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THE SCHOOLGIRL

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Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



This Magnificent Long Complete story of Cliff House School tells of the reformation of a much-hated prefect. Meet all your favourite schoolgirl characters once again.



"Give Helen Hunter a Chance!"

Out of the Frying-Pan—



"YOU'LL come, Babs, of course?" Mabel Lynn asked.

"Oh, of course!" Barbara Redfern assented.

"And me, you know, Mabs!" plump Bessie

Bunter eagerly chipped in. "I'd love a feed at the Courtfield Restaurant—I mum-mean, of course, I'd love to hear your Cousin Basil's band. We ought to form a party, you know!"

"Which," Mabs said, "is exactly the big idea. About ten girls—oh, Babs? Who else now? Clara?"

"Rather!" Barbara Redfern agreed.

"And Marjorie and Janet."

"And Jemima and Leila and Marcelle," Bessie Bunter supplemented.

"And Christine Wilmer," Babs added. "No, dash it, Christine's home on long leave at this moment, of course. But we'll be enough without her, I think. But I say, what about permits?" she added, with a sudden remembrance of her responsibilities as junior captain of Cliff House School. "You know we're not allowed to go to tea dances without special permission."

Mabel Lynn paused at that, and a faint frown appeared on the plump, shiny face of Bessie Bunter. For a moment the three chums of Study No. 4 gazed at each other in consternation. They had entirely forgotten that important fact.

Mabs was forming a party to go to the tea dance at the Courtfield Restaurant. Not, indeed, that the

actual dancing was to be the attraction of that party. Mabs' own interest, indeed, was nothing more sensational than to have tea and listen to the band. Basil Lynn was the conductor and the originator of that band, and the Courtfield Restaurant was his first engagement.

As Basil was a particularly favourite cousin of Mabs', and as Mabs' own father had had a hand in financing the project, Mabs was, not unnaturally, very keen to see the band. And so, for that matter, were her chums. They all knew Basil Lynn, all liked him, all whole-heartedly wished him success.

These three good chums, in fact, had just returned from Courtfield, where they had been to lunch with Basil, who only that morning had arrived. And, naturally, Babs had promised she would bring a party along.

"Hum!" she said now. "I say, that's awkward," she added, after a pause.

"We can't get permits from Dulcica Fairbrother"—referring to Cliff House's popular head girl—"because Dulcica has gone home for the afternoon."

"Which leaves," Babs observed, "only the duty prefect."

"And the duty prefect," Mabs countered, "is Connie Jackson!"

They grimaced. Dulcica would have granted the passes like a shot, but Connie—nasty-tempered, spiteful Connie, who had always harboured a grudge against the chums—would most certainly refuse. And apart from refusing, Connie, knowing where they wanted to go, would probably keep an eye upon them to see they did not disobey orders.

"Well, it's a cert we can't ask

Connie," Babs thoughtfully considered. "On the other hand, we can't let Basil down, especially now we've promised. Well, dash it, we're not going to do any harm. Let's go without passes."

"But—but it will mean a fearful bother," Bessie said dubiously.

"Not if we're not caught," Babs said. "And we needn't be caught if we keep our eyes open. Come on, Mabs, let's go and round up the others. Bessie, will you get our things from the cloak-room? Clara & Co. first."

Mabs nodded eagerly. Together she and Babs quitted Study No. 4 and passed along to Study No. 7, farther up the Fourth Form corridor. They pushed open the door and then stared.

For the occupants of that study, Tomboy Clara Trevlyn herself, Janet Jordan, and gentle-faced Marjorie Hazeldene, were seated at the table, and each of them was scribbling as hard as they could go.

"Hallo!" Babs cried. "Why the giddy industry? Writing out a novel, or something?"

"Lines!" granted Clara.

"Lines? But who—?"

"Helen Hunter's lines," explained Clara.

Babs and Mabs stared.

"But Helen Hunter's away—"

"Helen Hunter is," Clara granted, glowering distastefully at the work in front of her. "But haven't you heard that Helen Hunter's coming back to-day? And don't you know that the very first thing Helen Hunter will do when she comes back is to demand the lines she dished out before she went? You know what a cat she is—if

they're not done they'll be doubled at least!"

"Oh golly! And I've got a hundred to do for her!" Babs cried.

"And I," Mabs said sadly, "a hundred and fifty. What time's she coming, Clara?"

"Dunno," Clara grunted. "Anyway, you'd better get 'em done if you don't want to catch it hot. You can bet Helen will be in form when she does arrive. Oh dash! Marjorie, old girl, count those for me, will you?"

In some consternation, Babs and Mabs gazed at each other. Helen Hunter, the prefect, coming back? Helen Hunter, Connie's own particular crony, and as bad, if not worse, than Connie herself. Oh crumbs!

It had been a respite for the juniors when Helen, early last week, had been called away because of illness at home. But Helen, as usual, had left a mass of lines and punishments behind her. Like the mice, the Fourth believed in playing while the cat was away, and seeing that Helen was no longer on the scene, the Fourth had granted themselves the pleasure of ignoring Helen's lines; perhaps secretly treasuring a hope that Helen would never come back at all. Now the ogress of the Sixth was returning in very truth.

"Hem! Rather dishes it, doesn't it, Mabs?" Babs asked.

"Dishes what?" Janet Jordan asked.

"Well—" And Mabs told them. Clara, Marjorie, and Janet looked interested. "Anyway," Mabs finished defiantly. "Helen or no Helen, I'm jolly well going!"

"Which means," Babs nodded, "that I go, too! Blow Helen! Come on, Clara, take a chance! Dash it all, she might not arrive till to-night, and old Basil will be awfully disappointed if he doesn't see you. Anyway, let's trot along and see Jemima & Co.," she added. "Leave you to make up your minds."

They withdrew, to stroll along to Study No. 3, shared by the inimitable Eton-cropped Jemima Carstairs, Leila Carroll, from America, and the little French girl, Marcelle Biquet.

Marcelle was reclining in the chair, but both Jemima and Leila were scribbling lines. Leila looked up irritably as they came in.

"Oh, don't interrupt! I've got two hundred awful lines to work off my chest! That cat Helen is coming back!"

"Pretty tough, what?" Jemima added sadly. "Such a haven of refuge and peace has dear old Cliff House been while the Hunter's been away that I shudder to think of the fate that lies in store for us now! But you wanted us, fair Spartans?" she questioned interestedly.

Mabs told them. Jemima polished her monocle.

"Hum! Awkward, what?" she asked. "Still, shoulder to shoulder! Dear old Basil! How uninspired he will be if I'm not there to cheer him on to victory and success, and all that merry old rot! Leila, what sayest? Do we risk the wrath of Helen?"

Leila hesitated.

"Well, I guess it's asking for trouble if—"

"Spartans Babs and Mabs are chancing—" Jemima pointed out. "Bulldog spirit, what?"

"Well, then, I guess that settles it," Leila said. "O.K.! I'm with the crowd, I reckon. But oh," she breathed sighingly, "if only I could produce an earthquake or something

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER.

to keep that pest away! Right-ho, Babs; we'll be ready when you are."

"Well, thanks," said Mabs, and gratefully nodded.

It was a tribute indeed to her chums' loyalty that they should run such a risk. They went back to Study No. 4. Faithful Bessie, eager at the prospect of a feed, already had their clothes. In a few moments the girls from Studies Nos. 7 and 3 had joined them, and in a merry, happy body, determined not to let the shadow of Helen's probable arrival worry them, they set out. As they emerged into Big Hall, however, Babs looked at her chums.

"Heads up! Connie!" she murmured.

Connie Jackson, the sour-tempered duty prefect for the day, it was. She was standing near the letter rack, and the letter she had in her hand did not suggest that it had brought her good news. Her unattractive face wore a rather blacker scowl than usual. The scowl deepened as Babs & Co. passed her.

"Hallo, where are you kids going?" she demanded.

"Just out," Babs replied sweetly. "Quite entitled to, you know, as it's a half-holiday. Like to join us?" she added daringly.

Only Barbara Redfern believed in her; only Barbara knew she was really trying to turn over a new leaf; only Barbara stood by her against her enemies—and Barbara's cry was ever: "Give Helen Hunter a chance!"

"Thanks; I've got something better to do with my time than mix with Fourth Form kids," Connie disdainfully replied. "Mind you don't get into mischief, that's all!"

The chums grinned as, with a warning glare, Connie strode off. Just in time they caught the bus. Just as Basil Lynn's band arrived on its stage they reached the Courtfield Restaurant.

Basil at once saw them. They all felt rewarded by the look of grateful pleasure which came into his face as he waved an acknowledgement with his baton.

"Snug, eh?" Clara Trevlyn said, as they settled down.

Snug it was, though, to be sure, Leila Carroll eyed the dancers on the floor with some longing. Tea was served, and while they enjoyed the meal they kept a wary eye open. But no other Cliff House girl, prefect, or junior, was there.

"Say, what about a dance?" Leila asked.

But Babs shook her head.

"Asking for trouble," she decided. "You never know who's going to pop in, and if any of us were on the floor, we'd be spotted at once, especially as we're in school uniforms. We're safe here; see without being seen. And, after all, we really only came to hear Basil's band."

"Which," Bessie said, beaming, "is jolly nice. I like music with my tea, and this is frightfully good music, you know! Mabs, p-pass the jelly, will you? You know how fond I am of strawberry jelly."

"To say nothing," Clara sniffed, "of lemon, blackberry, cherry, and pineapple! My hat, you old porpoise, how

many more jellies are you going to scoff?"

Bessie only sniffed, however, as she embarked upon her fifth jelly. The band played on.

Then, during an interval, Basil came down to them.

"Oh, it's nice of you to turn up," he said. "Glad you were all able to get permits to come here."

Mabs coloured.

"Well, as a matter of fact, we didn't. But that doesn't matter," she added hastily.

"Doesn't it?" Basil looked at her keenly. "Don't risk trouble," he advised. "There's a mistress at your school—Miss Bullivant, isn't it?—who's booked a table for five o'clock. That's the table over there," he added, "and if she comes she can't fail to spot you. Thanks frightfully for giving the old band a look in, but for goodness' sake don't get yourselves into a row. Don't you think it would be wise to make yourselves scarce now?"

It would. The imminence of Miss Bullivant's arrival made them all agreed on that point. They had finished tea now—except Bessie Bunter, who was invariably the first to start and the last to finish.

The hint Basil gave was wise, and since no further useful purpose could be served by remaining, they decided to get out while the coast was clear. A hurried whip round then for the bill and the tip, and with a wave to Basil, acknowledged by a beaming smile, they started towards the entrance.

"Well, nicely done, what?" Jemima

Carstairs observed. "Comfy tea. Nice talk to our Basil, and no spotting by prefects. But, whoa, there! I spoke too soon!" she groaned. "Look who cometh!"

They all started.

"Oh, my hat! Connie!" gasped Babs, in sudden fluttering panic.

Connie—sour-tempered Connie Jackson—it was. Connie was on the other side of the glass panelled swing door, just in the act of stepping into the restaurant from the street. For a second they all stood rooted, giving themselves up for lost.

Then came Marjorie's urgent whisper.

"Quick! She hasn't spotted us! Bolt back through the Level Street entrance!"

They whirled and flew to the entrance for which Marjorie was already racing. They reached it, bursting into the passage which led out into Level Street.

"Phew! Done her!" Babs crowed.

Breathlessly they hurried along. Conscious of the narrowness of their escape, they reached the end of the passage. In a body they raced down the steps into the tiny foyer. As they did so the door swept open and into the foyer walked another girl. As if they had suddenly frozen in their tracks, the chums halted.

"Oh, mum-my hat!" stuttered Babs. "Lul-look!"

No need to look. They had all seen. Worse still, there was no escape now. For even as they all made half a move to turn, the eighteen-year-old girl who had entered turned directly towards them. A groan came from the lips of

the whole party as her gaze fastened in swift recognition upon them.

Truly Babs & Co. had stepped out of the frying-pan into the fire. They had dodged Connie Jackson, only to walk slap into the arms of—

Helen Hunter!

They Couldn't Believe It!



"BARBARA!" Helen cried.

"Oh, k i k crumbs!" Bessie stuttered. "Bib-Babs, tell her I'm not here!"

Babs tensed. Obviously they were all for it. Nothing now but to put a bold face on things.

"Oh! Hallo, Helen!" she said, making her tone as careless as she could. "Fancy seeing you! Had a good journey?"

Helen eyed her keenly.

"I suppose you girls have permits to be here?" she asked.

"Ahem!" Jemima said.

"Have you?"

"Well, you see, Helen," Babs stuttered, "you—you see—that is to say, you know—"

"That is to say," Helen guessed, "you haven't."

Hopeless to deny it. Their expressions gave them away.

"You know," Helen went on, "you've no right to come to this place without permits?"

"Oh, my hat! Now for it!" Clara muttered.

"Helen, I'm-sorry," Mabs spoke up, "but—but it wasn't their fault. It was mine. We didn't come to the tea dance—not really. We—we came to see my cousin. He's the band leader, you know."

"I see," Helen said. Then, most amazingly, she smiled as she regarded their crestfallen, apprehensive faces. "You needn't look as if you're all going to be expelled, or something."

They blinked.

"Because," Helen said, and actually laughed, "I'm not going to say anything about it."

"Eh?" gasped Babs.

"But I do advise you," Helen went on, "to hustle out of this place as soon as you can."

"Mum-my only giddy aunt!" Clara stuttered. "You mean you—you're not going to punish us?"

"Why should I?" They almost fell down. "I'm a prefect, of course, and I suppose— Oh, well, dash it, I'm not on duty yet. Just get out!"

"Kik-come on!" Bessie cried.

And Helen, with a swift nod, went on up the passage, while the chums, if dazed, still had sufficient grip of their faculties to put safety first and get on the right side of the door. Once in the street, however, they incredulously eyed each other.

"I—I suppose," Clara stuttered, "we weren't dreaming?"

"We have been to the tea dance," Janet asked, "and we did see Helen?"

"And Helen," Mabs said, "behaved for once like an utter sport?"

"Just a jolly old miracle," Jemima Carstairs observed. "The jolly old leopard changing its spots and the wolf turning into the woolly old lamb, eh? Wonders, fair Spartans, will never cease."

It seemed as if Jemima spoke the truth. Incredible, but true. On another occasion Helen would have taken a spiteful delight in having caught them—and the fact that she

was not on duty would have made no difference to her.

"I guess I've got a hunch there's a catch in it somewhere," said Leila Carroll anxiously. "I don't trust Helen!"

And with a feeling that Leila was right, they all resumed their astonished way.

Meantime, however, Helen had reached and opened the door of the restaurant.

Immediately an eager voice cried: "Helen!"

"Hallo!" Helen said, and then saw Connie Jackson. "Oh, hallo, Connie!" she greeted, but there was little warmth in her voice.

"Come in on the four o'clock train?" Connie asked.

"Yes."

"I had an idea you would, and I thought that this would be the first place you'd make for. By Jove, I am glad to see you! I'm in a fearful mess. But sit down. Let's have some tea. Helen, I have missed you," she added, with a gulp.

"Have you?"

"Haven't I?" Connie breathed fervently. "Only one dance while you've been away—couldn't just raise the cash, you see. But there's a dance on to-night—at Jay's Club—a tip-top affair, too! Helen, you know Fred Jay, don't you? What about getting a couple of tickets out of him?"

"And then," Helen asked, "breaking bounds at night to go to the club?"

"Well," Connie stared, "of course! Why not? We've done it often enough in the past, haven't we?"

Helen flushed a little.

"Yes, of—of course," she admitted. "But— Oh, well, never mind! Connie, tell me, how are things going on at the school?"

"Oh, same as usual!" Connie said irritably. She eyed her crony with eagerness. "Never mind the school. Let's talk about ourselves. Helen, have you brought any money back with you?"

"Not much; a few shillings," Helen said.

"Oh!" Connie pouted. "I want to borrow some—three quid!"

Helen shook her head.

"I'm sorry; I've only got about eight shillings. What's the trouble?"

"Same as usual," Connie shrugged. "Madame Judith—she's dunning me for the two pounds' worth of damages I did to that fancy dress I hired from her. Then she wants the ten bob I owe her for the hire of the dress, and is getting so rottenly impatient that she's threatening to come up to the school about it. I told her to wait till you came back, and she agreed."

Helen looked at her oddly.

"But what about your last week's allowance? You've had that?"

"Spent it," Connie said, with a sniff. "I went to the Hippodrome last Saturday night. A great show it was. But, look here, what about this Jay's club dance? Let's straighten that out first."

Helen drew a deep breath.

"Connie, I'm sorry; I'm having nothing to do with it."

Connie blinked.

"What?"

"Because," Helen said, as if steeling herself for an ordeal, "I'm through with all that. I—I've had—but never mind," she added hastily; "you wouldn't understand if I explained. But I'm serious Connie. No more playing the fool for me. I've

come back to work—and I'm going to work."

Connie blinked.

"Hey, come off! What's the big joke?"

"There's no joke." Helen spoke quietly but firmly. "I mean it. Something happened. I can't tell you what now. But in future the bound-breaking business and perpetually playing the fool is cut out."

Connie regarded her incredulously.

"Been reading: 'Good Little Eric?'" she flashed, with a half-sneer. "Oh, stuff! Cut it out, Helen! Anyway, never mind; you can let me in on the big laugh later on. Meantime, what about this cash I want? I'm relying on you."

"I'm sorry; I haven't got it."

"But you can raise it?" Connie urged. "After all, there's the Sports Fund?"

Helen frowned. Helen was the treasurer of the Senior Sports Club Fund at Cliff House, and Helen, often in the past when she or Connie had been pressed, had not hesitated to borrow from that fund. A risky business, and one which, more than once, had come near to causing her downfall. She said, very quietly:

"Connie, I—I'm sorry. But—but—it's not right. The sports money is not my money to lend, and I'm not touching it."

Connie's eyes almost bulged.

"But—but I'm in a jam!" she protested.

"I'm sorry."

"Sorry!" Connie blazed. "Will that get me out of it? Sorry, my foot! I've told you I've been relying on you, waiting for you. You wouldn't like to see me hauled up before the Head, would you?"

Helen made a restless movement.

"No," she said. "I—I hope it won't come to that, Connie. But I'm sorry. I can't do it. The sports money stays put."

"But, look here—"

"And I don't think," Helen said, rising hastily, "that we can do any good by carrying on the discussion. Waiter, let me have the bill, please!"

"Helen—no! Wait a minute!" Connie gripped her arm. "You mean, you've really reformed?"

