

"SYBIL SPENDER'S SERVANT!"

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

"JOAN HAVILAND'S SILENCE!"

An Enthralling New Serial of Life at Greyhurst School. By JOY PHILLIPS.

Numerous Extracts from the "Cliff House Weekly!"

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Week Ending February 18th, 1922.

The School Friend

Every **2^D** Thursday.

HOW THEY THOUGHT SHE LIVED—

When the Cliff House girls learned that Augusta Anstruther - Browne had gone to live with Sybil Spender at Spender Court, they assumed that her time was devoted to idle pleasure. But—

—AND HOW SHE REALLY LIVED!

Augusta was treated very differently. Her position in the Spender household was that of the most lowly servant!

(See the magnificent long complete story of the Girls of Cliff House School, contained in this issue.)



W.D. Dodson

PICTURE PUZZLE COMPETITION RESULT!

(List of Prizewinners, continued from last week.)

Two hundred and fifty-one competitors whose solutions contained four errors each, divide the eighty prizes of ten shillings each:

J. Lee, 116, Camp Road, Leeds; E. Hitchin, 44, York Road, Knox Road, Forest Gate, E. 7; Ruth Sykes, 165, St. Margaret's Road, E. Twickenham, Middlesex; Winifred Heath, 68, Parrin Lane, Monton, Eccles, nr. Manchester; Iris Gale, 8, Sea Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth; Daisy L. Gordon, Essich, nr. Inverness; Ronnie Wright, 13, Sinclair Terrace, Wick, Cathness; Irene Hutchinson, 306, Seaside, Eastbourne; Ruth Robinson, 4, Strensham Road, Cannon Hill, Birmingham; Lily Murray, 15, Park View, Langley Bridge, Durham; Leslie Howells, 86, Snatchwood Road, Abersychan, nr. Pontypool, Mon.; Miss E. Abel, 14, Kendal Road, Poulton, Wallasey, Cheshire; Kathleen B. Clark, 80, Edmund Street, Kettering; Winifred Sole, 15a, Stanton Road, Wimbledon, S.W. 20; Irene Williams, 78, Spenser Avenue, Rock Ferry, Cheshire; Mabel Sack, 4, Washington Street, Kingsthorpe, Northampton; Peggy Jarvis, Post Office, Hockliffe, Leighton Buzzard; Winnie McDonough, 17, Guilford Street, Everton, Liverpool; Ruby M. Campbell, 124, Gloucester Road, Bootle, Liverpool; Phyllis Marriott, 94, Ella Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham; Kitty New, 4, Myrtle Cottages, Union Street, Farnborough, Hants.; Elsie Parsons, 2, Marston Road, St. Clement's, Oxford; M. Doreen Gough, 18, Bonn Road, Soller Lane, Bradford; Lily Williams, The Arcade, Shotton, nr. Chester; Eva G. Pawsey, Clifton, 5, Grove Road, Leighton Buzzard; Miss M. L. Read, 21, St. John Street, Whitechurch, Salop; Enid Collier, 22, Station Road, Urmston, nr. Manchester; Ruby Burgess, Hazlemont, Guest Avenue, Westbourne, Bournemouth; Phyllis White, Bryn Aled, Woodlands, Conway, North Wales; Edna Alford, 30, Alma Street, Newport, Mon.; Winnie Evans 87, Bebbington Road, Port Sunlight, Winifred L. Freer, 145, Leadenhall Street, London, E.C. 3; Ivy Gilbert, 6, Prinsep Road, Hove; Evelyn Andrews, 15, Rosebery Road, Sufield Park, Cromer; Winifred A. Kelly, 40, Burcot Road, Meersbrook, Sheffield; Mabel Holt, Sewage Farm, Winton, Patricroft, Manchester; Lilian Miller, 110, St. Paul's Road, Camden Town, N.W. 1; Elsie W. Constantine, 4, Kellitt Road, Wavertree, Liverpool; Monica M. Manton, 14, Queen Street, Louth, Lincs.; Janie Maden, Oak House, Dunoakshaw, nr. Burnley; Eleanor Male, 1, Brighton Buildings, Tower Bridge Road, S.E. 1; Rosalie Tattershall, 28, Osborne Road, Broadstairs, Kent; Florence E. Carpenter, Treskerby, Redruth Highway, Redruth; Gwen M. Hiscocks, 1, Trevorton Street, N. Kensington, W. 10; Madge Colclough, 12, Wycombe

Street, Darlington; Freda K. Francis, 56, Talbot Road, Rickmansworth, Herts.; Nollie Poyzer, 45, Human Street, Nottingham; Vera Hutchens, 61, Astonville Street, Southfields, S.W. 18; Margery White, 19, Terrace Road, Bournemouth, W.; Lucy Bennett, 9, Cowper Street, Redfield, Bristol; Hilda Geldart, 6, Prince Street, Bridlington; Margaret O'Brien, 52, Old Glasgow Road, Uddington, nr. Glasgow; Fannie L. Worth, 10, Sandhurst Road, Harehills Lane, Leeds; Irene Hellard, Brook Farm, Stone Allerton, nr. Axbridge, Somerset; Annie O'Gorman, 45, Heyes Street, Altrincham, Cheshire; Mavis Window, 164, North Road, Bishopston, Bristol; Dorothy Bull, 4, Oxford Street, Marlborough, Wilts.; Miss T. Harrison, 47, Faraday Road, Wimbledon, S.W. 19; Florrie Hurcombe, Church Street, Long Preston, Yorks.; Cissie Sperry, Dumolo's Lane, Glasgote, nr. Tamworth, Staffs.; Kitty Beardmore, 58, Lea Road, Wolverhampton; Phyllis H. L. Lipscombe, 2, Bay View Villas, Manston Road, Ramsgate; Lilian F. Haswell, Arden Lea, 6, Brook Lane, Chester; Olive Wealsh, 72, Lansdowne Road, Seven Kings, Ilford; Queenie G. Parke, 34, Umfreville Road, Harringay, N. 4; Marian Nairne, Kent Cottage, Whitley Road, Yorks.; Ivy Hammond, 20, Solon Road, Brixton, S.W. 2; Mary Weatherberg, Mill Lane, Wrawby, Briggs, Lincs.; Winifred K. Bryant, 81, Hamilton Street, Keyham, Devonport, Devon; Katherine Fowler, Market Place, Charing, Kent; Louie Bray, South Wraxall Vicarage, Bradford-on-Avon; Doris Muriel Brown, 21, South King Street, Dublin; Bessie Buchanan, 10, Savoy Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow; Marjorie A. Allen, 119, Tower Gardens Road, Tottenham, N. 17; Maud Bills, 25, Merton Street, Stoneholme, Burnley; Kathleen Dawson, 60, Boundaries Road, Balham, S.W. 12; Marjorie Smees, 20, Manor Road, Teddington, Middlesex; May Jackson, 37, New Street, Eiland, Yorkshire; Alice Bull, 30, Clifton Street, Swindon, Wilts.; Lilian Armstrong, 111, Chatham Street, Liverpool; Johnst MacLaughlin, 15, Joseph Street, Belfast; Alice Wilkie, 49, Bridget Street, Rugby, Warwickshire; Doris E. Cable, 10, First Avenue, Blyth, Northumberland; Betty E. Jolly, 230, Roman Road, Bow E. 3; Grace Bartlett, 80, Ashmill Street, Marylebone, N.W.; Pearl Derriek, 1, Lower Adelaide Place, Chatterton Square, Temple Gate, Bristol; Edith Huxtable, 7, Queen's Parade, Brandon Hills, Bristol; Lilian Gray, 70, Dagmar Road, Kingston-on-Thames; Beatrice Hunnisett, 64, Peel Hall Street, Preston, Lancs.; Alice Wheeler, 14, Napier Road, Kensington; Winnie Richardson, Oak Leigh, Buckley, nr. Chester; Connie R. Allison, 29, Doneraile Street, Fulham, S.W. 6; Peggy Forde, 38, Africa Gardens, Heath, Cardiff; Elsie Lyne, 10, Parkhurst Road, Walthamstow, E.; Dorothy Margerson, Post Office, Barlow, nr. Chesterfield; Flora Harris, 18, Netherwood Road, West Kensington Park, W. 14; Morfydd Murray, 1, Britannia Terrace, Pengam, South Wales; Jennie Carter, 94, Platt Lane, Hindley, nr. Wigan; Molly Underwood, 64, Hainault Road, Leytonstone, E. 11; Elsie Dodson, 26, Humber Street, Cleethorpes; Muriel Theresa Timson, L.C.C. School House, Newington Green, N. 16; Catherine Fry, 55, Buck-

leigh Road, Streatham, S.W. 16; Phyllis Neil Fry, 7, Clovelly Road, Southsea, Hants.; Barbara Fleming, Tibberton Rectory, nr. Newport, Salop; Cella Reinish, 134, Bedford Street, Mile End Road, E. 1; Alice Farrington, 34, Ward Street, Stockport; Evelyn Richardson, 279, Holderness Road, Hull; Lily Hillcock, 6, Caldey Street, Camberwell, S.E. 5; Lilian Frances Nash, 23, Fratton Road, Portsmouth, Hants.; Phyllis Margaret Locke, 96, Folkestone Road, Copnor, Portsmouth; Lilian Blanche Sheere, 22, Comberton Road, Upper Clapton, E. 5; Marjorie Glaysher, 86, Windermere Road, South Ealing, W. 5; Jessie Graham, 7, Stirling Street, Kirkdale, Liverpool; Alice Woodhead, 10, Dharwar Walk, Division Road, Hestle Road, Hull; Doris Carter, 4, Lower Stanley Terrace, Elliotstown, New Tredegar, Mon.; Edith S. Olive, Church Street, Nettleham, nr. Lincoln; Jessie Forsyth, 31, Rosefield Street, Dundee; Mary Fyfe, 22, Burdett Avenue, Westcliff-on-Sea; Kathleen Jones, 12, Birmingham Road, Oldbury, nr. Birmingham; Miss B. Siegler, 105, Edward Street, Brighton, Sussex; Winifred Taylor, 216, Boundary Road, Wood Green.

SOLUTION.

No. 1.—Barbara Redfern is the captain of the Fourth Form, and is liked by practically all the girls in the school. She is fond of needlework, and plays hockey, cricket, and tennis very well indeed. Barbara is a fine long-distance runner, and is editress of the "Cliff House Weekly."

No. 2.—Bessie Bunter is the fattest girl in the Fourth Form. She does not play games at all well, and neither is she clever at her school work. Her spelling is very bad indeed, and her writing is little better. She is, however, a fine cook, and her ventri-logical powers are remarkable.

No. 3.—Peggy Preston came to Cliff House as a scholarship girl, and many of the Fourth-Formers shunned her. But Peggy overcame this antagonism, and soon won for herself a place of honour amongst her colleagues. She excels at most games, and is a brilliant pianist.

No. 4.—Marjorie Hazeldene is the leader of Study No. 7, and is one of the nicest girls in the Fourth Form. She is a good short-distance runner, the best dancer in the Form, and is very fond of sewing. Marjorie is undoubtedly pretty, and has a sweet nature.

No. 5.—Marcia Loftus is the least popular girl at Cliff House. She is mean, vindictive, and has a spiteful temper. She does not join in games, and cares little for the honour of the Form. Marcia has been punished for misdeeds on different occasions, and expulsion may be her lot one day.

