

Marjorie Wheeler

MEET VALERIE DREW the famous girl detective and FLASH her clever Alsatian dog INSIDE

THE SCHOOLGIRL

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Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



"YOU TRICKSTERS!"
DIANA BLAZED.
"YOU'VE BOUGHT UP ALL
THOSE PICNIC BOXES!"
But Babs & Co. merely smiled.
They'd outwitted the Firebrand's
plot to disgrace their friend.
(See this week's grand story of
the Cliff House girls on holiday.)

Superb COMPLETE story featuring the famous Cliff House Chums on their summer vacation—



Enter—Diana!



"**M**UST have a girl who's pretty," Barbara Redfern said, a very thoughtful look in her blue eyes.

"Oh, yes, rather!" plumped Bessie Bunter approvingly. "I was going to suggest, Babs, that—"

"She must have personality," Mabel Lynn put in.

"Of kik-course!" Bessie stammered eagerly. "And I know—"

But there the plump one broke off, for Barbara—known to all her chums as "Babs"—had very firmly placed a hand over her lips.

"Now, listen, Bessie, please!" she pleaded. "Just be quiet for a moment, and don't keep butting in. This is important. You can have your say in a moment."

Bessie subsided, blinking impatiently. Babs looked round the girls gathered together in Chalet No. 13 at Pinebay Holiday Camp. They were all chums of hers, and, with one exception, they were all from the Fourth Form at Cliff House School. Mabs and Bessie, in fact, shared the same study with Babs.

Now they were on summer vacation, and having a simply marvellous time at the holiday camp. Perhaps it was a trifle odd to find them all gathered together indoors on such a marvellous day; but then there were big things to discuss, and Babs, as their leader, had called a meeting.

"Now old Bess has consented to remain quiet for a bit," Babs commenced again, "we'll proceed. The question is, of course, who's going to be our beauty queen in the carnival?"

"Well, Babs, why not you?" asked

Lorna Bayford, a friend the chums had made at the camp.

Babs, however, shook her head, a slight flush coming to her very pretty features.

"Thanks, Lorna, but nothing doing. In any case, I'm going to be jolly busy attending to decorations and other things."

"What about Mabs?" suggested Tom-boy Clara Trevlyn.

"Well, I thought of Mabs, but she won't take it," said Babs, glancing at her fair-haired chum. "She says she's too busy with the producing of our stunt."

"Guess we're not going to find this beauty queen business easy," remarked Leila Carroll, the American junior, who

Wasn't this just like the dear old plump duffer?

"Well, what? Must say there's a lot of you," Leila Carroll considered gravely.

"Oh, really, Leila," protested Bessie, "don't try to be funny! As the cleverest, the prettiest, the most attractive girl in this camp—"

"To say nothing," chuckled Clara Trevlyn, "of the biggest duffer, and the most conceited ninny, and the hungriest chump! No go, old Fatima. This is a serious business. What we want—"

"Look here—" hooted Bessie indignantly.

"What we want," put in Mabel Lynn thoughtfully, "is a girl like Diana Royston-Clarke."

There was a little murmur at that from all the girls except Lorna Bayford, who did not know Diana.

That was natural enough, for Diana, that wonderfully pretty, lordly girl of their own Form at Cliff House School, was not at the camp.

"Diana!" murmured Babs. "Yes, but—she shook her head—"Diana's holidaymaking abroad, isn't she?"

"Believe she is," Clara Trevlyn nodded. "In any case, I'm not so sure that I'd be too happy with Diana as our queen. That girl gets my goat with her snootiness. She always thinks she's so jolly superior."

Babs smiled a little. Clara, as usual, was speaking in her blunt way, but there was truth in what she said. One could never be sure of Diana. A strange mixture of good and bad was the Firebrand of the Fourth Form.

"Di can be awkward," she admitted, "but you can't get away from the fact that she'd fit this part marvellous. Still—she shrugged—"it's no good chattering about a girl who's miles away. We've got to find someone nearer home."

And nearer home, in Pinebay

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

was standing between Janet Jordan and an Eton-cropped girl with a monocle, Gemima Carstairs.

"But what about—" burst out plump Bessie Bunter.

"Oh golly, Bess, you starting again!" chuckled Babs. "Can't you see that this is serious?"

"Well, I'm serious, too," retorted the plump duffer, glowering through her thick spectacles. "Jolly serious! Now," she said importantly, "you want a queen who's jolly pretty, with pup-personality?"

"Absolutely!" beamed Gemima Carstairs. "So what, my dear old plump one?"

"Well, then," said Bessie breathlessly, "what about me?"

All eyes turned upon the plump figure of Bessie. There were faint chuckles.

at Pinebay Holiday Camp, and introducing that amazing character, Diana Royston-Clarke.



SEASIDE FEUD

with the FIREBRAND!

Holiday Camp, meant Row H, commonly known as the Blue Chalets, owing to the uniform colour of the roofs which covered the cosy and pretty little chalets.

In Pinebay Holiday Camp the great camp carnival was taking place at the end of the week, and Babs & Co., prime movers in all activities which concerned the Blues, had been voted as a committee to make the necessary arrangements.

There was to be a great procession, followed by a concert in the afternoon. That was to be followed by a battle of flowers after tea and a great torchlight banquet, followed in turn by a glorious display of fireworks. And there were to be prizes—oh, such a heap of prizes!

But each row had also to produce its own beauty queen, and during the festivities in the evening those beauty queens would be judged by Ivy Overbee, the famous society hostess, who was coming down specially for the occasion.

Who, then, was to be that beauty queen?

Babs might have filled the bill, for Babs was exceedingly pretty, with her deep violet-blue eyes and her curly chestnut hair. Golden-haired Mabs might have filled it, for Mabs was also pretty in a slightly less colourful way than Babs.

But Babs was busy with the organisation of the whole affair. Mabs was exceedingly busy attending to the entertainment part of the programme—and great strides they had made already in both those departments. For it was Babs' idea to have a decorated Roman chariot, followed by a procession of Roman soldiers, Roman ladies, and ancient British slaves. That fitted in

marvellously with the history of the district, in which had once stood a Roman town.

"Looks," Babs said, staring round, "as if we're no more forrader than when we started. We haven't got a Diana—"

"No? Who says?" put in a quick, breathless voice at the door, and Marjorie Hazeldene, who had been along to the camp shop to buy some wool, stepped in. "Babs, she's here!"

Babs stared at the eighth member of the Cliff House party.

"Who's here?"

Marjorie laughed, sharing their own enthusiasm and excitement. Out of the chalet they all poured, all bubbling now.

A scene of hilarity and gaiety met their eyes. Everywhere people were hanging decorations and fixing fairy lights for the great day; everywhere, it seemed, others were rehearsing; still others were feverishly working at some item of dress and props.

Already the spirit of carnival was abroad.

"This way," Marjorie cried, "and—I say, there she is!"

Like a bolt from the blue, Diana Royston-Clarke descended upon Pinebay Holiday Camp. At first, Babs & Co. welcomed her. But when the Firebrand decided that she should be Queen of the Camp Carnival, she crossed the chums' path. From that moment onwards there was a bitter feud between them, with the happiness of two other girls at stake

"Diana!"

They all jumped.

"Marjorie, no."

"I've just seen her—in Row J. Oh, it's Diana all right! She must have arrived this morning."

Babs whooped.

Diana—here! Diana, their own loftily overpowering Firebrand of the Fourth Form at Cliff House—just bobbing up the very moment they wanted her most badly!

"Marjie, lead the way!" Babs cried. "Come on, everybody! It'll tickle Di to death when we ask her to be our beauty queen!"

Babs & Co. paused. They had reached Row J now, and outside one of the red-roofed chalets which formed that row five girls were standing in a group. They were all extremely smartly dressed, and all, with one exception, older than Babs & Co. But it was the exception which made Babs & Co. pause.

For the exception was Diana Royston-Clarke, from their own Form at Cliff House. And what a picture Diana at this moment presented!

Pretty Diana was—radiantly pretty. Her cream-and-rose complexion was untouched by the sun. On those natural

4 "Their Seaside Feud with the Firebrand!"

blonde waves of here, which were Diana's chief beauty, was perched a hat with a wide, sweeping brim that would have looked ridiculous on any other schoolgirl of her age.

But, being on Diana, it just fitted in perfectly with the rest of her ensemble, which was a flowing dress, beneath which the pointed toes of Diana's very neat feet peered through open sandal work of Diana's new Paris shoes.

In one hand she twirled with careless grace a gleaming silk parasol made of the same material as her dress. Diana could afford to dress well, thanks to a wealthy and adoring father.

As always on these occasions, Diana looked older than she was. It was one of Diana's weaknesses to make herself look eighteen, and to seek the company of older girls than herself.

"Oh, isn't it a marvellous frock?" Marjorie Hazeldene breathed.

Diana was waving her parasol. "And I tell you—" she said, then spotted her chums. "Oh, yoicks, you kids!" she exclaimed. "Look here—"

"Kid yourself!" retorted Clara Trevlyn cheerily. "I say, thought you were abroad?"

"And so," Diana said loftily, "I was! But I've come down here specially for the carnival. You didn't know, did you, that my father has a big financial interest in this camp? And, naturally, he wants me to help pep things up a bit. These are my friends, all daughters of the directorial board which runs the camp. But buzz off now, kids! I'm talking!"

"Shucks, listen to mamma!" Leila Carroll murmured. "Is it very important?" she queried aloud.

"Not particularly," one of the older girls said. "But, I say, are you from Diana's school?"

"What-ho! And all in the same merry old Form," Jemima Carstairs agreed, "except Lorna Bayford here! She's a friend we've made in the camp. Babs here is our jolly old leader, and at Cliff House she's also captain of the Fourth Form."

"Fourth?" one of the older girls said, staring, and looked quickly at Diana. "But—but, Diana, you told us you were in the Sixth!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Clara. Diana's face turned crimson.

"You girls would come and give the game away!" she cried bitterly. "Oh, clear off, you kids!"

"Half a second!" the girl who had spoken first said now. "Diana, how old are you, really?"

"What's that got to do with it?" Diana flamed.

The older girls gazed at each other. The Cliff House chums looked grim. Just for a flash contempt showed in their faces. Why should Diana, meeting strangers, always try to make out that she was older than her near fifteen years?

"You told us," the first girl said, "that you were eighteen, Diana!"

"Did I? Well—" Diana shrugged. "Oh, rats! It doesn't make any difference, does it? Well, as I was saying— Anyway, what do you want, Babs?" she added crossly.

Babs smiled. "It's about the carnival, Di." "Well, that's what I'm talking about here—"

"But you'll love this, Di—just love it!" Mabel Lynn put in. "I say, do you mind if we cart Diana off and have an ice?" she asked of Diana's friends.

They shrugged indifferently. "Not a bit."

"But, look here—" Diana protested. "The business—"

"Oh, that can wait! Anyway, we haven't definitely decided on anything yet, have we?" the eldest of the four girls asked. "Go on, Diana! You can't be disrespectful to your Fourth Form friends, you know!"

Diana glared. Babs, however, smiled a little, detecting a hint of sarcasm in those two words, "Fourth Form." Diana, too, obviously detected it, and for a moment looked huffy. She shrugged.

"Well, all right. But don't keep me long, you kids!" she said grumpily. "Where do you go for ices?"

"The Blue Shop," Babs replied. "It's at the end of our chalets. They sell super ice-cream sundaes there, and Mavis Vine—she's the girl who serves in the shop—is a perfect dear! But, Di, what luck you coming here at this time! I wonder if you can guess what we want you for!"

Diana looked mystified. "No. Anyway, is that the shop? Let's talk it over over an ice. My treat!" she added grandly.

They stepped into the shop—rather more than a shop, in fact. A few tables were dotted on the floor in front of the counter, and Mavis Vine, an extremely bright-eyed girl serving behind the counter, beamed at Babs & Co. as they came in, and then stared with admiration at Diana. Everybody, in fact, stared at Diana. Though only a schoolgirl, she always attracted attention.

Diana smiled in that self-satisfied way which told that her vanity was satisfied. With a rustle, she seated herself at the counter.

"Sundaes, please, all round!" she said to the girl. "Make them your most expensive ones! Now, Babs, what's the big proposition?"

"Diana, we want you to be the Blues' beauty queen!" Babs announced. Diana's eyes flickered. Babs, having burst her bombshell, expected to see her face light up. Such a chance of limelight was the sort of things which the spoiled Diana loved. But Diana, instead of betraying enthusiasm, merely shrugged.

"Sorry!" she said. Babs blinked. "Sorry, Di? But all you have to do to qualify," she added eagerly, "is to move into one of the Blue Chalets—and there are three or four simply lovely ones vacant. Di—please!" she pleaded. "We're relying on you, you know."

Diana, however, shrugged. "Sorry," she said. "I can't. You see, I'm already going to be the beauty queen of Row J—the Red Chalets. That's what we were discussing when you came up."

The chums looked dashed. "You mean those girls have already selected you?" Babs asked.

"Well, practically," Diana smiled with lofty superiority. "We haven't discussed every detail yet. Nice of you to ask me, though. Thanks for the compliment! Why don't you or Mabs go in for it?" she added. "Though, of course, the Reds will win."

"Because," Clara said, glaring a little, "you're going to be their queen, I suppose?"

"For what other reason? Nice sundaes," Diana said to Mavis, behind the counter. "Bye-bye, girls!" she added, rising. "And sorry I can't help you out!"

Diana strolled languidly away. Mavis Vine watched her go with admiring eyes.

"What a really marvellously pretty girl!" she said to Babs.

"What a lump of conceit, you mean!" blunt Clara grumbled. "Still, we might have expected something like that from Diana. Well, what are you going to do? We want a beauty queen," she added, in explanation to Mavis.

"Hey, wait a minute!" Babs cried, regarding Mavis with such a penetrating stare that that girl coloured. "My hat—I've got it!" she cried, with sudden excitement. "Here's the beauty queen under our nose all the time. Mavis!"

"I—I beg your pardon!"

"Aren't I right, Mabs?" cried Babs. "Mavis?" Mabel Lynn jumped. She, too stared, realising now Mavis was remarkably pretty. Not, perhaps, with Diana's standard of looks, but really most awfully attractive. "That's it—Mavis!" she whooped. "Mavis, how would you like to be our beauty queen?"

"Oh, I—I'd love to!" Mavis faltered. "If Mr. Thorpe will let me."

Mr. Thorpe was the owner of the shop for whom she worked.

"We'll see Mr. Thorpe," Babs promised. "We'll see him right away. Hallo! Here he is," she added, as that gentleman came into the shop. "Mr. Thorpe—"

Mr. Thorpe smiled. He liked Babs & Co.—and especially Bessie, who was among his very best customers.

"Anything I can do for you, Miss Redfern?"

"You can!" Babs laughed. "Mr. Thorpe, we want Mavis—" Hurriedly she blurted out the reason, and Mr. Thorpe genially laughed.

"Well," he considered, "I see no harm in that. None at all. The only stipulation I make, of course, is that the beauty queen business doesn't interfere with Mavis' work for me. O.K., Mavis!"

Mavis was almost trembling with happy excitement.

"Yes, Mr. Thorpe, and—and thank you!" she said.

"Then," Babs whooped, "why not a rehearsal this evening after tea? You close the shop for an hour then, don't you, and the chariot should be ready for the first turn out. That's on?"

On it was!

Not Exactly in Demand!



WALKING back to Row J, Diana Royston - Clarke smiled.

Diana liked the limelight, liked admiration; she liked the opportunity of being able to say "No"

to such an opportunity as the one she had just refused, and it gave her a glowing satisfaction to have been able to refuse. Be the beauty queen of Babs & Co. indeed—with Babs & Co. bossing the show! Not likely!

As usual, Diana was fishing for bigger game than that!

She had impressed older, wealthy friends, who looked up to her—or so Diana thought. And she was going to be their beauty queen.

So Diana told herself.

As their beauty queen she could compete among the other beauty queens for the judgment of Lady Ivy Overbee—but Diana had no doubt about the issue. Undoubtedly she would be returned as the beauty queen of the whole camp.

"Yoicks!" She laughed as she thought of that.

And then, thinking further, her cheeks became rosy. For Diana—thanks to her father being one of the biggest shareholders—was in a position to know what the rest of the camp was not yet aware of.

The competition at Pinebay was to be one of many competitions, affecting other holiday camps, and if she were returned as Pinebay beauty queen she would compete with beauty queens for the title of the holiday camp beauty queen of England!

What a prospect to look forward to!

Diana chuckled again. But now she had reached the Red Chalets, where Ada Finch & Co. had seated themselves on the veranda of Chalet No. 4. They looked up as Diana elegantly sauntered across to them.

"Got rid of the kids?" Diana said. "Well, what about things now? Don't you think it's time we came down to brass tacks and settled what we're going to do? I've told you, of course, that I'll be beauty queen?"

"And you've told us, of course, that you're prepared completely to run the show?" Ada Finch said quietly.

"Well, that's right," Diana acknowledged. "We'll do the roller-skating stunt I put forward."

"As a matter of fact," Ada said calmly, "we've decided to wash out the skating stunt and do a Marie Antoinette stunt, with Lucille as Marie."

Diana's face darkened.

"But the beauty queen—"

"Lucille is going to be beauty queen," Ada said calmly, and smiled with just a little malice at the suddenly flabbergasted look which came over the Firebrand's face. "We think it very piffing of you to make out you're eighteen when you're only a junior school kid. It's not exactly our idea that this show should be run by a junior."

"And so," Ada continued calmly, "we've all decided to run the stunt in our own way, with Lucille as the beauty queen, and with you as one of the team."

For a moment Diana stared incredulously. But the faces looking at her were serious. Ada Finch & Co. had become just a little fed up with

Diana. They did not like Diana showing off, her belief that anything she said and did would be taken for granted.

"And—and you think," Diana flamed out, "that Lucille will win the prize?"

"That's not worrying us overmuch," Ada retorted. "If you care to back us up without the usual amount of swank, all well and good. If not—"

"If not," Diana said between her clenched teeth, "I can get out of it, eh? Back you up, indeed!" she cried shrilly. "I'm going to leave you flat, you—you traitors! I'll show you whether Lucille's got a chance or not!" she raved. "Yoicks, won't I just show you. Thanks, anyway, for being candid. We know where we stand now. And if I can't be queen for the Reds, I'll be queen for someone else. You're not the only silly pebbles on the beach!" And off Diana stormed.

Her face was thunderous. Gone was that smiling charm. Those cats—those traitors! Leading her up the garden all the time! But she'd show them!

Babs & Co. wanted her! Babs & Co. had longed for her to be the queen. Well, Babs & Co. should have her.

But to qualify for the Blues, she must first take a chalet in Row H.

Across at once to the office of Mr. Mackenzie, the manager of the camp, she strode.

