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"UNWORTHY OF THEIR TRUST!"

A New Story of the Girls of Cliff House School. Also in this issue: A Splendid Number of "The Cliff House Weekly!"

The SCHOOLFRIEND

Every 1½^d Thursday

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IMPRISONING THE CLIFF HOUSE CRICKETERS!

(An incident from "Unworthy of their Trust!" the magnificent long complete tale of the Girls of Cliff House, contained in this issue.)



Your Editor's Corner



Write to me as often as you like and let me know what you think of "The School Friend." All readers who write me, and enclose a stamped envelope, may be sure of receiving a prompt reply by post. All letters should be addressed: The Editor, "The School Friend," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

My Dear Readers,—Now that you have read two stories dealing with Mr. Hartley, the Cliff House coach, I feel sure that you must have formulated some opinion of him: Do you really like him? I must confess that I do. He is the fine figure of a man one naturally admires. But, quite apart from his physique and his undoubted skill at all forms of sport, Mr. Hartley is a gentleman. It is said that a sportsman is not really such unless he is a gentleman; then I feel that I am right in calling Mr. Hartley a first-class sportsman.

There must be a great deal of good in the man for Miss Bellew to love him. After all, the girls have perhaps been swayed by unfortunate mishaps. Not that I am blaming them, though. Under the peculiar circumstances, I am sure that anyone would have acted just as they have done. But there is a great deal to clear up. Who clears it up? Next week's story will give you the clue. It is entitled:

"WELL DONE, BABS!"

By Hilda Richards.

This story will help to further Mr. Hartley in your good wishes. Perhaps you will not be surprised to learn that Nancy Bell and her friend at Banesford Hall play quite prominent parts in this story, but their parts are not worthy of British schoolgirls. But then one does not expect much of either of them. I am sure none of you would care to have Nancy or Nellie for a friend. I should not, anyway.

But you are asking: "What part does Babs play?" That is what you are to learn next week. When Mr. Hartley is under a cloud, suspected by all, there are few to believe in his innocence, only—But I cannot spoil your interest in this wonderful story, so you must wait as best you can till next Thursday.

THE "CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY."

Special numbers of this admirable journal have proved extraordinarily popular, and, consequently, I feel quite sure that next week's

SPECIAL STORY NUMBER

will not differ in popularity from the others which were so well received. There are some splendid stories, and, as you like stories so much, you cannot help being interested.

There is still another announcement I have to make. There is to be a very important change in the "Weekly" soon, but what the change will be I am not going to say now. Next week will be, as I have said, a special Story Number; but after that—well, you must wait for that to come before I tell you exactly what will occur.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

(Owing to the fact that we go to press considerably in advance of publication, readers should bear in mind that letters cannot be answered on this page within six weeks from the date of receipt.)

"Nipper" (Hedfield).—I will bear in mind your request for more plates, but I cannot promise to accede to it. It is extremely doubtful whether Connie Jackson will ever re-appear. Will bear in mind your suggestion regarding the summer holidays.

"A Constant Reader, Flo" (Deilast).—I am afraid I cannot fall in with your view that punishments should be far more severe at Cliff House.

"Babs" (Fairview).—I cannot advise you to act against your father's wishes. Try to impress upon him the good that Girl Guides are doing all over the world, and he will undoubtedly allow you to join.

Eddie and Walter (Redcar, Yorks).—Thanks for giving me such a clear idea of your taste in stories. This is always valu-

able to me. I regret I cannot introduce characters with the names you mention, on account of the great number of requests of the same nature that are made to me.

"An Only Child" (Hereford).—An important announcement concerning Grace Kelywn will be made shortly.

"The C-e-cat" (Canton).—Clara Trevelyn hails from Surrey. I cannot give you the date of her birthday. She is a good swimmer, a good cricketer, and quite a nice girl. I do not recollect her ever having been named.

"A Chippy Cricket" (Ireland).—All boarding-schools, of course, are not like Cliff House. I regret that I cannot give you the birthdays of the girls you name.

J. C. B. (Victoria, Australia).—Babs and Mabs are each fourteen. Glad you like Bessie so much.

"Tolly Bear" (Walsall).—Will see what can be done in the way of a story bringing Phyllis into prominence. See reply to "An Only Child."

"Poppy of the Field."—Sorry I cannot introduce girls with the names you suggest, but I have had so many similar requests put to me.

A. Hildard and J. Richmond (Denton).—All the principal characters of Cliff House were given in the "Who's Who." That is why the feature stopped. Glad Bessie pleases you so much.

"The Office Girl" (West Bromwich).—Nancy Bell shares Study No. 1 with Annabel Richards, and Nellie, Marica and Nancy will reform only time can tell.

Betty and Ivy.—No; Miss Richards is in no way related to the writer you mention. See reply to "The Office Girl."

"Diamond" (Wandswoth).—Thanks for your warm appreciation. The answer to your question is "No."

Your Sincere Friend,

YOUR EDITOR.

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Unworthy of Their Trust!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of the Girls of Cliff House School, introducing Cyril Hartley, the Cliff House Coach, and the Girls of Danesford Hall.

By HILDA RICHARDS.

In the Woods!

"IT'S that man Hartley!" Barbara Redfern made that statement in a tone of great surprise.

"Hartley?" repeated Mabel Lynn, her chin. "Mr. Cyril Hartley, our new school coach?"

"Yes. But isn't it queer?" The others agreed in subdued voices that it was very queer indeed.

They were returning through the woods towards Cliff House school when they first sighted the familiar figure of the athletic Mr. Hartley flitting amongst the trees ahead of them.

Even at their first glimpse of the man they could see that there was something strange in his behaviour.

As they watched, however, that strangeness only became more pronounced. Cyril Hartley moved amongst the trees just like someone stalking someone else and wishing to do so quite unobserved.

From the elaborate precautions which the young man was taking it was quite possible that no one in front of him saw him. But his movements, to the girls coming behind, were visible and already giving rise to considerable speculation.

"It seems just as though we can't get away from that man," remarked Philippa Derwent, in a dejected voice. "Didn't we cut cricket practice this evening because he was supposed to be down there superintending it?"

"We did," said Barbara Redfern. "Having a school coach isn't half such a blessing as we thought it was going to be."

"Having a coach is all right," grumbled Phyllis Howell. "The thing we object to is being saddled with a bouncer like that man Hartley."

The topic of Cyril Hartley was a sore one with the Fourth-Formers.

The girls of Danesford Hall had been challenged to a boatrace on the Sark while Mr. Hartley had been on the Staff at Cliff House. The Fourth-Formers had therefore had the services of an expert coach during their training.

But although they had pulled well, and been admittedly the better crew, they had not won because of a remarkable accident to their boat—Flap Derwent at "stroke" had broken her oar.

As Mr. Hartley had promised to overhaul the boat and the oars on the night before the race, he had naturally been placed in a very difficult position when the Fourth-Formers declared quite candidly that they did not think it had been a fair race.

The interference of Miss Bellow, the Fourth Form mistress, had only complicated matters still more.

Miss Bellow, to the amazement of all, had accused her girls of being "poor losers," and had absolutely forbidden Mr. Hartley to take any notice of their remarks until they apologised for saying anything at all unfavourable to him.

Matters in the Fourth had therefore become somewhat strained.

Even though there was a cricket match due very soon with their rivals from Danesford Hall, most of the girls who would be in the team had decided that they would rather miss practice than accept the advice of Mr. Hartley.

But they had not missed their coach, after all. Here he was ahead of them, darting about from place to place in a manner which was most mysterious, to say the least about it.

"What ever can the man be up to?" Babs gasped, as a sudden and most extraordinary manoeuvre on the part of the young man caught their attention. "Can it be possible—"

"Look!" breathed Marjorie Hazeldene. "There's someone else—someone just ahead of him!"

"It's an old man, too—a poor old man walking with a stick!" exclaimed Peggy Prestwick. "Oh, surely it can't mean that Mr. Hartley is following him?"

"Impossible, surely!" said Babs, shaking her head. "We don't like Mr. Hartley because things have seemed queer, I know; but—Oh, gracious, girls, look at that!"

Babs raised a hand and pointed ahead. Her whole figure trembled with indignation.

Mr. Hartley had suddenly leapt forward. With a couple of bounds he was beside the figure of the old man. The stick went flying to the ground as the old fellow's wrists were clutched, each in a vice-like grip.

"The—the coward!" panted Barbara Redfern hotly.

"Bully! What ever can his game be?" muttered Clara Trevlyn.

"We're going to see, anyway!" cried Babs. "Rescue, Fourth!"

"Let that man alone, Mr. Hartley!" came a general cry.

The girls rushed forward, actuated by a common impulse.

The man's action, on the face of it, was so cowardly and so unjust that they simply could do nothing else.

If Mr. Hartley considered that it was correct and gentlemanly to stalk an old man through the woods and then pounce on him in that manner, it was not their idea of fair play at all.

"Rescue, girls!"

The hatless young man with the close-cropped curly hair and square, determined chin paused abruptly in the very act of pushing his companion's hands above his head.

"What—what the—"

"Let that man alone, Mr. Hartley!" cried Babs, racing to the spot. "We've been watching you, you great bully!"

"Yes, let go at once!" said Clara Trevlyn grimly.

"But—but I—"

The Cliff House coach was still stammering with his astonishment when the oldish man, who had been caught unawares, gave a sudden struggle and wrenched his wrists free.

If the Cliff House girls had been

watching more closely they might have thought that it was rather an athletic movement for a man of his apparent age.

They might also have considered that the manner in which the fellow managed to run, without any assistance from his stick, was also surprising.

But they were too glad to see him released to feel anything but satisfaction when the old fellow plunged amongst the trees and disappeared from sight.

"Gone!" gasped Cyril Hartley. "But not for—"

"You're not going after him, Mr. Hartley!" exclaimed Babs, clutching at the young man's sleeve.

"Let me alone!" cried Mr. Hartley.

"Hold him, girls!" responded Babs, in the same breath.

They did, too! There were eight or nine of them, and they all held the struggling young man at once. And although Mr. Hartley was strong and athletic he found that he had met more than his match in his assailants.

"Let me alone, you little siffies!" panted Cyril Hartley, with a crimson face. "You don't know what you're doing. Let me go!"

"Not yet," said Babs grimly.

"Oh, silly little noodies!"

"Silly—silly what!" asked Clara in surprise.

"Noodles! Interfering schoolgirls!" said the young man angrily. "Let me alone! Do you think I'd attack a man without reason?"

"Well, what is your reason?" asked Babs instantly.

"I—I can't tell you that."

There was an awkward pause. The crashing through the undergrowth had long since died away to silence. The oldish man was now either hiding or sufficiently far away to consider himself safe. Cyril Hartley realised that pursuit would be useless.

He became calmer, evidently understanding at last the light in which he must appear to these girls.

"I—I suppose you think me an awful cad over this," said the young man, almost apologetically.

"That was certainly our feeling when we came and grabbed you," admitted Barbara Redfern.

"Well, you've made a mistake," said Mr. Hartley. "You needn't hold me any longer, because I shan't run away now. Thank you! I'm sorry I called you noodles, or something like that, just now, but I was wild."

"So were we," said Flap Derwent.

"Y-y-yes. Look here," said Mr. Hartley suddenly, "can't you take my assurance that—that I wasn't really acting like a cad when I caught hold of that man just now? I—I can't explain it any better."

Evidently such a vague statement was not enough for the girls, who had seen everything.

"If Mr. Hartley could not explain why he had acted in such an extraordinary and seemingly brutal manner, the Cliff

House girls showed quite plainly that they could not give him the truth for which he asked.

It was certainly asking rather a lot—even Mr. Hartley seemed to realise that. But he did not offer to give any further explanation of his conduct. After a slight struggle his lips set quite firmly, and there was an awkward and unpleasant silence.

"I suppose I'd better be getting back to the school," said the young man, breaking the silence at length.

"I suppose so," responded Babs, in the same tones. "Good-night, Mr. Hartley!"

"Good-night, Miss Redfern!"

Cyril Hartley turned on his heel and strode away.

"And that's Hartley—our coach," breathed Flap Derwent. "That's a man who's supposed to know how to play the game."

"Looked more like highway robbery than anything else, to my mind," said (Mrs. Trevelyn candidly. "It's jolly queer coming on top of the boat-race affair, too."

"I wish the man had never shown up at Cliff House at all," groaned Barbara Redfern. "He helped us on the river, I know; but something queer happened to cause us to be defeated. It would have been better if we'd practised on our own and trusted to luck. I'd rather have had a defeat because we weren't as good as the Danes than the sort we did get."

"So would I," responded Mabel Lynn. "Oh, bother the man! He's caused nothing but upsets everywhere. Even Miss Bellew is disagreeable with us because of what we said to him."

Barbara Redfern's eyes twinkled.

"Ah, you're forgetting the cause there, Mabs," said Babs, with a little laugh. "Bessie Bunter's rumour that Miss Bellew is engaged to be married to someone in the district has proved to be a little more reliable than most of her rumours."

"That's so," said Mabel Lynn. "But she—"

"We mustn't grumble about Miss Bellew when she has such a weighty affair on her mind," said Babs, smiling. "After all, she's jolly nice to us really. We must make the most of the time that we shall still have with her."

"That's so," said Marjorie Hazledene. "And speaking about Miss Bellew, Babs, didn't you mean to say something about her at the Form meeting to-night?"

"I did, Marjorie."

"Then it's time that we made a move for the school," said Marjorie practically. "Let's get back and try and forget that horrid business with Mr. Hartley. I hate to think that it was really as bad as it seemed."

The girls made their way back to the school without further delay. They were not likely to overtake the long-legged Cyril Hartley after the start he had obtained. But as they approached the school they soon became aware of another figure—the fat figure of Bessie Bunter, which came hurrying along to meet them.

Bessie Bunter's eyes were simply dancing with excitement as she rushed up to the Fourth-Formers.

"I say, girls, it's true about Miss Bellew," squeaked the fat girl excitedly. "She really is going to get married."

"Has Miss Bellew told you?" asked Clara politely.

"Nun-no! It—it's not that," said Bessie. "But Lucy Morgan's people know some of the Bellews, you know, and Lucy's had a letter from home saying that Miss Bellew is really engaged!"

"Good gracious!"

"The SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 105.

"Who's the lucky man?" asked the curious Clara.

"I—Lucy doesn't know that," answered Bessie Bunter. "But I expect it's that beautiful young man in Courtfield with the splendid figure, you know. I've often seen Miss Bellew smiling at him, and— I say, where are you going? Don't walk away when I'm jolly well talking."

Bessie Bunter scuttled after the Fourth Form party, excited and somewhat indignant.

But the fat girl's news had only increased the urgency of a Form meeting, as Babs knew, and she was going to convene that important assembly at once.

An Important Meeting!

"SILENCE!"

"I say, Babs—"

"Quiet, please!"

"But, I say—"

"Will you listen to me?" cried Barbara Redfern.

"Yes, but— Yaroooop! Who's pulling my plait?" shrieked Bessie Bunter.

Bessie had "asked for it," as usual. A Form-meeting was always the occasion of a great amount of chatter on the part of the loquacious fat girl. But Mabel Lynn knew that on this particular evening Babs had a lot to say, and she accordingly took steps to secure Bessie's silence by a well-known but very effective method.

"That's better," smiled Babs cheerfully. "Girls, please listen for a few minutes, because there's a lot for us to talk about. In the first place—"

"Leggo my hair, Babs!" said a ready and indignant voice.

"In the first place, I want to say a few words about the boat-race which we had last Saturday. Miss Bellew, as you all know, accused us of not being good sports and being poor losers."

"It wasn't fair of her!" said Freda Foote.

"Thanks, Freda," said Babs, smiling. "Still, we'll let it go at that. After all, the affair is over, and as far as the Danes are concerned they honestly think they won, and would have won in any case."

"They wouldn't!" said several voices. "If our boat had been in better trim we should have made a better fight at the end, I'm sure," acknowledged Barbara. "But, as you all know, something happened to our boat, and that's a mystery for us to clear up. The matter stands like this at present: Either Mr. Hartley was careless when he overhauled the boat, or else someone got at our boat and tampered with it."

Hartley ought to have known in any case," said Nancy Bell, who had a particular reason of her own for saying such a thing. "If there was any damage done I expect he did it—because he wanted the Danes to win."

"We know he's a friend of Miss Potter's, look you!" said Lucy Morgan.

Babs nodded.

"We know that, Lucy," she said. "But he would be an awful, unprincipled bouncer to do a thing like that after coaching us for the race. I hardly like to think that myself."

"And yet we saw the queer scene this evening," said Clara Trevelyn. "Hartley certainly behaved like an absolute cad in front of us all, and he couldn't give any explanation of that."

Barbara Redfern looked perplexed. "It was very difficult for any of them to know what to think."

But Babs had always had a name for being very fair-minded. What was even

more was the fact that she realised that in her position as captain of the Form she was often responsible for what the Form, as a whole, thought.

