

"THAT ELUSIVE AFRICAN IMAGE!" Magnificent LONG COMPLETE
Cliff House School story inside.

The SCHOOLGIRL

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2^D Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"
EVERY SATURDAY



"OH, PLEASE DON'T OPEN
IT, MISS PRIMROSE!"

Bessie's desperate bid to
save the secret of the little
wooden image.

(See the first Bobo & Co. story in
this issue.)

A Delightful Long Complete story of three of the most famous of the Cliff House girls—Barbara Redfern, Bessie Bunter and Mabel Lynn.

That Elusive AFRICAN IMAGE



A Right—and a "Find"!



"**T**HERE—and there—and there!" Bessie Bunter crowed in triumphant, and with each "There" added an almost vicious line to the drawing which had grown beneath her plump fingers. "I—say, this is jolly good," she added, with a manner of almost surprised awe in her voice. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie, the fat, good-natured duffer of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School, was alone in Study No. 4, and, as often happened when she was on her own, Bessie was talking to herself. She was alone because that afternoon she had no prospect to do. She was alone while her chums, Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn, were dispersing themselves on the River Bank with their friends from the neighbouring boys' school, Jimmy Richardson & Co., and Bessie was utterly fed-up.

For the afternoon was sunny and fine, and Bessie had a feeling that Jimmy Richardson would irritate Mabel Lynn and Barbara Redfern to a snap-up row at the Riverside Cafe. Bessie had missed that. She had missed it because of carelessness. Miss Bullivant, the maths

mistress of the school. In class that morning Miss Bullivant had started by cataloguing Bessie's errors and giving her fifty lines. Bessie, trying in her own clumsy, blundering way to retrieve those errors while the Bull's back was turned, had again been caught out, and the result was that the Bull had punished her to school hours for the afternoon with an essay to keep her company. So very fed-up and very furious, the plump, hungry duffer of the Fourth had been in consequence.

But now Bessie's eyes were glancing, and there was a smirk on Bessie's round face as she peered again at the drawing before her. Then, with a sudden chuckle, she bent and scrawled some words beneath the drawing.

"**THIS IS THE BULL. ISN'T SHE A FRYE? HAN, HAN!**"

"Jolly good!" Bessie murmured, impressed by her own handiwork. Then, in another spirit of rebellion, she deliriously signed the work of art with a flourish—
"E. G. Bunter."

"He, he, he!" she chuckled again. Nobody except Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter would, of course, have signed what was drawn there.

Of its type it certainly was quite good. Perhaps it was more by accident than because Bessie had any real artistic skill, but certainly there was a characteristic likeness to Miss Bullivant

on the paper before her. Miss Bullivant's thin nose was unmistakable, the glancing eyes, the plumpness pointed at the right angle, the expression of frowning eyebrows—Bessie had managed to catch it all. Never in a thousand years would Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter have been able to repeat this effort.

And just by way of expressing her angry feelings, Bessie had added a volcanic pair of horns to that very unflattering caricature, and also a set of protruding teeth which were obviously intended to be the dentures which the whole school knew Miss Bullivant wore.

"Oh, jolly good!" Bessie breathed. "It's wonderful there be a row if the Bull herself saw it—especially, see, signed as it was!"

Then suddenly she gave a guilty start as there was a snap outside. Probably her plump arm had wobbled her caricature.

But she sighed a vast sigh of relief next moment. It was Barbara and Mabel, fresh and smiling from their river trip, who entered.

"Hallo, Bessie!" Barbara brightly greeted. "We wouldn't go to tea because we knew you'd be feeling lonely. But what—Oh, my hat! That's jolly good!" she chuckled, as she saw the caricature on the table.

"I say!" Mabel cried. "Bessie, you never drew that?"

"But I did, you know, Bessie!" Bessie

Buster announced proudly. "Blessed if I know what made me do it—I mean, of course, I worked it all out from A to Z, you know! Ho, ho, ho! Isn't it just a spanking likeness of her?"

"Spanking," Barbara agreed, "is the word. If there was spanking at this school, Bessie, you'd be spanked—jolly hard—for that. If the Bull saw it she'd throw a fit. Come on, tear it up!" she added urgently.

But Bessie blinked at that. Perhaps Bessie realized that the best thing which could happen so that highly dangerous work of art was to accept Babe's advice. But Bessie was unwilling to do that yet. She wanted to admire it for a few minutes longer.

"Bessie, come on, give it to me!" Barbara urged anxiously.

"Oh, no—really, Babe! I—I want to have a good look at it," Bessie said. "I—" And then she jammed again, hastily scratching up the crevice as the door re-opened. This time it was Lella Carroll who poked her head in at the door.

"Bey, tell me the rabbit," she warned quickly. "The Bull's coming."

"The Bit-Bull!" stammered Bessie. "She's crawling around on a study inspection—and say, is she on the war-path!" Lella shrieked. "Better tidy up quickly," she added urgently, "she's in our study now. She— Oh, look, she's coming!" she added, as the door of Study No. 2, next door, was heard distinctly to close.

The intense concern of Bessie Bunter at some good place to hide terror as Miss Bullivant's well-known steps sounded in the passage.

"Oh, crumble! Oh, dear!" "Bessie, look! Hide it!" Babe cried. "It's always that—"

Dispiritedly Bessie nodded. Mabe, by that time was collecting Bessie's things together off the table. In blank terror Bessie turned to the door. In a wild rush she plunged outside, almost careening into the thin, angular figure which at that moment was in the act of passing outside. In panic Bessie Bunter blinked up at her.

"Bessie!" Miss Bullivant rapped. "Bessie, how dare— Bless my soul! Bessie, come back!" she cried.

But Bessie, the caricature in her hand now, was frantically skimming down the corridor.

"Bessie," Miss Bullivant roared, "come back—at once—this instant!"

Bessie Bunter did not come back. Her fat little legs twinkled her along. One desire, and only one, possessed her—to hide that caricature before the Bull saw it.

With Miss Bullivant's cry still ringing in her ears, she scurried through Big Hall. There, for a second, she breathlessly paused, resting back on second look. The Bull, a questioning nod of indignation and anger, had just appeared at the top of the stairs.

"Help!" Bessie gasped. And, hurrying through the main doors, ran for her life.

She did not know where she ran. She did not care. Instinct took her steps towards the quietest and the most deserted part of the school—the old crypt.

Reaching the crumbling entrance of the old place, she breathlessly plunged down the steps.

And then she passed. Though Bessie often boasted of fighting lions and catching thieves, it is to be feared that her imagination was more vivid than her courage was real. Doubtfully she stared into theinky depths below her; but the thought of the caricature gave her courage. When it became clear that

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

she was no longer being pursued, she began to regain confidence.

She stared around her. She blinked at the opposite wall. Then suddenly she blinked again, as she saw something which filled her with vague curiosity; a hole in the wall where a loose lump of masonry had dropped out, and from that hole protruded about three inches of a dainty wooden thing which Bessie had never noticed before.

Momentarily forgetting her anxiety, she reached up and poked the object towards her, and was quite surprised to find it was about twelve inches in length. At first Bessie thought it was some sort of a fat, hollow stick.

Then she turned it over, and jumped with such a start that she dropped it altogether.

For at one end was the most frightfully ugly face. A carved, shiny, ebony face it was, followed by a body which was out of proportion. At the end of the body was carved a pair of short little legs, the knees bent and covered with scribbles and circles.

A strange little wooden figure. Bessie finds it first, and the plump duffer heartily hides a certain caricature she has drawn in it. The figure then falls into other hands. For Bessie's sake it becomes absolutely imperative that it is recovered. So Bessie, Babe and Mabe go into action. But that little figure passes from hand to hand and recovering it is not so easy, in fact, it becomes, apparently, an impossible task! Exciting and humorous adventures—and mounting trouble!—attend the quest of the Study No. 4 trio.

For a moment Bessie stared away. Then she saw what it was, and gave a shaky little laugh.

Of course, it was a carved idol of a native figure of some kind—like one of those which Professor Grant Wallace, the school's ethnographical expert, often brought upon. But what a funny place to find it.

She stopped, picking it up. Then she got another fright. For as she touched it, the head part of the figure suddenly flew up, revealing an oblong cavity. Oh, crumble, it was a fancy box, then! Fascination for this strange object was growing in Bessie, when suddenly from within she heard a sound which brought back vividly the sense of her own peril.

Footsteps! Bessie gasped. She thought of Miss Bullivant—Miss Bullivant was coming here! She thought of the caricature which she still held.

Then in the feverish impulse of the moment she rammed the caricature into the body of the strange figure, and, reaching up, pushed it back to the niche. Furtively she listened again. The footsteps had ceased now, and Bessie guessed that Miss Bullivant must be exploring in the school, as she said she often did—the rear of the crypt entrance. Now was her chance to get away.

Out of the crypt like a plump little rabbit from its hole Bessie scuttled. Looking neither to right nor left, she plunged back towards the school.

And, breathless and blown, she arrived at the school steps just as Babe and Mabe came out.

"Oh, hi-crumb!" she gasped. "Oh, dear-dear! Oh, really, you know, I think—think I'm giggling to death at an athlete's heart! I've had to run hi-like anything, you know?"

"Run!" Babe frowned. "But who?" "Well, from the Bit-Bull, of course, silly!"

"What, now?" Mabe asked incredulously.

Bessie glared indignantly. "Well, do I jolly wince-wool look as if I'd been chasing yesterday?" she asked. "Of course not! I was hiding in the crypt, you know, when she came streaking along—"

Babe smiled a little. "So you didn't actually see her?" she asked. "Silly old Bess! The Bull wasn't there at all. The Bull, as a matter of fact, has gone off to see Miss Fitzboone. You just heard someone else. But what have you done with that drawing?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh, crumble!" Bessie gasped again, glancing as she recalled that she need not have run at all. "Oh, gipped-ness, I've winked! I've blown! Let's go up to the study and have a glass of lemonade—"

"Bessie, give me that caricature first," Babe demanded.

"But I can't, you know. I've hidden it—"

"Where?"

"Ho, ho, ho!" Bessie shrieked. "Is a jolly cunning place—a place nobody will ever think of looking, you know! Trust a Bunter to be clever. I've hidden it in an old—a j-u-s-t, I think it's called."

"A what?" Babe and Mabe interjected loudly.

"Well, it's true, you know, I found it in the crypt." And then, while Babe and Mabe both stared, she went on, in her own roundabout way, to describe the strangely carved African figure, the hollow of the interesting caricature, and her tool for safety. Babe frowned.

"It sounds," she observed, "anything but a safe hiding-place to me, Bess. If the figure was so easy for you to find, it will be easy enough for someone else—and a few old duffers there'll be if the caricature is found inside it. Come on," she added urgently, "we'll go and get it now."

Across the quad they marched, and were nocking the crypt, when Babe pulled her party to a sudden halt. For from inside the crypt came a sudden sweeping sound, followed by a little exclamation of surprise.

"Hallo, somebody down there!" Babe breathed. "Somebody—"

And then she passed. They all stared. For ascending out of the crypt came the figure of a girl—a pale-faced, fair-haired Fourth Former, who was by no means a friend of Babe & Co., and who, because of her name and her coloring and her rather aloof manner, was known as the Icicle of the Fourth.

Frances Frost was her real name, however, and Frances, at that moment, was looking tremendously excited. In

her hand she carried a squinting figure about twelve inches in height.

"The— the— the—" stuttered Bessie.
"Frances?"
"Oh!" Frances spun round. She was there. She held in that strange little figure. "Hello!" she greeted. "I say, look what I've found!"

The Ju-Ju Changes Hands!



FOR a moment the three chums stared in consternation. Then Bessie's cheeks reddened indignantly.

"Oh, really! Look here, you know— Woe, Bessie, you tried on my top!"

"Shush!" Bessie hissed. "Don't give the game away. You found it, Frances?" she asked pleasantly. "I say, what a funny looking thing! I wonder how it got into the crypt!"

"Fancy— you," Frances sniffed. "But I know what it is," she said loftily. "It's an African ju-ju—a tribal image, you know. It was in the crypt, lying on the step, and it looked as if it had been hidden in a hole in the wall, and somehow dropped out."

"And what are you going to do with it?" Bessie asked, trying to sound casual.

"Well, finding its keepings," Frances returned. "It's mine, of course, if the owner doesn't claim it. It looks jolly valuable to me," she added, scrutinizing the object again. "And do you know, I believe there's something in it! Listen!"

She held the figure up. To the chums' consternation she shook it. Sure enough there came a faint rattling, scraping sound from within the image.

"Oh, death—that's just his heart beating!" Bessie said. "Ha, ha, ha! As if there could be anything else in it!"

"There is something in it!" Frances insisted. "It might be something jolly valuable, too." She frowned as if.

"Perhaps," she added, "it's got a secret opening. Anyway, I'll jolly well going to find out!"

"Oh, rubbish!" she snarled. "Bessie presumably has got it. But you can't, you know! There's nothing in it, of course—as if anybody would hide a draw— Oh, rubbish! Anyway, you can't have it," she asserted stoutly, "because I found it first. It's mine!"

Frances sniffed.

"Tell that to the Marjins!"

"But I did find it!" Bessie cried indignantly. "Didn't I, Bessie?"

"Well, Bessie certainly told us about it," Bessie nodded. "She said she put it back in the night—and it has never fallen out again."

"Then why, if she found it," Frances asked, with a disbelieving sneer, "should she have hidden it again?"

"Well— Bessie said— Well—"

"Anyway, it's mine—until the owner turns up!" Bessie broke in. "Give it to me!"

"Yes, do hand it over, Frances," Bessie begged.

"Fiddlesticks!" Frances sneered.

"My hat, I must say you three have got a nerve! If you'd just found half-a-crown, and I said I'd found it first and hidden it, would you hand it over to me? Not likely! Anyway, I don't believe you ever set eyes on it till this minute. If Bessie had found it in the first place, Bessie would be showing the news all over the school. It's mine, and I'm keeping it. I'm jolly well going to find out what's hidden inside it, too. Bye-bye!"

"Bessie, did—don't let her have it!"

Bessie wailed as Frances moved away. "Don't—!"

"Bessie let her go. Her face, like Bessie's, was rather anxious then. She knew well what would happen if proof, vindictive Frances found that certificate signed with Bessie Bessie's name. Frances had the head of hammer which would impel her to pass it on to Miss Charmant, and there would be trouble in plenty for Bessie then. Bessie ran after her.

"Frances, wait a minute. Just—just wait!" she called. "Look here, will you lend it to me?"

"So you can have first pop?" Frances sneered. "Not likely!"

And, leaving behind away, she ran towards the school.

"Oh, mourning hat!" Bessie gasped.

"Oh, dear—dear! Bessie, supposing she finds it?"

"Come on!" Bessie said. "We're going to be present at the opening ceremony. Whatever happens, Frances mustn't get that certificate. We—"

And then she passed again, as, from the doorway, a pleasant voice rang out:

"Barbara! Bessie! Mabel! Please! Just a minute!"

They all spun round, looking towards the pretty, graceful figure of the mistress, who now came towards them. It was Miss Charmant, the popular mistress of the Fourth.

"I've been looking for you three everywhere," she announced. "I've got a little surprise for you—a pleasant one. I hope Barbara knew would you and Bessie and Mabel like to come to my party on Saturday?"

"Party!" Bessie asked, and her eyes danced. "Oh, Miss Charmant, you don't mean—"

The mistress laughed.

"It's my birthday," she announced. "I'd love to be able to invite more girls, but as it's to be only a small party, I've afraid it's impossible this year. It's going to be just a happy little spread, with a few games and a little entertainment, and so forth; but I'm sure you will enjoy yourselves. Dick's brother, Harry Osborne, and Dick's brother will also be there," she added, "and so, of course, will my sister Jean. Perhaps you could help the entertainment party by doing a few impressions, Mabel?"

"Yes, rather!"

"And I," Bessie cried delightedly, "could do some of my jolly wonderful ventriloquizing, you know?"

"That's lovely!" Miss Charmant delightedly beamed. "I can come to you about anything," she said, "don't go and do anything which will mean a disputation or something. I'm going to rely on you three to help make this party a success."

With a smile she turned off, leaving the three chums flushed with delight. For a moment that delight again overshadowed their worry. Bessie giggled.

"I say, you know, fancy asking just all! It will be slipping, won't it? I'll hope," she said brightly, "they have coffee for tea—with real butter, you know. It's been ages since I had hot buttered toast!"

"It's a bit warm for coffee," Bessie laughed. "But won't it be lovely to see Harry Osborne and Dick Fairbrother again?"

"And Mr. and Mrs. Charmant," Mabel enthused. "How I say— Oh, my hat, that jolly party!" she added in appreciative alarm. "We've just got to get hold of that now!"

Bessie gulped, realizing full well that if that certificate were discovered there would be no Miss Charmant party for her, at least. In an anxious group they

made their way back into the school. Clara Trevilly, the Tombler of the Fifth, met them as they came in.

"Bessie, I say—"

"Just a minute," Bessie said anxiously. "See you later," she added urgently to Clara. "Come on, kids!"

She sped up the stairs. Along the Fourth form corridor she hurried her chums. Frances' study—No. 11—which the girls shared with Eleanor Clarke and Faith Ashton, was the last in the row and a little detached from the rest.

