

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

THE SCHOOLGIRL

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Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



**BABS & CO.
TRAPPED IN THE
TREASURE-TUNNEL—**

while Glenda Maine escapes
with the hoard of wealth.

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

In this Powerful Long Complete Story Barbara Redfern & Co. join forces in a last desperate fight against the most dangerous girl at Cliff House School.

BABS & Co. FIGHT BACK!



The Enemy Learns of the Treasure!

"BABS, are you there?" Clara Trevlyn called from the corridor of the Fourth Form at Cliff House, as she tapped at the door of Study No. 4. "I say, we've got something to show you."

"Yes, rather! Something frightfully exciting!" Marjorie Hazeldene added.

"Something, I guess, that will just thrill you to death!" Leila Carroll, the American junior, called. "Open up, Babs!"

There came no reply in words from the interior of Study No. 4, but there was a movement—the movement of a girl's heavy footsteps approaching the door. Next moment the key clicked in the lock, and Barbara Redfern stood revealed.

Clara, the Tomboy of the Fourth, blinked a little.

"Why, Babs, what's the giddy idea of locking the door? And, my hat, how washed out you look! What's the matter?"

"You know what the matter is," Barbara Redfern replied, and shook her head. Washed out she certainly did look, with her usually rosy cheeks pale, those usually dancing blue eyes of hers now lack-lustre and showing signs of weariness and strain. "Did you see Glenda Maine?"

"Why, no," Clara said, with a slight frown. "Babs, you're surely not—"

"I locked the door," Babs said, "because three times in the last half-hour Glenda Maine has popped in to have a sneer at me, and because I'm writing a letter to Mabs. Anyway, never mind. I've finished the letter

now, and I'm jolly glad you've popped along. What is it?"

Clara, Marjorie, Leila Carroll, and Janet Jordan, who formed Babs' little group of visitors, paused. They paused rather guiltily, remembering just in time the terrible blow which Barbara Redfern had suffered. That reference to Mabs—meaning Mabel Lynn, Babs' best and most loyal friend—jerked them to a reminder of it. For recently Mabel Lynn had been expelled from Cliff House.

"Oh!" Clara said. "Babs, you're not still worrying?"

"Of course I'm worrying!" Babs bitterly faced her. "Clara, wouldn't you worry if it had been Marjorie who had been expelled? Wouldn't you worry if you knew that the charge on which Mabs had been expelled was false, and that Glenda Maine, whom you all like so much, cunningly worked it? But don't talk about it," she said wearily. "I know you don't agree with me about Glenda Maine. I know you think she's a jolly decent sort, while I know she's a clever and cunning crook. What did you want to see me about?" she added.

Another pause.

The four chums looked uncomfortable now. Babs was their chum; Babs, as captain of the junior school, was their leader. But, no—they could not share this opinion Babs had of Glenda Maine, the newest girl at the school. Even plump Bessie Bunter, who shared Study No. 4 with Babs and adored her, could not believe ill of Glenda.

"You've heard from Mabs, Babs?" gentle Marjorie asked hesitantly. "What did she say? Is—is she getting on all right?"

"Yes," Babs nodded. "But she—she longs to be back at school, of course, and she's worrying about the Christmas play. By the way, we're all

in that," she added. "And I suppose you know Miss Charmant—the Fourth Form's mistress—is carrying on its production? I meant to tell you that we're having a rehearsal this afternoon."

"Goodie!" Clara said, glad to change the subject. "Meantime, Babs, I've something to show you. Marjorie, close the door," she added, and at the same time drew something from her pocket. "There, Babs, what do you think of that?" she added, a thrill of excitement in her tone.

Babs' eyes widened as she looked at the thing which Clara had put on her desk. It was an old and rather faded parchment-like paper, containing a faint design.

"What is it, Clara?" she asked.

"Look at it," Clara insisted again, and glanced at her chums. "See if you can recognise the spot."

Babs took the parchment up, interested now. She scrutinised it again. There were several little squares, each corner marked with a "P." Then came a rectangular shape marked "Chapel." At one end of the chapel was another tiny square marked "Secret door—look for the rose," and beyond that two parallel lines, obviously indicating a passage of some sort. The lines continued until they became three sets of lines obviously indicating that here was a junction. In the middle of the latter passage was a cross, and a little distance beyond the cross a rather cryptic announcement in faded letters: "Look for the bag under the loose stone."

"Looks," Babs said wonderingly, "as if this is a plan of the old vaults and the secret passage. These 'P' things, then, would be the pillars in the crypt. But what does it mean?"

Clara flushed. "What do you think it means? Treasure!"

Babs looked incredulous. "What? In the old chapel?" "In the passage leading off from the chapel," Clara said. "Babs, listen! I believe we're on to something—something big. My brother Jack sent me that this morning. He said he thought it might be worth looking into—and, anyway, it will be a bit of a rag. You remember my Great-great-aunt Sarah and—"

"You—you mean the one who used to live at Cliff House before it became a school?" Barbara questioned.

"That's the one," Marjorie Hazeldene nodded.

"She was supposed to be worth an awful lot of money," Clara pressed on. "All kept in the old school in the form of gold and jewels. When she died she left everything she possessed to my great-great-grandfather, but the beggar of it was, nobody could ever find what she possessed. All the family knew, of course, that she was a bit of an eccentric; and when nobody could ever find trace of her fortune, the general opinion was that she had just imagined it—"

"And now—" Janet Jordan breathed.

"Now," Clara said excitedly, "this has turned up. You know my brother Jack's home on leave? Well, apparently he was amusing himself by looking through some of the old rubbish which cluttered up Trevlyn Towers when he came across this. That's a plan all right, and the writing on it is my great-great-aunt's. Babs, she died in this place, remember, and her fortune's never been found—"

Babs looked startled. "Oh great goodness! Then—then this—"

"That," Clara said dramatically, "is the clue to the hiding-place of her hoard! At least, that's what Jack seems to think—and I'm dashed if I don't think so, too! But we thought, first of all, we'd chin it over with you."

"Golly!" Babs breathed, as she scanned the old chart again. "Clara, I believe there's something in this."

The Tomboy beamed. "And that means," she said, "we start a giddy treasure-hunt?"

"Doesn't it?" Babs, for the first time, laughed. The new excitement had chased the lines of worry from her face.

"Only one thing," Leila Carroll said slowly—"the old chapel's out of bounds."

"Is that going to stop us?" Clara demanded scornfully. "We're going to look for that treasure, and if it's to be found, we're going to find it. It will belong to my father, of course. Babs, you're in this, too. It—it will cheer you up," she added awkwardly.

Babs nodded. She felt brighter herself now. For the moment even the worry of old Mabs' expulsion was banished to the background of her mind. The scheme sounded thrilling, to say the least.

"Clara, you haven't told anyone else about this?" she asked suddenly.

"Eh?" Clara looked surprised. "No; only us five. I saw old Bessie going out this afternoon, but I didn't mention it to her. You know how that old duffer blurts out things. But why?"

"Because," Babs said slowly, "it might be dangerous to let the news get about. If the hoard's in existence at all, it sounds as if it must be a pretty hefty one—one which might tempt a girl who is not honest. Don't believe what I say about Glenda Maine, if you like, but at least give me one promise

By

HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

—all of you. Don't tell Glenda Maine about it."

They all looked uncomfortable.

"But, dash it, Babs—"

"I know. Please don't let us row. You wouldn't tell Glenda, anyway, in the ordinary way, would you? Well"—and then Babs jerked round as a knock came at the door, making a hasty grab at the chart, which she held behind her back—"come in!" she called.

The door opened. They all smiled at the pretty face of Miss Charmant, the mistress of the Fourth, looked in.

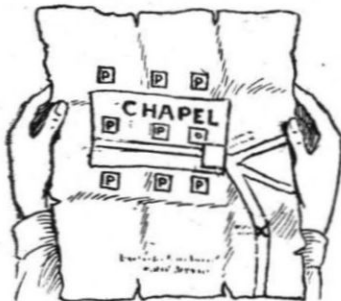
"Oh," she said, "here you are! I just came along to remind you about the rehearsal this afternoon. You know, of course, that I'm taking over the Christmas play in the—er—absence of Mabel Lynn. Barbara, my dear, what is that you are holding behind you?"

Babs crimsoned.

"Nun-nothing, Miss Charmant. At least, only—only an old piece of paper."

The mistress laughed.

"A secret, Barbara?" she teased.



"Well, y-yes—sort of," Babs mumbled. "But, not, surely, a secret I can't share?" Miss Charmant asked, and she dimpled again in that delightfully chummy way which had made every girl in the Fourth Form her worshipper. "Is it very exciting?"

Babs gulped. Many, many secrets already Miss Charmant shared with her girls of the Fourth Form, but never in any circumstances had any of those secrets not been most loyally observed. The expression on the faces of her chums, too, urged her to take Miss Charmant into their confidence.

"Of course," Miss Charmant said, "I don't want to be inquisitive. Please don't show me, Barbara, if you don't want to."

"Oh, it—it's not that!" Babs stammered. "As—as a matter of fact, we—we don't quite know what it is ourselves yet. But—but—well, this," she added, and she passed the chart, which the mistress eyed quickly and interestedly, while she told the story of Clara's aunt.

Miss Charmant smiled. "My goodness, it sounds exciting!" she said. "Most definitely exciting. Fancy gold and jewels being hidden in the old chapel! Ahem!" She paused. "I'd better not ask you, of course, whether you're going to try to locate it," she said, with a mischievous glimmer in her eyes. "Perhaps, after all, I ought not to have asked to see it."

"But, Miss Charmant, you—you'll keep it secret?" Babs anxiously asked.

"Barbara, have you ever known me not to respect a confidence?" Miss Charmant asked.

"Nun-no. I'm sorry."

Miss Charmant smiled again. She handed the chart back. Babs took it, rolling it into a tube, and then, quite by chance, she looked up at Miss Charmant again, and for a moment felt faintly surprised by the steady light that glowed in the mistress's eyes.

But before she could even analyse the queer little feeling which that odd look had roused within her, Miss Charmant had turned with a laugh to the door.

"Well, thank you for the confidence!" she said. "In the meantime, girls, you won't forget the rehearsal, will you—at three o'clock this afternoon in the music-room."

She beamed at them all as she reached the door, and then, with her hand on the handle, gazed at Babs once more. There was something in that gaze which made Babs stiffen as if she had been struck.

"Just a moment!" she cried.

But the visitor, as if not hearing, had closed the door and gone.

"My aunt, what's the matter?" Clara cried. "Babs, what's up? You look as if the Charmer had suddenly turned into a ghost, or something!"

Very, very queerly Babs regarded

A chart which gives the clue to the hidden treasure! What a thrill for Babs & Co. They're determined to find the treasure, of course, and find it in secret. And that's where cunning Glenda Maine steps in. She has designs on that treasure. She'll steal it if she can—and the chums know it. Thus an exciting battle of wits commences, with Babs & Co. battling to beat Glenda, to get the treasure first and show up the most dangerous girl in the school for the crook she is!

her. Her reply to that question made all the chums stare.

"You know," she asked, "who that was?"

"Eh? The Charmer, of course."

"The Charmer—no!" Babs' chest heaved. "We've all been fooled! I thought it funny she didn't say the chapel was out of bounds. She was no more Miss Charmant than I am! She was Glenda Maine, in one of her disguises! And now," Babs cried bitterly, "she knows all about the chart. And take my word for it, if we're going to hunt that treasure, we've got Glenda Maine to reckon with!"

Babs Proves Her Point, But—



FOUR pairs of incredulous, disbelieving eyes fastened upon Barbara. There was a momentary silence after her announcement. Then Clara burst out:

"Oh, Babs, what rot! You're just letting this notion—"

"I've told you, haven't I," Babs cried, "that Glenda Maine's a clever crook? I've told you—but you won't believe—that she's more clever at disguise and impersonations than any film star. It was by a trick of disguise she got Mabel Lynn expelled. But don't believe me," she added. "Go now, Clara—go to Miss Charmant's study! Make some excuse to get in there and

find out, if you can, how long since Miss Charmant left this study."

Clara looked a little startled. But then swiftly she nodded. "Why not? If she proved to Babs that she was wrong, then perhaps Babs would get this silly bee out of her bonnet—for good!"

"Right!" Clara said.

And, an expression of determination on her face, she went at once.

"Babs—" Leila muttered.

"I'm sure," Babs stated. "I'm dead sure. You didn't see her eyes as she handed that chart back, did you? I did. You didn't see her as she went out. If you did you'd have noticed nothing. But I happen to know Glenda's little tricks of expression. I tell you Glenda got wind of this chart. Glenda's after it, and she'll do anything to get hold of it; and she'll hit at anyone who gets in her way. But come on!" she added. "Let's see how Clara's getting on."

And, cutting short further argument, she opened the door.

She was thrilling now. She was sure she was right. Glenda Maine, arch-crook that she was, more clever than any professional actress in her imitations, had masqueraded as Miss Charmant solely in order to possess herself of a knowledge of that chart. No doubt Glenda had overheard some chance remark passed between Clara & Co., and so had got on the scent.

With a nod to the dubious-looking Leila, Marjorie, and Janet, she hurried off down the passage, and they, as if hardly knowing what else to do, followed her.

As they reached Miss Charmant's study the door of that room came open, and Clara Trevlyn, with a sort of dazed, incredulous look on her face, came out. Babs caught her by the arm.

"Clara, did you find out?"

Clara heaved a deep breath.

"I—I'm dashed if I can understand it!" she muttered. "The Charmer's in there all right; and the Charmer couldn't have been out of her study for a long time, because she told me she's expecting an important phone call, and has been waiting for a quarter of an hour."

"Yes?" Babs prompted quickly.

"I—I went in, pretending I didn't quite know the time of the rehearsal," Clara said. "She seemed surprised. She said: 'Well, surely Glenda told you? I asked her to warn everybody this morning.' Then she told me that she'd been too busy to come round herself because of a job she's got on hand, and because she's waiting for this phone call—"

"Phew!"

"But, Babs, it can't have been—"

"It can—it was," Babs nodded. "But come on! If you want further proof let's go now—at once—to Glenda Maine's study. She can't possibly have got rid of the disguise by this time; and if she doesn't let us in, that proves it up to the hilt. Come on!"

"But, Babs, it's pretty well impossible," Marjorie objected.

"Is it?" Babs asked grimly. "I thought that once. But come on!"

She raced ahead, with her chums, shaken now, following on her heels. Reaching the Sixth Form corridor, Babs halted outside the door of Study No. 13 and knocked.

To their ears came a faint sound of movement, but no answer.

"She's in!" breathed Clara. "Try the door."

Babs tried the door. But, as she expected, it was locked.

"Glenda!" she called.

No reply.

Babs' lips set grimly. She looked at the Tomboy, then pointed to the key-hole.

Clara understood.

She bent down and peered through the hole. For a moment she stood in that position. Then she straightened up, with a gasp.

"She's in there, yes," she breathed, "and there's a mistress' gown hanging on the chair; but, as I watched, a hand stretched forward and snatched it up. Babs, it's true! She's been fooling us! Glenda!" she called, sharply rapping on the door.

"Just a sec!" cried Babs. And then: "Oh, my hat! Cave! Here comes Primmy!"

"Primmy"—otherwise Miss Primrose—it was, who had just appeared at the end of the corridor. Impossible it was to escape at that moment—not, indeed, that anybody was thinking of running away.

Hot anger was in Clara's cheeks now; there was a rather bitter light in her eyes. For Clara, like all the chums, was at last convinced.

Glenda Maine, the girl they had trusted, to whom they had looked up, for whom they had all blamed Babs for suspecting, was the traitor Babs had accused her of being!

No doubt about that now—at least, to themselves. Glenda had deceived them; Glenda had played tricks on them; Glenda, among other things, had got Mabel Lynn expelled.

Perhaps in none of them was such an utter revulsion of feeling taking place as in Clara Trevlyn. Clara, honest and frank herself, was the last to do an injustice to any girl. Clara loathed all forms of trickery, and to feel that this girl had fooled her into condemning Babs and Mabel Lynn caused at once the hot fire of anger and resentment to blaze up within her.

"Dear me! What are you girls doing here?" Miss Primrose asked, coming forward.

"We want Glenda Maine," Clara said fiercely.

"Indeed! Then why don't you knock?"

"We have knocked and called," Clara replied. "Glenda's in there, but the door's locked, and she won't answer."

Miss Primrose frowned a little. She tried the door, and then she rapped.

"Glenda! This is Miss Primrose!"

"Hallo!" came Glenda's voice from the study. "Excuse me a moment!"—and there was a scuffling sound.

Then Glenda, clad in a dressing-gown, came hurrying to the door, opened it, and blinked in pretended surprise as she saw her visitors.

"Glenda, why was your door locked?" Miss Primrose asked.

"As a matter of fact," Glenda answered smoothly, "I was in my cubicle bathing my feet in the salt stuff the doctor gave me; you know, Miss Primrose, how I suffer with cramp in the feet this cold weather?"

"You mean," blazed Clara, "you were changing out of your disguise!"

"What?" Miss Primrose looked bewildered.

"It's true!" Clara blazed. "It's true! She came into Study No. 4 in disguise five minutes ago—"

"Clara, please!" Miss Primrose's voice quivered. "Silence, miss—at once! How dare— Bless my soul, are you girls in the Fourth all taking leave of your senses? Glenda, my dear, I am at a loss to understand their behaviour!"

Glenda shook her head sadly. But

there was a peculiar look in her eyes as she fastened then on Clara.

"Please, Miss Primrose, don't—don't blame Clara," she begged. "I'm used to this sort of thing—especially from Barbara's friends. I'm sure I don't know what they are talking about. I have been in my study ever since lessons, and, naturally, locked the door, seeing that I was bathing my feet. Look," she added, and drew aside the curtain which screened her bed, revealing a steaming bowl of water, by the side of which lay a convincingly damp towel. "I could hardly have done what Clara accused me of doing at the same time."

"Then who," demanded Clara, "came into Study No. 4?"

