

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

THE SCHOOLGIRL

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EVERY SATURDAY

Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



**MABEL LYNN FACE
TO FACE WITH THE REAL
HEADMISTRESS !**
—at the very moment when she
was about to bluff the most
dangerous girl at Cliff House.

*(See this week's superb
Barbara Redfern & Co.
story.)*

The third Long Complete story dealing with that daring and unscrupulous Cliff House Sixth Former, Glenda Maine.



MABS Pays the Penalty!

Glenda Warns Mabs!



"ROLL up! Roll up! Roll up!" Barbara Redfern cheerily called. "If you can't afford a pound, a bobble will do!" "Or if you can't afford a bobble, sixpence will do!"

Mabel Lynn laughed.

"Or even threepence, you know!" plump Bessie Bunter beamed. "Even pennies and halfpennies and farthings! We've got to make the most whacking great collection that ever has been collected, you know! Roll up!"

"Yes, rather! Come on! Let's have a record first day!" Marjorie Hazeldene urged, and rattled the collecting-box in her hand. "Remember, it's Mabs' mother's idea; and, remember, for every penny we collect, our chairman of the board of governors is going to add another! Cliff House wants to—and will—break the record of every other school! So roll up!"

There were grins, smiles, and laughs in the Fourth Form Common-room at Cliff House School.

That Common-room on this occasion wore a most unusual appearance. At the end of the room was a long cutting-out table, borrowed from needle-work class, and that table, covered with a snowy-white cloth, contained a tray of tiny, multi-coloured flags. Pinned to the front of it was a huge printed notice in red and blue:

"SOUTHERN SCHOOLS HOSPITAL CHARITIES FUND.

President: Mrs. Marigold Lynn.

CHARITY WEEK BEGINS TO-DAY. GIVE GENEROUSLY. PUT YOUR SCHOOL AT THE TOP OF THE LIST."

Behind that table stood Barbara Redfern, captain of the Fourth, Mabel Lynn, her golden-haired chum, and plump, beaming Bessie Bunter—the famous trio of Study No. 4—and Marjorie Hazeldene.

Each of them had a collecting box or tin in her hand, and, to judge from the way they held them, they were already fairly loaded.

They were.

For though Charity Week, as the poster announced, had only begun that day, there had already been an almost eager response.

There was reason for that, of course—several, in fact. In the first place, all deserving charities were sure of a good welcome at Cliff House. But this particular one had a special appeal, for it was Mabel Lynn's own mother who had conceived the idea, and Mabel herself, loyally backed up by her chums, who was energetically sponsoring it.

The fact that it had such personal contact with the originator of the scheme had put Cliff House on its mettle, more especially as the chairman of the school's board of governors had promised to double whatever contribution the school raised. Very, very keen indeed was Cliff House to see its name emerge as the biggest donor to the fund.

"Here we are!" Clara Trevlyn, the Tomboy of the Fourth, said jovially. "Here's sixpence! My hat, Babs, how much money have you got in that tin?"

"Oh, goodness knows!" Barbara laughed. "Miss Charmant gave me five shillings, Miss Bullivant another five, and Miss Primrose, if you please, two whole pounds! Even old Piper, the porter, parted up with sixpence."

"And the page-boy, you know, gave me his last bobble!" Bessie beamed.

"Jolly good for Boker!" Diana Royston-Clarke said. "Still, we can't be beaten by the page-boy, girls! Here we are, Mabs! Here's ten shillings—twice as much as Miss Charmant or Miss Bullivant gave!" she added disdainfully. "And whatever you find you've collected to-night, I'll make up the level quidlet! How's that for an offer?"

"Ripping!" Mabs gurgled, and laughed.

Diana liked throwing her money about, and advertising the fact while she was doing it. For once neither Babs nor Mabs could find fault with that little vanity, however.

"My hat, this is going to be a record!" Mabs whooped. "Anybody else? Offer still open, you know, girls!"

But though the offer was open, there was no more cash forthcoming. Not a single girl out of the thirty odd in that Common-room who had not already contributed.

"O.K., then!" Babs said. "What about trying the other Forms? Mabs, you do the Upper Third, will you? I'll do the Lower Third, and you, Marjorie,

the Second. By the way," she added. "Primmy hasn't appointed a treasurer yet, has she? Must see her about that, Mabs."

Mabs nodded. She hadn't forgotten. Some Sixth Form girl, of course, had to be chosen to take charge of the fund under Miss Primrose's supervision; but, seeing that collection had only just started, there was no hurry for that.

"But, look here, what do I do?" plump Bessie questioned.

"You stay here just in case anybody else wants to contribute, old Bess," Mabs instructed. "And, by the way, everybody, we're holding a meeting of the collection committee after supper, so anybody who cares to come along, pop in at the music-room. Some time during the week," Mabs added, "before parents' day on Saturday, when the fund closes, we're having a masquerade collection in Friardale village and Courtfield. We shall want heaps of volunteers for that."

"Sure, and here's one already!" Leila Carroll cried. "I'll be a Red Indian! Whoops! Oh, Mabs, that's a topping idea!"

Mabs laughed again. Babs, glancing at her, laughed, too—out of the sheer pleasure of seeing her best chum so utterly happy.

Leaving Bessie in charge, and the Common-room buzzing, the three went out. Hardly had they reached the corridor, however, than Mary Buller, from the Sixth, stopped them.

"Hallo! Collecting?" she genially asked. "My collection!" And she dropped a half-crown into each of their tins. "Good luck, girls!"

"Thanks, Mary! I think," Mabs replied gleefully, "we've got it!"

Got the luck, they certainly had. Astonishing the way everybody was rallying to the cause. Before they had reached the bottom of the stairs which led into Big Hall, Olga Johansson of the Fifth had added a shilling, Lucinda Finch, also of the Fifth, half-crown, and even little Dolores Essendon of the Second another threepence, Dolores already having given twopence during the morning.

"My hat, at this rate we shall come back staggering!" Babs chuckled. "Hallo, though! There's something about the fund on the notice-board!"

She nodded across the Hall, where the green-baize square given over to school notices was fixed. The vivid red-and-blue printing of one of the hospital notices attracted their attention at once.

By common consent, they made their way to it. And then suddenly, as she read that notice, all the happiness faded from Babs' face; a look of uneasiness came into Mabs'. For the notice, bearing the headmistress' signature, read:

"It has been my pleasure to appoint Glenda Maine of the Sixth Form as the treasurer of the Hospital Charities Fund. All girls with collecting-boxes are advised to hand them in to Glenda every day by 5 p.m."

"Glenda!" breathed Mabs, and looked at her chum. "Babs, surely you don't think—"

Barbara Redfern was gazing at that notice as though she could not believe it. And on her face was a peculiar expression indeed—an expression now of suspicion.

Glenda Maine! Glenda, of all people, to be the treasurer of an important fund such as the hospital charities!

Unconsciously she clenched her hands.

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

Unconsciously she hugged her own collecting box closer. For Babs, above all, knew the true character of this Glenda Maine, the newest arrival at Cliff House, who had won the regard of the school with such ease.

A nice girl, a sporty girl, thought all Cliff House. Only Babs knew her for a ruthless thief, possessing a superlative skill at disguise, whose one aim in life was the grabbing of other people's property, who, in the two attempts she had already made in that direction, had been foiled by Babs.

Unfortunately, with the exception of Mabs and Jimmy Richmond of Friardale Boys' School, now on holiday at his home, nobody shared that knowledge of Glenda Maine. And even Mabs was not wholehearted in her support of Babs' campaign against the girl everybody else liked so much.

"Mabs, let's go to the study, shall we?" Babs asked abruptly. "Marjorie, you don't mind carrying on, do you? I've something rather important I want to say to Mabs."

Marjorie did not mind. Gentle, unsuspecting, as she always was, she immediately drifted away.

The war between Barbara Redfern and Glenda Maine goes on! And this time Babs is not alone. At last she has convinced her chum, Mabel Lynn, that Glenda is an unscrupulous and cunning thief! Mabs comes in on Babs' side. And Mabs, like Glenda, is a master of disguise. Thus—"We'll fight Glenda with her own weapons, Mabs!" cries Babs. "Your skill at disguising against hers!" That is the chums' plan to thwart Glenda's latest scheme!

Babs led the way to Study No. 4, shared by herself, Mabs, and Bessie, and there faced Mabs.

"Babs, you—you don't think Glenda has—has—" Mabs faltered.

"I don't think—I know!" Babs' face set. "Mabs, old girl, listen to me! I know you only believe what I've told you about Glenda Maine because you're such a pal; but, believe me, old thing, there's more in this than meets the eye. If Glenda's taking such an interest in this fund, it's because Glenda's got her eyes on the fund. Remember, Mabs, I scotched her in trying to steal Ray Ellis' emerald. Remember I beat her in her attempt to steal that ruby of Major Fields-Croft's. She's been pretty quiet since then—because there's been nothing to attract her! But this—"

Mabs bit her lip.

"But, Babs, how could she get at the fund when it will be locked up every night in Miss Primrose's safe?"

"That's it!" Babs nodded keenly. Once again she felt her brain working swiftly, clearly—as she always found it when Glenda Maine was in question. "Glenda's tricked Primmy into making her treasurer. Don't you see what that means? Every night Primmy and Glenda will check up the collection of the day. Every night Primmy will put that collection in her safe, and Glenda will be watching her, finding out the combination of the safe and so on, until she's ready to strike her blow. Well, we've got to get Glenda out of that treasurer job before she does find out things; before she's had a chance to make her plans. Otherwise—"

"Otherwise—" Mabs faltered.

"There'll be no fund to collect when the time comes," Babs forecast with conviction.

In spite of her doubt, Mabs looked alarmed. The fund was very, very dear to her heart.

"But—but, Babs, even if you're dead right, what can we do?" she asked.

"Get somebody else—somebody more important," Babs said swiftly. "Ask Dulciana Fairbrother, for instance; I'm sure she'd agree to be treasurer like a shot. Glenda, after all, knows how fearfully interested in the fund you are. If she's not up to any crooked game, she ought to be willing to resign if the head girl takes the job on. But first get Glenda's resignation. And, if you want my advice, do it now."

Mabs nodded. Fears for her precious fund made her suddenly share all Babs' apprehensions. Even now she could hardly believe that what Babs said was right, but she could not afford to run risks. Swiftly she made up her mind.

"I'll go—now," she decided.

"Good old Mabs!"

She held the door open for her chum. Mabs passed through, her mind in a whirl. Was Babs right—could Babs be right, or had Babs, as so many others said, just let her hostility towards Glenda Maine over-ride her better judgment? But not usually was Babs wrong about such things.

Mabs tramped along to Study No. 13 in the Sixth Form corridor. Outside that door she hesitated a moment,

marshalling her thoughts, mentally finding the words with which she must open this decidedly awkward interview.

As she stood, there came the clinking of money to her ear, followed by a tiny impatient exclamation. And all at once suspicion flamed in Mabs. Without thinking, she opened the door. And then she stood for a moment transfixed.

Glenda Maine stood by the table. Glenda had a collecting tin in her hand.

The tin was upside down, and through the slot in its centre was projecting a portion of a pound note—quite obviously in the process of being extracted from the box.

The start Glenda gave, the quick look of alarmed guilt which was on her attractive features as she swung round, convinced Mabs in that moment more than any words of Babs' could have convinced her, that Glenda had been in the act of stealing that note.

But in a moment Glenda was all smiles. She did not hastily drop the tin, as another girl might have done. She went on trying to get the note out.

"Hallo, Mabel! Sit down," she said cordially. "A note's got wedged in the slot."

"Has it?" Mabs asked a little shakily. "Then wouldn't it be just as easy to ram it back with that knife on the table?"

"Eh? Well, what an idea!" Glenda laughed. "Why, of course, Mabs—of course. How silly of me not to think of that!" And she laughed again. But there was that in her look—the sly bafflement of it, which Mabs had sometimes noticed in her exchanges with Babs—that only deepened Mabs' convictions and set her now trembling for

the safety of her fund. "Might have looked as if I was trying to steal it—mightn't it?" Glenda added lightly. "I suppose you know I'm treasurer of the fund, Mabel?"

Mabs nodded. "Yes, I know. That is what I've come to see you about," she said. "Oh, yes?" Glenda nodded agreeably. "Anything we can do to cooperate, of course."

"I wasn't going to speak about cooperation. You know I've got a big interest in this fund? Perhaps you know that Miss Primrose didn't consult me before she made you treasurer?"

"No," Glenda gave a tiny smile. "She never had time; I volunteered."

"Well," Mabs said steadily, "I was wondering if you'd like to resign. You see, Glenda, my own idea was to get somebody like Dulcia Fairbrother to look after the fund—after all the fund is frightfully important, and Dulcia is the captain of the school, and all that; and I'm sure," Mabs went on, "that you must be awfully busy. If—if you'd resign"—she said hopefully, and then stopped, her voice faltering into sickly silence as she intercepted the very peculiar steely look Glenda was fastening upon her.

"You mean, in other words," Glenda suggested softly, "that Barbara Redfern has been talking to you?"

"Glenda, g-g—"

"I know! I know exactly what Barbara thinks of me, and I also know that she's got influence with you. Well, Mabel Lynn, I'm not going to resign! You can tell Barbara that from me. You can tell her, too, if you like—she'll understand—that I've a particular interest in this fund!"

"So that you can grab the money!" Mabs flashed out; she just couldn't check herself.

"What?"

"You heard!" Anxiety for her precious fund made Mabs forget her caution. "Glenda, you can't bluff me! I know what you were doing when I came in—you were trying to steal that pound note! I saw you!"

"You did?" Glenda eyed her mockingly. She was perfectly composed. "Well, if you are so confident of that, why not go and tell Primmy?" she asked lightly. "But, of course, in telling her, you'll have to convince her—and you'll also have to give her proof. Mabel, buzz off!" she added impatiently.

"But—but—"

"There's the door!"

And contemptuously Glenda tore it open; almost roughly she caught Mabs by the shoulder and spun her into the passage. Then, for a moment, she glared.

"And remember this, Mabel Lynn," she said softly, her blue-grey eyes gleaming, "that if you or Barbara Redfern start interfering, one of you—or both of you—is going to get hurt! And this time," she added, with a sort of cold, deadly menace that chilled Mabs, "there'll be no gloves on! It means the end of one—or both—of you at this school! That's all!"

And the door slammed in Mabs' face.

The Great Impersonation!



"BABS, I'm going to Primmy! I must tell Primmy!" Mabel Lynn burst out.

But Barbara Redfern silenced her with a negative shake of the head.

It was five minutes later, and the

scene was the laboratory of Cliff House. Dim and silent that laboratory was now that darkness was approaching—and except for themselves, vacant. Agitated was Mabs, who, afraid to talk where she might be overheard or interrupted, had dragged Babs to this place.

Whatever slight doubt Mabs might have had concerning "the dishonesty of Glenda Maine, it was utterly banished now. The almost certain knowledge that her precious collecting fund was marked down as Glenda's next coup, had flung her into a panic.

"Wrong move," Babs decided. "The very worst move, Mabs. Don't forget Glenda is high in favour with Primmy—so high, in fact, that I hear Primmy is thinking of making her a prefect. Primmy just wouldn't listen—why should she?"

"But, Babs, if Glenda does handle that money—"

"Wait a minute; let's think this out. Only one thing can make Glenda give up that treasurership now—and that is an order or a request from Primmy. But you can't very well go and ask Primmy to make that order after she's already made the appointment."

Mabs looked dashed.

"Then—then—"

"But," Babs said shrewdly, "if we could get Dulcia to agree to take on the treasurership? That might persuade Primmy to change her mind. After all, this is important. With the headmistress herself acting as a sort of trustee for the fund, Primmy might think it a better idea to have the captain of the school as her assistant. If Dulcia said she was willing to take the job on—and I don't suppose that Dulcia knows yet it's been given out to anyone else, because she's been working all the afternoon in her study—that would be half the battle. Anyway," Babs said briskly, "let's go and ask Dulcia."

And along to the Sixth Form corridor they went. They found the popular captain having a cup of tea, and when they proposed their plan, Dulcia, to their delight, signified her readiness. "You mean," Mabs gulped, "I can tell Miss Primrose you'll take on the job?"

"Yes, if she's agreeable. And if, of course," Dulcia said, obviously knowing nothing of Glenda's appointment, "she hasn't any other plans in mind. Have a cup of tea before you go."

They had the cup of tea, hearts throbbing in thankfulness now. With a gleeful grimace at each other, they left the room, and Babs immediately led the way towards the Head's study.

"No sense in wasting time," she said. "You'd better do the talking, Mabs, as you're the most interested party."

Mabs knocked at the headmistress' door. Miss Primrose, a little hesitantly, called out "Come in!" frowning to them to be silent as they stepped over the threshold, because at that moment Miss Primrose was on the phone.

"Yes?" she said into the mouthpiece. "Oh, is that Dr. Barrymore? Good-afternoon! Yes, quite well, thank you, and I shall be pleased to accept your invitation. I will be over at Friardale this evening at half-past five, if that will suit you? Thank you. Well, girls, what is it?" Miss Primrose added, hanging up.

Babs nudged her chum. Mabs licked her lips.

"Miss Primrose, it's about the fund—"

"Oh, yes?" Miss Primrose's face melted into an interested smile at once. "I trust there is nothing wrong, Mabel?"

"Nun—of course not," Mabs said. "Everything's going splendidly. But—but I wanted to make a suggestion—about Dulcia Fairbrother."

"Dulcia?"

"Y—yes, Miss Primrose. But—"

Dulcia would be glad to act as treasurer to the fund," Mabs blurted out, and ramming home her arguments before Miss Primrose could make objection, breathlessly went on: "You see, Dulcia is the captain of the school, and—and Glenda Maine is only a new girl, and the parents who will be coming along on Saturday won't know Glenda as they know Dulcia, and—"

"Mabel, please! Great goodness!" Miss Primrose cried. "Do not gabble like that! Do I understand that you prefer Dulcia to Glenda? Is that what you are trying to say?"

"Well, y—yes, Miss Primrose."

"You are aware that I have appointed Glenda?"

"Y—yes, Miss Primrose. "But—"

"And you are doubtless aware," Miss Primrose went on, "that though Dulcia is prepared to act as treasurer, she is, as head girl, always very busy—"

"Y—yes, Miss Primrose. But Dulcia said—"

"Never mind what Dulcia said!" Miss Primrose frowned a little.

"Mabel, I cannot consent to your request. Glenda is a new girl, as you remark, but she is extremely capable and I feel she would be ideal for the post. In any case, I have appointed Glenda now, and only her own resignation will make me alter my mind. Please go."

