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THE SCHOOLGIRL

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EVERY **2^D** SATURDAY

Incorporating
'SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN'



**ONCE RONA WAS
INSIDE—**

then Babs could make a bold bid to save her sister.

(See this week's dramatic complete Cliff House School story.)

Barbara Redfern, famous character at Cliff House School, fights for the sake of her sister against a relentless enemy in this powerful Long Complete story.



The Downfall of DORIS REDFERN

Defiant Babs!



"DOUGH NUTS," Barbara Redfern said with a laugh. "Put the whole half-dozen out, Bessie. Doris loves doughnuts."

"Yes, rather!" plump Bessie Bunter beamed. "And sausages. Doris loves sausages, too, doesn't she?"

"You bet! Got the salad made, Mabs?" Barbara Redfern asked of golden-haired Mabel Lynn.

"Just putting the finishing touches," Mabs smiled, and brought the salad to the table. "How does that look?"

"Prime!" Clara Trevlyn enthused. "Doris will like that. My aunt, this spread makes me wish she'd win a dancing competition every day! The only thing required now," she added, "is the arrival of the guest of honour! Isn't she due, Babs?"

"Just about," Barbara said. She smiled round at the girls present. There were Mabs and Bessie, who shared this study with her; Clara Trevlyn and gentle Marjorie Hazeldene from Study No. 7, and Leila Carroll and Jemima Carstairs from Study No. 3. "But I say," she added, her blue eyes dancing, "isn't this just the rippingest spread?"

A ripping spread it did look, in all truth. Study No. 4 in the Fourth Form corridor of Cliff House School, was famous for its hospitable board, but even Study No. 4 had excelled itself that afternoon.

Gleaming and white was the brand-new table-cloth; gleaming and shining the cutlery; polished as for an exhibition the chinaware, and the table itself

was spread with all those good things which were most calculated to please a small girl's appetite and eye. It might, in fact, have been somebody's birthday party.

But it wasn't. It was a celebration party. For Doris Redfern, Babs' younger sister in the Upper Third Form, had just won the junior school dancing competition at Cliff House, and as a result Doris was the heroine of the hour.

But more than that. For Madame Bartholomew, a renowned dancing instructress who had judged the competition, had been so enchanted with Doris' performance that she had actually promised to give Doris a series of free lessons so that the Third Former could compete in the great juvenile dancing ballet to be held at Courtfield Hippodrome.

Breathtaking, that. No wonder the chums of the Fourth Form at Cliff House were laying themselves out to do homage to their captain's younger sister.

But of them all, Babs was the happiest, the most excited. Doris was her sister, and Doris, though she was often pert and cheeky at times, had a niche in Babs' heart that could never be occupied by anyone else.

"Old Doris is probably having a spot of difficulty in getting into her dancing dress," went on Babs. "I told her to be sure to wear it for the party. I'll go and look her up!"

"Yes, rather! Back up, you know," Bessie said, with an anxious blink behind her thick spectacles. "These sosses will be getting cold."

Babs laughed. Gaily humming a tune, she trotted off. Along the Fourth Form passage, across the landing she went, and up the stairs which led to the

Upper Third dormitory. But, reaching the head of those stairs, she paused.

"Hallo, Sophie!" she said, with a smile.

Sophie Spence was Cliff House's new daily maid—and an object of some amusement. A good and hard worker she was, but it could not be said, from present impressions, that she possessed a super abundance of intelligence. And Sophie had a thick, rather nasal voice, and a way of staring at one out of wide-open eyes that was irresistibly comic. With her mouse-coloured hair falling over one eye, and her cap askew now, she looked even more laughter-provoking than usual.

"Hallo, Miss Redfern!" Sophie said. "I wanted to tell you, Miss Redfern, how glad I am that your sister won the dancing competition. She's a good dancer, isn't she?"

"Oh, very, Sophie!" Babs smiled. "Like to be a dancer myself," Sophie said wistfully, "but dancing isn't for the likes of me, if you follow me, miss. I've got a pair of dancing shoes, she added thoughtfully. "Only cheap ones, though. Won them at a fair, you know!"

"Did you really, Sophie?" Babs politely said. "But—oh dear, will you please excuse me now? I've got to go and help Doris to get dressed. We're having a party, you know."

"Oh, aren't you lucky?" Sophie beamed. "But Miss Redfern isn't in her dormitory. Oh, no. She went off with Miss Fox."

"Miss Fox?" Babs said swiftly. "You mean Rona Fox, the prefect?"

"Yes, Miss Redfern. They went off ten minutes ago," Sophie sighed. "Miss Doris was looking so pretty, too, but Miss Fox did seem to be so bad—"

tempered, if you follow me. Oh, dear, are you going?" she added; in surprise, as Babs abruptly turned away. "They've gone to Miss Fox's study, Miss Redfern," she called after her.

Babs, as she went, nodded. But there was a change in her face now. Swift apprehension had taken the place of that happy joy. Babs had reason to fear Rona Fox, of the Sixth Form—Rona, well-named the "Tigress"—with her slow smile and her amber eyes. For Rona Fox, at this moment, probably hated Barbara Redfern more than she hated any other girl on earth.

And that hatred, these last few days, had extended to Doris, too—simply because, Babs guessed, Doris was her sister, and whatever harm Rona did to her was sure to affect Babs also.

For a week the feud between Rona Fox, prefect, and Barbara Redfern, captain of the junior school, had been simmering. It had simmered ever since the adventure of Thalia Pascoe, the gipsy girl, whom Babs had prevented Rona from getting expelled.

Babs' steps grew quicker as she reached the Sixth Form corridor. At once she hurried to Rona's study, only to pull up as she neared the door. It was slightly open, and through the crack came Doris' own impassioned tones.

"It's unfair—beastly unfair!"

"Is it?" came Rona Fox's purring sneer. "Take another twenty lines for being insulting. And every time you dare open your lips, Doris Redfern, you can add another ten lines!"

"But, Rona—" Doris cried despairingly.

"Ten lines!" Rona snapped, and laughed. "Niece, isn't it?" she asked sneeringly. "That makes you squirm! But this is only the beginning, Doris Redfern! Life shall be—oh, so sweet for you in the near future—and that sister of yours! She tried to get me kicked out, didn't she? She nearly succeeded. But I fancy my turn has arrived now. Get on with those lines."

There came a sound that was almost a sob from Doris, and Babs clenched her hands. She caught the door, hurling it open.

"Doris!" she cried.

Doris Redfern, very pretty in her new silk dance frock, turned from the table with a burning face. In front of her was a sheaf of impot papers and in her hand was a pen. Seated at the edge of the table, a gloating smile on her lips, was Rona Fox. But in a moment she had started up.

"You!" she hissed. "Get out of here!"

"Thanks, I will!" Babs cried. "But Doris is coming with me. I heard what you said, Rona."

"Did you, now?" Rona sneered. "Anyway, get out! And take fifty lines for coming into this room without permission. Doris stops here!"

But Doris, also, had risen then.

"I won't!" she cried. "I won't! It's not fair! Babs, she's making me do lines that she never gave me!"

Babs eyed the prefect scornfully. An old trick that of Rona's—slyly putting an imposition in the punishment book and then pouncing on her victim with an instant demand for those lines. As a prefect, Rona had the power to do these shabby, mean little tricks, with little fear of being bowled out.

"I see!" Babs said. "Just to prevent Doris from coming to the party we've prepared for her, I suppose. You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself, Rona!"

Rona's smile grew more deadly than ever.

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER.

"Will you get out?" she hissed. "Yes, I will!"—and Babs caught her sister's hands—"but Doris is coming with me."

"Doris will do those lines!" Rona cried.

Babs jerked her sister through the doorway. Shaken with anger now, she slammed the door behind her. Rona yelled.

"Barbara, come back!"

"Come on!" Babs breathed.

She flew down the corridor, Doris after her. They heard a crash as Rona's door came open, her angry voice as she yelled: "Stop those fags!" But Babs did not heed. Faster she and her sister ran.

Then at last they were at the bottom of the stairs. Doris, a little scared, turned breathlessly.

"Oh, Babs, thanks!" she gasped.

"But—but won't there be an awful row?"



Rona Fox, prefect, hated Barbara Redfern. For many days she had been seeking an opportunity of hitting at her. The opportunity came when Doris, Babs' younger sister, suddenly seemed about to realise all her cherished dancing ambitions. "I'll hit at Barbara through Doris!" Rona decided, and bitterly, determinedly she set about bringing the downfall of the younger girl.

school, had been revisiting the school, and, with Aunt Annie's approval, had invited all the modern successors of her old class to spend a day at the stately Gates Lodge.

The visit, Bessie said, was to occur in a fortnight's time, and Aunt Annie, anxious to make the day a memorable one for her small guests, had suggested that among other things they might have a concert in the grounds. Bessie she had entrusted with the arrangements for that concert.

"I say, what a jolly good wheeze!" Babs enthused. "Pass the salt, Leila. And where do we come in?"

"Well, I thought you and Babs, and Clara and Marjorie could do that scene from Cinderella, you know," Bessie said. "Then Doris could give us an exhibition of dancing, and, of course, being such a jolly clever ventriloquist, I could get up a ventriloquial entertainment. Then Babs could give us some of her impressions, you know, and Jimmy some of her conjuring tricks."

The chums looked at each other. They laughed. A jolly good wheeze, it was; and wouldn't they all love to take part in it!

"You—you dud-don't mind, Babs?" Bessie asked.

"Rather not! Jolly pleased!" Babs agreed.

"And Doris?"

"Oh, I'd love to, Bessie!" Doris said. "Suppose Dolores Essendon and I do the fairy woodland dance together?"

"Tops!" Bessie said. "Oh, I say, this is going to be stunning, you know! But, of course, you'll all have

"We'll risk that," Babs cried. "I don't think Rona will dare to report, considering she knows she didn't really give you lines. Anyway, blow Rona! Spiteful cat!"

Doris chuckled a little then, but her eyes were full of admiration as they stole a look at her elder sister—that sister so strangely like her in face and form.

"But—but she'll take it out of you, Babs."

"Let her try it, that's all!" Babs said. "Oh, Doris, don't let's bother about that cat; she's just not worth it. And here we are at the study!" she cried boisterously. "In you get!"

With a laugh she flung open the door of Study No. 4. Immediately there was a whoop from its occupants.

"Doris!"

"Here she is!"

"Welcome, the guest of giddy honour!" Tomboy Clara Trevlyn chuckled. "Wondering where the dickens you had got to. Now, Doris, head of the table for you! But, oh! I forgot," Clara grinned, as Bessie caught her arm. "Bess has had some news while you've been away."

"Yes, rather!" plump Bessie beamed. "My Aunt Annie, you know—she phoned me."

"Oh, you mean the one who lives at Gates Lodge, near Friardale?" Doris asked.

to rehearse like anything. All except me. Jolly clever experts like I am don't need rehearsing! I say, let's rehearse after tea, shall we?"

"Why not?" Jemima Carstairs beamed. "No law against it. Ha!" she said abruptly, as the door opened and Rona Fox looked in. "The tigress comes to watch the spectators feed! Oh, hum! Ha! Ahem!" she added next moment, for behind Rona's scowling face appeared the tall, thin figure of Miss Bullivant.

Rona glared; but for once she allowed Jemima's sally to pass.

"Barbara, Miss Bullivant wishes to speak to you," she said.

"Indeed, I do! Stand up, please!" the mathematics mistress rapped. "You, too, Doris, Barbara, I have just received a serious complaint from Rona."

Babs braced herself. The other girls stared wonderingly.

"Apparently," Miss Bullivant said, "you deliberately prevented your sister from doing the lines which, through her own neglect, Rona was personally superintending. Apart from that, you were insulting to Rona. What have you to say, Barbara?"

Babs' eyes flashed. "Those lines were never given to Doris, Miss Bullivant. Rona pretended that she gave them, so as to prevent Doris from coming to this party!"

"Yes; that's really true, Miss Bullivant," supported Doris.

"Miss Bullivant, it's a fib!" Rona Fox said firmly. "You saw the punishment book?"

"With the entry faked!" cried Babs angrily.

"Barbara, how dare you accuse a prefect like that?" Miss Bullivant glared. "Apologise to Rona this minute!"

Babs shut her lips. "Barbara, you heard?"

"Babs, go on!" Mabs muttered anxiously.

But Babs, angry as she was, stood her ground.

"I'm sorry, but I can't apologise."

"Babs!" cried Mabs.

"I see," Miss Bullivant said. "Then in that case, both of you shall be taught a lesson. Rona, you will take Barbara and Doris for an hour's detention."

"Oh, Miss Bullivant, but what about the rehearsal?" Bessie Bunter gasped.

"I am not concerned with whatever you are rehearsing," Miss Bullivant said. "Barbara, Doris—go! And at the same time, I shall report you both to Miss Primrose."

And Babs and Doris, angry, yet still fiercely determined not to give in, followed the triumphant Rona outside.

Rona Makes a Prisoner!



"DORIS, how many lines have I given you?" Rona Fox asked.

"Seventy," Doris Redfern muttered.

"Thank you. Now we'll make it the level hundred because you did not look at me when I spoke to you," Rona said sweetly. "Barbara, how many have I given you?"

"Also seventy," Babs said, looking up.

"Thank you. You, too, will take another thirty for glaring at me when I speak to you," Rona said. "And don't forget, before you leave this room you've both got to finish that essay. You've another ten minutes to go."

In her throat Doris made a queer

little sound. In her hand Babs fiercely gripped her pen.

Fifty minutes of that dreadful detention had dragged by. To the sisters it seemed like fifty hours. More than once, indeed, Doris, who had less control over her temper than her elder sister, had almost flung something at the gibing, sneering Rona. Only Babs' warning looks, her sister's example in her refusal to be drawn, had kept her in check.

"And please, Barbara," Rona sneered, "don't shuffle your feet. Take another ten lines for doing so."

Doris choked. She could stand it no longer. Her face crimson, she looked up.

"Rona, can't you leave her alone?" she cried hotly. "You know she didn't shuffle her feet."

"Hallo, the dear little dancer has come to life!" Rona sneered. "Accusing me of lying, eh? I believe you have a dancing lesson to-morrow, Doris?"

Doris stared.

"What's that to do with it?"

"What time is the dancing lesson?" Rona purred.

"Half-past twelve."

"Oh! And if," Rona considered thoughtfully, "I gave you another hundred lines that would make it up to two hundred, wouldn't it? All right. Take a hundred lines for insulting me, Doris—but make sure you hand them all in before you go to your dancing lesson, otherwise I shall have to double them and report you at the same time. Now carry on, chicks."

Babs almost did lose control then. Fiercely she glared. Rona knew that it was a sheer impossibility to do the two hundred lines between now and midday to-morrow. Rona was just trying to make it impossible for Doris to attend her dancing lesson—that first lesson of the series which might mean so much to her. But again, with a fierce effort, she crushed the hot words which trembled on her lips. She looked at Doris, who had turned white with disappointment. They scribbled on.

The time registered six—which meant they had been at it an hour. Babs looked up.

"Rona, time's up."

"I know," Rona smiled. "But you haven't finished your essay, have you? Another ten minutes."

"Oh, my hat!" Doris groaned.

Frenziedly they scribbled again. Ten past six. Babs, finishing her essay, put down her pen. At the same moment Doris finished, too.

"Rona, we're done," Babs said.

"Smart girls!" Rona mocked. "Let me see the work." She came out from her desk and inspected it. "Hum! As I thought. You've both rushed the end. You can each write out the last page again."

Doris' eyes burned. Babs herself trembled. But again she signalled to her sister not to give way.

They wrote out the last page again. By that time it was almost half-past six—which meant that only half an hour remained to call-over—precious little chance of doing lines in that time. Then there was supper, and after supper, with a very short interval, bed. And prep had to be fitted in somewhere.

"Thanks," Rona sneered, when at last their essays were finished. "I'm sure I've enjoyed having your company. Doris, don't forget those lines," she added warningly. "To-morrow midday, you know. And that," she added, "also applies to you, Barbara."

Barbara looked at her, but she said

nothing. Sick at heart, the two sisters went out. In the corridor Doris gave a groan.

"Babs, how can I do the lines and get to the lesson?"

"Don't worry," Babs said. "Don't think of the lines; think of the lesson. You can see that cat's aiming to upset things—well, she's just not going to upset them, that's all. I'll be responsible for the lines—both lots."

Doris blinked.

"You mean, Babs—?"

"Doris, please don't argue," Babs said, a little testily, for the events of the last ninety minutes had not added to the store of her patience. "Do as I say and leave things to me. You know I won't let you down."

"Oh, Babs!" Doris breathed.

"And now," Babs said, "let's go and see how Bessie's rehearsal is getting on. Put that awful cat out of your mind."

Doris smiled. But the look she flung at her elder sister was one of almost worshipping admiration.

They reached the music-room, where Bessie, a ventriloquial doll on her knee, was giving a really first-class performance. Mabs, Leila Carroll, and Marjorie Hazeldene and the rest were there, all laughing heartily. But they turned as Babs and Doris came in.

"Hallo," Mabs said quickly, "what sort of time did you have?"

"Awful," Babs said.

"But why, Babs, didn't you apologise?"

"Because," Babs said, "I'm not apologising to that cat when she's dead in the wrong."

"Seems," Clara Trevlyn grunted, "she's got it in for you."

"Seems she has," Babs retorted. "She's just trying to get her own back for the Thalia Pascoe affair, and she thinks she sees a good opportunity in Doris' dancing. Still, let her carry on," she added recklessly. "Now, what about the Cinderella rehearsal, kids?"

But Mabs shook her head.

"No time before call-over," she said.

"We could hardly get through it. Still, Doris might like to go through the fairy dance with Dolores. Dolores is here somewhere—oh, here you are, Dolores,"—as the china doll-like face of little Dolores Essendon of the Second Form looked up. "Like to do your dance?"

Doris laughed. She was all happiness again now. Dolores flushed, for if there was one thing Dolores loved more than anything else it was dancing. When Bessie, beaming, finished her rehearsal, bowing this way and that to an imaginary thunderstorm of applause, Dolores and Doris mounted the platform, and Mabs, seating herself at the piano, struck up the first bars of the music. But hardly had the turn begun than the door opened and Rona Fox came in.

"What's going on here?" she asked.

"Oh, so dear Doris is giving an exhibition! Well, well, isn't that pretty?"

Doris, stopping dead, flushed crimson.

"Oh, stuff! Let her alone," Clara Trevlyn glowered.