No. 6.—Miss Primrose is the headmistress of Cliff House, and is liked by most of the girls. She is a strict disciplinarian, always just, and encourages all outdoor games, taking a keen interest in her scholars' hobbies. Should this headmistress ever leave them, the girls would be very grieved.

ALL

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Sybil Spender's Servant!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of the Girls of Cliff House School, introducing Augusta Anstruther-Browne, the expelled schoolgirl. :: By HILDA RICHARDS.

The Girl Who Had Lost Trust!

"MISS PRIMROSE was quite fair!"
"No, she wasn't!"
"And there was nothing else for her to—"
"She could easily have sent Miss Steel to Spender Court."
"Rubbish!"

There was a babel of voices in the Fourth Form Common-room at Cliff House School.

It was just after dinner on Saturday, and Barbara Redfern, the Fourth Form captain, had called a meeting on the subject that was uppermost in every mind that day. It was to have been an orderly meeting, and one that Babs intended should end in a deputation being sent to Miss Primrose to state the views of the Form.

But Babs had not been able to be as persuasive to-day as she could be sometimes.

There was dissension in the Form from the start. Now, before the matter of the deputation had hardly been broached, there was almost a riot.

Gwendoline Cook, who seemed to be the leader of the objectors, was on a chair and speaking very heatedly. For a moment Babs paused to listen to her.

"It's all very well to suppose this and that, but Miss Primrose did quite rightly!" Gwen cried. "It's a long while now since Augusta Anstruther-Browne was expelled from the school, and she's done nothing at all to prove her innocence, as some of you said she would."

"It's because that girl Judy Grigg has disappeared and can't be found," interjected Clara Trevlyn. "You know it, too!"

"She would have been by now, if Augusta had been really trying," said Gwen Cook doggedly. "Here she's supposed to have a five-pound note stolen from Augusta's aunt, and fifty cookery aprons that Augusta made for us. I say, then, to think that a girl could hide them for so long."

"Then where do you say they've gone, you duffer?" cried Clara. "We know Augusta made them."

"I say she sold them to someone else at a higher price, and pocketed the money!"

"Gwen!"

"Oh, how can you say such a heartless thing?" cried Peggy Preston indignantly.

"Because Augusta's gone to live with Sybil Spender, that's why!" cried Gwendoline. "We all know the sort of girl Sybil is, and how pally she and Augusta were at one time!"

There was a murmur among the girls as Gwen said that. Yes, they knew Sybil Spender—knew her for a vain, idle spendthrift, who cared for nothing but her own pleasures. They knew what friends Augusta and this girl had been in days gone by, how Augusta had admired her

and copied her in all her spendthrift ways. And now—

And now Augusta, expelled from Cliff House, was living with Sybil at Spender Court!

"I've backed you girls up, and sent orders to Augusta's aunt as much as anyone," went on Gwen heatedly. "We all thought that if we kept the shop going Augusta would stay there, and conduct her search for Judy. But she didn't. First she acts as a waitress, and now she had gone to Sybil Spender as a companion."

"Because she had to, that's the reason!" cried Peggy Preston.

"Had to! Fiddlesticks!" said Gwen scornfully. "Why should she have gone to Spender Court at all, after all we've done? She's found life too dull for her; that what's the matter. Perhaps you may say that it's her concern; but I, for one, am not going to consent to any deputation asking Miss Primrose to be merciful!"

Barbara Redfern managed to make herself audible at last.

"Now, please, listen to me, girls!" she begged. "Gwen only tells half a story. No one really believe now that Augusta was returning to her old ways before her expulsion."

"I do!" said the voice of Marcia Loftus.

"But no one cares a scrap for your opinion, Marcia!" said Babs witheringly.

"You'd be only too eager to chum with Sybil yourself, if you had the chance. We all loved Augusta while she was

here. It isn't the thing to forget an old friend, however queer things may seem. If we went as a deputation to Miss Primrose, she might reconsider her decision."

"After Augusta has treated us all in this shabby manner?" cried Gwen.

Babs threw out her arms, half angrily, half entreatingly.

"Oh, you don't seem to understand, Gwen!" she answered. "This morning Miss Primrose said she was almost convinced that a mistake had been made, and she was going to give Augusta the benefit of any doubt remaining, and let her return to the school. Just because Miss Steel found out that Augusta had gone to Spender Court, Miss Primrose said that she would not pardon her. Why? Why should it make such a difference? Think what it means for Augusta!"

"If her pardon had come just an hour or two sooner, Augusta would have been with us now, girls!" said Peggy Preston earnestly. "Surely you won't forget how hard she has struggled to get on? Surely you won't forget that we were all convinced of her innocence until she went to Spender Court?"

"I'm not going to consent to any deputation," said Gwen doggedly.

"Nor am I," added Cissy Clare, and two or three others. "Miss Primrose was quite right; it does prove that we were making a mistake, after all."

"It doesn't!" said Clara Trevlyn.

"Yes, it does!"

"You're talking out of your hat!"

"I'm not going into any deputation, anyway!"

There was babel once more. Babs called quite in vain for some semblance of order. The Fourth Form was divided against itself on the subject of Augusta Anstruther-Browne.

Even Peggy Preston, whom everyone knew to have struggled so hard to help Augusta in every way, could not make herself heard. They had rallied to Peggy's banner, and the sceptics had allowed her to convince them that an innocent girl had been sent in disgrace from the school. Now, however, they were asserting themselves again. Augusta had gone to the house of the rich, idle snob whom all of them had such little cause to like. Augusta had fallen in their esteem.

It had all been a baffling and bewildering business. They could not deny that. Caught with a five-pound note in her possession, Augusta had told a story that seemed hardly credible except to a few of the girls in the Fourth Form. She had said that she had mistaken it for a note that she believed to have been hidden by the servant-girl at the school, Judy Grigg.

With nothing to confirm her statements Augusta had been expelled. She had kept to her story, and after a week Babs and Mabs had secured proof that the servant, Judy, really had a five-pound note in her possession—perhaps the one that would clear Augusta!

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 145.

The Thinnest Girl of the Fourth Form.



AGNES WHITE.

Next Portrait:
THE HORSEWOMAN OF THE
FOURTH FORM.

But they had been unable to convict Judy that night. And since then none of them had seen the girl at all. She had disappeared, after the blame for yet something else had fallen on her—the suspicion that she had stolen fifty special cookery aprons that Augusta, the expelled girl, had made, so as to earn her own living.

Yes, Judy seemed to have utterly vanished; but the Fourth had hoped that Augusta would be able to find her and make her confess. To that end they had bought all manner of things at Augusta's aunt's drapery shop in Court-field, hoping that Augusta, proud as she was in insisting that she would be a drag on no one, would live with her aunt.

Augusta, apparently, had acted differently, although several of them had spent nearly all their pocket-money on things that they could very well do without for the time being. They did not

know the rights and wrongs of the matter, of course, but they did know that Augusta had thrown up everything, and gone to live with Sybil, the despised snob of Spender Court.

Snatches of all those facts were being thrown at one another, when Bessie Bunter, in her own way, precipitated matters.

She sought to bring Gwen Cook to a measure of reason by pulling her hair and then rapidly darting away.

Unfortunately, Bessie only darted into the arms of Cissy Clare.

Cissy had watched, and Cissy grabbed. Marcia Loftus, who delighted in a Form quarrel, quickly seized Bessie's waving hand and gave her wrist a swift twist.

"Yarooooop!" shrieked Bessie. "Help! Twisting my arm! Ow-wow-wow!"

"I'll twist someone's arm!" said Clara, and rushed at Marcia.

Something usually happened when Clara rushed. It did this time. Bessie struggled, and Marcia dodged, and Dolly somehow got in the way of all of them. Exactly what followed then was not clear, except that the table swayed violently, and went over.

Crash!

"My goodness!"

It was that startled cry from Miss Primrose herself that pulled the girls together. The noise, excepting the noise from Bessie Bunter, died down like magic. Miss Primrose stood grimly surveying flushed faces, and the overturned table, and Bessie Bunter sucking her fat fist and mumbling.

"I am astounded, girls—astounded!" exclaimed Miss Primrose sternly. "I was attracted here by the noise and commotion that I heard. Barbara Redfern, can you explain what this means?"

"We were having a Form meeting about Augusta, Miss Primrose," said Babs.

"A Form meeting?"

"Yes. And—and opinion runs rather high in the Form!" Babs suddenly decided to risk it. "The fact is, Miss Primrose, we're not unanimous, but a lot of us want to ask you if you'll reconsider Augusta's case as she's only gone to Spender Court this morning—"

"I shall do nothing of the sort!"

"But, Miss Primrose—"

"Nothing of the sort!" repeated the headmistress. "So it is about Augusta that you have been quarrelling in this manner? I am ashamed of you, girls, and there will be heavy punishments if there is any recurrence of this. What is more, I do not wish to hear you mention Augusta's name again!"

"But—"

"Augusta is an expelled girl, and is now to be treated as such!" said Miss Primrose, cutting short Peggy's breathless protest. "I was inclined to be lenient to her. But now she has gone to that girl Sybil, who is an expelled girl herself, I cannot give way, for I will remember the reckless acts of Augusta when she and Sybil Spender were friends. Another thing. Since I spoke to you this morning I have heard from Mrs. Colley, who tells me how shockingly Augusta showed her temper at the dance last night—a matter that none of you reported."

"Augusta said that she was not responsible for the damage, and we believe she spoke the truth, Miss Primrose!" broke out Peggy Preston.

"It is impossible to believe that."

"No. That girl, Judy Grigg, was there—"

"It is too extraordinary for her to be seen only by Augusta!" interrupted Miss Primrose. "But, even so, there is another statement I have to bear in mind. Only on Thursday night Miss Bullivant saw Augusta hanging about outside Spender Court, as though waiting for someone. She has just reported it to me. Putting one thing with another, there can be no possible doubt about what Augusta intends us to conclude about her plans for the future."

"Miss Primrose—"

"Do not argue, Peggy!"

"But if you gave her the chance of coming back to the school I'm sure she'd come!" rushed on Peggy, unheeding.

"Please give her the chance!"

"The chance has gone!"

"But—"

"I have not come here to argue about the matter!" said the headmistress sharply. "Augusta, although an expelled girl, has been treated as no girl in such a position has ever been treated before. We have tried to make something of the strange charges she levelled

"TESTIMONIALS"

(EDITRESS' NOTE.—Eight of us, finding ourselves in the Common-room on a Wednesday afternoon with nothing to do, tried to write the briefest, or the wisest, or the wittiest testimonials we could for well-known people at Cliff House. Below you will find some of our efforts.)

TO AUNTIE JONES (TUCKSHOP DAME).

"I can heartily recommend your buns as a new parlour game, the idea being to see who can first cut through a bun with a blunt knife. It may last for quite half an hour, and it is a matter of speculation as to which will wear through first—the bun or the knife!"—MABEL LYNN.

"Your cakes are like friends to me—in fact, they are like real friendship—both are very hard to tear asunder!"—CLARA TREVLYN.

"Your Swiss roll is so perfectly made that, after eating some recently, I dreamed that I was in Switzerland, tobogganing, and—fell out of bed!"—DOLLY JOBLING.

"I must admit that my splendid figger, that makes me the admerayshon of the school, is partly due to the good feeds I have had in Auntie Jones' shop!"—BESSIE BUNTER.

"Some girls say that your 1922 buns are not as good as the pre-war ones, but they are. I had one of the latter the other day!"—BARBARA REDFERN.

