

A CHALET GIRL FROM KENYA



**ELINOR M.
BRENT-DYER**

Author of the CHALET SCHOOL SERIES

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By
ELINOR M. BRENT-DYER

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*For
My God-daughter
JOEY TIMMS
(Josephine Mary Loyola Timms)
with much love and best wishes
for all her future
from
Elinor Mary Brent-Dyer*

Chapter I

A SURPRISE FOR JOEY MAYNARD

“Well! What do you know about that?” Joey Maynard lifted her eyes from the letter she had been reading and looked down the long table at her husband who had just shoved aside his empty porridge plate and was now fathoms deep in his own correspondence.

“Uh?” he grunted, his eyes fastened on a lengthy and official-looking document.

“I said, ‘What do you know about that?’,” Joey repeated sweetly.

“What is it?”

“This, of course.” She waved the letter at him with so little regard for the narrow tray holding coffee percolator, hot-milk jug and sugarbasin, that she nearly sent the milk jug flying. Len, her eldest daughter, who sat on her left hand at meals, caught the jug with a squeal of horror and steadied it just in time. Jo gave her a grateful smile and then went on unconcernedly, “This letter I’ve just had. Wake up, do! Put that thing down, Jack, and attend to me for a minute or two.”

He groaned and put down his document. “Well? What is all this in aid of?”

“This letter. Who do you think it’s from? I’ll give you three guesses.”

“Can we guess, too?” Len demanded.

“I’m afraid not, sugar-pie. You never knew the lady—I don’t believe you’ve ever even heard of her. So it wouldn’t be much good, would it?” She glanced again at her husband who had taken advantage of her chatter with Len to pick up his absorbing document again, and her voice became impatient. “Come on, Jack! Put that thing down and have a guess!”

Thus urged, he heaved an exaggerated sigh, laid down the closely typed sheets and gave his attention to his wife. “What a gadfly you are, Jo! What’s all this in aid of, anyhow? *What* am I to guess?”

“Who my correspondent is. I’ll tell you this much: she’s someone you knew in the dear old Tirol days, though I doubt if you’ve bothered your head about her since. I’m sure *I* haven’t. And, if what she says is true, that’s rather a shame in me. Still, you can’t keep up with *everyone* in this life.”

“I don’t think much of your hint,” he grumbled. “I must have known a few hundred girls in the Tirol days. How on earth can I be expected to guess which, of all that lot, has honoured you with a letter?”

“Well, I *have* told you it’s someone I’ve never thought about since schooldays. Can’t you possibly think of anyone that might fit?”

“Well—that ghastly Junker girl—what was her name, the one that was Marie von Wertheim’s cousin and she loathed from the depths of her heart?”^[1]

[1] Exploits of the Chalet Girls.

“You mean Thekla von Stift. No, my love. I very much doubt if young Thekla would ever condescend to write to *me*. She hated me with a deep and deadly hatred. Besides, anyhow, even Marie has no idea where she is or what’s happened to her. They heard nothing after the war and the entire family seems to have vanished off the face of the globe. Have another shot.”

“What about that girl who was at St. Scholastika’s who fell through the ice with you? Irish, wasn’t she? I forget her name, though. Is it her?”^[2]

[2] Rivals of the Chalet School.

Joey shook her head. “Maureen Donovan died just before the war. She had rheumatic fever, as you may remember, and it left her heart every which way. She was never fit again and when she caught ’flu, she just went under. I thought you knew.”

“Probably I did at the time, but I’ve forgotten since. Well, it’s obviously someone from that place. What about Gipsy Carson?”

“Oh, *Jack!* As if you didn’t know that Gipsy and I exchange Christmas and Easter cards every year! I admit that’s all we do these days; but we keep it up.”

“So you do. I’d forgotten that. Well, then, I give up. Go ahead and tell.”

“It’s Maisie Gomme. At least she *was* Maisie Gomme. Apparently, she’s Maisie Scott now.”

He shook his head. “Doesn’t ring a bell anywhere. Maisie Gomme? *Did* I ever meet her?”

“You did—when that crowd had measles. I believe that was the extent of it, though. You couldn’t forget her, all the same. She was so pretty—yards of light brown hair that crinkled all over her head and down her back; big blue eyes and a complexion as lovely as Frieda’s used to be. Not many brains, I fancy, from all Gip told me, but you can’t have everything and she really was a picture!”

“Sounds like a chocolate-box picture, then!” he retorted. “Well, what about her? I believe I do remember her vaguely, but I can’t say she made much impression.”

“I’ve just had this letter from her and oh, my dear, what do you think? She’s married—married almost straight from school—and she has one girl who’s fourteen now and she named her for me—Josephine Mary. They’ve a coffee farm out in Kenya and the kid’s been at school out there. Now they’ve been home on leave for three or four months and Maisie’s going back—she says her husband went ahead of them—and they don’t want to take young Jo back because of the disturbed conditions. So Maisie asked round and found out where the school is and she’s sending Jo to the Chalet School this term.”

“And she wants you to keep a motherly eye on the kid, I suppose?”

“Well, that of course, though Maisie doesn’t say so outright. But you’d better read the letter for yourself and then you’ll see. I warn you, by the way, that Maisie’s no literary genius,” Jo added as she handed the letter to Len to take to her father. “Give that to Papa, Len, my treasure—and bring his coffee-cup back with you. It must be cold by this time. I see,” she added as Len carried it round the table, “that she makes up for what she lacks in construction by copious underlinings. I seem to remember,” she went on dreamily as Len came back with the cup, “that she always talked in italics. She doesn’t seem to have lost the habit if her letter’s anything to go by, anyhow!”

Jack grinned as he unfolded the sheets Len had brought him. “Thanks for the warning! Yes; you might hot up my coffee while I wade through this.” Then, as his eye fell on the effusion, he ejaculated, “Lawks! Have I *got* to tackle this?”

“You have,” his wife returned sternly. “Here’s a fresh cup of coffee to sustain you in the effort. Carry it round, Len. We don’t want any swims on a clean cloth if we can help it.”

Len grinned at her mother as she carried the cup to her father and set it down beside his plate. That was the third cloth this week and it was only Wednesday. Jo grinned back, helped herself to a roll and honey and then proceeded to immerse herself in a long epistle from her adopted sister, Robin Humphries, who was a novice in the La Sagesse Order of nuns and in Canada.

It was as well she had warned her husband what to expect. Maisie Scott—*née* Gomme—wrote an elaborately backhand script and her underlinings had to be seen to be believed! Her punctuation was on the sketchy side which made things rather more difficult, and altogether Jack did *not* fancy the task his wife had set him.

“Dearest Joey,” Maisie had written, “I always *meant* to keep up with you when I left school, but *somehow* I never did. I *married* the next year and we went out to *Kenya* where Paul—he’s my *husband*—has a coffee farm, and I was so *busy* I had no *time* for letters *except* to home, so I had no idea you were married until I met *Gipsy Carson* last week, she told me you had married Dr. Jack Maynard and had gone to live in the *Oberland* and he was *Head* of the new *San* there.

“Have you *many* children, Joey? Gipsy said you had but she *wouldn’t* tell me only she

laughed when she said it, what's the *joke*? I have *one* girl and I called her after *you*. I *always* liked you, you know and when Jo was born I just *made up my mind* that she was to have *your name*, if I'd known where you were I'd have asked you to be *godmother*. I've always thought of you as an *unofficial* one.

"Gipsy said the Chalet School had gone to the *Oberland* and as we *don't* want to take Jo *back* to Kenya until things have *settled down* I thought I would send her *there*. I always *liked* the ideas and so on you had and she's *been* to school—*boarding-school* I mean—in Kenya so she won't *mind* so much. So I wrote to the *Head* and I was *so* surprised to hear it was *Miss Annersley*. What happened to Mdlle Lepatree? Anyhow I never knew her *very well* so I didn't say *anything* about all this but I thought I would write to *you* and *explain*. I'm going back to be with *Paul* of course. We've been *Home* for three or four months and he's gone *back* now and I'm following as soon as I get Jo *off my hands*. Look out for her, *won't* you? She's read *all* your books and *adores* them and is *fearfully* excited at *meeting* you in the *flesh*!

"I'll *write* again when we're settled and give you my *address*. Meanwhile I *must* stop as I have to take Jo to buy her *uniform*.

"Very much love and write *soon*. Maisie Scott.

"P.S. I *was* Maisie Gomme at school.

"P.S.2. Would you like some *coffee* if we can get it to you?"

Jack mastered this effusion with some difficulty. When he had finally finished it, he grinned down the table at his wife. "Well, you're *for* it, Jo, my girl! If Maisie's kid is anything like her, pity help you! That's all I've got to say!"

"Mother's little comfort!" Jo murmured. "Are you finished, children? Then bless yourselves and say your Grace. Len, you and Con and Margot may go and make your beds. I'll be up presently. Con, call the Coadjutor as you go up and ask her to come and take the twins. Boys, you may go up to the playroom for the present. Charles, keep an eye on Mike and the twins, for me, will you?"

Seven-year-old Charles nodded and he and Mike, who was nearly three years his junior trotted off to the big playroom at the top of the house. The rain was coming down in torrents and there was no hope of going out just yet.

Jo lifted her twins, babies of nineteen months, out of their high chairs and set them on the floor to tumble about until Rösli, the "Coadjutor", should arrive to bear them off to the playroom.

"You won't be long, will you, Mamma?" Con, the second of Jo's triplets asked as she turned to follow her sisters from the room.

"Not long—only a few minutes," her mother agreed; and Con went flying up the stairs after the other two, quite satisfied.

Once the children—except the twins—had vanished, Jo turned to her husband, laughter in her soft black eyes. "That's settled *them* for the next quarter-of-an-hour or so. I *shall* be thankful when Beth gets back! I'm all behind with my book and when you have eight healthy youngsters all over the house in holiday time, looking after them is a whole-time job. Thank goodness Steve's gone off to his school; and the girls go next door to-morrow. I can cope with Charles and Mike and the twins for a few days if necessary. Well, let's get down to business. Jack, I want a cheque, please. The girls need about a dozen hankies each and they could do with some more stockings. It isn't warm enough for them to go bare-legged yet."

He pulled out his cheque-book. "Well, hardly! How do you propose to get them, though?"

"Have an early lunch and go down to Interlaken on the thirteen-twenty, I thought. I'll take the girls with me and I rang up Hilda Annersley and she says she'll send someone in to look after the boys. Rösli can tackle the twins all right. If Anna were going to be here, she could see to the four, but it's her half-day and I know she wants to go to Büchsfastetne to the Graus. I can't possibly ask her—Herein!" She broke off as a tap came on the door and a pleasant-looking Swiss girl of

about seventeen entered.

Jo asked her to take the twins up to the playroom and see them into their rompers. She could leave them with the two boys, for there was a good deal of work to be got through in the early part of the morning and Anna, who had been with the Maynards since their marriage nearly thirteen years before, could hardly do everything single-handed.

“Mind you shut the gate at the top of the stairs,” her mistress ended up. “Be sure you drop the safety-latch. Mike can open it if you don’t and those are steep stairs. You’d better close the windows, too. This rain makes the air damp.”

Rösli nodded and went off, a twin astride each hip. Jack, in the meantime, had been writing the cheque his wife had demanded. As he passed it over to her he observed, “You haven’t chosen a very pleasant day for your trip, my love.”

“Oh, it’ll finish raining by noon,” Jo said easily, as she folded the cheque. “Thanks a lot. Shall you be back for lunch?”

“No; we’re giving that poor kid, Leila Elstob, a final thorough overhaul this morning to see if she’s in trim for the operation on Sunday. And there are three pretty big ops this afternoon. I’ve a heavy day before me, so don’t expect me before dinner. I hope to be back by then. If I’m late, don’t wait for me. I may be needed at the San and in that case I’ll have something there. By the way, Jo, if it clears up, don’t take the girls out on the lake. Yes; I know you can row *and* swim like a fish. Just the same, I’d rather know you were on dry land unless I’m with you. You know how suddenly a storm can get up among the mountains.”

“You’re making an awful lot of fuss over nothing,” Jo said. “Still, if nothing else will please you I suppose I must say yes.”

“It isn’t that I don’t trust you; but with a demon like young Margot——”

“Margot’s reformed,” Jo said quickly. “Last term’s experience at Lucerne has done that for her, anyhow. She’s been very much steadier ever since, poor lamb!”^[3]

[3] The Chalet School Does It Again.

“I daresay; but Rome wasn’t built in a day and Margot’s devil isn’t going to be expelled at one blow, even by such a ghastly experience as falling into Lucerne in March.”

“Perhaps not. But she really does *try* now, Jack.” Then she looked up at him with eyes as soft as black pansies. “About Leila—oh, Jack! Do you think you can do something?”

He shook his head doubtfully. “I don’t know, Jo. The trouble is very deep-rooted. If she could have come out here two years ago—even one year—I could feel much more sure. As it is, I doubt if we can guarantee a complete cure. Our best chance—and hers, too—is that she has had no more of those awful abscesses for the last three months. That’s why I want to operate as soon as possible. We’ve been able to build up her strength better than I ever thought we could. But if she had a return of the abscesses, her strength would be drained and then it would mean another long period of building up again—and with less hope of success than we have now. Mercifully, she has settled down at San better than I had hoped and we haven’t had any fretting for her mother which is so much to the good.”

“Poor Mrs. Elstob!” Jo’s voice was warm with sympathy. “What does she say?”

“She’s terribly anxious, of course; but now that it looks like being on us almost at once, she’s willing. She knows that if it isn’t done, Leila has no chance. I doubt, myself, if she could pull through another attack of abscesses.”

“I shall be thinking about them to-day,” Jo said quietly. “The girls and I will go into church this afternoon and pray for them and you may be sure we shall all pray hard on Sunday if you *do* decide to operate then. It’s all we can do.”

“It’s the best you can do. You can’t help Mrs. Elstob, poor soul. She’s bound up in that child and nothing—at present—can get through to her apart from Leila and Leila’s chances. I must be off. I shall be up to the eyes all day. Good-bye, Joey. Remember what I said and take care of

yourselves. Luckily, Beth ought to be back to-morrow night and then you'll get a little rest. By the way, I suppose this new Jo will also be up then?"

"Oh, certain to be. The school returns to-morrow, as you very well know, and I imagine Maisie will want her girl to start fair with the rest. There are our own fair daughters yelling for me! I must go! I've a fairly heavy morning's work myself, with three trunks to pack. Hanserl will trundle them over this afternoon sometime and then we've nothing more to worry about until they go over after Kaffee und Kuchen to-morrow. Matey will want them then for unpacking, though Hilda says the school won't be there much before nineteen o'clock, if then."

"Well, if I can, I'll arrange to be free to-morrow afternoon and take you all off somewhere for a final treat. Now I *must* go!" He stooped—not very far, for Jo was a tall woman and only four inches shorter than he—and kissed her and then went out to the little car and set off for the great Sanatorium at the far end of the Görnetz Platz where he plunged into work and forgot his wife and family more or less for the rest of the day.

Meanwhile, having waved good-bye to him, Jo raced upstairs to see that the babies were safe before she descended to the big bedroom where her three elder daughters, having finished all the beds and attended to dusting and tidying their own room, had lugged their trunks in from the landing and were already laying piles of underclothes on their beds, ready for packing.

Chapter II

JOSETTE TO THE FORE

The train thundered into the station at Berne with shrieks and great hissings of steam as it finally came to a standstill. At once the steps down to the platform were crowded as the Chalet School marched smartly out of the carriages in which they had been travelling for the last two hours. They jumped down and stood, thankfully stretching their legs. When you have been travelling by railway ever since the day before, you are generally grateful for a chance to loosen up your muscles.

Jo Scott came with the rest and stood looking round her with curiosity. She had done a good deal of travelling in her short life, for she had been on safari with her parents in Kenya; flown from Nairobi to Capetown on one occasion and on another made the same journey by boat from Mombasa. The Scott family either had plenty of money for luxuries or else didn't know where to turn for a penny. This time, there had been plenty, for Dad had had to come to England to settle up Grandpa's estate and the lawyers in London had sent a comfortable cheque for expenses. So the family had flown.

Now, it seemed, they were never likely to be at their wits' end again as they had so often been in the past. It must be owned that even Jo, who adored her father, saw plainly that he had little idea of saving for bad years. When the money was there, he spent it. When it wasn't, they just had to scratch round as best they could. But Grandpa had made that all right, as Dad had explained to her. The money he left was Dad's as long as he lived and then it came to her.

"So, whatever happens, we shall have that to reckon on, you see, Jo," Dad had said. "You needn't worry again."

Jo had been thankful. Mummy didn't like it when she had to go without pretty frocks and trips to Nairobi; but she had just laughed and said, "Better luck next year!" It was only Jo herself who really worried about what was going to happen to them all if they had two or even three bad years together.

Jo was not to know, but this was one big reason why Mummy had insisted that she should remain behind and go to the Chalet School when they returned to Kenya. She had come to the conclusion that her daughter was doing far too much worrying for her age and it was high time she was where she couldn't know what her parents were doing about money matters. There was the excuse of the disturbed state of the country, and Mrs. Scott wanted no more. She inquired about, met Gipsy Carson, an old friend and schoolfellow, and discovered where the school was. Jo was entered almost on the spot and informed that she would be there for the next four years.

"And you needn't worry about funds, either," her mother said, when they were saying good-bye the day before. "Daddy's arranged with the lawyers to settle all your fees and expenses and things like that *first* out of Grandpa's money. You go and have a good time. Give my love to your unofficial godmother and say I hope I'll be seeing her some time soon—perhaps next year."

Jo was thinking of all this as she stood on the busy platform next to the girl who had been put in charge of her. She rather liked this girl whose name was not unlike her own. At least, there was certainly a family resemblance between Josephine and Josette.

At this point, Josette turned to her with a beaming smile.

"Good! Here's Sally-go-round-the-moon at last, so perhaps we'll get off now! I'm sick of trains and I'll be thankful to be back at school again. I hope you aren't too awfully dead?"

Jo gasped. Josette's remarks were rather stunning. However, she grasped at the final query and replied, "I'm not 'specially tired, thank you. Is it much farther from here?"

“Oh, no. We just change to the Interlaken train and when we get there, we go up by the mountain railway and it’s about a mile or so from there to the school.”

“I say!” interrupted a fair, curly-headed individual who was standing next to Jo on the other side from Josette. “Here’s Miss Derwent and Miss Armitage and two or three other mistresses coming down the platform. What’s the idea?”

Josette at once swung round to look. “What did you say, Barbara? *More* staff!” She giggled. “What have they come for? D’you think it’s to say that the Head and Mately have started measles and we can’t go back? What on earth will they do with us all at that rate?”

“Talk sense!” exclaimed the girl standing at the other side of Barbara. “Is it likely? You shut up, Josette, and we’ll hear in a sec. Here they come!”

The four ladies who had attracted the attention of the girls came up to the little knot of escort mistresses who were standing awaiting them with startled faces, and the leader spoke at once. “Well, here you all are! The coaches are waiting outside the station——”

“Do you mean they’re *here*?” exclaimed Miss Denny who was head of the escort. “But, Miss Derwent, I understood that they would meet us at Interlaken.”

Miss Derwent nodded. “That was the first idea. But the Head decided that, considering we have twenty-three new girls this term, including a batch of Juniors, it would be better to meet the train here. We can shorten the motor route from here, you know, and then it would mean no more train changes and all the worry of their hand-luggage. That’s always a nuisance, as I know full well. Will you get them into line and march them out to the Bahnhof Platz? Most of the other passengers seem to have gone now.”

“Very well,” Miss Denny said. “Oh, and we’ve Beth Chester with us. She came with Barbara and Janice, of course, and she’s been a tremendous help with all those babies on the journey. We’ll have room for her, won’t we?”

“Heaps and to spare. Lashings of room as Bidly o’Ryan would say,” Miss Derwent laughed, forgetting that her clear voice carried and most of the girls could hear her using their history mistress’s Christian name so casually.

“Good!” Miss Denny turned to her flock. “Line up girls, quickly. The coaches are here to meet us and are waiting outside. Mind you don’t forget anything. You should have your night-case, umbrella, rug, raincoat and any other oddments you may have with you. Make sure of everything, please!”

This was mere convention as all the “old” girls knew. Before they had neared Berne, the prefects had gone the rounds, making sure that every one had all her possessions handy and one of the other escort mistresses had gone through their carriages after they left the train in quest of forgotten trifles. Rugs, raincoats and umbrellas were all strapped to night-cases and whatever else they had were in smaller cases. The school looked righteous and then, as the mistress gave the word, turned and marched forward smartly. Miss Lawrence, the Senior music mistress was already at the *guichet*, handing over the tickets and as the girls went past, she counted them by twos so that they could be sure that no one was left behind.

Outside the station, they found the five big school motor coaches lined up in readiness. Miss Derwent swung round to a tall, very beautiful person who was standing with another round-faced young mistress, with the eleven little new girls between them.

“I’m glad to see you, Beth,” she said. “Will you take charge of the last coach and these people?” She smiled at the other young woman. “And will you go with her, Miss Andrews? And I think we’ll send the other new girls along, as well. You people take your places while I sort them out, will you. I’ll send Julie Lucy and Clem Barrass to help out.”

She turned away again, intent on collecting the older new girls, and Beth Chester and the new Miss Andrews saw to getting the ten- and eleven-year-olds into the coach. By the time the smaller folk were settled, Miss Derwent had arrived with the rest, including Jo, who felt rather

forlorn at being wrested from Josette. There were a dozen of them altogether, from an unmistakably Scottish girl of about sixteen to three twelve-year-olds, one of whom rushed to sit down beside a child of eleven who was clearly her sister, for both were so much alike.

Beth Chester left the bus and came to stand by Miss Derwent and count until the newcomers were all in.

“Yes; all here,” she said, as Jo, the last of them, climbed up and sat down in the first vacant seat she saw. “We’ve room for a few more, if they’re crowded in the other coaches, Miss Derwent.”

“I’ll just go and see,” Miss Derwent began, when Miss Denny arrived. She peered in and nodded.

“Heaps of room! I’ll have the night-cases collected and you can pile them up along the back seat. That will give the others more room. And you could take one more girl as well. Is there a seat for Julie and Clem? Right! I’ll go and send someone along to sit beside—Jo Scott, isn’t it? Better be a Middle, then. Got seats for yourself and Miss Andrews, Beth?”

Beth nodded. “I made them leave that middle one vacant. I thought the front seat for Julie and Clem, seeing they’re prefects.”

Miss Denny laughed and lumbered off. Three minutes later, Josette Russell came flying along, laden with her night-case and attaché-case, and scrambled in. She spotted Jo at once and made for her. “I’ve got to come with you,” she announced, as she tried to cram her night-case into the rack. “Oh, bother! It won’t go in!”

“I heard Miss Denny say the night-cases were to go on the back seat,” Jo said.

“Good egg! I’ll take mine down and park it.” She was off and a minute later came back and sat down just as a heavily laden porter arrived with another batch from the other coaches.

When the last case had been safely stowed, two very dignified people of eighteen and seventeen appeared, and took the front seat. Jo had already learned that the very dark, very handsome girl, was Julie Lucy, the Head Girl. Now Josette told her that the other, who wore her thick, reddish hair in two plaits swung round her head, was Clem Barrass, the games prefect and a power in the land.

Beth Chester took her seat beside Miss Andrews and the door was shut. The other coaches were already moving off and now theirs rolled away after them.

“We’re off!” Josette said as she settled herself comfortably. “Now we can talk.”

To Jo’s way of thinking, they had done a good deal of that already; but Josette went on to explain. “I mean, on the train we were all squashed together with the rest. Here, with these high-backed seats, we’re *much* more private and we can say what we like so long as we don’t yell. For one thing, you can tell me all about you. All I’ve heard so far is that your name’s Jo Scott and you come from Kenya.”

“What do you want to know?” Jo asked cautiously.

“Well, how old are you? And what sort of school were you at before? And are you Josephine or Joanna, f’r instance.”

“I’m fourteen and I was at a boarding-school in Nairobi. Our farm was out in the wilds, you see, and Daddy said a governess would be more bother than she was worth. Mummy taught me first of all and when I was seven I went to Nairobi. As for my name, it’s Josephine—Josephine Mary, if you want to know.”

Josette turned to her with wide blue eyes. “But that’s *my* name, too. I was named for my Aunt Joey——”

“I was named after someone Mummy knew when she was at school and liked awfully only she never knew it—my unofficial godmother, I mean. But when I was born, Mummy said I was to be called after her and she’d have asked her to be my godmother properly, only Mummy didn’t know where to write.” Then she added importantly, “I expect you’ve heard of her. She’s a

writer. She writes the most marvellous books for girls and historical novels as well. Her name's Josephine Bettany, though now she's married and she's Mrs. Maynard."

Josette's eyes looked as if they would drop out of her head, so widely did she open them. "But—but—but that's my Aunt Joey!" she cried. "That's who *I'm* named after!"

The pair stared at each other and then Josette dissolved into giggles. "Oh, I say! How simply priceless! What a yell! Auntie Jo will shriek when she hears!"

She was off again and Jo laughed with her. "It *is* funny, isn't it?"

"But who are you exactly?" Josette demanded eagerly. "I mean what was your mother's name before she married? I may have heard of her, you know."

"Oh, she wasn't at the Chalet School at all," Jo replied. "She went to another one at the other side of the lake—what was it called? Something weird, I know."

"The Tiernsee," Josette said. "Then she must have been at St. Scholastika's." She gave the word its German sound, with the S-c-h soft. "When Miss Browne, who was Head there gave up, they joined us. Wasn't your mother there then?"

Jo shook her head until her thick, dark-red plaits flew wildly round her shoulders. "No; she was only there for the first year the school was at the—the Tiernsee. She was nearly eighteen when she left and she married Daddy the next year and went out to Kenya with him—he was home on leave, you see—and I arrived two years later. Before she married, though, she was Maisie Gomme."

"Maisie Gomme?" Josette pondered a moment. "No; I've never heard of her. But then I wouldn't be likely to if she left before Mummy bought St. Scholastika's. That's what happened, you know. Mummy started the Chalet School ages before the others came and it grew like fun. Then St. Scholastika's came along and after a bit, Miss Browne retired and Mummy bought the whole thing and joined them up. That was after she married Daddy. I say! Does Auntie Jo know—about you, I mean?"

Jo nodded. "A friend of Mummy's, Miss Carson, told her where the school was and that Mrs. Maynard was living at the Görnetz Platz, too. Mummy said O.K. I should go there and *was* I thrilled! I've heard heaps about the time in Tirol and I've always longed to go to the Chalet School, especially since they told me I wasn't going back to Kenya for the next few years. Mummy's going, of course. Daddy can't leave the coffee and *she* won't leave him. In fact, when she handed me over to Miss Denny in Paris yesterday, she was going straight off to catch a plane to Cairo and going on from there. She'll be in Egypt by this time, I expect."

Josette shot a quick look at her. Was she going to feel homesick and weepy? But whatever Jo Scott might be feeling, there was no sign of tears about her. She was glad of that. Josette Russell had an almost boyish hatred of tears and she never knew what to do with anyone who cried.

"Aunt Joey will be thrilled!" she said. "Does she know you're coming?"

Jo nodded. "Mummy wrote a day or two ago to tell her and why I'm Jo and all that. She'd have loved to come with me and see Mrs. Maynard, but there simply wasn't time. Everything was decided in such a frightful hurry at the last, you see. I'm to write and tell her everything, though, as soon as I can. I say, Josette, has she got a Jo herself? For if so, she's safe to go to the school, of course, and it'll be rather a muddle with me there, too, won't it?"

Josette chuckled. "Only the triplets go to the school, so far, and they're Len, Con and Margot; so you needn't worry about that. Felicity isn't two till September, and anyway, Josephine's just her second name."

"Has she *four* girls?" Jo's grey-green eyes were wide with excitement.

Josette nodded. "And four boys! You see, she had the triplets first and then three boys—all singletons. They're Steve and Charles and Mike. And then, nearly two years ago, the twins arrived. They're Felicity and Felix."

"Mummy *will* be thrilled to hear," Jo said. "There's only *me* in our family."

“Oh, well, lots of people are onlies nowadays,” Josette said. “All the same, I like a big family myself,” she added. “I’m one of six—two sisters and three brothers. Ailie, my kid sister, is behind there, sitting with Barbara Chester’s kid sister, Janice. They’re great pals, those two. Sybil is in Lower Fifth, so she’s with the Seniors. She’s sixteen. Then the eldest of us is David who’s eighteen and we have twin brothers who are not quite three.”

“Are you a Senior when you’re sixteen?” Jo asked.

“Yes. Sixteen and onwards, you’re a Senior. Fourteen to sixteen you’re a Senior Middle. Twelve to fourteen—Junior Middle. Below twelve—Junior. You’ll be a Senior Middle like me. I’m fourteen, too. I expect you’ll be in one of the Fourths—Upper A probably—unless you’re a genius and go straight into Lower Fifth.”

Jo grinned. “More likely Lower—or else Upper Third. I’m no genius, I can assure you, though goodness knows I work hard enough,” she added.

“You won’t be in any Third, however much of a dud you are,” Josette assured her. “Only those kids, like Ailie and Janice and Judy Willoughby are Thirds. We’ve four Fourths, you know—two divisions each of Upper and Lower, and even Emerence Hope, who *is* a dud and never does *any* more work than she can help, anyhow, is in Lower IV_A. I’ll bet you can do more than that.”

“Where are you?” Jo asked anxiously. She had taken a fancy to this charmingly friendly girl who was so pretty, with her black hair, blue eyes and pink and white colouring. It would be a real help if they could be in the same form. Not that she was likely to make a baby of herself over anything. With seven years of boarding-school already behind her, she was beyond that. But if she could start in the same form as a friend, it would be very much nicer.

“I’m Upper IV_A,” Josette said. “Of course, I’m fifteen in October. When’s your birthday?”

“I’ve just had it,” Jo said. “I was fourteen on April 15th.”

Josette looked grave. “I’m afraid, then, you’re hardly likely to be with us—unless you’re better than you think you are; and you quite well may be. Upper IV_A are all either fifteen or almost that. In fact,” she added, shyly, “I’m the youngest in the form. Still, you might make Upper IV_B and there’s lots of decent folk there—my cousin, Maeve Bettany, for one. And Barbara Chester’s another. You know her. We were in the same compartment coming from Paris. And there’s Clare Kennedy and Prunella Davidson and Sue Meadows and lots of others. I’ll introduce you round and I’ll tell Maeve to give you a hand if you need it. She’s a decent sort, but she loathes lessons and only does enough to keep out of rows. I rather like them myself.”

“I’m not awfully good at anything in the lesson line,” Jo sighed. “I do work, of course—always have. I loathe being beaten by a silly sum or a lot of dates. And I loathe being bottom anywhere even more. I can’t often hope to be top, but I *can* get somewhere near the middle if I slog, so I do. But the only things I’m really good at are needlework and cooking and things like that. Well, what are you laughing at?” she ended up in some indignation.

“You!” Josette told her bluntly. “You may have Aunt Joey’s name, but you’re not in the least like her in anything else. At least—well no; that’s not quite true. She does like cooking and she once wrote a cookery book—with her three chums.^[4] But she loathes sweeping and dusting and she says sewing, and especially mending, is her abomination.”

[4] The Chalet Girls’ Cookbook.

“I don’t exactly love mending myself,” Jo replied. “But sewing—that’s fun! Making clothes and seeing them come out just what you meant. And embroidering things and seeing the flowers or fruit coming like pictures, only in embroidery.”

“If that’s how you feel,” Josette said after a prolonged stare at her, “Mdlle will clasp you to her bosom! You’ll be her blue-eyed boy for evermore. But I don’t mind telling you the only other *girl* I’ve known to be crazy on it is my sister, Sybil. When she finishes school, Sybs is to have a course of training at the South Kensington School of Needlework and go in for it properly. I

don't know how she *can*! I don't actually loathe sewing, but I'd never want to make it my career. It's the one thing Sybs has ever wanted, though."

Jo looked startled. "I never thought of it that way," she began. Then the coaches pulled up before a big hotel and they were all turned out for Kaffee und Kuchen before they climbed back once more and went on their way. But now they were nearing familiar parts and Josette began pointing out various landmarks to the new girl and the question of careers went into the background for the time being.

The sun was setting when, after a prolonged run through the mountains, during which they climbed higher and higher, they finally reached the end of the Görnetz Platz. The sky was yellow and windy and there was a look about the dying sun that made Julie Lucy turn to Clem Barrass and say with a groan, "Rain to-morrow! Just look at that sun!"

"Oh, drat the thing!" Clem exclaimed. "I'd meant to try as many people out at tennis as I could. If it rains, there won't be a hope of that!"

Then they were turning in at the gates and rumbling up the short drive. The coach stopped and the door was thrown open by Julie who descended and ordered them all out. They scrambled out, thankful to stretch their legs once more, for it had been a long journey. Jo Scott looked eagerly round to take in as much as she could of her new surroundings before she had to go into the house. Then a tall, very dark lady, with fringe and "earphones" of straight black hair framing a delicate, mobile face, came racing down the drive, led by Josette. She came up to Jo and caught her by the shoulders while a golden voice cried, "So this is my namesake—Maisie Gomme's girl! Welcome to the Oberland, Jo! And while I'm about it, welcome to my house as soon as you can come! Now you must go with Josette, but I simply had to come and tell you at once how glad I am to see you. Take her along, Josette, and I'll see the Head and arrange for you two and some of the others to come to Kaffee und Kuchen on Sunday and then we can all get to know each other comfortably. Now you must go! The rest are all indoors. Off with you!"

The bewildered Jo had no chance to say or do anything but go with Josette, who had seized her hand and was towing her off in the wake of the prefects, while the lady, who couldn't possibly be anyone but her unofficial godmother, went on down the drive and out at the gate more as if she were a schoolgirl herself instead of the proud mother of eight!

But whatever else she might have felt, Jo knew that this warm and unexpected welcome had helped her to feel at home in the school even more than all Josette's chatter, and she entered the Chalet School for the first time with a feeling that she was going to be very happy here.

Chapter III

SATURDAY MORNING

It was Saturday. As the school had arrived on the Thursday night, Friday had been spent in short lessons with breaks for unpacking by the “old” girls and in tests by all the new ones except the eleven Juniors. About them, there was no question. They would form a Third Form. Later on there might even be Second and First.

“But no Kindergarten out here,” Miss Annersley had said firmly. “We take no one under eight—and not even those if we can get out of it!”

As Lady Russell, head of the Company into which the Chalet School had been formed, fully agreed with this dictum, it was embodied in the new prospectus and there were no “babies” in the Oberland. Instead, there was the very good English branch where small girls might be prepared for the Swiss one and that had to suffice.

The twelve new girls handed in their papers and were informed that when they went to Prayers in either Hall or the Speisesaal next morning, they were to look for the form-lists which would be pinned up and from which they would learn their own forms. As a result, Jo Scott had dreamed during the night that when she went to Hall to find out where she was, she saw her name set down with *every* form and she woke up in a panic wondering how on earth she was to manage it!

It was still dark, but she had her torch handy. She burrowed under her pillow for her watch and examined it by torchlight. Just five o’clock! That meant that she had an hour and a half before she must get up and two and a half at soonest before she found out whether fate had been kind and she was in an upper division of the Fourth or whether she would have to go to a lower one.

She switched off her light, tucked her watch back again and lay down to think. She did not get very far, however, for new experiences are usually tiring and she had been very tired when she came to bed the night before. Before she had managed more than one complete thought, she was asleep again and this time she never woke until Josette Russell roused her by proclaiming in bell-like tones, “What ho! The sun’s shining!”

Jo sat up in a hurry. Had she slept through the rising-bell? As if in answer to this, came the sound of Clem Barrass’s voice from the big end cubicle.

“Stop yelling, Josette. Other people may want to sleep if you don’t!”

“Sorry!” Josette said cheerfully. “But the bell will be going in a sec, Clem. It’s just on half-past six and it really is a joy to see the sun, considering what yesterday was like.”

Clem laughed and said no more and Jo pushed back her bedclothes and tumbled out to go to the curtain at the right side of her cubicle and say in low tones, “I say, Josette, could I come in and talk? I’m awake, too.”

“Of course you can’t!” Josette said in shocked tones. “Visiting isn’t allowed. If you want to talk, talk where you are—but don’t yell. You heard Clem on the subject.”

Jo giggled. “I did! All right. I’ll shove on my dressing-gown.”

“Are you up?” Josette asked, startled. “You’re on the early side, aren’t you?”

Jo finished pulling on her blue dressing-gown before she replied, “That’s Kenya. You begin the day early there because it gets so hot in the middle of the day you’d be a limp rag if you tried to do anything much.”

“My sister Sybil told me that Mummy told her that we’d have to rest in the middle of the day here, for this term,” Josette remarked. “That’s why we get up at half-past six and have Frühstück

at seven-thirty. Yesterday didn't count, of course. We stuck to the winter times because of the long journey and such crowds of people feeling pretty dead. But we start proper summer times to-day. You heard the Head at Prayers last night."

"Oh, well, it won't worry me. I'm accustomed to it," Jo replied.

A groan from farther down the long, narrow room interrupted them. "Who's that on the go at this ungodly hour? Can't you let a fellow sleep till the bell goes, anyhow?"

Before either could reply, the bell rang with a loud, determined clang, which made it impossible for the sleepest person to ignore it. There were sounds of drowsy protests and one or two thuds as the more wakeful turned out. Then came the sound of Clem's voice, "Show a leg there,—show a leg!"

Jo had already learned that this meant going to the curtain that shut your cubicle off from the passageway which ran along the twelve cubicles, and sticking out one foot. Clem's theory was that once you were up, you weren't very likely to go back to bed again. This practice of hers saved her endless trouble with slow risers, for if any cubicle did *not* show a leg, she was there in a flash and then, woe betide you if you had no good excuse for being still between the sheets!

On this occasion, Clem looked sharply down the legs poked out for her inspection, satisfied herself that there were eleven of them and retired to her own cubicle to slip on her kimono and hurry off to her bath with the remark, "First bathers—out!"

Josette had explained to Jo what this meant. The dormitory had one bathroom divided into four cubicles for its use. The first four "bathers" got off as soon as they were up while the rest said their prayers, stripped their beds or filled in the time as far as they could. The dormitory prefect was always a "first bather". On this occasion, Jo, Josette and Isabel Drew, a shining light from Lower IV^A, followed her in short order. In fact, Isabel, who was inclined to be slow in her movements, went holding her dressing-gown on as she had not had time to fasten it or tie its cord.

Baths were either cold or "chill off" and you had to leave the bathroom tidy for the next comers. Jo plunged into the cold bath she had run while she brushed her teeth, splashed herself vigorously and was out and towelling with equal vigour in a minute. As she left her bath, she turned on the cold tap for the next girl. There was never any time to waste in the mornings, as several people had duly impressed on her the day before.