"Clara dear, take twenty lines!" Rona said sweetly. "Write out 'I must not interfere with an earnest prefect in the execution of her duties in the school.' Write it out neatly, too, otherwise I shall make you do it again. Meantime you can stop making a row in here and scoot. I want the music-room for a singing practice."

"But look here," plump Bessie glowered, "what about my rehearsal?"

"Private affair, is it?" Rona asked.

"Yes, but—"

"Then outside affairs mustn't be allowed to interfere with school affairs," Rona decided. "That's all. And take twenty lines, Bessie, for glaring at me like that!"

"Cat!" muttered Leila Carroll. "And twenty for you, too, Leila, for calling a dutiful prefect unpleasant names. And write them in English—not Yankee," she added, with a sneer at Leila's nationality which brought a flush to that girl's face. "Now, out of this—all of you!"

"Oh, come on!" muttered Babs, in utter disgust.

Crestfallen and glowering, the chums filed out.

Not, as a matter of fact, that Rona had gained anything by that petty bit of spite, for ten minutes later call-over bell rang.

As Doris was not allowed in any but the Third Form quarters after supper, Babs had to bid her good-night. Rather anxiously Doris looked at her.

"And, Babs, the—the lines—"
"The lines," Babs said, almost fiercely, "will be O.K. Now, good-night, Doris, and don't worry."

Doris tripped off. Babs smiled as she watched her go. Dear old kid! Not if she knew it was spiteful Rona going to spoil her chances.

Dormitory bell rang. With the rest, Babs went up to bed. Round came Connie Jackson, the duty prefect, to see lights out, and the Fourth settled down to sleep.

But barely had ten o'clock chimed from the old clock tower when Barbara Redfern rose, and putting on slippers and dressing-gown, softly left the dormitory and made her way in the darkness to Study No. 4. She switched on the light, closed the door, and, producing impot paper and pen, sat down to work.

Babs had solved the problem of Doris' lines. She was going to do them herself.

No risk in that—at least, only a slight one. Alike in appearance and temperament as they were, Babs and Doris were alike in a great many other respects. It was said of both of them that their handwriting could not be told apart. Rona, artful though she was, had not thought of that.

But there was a colossal task before her. Her own lines and her sister's to do! With determination she dipped the pen in the ink.

Scratch, scratch, scratch! That and Babs' occasional sigh were the only sounds to be heard in Study No. 4.

For half an hour Babs did not pause, and, engrossed in her task, she did not hear the stealthy footfall which swished on the carpet of the corridor outside. Nor did she know that Rona Fox, having taken over Connie Jackson's duties while that prefect had ambled off to Courtfield on a forbidden dancing jaunt—Rona and unpopular Connie often worked together like this—had seen the slit of light glowing beneath the door of Study No. 4, and had paused outside.

Rona, about to fling open that study door and triumphantly pounce upon the law-breaker inside, had a second thought.

Just in time she remembered that she was acting in another girl's capacity. Any complaint against the occupant of Study No. 4 would necessarily mean that she would have to explain why she and not Connie Jackson was in the Fourth Form corridor at that hour of night. That would face Connie with an awkward dilemma, and it wouldn't be too pleasant facing Connie afterwards. For a moment she stood, thwarted. She bent down, peering through the

keyhole. Again she scowled, for the narrow radius of vision that limited aperture afforded did not reveal Babs, who was writing well out of range of the keyhole. Thwarted again, Rona straightened up. Who was in there?

She did not know, but it was Babs, Mabs, or Bessie Bessie she discounted. Wild horses, she knew, would not have dragged Bessie Bunter up in the middle of the night. Either Mabs or Babs, then—or perhaps both—and such an opportunity of making trouble for any member of the redoubtable Co. could not be missed. Then Rona saw the key on the outside of the door, and her amber eyes gleamed. With a soft chuckle she turned the key, and, smiling tigerishly, strode on.

While Babs, unsuspecting, worked away, finishing those lines which were to mean her sister's freedom for her dancing lesson to-morrow.

A Daring Escape—and Disaster!



"PHEW!" gasped Barbara Redfern,

And, with a heartfelt sigh of relief, she threw down her pen, rubbed her cramped wrist, and, with back-aching weariness, stretched herself in the chair.

But she smiled as she regarded the pile of closely written sheets in front of her. The job was done!

Carefully she gathered the lines together. Then she stepped to the door. And, turning the handle, her heart fell. The door was locked!

She was a prisoner for the night in her own study!

"Whew!" Babs murmured. "Nice thing if I'm caught here in the morning!"

She turned back to her chair to think things out. In a crisis Babs never got panicky. Only a prowling prefect could have locked that door, and if the prefect had been on legal duty bent she would have had no cause to play such a trick.

Babs' eyes glimmered as she saw the idea. For Babs was well acquainted with the little ways of Connie and Rona, and she knew, of course, that Connie was duty prefect. She knew, too, from the position in which she had been sitting that Rona could not possibly have seen her.

Rather thoughtfully Babs nodded. Rona, then, had just been out to make mischief.

She went to the window, staring down over the wide sill into the quadrangle below. She looked to the right, where the window of Study No. 5 glimmered with a faint greyness.

It was closed.

She looked to the left and then smiled. Study No. 3—the apartment shared by Jemima Carstairs, Leila Carroll, and Marcelle Biquet—had its window wide open. That was good enough for Babs.

She clambered on to the sill. It was part of a rather wide ledge which ran the length of the wall, and in daylight could be negotiated by an athletic girl without a great deal of difficulty. At night, however—certainly such a dark and dreary night as this—the task was something of a feat. Nevertheless, that did not deter Babs.

Hands braced against the wall to give her support, she gingerly advanced step by step.

Ticklish work, but she managed it, though it was with a sigh of thankful relief and a slight feeling of giddiness that she clutched the sill of Study No. 3 window at last.

It was unfortunate for Babs that she did not know what had been going on in Study No. 3, when dormitory bell had put an end to the efforts of its occupants. For careless Jemima, just before dormitory bell, had spilled a whole bottle of ink on the carpet, and Leila, Marcelle, and Jemima, frantically getting hot water and soap to scrub out the telltale stain, had left their implements, dirty water and all, on the floor. They had even rolled back the dampened part of the carpet.

Poor Babs! She did not know that.



"BARBARA!" almost choked Miss Bullivant. "Are you responsible for this?" Babs looked at her and gasped. What an awful ending to her clever plan. "Oh, mum-my hat!" she groaned.

And now, having regained the floor, she moved slowly towards the door. Then suddenly she felt caught in a fold of the drying carpet. Too late she tried to regain her balance, and, frantically throwing herself back, kicked against the dirty water pail. There was a clatter, a splash, and Babs wheeled in swift dismay. Oh golly, what had happened?

She switched on the light. Then she gasped.

Water was streaming over the floor; water was streaming through the cracks in the uncovered boards. Wildly Babs looked round for a swab. There was a duster in the corner, and, catching it up, she frantically dabbed. In a moment the duster was soaked. She looked round for something else.

Then, from beneath her, came a commotion. In sudden horror Babs remembered who slept in the room beneath—Miss Bullivant! The water must be seeping through the ceiling below!

"Babs, get out!" she told herself fiercely.

She bolted for the door, throwing it open. Down the passage, just as the light went on, and Miss Bullivant, dripping water, appeared at the head of the stairs.

"Barbara!" she almost choked. "Barbara, you! My gracious, girl, are you responsible for this?"

"Oh, mum-my hat! I—I'm sorry, Miss Bullivant," Babs groaned.

"Sorry! Look at me! Sleeping peacefully in my bed when suddenly this—this filthy avalanche descends upon me from the floor of Study No. 3! But I have caught you," she added with certain grim satisfaction. "You are out of bed, Barbara, and you can explain to Miss Primrose in the morning what you are doing out of bed and in Study No. 3, which is not your own. Get to your dormitory, you disgraceful girl!"

"Y-yes, Miss Bullivant," the utterly dismayed Babs said. "Can—I can I do anything for you?"

"You have done enough!" Miss Bullivant barked. "Go!"

And Babs went. Poor old Bull! But what a ghastly mess she had made of things!

Still, she had one satisfaction—Rona's lines were done.

Without further incident, she reached the dormitory and quietly climbed into bed. And in spite of the distractions of that evening, was soon fast asleep.

But in the morning she was forcibly reminded of all her troubles when she was sent for by Miss Primrose. She found the headmistress in her sternest and most reproving mood.

"Barbara, I have received two very serious complaints about you within the last twelve hours," she said. "You know what they are and so I am not going to repeat them. Since they affect my captain of the junior school I look upon them with the utmost gravity. Please remember that, Barbara, if you should become tempted again to neglect your responsibilities or your duties."

"Yes, Miss Primrose," Babs humbly said, though she winced a little.

"Very well; you may go."

Babs went, breathing a sigh of relief that the interview had been no worse. All the same, she reflected, she had to be careful.

Breakfast came then, and after breakfast all those duties for which Babs was responsible. Then assembly, followed by lessons, and after lessons she trotted off to the Upper Third dormitory where Doris, almost trembling with excitement, was donning her clothes preparatory to going off for her

first private lesson with Madame Bartholomew. Not yet had Doris heard of the row of last night, and Babs, because she did not want her sister to be worried, had decided not to mention it.

"All right, kid? Feeling fit?"
"Oh, Babs, yes!" Doris dimpled.
"But—but, Babs, did you do anything about the lines?"

"I promised you, didn't I?" Babs countered. "No need at all to worry about the lines. As a matter of fact, they're on Rona's table now."

"You mean, then, that you did them?" Doris asked.

"Well, what if I did?" Babs smiled.
"Oh, Babs, you—you shouldn't!"

But Doris looked happily relieved then. "You're a brick. What did Rona say?"

"Rona," Babs replied, "wasn't there. I just left them on her table. But come on now! And good luck!"

Together they quitted the dormitory. But they had hardly reached the end of the corridor when Rona came along. Her eyes lit up with spite as she saw Doris.

"Oh, going to your lesson?"
"That's right," Doris replied.

"So!" Rona sneered. "And what about the lines I gave you? I haven't seen them yet."

Doris looked at Babs.
"They're on her table, aren't they, Babs?"

"Certainly," Babs said calmly.
Rona glared.

"Don't tell fibs!" she cried.
"I'm not telling fibs!" Doris said indignantly.

"You know you couldn't possibly have done them!"

"All the same," Babs answered, "they are done—and mine. Now, please, let us go, Rona; Doris has her bus to catch. Oh, here's Miss Bullivant," she added as that mistress arrived upon the scene, to stop with a sharp look of interrogation at Rona.

"What is the matter here?" she asked.

Rona's eyes glowed.
"The matter, Miss Bullivant, is that Doris is going out without having done the lines I gave her yesterday. I expressly told her that those lines must be delivered by midday, and so far I have not seen a trace of them."

"Miss Bullivant, the lines are done," Babs put in calmly. "I have told Rona so, but Rona will not believe me. They are on her study table now."

"Rona, have you looked?" Miss Bullivant asked.

"Well, no," Rona confessed. She had never even thought it necessary, knowing the immensity of the task.
"They're just fibbing."

"Then supposing," Babs suggested, "we go along and look, Miss Bullivant?"

"Certainly," Miss Bullivant said. "Ahem, yes! You must first investigate matters, Rona, before you accuse. Let us go now."

Rona scowled at Babs. Still under the impression that Babs was fibbing, she followed Miss Bullivant to her own study. Babs herself threw open the door and indicated the lines on the table. Miss Bullivant picked them up.

"Rona, what does this mean? These are the lines! They have been done!"

Rona's face was livid.

"But—but I—I didn't know—" she blustered.

"All the more reason," Miss Bullivant said coldly, "why you should not accuse before making sure of facts. Here are the lines—both sets. Doris, you may go."

"And hurry, old kid," Babs warned.

"You'll lose your bus else. Meet you in Study No. 4 when you come back."

And Doris, with a grin, flew, leaving Rona crimson-faced. Miss Bullivant's lips compressed.

"I think, Rona, that disposes of this time-wasting matter?" she said.

"Y-yes, Miss Bullivant."

"Please see that you do not accuse girls of neglect in future without good and sufficient reason."

She rushed out, leaving Rona stuttering. Babs smiled.

"Well, Rona, satisfied?" she asked.

"You"—Rona glared—"you— you little wretch! How did you manage to do them?"

"Brains," Babs answered serenely, "will find a way! How do you think they were done?"

For a moment Rona glared. Then a glimmering flame of understanding lit her eyes.

"I see," she said thickly—"I see! Now I know who was in Study No. 4 last night! You did them for her?"

Babs did not flinch.

"And if," she said scornfully, "you could prove that, what a crow for you—eh, Rona? But you can't very well, can you, while I stick to my story? And if you could," Babs answered, enjoying the bafflement in the prefect's features, "you would find it rather difficult to explain how you knew I'd got up in the middle of the night to do lines, wouldn't you? May I go now?"

And, without waiting for the fuming prefect's permission, she went.

Doris Could Stand No More!



"O H, Romeo— Romeo! Wherefore art thou, Romeo?"

Bessie Bunter blurted wildly.

Babs and Mabs, entering Study No. 4, after dinner, stared.

Bessie was standing by the window, one podgy hand pressed against her chest, another podgy hand clasping a copy of Shakespeare. Bessie's head was thrown back, and the expression of perspiring agony on Bessie's face showed that she was throwing herself with all the soul of a great tragedienne into the part she was reading from the book.

"Romeo!" she wailed.

"Poor old Bess! I suppose it had to come sooner or later!" Mabs said sadly.

"It does get them sometimes like that, you know, Babs—burbling Shakespeare. Or perhaps," Mabs added hopefully, "it's a dog she's calling?"

"Deny thy father, and refuse thy name!" bellowed Bessie.

"Touch of the sun, do you think?" Babs asked anxiously.

"Or if thou wiltest not, be but sworn my love!" Bessie said, in anguish.

"Bessie!" Babs called.

"And," Bessie breathlessly continued, with a fierce glare at the two, "I'll no longer be a catapult— Oh crumbs!"

"Capalet, not catapult, Bessie," Mabs corrected—"that is, if this is Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' you're murdering! What's the giddy idea? If—"

And then she jumped as a man's voice spoke behind her—a deep baritone voice, throbbing and trembling with emotion:

"Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?"

"Who's that?" she cried.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Bessie hollowly. "That's Romeo! He says a line there."

"Romeo? Oh!" And Mabs blinked

understanding dawned upon her. "You mean you're ventriloquising Romeo?"

"That's it!" Bessie said, with great relish. "I'm doing the balcony scene from 'Romeo and Juliet,' you know! Stunning idea, isn't it? I've thought it all out for the party, you know. I'm going to be Juliet."

"You?" Babs said faintly. "Well, why not?" Bessie asked warmly. Juliet was beautiful, wasn't she?"

"Exactly!" Mabs agreed. "Then," Bessie said firmly, "that's why I'm just suited for the part, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Well, blessed if I can see anything funny in that remark!" Bessie sniffed. "You're both as bad as Shakespeare himself! Blessed if I can understand a word of what that man writes! All the same, that's the idea. You see," Bessie went on breathlessly, "while I'm Juliet on the balcony, I'm going to ventriloquise Romeo's lines from the trees beneath. Ripping idea, isn't it?"

The two chums looked at each other and smiled. Really, it wasn't such a bad idea, few and far between, as a rule, though Bessie's ideas were. But Bessie as Juliet—

"Well, it will be funny," Mabs considered.

"Oh, really, Mabs, it's not supposed to be funny! It's supposed to be dreadfully serious, you know!"

"That," Babs said owlishly, "is why it will be funny! Anyway, Bessie, never mind old Shakespeare now. Has Doris been in? She ought to be back from her lesson by this time."

"Well, I haven't seen her," Bessie said. "She hasn't come—Oh, here she is!" she added, with a blink.

Babs wheeled, eager welcome on her face. All during dinner her thoughts had been with Doris.

Babs stared at Doris' miserable face. "Doris, what's the matter? Didn't you see Madame Bartholomew?"

"Oh, I saw her all right!" Doris answered.

"But the lesson—wasn't that a success?" Babs asked anxiously.

"Yes, it was—a big success." Doris shook her head. "Madame Bartholomew said she was frightfully pleased with me, and taught me a new step. It—it's not that. It's Rona!"

"Rona?"

"Yes, Rona!" Doris' eyes glimmered suddenly. "That cat means to make things rotten for me!" she burst out. "I've just met her, and—she says I'm to be her fag!"

In consternation, Babs stared. "Her—her fag?"

"And not only that," Doris said bitterly, "but I've got to go and blacklead her study grate before lessons!"

"Oh, I sus-say!" murmured Bessie Bunter.

In sympathy, she gazed at Doris, who, having blurted out the latest tidings, was almost in tears of vexation now. In sympathy, Mabs gazed at her, but Babs' hands clenched. Mean, cunning, crafty Rona! This was her answer to her defeat of this morning.

For Rona, as a prefect, had the power, of course, to order any junior she wished to name as her fag. No wonder, Doris, in spite of her triumph with Madame Bartholomew, was looking gloomy!

"Oh, it's a shu-shame!" Bessie burst out.

"A shame, yes!" Babs cried. "But it's not because she wants Doris to be her fag she's given her the job. It's just because she wants to get more

chances of hitting at Doris! Well, I'll jolly well go and talk to her!"

"Babs, no!" Doris protested quickly. "Please don't! You've got yourself into enough trouble for my sake as it is; and, anyway, you can't alter the rule. Perhaps if—I do my job properly, she won't be able to come down on me. Let me see it through, Babs."

"Well, that's sensible," Mabs nodded. "Leave it to Doris, Babs."

Nothing else for it. But Babs' heart was sick. In any case, there was no time to argue the point further, for at that moment who should come along but Rona Fox herself. For a moment she

Finding them took some time, for Rona had deliberately concealed them behind a pile of old books.

Doris started the actual cleaning with lesson-time only four minutes off. She'd never do it in time. It was hopeless—hopeless! But desperately she worked—and then Sophie Spence looked in. Surprised at seeing that Doris was doing, she promptly offered to take over the job.

Doris nearly hugged her. Leaving Sophie in charge, she dashed away. No time to clean her hands, which had become rather grubby. Down to the Third Form Classroom she dashed.

