

"BESSIE BUNTER LEAVES CLIFF HOUSE!" Appealing LONG COMPLETE School story inside.

THE SCHOOLGIRL

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Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



**TRAPPED IN THE
LIFT—WHICH WAS JUST
WHAT BABS WANTED!**

It was the only way to save
her chum from trouble.
See this week's grand Cliff House
story.

A Grand Long Complete Story you will always remember. It stars that most famous of all schoolgirls, Bessie Bunter.



BESSIE BUNTER Leaves CLIFF HOUSE!

They Could Hardly Believe It!



"Oh, dear, where is old Bessie?" Mabel Lynn asked anxiously. "He can't wash wash longer." "Give her five minutes, Mabe," Barbara Redfern urged her dearest chum.

"But the rehearsal is being held!" "Well, never mind," Mabe soothed, "she's bound to be along any minute now."

Mabel Lynn looked a little anxious. The dress or so Fourth Formers who were in the music-room at Cliff House School, waiting for the rehearsal of "Gipsy Lady" to begin, looked impatient.

"Well, I say hlow Bessie," Rosa Redworth gasped. "Let somebody else take her place."

Mabe, who was the shining light of the junior school's Amateur Dramatic Society, shook her golden head.

"It would break the old chuff's heart if she came along and found somebody taking her place. Apart from which, Mabe added, "there's nobody as good as Bessie in this particular part. I wrote it especially with her in mind, and for once old Bess has worked hard on it. Why, she's practically word perfect now!"

"Well, where the Dickens has she gone?" Rosa wanted to know.

"To see her Aunt Annie and her new yacht, Mr. Eastman," Mabe said. "Yes, know they've just come back from their honeymoon, and have taken Gates Lodge. Well, the old chump is jolly keen

on this sort of terra play; she should be back by now," she added, with a worried little frown as she glanced towards the window.

The "old chump"—otherwise, Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter—should, for Bessie had been gone ever since afternoon lessons. No doubt Bessie was keen to see Aunt Annie again, for she was Bessie's favourite aunt, just as Bessie was Aunt Annie's favourite niece.

And so doubt the two of them had a lot to talk about, because very shortly the newly married Mr. and Mrs. Eastman were off on a two years' cruise before finally settling in Australia, which was Aunt Annie's home, and where Mr. Eastman, an immensely wealthy engineering magnate, was due to embark on a new contract.

Rather bashful and whirlwind had been the romance which had come to Bessie's favourite aunt so late in life. Until that afternoon, indeed, Bessie Bunter had never met her new uncle.

So there was no doubt that Bessie was having a very crowded time, and no doubt that there was every excuse for her lateness.

"Well, I guess we can't hold up the rehearsal for ever," said Lolla Carroll.

"Bessie get on with something, if only till old Roddykins comes. Give Bessie's part to somebody else to read for the moment, Mabe."

Mabe took the American justice's advice.

"Bridget, will you read it?" she asked of Bridget O'Toole.

"Sure, and it's the one thing I was going to suggest," Bridget said cheerily. "Hand over the script! It's a! Lends of it, eh?" she said, glancing over the MS.

"Do I start?"

"Yes, stand here," Mabe said. "You

needn't act. This is a test," she announced. "Listen, the gipsy girl, is waiting between the logs. Now, Bridget, start from 'Three hours, and set a single customer.' Babs, Diana, and Gwen, get ready in the wings, here."

Bridget checked as she moved to her appointed place. But before she could even open her mouth the door burst open with a crash. And everybody wheeled as a plump, bespectacled figure dashed in, her long pigtail flying behind her.

"Oh, kik-oo-oo! Oh, dud-dear!" the newcomer gasped. "I say, you girls, where's Babs?"

And she blushed rosy for the Fourth Form captain.

"Bessie?" gasped Barbara Redfern. For Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter it was.

"Bessie, you chump, where have you been?" demanded Mabe.

"Holding the rehearsal up, and all!" Bridget said severely. "I'm just reading your part."

"You?" Bessie blushed. "But I say, I've learned that, you know! But, Babs, I—I say—O! Babs, there you are! B!-Babs, I—I've got something to tell you—something absolutely amazing!" Bessie stammered breathlessly.

"You don't say?" Clara Twyn checked. "One of your rich relatives died and left you a fobbit in his will?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Bessie smiled.

"I am rich!" she said.

"Oh, of course!" Clara agreed, with a wink.

"I've got money to burn," the plump one boasted, jingling her pockets.

"Is that so?" Diana Hepburn-Clarke asked. "Then you can pay me back the five shillings you owe me."

"And," Beanie went on impressively, "I've left school."

"What?" cried up a head.

"And," Beanie gasped, enjoying the expressions on the faces of the girls grouped about her, "I'm going on a world cruise for two years!"

"And, after that, a trip to the South!" Clara Trevier chorused. "Go on, Beanie, what else has Santa Claus sent you?"

"And then," Beanie said unhesitatingly, "I'm going to settle down in Australia."

"And dig her spots in the Seven Dwarfs' diamond mine," suggested Joan Chambray.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Obviously Beanie glared at the grinning faces which surrounded her. Not one of those faces expressed the slightest belief in what Miss Beanie Bunter was saying, for Beanie, all too often, had those fanciful flights of imagination. Nobody had ever called Beanie an idiot and not a dozen, but nobody ever really believed her! And Babs and Mabel, her studymates and dearest chums, were among them.

Babs grinned a little now.

"And what else did you see all this in, Beanie?" she asked.

"Oh, really, Babs, I haven't seen a bit!"

"Well, what book did you read it in, then?" Clara Trevier grinned.

"I haven't read it in a book!" Beanie suddenly glared. "I tell you it's true, you know. I'm going to Australia with Aunt Annie and Uncle Miles, and if you jolly well want to know, I'm going at the end of this week, and I've only come back now to collect my things, because I'm going right away to live at the Gates Lodge, which my aunt and uncle have rented. And if," Beanie said breathlessly, suddenly putting her hand into her pocket, "she doesn't prove it, what does!"

And, to everybody's startled bewilderment, she produced a handful of silver coins and three ten-shilling notes.

Babs jumped.

"Beanie—"

"And—look at that, too," Beanie cried.

And she held up a postboard slip. Babs' eyes opened as she read:

"88. PLATHAN WORLD CRUISE CABIN RESERVED.

TICKET ISSUED TO MISS E. G. BUNTER.

TO BE GIVEN UP AT THE PURSER'S OFFICE UPON EMBARKATION.

"Beanie," Babs cried, and knew a funny little sensation as she gazed at her, "where did you get that?"

"Well, my Aunt Annie gave it to me, you know," Beanie explained. "Aunt Annie wants to adopt me now she's married; and my Uncle Miles wants to adopt me as well, because he says I'll be good company for his niece—Lay—who is also going on the cruise. Oh, it's true!" she beamed, and realized triumphantly that she had now disposed of the big-pulling, wren on to explain.

A rather long and rambling explanation it was, but the gist of it was that Uncle Miles and Aunt Annie, in company with Lay, had a niece of Uncle Miles, whom he had taken under his wing—were going on a two years' world cruise, after which they were all to settle down for some time in Melbourne, where Mr. Bunter had an important contract to fulfil.

All these arrangements had been

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER.

made without Beanie's knowledge, but with the approval of Beanie's parents. As a result Beanie was no longer a member of the school. She was leaving for her new home this day—this very afternoon, it fact.

"Oh," Babs said and purred. "Oh, Beanie, I—I am glad! You want to go?"

"Oh, yes, rather! Wouldn't you?" Beanie beamed. "Two years' cruise, you know. Think of that! And then a lovely home in Australia, you know. And uncle says that I can go to a domestic school there and study nothing but cookery and so forth, you know; so that afterwards I can start a school of my own, or buy a chain of restaurants, or—er—something like that."

"And I'm going to have lots of money—lots and heaps of money!" Beanie went on excitedly. "And they've told me I'm to pay what I like for the cruise, and it doesn't matter how much it costs, and—well all that, you know; and I'm going with Lay, Babs—and Lay's such an awfully nice girl that I know you'll love her."

"But, Beanie, what about the play?"

Mabel asked quietly.

"But, Oh, the—the play! Oh, yes!"

Good-bye to Beanie Bunter, perhaps the most familiar figure at Cliff House School. Good-bye to that dear old plump duffer, who has shared Study No. 4 for so long with Barbara Reffern and Mabel Lynn. Beanie leaves, with a golden future ahead of her. For her sake, Babs and Mabel are glad, yet—Cliff House without Beanie! How strange it will seem! They resign themselves, however, little dreaming of the amazing events to come before the time of Beanie's departure from England arrives!

Beanie paused. "Oh dear! I—I'd forgotten the play. Oh course, you won't be able to get anybody half as good as I am, I know. But—let's I've got to go, Mabel."

"And—and the summer holidays, Beanie!" Mabel said. "Remember you were coming to the Pinesbay Holiday Camp with us."

Beanie blinked behind her thick round spectacles.

"Oh, dear! Yes. But I shan't be able to do that now, shall I? Oh, it's all so thrilling, you know!"

"I—I feel sort of breathless!"

Babs and Mabel eyed their plump chum rather dazedly. Beanie gasped away! Beanie leaving Cliff House—this very afternoon!

They both shook their heads a little, thinking just for a moment what Cliff House without Beanie Bunter would be like. But realistically they banished those thoughts as soon as they arose. After all, Beanie and themselves had to part some time—and this, most certainly, was a chance which was never, never likely to come their fat chum's way again.

Still, it was hard to believe it—even now.

But there it was. That much was confirmed by Miss Frowson, Cliff House's headmistress, when she came in five minutes later to wish Beanie good-bye and the best of luck. There was no thought in anybody's mind of postponing the rehearsal after that.

All Beanie's friends were chattering round her, all of them who some day Beanie's friends had gone off to talk critically about the mouth-takingly

swift series of developments in each class.

Beanie was going—and going at once! Dear old Beanie! She was so bristling of excitement herself that she could hardly speak that afternoon. Practically everything in Study No. 4, which she had shared with Babs and Mabel, she gave to her two nearest chums.

Later, at her request, everybody within hearing had to come along to the backshop for a farewell treat—at Beanie's expense, of course.

And hardly was that meeting its end when into the gates drove a magnificent black Rolls-Royce, with Beanie's uncle at the wheel, and Beanie's then and happy-looking Aunt Annie seated beside him. It was all very exciting, all very bewildering. It left Babs and Mabel with the impression they were both drowsing.

But there it was. There was Beanie with her case of belongings. There was Beanie with Ting-a-Ling, her little Pekinese, under one arm, and her ancient parrot, Polly, in his cage, hanging from the other, clanking into the car.

And there was Aunt Annie beaming happily at the help her in; and there was Mr. Eastman, his rather stern, middle-aged face opened into a smile as he held the door open.

Then the door closed, with Beanie, a impatient mass of varied belongings, seated in the back of the car.

Aunt Annie approached Babs.

"Of course, Barbara," she said—the knew and liked Babs—"you'll want to see us much as you can of dear Beanie before she goes, so don't forget that Gates Lodge is only a stone's-throw from here, and you'll all be as free as the air to come and go as you please until we leave. And, because, of course," she added, "it'll often be coming along to visit you at the school."

"Oh, of all course!" Beanie stammered, her flushed nose! face protruding through the rear window. "Bro-ber for now, go girls!"

And "bye-bye" it was. With a sort of mist in front of their eyes, Babs and Mabel saw the car as it whirled off through the gate, crimson Beanie frantically waving from the back window. Then they looked at each other.

"Oh goodness! I—I can hardly believe it," Babs breathed. "Dear old cousin Beanie! Let's go and have a cup of tea in the study, Mabel."

"Yes," Mabel said. "Shall we invite Clara and Maypole?"

"Yes, rather!" Babs said. "And Let's and Jimmy. They'll all be tickled to death to talk about this."

But Babs, for some reason, did not immediately feel glad, and Mabel, for some other reason, looked positively disheartened.

In Study No. 4 they had just seen Joanna Cartain, Letta Carroll, Maypole's big sister, and the others from Study No. 7 at their guests. And talk of Beanie! Beanie! It was very, very odd of nothing else. Such a marvelous show for their old, good-hearted friend!

"But, oh my hat, we'll miss her!" Clara said. "I expect you'll miss her even more than we, Babe."

Babe replied: "Well, it's got to come sometime," she said. "And Bess is going to have such a wonderful time. I'm glad."

Clara she was—they all were. Yet—oh, it was funny somehow to see without Bessie. On the evening occasion not one of them would have missed her, but in spite of the cheery and excited conversation, they were conscious that there was an unclean gap in the festive talk that afternoon.

Nobody was surprised—indeed, they all looked as if it had been on the point of making the same suggestion—when, after tea was cleared, Babe said: "What about calling on old Bessie this evening? It can only prove."

"What—how?" said Clara and Bessie.

"Let's go. All of us." So all at once they went, and getting their machines from the cycle-shop, pedaled towards Gates Lodge. Not, as a matter of fact, that it was far away—Bessie never than a half-mile—and from every point in the road completely visible all the time. Half that distance they covered, riding in pairs, when ahead of them appeared a small car.

"Hallo!" Babe cried. "Better stop, girls. That car looks as if it's being driven by somebody new."

"Jolly dangerous!" Mabel cried.

They all hastily dismounted, staring rather angrily at the oncoming car. It was a saloon of a rather odd pattern, resembling in front or second gear, and wobbling dangerously from side to side. Even as they watched, its front wheels hit the curving side of the bank, and, clattering on the grass, leaped back on to the road.

"The—the—Oh my hat, look who's driving it!" shrieked Clara Tremlye. "Bessie!"

"No!" But Bessie it was. The car was near enough now for them to see distinctly the two girls who were in it. One was Bessie, her face tense, clinging to the steering wheel as though she were part of it. Next to her, was a dark-haired girl older and taller than Bessie—a girl whose Babe & Co. had never set eyes on before.

"Bessie, you chump, stop!" shrieked Lella.

Bessie had seen them. The car shot in a zigzag across the road, and then stopped to a standstill. The doors rattled forward.

"Bessie, you chump!"

"Bessie, you—"

"Oh, d-d-dear!" gasped the embarrassed Bessie. "Oh lik-crush! I say, you're driving all right!"

"Fines!" said the girl next to Bessie. She glared at Babe & Co. "Get you out of here!"

"Thank-oh-oh, these are friends of mine," Bessie stammered. "I say, you don't know Lucy Stoll, do you, girls?" she asked. "She—she's a sort of cousin by marriage to me now, you know, and we're all going out on the cruise, aren't we, Lucy? Lucy's teaching me to drive, you know!"

"Teaching you to drive a machine, you mean?" asked Clara Tremlye scornfully, and glared at Lucy. "Why, you might have killed somebody."

"Oh, really—" Bessie said unconcernedly.

"And, Bessie," Babe said anxiously, "you haven't got a driving-licence."

"Well, I can get one, you know," Bessie proceeded to tell.

"At your age! I suppose," Clara asked mockingly, "you know that a policeman could tax you to if he saw you driving?"

"Oh, stuff!" Lucy Stoll cried.

"Stuff—"

"But—" Lucy glared at them. "I'm taking the responsibility, she says haughty. "Bessie wanted to drive so well, I let her drive."

"Then you ought to jolly well know better!" Babe said curtly. "Supposing she smashed the car up!"

"Well, the worst that she's only just started," Lucy said. "Anyway, is it your business?"

"Yes, it is. Bessie is a friend of mine," Babe warmly retorted. "And—Oh my hat, here comes a policeman! Bessie, change places with Lucy—quickly!" she added frantically.

"Bessie, quick—this way!" Lucy cried, looking a little scared herself then.

And she struggled over the headland duffel, at the same time pushing her to one side. Bessie peeled out of one seat into another only just in time. For coming round the bend appeared a young constable from the Courtfield station.

"What's this!" he asked suspiciously, as he came up. "Obstructing the road. You driving this car?" he asked to Lucy.

"Why, of course," Babe said.

"Well, I could have sworn, the constable was staring at Bessie in a way that sent a shiver down the fat one's spine, "that this other girl was in the driver's seat."

"How could she have been?" Mabel asked loudly. "She hasn't got a driving-licence, and she's under age."

The constable granted. Bessie quivered. Still he seemed suspicious and a little baffled, and he inspected Lucy's driving-licence. That, at least, was in order. He eyed her.

"Well, a jolly good job for you've stopped you, old Bessie," Babe said. "Supposing he'd seen a minute before!"

"Oh, d-d-dear!"

"You might have found yourself with the handcuffs on now, what?" Julia Carstairs observed gravely.

But Lucy's eyes flashed.

"And what," she asked, with a half-smile in her voice, "should I have been doing? If that's just trying to frighten dear Bessie! Bessie was in no more danger than you were. Anyway, let's get going!" she added impatiently.

Gritting the chums looked at each other. With a snap Lucy engaged gear, pressing the starter at the same time. Then the car lurched—so sharply that the chums jumped back.

"But, I say, we're going to see—"

Babe yelled.

Thank! went the horn. Bang! went the radiator. And the chums, breathing heavily, watched the car shoot off down the road, leaving them with the impression that Bessie's new friend was distinctly annoyed that they had got Bessie out of what might have been a very awkward scrape.

Bessie Did Not Suspect!



"AND Babe is your very best friend, Bessie!" Lucy said.

"Oh, yes, rather!" Bessie beamed. "And Mabel, you know!"

"And do you always do what they order you to do?" Lucy went on.

"Well, they—they don't exactly order it, you know," Bessie pointed out. "That's—that's just their way of advising me. Now—no, I don't—don't think I'd better drive again," she said nervously, as Lucy took one hand off the wheel and glanced at her with as

unmistakably inviting suggestion. "I'll learn to do—drive when I'm older."

"Oh, as you please, of course," Lucy said, and bent lower—perhaps so that Bessie should get up to the thwarted look which was radiating on her face. "I hope," she said slyly, "I'll never persuade you to do anything you don't want to do. Bessie, don't you see, you aren't a bit at school now, are you?"

"N-no—no!" Bessie stammered. "And as you've got to see the world you'll have to learn to do important things. Lucy went on, her words, sounding very softly, at the last girl. "But, of course, Bessie, you'll always have me by your side," she said sweetly.

"Yes," Bessie beamed. "That—that will be lovely."

Poor Bessie! She was no judge of character. How could she know that Lucy Stoll, in reality, hated her?

That night Eastman had married Miss Anne Buzzer, Lucy Stoll had had pretty much her own way with her uncle, and the resentment she felt at that advantage had only been deepened by the knowledge that she was in particular, as a girl, a glorious social cruise which would visit it. That, to her disgust, she had learned that Bessie would also be on that cruise. Lucy wanted to see also on that cruise except Bessie.