"I really have not the faintest idea," Glenda said coolly. "Would you please go now? My feet are still wet!"

"And for your impertinence you can each take fifty lines!" Miss Primrose rapped. "Except Clara. She will take a hundred!"

Clara clenched her hands. She looked ready to blaze out again, but anxiously Babs caught her by the sleeve. In a crestfallen body the five returned to Study No. 4.

"Well," Babs asked quietly, "you believe now?"

"Oh, Babs, we're sorry!" Marjorie said.

"Please don't be—" Babs paused. "I'm glad you've found out—at last. I only wish it had happened earlier, though. If it had, we might have been able to save old Mabs from getting pushed out—but there's a chance still to get her back. Once Glenda's bowled out; once that girl is shown up—"

"As she shall be," Clara said savagely.

"Don't be too sure. You can't deal with Glenda as you'd deal with an ordinary girl. I tell you she's cunning and daring—and dangerous! Now, we've got to get hold of that hidden hoard—and we've got to get hold of it just as quickly as we can. If we don't, you can bet a torn exercise-book to a term's pocket-money that Glenda will do it for us."

They looked grim.

"And I vote," Babs said, "that as there's no time like the present, we go to the old chapel immediately after dinner. Meet here at half-past one with torches—and Clara, perhaps I'd better keep this chart?"

"Yes, right-ho!" Clara assented. "My hat, though, I can hardly believe it even now."

"And in the meantime," Babs added, "not a word—not even to a girl like Dulcia Fairbrother or Lady Pat. Glenda's so jolly tricky that you can never be sure who you're speaking to even! Hallo, there goes first dinner bell! Better trot along!"

They trotted, leaving Babs alone. Once they had gone Babs smiled a little. She felt happier than she had felt since the departure of poor Mabs. For now, at last, she had her chums on her side; now they were fighting shoulder to shoulder against Glenda.

She turned to leave, and then paused. A girl was standing in the doorway.

It was Glenda herself.

"Going to dinner, Barbara?" she asked pleasantly as she closed the door.

"I am," Babs said.

"A few words with you first, Barbara. They're rather old words, and I really am getting rather tired of repeating them. You know, of course, that Christmas is coming?"

Boldly Babs faced up to her, conquering that little tremor of nerves she always felt when alone in the presence of Glenda Maine.

"Well?" she asked quietly.

"And you want to have a happy Christmas, don't you? Not like poor Mabel, who has just been expelled! Think, Barbara, of the misery she must be suffering—the disgrace. You don't want that to happen to yourself, do you—especially just before Christmas?"

"It won't," Babs retorted.

"No?" Glenda looked at her with mocking inquisitiveness. "It may—probably will—if you don't think better about interfering with things I set my mind on, Barbara. And it may happen to your friends, too, you know. Marjorie, Janet, Clara, Leila—all of you. What's been done once can always be done again, even though one might have to use different methods. There goes second bell," she added. "Think it over during dinner, won't you, Barbara dear? Better tell your friends, too. Remember, I'm serious—deadly serious!"—and she went out.

In the Treasure Tunnel!



BABS clenched her hands. Her eyes burned. Just for a single moment that feeling of fear, of being hunted and taunted, rose up within her. Mocking,

those quiet words of Glenda, but only Babs knew to the full her power to put them into operation; only Babs knew the ruthless nature of the cunning and trickery which Glenda Maine was prepared to use against her and her chums. For Mabs' sake she was willing to run that risk, but was it fair, having been warned, to expose her chums to it?

Thus, as soon as they all met after dinner in Study No. 4, she told them of Glenda's visit.

It was Clara who replied to it—Clara, with her chin stubbornly set.

"Babs, we're in this now," she said. "If we hadn't been blind we should have seen it before. We're standing together. We're going to show up Glenda and we're going to bring old Mabs back at the same time."

"Sure! Which goes for me, too!" Leila Carroll nodded.

"And me," Janet said, her eyes glimmering.

"And—and me," Marjorie said, a little less boldly, for Marjorie was of a gentle and shrinking nature, though when real pluck was put to the test she was never found wanting. "Treasure or no treasure, we owe it to Mabs and ourselves to call Glenda Maine's bluff now. And the first step towards doing that," she added, "is to get the treasure."

Babs nodded happily. What staunch chums they were!

"Then shall we go?" she asked.

They were all ready, all anxious. They had armed themselves with torches, and in Babs' pocket rested the chart. It was Babs who led the way to the door, but before she opened it Joan Sheldon Charmant, Fourth Form sister of the Form's adored mistress, came in.

"I say, you won't forget the rehearsal, will you?" she asked. "My sister says that it will be absolutely hopeless without you."

"Of course we won't forget," Babs promised.

"Three o'clock in the music-room, you know," Joan stated.

"Sure! We'll be there," Leila Carroll promised. "Tell the Charmer—your sister, I guess—to rely on us."

Joan nodded, satisfied. She went off. Actually, of course, there was no reason why their treasure-hunt should interfere with the rehearsal. With an hour-and-a-half before them, they all felt they

had plenty of time in which to prove or disprove the fact that the hoard was where it was supposed to be.

But they'd have to go carefully, of course. Apart from the peril of Glenda was also the peril of being caught on forbidden ground. And again the old underground chapel in the crypt, and its secret passages, were by no means safe these days.

It was for that reason, more than for any other, that Miss Primrose had placed them all strictly out of bounds.

Babs, as usual, took the lead. Ignoring the usual route through Big Hall—they would have encountered too many other girls that way—the five chums used the fire-escape at the end of the Fourth Form corridor.

Into the chapel between the wall of the school and the swimming-pool they hurried, shivering a little in the chilly atmosphere of that early December afternoon.

Ahead of them lay the silent cloisters with its crumbling walls of arches, and beyond that the black, yawning hole, surrounded by loose debris, which was the entrance to the ancient crypt.

Nobody was about, thank goodness.

In silence they crept across the cloisters, glad for once that Bessie Bunter was not with them. Bessie was a good-natured duffer who insisted upon being in everything, but who, on these occasions, was rather a responsibility than a help. That afternoon, however, Bessie was paying a visit to her Aunt Annie, and her uncle, Miles Eastman, who were living near Courtfield.

"Right, all here?" Babs asked, as she reached the mouth of the crypt.

"Keep together. I'll go first."

She stepped down. It was dark here—a darkness that grew with every downward step, until at last it could almost be felt. Then, and not till then, did Babs flash on her torch.

The rays showed the old pillars with the still stout stone arches rising above them to give an impression of number-

less catacombs. On the right was a stout wall, and in the middle of that wall, here and there showing a crack, was a thick, iron-barred oak door. That was the door of the old chapel.

Babs did not try the door. She knew it was locked, and the key was in Miss Primrose's study. But near by was an arched window, most of its stained glass panels now, alas, smashed, and it was no difficult job for a junior girl to squeeze through the framework.

"The window," Babs pointed.

There were nods. Babs turned towards it. One swift jump upward and she caught the sill, swinging herself up and through it in time to give Clara a hand as she came scrambling after her. In a few moments they were all in the old chapel.

"Straight ahead, I think," Babs said, remembering the chart. "But be careful."

Marjorie shivered. Janet moistened her lips a little. Guided by the beam of Babs' torch, they made their way across the floor. More than once, however, they had to halt, for here and there masonry had fallen, littering the huge flagstones.

It seemed an hour before they reached the stone wall, though actually it was only a matter of a few minutes. There again Babs paused, quickly switching off her light as she jumped round. For a moment she stood still.

"Wuw—what is it?" stammered Janet Jordan.

Babs breathed audibly.

"Nothing much. Only I rather fancied I heard a sound, though. Now what about this rose business"—and she flashed the torch again. "Can you see any carving, or anything, anywhere?"

"Here, what about this?" Clara asked.

She had wandered away from the main group; was flashing her torch upon the dank stone wall. Where she had paused was the ruins of some



CLARA came out of Miss Charmant's study looking quite dazed. "I—I'm dashed if I can understand it," she muttered. "The Charmer's in there all right, and she couldn't have been out of her study for a long time." Babs' eyes gleamed. At last she was beginning to convince her chums that Glenda Maine was a master of make-up; that Glenda has just recently impersonated Miss Charmant.

ornately carved wooden structure—probably the relic of an ancient altar.

Covered with dust as it was, it was not easy at first sight to pick out that design, but when Babs flicked at it with her handkerchief, it soon became evident. The design was a chain of flying angels, each carrying some object.

"I say, Babs, here it is!" Marjorie cried excitedly. "This figure is carrying a rose!"

"That's it! It must be it!" Babs cried.

She reached up, while the chums, with bated breath, watched. She caught the rose in her hand and pulled, but nothing happened. Then she twisted it to the right. Still nothing happened. She twisted it to the left.

"No go!" Clara grunted disappointedly. "On the wrong track."

"Wait a minute," Babs said. "I'll push! I'm sure I felt something move last time."

The chums' torchlights, like miniature searchlights, joined in focus upon the object of Babs' activities. Fiercely she pushed, and then, with a gasp, hurled forward, almost losing her balance as the rose disappeared into the carving. Simultaneously, from Clara, came a low whoop.

"My giddy aunt, look!" she cried. "The secret door."

Without a sound, a section of the wall, backed with wood, had swung forward, disclosing a large aperture.

"The secret passage!" breathed Babs.

The secret passage, undoubtedly it was. A pause, then Babs stepped into the passage, shining her torch about.

And with the sense of an explorer who, for the first time, looked upon his newly discovered land, the chums surveyed the new scene of their operations.

Certainly, at first glance, it was not a heartening spectacle. The corridor, stretching away it seemed into infinity, was in a state of collapse. Mounds of debris littered the floor; here and there the walls, built of stout stone as they were, had sagged in. From several broken joists water was trickling.

Leila grimaced.

"Sure doesn't look as safe as the Bank of England," she said.

"Shall we risk it?" Babs quietly asked.

There were nods immediately. There was no thought in any of the chums' minds now about going back. Even Marjorie, shy, gentle, shrinking, said: "Lead on, Babs."

Babs led on, carefully picking her way among the puddles that everywhere dotted the floor. Eerie as the chapel had been, this crumbling passage was even more so. More than once they all stopped, hearts in mouths, as from somewhere ahead in the darkness came an echoing crash, followed by the rumble of loose soil. Once Janet slipped in a pool of slippery chalk and came with a crash to earth—fortunately, however, doing no damage to herself.

On, on, on, cautiously, carefully picking their way.

Now for a distance the passage, cutting through drier and better-drained ground, became free of debris. Following this, the passage widened out.

"Hallo!" Babs said, and paused. "Seems we've reached the junction of the three passages."

That was so. They had emerged in a wide, square-shaped sort of apartment, and from the stone wall in front of them three passages shot off at tangents to each other. They all knew a real thrill as they remembered the chart.

"Passage to the right," Clara said.

"That will be it. Come on, kids; we're getting warm."

Eagerly they pressed into the right-hand opening, the excitement of their quest banishing the jumpiness they had previously felt. Five torches poured beams of light into the ancient passage, and five torches suddenly stopped dead as they encountered an obstacle. But this time it was not broken debris. It was a door.

It was built right across the passage, completely barring their way.

"Hum!" Babs said. "Didn't bargain for this. Wait a minute, though, let's have another look at the chart." She opened it, studying it carefully. "I say, though, it is marked!" she said. "This cross here must refer to the door. The hoard is at the other side of it. Once we open that door—"

Fresh, tingling excitement seized them all then. It was a thrill to feel that only a few yards separated them from the possible hoard of Clara's ancestor.

It was Clara who went forward; Clara who lifted the heavy latch and pushed. But nothing happened.

"It's locked!" she muttered.

Disappointment surged within them. A single glance showed the impossibility of forcing that door. Strong, stout, iron-bound, and of several inches in thickness, it would defy every effort of theirs to open it. And yet, if they were to succeed in their quest, it must be opened.

"Only one thing," Clara said. "We'll have to get tools to force it, and come back."

Babs, however, shook her head.

"No good," she said. "Even if we smashed the woodwork, what about the iron? Apart from that, it would be dangerous—much too dangerous—to start smashing and banging here. We should probably have the whole place tumbling about our ears. But wait a minute," she added suddenly, eyeing the door again. "Anything familiar strike you about it?"

"Eh? Such as what?" Leila wanted to know.

"Isn't it exactly the same as the door of the old chapel in the crypt?" Babs asked.

"My hat, so it is!" Clara agreed. "They—they might be the same if they weren't in different places."

"Exactly!" Babs said. Her face was flushed now. "And as they're the same in design, what's the odds that the locks are the same, too? I've got a hunch that the key to the old chapel door would fit this door, too."

"But—but the key of the old chapel is in the Head's study!" Clara objected.

"I know," Babs said quietly. "So somehow we've got to get hold of that key. After the rehearsal—and I say, we shall have to buck up if we're going to get to that in time—we'll come back again. But let's buzz now. No sense in wasting time here talking."

Sensible advice, especially seeing that the time for the rehearsal was almost due. Excited now, braced for the return visit, they turned.

Having covered the ground once, they returned to the secret entrance in the chapel in considerably less time than the outward journey had taken them. And there again they paused.

For the secret door, which they had left open, was now closed against them.

"Oh, I say, it must have closed on its own account!" Janet cried. "But how the dickens are we to get out?"

In vain Leila and Clara hurled their weight against the secret door.

But Babs, more thoughtful, was flash-

ing her torch around. She gave a jump.

"My hat, look!" she breathed.

"Babs, what is it?"

"Look!" Babs repeated, a strong sort of thrill in her voice.

Her torch was directed at the floor now. In the chalky dust of that floor were several footprints. Most of them were easily identifiable as their own prints. But there was another—a slightly larger print—which stood out plainly. It was the print of a girl wearing small heels and a delicately pointed toe.

"Glenda Maine!" Babs gritted. "Glenda's been here. Glenda's followed us, and just to make sure we shouldn't get back, has closed the secret door against us! It's Glenda who trapped us in here!"

Glenda Drops a Bombshell!



CONSTERNATION showed on the faces of Barbara's four chums.

"Oh, my hat! Th-that cat!" Clara breathed, and her face was bitter then.

"Babs, it—it isn't possible!"

But she knew, as they all knew, that it was not only possible, that it was a fact. They all knew those shoes Glenda wore. In other circumstances they had all, at some time or another, admired them.

"But how," Marjorie nervously wanted to know, "are we going to get out? And, Babs, how could she have closed the secret panel?"

"Easy enough, I imagine," Babs said. "All she had to do was to wedge it from the other side. After all, she knew as much about it as we did. But dash it, there must be some way of opening it from here," she added.

"Search round, girls!" They searched around, desperate, anxious. They were prisoners in this underground tunnel, and only Glenda, of all the school, knew where they were. If it suited Glenda's purpose she could keep them here for hours.

Up and down the walls their torches flashed, until at last Leila, feeling above a stout beam, gave a low, triumphant cry. They all gathered round at once.

Hidden above the beam, out of range of their eyes, was another small rose. Leila pressed it and pulled it. There was a faint whirring sound in the wall before them, but still the secret door did not open.

"Dished!" groaned Clara. "Wait!" Babs cried. "Leila, keep pressing on the rose while we charge at the door. Ready, girls?"

"Yes!" "Go!" They hurled their shoulders against the door. There was a thud, and Marjorie, who staggered as she collided with the wall, gave a sharp cry. But nothing happened.

"Again!" panted Babs. "Thud! again—and again. 'We're done!' Babs groaned. "She's beaten us. She—"

And then she jumped back as suddenly the whirring sound became intensified, and the secret door swung back. "My hat, we have done it!" she almost shrieked. "It's working! It's—"

From the other side of the entrance a light flashed in her face.

"Barbara Redfern!" exclaimed an angry voice.

"Oh, my giddy aunt, Primmy!" gasped Clara.

"Come here—this instant!" Miss Primrose rapped.

There was no help for it. The chums stepped through into the musty darkness of the old chapel. Miss Primrose, torch in hand, directed its beam upon their faces. And someone in the darkness next to her chuckled.

"Ahem!" a new voice said—the voice of Glenda Maine. "I do hope, Barbara dear, that you are not hurt! Naturally, when I heard you thumping I went to fetch Miss Primrose."

"You mean," Clara bitterly flamed, "after you wedged the door, locking us in there—"

"Miss Primrose, I protest!" Glenda said indignantly.

"Clara, silence!" Miss Primrose's voice was like a lash. "Please let me hear no more of these accusations against Glenda."

"Well, she—" Clara began.

"Clara, fifty lines!" Miss Primrose said. "Glenda did not lock you in there! No doubt, having got in, you

come with me? I will see the porter and tell him to board up the entrance to the crypt at once."

The chums exchanged sickly, disappointed glances.

Meantime, in the music-room, Miss Charmant, surrounded by the cast of the Christmas concert, was anxiously eyeing the clock. The cast itself was fuming and impatient.

"I cannot understand it," Miss Charmant said. "I positively cannot. Diana," she added, addressing Diana Royston-Clarke, "you went to Barbara's study?"

"Yes; and Clara's and Leila's," Diana scowled. "They weren't there."

"And neither were they in the tuck-shop, Miss Charmant," Muriel Bond put in.

"Nor in the library or the laboratory or the attics!" Bridget O'Toole warmly supported. "It's getting us down they're after doing!"

cannot do what is required of them you can hardly expect me to waste my time. When Barbara and the others arrive ask them to come along to see me at once."

She went out, leaving an angry buzz in the music-room. Another ten minutes went by. Then the door opened.

Babs, Clara, Marjorie, Leila, and Janet, just returned from the detention-room, came into the room.

"Hallo, here we are!" Babs said, putting the cheeriest possible complexion on things. "I'm so sorry we're late. Where's the Charmer?"

"Where do you think?" snapped Rosa Rodworth.

"Expect her to hang around the whole afternoon like us mutts, I suppose?" Frances Frost indignantly put in. "She's gone! Anyway, where have you been?"



