

STARTING THIS WEEK:

"JOAN HAVILAND'S SILENCE!"

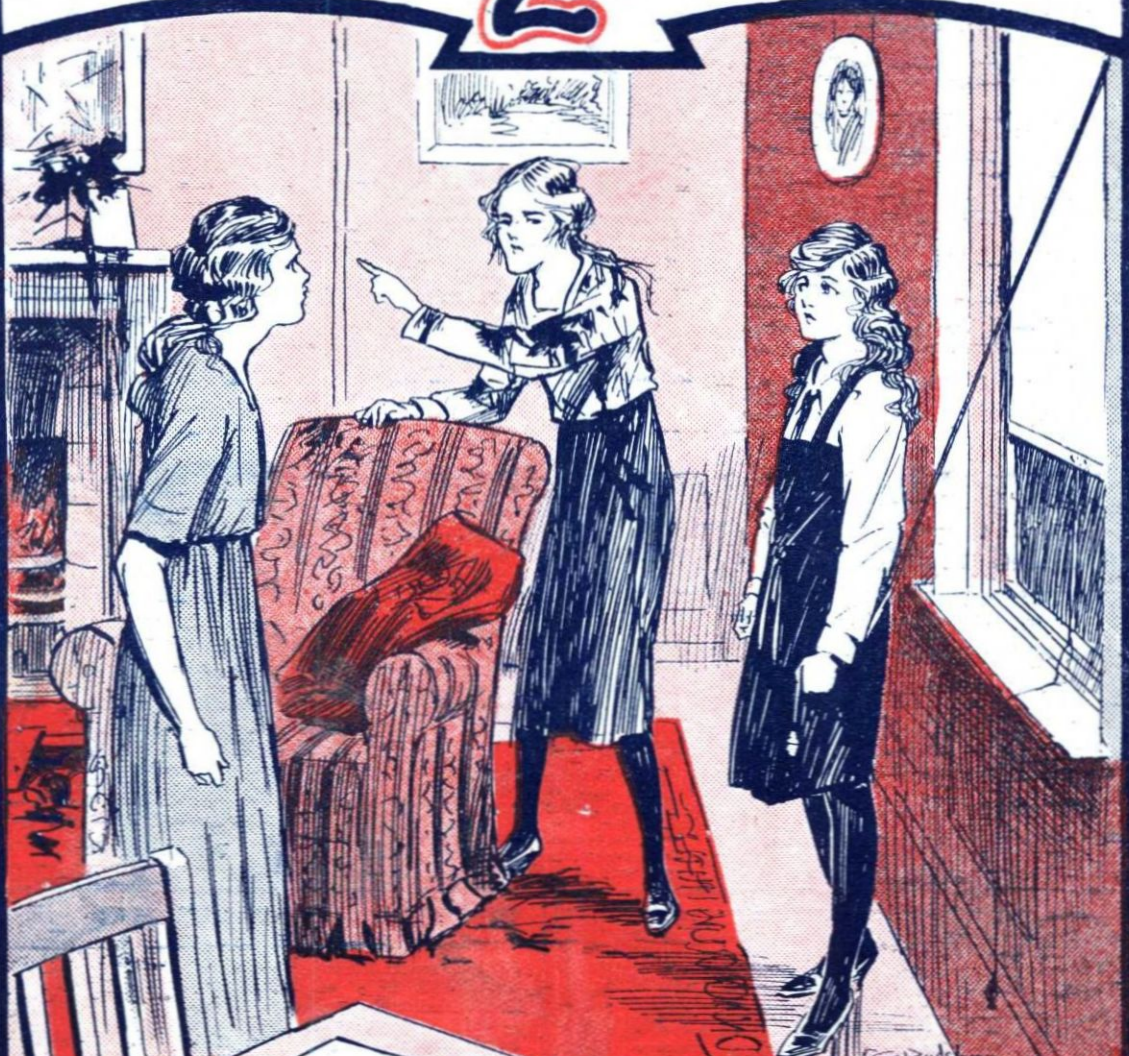
Grand New School Serial - - - By JOY PHILLIPS.

No. 149. Vol. 6.

Week Ending January 14th, 1922.

The School Friend

Every **2nd** Thursday



CONNIE JACKSON'S ACCUSATION!

(A dramatic incident from "The Feud Against the Fourth!" The magnificent long complete story 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,—On page 19, as I do not doubt for an instant you have already seen, begins the first instalment of our enthralling new serial, "Joan Haviland's Silence!" All of you who read "The Girl Who Chose Riches" have been looking forward to this story by the same author with the keenest of interest, and for new readers who missed the beginning of that most popular serial there is ample recompense in "Joan Haviland's Silence!" For it deals with the same characters, but in different environments.

Much as you admired Joan Haviland in Brick Row, you will find her an even more likeable girl at Greyhurst School. And Elsie Dainton reveals herself to be an even more sterling girl in adversity than ever we realised.

But Ruby—who would have believed, at the opening of "The Girl Who Chose Riches," that her accession to wealth would have spoiled her so! Little cares she for the feelings of her sister, so long as their relationship does not become known to the school! As to the rest of the girls of Greyhurst, you will like Hilda Heathcote and her friends just as heartily as you will dislike Sybil Sardone & Co. As soon as you have read the long instalment in this issue, let me know exactly what you think of it. Personally, I consider "Joan Haviland's Silence!" promises to be one of the best stories of schoolgirl life that has ever been written.

And now a word or two on the subject of next week's story of the girls of Cliff House. Everything, so far, has gone against the Fourth Form Parliament and their endeavour to make a success of their new position of responsibility. All Connie Jackson's latest scheming—with such valuable help from Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell—has been successful. And the parliament is in deep disgrace with Miss Primrose. But the title of next Thursday's magnificent long complete story of the girls of Cliff House, entitled:

"THE TRIUMPH OF THE FOURTH!"

By Hilda Richards,

suggests a sudden alteration in the fortunes of the parliament. But of what nature is their triumph? Is it at the expense of the scheming Sixth-Former? And is it possible that any of Connie's plotting is brought to light? These are some of the questions that will be answered in next week's story.

The Extracts from the

"CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY"

in our next issue are as entertaining as ever. "Statues We Should Like to See!" is a very novel article by Clara Trevlyn. Freda Foote

is responsible for some witty "Passing Remarks!" and "Angelica's Great Speech!" is reported by Mabel Lynn.

Other very interesting features are "My Reminiscences!" by "The Poker in Study No. 4," "Much Ado About Nothing!" (Letters to the Edress), "Cliff House Posters," and more novel articles.

A NUMBER YOU MUST SECURE!

The issue now on sale of our companion paper, the "Schoolgirls' Own," is one that you should certainly not miss. The stories to do with Betty Barton & Co., of Morcove School, have always been prime favourites, and in "Morcove to the Rescue" you are provided with a first-rate yarn full of exciting incidents and adventures.

Those of you who are Girl Guides will be especially interested in the fine new series just starting, dealing with Hilda Dare, Paddy Gay, and Lorna Carew. These three are just the sort of Girl Guides would all like to be, kind-hearted, plucky, and tremendously keen on their work. In "The Unwilling Guide" you will read how they turn a slack Guide into a keen one by sheer force of example. It is altogether a most interesting story, and the reading of it will make you long to follow Hilda, Paddy, and Lorna in their future adventures.

The serials in the "Schoolgirls' Own" have always been one of our companion paper's strongest points. "The Fisherman's Daughter" and "The Snow Maiden" have heroines in Carol Dean and Maisie Lane that will make an instant appeal to all your sympathies and interest.

So much for what we may term the entertainment part of the issue. In the "Cookery," "Needlework," and "Girl Guides' Corner" you will find hints that cannot fail to be of tremendous use to you. Should you want to make raspberry-buns, or learn how to construct bandages for first-aid work, or how to freshen up your last year's party-frock, here you will find exactly the right way to proceed in all these matters.

BRIEF REPLIES.

(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.)

"Gabrielle and Imelda."—Glad you like the "Cliff House Weekly," and that you enjoyed "The Girl Who Chose Riches!" You will find the new serial every bit as enthralling. I will certainly pass along your compliments to Mr. Dodshon.

"The Two Bookworms" (Ashton-under-Lyne).—As Bunter Court does not exist outside Bessie Bunter's imagination, we may be

pretty certain that the girls will never spend a Christmas there. I cannot promise that the characters you mention will ever be introduced into the stories. The future must show whether or not Grace Kelwyn will ever return to Cliff House.

"Una D." (Tadmorden).—The characters to whom you refer will take the leading parts in later stories. Philippa Derwent and Phyllis Howell are both about the same age. Vivienne Leigh has not yet been to Peggy Preston's home.

"Do-do" (Caterham).—At your age, twelve years, you would most probably be placed in the Third Form at Cliff House. I will consider your suggestion. Pip, Bunny, and Teddy Bear are ten years of age. Communicate with our "Subscription Dept." regarding having copies of the "School Friend" sent out to you.

"Marjorie" (South Africa).—Very interested to learn which are your favourite characters. "No" is the answer to your question. At your age, ten years, you would probably be placed in the Second Form at Cliff House.

Al Khessim (Arbroath).—Thanks for your high appreciation of both Companion Papers. I will bear in mind your suggestion regarding a portrait-gallery in the "Schoolgirls' Own."

Miss B. Royal (Didsbury, Manchester).—Glad you like Bessie Bunter so much. Bessie is quite well supplied with pocket-money, but she spends it almost as soon as it enters her hands.

"Chernb" (Derby).—I cannot promise that the characters you mention will ever be introduced into the stories. Should Marcia Loftus perform some good deed it will most certainly be mentioned in the stories.

"A Regular Reader" (Waltham Cross, Herts).—Greatly interested to learn that you have been a reader of the "School Friend" for so long a time. Mabel Lynn may take the leading part in an early story. I will see if Sybil Spender cannot be reintroduced.

Miss M. Ayres (Fishguard).—I cannot promise a "Brief Replies" feature in the "Schoolgirls' Own." Letters to our Companion Paper are replied to on this page. In the issue you mention, the small reproduction of the following week's cover was omitted on account of extreme pressure on space.

"A Boy Reader" (Bradford).—Stella Stone is the eldest girl at Cliff House. She is nearly eighteen. Glad to hear which are your favourite characters.

"Semper Fidelis" (Exeter).—Stella Stone is a very nice girl indeed. I cannot promise a Correspondence Column in either of my papers. I will bear in mind your suggestion regarding a "Weekly" in the "Schoolgirls' Own." Your handwriting is very good and clear.

Your Sincere Friend,

YOUR EDITOR.

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The Feud Against the Fourth!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale
of the Girls of Cliff House School.

By **HILDA RICHARDS.**



Awaiting Their Ordeal!

THE Hall's filling!" Barbara Redfern nodded. Babs' expression was not altogether happy. For that matter, few members of the newly-constituted Fourth Form Parliament looked really at ease.

All the girls in the Form were present in the ante-room at the side of the stage in Great Hall. Through the glass window of the door they could see girl after girl entering the lofty apartment.

They understood the reason without chatting about it.

Something in the nature of an ordeal awaited the members of the Fourth Form parliament.

Because of a minor but disturbing affair that had happened in the school, Miss Primrose had arranged that the self-governing members of the Fourth Form were to hold a "grand muster," for the whole school to witness on this foggy Wednesday afternoon. That was why Babs and the members of the administration were in their "robes." But they did not altogether relish the task that lay before them of occupying those chairs right in the centre of the Hall.

"It's a worry!" said Clara Trevlyn, the parliament's "usher."

"It is," agreed Dolly Jobling. "Thank goodness I haven't got to take a prominent part like you! I know I should go and do something clumsy. I'm not sure that I sha'n't, as it is!"

"All through the fog, too!" said Clara. "If that bothering mist hadn't come this morning, and made it almost impossible for anyone to go out, Miss Primrose wouldn't have thought of this."

"But you can't blame Miss Primrose," put in Vivienne Leigh quietly. "It's because she's so pleased with the way things have gone during our first week of governing ourselves—"

"It's a worry, for all that!" said Clara Trevlyn decidedly. "Heaps of the others will only come to grin at us. I don't see that it can serve any useful purpose, anyway."

"But we've got to go through with it," said President Babs, smiling.

"Of course!"

The conversation languished again. This waiting was the worst part of all. They could see every girl who came into the Hall. Connie Jackson, the bad-tempered Sixth-Former, who disliked them intensely, and would be called upon to apologise for making reckless charges if this school experiment succeeded, was one upon whom every eye rested, and not without reason.

Although Connie had been very quiet during the last day or two, they had had almost proof positive that she had tried to get the parliament a bad name when it was first formed.

Knowing Connie as they did, none of them could believe that she had finished. Her looks did not tend to give them that

feeling. In all their minds was the suspicion that Connie was only waiting for a chance—if they gave it to her. That odd little smile as she came in now was not really nice to see.

But Connie soon disappeared behind the others filing into the Hall. There was Stella Stone, the head mistress, quite an enthusiast now. Sweet-tempered Pauline Wilson came arm-in-arm with Shireen Al Raschid, the Persian girl. They were followed by Madge Stevens and a breathless crowd of Third Form girls; and then by Bunny, Pip, and Teddy Bear, the "shining lights" of the Second Form.

All familiar faces, and not all of them very pleased with the honour that had fallen to the members of the Fourth.

"Hallo! Here's Angelica Jelly. She's coming to see us, I think," said Babs suddenly.

The thin figure of Angelica of the Fifth, who was really one of the biggest duffers in the school, was certainly coming towards them.

"Wonder what she wants?" speculated Clara.

"Some of her silly old suggestions, I expect!" chuckled Bessie Bunter. "Angelica's such a duffer, girls!"

The door opened and Angelica peeped in at them.

"Babs!" she whispered. "I want to speak to you."

"Yes?" said Babs in wonderment.

Angelica's voice became still lower and more mysterious.

"I quit understand, Babs. I know

what you want me to do, if necessary. You can leave that to me."

"Leave—leave it to you?" repeated Babs in a bewildered voice.

"Yes. I understood your instructions."

"Instructions? Why, you silly duffer, I—"

"Sorry!" interrupted Angelica. "Perhaps I am a duffer to come and speak about it when it's a secret. Sorry! You can leave it to me."

And with that Angelica Jelly flitted away.

"What's the matter with her, president?" asked Clara.

"I think she must have taken leave of her senses," said Babs. "She talked about some secret and some instructions I had given her, and I haven't spoken to her for days! She must—"

"Babs!"

The door had opened again, and this time to show the face of the diminutive Fanny Tibbits of the Third.

"Yes, Fanny?"

"I quite understand—" began Fanny.

"Wha-a-at?"

"And I'll do my part, if it's necessary. I hope it won't be, of course. I haven't told the others—"

"Fanny!"

"I must cut back again now. Baba. I'll do it for you!"

The door closed.

"Another one of them!" breathed Clara. "It's something catching!"

"Perhaps it's a jape on their part to scare us?" suggested Mabs.

"No, it isn't that, Mabs," answered Barbara. "Angelica always giggles when she's trying to work a jape. Fanny usually gives it away, too. I think—My word! Here's another!"

Bluebell Clancy, of the Upper Third, was winking knowingly at Babs.

"You can rely on me, Babs!" said Bluebell cheerfully.

Babs jumped forward and seized the astonished Bluebell's arm.

"I've got you!" she said triumphantly.

"Now, what is it?"

"I understand what you want me to do if necessary, and it's just in my line!" said the acknowledged japer of the Upper Third Form.

"Hold her!" said Clara. "That's what the others said."

"Eh!" Bluebell looked astonished. "But I don't understand. I thought that—"

"What is it all about, Bluebell?"

"Why, your message about—"

"Bluebell!" exclaimed an authoritative voice.

Babs released the arm of the Upper Third Form girl in dismay. The time for questions seemed to have gone. Miss Primrose had come quietly up while they were talking.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 140.



Next Portrait:
THE MOST FASHIONABLE GIRL
IN THE FOURTH FORM

"You spoke, Miss Primrose?" said Bluebell demurely.

"Yes. You should be in your seat now, Bluebell. Everyone else is ready. Run off at once, my girl!"

"Certainly, Miss Primrose!"

And Bluebell sped away, without the members of the Fourth Form Parliament being any the wiser after all.

"I see you are all ready, girls?" said Miss Primrose, bestowing a kindly smile on the waiting girls.

"Yes, Miss Primrose," said Babs.

"Splendid, splendid!" nodded the headmistress. "I am very glad that I had this idea, girls. This may become an historic afternoon in the annals of Cliff House. I know that there are scoffers in the school who, not understanding your little ways and ceremonies, and their importance, have a wrong idea of the work that the parliament is doing. I feel that you will put new ideas into all their heads. If you will just wait a moment I will address the others before leaving you all to it."

With that Miss Primrose opened the door, and, leaving it ajar so that the others could hear her, passed back into Great Hall.

"Girls!"

The last faint buzz of whispering died away, as everyone became all attention to hear what the headmistress had to say.

"This afternoon, girls, I have prevailed upon the members of the Fourth Form parliament to hold what they call a Grand Muster publicly in this Hall, and I have desired you all to attend for a special reason."

Miss Primrose paused for a moment and looked around.

"Last night, as you all know," she went on, "there was a pillow-rag between the members of the Upper Third and Fifth Forms, which resulted in tempers being lost and loud cries that aroused the whole school. I have punished the ringleaders of this disgraceful affair."

The members of the Fourth exchanged glances.

The pillow-rag, carried out by the sporting members of the Upper Third, had been the culmination of a series of disagreements. It was most unlike those studious girls to indulge in pillow-rags as a rule, hence the commotion it had caused.

"I am surprised at the girls of both Forms for doing what they did," Miss Primrose went on. "When first I suggested that self-government should be tried at Cliff House, I was told that it would encourage lawlessness and defiance of established regulations. I am proud to think that so far the very reverse has been the case. The members of those Forms still under the control of mistresses and monitors are the girls who caused last night's alarm."

There was another brief pause.

"It is partly that you shall take example by them, and partly to let you see for yourselves the true meaning of the ways that have been adopted, that I have asked the members of the Fourth Form Parliament to hold a Grand Muster here this afternoon. I had to press them to do it—let me say that. They are naturally shy of appearing before you. But I am sure that you will find their proceedings most interesting, and for that reason I ask you to give them a fair hearing, and remain as quiet as possible. This afternoon's work will consist of debates on certain subjects of interest to you all, and you will see the manner in which they are handled by the president and administration of the Fourth Form parliament."