"Your home-made toffee is as delicious as the toffee-Dolly makes, except that it doesn't look black and taste of smoke and cinders!"—MARJORIE HAZELDENE.

"Without the tuckshop I couldn't make half as many jokes!"—FREDA FOOTE.

TO AUGUSTUS PIPER (PORTER).

"They say that hard work and worry, and constant rushing about sometimes cause a man to die young. I rejoice to think that you will live to draw your old-age pension!"—CLARA TREVLYN.

"There is every prospect of your name being long remembered at Cliff House. A new word has been invented, and is now in quite common use at the school. When we see Nancy Bell sprawling and dozing, and making herself absolutely lazily happy, we say she is 'Pipering'!"—MABEL LYNN.

"Ten weeks ago you cleaned our study. Since then the floor's got slightly muddier!"—DOLLY JOBLING.

"Althow I must confess that you are not reely hansum, I must say that you are quite an ornament to Cliff House on account of your good figger!"—BESSIE BUNTER.

"Piper, I know that if you had to tackle a burglar at Cliff House you would play the man, and not run away. You couldn't!"—FREDA FOOTE.

"I know that you are thrifty and careful with your money and will never finish in the workhouse. It's got such a horrid name, hasn't it!"—GWEN COOK.

"Piper, we do pull your leg about being lazy, and I want to take this opportunity of saying that one could find plenty of men who like work less—if one only looked long enough!"—BARBARA REDFERN.

"I can recommend Piper as a man who never causes dissatisfaction amongst the other servants by exceeding his duty!"—MARJORIE HAZELDENE.

TO MRS. PICKLES (COOK).

"Mrs. Pickles is an excellent plain cook. You could find plenty of others who were plainer in features. You would not find one who did plainer cookery?"—GWEN COOK.

"Mrs. Pickles is most accomplished in many ways. If she doesn't want to do any more cooking she could count the money at a bank, or anything like that. I know that she always counts the currants for our dumplings, and never gives one too many!"—BARBARA REDFERN.

"There are more ways than one of cooking a kipper, but I don't think that this proverb has been properly brought to Mrs. Pickles' attention!"—MABEL LYNN.

Bessie Bunter did not write a testimonial. She started to write an essay, of which this is part:

"I reely cannot say much for Mrs. Pickles becoss she never seems to understand that growing girls need nourishment. It is always the same old kippers and blotters, and the same puddings, day after day. Even a therd helping is freaquently not quite sufficient for a girl who is using her brane a lot, and consequently exorsting her strenkth."

against that girl, Judy Grigg. Instead of helping, Augusta seems to have done nothing at all—the very reverse, indeed! This last action of hers, in going to live with a girl who had such an influence over her in the past can only be taken as an affront. That is why I cannot have any more dealings with Augusta."

The headmistress waved aside the protests that Peggy, Babs, Mabs, and the other "loyalists" still wished to make.

"Nothing that you can say can change my mind," she said. "You must forget Augusta. There are to be no more meetings with her, as there have been before. I do not want to hear her name mentioned again by any of you!"

With that, Miss Primrose turned and left the room.

"Well, that's put a full-stop to the deputation, anyway, and that's what we were arguing about!" said Gwendoline Cook.

"It hasn't, as far as I'm concerned!" said Peggy Preston chokingly.

Gwen Cook stared at her.

"My word!" she ejaculated. "You're not going to cry about Augusta, surely!"

Peggy Preston brushed the tears from her cheeks with tightly-closed hands, and her pretty mouth struggled to be firm.

"I don't care if it is breaking an order. I'm going to see Augusta somehow!" she muttered. Her voice trembled as it increased in strength. "Oh, it's wrong—all wrong! Augusta is an innocent girl. I know it—I know it! She's been badly treated, and if she has gone to the Spenders—well, she has been driven there!"

"We were helping to keep the shop going!" said Gwen.

"Helping—but in such a small way!"

Peggy answered. "Besides, I won't argue about that. I know how Augusta felt that we were doing it to help her. She's been driven to this. And she's innocent!" Her eyes flashed. "You who don't believe in her, needn't! She wouldn't want your confidence! Everything's gone against Augusta. She's never had fair treatment. I won't desert her. And Babs and Mabs and many of you others won't desert her, either! We're going to stick to her. We're going to believe in her even now!"

And there was a sudden silence at that—a sudden tension.

They looked at Peggy, at her shining eyes, and at her resolute jaw, and they knew that she meant every word of what she said.

The Changed Sybil!

THERE was a very different scene taking place at Spender Court, a scene in which Augusta Anstruther-Browne had, through circumstances, to take a part.

Sybil Spender lounged in a chair in that luxurious room that she called her "den." There was a fire, although the day was mild, and the page-boy had just been summoned to attend to it. Sybil was too afraid of soiling her hands to poke a fire herself.

Now, however, she was sitting in a more alert attitude and toying with the lid of a little silver box that stood on a tiny table at her side. She looked across at Augusta and arched her brows. Getting no reply to that, she put her question into one word:

"Cigarette?"

"No, thanks!" said Augusta.

Sybil stared at her new "companion," annoyed at something in Augusta's tone.

"Are you going to carry on this foolery much longer?" she asked.

"What foolery?" said Augusta, in an even voice.



By FRED A FOOTE (Fourth Form).

IN this most dangerous season, when blades spring up out of the ground, and plants shoot, and buds burst—in other words, when spring is just in the air, everyone starts thinking about summer again.

They do, really! Take it from me they do! I don't say it just so that I can write an article on the subject. You know I'm not that sort of girl.

In any case, whatever you think, I'm going on to talk about summer, now that I've made a start, and if it should have turned freezing cold by the time you read this—well, this ought to warm you up a bit, and that's all I can say about it!

Lady Hetty is the one who seems most to be looking forward to summer. She's going to have a motor-boat on hire for the season, and her father, the earl, is going to rent one of the islands in the Sark specially for her benefit. Then she's going to have picnic hampers galore, and really have the time of her life!

At least, Hetty says so!

Why we don't all rush round her, and fall on her neck, and vow eternal friendship, I don't know; but we don't! The only time we have rushed round her was to shake her for being a little prig. Only a hassock has fallen on her neck, and Bessie dropped that when she was coming upstairs. As for the eternal friendship—well, I'm the first to think of it, I think!

Of course, when summer comes we shall really see what will happen.

Talk of camping is in the air again—camping or caravanning. It's delightfully early, but Flap Derwent is very keen on it, and says that people are starting to book up caravans already. Bessie Bunter—after reading an illustrated paper—offered to lend us the motor-caravan that they have at Bunter Court; but we declined it, in case the bottom fell out of it. (The bottom falls out of most of Bessie's schemes!)

Even if we don't go caravanning, I shouldn't be at all surprised if some of us go to camp. We had such a topping time last time that we are not likely to forget it, and Bessie Bunter is fearfully keen on the idea—if only we'll go to her camp!

We've only got to raise enough money, and she'll take us to a camp where there will be:

Three proper cooking stoves, with ample saucepans, etc.

Tables of snacks all days.

Plenty of provisions to last for a week longer than we mean to stay, and—

An extra whack of provisions, in case of emergency. (As Bessie remarks:

"A shipwrecked crew might be wrecked just by our camp, and see how silly

we should feel if we couldn't feed the poor fellows!")

I don't think, somehow, that Bessie will be in charge of the camp, even if we do go! Babs wants to make it an absolute "Guide camp," and most of us feel the same about it. Katie Smith, of course, would like an "adventure camp," and if we couldn't get real adventures we should have to play at Red Indians, and suffer ourselves to be scalped several times per day. Katie, as Hawk Eye, wouldn't let us be dull!

As for summer games—well, they are going with a real swing this year! I've seen no fewer than three cricket bats being inspected this week. Bessie Bunter is going to concentrate on lawn tennis, and thinks that with a bit of practice she might go in for a championship, especially as her father is going to send her a new racket. Bessie says it will be a "stunner," and I quite believe it. Last year she nearly stunned several of us with her old one!

Goodness knows what is the matter with Annabel Hichens, but even she seems to be thinking about the hot days. Yesterday I found her sprawled on the floor in her study, and although she held a brush in one hand, I'm sure she was practising her swimming strokes! Annabel denied it, but she's always so fearfully modest!

Yes, looking all round, I think that we shall have a jolly good time next term. I won't say more now, in case it does happen to be snowy when you read this!

I'd only like to add—if you've read as far as this—that it is my considered opinion that by the time summer really does come Bessie Bunter's remittance will have turned up as well—in spite of the postal delays!

"Oh, don't be so silly—don't!" exclaimed Sybil, stamping her elegant foot.

"You've come here as my companion.

You've accepted my offer. You said you

wanted to come. I've given you a dress

of mine to wear. You've had a jolly

good reception from the mater and pater.

And yet you sit about and moon round

as though you hated the place."

"I do!" said Augusta quietly.

Sybil's red lips twitched.

"Then why don't you clear out of it,

again?"

Augusta answered as steadily as ever.

"I can't. You know that! I've burnt

my boats behind me by coming here.

They probably know now at Cliff House

where I am. You wanted me to come to

you, and now you've got me!"

"You talk as though I'd got you here

by some trick!"

"Yes; it practically amounts to that!"

said Augusta.

Sybil sprang up from her chair, a flush

of anger coming to her cheeks. She

stared at Augusta's pale face, and glared

into the unwavering eyes that met her

own.

"I've tricked you? How?" she cried.

"You could have spoken for me last

night, when I was accused of wrecking that refreshment-table," said Augusta.

"You were the only girl who could have

said that Judy might have been at Mel-

sham Towers—and I've found out to-day

that she really did go there to take you

your fan! It would have made all the

difference if you had spoken. Some of

them would have believed me."

Sybil tried to sustain the anger that

was already melting.

"What has this got to do with your

coming here?" she asked hotly. "I only

knew this morning that that girl Judy

was the one they sent. In any case, it

didn't matter to me. I offered to pay for

the damage, because I forgot to tell you

that they'd arranged for you to have a

dance, and that caused you to lose your

temper—"

"I didn't lose my temper—and you

didn't forget!" said Augusta quietly.

"What?" cried Sybil, flaming up

again. "My goodness! I wonder I

don't order you out of the house for

saying such things!"

Augusta smiled bitterly.

"I shouldn't mind," she said. "I

don't suppose I shall go of my own

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 145.

accord, but it would be the best thing for me if you did send me away. I hate myself for being here! But if you want me to stay, I suppose I shall have to! I don't try to believe that I can have any friends left after the figure I cut last night!"

"So you refuse to be friendly?" asked Sybil ominously.

"You don't want to be friendly yourself," answered Augusta. "You want me to behave in the way that made me forget my real friends, let down my Form!"

Sybil stamped her foot.

"I'll ask you again! Why didn't you stop away from here?"

"Because you, who professed friendship, would not help me to clear my name at school," answered Augusta. "Judy Grigg, the girl for whose sake I suffered, is a maid here. You told me that the only way I could get to see her was to come here and agree to your terms. You knew I didn't want to come, but—well, I have!"

window recess, filled with elaborate carvings, and lit by the mellow light of stained-glass windows, she was able to gaze through two or three clear panes. She saw, before her, the tree-lined drive that led from Spender Court to the lane, and an open panorama of the country as far as Courtfield town. No pedestrians, and no motor-car, were to be seen.

"No sign of them yet!" Augusta muttered, and turned away. "Oh, dear! I'm to change the beads! I shall have to do it! I know I'm under orders now!"