But she was two minutes late. In-

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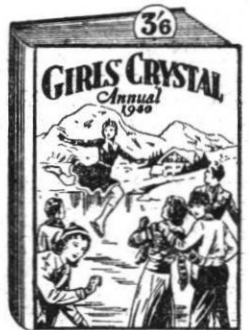
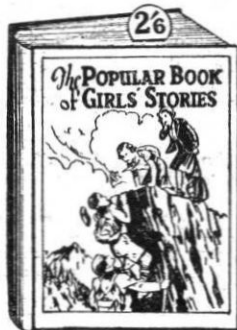
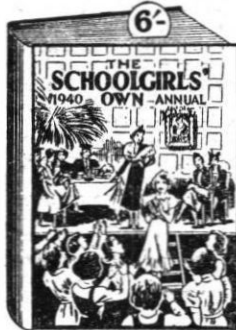


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glared at Babs, guessing full well what the discussion was about. Then curtly she nodded to Doris.

"Cut off and do your job," she snapped, "and mind you're not late for lessons. I'm taking the Upper Third this afternoon," she added as an afterthought. "Well, Barbara, got anything to say?"

Babs turned her head; and Rona, with a light laugh, went on her way.

Doris, meantime, had rushed off, her anxious dread intensified by the news that Rona was going to take charge of her own Form that afternoon.

She reached Rona's study and searched for the cleaning materials.

stantly Rona, just starting lessons, pounced on her. In vain Doris protested that, after all, it was Rona's grate she had been cleaning. Rona did not accept that as an excuse—of course not!

"You had plenty of time to do that before lessons," she said calmly. "For being late—and coming in with dirty hands—you will remain in class an extra half an hour after lessons!"

Choking, fighting to keep control of herself, Doris sat down. There were many sympathetic glances thrown at her as lessons went on, but nobody dared protest against the tyrant prefect.

Lessons dragged to an end. Rona

curtly gave the order to dismiss—all except Doris. To her she said, with her silky, purring smile:

"And now, dear Doris, you will do your extra half an hour. Let me see, what shall we do? You don't like maths, do you?"

Bitterly Doris gazed at her.

"No."

"And so," Rona purred, "we'll do a few sums, shall we? And if, of course, you don't do them right, you can do them all over again in your own time. I'll allow you five minutes for each sum, and we'll start with some simple addition and subtraction. Now, take this down. If Mr. A had three pounds, four shillings, and sixpence in his pocket, and then was given a fifth share of one-pound-nineteen-and-fourpence, then spent four shillings and elevenpence, and paid two shillings in taxi fares, and three pounds and one penny for a present for his wife, how much would he have left?"

"Oh dear!" Doris said falteringly. "I—I didn't get it all. What was the end of it?"

"Not paying attention, eh?" Rona sneered. "Take twenty lines!" She repeated the sum, varying the earlier details, which Doris had feverishly scrawled down; and Doris groaned. "One minute," Rona sang.

Doris bit her lip.

"Two minutes."

Doris hadn't even worked out the first part of the sum.

"Three," Rona gibed.

"Oh, Rona, please give me a chance!" Doris pleaded.

"Four," Rona gloated.

"But I haven't—"

"Five!" Rona said. "Finished?"

Doris set her teeth.

"You haven't given me five minutes!" she hotly protested.

"Put it aside," Rona said serenely. "Now we'll see if we can't make this next sum a bit harder—include a few fractions in it, shall we? Don't forget—that's one sum you've got to re-do. And don't forget," she added, "to state the problem and show the workings."

Doris almost sobbed.

Rona gave the next sum; and Doris wined.

"Rona, I can't do that."

"Five minutes," Rona said sweetly.

"But I tell you—" Doris panted.

"Get to work!" Rona snapped.

Desperately Doris bent her head. She couldn't—couldn't! Rona grinned again.

"Sum two not done," she said.

"Next time I shall give you a black mark in addition to lines. Now we'll have a little algebra, shall we?" she added with relish.

It was too much. Doris, her face flaming, jumped up.

"Rona, you're not being fair!"

"Twenty lines!" Rona sang. "Sit down!"

Doris quivered. With every sense of justice outraged, with every fibre of her tempestuous little nature quivering, the last threads of self-control had snapped. She felt she hated Rona in that moment—hated her with a bitter, overpowering hatred. That sneering grin upon her lips. Oh, if just for an instant she were a prefect and Rona was in her place!

"And don't," Rona sneered, "throw that book at me!"

Doris was not even aware until that moment that her groping hand had fastened upon the book on her desk. It was not a heavy book, and that she should use it as a missile had never entered Doris' head until that moment. But Rona put the suggestion there, and Rona, guessing Doris' reactions in her

present mood, knew what would come of it.

Doris acted with passionate impulse.

She threw the book.

Rona dodged back.

The book did not hit her. It fell short and hit the inkwell sunk into the desk. Out of the inkwell spurted a stream of ink, and Rona gave a sudden cry as the stream smote her on the neck. She glared.

"You—little hooligan!"

"Well, you asked for it!" the trembling Doris retorted, but utterly dismayed at the results of her impetuous action.

"Did I?" Rona choked. "Get out of that desk! I'm taking you to the duty mistress—Miss Bullivant."

And savagely she caught at Doris' arm. Out of the room she rushed her, down the stairs, and into Miss Bullivant's study.

Miss Bullivant was there—and with Miss Bullivant was Babs, who was just handing in some of the Fourth Form books. They both jumped at the sight of the inky Rona and the quivering, white-faced Doris.

"My goodness gracious!" Miss Bullivant cried. "What is this?"

"I have," Rona gasped, "to report this girl! She threw an inkwell at me in detention class, Miss Bullivant!"

"What?" Babs cried.

"I—I didn't!" Doris panted. "I didn't! She was goading me, and—and I lost my temper and threw a book!"

"Doris, you're sure?" Babs asked.

"Yes, I am! The book hit the inkwell, and the ink spurted up."

"Miss Bullivant, don't believe her! The child is an utter little fabricator!" Rona cried. "I was not goading her. All through detention task she has been lazy and insulting, and has refused to do the work I gave her. I merely remonstrated with her. She flared up, and did this."

"It's a fib!" Doris quivered.

"Really—really!" Miss Bullivant's eyes gleamed. "Doris, silence, please! How dare you, child! Throw an inkwell, indeed!"

Babs' eyes burned.

"She didn't throw it if she says she didn't throw it!"

"Barbara, enough!" Miss Bullivant banged upon her desk. "Upon my word, I believe you two sisters are the most unruly girls in the school. Once again, Barbara, I shall have to report you to Miss Primrose. You also, Doris! Now go!"

"But—" Babs blurted.

"Go!" Miss Bullivant thundered.

"Rona, please, wash that ink off your face. I really would like to know," Miss Bullivant flamed indignantly, "what this school is coming to? Throwing inkwells, indeed! Insulting prefects!"

Babs Loses Her Captaincy!



MISS PRIMROSE'S eyes glimmered as Babs, face flushed, and Rona, face pale and cold, stood before her. It was ten minutes later.

"This, Barbara, is my very last warning," she said, and there was almost a harsh note in the usually kind voice. "It is your duty as captain of the junior school not to insult prefects, and flout the authority of prefects, but to help them. The very next time I have a complaint about you, Barbara, I shall take away your captaincy. In the meantime, I shall enter a double bad conduct mark

against your name in the register. Is your sister outside?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose," Babs said.

"Then send her in, please."

Babs braced herself. She went out. Doris, waiting her turn in the corridor, immediately started forward.

"Oh, Babs, what's happened?"

"Nothing much," Babs said. "She wants to see you now."

"But, Babs, you've got it in the neck?"

"Not seriously," Babs replied.

"Buck up, Doris! I'll wait for you."

When Doris reappeared she was looking a little serious, but Babs knew by the expression on her face that the worst had not happened.

"Detention?" she asked quickly.

"No. She hasn't definitely decided what my punishment will be yet," Doris grinned. "Thank goodness she didn't detain me for my lesson tomorrow. But, Babs, what are we going to do?" she added despairingly. "We can't go on like this."

"Come on," Babs said quickly.

"Where?"

"To the music-room. There's a rehearsal on there, and there may be some fun. Never mind Rona. We'll find a way somehow to settle with her."

"But, Babs—"

"Oh, please!" Babs said, tugging her sister along.

She wouldn't talk about it. She wouldn't think about it. Together they burst into the music-room.

With rather disastrous results.

Twenty grinning girls were there, all grouped round a pair of steps. On top of those steps a very fat Juliet, book in hand, was declaiming to an invisible Romeo, who was supposed to be hidden in the non-existent trees below. Bessie wore the costume of Juliet, which Mabs had worn at Cliff House's last Shakespearian Festival, and that costume was painfully tight on the plump duffer.

Bessie, one hand flung towards the ceiling, was magnificently announcing: "I have no joy of this contract tonight. It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden."

When:

Crash! came the door as Babs and Doris entered. Thump! went the door against the steps, and "Wow!" was the next wailing word from "Juliet" as she wobbled.

Too late Babs rushed forward. By that time Juliet was rushing through the air, and heavier than the steps, hit the floor first, so that the steps gently fell upon her, and draped themselves about her plump neck. Up from Bessie went a roar:

"Ow! Wow! I'm killed! I'm shot! I've been murdered! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled everybody.

"Look here—"

"Bessie, I'm sorry!" Babs gasped. "Oh dear, I'd no idea! What on earth were you doing on those steps, chump?"

"That," Bessie bitterly retorted, "was the balcony. Oh crumbs! I'm bruised all over! Where are my spectacles?"

"On your nose, chump!" Clara Trevlyn hooted. "Ha, ha, ha! What a fall had Juliet!"

"Look here—"

"Bessie, old thing, I'm sorry," Babs said sincerely. "Let me help you up."

She lifted the steps from the gasping junior. Bessie got to her feet. For the time being that ended the Romeo and Juliet episode, but as Babs was there Mabs suggested a rehearsal of "Cinderella," and together they

plunged into it. Doris, however, looked anxious.

"Bessie, you won't want me for the next half-hour, will you?" she asked.

"Why, no," Bessie considered. "Then," Doris said quickly. "I'll rush off and do some of my lines. Tell Babs."

Bessie nodded. She had recovered her breath and her good humour now. And now, with Babs and Mabs playing the ugly sisters, and Marjorie and Clara as Cinderella and Prince Charming, the next rehearsal began. With vim and vigour Babs flung herself into the part, shutting out for the time being all the hateful memories of the afternoon, and, in spite of the fact that she had not glanced at it for three months, every word came back to her lips perfectly. Mabs gasped.

"My hat, that was topping!" she said. "Babs, you're a wonder! But how did you get on with Primmy?"

"Oh, don't let's talk about it!" Babs said.

"Didn't she give you a wiggling?" Clara asked.

"Well, yes. And black marks. Still, it's over, thank goodness!" Babs said. "Let's get on to the next thing, Jimmy, what about conjuring tricks? Where's Doris?" she asked quickly.

"Gone to do lines, you know," Bessie said. "And I shall want her in five minutes."

"Then," Babs volunteered at once, "I'll go and fetch her."

She rushed off, laughing now. Dear old Doris, getting down to things like that. Perhaps she could help her, she thought. She went to the Third Form class-room, and there Doris was seated desperately writing. She looked up almost with a jump as Babs entered.

"Oh dear!" she said. "I—I thought for a moment it was Rona again."

"You mean she's been here?" Babs asked, with a quickening of her heart.

"Yes," Doris bit her lips. "She—she—" She choked a little. "Babs, I can't get to the lesson to-morrow. I—I'll have to phone and tell Madame Bartholomew so."

Babs' eyes narrowed.

"Tell me what happened?"

"Well, you know," Doris said wretchedly, "I've got all these lines to do, and the sums. I think I can do those all right, but—but—"

"Go on, kid," said Babs quietly.

"Primmy has confined me to bounds for the next twenty-four hours," Doris gulped. "And it was Rona's idea. She admitted it, the cat! She suggested to Primmy that that should be my punishment for that inkwell business!"

Babs' lips came together hard.

"The awful plotter!" she breathed. "She's doing it just to keep you away from your lesson. But she's not going to get away with it! Doris, you're not to phone Madame Bartholomew. You're not going to give up that lesson!"

Doris stared.

"But, Babs, I—I can't break bounds. On top of all that's happened, it might mean expulsion!"

Babs placed a hand on her shoulder.

"Listen, kid!" she said quietly, grimly. "You're not going to do that lesson! Somehow I'll work it—and work it so that you don't hit trouble. Now, give me those sums! You trot along and rehearse—and don't worry!"

Doris nodded rather doubtfully, wondering how on earth Babs could possibly save the day for her.

Babs, having got the gist of her younger sister's sums, rushed off to Study No. 4, and tackled them. That done, she settled down to some deep thinking. How could she wangle things so that Doris could go off to-morrow?



WHILE Babs and Doris grinned gleefully, Miss Bullivant eyed the staggered Rona. "Rona, what does this mean?" she demanded. "These are the lines. They have been done!" Rona gulped. How Babs and Doris had managed to do the lines after all was a mystery to her.

She could find no answer then. She was still at a loss when later Doris looked in, her lines done. Babs handed over the sums and Doris darted off to take them to Rona.

In the early evening there came a phone call for Doris. It was from Madame Bartholomew, and madame had thrilling news to impart. For on the morrow there would be a guest to watch Doris dance.

That guest was Mr. J. Lord, the ballet master of the Courtfield Hippodrome, who was organising the forthcoming juvenile ballet in which Madame Bartholomew had already entered Doris' name as a competitor.

When Babs heard that news she was more determined than ever that Doris should go to the lesson. But to find a solution seemed hopeless. To make matters worse, at call-over that night Rona was nominated duty-prefect for the morrow.

And that meant that Doris, confined to bounds, would have to report to her every half-hour of her leisure time, apart from doing any fagging jobs Rona might force upon her.

But still Babs' determination was unshaken. Doris wasn't going to miss her chance. It was next morning before she got the idea—a desperate idea, in all truth—but Babs, by that time, was in no mood to stick at half measures.

At half-past twelve—just when Doris' bus was leaving—it would be Doris' duty to report to Rona Fox. Right, thought Babs. If there was no Rona to report to, then Doris couldn't report. Get rid of Rona!

By the time lessons were dismissed she had her plan cut and dried. But she said nothing to her chums. Meantime, Bessie, busy with her rehearsal, her excitement soaring to fever pitch as she saw the cherished concert taking shape, had fixed a rehearsal for the break before dinner.

"In the Common-room, Babs," she beamingly told the junior captain as they left the class-room together. "Make sure you're there, won't you?"

Babs nodded absently, hardly taking in the message, thinking now only of

her own project. She hurried along the passage, just in time, as she expected, to meet Rona issuing from Miss Bullivant's study, where she had been to give her lessons report.

And at sight of Rona Babs gave such a violent start and looked so utterly guilty all at once that Rona could not fail to be struck by the queerness of her attitude.

"Here, I say, what—" she began.

But Babs, as if afraid, hurried away. Rona frowned, then swiftly followed her. Downstairs and out into the quadrangle Babs went, knowing that Rona was trailing her. She sneaked towards the shrubbery, looking round with a scared expression on her face as she did so.

Rona's eyes glittered. Hallo, Babs was up to some mischief! Not Rona to let an opportunity like that slip by. Intrigued by the furtiveness and the stealth of Babs' actions, she followed her.

Which was exactly what Babs had planned.

She chuckled as she crept on, carefully avoiding looking in Rona's direction. Now, from the shrubbery, she skimmed towards the gym. But instead of entering that building, walked rapidly round the wall. This brought her to the gardens. With a swift look to right and left, she opened the gate and passed in.

Rona followed more cautiously. Through the garden Babs rushed, letting herself out at the opposite gate. Now, in the far corner of the school grounds, remote from any public spot, she saw the old clock tower, guarded by its one stout door.

With a swift, fleeting look behind her, she hurried towards it, with a great show of secrecy, lifted the heavy latch, and went in. Then she closed the door behind her, and, darting across the floor, scrambled out on the opposite side by the small window. Just a minute she took to fasten securely that small window from the outside. Her heart thudding, she stole round the wall towards the door again.

Rona, sharply suspicious, was just in the act of stealing into the tower.

Babs flattened against the wall behind the door. Rona stepped over the threshold of the tower, uncertainly peering about her. Instantly Babs leapt forward and pushed at the door. A cry from Rona as it crashed closed, and Babs secured it.

"Let me out! Let me out!"

And bang, bang, bang! went Rona's fists on the panels inside.

But Babs, chuckling, flew. Rona could bang and shout for an hour in that unrequited spot without making herself heard.

Nearly half-past twelve then. Into the school Babs tore. Time enough, when Doris returned, to let Rona out. Now she was in the school; now she was rushing along to the Third Form cloak-room. Just a moment she paused to snatch down Doris' hat and coat, and then, armed with those articles, rushed off to Rona's study.

Doris, thinking that Babs had been unable to help her, after all, had come to report to Rona. She looked white-faced and wretched. But how she jumped at Babs' entry.

"Babs, what on earth—"

"Doris, put those on—and scoot!" Babs said tensely.

"But I've got to report!" Doris cried.

"No, you haven't," Babs said. "Rona won't be back for an hour, at least. Don't argue, old thing—hurry! You'll miss your bus if you don't."

"I'm confined to bounds—"

Babs panted.

"Doris," she said fiercely, "will you do as I say? You've got to get that bus—and, remember, Mr. Lord is expecting to see you. You've got nothing to fear from Rona, and as for breaking bounds—well, never mind, go and do it! Don't forget," she added, "that I'm captain of the junior school. I, too, have authority, and I tell you everything's all right."

"But, Babs, you—you— Oh, my goodness, you mean you've found a wheeze to wangle it?" Doris cried.

"Yes. Now buzz!"

Doris gulped. Gone in a moment was her wretchedness. All dancing eyes and flushed cheeks, she scrambled into her coat, with a wave of her hand, went off. Babs gulped. Well, that was that, thank goodness! And Rona— "Oh, blow Rona!" Babs told herself. There'll be trouble, of course—big trouble. But it didn't matter. What did, was that Doris had got away.

With a rather grim smile on her face she went to the Common-room, where Bessie's rehearsal was in progress, Bessie herself doing her Romeo and Juliet act again—but this time from the more cautious pinnacle of a chair.

A crowd of girls were standing round grinning hugely at Bessie's interpretation of Juliet, and Bessie was in her element.

"Oh, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon," Bessie bellowed. "Babs, this is jolly good, isn't it? Swear not by—look here, I've lost my place!"

"Never mind, go it!" cheered Clara Trevlyn heartily. "Why worry?"