"Miss Primrose—" Babs faltered. "Barbara, do not waste my time!"

Babs bit her lip. But Mabs was face pale, desperately started forward.

"Please listen to me!" she cried. "Miss Primrose, this fund is my mother's idea. We're all anxious to do our best for it. But how can we do our best with a girl like Glenda in charge of the money—"

"What?"

"Oh goodness! I—I mean—" Mabs faltered, realising that in her anxiety she had blurted out more than she intended. "Miss Primrose, please—please let Dulcia—"

Miss Primrose's eyes were gleaming now, however. Her face portrayed the indignation she felt.

"Mabel, there was a serious—a very serious allegation in those words! You spoke as though you did not trust Glenda. Explain what you meant."

Mabs looked helplessly at Babs. "Well, Gig-Glenda's so new—"

"Indeed! Does that also make her dishonest?"

"Well—" Mabs blurted.

"Mabel, please stick to the point!" Miss Primrose spoke sharply. "Were you inferring that you do not trust Glenda?"

"Yes!" Mabs said desperately.

"Mabel!"

"I'm sorry—"

"Sorry! Sorry!" Quivering, Miss Primrose rose. "Mabel, how dare you? Since Glenda has been at this school I have found her in every way, in every respect, a girl of the most transparent integrity and uprightness of character. I am glad, Mabel, that she is not here to be hurt by your callous accusation. Take a hundred lines! Now go, both of you!"

"Mabs—" muttered Babs, plucking at her chum's sleeve.

Almost audible was Mabs' groan as she followed Babs out. In the passage she looked at her in despair.

"Mabs, don't worry. I've got something—or think I have." Babs said quickly. "We may be able to wangle it even now—if you're willing to take a risk?"

"Risk?"

"Yes. Come along to the study and I'll explain."

Mabs gulped hopelessly. But she followed Babs back to Study No. 4 without demur.

"Close the door, old thing." Babs said. "Now—my idea. Remember what Primmy said—that only if Glenda wanted to resign would she consider giving the job to Dulcia—"

"Yes; but—"

"And remember the phone message from the Head at Friardale School?" Babs asked. "That means Primmy is going out to-night."

"Babs, what the dickens—"

"This is the wheeze," Babs said. "It's one which only you can work, Mabs, because—we're going to play Glenda at her own clever game! You know Glenda relies on her powers of disguise to help her in her rotten thieving? Well, we're taking a leaf out of her book."

Mabs' eyes opened wide.

"Listen," Babs said tersely: "there's only one other girl in this school who can impersonate other people as well as Glenda can, Mabs—that's yourself. No, listen—don't speak yet. Let me get this off my chest while it's still in my mind. Mabs, the idea is that when Primmy goes out you take her place—become Miss Primrose!"

"You have a talk with Glenda—see? In the talk you'll say you've been re-considering matters and think that Dulcia, after all, is the best girl to have the treasurer job. And then you'll ask her—quite nicely, of course—if she'll resign and if she'd just mind sending you a letter to that effect. Well?"

Mabs, for a moment, could not reply. She was looking stunned.

"Mabs, you see?" Mabs asked.

"Oh, Babs!" The words came in a low, thrilled whisper from Mabs. "If—if it could be managed!"

"It can—it will be," Babs said firmly. "You've made up as Primmy before—don't you remember? Even I was taken in that time. But first," she added, "we've got to let Glenda get the idea that we've given up the notion of trying to get her out of it—and the best way of doing that is to cart along the collecting-boxes to her now. I'd better do that, and while I do it you scoot along to the attic and start getting made-up. You've got all the tiggery you want in the props basket, haven't you?"

Mabs nodded swiftly. She thrilled. Could she do it? But she knew, without any conceit, that she could. First-class both in acting and making-up was Mabs.

From that moment she took fresh hope. Make-up box under her arm, she climbed the stairs to the topmost attic. She opened the door of Attic No. 3, pulled the black-out curtains down and switched on the light.

In the corner stood the props basket of the Junior School Dramatic Society and in which were plenty of the clothes she would now require.

She opened her make-up box. She went to the mirror. Skillfully she painted her face and combed her hair. Next she produced a box of black powder and ruthlessly rubbed that into her glorious golden locks. Not very presentable did Mabs look after that.

But the gleeful way she grinned at her reflection showed that she was pleased with herself.

Now Mabs produced a greyish-white powder. Into her hair she sprinkled that powder, and brushed until at last she paused to examine herself again. Gone now was the Mabs of the golden tresses. In her place stood an apparently grey-haired girl. It was then that Babs came in.

"Hallo, Babs! Shut the door!" Mabs whispered. "How did you get on?"

"Fine," Babs nodded.

"Glenda didn't suspect?"

"What should she suspect?" Babs shrugged. "She thinks she's downed us. I let her think it, of course. But, Mabs, how marvellous you're beginning to look! Can I help?"

"Yes, rather!" Mabs laughed. "Pass me that powder there, old Babs! And just see, will you, there are no creases in that dress!"

Busily she worked away. Babs watched, admiration welling within her. A few deft pats of powder; a touch of paint here and there; a shadow here. What an artist Mabs was! Swiftly the fresh youth faded from her cheeks. A few touches with a lining-in pencil, and already there was the unmistakable outline of Miss Primrose's face appearing. Another few moments—

"Well, Babs?" Mabs asked anxiously.

"Mabs, it—it's incredible!" Babs gulped. "Dashed if I can believe you're not Primmy even now! If you were only a little taller—"

"That's easy," Mabs said. "Don't forget I shall be in Primmy's study, sitting down. Babs, I think I can manage now. Scoot along, will you, and come back and give me the tip when Primmy's gone?"

Off at once Babs went. Busily, earnestly Mabs bent to the finishing of her task. The stiff black dress was put on. She found a pair of pince-nez of the pattern Miss Primrose wore and placed them on her nose. Even her hands she made up.

And, except for that slight matter of

height, there was nothing—just nothing at all then—to denote any difference whatever between Mabel Lynn of the Fourth Form and Miss Primrose, head-mistress of Cliff House.

Mabs nodded at her reflection. She was pleased with the transformation. Keenly, critically she was examining herself when the door opened and Babs came in again.

"Mabs! Oh, great goodness!" she breathed, in awe. "How perfectly stunning! But, I say, the coast's clear now! Primmy just left. Will you buzz off there now? I'll go on ahead and keep the coast clear."

Mabs nodded confidently, assuredly; but, nevertheless, her heart was racing a little as she stepped out. With Babs scouting ahead, she stepped along the corridor, and, presently reaching the door of Miss Primrose's study, nodded to Babs and swiftly entered. There she turned on the light, grabbed another cushion from the settee to place under the one already occupying the seat of Miss Primrose's chair—just in order to give her the necessary height—and touched the bell.

Sophie, the maid, came almost at once. She blinked timidly at Mabs.

"Yes, Miss Primrose? You rang?" she asked.

"I did, Sophie." Mabs smiled in that kindly manner so characteristic of Miss Primrose. "Will you go along to Miss Maine of the Sixth Form and ask her to come and see me at once?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose."

Sophie left. Now the die was cast; now Glenda would come, and the battle of wits between them would begin.

She waited, her heart drumming. Then that heart suddenly seemed to stand still as there was a step in the passage, followed by a knock. For a moment Mabs' nerves had such an effect on her vocal cords that she could hardly utter the "Come in!" in response to that knock. In a voice which



WITH a startled cry Babs pointed at the notice saying that Glenda Maine had been appointed treasurer of the hospital fund. "Glenda!" breathed Mabs. "Babs, surely you don't think—" Babs did not reply. But she was certain in her own mind that Glenda had got this job solely because she intended to rob the fund!

sounded unreal to herself, she managed to get it out, however, and found the blood pumping in her ears as Glenda, her face questioning, came in.

"Yes, Miss Primrose? You wanted me?"

"Ahem! Yes—er—sit down, Glenda!" And in a moment, with that utterance, Mabs' little panic had passed. "I—I wish to speak to you about the hospital fund."

"Yes, Miss Primrose?"

"I—er—have been thinking things over." And Mabs, in the way Miss Primrose had, picked up a pencil and drummed it on the desk. "I was wondering, Glenda, my dear, if—if you'd very much object if I made a change in the treasurership?"

Glenda's eyes widened.

"A change?" Again Mabs knew a tremor as the grey-blue eyes regarded her steely. "May I ask why, Miss Primrose?"

"Of course you may ask," Mabs nodded confidently. She could see that Glenda, though startled, was not suspicious; she could see, too, that Glenda was taken aback. "As a matter of fact, Glenda, I am thinking of giving you more important duties to do in the near future; this treasurership may interfere with those plans, you see. In the second place, I learn that Dulcia Fairbrother—who, as you know, is our head girl, and who, therefore, should have been approached in the first place—is willing to act in that capacity."

"I see!" Glenda's eyes narrowed. "Miss Primrose, has Mabel Lynn been talking to you?"

"Mabel?" The sharpness of the tone Mabs adopted caused Glenda to redden. "Glenda, what do you mean by that remark?"

"Oh, nun-nothing!" Glenda said uncomfortably.

"Glenda, I demand to know what you mean?" And Mabs really enjoyed seeing Glenda's discomfiture then. "Why should Mabel have been talking to me?"

"Well," Glenda defended, "it was she who first put the scheme to me."

"And you seriously suggest, Glenda, that I, your headmistress, have been influenced by a junior schoolgirl?"

Glenda turned crimson.

"Oh, n-no, Miss Primrose!"

"Then why did you say it?" Mabs rapped irritably, marvelling at her own nerve.

"I—I'm sorry! I—I wasn't thinking!" Glenda blurted.

"Then in future please do think!" Mabs said severely. "I expect it from my Sixth Form girls! Mabel has no more to do with this suggestion than I have!"—which, of course was strictly truthful. "I am amazed, Glenda, that you, a responsible senior, should confront me, your headmistress, with such insolence!"

"I—I'm sorry, Miss Primrose—"

"Very well," Mabs was in a gracious mood now. "Let the matter rest. Now, about your resignation—"

Glenda glared a little

"But I haven't said I'm resigning!" she pointed out.

"No?" Mabs frowned. "Really, Glenda, please do not be so awkward!" she said. "Of course you will resign—with good grace! It is my wish."

Glenda gulped.

"I see!" she said, and rose. "Seems," she said, with a rather bitter shrug, "I've no alternative. Very well, Miss Primrose; I will resign!"

Mabs' heart seemed to burst into song.

"Thank you, Glenda!" she said. "It is nice of you to fall in with my wishes

so readily! I am sure, my dear, that you do realise it is all for the very best? In the meantime," she added, touching her bell, "would you mind bringing the collecting tins and boxes to me, please? Sophie will go with you and will help you to carry them. Then, Glenda, if you would not mind just writing a brief note of resignation—I do so like to keep a check on these changes, you know. Ah, here is Sophie! Sophie, go with Miss Maine, will you, and help her to bring the collection-boxes back to me?"

Glenda went out, Sophie following her. Hardly had they disappeared than Mabs popped in.

"Mabs, how's it going?" she asked breathlessly.

"Phew! Topping!" Mabs chuckled. "Working like a charm! But scoot! Glenda might come back!"

Mabs scooted, her face one big smile. Mabs hugged herself, faintly amazed at the ease with which she had gained her victory. She felt happy now. Once that resignation was placed before her, Primmy would have no alternative but to give Dulcia the job.

Glenda and Sophie, carrying the collecting-boxes and tins between them, came in.

"Aha!" Mabs said. "Put them on the table, please. Thank you, Glenda. You have relieved my mind considerably. Now, if you would not mind writing out the note of resignation? You can do it here, on my typewriter."

Glenda shrugged. She sat herself down at the typewriter, while Sophie disappeared. Mabs watched her, her heart pounding.

Glenda started to type. And then there were quick footsteps in the corridor. Back swung the door, and into the room the newcomer came. She looked with surprise and amazement at the back of Glenda; she looked at Mabs—

"Bless my soul! W-what is this?" Mabs gave a faint gasp. For the newcomer, dressed in outdoor clothes, was Miss Primrose herself!

The Form Against Her!



SWIFTLY Glenda Maine wheeled round; blankly she stared at the real Miss Primrose; with wide-eyed incredulity at Mabs. Upon Mabs her gaze became fixed with a piercing light.

"What is—is this?" Miss Primrose stuttered.

In that moment Mabs' dearest wish was that the floor should open and swallow her up. Falteringly she rose, her height revealing then her deception. Miss Primrose glared at her dazedly.

"Who are you? And what," she cried, "is the meaning of this masquerade?"

"Perhaps," Glenda said sharply, "I can answer that, Miss Primrose."

"What?"

"This girl, whoever she is, has taken me in. Clever!" Glenda nodded, her gaze full on the disturbed Mabs, and though there was a sneer on her face, Mabs read also just a disturbed look in her eyes. "Her objective was, Miss Primrose, to make me resign from the treasurership of the charities fund. I was just typing out that resignation as you came in."

"Why, bless my soul, that was Mabel Lynn's suggestion!" Miss Primrose stared. "Are you Mabel Lynn?" she thundered.

It was hopeless for Mabs to deny it.

"Oh dear! I—I'm sorry, Miss Primrose!"

"So—" Miss Primrose looked furious. "Mabel, I have always admired your talents as an actress and an impersonator, but this—this is altogether different matter. It is," she added grimly, "perhaps just as well that my car was found to be short of petrol and could not take me to Dr. Barrymore's, otherwise I can plainly see that this deception would have succeeded."

Mabs gulped.

"I can forgive you a harmless impersonation for the purpose of a practical joke," stormed the Head, her anger rising, "but that you should abuse your talent in order to deceive a perfectly trustworthy girl into giving up a position of honour which I myself have conferred upon her, I will not tolerate!"

Mabs groaned.

"Second, and more important—and, I may add, more distasteful from your point of view—is this continued effort to besmirch Glenda's character. For that, Mabel, you will write out a letter of apology to Glenda herself, and if you persist in this foolish attitude that she is some sort of thief in secret, I shall certainly take measures which you will not like. Thirdly, I object most strongly to your using my property and my room for the purpose of your deceptive scheme, and for that you are detained for the next three half-holidays. You will also take a hundred lines. Glenda, my dear, I am sorry—dreadfully—that you should have been the victim of such a trick. Mabel, you may go!"

"Y-yes, Miss Primrose."

"And please hand in those lines before call-over, otherwise I shall double them."

"But, Miss Primrose, I've a meeting of the collection committee—"

"You must put it off. If you want to enjoy privileges, Mabel, do not earn punishments. Go! Glenda, my dear, as you have the collecting-boxes here, and as, obviously, it is impossible to visit Dr. Barrymore without petrol for my car, we will deal together with the collection."

Mabs, feeling as if she had been whipped, went hurrying back to the attics.

Babs was there, eagerly awaiting her. But her face fell when Mabs told the story.

"Oh, my hat, what ghastly luck!" she cried. "Just when everything was going so well, too! Poor old Mabs!"

"But—but what now?" Mabs asked in despair.

Babs shook her head.

"I don't know—yet. But never mind; we'll think up something. We've got to. Now, old thing, you'd better change," she added, "because the collection committee's meeting is due in the music-room."

"I—I can't attend it," Mabs faltered. "I've got those lines to do. Primmy insisted on their being done before call-over—"

Babs pulled a face. The committee meeting was important. But in a moment her face cleared.

"Mabs, never mind. You go to the meeting; I'll do your lines."

"You, Babs! But—"

"Why not?" Babs asked quickly. "My writing's pretty much the same as yours, isn't it? Anyway, doing lines for Primmy isn't like doing them for Miss Charmant—she'd never spot the difference. You can tell me all about the meeting afterwards."

Mabs got changed, though not happily. She was still worried and

anxious. Her masquerade had been a frost—and very definitely she had raised Glenda's stock even higher in Miss Primrose's estimation.

Anyway, thank goodness nobody else knew anything about the escapade.

Re-dressed, re-washed, she went down to the music-room, parting with Babs at Study No. 4. All the committee, consisting of Marjorie Hazeldene, Bessie Bunter, Clara Trevlyn, Janet Jordan, Rosa Rodworth, and Beatrice Beverley, were there when she went in, and so, too, were a score of other girls, all eager to learn details of the forthcoming masquerade collection. There was a cheer as she entered.

"Faith, and it was after wondering if we should come and fetch you we were," Bridget O'Toole said. "Mabs, it's ten minutes late you are!"

"Sorry," Mabs said. "Important business." And she laughed, pushing her vague worries to the background of her mind. "Anyway, let's get on, shall we? Any more collections before we start? I vote, as Wednesday's a half-holiday, we have the masquerade collection then. You know the idea, of course. A certain number of girls in fancy dress will parade Courtfield and Friardale in aid of the fund, collecting from passers-by. If any of you have any good stunts to suggest—"

And there she stopped. For floods of suggestions were loosed upon her at once. Everybody, it seemed, was eager to be a volunteer, and everybody had her own particular pet idea of what she should do.

Diana Royston-Clarke, for instance, was going to carry out her collection on horseback, if you please! Bessie had a vague, but humorous idea of dressing as Cleopatra and riding round the town in a Roman chariot. Clara had an idea of setting up a sort of penny-a-shy stall in Lane's meadow.

The Terraine Twins decided to dress as nurses—a good idea, which was improved by Gwen Cook, who suggested that their collecting-boxes should also be disguised as first-aid boxes. Leila still stuck to her Red Indian idea, though she had improved it now to the extent of having a small tribe of Second Form papooses.

Good ideas; enthusiastic ideas. With what relish they fell to discussing them!

"One thing we ought to do," Lydia Crossendale said, "and one thing that nobody seems to have thought of yet, is to find some sort of an important job for Glenda. After all, she is treasurer of the fund."

Mabs frowned.

"Oh, we don't want her in it!"

"Why not?"

Lydia stared.

"Well, yes, why not?" Janet Jordan demurred. "Glenda's a jolly good sport and as enthusiastic as any of us."

"I say leave Glenda out of it!" Mabs protested, and girls stared a little, wondering at the vehemence she put into those words. "Glenda's busy enough. She's already got her work cut out. Glenda—"

"Is here," a laughing voice at the door interrupted, and Glenda herself looked in. "Lo, kids, can I stroll among you?" she asked. "Thought I'd like to be in this as I'm treasurer of the fund. Hallo, Mabs, written that apology yet?" she asked casually.

Mabs coloured.

"No," she said rather shortly.

