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School Story :

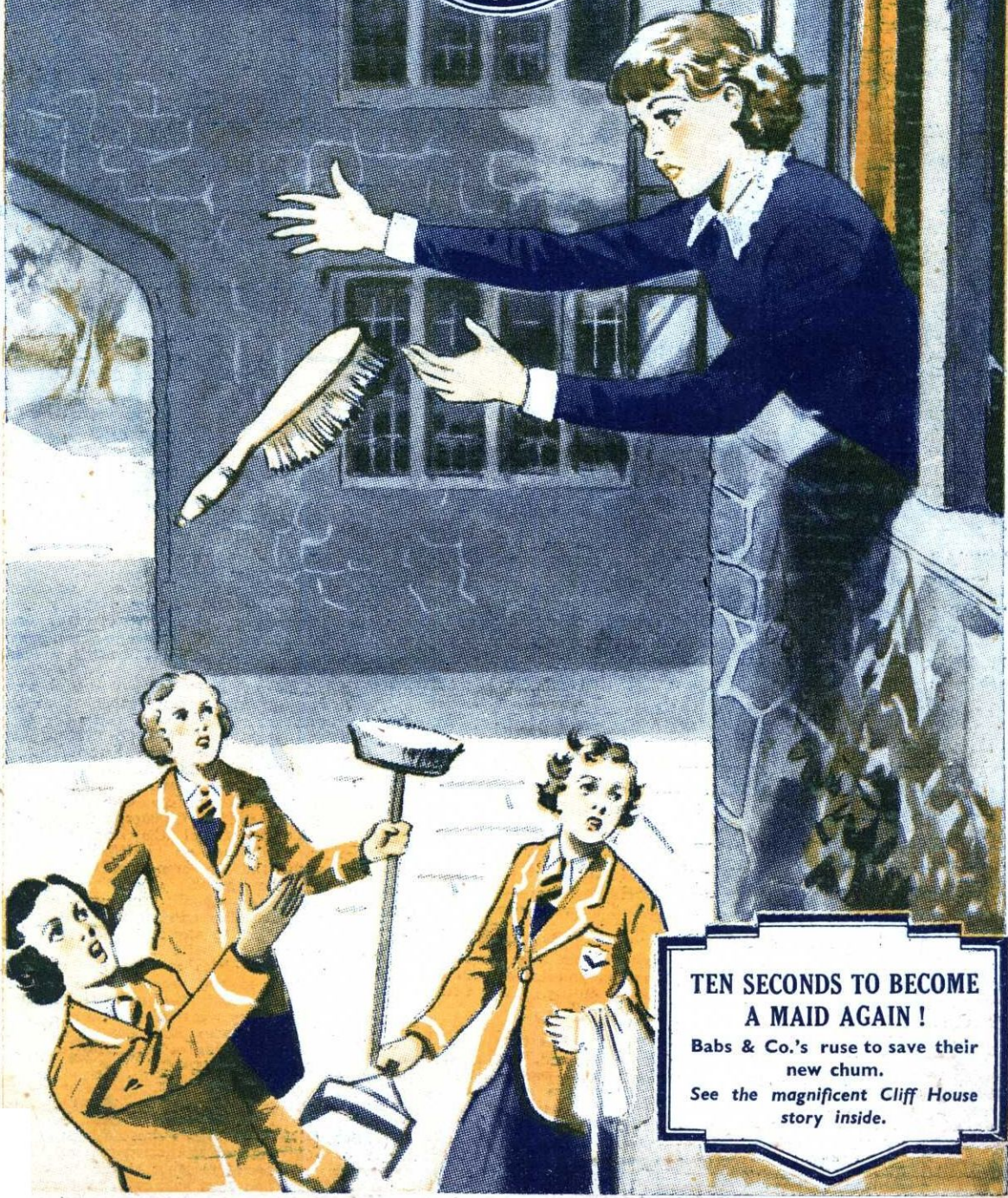
"BABS & Co.—NEW COOKS AT CLIFF HOUSE!" —inside

THE SCHOOLGIRL

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Incorporating
'SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN'



**TEN SECONDS TO BECOME
A MAID AGAIN !**
Babs & Co.'s ruse to save their
new chum.
See the magnificent Cliff House
story inside.

Novel happenings at Cliff House School in this Long Complete Story starring Barbara Redfern, Bessie Bunter & Co.



Babs & Co. — NEW COOKS at CLIFF HOUSE!

The Cunning of Sarah Harrigan!



"FOURTH Form, fall in!" Barbara Redfern cried cheerily. "Now, are we all here?"

"Yes, rather, you know! But I sus-say, Babs, what a lovely new dress you've got on!" plump Bessie Bunter exclaimed, and blinked admiringly behind her thick spectacles.

"But why," Mabel Lynn inquired, "are you wearing a new dress when we're all in school rig, Babs? We're not allowed to change until after lessons."

Babs, captain of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School, smiled at her two studymates. Her glance then roved round the Common-room, where every member of the Fourth was present. They had been called together by their popular leader for a special meeting before breakfast.

"This dress, Mabs?" Babs asked. "Well, I've changed for a special reason—as you all can before long if you like. Anyway, if you must know, this is not a new dress."

"Stuff!" scoffed Tomboy Clara Trevlyn.

"It's not!" Babs chuckled at her Form fellows' stares. "I had it last year. Clara, you ought to know. You were with me when I bought it." She laughed again. "Don't you remember? My uncle died just afterwards and I couldn't wear colours for a time, so I had to put it away, and when I

dragged it out again it was too short for me."

"Well, I sure guess it doesn't look too short now," Leila Carroll opined. "What have you been feeding it on?"

Babs' blue eyes twinkled.

"Lily Long. The new maid—you know her? She washed it, altered it, and let it down for me. Clever, isn't it?—and jolly decent of her, too! But now, please, do line up," she added patiently. "This, as you know, is an extraordinary special meeting—"

"Well, what about?" demanded Rosa Rodworth.

"I'm coming to that. As captain of the Form, I've been asked to call it by Miss Primrose. The reason is," Babs said impressively, as the Form shuffled into order, "there's a crisis!"

"So what?" asked Clara Trevlyn.

"I mean," Babs said patiently, "there's a crisis in the school. To put it plainly, we haven't any domestic staff! We haven't any breakfast—"

"Here, I say—" Bessie Bunter looked apprehensive. "This isn't All Fools' Day, you know, Babs!"

"I'm telling you the truth." Babs looked them over seriously. "Yesterday, as you know, was the servants' annual outing. They went to Bourne-

mouth—"

"Well?"

"Well, while they were there one of them collapsed," Babs went on. "She was taken to hospital, and it was found that she was suffering from scarlet fever. Scarlet fever is jolly infectious, and any person who is known to have been in contact with a case of scarlet fever has to be isolated until the doctor is sure she hasn't got it as well. And so," Babs concluded, "practically the

whole staff is isolated, and will remain away from the school for some days."

"Oh crumbs!" stammered Bessie. "The bub-breakfast—"

"And unless," Babs went on, "we can carry on with the skeleton staff which has been left behind, we're in the soup. We can't get another staff at short notice, because all the agencies Miss Primrose has phoned up say they have no spare servants owing to the summer holidays. Poor old Primmy's worried to death about it."

The Fourth were serious enough now. No servants. No cooks. And no prospect of servants or cooks for days and days! A crisis it was in very truth, and the Form listened attentively to what Babs had to say.

It was not until late last night that Miss Primrose had first heard of the sudden disaster. Faced with the prospect of the servants being isolated for an indefinite period, with the skeleton staff remaining at the school utterly inadequate for the school's normal requirements, Miss Primrose had frantically set to work to find temporary servants.

But inquiries at the usual agencies, thanks to the prevalence of summer holidays, had been unfruitful, and it was a very worried and harassed Miss Primrose who had finally called a special meeting of mistresses to discuss the situation.

Miss Plummy, the Domestic Science mistress, had suggested that the school should set to work to fend for themselves, and Miss Primrose had despairingly agreed to the suggestion.

A special meeting of the Form captains had been held early that morning

in which the various Form's duties had been assigned, and it was from that meeting that Babs had just come.

The Second and Third Forms could do little; the Sixth would look after their own studies, and so the main duties fell upon the Fifth and Fourth.

"So you see," Babs finished, "it's up to us to pull our socks up!"

"Well, and what do we do?" asked Bridget O'Toole.

"What we do," Babs said, "is to fill the servants' places—at least for the time being. And this is the scheme," she added. "We've got to divide ourselves at once into sections—cooking sections, cleaning sections, repair sections, and dish-washing sections, and all that. Each section will have its own leader."

Eyes brightened. This sounded exciting.

"And each section will be excused certain lessons to get on with their jobs," Babs went on.

"Yoicks! I say—" cried Diana Royston-Clarke.

"But," Babs added, "that doesn't mean that everybody's going to have a soft job, and the most important jobs will be given to girls who have taken domestic science certificates. Fall out all those who have."

Eight girls, including beaming Bessie Bunter, stepped out at once.

"Right. Now we organise," Babs said cheerfully. "Bess, you've got a cookery diploma, haven't you? You'll take on the cooking with a section of six girls to help you. Marjorie, you've got your needlework diploma—that makes you linen and repairs leader—Diana and Sylvia, you can help Marjorie in that. Janet, Mabs, myself, Clara, Leila, and Jemima will help Bessie in the kitchen. Margot, you'd better take charge of the cleaning section. Choose your girls. Now we shall want six waitresses for tables. Bridget O'Toole, you'd better do that job, taking Joan Charmant, Muriel Bond, Christine Wilmer, Amy Jones, and Faith Ashton. Our general adviser will be the maid usually responsible for the Fourth Form—Lily Long."

"Good old Lily!" cheered Mabs.

"But look here, what do the rest of us do?" Lydia Crossendale, the snob of the Form, scowled.

"You'll wash dishes and clean shoes," Babs informed her sweetly. "And you, Lydia, can lead that section!"

"I refuse to wash up and clean shoes!" Lydia cried.

"Right-ho! Then we jolly well refuse to cook meals and wait on you," Babs said. "This is a case of each helping the other, and if you were better at any other job you wouldn't be washing up and cleaning shoes! Freda Ferriers, Frances Frost, Rosa Rodworth, the Twins, and Eleanor Storke will be in your section, Lydia."

"Well, what happens now, Babs?" asked Mabel Lynn.

"First fall in and report to Mrs. Carey, the housekeeper," Babs said. "All except the cooking section, and we report to the cook, Mabs. Now fall in, sections, and do your stuff!"

There was a laugh. With some excitement the sections fell in. This was something so utterly different and new that they were all heartily glad now that such a state of things had come to pass.

"Right. Cookery section ready?" Babs beamed.

"Ay, ay, skipper!" returned immaculate, monocled Jemima Carstairs. "Lead on! Over the top with the best of luck!"

Babs laughed again. She led on,

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

Down the corridor the cooking section marched, down the stairs into the servants' quarters. All in fine good humour now, all eagerly determined to do their best. But just as they rounded the corner which led into the passage in which the school's staff had its quarters, Babs started back.

"Hist!" she whispered warningly.

For the door of No. 18—the room used by Lily Long, Babs' new friend among the servants, had opened. And out of that room, a book under her arm, quickly emerged a senior girl.

It was the very furtiveness, the stealth of her, that made Babs instinctively pause, and at the same time made Babs wonder.

For at once she recognised the girl. Every girl in the school knew the thin, sallow features of be-spectacled Sarah Harrigan, one of Cliff House's most bad-tempered prefects.

"Babs, what's the matter?" Clara, behind her, muttered.

"Wait!" Babs whispered.

From the angle of the wall she was

her chums following. At Lily's door she paused, tapped, and, receiving no answer, opened it. There were ink, pens, and paper on the table, showing that Lily had been working there; one or two books, too. But there was no sign of anything out of place or out of order.

"Well, I guess everything looks O.K.," Leila Carroll murmured.

It did. Babs felt a little ashamed of her suspicion, and by the time they had reached the kitchen, indeed, that small incident was banished from her mind.

There Mrs. Sullivan, the cook, awaited them.

"Oh dear! I'm sure I don't know how we're going to get through all the work," she said. "But I'm glad Miss Bunter is here. Miss Bunter, you will take on the cooking for the Junior School."

"Oh, yes, of course!" Bessie sniffed, implying that she'd take on the cooking for Courtfield and the Army and Navy at the same time if needs be.

"Well, as you're all friends together, perhaps I can leave you to it?" Mrs. Sullivan said relievedly. "You know the menu as well as I do, don't you, Miss Bunter? Porridge—you'll find it cooking in the big pot over



Cliff House minus practically all its domestic staff! No meals! An amazing situation at the famous school. Then the Fourth Form come forward to lend assistance, with their leaders, Babs & Co., taking over in the kitchen. Lots of fun and excitement, and through it all weaves the story of Lily Long, a new maid who mysteriously incurs the hatred of one of the prefects.



watching. She saw Sarah swiftly look up and down the corridor. Then she tucked the book more securely under her arm and went racing off in the opposite direction.

"Babs," Mabs said, "what is it?"

"Sarah Harrigan!" breathed Babs.

"Sarah?"

"She's been into Lily's room. She came out—with a book." Babs stared at her chums wonderingly. "Oh, I know there doesn't seem to be anything in that, but it was the way Sarah was acting which made it look fishy. Apart from that," she added keenly, "she's never been very keen on Lily, has she?"

"No," Clara agreed, "and for that matter, Lily seems a bit afraid of her. But I don't see that that makes Sarah a criminal for going into her room. Anyway, let's see if Lily's there."

Babs flushed a little, telling herself that perhaps she had been too ready to jump to conclusions. She was by no means alone in her dislike of Sarah, just as she was by no means alone in her liking for the willing and helpful new maid, Lily Long.

Lily had been at the school less than three days, but there was no doubt that, since her arrival, Sarah had made a dead set at her.

And it was not difficult for Sarah to make things unpleasant for the new maid. For Sarah Harrigan was not above trumping up false accusations to incriminate Lily and make her appear inefficient.

Babs stepped on down the passage,

there. Sausages and eggs to follow. Bread, butter, toast, and marmalade, and so on. You may use this kitchen. You're sure you'll be all right?"

"Right as ninepence," Bessie beamed. "I say, where're the sauc-pans?"

"In the cupboard over there," Mrs. Sullivan answered, and flew, leaving the chums in complete possession.

"I say, this is fine, isn't it?" Bessie said. She blinked round. "Now, I'm head cook, you know," she added importantly, "and just for once you've got to do as I say. Babs—"

"Ready to receive orders, Bess," Babs said demurely.

"You cut bread. Mabs, you butter."

"Consider it done," smiled Mabs.

"Clara, you can cut the bacon and attend to the pans. Leila, you get the marmalade served up into the pots. Janet, you can make toast. Jemima, you can—Blessed if I know what you can do! Oh, yes! You can get the sausages and crack the eggs."

"Suttlingly. Do I use the poker or a mallet?" Jemima asked cheerfully.

"Don't rot!" Bessie said peevishly.

"I say, where's my apron, you know?"

"Here we are, Bess," Babs said, with a wink.

She handed her fat chum a clean white apron and a chef's cap, which Bessie carefully placed on her head. When the ensemble was complete she stood before a small mirror, admiring herself, until Clara dragged her away.

Bessie beamed. She, at least, was

in her element. If there was one thing Bessie loved better than eating, it was preparing and cooking food.

Joining in the spirit of the thing, they all bustled around and got to work. Meantime, Mrs. Sullivan had disappeared into the mistresses' kitchen. Next door, in the seniors' kitchen, where the Upper Fifth had taken on the domestic duties normally pertaining to the Upper School, there was an excited babel of voices, accompanied occasionally by the crash of a breaking plate.

Expertly Babs set the bread-cutting machine. Mabs, producing an enormous, brick-like slab of butter, got to work spreading the slices as they fell from under the blade, while Janet, also grabbing slices, put them in the electric toasting-machine and set the alarm so that the signal would be given when they were done.

Clara attended to the bacon, and Jemima, catching up a huge carving-knife, armed herself with a rope of sausages and began to cut them.

Bessie stirred the porridge and tasted it.

"Yum!" she said. "But a tiny dash of salt perhaps? Babs, pass the salt, will you? Janet, while you're waiting for that toast, get the coffee-pots ready and put on another saucan of milk."

"My hat, give your orders!" Janet said, with a glare.

"Well, I am, you know!" Bessie protested, impervious to the sarcasm.

Babs chuckled. Pulling Bessie's leg when Bessie was so seriously engaged was just an utter waste of time.

"Well, where is the coffee?" Janet asked.

"I don't know," Bessie retorted.

"Go and ask Lily. Don't forget the milk's got to be heated!"

"Oh, stuff! I can't do everything," Janet said. "Where's the milk? Oh, here we are! Whoa, there! Mind your back, Jimmy," she cried, as Jemima, draping a string of sausages round her neck, stepped back to admire herself in the mirror. "Now what about that coffee?"

"I'll go and ask Lily," offered Babs.

"I think I've cut enough bread to be going on with."

She darted out. Reaching Lily's room and knocking, she received an invitation to enter. She went in.

"Lily—" she cried, and then stopped.

For Lily Long, the new maid, was looking most dreadfully worried.

"Oh, I say!" Babs had forgotten her mission in her concern for the girl.

"What's the matter?"

"Nun-nothing!" Lily muttered.

"Lily, there is!"

"Well, I—I've lost something. A—a book."

Babs suddenly remembered the strange furtiveness of Sarah Harrigan. She stared.

"What sort of book?"

"A book out of the library—a Euclid. I—I borrowed it yesterday," Lily said, "when Lady Patricia Northanson was library prefect, and—and I intended to return it this morning. Well, Sarah's librarian prefect for to-day, and Sarah's already been round for it. I—I left it here before I went into the kitchen, and now I can't find it anywhere."

Babs gazed at her keenly.

"So what?"

"Sarah says that if I don't return it in ten minutes she's going to report me to Miss Primrose," Lily faltered. "But, Miss Redfern, where can it be? It—it can't have disappeared into thin air!"

"No," Babs agreed grimly. For she knew where the book had vanished, she understood now why Sarah had been so stealthy and furtive. Sarah, during Lily's absence, had deliberately taken that book, of course, and Sarah, obviously, was just out to cause trouble for the girl. "Perhaps," she considered, "I can put my hands on that book, Lily. But look here, why does Sarah dislike you so much?"

Lily flushed.

"Oh, please, Miss Redfern, don't—don't let's talk about that," she said.

"But she's always trying to make some sort of bother for you."

Lily twisted her hands nervously.

"Please, Miss Redfern, if you know where the book is—" she pleaded.

"Oh dear! I'm sorry I borrowed it now. But I had to have it, you see, and I can't afford to buy one myself—"

"Pretty stiff subject—Euclid!" Babs said.

"Yes," Lily confessed.

"But why," Babs asked, "do you swot at it when there's no need for you to?"

Lily flushed.

"But there is need for me," she said.

"I—I—I—" And then she paused again, questioningly eyeing Babs, as if she found herself on uncertain ground.

"I—I suppose you all think I've got no end of a cheek," she said, "but I'm swotting for the servants' scholarship at Cliff House. That—that is why I came here—so as to be eligible when the examination came off."

"Lily—no!" Babs cried.

"Yes."

"Oh, tell me about it!"

"You—you don't think I've got an awful cheek?"

"Cheek?" Babs glowed. "I think it's fine," she said, "and I only hope, Lily, you'll pull it off. And if," she added, "I can help you—or any of us can help you—well, you know you've only got to ask. Jemima Carstairs, for instance—she's a whale at Euclid. But tell me, how did you come to think of the idea?"