But Lucy being awful, was not the sort of girl to say that outright. She had made up her mind, however, that if it was humanly possible, Bessie Barker should not be sharing that cruise. Her uncle told Bessie of the matter, and Lucy knew that uncle better than anyone, and she fancied she saw a way, by playing her cards cunningly, to turn uncle dead against the fat one.

The car, driven by Lucy, lurched on, and presently the grounds of Gates Lodge, which was the newly married Mr. and Mrs. Eastman's temporary home, came into view. Ting-a-ling, which had been sitting on the floor signifying awaiting the arrival of his mistress, rushed eagerly to meet her as the car drew up in the drive.

"Hallo!" Bessie said. "Down, Ting, old boy! I say, isn't it ripping here!" she asked the dog, and Ting said: "Yap, yap!" in a way that was meant to tell Bessie that he thoroughly agreed. "Hallo, aunt! Hallo, uncle!" she beamed as she got out, leaving from the house, came forward arm-in-arm.

"We've had a lovely drive, hasn't we, Lucy?"

"Oh, lovely!" Lucy said.

"And now I expect you're hungry!" Aunt Anne asked.

"Yes, rather, you know, famished!" Bessie said.

"Then if you and Lucy will get into the motor-room you will find tea laid for you," Mrs. Eastman said. "Your uncle and I have finished, Bessie. If you want fruit afterwards you will find plenty in the conservatory, so please sit down, do help yourselves."

"You know, Bessie, don't you, that you can have whatever you like and do whatever you wish to do."

"Within reason," her uncle said.

Bessie gurgled happily. Her eyes were not dim, she had recovered. "You know she had always dreamed about Gergons!"

With a pleased chuckle, she smiled off at once, leaving Lucy. Miss Eastman frowned a little, but Aunt Anne smiled and indulgently.

"Dear child!" she said. "Oh, Miss, I'm so glad she's with us!"

"Aren't we all!" Lucy said. "She is the dearest thing, aunt. Just a little

his impulsive jaw and again—but I suppose that's just because she's beginning to find her feet after being cooped up in a school for so long. But Lucy her being so excited about tea?" she said, laughing. "Why, it wasn't more than an hour ago—when we had a smashing great meal in the Royal Hotel!"

"The Royal?" Her uncle frowned. "That's rather expensive, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes, ever so!" Lucy shook her head. "I pointed that out to Bessie, of course, but she said that, as we had had told her she could have what she liked, and spend what she liked, she was going to have it. One can't blame her for that, of course." Lucy added, with excited elaboration, but with a quick look down under half-closed lids at her uncle. She knew exactly what effect those little threats were having upon him. "You—you don't mind, do you?" she added more hesitantly.

"I—I couldn't very well refuse to let Bessie have her head, could I?"

"No," he assented. "No, I—I suppose it is all right, but I do feel, Annie, my dear, that you have been rather wholesale in your invitations to Bessie. I grant her to be happy, I want her to enjoy herself and have the best of everything, but I don't want her to take everything too much for granted. I suppose she'll settle down, though."

"Mike, dear, of course she will," his wife said. "You don't know dear Bessie. You know the slightest cross her merry. I assure you, especially—well, a fond uncle as Lucy—when Bessie is in such good luck."

"Thank you!" Lucy said and even she blushed a little. "I—I'll just go and see what she's doing now."

"And us," her uncle said, "must get ready for the theatre. We've got stalls for the first night of 'Hawaii'!"

"Oh, uncle, how lovely!" Lucy laughed. "Would you like me to drive?"

"No, Lucy; Hopkins will drive. We shall be taking the Rolls."

Lucy smiled. Off she strolled. She entered the morning-rooms, to find Bessie just in the act of rising. Even Bessie's large appetite had been satisfied at the Royal, and for once she had time to worry that poor herself out an

extra cup of tea and nibble at an éclair.

"Why, Bessie, you've never finished!"

"But I—I have, you know!" Bessie beamed, with a regretful glance at the good things still so be consumed. "All this—the excitement in making me lose my appetite, you know?"

"Oh, stuff!" Lucy said. "Can't you think that happening? Bessie! Look here, if you don't feel like tea, what about a little luscious fresh fruit? You know just says you can leave whatever you like."

Bessie's eyes danced behind her spectacles. That was an idea, certainly. Fresh fruit sounded attractive, even if she wasn't hungry.

"Let her go and have a look," she said.

Lucy led the way. In the conservatory Bessie caught her breath. There, hanging in the windows, were several bunches of the most delicious black grapes she had ever seen, and, as an open box, a score or more of peaches, the very sight of which would have set her mouth watering at hour ago.

It was grand, somehow, just to feel that if she wanted it all that lovely fresh fruit was hers. Wouldn't Babs and Mabel just love it!

And, thinking of Babs and Mabel, she passed suddenly, an idea in her mind. Bessie would so love to share her good fortune with them.

"I assure, do you think you could mind if I sent a box to Babs and Mabel?" she asked.

"Mind?" Lucy cried. "Why, she'd be delighted! She likes your friends, doesn't she? Bessie, why not?" she added eagerly. "Send them the lot. There are bags there where they come from."

"But—let Babs and Mabel really be able to eat these all, you know?"

"No, but there are your other friends at the school aren't there?" Lucy inquired. "And, naturally, dear Babs and Mabel wouldn't dream of not sharing them out. Oh, Bessie, I'm sure they'd all love it. Let's get Perkins to pack these, shall we?"

"But—last one—" Bessie murmured, hesitating.

"Well, must send you, Bessie, that everything is yours! And, look!" Lucy

cried excitedly. "Here's a brand-new box of chocolates! Send them, too!"

Bessie gulped. She was tempted. Babs & Co. certainly would like that fruit, and Babs & Co. certainly would like those chocolates—a most expensive brand, which were her aunt's favorites. After all, it was all right, wasn't it? Just to make sure, she blushed at Lucy.

"Lucy, you—you're sure, just wouldn't mind if I sent them all?"

"Ah, yes," Lucy said, "I could be delighted—just too delighted. Ring for Perkins, Bessie. But wait a minute!" she added. "You'll want to put them over there tonight, won't you? Better tell Perkins to send them over to Hopkins in the Rolls."

Bessie gurgled.

"Double you think I could?" she asked breathlessly.

"Why not?" Lucy said. "You know I wouldn't advise you to do the wrong thing."

Bessie beamed. The last shred of hesitancy was gone then. Lucy was right, of course. Lucy, too, was older, and if Lucy gave her approval—well, that had she to worry about. Perkins, the butler who sent her, and, though he did raise his eyebrows a little in surprise when the order was given, he was too well trained a servant to make a fuss. With plenty of hands that trembled a little with the delicious pleasure she took in being able to make such a treat, Bessie ordered a hasty note.

"Send that with them, Perkins," she said. "Tell Hopkins to take the Rolls over and drop the things right away."

"Yes, Miss Bessie."

"And now," Bessie said excitedly, "I think I'll write to my people, you know, before I dress for dinner. Lucy, what will you do?"

"Oh, I'll just stroll around," Lucy said.

She chuckled as Bessie trotted happily off.

"And now," she breathed, "for developments!"

She went to the bath-room. There she washed and changed. From the window of the room she watched the black Rolls set out, and chuckled again. Then she reached a bell on the table.

A tall, rather sorrow-faced maid came in and looked at her.



THE chaperon hastily jumped off their cycles as the little car wobbled dangerously from side to side of the road. And then—"Oh, my hat, look who's driving it!" shrieked Clara Trevlyn. "Bessie!"

"Hallo, Bessie!" Lucy said. "Do something for me!"

"What is it this time?" Bessie asked, without any of that expect due to a surprise.

"Oh, don't look so sad, nippy! There's nothing to get worried about! That fat fool, Bessie Buxton, has bought all the fresh fruit in the conservatory and rubbed it off in the Rolls to her pals at Cliff House! She's also sent off a new box of my aunt's chocolates, though, of course, you know nothing about that yet! All I want you to do is to ask Uncle if he knows where the fresh fruit is, and send her chocolates. You can take up some yarn about wanting to put them away."

"Bessie looked relieved.

"That all?"

"Well, that's all right," she said.

"That all?"

"That's all!" Lucy chuckled. "Good girl!"

She grinned as the "good girl" disappeared. Then she turned as she saw her aunt and Uncle strolling in, and, sleepily, heard Bessie's voice.

"Good old Bessie!" she thought, with a glow of satisfaction. "Uncle! Bessie who, so many times in the past, had helped her to carry out her subtle, cunning plans! Not quite so respectful, of course, as a maid should be; but that was one of the penalties of making an unending a fellow-compriser. Still, she could overlook all that. It paid her."

One last peep into the mirror she gave. Then demurely she tripped downstairs.

Her uncle was there, looking rather grim. Her aunt was there, looking considerably surprised. Bessie stood before them both.

"No peaches, no grapes," exclaimed Mr. Eastman—"when I bought these fresh this afternoon! You're sure you don't know where they are?"

"No, sir," Bessie said. "I saw them in the conservatory about an hour ago, but when I came to put them away they were gone. I—I'm over so sorry if I've troubled you."

"Troubled! Fetch Perkins!" Miss Eastman snapped.

"Miss, my dear—" Aunt Annie scowled.

But Aunt Annie's "dear" irritably dropped. Then, as Perkins came along and Lucy stood back, he turned upon the leader. Perkins blinked at his water-stained.

"But, sir, Miss Buxton had them. Miss Buxton sent them all off to Cliff House for her friends."

"W-what?" stammered Mr. Eastman.

"Yes, sir. Those were her instructions, sir. She also sent Mrs. Eastman's new box of chocolates."

Mr. Eastman stared blankly.

"She sent them ten minutes ago with Perkins, sir, in the Rolls-Hope."

"In the—the Rolls? With—what? Help line? Doesn't she know I want the car for the theatre? Doesn't she know, even if she had been given the freedom of the confounded house, that she just can't load stuff up in my box car and park it off to her friends? What is this house? And who are I in it? Dash it all, we'll have the furniture being transported next! Fetch Miss Buxton to me, Perkins, at once!"

"Perkins—no!" Aunt Annie said sharply. "Miss—"

"Miss, I've told you—"

"Uncle, please?" And Lucy rushed forward. "Oh, uncle, I'm sorry—ear so! But dear Bessie—Uncle, I'm sure she didn't know what she was doing! Uncle, don't go for her!"

"I'm going to see her!" Eastman raved. "I'm going to tell that girl exactly what, and cannot go on in this house!"

"Miss, dearest, listen to me!" Aunt Annie begged. "It's just a trifle, really! Please—please don't quarrel with dear Bessie on her very first day home! It would break the poor girl's heart. Perkins, don't go!" she added sharply.

"No Perkins, stop," Lucy said. "Aunt's right, really, uncle. Bessie didn't think what she was doing. You know her by now. You know that she's got an idea she can help herself to what she likes. But you'll only upset her—and yourself," she added earnestly, "by seeing her now. Uncle, let me talk to her."

He hesitated. Aunt Annie framed the trifle with a grateful look.

"Really, Miss, I—I think that would be the better course," Aunt Annie said mildly.

"Well!" He blew out his cheeks. "Hani! Well—oh, dash it, very well, don't I don't want to lose my temper with her, but the girl must understand there's a limit. Well, thank you, Lucy! But go and talk to her now," he suggested, "and try to let her understand that if things like this continue to happen I shall be in danger of changing my mind about taking her on the train."

"Yes, uncle," said Lucy meekly.

And she hurried away, her face rosy with triumph, her eyes glittering. But she did not go so soon Bessie Buxton. Not if Lucy knew it was Bessie going to be warned of the pitfalls she, Lucy, was so carefully opening beneath her unsuspecting feet.

The Charm Takes Charge of Bessie!



"O H, dear!" sighed Barbara Redfern.

"O dear!" sighed Mabel Lynn.

And then they both looked up, but for a moment stared as though puzzled at having caught each other out in using the same words, and then, almost mechanically, they both looked at the vacant place at the table in Study No. 4. Another glance at each other, there was before they bent their heads once again to their work.

The work was prep. It was in full blast in Study No. 4.

At least, it should have been in full blast, and normally both Babs and Mabel would have been interested in the evening's preparation. But Babs was copying notes—a job she admired—and Mabel was translating Shakespeare into French. Yet they sighed.

Though neither of them would have admitted it, they were sitting down sad Bessie.

It was strange, somehow, to sit there without Bessie. They missed their familiar "Oh excuse!" of hers. It gave them a feeling of emptiness, somehow, to look at that spot and not to find the "voiced features" of Bessie, with at least one ink smudge on her cheek, and her bespectacled eyes screwed up in a concentration of thought.

They even missed the little Bessie usually applied, and those irritating little "So's she was in the habit of" giving the table just when they were tracing or drawing a most delicate line.

But neither of them was going to admit they were missing Bessie. If Bessie had gone, she had gone in better haste, and as she was their

—hers, their every earnest wish was for her to return in a success of the glorious new life into which she had plunged.

Dear old defferkins Bessie! What was she doing now?

Search, search! went the pens of Babs and Mabel. Silence, except for that coming in Study No. 4.

Then suddenly the door was pushed open. The sweet face of Marjorie Buxton from Study No. 1 peered in.

"Bess, old thing, I wonder—" And then she sat, gazed at the vacant spot. She bit her lip rather cordlessly, said "Oh!" and then, in confusion, reached greater by the apologetic smile she attempted, retired. And again Babs looked at Mabel, and Mabel at Babs, and again they both looked at the vacant chair. And once again, for some reason, they both sighed and went on with their work.

It was funny, somehow.

Still, it was nerveless to think of Bessie's good fortune.

"Suppose old Bessie's getting married about her, rather?" Mabel asked.

"Yes, unless!" Babs agreed. "Puts our holiday camp in the shade, doesn't it?"

Then there was another interruption. This time it came from Piper, the porter, who, after knocking, lagged in a heavy parcel.

"Which a fellow in a Rolls-Royce brought this," he announced, "and he gave me a note to give you with it. Which it is," Piper added hopefully, and then handed to Babs handed him his papers. "Oh, thank you, Miss Redfern! Hope everything's in order," he added, as he disappeared.

"But who," breathed Mabel, "is it from? Babs, what's the matter?"

"Bessie!" cried Babs.

And eagerly Mabel glanced over her chair's shoulder at Babs, with fingers that were just a little unsteady, unfolded and read out the note.

"Dear Babs and Mabel—I am sending you these because I know you like fruit, and will want to share it out with the others. All my love, "Bessie."

"Dear old cheap!" Mabel said softly.

"Anyway, let's see what she sent," Babs cried, and, flinging open the basket, stood astounded. "Grapes!" she cried. "Peaches! Oh, my hat! And, Mabel, look! This lovely box of chocolates!"

"Sister," "sister!" Mabel enthused.

"Shall I fetch the others?"

"Yes, unless! Better wait till after prep, though," Babs laughed. "Dear old Bess!"

They were about that, and pleased Clara Lela, Janet, Marjorie, Jeanina, and Marcelle none when they were invited in to partake of that deliciously expensive food. Miss Bessie they did, but Bessie, at least, had cut those a very pleasant something to remember her by.

But they missed her again at call-over when Miss Charmant, together called out her name. They missed her when, finally, they went to bed. And for hours Babs' thoughts, as she lay awake, were all of Bessie, little guessing that Bessie, in her own exquisitely furnished bedroom at Gates Lodge, was also thinking about them.

Lovely that room, but it lacked something, the decorativeness of the Fourth Form had. Even Polly the parrot, whom Bessie was never allowed to have in the dormitory at Cliff House, did not make up for it; yet the presence of Tony-a-Lou, who was called up at the top of her bed.

And just when she was doing off, and Polly took it into his head to speak a sudden remark "Good night, Babe!" I say, Babe, had she had a screw? Beanie, instead of gloving with pleasure at the closeness of her pet, felt a sudden little lump in her throat, and for some reason was quite cross with Polly.

But then her thoughts went swiftly to the future. What a time she was going to have—what a lot of countries to visit! Nervous to wait on her, money to burn, all the jollity she could wish for, and all the happiness she had ever enjoyed when girls. Oh, it was all going to be so marvelous—so utterly ripping.

"Wasn't she just the luckiest girl on earth?"

Presently she slept.

In the Fourth Form dormitory at Cliff House Babe also slept at last.

When rising-bell went, Babe awakened, and her gaze turned instantly towards Beanie's bed, only to meet the eyes of Babe, justifiably engaged, across the empty bed. They both smiled at each other.

"I expect old Boss can step in bed this morning as long as it suits her," Babe said. "I say, Babe, shall we go and see her after lessons?"

"We've got a rehearsal," Babe pointed out.

"Oh, never mind. We'll have that after tea," Babe said.

And after lessons, accompanied by Clara and Marjorie, who also insisted on visiting Beanie, they went over to Gates Lodge.

So eagerly anxious were they all to meet their plump chum again that unconsciously they set themselves a pace which caused them to feel rather hot by the time they had reached the glass of the lobby. And there Babe uttered an exclamation.

"Hallo, there's Lucy Stoll!" she announced.

Lucy it was, half-hidden by the shadowy With Lucy was a willow-faced girl dressed in a maid's uniform. The two of them seemed to be arguing about something—the maid, indeed, was shaking her head with such a complete lack of respect that the spectacle held their attention. Then suddenly Lucy looked round. She gave an apprehensive jump as she saw the Cliff House girls, and then hastily sheathed the servant away.

"Doesn't look as if she's too pleased at being caught talking to that girl," Babe said, and looked questioningly at Babe.

Babe nodded thoughtfully. More than once since yesterday had she thought of Lucy Stoll, and more than once had she tried to rid her mind of the impression that Lucy had allowed Beanie to drive that car in the expectation of Beanie getting into trouble.

Lucy, now, was acting rather curiously. For having demanded the servant, she had hurried away herself.

The chums went on, walking to the drive. But again, just before they reached the house, they paused, quickly glancing at each other.

It was Mr. Eastman they heard speaking—himself screened by bushes which grew in front of the touch windows. Distinctly his voice, raised a little in anger, came to them.

"I tell you, Annie, I shan't stand much more without opening my mouth," he was saying. "If Bruce had interfered with those glasses they would never have got broken."

"But, Miles, dear, it was a pure accident," Aunt Annie protested.

"Lucy says so."

"But also Lucy says she warned Beanie not to go near them."

The chums looked at each other. "I know," Aunt Annie said, a little disturbed. "But, Miles, dear, don't spot me—or yourself. I know you liked the glasses, but we can get more in Vermont. Please don't say anything this time!"

"Trouble," murmured Babe.