"At Bessie's reveal it she saw that the door was slightly ajar, and instinctively she passed, throwing on a warning hand as a signal to her two anxious chums to come no further. Frances was by the window, a frown on her brow; a possibility in one hand and the ju-ju in the other. Bessie heard her irritable voice.

"Dash the thing! How does it open?" she fumed. "I'll have to go and get a chisel."

"Quick!" Bessie whispered, and with a swift and pushed open the door of the study next door. "She's going out!"

Just in time they all slipped into that study—fortunately unobserved—as from Study No. 12 there came a clamping sound, followed by the squeaking of the hinges of Frances' door.

Breathlessly they waited until Frances' steps had died away down the corridor, and then, at a nod from Bessie, slipped into Study No. 12. She made for the table, on which, of course, she fully expected to see the ju-ju resting. But of the idol there was no sign.

"Just like Frances," she said. "She would hide it before she went out. So it can't be far. Bessie, around, kids!"

They "rusted" around. Bessie opened a drawer with such feverish eagerness that she crashed the sash; it contained on it to the floor. A previous minute was wasted collecting it together again, and then Mabel attacked the desk. But of the ju-ju there was no trace.

"Oh, kid-grams!" she snarled, having taken it with her? Bessie snarled.

"I shouldn't think so," Bessie declared. "Now, where?" she added thoughtfully, and started round. Then she gave a little cry of joy as her eyes fastened upon the coal-burn. "There we are!" she cried.

"And— Oh, great success, here comes Frances!" gasped Mabel as a hurried step sounded in the corridor again.

Bessie, grabbing up the ju-ju, turned—just too late. There came a little spluttering gasp from Frances, a stifled gasp from Mabel, as the doorway was reached, various bits of the table disappeared, Frances glared.

"And what the diabolical— she shrieked, white. And then she saw the ju-ju under Bessie's arm. "Put that down!" she snarled.

But Bessie, at that moment, was in no mood to put the ju-ju down. What Bessie's snarling and her face, however, Bessie's attention had been attracted, and she, in fact, was what looked for it or who had it; still that dangerous document was in their hands again, however, she was taking no risk.

Quickly she nodded to Mabel. With a swift look of her arm she flung the ju-ju in her direction, at the same moment yelling:

"Look at the window!"

Frances' white-hot gaze, starting towards the window. Mabel also had caught the ju-ju, made a dash for the door. But just in time Frances realized the need to fall back. Quickly she turned, and, grabbing Mabel by the shoulder, flung her back into the room.

Mable, although, went barging against Bessie, who in turn stumbled over the bench, and with a howl went sliding backwards to become wedged in the empty fire-grate. Then feverishly Frances made a dart at the ja-ju.

"Babe!" shrieked Mable.

"Oh, crumbs, I'm stuck!" bellowed Bessie. "I'm kik-squashed! Wow!"

And, making frantic attempts to extricate herself, Bessie heaved herself back, and, catching her head against the back of the fire-grate, hoisted herself as she banged her head against the wall. Alas, for poor Bessie! At the same moment was dislodged a quantity of soot, and in a flash a shrieking Bessie had changed into a black-faced, spluttering Bessie.

But nobody noticed. Babe was darting to Mable's rescue. Frances had had a hand on one end of the ja-ju; Mable was desperately grappling with the other.

Something had to go, and something did when Babe added her efforts to Mable's pull. The combined strength of Mable and Babe pulled the ja-ju completely out of Frances' grasp, and Frances, with a cry, went flying backwards just as the door opened and in came—

—Rona Fox, duty prefect for the day.

"Good!" gasped Rona, as Frances snatched her satchels and ferociously grabbed that girl, whirled her across the room just as frantic and unscrupulous Bessie, extricating herself from the fire-grate, was staggering to her feet.

Into Bessie Frances crashed, and Bessie, with a stifled wail, went back into the fireplace, to become wedged there more firmly than ever. Fiercely Rona glared round.

"And what," she demanded, "is the meaning of all this? Bessie, you idiot, get up!"

"Oh, kik-kik-crumbs!" stammered Bessie. "I was—wish I kik-could, you know! I'm all-stuck!"

"Then," ground Rona, "unstick yourself, idiot, and go to the bathroom and wash yourself at once! Barbara, help her out," she ordered peremptorily.

Dimly, Bessie helped up the quivering Bessie. There was a silence at Bessie, moaning and spluttering

not, staggered out of the room. Bona, arms akimbo, stood by the door.

"Well!" she demanded.

"Those—those thieves!" Frances panted. "They're trying to pinch my African ja-ju!"

"It's not her ja-ju," Babe asserted hotly. "It's Bessie's. Bessie found it first."

"Bessie didn't find it!" shrieked Frances. "I found it! It was in the crypt. Bessie only found out she'd found it when she saw me with it!"

"Is that so?" Rona's eyes glinted. "If that thing was found on school property, it belongs to neither of you. I'll take charge of it. And meantime, all fear of you can do fifty lines each for making such a stink. Barbara, hand that thing over to me."

"Beh, Rona—" stammered Babe.

"Hand it over!" Rona almost roared.

Babe gulped. In dismay she looked at Mable. In fury Frances clenched her hands as Bona, stepping forward, plucked the ja-ju from Babe's grasp. Then Bona stared as she looked at it. With a little gleam in her eyes she shook it. Her face was keen suddenly.

"What's in this?" she asked.

"How should we know?" Babe said.

"Frances, what is it in this?"

"I don't know," Frances moaned.

"That's what I was trying to find out!" Rona groaned.

"Really!" she chuckled. "Then perhaps—as she looked at the image—"I can see you the trouble." And while Babe and Mable apart dropped, she nodded her head. "Now clear out of this!"

"But Rona—" gasped Babe, and then pined in utter consternation.

For at that moment a loud clanging rang through the school.

It was the summons to lessons.

Miss Primrose Takes Charge!



"YOU are not paying attention, Bessie!" Miss Primrose observed faintly. "Really, Bessie, you are a most inebriated girl."

Lessons in the Fourth Form classroom were in progress.

At no time were lessons exactly popular with the Fourth. Some they half-heartedly liked, some they tolerated, some they detested. Under the "detested" list, Miss Ballivan's mathematics easily took first place—partly owing to the subject itself, but more particularly because of its exponent.

Nobody in the class-room ever collected more lines than Bessie during Miss Ballivan's lessons. She had been lined immediately on Miss Ballivan's entrance because she had run away in the Fourth Form corridor; she had received three sets of other lines for inattention; and appeared, that afternoon, to be well on the way to breaking line-collecting records. But in spite of that, Bessie, the moment Miss Ballivan's attention switched away from her, seemed to lapse once again into utter preoccupation.

She blinked furiously now.

"Oh, kik-crumbs! What did you mean, Miss Ballivan?"

"I asked," Miss Ballivan, answered tartly, "what is on your mind!"

"Oh, non-nothing!" Bessie feebly faltered.

"Well, that's true," Lydia Crossendale whispered, with a chuckle. "You can't have anything on a vacuum."

"Lydia, do not whisper! Now, Bessie, it is obvious your mind is not on lessons at all. You will take a further twenty lines!"

"Oh dad-dear!" sighed Bessie. "Thank-thank's two hundred, you know! I got fifty from Bona Fox."

"The next time I have cause to call your attention to lessons, I shall give you a block most!" Miss Ballivan promised.

Wofully and unhappily Bessie sighed. Babe and Mable looked at her sympathetically.

That afternoon it was just impossible for Bessie to concentrate. Even terror of Miss Ballivan could not prevent her mind from wandering.

For Bessie was thinking of the ja-ju which was now in Rona Fox's possession.

She had arrived back from the bath-room just in time to hear the tidings of the African ja-ju's confiscation from Babe, and Bessie was filled with alarm. Rona was just as curious and wary as



VASTLY interested, Rona held the little image near her ear and shook it. "What's in this?" she asked. "How should we know?" Babe said. But, of course, Babe DID know, and for Bessie's sake she was dreading that the prefect would discover the secret, too.

image you are so unsuccessfully trying to conceal behind your back, but to play this trick upon Bessie. Bessie, you are detained for Saturday."

Bessie jumped.
"And please," Miss Primrose ordered, "give me that image."

"Give it to me!" Miss Primrose repeated.

With a groan Bessie handed it over. Bessie's eyes glittered.

"That?" Miss Primrose said, frowning. "How—very quaint! How extremely interesting! Bessie, where was this found?"

"In the crypt," Bessie said. "Frances Frost found it. Frances," she added, "says there's something in it, and you can hear something rattling inside if you shake it. Miss Primrose."

"Oh, likelihood! But that's silly, you know," Bessie said, in horror. "It's just an old wood. I know—ha, ha—because I carved it myself, you know?"

"Bessie, please do not be so ridiculous," Miss Primrose snapped. "There is certainly something in this, and it will be interesting to discover what. And yet I do not see the slightest sign of an opening. I really must inform Professor Wallace about this and ask him to come and have a look at it."

"Oh, crumbs!" Bessie gulped.
"In the meantime," Miss Primrose added, "so it was found on the school premises and its ownership is doubtful, I will take charge of it. Bessie, you may go."

"Yes, Miss Primrose. But—but—"

"At once!" Miss Primrose informed her. "And please remember, Bessie, you are detained for Saturday. Bessie, take her away."

And, leaving Miss Primrose still intently studying the *ja-ju*, poor Bessie was led away by the porter.

Mobs to the Rescue!



"YOU were a cheap," Barbara Bedford said grudgingly, "to draw the silly caricature, in the first place, Bessie!"

Bessie Hunter miserably nodded.

"Yes, Bessie, I know."
"And you were an idiot to hide it in that *ja-ju* in the second place," Mabel said sternly.

"Yes, too—"
"And now—" Bessie said, with a worried sigh, "the *ja-ju* just seems to be flying from hand to hand, and every fresh owner wants to open the thing."

Bessie Hunter groaned.
"And to say everything, you've got two hundred lines, with black marks, one detraction, and now out of Miss Charmant's party?" Bessie went on.

"And if the caricature's found you'll probably get sent home for the rest of the term," Mabel added.

Bessie almost collapsed.
The room was tea in Study No. 4. But it was a tea which the usually cheery occupants of that apartment had hardly touched. It was a tea which Bessie's dilemma completely overshadowed, and a tea which had to be followed by the disastrous task of writing the lines which the *ja-ju* from Sylvia had secured the three of them.

But it was impossible, of course, to be really angry with poor old Bessie.

"There's only one thing to do," Bessie declared. "Get the *ja-ju* back."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mabel Lynn hollowly. "How?"

There was a long silence in Study No. 4. Then Bessie suddenly had an idea.

"I've got it!" she cried. "Supposing I suggested to Miss Ayre, the art mistress, that we sketch the *ja-ju* at drawing lessons to-morrow? Once it was in the art room—"

"I say, that's more like it!" Mabel approved. "Once it was in the art room—"

"Then," Bessie said, "it would be easy to get Miss Ayre off the scene for a bit—or ask to inspect the thing first hand—and we might hit on the secret of opening it. Anyway, it's a whimsical

reference to listen to the idea of encircling your detraction."

Bessie groaned.
"For goodness' sake, Barbara, don't you do anything to get a detraction!" continued Miss Charmant. "Nor you, Mabel. I heard that both of you have been getting loose to-day."

"Yes," laughed Bessie. "But—but they couldn't be helped, you know, Bessie, you can rely on us, Miss Charmant."

"I do hope so," the mistress said. "Bessie, my dear, there is no pleasure I didn't really come to school one-day to tell you how disappointed I was."



HILDA RICHARDS REPLIES

To some of her wazy correspondents and says how very, very sorry she is that, owing to lack of space, these little letters have been held up so long.

MADLINE FRANK (Greenwich, Scotland).—Here is the first reply you so wanted, Madeline. Little Deborah Kempton is a very lovely and talented ballet dancer.

JAN RICHMOND (Lancashire, Birmingham).—I was very glad to receive your letter, Jan. You would be in the Lower Third if you went to Cliff House. Jane is very well, thank you, and sends a few-shake to Mabel.

ROBERT WINTERBROOK (East Ham, E.M.).—You would be in the Second Form at Cliff House, my dear. Jonathan is aged 14 years 9 months, and Berie Underly is aged 12 months. Bessie's home is in North London.

ALICE GIBSON (Glasgow, Canada).—You would be in the Upper Third Form, Anne. Yes, Miss Charmant is Miss Charmant's sister. Patricia's address is exactly the same as mine, and I know she'll be delighted to hear from you.

CLARE MORTON (Glasgow, Scotland).—Clare's two greatest chums are Marjorie and Bessie. Bessie is very fond of Jimmy Richmond—whose age, by the way, is 14 years 10 months. Write again soon, won't you?

ALICE GIBSON (Glasgow, Scotland).—Marjorie is aged 14 years 5 months, and Bessie 14 years 5 months. Little Deborah, the youngest girl at Cliff House, is aged only 1 year 4 months. Hoping to hear from you again soon.

FAT BOBBIE (Aldingham, Croydon).—Here, at last, is the printed reply I promised you, Fat. How are you two just getting on? I hope they're both up, and that they'll write to me soon.

MARY DAVIES (Bedford, Somerset).—Kathie Hunter, of the Second, is Bessie Hunter's sister. Bessie, of course, is a Sixth Former. Write again when you have time, won't you?

JOAN PRICE (Buckley Heath, Kent).—I've answered of your queries to Joan, but here is the printed reply for which you asked. I hope you'll be willing to let me again soon.

ALICE LYNN'S ANSWERS (Glasgow, Edinburgh).—If you went to Cliff House, my dear, you'd be in the Upper Third Form, and your Form-mistress would be Miss Sylvia Bruce. Write again soon, won't you?

worth— "Come in!" she added, as there was a tap at the door, and they all rose as Miss Charmant entered. Her face was rather reproachful.

"Sit down, please!" she said. "Bessie, I have just heard what has happened—"

"Oh dear!" sighed Bessie.
"And I must say," Miss Charmant said, "that I am disappointed. Bessie, I especially wanted you to come to the party, because my parents are so keen on having your contributions. I have just spoken to Miss Primrose, but she is so anxious to hear you that she just

she called and left the room."
"Yes, old Charmant," Bessie said. "And poor old Bessie! Still, never mind the party for the time being. If we can get this *ja-ju* business straightened out we might even be able to get the party straightened out, too. You off to see Miss Ayre?"

And off, at once, she went. Miss Ayre, with her usual attentive interest, received her in the art-room. But when Bessie made her request, she shook her head.

"I'm afraid it's impossible, Barbara—at least, for the time being. Next

terms, perhaps, we may use the jaja as a model, but to narrow I am starting a series of drawing-from-life classes, and to introduce a jaja into that would completely upset my plans. All the same, thanks for the suggestion."

"Incidentally Babe! heard such. But she won't listen."

"Then—then do you think," she ventured, "you—you might ask Miss Frimrose to lend the jaja to me for— for private lessons? I'd just love to draw it."

"I'm sorry, but I couldn't even do that," Miss Ayns said, and for a moment looked at her curiously. "Miss Frimrose is so certain that the thing is valuable and contains some secret that I am sure she will allow nobody but an expert to touch it. Apart from that," she added, "Miss Frimrose already suspects you and Bonnie and Mabel of having some motive in trying to capture possession of it. I hope, Barbara, that you did not make the suggestion that we use it at drawing lesson with such an idea in view?"

"Oh dear, so—as if I'd even thought of such a thing?" Babe countered.

But she knew by the tremble in Miss Ayns' eyes that the mistress did not altogether swallow that, and she left the room feeling that the African image had become more impossible than ever.

At the same time, Miss Ayns' words had given her the glimmering of a new idea. Miss Frimrose would only allow an expert to touch it, would she? Miss Frimrose, then, was apparently saving up the jaja until the arrival of some such expert. Hm!

Bonnie greeted when the news of the failure was received. Mabel looked glum. Without saying anything further, the three of them sat down to lunch, but also Babe and Mabel were fidgeting long before Buster had succeeded for even half of her task. Babe made some excuse to get Mabel out of the room. Bonnie looked at them longingly as they passed towards the door.

"Oh, kid-creeds! I see—see, don't you?" she murmured.

"We shall be long," Babe said. "Just going down to the tobacshop, Bonnie. To get you some chocolate. What would you like—milk or plain?"

"Oh, milk, please!" Bonnie said, brightening. "Mmm—milk it half a pound each, Babe—with nuts and raisins in."

Babe smiled. With Mabel she went out. The tobacshop, when they reached it, was deserted, and after buying Bonnie her chocolate, Babe took her golden-haired slave on one side. Mabel knew that something was in the wind, and glanced at her curiously.

"Well," she asked, "what's it about? That jaja?"

"That's it," Babe said. "I think we can get hold of it. But it depends this time on you, Mabel—on rather, upon your skill as an actress. If Primrose meets a real expert who can talk about that jaja, Primrose will probably be so impressed that she'll let the expert take the jaja away for a private examination. You get me?"

"My hat!" Mabel breathed. "And you mean—"

"I mean," Babe said, "that to-morrow morning, Mabel, you're going to turn yourself into—Miss Matilda Skimmerdale—the expert! Mmm—m!"