"Apology?" Beatrice Beverley staringly questioned.

"Yes. Didn't you know? But please don't embarrass dear Mabs!" Glenda pleaded mockingly. "Anyway, as far

as I am concerned it doesn't matter a hoot. Only Miss Primrose insisted, you know. Better do it, Mabs, and save any further trouble."

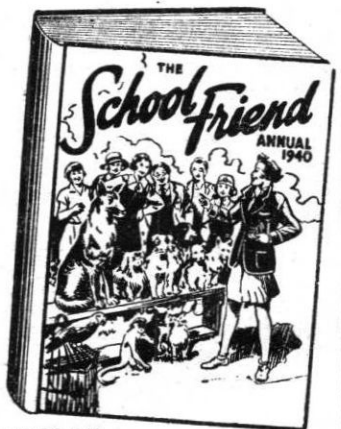
Mabs turned her head away.

"But what's Mabs got to apologise for?" Lydia Crossendale wanted to know.

"Oh, please," Mabs said impatiently, "let's get on with the business."

"But why the apology?" Beatrice

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Beverley insisted. "Why did Primmy order you to apologise?"

"Well, Mabs, you can see now they won't be satisfied until they know," Glenda laughed. "As a matter of fact, the story is worth telling. It did so completely take me in that my conceit suffered quite a shock. You see, kids, Mabs has got a funny little notion that I won't make a very good treasurer—"

"What?"

"Let me go on." And maliciously, challengingly, Glenda smiled at her victim. "Because I wouldn't resign at the request of Mabs and Babs, Mabs hit upon the brilliant idea of impersonating Miss Primrose and forcing me to resign!"

"The joke is," Glenda chuckled, knowing full well by the startled consternation on the faces of her listeners that it was far from a joke, "that Mabs jolly near succeeded. Fancy! I was actually sitting down in Primmy's study typing out the resignation at Mabs' dictation, thinking she was Primmy herself! And by this time," Glenda added, "you'd have found your fund minus its treasurer if Primmy hadn't come in."

"M-my hat!" breathed Lydia Crossendale. "The awful nerve—"

"Mabs, you didn't!" Clara Trevlyn protested.

Mabs' face was crimson.

"But why," Lydia Crossendale cried, "do you want to get rid of Glenda? And who," she added, with a burst of indignation, "asked you to try to get rid of Glenda? We want Glenda! We like Glenda—"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"It's beastly to insult her!"

Clamour at once. Hostility, anger was in every gaze directed at Mabs then. For the first time Mabs understood fully what Babs had been up against.

"Explain!" cried Rosa Rodworth.

"Rats! There's nothing to explain!" Mabs retorted.

"Perhaps," Glenda murmured, "I can clear up matters. It's silly, of course—I suppose we can't blame dear Mabel for being anxious, but I really think Mabel had some idea I was going to annex the funds. Didn't you, Mabel?" she asked sweetly.

Mabs almost panted then. What a girl Glenda was for ramming one into a corner!

"But, Mabs—" Clara cried.

"Oh, please," Mabs cried; "please chuck it! I'm not going to explain—"

"No? But what about us?" Rosa Rodworth put in. "We're in this, too! We all know Barbara Redfern's got a silly idea about Glenda Maine, but we did think better of you, Mabs. We're backing you up in your charity stunt, but you can't expect us to go on backing you up if you're going to insult and play tricks on a girl who's doing something you ought to be grateful for. You jolly well ought to apologise!"

"Yes, apologise!" came a shout.

"I'm not going to apologise!" she cried.

"No? Then we—" Rosa fumed.

"Please—please! Let me put a word in," Glenda soothingly interpolated. "Don't lose your tempers, kids! Dash it, I didn't tell you this little story with the idea you were going to go for Mabs! I just told you because I thought you'd be interested to know what a clever girl Mabs was. Anyway, we're not going to smash up the fund. Mabs can't be blamed if silly Barbara's poisoning her mind against me; and now we've set our shoulders to the wheel, we've just got to do everything we can to raise the biggest sum of money ever. In any case," she added, "Mabs is going to apologise, aren't you, Mabs, by letter? I say, don't go—"

But Mabs, throwing her one bitter, scornful look, had walked towards the door. The door slammed behind her, leaving the music-room in a buzz.

Bessie Gives the Game Away!



"ONLY three more lines and I've finished," Barbara Redfern said cheerily as Mabel Lynn came in, and then, looking up, frowned.

"Mabs, what's the matter?"

"Oh, Babs!" Mabs cried, with a half sob in her voice.

"Mabs, old thing"—and in an instant all concern, Babs was by her side. "What happened?"

"I—I almost wish we'd never started this fund," Mabs said, in a choked voice. "And—and if it wasn't for my mother—"

"Mabs," Babs cried, in amazement, "what on earth's happened?"

Hastily she blurted details of what had happened in the music-room. Babs' lips set.

"The sort of trick Glenda would try," she said. "She's always believed in getting the utmost out of every situation, and she's only setting the Form against you because she wants to make herself even more popular. Don't worry, Mabs; she won't see the fund suffer if she's got designs on it, though what does puzzle me," Babs added, with a momentary frown, "is why Glenda should be after such small game."

Mabs shook her head.

"Well, I suppose even Glenda has need for ready money at times," she said. "Oh, I don't know! But, Babs, what are we to do?"

"In the first place," Babs said firmly, "you're going to finish these lines, while I go and try to straighten things out in the music-room with the girls. In the meantime, I'm thinking over a stunt to beat Glenda if she tries again to sneak any money out of the collection-boxes. Now get down to those lines, old thing. It's nearly call-over, and you've got to have them in before then, remember."

And, with an encouraging smile, Babs trotted off.

Heartened somehow by her chum's words, Mabs hastily finished the lines. By the time she had placed them in Miss Primrose's study, call-over bell was ringing. After the girls were dismissed, Babs led her back to Study No. 4.

"There's no need to worry about the Form now," Babs smiled. "I've put things right there, providing you'll do one thing. And that," Babs added, "is to apologise to Glenda."

Mabs' expression revealed immediate mutiny.

"Babs, I'm bothered—"

"Yes, Mabs, you will," Babs nodded. "Putting the Form against you is part of Glenda's game. Apologise to her in public, and you're back in the Form's good graces—and that's a blow in the eye for Glenda. Come along now to the Common-room. Glenda's in there."

Rather hard—bitterly hard—pill was that for Mabs to swallow. But again, having faith in Babs' reasoning, she went along.

With Babs at her side, and with her colour heightened, she stepped into the Common-room, where a great crowd was collected around the dart board, and Glenda was in the act of taking her throw. They all looked round as Mabs and Babs entered, and upon the assembly fell just the faintest hint of chilly silence. But Glenda, also looking round, laughed.

"Hallo, Babs! Hallo, Mabs!" she said, in that friendly, all-forgiving manner which the Fourth found one

of her chief charms. "Come amongst us and wish me luck! I'm just playing Clara three hundred and one up to see who shall start to-morrow's collection with a shilling. But what's the matter, Mabel dear? Did you want to say something?"

"Yes," blurted Mabs, red-faced.

"Then say on."

"I—I want to say that—that I'm sorry," Mabs stammered, and never had words been more difficult to get out.

"For accusing me of wanting to run away with the fund?" Glenda laughed, though for a moment her expression suggested that she was not too pleased that Mabs had apologised. "Oh, that's all right! That's nice!" She dimpled. "Now watch me!"

There was a general lightening at once of the atmosphere. Appreciative nods were directed at Mabs. Nobody was anxious that Mabs should relinquish her position as chairwoman of the collecting committee, but they all deeply resented her insult to Glenda, and all were relieved to see her wipe it off.

"Now watch me get a bullseye!" Glenda invited. "I always score bullseyes when I mean to, don't I, Barbara. Let's pretend the bull is my worst enemy," she laughed, looking at Babs, "and this, girls, is what I do to worst enemies"—and whiz! flew the dart, and a cry of admiration went up as it stuck fairly and squarely right in the middle of the red spot. "And this," she added, with a meaning glance at Mabs, "is my second worst enemy." And everybody gasped as the second dart joined the first. "Then just to prove how easy it is to finish a game when both your enemies are laid low, I'll get this double twenty," she added, and flung again.

Involuntarily a great roar of cheering went up when the dart unerringly found its way between the double-twenty wires.

"Oh, my hat! Come on!" Babs muttered disgustedly.

She plucked Mabs' arm. Impossible to stand there longer listening to Glenda's veiled sneers—every one of them intended as a warning or a gibe at herself or her chum.

No doubt that Glenda was a heroine among the Fourth, and no doubt, up to that moment, that Glenda was having things all her own way.

But if Glenda had hoped that on the morrow the fund upon which she had designs would grow considerably she was due for a shock. The collection was not a large one. Most of the girls had given their biggest amounts in the first flush of enthusiasm, and nearly all were clinging on to their money for the masquerade in Friardale and Courtfield on the following day.

"Well, nothing for Glenda to gloat over to-night!" Babs chuckled to Mabs, after they had received the collection-boxes in. "But now for to-morrow! I've worked out that wheeze I told you about."

"A wheeze for—for dishing Glenda?" Mabs asked.

"A wheeze," Babs said, "if it comes off, that'll dish Glenda and show her up for the crook she is, too! The idea, in short, is to plant a currency note among the collection which everybody will know is in the collection—except Glenda, of course."

Mabs blinked.

"But, Babs, how—"

"I don't know yet. But don't worry; we'll work out the details all right. And if," Babs said, "that note's not among the collection when it's counted to-morrow night—"

"Glenda will be shown up," Mabs

breathed. "But, Babs, how are we to know if it's there or not?"

"One of us—or both of us—must be present when the count takes place," Babs replied. "That shouldn't be hard to manage—in fact, I think I can manage it by telling Primmy that the girls are so anxious about the collection that they will want to hear the result at the earliest possible moment. I'll ask Primmy for permission for both of us to attend the counting."

And Babs did. She got that permission from Miss Primrose—indeed, before bed-time that night.

Next day came—the most exciting day so far of the collecting scheme.

Miss Primrose, as apparently excited as her girls, handed out no less than twenty brand-new collecting-boxes and tins at assembly that morning, and added, to the school's general joy, that lessons would cease after first period, in order that girls taking part in the masquerade might get themselves ready. Dinner, for the purpose of the masquerade, was to be held an hour earlier than usual, in order that the collectors could get to Courtfield to catch night-bus contributors as they came from work.

"Barring thunderstorms or an air raid, I guess it looks as if this is going to be the cat's pyjamas!" chuckled Leila Carroll, the American junior.

Everyone felt that way about it. That first session of lessons, in consequence, was a farce. No sooner were girls dismissed than they whooped off to dormitories, and great was the fun, the excitement, and the thrill of getting changed.

With gusto were the props of the Fourth Form Dramatic Society raided, and poor Marjorie Hazeldene, always the general handy girl on these occasions, was almost run off her feet. But what jubilation when at last the junior school collectors stood arrayed!

Very sweet and pretty did Babs look in a Maid Marian costume. Very dashing was Clara Trevlyn as a knight of old in a suit of shining armour. Bessie Bunter provoked an explosion of mirth dressed as Cleopatra. Surely such a Cleopatra as Bessie made had never been seen before? Diana Royston-Clarke, in beautifully cut hunting clothes, certainly formed an arresting figure; and so did her friend, Margot Latham, who was to accompany Diana on her trip. Mabs herself was attired in Tudor costume, and made the most pleasing masquerader of them all; Mabs had such a sure and certain touch in these matters.

"All set, girls?" Mabs said. "You all know what to do? We meet in Courtfield Market Place at half-past three, and return on the four o'clock bus in time for tea. And don't forget," she added, "Each one of us has got to come back with her box simply packed!"

"Hear, hear!" Glenda Maine said, coming up, camera in hand. "Stand still, girls, will you? Must have a snap of this! Mabs, how marvellous you look! A special one of you, if I may?"

Glenda took the snaps. The Fourth beamed. Mabs, catching a nod from Babs, stood agreeably enough for her own photograph to be taken, and Glenda laughed.

"Thanks!" she said. "I'm not masquerading myself, but I'll be among you presently to see how things are getting on. And don't forget!" she laughed, with a mocking glance at Mabs. "Refuse silver and copper if you can get notes! Notes are what is required in this stunt—eh, Mabs?"

Mabs did not reply. But for a

moment her teeth came together. The charabanc which was to take the party to Courtfield had arrived then, and with a whoop, they streamed towards it, eagerly scrambling in. And what a picture they made as, cheering and waving, they bowled along towards Courtfield, with Diana and Margot, mounted on their favourite horses, trotting in the rear! And what a furore when they reached the Courtfield Market Place!

Almost before they had climbed out of the coach the contributions began to pour in.

"Well, nothing like a good start!" Mabs laughed. "Oh, I say, is this going to be a day? Babs, you're with me, aren't you? We'll do this end of the High Street together; the Twins the other end. Bessie, what's your billet?"

"Courtfield Lane," Bessie beamed. "And I've got a ripping wheeze, you know! I'll bet I come back overloaded with wealth!"

There were laughs and cheers. The party broke up, Bessie eagerly going on her way. Mabs and Babs strolled off together. Hardly had they taken a dozen paces when a voice hailed them.

"Why, what's this?" the voice cried; and they turned to see Major Fields-Croft with his daughter, Paula. "Barbara and Miss Lynn! Collecting—eh? Well, well, let's see what we've got for the deserving cause!"

What he had was a pound-note for each of them. Babs and Mabs gurgled. This was something like a start!

But, good as the start, the collection became even better as time wore on.

A great day! A glorious day! Mabs thrilled. Long before the meeting-time came she had lost mental count of the money she had collected, but she knew it must be in the region of six or seven pounds. And when they met the others at half-past three, every collector, flushed with victory, had similar tales to tell, and empty flag trays told of the success of the day. There was only one cloud on the horizon.

That was Bessie Bunter.

For Bessie, mysteriously, did not turn up with the others.

"Perhaps," Babs suggested, when they had waited a quarter of an hour, "she's gone back to school. Anyway, she can catch the next bus. Let's all go back now."

Get back they did, chatting and laughing. At Cliff House they were met by a great crowd of non-collectors, each anxious to know how the day had gone, and each jubilant when they heard of the great success which had attended the efforts of the collecting party. But, strangely enough, no Bessie had arrived.

"My hat, if we have another day like this when parents' day comes, what a giddy triumph!" Clara Trevlyn chortled. "Let's trot along to the Common-room! Golly, is this collecting-box heavy?"

Off they went to the Common-room, and then somebody suggested that they should have a guessing contest to guess the heaviest box or tin. Every girl taking part in the contest should pay an entry fee of twopence, and the girl who won the contest should have the honour of donating the money so won to the fund in the capacity of a private subscriber.

A good wheeze—a great wheeze. It was the wheeze which gave Babs a glimmering of an idea. She confided that idea to Mabs.

And Mabs, seeing it, nodded at once. "Right-ho, Babs! Leave it to me to play my part," she said.

In the Common-room they dumped

the tins and boxes. Joan Charmant rushed off to borrow a pair of scales, and the guessing competition was held, Mabs collecting the money, and Babs taking notes of the various guesses.

What tense excitement then, when, the scales produced, everybody clustered round to see how near or how far they were from the mark! But it was Bridget O'Toole who won the contest—Bridget guessing within three ounces the weight of Clara Trevlyn's box, which was by far the heaviest, Clara having been in the poorer quarter of the town and having received most of her donations in copper. Hardly had the excitement which greeted that result died down than there sounded an excited stutter at the door.

"I sus-say, you girls—" "Bessie!" cried Babs. "You old wash-out, where have you been?"

"Oh kik-crums! I kik-came by bus, you know! Oh dud-dear! Fuf-feel the weight of this!" And Bessie came limping in, struggling with her collecting box. "Phoo! I must have a— a tut-ton of money here, you know!"

"But—" Babs gasped. "Here, let

have rendered their most generous effort for Bessie Bunter's benefit.

"I think we'd better have a look at that box," Marjorie Hazeldene murmured anxiously.

"But what about Glenda Maine opening it?" Gwen Cook objected.

"Stuff! Glenda will never know," Diana Royston-Clarke sniffed. "I've got a key here that will fit. Mabs, you don't mind, do you?"

Mabs didn't mind. She also suspected that Bessie's fat leg had been pulled. And while everybody, grinning, gathered round, Diana fitted the key into the box.

Bessie gurgled. "Now you watch!" she said. "They ought to give me a medal for this, you know! Buck up, Dud-Diana, and open the box!"

With tantalising slowness Diana lifted the lid, almost doubling up as she glimpsed the contents. Then suddenly she threw back the lid.

And while Bessie just stood and stuttered, everyone howled.

For the box was cram-full—but with what a collection of oddments!

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me take that!" And she took the box, almost dropping it in sheer surprise at its weight. "Bessie, where have you been?"

"I've been," Bessie breathlessly announced, "to Courtfield Girls' School."

"Great pip! And you've collected all this?"

"Yes, rather!" Bessie said triumphantly. "Heaps and heaps of money, you know! Just fancy, you know! Beryl Brecknock took the box round for me while Bella Clamant entertained me in the tuckshop. I've had a lovely time!"

"And, by the looks of it, collected a gold-mine!" Clara Trevlyn chuckled. "I must say, though, I'm surprised. I thought Courtfield High were in this scheme themselves?"

"Oh, but it's my influence!" Bessie explained modestly.

But most girls there eyed the box she had brought back suspiciously. Courtfield High School and Cliff House were rivals—and sometimes not too friendly rivals at that! Courtfield High were also interested in this scheme. It struck them all as a most unusual possibility that they would

principally those oddments were round leaden curtain weights. But there were buttons there, too; a few useless old medals, many discs of plain tin, a great number of broken bone counters, and several pins, and bits of wood. Also, there was a mass of iron filings, obviously filched from the Courtfield School laboratory, and a glistening quantity of magnetic sand from the same place. Only one coin among it all was visible—and that was a battered farthing!

The Fourth Form almost had hysterics.

"Oh, my hat!" wept Babs. "Bessie, you chump—"

Bessie glared. Then, as she stupidly regarded the contents of the box again, the tears came to her eyes, and her lips quivered.

"Oh crumbs! Oh dud-dear! And to thuth-think that I dressed up like that to collect a fuf-farthing!" she cried.

"Bessie—poor old Bessie—" Babs said. "Cheer up; don't take it to heart. I say, girls, pack it up!" And the hilarious Fourth, seeing that there was a serious side—for, after all, Bessie had worked hard in her own sufferish

way to secure some result—fell silent. "It's funny, of course, in a way, but I think we ought to feel sorry for old Bess—"

"Yes, rather!" Mabs said.