Trouble it was—or seemed like it—and trouble again associated with the name of Lucy Stoll. Babe had vague suspicions.

But when, a few moments later, they met Beanie in her own room, Beanie herself gave an indication that she was conscious of any undercurrent of trouble in the Eastman household.

Beanie, in fact, was in a high pitch of excitement, for she had been told by Aunt Annie that she could go to Cambridge to buy things for her crew, and she was just consulting her dressing before taking her departure in Lucy's company. She was breathlessly excited and so utterly pleased to see them.

"Oh, I say, it's ripping!" she gurgled. "I'm going to get my outfit, Babe. And Aunt Annie, you know—she says I'm to buy whatever I fancy, and have the bill sent into Uncle Miles. Lucy's coming with me to help of course, and drive the car. You'd come, too, wouldn't you?" she added eagerly.

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"Why, Beanie, of course," Babe said. "If you really want us to come."

"Oh, really, Babe, you know I'd hate you anyone to come! Here's Lucy," she added, as that girl entered the door. "I say, Lucy, Babe and Mabel and Clara and Marjorie are coming with us, you know! You don't mind, do you?"

Just for a moment Lucy looked as if she did mind—very much. But in the circumstances the only thing she could do was to put a bright face on it.

"Why, it will be fun," she said. "Yes, rather!" Beanie said. "I say, let's get going, shall we?" Babe, what do you think of red velvet for an evening frock for me?"

"Horrible!" Babe said, with a shudder.

"Oh, really? Lucy thinks it's lovely, you know."

Babe glanced quickly at Lucy, who turned her head away. With excited Beanie leading the procession, they went out of the room and climbed into the waiting Buick, which Hopkins was driving. Lucy nodded to him.

"Paris Models sleep," she said gravely.

Babe blinked. Paris Models was the most expensive shop in Cambridge.

"But—have you got to go there, Beanie?" she asked.

"Oh! No, I can get anywhere, you know," Beanie said. "But Lucy says that's the best shop."

"And the most expensive," Babe pointed out gently.

Lucy glared at Babe.

"Well, does that matter?" she asked. "Beanie, can please tell me where she shops?"

"But I don't mind, you know—well," Beanie said unconcernedly. "Of course, I've never shopped at the Paris Models, and personally I think the change they sell are too slow for a girl with a nice evening figure, you know. Still, no need to worry about expense."

"Then I advise Hollands," Babe said. "It's not expensive, perhaps, but they've got a varied stock. Besides, you know most of the assistants there, Beanie."

"Yes, rather! That's a point, you know," Beanie said, "and after all, it is my shopping, isn't it?" Hollands, then, Hopkins. I say, see how this dreadful scowls his cap when I speak to him?"

Lucy snuck look. Babe glanced at her, her eyes narrowing a little, all her suspicion racking back to her. Beanie may have been given a free hand as far as money was concerned, but Babe had a shrewd idea that if Lucy had her way Mr. Kamsman would be appalled by the size of the bills which came rolling in when the expedition. From that moment Babe resolved to keep a sharp eye on Beanie.

So it was to Hollands they went, and seeing that bathing suits and evening dresses were in the forefront of Beanie's mind, they all tramped together into the summer holiday department. Bathing suits were asked for, and a variety of them displayed. Then Lucy said:

"Which is the best?"

"Why, that Challoner suit, miss," the assistant said. "But it's expensive, I'm afraid. Four guineas."

"Oh, well, I have three of those," Lucy said lightly.

"But," Babe objected, "what about this? It looks just as good to me, and it's only thirty shillings."

Lucy nodded.

"Let's have, who's spending the money?"

"Well, Beanie is. But I've seen Beanie doesn't want to be extravagant, do you see?"

Beanie hesitated.

"But Lucy says—"

"And, after all, I did come with her to help!" Lucy flashed.

"Well, you, that's right, you know," Beanie said unhappily. "Perhaps I'd better do as Lucy says, Babe."

But Babe was no better try one on suspicion, but caught upon Mrs. Clara, and Marjorie, and they were looking a little angry.

Babe had a sudden inspiration.

"Well, now," she said, and passed. "Beanie, that's no better try one on and see how it looks, first?"

"That's a good idea!" beamed Beanie. "Where can I change?"

"This way, miss," the assistant said. Beanie trotted off importantly. Lucy, with a transparently smug smile for Babe, answered to the next counter.

Babe looked at her chums.

"Now, girls, listen!" she said quickly. "You take Beanie round. It's pretty obvious Lucy's out to make Beanie spend and spend, and pretty obvious, if you ask me, she wants to get her hair a new. I'll get red of Lucy. You look after Beanie."

"Then?" Clara whistled. "Can you do it, Babe?"

"I'll try," Babe said. She walked towards Lucy.

"I say, Lucy!"

Lucy swung round. There was little friendliness in her eyes as she regarded her.

"Well!" she snapped.
 "I was waiting," Babe said smoothly, "if you'd care to join me in buying Bessie a surprise present! After all, we are her best friends, aren't we, and there's a good opportunity now that the old duffer's changing."

Lucy shrugged.
 "Just as you please," she said frigidly. "What do you suggest?"

"Well, what about a maximize set?" Babe asked. "They sell them on the third floor, I believe. Are you willing?"
 Just for a moment Lucy looked hesitant. But Babe's whole attitude was so completely innocent and disarming that it was impossible to refuse her. She nodded.

"Right-o, then?" Babe laughed. "This way, we'll take the lift."

She tripped across to the small passenger lift, Lucy trailing after her. The lift was of the variety that was controlled by the passenger himself, and was one of a set of three. Lucy did not know that lift.

But Babe did.
 Babe had had more than one adventure on that lift, which never seemed to be in smooth operation for any length of time.

Into the lift she stepped, Lucy, with a hesitant glance towards the changing-room, stepped after her.

"Let's be quick," she said.
 "Certainly," Babe answered; and down went the gate of the lift, and Babe put her finger on one of the buttons. The lift shot up past the first, the second, the third floor, and on to the fourth. Lucy gasped.

"You idiot, you've pressed the wrong button!" she cried, as the lift screeched upwards the lift floor.

"Oh, crumbs, so I have! Sorry!" Babe said. And in her apparent anxiety to undo her mistake jammed at two buttons at once. There came a jerk which sent Lucy reeling half across the tiny floor as, with a shudder, the lift came to a standstill between two floors.

"You fool, you've stopped it!" Lucy cried.

Babe anothered a shudder. Good old lift! She knew that it would take the Holland's electricity some time to get it going again, and they had to attract attention first. Just to make positively certain they were completely stranded, she pressed the emergency button. The lift stood motionless.

"Oh dear!" Babe murmured. "We—we've stuck!"

"You idiot!" Lucy cried. "I believe you did that on purpose!"

Babe looked hurt.
 "But why should I do it on purpose?" she asked. "Why should—? Oh, I say, you needn't be so rough!" she added, as Lucy, with a furious sneer, brushed her aside and frantically jammed at the bottom button. "But, I say, how do we get out of this?"

Lucy grunted her indignation.
 "Isn't there a bell, or something?"

"No," Babe said.

"I believe you know this would happen!"

"About! Let's cheer!" Babe suggested.

"Hi!" yelled Lucy.

"Hi!" squeaked Babe.

"That's not shouting!" cried Lucy.

"Yes!"

"Hi!" Babe said, a little louder; while Lucy pulled at the top of her voice and frantically shook the lift gongs.

"Look," Babe said solemnly, "as if we will have to take up the floor and drop down the shaft!" Do you think we might try that?"

"Don't be a fool!" Lucy retorted, and shook the lift gongs again.

Babe checked constantly. She had stowed the lift in the best possible position for her purpose. Above them, on the fifth floor, were the store-rooms; below them the antique floor, which was very well patronized. Still Lucy yelled and shrieked.

Fifty-two minutes went by before a distant voice sounded from the depths below:

"Hallo! What's wrong there?"

"No need! Wrong?" Lucy shrieked.

"We're stuck, you idiot! Let us out!"

"All right, miss—but keep your temper. I'll fetch the men."

Lucy parted.

Another five minutes went by before there were tinkling voices below which suggested that the men had arrived and were in action.

"Happy up!" cried Lucy.

"Can't work no faster, miss!"

A quarter of an hour went by. Half an hour. Babe felt sorry. By this time Babe, rebuffed of Lucy's influence, would be only too willing to listen to Mabel, Marjorie, and Clara. The time dragged on. Lucy, almost frantic with rage, glared at her.

"An hour—the fools!"

Two more minutes went by. Then a voice sounded up the lift-shaft:

"Press the ground-floor button, please!"

Lucy did so. Ever since the breakdown Lucy had meant to be furious gazed over the lift buttons. The lift gave a jerk, and then smoothly slid down. Fortunately Lucy flung open the gate, and without even a "Thank you" to the two scowled men who stood outside, stepped past them towards the changing-room again. Babe, however, who was in funds, dipped a shilling into one of the men's hands.

"Thanks!" she murmured.

"Please, miss!" the man said eagerly.

Babe trotted on the heels of Lucy. Fortunately Lucy was engaging the assistant who had served Bessie.

"Oh, Miss Bunter left with her friends an hour ago!" she said.

"And did she get the three Chalfoner suits?"

"No, miss, not in the end. Miss Bunter's friends persuaded her to have a Burley and two Carveres, each at twenty-five shillings. And very good suits they were, too. I believe Miss Bunter went to the evening dress. Take the lift, miss. It's on the second floor."

"Thanks," Lucy granted, "but I'm having as much of your lifts! Where are the stairs?"

"Right is to the right, miss, in the next department."

Lucy sarcastically thanked it, Babe, checking, followed in her wake.

In the evening dress they were told that Miss Bunter and her friends had gone to the shoe department. From there they tramped to the lingerie, which Bessie had left ten minutes ago. From the lingerie they tramped to the fancy goods, and from the fancy goods to the gloves. By that time Lucy was almost steaming with rage.

"And where," she almost barked at the assistant, "did Miss Bunter go from here?"

"Well, miss, I heard her say she was drying for a cup of tea. So perhaps you'll find her in the restaurant."

Into the restaurant they went, and there stopped. At the very first table were Bessie, Clara, Marjorie, and Mabel. Bessie was looking indignantly pleased and fuming.

"I see, my dear, where have you been!" she cried, as Lucy and Babe

came up. "I've nearly done my shopping, you know!"

Lucy checked at Bessie in a way

"What did you get?"

"Oh, heaps!" Bessie sighed happily.

"And some of the things were over so cheap, you know?"

Lucy looked sad. Clara, catching Babe's eye, winked, and Babe smiled. She felt happy then. It was obvious that Lucy's little scheme to make Bessie overstep extravagantly had been completely slipped in the bud.

Bessie Speaks Her Mind!



"HUM! Good—very good, Bessie! I congratulate you upon some very economical spending and a very careful choice!" Mr. Eastman beamed, and Bessie smiled at Bessie in a way that showed he was immensely pleased with his new ward.

Lucy did not smile. Lucy, hanging in the background, most frigidly scowled. Aunt Annie beamed happily, and Bessie smiled prettily.

The shopping expedition had just returned from Helderly Street, and Mr. Eastman was examining the bills which Mabel had insisted Bessie should see for

him. No doubt he was pleased—but as pleased, in fact, as Lucy was savage. Adding to that savagery which was obscuring her now, he tossed a good-natured smile upon her.

"As a matter of fact, Lucy, you might learn something from Bessie's methods of shopping. You're not too economical, are you?"

Lucy turned red. Bessie, however, "That Marjorie and Clara and Mabel helped me, you know," she said.

"Then I congratulate you upon having such good helpers," Uncle Miles said, and beamed graciously at the chaperone. "Which just reminds me, Bessie, while your friends are here I've something I want to tell you. You know, of course, that we are sailing on Saturday—"

"Oh, yes!" Bessie cried.

"Your aunt has just been suggesting you might like to have a farewell party—"

"Oh, I see—?" Bessie gasped.

"Invite, my dear, a dozen of your friends from Cliff House."

Bessie's face was like the full moon.

"Aunt, can I go over and write them now?" she asked eagerly.

"Why, of course, my dear," Aunt Annie kindly smiled. "And you may tell Miss Frances if you see her that both your uncle and I will be pleased to accept the invitation, she has so kindly sent us to attend the brooding-up-day concert at Cliff House. That, by the way, is on the very day we sail, but as the concert is in the evening and we don't have till the afternoon it will be easy enough to manage. I, just means, Bessie dear, that you will have to do all your packing on the day of your party."

Bessie smiled.

"I see, my dear, will you come, too?" she asked, and she said, "Babe!"

"Oh, with pleasure!" Babe said, with a mischievous look at Lucy.

But Lucy, smothering her hate, turned her head away.

"I shall try to come, Bessie dear, but—oh, I have some letters to write," she said. "Forgive me this time!"

Very willingly Bessie forgave her, and the chaperone, for their part, were glad.

In any case, they were all anxious to

he getting back now. Mals was remembering the rehearsal she had called for after tea. Work to be done there, for though everyone else was ward perfect, Bridget, who had now efficiently taken over Bessie's job, had such jewelry to make try with, she play only a matter of days away. Mals looked like having an energetic time.

Back into the car they all clambered, and in ten minutes were bowling up the Cliff House drive. An immediate rush was made for the car as Bessie was seen to alight.

"Hallo, Bessie!"
"I say, here's our giddy million-aires!"

"I say, Bessie, still expecting that postal order?"
Bessie beamed. She loved the limelight, but it troubled her now to realize how heartily glad all these girls were to see her.

"Bessie, come and have a ginger-pop!" Jean Charmant invited.
"Yes, rather!" Bessie said. "But I'll stand treat, you know. Anybody else like to come and have a ginger-pop?" she breathlessly inquired.

"Whisk-a!" chirped Jessica Carters.
"Fall in, the ginger-pop brigade!"

"Bessie, will you come to the Common-room afterwards?" Babs said. "I'm going to help Mals with the rehearsal. In the meantime, you can get your invitations issued."

Bessie beamed again. She was utterly happy now. Off she went, while Babs and Mals hastened into the school. There the rehearsal party was got together in the Common-room, and with Bridget as the main object of her attention, Mals started.

Bridget was good. Bridget, in the meantime, had been industriously "regging up" her lines and had made considerable progress. But it was funny to Mals to see her in that part which she had written expressly for Bessie—which, in fact, was full of Bessie's own confused sayings.

Still, Bridget was a good substitute.

They were in the thick of it when Bessie, attended by Jean Charmant and Joan Cartwright, came in.

"I say, Bessie," she said, and then blinked. "Oh, I'm sorry, I—I didn't mean to interrupt," she said, and blinked again at Bridget. "Hallo, Bessie!"

"Top of the afternoon to you, Bessie," Bridget grinned. "Come to see how your part should be played?"

Bessie blinked offensively.

"Well, you can't play it as well as I can, you know?"

"Can't I?" Bridget chuckled. "Ask Mals! Now, which did we get to—Ah, here we are! Mals, what time is it that Uncle Tom will be coming?"

"It's 'I don't know,'" Bessie objected. "It's 'I say, mother, what time is Uncle Tom coming?' Those are the words, aren't they, Mals?"

"That's right," Mals said. "But if it's easier for Bridget to remember by twisting it round a bit—well, who cares! Carry on, Bridget!"

Bessie smiled. But she stood silent, watching as the scene was played through, a rather peculiar expression on her face.

"Penny for 'em, Bessie!" Babs said, with a smile.

"Oh!" Bessie said, with a start. "Oh, I—I wasn't thinking anything," she mumbled. "I—I think I'll go up to the study. Bye! You coming?"

"Can't, old Bessie. I'm on in a minute or two. Look you up later!" Babs replied cheerily.

Bessie nodded and wandered away. She sighed as she went—though good-

ness knows what for, for if ever a girl had reason to be excited and happy, Bessie Bunter had.

Almost without realizing she had got there, she reached Study No. 4, and pushed the door open, slipping into the room. Then her face flushed.

"Here, I say!" she cried indignantly. "What are you doing with my Toby dog?"

A girl who had been in the act of removing that article from the mantelpiece of Study No. 4 and replacing it with an extremely pretty little stand-up miniature in a silver frame, swung round. It was Frances Frost, one of the Fourth Form's most unpleasant members.

"Your business?" she asked.
"Well, that's mine, you know!" Bessie said warily. "I left it here for Babs and Mals, and it's always stood there."



BESSIE gulped. She was tempted. Babs & Co. certainly would like that fruit—and those chocolates. "Lucy, you—you're sure aunt wouldn't mind if I sent them all?" she asked breathlessly. "Aunt," Lucy said, "would be delighted!" And thus Bessie fell into the other girl's trap.

"Really! How sentimental!" smiled Frances.

"Well, you've got as right to shift it!"

"No?" Frances sneered. "I suppose you haven't heard that I'm going to be in this study now?"

Bessie blinked.

"You!"

"Why not?" Frances shrugged. "You're not ill, are you—for good! My study is going to be decorated over the holidays, and I've got to find a new parking-place for my stuff. Right-oh! This is the spot," she added calmly.

"I'm just taking your place, Bessie."

"Oh!" Bessie said, and stared blankly round the old, much-loved apartment.

Frances to take her place! Frances moving all her little treasures to put her own in their place! Frances banishing the last traces of Bessie Bunter—this Bessie Bunter, who no longer belonged to Cliff House School, who, perhaps, would never see Cliff House School again!

"You haven't asked Babs if you can take my things away!" she said defiantly.

Frances smiled.
"My dear old darling, I don't have to ask Babs. As the third member of the study, I've a right to share a third of its space. Now boss off!"

"I wasn't boss off!" Bessie said warmly. "This is my study, so there!"

"Not now, talpi! Boss off!"

"Hallo, what's this!" a voice said at the door, and the face of Connie Jackson, the somewhat portly prefect of the Sixth, peered in. "You kids quarrelling!"

"Not exactly," Frances said. "Bessie still thinks she's got a voice in what's going to happen in this study."

"Well, so I have!" Bessie said defiantly. "I've been here for years, haven't I?"

"And a good many years there are when you won't be here, Connie said spitefully. "Anyway, you can keep

your nose out of this study in future, Bessie Darling! When you come to this school now you come as a guest, remember—not as a schoolist. Now clear off and leave Frances to do what she wants to do."

Bessie turned red. There was a funny sort of feeling inside her all at once. In the past Bessie had suffered much at the hands of Connie Jackson, and Connie, made jealous now by the extraordinary good fortune which had befallen Bessie, was enjoying making the fat jolly squint. Bessie sensed that, and Bessie suddenly remembered that whatever she did or said to Connie Jackson now need not be attended by any fear of punishment.

