

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

THE SCHOOLGIRL

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Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



THE AMAZING
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SPEED GIRL!

Racing Thrills, and School Fun and
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CLIFF HOUSE Story.

Meet once again Barbara Redfern & Co. of Cliff House School in this exciting Long Complete story. And meet, too, a delightful Old Girl.



Their Friend, the MADCAP SPEED-GIRL!

Drama on the Track!



"NEWS! News! News! News!" announced Barbara Redfern, bursting into the Fourth Form Common-room at Cliff House School, wildly

waving a sheet of notepaper. "News from Berry Osborne, girls!"

"Babs, no?" cried Mabel Lynn.

"Babs, yes!" Barbara mimicked her dearest chum, with a laugh. "This note's just been delivered from the Drome Stadium. Gather round—everybody! I'll read it to you."

The twenty or so girls in the room eagerly thronged round the Fourth Form captain as Barbara unfolded the sheet in her hands. To judge by the expressions on their faces they were as excited as Babs herself at the news from Berenice Osborne, for "Berry" was an old favourite of Cliff House—one of its cheeriest old girls whose madcap ways, reckless generosity and pluck, had endeared her to the hearts of all.

Berry, at the moment, was the chairman of the Old Girls' committee; and Berry was also daily winning fame as a speedster on the motor racing track. Everybody at Cliff House knew that she was to compete in the forthcoming lady drivers' race at the Aerodrome Stadium.

And because the lady drivers' race coincided with the date of the opening of the new Cliff House Old Girls' club-room, Miss Primrose, the head-mistress, had made a popular decision when she had asked Berry to perform

the opening ceremony of the club. A great honour, that.

But better than the honour from Berry's admirers' point of view was the fact that during her training time at the stadium, Berry Osborne would be a guest at the school. How keenly they were all looking forward to seeing her again.

"Here we are!" Babs chuckled. "No 'dear Babs,' or anything as usual, of course. 'Whoopie!'" she read. "I've arrived, and I'm dying to see you all again! Have a mountain's own amount of work to do here, though, so will you come over as soon as you can, and have a spot of tea at the Drome? To-day's a half-holiday at the school, isn't it? Bring your gang. Undying affection. In great haste.—BERRY O."

"My hat, isn't that just like her?"

Tomboy Clara Trevlyn chuckled.

"Well, are we going, you kids?"

"Are we?" whooped Mabel Lynn.

"Wouldn't miss seeing Berry for worlds!"

"Rather not, you know!" fat Bessie Bunter beamed. "And they do serve ripping teas at the Drome! Let's go now, shall we?" she added eagerly. "We can go on our bicycles. Nothing like a good bicycle ride for sharpening the appetite!"

There was a chuckle. Everybody, of course, was eager to go. Unfortunately, however, Janet Jordan and Diana Royston-Clarke were confined to bounds, so they were out of the running; Joan Charmant and Muriel Bond and Beatrice Beverley had already accepted an invitation elsewhere, and so had Peggy Preston and Sylvia Sirrett.

Still, there were, at least, a dozen

left, and every one of that dozen had but one ambition in the world from that moment—to see Berry Osborne—the dear, popular, carefree, madcap old Berry they all so adored.

"Well, what about moving?" Babs laughed. "Don't want to waste any —" And then she stopped as the door opened, and gave a smothered little gasp. "Oh, my hat, look out!" she muttered. "Here comes the Bore!"

"Wumps!" grimaced Clara Trevlyn. Rather startling the change in their high spirits as they gazed towards the newcomer—a very serious-faced, mousy-haired young lady of some twenty-two years of age.

Vera Staines was the newcomer's name, and Vera Staines was also an old girl. She was remaining at the school as the guest of Miss Bullivant, Cliff House's maths mistress, because she also was on the Old Girls' committee, and was going to take a hand in the opening of the new club.*

To be sure, nobody had anything against Vera Staines, but, on the other hand, nobody was very enthusiastic about her. For Vera, though she had only been at Cliff House for two days, having recently returned from a prolonged trip abroad, thoroughly deserved the unenviable nickname of the "Bore" she had earned for herself.

"Hallo, girls!" she said, with one of her weak smiles. "I just looked in to see if somebody would come and talk to me. Barbara, are you busy?"

"Well, yes," Babs said. "We've just received a message from Berry Osborne, you see, Vera."

"Berry" — Vera Staines' eyes flickered a little—"Berry Osborne? Oh, yes, I remember!" she said then.

"She's going to open the new club-room, isn't she? And isn't she connected in some way with motor racing? A rather unladylike way of earning a living, I always think."

"Oh, stuff! It's a jolly good way of earning a living," Tomboy Clara Trevlyn protested stoutly. "I only hope I'm a motor-racing driver when I grow up, or an air pilot," she added, as an amended afterthought.

"Oh!" Vera said mildly, and flushed a little. "Personally, I prefer exploring. Did I tell you about that stampede of elephants we met in the African jungle?"

"Oh, yes, you know!" plump Bessie Bunter said hastily.

"Did I?" Vera frowned. "I don't remember."

Babs smiled a little. They had heard so many stories of Vera's adventures in the jungle and elsewhere that even the most unsuspecting of them were beginning to suspect that Vera exaggerated more than a little.

"Well, you—you said something about elephants, you know," Bessie mumbled. "I'm sure you said something about elephants. But we've got to buck up. You see, Berry has just invited us over to the Drome."

Vera bit her lip.

"And I was just going to treat you at the tuckshop," she said.

"Oh crumbs!" said Bessie. "That's nice of you, you know. But if we go to the tuckshop we shall miss tea at the Drome—I mean, we shall keep Berry waiting. I say, you girls, we'd better hurry, you know," she added anxiously, and made a hasty move towards the door.

"But what time will you be back?" Vera asked Barbara. "I have a special reason for asking, for Miss Primrose has given me permission to lecture all girls who are interested between half-past six and seven. And, naturally," Vera said earnestly, "as it is my first lecture at the school—I hope we shall have others—I'm anxious for there to be a good attendance. You'll be sure to get back for it, won't you?"

"Oh, yes!" Babs said, and restrained her grimace. "Sure to."

"Because, you know, Miss Bullivant is going to be in the chair," Vera informed them, "and I'm going to talk about Arabia, and desert oases in the Sahara. A frightfully interesting subject, don't you think?"

"Er—oh, rather!" Babs murmured. "Well, come on, girls! We must hurry!"

She nodded brightly to the old girl, and Vera, with a slight frown, stood aside. With a haste that was suspicious, the chums hurried past her, and out into the corridor. Babs fanned herself.

"Phew! Clear!" she breathed. "Thought she was going to chin us for another hour. Cycle-shed, girls—and snappy!" she whooped.

In a cheery group they got out their cycles. Chattering and laughing, excited at the prospect of meeting Berry Osborne again, they pedaled along to the great Aerodrome Stadium, one of the most famous combinations of air-fields and motor-racing tracks in the country.

Outside the gates a girl in white overalls with a smudge of black oil on her cheeks was loitering, and as they came up waved a cheery hand and ran forward to meet them. Babs whooped.

"Berry!" she cried excitedly.

"Alive and kicking!" Berry Osborne laughed. "Guessed you'd soon be over so I thought I'd better meet you. Hallo, everybody! I say, how topping you all look!—Hallo, Bessie! Still

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

losing weight, I see! Hallo, Clara! Still looking like a dressmaker's model! And Mabs, I declare, you're prettier than ever!"

"Oh, Berry!" cried Mabel Lynn, and flushed to the roots of her golden hair. "And yourself? You're—you're looking ripping!"

Berry Osborne laughed. And when she did that her face, although not startlingly pretty, became marvellously attractive. Eagerly she shook hands all round; gaily she piloted them through the gateway where a uniformed commissionaire stood. She nodded to him.

"Phelps, these are my friends," she said. "While I'm here they are to be admitted at any hour of the day or night without question. Got it, old man?"

"Yes, Miss Osborne, I'll remember."

"Good! Now, what about the cycles, kids?" Berry asked. "Better leave them for the time being in my garage. I've got the tank in the pits."

"Tank?" queried Leila Carroll, the American junior.

"Term of affection for a racing-car," Berry briefly explained. "Show you it as soon as we've got rid of your cycles.

With her schooldays many years behind her, and now embarked on a racing driver's career, Berry Osborne was still a wonderful chum to Babs & Co. How they admired her, how they loved to watch her racing, how they enjoyed her madcap company! A popular old girl, indeed! Most earnestly they hoped she would win the big race; and when mysterious enemies raised their hand against Berry—why, then it was Babs & Co. who were to the fore in protecting her.

How's everything at Cliff House? Any other old girls there, Babs?"

"Yes, rather! Vera Staines," Babs said. "Did you know her when you were at the school, Berry?"

"Vera!" Berry laughed. "Didn't I just!—We were both in the same Form together. Is she still as fond of talking about herself as she was?"

"Fond?" Leila sniffed. "I guess it's about all she does. Still, she's not too bad, is she, Babs?"

"Not too," Babs said. "I think she means well enough. Is this the garage, Berry?" she added.

"This is it," Berry laughed. "Park the old cycles in it—that's right. Shut the door, will you, Clara—but don't lock it, because if I carry the key about I'm bound to lose it! Always do," she added. "Well, well! What a treat to see you all again! Come along, now, and inspect the tank and let me introduce you to my one and only mechanic—Charlie Small. Say, anybody like a buggy ride?" she added eagerly. "I'm taking the car on the track for a practice spin in a quarter of an hour."

"Oh, yes, me!" cried everybody at once.

"One—one and one only!" Berry laughed. "As Babs is the skipper, what about her—you others shall have a trip later on! Babs bags it, then? Ah, here we are at the pits. Here's the bus, and here's dear Charlie," she added, winking at the oily-smearing young man who was half-hidden by the up-thrown bonnet of a low blue car. "How's works, Charlie?"

"Fine, Miss Osborne, fine!" Charlie

Small said glowingly. "She's all ready, if you want to take her out."

"Then," Berry laughed, "start her up, Charlie, give Miss Redfern your helmet. Babs, clap that on the old grey matter. Now—Hallo!" she added, as there was the sudden blare of a powerful engine farther along the track and a big red car started off. "Nice tank, that! Who's the driver, Charlie?"

Charlie Small frowned.

"Dunno, miss—not rightly. Nobody's ever seen her face, as far as I know. She's on the list as A. N. Other."

"Private?" Berry asked keenly as the red car zoomed along the track.

"Yes Miss Osborne."

Berry nodded. Her eyes followed the car. Babs & Co., interested, watched, too.

A girl whose features were almost completely hidden by a helmet and goggles, wearing a red-and-white spotted scarf round her neck, was at the wheel. In a flash she was past them, and roaring up on to the banking.

"Knows how to handle it," Berry said admiringly. "Wonder who she is, though?"

"But doesn't she have to give her name?" Babs asked.

"Only to the committee," Berry answered. "As a private—private meaning that it's her own car and she's driving for her own benefit—she can drive under any name she likes. I'm

a private, too," she added, with a touch of ruefulness.

"You mean, you're just doing this for your own pleasure?" Mabel Lynn asked.

"Not exactly." For a moment Berry's face became serious. "To tell you the truth, a dickens of a lot hangs on this race for me. Funny thing, how it's all linked up with the school," she added, smiling. "You all know Humphrey Manderson, don't you?"

"One of the governors?" Marjorie Hazeldene put in.

"That's it. He's also the big boss in Manderson's Motors, Ltd. You've heard of them, of course. Humphrey Manderson runs a lot of racing-cars. Occasionally I have driven for him, but I'm not exactly his star, you see. But—and here's the story," she added, with a chuckle. "He's practically promised, if I win the lady drivers' cup, that he'll make me his No. 1 driver."

"Oh, I say!" Babs cried. "What's that mean?"

"A jolly good salary and plenty of racing," Berry answered. "The money would come in useful, because I'm spending all my cash on this race. Funny, though, isn't it, that he should be connected with Cliff House? And isn't he the chap who put up most of the money for the Old Girls' Club?"

"Yes, rather! And he's going to be present at the opening ceremony, you know," Bessie Bunter said.

"Is he now?" Berry's eyes sparkled. "All the more important for me to win the race and be his No. 1, eh? I say, Miss Spotted Scarf is looking some," she added admiringly. "Looks as if I'm

not going to have it all my own way. Start her up, Charlie. Ready, Babs?"

"Babs, you lucky thing!" Clara breathed enviously as Babs climbed into the cockpit.

Babs dimpled. There came a roar from the exhaust, a jet of blue petrol vapour, and suddenly the huge car was throbbing. Through her goggles Berry glanced at the Fourth Form captain.

"Hold tight, now, Babs, you're going places!" she yelled.

The car slid away on to the track. Babs laughed, waving her arm to her chums, and then was jerked back into breathless realisation of her position as Berry changed gear and accelerated. The car zoomed along.

"Fun, Babs?" Berry laughed.

"Ripping!" Babs shouted.

Like a live thing the great car leapt forward. Breathlessly Babs hung on to the side, while the wind cut at her face and the white track rushed like a long belt beneath the wheels.

My, how calmly Berry handled the car!

Thirty, forty, fifty, sixty. The needle in front of her was quivering.

"Now we're really off," Berry said, and smashed the car into top gear. "Babs, watch Miss Spotted Scarf! I'm going to give her a run for her money!"

Miss Spotted Scarf was ahead, a good half lap. Berry's foot went down. Those laughing blue eyes of hers became shot with a steely glint as they approached the steep banking—it looked like a mountain to Babs. Now Babs was thrown back in her seat, as they zoomed round it, for a moment feeling as small and insignificant as a small pea in an enormous pudding basin. The speed, the utter thrill of it.

Faster, faster! Tyres screaming, engine roaring, the instruments on the dashboard quivering with vibrant life.

Then they were off the banking, chasing the red car. Like a flash Berry went along the back straight, rounded the banking, and took the home straight.

For a moment Babs saw Spotted Scarf turn. Then, as if accepting the challenge, she accelerated. Berry exclaimed with delight.

"We're racing!" she cried.

"Oh, my hat!" Babs gasped.

She held on, heart in mouth, but liking it—loving it.

And Berry's car was overhauling! Came the banking again—another gain for Berry. Now the flat again—the banking!

"We—we're drawing level!" screamed Babs triumphantly.

But Berry was not heeding. Her face was set; every ounce of her concentration, her attention, was on the work in hand. Like rockets the cars shot. Nearer, nearer. Now they were on Spotted Scarf's tail; now they were gliding alongside; now they were bonnet to bonnet.

"We're passing!" screamed Babs. Berry's face was grim. Passing they were.

Desperately Spotted Scarf was trying to take the lead again, but Berry was determined she shouldn't. Gradually the blue car forged ahead, and ahead, and ahead. Four more laps and there was almost a quarter of a lap's difference. Then suddenly, from behind there came a terrific bang. Babs, turning, saw a spurt of smoke coming from Spotted Scarf's front tyre; saw the red car skid in giddy circles.

"Berry, an accident!" she gasped.

But Berry had heard, and was applying the brakes. The car slowed. At the bend Berry turned it and raced back.

The red car had come to a standstill, and the driver was already out beside it. Smartly Berry brought her own car to a halt. She and Babs leapt out.

"I say, bad luck!" Berry cried, in concern. "But it was a lovely try-out, wasn't it? Congratulations on your driving," she said to the other girl, and held out her hand.

The other girl for a moment looked at the hand; then, with a swift gesture, she lifted her own. Then, deliberately, contemptuously, she struck down the hand offered in friendship towards her.

"Oh, you—you mean cat!" Babs indignantly burst out.

And while Berry dazedly regarded the hand that had been struck, the unknown girl speedster rushed towards the pits.

Berry Plans a Surprise!



"A GOOD driver, yes—but not, I'm afraid, a good sportswoman,"

Berry Osborne said, with a shrug. "You'll find you meet 'em like that, you know, Babs—even on motor-tracks. Well, well! Never mind," she added, with a laugh. "We shall live to race another day, and perhaps friend Spotted Scarf will be in a better humour. What about some tea?"

"But—but aren't you going to have it out with her?" Babs cried.

Berry shrugged.

"What's the good? Don't like rows. Forget it. Hi, Charlie, take this bus back, will you?" she called. "This way, Babs."

They went forward towards the pits where the rest of the chums, having watched that test of skill in breathless wonder, and also the incident which followed it, were bursting with indignation. Clara, especially, was furious.

"Huffy cat!" said that blunt Tom-boy. "My hat, if that had been me, I think I should have hit her! Still, it was a ripping race," she added glowingly. "You won't have anything to fear from her, Berry."

"No?" Berry asked. "Talk when the race comes," she said. "She might have been holding something back, even though it didn't seem like it. But come on, now," she added, leading the way into the stadium. "I'll take you to the tea-room, and you can be getting on while I change. Order just what you want for tea, you know."

"Oh, I sus-say, aren't you a sport?" Bessie gurgled. "Is this the tea-room?" she added, as Berry threw open a door labelled: "Members only." "Isn't it ripping?"

Ripping it was. The chums' eyes sparkled. Not a very large room, of course—for this was on the private part of the track's premises. About a dozen other people were having tea, and Clara glowed with pleasure as she recognised among them Ben Allan, the world-famous motoring ace, and Mrs. Therring, who had not only just broken a track record in Germany, but who was also famous as a stunt flyer. They all turned to smile at Berry.

Berry smiled back. Then she spoke to the steward in charge, and left the chums. The steward approached.

"Tea, miss?" he asked Babs. "Hot sausages?"

Babs blinched.

"Yes; but—but we can't have them here, can we?"

"Why not? Miss Berry's got an

idea you'd like them. Tarts and cakes, of course. Cream puffs. Jellies."

"Crumbs! It sounds like a study tea!" Bessie said.

"Miss Osborne's idea," the steward informed her. "It's what Miss Osborne calls one of her schoolgirl feeds. She said she thought you'd like it!"

The chums laughed. Dear old Berry! What notions she had! Joyfully they ordered the meal, and while it was being served, Berry came breezing in again. She chuckled as she indicated the table.

"Tops, eh?" she asked. "You see, although I'm twenty-two, I've never really grown out of my schooldays, and I still like the things I did then. But, tell me about dear old Vera," she added, with interest. "I haven't seen her since the day I left the old school. I suppose she's altered a lot," she added wistfully. "At least, I hope so."