Miss Primrose nodded to show that she had finished.

Led by Stella Stone, the audience broke into clapping at once. Miss Primrose had put the matter very nicely. Even those who had been rather scornful of the parliament felt newly-awakened interest.

Perhaps, after all, it was a bit of an ordeal for them! They deserved fair play if they had been pressed into this, instead of pushing themselves forward, as one rather spiteful rumour alleged.

"Thank you, girls—I am sure that you

will listen attentively," said Miss Primrose. "Now, I will ask the members of the parliament to take their places, and I will leave you all to it."

Saying that, Miss Primrose gave the girls a last smile, and went through the swing-doors.

The ordeal of the Fourth Form parliament had commenced!

A Disastrous Beginning!

KATIE SMITH and Meg Lennox led the Fourth-Formers in Hall. Behind them the others came in more or less of a crowd.

They knew which were their chairs. Those who just constituted the parliament were to occupy the semi-circle of seats on the nearer side of the table. Beyond the table the president would sit on the raised chair with the members of the administration grouped around her.

"Left—right—left—right!" whispered the mischievous voice of Doris Redfern.

But there was really no "left-righting" about the Fourth-Formers. They were trying to walk carelessly and naturally, and perhaps overdoing it a little. But they certainly didn't look martial.

Behind them all came Clara Trevlyn, the usher.

Clara looked as confident and as at home as anyone, because it took rather a lot to daunt Clara. The choice of usher had been a good one.

"Take your seats quickly," whispered Clara. "Then we can start."

"Right-ho!" returned Dolly Jobling, over her shoulder.

Dolly, already moving quickly, moved a little more quickly still to pass to a chair on the other side.

It was unfortunate that Dolly, who was always rather clumsy, changed her step at all.

What followed was alarming in its suddenness.

Whi-i-iz!

Bump!

"Ow!" gasped Dolly Jobling.

There was dead silence after poor Dolly had sat down—right in the middle of Hall! Then a yell of laughter arose.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You duffer!" hissed Clara. "Get up, Dolly!"

Dolly Jobling, crimson with mortification, scrambled clumsily up and slipped, rather than walked, to a chair.

Titters could still be heard on every side. It was the most unfortunate start possible for the luckless Fourth-Formers.

Clara Trevlyn rose from her seat at the side of the table, just in time to save the situation.

"Members of the parliament!" she exclaimed, in a perfectly clear voice. "Please rise!"

The command was obeyed at once.

Chuckles subsided once more as six figures were seen entering in the pretty robes of the administrators.

No one could deny that they were very suitable and very effective. Even prim Annabel Hichens looked quite smart in her gown-like robe of red and light pink material.

In a complete silence, the administrators made their way to their chairs and remained standing.

There was a momentary pause then, but there were no titters now. Clara's voice nearly caused a stir in all their hearts as she made the next announcement:

"Our president!"

Barbara Redfern had entered.

The striking red-and-white costume suited her wonderfully. It was dignified but not showy. She walked quietly to her place amidst a breathless hush. The little ceremony that had appealed to the

PLACES OF INTEREST AT CLIFF HOUSE.



This Week: THE DINING HALL.

The dining-hall, although coming rather low on our list, is a very interesting sight at the school, and is never missed by those who make a thorough tour of the school.

With Bessie Bunter, of course, the dining-hall is high on her list; she can show her position at the table, and explain that the helpings sometimes get smaller and smaller. She can expound on the food that is provided, and its insufficiency for growing girls. She can demonstrate, in a wonderfully effective manner, how it is that the maids sometimes walk right past her, and do not see that she is signalling for another helping—all of which is very good "propaganda" when Bessie is

reminding reluctant relations that remittances are few and too far between!

But there are other sights besides Bessie's position at the table.

The dining-hall is in the oldest part of the building, and is just below Great Hall. It is not such a lofty and imposing apartment, for in olden days it served as the servants-hall, but it is very cosy and comfortable, for all that. The feature most admired is the ceiling, crossed by so many massive oaken beams that support the floor above. Another feature is the open hearth and huge fireplace; but a fire is only lighted it now on special occasions, as the place is warmed by rather modern radiators.

All meals, with the exception of tea, are taken in the dining-hall. Tea is provided every day, but the privilege of having this meal in the studies is taken advantage of by many girls. They may attend, however, and take the tea and bread-and-butter provided to their studies if they wish.

The mistresses sit at one end of the dining-hall on a dais, or low platform, but only the attendance of the duty mistress is compulsory. There is, therefore, seldom a full attendance of mistresses, except at breakfast-time, as their meals are otherwise served to them in their studies.

Also known as Lower Hall, this apartment serves other purposes. The tables and forms are packed away after each meal by Boker, so that Swedish drill may be held there. In the evenings also the Lower Hall is frequently the scene of senior and junior meetings, and all those debates, mock elections, mock trials, etc., for which there is not room in the Common-rooms. Dances, too, unless of a very important character, are held in the Lower Hall.

Next Week: The Needlework Room.

Fourth-Formers was appealing to the whole school!

The waiting members of the parliament thrilled.

It was going to be a success, after all! Perhaps they had been too pessimistic and too modest. After all, it was an interesting sight for the others to witness on such a foggy and miserable afternoon.

The President of the parliament walked to the little platform on which her chair was mounted.

Every girl had given the little salute of respect.

Clara was opening her mouth to inform them that they could be seated. But she never uttered the words.

Even as Babs mounted the platform the disaster happened.

With a startling crash, the whole thing gave way, and Barbara Redfern fell!

Rattle, rattle! Thud!

In the smother of dust that rose, Babs appeared again, scrambling to her feet.

She was no longer the smart and striking figure that she had been before. The scarlet band from her head had been wrenched off, her hair was ruffled, and her dress dusty and disarranged.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a spontaneous burst of merriment that burst from a section of the audience at the unexpected disaster.

Perhaps there was something funny in the unexpected termination of the whole thing, but it was tragic for Babs.

Not only the administrators, but members of the parliament came rushing to her assistance.

And then—more disasters!

Afterwards no one could exactly describe everything. They saw Dolly Jobling fall over again, and Cissy Clare and Gwendoline Cook went with her.

"Help!"

"Look out, you duffer!"

"Get off—you're right on top of me!"

There could be no semblance of order with such cries coming from the unfortunate performers. The laughter in the Hall increased. And then there were fresh interruptions.

No fewer than three girls in the audience had jumped excitedly on their chairs.

There was one amongst the Fifth-Formers—Angelica Jelly. In the ranks of the Upper Third, Bluebell Clancy was the one who jumped up. Fanny Tibbitts was shouting excitedly to the Third-Formers.

"Order! Order!" cried Stella Stone, jumping to her feet. "No noise—no laughter, please! Sit down, you three!"

But the three did not sit down.

Angelica, talking rapidly and excitedly, seemed to be telling a story.

Bluebell was delivering a stump speech on some subject not quite plain to anyone, including herself.

Fanny Tibbitts was singing!

"Order! Order!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The onlookers could not help it. They simply shrieked with laughter as they watched the unhappy members of the parliament still slipping and tumbling about, and watched the antics of Angelica, Bluebell, and Fanny.

Undoubtedly the antics of Angelica were very funny indeed.

"Order!" cried Stella again.

But there was little chance of even making herself heard now. Things had got out of hand. Chaffing remarks were coming from every Form. Certainly Bluebell had abandoned her stump speech, but Angelica was becoming quite worked-up, and Fanny shrill with her song.

"Make less noise!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Girls—go back to your seats! I



RULES FOR THE FOURTH FORM PARLIAMENT.

By MISS PRIMROSE (Headmistress).

FROM the date of this memorandum a scheme of self-government will be tried at Cliff House School in the Fourth Form.

The plan may briefly be explained as follows:

From their number the Fourth Form girls will select one of their members to be PRESIDENT of the Parliament.

Six more girls will be chosen to form an ADMINISTRATION, and they will assist the President in the ways laid down in the following rules.

The whole Form will be constituted a PARLIAMENT, and will be known as such in all matters affecting school discipline.

For the present lessons will proceed in charge of the schoolmistresses as heretofore, but out of the actual class-room the Parliament will be self-governing in all matters affecting preparation of school-work, discipline, etc.

It must be understood that this scheme is in the nature of a three-week—or less period, if deemed advisable—experiment. No promise is made that self-government will become an established practice.

RULES FOR THE CONDUCT OF THE FOURTH FORM PARLIAMENT.

1. The President shall be elected at a full meeting of the Parliament by ballot or by show of hands, and must obtain a two-thirds majority.

2. The Administration shall be elected in similar fashion.

3. The President and Administration shall have the power to create a limited number of officers for special duties, but these will not have governing power, except voting at full meetings of the Parliament.

4. The President shall be directly responsible to the headmistress should any complaints be made by members of the school staff concerning the Parliament.

5. The President and Administration shall have authority to make any regulations for the comfort, well-being, and progress of the Parliament, always provided that these do not countermand established practices at the school, and will not irritate or offend those in authority over other Forms.

6. Subject to Rule No. 5 being strictly observed, the President and Administration shall have the following powers:

(a) To issue special and late passes from the school, signed by the President and two Administrators.

(b) To make changes in the occupants of studies, if necessary.

(c) Generally to assume those powers hitherto granted only to mistresses.

7. The President and Administration shall be allowed to award minor punishments, should they be considered necessary.

8. Should six girls declare that they are dissatisfied with the work of the Administration, they may demand a meeting of the whole Parliament to vote. If the Administration is defeated, a fresh election must take place.

9. Every girl in the Parliament has the right of appeal to the headmistress, but frivolous or vexatious complaints will be severely dealt with.

10. A report, signed by the President and members of the Administration, shall be rendered to the headmistress twice weekly.

NOTE.—The members of the newly-constituted Fourth Form Parliament have been given every latitude in this experiment, in the belief that they will "play the game."

(Signed) PENELOPE PRIMROSE (Headmistress).

appeal to you for fair play!" Stella cried.

But she must have known that her voice was only audible to those just about her. The Hall echoed with laughter and chaff, and the noise of Angelica Jelly and Fanny Tibbitts.

In the middle of it all the door opened to admit Miss Primrose!

A Shock for Babs and Mabs.

"GOODNESS GRACIOUS!"

Those who were nearest whispered to their neighbours.

Silence reigned in the Hall in a moment. Only one—Angelica—was unaware of Miss Primrose's arrival.

Angelica was still on her chair, and still persevering with that story!

"And so, you see, the funny part of it was—"

"Angelica!"

"Oh! Oh dear!" gasped the Fifth-Former, looking up.

"Stand down from that chair at once!" exclaimed the headmistress.

"What is the meaning of this noise that draws me here? Stella, will you please explain?"

Stella, looking sorry and ill at ease, did so.

"The President had an accident?"

Miss Primrose repeated. "But surely that is not sufficient reason for the babel of sound that brought me here?"

"Some of the others fell over—I think they were a little excited," said Stella. "It was all so surprising that I am afraid everyone got out of hand over it."

Miss Primrose looked shocked and disappointed.

"I am very surprised that this event has had such a termination, girls!" she exclaimed, surveying the ruffled members of the Fourth Form parliament.

"As I understand from Stella, there were certain accidents, but they should not have caused such a commotion. President!"

"Yes, Miss Primrose?"

"I have your assurance, I presume, that there was no intentional fooling on the part of the parliament?"

"Certainly not, Miss Primrose," said Babs.

"Very good. I accept that assurance, but it is unfortunate, for all that. Perhaps you were not properly practised, or you attempted a little too much.

In any case, it is impossible for you to proceed with your debate in public now. The whole school will dismiss, and I do not wish to hear any further noise."

Saying that, Miss Primrose departed again, evidently not in the best of tempers.

"Poor old Fourth-Formers—in the wars again!"

"Better luck next time, administrators!"

"Do it next time with green lime-light—it looks more tragic!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

No one seemed to wish to leave the Hall without making some chaffing remark.

Knowing that they must accept their failure as sportingly as possible the Fourth-Formers took it with quite good grace.

They knew that Flora Cann was all right at heart, and was probably sorry for them in reality, except that such admissions were never made between the Fourth and the Fifth Forms.

Madge Stevens and Co. always meant well, but it was only human for the juvenile rivals of the Fourth to have something to say.

Bunny, Pip, and Teddy Bear had to come to say that they were sure that they wouldn't have got so nervous as to fall over!

"How could anyone help the platform giving way as it did?" demanded Clara Trevlyn.

Those figures were not difficult to recognise. Babs pulled up as she saw them. Certainly she wanted to have a few words with Angelica Jelly, Bluebell Clancy, and Fanny Tibbits!

"You duffers!" said Babs and Mabs in one breath.

"Eh?" gasped Angelica. "I'd have made it all right if it hadn't been for these two—"

"If Angelica had kept quiet I'd have got over it!" said Bluebell.

"My song—" began Fanny in the same breath.

"Made it all right!" repeated Babs. "Certainly. My little story—"

"My speech—"

"My song—"

"You silly duffers! You made it all wrong!" cried Mabel Lynn.

"Wha-a-at?" said three voices in unison.

"If you'd only left matters as they were, there wouldn't have been half such a commotion! You three getting up like that made everyone else make a noise.

badge was typed the legend: "By Request of the Fourth Form parliament."

But Babs had never seen that request of the parliament before.

"Where did you get this?" she asked faintly.

Bluebell Clancy gave an amazed cry.

"You're going to deny writing that, Babs?"

"Of course!"

"Then that explains why three of us got similar letters from the rack, and—and did what we did," said Bluebell contritely. "Oh dear! We really have made duffers of ourselves! I'm sorry, Babs!"

Angelica was sniffing and blinking and fluttering her thin hands.

"You say that you did not write that letter, Babs?"

Barbara hardly heard her question. She was reading the note, and ever as she read the flush deepened on her face; anger, rather than confusion, she was showing now.

And this is what Babs was reading:

"Dear Angelica,—In order to help us with our show this afternoon, we want you to lend a hand. We don't hope that things will go wrong, but if they should, will you please distract attention by getting up, and, say, tell a funny story? We know that you can do it awfully well, and it would save the situation should such a need arise. Thanking you in anticipation, and hoping you will not say a word of this to anyone,

"By request of the Fourth Form parliament."

Suspicious—and Investigations.

"THIS isn't from us!" said Barbara Redfern.

"Not—not from you!" gasped Fanny Tibbits. "Then the one asking me to sing must have been the same!"

"I thought it was a bit funny for you to butter me up over my stump speeches—you usually grin, as a rule!" said Bluebell Clancy. "My hat! Why didn't I guess what it was before?"

"You were on the point of telling us, only Miss Primrose turned up just then!" groaned Mabs. "Oh dear! If only we had known that some silly japer was sending out letters like this in our name, Babs!"

"It alters everything!" said Babs, in a hard voice.

"Yes, of course. Someone was japing—"

"Not only that, dear," said Babs, her eyes flashing. "These notes were not sent out on the off-chance that something would happen. Whoever sent them knew that the platform was going to collapse."

"Wha-a-at?"

"It seems pretty clear to me. I hardly put any weight on it at all when it gave way. Someone had been at those planks and boxes after Piper put them there, and that same someone is the person who wrote those letters!"

"My word!"

"Then you—you didn't write the letter?" asked Angelica, waving her hands excitedly.

"No. It's some—" Babs broke off abruptly, and her whole attitude seemed to change. "It's a jape on someone's part—not a very kindly jape, perhaps, but that is our concern. Will you three promise to say nothing more about this?"

"Not to anyone?" asked Fanny Tibbits disappointedly. Fanny was a born chatterer.

"No—please!" said Babs. "Look



AN EARLY DISASTER! Even as Barbara Redfern mounted, the whole platform gave way, and the President of the Fourth Form parliament fell!

But Clara's question was not answered—the others regarded it as rather superfluous. They were not concerned with causes.

"You'll be able to do it all right one day!" chuckled Grace Woodfield, captain of the Fifth Form. "It wants a bit more practising, of course!"

"That's the idea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ruffled, flushed, and feeling very humiliated, Babs smiled through it all and wished with all her heart that the others would only move more quickly.

It required an effort to take such humiliation smilingly, but Babs was making that effort.

"Let's get back to the room and take these things off," Mabs whispered suddenly in her ear. "Perhaps that will stop them a bit!"

Babs nodded, and started to follow her. Such a series of accidents was the worst possible of luck, but they knew that accidents will happen.

Three figures, who had been arguing together, steered across and headed off Babs and Mabs just as they were making their escape.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 140.

It wasn't playing the game of you when you saw we'd had an accident—"

"Of—of all the ingratitude!" gasped Angelica.

"Eh?"

"After asking me to help you—"

"No; I was the one asked!" put in Bluebell.

Babs and Mabs stared dazedly.

"After we had asked," repeated Babs.

"Look here, you've been talking that nonsense before! What does it all mean?"

"I suppose you're going to deny sending me a letter now?" said Angelica roughly.

"Deny sending you a letter?" gasped Babs. "Of course! Whatever nonsense will you—"

"Deny that!" said Angelica, with a flourish.

Babs found herself gazing at a sheet of typewritten paper that Angelica pulled from a pocket.

It was a message addressed to Angelica, and bearing that day's date. At the bottom of the page was a drawing of the school badge, and across that

here, you must admit that you're a little bit to blame, all of you. You might have known that we shouldn't send you a letter without signing it. Well, just repay us by keeping it quite to yourselves. It will help us if no one outside the Form knows anything about it. Will you promise that?"

"I will," said Bluebell readily. "It was a dud speech I made, anyway. I don't want to say any more about it."

"I—I got out of tune myself," admitted Fanny—a quite unnecessary explanation, as it happened.

"I—I believe I got a bit muddled—just in one place, you know—" began Angelica.

"You would—I mean, everything went wrong for all of us!" amended Babs hastily. "We have your promise to keep this to yourselves? Thanks awfully. Now, Mabs, let's get back to the others!"

She took their hands in turn and gripped them, then hurried across the Hall, taking off her presidential cloak as she went. The place had cleared at last, and the rest of the parliament had gone as well.