"Well, I think you're mean—and besides!" she said. "I think you're a cat. I think you ought to be jolly well kicked out of the school, so there! And you can't jolly well punish me now, so I'll tell you everything else I've ever thought about you!"

"Bessie!" roared Connie.

"Oh! Well—oh, no! I'm not afraid of you!" Bessie said warily.

"Get out of this room!" Cassie roared.

"I won't!"

Fortunately, before anything else could happen, Mabel came in.

"Bessie—she began, and then stopped. "What's going on here?"

"They—they're checking me out!" Bessie spluttered.

"Checking you—?"

"She's been checking!" Cassie's stammer.

"And she objects to me coming into this study!" Cassie asserted.

"Oh!" Mabel said slowly. A peculiar look crossed her eyes. Gently she took the girl's arm. "Come on, Bess. I just want you to come and hear Bridget how you did the fortune-telling scene, so that she can pick up a few tips. And, of course," she added, with a glance at Cassie, "you can come here whenever you like. You're still as welcome as the flowers in May."

She took Bessie by the arm. As Bessie reached the door she passed and did something she wouldn't have dreamed of doing before. She made a dash at Cassie!

Then, feeling happier and satisfied, she went out.

Babs Accuses Lucy!



"At A HA, Miss Redfern! May I have a word with you?"

Barbara Redfern turned in smiling surprise.

"Why, of course, Mr. Eastman."

She and Mabel, who returned at Cliff House noon, had brought Bessie back here.

"Ten minutes ago they had returned, to be met by Mr. Eastman and Lucy—the latter smiling in satisfaction, and Mr. Eastman himself wearing a worried frown.

Bessie had not noticed it, but Babs, quick to sense any reaction which might affect her dream, had. It was obvious from that moment that, pleased as Mr. Eastman had been with Bessie on her departure, he was thunderously angry with her now.

Now, with Bessie's exclamation changing her dinner dress, he approached them.

"It's about Bessie," he said. "I believe, Miss Redfern—and you, Miss Lucy—that she has been a friend of yours for a number of terms?"

"Yes, indeed!" Babs said.

"You don't mind if I ask you to treat this as a confidence?"

"Why, goodness no, Mr. Eastman! If we can help in any way—"

"Yes, yes—yes." He looked at the door. "To tell you the truth, I am rather worried. Doubtless you know the circumstances under which Bessie was accepted as a sort of ward? Her aunt, as you know, is very fond of her, and, well, so am I, for this reason—"

"I want to do my best for the girl, I am trying to do my best, but—"

He shook his head. "This is where you may assist us, Miss Redfern. I am finding that Bessie is either prone to take too great an advantage of the circumstances in which she now stands, or she is entitled to. Apparently nothing in this house is to be regarded or treated as private property any more."

Babs started.

"I—I don't quite understand, Mr. Eastman."

"Well, take last night, for instance," he said so. "This concerns you. You may remember having received a basket

of fruit and a box of chocolates as a present from Bessie?"

"Yes," Babs said wonderingly.

"Those were taken without my consent. They were sent off in my box case, when I wanted the car."

Babs and Mabel colored.

"Please don't think I am blaming you. I cite that only as one instance. This afternoon I have been talking to Lucy. Now, Lucy, as you know, is very, very fond of Bessie, but even Lucy has to admit she is inclined to take too much for granted. Apart from that, Mr. Eastman went on, "I discovered my wife's best silk umbrella in Bessie's—"

and once Bessie, obviously intending to use it herself, I also found one of my wife's fans in her cupboard, and—"

he frowned again—"I have noted two pound notes from my pocket wallet."

Babs drew a quick breath.

"As you think," she added, "that Bessie took these?"

"I don't want to think so. I wanted to speak to Bessie myself, but my wife is afraid I may lose my temper and upset her. I can forget the other things, but taking money is a serious matter, and I felt, as Bessie's friends, that I must ask you what you think about it. Miss Redfern, tell me frankly, do you not think Bessie would steal, do you?"

"No!" Babs said definitely.

"Not even if she was as broke as broke," Mabel put in. "Besides, why should she steal now? She's got plenty of money."

"Sometimes," Mr. Eastman said, with a little smile, "the possession of money only breeds greed for more. If I really thought, or received proof, that Bessie was that sort of girl, I should send her back to school without hesitation. But as you are so certain about her I can only conclude that—"

—that I must have made a mistake about the two pound notes." His voice held more than a hint of doubt, however. "I hope you did not need my asking this, Miss Redfern? As I said, I am fond of Bessie, and I should hate to do her an injustice. Ah! Here she is!"

He added hurriedly, "You will remember, please, that what I have said is not to be passed on."

"Yes, of course," Babs said, as he hurried away.

And all at once that old suspicion of Lucy was racing back with renewed force. Lucy! She was behind this!

In their very first encounter with Lucy that girl had been engaged in persuading Bessie to make trouble for herself. And now—

The two pounds had been stolen while Bessie was out!

Miss Babs' face became.

Mr. Eastman proclaimed himself satisfied. "Let it be obvious there was a doubt still at the back of his mind. Another such incident might completely turn the tables against old Ben, and then what hope for her luxury cruise, her settling down in Australia, and the golden future which lay ahead of her?"

Was Bessie going to be robbed of all this?

Not if Babs knew it.

"Hallo, girls!" Bessie said, coming forward. "I'm sorry, what about a game of table tennis before you go?"

"Bessie, I want to ask you something," Babs said. "About that fruit and chocolates you sent us yesterday. Did your uncle tell you you could send it?"

"Oh? No," Bessie's eyes opened in surprise. "But aunt told me I could have anything I wanted, you know. As a matter of fact, Mabel went on, with a frown, "I wouldn't have sent it at all

—only a bit of it, you know—but Lucy said it would be O.K. Bessie's Jolly helpful like that."

"I'll say!" Mabel exclaimed.

"Then, Bessie, why did you borrow your aunt's umbrella and fan?" Babs inquired.

Bessie blushed.

"My? I haven't borrowed them, you know. Look here, Babs—"

"Bessie, you're sure?"

"Of course I'm sure. Why should I borrow them? They're not mine, are they? And, in any case," Bessie said lightly, "I'll only get to ask for them."

"And, Bessie," Mabel persisted, remembering what she had overheard Mr. Eastman saying to his wife the previous day, "do you know anything about some broken glasses?"

Bessie started.

"Glasses? Of course not, you know."

She seemed the opposite look which passed between Babs and Mabel. Babs went. She had just spotted Lucy crossing the conservatory.

"See, I say—!" Bessie spluttered.

"Bessie, I want a word with her. There's Lucy!"

"I don't want a word with her," Babs said, and she rushed off just in time to see Lucy hastily waving away the silver-faced maid. She turned as Babs came in.

"Lucy's not," Lucy said airily.

"What's the game?"

"Games! Lucy's eyebrows elevated in astonishment.

"The game," Babs said gravely, "against old Bessie. Why are you trying to make trouble for her?"

"Oh, don't talk rubbish!" Lucy said offensively.

"I'm not talking rubbish—and you know it! You weren't trying to make things awkward for her by making her drive off to take a holiday, were you?"

"You didn't persuade her to send the whole of your uncle's fruit and your aunt's chocolates to Cliff House? You didn't smash some glasses, and then blame it on Bessie? It wasn't your fault she didn't spend a fortune on clothes, was it? And this afternoon you had another little smack at her by making out she borrowed your aunt's things and took two pound notes from your uncle's wallet."

Lucy gazed at her. For a moment her face changed, and it seemed she was about to burn out into a rage. Then she shrugged.

"And, of course, you can prove all these things!" she asked mockingly.

"You know I can't—"

"Then," Lucy said irritably, "why come wasting my time with them? I don't know what you're talking about. If I did the right thing I should take you to my uncle!"

"I dare you!" Babs retorted.

"The eyes in front of her glinted.

"You make't trouble. I'm not out to make trouble. As if I would hurt poor dear Bessie!" Bessie—with a mocking note—"is my dearest and best friend. You're just an outsider," she said contemptuously, and walked off.

Farewell Party!



"GOLD fountain pens," suggested Mabel Lynn.

"Box of water-colors; you know what a dear Bessie thinks she is at painting," Babs countered.

"No; I've got a better idea," Clara Trentyn broke in. "Something which will remind old Bess of Cliff House,

What about one of those ripping gold-crowned brooches with the Cliff House crest?"

"Full stop!" chattered Jessica Cartman. "Clara, for once, has a brain-wave. That's it, Spatsina. Let us depart with our spoodalaks and get it right away."

The scene was Holland's Room again, and the time was the next day. To-morrow was the farewell party, and Bessie's dozen guests were in the store, bent on buying Bessie a joint farewell present. Babe and Mabe, of course, was also making a separate present, and so were one or two others. But a collective gift, they felt, was something which would please Bessie immensely. Others from the Fourth had considered, too.

It was afternoon, and they had not seen Bessie that day. But in the meantime Babe had been doing some hard thinking about Bessie, and particularly about Lucy Beal. She hoped from the bottom of her heart that Lucy, though she had affected to take her accusations lightly, had benefited from the talk they had had yesterday.

So far, at least, no further news had come from Gains Lodge, and Babe was hoping that her words had taken effect. In the meantime, at her suggestion, they were buying her present—that farewell present which, somehow, brought a funny little smile to Babe's heart every time she thought of it.

Butter thoughtfully and silently pre-occupied was she when, the brooch bought, they went back to Cliff House, there to be radiantly greeted by Bess herself, whom they found, as usual, in the tuckshop. Bessie was radiant.

"Come in and have a load, girls," she beamed. "My treat! Uncle says I can invite three more girls, so I've come over to ask Dolores Esmondson, your sister Doris, Babe, and Mary Truborn to the party as well."

"Everything going all right, Bessie?" Babe asked.

"Oh, ripping!"

"Lucy!" Babe began.

"Lucy!" Bessie glowed. "Lucy's ripping, you know! And she's frightfully fond of you, Babe! She said as this morning, 'I say, have an ice-cream soda?'"

Babe nodded slowly. Anyway, it was good to know that nothing of a critical nature had happened at Gains Lodge.

Babe had the ice-cream soda. After that they all departed to have tea in Study No. 4.

New that her trip was imminent, Bessie was bubbling over with excitement, and, for once, had so much to say that she hardly ate anything at all. It was good to see her so happy, good to see her so full of interested excitement; though, to be sure, now and again there were funny little pauses on Bessie's part, and sometimes she would break off, staring ahead her at the old familiar study as though suddenly bewildered in the midst of all her happiness.

And that night she did not stay to see the rehearsal. Rather hastily she excused herself when Mabe invited her to come down to the theatre-room and watch its progress.

But somehow it was a long, long time before Bessie Baxter came that night. Bessie's excitement of course.

And it was a long, long time before Babe and Mabe slept. It was with a feeling that today marked some vital crisis in their history that they rose next morning.

At Miss Preston's very generous suggestion, they did not attend afternoon classes that day, because that

afternoon was to be Bessie's farewell party, and, instead of going into the class-room with the others, Babe, Mabe, Jessica, Clara, Lolla, Mabelie Russell, Janet Jordan, Marjorie Handlose, Jess Cartman, Jess Cartwright, Christine Wilcox, and Greta Cook went up to the dormitory to change. At three o'clock, with Doris Reddon and Mary Truborn of the Third Fourth and little Dolores Esmondson of the Second, they gathered to set out for Gains Lodge.

Bessie herself, beaming and excited, was waiting to meet them when they arrived. Her chubby face was radiant.

"Oh kik-crumbs! Thank goodness you've come!" she said. "I say, you ought to see the spread aunt's made for you—and I made the cake myself, you know! Lucy's upstairs; she won't

Bessie was flattered and overworked by the time it was all done, and she was sitting in her room.

"And now?" Babe said, "here's a present from all of us, Bessie. A good many girls in the Fourth who aren't coming to the party have chosen to buy it, because, you know, old Bess, we shall all miss you so dreadfully. I say, Bessie, don't cry!" she added, in alarm.

"I—I'm not sobbing!" Bessie gulped. "I'm only so happy, you know! Oh dear! I say, wait a minute! Lucy ought to see these. She'll be over so pleased at all these lovely presents. I'll go and fetch her."

"You stop here, Bessie. I'll go and find her. Where is she—in her room?"

"Yes."



"I THINK you're a cut," said Bessie, quite enjoying getting her own back on the bullying perfect. "I think you jolly well ought to be kicked out of the school, so there! And you can't jolly well punish me now, as I'll tell you everything else I've ever thought about you!" And Connie, with no power over the plump one now, just had to listen!

be long. But—but, I say, what's this?" she asked, as Babe handed her a parcel.

Babe gulped a little.

"My farewell present, Bessie," she said.

"Farewell?" Bessie, staring at the parcel, gulped. "Oh!" she said loudly, and opened it, to blink at the lovely bracelet that contained. "Oh, Babe! Babe, you—you should've!"

"And here's mine, Bess," Mabel Russell said.

Bessie quivered as she opened a box which revealed a little headwork evening bag.

"Oh, Mabe—"

"And mine, Bessie," Clara said.

It was a little silver pencil.

"And here's mine, I guess," Lolla Carroll said, handing her a leather-bound diary with silver corners.

And then came Marjorie's—well a dozen handkerchiefs embroidered with Marjorie's own delicate lace.

Then there was Jessica's gift—a really exquisite little miniature set—and others as well.

"Presentation ceremony postponed—what!" Jessica murmured.

Babe darted away. Up the stairs she went. Then suddenly she passed as she heard a voice.

"Got it!"

It was Lucy Beal speaking.

"Yes," came the answer; and the answer was given by the silver-haired maid.

"Right. You know what to do with it. I'll just scribble the note. Don't look up," Lucy said feverishly, "and, for goodness' sake, be careful you're not seen!"

The voice came from on Babe's right—a door slightly ajar. In a moment all those suspicions of Babe's had come jumping to the fore. That voice which had been telling her Lucy would strike a final blow was gripping her.

She hurried to the curtain which overhung the entrance to the passage, and watched as the maid came out, a small paper parcel in her hands. She disappeared into Bessie's room.

(Continued on page 14)



OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

PATRICIA is very busy preparing for her holiday this week. But that wouldn't make her miss writing her weekly letter to you. As usual, Patricia tells you of her own and her family's doings, of things to make and things to talk about—all in the chummy way so typical of her. No wonder she is such a favourite with you all!

WE'VE now reached that stage in our home when you can't help wondering if "holidays are worth it."

Of course, we know they are, really. But there certainly is a frightful lot to do before going away.

We've had to ask the people who live in the next house to keep an eye on the family post-office, for us. Fortunately he's not a very funny one, and will cut off all kinds of fish and "pieces."

Our maid, Olive, has had to have extra rest, because she is having her holidays also while we are away.

Then we've had to write to the telephone people, asking them to disconnect our phone. (And in return we received an interesting-looking notice that had to be filed up below this simple note—*"I imagined it could be carried out."*)

We've told the butcher not to call, and the fishmonger and the milkman and the baker.

And then we remembered that we wanted the fishmonger and the milkman very kindly to call next door with the family cat's daily ration!

In between all this, we have been sending some luggage "in advance," and worrying for fear it will never get there. However, and I have been trying to make an appointment each at the hairdresser—only to find that our favourite assistant is away!

So we've had our hair done by a second-best. We're looking very shabby because we've wearing all our old clothes, in order to pack our better ones.

In fact, we're tired out, but—
We're happy! For we're setting off this afternoon for a whole glorious fortnight of holiday.

Small brother Heath (whose full name is Heathcliff, as you may know by now) is in his bed at the moment.

He's having his "rest"—so called. But even so I type I can hear the springs of his bed bouncing and squeaking, and occasional piercing shrieks and roars which tell me quite clearly that young Heath is manfully playing "texas" in readiness for this afternoon.

● For Summer Shoes

There's one thing that I've noticed in my own particular case which I've rather proved with—a special shoe-shine can.

I don't know if you've ever felt the same, but I always think that so one ever dusts my own shoes as well as I do myself, and that applies particularly to summery ones.

As even if we do have our shoes cleaned for us "down on the farm"—which is near the sea—I shall still be able to do a little "touching-up" if I find it necessary.

Black and white shoes are wretchedly difficult to clean well, I always think. But I've noticed that to clean the brown part before the white is best. You see, it's quite easy to clean off any stray white from the leather, whereas it's surprisingly difficult to clean any stray brown points off the white part.

That sounds rather complicated, I'm afraid. But I've seen you know what I mean.

● To Make Yourself

If you're a shoe-proof young schoolgirl, perhaps you'd like to make yourself a bag for holding shoe-shining things, to tuck into your holiday case.

You would require a piece of crash, cambric cloth, or even a piece of clean washing about 8 inches square. You fold this in half, and stitch it strongly up each side. Sew a slipper along the top (this costs about a penny an inch, for any length), mark the words "shoes" on it in running stitches, and do a bright yellow circle to the back to represent the sun.

But if you can't do a small duster a tube of white cream, for rubbing about the canvas and white buckskin, and a tin of "white." You'll then be ready for any shoe emergency on holiday.

● All Sorts of Holidays

Here I am, talking only of holidays, when quite a lot of you are still ploughing your way through exams, and can't even spare time to think of breaking-up yet.

Anyway, the term will soon be over now, and you'll have long, happy days in front of you.

When I was at school, my parents always used to say the summer holiday was *TOO* long.

I expect you've got that, too.

I expect you've got that, too.

I expect you've got that, too. I'm guessing, say the people who study those things, how camping has increased in holiday popularity this last year or so. I think it's one of the best holidays—preparing just one thing! Providing the weather's good.

Others of you, I know, will be going to those wonderful holiday camps (like Hobb & Co.) that are so popular.

There, of course, you'll have all the luxuries of a first-class hotel as well as all the complete freedom of camping—*not* to mention all the joys of mixing with loads of other jolly people your own age.

So whatever type of holiday yours is, I do hope you'll all have a glorious time.

● For Special Occasions

Here's a special idea for the girl who's going to stay at home. It's a way of giving a rather plain dress that up-to-the-minute look, so that it can be worn for rather more special occasions.

Buy some pretty white lace, about two inches wide, from our favourite shop—that's all—everything. Gather it up. (There's a cord to run along the edge of lace that can be tugged to give it the required look.) Then sew this around the collar and sleeves of your dress, and sew rows down the front—*one* on each side of the opening.

It will look so pretty—all for about four yards of lace at (perhaps) threepence, if you're being extravagant a yard.

● New Again

Isn't it difficult to knit with old wool? I expect mother has more than once asked you to unravel a jumper or pullover for her, meaning to use the wool to make something else.

Then, quite likely she has changed her mind, because she has found this unaccountable wool so difficult to use.