"Why, wasn't she very popular?" Babs asked.

"Not so you'd notice," Berry grimaced. "She was too fond in the first place of talking about herself and telling tales. But don't let's run her down," she added. "I do hate scandal, and, of course, she's grown out of all that now. It will be fun seeing her again and talking over old times—gee, am I anxious to get back to the old place! Does she still wear yellow spectacles, by the way—slightly thicker at one side than the other?"

"Oh, yes," Babs said. "But mostly out of doors. She says they're just because bright daylight affects her eyes. Another sandwich, please, Mabs."

And so that merry meal progressed, while they talked, and talked, Berry eagerly listening, and occasionally relating some anecdote of her own madcap schooldays.

Time passed very quickly, Berry, as absorbed as themselves, never noticing how the hands of the clock were travelling.

But suddenly Babs jumped.

"Here, I say, we'll have to scoot!" she cried anxiously. "We've only got twenty minutes before gates."

"Oh, my hat! And here's me, forgetting all about the rules!" Berry cried. "Of course, you all have to be in by half-past six, don't you? Come on, we'd better get those bikes of yours!"

They hurried along to the garage. But when they reached it they stopped. For the doors were closed—and locked. Berry stared.

"My hat! That idiot, Charlie, has locked the bikes up!" she said. "Charlie!" she yelled.

"Yes, miss?" Charlie said, hurrying up.

"Where's the key of this garage?"

"I don't know, Miss Osborne," Charlie shook his head. "That's what I've just been trying to find out, because I want to put the car back. I thought perhaps you'd locked it."

"But who the dickens could have locked up the garage and taken the key without my permission?" Berry wanted to know. "Hallo, here's Phelps! Phelps, what do you know about this?" she added. "Who's been playing tricks with my garage door?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Miss Osborne. Unless," he added, after a thoughtful pause, "it was your friend—I don't know her name. The young lady with the red-and-white spotted scarf, I mean."

"Who—Miss A. N. Other?" Berry asked indignantly. "Friend, indeed! I don't even know her name!"

"Well, I saw her about half an hour ago going into the garage, and, naturally, I thought she had your permission. And I did see her close the door when she came out, but as somebody called me just then I didn't notice whether she locked it or not."

Berry laughed.

"Probably being just nosy," she said. "And, anyway, I don't see any reason why she should lock the bikes up. Still, that doesn't get us out of the difficulty. The girls have got to get back to school. Isn't there another key anywhere, Phelps?"

"I'm sorry, miss—no."

"Then," Babs gasped, "we—we'll have to walk—or run! We might just be able to do it, if we hurry. See you later, at the school, then, Berry?"

"Yes, rather! In half an hour or so," Berry promised.

They dashed off then. But it was hopeless from the first. It would have been hopeless even without Bessie Bunter, who could not run as fast as the rest, and who groaned and laboured like a ship in a gale. Many times they had to pause while Bessie had a breather, and the main gates had been closed nearly ten minutes when, panting and breathless, they finally reached Cliff House.

Piper, the porter, coming to the gates in answer to their ring, stared through at them.

"Which you've already been reported for being late," he grumbled, "and which Miss Primrose says as she will see you all in her study as soon as you come in."

"Wumps! Bare the neck for the chopper," Clara groaned. "Come on, let's go and get it over!"

In a somewhat chastened group they made their way into the school. At once they went to Miss Primrose's study. As they neared it, the door opened and Vera Staines, looking rather upset, came out.

"Oh, gollywogs!" Babs breathed, suddenly remembering. "We've missed the giddy lecture, as well! I say, Vera—"

Vera paused.

"You—you didn't come," she said hollowly.

"Oh crumbs! Vera, we're sorry. We—we got held up."

"And because you didn't come, nobody else in the Fourth Form came," Vera said, with some emotion. "And as a result, Miss Bullivant and I waited for half an hour, with only five girls present. She's very annoyed about it. So is Miss Primrose. But please," she added, "try to come tomorrow, won't you? Ahem! There's Miss Primrose!" she added, as the headmistress appeared at her door.

She walked on. Babs & Co., with no little apprehension, followed Miss Primrose as she nodded them into her study. In a rather anxious line they ranged themselves in front of her desk. Miss Primrose frowned.

"Well, Barbara, have you any explanation as to why you and these girls are late?"

"Well, you see, somebody locked the garage up, with our bicycles in it, at the race track," Babs said. "We went to see Berry Osborne."

"If," Miss Primrose said, "you had not left your departure to the last moment that could hardly have happened, could it? I am afraid, Barbara, I cannot accept that as an explanation. Apart from missing gates, I am very, very deeply annoyed with you all for the slight you have put upon Vera Staines."

"You will all," Miss Primrose added severely, "miss supper to-night, and immediately call-over is dismissed you will go to bed. And I hope in future—bless my soul!" she cried, as the door burst open, and then started. For the girl who came in then was Berry Osborne herself.

"Miss Primrose, I am sorry, but I heard!" Berry said earnestly.

"Berenice, I must protest—"

"Please, Miss Primrose," Berry said, "don't punish the kids! It wasn't their fault, really—it was mine. If only I'd remembered they had to get back—"

"They are perfectly capable of remembering these things for themselves," Miss Primrose said, a little stiffly.

"Oh, but just this once!" Berry pleaded. "Dash it all, you were a girl yourself one time—"

"Berenice, please!" Miss Primrose turned pink. "I appreciate your motive, but discipline must be maintained. Girls, please go!" she added. "Your punishment stands."

In dismay that madcap speedgirl watched as the juniors fled past her. Then imploringly she turned to the headmistress again.

"Miss Primrose, can't you—"

"Berenice," Miss Primrose said, "sit down. I warn you now that it is no use persisting in your championship of an unworthy cause. But I am pleased to see you," she added, a smile chasing away the sternness of her face. "And I am more than glad to hear from Humphrey Manderson that he is thinking of making you one of his permanent staff of drivers. I suppose you have heard that an old colleague of yours is also a guest at the school—Vera Staines?"

Berry grinned.

"Yes; Babs told me that," she said, "and, gee, am I just bursting to see her again! Where is she, Miss Primrose?"

"I will send for her," Miss Primrose said, and touched a bell. "Meantime, you will occupy Guest Room No. 2, which is next to hers. Ah, here comes Vera!" she added, as the door opened and that pale-faced girl appeared.

Berry, with a laugh, jumped to her feet.

"Vera—"

"Why, Berry!" Vera cried, and they both shook hands.

"My hat! It's like old times all at once, isn't it?" Berry beamed. "And pretty exciting times we had sometimes, eh? Whoops! Do I ever think about them? Remember the night you fell down the fire-escape into the white-wash barrel?"

Vera flushed.

"And remember the night when you were caught out of bounds?" she said.

"Oh, that's when you jolly well sneaked on me! I remember—yes." Berry grinned again. "It took me a long time to forgive you for that, Vera."

Vera flushed again.

"But that's all over, of course," she said, with one of her slow smiles. "And



"WHO'S been playing tricks with my garage door?" Berry demanded. "I'm sure I don't know, Miss Osborne," replied the commissionaire. "Unless it was the young lady with the red-and-white spotted scarf. I saw her go into the garage half an hour ago!" The chums started at that. But what possible reason could the mystery driver have for locking their bicycles in the garage?

if there's anything I can do for you while you are here—"

"Spoken like an angel!" Berry said heartily. "And as it happens, there is. I'm just trying to persuade Primmy—ahem!—beg pardon, Miss Primrose—to let Babs & Co. off. They've been packed off to bed without supper. Miss Primrose won't listen to me, but she might listen to both of us. Vera, be a sport and—"

But Miss Primrose impatiently waved a hand.

"Berenice, again no! I appreciate your kind motive, but you forget that I am headmistress here and I have my duty to do."

"And that's that, eh?" Berry asked ruefully. "Well, thanks! Thanks, too, Vera. Nice of you. By the way, is the tuckshop still here?" she asked suddenly.

"Why, yes, of course!" Miss Primrose said. "But it is closed now."

"And Auntie Jones still runs it?" Berry asked. "A very old friend of mine, Auntie Jones, in the past. Like to see her again."

"Then," Vera said, "I'll take you to her, shall I? I'd really love a talk with you, Berry."

"Let's go," Berry said, and impulsively caught her arm. "Miss Primrose, you don't mind?"

"Of course not."

Arm-in-arm, the two went out, just as bell for call-over rang throughout the school. Berry's eyes held a twinkle.

"Pity about the kids," she said.

"Tough luck, eh?"

"Very tough," Vera assented.

"And it was, in a way, my fault, you know," Berry went on. "Dash it, I can't see them going to bed supperless! Vera, I've got a wheeze!"

Vera eyed her in some alarm.

"Oh, Berry, don't start your old tricks again."

"Stuff!" Berry said. "Rats! Piffle! Bosh! Whoops, am I getting schooly again! Vera, what about getting a load of tucker from old friend Auntie Jones and giving the kids a dormitory spread? Remember the old midnight feeds?"

She laughed out of sheer excitement at that idea.

"You—you don't really mean that?" Vera asked.

"Why not?" Berry ripplingly laughed.

"But—but you're grown-up now!"

"Eh? Oh, stuff to that! Come on, Vera, be a sport—do!" she urged.

Vera, however, shook her head.

"I—I'd like to," she said. "I would, really. But—but I can't. I—I've just remembered something frightfully important. Miss Bullivant has asked me to play bridge with her, and of course, I couldn't disappoint Miss Bullivant—especially when I'm her guest. Here's the tuckshop, Berry—and I declare, there's Auntie Jones standing on the step! Do you mind if I leave you now?"

"Not at all," Berry breezily laughed.

"But, Vera, not a whisper to the Bull—"

Vera looked hurt.

"Berry, you don't still think I'd sneak on you, do you?" she said. "Of course not! But be careful," she warned, "and—and jolly good luck!"

"Go to sleep!" came a grumpy murmur from Lydia Crossendale's bed.

"But how can I sleep?" Bessie indignantly argued. "Nobody can sleep on an empty stomach! It's all right for you, you know—you've had supper! But what about us?"

"Gee, yes!" Leila Carroll said. "I'm with old Rolypolyskins there! I could eat the hind leg off a gee-gee!"

"And so," Mabel Lynn said, "could I."

The Fourth Form that night in the dormitory was split into two camps—the well fed and the unfed.

And the unfed, the girls who had missed supper by Miss Primrose's order—although it was an hour after lights out—were still wide awake.

"Funny," said Barbara Redfern suddenly.

"Oh, sure! Screaming!" Leila said scornfully. "I'm just laughing my head off at having missed grubbins!"

Babs smiled.

"No, ass, I don't mean that," she said. "I was thinking—of other things. Funny, I mean, why Spotted Scarf should have shut up our bikes."

"If," Mabs said, "she did do it. It's hardly likely—"

"Cave!" hissed a voice.

And instantly everybody ducked down as a soft tap came at the door. The tap was followed by the creak of the hinges as the door opened. A dark, shadowy figure, carrying a bulky basket, came into the room. Then sounded a soft chuckle.

"Hallo, girls! Anybody hungry?"

"Berry!" cried Babs.

"Berry it is!" that madcap answered. "Shush, though—don't make a sound! Couldn't let you go to sleep without supper, you know, so I've used my well-known influence with Auntie Jones to let me have a basket of tucker! What price a dormitory feed?"

"Berry, you—you giddy wonder!"

Clara Trevlyn chortled. "Oh, my hat, talk about a brainwave! Come on, kids!"

"Three cheers for the life-saver!" Jemima Carstairs said. "Candles forward! Careful not to make a row, though, old Spartans!"

Activity then—cheerful, if sudden, activity. In a moment everybody was awake, candles were lit, and Berry's feast spread out upon Babs' bed. And how the chums' eyes sparkled at sight of it!

Tarts, cream puffs, several slices of cold pie, several bottles of ginger-beer, biscuits, and sandwiches.

"Oh, Berry!" Babs breathed.

"Nice, eh?" Berry laughed. Her own eyes were sparkling in the candle-light. "Let's spread it out, shall we, and have a dormy feed in the old style? I'm in it, too, you know. I missed my supper specially so that I could have the fun with you all! Everybody's invited," she added cheerily, "but the hungry ones have first claim. What do we do for drinking-glasses?"

"Use our tooth glasses," Babs said.

"What-ho! This is ripping!"

Ripping it was. To the hungry chums of the Fourth it was a deliverance, indeed. Dormitory feeds at all times were popular functions, but there was no feed like a dormitory feed when one was really hungry. In an eager group the Fourth gathered round the bed.

In a few moments there was nothing to be heard in the Fourth Form dormitory, save the champing of appreciative jaws, and the gurgling sound of ginger-beer falling into small glasses.

"Tops!" Berry laughed. "My hat,

doesn't this bring back the old days? This is one of the things I often dream about, you know—to be a schoolgirl again, having dormitory feeds like this. But quiet!" she warned. "We don't want to get it in the neck."

"Here's to Berry, girls!" Babs said, holding up her glass.

"Hear, hear!" Clara supported.

"Here's hoping she wins the big race!"

Great fun—lovely fun! And Berry, sitting among them, was just one of themselves. That was the delightful part of it. Merrily the feast went on, until, abruptly, the door opened.

The lights were snicked on. And the dismayed Fourth flung round with all the evidence of their guilt surrounding them, to stare into the amazed features of Miss Bullivant, who stood at the door.

"Well, upon my word!" she gasped. "Upon my word! It is true, then! Barbara, how dare you! And—"

Her eyes almost popped. "Berenice!"

Berry made a wry face.

"Tough!" she said. "Sorry, Miss Bullivant. But please don't blame the girls. It was my fault—entirely."

Miss Bullivant's lips compressed.

"I am glad to hear it," she said tartly. "At the same time, Berenice, I must remind you that you are a guest in these premises. A guest must have a sense of responsibility, and to lead girls into breaking strict rules of the school is hardly the way to show recognition of those responsibilities. You understand, of course, that I shall have to report to Miss Primrose?"

Berry nodded.

"I'm sorry," she repeated again.

"But it was only a bit of fun. I—I sort of felt I had to make it up to the girls, because it was my fault that they got packed off to bed without supper. Don't punish the girls, Miss Bullivant."

Miss Bullivant paused.

"Very well," she said. "Barbara, you may clear up this—this mess. Berenice, I shall be obliged if you will leave this dormitory. And please remember in future that these sort of escapades are not tolerated. Miss Primrose will be extremely displeased."

"I bet she will," Berry assented ruefully. "Poor old me! Funny, though, how you spotted us," she mused. "I thought you were in bed."

"And so I was. Someone pushed a note under my door."

Babs started.

"A note?"

"A note," Miss Bullivant said, explaining, not to Babs, but to the old girl, "saying that this—that this lawlessness—was taking place in this dormitory. Naturally," Miss Bullivant added, "it was my immediate duty to investigate."

Girls were looking at each other in puzzled wonder.

"But who sent the note?" Berry asked, in surprise.

"Of that I am not sure," Miss Bullivant said stiffly. "The note itself contained no signature, and was printed in black capitals—very neat capitals—on a card. Now please get back to bed, girls. Berenice, you had better come with me."

For a moment Berry hesitated. Then she shrugged.

"Right-ho!" she said. "Sorry the feed was interrupted, kids, but better luck next time! I'm ready, Miss Bullivant."

And she waved her hand, a bright smile on her face, as Miss Bullivant starchily put out the lights.

And So Does the Mystery Enemy!



"O W!" Bessie Bunter moaned unhappily. "Oh dud-dear! I'm fuf-famished, you know! I'm sure I'll die of nine-night starvation!"

"Spotted Scarf" Strikes!



JOLLY nice of Berry Osborne to provide them all with a free supper, and to get them off punishment for eating that supper against the school rules. Jolly sweet and sporting of Berry, the whole Form agreed. But mean and sneaky of the unknown person who had given them away.

Who could it have been? No one knew. But early next morning Babs was up and dressed, and rushing off to Berry's room to find out what Miss Primrose had said to her the previous night. But early as Babs was, Berry had been earlier. It was from Vera Staines that she learned the madcap speed-girl had departed for the aerodrome track half an hour ago.

"And—and you don't know how she got on with Primmy last night, Vera?" Babs asked.

"Oh, that!" Vera shrugged, in slight contempt. "Silly thing to do, wasn't it?" she asked, as if expecting Babs to sympathise. "She just can't remember she's a grown woman. Primmy gave her a dressing down, of course."

"And—and that's all?" Babs asked anxiously.

"That's all as far as I know," Vera returned, "though I must say I think she got off very lightly."

Babs' face hardened. In that moment the faint dislike she had always felt for Vera deepened. What a prig the girl was, she thought. But she kept her feelings to herself.

"Did—did Berry say what time she'd be back?" she asked.

"Yes, for lunch," Vera replied. "We're both lunching with Miss Primrose, you see."

Babs nodded. She was satisfied, then. Apart from that, she had her captain's duties to attend to. Off to get those finished and done with, she flew. Then came assembly, followed by lessons. Immediately after lessons, however, Miss Primrose sent for her, and informed her that even though that afternoon was a half-holiday, she wished the Fourth to attend a lecture Vera was to give in the governors' room at two o'clock.

Babs went, making a face as she turned away. Blow Vera and her silly lectures! But she knew that she would have to persuade the Form to attend. Pretty tough, though, because Babs had practically promised to go back with her chums to collect the bicycles from the drome that afternoon.

Still, no help for it. She must tell the Fourth. And, calling the Fourth together she did tell them, her news being received with as little enthusiasm as Babs had received it from Miss Primrose.

"Have to go, I guess," Leila Carroll frowned. "Perhaps," she added hopefully, "it won't last an hour?"

"Won't it? Just watch." Mabs said, with a grimace. "Hallo, here's Berry!" she cried, as the Common-room door noisily burst open, and that sparkling-eyed madcap appeared.

"Cheers, chicks!" she cried gaily. "Just come back. Say, Babs, your bikes are out of cold storage. The key mysteriously turned up in Charlie's room last night, though Charlie swears he never put it there himself. What about coming over to the drome this afternoon and collecting them, and having some fun on the track at the same time?"