Cyril Hartley had, during the training period, proved himself a willing worker and quite a gentleman, and he was entitled to the benefit of any doubt there was.

"We'll give Mr. Hartley fair play, anyway, girls," Babs exclaimed. "Nothing is really proved against him, and I don't think that any of us ought to say too much about what we have seen or suspected. But as he is now the school coach we're quite entitled to think what we like."

"Hear, hear."

"We're due to meet the Danes next Saturday at cricket," went on Babs. "If we take the boat-race result as settled, it's up to us to beat the Danes and give them a good licking!"

"We will, too!" said a chorus.

"Well, certainly hope we shall!" exclaimed Barbara. "We've beaten the Danes before, and they've beaten us, so on the whole we're pretty evenly matched. Next Saturday we've got to shine!"

"Rather!"

"I say, you girls—" commenced Bessie Bunter.

"Quiet, Fatima! Phyllis is going to post up a list of the girls chosen to play, and we've all got to pull together and make it a really good team. The question is, what are we going to do about Hartley?"

"Drop him!" said Clara Trevelyn promptly.

"Leave him out!"

"Let him go and coach someone else!" said Phyllis Howell. "We don't want a man like Hartley teaching us to play games."

"Hear, hear!"

"Supposing we give him a chance," suggested Babs, temporising.

"A chance? How do you mean?"

"We might let him coach us if he doesn't try to ride the high horse," suggested Barbara. "After all, we can all do with a little coaching."

"We don't want Hartley's sort, for all that," pointed out Clara.

"He's already let us down once," said Dolly Jobling. "I think we ought to give him a miss just to show what we think of him."

"Especially when we know what he did to the boat," added Nancy Bell.

Babs frowned slightly.

The support of Nancy Bell had somewhat the opposite effect intended. None of the girls liked to feel that they were on the same side as one of the meanest of the Fourth-Formers.

"We'll leave it at that, girls, for the present!" exclaimed Babs. "You think it over amongst yourselves."

"I know what I shall do, anyway!" said Clara Trevelyn decidedly.

"So do I!" added Flap Derwent.

"I shall probably refuse to let the man coach me," said Bessie Bunter, in an airy voice. "I'm blessed if I can see anything to cackle at in that, Barbara Redfern! Considering that I'm the—"

"Write it on paper, Fatima!" laughed Babs. "Girls, there's still something else to talk about. Lucy's news this evening practically confirms Bessie Bunter's rumour about Miss Bellew. For once Bessie hasn't been telling fairy tales—"

"Oh, really!"

"And it really seems that Miss Bellew is going to be married," went on Babs. "None of us can guess who the lucky man is to be, but it's up to us

to give Miss Bellow a jolly good send-off, isn't it?"

"Rather!"

"I don't see why we want to worry about Miss Bellow," observed Marcia Loftus. "She's behaved perfectly cat-tishly about the boat-race—"

"Must have caught that complaint from you," interrupted Babs, with a smile. "Girls, I'll admit that Miss Bellow has been a bit strange since Saturday. But perhaps she's a little excited. And she's been a ripping good sort to us, hasn't she?"

"Rather!" chorused the Fourth-Formers. They knew how much Miss Bellow, as captain of the Guides, had done for the Fourth in hours which should really have been her leisure.

"Well, I suggest that we all start saving up at once," went on Babs, "and get her the very best present we can. What do you think?"

"Splendid idea, Babs!" said Marjorie Hazeldene at once.

"Hear, hear!"

"We ought to start at once, I think!" opined Peggy Preston. "We shall all be sorry to lose Miss Bellow, and I doubt whether we shall ever get such a ripping all-round mistress again. We must all do our best towards the present."

"If we start saving up now we can easily get ten pounds, I should think!" said Barbara eagerly. "Think what we can do with ten pounds!"

"I say, Babs!" squeaked Bessie Bunter excitedly.

"What is it, Fatima?"

"If you get ten pounds I—I might let you buy my dear old Polly to give to Miss Bellow!" said Bessie Bunter generously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a shriek of laughter at that suggestion.

To think of presenting Miss Bellow with a mopy-looking and disagreeable old parrot certainly had its funny side. "If you jolly well decide about Polly like that—," began Bessie warmly.

"Never mind that now, Bessie!" interrupted Babs, smiling. "We're all agreed about the present, girls?"

"Rather!"

"My pip-pip-parrot—"

"Then that's all we've got to talk about, I think," cried Babs, leaping down from the table at last. "But don't forget the cricket match next Saturday. What are we going to do with the Danes?"

"Lick them hollow!" said Clara Trevlyn immediately.

"And without the assistance of Mr Hartley, too!" added Flap Derwent. "Girls, let's be solid on that point. The least Mr. Hartley can do is to apologise for not overhauling the boat on Saturday. He hasn't even done that yet. Taking that with what we've seen to-night, I don't consider that he's a sportsman at all."

And that seemed quite the general opinion.

Even Babs and Mabs, although they advocated the policy of moderation, could not help feeling that Mr Hartley was hardly the sort of man to be welcomed with open arms as their coach for future sporting events.

"We can play cricket all right without his help," said Clara Trevlyn emphatically, when the subject rose again on that following morning. "He can stick all the notices he likes on the board, but I'm certainly not going down for voluntary practice while he's there!"

"Nor am I!" said quite a number of the Fourth-Formers.

They meant it, too. But there was a

surprise in store for them all, and it came during the afternoon.

They were just settling down for an hour's geography with Miss Bland when the door of the room opened, and Miss Penelope Primrose entered.

"Excuse my interruption, Miss Bland," said the headmistress quietly. "I have decided to make a little change in the time-table for to-day. Girls, will you all stand, please."

"There was a movement in the class at once.

"I have decided, as Mr. Hartley may not be with us for long, girls," explained the headmistress, "that it behoves us to appreciate his valuable services as much as possible. The whole Form will therefore be excused this lesson for cricket practice."

Miss Primrose favoured her scholars with a kindly smile.

She considered that her little message would prove a very welcome one indeed.



THE FOURTH-FORMERS INTERFERE! "Let that man alone, Babs, racing up. "We've been watching you, you great bully!"

She would not have been surprised even if there had been a little cheering.

But there was no cheering.

Even the smiles which Miss Primrose saw were rather weak, forced-looking ones; and the headmistress smiled out of the room surprised and puzzled.

"Cricket—with Mr. Hartley!" gasped Clara Trevlyn, as the door closed. "My hat! If that isn't just the giddy limit!"

Defiance!

CLARA TREVLYN and Philippa Derwent, in vowing to have nothing more to do with Mr. Hartley as a coach, had overlooked one little thing.

They could hardly overlook it as the Fourth-Formers trooped down to the cricket field armed with bats and pads.

Compulsory cricket—a cricket lesson, in other words—was a thing against which they could not kick, without the probability of serious consequences following their defiance. What was even worse was that the whole thing was Miss Primrose's idea, and Miss Primrose was headmistress.

If she told them to have a lesson with Mr. Hartley they would have to have it! "Good-afternoon, girls!" exclaimed Cyril Hartley cheerily, as he waited for the girls at the nets.

"G-g-good-afternoon," came a mumbling response.

No one felt quite easy.

The new school coach certainly looked far from happy. No sensitive young man could have felt otherwise, after a series of events such as those which had marked the coming of Cyril Hartley to Cliff House.

"An hour's cricket—and a splendid day for it!" exclaimed the coach as breezily as he could. "I understand that you have a match with Danesford Hall on Saturday afternoon, and you want to beat them, of course!"

"We shan't with your help," muttered Marcia Loftus.

Cyril Hartley went red. He did not know Marcia, and the remark which

he caught from her lips was not encouraging.

"For a start we will have some practice at these four nets, girls," resumed the coach, after a short, awkward silence. "Will those who specialise in batting and those who are bowlers please stand at opposite sides?"

The girls divided as requested in a resigned but rather sulky manner. Only one figure stood still.

"I say, Mr. Hartley! I'm both, you know!" squeaked Bessie Bunter excitedly.

"Very well, Miss Bunter. I will try you at batting, first. The nearest four girls please take their bats and stand in the nets. I see there are just twelve bowlers, so three can bowl at each net."

The girls found themselves obeying the quiet orders in spite of their reluctance to take part in the practice. Within a couple of minutes there were four girls waiting to bat, three bowlers at each net, while the remaining eight girls were out ready to "fag" the balls.

One of the batmen, of course, was Bessie Bunter. Bessie had taken THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 105.

advantage of the general reluctance of the other to get first to the wicket.

"Commence bowling, please," said Cyril Hartley.

Bessie Bunter saw Peggy Preston prepare to bowl, raised her bat, and took a terrific swipe.

Crash! The ball had no chance to hit the wicket. Bessie Bunter did that herself, sending the three stumps flying to the ground.

"Out first ball," said Mr. Hartley promptly.

"Oh, really! I—I did that myself, sir!" protested the fat girl.

"That doesn't matter," smiled the coach. "You're out all the same!"

Bessie Bunter endeavoured to catch Barbara Redfern's eye.

Bessie, who considered that such a speedy termination to her innings was most undignified, thought that Babs should protest. But Babs did not.

"Next one in, please!" said the coach.

"I s-sus-sus-say! It's not fair, you know!" protested Bessie. "It isn't fair, is it, Babs? It's cheating!"

"What was that?" asked Cyril Hartley quietly.

"We're not going to take any notice of what you say, Mr. Hartley," said Bessie, in a confident voice. "We've all decided that you can't jolly well play the game without being jealous of the best players."

"Good gracious!"

"There was a startled silence.

No one had expected that Bessie Bunter's conceit in her own alleged ability would lead to that. Babs and Co. were rather red, and even Clara and Pip looked ashamed to have their words used in quite that manner.

"Miss Bessie!" said Cyril Hartley, the only one who outwardly could show no confusion.

"I'm jolly well going to finish my innings properly!" declared the fat girl. "It isn't fair to try and get me out in that way. You can go on bowling, Peggy!"

"Bessie! Come out!" cried Babs, in vexation.

"Come out!" cried Bessie. "I thought you were jolly well going to tell Mr. Hartley that we'd had enough of him over the boat-race business, Babs! I suppose you're jolly well afraid to speak now!"

"You duffer!" said Babs.

She did not trouble to argue with Bessie Bunter. Argument was of little use. Babs, also, was not quite in the right mood. She seized the fat girl's arm and pulled her from the net.

"Now if you don't keep quiet you'll know all about it later, you silly duffer!" hissed Babs.

"Duffer? Oh, really! I consider that I've been treated unjustly!" said the fat girl warmly. "I ain't going to play any more, so there! You're a funk, Barbara Redfern!"

"A—a what?"

"Funk! F—u—n—c, so there! You know perfectly well that we all decided at the meeting to— Yaroooooh! Leggo my plait, you cat!"

Cyril Hartley, with a heightened colour, had moved discreetly from the scene, and the bowling had been resumed at the other three nets. Clara Trevlyn came forward and grabbed Bessie Bunter's bat.

"You silly fat noodle!" said Clara. "Noodle? Oh, I say, Clara! Fancy you saying that when—"

"You know you were out! Only the silliest duffer imaginable would go and knock all her stumps over! Give me that bat and let me do something!"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 105

Clara Trevlyn took her stand at the wicket in her grimmest manner.

Clara was not keen on this sort of practice at all. But interruptions like Bessie Bunter's were not going to help the common cause at all.

"Clary!" called Phyllis Howell. "Clary played—strongly. It was an easy ball, and Clara lifted it far into the field, evidently relieving her feelings in doing so."

"Play this, Clara!" called Mabel Lynn, preparing to bowl in her turn.

Clara took her stand at the wicket again. It was a more difficult ball, but Clara got her bat to it and lifted it like the other.

"That was not a good stroke!" said the voice of Cyril Hartley. "Do you mind bowling another ball like that, Miss Mabel? You'd be caught if you did that in a match. You should try and keep the ball low."

The Cliff House coach came into the net and held out his hand for the bat. Clara surrendered it without a word. Another ball was bowled, and Mr. Hartley sent it speeding along the grass.

"Now let me see you do that," he said to Clara.

Mabs bowled a third time. Clara took her stand at the wicket with quite a serene expression on her face, got her bat well under the ball, and sent it soaring high into the air.

"That was not a straight drive," said Cyril Hartley rather crossly.

"Possibly not," said Clara, with calm indifference. "I hit it, for all that!"

"You—you hit it?"

"Yes. No one caught it, either, so I'm out!"

"I want to see you drive a ball along the ground," said Cyril Hartley quietly.

"I'm sorry, but I can't do it," returned Clara indifferently. "My batting has always been good enough for the teams we've met before. I expect that it will be good enough on Saturday, Mr. Hartley."

"Oh! You think so?" asked the young man, evidently nettled. "See if you can't play this ball!"

He picked up a ball from the ground, and prepared to bowl.

"Play!"

The ball came down the pitch. Clara Trevlyn stepped quietly to one side and watched her leg stump fall flat.

"You—you didn't attempt to play!" gasped the coach.

Clara nodded in the calm manner for which she was famed. The young man went rather red.

"What is the good of my bowling if you are going to stand like that, Miss Clara?" he asked quickly. "Surely—"

"I'm afraid it isn't much good, is it?" admitted Clara.

"Well, what is the meaning of it, please? Do you refuse to practise?"

"I don't refuse to practise," said Clara quietly. "But I'd rather not practise with you, Mr. Hartley. We're going to try and beat the Daves without the aid of a coach this time, you see."

"Hear, hear!" said Philippa Derwent.

Play at the other three nets had stopped. Cyril Hartley was aware of that fact.

"Supposing I order you—as a master at the school—to play my bowling, Miss Clara?" he asked quietly.

"I shall refuse!" said Clara promptly.

"What was that, Clara?" asked a fresh voice, and Clara looked up in surprise to see Miss Bellow, with flushed cheeks and angry eyes, coming on the scene. "Did I hear you refusing to play, Clara?"

"Yes, Miss Bellow," said Clara demurely.

"For what reason, pray?"

"Because we don't like having Mr. Hartley for a coach," answered Clara Trevlyn. "We're quite ready to practise on our own, but I'm not going to have my batting criticised by him."

"Why not?"

"Mr. Hartley will tell you, Miss Bellow," said Clara.

Clara Trevlyn felt very strongly on the subject of that peculiar incident of the woods. But she did not want to "sneak" about it. To her absolute amazement Miss Bellow did not even press for further particulars.

"Clara!" she said angrily. "You will take your bat immediately and stand at the wicket! Do you hear me?"

"Yes, Miss Bellow."

"Further, you will do exactly what you are told, and I shall give you a hundred lines for disobedience. You seem to forget that this is a school lesson which you are receiving. I never heard of such impertinence before!"

"But—but we have a special reason—"

"Silence, Clara! I am shocked at your behaviour!" cried the angry mistress.

"I wish to hear nothing further from you after this. I am ashamed to think that you can be so un ladylike and discourteous!"

"Please, Miss Bellow—" began Barbara Redfern.

"Barbara, I wish to hear no more!" interrupted the mistress. "If there is any more of this, Mr. Hartley, you will please send a messenger to me, and I will come and see into the matter!"

Miss Bellow turned and swept away, her cheeks colouring furiously.

The Fourth-Formers, on the other hand, were dismayed beyond measure.

Clara Trevlyn's words had just expressed the feelings of most of the Fourth-Formers. Mr. Hartley had done sufficient to forfeit their trust, and they saw no objection to their saying as much.

But it was quite a different matter to defy Miss Bellow—especially at a time when rumour said that she was shortly to leave the school.

"What are we going to do, Babs?" asked Clara, still rather mutinous.

"Play, I suppose," returned Babs, in a low voice. "We'll have to obey Miss Bellow or there'll be serious trouble."

"Yes, I suppose so," admitted Pip Derwent.

So they played on for the rest of the hour, observing the letter of the law if nothing else in Mr. Hartley's teaching. But it was spiritless play, and it did not look as though the Fourth were likely to learn much from their coach.

That was not Cyril Hartley's fault, at all. But the Fourth-Formers did not like the young man who had been caught acting in such a seemingly brutal manner so shortly after the events on boat-race day.

It was a relief to all when the practice came to an end.

"Mr. Hartley looked just as though he wanted to say something all the time, girls." Babs remarked as they went up the field.

"Oh, bother Mr. Hartley!" said Clara shortly. "He got me a hundred lines through interfering. I don't want to play his way, and he may just as well know it now as linger in doubt. If he's got something to say why couldn't he have said it before?"

"The thing that worries me," said Babs, "is why Miss Bellow takes his part so much. I'm sure I can't understand it very much. I'm sure I can't understand it very much. I'm sure I can't understand it very much. I'm sure I can't understand it very much."

"I've a jolly good mind not to give anything to her present now!" remarked Bessie Bunter thoughtfully.