Babe added, "we're both going to advertise. Miss Matilda Skimmerdale—like the name!—for all we're worth, so that when she turns up at the school to-morrow there'll be no surprise. Apart from that," Babe went on, "you're got to go now to the library

and wrap up everything you possibly can about idols, African customs, jaja and so on, so that you'll be able to talk when the time comes. But get a word," she cautioned, "and especially not a word to dear old Ben."

"Although," Mabel grinned, "it's all to save old Ben! Right—right, Babe! I'm with you. And this time," she added, "we'll make a real go of it. I can do it! I'm sure. That's settled then."

And settled, from that moment, the daring scheme was.

The "Expert" Arrives!



"MISS SKIMMERS-DALK," Barbara Redfern said, drawing Miss Frimrose, who everybody knew her? she asked.

The name was the Fourth Form Common-room; the time half an hour later, Bonnie, sustained by the chocolate which Babe and Mabel had brought back for her, was still plodding through her lines in Study No. 4; Mabel was up in the library reading books on Africa as hard as she could go. Half a dozen girls hurried to stare at Babe as she uttered that question.

"And who's Miss Skimmerdale when she's at home?" Clara Tworbyn wanted to know.

"Oh, don't you know?" Babe asked innocently. "She lives at Christopher Cottage in Friarstable, you know. A great friend of mine. She's an awfully nice person—and young, too, it is so jolly clever! I'll bet she'd solve the mystery of that silly jaja in about two ticks."

"Why, does she know anything about it?" asked Frances Frost.

"No," said Mabel, laughing. "Everything," she stated simply. "Why, she's one of England's experts on such matters."

"Funny that nobody's ever heard of her then," Frances sniffed. "Not making her up, by any chance?" she asked, with an offensive sneer.

"Oh, no!" Clara said warmly. "Why should Babe make her up? All the same, if you do know her, Babe, I should think Primrose would be jolly pleased for her to give that jaja a look over. Everybody's jolly keen now to know what's in it."

Perhaps that was a slight exaggeration of the real feeling of the school towards the contents of the strangely discovered African jaja. All Cliff House knew about it by this time, of course; but all Cliff House by no means knew that Bonnie Hunter had been its original discoverer.

In view of the fact that the jaja was so hopelessly out of their hands, Babe and Mabel had thought it wise to suppress that bit of information, and since Frances was keen on obtaining the honor of having found it, they were content, for the time being at any rate, to let any credit that might be due go to her.

The great thing—the one thing, so far as Babe & Co. were concerned—was to recover that caricature from the jaja.

But Cliff House, as a whole, was interested. Most of the girls would like to know the secret of that little wooden image.

"You say," Jean Cartwright asked, "that she's a friend of yours, Babe?"

"Oh, real! One of my greatest friends," Babe nodded. "You'd never think, to look at her, what a lot she knows about savage tribes and all that." "I've never seen her at the school," Frances said.

"No?" Babe shrugged. "Well, I don't suppose you've ever brought all your friends to school. As a matter of fact, she has been to the school and knows her way about quite well. I wonder— Ah!" she added, as Lady Patricia Northman, duty perfect for the day, came in on her rounds. "Here's Pat. I'll bet Pat's heard of Miss Skimmerdale, haven't you, Pat?"

"No," Lady Pat said. "But she sounds interesting. Who is she?"

Babe had a smile. Nobody could guess by that smile that she had timed the opening of her Miss Skimmerdale campaign to coincide with the entrance of a prefect, her plan, of course, being to interest that prefect so that the news would be passed on to Miss Frimrose. Unconsciously, Lady Pat fell for it.

"Well, I certainly think Miss Frimrose would like to see your Miss Skimmerdale, Barbara," she said, when she had listened to the glowing report Babe gave of Miss Skimmerdale's scientific activities. "I happen to know Miss Frimrose is frightfully interested in that jaja. I'll mention it to her when I take in my reports."

"All the same," Frances protested, doubtful and suspicious. "I still say it's jolly funny you've never heard of this Skimmerdale woman before."

But Frances was ignored in the general interest Babe's announcement had caused.

Frances did not like being ignored. Scowling, she followed Lady Pat out and leaped up to the library to change her book. As usual, Miss Belling, the senior assistant mistress of the school, was there, and one girl, who, with her back towards Frances, was seated at a desk rather feverishly poring over the pages of a bulky volume.

Frances' eyes gleamed at the recognized Mabel Lytin. Boldly she stepped up to her, with curious interest peered over her shoulder at the book which was engaging her attention.

The page which Mabel was reading contained a photograph of a wooden African image very similar to the one which, Frances had convinced herself by this time, was her property. A grin crossed her lips.

"Nothing, isn't it, Mabel? Didn't hear you were an initiate in jaja-ism." With a guilty start, Mabel shut the book and wheeled round.

"Pretty dull stuff for you to read, isn't it?" Frances asked again.

"Well," Mabel countered defensively, "why not? I was just reading about jaja-ism, of course. Everybody's interested in Miss Frimrose's jaja—"

"My jaja!" Frances scowled. "I found it!"

"Well, yours, then. A jolly interesting subject, too. Anyway, thanks for the book, Miss Belling," she added, as she handed it to the mistress, and, with a quick smile in Frances' direction, hurried out of the room. A dozen yards along the corridor she met a beaming-faced Babe.

"Babe—"

"It's worked!" Babe checked. "I told Pat about Miss Skimmerdale, and now the Head wants to see me. More use in the main-room," she added smiling, as Frances came out of the library.

Mabel checked. She tripped off. To the main-room she went, and there tried to encourage the somewhat doubtful ideas she had gleaned on the subject of African jaja-ism. Jaja-ism in Africa, apparently, were common. Jaja-ism had a variety of uses, and was also the symbol of many tribal rites. Jaja-ism were thought to be magic things. Jaja—

The door opened. Babe came in. Her face was one broad smile.

"Done it!" she gurgled. "Close the door, Babe. Primmy fell for it, just drank it in, and she's given me permission to go off now and try to persuade Miss Skimmerdale to come along to the school to-morrow morning. Jolly lucky," she added, "there are no lessons to-morrow morning, so if I make the time somewhere about half-past ten that will give you time to sleep all immediately after breakfast and make up in the old hat at Friarisle, O.K.?"

"Absolutely," Babe said. "But—"

"But what?"

"I've been thinking," Babe replied, "perhaps it will be just as well if, when I arrive to-morrow morning, you be off the scene, Babe. I believe Frances has to sleep, wear spectacles, but, of course, she never can't possibly guess all the news that would be safe if we didn't see each other until afterwards. I'll carry the thing through—"

"But, Babe, you—you can't be any rick! If you're caught—"

"Trust me," Babe said confidently. "I won't be caught. Anyway, anything's better than Babe's respiratory being heard. Now, you burn off and make your babe appointments."

Babe bowed off, while Babe went along to keep Babe company. Half an hour later Babe returned, and, pointing as she to Miss Skimmerdale, would arrive about half-past ten the following morning.

Prap bell was ringing then, and, with a wry smile, poor Babe finished the rest of her lines and did her prep, and then, utterly exhausted, succeeded in the ascendant until call-over. After call-over came bed. Babe had no sooner closed into bed than she fell fast asleep.

So far she had heard not a word about the forthcoming visit of Miss Skimmerdale.

Not that Babe had been in a mood to pay attention to the rumors and the whispers which were going the rounds. Babe had been considering, to-day, it was had enough being in the "old's" and Primmy's bad books, but it was worse to think of that lively party of Miss Chatterbox's she was going to miss, and it was just dreadful to feel what would happen when that African image was opened.

The threat of the ja-jis passed upon her mind like a dull weight. Even Babe and Babe, it seemed, could not help her. Her own eager hope was that somebody would steal the ja-jis, or that it would be burned up by fire or something.

Next morning Babe awoke, pale and tired in spite of her sleep, and at breakfast, seemingly enough, never even thought of asking for a second helping of cornflakes. Babe, observing her troubled state of mind, smiled softly.

"Cheer up, Babe!" she said.

"Oh, grandma! What is there to cheer up about!" Babe asked dully.

"Come to the turk-shop!" Babe brightly invited.

"I—I don't want to go to the turk-shop!" Babe said firmly.

"Haha! but tip."

"Still thinking about that silly ja-jis—"

Babe successfully nodded.

"Well, cheer up!" Babe said. "I've got an idea, Babe, that nothing will happen. Wouldn't it be lovely, for instance, if this afternoon, say, you found that silly caricature back in your hands and nobody say the wiser! Anyway, if you won't come to the turk-

shop, come along to Little Side and watch the cricket practice!"

But Babe refused to fall even for that bait. She drifted away. Familiar instinct took her steps towards the turk-shop, and there she sat down in one of the chairs which stood outside. Then she started up again as Babe, a case in hand, came hurrying down the drive.

"Oh, hello, Babe! I say, where are you going?"

"Oh, just for a walk," Babe said, for Babe, of course, was bound for the hat in Friarisle Woods, where she intended to transform into Miss Matilda Skimmerdale.

"I'll come with you. I'm fed-up morning around here, you know. A walk will do me good, you know."

"But, Babe—" Babe cried in alarm.

"Clear on!" Babe said.

Babe blinked. She hadn't counted on this. For obvious reasons, Babe had been left out of the secret. Babe, at

as soon as she saw Polly, she hurried out through the school gates.

It was not a long walk to the woodman's hut, and in less than a quarter of an hour Babe had reached the place. She went in, carefully placing a prop of wood behind the door to guard against intruders, and then opened her case, drawing forth its contents.

On a table she laid a hat, a thin slip adorned with a bow at the back, a pair of thick spectacles, and a pair of dark-tinted shoes. Also a make-up box and mirror.

With a shudder, Babe got to work. If Babe Boyer was an expert ventriloquist, Babe Lynn was no less expert with her make-up box—so expert, indeed, that several times in the past she had actually deceived Babe herself.

In a few moments the youthful features of Babe Lynn had entirely disappeared. In their place now appeared a quite good-looking face of a woman of twenty-five or thereabouts, very medium and thoughtful. On went



"Do you think," Babe ventured, "you—you might ask Miss Primrose to lend the ja-jis to me for—private lessons? I'd just love to draw it." Bewilderedly, she awaited the art mistress' reply.

the best of times, was such an unguarded duffer in the things she said that it was never safe to trust her with a secret, even though in this case that secret was being kept for Babe's own good. And Babe, obviously, had made up her mind.

Apart from that, Frances Frost could not be seen hurrying out of the school.

"All right, Babe," she said. "Of course you can come. I—I'd love you to come, really. But don't you think you ought to go and see to Polly?"

"Yes, Polly."

"In the pet's house," Babe nodded, referring to Babe's beloved, if ancient, parrot. "I think you ought to, Mrs. Foggy old Polly," she added. "Well, go and have a look at him!"

Babe goggled. But that was enough for her. Anything wrong with Babe's position Polly was so serious a matter as anything being wrong with Babe herself, in a parrot she turned; in a parrot she saw. Babe smiled a little, wondering if that wasn't rather an unkind trick to play. Then, reflecting that Babe would be reassured

the wig, brightening the effect. On went the spectacles.

"And that, I think, will just about do," Babe chuckled in her reflection.

"Miss Skimmerdale—"

She put her school things into her case, carefully concealing it under a pile of socks in the corner, she went out, walking with long, stilted strides.

Arriving at the gate, she rang the bell of Piper's Lodge. The porter came out.

"Yes, we're in," he asked.

"Er—I believe Miss Primrose would like to see me," Babe said, uttering a high-pitched voice. "I am Miss Matilda Skimmerdale."

"Ho, yes!" Piper good for in some way. "Which Miss Primrose is waiting now," he said, "and which it's my instructions to take you right up."

Babe inwardly grinned again. Piper had no suspicion. She followed him. Past the pet's house they went, just as Babe Buster, having spent half an hour with Polly, came out again. With Babe was Frances Frost.

"Hello!" Frances said, spying Babe's

two-doll figure. "That must be the expert."

"The—oh what?" Bessie asked.

"You know her, surely? Babs says that she's a pal of hers."

"Oh, really? I've not never seen her before in my life," Bessie said. "If you ask me, she's rather a tramp. Anyway, what's she supposed to be an expert in?"

And Bessie almost fell down as Frances gave her reply.

"She's supposed to be an expert in African ju-ju," she said, "and she's come, by arrangement with Babs, to open that wooden image!"

Only Babs Left!



"A. H., come in! Sit down, Miss Skimmerdale," Miss Primrose greeted in a little confusion. "It's very kind of you to call."

"It's a pleasure," Mabel assumed her cheerfully.

"I heard about you from Barbara Redfern. I had no idea," Miss Primrose said pleasantly, "that we had such an authority in the neighbourhood."

"That is one of you, Miss Primrose," Mabel murmured.

"Of course, you will have an expert knowledge of the various objects and articles which the natives use!" Miss Primrose went on.

"A rather peculiar figure has come into my hands about which I am anxious to get some expert advice. I must confess my own lack of experience in such matters, and since this seems to be something out of the ordinary I would be glad if you would look at it. I believe it is what is known as a ju-ju."

"Ah!" Mabel said profoundly, and thrilled as Miss Primrose produced the ju-ju in question from brown paper wrappings. "Malogogwonga!" she added.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Malogogwonga is the name of the tribe who made it," Mabel answered. "A very brave, war-like tribe from the African Congo. A tribe, moreover, Miss Primrose, which indulges in mysterious rites and which has a terrific belief in magic. That wait," she added, with such deliberation that Miss Primrose jumped. "I trust, Miss Primrose, that neither you nor any of your girls has handled that ju-ju for any considerable length of time?"

"Why, goodness, yes!" Miss Primrose's face turned pale. "You—you don't mean to say—"

"I don't," Mabel said, with a frown. "But I'd advise anyone who finds these things not to handle them. The Malogogwonga ju-ju are usually covered with strange substances."

"Oh, good goodness!" Miss Primrose stammered. "I—I had no idea—"

"I trust," Mabel asked, "that your hands do not irritate—and have no rash on them?"

"Why, no! Bless my soul!"—and Miss Primrose looked at her hands. "I am not sure," she gasped. "I—Dear me!"

"Do not worry!" Mabel said. "Please, Miss Primrose. On the other hand, I think it is scarcely safe to handle this thing carelessly until it has been well cleaned. This is the sort of ju-ju in which those tribesmen often conceal their most secret medicines, and so forth, and it is usually provided with a hollow cavity, covered with a carefully concealed lid, which can only be opened by secret methods."

"Why," Miss Primrose cried, "that

is exactly what we are all so intrigued about, Miss Skimmerdale. Let us see if we can open it."

Francis outside the door came a low moan. Bessie Baxter was standing there. Bessie, frightened out of her wits by Frances' information, had rushed straight up to the Head's room, and Bessie was listening to every word of that conversation.

Now the showdown was here! Another few seconds and the lidless caricature signed by herself would surely be revealed.

Wild alarm filled Bessie. She forgot suddenly where she was, when she had intended to do. Without a second thought she opened the door and rushed into the room.

"Miss Papp-Primrose, please!" she gasped. "The master's open (through breadbasket)." "How dare you interrupt when I have a visitor? And why, pray, should the figure not be opened?"

"Because a lady (she may jump out!" Bessie stammered. "Or—a man—make—or a creature, or something! Oh dear-dear!" she added presently, and backed away as Miss Primrose began angrily to advance towards her.

"Stupid girl! Go at once!" Miss Primrose thundered.

Bessie blinked nervously, cold terror taking her. She retreated; she did not see the chair behind her as she stepped back—until she had crumpled right into it.

Bessie, with some vague idea that she was being attacked from the rear as well as menaced from the front, jumped forward. As she did so, the chair skidded and, with a cry, Bessie reeled against Mabel.

"Help!" yelled Bessie, and clung to her.

And then, even in that moment of panic, she staggeringly gasped. For as Mabel stumbled, Bessie saw the wig she wore shift to one side. In an instant Mabel's hand went up, adjusting it.

Next second Miss Primrose had Bessie by the shoulder. Before the pleated duffel could say or do anything she had found herself in the corridor outside.

"Now go!" Miss Primrose thundered. And Bessie, with a dazed glare through the door at the dighted Mabel, scottered away. Had she been descending?

"Crumbs! She—she had a wig on!" she muttered to herself.

She drifted along the corridor. As the door of the Fourth Form Conservatory was the first she found open, she tumbled into that. Half a dozen girls were there, among them Frances Frost. She started as Bessie came in.

"What's the matter with you?"

"She—she's a fat-lake!" muttered Bessie.

"Who's a lake?"

"That woman! That expert, you know? Bessie's eyes glowered. "She's in there now, looking at the ju-ju! She's got a wig on!"

"No!" cried Joan Charmant.

"But she has! I saw it!" Bessie booted. "I—I happened to cannon into her. Prigmy didn't see it, but I did—trust a lynx-eyed Baxter! Her wig shifted."

"My hat!" breathed Frances.

"And if you ask me," Bessie gloomed, "she's just come to pinch that ju-ju!"

"Oh stuff! You're jolly well dressing!" sniffed Queen Cook. "Sorrow you jolly well right, anyway, for aping!"

"But I tell you—" booted Bessie.