Babs and Mabs passed through the swing-doors and ran down the stairs. A few girls, standing in little groups, chipped them as they passed, but Babs gave no outward sign of the thoughts that were drumming in her brain.

"Sounds as though there's a bit of a breeze," commented Mabs, as they turned into the Fourth Form passage at last.

"Yes," nodded Babs, having caught the sound of raised voices coming from the Common-room. "That's where they've all gone. Let's see what the matter can be."

She opened the door and went into the Common-room, followed by Mabs.

It was a scene of great excitement that burst on their vision.

Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell were talking, quickly and angrily. Around them were Clara Trevlyn, the usher, who seemed to be doing most of the replying, and most of the members of the administration.

The bone of contention seemed to be whether someone should go out or stay in the school.

"Here's Babs!" cried a voice, as Barbara entered.

Clara looked up and was voluble at once.

"Marcia and Nancy want to slide off to the village for something, Babs," she explained quickly. "They know perfectly well that we haven't held our parliament—"

"Made yourselves the laughing-stock of the school!" interjected Marcia Loftus. "I'm going out, and I'll defy any of you to stop me! Bother this stupid self-government! What do Nancy and I want to have to do with it?"

"Oh!" said Babs, very quietly. "You don't want to consider anyone but yourselves. Now that we've had a disastrous time, you don't want to consider the honour of the Form—"

"Honour of the Form!" sneered Marcia. "The honour of Barbara Redfern—that's what you're thinking of!"

"Shame, Marcia!"

"Take that back!"

"I'll give you such a shaking in a minute!" promised Clara.

But Babs almost smiled.

"Girls, if Marcia and Nancy care so little for what we are doing, why not let them get away?" she exclaimed. "I'm sure we shall be better off without them! Marcia doesn't mind self-government when it suits her own ends, but she's been no credit to the parliament, so far! We sha'n't miss them from a meeting!"

"There's something in that," conceded Clara reluctantly. "Only, the principle of the thing is wrong—"

"We won't make it a precedent," nodded Babs. "But if Marcia and Nancy want to go, I think we might let them."

"I second that!" said Mabs. Marjorie Hazeldene and Phyllis Howell added their voices.

Marcia Loftus drew herself up and smiled sneeringly at Clara. Then, followed by Nancy, she moved towards the door. She stopped by Babs and snapped her fingers, just once.

"Thank you, all-powerful president!" she said mockingly.

In another moment the door had closed on the two meanest girls of the Fourth.

There was a chorus of indignation in the Common-room.

"It's cheek on their part—I'm surprised at you letting them go, Babs!" said Gwendoline Cook.

"Talk about self-government, it seems to be a question of doing what you like

"They weren't accidents at all!"

One by one the startled questions broke from girl after girl.

"I believe all that, but please don't make quite so much noise, girls!" Babs exclaimed. "I don't even think that Dolly Jobling fell down accidentally!"

"What?"

"But she's so clumsy—" began Meg.

"Clumsy, perhaps. We all have our little ways!" said Babs tactfully. "But others fell down as well. That floor was more slippery than it should have been. There might have been more wax, or even soap—"

"Soap!"

There was a greater sensation than ever at that.

Clara, the girl of action, came rushing across to the door at once.

"I believe that's right!" she cried. "Everyone seemed to slip just as though the floor was greasy! We'll find out, and prove—"

"It's too late!" said Babs. "Too late? How?"



WATCHING THE JAPERS! Babs and Mabs stared through the lighted window. "See, they're changing the hats from one box to another!" cried Mabel Lynn.

if you only make enough fuss, look you!" Lucy Morgan added.

"Not quite," said Babs quietly.

"Well, I'm getting fed-up with it, anyway!" said Gwen discontentedly. "Here we go and make such a lot of idiots of ourselves in Hall, and we're becoming the laughing-stock of the school! And yet—"

"It is for that reason that I allowed Marcia and Nancy to go!" said Babs, as calmly as ever. "We've known them both to sneak before. Well, this is a time when we don't want sneaks. Just listen!"

And Babs then related the business of the notes that had been sent to the three "helpers."

"They were sent," she finished, "because someone guessed that we were coming to grief. I admit that the someone was uncommonly lucky. But even so, she did not leave much to chance!"

"My hat!" was Clara's astonished utterance.

The others seemed to be gazing as though they could hardly credit their hearing.

"We—we've been japed?"

"It—it was all arranged?"

"Piper and Boker are already clearing the place up again, and re-arranging the chairs!" said Babs. "Mabs and I saw them as we came down. That's why I was glad to see the back of Marcia. We can only guess at present, you see. Whoever did it has been artful enough to see that the place is straightened before enquiries can be made!"

"We can find out who told Piper to go up there at once!" said Gwen.

"Connie would be too artful to let the message come from her!" said Clara.

"Connie?" repeated Babs, with a faint smile.

"Why, yes! Of course it must be Connie Jackson!" said Clara angrily.

"We all know she's been waiting for some opportunity. To-day she saw the best chance possible, and she's taken it! Yes, Connie, without a doubt!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Why didn't we guess that there was something up when we saw her grinning so broadly?" groaned Dolly Jobling.

"Let's go and see her!" said Katio Smith.

Again Babs checked them.

"That's no good, girls!" she said. THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 140.

"Listen, for a moment. We know Connie is our enemy, because if self-government is a success she will have to apologise to us before the whole school. Connie doesn't intend to do that. But we shan't catch her as we did once before."

"Why not, Babs?"

"It taught Connie a lesson to be more careful. Don't let us forget that she's clever, girls. She is! She's clever, and cunning with it, too. I believe that she did this, but if we went and accused her probably nothing would please her better. We shouldn't have an atom of proof!"

"The notes, Babs! You could show those!" said Gwen.

at us, and we can do nothing!" exclaimed Dolly Jobbing dejectedly.

"If we let them!" said Babs. "That's the whole point, girls. We've made a start that we're proud of. Because we've had one disaster, and we know now that it wasn't our fault—well, we won't let it worry us. That's the very thing Connie wants!"

"Hear, hear!"

"There's a lot of truth in that!" nodded Augusta Anstruther-Browne.

"Instead, we're just going to keep on and do our best!" exclaimed Barbara Redfern. "And we'll watch Connie more closely than ever after this! What

"Just a chance!" Babs answered. "I didn't say anything in there for fear of raising their hopes for nothing. I was thinking of those typewritten notes after all. If they weren't done in the school—"

"But they were, surely, Babs?"

"I think so myself, but I can't be sure. Miss Scott could tell us—she's the Commercial mistress, and she knows everything about style of type and all that sort of thing!"

"My word! Let's find her!"

They sped along the corridor and down the stairs. The fog that hung everywhere and even penetrated the school made the place look gloomy, and nearly all the lights were burning. Neither of the chums dreamed for a moment that they were ideal conditions for the figure that was following them.

They had not even considered that such a thing might happen!

By good luck, as it seemed, they found Miss Scott talking to a cluster of Second-Formers. Babs and Mabs pulled up and waited their turn. The figure that had followed them discreetly down the stairs paused in good time to avoid being seen.

"You want to speak to me, Barbara?" asked Miss Scott.

"If you please, Miss Scott!" said Babs, producing the envelope that had contained Angelica's letter. "We've had—er—a little argument. We wondered if you could tell us if this type is just the same as the machines in the school, Miss Scott?"

Miss Scott took the envelope and studied it critically.

"No," she said, shaking her head. "Unless I am very much mistaken, that was typed on an Imperial. We haven't such a machine here at present. Is that all you wanted to know?"

"Yes. Thank you very much, Miss Scott!" answered Babs.

There was a strangely triumphant gleam in Barbara's eyes as the girls moved away.

"Not done in the school!" she breathed. "Mabs, it may not be hopeless, after all! Miss Scott said an Imperial. Now—"

"That's the machine Miss Jones uses!" said Mabs breathlessly.

"No!"

"Yes. You know, Babs—that girl in the village who sometimes types manuscripts for the 'Weekly.' I noticed the name particularly, because it's an English machine."

"My word! You're right, Mabs!" ejaculated Babs. "I say, this is topping, isn't it? If we cut down to see Miss Jones she might be able to say for whom she had done those things!"

"Of course! And then we could bring it all home to Connie!"

"Let's go down now!"

"Rather!"

They raced back to the Fourth Form passage to don their hats and coats as quickly as possible. And as they departed, the figure that had followed them moved and came into the light.

It was the figure of Connie Jackson of the Sixth.

She stood quite still, biting her underlip, and her eyes shone very greenish and very spitefully.

"Miss Jones!" muttered the monstress. "I hadn't thought they'd guess as much as that. It's a good thing I tried to find out, after all, what they really thought about that business in Hall. I must—yes, at once!"

She turned and hurried off in her turn. A minute later Connie was at the telephone. In little more than half a dozen breathless sentences, she sent a message over the wire. Then she went to her study, donned her hat and coat,



CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS OF THE PARLIAMENT!

Specially invented by KATIE SMITH.

THOSE set in authority are always worthy of, and entitled to, respect. Savages and civilised nations alike usually show that respect in some outward manner. Some symbols are required to show that the business is not being done casually, but in earnest.

"Pomp and ceremony" have been known from the earliest times. The Fourth Form Parliament does not intend to carry pomp and ceremony so far that it becomes theatrical, but they do feel that there should be little ways in which they show their leaders respect.

It is for this purpose that Meg Lennox has designed special costumes for those elected to the positions of honour.

The following customs are being adopted for a similar reason, and so that things shall go quickly and smoothly:

GRAND MUSTER OF THE PARLIAMENT.

The meeting-place will be decided by the President. All girls are required to attend unless specially excused. They will take their seats on the chairs provided.

On the appearance of the members of the Administration, the usher will announce them, and say: "Please rise!"

When the President appears, the usher will announce: "Our President!" Each girl will then raise one hand in token of respect. The President will acknowledge the "salute," take her seat, and the others will then sit down as well.

DEBATE.

The President will raise any points that require discussion, and call on members of the Administration to explain when necessary. Those members of the Parliament wishing to speak will inform the usher, who will call their names in order.

Purely as a term of respect, every speech should be commenced: "With the permission of the President, I wish—" etc.

COURT OF HONOUR.

This shall be constituted for the punishment of offenders against the rules of the Parliament.

The offender will be in charge of the usher, and will remain standing after the President and others have taken their seats.

The usher will state the cause of complaint, and the offender will then be allowed to say anything in her defence.

We do not suggest any punishments—let us hope that these will not be necessary. When things are going smoothly, mock courts of honour will be held, without the official robes being used. At these courts inanimate objects can be "tried" such as pans of burnt toffee, unemended stockings, etc. The Parliament is not meant to be a dull affair by any means.

TRIUMPHAL MARCH.

This will be executed to celebrate victories on the sports field and elsewhere. The President will lead the march, arm-in-arm with any girl voted to be worthy of that honour.

No official robes will be necessary. Details of the march, which is going to be of a most exciting character, can be obtained from Marjorie Hazeldene, the dancing expert to the Parliament.

"Unfortunately Connie didn't sign them. They're typewritten on ordinary school note-paper, bought from Auntie Jones. Any girl in the Sixth or Fifth could use a typewriter in the Commercial Room. We can't prove that the platform didn't collapse because of Piper's carelessness in building it up. There won't be any soap on the floor now the maids have been over it with their cleaners!"

The dismay was beginning to show on every face.

President Babs had indeed shown them facts that they had been inclined to overlook.

"Then is all the school going to laugh

Connie can think of, we can, too! Don't you think so, girls?"

"Rather!"

"That's the idea, Babs! We won't let Connie put us off!"

"Not after a week of success!"

Their spirits had returned wonderfully. If Connie wanted to depress them she certainly shouldn't have that effect. That would only be making her "score" a greater one.

It was some time before Babs could excuse herself from the meeting, but she did so at length, and went with Mabs into the corridor. Mabs had guessed already that there was some plan in her chum's mind.

"What is it, Babs?" she asked.

and made her way towards the quadrangle.

Babs and Mabs little guessed how chance had played into Connie's hands, and what use she intended to make of that chance!

In the Fog!

"IS that someone following us?" Barbara Redfern looked back along the lane for the second time since leaving Cliff House, and listened intently.

Mabel Lynn listened as well.

"I don't hear anything!"

"Not now!" nodded Babs, still trying to peer through the thick fog. "And yet I could be almost certain that I heard someone walking along. How strange that all sound stops as soon as we stop!"

"It must be imagination, dear," shrugged Mabs. "My goodness, where are we now?"

"Still on the path, I believe," smiled Babs.

It certainly was a bewildering day to be out. There had not been such a fog all winter. It stretched in thick, misty, whiteness everywhere, and so obscured the light that it was difficult to see where one was going.

They pressed on, however, and Babs did not seem to hear any more of the echoing footsteps that had mocked her. She certainly said no more about it.

It was one of the longest walks to Friardale that they remembered. The lane seemed bewilderingly strange, and more than once they found themselves straying far from the path. But lights gleamed ahead at last.

"And now we shall be able to go a bit quicker, thank goodness!" sighed Babs, smartening her pace. "Straight on for Miss Jones, isn't it?"

"Yes—if we can go straight!" chuckled Mabs. "We haven't done much of that so far!"

But they did better along the High Street of Friardale. The shops were lighted, and it was comparatively easy after the first part of the journey. Babs stopped at last, and knocked at the door of a small cottage that lay back a few yards from the road.

"Now for the test!" she whispered. "If only Miss Jones typed it we'll have proof now!"

"Hear, hear!" said Mabs. "And I believe—"

The door opened at that moment to reveal the thin young lady usually to be seen tapping the keys in the front parlour that served as an office.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Redfern!" she said.

"Very foggy day, Miss Jones," said Babs. "Can we come in for a moment?"

"Certainly!"

Babs made her way into the little office and unfolded the letter that had been sent to Angelica.

"I'm sorry that it isn't business this time, Miss Jones," she explained. "We just want you to tell us, if you will, whether you typed that letter for one of our girls?"

"May I see it?"

"Of course, Miss Jones!"

The young typist took the sheet of paper in her hands. She regarded it steadily for some moments, then slowly shook her head.

"You didn't?" Babs exclaimed. "Oh, but Miss Jones, we felt certain—"

"This is done with a purple ribbon. I always use a black!" said the girl, pointing to her machine.

"Good gracious! Then—then you didn't—"

"We felt positive!" gasped Mabel Lynn.

"I am sorry that I can tell you nothing," said Miss Jones, shaking her head again. "I should like to oblige you if I could, of course!"

"Thank you!" said Babs, and took the letter back.

They did not speak again until they were in the street.

"What a sell!" breathed Mabs.

Babs shook her head.

"We asked for it, really, Mabs," she said. "We ought to have guessed before."

I—I feel somehow that Miss Jones did

"We—we don't understand!" said Babs, more surprised than ever.

"What! Do you deny that you are not the two girls who bumped into me in the fog just now, nearly knocked me over, and then ran away?"

Babs gasped.

"We—we nearly knocked you over, Miss Bullivant?" she exclaimed. "Why, we've only just come to the village, and I'm sure we haven't bumped into anyone, have we, Mabs?"

"Certainly not!" said Mabs. Miss Bullivant stared at them piercingly.

THE PRESIDENT'S FIRST REPORT!

As President of the Fourth Form Parliament, I have the honour to make the following report of progress for three days:
WEDNESDAY EVENING.—First meeting in the Fourth Form Common-room, at which the following elections were made:

PRESIDENT.

Barbara Redfern.

ADMINISTRATORS.

Mabel Lynn, Marjorie Hazeldene, Peggy Preston, Phyllis Howell, Augusta Anstruther-Browne, Annabel Hichens.

A resolution was passed expressing warm appreciation of the headmistress' action, and promising loyal support.

THURSDAY.—One meeting held to consider the rules made for the Parliament. The appointment of Clara Trevlyn as usher was suggested, and unanimously approved.

On the suggestion of Meg Lennox, it was decided that at official meetings of the whole Parliament costumes should be worn to indicate the rank of those in authority. This was approved, and Meg Lennox was instructed to prepare designs.

Catherine Smith's suggestion that the Parliament should adopt certain customs at their meetings was also approved, and a scheme was asked for.

A further meeting was held in the evening. By an unfortunate mischance, Miss Bullivant's coat was brought to the Common-room with some theatrical costumes. An apology has been tendered, and has been accepted by Miss Bullivant.

The whole scheme of self-government was discussed by the meeting, and general plans for the future formulated.

FRIDAY.—A Parliament tea was held in the Common-room, aided by a tuck-hammer anonymously sent to the Fourth Form by a well-wisher. A short business meeting was held afterwards, and Miss Steel was consulted on certain points which could not be decided. She very kindly gave her advice.

Passes were issued to the following:
Gwendoline Cook, Katie Smith, Meg Lennox, Lucy Morgan, Marcia Loftus, Nancy Bell, and Lady Hetty Hendon.

Guarantees were given in each case that the passes would be handed in again at 7.30 p.m., and preparation done.

SATURDAY.—Administrator Annabel Hichens reported that Nancy Bell had left the study in a very untidy state. Later, the usher reported that Nancy was then straightening the room, and the complaint was withdrawn.

A good game of hockey was played in the afternoon against the girls of Danesford Hall, resulting in a win for the Parliament by the narrow margin of 4 goals to 3.

A grand muster will be held this evening.

BARBARA REDFERN (President).

To the President, Fourth Form Parliament.

Contents of first report have been noted and approved.

I am charmed with the idea of pretty costumes and customs being adopted, as I am sure that they will lend interest to the proceedings. It is by taking the matter cheerfully, and yet seriously, that you will achieve success. Members of the Parliament, think as highly as possible of your President and Administration, because by their work you stand or fall.

I am glad to say that the remarks of mistresses and monitresses alike are most encouraging, and auger well for the success of the experiment.

PENELOPE PRIMROSE (Headmistress).

do it, but Connie must have warned her to say nothing about it! What a pair of duffers we've made of ourselves!"

"Yes, Connie's too artful!" nodded Mabs. "Good thing we didn't say anything to the others, and— Oh dear!"

A figure loomed up so suddenly before them that there was almost a collision.

"Bless my soul! I have found you at last!" said a familiar voice.