"But I've got to worry, you know! Really, Clara—hum, hum!" Bessie said impatiently, and turned over several pages of the book. "Hallo!" she said, with a sudden start. "I sus-say, the clock tower's on fire, you know!"

"Rats! That's not Shakespeare!" Mabel Lynn scoffed.

"But it is!"

"It isn't in the book!"

"Eh? Of course the clock tower's not in the book! But the clock tower's on

fire!" Bessie added, blinking, and stared through the window, through which, from her elevated point of vantage, she had a good view of the clock tower. "Smoke pouring out of the door. I say, there's Piper ringing the alarm-bell, you know!"

They all turned. A rush was made for the window. What Bessie said was correct. Smoke was pouring from the crack around the door.

"Who the dickens has been playing larks in the tower?" Clara cried. "But I say, Babs, come on; this is too good to miss! Fire, girls, fire!"

A rush was made towards the door at once.

"But the rehearsal—" Bessie yelped.

"Blow the rehearsal! Come on!" Babs was standing still, her face suddenly white. Mabs caught her arm.

"Babs, aren't you coming?"

"No," Babs muttered.

"But—but—"

"No, Mabs, you go!" Babs said.

"Please!"

Mabs, puzzled, hesitated a moment. But then she went, while Babs watched through the window with bitter eyes. She guessed what had happened. Rona, unable to attract attention by thumping and shouting, had deliberately set fire to some paper, or any item of rubbish that may have been in the tower.

Moodily she watched.

Now she saw Miss Primrose come hurrying out of the school, succeeded by a flock of alarmed mistresses. Now she saw Piper the porter opening the door, and amid a small cloud of smoke Rona burst into the open. Now for the fireworks, thought Babs.

But the fireworks, as it happened, were longer in coming than she anticipated. It was not until long after dinner that she was sent for by Miss Primrose, to find that worthy looking most forbidding and stern, and Rona, washed and changed, standing beside her.

"Barbara, you can guess, I think, why I have summoned you?" Miss Primrose said coldly. "You deliberately locked Rona in the clock tower."

Babs was silent.

"I see that you don't deny it, Barbara. Your object was to enable your sister to break bounds and evade her reporting to Rona. Do you deny it?"

Babs was still silent.

"Barbara, have you any defence?"

"Only," Babs said, "that Doris is innocent. She knew nothing of this."

"But your sister has broken bounds!" Miss Primrose sternly pointed out. "She knows the rules as well as you do, Barbara."

Babs gulped.

"Yes," she admitted. "But Doris had permission to break bounds."

"What? Who gave her permission?"

"I did," Babs said hesitantly. "As captain of junior school."

"You—" Miss Primrose glared. Even Rona looked taken aback. "Barbara, you—you had the impudence—"

Babs nodded. Her heart was beating quickly, but her voice was steady.

"So you see, Miss Primrose, Doris is not to blame. Doris had to take my order."

"I see." Miss Primrose drew a deep, deep breath. "Apparently," she said tartly, "the sole object of your sister and yourself is to humiliate Rona and put her authority as a prefect at defiance. Well, Barbara, since you gave Doris that order in an authoritative capacity, I can't, of course, punish Doris. But I can—and will—punish you!"

Babs set her lips.

"You know as well as I do that you

have no authority as junior captain to countermand any order given by a higher authority. Repeatedly, Barbara, have I had to warn you what would happen if you persisted in this dangerous game of defying Rona. This time you have gone too far. I see you are wearing your captain's badge. Very well. Take a pace forward.

Babs took the pace forward. Miss Primrose unpinning the captain's badge from her tunic.

"Barbara, you are no longer captain of the junior school. That high honour you have forfeited. That is your punishment for misusing the little authority you had. And for imprisoning Rona in the clock tower you are confined to close bounds for a week. And be careful," Miss Primrose rumbled, "that your next offence does not mean your expulsion! You may go. Rona, remain here, please!"

Without a word Babs turned. With footsteps that were outwardly firm, but which she had difficulty in making, she went to the door, opened it, and passed out. Like a girl in a dream she strode along the corridor, only to come to a full stop as she saw Doris breathlessly ascending the stairs ahead of her.

And at sight of her Doris gave a cry. "Babs—Babs! Mabs says the Head's sent for you! They're all saying that you shut Rona up in the clock tower. And, Babs—" She pulled up.

"Where's your captain's badge?"

"I—I— Oh, it's all right!" Babs murmured. "Doris, please!"

Doris' eyes were round with horror.

"You—you mean Primmy has taken it away—through me?"

"Doris—no!"

"Through Rona, then!" Doris' eyes flamed. "That treacherous, cunning cat! That—that—" She dashed past Babs. While Babs turned, she threw herself at Miss Primrose's door and burst in.

"Doris!" gasped Babs.

But Doris was already facing Miss Primrose.

"Miss Primrose, you can't take Barbara's captaincy away from her!"

"Doris!" Miss Primrose was on her feet. "How dare you?"

"Miss Primrose, no!" Doris said. "You can't! What Babs did was for me—just for me! She knows that Rona's trying to mess up my dancing—"

"Behave yourself, Doris!" Miss Primrose exclaimed angrily. "And apologise instantly to Rona!"

Doris, her self-control completely in shreds now, flamed up to the prefect.

"Apologise to her?" she cried. "I—I'd sooner be expelled first! I wouldn't! I couldn't! I—I hate her too much! And just wait," she panted, "till I get an opportunity of doing you a bad turn, you traitress!"

Miss Primrose stepped forward. Angriest she caught the Third Former's arm and hustled her to the door.

"Now go!" she rapped. "I shall not warn you again! Barbara, take her away. You are a disgrace to the school."

"Doris, come on!" Babs cried desperately.

And Doris, her sudden flash of temper expelling itself, allowed herself to be led away.

—

The Lie Which Condemned Doris!

CONSTERNATION reigned in the Fourth Form when, ten minutes later, it became known that Barbara Redfern, their popular captain, had been suspended indefinitely.



Babs herself did not bring the news. It was brought by gloating Rona Fox. But for the time being it dazed the Fourth; for the time being they could not believe it. Immediately a rush was made to Study No. 4, but in that Study Babs, closeted with Mabs, Bessie, and Clara, feeling shaken and trembling in the reaction of all the upset, had locked the door and refused to see anybody. For the time being she was utterly down and out.

"Well, we've got to fight," Clara said, "and seeing Babs can't do it, we will. She might have asked for it, but we all know the rotten sneaking ways of Rona Fox, and we aren't going to lose the best junior skipper Cliff House has ever had because of Rona. What about a deputation to Primmy?"

That suggestion was broadcast and instantly approved of. And everybody wanted to be on the deputation. Such a clamour there was all at once!

But in the end it was reduced to twelve—six girls from the Fourth, led by Clara; Madge Stevens and Fay Chandler from the Upper Third; Mary Treherne and Lucy Betts from the Lower Third, and little Dolores Essendon and Hilda Drew from the Second. They might have spared their effort, however. Though Miss Primrose received them, she would not heed their pleading.

"My order is that Barbara remains suspended," she declared.

That afternoon there was gloom in the Fourth Form class-room, and Babs herself, white-faced and silent, hardly looked at her chums.

After lessons Bessie cancelled the rehearsal she had ordered, and she, Babs, and Mabs retired to Study No. 4.

Meantime Rona, making Doris fat for her in her study, was giving that girl a harassing time.

"You see," she mocked, "what comes of defying me? Your sister's suspended and may be sacked before long. Hardly worth putting your puny wits against mine, eh?"

Doris did not answer.

"And I suppose," Rona sneered, "you still think you're going to carry on with your silly dancing lessons? Got one to-morrow?"

"I have," Doris said.

"And you're going, of course?" Rona mocked.

"I am."

"So! We'll see," Rona laughed again. "Oh, finished dusting those books? Right-ho. Now you can get on with copying out those maps. I want twenty copies, don't forget."

Doris choked. But she bore it all with manful fortitude. Though Rona did not know it, Mr. Lord, seeing Doris that afternoon, had been as pleased with her as Madame Bartholomew—had, in fact, suggested that instead of going to Madame Bartholomew's to-morrow for her lesson she should come along to the Hippodrome itself.

How glad and excited Doris had been at that news. Not even Babs knew that yet. But that night, when wearily she dragged herself away from Rona at last and went to see her sister, she did tell Babs. Babs looked at her keenly.

"To-morrow, Doris?"

"To-morrow, yes," Doris sighed.

"But, oh, Babs, what's the good?"

"What do you mean—what's the good?" Babs cried, her eyes flashing.

"My hat, where's your spirit, Doris? What about your dancing chances?"

"But, Babs, it's led to enough trouble as it is."

"Has it?" Babs' face became grim. "It's Rona who's led to the trouble—not the dancing," she said. "Doris, you've got to go to the Hippodrome—you've

got to, I say! After all, why not? You're not confined to bounds or anything. Now look here, and don't be a little goose. Doris, to-morrow, as soon as lessons are over, you've got to go. If you fly straight out of the school as soon as you're dismissed class, Rona will have no opportunity to put obstacles in your way. And don't wait for the bus where she might catch you. Take the short cut through the woods, and catch the bus at Friardale."

Doris blinked. Well, that sounded easy. Why not?

From that moment Doris was determined. And immediately classes in the Lower Third were over next day she was the first out of the room. Down the stairs she rushed into the quad, and down into the drive. As she did so Rona's voice reached her from the school steps.

"Doris—"

Doris pretended not to hear. She ran on.

For a moment Rona paused. She had

fierce wave of angry resentment swept over her.

"Go away!" she cried. "Go away!" And she twisted and fiercely lunged at Rona, pushing her in the chest. "Let me go!"

And Rona did. Surprised into releasing her grip by the suddenness of the attack, she gave back a pace, and tripping over a rotten branch went backwards. That was enough for Doris. She bolted.

Rona, seething, regained her balance and tore in pursuit.

Doris now had reached the plank that spanned the chalky bed of the stream which ran through Friardale woods. Treacherous, narrow, and slimy that plank was—with a decidedly unpleasant ducking among the rocks if one slipped. Normally Doris would have been a girl of the utmost caution in negotiating that plank. Now she simply skimmed across it.

And luck was with her. She did not even slip.



"AND don't," Rona sneered, "throw that book at me!" Until that moment the thought hadn't entered Doris' head. But now, goaded beyond endurance by the spiteful prefect, she whirled up the book. Which was exactly what Rona expected, and rather wanted, her to do!

not looked for such a surprise getaway. Rona, as a matter of fact, had been on her way to find Doris in order to give her a task that would not only cause her to miss her lesson but would take up the best part of her dinner time as well!

Throwing dignity to the wind, she rushed off in pursuit.

Doris disappeared through the gates. Rona went after her, putting on a fine burst of speed. She, too, reached the gates—just in time to see Doris, two hundred yards down the road, plunge into the woods. Her eyes glittered.

She'd soon have her now.

Meantime Doris was running as hard as she could go—desperately, grimly.

Behind her she heard Rona's furious shout, her plodding footsteps.

Doris ran on.

But she was losing ground now. Rona, longer-legged, speedier, was gaining rapidly. The gap between them closed, until near the stream which was crossed by the old plank, she caught her up. Out of the blue it seemed to Doris she felt the prefect's descending hand on her shoulder.

Doris faltered and stopped. Then a

After her, like a bull at a gate, came vengeful Rona. She also ignored caution. But alas for Rona! She was not as lucky as Doris. Suddenly the plank seemed to skid from under her. With a yell she went over.

There came a cry and a splash as she fell into two feet of water near the sandy edge of the stream—well away from the rocks in the centre where she might easily have hurt herself. She yelled.

"Doris, come back, come back!"

Doris paused. She jumped as she saw Rona. Then she grinned. Rona was in no danger, and Rona obviously had come to no harm. She hadn't, in fact, even lost her grip on the bag she had been carrying. She was just wet and furious—that was all.

Well, thank goodness for that, Doris thought. Drenched as she was, Rona would hardly feel like persisting with the pursuit. And Doris ran on, easier in mind now, grinning a little breathlessly to herself as she carried on along the path.

(Continued on page 14)

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.



WHEN this Patricia of yours went off to a boarding-school for the first time—I remember so clearly just frankly howling most of the way there!

My "comics" didn't interest me, neither did the scenery, nor even the chocolates with which I was laden.

I just wanted to be home again. So when Mrs. Jones, who lives in our road, asked me if I'd like to go with her to the station to see her young Bobby off to his first prep. school, I promptly said of course I would.

"I expect she wants company to help her to cheer up Bobby," I said to myself. "And bring Heath, too, of course," she had added.

Heath, as you know—or should by now!—is my small brother with the long name—Heatherington in full.

"You must smile as you say good-bye to Bobby," I told Heath (sounding rather like a song-writer, quite unconsciously) as we were dressing. "You don't want to see Bobby burst into tears, now, do you?"

"Yes, I would!" said Heath under his breath—which I thought had better be ignored. (Though I know that he and Bobby are the rivals of their "gang.")

We met Mrs. Jones and Bobby—looking resplendent in his new school uniform—by their platform and went to wait for the train.

● His First School

Mrs. Jones was smiling, though rather mistily, I suspected. I tried to chatter brightly.

But my wit was wasted on young Master Bobby, I'm thinking, who stood there, bright-eyed and grinning.

"And that's my tuck-box. All school-boys have those," Bobby was explaining to Heath.

"Why?" mumbled Heath. "Don't you get anythin' to eat at school, then?" Bobby stared stonily, and changed the subject.

"And them's—I mean those—are my cases, with my initials on, see? B. J.—that's for Bobby Jones."

Heath was very impressed at that, and all old enmities were forgotten.

Shrieks of joy came from Bobby as the train came in, and he dashed into it.

"Good-bye, Bobby," said I. "Have a good time, won't you?"

"Bye, Pat!"

"Well, good-bye, darling," said Mrs. Jones, with a little break in her voice. "You'll write to mummy, won't you?"

"Yes," said Bobby hastily. "Good-bye—er—mater! You don't have to wait."

"Goo'-bye!" said Heath.

"Good-bye, old man!" said Bobby lightly.

Heath looked about two inches taller at being called "old man!"

"Hallo, mummy," said Heath, when we reached home again. "When I go to school could I have a tuck-box bigger'n Bobby Jones', and lots of cases with ever so many initials on?"

"I expect so, Heath," said mother.

"Oo, thank you—er—mater," said Heath.

How these young things do grow!

● Making Plans

Miss Richards and I—your Patricia—were so pleased at how much you liked that little feature, "Babs & Co.'s Hairstyles," which finished some time ago.

"We must think up another idea," Miss Richards said to me. "I wonder what they'd like." (They, of course, is you—the readers.)

So we've both put on our thinking caps, and now have very nearly made up our minds.

I won't tell you about it this week, for it won't be appearing just yet. But I'll certainly give you good warning when it will appear.

Meanwhile, it's something for all of you to look forward to.

By the way, you'll probably be interested to know that Miss Richards has left her flat in London now, and lives in an adorable cottage in the country—surprisingly near to London, too!

"When I'm not writing, I spend most of my time in the garden," she told me. "But I'm afraid I'm not very expert at it. Juno seems to spend her time digging big holes all over the place, and I spend my time filling them up again!"

Which isn't quite true, of course, for actually, Miss Richards is a very good gardener. She is particularly interested in growing lilies.

But certainly her Alsatian dog, Juno, does adore digging, and she's allowed to dig away for hours—in the vegetable patch!

Juno, by the way—who, as I think you know, really is the gentlest and dearest dog you can imagine—has made herself very popular in the country.

It was her birthday at the end of August. (She was seven, though still with the most foolish puppy ways.)

The postman delivered a birthday card addressed to Miss Juno, c/o Miss Richards, etc., which said "Happy Birthday to Juno, from cat Minkie."

(I leave you to guess who really sent it!)

Oh, and the butcher sent a bone—which was more appreciated by Juno than the card was, I'm afraid!

● Flower Buttons

Goodness, here am I nearly at the end of my space, and I haven't yet told you about the how-to-make pictures.

They're particularly simple this week—for I'm quite sure you're finding far too much to do at school these days to look around for things-to-sew.

The dress here has been given a very new look by the addition of novel buttons. You can buy these in all the draper shops these days, you know. Some are shaped like flowers—daisies, buttercups, and so on; some are like animals—but all are very cheap.

A set of these sewn on to the belt of a plainish dress would make it look like the "very latest." And you could make a little necklace to match by threading any of the buttons you have over on to fine cord or elastic to slip over your head.

● A Postcard Box

The other novelty is a special box for holding all the postcards you received from your friends on holiday.

Any shoe-box, or chocolate-box would do. You just cover it, inside and out, with some of your prettiest cards, cutting them to fit, if necessary, and then glue them into position.

You'll love fishing it out with more cards inside, to show your friends when they come to tea.

Bye-bye now, my pets, until next week!

Your friend,

PATRICIA



MARY'S FIRST DAY

at a New School



IT was to be Mary's first day at her new school, and she did so want to make a good start. So—

She got up early, had a good breakfast—for nothing makes a girl more "nervy" than an empty "tummy"—dressed carefully in her new school uniform, promised mother she'd tell her all about it when she came home, and trotted off.

Mary felt a bit lonely in the playground at seeing all the other girls chatting together and showing snaps. But she didn't put on a face like a "wet week." And when a ball fell at her feet she returned it to the owner. She didn't say anything, but she *did* smile.

The bell went and everyone trooped into the cloak-rooms. Mary hadn't the foggiest idea where she was to hang her things. She saw there was a mistress on "cloak-room duty," so she asked her where the Fourth Form section was.

RATHER STRANGE

There was a tempting-looking corner hook vacant, with a roomy locker for shoes underneath. "Better not bag that," Mary said to herself—very wisely. So she asked again, this time of the girl who was standing next to her. (Strictly speaking, talking in the cloak-rooms was forbidden, but the rule was relaxed a little for the first day of term.)

"The pegs are in alphabetical order," said the girl. "What's your name?" Mary didn't say just "Mary," she said "Mary Winters." "You'll be the other end, then," said the girl. "Look at the list posted outside on the notice board. Oh, and my name's Carol Vaughan!" (Yes, our old friend Carol.)

Mary found her peg and memorised the number. She changed her shoes and then

made her way to Room B, which the headmistress in the interview had said would be her Form-room.

The Form-mistress, Miss White, wasn't there, and Mary wondered just what to do. So she approached Carol again. "Can you tell me who is the Form-captain?" she asked.