"It was Mrs. Stancey," Lily said.

"You've heard of her, of course? She's the president of the charitable organisation of which Miss Primrose is the honorary secretary. You see, my father was her butler, and he and I worked for her until my father—and then she hesitated. "Well, my—my father had to leave her employment," she stammered.

"I see," Babs said. "And you stayed on?"

"Yes."

And then Lily explained—how afterwards Mrs. Stancey had caught her studying odd books. How, in a moment of confidence, she had blurted to that good lady her ambition to attend a girls' school such as Cliff House. How Mrs. Stancey had promised her that she should have that chance, and how she had arranged with Miss Primrose for her temporary installation as a servant at Cliff House in order to qualify her for the staff scholarship, and how she had studied hard ever since then.

Babs was thrilled.

"And now you're on the way," she cried delightedly. "Oh, Lily, I do hope you'll win through. But"—and she frowned—"why has Sarah got such a down on you?"

"Oh, please, Miss Redfern, don't ask me that!"

"But she has, hasn't she?" Babs persisted keenly. "And if Sarah got you disgraced in any way, that would put an end to your hopes of winning the scholarship?"

Lily turned red.

"Please, if—if you can help me to find that book—"

"I can—or I think I can," Babs nodded. "Don't worry. Wait here."

She went out. But there was a steely glint in those blue eyes of hers now.

So that was the way of it, was it? Obviously there was some hidden connection between this new maid and Sarah—and obviously, from that moment, Sarah was out to make what trouble she could for the new maid.

But why? Why try to scotch her chances of sitting for the scholarship?

Mystery here—and a job to be done. Lily was making a plucky fight for it, and Lily could be sure of any assistance Babs & Co. could give her.

Babs strode on, turning at the corner in the direction of the Sixth Form quarters. That way took her along Miss Primrose's corridor, and the door of Miss Primrose's room, as she passed it, was open. In front of Miss Primrose's desk stood Sarah Harrigan, and Sarah was speaking.

"I am sorry to have to report the girl for the loss of the book, Miss Primrose. It would not have mattered if the book had not been such a valuable one. The girl is utterly careless!"

Babs' eyes flashed, and she hurried on. She was under no delusion as to whom that report referred.

Still, while Sarah was busy reporting Lily, Sarah's study was empty.

There Babs made her way.

She nipped in and crossed to the table. She threw open the drawer—not there. She went to the bureau—not there.

She wheeled round, by no means baffled. She pulled aside the curtain which screened the alcove in which was Sarah's bed. Then she noticed a slight bump beneath the eiderdown.

In an instant that eiderdown was thrown back and triumph was leaping into Babs' eyes as she grabbed up the missing Euclid.

Babs grinned. With the book under her arm she made her way out of the room, racing along to Miss Primrose's study. Just in time.

For Lily was there now, facing Miss Primrose, Sarah standing gloatingly beside her.

"But, Miss Primrose," Lily was saying, "I—I assure you I don't know how it happened! I honestly left the book on the table—"

And Miss Primrose, looking stern:

"I am sorry, Lily, that I cannot accept that statement. Sarah has already reported you three times for neglect and carelessness. The book is a valuable one. It was lent to you only on condition that you took the utmost care of it. And unless," Miss Primrose said, her voice beginning to rumble with the dreaded warning note the scholars of Cliff House knew so well, "it is found immediately, Lily, I shall have to take a serious view of your offence in losing it!"

"But," Babs said demurely, as she tapped and stepped in, "I don't think the book was ever lost, Miss Primrose. Because, you see," she added, while Sarah jumped back and Lily's eyes became wide with joy, "I've just found it in Sarah's study!"

Ructions in the Kitchen!



MISS PRIMROSE blinked as Babs held out the book.

"This—this—"

Why, bless my soul, this is certainly the book!" she said. "And you found it

—where, Barbara?"

"In Sarah's room," Babs replied sweetly.

"Sarah's?" Miss Primrose looked at the prefect.

"It—it's a fib!" Sarah panted.

"Oh, but it isn't, you know!" Babs looked hurt. "Really, Sarah, I think that is rather mean and ungrateful of you!"

"Barbara," Miss Primrose supported, "is not in the habit of telling lies, Sarah. I think," she added grimly, "there is an explanation due. If this book was already in your possession, you had no right to report Lily for having lost it. I trust, Sarah, I do not see any ulterior motive in that report?"

Sarah looked hunted. For an instant she glared at Babs in a way which suggested she would like that cheerily innocent-looking girl to shrivel on the spot.

"I—I—I—" she stammered. "I—I am sure I—I don't know how it came to be there. I—I can only suggest that somebody was playing a joke on Lily," she added feebly.

"Then I hope," Miss Primrose said primly, "that you will make it your duty to discover the joker and report her to me. In the meantime, Lily, I am sorry you have been caused to suffer this unpleasantness. Sarah, I hope, next time, you will be more sure of your facts before making a report. You may go."

Sarah, turning a fiery red, stormed off. Miss Primrose gazed at the two girls and smiled.

"Thank you, Barbara!" she said kindly. "You may both go!"

Outside the study, Babs laughed softly.

"Poor old Sarah!" she said. "How is the biter bitten! Better now, Lily?"

"Oh, Miss Redfern, thank you!" Lily exclaimed. "But—but how did you know she had it?"

"Simply because I know Sarah," Babs replied. "And, Lily, don't forget," she added warningly, "if she tries any other funny games, you tell us. Now, what about a bit of help with your swotting?" she asked.

"Oh, Miss Redfern, yes! But—" Babs laughed.

"What time are you off duty?"

"Not until after tea, I'm afraid," Lily confessed, "and not then if I'm required by a mistress or a prefect. Still, I never am."

"Then," Babs said cheerily, "what about coming along after tea to Study No. 4—I share that with Mabel and Bessie, you know—and letting us give you a hand?"

"Oh, Miss Redfern, if you would!" "If we would? Delighted! Right—ho, then; that's a 'date,' as Leila would say! Now— Oh, my hat, the coffee!" Babs cried.

"I knew there was something on my mind! Will you come along and dig out the coffee for old Bess?"

Lily laughed. She looked really happy then—and there was a grateful glow in her eyes as she followed Babs along to the kitchen, where a scene of terrific industry was in progress. Steam, and the smell of frying bacon, filled the air.

"Hallo, Babs! I sus-say, everything's going rippingly!" Bessie beamed.

"Hallo, Lily, old thing! Like to taste a bit of this porridge? It's prime! Janet, if you've finished with that milk, I'll just have a cup of it to drink." Then she blinked. "Hallo, Sarah!" she added, as the sour face of the prefect intruded at the door.

Sarah scowled bad-temperedly at the happy faces which were turned towards her. There was an especially black look thrown towards Lily and Babs.

"What do you think you're doing?" "Getting breakfast, I'll say," Leila Carroll replied.

"And making a whacking good job of it into the bargain!"

Sarah stared sharply round. "That bread-and-butter is too thick," she said to Babs.

"Well, the cutter was set to the usual thickness," replied Babs coolly, "so I don't know how it can be!"

"Lily, you can go along to my study and collect the dress I've put out for you to iron!" Sarah fumed.

"But Lily is helping us!" Babs protested.

"Lily's job is to do as she's told!" Sarah snarled. "As duty-prefect for the day, I'm entitled to the services of one servant! Now get off and do it, Lily Long!"

Lily did not hesitate. Anxious to

avoid trouble, and perhaps sensing that Sarah had only come to the kitchen, in a spirit of revenge, to make a row, she went off.

"And what," Sarah scowled, pausing before Jemima Carstairs, "are you supposed to be doing?"

That imperturbable Fourth Former was in the act of breaking an egg. She had tapped once, but either Jemima's blow with the knife had been too gentle or the egg possessed an armour-plated variety of shell, for though the shell itself was cracked, the egg remained in one piece.

"Eh?" she said, turning her monocle on the prefect. "Oh, Sarah, fair flower of my youth! Thank you so much! Hold that, will you?"

Sarah glared as Jemima blandly put the cracked egg in her hand.

"What's this for?"

"Just for you," Jemima said cheerily. "Here's another to keep it company. There, old fruit!" And beamingly she pressed another egg into Sarah's hand, so that for a moment Sarah, utterly at a loss, stood staring stupidly at the two eggs. "You can have them, if you like," Jemima offered, her face as straight as a poker; "but please don't worry Uncle Jimmy when she's preparing a meal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Clara Trevlyn.

"Look here, take these things back!" Sarah cried furiously. "If you're trying to be funny, Jemima—"

"Eh? Suttlingly!" Jemima said, and stretched out a hand.

But this time she caught Sarah's whole fist, holding it up. There was a crack, a spurt of yolk, and Sarah shrieked as she gazed at the sticky mess in her hand.

"Jemima, you idiot!"

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

Jemima blinked.

"Well, well, would you believe it? It's cracked!" she said innocently.

"You fool!"

"Pretty nifty way of breaking eggs!" Jemima said seriously. "Quite new and novel—what? Bit messy, though," she considered thoughtfully.

"Get me a towel, you idiot!" Sarah yelled. "Look at me!"



SARAH HARRIGAN had taken delight in reporting the new maid for the loss of a book, and Miss Primrose was taking a serious view of the matter, until: "I don't think the book was ever lost, Miss Primrose," said Babs demurely, looking in at the doorway. "Because, you see, I've just found it in Sarah's study!"

"Pretty sight—what?" Jemima said. Sarah choked. In disgust, she flicked the broken eggs from her fingers just as Mrs. Carey, the housekeeper, came in. Mrs. Carey jumped.

"Sarah, how dare you make a mess in the kitchen!"

"How dare I what?" Sarah glowered round. "This—this feather-brained idiot—"

"That is not the way to speak to a younger girl!" Mrs. Carey said severely. Mrs. Carey never had liked Sarah Harrigan. "And this is certainly not the way to behave in the kitchen! I hope, Sarah, when you've cleaned yourself, you will also clear up that mess!"

"Not jolly likely!" Sarah flared.

"Sarah, that is no way to speak to me!" Mrs. Carey said sharply. "You may be a prefect in this school, but here, at least, I am in authority! Leave the kitchen at once, girl, otherwise I shall report you to Miss Primrose!"

Sarah, with a glare of hate towards Jemima, went. Mrs. Carey, prim but angry, nodded.

"Jemima, please clean up this mess!" she ordered. "Girls, carry off! If there is any further interference, call me!"

The chums chortled. They guessed Sarah wouldn't be too ready to interfere a second time.

While Sarah, gritting her teeth, flung on her way. Those little cats! That awful prankster, Jemima! Never mind! Let them wait! She'd jolly well pay them out for this!

Quivering with temper, she flung herself into her study. And then she glared at the girl who was already there, in the act of neatly folding a dress.

"You!" she said. "You! I suppose," she flamed at Lily Long, "you put them up to this?"

Lily blinked.

"I'm sorry! I don't understand. Put who up to what?" she asked.

"You know! Oh, rats! Never mind!" Sarah said crossly. She closed the door. "All right! You needn't go for a minute! I rather want to talk to you. I don't see any signs of your packing up," she said.

Lily stiffened.

"I don't intend to pack up!"

"I see!" Sarah heaved a deep breath. Spite was in her face, and, with that spite, a sulky hatred of the girl. "I suppose you know it may come out that you're my cousin?" she said.

Lily flushed.

"Well, I don't see what harm that would do."

"Don't you? You think I want the school to know that I've got a servant for a relative?" Sarah scowled. "And what about your father?"

Lily winced.

"I don't see that my father need enter into the question," she said.

"Don't you?" Sarah sneered. "You don't think you can keep him secret for ever?" she asked. "You don't think it's not bound to come out sooner or later that he's in prison? A fine show-up that will be for you—and for me, won't it?"

Lily turned red.

"If my father is in prison, he never did the thing he was accused of doing!" she protested.

"Didn't he? The judge didn't seem to think so, did he?" Sarah sneered. "In any case, that's beside the point. What isn't is that your father is a convict, that you're a servant, that I'm your cousin, and for every reason on earth I don't want you here at Cliff

House, constantly reminding me of the poor-relation side of my family! And if you've got any sense," she added spitefully, "you'll take my advice and pack up and go—now! Anyway, what chance have you got of winning the scholarship?"

"As good a chance as anyone else!" Lily retorted. "In any case, I couldn't pack up now, even if I wanted to, which I don't. You forget, Sarah, that Mrs. Stancey gave me this chance. Mrs. Stancey is expecting me to make good."

A jealous flame shot into Sarah's eyes at the mention of that name.

"Anybody would think Mrs. Stancey was your mother!" she gibed.

"Mrs. Stancey has been very, very kind to me," Lily replied, "and very generous, too. She believes I can win the scholarship, and, if only for her sake, I'm going to have a shot at it. Apart from that," Lily went on, "Mrs. Stancey has promised me a trip abroad with her daughter if I get through."

Sarah heaved a deep breath.

"And that's one more reason why you should pack up," she said, "because I'm going to that trip, too! You don't think I want you hanging around all the time?"

"Can I go and iron your frock?" Lily asked, with light-lipped quietness, and made a move towards the door.

"You can wait!" Sarah retorted. "I've something else to say first! I've given you fair warning, Lily Long! Think over it—or you may find yourself with no opportunity of leaving of your own free will!"

"Meaning," Lily asked quietly, "you'll get me the sack?"

"Never mind what I mean. I'm just warning you, that's all. Meantime, I've something else for you to do. I suppose you don't know that Ruth Stancey and her friends are coming to see me this afternoon?"

Lily started.

"No—"

"Well, they are. They're having tea in this study; but it's going to be late, because they can't get here at the usual time. I shall want you to come and wait at table."

Lily bit her lip.

"But—but I can't," she said. "That's my free time. Besides, I've already arranged to do something else."

"With whom?"

"With Miss Redfern—"

"Barbara Redfern!" Sarah's eyes gleamed. "You've got that little cat on your side, haven't you?" she said.

"I suppose you think, because she's friends with you, that gives you some sort of prestige in this school. Well, you can drop your appointment with Barbara Redfern. My orders come first, and I've got permission from Miss Primrose for one of the servants to wait at my study table, and you're that one! Now you can go," she added spitefully. "And don't forget—have a jolly good think about what I've told you!"

But Lily did not reply. Frock on her arm, her head held defiantly high, she walked out. Sarah glared after her.

"Awful upstart little prig!" she told herself. "But, my hat, I'm jolly well not going to have her here at Cliff House, or on that trip with Ruth Stancey! I'll get her kicked out if she doesn't leave on her own accord!"

And, with another furious scowl at the door, which her cousin had just closed, Sarah flung herself into an armchair.

Babs Waits—and Wins!



"LILY should be here by now," Barbara Redfern said anxiously. "Hope nothing's happened to delay her. Think I'd better pop along to the servants' quarters, Mabs, and find out what's holding her up?"

It was half-past five of the same day at Cliff House School, and the scene was Study No. 4. The tea-things had been cleared away. In one corner was a small blackboard and easel, and on the table several school books, some pens, and imput paper.

Mabs, Babs, Leila, Clara, and Jemima were the occupants of the room, and true to Babs' promise to the servant girl, were now awaiting her arrival in order to help her with those studies she was so bravely pursuing in order to try to win the Cliff House servants' scholarship.

They had not seen Lily since breakfast that morning—and that breakfast a highly successful meal. Dinner—thanks also to Bessie Bunter, and Mrs. Sullivan—had gone off without a hitch, and altogether the pupil servant system at Cliff House School seemed to be working smoothly and well. Now, with the main meal and duties over for the day, the chums could relax, though Bessie, filled with her new importance, was still in the kitchen, helping to get forward the work necessary to the preparation of to-morrow's meals. But Lily should have been here by this time.

"Perhaps," Mabs considered, "it wouldn't be a bad idea."

So Babs hurried off, and, reaching Lily's door, knocked.

It was Lily's voice which bade her "Come in!"

Babs went in. Her smile died; for Lily, instead of being in her ordinary clothes, was still in prim black and white uniform, and, in addition, wore a small apron and cap.

"Lily," she cried, "have you forgotten? I—I thought—"

Lily shook her head.

"I—I'm sorry," she faltered. "I was just coming along to tell you. But I can't come to the study. You see, I've got to wait on Sarah."

"Sarah? She knew you were going to swot?"

"I don't know. I was a fool, I suppose. I let it slip that I was going to spend an hour with you—"

"And so," Babs keenly guessed, "she put this duty on you?"

Lily sighed.

"Yes. Anyway, I—I can't get out of it. As duty prefect she's entitled to the services of one of us."

"Even throughout your free time?"

"I—I don't know. I suppose so."

"I see." Babs looked decided. "She just wants to keep you from mixing with us. Oh, yes, she does! I know the ways of our little Sarah. Well, all right. I think I see a way out of it. You're not jolly well going to miss your swot, Lily, and as Sarah's entitled to the use of one servant, she shall have it! Take off those clothes!"

"Eh? Miss Redfern, what do you mean?"

"I mean," Babs said decidedly, "I'm going to take your place. After all, in a way, I'm a servant, too, now."

Lily blinked. She protested. But Babs had seen the way out, and Babs was adamant.

It was like spiteful Sarah to put obstacles in the way of Lily's friendship with the chums of the Fourth.

That extra bit of attention and encouragement which the chums were capable of giving Lily was vitally necessary now to the completion of her studies, and not if Babs knew it was the opportunity going to be allowed to pass.

If Sarah was entitled to the use of a servant, the rules of the school did not stipulate any one particular servant.

Perhaps Sarah herself was thinking with satisfaction of her authority over Lily as, in her carefully prepared study, she awaited her guests.

Not for a long time had Sarah been so scared as by the news that her poor cousin, Lily Long, was in the running for a Cliff House scholarship, and might become a scholar at the same school as herself.

Though Sarah herself was not well off, Sarah liked to feel that she was in with the wealthier girls at Cliff House, and because Sarah had always contrived to keep up an appearance of having money, nobody at Cliff House had ever questioned her status. The truth was, however, that Sarah came from a far from wealthy family, and that most of that family's connections found their walks in the poorer classes of life.

Lily Long was one of those connections.

But there was a reason apart from that why Sarah Harrigan hated Lily Long—why the appearance of Lily Long at Cliff House had filled her with dismay.

Quite by accident, at a dramatic festival, Sarah had met Ruth Stancey, the daughter of the wealthy patron of Miss Primrose's charity home, and with Ruth had formed something of a friendship. That friendship had grown, greedily fed upon by Sarah, who liked the wealth and the social prestige which her connection with the Stancey family gave her.

She liked still more the prospect now before her—that of spending a charming holiday with the Stanceys when the summer vacation became due. The only fly in the ointment of her happiness had been Lily Long.

For Lily, she had discovered, was, in the Stancey household, not so much of a servant as a companion. Mrs. Stancey, in spite of her father, liked her. Mrs. Stancey thought that she was clever. Mrs. Stancey had encouraged her. Mrs. Stancey, indeed, had promised, if Lily won the scholarship, that she also should come on the cruising trip.

Sarah feared now that, if Lily did win that scholarship—the examination for which was to take place before the summer vacation—Lily would not attend that cruise in the guise of a companion or servant, but as a friend and confidant of the whole family.

Sarah had the instinct to imagine that already the Stancey family thought much more of her poorer cousin than they did of her. Once they could welcome her on an equal footing with themselves, Sarah saw her own nose being pushed out of joint altogether.

Well, that wasn't coming off—not if she knew it—and, having failed to intimidate Lily by threats to leave Cliff House, and throw up the scholarship of her own accord, Sarah was going to try other methods.