Babs and Mabs looked in astonishment at Miss Bullivant.

"Have you been looking for us, Miss Bullivant?" asked Babs, in surprise.

"Looking! Ah! Dear me! Surely you will not choose to bandy words with me!" exclaimed the mistress.

"They were two Cliff House girls," she said.

"Very possibly—"

"Fourth Form girls for a certainty, and dressed very much as you are dressed!" declared the mistress.

"But it wasn't us, Miss Bullivant!" said Babs, almost in vexation. "We wouldn't do such a thing! If we did have an accident we should stop to apologise. It is difficult to see anyone in this fog."

"Yes, I am aware of that. That is why I am not certain of you!" said the mistress sharply. "In any case, I hope that it will not happen again."

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 140.

Saying that, Miss Bullivant sailed away.

Babs drew a deep breath.

"Well, fancy the Bull accusing us of bumping into her!" she exclaimed.

"I know who it was!" said Mabs suddenly.

"Who?"

"Marcia and Nancy! They're in the village somewhere, and it's just the mean sort of thing they would do!"

Babs nodded emphatically.

"But we could hardly have sneaked if we had thought of it at the time, could we?" she said. "We'll have a chat with them later about it. Marcia and Nancy! Perhaps it's a pity we allowed them out after all. I know they're ready to take just as much selfish advantage of our self-government as they can."

They were going on again when Babs suddenly pulled up and signed to her chum to listen.

Mabs smiled sceptically, but stopped with her chum, nevertheless.

They were gazing through the window of the little shop, when Babs, moving along slightly, came up against a lighted side-window. One glance inside, and she became rigid with attention.

"Mabs!"

"Yes, dear!"

"Come here!" whispered Babs urgently.

Mabs came to her side, gazed into the milliner's work-room that was so clearly visible, and gasped.

"Well, I'm blessed!" she uttered. "If—if that isn't the limit!"

There was reason for their amazement. Instead of seeing the old-fashioned milliner at her work they saw two girls, well known to both of them. They were Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell.

It did not need a second glance, either, to see from the grins on their faces that

keep the trimming in place. On the front was a crudely-sketched shield, and from that shield hung a grotesque length of veiling.

"It's a skit on our costumes!" muttered Mabs.

"Yes. And I get their idea now," Babs added. "They're putting the Bull's hat into the box with a hat they've bought for themselves, and they're going to tie that other thing up so that it's sent to the Bull!"

"Mean little schemers! I suppose they think it'll get the parliament into another scrape with the Bull!"

Babs nodded.

"It's quite possible that it would, too," she said. "The Bull doesn't love us too well as it is. If she found that hat in a box in her room she'd be certain that we had put it there to make fun of her. And no one would ever have been able to bring it home to Marcia and Nancy!"

"But for this lucky chance!" smiled Mabs.

"Yes, but for this!" nodded Babs. "We'll leave them to it, Mabs, as it seems to please them so much, and just change the boxes when we get back. What do you think of that?"

"Just the idea!" said Mabs. "Our day hasn't been wasted after all. If we hadn't come looking for Miss Jones we shouldn't have seen that, I feel quite bucked!"

"Hear, hear!"

Babs and Mabs moved away from the window, took a last glance in the shop, and walked off chuckling.

The echo of their mirth drowned the very faint sound made by the tall girl who stole from an unlighted doorway that was right opposite the milliner's work-room.

Connie Jackson again!

But Connie was not here by any accident this time. Certainly it was fortunate, for her, that she had chosen that particular doorway to hide when pursued across the road by Babs and Mabs. The rest had been perfectly natural. Babs and Mabs had not considered that by standing against the lighted window their own actions were quite visible to anyone behind them.

Now, without pausing, Connie darted across and stared down at the couple whose actions had so interested Babs and Mabs. She understood, even as the others had done. Whispered words that had reached her ears came back to her mind. Suddenly she smiled.

"My word! That's an idea, and not a bad one at all!" Connie muttered. "If I go in and see that pair— Yes, they'll feel guilty, of course! It will give me a bit of a hold over them, and they'll be only too ready to do anything if they think they're going to be found out if they don't!"

Without waiting, Connie walked into the shop.

A Shock for Babs & Co.!

"If the fog lifts—"

"Which it won't!"

"It should lift by Saturday—"

Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn entered the Fourth Form Common-room to discover a scene of great animation.

It had been a tedious journey back, even more tedious than the journey to the village. But their hearts had been light, and they had not minded it at all. Now they smiled very cheerily as they met all the others again.

Phyllis Howell broke off from the observations about the fog.

"You look very bucked about something," she said.

THE USHER!

By CLARA TREVLYN.

(Fourth Form.)

Beware, while you're tasting self-government's joys;
Don't heed that temptation to emulate boys.
For if you start making too much of a noise
The usher will be on your track!

Beware when the rising-bell rings in the morning;
Don't linger too long o'er the usual yawning.
You'll have a surprise, without very much warning—
The usher will be on your track!

You've seen a canary attacking its groundsel?
Remember then, please, that a similar pounce'll
Be made if you scoff at the Pres. and her Council!
The usher will be on your track!

Don't think, during prep hour, that all will be well
To start toffee-making, and no one will tell.
Remember, I've got such a keen sense of smell.
The usher will be on your track!

Keep guard on your tongue. Do not yield, on some spasm,
To talk about stockings with heavy sarcasm.
Just speak about "ladders" and someone who has 'em—
The usher will be on your track!

Don't yield to the tempting of booby-trap cravings,
And think one will stop all the usher's wild "ravings";
Though covered completely with wet sand and shavings,
The usher will come on your track!

"There! Didn't you hear a footstep behind us then?" she whispered.

"I didn't!" said Mabs, smiling. "Look here, we'll go back this time and see!"

"All right!"

They went back along the pavement as quickly as possible.

"See that?" ejaculated Babs suddenly.

"What?"

"Just as though someone was crossing the road! Come on!"

Babs darted across, and Mabs had to follow. But the form—if form it was—had completely disappeared. They reached the opposite pavement and stared blankly about, and then blankly at each other.

"Come on, dear! You're dreaming, with your footsteps and shadows!" smiled Mabs.

Babs laughed.

"But I'm sure I didn't imagine it!" she said. "Perhaps it was just some shopper, of course. Hallo! Here's the milliner's shop. Shall we see if they've got anything up-to-date?"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 140.

they were up to some mischief. Not that Marcia and Nancy knew that they were observed, of course. From the way that they glanced towards the window they did not guess that anyone could see them so plainly.

"See what they're doing?" breathed Babs.

"Looks as though they're meddling with one of the Bull's hats!" said Mabs.

"It is! It's the one we used to call the 'pudding-basin,' Mabs. The Bull must have brought it down here to be retrimmed. It's just about her mark."

"But they're not meddling with it; they're only changing it from one box to another. And look at that other thing! Oh, my goodness!"

"It's a jape against us!" muttered Babs. "It's one against the parliament!"

Babs and Mabs stared at the queer-looking hat that was causing Marcia and Nancy to shake with mirth.

It was a very antiquated shape, trimmed with red and white. Pins and needles were thrust here and there to

"We are," said Babs blithely. "We've seen Marcia and Nancy in the village. We've seen the reason why they wanted to go out. You listen!"

Babs, with corrections and amendments from Mabs, told the story of the changed hats.

They were listened to in complete silence.

"And they're there, planning a jape like that?" gasped Clara, when the recital was finished.

"Yes. But fortunately it won't come off, so we needn't worry," said Babs lightly. "Forewarned is forearmed, you see. When those hatboxes reach Cliff House they're just going to be changed again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now," said Babs, "what was all the argument about the fog just now, Phyllis?"

Phyllis Howell smiled.

"We were discussing the return hockey match with the Danes," she explained. "As the fog's bound to lift by Saturday—"

"It won't!" put in Clara.

"Anyway, we were thinking that it would be rather nice to entertain them here to tea after the match, or even if the match doesn't come off!"

"Topping idea!" said Babs.

"Clara's been working things out on paper, and now that we do our prep. on our own, we can do heaps more things than we could before. You explain it, Clara."

"Well, it's like this," said Clara. "While we had the giddy mistresses and monitresses fussing about we took our own time over the work, knowing that they'd pounce on us if we did finish early. If we all really buckle into it we can get it done twice as quickly and save all that time."

"For my cleaning club!" put in Annabel Hichens triumphantly.

"Yes—perhaps!" said Clara, with a grin. "We'll leave you to get on with the cleaning, gentle Annabel! There's photography. We might really take that up in earnest. We could do more acting. We'd have time to make things. Why, self-government's going to be the best stunt ever thought of! Those who've got enough energy can even get up for an hour in the gym before breakfast!"

"That's ripping—all of it!" nodded Babs excitedly. "That's exactly what we want to do—to show how much we can accomplish on our own! Let's hear the rest of it."

There was real enthusiasm in the Fourth by now.

The discussions that followed were practical and to the point. Everyone was beginning to see how the Fourth really could "shine," after all. Even the appearance of Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell in the Common-room did not interrupt the proceedings.

But Babs was watching them out of the corner of her eye, and she noticed particularly where they placed the hat-box that they were carrying. Undoubtedly that was the box containing Miss Bullivant's famous "pudding basin." There was going to be a change made on which Marcia and Nancy could not have reckoned.

Tea-bell went presently, and Babs rose to her feet.

"In Hall to-day, girls?" she asked. "After all, it's quite jolly now that Connie can't come nosing round and pretend to keep us in order."

Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell had risen and went out while Babs was still talking.

"See?" whispered Mabs.

Babs smiled as she nodded.

"Oh, I haven't forgotten that, Mabs. You others just pop down to tea, and I'll

rush along to the Bull's study and see if the other box has come from the milliners'. Marcia may have brought it with her. If it's there, I'll change them over!"

"Then we'll leave it to you, Babs," said Clara.

The girls went in to tea. Babs did not join them until several minutes later, but there was a bright smile on her face when she did so.

"Everything's all right!" she whispered. "The Bull's study was in darkness, but the new hatbox was just inside the door. I've changed them, as I said I would. Don't say anything to Marcia."

The Fourth-Formers were very gratified to feel that they were beyond the reprimand of monitresses!

"As for lines," Clara whispered suddenly, "why, I sha'n't know how to write them when I get some again! Not a line for more than a week, and all that have been given have been earned in class!"

"Not at all bad!" chuckled Dolly Jobling.

It was worth having tea in Hall, if only for the satisfaction that it afforded them. The boot had been on the other foot at their disaster earlier that afternoon!

Gathered once more in the Common-



LETTERS TO THE PRESIDENT!

To be brought up at the next Grand Muster of the Parliament.

To the President.

I have the honour to suggest that, now that we have so much authority in our own hands, a determined attempt should be made to revert to the ways of young ago, which I have always advocated.

President, let us be an example to the school! Here we are, just a parcel of young schoolgirls, given all this authority. Let us prove that we know how to use it properly and with good effect. Let us set an example to the whole school, and prove that, instead of abusing that authority, we are going to accomplish reforms that were never possible before.

I enclose a list of the reforms which I think we should tackle first. I lay particular stress on the abandonment of such wild games as hockey, and would like you to consider this at once, as I understand that a match with the grammar school is being arranged.

I think the little ceremony which I have called "Dusting the Common-room" would be particularly pretty, and it could be made into a dance, which would provide recreation, and also show a regard for tidiness.—Yours faithfully,

ANNABEL HICHENS (Administrator).

To the President.

I am more firmly convinced than ever before than Cliff House is haunted.

Now that there are no official times for us to be in bed, etc., I suggest that a watch committee should be appointed to investigate certain phenomena that I have observed.

I suggest, briefly, that four girls should be appointed to pace up and down in the old part of the building at midnight, and watch for anything strange to happen. It would be a splendid score for the Parliament if we could at last get definite knowledge on the subject of the Cliff House ghosts.—Yours, etc.,

GWENDOLINE COOK.

To the President.

Dear Friend, Barberer Reddfarn.—I am riting this in a letter becous, althow your friend, I do not like to take libbities now you are Prezident, and becous you told me that I must put it on paper.

Dear Barberer, I consider that, now that we are self-guvverning, we should study our figgers. This can only be done by seeing that the cooking is done properly. As I am an expert cook, I am quite willing to offer my services free in this important matter; and if you will appoint me "honorable cook to the Parliament," I will make myself a spesul uniform, with crossed roaling-pins, to show what I am.

Dear Barberer, I know you know how conchentious I am, and that I should take my new dewties very seriously. I should see that sufficient food was cooked in the kitchen for growing gerls, and I should pay freakwent visits to taste it to see that the quality was right. I hope you will ask the others to appoint me to this important posishon that does not seem to have been thort of yet.

Dear Barberer, how proud you would feel at the end of three weeks if all the gerls in the Fourm had figgers as fine as mine, and this is what I would try to do.—Your luvving friend,

BESSIE BUNTER.

"Not likely!"

Connie Jackson passed the table whilst they were having tea, and scowled. It was a very harmless scowl, as it happened. No one heeded Connie now.

The Fourth-Formers had their tea with great satisfaction that day.

Quite a lot of nerves seemed to be on edge at the close of this foggy afternoon. Because the Second-Formers made too much noise they were presented with twenty-five lines apiece by Iris Bentley, of the Sixth. Madge Steyens was ordered to stand in the corner by Violet Cutter for laughing too loudly, and had to miss the meal. Even the lordly members of the Fifth came in for a reprimand from Isabel Drake.

room, they were preparing quite cheerfully to wile the evening away with plans for the future when Babs reminded them of the time.

"Better get on with the prep. now, girls," she said. "We're on our honour to do it, and we musn't take advantage. If any of you do, the usher will be on your track!"

"With the copper-stick!" said Clara. She lowered her voice. "How about Marcia and Nancy, Babs? When are we going to have that chat with them?"

"Presently," Babs replied, in the same tone. "Come on, girls! Off to prep. I'll lead the way!"

But she didn't.

At the very moment that Babs turned,



THE "JAPE" HAT! "This—this ridiculous object!" Miss Bullivant exclaimed. "Who put this in a new box in my study?"

the door opened abruptly, and a most unexpected visitor appeared.

It was Miss Bullivant—a most indignant Miss Bullivant, whose eyes seemed almost to flash fire!

"Ah, you are all here!" she exclaimed.

Barbara's vision fell on something that the mistress carried in her hand. She blinked and looked again. Her heart seemed to stop beating. Clutched in the mistress' hand was the "jape" hat—the very hat that Babs imagined she had taken from the study!

"This—this ridiculous object!" Miss Bullivant exclaimed. "Who put this in my study in a new box?"

No one spoke.

"It is outrageous, positively outrageous, for this to come from a Form given such extraordinary privileges as those which you enjoy!" Miss Bullivant went on. "Let me tell you that I will have the name of the girl responsible for this! I have been made to look absolutely foolish! Through the failure of the light in my study I donned what I imagined to be a new hat, and I have appeared publicly in—in this disgraceful and grotesque thing! Ah!"

Miss Bullivant seemed to quiver with her indignation.

Babs was facing her like a girl in a dream. Some dreadful catastrophe had happened—and she was responsible! It might have been funny for those who had seen the Bull in that terrible hat. It was not a bit funny for Babs.

"Do you know anything about this, Barbara Redfern?" Miss Bullivant exclaimed.

It was a direct question that could not be evaded.

"I—I'm afraid I do, Miss Bullivant," Babs stammered. "But it is an accident. I—I had no idea—"

"You know about this?"

"In—in a way—"

"Did you place this hat in my study, Barbara Redfern?"

"By mistake, Miss Bullivant—"

Marcia Loftus gave an excited cry as she peered into a hatbox she was affecting to have discovered on a chair by the cupboard.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 140.

"Why, here is a hat that looks like yours, Miss Bullivant!" she exclaimed.

Miss Bullivant strode forward, and took her own precious model in her own hands. She thanked Marcia with a nod. Then she returned to where Babs was standing, wondering more vaguely than ever what she could say.

"Have you changed the boxes containing these hats, Barbara Redfern?" the mistress demanded.

Unconsciously, she had hit on the very question that Babs was dreading most!

"Yes, Miss Bullivant! But—"

"You visited my study after the arrival of my new hat, and left this atrocious thing in its place in the darkness!"

"By an accident—" panted Babs.

"Bless my soul! How could there possibly be an accident?" broke in the mistress. "Perhaps you thought that I should not discover the culprit! Contrary to your expectations, I have! Barbara Redfern, you will place this—er—present to me on your own head!"

"On—on mine?"

"Yes, immediately!"

"Please—"

"Do not argue! Immediately, please!"

Babs did so, wondering what was to happen next. She did not have to wonder long.

"Now you will come and stand in the corner at the end of the passage for ten minutes, Barbara Redfern, as a punishment for this impudent trick!"

"Miss Bullivant!"

Babs paused mutinously as the full meaning of that order burst on her mind.

"Come!"

"Miss Bullivant, there's been an accident, and—and you can't do such a thing!" broke out Clara. "I don't like to say it, but under this new scheme we are not compelled to take orders—"

"Clara!"

"Besides, it's my fault, and that of a lot of others; in fact, we're all to blame!"

"Clara Trevlyn, do not argue!" said the mistress frigidly. "I am aware that you are supposed to be self-governing. The fact that you all admit having a hand in this only aggravates the affair.

I call it disgraceful, and I think you should be thoroughly ashamed of yourselves!"

"Really—"

"Barbara admits placing this in my study. I am not inflicting a recognised punishment. I am merely going to compel her to suffer the same indignity that I have suffered at her hands. Unless she accompanies me, I shall make the strongest possible protest to Miss Primrose! Now, come!"

Babs made up her mind.

Clearly she was in the wrong, by her own admission. It was better for one to suffer than for the whole Form to be reported. She took a quick step forward and walked at the mistress' side.

They went along the corridor, Miss Bullivant saying no word. At the end of the passage a crowd of Third-Formers was standing. They saw Babs, and saw the hat she was wearing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With a shriek of laughter the Third-Formers fled from the spot, simply unable to stop there.

"You will stand there, Barbara!" ordered the mistress.

Babs started to turn, but stopped almost on the instant. A tall figure coming up from below—a figure that was instantly recognised.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the familiar voice of Miss Primrose, the headmistress. "Miss Bullivant, what is the meaning of this extraordinary scene?"