"I don't suppose you will in any case, dear!" rejoined Babs. "You never do

give anything. But because Miss Bellew had behaved so queerly I hope it's—it's not going to affect the presentation, girls."

"Oh, no, Babs!" answered Peggy Preston at once. "We all know what a perfect dear Miss Bellew has always been to us, and if she's really going to leave the school, the least we can do is to give her a jolly good send-off."

"That's just how I think about it," said Babs quietly. "And because Miss Bellew supports our coach so much I can't help thinking that somehow she—she must know more than we do. You know how fair she's always been before, don't you?"

Clara Trevlyn would have made some answer, but there was an interruption just at that moment. A smartly-dressed figure appeared in the quadrangle, and at the same moment Nancy Bell, who had been a discontented and reluctant cricketer, gave a glad cry.

"Nellie!"

She went hurrying forward, and Babs watched with a frown on her face.

"Nellie Travers, from Danesford Hall!" she muttered. "I wonder why that girl is getting so friendly with Nancy? I don't like it at all!"

"I don't see why we should worry about her," returned Clara moodily. "Nellie is no friend of ours, and isn't likely to be. If she and Nancy like to be friends, they can. I'm more concerned with what we're going to do about this Hartley man."

Little could Clara guess then that she would have been able to solve the mystery of the new school coach far more quickly if she had only known more about Nellie Travers, of Danesford Hall.

There was a mystery, and it was not entirely of Cyril Hartley's making. The question why Cliff House had lost the boat-race was one which could have been answered easily by Nellie—and by none better!

Nellie is Alarmed!

"NELLIE, how do you do?" asked Nancy Bell eagerly.

"Do?" Oh, ripplingly thanks!" returned the elegant Nellie. "I didn't know that you were a cricket enthusiast, Nancy."

"Compulsory practice," said Nancy, with a grimace. "That man Hartley, too. But won't you come up and have a cup of tea? I've got the study to myself this evening, as Annabel always has tea in Hall."

"Delighted, I'm sure."

The two passed into the school, Nellie turning her head and giving the rest of the Fourth-Formers a half-smile which was not returned—perhaps because they knew quite well that Nellie's smile was only an assumed one.

Nellie Travers was a new acquaintance of the Cliff House girls, but she did not bid fair to become very popular with them. At their first meeting she had inspired Nancy Bell to trick Babs & Co. into going for her companions at Danesford Hall into a scrape with their headmistress.

"Doesn't look as though I'm ever going to be popular at this school," said Nellie, with a smile, as she and Nancy passed into the school. "Still, they've no reason for suspecting anything, have they?"

Nancy Bell giggled.

"No reason at all," she said. "Mr. Hartley is very much in their bad books just at present. They've been practically defying him this afternoon. They haven't any idea that just before the boat-race you—"

"Ssssh!" muttered Nellie warningly,

and not another word was said until the pair of them reached Study No. 1.

"So everything has really gone well?" asked the Danesford Hall girl, in a low voice. "That was one reason why I came over to see you. You—you mean that—"

"My dear, I think you did it wonderfully," said Nancy Bell. "I should have hated to see Babs and her previous clique win the boat-race after all their bragging. But they went for Hartley when the race was over—went for him beautifully."

"How? Why?" asked Nellie, with a quick indrawing of her breath. "They thought they ought to have won, of course. That's the funny part of it all," chuckled Nancy.

"Ought to have won?" Nellie rose to her feet, neither so cool nor so elegant as she had been. "What made them think that? Do they really suspect anything?"



CLARA TREVLYN REBELS! "Clara!" said Miss Bellew, angrily. "You will take your place at the wicket immediately. I am ashamed that you should be so unladylike and discourteous!"

"Goodness! Didn't you know?" Nancy exclaimed in wonderment. "They recovered part of the broken oar, and suspected things at once."

"You never told me this!" said Nellie tensely.

"Well, there—there was no need," replied the Cliff House girl uneasily.

"There was no danger for us."

"None for you, you mean?"

"Or you, Nellie," rejoined Nancy quickly. "I tell you that if they suspect anyone, it is Hartley. He was supposed to have overhauled the boat before they went in it."

Nellie paced the study with strange, halting steps. Her eyes were wide, her mouth slightly open.

It was easy for Nancy to be calm and triumphant, for Nancy had done nothing except plot with this more daring girl from the rival school.

"What's the matter?" asked Nancy, started at the change in her companion. "You ought to have told me this—you know you ought!" burst out Nellie

half angrily. "I never suspected anything like this. If they think that Hartley tampered with the boat it makes it worse than ever."

"But I started that story myself—to help you!" exclaimed Nancy.

"You—you did?—Oh, you duffer!"

"said the other indignantly. "Why couldn't you let well alone? Hartley knows that he's innocent, and I'll want to clear his name. Perhaps he suspects something already. What's his vice like? Tell me!"

"Deep, and rather clear."

"Goodness! It was that man, after all, then!" faltered Nellie Travers.

"That man? When—how do you mean?" gasped Nancy Bell, quick to take alarm.

"Someone nearly caught me when I left the boathouse. Anyway, I'm almost certain that he saw me!" exclaimed Nellie Travers. "I was too quick for him to discover who I was. But it must

have been Hartley's voice which called to me. And now—"

"You don't think he can guess anything, surely?" asked Nancy, quite white herself.

"No, I don't. He can only have suspicions, of course, and he can't say which girl did it," said Nellie, more to reassure herself than anything else. "But I've got that horrid key, and, like a silly, I'm still carrying it about with me."

"The boathouse key?"

"Yes. If—I should be caught with that, they might think things at once. The key belonged to the Spenders, and they gave it to me some time ago, when they bought their own boats. If Hartley should start making inquiries, and—and they say—"

"Can't you say that you've lost the key?" asked Nancy.

"No. I've a better idea than that," returned the Danesford Hall girl, hardly touching the tea which Nancy had prepared. "If I could get to the boathouse and put the key there—it's a number—"

one, you see—so that someone found it, they'd never even ask questions."

"It's—it's risky," faltered Nancy, thinking more of herself than of her companion.

"Risky? Oh, I don't mind that!" said Nellie Travers. "I'll tell you it's far more risky for me to keep that horrid key. Let's get across to the boathouse to-night. We'll go in and pretend to be choosing a boat, and then I'll hang the key on an old nail—under a cobweb or something. If I dip it in the river, it'll soon go rusty."

"Think it will look suspicious two of us going?" asked Nancy Bell. "You— you know that that was the one—to—to—"

Nellie's eyes opened.

"Are you afraid?" she demanded.

"Nun-no," said Nancy hastily. "But—but I—"

"You'll have to come with me," interrupted Nellie Travers somewhat testily. "There's a risk to be run, and I want you there to keep a look-out while I'm getting rid of the key. You'll simply have to help me in this. Don't forget that if anything should come out about the Cliff House boat having been faked, they might find out that you helped me by telling me which boat they were to use, and—and all the other things you said."

"I'll come now," said Nancy Bell huskily.

Out in the corridor the hurrying pair almost ran into Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn, who were also dressed in their outdoor things.

"Oh, sorry!" exclaimed Nellie, pulling up just in time. "I—I've a message for you, Barbara. Gertie Thomas wants you to be ready at two-thirty prompt on Saturday, so that she'll have good time to give you another defeat."

"Thanks?" responded Babs drily.

"Was that all?"

"It'll be quite enough when Saturday comes," said Nellie, somewhat nettled by the reply she received. "We're going to give you an even bigger defeat than we did last time. Cheerio!"

The Danesford Hall girl swung down the corridor with Nancy at her side, and with a puzzled face Babs watched them go.

"She seems very keen, all of a sudden, on seeing us defeated," remarked Babs slowly.

"That's because we told her what we thought of her on the river the other night," said Mabs, by way of explanation.

"Perhaps so. But I don't like her being friendly with Nancy, a girl who would stop at little if she could cause us to be beaten," said Babs seriously.

"I don't think it's a good sign, when we're playing these matches with the Danes, to see those two together so much."

"Oh, there's nothing in it, I'm sure!" responded Mabel Lynn easily. "Don't worry about those two, Babs. Don't forget that we've decided to go down for a little pull on the river this evening, so that there's no chance of getting dragged into any more cricket practice with that man Hartley."

"I'm ready to start now, too," said the voice of Clara Trevlyn, from the doorway of Study No. 7.

Babs smiled, her fears with regard to Nellie evidently not being too deeply rooted.

"Come on, if you're ready, then!" laughed the Fourth Form captain.

There were quite a number of Fourth-Formers ready to accompany the party down to the Sark.

For one thing, the excitement of the

boat-race had certainly stimulated their interest in river events.

With a cricket match so close, however, it was not likely that many of them would have been so willing to miss practice if it had not been for the fact that they expected to meet Cyril Hartley at the nets.

"I'm really going to show you how to row this evening, girls," remarked Bessie Bunter, as, a few minutes later, the party made their way in the direction of the river.

"We'll wait and see about that!" said Babs promptly. "Do you know, Bessie, I still find it hard to believe your rumour that Miss Bellew is going to get married."

"But it must be true, Babs," said Margjorie Reddendale. "Lucy has heard the same thing in quite a different way."

"Yes. And—and yet the thing that puzzles me is why Miss Bellew doesn't tell us herself!" said Babs. "I know that really she is awfully fond of us, the same as we are fond of her, and she won't like having to leave at all. Perhaps—perhaps that's why she's behaving so queerly towards us—trying to hide her feelings, you know."

"It's a jolly queer way of doing it!" observed Clara Trevlyn. "Even if I was in love with someone myself—"

"Clara in love! Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Dolly Jobling immediately.

"I admit that it's difficult to imagine," laughed Clara. "But I don't think I should back up every young man, as she seems to Mr. Hartley, just because he happens to be rather athletic and good-looking."

"You don't understand the ways of people in love," chuckled Babs. "But there must be something in the rumour, and we're certainly not going to be caught napping, even if Miss Bellew does save it up as a surprise for us. Don't forget your subscriptions to the present, girls."

"How much have you got so far?" asked Peggy Preston eagerly.

"Nearly eight pounds promised," said Babs. "We ought to get well over ten before the list closes, and I can get Uncle Tony to buy something from a wholesale firm, so that we save money in that way, too."

"No good going too quickly with things, Babs," observed Mabs quietly. "We can't go and give a present before the engagement is even announced, can we?"

"I know that, dear," laughed Babs. "But we want to be prepared, so that we can go straight down to Miss Bellew and congratulate her, and then ask her what she would like us to get her. That will give us a chance to get her a ripping and really useful present."

"What do you think about that curious rumour which came from the Sixth Form?" asked Phyllis Howell suddenly. "You know that Frances Barrett has been saying that Miss Bellew intended to make the announcement of her engagement directly after the boat-race result, don't you?"

"Yes. But Frances must have got hold of the wrong end of the stick, I'm sure," said Babs in response. "You know what a duffer Frances is. I'm sure I can't see any reason why Miss Bellew should change her mind just because we lost the race, can you?"

And yet there were good reasons if they could only have known!

If some of the girls had been a little more observant they might have guessed the whole cause of the strange change which had taken place in the popular Fourth Form mistress. They would have been even ready to believe that Frances Barrett's rumour was true!

But there were several things which Babs and Co. did not understand then, and, as it happened, they were not even to have time for speculation.

Peggy Preston, looking ahead, gave a sudden exclamation.

"Look! Nancy and Nellie Travers are just ahead, girls!" she exclaimed, with that pretty Lancashire accent which made her voice so attractive. "It looks as though they're going on the river."

"Y-es," said Babs slowly. "They seem to be behaving jolly queerly, too. I—I wonder if they're planning some jape on someone."

"It would be just as well to keep our eyes on them," said Clara, never very fond of Nancy. "I think—My hat! Look at that! If it isn't that man Hartley again!"

"Well—well, I'm bothered!" muttered Phyllis Howell. "Hartley hanging round here! Isn't it strange, girls, how we're always seeing and hearing of that man loitering round here? We thought that, as he's the school coach, he'd be certain to be at the school a fine night like this."

The Fourth-Formers hung back with one accord.

Try as they would, they could not feel easy in the presence of Cyril Hartley. They had seen a lot of him, and on many occasions he had behaved as a really good sportsman. But there were two things—the boat-race mystery and the encounter in the woods—which they could not forget.

"Well, he's disappeared now, anyway," said Clara, after a momentary pause. "We'll get on again, girls, and find a boat. What do you say?"

"May as well," assented Barbara, at once.

It was not to be expected that the Fourth-Formers could connect Cyril Hartley with the two mean-spirited friends from the rival schools—Nellie and Nancy—who they had seen walking in front of them.

But even at that moment there was the making of another mystery.

Your friends are following us, Nancy!" Nellie had exclaimed, almost at the same moment that Peggy Preston drew the attention of the Cliff House party to the two girls ahead.

"Yes. I—I caught a glimpse of them just now," returned Nancy Bell, in a husky whisper. "Let's get rid of that horrid key as quickly as possible. If we dart round the boathouse here we can do it in no time."

"There's no one about, certainly," said Nellie Travers, groping in the pocket of her skirt. "Quick, Nancy, if we're going to do anything! Look in the boathouse and see if there's anyone about."

Nancy darted forward. They were on the bank of the river now, with the Cliff House girls cut off from view by the structure of the boathouse. There was no one in sight at all, even the boat-owners were away. A tall figure, which loitered in the shelter of the trees, was quite unnoticed.

"No one at all," whispered Nancy Bell. "There's a fine old cobwebby place where you can put the key."

"Good! Then I'll just dip it in the river here, and we'll hang it up," returned Nellie Travers, a little shake in her voice.

She stooped at the river-bank and dangled the key in the water. It was a shrewd scheme, for the steel, wetted like that, would soon rust when left hanging.

(Continued on page 9.)

"Unworthy of Their Trust!"

(Continued from page 8.)

But even as Nellie was rising to her feet again she became aware, quite suddenly, that she was not alone. With the key clutched in her tightening fingers, her whole figure suddenly rigid with surprise and alarm, she spun round. Confronting her was Cyril Hartley, the Cliff House coach!

Important Conversations!

"I HOPE I have not startled you!" The young man's voice was deep, and had a strange commanding tone.

Nellie Travers stood quite still, her face twitching; the guilty colour flooding her cheeks.

"I am sorry that I appeared as I did," said the young man, with just a hint of sternness in his voice. "But I see you are a Danesford Hall girl. May I ask you one question?"

"If—if you like," said Nellie, trying to appear indifferent.

The wet key was clutched tightly in her hand, and was out of sight. She was trying to assure herself that it was only her guilty knowledge of what she was doing which had caused her to become so alarmed.

"Very well," said the quiet voice. "I wish you to let me see that key which you were just dipping in the water, please."

"Key?" said Nellie faintly. Then he had seen, after all! Nellie Travers shook. She felt that her nerve had gone again. It was not merely a guilty mind this time. The boy-shed keys were of a curious, old-fashioned appearance, certainly very rarely seen. To be caught with one by anyone accustomed to using a similar one was almost to be convicted.

"The key, please," repeated Cyril Hartley, his blue eyes never moving from the girl's face. "I saw you dip one in the water, and I am looking for a missing key. I wish to see the one you hold."

"I—I have no key," said Nellie truthfully.

"You will excuse me!"

"You—you've made a mistake. I—I just stooped down to see if the water's warm enough for bathing," said Nellie desperately. "You're making a mistake. Why should I have a key at all?"

"I have reason for believing that some unauthorised person has been visiting the boathouse," said Cyril Hartley quietly. "On the night before the boat-race I saw a girl on the bank here."

"I—I don't see anything in that!" muttered Nellie, licking her dry lips.

"Not in that alone, certainly. But just before I saw the girl I heard the click of a lock, and when I called to her to stop she darted amongst the trees. I am very anxious to meet that girl," said Cyril Hartley, in his steadiest tones.

"I—I don't know what you're talking about," muttered Nellie, unable to meet the man's gaze. "I know that you hate Danesford Hall, and you would like to trump up some charge because you've quarrelled with Miss Patter—"

"I am sorry, but I must ask you to refrain from discussing personal matters, please," interrupted the young man in a sterner voice. "I have asked you a simple question after seeing you behave in a suspicious manner. Will you open your hand and let me see what it holds? If I have made a mistake I shall give you a full and satisfactory apology."

"I—I don't want to have anything to do with you. You—you mind your own business," said Nellie Travers, with a feeble attempt at bluster.

"You refuse?" asked Cyril Hartley. "Very well. I must ask you to remain here with me until I can see an older girl or mistress who will compel you to show me what you are holding."

"I won't be bullied in—in this manner!" exclaimed Nellie Travers, with a sudden wave of well-simulated anger. "You shan't bully me like this!"

She flung suddenly to one side as though to run away. But although she was quick her companion was quicker. A strong, although not cruel, grip fastened on her wrist. Nellie Travers was pulled up before she had hardly started.