"Oh, rather! That's ripping!" Bessie gleed. "And, oh, mum-my hat! We can't, you know. We've got this silly lecture."

"Lecture?" Berry asked.

They told her. Berry pulled a face. "Bad luck," she sympathised.

"Still, I don't see how you can get out of it. Poor old Vera! It must have broken her heart when you didn't turn up last night. Wait a minute, though! Tell you what!" she added eagerly. "Supposing, after lunch, I trot back and get your bikes? You could come along to the track after the lecture, couldn't you?"

a droning voice Vera commenced talking about Arabia. On and on she went, and on and on dragged the time, with Miss Bullivant smiling a starchy smile of approval.

Groaning inwardly and hiding yawns, the juniors sat, one eye on the clock. As three o'clock drew near they began to brighten. Not long now!

And Babs suddenly sat up as, looking through the window, she saw a blue racing car swing in at the gates. Berry was at the wheel.

Behind the car was a small trailer, almost overflowing with bicycles.

"She's here!" thrilled Mabs. "Oh,

OLD FRIENDS—

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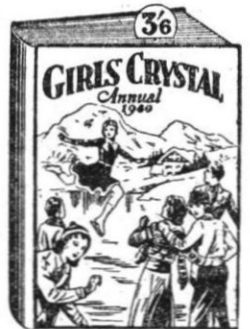
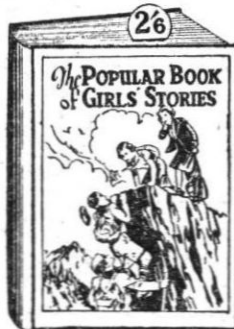
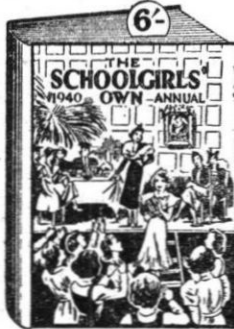


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"Oh, Berry! But how can you manage?" Babs asked. "There are a dozen of them."

"I know—but I've thought of a wheeze," Berry chuckled. "Don't worry, I'll attend to it. See you after the lecture, then."

Leaving the chums somewhat cheered, she breezed out. After dinner they all tramped into the governors' room for the lecture. Vera was there, and also Miss Bullivant. The "Bore" had on the table a projecting lantern, and she explained that later she would show one or two slides.

The juniors shifted restlessly, and earnestly hoped that it wasn't going to be too boring. A vain hope that! In

my hat! What a stunt! Good old Berry!"

Eyes were on the window then, not on Vera. Out leapt Berry and hurried towards the school.

"And now," Vera said; and they all stared at her with eager anticipation, hoping she was going to add: "I am going to finish." "And now we will have half an hour's showing of the lantern to illustrate some of the points I have talked upon. Miss Bullivant, I am sorry I have forgotten the slides," she said. "Have I your permission to go and fetch them?"

"Most certainly, my dear," Miss Bullivant said.

"But—but— Oh, my hat!" Babs groaned.

She blinked in despair as Vera rustled out.

Then suddenly the door burst open. Eyes sparkling, cheeks rosy, Berry appeared, her face one big smile. She waved her hand to the class.

"Cheerio, kiddies! My hat, you look like a set of boiled oyls! I say—" she added eagerly; then saw Miss Bullivant. "Oh! Hum! 'Afternoon, Miss Bullivant! Didn't see you," she added brightly.

"Apparently not," Miss Bullivant said freezingly. "This is hardly the way to come into a room where a serious lecture is being held, Berry."

Berry smiled ruefully.

"Sorry, Miss Bullivant! But I understood it would be over by now."

"The lecture," Miss Bullivant frigidly informed her, "will not be over for another half an hour."

"Oh, my hat!" Berry said in dismay. "Poor kids!"

"What! Berry, I really must protest!"

"My hat! Look!" shrieked Babs suddenly. "Berry—the trailer—"

"It's broken away!" cried Mabs.

Stepping aside as Vera returned, Berry gazed out of the window. Then she gave a gasp. For she saw what Babs and everybody else was seeing at that moment. The trailer, having broken away, was in the act of running backwards, gathering momentum as it travelled towards the headmistress's solarium. Even as they watched, it hit the glass sunhouse. There came a crash of breaking glass.

"Berry, you careless girl!" Miss Bullivant cried. "Why did you not—"

But Berry was leaping out of the room.

A dazed, dumbfounded moment of silence there was then. Everybody was on her feet, staring at the wrecked sunhouse.

Now they saw the frantic Berry bolt out of the school; they saw Miss Primrose running, and from all sides of the ground girls and mistresses converging towards the spot. Instinctively the Form turned towards the door, burning now to be in the excitement. But Miss Bullivant was standing there frowning.

"Please remain in your seats!" she ordered. "The lecture is not yet finished."

The Fourth frowned.

Vera, however, so obsessed by her own importance in the scheme of things, never even gave the centre-point of interest a glance.

"We will now," she announced, "show the slides."

And she did, despite the Fourth's impatience, despite the restlessness that prevailed.

For the next half-hour the Fourth sat and watched slide after slide and paid deaf-eared attention to Vera's remarks, but at last it was over. Like prisoners at the end of sentences they heard Miss Bullivant's "Dismiss!" and in an eager storm burst outside. As one girl they all made for the scene of the accident.

The crowd had gone now, the trailer towed away from the wreck of broken glass and woodwork it had created. But Berry was there, looking rather grim. In her hand she had two torn ends of rope.

"Berry, what happened?" Babs asked. "Was—as it an accident?"

"No," Berry answered. Her eyes were gleaming. "Everybody, of course, thinks it was my carelessness that the trailer got loose, and Miss Primrose—Phew! Is she up in the air about things? But it stands to reason,"

Berry added, "that if the rope didn't break on the way from the Drome to the school, when it was moving, it could hardly have broken while it was remaining stationary here. Look at those ends," she said. "Those are the broken ends."

Babs blinked.

"You mean they've been cut?" she asked.

"Yes."

They all stared at each other.

"But—but who by?" Mabs wanted to know.

"That," Berry said, "is something we've got to find out. Anyway, it's no good telling Primmy that. She's so upset about all this damage that she won't listen to excuses. But—"

She shrugged. "Anyway, never mind," she said resignedly. "I suppose I'll have to foot the bill and try to look happy about it. Here are your bikes, kids—

fortunately, undamaged. I think I'll just shift the car into the road before more damage is done."

She climbed into the car, starting up the engine. The car moved off. As it did so Babs pounced upon something which had been hidden beneath it.

"Look!" she cried.

She flung round, waving her discovery in the air. And they all started. For the thing Babs held up was a red and white spotted scarf. It was a scarf they all recognised at once—the scarf belonging to the mysterious motorist at the Drome track!

No Stopping the Madcap!



"MY hat! So it was Miss A. N. Other!" Clara breathed.

She stared at the scarf, as they were all staring.

By that time Berry was two or three hundred yards away.

Undoubtedly the mystery driver had been here; unmistakably now the wearer of the scarf was the one who had severed the rope which had resulted in the wreck of Miss Primrose's solarium. But how, unobserved, had she got into the school grounds?

"Pretty dirty trick," Babs said, when a little later they had returned into the school to change for their trip to the Drome. "Pretty obvious, too, that that girl's got her knife into Berry!"

"But why?" asked Mabs.

"Well, it might interfere with her chances in the race," Babs suggested.

"But how," Clara pressed, "could smashing Miss Primrose's solarium interfere with her chances in the race—any more," she added, remembering, "than locking our bikes up last night and getting us detained?"

Babs frowned. That certainly was a point.

"Anyway, we're going to warn Berry," she decided, "and in the meantime I'll pop the scarf into the drawer of the study here." And she popped it in "Now let's go and find Berry."

Finding Berry, however, was a thing easier said than done, for, full of concern for the damage to Miss Primrose's solarium, she had gone off to see Mr. Merryweather, Cliff House's gardener and general factotum, to consult him about repairs.

It was a quarter of an hour later before they ran her down, and when Babs told her of her discovery she looked frankly incredulous.

"Oh, stuff! It couldn't have been her, Babs!" she protested. "Why should the girl go to such lengths?"

After all, there's more than one red-and-white spotted scarf in existence. Where is it, by the way?"

"In my study," Babs answered. "Like to see it?"

"Yes, rather! Lead me to it," said Berry. "I bet you've got hold of the sticky end of the stick!" she added banteringly.

Babs frowned. She did not think so. But she led Berry to the study, and entering that apartment with Mabs and Clara, pulled open the drawer. Then she jumped.

"Mum-my hat! It's gone!"

Mabs and Clara stared. They had seen Babs put the scarf in that drawer, and both, naturally, expected it still to be there. But of the scarf there was no sign.

"Sus-somebody's taken it!" Babs stuttered.

Berry frowned.

"But who? You don't suggest the girl's still hanging around?"

"Either that, or—"

And Babs paused, stricken by a sudden thought.

"Either that—or what?" Berry asked.

"Or the girl has an accomplice in the school," Babs said.

Berry shook her head and laughed. Clara looked incredulous, and even Mabs looked doubtful. It seemed altogether too far-fetched.

"More likely," Berry said, "some other girl has taken a fancy to the scarf and raided it. Anyway, phut goes the clue! But, look here, I've got to get to the track," she added, "and I really must fly. See you there in half an hour?"

"Yes, please," Babs said.

"O.K., then. I'll leave word with Phelps to let you in."

And Berry dashed off. More slowly the chums followed.

When they reached the track they were informed by Phelps, the commissioner, that Berry was already on the circuit. At once an eager move was made in that direction.

"Come on; let's watch," Babs said.

They reached the track, and then they all beamed. Berry was on the track, and Berry was going like steam. Also on the track was the girl in the red car, and, as yesterday, it was obvious that she and Berry were pitting their cars against each other—with Berry half a lap behind.

In an eager body they watched. As Berry roared round the banking on the opposite side of the course the red car came hurtling past them, the spotted scarf of its unknown driver fluttering in the breeze. Obviously, the unknown had received back her scarf or was wearing a similar one.

In spellbound fascination they watched.

"My hat, look!" breathed Clara.

Like a living thing Berry's car was racing now, the gap between it and the red car closing. Now she was on Spotted Scarf's tail; now drawing alongside; now passing—and what a cheer the chums gave as daylight appeared between the two racers again.

"Oh, marvellous!" breathed Mabs.

"Well done, Berry!"

"Sure has got Spotted Scarf on toast, I guess!" Leila chuckled. "Hallo! Spotted Scarf is giving up the ghost!"

Spotted Scarf apparently was. For as Berry continued, the goggled girl in the red car turned into one of the near-by pits. Babs saw her as she spoke to a mechanic there, and then, with a stare towards the racing Berry, stepped out.



"HERE'S to Berry, girls!" cried Babs, holding up her glass. There were beams of approval all round. It was not often that one of the school's old girls stood them a dormitory feed. Wasn't Berry fine, they thought. But it was then that the door opened, and Miss Bullivant appeared.



Babs shouted:
"I say—I say! Just wait a minute, will you? I want to speak to you!"
The girl heard. For a moment her goggled face was turned towards Babs. And as Babs trotted down the steps of the stand, Spotted Scarf turned and hurried away.

Babs crimsoned a little. But she was not to be beaten. She had promised herself that she would tackle this girl, and she jolly well was going to tackle her! By the time she reached the pit, however, her quarry had vanished. Only a rather scowling mechanic was left in possession.

Babs looked at him.
"Who is she?" she asked. "What's her name?"

"Dunno." The mechanic scratched his head. "Pretty fiery-tempered sort of customer, though. You should hear how she blew me up because Miss Osborne beat her in the try-out! I'm only one of the staff mechanics, you see," he explained. "Pretty nice car she has, though," he added, with a nod towards the crimson juggernaut.

Babs nodded, only half interested in the last part of the observation. Almost absently she turned to regard the shining monster, and then gave a slight start as a glinting something on the floor of the vehicle caught her eye. The mechanic at the same moment turned to get a rag with which to wipe his hands. In a flash Babs had scooped up the thing in the car.

And what a thump her heart gave as she saw it!

For it was the broken end of a lantern slide!

Babs caught her breath at that. Her mind at once flew to Vera Staines. And again raced back the suspicion that the mystery motorist had an accomplice in the school. Could Vera be that accomplice?

She remembered suddenly that Vera had gone out of the room just before the accident with the trailer had happened. Was Vera Berry's secret enemy? Was it Vera who, hand in glove with the mystery motorist, was working for her undoing and her downfall?

A startling suspicion—and yet one which persisted. All the same, Babs was cautious. This clue, significant as it was, was hardly concrete proof. Unless, in fact, she could find the rest of the slide in Vera's possession, this fragment proved nothing.

She left the machine. She went back to her chums, who were still watching Berry as that madcap careered round the track.

For the time being she said nothing

to them. Nor when Berry, flushed and rosy, her blue eyes sparkling with enthusiasm, came off the track a few minutes later did she say anything to her. Berry, anyway, would only pooh-pooh the idea.

Once again they had tea—but this time in Berry's own room. After tea, to that worthy's thrilled delight, Berry took Clara for a turn round the track, and after Clara, Mabs and Leila and Bessie. Well before gates that evening the chums got back to school.

Almost immediately Babs learnt that Vera Staines was going out that evening and would not be back until late. That made Babs tingle. Vera's room would be vacant. What an opportunity to search for the remainder of the broken lantern slide!

She gathered a little party of her chums together, showed the broken end of the slide, and voiced her suspicions. They looked incredulous.

"But, Babs, Vera wouldn't!" Mabs protested.

"Why not?" Babs asked. "You can't say she's been particularly friendly towards Berry. It's pretty obvious Spotted Scarf has an accomplice in the school."

"But—but why should she want to harm Berry?" Clara Trevlyn wanted to know.

Babs shrugged.

"Don't ask me. That's one of the things we'll find out later. But if we can discover definitely that Vera is hand-in-glove with Spotted Scarf, then we should be able to stop any further blows against Berry. To-night's our opportunity. Who's game?"

"They were all game."

"After lights-out, then, I guess," Leila said. "We'll have to go carefully. Sure would be awkward to explain what we were after if we were caught in Vera's room, and— Heads up!" she added softly, as the door came open.

It was Berry Osborne who stood there.

"Lo, chicks! Just returned," she said breezily. "Got a glass of lemonade or anything? I'm just dying of thirst!

And what's the conference?" she added eagerly.

"Oh, just talking!" Babs said.
"Not planning japes?" Berry asked keenly.

"Oh, no!"

Berry looked disappointed.

"Well, O.K. ! But don't forget," she warned, "if there's anything on I want to be in it! That my lemonade? Oh, thanks! It looks delicious. Well, cheers!" She put the glass to her lips and drained it. "That's good. See you later, kids. I'm going up to change now."

With a gay wave of her hand, she was gone. Call-over bell was ringing then, however, and the chums tramped down into Big Hall. After call-over they saw their special girl chums for a few minutes in the Common-room, and then came supper and bed. At half-past ten, when the whole school was asleep, Babs rose.

"Awake, kids?" she whispered.

"Rather!" came from Clara Trevlyn's bed.

"Right-ho! Then up you get. But no noise, mind."

In the dark they rose. Silently they dressed. In a body they left the dormitory, and, led by Babs, made their way downstairs to the passage in which the two guests' rooms were situated. A light still glowed from under Berry's door. Babs paused.

"Shush! Quiet as mice, kids!" she cautioned. "We don't want Berry to find out what we're up to. She wouldn't believe in our idea."

On tiptoe they approached, almost holding their breath. But it was just like clumsy Clara, as they came abreast of Berry's door, to find a ruck in the carpet there, and, on tiptoes as she was, to lose her balance and strike her elbow against the door. While her chums

glared at her the door came open. They all stared in crimson-faced sheepishness at Berry as the light from the room revealed them.

"Hallo!" Berry whistled. "What's the game, Babs? A jape, after all?"

"Well, you see—" Babs mumbled.

"And you've come to call for me?"

Berry asked deliciously. "Say, what sports! What's the jape?"

"Well, you see, it—'it isn't exactly—that is, Vera's out—"

Berry gave a gurgle of laughter.

"And you're going to raid old Vera's room? Oh, ripping! Come on, I'm in this with you! It won't be the first time by a long chalk," she added, with a reminiscent chuckle, "that I've helped to raid dear old Vera!"

"But—but—"

"Lead on!" Berry ordered.

Babs gave a helpless glance at her chums. It was obviously impossible from that moment to put jape-keen Berry off the track. On the other hand, it was just as impossible to allow this opportunity of putting their suspicions at rest to slide. She nodded.

"Right! Then come on! But no row, mind!" she warned.

"As silent," Berry chuckled, "as the proverbial oyster. And here we are"—as she reached Vera's door and threw it open. "Now, tell me, what do you want me to do?"

A rather difficult demand that, considering the real nature of their quest. But Babs was equal to it.

"Well, first turn the pictures back to front," she said.

"O.K.! Then what about hanging the cushions out of the window on string?" Berry gurgled. "Just imagine old Vera looking for them!"

"Good gracious, no!" Babs said. "If you do that they'll dangle in front of Miss Bullivant's window! Just—just for fun, let's hide her things," she added, thinking up an idea which would give her an opportunity for handling Vera's lantern slides, a pile of which stood on Vera's desk. "Tell you what," she added, "you hold that cushion-cover open, and I'll drop these slides into it. Have to put them in one by one, though," she added. "Mustn't break any."

Berry grinned again. She held up the cushion cover, while Babs grabbed the slides. Quickly she ran through them, putting them one by one into the cover, mentally deciding, as soon as they had got rid of Berry, to undo all the evidence of the lark they were now creating for Berry's benefit. Six—seven—eight slides went into the cover, while the chums busied themselves as if doing other things. Then suddenly—

"My hat!" Babs cried.

"What?" Berry asked.

"Nothing!" Babs said. "Here's one broken, that's all." But she gazed at the broken one which had a piece out of one corner, feeling sure in that moment it was the slide she was searching for, but unable, because she couldn't very well produce the other piece, to solve that problem in front of Berry. "Better put that aside," she said.

"Well, come on, bung the others in," Berry said. "I say, this doesn't seem much of a jape to me! Why not swig up the arms and legs of her pyjamas, or something? That's much funnier."