Babs felt that, if anything, she had progressed from the frying-pan to the fire!

Given Another Chance!

I HAVE been made the victim of an outrageous joke, Miss Primrose!"

"But surely—"

"I think I had better explain, Miss Primrose."

Miss Bullivant did. She explained spiritedly and unstintingly. She described the horrifying experience through which she had gone, and the daring of Barbara Redfern. There were several far from kindly references to the Fourth Form parliament. Miss Bullivant had little guard on her tongue when she was really annoyed.

"This is very serious, Barbara!" explained Miss Primrose. "What have you to say about this?"

"Only that it was an accident, and we're very sorry, Miss Primrose!" returned poor Babs.

"An accident? Good gracious! Do you mean that it was by an accident that you were discovered?"

"No, Miss Primrose. We thought—I mean, we didn't know—that is, we had no idea that the boxes had got muddled—"

"Barbara, you do not appear to have any excuse!" put in the headmistress. "What were you proposing to do, Miss Bullivant?"

"To make Barbara walk round the school wearing that hat, Miss Primrose!"

"No, no! That is impossible!"

"I considered it a very suitable punishment!"

"No, no! Miss Bullivant, I would ask you, if you will, to forget that this has happened. It is regrettable and shocking. However, I will go into the matter myself. Barbara, take that hat from your head."

Babs was not slow to do as bidden.

"There is another point that I must mention now, Miss Primrose!" interjected Miss Bullivant, not prepared to forget so quickly.

"Dear me! And that, Miss Bullivant?"

"Whilst in the village this afternoon I spoke to Barbara and Mabel about pushing roughly into me. I accepted Barbara's word that she was not responsible, but with protest. In view of this, a sort of revenge—"

"We didn't push into Miss Bullivant in the village, Miss Primrose!" protested Babs hotly. "And to speak of revenge is—"

"I must form my own judgment now, Barbara!" said the headmistress sternly. "I am very disappointed indeed that this has happened. I will see you later, Miss Bullivant. Come with me to your Common-room now, Barbara!"

Feeling as though the very foundations of the school had been shaken, Babs went. Miss Primrose said no word until she had opened the door and was inside.

Even then there was a sight to cause Babs further dismay. Everyone seemed to be talking. Clara Trevlyn, having apparently guessed the truth, was chasing Marcia Loftus round the table. It was a perfectly natural action for Clara, but it did not commend itself to Miss Primrose, who was still ignorant of the truth.

"Girls!" said the headmistress, in a shocked voice.

There was silence and order at last.

"Girls, this is really too bad of you!" exclaimed Miss Primrose. "Coming on top of everything else that has happened that you are on your honour to behave as though the school discipline had not—well, I am more than surprised! You seem to have got thoroughly out of hand to-day. Do you, or do you not, realise been changed?"

There were such long faces at that, that Miss Primrose seemed to reflect.

"I realise," she said, in a less angry tone, "that until to-day I have been very satisfied with your work. But I must tell you that you will not be allowed to retain privileges if they are abused as they have apparently been abused to-day. I hoped that the respect that you were seeming to show would continue. This reported incivility to a mistress, and this joke in such bad taste—well, I never expected those things of you."

Several girls looked as though they would have liked to speak, but they refrained. The black sheep were in their midst—Marcia and Nancy were Fourth-Formers!

"Although the mistresses and monitors have no authority over you out of school hours," went on Miss Primrose, "you must understand, once and for all, that the many great privileges granted to you are conditional. They can be withdrawn at any time. Especially am I surprised and disappointed at you, Barbara Redfern!"

There was another pause, and Babs felt herself flushing a deeper colour than ever.

"I hope that nothing like this will happen again," said Miss Primrose. "I am willing to overlook it, only on that condition. If there are further acts of this nature, I shall not be able to forget what has already transpired. Barbara, I have not had your latest report, due this morning."

"Miss Primrose, I left it on your table," protested Babs.

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose—positive!"

"It is very strange—I looked for it everywhere. I must search again," said the headmistress. "Now, my girls, listen to me. I was on my way here to make what I considered would be a very pleasing announcement to you. What I have witnessed has, I must confess, shaken the confidence I was feeling. But I am determined to keep my word, and you shall still have the opportunity. I

refer to the annual competition for the Weller's History Prize."

The girls waited.

"This, as you know, is competed for every year by each Form in the school at the beginning of this term. It is compulsorily taken, and always entails extra study. In the ordinary course of things, there would be special lessons, and supervised preparation. Such a scheme, this year, would defeat an important point in this self-government that is being tried. As you all already know, you are all left to do your preparation work yourselves. Well, I am going to leave matters as they stand at present. The examination comes off shortly, at a date I shall announce to-morrow. To show my confidence in you, my girls, I am leaving the preparation entirely in your hands."

"Thank you, Miss Primrose!" murmured Babs.

"You understand what it means, girls? The examination is most important from a school point of view. It will be bad for all of us if a certain percentage of marks is not obtained. I am leaving you, on your honour, to work as though you were under the usual supervision. This is being done, in spite of what has happened, and your seeming disregard for the importance of your new privileges. I hope that I shall not be disappointed."

With that final remark, Miss Primrose turned and went from the Common-room.

For a moment there was a silence so deep that a pin could almost have been heard to drop.

Then Clara Trevlyn burst out.

"We've all been tricked in some way!" she exclaimed. "Marcia and Nancy are at the bottom of it! Marcia found the Bull's hat. She caused the scene. And it's absolutely unfair for Babs to have been blamed as she has been!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Marcia knew that we had found out, in some way, her plot on the Bull! She purposely let Babs make that mistake, and it's the most horrid thing she could possibly have done against the Form!"

"That's right, Clara!"

"They must be punished!"

Marcia Loftus stood away from the table.

"Hatch up some excuse—blame me!" she cried, with a very good show of injured dignity. "I brought both the hatboxes up from the village, I know, but I left them right. If Barbara, being so clever, hadn't interfered, nothing would have happened. If you dare to touch me, I'll appeal to Miss Primrose!"

Clara Trevlyn regarded her with mingled scorn and anger.

"You think we take your word, Marcia, against Babs?" she exclaimed. "We know perfectly well what you did, and the mistake that Babs made that led to all this! You must have changed your plans after Babs and Mabs saw what you were doing!"

"Then someone must have seen Babs and Mabs watching, and heard what they were saying!" ejaculated Katie Smith. "Anyone could have listened, and remained hidden by the fog!"

"My goodness!" breathed Babs. "Do you remember that I thought I heard footsteps following, and chased some shadow across the road, Mabs?"

A scornful laugh came from Marcia Loftus.

"How ingenious of you, Barbara, to invent that!"

"I'm not inventing it—I've told several girls already!" said Babs hotly. "And you, Marcia and Nancy—can you deny that you are the two girls who bumped into Miss Bullivant this afternoon and ran away?"

"Of course I deny it!" said Marcia.

"Then I don't believe it!" said Babs. "You were the only two Fourth Form girls out, and you've already suggested more than once that we should jape the Bull. It's your one idea, now that she can't give us lines out of class!"

"Connie!" cried Katie Smith suddenly. "It might have been Connie who followed Babs and Mabs, and told Marcia! Then—Girls, look at them! Look at Marcia and Nancy! Can they deny now that they saw Connie in the village to-day?"

"I—I do deny it!" declared Marcia. But her voice carried no conviction.

"Connie seemed to be out of school



THE ACCUSATION! "I want you to explain," said Miss Primrose, "how it is that these marks indicate the correct answers to the questions arranged for the history examination on Monday!"

this afternoon—her sister was looking everywhere and couldn't find her!" struck in Meg Lennox suddenly.

"And Connie's at the bottom of this, too—I'm sure of that!" cried Clara. "She was responsible for what happened this afternoon. She must have told Marcia to change those hatboxes, knowing what Babs had said she was going to do—we know there was some trick from the way Marcia behaved. If Miss Primrose can't find that report—why, it's another of Connie's actions!"

They might have seemed reckless charges to some, and yet everyone had such knowledge of Connie that no one doubted it for a second.

"We'll appeal to Miss Primrose if you don't leave us alone!" quavered Marcia.

"Leave them alone—why, of course we shall!" said Augusta Anstruther-Browne contemptuously. "The one we want is Connie. What a pity that we can't retaliate in some way!"

"We must keep on and see that nothing else happens," said Babs quietly. "We must be even wider awake than we have been."

"I think we ought to jape Connie!" squeaked Bessie Bunter.

"We can't, dear," said Babs patiently.

"Not openly, perhaps," conceded

she's letting us prepare for the examination ourselves."

"Which reminds me of prep we were going to start half an hour ago!" said Babs, with a rueful smile. "Come on, girls! Let's tackle it now!"

They dispersed from the Common-room at last, and went to their studies. It was only when Babs and Mabs were seated in Study No. 4 that they realised that Bessie Bunter had disappeared.

They went on with their work for about five minutes, and Babs looked up. Bessie was still absent. But even as she was on the point of rising there was a step in the passage.

"Here she comes!" said Mabs.

They were both looking at the door as it opened. But neither of them was prepared for the sight that met their gaze—the sight that seemed to send a cold chill to their hearts.

They rose to their feet in sheer dismay.

Bessie Bunter it was, but a very tearful-looking Bessie, and she was not alone. Miss Primrose was on one side of her, and Connie Jackson of the Sixth was on the other!

"Bessie, go inside!" said Miss Primrose, in her sternest tone of all. "But for the fact that I regard you sometimes as utterly stupid, I should punish you very severely for this! Barbara, do you know what this girl has been doing?"

Babs felt that she could not speak, even had she wished to do so.

"This girl," said Miss Primrose, "has had the effrontery to stand at the top of the stairs and attempt to drop a hassock on to the head of Constance Jackson!"

"My—my goodness!" said Babs, in a hollow voice.

"I—I didn't mean to hit her!" wailed Bessie dismally. "I—I only m-m-ment to skik-skik-scare her, Miss Pip-Pip-Primrose—"

"Enough, Bessie!" put in the headmistress. "Caught and questioned, Barbara, this girl has made a most extraordinary statement. It appears that since I left you you have spent all your time endeavouring to at least convince yourselves that Constance, here, can be accused of working against you in a kind of conspiracy!"

Babs felt petrified. She knew how Bessie's unfortunate tongue ran on when she was in a corner. Bessie had only spoken the truth, but the very truth that Connie, who had acted so cunningly, must have been longing to hear.

She felt that she could say nothing.

"To speak, Barbara, as you all have evidently been speaking, against a school mistress, is utterly unworthy of you!" Miss Primrose cried. "One statement you have apparently made is that Constance followed you, in the fog, to the village this afternoon, and actually played the part of eavesdropper. I cannot imagine a more unlikely thing, especially as there is no one who can even say that Constance left the school this afternoon!"

Babs and Mabs could only wait.

"Had I thought that this sort of unworthy talk was going on among you," said Miss Primrose, at length, "I should have hesitated about making that statement I did this evening. I will leave the matter at that, but I may say that I am most shocked to make such a discovery!"

The door closed on them at last. Connie Jackson had said no word. She had kept her eyes modestly down-cast almost all the time. But just as she was going she gave Babs just one look—a look that conveyed a world of meaning.

"Connie's beaten us again!" groaned



WHAT THE SCHOOL THINKS OF US!

Any Number of Opinions have been given to Flap Derwent.

STELLA STONE (Head Monitress).—I consider that you have made a very good start, and, if you go on as you have begun, the idea will stand a good chance of becoming permanent. Not a single Fourth-Former has been "cheeky" to me, in spite of the fact that I no longer have authority over you.

FRANCES BARRETT (Sixth Form).—I repeat what I have said before—that the idea is an utterly foolish one! You girls may try, but you have not the dignity of us Sixth-Formers. I am coming down to give you a lecture on how to go on, otherwise you are bound to make little duffers of yourselves. (Rather than than big duffers—which we should be if we followed Frances' example!—P. D.)

BUNNY (Beatrice Barlow, Second Form).—I think it's a perfectly scrumptious idea—hope you can write that word, because I can't! Still, we're going one better in the Second. We're having what we call a Republic, and we've got a President and thirteen Councillors—as a matter of fact, every girl in the Form has got some job. The worst of it is, however, that no one will take any notice of what we say or do.

ELSIE BRANE (the learned girl of the Third Form).—I am at present reading the "Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire," and it only makes me more sure than ever that I was right when I said that you were bound to make a failure of it before long.

MADGE STEVENS (Third Form).—You'll soon get tired of it. Look here, Flap, without any leg-pulling, I've been thinking out some ideas for you. You know our Third Form punishments? Well, I've got some ripping ones for you. I tried them once in the Third, but they caused such a lot of noise that they had to be stopped. Still, that wouldn't matter in your case. (I had to point out that, at the present time, we are looking neither for punishments nor ways of making a noise!—P. D.)

MISS STEEL (Mistress of the Fourth).—It will require hard and conscientious work to make self-government a success. I shall be proud of you if you succeed.

ANGELICA JELLY (Fifth Form).—It is a perfectly absurd idea to try such a scheme with the Fourth Form, and I only feel sorry for you. If the Fifth had been chosen, it would have been a different matter. We are older, and naturally know how to look after ourselves better. I am sure that you will make a hash of the whole thing. (A hash? No, Angelica! We're not suffering from your new hobby—cookery!—P. D.)

ALICE CONSTABLE (Upper Third Form).—If you had a proper regard for what girls should do at school, you would never have accepted the offer that Miss Primrose made in such a rash moment. As it is, you'll regret it. I have been considering the matter very carefully, and I really can't see how girls can practise self-government, especially when they are juniors. (That's more like it, Alice! The Upper Third wouldn't dare to tackle the idea if they had the chance!—P. D.)

MISS BULLIVANT (Drill Mistress).—I prefer to express no opinion at all. I am watching the progress of the experiment very carefully.

SHIREEN AL RASCHID (Sixth Form).—I wish the trial experiment good fortune at the hands of Kismet. My honourable respect to you, O sisters of self-government, if you are successfully triumphant!

THE MATRON.—Good luck to you, girls! But don't forget that, even though you are now responsible for so much, and can do so much, you can't prevent clothes wearing out! Unless you keep an eye on the necessary repairing, I am afraid that we shall not agree when I take charge of your wardrobes once more!

"Connie—Connie all the time, working behind these two horrid sneaks!" exclaimed Flap Derwent. "Yes, girls, Clara is right! Connie isn't actively against us now—she's working in the dark, keeping behind the scenes. It's just like her to do that. And it's just like Marcia to help her—no one can deny that!"

Again they all looked at Marcia and Nancy. And although those two were trying to look bold, their very attitudes were the picture of guilt.

"You're making wild guesses, and you can't prove anything!" muttered Nancy Bell, the more easily intimidated of the pair.

"There! That sounds as though she knows nothing!" said Clara triumphantly.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 140.

Bessie Bunter. "But she's been plotting against you, Babs, and it—it makes me feel awfully savage; I'm that sort of girl, you know!" Here Bessie struck an exceedingly fierce attitude that, even then, brought a few smiles. "I'll think of some way of seeing to Connie!"

"Connie's too artful for you, Bessie," said Clara candidly. "I don't know—this restraint is really getting too much for me! I'd like to have a little chat with Marcia and Nancy now, but I suppose we'll have to keep them for a court of honour."

Babs nodded.

"Everything must be done properly so that there's no further cause for Miss Primrose to complain," nodded Peggy Preston, in her quiet way. "After all, Miss Primrose has been very nice, and

Babs, dropping into a chair. "Oh, Bessie, you awful duffer!"

"I—I didn't mean to let it out; I can't think how they gig-gig-guessed!" wailed poor Bessie. "And—and I nearly hit old Connie with that hassock, too! Oh, dear! I—I thought I was going to be expelled!"

Babs and Mabs were almost past words.

They did not try to scold Bessie again, knowing that she had acted foolishly but well-meaningly in her own peculiar way.

Later, however, they had to tell the others, and a very gloomy story, too, it made in the telling.

They realised, without being told, what it meant. Connie had acted boldly but successfully in taking frightened, loquacious Bessie to the headmistress. It had cleared her name of any lingering suspicion by its very daring. It incriminated the Fourth, since Miss Primrose knew but one side of the question.

Connie's new methods—Connie at her cunningest, as Clara said—were proving alarmingly successful.

That night the Fourth Form parliament repaired to the dormitory with heavy hearts indeed. It had been the blackest day they had known since the start of their self-government.

Wanted by Connie!

FOG still lay everywhere when the girls rose the following morning. It was a gloomy start for a day, but Clara, the energetic usher, saw to it that the girls rose promptly enough after rising-bell.

The talk in the dormitory was of a more cheery nature than it had been the previous night. Spirits were beginning to revive again.

"After all, everyone gets a reverse sometimes," Dolly Jobling remarked. "We're still self-governing, and Connie will have a job to think of anything else against us now!"

"We'll bring it home to her, too, sooner or later!" said Freda Foote, ever optimistic.

"Let's hope so!" said Clara.

Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell were practically "in Coventry" now. No vote to that effect had been passed, but it was hardly necessary. There was no real case against them, as they had said. But their actions were too suspicious for anyone to doubt that they had betrayed their own side.

It was only when they were going down to breakfast that the members of the parliament seriously thought of the rest of the school.

In the eyes of the school they had had at least two falls from their pinnacle of success, and many glances of amusement and disparagement were cast at them.

Everyone had seen the unfortunate fiasco of the grand muster in Hall. Practically everyone else knew of Miss Bullivant's queer punishment inflicted the previous evening. Much chipping they would have to endure; they knew that they must expect it.

"We've had a bit of a reverse," Babs said, when they met in the Common-room after breakfast. "Now is the time when we must show how we can pull together. The parliament is on its mettle now!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, girls, we've got to prove that we really can do things besides dressing up! We've got to show that there's an inner meaning to it all, and that we're determined. If we can prove that we can really work on our own for this history examination, and still have the usual amount of fun, it will be a bit of

a shock for the school. I'm certain that we can make a record at that exam if we only try!"

That declaration was received with acclamation.

"The time is very suitable, too, with this fog hanging about," Babs went on. "We haven't much to distract our attention. The administration is going to meet at dinner-time, and we'll get out a time-table of work. You'll all abide by our decisions, won't you?"

