fayre thought of a better idea. The outlaws, starting to sweep near their glade, would be seen by the baron. Better by far to start the sweeping half-way to the road, and then to lead a false trail into another part of the wood.

Robin Hood heard her scheme with approval.

"Well considered, my lady—my friend," he smiled. "It shall be done. Take the rascal's sack, Little John, and spread a new trail from half-way to the road."

"Ay, ay!" said the tall fellow humorously called Little John. "And as the baron's men are mounted, mayhap 'twill be best to run it under every low branch there is."

"A kindly thought," winked Robin Hood.

Fayre, glad that she had been the one to think of the plan, went back to the castle, feeling certain that Robin Hood and his men were safe, even though the treacherous beggar had betrayed her trust.

She took care that she branched away in another direction, and very soon, reaching a mound, was able to see the castle and so take her bearings. Her shabby cloak and her ragged green frock were well known to the guard at the barbican, who believed her to be a messenger for the Lady Fayre, so, offering her no hindrance, they gave her a cheery greeting as she walked over the drawbridge.

Fayre hurried into the castle and up to her bed-chamber, where, in an old oak chest in the corner, was concealed her own luxurious frock. To change the two did not take her a moment, and presently, with her long golden plaits hanging down to her waist, she entered the school-room.

The Venerable Brie, her tutor, sat there, nodding off to sleep. He had not noticed Fayre's absence, and when presently she nudged him to wakefulness he rubbed his eyes.

"The lord baron is in the castle?" he asked sleepily.

"No, good sir. He is out riding," said Fayre, smiling.

"Ah!" murmured the tutor, with a pleasant sigh. "Continue reading, my child."

And, clasping his hands, the Venerable Brie passed again into oblivion. Assured that the baron would not be likely to look in, he did not exert himself. He could enjoy Fayre's reading as much asleep as awake.

Fayre read for a few minutes, and then, when several deliberate mistakes had passed unnoticed, she went to the window and looked out.

A great commotion could be heard in the roadway; the sound of cheering. Presently the pennants of the baron's troop appeared, and the flash of helmets glinting in the sunlight. A moment later they rode in through the gateway, the baron at their head.

Swinging his sword on high, he led a cheer.

Fayre leaned from the window, very anxious to hear the cause of their great joy.

"What is it, uncle?" she cried. "Tis Robin Hood. At last we came to clash of arms with the rascally outlaws. And Robin Hood is wounded."

The colour drained from Fayre's cheeks.

"Wounded!" she cried. "How—how sorely wounded, uncle?"

"I know not—nor care!" he said. "But his merry men went off in haste, and he last of all, weak from his wound."

Fayre trembled; she could not speak. Robin Hood, her hero, the bravest,



"OH, hurry—please! The sheriff's men—they're nearly here!" Fayre cried, keeping watch from the bushes. Feverishly the injured Robin Hood, helped by Friar Tuck and Little John, struggled into the armour that would disguise him as one of the Baron's knights!

noblest man she had ever known, wounded! Who knew where he might be hiding if he had fallen through weakness, all alone?

There were wolves in the wood; and they would find him more quickly than his own men would if he were too weak to escape.

Fayre stood staring from the window until she became aware that the baron was organising an expedition of foot soldiers to search the wood. Then she swung back from the window and ran to her room to make a lightning change from her rich self to the poor maid of the woods.

Taking with her what might seem of use, something to stop bleeding, and some medicine that the Venerable Brie had brought from the wise monks in Ireland, Fayre then went from the castle unnoticed in the confusion.

"A hundred gold pieces reward for whoever brings Robin Hood to the castle!" shouted a master-at-arms, in roaring voice.

And then, as the baron spoke to him, he sang out another message.

"Sir Geoffrey Witmot, captured by the outlaws, is at their mercy, and believed to be wounded. Whosoever rescues Sir Geoffrey will be given half the noble knight's ransom money!"

A cheer went up at that; for it would be a good round sum. But it would also be well-earned, since to recapture the knight the soldiers would have need to enter Robin Hood's stronghold.

Fayre waited for no more, but went as swiftly as she could to the wood; and all the while she blew the whistle that Robin Hood had given her for the dual purpose of scaring away wolves, and of letting him know that she was near.

Every few paces she paused, listening for his answering call, but none came, so she turned from the main path, hardly daring to listen for a reply here.