Next time this happens, perhaps you'll pass it on to me.

"But I find it difficult to knit with, too," you'll probably say to me. But you won't—if you do this first.

Fill a hot-water bottle with boiling water—an alternative one for preference, for those who always extra hot. Then wind the wool, quite tightly, round and round this, and leave it for an hour or so.

When the bottle has cooled off, you'll find the wool has also straightened itself out, and can be knitted up again as if it were new!

Good-bye, now, my pets. I have to start writing second, or so shall mine this time.

Your friend,

PATRICIA.



BEAUTY FOR THE HOLIDAYS

PATRICKA has been writing a special series of Good Looks articles for you, so that you'll be looking your very best for "going away." This is the last of them.

No. 5.—A PERFECT PICTURE.

By now you should all be looking rather marvelous, for I know you've been following this special series of Good Looks articles of mine very closely. We've already discussed the Figure, Complexion, Hair, Legs and Feet. So this week we'll just "finish you off," so to speak, and talk about this business of looking lovely in general.

ADDED GRACE

I hope you're going to hold that streamlined figure really well. If you keep your spine long, your head up and your chin tucked in, you'll look inches taller, you know.

Protruding tummies and too plump "rear ends" can be made to look slim and graceful if you hold yourself well. You should pull your stomach in and UP at the same time. This will automatically bring your "sit-upons" into its proper place. Just try this, standing up. It's rather difficult to describe the position exactly. But try to imagine that someone is just going to give you a hearty smack on your "sit-upons." You immediately draw it in, don't you? And THAT'S the position you should strive to keep, both for good looks and good health.

FOR SENSITIVE SKINS

If your skin is that sort which becomes very easily, and goes lobster red, instead of copiously brown, do remember to protect it while you're on holiday. Some cold milk dabbed on every morning will work wonders, you know. And if cold milk is difficult to come by, then you might prefer to treat yourself, for once, to a special bottle of complexion milk, which contains honey and almost.

This would be a great luxury—but well

worth while for the girl with the sensitive skin. (Much better than spending your money on lotions to soothe sunburn, anyway.)

CAREFREE HAIR-STYLE

As it's holiday time, you might like to try your hair in a new style. But choose a simple one for carefree days, won't you? You want a simple, yet becoming style—one that you can just run the comb through, and won't mess up any wavy if it should get wet in spite of your bathing cap.

Sea air and wind do straighten out even the wildest hair, you know.

If your hair is poker straight, then I think you'd be wise to keep it short and have a neat fringe at the back. Just a slight fringe—enough to show the pretty curve of your head at the back.

Only schoolgirls who are prepared to take a lot of trouble with their hair should wear it shoulder-length. Generally the curls need curling almost every night, and those WILL come out when you're swimming in the sea, you know.

SEASIDE CARE

When you're sitting down to scribble on a beach on a holiday, I want you to remember to "do" the backs of your legs. So many girls get chapped, itchy and brown in the front, but quite forget the backs—which, after all, are on show quite a lot to other people.

Protect the upper parts of your arms, particularly when you're sun-bathing—for the skin is very delicate just there.

And now I simply must repeat again that old warning about avoiding the sunbathing. Do—please do—start early. If you lie in the sun for hours at a time on



your first days on the sea, you're simply asking for trouble.

You may get, not only blistered, red, and painful skin, but headaches and other pains as well. So do be wise, won't you?

Go without about as much as you can on the beach, giving your feet a real treat.

I know a good many of you will be wearing bathing shoes when paddling and splashing around in the water. If so, you must not forget to dry your feet when you come out, especially between the toes. Otherwise, they soon often rot, which may not hurt just yet, but will make themselves felt in a few weeks' time.

LOOKING YOUR BEST!

Don't forget to take your sun-glasses with you, will you? And WEAR them when the sun and light is extra strong. Not to do so will cause eye irritation that can spoil pretty eyes.

There now I think you're all "sixed-up" for a lovely holiday. And knowing you are looking your possible best, you'll rest certainly have a grand and glorious time.



FOR HIKING—Or a Holiday Abroad

A very useful kind-of that the schoolgirl can make for her holiday.

FOR hiking, or for anything there is nothing more useful than a bag which leaves your hands free.

On the Continent, as you know, there are always so many things you have to carry around that it's a boon to have a bag attached to you, in which to keep such valuable things as your passport, tickets, and foreign money.

While for hiking, a bag like the one in the picture here is just the thing for holding a map, a few sandwiches, some chocolate, and some candy. It's lighter than a knapsack to wear—and much easier to open.

To make it, you would require a piece of strong linen or cloth, measuring about 7 inches by 17.

Folded at the corners at one end, then fold it over, like an envelope, with the rounded end as the flap.

LOOPS OF CORD

Stitch up the sides, and round the flap. Now sew pretty cord all round the edges, making two strong loops with it at the top. The belt of your dress or skirt can be slipped through these loops, so that there is no possible danger of losing your bag as its contents.

Make your initial in one corner with a small piece of the cord, and keep the flap fastened with one or two sturdy brass-studs.

IN A STRANGE LAND.

IT'S always a good plan to ask any opinions first in English. Try to do one you'd be right to do in the same tongue! But if not, then you can try out your French or German!

IN France, the menu in the restaurant can be pretty baffling. A good plan is to choose the "plat du jour" (pronounced pla doo zhoor, roughly), the "dish of the day." This is generally very good indeed, has vegetables with it, and is cheap.

STUDY the change of the money you are in. I once gave a French porter a load of coppers, and thought he'd be delighted. But you should have heard him! It wasn't till afterwards that I realized it had all amounted to about three-ha'pence. (He was povered!)



(Above) Show the hiking or travelling bag in view, leaving your hands free.

(Below) A close-up of the bag itself, showing how easily it can be made.

(Continued from page 11)

Babs had left her vantage point, and, silently creeping past Lucy's door, reached the door of Bessie's room. There she stooped, peering in through the crack between the hinges.

Bessie's room was in disorder, for Bessie had already started her packing. One case was packed, but a litter of odds and ends surrounded another which as yet was only half full. Over the case already packed the maid was bending, and now, as Babs watched, she lifted the lid and pushed into the bag the little parcel she had brought in. "Just was enough. In a moment Babs had disappeared into the next room.

She stood tense and breathless until she heard the maid depart. Just as she was about to emerge she heard the door of Lucy's room open and Lucy's soft footsteps retreating downstairs.

The coast was clear. Babs darted into Bessie's room. In a flash she had thrown open the lid of the case and caught up the parcel. Opening it, she caught her breath.

"This — the awful — about" she breathed. "So this is her little gem, is it?"

Babs Saves the Day!



"H A L L O, Babs! Here you are!" Bessie beamed.

"I see you, you missed Lucy, you know it's here!" Babs, descending into the hall two minutes later, beamed.

"I know, I'm sorry. I took the wrong passage," she excused herself. "Still, here we all are now! Has Bessie showed you her other presents, Lucy?"

"Yes, rather! They—they're beautiful!" Lucy beamed. "Looky Bessie to have such friends! But, Barbara dear, go on with the big presentation. I'm dying to see what it is!"

"Yes, rather!" Bessie said, quivering with excitement. Babs took the present. She handed it to Bessie.

"Bessie dear, this is free of all of us in the Fourth Form. We hope you'll take the whoever you go, and you'll wear it all the time in memory of the girls back at Cliff House. There!" she said.

She handed it over. Bessie, her cheeks quivering a little, took the box. She opened it, looked at the brooch, and gasped. She stared which was neither thanks nor excitement. She said simply "Oh!" but with such a funny little catch in her voice that it sounded more eloquent than words of grateful speech.

"Fit it on, Bessie," Babs murmured. Babs hesitated biting her lip and looking extremely queer in the effort she was making to smile.

Bessie pinned it on, putting it into place with a trembling hand. "Thank shall we giggle and have taken one?" she asked tentatively.

"Girls, please, just a moment!" And they all turned as Mr. Eastman came along—Mr. Eastman, looking extremely grave-faced, and in his hands a piece of paper. "I am sorry to do anything that might interrupt the party," he said, "but—but there is something here which must be attended to right away. A few minutes ago," he added, "this note was pushed under my door. Let me read it."

The girls peered wonderingly.

"The note says: 'Somebody in this house has taken your wife's pearl necklace.'" He looked at them gravely. "I am sure," he said, "you will agree that such a matter cannot go uninvestigated, especially as I have scrutinized the message in trust. If any girl here knows anything about it—his eyes fastened upon Bessie—"I ask her, for the happiness of all of us, to say something now."

Nobody spoke except Lucy. "Oh, this—is this dreadful!" she said. "Bessie—" her uncle said.

HILDA RICHARDS REPLIES

to a few of her many correspondents.



JOCK HIGGINS (Birmingham).—Here's the printed copy I promised you in my letter, my dear! I don't think I mentioned it to whom you refer in your appearance. However, I think you must be mist for Madeline. If she again comes then, won't you, Joyce?

MADGE LANE (Birmingham).—I've also sent you a postal reply, haven't I, Madeline? You would be in the bond if you see it in the C. H. Home, you know. I think you see rather like Peggy Weston in appearance.

AN ADMIRER OF CLARA (Aberdeen, Warwick).—Did you receive the list of addresses that I sent? I do hope so. I'm sorry I haven't been able to publish a reply before this, but it often needs several weeks before these little replies can appear, my dear.

SYLVIA LOCKE (Belmore, Malaga).—How nice to hear from such an enthusiastic reader in the-very Malaga! And a most interesting letter you sent, too. Yes, the C. H. clips are really very, very interesting to the friends here. Cliff House is situated on the coast of Malaga, overlooking the English Channel.

ANN DODDART (Dorset).—Many thanks for the little note you sent me. It is a "good" in return for his charming greeting. Write again soon, won't you?

THEA BROWN (Crowthorne, Bucks).—I've scanned it a printed copy to your charming little article, as you were so anxious to see it. Very best wishes, Thea!

ARTE AND POLLY HARRINGTON (Old Windsor, Bucks).—It's not often that I receive letters from readers in groups, so it is a double pleasure to hear from you. Please send a parcel to Miss.

"Y-y-y."

"Suppose you know nothing about this?"

"No!" Bessie jumped. "As if I'd dream of taking any's necklace, you know!"

"That necklace," her uncle said gravely, "was my wedding present to her. Am not suggesting, Bessie, that you have stolen it. But you have been rather in the habit of taking her pearl case, was that, haven't you? I hope this necklace is not among them."

Bessie's face was crimson.

"Nonsense," she said bravely.

"You're sure, Bessie?"

"Of course she's sure," Babs put in. "Of course. But in any case a search has got to be made so why not start it with Bessie's belongings?"

"Why, I say, that's an idea!" Lucy cried, and flung a look almost of gratitude to Babs. "It—it's horrible to have this suspicion cast upon one."

"Bessie, are you agreeable?" her uncle asked.

"Eh? Me? Y-y-y, of course. Anything," Bessie said. "Come on, let's go to my room now. Babs, you come, too!" she pleaded. "Oh dear!"

Her uncle walked away. Babs, snatching Bessie's quivering arm, followed her. After her went Lucy, and after Lucy went Babs and Clara, leaving the others in a rather dense and bewildered group in the body of the hall. It was Mr. Eastman himself who opened Bessie's door, just as Babs, the maid, apparently by the most accident, came down the corridor. He passed.

"Bab, I shall want you," he said gravely. He looked at the open case, and then at the closed one. "Just open that case, please!"

"Why, you, sir," Babs said, in apparent bewilderment.

She threw the lid open. They all craned forward. Then Lucy jumped.

"But it's—" she unguardedly began.

"What did you say, Lucy?"

"Me! Non-nothing," Lucy said, and craned forward. But Babs did not raise the lidless lock which was free from Babs, and did not raise Babs's startled frown. "I—I was saying," she said, "that it was not there."

"Well, I never took it, you know!" Bessie said.

"Bessie's the case!" her uncle cried.

"It was searched. So was the opened one."

"Well, that's that, isn't it?" said Babs quickly. "And seeing," she added, with a look at Lucy, "that one's lock's case have been searched, I think it only fair that the other should be searched, too. I'm sure Lucy has no objection."

"Oh, search at all!" stammered Lucy, but she looked quite startled.

"Then," Mr. Eastman said, "we'll go about to Lucy's room. Bab, you come, too."

To Lucy's room they all crowded. Three cases stood on the door, all picked. At a nod from Mr. Eastman, Babs opened the first one. As she lifted the lid she saw she jumped. For there was the necklace!

"Lucy!" her uncle gasped. Lucy goggled at the necklace.

"I—I—I—" she stammered. "Bab, you see?" she turned round. "You did! You put it in the wrong case!"

"I didn't!" Babs flamed back.

"Well, how—" She stopped. Deftly white her cheeks became then as she realized how she had given her self away. "I—I mean—"

"Lucy, wait a minute!" Her uncle looked shaken. "Bab, stop here! What is this? What did Lucy instruct you to do?"

"Non-nothing!" Babs said.

"Bab, be careful. If you don't tell me I shall send for the police. How did this case come into the room in this case? I insist, my girl, upon the truth!"

Babs broke down.

"It—it was Miss Lucy. She told me to do it. I—I took it and put it in

Miss Benson's case, so—so that you'd think she'd taken it."

"Lucy—"
"It's a lie!" almost screamed Lucy.
"No, it isn't!" Beeny cried. "You know you told me to do it while you wrote the note. You know you've been against Miss Benson all the time. You hated your uncle marrying Mrs. Eastman, but you hated still more Miss Benson going on the cruise. That's why you told me to put that umbrella and fur in her room. That's why I took the notes from your uncle's wallet. And those other things—"

"Say, you fool, shut up!" Lucy shrieked.

Bessie stood bewildered.
"I see!" Mr. Eastman breathed hoarsely. "So it is a plot! Lucy, I—I am surprised and ashamed! Bessie, my dear, I am sorry for the suspicion I entertained of you. I began to see things now. But I still want to know," he said, "how this necklace came to be in Lucy's bag."

after one of the jolliest and most exciting parties Bessie ever remembered. Lucy had departed, too, but on the night express for London, sent back to her parents. Now, at Bessie's request, had been given another chance.

Now the party was over, Bessie was feeling a little strange. It had been queer, somehow, saying good-bye to dear Babe and the rest. But, of course, she would see them again on the cruise.

She blinched up now from the contemplation of the Cliff House brooch she held in one plump hand.

"Yes, look tired, my dear," Aunt Arnie said loudly.

"Dad do!" Bessie said absently.
"You're sure you're well?"

"Oh, yes, aunt!"
"Well, darling, run away and get to bed, but tuck Mrs.," her aunt advised.

"Good-night, my dear!"
She kissed Bessie. Bessie drifted off. She reached her room, blinking at the unpacked case. To-morrow she was

Cliff House—her school!
Bessie caught her breath, and then jumped at Polly. In the corner, suddenly awakened.

"Good old Cliff House! Go it, Cliff House! Goal! Bravo, Clara!"

"Shut up!" Bessie cried sternly.
"Hats! Lead me half-a-crown, you girls!" Polly ratched back.

"Will you be quiet?"

"Take they, honest should me a fool! I see—say, you girls, what about a picnic?"

"Polly!" Bessie almost shrieked, and in hot irritation grasped a towel and put it over his eyes. Polly gave a wail and, with a cry of "Down the Field!" subsided.

Bessie turned towards her packing again. But somehow she couldn't sleep.

She was, of course, quite friendly, and she slipped into bed. As if the fever never to open them again, she screwed up her eyes, sleep—sleep—sleep.
Sleep did not come.



"SEEING that one niece's cases have been searched," said Babe, "I think it only fair that the other's should be searched, too! I'm sure," she added gently, "Lucy has no objection!" All eyes on Lucy then, and how startled that girl looked!

She must sleep.
Sleep would not come.
Rather, if, if she didn't sleep she'd be worn out to-morrow.

Her eyes opened and stayed rigidly wide.

And then suddenly, in that darkened room, there came the sound of a low, choked sob. It was followed by a rattle of clothes as Bessie sat up.

"What do, old Spartans, rise and shine!" Polly said in jaunty cheeriness, clearing her voice. "Rising bell's just jangled!"

"BARBARA, QUICK! Mr. and Mrs. Mabel at once! Bessie has disappeared!"

That was the staggering news which greeted Barbara Redden as she awakened next morning in the Fourth Floor dormitory.

It came from Miss Primrose herself. Strange and haunting the disease Babe had been having of Bessie all night long. For to-day was the last day of term at Cliff House School. To-morrow she and her class would be off on their summer holiday cruise vacation. To-day was a day of concerts, parties, and farewells.

And farewell to dear old Bessie. That event loomed larger than any.

And now here was the headmistress herself standing cross her back, Primrose actually shaking her. In a flash Babe was out.

"Yes, Miss Primrose, I'll go over at once! Mabel, look up!" she cried. They hardly stopped to wash and dress themselves. In five minutes they were out of the school, in a quarter of an hour were scorching up Coast

going away on a wonderful cruise, with afterwards a gorgeous future awaiting her in Australia.

Bessie stopped. Well, she must get ready, of course. Here were these gloves Babe had given her last Christmas. Here was the photograph Letta had taken of her and Mabel on the school steps.

Now—how was the dog collar with the silver plate which Ting had won in the last pet's competition at Cliff House—what memories that brought back! What was this—a little picture Babe herself had painted of the old cloisters with herself standing in the cory's entrance.

Suddenly Bessie turned, and going to the window looked out across the hedge and Sully's towards the cypress-belly man which she knew was Cliff House.

Bessie's Great Decision!



"BESSIE, my dear, don't you think you had better finish your packing and go to bed!" Aunt Annie said gently.
It was half-past nine. The Cliff House party had departed.

Lodge drive. Aunt Annie, her face distressed, was waiting to meet them.

"She's gone—gone!" she wailed. "She must have gone in the night! Her clothes are still there—half-packed. She's taken nothing except her presents, Barbara, if you know where she is—"

"But—but I don't!" Babs said. "But we have to be at the school by ten for the concert; at three o'clock on the train! Barbara, she must be found—she must! What can have possessed the dear girl to run away!"

"Don't she have a note or anything?" Babs asked.

"Nothing—nothing!"

"Then perhaps," Babs said, "she's just in the grounds somewhere. She might have walked in her sleep, you know. Hallo, here's Ting!" she added, as that little dog came snuffling up excitedly.

"Ting, where's mamma?"

"Wuf!" Ting said, and looked at the door.

"But, blow it, she must have left a clue!" Mabel cried. "Let's look in her room!"

They looked in her room. But no clue or trace of Bessie was there. They looked in the garden. They searched the bushes. No clue there. But again and again Ting, with an excited yap, went shooting towards the gate.