Vi Lucy raced off as soon as she arrived in the dormitory, and Jo fled to her cubicle and proceeded to dress at railroad speed. By the time the last four had returned, she was clad in her summer tunic of blue linen with her blazer pulled on over it, for the early mornings of May were still chilly. Her long, dark-red hair had been brushed until it gleamed and was hanging down her back in its usual tidy plaits. She surveyed herself in the mirror that formed the lid of the locker in her bureau and nodded. She was all that Mummy would have asked in the way of neatness. She put her brush and comb into their bag and tucked them away in the locker, hung up her dressing-gown which she had tossed over her chair when she came back and set to work to strip her bed and hump the mattress in the middle. That done, she put her bedroom slippers in *their* bag and hung it under the dressing-gown. Then, having done everything she could think of, she knelt down by the open window she shared with Josette to say her prayers.

With twenty-three new girls and only three departures at the end of the previous term, it had seemed good to the authorities to rearrange the dormitories, as well as call rooms, hitherto unused, into service. The three who had left—the Ozanne twins, who were cousins of Vi Lucy's, and the games prefect, Annis Lovell—had all been Seniors, so that had made very little difference. Jo knew that the Ozannes were going with their parents to the other side of the world and Annis, who was seventeen, was to take a voyage with her father before she went on to Chelsea College to train as a games mistress in the coming October.

"So *why* we should be all changed round just for those three, I *don't* know!" Vi had said.

“Oh, well, it’ll be rather fun to be with new people. With a crowd like ours, you do rather stick to your own gang and it’ll be fun to get to know other folk better.”

Besides herself, Josette and Vi, Jo already knew that Vi’s cousin and great chum, Barbara Chester, was a member of the Bluebell dormitory, as well as Christine Vincent, Catriona Watson, Sue Meadows, Lesley Malcolm, Hilary Bennett and Betty Landon. The eleventh member was another new girl, Alicia Leonard, who was about Jo’s own age and who had come because her elder sister was very frail and it was hoped that a year or two in the clean, fresh air of the high Alps might save her from serious illness.

Jo remembered as she knelt down, that someone had mentioned the night before that Sue Meadows’ young cousin, Leila Elstob, who was at the big Sanatorium at the far end of the Görnetz Platz was to undergo a serious operation on the morrow. The news had come through Josette’s sister, Sybil, who had been allowed to go to Freudesheim, the Maynards’ house, after Kaffee und Kuchen the day before with a parcel and a message from her mother.

Sixteen-year-old Sybil had returned to her own clan with a very grave face and when Elinor Pennell in her own form had asked what was wrong, she had told them that her aunt had told her that the operation was to take place because the doctors were afraid to leave it any longer.

“Is it—will it be—awfully bad?” Blossom Willoughby had asked with fear in her pretty face.

Sybil had nodded. “Aunt Joey says Uncle Jack says there’s just the barest chance for Leila if they do it now. There’ll be none if they leave it. And listen, you people! Aunt Joey told me to ask you all to think about Leila when you say your prayers.”

Somehow the news had seeped through the Upper Fourths—probably by way of Josette, though it was certainly not she who had told Jo. As for Sue Meadows who had gone to be with her aunt for the week-end when lessons ended the previous afternoon, *she* never mentioned it to anyone. But then, no one expected Sue to talk. She was a reserved creature and though she had been at the school for two terms now, none of them knew her much better than they had done at first.

Kneeling there, Jo prayed hard that the operation on the morrow might be successful. She had no idea what was wrong; but if it was as bad as Sybil had seemed to say, then Jo was determined to do her share towards Leila’s recovery.

As she rose from her knees the bell rang and already Clem was calling to them to come out and line up by the door. Jo glanced round her little domain and then saw that the curtains on either side were being tossed up to the rods. She jumped as Josette grinned at her with the remark, “I guessed you might forget. Throw up your front curtain and come on. Clem never was famed for being patient!”

Jo giggled, but Vi Lucy on her other side said warningly, “Shut up, idiots! Do you *want* Clem to come down on you with both feet?”

They did not, so they straightened their faces and went to stand in the line while Clem, having seen to it that everyone had thrown up her curtains and every cubicle was more or less as it ought to be, opened the door and told them to march.

They went off downstairs to their commonrooms where those unfortunates who had early morning practice on Saturdays went to seek the music-rooms. Vi, who learned the fiddle, was one of them and Christine Vincent collected her music with a deep sigh and departed to the piano in the Speisesaal.

A tall, sturdy girl of almost fifteen, whose fair hair was braided in two pigtails, like Jo’s, watched them pityingly. “This is one time when I’m glad I *don’t* take music,” she remarked. “Verity-Anne, aren’t you due in the Saal at this hour?”

The girl to whom she spoke had already caught Jo’s attention at Prayers when she had stood in front of her and heard her voice soaring above the others in such lovely larklike notes as made the new girl gasp. It had seemed impossible that all that sound could come from anyone as slight

and fairylike as Verity-Anne Carey.

She laughed as the other girl spoke to her. "Not this term, Mary-Lou. Miss Lawrence has taken me off early morning practice and given me afternoons instead."

"I don't wonder," Vi Lucy remarked. "How you ever managed to get down in time to do anything is best known to yourself and Mary-Lou."

Mary-Lou chuckled. "It's been a hard life. I'm thankful Lawrie has so much sense. Well, folks, it's a gorgeous morning. What about taking a stroll? I want to see the tennis-courts. Who's coming?"

Most of them were. Jo held back a moment, but Josette tucked a hand through her arm and hauled her along with them. In fact, she brought her up to Mary-Lou and said, "I say, Mary-Lou, meet the new Jo! This is her—Jo Scott. She's named after Aunt Joey."

Mary-Lou turned with a smile. "Oh, good! I've often thought it was time we had a Jo of our own generation. It should have been Josette, of course, but she's rarely called anything but Josette. Which form are you in? Or don't you know yet?"

"Not till just before Prayers," Jo said. "Miss Dene said yesterday afternoon that she would put up the lists in Hall and the—the Speisesaal then."

Mary-Lou looked at her consideringly. "H'm! How old are you?"

"Just fourteen."

"Oh! Well, I expect you'll find yourself in Upper V. You don't *look* like a dud."

"I'm not a genius," Jo said drily. "And I couldn't touch the German questions. I've never done any German."

"You'll get into it here all right," quoth Mary-Lou darkly. "Can't help it—not with two days a week of talking nothing *but* German *all* the time."

"What? Not in lessons, surely?" Jo said it anxiously.

"Every blessed thing," Mary-Lou assured her.

"How simply ghastly!" Jo looked horrified. "Maths and all, you mean? But it's *impossible!* I don't know the first thing about it—except that Herr means Mr. and Frau means Mrs. and Fräulein Miss. How on earth can I do lessons in a language I don't know?"

"You'll learn," Josette said comfortingly. "It's not so bad as it sounds and, you know, Jo, when you hear nothing *but* German all round you for a whole day at a time, you do begin to pick it up here and there. And I will say," she added, "that the staff are jolly decent about helping you out."

Jo looked completely unbelieving and the girls near her laughed.

"She's got to find out for herself," Lesley Malcolm from her own dormitory said. "Listen, Jo. When you want to know the German for anything, you ask a mistress and she tells you and you have to say it over and over again until you say it with just the right accent. By the time you've got that far, you've learnt something you don't forget in a hurry. And the same with French. It really is true. I know how awful it was when we first began to use other languages for everything. I, for one, thought I'd never manage in this life. But it comes. It sort of grows on you and presently you find yourself saying things without thinking. And when you've got that far, it isn't so long before you find you're even beginning to *think* in German—or French, as the case may be. In fact," she added cheerfully, "I'm expecting to find that I even *dream* in any one of the three languages—English, French and German!"

"Well, what about making a beeline for the tennis courts?" Mary-Lou suggested. "We shan't have much time left if we stand here nattering all day. Thank goodness this is Saturday and tomorrow's Sunday and we can use our own languages. But on Monday, young Jo, we use French, so mind you remember in the morning."

Jo's look of despair might have been suitable if she had heard that her entire family had been wiped out at one fell swoop. "Oh, my goodness! I look like being dumb!"

Verity-Anne slipped a tiny hand through the new girl's arm. "They're only piling it on to tease you, Jo. And it really isn't so awful as all that. Everyone will speak slowly at first and no one will expect you to get fluent in a week's time. The thing is to try to remember which day it is—English, French or German, I mean—and do your best to stick to the proper language. Everyone will help you out. You've only to ask."

With this, they moved out into the garden and languages were forgotten as they stood round the new hard courts and commented on them freely.

"No grass courts?" someone asked. "What a swizz!"

"You get a much faster game on hard courts," observed Clem, who had come level with them in time to overhear this. "You'll have to learn to curb your enthusiasm, though, Lesley, or you'll be sending your balls out all over the place."

"I've played on hard courts before. At home we play on the Rectory court," remarked another girl, whom Jo had heard addressed as Hilary. "If we get in any practices during the Easter hols I always find it difficult to remember that I've got to put more into my strokes on grass courts at school. Not that we had any practice these hols," she added. "It rained practically every day."

"There's the bell!" exclaimed Josette. "Frühstück at last, thank goodness! I'm ravenous! Come on, folks!"

They returned to the house with due decorum and presently were in the Speisesaal, standing behind their chairs while the Head said Grace. Jo heaved a sigh of complete happiness as she sat down. She did so like the way meals were set out here on gaily-coloured tablecloths, with small tubs of cups filled to the brim with milky coffee and plates of rolls all the way down the centre of the table, alternating with plates full of oblongs of sugar and flanked by beflowered bowls holding honey or black cherry jam. Little dishes laden with balls of creamy butter stood by the honey and jam and the whole was most appetizing. Some of the new girls had been rather surprised at the first meal of the day, but in Switzerland, the Chalet School had gone back to the customs of the original school and conformed to the country's fashion in meals.

Grace having been said, they all set to work to demolish the great heaps of rolls and empty the other dishes. Lessons, or, as this was Saturday, mending and letters, would begin at half-past eight and Mittagessen, their midday meal, came at half-past twelve. On the previous day, the Head had explained that in summer time, the middle of the day was often far too hot for anything but a siesta, so they would rest until fifteen o'clock when they would change and have Kaffee und Kuchen after which they would work again until eighteen o'clock. The rest of the evening would be free.

Frühstück ended, they had to attend to dormitory duties and then come downstairs and assemble in their formrooms. Punctually at half-past eight the bell rang for Prayers and they all marched quietly to either Hall or the Speisesaal for that. The Chalet School had always had a certain number of Catholic girls who made their devotions with the mistresses of their own faith, so it was necessary to have two big rooms ready.

Jo went with Josette beside her to Hall where her first action was to go to the big noticeboard at the far end. The lists were up and she scanned them eagerly. She had no hope of Upper IV_A, and not much of the B division, so she began at Lower IV_B. When she finally discovered that she had managed to take the B division of Upper IV she could scarcely suppress a triumphant shout of, "Yoicks!" She did just manage it and went to stand beside Barbara Chester with a beaming face.

"Are you in our form?" Barbara asked. "Oh, good! Come and ask me if you want to know anything, won't you?"

Clare Kennedy, the form prefect, was a Catholic, so she was not with them; but Ruth Barnes, who was sub, was, and she leaned across Barbara to say, "Welcome to our bosoms! Clare isn't here to say it so I'm saying it for her," she added unnecessarily. "She'll welcome you and Alicia

when we meet in our formroom.”

She gave a grin to Alicia, a quiet, very fair girl, and Alicia smiled back. Then Julie Lucy, standing on the dais, said, “School—attention!” And the school rose to its feet and stood waiting while the staff, headed by Miss Derwent, the English mistress, came to take their places at the back of the dais. Miss Lawrence, the Senior music mistress, was already at the piano and when Miss Annersley, resplendent in hood and gown, swept in and stood before the lectern, everyone was looking most proper. Julie, still at the far end of the dais, gave out the number of the hymn before she jumped down to stand with the select body of prefects congregated at the side farthest away from the piano and Miss Lawrence struck a chord. The next moment, the sound of “When morning fills the skies” filled Hall and drifted out of the open windows on the fresh morning air.

The hymn over, Julie read aloud the verses from the third chapter of Acts telling of the healing of the cripple at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. Then they knelt for prayers.

What struck Jo about Prayers here was the fact that everyone joined in most of them. The Head read the Collect for the day, but after that, they all joined together to say Our Father, a Prayer of Dedication and the School Prayer. Miss Annersley read another very short Collect and spoke the Blessing and they all rose from their knees and sat down to await the coming of the others.

It was barely two minutes before Mdlle de Lachennais, the Senior mistress, appeared, followed by Miss o’Ryan, the history mistress, Mdlle Lenoir, new this term, and Junior music mistress, Miss Moore, who taught geography, and Miss Andrews, also new, and responsible for the Third Form in the main. By the bottom door of Hall the girls, led by Veronica Worsley and Anne Francis, also appeared and went quietly to their own forms.

When everyone was seated, the Head, who had been talking in an undertone to the staff, came forward once more and, leaning on the lectern, said in the deep, beautiful voice, that Joey Maynard always declared was one of her greatest assets, “I won’t keep you very long, girls. I imagine no one has any mending yet, so there will be only letters and any oddments of prep you may have left to see to. That being the case, Break will come at ten-fifteen and after Break you can go out until Mittagessen which will be at noon to-day. This afternoon, I propose you all go for a ramble. You may take sandwiches and cake and milk with you and stay out until eighteen o’clock. You will go in groups as there are too many of you to go together and either prefects or mistresses will be in charge of each group. You will be told about that before Break.”

She paused and the girls promptly clapped. This was a delightful idea. Rambles were strictly go-as-you-please so long as no one played any tricks or tried to be too daring. Miss Annersley stood smiling and gave them their heads for a minute. Then she held up her hand and silence fell almost at once.

“I’m glad you’re all so pleased. I have only to tell you that after Abendessen we will have dancing and games in Hall till bedtime. Now that is all. Oh! I have *one* thing more to say. Don’t forget that those of you who wish to attend the eight o’clock services at either church must put down your names during the morning. Now, that really is all. Thank you, Miss Lawrence.”

Miss Lawrence swung round on the piano-stool and crashed out the first chords of a lively two-step and the school marched away to attend to its correspondence and any preparation that still remained undone.

“Well, that gives the term a good send-off!” observed Miss Wilmot to the Head.

“Doesn’t it? I’ll see you people in the staffroom in half-an-hour’s time, please, and we can arrange which of you goes with which group. In the meantime, you had better get off to your ewe-lambs before they quite yell the roof off the school!”

Chapter IV

“SIMPLY WIZARD!”

Mary-Lou Trelawney stood and surveyed the group of girls with whom she was making the ramble arranged for the afternoon. She was Head of the Lower School and it must be admitted that she took her responsibilities quite seriously. So now she looked her throng over and made sure that they would reflect credit on the Chalet School to whoever they might meet.

By some means best known to herself, Mary-Lou had contrived to arrange that The Gang, which she headed herself, should go together. Josette Russell had begged that Jo Scott might be included for this one afternoon. The Gang were very exclusive on the whole, but, so far as they had met her, they liked Jo, so Mary-Lou graciously gave consent. Therefore, Jo was with the rest, very trim in her summer tunic of gentian-blue linen with white muslin top, blue blazer and beret to match. Hats were abjured as they were big enough to get in the way when you were rambling. Matron had insisted that the girls should wear their knitted stockings and nailed shoes, but no one had so much as whispered “Gloves!” Each girl carried a knapsack on her back. In this she carried her packets of food and flask of milk for the picnic and her raincoat, tightly rolled, was tucked in on top. The knapsacks were small and light and there was just comfortable room in them for all that. Everyone carried an alpenstock and they looked most professional.

“Have you all got hankies?” Mary-Lou demanded, when she had ended her inspection.

Everyone had. Hilary Bennett even waved hers violently at her leader.

“I was not aware,” said a soft voice, edged with the creamiest of Kerry brogues, “that we were leaving you behind, Hilary.”

Hilary went red as Miss o’Ryan strolled up to Mary-Lou and looked them over with a smile. “I was only proving to Mary-Lou that I *had* my hanky,” she said sheepishly.

“I see. Well, put it away now. Are you all ready? Then come along. We’ve got quite a little expedition before us and we’ll want all our time. Yes; you may go in groups so long as you don’t lag behind, get too far ahead, or yell at the tops of your voices. Come along, now!” And the young Irish mistress, one of the favourites of the girls, led the way briskly with Mary-Lou and her “sister-by-marriage” as they expressed it, Verity-Anne Carey. Mrs. Trelawney had married Verity-Anne’s father the year before, and when someone had pointed out to the two girls that they were *not* stepsisters, Mary-Lou, the ever-ready, had promptly got round the situation by pointing out that, at any rate, they could call themselves sisters-by-marriage.

Miss o’Ryan was small and slight. Indeed, Mary-Lou was a good half-head taller than she was and there was some excuse for Vi Lucy, walking with her cousin Barbara, Josette and Jo, pointing to their leaders and murmuring, “Positive—comparative—superlative!” for Verity-Anne was elfin in build and smaller, even, than the history mistress.

“If Mary-Lou goes on growing at her present rate,” Josette said, “she’ll end up by being a young giantess—as big as Tom Gay, I shouldn’t wonder,” she added.

“Who is Tom Gay?” Jo asked, as they left the school grounds by the farther gate.

“She’s Tom Gay,” Josette replied. “Yes; it sounds mad, I know, but Tom is—is Tom! You can’t say anything else. She’s unique!”

“How?” Jo queried, making big eyes as she spoke. “Is she Thomasina, by the way?”

The other three went off into fits of laughter at this suggestion.

“I wish she could hear you!” Vi chuckled. “Wouldn’t she be mad, though?”

“Then what is her proper name?” Jo insisted. “‘Tom’ isn’t a girl’s name.”

“Wrop in mystery!” Vi replied. “No one knows! Oh, I suppose the Head and Miss Dene do;

but whatever it is, she's never been called by it here. Her initials are M. L. if that's any help. I've always thought, myself, that her real name is something too awful for words—like Matilda Lizzie, for instance.”

“Much more likely to be something too elaborate for words, like Marietta Liliana,” Josette put in. “Tom would sit good and hard on anything like that!”

“But how could she get ‘Tom’ out of anything like that?” Jo wanted to know.

“There, as the charlady said when asked for a character, you ‘ave me!” Vi returned. “I haven’t the foggiest notion. Your guess is as good as mine.”

“I *know!*” This was Barbara. “Beth told me that Nancy—that’s another of my sisters, Jo—told her that Bride Bettany had told *her* that Tom once let slip that her dad always called her Tom, because when she came, he wanted a boy and there she was—a girl. And he had a lot to do with her bringing-up and said she was always to act like a gentleman—and she does, too,” she added thoughtfully.

“Well, Bride ought to know,” Josette agreed. “She and Tom have always been in the same crowd. And you’re right, Barbara; Tom is a gentleman!”

“How on earth do you mean?” Jo demanded, in startled tones. “And tell me, someone, is she really so huge?”

“She’s six foot, if not more,” Vi said. “And I mean telling the out-and-out truth and playing fair and all that. Tom never had any use, either, for what she calls ‘Sloppy girlishness’. *You* know—having G.P.s on people and all that sort of rot. We never have gone in for that sort of rubbish here, of course; but Tom’s death on the faintest sign of it—always was, Julie says.”

“And she never could bear the way some people tried to slide out of things without telling downright lies but saying things so that people would take them in another way—what’s the proper word for it, Vi? The Head said something about it during one of her Sunday talks last term, but I forget it,” Barbara observed.

“I think it’s prevaricating,” Vi replied. “Tom loathed it. She used to say either a thing was so or it wasn’t, and only telling half the truth or telling it in a way that made people think what wasn’t really true, was just as bad as telling a black lie. And, you know,” she added gravely, “somehow I’ve always thought that way myself ever since I heard Tom on the subject when we were all kids and she was a pree and caught us midnighting and one or two of them tried to crawl round it.”

“I remember that,” Josette remarked. “I was awfully glad she couldn’t say anything like that to *me!* Besides, I knew it wasn’t any use trying to do it. I was up to the neck in it and she jolly well knew it. But I wouldn’t have tried to slide out of it, anyhow. Mummy would have had a fit!”

“Oh, I wouldn’t myself,” Vi assented. “All the same, what Tom said to young Pris and Prue and Della Bailey made me jolly careful to think before I spoke after that. I wonder she left any skin on them!”

“Oh, the Dawbarns and young Della wouldn’t worry too frantically over that,” Josette said cheerfully. “It ’ud be water on a duck’s back to that crew!”

“Which are they?” Jo asked curiously.

“Not here at all. They’re at the English branch. That’s at Carnbach on the South Wales coast—just opposite the island where we used to be before we came out here.” Vi turned to Josette. “Remember the fun we used to have with the Regatta at the end of the summer term, Josette? We shan’t be able to have anything of the kind here.”

“No; but we’ll have other things instead,” Josette said philosophically. “There’s Miss o’Ryan waving frantically at us to come on. We’ve dropped right behind.”

The four set off at a run and reached the others who had arrived at the mountain railway and were waiting impatiently for them.

“Don’t drop behind like that!” Miss o’Ryan said. “If you do, I’ll have to make you all croc.”

At this awful threat, the other eight glared at the culprits, who looked as meek as in them lay and apologized humbly.

“Well, keep up with the rest,” the mistress said. “Now then, you folk, across the railway and walk down the other side until we come to that opening just down there. We turn along there.”

“Where, exactly, are we going?” Lesley Malcolm asked eagerly.

“To the Auberge where you can hear one of the most wonderful echoes I ever heard in my life. It’s just a good distance and we’ll picnic there and try out the echo for you as well. If we’d started earlier,” she went on, as they crossed the railway in a bunch, “I’d have taken you right on to the Wengernalp; but we couldn’t hope to do it in an afternoon—or not yet. You’ve most of your climbing experience to come yet. However, you’ll like the Auberge *and* the echo, I think. Turn, Lesley and Ruth! I told you we went along this path. It goes down for a short way. Then it turns and runs up the whole way to the shelf. While I think of it, when we’re going upwards, remember to bend your knees a little at each step. It’ll save your legs quite a lot.”

At first the road lay between walls of rock with coarse grass and alpine flowers growing in the clefts of the rocks. Here and there were low green bushes which, Miss o’Ryan told them, were alpenroses and would be covered with red blossoms later on.

“Oh, do you think we’ll be able to find any edelweiss about?” Verity-Anne asked.

The young mistress shook her head. “I’m afraid not. It grows only up in the high Alps. We’re much too low here. In any case,” she added, “even if we found it, you couldn’t pick it. It’s heavily protected, these days.”

“Whatever for?” Mary-Lou exclaimed.

Miss o’Ryan explained. “It used to be quite plentiful, I believe. Then, when tourists began to come out to Switzerland in great numbers, they used to gather it and take it back home with them with the result that, before long, it became scarce and looked like perishing from the Alps for ever. So the Swiss Government forbade any more picking of it—I believe you can be quite heavily fined if you do and you’re caught—and declared it a protected flower. However, we needn’t worry about that to-day. You won’t find any, however hard you look!”

“But there are lots of other flowers, aren’t there?” Hilary asked.

“Oh, any amount—wild heartsease and narcissi and gentians, of course, and marguerites and globe-flowers and dozens of others. Down in the valleys, I believe you get lilies-of-the-valley but I’m not sure if they grow as high as this.”

“It sounds gorgeous,” Verity-Anne said.

Biddy o’Ryan, whose early schooldays had been spent at the Chalet School when it was in Tirol, laughed. “Some day soon we shall all go down to the valley for a trip and then you will see the fruit-trees and the chestnuts in all their glory of blossom. However, that won’t be just yet, though I expect we shall do it during the next fortnight so that you don’t miss it. It’s a wonderful sight! Now come along! You’re beginning to loiter and if we’re to reach the Auberge and have time for our picnic *and* the echoes, you’ll have to keep going.”

“Can we rest for a minute or two when we reach the top?” puffed Christine Vincent, as she mopped her hot face.

“Yes; I’ll give you ten minutes to cool off then. But don’t waste time now.”

With Mary-Lou and Verity-Anne, she dropped behind and the three acted as whippers-in and kept them moving at a good pace. Presently, they found that the path was getting steeper and steeper. It was not dangerous and not really difficult, but the girls were out of training and by the time the top was reached, there were aching shins and bellows to mend into the bargain. Miss o’Ryan looked them over with a grin. *She* had not turned a hair, but the girls were puffing and panting and mopping streaming red faces. She turned and led them to where a clump of bushes would give them some shelter from the fresh breeze.

“Here you are! Spread your raincoats and sit on them and you may have ten minutes to

recover, you poor creatures!” she said, her blue eyes dancing wickedly under their black lashes. “No, Mary-Lou! You may *not* take off your blazer! Do you want pneumonia?”

It was impossible for Mary-Lou to go any redder, but she looked exceedingly silly as she pulled her blazer on again. They unrolled their raincoats and spread them and sprawled on them with sundry groans and sighs.

“Gorgeous up here!” Josette murmured, as she rolled over on her stomach and lay gazing out across the valley at the great wall of the Alps. “We must be a lot higher than we are on the Platz. Isn’t the air marvellous?” She sat up to sniff loudly.

“No reason why you should act like a dog smelling for liver!” Lesley remarked. “Ooh! How my legs do ache!”

Josette lay down again and gave her attention to Jo. “I say, Jo, d’you have mountains like this in Kenya?”

“Well rather!” Jo replied. “Kenya lies high, you know. Nairobi is over 5000 feet above sea-level. Lots of people can’t stand it and have to go down to the coast to live. And when you get there, there are hills all round. And haven’t you ever heard of Mount Kenya? Or Kilimanjaro? They’re quite a good size for mountains. Why, Kenya is almost unclimbable because of all the glaciers!”

“I’ll remember that when we do Africa in geog,” Josette said.

Vi giggled. “I’ll bet you don’t. You’ll forget all about it by Monday. Oh, bother! There’s Miss o’Ryan standing up! I could stay here for ever almost—another hour, any how!” she rolled over and sat up and then got to her feet. “Come on, Babs! Have a hand and I’ll haul you up! We’ve got to move on!”

Protesting and grumbling, half in fun, half in earnest, they got up, rolled up their raincoats and returned them to their knapsacks, and set off across a meadow, green with young grass and gay with spring flowers, in the direction of a mighty rock that scowled across at them.

“What an awful place!” Catriona Watson said. “What’s it called, Miss o’Ryan?”

“That’s the Tschuggen, beloved of rock-climbers,” Miss o’Ryan told her.

“Do people ever really climb *that*? I wonder they don’t break their necks!” Vi exclaimed. “Isn’t it frightfully dangerous, Miss o’Ryan?”

“It would be for amateurs. I shouldn’t like to tackle it myself,” Biddy o’Ryan owned. “But then, I’ve done very little rock-climbing. This way, girls. We skirt round the base just here. When we get past it, we’re on a very good path to the Auberge. But you really must have some good walks to get you into proper trim!”

She led the way briskly and they followed, cooler, if not aching much less. The path was good as she had said, and they had all got their second wind, so they reached the Auberge in good shape. There were long tables set out in the courtyard and benches set on either side of them. Miss o’Ryan took possession of one and told them to sit down and be unpacking their food parcels while she went to the Auberge to ask for mugs. A pleasantly-smiling woman arrived as they settled down and Miss o’Ryan made her request in rapid, fluent German that made Jo wonder wistfully if *she* would ever be able to talk like that. The hostess replied and went off to return with a tray loaded with large mugs which she distributed among the girls. Then she left after a smiling, “Gut’ Appetit!”

Miss o’Ryan took her seat and they began to unpack the knapsacks which they had slung off their backs by this time. In one minute, everyone’s eyes were fixed on Hilary Bennett who had certainly tried hers to its limit. Out came her Kodak, a whistle, a first-aid case and a tin of toffees. Then she removed her flask, which was wet, and produced what looked like a *poultice* of egg-and-lettuce sandwiches, fruitcake and pastry, all sodden with milk.

“What—on—earth——” Miss o’Ryan sprang up and came round to investigate. “*Hilary!* What on earth did you think you were doing? And how on earth have you managed to upset your

flask like that?"

"I didn't upset it," Hilary confessed, crimson to the roots of her bronzy curls. "I put it in upside down. It was the only way I could make room for it."

"But what on earth possessed you to try to cram so much in? You *know* you are supposed to pack your knapsack with food and raincoat only! My good child, you must throw that horrid mess away—give it to the hens here. You certainly can't eat it yourself!"

"Well, I wanted a few snaps if I could manage it," Hilary mumbled, as Miss o'Ryan turned her own eatables out of their papers and picked up the sodden mess and bore it off.

"You *are* an ass!" Mary-Lou said as she opened her own neat packages. "Here! Have one of my sandwiches and explain why you brought all that cargo along."

Hilary recovered her insouciance as the rest pressed oddments from their own parcels on her. "I was only being thoughtful," she protested. "I thought the first-aid might be useful in case of accidents and the toffees were to eat going home."

"But why the whistle?" Miss o'Ryan demanded as she came back, wiping her fingers on her handkerchief in time to hear this.

"Oh, that was in case a mist came down and we got lost. I thought we could blow it and someone would hear it and come to our aid," Hilary explained.

"Well, all I can say is that only a miracle can have saved that thing from bursting!" Miss o'Ryan said. She looked at the knapsack and wrinkled up her small nose with disgust. "Turn that thing inside out and go and hang it on the fence to give it a chance to dry a little. It'll have to be scrubbed out when you get home. Still, that's *your* trouble! Pass your mug along and I'll give you some of my milk."

"I've got a little left, thank you," Hilary said, reddening again. "Honestly, Miss o'Ryan, I've enough."

"You do as I tell you," Miss o'Ryan said sternly. Then, as the mug arrived. "About two teaspoonfuls! Really, Hilary!" She poured a good half of her own allowance into the mug and sent it back and they settled down to make a good meal.

It was a blessing that Karen, cook at the Chalet School, always supplied more than most of the girls could eat, for they were hungry and by the time the meal was over, no one had anything left but papers and flasks. The papers were taken to the Auberge to be added to the rubbish there and the flasks were tucked into the bottoms of the knapsacks, though the mistress advised Hilary to wait until they had heard the echoes before she did anything about hers. It was drying nicely in the fresh breeze and the time she knew they would demand would probably see it all right, so far as that went, though it would certainly need scrubbing as she had said.

The first item on the programme was snapping a group of them by Hilary. Then Miss o'Ryan took the Kodak from her, sent her to join the others and took a second snap.

"Now for the echoes!" she said briskly when she had returned the little camera to its owner. "This way—and keep together, please!"

She had been here before with some of the other mistresses and now she led them to a vantage point. When they were all standing round, looking eagerly at her, she threw back her head and gave utterance to a long, sweet yodel while her pupils, who had had no idea that she owned this accomplishment, looked at her admiringly. The echoes caught up the melodious sound and returned it in a cascade of fairy music.

"Oh, how simply *marvellous!*" gasped Lesley. "Oh, *may* we try, Miss o'Ryan?"

"Sure and you may, of course," Miss o'Ryan said, laughing. "Go ahead—but take it in turns," she added, with sudden caution. "You begin, Mary-Lou."

Mary-Lou grinned and looked self-conscious as she stepped forward. Then she called, "Hello! Are you there?"

"Are you there—are you there—you there—there!" it came back, growing fainter and fainter

till it died into silence.

After that, they all had to try. Some of them cooeed; some of them just shouted short sentences. Verity-Anne sang the first line of, “Hark, Hark the Lark” and the resultant echoes thrilled them all. Hilary found a use for her whistle which was now reposing snugly in a blazer pocket, and blew a blast on it that made those nearest her cover their ears with shrieks of horror; but the echoes transmuted it into celestial music. Finally, Jo pursed up her lips and whistled a long cadenza and was answered by a stream of notes that might have come from a heavenly aviary.

They would have stood there for at least an hour, trying out various sounds; but Miss o’Ryan, with the fear of the Head *and* Matron before her eyes if they should get back late for Abendessen, finally exerted her authority and insisted that they must shoulder their knapsacks and start back again. Jo was ready first and as she stood waiting, an idea came to her. She turned and raced to the Auberge, whence she emerged carrying an enormous cowbell. She ran back to their standing-point and rang it with all her might and main and back came a shower of pixy wedding-bells, so delightful that the rest of the Gang clapped loudly.

“Very lovely,” Miss o’Ryan said, “but we *must* make a start. Take that thing back to the Auberge and hurry up about it, Jo. Hilary, aren’t you ready *yet*?”

Jo fled with it, to return a minute or two later and join Josette who was waiting for her and who greeted her with an admiring, “I say! That was a sma—er—jolly good idea! I think it was the best of the lot.”

“I loved your whistling,” Mary-Lou said. “I can whistle quite a bit myself, but I couldn’t do a whole lot of runs like that!”

Jo grinned. “I’ve always whistled. Daddy does it awfully well and he taught me.”

“Come *on*!” Vi said, with an eye to the mistress who had turned round from the front where she was walking with Christine and Catriona. “Miss o’Ryan’s a pet, but she can take the skin off you with her tongue when she likes! And if we’re late home, *Matey* will let us know all about it! All the same, Jo, you’ve got to teach the rest of us to whistle like you. It was marvellous!”

Josette grinned at her new friend as they hurried forward. “Good luck for you!” she murmured. “Oh, I’m saying nothing yet, but I rather think you’ll find that you’re adopted! I’m awfully glad. This has been a wizard ramble and if it ends with that it’s—well, it’s simply *wizard*!”

Chapter V

LEILA

Sunday, Jo found, was very much like the Sundays at her Kenya school. They all went to one or other of the two little chapels in the morning. When they came home, they sat about quietly with books until Mittagessen, after which they had to rest until half-past fourteen. Most of the girls then got ready for a walk. The rest, including herself, the two Russells, the Chesters, the Lucys and Maeve Bettany, were sent off to Freudesheim in charge of Julie Lucy. The Maynard triplets had gone there from church and would return to school with them. Maeve's mother was leaving Switzerland on the next day to return home to the queer old house called the Quadrangle, on the cliffs above the North Devon sea, and she had come up from Welsen that morning to say good-bye to her sister-in-law. She had brought with her Maeve's elder sisters, Peggy and Bride, who were at Welsen, though this was Peggy's last term. When it ended, she was going home to help her mother.

"And—it's a secret, but I don't mind telling you," Maeve said excitedly to Jo as they brushed their hair together, "but Mummy will need Peggy frightfully, because in September, we're to have a brother or sister. Isn't it marvellous? Maurice and I have been the family babies all these years and now we're to have a real baby! I'm thrilled to bits!"

"Lucky you!" Jo said wistfully. "I wish we had a baby or two. I'm tired of being the only one."

"Oh, well, you never know your luck," Maeve said consolingly. "Your mother may have a baby or two yet."

"I wish she would! It would be gorgeous!"

Then Julie arrived to ask why they weren't ready and if they meant to take all day over it, so they had to stop talking. Julie Lucy was not Head Girl for nothing.

Jo had expected to feel rather out of things, but the family at Freudesheim made that impossible. They arrived at Freudesheim at fifteen o'clock and Jo was promptly introduced to the elder Bettanys, after which she met the four Maynard babies. The triplets also led her to the kitchen to meet Anna who was almost as much a member of the family as themselves, since she had been with the Maynards before even the three girls had been born, and Bruno, their new St. Bernard puppy.

"The school gave him to Mother," Margot explained. "We had dear Rufus for ages, but he died two years ago and Mother couldn't bear to have another dog, though she wanted one. So the school gave her Bruno at our Sale last term. He's a pet, isn't he? He's just three months old now."

Jo adored dogs and she quickly made friends with Bruno who was as friendly as every happy pup is. Then Len brought snaps of Rufus to show her and by the time she had seen these, Beth Chester arrived with a summons to tea—real "English" tea!—which was in the garden.

After tea, they chatted and played quiet games; but halfway through, Joey Maynard announced that it was bedtime for the twins and was at once beset by a mob of girls who all begged to come and help.

"I can't have the lot of you," she protested. "The twins would never get to bed and what the bathroom would be like, I shudder to think! I'll have *one* and no more. The rest of you can amuse yourselves until we return." She stooped to the twins and slung them one astride each hip. Then she looked round. "Jo! I haven't had time to talk to you properly. Like to come and give me a hand?"

There was no need to repeat the question. Jo went off joyfully and was ushered into the night-nursery where four cots stood in a row.

“You take Felicity and undress her,” Joey said, handing the fair-curlled baby over to her. “I’ll tackle Felix myself. He’s the world’s worst wriggler; but Felicity is always good at bathtime, aren’t you, honey-bird?” She dropped a kiss on the flaxen curls before she sat down to strip Felix of his tiny knickers, silk shirt and little vest.

Full of pride, but rather alarmed at her trust, Jo turned Felicity round and began to unbutton her little beflowered frock. Felicity, who was a chubby bunch of sunshine, was good as gold, even though her new maid was rather awkward and slow. In fact, Mrs. Maynard had gone off with Felix to the bathroom and he was shouting and splashing in the bath before the tiny girl was in her nightdress and dressing-gown. Joey finished her youngest son off and inducted him into his sleeping-suit before handing him over to Jo with instructions to brush his curls with the blue-backed hairbrush on the table while she bathed Felicity. Then they were both ready and their mother carried them back to the night-nursery where she requested Jo to tidy up while she heard their prayers.

When it was all done and the twins were safely in their cots with the curtains drawn across the wide-open windows, Joey turned to her unofficial god-daughter.

“What about coming and seeing over the house with me?” she suggested. “Then, when you write to your mother you can give her some idea of us. Up these stairs and you shall see the playroom first.”

In the playroom, she showed the various toys, including the two magnificent dolls’ houses—La Maison des Poupées, which the doctor had made for the triplets when they were no older than Felicity, and St. Briavel’s, which Con had won in a competition at one of the school’s sales in England.

“Your Uncle Jack made the chalet,” Joey explained. “I helped with the furniture and did all the needlework things, of course. It helped the triplets to speak French because all the dolls spoke French. That gave them a decent start and Canada topped it up. French days at school don’t worry *them*, I’m thankful to say.” She laughed. Then she went over to one of the windows and sat down, beckoning Jo to her. “Bring up that stool and we’ll have a wee chat before we join the others. It’s too soon to ask how you like school of course——”

“Oh, but I do like it—*awfully!*” Jo interrupted her. “And Josette has been most awfully decent to me.”

“Good for Josette! I’m very glad to hear it, though I should have expected that from one of our own girls. I’m glad to hear you look like being really happy, Jo. But I’ve something to say to you. Your own mother is rather too far away to come to you if you ever should want her in a hurry. I want you to promise me that if, at any time, things are worrying and you simply *can’t* see your way through them, you’ll let me know and ask me for help. Your mother asked me to look out for you and I mean to do it. You’ll want to stand on your own feet as much as you can, of course; but sometimes you do want the sort of help a mother can give. In that case, and if you want it in a hurry, let me know. I’m always here.”