But nobody was listening there—not even Frances. Frances's sudden astonished expression on her face, had

stepped outside. She was remembering the startling sleepiness with which support Miss Skimmerdale had been latched upon the surprised school last night—through Babs.

She was remembering that while Babs had been advertising Miss Skimmerdale, Mabel had been sweeting up ju-ju in the library.

This morning Mabel had gone off with a case while Babs had gone off to play cricket, and, according to Bessie Baxter, whom she had cunningly glimpsed, nobody knew Mabel Lynn's destination.

Lastly, Frances remembered that Mabel Lynn was the best imperator in the whole of Cliff House.

Meanwhile, in the Head's study Mabel had persuaded Miss Primrose that it would be useless for any but an expert to open the ju-ju, and she was wrapping the figure up in brown paper, careful to conceal her confusion. Bessie Baxter, at last, was saved!

"You're sure, Miss Primrose, you don't mind if I take it away?" the prompt. "I will let you have it back, of course, as soon as I have discovered the secret."

"No, please do take it away," Miss Primrose said quickly. "I had no idea the thing might be—dangerous. And when you return it, you will be, won't you, that any—any possible injurious substances have been removed from it?"

Mabel nodded. Confidently she tucked the parcel under her arm. As she moved towards the door Miss Primrose came with her to see her off to the railway. The door opened and Mabel turned, bidding out a hand.

"You have no idea, Miss Primrose, how interested I shall be in discovering the secret of this fetish," she purred. "I thank you again for so generously giving me the opportunity of examining it, and I assure you—"

And then, with Miss Primrose's hand still in hers, Mabel jumped. For suddenly along the corridor came a rush of feet. For a moment she stood rooted as she saw the jangling figure of Frances Frost. The next moment Frances was abreast of her, and Frances, in passing, shot out a hand. The hair Mabel turned as she felt her wig hit, and spectacles whisked from her head, and her own golden curls falling down.

Frances, who had been ready to dash on if she had made a mistake, came to a halt.

"Miss Primrose, look!" she shrieked. "Frances, how dare—" And then Miss Primrose saw Mabel and jumped. "My word! My gig-gig-goodness!"

"It's Mabel Lynn!" Frances flamed. "She was walking off with the ju-ju! Mabel has tricked you, Miss Primrose."

"I—I—" stammered Mabel, seeing the grim expression which composed the headmistress' face. "It—it was only a ju-ju, Miss Primrose, it's scattered locally, but glared at Frances. "I assure you—"

"You will assure me of nothing!" Miss Primrose rapped. "Give me that ju-ju! Frances, you may go. But you, Mabel!"—and her eyes seemed to bore into the dumfounded Mabel Lynn—"first you will apologise for 'playing the trick'!"

"Oh dear-dear! I—I'm awfully!" stammered Mabel.

"And next," Miss Primrose said, "you will tell me what you were going to do with this—this figure after you had walked off with it."

"Non-nothing."

"I am afraid," Miss Primrose said, "I cannot believe that. However, let it go. Since the figure seems to contain

with an extraordinary interest for you and your friends, Mabel, I will have it examined myself now—and by an expert I know—Professor Grant Wallace, one of the governors of the school. I will telephone and ask the professor to come along to-morrow. He is due to give his mid-term lecture, in any event. Meanwhile, Mabel, you will write me handwritten lines and will consider yourself detained for Saturday."

Mabel stared.
"Sun-Saturday?" she asked.
"Det. Miss Primrose."
"Saturday," Miss Primrose said.
"You will remain within school bounds with a special detention task. Now go."

And Mabel went, dithering, possessing her whole being. What a hopeless quest her glove whose had landed her too—thanks to Frances! Bonnie was to bring off. Bonnie, in fact, was wiser of than ever, for now the real expert was to be immediately summoned.

Groaning, Mabel went along to Study No. 4. She removed her disguise and dumped down into the armchair. What a mess—oh, what a mess! Just when she had been on the point of success. Just when—

The door opened. Miss Charmant looked in her face cold.

"Mabel!" she cried.
Mabel rose confusedly to her feet.
"I have just heard," Miss Charmant said—and the hurt on her face made Mabel hang her head. "To—no think that you could play such a foolish trick! So you, as well as Bonnie, have got yourself detained."

"Miss Charmant, I—I'm sorry."
"Your sorrow won't help matters," Miss Charmant said a little tightly. "It is obvious that my party is of far less interest to you than your own mysterious pranks. I am very disappointed," she added, and, turning crimson-faced Mabel on the verge of tears, she whisked out of the door.

Miss Charmant is Annoyed!



IT was a fan, far from happy trio which met in Study No. 4 half an hour later.

There was trouble too for both Bonnie and Mabel. But worst of all for poor Bonnie. For Miss Primrose, pouring her own suggestions into effect, had immediately got into telephonic communication with Professor Wallace, who had announced himself delighted to give his mid-term lecture on the morrow, and at the same time examine the mysterious tribal image from Africa.

As Mabel said, and as they all deplored, if anyone could discover the secret of opening that box, that was via the professor himself.

Mabel was sorry now that she had ever suggested the bright idea of Mabel representing "Miss Skins-and-skins." But not more sorry than Mabel herself. Bonnie, at last learning the true details of that escapade, was apologetic for the part she had played in its downfall; but what was the use of regretting now? As Mabel said—and said rather grimly:

"Well, we've just got to do something. We've got to get hold of that 10-10 before the professor handles it. Things are bad enough as it is, but I wish that calculator comes to light!"

"I give up, Mabel," Bonnie whispered.
"And the 10-10," Mabel said, frowning. "It is now in the possession of a case. I've just discovered that. And the case is locked and the key is in Primmy's



"I'll come with you," Bonnie offered. "A wisp-walk will do me good, you know." "But, Bonnie—" Mabel cried in alarm; for the last person she wanted with her was the phony duffer. It would never do for Bonnie to know that she was going off to disguise herself.

Oh, we're got to get the key of that case from Primmy."

"Not so!" Mabel said quickly. "It's up to me this time! Third time lucky, they say, so whatever's done is going to be done by me."

"And if you're caught?" Mabel asked.

"I'll risk it," Mabel said.

"But Miss Charmant—"

Mabel frowned a little. But the determination on her face did not falter.

"Well, of course, I should hate to upset Miss Charmant. (On the other hand," she stated quietly, "we can't leave old Bonnie in this mess. We've just got to do something. And here's an idea which might succeed!" she added, a sudden glimmer coming into her eyes. "Primmy's so awfully keen on her old Greek mythology that if I ask her to lend me a book from her private library she'd agree like a shot."

"Well," Mabel asked, "we'd need one of those keys, wouldn't she?"

"And as Miss Helling, wouldn't she? And as Primmy's the only one who keeps the keys of her own bookcase in the library, she'd need one off with the keys. Right, then? In that branch is the key which fits the cases of the museum, and, as it happens to be on a ring, easy enough to snaffle it for the time being. I happen to know the key, luckily. Anyway, it's worth trying, so here goes."

And there and then Mabel walked off to Miss Primrose's study.

Miss Primrose was both surprised and delighted when Mabel made her request known. Greek mythology was her own pet subject, very dear to her heart.

"Of course you may have a book, Barbara—of course," she said. "Really, I am delighted to find the willingness of such an interest to seek a subject in a form so low as the Fourth. Come with me, my dear. I will select a suitable book for you myself."

This was hardly what Mabel wanted, but having started the thing, she had to see it through. Anxiously she eyed the ring of keys which Miss Primrose produced.

Without enthusiasm, she followed that

good lady as she shuffled off to the library—closed now. With a spare key belonging to the branch Miss Primrose opened the door and switched on the light.

She swept towards her own bookcase. Inserted a key. She lifted down a volume.

Then suddenly, from Barbara, came a terrified gasp.

"Miss Primrose—"

"Here my soul, Barbara, what—"

"A—a mouse!" Mabel cried, playing for all she was worth. "A mouse! I saw it—there!" And she shrunk back, apparently in the throes of terror. "It went behind that desk."

"Barbara, calm yourself," Miss Primrose said. "Hush my soul, I had an idea you were so nervous! A mouse won't hurt you."

"Oh, Miss Primrose, drive it away—please!" Mabel begged. "I—I'm sure I shall die if it pops out again!"

Miss Primrose smiled good-naturedly. She stepped towards the desk. She bent low, making a little hissing noise. Then, with a reassuring smile, she straightened up.

"I am afraid, Barbara, that your fears are unjustified," she said. "There is certainly no mouse here. It must have disappeared in some other direction."

Yes, Miss-Miss Primrose. Oh dear, now, you hear?" Mabel gulped, while Miss Primrose smiled. "It—it's all right now, though, I—I don't feel frightened any more," she added, and readily slipped the museum key from the ring into her pocket.

And richer by Dr. Smith's "Elementary Classics" and the key of the museum case, Mabel at last escaped to Study No. 4.

Mabel and Bonnie waiting there, turned anxiously on the case in—

"Mabel," Mabel began, "did you—"

"Here," Mabel laughed, and triumphantly held up the key. "Primmy won't discover this has gone until to-morrow morning, and then—well, what



OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

How all schoolgirls look forward to Patricia's pages each week! For she is a friend after your own hearts. Her pages are always so cheery—so well as helpful and bright. She tells you all about herself and "the family"—and gives you some grand ideas for things-to-make and do!

I've just found a new way of furnishing the weather for you—and one that won't mean giving up valuable information away, either.

If you are snafu from a chimney blowing straight down towards the ground—that means rain is on the way.

If it's going straight up to the sky—that means it's going to be fine.

We weigh the smoke next time you wonder whether to wear your best dress, or your old ones.

● A Proud Name

Mention of our last rather ridiculously reminded this Patricia of something else—something that amused her.

You know I told you when we're over living in a house which belonged to some friends of mine who went to Scotland?

Well, we had a letter from them yesterday and they say they're loving it where they are, and think nothing of walking over several mountains a day, so fit is, they feel. (Which is a slight exaggeration, of course, but is at least founded on fact.)

They've got some neighbors who talk such broad Scottish that our friends say they can hardly understand a word they say. But they're charming people, they insist—and their name is MacDavid MacGregor.

I simply had to struggle to think of the name MacGregor. If you cast it in a book you'd think "Oh, that's a made-up name," wouldn't you?

● A Happy Ending

Now I must give you a bulletin on our "chick."

They're still as sweet as ever, thank you very much—but we have discovered there is one "problem here" among them. I must explain that she arrived later than the others, and so is always known as "the new girl."

At first she was very unhappy with the rest of the hen party.

They really did bully her and wouldn't let her have any food from the dishes, the best to "smooch" for when she got. In fact, this Patricia of yours, who has dusted herself her expert in the family, was growing a bit worried. But Nature is pretty clever—and finally it was Mr. Conkors who saw to it that his hen-folk kept in order. If there was any suggestion of snatching, he just came between the two squawking, and looked very fierce until he had obtained quiet.

Now the "new girl" is quite one of the family, and has a fair share of the food!

But her tail doesn't stand up as it should. And this worried all wrong to me—for I know that hen's tails should be combed similar, but "comb" wasn't as

big as those of the other hens.

So I consulted our wise old gardener, Noah, about the "new girl."

"I've been reading," I said, "that the comb should be full and red and the tail carried upwards. Now, do you think there's anything wrong with that hen?" and I pointed to the "new girl."

"She's all right, raise," he assured me. "She can't well, don't she? Look at her eyes, too. They're bright, ain't they? At the lay eggs, don't she?"

I nodded to all these questions.

"Then what you worrying about?" asked Noah. "She's not good looking like the others, I own—but she's a good hen all right, never you fear!"

So there you are. And I tell you this rather long story in case your family should be helping him for the first time and to cheer you up in case you should be inclined to worry over them.

As long as your hens have bright eyes, but well and lay well—their way feels wrong with them. So that's that.

● No Heel-Turning

Have you heard about those socks that are knitted without any heel?

No, I don't mean hosiery! These are actually socks being made for The Boys without a heel, and they're said to be as comfortable as those with one.

A sort of spiral way of knitting is said to be the secret. I'll try to find out more about them for you, and see if the instructions are easy enough to pass on.

● Lots of Cross-Stitch

Did you have one of those cute little Juliet caps last year? You know, the sort that sometimes stole the place of berets, and which you wear well back on your head?

Well, if you did, now's the time to fish it out again and have a dust at gapping it up for the sunny days.

With all the space used there is around, I'm sure you could stuff it just a little in different colors.

Work a row of cross-stitches close together all round the edge of the cap—in red, say.

Then work another row in bright blue, but keeping the crosses further apart this time. Another row in yellow, and another in navy would look pretty snappy.

Oh, and if your cap has a habit of not keeping on very well, just try jolting a "grip" through your hair and right over the edge of cap as well, at each side, above your ears. It really does work.

● For the Babies

Presume for the youngest members of the family are not always easy to think out, are they?

But baby, I think, are pretty useful things. These in the picture here should certainly fascinate the young person around whose neck they go—and should please the mother as well.

You can make them of any shape of material—linen, or twilling is best, perhaps.

Get a paper pattern first, to the shape of a bunny rabbit's head, or a cat's head—with one eye on the picture here to help you.

Then cut out the material, and bind around with tape or ribbon. Brown or gingery colored ribbons would make the cat's face a good color, and white or pink for the rabbit.

Work the eyes in blue and green stitches, the nose in black and brown and the mouth in pink.

Now tape to the top of the head for tying round baby's neck—and they're all ready to be presented for a First, Second, or Third birthday.

● Kind Conductor

I must just tell you about an awfully kind bus conductor I met the other day. Getting on to the bus, I knew I had a ten-shilling note and twopenny in my handbag. So I asked for a "twopenny, please."

"There, to my horror, I found that I had only three-half-pennies, and the conductor had given me my ticket, too!"

You can just imagine how embarrassed I was, especially when he said he couldn't give him the other half-penny.

When I came to get off the bus I just thanked him very, very much for his kindness—and how I hope he realized that I truly meant it.

I wonder what you'd have done, if you'd made a similar mistake?

But then, I don't suppose for a moment you'd have been so silly!

Bye-bye now, all, until next Saturday.

Your friend,

PATRICIA.



SUCH A FRIENDLY SCHOOLGIRL!

That's what you'd like people to say about you, I know,
But making new friends isn't easy for everyone, is it?



SO many changes have come into our young lives lately, haven't they? Big changes and little ones, too.

Many schoolgirls have had to leave their old homes and their old schools and settle down among different people, in different surroundings.

Perhaps one of the biggest difficulties you have encountered has been the making of new friends, for this isn't always easy, is it?

At first you miss your old friends very much and you tend to compare the new girls you meet with them. And, naturally, I suppose—well, they just don't come up to standard, somehow.

A READY SMILE

Or perhaps you're shy and find it really hard to "break the ice" among people you don't know very well.

I once read that one of the secrets of popularity is "Not to worry about whether people like you, but to like them."

That's pretty true, you know—and well worth putting in an autograph album, I think.

If you do feel you'd like to be friends all round, then what you must do is to *not* try to be friendly yourself.

It isn't easy, I know—especially if you are inclined to be reserved.

But it can be done, if you resolve to make the effort.

A smile, for example, works wonders.

Perhaps you see a certain girl on the bus each day or pass her out shopping on a Saturday morning.

"I wish I could get to know her," you say to yourself. "I'm sure we'd be great friends."

Well, it's no use just thinking this way and leaving it at that—hoping that something, you don't know quite what, will happen.

Instead, next time you see her, you just give a really friendly smile. She'll smile back, all right.

And what about sitting next to her in the bus and asking her if she's got her tickets, for a start? Any old question will do, to start the ball rolling—as long as it isn't a personal one—just to begin with.

Or if you should see her shopping again, remark on that smile—and you can even comment on the weather if there's nothing else you can think of saying.

Having got over the first stage in the making of new friends, you then have to cement that friendship.

JUST LISTEN!

At first it's a good idea to go rather slowly, not to pour out your whole heart to her. Instead, encourage her to talk to you. It's amazing how people do like talking about themselves—even old set! And if you make an understanding listener, she'll begin to think you're pretty marvellous.

Don't contradict her often, either. This often has the effect of offending people. If you don't agree with her views, argue by all means, and state your own. But please, never, never suggest that another person is doing wrong and you alone are right—even if you do think so in your heart.

LITTLE THINGS

Little acts of courtesy, also—these do help to build friendship. For example, at school, the offer to lend a pencil or even to sharpen one, if you're particularly good at it, is much appreciated.

Instead smile at the door, to allow the other girl to go out or in first, don't stand in front—but how pleasing it is!

A remembered birthday, to ask how she enjoyed "the pictures" last night, or if she has heard from her big brother in the Army—these are all little details in which real friendships are built.

Then come the friendships that are truly established—and somehow it will grow without your realising it—you'll find yourself very much happier and your little worries and problems much smaller by comparison.

IT'S MADE FROM WOOL AND CARDBOARD

A really novel photo-frame, to hold a treasured picture.

HERE'S something you can make for yourself, for a class, or for a business—really gay and original photo-frames to hold a treasured photo.

First, you'll want a square of cardboard, and the size of this will depend, naturally, on the size frame you want to make. But for a picture that's postcard size, you'll have to cut a circle that's at least 4 inches in diameter—which is the measurement right across the middle, of course.