With the whistle once again to her lips, she paused. A faint sound had come, a feeble sound like a horn blown too weakly for its note to carry.

Twice she blew the whistle in quick succession, and, heart thumping, listened intently for that soft reply. It came, and now, prepared for it, she was able to judge the direction.

Swift of foot, sure now whence it

came, she saw ahead of her a thick large bush. Knowing Robin Hood, and his skill in selecting hiding-places, she threw herself low to the ground and rolled forward.

Under that massive bush lay the outlaw, pale and weak!

At Their Mercy, But—!

"FAYRE!" cried Robin Hood softly, in joy.

"Robin Hood," Fayre murmured, biting her lip, trying to be brave and composed. "Are—are you badly hurt?"

"Tis nothing much—yet I fear a poisoned wound," he said. "A rascal stabbed me in the back when already I was facing two swordsmen."

He turned his back, showing the gash that the stab had made in the jacket, and Fayre tenderly treated the wound, taking from her basket the ointments and cures she had brought from the Venerable Brie's supply. There was one that was marked for poisons; and using it as the instructions directed, she applied its soothing balm to the wound.

"Tis nearer to the road here than the camp," she murmured worriedly.

"And soon the baron will come."

"Then he will find me. He may bring dogs to hunt me," said Robin Hood. "If he does, so much the worse for me. There is no time for my men to carry me back to the camp."

Fayre bit her lip fretfully.

"Would the baron set you free to have back Sir Geoffrey?" she murmured; but shook her head at her own thoughts.

Robin Hood was worth a small fortune to the baron in kudos and fame alone, but Sir Geoffrey was of no account.

"I fear not, alas!" said Robin Hood.

But Fayre, rising to her feet, felt a thrill of excitement as a daring idea jumped into her mind. Turning, whispering to Robin Hood that she would be back, she hurried by the way she knew to the secret camp.

It was ten minutes later, when the baying of hounds could be heard from the road, that she returned, and with

her was Little John, bearing shining armour, and Friar Tuck.

Fayre dropped down to the ground again, and the two outlaws, after joyous greeting of their friend, did likewise.

"The baron comes," said Little John hoarsely. "There is little time to lose, Robin. Move out if you can, and let us buckle on this armour. Poor friend, a churlish jab in the back it was."

Robin Hood, despite his pain, crept out, and, without wincing, suffered them to buckle on the armour after Fayre had dressed the wound again. Then, pulling the vizor over his face, Little John jammed it so that it could not easily be opened.

That done, the outlaws, wishing their leader luck, scurried back to the camp to put the others on their guard.

It was left to Fayre to act then, and she pulled her hood forward, and dirtied her face. The moment she saw the foremost of the baron's soldiers, she ran forward, shouting:

"A knight in armour—a knight in armour, sirs!" she cried.

Two of the soldiers, remembering the offer of one half the knight's ransom, hurried to make sure of it.

Having done that, they ran back to tell their fellows; and presently the news reached the baron, who came on to the scene:

"Pah! 'Tis Robin Hood I want, not that fool," he said gruffly. "Lift his vizor and look at his face, to see if he still breathes."

Fayre held up her hands in protest. "He is wounded—take heed," she said. "Disturb him no more than there is need." Let the wounded knight be taken, with all speed to the castle, gentlemen, I prithe.

The baron, leaving an officer and two men in charge, went on with his search for Robin Hood. A few moments later the litter arrived, a crude kind of stretcher, and Robin Hood was lifted on it, to be carried back to the castle, slung between carefully led horses.

Fayre walked behind, hardly

breathing; for even now it was touch and go whether Robin Hood would be recognised at the castle.

But her brain worked to good purpose as she followed the litter, and by the time the castle was reached she had a plan firmly made. Saying that she would tell the Lady Fayre, she ran ahead, and, changing clothes, descended to the hall as herself, in the rich, red frock.

On her way down, however, she called in at the school-room, awakening the Venerable Brie.

"The green dye, wise whitebeard," she whispered. "Where is it? 'Tis urgently needed."

The Venerable Brie aroused himself sufficiently to answer and to give her the key to his secret chest; and there, after a brief search, she found what she wanted. The green dye was a bright stain that could not easily be removed; in short, the very thing she wanted for her daring, desperate plan.

Fayre slipped downstairs with it to the large room where Robin Hood, still in armour, had been taken.