"Hear, hear!"

"We will, Babs!" they promised.

there were minor skirmishes, but that could not be wondered at.

And Connie was watched—diligently!

A crude drawing chalked on the black-board in the Form-room, was fortunately discovered in time. It proved to the Fourth how active the unseen enemy was still prepared to be. She was not given such an opportunity again. Wherever Connie went after that day she seemed to come suddenly face to face with some Fourth-Former.

Babs, realising that the missing parliament report had more than probably



SELF GOVERNMENT!

What FREDA FOOTE, the Fourth Form Humorist, thinks it ought to be.

THE idea at the bottom of self-government, as I understand it, is that you should have a happier time governing yourselves than if someone else governs you. Of course, it has its drawbacks. There is no one to grumble at—a most disappointing circumstance, because you can't very well grumble at yourself. I could name other disadvantages, such as losing skill at writing lines—a very important part of our training at school. But enough of that!

The idea of the whole thing, as I said, is to please yourselves by doing the sort of things that you like doing.

Why don't we do it properly?

It seems to me, really, that our President is only nibbling at the idea. We seem to be doing very much the same as before, with the above-mentioned disadvantages.

First to my mind comes the important case of Nancy Bell.

Nancy, as you may probably know, is eternally tired. She is laziness itself, only more so. Well, Nancy, I consider, should be studied. There should be a bathchair for Nancy. Girls who are fond of exercise would find a great outlet for all their surplus zeal in pushing the bathchair with Nancy in it. I can imagine Clara doing this. I can, further, imagine the smile of joy on her face while she saved Nancy the waste of time and utter fag of walking along the passages. The only thing is, of course, that Clara is a bit reckless on the stairs.

I have also been thinking about Bridget O'Toole. Bridget always wants to tell us funny stories, and the unfortunate part about it is that no one can understand them. I think, really, that it is because she doesn't get enough practice. It seems to me that it would be a charming idea to provide Bridget with, say, a dozen wax figures. She could attain a high state of proficiency on them, and it wouldn't worry us at all.

Then there's Gwen. Gwen wants to see ghosts. She loves talking about them, and saying the sort of things they do.

I've already suggested to our President that Gwen ought to be taken down to the dungeons under the Tower, and allowed to spend the night there, but Babs says it can't be done. Why? Or, should I say, why not? Surely, as independent and self-governing members of the Fourth Form, we ought to be able to help Gwen Cook to see a ghost! I've offered willingly to carry her bed down to those damp, clammy regions, and I'm sure she'd spend a most merry evening inspecting the spectres as they passed in and out! At least, I expect as how they would!

Dolly Jobling's toffee is another thing that ought to get made during these days of independence. Dolly complains that she never has time to tackle it. Think what a wonderful inventive mind is being cramped! I don't call it self-government to say that Dolly can't be excused a week's lessons, and arrangements made for her to spend a week in a toffee-factory, helping the proprietor with his experiments. Of course, that is if a proprietor would let Dolly come and help him!

Lady Hetty Hendon seems to be having a really slow time of it. She likes the idea of self-government, but thinks that blood ought to tell. As the only titled girl in the Form, she considers that she is the only one fit to act as our leader. Well, Lady Hetty is entitled to her own opinion, of course. She could teach us all to be "real little ladies," and tell us just what to say to the "jukes" when we met them, and how to receive Royalty, and other useful tit-bits. Lady Hetty could hold At-homes and Leves, and tell us just how she has managed to obtain the charm of manner that we haven't been able to observe up to the present time.

I haven't forgotten Marcia Loftus. Marcia always says that she wants to go her own way, and be left in peace. I don't really see why a special Fourth Form shouldn't be invented for Marcia to captain; she could have all the wax figures when Bridget had finished with them. It would give her splendid opportunities for being spiteful, and she could smash them all up without upsetting anyone at all!

"Thanks very much! There's one more thing, girls. You know that we have an enemy, whose name I won't mention. This fog may give her other opportunities to score off us. I ask you all just to watch her, and to watch those who may be tempted to help her. That's all!"

But it was enough.

The members of the Fourth Form parliament realised that they were on their mettle at last, and they showed the spirit of determination that had so often helped them in the past.

That Thursday, considering the chipping they received on every side, was really a day of triumph. Certainly

been taken by Connie, supplied another one personally to the headmistress.

The administration, meeting at dinner-time, thrashed out very thoroughly the programme of work for the history examination, and arranged hours that would give ample time for the preparation needed. It was surprising, too, how enthusiastically everyone took to the idea of half an hour's work before breakfast—when they understood its purpose!

"A very good day yesterday, and I'm sure we're winning back our good name, girls," Babs said, when they rose on Friday morning for their first period of extra study. "It'll be far more fun to

think that we have succeeded, too, if there have been obstacles!"

There was not half so much chipping from the rest of the school that morning as there had been the previous day. Not a single girl was reprimanded in class for not doing her preparation thoroughly. Clara, the usher, felt very gratified at that! At dinner-time, after a particularly noisy meal, the Fourth-Formers were allowed to rise and depart, while the other Forms were kept sitting for a quarter of an hour's "silence."

And Miss Steel actually said that the Fourth had provided an example that the rest might well copy!

There was a slide at the far side of the quadrangle, and the Fourth-Formers made their way to it, conscious of the honour that had fallen to them. They spent the most enjoyable time imaginable while the others were kept behind. Sliding, in the fog, proved most exciting.

It was only at tea-time that day that Clara Trevlyn came to Babs with a report.

"There's a new story going round the school at last, Babs," she said. "I thought you'd better hear, because apparently it's reached the ears of some of the mistresses. Connie and some of her cronies are saying that we're all hanging about the school when other Forms are at prep, and that we don't seem to be doing any work at all!"

Babs smiled. "Thanks for telling me, Clara!" she said. "I don't think we need to worry about that. We shall be judged on results; we can do what we like with our own time."

Clara grinned cheerfully. "Oh, I'm not worried, Babs! It's about the only horrid thing we can't stop Connie doing, now that our inquiry agents are watching her so busily. It's bound to make her wild, of course. Such stories won't count when they realise that we're doing more prep than before, but at more suitable times to ourselves."

Other girls who had heard the story took the same philosophic view. What they did with their time was their own responsibility; that was one of the new privileges.

Darkness had long since descended on the school that evening, when a most astonishing and unexpected message came to Babs.

At first she hardly seemed to believe that Ida Jackson was speaking the truth when she met her in one of the lower passages.

"You said your sister wants to see me in her study?" Babs repeated.

"Yes, please," Ida answered. "She wants you to have a chat with her, so will you please go alone?"

"Why?" asked Babs.

"I—I don't know," Ida faltered. Her sharp little eyes looked away. "She said something about being sorry over all the unpleasantness that there has been."

"All right; I've had the message," Babs answered, astonished.

She watched the Third Form go away, and felt utterly at a loss to know what to do. What could Connie want? Why must she go alone? She was still debating it in her mind when two girls came in from the quadrangle.

To Mabel Lynn and Clara Trevlyn Babs repeated what Ida had told her.

"Well, that beats the giddy band!" said Clara. "You won't go, of course?"

"I rather think I shall," said Babs, with a smile. "It makes me curious. After all, she can't eat me! I don't suppose that Connie really wants to be friendly with us, but if she has some

plan in mind she might easily give it away."

"There's something in that, and I admire your pluck, Babs!" said Mabel Lynn. "But I don't like the idea of you going alone, for all that!"

"It wouldn't be any use if two or three of us went."

"No."

"And I shall keep my eyes open; I don't think I'm likely to walk into a trap."

Clara touched her forehead dramatically.



THE ONE DISCORDANT NOTE!

From
MARCIA LOFTUS.

I have been offered this opportunity of stating my views, and I take it gladly. I have never been given a fair chance in the Fourth, and it looks still less likely that I shall have it now.

I consider that the whole idea of this self-government is entirely wrong. It is not self-government at all; it is simply going to be a kind of bullying by the "chosen few."

Why should I have to go to dear Barbara Redfern whenever I want one of the privileges usually granted by the mistresses? If I want a late pass, I must say where I am going, and submit to all sorts of prying questions. It doesn't allow a girl to have any dignity at all.

I have got to attend stupid Form meetings whether I like them or not. If I make any suggestion, the cry always goes up at once: "Oh, she has got some scheme behind it! Don't take any notice of Marcia!" How can a girl have a fair chance like that?

The idea of self-government would be all right if tried in a different way. There is no need to make an autocratic President whose word is law for all the others. I consider that every girl should be left to herself. She should be trusted to do her prep when she likes, and how she likes, and there should be none of this foolish business about applying for passes to leave the school. The President and Administration, who only favour their own special friends, should be entirely abolished. If they were, I consider that we should have a very good time, and it would certainly be an improvement on what we've been used to.

To say that I am not trustworthy, and that if I were granted such privileges I should abuse them, is, of course, the very sort of thing that Barbara would say. I consider the whole scheme at present is most unfair, and I have no hesitation in saying so!

"I've an idea!" she said. "We can see the window of Connie's study from the quadrangle. We've both got our hats and coats on. We'll wait down here for ten minutes and watch it, Babs, and if she tries to bully you, you can give us the signal. It's letting you take a big risk—"

"Splendid idea!" Babs interrupted. An earnest note came into her voice. "Don't raise any more objections now, Clara. Just do that, please! Connie's nearly made fools of us on several occasions. If she's planning the same thing again, I don't want to miss any opportunity of finding out what is in her mind. I'm willing to take any risk if it will help the Form. Connie may have her friends hanging about the

passage, but she'll have no idea that anyone is watching the window."

"All right, Babs," nodded Clara. "But don't fail to give the alarm if there is any need. We'll come up at once!"

Mabs gripped her chum's hand, and then turned, with Clara, to go back to the quadrangle. Babs took a grip of herself, as it were, and walked to Connie's study.

It gave her a curious sensation to walk, by invitation, straight to the lion's den. But she was curious; anyway, the die was cast. And surely Connie could not do anything but threaten, at the worst?

"Come in!" called a voice in answer to her knock.

Babs' heart fluttered a little as she opened the door and walked into the mistress' room. She looked quickly round her, as though suspecting a trap even then. But Connie was alone.

"Come in, Barbara," nodded Connie, with a flicker of a smile. "I want to have a chat with you. Don't be shy!"

"What do you want, Connie?" asked Babs steadily.

"I'll tell you in a minute," answered Connie, as she rose to her feet. "Just for the moment we'll lock the door, I think."

"But—"

Click!

The key had been swiftly turned by the mistress.

"A little precaution, that is all," said Connie, her smile not nearly so pleasant. "We can talk better like this, I think. Where are you going, Barbara?"

Babs had taken up her stand by the window, more glad than ever that there were two watchers in the quadrangle.

"Why did you send for me?" she demanded, avoiding the question.

Connie Jackson's eyes glowed greenish as she looked across the room.

"I'll tell you!"

Connie's Desperate Plot!

IN a single flash Barbara Redfern understood that this was no effort at reconciliation.

Her eyes turned to the window blind, and the cord that must raise it before she could signal to her chums when she knew Connie's intention. She saw one thing at once. The fastener to which the cord should be tied, to prevent the blind dropping to the bottom, was missing. It was just one of those curiously clear, but small memories, that force themselves on the mind in a tense moment.

"I have sent for you here, Barbara Redfern, for a definite purpose," said Connie, in a low voice. "This nonsense has gone on for quite long enough. You, and your friends, have been shadowing me about the school for two days. Now I am going to teach you a lesson!"

With a swift pull Babs sent the blind curling up on its roller.

A bitter smile crossed Connie's face.

"There is someone waiting outside?" she inquired. "That is very sharp of you, Barbara. Unfortunately, it will be of no use at all to you! Anyone standing outside cannot see into this room on account of the fog. A pretty little scheme, but not quite good enough."

Babs felt her heart beating rapidly. She retained her hold on the blind cord almost unconsciously. There was more in this even than she had guessed. Connie, always cunning, had thought of something that none of them had ever dreamed about. Why was she smiling with such triumph?

"You have come here, Barbara," said

special History preparation. Perhaps they would not be so cheerful in the morning, but it was certainly the right spirit!

And one figure watched them!

One figure stood at the far end of the top passage, hidden by the deep shadows, and watched them reach the landing and turn into their dormitory. It was the figure of Connie Jackson. And, somehow, the expression on Connie's face was not so much that of a girl shamed publicly, and no longer to be feared as an enemy, as the Fourth-Formers had imagined. Rather was her expression that of a girl driven so far by baffled anger, that she was ready for any rash and desperate action!

Those, indeed, were the thoughts in Connie's heart! She was ready for a last attempt—win or lose!—if only she could see a way!

And Connie had the night before her!

"You Have Broken Your Trust!"

EXTRA prep! Rise, fellow members of parliament, from your couches!

They were used to Clara Trevlyn's picturesque hail, and most of them showed signs of activity at once when it echoed through the dormitory on the following morning. The result of disobeying that hail was not altogether picturesque as a rule!

"Are the History books in the Common-room, Clara?" asked Babs, when she was towelling herself.

"Yes—I put them all in place last night!" Clara replied. "Piper promised to light the fire first thing, so we shall be quite comfortable."

Dressing was soon finished this morning.

"And now for History!" Babs smiled, as she led them from the dormitory. "We shan't have to do this after Monday, but it will be a fine feather in our caps if only we can do better than last year!"

They went down to the Common-room. There was still a nip in the air, but the fire was burning cheerily.

The books for morning preparation were already distributed about the room, and the girls found their own copies at once. They were all settling down to refreshing their memories concerning forgotten facts when Marjorie Hazeldene gave a sudden exclamation.

"I say, girls! Certain chapters in here are marked! Has anyone been doing it?"

"My copy is just the same!" said Babs. "Did you do that, Peggy?"

Peggy Preston shook her curly head in a rather bewildered manner.

"No," she said. "I've just discovered the same thing. Is the chapter on the causes of the French Revolution marked?"

"Yes!" said Babs, breathlessly.

"And—"

Tap, tap!

"Come in!"

The door opened to admit—Miss Primrose!

"Good morning, Miss Primrose!" said a dutiful chorus.

"Good morning, girls!" said the headmistress, looking round in surprise. "I heard your voices and they attracted me here. What are you doing, Barbara?"

Babs explained, very simply, that they were doing "extra prep." of their own accord.

"Very commendable, too!" said Miss Primrose. "But—good gracious! May I just look at that book you are holding, Barbara?"

"Certainly, Miss Primrose," said Babs, passing it across.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 140.

The headmistress ran the leaves quickly through her fingers. She stopped several times—each time, it seemed, at a page that had been marked so mysteriously. The smile went from her face.

"You will please oblige me by placing all your books on the table!" said Miss Primrose suddenly.

Those who began to utter surprised murmurs stopped suddenly short as they saw the queer expression on the headmistress's face.

"Thank you!"

Book by book, Miss Primrose began to go through the text volumes, as she had looked through that belonging to Babs. Some she placed on one side, some on the other.

The sudden silence was almost uncanny.

As the girls exchanged glances they all became aware that something very unexpected had happened. Perhaps a few of them began, at last, to get some inkling of the truth. But Miss Primrose said no word until she had examined every book.

"I see!" How hard and stern her voice sounded! "Barbara, Peggy, Mabel, Augusta, Marjorie, Annabel, Clara, Phyllis, and Bessie! Please stand in a line before me!"

"If you please—"

"Not a word at present, please! Form a line!"

The nine girls lined up, more perplexed than ever.

"I have chosen you," Miss Primrose said, "because you nine girls are all in possession of books similarly marked. I want you to explain how it is that those marks indicate the correct answers to the questions arranged for the history examination on Monday!"

Babs started, and flushed crimson.

She was conscious of the most startled of gasps everywhere, and she started to stammer an instant denial of the implied accusation.

"Miss Primrose! It—it can't be possible that our books are so marked!"

"It is!" answered the headmistress.

"Now, do not speak again for a moment. It is by the veriest chance that I have discovered this extraordinary happening, as you have seen for yourselves. I did, at least, know this—that during the night my study was entered, and one of the drawers tampered with. Taking the two things together, I can only form one conclusion. I require immediately the name of the girl who saw those questions, and marked these books accordingly!"

The silence was almost tragic.

"There's some mistake, Miss Primrose!" Babs burst out at last. "Yes, it must be a mistake! Someone has done this—perhaps in error, or through spite! Surely you cannot believe that we have done this ourselves, Miss Primrose?"

"It's another horrid plot!" exclaimed Clara unthinkingly.

"Clara!"

"Yes, Miss Primrose—"

"I wish to hear no such remark after my previous warning to you about talking about a certain girl in the school. It is unworthy of you, and I will not tolerate it! Nine books are marked, and they include the books of all the brightest girls in the Form and that of the slackest. Further, they are the books of the president and administrators, the girls whom I have absolutely trusted!"

"And we haven't done it, Miss Primrose!" poor Babs protested again.

Miss Primrose gazed sternly at them.

"Does any other girl wish to say anything, besides making a denial?"

No one spoke.

"I see. Well, let me tell you this,"

Miss Primrose went on. "It is common talk in the school that you girls have apparently been enjoying far more leisure and pleasure than the girls in any other Form—especially since last Wednesday. I must point out to you that to know the questions to be asked would naturally save a lot of time and study. I find you, on the Saturday before the examination, studying from these marked books at an hour when no one is likely to discover you and ask questions. Can you wonder that I have formed such conclusion?"

"But it's a mistake, Miss Primrose!" said Babs desperately. "We've done all our preparation as we promised, but we've worked at hours to suit ourselves, instead of at the usual hours. We were doing history yesterday morning, as everyone here will say!"

"Yes, Miss Primrose, we were!" the others said.

Miss Primrose paused for a full minute. Her voice sounded almost weary when at length she spoke again.

"I am too grieved by this occurrence even to be angry," said the headmistress slowly. "On the face of the evidence in my possession, I can only come to one conclusion. You have shattered my hopes in you. I thought, and said, that I could trust my Fourth Form girls with anything. Perhaps it is my fault for trusting you too far—for allowing too much temptation to come in your way. But this—well, I cannot yet say what I shall do. If self-government is allowed to go on, it will be in a very modified form. On that subject you shall have my decision later!"

