

Happy Hours Every Week With The World's Most Famous Schoolgirls

# THE SCHOOLGIRL

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Incorporating  
'SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN'



**HER SCHOOL CHUMS  
MUSTN'T RECOGNISE HER!**

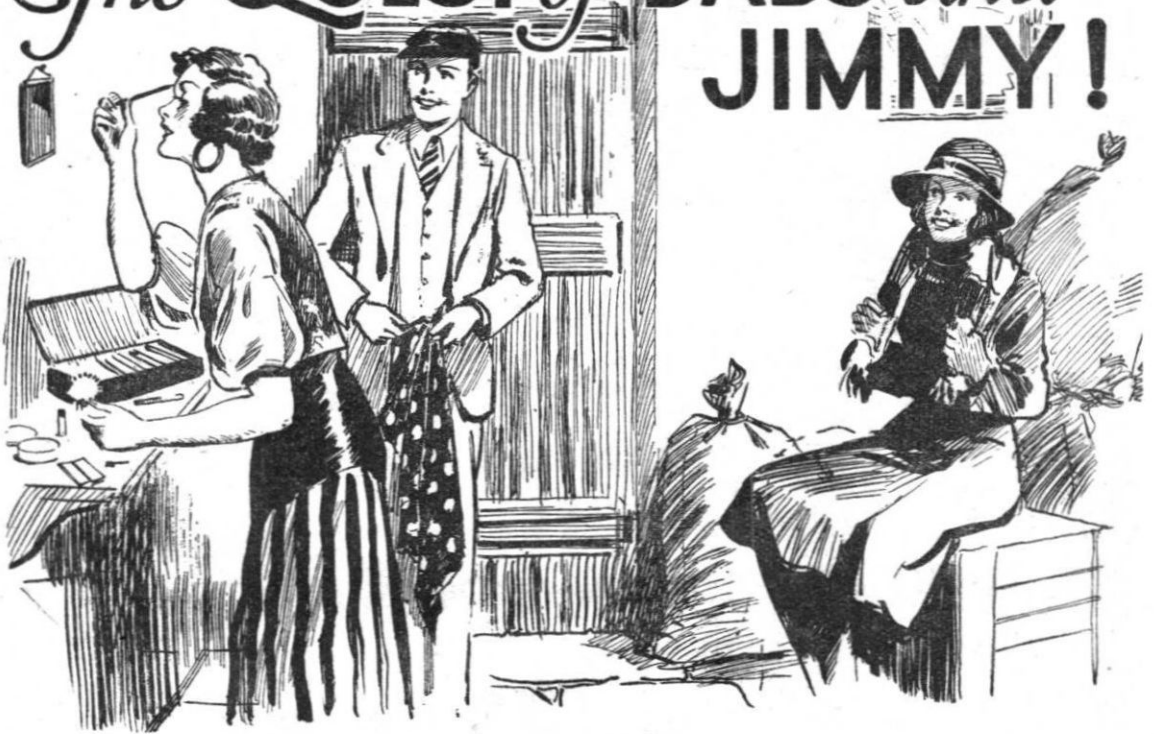
It was vital that Barbara Redfern's imposture should not be detected.

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



Barbara Redfern, leader of the chums of Cliff House School, has to play a strange part in this unusual Long Complete Story.

# The QUEST of BABS and JIMMY!



## An Unusual Story of Trouble!



"HALLO, Babs, you off?" Clara Trevlyn beamed.

"Yes, rather!"

Barbara Redfern, captain of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School,

laughed. "But I say, what's the giddy game?"

"Oh, really, Babs, it's nun-not a giddy game!" Bessie Bunter protested. "I'm just showing Clara what a topping hockey player I am. Dud-don't go for a minute! Watch this! It's what I call the Bunter stroke."

Barbara Redfern, dressed in her new winter coat, with fawn woolly gloves, and a fawn scarf to match, paused on the threshold of Study No. 4 in the Fourth Form corridor at Cliff House.

She smiled, though that smile was immediately erased to give place to a look of alarm as plump Bessie Bunter, co-sharer of that study with Babs herself and Mabel Lynn, grasped up a hockey stick with a do-or-die expression on her face. Very fierce, very determined did short-sighted Bessie look in that moment.

"But look here," Babs protested, "you're not playing hockey here!"

"Only pup-practice, you know," Bessie said. "Just once! I'm going to demonstrate. This disbelieving cat Clara won't give me a place in the co-ed team until she sees what a wonderful player I am, and I'm just going to show her, you know. This is a new trick stroke," duffer Bessie explained. "I—I invented it. The bureau there is the goal."

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"My hat! You don't mean to say the study carpet is the hockey field?" Babs cried, in alarm.

"Oh, really, Babs, that's just a petty consideration," Bessie said offensively, and stared severely at the faces of the five girls who were grinning from various quarters of the room, those faces belonging to Babs herself, Mabel Lynn, long-legged Clara Trevlyn, the tomboyish captain of junior games at Cliff House, and Leila Carroll and Christine Wilmer. "Kik-Clara, you throw the ball when I say 'go,' and then watch!"

"And then duck, you mean!" Clara gurgled. She was holding a tennis ball ready. "Right-ho! Ready!"

She winked at Babs. Bessie screwed up her face. Fortunately all the furniture had been removed to the wall for the purpose of the demonstration.

"Gig-go!" cried the plump duffer.

And back she swung the hockey stick. Crash! went that stick against the little clock on the mantelpiece, and there was a howl of laughter as Clara, throwing the ball, which Bessie never touched, hit her on the nose with it.

For Bessie, in hitting that clock, had halted as if magically petrified.

The clock was Bessie's own.

She stared at the clock, lying on the carpet now, its glass smashed and its face broken in. In utter dismay she blinked at it; then, with a suspicious quiver of the lips which had the effect of immediately restraining all her chums' mirth, she woefully picked it up.

"Oh, kik-crums!" she faltered. "Oh dear! Why didn't you tut-tell me it was there?"

"Never mind, Bess; we'll get another," Babs promised comfortingly. "You old goose, you ought to have

thought about it before doing your—er—stroke."

She stared at the clock, the mission for which she was dressed forgotten for a moment. It was a small clock, and of very little intrinsic value, but possessing a rather quaint and unusual face.

It was, however, one of the very few prizes Bessie had ever won, the clock having been given to her last term for her prowess in the cookery exhibition. In the second place, it was the most original clock on earth, according to the plump duffer. Bessie's face was the picture of most woeful dismay as she stared at it.

"But—but I can't get another," she said, and she was almost crying then. "I bet there isn't another clock like this! Oh dear!"

"Well, never mind," Babs counselled again. "As I'm going out, I'll drop into Friardale village and see if I can spot one like it. 'Fraid it can't be repaired. Now, cheer up, old thing!"

"Oh, Bib-Babs, if only you can get one like it!" Bessie said eagerly. "Look jolly hard, won't you? I've got some money saved, you know."

"Leave it to me," Babs said. "Now, Clara, any special message to Jimmy Richmond?"

"You're going to see him now?" Clara asked.

"Yes, of course."

Clara beamed. Everybody at once looked interested. The one big excitement in Cliff House's junior school at the moment was the forthcoming hockey match against the Westbourne Mixed School, which was scheduled to take place at Cliff House the following Saturday.

Westbourne was a co-educational school, with a red-hot reputation on the

hockey field, and this team, composed of six girls and five boys, was rather unique. And now Westbourne had thrown out a challenge to the joint schools of Cliff House and Friardale Boys to a match at the week-end.

The challenge had been promptly accepted by both schools, though, to be sure, there were difficulties in the way. Never before had Cliff House and Friardale played as a mixed team, and though Friardale were as excited at the prospect as Cliff House, there was a lot to be done before the match could take place.

Jimmy Richmond, Babs' boy chum at Friardale, was the captain both of his Form and the hockey eleven, and it had been agreed that the working out of details should be left to Babs and him.

"And the first thing to fix up," Clara said, "is a practice match between the two sides. That means twenty-two players—eleven girls and eleven boys. Better arrange that for to-morrow morning, Babs, as it's a whole day's holiday; and have the match here, of course. Wish I could come with you," she added regretfully, "but I can't. Old Primmy's pretty mean with permits these days."

Babs smiled. That was true enough. Fortunately favoured indeed was she herself, for in addition to certain privileges she held as captain of the junior school, she was also the bearer of a message from their Head, Miss Primrose, to Dr. Barrymore, the headmaster of Friardale, and so had been excused lessons for the whole of the afternoon.

"And nothing else?" she asked.  
"No, not for the present," Clara replied. "But get everything fixed up, won't you? We'll have a meeting of the sports committee as soon as ever you come back. Good luck, old thing!"

Babs, with a bright smile for her chums, went off.

She hurried down through the school into the quadrangle. Bright, crisp, and fresh was the afternoon, with a low-lying sun shedding a bright radiance over the peaceful grounds of the old school. From the cycle-shed she secured her "steed," as she called her bicycle, and cycled off towards Friardale village. Get Bessie's little job over first.

Whistling, she cycled on until, almost reaching Friardale village, she paused to read a new yellow notice which had been posted next to an A.R.P. notice on the trunk of the ancient Queen's Oak which stood by the side of Myrtle Cottage.

And her pulses knew a quickening of interest.

"Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!" started the yellow notice.

"Forget your war worries and relax! Stone's Stupendous Circus and Fair is here to entertain you! Come and see the wire-treading girl wizards! Come and see Mysti, the wonder-girl magician, and Bruno, the bravest lion-tamer on earth! Come and see—"

And then followed a perfectly breathless enumeration of all the super attractions of Stone's Stupendous Circus, which would commence at three p.m. that very day on Friardale Common.

"Wumps!" Babs laughed. "Certainly have to give this a look-in. Perhaps we'll make up a party to visit the circus from school to-morrow!"

With a pleasant sense of a new attraction on the horizon, she went on her way, passing by a score of the Stone notices before she reached Frank's, the jeweller's. But there her happiness received its first check.

For, although Frank's showed her

## By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER.

every single one of his clocks in stock, there wasn't one which resembled Bessie's.

Babs frowned a little as she went out again. Poor old Bess! Still, she had done her best.

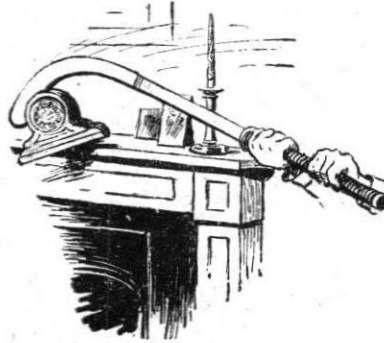
Seeking what consolation she could in that reflection, she jerked her machine round and decided to take the little path through Friardale Wood. Her trip to Friardale had lost her time, and this would be a short cut.

She wondered vaguely if she would find Jimmy in. It was a half-holiday at Friardale this afternoon, and, like a chump, she had not let him know she would be coming. The use of the telephone was so restricted these days.

But Jimmy Richmond was bound to be in—playing footer, or something.

She cycled on, the tyres crunching over the flurries of dried leaves which here and there bestrew her path. It was very pleasant, in spite of the decided nip in the atmosphere.

Presently, however, she came to a very muddy part of the path, and,



slipping from the saddle, wheeled her bicycle on to the grass verge in order to avoid the danger of a skid. As she did so she paused.

Hallo! What was that?  
Something near the old, unused rangers' hut to her right was moving. Babs halted. More intently she peered, and through the trees she saw a dark-faced girl dressed in a rather vivid yellow and red costume.

As she watched, the girl, as though by herself, turned, looked straight at her. Babs almost jumped then.

"Violet!" she cried.  
For Violet Mason, of the Neptunian Swimming Club, it was.

Babs knew Violet well. She had good reason to, for it was Violet Mason who had rescued her younger sister, Doris, during the summer when Doris, swimming near the dangerous rocks out of Pegg Bay, had been stricken by cramp and, carried in the swirl of a strong current, might have sustained grave injuries had it not been for the promptitude and pluck of this girl.

Violet was a pretty girl, very much Babs' own build and height, and except for her spectacles and darker colouring might, in certain lights, have been mistaken for Babs herself.

Babs also knew Violet's sister Audrey, at present secretary to Miss Gertrude Willing, the famous author.

Wondering at Violet's unusual costume, she hurried over to her.

"Violet!" she cried; and then blinked. "My hat, what's the matter? You've been crying."

Violet did not deny the accusation. She flushed a little.

"Oh, Babs—"  
"Trouble?" Babs asked keenly.  
"Dreadful!" Violet said, with a groan.

"What is it? Can I do anything? And why," Babs asked, staring at the other's dark-stained face and odd-looking costume, "have you got those things on? Going to a fancy-dress dance, or something?"

Violet shook her head.  
"No. That's part of my job," she said unsteadily. "I—I'm in a jam," she confessed.

"Vi, sit down," Babs said, and she urged her on to the sawn-off trunk of an old tree. "Now, what is it?"

"Babs, I'm sorry, I—I can't tell—"  
"You can. And," Babs said firmly, "you're going to! Vi, remember when you fished Doris out of the sea? Remember I said then that if I could ever do anything for you, I would—and you promised, if I could, that you would tell me? Vi, I'm in this, whatever it is. Now—please!" she insisted.

Vi gulped a little. For a moment she did not reply, but sat staring straight in front of her, obviously struggling to make up her mind. Then she turned.

"Babs, I—I don't know if you can help really."

**Plump Bessie Bunter was practising a hockey stroke. The result was a broken clock. And because Barbara Redfern tried to get a new one for her plump chum, she ran into the most astounding adventure—the most unusual part of which was that she had to run a stall at a circus. And her assistant in this amazing affair was her boy chum, Jimmy Richmond.**

"Tell me."  
"But—but if I do, will you swear not to tell anyone else?"

"Word of honour," Babs nodded.  
"Not—not even your best friend?" Vi anxiously pressed.

"Word of honour," Babs repeated.  
"Now what's the trouble?"

Violet bit her lip.  
"It—it's Audrey," she said.  
"Oh, my hat! You—you don't mean she's ill?"

"Nun-no. Not that. Something—"  
And Vi shook her dark chestnut brown curls, which were hidden beneath a bright scarf. "She—she's in trouble, Babs. You know that she is secretary to Miss Willing—"

"Rather!"

"Well, Miss Willing went away a week ago. She left Audrey in charge of the house, and also asked Audrey to deputise for her at a big dinner and dance given in Lantham while she was away. Of course, Audrey was frightfully excited about that, especially as she was dying to wear her new blue evening gown for the first time—"

Babs smiled a little. She knew Audrey's love of clothes.

"Well, the night of the dance came," Vi went on. "Audrey dressed—and, Babs, she did look wonderful! She was keen to wear her pearl necklace with the dress—she has one, you know, though it's not a first-quality one. I thought she'd look stunning in it, and said so. But—but when she was putting the necklace on, it broke."

"Oh!" Babs said.

"And—and so—" Vi faltered. "Oh, Babs, I suppose it was a dreadfully wrong thing to do, but—but at the time there seemed no harm in it. Miss Willing was away and wouldn't be using it—and, after all, it was her dance, and Audrey did so want to be a credit to her. Anyway, the upshot of it was, Audrey borrowed a pearl necklace of Miss Willing's—an expensive one!"

"And lost it?" Babs guessed.

Vi groaned.

"She went to the dance," she said. "After the dinner there was a sort of entertainment. It wasn't the entertainment which had been planned because they couldn't get the London artists to the house owing to the war, but they hired a crowd of circus people who were in the neighbourhood. One of them was a girl magician named Mysti."

"Mysti?" Babs cried, wondering for a moment where she had heard that name before. "Yes, go on."

"Well, this Mysti asked for an assistant," Vi continued. "Audrey, who was feeling pretty bucked with the way everybody had admired her dress, and so on, volunteered. Mysti's turn was pretty good, Audrey says, but during it something went wrong with the lights and there was a complete black-out for about a minute. Not until long afterwards, however, did Audrey remember that black-out—and that was when she got home and found Miss Willing's necklace missing."

Babs' eyes gleamed a little. It suddenly occurred to her where she had heard the name Mysti before. On the circus bill in Friardale.

"Of course," Vi went on with a gulp, "Audrey was frantic. The necklace was a valuable one, and, after all, she had no real right to borrow it. She was certain then, she said, that it had been taken from her during the black-out, and seeing that Mysti was the only girl near her all that time, it must have been Mysti who had collared it off her neck. Anyway, next morning she went to the circus camp, and she saw Mysti—in the act of putting away the necklace in a box which she slipped in a drawer of her caravan."

"Phew!" Babs whistled. "Then—"

"Then," Vi gulped, "she accused Mysti of stealing it. Mysti denied it, of course; threatened to send for the police, and all that. Audrey was almost a wreck, because, you see, Babs, she didn't dare call in the police. If she had she would have had to explain that she'd borrowed the necklace without permission. She came home such a nervous wreck that I sent her home to mother, telling her that I'd get it back."

Babs looked at her keenly.

"And—and so," Vi went on, "I got a job in the circus. I'm running Mr. Strong's houp-la stall. I only got the job this morning, and I'm due to start this afternoon—my idea being to keep an eye on Mysti's caravan and to nip in there when she's not about and try to bag the necklace. They don't know that I'm Audrey's sister, of course, especially as I've given my name as Brenda Tutton. That—that's why I'm dressed like this. I pretended I was a gipsy girl. But—"

She paused. Then, instead of going on, she handed Babs a telegram. It was a telegram bearing that morning's date, and came from Violet's home in Brighton. It said:

"Urgent. Catch the 3 p.m. Courtfield to-day. Must see you. You can return this evening.—Love, Mother."

"I—I got that—this morning," Vi finished, with a gulp, "and—and I'm

due to start work at three o'clock. If I don't turn up, the job's gone, and my hopes of finding the necklace are gone with it. Worse than that, Miss Willing is coming home on Saturday, and she's sure to spot the necklace is missing. Babs—oh, Babs, what can I do?"

Babs stared at her, stung to compassion by the frantic anxiety and misery on her face. Poor Vi! What a jam! For her sister's sake she had landed herself into this. But wait a minute! She'd got to do something—and she could do something!

"All right, Vi, cheer up!" she said quickly. "I've got a way out. I think. You say you'll be coming back to-night?"

"Yes, but—"

"Then," Babs said, "what about this? Let me take your place, Vi? Give me those clothes; you take mine. No difficulty," she added quickly, as the other girl incredulously stared. "It will be easy enough. After all, we're both rather alike. If I powder my face with dark stuff and wear glasses and those togs, nobody will tell the difference, especially as they've only seen you once at the circus."

Vi's eyes were open wide.