WHILE Clara and Leila hurled their weight in vain against the secret door, Babs flashed her torch around. "My hat, look!" she breathed, and pointed to a footprint. "Glenda Maine! It's Glenda who trapped us in here!"

never troubled as to how you were going to get out! Had it not been for Glenda, you foolish, undisciplined girls, you might have remained there for goodness knows how long! You are aware that this section of the school is out of bounds?"

"Yes; but—"

"There can be no buts! Once again you are guilty of disobeying school rules. Instead of trying to put the blame for your discovery on to Glenda, you should be grateful to Glenda that she happened along in time. Barbara, if you go on like this I shall seriously consider the probability of relieving you of your responsibilities as Form captain. For the present," Miss Primrose added, "you will all join detention class and write a special essay on the necessity of obeying rules. Now go!"

"But—but, Miss Primrose," Babs faltered, "we've got a rehearsal—"

"Please go!" Miss Primrose said tartly.

"But Miss Charmant—"

"You may make your peace with Miss Charmant when you have done the essay," Miss Primrose frigidly informed them. "And now, Glenda, will you

"Well, dash it, can't we start without them?" Rosa Rodworth petulantly demanded.

But Miss Charmant shook her head.

"You forget, Rosa, that Barbara, Clara, and Leila have the largest parts in the play," she reminded the Stormy Petrel.

"Well, jolly well give them to someone else!" Frances Frost defiantly put in.

"Again, that is not practical," Miss Charmant said. "The parts are too big for other girls to take on easily. We will give them a few more minutes. If, by that time, they do not turn up, I am afraid I shall have to leave you. I have work to do."

The girls glowered, their faces expressing their disappointment, their resentment. Silence now—a silence which seemed to breathe their hostility towards the absent Babs & Co. Five minutes went—ten minutes. Miss Charmant rose.

"Girls, I am sorry—"

"But, Miss Charmant—" Diana objected.

"I am sorry," Miss Charmant stated quickly. "If the members of the cast

"We—we got detention," Babs faltered.

"My hat! And what for?"

"Nothing," Clara said. "Well, never mind. I say, though—"

"Never mind!" Diana faced her.

"Yoicks! I must say you've got a nerve! Here you go, letting the play down, letting the Charmer down, wasting everybody's afternoon, and then calmly say you've had a detention! Is that the way you're going to back the concert up? What did you get the detention for?"

"Well— Oh, blow it! Primmy caught us in the crypt."

"Great pip! And what were you doing in the crypt when you were supposed to be rehearsing?"

"Nothing! Oh rats, we're sorry!" Clara said gruffly. "We couldn't help an accident, could we? And it never would have happened if it hadn't been for that cat Glenda Maine—"

"Glenda?" Diana stared. "Yoicks, you haven't joined the anti-Glenda brigade, too, have you?"

"Where's the Charmer?" Clara countered.

"In her study. But—"

"Then," Clara said, "we'd better go along to see her—at once. Dash it, don't glare!" she added. "We're just as fed-up as you at missing the rehearsal. Anyway, it will be all right to-morrow. We'll go through it together then. Come on, kids!"

"But look here—" hooted Frances Frost.

But Clara was not looking there. Remaining in that room would only have started a first-sized row.

In a body the chums marched off to Miss Charmant's study, to find the mistress feverishly making up the arrears of the work she had put aside in order to devote her time to the rehearsal. She was not pleased when she heard their explanation.

"I can only say," she said, "that you all acted with an utter lack of responsibility for your obligations. This once I am willing to overlook the matter. I must say, Barbara, much as I hate making any form of threat, that if it happens again I shall wash my hands of the whole affair."

"We—we're sorry, Miss Charmant," Babs stammered.

"Couldn't we have the rehearsal later?" Marjorie asked, hoping to mollify the mistress. "We—we won't let it happen again, Miss Charmant!"

"I am sorry; I am busy. But—" And Miss Charmant paused, thinking of the other disappointed girls. "Well, I do not know. I can't make any promises, but if it is practicable later I will let you know. Leave me now, please."

"Well, that's that," Clara said, once they reached the passage. "Oh, my hat! What a mess we've landed ourselves into all at once! But never mind. If we're in the soup, Glenda's not got her way, and even she can't do anything without the key of that door. Question is now: how are we to get hold of that key?"

"Which," Marjorie said, shaking her head, "is in Primmy's study."

"I've an idea!" Babs said swiftly. "Primmy will be going off to tea any minute now. I'll hang around, and as soon as she pops off I'll nip inside. I know where the key is, as it happens. You others wait for me in Big Hall."

That, decidedly, was the best plan.

Thereupon Babs went off, anxious as any of them to get this matter settled. Reaching the headmistress' study, she paused. The light, shining from beneath the door, plainly proved that Miss Primrose was still in occupation.

Babs withdrew to the darkest corner of the corridor and crouched down. Buck up, Primmy!

She waited, eyes on the door. Three—four—five minutes went by. Then, with a suddenness that made Babs jump, a voice at her back spoke:

"What's the idea, Barbara dear?"

Babs spun round, to confront Glenda Maine—Glenda, wearing that same old mocking smile; who, in that disconcertingly silent manner of hers, had stolen up behind her.

"Why," Glenda pressed, "are you watching Primmy's study?"

"Mind your own business!" Babs flashed.

"Good advice!" Glenda nodded. "Excellent advice, my dear Barbara. Why not take the advice yourself and make sure of that happy Christmas I spoke about?" she added mockingly. "You can have it, you know, Barbara—just by minding your own business."

Babs' eyes glowered. Exasperatedly she turned away. Glenda, smiling, went on, to disappear round the bend of the corridor. Coincident with her

vanishing, the door of Miss Primrose's study came open.

And Babs, pressing herself back against the wall, caught her breath as the headmistress went in the same direction as Glenda.

Now was her chance. Primmy had gone to tea.

In a moment Babs was a bundle of brisk alertness. Quickly she had moved forward. With a rapid glance to right and left she entered the study, closing the door.

She switched on the light, and stepping across to the special cabinet which Miss Primrose kept beneath her window, pulled open one of the drawers. There, in a glass-topped box which contained a number of other school items, was the key to the old chapel door. It was the work of a moment to extract it and dart out into the passage.

Breathlessly she scuttled downstairs. At the bottom of those stairs, in Big Hall, talking to Dulcia Fairbrother and Lady Patricia Northanson of the Sixth Form, her four chums stood grouped.

She nodded quickly as she approached, and Clara, reading the nod correctly, grinned triumphantly.

Dulcia turned to the leader of the Fourth Form.

"Hallo, Barbara! I was just telling Clara & Co. the news."

"Oh, yes?"

"It concerns the Hospital Charities Fund. I know you'll be interested to hear that Cliff House collected far and away the biggest sum of any school—so much so, in fact, that Mrs. Windham, the secretary of the fund, has decided to come along and give us a special address of thanks. She's arriving to-morrow about breakfast-time, and there'll be a special assembly in Big Hall. All you kids will be there, eh?"

"Rather!" Babs said, and for a moment her eyes glowed. This was an honour indeed.

"Meantime," Dulcia frowned, "for goodness' sake try to behave yourselves. I've heard all about your adventures in the crypt this afternoon, and Miss Primrose is terribly annoyed. She's spoken to me about suspending you from the captaincy. Barbara, we can't afford to allow that to happen," she added earnestly, "so for goodness' sake do watch your step!"

"And, in any case, if you've got any more idea of visiting the crypt," Lady Pat put in, "you can put the idea out of your head. It's being bricked up—permanently—to-morrow morning!"

Babs started at that. Quickly the chums looked at each other. If they had required any stimulant for going into immediate action, that surely provided it. To-night—now—was their only opportunity of getting in contact with the treasure of the crypt!

"So this time," Babs said, when Dulcia and Lady Pat had moved off, "there's got to be no mistake! I've got the key. That's all that matters. Everybody got torches?"

They had.

"Right. Then let's go."

There was no hesitation on that point. Realisation that a time limit was now fixed to the enterprise made them all eager and anxious. With a nod, Babs and Leila strolled towards the main school doors, Clara and Janet casually following, and, after an interval, Marjorie. In the darkness of the lawns outside they forgot their.

"Right. Nobody's spotted us!" Babs chuckled. "O.K., so far. Get your torches ready, but for goodness' sake

don't switch them on until we get well down into the crypt. And not a sound, mind," she added.

Not a sound they made as they scudded across the lawn and into the cloisters. And not a soul, apparently, was abroad.

Dense was the blackness. So effectively were the windows of Cliff House blacked-out that they might have been in some dark desert.

They reached the entrance to the crypt in safety.

"O.K., all here!" Babs chuckled. "Now we're for it! My hat, I wonder what Glenda would say if she knew we were stealing a march on her. Follow me."

She led the way down, cautiously flashing her torch. In single file the chums followed her, holding their breath as each step was negotiated. They were half-way down the stairs when suddenly a beam of light flashed up full in their faces. Babs jumped.

"Who—who's there?" she quivered.

"My dear Barbara, what a question!" a mocking voice answered.

"Glenda!" gasped Clara.

"Glenda, yes." And Glenda calmly climbed towards them. "The girl dear Barbara was just congratulating herself she had stolen a march upon! Well, well, isn't it nice to see you all—especially after receiving such strict orders from Miss Primrose that this place was out of bounds!"

And while they all stared at her in stupefied consternation she laughed musically.

"I think," Glenda said musically, "that instead of exploring the crypt again, you'd each better go back to your studies and do two hundred lines."

Clara glared.

"And, who," she wanted to know, "has given you power to dish out lines? Even if you are in the Sixth Form, Glenda Maine, you've got no authority!"

"No?" Glenda smiled. "And who says so, Clara?"

"I do!" Clara snapped. "What's more, if we're breaking bounds, so are you!"

"Indeed?" Again Glenda laughed. "But, of course," she said, "you haven't seen the notice-board. Surprised as you may be to hear it, Miss Primrose has made me your latest prefect—with special instructions and orders to keep an eye on you girls!"

The Form is Not Pleased!



BABS started. The last thing she had bargained for was this. Glenda a prefect—and in a position of power and authority in the school.

"I don't believe it!" she burst out. "No?" Glenda casually shrugged. With studied indifference, she lifted the lapel of her blazer, and all eyes goggled as they saw the new prefect's badge which had been pinned there. "You've seen one of these before, haven't you? If you have any further doubts, just have a look at the notice-board in Big Hall. Anyway, like it or lump it, you're leaving here now, and you're going to do those lines."

"And, if," Clara questioned, "we don't?"

"If," Glenda said, her eyes narrowing, "you don't, I'll fetch Miss Primrose. I'm not sure, even now, whether I won't fetch her. Make up your minds."

Clara clenched her hands. The chums exchanged glances. But they all knew from that moment that the whiphand rested with Glenda. Glenda again had bottled up their efforts, though, to be sure. Glenda had not got the key, nor had she got the chart. It was Babs who nodded.

"Right! Come on, girls!" she said quietly. "Nothing else for it!"

With Glenda watchfully falling in the rear, they tramped back into the schoolhouse. There Glenda caught Babs by the arm, and led the way towards the Fourth Form corridor.

"We'll go along to your study, Barbara, I think," she said, "and there you'll get down to those lines while I keep guard. But, of course, you still have the alternative of a complaint to Miss Primrose," she added.

"Oh, come on!" Clara disgustfully growled.

Glenda laughed. Sick, disappointed, but still grim, the chums tramped off to Study No. 4, Glenda leading the way. She nodded at Barbara.

"Get out paper and pens, please, Barbara," she said. "You can all sit round that table, and I'll watch from here. Tut, tut! How differently, little dears, you are spending the next hour from what you anticipated!"

"You rotten cat!" Clara burst out. "Take another twenty lines for that, Clara! And remember, as always, that I hold the cards."

Clara breathed heavily. Babs, looking at her, shook her head. Quietly she got out the papers and pens, and under Glenda's mocking gaze the five of them started to work. But they had not been at it five minutes when the door came open, and Joan, Miss Charmant's sister, burst in.

"Oh, Babs—My hat! What are you doing?" she asked, not for a moment seeing Glenda. "Babs, my sister has told me that she can find time to hold a rehearsal now. Everybody else is in the Common-room, and we're only waiting for you. Oh, halo, Glenda!" she added, seeing that girl at last.

"Hallo!" Glenda nodded. "Tough on Miss Charmant, Joan, but Barbara & Co. can't come. They're busy—doing lines."

Joan stared.

"What, again? But—"

"Again," Glenda nodded. "And again for the same offence which made them miss the first rehearsal. Better tell your sister, and the rest of them, that," she added, her eyes for a moment dwelling mockingly on Babs.

Joan, with a frown, went out. Inwardly, however, Babs groaned. She could guess the effect of that announcement on Miss Charmant and the rest of the cast.

"And please," Glenda said, "get on with your work. If you don't, I shall give you another fifty lines all round."

They got on with their work, but not for long. Five minutes elapsed, and the door opened again. This time it was Miss Charmant, her face rather bitter, who came in.

"Glenda, I hear that you are making these girls do lines?"

"Quite right, Miss Charmant," Glenda nodded. "I'm sorry; but Miss Primrose, as you know, is rather down on these girls breaking bounds in the crypt—especially after she punished them for the same offence herself this afternoon. I caught them repeating the trick, and rather than report them to Miss Primrose, I have taken them under my own eye. But I'm sure," Glenda added artlessly, knowing exactly what Miss Charmant's reaction



BETWEEN OURSELVES

MY DEAR READERS,—There's always a fascination about new things, isn't there? A new pair of gloves or shoes, a new fountain-pen, a new cycle, even a new edition of an already familiar book.

Well, next week there will be something new about your favourite paper—its cover.

The change has really been made necessary owing to the war, and the increased costs of production. Lots of other periodicals are having to economise in similar ways, some of them by reducing their number of pages. But we are going to have a different kind of cover.

It will not be orange and blue in future, but blue and white. So don't forget when you go for your copy next week—or when it is delivered to your house by kind Mr. Newsagent—the SCHOOLGIRL will be sporting a brand-new "face"!

And now for a few words about something else that is both new and old; very, very old, in fact. Christmas! The newness of Christmas from our point of view is this year's anniversary of that festive occasion—and all that it means to us, to you and your relatives and friends and to me and my staff and contributors.

As usual, we in this office have prepared a really grand Christmas Number for you, which will be on sale in two weeks' time. It will be full of good things, thoroughly in keeping with probably the gayest time of the year.

But it isn't about our Christmas Number that I want to chat at this moment; it's about next Saturday's number, which sort of starts to put us in Yuletide mood.

Look at the title of the superb Cliff House story—

"CHRISTMAS ROMANCE AT TREVLYN TOWERS!"

Now nothing could be more seasonable than that, could it? Nothing could more easily whet your appetites for Christmas, I am sure. And romance, too. Yes, a real, delightful romance between two "young" grown-ups, which takes place at Clara Trevlyn's lovely home, where she and the rest of the famous Fourth Form chums are spending part of their Christmas vacation.

This is a most charming, appealing story in many ways, and yet it does not lack drama and excitement—as though it could, coming from the pen of your very own Hilda Richards!

Oh, and Bessie Bunter is there, so there are heaps of laughs.

Next week's programme will also include further thrilling developments in Valerie Drew's most amazing detective story, another sparkling COMPLETE "Jess and Highwayman Jack" story, together with more of Patricia's Bright and Interesting pages, so be sure not to miss it.

But before I say bye-bye for another week, here is a hint

ON CHRISTMAS PRESENTS Both to Give and to Receive.

I refer to those four magnificent Annuals—which have been specially reproduced for you on page 23. They really ARE ideal gifts. They don't cost a lot of money, and yet they can last for years and years. Remember them when planning the presents you want—to give and to receive.

With best wishes,
Your sincere friend,
THE EDITOR.

was bound to be, "if I have your authority to let them go—"

"No, no!" Miss Charmant shook her head. "Kind as that is of you, Glenda, it is utterly against all the rules. But I am bitterly, bitterly disappointed in you girls," she added, her face plainly expressing that bitterness. "How are we ever going to rehearse this play unless you learn to behave?"

Babs turned scarlet.

"But, Miss Charmant—"

"Well, have you an excuse?"

"Well, we—we—we—" Babs stammered and blinked. "Well, nun-no," she had to confess.

"You are apparently being deliberately lawless for the mere pleasure of the thing," Miss Charmant accused. "In doing so, you are not only wasting my time, but the leisure of others. Now I warn you all! Unless you very soon cultivate some sense of responsibility, I shall wash my hands of the play. In the meantime, I shall tell the other girls what has happened."

She rustled away, leaving the chums red-faced and angry, and Glenda smiling gently.

Babs & Co. groaned as they plodded on. But they groaned in spirit still more when later they faced their indignant Form-mates in the Common-room. Rosa Rodworth was particularly furious.

"I think you're just a lot of idiotic

wash-outs!" she said bitterly. "Anyway, if there's another rehearsal, and you don't turn up, I, for one, am going to walk out. I'm fed-up!"

"Yes, rather! And I back out, too!" Diana Royston-Clarke said indignantly.

"Hear, hear!"

The chums writhed. But they had no reply, no defence. Matters plainly were coming to a head in the Fourth Form, and all because of their defiance of Glenda Maine. But Babs was not beaten yet.

"We've got to have another shot for the board," she said, later in Study No. 4. "Our one chance of making the crypt is after lights out to-night. Once we've got it, we can snap our fingers at Glenda, and there'll be no question then of letting the Form down any more. We—" And then she broke off as the door opened, and a fat, bespectacled figure, shining-faced and bright-eyed, rolled into the room. "Why, Bessie!" she cried, as Bessie Bunter beamed around at them. "You're jolly late!"

"Yes, I know. But I came back in my uncle's car, you know, and my uncle had already phoned up to ask Primmy permission for me to stop. Oh dear, I—I've had a lovely time! I sus-say, Babs, do you know there's a letter in the rack for you? It's from Mabs—"

"Mabs?" Babs started up. "Why, minny, didn't you bring it?"

"Well, I can't reach up high enough, you know, and nobody was there to give it to me," Bessie protested, "so I—"

But Babs, tingling, was out of the room. A letter from Mabel Lynn was an event, these days, of the most terrific importance to Barbara Redfern.