Jo slipped off her stool and knelt on the floor by Joey Maynard. “Thanks a lot, Aunt Joey. I’ll remember that. But I hope I *can* stand on my own feet all the time. I’m not a baby, you know.”

Joey’s eyes were very soft as they looked down at her. Her own thoughts had flown to the trouble in Kenya and she wanted to be sure that if anything happened, Jo would feel that she was not alone in a strange country. “I know that; but it can be a help to know that there’s someone quite unofficial, so far as the school is concerned, who will give you a lift when you need it over a sticky patch,” she said. “Now we must go downstairs and join the others, but I wanted to say this to you.”

“It’s—it’s just awfully decent of you,” Jo said earnestly. “If ever I do need help, I’ll come to

you at once. And—and thanks awfully!”

Jo bent and kissed her. Then she said, with dancing eyes, “My lamb, let me warn you about your language. Slang is *not* allowed at school—and there *are* other words than ‘awfully!’” She jumped up. “Come along! We’ll join the rest!”

At that moment, the telephone bell rang and she exclaimed and fled from the room, calling to Jo to follow her. Joey turned in at the study, but she waved Jo on to the garden where that young lady became involved in a game of “Who am I?” with persons from the Old Testament as the “I”.

When the hostess rejoined the party, she was looking very grave, but no one had time to notice except Mrs. Bettany, for Julie, who had been glancing uneasily at her watch, announced that it was time the school party returned and, in the general scrum of thanking Joey for their delightful afternoon and saying good-bye, the girls had no chance of observing that serious look on her face when she left the house.

They just managed to be in time for Abendessen and after that came Prayers and then bed, for everyone under sixteen. At Prayers, the Head had asked them all to pray for Leila Elstob, who had been operated on that day, but she made no further announcement and no one liked to ask any questions. The girls in Bluebell had gone to bed quietly, for all but the two new girls knew Leila very well, and even they had heard a good deal about her during the three days they had been at school.

“I wish the Head had told us how she was,” Vi Lucy said, as they undressed.

“I don’t suppose even the doctors can say that yet,” Barbara Chester observed. “She’s come through the operation, of course, but for a serious one, Daddy says you can’t tell until the first day or two are over.”

Barbara’s doctor-father’s statement was received with respect by the girls.

“I suppose,” Catriona Watson said thoughtfully, “that they have to wait to see how she’s stood it. You remember, Vi, it was *after* the operation that everyone was so anxious about Julie last year.”

“I know,” Vi said seriously. “Oh, well, she’s all right now—as fit as ever she was, Uncle Peter says. Let’s hope it’ll be that way with Leila, too.”

“Anyhow, we can’t *do* anything,” put in Lesley Malcolm, “except pray for her. The Head did ask us to do that. Suppose we all say our prayers at the same time? I’m nearly ready.”

“So’m I,” Hilary Bennet put in. “We’ll have three minutes more. Then I’ll say, ‘Time,’ and we can all pray for Leila at the same moment.”

They agreed to this plan, and eleven very earnest prayers went to God for the recovery of poor little Leila. Jo finally got into bed thinking that this was one thing in which the Chalet School did not resemble her Kenya one. All the same, she liked it, when she thought it over.

The girls had to wait till after Prayers for any news. Then, when the Catholics had marched in and taken their seats, Miss Annersley, speaking in the deep, beautiful voice that was one of her greatest assets, said, “I know you are all very anxious to know how Leila Elstob is going on. Dr. Maynard rang me just before Prayers to ask me to tell you that she is very, very ill and they cannot say yet how things will go. You may be sure that everyone at the Sanatorium is doing everything possible for her. But life and death are in the Hands of God, so we must do our share by praying that if it is His Will, Leila may recover. You shall hear every day about her—I promise you that. Clare Kennedy!”

Clare stood up, looking startled. “Yes, Miss Annersley?” she said.

“Mrs. Elstob wants to keep Sue Meadows with her for the next few days. But Sue does not want to miss more of her work than she can help. Will you pack up all her books, please? Have them ready by the end of morning school and Gaudenz will take them to the Elisehütte this afternoon.”

“Yes, Miss Annersley.” Clare paused a moment. Then she added, “Please, could we all write

notes to Sue and send them with the books?"

The Head nodded. "That's a kind thought, Clare. Yes; you may. I will give you time during my New Testament lesson and you may pack them in with the books. Now, that is all. School—stand!" She glanced at Miss Lawrence who was seated at the piano and Miss Lawrence swung round to the keys and the school marched off to lessons to the inspiring air of the "*Marche des Troubadours*".

Jo had been very anxious about her first day of work with Upper IV_B. She was nervous about having to do all her work in French and she felt very apprehensive as she prepared for arithmetic with Miss Wilmot.

Miss Wilmot was a sweet-tempered creature and an inspiring teacher, but Jo found it quite as hard as she had expected to follow arithmetical terms in another language. It was only by giving her whole attention to the mistress that she was able to grasp anything at all, and even then Miss Wilmot found it necessary to translate much of what she said when she went round the form later to examine their work. Not that this worried her. Jo and Alicia were by no means the only girls to need that sort of help. Even people like Dorothy Ruthven and those inseparables, Catriona Watson and Christine Dawson, who had been at the school for some years, were frequently tripping up in their French. As for Caroline Sanders and Francie Wilford, they needed almost as much prompting as the two new girls. However, the lesson came to an end at last and Miss Wilmot, having set their preparation, gathered up her books and departed to harrow up the souls of Lower IV_A.

Her place was taken by Mdlle who hurled them into a lesson on the use of the subjunctive. This was easier for Jo, for she had been accustomed to learning French by the direct method and she found that she was able to keep her end up quite well. But history was the last lesson before Break and Jo decided dolefully that no one would keep her in *any* division of Upper IV for more than two days. Miss o'Ryan spoke slowly and clearly and she was always ready to translate if necessary. Even so, it was a struggle to follow her account of the middle part of the Hundred Years' War. It was a surprise, therefore, to Jo when the mistress, as she went out, paused to say, "Not a bad beginning, Jo. Work hard and you'll soon find it easy."

Poor Alicia was even more at sea than Jo and, as she lacked that young woman's firm determination not to be bottom anywhere if she could help it, she had been badly fogged most of the time. Laure Olivier, the third new girl in the form, was French and had enjoyed her work in her own language that day, though she was looking dismally to Tuesday when German was the language of the day. She had never learnt any. But neither had Jo or Alicia and they could only wait for Wednesday, "English" day, when they might be able to take things a little more easily.

French had also to be spoken during Break but, as long as no prefects were near enough to interfere, the girls let themselves go and when their French failed them, eked it out with English pronounced as Frenchily as possible. The result was enough to make any trueborn Gaul tear his hair!

Laure was reduced to a state of wild giggles before five minutes was up. Mary-Lou, standing near, heard her and came to inquire the cause. When she heard it, she frowned for a minute. Then her brow cleared and she beamed at the innocent Laure.

"Bien!" she said, with a handsome British accent. "Maintenant, écoutez!"

Laure stared at her. Why did Mary-Lou want her to listen? The next moment she was gasping for that canny young woman was saying, "Il faut apprendre à dire en français. Vous pouvez nous —er—assister toujours. We'll do the same by you with English," she added kindly, in her own tongue.

Laure protested wildly at this bright idea, but the Head of the Middles was inexorable. Some of the others backed her up and Laure found that if she wanted any peace, she must fall in with the suggestion. It is true that some people objected almost as much as she did, but Mary-Lou led

the Gang and the Gang led the rest of the Middles by the nose. The order had gone forth. Henceforth, all girls who could speak French were to help their confrères on French days and that was that!

“That brings in Barbara and Vi,” Mary-Lou explained, fixing the pair with a stern eye. “And it also applies to Josette and the Maynards. They can all talk French and they can just help the rest of us. I only wish we had two or three *German* girls to give us a hand on German days!”

Fresh shrieks of protest greeted this aspiration, but she nodded her head defiantly. “I mean it! The trouble with you people is that you never think ahead. Can’t you see that if we pitch in now, we’ll be spared trouble later on. We’ve *got* to learn, whether we like it or not. Very well! Work at it now and by the end of the term we ought to be able to manage quite well for most things.”

Hilary Bennet made a face. Then she said, “You’d better call a meeting of the Middles, Mary-Lou, and rub it in.”

“Une bonne idée!” Mary-Lou agreed. “So I will—I mean, je le fais.”

The result was that the Middles had a meeting between Kaffee und Kuchen and late lessons on Wednesday, when Mary-Lou addressed them all and told them her latest plan. A good many people expressed their horror, but she was not to be moved.

“We’ve *got* to be trilingual—that means able to speak three languages,” she said, with an eye to some of Lower IVB who had looked puzzled by the new word, “so we may as well get on with it and then the staff and the prees will give us a little peace. I only wish we had some German girls to do the same by us with German.”

“But,” said Len Maynard, rising to her feet, “we have a girl who can speak German in our own form. Anneli Bertoni lives in Lucerne and German’s her proper language.”

The shy and very retiring Anneli gave a gasp at this, but Mary-Lou beamed on her. “Oh, good! Anneli, mind you help out whenever you can. Everyone will help you with your English, so it’s quite fair.”

And that ended that. During that term, everyone was to be amazed at the way in which the Middles came on in both French and German conversation.

Meanwhile, no one had forgotten Leila. Every morning, the Head gave them the latest report. It was not encouraging. Most of the time, Leila remained unconscious. However, on the Thursday, she began to rouse and grew very restless, much to the anxiety of the doctors and nurses. Jack Maynard, especially, was deeply concerned. The child had no strength and if she were to live, she must rest. They did not want to drug her except in the last extremity. What she needed was natural sleep. But, except for brief snatches of a few minutes at a time, sleep was far from Leila.

On the Friday, she was very ill indeed. Her mother spent the whole day with her, sitting watching her with eyes that made everyone’s heart ache. Towards the end of the afternoon, the restlessness grew worse and Mrs. Elstob, leaning over her, spoke tenderly.

“Leila, darling, tell Mummy what you want and she will get it for you if you will promise to try to go to sleep.”

For the first time, the heavy eyelids dragged themselves apart and Leila whispered so faintly that even her mother could scarcely hear, “Con—I want—Con.”

“Con Maynard, darling?” Mrs. Elstob looked up at the doctor, who was standing with his finger on the threadlike pulse. “She may come, mayn’t she, Dr. Maynard?”

It was the last thing Jack Maynard wanted. Con was only eleven and an impressionable youngster. The last thing he wished was to bring her here. But Leila’s life was running out unless they could check it somehow. If this sudden desire for Con would help, then his girl must come.

He laid down the tiny wrist and nodded. “I’ll bring her, Leila. Drink this milk Nurse has for you and try to have a nap until she comes.”

Leila took the milk obediently. Then she looked up at him with eyes that were tranquil once

more. "Con," she whispered.

"She shall come, my pet. Go to sleep, like a good little maid while I go for her."

Leila closed her eyes and fell into a light slumber. Once he had seen this, the doctor left the room and hurried down to the office where he caught his colleague, Dr. Graves, just about to go home. He explained matters quickly.

"I'm going for Con now. You take hold while I'm away; there's a good chap."

Dr. Graves nodded. "I don't like it for Con; but if we're to save that child, she must have what she wants. I'll go at once, Maynard."

Jack Maynard rushed out to his car and set off down the road at a most illegal pace. He had no idea how long Leila was likely to sleep and Con must be there when she woke if it were possible.

Arrived at home, he called Jo and told her what he wanted. She listened quietly.

"This is Leila's only chance?" she asked.

"The only chance. If she can be quieted and have some hours of natural sleep, we *may* just do it; but she's very far through, poor bairnie."

"Very well. I'll run and get her." Then she suddenly looked at him anxiously. "Oh, Jack, I don't like it! Con's such a *little* girl!"

"I don't like it myself," he said. "But if Leila——"

She pulled herself together again at once. "Forget it! I was just being the anxious mother for once! Con must go, of course."

She picked up her cardigan lying on a chair and raced out and across the garden, through a wicket gate which led into the school garden and into the study where she found the Head. She told her errand hurriedly and Miss Annersley agreed at once.

"I'll bring her. Where is Jack? At the gate with the car? Very well. You go and get in and I'll send Con to you. Let me have her back again to-night, though."

Jo nodded and fled and presently Con came flying down the drive to them.

"Leila wants you," her father said. "In you get!"

Con scrambled into the back of the car. "I'm missing parsing," she said with a chuckle. "Papa, how is Leila?"

"Very ill—which is why we're letting her see you," he replied. "You must be quiet, Con. Don't say anything to excite her, honeybird. Just tell her what you are doing and—and—oh, talk about your dolls' houses. And Con; don't kiss her!"

"O.K., if that's what you want," Con replied. "Are you and Mamma coming with me?"

"Yes. And when I sign to you, leave the room at once."

Con nodded. "Very well. I say! We are going at a lick, aren't we?"

They were. They reached the gates in record time and Jack hustled his daughter out of the car and marched her through the corridor into the little white room with its wide-open windows through which the sun was streaming.

Leila lay very flat on the high hospital bed, but as the three reached the bedside, her lashes quivered and lifted. Con was standing beside her and Con's round, pink face, with its dreamy dark eyes, was the first thing she saw. She gave a tiny smile. "Con!" she whispered.

Con sat down on the chair the nurse pushed under her and took a clawlike hand in hers.

"Gosh! Isn't your hand cold! I'll warm it for you, shall I?" She laid her other warm paw over the chilly fingers and smiled happily at Leila. "That's better, isn't it?"

"Nice," Leila whispered with another little smile.

"You've got to hurry up and get well," Con went on. "We want you to come and see *our* dollyhouses. We've got two, you know. And, of course, we want to come and see yours, now you've got it all set up. Isn't the wee cuckoo clock a duck? Tom Gay made it, but my cousin, Peggy Bettany, made the pine-cone weights out of raffia. Awfully nifty idea, I call it."

She chattered on about the dolls' houses and the fun they would have when Leila was better and able to go home. Leila lay listening to her, only answering by those shadowy smiles. Once or twice, the heavy lids fell over her eyes, but they lifted again as she listened to Con running on happily. Then they closed again and remained closed. Jack had been holding the other hand. Now he laid it down gently and nodded to Jo, who touched Con on the shoulder and drew her out of the room while the doctor gently drew up the bedclothes.

Con clung to her mother, awed and frightened, though she said nothing until they were well away from the room. Then she looked up and her lips quivered. "Mamma! Leila—she—she hasn't—*died*, has she?"

Jo sat down on a handy chair and drew her girl on to her knee. "No, my precious. She has gone to sleep properly, which is what Papa and everyone wanted her to do. When she wakes up, she will be better, we all think. So cheer up and don't look so lugubrious, little silly! You did just exactly what you ought. Now Leila will probably sleep for hours and when she wakes, she will be much stronger."

Con heaved a deep sigh. "Oh, I *am* so glad! But when Papa sent us out like that and her eyes were shut and she looked so white I was afraid she'd died."

"Far from it, I hope. Now we must wait for Papa to run us back. You've been here ages. Goodness only knows what you've missed, besides parsing!"

"Prep, I expect." Con was herself once more. "Auntie Hilda will excuse it, won't she?"

"Seeing Papa and I demanded you almost at pistol point, I don't see what else she can do. Suppose we go and ask Matron for something to eat?"

"Well, I *am* hungry," Con agreed. "Yes; let's."

Matron, who was Dr. Graves' sister, provided tea and bread-and-butter and cakes and Con had time to make a good tea before her father arrived to take her back to school. He brought Mrs. Elstob with him. Everyone had united to tell her that, in all probability, Leila would sleep for hours now and she had better go home and try to rest. She had consented on condition that they would ring for her as soon as Leila showed signs of waking up. Now she came forward to where Con was surreptitiously licking jam off her fingers. She bent down and kissed the child warmly. Con flushed and wriggled. The Maynard triplets were apt to be chary of kissing strangers. Joey gave her a warning look, however, and Mrs. Elstob was too wrapped up in her own feelings to notice.

"You dear little girl!" she said shakily. "How can I ever thank you? Leila is asleep at last and your father says he thinks we may hope now. It was all your doing!"

Con freed herself and stood up, "Oh, no, it wasn't," she said firmly. "I may have helped a little, but it was really God Who did it and it's Him you've got to thank and not me!"

She slid round her father and out of the door and climbed into the front seat of her father's car, red to the tips of her ears. If *this* sort of thing was to happen every time she came to see Leila, she rather hoped that young lady would not want her very often—at any rate, not until she was well again.

Chapter VI

STAND-EASY FOR THE STAFF

It was the evening of the second Saturday of the term—and the evening of a fairly strenuous day for most people. Clem Barrass had requested on the Thursday before that she and the other prefects might arrange a tennis tournament for the school with some idea of finding out who was likely to be of use to the school pairs.

“But my dear girl, how can we do it?” Miss Annersley had exclaimed when she had heard what Clem, Julie, and the second prefect, Veronica Worsley, had to say. “We have only eight courts here, which will mean only thirty-two players at a time. What do you propose to do with the others?”

“We met Auntie Jo this afternoon,” Clem said—she, Mary-Lou Trelawney and Verity-Anne Carey, all called Mrs. Maynard “Aunt”—“and she said we could have the use of theirs, too. That would give us nine, anyhow.”

“Well, thirty-six, then. That will still leave you with a hundred or so people sitting out. Do you realize that this term we have a hundred and thirty-seven girls?”

Before anyone could reply to this, there was a tap at the door and Miss Dene came in, looking mystified. “Miss Annersley,” she said, “I’ve just had a phone-call from Hilary Graves and she says I am to tell you that the four courts at Sonnenhofen are at your service to-morrow and if you’re short of umpires, she’ll help out with pleasure.”

The three prefects stared at her with startled faces and the Head looked only a little less surprised.

“But how does she know anything about it?” Clem cried. “We only got the idea yesterday and we haven’t seen either Mrs. Graves or Mrs. Peters since Sunday.”

“I think I’d better find that out myself,” Miss Annersley said. “Switch the phone through, please, Miss Dene. Wait, girls.”

A short conversation with Hilary Graves, once Hilary Burn and not only an Old Girl of the school but, for some years, Games mistress as well, caused her face to clear. The girls waited anxiously, for they could make nothing of her side of the conversation.

“Oh, it was, was it?” she said. Then, in answer to something Mrs. Graves said, “Well, it’s exactly like her. It would be a great help, Hilary, and I accept with pleasure. About the umpiring, I know nothing, I’m afraid. You must see Miss Burnett. I’ve only just heard about it myself, so your offer came as a shock.”

They heard Hilary Graves’ peal of laughter in reply to this. Then she said something and Miss Annersley replied, “Run along, then. I’ll try to come along myself part of the time. But don’t keep my god-daughter waiting, whatever you do!”

After that, she rang off and turned to the waiting girls with a smile.

“Joey Maynard rang up Mrs. Graves and Mrs. Peters and told them what you proposed doing and suggested that their courts would be very useful. So *that* mystery is explained. Now let me see. Our own eight and the one at Freudesheim and the four at Sonnenhof will make thirteen which will allow fifty-two players at a time.”

“And,” Julie Lucy said, “we didn’t think of including the new Third-formers, of course. We thought they might be ball-boys—for the morning, at any rate.”

Veronica had been adding up feverishly. “Fifty-two at a time out of a hundred and twenty-six would mean that we’d have seventy-four left, but they could look on.”

“How did you propose to arrange it?” the Head asked.

“Best out of seven games for each pair,” Clem said briskly. “That would keep them on the move most of the time. We thought we’d pair them up this evening and do the draw first thing tomorrow morning. If the Juniors act as ball-boys for the morning games, some of us—us prefects, I mean—who’ve been knocked out would take them over in the afternoon. So they’d be all right. May we do it, Miss Annersley?”

“If you can manage that, I see no reason why you shouldn’t. You had better see to it that only Seniors go along to Sonnenhofen, though. Keep the Middles here and at Freudesheim. Can you manage that, do you think?”

“Easily! It’s very unlikely that any of the Middles will last long enough to meet the Seniors. A good many of them—most, in fact—played cricket last summer and, unless we’ve collected any geniuses among the new girls, there are only three who are really outstanding at tennis—at any rate, if last year’s reports are anything to go by. We’ve gone through them with Miss Burnett,” Clem explained.

“Very well then, Clem. If you like to undertake the organization among you prefects and if you can find enough mistresses willing to be umpires, I think it would be quite a good idea. Come in!” for there was a tap at the door.

Miss Dene appeared to say that Joey Maynard had just rung up to invite the eleven Juniors for a picnic with herself, her babies and Miss Chester; so that settled the question as to what was to become of them in the afternoon. As a result, the rest of the school spent the entire day at tennis, the mistresses agreeing to share the umpiring amongst them. It had been a most successful day from everyone’s point of view and the evening found the girls tired enough to be glad to settle down to jigsaws, paper games and books when Abendessen and Prayers were over.

“You girls must be responsible for them for the rest of the evening,” the Head informed the prefects before she left Hall. “See that the younger girls go off to bed at the proper time and take dormitory duty between you. Come for Matron or me if you really need either of us. Otherwise, carry on by yourselves.”

Then she had dismissed them and retired to the school Salon where she had invited her entire staff to coffee, cakes, gossip and cards. Matron had excused herself from immediate attendance as she wanted to go over to Freudesheim to see Joey about some oddments the triplets needed. She promised to be back as soon as possible.

“So now,” Miss Annersley said, as she looked round the members of the staff, seated comfortably in groups about the cool, pretty room, looking very attractive in their light dresses and laughing and talking gaily, “we can enjoy ourselves in peace and quiet—for *once*, I hope!”

“I’m glad you added that rider,” Miss Armitage said, with a laugh. “Otherwise, such a statement is simply tempting Providence in the most bare-faced manner.”

“I rather felt that myself as soon as I’d said it,” the Head owned, joining in the laughter. “Will some of you people come and hand round cakes and cups, please?”

At least six people started up and she waved her hands in protest. “Not all of you! I’ll have Rosalie and Biddy and Nancy. The rest of you sit down and be ladies!”

The room rang with their laughter as they obeyed her. Out of school-hours, there was a good deal of free-masonry among them and, as several of them were Old Girls of the school, Christian names were used freely. The unwritten law was that so long as work went well, they were to have as much amusement as possible. Lady Russell had always held that a happy staff meant a happy school and it was a fact that some of those present had been with the Chalet School from its very early days.

Miss Armitage and Miss Derwent, two inseparables when they were free, remarked on this as they sat together on one of the windowseats.

“You know, Cicely,” Miss Derwent said, “we’re a jolly lucky set. At my first two schools, we were all in terror of the Head and would never have dreamed of being as informal as we are here.

Oh, thank you, Nancy. I'll have one of those cream cakes, seeing I don't need to watch my weight like some folk!"

Plump Nancy Wilmot gurgled at this. "Meaning me?" she said placidly. "Waste of breath, my love! I've been plump all my days and I'm quite resigned to it. Anyhow, I'm not what you'd call *fat*—just chubby." She moved on and Miss Armitage murmured to her friend, "You've had it, Ruth. Nancy won't rise. She never does. They all say she used to laugh over it, even when she was a schoolgirl. You'll have to try something else if you want to get her going."

"Well, have you found any fresh geniuses at tennis?" Miss Annersley asked, as she poured out the coffee.

"Nary one!" Peggy Burnett received her cup and stood smiling down at her Head. "In any case, I was umpiring on one of Hilary's courts and we know pretty well where we stand with the Seniors. Katherine Gordon is going to be a Wimbledon player before she's finished and so, unless I'm much mistaken, is Blossom Willoughby. That young woman's come on a lot. She's far and away better than any of the others. And she is a much steadier player than she used to be. Apart from those two, we have just ordinary good school tennis."

"It's something to have two girls who may make Wimbledon," Miss Lawrence said severely. "What are you grouching about?"

"I'm not!" Peggy protested. "I'm quite pleased on the whole. What about the Middles, someone? I never had a chance to come and vet them."

Biddy o'Ryan handed the last cup of coffee to Nancy Wilmot who had finished offering her cakes and sat down on a nearby settee. Then she said, "I'm not sure about that new girl—Jo Scott. She's only fourteen, of course, so she lacks strength as yet; but she has one or two decent strokes and whoever taught her has given her style."

The Head filled the last two cups for herself and Biddy and then left the table saying, "Anyone who wants more coffee can pour for herself." She sat down beside her second in command, Mdlle de Lachennais, sipped her coffee and then asked, "Well, what do you people make of our new girls, so far?"

"Quite a decent lot," said Miss Denny.

"For me, I like our new little Jo," Mdlle remarked.

"Doesn't it seem odd that in all these years we've never had a second Jo till now?" Biddy asked. "Oh, I know Josette Russell is really 'Josephine', but she was shortened to Josette as a baby and I've never heard even her own gang call her anything else."

"She isn't much like our one and only Joey, is she?" Nancy Wilmot said.

"Neither in looks nor in character, I'd say," Peggy Burnett agreed.

"Oh, Joey is unique," observed Rosalie Dene. "She always was. But I like Jo Scott, myself, even though she isn't in the least like Jo the First. You know," she went on, thoughtfully, "I should never have expected Maisie Gomme to have such a *sensible* daughter! As I remember her, she was one of the most feather-headed creatures going. Extremely pretty, of course; but very little else."

"Maisie Gomme?" Nancy sat up with a jerk. "Are you telling me that Jo Scott is Maisie Gomme's girl? Impossible! It just can't be!"

"But it is," the Head said rather plaintively. "What's more, Nancy, I'm certain I told you so at staff meeting before term began. *You* needn't talk about feather-heads!"

"But I wasn't at staff meeting," Nancy replied. "Don't you remember? I was coming on from Berne and there was a hold-up on the railway and when I finally reached Interlaken, the last train up here had gone and I had to walk and never arrived till nearly midnight. Matey had something to say!" she added with a grin.

"I remember. It's all been such a rush since the beginning of term, especially with poor Leila's business, that I'd forgotten that," the Head owned. "I'm sorry, Nancy. As for Maisie, I

never really knew her. She had left St. Scholastika's some years before we took over. I can just remember that she was very pretty and had charming manners. Of course, you were at school with her."

"Well, I was a Junior when she was a Senior. But we all knew that Maisie Gomme was mainly a pretty face and a kind heart. Trust a Junior!" she added, with a chuckle.

"If that was Maisie, Jo must take after her papa," Miss Derwent said. "She isn't brilliant, but she's average and she is a hard worker. Do you know anything about Mr. Scott, Hilda?"

"Only that he's in coffee in Kenya. Jo's fees are to be paid through a solicitor in London who is trustee to her grandfather's estate," the Head replied. "That *is* what Maisie said when she wrote, isn't it, Rosalie?"

Rosalie nodded. "Yes: that's right. She said that her father-in-law had left money in trust for Jo and her education would be paid for out of that. I rather got the idea that Jo's father is a happy-go-lucky soul and Jo herself was the one member of the family who worried about things."

"Must be a throw-back," Cicely Armitage said. "Poor little soul if she's had to worry about her family's finances! Did Mrs. Scott really say that, Rosalie? Or what gave you that impression?"

"Well, Maisie said Jo was far too old for her age and a fearful worrier, far more so than either herself or her husband. She added that she was thankful this legacy made it possible for them to send her to us, and she hoped we'd keep her so busy with lessons and games and chums, that she would forget to worry about what her family was going to do next." Rosalie paused, before she went on, "I think Maisie was really worried about the child."

"So well she might be!" Miss Denny spoke with her usual sledge-hammer bluntness. "I never heard such nonsense in my life! A child of fourteen or so having to worry about how her parents are managing their finances! It's absurd—and what's more, it's all wrong. A child like that should only have to bother about whether her pocket-money is going to meet collections, stamps and fines for slang, and leave a little over for sweets and other oddments. Her people should be ashamed of themselves!"

"Evidently they are, since Maisie wrote to us like that," Miss Annersley replied. "Joey had a letter from her, too. She gave it to me to read, but I've been so busy, I haven't had time to look at it. I'll see to it before I go to bed to-night. Maisie may have said more to her than she did to us. In any case, so far as I can see, the Gang have taken her up and they certainly won't leave her much time to bother about things outside of school affairs."

"How true!" Ruth Derwent rose to get some more coffee. As she poured it out, she continued, "Oh, well, if Mary-Lou and Co. are seeing to her, there isn't the least need for us to worry about her. They'll soon make a prattling, merry child of her!"

"Well, that seems to settle the little Jo," Mdlle said, as she held out her cup to the English mistress for a fresh libation. "As for the rest, they seem to me to be our usual type."

"We've got a very promising young pianist in Lorraine Varley," Miss Lawrence remarked. "Oh, I don't say she's a genius, but she certainly ought to go places if she fulfils her present promise."

Miss Andrews, who, as the newest member of the staff, had been sitting silent up to then, gave them a wicked look. "Of course, I'm new myself; but if that child, Gertrude Blenkinsop, isn't outstanding in sinfulness, I'll be surprised."

"She couldn't beat Emerence Hope," Bidy said positively. "Do you know that that young woman came to us with a reputation as a—*an arsonist*?"

"A *what*?" Miss Andrews' blue eyes became round with surprise.

"Oh, it's true enough." Rosalie took a hand, and proceeded to enlarge. "She was brought up by parents whose theory was that you should never say 'No' to a child. The result was that young

Emerence set fire to a summer-house in their garden because, if you please, she felt bored! She got more than she bargained for. She nearly caused a general conflagration of the neighbourhood. She comes from Manly, near Sydney, and this was in the summer when they'd had a long drought anyhow, and everything was like tinder. That was where her father forgot his theories and stamped on anything her mother might say. They'd heard all about us from their next-door neighbour who used to be history mistress when we were in Tirol. He decided that the only hope for his one and only, was to send her to us at once. He did just that. He packed her off by the first available plane to London, having previously cabled us to expect her. If it hadn't been for Miss Stewart—I mean Mrs. Mackenzie—that was all the warning we should have had; but she did send us an airmail, so we weren't quite unprepared."

"And was she as awful as her father said?" Miss Andrews asked curiously.

"Quite!" Three or four voices joined in this and Mdlle de Lachennais looked across at Rosalie with dancing eyes.

"Rosalie, chérie, do you remember the morning that Emerence marched down the main staircase and when you met her and took her to the girls' staircase and bade her go up it and then come down again, she refused—but how long she refused!"^[5]

[5] Shocks for the Chalet School

Rosalie broke into laughter. "Do I *not*!" She turned to Miss Andrews. "It happened one morning before breakfast. I was crossing the entrance hall when I saw Miss Emerence marching down the front stairs as calm as you please. She had been two or three weeks at school so she knew the rules but, as she coolly informed me, she wasn't taking any notice of them. I told her to go to the girls' staircase, go up it and then come down again."

"And she didn't do it?" Miss Andrews queried.

"My dear girl, she merely cheeked me until I saw red."

"And that," put in Nancy Wilmot with a chuckle, "is something that happens only once in a blue moon! I wish I'd been at the school then to see it!"

Rosalie laughed. "Oh, I didn't show it. I wasn't going to let the young monkey know how I felt. She *would* have been pleased! I kept calm on the surface, marched her along to the stairs and ordered her to go up. She said, 'Shan't!' and I told her that she stood there till she *did*."

"And what happened next?" Miss Andrews was passionately interested. She had already met Emerence at dictation with Lower IVA and she felt that the more she knew about that young woman, the better for her.

"Oh, she stood, there—no; I'm forgetting. Part of the time, she sat on the stairs—until she *did* cave in—which wasn't until halfway through Mittagessen."

"And did you stay there watching her all the time?" Nancy asked.

"Most of the time." Rosalie turned to the Head. "You relieved me while I had Frühstück and Miss Stevens—geography mistress then; she's at the English branch still—took over to give me a chance to get on with my own job."

"I shared the watch also," Mdlle put in.

"So you did. Anyhow, I took over at the end of school and then, as I said, Emerence suddenly collapsed. She began to howl and that finished it. She went up those stairs as meek as Moses and we never had any more trouble with her about *that* particular crime. Just as well, too, considering the things she's done that no one ever dreamed of making any rules about!"

"In one way, it was the turning-point with her," Miss Annersley said thoughtfully. "At least she did realize that when she was told to do anything she had to do it, sooner or later. She was never quite so defiant after that."

Peggy Burnett suddenly grinned. "Do you know what she said to me about it later on?" she said solemnly. "I never told you, though I meant to, but it slipped my memory, somehow. So much happened that term and the next, of course."

“Better late than never!” Biddy o’Ryan told her. “What was it, Peggy?”

“She said, ‘if they’d only scolded me or shaken me or something, I wouldn’t have minded so much. But no one seemed to be angry—except Matron when I wouldn’t drink my milk. All they did was to say I’d got to stay there till I’d done it and then left me to it. That was the awful part of it! It felt so dreadful.’ I think,” she wound up, “that it was really the complete ignoring of her, until she did choose to obey that brought her to her senses in the end.”

“I don’t wonder!” Miss Andrews was very young and near enough to her own schooldays to realize just how awful such treatment must have seemed to the young rebel. “I’d have caved in jolly quickly under that sort of treatment!”

“What sort of treatment?” asked Matron from the doorway.

“Matey! Come along in and have some of Miss Annersley’s coffee,” Nancy exclaimed. “Rosalie and the rest have been telling us all about young Emerence refusing to go up the girls’ stairs. Here you are! Hand those creamcakes over, Bridget, my love.”

Matron sat down. “Thank you. Yes, I’ll have a cake. Oh, Emerence! Bad little thing! Still, she seems to be taming down, though goodness knows it’s taken nearly two years to accomplish it.”

“Did Joey say anything about Leila?” Miss Annersley asked.

“A slight improvement in her general condition. She’s had two long sleeps and she’s taking a little nourishment. But—and it’s a big but—she’s still some way from having turned the corner. Still, it is better news, poor lamb.”

The Head nodded and said no more. She knew a good deal more than any of the others, as did Matron, but both had agreed that, for the present, it would be just as well to say nothing of the sad fact that if the doctors and nurses contrived to pull Leila through, the poor child would be lame for the rest of her life. Part of the bone had had to be removed and she was so frail that they dared not talk of grafting fresh bone, for the chances were that she would not be able to face it for years, if ever. It was a sad look-out; but sooner or later it must be faced. And at least everyone hoped that if she recovered from the shock of the operation, they had cleared up the disease.

Matron glanced at her and carefully changed the subject. “I’ve news,” she said.

The staff sat up at this. The news might be anything, but, knowing Joey Maynard, they were prepared for something startling.

“Joey has had a letter from her sister-in-law, Mrs. Bettany,” she said.

“Oh, what sort of a journey back did they have?” Miss Denny demanded.

“All right, I think. Joey said nothing about that. She was too full of the real news. Peggy is going to be very badly needed at home after this term.”

“What do you mean?” Biddy asked, in startled tones.

“What I say. A new little Bettany is expected in October. Mollie Bettany wrote that she hoped it would be twins again, so that she drew level with Joey who is getting swelled head over having the biggest family in the connection. Joey is furious and vows that at that rate, she’ll see about having Number Nine in short order. Her last words to me were that the twins will be two on September 10th and she misses having a tiny baby. Anyhow,” Matron paused to drain the last of her coffee before she went on, and the rest of the staff sat glaring at her. “Anyhow,” she repeated, as she set the cup on the saucer and put both down on a nearby table, “that is the very latest!”

Chapter VII

KENYA MAIL-BAG

(From Jo to her Mother)

“My darling Mummy, I was so glad to get your letter last week and hear that you and Daddy are all right and things have quietened down a little in our district. All the same, I hope you won’t take any chances, but carry your revolver wherever you go, just in case! You never can tell!

“How awfully funny that you should meet Mrs. Nixon in Cairo! Did she say where Joan and Margaret were while she was away? Joan told me last term that it might be their last at school as their dad had been talking about sending them home to England for the last part of their school-life. If they haven’t gone anywhere already, couldn’t you suggest to Mrs. Nixon that they might come here? They’d love it. It’s a gorgeous school and you do the sort of things here you can’t in England, like tobogganing and ski-ing—though we don’t have those until the winter—and going the most marvellous excursions. It’s Whit week-end this week and we are dividing up into parties and all going somewhere with one or two mistresses in charge, to visit various places. I’m going with the Gang as Josette Russell and I are pals, and we’re going to Fribourg which is right in the west of Switzerland, not so very far from Lake Neuchâtel. It’s in the French-speaking part of the country, thank goodness! Not that I find it too easy to speak French; but at least it’s better than German which I never learned until I came here and I don’t know awfully much even yet. You do have to learn it, though, because when you hear nothing else all round you—or more or less nothing else all round you—you just can’t help picking some of it up.

“I’ll write to you a really *long* letter next week-end, but I’ll wait till I’ve seen something of Fribourg so that I can tell you about it.

“Give my love to everyone and heaps to yourself and Daddy, from Jo.

“P.S. It’s just possible we may spend a day sailing round the Lake of Geneva!”

(From Mrs. Scott to her Jo)

“I was *delighted* to get your letter but I *can’t* say anything to Mrs. Nixon as they have all gone south to Capetown and are sailing for England from *there*. She did tell me that they *thought* of sending Joan and Margaret to *Cheltenham Ladies College* if there were vacancies for them. Anyhow, she means to *stay* in England with the girls so *Switzerland* wouldn’t be *much* use to her.

“The holiday trip to *Fribourg* sounds *wonderful*. But then, the Chalet School always *did* go in for *lots* of expeditions. I remember how we Scholastikans used to *envy* the Chaletians their trips here and there! Daddy and I *wish* we could be with you. As we can’t, Daddy has written to *Miss Annersley*, asking her to get you *a decent kodak* and you are to take snaps and send them to us to *make up*. Get one of your friends to snap you, too. What about *Josette Russell*? Who is she, by the way? It’s a *pretty* name, but a *new* one on me.

“Talking of Josette reminds me. I asked *Auntie Joey* if she would like some *coffee* but she *never* replied. Will you ask her about it the *next* time you see her and let us *know*?

“I was *so* amused to hear she has *eight* children! But when you get to know her you will find out that she always *does things thoroughly*.

“I’m afraid I have *no* news for you. Don’t be *silly*, Jo. Of *course* I never go anywhere without my *revolver*. Daddy wouldn’t *hear* of it. It is still *all quiet* thank goodness. Now I must finish with lots of love from us both.”

(From Jo to her Mother)

“This is Whit Sunday and we haven’t gone anywhere much—just to church which for us Protestants was in the Rue de Romont. The Catholics went to the cathedral. Fribourg is a

Catholic city and when Geneva and Berne and a lot of the other Swiss cities went in for the Reformation, Fribourg dug its toes in and stayed Catholic. They have the only Swiss Catholic University here which is bilingual. The Catholic College of St. Michael was founded in 1580, but the rest is pretty modern—1880, I believe, was when they began it. The very latest parts are concrete! It's quite good, but I like the old part best.