He, looking up from his papers, immediately rose to his feet. As Diana was the daughter of one of his most important chiefs, it behoved Mr. Mackenzie to be more than usually nice to her.

"Why, Miss Clarke—"

"Clarke?" Diana glared. "Royston-Clarke! Don't you even know the name of the man who employs you?" she added rudely. "I want to move out of Row J into Row H."

Mackenzie's lips set.

"I'm afraid it can't be managed at once. We have two empty chalets in Row H, but they'll be occupied to-morrow."

"I want a chalet in Row H—now! And what's more, I want a good one!"

"But—but the other arrivals, Miss Royston-Clarke—"

"Put them somewhere else!" Diana advised. "Anyway, I want to be among the Blues. Arrange it—please!

I want to move right away, and—oh, dash it! I'm sorry if I'm giving a lot of trouble," she added, with that typical change of mood at the sight of the sudden worry in the manager's face.

"I'm a pig, I know, but please—you will attend to it, won't you? It means an awful lot to me, and I'm sure the people coming in to-morrow won't mind what row they're in."

"Well, y-yes, of course. You can have—let me see—Chalet No. 3."

"Then thanks," Diana said. "Is one of your staff handy? He can come and help me move my stuff."

For the next half-hour Diana was busy changing her chalet. And being Diana, when that was done, instead of having tea in the great sun lounge with the rest of the camp, she ordered it privately in her new and most luxuriously equipped premises.

After that she enjoyed a cigarette, until the bustle of a sudden commotion in the camp and the merry, laughing voices of the holiday-makers prompted her curiosity to see what was going on. And peeping out of her chalet, she thrilled.

Farther up the lines the chariot—a structure, at the moment, of plywood, struts, and matchboard, was surrounded by a throng of men, women, boys, and girls, and two white horses hired from a near-by stables, were being backed into the shafts.

"Hallo, rehearsal!" Diana gleed. "There's old Clara! A Roman chariot, eh? That's not a bad idea at all. I'll look marvellous as a Roman Empress or something."

She laughed a little as she fluffed up her hair, for a moment darting back to scrutinise herself critically in her mirror. Yes, she looked good—jolly good. Now she'd make old Babs & Co. happy.

She sauntered along towards the crowd, swirling about the chariot. Bessie, in a flowing tonga, was helping Lorna Bayford drape a white cover over the front.

Janet Jordan stood ready with some boughs of laurel which would complete the temporary decorative scheme. Near at hand Jemima was carefully focusing her camera, and Leila, with her cine-camera already mounted, was in the act



"I've decided," said Diana, very graciously, "that I'll be your beauty queen, after all." "Sorry, Di," Babs said, glancing towards the girl Mabs was helping to make up, "but we've got one now—a stunner!" For an instant the Firebrand looked completely stupefied.

of reeling the film preparatory to setting down to action.

Marjorie Hazeldene was fastening the back of the bearskin which Clara, as an ancient British slave, was wearing, and several boys, armed with stone axes and bows and arrows and similarly attired, stood around. Half a dozen men with the brass helmets of Roman gladiators flashing in the sun were making a few final adjustments to the temporary chariot, while two others were brushing down the white horses. Leila Carroll laughed.

"Fine, I guess. Got the range, Jimmy?"

"What-ho! Twenty yards," Jemima Carstairs said, squinting through the range-finder she held. "Exposure one twenty-fifth, eh? What cheer, here comes the one and only Di," she added genially.

"Where's Babs?" Diana asked. "In the chalet there, I guess," Leila said.

Diana nodded. She stepped towards the chalet Leila's nod indicated. With a "Yoicks!" she put her head around the door.

Mabs and Babs, dressed as Roman ladies, were there—and Mabs, armed with her make-up box, was putting the finishing touches to the face of a girl whom Diana, for a moment, did not recognise, until she remembered Mavis Vine of the shop.

For Mabs, with that keen eye for make-up she had always possessed, had fluffed up her hair in a different way, and with just the tiniest spot of colour to each cheek, and just the faintest darkness on Mavis' naturally curled eyebrows, had made a tremendous improvement to her natural good looks.

Quite a nice girl was Mavis, Diana thought, but her eyes glowed at the sight of the purple-and-gold robe she was wearing. Yoicks, wouldn't she look just stunning in that!

"What cheer, Babs? Busy?" she asked cheerily. "I've brought you some good news."

"Pleased to hear it," Babs said, without looking round. "Mabs, a spot more colour on this cheek."

"I'm one of the Blues now," Diana added. "I've moved."

"Oh, good!" Babs said absently. "Mabs, I think we might put this hair clip here."

"And," Diana said, not a little offended because they were so unimpressed, "I've decided, after all, that I'll be your beauty queen."

If she expected Babs to exhibit rapturous joy she was disappointed. For Babs, looking round with a smile, shook her head.

"Sorry, Di, we're fixed up."

"Eh?" "Fixed up," Babs replied carelessly. "This is our beauty queen, Mavis Vine. And doesn't she look stunning, Di?"

Diana stood still, glaring at the girl in the chair. Mavis, meeting that glare, looked a trifle uneasy.

"You—you mean you don't want me?" Diana asked, in a hoarse sort of voice.

"That's it," Babs replied, "though, of course, if you're agreeable you can take a part. Mavis, I think that'll do," she added pleasantly.

"Hi, we're waiting for you in there!" Clara Trevlyn's hearty voice called from outside.

"You—you mean," Diana stuttered, "that shopgirl's taking my place?"

"Your place?" Babs stared. "Why, you refused it!"

"But I'm telling you I accept it now!"

"Too late!" Babs said sorely. "Too late, Di, old thing. Mavis

is our queen—and a jolly nice little queen, too, if you ask me! Up you get, Mavis!"

"But—but—" Mavis stuttered.

"You want to be queen, don't you?" "Oh, yes; of course!"

"Then that's all right. Out you go!" "I tell you," Diana raved, "I'm offering to be your queen."

"And I tell you," Babs retorted, "that we've got our queen. Now stand aside! Mavis, this way!"

Diana quivered with rage. This little upstart, this shopgirl, stealing her job, stealing her limelight, stealing all those entrancing things which the future promised for her. No, she wasn't going to stand that! Bad enough to be over-ridden by Ada Finch & Co. But to have her place filched by this milky-faced shopgirl—

"No!" she said thickly, and suddenly thrusting out a hand, pushed Mavis back. "This girl isn't a guest at this camp, she's an employee!"

"Well, what of that?" Babs demanded. "Her employer has given her permission, and we've fixed things up with the manager. That's enough! Now, come on, Mavis! Into the chariot!"

Diana felt suddenly that she hated Mavis Vine. For Babs, Mabs, and Mavis stepped outside. Then she heard the thunderous cheer that went up, the creak of the chariot as Mavis stepped into it. That—that cat! That shopgirl sneak—

But nobody was worrying about Diana then. Everybody outside was gaping. Pretty as they had expected Mavis to look, they were all surprised at the really charming picture she presented. And Mavis smiled, though for an instant she did flick one nervous blink back into the chalet. This was great, fine—glorious!

Everybody glowed.

"Hold still!" Jemima said. And click! went her camera; whir! went the handle of Leila's cine-machine as quickly she wound, while Mabs lined up the procession. Roman soldiers here, slaves there, Roman ladies, there!

It looked marvellous, in truth. Jemima recklessly was snapping away with her camera, getting every angle she could on the scene. Everybody was cheering. Excited comments reached Diana in the chalet.

"Isn't she pretty?" "Doesn't she look stunning?" "Brain-wave of old Babs" to think of her!

And then a remark by Janet Jordan: "Even Diana couldn't look prettier than that. If you ask me, she even beats Diana!"

Even Diana! They were talking about her, comparing her with a shop-girl! Yoicks, give her the chance to wear those robes! Give her a chance to make up! And the way, if she had a chance, she could drive that chariot!

"O.K., Mabs!" Babs' voice came. "That's it, I think. 'This is only a rehearsal for the line-up in the procession, of course! We'll do the thing in real style tomorrow, when the chariot's finished. Right-ho, Mavis, old thing! Golly, you know, you ought to be in colour film! But that'll do now. Step down and go and change. Everybody else across the other side of the camp, please! We're going to rehearse the arena scene."

There came a happy laugh from Mavis, the creak of the chariot as she stepped out of it. Diana drew back as she heard her rival approaching, humming a happy tune. Then Mavis' shadow appeared at the door, and a second later, with a little laugh, Mavis

had stepped over the threshold. But she drew back as she saw Diana.

"Oh, Miss Royston-Clarke!" "Come in!" Diana said. "And shut the door. Come right in!" She gazed at her, conscious of a jealous little stab. "I want to talk to you!"

"Y-yes?" "Listen—sensibly," Diana said. "And if you've the sense I take you for having you'll agree. You know, of course, that Barbara Redfern asked me to be beauty queen before you?"

"Yes. But—but you refused, didn't you?"

"Never mind. I didn't—not exactly," Diana said. "Look, I'm putting my cards on the table. I still want to be beauty queen. And if," Diana said, flicking open her handbag, "you'd like to back out now and hand the queenship back, there's a couple of pounds for you."

Mavis' eyes opened incredulously. "You—you mean you're bribing me to let you be beauty queen?"

"Rats! I'm just offering to do you a good turn if you'll do me one. I expect you can use two pounds?"

"But—but, Miss Royston-Clarke, I—I can't do that!"

"You mean, you won't?"

"Why, no. But—" That firebrand mood of Diana's passed into being instantly. The resentment she felt at this girl suddenly turned into bitter hatred. Without thinking what she meant to do, she caught at the purple cloak.

"Hang you, take that, off!" she flamed.

"Miss Royston-Clarke—"

"Give it to me!"

"I won't!"

"Then—" Diana said, and there was a rending sound as the cloak came off in her hand.

Simultaneously the door burst open and Babs appeared. In one glance she took the whole scene in.

"Diana, you—you fool!" she cried. With a swift bound she was on Diana and snatched away the portion of the robe which Diana held. "Look at this! You've torn it!"

"That cat insulted me!" Diana flamed out.

"Miss Redfern, I didn't!"

"I tell you—"

"For once, you listen to me, Diana!" Babs cried, angrily. "We've had enough of this. We're on holiday, remember, and it's not going to be spoiled because you choose to have one of your usual flare-ups. You refused the beauty queen job when you were asked, in the first place. Now it's been given to someone else, so try to be a sports-woman and be decent about it. And the best way you can start is to apologise to Mavis and pay for the damage to this robe."

Diana glared.

"And how much is the damage?"

"I don't know. A pound, at least."

"Then," Diana said, taking a pound from her bag, "here's your pound. But as for the apology"—she glared at Mavis, and Mavis, half under the impression that the stormy firebrand was going to hit her, gave back a pace—"well, that for the apology!" Diana flamed, snapping her fingers in Mavis' face. "And as for your silly Roman turn-out," she cried, slinging upon Babs, "I hope it's the biggest flop in the camp!"

And with that she stormed out of the chalet. Neither to right nor left did she look as she strode along to her own chalet, and there, violently slamming the door, fung herself into a chair.

Beaten by Babs and that shoppirl upstart! Oh, yoicks, yoicks!

But was she going to be beaten? No! The beauty queen job was hers by right. Wasn't she the prettiest girl in the camp? They were all against her. But she'd make them sorry! She'd show Babs & Co. whether they should ride over her rough shod like this! She'd—

"Hang it! Where are my cigarettes?" Diana fumed.

She raved round the chalet. Here was the box. She opened it, then scowled as she found it empty and in a sudden spasm of temper threw the box through the open window.

Dash it! Why had she allowed herself to run out of cigarettes?

She picked up her hat. Ramming it on her head, she strode off to the Blue Shop. She entered, to find Mavis behind the counter loading ice cream sundaes into glasses at express speed—for Mavis had overstayed her rehearsal time by a few minutes, and in half an hour it would be the shop's famous sundae hour.

Diana scowled as she saw her, and Mavis, meeting her eyes, turned her head a little. Diana threw a ten-shilling note on to the counter.

"Give me a hundred 'Turkish Castles,'" she said.

"Yes, miss, thank you!"

Mavis turned to get the cigarettes in question, and placed them in front of her rival. Diana was about to take them up, when, caught in a sudden revulsion of feeling, she snatched back the ten-shilling note as Mavis held the cigarettes towards her.

"No, hang it! What am I thinking of?" she cried, with sudden violence. "I want the cigarettes, but I'm hanged if I'll patronise a cheat like you!"

And while Mavis suddenly quivered with anger, she turned on her high heels and stormed out of the shop.

Generous—But Vengeful, Too!



THE Blue Shop was near the entrance to the camp, and the entrance was on the main coast road which carried a motor-bus service to the neighbouring towns and villages.

One of those buses happened to be in the act of starting at that moment, and Diana, remembering in a vague way a little shop about a mile down the road, ran and caught it.

She felt a little better after that outburst—and also a little ashamed. But why should she worry, after all, she asked herself. Serve the cheating cat right!

In silence she sat until the bus stopped again. Then, looking up, she saw they had reached the shop. A rather poor little shop—it was, with one or two weather-beaten notices outside advertising teas and ices and tobacco, and with three hopeful but unoccupied tables set out for tea at its entrance.

A dingy sort of hole, Diana thought disdainfully, but in that moment Diana would rather have bought cigarettes from a slum shop than from the glittering Blue Shop in the camp. She alighted from the bus and went in.

The interior of the shop was dim and cool, and a girl who was near Diana's own age sat behind the counter stitching at a woolly rug—a rather pale-faced girl. She put her work aside as Diana entered, and with the aid of a crutch, rose to her feet. A smile touched her lips.

Diana was captivated by that smile. It was so gentle, so kind.

"Yes, miss?"
"I want a hundred 'Turkish Castles,'" Diana said. "Suppose you don't stock them in a shop like this, though?"
"Yes, miss, we do. Though I must say we don't get a great call for them these days. A hundred, did you say?"
"Please!"

The girl turned. Then she looked up at the shelves behind the counter. Diana followed her eyes, and saw on the topmost shelf a box of Turkish Castles among a miscellaneous collection of other unopened boxes. With an

position, climbed up, and grabbed the box. "Here we are!" she said, with a laugh, as she handed it down. "And whoops, look out, I'm going to jump!"
"Oh, thank you, miss!" the girl said, her eyes shining.

"Stuff! Look here! What shall I do with these steps?"
"Would you put them there, miss, by the biscuits?"

"Easy!" said Diana, and gaily did so. Then she looked keenly at the other. "Looking after this shop alone?"

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apologetic smile the cripple disappeared, to reappear a moment later struggling with a pair of steps.

"I—I'm sorry, miss, but you don't mind waiting?" she asked breathlessly.

"Why, no," Diana said.

Strangely, she flushed. Plucky kid! The vague pity and interest she had felt turned to sudden admiration. Dash it! She wouldn't let the girl do all this on her behalf.

"Half a ticket," she said, "I'll get it down for you!" And vaulting over the counter, she placed the steps in

"Yes, miss," the girl said. "You see, mother's gone to London for a few days to—to sell some of my rugs."

The girl bit her lip as she looked at the latest half-finished creation, and sighed. "We—we have to do that because we can't make enough money to live on out of the shop!"

"Oh, yoicks!" Diana breathed. "What's your name?"

"Jenny Smith."
"Poor Jenny!" Diana sympathised; and the smile she gave was so melting that Jenny dimpled into a rosy blush.

But Diana meant every word of that sentiment. Pluck always appealed to Diana—and this was pluck, if you like! More every minute was she becoming attracted to Jenny Smith.

"You see," Jenny said, as if she felt it necessary to make some explanation, "since the camp started we've lost nearly all our trade. Before the camp was built, we used to do very well because there was a big site where people used to camp on their own for weeks on end. But now, of course, that's all gone," she added sadly, "and because the camp has its own shop which sells everything, we've lost the trade. I—I haven't taken more than three shillings all day to-day," she added.

"Poor, poor kid!" Diana breathed again; and her heart, which could be so large and so generous when it was not swayed by one of her storms, seemed to swell.

"But—but with the rugs and things we manage to get along, you know," Jenny said bravely. "Here are your cigarettes, miss."

"Thanks!" Diana said. "But wait a minute. I want something else. I'll take a box of those chocolates," she added; "that'll help business a little, won't it? I'll have a small jar of that ginger, too—I love ginger, don't you. And—you sell ices, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, miss!"

"Well, I'll have an ice, too. Or, better still," Diana laughed, "let me get it while you get along with your old rug. No, Jenny, don't you move, old thing. I can serve myself. You just attend to the cash part of the business. By the way," she added, "my name's Royston-Clarke—Diana Royston-Clarke—spelt with a hyphen and a final 'e.' But if you like, Jenny, you can call me Diana."

"Oh, Miss Roy—Miss Diana!" Jenny breathed, looking utterly entranced.

Diana laughed again. She was full of high spirits and happiness now. Banished was her firebrand mood. In its place was that Diana which everybody loved—generous, warm-hearted, impulsive, the Diana who could have been the most popular girl in the whole of Cliff House if she would allow that mood to be hers for always.

Diana bustled about, getting her purchases together. What a shame it was that some people had such a hard fight in life while others had everything they wanted! What a pity, too, that some of the trade that beastly Blue Shop did couldn't be diverted to this place and banish the necessity for Jenny and her mother to work so hard! If she had control of things—

But half a ticklet! Wasn't there an idea here?

She tasted her ice, forcing Jenny to have one with her. An excellent ice it was—made by Jenny herself. And then suddenly she heard steps and voices outside, and surrendering to a wild impulse, she rushed out of the shop just in time to find a dozen girls walking past towards the camp. One girl paused.

"Pshaw! Could do with an ice! But I'll wait for my sundae at the Blue Shop."

"Yoicks!" Diana laughed. "Why wait for the Blue Shop? Come inside and sample our ices. They beat anything the Blue Shop ever knew how to make. And they're free, you know—at least, the first is free—on me," she added. "Come on, girls. Hi, Jenny—rush of customers!" she called, darting back into the shop.

The girls looked at each other, nodded, and grinned. In a body they came in.

"Sundae, Munday, or cornet?" Diana laughed. "Jenny, I'll help serve. Quick, Jenny, let's have an apron. Now, girls, have what you like. Treat on me," she added merrily. "Well, I must say it's jolly nice of you!" one girl said.

"Not at all. Just advertising the shop," Diana beamed. "Poor Jenny here has been forced out of business by the holiday camp, and I don't see why she and her mother should starve while the people at the Blue Shop make fortunes, do you?"

"After all, Jenny and her mother were here first. Now what about a mineral there? Jenny, you serve, will you? I spot more customers coming along."

Half a dozen boys were toiling up the hill. They halted, attracted by Diana's bright smile.

"Come in, fellows," Diana invited. "Free ices to-day—or free minerals."

"We're on!" one youth grinned.