Already in the school she had embarked upon a battle of spite against Lily Long. That should be as nothing to how she would provoke and humiliate her before Ruth Stancey and her friends this afternoon.

Oh! She'd make it so jolly hot, so jolly uncomfortable, for Lily Long, that

Lily would be ashamed, in future, to look Ruth Stancey or her mother in the face.

There was a step in the passage.

The fallow face of Sarah Harrigan became more eagerly animated; a gleam came into her eyes. Even as the steps outside halted, she flung open the door.

"Ruth!" she cried.

Ruth Stancey, accompanied by her

"Thank You So Much," says

HILDA RICHARDS

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



MARY WATSON (South Hayling, Hants).—Many thanks for a charming little letter, Mary. I've already answered your Cliff House questions by post—I do hope you received my letter safely! I shall be looking forward to hearing from you just whenever you care to write.

P. M. DAWSON (Croydon, Surrey).—Such a sweet little letter, my dear—but you didn't tell me very much about yourself! However, you'll make amends next time you write, won't you? How are Sandy and Smoky? They sound very sweet pets, and I can see you're very proud of them. Thank you for your kind wishes to Juno—I know she does appreciate them!

UNA WALSH (Dublin, Eire).—Here's the printed reply you were so anxious to see! Yes, Connie Jackson is still at C. H., but Phillippa Derwent and Phyllis Howell have now both left the school. I think I've answered all your other Cliff House questions in my reply by post. Bye-bye for the present, Una—but you'll write again, won't you?

"MOLLY" (Norwich, Norfolk).—Did you receive my letter, answering your queries, Molly? Don't hesitate to send along any other questions that puzzle you, will you? (And, of course, I shall love hearing all your latest news, too.) I wonder if you've started your hiking club again for the summer. I'm sure you have some very jolly times together!

VICTORIA ENGELA (Queenstown, South Africa).—So glad to hear from you, my dear, and to know you are such a keen Cliff House fan. Yes, you have almost a miniature zoo, haven't you? What a lucky person to own so many pets! I'm sure you love them all. Many thanks for the story suggestion—I've made a large note of it.

WENDY SCHOLLUM (Hampstead, N.W.6).—Thank you so much for your two suggestions regarding new Fourth Formers. (The sketches of them were

"That's it! Thought you'd like to have her about," Sarah said. "I'm having her to wait on us at tea."

"Oh, that's ripping!" Ruth laughed. "But, Sarah, tell me, how is she getting on?"

"Well——" Sarah said hesitantly.

"She's doing well, isn't she?" Ruth asked, with that shade of anxiety which made Sarah flush jealously. "Lily's such a grand trier—so painstaking."

excellent.) When I find I need to bring a new girl to Cliff House, I shall certainly keep your ideas in mind! Do send along any other suggestions regarding my stories that you'd like to make, won't you, Wendy? I shall look forward to them!

BETTY ANDREWS (Croydon, Surrey).—I must thank you, too, Betty, for your idea for a new Fourth Former! I'm afraid I cannot promise any of you nice readers that I shall be able to introduce the girls you'd like to see—think how huge the Fourth would become!—but I make a note of all your ideas and use one whenever it is possible. Write again, won't you?

JACQUELINE CORBETT (Stoke Works, Wores).—I've answered your Cliff House queries by post, my dear. Hope you received my letter! Patricia asks me to send her love. She thinks the idea of jotting down her various hints and wrinkles is a jolly good one, and she's sure you'll find your scrap-book very useful.

BETTY HIRST (Mirfield, Yorks).—Yes, your letter reached me quite safely, Betty. But here's my address when you want to write again: THE SCHOOLGIRL OFFICE, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Do tell me more about yourself next time you write. I shall love hearing about your school and your hobbies.

"DOREEN AND JOYCE" (Ilford, Essex).—Many thanks for your sweet letter, my dears. I was delighted to hear from you. You would be in the Lower Third if you went to C. H. Yes, Muriel Bond is still in the Fourth. How is your pet, Sam? My Juno thanks him for his paw-shake, and sends one in return. Write again, both of you, won't you?

OLIVE KING (Maldon, Essex).—Here's the small reply you were anxious to see in our paper! I expect you've received my letter, answering your questions. I wonder if you've taught Beauty to speak yet. I'm sure it's grand fun, anyway, teaching him his first few phrases. And how is Billy? He sounds a most intelligent puss!

PAMELA HALL (Bristol).—Cliff House's summer uniform is the same as that worn in winter, except that tunics of cooler material than serge may be worn, and instead of the warmer woollen stocking, lisle stockings are permissible. Junior girls may also wear socks instead of stockings. Blazers are royal blue, with gold edging, or alternatively, a golden yellow, with royal blue edging. In appearance, I think you are most like Mabel Lynn. Write again, won't you?

two friends, Beatrice Lloyd and Rita Reeves, it was.

"Come in!" Sarah gushed. "Goodness, it seems ages since I saw you. Hallo, Beatrice! Hallo, Rita! Let me help you off with your clothes. You see, I've got tea all ready for you," she added. "And I did it with my own hands, too, because we're in the throes of a domestic crisis at Cliff House. Just make yourselves comfortable, will you, while I go and fetch Lily?"

"Lily?" Ruth cried, and her eyes lit up. "You mean Lily Long?"

"I know. At least, I know she was when she was with your mother. But here"—Sarah frowned—"well, I really believe that Lily thinks she's half got that scholarship, you know. The airs she's giving herself! The careless, slack way she performs her duties! But here she is!" she added, as a knock came to the door. "Come in, Lily!" she cried, in a tone of honeyed sweetness.

But it was not Lily who came in. It was Barbara Redfern—Barbara Redfern, dressed in a servant's uniform, and an apron and cap.

Sarah blinked.
"Here, Barbara, what's the meaning of this—"
"Ahem!" Babs solemnly gave a little bob. "I've come to take Lily's place."

"What? I thought I told Lily—"
"Yes, rather!" Babs answered. "But it's Lily's time off, you know. Lily's so frightfully anxious to get on with her studies that I offered to take her place—which is quite all right, isn't it, because we're all more or less on the domestic staff now, aren't we, and Miss Primrose didn't absolutely specify you could have Lily."

Sarah's face turned red.
"So!" she sneered. "Well, you can buzz off! This is Lily's job, and Lily takes it on, and you can tell her from me it's like her cheek to disobey orders. Now get—"

"Just a moment, Sarah, please!" Ruth said.

"Well?"
"Surely," Ruth asked eagerly, "if this extremely nice girl is willing to do the job for Lily, why not let her? Apart from that, it does seem to me that Lily's entitled to her own free time, and as you're so anxious to see her get on, I'm sure you can't really wish her to be deprived of time she can give to her studies."

Sarah gulped. The look she threw at the innocently smiling Babs should have shrivelled her on the spot. But Babs' action had completely put her in a cleft stick.

"Well," she considered, "well—hum! Yes, of course! You—you don't mind, Barbara?" she asked, with a glare.

"Oh, Sarah, dear, nothing would give me greater pleasure!" Babs simpered. "Can I get on with the job now?" she added brightly. "I say, Sarah, you haven't given out the serviettes."

"Oh!" exclaimed Sarah.

"Never mind! They're in the drawer, aren't they?" Babs asked. "I'll get them!" And willingly she flew to the drawer, while Ruth and Beatrice and Rita, smiling at each other, sat down.

"Now I'll make tea," Babs said. "Would you like toast, Sarah?"

"No, thanks!" Sarah grunted.

"Muffins, then?"
"I haven't got any muffins!" Sarah glared. "And don't chatter! If you are going to serve, get on with it!"

"Oh, Sarah, that's not very kind!" Ruth Stancey protested.

Babs smiled mischievously as she commenced making the tea.

"You say Lily is studying, Barbara?" Ruth asked.

"Oh, ever so hard!" Babs answered brightly. "She's working like a little nigger, you know!"

Ruth glanced at the prefect curiously. "I thought you said, Sarah—"

"Did I? Well, I—I—perhaps I was under a misapprehension," Sarah said hastily. She fiddled with her glasses, a habit she had when agitated.

"Barbara, where's the jam?"

"There, Sarah dear—right under your nose," Babs said sweetly.

"And do the girls like Lily, Sarah?" Beatrice asked.

Sarah gulped. "Well—"

"Oh, we all think she's ripping!" Babs enthused. "So hard-working, and ever so willing, you know! But, of course, you're Miss Stancey, aren't you, and you know Lily very well? I'm sure she's one of the best girls we've ever had."

Sarah glared. "Look here, who asked you to poke your oar in?" she cried.

"Sarah—no! Let Barbara talk," Ruth said. "I'm interested to know

about Lily. Thank you, Barbara! Yes, two lumps of sugar, please! I hope," Ruth said rather anxiously, "Lily knows her place?"

"Place?" Babs asked. "You mean, does she give herself airs? Oh, goodness, nothing like that about Lily!"

Sarah made a funny sound in her throat.

"Have—have a sandwich, Ruth?" she gulped.

"Thank you! I'm doing well," Ruth said; but her tone was just a little on the icy side. "It's good to know, after all, that Lily is making herself so well liked. Mummy always said that, given a chance, she would win through, in spite of what happened to her father."

"Why, what happened to her father?" Rita Reeves questioned.

"Well, he was our butler for a number of years. One of the best butlers it was possible to have, too, and it was amazing that— Sarah, why are you looking at me like that?"

Sarah heaved a deep sigh.

"Because," she said, "I don't think it would be wise to tell what you know about Lily's father here. Lily herself is ashamed of it."

"Lily is?" Ruth's eyes opened in surprise. "But Lily has always said that—"

"I know," Sarah said hastily. "But—but Lily isn't anxious that the news should be spread about?"

Actually, of course, it was Sarah who didn't want the school to know that her cousin's father was a convict.

"It might do her harm if ever she became a scholar here—"

Again Babs pricked up her ears. Hallo, what was this? But at the same moment Ruth happened to glance up at her, and Ruth, perhaps reading the interest in her eyes and realising all at once that she might betray a secret, flushed and bit her lip.

"But what happened to Lily's father?" Rita pressed.

"He was a rotter!" Sarah said bitterly.

"No, Sarah, not that." Ruth looked a little offended. "Anything but a rotter. Mother, to this day, believes there was some mistake, and my brother Emery—well, Emery won't hear a single word against him. At the same time, I must say I'm surprised to hear that Lily takes a different viewpoint now. But perhaps it's just as well to keep the matter quiet. Can I have some more tea, Barbara, please?"

"And keep your ears to yourself, Barbara!" Sarah glowered.

Babs flushed.

"I'm sorry; I wasn't intending to listen."

"And don't answer back!" Sarah snapped. "Cut the cake."

Ruth looked rather indignant. "Sarah, I'm sure that's not the way to speak to Barbara."

"Barbara," Sarah said, who was rapidly finding the situation becoming intolerable, "has taken on the job of a servant, and Barbara must expect to be treated like one."

"Oh!" said Rita. "Is it the expected thing, then, to bully and browbeat servants, Sarah?"

"Who says I was browbeating her?"

"Well, I must say I do!" Beatrice put in, with an angry little sniff.

"You've done nothing but scold her ever since she came in."

"Well, isn't it my business?" Sarah glared.

"Your business—yes." Ruth looked frigidly offended now. "If it's your idea to treat servants like animals, and you've got the power to do it, nobody can prevent you. I must say, though,

I'm surprised. I hardly thought you were this kind of girl, Sarah."

"Have some more tea, Miss Stancey?" Babs said hastily.

"Miss Stancey doesn't want any more tea," Sarah snarled. "Can't you see her cup's half full? In any case," she added feverishly, "we shan't want you any more. You can get out."

"But, Sarah, who'll do your waiting?" Babs cried.

"I'll jolly well do it!" Sarah barked.

"Anyway, get out!"

Ruth rose.

"Perhaps," she said quietly, "it would be better if we went, Sarah? That would solve the problem to everybody's satisfaction, wouldn't it?"

"Oh, rather not!" Sarah said.

"Please sit down."

But Ruth, disgust on her face, was moving from the table. Beatrice and Rita rose, too.

"We'll come again," Rita said.

"Some other day," Beatrice added.

"When you're in a better humour, Sarah," Ruth nodded. "Sorry that it hasn't been all we expected it to be."

She walked towards the door. A smile she gave to Babs; just a friendly nod to Sarah. Sarah shook as the door closed behind them.

"You—you—" she choked. And then wheeled upon Babs. "You awful little cat! I see the beastly scheme now! You took Lily's place so that you could mess up my party!"

Lily is Warned!

UNFLINCHINGLY Babs faced her. Her tones were scornful when she spoke.

"I took Lily's place to help Lily, and it's not my fault if your own lies have bowled you out! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Sarah choked.

"You—you— you dare speak to me like that?"

"I dare!" Babs spoke up spiritedly.

"Why, I—I'll take you to the Head!"

"All right. Let's go," Babs challenged calmly. "I'll still dare—in front of Miss Primrose. She'd be pretty interested to hear of your latest little game, Sarah."

Sarah spluttered.

"My game?"

"Your game," Babs affirmed scathingly. "Your game against Lily Long, I mean. Trying to disgrace her. Well, let me tell you something," Babs went on, straight as a ramrod now and looking Sarah fearlessly in the eyes.

"Whether you like it or not, Lily Long is our friend, and we're standing by her. If you jolly well go on persecuting Lily you can look out for fireworks! Now, good-bye!"

And leaving Sarah spluttering with wrath, she turned indignantly on her heels.

"Barbara, you—you—come back!" Sarah croaked.

Babs did not even look round. Conscious that she had completely floored the ill-natured prefect, she went on. But she frowned as she remembered those odd references to Lily's father. Why should Lily be ashamed of him—that is, if Sarah spoke the truth? And what was it he was supposed to have done?

She pushed open the door of Study No. 4. At the table Lily, who was copying down a problem Jemima had just drawn upon the blackboard, turned. Her eyes showed surprise.

Her eyes showed surprise.



BABS entered the study in apron and cap, and solemnly gave a little bob. Sarah blinked. "Here, Barbara, what's the meaning of this?" "I've come to take Lily's place," said Babs, knowing very well why the prefect had wanted Lily to wait on her.

"Babs, you're early! Did—did everything go off all right?"

"Topping!" Babs cried. "Sarah's pals got up and walked out!"

"Not Miss Stancey?" Lily cried.

"She started it," Babs laughed.

"And all because of little me! Poor old Sarah! She was so ratty she hadn't you to bully and browbeat that she just couldn't keep herself under control, and so started on me instead. And Miss Stancey—well, she didn't like it. Neither did her friends, and the result was that the little party became rather a rapid parting."

The chums grinned as Babs filled in the details.

"Poor Miss Stancey," Lily said regretfully. "I—I'm so sorry she had such a rotten time. Did she look well, Miss Redfern?"

"Oh, topping!" Babs said.

"And did she say anything about—about—"

And then Lily, flushing fiery red, paused. "No, it—it's all right," she added hastily, though Babs guessed, from the uneasiness in her expression, that the question she had been about to blurt was concerning her father. "Oh!" she exclaimed, as the door was suddenly thrown open, and the smiles of the chums changed to sudden grimaces.

For on the threshold stood Sarah—a Sarah flushed, a Sarah who had a frock over her arm and whose attitude proclaimed the fact that she had come for a row.

"Lily!" she ground out.

"Y—yes, Miss Harrigan?"

"I thought," Sarah said, her eyes gleaming. "I gave you this frock to iron?"

Lily blinked.

"Yes, Miss Harrigan. I have ironed it!"

"You mean you've ruined it!" Sarah cried, and displayed it. "Look at that!"

Lily looked, and her face paled. The chums looked, and then exchanged significant glances with each other. For on the frock was a huge burn the exact

shape of the iron with which it had been made.

"But, Miss Harrigan, I—I didn't do that!" Lily cried.

"No?" Sarah snarled. "Then who else? Oh, yes, you did it all right, but I suppose you were too jolly eager to come to this study wasting your time to worry about damage!" She glared round. "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

Instead of replying, Lily suddenly stepped forward, pulling the frock from Sarah's hand. Then swiftly she put her hand over the black burn.

"Miss Harrigan," she cried, "this burn is warm! That means it has been done just a little while ago."

"What?" cried Babs.

"It's true. Feel it!" Lily cried.

She handed the frock in Babs' direction. But Sarah, her face suddenly blazing, grabbed it savagely before Babs touched it. She flung round on Lily.

"What? Are you trying to make out—"

"It's pretty easy to see, I guess," Leila Carroll put in contemptuously. "You've done that yourself, Sarah, a moment or so ago. Sure, it's like one of your catches, too."

"Leila, take fifty lines!" Sarah fumed at the American junior. "Lily, I am going to take you to Miss Primrose."

Lily stood still.

"I won't come!"

"Good for you!" cheered Babs.

Sarah drew a deep breath. But before she could speak again there came an interruption. A quick step in the passage was followed by the surprised voice of Miss Primrose.

"Lily—Sarah—what is this? Lily, did I hear you refusing to obey an order?"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Clara Trevlyn. "Miss Primrose—"

"I am speaking to Lily. Be silent, Clara, please! Lily—"

Lily was deathly white now.

"I—I'm sorry," she said.

"I think," Sarah said, her eyes glimmering a little, "I'd better explain, Miss Primrose. This morning I gave Lily this frock to iron. It was returned to me in this condition; Lily, apparently, being too eager to get on with her own private pleasures to pay proper attention to her work. I ventured," Sarah went on virtuously, "to come along here and remonstrate with her, and Lily made a preposterous suggestion that I had done the damage myself—"

"Bless my soul! Lily—"

"Well, the iron mark was warm," Lily said defensively, "and I didn't do it, Miss Primrose. Feel it," she challenged.

"I most certainly refuse to do anything of the kind," Miss Primrose said indignantly. "Do you expect me to believe that a girl would deliberately damage her own frock in order, apparently, to raise a quarrel with a maid? I am willing to believe that the burn was the result of an accident, but even so, Lily, such an accident shows a decided lack of care on your part."

"But, Miss Primrose—"

burst in Babs.

"Barbara, silence, please! Lily, you will take that frock and see if there is a chance of repairing it. Meanwhile, my girl, allow me to remind you that Sarah is a prefect, and as such is in a position of authority. I trust I shall receive no more complaints concerning you. You may go."

"But—but—" Lily stuttered.

"You may go!" Miss Primrose repeated. "Take the frock."

Lily, with a gulp, stretched forward her hand. She gave a hopeless, pleading glance round her before slowly leaving.

Miss Primrose and Sarah followed, the latter smiling slyly.

As the door closed, Babs clenched her hands.

"The rotter," she said, between her teeth. "What a treacherous trick to play! Poor old Lily—how she has got it in for that girl! But Sarah's not

going to get away with it," she added, her eyes flashing. "It's pretty obvious that she doesn't want Lily in the school and she's trying to get her out of it. Kids, we're all standing by Lily!"

"You bet, Babs!" Mabs cried. And there was a general nod.

A Quick-Change Act in Study No. 4!



BUT Sarah, having scored her first signal success, was apparently not going to be content to let matters rest there.

Before that night was out there was more trouble for Lily Long.

It came when the Fourth Form went to bed—the dormitory being Lily's responsibility. Most of the beds were untidily made, shoes were mixed, nighties and pyjamas in wrong beds, toothbrushes and nail-brushes on wrong wash-basins, and general chaos was the result.

It was Sarah, as duty prefect, who came round with Miss Primrose when the confusion of sorting out articles was at its height, and it was Sarah who put the responsibility for the confusion on to Lily, again artfully finding the reason in the fact that Lily was too busy swotting to pay attention to her real duties. Despite the protests of Babs & Co., Miss Primrose angrily stormed off to interrogate Lily.