"They have an old covered wooden bridge here, rather like the ones at Lucerne. I've seen those because we went to Lucerne one Saturday. That's one nice thing about this country. It's so small you can get round to almost all the important places and spend a few hours as well in a day. Rather different from Kenya!

"Besides having the University, Fribourg is the seat of the Bishop of Lausanne and Geneva. The people have never gone in much for manufactures and Miss o'Ryan who is with us and who says she can just remember you at St. Scholastika's, told me to ask you if you remembered Bidy o'Ryan? Oh, dear! That sentence seems to have got horribly mixed and doesn't make sense! What I set out to say was that Miss o'Ryan says that the citizens of Fribourg are quite satisfied. This is an agricultural district—we went to the Gruyères valley yesterday and saw the fat, black-and-white cows that give the milk from which Gruyère cheese is made—and they are keen on learning as well, so they don't bother with making things except that every Swiss—man and boy, at any rate—goes in for woodcarving and the girls and women embroider and make lace. I'd love to learn the sort of embroidery they do here. Sybil Russell, who is Josette's eldest sister, says the same. And that reminds me, Josette says I'm to tell you that her mother used to be Miss Bettany, only she married Dr. Russell and now he's Sir James, so she is Lady Russell. It was she who started the Chalet School.

"We arrived here on Friday afternoon and wondered round. Yesterday, we saw the market which always happens on Wednesday and Saturday here and then went up the Gruyères valley where we had our Mittagessen. You go by electric train and Gruyères is on a rocky hill. The river Sarine which is the river on which Fribourg stands flows past here. Miss o'Ryan bought some cheese for us to have with our sandwiches and it was lovely—so rich and creamy!

"This afternoon, we are to go to see Morat which stands on Lake Morat. I'll add to this letter this evening, with any luck, when we get back. Anyhow, I shan't send it till after we've got back to school, so you'll get a complete budget. We all decided we'd do that instead of sending off scraps. The rest are sending postcards as well each day; but I'll wait and pack mine with the letter. You'll have to wait for the snaps, I'm afraid—Kiss Daddy for me for saying I could have a kodak, please. It's a beauty!—until they're developed and printed. We all have to learn to do our own and the school has a gorgeous darkroom. Mary-Lou Trelawney who is our gang-leader says that she'll show me how to do it and help me so that I don't make a mess of it. She's the Middle School prefect and awfully decent, but a year older than I am. Next term, she will be in Lower Fifth and a Senior, Josette says. It's bad luck for me that Josette will most likely be there, too; but we can always be pals out of class, thank goodness! There's the gong for Mittagessen. I'll add some more later.

"Later. It's eight in the evening and we're off to bed at half-past as we have to be up early tomorrow morning for our trip round Lake Geneva. They call it Lac Léman, though, whereabouts. However, I'll leave all that till tomorrow. In the meantime, I want to tell you a little about Morat. It really is marvellous, with city walls that have towers and battlements and watch galleries. Morat castle overlooks the town and honestly, Mummy, when you're there, you feel as if you'd got back into the Middle Ages. It wouldn't have surprised me at all if someone had said to me, 'Ho, maiden!' and I'd found myself wearing a kirtle and wimple and long, flowing sleeves!

"There was a terrific battle fought here between the Swiss and the Burgundians under Charles the Bold. There's a lovely story—rather sad, though—about a young man from Fribourg who

went galloping off the battlefield after the victory was won to tell his fellow citizens that they needn't fear Charles the Bold any more. He rode madly into the market-place—at least, they call the Place de l'hôtel-de-ville nowadays—waving a twig of a lime-tree. He was absolutely done, for he had been severely wounded. He just managed to reach the town and gasp out the word, 'Victory!' before he collapsed and died. The people of Fribourg were so proud of him, they planted the lime-twig and it took root and flourished and now it's a huge lime tree with a fourteen-foot girth and has to be propped up by stone pillars. Of course, the tree is *ancient*! That battle took place in 1476!

"It was a terrific battle. In fact to-day, when red water-lilies appear on the lake, the people call them 'Burgundy Blood' because so many Burgundians were cut down on the shores of the lake that the water was tinged red with their blood! Those lilies don't come every year, I'm told; just every now and then. We didn't see any. But then, it's on the early side for water-lilies.

"We'll be hounded off to bed in a few minutes, so I'll just take time to tell you that when we got our monthly reports, mine said that I tried hard. Also, I came out seventh which was a huge surprise as I hadn't hoped for anything better than thirteenth or fourteenth. I *do* find it so difficult to do lessons in another language—ordinary lessons like geography and maths and Scripture, I mean. Clare Kennedy, our form prefect, told me that if I went on like that I'd probably get my remove to Upper IV^A next term. Miss o'Ryan has arrived and we've got to clear up and go to bed! I'll continue later.

"Whit Monday. We've just got back from Geneva and had Abendessen. We're all pretty tired, but Miss o'Ryan said we could sit about quietly for an hour to give our meal time to settle, so I'm going on with this.

"We set off for Lausanne, which is the nearest of the big lake towns, at eight o'clock this morning. We went by motor-coach and arrived at Lausanne shortly after half-past nine. We went direct to the quai where the steamers sail from. The lake is lovely and one of the bluest things imaginable—though no bluer than our own Thun. The steamer arrived and we all marched on board and found seats, though most of us preferred to wander about. It was the early boat, so there weren't such a lot of people on board. We steamed out into the lake and then headed east towards Vevey which I always remember because it comes into dear Louisa Alcott's *Good Wives*. Do you remember? It was the place where *Amy* tried to wake up *Laurie* and succeeded and where, later, they went for their honeymoon. *Amy* said it was a paradise of roses, so I was looking out for them. It's true there are heaps of roses but, of course, Louisa Alcott wrote in the sixties and seventies of the last century and I think she'd get a frightful shock if she could come back and see it now. Not that we went ashore. It takes three hours or more to sail round the lake, so there wasn't time. Anyhow, Miss o'Ryan told us all to turn and look towards the head of the lake while she pointed out the mountains near the Great St. Bernard where the monks have their Hospice and the St. Bernard dogs come from. The source of the Rhône is there, too, and the Dent du Midi. Then we reached the village of Clarens where the Frenchman, Voltaire used to live. I don't know why he was famous, but Miss o'Ryan says I can look him up when we get back to school. Lord Byron the poet lived there, too.

"The next important place we came to was Montreux where, years ago, T.B. patients used to be sent. Nowadays, of course, they go up into the mountains. Then comes Territet which is really counted in with Montreux. The thing that really interested us though, was the Castle of Chillon. I was frightfully surprised to hear that Byron's poem, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, isn't really true. At any rate, the *Prisoner* wasn't Francis Bonnivard, though Bonnivard *was* imprisoned in Chillon all right. It's a frightening place, even seeing it from the outside. It's really on an island and it must have been ghastly for anyone imprisoned in the dungeons! Miss o'Ryan said that some day we should probably come to see the Castle properly. I'm not sure I want to. I rather think all the horrible things that happened there would *cruddle* up my spine!

“The next really important place we saw was Evian where they have hot baths. It’s really quite a small town, but Miss o’Ryan says the baths are famous. We stopped at Thonon which is just a little market town. Then there were two villages and at last we reached Geneva itself. Bedtime! I must finish for the present; but I’ll manage to wind the whole thing up either tomorrow or Wednesday.

“Tuesday morning. We’re back at Fribourg, and this afternoon we leave to return to school. It has been a gorgeous holiday and I’ve seen things I never hoped to see. I got as far as where we arrived at Geneva. We left the boat there as Miss o’Ryan decided that it was time we had a meal of some kind. She took us all to a café and stood us coffee with mountains of whipped cream—literally. We had *the* most luscious cakes to eat with it. When we had finished, we went along to the Quai de Mont Blanc. We’d all been trying our hardest to see Mont Blanc all the way round the lake, but the clouds were down and we couldn’t get a glimpse of her. However, Miss o’Ryan said that if she was visible, it would be from the Quai, so we trooped along hopefully. No good! There wasn’t a vestige to be seen of her and we had to give it up. Miss o’Ryan says that she’s visible on an average of one day out of three from Geneva. Ours didn’t happen to be the day. Were we browned off! Still, we didn’t have too bad a time. The shops are gorgeous—but no good to people who haven’t wallets of franc-notes. A lady who sat near us when we went for lunch to the Restaurant du Globe on the Grand-Quai told us that the reason is the United Nations and the International Labour Bureau *must* have flats and houses for their officials and the prices had gone sky-high. That has also sent up the prices of most other things, and nowadays Geneva is one of the most expensive places to live in.

“We gave up any idea of buying souvenirs, except for postcards and things like that and went to see the cathedral which is lovely. We saw the house that has been built over the place where Calvin’s house once stood, and wound up with the League of Nations Palace which is now the headquarters of U.N.O. Then we went to catch the steamer heading for Lausanne—it was after three by that time—and when we reached Lausanne, we were all ready for Kaffee und Kuchen which we had at Ouchy which is the port of Lausanne.

“The motor coach was waiting for us when we had finished and we climbed in and toiled back to Fribourg where we found a dish of fondue waiting for us as a final treat. We’re all packed up and ready to go and in ten minutes’ time we’re going out to shop before Mittagessen. Geneva was a wash-out so far as shopping was concerned; but things are quite moderate here in Fribourg.

“By the way, I’m not sure if you’ll know what fondue is. It’s a kind of cheese dish. You put a little stove on the table and light it. On it you put a sort of pan and pour in some wine after you’ve wiped the pan round with garlic. Then you add a little flour—very little—and a whole lot of cheese cut into tiny squares. You let this melt and stir it until it’s like thick cream and all bubbling gently. Then the people round the table are given small squares of bread and long forks and they dip a piece of bread on the fork into the cheese and turn it about until it’s coated thickly. Then you eat it! And that is a fearful business. You mustn’t let your bread-square drop into the dish and it’s appallingly easy to let drips go on the table-cloth. And, of course, it’s still boiling hot when you get it to your mouth. It’s awfully filling. I felt as if I’d had enough by the time I’d eaten half-a-dozen pieces. But our waiter came round with cups of coffee and when we’d drunk those, we felt able to go on.

“Now I really have told you everything and Miss o’Ryan says if I like to pack this screed up—she’s said it to all of us—it can be posted from here. You’d like a letter from Fribourg, wouldn’t you? Anyhow, you’re getting one, like it or not. It’s a blessing this paper is so thin or I’d never get it into an envelope.

“Good-bye, Mummy and Daddy. I’ll be writing again on Sunday and you should have had this by that time, because I’m going to send it airmail. I’m putting the postcards in. I’ll try to

send the snaps next week at latest. Write soon and tell me how everything is going on and if there's any chance of you two coming here for the summer holidays. Your loving Jo."

Chapter VIII

“WHAT ABOUT THE END OF TERM?”

By the time the Whit week-end was over, Jo Scott and Josette Russell were firm friends and Josette, for the first time in her life, had a real chum.

“I’m thankful to hear it,” Lady Russell wrote to Joey Maynard, in reply to the letter that gave her the news. “Sybil has always been pally with Ruth Lamont and, for the last two or three terms, they seem to have taken Elinor Pennell to their bosoms. Ailie and Janice Chester are almost Siamese twins. But Josette has never seemed to have any special friend. I like what you tell me of Maisie Gomme’s girl and I’m thankful to know that Josette is not going to miss what is one of the best parts of school-life.”

Jo herself had settled down very happily, despite the background of anxiety over her parents in Kenya. She might not be brilliant, but she was a hard worker and what she had once learned stayed. Her French was improving steadily, though German was a big stumbling-block to her. However, she was not the only one by any means.

“All the same, I jolly well mean to slog at it until I can get around in it,” she informed Josette one Wednesday evening when they were busy weeding the long border down one side of the drive.

The school gardens were fairly new, for the owners of the hotel which the main building had formerly been, had contented themselves with a paved courtyard and tubs of flowering shrubs set about in the summer. Miss Annersley had had the paving taken up and the ground dug over before it was seeded down with grass. That had been done during the previous summer. Now she had had the four-foot borders for flowers cleared and then handed them over to the girls to do what they chose with them. The two Upper Fourths had come in for one lawn and the Lower Fourths for the other. The other forms had the ground at the sides and back of the building.

The evening the school had been told of the plan, Mary-Lou convened a meeting of the two Upper Fourths for she believed in doing things decently and in order.

“We’ve been given the most conspicuous part to see to,” she told the rest when they were all assembled. “Of course, we *are* the two largest forms in the school, so there are more of us to do the work. The thing is we’ve got to make something worthwhile out of it. I’ve called this meeting so that we can pool our ideas and make plans that are sensible as well as attractive. The Head says Gaudenz can do any work that’s too heavy for us to tackle as we shall have only the evenings to work. That’s all I’ve got to say for the moment. I’ll sit down now and this meeting is open for discussion.” She sat down with a grin at Hilary Bennet who seemed to be bursting with an idea already.

Hilary rose at once. “I beg to propose that we ask the Head to have a big circular bed cut in the middle of our lawn and plant roses there,” she said.

Barbara Chester jumped up as she sat down. “Don’t you think it would be rather jolly to have climbing roses and wistaria round the windows?” she asked earnestly.

“It would be mad,” said Ursula Vidler, who was by way of being artistic. “Creepers climbing up the walls here would be awfully the wrong thing. The walls are frescoed and if you grew creepers, you’d hide the frescoes which are the done thing hereabouts.”

“That’s what I meant,” Barbara snapped back. “My idea *was* to hide those ghastly frescoes.” Barbara herself was artistic and the frescoes were decidedly *unbeautiful*.

That set light to the tinder. Everyone wanted to voice her opinion and, in less than no time, there were nine healthy arguments going on at once. Mary-Lou ended it by hammering on the

table with the blackboard ruler which happened to be handy.

“Dry up, all of you!” she ordered, when the noise of battle had died down. “You’ll have someone dropping on us for making a row if you go on like that! Now then! You can’t do anything about either creepers or fresh frescoes, Barbara and Ursula, until the Head’s been consulted.”

The pair, having forgotten that this item was a necessity, both went scarlet and looked sheepish. Their leader suppressed a grin and went on in her usual serene manner. “About the roses, I don’t know if we could manage them this term. Don’t you have to plant them in November? I seem to remember that’s what we did—I mean Mother and Gran—when we first went to Howells to live. Anyone know definitely?”

“Oh, you *couldn’t* do any planting up here in November!” Vi Lucy cried. “It’s much too cold and wet. You do plant them in November in England, I know. Daddy had our new roses set then, two years ago. But I should think you’d have to be at least a month earlier here. It would be October—or even September, I should say.”

“Then what shall we do till then?” Maeve Bettany demanded. “Should we let the central bed idea go till next term and see about it then?”

But no one wanted to do that. Finally, it was decided to ask if the bed might be dug and content themselves with annuals for this term. Next term, they would set the roses, always supposing that roses would survive the bitter winters up at the Platz.

“We’ll ask Auntie Jo,” Josette said firmly. “She lived in Tirol for years and years and it’s the Alps, same as here, so she’s certain to know what we can have and what we can’t. Shall I go and ask if we can ring her up, Mary-Lou?”

“Well, not this moment,” Mary-Lou said. “But it’s an idea, Josette. Look here, all of you, what about sending her a message to-morrow by young Len? I know she’s going home in the afternoon for an hour or so during their free time. She told me she had to go to have her new muslin frock tried on. You scribble a note to her, Josette, and tell her we want to consult her about our share of the garden.”

As a result, Joey herself had turned up at eighteen o’clock next day, and gently guided them from some of their more ambitious suggestions. By the time June came, therefore, the big central bed, which had been cut, and the broad borders were gay with annuals and certain hardy perennials and the Head had agreed that they might plant roses and climbing plants next term.

“Of course, in October you must pack up your rosebushes in straw and coconut matting,” Joey informed the girls. “They wouldn’t stand up to the cold otherwise. I’ll show you how to do it when the time comes. Meantime, you can go ahead on pansies, snapdragons—or antirrhinums, if you want to be grand!—stocks, phloxes, geraniums, lupins—oh, almost any flower that grows wild up here. You’ve plenty of choice so get busy and make out your lists. I’m going to Basle for the day on Friday and I’ll get what you want *if* you can let me have that list to-night.”

“It really is gaudy,” Josette said on that evening in June, after Jo had made her announcement about German. “And did you ever smell anything to beat those stocks?”

Jo sniffed as a puff of wind shook the said stocks which sent out a gush of perfume. “Gorgeous,” she said ecstatically. She bent down to root up a last weed in the patch she was busy with and then stood up and stretched. “Ouf! My back aches!”

“Well, we’ve finished it anyhow,” Josette replied, as she surveyed the results of their labour. “It looks quite decent now. What shall we do next?”

“Clear out of the way, pronto!” Jo advised, leaping across the border on to the drive with the agility of a young goat. “Here come Betty Landon and Francie Wilford with the hose. Come on, if you don’t want a shower-bath.”

Josette uttered a squawk and joined her. “Who on earth was idiot enough to let those two handle the hose? They’ll soak everyone they can find accidental-done-on-purpose! I know

them!”

“They won’t touch us *here*,” Jo reminded her. “Not after what the Head said to Emerence and Margot and Heather Clayton when they soaked the path all the way along their beds.”

“Yes; she did rather trample on them, didn’t she?” Josette agreed. “O.K., you two. We’re on the drive and you know what will happen if you waste water on it. Remember Emerence and her crew last week!”

“You sound like, ‘Remember Lot’s wife!’” Betty Landon grinned. “Don’t worry! We wouldn’t *dream* of wasting our precious water on you! Got it in position, Francie? Then I’ll turn it on. Keep an eye on me while I sprinkle the bed, for pity’s sake!” She turned her back on the other two, having wisely joined them on the drive so that no water should fall there, and began to spray the flowers with unusual care.

Josette and Jo grinned at each other. Then they picked up their trugs which were brimful of weeds, and set off for the rubbish-heaps to dispose of the unwanted. That done, they put away their forks, hung up their gardening overalls and washed their hands and then sauntered off to a nook in the pines where hammocks and deck-chairs gave promise of ease and settled down to gossip.

“A week ago at this time, we’d come back from Fribourg,” Jo sighed presently. “Wasn’t that a wizard holiday? Did you do things like that when the school was in England, Josette?”

“Well, not exactly. People who lived near enough went home and the rest who had to stay at school were taken for trips. But, of course, it meant coming back to school every night. Usually, there seemed to be next to nothing left of the term after that. Of course, besides end-of-term exams, we generally had a pageant or sports or something like that and most of our spare time went in practising.”

“It’s about six weeks to the end of term now,” Jo said thoughtfully. “What do you think we’ll do this year?”

“Do—how? Do you mean for the end of term? I haven’t the foggiest. Last term we had the Sale and the Welsen pantomime, and the term before we had the Christmas play. I don’t see what we can do this term. Last summer, we had water sports and the summer before we had a water pageant. But then we were on the island. I wasn’t there for the Pageant,” Josette went on. “We were in Canada then. But I’ve heard about it.”

“But you had the sea there. We couldn’t do anything like that here, could we?” Jo pondered a moment. “I suppose they wouldn’t let us do something on one of the lakes in the valley?”

Josette shook her black head. “Hardly! We’d have everyone from all round coming to see us. On the island, there weren’t a lot of people and we knew them all.”

“I wish we could do something!” Jo sighed. “Mummy’s told me about the plays and things the school did when it was in Tirol and I’ve always hoped that when I came we’d do a play or something. I love acting!”

“Well; I don’t know what we’re likely to do, I’m sure. Oh, there’s Sybs! Hi, Sybs! Come on and sit down and have a gab-fest with us!” Josette hailed her sister.

Sybil, who had been sauntering idly along the path, looked up and came across the grass to them. She dropped into a deck-chair with a sigh and clasped her hands behind her coppery head. Jo watched her gravely. From the first, she had thought Sybil Russell the loveliest girl she had ever seen. The amazing thing was that Sybil herself seemed scarcely aware of her own beauty, even though the entire family acknowledged that she was the pick of all the girls.

Sybil wriggled herself comfortable and then smiled at her sister. “I thought you two were gardening?”

“So we were; but we’d finished our chore, so we came here. Besides, Betty Landon and Francie Wilford turned up with the hose and you know what those two are!”

“Do I not! Whoever was mad enough to let them do the watering?”

“There you ’ave me! Someone who doesn’t know much about them. Anyhow, Jo and I cleared off in short order. We didn’t want an ‘accidental’ showerbath!” Josette chuckled. Then she went on, “I say, Sybs, have any of you people heard anything about what we’re likely to do for the end of term?”

Sybil had been gazing dreamily up through the pines. At Josette’s question, she dropped her hands and sat up. “Goodness! I’ve never given it a thought! But, of course, the Whitsun holiday is only just over. Still, we ought to be getting on with it now, whatever it is. No one’s said anything yet, so far as I’ve heard, though.”

The sound of voices reached them and they looked round. A group of prefects were strolling in their direction and Sybil promptly gave them a hail.

“I say, you folk! Have you heard anything about what we’re doing for the end of term?”

As it happened, the prefects had been discussing the subject as they walked. They came over to the trio and sat down, all ready for a discussion.

“What put you on to that, Sybil?” Julie Lucy asked.

“Josette, if you want to know. I hadn’t bothered about it so far. If you come to that, the Whitsun holiday is just over and it was so thrilling, I didn’t think about anything else. But if we *are* going to do anything, we’d better get down to it, hadn’t we? There’s only six weeks or so left of term now.”

“I know.” Julie nodded. “That’s what we were saying. The trouble is, we can’t think of anything. We certainly can’t have aquatic sports——”

“*What* kind of sports?” Josette asked, with a puzzled frown.

“Oh, swimming and diving and boat-races and so on,” Julie explained easily.

“Then why didn’t you just say so?” Josette persisted.

Julie laughed. She was a dark, very handsome girl, cool and self-contained. She realized that Josette had no intention of being rude and was quite prepared to explain. But Ruth Wilson, the Hobbies prefect, had little sympathy or understanding. Unlike Julie, who was the eldest of six, she was an only child. She had a great opinion of the dignity of the prefects and she thought that Josette was being impudent. Before the Head Girl could say anything, she jumped in.

“That’ll do, Josette. You kids are a lot too cheeky. You’re not to speak to *any* prefect like that, let alone the Head Girl. Do you hear me? Then apologize at once!”

Josette flushed angrily. At fourteen-and-a-half, she objected to being spoken to as if she were a Junior of ten or eleven. Apart from that, Ruth’s overbearing manner was very galling and well calculated to rouse ire in anyone. Before the Middle could utter the angry retort on her tongue-end, however, Julie interfered.

“Oh, fiddle! Josette wasn’t being rude, Ruth; she was only asking. No need to jump on her as heavily as all that.” She turned to Josette. “It’s this way, Josette, ‘aqua’ is the Latin for ‘water’ and aquatic sports are water-sports. Now do you see?”

Josette cooled down. “Yes; and thanks for explaining. I didn’t mean cheek.”

“Don’t be silly! Of course I knew that!” Julie said lightly.

Sybil had been watching Ruth out of the corner of her eye. She saw that the elder girl was looking none too pleased at Julie’s handling of the situation, so she made haste to change the subject. Ruth had the reputation in the school of holding on to grudges until she had paid them off. Sybil was well aware that she would regard the Head Girl’s rather snubbing remarks to her as Josette’s fault and would not rest until she had settled the score. Where her young sister was concerned, Sybil always felt a heavy responsibility. Years ago, when Sybil herself had been a Junior and Josette a tiny of four, there had been a bad accident for which the former knew herself to be to blame. They had nearly lost Josette at the time and Sybil had been heart-broken over it. Since then, she had kept a watchful eye on her sister as far as she could—frequently, it must be admitted, without getting much gratitude from Josette who sometimes grumbled that Sybs was

too grannyish for words!

“Well,” she said, “having got that much into young Josette’s head, what *about* the end of term. Six weeks doesn’t give us an awful lot of time to think up something and get it going and you know we’re always expected to be responsible for the summer term show. Hasn’t anyone any ideas to lay before us?”

Seventeen-year-old Sybil was not yet a prefect and only a member since the Easter term, of Upper Fifth. All the same, many of the Sixth Form inclined to treat her as one of themselves. She was older than her age in many ways and, besides, she had a little imperious air and a great deal of natural dignity that seemed to set her more on a level with the prefects than with a good many members of her own form. Julie, therefore, answered her as if she was a prefect.

“We really haven’t come to any decision, Sybil. We ought to have a ‘do’ of some kind, I know; but apart from a garden party and pastoral play, no one seems to have an idea to bless herself with.”

“Oh, I expect Sybil can give us one,” Ruth said, with a slight sneer.

Sybil reddened and Jo flashed an indignant look at the prefect. She said nothing, of course. She knew her place as a very new Middle too well for that. But from that moment she disliked Ruth Wilson with an intensity that was worthy a much better cause. It showed in her eyes and Ruth, happening to glance at her, saw it and wondered. Nor did she forget it and it was the cause of a good deal of unpleasantness later on. At the time, no one said anything and Sybil herself merely remarked that she had only just begun to think of it and hadn’t any more ideas than anyone else.

“I suppose,” said Clem Barrass, the Games prefect, “that we shall have to fall back on the garden party plus play in the end, but I must say I wish we could have dreamed up something a little more original. After all, it’s the last term here for a good many of us. I know most of us are going on to Welsen, but that won’t be the same thing. Come *on*, folks! Put your brains in steep and see if you can’t evolve something better than that.”

“Think of something yourself,” Madge Herbert, the school librarian, suggested. Clem grinned. “Originality is *not* my strong suit. Why don’t you get on to Mary-Lou? She has a knack of thinking of things.” She paused. Then she suddenly sat up in the hammock in which she had been swinging and promptly suffered the fate of everyone who fails to treat hammocks with due care—she rolled out on top of Josette and Jo who had given up their chairs to the prefects and had been squatting on the ground.

Between the shrieks of the two Middles and Clem’s wild squawk as she went, not to speak of the exclamations of the rest, it was a little time before peace was restored. Jo and Josette were anxiously felt in case Clem’s weight had hurt them.

“She’s such a lump,” Julie explained, as she ran her hands over Jo’s arms. “I wonder you two aren’t squashed flat after getting a ton-weight like that on top of you! *Sure* nothing’s broken? Let’s see you waggle your legs and arms.”

The pair were breathless and bruised, but they promptly squirmed wildly and proved that there was nothing much the matter with them, so the prefects went back to their seats, Julie pushing Clem into her own chair with the remark that she would be safer there and so would everyone else. Clem grimaced at her, but the two were close friends and given to cheerful insult on occasion. Besides, they had forgotten the two Middles for the moment.

Sybil came to the fore again. She was not a prefect, whatever she might be next term, but she had no idea of allowing Josette and Jo to have anything to gossip about.

“What were you going to say when you fell out of the hammock, Clem?” she asked.

Clem fanned herself with her handkerchief. “That was a feverish business! You two are sure I haven’t hurt you?” She turned to Josette and Jo.

They informed her eagerly that they were both all right, so she sat back. “Good! What were

you asking, Sybs? Oh, about my idea. Here it is, then. Julie, what do you think of calling a meeting of the entire school to-night and asking them each to send in one idea as to what we should do for the end-of-term finish? Give them till to-morrow after Kaffee und Kuchen to do it. Then we can go through their proposals and see if we can find anything suitable. How about it?"

They all rose at her. Even Ruth forgot for a minute or two that she had a grievance against anyone and congratulated her fellow prefect cordially.

"It's really an excellent idea," Julie said approvingly. "And if young Mary-Lou can be original and find us something decent, we'll do it—or anyone else," she added vaguely.

"And there's the gong for Abendessen," said Sybil, standing up. "I must wash my hands. Come on, Josette—and you, too, Jo. We'll hop off and get to the splashery first." She raced them off, leaving the prefects to fold up the chairs and put them under the trees for safety in case of rain. But when she had the pair at a safe distance, she stopped and said sternly, "Listen to me, you two. You are *not* to tell anyone about the prefects—understand? That was private and not meant for you to see or hear. Anyhow, you'll be prefects yourselves some day with any luck. Just think how *you* would like it if two Middles caught you off guard and went broadcasting it all over the school."

They saw her point. After all, prefects really meant something at the Chalet School and they could guess how people like Emerence, Francie Wilmot or Margot Maynard would clutch at any tale about those grandees.

"O.K.," Josette said. "Keep your wool on, Sybs. We won't say a word. After all," she added cheekily, "it is rather a joy to know that the prees can make asses of themselves on occasion. But I do *not* like Ruth Wilson, prefect or not, and she was a beast to me—talking to me as if I were a kid like young Ailie!"

"But Julie did sit on her," Jo reminded her. "I was jolly glad of that. But we won't talk, Sybil. That's a promise."

"Well, see you keep it," Sybil replied. "Now you can hop off and tidy yourselves or you'll be late for Abendessen. Scram!"

They fled on the word. But they kept their promise and no one ever heard from them about the little fracas among the prefects. Not that anyone would have had much time for worrying about it that night. Julie got permission from Miss Annersley to hold her meeting after Abendessen and Prayers and her request that everyone should make a suggestion as to what they should do for the end of term, put most other things out of their heads.

"Remember that we want to have it in the garden if possible," she told them, "but it *may* be a wet day, so it's got to be something we can do in Hall in that case. Write your idea on a slip of paper and give it to your form prefect. Form prefects, we want the slips brought to the Prefects' room after Kaffee und Kuchen to-morrow. We'll go through them then and let you know what we decide on as soon as possible. We break up six weeks yesterday, so we'll need all our time to prepare for whatever it is and remember we've also got the year-end exams to think about. That's all. You may go now, and thank you, everyone."

They streamed out into the garden to make the most of the time left to them before bedtime. They needed no supervision. Everyone was engaged in trying to think up some idea that would satisfy those exigent young ladies, the prefects.

Chapter IX

THE PREFECTS CONFER

“Come on, people! We’ve piles to do if we’re going to read through every one of these slips—and I suppose we must, seeing we told them to send in any ideas they might have.” Julie waved her hand at the bundles of slips, each neatly fastened with a rubber band. There were eight of them and, judging from the depth of some, every girl in the school—including the ten Juniors—had added her mite.

Clem Barras looked at them with deep disgust. “Do you mean we’ve got to plough through the inanities of the kids as well as Lower IV_B? I *thought* you were overdoing it when you *would* have those Third-formers hauled in as well. Oh, well, if we must do it, we must, I suppose. Sit down, everyone, and let’s get on with the job.”

She threw herself into her usual seat at the Head Girl’s right hand, while Veronica Worsley, the Second prefect, took the seat on Julie’s left. The rest swarmed round the long, narrow table running down the centre of the room and then all looked expectantly at the Head Girl.

“How are we setting to work?” Edris Young, the editor of *The Chaletian* demanded.

“There are fourteen of us. I thought we’d work in pairs. Each can take one form and I’ll take on the Thirds as well. Look them through; throw out all the things that are ordinary; save the more original and then we can discuss them when we’ve finished. Will that do?” Julie looked round the rest and they all nodded assent.

“A jolly good idea,” Madge Herbert said approvingly. “Veronica, work with me, will you? Hand over Lower IV_A, Julie. We’ll tackle them.”

She set the ball rolling. In less than ten minutes, everyone had paired off and had been handed a bundle of slips for each two, Julie reserving those of the little girls as well as the big bundle from Upper IV_A for herself and Clem. Then there was silence for the next twenty minutes or so as the big girls unfolded the slips and considered their contents.

Rosalind Wynyard and Edris were the first to finish. They had taken over VI_B and those young ladies seemed to have no very original ideas. At any rate, the two tellers had reserved one slip by mutual consent and, after some low-toned argument, Edris added another. The rest were pushed to one side.

It was at this point that Pat Collins suddenly giggled, an example followed by her partner, Zoë Wylie.

“What’s the joke?” Veronica asked.

“You’ll hear presently,” Pat told her, as she laid the slip to one side. “It’s original enough, goodness knows! What’s that one, Zoë? I haven’t read it.”

“Hurry up,” Julie said, as she swiftly opened and passed Hilary Bennet’s effort to Clem. “What do you think of that, Clem? Good enough?”

Clem read it through and nodded. “At least it doesn’t talk of a garden party and that’s something! Aren’t they a monotonous crew? Scarcely anyone seems able to rise above that. I couldn’t myself,” she added honestly. “But then, I never laid much claim to being original.”

“No; common-sense is *your* strong suit,” her friend informed her, as she scanned Mary-Lou’s suggestion. “We might add this, I think, don’t you?”

At long last the job was finished and they all sat back. In the centre of the table was a pile of rejected ideas, but each pair had at least one in reserve. Julie leaned back in her chair, made a long arm, nearly over-balancing in the effort, and yanked the waste-paper basket to her.

“Shove that rubbish over here,” she said. “We’ll get rid of it at once. Then we can talk over

what's left."

Willing hands pushed the pile along and she and Clem swept it into the basket which Clem returned to its corner. Then the Head Girl settled herself comfortably in her chair.

"Well, we don't seem to have too many original folk in this place," she observed, as she surveyed the scanty collection left. "Pat, suppose you and Zoë begin and relieve our minds as to the cause of your wild giggles?"

Pat looked at Zoë and the pair went off again, much to the irritation of the others.

"Oh, get on, you mad things!" Madge exclaimed. "Don't sit there giggling like a pair of lunatic hyenas!"

"Of all the insults!" Pat cried, as she pulled herself together. "All right; here you are. It comes from Norah Fitzgerald, so you ought to know what to expect." She picked up the slip and read out in somewhat choked tones, "'Hire about twenty ponies and have a gymkhana with entrance fees of a franc a class and buy prizes with the money.' There! How's that for originality?" And she looked round the rest who had doubled up at the proposal and were peeling with laughter.

"Oh—oh!" Julie gasped, clutching the side where her operation scar was, "I'm sore! Oh, how *like* Norah!" She mopped her eyes and sat up. "Does she also say where we are to hire the ponies, or who's to pay for them, or how they're to be got up here? She surely doesn't think the class fees will cover everything, does she?"

"She—she doesn't say anything about that," Zoë choked. Then she looked anxiously at Julie. "Better stop shrieking, Julie. You may upset your op. Can't scars break open sometimes, even ages after an op?"

Julie recovered herself. "It's not as bad as that. All the same, such an idea never occurred to me. It's original all right, but I'm afraid it's beyond us. What else have you got there, you two?"

"Only Margot Maynard's proposal that we should each contribute something, get the Staff to hide them and have a treasure hunt," Pat replied.

"It's an idea all right," Clem said. "If we meant to keep it to ourselves, it might do; but do we? I thought we were to arrange something that we could ask people to. You can't expect folk from the San to go rootling about among bushes, or climb trees and so on. What about it, everyone?"

"Oh, we must make it something we can ask people to come to!" Polly Winterton cried. "Look how they've loved the other things we've done! We can't be pigs and keep it all to ourselves and we're not likely to have time for anything else."

The others fully agreed with her, so Margot's proposal was set aside as something they might carry out one Saturday among themselves and Julie asked for the ideas from Upper IV_B which had been entrusted to Rosalie Way and Ruth Wilson.

"The only idea you could call original comes from Con Maynard and she suggests that we should give a tea-party and ask leave to make everything for it ourselves." Ruth said. "It isn't really original, either, for it's just another version of party but it's the only thing we could choose."

They all turned down the idea and Julie turned to Bess and Veronica and asked what they had to offer.

"Barbara Chester suggests that we have a floral fête and make tableaux with flowers and foliage and invite people to come and see them. She also suggests that we have a collection for the free beds at the San and give people tea," Veronica said. "Clare Kennedy seems to have been thinking along these lines, too, for she proposes a flower festival, the festival to be held on one lawn while the audience sit on the other—at least, I don't know if you'd call it audience or congregation," she interpolated, "for she suggests that we have hymns and someone to address us and prayers. Afterwards, we should sell the flowers in aid of the San."

"That would be difficult," Julie said, frowning over it. "For one thing, who would you have

to preach? We're half and half here—I mean, some of us are C. of E. and some of us are Catholics. Or does she propose we should have a short address from both Mr. Carr *and* Father Romuald? Is that all you have, Veronica?"

"No; there's this one of Jo Scott's. Her idea is to have a show of all nations—all the nations we have here, I mean—with dances and songs. It's not unlike a pageant, but it is something we haven't done before. I rather like it, myself."

"So do I," Madge put in. "And what's more, we could have Barbara's floral tableaux as well. If we had the singing and dancing on the lawns, we could arrange the flower part of it in the other parts of the grounds. I like it, Julie."

"So do I," Julie was beginning; but Ruth broke in first. "Oh, rot! It's neither more nor less than a pageant, however you may word it, and we said that a pageant was just what we *didn't* want! Have Barbara's tableaux, by all means. That would fit in with anything else we chose. But for pity's sake let us have something else that's fresh!"

"But that's just what Jo's idea is. We've never done a Girls of All Nations thing—or not while *I've* been at school," said Veronica, who had the advantage of Ruth there, since she had arrived at the Chalet School two full years before Ruth.

"It's a *pageant*," Ruth insisted. "We don't want a pageant unless we really *can't* think of anything else."

"It isn't a pageant at all," Clem put her oar in. "You have to have *episodes* in a pageant. This idea, so far as I can make out, is that we should all be 'on the stage' and give a—a sort of pierrot show, only we'd dress in national costume. I'm rather for it, myself. However, we can't really decide until we've heard about the others. Upper IV_A comes next and that's Julie's and mine, so I'll start reading out, shall I? Mary-Lou considers a garden gymkhana would be nice—oh, no ponies!—but things like flower-pot races and driving pairs in between skittles without upsetting them and wheelbarrow races and so on. How does that appeal to any of you?"

It appealed to quite a number until someone asked, "What about prizes?" and then they had to stop to think. Veronica suggested that they should make a small charge of, say, five centimes for each race and buy the prizes out of that.

"We shouldn't want anything startling," she said sensibly. "Trifles would be all we should need. And visitors would get any amount of fun out of watching flower-pot races and wheelbarrows and so on. We could have a frog race; and what about a cartwheel race? Quite a lot of us can do cartwheels quite decently."

There was no doubt about it. Mary-Lou's idea appealed to all of them. However, both Julie and Clem insisted that they could make no decision until all the slips had been read and Julie followed this up by producing Josette's slip.

"'Have a flower show'," she read. She laid it down and looked at the others. "And *that's* an idea, too. Josette says charge a small fee for entrance and throw it open to the Platz and also to the people of Lauterbach. I *won-der!*"

But Ruth had a grudge against Josette and she certainly was not going to approve of anything that young person might propose. She promptly proceeded to throw cold water on the scheme.

"Oh, what nonsense!" she exclaimed. "If you're going to throw it open to everyone like that, you'll have to provide some jolly decent prizes and where are they coming from, may I ask? I, for one, won't have much spare cash by that time."