"Off with his armour!" cried the officer.

Fayre tiptoed to Robin Hood, and, stooping low, peered through the vizor.

"Close your eyes," she breathed, and then flicked little spots of green dye through the vizor slits.

"Wait! I will unfasten the vizor," she murmured.

By a fierce effort, aided by Robin Hood's left hand, she opened it and looked. Then with a scream she dropped the vizor and staggered back. "What is it?" asked the officer sharply.

"'Tis Saracen green fever!" gasped Fayre. "Oh—oh! Out—away—run! Let no man dare breathe a word of this or panic will reign. Run to the physician, officer!"

The officer and the soldiers, convinced that this was some terrible fever of which all who got near to the unfortunate knight were likely to die, rushed from the room; although the officer, as befitted his responsibility, took a quick glance through the vizor. To see the face clearly was not possible, but the green spots were unmistakable. They looked fatal.

When the door closed behind the soldiers Fayre barred it, and unbuckling the armour, freed Robin Hood, who, eased by the wonderful ointments, could now move without suffering pain.

"Well done, little mystery maid," Robin Hood said gratefully. "You have saved me indeed."

"But you have yet to escape."

"There will soon be hue and cry for me, yes," Robin Hood mused. "For they will find the armour empty, I fear."

"They will, indeed. But I have thought of that, and I have a plan," said Fayre eagerly. "So long as they do not seek Robin Hood in the castle, nothing matters."

Fayre, helping him to a seat, moved to the door, unbarred it, and peeped out. There was no one to be seen.

To make quite sure that Robin Hood would not be seen and recognised, Fayre hurried to her uncle's room, where a number of cloaks hung behind an enormous curtain. Choosing the longest one, with the highest collar, she returned with it to Robin Hood.

"'Twill mask me well," he smiled. "A clever girl, my Lady Fayre. And a sweet, dear friend."

"And you—the friend of all the poor and needy," she reminded him. "Who more deserves the hand of friendship than you? But hush! Swiftly to hiding."

"And where?" he asked, as they tiptoed from the room.

Fayre led him aloft to one of the large, neglected rooms on an upper floor, where some broken engines of war were stored. As it was not as a rule entered from one year's end to the other, it was a safe hiding-place.

Leaving him there, promising to return with food and bedding, Fayre hurried back to the room where the armour had been left. Arranging it on a form as though it was occupied, and closing down the vizor, Fayre took the sulphur jar from the medicines in her basket, and spreading a little, burned it in the armour, bringing a pungent smell.

It was an hour later that the baron returned in ill-temper from the hunt of Robin Hood. He heard at once about the terrible fever, and lowering his own vizor, went to the room where Fayre had been left with the knight.

Fayre herself was on duty outside the door, sitting on a stool, sewing. She rose as the baron approached, and dropped a curtsy.

"Has Sir Geoffrey left this room?" asked the baron.

"No, uncle."

The baron, plucking at his chin in agitation, gruffly demanded the key. Then, passing his sword to and fro in front of him as a guard against catching the fever, he advanced to the armour.

A curl of yellow smoke was rising through the vizor, and the baron fell back, a pace in horror. Three other knights who followed him in, also fell back when they saw the yellow smoke. "All gone!" he choked. "Sir Geoffrey—Nothing—"

Silent, they exchanged looks, and then with common accord, without one word being uttered, they hurried from the room.

So far as the baron was concerned, that was the end of Sir Geoffrey.

For a whole week Robin Hood stayed in the castle; and such was the care of Fayre's nursing and his power of recovery that at the end of that period of time he was well and strong again.

He was, indeed, so strong that he was able to lift the baron's treasure-chest practically off its hinges. He could probably have lifted it right off the hinges, but he only opened it enough to enable him to lift out two bags of gold, which approximated in value to the amount of taxes wrongfully levied on the people by the baron.

By an odd coincidence on the very day that the gold vanished from the baron's treasure-chest, the knight Sir Geoffrey returned.

The baron was astounded. But where Sir Geoffrey had been and what he had seen meanwhile he could not tell them. He was, after all, a gallant knight, and having been tended by the outlaws while he was ill with the wound, he had given his word not to mention where he had been.

The baron and most of the others supposed that Sir Geoffrey had just dissolved into space.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

BE sure to meet the Lady Fayre and gallant, daring Robin Hood again next week.



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