"But—but I haven't collected anything, you know!" Bessie said. "Oh dud-dear! I can't hand my box in like that!"

"Just a sec!" said Mabs, having nudged Babs meaningly. "Look here, girls, I've got an idea! Supposing we have another competition?"

"What sort of one?" Diana Royston-Clarke wanted to know.

"Well, here—" And Mabs, staring round, fished a pound note out of her pocket. "I've got this pound note. Lady Courtfield gave it to me, and my tin was so full I couldn't cram it in. I'm going to put it in Bessie's box. But what about guessing at the number first? Threepence a guess, and the winner donates the money to old Bess' box."

"Whoops! That sure sounds a fine idea!" Leila Carroll said. "Come on, everybody!"

"Well, guess," Mabs said, with a glance at Babs, "at the number of the note. And first, to give you a clue, I'll give you the first and the last numbers. The first is a four, the last a one, and there are four other numbers between them. Now, out with pencil and paper, girls—and don't forget the entrance fee."

There was enthusiasm at once. Everybody, having enjoyed a laugh at the expense of Bessie, was now only too pleased to be able to help Bessie. Carefully the girls wrote their guesses on a slip of paper.

"Right! Now, ready?" Mabs asked. "All got your numbers? You've remembered to put the four first and the one last?"

"Yes."

"Then the real number—everybody make a note of it so that you can see how near or far you are from the real one, is—44031. Got that?"

"Yes!"

"Oh kik-crums!" stuttered Bessie in excitement, "I've won my own competition! Look!" she shrieked, fluttering her paper in Mabs' face.

"Great pip squeak!" cried Mabs. "Bessie—"

For Bessie, by the most wonderful stroke of luck in the world, had actually put down the exact number of the note!

So into her box went Lady Courtfield's pound note and the girls' threepences, and Bessie beamed happily.

While Babs and Mabs, looking at each other across the Common-room, exchanged a thrilled and knowing nod.

The great scheme had succeeded. The Fourth, unconscious that it had been made party to that scheme, and that over thirty girls, if necessary, had formed themselves into a body of valuable witnesses, had guarded against any designs Glenda might have upon one note, at least.

And if Glenda was systematically filing notes from the collecting boxes and tins, why not this one?

But Mabs and Babs, alas, had reckoned without Bessie. For Bessie, like the others, had to hand her collecting-box in to Glenda Maine, and Bessie rather liked Glenda Maine, and liked talking to Glenda Maine.

And Glenda, who in her own detached way rather liked the blundering Bessie—though if Bessie ever got in her way she would not have hesitated to crush her as ruthlessly as she would have crushed any other obstacle—greeted her cheerily when the plump duffer took in her box after tea.

"Hallo, Bessie! Collected a fortune, I hope?"

"Well, no," Bessie admitted. "Those spoofers at Courtfield played a tut-trick on me, you know! But I've got a jolly good collection, you know—trust a Bunter to be clever enough for that. I won Mabs' competition."

"Mabs?" Glenda looked immediately interested at the mention of that name. "What was the competition, Bessie?"

"And out of all the girls who went in for it, you know, I was the only one who knew the right answer!" Bessie proudly boasted. "It was a competition for the number of a pound note."

"Oh!" Glenda looked at her thoughtfully. "And it was Mabs' idea, you say?"

"Well, yes," Bessie admitted.

And then, missing the steely light which appeared in Glenda's eyes as she intently listened, she blurted details of that competition. Glenda nodded.

"A good idea—a jolly good idea," she said enthusiastically. "Clever Mabs. She has got a brain, hasn't she? And, of course, Bessie, you have, too. I think it was just stunningly clever of you to win that all off your own bat."

And when Bessie, beaming and treading on air, had gone, she stood for a moment as if deep in thought, looking at the door.

"So, Miss Mabel Lynn," she muttered. "So! Out of the mouth of your own fat fool of a friend comes the clue, eh? H'm! I think, Glenda my dear, you know how to deal with this one!"

The Tables Turned!



"READY, Babs?"

"What-ho!"

Barbara Redfern beamed, and in the Fourth Form dormitory, where she had been changing her blouse in preparation for the counting-out in Miss Primrose's study, she dimpled at Mabs. "Feel all right, old thing?"

"Y-yes, I suppose so"—but Mabs' tone was uncertain. "Just a bit on edge," she confessed. "Just—just a little—oh, I don't know, Babs, but you can understand."

"I do, Mabs," said Babs quietly. "But pecker up! We've nothing to lose anyway—and everything to gain. Come on."

Mabs nodded. Six o'clock was near at hand now, and in the Common-room an excited Fourth Form was waiting to hear the verdict.

Together they walked along to the Head's study, to find Miss Primrose already there in company with Miss Charmant, the mistress of the Fourth, and also Glenda Maine, who was regarding a pile of collecting-boxes and tins on the table, rubbing the nails of her right hand into the palm of her left as she did so—an unconscious trick which more than once had betrayed her in disguise to Babs.

Miss Primrose smiled as the two girls entered, though for a moment a slight frown did cross her face at the sight of Mabel Lynn.

"You are early—that is good," she said. "I must say that I am pleased indeed by the results of the collection, and to judge from the weight of the boxes and tins the total should reveal something of a record. Glenda, will you take the details, please? Miss Charmant, perhaps you will deal with the silver? Mabel, will you and Barbara count the coppers. Now, which box first?"

"Please, Miss Primrose, that one," Mabs suggested almost with a gasp, and pointed to Bessie's, which was on top of the first pile. The sooner this ticklish business was decided one way or another, the happier and the freer-minded she would feel.

And just for a moment, the grey-blue eyes of Glenda Maine flickered.

Miss Primrose took up the key. She fitted it into Bessie's box. Up flew the lid, and on to the table rolled a heap of coppers. But of the note—Lady Courtfield's note—there was no sign.

"Bessie Bunter's box," Miss Primrose murmured. "Ahem! Not up to anticipation, I am afraid."

"Miss Primrose," Mabs cried in a choked voice, "there—there's something missing from that box!"

"I beg your pardon, Mabel!"

"There's something missing!" Mabs gathered herself. Now that she knew, now that she realised at last the game was in her hands, nervousness had vanished, a great wave of triumphant exultation had swept over her. "There was," Mabs said, "a pound note in that box."

"That's right," Babs nodded.

Miss Primrose frowned.

"There is certainly no pound note here now, Mabel. You are making a mistake."

"No, Miss Primrose," Mabs said, and stared accusingly at Glenda. "The box was handed in to Glenda Maine containing a pound note, as the rest of the Fourth Form can prove. That note," she stated distinctly, "has disappeared since the box has been in Glenda's possession."

"Miss Primrose, I protest—"

Glenda cried sharply.

"Mabel—"

"It's true!" Mabs cried.

"It is not true!" Glenda said steadily. "Miss Primrose, this is becoming intolerable! Ever since you appointed me to the treasurer'ship of this fund this girl has been—"

"I have proof of what I say!" Mabs burst in. "I suspected Glenda meant to rob the box and I laid a trap to catch her out! Thirty girls saw Bessie Bunter put that note into the box, and thirty girls have the number of that note! I suggest that you search Glenda's room—her bag!"

Miss Primrose turned a strange, startled look on the Fourth Former.

"Mabel, you realise the seriousness of what you are saying?" she asked slowly.

"Yes," Mabs said. "Glenda has stolen that note!"

Miss Primrose heaved a sigh.

"Very well, Mabel. Glenda, my dear, I am sorry, but you will understand it is my duty to look into this matter?"

"Please do, Miss Primrose," Glenda said smoothly. "I insist now that you do. Miss Charmant, will you examine that bag, please?"

And she laid her bag on the table. Miss Charmant searched it. She shook her head.

"There is no pound note here," she said.

"Now will you please go to my room and search there?" Glenda asked. "Or anywhere else that Mabel should suggest?"

"Ahem! That—that is not necessary at this juncture," Miss Primrose coughed. "That can wait. Let us have Mabel's proof first. Miss Charmant, will you please call together your Form?"

"My Form, Miss Primrose," Miss Charmant replied, "are already collected together—on their own initiative.

They are all wailing in the Common-room, and I fancy there are enough of them there to prove or disprove Mabel's statement."

"Then," Miss Primrose decided, "let us go."

They went. Glenda's face was now inscrutable as she walked behind the headmistress. Miss Charmant was biting her lip. And Babs and Mabs were triumphant.

It was Miss Primrose who opened the door of the Fourth Form Common-room, and the rush made towards that door by the eager wanters of news became stopped as the solemn assembly entered.

Miss Primrose coughed. "Your attention please, girls!" she said. "I—er—have a very painful matter to investigate. It concerns Bessie Bunter's collection-box."

"Oh, I sus-say—" stuttered Bessie. "Did any of you see a pound note placed in that collection-box before it left this room?"

"Why, yes!" Diana Royston-Clarke

"What?" demanded Rosa Rodworth; and there was a gasp.

"Please, girls!" Miss Primrose snapped. "Glenda, it is for you to explain."

"I can only suggest," Glenda said, regarding the stupefied, incredulous faces of the Fourth, "that this is some sort of prearranged plot. Miss Primrose, may I ask a few questions?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then, in the first place, may I address myself to Bessie Bunter? Bessie, before you brought that box along to me from this room, had you been anywhere else?"

"Well, only into my study, you know!" Bessie blurted.

"Was anybody in there?"

"Only Babs and Mabs But—"

"Thank you!" Glenda smiled.

"You see, Miss Primrose, the box was not handed directly to me. I hate to accuse Mabel Lynn, but, as you have yourself observed, Mabel has done her utmost recently to blacken me in the eyes of the school, with the object,

was upon Glenda, suave, cool, serious—so utterly sure of herself that for a moment Babs, knowing her wily ways, experienced a qualm. Sympathy was on many faces for Glenda, but only the most biting contempt for Mabs. They all knew how Mabs had been against this girl, how she had tried to blacken her. It seemed that matters had come to a head.

"Miss Charmant, will you fetch Mabel's handbag?" Miss Primrose asked.

Miss Charmant, with a troubled nod, left the room.

There was a deathlike silence until she returned with Mabs' handbag in her hand. Without a word she handed it to Miss Primrose.

Everybody stood tense, expectant, electrified as she snapped back the catch and peered in.

Suddenly her hand went into the bag. While Mabs stared with unbelieving eyes, the hand came out holding a folded note. Slowly Miss Primrose unfolded it; carefully she scrutinised the



"YOU jolly well ought to apologise to Glenda!" cried Rosa, grasping Mabs' arm. "Yes, apologise!" came an angry shout from the other girls. Mabs, glaring at Glenda, stiffened. That mocking girl had neatly trapped her, but somehow she couldn't—just couldn't—bring herself to apologise.

said. "We all did. We had a little competition to guess the number of the note."

"Which was," Mabel Lynn put in, "No. 44031."

"Sure, that's right," Leila Carroll nodded. "I've got the number of it here."

"Yes, and so have I."

Babs and Mabs smiled at each other.

"I see. Has anyone else the number?" Miss Primrose asked.

There was a clamour at once—a rustling and groping for discarded pieces of paper. Fully twenty girls had the number which coincided with the number Mabs had given. The proof was overwhelming.

"Er! Hum!" said Miss Primrose. "Well, there seems to be no doubt upon that point, Glenda. Every girl here has the number of the note; every girl testifies to the fact that it was placed in Bessie's box."

Glenda's face did not change.

"I know. I admit that. But—but I can't understand. Miss Primrose, I persist still that I have never seen it, much less stolen it, as Mabel Lynn accuses me of doing—"

apparently, of depriving me of my treasurership. Mabel was in that room while Bessie's box was there. What was there to prevent Mabel from taking out that note before the box was handed to me?"

"Why, you—" Mabs flashed.

"Mabel, please!" Miss Primrose frowned. "Glenda has a perfect right to defend herself. Mabel, did you do this?"

"I did not!" Mabs said hotly. "I'd never dream—"

"But," Glenda said smoothly, "you certainly did dream, didn't you, Mabel, of concocting this plot? See how cleverly you planted your evidence! And isn't it more than a coincidence that you pounced on Bessie Bunter's box as the first to be opened? May I ask where your handbag is?"

"In the top drawer of my bureau," said Mabs, staring. "Study No. 4. Why?"

"Because that handbag, Miss Primrose," Glenda said steadily, "is the most likely place in which Mabel would have hidden the note if she had taken it."

There was a mutter now—a sort of hissing intake of breath. Every eye

number. Then her face became bitter. "Mabel!" she cried, in a voice that made Mabs jump.

"I—I—I— Yes, Miss Primrose?"

"You wicked, dishonourable, slanderous girl!" Miss Primrose's chest heaved. "Mabel, Glenda is right.

Here is the note—the very note containing the number you yourself have taken such great pains to advertise! Mabel, it was you who took this note—with the intention of ruining a girl's name! Glenda, your innocence is proved!"

"Hurrah!" shouted a voice.

"Girls—"

"Hurrah! Three cheers for Glenda!"

cried somebody else.

"Hip, hip—"

"And three boos for Mabel Lynn!"

"Boo, boo, boo!"

And while Mabel, feeling the whole world collapsing about her ears, stood stunned and stricken, cheers and hisses mingled in the Common-room in deafening volume.

Glenda, by some brilliant, cunning trick, had won again.

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS



At times like these we all value our friends, don't we? That's why schoolgirls are finding PATRICIA'S pages such a comfort—so helpful and cheering each week. For Patricia has a complete understanding of schoolgirls, which has endeared her to each one of you.

THIS Patricia of yours is very busy—as she often is, as a matter of fact. But this time, I'm more engrossingly busy than usual.

You see, I'm making my "Lists." I've told you before that I'm a great believer in "lists." My handbags are quite often littered with them. Tiny shopping lists, train lists, book lists, birthday lists, "things I must do" lists—and goodness knows what others.

But this time I'm busy on "Christmas Present Lists."

There's the "Family List" first. Mother, father, big brother Brian (who was recently commissioned and is a second-lieutenant, you'll probably be interested to know), small brother Heath. Then there's Aunt Monica, who's in Scotland at the moment; sundry other cousins, aunts, and uncles, and Olive, our maid. That's the "family" so to speak.

Next comes the friends' list. There's rather rich friend Esmee on this, and not-so-well-off friend Joan. There's Rosemary who lives next door, the gardener-man, Mr. Herring, and his chum, Mrs. Smiff (as Heath calls her), who comes to help with the cleaning twice a week.

The third list is for acquaintances—and these people will have either cards or calendars from your Patricia. Rosemary's mother will have a calendar, some perfectly sweet nurses at our local hospital, where I've been helping, really deserve two each. But on second thoughts, perhaps I'll be able to give them a very tiny present, like a hankie, or a powder-puff. Several old school friends, my favourite school-mistress, who's married now—and incidentally is expecting a baby very soon—must certainly have cards. (That also reminds me I must buy some fuzzy-wuzzy wool to make a bonnet for the newcomer.)

So far that's three lists of names I've drawn up—but my mind goes absolutely blank when I try to think what to give.

● Present Problems

I'm trying to think up really useful presents. "Glamour" gifts are not going to be quite so popular this year, so I must have a real ponder. I shan't be able to spend very much on them, either—so that means still more thinking.

Father, I've decided is going to have a really cosy scarf, made of very soft wool.

He's a Special Constable, you know, and he goes "on duty" in all weathers, so I think he'll like the scarf. And if I have time, I'll make him some wool gloves to match. He says he prefers these to leather ones.

Brother Brian is going to have a hamper from us all—containing lots of goodies that mother (and I) have made. I'll also send some cigarettes from myself.

Small brother Heath will have a toy, I expect.

"I'm going to give ev'ryone a lu-lum'ous disc—you know, the sort you can see in the dark," he said to me the other day.

"Jolly good idea," I said. "But what about Brian?"

"Oh, I'll send him one, too!" Heath said graciously.

So, of course, your Patricia had to explain exactly why Brian wouldn't want a luminous disc in France!

● A Gay Blotter

If there's one thing my Aunt Monica (who is actually Heath's godmother and not an aunt at all) likes doing, it is writing letters. I always suspect that that is partly why she travels around so much—so that she has an excuse for writing reams and reams of epistle to all her friends at home.

Anyhow, I'm going to give her a Blotter, I've taken from—and it's going to be just like the one in the picture here.

Mine's going to be made of gaily-coloured felt, in bright yellow—for Aunt M. likes vivid things, bless her. But if you don't want to buy felt specially, you could make it of cretonne or parchment paper, measuring 9 inches by 20.

The side pieces should be folded over for 3 inches to make pockets, and stitched at the ends. A piece of cardboard, measuring 9½ inches by 13½, should be slipped into these folds and then creased right down the centre.

I shall cut the inkwell from bright blue felt and glue or stitch this on to the front of the blotter. (You could use cretonne or parchment again, if you prefer.) The quill pen can be cut out of felt also, in a vivid colour. But I think I shall glue a real feather here—a bright red one that

I've taken from a grey hat I wore last spring.

A few sheets of blotting paper, cut to fit, should be folded flat inside the blotter, and kept in position with brightly-coloured cord or string.



Just in case any of you have been worrying your young selves about those chickens I told you we were going to keep, I must make another statement on the subject.

They haven't arrived yet, but are still being kept for us. You see, we had to wait for the chicken house—or coop—to arrive. There was some delay over it.

It has come now, but is not yet erected. So it looks as if the chicks will be in their new home in a few days now.

I'll give you the latest bulletin next

week, my pets—or, as I nearly said, my chicks!

● Ribbon Trimming

Now that most of us are doing a great deal more walking than we used to, don't you notice that shoes wear out more than ever? I know mine do.

It's a good plan, you know, to make a habit of always changing your shoes for a pair of slippers when you come indoors, and intend to stay in. (If you live in the country, you just have to, of course. A good many of you are realising for the first time just how much mud shoes can carry!)

I always keep my own shoes well-treed. That is, I slip "trees" into them when I take them off. And it honestly does help them to keep shape.

You can buy very dainty gold-coloured shoe-trees for threepence a pair, you know.

They'd make a lovely present for a chum or older sister. You can give them as they are, or can buy pretty ribbon and bind this closely all along the metal part so that it is completely covered, fastening off with a pretty bow. For a girl or young woman who loves dainty things, here's a present that's just right for this Christmas. It would be inexpensive, "sensible," and yet with a dash of glamour, too!