Her even teeth set. She did not even like to attempt to analyse her feelings. Here she was—at Spender Court! The plunge had been taken. And now all sorts of wild plans seemed to haunt her mind. She thought of all the things that might have made it possible for her to keep away—because it was too late for such thoughts!

She passed along another corridor with quick, silent steps, and came to a flight

staircase. Augusta was holding her with a vice-like grip. The days of suspicion, the days of disgrace, and toil, and fruitless effort, all added to the anger welling up in Augusta's heart as she held the frightened servant-girl.

"You stole a five-pound note from my aunt!" Augusta said, still staring at Judy. "You tried to hide it at Cliff House. Apparently, you changed your mind. I made a mistake, and was accused of trying to steal a different note. I want the one you possess so that I can prove my innocence!"

"I—I haven't a note!" chattered Judy. "And—and you sha'n't—"

"I want those aprons, too—fifty cooking aprons that you hid!" Augusta went on. "They were a week's work! You played a trick on me—you can't deny it! Where are they?"

"I—I don't know," whispered Judy, and trembled violently.

Augusta thrust the girl away from her. But her burning eyes never left the mean, pinched face of the girl who had caused her such suffering.

"You know that what you say is false!" Augusta said. "You ought to know now that I'm determined. I will have those things—the note and the aprons! You'd do better to give them to me now. Where are they?"

"I—I'll complain to Mrs. Spender!" muttered Judy, and started to slink away.

Augusta started forward, then stopped. A plan—a way out of this extraordinary position—had come to her. Only suspicion, even though it was a positive suspicion, was all the evidence she had. Judy had been supremely cunning. That was what had hampered them all the time. It was always word against word; never any real proof!

But now Augusta remembered something—a trait in Judy's character. When first she accused Judy of having the stolen note, Judy darted away to dispose of it at once. After nearly giving herself away in Uncle Clegg's, they had told her that she tried to hide it again.

That was Augusta's sudden plan now. She would give Judy just enough time to get away—so that she might betray herself again!

So she stood still, and watched Judy disappear up the stairs. And then Augusta followed very stealthily, forgetting Sybil and Spender Court.

Would Judy behave as she expected? Augusta could hardly suppress a tremor of excitement. Was this really the first opportunity that she was going to have of catching Judy, and in such a manner that she would have to confess?

On an upper landing Augusta stood still, gazing this way and that. She did not know where Judy had gone; did not know her room, as yet. Had she let her escape, after all?

It was while she was peering from side to side that Augusta heard a sound that caused her to shrink back to a recess, and hide behind a heavy plush curtain.

At the far end of the corridor a figure suddenly appeared, descending what were evidently the servants' stairs, because they were uncarpeted. Augusta's heart leapt.

It was—it was! It seemed too good to be true! The plan, reckless and risky, had succeeded!

Judy Grigg it was that Augusta saw, a trembling Judy, who descended the stairs with nervous haste! And she carried something in her arms—a parcel.

Just a glimpse, and she was gone. And then Augusta moved from behind the curtain. She ran along the corridor, and reached the back stairs that Judy Grigg had just descended.

What was in that parcel? She could guess. And, in any case, she was going



A DISTURBANCE IN THE COMMON-ROOM! "Garrooh!" Bessie Bunter. "She's twisting my arm! Help!" Clara Trevlyn dashed to the rescue, overturning a table as she did so. And at that very moment the form of the headmistress appeared in the doorway.

Sybil Spender snatched a magazine from the table, dropped to her chair, and fiddled with the pages. Finally, she glanced at her wrist-watch, and scowled across at Augusta.

"If you let me down when Kiki Barbour and my other friends come, I'll make you sorry for it!" she threatened. "You've led me a fine old dance as it is, and I had to write a tidy cheque for the things broken last night. I'd practically decided to get along without you when you came this morning. Just trot along and see if you can see Kiki Barbour and the rest coming. And for goodness' sake, go to my room and put on some beads that match your frock, not those dowdy old things! Put on some jewellery, too!"

Augusta recognised the faint taunt in the last words, flung at her just as she was going out of the door. But it did not affect her.

She passed to the head of the magnificent oaken staircase, and then along a richly-carpeted corridor. Here, in a

of stairs. A small figure, dressed in cap and apron, appeared suddenly from an ante-room. Augusta saw, and acted instantly. She whirled forward to grip the shoulders of—Judy Grigg!

"Oh!" gasped Judy.

"So I've got you at last!" Augusta said, in a low, vibrant voice. "At last, Judy! I've had to come here for you! You thought you were hiding! You thought no one knew where you were! But I'm here—here!"

"You—you did give me a scare, miss!" panted Judy.

"I'm not surprised!" said Augusta icily.

"But—but if you've come here to say those things—"

"Oh, I know! Don't try to argue with me!" Augusta exclaimed. She brought her head more forward, and stared with burning eyes at Judy. "I've got you, and—you're going to confess! Now, understand that! I am expelled from my school because of you! You've got to confess!"

Judy Grigg struggled wildly. It was

to see. And if the parcel did not contain some of the cookery aprons that had been specially made for Cliff House, Augusta would be very surprised.

Nothing Ever Right!

JUDY GRIGG must have gone down those stairs very quickly. Augusta followed as rapidly as possible, but did not rush for fear of alarming the girl when there was still time for her to get away. For all that, she did not lose a second in reaching the ground floor.

There, turning away from the stairs, she saw Judy again, hurrying along a tiled passage. She started in swifter pursuit now, gaining rapidly. As Judy paused, suddenly, at a door on which the word "boiler" was painted, Augusta gained another few feet. Not more than a couple of yards separated them, and how clearly she could see the hastily-wrapped parcel now!

Then Judy turned her head. Her eyes met those of Augusta. She gave such a start that she nearly dropped the parcel. Augusta heard the gasp of dismay that rose to her lips. And then Judy turned and fled blindly.

"Stop!" shouted Augusta.

She raced in pursuit, determined that Judy should not escape her now.

The swing-doors that separated the servants' quarters from the rest of the house whirled shut as Judy crashed between them. Augusta bumped into them in her turn, but slipped. She saw Judy rushing upstairs just in front of her, but even as she staggered to her feet the servant-girl turned the corner of the half-landing.

"Stop!" panted Augusta again.

She leapt forward, to take the stairs three at a time.

A figure appeared as though by magic from the door of a side room, and barred her path just as she rushed forward.

"Augusta!" cried Sybil Spender's amazed voice.

"Judy—she rushed up there! She's got the aprons!" panted Augusta. "I'll catch her this time! I know that— Oh!"

She gave that ejaculation as she was suddenly jerked back. Sybil Spender had seized one of her wrists with both hands.

"Are you clean mad, Augusta?" was her amazed question.

"Mad? No! Judy has just gone—"

"Bother Judy!" cut in Sybil. "Kiki and the others are here, and you never—"

"I can't worry about Kiki! I'm going to catch Judy!"

She tugged forward with all her strength. A sort of despair maddened her. Sybil, still holding, found herself forced to follow Augusta up the stairs. Her breathless protests and threats and ejaculations fell on almost deaf ears.

"Mad! You must be mad! I didn't see Judy. Bother her, anyway! My friends are waiting. You haven't changed those horrid beads. Come back! Don't rush away like that. Oh, you—you—"

They were on the first landing at last, and Augusta was peering in every direction. She could not see Judy. That tumble and Sybil's intervention had proved too much!

Where had Judy gone?

"Will you let me alone?" Augusta cried, tugging at the wrist that Sybil still held captive.

"No, I won't!" retorted Sybil, breathless, and now thoroughly angry. "What do you mean by dashing about the house in this way, when you're supposed to be

in the drawing-room? I tell you Kiki I—"

"Bother Kiki! Oh, this way!"

Augusta tugged on, and Sybil slid, rather than ran, along the rich corridor carpet.

"To come to another blank wall.

"I—I've lost her!" said Augusta, in a hollow voice.

"Now will you be reasonable?" snapped Sybil angrily. "Flying about, dragging me round like this!"

Augusta seemed to come to realities for the first time.

"I saw Judy. She had a parcel, and was going to the boiler-house!" she said tensely. "That's who I was chasing, and you've stopped me! I don't care a rap for a party, when this might mean that I could clear my name!"

"What a story! But we can soon see what it's worth. I'll have her here!" said Sybil, and with that she raised her voice. "Judy—Judy, come here in—"

Augusta came back to herself, almost with a start. She stared at Judy.

"You've tricked me!" she said. She stepped forward to grip the girl's shoulder. "But you're not going to deny that there's another parcel, a parcel full of cookery aprons—"

"Help! Oh, miss, protect me!" cried Judy, giving Sybil a pleading glance. "Miss—Miss Browne is always threatening me and running after me. She'll hurt me one day. And I'm only a poor servant-girl who's never done any wrong."

Augusta gritted her teeth.

"Satisfied?" asked Sybil, more mockingly than ever. She turned to Judy. "Have you just been to the boiler-house?"

"Oh, yes, miss!" said Judy.

"Did you run away when you saw Miss Browne?"

"Yes. Oh, I—I felt so scared when



THE GIRL TO BLAME! "I've got you, and—you're going to confess!" exclaimed Augusta. "It is because of you that I am expelled from school!"

stantly! Send Judy to me at once—immediately!"

A long pause, and then Judy appeared!

Augusta's heart bounded for a moment, but only for a moment. And then she knew, without doubt, that it was a different parcel that the girl was carrying.

"She—she's tricked us!" she muttered. The breathless servant-girl came hurrying forward.

"You called for me, miss?"

"Yes," said Sybil, in her curtest voice.

"What have you got in that parcel? Open it instantly!"

"Only your—your old dresses you told me to burn, miss," faltered Judy.

"Open it!"

Augusta was standing like a girl in a dream. It did not surprise her at all to see a bundle of Sybil's discarded but still elegant dresses, nothing more. That was where Judy was so artful. Her brain could work so quickly in a real emergency.

"There you are, Augusta!" said Sybil, in a mocking tone.

she looked at me!" said Judy, her cunning wits working at their best. "I—I ran away because I was afraid. But—but as soon as I heard your voice I came back—"

"Cut off and burn those things now!" interrupted Sybil. "And, mind, if I find you wearing any of them or selling them you'll be dismissed instantly. Now get away!"

Augusta watched the girl go, her brain in a whirl.

"I think you're as mad as Judy thinks you are!" commented Sybil.

"I want to search for the parcel that she's put down somewhere!" said Augusta doggedly.

"Parcel she's put down!" gasped Sybil. "Look here, Augusta, no more of this nonsense! If you don't come down with me now, I'll call the maids and have you taken away and jolly well locked in a room!"

"That's your idea of helping me?" muttered Augusta. "That's your professed friendship?"

All of Sybil Spender's anger flamed up again.

"Are you coming? Do you think you're going to drag me about the house, and say what you like?" she cried. "You're coming down at once, or I'll send you about your business instantly! Cheek, I call it! Here are my friends waiting, and you're paid to entertain them! You want to rush about the house looking for a parcel that doesn't exist! There, that's what I think about it!"

Augusta gave in without a word. She had to, and she knew it. She could not afford to run the risk of upsetting Sybil to such an extent that she would order her to leave Spender Court. For, away from the court, she would have no opportunity of keeping an eye on the crafty Judy.

"I can't stand that necklet!" Sybil exclaimed, with sudden, petulant anger. "Take it off! Here!"