Anxiety for Lily made Babs rise early in the morning, and at once she flew off to the servants' quarters, to find Lily in the act of getting together her brooms and pails. She shook her head hopelessly when Babs asked her what had happened.

"Miss Primrose blames me—of course," she said. "She gave me a lecture about carelessness, and so on. She—even warned me that the next time it happened she might dismiss me. But, Miss Redfern, I didn't do it!"

"Of course you didn't," Babs said angrily. "Sarah did. All the same," she added grimly, "we're keeping a sharp eye on Sarah to-day. Anything else happen?"

"No; except that—that I've been given extra duties," Lily shook her head. "And goodness knows," she added wearily, "how I'm to put in my studies now. I've only one hour off this morning, and that's the hour when Mrs. Carey will be doing the servants' quarters."

"You mean you won't be able to work in this room?" Babs asked.

"No."

"Oh!" In some consternation Babs regarded the maid. She did not hear a soft footstep outside, nor did she look round towards the partly opened door as that footstep sounded. Had she done so she might for a moment have seen the sly, interested face of Sarah Harrigan.

"You see, I—I was going to work through my breakfast hour," Lily went on; "that's from eight till nine. I—I've often done it in the past, snatching a sandwich or something as I worked. But now—"

"Hold on, though!" Babs said quickly. "Lily, we shan't be using Study No. 4 between eight and nine. If you'd like to work there you can carry on in peace. What about that?"

Lily's face brightened.

"Oh, Miss Redfern, if—if you're sure you don't mind—"

Babs laughed gleefully.

"The only thing we shall mind," she

said, "is if you don't win through that exam. Now I must fly."

And fly she did, because Babs was suddenly remembering that she was due in the kitchen to prepare breakfast. Thither she wended her way, to find Bessie already in occupation. In a few minutes the rest of the party came in and preparations for breakfast were in full swing.

Babs felt happy then, simply because Lily was happy. To add to her enjoyment, Miss Primrose came in presently and appreciatively sniffed.

"You appear to be getting on quite well, girls. You're sure you can manage?"

"Oh, marvellously, thank you, Miss Primrose!" Babs said.

"Thank you."

She went out then, leaving the chums pleased and Bessie beaming. Presently Bridget O'Toole, Joan Charmant, Muriel Bond, Christine Wilmer, Faith Ashton, and Amy Jones, who were still acting in the capacity of waitresses, came in to collect the porridge.

As soon as breakfast was over Lydia, Freda, Rosa, Frances, the twins and Eleanor Storke came in to take over the washing-up duties, and Babs & Co. retired to the dining-room to have their own breakfasts.

"This is going with a swing, what?" Jemima Carstairs observed. "Getting quite expertish in the old domestic world."

"Yes, rather!" Bessie beamed. "You follow my inspiration, you know, and I'll make cooks of all of you. Pass the bacon, Babs. Yum! This is fine!"

Certainly it was all very good fun while the novelty lasted, especially as some of the sections were excused all sorts of duties. Babs & Co. and Lydia & Co., for instance, missed assembly that morning, and, with the first half-hour of lessons also excused, they counted themselves in clover indeed.

But just before nine Babs remembered Lily. She had already told Bessie and Mabs of the arrangement, of course, and, as she expected, found that it met with their unqualified approval. She smiled at them now.

"I'll pop along and see how she's getting on," she said. "Her time's nearly up, anyway."

"Give her my love," Clara said.

And off, with a laugh, Babs scampered, and, diving round the corner which led to the Fourth Form corridor, almost cannoned into Sarah Harrigan, who, walking rather quickly, jumped back with a guilty start. She glared.

"Running about like that!" she growled. "Don't you know it's forbidden to race in the corridor? Take fifty lines."

She passed on towards the Head's corridor, leaving Babs grimacing.

And just at that moment the hour of nine chimed out from the clock tower.

Babs went on. She reached the door of Study No. 4 and turned the handle; then she paused, blinking. For, though the handle turned, the door would not budge; and when she looked down at the keyhole, it was to find the key missing.

"Lily!" she called.

Lily's voice, rather agitated, answered her from the other side of the door.

"Oh, Miss Redfern, is—is that you? I'm locked in!"

Babs jumped.

"Who locked you in?"

"I—I don't know, but—but— Oh dear!" Lily's voice sounded distressed.

"It's just gone nine, and I'm supposed to be on duty now, cleaning out these

studies! Miss Redfern, help me— please!"

Babs whistled shrilly. A moment's inspired thought told her exactly what had happened.

Somehow Sarah had discovered that Lily was using Study No. 4, and Sarah, having locked the door, had trapped Lily so that Lily would be kept away from her duties. No doubt at this moment Sarah was reporting Lily!

"Lily, open the window and wait!" Babs snapped. "Won't be a minute!"

And, without waiting for a reply, she went tearing back to the kitchen. "Clara—Mabs—quickly!" she cried. "Lily's apron and cap; a duster, broom, small brush, and dustpan. Come on! Can't stop to tell you what I want them for. We've got to step on it!"

"Lily?" asked Mabs.

"Yes."

That word was enough. In a minute they had grabbed the articles Babs wanted.

"Now, out into the quad!" Babs cried. "Race round to Study No. 4's window."

And she herself led the way, arriving in a very few moments below that window. Babs called up:

"Lily!"

Lily, face white and anxious, peered down at them.

"Nobody come yet?"

"No," Lily said. "But—oh, Miss Barbara—"

"O.K.!" Babs laughed. "Lily, catch these! Put them on and get to work."

Up went the apron and cap. Clara, with a grin, hurled the broom after it. Then the duster and broom, and then the hearthbrush. Expertly Lily caught them, one after the other.

Babs gasped gleefully.

"Done it!" she cheered. "But come on! I'm dying now to see Sarah's face when she opens that door! Back into the school, kids!"

A Mysterious Accident!



"YOU are sure, Sarah, that this is true?" Miss Primrose asked.

"I'm sorry to have to report it so, Miss Primrose, but, yes." And Sarah sighed.

"Naturally, I do not wish to get Lily into further trouble, but I think it is my duty, especially as we are so short-handed on the domestic side, to report to you the fact that, while she should be engaged in her duties, she is sitting wasting her time in Barbara Redfern's study. Perhaps, Miss Primrose, you will come along and remonstrate with her?"

The look on Miss Primrose's face suggested she would do more than remonstrate with the victim of Sarah Harrigan's report.

"Sarah, lead on!"

Sarah, with a sly smile, led on, at the same time slipping the key of Study No. 4 into her palm. It suited Sarah's purpose to lead on, because it meant that, by reaching the door of Study No. 4 in advance of Miss Primrose, she could silently unlock that door before Miss Primrose arrived.

Hurrying along the passage, Sarah most expertly slipped the key into the keyhole, silently turned it, and stood there, her hand on the knob, until Miss Primrose came up.

"If," Miss Primrose said, "I find that what you say is the truth, Sarah, I shall most certainly dismiss the girl!

"I—" And then she gazed along the passage annoyed as Babs, Mabs, and Clara came trotting up. "Please, girls, do not make that noise!" she said exasperatedly, and, with that, flung the door open. "Now—"

And then she stopped, and Sarah, blinking over her shoulder, almost fell down in sheer astonishment.

For there was Lily—Lily, in cap and apron, kneeling on Study No. 4's carpet. In Lily's hand was a dustpan; in her other a hearthbrush. Propped against the mantelpiece was a broom, and on Lily's face was a small dusty smudge. She turned as Miss Primrose's voice fell upon her ears.

Miss Primrose swung round with a glare upon Sarah.

"Sarah—"

"Oh!" Sarah said.

"I thought you gave me to understand Lily was deliberately wasting her time here?"

And then she glared. "All right," she said thickly—"all right! You just think you've had the laugh, but wait, that's all! I'll make you all sorry for this!"

And she, too, stormed off, leaving Babs & Co. chuckling. They felt they had done Sarah in the eye at last.

"All the same," Babs said, "we've got to watch her. After this she'll be more spiteful than ever. Now, I wonder what Primmy wants to see us about?"

They knew that, however, within the next ten minutes. For when, after a short, cheery chat to Lily, they went along to the Head's study, they found her looking considerably anxious.

"I have asked you to come along because I wish to consult you about some domestic arrangement. You may be aware that some time ago, I arranged for a little dinner-party to be given to the chief patrons of my London

to whom the orphanage owes most of its success. She cannot attend the whole dinner, but has agreed to arrive about nine o'clock for coffee and the purely informal conference which will take place afterwards. One of the very pleasant little ceremonies we shall perform at that conference, Barbara, is to present Mrs. Stancey with an alabaster bust of herself in recognition of the good work she has done for the home. I would like the bust to be placed in some prominent position in the room."

"Yes, Miss Primrose."

"And please," Miss Primrose said, "handle it gently and with great care, because, apart from its significance, it is a very expensive production. You may use the mahogany pedestal in Big Hall," she added. "This is the bust, Barbara."

Babs took it, holding her breath at the sheer delicate beauty of the craftsmanship it revealed. An artist herself,



"THIS burn is warm!" Lily cried, taking the frock from Sarah. "That means it has been done just a little while ago!" The chums started at that, for it seemed to prove that Sarah had made the burn herself and was now trying to blame it on the new maid.

"Well, you—you see—" spluttered Sarah.

"I thought you told me she wasn't even in uniform?"

"Well, I—I thought—"

"Look at her!" Miss Primrose angrily ordered.

Sarah looked. The look still suggested that she could not believe her eyes.

"But—but I'm sure—"

"Absurd!" Miss Primrose snapped.

"I am annoyed, Sarah! So far from Lily wasting her time, you have caused me to waste mine!"

Sarah was scarlet.

"I—I—I—"

"Please proceed, Lily!" said the Head. "I am sorry to have disturbed you. Barbara, and you other girls, will you come and see me in ten minutes, please?"

"Certainly, Miss Primrose!" Babs agreed; and as Miss Primrose, stormily and angrily, turned away, she looked at Sarah. "Funny, isn't it, how one can make mistakes?" she asked innocently. Sarah's eyes gleamed.

"I suppose you know nothing about this?" she gritted.

"Know nothing about what?" Babs asked innocently.

"You—" Sarah choked. "You—"

home for orphans I have just realised, to my great alarm, that the date is to-morrow evening."

"Oh dear! Just when we are so short-handed?" Babs said.

"That is my worry," Miss Primrose nodded. "I do not wish to cancel it. However," she went on, "I am entirely pleased so far with the way you have conducted things, Barbara, and I was wondering—could you and your friends possibly manage to officiate at the party?"

Babs flushed.

"Why, Miss Primrose, yes!"

"It will mean a great deal of work," Miss Primrose pointed out.

"But we can do it," Babs said.

"Lily will help us and advise us."

"I shall want you to get out the whole menu—"

"Yes, Miss Primrose; we'll see to that. Bessie has lots of ideas."

"Very well," Miss Primrose heaved a sigh of relief. "We shall use the governors' room for the dinner. Perhaps you had better see about getting it ready at once, and—"

She paused. "Barbara, you have heard me speak of Mrs. Stancey?"

Babs looked at her quickly.

"Mrs. Stancey," Miss Primrose went on, "is an extremely generous woman

Babs could appreciate a thing so exquisitely beautiful as this. She felt almost nervous.

"Barbara, you will be careful, will you not?" Miss Primrose said.

"Y-yes," breathed Babs. "Oh, rather!"

Holding the bust, she went out with Clara and Mabs, who were chuckling delightedly.

They went to the governors' room. There Babs put the bust on the table, and while Clara rushed off to get the pedestal, hovered around it, drinking in its beauty.

"Well, work to be done," Mabs said.

"My hat, fancy us running old Primmy's dinner party for her. Better get hold of Lily first, hadn't we?"

"Yes, rather! Fetch her!" Babs said.

Mabs rushed off. Three minutes later she returned with Lily, to find the bust perched on the mahogany pedestal which Clara had procured according to instructions, and just as a protection, Babs had draped the bust with a small dust-sheet. When Lily heard about the projected dinner she was as excited as themselves.

"And so," Babs said, "you'll have to do the overseeing. Lily—getting the

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

PATRICIA is your very own friend, who writes to you on this page each week. Her letters are just the sort you love. They are cheery and chummy; they are newsy and helpful, too. No wonder she is so popular with you all.



AT last this Patricia of yours has "taken the plunge" and had her first swim of the year.

And about time, too, I can hear you say!

Yes, I must confess that I am rather a slow person over being enticed into the cold, cold water of the swimming pool.

I like the day to be blazingly hot for my first "dip" of the year—so hot that you simply must do something to keep cool.

As I think I've told you before, I really do feel the cold more than a good many people, and if I go bathing too early in the season I find myself all sneezy and snuffly, which makes my mother say "I told you so"—or words to that effect.

However, now that the first dip is over, I shall go swimming a lot.

For I honestly do think that it's one of the grandest exercises there is.

Not that I'm at all good at swimming, mind you—much as I'd like to be! In fact, my small brother, whose full name is Heatherington—called Heath, for short—looks like beating me in a very few years time.

I find that I get so puffed if I stay in the water long. My big brother says this is because my breathing is all wrong—and I agree. But I don't seem able to do anything to put it right—and make myself more long-winded.

If any of you find yourself troubled this way and find that a short swim makes you tired, then you must never stay in the water too long at a time, but rest between each burst of energy.

● After the Swim

You other clever ones, who could stay in the water all day if you were allowed to, and can swim nearly as well as Johnny Weissmuller, don't have to worry about getting tired.

But do remember always to come out of the swimming bath immediately you feel cold, won't you? If you continue swimming after this, it will do you no good at all.

It's much better for you to go back to your cubicle and have a really brisk rubbing down—with a harsh towel—and a run around the bath until you are glowing.

That's when swimming does you good. Do you find you always feel hungry after a swim? I do. So generally I buy myself a bun as I enter the swimming bath and nibble this while I'm dressing.

drink. A gallon or so of the bath water!

● For the Sun

When we think of what our grandmothers missed, it makes us gasp at times, doesn't it?

No cars, no wireless, no hiking—and no sun-bathing!

I know there are still a few girls and women to-day who like to keep their skin all milk and roses throughout the summer. But not many, are there?

Most of us adore a gipsy tan and long to get as brown as a penny—as quickly as possible.

And not only our face and legs, but our arms and even our back, so that we look "done all over," instead of only brown in spots.

I have seen some fascinating sun-bathing dresses for schoolgirls (and toddlers, too) in the shops this year. Most of them are cut fairly low in the front and very low at the back. They are completely sleeveless, too, of course.

Then, so that the dress can be worn on more than "beach" occasions, the sun-frock generally has a little bolero jacket to go with it, which can be slipped over the dress to turn it into a very modest little out-to-tea garment.

But we can't have new sun-bathing dresses every year, now can we?

And lots of us have to "make do" with the one we wore on our holidays last summer.

But supposing it's too small? At first you'll be disappointed, but any schoolgirl who's good at sewing can soon cheer up if she looks at the picture here.

For this smart dress, with its striped panel down the front was actually made from a dress that was horribly tight.

With mother's help, it would be quite easy to make an opening all down the front of a too-small dress and to sew a perfectly straight piece of contrasting material there—to give extra room.

Then—just so that it won't look like an alteration—make a belt to match,



And you have a "this-year" instead of a "last-year" sun-frock!

● Holiday Brooches

Now what about something new to make—something to put you even more in holiday mood?

It must be cheap, of course, for pennies are being saved these days for donkey rides, ice-creams, and visits to the pier, now aren't they? So here are two little brooches or mascots for you to make—from pipe-cleaners.

(Father might have some spare ones. But if he hasn't—well, I think the mascots are cute enough to be worth risking a penny.)

The sailing ship is made from just one pipe-cleaner. Make a loop at the top, then bend the other end, zigzag fashion, to form the "hull." The straight piece in the middle makes the "mast," of course.

Now cut out the tiny sails, either from bright-coloured felt or some othersuitably strong material. They just want catching to the "mast" in three places with a stitch or so.

It would make a very gay ornament on the lapel of a blazer, wouldn't it?

Your initial is another idea. For this you'll want two pipe-cleaners. The first one is wound round and round into a circle. Then another pipe-cleaner is twisted into the shape of your initial, and the ends fastened round the circle.

A pin could be sewn to the back for pinning to your dress, handbag, or—wherever you like!

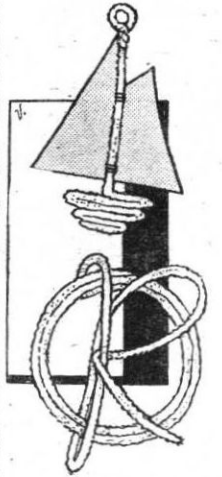
● We Don't Believe It

The story of Cinderella should not be told to children!

That's what a society of chiropodists (foot experts) in America say! They insist that it makes young people prefer to wear shoes that are too small for them—like the "ugly sisters," I suppose. But I just don't believe a word of it, do you? Schoolgirls and young women are far too sensible these days!

Bye-bye now, all, until next Saturday.

Your friend,
PATRICIA.



BEAUTY FOR THE HOLIDAYS

PATRICIA is writing a special series of articles that will solve all the schoolgirl's Good Looks problems in time for the holidays.

(1.) A Streamlined Figure

WE all want to look our most attractive for the holidays, don't we?

If it were just a question of shampooing our hair, and giving our nails a special "do," it would be easy, of course—and we could look pretty very quickly.

But good looks is more than that (for most of us at any rate!) and we really should begin now if we want to be looking our radiant best by the end of the month, in time for "going away."

So we'll start right at the beginning, shall we?

You'll see I've called this article "a streamlined figure," but in acquiring this you will gain more—for wise eating and correct exercise are the very foundations of good looks.

So first you must decide if your figure could do with improving—for you want to look nice in your bathing-suit, don't you?

A good many schoolgirls find that they are on the plump side. And often the plumpness is in all the wrong places!

Perhaps she's got a sort of spare tyre round her middle. Perhaps her hips are larger than they should be.

Well, a few exercises should soon improve these.

FOR HIPS.

Just look at the exercise in Picture No. 1 here. This is excellent for slimming the hips.

You stand with one hand holding a chair, or the bed-end, and shoot your leg out as far and as high as it will go.

Do this six times, then turn, and repeat with the other leg.

Lying on your back, and doing "pedaling" in the air with your legs, as if you were on a bike, is another hip-slimming exercise that is also very good for you.

A SLIM "MIDDLE"

Exercise No. 2 is the one for getting rid of that "spare tyre" of fat that sometimes comes on the ribs and spoils the graceful lines of your dresses.

Stand with your feet apart and lift your arms slowly into the air, so that you feel every muscle of your body moving. As you do this it is very important to take a deep breath in, pulling in your tummy as you do so.

Hold this position a second, and then flop your arms and head forward, bringing your finger-tips to the floor. And as you do so, let your breath out with a big puff. (This is rather a tiring exercise, so you shouldn't do it more than three times or so just at first, though you'll soon find you can manage more.)

A FLAT TUMMY

No one likes to see a schoolgirl with a protruding tummy, do they? It always looks as if the owner eats too much, for one thing—when quite often it's just because the tummy muscles are not as strong as they might be.



This is where exercise will help again. Take the one in Picture No. 3, for example.

Stand with your feet together and your back as straight as a ruler.

Now raise first one foot and then another, trying to bring it up to shoulder level. You won't be able to manage it at first, perhaps, but each day you'll find your foot getting an inch or so higher.

And each time you raise it those tummy muscles are becoming stronger. If you persevere, and do this exercise regularly, you will soon find that tummy becoming as slim as a mannequin's!