"Babs, you—you couldn't!" she tremulously said.

"Why not?" Babs asked. "No, Vi, I'm going to. You've done me a jolly good turn; this is my chance to repay a bit of it. Meantime," she added, "I'll keep my eye on Mysti's caravan, and perhaps—who knows—I may be able to bag the necklace myself. Anyway, you've just got to obey that telegram, Vi, and it's only for one afternoon, dash it all!"

"Oh, Babs, what a brick you are!"

"Stuff!"

"And—and you won't breathe a word to a soul?" Violet almost feverishly pleaded. "Babs, tell me you won't tell anyone? It's a secret."

"A dead secret," Babs agreed. "Just between you and me. I—". And then she jumped round as there came a cough behind her; as a twig creaked under a foot. And Vi's face turned deathly pale as another figure stepped on the scene.

The figure of a boy—a Friardale schoolboy—whose ruggedly handsome face was as embarrassed as theirs were startled. Babs gave a tiny gasp at sight of him.

"Jimmy!" she cried. "You—you heard?"

Jimmy Richmond, cap in hand, fingered it nervously.

"I'm sorry, I—I couldn't help hearing. But please don't look alarmed," he said, as Violet took a step back. "Babs, I heard what you promised, and I think it's splendid of you. But now, as the third sharer of the secret, I'm going to make a condition."

"And that's what?" Babs asked.

"Just," Richmond said earnestly, "that you don't carry this thing through alone. I've been having a look round that circus, Babs, and there are some nasty customers in it. This isn't exactly a girl's job, Babs, and I wouldn't be your pal if I let you run into it on your own. I just mean," Richmond said simply, "that, whether you like it or not, I'm going to help."

### First Attempt—Failure!



"Oh, Jimmy!" Babs breathed, and her eyes shone. "But how did—did you come to hear everything?"

Richmond flushed a little.

"I'm sorry; that wasn't intentional," he said. "As a matter of fact, I'm dodging one of the prefects at the school. I thought he was on my track, so I hid in the bushes just here, and when I heard your friend moving about I thought it was he. I didn't mean to listen, of course, but as things have turned out I'm jolly glad that I did."

Violet nervously bit her lip.

"And—and you won't say anything?"

The boy smiled slightly.

"Babs will tell you I won't. You can rely on me."

"Rather!" Babs said. "Vi, don't worry. Your secret is as safe with Jimmy as it is with me. Now put everything out of your mind, old thing—and for goodness' sake hurry!" she cried urgently. "Otherwise you'll never get that train. Jimmy, you can do something right away. Will you slip back to Friardale and get some dark face powder and eyebrow pencil and a pale lipstick and a pair of glasses—"

"I'll get a make-up box from the Junior Dramatic Society," Richmond grinned. "Better use the hut if you're going to swap togs," he added. "I'll borrow your bike if you don't mind, Babs. I'll soon be back then."

"But—but—" Vi faltered.

"No buts—action!" Babs cried.

"Come along, we can change in the hut. To-morrow morning we'll meet here again and swap back. As we change, you can explain what I do."

She bundled Violet into the hut. "All feverish anxiety was Babs now. Phew, what a startling twist, though, to the afternoon—and what an adventure now lay before her! If it were only possible to get back that necklace—to allay the anxiety and the nervous worry of these two sisters—that a triumph for them all! And somehow she felt confident now of that issue. She was glad in her heart that she had found such a grand ally as Jimmy Richmond to back her up in this project. Good old Jimmy!

Hurriedly she and Violet began to strip.

"There, Vi!" she said, handing over her school clothes. "Now hand me those gipsy things. Better swap the stuff in our handbags, too."

The change was made.

"Good work!" approved Babs.

"Now where's that slacker, Jimmy?"

"Ahem!" a voice said from outside.

"Can I come in?"

"Please do!" Babs said.

The door opened. Jimmy Richmond, flushed from a record run back to Friardale School, looked in.

"I've brought the make-up box, Babs. Want a hand to make up?"

Babs didn't. Thanks to the expertness of her chum, Mabel Lynn, in such matters, she knew all about making-up. She got busy with greasepaint and powder.

"How's that?" she asked eventually.

"Phew! Stunning!" Richmond said. "Put the glasses on, Babs."

Babs put the glasses on. Richmond gave a whoop.

"My giddy aunt! You ought to go in for imitations, Babs. You'll pass for Violet anywhere. But you'd better hurry," he added, with an anxious glance at his wrist-watch. "Babs, have you got all the dope?"

"Dope?"

"Well, has Vi told you what to do?" "There's nothing much," Violet said hurriedly. "All you do is to go to Mr. Strong's office—Mr. Strong is the manager of the fun fair, you know—and hand in this ticket. Oh, Babs, it's—wonderful of you, and—and you, too, Jimmy!"

"Right! Well, come on!" Richmond



said hurriedly, and went out and got Babs' bicycle. "Can you ride a bike? She can leave it at the station, Babs." "Can I eat chocolates?" Violet laughed. "To-morrow, then, Babs."

"To-morrow morning here—at eight o'clock," Babs said. "So-long!" She and Richmond stood there at the door of the hut as Violet, looking much happier, pedalled off along the cinder track with a wave of her hand. Then, for the first time, Richmond looked grave.

"Big thing, Babs! Risky!"

Babs laughed a little.

"Oh, stuff! I don't see where the risk comes in. After all, it was up to me."

"Perhaps," Richmond said. "Anyway, no time now to argue the pros and cons of things. But wait a jifflet, Babs; we're working together in this, and you're not running any more risk than absolutely necessary. While you look after Vi's job, I'll scout around and find out which is the caravan. And best, I think," he added keenly, "if we don't appear to know each other in the circus. If I got bowled out, there's no need why you should be associated with me. By the way, know who Mysti is?"

"No," Babs said.

"Daughter of the lion-taming fellow, who calls himself Bruno—burly looking bloke. I know, because I've had a look around the circus with Cattermole and Don Haybury this morning. Better get along now, though," he added, "and we'll chin things over as we go. No nerves, Babs?"

"What do you think?" Babs asked, with a laugh that completely dismissed the suggestion. All the same, she was thrilling. All the same, she was excited. Whatever danger there was, there was no doubt this was an adventure—an adventure, she vowed, for the sake of Violet's sister, that would be one crowned with success. But she'd have to go careful. If word of this got back to the school, for instance, there would be the dickens to pay.

Together she and the boy strolled off, Babs clutching her employment ticket in her hand. On the way, just to avoid the subject, they talked of the forthcoming hockey match, and seeing that Babs would have to go back with some information on that subject, arranged the details she had been asked to fix up. Barely had that matter been cleared up than they emerged from the wood on to the common. There, under a tree, Richmond stopped.

"Parting of the ways here, Babs," he said gently. "See you in the circus. Now, old girl, be careful. Promise?"

Babs gave the promise, and they parted. A quarter of a mile away, covering several acres of ground with its big top, its tents and caravans and side shows, Stone's stupendous, colossal circus stood, already making the air hideous with music, and with quite a crowd of people flooding towards it. Babs looked at her ticket.

She smiled as she read the printed contents.

"Stone's stupendous circus fair," it read. "Employees' ticket—fair section. To be given up to Mr. L. Strong, Wagon No. 3."

And on a line beneath that announcement was the name under which Babs would now be known—"Brenda Tutton."

With a sense of mounting excitement, she joined the throng pushing in through the turnstile, and presented her card.

The man there gave her a look, and

then jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

"Employees' entrance fifty yards to the right," he grunted. "Didn't they tell you that?"

"Oh, sorry!" Babs said, in some confusion. "I—I forgot."

She bustled out among the crowd. Wumps! First little snag. With just a little apprehension she presented her card to a red-uniformed, gold-braided attendant she found at the little wicket gate farther on, and he nodded to her.

"Right! Third wagon along," he said. "You'll find Mr. Strong in his office."

Office and wagon turned out to be one and the same place. The wagon was a long, low caravan of gleaming silver and mahogany. Half a dozen other girls were there, all possessing similar tickets to the one which Babs held, and all obviously as new to their jobs as herself.

Mr. Leslie Strong, a pleasant enough old chap, with distinctive white eyebrows and dark brown hair, stared at her as she handed in the ticket.

"Oh, yes, you!" he said. "Late, aren't you? You're in charge of Houpla Stall No. 3, near the living quarters. And mind," he added, with a frown, "those hoops have got to lay flat before you hand over prizes, though if you find anybody spending a lot of money without winning anything, you can make them a present of a small packet of cigarettes, or a box of chocolates. Got that?"

"Yes," Babs agreed meekly.

"Hoops, three for sixpence, or seven a shilling," Mr. Strong further instructed. "And no leaving the stall without permission. If you do, it's the sack! Right-ho! Get! I'll be along later!"

Babs, with a relieved gulp, turned, thankfully hurrying towards the door. As she did so the threshold was darkened, and a tall, bold-faced girl, dressed in spangled tights and puffing at a cigarette, came lounging in. She paused at sight of Babs.

"Hallo! New hand, aren't you?" she asked.

"Yes," acknowledged Babs.

"Temporary?"

"Yes," Babs said, wondering.

"Oh!" the girl smiled. It was a lofty smile. "Well, in that case you can do something for me," she said patronisingly. "You know who I am, of course?"

"No," Babs retorted.

"I'm Mysti. And Mysti," that girl said, "is one of the top-liners in this outfit! And don't stare at me like that!" she added petulantly; for Babs naturally was staring at her now with all the eyes she had got. "Buzz off and get me twenty cigarettes! I'll give you the money when you come back."

"Yes?" Babs said. "But I'm sorry, I can't. I understand I'm employed here to take charge of Houpla Stall No. 3, and that hardly gives me time for running errands. Cheerio!"

And Babs coolly strolled out, leaving Mysti spluttering in surprised fury.

Babs grinned a little. So that was Mysti, was it? Apart from being a thief, she was also a bully! Right, Babs thought grimly. She knew now where she stood. Her resolve to help Violet by any means in her power was strengthened from that moment.

Meantime, here was Houpla Stall No. 3. Babs smiled as she reached it. Very tempting, very trim the stall looked, with its array of cheap prizes, each supported on wooden blocks, its garlands of hoops hung to the centre pole. A dozen or more people were staring at it, obviously wondering when it was going to open.

"All right!" Babs called briskly. "Here we are! Business starts in a minute, people, and I hope you'll all win a prize!" She let herself in by the little gate, and, gathering an armful of hoops, beamed. "Three hoops for sixpence; seven for a shilling! Now, who's first?"

"Oh, please," a small boy piped,



"I SAY, can't you swap the clock for this penknife?" Bessie asked hopefully. "Sorry, old Bess—" the disguised Babs started, and then could have bitten off her tongue in dismay. "I mean—I mean—" "You said my name, you know!" Bessie stammered, and the other chums stared wonderingly at Babs.

"I've only got a penny! Kik—couldn't I have half a throw for that?"

Babs laughed.

"You shall have a whole one—for nothing!" she promised, and handed him a hoop, at the same time putting two pennies from her own money into the cashbox which stood on the corner of the hoop-la table. "Now, mind you win something!"

It was a good start. It was a start which was appreciated by Babs' customers. Interest immediately became concentrated on the small boy, who, quivering with excitement and apprehension, now took his stance.

And the watchers all grinned as he threw. Then what a cheer went up! For the hoop, falling over a bottle of barley sugar, for a moment came to rest on the corner of the wooden block, and then slipped over, forming a complete circle round the bottom of the block.

"I've won!" the small boy shrieked.

"Won you have," Babs agreed, and picked the bottle up. "And here's the prize," she added jovially. "Don't eat it all at once, though." She paused as she saw Mysti come striding out of Mr. Strong's office. "Roll up, now, ladies and gentlemen! Three for sixpence; seven a shilling!"

Business was brisk at once. They all liked Babs. As fast as she could Babs paid out the hoops, collecting sixpences and shillings in return. Great fun, this! How it reminded her of the Courtfield Charity Fair before the war broke out in those far-off, peaceful days of the summer! But, all the same, Babs was watching Mysti.

She saw her storm past the stall; she saw the furious look she flung at her as she ran on. At the back of the stall, perhaps fifty yards away, was a long line of caravans, and into the fifth of these from the end Mysti went. Babs' eyes gleamed.

So that, she guessed, was where Mysti lived. That was the caravan which was to be her objective—the objective of Jimmy Richmond!

As she paid out hoops and collected money, she stared at it. There was nothing to emphasise its distinction from its fellows, except for a small line of washing which hung outside. Babs took a careful note of that.

Then presently she saw Mysti emerge again, this time accompanied by a great, strapping, bristling-moustached man, who, with vivid red dressing-gown slung over leopard-skin tights, was rather reminiscent of some barbarian from the Stone Age. That, she guessed, was Bruno, the lion-tamer and Mysti's father. They collected some cases lying outside the caravan and carried them inside.

Babs' attention was called from the couple by the excited voice of another prizewinner. With a laugh, she handed over the prize—a small brooch—and then started as she heard her name.

"Babs!"

Jerking round, she found herself staring into the face of Jimmy Richmond.

"Six hoops, please!" he said in a loud voice; and, as Babs handed them to him: "Anything happened?" he whispered.

"No; nothing much. But I've found out where they live—the caravan behind you; one with the washing hanging out. Now, people," she cried in her natural voice, "here we are! Try your luck!"

She paid attention to customers. She did not see Jimmy hurriedly pitch his rings—anywhere—and then draw back

from the stall. But she saw him four or five minutes later among the crowd, carefully, stealthily making his way towards the caravan outside which the line of washing hung. Oh, goodness, why hadn't she told him that Bruno and Mysti were still in that caravan? Still, Jimmy would be careful.

In the intervals between her duties she watched him. Now Jimmy approached the caravan; now, using the washing as a screen, he was peering at it. She saw him duck beneath that washing; saw him skirting the caravan and pause beneath one of the windows. As he did so, a face peered out from another window. It was the face of Mysti.

Babs' heart seemed to stop. Mysti had spotted Jimmy, and Jimmy, from his point of view, did not know she was staring at him!

Suddenly, out of the caravan, carrying a stout walking-stick in his hand, crept Bruno, the lion-tamer.

At the same moment, through a gap in the crowd of customers, she saw Mr. Strong approaching.

Babs opened her lips to shriek a warning to her boy chum, but some instinct warned Richmond in time.

With a jerk, he whirled—just as the lion-tamer, sneaking up behind him, lifted his stick.

For one fraction of an instant the two glared at each other; then desperately Richmond grabbed upwards and caught the wrist that held the stick, and, by an enormous feat of boyish strength, snatched it away.

Then Babs almost fainted. Like a sledgehammer, the angry lion-tamer's fist came round. It connected with the boy's jaw, and Richmond went reeling.

"Now get out!" hooted Bruno.

"Jimmy—" Babs muttered in agony.

But the fight, as far as Richmond was concerned, was obviously over. Richmond had the sense to see that in a hand-to-hand fight with the big lion-tamer, he would not have stood a fly's chance. One hand to his jaw, he rose. Babs saw that he was saying something, but could not catch the words. Then, abruptly, he turned away.

And at the same moment Mr. Strong came up to the stall. He glared at Babs.

"And what," he rapped, "do you mean by star-gazing, Miss Tutton, when half a dozen customers are clamouring for attention? Get on with your work this instant!"

### The Supreme Test of Disguise!



"Y-YES," Mr. Strong! Babs gasped flusteredly; but

her mind was in a whirl. For she had just glimpsed her boy chum entering the canteen thirty or forty yards along the trackway formed by the stalls.

Jimmy—was he badly hurt?

She felt that she must know. She must see Jimmy at once. At the same time, she could not desert the stall—especially under her employer's eyes.

"I—I'm sorry," she said, an idea swiftly coming to her. "I—I was just thinking—of something I'd forgotten—something, perhaps, that I dropped while I was going into your office. And—and I was rather worried, because I couldn't leave the stall!"

Mr. Strong grunted.

"Well," he said, "well, then—" He gazed at the throng of customers, and appreciation showed in his face.

"You seem to be doing well," he concluded. "I must say that business looks good. I'll take charge here while you nip off after whatever it is you've lost. But don't be a minute!" he warned.

Babs could have hugged him for that. No second bidding needed she. At once she was out of the gate; in a flurried state of agitation, she ran across to the white canvas canteen. There were only a few people in it, and those for the main part lolling against the counter. Jimmy she spotted at once, sitting at a table behind the entrance flap.

Stirring a cup of tea with one hand, he nursed his jaw with the other. He gave quite a jump, however, as she came up.

"Babs, you shouldn't—"

"Jimmy— Oh, goodness, are—are you all right?" Babs breathed anxiously.

"Yes, of course!"

"But that brute—"

The boy ruefully smiled.

"He certainly gave me a sock!" he said. "Ouch, the way that chap can hit! I feel a-bit of a funk, not standing up to him—"

"But, Jimmy, that's silly!" Babs said. "You couldn't stand up to him. It—it would be like a fishing-smack fighting a battleship! Jimmy, did he—he suspect, do you think?"

"About the necklace? No. Why should he? I fancy he thought I was just being nosey and was out to give me a lesson with that stick. But, Babs, get out of here," he added agitatedly—"please! The last thing we must do now is to be seen together; they might smell a rat. I'll get in touch with you if anything happens, and— Oh, my hat—quickly!" he groaned.

And Babs, turning away from the table, received a sudden little shock as she saw the girl who had come into the canteen. It was Mysti.

"Hallo!" she said, and suspiciously her eyes went from Babs to the boy.

"You two pals?" she sneered.

"Rats! Don't be silly!" Babs sniffed.

"But I saw—"

"Please, out of my way; I've work to do!" Babs said impatiently; and before Mysti could stop her, she strode out and hurried back to her stall.

"Well, find it?" Mr. Strong asked.

"Oh, thank you, yes, Mr. Strong!" Babs gratefully gulped. "I—"

"Right-ho, then, take over! I'm going along to the skittles!"

Babs smiled. She felt an appreciative glow of affection for Mr. Strong.

The crowd about the stall had thinned a little now, though business was still brisk. From the big top the circus' huge brass band was blaring out, showing that the circus performance was about to begin. In the living quarters she saw spangled and gay-costumed artistes fitting to and fro, and a great crowd of horses, riders, and lion cages, all making their way towards the entrance of the big top in order to take their various parts in the parade which was the inevitable forerunner to all performances. She looked towards Mysti's caravan.

And her eyes suddenly gleamed as she saw Bruno come out of that, a long whip in his hand as he started off towards the big top. Mysti followed him.

What a chance to explore that caravan! When he and Mysti were engaged in the circus ring!