She jerked the beads from Augusta's neck, and threw them disdainfully to the side of the passage.

"A present from a silly old aunt—and you would choose them, of course!" Sybil said. "Now you'll have to get on without them. Here we are—that's Kiki talking. For goodness' sake try and pull yourself together!"

Augusta was led into the drawing-room, where Sybil's four friends awaited them. There was something rather fascinating about little Kiki Barbour, in spite of her affected speech and simpering ways; but Augusta knew her by repute as the thoughtless and spendthrift companion, who had once fascinated Vivienne Leigh.

Daphne Luntun gave Augusta a very shrewd and not altogether welcoming look. Tall, languid Cora Clayton she had met before, but Cora did not seem to remember her; and the fourth—Phillida Tankeray—Augusta judged at once to be just an easy-going girl.

"Now you all know each other!" Sybil exclaimed with forced gaiety. "Sorry I've had to keep you waiting for a while, but we'll try and make up for it. Who says tea?"

"Tea," said Kiki Barbour, "would be rippin'!"

The butler was called, and Sybil gave her orders. She signalled to Augusta with her eyes to make some conversation, but Augusta was already feeling utterly out of spirits. This meeting would have charmed her at one time, but it could not to-day.

The few remarks that she made over the lavish little tea fell hopelessly flat; and it did not need Sybil's fierce glances to tell her that she was not proving the success that she was expected to be.

And now she began to understand why Sybil had wanted her so much. In a very subtle but successful way Kiki and the others were always pulling Sybil's leg, and not always as tactfully as they might have done. They were a "Co.," and Sybil was a girl on her own. Sybil had apparently been boasting to them, knowing herself to be far wealthier than they. Now they were having a sort of "revenge," asking Sybil many sarcastic questions, talking of her many motor-cycles, and generally making her feel as uncomfortable as they could, in a polite manner.

Augusta could see it all. She hated the whole business.

"Fetch the violin, and give us a tune, Augusta!" said Sybil suddenly. "Daphne will play if you ask her nicely, I'm sure!"

"Oh, won't you play, Sybil?" Kiki cried innocently. "You two must be practised together, and as Professor

Lunier is your master, you ought to be heaps better than Daphne's tinkling."

"I—I'm rather out of practice, and—I and I'm an awful accompanist, aren't I, Augusta?" said Sybil.

"Yes," answered Augusta absently, and then realised what she had said!

She heard their gay laughter as she went out of the room and hurried to fetch her violin, and knew how Sybil must be feeling. Sybil had frequent visits from the most expensive teacher in Courtfield, but she was not nearly so good as Daphne. Kiki, of course, knew that when she pressed Sybil to play.

Daphne had taken a seat on the music-



DORMITORY NOTES AND NEWS!

By Bessie Bunter.
(FOURTH FORM.)

Miss Bullervint was very amusing the other night. She was waving her arms about in the dormitory because we were not all in bed, and she hit her funny bon on the electric switch and shrieked like anything. I had to laugh, but it was most unjust of her to give me a hundred lines.

Ladey Hettie Henden has been talking so much about having a maid that Clairier Treverlin worked a very good joke on her recently, and pretended to be her maid, and when everyone else was ready to get into bed, Hettie had only got her shoes off! She discharged Clairier!

I have been trying to get up a partition to Miss Primrows for delicate girls to have an extra hour in bed in the mornings. I pointed out on my partition, in rather a clever way, that we are not like the birds that have to get up early to catch their food, but the girls were very unreasonable about my petition, and laughed at it, and Flapp Derwint took it in the end, and said she was going to send it home to her parents. I shan't worry about others any more after this!

Clairier is an awful worry and is always pulling me out of bed in the mornings. I have told her that it is not natural for a girl to be so restless first thing in the morning, and it will make her awfully skinny. What is even worse is that she squeezes cold water over me, and that is awfully dangerous for a delicate girl.

As a matter of fact, I should have had my revenge on Clairier a few mornings ago, except for a little accident. I was going to throw a wet sponge at her, but while I was holding it redly, I happened to squeeze it, and the cold water all ran down my arm. I don't think any girl could be blamed for saying "Ooer!" but Clairier thought it quite a joke!

stool when Augusta returned, and was ready to play when given the music. Augusta tuned up her instrument and tried to do her best.

But it was impossible to do well. Sybil, knowing that Augusta was just her paid servant, was chatting, heedless of the fact that she was waiting to begin. The others were in no mood to listen to anything very earnestly.

Augusta played at last, but it was spiritless and faulty. Sometimes she could lose herself entirely in the mellow, wandering notes of her instrument, and then, indeed, she was a treat to hear. Augusta could not lose herself to-night. She was conscious of their presence all the time—conscious that Sybil was whispering that she should play dance music next!

She did play dance music, and that was worse than ever. Augusta had no heart in it. Kiki was the first to sit down, complaining that the room was too hot; and the others followed her example. Daphne Luntun stopped playing, and Augusta laid down her violin practically unnoticed.

The little party dragged on for another half-hour after that, and then Kiki rose, and said they would have to be hurrying back for dinner. Sybil, her face still a smiling mask, gripped her delicate little hands.

"You'll come to-morrow, Kiki?" she exclaimed. "All of you—will you promise me that?"

"To-morrow?" said Kiki reflectively. "That's Sunday. Oh, bother! I've promised to visit an old friend."

"But you, Cora?" Sybil asked, and then realised what a clumsy attempt she had made to split the party.

"Thanks, but I'm restin' to-morrow," said Cora. "Couldn't come without Kiki. Better make it Monday now!"

Augusta shook their hands lifelessly, and watched them go. She was quite prepared for an outburst from Sybil as soon as they were alone, but not for such an outburst as the one that came.

"You idiot—oh, you fine companion!" Sybil hissed, as she came to her side. Her anger, uncontrolled at last, was already suffusing her cheeks with colour.

"Look what you've done! Look what a dumb, hopeless idiot you looked, and what a fool you've made of me, too! And that violin—oh, it was horrid! Atrocious!"

The words stung Augusta into quick retort.

"How do you think anyone could play when you were talking all the time?"

"Don't pretend you're as musical as all that!" retorted Sybil. "You weren't trying! You were just playing me up; and I'll let you know, pretty soon now, that two of us can play that game! If you'd only been nicer to them, I'm sure they'd have come to-morrow. Now I shan't see anything of them till Monday."

"And I'm glad!" said Augusta.

Sybil Spender stuttered in her anger. "You—you say that to me? You—you— Oh, I could bundle you out of the place now, Augusta, playing me up like this! My word! If there's any more bother when they come on Monday you shall go!"

"Where?" said Augusta. "Anywhere out of this! I don't care twopence what happens to you if you go from here!"

"I thought not," said Augusta.

"And don't speak like that!" said Sybil furiously. "You've got to remember your place when we're alone. You're not going to be just as impudent as you like. You shall earn your money now—I'll see to that! You let me down deliberately to-night!"

"I didn't!" answered Augusta. "You did it yourself, and you know it. You spoil my playing. You wanted me to fawn on you. I don't do that sort of thing; but even if I had, everyone would have seen through it. You ought to know that you've got to stand on your own feet with your fine friends. It won't help you to be as sarcastic as possible to me when ever you speak—as you were to-night! How can a girl in my position keep from being miserable?"

"I suppose you'll say next that you like Kiki better than you like me?" blazed Sybil.

"She would probably have helped me more than you have done!" answered Augusta recklessly.

"Go to your room!" shouted Sybil furiously.

Augusta gave Sybil a sharp look, and

then walked up the stairs, taking her violin with her. She looked at the ornate walls, the costly furniture, the gilding, and the polished brass. How she had loved it all when first she saw it, in her old reckless days! But it was an empty show, that spoke only of selfish luxury!

And Sybil—Sybil was just typical of this home.

Augusta went to the little room that had been allotted to her. She was still breathing quickly. She hated everything that she saw—the very chair that she sat on. What was going to be the end of it all? Deeper and deeper she became involved in her troubles, with everything that happened!

A resolution to plead with Sybil yet again came to her suddenly. She rose and paced into the corridor. But at the head of the stairs she suddenly paused. Girls were talking in the hall. Was it a familiar voice that she had heard uttering the last word or two of some sentence?

Augusta became an unconscious eaves-dropper as Sybil Spender's still angry voice replied to the unseen visitors.

"Yes, she's here!" Sybil was saying. "But she's finished with you and your crowd—she told me so. She won't see anyone! Now, go away!"

Augusta suddenly trembled. To whom was Sybil speaking in that way? The soft click of the front-door latch came to her ears. Pattering footsteps sounded on the marble steps outside. Then the door closed.

Gripped by a sudden thought, Augusta ran along the corridor and came to the window, from which she had looked for Kiki & Co. She saw three figures walking down the drive. It did not need a second glance for Augusta to recognise them.

Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn, and—Peggy Preston!

Augusta gazed with staring eyes, her cheeks blanched. They had been to Spender Court, and—and Sybil had repulsed them! Sybil had told them the falsehoods that she had heard. Babs, Mabs, and Peggy had come to see her, and they had been sent away!

Why had they come? Was it possible even now that they could trust her? Augusta could not believe that. It must have been for remonstrance—perhaps to tell her how disgusted they were at her behaviour in coming to live with Sybil!

She dropped to the window-seat, her heart fluttering. Everything that afternoon had tended to unnerve and upset Augusta, and now her strong reserve deserted her completely. An overwhelming sense of her loneliness in this great house was upon her. She buried her face in her hands, and wept as though her heart would break!

Never Given a Chance.

TWO o'clock in the morning, and still Augusta Anstruther-Browne was tossing restlessly and sleeplessly on her bed.

On this first night at Spender Court she was likely to know little repose. She regretted, more than ever now, the weakness that had allowed her to break down when she saw Babs, Mabs, and Peggy going away. Why hadn't she run after them, and told them that Sybil's words were false?

And yet—perhaps it would only have been snubbed! Augusta was too sensitive to hope that they could still wish to be friendly. And if she had gone out of the house, perhaps Sybil would have dismissed her—and then what?

Good-bye to any hope of catching Judy! Perhaps good-bye to Cliff House,

and Courtfield as well—a return to those relatives in the North, a return as a girl expelled as a thief!

Judy! She was thinking of her as well, almost every moment. Had the servant-girl managed to find an opportunity of burning the cookery aprons? For Augusta was now certain that at least some of them were in the house—that Judy had carried them in that parcel that Augusta had so nearly captured!

But Judy was cunning, although easily scared. And Judy still held the



THE LATEST ABOUT CONNIE!

By Dolly Jobling
(FOURTH FORM.)

Connie Jackson, as you know, is no longer a monstress.

The pedestal on which she once stood knows her no more. She is a Sixth-Former, but with no authority. That Connie wants to win back the esteem of the school cannot be doubted. These are a few of her recent doings:

Feeding the birds in the quadrangle (which created huge amusement, as some paper had pinned on her back a placard reading: "See how nice and kind I can be WHEN YOU'RE WATCHING!").

Pausing to stroke the cat whenever she meets it. Connie, unfortunately, has done it once too often. It was most ungrateful of him to scratch her hand, thinking that she intended to administer her customary smack!

Holding special study teas, open to everyone.

Writing an autograph for nearly all the members of the Second Form (and it was one of Bunny's "japes").

Leading her bicycle to Frances Barrett (who had a most unfortunate accident, and got "ditched." Connie wasn't really sweet when she saw Frances return.)