"I don't suppose any of us will," Madge said. "But Julie, if we had the flower show, couldn't we add Mary-Lou's gymkhana as well—and Barbara's floral tableaux? Amongst all that we ought to make something decent. And if we shan't have much money to spare most of us could find some oddments that would do for prizes. I have a pair of rather pretty vases, for one."

"There's that little blue fern-pot of mine. I could give that," Rosalie said. "And there are two or three things at home Mummy would send if I asked her. Oh, surely we could scratch up

enough among ourselves?"

"Well, I think it's silly," Ruth persisted. "Anyhow, I thought you were going to read *all* the slips before you decided. May I point out that only about half the school has given us any ideas so far."

"Well, so far as Upper V are concerned," remarked Nora Penley, one of the sub-prefects, "the best any of them can do comes from Katherine Gordon and she suggests a fancy tennis tournament with all the players wearing fancy dress and original rules of our own. It would be good fun for a Saturday some time, but I don't know that it would be all that amusing for outsiders."

"Lower V aren't much better," Polly Winterton said. "Yvonne de Gramont proposes that we get up a concert; and Blossom Willoughby wants school sports. What about our own crowd? Anything there, anyone?"

But the two Sixths had nothing more original to offer and finally Julie turned to the Third Form's ideas. Ailie Russell wanted to give a play and Blossom Willoughby's small sister, Judy, proposed "All sorts of games, like tennis, cricket, rounders and things like that". However, that was another thing they could manage for their own amusement some Saturday, so it was turned down. Finally, after a good deal of argument, they sorted out what they had and were left with Barbara's tableaux, Josette's flower show, Mary-Lou's gymkhana, and Jo's "Pierrot Show", as Clem called it.

"We must choose from these," Julie said. "I think we can have Barbara's idea whatever else we choose, so we'll leave that and vote on the other three." She produced a writing pad and tore off a couple of sheets which she handed to Clem. "Tear them up, Clem. All got pencils or pens to write with? Good! Then write down the item you most favour and we'll discuss it after that."

However, this proved to be no solution. Five people each voted for Jo's "Pierrots" and Mary-Lou's gymkhana, the remaining pair putting down the flower show.

"Oh, bother!" Clem exclaimed when the results of the voting were read out. "The flower show's out and we aren't any farther on, since the voting on the pierrot show and the gymkhana are equal. What do we do now, Julie? Vote again? But who's to say that the voting won't come out equally if we do? Can't anyone think of something?"

"I can!" It was Veronica. "Look here! Why don't we take up the whole day from eleven o'clock on. We could have the flower show and use the gymkhana *and* the pierrot show as entertainments—oh, and the tableaux as well, of course. We can charge an entrance fee and get something for the San that way and use all the fees for the show and the races to buy prizes. And we could charge for admission to the pierrot show."

"And where are you going to find room for all that?" Ruth asked disagreeably.

"Aunt Joey's garden!" Julie said, with sudden inspiration. "We can do it all right then. Part of the Freudesheim grounds back on to ours and there's that gate Uncle Jack had cut through the dividing fence during the Easter hols. We can give the pierrot show in their place and have the flower show on the lawns and the gymkhana on the tennis courts. Barbara's tableaux can be arranged in the rock garden. Then we can easily charge entrance fees for all those three. It needn't be much—ten centimes each, perhaps. But if the Platz *and* the Lauterbach people show flowers and things, they'll certainly want to see our entertainments. We ought to make quite a nice little sum for the San, as well as having a grand do for the end of term."

They rose to her at this brilliant suggestion. They were all very anxious to do everything they could for the big Sanatorium; and whatever they made went to supporting free beds for British children who need the clean Alpine air and rich milk. Naturally, a certain amount was provided by the Government Health Service; but what they could collect provided pocket-money and little extras for the poor little patients. As Clem had once said, "It's bad enough to be ill when you're just a kid. When it means being right away from your own people among total strangers and

having either very little or almost nothing in the way of pocket money, it must be ghastly.”

Even Ruth had no objections to make though, when they had calmed down, she did ask, “What about eats for the visitors?”

“Get Frau Mieders and the Dommy Sci people to see to it,” cried Rosalie Way, producing an idea before anyone else, for once in a way. “Matey would let us have the school crocks and the Dommy Sci could manage sandwiches and cakes. And, luckily, it’s the fruit season, so that would be all right. They could use Hall and the Gym for the cafés and the Senior Middles could help with the serving. Or, I’ll tell you what! Make it a Help-Yourself business with trays and let them come to a sort of buffet and help themselves and pay at the far end. That would save the serving.”

“Good for you, Rosalie!” Julie exclaimed. “That’s a super idea. Well,” she turned to the rest while Rosalie sat, blushing and proud, “now we’d better get it all worked out and then I can ask the Head for an interview to-morrow morning. If she agrees, we can get down to work at once.”

“Hadn’t you better ask Mrs. Maynard if she’ll let us have their garden first?” Pat queried. “We’ll need it if we’re going to have the pierrot show and though we know she’ll agree all right, it would be politer to ask first, wouldn’t it?”

Julie nodded. “Oh, yes; we must do that, of course. What’s the time, anyone?”

Clem glanced at her watch. “Nearly nineteen o’clock. Suppose we choose two people to go as a deputation to her? There’s just time before Abendessen.”

A tap at the door sounded before anyone could reply to this. It was pushed open and Joey Maynard herself entered, carrying a big basket.

“You come pat upon your call, Aunt Joey!” Julie exclaimed. “What’s that?”

“Blocks of ice-cream,” Joey said, sitting down on the only spare chair the room possessed. “I was down in Interlaken to-day and saw these, so I brought enough for each of you to have one. Don’t let the rest know, whatever you do, for this was all I could manage. I left an order with the man for Saturday, though, so they’ll get theirs then.” She passed the basket round with the remark, that there were wooden spoons in with the ices and, when everyone had been served and she was busy with the last herself, she went on, “What are you all doing? You looked awfully official when I came in. What is it all in aid of?”

“Aunt Joey, can we borrow your garden for the whole of the last Saturday of term?” Julie demanded.

“You certainly *can*. The question is *may* you,” returned Joey, with a wicked twinkle in her eye. “For the *whole* day, Julie? What, under the sun, do you want it for?”

Julie grinned at her. “Don’t you love us enough to promise?”

“No fear! You don’t catch *me* buying any pigs in pokes, I can tell you! Tell me why you want it and I may agree. I’m promising nothing till I hear that.”

Julie absorbed a spoonful of ice and then said, “Well, we’ve been discussing what we should do for the end of term. As you know, it’s always left to us to decide and as we wanted to be original for our first effort in the Oberland, we asked for suggestions from everyone. We’ve had some weird ones, too,” she added thoughtfully.

“Such as?” Joey demanded, licking her spoon with enjoyment.

“Well, Norah Fitzgerald wanted us to hire ponies and have a pony gymkhana,” Pat told her.

“Good Heavens! She’s not at all ambitious, is she? Still, it’s what you might expect from young Norah. She always was crazy over horses. I suppose you turned that one down flat. Any more high-flying ideas?”

“None quite as bad; but we *are* having a gymkhana, with flower-pot races and frog races and anything else wild we can think of,” Clem explained. “That was Mary-Lou’s idea. We can have that on one of the tennis courts. Luckily, they’re hard courts, so it won’t hurt them. Then Barbara Chester suggested making tableaux out of flowers and greenery—and I know where she got *that*

idea from,” she added unexpectedly. “It was that account you gave us of the well, somewhere in England, which the village folk decorate every year. I’ve just thought of it.”

“It’s an idea,” Joey agreed. “Where do you propose to have that?”

“In the rock garden. There’s plenty of room and with all the paths, the people can walk round quite comfortably. Also, they have to go down the steps to get there and they’re on the narrow side. We thought we’d have someone at the top to collect the cash.”

“Oh, you’re going to charge to see it, then? Good idea! You ought to make a nice little sum for the San at that rate. But why do you want my garden?”

“Jo Scott suggested a kind of pierrot show,” Polly Winterton said. “It isn’t really pierrots, but the idea is that some of us dress up in the national costumes of various countries and have songs and dances belonging to them.”

“Belonging to whom?” Jo demanded with a grin. “You’re frightfully vague, Polly.”

Polly reddened to the roots of her red hair. “Oh, you know what I mean, Mrs. Maynard. Dilys Owen is Welsh and she would wear Welsh costume and sing something like——”

“‘The Bells of Aberdovey’,” Veronica took it up, seeing that Polly had stopped, gravelled for the name of any Welsh song. “Yes; and Nora Fitzgerald is Irish and could dance an Irish jig——”

“Over my dead body!” Julie spoke dramatically. “I don’t trust Norah Fitz as far as I could throw her and she’s having nothing like an Irish jig to do; I can tell you that! Anyhow, Pat’s Irish. What’s the matter with *her* doing the jig?”

“Oh, Pat’s got to sing, of course!” Veronica cried. “What’ll you sing, Pat? ‘The Londonderry Air’? Or what about ‘My Love’s an Arbutus’? I always love that.”

The horrified Pat exclaimed, “You can count me *out* of the pierrot show! I’ll be busy either taking money or helping to run the flower-show. If you *must* have a jig, you can come down on Clare Kennedy for it. Goodness knows she’s Irish as they come and she can dance the jig beautifully. I’ve seen her.”

“Oh, very well. Anyhow, you get the idea, don’t you?” Julie turned to Joey.

“I *think* so,” Joey said thoughtfully. “It’s quite good and very original. Well, if that’s what you want the garden for, you’re welcome to it. How many countries do you think you can represent? Let’s see.” She began to count on her fingers. “You’ve Wales and Ireland. What about Scotland?”

“That new girl, Lesley Bethune—in Lower V,” Clem said quickly. “She can dance the Highland Fling. She was doing it for that crowd the other day. She’s safe to have kilts and all the rest and if she hasn’t got them here, there’s any amount of time for her to write home for them. Then we’ve eight or nine French girls, and Jeanne d’Élie, at any rate, has quite a decent voice and could sing for us. And Ghiselaine Thomé is Belgian and can do something Belgian. And some of our crowd could do country dances and sing some of the folk songs. Oh yes; we could get up quite a decent programme, Aunt Joey.”

“And what does the Head say to it?” Joey asked.

“We haven’t asked her yet. We’re going to write it out and send a deputation to her tomorrow,” Julie explained. “But we had to ask you about your garden, first.”

“I see. Well, I’ve agreed, so that’s all right. But if you’re going to write out the list of all you want to do before Abendessen, you’d better get cracking. It’s ten past already, so that leaves you only twenty minutes before the gong goes. Put your remnants in the waste-paper basket and I’ll be off. I only came to bring you your ices. Count on me for any help you want. I think it’s a great idea and I’ll co-operate with all the pleasure in life,” quoth Joey, as she stood up. “By the way, I haven’t seen my family, so you might keep this visit dark. They’re coming to spend the day on Sunday after Mass, anyhow.”

She slid out of the door before they could reply to this valediction and scuttled down the front

stairs, where she sought Miss Annersley in her salon to warn her of what was before her before she went home through the two gardens and no one else but the prefects knew that she had paid the school a visit that evening.

Chapter X

JO GETS INTO TROUBLE

Thanks to Joey Maynard's foresight, when Julie came next day to the study to ask if the Head would receive a deputation from the prefects, she met with a warm welcome. Miss Annersley told her that the deputation might come to the salon immediately after Kaffee und Kuchen that afternoon and she would be ready to listen to them.

"So *that's* all right," Julie said, when she told her compeers what the Head had said, while they were hunting out their books for the first part of the morning's lessons. "We'd better choose our deputation during Break. We can meet in the summer-house and see about it. Help!" as the cuckoo from the wall-clock suddenly flew out and cuckooed eight times. "Is that the time? Come on, everyone! We'll be late for walk if we don't look out and a nice gloat *that* would be for the Middles!"

They gathered up their belongings and hurried downstairs to the Sixth Form room where they and Lower Sixth met for English essay during the first period. It was a large, sunny room, fitted up with folding desks and chairs, bookcases, which contained part of the school's reference library, and copies of famous paintings by the Italian primitives. Flowers stood about on every available space and with the French windows open to the June sun and air it was a pleasant place.

Having deposited their books, the big girls went along to the Senior Splashery to get their big hats. In June, the Swiss sunshine is very hot and Matron flatly refused to run any risk of sunstroke with the girls.

It was as they were walking along the corridor that the door of Upper IV_B flew open and Jo Scott hurtled out. She was in such a hurry, that she never attempted to look where she was going. The result was that she plunged head first into Ruth Wilson, sending that young woman staggering against the opposite wall. Jo would have crashed on top of the prefect, but Clem, who was just behind Ruth, grabbed her shoulder and steadied her, while Veronica performed the same kind office for Ruth.

"Oh!" Jo gasped, when she had recovered herself, "I'm frightfully sorry! I hope I haven't hurt you? I really am awfully sorry!"

Ruth had pulled off her hat which had suffered in the collision and was trying to straighten the brim. "Clumsy young idiot!" she snapped. "Look what you've done to my hat! I believe you've spoilt it—and it's new this term."

"I'm frightfully sorry," Jo repeated, with an anxious look at the hat. "I honestly didn't mean it. Can I—can I do anything about your hat?"

"'Didn't mean it'? Didn't bother to look where you were going, you mean!" Ruth retorted furiously. "Well, Matron will have something to say about this, I can tell you! No, Julie!" for that young woman had taken the maltreated hat from her and was seeing what *she* could do with it. "It's broken, just there by the crown. You can't do anything with it. It's ruined and I'll have to send home for the money to buy a new one. In the meantime, will someone kindly tell me what I'm to wear just now?"

"I believe I could fix this for you," Julie said, looking up from the hat. "A stitch or two would put it more or less right so that you could wear it. Really, Jo," she added severely to that penitent sinner, "a girl of your age might show a little more sense. Why on earth didn't you *look* before you burst out like that? And what were you doing in your formroom at this hour, in any case?" she added.

Jo went red. "Matron sent me to pick up my books. They'd slid down off the desk and were

all in a heap on the floor.”

“Well, another time, please be more careful!” Julie said sharply. “And for goodness’ sake look where you’re going, in future. You’d better be off now. Your walk will be waiting for you.”

Thankful to get away, Jo turned and scuttled off as hard as she could go and Julie proceeded to do her best to smooth Ruth’s ruffled feelings. “It’s not really so bad, Ruthie. I can easily put a stitch or two in and I believe it’ll be practically all right again then. You go on, everyone, and Ruth and I will follow as fast as we can, so don’t run a Marathon. We’re walking along to the San, aren’t we? Right! We’ll be with you in a few minutes. Come back to the prefects’ room, Ruth. My sewing things are up there in the cupboard.” She led the way, Ruth following in a direful mood. She had got up in a bad temper that morning and Jo’s escapade had not made matters any better.

Meanwhile, Jo herself had fled to join Upper IV_B walk, where, luckily for her, she found that Miss Moore was late, and was able to join Clare Kennedy, her partner for the day, without being caught late. She was still feeling sorry for the mischief she had done, though Ruth’s quick anger and Julie’s sharp remarks had taken the edge off her regret a little.

Clare, who was quick to scent trouble in the air, waited until they were well away from the school gates and marching in a demure crocodile along the great motor-road that led down to the valley. Then she asked, “What’s wrong with you, Jo?”

Jo gulped. “It was my own fault, of course. No one need tell me that. But I must say I wish it had happened with almost anyone else but Ruth Wilson.”

“What do you mean?” Clare demanded in careful German, since that was the language of the day, though both the prefects and Jo herself had forgotten it during the past few minutes. “What on earth has Ruth Wilson to do with you?”

Jo went red again. “I forgot it was German day,” she said, with fair fluency. After all, this remark was made by most of them at least a dozen times a day on Mondays and Thursdays. Then she paused to muster up her scanty German in order to explain. “I ran out of the classroom and I bumped into Ruth and—what’s the German for ‘damaged’?—her hat. She was angry and so was Julie.”

Clare looked serious. “Ich bin sehr traurig,” she said. Then, with a cautious look round, she added in low tones, “Ruth can be such a beast when she gets her monkey up! What did you do about it?”

“English, Clare?” Miss Moore had ears like a hare, as someone had once said, and she had overheard enough of Clare’s remark to tell her that it was not German.

It was Clare’s turn to crimson as she replied slowly and in German, “I am sorry Miss Moore. I forgot it was German day.”

“But you must *not* forget,” Miss More said inflexibly. “Repeat to me what you said—and in German, please.”

Clare was in a quandary. She could hardly tell the mistress that she had been calling one of the prefects a beast. She hurriedly searched her memory for a less unpleasant word and finally managed to get out that she had said that Ruth could be very unpleasant sometimes when she was annoyed.

Miss Moore looked at her quickly, but made no comment beyond correcting her pronunciation of two or three words, and by the time that was over, they were well away from the Platz and Barbara and Maeve had come to ask if they might break ranks and walk in groups. Miss Moore gave leave and the matter was more or less forgotten, though Jo, stumbling over the foreign language, told Clare that she was sorry her friend had got into trouble on her account.

Clare laughed. “It was my own fault,” she said. “I should have known Miss Moore would catch me. Well, tell us what the row was.” For by this time, they had been joined by Maeve, Barbara and Prunella Davidson.

With such help as the other four could give, Jo managed to explain the trouble and their faces lengthened as they heard her. They had all, at one time or another, got across Ruth Wilson and they all knew that she had a habit of holding on to grudges.

"If it had been anyone else!" Maeve sighed. "But *Ruth!*"

"You'd best try to keep out of her way," Barbara advised. "Perhaps, if she doesn't see you for the next day or two, she'll forget about it. Julie may be able to put her hat right—she always says that if she hadn't made up her mind to go in for Law, she would have been a milliner!—and that should soothe her down."

"You've got a hope, haven't you?" Maeve said, tempting Providence by saying this in English. "Ruth's like the elephant. She *never* forgets!"

It was lucky for Maeve that Miss Moore was occupied just then in helping Sue Meadows to say in German, "I want to gather some of those flowers to send to my cousin, Leila, in hospital." So for once, Maeve came off without her deserts.

They had to turn presently, or they would be late for Prayers and after Prayers, lessons began at once. Lower IV_B reached the gates at almost the same moment as the prefects, and Jo and her chums all shot quick glances at Ruth whose hat looked almost as well as usual. Ruth herself glared at Jo, who, with Clare, came second in the long file, but Jo, after that one swift look, had turned away and did not see it. Clare did though, and later, in the formroom, she seized an opportunity to warn her friend to be careful what she did if she met Ruth for the next day or two.

"She looked at you as if she would like to eat you," she said. "Do look out for her, Jo!"

However, the rest of the day passed more or less peacefully. Jo managed to escape from Ruth during the morning by scuttling into doorways and side corridors when she saw the prefect in the distance. In the afternoon, all those of the two Sixths who took science went down to Welsen for a couple of hours with its Head, Miss Wilson, who had been science mistress at the Chalet School for a good many years before she went out to start the new branch two years before the major portion of the school followed to the Oberland. Ruth was among them and as they always had Kaffee und Kuchen at Das Haus unter den Kiefern, as the big Chalet where the finishing branch lived was called, the Middle was able to avoid the elder girl for the rest of the day. The only time when they were in the same place was during Abendessen and Prayers and after Prayers, Julie, Veronica and Clem carried their colleague off for a good game of tennis while Jo joined some of Mary-Lou's Gang and gardened with vim.

Friday was French day and it must be admitted that most of the girls greatly preferred it to Thursday. For one thing, all of them had learned French for some years, even if their conversational French left a good deal to be desired. For another, Friday was the last day of the working week and Friday's lessons were mostly favourites.

Upper IV_B had art for the first two periods of the morning and were expected to have everything ready before Prayers, so that immediately after, they could march straight across the garden to the long, wooden building which had been erected as art and handicrafts room. They usually saw to it that they had all their possessions in the Splashery before they went in to Prayers. Herr Laubach, the art master, was a man with a hair-trigger temper and a bitter tongue. When the school had left Tirol, he had followed it, and the long years in England had improved his English, so that he could scold fluently in their own tongue if he saw that his German was beyond them.

History told that in the earlier days of the school Joey Maynard, then Joey Bettany and a monkey of a schoolgirl, had infuriated him to such an extent, that he had flung her pencils, paper and rubber at her before turning her out of the art-room for good and all. It happened to be truer than some of the legends the school had perpetuated; but not many of them knew that on that occasion Joey had set out to be as irritating as she knew how and fully deserved not only what he gave her, but the retribution of extra maths in art time which had fallen on her.

On this occasion, Jo went with the rest to the art room and settled down at her desk only to find when she opened her paintbox that she had forgotten her paint-brushes.

“Qu’avez-vous?” demanded Prunella, sitting next her and seeing her face fall.

“J’ai oublié mes brosses,” Jo murmured dismally. “Que ferai-je?”

Prunella shook her head. She would willingly have lent some of her own, but borrowing was strictly forbidden and only last week, Heather Clayton had got into serious trouble for lending hers to Francie Wilford. Herr Laubach had reported the pair to the Head and both had had an unpleasant interview with her. She had followed that up by informing the school at large that evening that in future, any girl who lent or borrowed art belongings, would be docked of three order marks and fined into the bargain. In view of that, Prunella did not dare to lend and Jo would certainly not have borrowed. Pocket-money left little margin for fines which could be avoided.

There was nothing else for it. Jo had to own up and, judging by his scowl, Herr Laubach was not in a sweet temper. It took all her courage to get her to her feet and walk up the room to the table where the master was arranging a “group” which the girls would draw direct in water-colours on to their paper. The length of blue silk, which was to form the background, was proving difficult to drape as he wanted and his brow was very dark when, attracted by her light footfalls, he glanced up and saw her at his side.

“Veil?” he growled. “Vat is it you vant, hein?”

Art did have one bright side to it for even the inartistic. English was the language spoken unless your German were fluent enough for you to dare to risk speaking it. Herr Laubach had little or no French and flatly refused to bother with it. Jo took a grip on herself and faced him bravely.

“Please,” she said, “I’m very sorry, but I’ve left my paint-brushes over at school. May I go and get them?” She ended on a gulp, for his light, greenish-grey eyes were shooting fire at her.

He glared at her in alarming silence for a full minute. Then, just as Jo was beginning to think if he went on saying nothing, she must let out a most unladylike yell, he growled, “Vy is zat? Vere do you your broshes keep?”

Anything was better than that frightening silence. Jo plucked up courage and replied, “I keep them in a long box because some of them have such long handles that if I put them in my paint-box, it makes the hairs bend over. I *have* my paint-box, but I forgot to bring the brushes-box. Please, Herr Laubach, may I go for it?”

For reply, he lugged out his huge, turnip watch, glowered at it for a moment, and said, “Ja; you may go. I gif you fünf minuten. *Go!*”

Jo fled on the word and arrived back in the art-room with one minute to spare. She was breathless and scarlet with running, but she had done it. She slid into her seat, panting, and mopped her face with her handkerchief before setting to work.

His eye was on her and he growled at her. “To vork begin. No more idleness!”

She tucked her handkerchief away and turned her eyes on the group with some apprehension. What he called “free water-colour drawing” was something of a bogey to her. If only he would allow them to use pencil first! You could at least rub out wrong marks then. But when you had to do it with brushes and paint straight on to the paper no such solace was yours and you could make a horrid mess in no time.

The group consisted of the blue silk which he had draped to his satisfaction while she was out of the room. Against it stood a shapely Chinese vase with a blossom design in green and gold spraying across the sloping, rounded sides. At the foot of the vase lay a folded fan with three playing cards under it. Jo gasped a tiny gasp of horror, even while her mind approved the contrast between the black fan and the scarlet-backed cards in combination with the vase and drapery. But how on earth was she ever to manage anything that would even remotely satisfy him?

“Oh well,” she thought, “I’d better get cracking on something. Sitting *staring* at it won’t buy the baby a new hat!”

She mixed the groundwash of yellow ochre, well-watered down, selected her thickest brush and set to work to wash her paper over. So much he had managed to din into her. That done, she had to sit back and wait until the wash was dry. Meantime, she began trying to get proportions into her eye. She was still busy, when Herr Laubach himself arrived at her elbow and looked down at her work.

A positive snarl startled her. “For vy haf you your paper zis way pinned?” he demanded. “Can you not see, Dummkopf zat you are, zat ze length greater zan zee breadth is? Unpin him and turn him round and do not be so—so *unseeing!*”

He passed on to Prunella who was beginning to wash in her vase and Jo was left to shift the paper round and wish that she had indeed used her wits. By the time he had reduced Prunella to flushed consternation and gone on to Barbara Chester who was really artistic, an inheritance from an artist mother, the ground was dry and Jo, shuddering apprehensively, was mixing a watery green for the vase.

Of the rest of that lesson, the least said the better. Jo, painting carefully at a lop-sided version of the vase, was nearly blown out of her seat by his demand to know why she had used such a faint green that the object on her paper was scarcely visible? He also pointed out that the vase on the table happened to be evenly shaped, without any peculiar bulges on one side, and stood level on the table, while hers was obviously tilted at an angle no self-respecting vase could ever maintain without support! In short, everything she had done was wrong. He ripped the paper from the board with no regard for the drawing-pins at the corners and they sprang out and flew in all directions. Jo picked them up and was then sent to the cupboard for a fresh sheet of water-colour paper and ordered to start again. Luckily, she was by no means the only one. Three other girls, including Betty Landon, had already been subjected to the same treatment. She went meekly to fetch the paper and was presently back at the old groundwash. But she did remember to pin the paper lengthwise to her board!

By the time the lesson was over, Upper IV_B had been reduced to flinders with the exception of Barbara and Clare who were the shining lights of the form when it came to art. Even they were more subdued than usual. Over and over again the form had been roared at, called thick-heads—idiot-children—careless little girls! Betty’s second effort had met the same treatment as her first and she had nearly been reduced to tears by his strictures. Alicia Leonard *did* duck under the desk and mop her eyes when he had finished storming at her.

“Well, there’s one thing,” Barbara said, as they loitered across the grounds after the lesson was over. “We’ve had a doing, but Upper V will get it even worse.”

“How d’you make that out?” Clare asked. “I don’t see how he could give them any worse than he’s given us. If you ask me, he’s excelled himself this morning!”

“*And* he’s just gone on working up and up!” Barbara retorted. “He hasn’t given the first sign of simmering down—not once. He’s at boiling-point now. When Upper V come along, they’ll get the full benefit of that and what they earn on their own. I’m thankful *we’re* first and not them!”

“Why is he like that?” Jo wanted to know. “I’ve had six lessons with him now—no; seven—and every time he seems to be in a perfect rage. Does he *live* in a state of continual fury?”

“No-o,” Maeve said slowly. “I *have* known him to be quite decent sometimes. And then sometimes he’s like he was to-day. Nothing you can do will please him. You saw how he went for even Barbara and Clare and I thought *their* groups were frightfully swish myself. I suppose it’s a kind of disease and he can’t help it,” she wound up placidly.

“It’s no use having fits over him, Jo. He just can’t help it.”

“Who can’t help what? And what on earth are you crowd doing strolling along like this at *this*

hour on a Friday?” demanded her aunt’s voice just behind them. They all turned to see Joey, with her twins packed into a double go-cart, standing looking at them with laughing eyes.

“Oh, Auntie Joey!” Maeve exclaimed “We’re just going back from art. Hello, twins! Oh, aren’t the twins *ducks!* Kiss Maeve, Felicity, precious! Now Felix!”

Felicity put up her rosy face for a kiss; but Felix, who was, as his mother said, chockful of wickedness, grabbed at her bronzy curls with sturdy little fists and tugged hard with shrieks of delight. Maeve’s yell joined them and Joey hurriedly released the curls from his stumpy fingers. Maeve made haste to move out of the way while her aunt scolded her youngest son.

“And now,” Joey said, when she had attended to her son’s morals, “for the second time of asking, what are you people doing out here? Yes; I know you’ve just been to art, but I thought you were expected to go straight back.” She paused and surveyed their faces with dancing eyes. “You all looked rather dejected when I first saw you. Have you been told exactly where you get off when it comes to art?”

“I should think we have!” Prunella said ruefully. “Mrs. Maynard, was Herr Laubach *always* furious when *you* had lessons from him?”

Joey giggled like a schoolgirl. “Mean to say you’ve never heard about my *last* lesson with him?” she asked. “You *are* behind the times, Prunella! Oh, I’m not going to tell you and certainly not now when you ought to be in school. You ooze along and ask someone to-morrow when you can talk English. You’re all going to be frightfully late for Break. Do you know,” with a glance at her watch, “that it’s *twenty-three minutes to eleven?*”

A chorus of horrified shrieks greeted this information and they all tore off, arriving in the kitchen for their lemonade and biscuits breathlessly and untidy. Karen glowered at them. Late-comers made her work even more difficult, for it held the maids up when there was a whole form’s glasses to wash after everyone else’s had been seen to. However, she said nothing, but gave them their “elevenses” in a grim silence that quelled any desire they might have had to chatter.

General literature, which they had with Upper IV_A, came next and as this was a favourite lesson with everyone, they calmed down. But geography came next for Upper IV_B and, on this occasion, it pleased Miss Moore to set them a “spot” test.

The opinions were of the form on “spot” tests was very much at variance. Some of them enjoyed them; some didn’t mind one way or the other; but at least seven girls loathed them in geography, at any rate, and among them was Jo. That young lady was not fond of geography at any time and “spot” tests on physical geography struck her as cruelty to girls. So when Miss Moore arrived with a prefect wheeling a large blackboard behind her, Jo thought rebelliously that this really had been a *ghastly* week; what with the row with Ruth, this morning’s art class, and now “spot” test in geography to wind up with!

Clem wheeled the board into position and Miss Moore dismissed her with thanks. When the prefect had left the room, the mistress said briskly, “Sheet paper, pens, and coloured pencils, please! Head your papers. Then I’ll turn the board. There are twenty questions and you will have half-an-hour. Most of them should require only a minute or a minute and a half to answer. I don’t want more than two or three sentences on any one question.”

“She’ll be in luck if she gets *half* that from me!” muttered naughty Heather Clayton, from just behind Jo. “How I loathe geography!”

Jo agreed, but she could hardly say so. She headed her paper and then looked up as Miss Moore swung the board round to show the questions, neatly written in script. That done, she glanced at the clock, said, “Half-an-hour from—*now!*” and she sat down at the table to mark papers from Lower IV_A and Lower V.

The first question was easy enough. “Name the Tropics. What winds mainly affect such regions.” Miss Moore had gone through that with them only the week before. Even Jo and

Heather could answer it and all pens went flying over the paper. But after that, it wasn't quite so easy. For instance, what, exactly did you mean by "the volcanic circle"? Jo had no idea. Finally, she wrote down desperately, "The volcanic circle is the land immediately round a volcano".

Worse was to come. Jo looked down the questions, picking out one here and another there to which she felt she could produce some sort of answer. She met her Waterloo when she came up with: "How could you compare land and sea breezes with monsoons?"

Now although Jo had lived in a land which depends on the wet monsoons for its rain, she had never taken any interest in the scientific side of it. *She* had regarded it as the cause of a good year or a bad one and left it at that. Miss Moore had taken both forms of wind with the class before Easter and had not touched on it since. Jo had never taken any of it in at her Kenya school, though she remembered vaguely the mistress there drawing diagrams with long curly arrows on the blackboard.

She sucked the end of her pen dismally. She knew she could do nothing with the other remaining questions and she had answered only nine of them as it was. She glanced round and saw that most other people were working steadily. She could hear even Heather scratching away behind her. She simply must do something about it. Was there any other single thing she could answer? She scanned the blackboard hopefully. Only five minutes remained of the time, so she *must* do something! She gave up the winds and pitched on "What is 'loess'? Where is it found? What causes it?" She had no real idea what it was, and, as a matter-of-fact, she mixed it up with "lava". Therefore, the astounded Miss Moore had the pleasure of reading later on, "Loess is the stuff that comes out of volcanoes when they erupt. It is caused by the steam and fire in the middle of the earth melting the rocks and ground, and when they are liquid, they blow a hole in the top of the volcano and pour out rather like milk boiling over."

By the time Jo had finished this remarkable piece of information, time was up and she laid her pen down and blotted her last page with a sigh of relief. At least, she had done half the paper and if some of the answers were not quite correct, she had tried. It came as a nasty shock when, at the next lesson, Miss Moore, after stigmatizing her paper as a disgrace to a girl in *Lower IV*, let alone one in *Upper*, wound up by commanding her to write down and learn by heart, "Loess is the alluvial soil borne down by great rivers and deposited on the land when they are in flood. The word is Chinese and loess is found in China".

Chapter XI

LEILA COMES HOME

On the Tuesday after that memorable Friday, Sue Meadows was called out of form during the morning. Nor did she return.

"I hope there's nothing wrong with Leila," Mary-Lou said, during the brief period between the end of morning school and Mittagessen. "She's gone on so well this last few weeks, it would be simply horrible if anything went wrong now."

"Why don't you go and ask the Head?" suggested Lesley Malcolm, who was a sarcastic soul on occasion. "I'm sure she'd tell you, Mary-Lou."

As Lesley was only being sarcastic and did not mean what she said, she got a bad shock when her friend stood up, pulled her frock straight and examined her two plaits anxiously, before saying, "That's a good idea! I'll go at once!" And went.

"Oh lord!" Lesley said, using a strictly forbidden expression in her dismay and adding to her sins by speaking in English. "Can't the little ass tell when you're ragging?"

"It doesn't pay to rag with Mary-Lou," said Vi Lucy. "Don't worry, Les. The Head will know we're anxious. She'll tell her all right, though she mightn't tell anyone else. Mary-Lou's a cat on her own and you know yourself she gets away with things none of the rest of us would dare to think of doing."

Clem Barras, coming over from art, overheard this. "I ought to jump on them," she murmured to Julie who was with her, "but it's too hot. Heavens! What a day! If it gets much hotter, the spirits of wine or quicksilver or whatever it is will be blowing a hole in the top of the thermometer and boiling out like young Jo's loess!"

The school had all heard of that young woman's "howler" by this time, and it had taken the fancy of the elders immensely. Julie laughed, though she hinted that as Clem *had* heard the pair breaking rules, she ought to sacrifice herself and go and dock order-marks.

"I can't do it," she added. "I wasn't paying any attention to them and I didn't hear a word. It doesn't do to be slack with those young demons of Middles."

"It's too late. We're well past them and I *would* look an ass, going back and ticking them off for talking English when it ought to be French," Clem said, mopping her face with her handkerchief. "What a day for a swim this would be! How would you like to be transported to St. Briavel's for the afternoon, Julie?"

"I shouldn't mind," Julie acknowledged. "I wonder, if this heat goes on, if the Head would let us go down to bathe in Lake Thun? They have bathing-places there and it *would* be nice for a change."

"We might get up a petition to her," Clem proposed. "But not this minute. All I want is a nice drink of cold water and, thank goodness, I can have that from the tap in the Splashery. Come on, before the rest break the glasses with scrapping for them!"

"Who's talking English now?" Julie cried. "But I'd like a cold drink myself," she added. "Come on! We're nearly there."

The pair entered the Splashery where they found half-a-dozen other prefects all sitting on top of the lockers in various attitudes of langour, fanning themselves with handkerchiefs and sipping the ice-cold water. At sight of Julie and Clem, they sat up and Madge Herbert hastily rinsed out the glass she was holding and filled it.

"What ages you two have been! Have a drink and then, lend me your ears. What do you think is the latest?"

“Not knowing, can’t say,” Clem replied, tossing down her art impedimenta on to the windowsill. “Buck up with that glass, Julie! I’m parched!”

Julie drained the glass and handed it over. “Here you are. Madge, what has happened? You look like a cat that has just absorbed a saucer of rich cream.”

“I’ve news, my loves—news!” Madge said dramatically.

“News? Good news? Then, ‘Prithee take the cork out of thy mouth and I will drink thy tidings!’”

“What?” It was a shrieked chorus. The prefects had forgotten what day it was and were all chattering in English as hard as they could go. “*What did you say, Julie?*”

“‘As you Like It,’” Julie said, with a sweet smile. “Didn’t you recognize it after slogging at it all last year? Dear me! What rotten memories some folk have!”

“I’ve a good mind not to tell you my news,” Madge said severely. “You don’t deserve, after that slam! Only, the rest are dying to hear it, I know——”

“And you’re dying to tell us,” Clem put in. “Get on with it, Madge!”

“Well,” Madge said, “I met Miss Burnett as I came across and she told me that to-morrow, if the weather is still fine, and, according to the radio it *will* be, we are all going down to bathe in Lake Thun. If—mind, it’s only ‘if’—it goes on being hot and everyone behaves decently, we shall probably go down three or four afternoons in the week, as long as the heat lasts, for boating and bathing. How’s that?”

“Marvellous——”

The sound of the gong cut across Julie’s speech and she gave a cry of horror. “Mercy! That’s the gong and I’ve never washed or tidied my hair. Fly, you people, and see that the kids march in decently and in order. I’ll be alone in a moment.” Julie was at one of the basins and soaping her hands vigorously as she spoke. The rest, including Clem, who had attended to her toilet while Julie and the others talked, left the cloakroom, every last one of them with guilty feelings, as they remembered the orgy of English they had just enjoyed. Julie splashed her face, dried face and hands and added a light dust of powder before running a comb through her curls. Then she fled to the long corridor down which the school was filing to the dining-room.

“You’ve been quick,” murmured Clem, in very correct French, but with a British accent, as the Head Girl joined the prefects. “*I hope you are clean!*”

“*Mais parfaitement,*” Julie retorted, turning pink. Then she was recalled to her duties by seeing Emerence Hope give Len Maynard a surreptitious shove. “Emerence!” she called warningly. “*Comportez vous bien, s’il vous plaît!*”

Emerence went scarlet and Len, turning round, made a face at her. The heat was upsetting all the girls and most of them were what Matron had called “frachetty”, when she was talking to the Head before the gong sounded. It was this which had decided Miss Annersley to send them all down to the lake next afternoon. She had made her decision at Break and told Miss Burnett, since Miss Dene was already in Interlaken on business connected with the school. The Games mistress had gone off to the station on Joey Maynard’s bicycle which she had borrowed, and made all arrangements. She had been returning when she met Madge and the girl’s languid manner had inspired her to tell the news. The rest would hear it when they had sat down after Grace.

The prefects waited until everyone but the staff had entered the room. Then they strolled in to take their places with such beaming faces, that most of the girls stared. The only people who took little or no notice of them were The Gang and they had their own cause for excitement, though Mary-Lou had warned them that they were to keep their own news “under your hats”.

“Can’t very well. We shan’t have ‘em on,” Hilary Bennet retorted.

“Well, you just breathe a word and see how long it is before I tell you anything!” was her leader’s riposte; and Hilary was silenced.

The staff came in and took their places and Grace was said. Miss Annersley told the girls to

sit and when everyone was in her place, all faces turned towards the top table where the mistresses were also sitting, she gave them her news.