"I am," said Carol. "At least, I was last term. But we vote for new ones to-day, and I don't intend to get elected again! Still, perhaps I can help. I suppose you want to know where you sit?"

Mary nodded. "Well, I don't really know," said Carol. "You see, it's a custom at this school for girls to 'bag' which desk they like on the first day of term. And then you can't change without asking your Form-mistress. This one's mine, and my chum, Ann, is next to me. You'd better wait for Miss White to come."

Miss White soon came. All the girls ceased chattering—which was allowed—stood up, and wished her "good-morning." It was not till then that Mary approached her, and very soon she found herself with a desk of her own, right in the front. (All the old stagers avoided the front desks, she noticed, except those who wore glasses.)

"Never mind," Mary told herself. "I'll be able to bag one of the others next term—when I'm not that funny creature known as a 'new girl.'"

The first part of the morning passed pleasantly with Miss White in charge. There was a register to be compiled—with Mary's name at the bottom!—not because she was "new," but because she was the last "W."

Two Form-captains were elected and Carol very nearly got the most votes again! Monitresses were chosen, for opening windows, for collecting books, and for looking after the stationery.

HER FIRST JOB

"Now I want a blackboard monitress," said Miss White. "I'd like a girl who sits in the front to volunteer for this." No one spoke, so Mary rather timidly put her hand up. Next moment she found she was "blackboard monitress."

At "break"—in Mary's old school it had been called play-time—she didn't tuck

herself on to anyone. "Better be lonely for the first day than make myself a nuisance to girls who don't want me," she thought to herself.

All the same, her face lit up with pleasure when Carol approached and said casually: "Would you like to come to the biscuit counter with us?"

Off Mary went with Carol and Ann. She bought some biscuits.

Then off she went into the playground and found herself with a group of Carol's and Ann's friends. They were all talking holidays, but though Mary was dying to tell them that she'd been to Scotland, she didn't butt in with it. "It'll keep," she decided.

The rest of the morning there were lessons—with different mistresses. For geography, there was a packing up of books and a journey to the geography room. Mary just followed the crowd.

There again she didn't know where to sit, so she asked the new Form-captain, Winnie. "Oh, anywhere in the front, as you're blackboard monitress," said Winnie. (And Mary then realised why it wasn't such a popular job!) But she enjoyed it and found she was in charge of the maps, as well.

By lunch-time she no longer felt "new" and strange. She had brought sandwiches and fruit, and found herself seated by two other Fourth Formers, who became quite friendly.

A HAPPY DAY

She saw Carol and Ann in the playground before afternoon school. They were still talking "holidays," and this time she was asked where she'd been!

At the end of the first day Mary decided she was going to like her new school and new schoolmates. Mother wanted to know all about everything, of course, and Mary chattered away—rather different from the girl who'd been so quiet all day.

"So you're blackboard monitress," said mother finally. "That is an honour, Mary. Perhaps next term you'll be Form-captain!"

Mary wasn't so sure, but in her heart she was sure that she'd made one or two friends—and not a single enemy—on her first day at her new school. Yes, it was her new school now!

A MASCOT—for CAR, BIKE, or BLAZER

It is made with a cork, a curtain ring, and some pipe-cleaners.

WOULDN'T this quaint mascot look cheery dancing up and down in the rear window of a family car?

Even if you haven't a car at home, perhaps you know someone who has—who'd like such a mascot.

Then again, if you don't, but would like to make the mascot for yourself, what about sporting it on your bike? Or, yes—even on the lapel of your blazer or autumn coat.

To make this comic man, you'll require a cork, a coloured curtain ring, and two

pipe-cleaners. Paint the cork first, to match the curtain ring, and let it dry thoroughly. And choose pipe-cleaners the same colour if you can.

Now make a hole right through the cork, with a knitting needle.

Next look at diagram (a) here. Fold one of the pipe-cleaners in half, and push through the hole in the cork, leaving a little loop at the top.

Then (b) twist the pipe-cleaner ends around the ring, like arms. Now twist the other pipe-cleaner around the lower

part of the ring, to represent legs.

Lastly, paint a comic face on the cork, and tie a piece of coloured cotton around the top of the cork.

He should now look something like a jolly Jack Tar doing a hornpipe.



(Continued from page 11)

But Doris did not know Rona. Rona was not beaten. If anything, Rona was more vindictively determined than ever. Drawing herself to the bank, she struck out after the Third Former, but this time she did not follow the path. She took a trail through the trees.

"I'll catch the little cat!" she told herself.

She would—by that route. For it was Rona's intention to cut off the centre of the wood and intercept Doris where the footpath led into the open fields. There were two big drawbacks to that route, however.

One, that it was strictly out of bounds, not only to Cliff House girls, but to all pedestrians. The other was that owing to the great landslips which were continually occurring in the wall of the old chalk quarry which lay athwart the route it was highly dangerous.

heeled over. Desperately she flung herself towards the white face of cliff which seemed to be hurtling past her. She hit the cliff, slithered on, and then, forcing her feet into loose chalk, came to a stop, and for a moment she lay breathless and stunned.

What had happened? With wide, scared eyes she looked above her. A full twenty or thirty feet she must have fallen down a steeply shelving bank of crumbling chalk.

Panic filled Rona's being then. White-faced, quivering, she climbed to her knees. With a last despairing effort of strength, she scrambled back up the cliff, noting with a sort of dull surprise the blood that dripped from a cut above her ear as she did so. Would she reach the summit?

A thousand palpitations Rona knew, but her luck held. Frantically she hurled herself over the lip of the quarry just as several tons of loose rock went crashing into the pit beneath her. Dazed, numbed, dripping wet still,

Expulsion!



"BABS, Babs, Babs!" Barbara Redfern turned eagerly as that laughing, full-of-excitement whoop reached her ears.

Babs was standing on the steps on Junior Side pavilion, awaiting her turn to take a smack at the nets. Confined to close bounds—which meant that even the tuckshop was out of bounds to her—Junior playing side was the limit of her straying. But she waved her bat now as Doris came whooping across the fields.

"Doris, how did you get on?"

"Oh, fine—fine!" Doris laughed. Her eyes were sparkling, her whole face radiant. "Babs, I'm in the ballet! Babs, I'm going to have a special rehearsal to-morrow with other girls, so that Mr. Lord can pick out the leader of the ballet. And, Babs, guess?" Doris breathed excitedly. "Madame Bartholomew says that if I only dance as well to-morrow as I did to-day, then Mr. Lord will make me leader!"

"Oh, Doris, you splendid kid!" Babs cried delightedly.

"And, Babs, more than that!" Doris enthusiastically rushed on. "Madame Bartholomew is so pleased with everything that she must, if you please, go and phone mums and dad there and then. And guess—they're coming down to see the rehearsal, too!"

"Oh, Doris!"

"And Rona— Ha, ha, ha!" Doris laughed. "Babs, have you seen Rona? She got herself a frightful ducking!"

"Ducking?"

"Yes. She chased me." And Doris went on to relate the details of the chase. "Of course, she wasn't hurt. I made sure of that before I ran on. But hallo!" she added, as Sally, the maid, came up. "Oh, I say, seeing you reminds me that I've looked out my old camera for Sophie Spence. Sally, where is Sophie?"

Sally smiled.

"It's Sophie's day off, Miss Redfern. She's gone off for a picnic with her mother in the woods. But Miss Primrose would like to see you now. And," she added, with a queer look at Doris, "Miss Fox is with her."

The two sisters looked at each other.

"I suppose," Doris said bitterly, "she's reported me again for not coming when I was called, or perhaps because I pushed her before we got to the stream. Anyway, who cares? Even Primmy can't very well detain me to-morrow, with my rehearsal coming off, and mum and dad coming down. Right, Sally. I'll come along."

"And I think I'll come with you," Babs said.

Doris trotted off, Babs at her side. She wasn't even concerned. The petty spite and vindictiveness of Rona Fox had no power at this moment to quell her bubbling spirits, and she was smiling when, leaving Babs in the corridor, she went into Miss Primrose's study. But her face lost its smile when she saw Rona.

For Rona, very white, very shaken, was seated in a chair, and Miss Primrose was looking dreadfully stern.

"Come in," she said. "Shut the door. Doris, you have just returned from your lesson?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose."

"On your way to the dancing lesson you were chased through the woods by Rona, were you not. Rona apparently having given you some order which you failed to carry out?"

"Rona didn't give me any order,"

"Thank You So Much," says

HILDA RICHARDS

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

awfully pleased when I told her how much you enjoy her chat each week.

MARY SHEPHERD (Orston, Notts).—Delighted to hear from you and to know you're such an enthusiastic reader, Mary! Babs has been captain at Cliff House ever since I began writing my stories in our paper. Stella Stone—who left C. H. to take up veterinary work—was head girl before Dulcia Fairbrother.

DORA WEBSTER (Spalding, Lincs).—I have already written to you answering your queries, haven't I, my dear? You must tell me more about yourself next time you write, you know. In case I didn't mention it in my letter, let me thank you here for sending along the head of wheat. It was quite a surprise. Bye-bye for now, Dora.

DOROTHY GILBERT (Toronto, Canada).—So glad to hear from you—and how very enthusiastic you are about our paper! I always look forward to hearing from you loyal overseas readers, you can be sure. So you'd like a story featuring Doris Redfern and the Terraine Twins? I cannot promise one, but I will certainly keep your request in mind.

JEAN FRITH (Sheffield).—Many thanks for a sweet little letter, my dear. And congratulations on having passed your scholarship exam. I do hope you'll be very, very happy at your new school. I'm sure you will soon settle down there.

More replies on page 18.



VATHANY SOLOMON (Rangoon, Burma).—I was very pleased to receive another of your charming little letters, Vathany. And here's wishing you the best of luck in your latest exam. Juno, my large Alsatian, is keeping very well, thank you, and sends you a pawshake.

IRIS PRINGLE (Shepherd's Bush, London).—Here's that printed reply you were so anxious to see, my dear. You seem to be a very busy young person, but I can see you just love your stage activities! I wonder what show you will be appearing in next?

BETTY WALE (Scarborough, Yorks).—Many thanks for writing such a newsy little letter, Betty. I enjoyed every word of it. Yes, I can assure you I shall be featuring dear old Bessie Bunter in lots of stories in the future. Patricia asks me to send you her very best wishes. She was

she rose to her feet and staggered through the woods.

At last she reached the Friardale Road. She almost collapsed as she broke from the trees, and a car, coming by at that moment, stopped. A startled, horrified face stared out.

"Rona!" Miss Primrose exclaimed. "My goodness gracious, what's the matter? Have you had an accident?"

Rona paused, panting. Oh, how quickly and spitefully her brain worked then!

"No, it wasn't an accident," she said.

"What?"

"It—it was," Rona said. "Doris Redfern! You remember, Miss Primrose, what she said yesterday—that she hated me, and would do me a bad turn if ever she got the opportunity? She—she's just fulfilled her threat; that's all. She pushed me into the rocks in the stream and then ran off, leaving me to drown!"

But Rona was in no mood to think of danger then—no mood even to heed the ominous warning notice which met her eyes when, five minutes later, she came to the old chalk quarry. But five yards after that she did stop, brought to a sudden standstill by an ominous new slip of the ground, which had opened a gap ten feet or more in the ground, and which steeply descended to a depth of some sixty feet. For a moment she stood on the lip of the chasm, wondering if she dared risk jumping it.

And in that moment the decision was taken out of her hand.

Without warning, she felt the ground sliding beneath her feet. Too late she stepped back—she stepped on to ground which again was shaking—and then, with a rush and a shriek, went plunging downwards. About her rose a smother of white chalk.

Down, down! Something clouted with cruel force against her head. She

Doris said spiritedly. "But she did chase me."

"You had a struggle?"

Doris flushed.

"Well, not really, Miss Primrose. I—only gave Rona a little push."

"I see," Miss Primrose's lips set more severely than ever. "And having given her a push, you landed her into the most treacherous part of the stream and ran on, leaving her in danger of drowning."

Doris started.

"I did? I didn't! There was no danger."

"Doris, enough! You have said quite enough to convict yourself. You admit struggling with Rona; you admit pushing her. You admit that she went into the stream and you ran on. The struggle, and even the push, might be met with by 'punishment,' she added, 'but callously to leave a girl to fight her own way out of deep water into which you pushed her when she had struck her head on the rocks, was a cowardly and outrageous thing to do.'

"You have already shown your hatred for Rona," Miss Primrose went on, while Doris stared at her with eyes

"I'm going," she said, "to the punishment-room. I'm going there because that traitress makes out I pushed her in the stream and left her in danger of drowning! And to-morrow I'm to be expelled!"

"Doris, this way," Mrs. Thwaites said.

And while Babs stood stricken, her sister was led off along the corridor.

A Word from Sophie!



"IT'S lies!" Barbara Redfern panted.

"Barbara—"

"Lies—just lies!" Babs wildly repeated.

"Doris wouldn't do it! Doris couldn't do it! Rona just twisted what did happen to make up this story and get her expelled because she hates us both! Miss Primrose, you mustn't believe it—you mustn't!"

It was one minute later.

Babs was in Miss Primrose's study. She was in there without knowing how she had got in.

"Barbara!" Miss Primrose said.

brushed past the compassionate matron into the room. Doris, shaken by sobs, was lying on the bed.

"Doris—kid!" Babs cried, almost sobbing herself. "Doris, chin up! We'll get you out of this somehow! But tell me everything now—what exactly did happen?"

And Doris, in sobbing gasps, told her. "Then," Babs said, "she must have had an accident somewhere else."

"Well, where else?" Doris said. "Oh, Babs, Babs! Don't let them expel me!"

"Barbara—please," Mrs. Thwaites said gently. "If—if I allow you to stop longer I shall only be in a bother myself. You know the rules."

Babs nodded dully. With a choked word of thanks, she went out. She went to Study No. 4.

Bessie, in the act of donning her blazer, paused as she saw her face. Mabs, accompanying Bessie, almost started.

"Babs, what—"

"Doris!" Babs said, and sank helplessly into a chair. "Doris—and—and that cat Rona! Rona's done it! Doris is to be expelled! Expelled! But, Mabs—Bessie—she mustn't be expelled! She can't be expelled!"

"Babs—" Mabs cried, a little scared.

ONE arm about her sister's shoulders, Babs faced the headmistress. "You can't expel her!" she cried. "It's unfair! And if you do, you can expel me with her!" The whole school gasped at that.



of horror. "You have already hinted that if ever a chance came for you to take revenge you would. Now you have taken that revenge—and for doing it, Doris, you will be expelled! Rona, ring the bell for the matron."

"But, Miss Primrose, I tell you—"

panted Doris.

"You have told me enough!" Miss Primrose said curtly.

"But Rona was nowhere near the stream when I struggled with her."

"Add no more lies—please!" Miss Primrose snapped, her voice almost like a whip-lash. "You are a disgrace to the school, Doris Redfern!"

Babs, outside, heard that last sentence and bit her lip. What was going on in there?

Then along came the matron. Babs fell back as she entered the study. She jumped a moment later when the matron, carrying a bundle of keys, came out, gripping a white-faced, utterly horror-stricken Doris by the arm. She came forward.

"Doris, what's the matter? Doris, where are you going?" she cried.

Doris turned bewildered eyes upon her.

"Silence, please! Making all allowances for your affection for your sister, I protest against this attack on Rona. Are you trying to suggest that she made those cuts and bruises on her head herself? Rona, my dear—" she added, as that girl pretended to swoon.

"Oh, my goodness! Barbara, get out of this study at once!"

"But you won't expel Doris?" Babs cried.

"Miss Primrose, please!"

"I shall," Miss Primrose said flatly, "do my duty! Now go—at once!"

And very angrily she led Babs to the door and pushed her through it.

In the passage Babs stared blankly before her. Lies—treacherous lies! Doris shouldn't be expelled!

But how could she, Doris, or anyone else prove that the prefect was telling lies?

She dashed away. To the punishment-room she went, meeting Mrs. Thwaites, who was just about to close the door. She caught the matron by the arm.

"Mrs. Thwaites, please let me—just for a minute—have a word with my sister?" she choked. "Please!"

She did not wait for a reply, but

"She hasn't done it—she hasn't! We've got to prove it! We've got to!"

"Oh, kik-crums!" stuttered Bessie Bunter.

"Babs, old thing!" Mabs cried, catching her round the shoulders.

"Steady—please!"

Well meant advice, that. But how impossible for Babs not to be desperately upset!

In bed that night she tossed and muttered, thinking—thinking—thinking. Doris wasn't guilty, but how utterly impossible to prove that.

Heavy-eyed and haggard, she rose in the morning to rush up to the punishment-room. But Piper, the porter, who was on guard there, barred her way.

"Sorry, no admittance," he said.

She stumbled back to Study No. 4, where Mabs, Bessie, Clara, Leila, and Jemima were awaiting her. They all looked at her as she came in.

"Pecker up, old Spartan!" Jemima said softly.

Babs' lips quivered.

"Doris—Doris! Oh, it can't happen!" The chums glanced at each other. Then Mabs, her own lips quivering a

little, put an arm round Babs' shoulders as the bell went.

"Say, that's the bell!" Leila said, almost a groan in her voice. "We'd better hike, I guess! Come on, Babs!"

Babs allowed herself to be led away. In Big Hall, where the school was assembled, she was hardly conscious of the compassionate looks which were bestowed upon her; the little murmurs of sympathy which reached her ears. Her burning eyes were fixed upon the platform.

Presently a sort of sigh went up as Miss Primrose appeared with, behind her, in the matron's charge, a pale, nervous Doris.

"Doris!" Babs cried. "Doris—" "Babs, shush!" Clara gulped. "Oh, m-my hat! Babs, old thing, steady! Don't—don't look!"

But Babs was looking—with fiercely burning eyes. Now she saw Rona Fox appear. Now Miss Primrose was speaking. A silence akin to that in a tomb descended upon Big Hall as the headmistress began the story of Doris' misdeeds.

"And now," Miss Primrose said, bracing herself for the great effort, "it is my most painful duty, Doris Redfern, to—"

"No!" Babs cried. "No!" While everybody else was struck into sudden electrified silence, she leapt upon the platform, putting an arm round Doris' shoulders. "You can't expel her! You shan't expel her for that cat's lies! It's unfair! And if," she panted, "you do, you can expel me with her!"

"Barbara!" Miss Primrose cried. And then for a moment there was a pause. You could feel a sort of quiver in the air. From Doris came a stifled sob as she sunk her face in her hands. Miss Primrose, bracing herself, heaved a sigh and shook her head. But before she could speak something happened.