Like a whirlwind she raced into Big Hall, pausing, however, before she reached the letter-rack.

Only one girl was in Big Hall, and that was Glenda Maine, who stood in front of the letter-rack. Glenda was in the act of taking a letter down from the rack, and, seeing that the initials on the rack were easily visible, Babs felt faintly surprised to notice that she removed it from the letter "P."

She turned round as Babs came up, quickly thrusting the letter into her pocket.

Babs eyed her.

"Letter?" she asked.

"Your business?" Glenda retorted.

"I think so," Babs was suspicious.

"You took it from the letter P."

"Quite," Glenda nodded. "If you'll notice, the M is very near the P," she said. "Somebody put my letter in the wrong rack. Anything else you want to know?"

Babs stared. She could hardly ask to see the letter. The explanation was a very feasible one, for Grainger, the postman, was not always too particular where he put the letters as long as he got rid of them quickly.

Her eyes went to her own rack. Sure enough, there was a letter for her, but it was not from Mabel Lynn. It was simply an answer to an advert for some wool she had seen advertised not so long ago.

Silly old Bess! She would make a mistake, of course!

Feeling dashed, she went back to the study, where Bessie, having divested herself of her outdoor clothing, was having a quick cup of chocolate. Clara & Co. had gone, leaving a message that they would see Babs later.

Bessie blinked when Babs grumbled about the letter.

"But it was from Mabs," she said. "I recognised her handwriting."

"You recognised my foot!" Babs said disappointedly. "This one is typed, anyway. Can't you distinguish the difference between handwriting and typing?"

"Well, it was!" Bessie warmly argued. "Blow it, don't I know Mabs' writing? Besides, this envelope was a blue envelope, not a yellow one like that mouldy thing! I tell you, it was from Mabs!"

But Babs sniffed, having been the victim of too many of Bessie's mistakes in the past. Bessie was such a short-sighted old duffer.

She thought no more of the matter then. She had other things to attend to. Dormitory bell would soon be ringing, and she was strung up for the great adventure which the night promised.

Carefully she felt in her pocket. Yes, the key was there, and the chart, for safer keeping, was now hidden behind one of the pictures in the study. Before going to bed, she retrieved that, slipping it into the pocket of her tunic, together with the key.

It seemed hours, however, before dormitory bell sounded. For once the chums obeyed that summons almost gladly. There was a great deal of talk, though, in the dormitory, and, as most of it came in the form of seathing criticisms by the angry members of the

cast of the Christmas play, it was anything but musical to the ears of Babs & Co.

"Lights out!" came presently. The Fourth settled to sleep. Half-past nine—ten 'clock—half-past ten chimed out from the old clock tower before Babs, judging the whole school to be asleep, rose.

"Hallo, kids! Awake?" she breathed.

They all were, as strung up, as anxious, as Babs herself.

"Right-ho! Then get dressed. Not a word," Babs whispered.

Almost soundlessly they dressed, and, armed with torches, groped their way after Babs down the corridor and into the lobby in Big Hall. There Babs paused, opening the window and letting in the brilliant light of the moon.

"Keep to the shadows!" she whispered.

Hugging the walls of the school, they crept once more towards the crypt. Again Babs led the way down, without incident this time. Once more they crawled through the window of the old chapel, and, with hearts pounding with excitement, found the secret door.

Passing through, they closed it behind them. With many a strained pause to listen to the fall of a stone or the splashing of water, they made their floundering way towards the great door which had defied their previous visit.

"Babs, got the key?" Clara asked.

"Here," Babs said; and the key gleamed in her hand. "Now!"

Holding their breath, the chums watched as she inserted it in the lock. The key was clean and well oiled, though the lock itself was rusty, and Babs grunted as she tried to force it.

Clara looked anxious.

"Babs, doesn't it fit?"

"It fits, but, dash it, I can't turn the thing!" Babs panted. "It's the lock—rusty!"

"Let me have a try," Clara suggested.

Eagerly she stepped forward, and Babs stepped aside. Grimly Clara grabbed the key, and, putting both hands to the strain, gave one tremendous turn. There was a squeak and a click.

"Done it!" cried Leila Carroll.

Done it Clara had. For, as she pushed, the door, with squealing protest from its rusted hinges, moved inwards.

They shone forward their torches, and blinked at the scene which met their eyes.

Here and there great sections of stone had fallen into the passage, revealing the face of the rock through which the tunnel had been hewn. Here and there little green streams of water were trickling out of the cracks, forming minute, slimy little lakes on the floor. Near the door a section of the ceiling, wet and crumbling, had at one time crashed.

Perhaps for a time their hearts knew a chill, a sense of peril. But there was no turning back now.

"Look for the loose stone," Babs said, frowning at the wall. "My hat, that's going to be some job, I must say! There must be dozens of loose stones. And which side of the tunnel is the loose stone on?"

"Perhaps," Marjorie ventured, "it might be a good idea to have another look at the chart, Babs? There may be some clue in that."

A good idea it was. At once Babs plunged her hand into her pocket. From it she produced the folded paper, frowning a little as she did so; it

seemed lighter, of different texture, somehow. While the chums eagerly gathered round, she unfolded it.

Then she started.

For the paper was blank!

"Babs," Clara cried, "what's happened?"

"What's happened?" Babs' eyes blazed. Her face was bitter then. "We might have guessed—we might have known! Glenda's got the chart—the real chart. Glenda, spying round when our backs were turned, found it under the picture and put this blank sheet in its place! Oh, my hat, what are we going to do?"

In dumbfounded, startled consternation, they stared at her.

"Then—then Glenda—" Janet Jordan stuttered.

"Is here!" a mocking voice put in. "And so," that girl added, as, open-mouthed, they whirled, "is Miss Primrose!"

And while they stiffened in horror, the headmistress of Cliff House, her face like flint, moved into the radius of light produced by mocking Glenda's torch.

The Headmistress' Final Warning!



"AND what," Miss Primrose demanded in her iciest and most forbidding tone, "are you five girls doing here? Why are you out of dormitory?"

What do you mean by trespassing in this perilous place after I have expressly forbidden you to come anywhere near it?"

"That—that cat—" Clara choked, glaring at Glenda.

"I beg your pardon?"

"That cat!" The Tomboy's chest heaved. Utter defiance was in her face now that she had recovered from the shock of meeting the headmistress and the prefect. "That cat—she sneaked on us. She must have guessed or known we were coming here—"

"Clara, how dare you?" Miss Primrose cried. "Glenda did not know you were here. Glenda by accident discovered you were out of bed, and disturbed only because you might have endangered your safety, suggested that this might be your rendezvous—a guess which was more than proved when we found the secret entrance to this place wedged open."

"You mean," Clara raged, "Glenda told you it was wedged open?"

"Certainly Glenda told me that, though—"

"Then Glenda," blazed Clara, "is a liar! We closed that door! Glenda pretended it was wedged open so that you would come on our trail!"

"That is enough!" Miss Primrose thundered. "Far more than enough! Barbara, on this very spot I suspend you from your position as captain of the junior school! Clara, I also suspend you from the games captaincy! And any more of this—any further attempt to go against my orders—and I will expel every one of you!"

Grimly, tight-lipped, the girls looked at each other.

"Tough," Glenda Maine said, with mock regret. "Didn't mean to land you into this, kids, but if you will defy your headmistress—anyway, better fall into line and march," she said, and Miss Primrose nodded approval.

"Come on now, no more trouble." The chums glared. Even gentle Marjorie looked rebellious then. But there was no doubt, once again, that Glenda

held all the cards—no doubt that Glenda, by her treachery, had defeated them. Sullenly, silently they marched forward, Miss Primrose leading the way, the new prefect bringing up the rear.

Babs clenched her hands as she strode along; her eyes were gleaming. One thing she had noticed with secret satisfaction. Neither Glenda nor Miss Primrose had extracted the key from the lock of the old door. They had overlooked that!

Babs' heart beat swiftly as she marched on. Already a new, desperate scheme was being born in her mind. With the door still open there was still a chance to save the hoard!

Thanks to Glenda they had already lost all their privileges—and that, Babs remembered with a pang, also included the privilege of appearing in the play. Another attempt, Miss Primrose threatened, would surely meet with expulsion.

Well, what of that? Poor old Mabs had been expelled! What Mabs had already endured, they would risk.

Scrambling and slipping, with the stern Miss Primrose at times cutting a most undignified figure, they at last reached the crypt again.

They entered the school by the servant's quarters, and Miss Primrose escorted them all up to the Fourth Form dormitory. Half a dozen heads were raised at once as the culprits came trooping in.

"I say, what—" Diana Royston-Clarke began.

"Diana, silence, please!" Miss Primrose requested. "To bed, all you girls. Do not make a noise. And please remember that from now until further orders all school privileges are denied you."

Marjorie bit her lip.

"Miss Primrose, does—does that mean we can't take part in the play?"

"Most certainly it means that you cannot take part in the play. Nor in games. Now, please, go to bed!"

There was a subdued gasp from the Form. While Miss Primrose stood sternly by the light switch, bitter and furious were the looks cast at Babs & Co. by the Form. But before they had climbed into bed, there was another interruption.

It came this time in the shape of Miss Charmant having a last look round before going to bed. Rather wonderingly she entered the room.

"Why, Miss Primrose, is anything wrong?"

"Everything is wrong," Miss Primrose said tartly. "Once again, Miss Charmant, I have caught these five girls in the forbidden and highly dangerous secret passage from the crypt. Apart from that, they have insulted Glenda Maine."

"And—and you have punished them?"

"I have," Miss Primrose said, "deprived each of them their privileges for the rest of the term. Apart from that, Barbara and Clara are suspended from their captaincies."

"Which means," Miss Charmant said in a small voice, "we cannot continue with the play!"

"But, Miss Charmant—" broke in Diana Royston-Clarke.

The Form-mistress shook her head.

"I am sorry. You must realise, Diana, that it is impossible to carry on. I have neither the time nor the enthusiasm to go back to the very beginning and train other girls to take the parts of these girls. I warned Barbara and her friends what would happen if they persisted in pursuing



TENSELY Babs waited, her gaze on the headmistress' door, until a mocking voice suddenly spoke behind her. "What's the idea, Barbara dear?" Babs whirled in dismay. There stood Glenda Maine. And with Glenda there, there was no chance of getting the vital key from the headmistress' study.

this foolish lawlessness of theirs. Now, though I am loath to take such a decision, I wash my hands of the play. That is all."

But was it? You could feel the quiver of angry indignation that went through the Form. And once Miss Charmant, Miss Primrose, and Glenda had departed, what a storm broke out!

Everybody had worked so wholeheartedly for that play, everybody had given it such unstinted enthusiasm, such energy, that their wrath was excusable. Red-eared, Babs & Co. were forced to face the scorn of the Form.

"What has happened to them they jolly well deserve," Lydia Crossendale declared hotly.

Rosa Rodworth, bitter, declared that it was a good thing Clara and Babs had lost their captaincies—it was about time that other girls with some slight sense of responsibility and duty replaced them. Frances Frost was all for sending the Co. to Coventry there and then, and Beatrice Beverley declared that if the play was, by some miracle, continued, she would refuse to take part in it.

It was a long time before the Fourth at last settled down to sleep. But Babs remained awake. She could understand the girls' feeling—but if they only knew—if she could only make them believe the real author of their woes, this cunningly treacherous Glenda, who had already got her own best friend expelled, who had now ruined the Form's play, who had sent Miss Charmant off angry and disappointed.

If they only knew that all this woe and misery was being piled upon their heads because Glenda was trying to steal something which did not belong to her!

One o'clock chimed out from the clock tower.

Babs' eyes gleamed. She still had a plan in mind. That plan must be acted upon—before dawn! With the

entrance into the crypt boarded up to-morrow it would be too late ever afterwards. And Glenda would know that! Glenda would have to strike quickly, too!

She dozed off then. When she awakened it was still dark, but Babs gasped when she examined the luminous dial of her wrist-watch. It was six o'clock!

"Clara, you awake?" she breathed.

"Eh? Yes! Why?"

"Wake Janet, Marjorie, and Leila. Dress, and then get into the passage. Quick!"

Clara grunted, but she obeyed. The rest of the dormitory was sound asleep, and in five minutes the Co. had foregathered. In the darkness of the corridor, Babs faced her chums.

"We're going!" she said grimly.

"We're going again to the crypt. If we're caught it's expulsion, so if anyone of you wants to back out, do it now."

"Shucks! If you're taking the risk, we are, too, I guess," Leila said.

That was the general sentiment. All of them appreciated the urgency for a quick move.

"Let's get on," Marjorie said.

Babs nodded. She led the way. But there was dread in her heart. Had Glenda already taken advantage of the night to find the treasure?

The first faint grey streaks were in the eastern sky as they climbed into the frosty quadrangle, making their way towards the cloisters. That dread which Babs had not voiced was in all their hearts now. Would they be in time?

They reached the old chapel, passed through the secret door and proceeded along the passage. Finally they reached the old door.

It was closed, just as they had left it.

"Looks," Babs breathed, "as if she hasn't been here."

(Continued on page 14)

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.

"Because," said father darkly, and he looked at me as well, "you'll try to turn those chickens into pets—and they're not going to be. If I'm not careful, I shall find them in my chair in the sitting-room, while I have to go and sit out in the chicken house."

From which I gathered that father himself had thought the chicks rather sweet, and was afraid we might become too fond of them.

But although he exaggerates, I think his idea is right. It would be foolish to make pets of birds that are being kept for a really serious purpose, wouldn't it?

So we've all decided they shall be numbered—not named.

● For Chilly Mortals

There are going to be lots of cosy mufflers and scarves (I confess I never know the difference between them, do you?) going through the post this year.

All the Tommies and Jack Tars and boys of the Air Force will have them, of course. But so will lots of us on the home front, too.

For the schoolgirl who likes something really easy to knit, there's nothing like a scarf.

This one in the picture could be made in an evening or so—and the knitting is all plain, too. So there would be no excuse for dropped stitches.

I'd like to see it made in bright emerald green, with perhaps a different colour, such as brown or deeper green, at the ends.

Choose 4-ply wool for knitting, and No. 7 needles (or thereabouts).

Cast on 48 stitches and knit plain for three inches in the darker wool. Then change and knit for as long as required in the bright green. Change the wool again and finish off in the colour you started with.

If you were making the scarf for a small person a little "bunny," cut out of felt and stitched to one end, would look very sweet. Make his tufty little tail and his whiskers in wool stitches.

But, of course, this scarf would be just as useful without the bunny-rabbit on it.

● Trim Edgings

I wonder if you know how to get that nice firm edge with knitting?

It's very simple.

After casting on, you knit the first row by placing your needle into the back of each stitch. This avoids that "loopiness,"

and then for the second row you go merrily on your way as usual.

To avoid that too-tight edge when casting-off, you must remember to knit a stitch occasionally, between the "slipping one over."

● Three Sizes

When knitting socks for soldiers it's certainly interesting to know what is the average size of the sock-wearer's foot, isn't it?

If you can imagine 1,000 men, 136 of them require socks that measure 11½ inches in the foot, 683 socks measuring 11 inches, and 18 need them to be 10½ inches, with a few odd sizes as well.

So if you should be engaged on sock-knitting, even if it's only doing a bit of those one of the grown-ups has dropped for a moment, remember that 11½ inches is the most usual foot size.

● In Gay Mood

Here's a pretty little idea for a hair-trimming for the Christmas days in store—when I want you all to look very cheery and bright.

Get a yard of ribbon to match your best dress. Use three quarters of it to make a band to go right round your hair. The other quarter should be gathered up to make a pretty rosette, which can be stitched to the band itself. Then, in the centre of the rosette sew a few pretty beads. Pearls would be particularly dainty, for they have a habit of looking "just right," whatever the occasion.



● Money-Saving

Isn't it annoying when you go to make up the fire for mother, wanting to make a cheery glow for her as a nice surprise, and find there's only "slack" or dust in the coal-scuttle.

It's so miserable on the fire, for it takes ages to burn through, yet it mustn't be wasted.

The very best way to make use of it is to fill empty sugar bags or cartons with it. Damp it thoroughly, either with water or tea-leaves, and then place it in the middle of the fire—with lumps of coal around it, if possible.

The "slack" will very soon become a nice solid lump, and will burn slowly and steadily for hours, giving off a lovely heat and a bright glow.

It's well worth knowing, isn't it? Bye-bye now, my pets, until next Saturday.

Your friend, PATRICIA.

THIS Patricia of yours saw such a gorgeous doll's house in a toyshop window that it really made me wish I was a small girl again, so that I could write and ask Father Christmas for it.

It was most beautifully designed and equipped, and the furniture in the sitting-room—or perhaps I should say drawing-room, for such a house!—was all "antique." There were winged arm-chairs, and Queen Anne design tables and chests.

The bed-room was all in keeping, too. It was really sweet. There was a very real-looking bath-room, with walls made of mirror, and the taps of the bath and basin looked as if they'd really turn on.

The kitchen, also, was a joy—all electric in appearance. There was even an electric clock on the wall, no bigger than a wrist-watch!

Oh, and there was a garage, with the most opulent-looking car in it. Too big a luxury even for a doll's house these days, I'm thinking.

When I pointed it out to Heath he gave a little sniff.

"S'all right for girls, I s'pose," he said. "But jus' look at that model of the Maji—you know the Line where Brian is!"

And Heath pointed to what was a most magnificent scale model of the Maginot and Siegfried Lines.

All the same, I couldn't help wishing—just for a moment—that he was a small sister instead of a small brother.

For how I'd have liked to examine that doll's house more closely!

● Those Chicks Again!

For you who're following the fate of the chickens we're supposed to be having at home, I must tell you that they have not arrived yet. (It seems to me that I started talking about them too soon!)

Father spent the week-end getting up the chicken house. But it was a frightful job, and now the floor doesn't fit. Whether a dud floor was supplied, or whether father's carpentry leaves something to be desired, I just don't know. But I do know it was a really hefty task—for it was not a new coop, you see.