Draw the outer circle with your compass, and then a smaller one, 2 inches inside the other.

Now with a very sharp penknife, or a razor blade, cut all round the inside circle, and remove it. There you have a card-board frame.

Now the nice part. Get some gaily-colored wool or raffia, and bind all round the cardboard. Keep the wool strands very close together and pull quite tight to keep them firmly in place.

When you come to make a join in the wool or raffia, be sure to place the end along the frame, so that it gets bound invisibly and securely in place.

Fasten off strongly with a stitch on the back of the frame.

Now paste your photo on to a circle of plain cardboard, which is just a little smaller than the outer circle, and fix this in the center of the frame—from the back.

Take two holes right through the frame

and the piece of "looking card" at the top and bottom—as shown in the diagram.

Then thread ribbon—do not cut this, treat with the frame first—through the holes, so that it comes right over the card at the back, then pulls through to the front to tie in a bow.

Just another tip at the diagram will show you how this can be done to keep the looking card in place, and without spoiling the photo at all.



SHOES WILL LAST LONGER—

If you wear the right ones for the right occasions. For example, in the country, do try never to wear your "best," rather dirty shoes—indeed, never going anywhere rather special. They'll last and several footpaths simply rain down. Have two pairs if possible—one with thick soles for every day, and one pair for "going places."

If you clean them regularly. Remember that an occasional paper polish-up is not as good for the shoes as that daily treatment. Use only a little polish on the break, and lots of that old-fashioned—and very cheap—olive-green.

If you stand them on their sides, away from the fire place, but in a warm place, when they are very wet. (Place them too close to the fire and they'll crack most depressingly.)

If you keep shoe-trees in them. Perhaps you haven't any wooden or metal ones—but tissue or newspaper, scrunched into a ball, and pushed into the toes is almost as good, remember.

If you have them mended immediately they start to "go." It's only the selfish old advice about a "stitch in time," of course—but it's right, all the same!

If you always unlace any lace or buttons before taking them off. Likewise, don't slip your feet into them when they're "dunk-up." Nothing breaks down the backs more than these tricks.

(Continued from page 11.)

does it matter?" she asked. "By first time we shall have opened that j-u-j-u."

Mabe's eyes sparkled. Beanie looked overwhelmed with relief.

"And now—now, Babs?" she stammered.

"Now," Babs said, "just keep your nose. Beanie, not a word about this. Not a hint—understand? Tonight we'll do the deed, and we'll do it in the museum hall. Nobody would ever dream of coming along to the museum during the night."

"Makes sense," nodded Mabe approvingly. "But supposing you still can't find the way of opening it?"

"We've got to!" Babs' face took on

"Ready, Babs," Mabe boasted solemnly.

"Be sure——"

"Y-yes, rather, you know!"

"Come on, then?"

They got up. Slipping on shoes and dressing-gowns, they made their way to the door. On the landing outside, where the black-out blinds had been raised, brilliant moonlight shined in through the window. The whole school appeared to be sleeping, and not a sound save the soft half-huff of their own footsteps was to be heard.

They reached the museum, and Babs pushed the door open. The big room, with its dome of unascertained plan in the centre, bathed the whole place in

"It's funny, isn't it," she said, "nobody sees the trace of a light?"

"Oh, certainly, let's force it open!" Babs said.

"No, wait a minute. Let's see if we can find the secret of opening it first," Babs said, and then started. "What was that?"

"Oh, little—nothing, wasn't that was what?" Babs asked.

"I thought I heard the door creak!"—and Babs stared towards it, while the three of them stood in a loose group. But nothing moved there. No sound came from that direction. Babs laughed a little. "A mouse, perhaps," she said. "I'm feeling jumpy. Let's get on."

They bent over the j-u-j-u again. None of them are the figure which, hiding behind the cupboard near the door, saw a new "moving" towards the case—and that figure, because of the overpowering noise, did not see them. The figure, however, was that of Frances Frost.

But Frances, as it happened, was not on the track of Babs & Co.

Frances, like everyone else, knew that to-morrow the professor would arrive. Frances, like everyone else, was perfectly aware that if there was anyone who could open that j-u-j-u it would be the professor himself.

And Frances, absorbedly interested in the question of j-u-j-u now, had been doing a bit of reading during the evening, and during that reading had discovered that j-u-j-u were supposed not only to possess magical powers, but were often cunningly made to conceal tribal treasures such as precious stones and gold.

The fact that the Cliff House j-u-j-u contained something had been sufficient to light the fire of Frances' imagination.

If there was anything in that j-u-j-u, therefore, it was certainly not going to be found by the professor. Whatever was in that j-u-j-u was, in Frances' opinion, her own.

And Frances, unaware that Babs & Co. had already captured the j-u-j-u, was, with the same intention of Babs & Co., standing creeping towards its case at that moment.

Babs & Co., intent on the little wooden image, did not see her. Taking the chair, Babs was busily exploring the nook in the carving, trying to find some indication of an opening which she could pry. Suddenly——

"Oh!" came a cry, making them all jump; and crash! came the sound immediately following that cry, from the direction of the j-u-j-u case. "An eye they swing round—just in time to see the figure of a girl darting for the door."

"My! but, what's happened?" Babs cried. And she crossed to the case, its door swinging open now, the glass shelf on which the j-u-j-u had been placed, broken and smashed in the case itself. Whoever that unknown intruder was, great have touched that shelf and destroyed it.

"That was—was Frances, I bet!" Beanie said. "And—— Oh, Francis, someone's coming!"

"Beanie—quickly! Beneath the table!" Babs cried.

And fiercely she pushed Beanie down. The next moment the lights sprang on, and Miss Drake, the duty mistress, making her final round, came hurrying in. Too late, Babs tried to jump back.

"Barbara! she cried. "Barbara—and you, Mabel! My goodness, what are you doing with that j-u-j-u!"

"I—I—I——" stammered Babs.

"And this case—where my soul, you



MY DEAR READERS—Civilization may be a very wonderful thing and all that, but it can't do you down, especially if you have you to be in the company of Gladstone, my niece.

Gladstone, as old readers will know, is a very charming, very obliging young lady who, about half a century ago, set out on a mission, and, as you will have heard, she has not yet returned. Gladstone is always brags to hear in moments of crisis.

The other week-end I visited with me in the Assembly-halls of Your Honor. I had been invited to the week-end by some dozens of men who live in a district that has just been discovered, the nature, that is, of means. Gladstone was also there, and Gladstone decided to travel up to Your with me on the Monday morning. I wanted to get there earlier than usual to keep an appointment with my parents, but Gladstone's own body. And it was Gladstone's idea.

There was a complication. In the old days the wheels had been to go all the way from my district, station to the city. With the advent of a new electric system, you have to change to a third train, at the middle station. If you want to avoid making a mistake about the Monday morning, the advantage is that the electric journey is much quicker.

I suggested making the later change station down the line. Gladstone immediately declared that the best thing to do was to change at the first stop and get out of the old steam train there.

Well, to cut a long story short, I agreed to Gladstone's plan, and all proved.

But I still think you'd get there sooner by staying in the train and we're near the city.

"Only all right!" Gladstone playfully stated me. "Of course you shouldn't. I've been studying the time-tables. You just wait and see——"

Very pleasant words, these. For we

did wait, as you see. We waited twenty-two and a half minutes after alighting at the first station stop before that steam train arrived; and we saw nothing but an ordinary sort of white electric train coming along in the platform we left!

There was one thing Gladstone had overlooked. The steam train, as you only see every half an hour; the electric train, as you see every ten minutes. By a few seconds we had missed the first steam train, and there we stood, wondering what had happened to it, but expecting it to appear at any moment.

Instead of being punctual at the office that morning, I was nearly half an hour late!

So now for a few words about last Saturday's slightly superb Long Complete Cliff House story. It is entitled:

"THE FEUD BETWEEN THE PROFESSOR!"

and "dances" not only Barbara, Edith & Co., playing their usual leading roles, but also South Forester, Helen Hunter and Dennis Jackson.

Used a short while ago Connie and Helen were two similar characters, both warm-hearted and sympathetic. Since then, however, Helen has made little observations about to change her ways, and she is thought and great beyond measure "wise" during the temporary absence of Helen, Edith, she is regarded deeply fond Edith.

Edith's unexpected behavior for Helen; and a wonderful opportunity to show her real worth, for she is put in charge of the proceedings for a big exhibition and even when Cliff House is to go. But Connie Jackson, a member of the team, soon makes herself objectionable! There is trouble between the two parties; people who steadily given said it has developed into a terrible feud that involves many of the Cliff House folk.

Babs & Co. loyally rally to Helen's support, but it seems that even they are prepared to see both Helen and the professor over from Connie Jackson's side. Which, naturally, is a bit very best in this gripping story.

An usual, and well-known, team will contain further exciting chapters of "The Feud Between the Professor!" as well as the names of Edith, Helen and the names of Barbara's Bright and Interesting Pages, so don't miss it, will you?

With best wishes,
Your devoted friend,
THE EDITOR.

a grim expression. "If we have to see the blessed thing in half we'll get it open. Bring a chair and see and so on, and we'll fix it, never fear."

There was happiness in Babs' No. 4 after that. Even Beanie brightened.

Bed-time came eventually with the three of them lying at the prospect of the adventure ahead. Babs, through as always, had concluded a chair and a half-life under her pillow, and Mabe had a small chamber. Just as the hour of silence struck out from the clock tower Babs set up in bed.

"Then——"

a weird combination of shadows and silver lightness, and the glass there reflecting that brilliance.

Verily Babs turned to the case which held the little wooden image. Inserting the key in the lock, she opened it. Beanie gulped as she withdrew the object of all their recent woes.

"Get it!" Babs shrieked.

She closed the door of the case. In a corner of this room was a small, oblong table, used, probably, for sorting specimens, and to that table the three hurried. On the table Babs placed the j-u-j-u, carefully examining it.

have unaided the glass shelf! You have had the daring to rifle that case!"

Babe gasped in dismay. Considering the ju-ju was in her hands, how was she to deny that accusation?

"Give me that image," Miss Drake stormed, and took it from Babe. "Now," she added grimly, "since Miss Princesse is still in her study, you can come with me—both of you!"

Bessie, palpitating behind the table, blinked as if they were not, and the lights also went out. She rose then. Hastily she made her way to the Fourth Floor dormitory. It was ten minutes later when Babe and Male came in.

"Oh crumbs! Bib-Babe, what happened?" Bessie stammered.

Babe made a dismal grimace. "Listen for Male, and I'm pated on Saturday! Oh, goodness, I—I wonder what the Chairman will say now?"

"She was to know that in a very few hours' time. For the first person she met on coming downstairs after rising-bell meal morning was Miss Charmant herself. There was a look of reproach in her eyes as she stared at the leader of the Fourth Floor.

"I really did think, Barbara," she said in a voice that went to Babe's heart, "that you would have known how to behave yourself. If you didn't want to come to my party in the first place, why did you accept the invitation?"

"Well, you—you see, Miss Charmant, I—"

"I'm afraid," Miss Charmant said contemptuously, "I don't see anything—except that you have deliberately let me down. I shall think a long time, Barbara, before I decide to rely upon you and your friends for any help in future."

And she strode off down the passage.

The Worst Blow of All!



THAT day looked like being the most distressing and trying day which the chance of Study No. 4 had ever known.

All three of them were galled now. Miss Charmant was decidedly displeased with them. Worse than that, the ju-ju was safely locked up in Miss Princesse's desk now, and after assembly, Professor Wallace was going to give the lecture which could only end in the disgrace of Bessie's Header. How could they save Bessie now?

There wasn't a chance—not a ghost of a chance.

Bessie knew it. Bessie felt that the end of the world was coming for her. So great was the strain under which she was laboring, that for a moment she actually did not touch her breakfast in the dining hall.

When assembly bell rang she was almost knocking at the doors.

But it had to be faced. It had to be gone through.

Babe and Male, with the terror-filled Bessie between them, went into Big Hall. There they stood while the roll was called. Without enthusiasm they listened to Miss Princesse's speech for the day. Then, with jumping hearts, they saw the smiling Professor Wallace step on to the stage.

"Ahem! Good-morning, girls. At Miss Princesse's request I have come along to deliver my anti-irrigation lecture. I trust you and all attention."

"Oh, magnificent!" Bessie muttered faintly. "I—the gig-gigging to death, I think."

"Chin up, Bess!" Babe muttered anxiously.

But she herself felt horribly jumpy as the professor embarked upon his lecture. At Miss Princesse's request, that lecture was on the subject of tribal images.

At last it came to an end. There was a sigh, a restless whisper, a shifting of feet. The professor, adjusting his glasses, beamed over them all once more.

"And now," he said, "I come to what I perhaps most interesting to you all. I understand from Miss Princesse that one of these same tribal images about which I have been speaking has recently been discovered in the grounds of Cliff House School itself. Miss Princesse has been good enough to ask me to look at it and try to discover whatever secret it holds. Miss Princesse, may I have the figure, please?"

"Oh, dear-dear!" murmured Bessie, in a faint voice.

Babe gripped her arm. But she herself was tense now. With dread she

"This," the professor cried, "is it! Is, Miss Princesse! I was in despair. I offered five pounds reward for its recovery in the newspapers. Miss Princesse, you say this ju-ju was looted by a girl here? Introduce me to her, I pray you—at once. Let me be the first to congratulate her."

Bessie blinked. Babe and Male looked at each other in wonder. The professor was rubbing his hands with joy; the rest of the school was thrilled by the unusual turn the lecture had taken.

All eyes were now on Frances Frost, who was blinking and looking transcendently proud.

"Frances Frost," Miss Princesse called, "step this way!"

Bessie shifted restlessly.

"But—last, Babe—"

"Shush? Babe hissed. "You don't want to explain everything, do you?"

"Oh, hush, hush, no!"

All the same, there was resentment in her gaze as she saw Frances stepping forward.



"A—A mouse!" Babe cried. "I saw it—there," and she thrust back. "Barbara, calm yourself," Miss Princesse said. "Wipe my soul, I had no idea you were so nervous." Babe wasn't! She had a very vital reason for putting on this little act.

watched as Miss Princesse, with a smile, brought on the ju-ju covered with a cloth, and, passing in front of the professor, whisked the cloth aside.

The professor beamed, obviously preparing to get into lecturer's stride again. He gazed at the ju-ju. Then he jumped.

"Incredible! Amazing!" he cried, and his face was beaming with excitement. "Miss Princesse, this is mine!"

"Y—yours?"

"Mine?" The professor was looking more excited than a Second Form youngster now. He was shaking his glasses in his hand in his excitement. "This—this," he said, staring at the thing, "is my N'wooko ju-ju pigment which was stolen from my eye last time I visited this school. You remember, Miss Pittaross, I told you about it?"

"Why—why?" Miss Princesse stammered. "Dear me, yes, I believe I do remember that you said you had lost a most important figure. Then this—"

She glowered when the professor warmly shook Frances by the hand. For a moment she almost did forget herself, and only with difficulty conquered the desire to shout out: "She didn't find it; I did!"

Babe watched tensely, hopeful for a moment that in the excitement of the professor's discovery he would either forget to open it or refuse. The school now was crying something to Frances: they saw Frances pointing towards the ju-ju. The professor beamed.

"Open it?" he said. "It is easy. This is one of those ju-ju which was used by a N'wooko medicine-man, not only as a sacred image, but also as a sort of make-up for his himself. It can be kept the same and providing blue powder with which he adorned himself on ceremonial occasions, and if I am not mistaken, a quantity of that powder still remains within this image. Watch."

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"Beats, why?" Miss Primrose rapped. "Ally shouldn't the professor sign it?"

"Be-cause something might pop out of it?" Beate stuttered.

"Ridiculous, girl! Silence, please! Barbara, please control her."

"Yes, Miss Primrose," said Beate. "But—didn't you think—"

And just as she froze. For the professor, during the interval, had pressed the arms of the ju-jos close to the body of the image, and there was a faint snap. Up at last rose the lid, and the professor, with a little chuckle of triumph, glanced in his fingers. Then he frowned.

"Hallo! What's this—a document?" he asked; and Beate almost did faint right away then, as plainly through the stout equipment of Big Hall sounded the rattle of papers.

Miss Primrose, at last, was about to be revealed. Nothing—nothing could save Beate Hunter now!

"The Bull" Wants to Know!



A LOW mean came from Beate's a quick intake of breath from Beate; a gasp from Mabel Lynn. Beate arrested her face. She couldn't—just couldn't—

bear to watch that document revealed.

The professor withdrew his fingers. From the school went up a wondering gasp, and from Beate came a low-breathed exclamation:

"Oh-h!"

Beate forced herself to look. Then she stared. She blinked. What was this?

Miss Primrose, Miss Bullivant, and Miss Charmant were surrounding the professor, who held up a sheet of paper. The sheet was certainly exercise paper, and it was certainly that paper on which Beate Hunter had drawn her unfortunate signature. But there was no sign of the signature now!

It was blank—or, rather, a deep, purple sort of blue—except for one white square. And in a flash Beate guessed the truth, and, in guessing the truth, burst into a chuckle of relief.