There was a rustle of feet from the far end of the platform, and suddenly appearing on that platform, looking almost surprised and carrying a bag, came simple Sophie Spence.

"Oh, I say!" Sophie said, and stopped and stared. "Hallo, Miss Redfern; Hallo, Miss Primrose! Hallo, Miss Rona! I've been looking for you everywhere, you know!"

"Sophie," Miss Primrose thundered, "what are you doing here?" Sophie blinked.

"No harm, I hope, Miss Primrose? Not any intended, you know!" she seriously assured her. "I was only looking for Rona, because I've got Rona's bag here, and I thought she might want it. You see, I found the bag yesterday in the woods on the lip of the old quarry. That's where you left it, didn't you, Miss Fox?"

"Quarry?" Miss Primrose started. She swung upon Rona. "But Rona was nowhere near the quarry!"

"Of—of course I wasn't!" Rona cried. "Of course not!"

"But you were, you know," Sophie said seriously, "because I saw you! My mother and me was picnicking not far away, and we heard the fall of rock, and then saw you climb up and stumble off, if you follow my meaning. Then mother found your bag, and we wondered if you'd hurt yourself much. Did you, Miss Fox?"

"My hat, I see it now!" Babs burst out wildly. "Miss Primrose, don't you see, too? Can't you all see? Rona had that accident in the quarry when she was chasing Doris after she had fallen in the stream. That's how she came to be cut and bruised!"

"Shut up!" Rona cried furiously.

A murmur went through the Hall. "I won't shut up!" Babs cried. "I won't! Oh, Miss Primrose, this is the truth, and Sophie has proved it! Rona took advantage of her accident to blame Doris, and, because Doris admitted certain details which tallied with what Rona had said, you believed her! All along she's been against Doris and myself!"

"I haven't!" cried Rona. "Yes, you have!" cried Clara Trevlyn from the ranks.

"Please!" Miss Primrose looked at Sophie, and then took the bag. Her expression had undergone a change. "Rona, this is certainly your bag," she said quietly, "and, apparently, there are two witnesses to show how you lost it. The quarry, in any case, is out of bounds. What were you doing there?"

"Taking the short cut to head Doris off!" Babs panted.

"I—I wasn't! I—I wasn't!" Rona panted. "I slipped—I mean, I didn't go that way!"

"You are prevaricating!" Miss Primrose exclaimed.

"I—I—I—" Rona stuttered.

"Rona, I insist upon an explanation! It is clearly established, I think, that you fell into the quarry of your own accord, and that is how you received your injuries! What have you to say?"

Rona was quivering and sick. She turned to the school. Immediately an angry outburst flared.

"Cat!"

"Own up!" Miss Primrose raised her hand. As the voices died she looked steadily, contemptuously at Rona. Then her gaze turned to Babs and Doris. She nodded thoughtfully.

"Doris," she said quietly, "you may go back to your place in the Third Form ranks. Barbara, you may go, too. I am sorry that I came within an ace of making a dreadful mistake! And, Sophie, thank you! Rona, you will go to my study! Later, there are certain other matters concerning Barbara and Doris which need thorough investigation. That is all."

"Hurrah!" cheered Clara Trevlyn wildly. "Good old Doris!"

"Three cheers for Babs!" shrieked Mabel Lynn.

"But, no—no!" Babs yelled. "No! Three cheers, if there's going to be cheering, for Sophie! Hip, hip—"

"Oo, I say!" cried a bewildered and embarrassed Sophie, as the cheering rang out. "Hark at the row!"

A row it was—a row of jubilation and clamour—and for once Miss Primrose did not attempt to stop it. She, like everyone else, was heartily thankful that justice had been done in the end.

JUSTICE WAS. That very morning Rona left Cliff House, suspended until the beginning of the New Year.

Miss Primrose had made a very thorough investigation of the past troubles between Barbara, Doris, and Rona. She had swiftly seen who was really to blame, and that afternoon Doris, happy, radiant, was released from all punishments, and, with Babs reinstated as junior captain, met Mr. and Mrs. Redfern.

And, later, Doris achieved her great triumph before Mr. Lord at Courtfield Hippodrome as leader of the Juvenile Ballet. That same night Bessie Bunter had her first dress rehearsal of her great concert; and two days later that concert was held in the grounds of her aunt's house, and was voted a stunning success by everybody who saw it.

At the Hippodrome and at the garden-party there was one special guest of honour.

That guest was simple Sophie, the slow-witted maid who, at the eleventh hour, had saved the Redfern sisters. But all Sophie could say when, time after time, she was congratulated upon her intervention was:

"Oh dear! I'm sure I didn't mean Miss Rona any harm. But I am glad, Miss Redfern, if I did you a good turn. But, I say, I am having a time, aren't I?" she giggled. "I never thought they'd ever make such a fuss of the likes of me! Wonder what Miss Rona is doing now?"

But nobody else was wondering. Nobody, in fact, would have been troubled if they had never seen Rona Fox again. Cliff House was a different and a happier place without her.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

WHEN BOKER, THE LIKEABLE YOUNG PAGE-BOY

OF CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL, WAS VICTIMISED BY
SOMEONE HE WAS BEFRIENDING—



Even Mabs' own chums, Barbara Redfern, Clara Trevlyn, Bessie Bunter and the rest, were deceived. They thought Boker's enemy a most charming lad; and Boker suddenly most contemptible. But Mabs knew otherwise and, standing by the persecuted page-boy, resolved to prove he was the victim of a cunning little schemer. You'll love this dramatic Hilda Richards story. It appears next Saturday.

Another splendid COMPLETE story featuring that fascinating girl—

KIT OF RED RANCH



"DESERTED!" gasped Kit, looking at Redwing. "He's been abandoned!" Little Jackie was such a dear it seemed incredible that anyone could leave him in the wilds. But Kit began to understand when she met Jackie's self-styled uncle!

A Little Waif!

"GUESS I must be wrong, Redwing, but that sounds to me mighty like a young kiddie crying, though way up in these mountains is no place for a young kiddie."

Kit Hartley, of Red Ranch, reined up her horse, Pete, and sat listening. Beside her Redwing, her Redskin friend, dismounted and stood motionless, her quick ears alert to catch the faintest sound.

The mountainside was beautiful, but lonely, and when there were suitable places to live in below, it certainly seemed unusual for anyone to choose these heights. But Kit had not been mistaken.

Clearly now came a childish cry, and, dismounting, Kit went crashing through the undergrowth.

Ahead of her a figure hurried. Kit was just in time to catch a glimpse of a small boy, in shorts and shirt and too-large hat, as he scurried away.

He ran at far too great a pace considering the trailing roots, and it was only a moment before he tripped and fell. His cry rose almost to a scream as he rolled over, and Kit thought that he had hurt himself badly.

"I say—I say," she murmured, "that was a tough tumble, son! Where did it get you?"

The small boy's crying died as Kit stooped over him, but his tears were hot on his pink cheeks, and the unshed grief was locked inside him only by fright.

"Don't be scared," said Kit, smiling. "I'm an aunty, you know. Where did you bump yourself—eh?"

The small boy's eyes measured her warily; but there was something about Kit Hartley that quickly won friends,

and this kiddie was soon a victim of her charm.

"Dere!" he said tremulously, and pointed to his knee.

It was dirtier than the other, and there was a slight graze on it. Kit looked at it, stooped lower, and kissed it.

"Better?" she asked.

"I felled!" said the small boy, through quivering lips. "Mebbe me boked leg!"

"Oh, I don't think so!" said Kit, and, gathering him in her arms, called to Redwing.

Redwing, who knew the wonderful-healing methods of the Redskins, examined the damaged knee, and quickly decided that the injury was quite slight. All that it needed was washing and the application of some leaves. She soon attended to it.

Then, straightening up, she stared at him and pointed to his neck.

"Writing," she said.

Attached to the boy's neck by a piece of string was a sheet of paper. As she turned it, Kit saw that it bore writing on it, and, putting the little boy down, she took the string from his neck.

At a glance she read the message:

"His name is Jackie. Please take care of him."

That was what the writing on the paper said, and Kit stared at it in astonishment, hardly able to grasp its significance at once.

"Jackie! Your name is Jackie?" she asked.

He nodded his curly brown head in agreement.

Kit, alarmed, shot a look at Redwing, and showed her the paper.

"Looks like he's been deserted," she said in a low tone. "But, gee, what a place to desert a kid!"

They looked compassionately at the little boy, and then Kit sat down beside him and tried to get his story. He told her that he was four years old, that he had a mummy and daddy, and that he lived in a house "wiv a dog Simon." But that was all.

"I see—I see not lost, am I?" he ended anxiously, and tears shone in his eyes.

"Lost? Golly, no!" said Kit, with a short laugh. "Reckon you won't ever be lost, Jackie, with me around. And, now, how about coming to look at some horses—eh?"

Kit's intention was to get Jackie down to Red Ranch as quickly as possible, and then to make inquiries about him. She could not guess why he had been abandoned; but here he was, left on her hands, and until his parents were found Kit meant to keep him happy.

Boy-like, he was thrilled by the horses, and especially when he was able to stretch out his podgy hand with a lump of sugar on it. Then Kit mounted Pete, and Redwing lifted Jackie up to her.

Perching him in front of her, Kit led the way down the winding path to where Red Ranch lay on the plains below.

When they were half-way down the mountainside Kit spotted the top of a stetson hat through the trees ahead, and heard the clops of a horse's hoofs.

Someone else was riding up the slope.

Next moment the rider turned a bend, and Kit saw that it was a stranger—burly, middle-aged, black-bearded.

Instantly he reined up, stiffening, and then jerked his bearded chin forward.

"Hey!" he shouted, and cantered up. "What are you doing with that thar kid? Hand him over to me at once!"

Kit felt Jackie quiver in her arms.

"No, no, no!" he cried anxiously.

Holding the little fellow in a comforting embrace, Kit faced the man.

"And who may you be?" she asked.

It seemed to her that the man hesitated.

"Jes' a minute, missie!" he said, his eyes glinting. "Mebbe you'll be tellin' me by what right you kin hold a kid from his lawful uncle?"

Kit could think of no reason, but there was a challenging set to her jaw.

"Guess that'd be mighty hard to do," she admitted. "But I know a good enough reason for not letting Jackie go to someone he's scared of."

The man whipped out a gun.

By

Elizabeth Chester

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BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS.—I've got to be very brief this week to make way for your own Hilda Richards. As space is terribly short, Miss Richards is answering some of her correspondents here, as well as elsewhere in this number, so you'll forgive me for dealing quickly with next week's programme, won't you? The magnificent complete Cliff House School story is entitled:

"MABS ALONE BELIEVED IN HIM!" and tells what happens when Boker, that very likeable and willing page-boy at the famous school, makes an enemy of a lad he is trying to help. Even Mabel Lynn's own chums, Babs, Clara, Bessie, and the rest, are convinced that Boker is the one at fault, and that his enemy is a most charming lad. But Mabs knows different and she resolves not only to stand by Boker, but to expose his enemy to the whole school. You'll adore every word of this great story by your favourite author.

As usual, our next issue will contain further thrilling developments in "Valerie Drew's Holiday Mystery," another delightful COMPLETE Kit and Redwing adventure, and more of Patricia's Bright and Useful article pages, so do order your copy well in advance, won't you?

And now for the item you've all been eagerly awaiting—

HILDA RICHARDS REPLIES—

(to just a few of her many correspondents, though, I'm sure you'll all find what she says most interesting.)

SYBIL CAIRNS (Greenock, Scotland).—Did you receive my reply safely—some time ago? I hope so! You would be in the Upper Third if you went to Cliff House, my dear—not with Babs and her chums, but with Doris Redfern, Madge Stevens, and their very cheery "Co." (You'd go up into the Fourth—Babs' Form—next year, you see.)

MARGARET SEDGWICK (Preston, Lancs).—So glad to hear from you again, Margaret. I'm rather late in replying to your letter, but I'm sure you will forgive me! Your birthday-party was evidently a great success, and I expect you wish you had several birthdays each year! Bye-bye for the present.

JEAN SMITH (Willenhall, Staffs).—Here's the printed reply I promised you, my dear. Did I mention that you would

be in the Fourth Form if you went to Cliff House?—Yes, I do think you are rather like Babs in appearance, and I can see that, like her, you are keen on most sports. Patricia asks me to pass on to you her good wishes.

MALTI BEWOOR (Simla, India).—Here are the answers to your Cliff House questions, Malti. First, Diana Royston-Clarke is 14 years and 8 months old—though she likes to appear older. Duleia Fairbrother is 18 and 3 months. There is certainly a very close friendship between her and Jack Trevlyn. First in the Fourth Form at present is Sylvia Sirrett, a very brilliant scholar. Good-bye to the present, my dear!

BARBARA WALLACE (Osterley, Middlesex).—I do hope you received my letter safely. I'm keeping your suggestion regarding a new Fourth-Former in mind, by the way. No, Jean Cartwright doesn't curl her hair herself; she has no need to! It grows in the most perfect curls without her having to do a thing to help it. (Lucky Jean!)

ALMA WATSON (Montrose, Scotland).—I think I've answered nearly all your questions in the letter I sent. I didn't mention Babs' ambition, though. She has quite a number of ambitions, actually, but most of all she'd love to see her pictures exhibited in the Royal Academy. And there's reason to hope that, one day, her wish may come true, for Babs really is a young artist of talent.

VERA PELOSI (Langholm, Scotland).—Your newsy letter was very sweet, Vera, and I was delighted to hear from you. I told Patricia how successful you found her suggestion for easing tight shoes, and she was very pleased indeed. We were both glad, too, to know you liked our little "Cliff House Hair Styles" series. Write again when you have time, won't you?

JOCELYN JENKINS (Golders Green, London).—Did you receive the letter I sent, not long ago? I think I answered most of your C. H. queries in it, and promised to answer the others in our paper. Here they are! Miss Primrose takes the Sixth-Form, Miss Thelma Bland the Upper Fifth, Miss Dora Wright the Lower Fifth, and Miss Bullivant the Lower Third. Bye-bye for just now, my dear!

DENISE LOPAFIE (Johannesburg, South Africa).—Thank you so much for sending along the newspaper cuttings, Denise. They were all most interesting. Thank you, too, for your suggestion regarding a Cliff House serial—I shall certainly think about the idea. Tell me more about yourself next time you write, won't you? Bye-bye for the present.

EVELYN RADFORD (Castle Cary, Somerset).—Delighted to hear from you and to know you are such a keen reader of my stories, Evelyn. I've answered all your Cliff House questions in the letter I sent, I believe. How's your lovely pet, Mack? He must be quite famous, having had his photo in the papers! I can see you love him very much—and I'm sure he's devoted to you.

"Kimmon!" he rapped. "Get off that hoss!"

While she pressed her cheek against Jackie's, as he clung to her fiercely, Kit thought quickly.

She knew that guns spoke readily enough here, and that this man might not be bluffing; but, on the other hand, she had a shrewd idea that he would not shoot unless he had to.

It would have to be a battle of wits, rather than strength.

"All right, mister," she said, "I'll get down; but you'll have to hold my hoss."

The man, holstering his gun, sprang from his horse with the idea of getting at Pete's reins.

And that was where Kit's wits came to her aid. Twisting her horse round, she backed him at the man, then clucked her tongue.

But, even though Pete could bound forward and take her quickly to the bend, Kit was running a risk with the man's gun. If he were desperate there was still time for him to shoot—if not at Kit, at poor Pete.

But Kit was relying on Redwing. Unheeded by the man as someone quite unimportant, Redwing had remained astride her horse a few yards to the rear. Now, as this startling incident happened, Redwing yelled and set her horse forward.

That yell did not scare her own horse, which was used to such sounds, but it panicked the man's.

To keep his horse from bolting he used both his hands; and Redwing, cantering past him, leaned over and jammed his hat down over his eyes.

Together she and Kit then rode down the winding, jagged path while the

small boy clung desperately to his rescuer.

"Guess I'm turning aside, Redwing. He'll be after us, mebber," said Kit. "You lead him off the scent."

She cut through the trees then and let Redwing go on; for the Redskin girl knew every path on the mountain-side, and could easily outwit her pursuer.

Kit, riding hard and holding tightly on to Jackie, soon reached the plain, and then felt she could talk.

"Bad man. Was he your uncle?" she asked.

"Not uncle. Bad man," said Jackie firmly.

Kit hugged him, and then, seeing the ranch in the distance, hallooted to the figures in the compound.

It was Bill—her father's tough, burly foreman—who rode out first, gun in hand.

"What's wrong, Miss Kit?" he demanded.

"This kid—found him on the mountain. There's some tough gink trying to take him from me!" gasped Kit.

"O.K.!" said Bill grimly. "We'll settle his hash! C'mon, boys!"

Kit reached the ranch, and, breathing hard, signalled to her dad—the boss—who came out looking alarmed.

"What's up, Kit?" he asked. "Gee! Where did the kid come from?"

Kit handed the youngster down to him and explained how she had found him.

"And there's some tough nut claims to be his uncle," she said.

Her father made no comment, but went with her into the ranch-house with Jackie, who took to him at once and seemed to find security in the strong grip of the boss' powerful hand.

"Sweet kid, isn't he, dad?" smiled Kit presently.

"Sure he is a dandy boy," her father agreed in a rather solemn, slow tone that puzzled her. "But—but I can't say I like the idea of taking him in without knowing where he belongs. He's got a ma and pa somewhere, and they can't be far away; or if he hasn't—"

There was a commotion outside and Bill's loud voice.

"C'mon, boys, bring him in to the boss!"

Kit knew who the "him" was, and she took Jackie's hand. She did not want him to see the man again, nor to witness an angry scene that might frighten him; so, as the kitchen adjoined, she led him to it, and left Redwing, who had also arrived, in charge.

Then, very determined, she returned to the living-room.

Bluffing a Suspect!

THE bearded man, looking angry and dishevelled, was facing her father. He had been disarmed; and Bill stood guarding him, with Jem in attendance, in case the man cut up really rough.

"I tell you I'm that kid's uncle—and if I say so, I reckon it goes!" he roared. "There'll be a packet of trouble over this, sir—a mighty packet of trouble. No one's got the right to snatch a kid from his uncle."

Kit's father looked at her as she walked into the room, and his face was even more troubled than it had been before.

"You heard that, Kit?" he said.

"Yes, dad, but I'm not taking any notice," Kit replied quietly.