"My hat!" gurgled Clara. "I wonder—Babs, quickly!" she cried, a note of frantic urgency suddenly in her tone. "Somebody coming!"

But it was too late! For even as Babs swung towards the door it opened—and there stood Vera herself!

"Oh crumbs!" muttered Berry.

"Ahem—"

"You!" Vera quivered, and for a moment Babs saw hate in her face. "You, Berry! Encouraging the girls in these pranks! Barbara, what are you doing with my lantern slides?"

"I—I—" Babs stuttered, and got no further.

For Vera, with one agitated swoop, had snatched at the slides. Instinctively Babs' grip tightened upon them. Almost savage was the jerk which Vera gave—and the result was inevitable. There was a crash as the whole heap went slithering into the fireplace.

"Berry, my hat! Keep her off!" Babs cried as Vera, sweeping round, swished off the broken slide which Babs had left on the corner of the table and sent it-smashing among the others. "Vera!" she shrieked. "Vera, you—"

But the mischief was done then. The vital slide was in a hundred fragments. And even as Berry good-humouredly caught the enraged Vera by the wrist, swinging her round, there was a step in the passage, followed by an exclamation as a newcomer arrived on the scene. Mabs gave a stifled gasp.

"Oh, great golliwogs! Prim—Miss P-Primrose!"

Miss Primrose it was. In blank consternation and dismay they all stared at her.

"What—" Miss Primrose cried. "Goodness gracious, what a smash! Vera! Berenice! Barbara! What does this mean?"

"These girls—apparently under Berry's leadership," panted Vera, "have broken into my room!"

"Berenice—"

Berry shrugged. "Oh, it was only a bit of a joke, Miss Primrose! Dash it, we never expected this to happen!"

"I should hope not!" Miss Primrose looked grim. "But you were all intent upon playing some sort of prank on Vera—an honoured guest in this school! Berenice, I shall want to see you about this!"

Berry sighed. "Yes; right-ho, Miss Primrose! But—but don't be hard on the kids!" she urged.

"I presume," Miss Primrose said, with starchy dignity, "you mean these girls? Each of them will be detained to-morrow, and each will contribute from her pocket-money enough to cover the damage done here. Girls, you may go! Not you, Berenice—I want to talk to you," she added. "I think it is time you and I understood each other!"

The Interrupted Detention!



"AND you found—nothing?" Clara Trevlyn asked.

"Well, no,"

Babs hesitantly confessed.

"At least, nothing that would prove anything. But I'm jolly sure that I had the other piece of slide, you know. If I'd only had a chance to true it up with the fragment I found in the car—"

Clara grunted. Clara never had any use for "might-have-beens."

"Which means," she said, "that all we've got out of the wheeze is a detention—and another jawing for Berry! Wonder how she got on?" she added a trifle anxiously.

"Perhaps," Babs suggested, "she'll tell us. Here she comes now!"

It was the next morning, and the

two chums, after breakfast, were standing on the steps of the schoolhouse.

"Cheers, Babs," Berry said as she strolled up. "Not feeling too bright and chirpy, eh? Sorry you got it in the neck last night, but Primmy was in a frightful pet, wasn't she? My fault," she added, with a grimace.

"Not a bit of it!" Babs said. "But, Berry, how did you get on with Primmy?"

Berry laughed. "Just jawed," she said. "Dear old Primmy! She's no longer able to give me lines or detain me. Still, must say she was ratty—and even went so far as to hint that if anything else like it happens I should be called upon to remove my gracious presence from the school. But, bless you, she didn't mean it, of course! But she just wouldn't listen to you kids being excused detention!"

Clara grinned. "You mean, you still tried to beg us off?"

"What else?" Berry asked. "What time does detention start, by the way?"

"Two o'clock!" Babs replied.

"Oh!" Berry thoughtfully nodded.

"Lock up detention?"

"Yes. But why?" Babs asked.

"Oh, nothing!" Berry answered airily. "Hallo, here come Mabs and old Bessie! Top of the morning, everybody! Say, what price a snack at the old tucker-shop before lessons? My treat!"

"Oh, I sus-say, what ripping ideas you get!" beamed Bessie.

So to the tuckshop they all repaired, eagerly thronging around the bubbling Berry. And there, until assembly bell rang, they forgot their troubles in fresh made jam tarts and lemonade. Feeling better for that encounter with their madcap grown-up chum, it was in almost a cheerful frame of mind they eventually tramped into lessons.

Lessons, dragged through, while outside the sun shone with growing warmth, holding out a promise of a fresh half-holiday.

After dinner, the chums went up to detention-room to report for the afternoon's punishment. Lock-up detention varied from the more severe variety by reason of the fact that instead of being supervised they were all left behind the locked door of detention-room with a special task to get through in their own ways.

With a groan they settled down to it. Clara Trevlyn, who had promised herself some hockey practice that afternoon, grumbled loudly.

"Blessed if I don't feel like cutting and running for it! Suppose we couldn't bunk, Babs?"

"Oh, stuff! Don't be a chump," Babs said. "You forget we're two stories high!"

"Hey!" cried Leila Carroll. "What's this? Look at the window. Shucks, a ladder!"

They all twisted round, all having heard, at the same moment, the scraping sound which had provoked Leila's surprised exclamation. And they all stared as, above the open window which overlooked the courtyard joining this part of the school building to the gym, the end of a large builder's ladder, newly painted in vivid green, pushed its ends above the sill. Then came a squeaking sound. As they blinked a decidedly pretty face beamed in at them. Babs gave a jump.

"Berry!"

For that astonishing madcap it was! "Chips!" Berry said. "Whoops! Thank the mercies I'm not a window

cleaner! Here, I say, grab this, somebody!" she laughed, and flung into the room a box. "Chocies! I've just been down to the track. I picked them up on the way back!" she explained as she came scrambling in. "Just couldn't bear to think of you girls penned up here while everyone else was enjoying themselves!"

"Oh, my hat! But, Berry, if you're caught—" Marjorie Hazeldene breathed.

"Time enough to worry when I am," Berry laughed breezily. "Open the choccs, Babs—I'm dying for one! Still the same old dump," she added, looking round. "How many weary afternoons and hours have I spent in this room! Hallo, hallo!" she cried, staring at her gloves. "Seem to have been camouflaging myself. Where on earth have I got all this green paint from?"

She held out her gloves—a rather nice pair of fawn suede, the palms now smeared and blotched with green paint.

"Berry, it must have been the

way, a good two feet of its upper portion had crashed through Miss Drake's window, smashing the upper panes to atoms—and completely cutting off Berry's retreat. And even as, in consternation and dismay, they stared, there came the rattle of a key in the door.

"Berry—" gasped Babs. The door opened. And as Berry spun round, two angry mistresses stamped into the room. One was Miss Drake, the Fifth Form mistress. The other was—Miss Primrose.

One angry look she threw at Berry! One all-comprehending look at the opened box of chocolates on Babs' desk.

"I might," she said bitterly, "have guessed something like this! Berenice, I have warned you until I am tired of warning you! Since you have been in this school there has been nothing but one upset after another. I am sorry, but—"

"Miss Primrose!" cried Babs.

it away from the wall so that it would smash the Drake's window and bring a mistress on the scene! She's just out to get Berry into as many rows as she can!"

"Well, if you're right, it appears she's succeeded," Leila Carroll said, "and I guess you can do nothing about it until you can prove it! And how are you going to do that?"

There was silence then. Five minutes ago, Miss Primrose and Miss Drake had left the room, the expelled Berry in their midst—expelled simply because she had done them a good turn.

Babs clenched her hands. Was it Vera, really, who had pulled the ladder away from the wall? If only she could prove that!

Thinking in that vein, her eyes fell upon Berry's discarded, paint-smeared gloves. And she jumped.

"My hat, I've got it!" she cried, in sudden excitement. "We can prove it! We will! These gloves"—and she



"LOOK!" cried Babs breathlessly, and as Berry drove off, she pounced on an object lying on the ground. It was a red-and-white spotted scarf! Did this mean that the mystery racing driver was responsible for the damage for which Berry had been blamed?

ladder!" Babs cried. "It's wet paint! Oh, goodness, just look at them!"

But Berry, with characteristic carelessness, shrugged.

"No matter! Get 'em cleaned," she said, as she peeled them off. "Chocs forward, Bess! I didn't bring them all for you, you know! Oh, my hat!" she broke off. "What's that?"

For suddenly from the window came a sound as the ladder, detached from position, slid down the wall outside, ending in an appalling crash!

"Oh, golly! Miss Drake's window is below!" Babs cried.

At once, her heart jumping, she had leapt to the window. Thrusting out her head, she gazed down. Was it her fancy, or did she see the flutter of a skirt vanishing round the corner of the wall?

"Babs, is—is it—" cried Clara behind her.

It was! No doubt about that! Either the ladder had been pulled away from below by someone—or it had slipped down from the wall. Any-

Miss Primrose, however, did not even glance at her.

"I am sorry," she stated firmly, "but my patience now, Berenice, is at an end: I shall be obliged if you will immediately pack your things!"

Berenice looked alarmed. "Oh, shucks, Miss Primrose, have a heart!" she protested.

"I am sorry," Miss Primrose insisted flintily.

And Berry, with a shrug and a rueful smile at the chums, left the room.

"No more arguments, please!"

held them up—"Berry didn't know that ladder was newly painted. There is no reason why Vera should have spotted it. If Vera did handle that ladder, then she must have paint stains on her hands. Coming, Mabs?"

"Where?" cried Mabs. "To find Vera!" Babs answered fiercely.

And forgetting they were in locked detention, she wrenched at the door.

Surprisingly enough, that door came open. Miss Primrose had completely forgotten to turn the key in the lock again!

In a flash Babs was on the other side of it. Mabs cried out.

"But, Babs—"

"Oh, come on!" Babs said. "I'm going to find Vera!" She darted out. Mabs, after a moment's hesitation, followed her. Half-way down the corridor she caught her up.

"But, Babs, what will you do?"

Babs Challenges Vera!



"IT'S that cat Vera's fault! I'll bet it's Vera's fault!" Babs hotly vowed.

"I'm sure I saw someone dodging away. She must have spotted Berry climbing that ladder! She jolly well pulled

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

Week by week your friend *PATRICIA* writes to you. She tells you all her own news, about things to talk about and things to make—all in that cheery, chummy way so typical of her. No wonder all schoolgirls have taken *PATRICIA* to their hearts and wouldn't miss her weekly pages for anything.



POOOR pets! Quite a lot of you are now thinking of the return to school, aren't you?

I know you like school these days. All that business about the joys of playing truant doesn't ring quite true in this year of 1939, does it?

This Patricia of yours certainly loved school. (Mind you, I had a gift for not working very hard—which probably helped—even though I don't pretend it was very commendable of me!)

All the same, in spite of this school-affection, it's certainly a little more difficult to return after a summer holiday, isn't it? School work seems so remote, somehow, and the idea of having to rush out in the morning, shiny-shoed, neat-haired, and uniformly clad, is all a bit different from the carefree holiday times you have been enjoying!

● A Free Ride

But what's this I hear about schoolgirls under fourteen years of age being able to have free rides on buses?

Not every ride, of course.

The London Transport people, I understand, are going to allow you lucky young people to have four separate penny bus or tram journeys for threepence on any one day, beginning with the Autumn term.

Of course, most of you walk to school, so this won't impress you terribly. But it's very nice for those who have to make a bit of a journey, isn't it?

● An Envious Tan

I expect you're all exquisitely tanned by now, aren't you?

Well, mind you save it till you get back to school. People always seem to have had a much better holiday if they're brown, don't they?

If you're the same colour as usual, friends look at you pityingly and say rather doubtfully: "Did you have a good time?" instead of: "You look as if you've had a good time."

My own summer holiday tan is wearing off a bit now. I get lots of fresh air still, of course. But it's the sea air and wind that whips that lovely golden look into the skin, isn't it?

As long as my legs don't go all lily-white, I don't mind.

For some reason, my silly legs take ages to "brown." I spend hours lying on my "tum," trying to get the backs of my legs a becoming shade—a most tedious business. For while I'm concentrating

on the backs of my legs, I always have a feeling I'm rather neglecting my face! But what's a poor girl to do when she can't "brown" on both sides at once!

Anyhow, I did manage it, after all—and have been able to go stockingless for a long time now.

I do like legs to be that shade which makes people think at a glance you are wearing the finest silk stockings, don't you?

● Holiday Memories

In my talk of returning to school, I haven't forgotten all you young scholarship winners, and others who are lucky enough to go to secondary and high (not to mention boarding) schools.

You won't be going back again for a week or two yet, of course. So here's a suggestion for when you get an "Oh dear, I wish I had something to do" mood. (No, thank you—not the washing-up!)

You can make yourself a cheery record of your holiday. (Naturally, you back-at-school ones can do this, too—after homework, mind, mistressy Patricia!)

You'll simply love looking through this book when it is complete, and it would be fun to take it to school and show your chums; even your nice Form-mistress, as well. (No wonder we keep saying what a nice place school is these days! Imagine our grannies being able to do such a thing!)

Get a stiff piece of cardboard for the outside cover, and paste white or coloured paper very smoothly all over this. The inside can be made of sheets of plain paper—or that nice pale-tinted art paper, which can be bought for a penny a sheet at the shop which sells artists' materials.

Tie coloured cord or raffia round the back of your book to keep the sheets and cover together, and then decorate the front.

You can be as artistic as you like over this. If you went camping, for example, you could cut a tent-shape from a piece of canvas or linen, and paste this on the front, and put a coloured flag on top.

If you were at the sea, some pretty shells—rather flat ones—glued to the cover would be quite snappy.

Sketch out appropriate lettering on the front—and then you're ready to fill up the inside.

Snaps you have taken yourself, with amusing little "captions" underneath

them; postcard views; pressed flowers; concert-party programmes or leaflets; your weight card from the pier; your fortune—all the little treasures you collected on your holiday can be arranged attractively in your Book of Holiday Memories.

It'll make an engrossing something-to-do these last days of summer—something in which all the family will take an interest, and probably help with suggestions.

And how proud you'll be of it when it is complete, and you show it to your friends.

"You did have a lovely time!" they explain—even if it did rain quite a bit.

For haven't you noticed that, unless it's simply teeming down, rain doesn't seem to come out in a snap!

● Penny-Saving Ideas

I'm always on the look-out for you for ideas that are really inexpensive, for I know how important it is in most families to save the pennies—and even the farthings.

Iron-holders, for example. They're such little things, and yet they can cost a penny or so when thick material for making them is scarce.

Well, it's a good plan to remember that old felt hats and worn-out handbags can be cut up to make really excellent iron-holders that will wear and wear and wear.

● With Curtain Rings

From penny saving to penny spending—

but in a good cause! For here's a belt that will cost you about a penny, and look worth at least a shilling.

Buy a dozen white bone curtain rings, and slip them round the belt of a favourite dress. Catch them lightly with a stitch or two, so that the rings come in the front (the belt fastening at the back). They make such a smart trimming. And three more rings, caught together, make a pretty ornament for the neck of the dress, if you feel it's a bit plain just there.

Bye-bye now until next week, my pets!

Your friend,

PATRICIA.



you've finished your homework, mind, adds stern, school-



BACK TO SCHOOL AGAIN

Now is the time to get all your school things ready for the new term—with PATRICIA'S help.

A NEW term—and a very important one at that—is the Autumn term, for it is, of course, the beginning of the School Year.

Many of you will be "going up" to a new class, learning new lessons, and possibly with a new mistress in charge of you. So naturally you want to start off really well.

It's a good idea to begin to get ready for school a day or two in advance, so that you have no scramble and bother of a last minute rush.

The girl who arrives at school for the new term, looking trim and neat, and feeling calm and cool, is much more likely to create a good impression than the girl who is all flustered and not-so-spruce.

A FEW STITCHES

I think first of all, if I were you, I should get your clothes ready.

Fish out your school tunic—and see it has a girdle—your blouse, stockings, and the rest of your school uniform.

Now get out your sewing-basket—or mother's—and look over each garment to see where stitches are required. Examine the buttons on your blouse, see if any seams are tending to split, particularly under the arms. Look at the slots for holding your girdle on your tunic, examine your stockings for little holes, or thin places that threaten to "go" at any moment.

Look at the hem of your tunic, the elastic on your hat, and the lining of your school coat.

You'll be surprised how a stitch here, and another there, will be required. But it's well worth the labour.

Now slip the work-basket away, and we'll see if we can perk your uniform up so that it looks like new again.

AWAY WITH STAINS

Your hat first. This will be a velour, or a dark felt, anyway.

So take off the hat-band, then hold the hat over your hand, and twirl it around in the steam from a boiling kettle. (Be careful not to get your face near, won't you?)

This will bring up the "nap" beautifully, and remove any rainspots. Next brush it gently, in one direction only.

You'll want to cheer up your school hat-band next—for these are costly things to buy new.

Get a saucer, and place a teaspoonful of household ammonia in it. Add cold water. Now dip a rag in this, and apply it gently to the hat band. Stains will vanish, you'll find, and the colour be brighter.

You'll now be able to use this reviving mixture on your tunic. Dab every single stain or "spot" you see, changing the rag when it becomes dirty. Use it for your coat as well, if you're one of those people who just can't help spilling things.

Perhaps you'll wash your school blouse next, using a gentle squeezing, and giving it plenty of rinsings.

CAREFUL PRESSING

The best time to press a blouse is when it is half-dry, so try to catch it at just the right moment of dampness.

Avoid too hot an iron, for goodness' sake, otherwise there'll be scorch marks to spoil it—but press hard with the iron. Remember to do "trimmings," such as cuffs, collars and the front panel, first, and try not to iron a crease all the way down the sleeve. (This is considered wrong, for some reason.)

It would be a grand idea if another member of the family, or a nice chum, would tack down the pleats of your tunic while you're wielding the iron.

Examine her handiwork when she has finished to see that the pleats really are the same width at the hem as they are at the top, then smile your thanks and tell her you're sorry to be such a fuss-pot—but it is important.

Now slip your tunic over the ironing board, wring out a clean tea-cloth, duster, or piece of sheeting in water, place this over the tunic and press quickly. Use "dabbing" movements for this, rather than smooth ironing strokes, but be certain you go over all the pleats.