Attending the hockey field and clapping the Cliff House junior teams at the slightest provocation. But most of them see through it!

Smacking the arm of Ida Jackson, her sister, in view of all the Third-Formers, being well aware of the fact that Ida is a most unpopular member of the Third. (But Madge Stevens did a most unexpected thing; she accused Connie of "bullying a Third-Former," and led a chase that absolutely put Connie to flight!)

Making kind remarks about the Guides.

Offering to help the Fourth-Formers with their prep. (But not since six of us went to her with a fearful array of sums that took Connie half an hour to work out, and then we told her that they were nothing to do with our prep at all, and we shouldn't ask a Sixth-Former's help.)

From the above you will see that the stunts of Connie are many and varied; but they're not taking in the school as Connie seemed to hope!

whip-hand. If she cared to lay low, Augusta could do little or nothing.

Click! What was that sound that came suddenly to her alert, straining ears? It sounded like the closing of an outer door—just below her room!

Augusta sprang from her bed and ran to the window. She peered out, to find her eyes instantly riveted by a small figure that moved below. She saw a girl and—a bundle. Her eyes blinked disbelievingly.

But it was true! She recognised Judy Grigg at once. She saw the heavy parcel that she was carrying. It could only mean one thing!

Augusta was away from the window, and scrambling instantly into her outer

clothes and topcoat. Within a minute she had opened the door, and was running along the passage. She did not know how to reach the door by which Judy had left, but she could find the front door.

By the aid of one or two passage-lights, Augusta reached the stairs, slipped rather than ran down them, and came to the front door. Her trembling hands drew the bolts and the chain. She jumped down the marble steps outside, and wheeled to her left.

Judy—trying to leave with the aprons! The thought seemed to give Augusta increased speed. She leapt a flower-bed, and sped across a smooth stretch of lawn.

She had been very quick. Judy, moving with great stealth, had not gone far. Augusta saw her suddenly, flitting between the bushes dotted about the kitchen-garden.

She was running to catch Judy when she started back with a suddenness that almost hurt her. There was a trellis fence right across the garden, dividing the lawn from the part where Judy was. It was high—eight feet or more. Augusta tugged frantically, to find it—padlocked!

"Oh!" She heard that cry from Judy, who had been alarmed at last. Only a yard or two separated them, but there was the fence between them—always something, it seemed! With the energy of furious disappointment, Augusta gripped the fence and started to climb it. Judy wheeled and darted back for the house. "Stop!" cried Augusta wildly.

"Judy, stop! I've seen you!" She hauled herself over the top and thudded to the ground below. Even as she raced forward she heard the slamming of a door. There came the creaking of bolts.

It was hardly necessary for Augusta to try the door to know that Judy had locked her out.

Her mind was working too quickly for any dalliance. She was back at the fence, and climbing over it. She raced back to the front, and was entering, when lights began to spring up in the house.

Sybil Spender, clad in a dressing-gown, met her as she rushed up the stairs.

"What ever's the matter?" was her startled exclamation.

Augusta told her excited tale, but hardly paused in her headlong pursuit. She left Sybil to explain to the others who were now appearing in the passage.

Straight to the top of the house she ran, and here she found the housekeeper—a motherly old soul who had shown her more kindness than most of them at Spender Court.

At Augusta's excited words the housekeeper took her to Judy's room. They tried the door, but it was locked. They knocked and banged. Then a sleepy voice answered them.

And when they were given admittance at last they found Judy—in bed!

She looked guilty, of course. Augusta knew that. But she had had just time to get undressed again, and she was acting as well as was in her power. And although Augusta hurried round the room, looking everywhere, she could find no trace of the parcel that Judy had been trying to take from the house!

Then despair descended on her. She had half expected this when Judy gave her the slip outside the house. The parcel had disappeared again—hidden in some spot only known, in all probability, to the servants. She had no heart to ask Judy any of the questions that the cunning girl could now so easily evade.

But Sybil Spender when she came asked those questions, and Judy denied

ever being out of her room and ever seeing a parcel, and said that it was a trick, or imagination, on Augusta's part, because she bore her a grudge.

"You say you haven't been out of this room?" Sybil asked for the second time.

"No, miss. Oh, I vow I haven't!" quavered Judy. "I-I daren't go out at night, miss, in this big house!"

"Then I think that you must be perfectly mad, Augusta!" said Sybil Spender, turning against her with a readiness that did not really surprise Augusta. "Is there anyone else but you to say that Judy has been out?"

Spender Court in the dead of night. Perhaps Judy would not have a second opportunity, and she might not try the same thing again; but it had availed Augusta nothing. She had prevented Judy, but not caught her, and Sybil was very angry that there had been such an alarm in the night.

She realised exactly what form that anger was to take when she had dressed, and went into the corridor the following Sunday morning. Sybil Spender was there, and gave her a cold nod.

"Oh, don't come down, Augusta!" she said. "It's been arranged that you're to have your next few meals in the house-

when she alarmed the house during the night. Clearly she did not like Judy. But Augusta noted that she made no criticism of Sybil Spender, or of what she had done.

Augusta, however, quite enjoyed the meal, and was heartened as she had not been before when the housekeeper promised that she would keep her own eyes on Judy Grigg.

"It's a queer position, as you say, Miss Browne," she observed, "but I've always felt that that girl Judy had something worrying her. I shouldn't be at all surprised if that is really her trouble. I'll see that she doesn't have another chance of getting the parcel of aprons away."

Almost blithe at that promise, Augusta went to see Sybil, and was curtly told that she would not be wanted that morning. She asked the housekeeper if she could go with her to church, and was warmly given the invitation she wished for.

"Come with me, by all means, my dear. I shall be only too pleased!" said the housekeeper.

So it was settled at that, and Augusta got ready. It was only when they started that she realised where they were bound for—the pretty little village church of Friardale!

And the Cliff House girls would be there, Augusta knew. She had been with them a fortnight ago to-day.

Augusta hesitated, but only momentarily. After all, she had nothing to fear. If she met with black looks from her old friends, she would know that she had earned them.

They were only just in time for the service, and the Cliff House girls were already in their places. Augusta sat in a pew at the back, and looked in front of her. She blinked her eyes. Was it quite by accident that there was a vacant place between Peggy Preston and the stone pillar—the seat that she usually occupied?

It was the most moving service that Augusta ever remembered. She listened to the singing, and she could distinguish the voices of many of the Fourth-Formers—most of all, it seemed, that of Peggy. Peggy!

She felt her heart beating. What must Peggy think of her, as she had never had a chance to explain? And Peggy had tried to do so much for her!

It was all over at last. But when they were outside the church, Augusta hesitated, oddly reluctant to go away. She was trying to hope that some of them might have seen her—that perhaps Peggy, or Babs, or one of them would give her some chance of saying just a word in her favour. And suddenly her heart bounded as she became aware that all the Fourth-Formers, marshalled two and two, were coming along the pavement towards her!

She looked towards them. At the very same moment Miss Steel, who was in charge of them, seemed to observe her as well. Augusta heard a sharp order, "Right wheel!" and they turned away from her as though it would even be humiliating for them to pass on the same pavement.

Augusta turned, a choking lump in her throat. A real outcast now—the "chum" of Sybil Spender. She walked back to Spender Court, a prey to all her old thoughts. Supposing that she was not successful in proving Judy's guilt? She would have forfeited the trust and respect of all her Cliff House friends—for nothing at all!

Now she did not know whether she had done rightly or not. Would it have been better to have stayed in Courtfield and trusted to Judy betraying herself in



MY LATEST LITTLE WORRY



The Result of Philippa Derwent's Latest Activities with Her Notebook.

BARBARA REDFERN.—Getting the proper kind of copy for the "Cliff House Weekly." Some girls will persist in writing on subjects that nobody wants to read about. I could write a whole page on this matter, but, after all, that would not be the proper kind of matter, either!

MABEL LYNN.—Impressing upon Meg Lennox exactly what kind of costumes I want for the forthcoming Easter play. I have to watch her like an eagle!

BESSIE BUNTER.—How I'm going to last out until supper! I've not had a bite to eat for an hour and a half, and I'm famished! If you've got anything left in your cupboard, Flap—

MARJORIE HAZELDENE.—How I shall manage to get all the girls to do some knitting for the charity bazaar next week.

CLARA TREVLYN.—Whose window I broke when I threw a hockey ball into the air a few minutes ago. I felt so vigorous I simply had to throw it! And then came a tinkle of glass from somewhere in the dusk—well, I suppose I shall hear about it all in good time!

DOLLY JOBLING.—What the Bull will say when she finds a lot of sweets adhering to the back of her dress! You see, she's just sat down in a tray of sweets that I'd left in the chair to cool!

VIVIENNE LEIGH.—Why Stephen didn't come to the school this afternoon. He promised me faithfully that he would. I do hope nothing has happened to him on the way. (Viv's brother turned up just as I jotted down her "latest little worry." I didn't stay to ask what her very latest is. I don't believe she has one!)

ANNABEL HICHENS.—Look you here, what I want to know is—who is it has just broken my window with a hockey ball? See the mess made by this broken glass all over the carpet! I do believe it's Clara Trevlyn! She's just the sort of unladylike girl who would, and I declare I'm going to speak to her plainly about it straight away! A woman's place is in the home, and if she'd been in the home—I mean, the study—she wouldn't have got into this mischief! (Clara's latest worry will vanish when she learns that it's only Annabel's window she's broken!—P. D.)

FREDA FOOTE.—Don't bother! I'm worried trying to find a rhyme for "hurry" and "flurry." Why, that suggests it, Flap! "Worry" is the word!

GWENDOLINE COOK.—I'm deeply worried as to whether that was, or was not, a ghost I saw to-night leaning against the gates. (Ask Piper!—P. D.)

CISSIE CLARE.—As I'm very busy with prep, Flap, the only thing that worries me now is your presence! Sorry! (I returned profound thanks, and withdrew.—P. D.)

PHYLLIS HOWELL.—Whether or not we're strong enough to beat the Danes in the return match.

MEG LENNOX.—Whether or not the new hat I've just bought really suits me.

KATIE SMITH.—Whether the ripping adventure story I've just finished reading is really true, and whether the people it's about really exist or not!

AGNES WHITE.—What it was I promised to do for Miss Bullivant, and what favour I promised Barbara this afternoon, and what the knot in my handkerchief is there for, and what— (Oh, heaps more!—P. D.)

Augusta had to admit that there was not.

But she hardly cared now. She had been tricked yet again. She knew that it was hopeless to even ask Sybil that the house might be searched for a parcel that Judy had popped into some hiding-place. Sybil would not do it. Augusta listened to the other words that followed, and then went back to her room in a kind of a dream.

To sleep? No, there was to be little sleep for Augusta that night. She felt that she was involved more deeply than ever in these troubles that had descended on her.

Would she never prove Judy's guilt? She did not know. But for her wakefulness that night the aprons might certainly have been smuggled away from

keeper's room. The mater and pater are really fearfully annoyed with you over last night and your stupid dreaming. I don't want to have a scene."

"All right," said Augusta. She realised exactly what it meant as Sybil went down the stairs. It was the withdrawal of one of the dazzling prospects that Sybil had dangled before her eyes when she asked her to come there—to live like one of the family. Augusta did not mind, for that matter. But it showed once more Sybil's true character.

Augusta made her way to the housekeeper's room, and introduced herself. She found that it was to prove, after all, a far more pleasant meal than she had had hitherto at Spender Court.