Did Jimmy know?

She was debating the question in her mind, when a familiar voice struck upon her ears.



"Oh, I sus-say, you girls! Look, there's my kik-clock, you know!"

As if she had been shot, Babs jumped round. Then she fell back with a groan of dismay. For hastening towards the stall, her fat face flushed and excited, was Bessie Bunter.

And behind Bessie, obviously heading for the hoop-la stall, were Clara Trevlyn, Mabel Lynn, Leila Carroll, and Marjorie Hazledene.

**When Discovery Seemed Certain!**



**F**OR one swift moment panic seized Barbara Redfern. For one ghastly instant she told herself that all was lost—that she was recognised! But she controlled herself.

She had to. She had to rely upon her disguise.

She adjusted her glasses, pulled the scarf a little farther over her forehead, and braced herself for the shock of the meeting. But as it happened, Clara & Co. barely gazed at her. They were looking towards the small clock, perched on its wooden plinth, which Bessie was eagerly pointing at.

"I sus-say, it is mine, you know!" she cried.

Babs swung round, staring at the clock in question. There were so many small clocks of various design on the stall that not until that moment had she taken any stock of this particular one; but now she stared. It was certainly very like Bessie's broken clock.

"Chump! How can it be yours?" Clara chuckled. "You busted yours! But not a bad idea," she added keenly, "to try to win it! Ten to one old Babs won't be able to buy one like it!"

"Yes, rather! Here, I say, give me some hoops!" Bessie beamed.

"Three for sixpence—seven a shilling, miss." Babs said gruffly, keeping her head lowered.

"Eh? Seven a shil— Oh, phoo, I shan't want seven! One will do!" Bessie said loftily. "I'm a champion hoop-la thrower, you know! In fact," the plump duffer added rather vaguely, "I shall probably win two prizes with the same hoop! Twopence for one, please!"

She handed over her twopence. Babs, with a smile, took it, handing back the hoop. Then Mabs, who had been staring at her, spoke.

"I say, don't I know you?" she asked.

For a moment Babs turned cold.

"Do you, miss?" she murmured, making her voice more gruff and deep.

"What's your name?" Mabs asked.

"Brenda Tutton, please, miss," Babs answered.

Mabs shook her head puzzledly as she stared. Babs turned her face away, feeling her heart thumping.

If Mabs should guess—

But Mabs didn't, though it was obvious that Mabs was still mentally groping to place this hauntingly familiar girl. All attention now, indeed, was on Bessie, who was standing in a majestic quoit-throwing poise preparatory to netting her prize. She blinked once, twice—then, drawing a deep breath, let fly.

"Wow!" yelled Clara at her side.

"I'm not the clock, you dummy! That hit me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie glowered at her chums, and the crowd burst into a laugh. Babs, hiding her grin, picked up the hoop.

"Try again, miss," she said huskily.

Bessie tried again. This time the hoop, by an alarming fluke, shot

straight across the board and hooked itself to a dozen other hoops on the inner pole.

"My hat, what a throw!" gurgled Clara. "Better buy a few more hoops!"

Bessie tried again—buying seven hoops this time. Some went on the board, some over it; one rolled near the clock, but no farther. Mabs chuckled.

"Go it, old Bessie."

"Give me another seven!" Bessie said fiercely.

Babs smiled, though she felt sorry for her plump chum. She handed her the seven hoops, and again Bessie threw. This time she did secure a prize—a boy's cheap penknife.

"Blow! I say, can't you swap the clock for this penknife?" she asked hopefully.

"Sorry, old Bess—" Babs said.

"Eh?"

"I mean—I mean—" And Babs broke into an inward perspiration as

aside, still perspiring under her powder. But again Bessie drew a perfect blank.

"Try another seven, Bess," Clara advised.

"I kik-can't!" Bessie confessed. "I—I'm broke! You know, I think there's a trick in this Oh dear! I say, what's this for?" she added as Babs pushed a small box of chocolates in her hand.

"A sort of compensation prize, miss," Babs said, with a smile. "I'm so awfully sorry you didn't win the clock. Better luck next time, eh?"

"Yes, rather! But I jolly well will win it, you know!" Bessie said, with determination. "I say, this is awfully nice of you! I like you, in spite of your swindling stall! But come on, girls, let's go and meet old Babs."

She smiled at Babs. They all smiled, struck by some odd liking for this gipsy girl

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she realised the slip her tongue had made. "I mean—"

"But—but you said my name, you know!" Bessie stuttered.

"You know her?" Mabs cried, staring.

"I—I—" Babs stuttered. "Oh dear! But—but, of course, I know her," she said.

"I—that is to say, I heard you call her by name. I—I didn't mean to be disrespectful," she added, hoping they would all think her confusion was due to the fact that she had let Bessie's Christian name slip. "I'm sorry."

Mabs stared hard at her. But Bessie dimpled.

"Oh, that's all right! Don't worry," she said. "I am Bessie, you know—Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter. It's not surprising you know my name, because it's only one of the oldest and the most aristocratic in England, you know! Let me have another seven hoops, please."

Again Bessie threw, while Babs stood

With mixed feelings, Babs watched them drift off, glad because she felt the peril of recognition was being removed, but feeling rather lonely somehow when they had finally disappeared. She wondered, vaguely, what odd chance had made them decide to come along to the circus after afternoon lessons.

Meantime—  
Business was slackening now. The diversion Bessie's efforts had created seemed to have drawn the crowd away when Bessie herself had departed. Apart from that, a great many people were in the big top now that the circus was in full swing.

Her eyes went to the caravans again. Now was her chance. She wondered where Jimmy was; but as there was no sign of Jimmy, it was up to her to act. For the moment business was completely dead.

Towards the outside living quarter lines she made her way. Her breath came a little faster than usual as she dived under Mysti's washing, and with

a swift glance to right and left went up the steps to the door of the caravan.

Now—  
She caught the handle. She turned it. And then a swift cluck of disappointed dismay came to her lips as she pushed in vain at the door. Mysti, obviously, had taken the key.

No sense in pursuing that means of entrance, Babs told herself. The next thing, obviously, were the windows. Down the steps she hurried.

But before she could examine the windows there came the sound of swiftly running feet near her, and in panic Babs turned. Then she gasped as she saw Jimmy Richmond.

"Babs, quickly—out of that!" he said urgently. "They're coming back! I'll meet you later at the hut in the woods. Hurry!"

And without further hesitation Babs flew, just as the brutal-looking Bruno and Mysti appeared. No further chance then to make an investigation. The two went straight to their caravan. In any case, her job would soon be over now, for the fair, forbidden to show lights, had to close at dusk.

With her mind on Jimmy and Violet, and conscious of a sense of disappointment that the afternoon, after all, had not been the success she had hoped it would be, she attended to her remaining customers until, just before five o'clock, Mr. Strong came round. He nodded to her as he handed her an employment ticket for the morrow.

"Turn up at three, sharp," he instructed. "Hand over the takings, and I'll get the men to shut up the stall. And don't forget—three o'clock," he warned. "Otherwise, it's the sack. The day after we'll probably be opening in the morning, but I'll let you know about that later."

"Yes," Babs said, but inwardly hid a smile. If Mr. Strong only knew that to-morrow another would be taking her place!

She hurried back towards the woods. It was completely dark when she reached the hut, but there before her was the faithful Jimmy, and with Jimmy the bicycle she had lent to Violet. He peered as she came up.

"Hallo, Babs, that you? I've got your bike back for you. Here it is. 'Fraid," he said ruefully, "we didn't accomplish much except a sock on the jaw!"

"No," Babs agreed disappointedly. "Still, we've got the lie of the land," Richmond said. "Sorry if I put the wind up you at the caravan," he added, with a grin, "but I decided, before I made another shot at getting into the caravan, I'd make sure of Mr. Bruno and Mysti first. So first of all I went over to the performers' entrance to get an idea how long they were likely to be away, and it was while I was there that I saw you snooping up the steps."

"Thanks, Jimmy," Babs smiled. "But now, what about Violet?"

"I've worked that out," Richmond said. "I said I'd help her, and I will. But, Babs, there's no need for you to worry about anything else now, except the co-ed. hockey match. I'll attend to Vi. You're meeting her to-morrow at eight, aren't you?"

"Yes."  
"Right-ho! I'll be here at the same time, and we'll work out some plan of campaign between us. But you'd better scoot now—and for goodness' sake don't let anybody see you getting into school in those duds."

But Babs had already thought of that. Fortunately it was dark when she reached the school grounds, and,

entering by the servants' entrance, she made her way towards the kitchen, hiding her bike in the shrubbery. Vividly conscious of her gipsy attire, she stepped into the little hall.

Nobody about, thank goodness.

The lights were on, though the A.R.P. blinds were drawn. Swiftly she turned towards the housekeeper's corridor, drawing back with a sudden sharp gasp as the housekeeper's door unexpectedly opened and Mrs. Carey herself appeared. Had she happened to look in Babs' direction all would have been lost then, and Babs held her breath. Luck was with her. Mrs. Carey did not even glance at the spot where Babs was desperately pressing herself against the wall. She went on. "Phew!" gasped Babs.

Her heart was thudding heavily when the Fourth Form dormitory was at last reached.

Feverishly she tore off her gipsy costume, throwing it in a hasty bundle and ramming it under her bed. She cleaned her darkened face with cold cream, and turned on the hot water. She was still in the act of washing her face when, to her dismay, the door opened, and Mabel Lynn and Clara Trevlyn came in.

Their eyes widened as they saw her. "Why, Babs!" Clara cried.

"Where the dickens have you been?" Mabel Lynn asked. "And how did you get into the school without our noticing? We've been hanging about on the steps of Big Hall for the last half-hour, expecting you."

Babs gulped. "I—I came in through the back way."

"But why?" Mabs asked incredulously. "You weren't late, or anything?"

"No; but—but it—it was handier," Babs stammered, "and—and as I felt rather grubby, I decided to come to the dorm and wash and change right away. Anyway, I won't keep you a minute," she added.

"But where," Clara pressed, "have you been?"

"Well, doing things, you know," Babs answered vaguely.

"You've seen Jimmy Richmond?" Clara asked.

"Oh, yes!" She and Mabs eyed each other.

"But you didn't," Clara accused, "go to Friardale School?"

"Who says I didn't go to Friardale School?" Babs asked defiantly.

"We do. Because," Clara said rather grimly, "we've been there ourselves. Don't you realise, chump, that you've been away over three hours? We all expected you back after lessons, and when you didn't come we went along to Friardale, after a look in at the circus, hoping to meet you en route. But we didn't. We went to Friardale right enough, and Don Haybury told us he'd never seen you."

"And Jimmy Richmond—he was missing, too," Mabs said. "If you have seen him, Babs—"

"I have," Babs said. "You met him out of the school, then?"

"That's right," Babs nodded. "I met him in the woods, and—and—well, seeing that my business was just with Jimmy, there wasn't a great deal of sense in going on to the school, was there? We—we went to the circus instead."

"You did?" Mabs said. "We didn't see you."

Babs smiled. She felt she had the situation in hand now.

"Well, the circus isn't exactly a small

place, is it?" she countered. "Anyway, never mind. I've made all the arrangements. We're going to hold the practice match to-morrow morning, and the boys' team is coming over at eleven o'clock."

"Well, I'm ready," she announced, brushing down her second best school-dress. "Come on, let's round the others up!"

The three went down to the Fourth Form corridor together. But barely had they arrived there than trouble arose for Babs.

That came in the person of Miss Primrose, Cliff House's headmistress. She was looking annoyed as she stopped them in the corridor.

"Oh, Barbara—"

"Yes, Miss Primrose?"

"This morning," Miss Primrose said, "I gave you a message for Dr. Barrymore, of Friardale School—"

Babs' heart gave a jump. Oh, crumbs, in the excitement of other things she had forgotten all about that!

"Apparently," Miss Primrose rumbled, "you have not even been to Friardale School?"

"Oh dear, I—I'm sorry!" Babs stammered.

"That hardly explains your forgetfulness, Barbara."

"No," Babs admitted, "I—I'm sorry. But—but I met Jimmy Richmond, you know, and—and as we had the hockey match to fix up I never went to the school. I'm sus-sorry."

"I trust," Miss Primrose said acidly, "you are. That message might have been important. In the meantime, Barbara, you will take one hundred lines for carelessness. And next time," she added sternly, "try to remember your duty before your own pleasures."

### Jimmy's Terrible Blunder!



"WELL, then, that's all decided,"

Clara Trevlyn said enthusiastically.

"Jolly good work, Babs—although you did take such a whaling

long time about it! I'll get the team out right away. Bully-off at eleven and a practice sprint for the whole team before breakfast at seven-thirty. That agreed?"

Agreed it was. The sports committee which had met in Study No. 4 looked happy. Enthusiasm now for the co-ed. match was at fever heat in the Lower School at Cliff House, and the unusual practice match between the Friardale boys and the Cliff House girls which was to be played to-morrow was the most eagerly discussed topic of the day in the school.

Babs herself felt happy, too, reflecting now that after her meeting with Violet Mason to-morrow she would once more be as freely eager to take a full share of interest in the doings of the school as her chums. But—wait a minute, there was one snag. She couldn't participate in that practice sprint and keep her appointment with Jimmy Richmond and Violet Mason at the old rangers' hut at the same time. Awkward, that.

Should she mention it?  
A swift moment's reflection made Babs decide not to. She had no excuse, except for her lines. Just for once she'd have to cut the practice and trust to circumstances to find some excuse afterwards. Once she had seen Violet everything would be much easier.

"Any questions?" Clara asked cheerily. "If not, we'll break up."



There were no more questions. The meeting, accordingly, broke up.

There was one little thing Babs still had to attend to, and when the Fourth went to bed that night, she accordingly attended to it. When the dormitory was quiet, she got up, collected her bundle of gipsy clothes from underneath the bed, and conveyed them to Study No. 4, making it easier for her to collect them in the morning.

And an hour before rising-bell that morning, when dawn was filtering in through the window of the Fourth Form dormitory, Babs rose, and, creeping out, made her way to her study, from which she retrieved her bundle of garments.

Except for a few early rising servants, nobody was about yet. With a feeling of relief, Babs trotted off down the stairs and into Big Hall, where the great entrance doors had already been opened. It was a habit, nothing else, which made her glance at the letter rack as she passed it.

Then she stopped. Hallo, what was this? A telegram—for her.

With a little thrill Babs took it down. She ripped open the envelope and frowned puzzledly for a moment when she saw the name Brighton franked in the corner. Then, reading the time of delivery, 10.30 p.m. the previous night, she understood. Obviously this wire had arrived after she had gone to bed last night. That was why she had not received it before.

But a little gasp came to her lips as she read it. For the telegram was from Violet Mason. It said:

"Dreadfully sorry to worry you, but can't get back as promised. Will you please carry on until I return, otherwise I lose my job. Writing later. Love, Vi."

In dismay Babs blinked at that. With her mind a sudden whirl, she read and re-read it. Oh, good gracious, what had she let herself in for—but no, that was a mean, uncharitable thought.

She had promised to help Vi. She was going to see this thing through. That meant, whatever the difficulties in her path, she must hold Vi's job open.

Thank goodness, though, she had Jimmy Richmond to help her. This altered the complexion of everything.

Jimmy, when she reached the hut, was already waiting there, early though Babs herself was. He looked a little taken aback when she told him of the latest development.

"I'm awkward!" he said. "Still, we've just got to go through with it, Babs. Violet's relying on us now, and we just can't let her down. And the best thing," Jimmy decided, "is to make as swift a job of it as possible. We can only do that, of course, by grabbing back the necklace."

Babs nodded. "And don't you think," Richmond asked seriously, "you ought to leave that part of the job to me, Babs? It's hardly a girl's work, you know."

Babs flushed. "And it's hardly your work, Jimmy," she said. "After all, you only got into this by accident. Vi is really my friend."

"And I," Richmond returned quickly, "am yours, Babs. Helping Vi means helping you. And I do think you're doing enough, you know, by holding the job down—"

But Babs wasn't hearing of that. "Jimmy, I'm making no more promises," she said. "I think you've done enough as it is. We just work in together, helping each other as we can. Meanwhile, we've got to discuss ways and means."

They discussed ways and means,



**I**N horror Babs and Jimmy stared at the box. "Jimmy," said Babs unsteadily. "Oh, Jimmy! You—you've taken the wrong box! You've taken their savings instead!"

though, naturally, that discussion was somewhat vague. The chief difficulty was Babs—that of getting to the circus in her costume, and back to Cliff House in her school clothes. It was Richmond who made the suggestion that Babs should use the hut for that purpose, hiding her things in an old cupboard there which, fortunately, was intact.

"But supposing," Babs asked, "that somebody came in scrounging and found them?"

"They won't," Richmond said, with a chuckle. Diving his hand into his pocket, he brought out a great bunch of keys. "One of these little jokers will fit that cupboard," he said, "and I'll bet there's another that'll fit the door."

"But, Jimmy, why are you carrying those about?" Babs cried.

Quizzically he eyed her. "Well, remember that Mysti's caravan was locked yesterday?"

"Yes; but—"

"That's the idea," Richmond explained simply. "That's why I brought them along this morning. You see, Babs, I hadn't any intention of deserting Vi, even if you couldn't help any longer. And next time," he added grimly, "I get a chance of exploring the caravan, no locked door is going to stop me! Thus the keys!"

"Oh, Jimmy!" Babs breathed. Richmond laughed, but Babs' eyes shone. What a loyal, unswerving friend Jimmy was!

"And, seeing," the boy chuckled, "we've fixed everything up now, we'll be toddling! See you at eleven o'clock when we come over for the practice match."

Babs placed the gipsy clothes in the cupboard. Richmond found, the key which would fit that cupboard and handed it to her. By great good fortune, he also found a key which would fit the outer door, and, though the lock was rusty and at first refused to budge, a few deft twists by the boy restored it to working order. He grinned breathlessly.

"Bring a drop of oil for that little joker!" he said. "Meantime, Babs, keep your pecker up! And don't

worry!" he added softly. "We'll see this through in no time!"

Brave, optimistic words. But Babs had her doubts. She left him then, hurrying back as fast as her legs would carry her to the school, arriving at the gates just as breakfast-bell was ringing. Clara, who met her as she trotted breathlessly into Big Hall, glared.

"Here, Babs, what's the matter?" she asked angrily. "I thought you understood there was a practice sprint on this morning?"

"Oh, sorry!" Babs said. "I—I had to go somewhere."

"Where?" asked Clara.

"To—to meet someone."

"Meet someone?" Mabs asked, coming up, and gazed at her chum peculiarly.