Then hang the tunic up on a hanger. When the steam has vanished and it is quite dry, you can remove the tacking stitches, and the tunic really will look a picture.

(Here I might mention that if the tunic is not badly out of pleat, it's a bit of a brain-wave just to clip the ends of the pleats in position for the pressing, to save the labour of tacking. Paper clips or hair-grips will do this very well. But you need more care when ironing, in this case.)



CARE OF A CASE

Now that your school uniform is pretty immaculate, there's your school case or satchel.

Turn all your treasures ruthlessly out of this. Tip it upside down over the dustbin to remove odd scraps of dirt that seem to linger in suitcase corners, or sand that may have come from your holiday by the sea.

Then dust it out thoroughly. If it's got some grease patches inside (from your snack lunches) place a piece of blotting paper over these, and press the nearly cool iron on top for a second. The blotting paper will absorb quite a lot of the grease, you'll find.

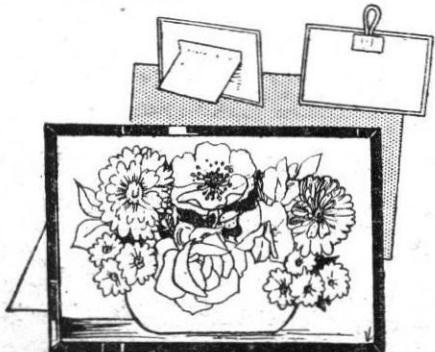
Now give the outside of the case a good polish with furniture cream. Touch up any corners that have become battered with a dab of brown boot polish, and brush well. Rub up the locks, and see that they work properly—just to make sure your books don't shoot out all over the road.

(I did this once, to my undying shame—and there was a pint of very hard green gooseberries in the case, too!)

By this time you're nearly all set. Just examine your pencil box, give yourself a new nib, and sharpen up your pencils. See that your name is neatly—and securely—sewn or gummed to all your school things.

It's a good idea to use adhesive tape—such as you keep for cut fingers—for marking your names in shoes. Write your name on the tape first, and then press it into position with your warm hand.

Then you can sit back in snug comfort, knowing that you're "all set" for that first day of the new term.



HOME-MADE PICTURE FRAMES

Any schoolgirl can make them, and they cost next to nothing.

own room. (Pictures on the wall are fashionable again, you know—just in case you worry about fashion in furnishing!)

Home-made picture frames are so easy to make.

First you'll require a roll of passe-partout tape—which will cost twopence. and some "Cellophane" paper, which costs either a penny or twopence a sheet, according to thickness. (You can buy all these

from our favourite sixpenny stores, by the way, or from the stationer's.)

I'm hoping you'll already have some cardboard, snaffled from shoe boxes, or somewhere, you'll notice.

Cut a piece of cardboard and a piece of "Cellophane" to the exact size of the picture you want to frame. Slip the picture between, and then stick the passe-partout tape all the way around the edges, pressing down firmly.

TO STAND OR HANG

If you want to hang the picture up, gum another strip of passe-partout over a loop of cord—and allow it to set firmly.

If you wish the picture to stand, then cut a "rest" out of cardboard. Bend this, and glue the straight part to the back of the frame, so that the other part will stand securely on table or mantel-piece.

HAVE you a collection of postcards among your treasures—pretty flower pictures or charming views? If so, I wonder if you have considered turning them into little pictures for your

(Continued from page 11)

"Catch that cat before she gets the green paint stains off," Babs said, and then jolly well denounced her for the schemer she is to Primmy! And here," she added, as they halted outside Vera's room, "is where the show-down starts! Come on!"

She crashed open the door. Then she paused. For of Vera in that room there was no sign. As she stared round, however, an adjoining door which opened on to Vera's bath-room hastily closed.

"She's in there, washing herself! What did I tell you?" she crowed.

In three strides she had reached the door. Crash! the door went as it was flung open. Vera, wearing her pale yellow spectacles, jumped round, a towel across her hands.

"You get out!" she shouted. "What do you want?"

"Let me see your hands!" Babs cried.

"The idea! Get out!"

Babs wasted no more time in words. Swiftly she caught at the towel. With sudden fury in her face, Vera, detaching one hand, made as if to slap Babs' face. In the wildness of the moment, however, Vera, bringing her arm over too near her own face, knocked off her glasses.

"Look out!" shrieked Mabs. "Babs—the glasses!"

But the mischief was done, even before the words had died on Mabs' lips. In the instinctive backward step she had taken, Babs had stepped upon the fallen spectacles.

"My glasses!" shrieked Vera.

One lens was smashed into half a dozen pieces. Vera was livid.

"You fool—fool!" she panted, and grabbed the pieces up. "These glasses—my only pair!"

Frantically she bundled the pieces into her pocket; then, as Babs stood helpless, momentarily taken aback by the disaster, she lunged forward fiercely and bundled her and Mabs through the door. "Now get out—and stop out!"

And—bang went the door in the chums' faces.

"Babs—" Mabs stuttered.

"Come on!" Babs said.

"But—but the paint—"

"Didn't you see?" Babs looked at her queerly. "When she pushed me, I mean. I saw paint—green paint—still clinging to her finger-nails. Come on! We've got to think this out. But one thing is dead certain now, Mabs! It is Vera who's plotting against Berry at this school; and it is Vera who is hand-in-glove with the mystery speed-girl, Spotted Scarf!"

Berry in Danger!



THERE was no possible room for doubt now that Vera Staines was Berry's enemy. Even the most sceptic of her chums agreed with Babs when, rushing back to detention-room, she reported her latest discovery. Obviously, Vera Staines was linked with Spotted Scarf, the mystery motorist of the Drome Speed Track.

But for what purpose?

How could Vera, the prim, lecture-giving Old-Girl of Cliff House, be of assistance to the girl who was Berry's greatest rival for the Lady Driver's Trophy? What possible object had she achieved by getting Berry driven out of Cliff House?

Babs & Co. did not know—but it was one of the things they meant to know

before all was done. That evening they went over to the track, where Berry had been allotted a member's room, and explained to that girl, in some measure, their suspicions. Berry, however, only smiled.

"Good kids, but silly kids," she said fondly.

"What's happened has just been my own fault. Naturally, you're dying to blame somebody, but please don't. Vera's a bit of an old crow, I know—she always was—but she wouldn't stoop to anything so mean and underhand. And, talking about Vera," she went off inconsequently, "do you know what I've found out?"

"No. What?" Babs asked, with quick interest.

"Oh, nothing much. Just that she's a niece of Humphrey Manderson, that's all. Queer, though, isn't it, to find old Vera even remotely related to motor-cars? And, talking about motor-cars," Berry added, with a flush of eager excitement, "dost realise, fair children, that to-morrow is the great day? And dost realise," she added, "that this time to-morrow I may be Manderson's Number One driver?"

"And dost realise, old fruit, that Vera is opening the Old Girls' club-room in your place?" Mabel Lynn demanded.

For a moment Berry did look rueful at that reminder.

"I'm sorry!" she said quietly. "I'd like to have done the job—especially if I win the race. Anyway, that can't be helped now, can it? But winning the race can—and, gee, am I going all out for that! Mind you're early, kids! I've got top notch seats booked for you in the stand!"

Dear, unconquerable Berry! How impossible it was to make her take things seriously!—But Mabs knew that under that banter was an almost fierce anxiety; knew that while Berry laughed and joked she was bitterly disappointed at not opening the Old Girls' club-room, and just a tiny bit apprehensive of what Miss Primrose might say to Humphrey Manderson when she met him on the morrow.

All the same, that clearly was a bit of interesting news concerning Vera and Humphrey Manderson. Babs wondered vaguely why Vera, so fond of boasting about her travels, had never even mentioned such an important thing as having a famous school governor for an uncle.

They left Berry then, returning to school. They arrived back there to find everybody talking of the great race to-morrow, and everybody, apparently, going. Only one girl, in fact, seemed to have no interest in the race. That was Vera Staines. Vera was utterly excited because of the opening of the Old Girls' club-room, which was due to take place in the late afternoon.

"And, of course, you'll all be there," she said. "Do be careful to get back from the race in time. I've prepared a frightfully important speech, and I'm going to read a special address of welcome to Humphrey Manderson."

"Your uncle?" asked Babs casually.

For a moment Vera looked startled.

"What?—Who is?"

"Humphrey Manderson. Isn't he?"

Babs asked, and again was faintly intrigued why Vera, so fond of boasting, should have kept such an important relative in the background.

"We heard so to-day at the track."

"Oh!" Vera said, and abruptly turned away.

Queer, that. But there was no time for speculation, for call-over bell was already ringing, and from then until

bed-time Babs had all her work cut out

to get through her duties as junior captain.

But she was still wondering when she went to bed that night.

She was still wondering when, with her excited chums, she got up next morning and dressed in preparation for that day of great events.

And she wondered again when, during that dressing, she spotted Vera Staines through the dormitory window cycling out of school gates. On what errand was Vera bound at such an early hour in the morning?

But breakfast, then—in an atmosphere of mounting excitement as the time of departure came near. All the chums had planned to be at the track early so as not to miss a single thing, and shortly after breakfast Babs, in company with Mabs, Bessie, Clara, Marjorie Hazeldene, Jemima Carstairs and Leila Carroll left the school. The morning was fine, and as there was bound to be some difficulty about parking at the track, they left their cycles behind, and decided to walk.

They had barely reached the cross-roads, however, when Babs gave an exclamation.

"Hallo! There's Inspector Winter!"

Detective-Inspector Winter, their old friend of the Courtfield division of police it was, with Sergeant Smallways, and a fresh-faced young constable. He was frowning as Babs & Co. came up.

"Morning, inspector!" Babs said. "Anything wrong?"

"Oh, morning, Miss Redfern!"

Winter said. "No; nothing terrible, I'm glad to say. We're looking for a blue racing car."

Babs started.

"A blue car!"

"Driven by a girl," Inspector Winter nodded.

"Why, that's—" Bessie began.

"Oh, wow! Babs, you idiot, you've trodden on my toe!"

"Shut up!" Babs hissed, in a fierce aside.

"Yes, we're rather anxious to have a talk with the young woman who was driving it at eight o'clock this morning. Went through Lantham at fifty miles an hour, if you please. Shot through the traffic lights when they were against her, and wrecked a stall which was erected in the market-place. We chased her in the police car, but she got away."

"And—and you didn't recognise her?" Babs asked.

"No. Her face was hidden by a helmet and goggles. But we're watching all roads for the car. You don't happen to have seen it, I suppose?"

Babs shook her head, signalling her chums at the same time to say nothing. But her heart was thumping then; a most dreadful anxiety had gripped her. Surely Berry would not have been such a callous fool as to do all that reckless damage? Surely Berry would not have dreamt of taking her car on the open road on the morning of the greatest race of her life? But if not Berry—who?

Anxiously, dismayed, the chums discussed the question as they hurried along.

"We've got to find out what happened from Berry," Babs said, "and if she knows nothing about it, there's only one conclusion to jump at. Somebody else borrowed Berry's car; somebody else did that damage, hoping Berry would find herself in trouble with the police, and, therefore, unable to race. And that girl—"

"Spotted Scarf—what?" Jemima Carstairs asked softly.

Babs nodded grimly. On they hurried. Reaching the track, Babs went in search of Berry, to find that usually merry madcap in a rather exasperated frame of mind. She explained the reason.

"Some idiot sent me a message to meet Humphrey Manderson on the eight-five train at Courtfield. I found the whole message had been a hoax."

But Babs knew then. Innocent Berry, not knowing the police were looking for her, had been lured away by that faked message, while someone else—and who else but Spotted Scarf?—used her car.

She went off, glancing at her wristwatch as she did so. Phew! Time was getting on, and already on the track the first race had started. It required less than half an hour now before the lady drivers' event.

Down the corridor she tramped, her face grim now. She reached the door marked "A. N. Other," and pushed it open.

And then she paused. For the mystery speed-girl in the red-and-white spotted scarf, her back towards her, was speaking into the phone. Babs was just in time to hear the words she uttered, and she immediately changed her plans because of them.

"Oh, is that the Courtfield Police?" the mystery girl said; and Babs paused, struck by a faintly familiar ring in the voice. "Never mind who I am, but I want you to know that the girl and the blue racing car you are looking for are here. The girl's name is Berenice Osborne, but if you want to get hold of her you'll have to hurry, because she's racing in twenty minutes' time."

Babs clenched her hands, catching her breath sharply. So that was the scheme, was it—to get Berry delayed by the police so that she could not race in the big event which was to mean so much to her?

Somehow she had to prevent Berry and the police meeting. At all costs, Berry must race in the big event. But how—how to accomplish that when minutes were fleeting?

Two Berrys!



BABS, whose brain never worked more swiftly than in moments of crisis such as this, had her plan already cut and dried by the time she had rejoined her chums, and gasped out the surprising news to them.

"We've got to get Berry out of it!" she said urgently. "Now! Leila—and you, Mabs—you've got to do that! Kid Berry out of her room! Shut her up somewhere! Clara, you're nearer Berry's height than anyone else. For the time being you've got to be Berry. As soon as Mabs and Leila get Berry out of it, you nip into her room and put on one of her driving suits, with a helmet and goggles. By-and-by the police will come along. Keep them in conversation if you can until the race has started. Now, Jimmy, you come with me," she added. "Everybody clear?"

They all were, and all, recognising the urgency of the case, were determined to do their best. At once Mabs and Leila trotted off, to find Berry just putting the finishing touches to her dressing. She beamed round as they entered.

"Hallo, kids! Anything I can do?" she asked.

"Yes, Berry," Mabs said. "I've got a wheeze—a frightfully gorgeous wheeze it is, but we want a room all to ourselves to do it in."

"Well, there's Charlie's room," Berry said. "Charlie won't be wanting it for an hour or two. But what's the wheeze?"

"Come along and I'll show you!"

Berry grinned, though she gave one look at the clock. Without further question, she led the way out, and reaching Charlie's room she flung the door open. Into it Mabs and Leila went with her, and Mabs, who was last, clicked the key and swiftly removed it. Berry started.

"Here, what's the idea of that?" she asked.

"The idea," Mabs replied quietly, "is that we all stop here, Berry, until the start of the race. You see," she added, "we're helping Babs to carry

jumpy, stole a look at her wristwatch. Ten minutes before the race.

She led the way, taking, however, a rather circuitous and leisurely route. Three minutes she wasted in that manner, and finally, coming to Berry's door, knocked. Clara had already been primed in her tactics, and the Tomboy played up splendidly. A voice, utterly unlike her own, answered from behind the door as Babs tapped.

"Yes, who's there? Can't come in for a moment—I'm dressing."

"Is that Miss Osborne?" Inspector Winter asked.

"Well, who do you think it is?" Clara retorted. "Don't come in, though."

"Very well, we'll wait," the inspector said easily.

They waited, sure now of their victim. One—two—three minutes went by before the goggled and entirely unrecognisable face of Clara appeared.



HER suspicions roused now, Babs grabbed at the towel. "Let me see your hands!" she cried. But Vera Staines held on desperately.

through a little scheme on your behalf—and if Babs doesn't carry it through, it means you'll be talking to policemen instead of racing. Now let me explain—"

Clara, meanwhile, was slipping into Berry's spare driving suit. While she did that, Babs and Jemima Carstairs had strolled towards the entrance, and stationing themselves there, watched presently the arrival of Inspector Winter and Sergeant Smallways.

They saw the inspector get out of his car. They saw him speak to Phelps for a few moments.

Then Babs approached. "Hallo, inspector! I say, we've just been talking to the girl who owns a blue car here—a girl named Berry Osborne. I wonder if she's the girl you're looking for?"

"That's her—yes!" The inspector nodded swiftly. "We got her name just now. Where is she, Miss Redfern?"

"Come along and we'll take you to her," Babs invited. "Not far away." The inspector beamed his gratitude. Babs, outwardly calm, inwardly rather

Three minutes only to the race—surely Clara could be relied upon to keep the inspector engaged until that time!

In any case, it had to be risked. Babs, leaving Clara to her fate with Jemima, rushed down to the starting point.

There the cars were already lined up, and Spotted Scarf was seated in the red car. A vast crowd was murmuring in the stand, and Humphrey Manderson was standing a little way away talking to Miss Charmant, of Cliff House. Berry's car was there also, accompanied by a distracted-looking Charlie. He looked at Babs.

"Miss Redfern, where's Miss Osborne? She hasn't arrived."

"Don't worry," Babs said. "She'll be along. Wait a minute—wait a minute! What's this?" she added excitedly. Stepping forward, she picked up two small pieces of tinted glass from the seat of the racer. "My hat!" she breathed stupidly as she stared at them, and then was whisked aside as a great shout went up and Berry came racing forward, followed by Mabs and Leila. "Berry!"

"Let me get in!" Berry cried. She fairly leapt into the seat.

Engines were throbbing now; exhausts thundering. Half a minute to go!

"Then—
"They're off!" went up a delirious yell, and down dropped the starter's flag.

Off they were just in time. For even as the cars shot away, Inspector Winter came hurrying down towards the track.

"Mabs! Look at these!" Babs said—and held out the two pieces of tinted glass. "They were in Berry's car."

Mabs looked at them. A startled look crossed her face.

"Babs, they're not—they're not—"
"They are!" Babs said breathlessly. "Now I know, Mabs—now everything is clear! Berry has simply got to win now!"

There was a thunder of engines as the cars roared past on the first lap. The race had already resolved itself into a duel between the red and blue car, and Berry and Spotted Scarf were racing neck and neck. Strung out in a chain behind them, the rest of the field was not even getting a look in.

"Berry's winning!" cried Babs. "She's going ahead!"

"No, Spotted Scarf is holding her!" Mabs panted.

They watched, struck into spell-bound fascination; forgetful now even of the drama underlying this race. Phew! What a struggle!

"Go it, Berry!" cheered Babs.
"Come on, Berry!" shrieked Mabel Lynn.

Like a blue and red flash the two leaders whizzed past the chums again on the long straight—my, what a pace!—with Berry once more taking the lead on the banking.

Babs glanced at the lap-board.
"Three more to go," she muttered.
"Berry, come on!"