Back in triumph Diana went. Jenny, setting herself on one crutch, was working furiously now. Diana gleed. This was good—this was fine—and there was an added satisfaction in knowing that every ice consumed here now would be one less consumed in the Blue Shop that afternoon.

"Treat on me, everybody!" was her cry; and when treats had been stood, and the treated, feeling that they must make some response, had bought some article in addition: "And don't forget, you know, that the shop is always here. We shall expect to see you again next time you're this way."

"And we'll jolly well come!" was the earnestly meant reply she mostly received.

Money flowed into the empty till. There were even teas. Diana served those, cutting bread-and-butter and delicious salad as if she had never done anything else in her life.

It was while she was serving one of the customers that Babs, who had made an odd purchase or two at the shop last week, came in, hoping to find a pair of leather bootlaces for one of the Roman soldiers—for, the Blue Shop with all its amenities, did not stock such odds and ends as those.

Babs blinked as she saw Diana, clad in an apron, laughingly serving ice-cream to one of the crowd of customers, many of whom Babs recognised as regular patrons of the Blue Shop.

"Why, Diana, what's the game?" she asked.

"Mind your own business," Diana retorted instantly.

Babs frowned. It was quite five minutes before a flustered and excited Jenny had served her with her leather bootlaces, and, a little bewildered, Babs went back to camp.

Jolly nice of Diana helping that little cripple out, she thought—that was the Diana she and all her chums loved. Bit different, that Diana, from the stormy, conceited, arrogant girl who had been such an upsetting influence in the camp that afternoon.

Arriving back at the camp, Babs told her chums about it. Clara shook her head.

"Blowed if I shall ever understand that up-and-downer," she said. "Still, I'm glad she's found something to keep her out of mischief. But let's get on with prop-making. Bring the bootlaces, Babs?"

"Yes, rather. Here we are. And rehearsal," Babs said, "in half an hour."

They were all very, very busy. Most of the costumes required an alteration or addition of some descrip-

tion, and Marjorie, Leila, and Janet were busy on those.

Babs and Clara were running through various shoes and boots—all of which had been hired from the nearby town of Rivermouth. Mabs, Lorna, and Bessie were giving the chariot its first coat of paint, and Jemina, who had brought with her her portable typewriter, was banging out duplicates of various parts. Industry if you like, but such excited and enthusiastic industry!

Half an hour went by. In their happy concentration it passed like a flash. Eager members from other chalets were gathering then, and Babs, with a sigh, ran off to fetch Mavis, who by this time should be through with her work at the shop.

But when Babs entered the shop Mavis was still in her apron and her blue print dress, and in rather distressed dismay was sighing at a great pile of uneaten sundaes.

With her was Mr. Thorpe, the manager, looking anything but pleased.

"The sundaes are no good!" he said a trifle angrily. "You should have sold them. Look at the waste. How do you expect me to run this shop at a profit? And what," he added sternly, "has happened to the takings this afternoon? You're nearly fifty per cent down, girl! I hope, Miss Vine, you're not letting this competition interfere with business!"

"Oh, Mr. Thorpe, no!" Mavis gasped. "I—I can't account for it. More than half of the usual customers haven't been in."

"Ha, ha, ha!" said a voice behind Babs who, rather undecidedly, had paused on the step.

And Babs, swinging round, saw the mocking face of Diana. With a swift suspicion she looked at her.

"Diana, then—then that's why you—you were at the shop? Taking Mavis' trade away?"

Diana laughed ripplingly. "And seeming," she said, "to have made a jolly good job of it. Has he sacked her yet?" she added callously.

"Diana, you cat!" Babs cried.

But Diana, with another laugh, had walked away, a peculiar gleam in her eyes.

The Chums to the Rescue!



"HALLO, Mavis—busy!" Barbara Redfern asked the following morning.

But though her voice was light and cheery there was just the faintest trace of anxiety in it.

For last night at the rehearsal, smoothly as that had run, Mavis had not been her usual bright and beaming self. Mr. Thorpe plainly was annoyed with her, and the displeasure he had voiced had quite upset Mavis.

What had happened to Diana since she had spoken to her in the Blue Shop, when Mavis was being upbraided for the loss of turnover, Babs did not know. But she was not thinking of Diana now. Lunch-time at the camp was approaching, and Babs had so arranged things that Mavis should spend half an hour of her lunch-time in going through the script which had been prepared for her. With the idea of giving Mavis a helping hand, she had come to the shop.

Mavis, behind the counter, however, looked up with a worried little smile.

On the floor were a number of small picnic-baskets.

"Thanks, Babs! Just finished," she said wearily. "Phew! Warm work, isn't it? I've been making the picnic-baskets," she explained.

Babs nodded. The picnic-basket idea was a good one, and quite a feature of the Blue Shop's trade.

A great many of the holiday-makers, intent on making the most of sunny afternoons on the beach, would rather take tea with them than make a special journey back for the one provided at the camp, and for a shilling per basket that amenity was provided.

"Right-ho! Then you won't forget the rehearsal?" Babs asked. "In No. 13 half-past one, Mavis."

Mavis nodded as she picked up a pad in which to note the picnic-baskets, and Babs, humming a tune, went out. As she did so, Leila and Janet, who had been to Pinebay, came swinging in through the entrance gates. They hailed her.

"Howdy!" Babs laughed. "Enjoy the trip?"

"Sure we enjoyed it! Fine!" Leila nodded appreciatively. "Sure is a nice little burg, that Pinebay. Like it more every time I go there. We saw Diana, too. I guess that girl is making things hum some at the shop along the road."

"Oh!" Babs said interestedly. "Sure. Diana, if you please, was painting notices outside the shop, advertising picnic-baskets, and, at the same price as the Blue Shop. She'd written up: 'If you can't get your tea-basket at the camp, get it here. Same price, but better contents.'"

Babs frowned. Diana's scheme seemed silly, because most of the holiday campers would have their baskets when they passed the shop. She might sell an odd one or two to people who changed their minds en route.

But had Babs only known it, Diana's scheme was deeper than that. Not for nothing had Diana laid in fifty of those baskets, and not for nothing had she spent the morning equipping them.

Busy though she had been, she had nevertheless found time to make some inquiries of the camp manager. Diana knew now, for instance, that when Mavis locked up the Blue Shop for lunch she took the key with her to her chalet. It was that tit-bit of information which had given Diana her picnic-basket idea.

How she did hate that girl! And how her heart softened every time she thought of hard-working, crippled, little Jenny Smith. A real pleasure it was to help that girl; to have that glowing feeling that she was really doing good. It gave her efforts for Jenny, however, an added spice when she felt they could be directed to the disadvantage of Mavis Vine.

In spite of Jenny's plea that she should stop to lunch, however, Diana, at a quarter to one, gaily shook her head.

"No, Jenny. You lunch," she said softly. "I'll be back this afternoon to help you sell those picnic-baskets. My, and how we will sell them!" she laughed.

She caught the bus, watched by an adoring Jenny from the door. At five minutes to one she alighted outside the camp; but strangely enough Diana did not enter the camp. Outside in the road she stood, talking to a vendor of newspapers and magazines, but while she pretended to look through his wares, her eyes were watching the door of the Blue Shop seen through the hedge. Presently the great gong clanged for lunch. Still Diana did not move. Then she saw Mavis come out. She

saw her lock up the shop and depart. And that was Diana's cue.

Instead of making a purchase, she tossed a sixpence to the astonished but gratified news-vendor, and trotted along towards Mavis' chalet.

There again she waited. Presently she saw Mavis come out, making her way to the staff quarters where she would have her own lunch. The lines were deserted then, and Diana chuckled as she popped into Mavis' chalet, swiftly drew open the drawer of Mavis' table, and took out the key.

With the key in her hand she jumped out, almost cannoning into a fat, bespectacled figure who, at that moment, was passing the door. The figure was that of Bessie Bunter.

"Ha-hallo, Di!" Bessie said. "I say, you know, you've been in Mavis' chalet!"

"Well?" Diana asked. "Nothing wrong in that, is there? I wanted to talk to Mavis about something, but she wasn't there. Anyway, what are you doing out at feeding-time?" she added.

"Eh? Oh, I'm not out really, you know! I've had my soup, and there's a collection in the restaurant for poor children's day at the camp, so I'm just going back to get my purse. But I sus-say, I must hurry!" Bessie rushed on. "It's sole next course, and I just hate cold sole, don't you? Bye-bye, Di!"

But Diana felt a little easier as Bessie disappeared, and, assuring herself that Bessie's momentary curiosity was completely satisfied, hurried on to her own chalet again. There she carefully hid the key behind a small picture of herself which she had hung on the wall, and then donning her long, white, immaculately creased slacks and royal blue blazer, strolled majestically into the main restaurant. As usual, every neck craned to stare at her. As usual, there was that momentary pause of involuntary admiration.

"Shucks, how people do stare at Diana!" Leila whispered to Babs. "Still, I must say she looks pretty stunning."

Diana saw the Cliff House chums. She smiled a lofty smile as she passed on. The head waiter, fawning over the important guest Diana undoubtedly was, conducted her to the special table set aside for her, and while she toyed in lordly loneliness with the good food set before her, Diana smiled to herself.

The fish course came along just as Bessie returned. It was followed by the main dish—to-day a deliciously tender chicken, green peas, and young carrots with white sauce. Remembering their appointment with Mavis, Babs and Mabs simply galloped through their meal and left the rest of the chums at it while they rushed back to Chalet No. 13. Mavis was already there.

"Good! Now let's go," Mabs said delightedly. "Feel fit, Mavis?"

"Yes, Miss Lynn. But—but you won't keep me longer than two, will you? I'm sure Mr. Thorpe's got an idea that I'm letting this business interfere with my work."

"Well, he shan't have any cause to worry this time," Babs said. "Now let me read you the cue parts. Here we are—'Hail the Empress'—that's where you ride into the arena and step down from your chariot, you know!"

Mavis smiled. She took up the lines. Mabs sat still listening, nodding her head from time to time in a way that showed she was pleasedly satisfied. For ten minutes the voices of Babs and Mavis declaimed in Chalet No. 13. Mabs beamed.

"That's ripping!" she said. "Once you've got those lines off by heart, Mavis, you'll be good. We've got time to go through it again, I think. Just a little more expression this time."

They went through it again. Mavis, familiar now that she had read the part through once, was even better. Babs laughed.

"Golly, you're going to be the cat's pyjamas!" she chuckled.

Mavis hesitated.

"But not as good, perhaps, as Miss Royston-Clarke would be?" she asked wistfully. "Miss Lynn, I—I've been thinking about her, and—and if you want me to I'll back out even now. Of course, I don't want to, but—"

"Diana," Mabs said firmly, "is out of it—definitely. Mavis, we want you. Hallo, there's the two o'clock bell!" she added. "Better push now, Mavis, while we get changed. See you later," she added, as Mavis hurried towards the door, just as Clara, Bessie, and the rest of the chums came in. "Question now, kiddies, is—what are we going to do this afternoon?"

"Let's get a boat out and row round to Riversmouth and picnic?" Marjorie suggested.

"Yes, rather! And buy the beach baskets at the Blue Shop," Bessie amended.

"Good wheeze! Right-ho! What shall we wear?"

"Shorts and jumper for me," Clara said.

"Slacks and blouse for me, I guess," Leila exclaimed.

"Yes, rather! And I'll wear my new green sun-suit, you know!" Bessie simpered. "I like green for the sea. It sus-sort of fits in with the colour scheme."

They all chuckled, but off then to change and get into suitable clothes. Always a great deal of excitement there was about what they were going to wear; always a lot of trying on and discarding before they made up their minds. But finally they were ready, and away they went to the Blue Shop to pick up the beach baskets.

They reached there, to find half a dozen people standing outside the door, and Mavis, her face white, making a desperate endeavour to unlock it. On the fringe of the crowd stood Diana. She was chuckling.

"Bet it doesn't fit," she jeered. "Why not try a hammer?"

"Look here, I'm not waiting any longer," objected one man.

"Why wait at all!" Diana mocked. "Why not do the same as all the others have done? Smith's shop down the road sells better baskets than these at the same price. Hallo, Babs, do you want a beach hamper, too?" she added. "Why not come along and get one from Jenny Smith?"

Babs frowned. The distress of Mavis, the jubilation of Diana, put a sudden thought into her mind. She turned to Mavis.

"Mavis, what's the matter?"

"The—the key!" Mavis stuttered. "Oh dear, I must have lost it! I could have sworn I put it in the drawer of my table in the chalet, but—but it's gone, and this is an odd one that won't work. Oh dear!"

"Well, we can't hang around longer!" one man cried. "Come on, let's go to Smith's."

"Oh," but please, if you'll only wait—" Mavis cried.

"Miss, we've waited half an hour as it is!" another man said. "Come on; let's go to Smith's."

With a triumphant laugh Diana led the way. The half a dozen lingering

to "Their Seaside Feud with the Firebrand"

customers turned to follow her. But Babs, that half-formed suspicion suddenly hardening to conviction, rushed after her and caught the Firebrand by the shoulder.

"Wait, Diana. I suppose you know nothing about this?" she asked.

Diana laughed mockingly. "And if I did, should I tell you?" she asked. "I do hope," she added sweetly, "that dear Mavis gets the sack! You might get an idea, then, that there's a better beauty queen than she is in the camp. Bye, bye, Barbara—de-a."

And so saying, she climbed jauntily into the bus. It started off, and Babs, staring after her, bit her lip. Diana knew something about that missing key. She began to see, too, that Diana hadn't had that sudden brain-wave of selling beach baskets at Smith's shop for nothing. But that didn't alter Mavis' dilemma. Mavis looked almost terrified as at last she desisted in her efforts.

"Oh dear, what shall I do? Mr. Thorpe—he'll sack me for this. I know he will. What can I have done with it?"

"You're sure you had it?" Babs asked.

"Yes, positively. At least, I—I might have done something else with it. You see," Mavis explained, "I—I had an accident some years ago and I lost my memory. Occasionally I do get black-outs. But I know when I've had one, and I'm sure I haven't got one now."

"Is this the first time you've seen Diana since lunch?" Babs asked keenly.

"Yes." "Eh? Oh, I sus-say, you know—" Bessie broke in excitedly. "I saw Diana at lunch-time. And she was coming out of Mavis' chalet and—Crumbs! Now I remember it, she had something in her hand!" Bessie went on excitedly. "It mum-might have been the key!"

Babs' eyes flashed. The others looked quickly at each other, the last strand of doubt in their minds snapped now. A typical Diana trick—and one, sickeningly enough, which had succeeded. They all saw Diana's object now—to divert Mavis' customers and sell them Jenny's goods, once again leaving Mavis to be blamed for having neglected her duties.

"Mavis, hold on!" Babs said. "Don't look so upset. I've got an idea we shall find that key in Diana's chalet. If not"—and Babs' jaw thrust—"then we'll go down to the Smiths' shop and make her give it up."

"But the customers—" "Come on!" Babs said to her chums. She led the way. In an angry body they followed her. The nine of them reached Diana's chalet, which, as Babs suspected, was locked. Still, this was no time for ceremony, and Babs, flashing out the key of her own chalet, tried it, giving a cry of triumph as it worked.

"Come on—search!" she cried. They searched. The search, as it happened, was not a long one. Babs knew enough of Diana's artfulness to know that she would not have hidden that key in any ordinary place, and the picture was the third thing she investigated. With a clatter the key fell from its hiding-place.

"The—the sneaking thing!" Babs cried. "Oh, my hat! Wait till I see her!"

They hurried back to find Mavis looking almost ill as she sat forlornly on the step of the shop, with not a customer in sight. Everybody who in-

tended picnicking on the beach had left by now.

"Mavis, here we are," Babs said quickly. "Here, take the key and open the shop."

While Mavis stared wide-eyed she thrust the key into her hand, and almost mechanically the girl opened the door.

"Now," Babs said, "where are the picnic hampers?"

"Here," Mavis said. "But—"

"How many?"

"Sixty."

Babs looked at her chums. Sixty picnic hampers meant three pounds.

"And goodness knows," Mavis cried, "what I'm to do with them now!"

"But we do!" Babs said. "We're going to buy them, aren't we, girls? Come on, everybody, grab up as many as you can take and cart them round to Chalet No. 13. Bessie, old thing, run along to the Greens lines and see if Chrissie Longmore & Co. are about. If so, invite them to tea with us—and invite anybody else you like. And buck up!" she hissed, with a glance through the window. "I spy Mr. Thorpe coming along. Hey, whoops!" she cried, and scooping up six baskets, bolted towards the door. "Mavis, stay where you are!" she cried urgently, disappearing after her chums just as Mr. Thorpe hove in sight.

Mr. Thorpe, his face clearly indicating that he expected bad news, came into the shop. "Hum!" he said. "How are things going?"

"Ve-very well, Mr. Thorpe," Mavis said, with a tremor in her voice. "What about the picnic hampers? That girl Miss Royston-Clarke said we shouldn't sell any this afternoon."

Mavis almost swooned with the gratitude she felt towards Babs.

"Then," she said coolly, "you can tell Miss Royston-Clarke she's wrong! We've sold every one. Look!" she added, and the manager almost jumped as he saw the empty floor behind the counter. "Good business, don't you think?" Mavis asked, with a smile; and Mr. Thorpe was too joyfully thunderstruck even to reply.

While in Chalet No. 13, fifty yards away, Babs & Co., with sixty beach baskets and only fifteen girls to eat their contents, were wondering what on earth they were to do with all the food.

A Blow for the Firebrand!



"PHEW! Warm work, hey?" Diana laughed. "But that's the last of the beach baskets. Only wish," she added, as she straightened up, "we'd prepared more. How's that for a bit of business?"

"Oh, Miss Diana, I—I think you're wonderful!" Jenny breathed.

She stood outside the little shop leaning on her one crutch, breathing a little heavily after her exertions of the past half-hour. An extraordinarily busy and happy half-hour that had been, with the shop besieged by an army of holiday-makers all anxious to snatch at the beach baskets which Diana's foresight had provided.

Diana herself was rosy and laughing. For the first time she was not sorry that a lull had occurred, and gleefully she was congratulating herself upon the success of her ruse. Inwardly she was chuckling, too. What a let-down for Mavis, stranded there with all her beach baskets on her hands for the

day! Wouldn't Mr. Thorpe be pleased about that?

Her great hope was that Mavis would indeed be dismissed, thereby stripping her of her very last qualification to appear as the Blues beauty queen. Once that happened, then Babs & Co. could not possibly fail to turn to her.

Of course, she could always find Mavis another job—in a sphere where she was not likely to interfere with Diana's own activities. Yes, things were going very well for the Firebrand of the Fourth.

Or so Diana told herself—not knowing of the gigantic picnic which was being spread out on the grass of the holiday camp.