So the chicks are still with the owner. Father went round to see him and the chicks, and he came back looking like a man who had made a weighty decision.

"I've made up my mind on one thing," he said to us all at tea-time. "Those chickens are not to be given names."

"Why, dear?" said mother, rather wonderingly. (I suspect she had already thought out a dozen pretty names suitable for chickens.)

HOBBIES AT CLIFF HOUSE

"O, LA, LA!" How the vivacious little Marcelle does love her stamp collection!

Marcelle, you know, is Leila Carroll's very great chum.

"He ees very dear to me!" she says, as proudly she shows her album to girls—and boys, and grown-ups—who are interested. And happily her face lights up if her collection is admired.

It is admired, too, as it deserves to be. For Marcelle has a splendid collection.

When Marcelle first began to collect stamps she was a small girl of about eight. She would steam them, ever so gently, from the letters that arrived at her home in Paris, and paste them on to sheets of white notepaper.

These she made into books.

But later she became the proud possessor of a stamp album with a real leather cover. Each page is beautifully printed, giving the names of countries and the values of the stamps—with extra pages for new stamps that come along.

It's not until you look through a really good collection of stamps that you realise how beautiful some are. Some Spanish ones, for example, that Marcelle is par-

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.



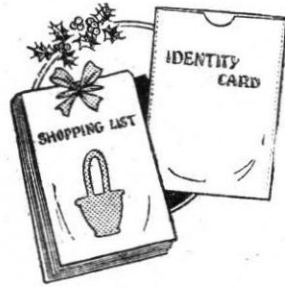
This week:

MARCELLE BIQUET.

SAVE UP FOR THESE

For BOYS of the ARMY, NAVY, and AIR FORCE: Darts, mouth-organs, cigarettes, tobacco, pipes, bacey-pouches, sweets, chewing gum, magazines (particularly for the Navy), torches, sets of draughts, packets of playing cards, and other compact games.

FOR YOUR FAMILY at HOME: Bracelets, bright belts, necklaces, gay hankies, fish-net scarves—all to brighten home-knitted jerseys. Wool gloves, mufflers, pullovers, cardigans, socks—for men or women on A.R.P. work.



MORE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

—That You Can Make

IT seems to me that most of us have made lots of new friends since September—which means we have even more presents than usual to give.

So naturally, we want to *make* as many of them as possible.

It's the men-folk who're always such a problem, isn't it? And they're never very helpful when we ask them what they'd like, are they? But, bless them, they must have something.

So what about a SPILL-HOLDER?

It could stand in the hearth, and would not only save matches—which would please mother!—but could look quite decorative at the same time.

You'll require a round tin, some coloured paper—wallpaper would be excellent, or a map from an atlas that's a bit out of date would be rather novel, and a piece of elastic.

Paste the paper carefully on to the tin, making sure that it turns over at the top, to cover up any scratchy edge. Then fix a piece of elastic round the tin, and slip a packet of book matches on this—for the guests.

Make very neat "spills" of folded paper, in all colours, and fill the tin. It's then complete.

A SHOPPING LIST NOTEBOOK is always useful. You can buy little notebooks at three-a-penny.

Using one as a guide, measure a piece of felt or leather (perhaps from an old belt), and cut a cover that is just bigger than the notebook. Stitch or snip around the edges so that it doesn't fray, then

attach the cover to the notebook with coloured string or ribbon.

Cut a little shopping basket shape out of more coloured felt, or any other material, and glue this on to the front. Write SHOPPING above, in Indian ink or paint if you're rather neat at lettering.

The IDENTITY CARD CASE is also useful—particularly as we're supposed to carry them around with us.

Parchment paper would make a good cover, and so would that extra strong "Cellophane." You must cut the case, with a little space for the thumb at the top, a little bigger than the card. Then, either glue, or stitch the sides.

The MASCOTS are rather novel, aren't they? They're made from pipe-cleaners, scraps of wool, and odd beads.

If you look carefully at the diagram, you will see exactly how to bend the pieces of pipe-cleaner, and how to fix the beads on to represent heads.

The Netball player has black wool wound tightly around her legs, a tiny scrap of material ties on for a skirt, and any colour wool wound round her "body" for a jumper—red would be quite gay.

The Footballer can have red and blue, or white and yellow (or any two colours for that matter) tied around his body to represent his jersey, and navy blue for his shorts. Brown wool is tied round his feet for boots, and if you like, more stripes round his legs for socks.

(Continued from page 11)

Clara pushed open the door. With thudding hearts they went through. There had been a fresh fall of stone from the roof near the entrance.

Carefully they stepped over it. Babs racking her brain to bring before her mind's eye a picture of the chart.

"Somewhere about here," she said, flashing her torch at the wall. "Seems to be pretty solid, though," she added, frowning. "Best thing we can do is to tap the stones."

By the aid of the torches, they anxiously tested the solid wall, the lights flashing up and down the cracks. Certainly, as Babs said, this section of the wall seemed solid enough, and after half an hour's investigation they were forced to retire farther up the tunnel. Then suddenly there came a cry from Janet Jordan.

"Babs, what's this? Look!"

At once they all flew to Janet's side. Janet was on her knees above a big stone near the base of the wall. With a pencil she had scraped away the loose dust and mortar which had gathered in the cracks, revealing a clean, thin crack which seemed to be utterly devoid of cement. She looked up excitedly.

"I've stuck my pencil in all around, and there doesn't seem to be anything there," she said. "Babs, could this be it?"

"Let's have it out," Babs said eagerly. "Clara, get a lever?"

Clara had a chisel. So had Leila. In anticipation of some such discovery as this they had taken the precaution of bringing those implements with them. Determinedly they levered at the stone.

But the stone was heavy and it was terribly difficult to move it up. Many times they got it on the move, and as many times it slipped back into position.

"Let Janet and me have a shot?" Babs cried.

Thankfully Leila and Clara handed over. Babs looked at her watch.

"Oh, great goodness, a quarter to seven! Rising-bell will be ringing now! Hurry!" she urged.

Perspiringly Janet and Babs worked. Bit by bit the stone came up, until at last this time there was enough of it protruding to afford a good grip.

"Right-ho. Now let us pull together!" Babs said, excitement gripping her. "Get hold where you can. When I say pull, pull for all you are worth! Right! Got the hold? Now keep it. One—two—three—pull!"

As one they tugged. The stone jerked. A final desperate pull—

"It's coming!" cried Clara, and suddenly the stone swung up on one side, revealing a dark square hole.

They all held their breath then, Babs, dry-mouthed with exertion and excitement, flashed her torch into the hole, and then gave a glad cry.

"Mum-my hat, it's here!"

"What?"

For answer Babs plunged her hand into the hole. Fascinated, thrilled, the chums watched as she strained forward, then backwards. From the earth came a musical chink.

"Treasure!" whooped Clara. "My hat, we've beaten Glenda now! Babs, let me give you a hand!"

She put her torch down. As the top of an old brown bag appeared, she caught one of the handles. Treasure it was—and treasure, by the look of it, which was in considerable quantities. They had it! They had beaten Glenda after all!

"Oh, my hat, to see Glenda's face now!" Clara chortled as she tugged.

REMEMBER
NEXT FRIDAY

Because next week's issue of The SCHOOLGIRL will be published then, one day earlier than usual!

"We— Hallo, look out!" she shrieked.

The words were not out of her mouth before it happened.

There was a rush of feet. From behind a pile of debris back along the tunnel a girl rushed. They had a brief glimpse of her white, furious face—then she was among them. Torches were scattered, plunging the whole passage into inky darkness. From Clara came a shout.

"Glenda! It's Glenda! She's got the treasure! Find a torch—light the lamp—quickly, somebody!"

There came the sound of scudding steps towards the door. The door, with a slam, closed, and just as Babs got a light going, a mocking laugh came back to them.

"Quickly, after her!" hooted Clara. "No—stop!" Babs shrieked. "The ceiling—look!"

Wildly she pointed down the tunnel. The roof was caving in!

Then, with a thundering rattle and roar, rocks and stones came hurtling down into the passage, completely blocking their way of escape.

The End of the Duel!



FILLED with horror, choking with the cloud of dust which floated about them, the chums for a moment looked at each other in stunned dismay.

And where the door had been, now, completely hiding it from view and stretching almost up to the roof, was a huge pile of debris.

It was Babs who was the first to recover her wits.

"Everybody all right?" she asked.

A nodding of heads.

"But—but what are we to do?" faltered Marjorie.

"Why, get out, of course—and get out now!" Babs said steadily.

"Glenda's got ahead of us—my hat, the luck that girl does have!—but she can't bolt all at once with that treasure. Get out, and the first thing we do is to grab Glenda—and with Glenda, the treasure! And the only way to get out," she said, "is to tear our way through that lot!"

A terrifying, chilling prospect, that, but obviously the only one which provided a solution. Glenda had beaten them—unless they caught her with the stolen treasure and showed her up.

Desperate recklessness filled them. They all realised the terrific issues at stake. With a will they set to, dragging aside huge stones, shovelling the loose mortar up with their bare hands, and performing prodigious feats of which not one of them would ever have dreamed herself capable.

But it was dreadful work—exhausting work—and in ten minutes reduced them all to the appearance of scarecrows.

Upstairs it would be breakfast-time. Still they toiled. Half-past eight, and the school would be getting ready for assembly and the address of thanks by

Miss Windham, the secretary of the Hospital Fund. A quarter to nine—

"Phew! I think," Babs gasped, "we can manage to squeeze between the roof and the top of the pile now. Only hope," she added anxiously, "Glenda didn't lock the door."

"Get over it!" Clara snapped tersely.

Babs scrambled up. Somehow she crawled over the pile, and, half exhausted, rushed to the door. Thank goodness it was open, the key, obviously shaken out of the lock by the collapse of the roof, lying on the floor. She ran back.

"All clear!" she cried. "Buck up! Don't forget we've got to get Glenda. Nothing else matters now. Never mind mistresses, prefects—never mind anything! Get Glenda!"

Get Glenda! It was, somehow, an inspiring slogan.

Breathlessly the rest scrambled over the debris; with Babs at their head, passed through the doorway. Nothing mattered except to get at Glenda.

At a breathless pace they slipped and floundered along, and, gaining the old chapel, scrambled through the paneless window and flew up the crypt stairs. At a rush they went across the cloisters, awaking its solemn silence with the echo of their feet.

Breathlessly they arrived at the main entrance doors of the school which led into Big Hall. Assembly was being held there now, the whole of the school, comprising girls, prefects, and mistresses, being in attendance. Interrupting assembly at any time was a formidable crime, but the chums simply did not care now. Breathlessly Babs flung open the door.

There was a turning of heads; a sudden gasp.

"Babs!"

But Babs did not heed. Her eyes had gone to the headmistress' dais. On that dais was Miss Primrose with the assembled mistresses and prefects, and, dressed in her outdoor clothes and looking rather nervous, was a stranger whom Babs immediately guessed was Miss Windham, delivering her thanks—giving an address to the school for the sum collected in aid of the hospital charities. But Glenda was not there.

"To her study!" Babs rapped.

"Come on!" Clara cried.

Miss Primrose had risen. Her scandalised voice went booming through the Hall.

"Barbara—Clara—all of you—"

"Come on!" gritted Leila.

"Bless my soul—"

There was a gasp which became something of a shout as the five rebels twisted to the right.

"Barbara, come back!" Miss Primrose thundered.

But for once Babs & Co. were deaf to the orders of Miss Primrose. In palpating haste they went rushing up to the Sixth Form corridor, leaving a hub-bub and buzz of surprise behind them.

"Here we are!" Babs gasped, as they reached the door of Study No. 13. "As she's not in Big Hall she must be here. She—" And then she halted as she burst into the room. Staring round, her dust-grimed face became grim, for of Glenda there was no sign.

But that Glenda had made a rather hurried departure was plainly evident.

"Mum-my hat, she's gone!" Clara stuttered.

No doubt about that—and no doubt, in the first place, that Glenda had gone for good. The confused disorder left by a girl who had hastily departed was everywhere. One or two odd stockings had been thrown in a heap on the table. There was an old pair of shoes flung carelessly into the empty fire-grate; the

little treasures and nicknacks on the mantelpiece which Glenda had possessed had been completely swept away. So, too, was the photograph which had hung on the wall.

"She's made a getaway!" Babs cried. "She's cleared out with the treasure! Great goodness! But come on!" she cried desperately. "There might be time to catch her yet! She can't have gone far!"

"But—but that means we'll have to go through Big Hall again?" Marjorie muttered.

"Never mind! Come on!"

And Babs bolted back. Down the passage they went at a rush, just as Mary Buller, who had been sent by Miss Primrose to bring them back, appeared. The sturdy prefect stood in their path.

"Look here, you kids—" she began. No further. Liking Mary as they did, there was no recognition of her authority then. Every second counted now Mary, with a gasp, found herself swept aside, and the five rushed on.

Once more they reached Big Hall. Once more Miss Windham was in the act of addressing the school when the miniature whirlwind came darting in. Miss Primrose jumped.

"Barbara, how dare you! Barbara—Clara—"

"Come on!" panted Babs.

"Stop them!" cried Miss Primrose. "Prefects, bring them back! Miss Windham, I am sorry—desperately sorry! I assure you—"

"Oh, my hat! Come on!" shrieked Babs.

She bolted for the main door. But not this time was their progress going to remain unchecked. Up in a body rose prefects and mistresses; the ranks of the Sixth Form, near by, broke. A rush was made towards Babs & Co.

Confusion then. Desperately Babs & Co. sprinted. Clutching hands grasped at them, voices yelled, and in a moment Big Hall was a scene of disorder.

Somebody grabbed at Babs' shoulder, but Babs wrenched herself away. She saw Grace Camperhill in front of her. She pushed her aside. Then the doors were reached.

"Babs, quickly!" cried Clara.

"They've got Marjorie and Janet!"

"But not me, I guess!" Leila Carroll breathlessly gasped. "Outside and shut the doors!"

But Babs had already thought of that. Outside they flew, Babs slamming the great door just as the first prefect reached it. Then, like the wind, they were scudding for the school gates.

Ten—twenty yards they had covered before the doors were flung open again. Out from Big Hall poured an excited stream of Sixth Formers, mistresses, and prefects. A score of cries rent the air.

"Stop! Stop! Stop!"

As if their lives depended upon it, Babs, Clara, and Leila ran. Before them loomed the gates, still closed, and Piper, the porter, was in the act of coming out of his lodge. Babs, sprinting ahead, seized his arm.

"Piper, how long since Glenda Maine went out?" she cried.

"Maine? Miss Maine?" Piper shook his head. "Miss Maine ain't been out!" he said. "Nobody's been out or in, 'cos I ain't unlocked the gates yet. But my heye!" he cried as he saw the chums' army of pursuers.

Babs fell back, dashed, stunned. Then how had Glenda disappeared?

"She must have got out through the gap in the hedge!" she jerked. "Come on, then; we'll go that way, too—"

"No, you won't!" roared Grace Camperhill.

Too late the chums turned. Twenty or thirty girls were now bearing down upon them. In the act of turning, Leila was caught. Clara made to dodge, but at once three prefects grabbed her. She cried:

"Babs, run!"

But alas for Babs, the luck was dead against her! With a thud she went flying as she barged into Piper's barrow. Four or five girls fell upon her and jerked her to her feet.

"And now," said Mary Buller, one of her captors, grimly, "you can come and explain to Miss Primrose!"

"But, Mary, let me go!" Babs gasped.

"Come on!"

And the tightening of the grip which accompanied that instruction showed that Mary was taking no further chances.

Hopelessly, despairingly Babs glanced at her chums.

This was the end! Glenda had beaten them, as she promised. Now before them was only expulsion—banishment in utter disgrace from the school.



THE chums stared at the blank sheet of paper in wonder and dismay.

"Babs!" Clara cried. "What's happened?" Babs' eyes blazed.

"We might have guessed!" she cried bitterly. "Glenda's got the real chart. Somehow she sneaked it and put this in its place! Oh, my hat!

What are we going to do now?"

Grasped fiercely by their captors, they were hurried back to Big Hall, there to be met by the incredulous, goggling eyes of staring girls. Every semblance of order seemed to have disappeared.

Miss Primrose, indeed, was almost weeping with humiliation as she tried to explain to the wondering Miss Windham.

"Miss Windham, I must apologise—a thousand times I must apologise!" she cried. "Please, please do not think that this is typical of our behaviour at Cliff House. I can assure you that such disobedience is unparalleled in the history of the school, and these girls will most certainly be expelled before this assembly is finished! Ah, here they are!" she cried, as she saw the captives. "Bring them here, please! Everybody, silence!"

Babs & Co. found themselves facing their quivering headmistress.

"You—you disgraceful girls!" Miss Primrose choked. "You—you utter young ruffians! Never, never have I

witnessed such dreadful conduct, and never, I am sure, has a guest at this school been treated so disgracefully! Twice, Barbara, you have interrupted Miss Windham in her speech! I order you, before she goes, to make an instant apology!"

"I—we—we're sorry!" Babs blurted, looking at the woman.

"Thank you!" Miss Windham shook her head. "Well, well! Perhaps, Miss Primrose, I—I had better go?" she suggested, looking at her bag. "I think I have said all that I want to say, and—and I have a train to catch, you know!"

"But, Miss Windham, you have only been here half an hour!" Miss Primrose cried. "Please do stay and have breakfast!"

"Please, no. Thank you all the same." And Miss Windham, in some haste, put on her gloves and stepped towards her bag. "I really cannot

trespass on your hospitality or your time, and I am sure, my dear Miss Primrose, that you are too upset to entertain a visitor. I will go now."

"Will you?" asked Babs.

"Eh?"

"Will you?" Babs repeated.

There was a desperate look in her eyes. For instantly Babs' mind had fixed upon that chance remark of Miss Primrose: "You have only been here half an hour." If Miss Windham had only been here half an hour, then how was it that the gates were still locked? How was it that Piper had declared: "Nobody has been out or in this morning"? In a moment the startling truth shocked Babs' mind. This woman—

She was not Miss Windham!