But Berry had the race in hand now. Slowly the gap between the two cars lengthened. At the end of that lap Berry was three car lengths ahead; on the next lap she had gained thirty yards, and started the last lap of all with a good fifty yards in hand and Spotted Scarf falling farther behind with every revolution of the wheels. Last half-lap, and Berry had things her own way, Spotted Scarf well and truly defeated. Like a flash she went over the winning line; amid a thundering roar of cheering and clapping once more lapped, halting at length near her pit.

"Berry's won!" cheered Babs.
"Come on!"

Excitedly she rushed towards the stationary car, Mabs at her heels. A great crowd was swarming around the car now, among it Humphrey Manderson and Inspector Winter, both of whom had been talking together during the latter laps of the race. As Babs rushed up, breathlessly laughing, Berry was in the act of slipping out of her seat. She twinkled at Humphrey Manderson.

"Well, sir, do I get the job?" she asked cheerily.

He did not smile, however. He frowned.

"Fine driving—congratulations," he grunted. "On the other hand, I'm not sure! I've just been talking to the inspector here, and from what he tells me you're pretty reckless on the road. Pretty bad show you put up in Lantham this morning, wasn't it?"

"No, it wasn't!" cried Babs.

"Eh? Who the dickens is talking to you, girl?"

"Because," Babs said, "if it was Berry's car which was in that show, it wasn't Berry who was driving it!"

"Don't be a fool!" cried a voice, and

Babs wheeled to behold Spotted Scarf. "Who else could it have been?"

Babs stared at her grimly.

"I can tell you that!" she cried. "The girl who did it was the girl who has been Berry's enemy all along—her enemy at Cliff House. And that girl is—you!"

"What?"

"You—Vera Staines!" rapped Babs.

Her hand flashed out and caught the goggles on Spotted Scarf's face. She tore them away, revealing the features of Vera Staines! And Vera was wearing her tinted spectacles, minus one lens.

"You drove that car!" cried Babs, while Vera staggered back and the on-lookers gasped. "And to get Berry out of the way, you tricked her to Courtfield Station with a faked message from your uncle!"

There was an electrified silence. Humphrey Manderson, looking dazed, was staring at his niece. Vera's face was livid.

"I didn't! It's a lie!" she cried.
"You can't prove it!"

"Can't I?" Babs cried, and like lightning her hand flashed out; and Vera turned deathly pale as she saw the smashed fragments of her glasses. "Then perhaps," Babs said, "you can explain how these came to be in Berry's car? I've witnesses to prove that I found them there! These bits are from your glasses. Remember I smashed them yesterday?"

"Vera!" Humphrey Manderson cried.

Vera choked.

"I tell you—"

"I think," Humphrey Manderson said curtly, "you've told us enough! This is another of your scheming tricks! In any case, you know I have forbidden you to drive cars! Perhaps," he added to the bewildered Berry, "you haven't so much explaining to do after all! It appears to me it is my niece who will have to do that! Well, Winter, do you still want to talk to Berry?"

"Thanks, no!" Winter said. "But I'd like to talk to Miss Redfern. And I'd also like those broken pieces of glass to check up on, Miss Staines—they'll be useful evidence! Meanwhile, Miss Osborne, I'm sorry you were suspected—"

"And so am I," Berry gurgled. "For if you'd had your way I'd have missed the race! As it is, I've won it—thanks to Babs. Now, what about the job?"

Humphrey Manderson smiled.

"It's yours!" he said. "I'll announce it officially at the opening of

the Old Girls' club-room this afternoon. Vera, this way!" he added curtly, and leaving Berry and Babs to be mobbed by their overjoyed chums he led his erring niece away.

HUMPHREY MANDERSON was as good as his word. That afternoon, at the opening of the Old Girls' club-room it was Berry who officiated and Humphrey Manderson who was the guest of honour. And at that opening he made a long speech which had nothing whatever to do with the Old Girls' club, but everything to do with Berry Osborne and, now and again, his own niece, Vera Staines.

For Vera, in the meantime, had confessed everything to her uncle, hoping, by that means, to soften his anger.

And Vera, all along, had been the snake-in-the-grass. She had plotted against Berry because she wanted to impress her uncle as the winner of the Lady Drivers' Race. To further gain his favour, she had schemed for the honour of opening the Old Girls' club-room.

The whole story, during that speech, came out.

Years ago, Vera had smashed up her uncle's car. As a result he had forbidden her ever to drive again. But Vera, who had a passion for driving, had trained secretly in Italy during her world tour, and arguing that if she proved herself a capable driver now her uncle could not fail to be pleased with her, and perhaps make her one of his own racing-drivers, had entered the Lady Drivers' Race intending to dazzle him with a spectacular victory.

At the same time, to prove to him the high regard and esteem in which she was held at her old school, she had aimed to surprise him pleasantly by being his partner at the opening ceremony.

"And that," Humphrey Manderson concluded, "is all I am prepared to say on this subject. At the same time, I sincerely hope Vera will have learned her lesson. Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased and proud to be your guest of honour, but I am more pleased and more proud to name Berenice Osborne my star driver—"

"Hurrah!" cheered everybody.

"And I," Berry said, coming up, "am pleased and proud to be that driver! But I'm more pleased and proud to have such good chums among the girls of my old school—Babs & Co.!"

To which sentiment Cliff House rose as one girl.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

WHEN BARBARA REDFERN'S ENEMY WANTED REVENGE, SHE STRUCK AT BABS' YOUNGER SISTER DORIS—AND SO WAS BROUGHT ABOUT—



Rona Fox was the schemer; Rona, the spiteful prefect whose plot against Thalia Pascoe Babs had so recently thwarted. Naturally, Babs stands by her sister, deliberately taking most of the blows. For she is fiercely resolved that Doris shall be spared trouble and suffering no matter what happens to her! A masterly story, in Hilda Richards' most brilliant style.

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FLASH, are on holiday at Sunnylands Farm, which is run as an hotel by a hard-working, likeable young girl,

DOROTHY DEAN. Dorothy seems to have a secret enemy, who is trying to drive guests from the farm. Mysterious things happen and suspicion falls upon one of the guests.

JOHNNY JEVONS, a boisterous young fellow who is a confirmed practical joker. Valerie, though puzzled by him, likes him, nevertheless. One of the guests leaves because of damage done to her property. Suspicion again falls on Johnny, but Valerie clears him. She is searching some old ruins which seem to be connected with the mystery when an unseen attacker pushes her into a deep hole!

(Now read on.)

By
ISABEL NORTON

Done by Cunning!

FOR an eternity Valerie seemed to be falling, and then, abruptly, she fell in a heap.

To her joy she was breathless, but apparently uninjured. But on the point of congratulating herself on a fortunate escape, she found, to her horror, that she was slipping again.

In a flash she realised what had happened. She had landed on a smooth, sloping stone surface several feet below the hole in the ground. But she could only tell by its feel. It was too dark to see anything, except the lighter opening above her.

Throwing out her arms, she searched desperately for anything to which she could hang on. At first she touched nothing but the cold, wet, slippery surface of the stone. All the time she was sliding faster. Something icy cold touched her ankles, so unexpectedly, that she all but shrieked. She bunched her legs sharply; at the same moment the fingers of one hand encountering a tiny ledge just managed to grip it.

She kept very still at that, knowing that she had only just avoided plunging into a pool of icy water which almost filled this hideous subterranean trap.

"Help!" Valerie called, the moment she could collect sufficient breath for the effort.

The wet sides threw her voice back at her in mocking echoes. She shouted again and again, but in a deepening despair. The person who had thrust her in would hardly pull her back, and the thin echoes of her voice would

never reach the outside air beyond the ruins.

Her fingers, holding to the tiny ledge, began to ache with the strain. Gradually, as her eyes became more accustomed to the deep gloom, she saw just within her reach a second fissure in the stone. Eagerly she held it with her other hand to take some of the strain off her smarting fingers.

Poor as it was, it was obviously the best support for which she could hope. Cramped and acutely uncomfortable, Valerie slowly turned her head, knowing that the slightest incautious movement might cause her to lose her precarious hold altogether.

She could dimly make out the details of her prison at last.

The hole through which she had fallen, seven or eight feet above her, was now away to one side, for she had slid two or three feet down the sloping surface before checking herself.

It was a game of rounders that saved Valerie from peril—and incriminated the japer of the farm!

She had evidently dropped into what had been one of the ancient dungeons. At the spot where she had fallen through there had originally been a grating, through which a dim light had been reflected off this slope to the prisoners below.

The dungeon itself, which might be many feet deep, was now nearly full of icy water. Valerie could just make out the sheen on its pitch-black surface only a few inches below her feet. She gave a tiny shiver as she realised the fate that had so nearly been hers.

"Help!" she called again.

The same tantalising echoes filled her ears; the same uncanny silence followed as they died away. Yet, only a few yards distant, the farmyard was still drenched in sunlight, the game of rounders was still in progress. Holiday-makers would be constantly coming and going on all manner of care-free errands, but there was no reason why any of them should come near the spot where Valerie clung in such peril. Then, all at once, Valerie stirred. A

thrill of returning hope suffused her as, from near at hand, she had heard the faint, familiar sound of a puzzled whimper.

She gazed breathlessly towards the oblong of light above her head, listening tensely as the patter of paws drew steadily nearer.

"Flash!" she called urgently, and in another moment she saw his head above her—saw his perky ears strongly silhouetted against the light, his eyes shining greenishly as he gazed eagerly down, trying to see where his mistress was.

It was a moment Valerie would never forget.

Flash whimpered anxiously as he heard her voice, sensing that something was wrong. He ran worriedly round and round the broken, crumbling edge, seeking desperately for some way of getting down to her.

"Steady, boy!" Valerie called warningly, as she saw him start to paw the loose soil.

It was a critical moment. There

would be little hope left for either of them if Flash fell in as well. But could she make him understand?

Flash's ears drooped, and, in puzzlement, he put his head on one side, peering unseeingly into the blackness from which his mistress' voice had come. She knew he was still on the point of plunging recklessly down to discover what had happened to her.

"Fetch help, Flash! Go!" Valerie instructed him tensely. "Help! Find Johnny, Flash! Bring him here! Quickly, boy!"

She saw his head move as he listened, watched the raising of his sensitive, pointed ears as he tried to think out, in his own doggy way, whether it was really safe to leave Valerie at all.

"At once, boy!" she urged. "Quickly! Bring help! Find Johnny! Quick, Flash!"

And Flash, at that, turned. Valerie, still clinging in twisted discomfort to the perilous wet slope, caught one last glimpse of his faithful head as he

turned away, then heard the swift patter of his receding footsteps.

"Whoof, whoof!" barked Flash, as he burst upon the rounders players in the farmyard.

Johnny, stoutly defending a gatepost with his improvised bat, paused to look at Flash with a twinkle of amusement in his eyes.

"What's the matter, old boy?" he asked. "Want to join in?"

Flash, stiff with excitement, his ears erect, the ruff of hair around his neck bristling, barked again.

"Whoof!" he repeated commandingly.

They must stop! Everything must stop when his beloved mistress was in peril. They must follow him immediately to the spot where she was.

Freckled Marjorie, who was feeder, had just called out to Johnny to be ready. Now, on the point of throwing the ball, she paused to watch Flash with wondering eyes.

In a frenzy of fresh excitement, Flash had run to the party of players, who were already out, and was leaping up at each in turn.

"What's the matter with Flash all of a sudden?" asked Marjorie, in amazement.

"Feels like it, no doubt," answered Johnny lightly. "I'm still waiting, Lightning."

But Marjorie still held the ball. Flash's unusual behaviour fascinated her.

"There's something up with him," she said, with conviction.

"You'll turn into a statue in a minute," chaffed Johnny. "Hang it all, Flash can surely—Hey! What's up?" he gasped, in a changed tone.

For Flash, suddenly despairing of moving the puzzled group he had gone to first, had now rushed straight for Johnny. Grasping the end of the bat with his strong teeth, he started to tug as hard as he could, growling fiercely.

"Go on, you old silly!" cried Johnny, freeing the bat with a smart twist. He brandished it around his head. "Clear off, you silly old ass,

and worry someone else!" he commanded. "Can't you see Marjorie's nearly come out of her trance, and may throw the ball any day now?"

Flash's ears sank, his bushy tail drooped. They couldn't understand what he was trying to tell them. Valerie was in desperate peril—she had sent him to bring help to her. Yet, whatever he did, they didn't seem to understand.

"Johnny, I'm sure he's got something on his mind," Marjorie insisted, uneasily.

"How nice," answered Johnny, "to have one to have something on! Sling up the ball, little feather-headed friend, and don't foolle around any longer!"

Stung by that taunt, Marjorie heaved the ball with all her strength. Johnny drew his bat back, intending to send it clean out of the farmyard.

Bat and ball, as it happened, never made contact.

Shooting up as though impelled by a powerful spring, Flash took a prodigious leap and caught the ball with his teeth in mid-flight.

"He's got it!" gasped Marjorie, in amazement.

"Out!" ejaculated the watchers, in delight.

"You silly old idiot!" howled Johnny, having taken a mighty swipe at the empty air.

Flash dropped back to the ground. With one swift, cunning glance at Johnny, he ran straight back towards the ruins, ball still in his mouth.

"You cunning old fox!" yelled Johnny, exasperatedly—and next moment was leading a chase in which everyone decided to join.

Flash pelted on amongst the broken columns. Cunning had served him at last. They were all after him now. And somewhere very near here—

"Help!" came the faint echo of Valerie's voice.

Flash dropped the ball. His ruse had worked; they had all heard the muffled cry now. The ball was instantly forgotten by everyone. Whimpering with excitement, Flash led them to the edge

of the treacherous hole through which his beloved mistress had fallen.

Startled, horrified, they clustered nearer as Valerie's tones floated up out of the pit.

"Fetch a rope quickly!" she called. "I can't hold on much longer, and the place is flooded. A rope!"

Someone pelted back to get one immediately. They dropped one end down into the darkness of the pit; as Valerie called for them to pull, they gathered at the other end of the rope and hauled it up.

Foot by foot, Valerie was drawn to the surface until, with the aid of so many willing hands, she was easily able to scramble to complete safety again.

The girl detective was unusually pale. Though she smiled her gratitude, they could all see how the ordeal had shaken her.

"What ever made you go down there, Val?" asked freckled Marjorie, in deep perplexity, and she glanced at the three heavy planks, now lying at one side, which had originally covered the danger spot.

"The hole was uncovered when I came along," Valerie answered.

Marjorie whistled incredulously.

"Poor old Val! Then you slipped in without noticing it?" she asked, sympathetically.

Valerie shook her head, keen eyes travelling swiftly from face to face.

"No, it wasn't like that at all," she answered, evenly. "I was standing just here when someone I didn't see crept up behind me and—pushed me in!"

"Pushed you in?" echoed six disbelieving voices at the same moment.

And the six turned, as one, to gaze with incredulous amazement at the seventh of their number, who had not spoken at all.

Johnny Jevons!

For he had recently entered the ruins to recover the rounders ball!

"Give Me An Hour—"

"IT couldn't have been Johnny, Dorothy!" declared Valerie in a tone of deep conviction. "If there's one thing I'm absolutely certain about, it's that Johnny's innocent this time!"

It was a quarter of an hour later. Having stayed only to see that the planks were safely replaced across the treacherous hole over the ancient dungeon, Valerie had made her way to the farmhouse, anxious to give her own report to Dorothy Dean before a garbled version of it reached her from any other source.

In order not to disturb Dorothy more than necessary, Valerie had naturally made as light of her adventure as possible, but the young hostess at the farmhouse had listened with deepening concern to the account of her startling adventure.

"You're a brick, Val!" she said gratefully. "Now you're almost ready to make out that it doesn't matter what happens to you as long as we save Johnny!"

Valerie laughed unexpectedly. "Put it like that if you like," she smilingly agreed. She led Dorothy to a chair in the cheery little writing-room where they had gone to be quiet, and made her sit down. "Tell me the truth, dear. Doesn't it matter rather a lot whether Johnny stays here or not?"

Dorothy was several moments in replying, but her frank eyes could not conceal what she was really thinking.

"Yes, Val," she admitted, at length. "Johnny's here for a whole month.

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Here are details of the others :

No. 693. "Study Against Study," in which Marjorie Stanton tells of one of the earlier exploits of Betty Barton & Co.

No. 694. "On Secret Service at School," specially written for this month's issues by Joan Inglesant.

No. 695. "Their Thrilling Riviera Holiday," an enthralling holiday mystery story by—Hilda Richards!

You've seen for yourself that he's the life and soul of the place. I know lots of people have stayed on merely because there's always some kind of lark when Johnny's around.

"But it also matters a lot to me what happens to you as well!" she added in concern.

Valerie smilingly shook her head. "Forget it! I'm a detective, my dear," she answered, her hand resting affectionately on Flash's head. "You see, it's my business to go out looking for trouble, so I mustn't grumble when I occasionally find a spot of it. I've really found out all I wanted to know."

Dorothy's eyes opened wider. "Exactly what is that, Valerie?" she asked.

"There must be no 'Ghost Game' in the ruins to-night," Valerie answered firmly. "We're never likely to find out now who first put this idea into the suggestion box. If we did—"

She broke off without completing her sentence, for she had been on the point of saying that if they knew that they would also know the identity of Dorothy's mysterious but relentless enemy at the farm.

Fortunately Dorothy's thoughts had already run on in another channel.

"You're right about that game, Val," she said, with a tiny shiver. "It would have been terrible if the game had started without that danger spot being noticed. One of the elderly people might have fallen through!"

"Well, all's well that ends well, my dear," Valerie said, with a heartening smile. "If only we keep on keeping our peepers open, we'll soon clear everything up."

Dorothy laughed. "Of course we will, Val," she agreed. "It never does any good only to look on the black side. Which reminds me about my cakes. They'll be giving me some mighty black looks if I don't rush off and see how they're doing!"

Valerie's eyes followed her as she sped out of the room. Dorothy, with her cheerful nature, her pretty voice, and graceful ways, would have been an attractive girl to meet under any circumstances. But she was far more than just a jolly girl in charge of a farm guest-house. She had readily shouldered a big burden when her mother had been taken seriously ill. Plucky and resolute, she still made no bones about working all hours to keep the farm running as smoothly as possible.