Someone who is home-proud would also love the feather duster, I'm thinking. This also costs threepence in all sorts of pretty colours. You could bind the handle part of this with ribbon, making a bow at the top so that it could hang up in the sitting-room, ready to be used for all the more delicate bits of dusting.

● Saving Tears

Have you ever tried shampooing a small person's head? I wash my small brother's quite often, and does he make a fuss!

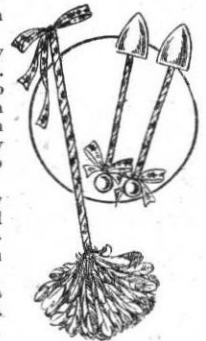
Although I'm very careful, he would insist that I got soap in his eyes!

This can be jolly painful, I know. So now—just in case I had been doing this, I give him a folded hand-towel before I ask him to hang his head over the basin.

This, he presses flat across his eyes, and keeps it there, until the "ordeal" is over. It's worked jolly well so far.

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

Your friend,
PATRICIA.



CURIOUS NUMBERS

HERE'S a number that is worth committing to memory—if you like showing your chums surprises now and again.

142,857 is the number.

Now you can do all sorts of wonderful things with this number. Let's multiply it by 2 first, and you get 285,714, which, as you can see, gives all the figures of the original number, and in the same order, but starting from a different point.

If you try multiplying it by 3 next, you will still have the same six figures—428,571. Multiplied by 4, it equals 571,428—the same figures again.

By 5, the answer is 714,285.

By 6, you get 857,142.

But by 7, you get all nines, 999,999.

Multiply by 8, and you find 1,142,856.

Add the first figure of this to the last, and you have 142,857.

The number you started with!

Another curious number is 45—much easier to remember, and rather a special number because it can be made up by adding all the digits (numbers 1 to 9, that is, together). Like this:

$1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8+9=45$.

It may sound impossible, yet you can take away fifty from this number and leave 15.

This is how it's done—in Roman numerals. Forty-five is XLV. Take away 50 which is L, and you have XV left—which is 15.

Just show these around to all the family one black-out evening. They'll all be enthralled, I'm quite certain.



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: LEILA CARROLL.

LEILA CARROLL'S hobby is quite definitely films.

She is a perfect mine of information about films and film stars and has a collection of photographs and autographs that would fill many a filing cabinet if she kept them all at school.

Quite a number of these are stored in London. When Leila's father—who, as you know, is an American—is in England, he rents a flat near Park Lane. While he is away this is let, furnished. In one of these rooms is a large cupboard containing Leila's treasures, all neatly labelled, so that she can lay her hand on any particular photograph in a moment.

A good many of the photographs Leila's father has given her. But most of the autographs she has obtained herself. Leila has spent some time in Hollywood, apart from the time when she went there with Babs & Co. Several famous film stars she knows really well, including, of course, her father's second wife, who gave up her film career when she married Mr. Carroll. Mrs. Carroll, who lives in America, writes regularly to Leila, and keeps her informed of all the latest Hollywood news.

But while she is at school Leila's interest in her hobby does not flag. She still writes many "fan letters" a week and makes requests for photographs and autographs. (Leila doesn't forget to include an International Reply Coupon, by the way.)

The autograph that she is most proud of, perhaps, is the late Marie Dressler's, who was a very dear person.

But there is one that Leila does not possess, however—one that she'd love to have. That is Greta Garbo's.



CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

How to spend wisely and enjoy yourself at the same time when you're off on a present-buying spree.

Wear flat shoes, a comfy hat, and take a large bag with you when you set off on your shopping expedition.

It's simply no use strolling from shop window to shop window, "looking for ideas," if you really mean to get all the business done in one day.

BE FIRM

Go straight to the shops where you know you can get what you want. Change your mind by all means if you see a little gift that you think someone on your list would like better than the one you have marked down. But—please, don't be tempted into buying even the cutest little article, merely because it takes your fancy. Otherwise, you may come home with five presents for yourself, and nothing at all for grandma. And much as I'd love you to buy yourself little treats, it's simply no good when you've got so many other things to do with your money, is it?

Remember to save some of your spending money for boxes and wrappings for the gifts.

Even bedsocks look positively film-starry nestling in tissue paper, and tied with silvery ribbon.

A LITTLE REST

Have a coffee—or perhaps a hot chocolate—in the middle of your shopping orgy, when you can sip and check over your list at the same time,

Make a note of any alterations, particularly in the costs, and adjust any others if necessary.

REMINDERS

And now just a few Do's and Don'ts that will keep you popular with the shop assistants.

DON'T handle stuff—particularly delicate things—with your gloves on. Take them off if you simply must touch to examine for weight or price.

DO be quite clear in your demands. If you want a really cheap scarf, for example, then just say so. No one will mind—and it'll save the girl sorting through lots of more costly ones.

DON'T stand for a long while in the cold waiting for buses. If it isn't very far you have to go, just walk there. It'll probably be quicker and save you a penny or so, too.

DO remember that knitting counters are simply thronged these days. And if you want to get a look-in, you've either got to get there very early in the morning—or push. It's easier to get there early.

DON'T buy highly coloured things, whether garments, or wool, in the artificial light, without asking the assistant if you may look at it first by the door. It's astounding how colours change!

DO keep a cheery smile. It's difficult at times, I know—but after all, it is Christmas, and a happy look can cheer up even the most depressing day.

ISN'T it lovely to see all the shops looking gay and festive, in spite of black-out and earlier closings? There's Father Christmas, not looking a day older than he did last year—and all the shop girls more eager than ever to be helpful.

"Shop Early For Christmas" really is sound advice—both early in December and early in the day.

But first you must plan your buying. Make out a list of all the people who simply MUST have presents. Have a really hard think, and write present suggestions against each name, and the price you can afford to pay.

Resolve to stick to that price like grim death, otherwise you'll find yourself spending a rash shilling on friend Mary, and wondering just what you can buy friends Alice and May for approximately three farthings!

(Continued from page 11)

Their Enemy Plots With Them!



WRETCHEDLY white, Mabel Lynn stood before the desk of Miss Primrose in that very angry lady's presence ten minutes later. Nobody else was in the room.

"Mabel, if I obeyed the dictates of my own impulse, I should expel you out of hand here and now. Worse than any sneak-thief is this outrageous prank you have played in order to disgrace a girl to whom you have taken a petty dislike. I am only arrested in this course by Glenda herself, who has pleaded that you shall be forgiven."

Mabs gulped. "Fortunately," Miss Primrose went on bitingly, "Glenda at least is a girl of some pity and principle. Glenda points out that if you were expelled now it may cause the failure of the whole scheme. You have her to thank—and Glenda only, Mabel Lynn, that I am not sending you away at once. But if," Miss Primrose threatened, "if there is any further malicious attempt on your part to harm Glenda, then I shall not hesitate. You may go."

And Mabs, feeling almost stunned with humiliation and defeat, went. Glenda had triumphed again. Oh, what was the use of trying to fight the wiles of that girl?

And not only had Glenda triumphed, but she had caused something like a revolution in the junior school. The revolution was in the Form's feelings for Mabel Lynn—this girl who had twice been caught in deliberately trying to ruin Glenda's character. Even friends shared the indignation against her.

Utterly dashed, Mabs went back to Study No. 4, where Babs was anxiously awaiting her. There was little or nothing Babs could say or do to comfort her.

That night nobody spoke to Mabel Lynn in the Fourth Form dormitory—except, of course, Babs. Next day she was almost sent to Coventry by the rest of the Form, and the collecting scheme seemed to have fallen flat. By Friday, however, Mabs was recovering her spirits a little, and called a collection committee, only to have her recovery suffer a bitter relapse when nobody attended it. Enthusiasm for the fund seemed to have completely dried up.

But that evening Mabs and Babs had a visit from Glenda Maine. Bessie Bunter was not present.

She came in with a frown. "Hallo, you two!" she said. "I say, what about this fund? I suppose you know it's Parents' Day to-morrow—and I suppose you know that we've collected really nothing for the last two days? And that," she added, with the old hint of mockery, "doesn't suit my book at all, you know. We must—really must—make to-morrow a bumper day, don't you think, Barbara?"

"Must we?" Babs said. "Must!" Swiftly Glenda nodded. "For to-morrow night, you see, the whole fund will be collected together, and then—ah, then!"—and she smiled—"what an exciting thing is going to happen then, my countrymen! You know," Glenda said, frowning, "I shouldn't at all be surprised if there's not a most dramatic development when that money is counted out in Miss Primrose's study. In fact, I've got a hunch there will be. Haven't you, Barbara?"

Babs gazed at her steadily. "Meaning," she guessed, "you're going to help yourself?" "Meaning," Glenda said, "something which, of course, you won't be able to prove. But do get a move on and collect a lot, you kids!"

With the old mocking, challenging smile, she had gone, leaving Mabs and Babs staring at each other. Mabs' eyes were full of worry.

"Oh, Babs, what are we going to do? We—we can't warn Primmy what Glenda intends to do."

"And we can't," Babs said, a glimmer in her eyes, "let her get away with it. She's beaten us so far—all along the line. But, Mabs, we're going to foil her in this—we've got to foil her. Oh, my hat, if we could only make Primmy see—"

"Or Miss Charmant. Or"—Mabs faltered—"even Dulcia." She started up. "Babs, that's an idea! Suppose we do see Dulcia? Suppose we tell her what we know, what we suspect? She trusts us. She'd believe us more than Primmy would. Dulcia, in some way, would be able to put a spoke in Glenda's wheel. What price seeing her after prep?"

"Eh? But why should Dulcia put a spoke in Glenda's wheel, you know?" Bessie Bunter asked, rolling into the study.

The two chums fell back. "Oh, Bess, don't interrupt!" Babs cried.

"But you were saying—" Bessie objected.

"We were saying," Babs said, "that we were going to see Dulcia."

"What, about putting a spoke in Glenda's wheel?" Bessie asked. "But why should Dulcia put a spoke in Glenda's wheel? Why can't Glenda herself do it?"

"Bessie, please! Buzz off!" Babs said wearily.

Bessie sniffed. She shrugged. Bessie, obstinate duffer that she was, did not understand. Truth to tell, even Bessie had been just a little standoffish with Mabs these last two days, for Bessie, though she really adored old Mabs, could not share her poor opinion of Glenda. Grabbing up the stamp album for which she had come in search, she rolled out again.

But before she got to the Fourth Form Common-room, whither she was bound, she halted as she heard her name called, and there stood Glenda Maine.

"Hallo, Bessie!" Glenda said pleasantly. "What, are those stamps? I say, are you a keen stamp collector, too? So am I. Do come along to my study and let's have a look."

Bessie beamed with pleasure. She needed no second bidding.

"I say, that's nun-nice of you!" she said. "I've got a lovely collection, of course. But I say, Glenda, what's happened to your bicycle?"

"My bicycle?" Glenda asked, with a frown.

"Yes, rather, you know! Why are you going to ask Dulcia to put a spoke in your wheel?"

Glenda started.

"Who said that?" she asked. "Well, nun-nobody, of course. I dud-didn't hear Babs and Mabs talking about it, and, of course, they never said that they were going to see Dulcia about it after prep. But it did strike me as a funny thing to ask Dulcia, you know— Here, I say, Glenda, don't walk so fast, you know! I kid-can't keep up!"

"Sorry, Bessie," Glenda said, "but I've just remembered something—something important. See you later

about the stamps," she said hurriedly. "Pop in after prep."

Bessie blinked as Glenda, like a whirlwind, hurried away. On Glenda's face was a smile now—a rather strange smile.

She entered her own study, and locking the door, got out a make-up box. She grinned as she looked at herself in the mirror.

"And now, Glenda Maine, you disappear—to become Dulcia Fairbrother!" she said, grabbing up a pot of cream-coloured paste. "I think, as Dulcia Fairbrother, you'll have no difficulty in taking in clever Babs and Mabs and find out exactly what their plans are!"

"WELL, TALK of angels!" Babs cried. "Dulcia!" Mabs enthused. "Please come in. We were just talking about you!"

And they both beamed as the girl they imagined to be Dulcia Fairbrother strolled into Study No. 4.

"All right, don't get up," Glenda said—for, of course, it was Glenda, most marvellously disguised as the captain of the school. "I just felt I had to come and have a talk with you," she said. "But in confidence, of course."

"Of course," Babs said quickly. "But what—"

"About the Glenda Maine girl," Glenda said daringly.

Both Babs' and Mabs' hearts leapt as significantly they gazed at each other.

"Don't mind me talking, do you?" Glenda asked calmly as she seated herself. "I know I can—to you. I know that you've been up against Glenda, and—well, I knew you wouldn't be up against her without reason. And I've a funny feeling—I don't know why—that that girl's not on the level. Tell you why," she added. "I caught her yesterday fishing money out of one of the collecting-boxes. She made excuses, but they didn't really satisfy me."

"Dulcia!" breathed Babs, never for an instant suspecting the real identity of the visitor.

"I hope I'm wrong," continued Glenda, "but I do think it wouldn't be a bad idea to hear what you two think about the girl. I know, of course, you must have good reason for being up against her—"

Delightedly Babs and Mabs looked at each other.

"It's funny, but—but we were coming to see you about the same thing after prep," Babs said tensely. "Dulcia, Glenda's a crook—and not an ordinary crook at that. And we know for almost certain that she's out to rob the hospital fund."

And then, while Glenda seriously listened, Babs told her what was in her mind, and though Glenda looked suitably shocked from time to time, she grimly nodded.

"Dulcia, that girl is awfully clever," Babs breathed. "What she says she will do, she will do!"

"If," suggested Glenda calmly, "she gets a chance."

"But, Dulcia, how can we—"

"Wait a minute; leave this to me," Glenda said. Really, as Dulcia, she was perfect. "I've got an idea. You can't accuse her, of course. She's too well up in Primmy's good books. But I'm as anxious as you are that nothing shall happen to that fund. And perhaps," Glenda added, "I can manage that. If Glenda isn't present when the fund's counted out—if she's not there until it's safely disposed of after the count-out—"

Babs blinked.

"But, Dulcia, she's got to be present! She's treasurer!"

"I know," the false Dulcia nodded. "That's where Mabs comes in," she said thoughtfully. "This is where we can beat Glenda at her own game. Leave it to me to get her out of the way. I'll let you know when it's done. When I've got her out of the way, you, Mabs, will disguise as Glenda and act in her capacity during the count-out. When the money's safely stored away—or taken off to the bank—we'll let Glenda out. But can you do it, Mabs?"

Mabs' face was radiant. "Can I?" she said jubilantly. "Give me the chance!"

"Right-ho, then!" Glenda nodded. "But not a word, mind. Nobody must suspect. Better just treat this conversation as if it had never happened. Don't breathe a word of it even in private, until I tip you off to-morrow, Mabs. Get your things ready, though, before the count-out, so that you'll be all prepared. And in the meantime—not a word."

was much more cordial. But Mabs did not care then. She was looking forward only to one thing—Glenda's humiliation on the morrow.

The new day dawned bright and crisp. Masqueraders in colourful costumes were posted at the gates to intercept parents as they came in, and all was joy and gaiety. From early morning till noon there was an endless stream of parents, and collection-boxes and tins became so full that they had to be emptied and re-emptied before they would take more money. If the carnival collection had been a success, this was going to be gigantic.

Tea was taken in Big Hall that afternoon. After tea there were games. It was dark then, and in the hour's interval which must elapse before the opening of the concert which was to finish the day's collection, Miss Primrose announced that the collection committee would assemble in her study in half an hour's time. Mabs, in disgrace, had been removed from that committee, though Babs was still on it.

buzz! Don't be long. They'll be waiting for you."

Mabs nodded. Babs went out. She hadn't gone five minutes when another knock came at the door.

"Who's there?" Mabs called quickly. Glenda Maine, still in her Dulcia Fairbrother disguise, grinned to herself. "Mabel, quick! It's Dulcia! Are you ready?"

"Yes," Mabs said.

"Oh, good!" Glenda came in. And if Mabs had been less elated she might have noticed the steely light which came into her eyes as she stared at that really marvellous impersonation of herself. "Mabs, before you go I want you to come with me to the clock tower. There is something there I want to show you concerning Glenda."

Of course, Mabs was instantly intrigued, and hurried off with the fake Dulcia at once. Meanwhile, Babs had reached Miss Primrose's study.

Rather to her surprise, Dulcia—the real Dulcia this time, not the disguised



A HOWL of laughter went up as it was seen that Bessie's box contained only rubbish—and a weird assortment of rubbish at that. But Babs and Mabs were quick to see a serious side to this jape on the fat duffer—quick to see how they could turn it to their account in their war with Glenda Maine.

"Not a syllable," Babs promised. Glenda nodded. She rose; with a smile walked out of the door, while Mabs and Babs gazed at each other with shining eyes.

"Oh, Babs, what a brick old Dulcia is!"

"Mabs, you can carry it off?" Babs anxiously asked.

Mabs' teeth clenched.

"I'll carry anything off to stop Glenda!" she vowed. "Oh, my hat! What a smack in the eye when she knows how we've dished her!"

Babs nodded. She felt satisfied. With Dulcia backing them up she felt more confident, more serene. But what a shock that serenity would have suffered had she known that the girl they had been talking to was their enemy!

Which, in the circumstances, was just as happy an arrangement as could be.

The two chums went to their study. Hardly had they entered, however, than the door opened.

It was, apparently, Dulcia who appeared—so marvellously natural was she that neither Babs nor Mabs guessed for a moment that it was their old enemy, Glenda, in her clever disguise.

"O.K.!" Glenda chuckled. "I've done it! Glenda's safe! I've locked her in the clock tower! Now, Mabs, do your stuff!" she added urgently. "Barbara, you'd better get off to the meeting in Miss Primrose's study!"

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

Babs and Mabs, who had been completely deceived, were very soon gleefully getting busy. Babs locked the door, while Mabs stripped off her clothes, and the transformation began. In a few moments Mabs was looking so startlingly like Glenda that even Babs, prepared for something in the way of wonders where Mabs' make-up art was concerned, held her breath.

"Oh, Mabs, wonderful—wonderful!" she cried. "But, look here, I must

Glenda, who at that moment was escorting unsuspecting Mabs to the clock tower—was already there. She smiled as Babs came in, and Babs warmly smiled back.

"Well, here we are," Miss Primrose said, standing in front of the collecting-boxes and tins. "Dulcia, I think you had better assist Glenda when she comes in making out the list. Miss Charmant and Barbara, will you attend to the silver and copper? I will deal with the notes and any cheques. We had better not wait for Glenda, however. No doubt she will be along at any moment. Let us start."