A GIRLISH WAIST

The other "spot" where fat tends to accumulate and so spoil the girlish figure is around the waist.

This simply must be made to disappear, for shorts, dirndl dresses, and play-suits all draw attention to the waist particularly.

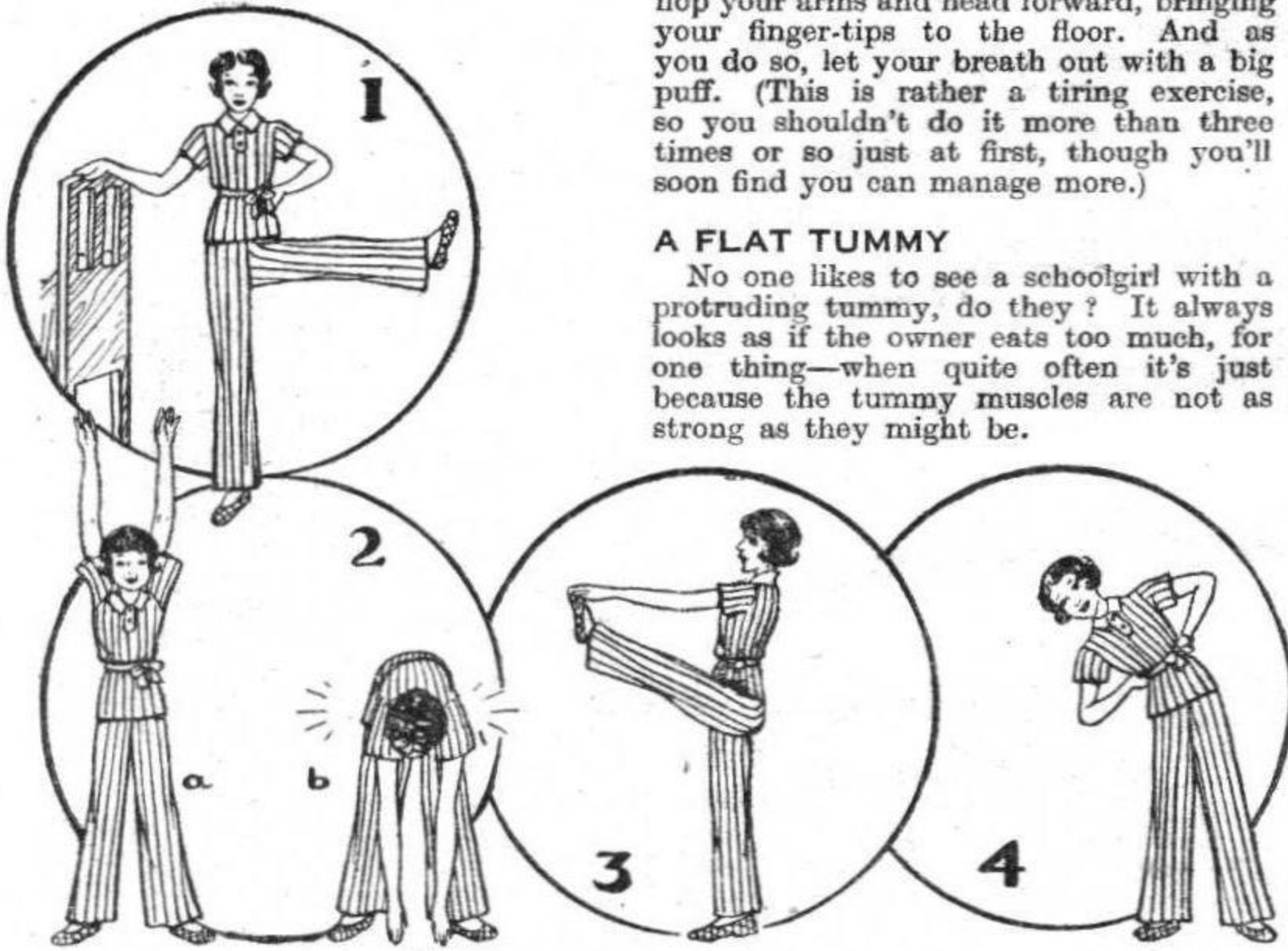
Exercise No. 4 is the one you must try for this. Stand with your feet apart and your hands on your hips. Then bend over your trunk—first to right and then to left—as far as it will go, letting your head droop with your body. Do it backwards and forwards, too.

If you keep up these exercises during the next few weeks, doing those that apply to your particular "plump spots," you'll be delighted with the improvement in your figure by holiday time, I'm quite sure.

But just one thing I ask. Do try to cut out eating sweets and snacks between meals, if you are really in earnest about "streamlining."

There now, I think that's enough to be getting on with for this week, don't you?

Having got that figure on its streamlined way, we'll tackle Complexion Problems next Saturday, and follow with Hair, Hands and Feet (and Legs and Arms)—until you're a Perfect Picture!



THE WAY THEY DO THEIR HAIR

Miss Richards and Patricia have planned this little feature between them, describing Cliff House Fourth Formers' hair styles.

This Week: CHRISTINE WILMER

THIS hair-style of Christine's isn't one that appeals to me particularly, but it would look quite attractive on the older schoolgirl who has a middle parting and would like to try "something new for a change." Christine herself is just trying it out for the holidays.

These sausage curls on top of the head may strike you as rather difficult to make, but actually they're not.

Two pieces of hair are cut short—one on each side of the parting, and then curled up with a pipe-cleaner. (The joy of curlers on top like this is that they don't dig in your head while you sleep!)

In the morning, the pipe-cleaners are removed, and the hair brushed over the finger—or over a rat's tail comb. The result is the sausage curls.

For the girl who wants to make her forehead look higher, or whose face is rather square, this is a most flattering style. But the girl with the long face and thin neck should certainly avoid it.

(Next Week: JANET JORDAN.)



(Continued from page 11)

room ready, and so on. Mabs, I think we ought to have flowers—tons of flowers! You'll cut those, will you? Think we'd better leave the bust draped," she added thoughtfully.

"Bust?" Lily said.
"It's a sort of presentation," Babs explained. "They're going to give it to Mrs. Stancey—"

Lily jumped.
"You—you mean, Mrs. Stancey will be here?" Lily asked, and for a moment showed signs of being disconcerted.

"Yes, of course. Didn't you know?" Babs asked. "Why, Lily, you look queer! I thought she was a friend of yours?"

"And so—so she is," Lily said. "But—but—" And she gulped, shaking her head. "Oh, I'm glad, of course. It—it will be awfully nice to see her again. Shall we get busy now?"

"Yes, rather!" Clara called.
And with a cheery good will they immediately set to work. While Lily dashed off for the vacuum cleaner, Mabs nipped along to the garden. While Clara dusted, Babs went down to the kitchen to see Bessie Bunter, and Bessie positively beamed at the prospect of organising a dinner all on her own. No doubting that the plump one would make a good job of it.

Babs, with a happy laugh, raced back to the others, pausing, however, as she reached the corridor in which the governors' room was situated. For outside the door, peering in, was Sarah Harrigan. She turned as she heard Babs' footsteps, and hurriedly walked away.

"Hallo!" Babs muttered. "Wonder if she's plotting more mischief?"

If she was, they saw no evidence of it. For once in a way, indeed, Sarah seemed to be keeping out of their way. All morning they worked in the governors' room until it looked very bright, and as clean as a new pin. After that came dinner, and after dinner, lessons. In the evening they worked once more, and everything by that time was ready.

"If you'll give it a final dusting to-morrow morning, Lily, we'll lay the table after tea to-morrow afternoon," Babs said. "O.K.?"

"O.K.!" it was. The room fairly shone, and Miss Primrose, looking in before call-over, expressed herself as delighted with the progress made.

In the morning Babs was up early, and on her way to the governors' room for a last look round, was met by Dulcia Fairbrother, the head girl of the school. Dulcia had a camera in her hand.

"Oh, Barbara," she said, "if you're going along to the governors' room, you might find a parking place for this camera, will you? I've promised Miss Primrose that I'll take a few snapshots of the dinner to-night."

Babs dimpled. She took the camera. From Miss Primrose she got the key of the governors' room—that room always most carefully locked—and, putting it in the lock, opened the door. Soundlessly the door swung back.

And then Babs paused.
For there was another girl in that room.

The girl was Sarah Harrigan, and the window which was open behind her, showed how she had entered. Sarah was near the bust, her back half-turned towards Babs, and there was something in her hand. The bust itself, still draped, overlooked the table.

Babs, sensing that Sarah was there

for no good purpose, swiftly stepped back. Then she had another idea—an idea which might be useful. Sarah had no more right in that room without permission than any other girl in the school. What a crow for the chums to take Sarah in the act of trespassing!

In a moment Babs had focused the camera. Snick! went the release.

She smiled a little grimly as she wound on the film, and then, peering into the room again, saw Sarah in the act of climbing out of the window. As she did so she put the thing she had in her hand on the sill, and Babs got a glimpse of bright metal. In another flash of inspiration she took another snap just as Sarah picked up the object, and disappeared over the sill.

Then Babs frowned. What game had Sarah been playing in this room? She looked round. Nothing seemed to have been touched. She approached the bust, and gingerly lifted the edge of the draping. That seemed all right, too. Funny, though. Babs could have sworn that Sarah had been bent on some mischief.

Carefully she placed the camera in a drawer. Mustn't forget to tell Dulcia she had used two of the films, though. Once more she looked round, and then, locking the door, went off to see Lily. Lily was in her room, and as she had not yet commenced her official domestic duties, she was immersed in her books. Babs handed her the key.

"Breakfast now," she said. "I'll give this to you, Lily. You won't forget you've got to give the governors' room a final dust?"

Lily smiled faintly.
"As if I should forget," she said. "Sarah's just been in to remind me about that, too."

"Sarah? What's she got to do with it?" Babs asked sharply.

"Nothing, I suppose; but—but you know how she likes interfering. She was almost nice to me," she added, with a laugh.

Babs left her then to go and help in the kitchen. Lily, with a sigh, gazed at the clock, put her books away, and donned her uniform. Then, taking a feather duster, she hurried to the governor's room.

Unlocking the door she entered. Like Babs, she stood for a moment regarding it admiringly. Certainly the room looked cheerful and bright. Just lightly she ran her feather duster over the furniture, picked up one or two pieces of fluff from the floor, and threw them into the wastepaper-basket. Then she approached the bust.

Carefully she caught one end of the small sheet which draped it. Carefully she folded it back. Then, with a quick flick, she removed it completely.

And as she did so—
"Oh!" Lily cried.

Too late she made a jump forward. The bust, that beautiful piece of alabaster, collapsed before her eyes and crashed to the floor!

For a moment Lily was frozen with horror. She had done that—although goodness knows how. The duster must have caught somehow, although most certainly she had not been aware of any contact when she had flicked it off.

She stooped to pick up the pieces. Her fingers were shaking.

The door opened.

And into the room, accompanied by Sarah Harrigan, came—Miss Primrose. A startled look of utter consternation Miss Primrose gave the smashed bust.

"Lily!"
Lily reeled round.

"You—you—" Miss Primrose choked. "My presentation! You—you did this?"

Lily stood pale and shaken.
"Yes, Miss Primrose. I—I must have done, but—"

The headmistress' eyes flashed with anger.

"You admit it, Lily? You were careless enough to—"

"Miss Primrose, I—I'm sorry. I—I never knew—"

"Leave this room!" Miss Primrose cried. "Go to your own! And this time, Lily, there is no second chance for you! You will leave the school this very day. You are dismissed! Go to your room now and pack your clothes! My presentation!" she breathed. "Oh, what am I to do now?"

And while Lily, white-faced, stumbled past her into the corridor, Sarah Harrigan grinned. There was satisfaction in her face at last.

Photography Plays a Part!

LILY, are you sure you did it?" Babs asked.

It was ten minutes later.

Babs, Mabs, Clara, and Jemima, in Lily's room, were comforting the girl whose white face was so utterly wretched.

"I—I suppose so," she said. "But I was careful—as careful as anything. I took the cloth off, and then I saw the whole thing crumbling to pieces in front of my eyes."

"Just as if," Jemima Carstairs asked keenly, "it had already been broken and was just being held together by the sheet?"

"Yes, that's it—exactly," Lily said. "But—but it couldn't have happened, of course. I—I suppose I must have touched it somehow without being aware of it. But what am I to do now?" she cried. "Miss Primrose has sacked me, and the sack means that I'm out of the scholarship. And—and Mrs. Stancey is coming to-night. She'll know of this. Oh—oh dear!"

Babs' eyes glimmered a little.

"It's cute," she said grimly.

"What's cute?" Mabs stared.

"The plot. It is a plot. Sarah's plot." Babs nodded her head in conviction. "That was why she was in the governors' room this morning. I told you I saw her snooping around by the bust? That's why she got in through the window. That's why she made it her business to remind Lily she'd got to dust."

Clara frowned.
"But Lily herself isn't sure she didn't do the damage," she objected.

"Apart from which," Mabs put in, "I don't see how you are going to prove that Sarah was there."

"No?" Babs' eyes gleamed. "But if I showed a photograph of Sarah in the room, that would. And I've got one—or I think I have. Wait a minute." She pressed a hand to her temples. "I've got half an idea. Jimmy, could you tell, if you saw the bust, where it had been tampered with before Lily touched it?"

"Well, I might," Jemima said.

"But—"

"Lily, wait here. Don't do anything—yet!" Babs cried. "I'm not promising anything, but there may be something in this. Jimmy, come on!" she cried impulsively, and urged that girl out of the room, and followed by Clara and Mabs, crowded back into the governors' room. "Now look at that!"

The bust, whose fragments had been carefully collected, stood on a table in one corner. Jemima stared at them through her monocle.

Then deftly she re-assembled the top of the head, holding it in position with her hands. As she did so, her eyes glittered.

"See the dent on the top of the old skull?" she asked. "That was done with a hammer—or some other instrument."

"Before Lily touched it?" Babs asked.

"Looks like it." Jemima examined the bruise keenly. "Notice, comrades, that all the fractures radiate downwards. That obviously shows that it was a cosh which did the breaking in the first place. Now alabaster," Jemima said learnedly, "is a brittle substance. Even one light blow would be sufficient to cause all those fractures, and because the blow was light, the whole thing, clearly, would hang together until it was touched again, you see?"

"Goodie." Babs nodded excitedly. "I think we've got it now. Sarah certainly had something in her hand—something metallic, but whether it was a hammer or not I couldn't see. But the camera will tell us," she went on eagerly. "The great thing now is to gain time until those films are developed and printed. I'll see Primmy!"

And Babs simply flew out of the room. At once she entered Miss Primrose's study, to find that mistress looking decidedly harassed and worried. She came to the point at once.

"Miss Primrose, about Lily—"

Miss Primrose frowned. "Lily is leaving," she said coldly. "I know," Babs nodded. "But, Miss Primrose, can't you postpone it for a little while—say until after the dinner to-night? We're doing our best, but we can't very well get on without Lily, and—and you wouldn't like your dinner party not to be a success, would you?"

With some reluctance Miss Primrose consented, and back Babs flew to the governors' room. There she saw Mabs. "Tell Lily she's hanging on till to-night," she said. "She's not leaving until after dinner. By that time," she added, "everything should be all right. Now where's the camera?"

"Where are you going?" Mabs asked. "To the chemist in Friardale to get these films printed. But not a word, mind."

And off on her bicycle Babs scorched. Ten minutes later she was in Friardale, arranging with the chemist for the films to be developed and delivered at Cliff House by six o'clock.

Then happily Babs rode back to the school. Just in case of a hitch she had said nothing to Lily about the photos, not wanting to buoy her hopes, only to dash them again.

Time passed slowly. At last, six o'clock came with the chums feverishly busy in the kitchen, and Babs frowned.

"I say, the Griggs man hasn't arrived," she rather anxiously told Mabs. "Think I'd better phone?"

But before Mabs could answer that question Lady Patricia Northanson looked in.

"Barbara, there's a fellow named Griggs on the phone for you," said the prefect. "Says it's urgent."

Babs rushed off, her heart a little anxious now. In the prefects' room she grabbed up the receiver.

"Yes, Mr. Griggs? Oh, thank goodness! Are those snaps ready?"

Her heart fell like a plummet when the reply came.

"I'm sorry to say, Miss Redfern, they

haven't even been touched. My son has been delayed all day at Lantham. Shall I keep the film, or will you call for it?"

Delaying the Vital Dinner!



THAT vital evidence which could prove Lily's innocence, was not forthcoming, and in less than three hours Lily would have to leave. What was to be

done? Wait a minute! Supposing those snaps could be printed and developed at school?

Thinking of that made her think of Leila Carroll, the Fourth Form's photography expert. And at once Babs rushed off to the kitchen; at once she questioned Leila.



"BABS, you—you sus-silly!" stuttered Bessie in alarm. "What are you doing?" For Babs, catching up the saucepan, had deliberately emptied the soup into the sink. "Sorry," she said. "But we've got to hold the dinner up—for Lily's sake."

"Leila, could you develop these snaps before Lily leaves?"

"Dead certain sure!" Leila answered definitely.

"Right! Then there's only one way out of it," Babs said. "Lily agreed to stay and see the dinner through. We'll hold her to that promise. But the dinner's got to be drawn out until these snaps are ready. And in the first place," she said, her eyes suddenly gleaming, "the soup is going to be delayed. Bessie, where's the soup?"

"Eh? Why, there, in that pan," Bessie said, and then gave a yelp of alarm. "Babs, you—you sus-silly! What are you doing?"

For Babs, catching up the saucepan, had deliberately emptied the soup into the sink.

"Sorry," she said. Her face was determined now. "But we've got to hold the dinner up—for Lily's sake. Make some more, Bessie. Clara, get hold of Primmy. Tell her we've had an accident to the soup. Leila, go and get the stuff ready for the film, will you? Hold things up as long as you can. Well, I'm off to get back the film."

And Babs, leaving her chums gasping, flew.

Like a girl possessed she cycled to Griggs, and not remaining even to speak to Mr. Griggs, snatched the film from his hand and raced back. By that time it was nearly seven.

Leila was waiting for her in Big Hall. Breathlessly Babs handed her the film. Off to the dark-room Leila raced at once, and Babs went to the kitchen.

"Started?" she panted. "No," Clara said. "But poor Primmy's getting impatient."

Babs nodded. She went off to see Lily in the next room. Lily was looking just a little anxious.

"Oh, Miss Redfern, the dinner's late in starting—"

"I know," Babs said. "I'm sorry. Things aren't going half as well as they should go, dash it! But, Lily, we're relying on you. You have promised to stop and see us through, haven't you?"

"Well, Miss Redfern, providing I don't lose my train. I shall have to leave here about half-past eight."

"Listen, please, Lily," she said quietly. "And don't think I'm being nosy. I know that Sarah has had a down on you all along, has been trying to wreck your chances. I know that there must be more than ordinary spite behind it. I know that the Stanceys and something to do with your father play a part in this."

Lily's lips quivered. She opened her mouth.

"I don't want you to explain," cut in Babs quickly. "I'm just telling you that I can feel what all this means to you—and I want you to stay on here until we get through, because there might be a slight chance that I can clear things up."

Lily's eyes widened. "Miss Redfern! You mean—"

"It's a chance," said Babs quietly.

"Lily, will you promise to stop?"

"Well, yes—"

That was all that Babs required. Back into the other room she bolted. Clara, Mabs, Joan, and Christine were in the act of serving the soup then. Babs, piling up a tray, went after them.