"Oh, you brute—you brute!" said Nellie Travers, struggling furiously at the restraining hand, tugging desperately

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with her clenched fist to free herself. Cyril Hartley was taken off his guard. He felt the girl wrench herself away, and she tottered back on the bank.

"Look out! Look where you're going!" cried the young man. "The river—look!"

He sprang forward, but he sprang too late.

The first nervous, frightened spring had taken the girl to the very edge of the water. She became aware of her peril just as the young man called.

"Splash!" With a single despairing cry Nellie Travers tottered on the bank and sprawled into the river.

"Oh, look, girls!" cried Barbara Redfern's voice as that very moment. "Someone's fallen in!"

There was a patter of footsteps as the Fourth Form party, who had seen nothing of the dramatic events of the last few seconds, came running forward to help at the disaster which they had been just in time to see.

Their help, however was not needed.

Before the figure of the girl had gone right under the tall young man on the river bank poised on the edge. With a clean and beautiful dive he took to the river, and shot to the surface beside the struggling figure of the girl.

"It's Mr. Hartley!" Babs cried, with shining eyes. "Oh, well done, sir! Wasn't that splendidly prompt, girls?"

"We'll give you a hand, Mr. Hartley," said Clara, rushing forward to the bank.

"Thank you!" said the deep, pleasant voice.

With one arm holding the girl's head and shoulders well above the water Cyril Hartley came towards the bank with quick, certain strokes.

There was no lack of assistance there.

Babs and Mabs were the first to lean forward, grasp the sodden figure of Nellie Travers, and help her to dry land. Cyril Hartley received little help. He gripped at the woodwork of the landing stage and, with a muscular heave, drew himself, dripping, on to dry land again.

"Bravo, Mr. Hartley!"

"Well done, sir!"

There was no ring of hostility in the cries which greeted the Cliff House coach as he stood there now. The perfect, instant leap could only excite admiration from them all.

But there was something to turn the attention from the young man even at that moment. Nellie Travers was standing silently at one side, an unmistakably angry expression in her face.

"Surely you can say something to Mr. Hartley, Nellie?" Babs exclaimed, turning to the girl. "We all saw—"

"You don't understand!" cut in the Danesford Hall girl in a choking voice. "If it hadn't been for him I—I shouldn't have fallen in. And there was no need for him to dive like that. I can swim all right."

"If—if it hadn't been for Mr. Hartley you wouldn't have fallen in?" repeated Babs, in a wondering voice.

"That is not quite correct," said the young man quickly. "This girl understands—"

"It's all right; I don't want to argue," interrupted Nellie, suddenly raising her empty hands in a derisive gesture which Hartley alone could understand. "I've lost my—my lock, but it doesn't matter. I'm going back to the school to change."

Whirling round even as she spoke, Nellie Travers set off along the bank.

"A precious fine representative for the Danes," said Clara Trevlyn scornfully. "We've seen her before, Mr. Hartley, and she's not the sort to be grateful over anything. I think it was jolly decent of you to go to her rescue, whether she could swim or not, and I'm sorry that—that I was cheeky to you this afternoon."

"Well spoken, Clara," said Babs at once. "We all think it was jolly nice of you to do what you did."

"Hear, hear!"

"Thank you for saying that," said the young man in his quietest tones. "But I have really done nothing, as the girl was probably not in very much danger. I hope, however, that I may yet have an opportunity of really winning the trust which I have forfeited through—through unfortunate circumstances."

"We'll certainly come down to the next cricket practice with you, Mr. Hartley. Won't we, girls?"

"Rather!" came the promise at once.

"Thank you," said the coach, blushing. "I hope you will never regret it."

"Queer—very queer indeed," commented Mabel Lynn, as the young man disappeared into the boathouse cottage where he had his rooms. "Mr. Hartley

acted then like a real sportsman, didn't he?"

"Of course he did!" answered Peggy Preston at once. "He's a puzzle to me. A man who was really ruffian enough to attack a defenceless old man would never plunge to a girl's rescue like that, would he?"

"No," said Babs, shaking her head. "I tell you there is some mystery, girls. It's beyond me. Of course, anyone can point out that Mr. Hartley did nothing which was specially brave in rescuing a swimmer from a quiet river. On the other hand, only a real bric would act so instantly without pausing for a moment."

"I can't understand him at all," admitted Clara. "The things don't fit together, do they? Still, we'll go down to cricket practice after this and really see if we can find out more about him."

"What could Nellie mean about—about it being his fault?" speculated Dolly Jobling.

Babs shrugged her shoulders.

"Considering the horrid way in which she took everything," she answered, "I don't think we need worry about Nellie. We know the sort of girl she is. Perhaps she tried to work some saps on him and fell in the water."

"That's about it," agreed Mabs. "Still, all's well that ends well. Let's get our boat now we're here, and go for a little row."

The feelings of the unfortunate Cyril Hartley were, at that moment, even more confused than the thoughts of the Fourth Form girls.

He had been defeated by the Danesford Hall girl, he knew. If it was a boathouse key which he had seen in her hand it must be buried now somewhere in the weeds at the bottom of the river, with no chance of ever connecting it with Nellie Travers.

Yet he felt that there was a boathouse key there, and he felt, too, that Nellie had held it. The guilt on her flushed face had been plain.

Did it mean that chance had brought him on the very girl who was responsible for the lost boat-race, and for the disasters for which he had had to bear the blame. He had hated, with all the instinct of a sportsman, to think of foul play at the time. Now he was more ready to take such an explanation.

"Coo-coo-coo!" came a soft, rippling little call from the bank of the river.

"Coo-coo!" returned Cyril Hartley, leaping instantly to his feet. He had finished changing into dry clothes, and was lacing his white shoes when the first sound of the familiar voice came to his ears. "Coo-coo-coo!"

With a couple of bounds he was across the room and descending the worn stairs there at a run. The change in his expression was remarkable. There were no lines of worry on the handsome face now.

"Ada dear!"

"Cyril!"

In the shelter of the laurel screen around the cottage garden waited a pretty, blushing woman. The young man was at her side in a moment, catching her tenderly to himself.

"I thought you were never coming out to-night, Cyril," whispered the voice of Miss Bellew, the Fourth Form mistress at Cliff House. "I have been waiting about here for ever so long."

"I am so sorry, dear," answered the musical voice of the young man. "I got wet in the river and had to change. Yes, it was to help someone out, but there was no danger at all for either of us, so don't say anything about it!"

"I think you're wonderful, Cyril—"

began the voice of Miss Bellew.

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"I shall have to tell you the whole story, so please do not interrupt, dear," said Cyril Hartley, after a pause. "As I have some bearing on the boat-race, as I have told you, I have always had an idea that someone—some girl—entered the shed on the night before the race."

"But, Cyril—"

"I hated to think it, dear. This evening, however, I happened to see two girls hanging round the place. One went in one side, and the other stooped and dipped a key—a boathouse key, an sure sign of the water. I confronted her, and she would not show it. She attempted to escape, I tried to detain her, and in the end she fell in the water. Naturally, the key vanished. Without such proof I can prove nothing, can I?"

There was a disappointed ring in his voice; yet, at the same time, it was the tone of a sportsman who has suffered a defeat. Miss Bellew was evidently took the matter more to heart.

"You really think that a—Danesford Hall girl did that wicked thing, Cyril?" she exclaimed. "Oh, how terrible to have to think that! How terrible that you cannot clear yourself! Surely I can see Miss Potter and explain that—that thing."

"No, I have no proof now—but even a single witness," said the young man quietly. "But my rescue, as it happened, was seen by some of your girls. You know I am not one to wish for cheap glory, but the fact that they are more kindly disposed to me will make it easier for me to carry on at Cliff House."

The mistress turned away to hide two tears which welled suddenly to her eyes.

"Oh, Cyril, it is cruel—so cruel for both of us," she said in a husky voice.

"Last Saturday our engagement was to have been announced. That terrible business of the boat-race made it impossible. On Monday they saw you tracking that man in the woods—"

"Marcus Stoneman, in his cunning disguise as an old man," assented Cyril Hartley grimly.

"Yes, but what a pity that we cannot tell them all," sighed Miss Bellew. "How sad that we cannot take them into our confidence and tell them that your firm has sent you here to watch what that man is doing, and to see that he has no meeting with his confederates. If they only knew how brave and plucky you are, and what a dangerous man he really is—"

"I wish I felt that I could deserve such words from you, Ada."

"But you do said that you are the most wonderful man in the world! Surely I have told you that before? And my girls are dears, too, and I love them so very much, although in a different way. I can never do anything but take your part when I know that you are so cruelly misjudged. Yet it has hurt me to have to speak as I have done to my girls. They have been so loyal and such real friends to me in the past."

"Really, I shouldn't have come to Cliff House as a coach, dearest."

"Yes, yes. It helps you to remain in the neighbourhood without exciting suspicion. If only—"

"If only I could earn the respect of those splendid girls of yours," said the young man softly. "But I will do that even, yet. Everything will come right soon."

Little could Cyril Hartley guess at that moment of a meeting which was taking place further down the river.

Nellie Travers, dripping wet and trembling with her rage and dismay, was talking to Nancy Bell, who had followed her carefully through the trees.

"You let me down, of course," Nellie was saying bitterly. "You deserted me. Now you'll have to help. I tell you that

man Hartley simply can't stay at Cliff House any longer. Something will have to happen."

"But what?" quavered Nancy. "I don't care. Something must happen—something which will disgrace him so that he can't stay at your school. He'll get friendly with those Fourth Form girls and start making inquiries. Supposing it comes out that the Spenders gave me that key?"

"They'll—they'll never—"

"Anything can happen. I might even be expelled," muttered Nellie. "I tell you that man Hartley will have to go now that he suspects so much. Oh, why didn't you see him hiding there?"

"I—I—"

"Never mind excuses now. You must find out all you can and tell me. We must arrange something which will disgrace him in the eyes of them all so that they won't have anything more to do with the man. I shall rely on you, and if you let me down you'll be sorry!"

How much those two conversations would have meant to Babs and Co. if they could only have heard them as they floated on the river!

But such was not to be. Although it seemed, for a little while, that Cyril Hartley was to have better luck, he had incurred the anger and excited the fear of a girl who would stop at little indeed to blacken his name still further in the eyes of the Fourth-Formers.

What Nancy Saw!

CHINK-CHINK!

That noise was made by Bessie Bunter as she looked into Study No. 4 during the dinner hour on the following day.

There was a fat and very persuasive smile on Bessie Bunter's face, and a large and marvellous box on the box mentioned the name of Miss Bellew in a manner which was very obvious.

"Some new game, dear?" asked Barbara Reifern, busy chatting with Phyllis Howell about the cricket team which was to be selected for the Saturday match against the Danes.

"Game? Oh, I like that!" said Bessie indignantly. "I'm collecting for the Form present to Miss Bellew."

"Sounds as though you've got a lot of buttons already," smiled Mabel Lynn.

"Oh, rather, I mean, certainly not, Mabel!" said the fat girl indignantly. "You'd better get out your notes and put them in my box. I've quite decided that it's no use leaving the matter to you, Barbara, because you'll never buy a present."

"Haven't I told you that the engagement isn't even announced yet?" demanded Babs. "We can't go and buy a present before Miss Bellew tells us officially, you silly duffer!"

"I'm going to find out for myself," said Bessie Bunter darkly. "I recognise the gleam in Miss Bellew's eye which shows that she's in love with someone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's it—cackle!" said the fat girl severely. "I tell you I've known all along that Miss Bellew was in love with that nice, plump young man at Courtfield—the one at the Creameries. Now with regard to the present, I'm a girl to get things done, you know."

"To get them muddled up, you mean," said Phyllis Howell correcting. "Not at all! Babs is too slow for anything, so I've decided to take on the job myself," said Bessie Bunter airily. "I'm going to buy Miss Bellew a ripping present—a hamper of grab, and perhaps a few forks and spoons, and all that sort of thing. I shall make a special point of just sampling the things to see that there's nothing wrong with them."

"I knew there must be a catch in it somewhere!" laughed Mabs.

"Catch? Oh, I like that! Do you think I'd give Miss Bellew a present which might poison her?"

"There wouldn't be any left to do that when you'd finished sampling, Bessie," laughed Mabs. "But do run away now and have a chat with someone else. I really think Phyllis—"

"Clang, Clang!" echoed along the corridor.

"Bell for afternoon school," said Mabs, rising with a sigh.

"I shall put my money-box in here—in the cupboard, girls," said Bessie Bunter, with ponderous caution.

"If I find that anyone has been borrowing any of the five-pound notes—"

"Don't be such a cuckoo!" laughed Babs. "As though anyone would give you a five-pound note! You'll be getting some more lies from Miss Bellew if you're late!"

"Ho, he, he! That's all you know!" giggled the fat girl. "I tell you I'm going to please Miss Bellew, and find out all about her engagement this afternoon."

"Bessie, you mustn't be so silly!" exclaimed Babs, but Bessie Bunter was already scuttling away along the corridor.

"Only Bessie's way, dear," said Mabs. "Anyway, we don't have Miss Bellew until second lesson this afternoon. Fatima will have forgotten her money-box by then."

But those who watched Bessie Bunter saw that she was getting into a very excited state as Miss Bellew came into the room to take history, the second lesson.

Miss Bellew, quite unconscious that anything was different from usual, opened her book in her quiet way.

"We are going to take quite modern history this afternoon, girls," she said. "Commencing with Queen Victoria's early reign I will ask you a few questions. In the first place, whom did she marry?"

"He, he, he!" came from Bessie Bunter.

"Bessie! You are making an absurd noise," said Miss Bellew, in surprise.

"Eh? Oh, really—!" commenced Bessie Bunter.

"I want silence until I ask for a girl to speak, Bessie."

"Y-y-yes. But I couldn't help laughing because you started talking about marriage at once."

"Bessie Bunter!"

"I—I'm a jolly diplomatic sort of girl, you know, Miss Bellew," said Bessie hastily. "The others don't know why I'm smiling at all."

"Girl!" said Miss Bellew, with pink cheeks.

"Y-y-yes? I—I'm really very sympathetic for people in love, you know," said Bessie hastily. "Having been in love myself, and coming from a very romantic family, I understand—"

"Bessie!"

"Oh, dud-dud-dear! Y-y-yes, Miss Bellew?"

"I think you are a perfectly absurd girl at times," said Miss Bellew, with a heightened colour in her cheeks which only the "clever" Bessie did not notice.

"Stand up and answer this question at once: Whom did Queen Victoria marry?"

"A—a—a tuck hamper!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"With a lot of forks and spoons in my suggestion, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Fourth-Formers shrieked with laughter.

Evidently Bessie Bunter's secret ambition of presenting the Form mistress with a hamper had become confused with Miss Bellew's question.

"Bessie Bunter!" cried Miss Bellew,

almost in desperation. "You are thinking of something else, I am sure. Tell me whom Queen Victoria married!"

"I—I had thought of a teapot!" admitted the fat girl.

"Queen Victoria married to a teapot!" exploded Babs. "Oh, my word!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or a sugar-basin, Miss Bellew!"

"Bessie! Sit down immediately!" cried Miss Bellew. "This laughter must cease, girls, at once. I cannot have a lesson interrupted in such a manner."

"Oh, really—"

"Bessie, be seated!"

Bessie Bunter seated herself somewhat reluctantly.

In her own opinion, at least, she had been suggesting matters to Miss Bellew in a very tactful way—a way, in fact, which Bessie did not believe that the others had understood at all.

From the strange and quite unusual confusion which had come over Miss Bellew, however, most of the girls could

The appearance of Miss Primrose, who came to announce that there was to be another cricket lesson that afternoon, came as a great relief indeed to Miss Bellew.

To the headmistress' pleasure, the idea was received far more warmly than it had been at that previous afternoon. "Cricket! Hooray!" breathed Babs excitedly.

"Thank you, Miss Primrose," said several voices.

Miss Penelope Primrose beamed.

"I shall certainly look forward with great interest to your match with the Danesford Hall girls," she said. "Now that you have a coach your play should be better than ever before."

"Very decent of Miss Primrose," conceded Clara Trevlyn, as the girls went hurrying down the field shortly after that.

"Of course, she didn't understand the other day that we didn't want to have anything to do with Hartley.



CAUGHT IN THE ACT! Even as Nellie Travers was rising to her feet she became aware, quite suddenly, that she was not alone. She turned round, and observed to her amazement that standing at her side was Cyril Hartley, the Cliff House coach!

see that the rumours which they had heard had more truth in them than many rumours.

"It's right, I'm sure!" whispered Babs excitedly. "Miss Bellew must be engaged, after all! We must get ready to give her a jolly good send-off now it seems so sure, mustn't we?"

"Rather," said Mabs. "I expect that—"

"Mabel, you are talking!" said Miss Bellew, with attempted severity. "You will please attend to the lesson."

But the attention that afternoon was not the most commendable thing about the class.

Bessie Bunter, in her own clumsy way, had certainly let Miss Bellew know that the Fourth-Formers had a very shrewd idea of those most intimate plans which she had formed for the future.