"I believe," Babs said desperately, "she's made off into the woods. Anyway, we'll look with Ting. He seems to know. If we find her, Mrs. Eastman, we'll take her back to school—there's hardly time to bring her back here before you start out. Good boy, then, Ting," she added, as the Poko went snuffling off. "Come on, Mabel!"

"Ting-a-ling, as though relieved by his kneeling upon some into their hands at last, excitedly went gambolling on ahead of them. Straight through the woods he went, heading towards Cliff House.

"The dog's cracked!" Mabel said. "She won't have gone back to the school!"

"Come on!" Babs said, with a sudden tremor in her voice. "Follow Ting."

They followed. Now Ting was running up the road. Now he passed in front of the gates of the school before belling in.

"Clear on!" Mabel muttered.

"Clear on!" Babs said with peculiar intensity.

They went on up the drive. Ting dashed into the school. Mabel's eyes opened wider still. Along the Fourth Floor corridor they raced, until Ting, with an excited yap, leapt up at the door of Study No. 4. Babs flung it open, and simultaneously fixes her lips close a yelp.

"Bessie—"

"Bessie, you—you old goose—"

Mabel choked.

For Bessie it was. Bessie in her Cliff House uniform. Bessie, jammy nervous and flustered. She made a dive for the table, along with a yell blabbed beneath it. Babs lifted the cloth.

"Bessie, you cheap—"

"Go away!" Bessie said. "Go away! I—I'm not here, you know!"

"Bessie!" Babs cried again, and flung the tablecloth wide. "What are you doing here!"

With miserable eyes Bessie blushed up.

"Oh, dad-dar! Oh!" Bessie stammered, and as Mabel stretched down a hand, she cried out: "I—I had to come, you know!"

"Your aunt and uncle are looking for you," Babs said gently. "They're nearly desperate!"

"Are—are they?" Bessie murmured. "And they're coming here—"

Mabel put in:

"Bessie's eyes showed wild alarm.

"Nonsense!" she gasped. "No, they can't! Babs, dad-dar! let them find me!"

"What's the matter, you old duffer-kiss?" asked Babs blankly. "You know this is your last day in England!"

"Bessie stammered:

"And you know you're sailing this afternoon!"

"Bessie stammered:

"And you know—"

"Babs switched off queerly, "what is the matter with you? Anna! you glad you're going to Australia!"

"Yes!" stammered Bessie.

"Well, what's wrong? Don't you like your aunt and uncle any more?"

"Yes, of course!"

"But—but—" Babs shook her head, a funny little pang going to her heart as she noticed the tears that had begun to gather in the fat one's eyes.

"Bessie, old thing, I—I don't understand," she said in a voice that was just a trifle unsteady itself. "Here you are, with everything a girl could wish for—with clothes, a ripping house, a cruise that most of us would give our heads to be sharing with you—a lovely time in a far-away country—"

"Oh, Babs!" cried Bessie. "I—I—I—"

"I—And she blushed. For a moment her lips were tightly quivered. "It—it's not that!" she cried out. "It—it's—"

"Hallo!" Mabel cried, staring through the window. "Here they come, Bessie! Your uncle and aunt are just getting on at the car!"

Bessie quivered.

"Oh, how-crambs, I must go!" she cried. "Babs, hide me, please!"

"But, Bessie, why are you running away?"

"I—I—"

"I—I—"

"I—I—"

"I—I—"

"I—I—"

"I—I—"

"I—I—"

"I—I—"

"I—I—"

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"I—I—"

"I—I—"

"I—I—"

Australia. I—I want to go to the holiday camp with you!"

Babs, for a moment, was stricken. Mabel hastily turned away.

"And I—I dad-dar! I—I want to come back to Cliff House! Babs, Babs, I don't want money and riches; I—I only want you and Mabel."

Babs gasped. From Mabel came a stifled sob.

"Babs, you—you do want me, don't you?" Bessie asked.

"Bess," Babs said lamely, "of course! But we—Mabel and I, that is—we—we both want you so—to—to—"

"Oh, dash it!" Babs cried. "Mabel, please give me a handkerchief!"

"I—I can't!" choked Mabel. "I'm using it!"

"Oh, stop!" Babs cried, fiercely rallying. "Bessie, this—this has got to stop! Bessie, your aunt and uncle—"

"Oh, my hat, here they come!" she cried, as footsteps sounded in the corridor.

"Don't let them come in!" Bessie gasped.

Yet even as she uttered those words the door opened.

"Bessie— her aunt cried.

"Bessie, my dear—" her uncle said.

"Pup-please don't take me to Australia!" Bessie blubbered. "I want to go to the holiday camp with Babs and Mabel! I run-away wanted to go, after all, you know! I—I only thought I did!"

Aunt and uncle exchanged a quickly significant glance. Then uncle smiled.

"Bessie," he said gently, "you're not going to Australia."

"Babs!"

"None of us is going to Australia," he shook his head. "The Government has found more important work for me here in England. And so," he said, while Bessie looked dumb with joy, "we're going to stop here. And if you'd like to go to the camp—"

"Oh, yes, yes!" Bessie cried.

"You shall, and afterwards you shall come back to the school. My dear, don't cry!"

But Bessie, standing between Babs and Mabel, was quietly sobbing, and the tears were of real happiness this time.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

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FOR NEW READERS.

BRENDA BAY, who has spent most of her life in an orphanage, is delighted when she is asked to become companion to wealthy **VERONICA SCHOLEN**, Veronica lives with her aunt and uncle and her five-year-old brother, Dickie. Part of Brenda's duties consists of looking after the little youngster.

Once installed at Fernbank, the Scholen know she meets

RONALD BENSON, who tells her he is working on her behalf. After many adventures, he reveals to Brenda that Veronica Scholen is an impostor—that she, Brenda, is the real Veronica. All along, Ronald has been working to prove this.

The fake Veronica does not know who Brenda really is. She imagines that she is just helping Ronald to succeed her. Ronald and Brenda find the vital proof of Brenda's identity, but it is stolen by a certain Mr. Jones, who is Veronica's father really.

Knowing that she cannot be loved by Veronica, she goes to get Brenda out of the way. She takes money from her aunt's bureau and makes it appear that Brenda has stolen it. Brenda denies it, and Dickie is called in to prove that Brenda went to Mr. Scholen's bureau that morning. Brenda thinks all is lost, because actually she did go to the bureau, although only to search for something of Dickie's.

(New read on)

Brenda Gives Herself Away!

"YES," said Dickie, "that's all you've got to say!" coaxed Mr. Scholen. "Did you see Brenda go to my bureau? Yes—or no?"

On one knee, the master of Fernbank put an arm about his little nephew's waist, and Brenda's heart was torn with compassion, as well as with dread for herself, as she saw how bewildered and scared Dickie was.

Obviously he could sense that something was wrong. But how could he realize that her fate, perhaps her whole future happiness, depended upon his answer?

"Just 'Yes' or 'No,' darling," whispered Mrs. Scholen.

Her voice was unsteady with emotion; not like Veronica's, which was tense, almost eager, despite her effort to control it, as she forced her uncle and aunt around the table.

"Did you, Dickie? Did you see Brenda touch uncle's bureau?"

There was a pause to give Dickie time to consider.

And Brenda, she stood alone on the far side of the room, fighting so steady herself, so that when disaster came, as inevitably it must when Dickie told the truth, she did not panic or lose her head.

For if she did that she might ruin whatever chances remained of proving who she was—Dickie's own sister! The real Veronica Scholen!

Oh, if only she could bowl out Veronica now! But the vital proof of her—Brenda's—identity, the children's story book which she herself had hidden in the old tell tale by during her early years at this house, had been stolen from Ronald Benson by this girl's father. Until that was recovered she could not speak one word of what she knew.

Veronica learns the truth about Brenda—and plans to strike a last desperate blow!

This house, its wealth and luxury; her parents, now in Canada, whom she could not even remember; and— and Dickie! All worn here. Yet she must be robbed of them because this impostor had plotted to brand her a thief.

"Well, darling, surely you remember?"

Mrs. Scholen's tremulous voice broke the spell at that moment.

Dickie blinked from one to another of his relatives. He was twisting his hands.

"Did—did I see Aunt Brenda?" he pronounced said in faltering tones.

There was a nodding of three heads.

"Yes, Dickie," said the bogus Veronica. "You remember. You and Brenda went into uncle's study this morning to try to find your shoes. I expect you helped Brenda search, didn't you? Well, then, if Brenda went to uncle's bureau you'd have seen her,

wouldn't you? Did you? Just answer 'Yes' or 'No,' that's all."

Dickie, head drooping, gulped. For Dickie, if he did not know of the disgrace and disaster that would come to Brenda if he spoke the truth, knew something else. He had only to say "Yes" and Brenda would leave Fernbank!

That was what Anny Vera and big sister Vera's had said. He'd heard them—heard them from upstairs, when they were talking in the hall. And then Anny Vera had come up and fetched him down, and everybody in here—everybody except dear Anny Brenda herself—they'd all said:

"Say 'Yes' or 'No.' 'Yes' or 'No.' 'Yes' or—"

Dickie flung up his curly head.

"No, no!" he choked. "Oh, no, Anny Vera! No, Uncle Arthur! Really, truly, No—no!"

From kindly Mrs. Scholen came a sigh of relief. Her husband was frowning, and for the moment Veronica was speechless with shock. For Veronica had planned that money in Brenda's room with the certain knowledge that Brenda had been to the bureau.

"Brenda didn't touch your uncle's bureau, Dickie?" his aunt asked, taking one of his hands in hers. "You're sure?"

"Sure—no?" Dickie looked down at the carpet again. "No, Anny Vera."

"Did you see Brenda all the time you were in the study, then?"

"Yes," Dickie said, nodding vigorously.

"But—but, really, that's ridiculous! He's just trying to defend her!" Veronica burst out furiously.

Brenda had been staring at Dickie in almost trance-like stupor. Incredible, it was, but—had told a lie! Not that lying was such an unusual practice for a wee child like him, but there had been no reason why he should have told, except—

In some extraordinary way he must have part of the truth. And he had had to say 'No'!

"Really, Veronica, it is you who are being ridiculous," said Mrs. Scholen

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sheeply. "Dickie is far too young to be capable of defending anybody, except herself, in the way you implied. Well, Arthur?"

She looked at her husband, plainly asking the unspoken question "Are you satisfied?" He nodded. Satisfied he was—of Brenda's innocence. But he was now extremely puzzled as to how his money had got into her room if she had not put it there!

That, however, was a problem that could be investigated on its own. He had something else to do now. He said Brenda Day an apology.

Ms. Scholes never did things by halves.

"Afraid I've made rather a bad of myself, Brenda," he gruffly confessed. "I did rather jump to conclusions, even though they were fairly obvious."

"Well, everything's all right now, isn't it?" Brenda said, with a shaky but radiantly happy smile. "You know it wasn't me, was it?"

"And there's no one more pleased than I am," said Mrs. Scholes, patting an arm about Brenda's shoulder. Her eyes were twinkling. "I didn't think you could have done this. Why, Veronica," she exclaimed, "aren't you going to my your apologies!"

Veronica came forward. And she did apologize. But it was an obvious to Brenda that the words nearly choked her and that her smile cost her a tremendous effort that she wanted to burst out laughing.

"For once the way of the thief had ended in disaster!"

She and Ronald were now "as you were." Everything depended upon receiving that precious money-back, for the fingerprints it was bound to contain—prints made by herself when a child—would prove in the world that she and so one she was Veronica Scholes.

An excellent chance of recovering it, Mrs. Brenda moved, as she took Dickie up to bed, shortly afterwards. The beguine Veronica's father was not likely to destroy it. He would try to discover for himself why it was so vitally important to her and Ronald. And Ronald, knowing where the man lived, had vowed to get it back.

Hazel advised Mrs. Brenda when she asked Dickie into bed, but her sense of duty—and the overwhelming feeling of selfless affection which filled her heart these days—made her give gentle reproof for what he had done innocently.

"Dickie darling," she whispered, pressing his chubby face between her hands as he lay back on the pillow, "you ought not to have told a story when they asked you if I went to your uncle's bureau."

"Is—is you mad wiv me, then?" Dickie asked, his eyes rounding in alarm.

"Yes—I'm only did it 'cos they said you'd go 'way an' never, never come back, Aunty Brenda, an' I love you so awfully lots that—that— Oh, Aunty Brenda," he choked, sitting up again about her neck, "you isn't mad wiv me, is you? Not—not really, truly?"

"Of course I'm not, sweetest," Brenda murmured into his ear. "I thought you were just the loveliest little boy ever to do that for me. But sometimes it's wrong even to be brave, Dickie. It is." She nodded. "But you're always going to be brave, I know. And you won't tell stories again, will you?"

"No—not if you say 'No,' Aunty Brenda."

"Then I'll say 'No,' this very minute, shall I? Now does you go, there's a good chap. It's awfully late, Night-night!"

With a sigh of blissful contentment, Dickie settled down to his arms.

He was soon asleep, and Brenda gently smoothed her arms and tucked the bedclothes around him. She stood by, but did not creep away at once. If she had, she might have seen the person who listened at the half-shut door.

But, no! Brenda nodded, looking down at the small curly head on the pillow as she said:

"Darling little fellow," she murmured. "And you do love me so much. I wonder what you'll say when you know you're my mother? Bumped!" She smiled. "Gorgeously surprised, I bet. But not nearly as surprised as the girl you believe is your sister."

Bowling, she pressed a kiss to his forehead.

Outside the room, Veronica, face white, eyes started, leaned back against the wall. She stayed like that, breathing heavily, for some seconds.

That—that girl—the real Veronica! Brenda Day, heiress of Fernbank! Brenda, the long-lost child, whose place she had been taking all these months! Oh, it was absurd, fantastic! It just—

just couldn't be true! Crazy things like that didn't happen in real life. They didn't—they didn't!

Then Veronica's speculation passed, and cold reality gripped her.

"Oh, you goodness!" she whispered.

"That girl—the real Veronica!"

On tiptoe she hurried away. Father must know of this at once. They would have to strike again—and successfully this time!

Veronica's Strange Occupation

IT was an extremely puzzled and vigilant Brenda who, after breakfast the following morning, accompanied Mrs. Scholes and Veronica into the dining-room to discuss Veronica's birthday celebrations. They were planned for two days' leave—actually two days after Veronica's birthday.

Something was in the air. No need to sell Brenda that. People who, one moment, ruthlessly plotted to brand you a thief, didn't suddenly become the height of friendliness without some ulterior motive.

And that's what Veronica had done. First thing this morning she had popped her head into the bed-room to wish her a cheery good-morning. At breakfast she had chatted away to Brenda in almost gushing manner, full of smiles and banter. And now, as they stood talking to Mrs. Scholes, she slipped an arm through Brenda's, and gave her a hug.

"Awwfully exciting all this, dear," she said. "It's so wonderful! You know, I can hardly believe it even now. Eighteen to-morrow, and ten thousand pounds the day after! Please!" And she gave a comical shake of her head.

"I shan't know where to start."

Mrs. Scholes, raising over the list of invitations, smiled at Brenda—she stood like one in a dream.

Ten thousand pounds! And Veronica was to receive it the day after to-morrow.

Unaccountably dazed on Brenda at least, and this, she felt, the severe behind Veronica's scheme with her father! Then, then, was the reason for the manœuvre?

They had known all along about this enormous legacy. They had planned to receive it, and then—disappear!

Ever so Brenda closed her hands.

"That money was actually hers! And this girl who now chatters with such false, smothering friendliness to her arms, meant to rob her of it. In two days' time she would rob her of it. Only one thing could frustrate her—the receipt of the money!"

Somehow Brenda managed to seem perfectly composed as she smiled back at Veronica.

"Lucky old you!" she said, checking. "I bet you will be in a daze!"

And then she started as Mrs. Scholes addressed her.

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Scholes!"

"Like to take Dickie into town, dear?" Mrs. Scholes inquired.

"Oh, rather!" Brenda's eyes lit up. Just the chance she wanted to try to meet Ronald, and discover if his quest had succeeded. "What is it you want me to do, Mrs. Scholes?"

"Oh, nothing much, dear! Just hand this list in at the confectioner's—Truman's." Mrs. Scholes held out a slip of paper. "Oh, but you might rouse it out again, if you don't mind. I've afraid I've made rather a mess of it, changing items here and there. You could do it at the table, dear."

Naturally Brenda fetched paper and ink, seated herself at the table, and got

bury. But she was thinking more of Ronald than the task of copying out Mrs. Scholer's list of provisions for the party, and the wastepaper-basket came in very handy.

One, two, three crumpled balls of paper Brenda had had thrown into the basket before—

"Done it!" she cried triumphantly. "Godly, like doing an executive for the party, and she went out upon to dress herself. While doing so, Mrs. Scholer popped in.

"Don't say anything to Veronica, dear," she said, in suppressed excitement, "but I've got a lovely surprise for her. Her parents are coming home specially for the party. They'll arrive that evening. Now, not a word, mind."

And, figger to her lips, Mrs. Scholer bustled off.

Slowly, thoughtfully, Brenda finished her dressing.

"They'll be here the day after tomorrow," she mused. "My—my—my parson. I wonder what they're like!" There was a strange, rich feeling of excitement within her. Out she went, to gather Dickie from his usual little nook. Hand-in-hand they went downstairs.

"Oh, polly," she gasped, as they passed the drawing-room—"the list! I'd forgotten it! Just a minute, darling. You wait here."

She opened the door and went in, making straight for the table. Veronica was there too, also with pen and ink, and Brenda's eyes widened as she recognized her first three attempts at the provision list spread out before the girl, who was staring anxiously at the paper list at her elbow, at the same time laboriously writing on another sheet of paper.

So engrossed was Veronica that she did not realize Brenda's presence for some while. By then Brenda, more surprised than ever, had spotted what she was doing—copying her handwriting!

"Ee—excuse me!" Brenda said, "but could I have that?"

Veronica jumped. For an instant a startled light shone in her eyes. Then, with a shaky little laugh, she picked up the list.

"Oh, sorry; there you are!" she said, holding it out. She indicated the other list and her own handwriting. "Just—just a little hobby of mine, you know," she went on quickly. "Trying to imitate people's handwriting. What do you think of that?"

Veronica held up her effort, and Brenda, recognizing several little characteristics peculiar to her own writing, had to confess that it was remarkably good.

"Not bad," Veronica checked. "I'm bent with uncle's, though. But you run along; old thing. Don't let me bore you."

Brenda went. With Dickie frolicking beside her, she made for the town. Quicker she was thinking. It wasn't like Veronica to waste her time like that. What on earth was at the back of the girl's mind to-day?