With a sudden movement of her hand, she swept the marked books disgustfully from her.

"To cheat like this over an examination is a thing I never anticipated!" The headmistress' voice suddenly rose. "I would rather you had all failed, and failed utterly, than to take such methods as this! It seems that those who told me you had no sense of responsibility, and no respect for discipline, were right. Girls, I am disappointed, and ashamed of you!"

Miss Primrose turned and left the room, leaving despair behind her.

Despair!

Even when breakfast was over they had not rallied from that unjust, but comprehensible accusation.

"We have done our best, although Miss Primrose may never understand it now," said Mabel Lynn bitterly.

"Someone has beaten us after all!"

"Connie Jackson!" said Clara Trevlyn.

"Sssss!" warned Marjorie.

"No, I don't care—I will say it!" said Clara recklessly. "We thought she had finished, but the last trick is hers after all. Well, may it give her some pleasure! I will, at least, let the whole school know what she's done, whether I'm punished or not!"

Barbara Redfern turned away without speaking.

Her eyes were moist, and her lower lip trembled slightly. She was thinking of hopes and aspirations that now seemed passed. She was thinking of the shame and disgrace that had fallen on the Fourth Form parliament!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

(Next Thursday's issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND will contain "The Fourth Form Triumph!"—a magnificent new, long complete story of the girls of Cliff House, by Hilda Richards—a splendid instalment of "Joan Haviland's Silence!" and numerous extracts from the "Cliff House Weekly." Order your copy at once!)

The Opening Instalment of a Magnificent New School Serial!



JOAN HAVILAND'S SILENCE!

By JOY PHILLIPS

(Author of "The Girl Who Chose Riches!")



Poor in Purse—Rich in Friendship!

LOOK, Joan—look!"

The girl who spoke raised her pretty eyes from the pages of a magazine, to glance out of the railway-carriage window.

In the opposite corner seat sat the girl addressed as "Joan"—the only other occupant of this third-class compartment. She flung aside her book, and quickly turned her head to peer out, following the direction of her chum's pointing finger.

Only a thin strip of meadowland divided the railway-track from the open highway, where a motor-car was booming along almost as fast as the express was bearing these two girls to Greyhurst School.

"Isn't that the Sardones' car?"

"Yes, Elsie," assented Joan Haviland, in a low tone that was just a little sad. "How fast they are going!"

"Yet we shall get there first, of course!" Elsie Dainton rejoined, twisting round in her seat so as to be able to look back at the car now that it was gradually being dropped behind. "They dare not keep up that pace all the way!"

"I suppose not, Elsie. And yet—"

Joan did not finish her sentence. But she thought to herself, was there anything in the reckless line that the Sardone people would not dare to do?

Suddenly she exclaimed sharply:

"I can see Ruby—look! See her, looking out of the car-window, Elsie dear!"

Elsie Dainton gave a gentle nod.

"Perhaps she has guessed that this is our train," Joan went on, rather excitedly. "I wonder if she is hoping I shall see her, and wave? I don't suppose so," the girl answered her own question, in the very next breath. "I don't suppose Ruby wants me to—to do anything of the sort!"

"I don't suppose she does!" agreed Elsie Dainton, with such sudden bitterness that she found Joan Haviland looking across at her as if to say: "Oh, please try not to be hard on Ruby!"

"I am sorry I spoke like that, Joan dear," Elsie said, ending the painful silence. "Only, you know, I—I can't get over this thing your sister has shown her intention of doing. Your sister—and yet she is going to Greyhurst School, as we are, and is not going to own you as a sister!"

"But, Elsie dear—"

"Yes, I know; you feel you must make excuses for her, Joan, and I love you all the more for not condemning her," Elsie exclaimed, sighing. "But

please forgive me if I—if I take a little time to get over my crossness!"

"You are cross, Elsie?"

"In a rage—a downright rage, yes!" burst out Elsie Dainton then. "There, now, I've said it, Joan! You may think I have been reading this magazine ever since we left Paddington; but I haven't! I—I've been fuming, that's the word—"

"Oh, Elsie!"

"And all I can say is," rushed on the indignant girl, "it is a marvel to me that you haven't broken down—simply cried your eyes out, over things as they are! If I had been in your place, Joan, I know I would!"

"No; you wouldn't!" demurred Joan, smiling, although her eyes did suddenly reveal the shine of tears. "If you were Ruby's sister, as I am, you—you would feel as I do. More sorry than hurt, that's all!"

But Elsie Dainton shook her head, as if she still had her doubts about being as long-suffering as this girl cousin of hers.

"I'll admit," Joan said suddenly, with a little gulp, "it did upset me, Elsie dear, when Ruby told mother and me that she was going down to the school along with Sybil Sardone, in the Sardones' car. 'Twasn't that I minded so much for myself, but I could see that mother—she felt it was strange, unnatural, for Ruby not to make the journey with me. Our first day at the school, mother must have felt, should have seen us turning up there together."

"And instead," Elsie exclaimed, unable to restrain her bitterness, "your sister is to arrive with Sybil Sardone, thus leading the whole school to infer at once that you have no connection with her whatever, although the surname is the same!"

"I don't mind," Joan said stoutly, "so long as it doesn't end up by causing mother pain. That is what I dread, Elsie—mother finding out! And she may do so, easily."

"You mean, because—"

"Because she is coming to live near the school—yes," nodded Joan, her large eyes full of trouble now. "It is only by a fluke that mother isn't with us in this train. She was to have travelled down from London this morning to take up her lodgings in the village, but got detained, as you know. And—Hallo, are we stopping?"

The brakes had gone on, and now the whole train jolted past the points outside some big junction.

Elsie Dainton sprang up and ran to the other side of the carriage, letting

down the window with a crash to look out.

"Yes, Joan, we stop here—and just look at the Greyhurst girls waiting to get in!" she cried gaily, without drawing in her head to face round. "Swarms of them, all wearing the school hat!"

"How jolly!" beamed Joan, taking an unsteady plunge to the window on the platform-side of the carriage. "Feel nervous, do you, Elsie? I don't—not a scrap, although I am only a scholarship girl!"

Elsie's answer was lost in the hurly-burly of platform cries, as the train hissed to a standstill.

Joan, peering out, saw the schoolgirl passengers scurrying this way and that in quest of seats, along with grown-up people. And then, still watching, she gave a gleeful shout.

"Elsie darling—do you see? That girl—"

"It's Hilda Heathcote!" cried Elsie, at the same time whipping open the door. "Hilda! Coo-ee! Here we are!"

Next moment both Joan and Elsie knelt up on the carriage seats to let Hilda Heathcote, captain of the Fifth Form at Greyhurst, fling a few hockey-sticks and some light luggage into the compartment.

"I suppose the rest of the traps are all right. Anyway, I can't bother!" laughed Hilda, as she stepped on board. "So here you are, as you say. Joan Haviland and Elsie Dainton. Just fancy—how ripping!"

Then there was some hearty hand-shaking, and the three girls withdrew to the other side of the compartment, talking away nineteen-to-the-dozen, whilst one other fresh passenger—a very pleasant-looking old lady—subsided into her seat, and sat there getting her breath back.

Slam, slam! went the carriage-doors. "Right away, there!" Slam! Bang! Slam! And off went the train again, with Greyhurst for its next stop.

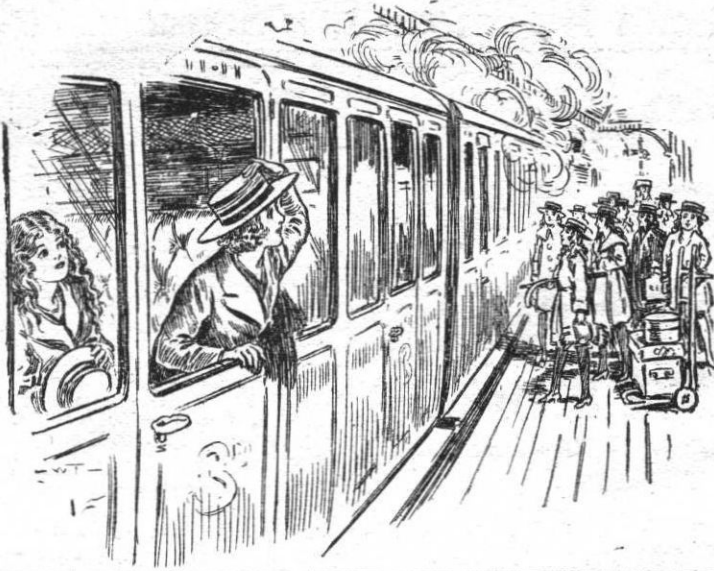
"Yes, I was looking out for you girls," Hilda Heathcote said. "You got my cards at Christmas, both of you? I got yours—yes."

"It was nice of you to remember us both," said Elsie, "considering we only met you for a little while last term, when we ran down to the school to be shown over it with my father."

"Mr. Dainton all right?" asked Hilda, tossing aside her peeled-off gloves.

"Very well in health, thank you, but not—"

And there Elsie paused. All in a THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 140.



"Just look at the Greyhurst girls waiting to get in!" cried Elsie Dainton.
"Swarms of them—all wearing the school hat!"

moment the sunny expression of her frank face had been clouded over.

"I may as well tell you at once," she went on, after fetching a deep breath. "Dad had a big misfortune a few weeks ago. Now he is on his way abroad, to see what he can do to pull things out of the wreck."

"Oh, I am sorry!" Hilda exclaimed, her eyes all wide with horror. "You mean he—he has lost money?"

"All his money," Elsie answered simply. "So you can guess, Hilda, I am not likely to belong to any swell set, even if I wanted to, whilst I am at Greyhurst. I wouldn't be going to the school at all, only my fees were paid before the crash came."

Hilda said, after a little pause: "I'm glad you explained how you are placed, Elsie. So much better than if you had tried to—to keep the sad misfortune to yourself. Because now I can help you. And Joan, here—"

"Oh, don't take me on, too!" Joan said, with a cheery little laugh. "Of course, I'm another of 'em! Hardly a shilling to get me through the term after I've paid subscriptions. Ha, ha, ha! We can't help laughing, can we, Elsie, at our being such a penniless pair!"

"I wonder," murmured Hilda, as she looked from one smiling face to the other—"I wonder how many girls, placed as you two are, would be feeling like laughing? Still, it's the thing to do—keep smiling!"

She said it with the air of one who practised what she preached. Hers, indeed, was not a bed of roses at Greyhurst School. She had her battles to fight, as Joan and Elsie knew full well. And well they knew that never yet had she failed to "keep smiling."

With the train speeding on through the wintry countryside the three girls chatted away just as vivaciously, doubtless, as other parties were talking in different compartments of the train.

Meanwhile, the middle-aged lady in her corner seat made no pretence of not being an interested and amused listener to all the gossip.

She did not enter into talk with the girls, however, until the train was swinging round a curve not far from Greyhurst Station.

Then she suddenly bent towards Elsie, THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 140.

Joan, and Hilda, and spoke in the most genial fashion.

"Would you like to come and sit this side?" she suggested. "You can see the school buildings from this window—and I am sure that is a sight you don't want to miss!"

"Thank you—thank you!" said all three girls, in a sort of chorus, and in a flash they were crowding to the other side of the rocking carriage.

The lady, for her part, shifted along the seat, adding a few more smiling remarks to these girls who had evidently taken her fancy.

"I was a Greyhurst scholar myself once—yes; indeed," she assured them. "Now I live in my little country cottage not very far from the school."

"Then you will be getting out at our station?" guessed Joan.

"Yes, my dear. But see the school now. Ah, what fine buildings they are!" she murmured, gazing over the girls' heads at the distant view. "What a school to be proud of! Well, I am quite sure, from the way you have been talking, each of you is going to be a credit to Greyhurst!"

Then, finding that the train was beginning to slow up, she resumed the wrap she had laid aside, and got a few other things together.

Elsie Dainton was sitting in the corner which the lady had first occupied, and Joan was next to her cousin.

This meant that Joan was sitting on a part of the seat where, previously, the lady's wraps had been lying. And what would Joan have said, if she had found out that, in dumping herself down in this particular spot, she had sat upon a very beautiful diamond brooch!

Yet the brooch, a dainty trinket with clawset diamonds—was fast all the time, to the fleecy coat that Joan was wearing. It had hooked on somehow, and it still held on, even when the train had stopped and Joan was scampering along the platform, amidst the swarm of other scholars!

"Good-bye, my dears!" beamed the kindly lady, looking round as she preceded Hilda, Elsie, and Joan through the congested barrier. "I expect you will see me up at the school one of these days. I usually pay a visit once at least every term. Good-bye!"

The girls were smiling.

"She's a dear," voted Joan. And Hilda Heathcote said quietly:

"I have seen her more than once up at the school. Her name is on the honour board—a name she has never changed by marriage. Miss Merrick—Margaret Merrick."

"So she is what they call a spinster?" said Elsie Dainton. "Well, if I am to grow up an old maid, I want to grow up like her!"

"Meanwhile, let's get a cab, before they are all snapped up," Hilda said with a laugh.

The railway yard was chock-full of vehicles plying for hire, and it was typical of Hilda's quiet, capable way of achieving her purpose that she had somehow "fixed up" with one jovial-faced driver whilst other girls were still dashing about in the most distracted manner.

Then began the very slow journey by road to the school—first along a stretch of undulating road, and then steadily uphill at a mere snail's pace.

By-and-by the girls made a joke of looking out of the window, just to see if they were moving at all, and it was Joan who caused the most laughter by remarking that, anyhow, they were not going backwards!

A few motor vehicles overtook them and left them crawling on behind. But never mind! Hilda Heathcote was perfectly satisfied. She would have hired a motor-cab, only she had not wanted to involve her two chums—who had insisted that they must bear their share of the trip—in greater expense than was necessary.

The crawling cab was good enough for Hilda, and what was good enough for her was quite good enough for Joan and Elsie!

Suddenly a motor-car, coming on behind, sent its warning glare into the cab's interior.

In a few moments it was level with the cab-window, and our three girls could see straight into the richly-upholstered interior of the grand car.

With the first glimpse that they took, Joan and Elsie both gave a start of surprise.

As for Hilda Heathcote, she emitted a mild "Oh!" of quickened interest.

"So the first day of term brings us all together again!" she observed, turning a smiling face to her chums, after the big car had shot ahead. "You saw, of course? That was Sybil Sardone!"

"Yes," nodded Joan and Elsie.

"And did you see who was with Sybil?" the Fifth Form captain went on. "That rich girl, Ruby Haviland. Haviland—same name as yours, Joan, as we all remarked once before! Don't you wish you came of the same family, too?"

It was said jestingly; but Joan had a hard struggle to greet the remark with an appearance of mirth.

"If you were Ruby Haviland's sister," said Hilda, still smiling, "you wouldn't be short of pocket-money then, would you, dear?"

A light laugh from Joan was the only response. It was no answer to the playful yet alarming remark which had been addressed to her. And how well Elsie Dainton remembered that moment in the cab, in after days, as being the fateful moment which saw the beginning of Joan Haviland's silence!

Lost—and Found!

IT was three o'clock in the afternoon. Some of the bustle and commotion of re-opening day at Greyhurst School had come to an end.

New scholars, like Joan and Elsie, had joyfully taken possession of the studies which a typed list on the notice-board

told them had been allotted for their use. Other girls had swarmed into the old familiar "dens," there to throw hockey-sticks into the old familiar corners, and generally "get to rights."

In one such study, half-way along the Fifth Form corridor, Ruby Haviland was alone with Sybil Sardone.

Ruby's belongings had been brought hither by the porter, for it had been Ruby's joy to discover that she was actually to share Sybil's study.

The new girl's handsome face still looked radiant with the delight of such a pleasant surprise, and now and then Sybil gave that wide smile of hers to see her future study-mate in such a state of ecstasy.

"I had thought of going co. this term with Clarice Choane," purred Sybil, setting out some silver-framed photos on the mantelpiece. "But I thought I would be the real chum to you, Ruby dear, and have you in with me."

"It is good of you, Syb. It really is!" Sybil took a rest in the cosiest arm-chair, leaning her pretty head well back, and crossing her legs.

"Sure you wouldn't like to go co. with your namesake—the other Haviland girl, you know; that scholarship pauper from Brick Row, London?" went on Sybil.

Ruby hurriedly went on with her unpacking.

"I am sure," purred Sybil, keeping up the joke, "the Duchess of Brick Row would be as good as a sister to you, Ruby darling—Hallo! Come in, Clarice!"

"Tea! I'm longing for a cup of tea!" cried Clarice Choane, whisking into the room.

She was just such another girl as Sybil Sardone—extremely handsome, expensively dressed, and with all the mind and manners of a girl past the school age.

"You can hold on for half an hour, Clarice darling," said Sybil, still loling in her easy-chair. "Then we'll be fairly to rights, and we'll have a little spread that will show Ruby how we do things at Greyhurst."

"We"—meaning the Sybil Sardone set!—laughed Clarice. "But, I say, I've got something to tell you! What do you think I picked up in the corridor, just now?"

"Give it up!" said Sybil, whilst Ruby merely looked interested.

Clarice drew something from her dress-pocket, and held it out on the palm of one hand.

The object was a costly diamond brooch, and both Sybil and Ruby exclaimed: "Oh, how lovely!"

"Not the sort of thing you would expect any girl to bring to the school to wear, is it?" said Clarice. "But some girl must have dropped it, and presently I am going to make it known that I have found it. But—"

"They are real diamonds!" broke in Sybil, taking the brooch to examine it closely. "What is this fluffy stuff clinging to the claw settings? One would think that it had been—"

"Hark!" struck in Clarice sharply.

She took back the brooch, and then stood with her head turned to the door.

"That's a grown-up's voice," she murmured, after listening to some talk audible from the corridor. "Why, I jumped was because— Yes, come in!" she called, as a knock sounded.

Then the door opened, and a middle-aged lady stood revealed, anxiety mingling with her pleasant expression.

"Excuse me," she said, "but I have come up to the school about a brooch I have lost. It was in the train—"

"Oh!" exclaimed all three girls.

"If you can tell me where Joan Havi-

land is," went on the lady quickly. "I think perhaps that girl may have it!"