"Yes."

Connie looked at her, stunned. But something in the lines of Helen's half-averted face made her believe then. She burst out.

"You, Helen—you! Helen, you idiot—you fool! You—playing the good little Erica! You—my hat! The girl who tried to dun down poor little Letty Green!"

"Connie, stop it!" Helen fiercely protested.

"Well, it's true, isn't it?" Connie sneered. "Even I wouldn't have tried to rob that Second Former like you did! Who's always been the most treacherous cat in the Sixth? Who's always been the terror of the kids? You! Who's the most-hated prefect at Cliff House? Who do the kids call the Ogress?"

"Connie, stop it!" Helen cried. "Stop, I tell you! If you don't—" Her lips quivered; her whole face was burning suddenly. "Of course you wouldn't understand!" she said bitterly. "I was a fool ever to think you would! Well, I tell you I'm through! I'm finished with you, your shady games, with the horrible money messes you're always getting into! And now— Oh, thanks!" she added, as the waiter pushed the bill into her hand, and she

paid it, and, to that worthy's astonishment, gave a shilling tip. "Now I'm going!" she added.

And she turned swiftly on her heel, leaving Connie staring dazedly, bewilderedly at the door.

"HALLO, HERE'S Babs & Co. I say, Babs—"

"Babs, guess!"

"Babs, you'd never believe it!"

Quite an eagerly excited throng of juniors surrounded Barbara Redform and Mabel Lynn and Clara Trevlyn as they came into the Fourth Form Common-room.

(It was evening then, Babs & Co. having arrived back at school much later than they intended, the reason being an accidental meeting with Molly Knight, one of their Kenmarsh friends, whom they had met shopping in Courtfield preparatory to going off to London to join the Thomas Quimble Art School.

And, of course, meeting Molly, they had had a lot to say to her. It had been very jolly; but, all the same, it had made them late—and still with those awful lines of Helen's to do.

"Hallo, hallo!" Babs said now. "I say, don't all shout at once! What's the matter? Somebody left somebody a fortune, or something?"

"No; something more surprising than that," Margot Lantham said. "Helen's come back!"

"Well, we know," Babs said, and frowned a little, apprehensively thinking of her undone lines. "We met her in—Courtfield. Get it in the neck?" she asked apprehensively of Margot.

"That's it!" Margot laughed. "The first thing I expected when I saw her was that she'd ask for lines. Well, I hadn't done them, so I went to her and tried to make out that they'd slipped my memory—which they had, of course. And guess what she said?"

"What?"

"She said it didn't matter," Margot crowed. "She told me—yes, actually she did, Babs—told me to forget them!"

"And she told me the same thing!" Bridget O'Toole beamed.

"And I jolly well bumped into her in the corridor," Joan Charmant put in. "And what do you think happened then? It was she who said 'Sorry!' even though it was really my fault. I say, Babs, do you think she's caught something, or anything, while she's been away? Another time she'd have given me a hundred lines without a look!"

"My hat!" Babs breathed.

"Sure looks," Leila Carroll observed, "as if she's turning over a new leaf or something. I guess she was pretty decent to us in Courtfield. She—Shall I tell 'em, Babs?" she asked.

"Why not?" Babs asked.

"Oh stuff! I don't believe it!" Rosa Rodworth, the Stormy Petrel of the Fourth, broke in, when Leila had retailed the story. "There's a trick in it somewhere. Anyway, I notice she's not offered to let me off lines."

"No, nor me!" scowled Lydia Crossendale, the snob of the Form.

"And it will be fun if she is trying to reform!" Freda Ferriers giggled. "What a howl to see Helen playing goody-goody! And won't," she added, with delicious anticipation, "we make it hot for her!"

Babs frowned at the sneak of the Fourth.

"And why," she asked, "should we make it hot for her?"

"Well, what has she done for us in the past?" Freda said; and there were nods. For there was not one girl in that room who had not, at some time

or another, suffered at Helen Hunter's hands. "Hasn't she always made it as hot as she could for us?"

"Yes, that's right," dark-haired Rosa Rodworth said. "The cat ought to be paid out for that! Anyway, you should worry about making it hot for Helen?" she sneered. "Look what she's done to you from time to time!"

"I know," Babs nodded. But she had a funny little feeling inside her now. "All the same, if this is right—if Helen really is going to try to be decent—I think we ought to give her a fair chance."

"Oh stuff!" Rosa cried. "Did she ever give any of us a fair chance? No! And if there's a chance of getting our own back on Helen—well, I, for one, am jolly well going to take it! In any case, I bet the reformation won't last five minutes!"

And that seemed to be the opinion of the Fourth.

At the same time, Babs was puzzled—a little worried, too. If Helen was going to do the right thing at last, then Babs, at least, was ready to forget the past and help her all she could.

That innate sense of fair play and sportsmanship always made Babs rally to a deserving standard, and—well, bother it, Helen had acted in a way that had been positively decent at the Courtfield Restaurant. Before she could say anything else, however, the door opened, and a little girl, with a shy, happy, rosy face looked into the room.

"Oh, Barbara!" she said.

"Why—oh, hallo, Letty!" Babs said, dimpling into an impulsive smile at the sight of little Letty Green, Cliff House's newest and almost youngest Second Former, whose advent into the school a few months ago had started bitter plotting by Helen Hunter, and which had ended in a fine old row between Helen and her Uncle Noah and a temporary suspension of Helen's prefectship. "You want me, Letty?"

"No, Barbara, I don't, but—but Helen Hunter does," Letty said. "She

said, would you go and see her at once?"

"Whoa, toady!" called Lydia Crossendale derisively, who never missed an opportunity of jeering at the popular Form captain.

Babs gave her one look, and walked out.

"Oh, Barbara!" Letty beamed, when she was in the corridor. "Barbara, Helen—"

Babs looked at the youngster wonderingly.

"Helen, Letty?"

"Yes, Barbara. She—she's been ever so nice to me," Letty said happily. "You know she's always been so horrid, and—and now she says she's ever so sorry for having been such a cat, and she says she hopes I've forgiven her. But I have, of course. I think it's horrid being nasty to people, don't you?"

"Dear kid!" Babs said softly.

"And—and she brought this back for me—look!" Letty cried excitedly, and she proudly waved a wrist at Babs, and Babs blinked as she saw the little wristlet watch upon it. "She says that's just a little peace offering, you know, and she told me that if I'm ever in any trouble I must come to her. Isn't that nice of her, Barbara?"

Nice it was. Again Babs knew that funny little feeling inside her, and again she felt her mind confused, torn between doubts of Helen and a desire to support Helen.

Certainly that action—in bringing back a peace offering for Letty, in acknowledging so frankly her misdeeds of the past to this child, whom she had always regarded as her greatest enemy—weighed more with Babs than any of the other incidents she had heard about.

Helen, when she confronted her in her study, looked altogether different somehow. She actually blushed as Babs came in, and then for a few moments stood diffident and embarrassed.



"AND—and she brought this back for me—look!" Letty Green cried excitedly. Babs blinked at the wristlet watch. Helen had brought that as a present for Letty—and yet little Letty was the girl Helen had hated so much! What had happened to Helen?

"Thanks. It—it's nice of you to—come," she said at length. "As—as a matter of fact, I—I was going to ask you to lend me something, Barbara."

"Yes, Helen?"

"You—you see," Helen said, "I've got to do a bit of swotting during the next few weeks—well, more than a bit, as a matter of fact. I've got to work jolly hard. You know I sat for Matric. last term?"

"Yes," Babs said. She knew that like everybody else, and she knew also that Helen had failed pretty badly.

"Well, I—I'm sitting for it again," Helen went on. "I'm afraid I was a bit backward last time, and I fell down especially on English. My spelling's so rotten, too."

Babs nodded again.

"And—and—well," Helen said confusedly, "I don't mean, if I can help it, to fall down on the same subject again. Oh, I know I've been a special sort of idiot. To tell you the truth, Barbara, I'm just about Third Form in my grammar, spelling, and so on. Well, I—I've made up my mind to thrash the whole subject out again—back almost to the beginning—and doing Fourth Form work and working up. And so—if you could lend me your books—you have some very good English books, I understand?"

Babs' eyes sparkled.

"Why, Helen, of course—"

"And you know a fairish bit about the subject yourself?"

"Well—" Babs laughed, though she blushed. As the girl who had ever been top in the Fourth Form in English she was entitled to that tribute. "I—I suppose I do. And, of course, if it's the books you want, Helen, you're welcome to them. Welcome as anything. And—" Babs paused. Dash it, there really was something about Helen which was altogether different from the sour-tempered, spiteful girl she had known before Helen had gone home. "And if," she burst out, "I can help you in any other—"

Helen looked at her seriously.

"Barbara, that's sporting of you—"

"Well—" Babs stammered.

"Especially," Helen added, wincing at her own words, "the way I've treated you in the past—yes, and your friends."

Babs turned a beetroot red.

"Well, Helen, we can forget all that."

"Can we? I—I wish I could," she replied, a trifle uneasily. "I—but never mind, Barbara. But I would like you to know that you won't exactly find me the same girl as I have been, Barbara. I—I'm just going to try to be different."

"Oh, Helen!" Babs breathed, her eyes shining. She fiercely believed in her then.

"And—and if you could do something—anything," Helen mumbled.

"Well, you know. The Fourth think I'm a pretty out-and-outer, don't they? Yes, they do, and"—with a flash of self-scorn—"they're entitled to think it. Barbara, I—I don't want them to go on thinking it. I'd like them all to understand that they can rely on me for a square deal in future. When can I have the books?" she finished abruptly.

"Why, now," Babs said. "I'll fetch them at once."

And she left, all amazement now banished by the firm conviction that Helen Hunter really meant what she said. What had brought about the reformation didn't really matter. The reformation was a fact, and she—Babs meant to rally round and help Helen.

And the Fourth—

Babs' elation knew a momentary darkening as she thought of her colleagues.

Not as easily as she would they take Helen Hunter's reformation for granted. Nor would they easily believe in it—no, not even her own chums. And there were certain of them—like Lydia and Rosa—who, even if they did believe it, would not hesitate to make the utmost capital out of it, and who would make all the difficulties they could imagine for the sincere-in-pursuit Helen.

It seemed, indeed, that Helen had planted her reformed feet on a hard and thorny path.

And although Babs did not know it then, there was another girl who would not be slow to hit at Helen if she got the chance. The girl was Connie Jackson. For Connie, desperately hoping that Helen was not sincere in her reformation but was up to some clever game of her own, had seen her once more, and again pressed the question of borrowing from the sports fund.

But Helen had been firm, and a row had sprung up. It had ended with Helen almost pushing Connie into the corridor. Connie had gone away then—gone away with black hatred in her heart for her one-time crony—gone away vowing revenge!

Rosa's Challenge is Taken Up!



"IT'S a leg-pull," Clara Trevlyn decided.

"I'd like to, but I just can't believe it," Mabel Lynn said, with a shake of her golden head.

"Yes, rather! It does seem jolly funny," Bessie Bunter nodded. "Perhaps," she added, with a flash of inspiration typical of the plump duffer, "it's not Helen Hunter at all who's come back to school? Perhaps it's her twin sister?"

"Perhaps it's fiddlesticks!" Barbara Redfern retorted. "In any case, Helen hasn't got a twin sister! Oh, it looks funny, I know, but—well, I believe it. And I do think it's up to us to give Helen a chance if she's going to play the game."

Nods. The chums were agreed on that point. But they couldn't, despite Babs' eagerness, agree that the Ogress had reformed. Babs believed it, and if only because the Co. always stuck together, they were going to rally round Babs. But they were very doubtful. And the rest of the Form—

The rest of the Form simply scoffed.

"Anyway," Babs said later in the Fourth Form Common-room, "we'll all have a chance of judging to-morrow morning. I suppose you know, girls, that as Miss Charmant is very busy on A.R.P. work, Helen is going to be in charge of the Fourth?"

"And I'd like to bet," Janet Jordan put in, "that she's forgotten all about her reformation by then, and is the same old cat as usual."

It was a case, anyway, of wait and see. The following morning the Fourth, for once, were almost eager to get to lessons. There were many comments in the class-room before Helen arrived.

"I say, let's have fun?" Rosa Rodworth brightly suggested. "What about a little sweepstake on the number of lines Helen dishes out? I'll take No. 3,000."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Perhaps," Babs suggested, "it

wouldn't be a bad idea if you did the ones she gave you before she went away? You haven't asked her about cancelling them, have you?"

"Rats! Why should I?" Rosa scowled. "As she's cancelled most of the other girls', it goes without reason that mine are cancelled, too. And Lydia. Lydia hasn't done hers, have you?"

"Bet your sweet little nightie I haven't!" Lydia chuckled.

"Heads up!" whispered a voice. "Here she is!"

They all sat still as the door opened and Helen came in. Rather pale she looked, as though she had slept badly. In her arms she carried several books, three of which, Babs was quick to notice, she had lent Helen yesterday. The prefect smiled as they stood up.

"Thank you, girls! Please sit!" she said. She put her hand over her mouth to smother a yawn, for last night Helen had been studying until twelve o'clock, and so much extra study, after her long journey from home, had told its tale upon her. "Get out your essay-books, please."

"Yes, Helen," Rosa Rodworth said, and added sympathetically: "Tired, Helen?"

Helen flushed a little.

"I am—a little. I was working last night rather late."

"Oh, were you?" Rosa said innocently. "There was a dance at Jay's Club, wasn't there?"

"Rosa!" Babs hissed.

There was a chuckle in class. Most of the Fourth were aware of Helen's little habits, and particularly were they aware of her fondness for Jay's Club, in Courtfield, which was strictly out of bounds.

Helen turned scarlet.

"Rosa, are you trying to imply that I was at that dance?"

"Eh?" Rosa looked shocked. "Oh, as if I would! Of course you weren't, Helen! You'd never dream of going to Jay's Club, would you?"

There was another titter.

"Rosa, I suspect you are trying to be impertinent!" Helen rapped.

"The cap fits!" chuckled Lydia Crossendale.

"Lydia!" Helen's attention was at once diverted to her. "I heard that. That was an insult."

"Oh, no, Helen!" Lydia said calmly.

"What!"

"Miss Wright, the English mistress, says that truth is never an insult!"

"Lydia—" broke out Babs.

"Barbara, thank you! I can handle this!" Helen's eyes gleamed, and there was something in her look which at once whipped the smiles off the Form's faces. "Lydia, sit down. Rosa, you sit down, too. Now, first of all, where are the lines you both owe me from last week?"

Rosa scowled.

"Oh, stuff! You're not going to pick on us for those?" she protested.

"You've let everybody else off."

Helen eyed her steadily.

"That is true," she confessed. "I

had reason. The rest of the Form's

lines were earned for trivial offences.

Smacking Peggy Preston's face, Rosa,

was not a trivial offence, and so the

imposition still stands. And putting

jam down Bessie Bunter's neck, Lydia,

during meal-time, is also not a trivial

offence, so yours stands, too. And

now I warn you. Obviously, you two

girls are out to make trouble. Very

well. If I have to speak to you again,

you'll each get a black conduct mark."

"Oh, rats!" Lydia broke out

furiously.

"Lydia, that's enough! Put a black mark in your book!"

"Don't you, Lydia!" cried Rosa.

"Rosa, you will also put a black mark—"

"I won't!"

"Go on, Rosa, tell her off!" chuckled Freda Ferriers.

"Shut up!" cried Babs. "Give Helen a chance!"

"Bah! Toady!" jeered Rosa.

"Yes, keep out of it, Babs!" cried Diana Royston-Clarke. "This is none of your business!"

"And it's none of yours, either!" Babs retorted spiritedly. "It's not fair—"

"Bah! Toady!" sneered Freda Ferriers.

"Silence—all of you!" Helen rapped on the desk. "Rosa, Lydia, Freda, step to the front of the class!"

There was a pause, a murmur. But it was obvious from Helen's attitude now that she was not to be trifled with. If Helen had reformed, there was still no doubt that she could handle girls.

The three girls named glared first at Helen, then at Babs, who challengingly stared back at them. Then sulkily they stepped out.

"Thank you!" Helen said. "Now, please, order in the class. You three will stand in a row where I can keep my eye on you. The rest of the Form, get on with your work!"

Rosa & Co. scowled. But with the example of the ringleaders in front of them, the Form quietly enough got down to its work. Work had not been in progress five minutes, however, when Miss Primrose, the headmistress, came in.

"Why," she said, staring at the three. "Helen, what does this mean?"

Helen coloured.

"I'm sorry, Miss Primrose. I had to make an example of them for causing trouble."

"Which is another way of saying," Rosa daringly burst out, "that she's just got her knife into us."

"Rosa—"

"Well, it's true, Miss Primrose," Rosa cried. "Why should she let everybody else off their lines instead of Lydia and me?"

"What is this, Helen?" asked Miss Primrose, in surprise.

Helen bit her lip.

"Rosa refers to the lines I gave out before I went away," she explained steadily. "The lines I excused other girls were for trivial offences, Miss Primrose, but Lydia and Rosa's most decidedly were not."

"I see." Miss Primrose frowned, however. "Once having given lines, Helen, it is your duty to see they are done," she said a trifle severely. "If the offences were so trivial in the first place, then I don't see that you have reason to give lines at all."

"My hat, hear her being ticked off!" sniggered Frances Frost.

It was obvious that the Head, like the Fourth, had her doubts about Helen. Those doubts were certainly fostered by Helen's past conduct.

"And so," Miss Primrose finished, with a curt nod to the three cronies, "you may go back to your places. You will each take a hundred lines for being impertinent! You have no other reports, Helen?"

"N-no," muttered Helen.

Miss Primrose went out. As soon as she had gone there was a titter as Helen, crestfallen and crimson with humiliation, took her seat at her desk again. Babs clenched her hands. Oh, it was unfair! Helen wasn't having a chance!

No doubt, through Miss Primrose's intervention, Rosa & Co. had won the first victory—which, of course, only made Rosa & Co. more gleefully cock-a-hoop than ever. At break, however, Babs took the Stormy Petrel to one side.

"Look here, Rosa, what about playing the game by Helen? What about giving her a chance?"

"Rats to you, toady!" Rosa said

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scornfully. "What about you playing the game for a change? You seem to forget you're one of us, and sticking up for Helen against your own Form isn't exactly what you might call being loyal, is it? Mind your own business!"

And that, Babs discovered, seemed to be an opinion shared by a great number of her Form-mates. None of them placed any faith in the reformation, and, remembering the many bitter

grudges of the past, it seemed that the Fourth's opportunity had come to pay them off. Even Babs' own chums were not altogether with her.