“I have two pieces of news that I think you will like to hear. The first is, that Leila Elstob has made such good progress that she is being brought home this afternoon. Sue Meadows has gone to be there to welcome her and to help her aunt, Mrs. Elstob. A nurse will be with Leila for the present, but Dr. Jack called in this morning to tell me and he says that they have every hope that they have overcome the disease, though they can't say definitely for some time to come. I saw Leila on Sunday, though, and she looks much stronger.”

There was an outburst of clapping at this, led off by Mary-Lou, needless to say. That young woman had already heard the news, as a result of her call on the Head, and had been allowed to tell her own clan, though she had been warned that they were to tell no one else, as Miss Annersley meant to inform the school herself.

She stood smiling at them. She had known that they were all deeply interested in poor little Leila. Indeed, they had contrived, among them, to bring a good deal of pleasure into her short, pain-filled life since the school had come to the Platz. Tiny gifts of no real value, notes, story-books and many other things had gone along to the Elisehütte. During the winter, they had practised their ski-ing in front of her window to amuse her. The best of all had been the gift of the magnificent toy chalet made by one of the girls at Welsen, Tom Gay, for the Sale of Work at the end of the previous term, and won by Con Maynard in the competition for it. The Maynards had two dolls' houses already, and Con and her triplet sisters had fully agreed that the delightful toy should go to Leila. During the holidays, they had gone to play with it and with her on two or three occasions. Leila was not actually known to most of the girls, apart from Joey's children and her cousin Sue; but the school regarded her very much as theirs. Hence their delight at the good news about her.

For a minute the Head let them clap. Then she held up her hand for silence.

“I said I had two pieces of news,” she reminded them, with a smile. “Don't you want to hear the other?”

“Yes, please!” It came as a chorus from all corners.

“Well,” she said, “it's been very hot this last day or two and I know you've been missing the boating and bathing we've had at St. Briavel's. I've made arrangements for everyone to go down to Interlaken to-morrow. We will take the lake steamer to Därligen where there is a good beach. You shall bathe and, if we can hire boats, you shall have boating, too. Miss Burnett will go down to-morrow morning to see about that. Lessons will go on till twelve and then we shall have Mittagessen and go down with the thirteen-ten train and spend the afternoon and early evening by the lake. We'll have a picnic there and when you come home, Karen will have Abendessen ready. Wait!” For some of the girls were already patting their hands together. “There is one condition attached to this. It all depends on your own behaviour whether any one of you goes again. Girls who are not instantly obedient or who make exhibitions of themselves, will not be allowed to join our water-parties again for some time. I want that to be clearly understood.”

She looked at no one in particular as she finished and sat down, but quite a number of the Middles, especially the Junior Middles, took her final remark to themselves and vowed, even as they applauded wildly, that their behaviour should be comparable with that of baby angels.

Everyone forgot the heat in the excitement of to-morrow's expedition. Perhaps the fact that Mittagessen was a cold meal helped them. Karen had provided cold, stuffed veal with salad, and jelly and ice-cream to follow. The school had a big refrigerator and ice-cream was easy enough to provide. Furthermore, Joey Maynard had presented the cook, who was a very old friend, with some of her recipes for fruit drinks and the cold and agreeably acid drink that filled their tumblers cooled them down appreciably.

“It is too hot for you to be on the lawns, girls,” the Head said at the end of the meal, when

they were all standing for Grace. “All Seniors may take their deck-chairs into the pines. Middles, you may take yours to the shrubbery. Juniors, you are to go up to your dormitory and undress. Put on your dressing-gowns and lie down on your beds. Miss Andrews is coming up presently and she tells me she has a most delightful book to read to you called *Titania had a Daughter*. It is by the writer of *The Rustication of Randy*, which I know you all enjoyed earlier in the term and it’s about fairies this time. That is all, thank you. Grace!”

They bowed their heads, while she spoke the brief Latin Grace always used, and then hurried to clear the tables as soon as the staff had left the room. That done, the little girls went scampering off upstairs. They had loved the story of Randy, the orange cat who left a big city to go and live in the country. A fairybook, by the same author, sounded good. By the time the unselfish Miss Andrews had reached their dormitory, they were all lying on their beds in their cotton dressing-gowns. Every window and the door as well were wide open and Ailie Russell had lugged a deck-chair all the way upstairs and Janice Chester had begged the loan of a cushion from her cousin Julie. They were waiting for the mistress, by one of the windows, and she acknowledged the attention with hearty thanks before she sat down and plunged into the adventures of Titania, Oberon and their daughter, Princess Jewel.

Meanwhile, the rest had seized on their chairs and departed to seek the coolest spots they could find this very hot day.

“Not,” said Mary-Lou, as she carried her chair to a place where the tall bushes formed a crescent which gave shade to the hard earth, “that it’s very likely to be cool anywhere, a day like this. I should think the thermometer will be *busting* if it gets much hotter. Move up a bit, Barbara. There won’t be room for all of us, otherwise. Thanks! Come on, Verity! Park your chair here beside mine.”

The Gang settled down companionably. There were twelve of them and, as Clem Barrass had once said, they led all the rest of Middle School by the nose and Mary-Lou led the Gang by the nose. Luckily for everyone, Mary-Lou was a level-headed creature, very ambitious and very kind-hearted. The Gang worked hard and played hard; kept a watchful eye on the manners and morals of their fellows; and stood by each other on every occasion. It was into this select body that Jo had found herself drawn, partly through her friendship with Josette Russell, but very much more thanks to her own personality. The Gang were exclusive and if you didn’t measure up to their standards, they might be friendly enough with you, but you could hope in vain to be received into their midst.

At the beginning of the previous term, Mary-Lou had been appointed Head Girl of the Middles. Everyone concerned saw clearly enough that the day was not many years away when she would be Head Girl of the whole school and, as the Head had said, when she had talked over the matter with the staff, it would be as well to give her some experience first. Hence the appointment, the first of its kind.

“No talking for the first half-hour,” Mary-Lou said with authority, as she lay back against her big cushion and produced *Six to Sixteen* which she was reading for the fourth time of asking. “Read, if you like, or sleep. But silence, please.”

The girls produced their books and there was silence in among the bushes except for the sound of pages being turned. There was no breeze and even the birds seemed to consider that it was best to rest in this heat. Jo buried herself in Edna Lyall’s historical story, *In Spite of All*, but, accustomed as she was to the heat of the Kenya summer, even she found to-day more than she enjoyed. She soon found the print blurring. The book fell out of her hands into her lap and she was sleeping as peacefully as Josette on one side of her and Barbara Chester on the other. In fact, only Mary-Lou, Hilary Bennet and Catriona Watson remained awake for the whole time. The rest drowsed or slept unashamedly. It took the bell, ringing at half-past one, to rouse them. But once they were awake, they began to chatter. This was allowed, so long as they spent the first

half-hour of the rest-period in silence. Only Verity-Anne paid no heed to it and slept on peacefully. The rest talked quietly because of this. Verity-Anne was very small and slight and, as Hilary Bennet had once remarked, even though she wasn't really delicate, she somehow made you *think* she was.

"Isn't it gorgeous news about Leila?" Josette asked.

"Marvellous!" Mary-Lou agreed. "I expect Mrs. Elstob is feeling ready to jump the moon this minute. The kid's to come home about four. Can't you see Sue rushing madly about, putting vases of flowers everywhere to welcome her? Leila adores flowers, poor kid!"

"I can't see anyone rushing madly about to-day," Vi Lucy said decidedly. "It's far too hot to do anything but walk *quietly* and in a *ladylike* manner, whatever you may be doing, I say! I wish we'd known she was coming home so soon. We might have got up some surprise as a welcome to her."

"Such as what?" Hilary demanded. "We couldn't go and visit her. I don't suppose she'll be allowed many visitors yet, even though she *is* so much better. What could we do?"

Vi, who had spoken without due thought, was silent; but Mary-Lou was never lacking for ideas. "That's a marvellous thought, Vi," she said, eagerly. "I know we shouldn't all be allowed to go and see her in a body, Hilary. I've got *some* sense! But we might certainly do something to show how glad we are she's getting on so well. Let's all think for two minutes and then each make a suggestion."

"Whatever we do, we'll have to ask for permission," Catriona said.

"Well, I know that. But the Head will give it all right so long as it isn't anything madly exciting or likely to upset her. Come on! We'll think from—*now!*" She looked at her watch as she spoke and the rest, accustomed to follow her lead, however much they might argue with her at times, fell silent again and thought hard. Two minutes can go in a flash—or they can seem hours long. Most of the girls had made up their minds before half that time was over and when Mary-Lou finally said the time was up, there was a general sigh of relief. Their leader looked round.

"We'll begin with the youngest. That's you, Jo. Got anything?"

Jo went very pink as they all gazed at her, but she said sturdily, "What about us all going and singing under her window to welcome her?"

"Gosh! That's *my* idea, too!" Vi exclaimed. "We could go after Kaffee und Kuchen. The Head would give us leave all right and you know she said that there would be no more lessons to-day. That's one very good thing about this school," she added. "When it's a scorcher like it is to-day, we aren't expected to work. I don't mind having to do extra time in the winter when we can't go out, just because I *know* we'll get time off in the summer when it's hot."

"It's a very good idea," Mary-Lou said. "I'd only thought of us all writing notes to her. We can't send her anything to-day. It's the middle of the week and we certainly couldn't get leave to go shopping. But we might see about something to-morrow when we're down at Interlaken," she added. "Anyone got anything else?"

"I only thought we might see if we could send her some flowers," Lesley replied. "There are heaps of roses now, and lilies and other things, too."

"Let's do all three!" Josette proposed. "We could all write notes to her and hand them in *with* a big bunch of flowers when we go to—to serenade her."

They were all agreed and Mary-Lou, picking up the big hat she had tossed down in front of her, stood up. "I'll go and ask the Head at once," she said briskly. "Jo and Lesley, you can come with me—put your hats on!" she added severely. "Do you *want* to get sunstroke? And supposing Matey caught you?"

That was quite enough. They picked up their hats and pulled them on. Then, leaving the rest to discuss the proposals, they sauntered off to the salon where they found the Head taking her

ease in a big chair by the open window. She raised her eyebrows when, in answer to her, "Entrez!" the three entered. When she heard what they wanted, however, she consented at once.

"You may write the notes this afternoon, and gather your flowers, too. About the serenade, I'm not so sure. I'm afraid you must leave it until I can hear how Leila has stood the journey from the Sanatorium. I know it's only a short distance, but you must remember that Leila is very frail and easily tired. If Mrs. Elstob says that it would be best to leave it, I'll ask her to let me know when Leila is well enough and you may go then. Will that do?"

"Yes; and thank you very much," Mary-Lou said properly.

"Very well, then. We'll leave it like that. Now go back to the garden and rest. The heat has been dreadful to-day and I'm sure you feel more like sitting still than running about. May you get everyone's writing-pad, Mary-Lou? By all means. Mind you take their pens as well or the pads won't be much use."

She dismissed them and returned to her book, while they went to rout out pads and pens from the lockers and returned to announce the Head's decision.

The result of all this was that when they went to bring out their Kaffee und Kuchen which they were to have in the garden, Mary-Lou carried a pile of notes for Leila and Lesley followed with a huge bunch of flowers. Miss Annersley told them that when the evening cool had come, the prefects might walk along to the Elisehütte to deliver them but there must be no serenading to-night.

"But I'm coming into the garden to tell you all the latest news," she added. "Run along now and help to carry out the crockery and eatables."

They were just finishing their picnic when she arrived, looking cool, despite the blazing heat which still continued. The entire school was assembled on the lawn and she signed to them to remain where they were while she spoke.

"Girls," she said, "I know you will all be glad to hear that Leila Elstob has reached home safely. She has borne the journey very well, but she is very tired between it and the heat. When I rang up Mrs. Elstob just now she told me that Leila had had some milk and bread-and-butter and then fallen asleep. I expect you know by this time that some of you wanted to go and give her a song concert by way of welcome. I'm afraid you must put that off for a day or two until Leila is more rested. But I hope that by Friday or Saturday she will be well enough to enjoy listening to you. In the meantime, as she must be kept very quiet, your evening walks will all be in the other direction. But Mrs. Elstob is deeply grateful for your kind thought and says she knows that Leila will be, too, when she is well enough to be told. Now finish your meal and clear away. By that time, I hope it will be cool enough for you to take your walk."

She nodded and smiled and vanished into the house and the girls were left to themselves once more.

Mary-Lou spoke to her own crowd, once the Head had gone. "Well," she said, "it's all good news. And if we'd had any sense, we'd have known that Leila would be too tired for any more excitement. Anyhow, we've got to-morrow to look forward to and at the end of the week we can go and serenade her. I vote we ask Plato to choose our songs when he comes for singing to-morrow."

And they all agreed with this dictum.

Chapter XII

THE SCHOOL GOES TO THE LAKE

The first thing everyone wanted to know next morning was how Leila was after her first night at home for three months or so. Luckily for the girls, Miss Dene had had orders the night before from the Head to ring up at eight o'clock and ask. She was also to find out if Sue could be spared to return to school. As a result, Miss Annersley told the girls at Prayers that the news from the Elisehütte was as good as could be expected. Leila had had a good night and though she was still very tired, she had enjoyed her breakfast and was delighted to be at home again. Sue would be along in time for school. Her little cousin still had to be kept very quiet and Mrs. Elstob had plenty of help so she was not needed.

"Well, *that's* all right then!" Mary-Lou observed to Verity-Anne, Vi Lucy and Hilary Bennet, as they sat down at their desks and prepared for the first lesson. "Leila should go on all right now and, with any luck, she may be fit enough to come here to school a year come September."

In Upper IV_B, most of them expressed the same belief. They had not yet realized that when she was well enough to move about, Leila would be on crutches and would probably remain on them for some years yet. Later, the doctors meant to see if they could graft fresh bone in the place where they had removed the diseased parts; but the child's strength was not great enough for her to stand that yet.

Having sent their notes and flowers, and been told that they should give their serenade as soon as Leila was strong enough for it, they turned their thoughts to the days' excitement and it was well that the Chalet School staff were an understanding crowd, for a good many people produced the poorest possible work. Even Len Maynard, who was famed as a keen worker, came within an ace of detention. As for Margot, she was finally warned that unless she sat still and gave her attention to her work for the rest of the morning, she would be left behind. Sundry other people got the same warning and the last part of lessons went better than the first in consequence.

At long last, the time came for them to line up in the drive to march to the little mountain station—it consisted of a platform with a shed roof over it—where the train would take them down to the valley. At Interlaken, they would board one of the lake steamers for Därligen, famed for its fine beach. It was another sweltering day and the little coaches on the rack and pinion railway had every window open and the girls revelled in the fresh breezes as they slid down to the valley. But as they dropped, the air grew warmer and by the time they had reached the Interlaken Ost station, they were mopping their faces and fanning themselves with their handkerchiefs.

"Never mind," the Head said, with a sympathetic smile to those nearest her. "Only a few minutes longer and we shall be on the steamer and the air will be cooler on the water. Here we are! Lead on, Julie and Clem, and when you are out, take charge as the younger girls come. The mistresses on duty will stay in the coaches until the last girl is out."

In another quarter-of-an hour, they were all safely aboard the little white-painted lake steamer which was moving down the narrow channel that led to Lake Thun. Then she steamed out on to the blue lake and almost at once the girls felt the truth of the Head's speech. Even on a hot day like this, there was a little cool breeze over the lake and they heaved deep sighs of relief as they felt it.

"*This* is something like!" Barbara Chester said to Jo Scott, who was sitting beside her. "Oh, I *have* missed the sea this summer! I've never been so long away from it in the summer, that is, before."

Jo laughed. "I've never had a lot of it. We live not far from Nyeri in Kenya, and if we want to go down to the sea, it means going down to Mombasa and that's not always fun. It's frightfully hot there—a sort of steamy heat."

"It sounds horrid!" said Josette, on Jo's other side. "What makes it like that?"

"Oh, I don't know," Jo said casually. "It's geography, isn't it? Ask Miss Moore. She ought to be able to tell you. I only know it is steamy hot."

Josette chuckled. "You're not interested in geography one little bit, are you?"

"Not in the slightest," Jo agreed. "At least," she added, "I don't like physical geography. The products and the way people live in different countries and things like that are all right."

"I like those best, too," Barbara said. "Don't you, Vi?" For she was with her cousin as usual.

Vi wrinkled up her brows until they nearly disappeared into her thick, bronze curls. "Don't I what?" she asked. "What are you talking about?"

"Geography," Barbara said succinctly. "Josette was ragging Jo about not liking it a little bit and Jo said she didn't, except the part about peoples and products. I said I liked those myself and I asked you if you did?"

"Yes; I do. That's all frightfully interesting," Vi replied, her charming face lighting up. "I love all lessons about *people*. That's why I loathe maths and science, I s'pose," she added. "I wish to goodness we hadn't *got* to learn them!"

"Oh, so do I!" the other three chorused fervently. None of them was in the least mathematical, as Miss Wilmot could have told you.

"Ready, girls?" came Miss Burnett's voice at that moment. "Pick up your possessions and mind you don't leave anything behind. We're just turning in to the shore. Line up in your forms and be ready to march off the boat quickly. There are a mob of us, we can't delay it longer than we absolutely *must*."

Vi left the little group to join up with the rest of Upper IVa and the trio left looked round for their own mates. In three minutes' time, the girls were all lined up on deck, ready to march off the boat as soon as the gangplank was down. They stood quietly, looking round with interest, as the little steamer slowly swung round in a wide curve and headed for the ferry-landing. Wide, pleasant beaches spread along the shore of the lake on either side of the landing, and groups of people were scattered here and there, while more were in the water.

"Oh!" Barbara muttered to Clare, beside whom she was standing. "I do wish the wretched boat would hurry up! I'm simply dying to get in!"

"Sure, you're not the only one," Clare returned, as the engines were shut off and, moving under her own momentum, the steamer slowly glided up to the landing.

The gangplank went down and Miss Annersley and Miss Dene went off first and then stood watching the girls as they trooped sedately off, beginning with the Third, who had their own Miss Andrews with them, and ending with Julie, Clem and Veronica. Miss o'Ryan had stayed behind to make sure that no one left any of her belongings on the boat. A swift glance round reassured her, and she raced after the others—just in time, for the men were on the point of raising the gangplank. She joined her thrilled younger pupils, who had fully expected to see her carried off to the next village, and set about leading them away to the far end of the beach where Miss Annersley and Miss Dene were already heading. There was only one other group there, but it was a large one, as Julie remarked to Clem and Veronica. The next moment, she uttered a cry of surprise.

"Why—that's Nancy, I'll bet! And that lanky thing couldn't be anyone but Tom Gay! Oh, goody! The Welsen crowd are down as well! I'll bet the Head and Bill fixed it up! Come on, folks!" And she set off at full speed along the beach. Others of the school, who had sisters, cousins or chums at Welsen, followed her example, and when the bulk of the school reached the spot, various people were shrieking delightedly. Barbara was clinging to the arm of a tall girl of

eighteen, whose sunny, brown hair framed a face which proclaimed the pair of them to be sisters. Julie was at her other side, with Vi and small Janice Chester dancing round, and Jo did not need to be told that this was the Nancy Chester of whom both Josette and Vi had told her quite a good deal. Farther along, she saw Maeve Bettany rush up to a strikingly pretty girl with fair curls and a dainty air, with a squeal that sounded as if someone had stuck a pin into her.

“Peggy!” she shrieked. “Where’s Bride? How did you know we were coming?”

A tall creature, accompanied by another leggy person, came up to them and then Josette grabbed her wrist, crying, “Come on! Those are our cousins, Peggy and Bride Bettany and I haven’t seen them for *ages*—only once since term began. Come on!” And she had to go or trip up and be dragged along on her back. She knew Josette!

Meanwhile, the staff were forgathering with the Welsen mistresses, some of whom were very old friends, and all more than mere acquaintances now.

Miss Wilson—“Bill”, to all those girls who knew her well—looked at the shrieking, excited crowd and grinned at Miss Annersley. “What a riot! It’s a blessing we’re right along at the end. Otherwise, Hilda, my love, we’d have to step in and calm them down. Just listen to those young Bettanys and the Maynards! Cockatoos aren’t in it!”

Miss Annersley laughed. “I see you’ve got the tents up. Suppose we shoo all those *not* taking part with the rabble into them and let them get undressed and into the water. When our crowd see themselves left behind, they’ll come to their senses in short order, I expect. When did you come down?”

“About noon. Das Haus unter den Kiefern is pretty heavily surrounded by trees, you know, and the heat was simply awful. No use expecting the girls to do really good work in such conditions. I shut up shop at eleven o’clock and brought them down. We brought Mittagessen with us, and we’ve been enjoying ourselves nicely. I’m very glad I did it. My girls are different beings from the languid damsels I brought away this morning, I can tell you.”

“So are mine,” Miss Annersley said with some decision, as she signalled to any mistresses standing nearby to herd those girls not occupied with reunions into the tents and see them into their swim-suits. “We’re down here till eighteen-o’clock, at any rate. Matey informed me this morning that quite a number of them had been restless during the night. The heat, I suppose. I’m hoping that a long afternoon both in and on the water will put paid to that. Did you arrange about the boats, Nell? I left it to you, you know.”

“My dear girl, I not only arranged about them—I’ve been out on the lake already with my crew. We had a good swim and then Mittagessen and after that, we had the boats and went out for about an hour. We’ve just changed back into swim-suits. We were leaving the tents when we saw you all streaming off the ferry, so I told them to stand fast until you’d joined us. Hello!” she added, in a different tone. “Here comes my god-daughter hurtling towards us! Steady, the Buffs!”

She straddled slightly and thus saved herself from being knocked down when Len Maynard came flying up to them and flung her whole weight on her. “Marraine! Oh, Marraine, why haven’t you been up to see us lately? It’s been ages since you came! And where’s Auntie Grace? Margot’s looking for her. She hasn’t been up either. Why haven’t you? We like to see our godmothers sometimes, you know.”

“I dare say, but both Auntie Grace and I have been busy the whole term,” Miss Wilson said, as she hugged her god-daughter. “And what about Con? After all, you two do see *us* every now and then; but Con hasn’t seen *her* godmother since you three were tiny babies.”

“But Auntie Con lives in Australia,” Len pointed out. “You and Auntie Grace aren’t half-an-hour away from the Platz.”

“Bill” laughed and released her. “Well, you see me now. I’m afraid Margot must wait to see *her* godmother. Your Auntie Grace has gone to Basle to spend the day with Tante Frieda. Now, suppose you run and change into your swim-suit and see how you like swimming in a lake after

the sea.”

“Oh, but I know *that* already,” Len said, slight reproof in her voice. “We used to swim in the lake—Lake Ontario, I mean—every day in the summer when we were living in Toronto. Still,” she added, “it is a little different here. Ontario is so huge, it’s almost like the sea, and this is quite a small lake.”

“Well, you go and see if it’s different to swim in,” her godmother advised her. She held the child for a moment and looked at her. “What a length you are, Len! That go of ’flu last term seems to have set you growing like a scarlet runner! You must be much taller than the other two now.”

“Half-a-head,” Len said, with a grin. “Still, I’m the eldest, so it’s O.K.” She ran off towards the tents and, a few moments later, emerged, looking like a little green cane, in her swimming-suit, wriggling her curly head into her green helmet.

She was not the only one; and when the rest suddenly realized that quite a number of people had outstripped them and were already disporting themselves in the sun-warmed water, they came swarming up to the tents, and before long everyone was splashing about delightedly.

Even Jo could swim, having learnt on one of her visits to Capetown. The French girls had learned during holidays at the seaside and there were only half-a-dozen or so of the Third Form who needed teaching properly. Janice Chester and Ailie Russell were like little fish and Judy Willoughby was not far behind them. Miss Andrews, who was a first-class swimmer, gathered her flock together and proceeded to give instructions. Some of the prefects and the girls from Welsen came to help and before the afternoon had ended, even Odette Bertoni, who was nervous about it, had accomplished three strokes by herself.

“Isn’t this gaudy?” Vi Lucy asked Jo, as she lay floating comfortably on her back. “I say, Jo, let’s have a race—all the Gang, I mean.”

“Then we’ll have to be handicapped,” Josette said, as she swam up in time to hear this. “You know very well that Mary-Lou is a crack swimmer and there isn’t one of us who has a chance against her if we all start from scratch.”

“Well, we’ll handicap ourselves then,” Vi said instantly. “Come on!”

She rolled over with a mighty splash and set off to where Mary-Lou and some of the others were practising various strokes and grumbling because their back muscles had become so soft since they had last swum. Josette and Jo went after her and came up to the crowd to find them treading water vigorously, while they argued just as hard. Mary-Lou, who knew what she was talking about, was pointing out that they had been playing about for a good quarter-of-an-hour and were all tired, since this was the first swim of the season. It would be mad to try to race until they had all got back into form again.

“You know the Head said that if it was all O.K. we should come down two or three afternoons in the week so long as this weather lasted,” she said. “Let’s wait a week or two and then we’ll get someone like Julie and Clem to handicap us and have a really decent race.”

Vi was quite prepared to argue with her, but at that moment, Miss Burnett’s whistle rang out and they all knew what that meant. In at once, or no swimming next time for people who disregarded it! They dropped the argument, turned and swam full tilt for the beach. Mary-Lou quickly forged ahead, her arms going like pistons and Jo, following with a much feebler side-stroke, was moved to thank her stars that there could be no race that day. She felt certain that she would be left ignominiously in the rear.

“Come out now,” Miss Burnett said, as they splashed their way to shore for the last eight or ten yards. “That’s quite long enough for a first time. Go and change into your dry suits and then you shall have a drink and biscuits. After that, we’ll rest for half-an-hour and then we might have a game of some kind. We’re having the boats after Kaffee und Kuchen, so you needn’t dress properly till then.”

A good many of them were already feeling the effects of the first swim and were not sorry for the break. People like Mary-Lou, however, who frequented the swimming-baths on all possible occasions when they were at home, were inclined to grumble.

"It's all right for people who don't bother with swimming, except in summer," that young woman protested to her own crowd, as she rubbed down before pulling on her dry suit—the school always took two swim-suits with them—"but I always go to the baths during the hols and I'm not much out of form, even now. I do think Burney might have let us stay in a little longer!"

"Go and tell her so then," Hilary retorted. "You'll be slain, of course, but I don't suppose you'll mind that. Oh, come off it, Mary-Lou! You know very well they couldn't make differences like that. After all your talk to Vi about this being the first swim of the season, I think you'd better hold your tongue."

Mary-Lou was a sweet-tempered creature, so she only laughed at this plain speaking. "I suppose you're right, Hilary. Oh, well, with any luck we'll be getting a lot more, now the hot weather has really started." She whipped off her helmet and released her long, fair plaits and felt them anxiously. "H'm! A trifle damp! I *thought* I needed a new helmet, but Gran said this was new last season and I'd better see if it wouldn't hang out this." Her fingers flew, unplaiting the long ropes and then she stood with her mane of gilt locks tumbling to her waist. "Got a comb, anyone? I forgot to put mine in."

"You can have mine," Verity-Anne said, offering it.

Mary-Lou combed her hair out and then tossed it back over her shoulders. "Good! That's better. Thanks a lot, Verity. Come on, folks! Let's go and snaffle those biscuits and milk Burney talked about."

They left the tent and joined the others who were sprawling in various attitudes on the white sand of the beach. Miss o'Ryan, Miss Dene, and Miss Norton and Miss Culver from Welsen, were handing out biscuits and bakelite beakers of lemonade. The Gang accepted their share and sat down in a body. Everyone was talking hard and the Welsen people were asking for all the latest news of their old school and getting it—usually from a dozen people at once.

"What a difference!" Miss Dene said, as, her duties ended, she came to sit down with the rest of the mistresses. "Some of those young *hooligans* over there were incapable of taking the slightest interest in anything yesterday. Look at them now!"

"I'd forgotten how hot it can be in Central Europe when it really tries," Miss o'Ryan said, rolling over on her side. "Luckily, we haven't any public exams this year to bother with. The Head thought it would be wiser to let the school get into its stride this year and ask if we might have a centre next. So they don't have to worry as you and I used to, Gill." She laughed at Miss Culver who was another Old Girl, and was now secretary to the Welsen branch.

Gillian Culver looked reminiscent. "What a time I had that last summer term before School Cert!" she said. "Gay and Jacynth were out of it, as they were both going in good and hard for music. But I'd no such excuse, and no escape."

"But you did awfully well," Biddy o'Ryan said soothingly. "Three distinctions and credits in everything else! It was a marvellous result."

"Time's up!" Miss Wilson called. "Get the balls and the stumps and everything else and set them on to games for the next hour. They'll have to divide up. There are far too many of them for one game. Luckily, there's plenty of room!"

They divided up. Miss Norton and Miss Dene undertook to run rounders; the three youngest mistresses collected the cricket stumps, bat and ball and went off to organize tip-and-run; Miss Dene, producing a bicycle-pump, blew up a huge coloured ball and collected a score of people for a version of medicine-ball. Before long, everyone was running, throwing, and generally exercising every muscle in her body. The mistresses remaining, prepared for a good picnic meal and when it was ready, summoned the remainder by clapping their hands as hard as they could.

Everyone stopped playing and came to sit round the tablecloths spread on the beach and, for a good half-hour, they ate and chattered gaily. When that was over and everything had been cleared away, the boats arrived and, for more than an hour, the girls were rowed and rowed themselves about the lake. Mistresses went with the younger girls, but the prefects took over the rest. They could all row well and were all good swimmers and Miss Annersley had uttered a brief warning before they embarked as to what would happen to anyone who was misguided enough to make an idiot of herself.

At last the whistle blew to summon the boats and they rowed back to the beach where they had to strike the tents, clear up everything and set off for the landing to catch the steamer, which was coming steadily down the lake from the little town of Thun at the far end. They did it comfortably and when they reached the Interlaken Ostbahnhof, the train was waiting for them. Abendessen was ready when they finally reached school, by which time a good many people were beginning to feel the effects of the swimming on soft back-muscles. But, aches or not, they all agreed that it had been a glorious outing and all looked forward eagerly to the next one.

Chapter XIII

TROUBLE FOR JO

Joey Maynard sat by the open french window of her salon, her work in her hands and her eyes fixed dreamily on the garden outside. The big radio was on for it was nearly nine o'clock and Joey always tuned in to London at nine—or twenty-one, if you are in the Oberland—in order to hear the London news. She had owned the big radio which brought it to her since Christmas, when her brother, Dick Bettany, and his twin sister, Madge, Lady Russell, assisted by Mrs. Bettany and Sir James Russell, had joined to give it to her for a gift.

Rather more than two years before this, Joey had been talking about buying a new cabinet radio as their old one was on its last legs. Then she had gone out to Canada for a year and when she had returned, it was to the job of clearing two houses and packing up for the removal to the Platz. She had decided that to get a new radio at that point would be sheer insanity. For all she knew, an English set might not run on Swiss electricity. Far better wait until they were in their new home and then buy one. In any case, the less they had to take, the better!

But when the time came to discuss it, Jo thought of the heavy bills they had had to settle for the removal and she had decided that they had better not spend so much on a luxury. She would content herself with a new portable for the present. And then she found that all too often it was either difficult or impossible to get London on a portable!

"I've had it!" she said mournfully one night, when she and her husband and Beth Chester had all tried vainly to get *some* station that would give them the home news without outrageous atmospheric. "Well, it can't be helped. We'll just have to put up with it for the present and depend on the newspapers and letters."

When Lady Russell came for the end of the first term of the Chalet School in the Oberland, she quickly found out all about this and the result had been that on Christmas Eve, the grand new radio, powerful enough to get any station a reasonable person could wish, had arrived. Thereafter, Joey had had the *Radio Times* sent out to her regularly and her "Radio Parties" had become famous at the Platz. She generally gave one every fortnight.

This evening, however, there was nothing special to be heard and she was by herself except for her St. Bernard puppy, Bruno, who was stretched at full length beside her, tired out after a strenuous day in which he had been smacked three times. Once was for killing one of his master's bedroom slippers. The slippers were new and Bruno had done a very thorough job on his victim. When he was found with it, it was taken from him and applied to his fat flanks in a way that made him resolve to leave such things alone—for the present, at any rate. The second time was when he playfully nipped a mouthful of his mistress's skirt and tugged. Bruno was as powerful as most St. Bernard pups of his age and the skirt had parted company with the bodice all round one side. The third time had been by Anna when he had seized the opportunity when her back was turned to slip into the larder and upset all her vegetables. She had just scrubbed the place out and set it all in order and the sight of potatoes, lettuces, tomatoes and other oddments bestrewing the floor roused her thoroughly. To make matters worse, Bruno had trodden heavily on one or two of the tomatoes and that floor had to be scrubbed again. Anna grabbed the sinner by the scruff of his neck and her hand taught him to leave the larder alone for the future. The rest of the day had been spent in frolicking about when he was not sleeping or eating. All told, Bruno had lain down by his mistress with the reflection that he didn't see how he *could* have crowded one more happening into it!

The usual variety show was drawing to a close, but Jo was not listening to it. She was musing

on the fact that it was nearly July. The holidays were drawing near and before long she would have to think about new clothes for her school children—and this time, Charles, her second boy, would be going off to school with Stephen, the eldest, when September came.

“Oh dear!” Joey said aloud. “I do wish children didn’t grow up so fast! In two years’ time I shall have to think of sending Mike along with the other two and all I’ll have left will be the twins! How deadly the house will feel!” Her black eyes lighted up with sudden mischief. “I really shall have to think again about those quads! What a shock everyone would get if I brought it off!”

She giggled softly to herself and, at that moment, the variety show came to an end. The announcer gave the time and, with one minute to spare before the news began, Joey felt for her cigarettes, found them missing and remembered that her case was empty and the box was in the study.

“Oh, bother!” she exclaimed aloud, as she got up, tossing her work down on a nearby table. She glanced at her watch. “Just time, if I fly!” And she dashed out of the room, a sleepy Bruno following her. He felt it his duty to be with her whenever possible.

Unfortunately, the box was not on her desk as she had thought. Neither was it in any of the drawers. She was about to give it up as a bad job when she caught sight of it behind a pile of books on the table in the window. Catching it up, she sprinted back to the salon, nearly falling over Bruno as she did so, and reached it just as the announcer finished the first item and prepared to begin on the second. Joey lit a cigarette and listened to a brief summary of a visit paid by the Duke of Edinburgh to a city in the Midlands. It was followed by another describing the departure of a number of well-known artists bound on a visit to famous art galleries on the Continent. She was so bored, that she was on the verge of switching off when there was an announcement which made her wait a moment.

“Fresh trouble has broken out in Kenya. Schools and mission stations in the Fort Hall area have been attacked and one Roman Catholic priest and a native lay brother have been seriously injured. Outside Nyeri, a farmer, Mr. Paul Scott, and his wife have disappeared. Police and troops have been sent to the area and are combing it for the assailants.”

Joey gasped and sat back, her face white and her eyes wide with horror. The news made her feel sick. Poor, pretty Maisie! What awful fate had overtaken her? And her husband, too! And oh, what about their child—poor little Jo! Who was to tell her and how would she take it, so far away from any relations? Then Joey remembered that in one of her recent letters Maisie had said that she was thankful to know that Jo’s unofficial godmother was close at hand as they had no near relatives left in England and only her brother who was in the Merchant Navy and at sea.

For one awful moment, Joey slumped. She hid her face in her hands and shivered. Then she pulled herself together. Automatically, she switched off the radio which had continued with the news. Bruno, sensing, as dogs do, that there was something wrong, had laid his head on her knee, whining miserably, and she patted him absently.

“This is awful, Bruno!” she said, looking down into the wistful dog eyes. “My poor little Jo! And just when she’s settled down so happily at school and doing well! How *can* I tell her? And yet I must! There isn’t anyone else to do it. I can’t leave it to Hilda. Jo’s mine as she can’t be even Hilda’s, and I’ve *got* to do it, or never look myself in the face again. I can’t funk it.”

The door opened and her husband came in. “What’s wrong?” he asked sharply. “The children _____”

Jo was out of her chair and in his arms in an instant. “Jack! How did you know? No, it’s not the children, thank God! So far as I know, they’re all right. But oh, Jack, it’s just come over the radio that the Kikuyus are at it again in the Fort Hall area, and they’ve raided schools and mission stations and—the Scotts’ farm. Maisie and her husband have vanished. Jack—how *am* I to tell Jo?”

He sat down on the big settee nearby, still holding her. "What exactly did they say?" he asked.

Jo repeated the announcement more or less as she had heard it. He frowned blackly as he listened. When she ended, he was silent. She freed herself from his arms and faced him. "Jack! Tell me what I'm to do!"

"Nothing—for the moment," he said slowly. "Mercifully, this is the only radio of any size up here and no one else is likely to hear the news for two or three days to come. Say nothing yet. All the authorities know is that Paul and Maisie are missing. There's a chance that one or even both may turn up yet. It would be cruel to that poor child to tell her at once and let her have all the grief and worry of not knowing *what* has happened. You must tell Hilda, of course, but she's safe. In the meantime, I'll cable to Jem and ask him to get on to someone who's likely to know. That's all we can do for the moment."

The horror left Jo's face. "Oh, Jack, what a lump of comfort you are!" she said.

"I seem to remember that you said very much the same thing to me years ago, when we thought we'd lost Robin and Hilary, just before we were engaged and had that wild flight from Tirol and the Gestapo.^[6] Do you remember?"

[6] The Chalet School in Exile

Joey was pink now, but she replied, "Of course I do! It's just what you were! I should have gone scatty if it hadn't been for you. And I think I *might* have done it to-night if you hadn't come in when you did. Are you *sure* I needn't do anything about it yet?"

"Quite sure! We've nothing definite. Tell Hilda, for she ought to be prepared, and leave it until we get further news. If the worst comes to the worst, you can bring Jo here and tell her quietly. Poor little soul! Do you know of any address to write to in that case?"

"None! We're the nearest. Maisie said so in her last letter but one. They seem to have no near relations but her brother and he's somewhere at sea, so it wouldn't be much use bothering him at present, at any rate."

"No; but we'd better try to find out the name of his firm and his ship. If it comes to that, I'll write to him myself. His firm would give him leave in such a case, I feel certain." He paused a moment. Then he said in a different tone, "Has Anna gone to bed, do you know?"

Joey stared. "I haven't the faintest idea. Probably, considering it must be nearly ten by this time. She likes to go early. Why?"

"Well, I've had a gruelling day and I'd like some coffee if there's any going."

Joey was off the settee in a moment. "Oh, my *dear!* I'm so sorry! You sit there and I'll go and put the perk on at once. Keep Bruno with you, dear. He's a pet, but he does get under one's feet at times. I won't be a minute!"

She was out of the room as she ended and her last words floated to him along the passage. He grinned at Bruno, catching the pup as he resignedly rose to his feet to follow Joey. "No you don't, young man! You stay here with Master and Missus will be back soon with coffee for me and, perhaps, a saucer of milk for you. Sit!" Bruno gave him a white-eyed glance. "*Sit!*" And Jack set a firm hand over the sturdy back and gently forced him down on his haunches. "There! Stay there!"