"Jenny you look tired, old thing," she said gently. "Sit down while we have a breather. You know," she added softly, "you haven't told me much about yourself, and I'm frightfully interested really. There we are." She helped Jenny into a chair and procured a cushion, which she put behind her head, and then, dropping into the chair next to her, smiled. "Jenny, how long will it be before your mother comes back?" she asked.

"The day after to-morrow, Miss Diana."

"So soon?" Diana mused. "Why, that's the day before the carnival." "And the beauty show?" Jenny looked at her. "Oh, Miss Diana, I should love to see that," she said fervently. "But—aren't you in the beauty competition? You ought to be, you know. I—I think you're ever so lovely!"

Diana laughed pleasedly. "Of course I'm in the beauty competition!" she boasted.

"Oh, Miss Diana, not really?" "Yes, really!" Diana laughed again. "And of course I shall win! Everybody says that."

"Oh, Miss Diana, I'm sure they do!" Jenny said sincerely. "I—I hope you do win! How I would love to see you!"

"Well, why not? Your mother will be back in time for you to come, won't she?"

"Oh, yes!" "Then," Diana laughed, "you must come, Jenny! Be my guest for the day—the guest of the beauty queen!" She laughed at the sudden excitement which shook the other girl. "Is that on, Jenny?"

"Oh, yes—yes!" "Jenny, by the way—don't answer if you don't want to—but how long have you been a cripple?"

Jenny's face shadowed.

"Four years, Miss Diana. I—I was hurt in a railway accident, you see!" Jenny's lips quivered. "My sister Esme was with me, and—and she was killed. I was taken away with a dislocated shoulder and the muscles became paralysed. They've remained paralysed ever since. But Esme"—her lips quivered—"Oh, Miss Diana, you would have loved Esme! She was a pretty girl, too!"

"You loved her, Jenny?" Diana asked softly.

Tears stood in Jenny's eyes as she nodded. She could not speak.

"Poor kid!" Diana said. "Jenny, old thing, I'm sorry. I didn't want to bring up old spectres. But paralysis!" She frowned. "You know, Jenny, I'm sure that could be cured with the right sort of treatment."

"Yes," Jenny nodded. "But—but the treatment would be ever so expensive and—and we can't afford it. The doctor I saw not long ago said that an injection might put it right. And he said another thing, too—that a shock or another accident might put it right."

But that's silly, of course!" she added sighingly. "I do wish I was all right, though. I—I'd love to earn my living like other girls."

"Silly goose!" Diana said softly. "You do earn your living, by looking after the shop and making those lovely rugs! Well, just supposing you could earn your own living, what would you do?"

Jenny smiled wistfully. "I think," she said, "I'd like to look after one of those shops in the holiday camp. It must be jolly with a lot of girls like you about."

Diana looked at her quickly, a sudden new thought in her mind.

If Mavis got the sack—might not something be done for poor Jenny? Might she not, with all her influence, persuade Mr. Thorpe to take her on, cripple or no cripple? After that, perhaps, with the money Jenny would earn and the money she herself could coax out of her father, it might be possible for Jenny to be cured. Diana glowed. She'd have to think about that.

In the meantime, however, her thoughts were more on her own triumph than on the future of Jenny. She was dying to know if Mr. Thorpe had yet discovered the failure of his assistant to sell out those picnic-baskets. A dead loss, that—for things like sandwiches and tea wouldn't keep till to-morrow.

"Jenny," she said suddenly—she just had to know how things had turned out, "as we're so quiet now, I'll slip back on the next bus. You will be able to manage?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Diana!"

So off Diana went, sped on her way by Jenny's beaming, heartfelt smile. She caught the bus and at once made her way to the Blue Shop. Mavis was there. So was Mr. Thorpe, looking uncommonly pleased with himself as he leaned over the counter taking his afternoon cup of tea. Mavis was laughing, too.

Diana paused. Hallo, what was this? Not at all according to her programme! And what was that Mr. Thorpe was saying?

"Yes, of course you can have time off for the rehearsal, Miss Vine. I hope you'll win when the time comes. Day after to-morrow, isn't it? I'm glad to see," he added heartily, "that you aren't letting it interfere with your business. In fact, business seems to have looked up to-day, hasn't it? I don't think we've ever sold sixty beach baskets, before, have we?"

"No, Mr. Thorpe. Our record is fifty-six," Mavis said.

"Good business indeed!" Mr. Thorpe gleed. "Oh, here's Miss Royston-Clarke!" He turned and chuckled. "Say, I want a word with you. What about me not selling the beach baskets now? Mavis has sold the lot!"

"I'm sure," Diana said, with a glance at Mavis, "that's a very clever of her! How did she do it?"

"Oh, just sold them!" Mr. Thorpe said. "Anyway, it doesn't matter how she did it, as long as she did it, does it?" he added with a throaty chuckle. "I'm just telling Mavis how pleased I am about it. What made you say she wouldn't sell any?"

But Diana was not replying to that. She was almost choking. Mavis had beaten her then! But how—how?

Intent upon solving the key part of the mystery, at all events, she strode off towards her own chalet. But the whole mystery was solved before she ever arrived there.

For on the edge of the camp, where



NEVER had Babs been so amazed as by the sight of the lordly Diana, wearing an apron, serving customers in the little general shop—and serving them in the gayest, friendliest fashion. "What's the game, Di?" she asked. And Diana, sweeping majestically past her bearing a loaded tray, blithely replied: "Mind your own business!"

it overlooked the sea, fourteen girls were gathered, picnicking, and round the fourteen girls, forming a sort of barricade, were sixty white beach baskets and a whole heap of thermos flasks. Babs & Co. and their holiday pals.

"Go on, Bessie, just another sandwich!" Babs was urging. "We just can't eat another single thing, and you don't want to see good grub go to waste, do you? Just another, Bessie."

Bessie, whose face was like a full moon, red and flushed and shiny, shook her head.

"Bib-Bibs, I kik-can't. Oh, dear! I kik-can't. Well, just another one, then. This is the last!"

"Leila, you, then?"

"Oh crumbs, I've eaten a dozen!" Leila groaned. "Give it to Clara."

"I'm whacked!" Clara declared. "Hallo," she added, looking up with a grin. "Another guest. Come and have tea, Diana."

Diana, glaring with eyes like saucers, was shaking with fury.

"You—you tricksters!" she throbbed. "So that's it. You bought up all those baskets!"

"Well?" Babs rose challengingly. "Anything against it?"

Diana regarded her bitterly. "Can't you ever mind your own business?" she cried.

"That," Babs retorted, "is what we always try to do! As it happens, this is our business. It's our business, Diana, because Mavis happens to be a friend of ours, and you're trying to get her the sack! Here, what are you going to do?" she cried angrily.

For Diana, unable to control the trembling rage which shook her, kicked at one of the beach baskets, and then, fearful of her own ungovernable temper, broke into a run. The chums looked at each other and grinned.

"And so," Jemima murmured, "out goes dear little Di—avec one large dose of the hump!"

Humiliation!



"W HOA, steady the Buffs!" Jemima said. "Backwater, Dobbin, you old Derby-winning donkey! How's that, Babs?"

Diana, hearing the turmoil going on in her line, peered out of her chalet window.

And she scowled—bitterly, hatefully. A busy, happy scene met her eyes. For it was well after tea now, and preparation for the great rehearsal was beginning.

The chariot, still in a rather crazy stage of construction, despite its proud coat of paint, had been placed opposite Chalet No. 13, and Jemima was in the act of backing the horses into the shafts. Many people were dressed; many were semi-dressed; and all were hugely enjoying the fun. As Diana watched, Marjorie Hazeldene came out of her chalet carrying the repaired purple robe.

"Finished, Marjorie?" Barbara Redfern asked. "Put it in Chalet No. 13, will you? I'll go along and fetch Mavis presently—plenty of time yet."

Carefully Babs marshalled her party. Watched by the still-scowling Diana, they marched off. Seeing for the moment that activities were suspended, the spectators of the fun began to melt away. But Diana suddenly caught her breath.

Voicks, what a chance for her to shine! What a chance to show them, after all, that she was the beauty queen they should have! What a chance now, while Chalet No. 13 was empty, to dress herself up in Mavis' royal robes and create a sensation in the camp by driving that chariot right round it!

After they had seen her in that chariot, handing those horses, who the

(Continued on page 14)



OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

Still in holiday mood is PATRICIA'S letter to you all. She tells you about her own holiday, and makes somehow-to-alter suggestions for the girl who likes to look her best always. There's something to interest ALL schoolgirls in Patricia's cheery, chummy letters.

DO you find it difficult to write letters on holiday?

I know some people do, and they'd as soon think of taking up a notepad and fountain pen as they'd think of swimming the Channel!

But this Patricia of yours *likes* writing—yes, even on holiday. So many exciting things seem to happen.

At the farm where we are all staying—it's quite near the sea—there has been a "happy event." Or rather seven "happy events."

The large black cat that lives in one of the sheds at the farm has just presented everybody with seven adorable kittens.

My small brother, whose name is Heatherington in full—but Heath for short—was thrilled. He had never seen so many puss-cats all together in his young life!

The farmer said your Patricia could name them. But to think of seven catty names all at once was rather a job!

The mother's name is Susie, and she didn't seem to mind what her family was called. She knew each of them, without a name!

So young Heath and I had a discussion—with mother to help. We thought of naming each one after the seven dwarfs in the film "Snow White." Then it seemed a shame that one of them would have to have a name like "Grumpy"—especially as they're so sweet.

So what do you think we called them, after all? Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday—and so on. One after each day of the week!

● All for a Penny

Mother says we shall all get as "fat as butter" before we leave this farm, and certainly I have a feeling that I've put on weight.

We went down to the beach to look for a weighing machine. But it's a very small seaside resort, as I told you, and there's no weighing machine.

But there was a lovely old sailor there with his telescope. For a penny he allows you to look through it.

I had a peep, and saw a marvellous liner going by. I think it was a French boat actually. But when I lifted Heath up to see, he insisted that it was the Queen Mary—even though he can't read.

As for weight, I should think that small brother of mine has put on about two hundredweight. I had to get a box for him to stand on, finally—for I just couldn't hold him up any longer.

"Coo, I wish we could see our house through this," he said regretfully after watching the liner out of sight. "Then I'd know if Minkie's being good."

See our house indeed! "You want a private television set, my lad," I told him. And all for a penny, too!

Haven't you noticed that one of the differences between cats and dogs is that dogs become deeply attached to *PEOPLE* and cats to *PLACES*?

Certainly, a dog will go anywhere, as long as he is with his master and "missus." But a cat, somehow, frets if he is away from his familiar "haunts."

Young Heath, of course, had wanted to bring our cat, Minkie, away with us, but mother and I had to explain that he would be much happier at home, with the people next door to look after him.

I have heard of cats walking as much as a hundred miles in order to return to the old home, when their owners have moved to a new house!

● A Pretty Two-Piece

Lovely as this summer weather is, it's surprising how chilly the evenings can be! I know I've been very grateful for my little coatees and cardigans after the sun has gone down.

Please don't ask me to explain it, but a two-piece outfit always seems so much warmer, somehow, than a dress all-in-one—even if it's made of exactly the same material!

This little two-piece in the picture, for example. You'd never believe that that was once a dress, now would you?

Yet it was. And then, one day, it grew just too small—all over. It was too tight in the bodice, and too short in the skirt.

The brahwave was to turn it into a two-piece—as you see.

The bodice was cut from the skirt of the dress, and elastic threaded through the top of the skirt.

Then the collar was cut from the bodice, and an opening made all down the front.

Some petersham ribbon—navy blue—was sewn round the bottom of the jacket—as it now is—and more around the hem of the skirt. This gave extra length—without looking like an alteration.

A white linen two-piece with navy blue bindings was the result. And worn with it is a white blouse with red or blue spots.

● Extravagant

I saw a girl on the beach the other day most carefully applying her sun-tan oil. Oh, she did take a lot of trouble over it.

Each time she placed the bottle down,

she was most particular to see that it rested on a towel, and not on the sand. (If you've ever got your sun-tan oil mixed up with sand and then rubbed it over your arms or legs, you'll know why it pays to be careful. It's like rubbing yourself with emery paper!)

After all this business, up gets this young lady, and plunges into the sea for half an hour's swim.

"Well," thought your Patricia, "what a waste of sun-tan oil!"

Most of it was left in the sea, of course!

The right time to apply any sun-tanning preparation is *AFTER* a bathe, or when you intend lying in the sun for some time, to allow it to do its good work.

● Money-Saving

Here are two little economy hints for the girl who likes to save mother's expenses in the home.

It's a very penny-saving notion to rinse the soap under the cold tap after washing, you know. If you take it straight out of the warm water and place it in the soap-dish, it tends to go 'mushy,' and melt quite a bit.

Perhaps mother asks you sometimes to "turn out the butter" from its new wrapping. This weather, the butter will stick to the paper, however careful you are—and waste quite a bit.

So before you unwrap it, just hold it under the cold tap for a moment. The paper will then peel off beautifully, without any butter adhering to it, you'll find.

● For Tea in the Garden

I expect you who're having a stay-at-home holiday this year are spending a lot of time in the garden, aren't you?

If you're feeling very energetic, and you have a big brother to help you, here's something you could make for mother that would be a perfect boon for tea in the garden.

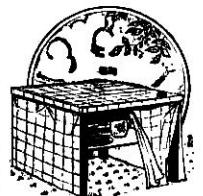
You're sure to have an old folding table. Well, cover the top of this with American cloth. Nail pieces of wood to the legs on the inside and make a sliding shelf to fit on them. You can keep all the outdoor tea-things here, you see.

Then to prevent the rain doing any damage, make American cloth curtains to cover the sides—or pieces from an old mac would do as well. These are attached to the table with rings and dresser hooks, so that they can be easily removed when you want to set the table.

And, of course, no cloth is necessary, with the bright cover on the top, which can be cleaned with a single wipe!

Your friend,

PATRICIA.





A DAY IN LONDON

Patricia takes you on a very swift trip around London by bus—to see as much as possible in a day.

Down the Haymarket will go your bus, then a round past famous clubs, and shipping offices—and so you come to Trafalgar Square.

The bus stops just past the square, so you'll get off and walk back a bit. There are Nelson, the pigeons, the fountains. There are the National Gallery, and the National Portrait Gallery. (You may be tempted to visit one of these.)

Then back you go to your bus stop, where you dismounted, and get on a Number 6, 13, 15 or 60. This will take you past Charing Cross Station, and right along the Strand. You'll see vans coming from Covent Garden which lies to your left—you'll notice famous hotels.

Round the Aldwych you go, and spot famous names on the theatre bills. You'll see a church in the middle of the road, which is St. Clement's Dane (the "oranges and lemons church"). Then you can't miss the Law Courts on your left, and in the middle of the road, the celebrated Temple Bar, which marks the beginning of the City of London.

THE NEWSPAPER WORLD

You are now in Fleet Street, and will look for famous newspaper houses to right and to left.

Another big cross roads and you'll see the policemen in their box in the middle of the road. This is Ludgate Circus. As your bus goes across, Farringdon Street is on your left. (The building about 60 yards down on the right, with the clock outside, is Fleetway House. But you'll have to be quick to spot it.)

Up Ludgate Hill you go, and so reach St. Paul's Cathedral—which you'll be keen to visit, I expect.

After that you catch the bus on the other side of the road, and come back to Charing Cross. Here is a restaurant where you can get a very exciting lunch for one-and-six or less.

After that you must cross the road to Admiralty Arch, walk along the beautiful Mall, and gaze at Buckingham Palace.

Walk back again to Charing Cross, and catch a No. 11 bus in Whitehall.

This will take you along this famous thoroughfare. You'll see the Guards on your right, and Downing Street is towards the end of the road on your right, just past the Cenotaph.

ON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

Get off the bus here, and walk over Westminster Bridge. Here you get an excellent view of Big Ben (where you put your watch dead right) and the Houses of Parliament. Don't miss the County Hall, on the other side of the Bridge. Here, also, you'll see Cleopatra's Needle, and the well-known statue of Queen Boadicea.

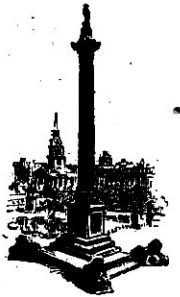
Back to the corner again, you can get on another bus—No. 11—along to Victoria Station, or else walk there.

Here you change on to a No. 2, 16, 25, or 36, and ask for "Marble Arch." This will take you along Grosvenor Street, past the back of the gardens of Buckingham Palace on your right—behind a high brick wall with spikes on it.

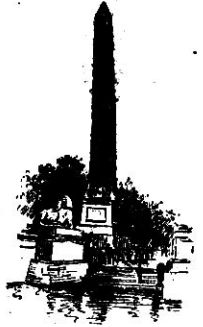
You circle around at Hyde Park Corner, and then go along Park Lane—where the homes of the wealthy are. Hyde Park is on your left.

At Marble Arch you are back where you started—and it wouldn't be a bad idea to have tea in a restaurant there, or take it in the open air in Hyde Park itself.

There is much to see in Trafalgar Square. But you can't overlook Nelson on his monument.



All the way from Egypt came Cleopatra's Needle, which is to be seen on the Thames Embankment.



I'M going to pretend that this is one of your first trips to London, and that you want to see as much as possible in the time.

You'll notice that I shall not include the Zoo, Madame Tussaud's, the Tower of London or the museums—for the simple reason that you'd probably want to spend a long time at places like these, and they deserve a separate visit.

First, we must decide on a "starting-point," and there I'm going to put you on a bus—for that is quite the best way of seeing things, since you can't walk *all* the way.

We'll choose Marble Arch as our spot. Some coaches stop here, and it's an easy place to get to from all the big railways and coach-stations.

Have a look at Marble Arch, which really is made of marble.

Now wait for your bus in Oxford Street—a No. 6, a 15 or a 60. Climb up to the top, bag the seat in front, from where most can be seen, and fish out the fare.

Ask for Trafalgar Square—which is 2d., I think.

LOVELY SHOPS

Now look around. You'll see many very famous big stores on your left, some that are named, some that are not. But the windows are certainly a joy, and I expect the grown-ups with you will promise themselves a look around later in the day.

Near Bond Street Underground Station, which is on your right, is fashionable Bond Street itself. Take a peep down this. You won't see much. But at least, you know where it is for another time.

On goes the bus, past more marvellous shops—until you come to Oxford Circus. The "circus" is really a traffic roundabout. As you turn, look to your left, towards Portland Place, and you'll see Broadcasting House.

That will quickly vanish as you spin down Regent Street—one of the most handsome shopping streets in the world, 'tis said.

PICCADILLY CIRCUS

Your bus will probably be held up by lights and other traffic, so this will give you a chance to watch out for Piccadilly Circus—which you can't miss—for Eros is poised daintily in the middle, and perhaps the fountain will be playing.