"Of course," Clara Trevlyn said uneasily—"of course, we stick by you, Babs. But—well, dash it, Helen has asked for it—if not now, in the past. Even Primmy doesn't trust her. Easy enough to see that."

"And if," Babs was stung to retort, "everybody goes on thinking that, what chance has she got of making a decent show?"

"But—but, Babs, you're not going to make yourself unpopular for Helen's silly sake?" Mabs pleaded. "After all, you owe her nothing."

Babs shook her head hopelessly. Obviously, she was alone in standing by Helen.

Break was over. Into the class-room they all tramped again. Helen still looking a little flushed, as though the memory of Miss Primrose's snub still hung over her. Quietly she nodded them into their places, but almost as soon as lessons had begun Rosa Rodworth started her old tricks. Just out of a spirit of mischief, Rosa, during the break, had unearthed her silver bracelet, which she was now flauntingly wearing.

It was rather a nice bracelet—heavy, too, and of an expensive make. Strictly speaking, Rosa was not supposed to wear any form of valuable jewellery in school, which was, of course, the reason why she had donned that bracelet. But Helen, for once, was not to be drawn. She saw the bracelet, certainly, but she made no comment.

"Get out your books!" she ordered. "You will all copy these questions into them and answer them in your own way!"

She turned the blackboard on which the questions—general knowledge—had been painstakingly written by herself during break. The Fourth began to copy them out until from Rosa's desk came a low rat-tat-ting. Helen looked sharply at the Stormy Petrel.

"Rosa, cease making that noise!" she said.

"Oh, yes, Helen! Certainly, Helen! Of course, Helen!" Rosa simpered. "I'm sorry, you know! I was lost in thought, and was just absent-mindedly tapping with my bracelet on the desk."

There came a subdued snigger from the Form. They bent to their tasks again. Then suddenly Rosa dived beneath her desk, bringing a startled yell from Bessie Bunter as she nipped her leg between two rulers.

"Ow, ow! Oh crumbs! There's a snake in the room! I'm b-bub-bip-bitten!" Bessie yelled, in anguish.

"Helen, fuf-fetch a gun, or something!"

"Rosa," Helen flashed, "you did that!"

"Oh dear!" Rosa sighed. "I'm sorry, Helen! I dropped my bracelet, you know, and it must have hit against Bessie's leg!"

"Then take fifty lines for carelessness! And if," Helen added, her eyes beginning to glint, "there is any more trouble about that bracelet, Rosa, I shall confiscate it!"

"It's a valuable one!" Rosa said warmly.

"I don't care! Proceed with your work!"

Rosa winked at Lydia.

Perhaps another five minutes went by. Then again came the now-familiar chink of Rosa's bracelet, accompanied by a cry from its owner as wildly she leapt to her feet.

"My bracelet!" she cried. "Helen,

my bracelet! Whoa! I say, rescue it, somebody!"

She herself made a dive at the bracelet, which was rolling down the aisle towards the mistress' desk. She missed, of course.

Freda Ferriers leapt out, grabbing for it, and accidentally-jolted Christine Wilmer's elbow. Christine gave a yell.

"Freda, you idiot! Look at this blot!"

"My bracelet!" shrieked Rosa. "It will be lost! Frances, grab it!"

"Whoops! Missed it!" cried Frances, throwing herself forward.

"Girls—!" Helen cried.

Commotion now. Rosa had set a real rag going. Half the girls in the row she occupied were on their feet, half a dozen making futile attempts to grab the bracelet as it rolled on its merry way.

"Girls, quiet!" Helen cried, quivering. She herself stepped forward. She snatched the bracelet up. "Get back to your seats, every one of you! Rosa, I shall report you for this! Now, please! If order is not restored in another five seconds I will detain you all!"

"But my bracelet—" Rosa cried.

"You had no business," Helen retorted, "to bring it into the Form-room at all! Sit down, please!"

"Yes, go on, you mischief-maker!" Babs hissed.

"Why, you—"

"And no quarrelling!" Helen said. "Rosa, you may come to my study this afternoon after lessons. Until then consider your bracelet confiscated!"

Glaring, Rosa sat down, while Helen slipped the bracelet into her pocket. Babs grinned as she glanced at the sulky looking Stormy Petrel. Well, that ought to teach Rosa a lesson.

It seemed, indeed, as if it had a quietening effect. For the rest of the morning there were no further disturbances, and it was with a sigh of relief that Helen at last dismissed the class. She signalled to Babs, however, as that girl was stepping through the door.

And her eyes were full of a new gratitude as she regarded her.

"Barbara, thank you!" she said simply. "You behaved splendidly! But—but, please," she added, a trifle unsteadily, "don't go and get yourself into trouble for my sake!"

Babs smiled. If she had been quietly determined in her championship of Helen before, those words made her almost fiercely so.

She went out, while Helen, taking Rosa's bracelet, went off to her study. She was in the act of locking that in a drawer when Connie Jackson came in. Connie still looked harassed.

Her eyes flickered, however, as she saw the bracelet being deposited.

"Hallo, what's that?"

"Rosa Rodworth's bracelet," Helen returned, a little curtly. "I've confiscated it because Rosa was being a nuisance with it in the class-room. Anything you want, Connie?"

"Well, you know there is. Helen, could you just let me have ten bob?"

"I've told you," Helen patiently replied, "I haven't got it. And please," she added, a trifle wearily, "don't ask for it out of the Sports Fund, because the answer is just the same."

Connie scowled. In a sudden bitter, bad temper she drifted out. But as she reached the steps of Big Hall she paused, glaring at a crowd of arguing juniors who stood at the bottom of the steps. Something like a row was going on there, and the leaders were Barbara Redfern and Rosa Rodworth. They both looked flushed and excited.

"Confiscated!" Rosa was bitterly sneering. "Yes, we know what she means by that! Last term she confiscated your sister's chocolates, didn't she—and did your sister ever get them back? Then there was the ping-pong ball she confiscated—and I jolly well caught her playing with it the following day! We all know what happens to things Helen confiscates. She just sticks to them!"

"Shut up, Rosa!" Babs hoily exclaimed. "She's changed, I tell you!"

"Do you think I believe that rot?" Rosa said sneeringly. "Just you see! She's got her eye on that bracelet—and no wonder. If she sells that she can get money for it, and we all know how hard up she is! I'd like to bet, when I go to ask for it, that she finds she's lost it—Hi!" she broke off in fury.

But just in time anxious Mabs dragged Babs back as she would have slapped the slanderer's face.

Connie paused. In the ordinary way she would have intervened; but now, amazingly, she turned on her heel. Her face was rather strangely thoughtful as she walked away.

"My hat, what an idea!" she breathed to herself.

Immediately lessons that afternoon were over—not taken this session by Helen, but by acid-faced Miss Bullivant, the maths mistress—Rosa Rodworth marched off to Helen's study.

"I've called," she said bluntly, "for my bracelet!"

At once Helen rose, putting down the list of words she had been copying out from one of Babs' books. She crossed to her bureau. She pulled the top drawer open. And then she started.

"Oh!" she said.

Rosa sneered.

"Can't find it, eh?" she asked.

"Rosa, I'm sorry—no! But I'm sure I put it here—"

"Yes? But forgot, I suppose, you took it out again? Pretty thin sort of excuse that, isn't it, Helen?"

Helen stared at her.

"What do you mean?"

"You know!" Rosa boldly challenged.

Helen drew a deep breath. Her eyes for a moment showed the old glittering light as they regarded the junior.

"Rosa, what are you hinting at?"

"Oh, don't bluff!" Rosa said contemptuously.

"Rosa, I warn you—"

"Then," Rosa retorted bitterly, "warn yourself! I know what you've done with my bracelet. I half-expected this. Pretty valuable, isn't it?" she sneered. "Bring in a tidy sum if it were sold—or pawned."

Helen's face turned dead white.

"Rosa, you—you mean you think I've stolen it?"

"Well?" Rosa repeated defiantly.

"I see," Helen closed the bureau drawer. "Rosa, I'm sorry, but this is too much!" She caught her by the arm. "If you think that, there's only one thing to do, and you're going to do it—right away. You're coming with me to repeat that accusation to Miss Primrose!"

"Here, wait a minute!" startled Rosa cried.

"Come on!"

The Headmistress is Doubtful!

PROFOUNDLY startled did Miss Primrose look when a few minutes later she faced the prefect and the still-defiant Fourth Former in her study.

"Rosa, you—you still persist in this story!"

"I do," Rosa said defiantly. "Helen jolly well used to keep things in the past—any of the girls can prove that! And if," she added, "she hasn't got the bracelet, who has?"

"This is extremely serious," muttered the Head.

"I can only repeat, Miss Primrose, that I do not know where the bracelet is," Helen protested, white to the lips. "And if you have any doubt in your mind, Miss Primrose, the best thing I can do is to resign my prefectship here and now. I am not a thief!"

"Helen, please!" Miss Primrose said. "Nobody is accusing you of such a crime."

"Rosa is!" Helen flamed out.

"Yes, I am! And it's true!" Rosa defiantly flung back.

"Rosa, really!" Miss Primrose rose. "Rosa, leave the room! For insulting Helen you are detained tomorrow. Helen, remain behind, please."

Rosa, with a last furious look at the prefect, went. Miss Primrose paused.

"Helen," she said searchingly, "you are sure—positively sure—that what you have told me is correct in every detail? I cannot forget that certain things have happened in the past, you know. You are not deliberately hiding that bracelet—shall we say—to annoy Rosa?"

Helen winced.

"Frankly no, Miss Primrose."

"Very well. Naturally," Miss Primrose said, a trifle uncertainly, "as a prefect you have my trust, and I must take your word. But please, please do your best as soon as you can to clear the matter up."

Helen turned pale, reading very plainly the doubts implied by her headmistress' questions. Head a little high, she went out. Meantime, Rosa had furiously rushed to the Fourth Form Common-room.

At once a surge was made towards her.

"Rosa! Rosa, old thing! What's happened?"

"What happened?" Rosa repeated bitterly. "What happened? What I said would happen—of course! The cat's sticking to the bracelet, waiting for the hue and cry to die down before she sells it or pawns it!"

"Rosa, you—you cat!" Babs flamed out.

"Here, take it steady!" Mabs exclaimed.

"Rats!" Rosa cried. "Helen's got it—everybody saw her take it—and now, of course, it's lost! And what I get," Rosa sneered bitterly, "is detention from Primmy for complaining about it, though you can see with half an eye that Primmy herself believed me!"

"Oh, my hat!" Babs flamed. "Let me get—"

"No, you don't, Babs!" cried Mabs. "Bother Rosa's silly bracelet! Come on, this way," she added firmly, and, against Babs' will, led her through the door and rushed along to Study No. 4.

"Now sit down, goose!"

"But, Mabs, you know—" Babs broke out.

"I know," Mabs said grimly, "that you're setting the Form by the ears, chump! Babs, I'm sorry—awfully—but—well, dash it, you can't expect me, or any of us, to just sit tight and watch you making yourself unpopular! Let Rosa and Helen fight it out their own way, Babs, please—for our sakes!"

Babs gulped. But she nodded. Perhaps she saw that no good could come of carrying on the quarrel in the Common-room. But inside she was fiercely burning. It was unfair, untrue.



Either the bracelet had been honestly mislaid, or—

Well, or someone else had taken it. She had faith in Helen.

But Helen's past was dead against her.

Not a happy evening was it between the chums of the Fourth. Not one of them was there who did not share with Mabs the feeling that Babs would have been wiser to let Rosa and Helen fight out their own battles. They just could not bring themselves to share their leader's faith in the prefect.

Immediately after call-over Babs, breaking away, went to see Helen.

Perhaps, she hopefully thought, the mystery of Rosa's bracelet had already been solved.

She found Helen tired, wretched-looking, almost hidden behind a mass of papers which she was fretfully studying. She shook her head in answer to Babs' question.

"No, Barbara, nothing has turned up. I—I suppose"—hesitantly—"that Rosa & Co. still believe I've taken it?"

Babs had to admit that that was so. Helen shrugged a little.

"Give a dog a bad name— You know the old saying. I suppose I've earned it really. After all, why should I expect them to take me for granted?"

"Oh, Helen—you're not weakening?" Babs blurted.

"No, Barbara, I'm not. And just to prove it," Helen said, with a wry smile at the work in front of her, "I've entered my name for the matric to-day. Which means that I've got to work like a slave. That's not easy when you're a prefect. The interruptions!" she explained.

"Poor old Helen!" Babs sympathized. "Why not take a rest now?"

"Because," Helen said, "if it's worth making an effort it's worth making a big one. Anyway, I'm going to swot on till about midnight. But good-night, Barbara, and—thanks," she added a little unsteadily, "for being the splendid little sport you've proved yourself to be. You know, I'm amazed when I think back how it was we never understood each other in the past."

Babs left her, glowing. That past of Helen—how dead it was to her! Already how fantastic, somehow, to think that Helen could have ever been that ogress the whole school had so dreaded. Oh, but it was fine to see her like this—and it was worth risking unpopularity to help her in this really splendid fight she was making.

The bell for bed-time was already ringing as she stepped along the Sixth Form corridor. Babs went quickly to the Fourth Form dormitory. She looked swiftly at Rosa, who was surrounded by a group of her own friends.

"Well, if you others are game, we'll jolly well do it," Rosa was saying.

"It's easy enough. If we find my bracelet in Helen's own study she can't deny then that she was sticking to it."

"No, rather not!" Lydia Crossendale approved. "That cat ought to be shown up. What's the programme?"

"Wait till lights-out," Rosa chuckled, "then sneak out. We'll kid Helen out of her study by using the staff house phone, saying that Primmy wants to see her, and while she's away we'll do the searching."

"You won't!" Babs interrupted curtly.

"Eh? Who asked you to stick your nose in, toady?" Rosa Rodworth sneered.

"Perhaps," Lydia gibed, "she's afraid that we shall bowl out her precious pal!"

Babs breathed hard and deeply. She caught Mabs' eyes and Bessie's—pleadingly anxious, begging her not to provoke the quarrel, to let Rosa & Co. go their own way.

Babs was not afraid of what Rosa & Co. might find in Helen's study; but she was remembering that Helen was busy, she was remembering her hope of swotting until midnight, and, knowing that the prefect must cram in every spare moment available to her, she was fiercely determined somehow that Rosa & Co. should not interrupt those studies.

But she said nothing else then. She got into bed.

Miss Wright, duty mistress for to-day, came round and put out the lights. Rosa, Lydia, Freda Ferriers, and Frances Frost lay awake, chuckling and muttering in low tones. The half-hour chimed from the clock tower.

"Right-ho!" Rosa breathed. "Ready, kids?"

"I won't! You're not going to worry Helen!"

Rosa let out a hiss. She flashed a look from one to the other of her followers, then suddenly she made a grab at the key which showed in Babs' hand; and Babs, twisting away, collided with the door. The next moment Rosa had closed with her.

"Oh, my hat!" Mabel Lynn cried.

"Here, Rosa, stop that!"

"Rats! Give me that key!"

"I won't!" Babs gasped.

They struggled. Then Lydia, creeping up behind Babs, caught her arm. Freda grabbed up a water jug.

"Don't you dare to throw that over Babs!" Mabs said furiously.

"Stuff! Mind your own business!" jeered Freda. "Go on, Rosa!"

Strong girl though Rosa was—and even stronger when that anger of hers was aroused—Babs was proving a match for her. But Babs could not



"OH, crumbs, there's a snake in the room!" plump Bessie yelled. "I'm bub-bitten! Helen, fuf-fetch a gun, or something!" Helen Hunter whirled from the blackboard. Rosa was building up more trouble for her.

"What-ho!" supported Lydia. "Right! Then up you get."

Babs heard. Her lips came together. As the others rose she rose, too, and, being nearer the door, quietly slipped towards it, turned the key, and removed it. She clicked on the light.

Rosa glared. "You—you—here, get out of the way!"

"Get back to bed!" Babs ordered.

"Unlock that door!" Lydia Crossendale said furiously.

"Nothing doing!" Babs faced them defiantly. "You've no right to go out of this dormitory!"

"Oh, yes? And who says?" Frances Frost glared.

"I do," Babs answered calmly. "It may have escaped your notice that I'm captain of this Form. I don't often use the powers I've got, but one of them is to preserve order and discipline, and I'm using that now. Get back to bed!"

Girls were sitting up now, watching rather excitedly.

Rosa & Co., bunched together, glared.

"What you mean, toady, is that you don't want us to show up your dear Helen!" Rosa cried. "Well, rats to you! We're going! Hand over that key!"

hold out against Lydia and Rosa, and now Frances Frost was throwing herself into the fray.

It was too much for Mabs and Clara. Unenthusiastic as they might be in Babs' campaign for Helen, Babs, after all, was their chum.

They leapt out of bed. Clara caught hold of Frances Frost and whirled her away on to her bed.

At that, Beatrice Beverly came leaping forward. Mabs faced her.

"Get back!"

"Rats!" Beatrice said, and she pushed Mabs on to a bed.

That started a general row. There was a shout as somebody grabbed up a pillow, hurling it towards Babs, a yell as somebody else received a slipper on the side of the face.

And, almost without knowing how it happened, the Fourth Form dormitory suddenly became a battleground.

Order went to the winds. Except for the Terraine twins, everybody was out of bed then. Babs' chums were sticking up for her—not because they

agreed with Babs, but because they just could not stand by and look on at Babs being bullied. The rest, incensed against Babs' championship of the hated prefect, felt it their duty to back up Rosa.

A hot tussle resulted.

And in the excitement of that tussle the real cause of the row was forgotten. Pillows and slippers flew—thick and fast, girls, locked in embraces, staggered and reeled this way and that. Babs herself, still grappling with Rosa, but still in possession of the key, gave a cry as an elbow was thrust into her ribs, as a second later somebody trod heavily upon her toe. From Bessie Bunter, who trod on a bar of soap and slipped across the dormitory, came a howl.

Then—
"Girls, girls, girls!" a thunderous voice came from outside. "Upon my word, what is going on in here? Open this door!"

"Oh, my hat! Primmy!" gasped Marjorie Hazeldene.

"Quick! Get to bed!"

Like lightning the scrimmage came to an end. There was an immediate

"Bessie, be silent! Barbara, you understand?"

"But—but—no, Miss Pip-Primrose, you've got to listen!" stuttered Bessie, furious that Babs was getting the main portion of the blame. "It wasn't Babs' fault, you know! It wasn't. It was only because Babs was trying to kick order that the row started!"