Beate was moved! The paper, coming in contact with the moustache of the pigment which the professor had declared to be still within the ju-jos, had completely tanned colour, obliterating the caricature!

"What—what is it, professor?" Miss Primrose asked.

"Ah-h! I hardly know, although it is obviously a sheet of paper stained by the pigment."

Miss Primrose peered closely and gave a jump.

"Why, here is a signature—on the part remaining uncoloured! It is the signature of—of—Beate Hunter!"

"Oh crumbs!" muttered Beate.

"Beate!" Miss Primrose cried.

But Beate had the situation full in her grasp now. Stepping forward, it was she who answered for Beate.

"That's Beate's signature—her handwriting, isn't it, Miss Primrose?"

"Why, yes! But I do not understand how it came here?"

"It came there," Beate cried, "because Beate found the ju-jos first. Beate found it in the crypt, and she put that paper there. It was just to show it belonged to her. Then Beate told it, and Frances, coming along, found it and claimed it."

"It's mine!" cried Frances.

"No, it jolly well isn't!" Beate cried, her courage returning. "I deflected

"I tell you—" Sighed Frances. "Wait a minute!" Miss Primrose frowned. "Frances, stand aside—please. Beate, why did you not claim this before?"

"Well, I jolly well-well did, you know?" Beate said. "I told Beate I'd found it. But Beate took it off."

"Beate, is this true?"

"Yes, perfectly true, Miss Primrose," Beate replied. "I did not believe it at the time because Frances was the girl who had possession of the thing. But the ju-jos was most certainly fastened when Frances had it and, as we all know, it has not been opened since. It" Beate said, anxious to have a voice in the question of the ju-jos, "Frances found it in the first place, she could hardly have put that paper on it."

Frances scowled. But she saw that she was beaten there. The professor signalled Beate to come to the platform. Her terror changed to pride now, Beate stepped importantly forward, to be warmly greeted by the professor, who grasped her hand.

"You found this, Miss Hunter?" he asked.

"Yes, rather, you know?" Beate said.

"Trust a jolly clever girl!"

"In finding it," the professor went on, "you have done me the best turn it is possible for a girl to do, Miss Hunter. As I have said, this was stolen from my car, and how it got into the crypt I am not going to concern myself with at the moment. I cannot fully express my delight, Miss Hunter—of my gratitude—and naturally," he said, "the reward I offered goes to you. But alas—" He passed, looking at Miss Bullivant, who was turning the paper this way and that. "Since, Miss Hunter, you have done me such a good turn, I hope I may be able to do you one in return. If there is anything I can do for you before I leave this school—"

"Oh h-h-crums!" stuttered Beate.

"There is?"

"Yes, rather!" Beate gulped. "Ask Miss Primrose to let Beate and Mabel and me off our detention on Saturday, so that we can all go to Miss Char-

mant's party. After all, you know, it was all because of that nasty ju-jos—I mean, the lovely image—that we all got detained."

The delighted professor laughed. He looked at Miss Primrose.

"Miss Primrose, is it possible?"

"As you are a school governor," Miss Primrose said a little stiffly, "I cannot, of course, refuse to comply with any wishes you may express."

"Then," the professor said enthusiastically, "I do sincerely desire, Miss Primrose, that this girl and her friends should have this request granted. Apart from that I shall, of course, send Miss Hunter a cheque for five pounds as soon as I reach home. Miss Hunter, again I thank you," he added enthusiastically. "At last my N-wonder comes home!"

Miss Primrose smiled. Frances looked black. From the school went up a little cheer, and delighted Beate and Mabel shook hands with each other. Beate, proud and beaming, stepped down of the platform. But hardly had she negotiated the first step when Miss Bullivant's voice rang out.

"Beate, one moment—"

With sudden dread Beate turned.

"I seem to distinguish," Miss Bullivant said mildly, "the traces of a drawing here, Beate. It seems to be the drawing of some animal. Beate, what was it?"

"Oh, an—an elephant!" Beate stammered.

"An elephant?" Miss Bullivant frowned.

"But I seem to see traces of horns—like the horns of a bull, Beate."

"Yes," stammered Beate.

"Beate, you see," she added tentatively, "it is what is supposed to be a bull-elephant!"

And everybody, little guessing Beate's real feelings, laughed. But Beate and Mabel, beaming now at Miss Charmant, who was smilingly smiling, laughed louder and longer of all.

Beate Hunter's ju-jos had not turned out to be an image of such ill-omen, after all.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Now that Helen Hunter, once such an unpopular prefect at Cliff House School, has reformed, Barbara Redders & Co. are delighted to back her up. And when Helen is made temporary Head Girl, and put in charge of an important swimming event, they are almost as thrilled as she at her chance to establish herself completely. But—Connie Jackson, Helen's one-time friend of the Sixth, has other ideas! While Beate & Co. do all they can to help Helen score a triumph, Connie does everything to prevent it. Let HILDA RICHARDS tell you in her own scorching way what happens, NEXT WEEK, during—



FEUD BETWEEN THE PREFECTS!

Another delightful COMPLETE story featuring that appealing character—

ZANA OF THE JUNGLE



Dangerous Little People!

"DUMBO, we must be long way from home."

Zana of the jungle had had an exciting run on the head of her elephant friend, Dumbo; so excited that she had not taken much heed of the noise until now. But looking about her, she realized that they had wandered farther than usual from her home in the trees.

Zana was never frightened in the jungle, for it had been her home ever since she could remember. The only survivor of an air disaster in which her English parents had perished, Zana's own memory of earlier life was lost. So far as she knew, she had been born in the jungle, and she loved it. All the same, she did not like to wander too far from her usual haunts.

Dumbo, on the other hand, did not care how far he wandered; he was used to wandering at large, and he had no real home, although he made a habit of returning quite frequently to see Zana. And he trusted no one pleasantly enough, thoroughly carefree.

"What?" Zana called sharply.

Obediently Dumbo halted, for he knew what that word of command meant. And, as there was some luscious fruit on the nearby branches of a tree, he stretched up his trunk and helped himself.

Zana looked about her, not worriedly, but curiously with curiosity. A stranger to the jungle might not have realized how different this part was from the part where she lived; but to Zana every tree had personality, the bushes were all individual. And she knew that this was strange new country, miles from her home.

"Help you there way back, Dumbo," she said slowly.

If she should lose touch with the elephant now, it would still be easy for her to find her own way back even by trying to follow his trail.

But she trusted Dumbo. He had brought her here in their carefree run together—and he would take her back.

"Yes, we go back in one minute," she decided, and then, catching sight of

some lovely fruit beyond his reach, she swung across from his head to a branch and went rearranging up the tree to collect the fruit.

"Catch, Dumbo!" she called.

Then suddenly she passed. With the fruit in her hand, she stood staring in sudden alarm—not at Dumbo, but at a small figure that lurked near by in the bushes, a native boy.

The native was putting something in his mouth—a small blowpipe—and as Zana stared, she saw him aim at Dumbo and take in a breath.

From that deadly blowpipe a dart would be sent out; a poisoned dart most likely!

Without pause, Zana herself took aim; she drew back her hand and then, with all her force, hurled the fruit she

**If Zana's elephant friend
tried to cross the pygmies'
bridge he would fall to his
doom—and yet how often
could he save her from
life-long captivity!**

had gathered for Dumbo straight at the small, brown figure.

Zana's aim was deadly. With a squabbling sound the fruit burst on the native's face.

There came a straggled cry, a startled gasp, and Dumbo turned.

For what happened then Zana was quite unprepared. Dumbo, with amazing speed, ran at the native. If the man had not been blinded by the fruit, he would have seen Dumbo and dodged. As it was, the elephant took him unaware.

Dumbo's trunk curled about the small native's body. In a moment, he had whisked his victim clear of the ground. In another, he would have him down. But Zana uttered a cry of alarm. For all that the man had blinded his blowpipe on Dumbo, she had no wish to see him battered.

"No, Dumbo, no!" she cried.

Dumbo heard her, and despite his anger, he paused.

"No, Dumbo!" Zana cried again, and

By

IDA MELBOURNE

went rearranging down the tree to the ground.

The brown native's eyes were wide with terror, and he clutched the encircling trunk desperately, knowing that he was now completely at the elephant's mercy.

"No! let elephant kill me!" he shrieked.

Zana arms akimbo, looked up at him, and there was anger in her eyes. Because she had given the command, Dumbo would spare the man; but even though spared, there was no reason why he should not be given a good scare.

"You had man," she cried sternly. "Why you try kill elephant?"

"Not kill elephant. Walk far gone," he answered.

"Never again!" roared Zana.

"No, no!"

Zana then spoke softly to Dumbo, who very gently lowered the native to the ground.

Only then, when she could see the native close to, did Zana realize by his fixed face that he was not a boy but a pygmy.

"Pygmy," she murmured. "Why? Am I so far from home then? This is pygmy country?"

The quivering, still frightened native, nodded his head.

"Pygmy country, yes," he faltered.

Zana poked up his blowpipe, but did not return it to him.

"You had people to use dart. Dart has poison!" she asked.

He looked at her wearily, as though anxious to give a pleasing rather than a strictly truthful answer.

"Not hurt elephant," he said.

Not soon knew that he did not speak the truth, for when she let the dart drop from the blowpipe and studied the tip of it, she saw that it was stung and void.

She gave the pygmy a stern, accusing look then, which made him wail.

"Not kill elephant—make go deep," he said.

Then, looking at Zana with wide, admiring eyes, he suddenly dropped to the ground, and touched her feet with his lips.

"White girl save pygmy from elephant," he said, his tone vibrant with deep emotion. "Very brave. Very kind."

Zana, quite touched by his gratitude, smiled, and signalled to him to get up on his feet.

He straightened up, his face quite self-satisfied.

"Some time," he said, "other pygmy, maybe, shoot dart at elephant. He would go sleep. Not more. Then rise, can go down, then he not wake more. But when first elephant go sleep, he can wake. Oh, yes! There is herb that will wake him," he added impressively.

Zana's eyes shone in gratitude.

"And you tell me!" she breathed.

"I tell you, yes," he nodded. "You come with me. I find it. Little blue flower grows here deep under bush with red flowers. Small flower. Press from so— He showed with his finger how to press it. Juice come. Rub juice in wound. Then elephant wake again. Not then, but some time soon."

Zana's eyes sparkled, and she clasped her hands with glee. Already she had a little store of herbal remedies for snake bite and other ills, but she could never have enough. And if by chance Dumbo should be hurt by a dart, why this would be most valuable—essential, in fact!

"Please now show me," she urged.

He held out his small hand, and she took it. But even as their fingers closed, he stiffened and gave a sign of alarm. Hardly a moment later Zana herself heard the sounds that had startled her.

Witness! A hub of them!

In a sudden panic, the pygmy turned to her.

"Run!" he cried.

He himself ran, and was out of sight in a moment in the bush. But hardly was he gone when a half-dozen other pygmies came running into view, shouting wildly.

Precisely for a moment Zana then turned to Dumbo. Every one of those pygmies was armed—every one had a blow-pipe, and at his belt a pouch of poisoned darts. And if a dart should strike poor Dumbo now she had not the remedy to hand!

Zana yelled at Dumbo, struck at him to make him run. But loyal Dumbo, although he scented the danger, did not rush away. He paused—paused long enough to wrap his trunk about Zana.

That pause was disastrous. If he had run at once through the trees, he would have dodged the pygmy hunters; but because he paused they took aim.

Now as Dumbo started his thunder-groan was a fearful dart sped on its way. The wailing elephant cried out, and then, terrified, crashed on through the bush, Zana clinging desperately to his head.

He had been struck by a poisoned dart!

No Freedom!

ONISHED Dumbo, at terrific speed, the pygmies left behind. But his speed soon began to slack, his gait to grow uncertain. And Zana, clinging to his head, lying flat, knew from the change in his rhythm that he must soon collapse.

"Oh, Dumbo, Dumbo, they got you!" she wailed. "My poor Dumbo!"

Now he faltered, breathing hard, and shook his head as though, knowing that he was doomed and near crash, he was trying to tell her to get off and save herself.

Zana saw a branch just ahead, and,

reaching up, clapped it skillfully, leading himself up to perch on it. Hardly a moment later Dumbo stumbled, went down in a heap, and fell over on his side.

For some moments Zana stared at him, and he grew misty as tears filled her eyes.

Dear Dumbo, only a wild animal of the jungle, and yet her friend.

Trembling, feeling that the night had that he had breathed his last, Zana at last dropped down from the branch and ran to him.

Years blinking her, a lump in her throat, she looked into his eyes. The lips flickered, and her heart leaped to joy.

Zana came back to her then what the pygmy had said. Dumbo would go to sleep, and his sleep would last from the rising of a sun to its setting—whole day. And then—then he would not awake. But if that sleep could be ended early in his course he would live! Zana started up.

"A little blue flower! Oh, Dumbo, I must find it," she gasped. "A bush with red flowers—and under it—a little blue flower. And the juice shall save you, Dumbo. I will find it."

Wildly Zana looked about her, seeking such a bush. To right and to left she ran, in amongst the bushes, heedless of thorns and brambles that tore at her skin. Nothing mattered but saving Dumbo.

"Oh, where—where can it be?" she panted.

It seemed to her that the night have to search all day. And yet if only the pygmies had arrived a minute later, the one she had reserved would have shown her just where the precious blue flower was to be found.

Zana grew frantic as she searched; for now she could hear the voices of the pygmies. They were tracking Dumbo, and presently they would find him. And because they had no reason to feel grateful to her, they would not be likely to want to cure Dumbo.

Thinking quickly, Zana decided that at any cost to herself she must drive them off, she must lead them on the wrong scent. So long as she was free she could seek the little blue flower, and take it to Dumbo; but equally important was the need to keep them away from him.

So Zana ran off through the bushes, and then, when she had thus covered several hundred yards, she called out loudly to attract the pygmies.

It was not long before they turned away from their original course and made towards her.

And then an awful idea came to Zana. Of a sudden, almost as they came into sight, she clasped her arms, and started to groan.

In a flash it had come to her that she must pretend that she had been wounded by a poisoned dart. If they were not, she might lead them on the wrong scent. So long as she was free she could seek the little blue flower, and take it to Dumbo; but equally important was the need to keep them away from him.

Once Zana had possession of the remedy, she would run from them, dodge them through the trees, dash into the bushes, quite certain that the tricks she had learned from Chatter-box and her other monkey friends would enable her to outwit the pygmies.

The thing to do now was to get the remedy from them. She must pretend to be ill.

Realistically Zana groaned as the pygmies came into sight. From half-closed eyes, she lolled weakly against

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A tree, she saw them halt, stare at her, and then group together, muttering.

Now one of them, when she took to be the chief, stepped forward. Zana watched until he was several yards from her; then, clucking her supposedly injured arm, snatched at him in anger.

"You hit me with poison dart!" she cried. "If I die many white men come—many, many!"

The little chief halted, and she could see that she had startled him, for the power of the white man had made itself felt everywhere in the jungle. He was frightened, and he was feared, too.

"You not go die!" said the little chief, in dismay. "We not think that hit you. Not mean to hit you; mean to hit elephant."

Zana's eyes flashed.

"You had people hit elephant with poison dart!" she cried. "But none had still to hit me! Yes, if I am ill look only white men with many stone come—oh, many come!"

The chief swung back to his followers, shouting and panic-stricken, and Zana's heart thumped wildly with excitement. For she heard what it was he said:

"Get blue flower."

And now from among the pygmies came the man Zana had rescued from Dembo. He looked really upset and afraid.

"Oh, leave white girl, you not go die!" he asked fearfully.

"Get blue flower," whispered Zana; and she sank down to the ground at the foot of the tree, so that they should be worried enough to get away quickly.

"Yes, yes! Go get quickly!" he breathed, and ran off.

Zana's eyes flashed. Her little ruse was succeeding splendidly, for all the pygmies, except one who remained to watch her, had gone scurrying off to fetch the tree.

It was hardly more than five minutes later that three pygmies came rushing back from three different directions, each carrying a sample of the precious blue flower; but foremost of them was the man she had rescued.

"Here—here!" he cried, and stamped heavily here. "Quick! I press stem—! And now—the second—yes, yes—!"

He took her arm to do the little operation himself, but Zana wrenched his hand, for she wanted that precious ruse for poor Dembo.

"No, let me do it!" she breathed. "Let me have other blue flowers before juice pressed out—please!"

He looked puzzled, but, being most fearful, his Zana should suffer when she had saved his life, eagerly obeyed, taking the flowers from the other two men.

Now was the time for Zana to spring up, leap to a branch, and escape.

But at that moment the chief turned to one of the others, and, to Zana's surprise, threw something that looked like a crooked tooth.

"The foot!" he commanded.

The foot! Zana was so shocked and startled that she did not at once grasp what he meant. But the man he threw the foot to did, and, with waddling fingers, he leaped the distance toward Zana's ankles and fastened it. In a fury then, Zana leapt at him, but in vain.

"Why you hit me!" she panted, clucking her supposedly injured arm to keep off the pygmies.

The chief stepped forward, his face solemn.

"You go run back to white people!" he asked.

"If—if I get hurt!" said Zana helplessly, wondering what was in his mind.