Steal a glance at him, and don't miss all the electric signs, which really are an amazing sight at night when they're lit up. As you go past Eros, you'll notice a broad road to your right. That is Piccadilly itself.



St. Paul's Cathedral with its famous Whispering Gallery should not be missed.



You must watch the Tower Bridge opening and closing when you visit the Tower!

Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament as seen from Westminster Bridge.



The Tower of London is almost a history book in itself—history without a dull moment.



(Continued from page 11)

dickens would even look at Mavis Vine again?

Almost quivering with delight, Diana darted out of the chalet, in a moment was in Chalet No. 13. She laughed as she found it deserted, and on a chair the silken robes which were destined for the Roman empress.

Dressed in shorts, Diana had no need to change, except to kick off her shoes and replace them with the gold sandals provided for the empress. Chuckling, she wrapped the rich crimson toga about her, fastening it on the shoulder with the imitation jewelled clip. After that she fluffed up her blonde hair, and on its glorious platinum curls placed the jewelled headdress which was the crowning finery of the ensemble. Just a touch then from Mabs' make-up box to her lips and cheeks, and after that she swept the purple robe around her shoulders.

She caught her breath as she surveyed herself in the mirror.

Yoicks, now for it!

With a lordly glance up and down the line, she stepped into the chariot.

People, seeing her, stared.

"My goodness, look!" A murmur of wonder went up.

The floor of the chariot creaked as Diana stepped into it. Diana did not know that it had not yet been properly secured. Even if she had, it is doubtful if the Firebrand, in that supreme moment, would have given heed to the fact.

For all Diana's concentration now was on herself, and in such a moment Diana had no use for outside concentrations. She saw the looks, saw, with inward glee, faces peering from chalet windows as she caught up the reins. Now she'd show them.

She caught up the whip, jerking the reins. The whip cracked. The horses whinnied, then plunged forward. Diana let out a shout.

"Make way for the Roman empress!"

Clatter, clatter! At an outstanding rate the chariot went flying along the Blue lines. Under her feet the floor shivered and groaned, but Diana did not care. People were gaping at the regal queen who was galloping past them.

Now for the corner. Round it the chariot went with a lurch, on one wheel. Up the straight Diana flew, into the lines where the store shed was placed between the Greens and the Purples. Ahead she saw, to her immense satisfaction, the busy industry going on in the Purple lines, for the Purples, her old friends and now enemies, were also holding a rehearsal. There was the doll-faced, sickly looking Lucille—yoicks, didn't she look a fright in that Marie Antoinette costume!

She'd show 'em!

She was already "showing 'em." The Purples had turned at the sound of pounding hoofs, creaking wood, and jingling accoutrements. They were gasping as they recognised the lordly Diana, and just to make success even more spicy, what should happen at the moment but that out of the store shed should emerge Babs & Co., carrying an armful of parcels. Seeing Diana, they stopped, dumbfounded.

"Diana—"

"Diana, you idiot—"

"What are you doing, with our chariot?"

"Diana, stop!"

Diana laughed loud and long. Crack! snapped the whip over the backs of the horses. Those animals, thoroughly enjoying themselves, gave a plunge for-

ward, and as they plunged the unbolted floor, no longer able to withstand this whirling strain, gave up the ghost.

With a crack it parted from its moorings; with a howl Diana let go her hold on the reins as the framework of the chariot suddenly shot away from her.

And then—what a yell!

For Diana, unable to maintain her balance, went shooting forward as the floor see-sawed over the axle, and the rest of the chariot tore on. Nose first Diana went, and as she went the robe enveloped her head, so that when she hit the floor the stars she saw were illumined by a purple sort of darkness. From everybody, from every direction, went up a hilarious howl.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my Aunt Sally and Uncle Sam!" Clara hooted. "Dear old Di! Hold me up, somebody! This just isn't fair after the tea I've had!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And "Ha, ha, ha!" went up a fresh peal as Diana's furious face, with the jewelled headdress over one eye, pushed furiously through the folds of her toga and robe, and glared about her.

Diana staggered up. Everybody was roaring. Crimson with humiliation, she tore off the purple cloak and kicked the headdress after it, glared round, choked, and then, unable to speak, broke into a run.

Breaking records, she reached her own chalet, and flung herself into a chair. Fool, fool—awful, idiotic fool that she was! She had been the sensation of the camp all right—but at what price to her pride, at what a ridiculous cost, nobody to blame this time except herself.

There came a tap on the door. Babs' voice, mack, but holding a choked note of laughter, spoke:

"Please, empress, can we have our clothes? We want to get on with the rehearsal—with the real empress, you know!"

Diana, her eyes flaming, picked the clothes up, opened the door, and hurled them into Babs' face. The real empress, indeed! That doll-faced Mavis Vine!

She gritted her teeth. There could be no peace for her after this.

Early to bed Diana went that night. Earlier than usual she rose. Even so, many people were about, and as she stepped on to the bus to go and see Jenny, Ada Finch, and Lucille came along. They both stopped and tittered.

"Hallo, Di. Still hankering after being a beauty queen?" Ada jeered.

"Hang you!" Diana quivered.

Black her mood during the ride. But meeting Jenny all that blackness disappeared, for Jenny, her eyes shining, came limping on her crutch to meet her, and she had something in her hand about which she seemed very excited. As usual, Diana kissed her; as usual, felt in that contact all her bitterness melt away. Jenny said happily, shyly:

"Oh, Miss Diana, I—I've got something for you. It—it is a mascot—something to bring you luck and help you win the beauty competition."

Diana blinked for a moment. Then the queerest lump rose in her throat as she looked at the thing which little Jenny held up.

It was a silver horseshoe brooch.

"Jenny—" she choked.

"Miss Diana," Jenny said, with a soft smile, "please—please do take it! And—and promise me, Miss Diana, when you ride in the procession as the beauty queen, you'll wear it?"

"I—I will," Diana said.

She clenched her hands, feeling a silly desire to rub her eyes. Dear, sweet kid! And to think, just for a

moment, she had toyed with the idea of abandoning the beauty queen! No, no, no! Nothing should interfere with those ambitions now. She would wear that mascot, and she would, as she had promised, wear it in the procession as beauty queen.

If she didn't she felt that she would never be able to look her little friend in the face again!

Desperate Moments!



"I SUS-SUS-SAY, you girls, what do I look like?" Bessie Bunter asked excitedly.

"A flour-sack!" retorted Leila Carroll laconically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was carnival morning at Pinebay Holiday Camp.

And the camp was in a ferment of excitement as it prepared for the great pageant.

It required an hour yet before the procession would begin, though it was known that Lady Ivy Overbee, who was to judge the beauty competition, had already arrived. In the Purple lines Ada Finch & Co. were feverishly dressing for their Marie Antoinette turn out; in the Greens, Chrissie Longmore & Co. for the Neptune stunt they hoped would win the prize.

And inside and outside their own chalets—those nearly dressed finishing their costuming in the sunlight on the grass—the busiest preparations of all were going on with Babs & Co.

Enger and excited they were as they donned their clothes. Everything was fine. Last night had been the great dress rehearsal, with the chariot finished at last, and it had been a stunning success. Already in the camp people were saying that nobody stood a chance against Mavis Vine in the beauty competition, and Mavis herself, quivering excited, was putting in her last spell of work in the Blue Shop, polishing glasses before she joined them. As for Diana—

Only twice had Babs seen Diana since the chariot incident. On both those occasions Diana had been talking rather earnestly to Mr. Thorpe, Mavis' employer, and because Diana was the daughter of the chief director, Mr. Thorpe, of course, had been giving her an attentive ear. But nothing, apparently, had happened to Mavis as a result of those conversations, and Babs was hopeful now that Diana, having ended her ambitions in humiliation, had given up all pretensions to the throne of the beauty queen.

But they little knew Diana.

Presently she left her chalet by the back entrance, and, avoiding the revellers, stepped towards the Blue Shop. Mavis was there alone, fiercely polishing her glasses in order to get away for the excitements that lay ahead of her. In front of her, on an enormous tray, was arrayed a pyramid of glasses piled on top of each other which must have amounted to a hundred or more.

She stopped as she saw Diana, and Diana, with her most melting and charming smile, nodded casually.

"Morning!" she said brightly.

"Nice day for the carnival, isn't it? No bad feelings?" she asked.

Mavis blinked.

"Oh, no, Miss Royston-Clarke!" she said.

"Good egg!" Diana said cordially. "In the meantime, can you spare a minute? Barbara Redfern wants you.

I'll keep an eye on things for you. Anyway, you won't be a minute. But hurry!" she added urgently. "I rather think that what Babs has to say is important."

Mavis gulped. She nodded. With a friendly glance at Diana, she unfastened her apron and hurried out. Just for a moment Diana paused.

Then in two quick steps she reached that mountainous pile of glasses which stood on the counter. Viciously she caught the edge of the tray and threw it up in the air. A crash like a thunder-bolt filled the room as one gross of Mr. Thorpe's best glasses smashed in a splintering heap on the floor. Then Diana fled.

Mavis, hearing that crash before she had even reached the Blue lines, turned, with a startled gasp, and, heart in mouth, went pelting back again.

"Miss Roy—" she cried, as she flew into the shop.

But of Diana there was no sign. Then Mavis stared in horror as she saw the damage. Those glasses—pounds' and pounds' worth of glasses!

A footstep sounded. Mr. Thorpe, also startled by the sound of the crash, came in. His face turned livid as he saw the wreck.

"My glasses!" he cried. "My glasses!" For one thunderstruck moment he stood gaping. And then he glared as Diana came into the shop. "Hey, you were right!" he said, between his teeth. "I reckon this carnival business has got on this girl's nerves to such an extent that she's just not capable of attending to her work! Look at that!"

"Yoicks!" Diana said, staring with wide eyes. "How did it happen?"

"Miss Royston-Clarke, please!" Mavis cried. "Tell him! You were in the shop when it happened! You must know!"

Diana bridled. "Me? Are you mad! This is the first time I've been in the shop for ages!"

Mavis' eyes widened. "But—but—" she stammered feebly. "Mavis, stop that!" her manager snapped. "Don't make things worse by trying to incriminate another girl in your misdeeds! I might tell you, young lady, that if I had another girl to put in your place, I would sack you to-day—this minute! Clear this mess up!"

Mavis was in tears then. "But—but—" "Mr. Thorpe," Diana said, looking at him queerly, "can I speak to you for a moment? Outside," she added briefly, with a jerk of her head towards the door.

He followed her out, giving a backward glare at Mavis as he stepped over the threshold.

"Supposing," Diana ventured, "I could bring another girl here?"

"Hey? Bring her!" he invited. "Bring her now! She can have the job at once. And as soon as she arrives, Miss Vine goes!"

Diana laughed as she strode away. What a break! Mavis was sacked at last! Mavis, no longer a servant of the camp, had no further connection with the camp and was no longer eligible to compete in the beauty competition. She'd done it! What now could Babs say—or do?

And better than anything else, she had secured Mavis' job for little Jenny.

"AND YOU say Diana was in the shop?" Barbara Redfern asked. Miserably, white-faced Mavis nodded. "Yes. But she denied it, of course, and—and—oh, Miss Redfern, over

seventy of those glasses were broken!"

The scene was Chalet No. 13, where Mavis, after clearing up the mess in the Blue Shop, had come to dress. Still with traces of tears in her eyes, she had just retailed to Babs & Co. the particulars of the disaster. Babs' face was grim.

"Just the trick Diana would play!" she said. "Mavis, you can't afford to worry now. We're all relying on you! This is just one of Diana's dirty little tricks to make things rotten for you, but we'll clear it up—believe me!"

Rather grimly Babs strode out of the chalet. Rotten, beastly trick, that! Still, Diana wasn't going to get away with it!

She reached Diana's door. From behind it came Diana's excited voice.

"Yes, Jenny. You see, I'm wearing your mascot," she said. "Already it has brought me luck. And by-and-by, Jenny, I've got some wonderful

way—and Diana knew that, with Mavis sacked, the Blues were utterly stranded for a beauty queen.

Very keenly Babs eyed her. "I see!" she said. "I see!"

But though Diana did not guess it, Babs' brain was working like lightning. So far, at least, Mavis knew nothing of her dismissal. Good—good!

Rather to Diana's astonishment, she said, very humbly, and very meekly:

"If you'll wait here, Diana, I'll bring them to you."

Babs scuttled away. But she did not even go into the hut. She went instead to Bessie Bunter.

"Bessie—quickly—I want you—to do some ventriloquising!" she cried. "See Diana's chalet over there?"

"Y-yes, Babs!"

"Right! We've got to get her out of it—see? Kid her into that empty chalet there. I'll be ready when Diana



SWEPT away by her own wild fury, Diana did not stop to think. With a savage heave, she sent the tray of glasses crashing to the floor. That'd get Mavis the sack! That'd put that cat in her place. Meanwhile, Mavis heard the startling sound of breaking glass as she hurried off.

news to break to you—yes, I have! I've fixed you up with a job at the camp."

Babs started back. Hallo, what was this?

Came Diana's silvery laugh. Then the door opened, and she stepped out into the sunshine, immediately seeing Babs. Not a whit, however, did Diana look taken aback. She gaily smiled.

"Hallo! Just coming to see you!" she said cheerfully. "Got the beauty queen things ready for me?"

Babs' eyes glimmered. "Diana, you know that Mavis is our beauty queen."

"Is she?" Diana laughed. "I don't think so. Mavis, you see, dear Barbara, is no longer associated in any way with this camp. In a minute I'm going to take her successor to Mr. Thorpe, and then the news will be official."

Babs stared. Now she saw the full cunning of Diana's scheming, and her blood boiled. So Diana had got her

steps into it. Imitate her father, or something. Understand, Bessie?"

Bessie did, though as yet she did not understand Babs' object.

Diana, on the steps, was laughing as she waited for Babs.

And then she jumped as her father's voice suddenly spoke from the empty chalet.

"Gad, but Diana will be surprised to see me! Don't let her know I'm here."

Diana chuckled. So her father thought he'd give her a surprise, did he? The surprise would be on the other foot.

With a soft laugh Diana stepped across to the chalet. Rather small it was, with the windows still shattered from the outside. She pushed open the door and looked in.

"Curmudge," she said. "Curmudge, you old—"

And then she jumped as a hand suddenly shoved her in the back, thrusting her into the room. Just in time she turned as the door slammed—to see Barbara Redfern's face. Then the door was locked!

It Just Wouldn't Work Out!



"LINE up this way! Roman chariot for the fore!" Barbara Redfern sang. "Everybody in position, Mabs?"

"Everybody!" Mabs laughed happily. "And, Babs, look at Mavis!"

But Babs was looking at Mavis. Everybody was looking at Mavis. Flushed, happily smiling, she stood in her royal robes in the chariot, holding the reins. Behind her were lined up the gladiators, the centurions, the Ancient British slaves and manacled Christians, and behind them, on a white steed, was Nero, a crown of laurels on his head, a shining sceptre in his hand.

For the great procession was about to start, and Mavis, unmindful of the fate which overhung her, restored now by sheer excitement to good spirits, was the queen of the whole pageant.

While Diana—
In the chalet Diana was raging. And Jenny, sitting quietly in Diana's luxury chalet, heard those noises and went to the door to investigate.

"Dash it, let me out!" came a furious yell.

Jenny jumped.
"Miss Diana!" she cried.
Tremblingly she hobbled to the chalet, turning the key which was in the lock. Diana, flushed and furious, stared out at her.

"Tricked!" she cried. "Tricked by that cat Babs! The procession's on!" Diana gritted, as a burst of cheering floated across the camp. "It's started, with that cat Mavis in my place! But come on, Jenny, she's not going to get away with it!"

She started forward. Jenny hobbling on her crutch, followed her.

On she tore, outstripping the following Jenny. Now she saw the crowd lining the procession's route. Now she reached them and struggled through. And now—there was Mavis, standing in the chariot, the glistening procession behind her.

For a moment Diana stood stock-still, then she rushed forward.

There was a shout.
"Hey! What are you doing?"
But Diana did not heed; did not care. Into the lines she ran, up to the Roman chariot, to catch at the foremost horse's head, bringing it to a standstill. Mavis, startled, pulled on the reins.

"Miss Royston-Clarke—"
"Get out of that!" Diana cried.
"Get out of it! Another girl—Jenny Smith—"

And then she jumped as a sudden piercing shriek rent the air, and Jenny, who had forced her way to the forefront of the crowd, dropped her crutch and came rushing forward.

"Jenny, what—" Diana started.
"Diana, you—you wonder!" Jenny cried. "Diana—oh, Diana, why didn't you tell me of this lovely surprise? Madge!" she panted up at Mavis Vine, who, looking at her in the queerest, most astounded way, seemed to reel.
"Oh, Madge, don't you recognise me? I'm your sister Jenny!"

"What?" Diana cried.
"Her sister," Jenny said. "Oh dear! And I thought she was killed in that accident! Madge—Madge—"

Mavis, her face transformed by a suddenly wonderful new light, clambered down from the chariot, and with a sobbing "Jenny, it's all come back!" threw herself into the other's arms.

Diana was dazed, stricken. So, too, were Babs & Co., as they gathered round. Mavis was openly sobbing now, but the tears were tears of joy.

"Jenny!" she said again. "Jenny! Babs, it's wonderful—wonderful! And—and to think that Diana—" She gulped. "Babs, I haven't told you yet, but four years ago I was with my sister in a fearful railway smash. I was picked up and taken to hospital, but could never remember anything—not even my own name. After that I was sent to a home for lost girls, and it was there that some people named Vine adopted me, and seeing that I had no name of my own I took theirs. And now—"

"Phew!" Babs said, and stared at Diana. "And you guessed this, Diana?" she asked.

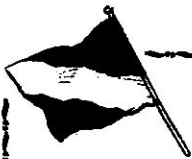
Diana was still too bemused to speak.
"Diana did it! Diana must have guessed it!" Jenny cried radiantly. "That's why she brought me here! That's why—and—but look! Oh, look!" she breathed, raising her arms. "My crutches—I don't need them! You see, Diana?"

Diana did see. She felt utterly crushed, utterly miserable, somehow—and yet she also felt the beginning of a burning bout of shame. The most frightful shock in the world had restored Jenny's lost health and vitality. The most amazing coincidence in the world had given Jenny back that sister she had loved, lost, and mourned. In a way she had been responsible for both accidents—but what a callous, underhand motive had inspired her!
"And—and we owe it all to Diana!" Jenny cried.

"Oh, Jenny, yes!" Babs cried. "This will be the story of the day! Diana, where are you going?" she added.

But Diana did not reply. Straight to Mr. Thorpe she went.