"What?"

"Well, it is!" Bessie blurted defiantly. "And I don't see why old Babs should have to take all the blame when it was some other cat's fault! Babs only locked the door because she wanted to stop some other girls going out, and then the other girls tried to grab the key from her, you know, and the row started!"

"Sneak!" hissed Lydia Crossendale.

"Oh!" Miss Primrose paused. A new light of understanding appeared in her face. "Barbara, is this true?"

"Well, y-yes, Miss Primrose."

"Who were the girls?"

Babs bit her lip. She said nothing.

"I see!" Miss Primrose's eyes glimmered. "You are afraid of what you call 'sneaking,' eh? Very well, Barbara. Though I do not countenance

Helen Explains!



RATHER cold in their attitude to Barbara Redfern were the Fourth Form after that—rather hostile, too. Hardly a girl among them, except for her own chums; greeted her the following morning, but there were plenty of glares.

Babs took no notice. She was convinced she had done the right thing the previous night, and she had proof of that when, after breakfast, Helen sent for her.

"Sit down, Barbara," she said kindly, and then shook her head. "I've just heard what happened in the Fourth Form dormitory last night."

Babs coloured.

"Pretty decent of you to stop Rosa & Co. like that."

"Well," Babs mumbled, "I—I knew you were swotting, and I didn't want you to be interrupted, you know. How did you get on, Helen?"

"Thank you—well. I really believe I'm getting to grips with things, thanks to your books. But, Barbara," she added quietly, "this won't do, you know—getting at loggerheads with the Form like this. It—it's a bit upsetting, knowing that you're doing all that for my sake. Why are you doing it?"

"Well," said Babs rather awkwardly, "because I—I think you ought to have a fair chance. Because I know you're trying jolly hard."

It was Helen's turn to flush.

"And the others don't believe I'm playing the game, eh?"

"Well, no," Babs confessed.

"I see. I can't really blame them." Helen shook her head. "I haven't told anyone yet, Barbara, and I really am grateful that you haven't brought the subject up, but you must have wondered why I am so—so different?"

Babs stared at her.

"Well, yes, Helen, I have," she confessed frankly.

Helen averted her face for a moment.

"Babs, it was my mother—"

"Oh!"

"You—you see," Helen spoke with difficulty. "I've always been fond of my mother, Barbara—fonder of her than of anyone else. She has always stuck up for me and refused to believe that I was the rotter I have been. My father, however, was stricter, and he and I—well, we've never got on well together. More than once mother and father have quarrelled because of me."

Babs shook her head uncertainly.

"Oh, Helen, if you don't want to tell me—"

"Yes, Barbara, I do. It—it's funny, isn't it—"

And Helen laughed a little shakily. "It's funny that I have the feeling now that you're my one friend in the school? Well"—and she drew a deep breath—"it was the last report which father had from Primmy that did it. It sent him off the deep end. The usual row resulted. There was a scene, and—well, cutting a long story short, it almost came to a parting between my parents. As it was, it brought about a collapse on mother's part, and it was because of that collapse that she fell ill. Barbara, when I went home last week my mother was very, very ill!"

"Oh, Helen!" Babs breathed.

"I think," Helen said steadily, "that she—she might have got worse if I hadn't promised, with father there, to turn over a new leaf. I never seemed to see, until then, what an awful selfish

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panic-stricken bolt for beds. Babs, breathing heavily, her hair all over her face, gave a hollow groan of dismay. Miss Primrose thundered again.

"Open this door!"

Babs opened the door. In came Miss Primrose. As she gazed at crumpled beds, strewn slippers and pillows, her eyes widened.

"My goodness gracious me! Barbara—"

Babs gulped.

"Oh dear! Y-yes, Miss Primrose?"

"What has been going on here?"

"There—there's been a bit of a row, Miss Primrose."

"Indeed! With you," Miss Primrose snapped, "as a principal factor in it. Every girl will take a hundred lines!"

"Oh, my hat!" went up a groan.

"And as you, Barbara," Miss Primrose said, "I suppose you understand that it is your duty, as captain of this Form, to maintain discipline and keep order. So far from doing that, you have apparently been a ringleader in a most disgraceful scrimmage. Tomorrow you will come and see me. I shall seriously consider whether it is not my duty to suspend you from the captaincy!"

"Oh crumbs! But—but—" blurted plump Bessie Bunter.

your scruple as headmistress, I think I understand and I am sorry, my dear, for making a mistake. Bessie, thank you for your information. As you were only doing your duty, Barbara, you are, of course, excused any punishment. But every other girl," she added curtly, "still has her lines. Now go to sleep."

In a deathlike silence she went out, switching out the lights. Not till Miss Primrose's footsteps had died away outside did anyone speak. Then it was Rosa who, with tones choked with bitterness, said:

"And while our toady captain gets away with it, we get it in the neck! My hat! Why do we stand you, Barbara Redfern?"

"Shut up!" snapped Mabel Lynn.

"Oh, stuff! Why should we shut up?" Beatrice Beverley put in angrily.

"Rosa's right! Babs had no right to interfere! If she hadn't interfered Primmy never would have come on the scene!"

"And I," Rosa complained, "would have got my bracelet back and shown up that cat for the thief she is! You're just a traitor to the Form, Barbara Redfern!"

At which there was a murmur from many girls.



"HAND over that key!" cried Rosa Rodworth furiously. "I won't!" retorted Babs. "You're not going to worry Helen!" That was enough. Instantly Rosa and her followers closed with Babs, struggling for possession of the key.

eat I'd been. Now do—you understand?"

Babs heaved a deep, deep breath. She could only nod her answer.

"And—and then," Helen went on, with a deep gulp of gratefulness at the recollection, "mother recovered. And now I'm just trying to live down the past and keep my promise."

"Oh, Helen!" Babs said. Her eyes were misty with tears. "And you know, if—if I can do anything—anything to help you—"

"You've done enough, kid, already," Helen said gratefully. "But please don't get into any more rows. Leave me to fight through. It's a fight I've brought upon myself, and one I had to face, anyway. But," she added, with a slight laugh, to relieve the tension of the scene, "there is one thing you can do for me, Barbara, and do now before lessons. I've just heard that the sports club funds are going to be audited, and I'd like you to check up upon my accounts and cash so that I have them all in order. You don't mind doing that, do you?"

Mind! Babs, in a new glowing burst of loyalty towards the reformed prefect, nodded eagerly.

The sports box was brought out and opened. In her usual thorough manner Babs counted the cash, checked up the items on the books, and, following the procedure she had been taught in commercial class, even pencilled the numbers of the treasury notes against two items of one pound each, which had been paid in by Dulcia Fairbrother and Grace Camperhill. They were in the midst of the operation when the door opened, and Connie Jackson appeared.

"Oh!" she said, as if taken aback at seeing Babs there; but her eyes went to the money on the table. "I—I didn't know you had anyone with you, Helen. See you later."

"Very well," Helen said absently. "Barbara, that's all, isn't it? Thanks so much! Now will you put the money back in the box? And you'll have to bunk," she added, with a laugh. "There goes lesson bell."

Babs hastily bunked, feeling glad to have done that slight good turn for Helen. She was glad that this morn-

ing Helen was not taking Fourth Form classes—that duty having been assigned to Connie Jackson, relieving Miss Charmant, whose A.R.P. duties were taking most of her time.

Most of the girls were already in the class-room when Babs entered, and Connie was there, also.

From Rosa's desk went up a jeering whisper.

"Here comes toady Barbara! How's your pal, Helen, Barbara?"

"Silence!" Connie frowned. "Barbara, serve out the foolscap!"

Babs glanced at her curiously. Connie, for once, seemed a little subdued—worried, too, Babs thought. While she went to the cupboard Connie seated herself at the mistress's desk, pulled out a letter from her pocket, and, with a harassed sort of look which seemed to suggest she had read that letter many, many times before, perused it again. Then, obviously with the intention of answering it, she drew a sheet of paper towards her, and bent her head.

And as she did so, she accidentally pushed the letter off the desk, and, unseen by Connie, it floated to the floor, almost coming to rest at Barbara Redfern's feet.

At once Babs stepped forward. But before she had actually picked up the letter she had, unknowingly, read it. It was very short, and very much to the point.

"Dear Miss Jackson," it said. "Thank you for the ten shillings, but this does not settle up your debt to me. If I do not have the other two pounds within the next few hours, you know what I shall do.

"Yours,
"JUDITH M."

Babs frowned. She knew all about Madame Judith, the dressmaker—the woman whom every girl at Cliff House had been warned against dealing with on pain of heavy punishment. So Connie was in her toils, eh? No wonder Connie was looking harassed and subdued.

Still, of course, it was none of her business.

She picked the letter up. Quietly

she placed it back on Connie's desk. Connie, absorbed by what she was writing, never even looked up.

Babs, having handed out the foolscap, went back to her desk.

Rosa grimaced at her. "Traitor!" she sneered.

"Oh, shut up!" Babs said scornfully. "Who helped Helen to pinch my bracelet?" Rosa sneered.

"Ninny!" Clara retorted. "Be quiet!"

"Clara, twenty lines!" Connie rapped. "Barbara, twenty lines, too, for talking. Rosa, get on with your work," she added, with strange mildness.

Rosa grinned. Again she got on with her work. But for a moment Babs paused, eyeing Connie, noting the fact that while Connie had lined herself and Clara, she had altogether overlooked Rosa.

And as the morning progressed, Babs was quick to spot Connie's extreme mildness of manner towards Rosa.

Funny, that. But funnier still was it when, dismissing lessons, Connie nodded towards Rosa.

"The rest of the class, dismiss!" she ordered. "All except Rosa."

"Hallo!" Clara Trevlyn chuckled. "Who's going to be toady now?"

Rosa pulled a face at her.

"Rats! I'm not toadying to a prefect—not me!" she sullenly retorted.

And she wasn't. Rosa liked Connie no more than she liked Helen Hunter. She faced Connie as that girl closed the door.

"Well, what's the game?" she asked bluntly.

"There's no game," Connie said smoothly. "I just want to do you a good turn, that's all."

"Oh!" Rosa looked suspicious.

"About that bracelet—"

Rosa's eyes gleamed.

"You know where it is?"

"I know, Rosa, that you put a high value on the bracelet, and I just want to tell you, for what it's worth, where it is. But mind, not a word of this!"

Rosa drew a deep breath. "No, of course not. Where is it?"

(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.

GOODNESS, aren't we all busy these days!

Your Patricia has been busy on A.R.P. work for some time—from filling sandbags at our local hospital, to answering telephones.

Now my friend, Esmee has "joined up." As I think I've told you before, Esmee is my rather-rich friend—but very, very sweet in spite of that!

She has just become an ambulance driver—complete with uniform. Esmee's been driving an ordinary car for over a year, and after extensive training, is now considered competent to drive an ambulance. You can imagine how difficult this is—in the dark, too!

"I shall never be able to wear my new fur cape now, Pat," she said to me the other day when I went around to see her. It seemed rather a funny thing to say just then. But, after all, most girls look forward to their first furs, don't they?"

So Esmee has packed it away, very carefully, for "later on."

● Curtain Problems

Oh dear, hasn't this "black-out" business been difficult? Our windows all seemed to be the most annoying shapes and sizes, and mother and I were beginning to think that the best way out of all our difficulties would be just to remove all electric light bulbs throughout the house.

But, of course, that wasn't very sensible—though we did have to take out the upstairs ones at first.

We tried brown paper—and that tore. (Not to mention the drawing pins that kept lodging in our precious feet!)

We tried cardboard—but that kept out all the air as well as the light, and was much too stifling.

So finally there was nothing for it but to buy material and make curtains.

On the straight windows we fixed these up like ordinary curtains that pull across, on "runners." But the bay windows presented rather a problem, as it's rather difficult to fix up those cheap runners on a curve.

So finally we screwed dresser hooks into the wood above the windows, sewed rings on to the top hem of the curtain, and now we just loop them on every evening, and unloop them in the morning. They work quite well, too.

We also changed over a good many of our very bright electric light bulbs for smaller ones, and decided to have one of those very dim blue ones on the landing.

It was mother who had the brain-wave of dyeing an ordinary small watt bulb in strong blue-water. (Yes, the sort you use on wash-day.) The landing looks rather like a darkened railway carriage now, I confess—but, at least there's no risk of falling downstairs.

● New Soles

Doesn't it seem a pity to throw away indoor slippers when the top part is quite good, but there's a hole in the sole. They're not like outdoor shoes, which can be sent to the "snob," for a repair.

Of course, you can always make a new sole with a piece of stout cardboard. But this soon wears through—and doesn't keep out the damp very well (in case you do wear the slippers out of doors).

Quite one of the best ideas is to make a sole with odd pieces of lino. This can be fixed either to the outside, or inside the shoe, and will wear for ages.

You must remember this to tell mother, for I expect she has come across some pieces of old lino in any recent "turn-out."

● A Weird Word

Here's a funny word for you!

GHOUGHPTHTEIGHTTEW

Just show it to one of your chums and see what she can make of it.

Nothing, I suspect!

Of course, it's a catch—and rather a smart one, in my opinion—so I'll tell you right away that it spells "potato." You see:

GH in hicough is	P
OUGH in dough is	O
PTH in phthisis is	T
EIGH in weigh is	A
TT in fatten is	T
EW in sew is	O

And there you have—"potato"! Mind you, that word "phthisis" is rather tricky, I admit—but if you're a Spelling Bee fan, you'll probably have heard it.

In any case, it's in the dictionary, so you can always show it to a doubting chum!

Just one more catch—rather an easy one this time.

How would you spell Excellency, using only four letters?

Give it up—or have you got it?
X L N C—of course!

● A New Belt

What an annoying habit belts have of getting themselves lost!

I was out the other evening, and you know how dark and mysterious these evenings can be.

Suddenly I felt something clinging around my legs.

"Goodness, I'm losing my petti!" I thought in a panic. "Now what shall I do?"

I didn't dare look down, though why, I don't know. But finally, I did risk a peep, and then—well, was I relieved! Silly me!



It was only the belt that had come slipping off my dress. Being one of those tie-in-a-bow belts, there are no slots on the dress to keep it in place, and the bow must have come undone.

So thankfully I picked it up, and put it on again, glad that I hadn't lost the

wretched thing, especially as it was made of the same material as the dress.

All the same, because I happened not to lose that belt, that doesn't mean to say I haven't lost others—for I just have. My mother also has a habit of snaffling mine if she thinks she'd like a little change on one of her own frocks—and these have a habit of mysteriously vanishing at times.

So I always think it's quite a good idea to keep an odd belt—one that "goes" with any dress, so that it can be used in a hurry.

The one in the picture here was made of multi-coloured raffia.

You mix the colours all up together, divide the strands into three, and plait.

When the plait is long enough to go around your waist, fasten off with some firm stitches and a buckle—and there you have a belt that will be amazingly useful. For it will look equally well on a dark winter dress as on a lighter one.

Or you can use the beige raffia if you like. This is a little cheaper to buy, and beige has a trick of always looking "just right" somehow.

Bye-bye now, until next Saturday, my pets. Take care of your young selves!

Your friend,

PATRICIA.

SIMPLE FIRST-AID

Every schoolgirl will find these hints useful at all times.



Of course, many of you are already quite expert at First-Aid; you've learned it at school and in the Guides.

But perhaps there are others who haven't had the opportunity to learn. And when so many "accidents" can arise each day, in the home, and at play—it really is useful for a schoolgirl to be able to render a little "aid."

BRUISES for example. A little bruise doesn't need much attention, but a big one can be very painful.

For these, a handkerchief should be soaked in cold water, and methylated spirit, if this is available. This should be applied to the bruised part and changed frequently.

A SPECK OF COAL or Dust in the eye hurts like anything—as most of us know. The "patient" should not be allowed to rub the eye, but the "speck" should be gently removed if it is loose. A drop of castor oil in the corner of the eye will be found a great help to loosen it, and very soothing to the eye itself.

NOSE-BLEEDING is another fairly common complaint among young people.

The patient should sit upright, and the head should be held as far back as possible. Clothing around the neck should be loosened and a cold sponge, or cloth, held over the nose.

KNEES are always in trouble with young people, aren't they?

If a youngster should fall down and injure a knee on gravel, the "wound"

should immediately be washed in clear water. Iodine should then be applied to the skin around, and a piece of lint and a bandage bound around the knee.

A SPRAINED KNEE is even more painful. For this you should apply a pad wrung out in cold water. Then the poor patient should be helped—or carried—home, made to rest with the leg up, until a doctor or a nurse comes to bandage it.

Much the same treatment applies to a **SPRAINED ANKLE**. The boot or shoe should be removed. Then a "figure of eight" bandage should be applied, first dipped in cold water. The patient should be helped home, so that the foot is kept off the ground—and a doctor or nurse consulted.

CUT FINGERS are everyday occurrences I know, but they must be "treated" all the same. The cut should be held under a running tap, while you press hard with your free fingers at the same time to stem the blood. Then apply a dressing, and bandage tightly.

Now here is some general information about **BANDAGES** that the girl who's interested in First-Aid should always remember.

The regulation size of a triangular bandage is 5 feet along the base, and 42 inches along each side. (That sounds very large, but it has a thousand uses.)

Cotton, bleached or unbleached calico, linen or silk are the best materials for this bandage—and one of them should always be kept in the Medicine Cupboard.

THE MEDICINE CUPBOARD should also contain:

A bottle of iodine, for keeping wounds germ-free.

A roll of surgical lint—to make a dressing to go under bandages.

A large roll of cotton wool—which is useful for bathing as well as keeping "wounds" dry.

Some safety pins.

Sal volatile—just in case anyone should faint.

A good pair of scissors—which should not be used for any other than surgical purposes.

And now just a word to those school-

girls who have moved into the country recently.

You should not eat any berries that you find in the hedges or fields without first consulting mother or your school-teacher.

Avoid toadstools that look as if they MIGHT be mushrooms, and do not put holly berries or laburnum seeds in your mouth.

WISE PREVENTION

We all know the saying about "prevention being better than cure," and it is now more important than ever to guard against everyday ailments.

Colds, for example, can be kept at bay if you observe the following rules.

Avoid extremes of temperature. Never go from a very warm room, straight out into the cold, without first slipping on a coat.

Do not keep wet boots or shoes on a minute longer than necessary.

Do not stand with your back toasting at the fire or a radiator.

Do not stand about in the cold after taking violent exercise.

Do not talk for the first minute or so when going out into the cold night air. Breathe deeply through the nose for a few seconds first.