Valerie's smile soon faded, however, as, left alone, she reflected on her recent adventure.

The hands which had pushed her into the pit had not been those of a japer!

Some of the people might believe Johnny Jevons had done it, only intending it as a foolhardy lark in the belief that there was merely a shallow depression, from which Valerie would have no difficulty in escaping. Valerie's private view was very different.

She was sure now that Dorothy had a secret, sinister enemy, determined to cause trouble at the farm as often as possible.

That enemy had cunningly slipped the idea of the "ghost game" into the suggestion-box, hoping that it would catch on. The planks over the ancient dungeon had been deliberately removed in readiness for someone to fall through by accident in the darkness, once more giving the farm the name for being a dangerous place, carelessly conducted by the girl in charge of it.

Valerie, already suspicious of the genuineness of that "suggestion," had gone to the ruins for the express purpose of discovering whether any kind of mischief had been planned. The



SEIZING the ball in his mouth, Flash tore towards the ruins, glancing back to see if the players were following him. It was the only way he could bring help to his beloved mistress.

enemy, unsuspected by Valerie, had evidently been lurking quite close at hand all the time.

Why she had been treated in such a cowardly manner scarcely mattered. Her attacker might have been merely anxious to scare her.

Whatever the motive, it told Valerie clearly enough that the mysterious enemy was a dangerous one.

Rising to her feet, she briskly left the room and turned along the corridor. At the end of it she all but collided with a stooping figure fumbling about on the floor. She recognised him as Dorothy's Uncle Nathan, the well-meaning but inefficient relative who had come to help her during her mother's illness.

"Looking for these, uncle?" asked Valerie, smilingly retrieving a pair of spectacles from the floor and handing them back to him.

"Thanks ever so much! Oh dear!" sighed Uncle Nathan, as he replaced them on his nose and blinked gratefully at Valerie. "Why, it's Miss Drew! What ever is it they tell me you've been up to in the ruins?" he asked, gazing at Valerie as though she had become an entirely new person since he saw her last.

"Just a little tumble which didn't matter at all," Valerie lightly answered. "Have you been around the farm all afternoon, uncle?"

"Yes. Well, here and there," amended Uncle Nathan, in his usual confused manner. "I was down with the haymakers at first, but Emily forgot to bring me my cup of tea. So I went along to see the people watching the bees being smoked out, thinking Emily might have taken my tea there instead—"

"Who did you see while you were around?" Valerie intervened, anxious to keep him to the point.

Uncle Nathan usually seemed very vague about anything he did or saw, but in the end Valerie managed to get him to remember quite a number of people who had been watching the various farm activities.

Thanking him, she made her way to the notice-board, and keenly studied the lists of those who had gone off on organised excursions elsewhere.

In a few minutes the girl detective had reduced her list of possible suspects to only four or five people, whose movements during the afternoon still remained unaccounted for.

"I'll have to check up on them as soon as they return," she reflected. "Now, while I'm waiting, is my chance to have a quiet look round the ruins again."

Her blood was up. That treacherous attack from behind had really put Valerie on her mettle. If it was humanly possible to unmask Dorothy's cowardly, unseen enemy, she meant to do so now.

But on the very point of leaving the farmhouse, Valerie pulled up in astonishment.

Outside the barn which had been so attractively converted for use as a ball-room a dozen or more people were clustered in an excited knot. Valerie's brows suddenly contracted as scraps of what they were saying floated to her ears.

"It must have been Johnny!"

"Nobody else went into the ruins!"

"He wanged the rounders ball right over the wall, even though it's out of bounds!"

"Hitting it there deliberately, or I'm a Dutchman!"

"And he was a fearful long time pretending to fag it. We all wondered what he was up to."

Filled with a sudden misgiving, Valerie hastened across to the spot.

Johnny was being actually held responsible for the cowardly attack on her!

She found him standing in the centre of the group, hands in pockets, as usual, his cheeks brick-red, his familiar smile now oddly twisted.

"Hang it all, give a chap a chance!" he protested, as he managed to make his voice heard at last. "Before you accuse a fellow of being such a rotter you might let him speak—"

"We've heard you excusing yourself before!" a voice scornfully interrupted before Johnny could get any further.

"Excuse me!" put in Valerie, speaking with quiet intendment from the edge of the crowd. "Can I have a say as well?"

There was an immediate stir in the

group. Everyone turned to look at Valerie. Her face was set; there was grave disappointment in her eyes.

"Why, of course, Val," said freckled Marjorie, with an apologetic smile. "Though you weren't playing rounders with us; you didn't see—"

"At least, I know enough," Valerie intervened, her glance travelling quickly from face to face, "to be quite sure that it wasn't Johnny who attacked me!"

"There was a sensation at her words. Some of the crowd looked uneasily away; covert nudges were exchanged amongst others. There was a minor outburst of embarrassed coughing. Shy Miss Peek gave Valerie a diffident smile.

"Perhaps you haven't heard all the evidence, Miss Drew," she suggested. "You see, Johnny was actually seen—"

"Behind me?" asked Valerie quickly. Miss Peek spread her hands deprecatingly.

"Not exactly, of course. Oh dear, it's so very difficult—"

"I see no difficulty!" declared Peter Passleigh, in stern, precise tones. "There can't be any doubt we've caught him this time. If Johnny isn't chucked out after this, I shall certainly leave myself."

"Hear, hear!" chorused two or three others immediately.

"And me!" Little Miss Peek spoke quite firmly, though still with obvious reluctance. "When he's proved to be such a thoughtless little rascal—"

"Don't say any more!" chipped in Johnny unexpectedly. "You needn't worry, any of you, about clearing out. I'm going!"

He stood, hands on hips, his cheeks redder than ever, facing his accusers.

"I've been out for a lark most of the time," he explained, "so I can't blame any of you for jumping to the conclusion I've overstepped the mark. I'll admit everything's against me this time." He paused to swallow. "All the same," added Johnny, his eyes suddenly meeting Valerie's, "it's jolly decent of Valerie to stick up for me, and I shan't forget that. You can tell Dorothy I'll be leaving at once, so I'll go and get my traps packed right away."

"Stop, Johnny!"

It was Valerie's voice that arrested him just as he was turning away. Everyone looked at her with startled interest, for there was a resolute set to her chin.

"Please, everyone," she begged, "I don't want Johnny to go yet! Give me just an hour longer, and then I'll tell you who really pushed me through the floor of the ruins—and why!"

The Final Clue!

ONLY an hour in which to prove that Johnny was innocent! Only an hour left in which to test out all her theories and cast a ray of revealing light at last through the dark mystery which hung over Sunnylands Farm!

Valerie Drew knew it was a heavy task she had set herself as, with Flash trotting at her side, she made her way through the ruins back to the scene of the alarming adventure for which Johnny was being blamed.

At all costs she was determined to prevent the expulsion of Johnny from the farm before it was too late!

It wasn't only because her own instincts of fair play were wounded. She was thinking of Dorothy as well. Only a short while ago, before either of them

had guessed that the indignation of the other guests would boil up so suddenly and violently, they had both agreed that the presence of cheerful Johnny was indispensable to the jolly life of the holiday farm.

And another thought grew larger in Valerie's mind as she wandered on through the ruins. Johnny had been too frequently involved in the various setbacks at the farm for everything to have been accidental. Dorothy's enemy was Johnny's as well.

She believed she was beginning to see daylight at last.

Someone wanted the farm to prove a failure; and, naturally, Johnny's departure would be a severe loss to the farm.

But how, Valerie still asked herself, was she in one brief hour to prove her amazing theory to the satisfaction of all her fellow-guests?

Deep in anxious thought, she stood once more on the very spot where the attack had been made, though there was no peril any longer now the protective planks had been replaced over the cavity.

Gazing behind the section of broken wall by which she had been standing at the time, she saw the patch of clean stone across which her attacker had obviously had to run in order to give her that determined push.

A startling thought leapt into her mind as she saw it.

She had previously reasoned that she had either been the victim of spite, or that someone hiding in the ruins had seen where she was and determined to teach her a painful lesson to mind her own business in future.

Surveying the setting more intently, Valerie saw a third possibility.

At the end of the stone floor was a blank wall. Had someone been hiding there when she first approached the covered hole?

It was a startlingly new theory, but one well worth considering.

For if anyone had been hiding there they would have instantly appreciated that Valerie had only to turn her head to discover them.

The inference was obvious.

They might have pushed her in the pit to avoid being seen!

Anxious to see whether her theory was likely to give her a new lead, Valerie stepped over the wall, and, standing where her assailant had been, glanced keenly from side to side.

The clear way of escape lay to her right along a narrow passage between low, broken walls. A dry, earthen path ran between them.

With a sudden thrill of interest, Valerie dropped to one knee. Though there had been no rain for days, the soil was distinctly damp in one spot.

"What's the reason for this?" Valerie asked herself, in mystification.

Her gaze, seeking everywhere for some further clue, travelled on to a tuft of wiry grass growing beside the wall a couple of feet beyond the damp spot. Stooping again, she probed it with her fingers. From the centre of the tuft, where previously only a tiny projecting edge had been visible to her searching eyes, she took up a fragment of white china about an inch square.

Valerie could see in a moment that it was a piece out of a broken teacup, similar to those in regular use at the farm. Its edges were still so clean that she felt sure it could only have been lying there a very short time.

"Wonder how it got here?" mused Valerie. "Whew!" she softly added, as an unexpected recollection came to her mind. "I met Emily, that timid little maid, wandering around in here with a

cup of tea for Uncle Nathan. Wonder if she broke the cup?"

Calling Flash to her side, she decided to question Emily before doing anything else.

She found her outside the kitchen. The shy, dark-haired girl was just in the act of tipping the contents of a dustpan into a big bin in the yard. She drew instinctively back as she saw Flash trotting towards her.

"I would like a word with you, Emily," Valerie murmured.

Emily nodded in her oddly resigned way.

"I expected you would, miss," she agreed, "after meeting me in the ruins, then falling down that awful hole! Have you found the crook yet, miss?" she asked eagerly.

"No, Emily. By the way, did you find Mr. Nathan and give him his cup of tea?"

Emily shook her head.

"No, miss. I heard Miss Dorothy calling me from the house," she answered; "so I put the cup down where I thought Mr. Nathan would be sure to see it if he came that way and went indoors. I didn't think it was much good, because it was nearly cold."

"Where did you leave the cup—near the spot where I had the accident?" asked Valerie keenly.

Emily, who had a habit of standing with downcast eyes, looked up shyly at the question.

"I couldn't say, miss, as I don't know exactly where your accident happened. Why do you ask?"

"Never mind now," answered Valerie guardedly. "I want you to answer my next question very carefully. Did you see anyone else in the ruins?"

Emily clasped her chin uneasily.

"I didn't want to say anything, miss!" she muttered. "I was hoping you wouldn't ask. I've always liked him quite as much as anyone else. I only thought he was up to some little joke, like his other ones, you know, when I saw him creeping through the ruins the way you'd gone yourself."

"Who was it?" Valerie insisted.

Emily looked away, clasping her hands, and appearing to sway slightly as she made up her mind to answer.

"Mr. Johnny Jevons, miss!" she breathed, with obvious reluctance. "I—I didn't want to say a word, but you've got it out of me! It was Mr. Johnny that I saw! But you won't split, will you, miss? Promise you won't split!"

Valerie stood very still at those words, looking stunned with shock. She had promised to vindicate Johnny; at her urgent request, the sentence of expulsion from the farm had been suspended for just one brief hour. And here was Emily—the only other person, as far as Valerie could discover, who would possibly have been a witness of what happened in the ruins—offering this further, and even blacker, evidence against him!

"I see, Emily!" murmured Valerie, finding her voice at last. "Thank you for telling me! I shall certainly respect your confidence. That's just what I wanted to know. Now I can act!"

And, turning on her heel, she walked away in the direction of the farmhouse, an odd gleam in her violet eyes suggesting that exciting happenings were about to take place!

CAN the likeable Johnny really be guilty, after all? You will discover the answer to that very intriguing question in next Saturday's thrilling continuation of this superb mystery story.

Another delightful COMPLETE Canadian story, featuring—

KIT OF RED RANCH



A Queer Sort of Bandit!

"NOW, just what'd we do, Redwing, if we were to meet a bandit?"

Kit Hartley posed that question to her Redskin friend as, side by side on the box seat of the one-horse shay, they returned from the town to Red Ranch.

It was a sunny morning, a gay morning, and even though the mountain pass they traversed was lonely, there was nothing to suggest bandits. Nor would Kit have thought of them, but for the fact that in her shopping-basket she carried a load of five hundred dollars.

The bag of money was well hidden down in the large basket under some fruit and vegetables, and no bandit was likely to guess that it was there at all; but Kit put the question just because the thought had occurred to her.

"Go plenty quick!" said Redwing, after a pause.

"Yes, but the bandit would be in front of us, holding a gun, and telling us to stick up our hands," pointed out Kit. "Reckon if a feller's tough enough to—"

But that was all Kit could say, for ahead, where the path narrowed, a rider had suddenly appeared.

Wearing a cloak made of pieces of sack sewn together, he shot out three terse words and at the same moment projected the muzzle of a forty-five revolver through the cloak.

"Stick 'em up!" he snapped.

Kit reined up Daisy the horse, and her heart went cold.

The fact that she had just been discussing the possibility of a bandit stopping them had not prepared her for one. She had not thought it was a possibility, let alone a probability.

But here a bandit was!

Kit sat motionless, the reins in her hand, and in fascinated awe studied the bandit's strange appearance. The sacking disguised his figure and his clothes, while across the lower portion of his face was a red handkerchief folded in half.

"Gee! It's a hold-up!" she breathed.

"It's a hold-up!" snapped the bandit in a hoarse tone to disguise his voice. "Hand over the dough, drop it from the shay, then get moving and keep moving!"

But Kit sat quite still, thinking hard. The five hundred dollars was wanted by her father for wages, and if it went to the bandit it would be a dead loss.

"A joke's a joke, bandit," said Kit, with a lightness she did not feel. "Quit kidding, and let me get on with my fruit and vegetables."

The bandit fired a round of ammunition that whistled a yard over Kit's head and made Redwing cling to her, panic-stricken.

He was a bandit. He held Kit up, threatened her with a gun and tried to rob her of the cowboys' wages. And yet—Kit did all she could to shield him!

"Bad man! Give money!" she said huskily.

"I mean business," said the bandit. "Reckon it's not my job robbing gells, but that's yer dad's fault for sending yer. Dump out the money!"

Kit thought quickly, and then stood up in the shay.

"O.K.! You win!" she said. "But you won't get away with this. The boys will most certainly be hot on your trail, bandit."

Kit reached behind her and took up a basket. There were two baskets, and this contained only household supplies, but no money.

"Here you are, bandit," she said, springing down from the shay. "Do you want it poured out and counted? Skip down, Redwing!" she added.

Leaning over a little to give the impression that the basket weighed enough to be loaded with cash, she went

towards the bandit, but halted a few yards from him.

"I'm scared of that gun," she said in timid tone. "Can I dump the stuff here?"

"Empty the basket!"

Kit lifted the basket to hurl the contents on the ground, while Redwing stood back, watching the bandit closely.

Neither of them was prepared for Kit's next action. She certainly emptied the basket, but not straight on the ground. She shot the contents at Daisy's hoofs.

Daisy was a steady, placid horse, given to day-dreaming, and when she stopped she went into a semi-dose, lolling on three legs.

To have a basketful of vegetables and groceries hurled at her hoofs when she was half asleep was naturally pretty disturbing, and she awoke with a start.

She did more than wake, she jerked away with a clatter of hoofs.

Dragging the dancing shay behind her, Daisy shot past the bandit, took the bend in the path with the shay on two wheels, and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

The bandit was too startled to do anything until it was too late to act; and then he scowled at Kit, who was smiling broadly.

"Why, you—little double-crosser!" he snapped.

Then, without another word, he wheeled his horse and went pounding away through the trees.

The hold-up was over. The gold had gone homewards, and the bandit had been put to flight.

It was such a sudden and complete end that Redwing looked as though she did not quite believe it now, and moved forward to watch the bandit until he was lost to sight. Then, wide-eyed, she turned impulsively to Kit and hugged her.

By

Elizabeth Chester

Your Editor's address is:—
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BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—Have you seen that wonderfully exciting announcement on page 7 of this issue? About our lovely Annuals, I mean? If not, you should turn to it at once, and if the sight of those four delightful books, reproduced there, doesn't make you eager to sample their enthralling contents—well, then, you'd better read on, while I tell you something about them.

First of all, as it is **OUR** very own Annual—

THE SCHOOL FRIEND ANNUAL.

It costs 3s. 6d. And it will gladden the heart of every single lover of Babs & Co., for its scores and scores of pages are packed with stories featuring your Cliff House favourites. But that is not all. There are other superb stories, too—including one that brings back Lady Fayre, whom you are sure to remember as "Secret Helper to Robin Hood," and another dealing with one of the exploits of that irrepressible girl, The Imp—and Cousin George. (Another old favourite.)

For readers of The **SCHOOLGIRL** their very own Annual is easily the grandest treasure trove of reading ever published. Don't forget—the price is three shillings and sixpence.

THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN ANNUAL

is crammed with gorgeous features. Beautifully produced, containing stories, articles, a coloured plate, and heaps of other features of interest to schoolgirls, it is well worth the six shillings which it costs. Just ask your newsagent to let you glance through its many pages and you won't want to part with it.

THE GIRLS' CRYSTAL ANNUAL.

also 3s. 6d., is quite truly a "Big Sister" of the "Girls' Crystal"

Weekly, for it features many of that paper's most popular characters in specially written stories. Brand new stories, mind you! And all written by popular authors. Even if you don't read the "Girls' Crystal"—which means you are missing a treat every week!—you'll love this Annual. And it's almost bound to make you a "Girls' Crystal" fan for ever afterwards.

THE POPULAR BOOK OF GIRLS' STORIES

costs two-and-sixpence, really wonderful value for money. Just look at some of the celebrated people who have written specially for it: Renee Frazer, Hilda Richards (your very own Hilda!), Elizabeth Chester and Margery Marriott (two more **SCHOOLGIRL** favourites), Ruth Maxwell, Hilary Marlow, Elma Dane, etc.