Bruno sat. He might disobey Joey on occasion, but he knew when he had met his master. When Mistress returned, she found her husband sitting back against the cushions and a very sulky pup beside him.

"I've put the perk on," she said. "Anna had gone, but she must have made some before she went upstairs, for it was quite warm, so it'll be ready in a minute or two. Would you like anything to eat? I can whip up something in a moment."

His main idea was to occupy her and take her mind off the awful news, if he could. He knew his Joey. Unless he did something, she was likely to lie awake half the night and, if the worst

news should come to-morrow, she would be worn out and not capable of dealing with it as she should.

"I think I would like a sandwich or two," he said.

"None of your patent messes, though," he added hurriedly. "Some of that cream cheese and jam would be a good idea. And some lettuce, too. Not too many; but I *could* do with a light meal."

"You shall have it." Joey went to the door. Then she came back and stood looking down at him with troubled eyes. "Jack—how *soon* do you think we'll hear?"

"I can't tell you. It may not be for two or three days. We can do nothing about it except wait. You go and see to those sandwiches. Is that the coffee boiling over?"

Joey was off at the word and it was ten minutes before she returned. By that time he had been to the little cloakroom at the other end of the passage and washed hands and face. He had drawn a table up to the settee for her tray and when she set it down, he pulled her down beside him and poured the coffee himself. He sweetened hers liberally and then handed it to her.

"Drink this, Joey. You need it. You've had a nasty shock and unless you have something, you'll be conking out."

"What sort of an ass do you take me for?" she demanded. But she sipped the hot, sweet coffee all the same. "A—ah! That's better. Try a sandwich, Jack. I've made no experiments, I promise you."

They fell silent then and the little meal was taken more or less in silence. But when it was over, Jack carried off the tray to the kitchen and then insisted on his wife's going to bed. Joey was beginning to feel drowsy, so she agreed and went upstairs while he made the rounds, locking up and seeing Bruno to his bed in the kitchen. When he went upstairs, Joey was in bed and half asleep, though she roused sufficiently to ask, "Have you put Bruno to bed?"

"I have and he curled up at once. The heat's tiring him, I expect. That heavy coat of his can be no joke this weather."

Joey yawned. "If you only knew *what* has tired him——" She broke off for another fearful yawn. "I'll tell you—to-morr'—too tired—now."

With the last word, her lashes fell and she was asleep. Jack bent over her for a minute or two, but she never stirred. Then he looked into the nursery and the room where small Charles was also sleeping before coming back to go to bed himself. Joey never moved. The tiny dose he had slipped into her coffee, with the sugar, had taken hold of her and as he stretched himself with a sigh of relief, he knew that she was in for a good night's sleep.

"And that'll be all to the good," he thought. "She'll need all her strength for the next two or three days, I'm afraid."

There was no news next day; but the next brought a cable from Sir James which stated that Maisie Scott had been found, seriously injured. There was no news of her husband so far, though the police were hunting diligently for him.

"Jo must hear now," Joey said, when she had read it. "Oh, Jack, what will it be best to do? Poor baby! It's enough to break her heart!"

Jack thought. "Wait for the post," he said. "Jem will have written, I expect, and we shall get more detail from his letter. This," he pointed to the cable she was still holding, "would be a nasty blow. If we can tell her more, it may help."

So for one more day Jo was left happily unconscious that there was any bad news for her. But next morning, the post brought a letter from Madge Russell.

"Jem asked me to write as he has been suddenly called away to a bad case," Lady Russell wrote. "He's been moving Heaven and earth for more detailed news, and luckily he remembered a man he was at school with who is something in the Government at Nairobi. He got on to him and this is the latest. Maisie was found in a clump of bushes and they seem to think she rolled

there, for she wasn't killed, though she's been very badly cut about the body and arms and legs. She is in hospital in Nairobi, very ill with shock and her wounds. As soon as they can, they are going to fly her south to Capetown.

"Of her husband, they can find no trace. Jem's friend seems to think that he has been murdered and stuffed into some hole or crevice and they may never find him. They are still searching, but they don't seem to have much hope.

"That poor child! Would you like me to come out and take her home, Joey? She'll want to go to her mother, I expect, but it would be useless and Maisie is too ill to see her, even if anyone would allow her to go. Most of the time she is wandering and when she isn't, she's lying in a coma. They can't say yet if she will pull round all right or not. I think they hope she will, so Jo won't be left all alone.

"If you want me, Joey, I'll come at once. The twins will be safe with Rosa; and Marie can see to the house as well as I can. Let me know *by cable* if you want me and Jem will try to book me a seat on the Friday plane. I'll come with a heart and half."

After a few more words, the letter ended. Joey handed it over to Jack and waited to hear what he had to say about it. He read it carefully, twice. Then he looked up.

"I don't think we need fetch Madge out here just yet, Joey. After all, Jo doesn't know her and she looks on you as her mother's substitute while she's here. You'll be able to do all that's needed. But this," he tapped the letter, "means that we must wait no longer. I'll call in on Hilda as I go past and ask her to send the kid over here on some errand. Then you can have her alone. I wish I could stay, darling, but Peters sounded pretty urgent on the phone just now so I must get off. I'll take the car and come back as soon as I can. Keep Jo here unless she asks to go back to school."

"Very well," Joey said. "And Jack—pray for us both! For me, that I may be given wisdom to say the right thing; and for Jo, that she may have strength to meet this awful business."

He made no reply, but his kiss was very tender. Joey was satisfied. She left the dining-room and went into her study which was full of sunshine. A fresh breeze was blowing and the madras muslin curtains drifted idly at the wide-open windows. She sat down at her desk and her eyes went to the crucifix hung above it.

"You know what sorrow meant," she said. "You comforted people who were in grief. Please, please tell me what to say to comfort Jo."

Then she sat back and waited.

It seemed endless before she heard light footsteps scampering up the path to the door. She left the study quickly and went to stand at the top of the steps and call Jo in. That young lady bounded up them, beaming. She carried a big parcel which she held out.

"Oh, Auntie Jo, wasn't it luck for me?" she cried. "Miss Annersley wanted you to have this parcel at once and I was just coming back from the office with a message for Miss Wilmot so she told me to bring it and I'm out of that beastly geom!"

Joey swallowed hard before she could speak. "Yes," she said at last. "And I wanted to speak to you, Jo, so come along to the study, dear."

She tried to be her usual self, but she failed. Jo felt the difference and her beam faded. She followed her unofficial godmother into the sunny study, wondering what was wrong. Then, poor girl, she partly guessed. As Joey closed the door behind them and tossed the parcel into a chair, Jo clutched at her arm.

"Aunt Joey—what—is there—what's happened—at home?" she got out.

Joey looked down into the frightened face raised to hers and her arm went round the girl. "How did you guess, Jo? Oh, my dear, I wish I hadn't to tell you, but there's no one else. Jo, my darling, the Mau-Mau attacked your home. Your father is missing, but your mother is still alive, though she is very ill. That is the worst of it, Jo. They think your mother will pull through all

right and they don't know what's happened to your father. But he is—missing.”

But for her arm, Jo would have fallen. Joey half-led, half-carried her to a big armchair, sat down in it, and took the girl on her knee. Jo lay against her, quite still, her breath coming quickly, but her eyes closed. Joey held her close murmuring gently to her. Presently, she felt the limp body in her arms stiffen and Jo sat up and looked at her.

“Is it—true?” she asked slowly.

“What I have told you is.”

“When—did it—happen?” Jo spoke brokenly, with long pauses between the words.

“I heard on Saturday night on the radio,” Joey replied.

“All that time ago? Why didn't you tell me, Aunt Joey?”

“Because there was nothing definite and we waited to see if we could hear anything more. Your father might have turned up safe. We didn't know just how badly your mother was hurt. Uncle Jack and I talked it over and decided to wait until we really could tell you something quite definite. My sister's husband—you've heard the others talk of Sir Jem, haven't you? Sybil and Josette's father?—has a friend in Nairobi. He got on to him and asked him for details. We had a letter by airmail this morning. It said that nothing had been heard of your father so far and your mother was in Nairobi hospital, very ill with shock and—and some cuts. As soon as she is well enough, they are going to fly her to Capetown. That's everything I know, Jo, and I've hidden nothing.”

Jo looked at her steadily. Suddenly she quivered. The next moment she had hidden her face on Joey's shoulder and was crying with great sobs that shook her from head to foot. Joey held her close, thankful that she could find relief in tears. But as the sobs went on and became heavier and heavier, she decided to put a stop to it. If Jo went on like this, she would cry herself sick.

“Jo,” she said firmly, “you must stop crying like this. You'll make yourself ill and that won't help you or anyone else. Come! Stop it, quickly!”

“I—I—ca-an't!” Jo sobbed. “Oh, Auntie Joey! It's so-o dreadful!”

“It is; but it might be much worse,” Jo said, lifting the girl so that she had to sit up. “You're lucky, Jo. You might have lost both parents and we don't know yet that you've lost even one. We can still hope that your father will turn up, and I feel sure that your mother will recover, even though it may take a long time. So take a pull on yourself, and stop crying like that.”

Jo turned tear-drenched eyes on her. “D-do you really th-think that?”

“I shouldn't say it, if I didn't,” Joey replied. “I *do* think it. But crying yourself sick isn't going to help anyone.” She extracted her handkerchief from her pocket and tucked it into the hot hands. “Mop up with that and I'll go and get a drink for you. Then you can go upstairs and wash yourself thoroughly. You'll feel better after that and when you come down, I'll tell you what you can do.”

Jo scrubbed her eyes. Then she slowly got off Joey's knee and stood up. She still shook with an occasional sob, but the worst was over. Joey sat her down in a low chair by the window and went off to seek coffee.

“It's too hot for hot milk,” she thought, “and she really needs something more than lemonade after a breakdown like that. A cup of very sweet, milky coffee should just about fill the bill and, luckily, there was some left over from breakfast and it should still be warm and quickly hotted up.”

When she came into the study with the big cup of coffee, she found Jo was fast asleep in the chair. The long crying-match had worn her out and the quiet of the big room, broken only by occasional cries from the Maynard twins who were in the garden at the side of the house, safe in their playpen, while Charles and Michael had their two hours of lessons with Beth Chester in a little room whose window opened on to the lawn, had calmed her and she had fallen into a sleep that would do her even more good than Joey's coffee.

That lady set the cup down, and cautiously tucked in cushions to make the girl more comfortable. Then she went out of the room again, bearing the coffee with her, and for two hours, stayed away, only glancing in at the window occasionally.

Miss Annersley arrived halfway through the morning, to learn how Joey had fared. She agreed that, unless Jo wanted to come back to school, it would be as well for her to stay where she was till next day, at any rate. More news might have come by that time and the quiet of Freudesheim would be better for her than the bustle and clamour of school.

“But unless she has really upset herself,” the Head said, “I think it would probably be better for her to come back to-morrow. However, I must leave it to you and Jack. Now I must get back or I shall be late for my literature with Upper V.”

Jo slept until Jack Maynard came home for Mittagessen. Then she roused up. She was heavy and listless and said her head ached badly. Jack recommended bed and Joey went off to make up the bed in the room next to Beth’s. Then Jo was taken upstairs and tucked in after a cup of tea and an aspirin and when the doctor looked in on her at about eighteen o’clock she was still sleeping, but the hot flush had left her cheeks and she had ceased to sob in her sleep.

“Let her have her sleep out,” he told Joey, when he went downstairs again. “It can wait till the morning if necessary. Don’t disturb her. Just put a glass of milk and a plate of rolls and butter on the bedside table in case she wakes up hungry. We’ll not disturb her, poor kid.”

And Joey, however impatient she might feel, had to agree that he was right. So Jo was left to sleep and slept the clock round. When she woke up, the sky was greying to early dawn. She felt hungry, so she sat up and drank her milk and ate the rolls. She remembered quite clearly all that had occurred but somehow she felt no desire to cry again.

“I suppose I howled so in the morning when Auntie Joey told me I haven’t any more howls left in me,” she thought. “And anyway, she did say that she thought Dad might turn up again and she was sure Mummy would get well. I’ll hold on to that. And I’ll say my prayers, too, and ask God to look after them. I *can* do that and it’s more likely to help them than howling my head off again.”

She tumbled out of bed, knelt down and said her prayers with some very ardent special petitions for her father and mother. Calmed and peaceful, she clambered back into bed after that, lay down and fell asleep once more, not to awaken until Joey stood by her bedside with a breakfast tray in her hands and a slip of thin paper between her lips. She set the tray across the bedside table and lifted Jo into a sitting position.

“Wake up, Jo, my precious!” she cried. “Here’s your breakfast and this is a cable to say that they’ve found your father. He’s wounded, but not badly, and will soon be well again.” Then, as she put the precious cable into Jo’s fingers, she added, “Oh Jo, it’s come true. ‘Heaviness shall endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning’!”

Chapter XIV

PREPARATIONS FOR THE SHOW

It was a fortnight since the good news had arrived and June had faded into July. Of that fortnight, Jo had spent the first week at Freudeshiem. The reaction following on the news that her parents were safe after all had upset her badly, and though she had seemed all right that first morning, by the evening she was running a temperature and Jack ordered her to bed and kept her there.

“I wish we’d never thought of telling her the news so soon,” Joey said.

“If we hadn’t, she’d have heard of it another way,” he replied. “Old Mrs. Wishart stopped me that very morning to ask if it were true that those poor Scotts, who had been killed by those wicked natives, had a daughter at the school.”

“O-oh!” Joey spoke thoughtfully. “In *that* case, then—and I must say old Mrs. Wishart is the finest example of a leaky cistern I’ve ever met! Talk of anyone’s tongue being hung in the middle! Hers isn’t hung anywhere—it floats in her mouth and waggles from tip to tail!” With which highly libellous remark, she went off to take the invalid some lemonade, leaving Jack convulsed with laughter.

For a day or two, Jo was poorly enough to be glad to stay in bed and let Joey’s mothering fill a want she had never owned till then. Then she began to rebel—especially when a letter by airmail arrived from Kenya.

Mr. Scott wrote to say that her mother had turned the corner and the doctors thought that she would soon be convalescent. He had escaped with a bad slash and minor cuts. Something had alarmed the attackers and they had fled, leaving him for dead. He had lain still until they were gone. Then he had tried to stand, only to find that when he fell he had damaged a foot badly.

“I felt pretty bad as you may imagine,” he wrote. “I hadn’t a clue whether those wretches would come back or not and I couldn’t stand at any price. The doctor found later that I had not only sprained my ankle badly, but dislocated two toes as well. I tried crawling and got on quite a way. But I was losing blood all the time and that was where I fainted and fell into a pit I’d had dug last year—remember? I forget why we did it but it was no use. I told Mlanku to fill it in, but the lazy blighter never managed to get round to it. It was overgrown with scrub and I wasn’t exactly in a condition to think just then; so down I went. When I came to, it was daytime. I could see the blue sky and I could even hear men moving about. I tried to call, but my voice seemed to have gone and I could only whisper. It was a nice mess to be in, for I hadn’t a hope of climbing out. Mlanku may have omitted to fill the pit in, but he’d dug it well and the sides were no use. Besides, by that time, my whole foot had swollen to the size of a football and I couldn’t move on it.

“Just what might have happened, I shall never know. But the next day, Mlanku himself came along. You know what hearing the natives have. I was groaning by that time and he heard the sound. Just as he was scouting round, the police arrived with dogs. They’d tracked me so far and it wasn’t too long before they checked at the pit and it was all over then, bar the shouting. They got me out and carted me off to hospital and here I am. Don’t worry, Jo. I’m well looked after and I have only one bad cut which has been duly sewn up. The ankle is a matter of time and the toes are back in place.

“I expect you’ve been told that Mummy is pretty bad, but she’s better now and everyone here says she will recover. However, I rather fancy we shall have to leave Kenya. The whole affair has upset her nerves very badly. So in a day or two I shall write to the Maynards and ask them if

there's a chance of a chalet or what-have-you up at your Platz. If there is, I'll bring Mummy to convalesce and then we'll see what we can do. Meantime, keep your pecker up, old lady! It's not so bad that it mightn't have been a lot worse."

"Have you heard from Dad?" Jo demanded, when she had finished the letter.

"Not yet; but we'll hunt round and see what we can find in the way of a chalet," Joey replied. "Well, you'll be happy about them now, won't you? As your dad says, it might have been a lot worse. You've a great deal to be thankful for, young Jo." She tugged gently at one of the thick, red pigtailed and Jo looked up at her happily. "I know that. And you're one of the things I'm very thankful for, Aunt Joey. Can I get up now, please?"

Three days later saw her back at school. The girls had been warned not to mention the affair to her unless she spoke of it first. In any case, they were all very busy with arrangements for the flower show and its entertainments, and Jo found herself in the thick of things at once. She had, literally, no time to brood over what might have been and the Chalet School authorities saw to it that she went to bed so tired that she fell asleep almost as soon as she lay down. As a result, the pink came back to her cheeks and the shadows vanished from under her eyes and, apart from the fact that she watched eagerly for letters, there was little to tell of the strain she had undergone.

But it had made a difference in one way. The Jo who went back to school was no longer a child. When Maisie Scott and her husband came to Switzerland, they would see a great change in their daughter in that way.

"What pictures are you thinking we should make, Barbara?" Josette asked one day in July, when their rest period was over and they were sitting talking.

"I haven't really thought it out," Barbara confessed. "I did think we might try to make a church for one. I thought we could use leaves for the church and do the windows in flowers to look like stained glass. And do you think we could do a clock like the one down in Interlaken?"

"Of course we could," Mary-Lou said. "And what about a lake with a swan on it? We could do the lake in blue flowers and the swan in white. We could make the shores of the lake green. Oh, and by the way, are the pictures to stand up or lie flat? Because it'll make quite a difference which it is, you know."

"Lie flat, of course," Hilary cried. "We can do lots of things that way that we simply couldn't hope to do if they have to stand up. But what's *really* worrying me is how on earth are we going to keep the flowers looking fresh all day? We're to have the show in the rock garden, so we can't shove the flowers down into the soil. What are we to do about that?"

"We'll get wedges of moss and soak it thoroughly and set them on that," said Mary-Lou, the ever-ready. "There's heaps of moss on the rocks along the walk to the Auberge. I noticed it the last time we went there. Let's ask leave to go there the evening before the day before the show. We can take baskets and bring back all the moss we can carry. We can soak it thoroughly overnight and then, when we've made the pictures next day, we can soak the whole thing again—and first thing on the morning of the show. That ought to keep them fresh all right."

"It's a jolly good idea," Josette remarked. "O.K. We'll see if we can do that." The time was to come when Mary-Lou wished she had never *seen* the moss, let alone suggested they should try to gather it.

The "pierrot" entertainment, suggested by Jo, had been given over to Rosalind Wynyard, Edris Young and Pat Collins to organize and, at this point, Pat arrived.

"Now then, you crowd," she said, "I want to know your nationalities, please."

They gaped at her.

"But why?" Mary-Lou asked, when she had recovered her breath.

"For the pierrot show, of course. Vi Lucy, you come from the Channel Islands. Do they have any special dances or songs or things like that?"

"Not that I know of," Vi said, staring. She turned to her cousin. "Have *you* ever heard of

anything, Barbara?"

Barbara considered. "There's 'Si J'Avais le Chapeau' that Aunt Elizabeth's Javotte used to sing to Vanna and Nella," she suggested.

"So there is. I'd forgotten that. I was only a baby when Javotte died and I never really heard it," Vi said. "But isn't it awfully *long*?"

"And if Vi was only a baby when What's-her-name died, so she doesn't know it, how come that *you* do?" Lesley demanded.

"Mummy knew it from Javotte and she used to sing it to me when I was little," Barbara said, with dignity. "Oh, the whole thing's miles too long, Vi, but you could always cut it short."

"Which of you sings best?" Pat demanded, producing a business-like notebook.

"Barbara," Vi said quickly. "But what's the matter with Julie doing it? She's the oldest of us and it's no use asking Betsy. You know what Plato says about her."

Pat joined in the giggles. Betsy Lucy was famed for having so poor an ear that she had been known to branch off from "God Save The Queen" into "Rule Britannia" before this! In singing-class, she usually stood with the rest, but uttered no sound.

"We can't use Julie," Pat explained, when she had recovered. "She's got to act as hostess at the show. It'll have to be one of you two."

"Then you'd better make it Barbara as I said before," Vi replied. "She really *has* a voice. Mine's only a twitter beside hers."

"Very well. Barbara, you're to sing that Hat thing, whatever it is. Now what about the rest of you." Pat ignored Barbara's frantic protest that she had the floral pictures to see to and hated singing in public, anyhow!

"You pipe down," Mary-Lou muttered. "This is for the good of the cause."

Barbara "piped down", but she was no more reconciled to the idea. However, Pat had fastened on Lesley and Catriona, two Scottish girls, and was asking what *they* could do.

"Catriona can sing some of the 'Songs of the Hebrides'," Lesley said, basely pushing the responsibility off on to Catriona. "She comes from Lewis."

The look Catriona cast at her was anything but friendly. She was a shy girl and hated having anything more to do in the school plays than being part of the Crowd or a maid to open doors and carry things in. However, when Pat asked her what she could sing, she replied that she thought she could manage the Hebridean spinning-song.

"Oughtn't those songs to be sung to the harp?" Mary-Lou asked. "That would be rather a wiz, Catriona."

"Well it wouldn't, because I can't play the harp!" Catriona snapped.

"That's two things from you people, at any rate," Pat remarked, wisely ignoring side-squabbles. "We must have a full programme, because Julie thinks we ought to give two shows—one in the morning and one in the afternoon."

"Lawks!" Mary-Lou's jaw fell at this prospect. "Can we do it, Pat? It'll mean an awful lot."

"We've *got* to do it," Pat said stubbornly. "So if any of the rest of you can think up something to do, let me know here and now."

Josette glanced at Jo and there was mischief in her blue eyes. "What about you, Jo?" she asked. "You come from Kenya, so you're bound to have heard the native music some time or other. What about it?"

Jo opened her mouth to rebut any idea that she could give a public display of any kind of native song or dance. Then her own eyes gleamed and she said demurely, "Well, I might, but I don't know if the Head would like it. I'd better show you a sample, hadn't I, Pat?" And before anyone could say or do anything, she had bounded into the centre of the circle, lifted her voice in a kind of prolonged howl that rose and fell on four notes only and was shivering from head to foot as well as she could. She wound up a show that brought ecstatic yells of laughter from the

Gang, with a few wild bounds which sent her pigtails flying and then retired to her chair remarking to the stunned Pat, "I think that's the best I can do."

"Yes; well we'll excuse you," retorted Pat, coming to her senses with a jerk. "*That* isn't the sort of thing we want, thank you."

Hilary Bennet thought it well to smooth down the prefect's ruffled feathers. Choking back her wild giggles, she said, "I don't think the rest of us could do anything more, Pat, though we'll sing in choruses if you like, or do country dances; but did you know that Janet Forster has learnt the 'Bacca Pipes' jig? She was doing it for a whole crowd of us last week and it's lovely to watch; she's so neat and quick. Her aunt at home taught her in the Easter hols."

"Sounds all right," Pat said, too much in earnest to let her own feelings stand in her way. "I'll go and find her at once. Thanks, Hilary."

She departed and the Gang were left to have their giggles out.

"What a nerve you have, Jo!" Christine Vincent said presently. "Is that *really* what the natives do or were you making it up?"

"Well, I've never been to a native *shauri*, of course," Jo said, "but I've heard the singing at night and it's more or less like that. And I do know they do a lot of shivering in their dancing. I put the leaps in off my own bat."

"It was a yell," Mary-Lou said. "All the same, don't you try that sort of thing on with everyone. Pat's a good sort and she doesn't lose her temper much; but if it had been Ruth Wilson, she'd have about eaten you. Even Julie and Clem would have had something to say, and so would Veronica and Madge. But it was frightfully funny," she added, with a reminiscent chuckle.

"And Pat's face was one of the funniest things about it," put in Prunella Davidson. "She looked literally petrified."

"What was that rummy word you used just now, Jo?" Lesley asked.

"Which word—oh, '*shauri*', you mean. It's a native word meaning a big do."

"Rather neat, don't you think?" Lesley appealed to the rest.

"Quite neat," Mary-Lou said instantly. "We'll adopt it."

Thereafter, for the rest of the term, the Gang alluded to the flower show as "The Shauri", much to the mystification of the rest of the Middles at first.

They turned their minds back to the floral pictures after that. It was by no means easy to think of enough to make any sort of a show. Some of the things proposed were turned down as too elaborate. Some were shouted down as much too dull. At last, however, they managed to fix on a dozen—"And that," Barbara said, "is about as much as they'll want to bother with."

"What are we sending in?" Verity-Anne's silvery voice asked.

"Roses for us three," Lesley said. "I've watched over those bushes we found at the end of the far lawn like a mother and they're covered with buds now. They ought to be just right for the show."

Hilary and Prunella nodded. They had helped Lesley with the said bushes and they felt they had a right to show them. Barbara, Jo, Josette and Vi were all entering for the wild-flowers bouquet class. There were plenty of wild flowers on the Platz, even though the narcissi and crocuses were finished. They felt they ought to manage something attractive with the riches that were there for the gathering.

"Verity and I are going in for the table decorations," Mary-Lou announced. "She's making the plan and I'm to carry it out—oh, bother! There goes the bell! To be continued in our next. Come on, everyone!" And she led the way to the house.

It was just as well that the authorities at the Chalet School had decided against public exams that year, for, from that time on, the school talked and thought of little else but the flower show. The prefects had managed to arrange two programmes for the pierrot show without duplicating a

single item, and whenever the performers had a spare moment, they were generally to be found practising their particular items. Miss Burnett, Miss o’Ryan, Miss Andrews and Miss Wilmot had been co-opted into a committee, with Clem, Julie, Veronica, Madge and Ruth, and had evolved a set of races for the gymkhana which were guaranteed to give the visitors an amusing time. They refused to say anything until the week before the show when the list was put up in Hall, and the girls crowded round eagerly to find out what they had been set to do.

All the usual things were there and one or two original ideas as well. Flower-pot racing, wheel-barrow, Queen’s chair, driving a pair and driving tandem were down. Besides these, there was a cartwheel race, a frog-hopping race and a three-legged race.

“What’s ‘tilting’?” Sybil Russell asked, as she read the programme.

Julie enlightened her. “Two big people have two smaller people pickaback and the smaller people try to push each other off,” she explained. “Veronica says it’s good fun. She saw it somewhere last summer.”

“Sounds all right,” Betsy Lucy commented. “I’ll put my name down for that and bags me young Janice for rider!”

“And I’ll have my kid sister, Judy,” Blossom Willoughby said decidedly.

“I’m entering for cartwheel, frog-hopping, driving tandem and wheelbarrow,” Mary-Lou decided. “Verity, be my wheelbarrow, will you?”

“I don’t mind, so long as you don’t push so hard I go *wump* on my chin,” her “sister-by-marriage” agreed, cautiously.

By degrees they got their races sorted out and the long sheets of foolscap, headed with the titles of the various races, were soon filled in with names.

“The Welsen people are joining in this,” Miss Burnett remarked, to the crowd who were watching her removing them.

“But there’s no room left for them,” Mary-Lou objected. “Those sheets are practically full. How’ll they manage, Miss Burnett?”

“They’ve got their own,” the games mistress said. “Miss Culver came up with them this morning. Well,” as she glanced at the sheets, “so many of you are going in for each race I can see that we shall have to have heats beforehand *and* divide you up into three classes at that. We’ll never get it all in otherwise.”

She departed and the school went out into the garden to discuss this.

“How on earth are we going to manage all that number of prizes?” Prunella asked. “I’ve got two things to give, but that’s all.”

“I’m giving that awful paintbox my uncle sent me at Christmas,” Hilary said. “It may be all right for a kid, but it’s no use to me. I wonder how old he thinks I am?”

The school had heard all this at least a dozen times before, so no one took any notice of it. Mary-Lou called to Clem, who was passing, and asked anxiously what they were going to do about the prizes.

“I’m sure I don’t know,” Clem returned. “I got a shock when I heard Miss Burnett on the subject of three classes for each race. I suppose we’d better collect in to-day or to-morrow and see what we’ve got. Luckily, the staff at the San are giving the prizes for the flower show or we’d be completely sunk. Oh, I suppose we’ll manage somehow. Don’t fuss, Mary-Lou!”

She hurried away to seek her own clan and the result of their conference was that, after Prayers that evening, the Head announced that anyone who was giving a prize was to take it to the prefects’ room before Prayers next morning.

“You will be excused your usual walk,” she said. “We are going down to the lake this afternoon, so you’ll get all the fresh air and exercise you need then.”

A murmur of delight ran round Hall. The girls had gone down regularly three afternoons a week since the first time, but they never knew which afternoons they were going until the time

came, which added a pleasing uncertainty to it. She smiled at their pleasure and dismissed them to go and rout out the objects they intended to give, while she and the staff retired to the small lawn known as “the staff garden”, and left to them entirely.

Next morning saw the prefects in their room early, and busy clearing the table and shelves in readiness for whatever the school might choose to produce.

“Let’s hope we don’t get *too* many impossible things,” Veronica said, as she carefully moved a vase of flowers to the top of the stove. “Think that’ll be safe there, everyone? I’d hate to have the vase smashed; it’s so graceful.”

“It should be all right,” Julie said. “So long as they don’t get milling around, of course.”

“There’s going to be no milling around here,” Clem retorted. “Madge, you and I will stand at the door and Pat and Edris can go along to the end of the corridor. Make them line up, Pat, and march in properly. Madge and I will take care of their behaviour at the door. The rest of you can receive the things. I’d sort them out, by the way. Put big things in one heap; mediums in another; tinies in another. As it is, we shall have to sort them out in the three grades and then there’s settling which go to which race. We don’t want to give ourselves any more work than we can help.”

It was excellent advice. Pat and Edris, hearing sounds of feet, voices and laughter, scurried to the end of the corridor, and Madge and Clem took up their posts at the door. Thanks to this plan, the girls were quickly formed into lines. Julie had just time to send Ruth and Rosalind to one end of the table to take the large things, station Zoë, Polly and Nora Penley at the other to be responsible for what Clem had called “the mediums”; and Rosalie Way and Anne Francis to the windowsill to take charge of “the tinies”. She herself stood near the door to direct the girls to whichever group should be theirs.

Small Janice Chester came first with two lace-edged handkerchiefs and Julie grinned when she saw them. They had been a birthday present and Janice had held forth to her prefect cousin on the iniquity of people who gave you *hankies* for a present. She was sent to the windowsill and Julie turned to Mary-Lou who had her second attaché-case.

After that, the prizes piled up. Everyone had brought something, no matter how tiny, and some people had even given two. All the same, even when their own offerings were added, they found that they were short of at least a score. So many people had put down their names for the races that it had been necessary to divide them up into five grades—over sixteen; fourteen to sixteen; twelve to fourteen; eleven and tens. Some of the children who lived on the Platz but did not attend the school had been allowed to enter, and that had helped to bring up the numbers of the juniors considerably.

“What do we do about it?” Edris asked, when they had finished.

“Buy them, I suppose,” Valerie said. “It’s a pity. It’ll take off from what we can send to the San. I’d hoped we could manage enough prizes without buying.”

“So had I!” It came in a chorus.

There was a tap at the door and Beth Chester from Freudesheim appeared, a huge basket loaded with parcels in her hands.

“Beth!” Julie exclaimed. “What on earth are you doing here?”

Beth gave her cousin a laughing look. “I’ve brought over the contribution from Freudesheim to the prizes,” she said, setting her basket down. “Mrs. Maynard says she hopes that will give you enough. If it doesn’t, you’re to let her know and she’ll see if she can rout out anything more. If there are too many, you’re to use them as consolation prizes. The Head was over after Abendessen last night and told her you were going to receive prizes before Prayers, so we collected everything together and she told me to come over this morning with them. Now, I must fly. I left her to cope with everything and though the twins are safe in their playpen, Mike is one person’s work at any time. See you all sometime!” And she went off.

The prefects cast agonized glances at the clock, but it was no good. The bell for Prayers was due in one minute and they must go. Madge, whose duty-week it was, departed at once and the others followed her after locking the door. They were not minded to leave their room open to any monkey-tricks and the school had its fair share—*more* than its fair share, some of them thought—of wicked Middles. But when they were free, they came racing upstairs to turn out the basket and gloat over their loot.

Joey had written home ten days before to ask that someone might find, pack and send the list of objects she enclosed. The thrilled prefects opened parcels containing vases, ornaments, strings of beads, china jugs and cups and saucers, small pictures and statuettes. Last of all came a note from Lady Russell herself, informing them that she was coming to the show and would bring with her two cups, one for the best floral exhibit and one for the best wild flower bouquet.

“Well!” Julie exclaimed, when she had finished reading it. “I think we may say that we’ve prizes for at least two more races and as for the cups, they’re a marvellous idea. And look here, everyone, so long as Madame is coming, what’s the matter with asking *her* to open the show?”

“But we’ve already asked Bill,” Veronica said.

“I know that; but what do you bet that when Bill hears she insists on stepping down?”

“Nothing! It’s just what she would do!”

And, to anticipate a little, that was exactly what happened.

Chapter XV

JO TAKES A CHANCE

“Now is everyone here who’s coming? I’m not going to wait much longer!” Thus, Miss Wilmot, as she surveyed the file of girls all armed with big baskets, who were going to gather moss for the floral pictures.

“I think so,” Mary-Lou replied. “Barbara’s still in bed with headache, so she can’t come. It’s better though and Matey—I mean Matron—says she’ll be all right by to-morrow.”

“Hard luck on Barbara,” Miss Wilmot said. “Well, if you’re *sure*, we’ll set off. Lead on, Mary-Lou and Vi.”

The double files moved off smartly to be joined at the gate by Miss Dene who was also coming. Miss Wilmot had refused to be solely responsible for eighteen girls, who included Emerence Hope and Francie Wilford, and who were all in a state of wild excitement in any case.

Kaffee und Kuchen had been taken in the garden early, by the moss-gatherers, and the rest of the school was just going to have it before seeing to setting up the trestle tables ready for the exhibits, which would come up on the morrow. They had wanted to forego their usual rest and do it in the afternoon, but no one would agree. Matron, to whom they had gone first, had given them short shrift.

“Go without your rest? Certainly not! I don’t want anyone else down with headache, thank you!” she had snapped. “You’ll take your siesta as usual!”

The Head, when some of the prefects bearded her, was equally firm. “No; you must have your rest. Believe me, girls, you’ll find you do far better work and much quicker this evening if you have your usual ‘stand-easy’. You will have plenty of time for everything. I am excusing all prep to-day, so that should give you all you need.”

That had settled it and the prefects withdrew, inwardly praying that Matron would never find out that they had tried to go over her head with Miss Annersley.

It had been very hot during the morning and early afternoon, but now, thin, lacey clouds trailed across the sky, sometimes veiling the sun, and a little breeze had sprung up. Under its influence, the girls stepped out smartly, the two members of staff strolling along beside them, talking to each other, but keeping a wary eye for stragglers.

Once they had turned down by the railway, cut across it and entered the long, rocky defile, which led to that favourite spot of theirs, the Auberge, famed for its echoes, the girls were allowed to break lines and walk in groups. Most of the Gang were there, including Jo and Josette, who were faster friends than ever. Verity-Anne had been left behind. She was not robust and the great heat of the past week had taken it out of her considerably. In addition, Clare Kennedy and her own great friend, Christine Dawson, Gwen Parry and Sue Meadows, Con and Len Maynard, *and* Emerence Hope and Francie Wilford, causes of Miss Wilmot’s misgivings, were there.

It had taken hard pleading on the part of the last pair to get permission to join the party. They both had a well-deserved reputation for being two thoroughly naughty girls and Miss Wilmot, easy-going as she generally was, had flatly refused to include them at first. It was not until Miss Dene had offered to partner her that she had agreed, on the condition that they would do as they were told and play no monkey-tricks. The pair had promised fervently and they fully meant to keep their word. However, fate was to see to it that before the party arrived home it was to have all it wanted in the way of thrills, both good and bad.

“Where shall we begin to gather, Miss Wilmot?” Mary-Lou came to ask presently.

“Not till we’re past the turn. There isn’t much here and what there is, is very poor. As I

remember it, the best is a little way on round the curve. You may begin there.”

Mary-Lou thanked her and went back to Vi and Lesley and presently they were chattering about the flower show.

“It’s jolly bad luck on Barbara,” Mary-Lou said presently. “It’s her idea and this moss-gathering will be one of the best parts of it and she’s got to miss it! I’d be jolly well browned off if it were me!” with sublime disregard of grammar.

“Oh, she’s fed up all right,” Vi said. “But she knows it can’t be helped. Anyhow, her head was so bad this morning that I don’t think she cared one way or the other. It’s weird, you know,” she went on. “It’s only about three years ago that she was watched by everyone and no one allowed her to do anything in case it made her ill. You’d never think it now, would you, except when she gets a sudden go like this. I asked Matey and she said she’d be all right by to-morrow. It was partly the hot weather and partly she’d got herself so revved up——”

“I’ll bet Matey never said anything of the sort!” Lesley broke in.

Vi gave her an impish smile. “You win! What she did say was that Babs was far too excited and it was a pity she couldn’t control herself better. Anyhow, it really is nothing, only she’s done out of this trip.”

“Stop, girls!” Miss Wilmot called; and they all stood still. “Now, listen to me. Round the curve, you should find all the moss you want. You are not to try to climb up anywhere but keep on the level. Go in pairs, one to dig the moss—or *scrape* it, might be better—and one to carry the basket. No one is to go beyond the end of the path. We aren’t here to try the echoes, but to get *moss*! Now, is that clearly understood?”

They said it was, though Emerence and Francie gave each other conscious looks. They had fully intended running ahead to the little plateau where the Auberge stood, and trying out a few new ideas they had evolved about the echoes. Miss Wilmot put a stop to that, though. They followed the rest meekly when she gave them the word to go on and presently they were round the curve.

Here, the path widened and between the great rocks grew the rich moss they were after. They scattered, keeping in pairs as the mistress had warned them, and presently, all were hard at work. And it was *hard* at work. The moss was not easy to get up, for the roots seemed to cling under the rocks and they had to go deep to get it out in clumps. They had been warned that small tufts would be of little use. They must try to bring clods at least six inches square.

Mary-Lou and Vi were the farthest along the path. Emerence and Francie, seeing that their little game had been stopped, elected to work at the other end. As Emerence had cannily remarked to her friend, they would have a shorter way to carry their basket when it was full. In between came the rest, Jo and Josette nearest to the two demons and with the Maynard pair on the other side.

Jo kept an eye on Con and Len. She felt that she owed Aunt Joey a great deal for all her kindness, and more than kindness, during those days she had been at Freudesheim. The least she could do was to see that her girls kept out of danger. Not that there should be the least danger. There was plenty of moss near the path and there was no reason why anyone should venture close to the edge.