Do have lots of fresh air—but avoid draughts.

Sleep with your windows open, but not on a level with your head.

If you are subject to sore throats, it really is wise to gargle regularly each morning at least. There are plenty of excellent preparations sold for this but one of the cheapest and best can be made with a teaspoonful of ordinary salt dissolved in a glass of warm water.

If medicine is necessary at any time, be sure to read the directions carefully before giving, or taking it. Then follow these exactly.

Most medicine cupboards contain some bottles whose contents are "not to be taken." A good idea for avoiding such bottles in the dark is to jab some pins into the cork—just to be on the safe side.

Sorry to be so serious this week—but after all accidents do happen and it's as well to "be prepared" isn't it?

THE LATEST TURBAN-STYLE

It's so easy to make—and so very pretty to wear.

I'M quite sure you've all been longing for one of those newest turban-style hats. Not that they're really hats at all—but rather, bandeaus, that you can fix around your hair in any style that suits you best.

These can be made of any oddments of material to match your dress or your coat. Or, of course, it can contrast instead, to make a gay splash of colour.

I suggest you use fairly thick material as November isn't very far off—but choose it as bright as you like, won't you? You'll want a triangular piece, the long side of which measures at least twenty-four inches, without stretching.

Perhaps you have an old wool dress, skirt or jumper from which you could get this amount.

Hem or machine any raw edges, and then fold up the triangle into a long strip, about five inches in width, with the pointed corner tucked inside. Stitch this in position if you like—and it's ready to go on your head.

Now here is the part that requires a knack. Try it on several times, with the wide part at the back, and the ends towards the front. Tie the ends and tuck them under, or cross them first—just as you like. If you're not pleased with the first result, do try again, until you



have got your bandeau on just as it suits you.

You'll be so pleased with it then, that you'll probably not want to take it off—even to go to bed!

(Continued from page 11)

"She's hidden it," Connie declared; "as a matter of fact, in the bottom of the sports fund box, which she keeps in the drawer of her bureau. Just thought you'd like to know," Connie added casually. "But mum's the word."

"Mum it is," Rosa agreed, "and—and thanks for telling me!"

A rather fierce glint in her eyes, she went out. But she did not go to the Fourth Form Common-room as she had originally intended. She went instead to Helen Hunter's study.

Helen was there, and, quite meekly for her, Rosa delivered a message that Barbara Redfern wished to see her. Without another word she left. But she did not go far. Only to the end of the passage, in fact.

There she waited until she saw Helen leave her study, tricked away by Rosa's bogus message. Once she was gone, Rosa darted into the prefect's study.

She made a bee-line towards Helen's bureau. She pulled the drawer open. Then she gasped as she saw the black cash-box which contained the sports fund. With a quick glance at the door, she took it out. Feverishly she caught at the lid, pulling at it. But the box was locked.

"Oh, dash it!" fumed Rosa. "Where are the keys?"

She rummaged among the papers in the desk. No keys there! Well, never mind, she told herself; she had a set of keys in her own study. One of them would probably open this box. Anyway, she couldn't remain here now. At any moment Helen, discovering she had been fooled, might be back. Box in hand, she went to the door, peered along the corridor, and then, seeing that the coast was clear, flew.

For Rosa's Sake!



"ROSA'S just playing a silly trick, Helen!" Babs burst out angrily.

"I never gave her a message that I wanted to see you. Anyway, I wouldn't be cheeky enough to expect you to come looking for me!"

Helen frowned.

"It was a senseless thing for Rosa to do," she said. "But no harm's done. Barbara, by the way, I didn't tell you, did I, that my father's coming to the school to-morrow?"

"Why, no."

"To-morrow morning," Helen nodded. "I received a letter from him by the midday post." She shrugged a little. "You see, my father, like Rosa and the rest, doesn't quite trust me, Barbara. I fancy he's just coming along to try to judge for himself if I am keeping that promise. I only hope," she added fervently, "that you will be able to make Rosa steer clear of him. He's bound to be on the look-out for evidence, as you can guess. But perhaps I can have a word with Rosa while I see her about playing this silly trick. I'll go along to her study now."

With a smile at Babs, she went out. She reached the door of Study No. 2 and pushed it open.

Then she jumped.

"Rosa!"

With a guilty start, the Stormy Petrel flung round.

"Rosa!" Helen repeated, and her astonished eyes went from the box on the table to the key in Rosa's hand.

The lid of that box was raised, and the flush of triumph on Rosa's cheeks showed that she had just succeeded in opening it. She gave back, however, as Helen approached.

"I—I haven't touched anything!" she panted. "I—I was only looking for my bracelet."

"And you took this box from my study, imagining the bracelet was there?"

"Well, yes," Rosa said defiantly.

"You know, of course, that was a very wicked thing to do? You realise, Rosa, that it might have earned you expulsion?"

"I want my bracelet!" was Rosa's defiant retort.

"I'm sorry. I've told you I do not know where your bracelet is. It most certainly," Helen said quietly, "is not in this box. Thank goodness I caught you in time—before you did anything foolish. Rosa, you swear you have not tampered with the money in this box?"

"Thanks, I'm not a thief!" Rosa sneered.

"But you are a fool!" Helen said scornfully. "A silly young fool! You can thank your lucky stars that it was I and no one else who caught you out in this action, otherwise you would have found yourself in front of the headmistress by this time. As it is—" Helen eyed her levelly. "Just to prove to you that I'm not the vindictive sort of girl you are still trying to make me out to be, Rosa Rodworth, I am going to say nothing about this. And in future try to be a little more level-headed."

And, box in hand, she walked out, leaving Rosa defiant, but perhaps realising that she had had a very narrow escape. Back to her study Helen went, intending to examine the box before she securely locked it away again. But arriving there she received a surprise. For in the study were Miss Keys, the gym mistress, and Dulcia Fairbrother, head girl of Cliff House.

"Ah!" Miss Keys said, and looked quickly at the box. "Dulcia and I are waiting for you, Helen. We have come to audit the sports accounts. Are they ready?"

"Perfectly," Helen said quietly. "Excuse me a moment and I will get the books."

She got the books, while Dulcia checked the cash and Miss Keys checked off the items, Helen busied herself by tidying her papers and her English books. Suddenly Miss Keys looked up.

"Helen, a minute, please. Do you realise you are two pounds short?"

Helen started.

"No, Miss Keys."

"The money is not here."

Helen blinked. She went through the figures as Miss Keys handed them to her. Then she looked at the cash. And suddenly her face turned pale.

Rosa—Rosa had taken that two pounds! When she had checked up with Babs the two pounds had been there. The only other girl who had handled the box since was Rosa Rodworth.

"I—I'm sorry, I cannot understand," she said. "There must be a mistake."

"There is no mistake. Both Dulcia and I have checked these figures, and two pounds remains unaccounted for. Helen, what has happened to that two pounds?"

Wildly Helen eyed her. If she told them that Rosa had taken that money, Rosa, as sure as fate, would be expelled. Rosa was only a hot-headed fool. Rosa, she knew, was not at heart dishonest. No, no; she must not mention Rosa's name. She must not! First, she must see Rosa; must ask her to account for this two pounds.

"Helen!" Miss Keys rapped. "I—I'm sorry—" Helen stut-tered.

"That, I am afraid, will hardly make good this deficit!" Miss Keys said rather sternly. "You know, Helen, it is my duty to report this matter to the headmistress. Dulcia, will you please bring these books and that money along? Helen, please remain here. You will be wanted."

She went out, followed by Dulcia.

White, stunned, Helen stood there. Rosa had taken the money, of course—Rosa, either to spite her or perhaps to hold the two pounds as a sort of hostage for her mysteriously vanished bracelet.

Where, by the way, could that bracelet have got to?

Anxiously she paced the room, expecting the summons from the headmistress. It was not long in coming, and with head held high she went off to Miss Primrose's study. She found Miss Primrose looking grave in the extreme.

"Helen, I understand you cannot account for this money?"

"I—I'm sorry, Miss Primrose!" Helen stammered.

"You have no idea what can have become of it?"

"No, Miss Primrose."

"A truly lamentable admission," said the Head sternly. "As the treasurer of this fund, this money was your personal responsibility. Of course, I am not accusing you of taking or borrowing the money for your own purposes, but I most certainly do accuse you of utter carelessness and neglect of duty. And this, Helen, in the light of recent events, reluctantly compels me to take a certain course."

Helen felt the floor slipping away beneath her feet.

"And—and that is?" she asked, in a voice small and far off.

"I can only state, Helen, that I am not satisfied with you as a prefect in a position of responsibility," Miss Primrose went on. "I have been doubtful for a long time about your position in the Sixth. I am sorry, but this incident makes up my mind. You will replace from your own pocket the two pounds your carelessness and neglect has lost, and from to-morrow morning you will cease to be a prefect. That is all. You may go!"

Helen, with trembling step and white face, went. This—this! This was the result of her reformation! This was the outcome of all her hopes! She was to be suspended—suspended on the very day her father was calling at the school to see what progress she was making!

The Evidence Babs Brought!



"HELEN!" Barbara Redfern cried, bursting into that pre-fect's study. "Oh, Helen! I've just seen the notice-board. It says that you're to be suspended to-morrow."

Wh-what does it mean?"

Helen Hunter turned from where,

white-faced, she had been drumming her fingers on the window-sill.

"Babs, don't upset yourself." She smiled wanly. "It's true enough, but—but"—she shook her head—"honestly, I don't know how it happened. I've seen Rosa, and Rosa flatly denies that she took the money. But, of course, I—I couldn't say anything about her part in the business. Better for me to be suspended than for her to be expelled—"

"But wait a minute!" Babs cried. "Oh, wait a minute! I don't get the hang of things, Helen. Please, you must tell me the whole story!"

And Helen told her. Babs clenched her hands as she listened.

"And Rosa still sticks to her story?"

"Yes."

"Then," Babs said grimly, "I'm going to see her!"

And off she was before Helen could prevent her.

She went to Rosa's study, bursting into that apartment just as Rosa was in the act of coming out. Rosa halted at the sight of her white, determined face.

"Just a minute, Rosa!" Babs said. "And don't glare; this is serious! I've just heard from Helen what part you've had in this sports fund business. I suppose you know she's suffering suspension so that you won't be expelled?"

"Oh, rats!" Rosa said sullenly.

"Is it?" Babs' eyes burned. "If it's rats, why haven't you been called upon to give some sort of explanation? How is it she hasn't reported you? Rosa, you did touch that money!"

"I didn't!" Rosa said.

"Not to spite Helen?"

"No!" Rosa glared. "Dash it, why should I touch the money? Connie told me that—I mean, when I found out that Helen had hidden my bracelet in the box—"

"Connie told you—eh?" Babs interrupted keenly. "Connie!" Her eyes glinted as she thought of that letter from Madame Judith, dealing with the two-pound debt; as she remembered how honey-sweet Connie had been to Rosa in class; as she remembered all at once that Connie had looked in when she had been counting out that money with Helen. "You needn't say any more."

"Here, I say, what are you going to do?" Rosa cried, in alarm.

But Babs was out of the door then. She was flying along the corridor. Her feet did not stop until she reached Connie's door, and there, after only the briefest of taps, entered. Connie was there.

"Connie, I want to talk to you!" Babs blurted out. "What do you know about the money missing from the sports box?"

"I? Why, you cheeky imp—"

"Why did you set Rosa on to rummaging in the sports box for her bracelet?"

"My hat, how dare you!" Connie's face was livid. "I did nothing of the sort!"

"No?" Babs looked at her scornfully. She had her measure then.

"Not," she asked, "so that if there was a row about it Rosa would have got the blame? Pretty cunning, wasn't it, Connie, especially when you needed two pounds for Madame Judith so badly? You didn't know, for instance, that—"

Connie's eyes blazed.

"You—your little wretch! Get out!" she cried passionately. "Get out—this minute!"

And, with sudden flame in her eyes, she caught Babs' shoulder and almost hurled her into the corridor, slamming the door upon her.

Babs regained her balance, gasping.

But she was convinced then. Connie was the culprit. Connie had meant Rosa to take the blame. Now it was Helen who was to suffer. But Helen shouldn't—shouldn't!

She'd go to Primmy first.

But hold on! What if she went to Primmy? What proof had she? If she told the whole and truthful story—what then? Primmy would want to know at once why Helen hadn't mentioned Rosa Rodworth's part in the plot at the time. It would look rather as if the whole thing had been faked up as a plan to reinstate Helen and throw the blame on Connie. And, of course, Connie would deny everything.

No! Some other way than that had to be found.

But what? Babs thought furiously. There seemed no way. Helen had to go through with her humiliation—and on the very day her father turned up, too. All that evening, all that night Babs racked her brains, but it was morning before she got her inspiration.

And immediately after breakfast she went and saw Helen Hunter.

That one was Barbara Redfern. Barbara had vanished. She was marked absent. Nobody knew where she had gone, and Mabs, Bessie, Clara, and the rest of her chums were almost as worried about her as they were interested in the fate of Helen Hunter. For everybody knew, of course, that Helen was to be immediately and publicly suspended.

On the platform Connie Jackson, duty prefect for the day, watched with glowing, bitter eyes as Helen stepped on to the platform. A hush fell as Miss Primrose nodded to her.

"Remain there, Helen, please! Face the school! It is," she said, "with deep regret that I have to make the announcement I make now. But circumstances compel no other course."

She paused, with a slight frown, as there was a commotion in the Hall as suddenly, from behind the curtain which screened the door, a figure appeared. It was the figure of Barbara Redfern.

"Barbara, please remain still! You are interrupting!" she rapped.



"ROSA!" Helen cried, and her eyes went from the box on the table to the key in Rosa's hand. With a guilty start, the Stormy Petrel flung round. "I—I haven't touched anything," she panted. "I—I was only looking for my bracelet."

The prefect was white, but determined. Babs could see how she was dreading the blow that was about to fall.

"I've just come to say, Helen, keep your pecker up!" she advised softly.

"Perhaps it won't happen, after all."

"Barbara, what are you going to do?"

"You'll see!" Babs said grimly, and with that darted out of the room and out of the school.

For Babs had thought of a last hope—one desperate last hope.

Madame Judith!

Connie Breaks Down!



"AND now," Miss Primrose said quietly, "will Helen Hunter step this way, please?"

There was a catching breath in Big Hall at Cliff House, where every girl and mistress, in accordance with the usual custom, were assembled—every girl, that is, except one.

For a moment all attention was directed towards the captain of the Fourth, and then, as Miss Primrose began to speak again, it returned to her.

"It is my duty," Miss Primrose went on, "to begin with a recital of Helen's record."

Babs caught Connie's eyes. She nodded. Connie frowned, and then, as Babs moved the curtain aside a little, she started. Her face went deathly white. A woman was standing behind that curtain—Madame Judith!

And in the same moment Babs held something up between her finger and thumb—two pound notes

Grimly, significantly Babs held the notes. The look on her face said: "Well, are you going to own up?"

Connie panted. Obviously, Babs had discovered where the missing two pounds had really gone.

Then, all at once, it was Babs' turn to be startled. There was a window near by, and through it she saw a car draw up in the quadrangle, and step-

ping out of that car was a man. Helen's father!

Babs moved forward. She must act quickly.

"Connie!" she cried.

"Barbara, be silent!" Miss Primrose angrily exclaimed.

"Please, Miss Primrose, wait a minute! Connie's got something to say—haven't you, Connie?"

Connie glared. Her face was like paper.

"No, I haven't! What should I have to say?"

"Connie, what is this?" demanded the Head in wonder.

"I—I don't know," stuttered Connie. "Barbara is just making a fool of herself! I've nothing to say."

"But, Connie, you know you have!" Babs said. Her own face was desperate now.

"There's a friend of yours not far away who is waiting to hear you say it" And again she looked towards the curtain, while the school blinked with amazement.

"You've got something to say," Babs added, "about those notes, haven't you?" And she looked at her hand in which the notes were enclosed.

"Say it, Connie—please!" she begged.

And she moved back to the curtain as if to whisk it aside.

Connie gritted her teeth. For she saw Babs' scheme.

Babs had the two pound notes she had stolen with which to pay Madame Judith. Babs had placed Madame Judith behind that curtain to substantiate that fact if the worst came to the worst. Babs was giving her a chance—just one chance—to clear Helen. Against that—

Connie almost fainted.

Against that, the presence of Madame Judith, the evidence of Madame Judith, her own expulsion—

"Connie, for the last time," Babs said, her heart racing as, glancing from the window, she saw Mr. Hunter stepping towards the school, "or—"

She had moved towards the curtain again, while the whole school buzzed excitedly. Connie gave a hoarse cry.

"No, no!" she cried. "Wait! I—I have got something to say, Miss Primrose, before you suspend Helen! I—I meant to say it all along, but—but I waited. I've been playing a joke on Helen!"

"What?"

"I—I took the two pound notes!"

A gasp came from the school.

"Connie!"

"I—I only did it to frighten her,"

Connie gasped almost incoherently. "I never mean to let you suspend her. I—I took them for—for a joke," she stuttered.

"I took them only because I wanted to give Helen a fright. I—I—"

And then Babs was up to her, and Babs, swiftly thrusting the two pounds to her, smiled at Helen.

"These—these are the notes!" Connie cried. "Look! You'll find the numbers correspond! Helen never took them! Oh dear, has she gone?" she whispered frantically to Babs.

"She will go—as soon as she sees everything's all right," Babs answered calmly. "She was jolly glad to come along when I suggested that she might be receiving stolen money!"

Helen looked at Connie as though hardly believing her eyes. Miss Primrose was incredulously examining the notes, conferring with Miss Keys and Dulcia Fairbrother as she did so. Then came a fresh buzz in Big Hall as a man entered.

"Well," Miss Primrose said, and looked at Connie. "Connie, you wicked girl!"

"I—I'm sorry!" Connie mumbled.

"Sorry!" Miss Primrose's eyes blazed. "Do you realise, miss, that you have wasted the time of the school? Do you realise you came within an ace of letting me commit a grievous error? Helen, my dear, I am sorry. Connie apparently has an extraordinary sense of humour, and Connie shall be punished. I am glad to say," she added, "that Helen leaves this platform without a stain on her character and with her full prefect's rights restored. But as for you, Connie—go to my study!"

And while Connie tottered off, and Helen, flushed with triumph, stepped down into the Hall again, Babs quick to take advantage of the reaction she saw had set in among the whole school, raised a cheer.

"Three cheers for Helen!" she cried. "Hip, hip—"

And the amazed school, hardly knowing what it was doing, roared:

"Hurrah!"