"Yes. But—but it's all right now," Babs said swiftly. "Come on! Let's go in to brekker, shall we? Clara, I'm sorry, but—but this was important."

"And so," Clara grumbled, "is keeping fit for hockey. Dash it all, somebody's got to take it seriously! Come on!" she added rather crossly.

Babs bit her lip as Clara moved off. Mabs touched her arm.

"Babs, I—I didn't hear you get up," she said. "You know, I'd have loved to come with you. Who did you meet?" she added, with just a tinge of jealousy in her voice.

"Oh, Mabs, please don't ask! I'll tell you later—everything," Babs promised.

Mabs sighed. It hurt her that Babs didn't confide in her, not guessing that Babs could not do so without breaking her promise to Violet Mason.

Breakfast then, and after breakfast assembly. After assembly there was a short service in the chapel, the usual prelude to a whole day's holiday, and after that the school dismissed.

It was ten o'clock then, and a fine, sunny morning for the prospective trial match, in all truth. That match now was the one topic of conversation in Cliff House, and long before the Friar-dale boys had even arrived a great crowd of girls were to be seen racing across to Junior Side in order to secure the best vantage points.

Almost to a girl, the junior school was there, including diminutive fags from the Second Form like Dolores Essendon and Letty Green. Nearly all the Lower Fifth had turned up, too, at least half the Upper Fifth, and a fair sprinkling of the lordly Sixth.

"Whoops! Is this going to be a match?" Clara gleed.

Of all the girls in the school, she was the most excited. Hockey, cricket, all forms of sports meant the world to Clara. By half-past ten she had her team in the dressing-room, and by twenty minutes to eleven they were all changed and ready for the fray. Then a great cheer arose as a motor-coach trundled in at the gate, and the Friardale boys appeared.

"Here they are! Come and wish 'em luck!" Clara gleed. "And remember we've got to put up a great show to-day! I want to see at least five girls in the team to meet the co-ed school!"

Clara was the first to greet the players as they stepped down, led by Ralph Lawrence, the games captain of Friardale, who, with Dulcia Fairbrother, of Cliff House, was acting as umpire in the match. Next came Don Haybury, fit and fresh, and with him the Hon. Laceport Leveden, followed by Douglas Coutts and Lister Cattermole. Haybury, as he shook hands, looked anxiously round.

"I say, has our skipper turned up?" he asked.

"Richmond?" Clara stared. "No."

"But"—Haybury looked at Cattermole—"we thought for certain he was bound to be here. The beggar snooped out of the school this morning before rising-bell, and nobody's seen him since."

"What's that?" Babs sharply asked.

"Fact," Cattermole said. "Dunno what's come over Jimmy. He was dead keen on the co-ed match and this trial game to-day. Now he seems to be taking it light-heartedly. We were all certain he must be here, making arrangements and so forth, especially as he's the skipper. Where can the idiot have got to?"

Clara frowned. Babs had drawn back, her face anxious. So Jimmy, after meeting her at the rangers' hut that morning, had not returned to Friardale School! Where had he gone?

Only one place—oh, Babs knew Jimmy!—the circus.

Her face sharpened with the anxiety she felt. That was just like Jimmy! Jimmy, of course, had some stunt in mind all the time, but, not wishing to draw her into it, had gone off to execute it on his own. But what had happened to him?

"But, surely," Clara asked the boys, "he told you where he was going?"

"Nary a word!" Cattermole laconically replied. "He just went."

"But—but what are you going to do?" Clara stammered.

"Play a reserve, of course, unless Richmond turns up in time," Haybury answered.

Babs turned away. She was no longer thinking of the match. She was thinking of Jimmy, her friend—Jimmy, who was taking this risk for Violet's sake because, by so doing, he could help her. Oh, Jimmy, why hadn't you told me what you had in mind? she thought.

"Well, better get changed, chaps!" Clara said briskly. "Hope Jimmy does turn up, though! The side won't be the same without him. All the same, a pretty shabby trick!" blunt Clara considered. "Hardly what one expects of a skipper!"

"Oh, stuff! Jimmy wouldn't deliber-

ately let the side down!" Babs said a little sharply.

"Eh?"

"Well, I mean—" And Babs coloured. "Well, Jimmy is—isn't that sort of fellow," she said, somewhat lamely.

Clara gazed at her, frowning a little. She opened her lips as if to make some retort, then, thinking better of it presumably, shrugged her shoulders. As the boys departed into the visitors' dressing-room, she nodded.

"Better get hockey sticks," she advised curtly. "Might as well test the feel of the ground until they're ready."

They passed into the pavilion again to fetch the sticks; just as a flock of Friardale fellows, mounted on bicycles, came speeding through the gates. Babs waited, and watched them come up. Was Jimmy among them?

Jimmy was not.

She went into the pavilion, that sense of anxiety gnawing at her heart.

Clara & Co. were already on the ground then, and the home team's quarters were deserted. Babs' hockey stick was still there, propped up near the little window which looked back on to the elm-bordered drive and the ancient clock tower. She picked up the stick, and taking a cursory glance through the window, started.

For from behind one of the elms a figure had appeared—the figure of a Friardale boy, desperately beckoning.

And Babs' heart gave a bound. For the figure was that of Jimmy himself!

Obviously, he had seen her, and, obviously, it was for her that his signals were intended. They seemed to be urgent, too.

She went to the small rear door, away from the playing field, and in a moment was racing across to him.

As she did so, Richard himself moved forward towards the clock tower. Babs saw then that he had some sort of parcel in his hand. With a swift look to her rear, she plunged in after him.

"Babs—" he breathed.

"Oh, Jimmy, where—"

"Never mind." His face was flushed with excitement, his eyes ablaze.

"Babs, luck!" he chortled. "Glorious luck! I've got it!"

Babs jumped.

"It?"

"The box—from Mysti's caravan! Look!"

He held out the parcel, which now turned out to be a yellow metal box which he had slipped into a paper bag. It had a metal lid, fitted with a small lock.

"Jimmy!" Babs breathed. "Oh, Jimmy, you wonder!"

He chuckled.

"Just luck!" he said. "Luck was with me all the way this morning! I didn't tell you when I left you, but I went straight on to the circus and did a bit of snooping around. I hid in the bushes near the caravan waiting until Mysti and Bruno would go out—and I hid until I got the blessed cramp in every joint. Then, just when I was thinking of giving up, there was a bit of a fire near one of the tents on the other side of the grounds."

"And—"

"And," the boy chortled, "Mysti and Bruno rushed to the scene with the others. Why, Babs, I practically had the whole outfit to myself, and you can bet I was in that caravan before you could say 'knife!'"

Well, I moved around, and in the drawer of a table I found this—the only box in the caravan. Once I'd got it, of course, I grabbed it up and bolted."

"And—and you've looked inside?" Babs asked.

"No, the thing's locked. Thought I'd better come and tell you right away. This absolutely ends the chase. Wait a minute, though—I've got some small keys on the bunch, and we'll take a peek together. Hold it, Babs!"

Almost trembling, Babs held it while her boy chum fished out his keys. Jimmy—good old plucky Jimmy! What a brick he was! With the necklace once more in their possession, the quest at the circus was ended. No need now to worry about carrying on with Violet's job!

"Here we are!" Richmond chuckled, and fitted the key and turned it.

"Whoops, lucky again!" he laughed. "This fits! Now—" And he threw the lid back. "Babs—"

Babs blinked, and Jimmy Richmond astoundedly stared at the contents of that box were revealed to their eyes. There was no pearl necklace there, but the box itself was half full of pound and ten-shilling notes. With mesmerised, goggling eyes they stared at each other.

"Jimmy," Babs said unsteadily—"oh, Jimmy! You—you've taken the wrong box! You've taken their savings instead!"

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### Their Chums Against Them!



JIMMY RICHMOND'S eyes were almost starting from his head.

"Jimmy, we've got to get them back—at once!" Babs cried.

"But—but—"

"Once they find them gone, you can guess the hue and cry there'll be!" Babs gasped. "You don't know, Jimmy—somebody might have spotted you going into the caravan. And then what? You'll be accused of stealing!"

Richmond groaned.

"But—oh, kick me, somebody!" he said. "I would make a bungling mess of the job! But, Babs, they'll be back in the caravan now!"

"Then," Babs said grimly, "we've got to get them out of it! No, wait a minute—we can work this together! Jimmy, I've got the idea! Let's get back at once. You snoop around the caravan and let Bruno and Mysti see you. Make them chase you. Meanwhile—"

"I get it!" Richmond said, and his eyes sparkled. "Oh, Babs, what a plucky old brick you are! But the trial match—"

Babs paused, for a moment knowing an overwhelming sense of dismay. The match—yes—she had forgotten that. But, obviously, something had to be sacrificed. This unfortunate mistake must be redeemed at once! Swiftly, she came to a decision.

"Jimmy, we can't worry about the match! Anyway, it's only a trial, and they've got reserves. Come on—let's hurry. And be careful! If anyone spots us—"

But nobody did spot them as they crept from the clock tower. All attention now was concentrated on the playing pitch. Without difficulty they reached the road, and since there were no buses at that time, set out at a swift walk towards the common. Presently they came in view of the circus, now busily preparing for the afternoon show.

Richmond paused at the employees' gate, fortunately unguarded. One lithe leap and he had jumped over it.



"Right-ho, Babs; you follow! I'll wait my cue until I see you," he muttered.

He vanished. Babs gave him a minute or two, then she, too, clambered over the gate, and, with the box in her hand, cautiously crept towards the living quarters. Careful—careful now, she told herself, for apart from the risk to Jimmy, there was a decided risk to herself, seeing that she was in full Cliff House uniform. Meantime, what of the match?

Every time Babs thought of that her heart knew a queer little contraction. But it couldn't be helped. Jimmy's safety came before hockey.

Now she was in sight of Mysti's caravan, its doors wide open, and she started back with a little jump as she saw Mysti herself and Bruno sitting on the top step. Well, they looked peaceful enough. Babs thought, with relief. Obviously they had not yet discovered the loss of their savings.

In the shadow of the adjoining caravan she crouched down. Where was Jimmy?

Hardly had that question flitted through her mind than it was answered. Two caravans away a cautious figure had stepped into the field, rapidly darting behind the steps of the wagon as he saw Bruno and Mysti. Babs signalled to him.

Richmond saw the signal. He nodded. Then he disappeared again, and for the next five minutes Babs knew the longest wait she had ever made. Then suddenly there came a cry from Bruno—a cry echoed a moment later by Mysti. She heard Bruno shout.

"That boy again! Mysti, get my stick!"

Babs held her breath. Jimmy was succeeding. Then she saw him running like the wind from Bruno's caravan. She heard Bruno shout as his heavy boots stumped down the caravan steps. Then she saw him brandishing his stick as her boy chum broke cover and rushed away towards the fair. After her father went Mysti.

Mysti, lion-tamer, and Richmond all vanished together through the stalls.

Now was her chance!

Out of her hiding-place jumped Babs. Holding her breath, she darted for the caravan steps. Up the steps she had raced in a trice, and, bursting into the caravan, saw at once the table near the window which Richmond had described. Feverishly she strode towards it, jerking the drawer open. Into the drawer she dropped her box. As she turned she saw Mysti—running back.

"Oh, my hat!" Babs cried.

She darted towards the door again—in full view of Mysti now. Mysti saw her as she raced down the steps, and shouted out; but Babs then was speeding like the wind.

A shriek of "Stop her! Stop her!" from Mysti, and she flew as hard as her legs would carry her to the gate. Mysti swerved, intent upon cutting her off, but Mysti, unfortunately, did not see the pail which stood in her way, and with a furious yell went clattering head over heels, while Babs, reaching the gate, simply took it in her stride like a hunter, and, running desperately across the common, reached the edge of the woods.

And there, for three or four minutes, she lay on the grass, getting back the breath she had lost. But she had triumphed. She had won. Jimmy's mistake was redeemed, and for the moment, at any rate, her boy chum was out of danger.

But—but where was Jimmy?

Anxiously she scanned the common from her hiding-place. Five—ten minutes went by, but no sign of Jimmy. As far as she could judge from that distance, however, all seemed to be at peace with the camp, and at last, rising, she made her way along the little path which led to the rangers' hut. Perhaps Jimmy would make for there. A hundred yards before she reached it, however, there was a step behind her. She wheeled.

"Oh, Jimmy!" she cried thankfully, for Richmond it was.

"O.K.?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes," rather! But, Jimmy, you—"

The boy chuckled. "Easy!" he said. "Bruno might have a heftier punch than I've got, but I had him beaten all ends up when it comes to running. My hat, and did I lead that chap a dance?"

They both chuckled when they had compared notes.

"Good work," Richmond approved, "though I was the fool in the first place. Babs, what about the match

"But Babs hadn't anything to do!" Clara protested. "Babs was ready to bully-off with the others. Where did you get to?"

"Well, you see—" Babs said.

"I'm bothered if I do!"

"You see—" Richmond put in.

"Hang it, don't go for Babs, Clara!

It was my fault. I took her away."

"No! I went on my own account!"

Babs cried.

"And let the team down?" Clara asked.

Babs turned hot and cold as she met the questioning glances of the team. They did not know, they did not understand. They thought she had deliberately let the team down. She winced as she saw Mabs' eyes, hurt, disappointed, questioning, fixed upon her.

"Well, I—I'm here now," she said.

"If you want me in the second half, I—"

"Thanks; we can manage!" Clara said curtly. "Come on—everybody!"

They streamed past Babs, glowering at her as they did so. For a moment Babs had a forlorn sense of being

The Editor says:

"THANK YOU, GIRLS"

for the way in which you have taken my advice about making quite certain of your favourite paper every week. As I have already explained, owing to the War and the difficulties of transport, supplies of papers to newsagents are being limited. In future, newsagents will only stock those copies they are sure of selling, and so, unless you have placed an order, you may find it impossible to obtain your copy. Fill in this form and hand it to your newsagent to-day."

THE SCHOOLGIRL

To..... (Newsagent)

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NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

now? What are we going to say when we turn up?"

Babs didn't know. But obviously they had to make some sort of an appearance, and obviously things, for both of them, were not going to be pleasant when they turned up at Cliff House again.

They went. The two teams were just coming off the field for the half-time interval when they arrived. Don Haybury, who had taken Richmond's job as skipper, leading the procession with Clara—Clara was looking decidedly ruffled.

They both halted, staring, as they saw Babs and Jimmy.

"Babs!" Clara cried.

"Richmond!" Haybury exclaimed.

"Ahem!" Babs said. "You see—"

"I see," Clara said bitterly. "A real old let-down! I thought you had an interest in this match, Babs?"

"Oh, Clara, I have—"

"And I thought," Haybury said angrily to Richmond, "you were supposed to be the skipper of the team. Where the dickens have you been since early this morning?"

Richmond turned a painful pink.

"Well, I—I had to do something," he said—"something jolly urgent and important!"

alone, of being utterly in the wrong. Then she felt Richmond's fingers touching her elbow.

"Chin up, Babs! Grin and bear it!" he muttered. "Think of Violet."

"Oh, Jimmy!" Babs breathed.

"Both in the soup, eh?" Richmond asked, in a tone he tried to make light.

But Babs knew that he, outcast of his own team, was feeling very much as she was feeling. It wasn't nice, and yet—what else could she have done?

Worriedly she watched the game as it progressed. It was a good game, certainly a brisk game with both teams keyed up. But there was a weak link in the team, captained by Clara—that weak link being Mabel Lynn. Mabs—dear old Mabs—was doing her best; but it was obvious to everybody that she was no real substitute for Barbara Redfern.

"Babs, better drift away before it ends," Jimmy said. "No sense stopping on and creating a scene. See you this afternoon—by the hut," he added.

Babs nodded. In the circumstances, that was the best possible course. Once the excitement of the match had died

# 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.

We found we hadn't any fresh cloths for this, so had the bright idea of making covers in that crackly "Cellophane" paper.

We put a large circle over the top of each basin, and then slipped a rubber band around—though string would have done as well. Then we gathered up the edges of the paper, and pulled it to the top of the basin, tying with some oddments of ribbon (from last year's Christmas cards) and pieces of coloured cord.

The puddings look so gay now all in a row. I'm quite certain that the one we give to the Annual Bazaar will sell much more swiftly than if it had been done up merely in a homely pudding-cloth.

the side, then sew a neat little zippy fastening along the top for swift and secure fastening.

## ● An Economy Hint

It's necessary for all of us to cut down expenses these days, isn't it? So every little economy that we younger folk can think of is a great help.

Firewood, for example, is not nearly as plentiful as it used to be.

It's a good idea to save orange peel, and to get it thoroughly dry in a box beside the fire, or even to put it into the oven. It is excellent for lighting fires, to use instead of wood, or to help it along.

Potato peelings are too, once they are dried—and if you don't require them for the chickens.

DO you play at "what I should like for Christmas?"

I'm quite sure you do, and certainly this Patricia of yours does. Yes, even this year.

Of course, I shan't get half my wishes—and I know it perfectly well. But it's fun to pretend sometimes.

I wonder what you're all wishing for. One of those cosy Pixie hoods, perhaps—with gloves to match. A real manicure set, with file and emery boards and so on. A brush and comb set for your dressing-table, with backs of coloured enamel.

This Patricia of yours has some "luxury" wishes, too. There's that fur coat, for example, that I'd love—with a muff as well. Then I want a pair of fur-lined boots, and a satin-covered eiderdown.

All very warm-making ideas, you'll notice!

But I have some humbler wishes, too. I'd like some new hankies, with lace round the edge—not coloured ones—some bright yellow over-socks, that I simply can't find time to knit for myself, because I always seem to be so busy knitting for other people—and a big box of chocolates with a whopping bow of blue ribbon perched on top!

Mind you, all these wishes are supposed to be secret ones—perhaps I shouldn't have told you!

I asked mother what she wished for, and do you know what she said:

"Pat, I'd just like some black-out curtains that are easy to pull and don't show a single chink of light," she said. "That's my selfish wish. But you know, dear, what my wish for other people is!"

Of course I know, bless her—the wish we all have.

## ● Cheery-Looking

I seem to be getting very Christmasy this week, don't I? For here I go on to Christmas puddings.

We made ours fairly early this year, while fruit was still quite plentiful, and jolly nice they look, too, even though perhaps they're not as "black" as I'd have liked them to be.

We've saved a large one for ourselves for Christmas Day, and sent one off to my elder brother, Brian, who is "somewhere in France," as they say in the papers.

If you want to keep Christmas puddings for any length of time, you should remove the pudding-cloths in which they were cooked and re-cover the old pud. again.