"Oh, hurry, Dembo—hurry!" Zana cried anxiously. But even as her elephant friend started to charge away through the forest, one of the pygmies took aim at him with a deadly blow-pipe.

The chief nodded.

"Yes, but if you go sick, what then? Suppose poison not cure you? Then white people come here and take vengeance. But if you sick here, and go long sleep, white people not know—white people not blame us."

A swirl of horror and dismay ran through Zana as the full meaning of his words became impressed upon her.

"You keep me here!" she asked in flying tones.

"Yes. If you get well, we let you go."

"But—but how long you keep me!" cried Zana, thinking of Dembo.

"Till you rise and can go down again."

Zana's heart seemed to have tight over. By then Dembo would have limped his last, unless the remedy could be taken to him.

"No, no! You cannot do it! I will call out! I will shout! I—"

A cloth was hurriedly flung over her head, and her shout was drowned by it. Unable to see what was happening, Zana could judge only by what was said in soft whispers about her.

"Take her to secret lair! My wife shall lead her!" commanded the chief.

"She seem carry her—quick!"

In fury and fear, Zana fought desperately, but, small though the pygmies were, they were strong, and of a few minutes they had secured her arms, as well as her legs. Six of them then fastened her up and carried her.

"To the secret lair!" commanded the chief. "And there she shall stay until the day her rope and cloth break!"

When All Seemed Lost!

ZANA WISHED that she were a man, was thinking, and, by the calling her, she might have had risen once more, and then gone again to run, would she be free. Looking about her, she found that

she was in a mountain fastness. Jagged rocks were on every side, forming a natural fortress. A few yards from her, obviously discussing her, were pygmies. It was only a moment more that she had been taken from her head, and Zana had hardly time to survey her position. But she knew that she had been taken across a bridge.

Now, looking slightly to the left between a shaft in the rocks, she saw it. It was a simple, beam-made bridge crossing a ravine, and she could hear a roaring torrent of water which rushed through the gorge below.

This was the secret lair spoken of by the pygmy chief—a highest where they were safe "this attack."

Then Zana's thoughts switched to Dembo. All this while he was lying in the jungle. Had they found him? Would they continue to seek him? Perhaps they had found him already. It was a thought that filled her with great sadness, for she could only think that they would kill him.

But she became aware that the pygmies were talking excitedly amongst themselves and looking about her anxiously, and, looking about her friend. He was not far away, his eyes on her, and only a few minutes to make him cross to her at once.

"Yes!" he whispered.

"Dembo, My elephant. Have they found him?" Zana asked.

"Found him! No. They do not seek him," he answered. "They think he has gone away."

Zana felt an immense relief course through her, and her crop deep. Dembo was still safe. And even now, if the little blue flower could be taken to him—

"Please—please, make them let me free!" she begged. "For I must find that elephant and cure him."

The pygmy looked about him, and she could tell by his manner that he was alarmed, albeit "thoughtful." Lowering his voice, he spoke close to her ear.

"They will not set you free. They know now that you were not hurt by dust. They say you are a spy; that you wanted to find this place to tell the white men of it."

Zana gave a start. It was a bad shock to realize that her little trick had been discovered.

"Oh, but—but—" she gasped.

"Hah! These warts! The dust men say I finished the piggy."

Zana looked at him with deep appeal. He was her own friend. He alone could save Dumbo—and he must save him.

"Oh, please—please!" begged Zana. "If I tell you where my elephant friend is, will you go to him? Will you take the cure? Then everyone all elephants will be grateful to you."

"Very well, then," the little fellow nodded. "I go. Tell me where."

With as much detail as memory allowed, Zana explained to him where she had left Dumbo; but hardly had she finished this recital when the chief came forward, suspicious and a little angry.

"What you talk of?" he asked his follower sternly.

"I talk to him, I beg him to set me free," pleaded Zana.

"Free?" stormed the chief, his eyes flashing. "You make bad trick. You say dust hit you. But not so. Dust not hit you. Why you pretend?"

Zana could not answer truthfully for fear that he might seek Dumbo.

"I—I did not wish you to hurt me," she faltered.

The chief's eyes narrowed.

"You are white man's spy?" he said angrily. "You come to seek our secret hid. If you go free now, then you will bring many white men here. They will hunt us as we hunt the elephant."

"No, no!" Zana cried. "That is not true! I come with my friend the elephant!"

"Your friend! You—friend of elephant!"

Zana's hope rose anew. Perhaps she could convince him that she had power over animals.

"Yes, I teach elephants tricks. Elephants obey me. I speak the language of elephants."

"Is he for make the chief strong as you, calling in his man."

"She say she has power over elephant. Let the name elephant be brought!"

This was something quite unexpected. Zana had not guessed that they had a tame elephant.

There was confusion and shouting, and then from somewhere at the back, where she guessed there was a cave, there came a young, light-colored elephant, proudly tossing its trunk.

Zana was lifted and supported by pygmies so that she faced the elephant.

"Speak to him! Command him!" cried the chief.

Zana looked into the elephant's eyes, and her heart almost stopped beating. For she did not believe that she had any power over ordinary elephants; all the tricks that Dumbo knew she had had to teach him.

The pygmies gathered about, expectantly, and Zana took in a breath. She dared not command the elephant in the pygmies' language, for then they would understand what she said, and would know if it did not obey.

Therefore she spoke in English, first ordering the elephant to kneel, and then to toss its head. The animal regarded her steadily without moving.

"We wait," said the chief, frowning.

Zana groaned. However long he waited, she knew that the elephant would not obey.

Pygmies, hoping that perhaps by

making signs she could get the elephant to obey her, she suggested that they foud her hands. But how the chief laughed at that!

"Ah, yes!" he exclaimed. "We set free hands, and you go away? Bah! You try fool us!"

Zana's heart sank in despair. She was beaten.

"Take elephant away!" snapped the chief. "She tells no truth. She is white man's spy. Now she has found where we hide, and we shall no need to hide."

Zana's eyes widened in fright.

"But how long you keep me here!" she cried.

The chief's small eyes narrowed.

"Keep more," he said. "You shall tend the tame elephant. You shall serve and wait and feed. You shall be as our slave, for we dare not set you free."

Zana weened about her. Soon night would fall with the darkness that was characteristic of this part of Africa. It was half an hour or more since she had been put to the test with the elephant, and she had not ceased to watch for the pygmy who was her friend.

From where she lay, still bound, although her hands had now been freed, she could see the remarkable bridge that crossed the ravine, the only means of reaching the jungle from this rocky fastness.

With what joy it was that she suddenly saw that pygmy crossing the bridge!

But—he did not even glance in her direction.

Zana's eyes filled with tears. It seemed that he had betrayed her; that, after all, his fear of the chief had been greater than his gratitude to her.

She was sunk in despair, miserably unhappy, when through her dazed thoughts there came a sound that she knew well. It was the trumpeting of an elephant. It was Dumbo's call.

Zana stiffened, she struggled partly up, and then, her voice shrill with excitement, she called out in her joy: "Dumbo!"

To the startled pygmies the cry meant nothing, but they turned and stared at her, wondering at this sudden change.

And then again came Dumbo's trumpeting. Again she called his name. But she could hardly believe her own eyes when, a moment later, her elephant friend appeared in view amongst the trees.

The pygmy had not failed her, after all; he had given the hint, and it had taken wonderful effect. Here was Dumbo, safe and well!

At the same moment the pygmies saw him. They shouted in horror, and ran forward, and the chief drew out his blowpipe. But although he put it to his lip he did not shoot—and for an excellent reason.

"The elephant has one foot on the bridge," he choked. "Do not shoot! If he should fall, he will smash the bridge!"

Now Zana shouted out shrilly:

"Dumbo! Now use him more another step; she saw the bridge quiver, and her heart leaped to her mouth. For Dumbo could not open that shaky bridge, he would smash it, and crashing it, he would be hurled to his death into the ravine.

So near—and yet so far!

The chief now swung upon her, frightened rather than angry.

"You tell him now to go back. The bridge is weak. One time we had

strong bridge and brought our elephant over. Now it is weak so he do not escape. If your elephant come, he will smash bridge and we never get from here until we have built new bridge. That take many moons."

But Zana shook her head.

"He come to seek me. Only send him back if you set me free!" she declared.

The chief seemed baffled. He had no answer, but swiftly paced up and down.

Meanwhile, Zana was torn between two emotions.

How long could she keep up her bluff? Would the chief at last set her free in order to save the bridge?

But the chief acted more strangely. Snapping his mandibles, he snapped an order to his men, and four of them lifted up Zana and carried her on to the bridge. Then they lowered her.

"Now," said the chief rapidly, "order back elephant or else if he break bridge you go down, too!"

Dumbo, seeing Zana near and knowing her to be helpless, took another step forward. The bridge groaned under his mighty weight, shivered and shook. "Dumbo—no!" the whisperer.

The pygmy chief's warning had won the day.

So—had it?

For Zana, unable to walk, had suddenly thought of an amazing idea. Why not roll towards Dumbo?

Turning herself the right way, she lay down, and then over and over she went.

The pygmies, realizing she was trying to escape, rushed on to the bridge to search her back.

Dumbo, trumpeting in anger, took a step forward and reached out his trunk, waggling it but a foot shy of her.

The bridge cracked; and there came an explosive crashing sound. Terrified, the pygmies rushed back to their mountain fastness.

And because they ran back the girls were relieved. Zana rolled on! Dumbo, edging forward, gathered her in his trunk, hoisted her, and then moved back.

Safe! Zana could have laughed aloud with joy!

"Oh, Dumbo, bravo Dumbo! You are well and I am free!" she cried. "But—look—look—they will come; they will chase us!"

Already the chief was warily approaching; for the weight of his men could not shatter the bridge where Dumbo's had failed to do so.

It was Dumbo who settled that matter. Angry, he took vengeance on the bridge that had frightened him. He trampled the big make at the end, caught the logs where they bedded down in the earth, and lifted them out. Then a huge pile of his foot met that end of the bridge swinging in midair.

Zana cheered, laughed, and shouted in joy. And then, as she saw the pygmies take out their blowpipes, she urged Dumbo out in safety. In safety, without fear of pursuit, she embraced his trunk, nestled and patted him, and it was not until ten minutes later that the glad reunion cooled.

"In the darkness—hoarse—hoarse, Dumbo!" she urged.

And on Dumbo's head Zana, tired out, sank down to rest, nor did she wake until Chatterbox's excited voice and the welcoming roar of Simba, the young lion, told her that she was home again.

Thrills—Drama—and Mystery in that exciting struggle between—

VALERIE DREW and the AVENGING THREE!



READ THIS FIRST.

VALERIE DREW and her Aunt Ann, Frank, are called to Lockley College, a domestic science school for girls, to track down a mysterious and deadly letter to the AVENGING THREE. The letter is deliberately hitting at the school and the school's popular headmistress, Miss Thompson.

Thanks to their activities, Miss Straightway from the neighboring High school, is humiliated and it appears she has the lockers, which both schools share, put out-of-bounds to the Lockley girls. Valerie takes a liking to

KITTY BAKER and her two friends, ANNE and MAE NELSON, but doesn't

MAE NELSON, who follows EMILY, Miss Straightway is invited to the school by a mysterious note. The finding of a small girl through whom Valerie finds that she might be responsible for the writing of a book-club set for Miss Straightway's friends. But Mae has had a accident, and Valerie is unable to question her. During a game musical, some High school girls are discovered with a book by a girl wearing a mask. Her features are those of Mae! Soon afterwards, a girl exactly like Mae is caught. The decision about Mae's return is left to Faith, but Valerie ought not to be asked for not catching her before!

(You read on!)

By

ISABEL NORTON

"And what will that prove," Faith aggressively demanded, as Kitty excitedly sped away, "even if Miss Nelson is?"

Valerie turned to the tall junior captain from the rival High school.

"First of all, Faith, tell me why you're so convinced you've really caught one of the Avengeing Three!" she politely invited.

"I got the full name of the water from the tin here!" Faith hotly answered. "When you turned on your torch I saw who was holding the book. It was that girl!" she dramatically declared, pointing to the captive.

"What's more, you know it. You saw her, too. You must have recognized her then. You couldn't have been mistaken. You'll admit it now, Valerie." Faith said, in a tone of unexpected bitterness. "you're hand-in-glove with the Avengeing Three yourself!"

"What's Faith saying?" cried Kitty's

reception a little while ago. We've just as excited as you are to catch the Avengeing Three. But we must be fair as well!"

"Fair!" Faith challenged unpolemissantly. "How, Miss Brown," she asked sarcastically, "do you make out that I'm unfair?"

"Because," Valerie answered, "we haven't given April Nelson a chance so far to say a single word for herself!"

"I've told her," Faith abruptly retorted, "she'd better come up and tell us who the other two members of the Avengeing Three are!"

"And I've told you," April burst out hotly, "that I've never even heard of anyone calling themselves the Avengeing Three before!"

"Why were you on your way to Lockley, April?" asked Valerie, taking no notice of Faith's impatient shrug implying it was a sheer waste of time to ask Mae's twin sister anything at all.

"I had a phone call at home," April answered, "saying Mae had been injured."

Valerie raised her brows in astonishment.

The angry High school girls were certain they had caught one of the Avengeing Three. But one glance at the suspect's shoes told Valerie Drew the girl was innocent!

The Clue That Went Astray!

"SACK me!" Valerie Drew exclaimed, taking up Faith Langley's words instantly.

Wearing a dry smile, she looked from the excited High school girls and their straggling prisoner to the group of bewildered Lockley girls who had met them.

"By all means sack me!" Valerie invited. "If I deserve it. But let's be fair! Let's be quite certain we really have caught a member of the Avengeing Three!"

It was the most startling moment for Valerie since her strange adventure had begun.

Her eyes turned on the scowling girl. Whether she was really Mae Nelson's twin or not, the resemblance was amazing. The eyes were a gray, costume similar to the Lockley uniforms.

Then, all at once, Valerie noticed something about the accused girl that caused her to wince greatly.

"Kitty, run up in the mazy at once!" Valerie impudently requested. "Just see if Mae's still up there!"

attended voice, as she came racing downstairs again at that very moment.

"Here Faith goes quite mad!" Val!

Turning, Valerie read in Kitty's eyes an angry resentment in Faith's eyes at Valerie's ridiculous gibe. But she was deeply anxious to avoid anything that might cause feelings to run higher than they were already.

"Any luck?" Valerie inquired, as though Faith had not even spoken.

"About Mae?" Kitty responded, quickly guessing the reason for Valerie's significant question. "Yes, Val, Mae's still in the mazy. They really are crazy—there's no possible doubt about that."

"And what does that prove?" Faith demanded more pertinently than ever.

"Can't we settle this problem without getting cross about it, Faith?" Valerie suggested. "We all got embarrassed at Lockley because you had such a rotten

"Can you offer any proof about getting this phone call, April?" she asked.

The unexpected girl shrugged her heavily built shoulders in just the same way that Mae Nelson might have done under similar circumstances.

"No, I can't," she answered. "We've only recently moved into a new house at Eastlake. Mother and dad were both out when the phone rang. I left a note for them and dashed along here as soon as I caught a public bus outside the Royal Cinema in Eastlake."

"Why not my outside Eastlake Palace," jested Faith, "after having tea with the duchess? There's quite as much evidence! We know it's all a pack of lies, anyway!"

"As far as I know, Faith," Valerie retorted, "they're not digging up the road outside Eastlake Palace, and the school isn't chafing!"

Faith looked almost startled.

"Chalk?" she repeated in amazement. "What's chalk got to do with this girl's ridiculous tale?"

Valerie knew that every looker-on eye was on her as she pointed coolly to April Nelson's walk-along.

"April's shoes are scattered with white all around the edges of the main," Valerie quietly pointed out. "The main is even still wet in places. 'An' most o' you know they're digging up the road just outside the Royal. The school's chalk, and there are sticky-wet piles of it all over the pavement where you have to wait for the trolley-buses. It was because I noticed April's shoes that I knew we ought to hear what story she would tell us. She couldn't be waiting for a trolley-bus in Haultake and also working a fine line in Jackley at one and the same time!"

There were gasps of amazement from the Luckley girls at the unexpected demonstration of Valerie's keen observation. Then Faith, after looking rapidly around for the moment, suddenly laughed sharply.

"How nice to have a sharp-eyed detective girl living in the school!" she sneered bitterly. "You're only to turn up with a bit of chalk on your shoes, and clever Valerie will supply you with an alibi without even looking ahead!" She gave her sneering, nose-looking companion a sniggering grin. "Let's get back to the High!" She angrily suggested. "We'll never get anywhere here when they evidently glory so much in their Avenging Three that they won't admit we've caught one even when we do!"

Marmara broke out amongst the Luckley girls as Faith and her companion turned away. Then the buzz of excitement was broken into suddenly by the girl Valerie had so dramatically cleared.

"If someone will only tell me where I can find my sister after all this silly fuss, I'll be much obliged!" April Nelson earnestly observed. "Was she crach an about me afterwards?"

It was a gradual remark which again reminded everyone of her twin, Miss, but someone politely offered to lead the way to the main-staircase. Painfully aware of the deep perplexity of the other middle school girls, Olive Tempest took Valerie's arm and drew her to one side.