"You gotter take notice!" sneered the uncle. "Or I'm going right away to the sheriff!"

At that moment Jackie poked his head around the door, and the man gave a shout.

"That's my nephew! Hand him over! Thar he is!"

But Kit, stepping to the door, shut it; then faced him grimly; and the man, after glaring at her, turned again to her dad.

"Now, listen, mister!" he said in a quieter tone. "Are you looking for trouble? I'm telling you that this is the way to get it. I'll give you all the proof you want Jackie's my neevie!"

He opened his shirt pocket and produced two photographs. As her dad took them from him, Kit went to his side and looked over his arm at them.

They were snapshots of Jackie playing amongst the trees.

"And what does that prove?" Kit asked.

"Well, it proves he does know the kid," said her father. "Anyway, Kit, we've no proof he isn't Jackie's uncle, you know. Reckon you've acted a bit high-handedly, although meaning well."

Kit frowned.

"You mean I'm to hand Jackie over?" she said quickly.

The man took back the photographs, a leer of triumph on his face.

"Go get him!" he snapped.

"O.K.!" Kit said, turning to the kitchen door.

She closed the door behind her and stood there. Near the table was Jackie, his eyes shining, all previous worry and cares forgotten, for he held a cake in either hand.

Redwing stood beside him, smiling, her eyes soft and motherly, but she looked up keenly as Kit spoke.

"Yes, Miss Kit?"

"Dad's ordered me to hand the kid over," murmured Kit. "But I'm going back in two minutes to say there's no trace of him; he's gone. Get me? Gone! And when they come to make sure, the farther he's really gone the better."

Redwing understood, and, whispering softly to Jackie that she had something to show him, led him to the door that gave on to the yard.

Kit smiled, closed one eye meaningly, and then paused to assume the right facial expression before returning to the living-room. When she had ruffled her hair and felt she looked wild-eyed and amazed, she pushed open the door and rushed in.

"Jackie's gone!" Kit cried. "He's not there! Not in the kitchen!"

The announcement caused just the stir she had anticipated. Her father alarmed, swung round; the uncle put his hand to his empty holster, muttered, and then strode forward.

"Gone—gone where? That kid's got to be found, and mighty quick, too!" he shouted.

Pushing Kit aside, he rushed into the kitchen, glared around it, and, striding on, went into the yard.

But Jackie was not to be found—not even after Kit had questioned all the available cowpunchers.

"Reckon he's got clear away, mister," she said, shrugging.

The bearded man scowled at her.

"Mighty cute, ain't you?" he sneered. "You've hidden that kid. What's your game?"

Kit did not answer, but, giving the man a mocking smile, returned to the ranch-house, leaving him to follow if he wanted to.

In the living-room Kit found her dad standing with arms folded, and a far-away look on his face, thinking.

"Find him?" he asked.

"No luck. He came into our lives, an' jes' went," said Kit lightly.

Then she showed her dad the paper she had found tied to Jackie's neck. He studied it thoughtfully, shaking his head.

"Queer business," he said slowly. "But it doesn't help much, I reckon."

Kit looked resolute.

"I'm gonna find out what it means, dad," she said.

Then, just as though her mind was not on Jackie, she set the table for tea, so that when the uncle returned, he found her busy.

Suddenly, he demanded his gun back, and, as there was no excuse for refusal, he was given it.

"Are you going, or staying for tea?" Kit asked easily.

"I'm going!" he snapped. "But I'll be back. And when I come back I'll bring the sheriff, and mebbe a Mountie or two. Young Jackie's gonna be found, and found quicky."

He strode out of the ranch-house, slamming the door with a force that shook the whole building. Kit waited until he had ridden away, and then sought out Redwing, where she was hiding with Jackie.

Kit found them in a copse, young Jackie quite happy now; for Redwing had used her sharp knife to cut him a whistle, and the shrill noise it made thrilled him immensely.

He was delighted to see Kit, and flew to her arms when she held them out to him. She was quite touched that he was so fond of her; and it was good to see his eyes so bright and unafraid.

"How would you like to stay here for a while, Jackie?" she asked him.

"Nice home?"

"Es," he said. And then his thumb went to his mouth and he looked sad again.

"When is I doin' to see mummy?" he asked wistfully.

"Soon, son," said Kit, smiling to cheer him up.

She had kept the notice found on Jackie's neck, and now she took it from her pocket and studied it.

"Jackie—who wrote this?" she asked.

He looked at it intently, and his face cleared.

"Aunty," he said.

"Aunty, who lives near the place where we found you?" Kit went on gently, concealing her growing excitement.

"Yes."

It didn't help much, though, and not long afterwards Kit, again taking a roundabout course, returned to the ranch-house. The self-styled uncle had returned there, and he was not alone. It was not the sheriff who accompanied him, however, but a white-faced, tearful woman.

"Kit!" cried Kit's dad. "Come along now; if you know where the boy is, find him. This is his aunt, and she's worried out of her wits. A servant put that notice round the kid's neck out of spite."

Kit looked at the white-faced woman and frowned.

"I see," she said slowly. "Well, that's bad. I'm real sorry."

"You know where Jackie is?" asked the man brusquely.

"I've got a clue," Kit said slowly.

"A clue—to where he is?" the man exclaimed.

"To who he is," said Kit keenly.

Her father stared at her, amazed. But Kit was not looking at him. She was watching the other two, and saw a look exchanged by the man and the woman. The looks were alarmed—there was no mistaking that.

"We know who he is, naturally!" scoffed the man, his composure recovered. "But what's the clue?"

"I'm keeping it," said Kit, patting her shirt pocket.

Her father grew impatient. He had noticed the clear imprint on Kit's shirt of a small hand that had not been too clean—Jackie's hand. And it had not been there when he had seen Kit last.

"O.K., Kit," he said briefly. "Play



"I KNOW that kid's hyer, an' if need be I'll fetch th' sheriff to make you hand him over!" the uncle threatened Kit's father. Kit looked on as innocently as she could, not knowing that little Jackie himself was foolishly peeping out of the kitchen.

the fool if you like, but I'm not. Hey, Bill!" he cried to the foreman near by. "Take this man to where the Redskin girl has her hide-out in the hills. Get going quickly. That's where the kid is, sure enough!"

Kit gave a cry of alarm. "Dad, you can't do that—"

But it was done; Bill and the alleged uncle went dashing away together.

Hands clenched, she faced her father, who barred her way out.

"Dad, you've done a silly thing! That kid isn't his nephew. I tell you there's something phoney about this business. I was bluffing about the proof—"

"I guessed that, Kit. You're headstrong. It's not for you to decide who's a fit and proper uncle— Hey!" he ended in a yell, for Kit, edging to the window, had suddenly hurled up the bottom portion, and was scrambling out.

Before he could reach her, she was through; a moment later, she was astride the first horse she saw, one recently saddled by Jen for himself.

In a cloud of dust Kit rode away, to take the short cut known only to Redwing and herself!

She had bluffed when she said she had a clue to Jackie's identity—but the man's alarm had told her the truth.

Jackie was not his nephew. Who he was, Kit could not guess, except that the man had no right to him. And by hard riding and her short cut, she meant to save Jackie even yet!

Splints and Bandages Do the Trick!

"HERE'S the spot all right," granted Bill. "And way over there, I see the Redskin gel."

He pointed to where Redwing's sleek black head, with its decorative feather, showed over the top of a bush, and the man with him charged on, shouting.

"Hey! Where's that kid?"

He came upon the kid a moment later. Redwing turned to him, finger to lips warningly, and he pulled up short.

Jackie lay on the ground, one leg bent, but the other stiff, encased in splints, and bound by strips of rag torn from Redwing's tent fabric.

"Gee, broke his leg!" said Bill, in awe.

"How d'ye come to let this happen?" demanded the man, in fury.

Redwing shrugged.

"Small boy—take chance," she said. "Fall."

"Looks mighty orkward to me," grunted Bill. "Reckon he ought to be whisked right off to hospital."

The man scowled.

"He's coming home with me right now."

"Not with a broken leg. He needs proper attention," said Bill sternly.

"He ain't goin' ter hospital!" the man growled, his eyes shifty. "I—I jest won't let him! Give him ter me! I'll—"

At that moment Kit came breathlessly on to the scene.

"You two certainly rode hard," she said. "And— Hallo! What's this, Redwing? Not a broken leg?"

She dropped to her knees beside Jackie, and, examining him, gave a soft whistle, looking up with a grimace at Bill.

"Reckon this'll mean a stretcher," she said. "Can you fix it? A stretcher straightaway to hospital."

Little Jackie did not make a sound, but lay quite still, his face pale and a little frightened-looking. When he

seemed inclined to break down, Kit stooped, and whispered comforting words.

Bill looked at the uncle.

"Waal, come on! We gotter get a stretcher!" he said, "unless he can be carried without hurting on my back."

"I'll take him," grunted the other.

"O.K.!" nodded Kit. "Come on, Bill! Hand him up."

Little Jackie was lifted up gently on to the man's back, and then like a flash, Kit acted. She snatched the gun from the man's holster, and tossed it to Redwing.

"O.K., sheriff! Here's your man! Here's the kidnapper!" she shouted.

The uncle let go of Jackie—whom Kit promptly caught—and madly dashed for the horses.

A shot from Bill's six-shooter toppled his hat over his eyes, so that, blinded momentarily, he tripped and sprawled.

"Don't get up, or I'll shoot!" shouted Bill.

"Keep him covered, Bill. I was bluffing," said Kit. "There's no sheriff here yet. But that gink has given himself away. He's a kidnapper all right."

The man glared at her in savage fury.

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THE GIRLS' CRYSTAL Next Friday

"Yeah. You're guessin', an' guessin' wrong," he snarled.

"That's all right; we'll see at the hospital. When a kid's missing from home every hospital is warned," said Kit. "Not that the kid needs taking to hospital. His leg's O.K.!"

"O.K.?" cried Bill and the kidnapper together.

"Sure!" smiled Kit. "I reached here before you and got Redwing to string up the leg as if it were broken."

Bill, with the free hand, scratched his chin.

"Yeah. But what now?" he asked.

"Ask Jackie. Shall we tie him up, Jackie?" asked Kit.

Jackie, whose leg was being unfastened by Redwing, clapped his hands.

"Es—bad man—bad man!" he chanted.

While Bill covered him, the man was tied by the ankles and wrists. Then, thus pinioned, he was slung across his horse, and escorted back to Red Ranch, where Kit's dad gaped in amazement.

"Waal, I'll be— Hey! What's the idea of this, Bill?" he demanded.

"Miss Kit says he's a kidnapper—

and he certainly got moving fast when he thought the sheriff was near," Bill grunted.

Kit smiled at her dad.

"When a man's got a raw conscience, bluff's as good as the real thing," she said. "He's no more Jackie's uncle than you are! And if he hadn't bolted when he did, I'd have let Jackie go to hospital!"

Kit's dad frowned at her.

"Kit, you're guessing," he said. "But if this kid has been kidnapped, the sheriff is the man to tell. I don't hold with taking the law into our own hands. What you should have done is to tip off the sheriff."

Kit looked meek.

"You think so, dad."

"I know it. And right, now—"

He broke off as there came a clatter of hoofs. A man dismounted in the compound, and a moment later burst open the door, gun in hand.

"Why, sheriff!" gasped Kit's dad. "It's me all right. Where's Jackie McGuire? That him?" the sheriff asked, pointing his thumb at Jackie.

"Yes, he seems to tally—"

He had produced a photograph, and was comparing it with Jackie. That done, he took some handcuffs from his pocket.

"And this is the kidnapper, eh? Smart work, Hartley—smart work!"

He patted Kit's dad on the shoulder, while Kit, cuddling Jackie, laughed softly.

"So you're Jackie McGuire?" she asked the kid.

"Jackie McGuire, son of Jake McGuire, millionaire," said the sheriff.

"He's been missing a month, and I've had his picture in my office all that time. But who'd ha' thought he'd be here, six hundred miles from where he lives, eh?"

Kit nodded her head gravely.

"That was why he was kept here in the mountain, sheriff," she said. "And mebbe he'd still be there if this man's wife hadn't got scared, and put him adrift with a notice round his neck."

The kidnapper said not a word, but he looked hatred at Kit, who waved him good-bye. Jackie not only waved, but jumped with glee.

"Waal—" said Kit's dad, in amazement. "By gosh, and he nearly got away with the kid, after all! Huh! If we hadn't bin too smart for him he would hev, eh, Bill?"

"We?" gasped Kit, laughing.

"Why, I like that—"

And Jackie giggled just as though he saw the same joke as Kit.

IT was only the following day that Jackie's anxious parents arrived at Red Ranch to collect him. They found him riding a horse, and wearing a cowpuncher's hat stuffed with paper so that it balanced on his head, looking bonnie and well.

Kit was sorry to lose him; so, too, was her dad, and even though Jackie was delighted and overjoyed to see his parents, his tone was wistful when he said good-bye to Kit.

"And you didn't let the bad man have me, did oo?" he asked.

"Guess we always keep our word," said Kit. "S'-long, Jackie! Look us up some time, and you be mighty careful who you call uncle or aunt. Pick only nice people."

Jackie chuckled.

"Yes—Aunty Kit," he said.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

DON'T forget to meet these two lovable characters again next Saturday in yet another splendid COMPLETE story.

Our thrilling and intriguing girl detective story.



Valerie Drew's HOLIDAY MYSTERY

By
ISABEL NORTON

FOR NEW READERS.

VALERIE DREW, the famous girl detective, and her clever Alsatian dog,

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! Thanks to Flash bringing help, Valerie is rescued. Suspicion falls on Johnny again. Later, she asks one of the maids, a timid girl named

EMILY, about the affair. Emily, who was also in the ruins, taking tea to Doreen's

UNCLE NATHAN, a well-meaning muddler, declares that she saw Johnny there! Valerie looks triumphant. "Now I can act!" she says.

(Now read on.)

The Signal!

"THERE'S the cake, Johnny!"
"One candle on it for each of your misdeeds at Sunnylands!"

"Don't exaggerate, Marjorie! No cake could be big enough for that!"

"Ha, ha! Eat up, Johnny, while you've got the chance."

Valerie Drew stood just outside the big dining-room at Sunnylands Farm, taking one swift survey of all that was going on inside while she was formulating the completion of her own plans.

In spite of her grave thoughts at that moment, she couldn't help smiling as she looked at Johnny Jevons.

Johnny, true to form, had dressed for the part.

At Valerie's request, the younger members who sat at his table had called a truce. Valerie, still sure that he was only the victim of circumstances, had asked to be given just one hour in which to vindicate him. Giving him the benefit of the doubt for that hour, they were standing him tea, and Johnny had come well prepared for possible rough handling.

A crash-helmet reposed on his head, his legs were encased in cricket-pads, a pair of boxing-gloves lay close beside him, whilst a large cushion was

strapped in position in case anyone decided to kick him as well.

"That's fine!" declared Johnny, gazing at the cake alight with candles of all shapes and sizes. "As long as you bake yourselves carefully afterwards, it ought to be safe enough for you to sit at the same table with me. Here goes!" And he began cutting the cake.

Valerie had seen enough. Before her presence was noticed, she slipped away and hastened up to her room. There, for several minutes, she was very busy indeed.

Johnny, even with the shadow of expulsion from the farm hanging over his head, was making a joke of things to the last. But it would be no joke for Valerie if she failed now.

She was sorry for Johnny himself,

**ONE BARK FROM FLASH—
AND THE CULPRIT WAS
TRAPPED!**

and sorer still for Dorothy Dean, to whom it would be an even bigger blow if she lost a paying guest as popular and cheery as Johnny. But the whole affair had now taken on a deep personal significance for Valerie herself.

The unseen enemy had so far mocked her at every step. For her own satisfaction, as well as for Johnny's sake, Valerie intended to make no mistake now.

Carrying the small parcel she had made in her room, she entered the dining-room a few minutes later, and made her way to the table where Johnny sat beside the candle-decked cake.

She was aware of an immediate lull in the conversation as she appeared.

"Hallo, Val!" Johnny greeted her, giving her his friendliest grin. "Don't come any nearer unless you've been vaccinated. Got all the clues in that parcel?"

Valerie did not reply immediately. Turning her head, as she sat down in the vacant place at the table, Valerie

swept her fellow-guests with one long, appraising glance.

It did not appear that Johnny had many friends at the moment.

The story of Valerie's serious mishap in the ruins was naturally now known to everyone, as well as the part which Johnny was believed to have played in it. It was obvious that many of the older people were asking themselves why such a seemingly graceless young scamp should be allowed to stay at the farm a second longer.

"Yes, Johnny, I've got a few things here," Valerie admitted with a smile, as she looked carelessly at the parcel. "For those who're interested in what I've been doing since I've been here I'd like to start right at the beginning."

An explosive sound, suspiciously like "Tush!" came from the table where peppery Colonel Benn was seated.

"My first introduction to anything mysterious at Sunnylands," proceeded Valerie serenely, "was what turned out to be a squeaker, which made a very ugly noise in the ruins. I found out something about it at the same time which I kept to myself. It was that the open end had been very carefully filled with toffee, then left lying in water which would slowly dissolve it."

A dead silence followed Valerie's revelation, until a distinct growl of "Stuff and nonsense!" emanated from Colonel Benn.

"The game of blind man's buff followed soon afterwards," Valerie went on imperturbably. "Perhaps, Marjorie," she added, taking a paper from her parcel and handing it unexpectedly to the cheery, freckled girl at the head of the table, "you'd like to read aloud this note which Johnny handed to me some hours before the game commenced."

In utter silence, Marjorie read the dramatic message, which ran:

"To-night at ten. We must not fail this time!"

"You say Johnny gave you that?" ejaculated Peter Passleigh, his voice fairly squeaking with excitement. "Then it proves—"

"Unfortunately it proves nothing, Mr. Passleigh," Valerie politely disagreed. "Incidentally, the message was written with my own fountain-pen!" Turning to her parcel again, she produced a length of string and held it up. "This was used for the

purpose of turning off the main switch—and all the lights—at the chosen hour. It could have been pulled with equal effect either in the passage, or outside the room, by any of you ladies and gentlemen present at the time. Unfortunately, string doesn't take fingerprints. All I know is that a guest or a servant turned out the lights exactly at ten o'clock—the time mentioned in this note."

Colonel Benn got stiffly to his feet.

"And what, may I ask," he demanded, in a steely voice, "has all this to do with that young scoundrel still being allowed to sit grinning at that table?"