Soup was served. They went back and hung out time, until—

The bell rang again. Babs groaned. Just to cause a fresh delay, she dropped her trayful of fish when she took it in a few minutes later. That helped a little, though it made Primmy most highly annoyed.

The main course—chicken, with salad—came. Again Babs held it back. This time the bell rang three times before she allowed the course to go out. Nearly eight o'clock by the time the empty dishes came back—and with them Miss Primrose. Miss Primrose wore a rather annoyed look.

"You girls are not doing very well here!" she snapped. "Mrs. Stancey will arrive in a few moments, expecting the meal to be over. Please do hurry along things!"

And Miss Primrose rustled away. Again the chums looked at Babs.

"Never mind; carry on!" Babs said desperately. "Keep on hanging about. What next?"

"Trifle," Bessie said. "And it's a ripping trifle, too! Babs, will you serve the cream?"

Babs bit her lip. Oh, goodness, why didn't Leila hurry?

Rather peculiar was her face as she served the cream, and the chums, unsuspecting, took the course in. About half a minute after they had disappeared, Miss Primrose came storming in at the door.

"Barbara—"

"Oh! Yes, Miss Primrose?"

"I suppose you are aware that, instead of serving cream with the trifle, you have served mayonnaise sauce?"

"What! On my trifle?" Bessie yelled.

"Oh, dud-dear! Have I?"

"Most decidedly!" Miss Primrose stormed. "Please serve the trifle up again."

Bessie glowered. But Babs inwardly drew a breath of relief. Back came the trifle. New helpings were served. It was getting on for half-past eight then.

Lily, looking rather pale, came from the other kitchen.

"Miss Redfern, we'll never get through in time for me to catch my train. Miss Primrose will be furious if she finds me still here."

"But, Lily, you promised to stop and help," Babs said. Then she gasped as the door was flung open, and Leila burst in. "Leila!" she cried.

"Babs!" Leila cried, her face aflame.

"The snaps—"

"I've got them—here!" And Leila held them up, still dripping wet. "And I guess it's Jake!"

"What—what—" Lily stuttered.

"Let me look!" Babs cried.

Trembling, she grasped the snaps. Then she, too, rapped out a cry. Clear in every detail they were, showing Sarah in front of the bust, a hammer in her hand, showing Sarah climbing out of the window, a hammer on the sill.

"Whoopee!" Babs cried. Then, like a girl possessed, darted from the kitchen, and, ignoring the surprised exclamations of the guests in the governors' room, went straight to Miss Primrose. "Miss Primrose, will you please take a look at these," she whispered.

Miss Primrose, annoyed, looked, jumped, then swung on Barbara.

"Barbara, what is this?"

"Sarah," Babs said, "smashed the bust before Lily came to dust it. She did it," Babs added, "because she wanted Lily sacked!"

Miss Primrose stared at the telltale snaps again.

"Barbara, I cannot believe it—"

"But it's true!" Babs pleaded, conscious that the guests were eyeing her curiously. "You know yourself how Sarah has been against Lily ever since she came here."

Miss Primrose pondered. Her face became a little grim.

"Barbara, bring Sarah here at once! No, wait! Take her to the room next door. I will excuse myself from my guests for a moment."

Babs nodded eagerly. Hastily she flew off to execute that instruction. Sarah she found in her study.

"You're wanted," Babs told her. "Primmy! In the room next to the governors' room."

"Oh!" Sarah said, and smiled. "I suppose Mrs. Stancey would like to see me? Is she there, Barbara?"

"Not yet," Babs said grimly. "But she's due any moment."

Sarah laughed as she flounced her long hair. She hurried away, but immediately she entered the room she knew that something was wrong.

Mrs. Stancey was not there, but Lily, looking relieved and happy as she stood between Miss Primrose and



The most puzzling, intriguing girl at Cliff House School!

THAT'S Jimema Carstairs—"Jimmy" to all her friends, and especially Barbara Redfern & Co. For Jimema, of the gleaming monocle and Eton crop, seldom says what is in her mind. But never has Jimema been so puzzling as in next week's superb Hilda Richards story; puzzling and infuriating, too, for it seems quite definite that she is deliberately plotting against her own chums! Don't miss:

"JEMIMA—AND THE CHINESE PAGODA!"

It will thrill—mystify—and delight you all.

Leila Carroll, was, and Miss Primrose's face very stern.

"Sarah," she said evenly, "what were you doing in the governors' room this morning with a hammer?"

"I never was in the room," Sarah gasped.

"No? Then look at these," Miss Primrose said.

And sternly she held the photographs towards her.

Sarah looked. Her jaw dropped. A wild, hunted look came into her eyes. She saw she was caught then.

"You smashed that bust to fix the blame on Lily," Miss Primrose said icily. "You wanted to get her dismissed, Sarah. Why?"

"All right!" burst out Sarah. "I admit it. I did break the bust, and I did want to get her dismissed. And why, Miss Primrose? Because a girl like she is a menace to the school!"

"What?"

"Yes, I mean it!" Gone was all Sarah's caution now. In her hate and fury she blurted out the thing she had wished to be kept a secret—in case it was learnt that she was Lily's cousin.

"Lily's father is at this moment in prison!" she cried. "He was convicted of stealing a pearl necklace!"

"Sarah!" cried Lily. "How—how can you?"

"Well, isn't it true?" Sarah blazed. "It is not true!" came a voice at the door, and everybody swung round as a middle-aged woman entered. "To your shame, Sarah!"

Lily recognised her instantly, as did the prefect.

"Mrs. Stancey!" gasped Lily.

Mrs. Stancey's eyes roved over the tense group. She looked at the Head.

"It is not true, Miss Primrose," she repeated quietly. "And Sarah, as Lily's cousin, ought to be ashamed of herself for making such an accusation in public!" What a gasp then. Lily's cousin! Babs' eyes gleamed. She began to understand things more clearly now.

"And," finished Mrs. Stancey firmly, "Lily's father did not steal the necklace! To-day I found out the truth when my son Emery was involved in a car crash—"

"Oh, Mrs. Stancey!" cried Lily. "He was—not—"

Mrs. Stancey smiled gently at her. She shook her head.

"No, my child, he was not seriously hurt," she said. "But—but—" Mrs. Stancey faltered, and there was a sad look in her eyes as she continued firmly: "But Emery thought he might die. Emery was always something of a scapegrace, and—and he blurted out the truth to me. Emery—it was clear how it hurt her to say it, but she did it bravely—Emery stole the necklace!"

A gasp. Then silence.

"Your father, Lily," continued Mrs. Stancey softly, "to save my son, took the blame on his own shoulders. For a month your father has served imprisonment for what my son did. Even though it hits my son, I am glad that the wrong has been righted."

"Yes, indeed," murmured Miss Primrose.

"And after what I heard to-night, Sarah," Mrs. Stancey said evenly, "I hope never to see you again. Lily, my dear," she added, and tenderly embraced that quivering girl, "to-night, after the meeting, I want you to come back with me and meet your father."

"You mean, he—he is out of prison?" Lily cried.

"He was released this afternoon."

"Oh!" Lily sobbed, and tears started to her eyes—but they were tears of joy.

"And instead of Sarah," Mrs. Stancey smiled, "you and your father are coming on the cruise."

Sarah, like a girl in a daze, slunk from the room, while Babs & Co., looking at each other, grinned joyful, triumphant grins.

Miss Primrose coughed.

"Well, I—I am sure," she said, "that we are all very, very pleased to hear this. Lily, I am sorry for the way I misjudged you. I can only," she added, "offer you my most sincere apologies—"

"Good old Primmy!" muttered Babs.

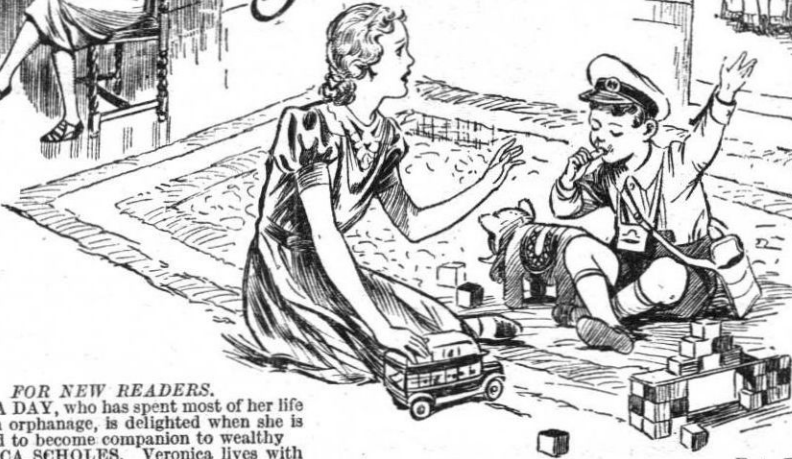
"And," Miss Primrose said, with a look at the chums of the Fourth Form, "congratulate you, Lily, upon the friends you will have when you eventually become a scholar at Cliff House. At the same time I cannot congratulate them upon being first-class waitresses!"

"Which," murmured Clara Trevlyn, with a grin, "is one under the chin for us! But who cares?"

Nobody did. With Lily saved and Sarah reaping her just deserts at last, they were all happy.

Further chapters of our dramatic and unusual serial—

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.

Veronica discovers that Brenda has a mysterious boy friend. She and a friend of her own, a certain Mr. Jones, try in vain to discover who Brenda's helper is. In a toy of Dickie's which is accidentally broken Brenda finds a drawing which Ronald has told her to look out for as it is vitally important to her future.

Thrilled at her discovery, Brenda arranges to meet Ronald that night and give him the drawing. She manages to get a little time off, but at the moment of departure Dickie learns of the broken toy. He won't be consoled, and thus Brenda cannot leave on her vital errand to meet Ronald.

(Now read on.)

Held Up By Little Dickie!

"OH, Aunty Brenda, they've broken—Tommy and Elly! I'll never have them again!"

And little Dickie, clinging to Brenda, while he hugged to his chest the broken china toy, sobbed as though his heart would break.

Filled with compassion, Brenda tried to comfort him, but Dickie, sobbing and choking, seemed inconsolable.

Even as she rocked him in her arms, fingering his dark curls, Brenda stared towards the bed-room window.

For her own sake as much as for Dickie's, she must soothe the wee fellow off to sleep, must drive away his grief and convince him that his precious toy could easily be mended.

It was nearly half-past six, and at seven o'clock she was due to meet Ronald at the spinney and show him the strange little drawing, done years before by Veronica, which she had, remarkably enough, found inside the broken toy.

To all intents and purposes that drawing was just a childish attempt at art—a picture of a book and some sort of building, like a tower—but Brenda knew that it would lead to the hiding-place of something which might clear up all the amazing web of puzzlement that enmeshed her.

She must—simply must—get away during the next few minutes. If she didn't, it would be too late, for Mrs. Scholes had requested her to be back by eight. There was scant time left, even now. She'd got to do something.

And then Brenda's eyes lit up. Inspiration! Why, golly, she ought to have thought of it before. Those barley-sugar drops, of which Dickie was so passionately fond.

"Dickie—Dickie, darling!" she whis-

THE VITAL DRAWING STOLEN.

It was only a childish scribble, but it could affect Brenda's whole life.

pered gently, raising his tear-stained face to hers. "There, now, don't cry any more. How would you like some barley-sugar drops?"

"Per-per-pr'aps," Dickie gulped, not quite certain.

But the flood of tears, the spasms of sobs, ceased—that was the chief thing. Brenda, fetching the jar of sweets from the mantelpiece, shook some out on to the bed. Dickie half-heartedly sampled one; with more interest, had a second, and two drops later was smiling tearfully.

"There, that's lots better, isn't it, darling?" Brenda beamed. "And we'll soon have Tommy and Elly mended again."

"H-how, Aunty Brenda?" Dickie said, sucking noisily.

"Well, I'll mend him, or we'll take him into Fowler's," Brenda declared, remembering the big toyshop in the town. "They'll make him as well as well in no time."

But Dickie, eyes widening, gave a vigorous shake of his curly head.

"Ooo, no, Aunty Brenda. He'll be the maddest thing ever!" he said in awe.

"Who—Tommy and Elly?" Brenda said, her lips twitching.

"Father Kissmus," Dickie said, lowering his voice and looking round the room, as if expecting to see that benevolent old gentleman in some odd shadow. "Ooo, he'd be ever so mad, Aunty Brenda."

"But why, Dickie?"

"'Cos that's where Tommy and Elly came from. They did," Dickie stated, nodding. "Father Kissmus brought them for Veronica when she was as wee as wee, and if Mr. Fowler mends them—urrrr!" he ended, shuddering.

Brenda managed not to chuckle. Quaint little Dickie! But somehow she had got to set his mind at rest. Precious minutes were fleeting by.

"Oh, Father Christmas wouldn't mind, Dickie," she began. "You see—"

"Did Father Kissmus tell you that, Aunty Brenda?"

"Well—er—not quite, Dickie," Brenda faltered. "But—er—I know he wouldn't be angry if we took Tommy and Elly to Mr. Fowler, because that's where lots of broken toys go to be mended."

"And Father Kissmus doesn't ever get cross—not the teeniest, weeniest bit cross, like Uncle Arthur does when he cuts his chin?"

"Not the teeniest weeniest," Brenda laughed.

"Why not?" Dickie fired off.

And Brenda's laugh died away. Of all the disconcerting cross-examinations she had ever had, this really was the limit. At any other moment, less urgent than this, she might have revelled in it. But now—oh, golly, it was twenty to seven! And if Dickie took as long as usual to settle down to sleep, she'd never be able to get away.

"Well, because—because," she said, groping for inspiration, "well, Mr. Fowler just—just takes them in for Father Christmas. Father Christmas goes and gets them."

THRILLS AND MYSTERY

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CLIFF HOUSE CHUMS

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"And Father Kissmus mends them?"
"That's it, Dickie! I was forgetting that. Every little boy's and girl's toy that gets broken and is taken to Mr. Fowler is—mended by Father Christmas!"

"Coo!" Dickie piped. "Mustn't Father Kissmus have lots and lots of toys to mend? And will he have Molly's teaset and Tony Shannon's fireman's suit?"

"If they're broken, Dickie," Brenda assured him. "But look, dear, just you lie down now and try to go to by-byes."

Dickie obediently snuggled between the sheets, but he wasn't finished yet.

"Does Father Kissmus ever get any of the little boys' and girls' toys mixed up, Aunty Brenda?" he asked.

"Oh, no, never," Brenda said, and then looked at him in astonishment, for his little face was quite crestfallen. "Why, Dickie dear, what ever's the matter?" she asked in concern.

"I—I was only hoping that Father Kissmus did get the little boys' and girls' toys mixed up sometimes, Aunty Brenda," he said, with an old-fashioned shake of his head, "cos then he might send me Tony Shannon's fireman's suit by mistake, an' I do so want a fireman's suit—really I do!"

Brenda simply had to laugh then—and simply had to hug the wee fellow, too.

"Well, perhaps the fairies will tell Father Christmas to bring you a fireman's suit for your birthday, darling," she said, mentally resolving that she would be Father Christmas on that occasion. "But they won't if you don't go to sleep, you know. And they might not let Father Christmas mend Tommy and Elly—"

Never did such a playful warning have so instant an effect. Dickie flung his arms around Brenda's neck, gave her two resounding kisses—"one for Father Kissmus an' the fairies!"—wriggled under the bedclothes again, and screwed up his eyes.

With a sigh of relief Brenda settled down to keep watch, but as time passed—a quarter to seven, ten to seven—and he continued to murmur drowsily, suspense returned.

Five to seven! Alarmed now, she peered at him closely. Oh, thank goodness he had dropped off at last and was breathing evenly!

Gently arranging the bedclothes,

Brenda crept out of the room; but once outside, with the door shut, she simply flew.

As she tore towards her room the door opened and Veronica emerged, dressed in her outdoor clothes. Seeing Brenda, she hastened up.

"Oh, I've been looking for you, dear!" she said, smiling. "I do hope it won't make things awkward for you, but I'm awfully afraid you won't be able to get out to-night—"

"Not get out!" Brenda cried, in dismay. "Oh, but your mother said—"

"I know, dear. But I've been called out sooner than I expected, and aunt and uncle have already gone. It'll be all right to-morrow, though. But do excuse me, won't you? I must simply fly. Cheerio!"

And Veronica, with another smile, rushed off.

What a dismaying thing to happen! Veronica couldn't have struck her a more serious blow if she had wanted to. And then Brenda's eyes narrowed.

Wanted to? Golly, the thought took her breath away! But was it so fantastic, after all? Veronica's smiles just now had been rather strange, almost mocking and exultant. And she'd been hanging about in the passage when she fetched Dickie's broken toy from her room.

The vital drawing was in the same drawer as Tommy and Elly had been. She remembered making certain it was safe when getting the toy. But supposing Veronica had been spying? Supposing, suspicious, she had peeped through the keyhole, seen her at the drawer and decided to do some investigating?

"Oh, my goodness!" Brenda gasped to a sudden startling suspicion, dived into her room, and feverishly dragged out the drawer.

In five seconds her frantic searching ceased. White-faced and shaking, she recoiled, her every fear confirmed.

The paper had gone!

Ronald's Desperate Effort!

FIERCELY, frantically, Brenda shook off her stupor.

In three quick strides she was at the window. She pulled back the curtain. She stared down, and then her hands clenched.

There was Veronica, almost running

down the drive. Already she was half-way to the gates. In another half-minute she would be in the lane, out of sight bound for—

"That man!"—Brenda spoke through half-shut lips—"that man she was with at Miss Allen's. She's off to see him!"

Instinctively Brenda knew that much. But in utter bewilderment she shook her head. Why should Veronica steal that paper?

And that man. Who was he? What part did he play in all this?

Brenda snapped off those rioting, wandering thoughts. They did no more than puzzle her more than ever. And she could not stop to think. She must act—act as she had never acted before.

Forbidden to leave the house! That was her predicament. But she must ignore it. Unless she did leave the house and follow Veronica, Ronald would never see that vital paper, and that might mean complete disaster for all his mysterious efforts on behalf of her future happiness.

But if she left, what about Dickie? Brenda thought. Supposing he awakened? Oh, but there was always the housekeeper. Dickie was fond of her.

"She'd see he was all right," Brenda assured herself. "And—and I daren't stay another second!"

And she hurried from the house. No sign of Veronica on the drive. That girl had reached the lane, and when Brenda reached it, pausing to cast a swift, anxious look in both directions, she thought for the moment that her pursuit would be in vain.

No sign of Veronica to the left, or to the right. Ah, wait a moment! What was that—that shadow close to the hedge? It was moving. Yes, yes, it was a figure—a girl's figure!

"Now we'll see what happens," Brenda mused grimly, and, drawing a deep breath, she began to trail her young mistress, also keeping close to the hedge.

Veronica was making for the town, two miles away. She started at speed, but soon slackened, and Brenda, finding it simple to keep her in view, and at the same time prevent her own close presence being suspected, did some intent thinking.

What could she do if Veronica did meet her mysterious friend?

Scarcely demand the paper's return; scarcely trick Veronica into yielding it up. Indeed, it would be dangerous even to let Veronica know that she was on the trail.

"Just have to wait and see, that's all," Brenda decided.

In her heart, as she shadowed the girl who was her young employer, Brenda knew that she was fighting for herself to-night. Inexplicable though all the mystery was, puzzling and rather disturbing though it was to realise, as she had to now, that Veronica was actively working against her, of one thing she was absolutely certain.

It was her future which was at stake—her happiness!

Featheridge came into sight, roofs and church spires tinged with the grey of approaching night. Brenda, eyes never leaving Veronica's form, a hundred yards ahead, suddenly crouched behind a tree as the girl entered a telephone kiosk.