The housekeeper was a pleasant soul, and evidently believed that there was something in what Augusta had said

some way? She could not answer that. But her mind was black and hazy. She could think of nothing but that turned procession that had gone on to the opposite pavement rather than pass her.

She had her lunch with the housekeeper, and then went to her room. She spent the whole afternoon trying to compose a letter to Peggy Preston, but tore up each attempt. She could make nothing of it, because she dared not guess at Peggy's feelings, and after tea there was no further chance.

Sybil called her to her "den" to read to her—a task that she had evidently been meditating on all day. And after dinner Augusta had to "help" rearrange her den by doing all the work herself.

After the scene on the previous evening, Augusta was not surprised at Sybil's distant manner towards her. She realised the purpose of the "light tasks" given her to perform. She must understand that she was not on an equality with Sybil; that Sybil was a mistress who paid her. She must be prepared to do just everything that Sybil wanted.

And that was the girl who had once been her "friend." Not a thought did she seem to have about Judy. In fact, it seemed to Augusta rather as though Sybil hoped that the servant-girl would not be caught. It kept Augusta at Spender Court, and that was what Sybil evidently wanted.

But there was a little consolation for Augusta. Before she had turned in for the night, the housekeeper came to her room for a little chat. She was more confidential than she had been before, and her report concerned Judy.

Four or five of the maids who were to be trusted, she said, had been keeping an eye on the new girl all that day, and were certain that it had annoyed and worried her. They were not going to relax.

Augusta gripped the housekeeper's wrinkled hands, and looked gratefully into her eyes. It was the finest thing she had heard that day!

"You really mean it, Mrs. Leggett?" she breathed.

"I do!" nodded the other. "Oh, Miss Brown, perhaps—perhaps it's unwise for me to speak like this, when Miss Sybil seems so indifferent. But I've always thought that I could tell an honest face—and a dishonest one! I know that you're in some terrible predicament, and I believe that it isn't your fault. I'm going to help you all I can!"

And after that, when Augusta was lying in her bed, she cried with gratitude. Real allies at last! Little did Sybil realise that she had thrown Augusta up against such friends.

They would watch Judy, to help her. Why, there was hope, after all! Her duties had seemed likely to tie her, and keep her right away from the servants. But this—it would be so different. It was hope—real hope—the first real hope she had had!

She cried herself to sleep, but awoke with a happier feeling on the Monday. She bore Sybil's brusqueness patiently. There were sewing tasks for her in the morning, and she worked at them well, determined to earn her pay as well as she could. After lunch she had to read to Sybil again, and then play her violin whilst Sybil practised an accompaniment laboriously and impatiently on the piano.

It was nearly teatime, when a note came from Kiki Barbour. Sybil tore it open, and frowned pettishly as she read it.

"Not coming until after dinner now," she frowned. She stamped her foot on the carpet. "Oh, bother them—bother them! I've a jolly good mind to be out when they call!"

Augusta waited, knowing that Sybil was not likely to do such a thing.

"That's it—sit there like a dummy, and say nothing!" Sybil cried, whirling round on the piano-stool. "And you're a companion! Can't you say anything?"

Augusta could have said many things, but she refrained from doing so. Sybil got up, and paced up and down the room.

"I'll have tea at the Creameries now. I can't stay here!" said Sybil suddenly. "You'd better come with me. You're my companion. Goodness knows what they'll think of me being out with a

"Here—here, come back!" Sybil gasped. "I won't have—"

But Augusta was already running heedlessly after the four Fourth-Formers. She could recognise them all—Gwen Cook, Cissy Clare, Lucy Morgan, and Freda Foote. She could not resist the impulse that made her follow.

"Gwen!"

Gwendoline Cook turned as she heard Augusta's breathless cry.

"I'm sorry to call you back!" Augusta panted, as she hurried up to them. "I dare say that you feel pretty



LATEST NEWS FROM THE FOURTH FORM STUDIES!

STUDY No. 5. (Shared by Phyllis Howell and Philippa Derwent.)—By far the most interesting event here lies in the fact that the Australian mail has just arrived. Flap, who hails from Tasmania, is now joyously scanning quite a pile of letters from her people and her friends "down under." At the same table, Phyllis Howell is endeavouring to make notes from the reports of the season's hockey matches. Somehow or other, Flap's letters and Phyllis' reports persist in getting mixed in the most distressing fashion. The result is, Flap keeps finding herself perusing Phyllis' reports, whilst Phyllis repeatedly finds herself staring at one or another of Flap's letters!

STUDY No. 6. (Shared by Freda Foote, Gwendoline Cook, and Agnes White.)—With three such girls as study-mates—a confirmed humorist, a girl who believes in ghosts, and a girl with a memory like Agnes—it is not surprising that disturbances are frequent here! Gwen found that her latest "spook" article—upon which she was to lecture that very evening—was missing. Agnes remembered having put it carefully away somewhere; but where—well, Agnes had forgotten! At last, one single minute before the lecture was due to commence, Agnes remembered. She had placed it on the top shelf of the cupboard. She forgot why. In a frantic hurry Gwen climbed up, seized the typed sheet, and dashed away to the Common-room. Gwen began her lecture with force and gusto, but conscious that the wording was not quite familiar. A sudden yell of laughter from her listeners—and not only that—made her pull up. She understood! What she was reading was nothing more or less than a comic article on "spooks" by Freda Foote! What Gwen thinks of Agnes' memory and Freda's humorous efforts, would fill whole volumes!

STUDY No. 7. (Shared by Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevlyn, and Dolly Jobling.)—Marjorie has for some little time been engaged upon the thankless task of knitting a pair of slippers for Clara. Clara did not want the slippers, but Marjorie insisted. To-day those slippers disappeared, and, after a frantic search on the part of Clara, they were found being used as kettle-holders by the thoughtless Dolly Jobling. It was agreed by a majority of two to one—Clara and Dolly against Marjorie—that the slippers should continue to serve that purpose. But Clara had been doing a little knitting on her own account—a pair of gloves for her brother Dick. Strangely enough, these disappeared shortly after the slippers were found! Then, indeed, began a frantic hunt round the study on the part of Clara. Imagine her surprise when she found Dolly using them as saucenap holders! It transpired that the slippers had fallen behind the gas range, and Dolly, seeing the gloves, had mistaken them for her latest "kettle-holders." Clara's gloves—mistaken for large slippers! Heated words are still passing between Clara and Dolly even as I pen these lines!

STUDY No. 8. (Shared by Bridget O'Toole, Lucy Morgan, and Meg Lennox.)—There is nothing of special interest to report from this celebrated apartment. The fashion-loving Meg is still busily turning out "creations," and Bridget and Lucy are made to serve as models for the "trying on" of them.

STUDY No. 9. (Shared by Vivienne Leigh and Peggy Preston.)—Music, singing and dancing are, just at present, the craze in No. 9. Peggy has a beautiful voice, and Vivienne is a splendid step-dancer. The two invariably attract a small audience whenever they begin, for Vivienne's dancing is quite a treat to watch. Peggy's voice fills the Fourth Form quarters with really entrancing melody, and, far from distracting us girls' attentions from whatever task we are upon, it makes our labours much more easy and pleasant!

girl who was a waitress there! Tell Farrington to order the car!"

Augusta did so, and ten minutes later she was bowling away in the car that had once delighted her so much. They were different feelings that it inspired now.

At the Creameries the waitresses were polite enough to keep any surprise that they felt to themselves. Augusta ate her tea slowly, and chatted with Sybil on quite ordinary matters.

It was when they were going out that Augusta first caught sight of a familiar hat-band. She looked again, and knew that her eyes had not deceived her. Four Cliff House girls had just gone along the pavement!

"Just a moment, Sybil!" she exclaimed.

fed-up with me! But I just want to send a message."

"Not by us!" interposed Gwen Cook cuttingly.

"What?"

Gwen Cook gazed scornfully at the girl who had stopped her.

"Not by us!" she repeated. "We've finished with you, Augusta, the same as everyone else has! You're a disgrace to those who trusted you and tried to help you!" She raised her arm, and pointed back along the pavement. "Go back to your snobbish friend, Sybil Spender, and enjoy yourself—if you can!"

And then, as Augusta stood like one rooted to the spot, the four of them turned and resumed their walk.

She had been cut—openly snubbed!



SCORNFUL BY HER FRIENDS! "We've finished with you, Augusta!" said Gwen Cook, scornfully. "Go back to your snobbish friend, Sybil Spender, and enjoy yourself!"

It was true! They'd finished with her! That was what Babs and Peggy had come to tell her! She had guessed aright yesterday, and she had obeyed that sudden impulse to try to explain to her old friends—only to be treated like that!

She returned to Sybil Spender, who awaited her with a mocking smile.

"So they don't want you, Augusta?" she purred.

Augusta got into the car without a word.

"Perhaps, now that you see that they don't want to have anything to do with the dear, 'reformed' Augusta, you'll be different!" said Sybil, with a touch of triumph. "You've been my companion more than you think for. You'll have to stick your job, and please me! If you want to enjoy yourself, you'd better make up your mind to be more like the girl you used to be!"

The car drove on, and threaded its way back to Spender Court. Augusta stared about her. Her humiliation was evidently not over. They passed Miss Bullivant, and Stella Stone, and then Amy Barlow and other popular Fifth-Formers. From each and every one she received just the same stony stare.

Yes, they all seemed to hate cut her!

Peggy's Daring Plan!

AN hour or so later there was a very angry scene in the Common-room at Cliff House School, little as Augusta suspected it.

It was when Gwendoline Cook described her unexpected meeting with Augusta that the trouble started.

"What had she got to say?" asked Clara.

"I'm sure I don't know!" Gwen said, in a very superior voice.

"What do you mean?"

"If you think I was going to stand and talk to her, you're very much mistaken!" said Gwen Cook warmly.

"There was Sybil Spender waiting for
THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 145.

her, with the car. There's no possible doubt about what she's done!"

Peggy Preston was at her side.

"Tell me just what Augusta said, Gwen!" she exclaimed.

"Said?" said Gwen loftily. "Oh, something about a message! But I didn't want to hear her message. I just walked on!"

"After she had run after you specially to say something?" cried Peggy.

"Yes! I'm not taking her part like you are!" retorted Gwen.

"I should have thought that even you would have believed that Augusta was entitled to say a word in her own defence!" answered Peggy spiritedly. "She's been able to say nothing as yet—not a word!"

"And hasn't tried until now!" said Gwen.

Gwen turned on Freda, who was looking uncomfortable.

"You, Freda?" she exclaimed. "You didn't cut her as well, did you?"

Freda shifted from one leg to the other.

"I—I hardly felt, after what's happened, you know, and—and what Miss Primrose said to us."

Peggy gasped.

"So you wouldn't listen, either?"

"No. You see, I—I really agree with Gwen."

"I think it was perfectly horrid of you, Freda!" Peggy cried indignantly. "Four of you out, and Augusta must have had something special to say to you. I don't believe that Augusta has gone to Spender Court for selfish pleasure at all, and I'll never believe it!"

"Hear, hear!" spoke up Babs and Mabs.

"She had some reason, and—and she might have told you," Peggy went on. "Babs, Mabs, and I weren't allowed to see her the other night—"

"And a jolly good thing, too!" said Gwen.

"Yesterday morning Miss Steel turned us when we came out of church. We had no opportunity then," Peggy explained. "Goodness knows that it's difficult

enough to get a word with her now! And yet when she speaks to you you won't even listen!"