At which Mr. Hunter, standing by the curtain from which Madame Judith was swiftly retreating, gave a greatly surprised and radiant smile.

"Well, that's how I did it!" Babs laughed. "I knew Helen was innocent. I was determined to save her. At the same time, I didn't want to get Connie expelled if it could be helped, so I tried the bluff with Madame Judith's help!"

"My hat! And did you pull it off!" Mabel Lynn said admiringly.

It was midday break that morning, and Babs was explaining to a crowd of girls in the Fourth Form Room. Among them, looking rather ashamed, was Rosa Rodworth.

"I knew Helen wasn't guilty," Babs went on. "I knew Rosa wasn't guilty. Connie wanted that money to pay off Madame Judith. Connie's little plot was that if there was any blame Rosa should get it. Well, I went to see Madame Judith. I got back those two pounds from her, giving her two of my own in exchange. Thank goodness daddy sent me that three pounds when I won the school medal in the Courtfield Art Exhibition. Knowing her money was safe, I persuaded Madame Judith to come along."

"And Connie—what does Connie say?" Clara asked.

"Connie," Babs smiled, "is cut up. Naturally. But Connie's had her lesson. I had a talk to her not so long

ago. I told her that she could take her time about repaying the two pound notes I'd paid out, and she's grateful for that. And also," Babs said, "I bluffed her into telling me what had become of Helen's bracelet. Connie's so jolly afraid of me now that she thinks I've got power to do anything."

"And what," Rosa asked, "did she do with it—if she took it?"

"She did," Babs said. "She pawned it. As a matter of fact, I got the hint of that from Madame Judith herself, so it wasn't a hard job to make Connie spill the rest of the beans. But I've promised Connie," she added, "that there'll be no row about that, if only she gets the bracelet back by the week-end. Is that O.K. with you, Rosa?"

"Yes," Rosa muttered.

"And do you realise now that Helen only risked suspension because she thought you might have been expelled if she'd told the truth?"

Rosa went a brick red.

"Yes."

"And do we all believe," Babs asked with shining eyes, "that Helen really is true-blue, that she's turned over a new leaf?"

"Well, I reckon you've sort of proved it, Babs," stated Clara Trevlyn.

"And will you all back her up in future?"

"Yes."

"Then," Babs said gleefully, "let's go and tell her that, shall we? The motto of the Fourth has always been fair play, and now it's fair play for Helen. Hi, there she is!" she cried. "Helen, come along! Bring your father with you! We want you to hear something."

And as Helen, smiling, came forward with her father and entered the Fourth Form Common-room, Babs, with shining eyes, looked round, and then, holding up her hands, burst into a song.

"For she's a jolly good fellow—"

Helen smiled rather tremulously. She looked at her father's flushed, proud expression. He smiled, too.

"It seems, Helen, you're making the grade," he murmured. "I'm pleased; I'm glad. Keep it up, girl, keep it up."

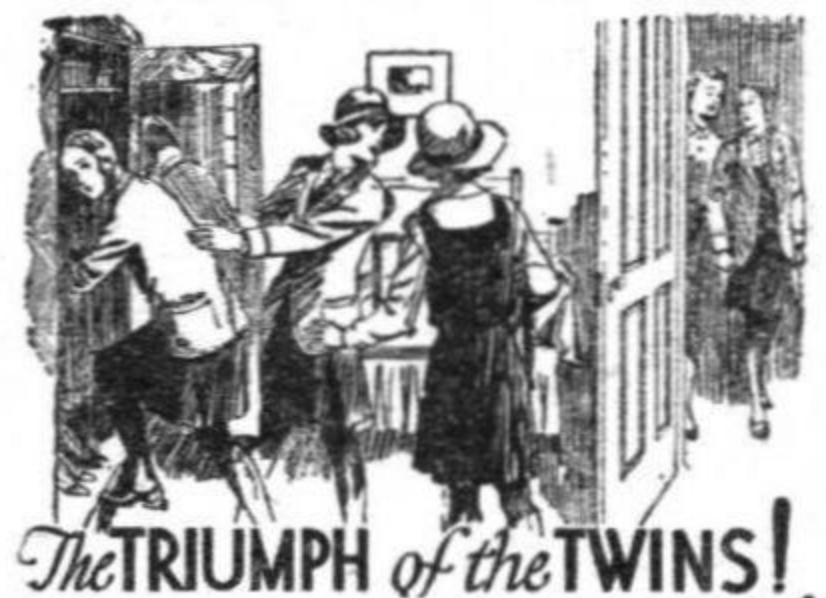
And Helen gulped through her tears. No longer doubted, no longer despised. The past was done with, and enemies were friends. But—

"But," she whispered to Babs, "it's all due to you! Oh, Barbara, what a wonderful friend you are!"

But Babs, happily, laughed.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

WHEN ERMYNTRUDE TERRAINE FOUND A LOST KEY, SHE AND HER SISTER PRISCILLA WERE PLUNGED INTO THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES!



The TRIUMPH of the TWINS!

For certain people, determined to get that key, thought Priscilla had found it. They did not know there were Twins! Thus, Barbara Redfern & Co., rallying round the pair of quaint, but lovable Fourth Formers, were able to make clever use of the sisters, resemblance to outwit those who were seeking the key. But what exciting, unusual times the Cliff House chums experienced! This superb Hilda Richards story appears next Saturday, and remember—to make quite certain of your copy you must order it in advance.

No. 1 of our wonderful series of romantic stories featuring—



JESS AND HIGHWAYMAN JACK

By
IDA MELBOURNE

great squire was asking a favour of her, Jess had most gladly agreed.

Now, suddenly, the basket slipped as the coach lurched over a bump. But a quick snatch retrieved it just when it was likely to topple on to the opposite seat, where a fat man in a heavy coat and three-cornered velvet hat sat gently dozing.

Jess looked from him to the other passenger who sat beside her, a lady. Wrapped in a rich cloak, she seemed to press herself into the corner, and not for a minute had her restless, anxious gaze been taken from the window.

Under her lashes Jess looked at this lady of fashion, and wondered who she was. At that moment the lady leaned forward, and tapped the fat man on the knee. A rich rustle of satin came as she did so, and the jingle of jewellery at her wrist.

The fat man stirred.

"My dear?" he said.

"Father—we are on the heath. Highwayman's Heath!" the rich young woman quavered. "Keep awake, please. I am afraid."

He rubbed his eyes and yawned, his condensing breath showing white in the moonlight.

"Afraid? Pah! I have my trusty pistol. All highwaymen are cowardly scum. I wish but that one should halt us, my dear. If 'twere Laughing Jack, I vow he'd laugh no more. Let the rascal come—"

What he said next was drowned by a shattering blow, and the splintering of glass, as the window fell to pieces, letting in the cold night air.

The gleam of a spurred black boot showed beyond, and a fluttering cape.

Then a voice cried out above the clatter of hoofs and the rumble of wheels. A voice that was gay, clear, and musical. It had no roughness nor threat in it, yet the words used were commanding enough.

"Stand and deliver—your money or your lives!"

As JESS heard those dread words, called by a highwayman, for the first time in her life, her heart almost stopped beating, and she could feel her cheeks chill as the colour drained from them.

A medley of sounds filled the air.

The wild "Whoa!" of the coachman. The grinding of the horses' hoofs as they slithered to a standstill.

At Jess' side, the rich young lady of quality sank down in a swoon; the fat man opposite was making a strange sound, his teeth chattering, while with frantic rummaging he sought to hide his purse in the cushions of the coach seat.

A waft of night came then as the

"Stand and Deliver!"

"AND now for the heath; Highwayman's Heath—"

Jess Reynolds, in thrilled, quivering tones, whispered the words only half-aloud, as she hugged her basket to her with one hand, and with the other held on tightly to the seat of the jolting, rumbling stage-coach.

The last house had been left behind; the village where Jess lived with her uncle at the inn was a mile back down the moonlit road. All that lay ahead now was open, windswept heath—Highwayman's Heath.

The well-wrapped, muffled coachman whipped up his four horses, the long lash curled through the air with a sound like a pistol-shot.

The clatter of sixteen hoofs; the rumble of wheels on the hard road. And now the keen wind came screaming across the heath, stealing even into the snug interior of the Wayland coach, so that Jess had to slacken her grip on the seat to tighten her muffler, and bury her chin down into it.

Everything the horses could give in the way of speed must be given now. For near this spot, only a week ago, Laughing Jack, the highwayman, had clattered out on his horse, with the warning cry that all travellers had learned to dread; "Stand and deliver; your money or your lives!"

And to-night he might be there again with his black horse, black velvet mask, and loaded pistols.

Through the misted windows Jess stared with bated breath, clearing a little space with a woollen-gloved finger so that she could see the wild heath bathed in moonlight.

"Stand and deliver!" rumbled the wheels, and the crack of the curling whip was like the highwayman's pistol shots. "Money or your lives!" clattered the horses' hoofs.

Money! There was no money in Jess' basket—nothing but food. A pie made by her own hands of steak and kidney, with such a delicately browned crust that she had yearned to eat it herself. A chicken fresh roasted. Bread, cheese, home-made jam, and cakes. Apples, too, and a bottle of

wine. All for her Aunt Jane, ill and poor, who lived on the far side of the heath.

It would be worth the risk of this evening journey to make Aunt Jane happy, and Jess was glad that she had persuaded her father to let her go.

Her father, jolly host of the Rising Sun Inn, had readily agreed to her taking some goodies to her aunt.

"Highwaymen do not steal baskets of food, dad," she had told him. "I shall be safe enough."

And then the squire, fat and florid, sitting by the roaring log fire in the great timbered parlour, resting awhile on his way home, had put in a word. There was no reason to fear that

A moonlit night; a lonely heath; the rumbling coach, swaying on its way. And then: "Stand and Deliver!" rings a fierce command. Highwayman Jack has struck again. No wonder Jess Reynolds, in the coach, is alarmed. But when she sees Highwayman Jack, his friendly smile and gallant ways, she likes him at once, convinced he is no ordinary robber. And that is the beginning of the most thrilling adventures Jess has ever known.

Laughing Jack would be abroad to-night. There was a moon shining, he observed.

The squire was rich and important; so what he said always carried weight with Jess' dad, who had at once changed his tune, lost his worried frown, and granted Jess the permission she asked.

"And if you are going, lass," the squire had said, groping in the folds of his rich amber velvet tunic, "here is a note I would have you leave at that same village where your aunt lives. 'Tis but a stone's throw from her house that it must be delivered. Take great care that it be not lost."

Flattered by the thought that the

door of the coach was flung open. And there on the moonlit strip of road stood a tall young man beside a foam-flecked black horse. There was lace on the cuffs of his green velvet tunic, and in either hand a pistol.

From the pistols Jess looked to his face, handsome, lips parted in a smile beneath the black velvet mask, through the slits of which his eyes sparkled with merriment.

"Ladies first, please, and mind the step!" he said.

His tone was gay, as if he had been inviting them to trip a measure with him in the roadway, and of a sudden Jess' qualms and fears melted. If this was a highwayman, then why shiver with dread?

"Highwayman!" Jess daringly called. "This lady has fainted. Have mercy, please!"

"Have mercy? La! Am I such a terror, then?" he asked. "Nay, I am the kindest knave that ever held a pistol. If the young lady has fainted, then let her rest so. She will feel less the pain of losing her jewels and money. Come, sweet lass, if the step is high take my hand."

He stepped forward, and tucking one of his pistols into a capacious inner pocket of his swirling cape, offered the free hand to Jess with all the courtliness of one used to helping great ladies.

Jess took the hand, marvelling at his considerate kindness, sprang down, and looked up at him under her lashes. Well-cut chin, smiling mouth, and gay eyes. Who could dread such a gallant as this?

But he was not looking at her. His attention was given to the coach and the fat man who had his hands over his head now—he who had been so brave a moment before.

"On your honour, sir," said the highwayman. "Have you a pistol?"

"On my honour, none—none. I am unarmed."

He lied, as Jess knew, and it was on the tip of her tongue to tell the highwayman so. But she held her peace. Gallant though this laughing highwayman was, he was yet a robber, a knave.

Yet Jess was glad that the fat man's pistol was not on view to be fired at the young man.

"Then, sweet maid, I will deal with you," said the highwayman, turning to Jess. "A basket I see. Loaded with gold?" he teased her.

Jess lifted the cover, remembering suddenly the important letter the squire had given her. But it was tucked down out of sight, and only the pie showed.

"Nothing but food for my aunt, who is sick, and lives beyond the heath," she said. "A steak and kidney pie—"

"Home-made?" he asked.

"Why, yes, I did make it myself," Jess admitted, with a faint smile and a little blush.

"La, la!" he cried merrily. "With your own fair hands? Then it will be rich indeed, and well worth the taking. But stay a moment, my dear. Here comes the fat fellow, who is loaded down with golden sovereigns."

Jess moved away as the fat man stepped down from the coach, quaking still, his face ghastly white with fright.

"I have nothing! I am a poor man!" he gasped. "My daughter is ill. We are paupers. We have nothing—nothing but what is in my purse here."

With that he tugged something from the inner pocket of his thick travelling coat, tugged it out, and presented it. Presented it at the highwayman!

It was no purse that he held, but a pistol! Jess held her breath. A touch of the trigger, and even though his jellied hand quaked and quivered a bullet would speed on its deathly way.

A Very Gallant Highwayman!

JESS, horrified, seemed to see the highwayman's merry smile ended. Unconsciously she acted. She screamed.

As that scream rang out, the fat man started convulsively. His finger pressed the trigger, and, with a deafening report and flash of flame, the weapon fired.

Jess closed her eyes, then opened them anxiously, to see the highwayman no longer laughing, but standing still, his own pistol pointing unerringly at the fat man's broad chest, while that hero, shaking from head to foot, jaws agape, stood as though ready to drop, whether shot or not.

"No, no, highwayman—spare him! Oh, please!" Jess cried in horror. "Do not shoot! He is that poor young lady's father!"

"Fear not," was the tense reply. "It is good powder and shot I have in this pistol, and not to be wasted on cowards. But see, his daughter is aroused from the swoon."

In the doorway of the coach showed now the white face of the young lady, lovely even in terror.

"Highwayman, spare him—spare him!" she begged. "You shall have my pearls, my diamond bracelet, my rings; but spare my father—please!"

The highwayman bowed, doffed his three-cornered, lace-trimmed hat, revealing a snow-white powdered wig, and laughed as a boy at a prank.

"M'lady, you prize him too highly. I want no pearls and no diamonds. Tell me but one thing. Are you friends of Squire Olding's?"

"I—I do indeed know the gentleman," the fat father quavered.

"The worse for you. Turn out your pockets—all of them—and no nonsense!" said the highwayman crisply, a new note in his voice, near to harshness. "Friends of the squire's are enemies of mine."

Jess moved away, her former calm lost now that his tone was so changed. But most of all because it was Squire Olding's letter she had in her basket.

From the fat man's pockets came letters and oddments, a writing-pen, a little ink flask, a snuff-box, heavily jewelled, some coins, handkerchief, and biscuits.

Satisfied at last that the fat man had nothing else, the highwayman turned to the daughter, who stood in the moonlight, wrapping a velvet, fur-lined cloak about her.

"Your bag, my lady," he said. "And if there are pockets in your cloak, let me see them. Ah, pearls, diamonds," he murmured, as she showed what she had secreted. "Is that all?"

"All, yes," faltered the young lady.

"Then stand with your father and the coachman. There are some travellers so cunning that they hide valuables in the coach. We shall see."

Covering them with his pistol as they drew together, he then groped in the coach, pulling out the cushions. Laughing, he held out the purse that the fat father had hidden.

"Yours, good sir?" he asked tauntingly. "Haply I am not in need of gold; but to teach you good manners to the gentlemen of the black mask, I must, in my turn, hide it, too. Seek!" he ended, and with a fling of the arm

tossed the purse away on to the heath as far as he could.

Jess, gazing at the spot where the gold had fallen, marvelled that this strange gallant of the heath should take so much risk and trouble for no gain. He had stolen nothing—not the pearls, not the diamonds, not even the purse of gold!

Why, then, was he a highwayman?

"Fear not, it will be found," said the highwayman mockingly. "In the light of day children from the village will seek it at a word from me, and good luck attend them. Into your coach and away. On the box, coachman!"

The girl went into the coach with scrambling haste, followed by her father. Last of all, Jess moved forward, but the highwayman touched her arm.

"With your leave I shall take a cake," he said.

"Why, yes, please do!" said Jess. "Indeed, you are the strangest highwayman. I doubt if you are one at all, but only a gentleman playing a game for some high wager."

His smile faded, and his eyes, through the slits in the mask, were no longer glimmering. For he had lifted the cover of her basket.

It was not a cake that he drew out. It was the squire's letter, and, stepping back a pace, he held it up in the light.

"By my faith, what's this?" he cried sharply.

"A letter!" gasped Jess. "It is not for you, but must be delivered—"

"From the squire—Squire Olding?" he demanded sternly.

"Why, yes—"

"So ho, then 'tis you I must fear!" he exclaimed mysteriously.

Firmly he seized the handle of Jess' basket.

"Let me see this pie, this chicken," he said scornfully. "You lied—and, like a fool, I trusted your simple face. Let me search. If there is only food in it you shall have it back; if not—"

Jess relaxed her grip; for now there was nothing to conceal in that basket, only what she had said was there—the food. But even as he took it there came from afar along the road over the heath the ringing of horses' hoofs.

"The soldiers!" yelled the coachman in undisguised glee.

The highwayman whipped round, and, still holding the basket, sprang for his horse. In one bound he was on it and away—away, low over his horse's neck, galloping as one in a race. And, indeed, for him it was a race—a race against soldiers, against bullets, against capture.

"It's Laughing Jack!" howled the coachman to the approaching soldiers, heedless of the fact that they were well beyond range of his voice.

Laughing Jack!

Jess looked down the road after him, bewildered and torn with doubts, not knowing what to make of him. With him had gone her basket of food for Aunt Jane—and the squire's letter. She alone had been robbed. Yet as she heard the thunder of the soldiers' horses her heart beat for the highwayman; she stood watching him until he was lost beyond the fringe of the heath amongst the trees.

For, highwayman though he was, she was on his side. She wanted him to escape; and yet at the selfsame moment she was angry with him, furious that he should have stolen her basket and letter.

Why had he taken only those things?

The soldiers were almost on top of the coach, and soon they would sweep past.

"Into the coach, girl!" cried the fat

man, and caught her hand, dragging her in. "Wait till the soldiers have gone, and then we can seek my purse—"

But with a jolt the coach started forward, despite the yells of the fat man.