"Phoning!" Brenda murmured, watching. "To that man, I'll wager!"

Whoever Veronica was talking with, their conversation was brief and apparently excitable. Brenda saw the girl gesticulate, nod vigorously several

times, and then, snapping down the receiver, turn to the kiosk door.

Pressing herself flat against the tree, Brenda peered round.

Veronica, emerging from the kiosk, glanced at her watch, looked up and down the road, and then began to pace to and fro.

"Waiting," Brenda mused. Hope suddenly flooded her heart. "Golly, it's a chance!" she breathed excitedly. "I'll fetch Ronald—go to the spinney and bring him back here. He may be able to think of something. And if only we can get back before that man arrives—"

Brenda waited until Veronica's aimless, time-wasting sentry-go had turned the girl's back towards her, and then, ducking low, she dived across the road and through a gap in the hedge on the other side. Over the field beyond she raced.

Would Ronald still be waiting at the spinney for her?

A grotesque shape a quarter of a mile to the left caught Brenda's fleeting attention as she began to climb the slope leading to the dark patch of trees that marked the spinney.

The old mill—quaint and picturesque, with its one ruined sail extended against a background of sky, like some gigantic scarecrow.

Panting for breath, Brenda stumbled up the slope. She was half-way to the summit when a figure, emerging from the trees, stood silhouetted against the skyline.

Brenda's heart leaped.

"Ronald! Ronald!" she cried hoarsely. "Ronald! Quick—quick!"

Spurred into life, Ronald came leaping down the slope. Even as he reached Brenda, faltering, she pitched forward.

But he caught her, steadying her. "Brenda, old thing, take it easy," he said gently. "What ever's the matter?"

"That—that paper, Ronald!" Brenda panted. She clutched his arm. "It—it's been taken! Veronica—she found it—she's down there on the main road, waiting for—for that man—"

She flung out a trembling arm towards the road. Ronald, eyes widening with dismay, slowly turned in that direction; then, jerking round his head, he stared at her.

"Veronica? She's got that drawing?" he repeated in a tone of utter despair. "Oh, my gosh! But—but how did she get it? How did she know you'd found it? And you say she's waiting for that man now?"

"Yes. Oh, Ronald, come quickly! Surely there's something we can do to get it back! It—it is important?" she asked, almost as if she half-wished now that the paper did not mean very much to her, after all.

"Important?" Ronald said grimly. "My gosh! It's the most important thing we've struck. It may be the means of clearing everything up. That paper, Brenda, can—"

Abruptly he broke off, glancing at her keenly.

"Look here, we've got to move like lightning. If they guess what that paper means we'll be sunk! You're not properly fit again yet, old thing, so I'll dash on. You follow when you can—"

But Brenda vigorously shook her head.

"I—I'm all right, Ronald," she declared in a shaky voice that belied the assurance. "I'm coming with you."

Admiration showing on his purposeful face, Ronald tucked his arm under Brenda's, and off they went.

They reached the hedge some distance from the telephone kiosk. It was dark now, and as they cautiously

looked through they saw Veronica still engaged on her sentry-go.

"Still waiting," Ronald whispered, and then stiffened. "But—Look!" He grasped Brenda's wrist. "There he is—that fellow she was with. Quick!" He pointed to a large mound some way from the hedge. "Over there—and bob down behind it. I'll join you in a jiffy—I hope," he added, through his teeth.

"But what are you going to do, Ronald?" Brenda breathed.

"Wait until Veronica starts to hand her pal that drawing, and then do some pretty nifty intercepting. One little snatch ought to do the trick. Now then, off you go!"

Her heart pounding, every nerve strung up, Brenda crawled to the mound. As she dropped behind it Ronald stealthily moved to a spot opposite where Veronica and her friend had met.

Tensely Brenda looked over the top of the mound. In the light cast by the telephone kiosk she saw Veronica snap open her handbag, and, extracting a piece of paper, hold it out.

The mystery man with unconcealed eagerness reached to take it; but a fraction of a second before Ronald, his head averted, hurled himself through the hedge, and, with an athletic spring that took him to within a yard of the startled, stricken couple, made a snatch for the precious paper.

A Clue At Last!

WITH bewildering swiftness a number of things happened during the ensuing moments.

"Look out! The paper—quick!" came a shout of warning from the man, and he turned, lunging out with his fist at Ronald's hurtling form.

Veronica, screaming, tried to draw out of range, but Ronald was too smart. Dodging under the man's wild blow, he grabbed the paper, and then, bursting through the pair of them, dived for the opposite hedge.

"After him!" yelled the man, leaping forward. "You little fool, don't stand there gaping! Head him off! Quick—quick!"

But, to Brenda's palpitating delight,

Ronald, having got a clear start, showed his pursuers a clean pair of heels. True, they crashed through the hedge after him, but there was no catching the young fellow who had so audaciously frustrated them.

The trio disappeared from Brenda's view. Seconds went by. She could hear voices, the crackling of twigs, from the field opposite; and then, so unexpectedly that she gave a startled jump round, a breathless but very triumphant voice whispered close to her ear:

"Back again, old thing—with the spoils!"

"Ronald!" Brenda cried in delight. "They're still hunting for you. Listen!"

Listen they did—and they had to chuckle as the sounds continued from the distance, slowly becoming fainter.

"And I don't think they recognised me, either!" Ronald declared.

"Well, good old you!" Brenda said in relief. "But hadn't we better make ourselves scarce, just in case they come back?"

Ronald nodded. Leading the way across the field, he did not halt until they were beyond all sound of his pursuers; then, in the shelter of an old derelict tin-roofed shed which was minus one side, he examined the paper.

By now there was a bright moon, and, watching him in gathering suspense, Brenda saw his face darken with puzzlement.

"That's a book, old thing," he mused, pointing to one of the two crudely sketched objects; "and that thing's apparently some sort of building—but what sort of building I'm hanged if I know! What do you make of it?"

Brenda took the paper, but before studying it she regarded Ronald questioningly.

"A book?" she echoed. "I know it looked like one—and I'm ready to believe it is supposed to be one—but what has a book got to do with—well, with me? This is to do with me, isn't it?" she asked. And then, as Ronald gently nodded: "Well, then," she added, "what sort of book?"

"Little Miss Forgetful," Ronald chided her, "didn't I tell you that this paper was drawn years ago by



VERONICA opened her bag, took out a piece of paper and made to hand it to her mysterious friend. And then—Brenda's heart leapt—Ronald came leaping forward, hand outstretched.

Veronica, when she was a kid, and that it was her way of indicating where she had hidden one of her toys? O.K. Then that book was one of hers—some fairy-tale or something like that. And that," he concluded, stabbing a finger at the puzzling representation of a building, "is where she hid it!"

"And this kiddies' book will clear everything up—mean something to me?" Brenda said in amazement.

"Mean far more than you'd dream—far more than you'd ever believe, if I told you," was Ronald's extraordinary reply.

Nonplussed, Brenda shook her head. "Let's try to puzzle it out together," she urged. "Now look," she went on, as they bent over the drawings, "what's that supposed to be—that sort of bridge sticking out at one side, without another support?"

"Looks like the arm of a crane," Ronald frowned. "Can't be that, though. There weren't any cranes knocking about here when this was drawn."

He looked up from the paper and began to stare about him, while Brenda, brow furrowed, racked her brains. Time and again she thought of a solution, only to dismiss it as impracticable. And then, just when she was beginning to despair, she felt Ronald's hand on her arm.

"Brenda—look," he said, in a tense, vibrant voice.

He was pointing across the field. Brenda, staring in that direction, found herself gazing at that same conspicuous landmark which had attracted her attention on her way to the spinney.

"Why, the mill," she began, then drew in her breath. "Ronald!" she burst out. "My—my golly, you've got it! The mill—that's the place! It's got one arm, sticking out like a bridge with only one support. Oh, it must be it, Ronald, it must—"

"Of course it is. We've solved it. By jingo, what luck!" He took the paper from her, thrust it into his pocket and then looked at her with shining eyes. "Well—what are we waiting for?"

Brenda had forgotten the passage of time; forgotten that she was supposed to be at Fernbank; forgot everything in that supremely thrilling moment except that she and Ronald stood on the threshold of the most wonderful achievement of all—the finding of the vital book.

"Let's go!" she cried.

AND MEANWHILE, almost at exactly the same moment, Veronica and "Mr. Jones," as her mystery-friend chose to call himself, were engaged in a dramatic exchange of words some distance past the old mill.

Abandoning their hunt for the young fellow who had so daringly robbed them of the paper, they stopped, short of breath, frayed of temper. And then, looking at each other, they started:

"So it was Ronald Benson, after all," Veronica bit out savagely, and her eyes flickered with fear. "I'm sure of that now, even though he tried to hide his face. Ronald Benson—and her. Oh, my stars, it's what we were afraid of. He—he knows; perhaps she knows, too—"

Fiercely, Mr. Jones gnawed his underlip, silent for quite a while.

"It doesn't necessarily mean that, Veronica," he muttered at last, "but if it does we're sitting right on top of a pile of dynamite! There's no need for me to tell you what'll happen to us if our little game's rumbled."

"No," said Veronica.

"But we aren't bowled out yet," Mr.

Jones resumed. "And now we know who we're dealing with we can hit back—heavily. Veronica!" There was an imperative ring in his voice. "That fellow and girl have got to be stopped! You look after her; I'll find ways and means of dealing with him. But we'd better be careful just in case there's nothing in it."

"It's getting on my nerves," Veronica said shakily. "What could those drawings have meant?"

Mr. Jones, shook his head. He had not even seen the drawings; and Veronica's description was none too clear. Chagrined and disturbed in mind, they moved away over the field, unconsciously heading for the old mill.

Inside the mill, Brenda and Ronald were holding a debate.

It was almost pitch dark, and as luck would have it, neither of them had brought a torch. They had searched as much as possible, behind the miscellaneous collection of rubbish there—old tins, boxes, and heaps of broken wood-work from the mill itself—and in corners and crevices, but no sign of a book had been revealed.

A ladder, for use in climbing to the upper apartment through an open trap-door, lay length-wise on the floor along one wall. Ronald indicated its dark, shadowy outline.

"Care to try now—upstairs, I mean—or rather wait 'till we've got torches?" he asked.

Brenda, facing the open doorway, was considering, when her eyes filled with alarm and she grabbed his wrist. "Veronica and that man—coming here—look!"

Ronald swung. Clearly outlined in the moonlight were his two recent pursuers. Ronald thought swiftly, naturally concluding the only thing possible—that he and Brenda had been seen entering the mill, and were in danger of being caught.

"Ronald, what shall we do? Try to hide?" Brenda jerked, eyes still fixed upon the approaching girl and man.

"No," Ronald said quickly. "If they know we're here they'd only come and find us—or stay until we had to come out. No," he added, his chin setting. "There's just a chance we can trick them. They're talking; not looking this way. If we can slip out and round to the back—come on!"

In a frantic, helter-skelter rush, Brenda and Ronald made for the back of the mill. But just as they reached it, and began to breathe with relief, Ronald stumbled over a piece of fallen sail.

With a crash he measured his length, to spring up at once. But the damage was done. There sounded an excited shout from the man, and the sudden pounding of running feet.

"They're coming after us," Brenda gasped, when Ronald cut her short.

"All right. I know what to do. I'll show myself and try to get them to follow. Maybe they won't bother about you, and that'll give you a chance to slip away. If you want me to-morrow, you know where to phone. Cheerio, old thing." He seized her hand. "And keep smiling. We're nearly at the end of our journey now."

Then he had darted away from her; away from the mill; tearing across the moonlit field. Dropping to hands and knees, crouching close to the mill under its welcome shadow, Brenda saw Veronica and the man give chase, until all three disappeared from sight.

Only then did she straighten up and start to hurry off in another direction. She felt no qualms for Ronald's safety. Quick-witted, fleet of foot, young and

strong, he was more than capable of avoiding capture.

Reaching the main road, Brenda strode out, remembering all at once with dismay that she was absent from Fernbank in direct defiance of Veronica's orders. And the time—Oh, goodness! Ten past nine!

She broke into a jog-trot. The telephone-kiosk showed ahead. It drew nearer and nearer. She was practically abreast of it when—

In palpitating alarm she stopped, gripping her hands, and spun round as a cry came from behind her.

"There she is!"

And then she saw, on the other side of the hedge, the figure of a girl, pointing towards her; pointing and calling to a man who was sprinting across the field.

Veronica and her companion had got on her track.

Brenda sprinted along the road. Behind her, the man tore in chase. For a hundred yards Brenda ran, but her heart filled with utter despair, for she knew by the man's clattering feet that he was slowly overtaking her; that nothing could save her from capture; nothing—

A side turning loomed up on the left. Desperately Brenda dived down it. Twisting and turning, it took her along the bottom of the garden of a private house. The house was in darkness; the garden full of trees and shrubs, all kinds of cover for a fugitive.

Brenda, panting for breath, almost exhausted, scrambled through a gap in the hedge and simply hurled herself behind some shrubs.

There she lay, fervently hoping she hadn't been spotted. And slowly her spirits revived, for no one appeared down the lane; indeed, all sound of pursuit had ceased.

Brenda waited until she had recovered from her efforts, then slowly rose. Stealthily, she made for a gate farther along the hedge. But before she had taken five steps something fastened on to her arm, gripped it fiercely, and she was pulled to a stop.

"Very clever, my girl, but not quite clever enough," said an exultant voice. "And now you're coming with me!"

Brenda fought back the scream that rose to her throat. Trying to seem unafraid, defiant, she looked at the man who held her.

It was Mr. Jones.

"Let go of my arm!" she exclaimed. "You've no right to do this. Let me go—"

"Considering that this garden happens to belong to the house I am renting, and is therefore my property for the moment, I have every right," was the man's retort. "You're a trespasser! You've damaged my flowers! Trampled on my lawn seeds! And now I'm taking you to the house where you belong just to see what your employers have to say about it!" He sent her stumbling forward. "Now get going!" he rapped.

And while Brenda's heart went cold with horror at what would happen to her when Mr. and Mrs. Scholes heard this man's suitably exaggerated story, she was forced across the garden, through the gate, and along the road! If she was dismissed from Fernbank, all her chances of solving the mystery surrounding her would be gone, too!

AN unexpected and disastrous happening for Brenda. What will the Scholes say? And what of her quest for the vital book now? You'll be thrilled by next Saturday's instalment.

Another superb COMPLETE story featuring that most unusual but most attractive girl—

KIT OF RED RANCH



"GOLD—gold!" The Old-Timer had found it at last. Everyone thought so, even Kit—until she learned to her dismay that it was all a terrible mistake. And then Kit set to and tried to make the old man's dream come true, after all.

Just an Old-Timer, But—

"HEY, what's the big laugh I'm missing, boys? When there's fun around, I certainly want to be mixed right up in it."

And Kit Hartley, dropping the woollen waistcoat she was knitting for her dad, swung over the window-sill of the parlour window at Red Ranch, and ran towards the group of laughing cowboys who stood in the roadway.

"What's doin', Jem?" she asked a young cow-puncher.

Her words were drowned by the bark of a six-shooter that spat flame. A bullet whistled; a yelp of surprise followed, and then roars of laughter from the boys.

But the smile froze on Kit's lips as she looked down the road to the spot whence the startled yelp had come.

In the roadway, the cause of the boys' merriment, was a quaintly dressed old man, white-haired, bent-backed. His battered hat was several shades of green; his suit was patched in more places than not; his boots were tied with string; yet shining from all that shabbiness were his white-whiskered, apple-cheeked face, and clear blue eyes. "Gee!" said Kit indignantly. "Which of you mighty heroes took a plug at the old feller? Who fired that shot?"

She looked from the old man to the surprised cowboys, and her eyes blazed with anger.

The boys, looking a little sheepish, did not meet her eyes; but as Kit turned to go to the old man, who shook his fist at them, a surly puncher named Darrel Lamoine spoke up.

"I fired th' shot," he sneered. "I shot to miss, and I missed. He jes' nacherly dropped that tin-can dump he totes around on his back. I didn't shoot it from him."

But Kit paid no heed to him. She

ran down the road to the old man, who was stooping to pick up the scattered contents of the sack he had been carrying on his back.

"Here, let me give you a hand, pard," said Kit breezily. "Gee, cans, and pans, and knives and forks. The whole works, eh?" she said, as she gathered things up and put them in the sack.

The old man met Kit's kindly eyes, and gave a slow smile.

"You're very kind to a pore old fool, lassie," he said.

"Poor old fool?" asked Kit lightly. "They say an old fool's better than a young fool—and that's me for one, and that whole bunch of big, brave, gun-shooting boys for others."

She packed the sack with the oddments, and a glance at the tools the old man carried was enough to tell Kit what he was—a pan-handler, an old man who spent his life hoping to strike gold.

The Old-Timer swung the sack on to his back, and there was a flickering smile on his lips.

"It's done me good, meetin' you; but don't get sore with the boys," he said gently. "Reckon I must be a pretty funny sight. And mebbe even a monkey on a stick don't look so funny as the Old-Timer skipping up, when a bullet snicks past."

He touched her hand, giving it a pat, and Kit felt a lump rise in her throat. "I'll be seein' yer," she said. "Mebbe—mebbe I'll come along and give you a hand, digging or pan-handlin'."

She stood back, forcing a smile as the old man gallantly doffed his shabby hat and gave his bent back an extra bow in a manner no French courtier could have bettered.

Kit stood watching him down the road, his worn, string-tied boots kicking

the dust, until only the top of his green battered hat could be seen. Then, with a sigh she turned back and was suddenly aware that the boys were still there, in a silent group.

"Well, boys," she exclaimed, "the laff's over, the Old-Timer's gone." Then her tone of raillery changed to a sharper note. "He's gone," she flashed. "But he'll be this way again. And next time he's along I'm taking my hat off to a man who's got the grit to keep hopin'—yes, and workin'."

Only Lamoine gave a jeering laugh.

"Mebbe you'll go workin' along with him, and strike it rich together," he said, twisting his face into an elaborate wink.

Kit saw their grins, and did not pause to think.

"You've guessed it; it's jest what I am doin'," she said. "From now on he's my pard."

A roar of genuine laughter came from the boys, and Kit, her face crimsoning, turned away to the ranch.

"Gee, I said a fool thing then," she told herself dismally. "Strike gold here? It'd take a thousand years."

But Kit, even when she spoke in haste, never drew back from what she said. And straightway she swung round to the back of the house and told the Chinese cook that there'd be an extra one for dinner.

That extra one would be her new pard, the Old-Timer.

KIT, TWENTY minutes later, sat on the box of the one-hoss shay pulled by Daisy, the horse, on her way to the small town.

But presently, drawing rein, she opened her mouth, and, using her finger, gave a Redskin call.

There was only a moment's pause and then an answering call came, and down from the high ground, slithering, sliding, springing, came a pretty Redskin girl, her dark eyes shining with pleasure.

"Lo, Redwing," Kit said. "Lo, Miss Kit," breathed the Redskin girl, as she danced up to the shay.

"Well, hop aboard," smiled Kit. "We're goin' places. Goin' shopping." "Buy pretty frocks?" asked Redwing eagerly.

"No; I'm going to buy ragged, shabby men's clothes, if there's a place to get them," said Kit. "You know the Old-Timer, the pan-handler man with white hair?"

Redwing nodded her sleek, black-haired head.

"Know him, yes," she said. "You buy him more clothes?"

Kit chuckled.