"Tea, miss?" asked the demure voice of Emily, the dark-haired maid, as she approached Valerie, apparently quite unaware that anything unusual was happening.

"Please," murmured Valerie absently. Turning to the angry colonel, she asked: "Would you believe, sir, that even the stupidest of criminals would implicate himself every time he acted?"

The colonel glared.

"I always believe what I see with my own eyes!" he barked, whilst encouraging murmurs arose from different parts of the room.

Without replying, Valerie reached inside her package on the table and, still outwardly unperturbed, produced a neatly moulded wax impression of a footprint.

"This mould was taken from the soil outside the window after Mrs. Croby's pearls were snatched in the darkness," she said, in her coolest tones. "I'll tell you whose it is. It is—Johnny's again!"

"Mine?" Johnny almost yelped. "But I was sitting on Mrs. Croby's lap. How on earth could even a crook like me be inside the room and outside it at the same time?"

"The impression was so clear," Valerie explained, "that I decided it had been left deliberately—to incriminate Johnny!"

The colonel, having originally stood up as a protest, now sat down sharply

as another method of showing disapproval.

Nobody else in the room moved; nobody said anything.

Valerie realised that far more proof was still required to convince the doubters that her theories were right.

"The person wearing Johnny's shoes when the necklace was snatched," she continued, "buried it in a spot where I found it later, proving robbery was not the motive."

"Then what," meekly inquired little Mrs. Peek, looking greatly puzzled, "was the motive?"

"You may guess that," Valerie answered, "when you recollect that the next happening implicated Johnny yet again. His handkerchief and watch were both left as 'evidence' that he had tampered with Mrs. Croby's tent."

"So he did!" muttered Colonel Benn unrelentingly.

Valerie gave him her most patient smile.

"I admire you for sticking to your point, colonel, but—"

For the second time Colonel Benn rose to his feet.

"May I remark," he asked bitterly, "that in all this plausible pleading for a worthless young scapegrace we've heard nothing new at all?"

"Exactly, colonel," Valerie agreed. "Lucky I still have one vital piece of evidence to show you, though you will have to go up to my room presently to see it. Underneath the table—"

"Excuse me, miss," murmured Emily, on the point of refilling Valerie's cup. "I'll get some fresh tea—this doesn't look very strong now."

And she hastened off on her mission.

"What is this new evidence?" asked the colonel grimly.

Valerie glanced around the room. She saw expectant looks, puzzled looks, and, most of all, doubting ones. Despite all the evidence she had offered, the weight of opinion was still on the colonel's side.

"I must ask everyone's indulgence for a minute or two," Valerie responded quietly. "I want you to believe just one thing. I've been talking all this

time for a certain reason. There was a motive in everything I said. Before anyone leaves, I just ask you to think things over."

Silence fell—utter, electric silence.

Valerie's own pulses were beating fast with suspense. She had been working one of the biggest bluffs of her whole career. For though she knew in her heart who the culprit was, she still had not one definite shred of evidence against that person.

A minute passed. Suddenly the colonel coughed loudly. Others began to stir as well. There was an uneasy fidgeting of chairs.

And then—

"Whoof, whoof!" rang out a sharp, challenging bark from Valerie's room, which was situated just at the head of the stairs.

Heads turned in amazement towards the door. The colonel made an explosive sound.

"Why, there's that confounded dog—"

"Exactly! Flash—telling me my trap has worked!" Valerie cried, her face radiant. "If you'll all follow me to my room you will see the final piece of evidence—the actual person who has done everything for which Johnny Jevons has been blamed!"

And, springing up from the table, she ran across the dining-room, followed a moment later by a scramble of guests who rushed up the stairs after her to her room!

Outside the door of her own room she paused, a hand on the knob.

"Now I'll show you the culprit!" she dramatically announced, and flung open the door.

Whose Scarf?

NEXT moment Valerie found herself gazing triumphantly at a pale-faced girl in maid's uniform who stood cowering back against the wall opposite!

"It's Emily—" someone burst out.

"Emily, the maid!"

"What on earth is she doing up here?"

She had been caught at last—and by Flash!

The Alsatian stood a yard away from her, his pointed ears erect, his eyes glistening, a hint of white teeth showing under his quivering upper lip. The hem of the long tablecloth still trailing on his back showed immediately where he had been concealed.

"Oh, Miss Drew!" burst out Emily, in a terrified voice. "I always knew he'd go for me one day."

Valerie's eyes were hard.

"What are you doing in this room?" she demanded.

Emily, her hands nervously crumpling her frock, licked her lips uncertainly.

"I—I thought I heard a sound up here—"

"That isn't the truth! You said you were going to fetch some more tea!" Valerie tartly reminded her.

Emily's upper lip twisted oddly and she made no reply.

"Flash was waiting for you here," Valerie went on. "He only barked, as I had instructed him, to tell me you were here. I expected you all the time."

Emily's frightened eyes opened wider still.

"Ex-pected me?" she gasped.

Valerie nodded. She could feel no pity for Emily—a ruthless schemer who had been concealing her real nature behind her pose as a simpering maid.

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"I was talking downstairs for your benefit," Valerie explained. "I knew you were listening to every word I said in your hearing that there was certain evidence to be found under my table."

"It's no crime to be curious—"

"You lifted the cloth to see what the evidence was! Flash was told not to move until somebody did that!"

Emily, cornered as she was, still looked at Valerie with bold, impatient eyes.

"Just a trick in other words, because you're a detective who can't detect anything!" she mocked. "But you haven't got me or anybody else, and you still can't prove a thing!"

A murmur of approval rose unexpectedly behind Valerie.

"Quite so! And setting a dog on to a girl," declared Colonel Benn warmly, "is hardly—"

Valerie turned on him in a flash.

"There were two people in the ruins this afternoon when I had my accident," she said curtly. "One was Johnny—the other was Emily."

"What?" ejaculated the colonel, dumbfounded by the revelation.

"I met her face to face. She pretended to be looking for Uncle Nathan," proceeded Valerie crisply. "She already knew about the hole in the floor. Evidently she moved on ahead of me and was hiding close at hand when I discovered it. Afraid of being caught, she pushed me into it simply in order to get away."

"Your—your proof of that?" stammered the bewildered colonel.

Everyone else crowding close to the doorway was watching Emily. Her face, now deeply flushed, was shiny with perspiration. Her eyes watched Valerie as though some irresistible fascination held her. Emily, for all her artfulness and cunning resource, knew she was cornered at last.

"Why, there—there can't be any doubt about what Emily's been doing!" ejaculated Marjorie, in astounded tones. "Look at her now! She hasn't a word to say for herself!"

"And Johnny was innocent all the time!" gasped Peter Passleigh. "I say, Johnny, old scout, I'm dreadfully sorry, you know—"

"I can't tell you, Johnny, how terribly relieved I feel!" eagerly declared little Mrs. Peck. "Of course we never really wanted to think such horrid things—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo, Johnny!"

Valerie moved closer to Emily.

"Do you want to get away?" she whispered tensely. "I'll give you just half an hour, Emily, to make a clean breast of everything. There's a pen and paper on the table. If your confession's satisfactory, I may let you go. It's up to you now—you know who I'm really after. If you're sensible you'll take this chance and realise what it's worth to you. That's all!"

Turning, she called Flash to her side and left the room. Closing the door behind her, she turned the key and withdrew it from the lock. Dorothy Dean, the young hostess, looking startled and bewildered beyond words, had just come to the head of the stairs. Valerie handed her the key with a smile.

"I'd like you to look after that for half an hour, Dorothy," she said quietly. "I've got an idea Emily will be reasonable, after all."

Dorothy took her arm excitedly, and they went downstairs together amidst



HER hand on the knob of the door, Valerie swung round to the puzzled guests who were racing after her. "Come on! Quickly!" she cried. "I want to show you the schemer. The person's in here!"

a buzz of congratulations on all sides.

"There's a safe spot in the kitchen to hide the key, Val!" Dorothy whispered. "Wait just a mo'! I want to talk about lots of other things to you now."

Valerie moved intently along the front of the farmhouse as Dorothy sped away to the kitchen. Her own room was at one side, overlooking a quiet space full of fruit-trees; immediately beneath the window stood a line of glass-topped forcing frames. Emily, she was convinced, was safe enough in Valerie's room until they chose to release her. A jump from the window would be too hazardous.

Dorothy joined the girl detective a few moments later. Holding Valerie's arm, she walked with her past the pretty barn converted into a dance hall, the games-room, and all the other attractive features which made Sunnylands such a memorably different farm for a jolly holiday.

Leaning at last against a gate on the far side, Dorothy looked at Valerie with radiant eyes.

"Seems silly, Val, to say that I feel years younger, but I do!" Dorothy laughingly declared. "I can't even start to tell you how grateful I am! To think it was Emily—that little mouse of a girl—playing all those tricks on people—"

Valerie laughed with relief.

"It was only when she overdid her innocent pose that I began to suspect her," she confessed. "Pinning something on her was my biggest trouble. I'm specially glad on Johnny's account that it's all worked out so well."

"Of course, Val." Dorothy laughed again excitedly. "That's what I sort of can't get my teeth into. Having Johnny still here to organise things so well, and with everyone backing him up again as they always used to—why, it'll be just grand fun running Sunnylands now!"

Valerie was listening smilingly as the young hostess ran on with all her eager plans for the future, when Johnny Jevons, suddenly seeing them from a distance, came hastening across the farmyard.

"Lots for me to get on with after all my chatter, Val," Dorothy declared, with a rather breathless little laugh, "so I'll just say thank you again, and leave you to Johnny now!"

He came up, just then, smiling his most attractive smile, his hair pleasingly awry as usual, his hand extended.

"Thanks, old sleuth!" he greeted Valerie. "I've been searching for you everywhere. Really, I don't know quite how to put things—"

"Of course! It isn't your line, anyway, to pay pretty compliments, so don't try them now!" Valerie laughed.

Chuckling heartily, Johnny leaned against the fence at Valerie's side.

"My old Army chum, the colonel, has hopped it in a huff," he reported. "Pretty peeved, apparently, that I didn't turn out to be a crook, after all."

"Well, perhaps it's good riddance, anyway," Valerie declared.

"Wasn't room for the two of us," Johnny agreed. "But I say—fancy little Emily, who couldn't even melt butter in her mouth without sitting in a hot bath, being my mortal enemy! Life's going to be dimly quiet without her, I'm afraid!"

Valerie glanced at his good-looking face out of the corner of her eyes. She had been keeping one thought very carefully to herself while talking to Dorothy. There was obviously less need to consider Johnny's peace of mind.

"Except, old son," Valerie significantly answered, "that note you found must have been sent to Emily by someone else!"

Johnny almost dropped his cigarette. "Golly!" he ejaculated. "Of course—Emily's got a confederate! Then—"

He broke off sharply. Valerie, at the same moment, turned towards the farmhouse as an unexpected commotion arose. People were shouting and running; a figure, scampering fleetly ahead of them, grasped a bicycle standing by the pump, leapt to the saddle and pedalled madly towards the lane. Valerie and Johnny recognised her at the selfsame instant.

"Emily!" ejaculated Valerie, in consternation.

"My only aunt, she's doing a bunk!" said Johnny blankly. "How on earth has she got out?"

Valerie, not pausing to reply, sprinted at top speed back to the farmhouse. Several people were still running in pursuit of the fugitive, but Emily, having turned the bend of the lane, looked safe already. Dorothy, her face pale with dismay, awaited Valerie in the farmhouse doorway.

"Don't know how she's done it, Val!" she shakily confessed. "Your door suddenly opened and Emily rushed out like a mad thing, knocking poor little Mrs. Peek clean over. We couldn't hold her."

"And the key?" asked Valerie. "It's still where I put it. I've just looked, to make sure. Besides, I'm positive nobody went anywhere near the room. There's been somebody or other standing about in the hall all the time."

Valerie ran up to her room without another word. The paper she had left on the table was blank. Emily had not written a single line. A swift examination of the lock gave no indication of its having been forced. Crossing to the window, Valerie looked out.

Down in the little orchard, she saw just one significant thing—a blue piece of material which she was sure had not been there before.

In a moment Valerie realised that there could be only one explanation. Someone who was desperately anxious that Emily should not confess had obtained the key and tossed it up to her. Emily, unlocking the door, had thrown it down again for them to return it to the kitchen. Then she had made her desperate escape.

Calling to Flash as she ran downstairs again, Valerie hastened to the side of the farmhouse, picked up the piece of blue material, and examined it intently. It was a scarf, which a woman had evidently used to tie over her hair. Had it been dropped here by the audacious person who had thrown the key to Emily?

"Here, boy—get the scent!" Valerie directed her pet tensely. "Find it!"

Lowering his sensitive nose keenly to the ground, Flash started off. Running through a gap in the hedge, he went for some distance on the other side until, coming to a hollow, he turned sharply to one side and ran towards a distant cluster of trees. Leading the way through them, he brought Valerie to a small clearing.

A bewildering sight met her gaze.

In the soft earth were the wheel-marks made by a vehicle, which had recently moved towards the road. Near at hand was a glowing fire, with a steaming can of water still suspended over it. Whoever had been camped here so recently had evidently gone off in a great hurry.

What did it mean?

Seeking vainly for any other evidence which the mysterious camper might have left behind, Valerie's mind returned to still unexplained features which had baffled her earlier on in this strange case.

More than once a gipsy woman, pretending to be a painter, had appeared in the vicinity of the farmhouse, and always under suspicious circumstances.

Was she, Valerie asked herself, the same woman who had been in camp here, and then fled so suddenly?

Valerie compressed her lips as she realised that, despite her success over Emily's exposure, she had reached a blank end, after all.

It would all have been so different if Emily had confessed. But Emily had gone without leaving one written word behind her as to the identity of her confederate—and their motives.

Drama During the Dance!

"TAKE your partners, please, for the waltzka!" directed Johnny cheerfully.

"The what?"

"What on earth," demanded freckled Marjorie, with an expectant grin, "is the waltzka?"

Everyone wanted to know what Johnny, master of ceremonies in the barn dance-hall, meant by that strange instruction.

It was the same evening at Sunnyslands Farm.

After a dinner-party memorable for its gaiety, with such warm friendliness dominating everything that Valerie Drew felt a glow of triumph, a dance had been announced.

Naturally enough, the dance was being held to do honour to Johnny. Johnny, to-night, was the lion of the evening. Those who had been his friends all the time wanted to make it a bumper celebration; those who had believed there had been real cause to doubt him were now only too anxious to make up for past misunderstandings.

"Help me out, please, Val!" pleaded Johnny smilingly. "You and I have got to demonstrate the waltzka. We do three waltz steps, then three polkas. 'Quite easy, really. Come on, Val, old sleuth!"

"But, I say—" Valerie was protesting, when Johnny, compellingly embracing her, trod an exceedingly original measure across the floor which Valerie, still laughing, could do nothing else but attempt to follow.

Actually she did it rather well, and there was a round of applause as they reached the far end of the hall safe and sound, with the toes of Valerie's smart dance shoes still surprisingly uninjured.

"Uncle Nathan and Mrs. Peek will demonstrate next!" Johnny mischievously announced, as the merriment began to die down.

Naturally, there was a bigger peal of laughter then, Mrs. Peek herself dissolving immediately into girlish giggles.

Uncle Nathan was the only person who did not seem to see that it was all a joke.

"I say, Johnny, I can't, really!" he declared, shambling in awkward protest across the room.

"Jump to it, uncle!" advised Johnny, towing him to the middle of the barn. "Standing with both feet off the ground, you first do a side chase—"

"Oh dear! Oh my! Oh, help!" lamented Uncle Nathan.

Freckled Marjorie was nearly crying with merriment as, watching Uncle Nathan leaping desperately after Johnny, she moved across to Valerie.

"Uncle's such a good sport in his own funny old way!" she chuckled.

"Johnny pulls his leg unmercifully, but he always takes it in such good part!" Valerie warmly agreed. "I say, Marjorie, what a topping evening we're going to have! It's the first time I've

seen the hall like this. Doesn't it look pretty?"

Marjorie's eyes feasted on the gaily coloured Oriental lanterns, the sprays of leaves so tastefully arrayed all around the walls, the charming little tables and attractive chairs. It was difficult now to realise that such mysterious things had been happening here.

Past differences were all forgotten. Soon, when Uncle Nathan had tactfully faded away in quest of lemonade after his clumsy exhibition, real dancing was in full swing. Dorothy came in a few minutes later. Her eyes lit with pleasure as she saw her guests so thoroughly enjoying themselves.

An hour seemed gone in a flash. Refreshments, of which there was always a never-failing supply at the farm, were brought in and piled on the tables. The dancers warmed to their fun at the capable instigation of Johnny, whose merry tricks to-night were not only novel, but seemingly endless.

It was nearly eleven o'clock at last, and the dance was drawing towards a happy close, when Valerie, dancing with formal but friendly little Peter Passleigh, stiffened and stopped in the middle of a step.

Above her head she had heard a strange crackling sound. Giving a puzzled sniff, she felt uncomfortably certain she smelt smoke. She turned her eyes towards the window. In consternation, she saw a red, flaming mass fall sharply past it from above, and drop on the ground outside in a burst of flying yellow sparks.

"Stop!" she cried, above the music. "No panic, please! Just leave by the exit doors quietly and quickly! Something's wrong!"

Turning, she ran through the nearest exit door and gazed up at the roof.

It was on fire!

Standing momentarily like a girl in some hideous nightmare, Valerie watched red tongues of flame greedily licking, in a line of growing ferocity, right across the thatch of the roof.

The dance-hall barn had caught alight—or been set alight deliberately!

Recovering, a moment later, from the shock it had given her, Valerie turned on her heel to make a desperate rush for where she had seen a hose lying earlier in the day.

The flames on the roof, fanned by a sudden gust of wind, rose at the same moment. A weird, flickering yellow light shot up, lighting the sky, throwing the farmhouse and all its minor buildings into startling relief. They lit something else, too—a figure running across the distant grass.

Rooted to the spot with amazement, Valerie stood watching it go.

She glimpsed a bright, familiar-coloured jacket, a skirt slashed with red, brown arms gleaming with gilt bracelets.

Her face at that moment was unmistakably clear.

She was none other than the mysterious gipsy woman who had been haunting the district ever since Valerie came to the farm!

WHAT a dramatic and startling happening this is! Can the fire be got under control—and will Valerie be able to catch the gipsy woman? Next Saturday's enthralling chapters will tell you. Order your SCHOOLGIRL now.