## ● So Cosy

Hot water bottles are such a joy to go to bed with, aren't they? I don't suppose you have one in the ordinary way, but if you should have to spend a day in bed with a cold, it's then they're appreciated.

Some of the grown-ups have taken to them, too, this winter—what with coming indoors cold after "late duties," and saving on fires in the bed-room and so on.

If you wanted to make a nice present for someone—a present that is easy and yet attractive—a cover for a hot water bottle would be the very thing. (Bazaars and hospitals would love them, too.)

For the rubber bottle you should cut out two pieces of blanket or other thick material, large enough to cover the bottle. (I won't give you any exact measurements because these rubber bottles do vary in size so.) Leave an inch for turnings all round, won't you?

Join up the three sides with a French, or run-and-fell seam, and hem around the top opening, sewing on two lots of tapes to tie.

Then, if you like to add a spot of originality to the cover, you might like to embroider—in the simplest running stitch—a candle and stick, and the words "Good-night" underneath.

But all bottles aren't rubber. Some people prefer the aluminium ones—and goodness, aren't they hot, too! They certainly need a cover.

Cut a piece of material that's wide enough to go round the bottle loosely, and long enough to cover it entirely, stopper as well. Join along the bottom and up



## ● Something to Make

This reel of cotton and pin-cushion combined is quite cute, isn't it?

If you feel in a something-to-make mood, you could very easily do this in an evening.

Cut two pieces of felt, or other thick material, to the shape of a doll's head and hair. Join them and fill with bran or sawdust. Then gather up the bottom part tightly, and run the cotton right through the hole in the reel. Fix it through a bead there, and it won't slip.

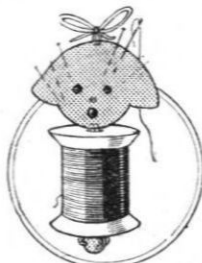
Sew blue buttons on for the doll's eyes, make a stitch or so for the nose, and another button for the mouth.

Your little novelty is now complete—except for the top-knot of strong cotton perched on her head, which enables her to be hung up where she'll be most useful for emergency mending.

Bye-bye, now, my pets, until next week! Be cheery, won't you?

Your friend,

PATRICIA.





# HOBBIES AT CLIFF HOUSE

MISS HILDA RICHARDS and PATRICIA have planned this series of articles for you, to tell you about the hobbies of some of the best-known characters at Cliff House School.



## This Week : BESSIE BUNTER.

Cooking—that's our Bessie's favourite hobby. And she's expert at it, too. You mustn't think that because Bessie is a bit of a dream over other things that she bungles "the culinary art."

Though Bessie finds it almost impossible to add fractions on paper when she's in class, she finds it child's play to measure out quarter pounds of lard, two teaspoonfuls of sugar, and so on.

It isn't remarkable, really, for quite a number of people who aren't very bright at lots of things simply excel at one particular gift they may have.

Of course, Bessie doesn't get a lot of opportunity to practise her cookery. The Fourth Form has a domestic science lesson once a week—the high-spot of Fridays for Bessie.

Her pastry is said to be the lightest in the school, and Bessie says that's because she's got a "fairy touch."

This may sound a bit romantic, but actually there's sense in it. For two girls can be given exactly the same ingredients, work to the same time, use the same type of pastry board and roller, the same oven even—and yet one girl's pastry will melt in your mouth, while the other is just—well, ordinary. The secret does lie in "the touch."

Light handling of cooking utensils is one of Bessie's knacks. And there is nothing to make her shiny face beam more than to bring from the oven a crispy pie that looks almost too tempting to be real.

The frying of sausages may sound rather easy. But Bessie always insists that they require skill, too—and I'm inclined to agree with her.

"You should always prick the sausages first before putting them into the pan," says Bessie. "Do this with a sharp-pronged fork. It allows the sausages to swell, without making them burst all over the place."

The fat should be heated before the sausages are popped into the pan, too. Allow them to cook gently and then turn up the gas, or increase the heat to "brown them off" to give them that crunchy flavour.

Bessie has a favourite cookery book that she often looks at—just for pleasure. A "Mrs. Beeton." It doesn't sound very exciting—but Bessie loves it! It was a cookery prize.

Next Week : JEMIMA CARSTAIRS.

# BRAIN TEASERS

A few more puzzles and catches for leisure moments.

1. How can you show that 6 is half of 11?

That's just a trick, and you need pencil and paper to prove how it can be done.

Now two riddles:

2. Which county of England is the most studious?

3. If your uncle's sister is not your aunt, what relation is she to you?

They're both quite good, I think, and you'll find the answers at the end.

4. Next see if you can change the word LAND to SEAS, making only three changes—but each change must form a separate word, remember.

My next one is an old favourite—but most of you may not know it.

5. Go up to a chum and say: "Can you spell hungry horse in four letters?" Maybe she'll give it up as hopeless, in which case, you promptly tell her the answer—below.

6. Another riddle now. What fruit appears on every penny?

## THE ANSWERS.

Now here are the answers. Remember to hide them if you're trying these puzzles on the family.

1. Write 11 in Roman figures, XI. Now cover this with a piece of paper, so that it looks like VI. And there you are.

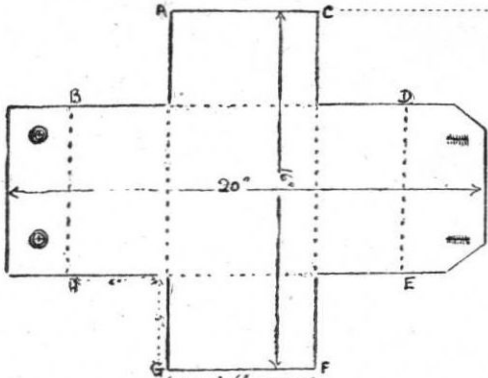
2. Berkshire; because it has a whole town in it that is always Reading.

3. She would be your mother.

4. LAND, Lend, Lead, Leas, SEAS.

5. M T G G (empty gee-gee—see it)

6. The date.



# A NEW CASE FOR YOUR GAS-MASK

Here is the pattern of the gas-mask case. If you follow the measurements carefully you can't go wrong.

LOTS of you already have a case for covering the cardboard box in which your gas-mask is, I know. But then, some of you haven't. And there are still others of you who may have a pretty enough case, but require a new one for the winter months—one that is completely waterproof.

So that's why I've designed one for you. It's very simple to cut out if you follow the diagram exactly, and just as easy to make up.

Now what material will you make it in? I suggest gaily-coloured American cloth, or that pretty, patterned oil-silk. You'll only need half a yard of either material—and this should cost about 6d.

After turning your paper round again so that line G, F, is nearest to you, now cut from G for 5 inches. Do the same from F. Then turn and repeat from A and C.

Next, cut from these corners towards the right and left sides of the paper—that is, towards H, E, D, and B.

You now have the essential shape. Now you can do a little trimming off of corners as shown on the right of the diagram.

The next step is some careful folding. All the dotted lines in the diagram represent folds. Place the cardboard case of your gas-mask on the pattern, and then fold up to make sure your measurements are correct.

## A PATTERN FIRST

First take a good look at the diagram here, then cut a piece of paper measuring 20 inches one way and 16 the other. (This is to serve as a pattern, so that there

## CAREFUL CUTTING

There—having the pattern correct, you can use it as a guide for cutting out the material itself. Pin it to the paper pattern so that it doesn't slip, and wield

will be no fear of your spoiling the precious material.)

With a pencil mark the centre of the long sides and the centre of the short sides.

Now mark the line G, F, which measures 3 inches on each side of the pencil mark on the 20-inch side.

Turn the paper round, and mark A, C, which also measures 3 inches on either side of the pencil mark there.

the scissors carefully. It's quite tricky—but not difficult, if you go gently and don't get flustered.

The cutting-out done, you now have four joins to make. Allowing half an inch for turnings, join A to B, C to D, E to F, and G to H. These seams should be five inches long and the corners should be neatly tucked in.

Now you must either hem or bind the other raw edges. I think binding in that pretty bias-binding or with tape would look best—and it's stronger, too.

## STRONG STITCHING

Sew two buttons on the straight edge that folds over the top of your case, and make two buttonholes on the shaped end.

Your case should now fit neatly into this, and button close on top.

It's now complete except for the strap. This can be made, as long or as short as you like, from the oddments of material you cut away, joining them into a long strip, and turning inside out.

If you can use the family machine, I certainly should for this job, but if not, sew in strong back-stitching.

And if you find the slightest difficulty in doing the cutting out yourself, do ask a grown-up to help you. I've made the diagram as simple as possible, but I do realise that they can be a bit baffling to follow if you're not made that way.

(Continued from page 11)

down, both of them would be called to account by the team they had let down, and better to vanish and let tempers cool before that happened. So while Richmond unobtrusively slipped away, Babs wandered off into the school.

And, passing the letter-rack, she pulled up with a start. For there, pinned below the "R's," was a letter in the well-known handwriting of Violet Mason.

Babs took it down. Eagerly she ripped it open. The letter was from Vi, written from a Brighton address, and apologising because she had not returned as promised, the reason being that her mother had been taken ill. "Here," Vi added, "I am making arrangements for mother to be transferred to a nursing-home, either to-night or to-morrow morning, and then I shall return right away. Oh, Babs, you are a brick to do what you are doing, and I do feel an awful cat at having left you and Jimmy Richmond to do everything. But if you can only hang on until I come back—"

Babs smiled. Dear Vi. Well, now she knew she felt happier somehow, and right away went to her study to pen a reply to that note, assuring Vi that Jimmy and herself would hold out until Vi herself showed up again. She made only one amendment to that guarantee.

"Unless, of course, we succeed in getting hold of the necklace in the meantime," she wrote.

Just in time to catch the post with that letter, she felt contented once it had been dispatched. But that contentment was not due to last, for by that time the trial match had finished, and Clara's team had not shown up too well.

Rather black and bitter was Clara, rather surly the rest of the team. During that half an hour which preceded dinner, Babs had a very uncomfortable time indeed.

The whole Fourth Form, with some justification, felt that she had let the side down. The whole Form was angry.

But, harder than the wrath of the Form to face, was the bewildered hurt of Mabel Lynn in Study No. 4 afterwards. Very gravely Mabs eyed her.

"Oh, Babs, why did you do it?"

Babs bit her lip.

"Another secret, eh?" Mabel asked, with a hint of jealousy in her tone.

"And Jimmy's in it, Babs?"

"Mabs, I—I'm awfully sorry—"

"And so," Mabs said, "am I. Babs, it's not that I want you to tell me things you don't want to tell me, but—well, dash it, I'm your friend, aren't I, and—and I just can't stand around listening to other girls running you down!"

Babs smiled.

"Mabs, old thing, don't worry," she said gently. "I know it must be beastly, and—and, honestly, I'm not deliberately keeping secrets from you. But you see, old thing, this—this isn't exactly my affair. Believe me, Mabs."

Mabs sighed, shaking her head. She looked rather worried and miserable.

But before the conversation could proceed further, another interruption occurred—this time in the form of Clara Trevlyn. Clara had a letter in her hand.

"Babs, are you going to play in the co-ed match?" she asked bluntly.

"Well, yes, of course, if—if you want me," Babs said.

"You know jolly well we want you. But I want you to make up your mind

if you are, and no more silly hanky-panky, please! You will play if you're put in the team?"

"Of course."

"Right-ho! Then listen to this!"

Clara said. "I've just had a letter from co-ed secretary, and she wants us to bring the date of the match forward, as the co-ed school will be evacuating itself, or something, at the end of the week. We're playing the match to-morrow afternoon, instead of on Saturday as arranged. That's all. Cheer-ho!"

And Clara went off briskly. Babs blinked after her.

To-morrow afternoon. And she had given her promise to play in the team!

For a moment Babs knew a sense of dismay. Oh, goodness, what did this mean? If Violet did not return, how could she play in the match, and take her part in the fairground of the circus at the same time?

### Bessie to the Rescue!



A BAD blow, that, but one faint hope remained for Babs. Perhaps that afternoon she and Jimmy might have luck.

A wishful thought, but that afternoon neither she nor Jimmy had any luck. Much to their disgust, the space in front of the Mysti-Bruno caravan had been taken up by a string of ponies, and all that afternoon, during and after the circus performance, those ponies were being groomed and exercised. Richmond, though he was faithful to his watch, never got even a look in at the caravan. As yesterday, however, Babs' business was brisk, and Mr. Strong, her employer, was profuse with his congratulations.

"Doing well," he said. "To-morrow you'll do better. We're running a special morning matinee in the circus as the schools round about are having a whole day's holiday, and the usual one in the afternoon. See that you turn up at ten to-morrow."

That was news to Babs—news that made her anxious. With two visits, instead of one to make, and with the hockey match overlapping the second, it certainly seemed that life was going to be a rather complicated affair on the morrow.

Just before closing-down time came, Babs had a visit from Mysti. The girl's eyes were full of suspicion.

"Here, I want to talk to you," she said offensively. "Who's that boy I saw you with in the canteen yesterday?"

"Boy?" Babs blinked in surprise.

"Yes, boy! The fellow who's always spying around our caravan. Friend of yours, isn't he?"

"What rot!" Babs retorted evasively.

"Why should any friend of mine be interested in your caravan?"

Mysti stared at her, plainly not convinced. As it was obvious, however, that nothing was to be got out of Babs, she fumed away. Babs smiled as she tramped off, but there was a trace of apprehension in the smile. Mysti, undoubtedly, had her suspicions aroused.

She was glad at last when it was time to close down. In the deepening dusk at the rangers' hut, she and Richmond joined forces again. The boy was frankly downcast.

"All afternoon I've waited for nothing," he said. "But, Babs, be careful. If Mysti's got a suspicion, she'll be watching you. And what the dickens are we going to do about the match to-morrow?"

Babs shook her head helplessly.

"I don't know. Just hope for the best," she said. "In any case, I'm not going to let Vi down now. If the worst comes to the worst, I'll have to ask Clara to find a substitute for me. But perhaps," she added hopefully, "there'll be some other word from Vi when I get back?"

In that, at least, she was doomed to be disappointed. When she got back there was no word from Vi. Perhaps Vi would write to-morrow morning? she thought anxiously, and buoying herself with that hope, went to bed. But in the morning—

There was no word from Vi.

Babs' heart sank then. With the match in the afternoon, it was obvious now that she either had to let down Clara or let down Vi. Letting down Vi was out of the question, and obviously she could not just walk out on Clara. It gave her a wrench to come to the decision she then had to take, for apart from effacing herself from the team, Babs did so desperately badly want to play in the co-ed's unusual match. Still, for once her own personal feelings had to be put on one side. She went along to Clara's study.

The Tomboy greeted her with a cheery nod.

"Hallo, Babs! Come in. We're just making up a party to go along to the circus. Like to come?"

Babs started a little. But she shook her head.

"N-no, thanks, I—I've got something to do," she said. "I—I came about the match this afternoon—"

"Oh, yes, rather! You're centre-forward," Clara said enthusiastically.

"I—I was wondering—" Babs faltered. Oh, goodness, how could she get it out? "I—I was wondering," she said, all in a rush, "if you'd like to play a substitute in my place this afternoon? You—you see, it's just possible I shan't be able to play—"

Clara glared.

"You promised!" she cried.

"I know; but—"

"But—fiddlesticks!" Clara turned red. "Dash it, you know we're relying on you—and a fine last-minute time to come and try to cry off this is! I'm not playing a substitute, Babs—there isn't a substitute. It's all fixed up with the Friardale boys. You promised to play, and you're jolly well going to play! And if you don't—"

Babs tensed.

"Then—"

"Then," Clara retorted, "I'll never speak to you again! And I don't think," she added half angrily, "the Form will, either! You're playing, Babs. We're relying on you."

So that was that. Blunt those words, But Clara was in earnest. Something had to be done—something must be done. But what?

When she met Jimmy Richmond she talked the matter over with him. Jimmy's own plight was as bad as her own.

"The chaps are looking to me to skipper them," he said. "I'll have to. If I don't, they'll call for my resignation at once. Babs, there's one thing we can do to get out of this mess—and that thing, by hook or crook, we'll have to do. And that is, clear this business up this morning."

"You mean, get the necklace back?"

Babs asked.

"Just that," the boy nodded. "A tall order, I know; but—but—well, Babs, it may be managed. If only we can think of something to get Mysti and Bruno off the scene for ten minutes or so—"



"When Mysti," Babs asked, "is already suspicions of both of us? No, I don't—" And then she paused. "Oh, my hat!" she breathed. "Jimmy, I've got an idea."

"Spill it!" Richmond tersely advised.

"It—it's mentioning Mysti that put it into my head," Babs said. "Supposing she saw you and I talking together? Wouldn't her suspicions increase? Jimmy, that's it! We've got to play some bold card, and this is it. Let her suspect that we are working together. Supposing, now, she does see you talking to me? What will she do?"

"Well, she'll want to find out all about it," Richmond said slowly. "But—"

"That's it!" Babs cried excitedly. "She's bound to come and try to pump me. Well, that's it. I send her and Bruno off on some wild goose chase, and hey presto—there's the caravan at your mercy! Do we do it?"

"Well, Babs, if you think it'll work—"

one corner of her eye, the sharp, alert notice which Bruno and Mysti were taking of that happening.

"O.K.! You've got them interested!" she whispered, as Jimmy stopped by the stall. "They're looking this way. Pretend to show me something—let them think we're plotting. I say, they're staring this way, hard! You'd better bunk! They're coming!"

Swiftly Richmond gazed towards the two. Bruno and Mysti had arisen. With a nod he turned away, walking hurriedly through the stalls.

Bruno and Mysti, the former carrying his lion-tamer's whip, came across. Mysti glared.

"Hi, you! Thought that boy wasn't a friend of yours?" she challenged.

"Boy? What boy?"

"The one you were just talking to."

"Oh, him!" Babs laughed. "Well, dash it, I can talk to one of my customers if I like, can't I?"

"He's a thief!" Bruno glowered.

"What's he doing here?"

lock. She gulped a deep, fervent breath.

Jimmy was in! Would—

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" a voice said, and Babs jumped as she heard Clara Trevlyn's voice. "Here we are! Bess, your luck's in! Your old Big Ben is still intact, and blow me if I don't treat you to the first bob's-worth of the seven hundred hoops or so it's going to cost you to get it! Miss Hoops, this way, please!"

"Yes, miss—certainly, miss," Babs said in her husky, assumed voice. "Seven miss. Here we are."

Clara chuckled. So did Leila Carroll and Marjorie Hazeldene as Bessie Bunter grasped those hoops. They did not suspect, those three. But Mabs, who was also with them, was regarding Babs in that same puzzled, I-know-I've-seen-you-before sort of way which was causing funny little prickles to rise beneath Babs' skin. If Mabs, mistress of disguise herself, should see through hers—

And Jimmy?