"Oh, well, bother Veronica!" Brenda said herself. "I won't stop worrying about her, or—Dickie—Dickie, come away!"

To sudden alarm she darted after the little cherub as he lay by a garden fence, composed of wooden stakes set a few inches apart, and joined by wire, he gave an excited cry!

"Oo, big doggies! Look! 'Nonsense big doggies!" he shouted, and thrust a hand through the fence.

It is the tick of time, Brenda dragged him back. A moment later two mastiffs

barled themselves at the fence. There was a rattling of chain, and Brenda, arms about the kiddie, rushed to her surprise, that the dogs were imbued in a stake some thirty or forty yards away.

Their owner, apparently, wished them to have about as much liberty as if they had been entirely free.

"Ooo, look! Awful Brenda!" Dickie said, gaping up and down. "They want a sweetie! Please let me give them one!"

"—Well—" Brenda considered. "All right, Dickie." But there it Don't give your there."

Dickie, released, did both things. He threw a sweet, and then, before Brenda could stop him, toddled to the fence and held out another. Cold with fright, she hurried herself forward. But she need not have worried. Possessed though the animals looked, deep-eyed like children, for while one snatched the first sweet at a distance, the other took the second sweet from Dickie's fingers as gently as could be.

"Golly me!" Brenda gasped. "That's made me surprised!"

"No more surprised than I am!" exclaimed a cheery voice from behind her.

And there, a grin on his good-looking face, stood Ronald Benson.

"Ronald!" Brenda cried, eyes lighting up. "Oh, how good! I was keeping to see you! Well"—eagerly she looked at him—"say look over the book!"

"No," said Ronald quietly; "but don't give up. There's still time. And I've an idea. The reason I've had to look at these dogs—"

He pulled a grizzled cat at the sweet-toothed mastiffs.

"Those!" Brenda echoed. She stared out the fence, surveying the garden beyond. "Why, my goodness, of course," she breathed. "I recognize the place now. This is Veronica's father's house—the one he's renting."

"Exactly," said Ronald, grin-jawed. "And these bounds, believe it or not, are like a couple of half-starved keepers. Every time I've started to sneak past them, they've tried to tear me limb from limb. And if I can't get to the dashed house—"

He broke off, frowning at the

grounds. Brenda, not thinking as much of this aspect of the problem troubled his arm.

"Ronald!" she said, her voice tense and vibrant—"Ronald, I know what Veronica's game is—money!"

"Money!" Ronald swung round. Eyes wide, he stared at her keenly.

"Yes, money—"

"A legacy—ten thousand pounds—that she's getting the day after tomorrow," Brenda went on quickly. "Oh, Ronald, we've got to stop these! Can't you see what'll happen? Once she's got her hands on that money she and her father will beat. They'll destroy that book. There'll be no way for us to prove who I am. Two days, Ronald," she ended, her voice breaking—"that's all the time we've got!"

Ronald shaken, worried, bit his lip. "My stars! Is that that's it!—And the book? If only I could get past those dogs!" he burst out.

Looking at them, troubled, quivering, Brenda's face suddenly glowed.

"Why, I—I think I've got it, Ronald!" she breathed. "Look! See how they like Dickie, and sweets, she asked with a low laugh. "If Dickie and I could keep these here, like this couldn't you creep to the house, then?"

"Jove, what a wheeze!" Ronald cried delightedly. "Of course! The very thing! And here you are, he went on, dragging out a bar of chocolate, and thrusting it into her hand. "More ammunition! Try to keep these busy, and I'll be as quick as I can."

"All right, Ronald; we'll try it," Brenda promised.

Heart pleased, she turned back to Dickie and his new playmates as Ronald sped away for the gate. There were few sweets left in the bag, so hurriedly she unwrapped the chocolate wrapping, broke the bar into pieces, and gave some to Dickie.

Grudgily she dogs ate, and as the supply of chocolate dwindled, and the sweets sped by, Brenda's suspense and anxiety increased. What was happening to Ronald!

At last—only one more piece. Dickie held it, but she took it from him with a shrilled little, "Watch, darling!" Then hurried it as far as she could away from the house.



BRENDA'S heart pounded as Ronald slipped into the garden. Could she, with little Dickie's help, keep the watch-dogs engaged, while her boy friend carried out his vital mission?

Backed, the dogs leaped after it. There were two pointers, a sheltie, and three of the ones secured it. Both of them turned, looking back at the fence. Then, with ear-tipping growls, they seductively whined towards the house and proceeded away.

"Reveals—they've seen him!" Brenda gasped.

The dogs had, so she did so a moment later—springs for another part of the fence, while the dogs tore it out like old!

Kidnapped!

"OCC, look, Auntie Brenda," cried Dickie, pointing. "Someone's having a game with those dogs. Can it's Uncle Reveals!"

Obviously, he slipped his hands, but Brenda dragged him away.

Filled with agitation, she moved down the road, leading a reluctant Dickie by the hand. All at once, there sounded a crashing of bushes, and Reveals appeared again.

Behind him, less than five yards away, came the dogs.

No need for that frantic advice. Brenda leapt desperately, just cleared the fence, and dropped on to the road beyond.

Even as he landed, both dogs crashed against the fence, clashing, snapping, snarling.

White-faced, Brenda managed to give an astounded smile of relief.

"My goodness," she breathed, as Reveals pattered on her side. "That was a close shave. No—no good!"

"Yes—and no," Reveals jerked, gasping. "Didn't get the book, but saw where it is. Through a window I saw Veronica's father chase it in a cupboard. He was talking to two others. Overheard by me. He's going out to-night. To-night, Brenda." His eyes gleamed. "So are those other jokers. The con'll be clear. Dogs or no dogs, I'll be able to get into the house. And I fancy I can buy enough assets to keep those tykes busy! That come as I mustn't hang around here."

Brenda's heart filled with new hope as they moved away. To-night! Oh, if only she could get that book then!

"But—but you'll be awfully careful. Reveals, won't you?" she said anxiously.

"Why, of course, old thing," he said, with a smile. "I won't take any risks. But here's my thing."

He gave a nodding glance at Dickie and Brenda, understanding, told him in cryptic language of the dramatic events of last night. Reveals whistled.

"Please! Desperate, are they? Wonder if they guess who you are, old man? That's impossible. Why should they? We haven't given the game away. You're not taking any chances!"

"Oh no," said Brenda, shaking her head. "But Veronica's up to something. I'm sure. I'm going warily."

"That's the stuff," Reveals approved. "I'll let you know, those you or something, the moment I've any news! Now bye-bye!"

They parted then, Reveals to return home; Brenda to continue her trip to the scene.

It really did seem as though they stood on the verge of discovery, at last. For if that house was deserted to-night, except for those dogs, what was there to prevent Reveals recovering the vital book!

How several fulfilled, Brenda took Dickie into a trap for lemons and cakes, and then they returned home.

Brenda saw nothing of Veronica until well after tea, when, with Mr. and Mrs. Scheles, she sat in the drawing-room, listening to a radio variety program.

As Veronica, nodding amiably to each of them in turn, settled down in her favorite chair, Brenda looked at her keenly.

Something was in the air. She was certain of it now. The very atmosphere of the room seemed to have become charged with tension at Veronica's side. The girl was so tense, so keen.

Just before the Third News at nine o'clock—exactly while the familiar five signal was piping away—the phone rang in the hall.

"Hark!" greeted Mr. Scheles, glowing. "Have I not what I think it is."

"What, what do you think it is, Arthur?" asked his wife.

"Trouble! Trouble with a capital T, from the office. I told them to ring me if it happened, and it looks as though—Come in!" he called irritably, as a tap sounded at the door.

A maid appeared.

"Please, there's a call for Miss Day," she announced.

Up Brenda jumped, heart fluttering. Frown Reveals, of course!

She hurried out, not waiting until the maid had returned to the kitchen quarters, tucked up the receiver.

"Hello!" she said, in low, guarded tones. "Is that you, Reveals?"

"It's me all right. I say, can you meet me?"

"Why?" Brenda asked tremulously. And then, in a shaking voice: "Didn't you get it?"

"Get it? Oh, yes, I should say I did! That's what I want to see you about. Can you manage to slip out—out for a couple of ticks, to meet me at the corner of the lane? I'll be in a car."

"Oh, yes, yes! Golly, of course I can!" Brenda cried, and was so wildly excited she almost dropped the receiver when she hung up.

Reckless-faced, she stood there for a moment. Found again! The book which could make all her dreams come true, and frustrate a desperate plot, was more safe and sound in Reveals's hands.

Oh, it was marvellous!

Trying to mask her excitement, she flew back to the drawing-room. One thing to be cautious about—Veronica. Could she possibly ask permission to leave and slip away without that girl suspecting?

She could—now she did, thanks to the radio, which Mr. Scheles invariably turned on almost to full blast during the news.

"Would it be all right, Mrs. Scheles, if I went out for a few minutes—just to see a friend?" Brenda explained, in a low voice.

"Certainly, dear!" was the ready response. "But you will be only a few minutes."

"Yes." Happily Brenda nodded. "Oh, thanks so much!"

Away she sped, not bothering about hat and coat.

Rattling across the well-trodden, Brenda approached the gates with fast-leaping hooves. At last, she reached them. Rapidly she leaped over, staring up and down the road.

And then she excitedly waved. Drawn to close to the ditch on her left was a large blue van. At once an arm waved back at her, then cracked back.

Brenda did not wait. Thinking with excitement, she tore down the road.

"Hello!" she cried, halting by the driver's seat. "Here I am! But you did it pretty smartly if you were pho-

ing from that call-box. I didn't think 'why' who are you? Where's my friend?"

For the man with sleek hair bearded behind the wheel was not Reveals. Neither was Reveals the owner of the van which suddenly appeared before her.

"I'm afraid your friend was in a position to assist you at the moment, Miss Day."

Brenda smiled, all the blood draining from her face, as she stared at the man who slowly had slipped down from the back of the car, and was now confronting her with a mocking smile.

"You!" she cried. "Veronica's father?"

"Mr. Jones, if you don't mind," said the man, leaning. "You had for the next couple of days. Surely for my own good. Hi, grab her, Jim!" he barked.

A third man, appearing from the other side of the car, where he must have been crouching the whole time, seized Brenda by the shoulders. Frantically she struggled, but spread her mouth to scream for help, but Mr. Jones clapped his hand over it. Plunging and writhing, but utterly powerless. Brenda began to gasp, but was bound in, and driven away at top speed.

"But—er it's almost unbelievable!" declared Mrs. Scheles.

"I've never heard of such ingratitude!" Veronica said indignantly and shocked. "After the way we've treated her—"

"Confused her treatment of her?" raged Mr. Scheles. "What of her treatment is that? Her treatment to me! That money gone again—far good this time. Twenty pounds taken out of my wardrobe, though how I put in the name of goodness the know I'll put it there before me!"

"And to think she's gone!" said Mrs. Scheles, her voice shaking.

"It was half-past ten, and the three of them stood in Brenda's bed-room, whether Mrs. Scheles had gone five minutes before an investigate her departure. In her mind she still held the note which had sent her rushing on to the landing, agitatedly calling for her husband and Veronica to join her.

Certainly it was a dramatic note to find on any girl's pillow, for it was:

"Sorry to give you all a shock, but you had it coming to you. Thanks for the £20. Bill comes in handy, even though I had to go for it twice."

"Brenda?"

Mrs. Scheles drew a long, quivering breath.

"If it hadn't been for her writing, I—well, I'd have said it must have been written by someone else," she murmured disbelievably, still clinging to her last shred of faith in the missing girl.

And that was where Veronica encountered a smile of triumph. Practice makes perfect, she mused. In this case this had been true. Her practice at imitating Brenda's writing had enabled her to make a perfect reproduction of it.

"Well, that's that, I suppose," she said wearily. "There's nothing we can do."

"Oh, yes, there is!" said Mr. Scheles exuberantly, and he strode for the door. "I'm going to phone the police!"

THANKS to the cunning of her enemies, Brenda cannot defend herself. Brenda and the vital story-book? In next week's chapter this story reaches an amazing climax. Be sure you don't miss reading it.

COMPLETE this week. Another grand story featuring that attractive character—

KIT OF RED RANCH



"GOSH! What a loss!" gasped young Billy, who couldn't bear school-work. And there and then he vowed he'd win the animal, which Kit's dad was presenting to the best scholar of his present spelling class right. He did not realize that Kit was behind it all—with a very smart scheme!

Kit Tackles a Truant!

REDDING, what do you figure, that would be?"

And Kit Hardier, of Red Ranch, sitting on a grass bank in the shade of a tree, put her head on one side and listened intently. The Redskin girl with the pretty, delicately copper-tipped face, who lay sprawled beside her, sat up and gave the second bar attention, too.

It was a quiet spot where they sat, in the midst of lovely Canadian scenery, with the schoolhouse smack the only sign of habitation.

Redding, listening with an ear to the ground, looked up.

"Must walk'n' near on grass," she said. "Smaller someone walk, too—near."

"Chasing this way?" asked Kit, jerking upright with interest.

Before Redding could answer there came up above the second that had first attracted Kit's attention; but now they both recognized what it was.

"Oop!"

The sound was human, a yelp, and the voice young. Almost immediately a recognizable voice came.

"Yeggo!"

Then into view strode the burly figure of the Red Ranch foreman, Bill, grunted, tough-looking, a companion of the old school. Beside him, most unwillingly, marched his nephew, young Billy, led by the ear, which Bill held in a firm, sure grasp.

"Hey, Bill," gasped Kit, and sprang forward, "take it easy."

She frowned at the burly foreman in reproach; but he did not release his grip, although he touched his hat with respect.

"Mornin', Miss Kit!" he said.

"Bill, that kid's ear will come off if you grip it that way," said Kit, and she gave the boy a look of sympathy.

"Miss Kit, this young warden's gone to the skule," said Bill.

"Yoop!" yelped young Billy. And, wincing, clucked Bill's hand with his own.

Kit barred the way, arms akimbo, frowning.

"Bill, he's had enough," she said. "I reckon he'll go on now without any forcing."

Kit liked Billy. He was a bright, cheery kid, aged about ten years, ready for any mischief, but good-hearted and likable. The trouble was that Billy did not like school.

"Go on, Bill, let him go!" said Kit.

Bill looked at her, frowned down at Billy, and then grunted.

"Right, if you say so, Miss Kit!" he said. "But, all the same, he's got to school."

He released his grip, and young Billy dodged and dodged away. He ran ten yards like a hare before he stopped, and, rubbing his ear, baring ear, swung round.

"Thank you, Miss Kit, you're sure swell," he said. "But that great boss of my mammy, if he's around on my next birthday I'll punch him flat! I—Yoop!" he called, and ran as Bill took a lumbering movement forward.

Kit laughed, she couldn't help being tickled by the idea of a ten-year-old Billy knocking the stuffing out of big Bill! But her laughter died as she saw young Billy making tracks for the hill-side.

"Billy, come back!" she called.

But Billy went scrambling up the hill-side hand as he could go, although the school was on the far side of the roadway.

"That! Looky! He ain't gone to skule, Goldburn no!" said Bill severely. "That's what comes of being soft, Miss Kit. I'll tan him! I'll day him when I get him!"

By

Elizabeth Chester

Kit looked after Billy, brows knit, and then, with a smile twinking the corners of her mouth, she tapped Bill's arm.

"Aw, let up, big Bill!" she said jovially. "I'll handle young Billy."

And, linking arms with Redding, she turned towards the hillside up which Billy had defiantly climbed.

"Wack till I catch young Billy!" she said to Redding.

"You give him bad poppik!" asked the Redskin girl, in surprise.

"No; chawing, that's all. But I reckon it'll make him feel a lot worse than any luzzing," said Kit, "because he's a decent kid. I like him a lot."

"We go chase him!" asked Redding.

"Not likely," said Kit. "All I'm going to do, Redding, is sit here and eat cookies and English toffee."

Kit dropped down on to the grass and opened her haversack, while the Redskin girl regarded her in amazement.

"You no got cookies," she said softly. "No got English toffee-toffee."

"Sheek, no! But play up!" warned Kit; and added aloud: "Here, try this one! Good eh?"

Redding had a shrewd, quick mind, and, grasping the idea at once, pretended to be munching something.

"Try a jam tart," said Kit.

They sat munching nothing with gusto, and with such realism and suitable comments that it was not long before the grass rustled behind him.

"Hallo!" said a voice.

Kit turned her head and saw Billy's bright, cheery face.

"Oh, hallo, cowardly morder!" she said. "Scared to go to school, aren't you?"

Billy came through the bush, looking very puzzled, and pinkish-cheeked.

"Scared—no!" he said. "You don't think that, Miss Kit, Scared!"

Kit laughed, and fastened her haversack.

"Bill, you sure would get it hot if you put your nose inside that school-house door," she said. "I reckon the school-learn would just take you by the neck, and beat the life out of you."

As she spoke, she nudged Redding,

for they both knew that the young school man was gentle as a lamb! And so, too, did Billy. He chuckled at the idea.

"Ay, sure it, Miss Kit. Quit kiddin'," he said. "I'm not afraid to go, and you know it."

"Well, what are you afraid of?" asked Kit.

"Nothin'," he said indignantly. "And I'm not afraid of Bill, either, if it comes to that. I'm going to be a congressman when I grow up, even if he doesn't like it. Chicks are being a good an' winning prize an' scholarships an' being sent off to a city office. Heh!"

At that Kit gave a start; for this was the class she had lacked to Billy's hatred of school.

"Why, that's what's hidin' you!" she explained. "You think if you get top of the school you'll be sent to college?"

Billy frowned heavily.

"Nerbody I want," he said gruffly. "I'm all the rest of the world."

Kit's eyes reddened and she looked at him, and saw how deeply he felt.

"Soho?" murmured Kit. "And those at the bottom of the school just have to stay down on the farm. That it?"

"That's it," said Billy.

He stood up, hands in pockets,

glanced at the school-house, and grizzled defiance.

Kit did not argue with him; she realized that argument at this juncture wouldn't help things at all.

"All right, Billy," she agreed, standing up. "Have it your way. But one afternoon in school you'll make you a fool or a prisonizer, I reckon. I got you away from Bill, and if you don't go to school, what'll he say? That I'm an interfering busybody. Looks like you've let me down. But never mind."

Kit turned away, and Redwing joined her. Neither looked back at Billy, who stood shame-faced, watching them, his mind torn by doubt.

Kit did not look back until she had gone over a hundred yards; then she saw Billy walking to the school-house, only a few paces from it. When next she looked back he was out of sight.

"Gone to school," said Redwing, in surprise.