She was—

"Glenda Maine!" Babs shouted fiercely.

While the whole school stood electrified, she pounced forward. Her hand caught at the hat the woman wore,

dragging it from her head—and with it a wig! Then, while the impostor started back, while Miss Primrose gave a startled cry, Babs had caught the woman's bag, had quickly unfastened the lock, and Miss Primrose and the school almost fell down at the surprising pile of articles which tumbled into view.

A make-up box, small hide bags of money; a golden cup; glittering necklaces; and unset gems.

Clara shrieked:

"My aunt's treasure!"

"And Glenda's the thief!" Babs cried.

Glenda undoubtedly saw that the game was up. Taking advantage of the paralysed surprise which had swept the school, she leapt for the door.

Too late, Babs and Clara jumped after her. Too late, the surprised school swept round. Glenda was near the door, Glenda was disappearing. Another moment—

"Hey, not so fast, not so fast!" a voice said, and through the door stepped a young keen-faced man, accompanied by a girl. And Babs almost shrieked as she recognised them.

They were Mabel Lynn and Mabs' detective cousin, Austin Lynn!

"Austin, grab her!" Babs yelled.

But Austin Lynn was already seeing to that. His arm had dropped round the desperate Glenda. For a moment Glenda fought furiously and savagely, and then suddenly she shrugged. She turned a bitter face towards Babs.

"You win!" she gritted.

"But—but what—" Miss Primrose gasped. "Mr. Lynn!"

"May I come up, Miss Primrose?" Austin Lynn asked.

"Certainly. But—but—"

The detective smiled. He nodded to Mabs, grinned at Babs, and then, holding the half-sneering Glenda by the arm, he calmly stepped on to the platform, Mabs at his side. He smiled as he saw the pile of articles on the floor.

"Miss Primrose, excuse the interruption," he said. "Apparently I came only just in the nick of time. This girl is not Glenda Maine. It is Natalie Swift, and, Miss Primrose, she is not a schoolgirl, but a woman, so young-looking and such a skilful actress that she could, if necessary, pass herself off even as a junior. Apart from which," he added, "she is one of the cleverest crooks it has been my misfortune in the past ever to encounter."

"What?"

The school stood spellbound. Babs, drawing near Mabs, exchanged a triumphant look, and Mabs, reaching for her chum's hand, caught it and held it.

And then, while everyone listened in incredulous amazement while the girl they had known as Glenda Maine, exposed now, stood calmly by, Austin Lynn went on to tell his story.

From Mabs' description he had recognised Glenda. Mabs had written to tell Babs about it and to tell Babs that she was coming.

"And, my hat, that was the letter Glenda stole—the letter Bessie saw in the rack?" Babs cried.

"How clever!" Glenda scoffed.

It was that letter, obviously, which had made Glenda desperate. For the moment Austin Lynn arrived Glenda knew her number would be up.

The rest of the story did not need much telling, and a search of Glenda's handbag soon provided all the proof that was required. Among that proof was the letter Mabs had sent to Babs, and among it was also another letter

from Miss Windham to Miss Primrose, in which she had told Miss Primrose that she would regretfully have to postpone her visit to Cliff House owing to a very bad cold. Babs gasped as she heard that.

"Then that was the letter I saw you taking from the rack!" she accused Glenda.

"Clever again!" giped Glenda.

"And so," Austin Lynn said, smiling at the stunned and astounded school, "another chapter in the adventures of Natalie Swift comes to an end, and this meeting, instead of ending in the expulsion of Mabel's friends, ends, I take it, in the disappearance of Natalie?"

"And," Miss Primrose said, deeply agitated, "in the reinstatement of Mabel herself. Mr. Lynn, how ever can I thank you—"

"Don't," Austin Lynn said, "thank me. Thank Barbara most of all, for it is Barbara who has borne the brunt of all this girl's tricks, and Barbara who, many times since her arrival, has saved the school. I think," he added, "we all owe a great vote of thanks to Barbara."

"Which," Miss Charmant said, "shall be given. Girls, three cheers for Barbara Redfern!"

The cheers were given with hearty good will time and time again. Then there were cheers for Babs' friends, and a special one for Mabs and Austin Lynn. Babs, of course, had to make a speech, and while Glenda was led away she made it. She was cheered again to the echo.

"The only question which remains now," she said, "is to see that Mr. Trevlyn, to whom this treasure rightly belongs, gets it. And I do hope, all you chumps in my Form, that next time anything happens like this you'll back me up a bit more!"

"Yes, rather! Hear, hear!" beamed Bessie Bunter.

"May I, too, contribute to that sentiment?" Miss Primrose said, coming forward. "Like everybody else, Barbara, I have been deceived. I want now, my dear, to extend my most humble apologies for having doubted you—all of you—and, as a token of my forgiveness, I reinstate you and Clara here and now in your captains' positions again!"

"Hurrah!"

"And I," Miss Charmant said, coming forward, "am apologising, too, Barbara. But," she added, "a twinkle in her eyes, 'I shall not carry on producing the play. I shall leave that in more competent hands!' And she beamed at the blushing Mabs.

At which there was another cheer. After which, assembly broke up, with the girls breaking the ranks, to excitedly grab the chums and carry them off in triumph, shoulder high.

Babs laughed. She felt now that she could afford to laugh. Glenda Maine in the end had been beaten. Mabs had returned with honour, and a happy Christmas could be looked forward to by them all.

And that morning Glenda Maine went. Babs did not see her go, but at break Babs was given a note by Piper, the porter.

"From Miss Maine," Piper said. "She asked me specially to let you have it."

Babs unfolded it.

"From the vanquished to the victor—congratulations!" the note read. "Luck has been with you, Barbara, but I do not stint my praise. But please do not think you have seen the last of me. We shall meet again—perhaps sooner than you think!"

"GLENDA MAINE.

"(Please think of me by this name.)"

Slowly Babs folded the paper, shaking her head. She smiled. That note, she told herself, was Glenda's last desperate attempt at bluster. She would never see her again. Never, never again would Glenda dare show her face at Cliff House.

Or would she?

Babs knew just the queerest little thrill as she allowed her mind to dwell upon the prospect. Anyway, blow Glenda Maine! Glenda was gone now, and before them stretched the entrancing prospect of the Christmas holidays.

With the menace of Glenda Maine removed, with herself and her chums the heroines of the school, all her energies were going to be devoted to making the end of term the happiest ever, and the Christmas holiday, which was to follow at Trevlyn Towers, the most memorable in all the chums' history.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

BABS & CO. BEGIN THEIR CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS—



Christmas Romance at Trevlyn Towers!

—IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE OF "THE SCHOOLGIRL"

From Cliff House, and all the thrilling drama of their battle with Glenda Maine, the famous chums go to the home of Tomboy Clara Trevlyn—for the festive season! And there, in unexpected fashion, they encounter another sort of drama. They find themselves caught up in the poignant story of two young people who are going to be married. It's an unusual story, and Hilda Richards has brought to it such charm, such realism—and such a wealth of human appeal—that you'll revel in every word. Don't fail to read how Babs & Co. fight to save a shattered romance!

Further dramatic chapters of our fascinating new Girl Detective story—



SUSPECTS OF PLEASURE ISLE!

By ISABEL NORTON

FOR NEW READERS.

VALERIE DREW, the famous girl detective, together with her clever Alsatian dog, **FLASH**, is on holiday at Mazonia, a romantic pleasure-island in the Atlantic. She is in charge of four young people, **DULCIE** and **FRANK FURNIVAL**, brother and sister, and **ROGER DRAKE**, and **MOLLY DIXON**. With the party is a tutor for the boys and girls, a **HORACE BOON**, who has brought his own daughter, **SYBIL**. On a visit to Tarka's Temple, Valerie and her party are suspected of stealing a famous ruby. They are forbidden to leave the island until the mystery is solved. Valerie discovers that the ruby was flown off attached to a carrier pigeon—the pigeon having been hidden in Frank Furnival's camera-case. Still in the case is a ring from the pigeon's leg. While investigating, Valerie is trapped in a warehouse. Flash has vanished. Suddenly a piping voice orders her to throw what she found in the camera-case through the barred window, otherwise—she will never see Flash again!

(Now read on.)

Thrills Galore!

FOR a few moments Valerie Drew was cold with horror.

Her beloved pet in terrible danger! Nothing could have hurt Valerie more, for Flash, so loyal and brave and affectionate, was the dearest creature in all the world to Valerie.

Her hand had dropped instinctively from her side pocket, her fingers were actually touching the vital metal ring from the pigeon's leg, when a sudden change of mood caused her to pause.

Her mystery enemy had not stated, in so many words, what he was really after. He had only mentioned that it was something she had taken from Frank's camera-case!

Supposing he wasn't sure what she had taken?

"Wait!" she instructed tensely; and opening her handbag, she fished out two objects.

One was a little gilt key to a jewel-case which could be easily replaced; the other was Valerie's special whistle of such a high pitch that no human ear could detect it, though a dog could.

"Here you are!" she exclaimed, and, tossing the key between the bars, she

placed the whistle to her lips, and blew as hard as she could.

Outside, she heard the little key tinkle as it fell on the cobble-stones. Putting away the whistle, she moved to the nearer window, hoping to catch a glimpse of her enemy running to retrieve the key. But she had evidently snatched it up at once for she saw no one.

Taking out her electric torch, she flashed it around her prison while she awaited the enemy's next move.

It was not a pleasant place. An unexpected glimpse of a big, venomous-looking spider caused her to recoil in disgust from its web, which she was almost touching. Only the mouldering remains of old balks of wood lay around on the grimy floor. A big

Valerie Drew's Astounding Discovery:

THE OWNER OF THE PIGEON THAT FLEW OFF WITH THE STOLEN RUBY WAS THE SERGEANT WHO HAD ARRESTED THEM!

black rat, which had been creeping inquisitively about in the gloom, scuttled away as the bright beam of her torch flashed past it.

Outside, in the narrow alley, there was complete silence. Her foe was evidently satisfied.

Swiftly on her realisation that her clever ruse with the little key had succeeded, came another.

Her enemy had not bothered to release her.

"Goodness, I'm in a worse mess than ever now!" Valerie anxiously reflected.

Shining the torch ahead of her, she moved across to the far side of her prison. There she saw two heavy wooden doors set in the thickness of the wall, which had evidently been used at one time for the entrance of goods from boats lying in the river below. Now, though Valerie tried her hardest to shift them, they refused to budge an inch.

She turned back in the direction of the alley, scarcely knowing which of

her troubled, conflicting thoughts was the most disturbing.

She had set out to make something of her important clue as soon as possible. Now there was no knowing how soon, even if she made as much noise as possible, she could hope for release. On top of everything, her pet was still missing, and, though she could see no reason why he should be harmed, she would never be able to rest until she had found him again. If anything ever happened to Flash—

Scratch, scratch!
Incredulously she raised her eyes, staring towards the alley door. Eager paws, it seemed, were trying to dig amongst the cobble-stones outside. A faint but unmistakable whimper reached her ears.

"Flash!" she exclaimed breathlessly; and his sharp, excited bark confirmed the wonderful tidings that, wherever his own prison had been situated, he had managed to make his escape from it.

But how, she asked herself an instant later, could Flash help her to get free as well?

Pressing her head as close as possible to the bars of the window, Valerie was just able to glimpse the closed door, and her anxious pet watching it with puzzled, uneasy eyes.

The fastening of the door itself was obviously one which no battering from inside was ever likely to break, and certainly Flash could not be expected to tackle it on his own. It consisted of a long iron bar, hinged in the middle, which swung completely up so that its ends fitted into heavy sockets on the door posts.

For a few moments Valerie feared it was all but impossible to get away without summoning human aid. Reaching her arm out through the bars, she could only just touch the end of the long bar. Flash could not possibly be expected to grip it with his teeth when it was so close to the woodwork.

Then suddenly Valerie had an idea. If she could only attach something to the bar, Flash could certainly try to pull it down, raising the other end at the same time.

Turning, she poked here and there amongst the litter on the floor, and

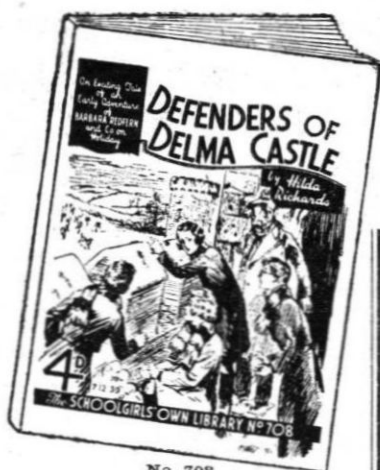
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presently spotted a short, rusty-length of chain.

Taking it to the barred window, and reaching out as far as she could, she just managed to slip the end link over the tip of the iron bar. Pressing it on as far as possible, she spoke to her eager pet.

"Seize it, Flash—gently!" she urged. "Take it carefully! Don't move yet!" The chain had shifted already, and she had to make a great effort to push the link back into place. "Now, old boy!" she warily instructed.

It was a breathless moment. The one end of the bar creaked downwards as the other end rose. A sharp push on the doors, and they opened freely. As the girl detective emerged into the open air, her pet leapt up to give her his boisterously affectionate welcome.

"Where have you been, my old funny-face?" Valerie murmured, as she fondled his perky ears. "Why did you run down here at all without telling me where you were going? How did they manage to call you away?"

Flash gazed back at her with shining, doggy eyes that seemed to say: "We're together again—so what does it matter?" And Valerie, knowing that her pet, with all his cleverness, had his limitations, laughed gaily, and let it go at that.

Straightening up again, she saw the alley was still as deserted as when she had first entered it. There was no trace of the mysterious enemy. Liking the look of the place less than ever, she hurried back to the wharf, called a ferry, and was soon crossing the sparkling river to the busier wharf on the other side.

Her first brush with the enemy had left her greatly perplexed, for she had never heard quite such a strange falsetto voice before. It could have been that of either a man or a woman. There was still another puzzle. Though she had noticed a distinctly foreign accent, it had spoken in simple but very natural English.

"I've got to hustle and get on the track of that pigeon pretty soon!" Valerie reflected.

Having visited the island previously, she had a good idea of the district she wanted, and was soon penetrating deeper along the narrow, picturesque streets of the oldest part of the town.

At the end of one full of attractive examples of the embroidery in which the islanders specialised, she came at last to a side turning where a bird shop was situated.

The proprietor proved to be a pleasant, stout little man with a good knowledge of her own language.

Deciding to risk everything, she produced the ring from the mystery pigeon's leg, and showed it to him, explaining that she wanted to get in touch with the owner as soon as possible.

"Yes, certainly," he responded, studying the number on the ring intently. "It is one of our racing pigeon numbers. If you have found the bird, it is probably because it strayed or was hurt when taking part in this morning's race." He was turning over the pages of a big book full of written entries as he spoke. "Yes, here it is!" he declared, with satisfaction. "A very well fancied and costly bird, this one—it has won many races already, and is worth quite a lot of money."

Valerie was breathing faster, for she had scarcely hoped to be lucky so quickly.

"Do you know the owner's name and where he lives?" she asked, finding it hard to repress a tiny thrill of excitement in her voice.

The proprietor looked up at her with a bland smile.

"Why, surely," he responded. "He is none other than Sergeant Fanchal, a very well-known officer of the Mazorian Police!"

The Sergeant Reappears!

FOR a moment or two, following that sensational statement, Valerie Drew was utterly dumb-struck.

Sergeant Fanchal!

Why, he was the officer who had

insisted on taking particulars of all her party before they were allowed to enter Tarka's Temple, and had presumably been looking after it when the priceless ruby was stolen!

Nobody could have had a better opportunity to remove Frank's camera from its case and substitute a racing pigeon!

"Can you tell me, please," Valerie asked, her studied calm betraying nothing of her excitement, "where this Sergeant Fanchal lives?"

"Why, certainly—he has a billet at the central police station," the other answered. "But that is naturally not where he keeps his pigeons. They are all at the little island of Palma Diaz, which you can just see from here. It is about ten miles away."

Valerie knew that, to learn any more, she must give away something herself.

"I haven't got the pigeon myself," she confessed. "The ring merely fell off its leg. But it was such an attractive bird, and flew so fast, that I wanted to find out more about it."

"A strange thing happened during to-day's race," the plump little man replied, looking decidedly puzzled. "This pigeon of the sergeant's, No. 16661, should have been released from the market-place with all the other birds in the race, and everyone expected it to be first home at Palma Diaz. They say it was nowhere in the race at all—it is not even believed to be home yet. Are you quite sure you only secured the ring?"

"Indeed?" said Valerie, thinking more than she said. "Er—how does one get to Palma Diaz?"

"The steamer leaves every morning at nine o'clock," the shopkeeper responded. "Because of the currents, it takes a very long while to get there in any of the small boats. You will be advised to wait until to-morrow if you intend to go across."

"You have been very kind indeed, and I thank you very much," said Valerie sincerely as she left the shop.

Deep in thought, she hailed a taxi, which would be faster, though less picturesque than a bullock sledge, and bade the driver take her back to her hotel as quickly as possible.

Until she could actually visit the island of Palma Diaz and make inquiries there, she knew she would have to go very slowly where Sergeant Fanchal was concerned.

It was not going to be easy to make a sensational accusation such as that the ruby had been stolen by one of the very police who had been placed on duty to guard it!

Reaching her hotel, she stepped out on to the sunlit boulevard, with its lines of flowering trees, and beautiful, coloured mosaic pavements.

The hotel itself was a marvellous palace of white stone. There was an attractive balcony to every room, and all the windows were wide open to admit the warm, scented island breezes. The gardens, planted with proud, graceful palms, were set with little tables under bright-striped sun-umbrellas.

Momentarily Valerie compressed her lips. The lovely island could never prove the holiday paradise they had all anticipated while the heavy shadow of such grave suspicion hung over her little party.

Entering the hotel, she sought out Frank and Dulcie Farnival.

"Any luck, Val?" asked Frank eagerly.