**FURIOUSLY** the hockey players glared at their respective skippers. "I thought," stormed Clara Trevlyn bitterly, "you had an interest in this match, Babs! I thought you were supposed to be playing!" "And I thought," Don Haybury said angrily to Jimmy, "you were supposed to be the skipper of the team! Where the dickens have you been since early this morning?"

"I do," Babs said firmly. "Come on; let's go."

And with Babs dressed in her gipsy costume, the two hurried off, tingling now as they perfected their plans between them. But would that plan succeed?

At the edge of the wood they split up, Babs hurrying to the wicket gate. As before, she reported to Mr. Strong; as before, went off to her stall, noticing as she did so that Bruno and Mysti were sitting on the steps of their caravan, looking out across the grounds. She saw them mutter together as she entered her stall.

Hurriedly she took a look at herself in the tiny mirror attached to the centre pole, remembering that before long Clara & Co. would be strolling this way. Yes, her disguise was good, but she must remember—no more little slips like mentioning Bessie's name!

At the moment there were not many people about, and flicking the duster round her prizes, she smiled a little as she beheld the little clock which Bessie had vowed to win. Then she knew a thrill as she saw Jimmy Richmond strolling towards her—and saw, out of

"And where," Mysti flashed, "has he gone now?"

"Oh, that," Babs said. "I can answer that. He's going along to see Mr. Strong, you know. Got an idea he might get a job as a lion-tamer's assistant, or something, in the circus. He'll be there now," she added; "that is, if you want to ask him any questions. I say, you're not going?"

But the two were going. The swift, significant nod which passed between them caused Babs secretly to hug herself. The plan was working.

And, what was more, the precious pair had left their caravan door completely unguarded.

Quickly she looked round as lion-tamer and daughter stamped off towards Mr. Strong's office.

Where was Jimmy?

Even as the question came to her, she saw him. Good old Jimmy!

Already on the spot, alert, watchful, he was losing no time. From the little patch of scrub near the caravan she saw him rise; saw him, with a swift look to right and left, approach the dwelling and turn a key in the door's

lock. She cast another look towards the caravan. The door was slightly open. Jimmy was in there.

"Now," Bessie said, and away went her first hoop. It missed badly, but Bessie, not to be deterred, aimed again. This time the hoop actually hit against the wooden block on which the clock was resting.

"Whoops! Getting warm!" Clara grinned. "Just another six hundred and fifty hoops, old Bess!"

"Rats! Watch me!" Bessie sniffed.

She aimed again. Babs, her heart in her mouth, took another look at the caravan. Jimmy was still in there. Jimmy was—

And then—Great goodness!

For a moment every drop of blood in her body seemed to freeze. For suddenly, from the direction of the big top three figures had appeared. The figures were those of Mr. Strong, Bruno, and Mysti herself, and they were heading towards the lion-tamer's caravan.

And Jimmy did not know!

Momentary panic seized Babs. Jimmy in there—Jimmy about to be caught!

Impossible, now, to warn him; even if she dashed away the lion-tamer and his companions would still have reached the caravan first. What was she to do? She must warn Jimmy!

Lightning inspiration came to Babs. Swiftly she turned. Bessie was, just in the act of pitching her fourth hoop. It was dropping near the coveted clock. But to Bessie's amazement, Babs, in midair, seized it and caught up the clock. Bessie glowered.

"I sus-say—"

"Bessie—" Babs gasped.

"Eh?"

She, Mabs, Clara—all of them—jumped.

"Bessie, listen! It's me—me, Babs!" Babs said frantically. "Quickly—don't stare! Bessie, make a lion escape from the big top! Your ventriloquism!" she added urgently.

"But, Babs!" Mabs said faintly. "Bessie," Babs cried in agony—"quickly, before those three people reach that caravan! Then—then I'll buy you the clock!"

Not on many occasions did Bessie's somewhat dull brain work swiftly to words of command, but the shattering knowledge that this strange gipsy girl was her own chum, the inspiration of the promise of the clock, did something impossible on normal occasions. Not many accomplishments had Bessie, but there was no doubt that among the few she had the gift of ventriloquism was supreme.

"And Clara, Mabs—all of you!" Babs cried, and seeing they still stared, realising now that for better or worse the game was up, that she must save Jimmy Richmond at all costs, she passed a hasty hand across her face, removing some of the brown powder and grease-paint, to reveal her own colouring beneath. "All of you listen, all of you help me!" she cried frantically. "When Bessie starts, make a rush for the big top! Start a stampede! Jimmy's in danger!"

She broke off. For Bessie had started. Ten yards Bruno & Co. were from the caravan which hid Jimmy, when from somewhere behind them came a coughing roar. Bruno, Mr. Strong, Mysti, swiftly spun round.

"Lion!" cried Bruno.

"Lion!" shrieked Mabs. "Lion, look! Girls, come on!"

Roarrrr! came from near the big top.

Babs held her breath. Would that ruse succeed?

It did! It succeeded so well, indeed, that it even brought startled Jimmy Richmond to the door of the caravan—fortunately, just at the moment when his enemies had turned. Magnificently Bessie threw her voice; magnificently Babs' chums, though not understanding, supported her. With that cry of "Lion!" they all started off in a bunch. Others, hearing the roar, inspired by their rush, rushed, too, leaving only Bessie and Babs.

Now there was a full flight across the grounds.

Babs rushed out into the open, waving her arm to Richmond. He saw,

Perhaps, seeing Bessie, too, he understood; for suddenly he was streaking out of the caravan like a deer—holding a glistening, shining something at sight of which Babs, running to meet him, gasped in joy.

It was a pearl necklace!

"Babs, got it!" he cried. "But—"

"Jimmy, this way!" Babs hissed. "Quickly! Never mind Bessie—or anyone! Streak for the trees! We've got to get away! In a minute they'll spot the hoax! Jimmy, this way!"

She tugged his sleeve. They reached

the fence, leapt over. On flying feet they skimmed down the road, just as a big black car came purring up. And then a girl suddenly popped her head out of the car.

"Babs!" she yelled.

It was Violet Mason herself!

"Oh, my hat! Vi, we've got it!" Babs cried, pulling up. "I—"

And then she blinked as she saw who was in the car—Miss Willing—and Audrey Mason, too! "Gig-golly—"

She and Jimmy trotted up.

"Babs!" Violet breathed. "I didn't tell you, but Audrey couldn't stand the nightmare of that missing necklace any longer. She broke down and confessed, and we're all on our way now to go to see Bruno and get things cleared up. But—but you've got it?"

"Come on; let's get in the car!" Babs said. "Jimmy, this way!

Jimmy got it!" she explained. "I was only a sort of scout. All the same, I'm dashed glad to see you all—but gladder still we've got it. Even if you had accused Bruno, Miss Willing, he'd probably have denied it. Jimmy, where did you find it?"

"In a crack in the wall," Richmond retorted. "Still, it will be fun to see that old scoundrel's face when he's confronted with it. You should have brought a policeman, Miss Willing."

"The police," Miss Willing said grimly, "have been informed and are on their way. But let us see this man."

That wish was granted in less than five minutes. For as soon as Mysti and Bruno saw Jimmy Richmond and Babs stepping out of the car, he stormed over. It was Miss Willing, however, who faced him, holding the necklace in her hand.

And at sight of that Bruno fell back with a suddenly chalky face, a hunted look in his eyes. His own action gave him away, then. For suddenly, coward as he was, he turned and bolted towards the entrance—right into the arms of the police, who had followed behind Miss Willing's car in case of trouble.

"And I think," Miss Willing said, "that ends it. Officer, I give this man in charge, with his daughter. Barbara, my dear, I am sorry about all this—as sorry as dear, foolish Audrey—but I

must offer you my congratulations on the way you have handled the matter."

"And for being," Violet softly put in, "the most marvellous friend a girl ever had. Which," she added, dimpling at Jimmy, "goes also for you, Jimmy! How ever—how ever can I thank you both?"

Babs laughed as she saw her chums bearing down upon them.

"By just," she grinned, "explaining everything to my chums—and especially to Mabs. And then, if you don't mind, by taking us back to the rangers' hut in the woods. I'm just dying to be Barbara Redfern again for a little while before we play our co-ed. match!"

And that, naturally, was done. And great was the jubilation in the Cliff House camp when the news was at last out. Great was Mabs' relief, who, knowing now the truth, would not have had Babs act otherwise. And great was the happiness of everybody concerned, though, to be sure, Bessie tried to grab the lion's share of the honour for her part in the exploit.

More congratulations were paid that afternoon when the Friardale boys arrived to learn of their leader's own share in the escapade, and Babs and Jimmy, so far from the outcasts, were the hero and heroine of the day.

And just to prove that their hockey had suffered nothing by reason of their adventures, they each scored in the match which followed. As the Westbourne Co-eds, though they played magnificently, only scored once, there was increased jubilation between Cliff House and Friardale.

An exciting day, a triumphant day; a tremendously happy day in truth, which saw at its end Jimmy and Babs more firmly established in each other's keen regard than ever, and a further cementing influence in that staunch friendship which had always existed between Cliff House and Friardale.

And one which, too, had made Babs and Jimmy three grateful friends—the sisters Mason and Audrey's employer, who had now fully forgiven her secretary for her momentary vanity. Never, never would they all cease to be grateful to Babs and Jimmy.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

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# JESS AND HIGHWAYMAN JACK

By  
IDA MELBOURNE

## The Frightened Girl!

“ANY more for the London coach?”

As Jess Reynolds gave that cheery call she looked about her in the warm, cosy hall of the Rising Sun Inn, of which her father was the host.

The London coach had pulled up with steaming horses a few minutes ago, and the passengers, alighting, had partaken of refreshments at the inn. Now it was time for them to be on their way again, and Jess was making sure that no one would accidentally be left behind, as had happened on one occasion.

“Any more for the coach?” she called again.

She smiled at a jovial man and woman who were gathering their bundles, and then looked across at a more elegant pair who were talking to Squire Olding, close by the blazing log fire, the red rays of which were making the hall so cosy. The elegant pair did not seem on the point of leaving.

“’Tis time for the coach to depart,” said Jess to the man, as he turned to her.

“We are not leaving by the coach, my girl,” he explained. “We are the squire’s guests, and are travelling to the Manor House in his private chaise.”

Jess thanked him, and could not help giving a rather envious look at the elegant young woman who accompanied him, for the squire was giving a masked ball on the morrow night, and obviously these guests of his would be there enjoying the grand fun.

Jess, being only the innkeeper’s daughter, had not been invited, but she had heard enough about the ball to wish that she had.

The small group of passengers did not need much rallying, and soon they were passing from the warmth of the inn to the cold of the night, wrapping thick coats about them, muffling themselves carefully, and pulling on cosy gloves.

But in the doorway Jess paused, and looked back—a final look. And as she did so she suddenly became aware of a girl who sat in the shadows beyond the fire.

She seemed to be seeking something on the seat beside her.

“Are you for the coach, please?” asked Jess.

The girl looked up with a start, and Jess saw that her face was pale and rather frightened-looking.

“Y—yes, I am,” she faltered. “I was getting warm. It was very cold coming, and it will be worse on the heath—Highwayman’s Heath, don’t they call it?—are there really highwaymen there?”

She spoke with a quiver of fear in her voice, and her eyes were quite round with fright. It was clear that she had been loitering because the next stage of the journey frightened her.

Jess slipped a comforting arm about her waist.

“Don’t be afraid of the heath,” she

**The squire was a rogue whom none dared defy. Yet Jess and Highwayman Jack not only defied him—they robbed him of something he had stolen.**

said softly. “It is the Laughing Highwayman who waits there—and he never robs girls.”

Jess spoke softly; but Squire Olding, standing near by, chanced to overhear her and stepped forward his voice angry.

“Rubbish! Fiddlesticks! Highwayman Jack would rob anyone!” he snapped.

Jess coloured slightly and drew back as the squire’s sharp, glittering eyes fixed themselves upon her in anger. He was a hateful man, far more feared than respected in the district, and Jess had good reason to dislike him.

“I was but trying to reassure this traveller, squire,” said Jess mildly.

“Highwayman Jack is a rascal!” he snarled. “Do you say otherwise?”

It was on the tip of Jess’ tongue to say that she did, but good sense checked her in time.

Laughing Jack was her friend! Whoever heaped abuse on him, she at least

knew that he was gallant, charming, and no ordinary robber! But she dared not say so. She dared not let it be known that she was his friend. And most certainly it would have been dangerous to let such a thought enter the squire’s suspicious mind.

“’Tis the squire,” Jess murmured to the girl.

The girl dropped a curtsy at that, and as she did so a leather wallet she carried slipped to the floor.

Jess picked it up. She made to give it to the girl, but the squire snatched it.

“What’s in this?” he asked, frowning. “You seem to have great fear of the highwayman? Are you carrying valuables? If so, I doubt that they are yours.”

“Why—why, yes; it is my mistress’ wallet!” murmured the girl. “And in truth it is that that makes me nervous, for it contains some jewels of great value that a highwayman might well wish to steal.”

Jess supposed that the squire would give the case back at once, but instead of that he opened it.

“Carrying jewels for your mistress, eh?” he murmured. “Art sure you have not stolen them, miss?”

Jess eyed him indignantly. How dared he pry into this girl’s case! And how dared he, without the slightest proof, hint that she might be a thief? Jess herself saw no reason at all to doubt the girl’s story.

The squire’s prying hands took out the contents of the case. First there was a letter, then a slender jewel-case, from which he drew a string of pearls of such perfection that Jess’ eyes rounded in awe.

Into the squire’s eyes came a look so covetous that the girl sprang forward anxiously.

“Oh, please—” she gasped, as though fearing that he would steal them.

“Pshaw!” he exclaimed, brushing her back with a movement of the arm. “Dost think I might keep them?”

And he replaced the jewels in the case. Jess was almost as relieved as the girl, but at that moment she heard the coachman giving his last call. For fear that he would go without the girl she ran to stop him from whipping up his horses.

“Wait—wait! Another passenger!” she cried.

Rushing back into the inn, she snatched up her father’s heavy coat and slipped it about her shoulders. Then she beckoned to the girl, who was now fastening the wallet and curtsying to the squire.

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- No. 707. "THE TYRANT OF RANALPUR!" Thrilling foreign adventure told by Clive Bancroft.



No. 704.

"Hurry—hurry!" urged Jess. "And since you are so nervous I will come with you!"

"Oh, you really mean that?" cried the girl eagerly, flashing Jess a look of deep gratitude.

"Don't be afraid," whispered Jess. "The highwayman won't steal your pearls."

She knew that the Laughing Highwayman would not have stolen them, even if the girl had travelled alone; but the girl herself could not be expected to understand that, since Jess could not tell her the truth about Laughing Jack.

It was pitch-dark, save for the yellowish glow from the coach lamps—so dark that Jess could not see her own hand held before her face. There was a nip in the night air, too, that made her wrap her father's top-coat tightly about her.

With a clatter of hoofs the horses moved forward. The coachman yelled encouragement, and the rumbling wheels ground on the hard road as the coach got under way.

On through the darkness they went, Jess with her arm about the girl, who, talking freely, perhaps to hide her fears, explaining that she was Lillian Jones, a rich lady's maid.

But presently—  
"How far now to Highwayman's Heath?" Lillian quavered.

"Oh, a longish way," Jess said. "Quite a—"

But her words died, for there came a shout from the darkness in a clear voice that she knew well—a cry that made the coachman haul on his horses' reins, and the passengers huddle together for mutual protection.

"Stand and deliver!" commanded a young, ringing voice. "Your money or your lives!"

### At the Squire's Ball!

"YOUR money or your lives!" It was a cry drastic enough to send fear into the hearts of those who heard it; and, indeed, it had that effect on most of the

passengers and on the coachman. But Jess Reynolds chuckled to herself.

She knew that it was an empty threat, more in the nature of a joke; and because she listened for it, she heard the laugh that accompanied the words.

Highwayman Jack did not steal from passengers. He held up the London coach for some secret purpose of his own, which even Jess did not fully understand.

And here he was dimly to be seen in the yellowish lanterns of the coach. Under the black cloak his red jacket showed, and a large pistol aimed at the coachman. A purple mask obscured his face, but through it twinkled merry eyes.

"Stand and deliver!" he repeated. Lillian Jones clutched at Jess in fright.

"My mistress' pearls!" she gasped. "He'll take them—"

Jess took her arm.

"Give them to me. I'll answer for them," she said confidently.

Lillian opened the wallet, took out the jewel-case, and groped for the pearls. Then she gave a startled cry.

"Oh, my goodness—oh!"  
"What's wrong?" Jess exclaimed.

"The pearls—they're not here!" Jess just stared at her, hardly hearing Highwayman Jack as he addressed the passengers.

"Any guests of the squire's?" he called gaily. "This is where they alight, if so. Peace and calm, ladies! Fear nothing. I do not rob the fair sex."

Then he looked up at the roof of the coach and saw Jess.

"Why—" he exclaimed, amazed. Jess saw the coachman look round, and because she was fearful that he might see this friendliness and guess that she knew Highwayman Jack, she feigned alarm.

"Oh, highwayman, have mercy! Oh, do not rob us!" she wailed.

"Fie! Rob a charming wench such as you? For shame!" he said merrily. "All I'll rob you of is a smile, my dear."

Lillian Jones hardly heeded him now.

"The pearls!" she cried distractedly. "Where are they if not in the case? They were there when the squire examined it, for he took them out."

Highwayman Jack cut in then, a sharper tone to his voice.

"The squire? Squire Olding, you mean? What talk is this of pearls?"

"Why, this girl is a messenger for her lady, and carried some pearls in her case. The squire took them out," said Jess, in rising indignation. "It does seem that he did not replace them."

Highwayman Jack gave a soft whistle.

"Is the squire now competing with me? H'm! A cut-purse robber to boot! Valuable pearls! I' faith I'll have them from him, for I'll brook no rivals here!"

Then he moved nearer to Jess and spoke in a whisper.

"Ay, I'll get them back, and see that the lass shall have them, too. Come, down from the coach."

Jess climbed down, and Lillian, frightened though she was, followed her.

"All right, coachman, I have my prey!" called Laughing Jack. "Drive on—hard as you can—before I fire!"

Only too readily the coachman whipped up his horses, which clattered off at frenzied speed, sending up sparks.

As its clattering died away, Highwayman Jack looked down at Lillian.

"'Twas a base trick the rascally squire played you," he said.