"Yes—good for Billy! But I reckon it's only for the afternoon," said Kit worriedly. "To-morrow it'll be the same again. I've got to get Billy keen on school, or it'll be one long war with him and Old Bill. And by the same token, I've got to get round Bill to lure him from the passing to see

young Billy dressed in a black jacket and striped tights, boater hat, and umbrella.

Redwing shook her head and gave one of her rare smiles.

"Not so best," she said.

But Kit had already made up her mind that she would do both—somehow!

All Through Old Bill!

THE next assistant, eldest scholar of the whole outfit, that's the last I want to see, Judith," said Kit heartily a day or two later.

She addressed Judith Cairns, the schoolmistress, just before lessons began the following afternoon, and prairie-competent Judith had no doubt as to who that lad was.

"Why, that'll be Dave Simpkins," she said without hesitation. "The boy really has a gift for learning. Look, that's Dave over there, Kit."

Kit looked, and saw Dave walking in at the gate. He was lanky, a little bent over at the shoulder. Perhaps because he had strained his eyes with too much study, he wore glasses, and as he walked he seemed lost in thought.

"That's the prize specimen, is it?" asked Kit, with a faint smile. "Can you call him over, Judith?"

Judith called Dave Simpkins, and he arrived, lifting his cap and giving Kit a glance.

"Good-afternoon," he piped. "Pleasant weather even for the time of year, I think. One might reasonably expect an equable, almost balmy air, but this exceeds even our most optimistic expectations."

Kit's eyes rounded and then twinkled.

"But no, you're certainly quite splintered an' awful."

She met Dave's grave eyes.

"I guess that's slang," he said crossly.

"You guessed it first shot," redded Kit. "Er—Dave! How'd you like a spare-time job to earn a few dimes?"

Dave's eyes glinted.

"Well, I have been considering for some little while now the purchase of some tomes that would advance my studies," he said. "And the willingness to do so has been the sole hindrance. It would certainly facilitate matters if I could accumulate capital in any free time."

His words just took Kit's breath away, even though she had had a good schooling herself.

"O.K., Dave," she said. "Just come along to the ranch. We can fit you up with a few spare jobs."

He thanked her gravely, and she turned away, but she swung round almost immediately and beckoned him out of Judith Cairns' hearing.

"And if it wouldn't be asking too much," she said gently, "you might pull up Bill, the foreman, when he comes to be using slaps or worse talking liberties with grasshopper. Get it? No trouble?"

"Why decidedly, Miss Kit," said Dave promptly, and, lifting his hat, passed into the school-house.

Asking after Bill then, and hearing that he had not progressed markedly with his studies, Kit returned to Red Ranch. There she saw a word to Bill about the new help, and later was on the scene when Dave Simpkins showed up; Dave wore breeches, and a shirt and suspenders, but there his likeness to a congressman ended.

"It's the top hat of the school bill," said Kit solemnly. "A real scholar,

Your Editor's address is—
THE SCHOOLGIRL OFFICE, Firstway House,
Farrington Street, London, E.C.4.



BETWEEN OURSELVES.

MY DEAR READERS.—Well, here we are meeting the end of July, and that, of course, means that our thoughts must be very close indeed to—holidays! For some of us, alas, this year's holidays will be but a pleasant memory; others of us may be actually experiencing the joys of seaside and country, or eagerly preparing for them.

Whichever category YOU happen to come in, I know you're all longing to hear more about the holiday which Hale & Co. of CHESTER, have planned for themselves, and as I would delay another moment but tell you all about it straight away.

As I mentioned last week, the famous drama are staying at a holiday camp, and such a wonderful holiday camp, too! Entertainment, games, a host of facilities for enjoying yourselves—tennis, bathing, boating, dancing; hosts of gay, friendly people; the most comfortable prices!

And—expensive, too! History and drama! For Hale & Co. have an account arrived at this glorious place than they are plunged into one of the most striking shows it has ever been my pleasure to read, and which Miss Richards has aptly called

"THE SECRET OF THE BLUE ORACLE."

You'll adore it; be completely spell-bound by it. It'll not only thrill you with its excitement, but make you feel that you are actually sharing everything with Hale & Co.

This grand story, the first of a series,

appears next Saturday, so do order your book now! Then you will also make certain of reading the continuation of "Ivanda's Task of Mystery"—which is nearing its most important stage, by COMPLETE Kit and Redwing, and Patricia's latest pages of keenly-written articles.

And now, before I say an revoir, here are a few

LITTLE LETTERS.

Joan Hansen (Arnhem, Ark.)—Congratulations, Joan. Your deduction is quite right, with one small reservation, which you will discover for yourself very soon now. Please write again whenever you like.

Alvige Kirmani (Bhopal, India)—Did you receive the copy you wanted, Alvi? I do hope so. It was lovely hearing from you, you know. Oh, yes, I've quite a few readers in India, though most of them are English. Best wishes, my dear.

Alvina Segra (Batal, S. Africa)—So glad you liked those articles, Alvi. Let me know how you are enjoying our present feature, won't you? Miss Richards and Patricia both asked me to send you their very best wishes.

Rosemary Rae (London, S.W. 59)—Thank you so much for your good wishes. Yes, Rosemary, I am quite well thank you. How are you? How you had your holiday yet? I shall be looking out for another letter soon.

Joan King, Estira Baman, Phyllis Clifton (Dunelm)—Many thanks for your suggestions, dear readers, regarding the radio. I am afraid, however, that the idea is not practicable at the moment for quite a number of reasons being the cost of it is over £100. Hele is 14 years and 6 months old. Bye-bye, you three. And write again—separately perhaps—soon! You!

Which brings me to—good-bye to everybody, until next week.

With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR

just what you want Billy to be. By the way—where is Billy?"

"Billy? Ha! In the shack, way over there," said Bill.

Kit left Dave to it and went to the shack; she opened the door and found Billy easily enough, but the sight of him made her gasp.

Billy had his methods, hiked and to the point. He wanted his neighbor to do his homework, and he didn't intend the lad to stray. So Billy was sitting on a crate that had been nailed to the floor. Billy himself wasn't nailed to the crate, but he was securely roped there with his hands and arms firm. There was a table in front of him, ink-well, paper, and books.

"Lo!" said Billy dreamily.

"Working?" asked Kit gently.

"No! Bill can rope me down, but he can't do no more," said Billy dogmatically.

"Ah, well!" said Kit, but felt sorry for Bill as she left the little shack and sought Dave again.

She found him kneeling in the mud, pressing his face to a saddle.

"Hallo! What's the idea?" asked Kit.

There was a horse canteering round, and Bill was not far away, doing a sort of war-dance.

"You see of a gal?" he booted, in wrath. "Don't ya hear me say 'saddle that horse?'"

Dave staggered up. He had tried to saddle the horse, but it had not stayed still. The saddle had collapsed, and he had collapsed with it—hence his appearance of chastity.

"I'm sorry," he said; "but the work is new to me. Perhaps you could draw a diagram."

Billy's eyes bulged.

"Can't you figure out how to saddle a horse?"

Dave put his glasses straight.

"Yes, sir; but, strictly speaking, the word figure has reference principally to digits, and secondarily to shapes and forms. One does not figure out things—namely, of course, the subject matter is arithmetical."

Kit managed not to chuckle; but Billy's face was a picture. His eyes were popping.

"Say, he asked, 'air you a-trying to teach me something?'"

"No trouble at all," said Dave.

"And if you see the word in print, I think you will admit that there is no 'p' in anything."

Billy walked across to him, trembling a little.

"See," he said, "saddle that horse! Figure it out, anyway you like. There a-saddle ain't no 'p's in anything, but I reckon there are a mighty few of 'em in your horse."

It took Dave twenty minutes to saddle the horse, and then he took it away. He was no better at the other jobs, brainy though he was in staidness of sphere. As a handyman about the farm he was a flop.

When he fitted the horse to swell the yard, he soaked himself getting the saddle on. Then he washed Bill because he had left the hose tap open, and turned on the water at the stop-cock, when the far end was pointing at Bill.

Bill chased him three times round the yard before Dave, panting and gasping, took shelter in the shack.

"Bad luck!" said Kit softly, fending him. "But somehow I reckon that ranch work's not your line. So here's a dollar. In time you might pick it up, but it'd be a mighty long time."

Dave pitched water from his glasses. "I shall try some other taking a course of lessons by mail," he said.



Kit, Redwing, and young Billy's uncle stared at the scene in amazement, for Billy, the latter of whom, was scuttling away for dear life. No wonder Kit chuckled with triumph.

"There's a man who teaches book-keeping by correspondence course for ten dollars. I should—when! Here comes Bill!" he exclaimed, and ducked fat as the foreman strode into view.

"Hey, Miss Kit, whom's that young school-ard?" asked Bill.

"Seems to have disappeared," said Kit.

"Yeah, just when I've found a real use for him— If he'll all you say is the brain department, I guess he's what I'm looking for to figure out these accounts."

"Oh, no, no!" said Kit hastily.

But Dave jumped up. "Accounts! Certainly! With pleasure. I'm sorry about that horse, you know, but—"

"Forget it!" said Bill briskly. "I'll forgive you anything, son, if you can disentangle these horse accounts, and every corner of the stall 'cept the big block in a nice neat hand."

Kit said nothing, but she groaned; for as Dave scuffled off to the store-room she knew that she had failed. Twenty minutes later she knew it for certain. Bill responded, rubbing his hands and heaving.

"Miss Kit, I take off me hat to you," he said. "That boy's certainly all you need. Gee, can he slip down a line of figures and not 'em up?'"

"Yes, I suppose so," admitted Kit dimly.

"Well, it's how I'd like young Billy to grow up. A mighty good man I'd be then."

Kit could have groaned. Everything was raised!

Redwing's Brainwave!

SADLY Kit walked away, for it looked as though Bill's creed was as fixed in his position as Billy's was in his. There seemed no way of striking the middle, either.

An hour later there came gasps and stifled yells from the little shack, and Kit, watching from a window, saw young Billy, scowling, called by Bill, dodge from the shack. Bill held a bit in his hand, and shook his fist after the departing figure.

"Grow up like Dave, and you won't get larrapings!" he roared.

Kit clenched her hands. She liked Bill, she knew his sterling worth, but when it came to bringing up Billy, he was just a thick-headed lolly.

"Oh, poor kid!" sighed Kit.

It took a lot to make Billy stubborn, but even he had his limit, and when a little while later Kit came upon him, leaning against a wall, his head in the crook of his arm, she had to battle hard not to go and comfort him.

But she was wise, and, biting her lip, turned away. If she let him know she had seen him with his flag at half-mast, he would never look her in the face again.

"It's got to be stopped," she told herself severely.

And as usual, when she was miserable, Kit sought the sanctuary of the wood and Redwing. The little Indian's sweet nature and deep wisdom were as balm to a wound when Kit was sad.

She gave the Indian call on the fringe of the wood, and back came Redwing's eager answer, followed by the little Redkin himself a moment later, her eyes shining.

Kit, flopping down on the grass, told Redwing the story.

"Bad," said Redwing, shaking her head. "Miss Bill chuck, more Billy not work; more Billy-not work, more Bill chuck."

"Yes!" said Kit. "So what?"

Redwing looked over her shoulder, and then, rising, she beckoned Kit, and waddled with quick, silent tread to the top of the hill. Beyond and below was

the plain, and just in sight, grazing, was a white pony.

"My word, that's a fine fellow!" said Kit admiringly; "Reddon led that same bounding."

"His already broken," said Redding. "Redskin horse."

"Kit looked at Redding inquiringly. "But say, what's this got to do with Billy?"

"Best horse—horse not do things," said Redding slowly. "Give horse sugar—work, do tricks."

"Kit sat up with a start. "My golly, Redding, I got it!" he said. "That's a glittering-bright idea. Sure! What a poor sap I've been. Who of course—sugar for Billy, eh? A white horse—gee!"

And Kit, full of the grand, new idea, ran down to the shack to find her mare. For once her ideas started to move they got going swiftly!

"Come on, dad, do your stuff," said Kit.

She stood with her father outside the schoolhouse. He had tugged himself up in a jacket, with polished boots and a smart sash, to please Kit, but he did not look quite himself.

"It's not the best of the, only the schoolhouse," smiled she. "I'll go in first, and if any of 'em bite me, I'll sell 'em."

"Kit walked into the schoolhouse, and Judith Cairns gave the signal to the boys and girls to rise to their feet. Everyone stood up, all eyes on the door.

"Here's dad," said Kit.

"Here he is," said her father gruffly.

"Girls and boys all," called Judith Cairns with a bright smile. "Here is Mr. Hartley. Very generous, he is offering a prize for the examinations next week. The prize is not to go to the boy with the highest marks, but to the one who has made the greatest progress since last exam."

Kit, surveying the class, raised her eyes on Billy. He did not look at all thrilled.

"Aw, it's nothin'," said Kit's dad, twisting his hat round and round in his hand.

There was a faint ripple of applause.

"Maybe they'd like to know what the prize is to be," said Kit. "Should I bring it in and show them? They don't want to exert hard to win a clay model of a schoolhouse. Hey—"

And giving a gentle call, she opened the door wide. As books did not respond to gentle calls, the whole form became electrified with interest. Heads tilted sideways, and heads began to stir. Billy was one of the first on his feet.

"Then a gasp arose—"Odds!" from the girls and clicks from the boys—as late the schoolroom there stepped the daddish white horse they had seen soon.

"Gee—" said Billy, in a voice that rose above the murmured din. "What a boy! Oh boy!"

"Indian horse," said Kit. "Reddon it's the kind of horse you'd like, Dave?"

"Yes," he said; and Kit guessed he was disappointed; he had expected something like the "Encyclopedia Britannica."

"You haven't told them the one condition yet, dad," pointed out Kit.

"Ah, you've got the point," said her dad quickly. "We don't want any of you kids breaking home, so it's understood that

after your marks have been figured out the horse goes to the one who's done best—yes, you really ride him and stay put! No kid who can't ride him have him. So those who reckon you're right in the running for him but can't ride had better learn fast."

That was all; he went from the room, and Kit led out the splendid white horse, affectionately stroking its mane.

When she looked back the class was seated again, all except Billy; he seemed to be in a kind of trance, with fixed staring, sparkling eyes.

"Gee!" she heard him sigh. "What a boy!"

Outside Kit's dad looked at her, and shook his head.

"Kit, I guess you're barking up the wrong tree, lass," he said. "The winner of that horse'll be Dave—if he learns to ride and stay put."

Kit chuckled. "He can't make the correspondence course in less than a month, dad. My money's on Billy."

It was not until later that evening that Kit saw or heard of Billy, and then it was only Bill's roaring voice along for him.

The home-work shack was empty, Billy had dodged away, and Bill was left as his trail.

"Something good have happened to that murrin?" he said worriedly. "I'll lay any money I'll find him on the plain, roping a murrin."

Kit jumped. She hadn't thought of that.

"Oh gosh!" she muttered. "Here! If she rooped to find Redding, and ten minutes later was on the trail with her. There was no one near on a scout than the Redskin girl, and if once she could pick up Billy's tracks it was a sure thing that she would run him to ground wherever he was."

Behind them came Bill, mounted, carrying a whip and a lasso, for one who had his wits was caught.

It took the Redskin twenty minutes to pick up Billy's trail on the mountainside, and then she followed it with hardly a falter, meeting softly.

"Gee right over the top to the far plain," murmured Kit. "Through the pass."

That was how it seemed, but presently Redding reached a glade, and then drew back with a soft hissing sound. Waving to Kit, she signalled how on, and Kit crept forward to the approved Indian manner.

Reaching the edge of the glade, she peered in. There, knitted down at the bottom, was Billy. Kit took one look, and turned for Bill.

"Hey—quiet," she whispered. "Crawl—we've found him. Not off-sidely do it—"

"What's wrong?" jerked Bill, peering. "The kid's all right—"

He did not finish the sentence, but moved forward, creeping low, while Kit and Redding, knowing what he would see, smiled expectantly.

When Bill moved to the edge of the glade and stared over, he very nearly let out a yelp, but managed just in time to stifle it.

BILLY, down at the bottom, was huddled over a book. There were books beside him, pen and ink. His face was wrinkled and packed with care, and he was so wrapped in what he was doing that he did not hear the slight sounds from above.

"Gee!" whispered Bill when he had

gone out of sight of his smiling nephew. "Can that be Billy?"

"Not a word. Don't let on you've ever guessed," warned Kit anxiously; "or he'll think that you've got a bunch you've licked him into this. Let it come as a surprise, Bill."

"Surprise," said Bill thickly. "I'll say it's come as a surprise. Who's holding him down these—as rope, no tackle?"

"Only a white horse—a Redskin horse," chuckled Kit. "You'd better start doing the kind of stuff he's apt to see, Bill."

Bill twiddled his spare belt in his hand; then, with a queer grin, swung it away into the bushes.

"It's no that's his lick, and by a gee!" he said.

Kit stopped his book. "He'll do," said she, the accounts yet. Bill—mittin' on a white horse?"

BILLY was not top in the school examinations by quite a long way. He was actually last in his term, but had been sixteenth it was an advance of the school level all the same—and the horse was his!

Miss Judith Cairns was so startled that she had to add up all the figures three times to make sure she was right.

"Well, fancy any boy wanting a white horse as badly as that," she murmured.

"Yes, fancy," smiled Kit, when she saw the list. "But there's more in it than that, Judith. You see, Billy's going right out to show us that he can ride that horse, that he's a born cow-puncher. Ogey, he's got the horse—"

"He'll drop back to sixteenth!"

"I guess not," said Kit. "By the time he's mounted on his own he'll have lost the fear of it, and maybe he'll be kind of interested in learning. And after all, if he does drop back too far, he can use the rest of the term he'll pick up as himself!"

But Billy did not drop back—far. He had more than one hint given him that although the horse was his he should be forbidden to ride it. As there wasn't a prodder horseman in the whole country, Billy took no chances of losing his mount.

He spent a great deal of his spare time on his horse—but not all of it. For Billy didn't seem to part with his newspaper, and to make sure he wasn't forced to do so, he studied every night, to the satisfaction of everyone, including his uncle.

And now, Bill didn't seem to keep his eye on Billy to become such a brilliant scholar as Dave, after all.

"They're a mighty stuffy crowd, are those reading guys," he confided to Kit. "I reckon I'll keep the evening Bill, to carry on in this outfit when he's older. You think he could, Miss Kit?"

Kit smiled. "I think so," she said.

"Miss Kit—guess it was your idea," he said, looking at Kit with a cheery grin.

"Thanks," he said. "Well, Redding gave me the class," she said. "But thank yourself, Bill—you did the work. Well does it!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

ANOTHER fascinating story of Kit and Redding next Saturday, so be sure to order your SCHOOLGIRL well in advance.