Suddenly a cry from Clare took Miss Wilmot along the path at full speed. The knife she had been using to loosen the moss had slipped and cut her. It was a nasty, jagged cut, though not deep and it bled profusely. Clare was one of those unlucky people who cannot stand the sight of blood, and by the time the mistress reached her, she was a delicate green and Christine, who was dabbing at the cut with her handkerchief, was not much better.

It was well that Matron allowed no one to go on an expedition without taking the minimum of first-aid with them. Miss Dene had a flat tin in which were plaster, a little bottle of iodine, ammonia and a couple of bandages. Miss Wilmot looked at the cut which was smeared with dirt,

since moss-gathering is hardly a clean occupation, and called to Miss Dene to bring the first-aid kit along.

Miss Dene, with a warning word to the grubbers to be careful, ran along the path pulling the case out of her bag. It took barely a minute and she turned back at once. But that minute was enough for Emerence. She saw an extra fine clump of moss quite near the edge and made for it. She never looked where she was going, and caught her foot in a crevice in the rock. With a wild scream, she went headlong, her knife flying from her hand to fall down into the depths below and, for one awful moment, it looked as if Emerence herself must follow.

Miss Dene literally flew down the path, but she would have been too late. Jo, who was nearest, dropped her knife, bounded across the little space, and laid hold of Emerence's ankle just in time to check her fall. Then she stretched herself out full length and held on like grim death.

Josette kept her head, too. She ordered Len and Con back on to the path in no uncertain tone and they obeyed her without a word, though Con was sobbing with fear and Len was shaking, as she put her arms round her triplet and held her tightly. Miss Wilmot and the other girls were on their feet at once, Clare forgetting that she had felt horribly faint and sick a second before. Mary-Lou tossed her knife down and tore after Miss Wilmot, who had left Clare and Christine to look after themselves and gone at her utmost pace to the rescue. The others kept back out of the way. They knew that too many people clustering round might hamper the mistresses in their attempt at saving Emerence.

Meanwhile, Jo was feeling as if her arms were coming out of their sockets. She had had no idea that Emerence was such a weight. The fact was, that when she felt herself going, after that first scream, Emerence had fainted and she was a dead weight on poor Jo's arms. But help was close. Miss Dene was kneeling down just as Jo was feeling that if it went on much longer she simply must be dragged over the edge with Emerence. She had no idea of loosening her hold.

Miss Dene was only slightly built, but she knew better than Jo how to manage. She had knelt down and now her hands were grasping Emerence under the knee. Miss Wilmot was beside her on the other side and she lay flat, inched her way nearer and nearer to the edge, and was able to grab the girl by the other leg.

"Got her!" she gasped. "Can we back, a bit."

Mary-Lou was there and she had taken off the stout leather Guide belt she had elected to wear and was untwisting the stout cord which, like all good Guides, she wore on it. Her fingers flew and then she was crawling on all fours up to Miss Wilmot.

"I'm here, Miss Wilmot," she said gently, so as not to startle the mistress. "I've got my Guide cord here. If I take her leg could you get it round her?"

"Take a grip just below my hands," Miss Wilmot directed. Her nerves were strong and Mary-Lou's method of addressing her had come as a relief rather than a shock. Besides, Mary-Lou was a big, sturdy girl, a fine swimmer, full of common sense and given to keeping her head on all occasions.

Mary-Lou lay flat, gripped just below the mistress's hands and then said, "I've got her tight. You can let go."

Miss Wilmot let go and wriggled back a little from the edge. She stood up and carefully measured the length of the cord with her eye. It was extra long. Mary-Lou generally did things thoroughly. In her schoolgirl days, Nancy Wilmot, growing up among a horde of brothers, had learnt to fling a lasso. She coiled the cord and uttered a swift prayer that she might get it right over Emerence's shoulders. It wouldn't help if it caught any further up. She had no wish to hang the girl! Then she set her teeth and threw!

She had not lost the trick. The cord curled round and caught round Emerence's waist as the mistress carefully drew it up and tightened it. She looked at the others.

"When I say 'Pull!' pull steadily!" she said.

She took a firm stance and braced her muscles. “Pull!” she said sharply.

The three people on the ground wriggled backwards, Jo, rather clumsily, for she was coming to the end of her tether. At the same time, Miss Wilmot hauled on the cord, lifting the upper part of Emerence’s body, so that her face was slightly protected from the rock. Slowly, slowly, they got her up, until the mistress began to coil the cord in and at last was able to get her arms round the unconscious girl and lift her bodily on to the little shelf again. She felt a chill as she noted how limp Emerence was. For an instant, she thought the child must be dead. Then, as she laid her down, Emerence’s lashes fluttered. Her blue eyes opened and she looked up to find Miss Wilmot and Miss Dene kneeling beside her with anxious faces.

“Hello!” she murmured faintly. Then her eyes shut again; but it was enough. Reassured, Miss Wilmot got to her feet, stooped down and, with some help from Miss Dene, carried her to the path where the girls were standing, silent and white-faced. Only Mary-Lou, who had joined them, once Emerence was safely over the edge, looked more or less herself. As for Jo, she was lying in a little heap, wondering if her arms and shoulders would *ever* feel right again.

“We must take her to the Auberge,” Miss Dene said, rather shakily. “It’s nearer than anywhere else. Vi, can you run on and warn them, dear? Take Josette with you. Where is Josette, by the way?”

She looked round. Josette was beside Jo, who was still lying there and Miss Dene went at once. “Jo, are you all right?” she asked anxiously.

Jo made a big effort and pulled herself together. “I—I’m all right. Only my shoulders——” She stopped, for the tears of pain were rolling down her face.

“Of course!” Miss Dene was stooping and lifting her. “You poor child! You had her full weight depending on you until I reached you. It’s a wonder your arms aren’t dislocated! Can you stretch them, dear? Try!”

Thus urged, Jo stretched first one arm and then the other. She bit off a cry as she did so, but it was plain that she was suffering from wrenched muscles only. There was no real harm done. Miss Dene pulled out her handkerchief and wiped the tears away. She knew that it was partly shock as well as the pain which brought them and she did not wonder. It was only a fortnight since Jo had had another bad shock.

“There!” she said. “Now, do you think if Josette and I help you, you can manage to walk as far as the Auberge? Miss Wilmot and Mary-Lou are carrying Emerence there. You shall have a warm drink and a good splash and then you’ll feel better. Josette, go to her other side and put your arm round her waist to help her. Now, Jo!”

Jo decided to try. Her shoulders were aching as badly as ever, but she knew now that Emerence was alive and she had thought she was dead. She set her teeth and stepped out as well as she could. Josette’s arm was firmly round her waist and Miss Dene had put one across her shoulders in such a way that she felt the support. It was not an easy walk, for every step jarred the strained muscles, but she managed it and at long last they reached the Auberge, where the girls were standing in a silent group at one side—silent, that is, all but Con and Francie who were both crying heart-brokenly. But when they saw the trio enter the little courtyard, they set up a faint cheer.

Miss Dene had had time to recover herself to some extent. “Yes,” she said. “I know you all realize that Jo Scott has behaved like a heroine this evening; but she is in pain with her shoulders and I’m sure she would rather sit down a moment now. Francie and Con, you must stop crying. There is nothing to cry about. Emerence will be all right presently and I only hope this has taught her a lesson, for the future, to be obedient.” She said this with some severity and the girls looked at her, startled. That was the last thing they had expected when one of their number had been so near to death.

Miss Dene nearly smiled at their faces. She bit her lips hard, and went on, “Hilary, go to the

Auberge and ask if we can have some hot coffee, please. You would all be better for a hot drink. Find seats for yourselves. Con and Francie! Did you hear me tell you to stop crying?"

The pair struggled with their tears. Con gulped and dabbed at her eyes with a soaked handkerchief. Francie uttered a terrific whoop. But after a few minutes, they had recovered, though it must be said that their self-control was still very shaky. But Miss Wilmot emerged from the Auberge and came straight across to them.

"When you say your prayers to-night, girls," she said soberly, "don't forget to thank God for His goodness to us. Emerence will be all right, though she's feeling very sorry for herself at the moment. She has been very sick and, of course, she is very stiff and sore with being hauled about as she was. In fact, she asked me if her legs were still there! But she is all right and a messenger is going to the station to ring up Freudesheim and ask Dr. Jack to meet us with his car and take Emerence and Jo home."

The girls had grinned faintly when they heard Emerence's question. The hot coffee arrived—more than half chicory—but it was well-sweetened and it went down very well. After that, they had to wait a little until a big man arrived with Emerence in his arms. She was very white, and there were heavy shadows under her eyes, but she waved her hand feebly at them and they felt reassured at once.

Miss Wilmot told them to pick up their baskets and line up. She and Miss Dene would give Jo a queen's chair till they met the car. So Jo rode back along the path in state. She was very quiet, for she was thinking of a good many things, but Miss Dene, glancing at her once, was thankful to see that the colour was returning to her face again. Dr. Jack was at the mouth of the path to meet them and packed not only Emerence and Jo into the car, but took all the baskets of moss as well. This was a great relief to the girls, who were very tired with all the varied emotions they had endured during the past hour or two.

Joey was at the school when the car drove up and while the doctor carried Emerence up to the san, where he examined her carefully, before telling Matron to keep her in bed all next day but to let her get up on the flower show day; she took Jo up to her own little cubicle and saw her first into a hot bath which helped the wrenched muscles considerably and then, when she had anointed shoulders and arms with some of Matron's special lotion, she sat down and talked quietly until Jo fell fast asleep.

When she was sure that the girl was safely off, Joey got to her feet and left the room quietly, to go downstairs for a while. She got the whole story then and when, on going back for a last look at her unofficial god-daughter, she found that young person wide awake and restless, she sat down with the air of staying for the night that was, in itself, soothing.

"What's wrong, precious?" she asked.

"I was wondering—how is Emerence?" Jo asked.

"Sound asleep, Matey told me, just before I came up. Don't worry about her. She'll be all right and if she's sore and stiff, it serves her right. She knew well enough she was being disobedient, when she went so close to the edge, because Miss Dene's back was turned. Jo, I shall have a very nice letter to send to Kenya. Your mother will begin to get well by leaps and bounds when she hears what a heroine she has for her daughter!"

"But that's just it, Aunt Joey!" Jo sat up, her hair, loosened from its plaits, streaming wildly round her. "I'm *not* a heroine! When I thought my arms were going to be pulled out, I very nearly let go. Only I *couldn't* do that altogether, because I knew if I did she'd go right over and nothing could save her. But oh, it did seem *ages* before Miss Dene came!" She ended on a sob. Jo took her into her arms.

"My precious girl, that's just *why* you are a heroine. You *did* hang on, even though it hurt so dreadfully. You *didn't* let go and you *did* save Emerence's life. If it hadn't been for you, she must have gone clean over. There was only her one leg and her other ankle on the rocks. She

couldn't possibly have saved herself. I'm going to tell your mother and dad that you are a real heroine. Now, I'm going to bring your sponge and sponge your face and hands and tie your hair back. And then you are going to lie down and go to sleep and when you wake in the morning you won't ache nearly so badly and you'll be ready for the fun of the week-end."

Jo found the sponge and went to soak it. On her way back, she met Matron and had a few words with her. So, when Jo, feeling much refreshed after the sponging, was sitting with her back to Joey while that lady attended to her hair, the Chalet School's tyrant appeared with a drink of hot milk.

"Well, Jo," she said, "I hear you're restless. Drink this milk and then you'll soon go to sleep. Nothing like hot milk for restless people!" She held the cup to Jo's lips and went on, "You've nothing to worry about. Emerence has escaped much better than she deserves, and you have done something that will make your people as proud of you as the school is. If you don't sleep after all that, you'll have to spend the week-end in bed——"

"Oh, Matron, *no!*" Jo cried, handing back the cup which she had drained. "I couldn't possibly do that! I've got far too much to do. I'll lie down, when Aunt Joey has finished my hair, and go to sleep at once, I promise you! But *don't* say I've got to stay in bed! *Please*, don't."

"We'll see," was all Matron would say. But she was not worried. She knew that after that cup of milk Jo would sleep throughout the night and wake much more like herself in the morning. She waited till Joey had finished with the pigtails and then marched that lady out of the room, very much as she had done a good many years before, when she was a schoolgirl herself.

"You haven't a scrap of respect for me as a wife and proud mamma, have you, Matey?" Joey asked, laughter in her eyes.

"None whatsoever." Matron retorted. "I know you too well. Inside, Joey, you're just the same tiresome, naughty girl you ever were. Now march and let me get on with my chores. These are long days from now till the end of term."

Joey marched.

Chapter XVI

THE FLOWER SHOW

When next day came, Jo felt better, but she was still so stiff that she could only agree when Matron shook her head and said she must stay where she was for that day. She protested, of course. No girl was going to hear such a fiat and *not* make some protest; but Matron's foot was down and she resigned herself to lying in bed. What mattered much more was the news that she was out of the gymkhana as well.

Jo sat up straight in bed at this, forgetting her aches and pains in her horror. "But Matron, can't I possibly? Not if I stay here quietly all day?" she begged.

"My dear girl, I don't think you realize quite how badly your muscles have been strained," Matron responded briskly. "Of course you can't! I'm sorry, Jo, but it's quite out of the question. You'll have to console yourself with the thought that at least you've saved a life."

Jo gave it up after that. The best part of a term at the Chalet School had taught her that you couldn't argue with Matron—not if you valued your life, to quote Mary-Lou. All the same, she felt rebelliously that it was jolly hard lines that saving Emerence from diving headfirst down to the valley should have done her out of the Gymkhana.

However, even on the Saturday, when Matron let her get up and dress, she had to own, strictly to herself, of course, that that lady had been quite right. The pain had subsided to a dull ache which could be ignored for the most part; but any sudden movement brought a sharp pain. Racing, of any kind, was clearly out of the question. She might have resented it more, but Emerence was out of everything. She was still in bed in the tiny room off San itself and allowed no visitors but Matron, the Head, and Mrs. Maynard, who claimed the right to mother anyone who really needed it, whether she was more or less in charge of them or not.

Jo was greeted with such whole-hearted warmth from the rest, that she felt both startled and embarrassed. However, she contrived to accept it without too much fuss and, in any case, once Frühstück was over, they were all so busy, that no one had much time to talk of anything but the flower show.

"Come on out to the marquees and see the exhibits," Josette cried.

"Have they all come?" Jo asked eagerly, following her out to the front lawns which were more or less hidden by the big marquees. "I say! What about our beds?"

"They're fenced off. Gaudenz did it yesterday," Mary-Lou, who was with them, explained. "This is the one for flowers and vegetables. Flowers at that side; veges this. Fruit is in the other and so are the bouquets. The table decorations are in the Speisesaal. Everyone going in is hard at it there. We're to have our Mittagessen in the gym as Hall is being used for the visitors. Rather a nifty display, isn't it?"

Jo stood still looking at the long trestle tables with their vases and bowls of flowers. Light shelving had been raised behind them, for the folk of the district had taken to the idea with enthusiasm and nearly everyone, with a garden or even a few pots of flowers, had sent in an exhibit. The vegetables were even more numerous and Jo found that cabbages and leeks and onions and turnips have a beauty of their own when they are properly cleaned and carefully arranged.

Verity-Anne came plunging into the marquee to find them. "Come on!" she panted. "The judges are here and the Head's bringing them along almost at once. You've got to clear out, pronto!"

"They'll probably come here first," Mary-Lou said. "We'll shift over to the other and you can

get a dekkko at the fruit and bouquets. Then we'll go and see the pictures."

"We nearly didn't have them," Josette added, as they trooped out of the marquee and crossed the drive to the other. "Barbara was so horrified when she heard what had happened, that she wanted to cry the whole thing off. But the Head said that was childish and she insisted, so we all turned to and did our best. They don't look half bad, either. Vi and Barbara and I were out at six watering them, so, with any luck, they ought to keep fresh all day. Here's the fruit. The bouquets are over there. Some of them are really lovely!"

Jo gazed at the baskets and heaps of fruit. Cherries, strawberries, raspberries, grapes, peaches, and apricots were heaped in luscious-looking piles, decked with their own leaves. Red, black and white currants gleamed in the sunshine that fell through the open flaps of the marquee.

"Gosh!" she gasped. "I didn't know Switzerland grew so many fruits!"

"I didn't myself," Mary-Lou agreed. "But we can't hang about just now. Goodness knows how long the judges will be, but we'd better not be found here when they come. Come and see the bouquets and we'll trot off to the pictures."

She led the way round to the far side of the tent where, in jam-jars, bouquets of wild flowers made fairyland of the shadowy side. Jo looked at them rather sadly. She had intended entering a bouquet of bluebells and grasses but, of course, it had been impossible. She admired Josette's entry of purple salvia and white anemones, and exclaimed at the glowing beauty of a bouquet of alpine roses and trailing grass, which Betsy Lucy had entered. But she had no time to see anything more. The others were too anxious not to be caught there by the Head and the judges and they hurried her off to the rock garden where the floral pictures had been laid out in the shade, as far as possible.

The girls had really produced some very charming pictures. They had wisely limited the size of their efforts and the largest, an ambitious attempt at William Tell and his son, was only twenty by eighteen inches. The background was of green foliage; the great archer was attired in a tunic of yellow gentian with breeches of brown and yellow lady's slipper orchids. His bow and arrows were of the same flower and his cap matched his tunic. His son was attired in the deep wine colour of the vanilla orchid and one alpine rose made the apple he held. It must be admitted that both looked as if they were coming down with scarlet fever at its worst. The girls had used scarlet gentian for their faces!

Mary-Lou's lake with the white swan was composed of dark blue gentians with white daisies for the swan. She had introduced short lines of white anemones to give the impression of rippling water. Barbara and Vi had done their clock and Hilary had portrayed a steepled church with purple salvias and windows of flowers of every colour she could squeeze in. There was a picture of a basket of flowers, lady's slipper orchids forming the basket with bare twigs interlaced to give the impression of basketry and the flowers were mainly roses, begged from Lesley and her helpers. In short, as Jo remarked, when she had made the rounds, they had managed quite a variety.

"I'll bet everyone is thrilled with them," she observed. "Aren't you glad the Head made you stick to it, Barbara?"

Barbara nodded. "Ye-es. I am, now. But I can tell you I felt jolly sick when I heard what had happened because of the moss!"

"When you heard what had happened because of that young ass, Emerence, you mean!" Vi said severely. "I've told you till I'm tired that if Emerence hadn't played the giddy goat, nothing *would* have happened!"

"No; but if you hadn't gone after moss for the pictures, she wouldn't have had the chance to play the giddy goat," Barbara replied.

"If you come to that, if someone had only said she *wasn't* to go, she couldn't have done it then, either," Vi pointed out. "And if she hadn't been Emerence, anyhow, she wouldn't have

thought of doing it, either. So put *that* on your needles and knit it, young Barbara!” she wound up triumphantly.

Barbara subsided and Lesley, now that the subject of Thursday evening’s adventure had been introduced, turned to Jo. “I’d like you to know, Jo,” she said soberly, “that I think you jolly well played the game when you hung on to Emerence as you did. It must have hurt horribly, even though it was for hardly three seconds. If it hadn’t been for you, she’d have gone. She had only about a third of her body on the shelf. The rest of her was hanging over—why on earth are you looking at me like that?” she added, in a puzzled way.

“Do you mean,” said Jo slowly, “that it was only a few seconds before Miss Dene came to help me? I thought it was *hours*! It felt as if no one was ever coming!”

“Well, it may have been five. I should have said three myself,” Lesley replied. “In all the years I’ve known her, I’ve never seen Miss Dene move so fast. One minute she was talking to Miss Wilmot and Clare. The next, she was kneeling down beside you and I can’t remember seeing how she got there.”

“You said you’d never seen her move so fast before,” said Mary-Lou, the matter-of-fact. “But she’s right, Jo. I don’t think it was more than five seconds if it was as long. If it had been,” she added seriously, “I doubt if you could have kept Emerence from falling. She’s small for her age, and she’s skinny; but you’re not so very much bigger even if your muscles *are* pretty good for a girl. Now, look here, everyone! We’re all here. I know the Head said we weren’t to talk about it to either Jo or Emerence; but it’s cropped up by accident, so I’ll just say this—and I know I’m speaking for all of us, Jo—we’re jolly proud to think you’re one of the Gang and we’re jolly proud to have you for a friend.”

“Hear, hear!” the rest chorused while Jo stood there, going red and white by turns and not very sure what to say or do.

“Well, that’s all,” Mary-Lou said. “There’s the bell for Break. Come on, Gang! We don’t want to miss our share of the biscuits!”

They whirled up the steps and raced for the school. Only Jo was left and Josette stayed with her. As they took the steps at a much more sedate pace, the latter said, “That’s good, Jo! Mary-Lou never says anything she doesn’t mean. You’re a full-blown member of the Gang now. You were sort of on trial, before.”

Jo knew this for the honour it was and she went red again as she replied, “I’m awfully glad. And if only I didn’t have to miss the gymkhana, I wouldn’t have a thing to ask for. Matey told me this morning, when she woke me, that Aunt Joey had rung up this morning to say she’d had a cable from Dad saying Mummy was much better, and they’re hoping to move her to Capetown in about a fortnight. So *that’s* all right! Auntie Joey thinks she’s got a chalet for them to come to in September if Mummy’s well enough. It isn’t just here, but it’s up at the Rösleinalp and that’s only fifteen minutes by the railway, so I’ll be able to go and spend week-ends with them when term begins again. It’ll be marvellous, won’t it? And I’ll ask Mummy, when she’s well enough, if you can come, too. She’s sure to want to see you.”

“That’ll be wizard!” Josette agreed, as they reached the kitchen door and went into the big kitchen to get their milk and biscuits.

After that, they had to fly upstairs to change into fresh frocks and wash hands and faces and brush their hair. The show was to open at half-past ten and they had been warned to be in readiness. The gymkhana would take place in the afternoon, but the first pierrot show was to be at half-past eleven. Those taking part in it had to change into their versions of the national costumes and go over to Freudesheim to be ready. Barbara had complained that the Channel Islands *had* no national costume, but Julie had squashed her by pointing out that their French name was “Les Iles Normandes”, therefore, she could perfectly well wear Norman costume. So Barbara had to get herself into her ankle-length skirt and full-sleeved white blouse, with the little

silk shawl fastened over it. On her sunny curls was set a fan-shaped, gauffered cap and Julie, who appeared to make sure that she was all right, produced heavy, silver ear-rings which she tied on with pink silk so that it didn't show.

"There!" she said, standing back to admire the result, with her head on one side. "You don't look at all bad! Now where is Catriona? I want to be certain that she's got everything. Catriona! Come out and let me look at you!"

Catriona emerged from her curtains, looking, as Vi said, the complete Highland chieftainness, in her green kilt, black velvet jacket with ruffles at throat and wrists and Glengarry bonnet with eagle feather at one side. Her maud was clasped on the left shoulder with an enormous cairngorm set in gold, and her stockings with their Fair Isle tops were neatly gartered.

"I may *look* all right," she said, in answer to Vi's comment, "but if it gets much hotter, I'll be a grease-spot by the end of the afternoon in this kit!"

"Well, you can take off that plaid-thing, for the time being, once the show's over, and then you won't feel it as much," Julie said consolingly. "Now is there anyone else in the show here? If so, come out and let me take a dekkko at you. Be quick! I've got to be down in the garden when the gates open, and I haven't much time left."

Three people appeared in the loose, round-necked frocks the school wore for country-dancing and Julie passed them. Then she glanced at her watch, exclaimed in horror and fled to her post in the garden.

The others cast hurried glances round their dormitory to be sure it was tidy, for you never knew with Matron. She *might* just make time to do a round and though they hardly expected her to call one of them off to go and tidy up, they knew they would feel the rough edge of her tongue afterwards and that was something no one wanted. All was well, however, so they went downstairs quietly. The people in the pierrot show made for the gate between the school and Freudesheim and the others wandered about in groups.

At half-past ten promptly, Lady Russell arrived, looking her most charming in a flowered, voile frock with a shady hat and accompanied by the Head, the Maynards, Miss Wilson and Drs. Peters and Graves from the big Sanatorium. By that time, the place was crowded and it had been decided that the formal opening should take place from the top of the three steps that led into the entrance hall. A bell was rung and the visitors crowded out of the marquees and filled the drive and every other available space and looked expectantly at the group by the big door.

Dr. Maynard acted as Chairman. He cut down his remarks to the bare limit and then called on his sister-in-law to open the show.

Lady Russell stepped forward and there was a little stir as Janice Chester came forward with an armful of roses and lilies to offer her. Lady Russell smiled and kissed Janice. Then, as that young person ran back to her place with the Third Form, she said, "Thank you, very much, School. They are lovely!" Then she handed them to the Head and turned back to her audience with a smile.

"I'm so very glad to see you all here to-day," she said simply. "And I'm more than glad to be here. I understand that it really should have been Miss Wilson from our branch at Welsen, but she very basely backed out and left me to do the work.

"I've already been round the marquees and I don't think I ever saw a more lovely show of garden products before. I congratulate all the winners most heartily on their success; and I congratulate everyone who has tried. The judges tell me they have had a most difficult task to make their decisions.

"And now I want to say a few words about the reason for this show. It stands at the other end of the Platz—the great sanatorium, where the doctors try to relieve suffering and give back hope to the sick. The Chalet School and the Sanatorium have always been closely linked from the days when the school was running in Tirol. I hope this will always be the case. I know our girls—and I

include Welsen among them—have already shown you what they can do, in the way of plays and a Sale of Work. This is a new venture and I am sure it will be as successful as those have been. I am told that the exhibits in the marquees are to go to the patients in the Sanatorium and I can assure you they will be received with delight. Thank you all very much for that.

“Besides the exhibits, I hear we have a series of floral pictures, and there is a show of national songs and dances in the garden at Freudesheim, next door. You can go to see it through the gate in the hedge round at the side. This afternoon, there is to be another show with an entirely different programme. Finally, the girls themselves are holding a gymkhana on one of our tennis courts and that, too, we hope you will visit. The entrance fees are low, and, if I know our girls, you will certainly enjoy it.

“And now I have kept you long enough. I declare this flower show open and I wish it every possible success.”

Loud applause greeted this brief speech and, after votes of thanks had been passed, the meeting broke up and the girls went off to their posts, while Lady Russell, having requested that someone would see that her flowers were put into water to keep them fresh, demanded to be taken to see the floral pictures before it was time for the show.

“How much?” she demanded of Polly Winterton, who was at the top of the steps, seated at a table on which stood a large wooden bowl.

“Ten centimes,” Polly replied. “Oh, thank you, Lady Russell!” for the head of the Chalet School Trust Company had dropped a hundred-franc note into the bowl saying, “That’s to start you off well.”

Quite a number of people followed the Opener and the praise showered on the girls’ efforts made those of the Gang in charge for the morning blush and grin at each other with delight. In fact, they were kept very busy until the bell sounded again and Miss Derwent’s voice sounded over the loud-speaker Jack Maynard had had rigged up, announcing that the show would begin in twenty minutes’ time.

“Aren’t you going to see it?” “Madame”, as the school called her, asked Lesley.

Lesley shook her head. “We’ve got to stay here. Everyone won’t be able to get in. And, anyway,” she added, “we’ve seen and heard everything till we’re pretty well sick of them! But I do hope we get a chance of seeing the gymkhana,” she added.

“Aren’t you in it?” Madge Russell asked sympathetically.

“No; I’m out. Lost all my heats. Still, I had the fun of trying,” she concluded philosophically. “And I jolly well hope to have the fun of seeing it this afternoon! Mind you go, Madame. Some of those events ought to be a complete yell!”

“Of course I’m going! What do you take me for?” the lady demanded indignantly. Then she went off to hunt up her sister and the pair, having paid their shot at the gate, sought the special seats reserved for them.

“Where are your babes?” Lady Russell asked Joey, as they sat down.

“The twins are round at the back in their playpen and Charles and Mike are in the salon with Beth. I couldn’t have them running round underfoot,” Joey replied. “You might have brought your own twins with you! I haven’t seen them for a year, remember. They’re quite boys by this time, I suppose?”

“They are! But how do you imagine I could have coped with air-travel and an opening with those two on my hands? They’re as bad as Mike and there are two of them into the bargain! If you want to see Kevin and Kester, you’ll have to come home for a holiday. Hu-sh-sh! They’re going to begin.”

By this time, every seat was filled. Visiting children had been accommodated with rugs, on the ground in front, and as Miss Lawrence, the music mistress, came forward, everyone applauded heartily.

"I just want to say, that as time is limited, there can be no encores," she said. "We open with a song written by Mrs. Maynard—Josephine Bettany—and composed by Mr. Denny, our music master." She bowed and retired in good order and the little orchestra, provided by half-a-dozen girls from Welsen, struck up a brisk, marching tune and the girls, in their costumes, marched in singing a gay song of welcome to the visitors.

"It really is most striking," Madge whispered to Joey as the song ended, and the girls went to take their seats on the two rows of forms placed at the farther end of the lawn. "However did they manage to provide so many nations?"

"Don't ask me! All I know is they've borrowed half my curtains and a few other oddments," Joey whispered back. "Here comes the first number—Clare Kennedy."

The orchestra broke into a merry Irish jig and Clare, looking charming in her little green dress with white apron and shamrock-powdered handkerchief tied over her hair, came forward and danced her jig beautifully. She concluded with a saucy bob-curtsey, finger to chin, and then turned and ran back to her place, while the French girls, each in a different peasant costume, came to sing "Malbrouck s'en vat-en guerre" and "Ron-ron-ron" with its accompaniment of briskly clapping hands. They were succeeded by a group of the English girls, who danced two country dances and then gave place to Catriona, who looked hot in her warm national costume, but sang the haunting "Fairy's Lullaby" from the "Songs of the Hebrides" very charmingly. It had been decided to keep the "Spinning Song" for the afternoon performance.

There was no pause anywhere. As one girl finished and returned to her place, the next came forward and the audience had no chance of trying to demand encores for they had no time. Then there came an entirely unrehearsed effect.

Joey had taken care to send Bruno off to a friend's for the day. No one wanted a rollicking pup at the show and if he were shut up, it was certain that he would make the atmosphere hideous with howls. Therefore, Master Bruno had gone in the car with his master to spend the day at Dr. Graves' since Mrs. Graves, once Hilary Burn and an Old Girl and former mistress at the school, was unable to come, as her small daughter, Marjorie, was teething violently.

How Bruno ever got free was something no one could say. Hilary Graves vowed that she had left him asleep in her sitting-room, while she went to peep at Marjorie who had fallen asleep at last. At any rate, he had managed it, and, just as Janet Forster's beautifully danced "Bacca Pipes" was drawing to its close, a large and indignant dog hurtled across the lawn, upsetting Janet on to her pipes which were smashed to atoms, and flung himself on his mistress with small regard for her pale green draperies. Joey had been tilting her chair in her excitement and the chair, a somewhat elderly one, gave up the ghost when it received the addition of several pounds of excited pup. The back parted company with the seat and Jo was deposited on the ground while Bruno washed her face with liberal kisses, knocking her hat off her head, and pulling down one of her "ear-phones" in the scrimmage.

It was as well that Janet's was the last solo of the show, for once the audience had found that Joey was not hurt, they roared with laughter and the entire chorus had no chance to sing their last concerted number. The orchestra very wisely struck up the marching song again and the girls took the hint and disappeared, leaving Madge Russell to direct the visitors to Hall where a meal would be ready, while Joey, collecting her obstreperous pet, retired to the house to change and tidy and to be greeted by two excited small sons, who told her that it was the best part of the show!

The second performance, which took place in the early afternoon, went off without a hitch. Joey had requested Jack to park Bruno somewhere where he couldn't either escape or be heard, and he had removed him to the Sanatorium, where he was a great favourite with Matron and the nurses, before tearing back to get a meal of some kind.

By this time, everyone had seen the floral pictures, and Polly had already carried a bowl,

overflowing with notes and coins to Miss Dene to be counted, before it was locked up in the safe. As quite a number of people had paid three and four times over, she had a goodly sum for the fund and went off to prepare for her own share in the gymkhana with much satisfaction.

By the time everything was ready, the visitors had found their way to the hard court on which the events were to take place and every seat was occupied. The girls who had lost in the heats formed a solid phalanx at one end and had gathered in all the visiting children who had also been knocked out, much to the relief of their friends and guardians. Then Miss Burnett came forward and announced the final of the senior flowerpot race and five big girls came forward, each armed with two flowerpots, and toed a line. Dr. Grave, who was starter, counted.

“One—two—three!” The pistol banged and they were off.

Each set a flowerpot before her and stepped on it. Balancing as well as she could, she stooped and placed the other pot a little in advance and stepped off on to that before turning enough to stoop and pick up the first. If you overbalanced, you were automatically disqualified. It was very difficult indeed, and Bride Bettany, from Welsen, had not taken five steps before she lost her balance, squirmed wildly and weirdly and fell full length with a pot in her hand.

Ruth Wilson was the next. She miscalculated her distance when she was placing her pot. She tried to set it at a bigger distance than usual, found that she was slipping and landed flat on her tummy with a “Whump” which knocked the breath out of her for a moment. Mary Wormald, also from Welsen, heard her, looked round while balancing on her toes on both pots, staggered wildly and landed on the ground.

The race was now between Bride’s elder sister, Peggy, and Dickie Christy and was finally won by Peggy whose slightness seemed to be an asset. Dickie was leading but, in her excitement, she stamped on her pot and crushed it to pieces, amid howls of laughter from the entire school. Peggy reached the rope without a fault and retired to the ranks of the school, smiling demurely.

The other races in this event went in much the same way, though Ailie Russell won amidst wild cheers, for she actually made the distance in record time, leaving all her competitors behind her.

The frog race for the Senior Middles was won by Mary-Lou, who hopped over the distance as if that were her normal form of progression. Julie won the Seniors’ handsomely from Peggy Bettany and her own cousin, Nancy Chester. But Welsen walked away with the Senior wheelbarrow race *and* the driving pair.

This was something that Miss Burnett had evolved out of her own inner consciousness. Two girls were “pair” and a third was the driver. They were linked by cords and then had to drive a course that wound in and out between skittles which Jack Maynard had produced. The skittles were set in pairs along the course and there was barely room between them for the “pair” to pass. Any who knocked over a skittle were disqualified and, as they were all racing at top speed, it was a wonder that Nell Randolph, driving Peggy Bettany and Gabrielle Fournet managed to stay the course. Their trio was the only one who did so.

But the star turn of the whole show, according to the girls, at any rate, was the blindfold race which Julie had proposed at the last moment. Five competed in each group. They were blindfolded by Matron who was an adept at this, led to their places at the start and when the pistol went, set off to walk the course as steadily as they could.

The audience were weeping with laughter and holding each other up before even the first race ended. The competitors stalked out with grim determination in the lower part of their faces—all anyone could see!—and most of them had not taken three steps before they were diverging in all directions.

Peggy Bettany made straight across the court to fall over Miss Annersley’s knee. Madge Herbert and Veronica Worsley fell into each other’s arms and embraced affectionately. Polly Winterton found herself grabbing the hat of a complete stranger, and Nancy Chester, the only one

to keep reasonably straight for most of the way, suddenly swung round to the right and marched over to the far corner where she clutched the pole holding the netting.

No one else was any more successful and Margot Maynard created a sensation by losing herself completely and wandering right round the court before she suddenly paused, stretched out her hand unexpectedly, and gripped the nose of her own father. His howl rose up at the same moment as his daughter's. Margot had gripped hard and the shock caused her to yell at the top of her voice before she let go.

He was still caressing his maltreated feature when he went to help his sister-in-law with the prizes and it was still red.

That was the last of the flower show and when the visitors finally left, they all declared that they had enjoyed themselves enormously.

"What's the total?" Joey asked much later, when they were all in Hall waiting eagerly to know that very thing.

Miss Dene, Miss Wilmot, Miss Derwent and Mdlle were all counting, with the rest of the two staffs sitting by to check. Miss Wilson and Miss Annersley had got Lady Russell into a far corner of the daïs and were talking to her hard.

Mdlle, the doyenne of the Chalet School staff, rose at that moment and came to the front of the daïs. "I congratulate you, mes enfants," she said. "To-day we have the sum of 606frs. 87c. to add to our Sanatorium fund. An excellent total for what you offered your guests."

The girls cheered lustily, but Lady Russell and the two Heads were coming to the front of the daïs and the cheering died down as the girls looked with curiosity to see what was going to happen now.

"Girls, you have done splendidly!" Lady Russell said. "I am very proud of you all. I am very proud indeed of the school which I began so many years ago with only three pupils when we arrived in Tirol—my sister, Joey, now Mrs. Maynard; Grizel Cochrane, who taught music here for a long time, and is now in New Zealand; and Simone Lecoutier, who also taught till her marriage, and is hoping to send us her daughter, Tessa, next year.^[7] We've a pretty good record, I think, in both work and play. We have a good record among girls who have gone out into the world to carry our standards with them. On more than one occasion, we have had girls who have not hesitated to risk their lives to save those of others. We have one to-day—Jo Scott. Jo's daring saved the life of Emerence Hope. Unfortunately, it also spoilt her part in the flower show.

[7] The School at the Chalet.

"Jo! The prefects are all so sorry for that and they are so proud that you did what you did, that they have asked me to make a special presentation to you. Years ago,^[8] Mrs. Maynard founded a prize to be known as the Margot Venables Prize, to be awarded to the girl who does her best to help other people. Some of you remember that Margot Venables was the mother of Daisy, who is now married, and Primula, who is still at Welsen." She smiled across at that damsel who had given her a startled look. "Mrs. Venables was matron in one of the school's houses until her death. Of late years, the prize has not been awarded, as no girl has seemed to fulfil the conditions. But this year, the prefects have asked me to give it to Jo Scott, partly to make up to her for missing her chances in the various competitions and races; partly, because, although Prunella Davidson fished Margot Maynard out of Lucerne last term, she did not fulfil others of the conditions.^[9] But Jo not only risked her life but, they tell me, has shown herself ready at all times to help."

[8] Gay from China.

[9] The Chalet School Does it Again.

At this point, Joey arrived on the daïs, a slip of paper in her hand. She beckoned furiously at Jo. "Come on!" she said. "I've got it here! Up you come and collect it!"

Helpful hands pulled Jo from her seat and shoved her along the row and up to the dais where Rosalie Way appeared, to lead her to the steps and give her a push up them. Finally, she arrived, looking actually scared.

Joey bent over her. “Here you are, Jo. And I’m glad it’s been won this year and by my own namesake and unofficial god-daughter.” She put the cheque into Jo’s hand and swung her round to face the cheering girls. “Now then, all of you, not so much noise! Take your time from me! Hip, hip, hip——”

And the school joined with full voices in the “Hooray!”

[The end of *A Chalet Girl from Kenya* by Elinor Mary Brent-Dyer]