"And now," Jess told herself, strangely lost in the coach, with no basket to hug to her. "what have I to take my aunt but a strange tale of the night's adventure?"

In her mind echoed the highwayman's last words:

"If there is food in it you shall have it back; if not—"

An idle boast surely! Laughing Jack, gallant though he was, would not be likely to return at risk of his life to give back a basket of food to a girl who meant nothing at all to him. Aunt Jane must hunger in vain.

LIGHTS TWINKLED in the village when Jess stepped down from the coach outside the inn.

The coachman was telling his tale to a crowd that gathered; and Jess, empty-handed, turned away.

But as she did so a man came swinging out of the darkness, hat over his nose, hands behind his back.

"Oho, there! Hast a message come for me from the squire? You, coachman! A message, a letter? My name is Jeremy Crane."

With a feeling of guilt Jess turned to him, touching his sleeve to attract his attention.

"Sir, there was such a letter," she admitted. "It was entrusted to me—"

She saw a gaunt, lined face above her, looking down, and piercing eyes searched her face.

"Then where is it?" asked this Jeremy Crane.

"The coach was held up. Laughing Jack, the highwayman on the heath—he took the letter," explained Jess breathlessly.

The man staggered back as though he had been dealt a violent blow, and could not speak; then he suddenly snatched Jess by the shoulder and shook her.

"Idiot girl, you let him have it—that letter? Why, you are but a fool! There was no money in it!"

"He took it," protested Jess, well shaken and alarmed by his roughness. "Ask these good people, sir. He took that and my basket of food for my aunt."

The man left her to question the others by the coach; and Jess, gladly taking the chance to do so, slipped away in the darkness beyond the pool of light that came from the inn's lanterns.

She ran down the narrow, cobbled side street until she reached the pretty little cottage that was her aunt's home. As she went up the narrow path she looked at a glow of yellow light stealing through the parted curtains of an upper room.

What ever could she say about the basket?

Before she could think of anything the door opened, and her aunt, wrapped in a shawl, peeped out.

"Why, Jess, my dear," she cried, amazed, "so soon after the basket!"

"Strange words—most strange!"

"The basket, aunt?" asked Jess, walking into the hall, while her aunt held up a rushlight.

"Yes, sweet child, the basket—brought by the grand gentleman. A fine person to be your messenger, so gallant and handsome!"

Jess gasped aloud. Her bewildered mind could find but one solution, nigh incredible though it was.

"Laughing Jack—" she gasped involuntarily.

"Laughing Jack, the highwayman? Why, what do you mean, dear?" her aunt asked, puzzled. "I was no highwayman brought the basket. Why, I'd scream the place down if one was nearer than a mile to me," said her aunt.

"Of course, aunt," murmured Jess, not wishing her aunt to guess the truth. "You mean the gallant gentleman with the green velvet coat, and the merry eyes and smiles."

"Yes, dear. He brought it here, and said you had asked him to bring it, and hoped I was well. Then off he went."

Thoughtfully Jess mounted the narrow staircase to her aunt's room, which was cosily warm after the cold night air; and there, on the table,

Jess Could Save Him!

AS Jess waited, heart pounding, she heard the sound of voices, of horses on the cobblestones.

The voices grew louder, rising to a shout, as though something—as likely as not the discovery of the highwayman's horse—had roused them to excitement.

"They are hunting you?" asked Jess softly.

"In their simple way, yes," he said, with a soft, jaunty laugh.

Jess could hardly see him in the darkness, but she could picture his twinkling eyes and smile.

"It was noble of you to bring the basket," she said in a voice that quivered. "My aunt thinks that you are a gentleman; and I shall not tell her your true trade."



HIGHWAYMAN JACK pressed himself against the wall as the shadow of a soldier fell upon the blind. "Well," he said, with almost a flippant gesture, "I am at your mercy. You have but to shout, and I shall be caught. It rests with you!" Jess stared at the menacing shadow, torn with uncertainty.

was her basket. But even as she looked at the things, wondering if all were there, a rapping came at the door below.

"I'll go, aunt," Jess said promptly. "Who knows—perchance it is the gallant gentleman come back?"

She ran lightly down the dark staircase, thinking that it must indeed be the highwayman knocking. But, for all that, she gave a start of amazement when she opened the door.

Cloaked, wearing his tricorne hat, there he was—Laughing Jack, green velvet jacket showing under his cloak.

He did not smile, but pushed the door wide, brushed past Jess, and closed it.

"The soldiers!" he said briskly. "Coming up the street. Not a sound! My horse is outside. Should they see and recognise it, next they will seek me. If I dare crave the favour of concealment, I ask no more."

"No; it might well affright her," he said softly. "But I am in your hands. The soldiers are out there. A word from you, and they have me. And why should you not give that word when you know me for what and who I am?"

Before Jess could answer, he put a hand on her mouth, for the soldiers' voices came nearer now. They came from just outside the door.

"Shush!" he breathed urgently. He lowered his hand; then, like a thunderclap in suddenness, came a knock at the door.

"Open there! Open in the King's name!"

Jess' heart gave a leap of fright so that she could hardly breathe as the knock became a mighty thump. But instead of obeying the loud command, and hurling open the door, she took the highwayman's arm. Without weigh-

ing her thoughts. She knew that she could not betray him.

"Quick—hide!" she gasped. "Follow me!"

Under the stairs was a cupboard, the door ajar as she led him to it.

"Because you were kind, I will be kind, too," she whispered. "They say that one good turn deserves another. In there—quickly! Later I will ask for your promise."

She left him to make his own concealment, and hurried back to the door, which some heavy-handed trooper was already near to knocking down with blows.

When Jess opened the door he overbalanced in the act of thumping again, and then, recovering, drew back, sword raised.

"What is it?" asked Jess. "Who are you?"

The burly trooper lowered his sword.

"We seek a rascal highwayman by the name of Laughing Jack. If there is a window he could open he'll have opened it, and for all you know he's hiding here, lass. Make way, and I will search."

Jess stood back. To bar his way would but rouse the man's suspicions more; but there was dread in her heart.

"He cannot be here, I am sure," she murmured.

The soldier swung a lantern in the narrow passage, opened the door of the front room, and stared about him. But there was clearly no one hiding in that room. Leaving it he shut the door, and turned to the stairs.

But with a foot on the first tread, he paused.

"A cupboard under the staircase! A likely place enough," he said. "Here, lass! Hold the lantern while I search it with my sword!"

JESS TOOK the lantern with such a shaking hand that it swung, sending its rays up and down the wall, casting long, ugly shadows of the red-coated soldier that made him even more sinister.

A highwayman, a robber—it was the proper fate for such men to be arrested. Yet at the thought of Laughing Jack's being arrested and marched off to prison, a deep misery came to Jess.

She could not see that gallant as a rascal, only as the noble gentleman who had taken her basket to the cottage at risk of his own life.

He was helpless now; for even should he escape this soldier, there were others in the street.

Jess moved forward, desperately eager that he should be spared, whatever his crimes: certain that at heart he was good and kind.

"Wait!" she cried huskily. "If you would open that cupboard, I must first go to my aunt for the key."

The soldier, in the act of stooping, paused.

"Locked! Well, as the lock's not burst, he can't be there. Don't trouble yourself to get the key, lass. Let's see where else he might hide."

He went through into the kitchen, swinging his lantern, looked under the table, assured himself that the door at the back was bolted, and returned.

"He cannot be upstairs, for there are but two rooms. My aunt is asleep in one, and the other leads from it," said Jess. "Believe me, she would scream should a highwayman break in. But if you would, we can but ask her."

It was enough that she seemed willing to make the search. For had the highwayman been there, the trooper would have expected some opposition

to the search. As it was, he took Jess for a simple wench.

"All's well, then!" the trooper said, and went to the door. "But should you hear or see him, then give the warning. A man shall remain in this road."

For two or three minutes after the door was closed, Jess stood there silent; then she ran up to her aunt, who was calling out, asking what the trouble was.

"Oh, they are hunting for a highwayman," said Jess. "He has hidden somewhere, and they thought he might have come here. As like as not they mistook me for him in my cloak."

"A highwayman here?" shivered her aunt. "It is a dread thought. Has the trooper searched well?"

"Yes, well, indeed," nodded Jess. "Have no fear, aunt; but, to make sure, I will go down again."

And, ignoring her aunt's protest, Jess hurried down to the passage and unlatched the cupboard under the stairs.

"You can come out; he's gone," she whispered. There was no answer, only

his escape grew fainter on the night air, soon to be heard no more.

JESS GROANED in despair, as well she might, when, hurrying to the inn but a few minutes after the highwayman's dramatic escape, she found that the return coach had gone.

She was stranded, left with the choice of walking alone across the heath in the darkness, or spending the night was thick black, yet even so she worrying her poor father to distraction.

Setting her face to the darkness, and the windswept heath she wrapped her cloak about her, and set off at a smart pace. She had not gone far when a horseman drew level with her, and reined up.

"Stand and deliver!" said a soft voice teasingly. "Walk or ride. If, as I think, it is my kind helper, then let this stolen horse carry us both. One good turn, you said, deserves another."

"Laughing Jack!" Jess panted. "'Tis the same!" he laughed. "Come, take my hand and mount behind. There's room for two."

Jess gave her hand; he pulled, and, with a spring she was on the horse's back behind him.

"If this horse's stolen, do not spurn it," he said softly. "For the rascals have stolen mine."

"One moment," Jess murmured. "Do you give your word that never again will you—"

"Ride the heath?" he sighed. "I cannot, for I am a highwayman with a purpose other than stealing gold. Yet what that purpose is, it is best I do not say. Besides, I must yet steal back my faithful horse, my dear friend and companion. It is my next task."

He let the horse move on, and Jess tightened her arms about his waist, even though the promise had not been given.

"Would that I understood your reasons," she sighed.

"Ah, one day," he answered, over his shoulder. "Perhaps the truth may be told, but not yet. And lest you should dread to face the squire on account of the lost letter, fear not. It was delivered by my own hand."

Not another word was spoken during the ride over the heath, during that grand canter and gallop—not until the village was reached, and the coach was seen just ahead, setting down the passengers at the inn. Then, as Jess alighted, murmuring thanks, all that Laughing Jack said as he smilingly patted her cheeks was "Au revoir! till the next meeting, little friend."

He was gone with a clatter of hoofs amongst the trees at the roadside—gone but not, Jess knew, for ever. He had said "Au revoir!" and something told her that this strange, brave, daring highwayman would cross her path again.

"And one day I'll know his secret," she told herself, as she hurried to the inn. "But mine I'll keep. For his sake and mine, it will be best that no one, not even dad, knows that I have been his friend to-night."

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

WELL, wasn't that one of the loveliest, most enthralling stories you have ever read? And it is but the first of many such grand tales featuring Jess and Laughing Jack which are to appear, week by week, in your favourite paper. The second appears next Saturday, and remember—to make certain of your copy you must order well in advance!

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This splendid booklet captures all the thrilling action and romance of the film. To turn its pages is to re-live the stirring sequences of "Beau Geste," scenes from which are shown—with the story, photographs and many interesting sidelights on the principal actors. Whether you have seen the film or not you will enjoy this FREE booklet. On no account miss getting your copy given this week in

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stillness. Again she called, and then, wondering if with too little air he had been part-suffocated, she groped inside.

But the cupboard was empty. The highwayman had gone.

At that moment a commotion came from the street; the blaze of muskets, elation of hoofs, and wild yells. Leaping to the door, Jess hurried it open, and went into the street, to see a crowd of soldiers pointing to the roof of a house.

On that roof was Laughing Jack; but even as Jess ran into the roadway, he swung to the gutter, dropped to a lower sill, and then on to the back of a trooper's horse as it stood there, pawing the ground.

There was no need for him to spur it on; for fright alone sent it hurtling forward, knocking aside two troopers who rushed to hold it.

That waving, giving a yell of mocking laughter that echoed in the narrow street, the highwayman, clearing a crouching trooper as though he were a fence, took the horse out of sight round the bend. And the clatter of

More thrills and excitement than ever this week in—



Valerie Drew's HOLIDAY MYSTERY

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, with the help of her UNCLE NATHAN, a well-meaning old muddler 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 completely clears him, however. One of the guests leaves because of damage done to her property, and Valerie bows out a maid, who leaves. Later, when a barn is fired, and part of the cliff is blown up, she suspects a gipsy woman. MRS. LOGAN. But this woman warns Valerie of an attempt to rob the safe, and Valerie calls on Johnny for help.
(Now read on.)

A Terrible Blow!

"MAYBE it sounds a pretty bold statement, Johnny," Valerie Drew went on, meeting the intrigued gaze of Johnny's lively eyes. "But, between us, I'm quite sure we can catch this criminal now!" Johnny did an unusual and surprising thing. Moved by a warm impulse of friendship and excitement he put his arm in the most natural way imaginable around Valerie's shoulders. "Good luck, Val!" he cordially approved, his good-looking face lit by its most attractive smile. "I knew all the time you'd get your teeth into something before long." Then, realising how far enthusiasm had carried him, he dropped his arm abruptly and grinned self-consciously. "What's Uncle Johnny expected to do, Val?" he inquired, far more like his usual self. Valerie smiled. Even when she had had her doubts concerning Johnny, she had always felt oddly drawn towards him. She was genuinely glad to think of having him as her assistant now. "We'll call the rascal I'm after 'X,'" answered Valerie keenly. "Where he or she is concerned, you still know pretty well as much as I do. Only two things appear certain. One is that X is definitely someone at Sunnylands Farm. The other is that X is planning to carry on with another nasty bit of work when given the chance.

"I want to give X every encouragement to get on as soon as possible," Valerie continued. "With your help, he'll be at work again to-night. To all intents and purposes the coast will be absolutely clear—things will be so easy that X simply won't be able to resist the opportunity we're giving him. Then, with average luck, I'll get—his photograph!" Johnny whistled. "I'll say you're the cat's whiskers!" he declared admiringly. "Do you mean it can really be done?" Valerie nodded decisively. "I want X to be able to get to the library. To make it as easy as possible, practically the whole building must be in darkness. Also, the library must be put out of bounds, so that X will feel quite sure of being able to work there without interruption." Johnny's face had lit up with enthu-

shutter fixed open," Valerie responded. "Also, there'll be a special flash bulb in the light fitting. X will naturally close the door before attempting to switch on the light. The moment he does so there will be one flash, and his picture will be in my camera!" Johnny grasped her hand impulsively, his boyish face alight with admiration. "That's a clinking scheme, Val!" he declared. "Even Uncle Johnny couldn't have thought of anything better. And if that doesn't do the trick—" "You can call me a Dutchman!" finished a gleeful voice just behind them. Valerie and Johnny turned in astonishment and dismay. There, grinning broadly, was Charlie Deeds. He had approached so silently along the passage that neither of them had

Valerie's Ingenious Plan:

WHEN THE UNKNOWN ENEMY AT SUNNYLANDS FARM TURNED ON THE LIGHT—HE WOULD PROVE HIS OWN GUILT!

siasm as he listened, for now he really began to understand what Valerie had in mind. "That means a house game which everyone joins in, of course," he responded, thinking rapidly. "We won't have 'Murder,' because Mrs. Peek or some other nervous old dame's sure to scream the house down. I'll invent a new one, and—yes, we'll call it 'Fugitive.'" His agile brain was working at top speed. "Someone's supposed to have stolen the family plate. The lights go out. Three 'detectives' start off in the darkness to catch the thief—" Valerie listened with an excited, approving smile, for at anything of this kind Johnny was without an equal at the holiday farm. "Couldn't be better!" she declared admiringly as he finished at last. "And how," inquired Johnny, with a whimsical twinkle in his eyes, "are you going to be quite certain about getting this photo, Val?" "There'll be a camera concealed in a corner of the library, with the

had the slightest suspicion that he was anywhere near. "Why, it's old Rubber Heels!" ejaculated Johnny, collecting his wits in a moment. "Which hole in the skirting have you just crawled out of, Charlie?" "Charlie's thick-lipped mouth expanded in a wide, encouraging smirk. "Think it'll work?" he asked mysteriously. Valerie's bland expression betrayed nothing of her secret thoughts. Had Charlie guessed anything? She didn't think so. She believed he had only caught a snatch of Johnny's last remark which would naturally tell him nothing vital. He was simply trying to bluff them. "It ought to," responded Valerie sweetly, "with Johnny organising it."

By
ISABEL NORTON

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS.—I wonder if any of you ever realise how difficult it sometimes is for we in this office to cram into your favourite paper all the things we should like to accommodate?

Naturally, there's a limit to what can be got into twenty-four pages. If we had our way—and I'm sure if you had your way, too—all our stories would be three or four times their present length every week.

But that, of course, is a dream beyond fulfilment. What we very often can do, though, is to take some regular feature from its usual place and, by putting it elsewhere, perhaps in some other form, leave room for something else.

That's what I have done this week. I have decided to leave out our usual "Schoolgirls' Own Library" notice and tell you about those fine books here.

And why have I done this?

Well, as you've probably discovered for yourselves, in order to give the first of Ida Melbourne's wonderful, romantic series the very limit of available space. When you've made your acquaintance with Jess and Highwayman Jack I know you'll thank me for this decision—and wish, as I did, that the story could have been even longer.

But now I must tell you about these "Libraries," mustn't I? First of all in importance to you, as admirers of Babs & Co., we have—

"THE SECRET SOCIETY AGAINST BABS & CO.!" which is a thrilling Hilda Richards story dealing with the earlier adventures of your favourites. Packed with excitement and mystery from beginning to end, it is a novel-length story that will hold you spell-bound. It is No. 696, by the way.

No. 697 is a most unusual story by Anne Laughton, called "MYSTERY AT MEADS!"

No. 698, "HER SHADOWED SCHOOLDAYS!" has been specially written for this month's issue by Ruth Maxwell, and is the dramatic tale of a girl struggling to make a success of her school career against unexpected odds.

No. 699 is one of Elizabeth Chester's finest adventure stories, "THREE ON THE LONESOME TRAIL," telling of the exciting things that happened to two English chums and a little Red-skin girl in the wilds of Canada.

Well, there you are, readers all. Take your choice of those four superb stories. I expect you'll be eager to read them all!

And so on to our own programme for next Saturday.

"THE TRIUMPH OF THE TWINS!" is the title of Hilda Richards' latest story of your Cliff House favourites, and I know you'll be delighted to find that quaint, lovable pair, Priscilla and Ermytrude Terraine, of the Fourth Form—alike as two peas—sharing the "starring" role.