"I was only successful up to a point," Valerie answered, thinking it best to keep her own suspicions entirely

to herself for the time being. "What have you two been getting up to?" she asked pointedly, as she strolled with them towards the big sun lounge. "You can't kid me you haven't got something on your minds!"

Frank laughed. "There you are, Dulcie!" he ejaculated. "Didn't I say—"

"All right, Clever Dick!" smiled Dulcie. "Tell Valerie what we've been saying, and have done with it!"

The fair-haired boy whom Valerie already liked so much, drew a deep breath and took the plunge.

"Well, Val, we've been thinking about that camera-case of mine," he confessed. "You see, Dulcie's still got some silly idea in her funny old nut that I'm going to be arrested if I'm not careful!"

"Frank," Dulcie protested uneasily, "I only said—"

"I know. How awful I'd look as a convict digging the roads!" Frank assured her, with a grin. Serious again a moment later, he went on: "We've both been thinking a lot, Val. I'm dead positive I left the hotel with my own camera, because I took a picture of the prom, and a snap while we were waiting for the coach in the market-square."

"I'm sure of that, too," Dulcie put in. "I remember Frank kept bumping the camera against me."

"Go on!" urged Valerie, listening intently.

"The coach took us as far as the big Tivoli pleasure gardens," Frank went on. "There we had to wait for another to take us up to Tarka's jolly old temple. And while we were waiting for—"

"Frank put his camera down on the ground and went to the kiosk to buy some postcards!" said Dulcie triumphantly. "We're both sure of that now, Val. He left it just at the end of the seat. Sybil started talking about some adventure she had in Paris, and we were all listening to her while Frank was away."

Valerie's eyes were slightly narrowed as she listened.

"What else?" she asked keenly.

"Well, I remember, while I was buying the cards, seeing the woman at the kiosk staring past me towards the seat," said Frank, his voice now a trifle breathless. "I didn't think anything of it at the time, but now we both do. In fact, Val, we wonder whether that was when my camera-case was changed for the one with a pigeon in it, and the woman actually noticed someone at the time hanging around and behaving suspiciously."

"The point is, Val," Dulcie eagerly added, "that if you could take us along that way again Frank could ask the woman what she actually saw."

Valerie's eyes were shining. She had always believed that Frank and Dulcie's heads were screwed on the right way.

"I congratulate you both!" she warmly declared. "I'm specially glad you haven't said a word to the others. It ought to be quite easy—"

A page-boy coughed discreetly behind them just then, and Valerie, breaking off in the middle of her sentence, turned her head.

"Et is a message for Mees Drew," the boy announced solemnly. "There is police gentleman which would speak with her at once, please!"

"Oh, Valerie!" gasped Dulcie, her face falling.

Valerie's hand rested comfortingly on her shoulder.

"Only a routine matter, no doubt," she said lightly; and, turning without

any sign of concern, she followed the page-boy back to the entrance lounge.

There, despite her studied calm, she nearly gave an audible gasp of surprise at sight of the tall, figure in a gold-braided jacket waiting for her.

He was none other than Sergeant Fanchal, the owner of the pigeon which had flown away with the priceless Ramon Ruby attached to its leg!

There was a tense moment of mutual interrogation as their eyes met.

Then the sergeant broke the silence.

"Mees Drew, I come with a special message from the commissioner himself!" he announced dramatically. "In future I am placed in charge of your party to keep observation. You are all to keep together, and I shall not be able to let any of you leave this hotel until the ruby is recovered!"

Accused!

IT was such a terrible shock for Valerie that her heart sank with despair. Then abruptly her mood changed.

There was one important aspect of the new situation which she had overlooked—while the sergeant was keeping an eye on them, she could also be keeping an eye on him!

Looking at him with what appeared to be merely a puzzled smile, Valerie replied:

"I'm afraid that will be quite

ningly. "After all, it would be very dull for you to hang about the hotel all day, and it would make us dull as well. I know you must be as proud of your wonderful Tivoli gardens as all the other islanders are."

"Why, of course!" the sergeant agreed, taken off his guard. "It is the finest open-air amusement place in the world—at least," he added, trying to recall himself, "it would be—"

"It will be to-night, sergeant!" Valerie confidently assured him.

"We're just about to sit down to dinner, so I insist that you join us at our table." She shook her head decidedly. "I should never forgive myself," she declared, "if the commissioner reprimanded you because I allowed you to take your instructions too seriously!"

And she was thinking, as the baffled sergeant followed her through the lounge, that, once they reached the Tivoli gardens and darkness had fallen, it should be quite a simple matter for Frank to slip away and make his own



TENSELY Valerie watched as Flash, gripping the chain with his teeth, began to tug it downwards. Her only chance of escape rested with him, but if he pulled the chain off the bar—all would be lost!

inquiries at the kiosk just outside the entrance.

At the meal, which was served a little later, everyone did their best to follow Valerie's lead and make their unexpected guest feel at home. The sergeant, stiff at first, thawed perceptibly as he found his "suspects" being so engaging. Even Mr. Horace Boon, the prim tutor, accepted the unusual situation with calmness, and chatted most interestingly, and all was going well until Roger Drake decided to make a comment on his own.

"What struck me most this morning, sergeant," he remarked affably, "was what rotten shots your fellows with the rifles were. It didn't look to me as though they were trying to wing that pigeon at all!"

The sergeant's cheeks turned pink, and the shocked silence amongst all the others told Roger that he had, as usual, put his foot in it.

Valerie was the first to recover. In an instant she saw how she could, with luck, twist Roger's blunder to suit her own ends.

"That, sergeant," Valerie blandly

impossible, sergeant. I've already planned to take my party to the Tivoli gardens this evening."

The sergeant's brows contracted.

"I said, Mees Drew," he firmly responded, "that you are not able to leave the hotel!"

"Yes, yes; I heard that," Valerie pleasantly agreed. "That's what you said, sergeant—not what the commissioner himself said. He merely placed you in charge of us." Valerie gave him her sweetest smile as she added: "It was very kind of the commissioner to choose such a charming officer to look after us!"

Sergeant Fanchal blushed slightly, in spite of his effort to remain stern.

"I have my duty to perform!" he muttered, still trying to sound severe.

"That's no reason at all why it should be unpleasant," Valerie answered win-

declared, "would be a very natural feeling in kind-hearted men where such a lovely bird as a pigeon was concerned. I wouldn't blame them for deliberately missing it."

The sergeant drew a deep breath, convinced from those words that Valerie must be a "fancier" after his own heart.

"I would have hated to shoot at that bird myself," he impulsively assured her, "especially as it distinctly resembled a pigeon which I am very proud of."

"Never!" exclaimed Valerie, as though it was a surprising, but very agreeable confession on the sergeant's part. "I love pigeons myself," she added, giving Roger a covert pinch to warn him to leave everything to her. "Do you race them?" she asked innocently.

The sergeant swelled.

"Mees Drew, I win most of the prizes with my racing birds!" he proudly informed her. "And that reminds me of a mystery. My best bird, 16661, which should have won a race this morning, was not even placed. I must see the starter about that when we go through the market-place on our way to the Tivoli."

Valerie had plenty of food for reflection after that.

For the sergeant to admit publicly that he was the owner of the pigeon which, to Valerie's knowledge, had got safely away with the stolen Ramon Ruby, did not suggest he was the thief.

Was the sergeant, as she had previously surmised, as much the victim of circumstances as she and her party?

It was a problem which only the morrow could settle, when the steamer took her across to Palma Diaz and she could make investigations on the spot. As far as the sergeant was concerned, her mood had changed and she found herself liking him in spite of his official role as their unwanted supervisor.

What was of vital importance at the moment was that Frank should have every opportunity to follow up his own theory and discover how much the woman at the kiosk had seen before the pigeon, in a camera-case, had been so neatly "planted" on him!

It was quite dark when they all set out, and Mazoria was looking at its loveliest.

Festoons of coloured lamps hung along the promenade, whilst other lights, cunningly concealed amongst the branches, lit the flowering trees like fairyland itself. The cruising liners lying in the bay were brilliantly floodlit.

All around the town the dark hills, looking mysteriously attractive under the purple sky, twinkled with the lights from hundreds of villas, as though some enormous, dark mirror had been folded over the landscape to reflect the brilliant starry sky above.

With the warmly scented breeze, the frequent sound of soft, happy laughter and the haunting strains of languorous music floating from the big cafes they passed, it seemed to the excited younger members of Valerie's party like being in some earthly paradise.

Valerie had an opportunity to whisper a few words of instruction to Frank while they were waiting for their coach in the market-square, when the sergeant went away for a moment or two to make inquiries about his pigeon.

Twenty minutes later they stood at the wide-open, gilded entrance gates to the great Tivoli gardens, the island's most famous amusement centre. Paying the admission charge

for her party, Valerie followed them in, still attended by the watchful sergeant.

The park was a wonderful example of natural beauty to which the happy islanders had added every imaginable device for visitors' entertainment.

Attractive floodlit buildings, erected in many different styles, clustered everywhere amongst the trees. Bright uniformed bandmen were playing stirring music in a sunken bandstand surrounded by rows of luxurious deck-chairs.

As they wandered on amongst the happy throngs of pleasure-seekers, they passed numerous pretty little cafes where the most appetising snacks were on sale.

Farther on, excited screams and shrill peals of laughter came from the amusement section.

"Golly, what a super mountain railway!" Frank Furnival ejaculated, his eyes lighting up as he saw the lines of cars, full of shrieking passengers, racing up and down precipitous slopes. "I'm going on that, Val!"

"And me!" said Roger Drake enthusiastically.

"I'll come, too!" said Molly Dixon eagerly.

As this was the prearranged moment for which she had been waiting, Valerie turned eagerly to Sergeant Fanchal.

"Shall we all go?" she asked in a thrilling voice.

The sergeant looked horrified at the bare suggestion that a Mazorian policeman should be seen riding in uniform in one of the cars.

"Certainly not, Mees Drew!" he said decidedly. "In fact, I cannot allow anyone to go. Here—stop, I say—come back—"

Valerie persuasively touched his arm as Frank headed an impulsive rush for the little ticket-office.

"They can't possibly get into any harm, sergeant," she urged. "You'll be able to watch them all the time. We'll stay with you."

"Indeed, I certainly shall myself!" Mr. Boon agreed emphatically. He was a tutor to the four young people in Valerie's charge. "It looks a most dangerous contrivance to me!"

"Horrible things!" shivered Sybil, his daughter. "A girl always looks such a fright when she comes off. I detest racers!"

Muttering under his breath, the sergeant gave in and watched the four younger members scramble for vacant seats in the waiting cars.

Happy shrieks filled the air as it raced up and down the dizzy track, until the ride was over at last.

"Now we can wait for them at the exit," Sergeant Fanchal announced, in obvious relief.

"Not yet," said Valerie quickly. "Look, there's Roger waving to us. They've decided to stay on for another ride. Yes, there's Molly Dixon as well." She laughed. "It may be a job to get them off it now."

"Sooner them than me!" said Sybil, with feeling.

The conductor was briskly collecting fares for the repeat ride when Mr. Boon gave a sudden ejaculation.

"I can't see Frank anywhere!" he declared.

Valerie's lips moved uneasily as she gave him a covert, warning nudge. For, of course, she knew quite well that Frank wasn't on the train any longer! That had been the whole idea.

"Yes, that is so," Sergeant Fanchal worriedly agreed.

"Look!" Valerie pointed eagerly just as the car was moving off again. "Isn't that him—that fair-haired boy in the middle? Possibly Frank wanted to get nearer to the front for a bigger thrill. Ah, they're off!"

Sergeant Fanchal made no reply, and Valerie, inwardly fuming that Mr. Boon should have been so tactless, waited until the cars had once more completed their journey. There, sitting right in the front row, and waving both arms excitedly, was dark-haired Roger Drake.

"Goodness, they're going to have a third ride!" declared Valerie, affecting a light laugh. "Well, it'll be their headache if they have too much of it!"

Sergeant Fanchal did not seem even to be listening to her any longer.

"I did not see Frank Furnival," he said flatly. "We go at once to the exit. I shall give orders that all people must leave the car next time!"

Valerie followed him uneasily as he led the way. How, she was desperately wondering, had Frank got on? She knew it wasn't very far to the vital kiosk just outside the fairground. Had he reached it safely? Was the same woman still in charge? Had she been able to tell him anything of what she had seen this morning?

They reached the exit gates of the mountain railway, and the sergeant spoke to the attendant. When the train came to rest this time all the passengers were told to alight. Valerie's pulses thrilled more uncomfortably still as she waited. The sergeant would soon realise the truth, and then—

"Oh, Valerie it was gorgeous fun!" a voice cried happily, right at her elbow.

Valerie turned in amazement. Dumbfounded, the sergeant stared at the boy who, mingling neatly and cleverly with the crowds coming away from the mountain railway, had reached them first. He was the very boy she was so concerned about!

"Frank Furnival!" ejaculated the astounded sergeant; and in his surprise he certainly failed to see what Valerie had.

Slung over Frank's shoulder was the strap of a camera-case!

He had evidently succeeded beyond Valerie's wildest hopes. His inquiries had already led him to the discovery of his own stolen camera. For the moment she could only dizzily speculate on what he would have to report. But as soon as there was an opportunity to speak to him alone—

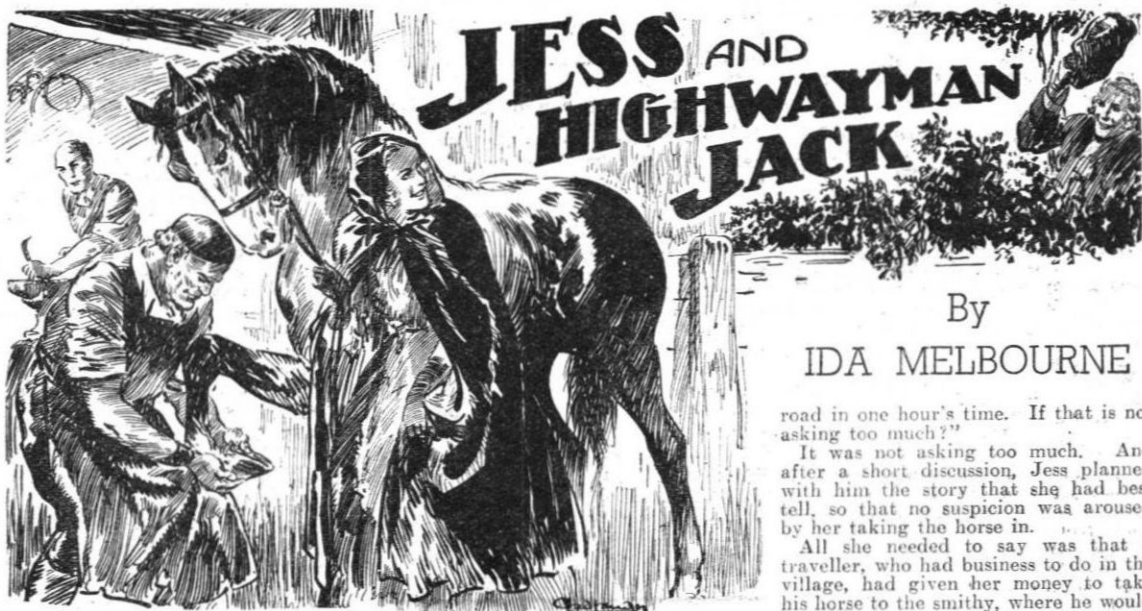
Her thoughts were startlingly interrupted by the vision of two tall men in ordinary tweeds pushing their way through the crowd. Something in their very bearing told her in a moment they were plain-clothes policemen.

To her unbounded horror, they made straight for Frank and dropped a hand on each of his shoulders.

One of the strangers spoke sharply. "This is the boy we have been watching!" he said curtly. "We observed him take possession of a camera we have been keeping an eye on all day. The boy is now under arrest on suspicion of stealing the Ramon Ruby!"

AT the very moment when Valerie's investigations have made such exciting progress—disaster! What ever will happen now? You will see when you read next Saturday's dramatic chapters.

COMPLETE this week. Another charming 18th Century Adventure featuring—



By
IDA MELBOURNE

His Horse Would Betray Him!

“OH, who will o'er the downs with me—?”

Jess Reynolds, a basket on her arm, sang as she hurried along the lane towards her father's inn, the Rising Sun.

There was yet half a mile for Jess to go, and the road was lonely at this hour, just before dusk; but the sound of her own voice was company to her.

The song was a pleasant one that helped her to keep a swinging step; but although she asked the question in a clear voice, she certainly was not expecting an answer. But one came, for as Jess repeated:

“Oh, who will o'er the downs with me?”

—the bushes at the side of the road parted, and a clear, laughing voice said: “I will.”

Jess pulled up short, and her heart gave an extra hard thump. It was a handsome face that peered out at her, or, at any rate, all that she could see of it was. A black velvet mask obscured the upper part—such a mask as highwaymen wear. A tricorne hat, perched jauntily on a white-powdered wig, shaded the face, too, yet notwithstanding, it was visibly a handsome face. And the eyes that showed through the two slits of the mask had a merry twinkle.

“Highwayman Jack!” breathed Jess. Most girls would have run for their lives, or else have stood there paralysed with fright. Jess, however, even though she reckoned herself to be no braver than most girls, stood her ground and laughed.

But then she was Highwayman Jack's friend, and he hers. She had nothing to fear. It mattered nothing to her that the squire had issued a warning that he was a rascal, who was to be captured dead or alive, or that the driver of the London coach called him the terror of the road. Jess knew that he was no robber, but a gentleman.

“Why, this is indeed a most pleasant and charming surprise!” said the

highwayman. “What's more pleasing than a stroll o'er the downs, my lady, and so sweetly requested in dulcet tone.”

Jess laughed. “Not for me, thanks!” she said. “But surely, highwayman, it is a strange hour to be hiding. You do not hold up coaches in daylight, I trust?”

Highwayman Jack shook his head. “Indeed, no,” he said. “I have a favour to ask you, kind maiden.”

“Ah! A steak-and-kidney pie?” teased Jess, her eyes twinkling.

“Why, no! A horseshoe.”

“A horseshoe—for luck?”