"Base it was," agreed Jess. "And she must have them back, poor child."

Her arm went round Lillian's shoulders as the girl buried her face in her hands and sobbed.

Highwayman Jack shook his head in commiseration, and then glanced sharply towards the inn, whence came now the sound of shouts as though those there had heard the hold-up.

Wheeling his horse, he looked down at Lillian.

"Keep a brave heart, lass!" he enjoined her sympathetically. "Do not be afraid of me. They say I have taking ways, and la! I'll do a little taking from the squire."

Without another word he sent his powerful black horse forward, racing towards the inn.

But already, from away down the road, came the sound of a chaise. Squire Olding and his guests were on their way—and the pearl necklace.

"They've gone!" sighed Jess, in despair. "Even Highwayman Jack can scarce ride them down before the squire's gates are reached, and once behind them he will be safe."

The lady's-maid looked up at Jess, tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Then I shall not see those pearls again," she whispered in distress. "Oh, but the squire cannot be a thief! I cannot believe it! And—and if it be so, how am I ever to have them back again?"

Jess stood listening to the clatter of hoofs in the distance.

"Highwayman Jack will find a way," she said. "And if not then, I must use my brains. Meanwhile, back to the inn, for you cannot go on without the pearls."

It was true enough, as Lillian falteringly explained. She had been sent to convey the pearls from her sick mistress to a friend, and to complete the journey without them would be a waste of time, and would, moreover, prove that she had failed in her trust.



"There'll be another coach to-morrow," said Jess slowly. "To-night you shall stay at the inn, and by to-morrow—by to-night even—Highwayman Jack may have your pearls."

The girl looked at Jess in wonder. "But he is a highwayman! If he gets them, assuredly he will keep them?"

"Not he," said Jess, with a ring of pride. "He is different from all other highwaymen. He is a gentleman, a gallant and— Her voice changed and she looked at the girl anxiously. "But never breathe a word of this to anyone. Trust him and trust me, and I'll promise you shall have your pearls again."

WITH SOFT tread Jess walked to the hollow oak on the fringe of the forest behind the Rising Sun Inn.

It was the following morning. There had been no word the night before from Highwayman Jack, and Jess was wondering if he had hidden the pearls in the hollow oak.

That hollow oak was where Jess left cakes and goodies for her highwayman friend, and where he in turn sometimes left her a note of thanks or some other message.

Making quite sure that she was not followed—although the hour being but little beyond dawn there was small chance of that—Jess reached the oak.

With a thrill of excitement, she groped her hand inside uttering a little gasp as her fingers closed upon a package.

"'Tis here!" she cried in glee. And her heart filled with admiration for her highwayman friend.

But as she unfolded the package her hopes sank, for she could not feel anything solid inside—nothing to suggest that pearls were there.

Nor were there pearls—only a message, which ran:

"He started for home sooner than we thought. But fear not. If he has them they shall be recovered. All that I ask is your assistance at the ball to-night."

Jess frowned and turned the slip of paper over, wondering if more had been written behind. But there was nothing else—nothing to explain that reference to the ball.

"At the ball to-night?" she murmured. "Then is Highwayman Jack to be at the ball?"

A highwayman at the squire's masked ball! It was an incredible thought. And Jess herself there?

"Why, 'tis more than I could ever hope for!" she mused in amazement.

What ever did Highwayman Jack mean?

It was a problem that puzzled Jess all the way back to the inn. The little lady's-maid was waiting for her in the hall, having risen early.

"You have them?" she cried hoarsely, as Jess entered.

Jess, hating to disappoint her, broke the news as gently as possible. Even so, Lillian went chalk white and seemed on the point of fainting.

"There is no hope now," she murmured wretchedly.

"Yes, there is hope," Jess insisted. "The squire has them, and to-night—to-night we will get them back."

Then she advised Lillian to plead a slight sickness so that she had an excuse for staying on at the inn. And as Lillian really looked white and ill her pretence was not suspected by Jess' father and stepmother.

By the morning coach two more guests arrived for the squire's party, and waited the chaise to collect them.

This time, however, the squire did not come in the chaise himself.

Jess, having given the matter great thought, had a plan for attending the ball half schemed by the time the chaise arrived. There was no hope of her attending as a guest, but, thinking things over, she had realised that extra help would be needed at the Manor House. As the squire was so mean he would expect his normal staff to do the work of two wherever possible, but his very meanness would tempt him to accept the offer of help given free!

So if Jess, asking for nothing in return, offered to take on the job of cloak-room girl, he was sure to be glad of her assistance.

An artful plan came to her mind when the squire's guests, who were waiting at the inn, rose to take their places in his chaise.

She hid a small item of their luggage, so that the guests drove away in the chaise without it.

A few minutes later Jess pretended to find the item—a small bag.

"Why, dad," she cried, "I must go at once to the manor with this bag! One of the squire's guests left it behind."

Her father, who was quite afraid of the squire, was only too anxious that the bag should be taken at once, so Jess put on her thick winter coat and asked the ostler to saddle a horse for her.

At a lively trot she rode to the Manor House.

"Ha!" said the squire, when she gave the bag to his charge. "I am glad to see that you have some appreciation of my guests' importance, young woman."

Jess, managing to conceal her dislike of him, spoke smoothly.

"Why, yes, sir! And if I could be of service at the ball to-night I should think it a great honour. I ask nothing in return. Not even a meal, sir."

That suited the squire. The idea of such a good bargain made him rub his hands.

"Think yourself lucky to see all the fine people in fancy clothes," he replied,

with a smirk. "If you'll be useful you can come to help wash up—"

"I could look after the clothes," said Jess quickly.

She wanted a job which would enable her to meet the highwayman when he came—which she could not do if she were put to work in the kitchen.

"Very well then," nodded the squire. Jess was there well before any of the outside guests drove up in their coaches.

They came in twos and threes, and it was not long before a score of ladies and gentlemen thronged the hall and drawing-room of the Manor House.

One and all wore velvet masks—black, purple, red, green. And there were lovelier frocks than Jess had ever seen in her life before, and more gorgeous tunics and breeches and shoes, as well as wigs of most elaborate design; powder, paint, and jewellery.

Soon the fiddlers were playing a lilting tune, and there were dancers stepping the minuet.

But of Laughing Jack there was no sign. Where was he?

### Turning the Tables!

JESS, waiting patiently in her best frock and crisply starched collar, cuffs, and cap, wished that he would come soon, before the freshness wore off her clothes. But in her heart she did not believe that he would come at all. It seemed incredible that he could do so.

She was storing a rich fur-cloak for a lady when she heard a well-known voice at her side.

"Have the goodness, damsel, to take this cloak, I prithee!"

Jess looked up, her heart leaping, her eyes round as saucers. For there, just in front of her, was a man most elegantly attired, with lace ruffles to his cuffs, lace collar, a most magnificent rich tunic, satin breeches, powdered wig—clad as a gentleman of fashion, but with the voice of Highwayman Jack!



AS Jess watched, she saw the rascally squire show the stolen pearls to Highwayman Jack. Instantly, the highwayman whipped out a pistol. "Hand them over if you value your life, squire!" he ordered. Jess held her breath in anxious suspense.

"Why—why, yes, my lord!" Jess gasped, as he winked at her through his purple mask.

Taking his cloak, she became aware that there was something inside it, hidden there.

"'Tis well you have found yourself this task," murmured the highwayman, while Jess still stared in wonder at his gorgeous attire. "It will help me greatly."

Then, with a smile, he turned away. Jess, quivering with excitement, watched him go into the ball-room. But all at once a commotion from the door made her turn.

At the doorway a footman was accosting a Bow Street Runner who tried to force an entry.

"In the king's name!" shouted the Runner. "I tell you that Highwayman Jack rode up here. We followed him—and his horse is tethered at the gates."

A murmur ran through the throng. "Highwayman Jack—"  
"Laughing Jack!"

Jess' heart turned cold with fright; for if Highwayman Jack were recognised, escape would be impossible for him.

He had to be warned at once!  
Slipping from behind the table where she stood on guard, she paused as she

heard the Bow Street Runner explaining matters excitedly to the squire.

"Yes, in his red jacket and black cloak—lurking outside, maybe!" gasped the Runner.

Jess stood still, thinking quickly. How was it that Highwayman Jack had been seen in his red tunic—yet wore a blue one now?

Turning to his cloak, she cautiously opened it to see what was hidden inside. But she closed it hurriedly; for inside was the red tunic—the tell-tale tunic of Highwayman Jack!

A load was lifted from her heart now; for obviously the Bow Street Runner would not recognise Highwayman Jack. Yet even so the daring highwayman must be warned at once that his horse was being guarded.

Jess slipped down a corridor that led to the ball-room. But she did not get more than half-way. Just ahead of her was the squire, and talking to him was Highwayman Jack himself!

"La, sir," the highwayman was saying, "I do congratulate you on the most magnificent gathering of wealth and fashion that I have ever seen. Why, there is a lady wearing a string of pearls for which I would gladly give a thousand golden sovereigns."

The squire's mouth worked.  
"Come into the library here in a minute's time, and I will show you a finer string even than you saw a minute ago. And mayhap I might be tempted to sell them."

"At your service," bowed the highwayman. "I'll be there."

It was easy to guess why the squire wanted the delay of a minute or two; he had secreted the pearls in the library, and did not want their hiding-place there known.

Jess gave a soft-whispered call as soon as the squire had entered the library; and Highwayman Jack swung round.

"Oh, take care!" implored Jess anxiously. "A Bow Street Runner is here; your horse has been found and is being guarded."

Highwayman Jack's eyes twinkled through the slits of his mask.

"First my tunic, please—and then the pearls from the squire."

"The—the red tunic? Oh, no!" protested Jess in alarm. "If 'tis seen you are undone."

"Hist! The cloak and the tunic inside, please," he urged her.

Jess hesitated, reluctant to comply, but after a moment's pause she turned back. For if he had his plans fully made, it would be wiser to let him go through with them now that the pearls were so near.

Going to the cloak-room, she returned with the lovely silver-and-blue cloak, inside which was the tunic, tricorne hat, and something heavier—a pistol.

Highwayman Jack looked about him, moved under the cover of a staircase, and whispered to Jess to keep an eye open for anyone who might be lurking near.

Then, changing the tunics, he put on the tricorne hat, turned the cloak inside out, revealing a black silk lining, whipped over the pistol, and rapped at the library door.

"Come in!" called the squire.

Highwayman Jack opened the door; and through the chink Jess saw the squire holding the pearls that he had taken from Lillian's case.

"Here we have the finest—" he began.

"Stand and deliver!" cried Laughing Jack. "Those pearls, or your life!"

That was all Jess waited to see. Swinging round, she ran down the cor-

ridor and out through the doorway to the grounds.

Men were walking to and fro with drawn rapiers, prodding the bushes, swinging lanterns, calling and challenging the supposedly hiding highwayman.

Past them Jess went to the gates, and drew up there as she saw Highwayman Jack's horse, with another Bow Street Runner holding its bridle.

"Oh, quick—quick!" she cried. "Help! Highwayman Jack—he's robbing the squire! Upstairs! I will hold the horse!"

The Bow Street Runner fled up the drive to the house, drawing a pistol as he did so; and Jess, opening the heavy gates, led the horse out.

On the far side of the road, among the trees, she tethered the fine animal, patted it affectionately, and then ran back to the house. But all at once—

"Highwayman Jack—there he is!" came a shout.

A pistol barked, and there sounded an agonised yell.

"I'm hit!"  
Jess pulled up short, clutching at her heart, as, farther along the drive, she saw a figure in a red tunic scramble half-way through a window, and then collapse, his tricorne hat falling from his bewigged head.

A crowd of men rushed forward with drawn rapiers; and Jess, white as a sheet, would have followed had not a hand grasped her arm.

"Come! Even though he is but lightly wounded in the arm, 'tis no place for a lass—"

Jess swung round, with a cry of amazement, as she recognised that cool, mirthful voice. With wide eyes she stared at the young gallant in the blue tunic and yellow breeches who smiled at her through a purple mask.

"You—you? It is you?" she breathed.

"'Tis I. Quick—take the pearls!"  
"But who—who was it in the red tunic?" gasped Jess, taking the string of pearls from him.

"What? The squire. It seemed a good ruse to make him wear my tunic," smiled the highwayman, "poor fit though it was. But now I must go, I fear, with the fun only half begun; for without a horse—"

Jess clutching his arm, and a relieved laugh escaped her.

"No, no! Your horse is there, in the forest—just beyond the road. But hurry! When they learn the truth they will be after you."

But long before the searchers did that Highwayman Jack was riding away.

Jess, tucking the pearls in the neck of her frock, returned to the cloak-room, and there she remained until the last tune had been played.

It was a late hour when she returned to the inn, but Lillian was awake.

"The pearls?" she breathed.

In the darkness Jess pressed them into her hands and laughed.

"Thanks to Highwayman Jack! But never—never breathe the word!" she whispered.

"Never—never!" answered the happy maid. "Yes, he seems more like a fairy prince than a highwayman."

"If you had seen him at the ball to-night you would indeed have thought so," sighed Jess. "Ah, but how he fooled them all! And so he will fool them always—always!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

MEET Jess and Highwayman Jack again next week, and be sure to tell all your friends about them.

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# 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 bowls 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, enabling Valerie to frustrate it. She later trails a mysterious figure on to the farm roof. So does CHARLIE DEEDS, an interfering guest, who thinks himself a detective. The figure pushes him off the roof.

(Now read on.)

## Several Clues, But—

**N**UMB with horror, Valerie Drew hung to the edge of the skylight, still staring at the spot where Charlie Deeds had so dramatically disappeared.

The sinister figure in black, hearing the cry which had involuntarily left her lips, turned at once. Seeing her, it picked up a piece of broken tile with a black-gloved hand, straightened again, and poised the missile threateningly.

"You can't get away!" cried Valerie in a desperate bluff.

Her words were drowned by a howl which rose from unhappy Charlie Deeds as he landed on the ground below.

At the same moment the desperate schemer lunged towards the girl detective, hurling the broken tile.

Valerie had no alternative but to drop back into the room and spring to one side.

The flying missile struck the wooden prop which had been holding the fanlight open, knocking it away. The fanlight dropped back into position with a crash, and a shower of broken glass fell all over the box-room floor.

By the time Valerie could reach the box and draw herself back to the edge the figure in black had vanished completely.

By

## ISABEL NORTON

It was a dismaying moment for Valerie. The only way of escape from the flat roof around the chimneys lay through a low-built doorway which led into a cobwebby labyrinth of struts supporting the main thatched roof. Inside it, as Valerie already knew, there were several trapdoors, through any of which a safe descent might be made to one of the upper rooms.

A second and shriller cry rising from Charlie Deeds decided her.

Not knowing the extent of the injuries he might have sustained, Valerie felt that at all costs she must run to his assistance first.

Descending the stairs three at a time, she sped across the hall and reached the gardens at the side of the house. There, quick as she had been, she found others had forestalled her.

Down on one knee, supporting a very

seem to have been lucky!" With his uninjured hand he stroked his chin dazedly. "That brute gave me a shocking swipe—"

"What brute?" asked the major, astounded.

Charlie glanced oddly at Valerie as, with lips compressed, she stood watching him in silence.

"Valerie should know more than I do," he said spitefully. "She saw it all happen. She was safe enough while I went for the figure in black."

Valerie, instantly the centre of interest, was bombarded with questions from all sides.

"I'm very sorry indeed for you, Charlie," she said sincerely. "But if you tell the truth, you've nobody to blame more than yourself. I didn't ask you to try to forestall me!"

Turning, before he could reply, she called to Flash, ran back into the house, and returned to the box-room at top speed.

Propping the broken fanlight open,

## IT WAS BECAUSE OF VALERIE—AND NOT THE UNKNOWN ENEMY—THAT MORE GUESTS MEANT TO LEAVE THE FARM!

white and shaken Charlie in his arms, was Major Adams.

Freckled Marjorie and several others hovered close at hand, looking deeply shocked.

"Are you hurt very much, old chap?" asked the major sympathetically.

Charlie's face twisted with pain as he made an attempt to lift his right arm.

"Fell right on it!" he muttered hoarsely. "Gives me socks even to try to move it!"

There was dead silence as the major, evidently thoroughly competent to do so, made a swift examination of the unhappy youth on the ground.

To the intense relief of everyone, the result appeared to be highly favourable for Charlie.

"No bones broken," the major reported. "Falling amongst the bushes was the cleverest thing you've done so far. You've given your shoulder a nasty twist, but we can soon see to that. See if you can stand up!"

Thus encouraged, Charlie made the effort and got rather shakily to his feet. "Gosh!" he said breathlessly. "I

she lifted Flash to the roof, then drew herself up beside him.

"Here, boy!" she directed, and led him to sniff beside the two chemical packages still standing near the chimney which had been the intended site of the enemy's latest mischief. To one of them was still tied the now broken twine which Valerie had trailed inside the house to tell her when the package was moved.

She felt furious to think that it was Charlie's recklessness which had allowed the schemer to get clear when she had succeeded in being almost within grasp of him.

Turning to follow some scent which he found on the roof, Flash reached a tiny gully running across its centre, and suddenly digging down into it with his paw tried to drag something out of it.

When Valerie went to his aid and slipped her fingers into the narrow recess, she drew up a long walking-stick with a crooked handle.

"Good boy!" she approved, giving him a pat. "Evidently this is what he used for hooking up the parcel out of



the box-room." She felt immensely heartened by this quick success. "Seek him, boy! Where is he now?" Lowering his nose again to the surface of the roof Flash sniffed keenly and trotted towards the low door leading in under the vaulted thatch of the main roof.

Taking the walking-stick and shining her torch, Valerie followed her pet amongst the huge, twisted beams which supported the roof.

In the absence of a proper floor, they had to step carefully on the joists, avoiding the deep spaces in between them. The trail was naturally difficult for Flash to follow, but its directness convinced Valerie that the person in black had often been here.

Suddenly Flash stopped again, sniffing intently, and Valerie thrilled as she saw what else he had discovered.

Stuffed between the joists was a pile of black material. Pulling it out, she found the long coat, hood, and gloves the mystery figure wore.

Rolling them neatly together for later examination, she placed the evidence under her arm and shone her torch in a circle around her. The reason for the disguise being abandoned at that spot was quickly obvious. Near at hand was the upper side of a trapdoor, communicating with one of the rooms below. The way in which the film of dust on it had been disturbed along its edges showed how recently it had been used.

Cautioning Flash to remain silent,

Valerie laid the stick and package aside and cautiously raised the trap.

Beneath her she saw a tiny room, lit by one little window, which she immediately recognised as the maids' service-room on the top floor.