It's really a grand story, full of excitement and yet not without its lighter moments, and it all begins with Ermytrude finding a key, about which Priscilla knows nothing.

Certain people, after the key, do not realise they are dealing with twins. Therefore, when Priscilla denies knowledge of the key they imagine she is deceiving them. Not only do the twins get involved in all sorts of adventures, but so do Barbara Redfern & Co., who are rallying round them.

In fact, the famous chums make ingenious use of the twins' amazing resemblance in order to outwit those who are seeking the key.

You'll remember this topping tale for weeks to come. Next week's issue will also contain the second "Jess and Highwayman Jack" story—do please write and tell me what you think of the first; further developments in the fine Valerie Drew mystery, and more of Patricia's Bright and Interesting Pages. And, of course, with his usual Best wishes,

THE EDITOR.

Charlie's eyes opened. "What's he organising?" he asked eagerly.

"A new game for to-night, Charlie," responded Valerie, in her friendliest tones. "It's called 'Fugitive.' Someone has to play the part of a criminal—"

"I'm quite sure you weren't talking about a game at all!" Charlie broke in, with conviction. "What was it really?"

"A game," insisted Valerie, with a soothing smile. "I think you ought to get the notices up, as soon as possible, so we can be certain everyone will join in."

Johnny took the hint.

"O.K. with me!" he agreed cheerfully. He gave Charlie a grin, though there was a glimmer in his eyes which was not at all affectionate. "So-long, sweetheart!" he said, and walked away whistling.

Charlie remained staring at Valerie. "Well, why won't you let me in on it?" he asked abruptly.

"On what, Charlie?" countered Valerie.

Charlie gave a mirthless grin.

"Charlie," she responded evenly, "without expressing any opinion about what you found, do you think it would have made it a happier holiday for some of the nervous guests to have you flourishing sticks of dynamite under their noses?"

Charlie flushed. Valerie had got him there.

"I'm a reasonable fellow when people treat me properly!" he answered sulkily. "There was no need to set out to make a fool of me—"

"Charlie, you mustn't be too sensitive," Valerie urged, with a pleasant, understanding smile. "Everyone's sure it was just a gorgeous leg-pull on your part; they're all happy, and they think all the better of you for it! Why not let it go at that?"

And, giving him a friendly pat on his shoulder, she hurried off along the corridor.

Though Charlie was an embarrassment at the moment, with his eager desire either to be "in" on everything or prove himself cleverer than Valerie, she had far more important matters to worry about just at present.

Up in her room again, she unlocked a drawer of her table and took out a rusty key.

It had been dropped in the ruins last night by the monkey belonging to mysterious Mrs. Paizi Logan. This morning, sure of the gipsy woman's complicity in the farmhouse mystery, Valerie had searched the countryside far and wide for her.

Now Valerie was forced to believe that, during her own absence, Mrs. Logan had daringly revisited the scene in broad daylight for the purpose of leaving an anonymous warning note. Still lying in her drawer, it had told Valerie that someone intended to burgle the safe!

"Why, of course!" Valerie breathed to herself, as a new thought struck her with startling force. "Flash, old boy, come here! You can soon tell me whether it's Paizi Logan who's been here."

She took up the scrap of scarf which Mrs. Logan, at their last meeting, had admitted was her property. Bidding Flash pick up the distinctive scent which still clung to it, she dropped the mystifying key into her handbag, locked up everything else securely, and left the room.

A few minutes later Flash began running in widening circles around the orchard under Valerie's window, to give a sudden bark of excitement as he reached a thick cluster of bushes. Then he at once trotted purposefully towards a near-by hedge, his nose close to the ground.

"Good boy," Valerie softly encouraged him; and, skirting the farmyard, she found herself heading straight for the distant woods.

It was once again a beautiful day, and all that Valerie saw and heard about the farm gratified her immensely.

Two thatchers, working at top speed, had started to repair the burnt roof of the dance-hall barn. From the distance came the ring of metal, telling her that expert workmen were already cutting new steps in the cliff at Battleby Cove to replace those destroyed in the recent explosion.

Soon, thanks to the reserve of money Dorothy could produce to meet the emergency, the holiday farm would be its old attractive self again.

Then, as she followed her pet, Valerie's brows contracted at an ugly thought. It would be a very different situation if Dorothy, called on to pay

"I'm not a fool! Even if you have asked Johnny to get up some silly game, you're not doing it without a reason!"

"Naturally!" Valerie blandly agreed. "I'm never a sobersides on holiday. I like to see plenty of fun going on—and it helps Dorothy, who's got quite enough other things to see to without inventing games—"

"You're getting up that game for a reason," Charlie said doggedly.

Valerie shrugged her shoulders a trifle regretfully.

"Of course, Charlie, I can't help it if you persist in disbelieving everything I say—"

"I don't believe you're on holiday at all! You came here," declared Charlie, "to solve a mystery, and you're staying on here because it isn't solved. What's more"—he lowered his voice, his eyes narrowing significantly—"it wasn't rock I picked up on the cliffs, and you know it!"

Inwardly Valerie felt an uncomfortable twinge at his words, for Charlie was speaking the truth. Outwardly, to his chagrin, her manner remained as composed as ever.

for the repairs, went to her safe to find if robbed!

Flash, meanwhile, made excellent progress. His sureness told Valerie he was following a trail recently made by the mysterious Paizi Logan.

The trail led amongst the trees, then descended by little used paths until, in the very heart of the wood, Valerie came to a glade almost completely enclosed by trees.

The glade, though it showed obvious signs of having been recently occupied by somebody, was empty!

On the mossy cart-track leading towards a distant lane were the deep impressions where a wheeled vehicle had passed only a short time ago.

Biting her lip in disappointment, Valerie watched her pet running around in aimless circles. This was the end of the trail.

But—no! It wasn't quite. For all at once Flash, giving a bark of excitement, started to dig vigorously in a patch of loose earth with his forepaws.

"My goodness! What ever have you found?" Valerie ejaculated, as she hastened to his side.

She saw her pet had unearthed a small package tied up in an old handkerchief. Pulling it out of the ground, Valerie found it to be astonishingly heavy. Opening the knotted ends, she gazed, dumbfounded, at the odd array of articles inside.

There were several old rusty nails, a horseshoe, many oddments of scrap metal, a battered cigarette case, several nuts and bolts, and—a gleaming metal detonator! As though that sinister object was of no more importance than all this other useless rubbish, it now lay abandoned where Paizi Logan had last pitched her shifting camp!

"Flash, this looks like the biggest discovery we've made for a long while!" Valerie breathed; and, convinced at last that there was nothing more to be found, she gathered the strange miscellany into the handkerchief again, and hastened back in the direction of the farmhouse.

Anxious to enter unseen, if possible, she turned on reaching the stables and made to cut across the kitchen garden. But suddenly she came on two people in conversation. One was Dorothy Dean. The other was a tall, well-dressed stranger, standing with his back to Valerie as she approached. Before the girl detective could warn them of her presence, he went on speaking.

"What money is there in any holiday farm?" he asked Dorothy crisply. "Remember my offer, but keep it to yourself—don't tell even your uncle. The moment you're willing to sell, telephone me at the address I've given you!"

Turning as he spoke, the stranger's eyes fell on Valerie at last. His jaw dropped.

"What are you hanging around here for?" he asked suspiciously.

Valerie gasped indignantly.

"I beg your pardon—"

"My friend Miss Drew has just returned from a walk with her dog!" Dorothy put in, spiritedly. "She's every right—"

"Why, of course!" The stranger showed his teeth in an apologetic smile. "Then you will naturally explain to Miss Drew that what she has just overheard is a purely private matter between us. Phone me, Miss Dean, as soon as you've made up your mind."

He saluted briskly, turned on his heel, and hurried away to a big car waiting in the farmyard. Dorothy, meeting Valerie's inquiring gaze,

dropped her eyes and stirred uncomfortably. An embarrassed silence hung between them.

For it seemed that, even while Valerie was working night and day to solve the strange mystery looming over Sunnylands Farm, Dorothy had been planning in secret to sell the place and get right out of it!

Baiting the Trap!

"IT'S mother!" Dorothy confessed, unable to hide her downcast manner. "She's not getting any better, you see. She's got an idea of what's really happening at the farm, and it's keeping her from getting on."

They were sitting in Dorothy's pretty little office a few minutes later, and Valerie's expression of deep concern showed how much her friend's unexpected revelation had disturbed her.

"Poor Dorothy! I had no idea," she murmured sympathetically. "How did your mother hear?"

Dorothy momentarily compressed her lips.

"I suppose," she said, with a reluctant sigh, "that I've got Uncle Nathan to thank for spilling the beans. He went to see mother recently. You know what an old blunderer he is."

Valerie nodded sadly. Well intentioned as Uncle Nathan was, she had seen from the start that he was an utter failure so far as acting as Dorothy's assistant was concerned.

"And who was the gentleman you were talking to, Dorothy?" asked Valerie. "Don't think I want to quiz you. If you'd rather not—"

"I want you to know, Val," Dorothy eagerly responded. "I haven't really been as sly as I seem. He represents a London firm of estate agents with big offices in Matrix Street. They've got a farmer client who'd like to buy our farm."

Valerie's eyes opened. For Dorothy had told her that the soil was so poor that the farm had been almost bankrupt before it became a holiday centre.

"Mr. Mealing, the agent, insisted on coming to see me to-day," Dorothy went on. "He offered quite a big sum of money for the goodwill. It would mean I could take mother to the South of

France at once, and, after a good holiday, we could look for something else." Hesitating for an embarrassed moment, she turned suddenly and met Valerie's gaze squarely. "You know yourself, Val, that we can't seem to get things right, however we try. There's a—"

"Wait?" instructed Valerie softly. Unexpectedly she produced her strange find in the glade in the woods, and, laying it on the desk, untied the ends of the handkerchief. "Exhibit No. 1!" she announced, with a smile which Dorothy, even in her present despondent mood, found infectious. "Ever seen anything like this little lot?"

"What a weird lot of things!" Dorothy gasped, in amazement. "Where did you get them? What are they for?"

Before replying, Valerie opened her handbag and produced the rusty key.

Then, deciding it was time for Dorothy to know everything if she was to be induced to keep up the fight, Valerie told her the full story of her night adventure in the ruins, and how the key had come into her possession.

"Undoubtedly," she concluded, with conviction, "Mrs. Paizi Logan was there searching for this key, which, for all we know, may be her own rightful property. The monkey was employed simply to find it. These things," she explained, indicating the strange contents of the handkerchief, "show how she's been training the monkey to do its work. It's been taught to pick up any small metal object and bring it to her, for, naturally, a monkey wouldn't know a key from anything else made of metal."

Dorothy looked breathless with amazement.

"Searching merely for a rusty old key doesn't seem very sinister, does it, Val?" she agreed, with a startled, unexpected laugh. "But what's that bright thing? Surely—"

"It's a detonator, Dorothy," Valerie confessed. "When I saw the monkey bring it to Mrs. Logan the other day you can guess what I thought of her. Now, I believe the monkey found it purely by accident on the cliffs."

"But, Val," Dorothy said, in perplexity, "we know we've got some mean, unforgiving enemy. If it isn't the gipsy—"



CLEARLY Valerie overheard what Dorothy and the stranger were saying, and it was such a shock that the girl detective instinctively slowed down. For Dorothy was discussing plans to sell the farm!

"It can't be, because she sent me a certain warning," Valerie explained, her eyes brighter as they held Dorothy's gaze. "To-night I'm hoping to get a picture of the person who's really been dogging us all the time."

And while Dorothy, astounded at the revelation, listened breathlessly, Valerie revealed her ingenious plan for catching the enemy red-handed at last.

Later in the day, when she had seen Dorothy back at work with all her old energy and enthusiasm, Valerie found still further cause to congratulate herself on her choice of Johnny Jevons as an assistant when she beheld the social notice-board.

"IT'S NEW AND ARRESTING!" a bold notice proclaimed. "THRILLS IN THE DARK FOR ALL! SOMETHING YOU'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER! THE LARK OF A LIFETIME! NO CHARGE—NOT EVEN FOR CHARLIE! EVERYONE WILL BE AFTER THE 'FUGITIVE'!"

She was reading that striking announcement when a figure sidled, with exaggeratedly furtive movements, along the hall.

"The spider creeps from his lair!" explained Johnny Jevons, with a grin. "I'm watching to see nobody escapes. Putting your own name down, Val?" he asked, lowering his voice.

"Why, of course!" Valerie answered, with a meaning narrowing of her bright eyes. "I certainly want it to be generally understood that I'm in on this as well."

Johnny glanced cautiously from side to side.

"Everything fixed?" he asked. "It will be by the time you're ready," Valerie promised.

That afternoon there was an organised outing by motor-coach to Canter Bay, where the bathing was as good as at Battleby Cove, temporarily out of action on account of the cliff fall. Taking the one precaution of advising Dorothy to remove her money from the threatened safe, Valerie went off with the party.

Here was a waiting game now, and she wanted nobody—least of all, inquisitive Charlie Deeds—to guess it. This time there must be no mistake.

Charlie went with the bathing party. He was astonished and gratified to find that on this occasion Valerie took quite an unexpected amount of notice of him.

Little though Charlie guessed it, it was all part of a scheme to allay his suspicions.

It was dark by the time they reached the farmhouse; and Valerie, going up to her room, gathered two or three things together; then, descending by the small staircase at the rear of the house, she gained the passage in which the library was situated.

The place was very quiet. Reaching the door, Valerie tapped softly; then, receiving no reply, entered.

The room was in darkness. Switching on the light, she caught a little breath of amazement to find how dim it was. In a moment she realised what had happened. A low-powered bulb had been substituted for the usual one, while just one edge of the red silk shade had been artfully looped back so that a shaft of light fell—right on the door of the safe.

Mr. X had prepared everything to continue work to-night while the game

of Fugitive was being played in the darkened house.

Valerie closed the door softly behind her. Then, stepping across to the bookcase in the corner, she climbed on a chair, and, resting her camera on the top shelf, sighted it carefully on the doorway. Satisfied, she turned out the light, opened the shutter of the camera, then felt her way back to the electric light fitting in the centre of the room. Removing the dim bulb, she replaced it with a special photographic one which would give just one dazzling flash as soon as the switch was moved again.

Softly, with Flash trotting at her side, she left the room and closed the door behind her. The trap was laid; whoever entered the room next and touched the light switch would be faithfully "snapped."

It only remained now for Dorothy Dean's secret enemy to do the rest!

Enter Charlie!

"LIGHTS out, please!" directed Johnny Jevons, his boyish face shining with happy anticipation. "Ladies and gentlemen, the Fugitive is now at large. Don't forget the rules, and play the game like little darlings. Off we go!"

Valerie Drew caught one last glimpse of amused, expectant faces all around her; then, in a rapid succession of snicks, the switches went off one by one and the farmhouse was plunged in total darkness.

Johnny's exciting game of Fugitive was about to start.

For Valerie, by contrast, a day of almost unendurable suspense was nearly at an end, and she would soon know whether her ingenious trap was going to solve a hitherto baffling mystery.

Silently she moved through the darkness towards the spot where she had decided to keep her own vigil while the game, specially devised to cover her own important movements, was in progress.

For Dorothy's sake, she did not even dare to think of failure now.

All around her Valerie heard rustles of furtive movement and excited whispers, to which she naturally paid little heed. Valerie's thoughts were far away.

First as the master-mind directing Emily, the maid, and then doing his own dastardly work with ruthless precision, the unknown foe had laughed at every effort to unmask him.

Nobody had been spared, scarcely anyone had escaped suspicion. First doubts had been deliberately thrown on high-spirited, irrepressible Johnny. When the case against him had been utterly demolished a more cunning effort had been made to implicate Paizi Logan, the mystery woman with the caravan. She, Valerie was now convinced, was equally blameless. But the foe himself was still at large.

The minutes dragged by in a seemingly endless manner. And then quite suddenly from outside the house there came one sharp bark from Flash.

With a thrill of excitement electrifying her veins, Valerie turned immediately.

Her last precaution had been to part the library window blinds just sufficiently for a shaft of light to escape outside when the switch was touched.

And Flash was on guard outside to give tongue the moment he saw that brilliant beam.

Feeling her way tensely along the wall, Valerie reached the end of the passage leading to the library.

She heard someone moving ahead of her in the darkness, heard a frantic rustle of movement, then the creaking of the narrow stairs at the end of the passage as a mystery figure went up them at desperate speed.

Luckily, it didn't matter now whether he escaped or not.

Opening the library door, Valerie found the switch still depressed. Creeping across the room, she touched her own special bulb in the lamp-holder. It was warm to the touch, showing it had been used. Reaching with great care to the top shelf of the bookcase, she found her camera and closed the shutter.

The vital film was safe at last!

Crossing to the door, Valerie made her way softly along the passage until, at the far end, she touched the door of a little service pantry which Dorothy had previously placed at her disposal. Entering it, she shut the door carefully behind her and ran her hands over the table inside until her fingers encountered a special lamp. In a moment the tiny room was suffused with a dull red light.

A dish of developer stood ready, another dish of fixing solution beside it. Valerie had marked them with great care to make sure there could be no last-minute mistake.

Opening her camera in the safety of the red light, she took out the piece of exposed film.

For a delicious second she looked at it, knowing that somewhere hidden in its bland white surface there was now the picture of a lifetime. Then, dropping it into the developer, she rocked the dish carefully and waited for the telltale image to emerge as a negative.

Gradually the miracle of photography began to work before her eyes. She saw a dark streak appear, which she knew was, in reality, the white moulding of the library door. She saw something the shape of a hand in a switch, and knew beyond a doubt that it was that same ruthless hand which had fired the roof of the dance-hall barn. Then the figure itself began to emerge greyly.

Then, at that very moment, a hand fell on the outside handle of the door.

"Look out! You can't come in!" Valerie cried out in alarm.

Horror filled her as, despite her protest, she heard the door opening. Instinctively she turned in an effort to shield the vital film lying in the development dish.

But a shaft of brilliant light from an electric torch stabbed through the room, and before Valerie could do anything to mask it, it fell full on the negative she was watching.

With a feeling of startled bewilderment that turned to inexpressible dismay, she saw blackness sweep like a cloud right over that vital film, utterly ruining it!

"So there is where you are, Valerie," cried a triumphant voice from the doorway. "I guessed that you were up to some smart little trick of your own, so I've been after you all the time. This time you're caught, Miss Clever!"

The voice of the person who had ruined everything was the voice of Charlie Deeds!