“Not so; for my horse, I pray you!” said the highwayman; and, turning his head, clucked his tongue so that his lovely black horse came up to him and put his head, too, through the bush. “My four-footed colleague of the road,” added Laughing Jack, “has lost

“I will take your horse to be shod, Highwayman Jack,” Jess gladly offered.

a shoe, and needs another. Alas! he does not know his own way to the smithy, else he is shy. So—”

Jess jumped quickly to what was being asked of her.

“So you would like me to take him?” she said, a little surprised, and yet ready enough to do anything that might be asked by this kind gallant, who had given her so many proofs of his friendship.

“Yes, if you dare. And dare is the word, for there is some chance that questions might be asked you, even though I would unsaddle him, and not send him forth bearing my pistol-holsters,” said the highwayman.

Jess looked down the road. The smithy was just out of sight, not far from the inn. She often had occasion to take horses there to be shod; for in the stables of the inn, where travellers rested their horses, there were often horses who needed shoeing.

“Why, of course, readily I will take him,” offered Jess. “But how shall I send him back? Will he know his way?”

“No, alas! I shall wait at the cross-

road in one hour's time. If that is not asking too much?”

It was not asking too much. And after a short discussion, Jess planned with him the story that she had best tell, so that no suspicion was aroused by her taking the horse in.

All she needed to say was that a traveller, who had business to do in the village, had given her money to take his horse to the smithy, where he would collect it later. She could pick the horse up, and in the darkness take it to the cross-roads.

Thus it was arranged, and while Highwayman Jack kept beside her on the other side of the hedge, Jess took his lovely black horse down the road. It was an affectionate animal, and knew Jess well, so that she chatted to it, and stroked its sleek muzzle as they went along together.

There was a glow of light from the smithy, and the clang of the hammer on the hot shoes came ringing out long before Jess reached it. She always loved the smithy, the smell of the furnace, the hiss of the bellows, and the smell of the red-hot metal. The smith himself, a burly man in a leather apron, was a genial fellow who was ever ready for a chat.

“Hallo, there, smith!” said Jess, looking in.

“Hallo, miss!” he responded, a little

Instead of helping him, that brave deed of Jess' betrayed her friend to his enemies.

gruffly, because he had nails in his mouth.

A fine horse stood there, ears back, its head held by the blacksmith's mate. One hind hoof was gripped between the smith's knees, and now, with the tongs, he applied the shoe to the hoof, bringing a sizzling and an acrid smell. Then the hammer clanged busily, and presently the shoe was on.

“Another job for you. Traveller down the road. Here's the money in advance,” said Jess. “Shall I leave him here? The traveller will call in later.”

She did not stay, having seen the horse tethered, but hurried in to the cosy inn, where her father convalescing from a wounded shoulder, sat in an easy-chair by the fireside, talking to a heavy-jowled, bewigged man—Squire Olding.

“Ah, Jess,” called her father, “tis good to know you're back and safe from highwaymen, though it'll not be much longer you'll need to fear them.”

Jess stopped short, and her heart missed a beat. For there was something startling in her father's confident

declaration. It seemed that he had good-reason to think that soon Highwayman Jack would be caught.

"Why, are the soldiers hot after him?" she managed to say, in a calm voice.

Squire Olding looked up, his watery eyes glowing, and chuckled gleefully, rubbing his fat hands.

"The assize judge—Lord Tobin—will be riding through here to-night," he said. "And the highwayman shall have the pleasure of meeting him, I'm hoping, face to face—inside the assize court."

Jess breathed again. For the squire was only hoping that Highwayman Jack would be caught; and he had been hoping that so long that it seemed almost like hoping for the moon.

"Ah, 'twould be sad if they should meet before that, on the road!" said Jess, without stopping to think. And then, instantly regretting the words, she could have bitten her tongue off.

The squire fairly snapped at her.

"What! The highwayman dare hold up the judge! He'd not have the courage or the impudence. Huh! A cowardly rascal, that's all he is."

"Why, yes—so I've heard," admitted Jess softly, and hurried away to take off her thick coat.

It would not do to arouse the squire's suspicions! But she smiled to herself at the thought that all the while Highwayman Jack's horse was in the smithy near by!

Jess had a job or two to do, and got busy. There was some cooking to help with for the night's dinner; there were tables to lay, and it was some minutes before she had finished.

When she returned to the hall the squire was buttoning his coat in readiness for leaving. It was a sight that gladdened Jess, for she was never really happy when he was about the place; she disliked and feared him.

"Oh, we'll get him all right!" granted the squire. "Even if we don't know him by sight, we know his horse."

Jess pulled up short; and then hurriedly recovered her composure. For she had jumped instantly to the subject of the squire's remarks—Highwayman Jack.

"A black horse with a white patch, is it not?" asked Jess—to find out if he did know, and hoping that he would agree with that false description.

The squire turned to her.

"A black horse all right," he said. "But there's no white patch. What there is a sword-cut scar on the near hindquarter. That's the clue—and that horse is being hunted high and low."

Jess quaked within, but managed to keep calm.

"Indeed? Then it should soon be found," she murmured.

The squire went towards the door, and Jess ran to open it for him. Now was the time to ask him how much more he knew, and if they were on the trail of the horse.

But Jess was frightened to take too much interest in it, for fear that the squire might be suspicious.

"Soon be found—eh?" he murmured, with a sly chuckle. "It'll be found all right, for even a highwayman's horse needs shoeing now and then."

Jess felt as though an icy hand had clutched her heart.

"Why—why, yes, indeed," she faltered. "'Twould be—'twould be wise to search all the smithys—to-morrow."

The squire passed out towards his chaise, and then looked back.

"Search? We'll need no searching.

Every smithy for miles around has a full description of that horse pasted on the inside of its door. Highwayman Jack will be betrayed by his horse!"

Jess is Resourceful, But—

JESS stood as though turned to stone as the full realisation of what the squire's statement meant jumped to her mind. If he spoke the truth, then by this time the village smith must know that the black horse she had taken to him was Laughing Jack's.

Jess stepped across the threshold of the inn and closed the door. Her heart was beating madly, and her breath came unevenly. For there was desperate need to act—and to act at once.

Already the squire was in his chaise, and his boy was whipping up the horses.

"Call in at the smithy!" yelled the squire.

Jess took to her heels and ran. She crossed the road to the grass on the far side, and, stumbling and gasping, kept a short distance behind the chaise, which went at moderate pace since

there was but a short distance to go to the smithy.

But she did not quite reach it; she stopped twenty yards away. For in the glare of light outside it stood the smith, holding a horse by the bridle—a fine black horse that stamped and pranced.

His assistant, dancing and yelling with excitement, was signalling to the squire's coach, which was instantly reined up, with a slither of hoofs and a grind of braked wheels.

"Squire—squire! We've got it!" yelled the assistant.

Out of his chaise scrambled the squire; and Jess, hand to heart, crept closer so that she could hear.

"Let me look—let me see! A lantern there!" shouted the squire.

The yellow rays of the lantern were shone upon the horse, and the squire, peering closely, rubbed his hands and gave a sardonic laugh.

"We've got him. We've got his horse—and next we'll get the man. Smith—this will mean ten pounds to you. Who brought this horse in?"

"Why, 'twas Miss Jess, the landlord's daughter," said the smith. "Said something about a traveller telling her to bring it."

Jess quaked with dread. This was surely the end. The squire would suspect the truth whatever she said; for there was no denying that the horse was Highwayman Jack's.

"The landlord's daughter?" echoed the squire in startled tones. "So—ho—eh? So—ho! H'm!"

Jess fell back.

"Oh, fool—fool that I was!" she groaned. "And now they'll get Jack, too."

Moving back into the darkness, she thought frantically. The mere fact that she was outside the smithy, having followed the squire here, would count against her. Her one hope was that she would be thought an innocent accomplice—that they would believe she really had taken the horse in good faith from someone she had genuinely supposed was an ordinary wayfarer.

But what hope of that now?

The first surge of panic was dying down, however, and Jess began to think clearly.

She must play the part of an innocent dupe—just as she would have behaved if she had really taken that horse from a complete stranger.

How would she have acted then? She asked herself the question, and instantly knew the answer. She would have thought things over, put two and two together—and then, guessed that the black horse might be the highwayman's. What then? She would have run after the squire to tell him.

Then that was what she must do now.

Squeezing through the hedge, she ran forward, waving and calling.

"Squire—squire—"

The squire turned and swung the lantern round so that its rays fell upon her.

"The horse—the horse! Has it gone yet?" she cried. "The black horse that I brought here earlier. For all we know—it—it—" She gasped. "It may have a scar on the hindquarters. I did not look. 'Twas a tall man gave it to me. Good-looking, smiling. Highwayman Jack is surely a surly, ill-bred rogue; yet—"

The squire interrupted her excitedly, catching her wrist.

"Well-bred, he seemed?" he exclaimed excitedly. "A gentleman?"

"Why, yes. So 'twas not the high-

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wayman," Jess answered, still breathing with difficulty after her hard running. "Yet since the horse was black, I thought—"

"You thought right!" snapped the squire, his eyes shining in the bright light. "'Tis the rascal's horse. And Highwayman Jack has the manners of a gentleman, they say! Good-looking, tall—yes! It's he. Where was he? Where will he be?"

"I do not rightly know," said Jess slowly. "He should come here for it. Doubtless he would not think he would be suspected."

The squire nodded; and he was so impressed with the simple story that he clearly no longer suspected her.

"Wait you here, my gal; and if he should come, greet him in friendly way, and say that his horse is ready. Smith, have you a gun?"

"Ay—there's an old blunderbuss!" said the smith, nodding.

"Then load it—pack it well!" said the squire excitedly. "And stay in a dark part of the smithy and wait. Shoot him at sight—in the legs. And you"—he added to the assistant—"let a horseshoe be white hot. If the rascal tries any tricks it will be useful to aim at him, or touch him up with it, eh?" And he rubbed his hands and clucked with glee.

Jess moved away a yard or two, her brain seething. If Highwayman Jack did come to this spot, he would be trapped!

And, as though this precaution was not enough, the squire had sent the smith's son with a message to Farmer Brown, opposite, to bring his shotgun, and to send his lad on horseback to the town for soldiers.

Presently Jess turned her head, hearing what she thought was a step; but it was nothing, a mere trick of her imagination.

"You hear him?" breathed the squire.

It was a hint to Jess how she should act! What easier than to pretend that she had heard her friend approaching?

Jumping forward, she called out.

"Hallo, there! Oh, sir, your horse— Stop! Come back!"

As she raced into the darkness, the squire gave a yell.

"A lantern! Bring the guns! All together—"

Jess ran into the darkness, and the squire followed. It was her crashing steps that he followed, and not, as he supposed, the highwayman's.

When she had gone some way, Jess whipped off her shoes, and ran on noiselessly. She hardly cared that the rough road hurt her feet. All that concerned her was that she was out of danger—and that, if she reached Highwayman Jack in time, he would be out of danger, too.

Panting, gasping, stumbling, near to collapse, she reached the cross-roads, and a soft, anxious voice called out:

"Who's there?"

There was pitch black darkness all about her, and she could not see a thing; but, guided by the sound of the voice, she turned.

"Jack?"

"Why, yes! What's amiss?" he asked.

"Hush! The worst has happened. They know he is your horse. They're waiting at the smithy. Armed!"

She nearly collapsed, and, indeed, only Laughing Jack's right arm, encircling her, prevented her falling from exhaustion. But her strong will and the urgent need for action revived her.

(Continued on page 24)

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"Don't go back there," she begged him, "whatever you do!"

His answer was gentle, and there was the ring of admiration in his voice.

"Brave lass to warn me at your own peril. Go back to your inn and do not fear for me."

"But I do fear," said Jess huskily, "for the judge comes along this road in his coach soon. It seems like an act of Fate; and the squire has vowed to capture you and present you to him—in the dock!"

Highwayman Jack gave a sharp, startled exclamation.

"What! His lordship rides this way to-night?"

"Yes. And he will go past the smithy, to halt the night at the inn," added Jess, to impress him with his danger.

Laughing Jack gave a merry, ringing laugh.

"Why, then, my dear," he said, "'tis clear what I must do! I cannot go without my horse. And he is too old a friend to leave in the hands of enemies. There is but one remedy—"

Jess caught his arm, frightened by his tone.

"And that is?" she gasped.

"Why, present myself to his lordship on the road to-night, having first presented my pistol! Fear not. I shall be safe. A million thank you's, and do not fear!"

Jess tried to hold him, but he slipped away, and, in growing alarm, her heart throbbing, she stared after him in the darkness. What new daring was he planning? What was his reckless scheme to rescue his horse?

Jess could not guess, but she knew that, whatever it was, he would not draw back. Unafraid of the lurking peril, he would go to the smithy. And, just as certainly, he would be caught!

After a minute Jess turned and raced back to the smithy, where now the squire, the blacksmith, Farmer Brown, and his son were gathered in a group, arguing.

"He is gone!" she cried. "He escaped—"

She sank down on a wooden block just inside the smithy door, paunting and gasping, and covered her face with her hands. Nor did she look up until the kindly assistant offered her a mug of tea.

A few moments later there came the clatter of hoofs, and down the road came a coach, the four horses of which were reined up heavily as they approached the smithy.

"Why 'tis the judge's coach!" cried the squire. "And here's news for him!"

From the window of the coach peered a head adorned with a full-bottomed wig, at sight of which the smith bowed his head and touched his forehead.

"Ah, judge," called the squire, "welcome to our village!"

Jess watched as the coach door opened, and her heart sank. For if the judge was here, safe and sound, then Highwayman Jack had failed. Worse—had he been captured?

But Jess' eyes rounded wide as the judge stepped from the coach, wrapping a long black cloak about him. His right hand showed in full view, and on it was a ring she knew—a ring she had seen often on the hand of Highwayman Jack.

"Good-evening, squire!" came a voice with the quiver of age in it.

But that quiver of age was affected,

the voice disguised. Not so well disguised, though, that Jess did not know it at once, and she stood rooted to the ground, hardly breathing.

For the man who stepped so boldly down from the coach was not the judge at all. It was Highwayman Jack!

Enter the Judge!

HIGHWAYMAN JACK! A thrill ran through Jess, a thrill of pride and admiration—pride that a man so brave and daring was her friend; admiration for one who could dare such a trick as this. Who else would have had such courage?

But, Jess warned herself, it was not carried through yet. He had still some bluffing to do if he was not to be unmasked.

Jess stepped forward, dropping a curtsy.

"Welcome, your lordship!" she said.

"Your daughter, squire?" asked the supposed judge, and his face was concealed behind a large silk handkerchief as though he had a cold. "A comely wench who indeed does you credit!"

The squire scowled at the pleasantry,

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but quickly changed that expression to a smile, for the judge was a powerful man.

"The lass is the innkeeper's daughter," he said. "I trust you have had a safe journey, judge?"

"Safe journey!" rapped out the disguised highwayman. "A rascal highwayman held up my coach! Where are the soldiers? Where are the runners?"

Then Jess spoke up eagerly. "Judge, we have the highwayman's horse! Bring it out and show his lordship!" she cried excitedly.

The smith brought out the horse proudly, and the supposed judge looked up at the coachman on the box.

"His horse, Watkins!" he called. "It's something—eh?"

Jess shot a look at the man on the box, and what she saw was so surprising that she nearly burst out laughing. The coachman who sat so stiffly on his box had a scarf tied about his mouth. He was gagged.

But Jess pretended not to understand the man's signals, and took care not to attract anyone else's attention to them.

Highwayman Jack was examining his own horse now.

"I faith, a fine fellow!" he mused. "Mayhap I'll buy him when the rascal owner has no more need for horses. Hold him, and I'll mount!"

He had but to mount now, and he would be safe.

But Jess, watching the coachman, saw, to her horror, that he held something in his hand that glistened metallically. A pistol! And he was taking aim! He was levelling it at the back of the highwayman!

Without thinking, Jess hurled herself at her friend. He, taken by surprise, tottered sideways and collapsed.

With deafening report and flash of flame, the pistol fired. A shot whistled where the highwayman had been, and buried itself in the ground.

But Highwayman Jack, flat on the ground, had lost his wig; his cloak was wide open, and under it showed his red-and-gold jacket and white breeches.

"Highwayman Jack!" roared the squire.

Quick as a flash, the highwayman scrambled up, and was in through the open doorway of the coach before anyone had recovered from the shock.

Next moment the squire, the farmer, and the smith hurled themselves at the coach, the squire thrusting his gun through the window and pulling the trigger, the others clinging on as the startled horses shot forward.

Away went the coach down the road, and Jess clutched her heart in horror.

"They've got him all right!" said the blacksmith's mate, who stood holding the highwayman's horse.

Jess said no more, for a graceful, cloaked figure, his handsome face masked, stepped from the far side of the road, presenting a pistol at the blacksmith's assistant.

"Hands up!" he said sharply.

The man dropped the bridle reins and threw up his hands, his eyes almost popping from his head.

"My horse, I think. I believe the bill has been settled, but here's a florin for yourself, lad," said Highwayman Jack, with a laugh.

With that he doffed his hat to Jess, and, swinging himself astride his horse, was gone before even the lad had picked up the florin.

Jess, hands clasped, started to laugh; she felt that she could have laughed and laughed for hours. But her good sense came to her aid, and suddenly she screamed.

Hands to ears, she was still screaming when the squire returned and shook her angrily, telling her to stop.

"Has he gone?" quavered Jess.

"Yes, yes. Many minutes ago. The rascal must have stepped in at one door of the coach and out through the other, then startled the horses. And now, since he is not the judge, where is his lordship?"

But his lordship did not arrive until two hours after. He reached the inn, footsore and weary, just as Jess and her father were closing up for the night. He said not a word to anyone, but glared all round, snatched the key of his room from Jess, and stamped off to bed.

Somewhere, not more than a mile away, Highwayman Jack was abed, too; and so, in the near-by stable, was his noble, newly shod horse.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

BE certain to meet Jess and Highwayman Jack once again next week in another exciting **COMPLETE** story.