"I've come to tell you," she said, "that I broke your glasses this morning. I broke them deliberately. I broke them because I was just a mad, jealous cat, and here's the money for them. And I want to tell you," she added, while that worthy blinked in



THE FLAG OF HONOUR

at Pinebay Holiday Camp. And what exciting tussles take place between Babs & Co. and a party of rival girls for its possession. Everything is perfectly straightforward, too—until Janet Jordan starts to cheat. And it wasn't really Janet's fault, for—

"SHE HAD TO LET DOWN HER CHUMS!"

There was a very dramatic and important reason, as you'll see next week; a reason connected with a mysterious old house called No Man's Manor. Be sure not to miss this magnificent COMPLETE Hilda Richards story, for it contains plenty of holiday fun, as well as excitement.



astonishment, "that if you even think of sacking Mavis Vine I'll use all my influence with my father to get your shop taken out of the camp altogether!"

She rushed out, then faltered to a stop. Babs, Mabs, and Marjorie were rushing towards her.

"Diana!" Babs faced her. "About Mavis—"

"It—it's all right," Diana said unsteadily. "That's fixed up. Mavis isn't sacked, if that's what you mean. Oh, hang it, I don't know what's the matter with me!"

Babs smiled.
"Silly old Firebrand Diana!" she said. "But we understand—I think. Di, what a goose you are! Come along!" Babs urged. "The procession's ended and the beauty competition is going to be held now! We shall want your vote—for Mavis!"

Diana gulped. Vote for Mavis! Well, that was one thing she could do to make up for her past mistakes.

She went along to the great ball-room, gleaming with decorations. Everybody had crowded into it, and the beauty queens, Mavis among them, were lined up on the platform, Jenny in a place of honour in the wings. When the voting cards came round, Diana hesitated just a moment before scoring her cross against the Blues entry, and when they were collected she smiled at Babs, who happily smiled back. Then, they all waited anxiously, until at last Lady Overbee rose.

"I have pleasure to announce, ladies and gentlemen, that Miss Mavis Vine, of the Blues, is the winner!" she declared.

"Hurrah!" cheered Babs & Co.
"Speech, speech, speech!"

Mavis, smiling, came forward.
"Thank you," she said, "thank you. I'm very happy to have won the prize, but I want to tell you about an even greater happiness which has come my way this day. That happiness," she said, "is entirely due to Miss Diana Royston-Clarke!"

"Hurrah!" cheered Babs. "Go on, Mavis!"

And Mavis told the story, while Jenny, wide-eyed and smiling, stood at her side. Everybody listened; everybody gasped; and at the end of it a great roar went up. Then there was a shriek for Diana.

"Diana!" cried Babs, and blinked. "My hat, she's gone! Wait a minute, everybody; I'll go and fetch her!"

She rushed off to Diana's chalet, guessing the welter of emotions which must have urged the Firebrand's unseen exit. As she reached the chalet she saw Diana emerging, bag in her hand.

"Diana," Babs cried, "we want you! Where are you going?"

"Home!" Diana snapped. "This camp will be happier without me in it! Good-bye, Babs. Give my love to Jenny," she added, as she stepped into her car, "and give my love to Madge. Tell her, if she can, not to think too badly of the girl who tried to ruin her show. That's all. See you in the new term," she added, as she banged the door, and then she barked an order to the chauffeur.

Babs, standing still, shook her head as the car purred away.

Funny, queer, stormy Diana, out of whose harm had come so much good. Queer girl! Would anybody ever understand Diana? she wondered.

Would Diana ever understand herself?

She turned on her heel and went back to join in the revelry.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Superb Opening Chapters of Our Wonderful-Girl Detective serial



Valerie Drew's HOLIDAY MYSTERY

That Weird Sound in the Ruins!

"WOULDN'T this place make the perfect setting for a real mystery!" reflected Valerie Drew, the famous girl detective, as she strolled happily through the dusk. "Flash, it almost seems a pity we're coming to Sunnylands Farm in search of nothing more than a cheery holiday!"

The Alsatian dog trotting briskly ahead of her along the woodland path turned at the sound of his beloved mistress' voice.

Running back at once, he gave her hand an eager, affectionate lick. Then, with his noble head held on one side, his pointed ears erect and his tongue lolling he regarded Valerie with inquiring eyes which were already beginning to shine greenishly in the gathering darkness.

Evidently, he decided, she didn't want him particularly after all!

Turning his head, Flash stiffened excitedly. Then, letting out a strangled yelp of delight, he plunged noisily back into the bracken, racing in pursuit of a rabbit he had just espied.

Valerie Drew laughed softly to herself.

She loved to see her pet enjoying himself so thoroughly.

Luckily there was no need to feel the least bit squeamish where Flash's "hunting" trips were concerned. His only idea seemed to be to give a rabbit a run for its money. He had never been known to catch one.

"Perhaps he's wiser than to be always looking out for mysteries," Valerie told herself with a whimsical smile. "So that's Sunnylands Farm just over there! It looks great! Wonder if it really deserves the good name everyone gives it?"

Valerie certainly hoped so.

Having just finished several difficult cases, she was thoroughly in need of a really cheery change. A visit to a "holiday farm" had sounded so delightfully new and intriguing that she had decided to try it. Sparkling violet eyes reflected her enthusiasm for any fun that would be going.

She could see the farmhouse right ahead of her now, lying at the head of a large clearing in a thickly wooded valley. Its wide, drooping thatched roof gave it a most romantic appearance in the twilight. Lights twinkled brightly at many of its leaded windows.

By

ISABEL NORTON

In addition, several smaller buildings were grouped around it. One of them, Valerie knew, was certain to be the attractively converted barn in which dances were often held.

Yet some odd instinct turned Valerie's gaze back from the farmhouse to a dark cluster of ruins standing twenty or thirty yards distant.

She had already heard tell of the "Norman Priory." It had been some nobleman's stately grey home when Cromwell's gun-powder barrels reduced its brave structure to ruin. Now the fragmentary walls still left standing were darkly covered with ivy. There was some silent quality of romance

It was

**A PENNY TOY BALLOON,
left in the old ruins, which
told Valerie Drew that
STRANGE THINGS WERE
HAPPENING AROUND
SUNNYLANDS FARM!**

about the place which intrigued Valerie at once.

And suddenly—

"Am I dreaming?" Valerie asked herself, incredulously.

And she stopped all of a sudden, staring intently towards the ruins. For an amazing thing had happened.

A faint flicker of light had come from one of the frameless windows!

"Flash!" Valerie whispered, tensely.

Just as her pet came trotting obediently back to her side, she saw it again—a thin, wavering beam of light which danced for a moment amongst the ruins and vanished as suddenly as it had appeared.

"What the dickens!" she murmured. "Who on earth is using a flashlight in the ruins at this time of night—and why?"

Being Valerie, she immediately wanted to know more.

A grassy sward rose gently to a yawning cavity in the broken walls which was all that now remained of the

original entrance. Approaching silently, her pet keeping close to her side, Valerie stepped into the darkness beyond the arch.

A soft growl came from Flash as, from somewhere in the distance, they heard a vague scuffle of movement.

"Anyone there?" called Valerie, diving her hand into her handbag in search of the electric torch she invariably carried.

The scuffling sound immediately became more agitated.

Valerie raised her torch and pressed the switch.

The light shone brilliantly on a long series of broken stone columns, from which heavy shadows were thrown across the grass-grown floor.

In the distance, almost beyond reach of the rays of the torch, an indistinct movement became momentarily visible. Valerie had no opportunity to observe it clearly. She had merely a fleeting impression of the swirling folds of a vanishing skirt, as though it was a woman who was making that desperate rush to get away.

"Whoof!" barked Flash and, leaping forward, he went racing in pursuit of the mysterious fugitive.

Shining the light ahead of her, Valerie hastened after her pet across the broken floor. But almost at once she stopped again, for the silence of the ruins was startlingly broken.

A high-pitched moaning sound filled the air, its echoes rebounding from the broken walls as though it came from all sides at once.

It changed, as Valerie listened, into such a blood-chilling wail that it sounded for all the world like the despairing cry of some poor creature in pain.

With parted lips, a look of consternation coming into her violet eyes, Valerie flashed her torch here and there, seeking to discover its cause, and presently she stopped.

Set above an ancient doorway in a side wall of the ruins were the remains of several stout oak beams which had once supported the floor above.

Valerie had just glimpsed something on top of one of them—what looked, in the uncertain light, like the forehead of an enormous, hairless head, which sank slowly out of sight!

The moaning sound, at the same moment, died away in a last despairing gurgle, and utter silence reigned again in the ruins.

For a moment or so Valerie Drew stood irresolute after that uncanny experience. Then she pulled herself together.

"Come on, my girl," she murmured, smilingly. "If it's anything like a ghost, it's the first real one you've ever discovered. You'd better make sure where he hangs out!"

Crossing the floor, she raised herself on a convenient window ledge, which brought her almost in reach of the beam.

Slipping the lighted torch into her jumper pocket, so that its light still shone faintly upwards, she measured the distance. Then, giving a nimble leap, she managed to grasp the edge of the beam and hang on. A moment later she had drawn herself dexterously up, and was sitting on it.

As she turned her torch from side to side she immediately made an unexpected discovery.

Within a couple of feet of where she was sitting was a small tin-lid full of water. It looked quite fresh, as though placed there very recently indeed.

Valerie's brows contracted with puzzlement. How could such a simple object as that explain the uncanny sound which had just filled the ruins?

Convinced that something more important remained to be discovered, Valerie searched farther along the beam with her torch.

Suddenly her eyes narrowed with interest. Where the end of the beam was recessed into the wall there was a small cavity scarcely an inch in width. Slipping her fingers into it, she touched some soft, yielding substance, and when she drew it out, she gave a low murmur of wonderment.

It was merely the envelope of a deflated rubber balloon, its valve a specially made whistle which looked just like an ordinary squeaker.

Still fixed to the balloon was a short length of elastic which had drawn it completely into the cavity as soon as all its air had escaped.

"What a stupid trick for anyone to play!" Valerie crossly reflected. Then, stirred by a puzzling thought, she asked herself: "But what could have made it start off as it did? I'm quite certain nobody could have blown it up and got away without my seeing them. The squealing would have started as soon as they let go of the thing, and I was almost underneath it then."

She glanced back at the tin containing the water. Did that provide the clue she sought? Taking the balloon closer, she examined the end of the valve intently, finding it slightly sticky.

At once she guessed the explanation. The balloon had first been inflated to its full size, then the end of its valve filled with some soluble substance like toffee. It had then been left in position on the beam, with its sealed end resting in the little tin of water. As soon as the toffee had been sufficiently dissolved by the water, the imprisoned air had escaped, producing the sustained moaning.

"What I'd like to know next," Valerie shrewdly murmured, as she detached the balloon and put it into her pocket, "is who went to such strange lengths to play this very odd trick—and why?"

She slipped from the beam, hung suspended by her hands for a moment, then dropped lightly back to the floor. A scamper of paws at the same moment reminded her of the fugitive figure she had since forgotten about in the excitement

of making the discovery. Turning her torch, she saw Flash running eagerly towards her.

Grasped between his white teeth was something which glittered with a dull sheen in the rays of the torch.

"Goodness—a cheap, Oriental, gilt bracelet!" Valerie ejaculated, as she took it from her proud pet. "Where did you get it, boy? Quickly—show me, Flash!"

He turned at once and trotted across the floor of the ruin, glancing back frequently to make quite sure his mistress was following him. Where a wide break in the ancient wall led to a scattered pile of half-buried masonry outside, Flash lowered his nose and sniffed eagerly from side to side.

"Thanks, old boy," murmured Valerie, stooping to give her clever pet the rewarding pat he deserved.

There was evidently nothing more that he could tell her. The mystery intruder, in escaping, had dropped the bracelet at this point, and Flash had found it. Clearly then, the prank-player must be a woman. But what did it all mean? What possible reason could there have been for the wailing balloon?

With a whimsical shrug of her shoulders, Valerie slipped the bracelet into her pocket. Obviously she wanted more facts to go on.

"For the moment, old boy, I give it up," she told her pet. "It's time, anyway, that we made ourselves known at the farmhouse!"

Skirting the ruins, she approached the rambling, old-fashioned building.

She had a few moments in which to appreciate the snug, gracious folds of its roof, its picturesquely timbered front, and several dim beds full of half-seen, nodding flowers. Then, with a sudden quickening of her pulses, Valerie became aware that several windows were open, and people were leaning out of them, asking questions. The front door stood open, and shadowy figures were clustered together in the lighted hall just inside.

"What was it, Dorothy?" one voice could be heard asking.

"Surely you heard it!" another added. "It was a most unpleasant wailing sound. I'm positive it came from the ruins."

"It's time," a third person emphatically declared, "that something was done about this sort of thing!"

Valerie had by then reached the porch, and, with Flash trotting at her side, she smilingly entered the hall.

"Good-evening, everyone," she said cordially, aware that her unexpected appearance created a diversion at once. "I'm Valerie Drew. Is Miss Dorothy Dean, the hostess, around?"

A tall, attractive girl turned from the little group of people standing in the hall in evident relief. She came towards Valerie with outstretched hand. Her fair hair, brushed up from the sides, formed most attractive curls above an open, pretty face. Her manner, though brisk and capable, was pleasant, and despite her worried look, she had a quick, ready smile, which Valerie liked.

"I'm Dorothy—delighted to meet you, Miss Drew!" she declared, squeezing Valerie's hand warmly. "You couldn't have arrived at a better moment. There's a mystery puzzling us all—so sorry!" she apologised, with a hasty laugh. "You've only come for a holiday, of course—"

"Holidays can always wait where mysteries are concerned," Valerie smilingly assured her. "What's it all about, anyway?"

"Well, I don't really think there's any real mystery at all if we tell you the truth," Dorothy surprisingly confessed. "Johnny Jevons—he's one of the guests here—really ought to be more careful with his jokes. This time he's gone too far. An awful wailing sound came from the ruins—"

"Miss Drew must certainly have heard it for herself!" a sharp-featured woman put in tartly. "I call it anything but a joke myself. My little Penny is so highly strung and easily upset. And in any case I don't see how Johnny could make such an uncouthly sound as that, even if he tried. I've said all the time that something serious is being kept from us!"

Valerie gave the woman a brief scrutiny. A born trouble-maker, she decided. Her hand slipped to her pocket; taking out the balloon, she blew softly through the valve, then gently released it.

"Did you hear a sound rather like that?" Valerie asked, with a smile.

The people in the hall looked astounded as they heard a perfect reproduction of the very wail they had just been so excitedly discussing.

"Why, it's—it's only a balloon!" ejaculated the sharp-featured woman incredulously. "Merely a balloon—with a squeaker on it!"

Dorothy Dean was gazing at Valerie in blank amazement.

"Where ever did you find it, Miss Drew?" she asked incredulously.

"In the ruins," Valerie blandly explained. "I came across this queer thing more or less by accident!"

There had been a movement at the back of the hall whilst she was speaking, and, turning her head, Valerie saw that a tall, dark-haired boy had appeared.

He looked cheerfully unconcerned as, with his hands resting idly in his pockets, he came strolling towards the excited group.

Dorothy Dean's changed manner, as she saw him, caused Valerie to study him with growing interest.

"It's Johnny Jevons!" Dorothy whispered swiftly. Then, raising her voice, she added: "Johnny, I want you to meet Miss Valerie Drew. She's only just arrived—"

"What, the Miss Valerie Drew, the famous sleuth herself?" asked Johnny, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Not when I'm on holiday!" Valerie laughingly responded.

Johnny came forward to give her a warm handshake.

"You'll soon know all about me," he assured her. "I'm the bad boy of the family! If the cows moo too early in the morning, I'm usually accused of putting them up to it. But I say—" He glanced at the others, and pretended to take a nervous backward step. "What are you all looking so serious about? Don't tell me Miss Drew's come to arrest me!"

He was a very good-looking boy, and Valerie liked his frank way of meeting her gaze, while gentle leg-pulling was evidently his usual line.

But the balloon still needed explaining—and that seemed more than a joke.

"I shan't arrest you to-night, Johnny," responded Valerie, falling in with his bantering manner. "All the same, I'd like to ask you a question. With a quick movement she placed the balloon in his hand. "Ever seen one of these before?" she challenged.

Johnny gazed at it calmly for several seconds without showing any trace of surprise at all. Then, acting as though on a sudden impulse, he put the valve to his lips and blew hard.

A deep, sustained moaning sound

filled the hall the moment he removed it from his lips.

"Why, what a marvellous one!" Johnny approved delightedly. "It's the best squeaker I've ever heard!" He looked at Valerie with twinkling hazel eyes in which there was just a hint of mockery. "Miss Drew, if you're selling them, I'll buy half a dozen straight away!"

Johnny the Mystifying!

"CUP of tea, miss? I know you didn't order one, but as it's your first morning, I guessed you'd like— Oh! Is the dog quite safe, miss?"

Valerie Drew sat up briskly in bed, smiling reassurance to the dark-haired maid she beheld at her side, holding a small tray.

"Why, of course! Flash is like a lamb except when he's reason to be otherwise!" She glanced at her wrist-watch, gasped, and immediately took the proffered tray. "Nearly eight! Goodness, why I must have dropped right off again! What a lovely cup of tea! Thanks so much!"

The maid left the room, closing the door softly behind her. Valerie set the tray on the bedside table and stretched happily. Then she laughed as Flash, evidently finding her example infectious, promptly gave a prodigious yawn as though in sympathy.

"You old rascal! Why didn't you rouse me earlier?" she asked him, in mock reproof, as she sipped her tea. "I was awake early enough first time, too, when the birds all started singing. Then the cocks started crowing, and the cows mooing—they don't mean us to forget we're on a farm now, my boy!"

Not, of course, that Valerie wanted to forget it!

A warm enthusiasm for the holiday she was starting to-day filled her as she gazed around the pretty room. She had never slept in a more comfortable bed. At the leaded windows, which were wide open, bright chintz curtains were stirring in the warm, clean air. The furniture, picturesquely old-fashioned, glistened in the sunlight which lay in golden bars across the floor. The blue sky gave promise of an idyllic day.

Leaving out of bed as the maid returned with her can of hot water, Valerie washed and dressed at top speed.

Not only did she want to be down as soon as possible, to discover what her fellow-guests were planning to do for the day; she wanted to see more of Dorothy Dean.

There had been so much to attend to last night that Dorothy had had very little time to talk to her, but Valerie had heard several things about the young hostess at the farmhouse which had aroused her sympathetic interest.

It appeared that Dorothy and her mother, a very capable woman, had originally started the holiday side of the farm some months ago. Then, when her mother had suddenly been taken seriously ill two or three weeks back, Dorothy had found herself practically saddled with all the work and responsibility of the place.

Of course, she's got her Uncle Nathan, who's supposed to be helping where he can in return for living here rent free, an outspoken little woman named Mrs. Peek had explained. "That's him over there—bald head, small moustache, looking just as though he was waiting for manna to drop from the sky in front of him. Might as well set the man in the moon to help as expect anything useful from Mr. Nathan Marshall!"