Miss Bellew tried to hide her confusion in vain—a confusion only increased by the knowledge that, because of the incidents which had happened, she had been compelled to say nothing herself to the girls she was soon to leave.

But I don't think he'll be so bad after all."

"We've decided to give him a chance, anyway," said Babs, laughing happily.

"Of course, there's a lot that we can learn from Mr. Hartley, too. I'm so glad that we've seen him in a favourable light at last, because it does allow us to trust him a little now."

"Of course it does," said Phyllis Howell.

"I think that man Hartley's a brute!" said Nancy Bell venomously.

"Oh, that's your opinion, is it?" asked Clara calmly. "Have you forgotten that he pulled your precious Danesford Hall friend out of the water?"

"He pushed her in first! I tell you it was his fault!" retorted Nancy quickly. "I'm not going to have anything to do with the man, and I don't think you ought to."

"As you're not playing in the match it won't matter, Nancy," said Phyllis Howell quietly. "I think the rest of us

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prefer to remember what we've seen rather than take your opinion!"

"Hear, hear!"

There was no doubt that Cyril Hartley was to receive a better reception to-day than he had received before.

Even if the girls could not forget what they had believed of him over the boat-race result, and the incident in the woods, most of them were at least prepared to believe that there was some mystery, concerning which he was entitled to receive the benefit of the doubt.

"Good-afternoon all!" said the cordial voice of the young man as the girls reached the nets. "I think we can start from where we left off at the last practice. I want to develop your bowling a little. You could make a lot more of it if you tried."

"Thank you, Mr. Hartley," said Phyllis Howell quietly.

It was a very different lesson from the previous one. Clara was not at all obstinate, and Flap Derwent agreed with most that was said.

And because the girls had come down in a different spirit that afternoon from that which they had shown the other day, they discovered that their coach could teach them very much about the game.

Even Clara learnt to drive a ball along the ground, after previously refusing to make any change in her play.

Miss Bellew, watching from the window of her study, followed every movement with breathless interest. Her cheeks were pink and her eyes very bright. How much that game meant to her only the Form-mistress realised.

"Things are coming right after all!" murmured Miss Bellew. "We have had our trials, but I am certain that everything can soon be explained. As soon as Cyril has met that man and forced him to confess what he is doing here, he will be able to tell all. Yet what pleases me more is that my girls have learnt to trust Cyril at last. Oh, well, done, Babs! I'm sure that I have to thank you for this!"

It seemed, indeed, that the stoniest part of Cyril Hartley's path at Cliff House had already been traversed. The Fourth-Formers were becoming friendlier with him every moment.

With one exception! There was certainly no friendliness in the heart of

Nancy Bell as she remembered the words which her Danesford Hall friend had used.

Cyril Hartley had got to leave Cliff House lest he should stay long enough to be able to expose, in some way or other, the part which they had both taken in crippling the Cliff House race-boat.

Did that state of affairs seem likely to come about now?

Nancy Bell feared not. And yet she had to do something—something!

Nancy was never a good cricketer, and she was feeble than ever that day. Cyril Hartley, quickly seeing those who depended on putting their faults right as far as possible, and Nancy was left much to her own devices.

That was how she came to see a paper which suddenly fluttered from the pocket of the young man's blazer, which was hanging to one side of the nets. No one else had observed that detail at all. In a careless manner Nancy crossed the turf until her foot rested on the paper.

Cyril Hartley was demonstrating a stroke at the nets, and all eyes were on him. In a flash Nancy stooped, picked up the paper, and smoothed it out in her hands.

It was a dishonourable thing to do. But Nancy was not studying anything like that at the moment. She was too frightened, too agitated, to heed any means by which she might attain her ends.

Her eyes rested on the paper, and she started to see this message:

"Dear A.—Shall not be able to umpire on Saturday, but keep my name on list so that M—S— will think that I shall be in school. Ask Miss Bland to be ready to take my place. I anticipate meeting M. S. in the woods about seven minutes before the match is due to take place. Will explain fully later.—Ever your CYRIL."

Trapped!

WITHOUT even stopping to peek at her tea, Nancy Bell darted away from Cliff House School as soon as the cricket practice was over.

She had found out something—something important. Nellie Travers would have to be told at once.

Nancy had not even stopped to guess who that "A" might be. The words of the note had long since burned into her brain so that she could repeat the whole message, and the slip of paper was already back in Cyril Hartley's pocket.

It was a good walk to Danesford Hall, but Nancy reached the school at last. She found Nellie Travers sitting on the lawn, and hurried up to her.

"Nellie, I have found out something," she said. "I picked up a note which Hartley dropped, and he's going to cut the match on Saturday at the last minute, so that he can meet some man called 'M. S.' here."

"Marcus Stoneman!" said Nellie at once.

"M-M-Marcus Stoneman? Do you know him, then?" asked Nancy in a disappointed tone. "I thought he might be some poor relation, or something."

"He's not that," said Nellie. "But you listen to me, and I'll open your eyes. I've managed to find out something. Miss Potter said that your man Hartley isn't really down here as a coach at all—that's only a disguise. He's really after some man named Stoneman, who was the secretary of his company in London. The

man was discharged, and he's come down here with some of the confidential papers, hoping to get in touch with some of the people interested in the company. I don't know exactly all the circumstances, but this man Stoneman gets about in various disguises because the police are after him as well."

"Goodness! Then—then he must have been the old man Hartley was seen attacking in the words!" breathed Nancy.

"That's right," said Nellie quickly. "Dear Barbara and Co. spoil his game by rushing up as they did, and Hartley dare not explain anything because he can't until he has those papers back. The 'old man's' business was only a disguise."

"My word!" Nancy was beginning to understand. There was nothing shameful even in the affair of the woods, according to what this girl was saying. Cyril Hartley was an upright young man, against whom no charge could be levelled!

"But there's something in what you say," went on Nellie Travers suddenly. "Oh, don't think I'm wavering, because I'm not. If we can disgrace that man Hartley he'll be sent back to his office, and someone will come in his place. That's all I want. If that man stops here it's almost certain that he'll find out something about the boat business, and I tell you I simply daren't risk it!"

"No. But—"

"You listen to me!" cut in the Danesford Hall girl. "I've got an idea, I believe. If Hartley's going to be hanging about the woods just before the match, couldn't you start some story to say that he's doing it for—some reason? Get two or three of them to follow? They might be late for the match or something like that."

"Would that be any good?" asked Nancy Bell doubtfully.

"Yes, from what I've heard I believe it would!" answered the other girl.

"Anyway, they'll be wild with Hartley for deserting the match if you only speak in the right way. I'll be hiding in the woods myself, and if I have any opportunity to do anything to delay them getting back I'll do it. They might get into one of those huts or anything like that. It's the best thing I can think of."

The conversation continued until long after both girls had finished their tea. Nancy was more than a little frightened, but it was too late for her to withdraw now. She went back to Cliff House a little later, her brow puckered in thought.

"Here's Nancy Bell!" was the instant yell which greeted her appearance in the school.

Nancy started, drawing back in sudden alarm.

"But there was no need for alarm."

"I'm collecting the subscriptions for Miss Bellew's present, Nancy," explained Babs. "I want to have the money all ready so that we can decide on the present immediately after the cricket match. There's a rumour that the engagement will be announced then."

"We've all paid up—with the exception of Bessie Bunter," added Mabel Lynn. "You've promised five shillings, Nancy."

"All right. I'll get it!" muttered Nancy.

She was too worried even to heed the excitement in the Fourth Form passage that evening. But it was necessary to conceal her worry as much as possible. Nancy paid up and disappeared into her study.

Out in the corridor there was plenty of excited discussion.

MABEL CURES THE CRICKETERS!

Young Folks Tales 1s

Greatly Enlarged

A new number every Friday. The ideal fairy story book for your little brother and sister.

Bessie Bunter's box had been opened—against her wish—and found to contain an assortment of buttons put in there to rattle and act as decoys. The promised money subscription from the fat girl was still to come, but Babs believed that even Bessie would contrive to give half a crown at the last minute.

Even if she didn't it would hardly matter. The magnificent total of twelve pounds five-and-sixpence had already been paid, and was actually locked in a cash box in Barbara's writing-desk.

"More than twelve pounds!" said Babs, after placing the last item in the book. "Don't you think it splendid, girls? I'm sorry, of course, that we have to make such a collection, because it means losing a simply ripping mistress—a mistress we shall always remember."

"Hear, hear!" said several voices.

"Still, Miss Bellow is getting married for her own happiness," resumed Babs, "and I'm sure that none of us want to stop her. He must be a splendid sort of man whom she has chosen, I'm sure, and I'm longing to meet him."

"It'll be a pity to say good-bye to Miss Bellow," said Peggy Preston quietly. "But I believe that we shall still see a good lot of her. She's too fond of Cliff House to leave us entirely alone. What do you girls think?"

The general opinion seemed to be that Peggy Preston's conjecture was quite right.

And so the talk hummed on that evening.

It was to be a parting, of course, and all partings are regretful. But there is much to temper the parting in a marriage, and the excitement of the girls over the romance in their midst certainly kept their eyes closed to some of the little disadvantages they might discover when a successor to the popular Fourth Form mistress had been appointed.

At any other time the talk of the school would certainly have centered round such an important event as that about which rumour had been so persistent.

But the day of the cricket match with the Danes was rapidly drawing nearer and nearer. Even speculation as to whom the "lucky man" could be dropped a little as the last days flitted by and the morning of the match dawned.

"Danesford Hall is to be beaten today, girls!" chuckled Phyllis Howell, reading that somewhat unusual entry from her diary. "Are we going to do it?"

"I should think we are!" said the Fourth Form team confidently.

"Especially after the way they've crowded over winning the boat-race," said Clara Trevlyn. "It will be worth while beating them if only to see the face of the Potter lady when we've done it."

"Rathey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was excitement in the whole school as well as in the Fourth.

And as the Danesford Hall match was the only fixture for that afternoon it was to be expected that a number of Fifth and Sixth-Formers would be present to witness the game.

"Ripping day for it, too!" commented Barbara, when the dinner-hour came at last. "I expect the Danes will be in good form, but I think Mr. Hartley has given us a lot of help, don't you?"

"Where is Mr. Hartley, by the way?" asked Flap Derwent. "I haven't seen him about this morning."

"No, but he's promised to be one of the umpires, so we shall soon see him," said Babs easily.

"I hope he turns up soon," said

Phyllis Howell. "I wanted to ask him about one or two matters—change bowlers and that sort of thing. He promised faithfully that he would be along this morning."

"Well, there's time yet," said Babs practically. "Let's go upstairs to the dormitory and change so that we shall be ready in good time for the game."

The girls went upstairs, light-hearted and eager. And at just about that moment a Cliff House girl came hurrying from the direction of the woods—a girl rejoicing in the name of Nancy Bell. There was a smile on the menspirited girl's face as she came along—a smile which was certainly not a pleasant one to see. But Nancy had good reason for feeling satisfied with herself. She had gone into the woods for a last meeting with the plotting Nellie Travers, only to run right into Cyril Hartley himself!

To her unbounded pleasure Hartley spoke the very words which she needed to help her in her mean and plotting schemes!

"Can you give a few messages to Miss Phyllis, Miss Barbara, and Miss Clara?" asked the young man, as soon as he met the Cliff House girl. "I haven't been able to get along myself."

Nancy said she would, and then listened to a stream of advice couched in such terms that she would certainly not be able to repeat the whole of it accurately.

But she didn't intend to do that!

What she wanted was to get three of the Fourth-Formers away from the match.

"Here's Nancy Bell coming!" exclaimed Clara, the first to catch sight of the breathless girl, who came hurrying to the dormitory just as most of the cricketers had finished dressing.

"Oh, dear!" panted Nancy. "I've got a message for Phyllis, Barbara, and Clara—from Mr. Hartley!"

"Mr. Hartley? Where is he?" cried Phyllis at once.

"In the woods!"

"Nonsense. He's umpiring the match this afternoon," said Clara disbelievingly.

"Not at all. He's going to cut the match," said Nancy Bell, being quite certain of that statement. Miss Bland is to take his place. But—but he wants to tell you three something."

"Tell us something?"

"Yes. He's waiting in the woods for you, and won't come to the school," said Nancy Bell. "I tell you I've just seen him and he was acting in an awfully queer manner. He wants you to go to him and he'll tell you what he has to say."

"Nancy, you're pulling our legs!" said Clara disbelievingly.

"I'm not, really! Anyway, I don't care whether you believe or not," retorted Nancy, in her usual laughing tones.

She felt quite safe of herself in speaking like that. Although it was untrue to say that Cyril Hartley had requested to speak to those three girls, Nancy knew that she could easily say that she had understood so if questions should be asked later.

"Hartley! In the woods?" repeated Babs disbelievingly.

"Suppose we go and see?" suggested Clara. "There is still more than twenty minutes before the Danes even arrive, and we can ride most of the way on the paths. If Nancy is not speaking the truth we'll make her sorry for it when we get back."

"All right," assented Phyllis, who was keen on having a few words with the young coach.

It did not take a couple of minutes

for the three girls to wheel their bicycles to the gates and mount them. By riding cautiously they were able to proceed through the woods in single file, and within a very few minutes they sighted the tall figure of Cyril Hartley, loitering amongst the trees.

"Isn't he behaving strangely, though?" commented Babs at once. "He is moving about just as he was the other afternoon."

It was at that precise moment that Cyril Hartley saw the three approaching girls. She said—

To say that he looked startled would be to put it mildly.

The Cliff House coach looked simply astounded.

"Miss—Miss Barbara?" he gasped. "Surely you—you—"

"You said you wanted to speak to us, Mr. Hartley!" exclaimed Babs, jumping from her cycle and looking as surprised as she felt. "Nancy Bell gave us the message. She said—"

"Nancy Bell? Oh, she must have made a mistake. I wanted her to give you my—my messages!" exclaimed the young man, turning red. "I didn't—I mean, I'm awfully sorry to have dragged you here. I've had to—to change my arrangements, and—good gracious! There's the man!"

His whole body stiffened suddenly. But Babs, looking in the direction of the young man's gaze, could certainly see nothing to account for his startled appearance.

"Man? What man?" she asked blankly.

Cyril Hartley turned urgently on the three girls at his side.

"Please—please do me a favour!" he exclaimed. "There is a man I must see. I can do so in two minutes, and then come back to you. Will you just hide in this side-keeper's hut with your bicycles for a couple of minutes?"

"Hide? But why?" protested Barbara. "If you—"

"There is a man with whom I must speak," interrupted the coach. "If he sees that there is anyone about he may take fright. I have a special and urgent reason for saying this. I may be able to explain as soon as I come back to you. But I must see the man immediately."

Hardly consenting but carried away by the young man's earnestness, the three girls crowded with their machines to the little ramshackle keeper's hut, and the door closed on them. Cyril Hartley, without a backward glance, glided away amongst the trees.

Even as he moved, another figure—that of a girl this time—appeared from the shelter of the hut.

With a quick, noiseless movement, she slipped the heavy fastening of the door in its place, and then glided away with a silent chuckle in her throat.

Luck had favoured Nellie Travers indeed!

She had come to the spot to watch Hartley, and to discover more about him—to carry out some spiteful plot against the Cliff House girls if they should appear.

But never had she reckoned that she would be able to leave three of her best players like this—caught like rats in a trap!

Three Short!

"PHYLIS! Where is she?"

"Where's Babs?"

"I can't find Clara Trevlyn, girls."

Those were the cries which rose on every side. There was consternation amongst the Cliff House cricketers.

Mabel Lynn, Marjorie Hazeldene, Flap Derwent, and Peggy Preston had been searching everywhere for more than five minutes. Augusta, Anstruther-Browne, Gwen Cook, Freda Eoste, and Dolly Jobling, after hallooing outside the school gates, had also returned without news.

It was five minutes past the appointed hour. The Danesford Hall girls were waiting. But Cliff House were three short, and those three were undoubtedly three of their strongest players.

"Three missing? Can't you find them anywhere?" asked Gertie Thomas, in amazement. "Surely they know the time of the match?"

"There's no sign of them anywhere," answered Mabs, in a worried voice. "They went out for a few minutes, they said."

"Isn't it possible to start without them?" asked Molly Lambert, one of the famous twins of Danesford Hall.

"Hardly. Phyllis and Babs are captain and vice-captain, you see," said Marjorie Hazeldene, greatly perturbed.

"I'll tell you why Molly spoke," said Dolly Lambert, in a low voice. "Miss Potter is beginning to talk in her usual way—sloakness of Cliff House, and all that. She'll be demanding a start in a minute."

"Oh, dear! What do you girls think?" asked Mabs, calling the rest of the team round her. "You know Miss Potter can be unpleasant, don't you?"

"We do. We don't want to have any scene, either," said Peggy Preston. "Babs and the others really ought to be back by now. But I expect they'll be in any minute. Could we make a start with three substitutes?"