Well, there you are, readers all. Four really superb books waiting for YOU. If you cannot afford to buy them all yourself, then why not reserve them for birthday or Christmas presents?

And now I really must hurry on to next Saturday's **SCHOOLGIRL** programme.

"THE DOWNFALL OF DORIS REDFERN"

is the title of Hilda Richards' magnificent Cliff House story, and a dramatic, poignant tale it is, too. Rona Fox, the spiteful prefect who in last week's story was thwarted in her scheming against Thalia Pascoe, sees a chance to revenge herself against Babs by striking at Babs' young sister, Doris, of the Third Form.

Naturally, Babs stands by Doris. Side by side the sisters combat the attacks of the treacherous, vindictive Rona, but it is Babs who deliberately takes most of the blows. For she is determined that Doris shall be spared trouble and suffering no matter what happens to her! A masterly story, this. You'll be held spellbound.

As usual, next week's issue will contain further dramatic developments in Valerie Drew's most exciting case, another delightful **COMPLETE** Kit and Redwing story, and more of Patricia's Bright and Useful Pages, so do order your copy well in advance, won't you?

With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

"Miss Kit mighty quick, plenty brave," she murmured.

"Brave? I was quaking like a leaf," said Kit. "But Daisy was quick enough, the dear old thing. I'm sorry I had to scare her that way, but it certainly saved the five hundred dollars. And the next thing—"

Kit's face hardened as she thought what a narrow squeak it had been. Her ruse had saved the five hundred dollars, but only by a matter of seconds.

"The rascal!" she exclaimed. "I'll have the boys out after him in two ticks! Come on, Redwing! So long as that type of man's at large, no one's safe."

It was a long trek they had down the mountainside before they eventually caught up with Daisy who, after her fine burst of speed, had loitered to wait for them.

Kit had gathered the things she had scattered, and now she put the load aboard the shay, made sure that the money was intact, and hurried on to Red Ranch.

"And I have a clue," she said grimly. "I know his build; I'd know his voice. And when he swung round to take a shot at the shay, the handkerchief round his face shifted enough to show his chin."

Kit rallied the boys in no time, and led her dad, Bill, the foreman, Jem, and several others back to the scene of the hold-up.

There, the tracks were examined, and a general hunt around made.

Redwing, trailing in her skilled Redskin way, soon discovered where the bandit had been in hiding before riding out, and she called Kit excitedly.

"Yes, this is the hideout all right," Kit agreed.

The boys were in the opposite direction, and she hailed them, but as she turned her quick eyes caught sight of a scrap of paper that had fallen into some thick bush.

"Aha! A clue all right!" she exclaimed. "A letter. Mebbe it'll give his name."

It was a letter written in an old and rather shaky hand:

"My darling son," it began. "If I didn't know you were doing so well, I'd never write this letter as you do know; but I am in desperate need of money to save the home. As I'm going into hospital, I'm afeared the landlord may act quick while I'm away. Mebbe a hundred dollars don't sound much to you these days, but to me—"

Kit crumpled the letter, and her cheeks crimsoned. Never in her life had she read anything more poignant than those few pleading lines from a mother to her son.

And the son was—

There could be no shadow of a doubt that the son was the bandit! His mother needed a hundred dollars desperately, and desperately he had tried to get them.

As Kit crumpled the letter in her hand, her dad and the boys came riding up.

"Redwing says you've found a clue, Kit," said her dad, dismounting.

"Where is it?"

Kit faced them, and for a brief moment fought a battle with herself.

"A—a clue?" she said.

"Sure—a letter or something," said her dad. "Where is it, Kit?"

"Let's see it," said Bill.

Kit hesitated no longer. Just behind her, a yard or two away, was a precipice drop. Swinging her arm, Kit flung the crumpled letter into space!

Determined to Save Him!

"**H**HEY!" cried Bill. "What's that? What yer doing, Miss Kit? Was that the clue?"

Kit forced a laugh.

"Clue nothing! Call me the mutt, boys! It wasn't a clue at all—just a scrap of paper."

Darrel Lamoine gave a short, scornful laugh at that; for he and Kit had always been at logger-heads, and he never missed a chance, however small, of scoring off her.

"Jes like a gel—thinks any scrap of paper a clue!" he jeered.

"Scrap of paper? I'm reckoning it still might be a clue," said Bill, the foreman, stubbornly. "Jem, get down on that ledge and find it."

Kit bit her lip.

"Oh, Bill, it was just nothing!" she said. "Don't risk Jem's neck agoing after scrap-paper."

"Reckon Kit'd know whether it were useful or not," said her dad. "Anyway, Kit, you did a mighty fine thing in getting the dough away."

"She sure did, and the least we boys can do is to raise her a cheer," grunted Bill. "Hip, hip—"

He lifted his hat, and the cheers were warmly given. The delight at Kit's having outwitted the bandit quite overshadowed the argument over the clue.

"Thanks, boys!" smiled Kit, touched by the warmth of that cheer. "If you round up the bandit, then we'll call it square, I guess."

She turned for home, and Redwing joined her.

For a hundred yards or so they went in silence, then Redwing spoke.

"Miss Kit, why you throw away letter?" she asked.

"Why? Waal, I reckon it was better that way, Redwing," said Kit gently. "And I'd like to think you couldn't remember anything about the bandit at all. Get it?"

The Redskin girl looked puzzled, but she nodded her head in ready agreement. Kit was her heroine, and whatever she did was therefore wise and good.

"Yes, Miss Kit," she said.

"Kit to you, duffer! And there's just one other thing, my sharp-eyed, golden-hearted, copper one," smiled Kit. "I want you to do some smart Redskin work, and sneak back that letter I sent down the precipice. And if you do get it back, see that none of the boys collars it."

Redwing asked no questions, but immediately slipped off. Kit herself returned to Red Ranch, and got busy with one or two routine jobs for half an hour, when Redwing joined her.

Redwing, faithful and diligent, had not failed. She had the letter in her hand.

"You're a great little Redskin!" said Kit softly, and kissed Redwing on the cheek.

"Glad to help," answered the Redskin breathlessly, and put her hand to her cheek as though by so doing she could press the kiss into the skin permanently.

Kit unfolded the letter, and was glancing at the address at the top, when she heard the sound of horses' hoofs, and knew that the boys and her father were returning.

They had not come back alone, however; the sheriff was with them.

"Kit, it's all right!" her father called. "We've got a clue."

Kit went out to greet them, and gave a non-committal nod, though her heart was beating anxiously.

"That so? What is it? Footprint?"

"Better. It's a tar mark," said the sheriff. "We followed his trail right away down to where he climbed over a new-tarred fence. Reckon he may not know it, but he's got tar on his breeches. He's a marked man!"

Kit told him her story, leaving out what she thought should not be told, and he then went off to round up all the cowboys, since there was no telling if one of them was the bandit.

Ordered to join in the round-up, Kit remembered suddenly that there was the odd-job man in the wood-shed. He was stooping as she entered, sorting out blocks of wood, and Kit halted at once, her heart going suddenly cold. For on the new man's breeches was the mark of tar!

Quickly recovering herself, Kit pulled the shed door to behind her, and he, hearing the sound, wheeled. His face went crimson and then white as he looked at her.

"Listen!" said Kit, talking softly. "You dropped a letter after the hold-up, a letter from your mother."

The odd-job man fell back, dumb with fright and horror.

"All right, don't get scared," Kit went on. "Your mother's in desperate need? I had to read the letter to find a clue. If that's why you did the hold-up—"

The man drew a breath, and his hands clenched.

"I'm a fool!" he blurted out hoarsely. "I must have been mad; but—but I kidded the old lady that I had a swell job, managed to send her a bit now and again, and then—well, then I got the letter. You see—"

He gulped and clasped his hands.

"Miss, don't tell them; don't give me

away! I've never tried banditting before—I swear I haven't. But when I thought of my old mother needing money, I—I sort of lost my head. And seeing that there's thousands of dollars coming to me mighty soon—"

Kit hushed him, for someone might soon come in search of him, and if he were seen in this state he would be self-convicted without need of further evidence.

"Tell me later," she said. "For the moment, try to change your breeches—they've got tar on."

She slipped out of the shed and did some quick thinking. She knew that if the man were caught he would be sent to prison, but her own judgment convinced her that he had told her the truth.

He was not an ordinary bandit; he had fallen to a terrible temptation. Rightly or wrongly he thought that he would soon have money, and doubtless had intended to repay the money he stole.

But it seemed to Kit that there was no way out. The other hands were already lining up, and there was no time for him to change his tar-smearing trousers.

Kit, in deep thought, turned to the sheds at the far end of the compound, and suddenly an idea dawned in her mind. The shed was one used for various repair jobs on the ranch, and in it there were pots of paint, cans of tar, and brushes.

Opening one of the tar containers, she dipped in a brush. Then, routing out an old piece of brown paper, she wrapped the brush in it and walked out of the shed.

"Line up properly, lads!" came a shout. "All in one long line!"

Out from the shed hurried the odd-job man, taking a long, circuitous course so that he did not show the back part of his riding-breeches.

The testing time had arrived!

Kit walked along the line, and then passed out of the compound. In her own very ingenious way she had saved the odd-job man—or so she hoped!

Confession, But—!

ALTHOUGH Kit did not see what went on in the compound, she was sitting at the desk in the living-room of the ranch-house, and could hear. She heard her dad tell the whole outfit about the bandit; the way she had tricked him, and the hunt for clues.

"And we've got a clue—a red-hot clue," he said briefly. "The culprit has got a tar mark on his breeches. I'll bet a million pounds it's not one of you guys; it's more likely some hobo, but we'll soon make sure. Turn about, the lot of you!"

The cowpunchers turned round, and there was one—the odd-job man—whose heart was heavy with fear.

But as the cowpunchers turned, the sheriff gave a strangled cry, which Kit's dad echoed. Together they stood and gaped in silence, baffled and bewildered.

For every one of the cowpunchers present had tar on his breeches!

The boss was silent only for a minute, and then his face became purple with rage.

"Hey! Who's been playing tricks? There's tar on the lot of you!"

In confusion the cowpunchers broke ranks and examined each other's tar marks. Uproar followed, mingled with mocking laughter.

But the sheriff did not join in the mirth; he was furious.

"A joke, eh?" he roared. "I'll find out who played this mighty funny joke; for there's one thing sure now, and that is that the crook is here."

Kit, in the living-room, smiled faintly. Then, tiptoeing to the window, she looked out to see the punchers making a rush for petrol to remove the marks.

"Thank goodness it worked!" she sighed, and returned to the desk and her work there.

For some while she was very busy, although the work did not satisfy her, and, frowning with displeasure, she tore up her first two attempts. The



WATCHING the cowboys searching, Kit reached for the letter. It was a clue to the bandit's identity. But even more than that, it was the most dramatic letter Kit had ever seen.

third pleased her, however, and, hurriedly blotting it when she heard her father's steps just outside, she placed it upside down on the desk.

The boss walked into the room, frowning.

"Get your man, dad?" asked Kit.

"No. There's jiggery-pokery going on," he grunted. "The sheriff's pretty mad."

Kit stood with her back to the desk. "Looks as though this bandit won't be captured easily, even though he must be someone on this ranch. There's just one chance I can think of."

She held out the paper to him. He took it, stared at it, and whistled softly.

"Reward!" it said. "The sum of one hundred dollars will be paid to anyone giving information leading to the bandit's arrest."

"Well?" asked Kit.

Her father stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"Waal, mebbe it'd be worth that to know his name," he agreed.

"Then pin it up right away, dad," urged Kit.

Her father could be twisted round her little finger, so that very little further argument was needed before that notice was pinned up on the shack door. Then Kit ran off to find the odd-job man.

It was twenty minutes later that she ran him down. He was amongst the trees beyond the compound, his presence there betrayed by an unguarded movement, and, to her amazement, was dressed in city clothes.

"Gee! You're making a break for it?" Kit exclaimed.

"I reckon so!" he muttered. "Sooner I get away the better."

"Have you gone daffy?" demanded Kit sharply. "The moment you bolt, they'll know who was the bandit! Stay here and face it out. There's a reward offered for the capture of the bandit."

She saw him start, and a touch of colour came into his pallid cheeks.

"That so? Then the trail's gettin' hot!" he muttered. "Listen, miss! You've been a real sport and pal. It's the one chance I've got to get to the city. 'Way out on the rocky hill I've struck gold. I've got the samples, but I daren't show 'em for fear my claim's jumped afore I can reach the city. Men I worked near would know where I'd bin diggin'. I need the fare to the city; that's why I stepped in here as odd-job man."

Kit knit her brows as she listened, and tried to weigh up this story and decide just how much of it was true. It was the sort of story a desperate man might invent to make his own case seem good. On the other hand, it might be true.

"Even so," she mused, "it might be some long time before your mother got the hundred dollars."

"I reckon so," he admitted glumly.

"O.K., then!" said Kit. "You'll have to try to get the hundred dollars from the guy who wins the reward. And just think! If it had been anyone else, you might claim the reward. Mebbe even now—"

Kit's voice trailed away. She was trying to put an idea into his head—the idea of claiming the reward. Then she saw him stiffen, the lines of his face change, and his eyes brighten. The idea had got home.

"Gee!" he exclaimed. "Why, if I went along to the boss, and—"

He broke off, thinking hard.

"Better change back to your normal togs, I reckon," Kit advised.

She turned on her heel and joined the throng of cowpunchers gathered round the door of the shack.

"A hundred dollars!" said Jem. "Gee! What couldn't I do with a hundred dollars—huh?"

"Yeah! Me, too!"

"C'mon! Let's hunt up his trail agen! Mebbe we'll find suthin'!"

The group gradually melted away, and Kit went into the shack to ask her father if anyone had given information yet.

"Waal, one or two of the wise 'uns hev come with bright ideas and suspicions!" he smiled, shaking his head.

"But that 'undred dollars is only gonna be paid for real, definite information."

She had hardly arrived when there came a rap at the door, and the odd-job man looked in.

"Hallo!" said the boss.

"You—you want information about the bandit, sir?" the odd-job man asked.

"Yeah. What do you know?" asked Kit's dad.

Kit moved away to a chair, and watched as the odd-job man, bracing himself, stepped forward.

"Well, sir, I don't aim to do the double-crossing act, but I've an idea I can name a man who'll confess soon as he's caught."

The boss stiffened.

"That so?" he asked eagerly. "If you name a man who confesses when he's caught, the hundred dollars is yours."

The odd-job man nodded.

"That's what I was hoping, sir, but I'd like you to promise one thing. If I do get the money, will you send it to my mother? Mebbe Miss Kit could see to it."

Kit jumped up, her eyes sparkling.

"Why, surely! What's her name and address? Hey, dad! Make way! I want to get to the desk!" she said, and swiftly made a note.

"Now, what's the man's name?" said the boss.

"His name's Jim Frazer," he answered.

Kit stole a look at her dad, who looked puzzled.

"Jim Frazer?" he echoed. "I seem to know the name. A local man?"

The odd-job man smiled grimly, and touched his chest.

"Me, sir, I'm Jim Frazer."

The boss drew up and stared, colour coming into his cheeks. Not a word was spoken in the room, and Kit sat watching his expression anxiously.

Suddenly he sprang up, fists clenched.

"And you think to get a hundred dollars' reward? You crook! You were the bandit, were you? You held up the shay, did you?"

Jim Frazer backed a step warily, but his courage held.

"Yes, sir, I did."

Kit sprang forward with a sharp cry then, for her father had whipped out a gun, and was covering Jim Frazer.

"Don't move!" he snapped. "You're under arrest! Kit, go and tell Bill! Catch the sheriff if you can! Get moving quickly!"

But Kit did not move.

"Just a minute, dad," she said

quietly. "You heard what he wanted done with the reward? He wants to send it to his mother. Mebbe that's why he staged the hold up."

Jim took his cue.

"That's right enough, boss," he said. "I did it for that reason. And I could have repaid the dough—honest, I could!"

"Dad, I don't want you to do anything you might regret," Kit ran on quickly. "If this man goes to prison, goodness knows what'll happen to his mother! I guess it showed mighty fine courage handing himself over to justice for a hundred dollars when he won't get it himself."

Her dad lowered his gun.

"H'm! Seems you're on the bandit's side, Kit. Are you forgetting he held you up?"

Kit shook her head.

"And I'm not forgetting that he didn't shoot Daisy when she bolted with the gold, dad. I'm not forgetting he didn't shoot at me. Give him a break, dad."

"It's the first time I ever did anything of that kind, boss," Jim said thickly—"and the last."

Kit's father holstered his gun.

"O.K.! There's the door! Pack your things and get!" he snapped.

Jim Frazer swung on his heel, but Kit stood barring the way to the door.

"But the reward, dad?" she said, in disappointment.

"He's getting no reward!" retorted her father.

Kit moved from the door, her chin up.

"O.K.! You said you'd let me have a hundred dollars in the fall to get a new outfit. Can I have it now?"

"To lend to that bandit?" asked her father, with a grim smile.

"To do the best I can with it, dad."

Her father walked towards her and took her chin. Then, smiling, he kissed her.

"Kit, my dear, there's no need for you to use your outfit allowance that way. He's not getting his reward, but I'm sending the hundred dollars to his mother."

Kit's face cleared. In delight, she hugged her father and kissed him.

"Gee, dad, you're just swell!" she exclaimed.

"Sir, you—by gosh, you mean it?" gasped Jim Frazer.

The boss meant it. The hundred dollars, in bills of twenty, were sent off there and then to Jim's mother with his covering letter, and Kit herself mailed it. Then, so that no one on the ranch should guess the truth, Jim stayed on another week.

He stayed long enough to earn the fare he needed, and he got it by hard work, not by playing bandit. It was only a week after he left that a letter came from him, thanking Kit and her father for all their kindness, and enclosing a hundred dollars.

"He's staked his claim!" cried Kit. "He was honest, dad. Gee! Am I glad he wasn't caught and sent to gaol? Now I reckon his mother won't need to do any more worrying."

Kit was right there. The dark clouds had rolled away, and Jim Frazer was, in truth, as rich as his mother had thought he was.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

BE certain to meet Kit and Redwing again next week, in yet another delightful COMPLETE Canadian story.