As there seemed to be between twenty and thirty people staying in the farmhouse, Valerie knew that the job of management was anything but a light task for one girl to see through alone.

"To say nothing of having to cope with practical jokes, which threaten to upset the whole apple-cart!" Valerie shrewdly reflected, as she recalled the mystifying reception which had awaited her last night. "I wonder if Johnny Jevons was to blame for the balloon?"

Two puzzling facts, however, remained to disturb that theory. One was that Johnny had a reputation for owing up when he was caught. The other was the undoubted presence of a woman in the ruins—the owner of the gilt bracelet Flash had found.

Dressed in well-cut slacks and a cheerful striped jumper, Valerie stood for a few moments before the mirror, thoughtfully putting a few finishing touches to her hair, then left the room and ran downstairs.

member her quite well. She was in the hall last night when I arrived. Had a lot to say, too! She was the one who was so sure I must have heard the wailing in the ruins for myself!"

"That's the lady!" agreed Dorothy. "Well, now she says it's upset her kids, and they've both had nightmares, and she's threatened to go somewhere else if Johnny's japes don't stop!"

"So you're convinced it really was Johnny?" Valerie said.

Dorothy's eyes opened wider. "Why, who else could it have been, Val?" she asked. "You see— Oh!" She sprang up with a little gasp as she happened to observe the clock. "Half-past eight, and I haven't rung the gong yet! 'Scuse me, Val! There'll be a fresh rumpus if they have to wait for brekker!"

Valerie watched her dash off to the kitchen to make quite sure everything was ready before the guests were summoned to the long, raftered dining-



WITH a quick movement Valerie placed the mysterious balloon in Johnny's hand. "Ever seen one of these before?" she challenged, and wondered—was his coolness all a pose?

The raftered entrance-hall, with its polished brass wall ornaments, looked most attractive with the sun shining in through the open doorway. Bidding Flash run outside by himself, Valerie crossed the hall. Through the windgaws of a little office, built at the back of it, she saw Dorothy Dean.

The fair-haired young manageress of Sunnylands Farm was obviously lost in thought. With an instant sympathy, Valerie noticed the set expression on her pretty face. Something was worrying her—perhaps gravely. She tapped lightly on the door.

"Hallo, Miss Drew!" Dorothy cried, turning with a start and smilingly throwing the door open. "Slept well?"

"Toppingly, Dorothy! And I'm Val to you, in future, please!" said Valerie, stepping into the office. "What's the trouble? Won't the total come right?" she chaffed, glancing at a page of figures on the desk.

Dorothy sighed heavily. "I'm afraid you've just caught me having a fit of the blues, Val," she confessed. "I've been seeing Mrs. Croby, and she always manages to upset me."

Valerie nodded sympathetically. "Mrs. Croby!" she mused. "I re-

room, which was one of the farm's most attractive features.

The girl detective was wearing an approving smile as she went in search of her pet.

She liked Dorothy very much. Her cares were heavy ones for such young shoulders, yet she was obviously loath to complain about them. Valerie felt a keen desire to help her as much as she could.

"Must keep an eye on Johnny," she decided as she joined the other guests, who appeared as though by magic as soon as the gong rang.

Several Clues

VALERIE found it quite simple to watch the mystery boy. Wearing a bright, striped blazer, decorated with a big school crest, he came cheerfully into the dining-room and affected to look amazed as he saw Valerie already seated at one of the long tables.

"Uncle Nathan!" he ejaculated, addressing Dorothy's spectacled relative, who had briskly started on his porridge. "How on earth did Miss Drew manage to get out of the plane?"

"Eh?" Uncle Nathan, as they all called him, dabbed his lips with a table napkin and looked at Johnny wonderingly. "What do you mean? How could Miss Draw possibly be inside a piano?" he asked innocently.

There was a sudden, expectant silence in the dining-room. Valerie guessed that one of Johnny's witticisms was coming, and Uncle Nathan had obviously been chosen as the one most likely to be taken in by it.

"Why, s'easy!" said Johnny, as he sat down and gave Valerie a cheerful, boyish grin. "Valerie was in it trying to solve the mystery of the lost chord!"

Merry laughter rose from all the tables, Valerie joining in as heartily as any. And she loved the cheerful holiday atmosphere at the farmhouse, which revealed itself as the meal proceeded.

Everyone was making plans for spending the day as happily as possible, and there seemed no lack of diversions to occupy the visitors.

Valerie was standing on the sunny porch after breakfast, watching the various parties set off in high spirits on their various trips, when a voice behind her hissed:

"Got all their finger-prints yet?"

She turned immediately, to see Johnny Jevons. A boyish grin lit his face; his eyes were twinkling with mischief.

Valerie laughed.

"You again?" she exclaimed.

Valerie couldn't make up her mind about him at all. He was the cheerful sort of young fellow one liked instinctively. And yet if he had been responsible for the disturbance last night, his jokes certainly couldn't be called harmless.

"Johnny, can you be serious just for a moment?" she asked.

"Can't say," Johnny answered. "I've never really tried!"

Valerie smiled.

"Make an effort this time," she urged. "Dorothy isn't very pleased about that wailing in the ruins last night, and I don't blame her. How much do you know about it?"

The expression in Johnny's eyes changed. Valerie shrewdly realised that he was by no means pleased by her blunt question. But it was evidently not his nature to say as much.

"Now, now, Miss Drew!" he murmured, reproachfully. "The best detectives don't ask the wicked criminals to help them as much as that! Sorry—that's Ben calling!"

A shade of puzzlement creased Valerie's brow as she watched him speeding away across the farmyard.

Whether he was annoyed at being suspected, ashamed to own up because he was conscious of having carried a joke too far, or merely indifferent one way or the other, she could only surmise.

But one fact did remain very uncomfortable in Valerie's mind.

The "joke," whoever was responsible for it, had been in bad taste, and had caused a lot of worry for a girl who already had more than enough on her hands.

At the busiest time of the year, when Dorothy naturally hoped to make as much money as possible, the last thing she wanted was to have guests suddenly walking out and leaving empty rooms she had no chance of filling for several days, at least.

"Here, Flash!" murmured Valerie, as she watched her pet, intrigued by all the new odours of the farm, trotting around the yard. "I think we'll give the fun a miss this morning and see what the ruins look like by daylight."

She was puzzled and disturbed by the way her mystery was deepening.

For if Johnny was not the guilty party, it meant that some unknown person had deliberately set out to raise a very unpleasant scare at the farm.

That suggested Dorothy had a secret foe!

"Very odd," Valerie reflected, "when she's the sort of girl who shouldn't have an enemy in the world."

The ruins looked picturesquely attractive in the morning sunlight. The interior naturally presented a very different appearance from the impression Valerie had received by her flashlight last night. The ragged ivy-clad walls were broken everywhere, and, except for the few remaining beams overhead, the place was completely open to the sky.

On the beam to which Valerie had climbed last night the little tin lid was still as she had seen it last, though naturally the water had all dried out by now. Visiting the spot where Flash had picked up the gilt bracelet, Valerie searched in vain for any other clue to the mystery woman who had made her escape.

She was on the point of reluctantly abandoning her exploration of the place when she saw the spectacled figure of "Uncle Nathan" carrying a large notebook, wander into the ruins.

"Er—Miss Drew, I believe," he said, looking at Valerie in vague recognition. "Not disturbing you, I hope? I'm always trying to reconstruct this place and write a history of it. You don't mind if I take a few measurements, do you?"

Still moving in the same dreamy way, giving her the impression that he never really expected anyone to reply to his remarks, he produced a footrule and started to run it along one of the ancient walls.

Not anxious, at present, for her own interest in the ruins to be noticed, Valerie politely excused herself and strolled away into the adjoining woods.

There were so many pleasant paths to be followed that fully a couple of hours had elapsed before she found herself back in the vicinity of the farm. Only a few trees stood between her and the clearing when, suddenly aware of figures ahead of her, she gave Flash a cautioning signal and sharply stopped.

Standing in the shade of a bush were two people in earnest conversation. One was Johnny Jevons, his manner quite serious now. The other, to Valerie's great surprise, was a woman—a woman with deeply bronzed features and raven-black hair, dressed like a gipsy!

Valerie regarded them in silent wonderment. What possible reason could Johnny have for meeting this strange woman in what appeared to be such a secret manner?

The woman was evidently on the point of finishing what she had to say. Raising one hand suddenly, she patted Johnny warmly on his shoulder, then turned to hurry away.

Valerie looked thunderstruck.

Gleaming on the woman's wrist, clearly visible as she raised her hand, was a gilt bracelet. And it appeared, at that distance, to be the exact counterpart of the one Flash had picked up last night!

"So Johnny isn't quite all he appears to be!" Valerie murmured, and treading deliberately on a dry twig which snapped smartly under her foot, she stepped from amongst the trees just as Johnny was about to hurry off in the direction of the farmhouse.

"Golly, it's the young lady sleuth!"

ejaculated the boy, promptly throwing up his hands in a gesture of exaggerated horror. Then a slow grin came over his face, a twinkle of amusement dawned in his eyes. "Were you watching me with aunty all the time?" he asked.

Valerie looked at him keenly. "Once more he seemed to be laughing at her,"

"She looked like a gipsy to me," Valerie replied levelly.

"She was, too; so it's a fair cop, Valerie!" declared Johnny. "I'll come clean this time. She's been telling my fortune."

"Oh! A nice one?" asked Valerie. The same attractive grin lit Johnny's face, though the hint of mockery remained in his eyes.

"Yes, if it comes true," he replied. "But look here, as you're looking for clues, the very next one I come across I'll let you have!"

Valerie felt completely baffled as she returned with him to the farmhouse.

If the bronzed gipsy woman was really last night's mystery visitant to the ruins, it seemed a highly suspicious circumstance to have found Johnny in conversation with her. Yet Valerie, a shrewd judge of character, was still convinced that Johnny was no more than amused because he had been discovered in the strange woman's company.

Deciding to go to her room to see whether her luggage had been sent up from the station, Valerie almost collided with a figure coming along the passage. She stopped face to face with Mrs. Crosby, mother of the two children alleged to have had nightmares. Mrs. Crosby appeared to be in a very bad temper indeed.

"It's disgraceful!" she fumed, evidently only too ready to tell her troubles to anyone she met. "I'm certain someone has been in my room since I left it, interfering with all my things. The place is most inefficiently run. Dorothy is far too young and inexperienced to be in charge."

Feeling unaccountably depressed, Valerie went on up to her room. There was some mystery about the farm, and it was deepening, yet so far it baffled her completely. There were contradictions everywhere. She felt she could get hold of nothing tangible at all.

Having finished her unpacking, Valerie left the room, and was descending the stairs when a voice unexpectedly hailed her.

"Valerie! Hurrah! Been looking for you everywhere!"

Valerie glanced quickly down to the hall. Johnny, his face wreathed in smiles, was waiting for her.

"Hsst!" he said, suddenly lowering his voice mysteriously. "I told you I'd help you, Val, didn't I, if you promised not to give me away? Well, here's something right in your line. I picked it up just outside the house only a few moments ago. What do you think of this?"

He opened his hand as he spoke, revealing a crumpled piece of paper. Still unable to decide whether he was again leg-pulling, or really in earnest this time, Valerie took it in her hand and opened it. And this, printed in heavy capital letters, was what she read:

"To-night at ten exactly. You must not fail this time!"

THERE, now! Wasn't that one of the loveliest first instalments you've ever read? Thrilling and intriguing, too. But just wait until you have followed more of the detective adventures of Valerie and her clever pet. Further gripping chapters next week.

COMPLETE this week. Another fascinating story featuring—

KIT OF RED RANCH



"JUST you leave the house to me and go and have a real good holiday," said Kit, to hard-working Meg. "I'll make your dad and brothers appreciate you!" So Meg went; Kit took charge. And then the trouble started!

Kit Tackles A Handful

LETTER for you, Meg: It got delivered wrongly to Red Ranch, so I brought it along, thinking maybe it might be important."

Kit Hartley, daughter of the boss of Red Ranch, held out the letter to Meg Graham as she spoke, and, by the eager light in the other's eyes, Kit realised that the letter was indeed important.

"Thanks for troubling, Kit!" said Meg, wiping her hands on her apron before slitting the envelope. "It's from my Aunt Minnie. Now you're here, do come in, and try some of the pastries I've made for dad and the boys."

It was mid-morning, and Kit was tempted to comply, especially as she knew what delicious pastries Meg made. Meg was a domesticated girl who kept house for her father and her two brothers, Ned and Tom. Although she was little more than Kit's age, she shouldered all the cares of a fair-sized shack, and had done so ever since her mother had died a few years ago.

Kit stepped across the threshold, and, smiling, sniffed at the most tempting, agreeable smell of cooking from the kitchen.

"Gee, I can't resist your pastry, Meg!" she admitted. "Wish I were as well a cook as you! It'd go mighty hard for dad, I'm thinking, if I did all his cooking!"

But Kit was really quite a good cook, as Meg knew, and she said so. She had a natural pride in her pastry, however, and, before reading her letter, she gave Kit a sample from the tray. Delicious jam tarts were always welcome, especially accompanied by milk.

"I'm happy, Meg. You get busy with the letter," said Kit, perching on a table and munching one of the jam tarts.

She looked about her as Meg read the letter. There was never even a hint that such a thing as dust existed,

and every room in the place looked as though it had just been turned out a moment before.

All at once Meg gave a little gasp. "Hallo! Good news? Something surprising?" asked Kit.

"Surprising? Well, yes; but it's a crazy idea!" said Meg, a little breathlessly. "What do you think? Aunt wants me to go and stay with her a few days—in the city! My, wouldn't I love to!"

Kit had never seen Meg look radiant before; she usually wore a strained, care-worn expression. But at this instant, she was as young and as gay-looking as any girl of her own age.

"Why, Meg, you must go!" Kit said. "Only a few days! The house won't fall to bits in that time!"

But Meg looked solemn again, and shook her head.

"Ah, it isn't just that!" she said, with a sigh. "There's dad and the boys. Who'd get their meals and look after them? No, I can't possibly go, as aunt should know, though it's mighty sweet her asking me."

Kit finished her pastry, and furrowed her brow as she surveyed Meg, who was obviously fighting a battle between duty and pleasure. Duty, as usual, was winning.

Suddenly Kit came to a decision.

"Meg, you're forgettin' something," she smiled. "You're not the only one who can cook and keep house. Here I am, a plain cook and a good sweeper and duster. You go, put on your things. Reckon I can do the needful for your dad and brothers for a few days."

Meg's amazement made Kit chuckle. "You, Kit? But—but why should you?"

"Jes' because it'll be fun," smiled Kit, "and give you a holiday as well. Reckon keeping house has lost the novelty for you, but not for me. Just what I'd like. C'mon, Meg! Get busy

with the packing. There's a train leaves in an hour's time."

Kit had a persuasive way with her, and, as Meg was already heavily tempted by the thought of getting to the city for a few days, she won the girl over. Very soon Meg was busy packing, her eyes shining with excitement. She had not many frocks, but there were two special ones she had made in case she could manage to get to one of the socials, so they were brought out of their tissue-paper and packed.

"Gee, but I can't run off without saying good-bye to dad and the boys!" gasped Meg, when at last she stood ready to go, pink-cheeked and sparkle-eyed.

"Leave 'em a note," suggested Kit, who had an idea that Meg's dad might make some protest.

If he protested when she had gone it wouldn't matter. Too late then to prevent Meg having the needed holiday. "Waal, maybe you're right," said Meg; and, with shaking hand, she sat down and scrawled an explanatory note. "And, Kit, don't forget that dad likes his steaks well done, and the boys on the raw side. Oh, and there's clean linen in the cupboard!"

Kit laughed. "Leave it to me. I'll straighten it all out somehow," she said.

Twenty minutes later she was waving good-bye to Meg at the station. She waved until Meg was lost to sight, and then turned back to the shay and Daisy, the horse, who stood nibbling grass.

"Maybe that's what the Grahams will be eating soon!" chuckled Kit. "But, shucks, my cooking's all right, although, maybe, not as good as Meg's!"

Kit called in at Red Ranch, and, as her own dad was not to be found, she left him a note explaining what had happened, and saying she hoped that he did not mind.

Back at the Grahams' shack, Kit took stock of the larder, and then roamed over the house. But very soon Tom Graham arrived, a burly, good-looking fellow with a pleasant smile.

"Why, Kit!" he exclaimed in surprise.

He walked into the kitchen, saw the pastries, and picked up one in each hand. But Kit looked down at his boots; they were coated in mud. Right across the clean floor where he had walked were mud-marks.

"Hey! Look!" said Kit. "Mud!" "Mud?" he asked, glancing down: then he laughed. "Reckon the rains have made it muddy," he admitted. "Pretty fine pastries these!"

By
Elizabeth Chester

But Kit, arms akimbo, was surveying the mud-marks.

"Do you usually come in with the mud on your boots, Tom?" she asked grimly.

"Eh? Waal, only when it's muddy," he said easily. "Where's Meg?"

"Gone!"

"Gone? Where?" asked Tom.

Before Kit could answer him the door opened again, and Ned looked in. He was tall and lean, and rather solemn as a rule; but at the moment he was smiling.

"Mighty funny thing's just happened," he said. "Hear me laffing minute ago? I was walking in through the yard, when somehow I caught my shoulder on the clothes-line. Durn me if the whole outfit didn't go right down in the mud! Laugh! You should see my shirt now!"

Tom chuckled, but Kit did not; as the one who'd have to re-wash the clothing, she couldn't see the funny side of it.

"Where is Meg, by-the-by?" asked Ned, his smile dying.

"Just what I'm asking; I want the sleeve of this jacket mended," said Tom. "Seen her, Kit?"

Kit looked at the torn sleeve, at the mud, and thought of the washing that

was in need of being re-tubbed. Her Good Samaritan work was starting right now!

"Meg? Well, I guess she's gone," she said slowly.

"Gone!" jerked out the brothers, round-eyed. "Gone where?"

"She's—"

Once again Kit was interrupted—this time by Meg's bronzed, bearded dad. He opened the door and looked in.

"Meg!" he called. "You thar? Two pards of mine have dropped in, so see there's enough to eat, and plenty more, lass! And—Hallo! Where is she?" he asked.

Kit faced the three of them, as conscious that something was amiss, they looked about them in the kitchen.

Washing to do, jacket to mend, mud to clear up—and two extra for dinner. Meg had gone just when she was needed most. If there was ever a time when the Graham menfolk could not regard Meg's absence lightly, it was surely now.

But the news had to be broken, and Kit fetched Meg's note and handed it to Mr. Graham.

"Meg's gone," she said briefly. "And here's the low-down, telling you all about it. But before you all blow up, count ten!"

And she held her breath. Now for it!