"I think we ought to do something like that," said Mabs.

"Then you take on the captaincy until they come in, Mabs," suggested Flap Derwent. "Good gracious! There's the Potter person beginning to ask already when the match is going to start! We'll have to take the field."

"It's the only thing," admitted Mabs. "Oh, I do wish I knew why those others are keeping away so long!"

"They're bound to turn up soon," said Marjorie confidently. "Babs, Phyllis and Clara, of all girls, would never miss a match, would they?"

"Not if they could help it."

Mabs beckoned to Katie Smith, and she came running across the field.

"We're going to start, Katie," she said. "We want you, Lorna Grey, and—"

—and Agnes White to play as substitutes until the other three come back. Do you mind?"

"Only too delighted!" said Katie jubilantly. "I'm sure the others will be willing, too. But I hope Babs turns up soon. We want to win to-day, don't we?"

Katie went running off to warn the other two that they would be called on to play, and Mabs hurried across to where Gertie Thomas was waiting.

"We'll start, Gertie," said Mabs quietly. "We're going to play substitutes for those three until they arrive. Will you toss with me?"

"Certainly," said Gertie, spinning the coin.

"Tails!"

The coin fell, the head uppermost.

"We'll go in to bat first, Mabs, if you're willing," said Gertie considerably.

"It's very good of you to say 'if you're willing,'" said Mabs, with a smile.

"It's your choice, of course. Still, I expect that our three won't be long now."

The disposition of the Cliff House team was a difficult matter. Mabs, who certainly valued the advice of Marjorie

and Philippa in that, had a consultation with them.

"Until Babs and the others arrive, we've got to do our best," Mabs said. "I think Marjorie and Peggy might open the bowling, and Flap and I can relieve. The worst of it is Babs and Phyllis are our two best bowlers on the season's average."

"They'll come in later all right," said Flap confidently. "You'll see them appear soon. Of course, we can't let Katie, Agnes, or Lorna bowl, if we want to keep them only as substitutes."

"Certainly," said Mabs, knowing that by the rules those three girls were only allowed to field if they were later to give up their places to girls who would participate either in the batting or bowling.

The game started at last, with Gertie Thomas and Ethel Jeremy at the Danesford Hall wickets, and Peggy Preston opened the bowling.

"Go it, Cliff House!"

"Now then, Danes!"

Peggy did her best, and so did Marjorie. Inside the first five minutes they were both successful in taking a wicket, and Gertie and Ethel, both good players, had been dismissed for a total of fourteen runs.

"Not at all bad!" said Mabs approvingly. "But look at the time, girls! It's a quarter of an hour past the time for starting, and still they're missing!"

Most of the spectators knew now what had happened, and their eyes, too, were turning frequently in the direction of the gates.

Little did any of them guess that they were to witness the whole Danesford Hall innings with the three substitutes remaining in the team.

Flap Derwent relieved Marjorie, and Mabel took on the bowling at Peggy Preston's end. The Lambert sisters were making a stand which seemed likely to prove disastrous for Cliff House if something were not soon done.

Run by run the score was mounting up, and Cliff House seemed to be unable to do anything.

"Forty for two!" gasped Grace Woodfield. "Oh, it's absurd! It will be simply crushing! I can't understand—Ah, one of them caught at last!"

Dolly was the victim of that misfortune. Curiously enough, the partnership broken, Molly went almost to the next ball. Other Danes who were less redoubtable hitters followed them rather more quickly, but each added her little item to the score before she went.

Sixty, seventy, eighty! appeared each in its turn on the scoring-board, every round figure being the signal for a furious burst of cheering from the Danes. Yet, although the dismayed bowlers looked again and again towards the gates, there was still no sign of the girls whose bowling would certainly have done much to stop this rapid scoring.

The Cliff House girls were almost beginning to despair.

What had happened to Barbara and her two chums they could not guess. But every one of them had anxious thoughts.

"Ninety!" shrieked the Danes, as Marguerite Carr just touched a ball past the wicket-keeper, and another two runs were added.

Mabs looked dismayed. Clara, as wicket-keeper, would have caught that ball in the same way that she would have stopped other similar performances. Gwen Cook, although she was striving hard, was not to be compared with the brilliant Clara.

"Ninety, and still they're missing!" breathed Mabs. "Oh, what ever can have happened to them?"

"Go on, Cliff House!" came an encouraging cry.

Cliff House tried to "go on." The substitutes were doing their best, but their fielding was not as smart as that of the three missing girls. The four bowlers, also, were beginning to feel the strain badly.

Five minutes passed. The score stood at ninety-seven when another wicket fell, and wild cheers greeted the last girl in.

"Make it a century!" cried the Danes.

And the last girl did! A single brought her to face the bowling of a fresh over. She stopped the first ball, returned the second with a short drive, and lifted the third cleanly for a two.

"Hurrah!"

There was wild excitement. A hundred was a big score for either team to make. The Danes were nearly frantic with pleasure, few of them realising the handicap of their rivals.

Three more runs were added before a dead straight ball from Flap passed the Danesford Hall girls' bat and lifted the middle stump from the turf.

"Out at last! Hurrah!" cheered the Cliff House supporters. "Well done, the Danes!"

"Hurrah!"

"But a hundred and three!" breathed Mabel Lynn, as she walked to the pavilion with Peggy Preston and Marjorie Hazeldene. "It's a fearful defeat for us, but I wouldn't mind even that if I knew what had happened. Where ever can those three girls be? That's what's worrying me most."

"They would surely never have stayed away of their own free will," mused Peggy dejectedly. "What a pity that some of us did not go to look for them!"

"But where should we find them in the woods?" pointed out Mabs. "We had to start the match, as it was. I—I—Oh, I don't know what to think!"

It was the suspense which was so worrying.

All of the Cliff House girls were alarmed and anxious now. The strange absence of Barbara, Phyllis, and Clara was the only topic in the pavilion. Gertie Thomas and her chums were as sympathetic and thoughtful as anyone, but there was nothing, of course, that they could do.

The match had to go on, and each side must do their best.

Mabel Lynn, after deep and anxious consultation, went in first with Philippa Derwent, and the Danesford Hall bowlers commenced. The Cliff House representatives concentrated their attention on the game at last, realising the tremendous score which had already been compiled by their rivals.

The Cliff House supporters watched breathlessly. At first it seemed that Mabs and Flap were going to make a fine stand. But Flap was unlucky when the score stood at nineteen, and a catch at the wicket sent her back. Her place at the wicket was taken by Peggy Preston.

Then the really game struggle commenced in earnest. The Cliff House supporters, tired of looking for the three missing girls, had practically given them up. Now they were hoping against hope for a Cliff House victory—if it could be possible!

Was it possible? The girls were certainly batting well, but their score could not compare with that made by the Danes. Peggy went at twenty-nine, and Mabs, after a splendid struggle, departed when thirty had been reached. Marjorie added seven, and Freda, by really clever play, put on nine. But Augusta and Gwen Cook were not so fortunate, and they had only made eight between

them when Gwen fell to a tricky off-break.

Only Vivienne to bat before the three substitutes were called on in the place of the girls who had still failed to arrive.

The score was sixty-three—a good one, certainly, considering everything. But could they hope for the rest of the team to make forty-odd runs, the number necessary for a victory?

Augusta was evidently desperate. Her first hit in the new partnership was a three. Vivienne obtained a one, and then, to the delight of all, Augusta made what looked to all like a boundary hit.

But it was not! Gertie Thomas, in some marvellous way, got there just in time, and caught the leather in mid-air. Augusta was out!

"And now for the substitutes," sighed Mabs. "We shall have to play them, after all."

"No, no! Look!" yelled Peggy, in sudden wild excitement. "Here they are—Babs, Phyllis, and Clara!"

"Where—where?" gasped Mabs. Peggy pointed along the field. All eyes were turned in that direction now, and a general cry suddenly arose.

Peggy was right. The three missing players had appeared in the quadrangle, propped their bikes against the wall, and now they were running down the field. "Babs, where ever have you been?" Mabs cried, rushing to meet her chum.

"Been? We've been locked in a hut in the woods," said Babs breathlessly.

"Hartley must have locked us in there. Oh, don't ask me about it now, Mabs, I'm too furious! How's the match going?"

"You're to bat next!" Mabs exclaimed. "You're just in time—they're waiting, in fact. We're sixty-three with

your three wickets in hand, and the Danes are a hundred and three."

Babs grasped the position. She said a few words to Mabs and hurried to the pavilion to don her pads. A minute later a tremendous cheer greeted her as she walked to the wicket.

Phyllis and Clara were left to explain what had happened in the woods—the meeting with Hartley, his strange behaviour, the discovery that they were prisoners, and their long wait in the hut until Clara managed to clamber out of a small window and release them. It was a story which made the eyes of the listeners open wide with amazement.

"Well done, Babs!" a sudden cry came, and then they remembered that in their excitement they had almost forgotten the match.

But Babs had not. Vivienne was keeping up her wicket, and Babs was hitting well. Six already stood to her credit.

"Keep it up, Babs!" came the cry from the pavilion, to be followed almost immediately by: "Oh, hard luck, Vivienne!"

Vivienne, in trying to be too venturesome, had fallen to a tricky ball.

"Now who's in?" exclaimed Clara. "You'd better go, Phyllis. Leave me till last."

So Phyllis went, the score then standing at seventy-four. It was good bowling that she had to face, and she treated it with respect. After the first over only one more had been added, and Phyllis was facing the other bowler.

Then, quite suddenly, she started to hit. In one breathless over she added two fours and a two, bringing a ringing cheer of admiration.

"Hurrah! Well done, Phyllis!" came the shout on all sides.

But they were not to have things all their own way yet! Disaster lurked very near ahead. In the very next over there was a misunderstanding, and Babs and Phyllis hesitated in midfield over a somewhat doubtful single. Babs regained her wicket all right, but Phyllis was not so lucky. The balls were snicked off and Phyllis was run out!

"Eighty-five and only you to bat, Clara!" said Mabs, as Clara donned the pads. "Show them what you can do, now! If only we win you!"

"Put not your trust in Clara!" said that young lady uneasily. "I'm going in to hit, but whether I shall come off is another matter!"

But Clara Trevlyn played carefully for all that. She knew that on herself and Babs rested the chance of pulling the game out of the fire; and what a splendid thing it would be if they could win after all that had happened!

"Ninety!" went up a sudden shriek of pleasure. "Stick to it, Cliff House!"

Babs and Clara needed no heartening. They intended to stick to it if they could. If they could make fourteen more it would be victory! Could it be done?

"Played, Babs!" was the jubilant cry as Babs added another three. "Now, Clara!"

Clara received a tricky ball, but she was ready for it. Her bat flashed as the ball was snicked to leg, and everyone saw it rushing for the boundary.

"A four! Do it again, Clara!" came the delighted yell.

And Clara did it again! She was given the very same kind of ball, and luck aided her. She treated it even more neatly than she had done in the previous occasion, using the stroke which Mr. Hartley had taught her.

"A hundred and one!" breathed Mabs, her face alight with excitement.

(Continued on page 16.)



THE ROYAL FAVOURITE

(HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES—
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"Unworthy of their Trust!"

(Continued from page 15.)

"Oh, girls, you're going to win over yet! It's absolutely wonderful! Another three—and Babs to bat!"

Babs was looking serious as she faced the bowling. In cricket there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip. She stopped the first ball dead. The second was off the wicket, and she let it go. The third was a similar ball. But the fourth was a loss; ball, and Babs realised that it was her chance. She opened her shoulders and smote at the ball with all her might.

"Hold it, Gertie!" came a Damesford Hall yell, and then a breathless silence.

Gertie Thomas was fielding almost on the boundary, waiting to treat Babs as she had Augusta. The ball was dropping in her direction. Everyone waited, for it would either be a catch or a boundary—victory or defeat!

"She's got it!"

"No she hasn't!" came a Cliff House yell. "Hurrah! Good old Babs!"

They were right. Gertie had touched the ball, but she could not hold it. It slipped through her hands and rolled to the boundary, making the Cliff House score one hundred and five!

"Hurrah! Well done, Babs! Well done all!"

The excitement was almost feverish as the girls flocked on to the ground to cheer the side which had won such a breathless victory against their rivals. Everyone knew now how handicapped the Fourth had been. Sixth and Second-Formers alike joined in the general applause.

With a merry, satisfied crowd of Fourth-Formers rushing to meet them, Babs and Clara made their way in the direction of the pavilion—victors over the Dames, and victors, too, over a misfortune which had been planned against them.

And then, almost without warning, the very man who was in the thoughts of everyone appeared before them all!

A sudden cessation of the merry chatter was the first warning that Barbara had. Then she looked up with a start of surprise to see Cyril Hartley standing, smiling, before her!

Miss Bellew's Chagrin!

"I HEAR you've won! May I congratulate you?"

Barbara Redfern coloured under the cordial words. She was suddenly furious. Her flashing eyes encountered the meet's gaze, and she answered with one syllable:

"No!"

Cyril Hartley started back. His face was puzzled. He looked in frank bewilderment at all the indignant faces around him.

"I—I don't understand. I'm sorry that I didn't have a chance to get back to the bat," he commenced. "Of course, I knew all the time that you would be able to get out and return in time for the match, and as you've won the—"

"Get out?" asked Babs, in a steely voice. "When you had fastened us in?"

"Fastened in? I—I don't understand—"

"Oh, it's no good coming and saying a thing like that now!" cried Barbara Redfern, with flushed cheeks. "We know you now, Mr. Hartley. Why did you volunteer to act as umpire to-day and then stay away? Why did you send us that message to see you in the woods, and then get us into that hut? Why did you drop the bolt and then steal away as you did? Clara saw you going, so you need not deny it!"

"I don't understand any of this!" gasped the young man. "It's all Greek to me. You say that the bolt of the door was secured? You—you didn't see the man I was after?"

"Man you were after?" said Babs scornfully. "None of us saw any man in the woods. I suppose you're going to say that it was an accident, and the bolt must have slipped into place by itself? You didn't want to keep us away from the match at all, did you?"

"No, I—I really—"

"Do you deny, Mr. Hartley, that it was all a cowardly, horrid trick to make three of us miss to-day's match?" demanded Barbara.

"Deny? Of course I do!" answered the young man. "I had no idea that anything had happened. I admit that I was wrong in not coming back to the hut in two minutes, as I said. But if you could only understand how urgent it was that I should get away—"

"Urgent!" said Babs scornfully. "It wasn't urgent for us to be released, was it? You didn't mind us staying there?"

"And I'm sure we don't want to listen to any more excuses—from you," cut in Clara Trevlyn. "What do you girls think?"

There was a spontaneous and hostile murmur at once.

"In view of what happened before I think we were silly ever to trust Mr. Hartley again," opined Flap Derwent. "What had he to say about that broken oar of mine? What could he say about attacking that old man in the woods? Come on, girls; let's leave him to explain to someone else."

Cyril Hartley went very pale.

"It's quite clear to us," exclaimed Babs, "that you sent for us, and made that excuse about not expecting us to put us off the track. Who locked us in the hut, if you didn't?"

"I can't answer that, Miss Barbara. But I tell you that you're making a mistake," Cyril Hartley said, with a tremble in his voice at last.

"And that is all you have to say?"

"Miss Barbara—"

But Babs passed on, and her chums had to pass on with her. Only an indignant murmur came to the ears of the white-faced young man who stood so wretchedly and dejectedly watching them go.

"Still, there's one thing," cried Marjorie Hazeldene suddenly. "Miss Bellew hasn't appeared to-day, girls. Perhaps she's really found out now the sort of man Hartley is. Isn't her engagement going to be announced this evening, too?"

"It is," said Babs, a smile coming to her face at last.

"Let's have tea, and just forget all about Hartley. As soon as the engagement is announced we've got to congratulate Miss Bellew."

"Rather!"

"I wonder when—" began Clara, and then broke off, so that she could point ahead. "Look at Fatima! Ever seen her run like that?"

"I haven't," said Babs, laughing.

Bessie Bunter, her face red with excitement and exertion, was tearing down the field.

"Babs—all of you! I sus-sus-say!" gasped the fat girl, simply bubbling with her excitement. "Guess what I've seen? Miss Bellew's engagement's announced, on the notice board! I say, who do you think it is?"

"Couldn't say, Fatima," came a cry at once. "Do tell us!"

"It's old Hartley—she's engaged to Cyril Hartley!" yelled Bessie excitedly. "He, he, he! I knew it all the time!"

"Hartley?"

The word passed round in a whisper of absolute amazement.

"Hartley!" Babs exclaimed. "Oh, girls, what Bessie says must be true, too. Now we know why Miss Bellew has always stood by him. But to think of Miss Bellew marrying that man! Oh, it's impossible!"

"I shan't give any present," said Clara Trevlyn. "My hat! Fancy that man marrying Miss Bellew. Can't we duck him in a pond and tell him to clear off?"