"Joan Haviland! The scholarship kid!" Sybil exclaimed, turning upon Clarice, whose right hand was going back stealthily into her dress-pocket.

"That is the girl—yes!" said the lady. "She is a new scholar, and nobody I have asked knows in which study I can find her."

"No. 10! We'll show you!" Sybil said quite eagerly, at the same time nudging Clarice with an elbow. "This way, please!"

And she preceded the lady into the passage, whilst Clarice and Ruby followed.

No. 10 was only a few doors off. Sybil knocked in free and easy fashion, and then sent the door crashing open.

"Joan Haviland!" she called. "Here's a lady to see you about a missing brooch!"

Joan was bending over her open luggage, and she straightened up, with a little gasp of amazement. At the same time, Elsie Dainton faced round in great surprise.

"Oh, it is the lady we met in the train!" said Elsie.

"Yes, my dears," said Miss Merrick pleasantly. "I am so very sorry to come bothering you, but the brooch is a very valuable one, and—"

"Brooch! What brooch?" exclaimed Joan.

"One I was wearing in the train, my dear," answered the lady. "It must have become detached when I laid aside my wraps, and what I thought was that perhaps you had come away with it by accident. Purely by accident, of course!"

"But how—"

"You remember I gave up my seat to you as we were getting in to Greyhurst Station. If the brooch had been lying on the carriage seat it might have clung to one of your coats."

Then Joan and Elsie darted to where their coats were hanging. They shook them about, and looked all over them, but no brooch was there.

"Nothing?" commented Miss Merrick, her face falling a little. "Dear, dear, I

was so hoping that one of you would find the thing had been clinging to your coat! Well, I must hope that it will be found in the railway-carriage, and returned to me when I give notice of the loss."

She turned back to the open doorway, around which quite a number of girls had gathered, realising that this was some upset in connection with lost property.

"Good-afternoon, then, young ladies!" Miss Merrick cried, sweeping from the room with as bright a face as she could assume. "It is very annoying—very! But, of course, it is my trouble, not yours!"

Then she retraced her steps towards the stairs, and the crowd about the doorway began to disperse, the girls going off in twos and threes, discussing what they had heard.

"Of course," broke out Elsie, addressing Joan, "you and I were sitting on that side of the railway-carriage. Hilda wasn't, no. Hilda Heathcote could not possibly have brought it away by accident. What a shame if it is lost for good!"

Joan did not answer. She was aware of her sister Ruby still loitering in the doorway, with Sybil Sardone and Clarice Chane.

Ruby was not looking at Joan; she was looking at Clarice, who had not said a single word about having the brooch in her pocket.

But Ruby's presence in the doorway was an embarrassment to her scholarship sister, who became confused and a little flushed.

Then Elsie's spirit rose.

"Do you want anything?" she asked Sybil and Clarice sweetly.

"Oh, no!"

"Then would you mind just shutting the door behind you? We are busy."

Ruby had already backed away from the door. Clarice came after her, and Sybil also retreated into the corridor, giving the door a curious slam.

"But, Sybil!" Ruby burst out hoarsely. "Clarice! You—you—"

"Sh! Shut up, you duffer!" hissed Sybil. "It's all right; it's lovely! Come back to our den!"

And next moment the three girls were



"Joan Haviland!" called out Sybil Sardone. "Here's a lady to see you about a missing brooch!"

alone together in that study, behind a closed door.

Ruby was looking very white and agitated. Clarice and Sybil, on the contrary, were chuckling gleefully.

"Ha, ha, ha!" rippled Sybil. "How lovely! Clarice, it was jolly cute of you to hang on to the brooch!"

"Oh, rather!" said Clarice.

"On the very first day of term," went on Sybil exultantly, "here is a chance for us to land that couple in a lovely mess! Because, don't you see, Ruby, by-and-by we can slip along and put that brooch in the scholarship kid's pocket! Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's the wheeze!" grinned Clarice.

"But," Ruby gasped again, "it—it's a wicked thing to do! Oh—"

"Pooh! Do you think we are going to be troubled with scruples?" cut in Sybil scornfully. "Ruby, don't be a noodle! You know very well that I am the head of a set at this school, which is up against Hilda Heathcote and her lot. Especially am I up against that girl, Elsie Dainton, and her precious scholarship friend. I tell you—"

"It is our chance, no mistake!" agreed Clarice softly. "The kid will probably give up the brooch when she finds it in her pocket. Even so, she will have a difficulty to explain how it came to be in her pocket!"

Ruby was pressing icy hands together, whilst the colour came and went in her cheeks.

"Sybil—Clarice," she broke out again imploringly, "do think twice before you do such a thing! It is too unfair! It's wicked!"

"Piffle!"

"I—I can't be a party to it—no, I can't!" gasped Ruby. "She—that girl—she is—"

And there she stopped, unable to say the rest.

No, not even now could she say the words—"Joan is my sister!"

Into Sybil's handsome face there came a very withering look.

"What's that?" she said very softly. "Let us understand one another, Ruby. You won't be a party to this business?"

"I—I— Oh, Sybil—"

"You will either be an onlooker, and say nothing, anyhow," said Sybil, smiling grimly, "or you will find I'm done with you!"

"And I!" added Clarice.

"Do you want to be in our set, Ruby—do you?" asked Sybil bluntly. "Aren't you fond of us?"

"You know—oh, you know I'm ever so fond of you both!" panted Ruby. "But—"

"Sit down, then!" Sybil checked her, waving to a seat.

Ruby sat down, her face deathly white. In a few minutes a bell downstairs sent its summons through the whole building, and immediately there was a scamper of girls along the Fifth Form corridor.

"They are going down to tea," Clarice turned to explain to Ruby. "I don't suppose the Duchess of Brick Row and

the other pauper can afford to have tea in study! We'll find out if their study is empty, anyhow!"

Then she opened the study door, and went along to No. 10.

In a minute or so she came back, smiling queerly as she shut the study door again.

"All serene?" asked Sybil.

"It's done—yes!" said Clarice. "So now for that cup of tea!"

Ruby still sat there, her cold hands pressed together in her lap, her eyes upon the floor.

Ruby Haviland's Remorse!

ROUND about six o'clock Joan and her cousin Elsie were on opposite sides of the study table, sorting over their books for the morrow, when Hilda Heathcote looked in.

"Getting along all right, you two?"

"Hilda! Do come in!" cried the new girls.

And Joan, grabbing up a duster, made a great show of dusting a chair.

"Must have everything all right for the captain!" she jested.

"I'm going to stay a few minutes," said Hilda, dropping into a chair, "because I'd be awfully sorry if you girls felt I was neglecting you. Reopening day is a rush—a terrible business! But let's hope we are all through now!"

She let her eyes wander round the study, and Joan and Elsie were secretly delighted to see that everything seemed to have their captain's approval.

"You haven't got the best den in the corridor, by any means," Hilda remarked. "All the more credit to you, then, for the nice show you are making. Had any callers?"

The cousins laughed.

"Oh, yes—heaps! They mostly came to borrow hammers and tacks and screwdrivers, if we'd got them," said Elsie. "We generally hadn't; still—"

"That is what I liked about the girls!" chipped in Joan. "They were just as nice to us, even when we couldn't oblige them. Hilda, there are some ripping girls in the Form!"

"There are," agreed Hilda, with a touch of legitimate pride. "Girls like Evelyn Gray and Joyce Carroll and Hetty Wayne—you couldn't want better chums."

At his instant the door was rapped, and then it opened to allow a pretty head with bobbed hair to peer into the room.

"Oh, you are busy!" said the newcomer. "I'll look back."

"No—come in!" clamoured Joan and Elsie; whilst Hilda Heathcote jumped up from her chair with a laugh.

"I just mentioned your name, Joyce," she explained, "along with other girls. This is your business-call, of course?"

"Bother it, yes!" said Joyce Carroll, grimacing prettily at a slip of paper in her hand. "I felt I must start getting in the F. F. D. & D. subs right away. We'll all be broke in a week, I suppose."

"F. F. what?" smiled Joan.

"Fifth Form Debating and Dramatic Society," explained the girl with bobbed hair. "I don't know if you want to join. If you do, it's half-a-crown the term. If you don't, it doesn't much matter."

"Join? Rather!" declared Joan and Elsie heartily.

"Right-ho! I can put you down, then, and— Oh, pay any old time!"

But that didn't suit the cousins' idea at all.

Out came Elsie's purse, whilst Joan darted to her fleecy coat hanging upon the wall, because she suddenly realised that her purse was in a pocket of that garment.

"Thanks!" said Joyce Carroll, as she took Elsie's half-crown. "I hope the Form is to find a couple of real geniuses in you two girls. I suppose you know Shakespeare backwards?"

Elsie was on the point of bursting into a laugh; when Joan suddenly flashed about with a loud cry of:

"Gracious! Look here, Elsie! All of you! Just look!"

And she came forward with a diamond brooch held out before her.

"Hallo!" cried Elsie in an astounded way. "You had it on you, after all, then, that lady's missing brooch!"

"Elsie, I—I'm flabbergasted!" exclaimed Joan. "What ever do you think? It was in my pocket—my pocket!"

"In your pocket? But how—"

"This is the brooch that the lady in the train missed?" said Hilda Heathcote. "I heard about it."

"The whole Form has heard," chimed in Joyce. "The lady thought one of you might have picked it up by getting it entangled in your clothes, didn't she? But how ever did it come to be in your pocket, Joan?"

Joan could only give a baffled shrug.

The study door was open, and now, for the second time that day, the unlucky brooch was the cause of passers-by stopping to take an interest in the goings on.

It was only a few moments, indeed, before quite a big number of girls was thronging about the doorway, most of them keeping silent as they listened to Joan's bewildered remarks.

She had been searching for her purse in the coat hanging upon the wall, and had found the brooch in one of the pockets.

"Well, it's a puzzler!" said Elsie, forcing a laugh. "The only explanation is that you must have caught up the brooch in your handkerchief when—"

"No," said Joan. "My handkerchief was never in that pocket!"

"Um! Well!" exclaimed her friends, with a "give-it-up" look.

"Hello!" cried a cynical voice at this stage from the doorway. "So the brooch is found, is it?"

Sybil Sardone was the speaker. She advanced into the room, her presence causing a sudden deep silence.

"What's the explanation, then?" she asked, with a grin. "I thought the scholarship kid was so sure the brooch wasn't on her!"

"The explanation is a matter that concerns Miss Chessingham, the headmistress," said Hilda Heathcote coldly.

"Or our esteemed captain, acting under authority from the headmistress! Of course!" Sybil rejoined, in her sneering tone. "We mustn't try to steal your glory!"

Joyce Carroll looked at the girl with extreme contempt.

"I see you are beginning the term just where you left off when the last one ended," she said, bitterly reproachful. "The same old dead set against Hilda!"

"Only more so," laughed Sybil. "Isn't there some excuse, too, when one finds our captain taking up at once with such kids as these—one, a scholarship kid, from the slums of London; the other almost as bad, a pauper now, even if she did live in a West End mansion once!"

"You had better go," said Hilda, very quietly. "Joan, Elsie, I would suggest that you both go along to the headmistress with the brooch, and—"

"They needn't do that," cried several girls on the edge of the crowd. "Here is Miss Chessingham!"

"Oh!" said Sybil, with a laugh.

She did not stir from the room. On the contrary, when Miss Chessingham

(Continued on page 24.)

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JOAN HAVILAND'S SILENCE!

(Continued from page 22.)

had entered, with Clarice Choane and Ruby close behind, Sybil motioned to her chief enemy to come and stand beside her.

Ruby, white to the lips, simply stood staring in a sort of distraught manner at her sister.

"And you found it in your pocket, you say?" Miss Chessingham exclaimed, incredulously, when poor Joan's bewildered remarks had come to an end. "Your pocket! Well, how do you account for the brooch being there?"

"I—please, Miss Chessingham, I—I can't account for it all," gulped Joan.

Sybil Sardone gave a subdued titter. "These clever kids are always so absent-minded, Clarice," she said, in a stage whisper to her enemy. "Of course, the kid simply picked up the brooch in the carriage, and—"

"I did not!" Joan cried out fiercely; for she had heard, as had all the rest in the room. "It is a shameful thing for you to say I handled the brooch! I—"

"Do not get flustered, my girl," said the headmistress, with judicial severity. "Sybil's remark was not in the best of taste. But—really! The presence of the brooch in your pocket does demand an explanation. And you have none to give!"

"None whatever," said Joan with another gulp. "I—all I know is, if any girls think I found it, and thought of sticking to it, and then changed my mind, they ought to be ashamed of themselves!"

The indignant words, and the stamp of the foot which went with them, made their impression. Here and there some of the better-natured girls even murmured applaudingly. Sybil and Clarice exchanged grins, then looked at Ruby, still grinning. But Ruby did not grin.

Her eyes sought the floor again. "Miss Chessingham," Hilda Heathcote began, breaking the painful silence; but she was checked by a quiet gesture. "I don't know what to think," con-

fessed the headmistress, taking the brooch from Joan. "This shall be returned to Miss Merrick by me, with a letter giving—one can't call it an explanation, for there is no explanation! We will hope that she will be glad to make no further bother, now that the brooch is recovered."

"But, Miss Chessingham, is this to leave Joan Haviland under a sort of stigma? Oh, surely, you don't want any of us to think that Joan was tempted to keep the brooch, and then thought better of it?"

"I have not suggested that," Miss Chessingham said gravely, turning to pass out. "I think it was Joan Haviland herself who said there might be girls who would think such a thing!"

"And I said they should be ashamed of themselves for doing so!" cried poor Joan, by now scarlet-checked. "I have denied it—"

"Very well, you have denied it," said the headmistress, rather coldly. "And the girls know that I always accept a new scholar's word. You have denied it; that is enough."

Then she motioned to the crowd, which was parting in two to let her pass. It was a gesture that meant "disperse," and disperse the girls did, for the moment, only to flock back directly the headmistress was gone.

"Oh, come," remonstrated Hilda Heathcote gently; "I think there has been enough bother, girls! What is everybody hanging about for?"

"Perhaps the Form is waiting for its esteemed captain to express an opinion!" remarked Sybil, with malicious glee.

Hilda curled a lip as she looked at her standing enemy.

"The Form has already heard me express my opinion," she said with fine deliberation. "I think Joan Haviland is deserving of all our sympathy for the upset she has had."

"Oho!" said Clarice. "Then you don't think, Hilda, that the Duchess of Brick Row has an unfortunate habit of putting things that don't belong to her into her pocket. He, he, he!"

"Get out of this room!" Elsie Dainton flared up then, taking quite a menacing stride towards Sybil and Clarice. "The pair of you—clear out!"

"There is not the least need for us to stay!" retorted Sybil, with mock sweetness. "After the way our esteemed captain has spoken, the Form can form its own opinion of her behaviour. I've always said that Hilda Heathcote is ready to make a fuss of a scholarship kid. It is Hilda's way of showing off. We know it; we've seen it before."

"Oh, shame—shame!" cried Joyce Carroll and two or three others hotly.

"Let her say on, if she wants to," Hilda said, with sublime calmness; but she was very white.

"There is nothing more to be said," Sybil answered, sweeping her a mock bow. "Let the Form judge for itself whether your leadership, on such lines, is quite the thing—that's all!"

"You snobs!" exclaimed Joyce, as Sybil and Clarice now passed from the study.

Their going away caused other girls to disperse. In twos and threes they drifted off to their own dens, starting to talk in a rather excited manner about the whole flare-up.

Ruby moved off in an aimless way, with snatches of talk falling upon her hearing. Here and there girls were stigmatising Sybil Sardone's remarks as "Simply disgraceful!" "Just the usual!" and so on.

But there were other girls who seemed to have been slightly turned against the captain.

All this was made clear to Ruby as she loitered along the passage. And so, slowly but surely, it was borne upon her mind that the captain was already paying dearly for her loyal friendship towards Joan, and was likely to pay dearer still.

The Form-captain, with the friendship of others to consider, her proud position to think of! And yet she was not to be shaken—no!

And all this at a time when she, Ruby, was doing what for Joan—standing up for her? No!

She, Joan's own sister, was practically a party to the conspiracy which had resulted in that brooch being found in the jacket-pocket!

It was a moment for Ruby Haviland—hard and callous though she had grown, ever since she came into riches that put her on an equal footing with girls like Sybil and Clarice—to feel full of sudden, terrible remorse.

She wandered off downstairs, glad to find dim-lit passages and empty rooms where she could drift about, alone in her self-wrought misery.

The first day of term, and already this was the situation—oh, an awful one to think upon! Her sister might very easily have been suspected of downright theft—might have been expelled from the school on mere suspicion.

Ruby was full of remorse, was stricken with shame at the thought of the part she had played in the affair.

Could she do nothing to atone for it all? That was what she asked herself now, her better nature filling her with the sudden yearning to make atonement. Should she be done with Sybil and Clarice? Should she go to Joan's study now, and—

"Yes, I will!" was her sudden desperate decision. "Oh, I must—I must! The thing I have done to-day is too, too awful! I never meant to be so mean and selfish! Even if Sybil drops me altogether, I will—"

And there she ended her agitated thoughts, at the same time stopping dead at the foot of the stairs, for she saw Sybil coming down.

"Hallo! I'm looking for you!" said Sybil, with her fascinating smile. "I say; Ruby darling, do come up to the study! Clarice and some others have got a jolly spree on for the evening."

"No, Sybil, I—I—"

"You'll be missing some spiffing fun!"

"But I—just at present, Sybil—Oh, I don't feel I want to!" panted Ruby, opening and shutting her hands.

Sybil looked at her for a long moment. "You are not yourself, Ruby; all of a sudden? What is the matter?"

"Don't ask me, Sybil—please—don't!"

Then Sybil, laughing softly, laid a hand upon the new girl's shoulder.

Ruby stood silent, trembling with the moral struggle raging in her breast.

Sybil bent nearer, and gave Ruby a pleading look.

"Oh, do come!" she said.

And then Ruby went.

(Joan Haviland's first day at Greyhurst has proved an ill one. Through the scheming of Sybil Sardone & Co. she is, in the eyes of many girls, under the stigma of theft. And Ruby—how little like a sister is she to Joan! How easily is she swayed by Sybil and her friends! You must on no account miss next week's grand long instalment of this new serial.)



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