They Needed a Lesson

KIT watched Mr. Graham as he read the note. He looked stunned. Tom looked bewildered, and Ned, looking over his dad's shoulder, wrinkled his brow.

At last Mr. Graham lowered the note, his face dark.

"Meg's gone—just walked off—gone to the city!" he gasped. "Waal, can you beat it? And me with two pals coming to dinner!"

"And this jacket of mine to mend!" said Tom.

"Yeah—and how about my shirt that fell in the mud?" asked Ned.

"And the other washin'?"

They all looked to Kit for the answer.

"Take it easy, boys," said Kit coolly. "I'm here, and I reckon I can mend jackets all right, and wash shirts, and cook for two extra. Don't get excited. If ever a girl needed a holiday, I reckon Meg was that girl. But it's all O.K. I'm in charge."

For several minutes the men argued. They were shocked by the suddenness of Meg's going, for she had always been there at their beck and call, and none of them had ever thought of her having or needing a holiday.

However, she had gone, and, whatever they might have to say to her when she came back, there was nothing they could do about it now.

Kit did take charge. She put Tom's jacket aside for mending, went out to the yard and picked up the washing, replacing, on the line those articles that had not suffered in the fall, and taking indoors those that had.

"H'm! Mighty nice of you to rally round, Kit," grunted Mr. Graham. "But I'll have a word or two to say to Meg when she comes back."

He went out, followed by Ned, but Tom loitered, waiting for his jacket.

"While you're waiting, Tom," said Kit, "you might get busy scraping up that mud on the floor."

Tom, who had taken up a paper to read, stared at her in astonishment.

"Me?" he said.

"You," nodded Kit. "You're not telling me that you let poor Meg clean up the muddy marks you make?"

Tom frowned and gave her a queer look.

"I'm a man," he said gruffly. "I don't do housework."

"Well, who made the mud marks, anyway?" asked Kit sharply. "I'm not cleaning up dirt you bring in just because you're too lazy to clean your boots, you know."

"Oh shucks, let it stay there!" said Tom gruffly. "What's a little mud, anyway?"

"Sure. It can stay there," agreed Kit, a strange gleam in her eyes.

She found Meg's work-basket, needle, and darning wool, and tackled the sleeve, mending a three-cornered tear. "Thanks!" grunted Tom, eyeing it critically.

He shuffled out, and Kit fetched the broom. But instead of sweeping up the drying mud, she left it. If this was how he treated Meg, Tom needed to be taught a lesson.

Not being used to housework, Kit didn't find organising things too easy. She had to arrange a meal for six, and calculate how much was needed, and how long it should cook; then she

Your Editor's address is:—
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Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—I'm going to begin my chat this week with a request—or, rather, two requests in one.

I want you to write and let me know, first—what you think of the Valerie Drew serial which commences in this issue; and, secondly—how you are enjoying the grand Cliff House holiday series.

Of course, I know that a good many of you would let me know those things in any case, and in the past I've always appreciated the way I've been able to rely on your comments. But this time I want you all to write. That is, as many of you as possible.

If you do—and I can assure you that every single one of you will receive an answer, either through the post (if you enclose a stamped, addressed envelope), or in the Replies in Brief column of The SCHOOLGIRL—then I'll be the happiest Editor who ever lived.

I shall also be the busiest, too, replying to all those thousands of missives. But I shan't mind in the least.

And now let me say a few words about next Saturday's magnificent story of Babs & Co.'s exciting vacation at Pinebay Holiday Camp.

"SHE HAD TO LET DOWN HER CHUMS!"

is the title, and it features Janet Jordan.

Now, as you all know, Janet is a particularly loyal and reliable member of the famous Co. Clara's own special friend, she can always be trusted not to do anything to let her chums down.

But unfortunately Janet is compelled to let her chums down in this grand story. Time and again she is forced to do things which not only hit at Babs & Co., but also

hit at another party of girls at the camp, girls with whom the Co. are engaged in friendly rivalry.

I won't tell you more because it would spoil your enjoyment of the story, which is full of surprises. And you know how thrilling surprises can be when they come from Hilda Richards, don't you?

There's plenty of holiday fun and activity in this yarn, as well as drama and excitement, so you're in for a really lovely treat.

As usual, next week's issue will contain another delightful COMPLETE story about Kit of Red Ranch, and more of Patricia's Bright and Useful article pages.

And, of course, there will be further thrilling and intriguing chapters of Isabel Norton's splendid girl detective serial. (With heaps of thrills, I can assure you.)

Now before I say au revoir for another week, here are just three

Little Letters.

"PELLY" (Lausanne, Switzerland).—It was so lovely hearing from you, "Pelly," and I think your knowledge of our language really marvellous. Not only can you speak it fluently, but you can write it well, too. I have passed on your good wishes to the people you mention, and they all send back their very best wishes to you. Do write again, "Pelly," won't you?

SARAH CLARK (Verdun, Canada).—Delighted to know you are so fond of all our features. I will see what can be done regarding your suggestion, but I cannot make a definite promise, Sarah, naturally. Did you see the King and Queen on their tour? I've had shoals of letters from Canadian readers who did. In fact, almost every Canadian reader seems to have been lucky in that respect. Best wishes!

JOAN SLOCOMBE (Malden, England).—Well, Joan, your wish has been fulfilled in this very issue. Diana is back again in the limelight. And I am sure you will agree with me, when you have read Miss Richards' latest story, that Diana is just as powerful, sensational a character as ever. But you can't help liking her, can you? Write again whenever you like, Joan.

Well, that's all for to-day. Bye-bye until next week.

Your sincere friend,
THE EDITOR.

had to fit in the washing. How Meg had managed the place single-handed, she couldn't imagine, and her admiration for the girl became greater than ever.

But with hustling and bustling, Kit managed to have the meal cooked by one o'clock, and really good it smelled, too, although by that time she had rather lost her own appetite.

At five past one, with the table set and everything ready, she went to the door. But there was no sign of the men. At a quarter-past, she rang the large bell.

When half-past struck, and there were signs that the dinner was dangerously near being ruined, Kit could have cried with vexation.

"O.K. I'll have my own dinner!" she said grimly.

Kit started her meal, and was half through the meat course when she heard voices and footsteps. The men were arriving.

"Ha! Smell of cooking—good!" said Tom, bursting in.

Ned followed, and then came Mr. Graham and his two pards, laughing and joking, and saying how mighty hungry they were. But there was not one word of apology for their lateness.

While the guests washed, Mr. Graham took Kit aside, frowningly surveying the room.

"I don't want to seem critical, lass," he said, "but these guests are pretty big shots kind of. A muddy floor don't look so good. Meg never had a dirty floor."

"That's so," agreed Ned.

Kit did not answer them; she called Tom.

"Hey, Tom!" she said. "Yer dad doesn't like the mud you put on the floor! Thar's the broom right over in the corner. The long bit's the handle, and you use the other end!"

Then, leaving Tom gaping, and Mr. Graham and Ned shocked, she marched into the kitchen to serve up the ruined dinner. When she walked into the room again, Tom, looking sullen, was busy with the broom, while Mr. Graham and Ned watched solemn and frowning.

"If this dinner don't seem as it ought to, you must take my word that it was just dandy at one o'clock," said Kit. "And I guess one o'clock's dinner-time."

No one spoke, and in heavy silence they took their places at table when the guests came in. Kit was introduced, and Meg's absence explained.

"Meg was a mighty fine cook!" frowned Ned. "What's wrong with these taters? Seem kinda dry and burned."

"You should just have seen those same taters at one o'clock," said Kit blithely. "Gee, were they swell! I had some, so I guess I know!"

Nothing more was said about the cooking, and the conversation becoming general, the meal passed off quite well. But Kit, clearing away, was alarmed by the stack of washing-up.

Mr. Graham went out on to the veranda with his guests for a business chat, and Ned and Tom flopped down into armchairs.

"We kinder like a cup of tea after dinner, Kit," said Ned. "And as I'll be going into town, I'll be needing my shoes cleaned!"

He took them off, and put them a yard in front of him.

Going into the scullery, Kit gave a soft whistle.

"And poor Meg's been putting up with this!" she gasped. "Gee, she's ruined them—spoiled them dizzy!"

She put the water on for washing-



"Do you usually come into the house with muddy boots like those?" Kit demanded, as Tom left a trail of footprints across the floor. "Eh?" Tom said, taken aback. Kit smiled. His surprised note was as nothing to what it was going to be before she had finished.

up, and then in deep thought returned to the living-room. She took with her the box of shoe-cleaning things, and dumped it down by Ned.

"There you are, Ned," she said. "Make a nice job of them!"

"What's the idea of bringing that box in here?" asked Ned, surprised.

"For you to clean 'em—where you like," said Kit. "All the men I ever heard of clean the womenfolk's shoes when they don't keep a servant. And I suppose you two don't sort of look on your sister as a servant by any chance?"

And turning back to the kitchen, she looked round at them from the doorway with a glimmer of amusement in her eyes. Both Ned and Tom were sitting stiffly in a stunned kind of way, gaping at her.

Two minutes later, she looked into the living-room again. Ned, with scowling expression, was cleaning his boots, while Tom made playful comment.

Kit fetched a teacloth and flapped it in the air.

"Whose turn?" she asked.

"Turn?" said Tom, with a start. "For what?"

"Drying up, while I wash."

The two brothers sat with wooden expressions, dumb for a moment; then Tom stood up and regarded Kit witheringly.

"Say!" he said. "Where do you get these ideas, Kit? We're men. We don't do housework. Do you think we dried up for Meg?"

Kit eyed him in scorn.

"No, I don't. If you want to know, I think you treated her like a drudge. You made her wait on you hand and foot. Well, I said I'd do the cooking and run the house, but I didn't say I'd be a skivvy to you two. And, what's more, I'm looking to you to give me a hand. Which one will it be? You, Tom, or you, Ned?"

Tom, head up in stubborn defiance, crossed to the door. Ned eyed the teacloth and shook his head.

"Forget it!" he said. "I'm cleaning my boots, because I don't want to wear them to town dirty. But as to the washing-up—well, I guess that's your lookout, Kit!"

Kit eyed him thoughtfully in silence, and then, with a queer smile on her lips, turned into the kitchen again.

"O.K.," she said. "If that's how you feel, I know what I have to do."

Ned and Tom exchanged looks that were puzzled, for there was something mysterious in Kit's manner. But Kit did not expound. She was seething with indignation, furious that two healthy, strapping lads should expect to be waited on.

The time had come to bring the Grahams to their senses, and if things went on as Kit planned, then when Meg came back she would find her family changed—and her own life changed, too!

Sacked!

"HEY! Kit!" Kit Hartley heard the call, but she paid no heed. It was Ned calling her from his room upstairs, on her second day in charge of the Graham home. She had left the previous day, after supper, and now returned to cook breakfast.

Redwing, her loyal Redskin friend, was there, too, for as soon as she had heard what was happening, she had insisted on lending a hand.

Three more times Ned called, and Kit called back once, to show that she had heard. Two minutes later Ned, clad in breeches and shirt, looked in at the kitchen.

"Say, I've bin callin' you!" he said. "I can't find my gaubles."

"That's too bad," said Kit evenly.

"Yeah, but Meg allus came up to my room with morning tea, and put everything tidy," he said, in an aggrieved tone.

"Meg was too hard-working," said Kit. "I reckon she didn't realise you were grown up. I guess if you took the gauntlets off in your room they haven't walked out—"

Ned went stamping up to his room, and there came heavy thumping and banging sounds that told Kit the search was going on. The banging ceased suddenly, and when Ned came down to breakfast he was wearing his gauntlets.

When it came to cooking Kit knew that she could hold her own with most girls; and she could certainly fry bacon and eggs. This morning, however, she hadn't tried mighty hard. She had an idea that the boys hadn't realised just how good a cook their sister was.

Mr. Graham, Ned, and Tom looked at their breakfast, at the shrivelled bacon and brown-frilled eggs, and exchanged glances.

"Reckon you ain't much of a cook, Kit," grumbled Ned.

"Not so good as Meg," admitted Kit with a shrug. "But then, she's the finest cook for miles around."

"That's so," agreed the father, looking with disapproval at his plate.

After breakfast Kit went upstairs to make the beds. In the doorway of Ned's room she paused, staring. It looked as though there had been a free fight. Hair brushes were on the floor, a towel was on the bed, a chair was overturned, and the books from the bedside case were scattered everywhere.

"Searching for his gauntlets, eh?" mused Kit. "Well, the room can stay like it."

She made the bed, and she swept the floor, taking care to replace the hair brushes and comb and books where she had found them. Then she passed on to Tom's room.

That was almost as bad—so was Mr. Graham's—and Kit left all unnecessary litter.

At dinner-time the men arrived only ten minutes late, but they looked down their noses at the steaks. Those steaks were not as big as Meg would have grilled them.

After dinner Tom went up to his room. He came down at once, in quite a flurry.

"Hey! My room hasn't bin done!" he cried indignantly.

"It's been done; but the books, brushes, and towel are where you left them," said Kit smiling.

Ned looked at Tom, who nodded, and they both approached Kit.

"Listen!" said Tom. "I don't say as it wasn't a mighty nice idea your coming along to give a hand, but you don't seem to be a success."

Kit smiled.

"No, not like Meg," she admitted. "She's one in a thousand."

"That's so, Kit," nodded Ned. "So we've bin thinking. Mebbe you needn't trouble to come in at all."

"We'll manage," added Tom bluntly. "So if you care to go right now, Kit, there's nothing holding you back."

Kit hesitated for a moment, and then, thinking that it would do the boys good to find out just how much work there was to be done around the house, she decided that she had better go.

"O.K. Sorry I didn't suit," she said. "But you boys are mighty hard to please. Meg spoiled you. Believe me, when you find out how much is to be

done you won't be liking it so much, and you'll see how hard it was for Meg."

Kit took her hat, called to Redwing, and went. But outside doubts assailed her, and a worried frown came to her brow.

"Gee, Redwing, it'll be just too bad if those ginks make the house in a proper mess! By the time Meg comes back it may be just like a pigsty."

"Plenty bad," agreed Redwing. "But what do?"

"Yeah—what to do?" Kit mused, as they rode to the Red Ranch.

Very worried, she stayed away from the Grahams' place for the rest of that day. On the morrow, however, her patience and curiosity got the better of her, and during the morning she went to see how the men were getting on.

The door was not locked, and Kit walked in. Then she stopped.

"Gee!" she murmured.

She couldn't believe what she saw; it didn't seem real; it didn't seem possible.

On the floor stood dirty plates and dishes; ash, mud, dirty saucepans, and screwed-up newspaper, littered the place. Instead of washing-up the men had just gone on using all the crockery, and when the crockery had run out they had used tin plates.

"Never had she seen such a mess. Upstairs, the same story was told; the beds had not been made, the rooms had not been swept.

"Phew! Poor old Meg!" breathed Kit.

And grimly she went out.

"They kinda don't think, however hard she has to work," said Kit to Redwing, some minutes later, when they sat together on a grass bank. "But, gee, if she took a job in the city it wouldn't surprise me, and—"

Kit jumped up, a glint in her eyes. "Come on!" she cried excitedly.

Mounting Pete, her horse, she turned him to the station, and with Redwing following, put on pace. From the station it was possible to send a telegram, and that was what Kit did.

The telegram was to Meg, and ran: "Don't worry. Writing. But advise you getting job in town. Can you?"

It was during the afternoon that the answer came:

"What's wrong? Anxious. Can get job easily if need be. "Meg."

At the eleventh hour, Kit reckoned she had won her battle with the brothers. Like the wind she went to the Grahams, and found them busy making tea in the kitchen.

"Boys, grand news!" she cried. "Meg can get a job in the city."

"Job!"

"Meg!"

Mr. Graham, Ned, and Tom gaped at Kit.

"But—but she can't desert her own folk!" gasped the father.

"She's got her own happiness to consider," said Kit. "It's mighty hard work looking after you three, you know. What's there for her to come back to, anyway?"

"She surye'd the kitchen, while the men frowned uncertainly.

"Not what you'd call tempting, eh?" Kit went on. "I know what I'd do in your place. I'd get it mighty tidy; she's sure to come back to pack a few more of her things. Mebbe if she saw all this she wouldn't even stay for that."

Kit left them to think it over, and went back to Red Ranch. Another telegram awaited her there. It was from Meg.

"Returning this afternoon."

Fast as she could, Kit rushed back to the Grahams. She peeped through the window, but did not enter, for what she saw there sent her away smiling.

Mr. Graham was at the sink, wearing an apron, and washing-up as hard as he could; Tom was drying, while Ned was scrubbing the floor.

"BUT it can't be true, Kit. Those boys have never lent a hand yet. I've waited on them hand and foot. And dad—gee, he wouldn't know how to wash-up!"

Kit had met Meg at the station, and now they were outside the Grahams' home. Meg seemed in a confused whirl. She had had a wonderful time in the city, but at the end of it had been fretting about home. Now, having heard Kit's strange story, she was fretting all the more.

Meg, jumping down, made to run to the house, but Kit held her arm.

"Take it easy. Don't seem too eager," she said. "If you don't seem mighty keen on staying, life's going to be easier for you in future. Come on—steady!"

"Gee, it's Meg!" cried Tom, as Kit and Meg walked in.

Tom, wearing an apron, was sweeping out the sitting-room.

"Tom!" exclaimed Meg, taken aback. "Dad! Ned!" yelled Tom, in wild excitement. "She's back!"

Ned came rushing in, holding one of Meg's shoes which he had been cleaning, while his dad had a saucepan he was scouring.

"Meg!" they cried, and there was almost a fight to claim the right to hug her.

Then Mr. Graham looked at Meg sadly.

"Meg, you wouldn't go away and leave us for good!"

"We couldn't get on without you, Meg," said Tom.

"Reckon we'll make things a heap easier in future," added Ned shamefacedly.

Meg gulped, and could not speak.

"Come and see the bed-rooms!" urged Ned eagerly.

Kit slipped away. It was a family reunion, and she knew that Meg would stay, so there was no point in waiting to see how it ended.

Not until the morrow did Kit see Meg again. She found her singing and smiling, all the better for her holiday, and a whole lot better for the changed state of things in the house.

"Just dropped in to see if you can come to the dance on Saturday, Meg," said Kit.

Meg's eyes sparkled.

"Well, now, I think I can, Kit," she said. "Somehow there doesn't seem half the work there was. It's strange, but with the boys looking after their own things, and not making a mess, and helping with the washing-up—gee, I've really got time on my hands! Sure I'll come, and glad to. And—thanks a lot for everything you've done, Kit!"

That dance was only the first of a series that Meg attended, and Kit saw the difference in her. Gone were the worried lines. Meg was younger and happier. Thereafter she was the little mother still, but no longer the drudge.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

THERE will be another lovely COMPLETE story featuring Kit and Redwing in next Saturday's issue, so order your copy well in advance, won't you?