They started opening the boxes and tins. What a pile! Even Babs' breath was taken away. Notes—stacks of them—at least a dozen cheques, and heaps of silver and copper. It was going to be a record indeed.

Hardly had they started counting than the door opened, and another girl entered. Babs thrilled.

For she, of course, fondly imagined the newcomer to be Mabel Lynn—Mabel disguised as Glenda. Not for an instant did she guess the truth—that Mabs, hoodwinked herself, was now a prisoner in the clock tower, and that Glenda, knowing full well that Babs

The Downfall of Mabs!



BABS and Mabs went to bed presently. The rest of the Fourth, eagerly discussing the events of the morrow, were almost inclined to forgive Mabel Lynn for her vendetta against Glenda, and certainly the atmosphere generally

would mistake her for Mabs in disguise, had removed her Dulcia disguise, and was calmly playing the part which Mabs had intended to play—was, in fact, just acting as herself!

"Ah, Glenda!" Miss Primrose said. "We have started, but I know you do not mind. Dulcia is making out the list, and I should be glad if you would check the money as she puts it down."

The counting and checking went on. Clink, clink! went the coins as they were stacked up.

And at last—
"Very, very gratifying!" Miss Primrose said, beaming. "Forty-one pounds in notes, twenty pounds in cheques, and no less than twelve pounds in silver and copper! Glenda, my dear, will you gather those notes and put them in this envelope?"

"Certainly, Miss Primrose!" the treasurer said.

She picked up the notes. And not till that moment did Babs take note of her hands—those long, lean white fingers that could not possibly be Mabs! Not till then did she see—too late—the triumphant gaze which the supposedly false Glenda threw at her. And suddenly, with a shock that almost robbed her of breath, the truth came to her.

In sudden tumultuous agitation, she started to her feet. This girl wasn't Mabs in disguise! This girl was—must be—

"Miss Primrose!" she cried, in panic. "Miss—O-oh!" For Glenda had leapt to the electric-light switch and clicked it down. The lights went out, plunging the room into inky darkness. "Stop her!" Babs shrieked.

There was a cry, then a crash as the window went up. For a moment Babs saw a figure outlined against the sky outside.

"Miss Primrose—quickly! She's getting away!" she cried. "Quickly! Dulcia, I thought you said—"

"After her!" Dulcia Fairbrother cried.

Frantically they flung themselves forward. Babs scrambled through the window first, followed by Dulcia and Miss Charmant, while Miss Primrose hurried to the door.

"She's heading towards the clock tower!" Babs cried, listening intently, for it was too dark to see Glenda.

They rushed along. Faintly the footsteps guided them. They neared the clock tower. Then suddenly, in front of her, Babs saw a vague figure. With a cry, she hurled herself upon it.

"Glenda!" she cried. "Miss Charmant—quick!"

"Hold her!" Dulcia cried.

"We've got her!" Babs thrilled.

"But—" stuttered their captive. "But—but—"

"Hold still—hold still!" Babs said fiercely. "You're caught now, Glenda Maine! You thought you were clever, didn't you? But not clever enough! Miss Primrose, here she is!" she cried, as Miss Primrose, clutching a torch, came fluttering on to the scene behind the others. "It's Glenda Maine!"

"Hey! Who?" asked a surprised voice; and across the lawn to their right came the ring of a cycle bell and the figure of a girl cycling. "Who says I'm who? And who the dickens," cried Glenda Maine, as she leapt from her cycle, "sent me a fake phone message telling me to meet my father at Courtfield Station? But, my hat, who's this?" she cried, as she saw the captive. "Who is this? Miss Primrose, this girl is disguised as me!"

Babs wheeled. She almost fell down as she saw Glenda Maine, and for a moment a sickly giddiness seized her.

But in a moment Miss Primrose, as though she understood, had caught the captive—had fiercely passed her handkerchief over her face. Then she fell back.

"Mabel! Mabel Lynn!" she vibrated. "Mabel, you—disguised as Glenda! Mabel—oh, great goodness, to what depths will you not sink? You did this!"

"I didn't!" Mabs panted. "I've been shut up in the clock tower all the time! Dulcia, you shut me up!" she exclaimed.

"I?" Dulcia cried, starting back. "She didn't—she didn't!" Babs cried out, her own head reeling. But she understood, even in the ghastly sickness of her defeat, all that had happened. "It was Glenda—Glenda disguised as Dulcia! And it was Glenda herself we were chasing just now!"

"Barbara, hold your tongue! Are you, too, as mad as Mabel Lynn?" Miss Primrose cried angrily. "Mabel, this



AT ALL COSTS GLENDA MAINE MUST BE EXPOSED!

That is the resolute determination of Barbara Redfern and her chums, for with Mabs under the shadow of expulsion Babs wins to her support the loyal resourceful aid of Clara Trevlyn, Marjorie Hazeldene, Leila Carroll and Janet Jordan. It is their wits and ingenuity against Glenda Maine's cunning and unscrupulousness—in a last dramatic bid to end that dangerous girl's dishonest career once and for all. HILDA RICHARDS at the top of her form with a story that'll grip you from start to finish. You mustn't miss it whatever you do.

DRAMA — THRILLS — SURPRISES
in next week's superb Cliff House Story

is the end—the very, very end! I see the scheme now. While you tricked Glenda away with a bogus telephone message, you disguised as her and carried out an impudent robbery in my study in order that Glenda should get the blame—as she might have done!"

"I—I didn't!" Mabs panted. "I didn't!"

"Hallo, though, what are these?" Glenda asked in pretended surprise, and stooped and whipped up something from beneath Babs' very feet. "I think, Miss Primrose, these are the notes," she added calmly, and they were. "I saw them fall out of Mabel's pocket!"

"You fibber!" quivered Mabs.

"Miss Primrose—" Babs cried.

"Dulcia, please take Mabel! Put her in the punishment-room and see that she remains there till to-morrow morning. Then, Mabel Lynn"—and a chill seemed to strike through Mabs' heart—"you will be expelled! Now go back to school."

And faintly, held by Dulcia and Miss Charmant, the half-swooning, still bewildered Mabs was hurried back to the school, Miss Primrose following. Babs, feeling as if she had been stunned, lagged behind.

"Well, Barbara?" Glenda's mocking voice fell upon her ear.

"You—" Babs flashed, swivelling round.

"Me!" Glenda laughed. "Quite a clever and well carried out little scheme, wasn't it? Barbara, are you now going to be sensible? Are you going to cease to interfere? I warned you, didn't I, that one of you would get hurt—"

"You—you fiend!" Babs panted.

"Call me names—I can take them!" Glenda said calmly. "Barbara dear, I am going to let you into a secret. I did not join the collection committee because I wanted to be its treasurer—nor because I wanted to steal its paltry funds. I joined it for another reason—"

Babs clenched her hands. "I joined it," Glenda said mockingly, "because I knew you would immediately suspect I was up to no good. I joined it so that I could bait a trap for you."

Babs felt almost too sick to reply.

"Mind you," Glenda went on, "I had a task. Bessie was a help! It was she who, very artlessly, let me know yesterday that you were going to tell Dulcia Fairbrother all about my criminal activities with the idea of inviting her to join in. As it happened, however—I do so hate to leave you in the dark about these points—it wasn't, Dulcia you told: it was little me!"

"And—and?" Humiliated, crushed and furious as she was, Babs felt somehow that she had to listen.

"Why then," Glenda said lightly, "I, as Dulcia, propounded the little scheme which set the works going! You fell for it! Clever of me, wasn't it, to suggest that Mabs should disguise as me—and then, as Dulcia Fairbrother, take her off and shut her in the clock tower while I just became myself again?"

Babs clenched her hands.

"Because you see, dear Barbara, I had it all cut and dried. Mabs was in the clock tower; my bicycle was ready. All I had to do was to rush here, release Mabs, and drop those notes—then rush off with the bicycle so as to rush back at the right moment with the story of having been deceived away by a fake message. I hope you're satisfied now, Barbara Redfern, that it's not wise to work against me. I told you I could be dangerous."

"And you mean," Babs panted, "you're going to allow Mabs to be expelled?"

"Why not?" Glenda shrugged. "She got in my way; she must be removed. Take a lesson. Opposing Glenda Maine doesn't pay! Mabs is the sufferer this time, but next time, Barbara dear, it will be you!"

And with a light, mocking laugh, she strolled away, leaving Babs with a chill, numbed feeling.

And Mabs—Mabs was to be expelled!

"But she shan't!" Babs whispered to herself. "Or if she is, I'll get her back! I'll clear her name and get her back! And to do that I've got to show you up for the girl you are, Glenda Maine!"

Her hands clenched.

"But suppose," a voice in her ear seemed to whisper, "you're not clever enough to show Glenda Maine up?"

Babs shivered.

Superb Opening Chapters of our Gripping New **Valerie Drew Detective Story.**



SUSPECTS OF PLEASURE ISLE!

By ISABEL NORTON

Drama in Tarka's Temple!

"**H**URRY along, you slackers!" called Valerie Drew cheerfully. "We'll never see anything at all if some of you don't buck up!"

Clad in a trim white suit, her red-gold hair peeping out attractively from under a smart little beret, the famous girl detective stood waiting in the sunlight for her six companions, who had lingered on the way up to admire a truly marvellous landscape.

Valerie felt very proud and happy in her new vocation as she stood watching them. It had been a great compliment to her when three parents decided that she was just the right person to take charge of their children on holiday at this lovely Atlantic island of Mazoria!

Two were brother and sister, Dulcie and Frank Furnival. The other boy, dark and good-looking, was Roger Drake, while the auburn-haired girl beside him was Molly Dixon. Completing the party were severe-looking Mr. Horace Boon, accompanying the four young people as their tutor, and his daughter Sybil, travelling at her father's expense.

"Here, Flash!" murmured Valerie, stooping to give her Alsatian's fine head an affectionate pat. "Run back and tell them I'm waiting to show them round Tarka's Temple! Off you go!"

"Whoof!" barked Flash happily; and, with springy bounds, his bushy tail waving proudly, he went racing back to where the party still lingered, gazing down the sunny slopes of the hillside to the lovely little seaport town and, beyond it, the blue Atlantic that washed the shores of the sandy bay.

Valerie chuckled softly to herself as her pet, reaching the party, conveyed her message with a busy "Whoof, whoof, whoof!" and a great deal of excited leaping up at all the members in turn.

"Golly, we've almost forgotten all about Valerie!" exclaimed fair-haired Frank Furnival guiltily, coming back to earth. "Come along, you dreamy rubbernecks! Val's still waiting for us up top!"

"Wait for me, Frank!" exclaimed Dulcie, his sister, hastily gathering up

her handbag from the ledge on which they had been leaning. "Be careful!" she added cautiously, as he dashed impulsively off.

The spot where Valerie had stopped, close to the entrance to the island's most historic ruins, was on rougher and more broken ground. Taking a step to meet Frank, she trod accidentally on a loose stone. Her foot slipped, and her handbag, which she was in the act of closing, gave a jerk. Before she could do anything to stop it, a circular powder-box fell out and rolled rapidly away down a declivity at one side.

"I'll get it, Val!" offered Frank, immediately leaping in pursuit of the truant powder-box.

"Take care, old chap!" murmured Valerie warningly.

Valerie Drew, in charge of a small party on the romantic island of Mazoria, was looking forward to heaps of fun and excitement. Then—staggering shock! A precious stone disappeared. The whole party was suspected. And only Valerie, faced with the most amazing mystery of her life, could save them from conviction.

It was just like Frank to do an impulsive, good-hearted thing like that. Though she had taken to all her party on the voyage out from England, she had developed a particularly soft spot for Frank.

Suddenly her pulses gave an uncomfortable thrill. The circular box had wedged amongst the rocks some distance beneath the path. Frank, taking a nimble leap to reach the spot, slipped and sprawled. He was up again in a moment, however, to recover the truant box, and, grinning happily, climbed back to the spot where Valerie was waiting.

"Thanks, Frank—that was very kind of you!" declared Valerie gratefully.

"Welcome!" chuckled Frank. "After all, where would our Valerie be without her powder on a hot day like this?"

"But, Frank, what have you done to your wrist?" his sister Dulcie cried, joining them at that moment.

Frank looked at it in surprise. The skin was grazed; there was a little trickle of blood.

"Nothing at all," he said lightly.

"I'm going to tie it up!" finally declared Dulcie, producing a clean, dainty handkerchief. "Come here, you silly old duffer!" she commanded, trying to look really stern. "Hold your hand out!"

"Naughty boy!" completed Frank, but he obeyed Dulcie as he always did in the end.

Though Valerie laughed, the moment was not wasted. She had often noticed, and admired, this strong bond of affection between the sister and brother.

As the others of the party joined her, Valerie led the way without further delay to a barrier where a Mazorian police official guarded the actual entrance to Tarka's Temple. He explained to them that all visitors to-day must first enter their names and addresses in a special book before they could go any farther.

Valerie naturally complied at once, and Dulcie and Frank followed her example. Dark-eyed Roger Drake, however, appeared to be very puzzled about what was required of him. Knowing what a leg-puller he invariably was, Valerie left him to settle matters with the police official, aided by Molly Dixon, and her eyes turned on the Boons.

She did not mind the grey-haired, scholarly looking tutor being with the party, but so far she had not got on any too well with his daughter, Sybil, older than the other girls, and very fastidious where dress was concerned, was inclined to be pettish.

"Why don't you tell that fellow Roger to buck up, father?" Valerie heard her ask him peevishly. "He's purposely holding us all up, I'm sure!"

"I am not the person in charge," her father answered, in his rather stern, penetrating voice. "It is not my duty to point out that to try to confuse a foreign official is impolite, as well as time-wasting."

Roger, hearing the remark, promptly completed his entry, and winked at Valerie.

"S'a'right!" he whispered. "No harm done!"

"Thank you, ladies and gentlemen!"

exclaimed the gold-braided police sergeant, as Mr. Horace Boon signed the book last of all. "It is a law that we must have these full particulars of all visitors to-day because the famous Ramon Ruby is again on show. It is our most valued possession!"

Valerie Drew thrilled as the barrier was opened, and they entered the inner enclosure. For the Ramon Ruby was world-renowned. For size and colour it was claimed to be without an equal anywhere.

The flagged courtyard was in itself a fascinating place full of picturesque, broken columns where the outer entrance to the temple had stood two thousand years ago. Now it was graced by flower-beds full of brilliant blossoms which nodded in the sun. Bright-hued butterflies flitted amongst them. At one side stood an inviting weathered stone balustrade. From it one could gaze across a fresh expanse of delightful island scenery.

"Next, before entering the temple itself," the police sergeant announced, "I must ask you to leave all hand luggage on this ledge."

Valerie, to her surprise, felt a light touch on her elbow. Turning, she found a brown-skinned woman flower-seller proffering a bunch of gardenias.

"So lovely and so cheap!" she whispered; and, to Valerie's amazement, gave a mystifying wink.

Valerie was really taken aback at that.

"What on earth's the good of buying flowers," she asked, "if I've immediately got to put them down again?"

The woman solemnly winked the other eye.

"They are so very cheap, mees," she wheedled. "It is always lucky to buy from old Marlinna."

"Not now—perhaps when we come out," Valerie decided; and turned to see that her party complied with the latest formalities.

Dulcie Furnival had already parted reluctantly with her dainty handbag. Now her brother Frank placed a big camera-case beside it. Mr. Boon deposited a leather portfolio full of instructive books, and optimistic Roger Drake set down a pair of climbing-boots tied up in an untidy paper parcel—Roger always hoped there'd be something to climb. Valerie and Molly Dixon added their handbags. Last, and with deep reluctance, Sybil Boon surrendered some flowers.

"Worse even than going into an English museum!" she lamented, looking greatly peeved. "Not, of course, that I ever do."

Valerie made no comment.

"Hamiz!" called the sergeant sharply.

A black-uniformed man, with a sallow skin and rather narrow, furtive-looking eyes, appeared almost immediately.

"Your commands, Sergeant Fanchal?" he exclaimed, saluting.

"You will guide this party of English ladies and gentlemen, Hamiz!" directed the sergeant. "They wish to see the temple, and our famous white elephant with the living red eye."

"Certainly, sergeant!" said the guide Hamiz, saluting again. "This way, please!"

The guide turned towards a large, ornate doorway, and Valerie and her party followed him down a remarkable passage, now electrically lit, which had been originally hewn through solid rock.

The passage, turning and twisting unexpectedly, came to an end at a large, circular chamber. With audible murmurs of astonishment and wonder, the

party gathered together to gaze at the marvels of Tarka's Temple.

"What a thrilling place!" cried Dulcie.

"I'd no idea," Molly agreed, "that it could be so wonderful!"

Frank Furnival's eyes twinkled. Though obviously impressed as deeply as the others, he was always trying to shock his sister Dulcie.

"Ten times better," he said, with conviction, "than our local gasworks at home!"

"Oh, Frank!" murmured Dulcie.

Mr. Boon coughed reproachfully as the others tittered. But Valerie, quite prepared for young people to be flippant at times, continued to gaze around in unstinted admiration.

It really was a most remarkable place.

Enormous carved pillars supported the domed roof. The walls around were cut into hundreds of exquisite patterns. The floor, full of intricate designs, was brilliant with polished, multi-coloured stones.

But it was to the centre of this amazing subterranean temple of ancient days that Valerie's gaze had instinctively turned.

And now she was feasting her eyes on the wonderful Ramon Ruby.

The ancients who had cut it had devised an unusual position for its exhibition. It was set in the middle of the white forehead of a huge ivory elephant, to serve as a single glistening eye. Wherever one moved that strange eye seemed to be looking.

"There is a special way," Hamiz, the guide, proudly announced, "in which the ladies and gentlemen will see the full liquid beauty of our wonderful ruby. There must be only one light shining on it. I must ask that you first step over to the far side of the temple."

"Will they tie our hands behind our backs?" speculated Roger Drake, with a wink at Valerie.

"Of course not!" humourless Mr. Boon rejoined. "I trust we look too respectable for that!"

Valerie was glancing shrewdly around the temple as her party took up the position indicated by the guide. She knew that some unusual spectacle was being planned.

"You will please all stay where you are," Hamiz went on, his narrowed eyes watching the party closely. "Now I shall turn off the main lights. I return almost at once, carrying one little light. It will make our ruby blaze with all its hidden fires."

He vanished into a dim-lit passage, and there was the sound of a distant click. Instantly the whole temple was plunged in darkness.

Valerie could almost feel the expectant thrill which passed through her party. Then all at once she was astonished to feel her pet stirring uneasily at her side, as though he could sense somebody moving about.