There was nobody in it at present.

Lowering herself nimbly over the edge, Valerie dropped to the floor below. Moving a high chair to the spot, she lifted down the walking-stick and roll of black, then contrived to take Flash in her arms. When he was safely on the floor, she closed the trap and put the chair back where she had found it.

She had been aware all the time of a strong, distinctive odour in the air. Turning to examine the room more closely, she discovered the reason for it. A corkless bottle was lying on its side on the floor close to the door; the liquid which had been contained in it had spread right across the linoleum.

It was methylated spirit.

Valerie's hopes sank to zero again. It was impossible to expect Flash to follow the scent of Charlie's attacker any farther.

Had the bottle been knocked over deliberately by the fugitive?

Valerie did not try to answer that question. It made no difference to the truth. She had reached the end of the trail.

With Flash at her heels, she slipped along to her own room. There, with the door securely locked, she set to work to examine the figure's disguise in detail.

She studied the black garments first, her eyes keenly narrowed.

The material was ordinary casement cloth, and had been cut roughly to shape and stitched together in a far from expert manner. From the fact that it was damp to the touch and had a faintly mildewed odour, Valerie judged that it had most probably been kept somewhere in the ruins until required for wear.

Unable to discover more, Valerie next turned her attention to the walking-stick. It was a cheap one, which she remembered having seen several times in the hallstand, though never knowing whose property it was.

Putting away the black material in a drawer, which she carefully locked, Valerie ran downstairs and placed the stick where she had seen it last; then, giving Flash a soft instruction to keep an eye on it, she made her way to the winter-garden. To her joy, she found Johnny Jevons there alone.

"Hard cheese, old sleuth!" Johnny sympathised sincerely, as Valerie told him of the trap she had prepared and the way Charlie, eager to steal the glory, had spoilt everything for her. "Can't help feeling sorry in a way for that straw-headed goat, even though he did ask for it. But what a mess he's made of things for poor little you!"

"How is Charlie now?" asked Valerie in quick concern.

"Arm in a sling, but otherwise nearly as big a pain in the neck as ever," Johnny answered, with a grin. "Old Adams is apparently a kind of amateur bone-setter, and he's made no end of a good job of clever old Sherlock. And I've got his finger-prints, too!" Johnny triumphantly finished.

"Whose—Major Adams'?" asked Valerie keenly. "Where?"

Johnny led the way to a service table and indicated a shining glass.

"The major held it to give Charlie a drink," he explained in a conspiratorial voice. Moving on, he pointed to a small bottle of smelling salts. "Mr. Anthony touched those last," he went on, "while Mervyn Hodges left a lovely thumb-print on this spoon. They're all new for the collection. But the one who still dodges me is Mr. Weeple," he had to confess. "I haven't seen him for hours."

Valerie gave Johnny a grateful smile. She had not forgotten the vital finger-print she had obtained from the pair of pliers which the mystery enemy had handled. She had postponed her original plan to discover the counterpart of that print because, at the time, the parcel in the box-room had promised a shorter cut to the solution of her problem. Now she would naturally resume the earlier investigation at once.

"Thanks very much, Johnny," Valerie thanked her smiling, good-looking assistant, as she gathered the articles carefully together in a silk handkerchief. "I'll take impressions of them at once."

As she passed Flash in the hall he gave a little whimper, but made no attempt to follow her; and, safely back in her room once more, Valerie quickly coated the finger-prints with powder and transferred perfect impressions of them to glazed paper.

She had just finished, written the name and date on each, and was slipping them into her drawer, when a deep growl came from downstairs.

Valerie was up in an instant. Crossing the room, she ran lightly downstairs to the hall. There, with his coat torn and his appearance generally dishevelled, stood none other than the elusive Mr. Weeple, grasping the walking-stick Flash had been left to watch.

## BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—A few more words on a most exciting subject, by which I mean the wonderful new Valerie Drew serial which I referred to last week.

Isobel Norton's latest, and easily greatest, Girl Detective story will definitely commence in three weeks' time, but even though that seems a long way off—or perhaps because it does—I know you're all longing to hear something about the story. So I'll tell you one or two things now.

Of course, it's thrilling, it's intriguing, and it's dramatic. That goes without saying. But it is really most unusual, too. To begin with, the setting is new for a detective story. A very attractive setting, I may add, and one that supplies the central characters, including Valerie herself, with heaps of opportunities for enjoying themselves in the most novel ways.

Forgive me for not saying more at this stage, won't you? But I hope I've whetted your appetites for the complete details of this superb story in two weeks' time—and the enthralling opening chapters the week after.

From Valerie Drew we now turn to other staunch friends of ours, the famous chums of Cliff House School. In next Saturday's SCHOOLGIRL, Barbara Redfern & Co. are involved in one of the most thrilling, most perplexing exploits of their very adventurous lives.

It all begins with tea in Courtfield. Babs & Co. are at a cafe, making mild "whoopee." Near them is an old lady reading a paper. Nothing remarkable in that, you say? No—except the manner in which the old lady is reading the paper; a manner which instantly intrigues Babs. Later, something else about the woman intrigues the Fourth Form captain, though she forgets all about it.

Then, back to Cliff House. A new girl has arrived, a Sixth Former named Glenda Maine. She seems charming and likeable. Babs' chums think her a fine sport. But Babs—well, Babs suddenly gets the most extraordinary suspicions; such fantastic suspicions that even she can scarcely credit them. But they persist until Babs is convinced.

Of what? In brief, that this Glenda Maine, to whom everyone else has taken such a tremendous fancy, is actually—

### "THE MOST DANGEROUS GIRL IN THE SCHOOL!"

How? In what way?

I'll leave Hilda Richards to answer those questions for you in her own inimitable style next week. But be prepared for thrills galore—and plenty of shocks, too!

As usual, our next issue will contain another charming COMPLETE story featuring Jess and Highwayman Jack, further dramatic developments in Valerie Drew's baffling holiday mystery, and more of Patricia's Bright and Interesting Pages, so if you haven't yet placed that regular order with your newsagent you really must do so without delay.

And now, bye-bye till next Saturday. With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

"What's the matter with you, you old silly?" Mr. Weeple vexedly demanded, as Flash, showing his teeth uncertainly, stood facing him. "If someone hadn't stolen this stick this morning before I went out I wouldn't have had such a bad tumble. Be off with you!"

And, without even a glance at Valerie, Mr. Weeple strode upstairs, carrying the crooked walking-stick, vanished into his room, and slammed the door.

Thoughtfully Valerie gazed after him. Did this mean that Mr. Weeple was the unknown enemy? Such a thing seemed ridiculous, and yet—it was a possibility Valerie meant to bear in mind!

### The Intruder!

"LADIES and gentlemen," exclaimed Johnny Jevons cheerfully, "on account of the—ahem!—inclement weather, and to honour our distinguished invalid with the little moustache and the great big sling, I rise to make an announcement!"

Smiles greeted Johnny everywhere as he gazed blandly around the dining-room—the first that had been seen since the meal commenced!

Valerie could almost sense the feeling of relief around her as everyone turned to find out what good-tempered, irrepresible Johnny had in mind now.

There could be no doubt that the atmosphere at the farmhouse had taken a decided turn for the worse. The attack on Charlie, which everyone was constantly reminded of when they saw him, had changed everything.

Until to-day there had been a vague air of uneasiness caused by the presence of the unseen enemy, but the general gaiety of life at the cheery holiday-farm had not been seriously affected.

There was a great difference now, and as the meal had progressed Valerie had felt she could read the same thought everywhere.

When would the enemy strike again? Who would be his next victim? Would another be as fortunate in escaping serious hurt as Charlie had been?

"My idea," Johnny proceeded, his twinkling eyes roaming from face to face, "is that we have a mighty festival of party games this afternoon. In view of the fact that our notorious games winner is temporarily hors de combat, I hereby appoint Sherlock Charlie as judge!"

Charlie grinned with pleasure at the suggestion.

Having his arm in a sling was certainly very uncomfortable and inconvenient, but against that he was being shown a great deal of sympathy and attracting far more interest than ever before.

"O.K. with me," he said good-humouredly. "I'll see that none of you pot-hunters cheat, and you won't get any prizes from me unless you deserve 'em. What do you all say?"

Those typically ungracious remarks reflected Charlie's odd and unusual sense of humour, but Charlie, with his arm in a sling, was, for the moment, a privileged person who could get away with such impertinence.

Everyone else was enthusiastic, only too glad to lighten the general gloom which had descended on the party. For the weather, as Johnny had already pointed out, was no help to-day. The sky was grey, the wind was cold, and there was a persistent drizzle of rain which made out-of-doors activities anything but inviting.

Pressed for details, Johnny readily



VALERIE halted on the threshold of her room in blank dismay, for many of the guests were examining the records she had made of their finger-prints. Then Charlie Deeds turned towards her, holding up the mystery figure's black cape. "What are you doing with this?" he demanded. And his manner implied: "Were you the mystery figure?"

explained some of them. Having an apparently inexhaustible supply of new ideas up his sleeve, he did not disappoint anyone.

"You going to join in with the boys and girls to-day, Mr. Weeple?" asked Peter Passleigh.

Valerie looked keenly at the dour individual who had claimed the walking-stick.

"Why, certainly, if I'm not expected to be too boisterous!" Mr. Weeple unexpectedly agreed.

A hat-trimming contest came first, and all the men were soon busily trying to make ladies' hats out of crinkled paper and odd pieces of trimming. Their handiwork finished, the results were placed on the heads of various ladies, who paraded in front of Charlie, for him to announce Mr. Anthony as the winner.

A new game followed at once. Seven chairs were arranged in a close circle, and players sat on them facing inwards. Then each was given a large Sunday newspaper with the pages disarranged, and told to sort it out and put the pages in the proper order.

There were shrieks of laughter from all parts of the room as a waving mass of arms and newspapers immediately resulted, everyone naturally coming into clumsy contact with his neighbours in the confined space.

"They'll never do it in a month of Sundays," declared a voice at Valerie's side.

She turned in surprise, to see Dorothy Dean, the girl hostess so intimately affected by everything which happened at the farm.

It was a difficult moment for Valerie, for since Charlie's perilous mishap, and the excitement following it, she had had no opportunity to speak to Dorothy alone.

"I was just coming to look for you, Dorothy," Valerie murmured. "You've missed a lot of fun already."

"I had some letters to write, Val," Dorothy answered, and suddenly bit her lip and looked away.

"Letters?" Valerie asked, startled and uneasy at the significant change in the other girl's manner. "Surely not

about—anything serious?" she hazarded uncomfortably.

Dorothy tried to smile, but no amount of effort could hide the deeply troubled look in her eyes.

"It's about Christmas bookings, Val," she confessed, in a whisper. "Three people have written by the same post, cancelling their rooms. I can't understand it at all. I'll tell you more later. I mustn't be seen in here with a long face. Oh, shame, Peter!" she cried, with an unexpected, rather forced laugh. "You can't tear the paper to shreds!"

But everyone joining in Johnny's exasperating contest had realised at the same moment that it would never be possible to complete the task with so many others trying to do the same, and the papers were rapidly being reduced to confetti.

"No prizes for anyone for that!" announced Charlie magnificently. "What's next?"

Johnny was ready. It was, he said, the speed contest at the Zoo. Everyone would be given a folded slip of paper with the name of an animal on it. As soon as the name of an animal was called, the person concerned must rush to the head of the stairs, pick up a tray of fruit standing there, and bring it down again. Charlie, with a stopwatch, would record how long they took to do it.

The folded slips were handed around, and everyone read the name written inside. Then Johnny called: "Tiger."

Little Mrs. Peek rushed forward at once, went up the stairs amidst cheers of encouragement, and brought the basket of fruit safely down.

"Seventeen and one-fifth seconds," Johnny reported, as he replaced the fruit basket. "Very good effort, ma'am. All attending again? Ready? Then—elephant!"

There was a frantic rush by the whole crowd for the staircase. Before any of the contestants could realise that all the other papers had borne the same word, "elephant," they were jammed in a laughing, struggling mass on the staircase.



In the midst of the commotion a door at the top of the stairs flew open. A brown-skinned face appeared. A pair of dark, flashing eyes gazed down at the hilarious mix-up on the stairs.

"You're too late! I've got what I want!" declared the voice of Paizi Logan triumphantly. "You'll never get me now!"

The struggling ceased. The excited voices died suddenly to startled silence. And Paizi Logan, still failing to understand what had caused the tumult of excitement which had disturbed her in her search of Valerie's room, fled along the passage, claspings a rusty key!

### Defeat?

"IT was Paizi Logan, the gipsy woman!" burst out Marjorie incredulously.

"Stop her!" yelled Charlie Deeds, at the top of his voice.

Valerie Drew, watching the scene from a position where she could scarcely move at all, was filled with consternation as she realised exactly what it all meant.

The woman with whom she had so nearly come to terms recently still believed that Valerie had played her false.

To get possession of a certain key she had paid this daring daylight visit to Sunnylands Farm.

Valerie, seeing the crowd on the staircase sorting themselves out and starting off in straggling, bewildered pursuit, turned abruptly on her heel.

Leaving the farmhouse by the front door, she ran along the side of the building.

At the far end of it there was a lean-to thatched roof. From this Paizi Logan dropped to the ground a few yards ahead of her, then ran towards a horse tethered close by.

"You're safe now, Mrs. Logan," Valerie tensely whispered, overtaking the woman. "Flash would still get you if I called him. You'd have got the key far more easily if you'd only

trusted me. Write to me when you get away, or give me a ring."

There was no time to say more. The brown-skinned woman had reached the saddle. Turning, she gave Valerie one last glittering look, then galloped away at top speed.

Valerie stopped, breathing hard. Then, hearing a clamour of voices at the open window through which Paizi Logan had made her escape, she retraced her steps to the farmhouse.

With a thrill of dismay she stopped at the staircase as the sound of voices coming from her own room reached her ears.

"Valerie's actually been taking our finger-prints in secret!" Peter Passleigh cried out in bewildered tones. "Look! Here's mine!"

"And mine!" another voice added. A cry of shrill excitement came from Charlie Deeds.

"Look at all this black stuff! It's the very costume worn by the brute who shoved me off the roof! What's it doing in Valerie's room?"

"Two at a time Valerie went upstairs, and, reaching the threshold of her room, she gazed with wide, disbelieving eyes around that usually tidy apartment.

Every drawer in her desk had been forced open and its contents scattered far and wide. Paizi Logan had spared nothing in her desperate determination to recover the rusty key of mystery.

All that Valerie had, for her own reasons, desired to keep secret until her case was completed was revealed to the gaze of the guests.

Every eye was on Valerie, outwardly as calm and unruffled as ever; inwardly aware that this was the worst disaster which could possibly have befallen her.

It was Mrs. Peek, her cheeks reddening perceptibly, who spoke at last.

"My—my finger-prints!" she exclaimed. The paper in her hand trembled suddenly; she turned to look at Valerie very oddly indeed. "Why, this is almost unbelievable!" she cried, her voice rising in a flare of temper.

Charlie, wearing an unpleasantly satisfied grin, couldn't let his own discovery pass unnoticed.

"There's this black cloak as well," he pointed out eagerly. "That certainly needs to be explained! What's it doing here?"

Valerie found her voice at last. "It may interest you to know," she said evenly, "that every print I've taken so far has been the means of establishing that person's innocence."

"Who's going to believe that?" asked Charlie rudely.

For once Valerie nearly lost her temper. Even having his arm in a sling did not give Charlie the right to be as impudent as that.

"If you hadn't been dying to appear far more clever than you are," Valerie answered, unable to hide all trace of bitterness, "you would never have fallen from the roof this morning—and I should have succeeded long before now."

"I shall leave to-morrow," Mrs. Peek announced, as, white-faced and resolute, she walked towards the door.

Peter Passleigh followed her out. "I shall be leaving to-morrow as well," he announced.

"So shall I," said Mr. Anthony with decision.

Valerie watched them troop out of her room one by one until only Charlie was left. The would-be Sherlock looked decidedly less comfortable.

"I shan't go, you know," he hastened to assure Valerie.

Valerie made no reply. Closing the door after him, she picked up all her scattered possessions, and then went downstairs to break the devastating news to Dorothy Dean before it could reach her from any other source.

Tapping on the kitchen door, she received no reply. When, after a suitable pause, she entered she pulled up in fresh dismay.

As though enough had not happened already, she saw Dorothy Dean crying bitterly, while her Uncle Nathan, looking distracted beyond words, was pacing up and down the floor, gingerly clasping his bandaged hands.

"It's no good, Dorothy; you'll have to take a man's advice, after all!" he declared. "Now that more Christmas bookings have been cancelled, you certainly cannot hope to pay your way any longer. I can only hope the agents will still be willing to stick to their offer to buy the farm."

Valerie stepped into the kitchen and closed the door sharply behind her.

"Is there any reason why people should cancel the Christmas bookings, Dorothy?" she asked pointedly.

Dorothy raised her tear-stained face; and Valerie, deeply moved by her obvious grief, realised she had never seen the plucky girl hostess so distressed before.

"Yes, Val," Dorothy said chokingly. "I've just found out the truth. 'One of our intended guests enclosed a cutting from a newspaper.'" She swallowed hard. "If you—read it—for yourself—"

Suddenly filled with a new uneasiness, Valerie took up the cutting Dorothy had indicated.

"Disasters at a farmhouse," she read in bold type. "Luckless guests at a holiday home." And following, in smaller type, she read, to her consternation, a grimly frank account of all the troubles which had beset Sunnylands Farm since her arrival there!

"That would be bad enough by itself. Miss Drew," said Uncle Nathan sombrely, as Valerie, dumbfounded, laid the cutting down; "but something even worse has just happened. They've phoned from the hospital to say Mrs. Dean's no better. Something's given her the idea that things are all going wrong at the farm. They want Dorothy to go along and see her this very night to set her mind at rest."

He took off his spectacles, rubbed his eyes uneasily with the back of his hand, and polished the lenses vigorously.

"How, Miss Drew," he asked, "do you imagine Dorothy can go to the hospital and deceive her poor mother any longer?"

Valerie compressed her lips. She had seldom felt so baffled and defeated. The black tidings which she herself had brought still remained untold—it was still another blow in store for the girl already driven nearly to distraction.

It seemed that Valerie, after her long, fruitless quest for the mystery enemy who menaced Sunnylands Farm, must admit defeat!

NO wonder Valerie is so utterly dismayed! It really does seem that the position is quite hopeless. But—it takes a lot to beat the famous girl detective, as you'll discover in next week's dramatic chapters of this intriguing story.

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