Miss Bellew—engaged to Cyril Hartley!

They were all talking at once and all saying the same thing.

It was a most surprising item of news which they had never expected to receive. They passed into the school, suddenly heavy, suddenly very gloomy and depressed.

They had planned to rush off and congratulate Miss Bellew, and ask what present she would like. But no one even moved towards her study. They shunned it, miserable, mute, and dejected.

And Miss Bellew?

It was the evening that her engagement was announced, and it should have been the happiest evening of her life when she received the congratulations of all those she loved at Cliff House.

She had learned what had happened that afternoon.

And although she was still true to the man of her choice, her eyes were filled with bitter tears. She had given way to tears. The blows of Fate had been too heavy for her. Of all the sweet anticipations of that day none had been sweeter than to hear the pleasant, cheering words of congratulation which she expected to receive from the girls she loved so much.

But there were no congratulations. No one came for her.

Silent, lone, and crushed she sat in her study. Her prospective husband was the scorn of the school. She would leave Cliff House to marry a man who was despised by them all. No words can ever describe her misery as she sat, quite without hope, through the racking hours of what should have been the happiest hours of her life.

Cyril Hartley was wronged, of course! Miss Bellew knew that, so great was her faith in the Cliff House coach. But she could not guess that it was through the cowardly plotting of two girls who, so far, had known no reverse.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

(Next Thursday's issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND will contain "Well Done, Babs!"—a magnificent new long complete story of the girls of Cliff House, by Hilda Richards—and a special story number of the "Cliff House Weekly." Order your copy at once!)

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EDITORIAL.



—By—

Barbara Redfern

Special numbers have proved so extraordinarily popular that I have decided to make next week's number a

SPECIAL STORY NUMBER.

Not only is it a special number containing stories, but it is also a number containing special stories.

It would be difficult to say which of the stories in next week's issue is best, but I feel sure that you will agree with me when I say that they are all good. It is really remarkable, though, how every girl thinks she can write stories. Have you ever noticed it? And really there is not a great deal of story-writing talent about. But always the stupidest are the least modest.

Only the other day Bessie Hunter, who will tell you that she is the personification of modesty, came into my study with a story which she said would increase the popularity of the "Weekly."

I looked at it—for one has to do that, you know, whatever a story is like—and I shook my head decisively. "It is no good. Really, I simply can't put this in. Now, if I were running another Fun Number, I would put it in—on the front page, too!"

Bessie blinked at me indignantly. "Oh, really," she said, "I think you're a jealous cat, Babs! You wouldn't say that if you'd written it yourself!"

"No, that's quite true," I said. "If I'd written it, I should have been placed in some home long ago!"

Bessie glowered at me. "It isn't that I'm thinking of myself," she remarked wistfully. "I'm thinking of the thousands of girls who will never, never read this story now!"

And at the thought of the poor girls she became nearly fearful. You can't imagine what a job I had with Bessie.

My next visitor was Peggy. I glanced at her manuscript, and shook my head again.

"This is good, Peggy," I said, "and I know our readers will like it. They're bound to be sorry for poor Nina. But, you see, this is too long."

"All right," said Peggy. "I stopped her."

And she would have gone, but I stopped her. "Write some more," I said. "I'll try to put it through, but later."

Perhaps you will be wondering who this Nina is. You will learn—when Peggy's story comes to light. But I will say more about it next week.

So the Story Number will appear without Peggy and without Bessie's contributions. But it is a topping number, nevertheless.

Your clam,

BARBARA REDFERN.

THE CHRONICLES of the CONFECTIONERY CLUB!



How We Made Raspberry Jujubes.

By DOLLY JOBLING.

Required: Half a pound of raspberry jam, two ounces of loaf gelatine, two ounces of loaf sugar, half a gill of water, flavouring and colouring.

Put the sugar, jam, and water into a saucepan and boil for five minutes. Strain through a fine strainer, and return the liquid to the saucepan. Add the gelatine, and bring the syrup to the boil. Stir frequently, and add a few drops of raspberry flavouring and a little cochineal to deepen the colour. Rinse a mould with cold water, allow the syrup to cool a little, and pour it into the mould. When it is set, turn from the mould, and cut the jujubes into fancy shapes.

The Cliff House Confectionery Club had just assembled, and Peggy Preston was collecting our subscriptions before we commenced to make raspberry jujubes.

"So nice to be without Bessie Hunter," said Babs, as she weighed up the sugar. "Yes," replied Mabs, who was scouring out the saucepan. "Perhaps she will forget that the club is meeting this afternoon, and—"

"I say, you girls!" said an all-too-well-known and ready voice. "Don't be so greedy and start without me!"

Bessie had arrived! She has been trying ever since the club first started to become a member, and only once has she been successful. (Lack of funds keeps Bessie from joining our happy circle, which is as well, for on the occasion on which she was admitted she ate all of the sweets, and, consequently, has been in debt to the club ever since.)

"Run off, Fatima!" said Clara Trevlin, bustling up with the strainer. "Call again in about an hour's time. We can give you a job of washing up—and won't charge you anything, either!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I don't see anything to cackle at!" booted Bessie. "Just because the lazy postman didn't trouble to deliver my remittance, and I'm financially embarrassed—that is, embarrassed, I mean—"

"Story broke!" suggested Freda Poote. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you mean, Bessie, that you want a little money until the postman comes?" said Cissy Clare sweetly.

"That's just the idea!" exclaimed Bessie. "Of course, I'm not the kind of girl who is always borrowing. I've only borrowed a few shillings from twenty girls—I mean two or three, and I'll pay them all back early in the morning!"

We all know Bessie's little way of being short of money, and borrowing from anyone who is obliging enough to lend anything.

"I know how you could raise a trifle," said Cissy.

"Not skivvy work?" said Bessie suspiciously.

Bessie has on one or two occasions, under great pressure from the members of the

club, acted as carrier and "washer-up," in order to raise the much-desired subscription. But she was not taking on any menial tasks to-day!

"No, just a little business transaction," said Cissy.

"How much?" bargained Bessie practically. "Oh," said Cissy easily, "not over-much—just about twelve pounds. Might be a trifle more or less, but something about that figure."

"Twelve pounds!" gasped Bessie. "I-I don't understand—"

"In my den," said Cissy, "is a bundle of papers, tied with string. You know that I always have a copy of the 'Daily Reflex,' and I've been saving them for some time. The last lot I sold to Shrimp, the fish-monger, and he promised to buy any more that I had. His cart is due to pass the school gates in about five minutes' time, and if you wait there he will buy them from you."

"Thank you, dear!" said Bessie, as she ambled through the doorway. "I'll send you all a feed when I come back!" she added generously.

"Well done, Cissy!" said Mabs, as the door banged. "Exit Fatima once more!"

"Which will give us a peaceful half-hour to finish the sweets in," added Babs.

We were so busy that we forgot all about Bessie, but just as we had stood the moulds aside to set, our fat friend burst into the room.

"I've been swindled!" she shouted. "The horrid old man only gave me threepence! I've been standing at the gate all this time, and caught sunstroke and nettles and all sorts of things!"

"You've had the threepence, haven't you, dear?" asked Cissy.

"Threepence! After standing hours in the sun!" booted Bessie. "I thought the least he'd pay would be five shillings!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "And now I've jolly well missed making the jujubes, too!"

Threepence does not go far when the weather is hot and Fatima is thirsty. We simply couldn't help yelling at the look of disgust on her face, and when she laughed indignantly out of the study we only laughed more.

It only remains for me to say that next day we sampled the jujubes made without the valuable help of Bessie, and found them delicious.

DANCE

BLINDOM IN THE DANCES!

By Clara Trevlyn.

Possibly you know that old joke about the names beginning with "Mac." Annabel Bichens loves it, and she was asking Bessie Bunter the usual questions the other night.

"What does Mac—Pherson spell? What does Mac—Donald spell?" and so on, finishing up with the trick: "What does Mac—Hine spell?"

Bessie Bunter, of course, said McHine, and needed a lot of argument before she understood that it spelt machine. Greatly elated, she went off to ask it in the Third Form Common-room.

Bessie, of course, forgot the preparation. She started off immediately with "What does m-a-c-h-i-n-e spell?" And when they all said "machine," she saw there was something wrong, and she would persist that it was McHine. She became so persistent and was so far from complimentary that they eventually sentenced her to Bagging Beatrice, one of their weird and wonderful punishments.

Bessie has not had anything to do with riddles lately!

Since we came back from "Castaway Island," Annabel Bichens has been rather lazier than usual on the subject of what modern girls are "coming to." With tremendous zeal she has pushed on with her plans for reforming modern girls. The following is an extract from a leaflet which she has written on the subject:

(1.) What happens to the girl who plays games? The day comes, my dear friends, when she is carried from the field on a stretcher to some hospital. Remember that this will be your lot some day!

(2.) What is going to be the result of this modern craving for pleasure? One day you will be too old, and then, instead of having a comfortable home to sit in no one will want you, and you will tramp the streets thinking of your wasted youth and opportunities.

(3.) Do you ever pause to think of the quiet joy which comes to you after an in-dustrious evening spent making things clean and tidy and neat? Is it not far more enjoyable than flopping idly in a chair and saying (I use the words with great regret): "Pshaw! Wasn't it a giddy struggle!"

Cheer, isn't it? I think the last one is a bit at me.

I have just been glancing through the current number of the "Danes Journal," which comes from Danesford Hall, as you probably know.

Yang Li Wen has written an article in it praising up the Danes of old, and endeavoring to make a connection with the modern Danes we know so well.



As most of you probably know, Miss Potter has a cat called Kaiser. Although most of us are quite fond of animals, we can't stand this pampered, petted creature. Miss Potter, however, is very fond of her pet.

This morning, however, Kaiser is in great disgrace. Miss Potter is very fond of fish for breakfast, and had a specially large bloater cooked for her meat. At some mysterious manner it disappeared, and we of the Fourth were accused of taking it. Judge our absolute delight when the whole school had assembled this morning in Hall and Kaiser stalked proudly in through the open doors, laid the carcass of the bloater at Miss Potter's feet, and mewed for another.

What Kaiser got was not a bloater! THE SCHOOL FRIEND, No. 105.

This is how Miss Yang Li Wen describes things:

"The Danes all admirably rush up beach and shout out: 'Choope off headee, one two, three, if you no surrender to most excellent Blinder! This is most expally spoked in best fighting tones, and startled peoples do not know what they do. They all have surrendere to make when they most admirably peoples better than respected selves, like Cliff House's very present modern up-to-date Danes play excellent cricket in the very best manner.'"

I wish there was room to tell you all that Yang Li Wen has to say on the subject! It is really great!

I hear that readers occasionally ask what "Press Day" is like now that the "Weekly" is a firmly established journal. We have described our earlier meetings, but have said little on the subject lately, they say.

Press Day, unfortunately, is not always a joy day in the Fourth. There has never been any real scarcity of "copy" as you will have noticed, but notorious offenders (like one named Clara Trevlyn) have a habit of getting into obscure places such as the library when their contribution is due to be delivered at Study No. 4. Babs has seriously thought of having Grip trained as the office mascot, to keep out contributors who fail, at the last minute, to contribute.

Bessie Bunter is the only one who is always in evidence on Press Day. She usually manages to turn up with a new serial every week, and keeps on about it until summarily silenced by being sat in the scullie.

Still, we keep smiling, don't we?

"April Fools' Day—long past now, I know—was a great success at Cliff House. None of Angelica Jelly's wheezes worked, of course; and Bessie, in her usual way, did some very things which were not intended.

The most amusing thing, however, was the attempt by Mademoiselle Lupin to jape Miss Bullivant. Mademoiselle, as you know, does not quite understand the spirit of our times, and thought that the Bull would take a joke as well as anyone, so she told her that there was a gentleman wanting to see her. Greatly perturbed, Miss Bullivant hastened downstairs—only to meet the dustman.

As the dustman guffawed, Miss Bullivant was exceedingly annoyed. She hastened back to be greeted by a shriek of "April fish!" from mademoiselle. That put the finishing touch to it. To be called a fish brought Miss Bullivant's temper to the boiling-point. It took mademoiselle a long time to explain her intended innocent joke, and to add that in France they call them "April fishes" instead of "April fools."

Speaking of Angelica reminds me of a funny thing she did the other day.

Doubtless you have all seen the symbolical figure of "Justice," a blindfold lady, carrying a sword in one hand and a pair of scales in the other. When there was a dispute between the Second and Third-Formers, Angelica thought it would be so splendid an idea to start a new custom at Cliff House by going down herself and impersonating "blindfold Justice."

Things might have gone off quite well if anyone but Angelica had decided to play the role. As it was, the jubilant Second and Third-Formers joined forces immediately Angelica had seated herself in the chair, tied her securely to it, and pushed her round the school!

Angelica was annoyed!

Bessie Bunter's ventriloquism has been used in so many "scores" that I must tell you of a case the other day where the biter got sadly bitten.

Lucy Morgan had decided to give a little party, and had things set out in the cupboard in her study. Bessie Bunter heard of this splendid state of affairs, and started to spy out the land. Lucy happened to see her, and, as she was coming to be said, she conducted a conversation with Bridget O'Toole, saying how afraid of dogs she was and how she would fly from the study if ever she found one in the cupboard.

Bessie Bunter heard all that, and she was intended to, and put on her thinking cap. A really brilliant wheeze came to her—also as Lucy intended. Just before tea Fatima sailed into the study to see Lucy.

Hardly had she leaned on an agreeable conversation than from the direction of the cupboard came a deep and menacing growl.

"Oh, what was that?" gasped Lucy. "Sounds like a dog," said Bessie calmly. "Not afraid of dogs, are you?"

"Fearfully!" said Lucy.

"G-r-r-r!" came from the cupboard.

"Oh dear! I was coming to meet Lucy."

"I say!" said Bessie Bunter brilliantly, "I'm not afraid of dogs, and Bridget isn't, either. Suppose I mount guard here while you run and get her to turn the beast out!"

"G-r-r-r!" came more alarmingly than ever.

"I'll go at once!" said Lucy, making a bolt for the door.

Bessie Bunter absolutely giggled.

"Couldn't have been better!" she said. "While that silly Welsh kid is away, I'll just have a look round."

Bessie's method of looking round is to search the cupboard first. She crossed and opened the door.

As she did so she gave a terrific shriek, for no sooner had she turned the key than a large, strong, and fierce-looking dog leapt into the room.

"Yaroooh! Help! There's a wild animal!" shrieked Bessie.

It was only Grip. Lucy and Flap Derwent, taking with laughing water to Bessie Bunter's rescue, and Grip stood looking on, and almost seemed to be laughing himself. Bessie, however, did not laugh. She made her escape as quickly as possible, and has not been seen at the cupboard since!

machine which she couldn't stop anyhow, and didn't seem to think anything of it!

Have we any interesting Fourth Form customs? In an anxious case.

Let me take this opportunity of telling you that we have many. We rather pride ourselves on them.

Once a week during the summer—weather and Miss Potter permitting—we hold what we call our "Open Air Recital," at which all those girls who have just learnt a song, or practised a conjuring trick, or anything like that, can "let off steam" without annoying us when we're busy. Florentia Anziani, our Italian girl, last week amazed us all by rendering a passage from Shakespeare with a great amount of action, something in this style:

"O quality of da mercy is not troo da strainer, it dropa likea da gentle raina from above upon da place beneath."

Another interesting custom is on birthdays. The girl whose birthday it is sits in a room by herself, and we go in one by one, and give one minute in which to try and make her laugh by saying something silly. If she doesn't laugh the girl who has failed has to buy her a present.

INTERESTING PARAGRAPHS ABOUT DANESFORD HALL!

Specially Contributed by Gertie Thomas.

The Oriental mind, as you probably know, works in a very different way from ours.

Yang Li Wen, who is quite wealthy, recently purchased a motor-scooter, and set off proudly from the school on it. Two hours later she did not return. At locking-up time she was still missing, and, fearing that she had met with an accident, we got out search parties. Hardly had we started than she popped at the gate, calmly wheeling her machine.

"Where ever have you been?" exclaimed Miss Potter. "How dare you come back like this? Explain instantly!"

"No explanation," clicked Yang Li Wen. "Gotten on the machine, no engine, no wheels. Went on. No jounce off, so I just stay on till no more petrol in machine. Savvy?"

Miss Potter said not a word. Yang Li Wen had apparently been riding calmly round the lanes for about three hours on a



COULD WE IMPROVE CLIFF HOUSE?

Philippa Derwent, always fond of asking questions, has been asking this one. Here are the replies:

MAEL LYNN—I think more time ought to be given to acting. Acting—if it is to be good—calls for observation, and that's excellent practice. We could easily get along without Miss Bullivant's drill lessons, I'm sure. (I believe Miss Bullivant herself is not so sure!—P. D.)

CLARA TREVELYN—If someone could find a substitute for stockings, Freda wouldn't be able to make any more jokes about my mending, and I'm sure we'd be much happier.