By

Elizabeth Chester

"No, Redwing my pet. I'm going to buy some nice old clothes for Darrel and Jem and a few of the boys who like a laff. I'm getting a smart kit-bag with strong cords for the Old-Timer. And gee! Don't I wish he could strike it rich!"

Reaching the small town, she tethered Daisy to a post, just in case, as she said, the post tried to get away.

From the general store she bought a kit-bag, and then ambled Daisy along to an old junk store at the far end of the town, where she selected some ragged garments and battered hats. Smiling to herself, she returned to the ranch, and put them in a shed.

Ten minutes later, with Redwing beside her, she was in sight of the creek, where the Old-Timer stood sifting a pan, seeking gold.

Kit strolled forward, swinging the kit-bag.

"How're you doin'?" she asked.

He gave a quick start, smiled at her, and doffed his old hat.

"Peggin' away," he said, and then,

Seeing the kit-bag and realising that it was for him, he coloured and tapped Kit's arm pettingly. "That was a thought from the heart," he murmured.

"Thought it might save my back stoopin' and picking up cans and bits and pieces," said Kit lightly. "Oh, an' by the way, there's dinner awaitin' you at the ranch if so be you'd care to come along and join in!"

The Old-Timer brushed back his hat and wrinkled his brow.

"Mighty kind!" he said huskily.

"We'll be seein' yer, then," said Kit, looking round for Redwing, who had vanished.

She walked away, calling, and then heard the little Redskin's pattering steps. Redwing, breathing hard from running, came into view, and Kit saw that her eyes had a sparkle.

"Hallo, what have you been up to?" smiled Kit.

"Jus' lookin' around," said Redwing. "Silly Redskin girl tought mebbe see lump gold some place."

Kit laughed.

"Silly's right, papoose," she said.

Redwing smiled to herself in a mysterious way as though at secret thoughts.

"Old-Timer find gold be happy—and make Kit happy, too?" she asked.

"Make me happy? Gee—wouldn't it just?" said Kit.

Redwing nodded, walked on with Kit, and then stooped to refix her sandal. Waiting until Kit crossed the ridge, Redwing turned back, tiptoed towards the Old-Timer, moving as softly as a snake, and then rolled towards his heap of sifted silt a pebble that glistened yellowish in the sunlight.

Then, dancing, she rejoined Kit, and together they rode back to the ranch, where Redwing, who did not think Kit's dad approved of her as his daughter's friend, slipped away. Kit, handing Daisy over to the boy, ran to greet her dad as he came from the ranch-house.

"Hey! Kit, who's the guest?" he asked, frowning.

"Jes' a pal, dad," she smiled. "A dear old man, a pan-handling Old-Timer who could do with a good-sized filling meal."

Her dad's brow darkened.

"Get this, Kit," she said. "I'll tolerate a lot of things, but when it comes to pan-handling, good-for-nothing, wastrel Old-Timers, I'm drawing a line. That old foolzer doesn't put a foot across this ranch threshold!"

Kit drew up.

"Mebbe I've done the wrong thing, but I've asked him," she said, with a faint smile. "The deed's done, dad!"

His answer was curter than usual.

"It had better be undone. That Old-Timer is just a butt. We don't want the boys looking through the windows and shyn' things. He's a hobo, that's all!"

"But, dad—" Kit began, and then broke off as there came a shout from down the road.

Turning, she saw the Old-Timer fairly galloping into view, waving his green hat in the air, shouting and laughing.

"Gold! Gold!" he yelled. "I've struck it—found it—at last!"

Redwing's Secret!

"GOLD!" The Old-Timer's yell awoke the echoes. The boys were riding in for their meal and unsaddling their mounts. Close on a score of them were in earshot, and they all ran forward, raising a hilarious cheer.

"He's found a chunk of clay, boys."

"I'll lay it's a brass bed-knob!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kit, her heart thumping, ran to the road, desperately anxious that the Old-Timer should not make a fool of himself.

"Let me see," she said anxiously, reaching the old fellow.

His eyes might not be so good, she thought, and he might think that what he had found—

Kit took the gleaming pebble of jagged metal in her hand, stared at it closely, and then handed it back to him.

"My golly, it's gold!" she said huskily. "You've struck it!"

Then she spun round, waving her arms.

"Stand back, everyone! It's a little bit of gold that'll easily get lost. It's a little, but that's the way they built Rome. They started with one brick."

There was silence as the boys

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

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—Some time ago, you may recall, I mentioned that my niece, Claudine, and I intended to visit a fair during Whitsun. I also promised to tell you what happened. Well, we duly went to a fair; and we had quite a memorable time, which is only what I have come to expect from outings arranged and conducted by "Let-me-show-you-how-it's-done" Claudine.

It was a lovely fair, with roundabouts, helter-skelters, swings, shooting galleries, hoop-la, dart stalls, and an absolute bedlam of noise.

"Come on, uncle!" Claudine shrieked, as soon as we had pushed through the crowds to a fairly deserted spot. "That roundabout—on you get!"

And, being Claudine, she gave me no chance to demur but just dragged me there by one hand. Not that I would have demurred, in any case; I was always partial to roundabouts.

Well, to cut a long story short, we sampled pretty well everything, and had a thoroughly enjoyable time. I managed to win a one-handed clock at a shooting gallery, and an enormous Baby Giant Pagoda—if you can sort that out—through throwing some remarkably accurate darts at rows of playing cards, and then—

Claudine's face assumed a rather petulant look.

"You have all the luck, uncle," she murmured. "My darts went just anywhere, and I'm sure that rifle I used wasn't straight. Wish there was a coconut-shy," she added, peering about her on tiptoes. "Now, I'm awfully good at hitting coconuts. Why! Oh, uncle, look! Over there! Three cheers!"

And off Claudine rushed, struggling through the throng of people to a

coconut-shy. Buying six balls, she turned to me with a knowing smile, and gently waved me to stand clear.

"You watch, uncle!" she cried. "I used to be quite an expert at school—five coconuts with six shots, you know. You're not the only one who can get prizes!"

Claudine was perfectly right—I wasn't. For she "got" two prizes with her very first shot, only not in the way she intended. She "got" them fair and square amidships—a couple of gaudy china ornaments—the ball rebounding from one to the other, and reducing them to a mass of smithereens.

There were two appalling crashes, a bellow of fury from the attendant, a startled gasp from Claudine, a smile from Your Editor, which changed to a look of genuine concern, and a roar of laughter from the spectators.

Claudine, dropping the rest of her ammunition, fumbled for her handbag.

"How—how much?" was the gist of her stammered remarks.

As a matter of fact, I paid for those ornaments. It was worth it to have seen Claudine's face—and I always did like seeing things fly into pieces.

And now—goodness me!—I simply must tell you about next Saturday's wonderful story programme before all my space is gone.

"JEMIMA AND THE CHINESE PAGODA!"

is the title of the magnificent Cliff House School Story, and I do not think I need say much more than that it deals with a thrilling, unusual mystery, in which Jemima Carstairs, complete with monocle and puzzling little mannerisms, is involved in the most intriguing way. Naturally, in addition to their strange Fourth Form chum, Barbara Redfern and all your other favourites are well to the fore, and there's plenty of excitement, so don't miss it, whatever you do.

There will also be another superb instalment of "Brenda's Task of Mystery," another grand story of Kit and Redwing, and more of Patricia's Bright and Useful Pages. Until next week, then—bye-bye, all of you.

With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

crowded round, and the Old-Timer, who could not stop smiling, held out his hand flat towards Kit's dad, who looked at the precious fragment on it.

"Well, dad?" said Kit. "It's gold, isn't it?"

"Gold," said her dad with a whistle. "By hokee, it's gold—the real stuff! And spee though this is, I'll say it's worth a hundred dollars!"

Grinning, the Old-Timer held it out to Kit.

"Reckon it's lucky for a lady to take the first finding," he said. "And none of us'll ever meet anyone ladier than you, miss. It's yours."

But Kit, touched though she felt, shook her head.

"Yours," she reproved. "I'm not taking it."

The Old-Timer looked at Mr. Hartley.

"A hundred dollars, mister?" he asked. "It's yours."

Kit saw her father hesitate, even though he had the ready cash, and her eyes glimmered as her girlish wits came to the fore to aid the Old-Timer, who clearly wanted the dollars.

"Dad don't really know the worth of a bit of gold," she said.

GRIPPING the dismayed Redwing by the shoulder, and glaring at Kit, Lamoine pointed to the ground.

"So that's how the Old-Timer got his gold, huh?" he said harshly.

"This Injun trickster's been behind it all the time!"

"Me? I know the weight and worth of gold!" said her dad huffily. "Get my wallet, and I'll pay over the hundred right now."

Willingly enough, Kit fetched his wallet, and the Old-Timer counted the ten-dollar bills with trembling fingers.

"If dinner's not for a while," he said to Kit, "I'll be going into town. When I dine out, I like to dress the part."

Kit ran for the shay, harnessed Daisy herself, jumped up, and called the Old-Timer to clamber up beside her. Then, singing and laughing, she urged Daisy along.

"Oh, dandy, dandy!" she chirped, and looked back at the silent, muttering, puzzled cowpunchers. "Old-Timer, for the las' time lift that green hat to them."

Blowing kisses, Kit made for the town, slowing on the way to send a call to Redwing, who came running into view at once.

"Redwing, we've hit it—struck gold!" Kit cried.

Redwing smiled.

"You pleased?" she asked.

"Me skipping over the sky with glee," said Kit. "And look at the pan-handler! He's twenty years younger! Come on, then! Jump aboard!"

They reached the town in good time, and the pan-handler rushed off—first to the barber, to be well shaved and trimmed, and then to the clothes store

for a ready-made suit, snappy grey Derby, and yellow shoes.

Kit waited with Redwing, hardly able to bear the suspense.

"And this is just the start. This afternoon more gold, to-morrow more; always more, more!" she sighed. "That's the way it is once you strike, Redwing."

Then Kit saw that the little Redskin girl looked rather frightened and worried.

"Gee! What is it, Redwing?" asked Kit, genuinely concerned. "What's bitin' you?"

Redwing tried to speak twice; then she blurted it out.

"Oh, Miss Kit, silly, bad Redskin not understand. Old-Timer find one bit gold. Old-Timer find bit gold Redwing put close along him when you turn 'way."

Kit stood stock-still, as though she had been struck a blow. She opened

her mouth voicelessly, closed it, and stared fixedly at Redwing, who had tears on her cheeks as she clutched at Kit's hand.

"Not cross?" she asked pathetically.

"Redwing," choked Kit, "I've got to get this straight. You put that nugget where it was found?"

Redwing nodded.

"Thought make Miss Kit happy, Old-Timer happy."

It was easy enough for Kit to see how the Redskin's simple mind had worked. Redwing had not foreseen the consequences; she hadn't realised that everyone would think there was a vein of gold there; she had thought only of the joy of the old man's finding the nugget.

"But just a minute!" said Kit slowly, frowning. "Where did you get a bit of gold worth a hundred dollars?"

Redwing did not speak, but there was a pallor to her copper skin.

"Redwing," breathed Kit, "you—you didn't—you couldn't steal. No, of course not!" she corrected herself, and then turned as there was a cheer from the store.

The Old-Timer had emerged. He was wearing a light grey suit, the yellow shoes and grey Derby, a blue tie, and smoking a cigar. He was in the money, and there was something about him in these clothes that was quite impressive.

"Gee, there's a big show-down coming!" muttered Kit, setting her chin. "But we've got to face it, Redwing. What you did, you sure did for the best, but it was mighty unfortunate."

She tweaked Redwing's ear, and made as light as she could of it, for there was no use crying over spilled milk.

"Howd' I look?" he asked shyly.

"Swell!" said Kit wistfully.

"Reckon I fancied so as well," the old man declared, as he hauled himself on board.

They were home in next to no time, and the cowboys at once slung the Old-Timer in the air.

"There he goes, Redwing," said Kit, shaking her head. "And we've got to break the news to him, or else—"

"Or else?" said Redwing heavily.

Kit looked her squarely in the face.



"Where did you get that nugget? Can you get another?"

The Redskin held Kit's gaze.

"Miss Kit, Redwing love you! But Redwing promise never, never tell place of gold. Long time back, many moons, Big Chief Shining Water head many braves, many hundred horses. White man come search, dig gold. Kill Redskins, shoot Redskins. Big Chief Shining Water bow head; say gold bad stuff. He tell son. Son tell his son. One day son have only daughter—Redwing. Redwing know. Never, never tell."

Kit nearly collapsed. Then she took Redwing by the shoulder.

"Redwing, you know where there's a gold-mine—gold lying practically on top of the earth, and you're keeping it under your hat?" she asked. "Gee! Are you crazy? Just because your great-grandfather got sore with pan-handlers— Why, it's ancient history."

Redwing clasped her hands, and looked up in agonised appeal.

"Redwing swear by totem not tell," she said.

Then, without another word, she darted off, and did not stop running until she was out of the compound, out of sight.

"I reckon if she promised, she promised," said Kit, frowning. "And I'm not going to make her break her promise. Only—"

Then she clapped her hands as an idea jumped to her mind:

Finding that the boys were at dinner, she slipped to their quarters where they

had hung their swagger jackets, hats, and scarfs, whipped them from their pegs, and replaced them with the hobo rubbish from the dump.

That done, she went in to dinner, to find her father and the Old-Timer waiting, while they talked of big mines they had heard of that had been worth a million dollars.

Dinner over, the Old-Timer got ready for the trail with a new outfit, red shirt, breeches and boots, and a more respectable sombrero. In all his glory he saw a score of infuriated cow-punchers, waving ragged jackets and battered hats. And not finding their own hats or jackets, they had to wear what they found.

The fun over, Kit and the miner went to the creek to work, with half a dozen of the boys to watch. An hour passed, and the pan-handling produced nothing. While the boys joked, Kit stole away, trying to find the path Redwing had taken that morning.

"Gold—and only a matter of yards away," Kit murmured. "But it's Redwing's mine just as surely as if she'd staked a claim."

Standing still, Kit listened. Presently the soft sounds of movement came to her. "Redwing!" A minute later she saw the Redskin girl moving through the trees beyond the dip of the creek where the Old-Timer worked.

"Up here, then," Kit decided.

Before she could act further a shout rose on the air:

"Hey! Hold that Redskin girl, I saw her plop a nugget in the creek!"

Claim-Jumper!

Kit's heart went cold. That was Lamoine's voice! "Oh gee!" she gasped, and ran like the wind.

When she reached the scene she saw Lamoine holding Redwing by the nape of the neck.

"Hey! Let her free!" cried Kit

angrily. "Take your thick fingers from her neck, Darrel!"

"Can it!" Darrel Lamoine snapped. "This is a ramp. There's no gold-mine here. This Old-Timer's twinking a racket. The Redskin gel drops in the nugget, and he pulls it out."

"Let her go!" snapped Kit, striding forward.

Lamoine released Redwing, who rubbed her neck and dodged to Kit's side. But the boys had heard, and came crowding forward. The old miner had heard, too, and, shuffling forward, he stared from Redwing to Lamoine.

"Reckon someone's been having a little fun," he said dryly. "Is it true you dropped in a nugget, Redskin?"

Redwing looked down at the ground guiltily, spurning soft earth with her foot.

"Gee, Old-Timer, I'm sorry," said Kit from her heart. "But it was no joke. She had the nuggets, and—well, she's a nugget herself. She wanted to see you happy, and she didn't look into the middle distance to see what would happen next. That's all."

The miner smiled wanly and dropped his pan.

He turned back to the water, went to his stool, and sat down, looking into the water of the creek. Some of the boys grinned. One thumped him on the back. Another reckoned the Redskin girl needed a wiggling for her mean trick.

Redwing turned and ran; but Kit was on her heels and caught her at the top of the rise.

"Redwing, steady," she said. "Remember that promise. Don't go doing something you'll be sorry for when it can't be undone."

"Miss Kit," Redwing murmured wretchedly. "Old-Timer got broken heart. I know."

She wandered on, and Kit followed her. Reaching a small, dried-up creek, she walked across it to and fro, looking slantwise at Kit, until something in her manner struck Kit as being odd.

"Redwing," said Kit suddenly. "go along and tell the Old-Timer you're sorry but you meant it well."

The Redskin girl nodded and turned, and Kit, waiting until she was gone from sight, dropped to her knees by the creek.

"Redwing, you're gold yourself," she breathed. "You stood around here, saying nothing, just looking down and walking to and fro because you wanted me to learn your secret without telling me yourself."

Kit put her arm down into the creek and groped with her finger-tips. Raising her hand, she looked at what she held—a small chunk of earth. But in the earth here and there was a glint! Excitedly she turned, then nearly collapsed. For a yard from her stood Lamoine, his eyes on her hand!

"Say," he gaped, "so that's it! So that's where the Redskin got it, and the claim's not pegged out. It's—"

He said no more, but turned and ran helter-skelter for a horse, leaping astride it and thundering off, to stake a claim.

Kit ran down the grade to where Redwing was apoligising to the miner.

"Old-Timer—pard," she said, "I've got an idea. I've got an idea we want a new gush of water. There's a dried-up little creek ahead that'd give new life if we could get the water gushing through it."

She rushed back with the pick, and,

slinging it over her head, smacked it down to pierce the bridge of earth that concealed the flowing water below.

Her hands were sore, her fingers were blistered, by the time the old miner, wondering what she was doing, joined her and took over.

Kit ran down to the lower creek and waited until the first rush of water gushed through the dried-up section. Down it came, washing into her sieve.

A moment later her voice broke out in a yell.

"Gold!"

The gold was washing down. Henceforth the silt would be gold-bearing! And Kit, rushing back, flung her arms round the Old-Timer's neck as she showed him her find.

"Gold! It's gold this time!" he choked.

"Gee, you're made!" said Kit happily.

"We're made, you mean, lass; but it'll be slow work. And, what's more, the bit above there's beyond my claim, and I reckon the gold's washing down from there," he frowned.

"And that means?" asked Kit uneasily.

"The staker of that claim above can cut off the running water—an' the gold—when he pleases," grunted the miner. Kit gritted her teeth.

"Darrel; he rode with fire in his horse's hoofs, the two-timer! Before he can be caught, taking the short cut through the Saddle Pass, he'll have made the claim."

But the Old-Timer leaped for the nearest horse, and though he had not ridden for years, and was bumped and bounced, he made it tear off at break-neck speed!

It was hours later, when Kit and Redwing were taking a breather from their labour at the sieve, aided now and again by her dad, that Darrel reined up, dust-covered, his horse all in and flecked with foam.

"Well?" said the Kit. "You made it? You're a millionaire now?"

But he had a black look that told her the opposite.

"Aw, shucks! I found the Old-Timer leading the horse, or the horse leading him on me way back!" scowled Darrel. "There ain't no stake to claim. It's been claimed since the back ages. Claimed by a dead Redskin chief by the monniker Shining Water, for him and his heirs. Who's to know who's the heir of a forgotten Redskin chief?"

Redwing sat at the water's edge, drumming her fingers on the sieve.

"Shining Water seems kind of fitting," murmured Kit. "It's the shine of gold all right. And s'long as the heirs of Shining Water don't kick, it looks like the Old-Timer can take the golden shine out of the water all day long."

Redwing, last in descent of Big Chief Shining Water, drummed more faintly on the sieve, eyes shining proudly.

"Reckon you kept your promise, Redwing," said Kit softly. "There may be half a ton of gold somewhere below there, and it's yours when you want it."

Redwing smiled.

"Old-Timer have much as he like. Old-Timer sing—he happy!"

And the Old-Timer—not to mention Kit herself—certainly was!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

THERE will be another lovely Kit story in next week's SCHOOLGIRL, so be sure to order your copy well in advance, won't you?



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