"Val, we know you saw the girl with the fine hose," she whispered. "We've had no chance to say a word to you since you dashed off after her." Her anxious eyes searched Valerie's face. "Did she really resemble Mae or her sister, or was Faith simply romancing?"

Valerie momentarily hesitated. What could she say? The fact remained that, in peering that April was telling the truth, Valerie had seemingly only made her own problem more bewildering than ever!

"The girl we both saw, Olive," Valerie answered, "was the honest and straightforward of the Avenging Three. They sound very little," Olive protested earnestly.

"It means," Valerie was forced to respond, "that they concealed enough to take in both Faith Langley and me."

Olive's perplexity deepened. Her troubled eyes reflected the course of her disturbed thoughts. The elusive secret society was proving a greater menace in the school every day, and Olive's aunt, the headmistress, was nearly worried to distraction by it.

"Val, these surely can't be those of them!" said Olive, in hopeless tones. "What may help me a bit, Olive," Valerie replied, coming to a swift decision, "is to see those twin sisters to-

gether. Can you see we've not disturbed?"

She made her way upstairs at once. For too long everything had pointed to Miss Nelson having some connection with the Avenging Three. A "lucky accident" had saved Mae, so far, from being questioned. But Valerie had intended to be foisted no longer.

Reaching the main-staircase, she tapped and entered, to be met by an unexpected sight.

Mae, her bandages already taken off, was half-dressed. April, her twin sister, was perched on the edge of the bed Mae had occupied. Seem as close together, the resemblance was still most remarkable. But that was not what caught Valerie's thrilled interest.

The twins had evidently been whispering together just as she entered. From their startled looks as they turned when she opened the door she drew the shrewd conclusion that they hoped they had not been overheard. Why? What had they been saying?

"Glad to see you so much better, Mae," Valerie murmured, meaning to evade the recent "accident." "I was rather anxious to have a chat with you yesterday. In a flash her suave manner left her. "Tell me, Mae, why did you type that letter yesterday, asking Miss Straightly to come to Luckley?" she dramatically demanded. Mae's cheeks turned scarlet.

"Me? Write! When?" she ejaculated, blinking confusedly at Valerie through her spectacles, while April looked at her in startled concern. "I—I don't know what you're driving at! Why—why should I want to write to Miss Straightly about anything?"

"Really, Mae," Valerie concentrated, "you know all about the looby-trap she nearly walked into." Unrespectfully she opened her hand, to reveal a cheap little brooch. "This was dropped just outside the reception-room window by the person who set the trap. Remember it!"

Valerie was certain that brooch belonged to a member of the Avenging Three, and she felt that Mae, seeing it, would be started into betraying the fact.

To Valerie's consternation nothing of the sort happened.

Instead of showing any sign of recognition at sight of the brooch, Mae merely looked up at her with a pained but happy grin.

"I've never seen a brooch like that before in my life!" Mae answered, as though she had secretly been searching something far worse, and a great weight was off her mind in consequence. "Here you, April!"

April unexpectedly giggled at the question.

"Wouldn't he see wearing it even in a ditch?" she agreed.

For a moment or two Valerie felt utterly taken aback.

Mae had apparently been set too many for her after all. Valerie's hopes of starting a confession out of Mae were utterly dashed. Mae had had sufficient time to collect her thoughts. Her sister's unexpected arrival had in some way helped her, too. It was obvious that something which seemed to have reassured Mae considerably had already passed between the pair of them before Valerie had reached the main-staircase.

"What's your home telephone number, April?" Valerie sleepily asked.

"Haultake 8488," April replied at once.

Murmuring a word of thanks, Valerie left the room. Derisively she looked at the brooch. She asked the exchange girl if she could trace a record of any

recent calls to that vital Haultake number.

"Yes," came the girl's voice, after a short pause for search to be made. "A call was made from Torrington 2829. That's the number of a call-box in Torrington Lane, about a hundred yards from Luckley College."

Valerie sprang to her feet, her eyes shining.

"What an amazing stroke of luck—just when she had been nearly in the depths of despair! Calling on Faith to follow her, she ran at top speed down the stairs, convinced that she was really on to something vital at last.

Vanished!

"GOING very far, Miss Drove?" It was Stiggle's voice which greeted Valerie Drove as she approached the gates; book in hand, the obliging little school porter stood smilingly waiting to make an entry. "I know you have special privileges, miss, and can leave the school when you like; but I'm supposed to keep a record of everyone who goes through the gates."

"Why, of course," answered Valerie Drove, stopping at once. Struck by a sudden thought, she looked at the porter. "Where you learn, by any chance, Stiggle, just before that flood with the fine hose was made outside the gym this afternoon?" she inquired.

The little porter shook his head regretfully, while his eyes shone with sudden indignation.

"Unfortunately, I was round in the wash-house, miss," he replied. "I only wish I had been. I never seem to have the luck to be anywhere about when those wicked girls are playing their Avenging Three tricks." He looked at Valerie eagerly. "Beg pardon, miss—I hope you won't think I'm taking a liberty," he said apologetically. "But I would be pleased to find you've got some idea of who they are!"

He looked off, his smile fading, for Valerie had firmly shaken her head.

"They'll be caught when they least expect it. Stiggle was all she would answer. "I mean to be long—I'm only taking Faith for a walk."

She left the school, and, taking to the centre of the lane, walked purposefully along it. Knowing she might be watched by unscrupulous eyes, she went straight (as the telephone call-box until she reached a cluster of trees. Then, taking to their shelter, she began to creep cautiously back, close to the hedge, so that she could reach the box unobserved by anyone in the school.

The member of the Avenging Three whom she was after was clearly someone who had, at the time of the attack with the fine hose on the High school girls, borne a striking resemblance to Mae and April Nelson.

Valerie believed that person, relying on the darkness in the gymnasium, had hoped to get away unseen. Valerie's swift use of her teeth had prevented that. She and Faith had both seen those distinctive features, diagnosed only by a thin piece of ribbon-like material tied across the eyes.

What had happened then?

The girls had fed in panic, aware that suspicion would instantly fall on Mae Nelson. Then the miscreant had obviously realized she had made a mistake. Mae, of course, would be able to prove a complete alibi. Then what was to be done about it?

So far Valerie had gained the conclusion to which the frightened fugitive had immediately jumped. To put every one on a false trail, the guilty girl had

reached to the telephone-booth and asked April Nelson to come to the school as soon as possible. It had been a very clever scheme. But for Valerie's shrewdness, everyone would have assumed that April had been working in secret collaboration with her sister.

Whispering to Flash to keep guard, and warn her the moment anyone approached, Valerie reached the telephone-booth at last.

First, with a general staidifying-glass, she examined the outside handle for fingerprints. Finding none, she opened the door, slipped quickly inside, and with the same care, examined the telephone receiver for prints. As she drew blank eyes none, she was forced to conclude that the impostor girl had been chosen enough to wear gloves.

With narrowed, violet eyes, Valerie continued her search, but she was almost in despair when, all at once, she stopped intently to pick up a tiny fragment of material lying on the floor.

It was gray in colour, an almost resembling the shade of the hair of the mysterious people. Valerie might have examined one of a hundred such bits, and still not have been able to identify it altogether. It was a thin strip, scarcely an inch in length, soft and pliable to the touch. Wondering whether it was a piece which had been accidentally placed of a rubber head, Valerie turned it over. Then she gasped.

The other side of her peering had not been gray at all, but flesh-colored. Examining it intently with the aid of her glass, she discovered tiny grains of powder adhering to it.

Valerie knew immediately that she had made a sensational discovery. As the germ of an astounding suspicion began to develop in her mind, she wrapped her hand in tissue paper, and put it away in her bag for closer examination when she returned to the school.

There was nothing else to be found in the telephone booth, but Valerie felt her time had been anything but wasted.

Back in the school, she found a score of considerable excitement in middle school Common-rooms. Everyone still seemed to be discussing the sensational appearance of Miss's twin sister, and Faith's dramatic charge against her.

Valerie listened for a little while, but did not join in. Gratified to hear that Kitty Wake, anxious to press on with the forthcoming Healy and Henry show, had invited the Luckley girls to attend another rehearsal to-morrow, Valerie left the Common-rooms. Meeting the waitress at the passage, she learned that it had been decided that Miss Nelson was to spend at least another night in the apartment, and another bed had therefore been fixed up so that her sister could be with her.

Satisfied that they could not help her at present, Valerie retired to her own room, and, until a late hour, was busily engaged in testing her strange discovery from the telephone booth in every possible way.

When she woke next morning she was most disturbingly reminded of the recent activities of the Avenging Three, and the effect their mischief was having on the school life in general. First, meeting Miss Fremont in the passage, she gasped intently, from her pale, tired appearance, that she had had another sleepless night.

"I know you're doing your best, Val," Olive warmly assured her, when they stopped for a chat, "but I can't help all this business getting on my nerves. I notice it is near noon, too. I'm sorry you are so jumpy as this in thin days." She looked up at

Valerie with a sad smile. "If only we could guess who the Avenging Three are doing it, Val, it might help us to put up with it."

Valerie was deeply thoughtful as she went in to classes this morning.

Though nobody had reproached her for her lack of success so far, she had the uneasy feeling that she had been a great disappointment to those who had hoped she would quickly clear up the uneasy mystery.

The lectures, which were on cookery and general staff management, failed to hold Valerie's interest for long. With the approaching return visit of the High school girls that afternoon, she knew she must be more lonely on her ground than ever before, to make quite certain that nothing could possibly go wrong this time.

Suddenly, an incident was occurring there, and an unexpected thought struck her. Now both the Nelson sisters were in the school, it would be highly desirable to know exactly where they were when the High school girls paid their next visit.

Leaving the hall as soon as the lecture was over, Valerie hastened upstairs, only to come to a sharp stop as she reached the passage leading to the apartments. The expression on the face of the waitress, whom she met standing close to the swing doors, told her instantly that something had happened.

"They've vanished, Valerie—Miss and her sister April!" Miss Escobar startlingly reported. "I told Miss she was on her honour to leave until I gave her permission. I've just been to the room, and there's no sign of them anywhere!"

A minute later Valerie was confirming the startling tidings with her own eyes. The general appearance of the apartment suggested that the twins had spent it in a state of excitement and haste. Why? Where had they go?

Opening one of the windows wide open, Valerie crossed to it and gazed down to the ground beneath. Something she saw caused her to turn abruptly, run downstairs at top speed, and hasten to the back of the building. And there, immediately beneath the open window

of the room from which the twins had vanished, she spontaneously, Valerie stood gazing transfixed at the ground.

In the soft soil was a footprint, deeply impressed into the earth. The soil had been forced up into the instep of the shoe, leaving a clear, well-defined impression of its shape.

Valerie did not need to measure it to know instantly that it was a print from a shoe for whose owner she had again and again searched in vain.

That footprint had been made by one of the Avenging Three, whose Valerie had more than once seen and pursued, yet never managed to catch!

When Everything Seemed Safe!

"NOW then, Flash, old boy, it's up to you, here. Don't stain anything if you can help it!"

Valerie softly advised her pet, as the intelligent Albatross, with perfectly raised ears and bright, intelligent eyes, gazed around the gymnasium. "Whenever happens, there mustn't be any trouble (tear)!" One more (tear) in the High school."

And Valerie grinned, expressly without completing the sentence. She knew, only too well, that another affront to the visiting members of the rival school might well lead to the biggest disaster Luckley had sustained so far.

The time was immediately after dinner that day. The rehearsal at the gymnasium was not due to commence for another quarter of an hour. But Valerie was taking no chances.

Every one of the gym apparatus she secondly tested, and all the time Flash, gazing exactly what was in his mistress's mind, was suspiciously exploring the room in his own doggy way, searching for any unusual feature or unexplained sound.

Breathless but satisfied, Valerie stopped at last. As far as it was humanly possible to be sure, nothing could go wrong to-day.

Opening the windows, Valerie looked the door and removed the key, then went downstairs and handed the key over to Kitty Wake.

"I've locked the gym just to make



JUMPING up at the wall-bars, Flash thrust his head between two of them and wiggled it from side to side. A row of delighted laughter came from the rival gymnasts, but Valerie frowned thoughtfully. What ever had caused her pet to behave in such a strange fashion?

quite sure there'll be no checks in store for anyone to-day, Kitty," she explained.

Kitty smiled. "Good idea, Val!" she warmly approved. "And if anyone suggests blocking out the windows to-day and rebarrening in the dark, there won't half be something said!" By the way, I've thought of something!" she added, as a sudden afterthought.

Valerie raised her brows inquiringly. She had grown very fond of Kitty since getting to know her well, and had a great admiration for Kitty's ideas when they were well considered.

"What is it, Kitty?" she asked with interest.

"Well, I first ought to say that I realize Faith Langley was no end of a cat last night," Kitty confessed, "and you've got particular reason for remembering the horrid things she said about you, Val."

Valerie smilingly shook her head. "I'm not worrying a bit, Kitty," she answered coolly. "Why should I? Faith was certainly feeling pretty wild,

that Valerie felt it would even have been better if they had indulged in their usual rather unkindly banter on the subject.

But Kitty was in excellent form, and appeared to be quite unaware of the cool hostility of the visitors. Reasoning that it was much better to do things than say things to-day, she quickly got her team to work at the latest exercises she had devised.

Despite their disgruntled mood, Faith & Co. were working with quite unexpected interest, when the door suddenly opened and Olive Temper entered, beckoning Kitty over to the spot where Valerie was standing, with Faith at her side, she whispered eagerly to the pair of them.

"Aunt's just given me the wire that Colonel Paters has popped in unexpectedly!" Olive breathlessly reported. "Aunt will be bringing him down to see how the display's going any minute now!"

In an instant Kitty showed the rest of girl she really was.

"Faith," she cordially invited, "if

to hear that troubled sound. But there was no time for her to wonder what was striking him.

Peeping out through the crack of the door, Olive whispered:

"Here they come, Kitty!"

"Goodness!" Kitty responded, "All ready, Faith, my hearty old greeting! These jays to it and the crew stuff!"

The youngsters approaching along the corridor outside were now distinctly audible. Guessing whom they were, Faith exclaimed:

"One, two, three! Over the ship, girls!"

In four little, beautifully timed bounds her team had crossed the room, leaping simultaneously, they sprang upward as one, feet to the third bar, hands grasping the top. And even so they did so an astounding thing happened.

There was a crackling sound from the wall, and the bars appeared to shake vividly.

Colonel Paters, giving one brisk tap, stopped into the gymnasium. A moment later he cried out in alarm:

"What ever are those girls doing! Jump clear quickly, all of you!"

Like a girl in some hideous nightmare Valerie watched. The wall bars were already falling backwards so that the structure which held them, coming loose from the wall, swayed over.

Crash! Strangling and hushing alike in all sorts of ungainly attitudes, the High school girls fell to the floor. The bar which had been so solidly fixed to the wall only a few minutes earlier collapsed on top of them.

In one devastating moment of understanding Valerie recalled Faith's strange behaviour. He had run to the bars, not to show off at all, but because he had heard something which made him suspicious.

He could only have heard a muffled coming from the other side of the wall! His mind leapt. Beyond the gymnasium there was a small box-room, the wall being a row of heavy iron bars secured tightly against the brickwork of one wall. Immediately she guessed their purpose.

They were there to hold the wall bars up. Someone in the box-room had deliberately loosened and removed these mats while the rehearsal was in progress!

Tearing open the door, Valerie sprang out into the corridor. Even as she did so the door of the adjoining box-room opened as well, and the figure of a girl appeared.

She was wearing a dark hood over her hair and a thin, ribbon-like mask across her eyes. Her hair, rather rather features were, once more, those of the Nelson twins!

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but nobody would really blame her, all the same! She had good reason!"

Kitty took Valerie's hand sympathetically.

"You're a sport, Val. I know you'd be the first to understand!" she warmly declared. "Well, I don't see ought to do something to try to make up to them to-day for what happened yesterday. I've been making inquiries, and I've found out Faith & Co. ran off some pretty snappy numbers on the wall bars. I thought you'd let them have a special chance, and if they like, that can be their own particular notice of the display when we give it."

"Hooping!" Valerie cordially approved. "And great thoughtful old Kitty is think of it. Talking about proving the jolly old cat on troubled waters, you've got the very idea."

When Faith Langley & Co. arrived they were obviously ready to be highly critical of everything they saw and as disinclined about the projected display as possible.

The way in which they unobtrusively avoided making any reference whatever to the Avenging Three was so obvious

we have a spot now, would you care to carry out? Like to show us what you can do, for instance, on the wall bars!"

Faith was about to reply when, to everyone's astonishment, Flash trotted unexpectedly across the room; as though he had understood every word Kitty said, he ran straight to the wall bars, gave a sudden leap to rest his fore-paws on the third bar from the bottom, then thrust his head backwards and forwards through them in the act of smiling at the wall!

There was a peal of merry laughter in the gymnasium in which even the astonished High school girls joined, and Valerie exclaimed:

"Come back here, you old rilly! You're not giving a display. Make way for some girls who really know what they're about!"

Flash dropped back to the floor. He turned his head, looking deeply astounded at the burst of laughter which had greeted his surprising effort, and whispered unexpectedly, Valerie, already puzzled to know how he could possibly have understood what Kitty had said, was more perplexed than ever

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