"Keep together everyone, please," she instructed, in a concerned whisper, "and don't move away!"

"Who is?" came Mr. Boon's deep-voiced inquiry from the far side of the party.

Nobody replied. The silence remained, unceremoniously pronounced. Then unexpectedly Flash growled.

At that moment, to Valerie's relief, she heard the returning footsteps of Hamiz, then his voice from the other side of the temple.

"Please watch closely. I am about to shine the special light. You will now see the elephant's eye that lights up with living fires."

A brilliant shaft of light from his focused electric torch cut through the

darkness, and lit the pale white forehead of the ivory elephant.

Scarcely able to credit her own eyes, Valerie stared at the spot.

The Ramon Ruby had vanished!

Where the priceless gem should have shone with dazzling beams of reflected red light there was merely a shadowy recess in the ivory.

Somebody, in those few moments of darkness, had taken it!

For a second or two the stunned party stood watching that thin, wavering beam of light in utter silence.

Then—

"Golly, it's gone!" Roger Drake ejaculated.

A cry of fear left Hamiz' lips.

"Stolen—the ruby stolen!" he shouted at the top of his voice; and, yelling in his own language, the ray of his torch describing agitated arcs of light as he ran, he rushed back to the main switch.

Once more the temple was flooded with light. At the same time, answering hails came from different parts of the ancient excavation, and uniformed men appeared as though by magic.

Valerie had scarcely moved, for in an instant she had appreciated the full significance of this sensational happening.

From a swift inspection of her own party, none of whom appeared to have moved, her searching gaze roved around the temple for some glimpse of a hiding miscreant.

She saw none. Then a police official of obviously high rank, staring dumb-founded at the ivory elephant, turned suddenly in her direction. His face dark with anger, his hands raised excitedly, he strode straight towards her.

"You will restore the ruby at once!" he cried threateningly. "Nobody will be allowed to leave this building until the ruby has been returned. The person who took it in the darkness must give it back immediately."

Pigeon of Mystery!

STILL feeling as though it was all part of some incredible dream,

Valerie Drew had to make a definite effort to collect her wits.

She knew something must be done at once to clear her own party of suspicion. True, they were all looking as bewildered as she felt herself, yet that wasn't enough.

"If anyone's been playing a silly joke," said Valerie, with quiet intentness, "they must own up immediately."

"You felt me touching your hand, Valerie," said Molly, licking her lips.

"I haven't moved an inch," said Dulcie Furnival.

"I've been next to Dulcie all the time," offered Roger Drake.

"And I kept next to father," said Sybil Boon.

The tutor remained silent, knowing that everyone had heard his deep, characteristic voice.

The chief of police, who had been listening intently, stepped forward. His hand shot out dramatically towards Frank Furnival.

"Why does that boy say nothing?" he demanded.

Frank gave a gasp, and a brick-red colour began to suffuse his cheeks.

"Oh, Valerie, it couldn't be Frank!" cried his sister in deep concern. "You know him too well to believe that."

"Of course, it's not me!" Frank exclaimed. "I swear I haven't budged an inch."

"Well?" persisted the angry official.

"I am Commissioner Adani. You must

remember that I have full authority here."

Valerie turned her head.

Nobody could doubt for a moment how sympathetic she felt towards him, but her first duty was naturally to her own party.

"We're none of us guilty of this theft, commissioner," Valerie steadily answered. "You'll certainly have to look for the thief elsewhere."

The commissioner gave an angry snap of his fingers, but at the same moment there was a sound of commotion behind him. Turning, Valerie beheld an unexpected sight. Several other police had come into the ancient temple, bringing with them not only the guide Hamiz, but a woman whose appearance astonished her considerably. She was none other than the persistent flower-seller, Marlina. Though they were both speaking in their own language, it was obvious they were volubly protesting their innocence.

"Phew! That's quick work!" breathed Roger Drake. "A couple of arrests already!"

The commissioner asked a few curt questions, listened to his men's report, then gave an order. The two prisoners, still protesting, were led away along another passage, evidently for further examination.

Valerie remained staring after them. She had already been considerably puzzled by the woman's manner outside, and surprised at the apparent freedom given to her to wander where she liked. Where Hamiz, the guide, was concerned, she also entertained her own suspicions, for he must naturally be completely familiar with the temple under conditions of darkness. Was either the guilty party?

"I am still waiting, young lady," said the commissioner's grim voice, "for the ruby to be returned."

Valerie turned with a start, and a touch of colour sprang to her cheeks as she realised the remark had been addressed to her.

"Commissioner," she said firmly, "we know nothing at all about it! We have nothing more to say!"

The commissioner gave a twisted smile.

"Then," he responded, in a frigidly polite tone, "I must ask you all to accompany me outside!"

He turned, as he spoke, to lead the way.

"Follow him, and keep your heads," Valerie softly instructed her party. And, as they passed her, she looked shrewdly at each in turn, more puzzled and uneasy than she wished any of them to guess.

For it was Flash's strange behaviour which worried her.

When Flash suspected the presence of a stranger he always barked a warning. This time Flash hadn't barked once. He had only growled in that uncertain, puzzled way which suggested a friend was moving about.

Valerie still couldn't get away from the disturbing suspicion that Flash had believed it was one of their own party who had been stirring in the darkness!

Outside the temple again, they all stood for a few moments blinking in the brilliant sunshine. Then the commissioner, glancing around, pointed to the ledge where they had been made to deposit their possessions.

"Are these things yours?" he asked crisply.

"Yes, but we have not touched them since we entered the temple," Valerie dryly pointed out. "I'm afraid they can't help much."

The commissioner, still unsatisfied,

moved towards the ledge. As he did so an amazing thing happened.

The lid of Frank Furnival's camera case moved perceptibly!

The commissioner stopped dead, his face astounded. Gasps of amazement came from the others as they witnessed the same bewildering happening.

"Why, that's my camera—" Frank was beginning, when the words died in his throat.

The lid, moving again, suddenly shot upwards and fell fully open. The bright eyes and sharp beak of a biggish bird rose to sight from the interior.

"A thousand stars! It is a pigeon!" stuttered the commissioner.

He ran towards the ledge at top speed.

Alarmed at the sudden movement, the pigeon immediately hopped out of its strange prison and gained the level. Just before the commissioner could reach it, it spread its wings and wheeled into the air. As it flew off, a bright, glittering object, attached to one of its legs, became clearly visible.



VALERIE and her companions were still staring at the place where the precious ruby had been, when the angry police official dramatically pointed to it. "You will restore the ruby at once!" he cried threateningly.

"And nobody will leave this temple until you do!"

The same astounded cry burst from the lips of every member of Valerie's party.

"Look! The ruby!"

Dumbfounded, they stood for an incredulous moment, watching the brilliant red stone on the pigeon's leg glittering in the sunlight as the bird wheeled higher above their heads.

Next moment pandemonium broke out.

The horrified commissioner started shouting orders. Flash, barking furiously, raced across the terrace in fruitless pursuit. Roger climbed nimbly up a ruined wall in the hope that the pigeon might come near enough to be caught.

Calmer in this moment of crisis than anyone else, Valerie immediately stepped across to the ledge and tensely inspected the camera-case from which the pigeon had emerged. She was thrilled to discover just one clue—a tiny metal ring which had evidently once been fixed to the pigeon's leg. A number was stamped on it.

Valerie glanced swiftly back over her

shoulder. Everyone else was still watching the escaping pigeon. Two police armed with carbines had appeared in addition to the others. Now, under the excited orders of the commissioner, they were raising them to point at the wheeling bird.

Seeing her chance, Valerie deftly extracted the telltale ring and slipped it into her pocket.

The guns crashed out a moment later. Missing with their first excited shots, the men reloaded rapidly, and fired again and again. Frightened but unhurt, the pigeon flew swiftly to one side. In a few more moments it had made its escape, still apparently quite unscathed.

The men lowered their carbines at last, and stood fidgeting uncertainly. The commissioner, his face grim with disappointment, turned back to Valerie Drew.

"Whose camera-case is it?" he demanded.

"Frank Furnival's," answered Valerie without hesitation.

"What? That same boy again?" ejaculated the commissioner. "Then there can be no doubt—"

"Wait!" The very coolness of the girl detective's tones checked him. "I agree that Frank left the hotel this morning carrying a similar case to that one, but there are hundreds like it on the island. If you examine it carefully you will see it bears no identification marks at all. Who is going to say that it really is Frank's case?"

The commissioner stared at Valerie for a moment, then abruptly picked up the case. Turning it over in his hands, he saw her statement was true. The case was just like scores of others on the island.

"Though I regret to disappoint you, commissioner," Valerie went on evenly, "you must agree that you have no evidence against my party at all. We were told to leave these things here. Other people, including the flower-seller, were allowed to move about here quite freely. There was ample opportunity for anyone to steal Frank's camera and substitute a different case. Can you deny that?"

The commissioner turned slowly. "One of your party," he said with angry conviction, "is responsible for the theft of the ruby!"

"That is merely your theory, Commissioner Adani," Valerie politely but rather coldly rejoined. "At the moment it can be nothing more. Your law, without further evidence, does not allow you to accuse one of us!"

The commissioner showed his teeth. "I agree," he said harshly. "But the law of Mazoria is well able to look after suspected persons. I shall take immediate steps to see that you are all charged with complicity in this theft. Your future movements will then be under the control of the police. Not one of you will be allowed to leave the island until the Ramon Ruby has been found and restored to the temple!"

A Double Dilemma!

"SHANT we even be allowed to take part in the carnival?" asked, Sybil Boon, looking deeply disturbed.

"It is most unlikely," her father sombrely answered, "without police permission!"

"How about the battle of flowers?" Roger Drake grinned.

"We'll probably have to get bobbies to throw the flowers for us instead!" he speculated humorously.

"What about bathing?" demanded Sybil.

"We'll probably have bobbies with us even there!" opined Molly Drake. "That's going to be interesting, anyway! Think they'll keep their helmets on, Valerie?"

It was a little later the same morning. Following their amazing adventure at Tarka's Temple, Valerie's ill-fated party had returned as soon as they could to their hotel, situated in the centre of the island's loveliest bay.

It was obvious that, with the exception of Sybil, they still did not know whether to regard their present amazing situation as a really grave disaster or something that was likely,

in the long run, only to prove a huge joke.

Wisely enough, Valerie had refrained from giving them any indication of what was passing through her own mind.

She knew only too well that it would be anything but a laughing matter if the Ramon Ruby was not soon returned.

"It's early," she told her charges in a thoughtful voice, "to jump to any conclusions. We've come here to have a jolly good holiday, and we're still going to have it as far as possible. So don't start worrying until something really happens."

"Then I propose," said Sybil, brightly immediately, "that we have a bathe while we can."

Valerie, seeing the others fall in eagerly with the suggestion, took Mr. Boon aside.

"If they're going swimming," she said softly, "I'd be much obliged if you'd just keep an eye on them to see that nothing happens. There are one or two matters I want to look into for myself."

There was a reproachful gleam in the tutor's eyes as he returned her gaze.

"To be quite frank—Miss Drew," he replied, "I am glad to see you showing some concern at last. Had I been in charge of this party I should have handled matters at the temple very differently myself."

"How? Would you have let Frank be arrested because of the evidence of the pigeon?" asked Valerie, in amazement.

"Tut, tut! If they could have proved nothing, that would have been the end of the case!" Mr. Boon confidently averred. "As it is, we may now be held here for months!"

Valerie felt surprised and shocked at his disloyalty, but she did not want to show it.

"At least, Mr. Boon," she responded in her sweetest tones, "nobody is ever going to accuse you of being an optimist! I'll promise to be back as soon as possible."

A few minutes later, assured that her party was going to make the most of what remained of this so-far disastrous morning, she left the smart hotel, with Flash trotting at her side.

Along the attractive promenade the bright green trees were flowering profusely. Palms nodded gently in the breeze; gaily painted sledges, drawn by oxen, slid smoothly along the cobbled streets, conveying tourists under their striped sun canopies. In every big café an orchestra was playing. White ships lay at anchor; motor-boats skimmed across the blue, sparkling waters of the bay. Bathing in the beautifully warm sea was being enjoyed all along the coast.

When she had first set sail with her present party, bound for this lovely island where there was some new delight, some fresh excitement, to crowd every hour of the day, Valerie had felt certain that she and her young charges were going to enjoy the holiday of a lifetime.

Now, within a few hours, she had found herself involved in the strangest dilemma she had ever known.

It was an entirely new experience for Valerie to find herself one of a party suspected of a daring jewel robbery!

Her fingers tightened instinctively on the little metal ring reposing in her pocket. Wisely she had not breathed a word of her discovery, and she still believed nobody had seen her abstract it.

Would it really assist her to solve the strange problem of the lost ruby?

Valerie's hopes were high as she pressed farther into the town, with Flash trotting happily ahead of her.

It was obviously a trained carrier-pigeon which had escaped from the camera-case, and the numbered ring meant that it was registered, so that its owner could be traced.

If only she could find the owner of the pigeon, would she also have found the thief as well?

Inquiring where bird fanciers' shops were to be found, Valerie left the main thoroughfare she had been following, and turned along a narrower one running steeply down hill.

At the foot of the hill Valerie found herself approaching a wharf, where she knew she would have to engage a ferry to take her across the river to the part of the town she sought. She was about to step on it, when she turned her head in amazement, looking everywhere in vain for her pet.

"Flash!" she called, a note of anxiety in her voice.

Where had he gone? It appeared to her that the only possible place where he could have strayed was along a narrow, twisting alley which ran behind a line of decaying warehouse buildings fronting the river.

Calling aloud to her pet again, Valerie turned to make her way along it, and suddenly, as she listened tensely, she believed she heard a faint scratching sound. Alarmed instantly, thinking she had located the source of it, she moved towards the nearer building.

There was a half-open door in the middle of it, with tiny windows fitted with gratings on each side. She pulled the door a little farther open and looked into the dark interior. Still seeing nothing, she stepped inside.

"Flash!" she called, her voice sharp with apprehension.

Only an echo answered back from the damp walls. Her hand went to her bag in search of her torch. A sudden darkening of the place at that very moment caused her to turn sharply on her heel. Horrified, she saw the door was closing on her.

Without a word she sprang towards it, but she was just too late. The door slammed; a rusty bar grated into position outside. Dumbfounded, she heard a voice address her by her own name.

"Miss Valerie Drew!" it floated in through one of the windows, in a strange, piping intonation. "You are not so clever as you think you are! This time you have made a bad blunder!"

"Let me out!" Valerie cried. "How dare you do this! Open the door instantly!"

"Think of your dog, Miss Drew!" An icy chill seemed to touch Valerie's spine at those ominous words.

"Where is Flash?" she demanded tensely.

"Safe in my hands—but only for the present!" the piping voice responded. "He will not be safe for long unless you are sensible. Give me the thing you took from the boy's camera-case outside the temple, or—you will never see your dog again!"

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He Simply Must be Warned!

THERE, the sprained wrist should soon be mended now, highwayman, I think."

And Jess Reynolds, pinning the bandage about Highwayman Jack's wrist, looked up at his smiling eyes, which she could see only through the slits of his black velvet mask.

"Thank you, my dear friend!" he murmured. "I should make but a sorry performer had I need to rely upon my sword to-night—especially as I have need to hold up the London coach."

"'Tis a pity you have the need," said Jess gently. "To-night you should stay at home, wherever that may be, and read a book."

Jess and her highwayman friend had met not far from her father's inn, the Rising Sun, on the London road. She had not expected to see him, but she had heard his voice hailing her from amongst the trees of the forest behind the inn.

The sun was sinking in the sky, and before very long darkness would fall over the pretty country scene, and the yellowish lights of the inn would shine to add to the warm glow of the blazing fire of the hall.

A fine figure Highwayman Jack made in his red tunic, white breeches, and shining black boots, and Jess could not help thinking what a splendid-looking young fellow he was.

But there were many who never heard the name of Highwayman Jack without a shudder. They did not know how charming and courteous he was.

"What should I do without you for a friend?" he murmured. "La, but you have the trained hands of a nurse, I think; and what fine bandaging this is to be sure," he added, holding up his wrist. "One good turn deserves another, and—"

He put his other hand into a pocket, and drawing it out, held it palm up to show Jess what it held.

She caught her breath as she saw a pretty ring, a gold one with a shining blue stone.

"Why, how lovely——" she murmured.

"'Tis yours," he said, with a bow. "Slip it on your finger and keep it for luck. I've heard it is a good one."

But Jess, colouring deeply, hesitated. It was difficult to refuse the gift so charmingly presented; but who could tell how he had got the ring?

Although she did not want to embarrass him, he noticed her hesitation.

Highwayman Jack, his arm injured, had to fight a duel with the Army Champion! How could Jess save him?

"La! You fear I may have stolen it?" he laughed. "My dear, have I not said that I do not rob people; that I have a special reason for holding up coaches, and I take only what is mine? This ring is mine, although in a moment, if you will be kind enough to take it, it will be yours."

Jess hesitated no longer, for she had never yet found him out in an untruth. And most certainly it was a dear little ring.

No sooner did her fingers close upon it than they both heard the sound of a horse-rider on the path through the trees.

For fear of being apprehended, Highwayman Jack dodged back amongst the trees, and, with a wave to Jess, mounted his horse.

Luckily, however, the rider was not a soldier, but merely a stranger whom Jess had never seen before. He was richly dressed, and a most expensive-looking cloak hung from his shoulders.

Seeing Jess, he called to her, reining up his trotting horse.

"Hey, lass! Where is the Rising Sun Inn?" he asked.

"The inn? Why, yonder, sir," said Jess, pointing. "I am bound there myself. I am the host's daughter, at your service."

As she looked up at the stranger, she thought that there was something rather conceited in his expression and more than a hint of swagger in his attire and manner.

"Is that so?" he said, without interest. "Well, I hope your father keeps a good house. I am particular where I lodge."

"Oh, you'll find everything you want there," said Jess, not liking his manner. "People of quality quite frequently stay there, sir."

Jess walked on, and the rider, after a frowning look of disapproval because she had not said "other people of quality," urged on his horse and, overtaking her, reached the inn first.

When Jess arrived he was in the hall, divesting himself of his cloak, and talking to her jovial, rather plump father. "Yes, I am Squire Olding's guest," he said. "Is the squire here—"

The words were hardly out when the clatter of hoofs sounded outside, and Jess recognised the voice of the squire's coachman. Hurrying to the door, she opened it in time to see the squire step down from his chaise.