DOLLY JOBLING—Improve Cliff House? Certainly! I think that every study should be fitted with a gas-stove, so that a girl could cook without all this fuss being made by others who object to an occasional accident on the fire.

MRS LENOX—Fashion parades certainly ought to be arranged. If we had some mannequins down from London about twice a week to show all the latest dresses, it would be a splendid idea.

BRIDGET O'FOOLE—I'm affier thinking that a lot of things should be done, but it's not suggesting them that I am, in case things

were worse when we'd finished than when we were after starting. (Very helpful!—P. D.)

MADGE STEVENS—Improve the school? Rather! All the Fourth-Formers should be kept in padded rooms, and given gruel! Then—Ha, ha, ha! Can't catch me!

ELISE BRANE—I consider that useful learning should be encouraged far more at Cliff House. I asked several girls in the Fourth Form how many legs were possessed by a Californian tree-spider, and the only answer I received was eight hundred and fifty-five. As this was obviously absurd, I suggest— (Didn't have time to write any more!—P. D.)

ANGELICA JELLY—Hobbies are not encouraged at school as they should be. Take basket-making, for instance—What's that? Oh, all right. Anyway, all girls should know the value of oil coins. I think that's a most important branch of knowledge!

PIPER—I think as 'ow it would be a very good idea if all the young laddies was taught to hit a cricket-ball proper, and not clout a chap on the ankle whenever they goes near the nets—that's wot I think. I've ardy bin able to move this week through Miss Trevelyn's sitting.

AUNTIE JONES—I have applied to open a palm restaurant in the school, and think that it would be a splendid idea. Miss Primrose's chief objection is that it would be a lot of trouble knocking down the necessary walls to build the place. (I suggested that it would be quite easy to knock down any walls with some of Auntie Jones' penny buns, but she didn't seem to hear me!—P. D.)

KATIE SMITH—The library needs a lot of attention. There hasn't been a single new book about Redskins for the last month, and they're all ripping stories, as you know!

ANNABEL HICHENS—Could Cliff House be improved, Philippa? Just you wait here while I fetch you an article which I've been writing on that very important. (Happened to remember most subsequent engagement at that moment!—P. D.)

POLLY, THE PARROT—I think that everyone who asks me questions about my feathers ought to be made to give me a lump of sugar. I should have plenty to eat then!

FRANCES BARRETT—I could do a lot to improve the school if only I had my way. Fourth Form girls would certainly be taught to ask fewer questions. What's that? Did I catch that? Oh, yes, I did. I set last night? Now, look here, someone's been telling you why my finger is tied up!

BESSIE BUNTER—"Snack tables" should be stood in every corridor. I consider that the lack of food at school is a crying injustice. I'm losing strength every day! (But not weight!—P. D.)

PERSONALITIES!

By Freda Foote.

(The reappearance of an old favourite.—Ed.)



Connie Jackson has been eating melons, and has been seized with an attack of melon-Connie—I mean, melancholy. Velly solly!

Clara Trevelyn often puts her foot in it—but seldom in a stocking which she has mended herself.

We've often wanted to get Bessie Bunter on to the scales—but not the sort that she treats us to in the music-room!

Angelica Jelly has just taken another splendid picture with her camera. The drawback on this occasion is that there was no film in it at the time.

The Affiliated Order of Sisters of the Toasted Kipper—in other words, Madge Stevens & Co.—had a grand banquet to celebrate the last fire in their Common-room grate. If the table had not collapsed in the middle of the proceedings it would have been a great success.

The failure of Bessie Bunter's last "expected" remittance has provided her with a great amount of food—for thought!

Annabel Hichens still says that her place is the home. We shall have to try and get her into one.

Clara Trevelyn's recent declaration that Dolly Jobling's toffee making in Study No. 7 ought to be sat on, springs from the fact that some of the toffee itself was recently sat on—by Clara.

"Good gracions!" exclaimed Marcia Loftus. "What a horrid sort of girl I've been at times!" Yes, you're quite right, gentle reader. She woke up immediately after that and complained that it must have been the cheese which upset her.

Clara Trevelyn says that she doesn't like clocks on stockings—especially when they are alarm-clocks knocked over by a clumsy girl

like Dolly, and your feet happen to be inside them (the stockings, I mean—not the clocks).

It has been suggested that the Fourth Form dormitory should be provided with a large shoe-horn to put Bessie Bunter into the fire-chute during practices!

It was scarcely judicious of Bessie Bunter's parrot, Polly, to wish Miss Bullivant a happy Christmas when she entered Study No. 4 the other day and struck her "funny-bone" rather heavily against the cupboard.

Now that Frances Barrett is getting about on her bicycle along the insurance companies are doing a brisk business with all the chicken-owners who have seen her riding.

Speaking of Frances reminds me that in a recent book-keeping lesson in the Sixth she managed to prove (on paper) that Cliff House was about fifteen thousand pounds in debt. Evidently in soaring to the dizzy heights of this commercial subject she lost her "balance."

Fishing in the Sark recently, Piper landed a skate, and it happened to be one which fell from Angelica Jelly's foot when she slipped through the ice last winter.

A DAY IN MY LIFE!

By Dolly Jobling.



7.15.—Don't need the tones of rising-bell to rouse me this morning. I've been awake for an hour thinking about the challenge of last night. Study No. 4 has challenged Study No. 7 to prepare a better tea than they can, and Pauline Wilson is coming down to decide which looks the nicer, and will then have tea with the winner.

8.50.—School in ten minutes, and I simply don't know what to do. Clara is offering to do some cookery, but I simply can't let her. I know the funny things that Clara does. Have put some toffee to cook over a battery of candles, and I'll see if it's done at the interval.

10.20.—Toffee done to a "T"—the best I've ever made. That's one thing at least! I can break it up into nice chunks, and it will look splendid in a glass dish.

12.45.—Busy making cakes. Marjorie and Clara are helping. There is furious activity in Study No. 4, and Bessie is allowed to order what she likes. Unfortunately, Bessie, although a duffer at most things, is a jolly good cook, and I'm getting rather nervous. Thank goodness, it's cookery lesson this afternoon, and Miss Plummy will let me bake the cakes in the electric oven.

12.50.—The toffee ruined! Clara has been

carelessly sharpening a pencil, and didn't even see it. The toffee's all full of chips of wood, and there's no time to boil it up and melt it. Clara wants to pretend that they're cocoanut chips, but Pauline might want to eat some!

12.55.—Bessie Bunter has gone down the corridor with a great tray of things ready to be cooked by Mrs. Pickles. We're nearly at our wits' end. Clara's sat on a bag of flour, and smashed it all over the carpet, and I've accidentally dropped the treacle-tin in the grate.

1.15.—Another disaster! Have just heard that Miss Plummy can't come to-day, so there will be no cookery lesson. Now I shall have to get Mrs. Pickles to cook the things. Marjorie's bustling round trying to tidy up the room and get some stains of egg off the tablecloth. Clara says I dropped it, but I shouldn't have done if she hadn't knocked my arm.

1.15.—Lessons starting again, and nothing to do worth speaking of. Only a fruit cake, a few tarts, and some little fairy cakes made. We'll have to buy some pincapple and jelly, and deck the table with flowers, if we're going to be in Study No. 4 now.

3.30.—Another quarter of an hour to end of lessons, and Bessie Bunter has pretended to come over ill. I'm sure it was flour she

rubbed on her face to make herself look so white. Mademoiselle Lupin is always taken in by Bessie, and she's let her go. That means that I shall get in another quarter of an hour's cooking and setting the table.

3.55.—Have just met Mrs. Pickles. She says that she sent all my cakes up to Study No. 7 during the afternoon. I'm sure she's goodness only knows what will have happened! I must rush up and see!

3.57.—Bessie hasn't been cooking at all. She's been in Study No. 7, eating everything she could lay her hands upon. Now she's trying to explain to Babs and Mabs that it's a "score" for Study No. 4, and Clara's trying to get hold of her to shake her.

3.58.—Boker has just appeared with a tray containing two or three biscuits. I'm made. What can it mean? Gracious! A mistake was made, and they didn't send up my things at all, he says. The things which Bessie has eaten in Study No. 7 are the very things she made herself! Ha, ha, ha!

4.5.—Just looked into Study No. 4. They've set the most miserable tea imaginable—a few old sardines, a piece of cheese, and a loaf of bread and two or three biscuits! Marjorie's got round the sardines to give her some flowers, and Study No. 7 looks ripping.

4.10.—Pauline Wilson has chosen Study No. 7 for tea, and says she is enjoying herself very much.

9.30.—Bed at last. What a splendid day it's been—and such a peaceful evening!

THE SCHOOL FRIEND, No. 105.



MISS BULLIVANT'S BIRTHDAY PRESENT!

By Marjorie Hazeldenc.

Last year, you may remember, Miss Bullivant gave a party on her birthday, and would have been a greener success than it was.

"This year, as the Bull has been a little nicer to us all, we thought that we ought to return the compliment, and give her a present."

"Nothing expensive, of course," Babbs said. "But I really think that she would appreciate something from us. The Bull does try in her own funny way to be pleasant to us at times, doesn't she?"

"In her own way!" conceded Clara. "Well, the thing to do is to decide what to give her," said Babbs.

"There was a perfect clamour of suggestions. 'A muzzler!' 'A ticket to Scotland!' 'A pair of slippers with soles that make a noise when she walks!'"

Babbs laughed. "Do be serious, girls!" she exclaimed. "Look here, I've an idea. Supposing we give her a photo of herself?"

"It would serve her right!" said Freda Foote. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do listen!" cried Babbs. "You know Miss Bullivant is rather keen on photos of herself, don't you? Well, some time ago Babbs took a ripping snap of her in her cap and gown, and it makes her look really pleasant—doesn't it, Babbs?"

"It's flattering!" said Clara bluntly. "Never mind that, dear!" said Babbs. "Some of us are not exactly all that could be desired in the way of looks. Supposing we take that snap and have it enlarged and put in a frame. There will just be time!"

The idea caught on. "Although the 'Bull' is a something of a martinet, we have a little affection for her, so the idea rather pleased us. There was only one dissentient voice.

"Toadying!" said Nancy Bell scornfully. "You would think that, of course!" said Babbs. "Still, we'll leave you out of the presentation if you like, Nancy! We hardly want your help in the present!"

"Hear, hear!" Nancy Bell scowled. "It's all very well to talk like that!" she said jeeringly. "But you know that what I say is true. You're only trying to butter up the Bull! I hope she sees through your little scheme!"

"Let's pull her hair!" said Clara. And Clara did so to the immense amusement of everyone but Nancy. Nancy looked perfectly furious, but as looks do not kill, we didn't mind that at all.

While we were getting on with the idea of the presentation, Nancy Bell, as she always do, brooded on the matter.

By the time that the day drew near she was feeling very angry indeed with all of us. And it was then that a sudden idea came to her.

"I know!" she muttered triumphantly. "The Bull simply hates monkeys. I'll get hold of the box—I know it's going to be a big one—take out the photo-frame and all the pecking, and put Barbara Redfern's marionette in instead. That will make the deputation look silly, if you like?"

Filled with glee at that idea, Nancy immediately started to put her scheme into execution. But she said not a word to anyone—did not even tell her cronies, Marcia Loftus. She wanted it to be a complete surprise for us all, and it might have been—except for one thing!

Just before the presentation was due to take place, you see, Marcia Loftus got into very hot water.

There was a fearful row, of course. "Disgraceful—positively disgraceful!" said Miss Bullivant indignantly. "I shall punish you very severely for this, Marcia. I am absolutely ashamed to think that you can do such a thing. You will write me two hundred lines, and after this I shall keep a very strict eye on you."

Marcia, who, amongst other things, happened to be wanting a "late pass" in a day or two, was very perturbed.

Somehow or other she had to get into the good books of the Bull again. She knew that. She did not mind how she did it. And suddenly the very idea came to her!

She calmly resolved to annex the Fourth Form present and take it to Miss Bullivant as her own. "I'm sure she'll be awfully pleased to see that I don't bear her any malice," said Marcia, in satisfaction. "It's just the very idea! I can pop down now!"

She darted into Study No. 4, and there, lying on the table, was a large box, tied up with blue ribbon. She picked it up hastily, and darted off to Miss Bullivant's study.

"You wish to see me, Marcia?" asked the Bull frigidly. "Ahem!—I—I have come to wish you many happy returns of the day, Miss Bullivant," said Marcia demurely.

"Thank you, Marcia!" said the Bull. "But—"

"If you don't mind, Miss Bullivant," went on Marcia cunningly, "I would like to give you a little present. I've been saving up for this for some time, and—because you've had occasion to reproach me I don't wish you to think that that has affected me at all."

"A present?" The Bull looked very surprised. "It's a likeness of yourself which I've obtained," explained Marcia. "It's the best that I was able to choose, Miss Bullivant. As a matter of fact, I think that it absolutely does you justice. It's the best picture of you that I've ever seen!"

"Dear me!" said Miss Bullivant, quite touched. "I—I had no idea, Marcia, that you were such a considerate girl. If I had known that you were going to spend money like this, I should really have had to ask you not to do so."

"You have a look at it first, Miss Bullivant!" said Marcia, remembering the really splendid photograph which had been made from Mabel's snapshot. "Everyone thinks that it is the very image of you."

She undid the ribbon as she spoke, and took the lid off the box. To the unbounded horror of both of them, a small monkey leapt out on to the table!

"Queer!" said Babbs, in perplexity, as the numbers of the deputation gathered in Study No. 4 before taking the present down. "The box has vanished!"

"But what's that on top of the cupboard?" exclaimed Mabel Lynn. Babbs reached up.

"Why? It's the photograph!" she exclaimed. "Some silly practical joker has taken it out of the box to give us a fright. Never mind, we'll just wrap it in paper and take it down. What do you say?"

"That's the only thing, as time is so short," agreed Mabel. Babbs glanced at the photograph and then wrapped it up, and we of the deputation went down to Miss Bullivant's study to witness an amazing and totally unexpected scene!

"Marcia! I have never been so insulted in my life!" Miss Bullivant was fairly yelling. "You bring me down an ape—a detestable ape—and tell me that it is speaking in likeness of myself! You deserve expulsion for such audacity, girl! I am shocked—horried!"

"I'm a mistake!" panted Marcia wildly. "I—I tell you I didn't know—"

"Mistake! Fiddlesticks!" interrupted the Bull angrily. "This is a deliberate plot, Marcia! I shall— What is it, Barbara? Cannot you see that I am engaged? Here, come and take this detestable ape from my study!"

Babbs looked flabbergasted. "How—how did Tony get here, Miss Bullivant?" she gasped. "Why, I thought he was in the pet's house!"

"Marcia has brought the creature here!" said the Bull savagely. "She came with a box tied with blue ribbon, and— Ah! It disgusts me! I will have this punished most severely!"

Babbs guessed what had happened. And Marcia Loftus looked so scared that Babbs was quite sorry for her. She decided to pour oil on the troubled waters.

"Please, Miss Bullivant, we're a deputation!" she said meekly. "What?"

"We've come to wish you many happy returns of the day, and to give you a little birthday present, Miss Bullivant!"

"A present? Barbara—"

"Here—here it is!" interposed Babbs, hastily producing the picture, and looked at it. Miss Bullivant took, and looked at it.

Her expression changed. The angry flush left her cheeks. She almost smiled. "This—this is a picture of myself!" she exclaimed. "I—I did not know that such a picture even existed."

"Mabel took it at the sports' meeting," explained Babbs. "We've had it enlarged in 'Courtland, hoping—hoping that you would like it."

"Oh! Ah! Yes, certainly!" Miss Bullivant was almost radiant. "I am delighted, my dear girls, to consider that you very kind and thoughtful of you. I—I think I understand what has happened, too. Thank you very much, my girls."

"It's a pleasure, Miss Bullivant!" murmured Babbs. "Certainly—certainly! And now, if you will please take away your—your—ah!—little pet. I'm sure it cost her a great effort not to say 'detestable ape'—I will have a few words with Marcia."

"Very good, Miss Bullivant!"

He withdrew, leaving Marcia to face the music.

The presentation of the photograph evidently explained matters to the Bull, and she realised that Marcia had not really intended to be as insulting as she seemed.

But her cunning wheeze to present the Form's present as her own could not be hidden. Marcia realised that, and had to make a confession to that effect. And from what Miss Bullivant said, Marcia has decided never, never, never to do such a thing again, especially where the Bull is concerned.

As Nancy Bell's share in the event came to light, Marcia had a few very caustic things to say to that young lady; and on the evening on which she had hoped to get a "late pass" from Miss Bullivant she stayed indoors, and gave Nancy such a "ragging" that they didn't speak to each other for the whole of the week after.

The rest of us chuckled exceedingly. Even Babbs did not mind Tony being used for such an excellent purpose, so teaching Marcia not to wear borrowed plumes.

Next Thursday!
SPECIAL STORY
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