A word of welcome was always given to arrivals, but Jess found it hard to get a really genuine ring into her voice as she asked the squire in. He was an overbearing, mean, and unpopular man, and she was always glad to see the back of him.

"Is Captain Perceval here?" he asked curiously.

"I don't know the name, squire, but a gentleman has newly arrived——" she began, when from the hall came the visitor's voice:

"Here I am, squire!" The squire chuckled, shook hands, and then turned to Jess' father.

"Good landlord, you have the honour to have under your roof to-night the champion swordsman of the British Army!"

Captain Perceval gave a little smirk, drew up, and bowed slightly in acknowledgment of the looks that Jess and her father gave him.

"An honour, indeed!" said Jess' father.

"An honour, but no casual visit."

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answered the squire, with a glint in his eyes that Jess did not fail to notice. "Captain Perceval is here for a special object. He is here to run his sword through the pest of the heath!"

Jess stifled a sharp cry in time; for she instantly guessed to whom it was the squire referred.

Nevertheless, she could not help making quite certain.

"You mean, sir?" she prompted.

"I mean Highwayman Jack—Laughing Jack, who will be Groaning Jack!" ground out the squire. "That rascal has fooled us long enough! He may think that he has a charmed life, that he can escape us, trick us; but this will be his end!"

Jess' heart thumped; for, good swordsman though Highwayman Jack was, could he prove the equal of the Army champion now that he had a sprained wrist? And if not, then what mercy would be shown him? None—none at all. Captain Perceval's smirking manner and cruel mouth showed that.

Jess backed towards the door. In a flash she had made up her mind. Highwayman Jack must be warned to keep clear of the heath to-night.

Back to Jess' mind flashed the memory of his words:

"To-night I have need to hold-up the London coach."

"I shall be a traveller in the coach," said Captain Perceval. "And if the rascal holds it up, then it will fare ill with him!"

Jess slipped towards the doorway. She had taken but a step, however, when the squire shouted to her:

"Come back!"

Jess returned, alarmed by his tone.

"Yes, sir?" she asked.

The squire's watery eyes fixed her balefully.

"Tell no one what you have heard. No gossiping with the servants or anyone else. If only the four of us here know what is planned, and the truth leaks out, then one of us is a spy—one of you, either you or your father. Now get us some refreshments, girl!"

Sick at heart, fearful for her friend, Jess turned to the door to obey the squire's command.

"Give this highwayman rascal no mercy, no quarter!" she heard him rap. "This must be his finish!"

A Clever Trick—in Vain!

JESS returned with the refreshment in great agitation.

It was a difficult position she was in, for she had her father's safety to consider as well as her own. If she did warn the highwayman the squire would suspect one of them. If she did not, then her gallant friend would meet his doom.

At the moment Jess could see no way out.

She put the tray of refreshments down on the table at which the squire and Captain Perceval sat, and was so busy with her troubled thoughts that she did not notice that the squire was keenly eyeing her ring until he seized her hand.

"One moment, lass! I do not remember seeing that ring before. Where did you get it?"

Jess' father stepped forward, and arched his brows.

"Why, no! How came you by that, Jess?" he murmured.

Jess thought first of saying that a friend had given it to her, but she wisely realised that she would be asked to name the friend. And that she could not do.

"Why, I got it on the path!" she said, as casually as she could. "Tis but a trifle—"

The squire cut her short.

"Finding and keeping is stealing!" he said. "As a magistrate, I will take charge of the ring and make inquiries about the ownership."

Jess could not protest, and he took the ring from her finger, examining it with gloating satisfaction before putting it into his pocket. There was but little chance of his ever finding the owner, and less chance of his trying to do so.

Before conversation could be reopened there came the shouts of the ostlers announcing the arrival of the London coach.

Travellers entered the warm hall, clapping their cold hands, removing hats, ordering drinks, and keeping Jess busy.

Captain Perceval rose to his feet and affixed his cloak. Then, flashing out his rapier, he flexed the blade, smiled grimly, and sheathed it again.

"Wait. I will come and see the fun," said the squire.

Jess, heart thumping, suddenly made up her mind to the same purpose; but she was not expecting fun. If only she could be there on the heath, there was still a chance that she could give Highwayman Jack timely warning.

Moving quietly away, Jess put on her thick coat, and asking Nell, the maid, to take charge of things for her, she planned to board the coach as it moved away.

A simple ruse would be needed—and what more natural than that something had been left behind by a traveller?

So when the travellers were in the coach, and the horses were being whipped up, Jess ran out, shouting for the coachman to stop.

But she knew well enough that he could not hear her above his own shouting.

"Back soon, dad!" she called.

Without more ado, Jess ran to the coach, and helped by the guard, who stood at the back with the horn, she scrambled on to the open top.

The night was dark and cold, but there were bright stars above, and Jess was wrapped up warmly. Shaking with excitement, she could hardly control her patience until the heath was reached.

Also on the roof of the coach, in front of her, sat Captain Perceval, his rapier pommel, jewelled and splendid, glinting in the yellow rays that came from the coach lanterns.

There was only one other passenger on the roof beside him and Jess, an old man who sat huddled down in his coat, his face quite hidden.

Jess looked ahead into the darkness. The coach was on the heath now, the horses straining, the whip lashing, the coachman shouting.

As Jess looked at the captain in front, and at that sword pommel, so ostentatiously kept in view, an idea came to her—a daring plan.

The rapier pommel was inviting, tempting; she yearned to wrap her fingers about it. If she took hold of it, could she draw the rapier out?

Almost before she quite realised that she had done so, Jess had taken the sword pommel in her fingers. She gripped it, and, hardly breathing, steadied the scabbard and drew out the blade. No-sooner had she done so than Jess tossed it over the side of the coach.

The captain had noticed nothing; he was leaning forward, staring into the darkness.

A shout came from ahead, and a lantern swung in front of the coach.

"Stand and deliver! Whoa, there! Hands up, coachman! Better to-night than last time we met," came the jaunty tones of Highwayman Jack. "No rain, and no mud."

Jess looked down at him and thought how splendid he looked in the yellow rays of the lanterns, his three-cornered hat tipped forward a little, his eyes sparkling with excitement through the slits in the black velvet mask.

"You cowardly ruffian!" called an indignant woman from the inside of the coach.

"La, la, ladies have nothing to fear from me," said Laughing Jack lightly.

Captain Perceval sprang up. "Nor men, either!" he shouted. "Put down that pistol, and face me like a man. If you have a sword, so have I. Or are you too faint-hearted to use it?"

Jess moved from her seat, and, unobserved, since everyone's attention was on the highwayman and his challenger, dropped down from the other side of the coach and crept back so that she could see what was happening.

Highwayman Jack was smiling. "If the gentleman wishes to have a lesson in duelling I will oblige him earnestly," he said. "But first he must wait until I have done my business."

Captain Perceval whipped his hand to where his rapier's pommel should have been—and clasped nothing.

His expression was extraordinary; his face paled, his jaw gaped with amazement.

"Why, ladies and gentlemen," said Laughing Jack in mock amazement, "our champion dueller has forgotten his sword! A pity, because I could add another gladly to my collection. Some other dark night, good sir," he taunted.

Jess heaved a sigh of relief. The peril was past.

But she was too previous, for now the squire sprang down from the coach and, with a quick snatch, flashed out a rapier.

"Here, Captain Perceval, take this!" he exclaimed.

And he thrust the rapier into the captain's hand, leaving Highwayman Jack with the choice either of shooting the man point-blank, or being pierced by the flashing blade.

A cheer came from the travellers. "At him, captain!"

"Show the rascal up!" The captain looked very sick, scared of the pistol, but he need not have been.

Even though Highwayman Jack's face hardened, he holstered his pistol, and put a hand to his sword hilt. And that hand was bandaged.

Even if at any other time he could have stood a chance of defending himself, even of winning the duel, he could not now, surely, with a weak sword-wrist!

Jess clasped her hands; her cheeks were icy; her heart thumped wildly.

Next moment Captain Perceval, champion of the Army, darted to action with the rapier.

Daring Indeed!

JESS, her teeth clenched, watched for a moment the clashing swords.

Already the weakness of the damaged wrist was apparent. Highwayman Jack was falling back. His jaw was grimly set. His eyes had a bright steely glint. He knew that he was meeting a man who might soon prove to be his master.

If only, Jess frantically mused, there could be some interruption, something to bring respite, a halt!

For if this uneven duel continued it could only end in the defeat of her courageous friend. But what could stop it?

She looked down the dark road, and her mind worked swiftly under the urgency of this need.

All at once she knew what to do to save her friend.

As Highwayman Jack fell back before the slashing attack of the master dueller, Jess cried out, shrilly and excitedly

"The soldiers! Now he can't escape—"

Every head turned. Highwayman Jack shot a swift glance down the road, and for that moment's lack of attention was pierced through the sleeve.

The soldiers! There was certainly no escape unless he fled now. Once he was under arrest his terrible fate was certain. He would be charged and flung into prison, with perhaps death at the end of it all.

Heedless now of what anyone thought of his courage in the duel, he rallied and fought back so that Captain Perceval lost ground for a moment. Then, with an agile spring, he leaped away, hurled himself at his horse, drew his pistol, and, without intention of firing it, nevertheless caused Captain Perceval to recoil.

On to the saddle leaped Highwayman Jack, to go tearing away across the heath to the accompaniment of shouts.

"The soldiers! Where are they?" Jess stole back behind the coach and stole off into the darkness.

She did not rejoin the coach, but moved back down the road over the heath towards the inn, half-running, half-walking.

Highwayman Jack had been saved—but what if now they demanded to know who had called out; who had been on the coach?

As she hurried along she came to the spot where she had thrown the rapier, and so stopped to search.

It took her but five minutes to locate it; then her foot kicked against it in the darkness.

As she stooped to pick it up, the clatter of hoofs sounded, and snatching it, she dodged back from the road.

"Hallo, there!" called a soft voice.

"Highwayman Jack!" Jess breathed.

"Oh, thank goodness you are safe!"

"Safe—yes," he said. "The soldiers did not come. It was you who called out, I think, my friend?"

"Yes—I had to save you," Jess said anxiously.

Highwayman Jack laughed gently.

"What—you have so poor an opinion of my swordsmanship? I faith I am ashamed to know it!"

He sounded so disappointed and hurt that Jess was touched.

"Why, no, no!" she protested. "But you have a sprained wrist, and that man was none other than Captain Perceval, champion swordsman of the British Army! He would have run you through!"

Highwayman Jack, impressed now, whistled softly.

"Indeed so!" he murmured. "H'm!—a foeman worthy of my steel! When he came unarmed I laughed—"

"Unarmed? Here is his sword. I tricked him," Jess said.

Highwayman Jack took the rapier and twirled it.

"He shall have it back," he said—"point first. Little lady, I have to thank you for your valour. I only wish you had greater faith in me. But, egad, I'll show you that your highwayman friend is no duffer with a rapier, damaged wrist or not. It shall be my business to meet this champion once again if he lives near by!"

"He lives I know not where, for he is lodging the night only at the inn," explained Jess. "And—"

"Then to-night I shall meet him again. Till then—au revoir, and a thousand thanks!"

Before she could reply he rode off into the darkness, and Jess, filled with forebodings, was left to stare at the spot where he had been.

Highwayman Jack's pride was stronger than his sense of danger. Despite Jess' efforts, he meant to try his skill against the champion!

Jess, horrified, ran all the way back to the inn, where her father, hoping for news of the duel, stood in the porch.

"Well, well, what has happened?" he asked.

But Jess, unwilling to let him know that she had been on the scene when the false warning cry had saved the highwayman, evaded the direct answer.



JESS, having placed the tray before the squire, was about to slip away when that greedy, crafty man seized her wrist. "One moment, lass!" he exclaimed. "Where did you get that?" And to Jess' horror, he indicated the ring given to her by Highwayman Jack!

"To know that we must wait until the squire returns," she said.

There was not a long period to wait. The squire and Captain Perceval returned in the chaise, and both sprang out in ill-humour.

Jess stood by the fire as the squire strode in.

"You, girl," snapped the squire, "were you on the coach?"

"On the coach?" asked Jess.

Her voice quavered; her lips trembled.

"You heard what I said!" stormed the squire in fury. "Someone warned the highwayman—a girl. And there was no girl on the coach when we reached the far side of the heath. But the guard swears you mounted beside him."

Jess avoided her father's startled gaze; for he knew the answer to this question. But he held his peace. He could see how dangerous the admission would be to her.

"If a girl warned the highwayman—why, it must have been his friend—the girl called Bertha," Jess said.

Once before she had bluffed him, pretending that a mysterious girl was someone called Bertha. It had been herself then, as now; but she hoped that once again the bluff would succeed.

Would it? The squire had suspicion in his eyes; he was keen, intent, determined to have a clear answer.

"Were you on the coach?" he demanded.

Silence reigned; a pin could have been heard to drop. But all at once a grating noise broke that silence—the sound of the door's being swung open. And as Jess, her father, the squire, and Captain Perceval turned a cool voice interrupted.

"Sir, you drive your horses hard. I had some difficulty in catching you. Allow me to present your sword—"

Highwayman Jack, urbane, smiling, lifted his tricorn cap from his powdered wig, replaced it, and then held out the captain's sword to him, point foremost.

"My—my sword!" exclaimed the captain. "Then you had it?"

"My fat friend Bertha was keen-witted enough to take it when she mounted the coach outside here," said Highwayman Jack.

"That fat girl?" cried Jess quickly.

"The fat girl, wench," nodded Highwayman Jack. "And kindly do not interfere with my plan in future, if, as she says, 'twas you who nearly foiled her."

"Bertha!" choked the squire. "She shall go to prison—"

Highwayman Jack, bluffing, called out through the doorway:

"Bertha, run—run!"

Then he faced Captain Perceval, as that cocksure man had whipped out the

squire's rapier, which he had slipped into his own sheath.

The rapiers clashed. Jess, hand to cheek, fell back.

But now it was Laughing Jack who had the advantage. His bandaged wrist was laced with cord, and he fought as for his life. His speed, his daring dexterity, amazed the on-lookers—and most of all Jess.

Her heart leaped for pride; her excitement quelled her fears as Laughing Jack, grim now, forced the pale-faced captain back.

The highwayman knew his opponent's mettle, and gave no ground.

For five minutes the rapiers clashed; the feet danced. And then, with a lightning-swift movement, Highwayman Jack lunged.

A gasp came from Captain Perceval, his rapier dropped, and, clasping his right shoulder, he fell back.

Jess only just managed to stifle a cry of mingled horror and joy.

The squire, as though thinking himself the next adversary, flinched and put up his hand; but Highwayman Jack swung round and tossed the rapier on to the table.

Then he paused, staring at the squire's hand.

"Why," he exclaimed, "what ring is that you wear, sir?"

"I—I— It—it was found in the lane," the squire said.

"Indeed so? 'Twas lost there but this very afternoon by my friend Bertha," said the quick-witted gallant of the road. "Is stealing by finding not the law?"

The squire's watery blue eyes momentarily glowed with anger, then, evidently deciding that caution was by far the better part of valour when dealing with a person so reckless and courageous as Highwayman Jack, he scowled.

"Mayhap finding is stealing according to the law!" he muttered. "But in some respects I am the law in these parts—"

"But I, my fat and unpleasant friend, defy the law!" Laughing Jack chuckled in reply.

The squire's scowl deepened; his thick underlip pouted.

"Fine words!" he sneered.

"And finer deeds, my friend! Off with the ring!"

The squire took off the ring.

"'Twas not I found it, but this girl," he said, indicating Jess.

"La, la! Then, since Bertha was so careless as to lose it, let this wench have it, even though she was near to being my enemy. Being a highwayman, I believe that findings is keepings—"

He backed to the door.

"Until we meet again, gentlemen all—" he said, and vanished.

Jess slipped the ring on her finger and smiled at it. It was hers again, and now it meant more than it had done before; it was a token, a souvenir, of her friend's daring victory. More than ever she admired him. She had been his timely friend, but she knew if ever she, in turn, needed friendly aid she would never call in vain to Laughing Jack.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

ANOTHER delightful Jess and Highwayman Jack story next Saturday. By the way, have you told your friends about this lovely romantic series?

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—For weeks and weeks—or so it seems—I've been extolling the praises of Isabel Norton's latest girl-detective serial. I've told you it was the most unusual, most delightful, and most gripping story featuring Valerie Drew and Flash which had ever been written, and I prophesied that you would completely agree with me.

Well, now is my testing-time—as a prophet, I mean. The opening chapters of Valerie's latest adventure are in your hands. Have you read them yet? Some of you have? Then what exactly do you think of them—and of me, as a prophet?

Do, please drop me a few lines telling me your candid opinion of Isabel Norton's new story. (Although, being rather a self-assured sort of prophet over things like SCHOOLGIRL stories, I don't think any of you will find fault with my praises.)

Now let's chat for a few minutes about another very important item relating to your favourite paper—next Saturday's magnificent COMPLETE Cliff House School story, which brings to a dramatic and sensational end our superb series featuring the struggle between Barbara Redfern and the most dangerous girl at the school, Glenda Maine.

It is entitled:

"BABS & CO. FIGHT BACK!"

and tells what happens when Babs, convincing more of her chums of Glenda's true nature, and that it was that girl's treachery which caused her dearest chum, Mabel Lynn, to be expelled, rallies them round her in one last attempt to expose the new girl.

With Babs herself there are five of them—the others being Clara Trevlyn, Janet Jordan, Marjorie Hazeldene, and Leila Carroll—all pledged to put an end to Glenda Maine's activities once and for all, and, by revealing her at her true worth, vindicating their disgraced chum, Mabs.

And what a fight it is! Glenda, on the one side, lone-handed and yet with the cunning, resourcefulness, and—even Babs has to admit this!—the daring of half a dozen normal girls; Babs & Co. on the other side, equally as daring, and matching Glenda's cunning with skill and ingenuity.

The theme of this fine story is a treasure hunt in the school crypt. Nothing frightfully new in that, of course—but the battle between Glenda and the chums in connection with that hunt makes this story so gripping and dramatic that you will remember it for months to come.

And next Saturday you will also be enthralled by the second instalment of "Suspects of Pleasure Island," another sparkling COMPLETE "Jess and Highwayman Jack" story, and more of Patricia's Bright, Useful, and Topical Pages.

I'm sure there's no need by this time for me to advise you to place a standing order for your SCHOOLGIRL to be saved or delivered to your home every week, but just in case—there's another Order Form on page 9.

Well, bye-bye, readers all, until next week. With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.