"Jolly unsporting of you, Gwen!" declared Clara.

"Yes; Augusta made the first advance!" observed Flap Derwent.

"I don't care what any of you think!" Gwen cried angrily. "I wasn't going to speak to the girl, and I'd cut her again. I've finished with Augusta, after this!"

"She shouldn't have gone to that girl Sybil, and be riding about with her in her motor-car," said Lucy Morgan.

"And I think the same," said Cissy Clare.

The argument broke out fiercely at that. The Form was still divided on the subject of Augusta, and her backers hardly formed a majority now.

Their position was not improved by the speech that Bessie Bunter added to the discussion. Bessie had enough affection for Babs usually to be influenced by what Babs said and did, and she was now. But Bessie had very queer ways of saying what she meant.

"No reason why you should run down Augusta at all," she declared. "Besides, I don't care if she is friendly with old Sybil, provided Sybil has turned over a new leaf. Think what spiffing rides she could get us in Sybil's motor-car!"

The derisive laughter of Gwendoline and Marcia Loftus, and all the other "hostiles," at that unfortunate utterance practically turned the scales. Gwen found more support; Peggy Preston found less. Fearing another scene, Babs at last retired from the Common-room.

"It's a wretched position—absolutely wretched, Mabs!" she confided to her chum, as she sat in Study No. 4. "I believe that Peggy's right all the time, and even now I think that Augusta deserves our support. Supposing she's gone to Spender Court against her will, because she has been forced by want! Think what an awful time she'll be having!"

"And she may have been forced to go there!" nodded Mabel dejectedly. "The others won't see it; but we don't really know the state of her aunt's drapery business now. It might have been essential for Augusta to take any job."

"If only we could find out for certain!" muttered Babs.

Mabs replied, after a pause.

"I wish Augusta had written, or managed to send a message by Gwen," she said. "As it is, we're in the dark, and will never convince the others. That girl Sybil told us that Augusta wouldn't see us, I know—"

"But I don't trust Sybil," said Babs decidedly. "She was furiously angry at the time, and it seemed as though she was angry with Augusta. That didn't seem as though they were chums. And yesterday, when Miss Steel turned us, I—"

"Yes, I'm sure Augusta wanted to speak to us then," nodded Mabs; and they both fell silent, a prey to their own thoughts.

The silence lasted for a long while. Babs and Mabs, unable to think of anything that they could do, were just opening their books for prep when a knock sounded on the door. Almost before they could reply, Peggy Preston burst into the room. Her eyes were dancing excitedly.

"My word, Peggy!" exclaimed Mabs.

"What's the matter?"

Peggy's answer fairly took their breath away.

"I'm going to Spender Court!"

Babs and Mabs blinked their amazement at that dramatic statement.

"Wh-wh-what?" said Mabs.

"You—you must be pulling our legs!" said Babs disbelievingly.

"No, I'm not; it's a fact," Peggy answered. "The idea came to me, all of a sudden, and I've arranged everything. I'm going now!"

"Now?" said Babs, more amazed than ever.

"Yes, Miss Steel's given me a pass to go out."

"Never! Not a pass to visit Spender Court, surely?" gasped Babs.

"I didn't exactly tell Miss Steel where I was going," said Peggy quickly. "I've got to risk being caught. I don't suppose I shall be."

"But—but if you were, Peggy, you—you might be publicly caned!" said Babs, torn between excitement and anxiety.

"It's a risk, but I must take it," said Peggy. "Oh, Babs, I must see Augusta somehow—I must! Goodness knows why she is at Spender Court, but I'm going to find out the truth to-night. Gwen wouldn't do anything, but we'll get on without her help. Listen, and I'll tell you how I've done it. You know I've been collecting for the little Kiddies' Home in Courtfield?"

"You're always doing something like that, Peggy," said Babs quietly.

Peggy blushed slightly. "Not always; and you always back me up so well when I do," she answered. "The particular card that I've got has got to be in to-morrow. Miss Steel has given me permission to go out and see if I can get any more subscriptions, if I'm not more than half an hour gone. I said I thought I could do it."

"But they'll never give anything at Spender Court!" breathed Babs. "They're horridly mean when it comes to helping anyone else!"

"I'm going to call on Miss Moggridge on the way," Peggy explained. "She lives very near to the Court. I shall go on when I've seen her."

"But you'll be sent away, the same as we were the other evening."

Peggy actually laughed. "No, I sha'n't!" she said. "I've got a fine scheme to get over that. You know we saw Augusta with a lady on Sunday morning?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's Mrs. Leggett, house-keeper at Spender Court. She's a jolly good sort, and a great friend of Mrs. Towle, our matron. I've got Mrs. Towle to give me a letter of introduction to Mrs. Leggett. Don't you think she's a brick, Babs?"

Babs "saw" at last. "No one else on the staff would have done so much, Peggy!" she declared.

Peggy nodded eagerly.

"I never expected that she would," she said. "Bravo, Mrs. Towle! Now you see my scheme? I'm going to see Mrs. Leggett, and I'm sure she'll arrange for Augusta to see me in some manner without Sybil knowing. Even if she can't, I can leave a message."

"And you're going to take this risk for Augusta's sake, Peggy?" breathed Babs.

"I'd do more—anything," answered Peggy simply. "I'm sure she's innocent—I'm sure she didn't deserve expulsion. And when I see her, we'll find out for certain what has really happened, and why she is there!"

"Bravo, Peggy!" Babs and Mabs hugged the girl from the North, the girl who had once been at the school on a scholarship. This was the real, self-sacrificing Peggy, and they had never loved her so much before. She was going to take a risk, but one that had their hearty sympathy. And Peggy was the girl who had been so cruelly treated by Augusta when she was first at the school.

Truly, it was repaying good for evil! Truly, it was a very fine thing that Peggy was proposing to do!

Peggy's Champion.

AUGUSTA ANSTRUTHER-BROWNE was waiting to go to the drawing-room and meet Kiki Barbour and her chums for the second time.

Dinner was over at Spender Court, and the visitors had just arrived. Augusta had dressed ready to meet them—and Sybil had not failed to remind her of the fact that the dress was really Sybil's own, and had been a most expensive purchase.

Augusta would have accompanied the rich girl, but at the last moment Sybil had said that she would go alone, and send for her in a few minutes.

Tired of waiting, Augusta at length rose and went tripping down the stairs towards the drawing-room to see whether she was wanted yet.

It was the sound of a familiar voice, floating through the half-open door of the drawing-room that suddenly arrested Augusta.

She stopped rigidly still. It was so unexpected that it startled her. She knew that voice well, but she had never expected to hear it at Spender Court!

For the voice was the voice of Peggy Preston!

"Peggy!" breathed Augusta. She heard it again. "Yes, it is! But what is she doing here? And there is someone else talking—someone who—"

And there she broke off, her heart fluttering. Her hand gripped hard on the baluster-rail. One long, indrawn breath hissed sibilantly through her set teeth.

"So you're collecting—eh?" asked the mocking voice of Sybil Spender.

"Yes," Peggy answered, so clearly that it was as though Augusta stood in the room. "You see, it's a very deserving cause—"

"For the poor little children! How touching!" interrupted that mocking voice, and there was a chuckle of answering laughter. "Are they all like you? Do they all talk like that? What a dreffle, depressing place it must be!"

"They are—" began Peggy, but she was interrupted.

"They ought to be supported, as you say!" Sybil Spender went on. "Then perhaps they'd turn into nice little scholarship girls, and brighten the lives of girls like us. Ha, ha, ha! They may even come round with collecting-cards for homes for paralysed pussies, and blind bow-wows—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" sounded the laughter again.

Augusta went on down the stairs again, with hard-set jaw and glittering eyes.

She was not bothering for an explanation. The essential fact was clear to her. Peggy Preston was collecting for some charity, and Sybil and her spiteful friends were making fun of her, and mocking her.

There was a dull fury in her heart that made her forget all her own troubles. They were insulting Peggy. That was all she thought of. And Peggy was the girl who had saved her from the blackest of black despair; the girl from whom she would do anything!

"Come on, girls—come on!" Sybil called out brightly. "We'll put our names on the card—eh? I've got a half-penny, and a bright farthing! Has anyone—Oh!"

Crash! Sybil spun round as the door crashed back on its hinges. Augusta stood regarding her, with smouldering eyes, and lips set in a thin, hard line.

It was like a bombshell to the five sneering girls.

"Oh!" gasped little Kiki Barbour, the first to recover her composure. "It's only Augusta, Sybil. Perhaps she'd like to contribute—"

"Be quiet!" said Augusta, not even looking at her.

"Augusta, you—you haven't been



PEGGY PRESTON AT SPENDER COURT! "Peggy!" breathed she broke off, her heart fluttering. For in the drawing-room with Sybil and her friends was Peggy Preston!

"baked yet!" said Sybil, with an attempted haughtiness. "Please go back to your room until—"

"You think you are being funny?" Augusta asked, her voice like the first mutter of a storm.

"Yes!" answered Sybil, with forced defiance. "If creeping scholarship girls come in here begging they must put up with what they get. It's no business of yours, and—"

"Sybil Spender," said Augusta, the first tremor of rage creeping into her voice. "Do you know what you are? You are a horrid, despicable—"

"There was consternation in the room. Sybil's face went as pale as a sheet.

"What! You—you dare—"

"Yes!" Augusta cried, and suddenly all her restraint was gone, and the storm had burst. "I'll tell you what you are now! You're contemptible, mean, hateful! You've insulted my best friend! Don't answer me! Don't try to talk!" She stood against Sybil, and cowed her by the fury in her flashing eyes. "I'm telling you now!"

"I don't blame you so much, because Sybil was the ringleader," said Augusta, with more restraint in her voice again.

"But I have the right to speak to you because you were joining in this. Peggy isn't a scholarship girl now, if you want to know—she probably has as much money at her command as most of you. But I should have thought that there would have been one of you—yes, just one!"—and Augusta looked at them each in turn—"who would have had the kindness and the good manners to protest against this sort of thing!"

Sybil was trying to say something, but even her own friends ignored her and kept their attention on Augusta as though magnetised.

"I don't mind how you spend your money—it's no business of mine!" Augusta went on. "You can feed in the Creameries to your heart's content—I used to do it myself at one time. But I won't have you mocking a girl who is unselfish enough to think about others. If you didn't want to contribute, you could have said so—that would have

found her talking to the housekeeper, and brought her along for a bit of a jape—"

"And it was a jape, too!" said Sybil defiantly. "Anyway, it's finished now, and that's enough about it. Peggy Preston, you can get away again!"

She pointed to the door, and Peggy, who had been standing as amazed and confused as anyone, obeyed the order at once.

But Augusta went, too, and out in the hall they stood together.

"Augusta, it was too good of you!" Peggy gulped. "You really shouldn't have said so much—"

"I didn't say half I wanted to, Peggy," Augusta put in. "Oh, it's the very least I could do!"

"But Sybil!" protested Peggy. "After this she'll be angry—"

"Angry! As though I care!" answered Augusta. "She's seldom been anything but that with me!"

"Aren't—aren't you her friend again, Augusta?" asked Peggy, a catch in her voice.

"Good gracious, no!" said Augusta. "I wanted to tell you, and I've never been able. I can see now that you really came here to see me, Peggy. Goodness knows why you should trust me still, after what I've done. But I'm here for a purpose. Judy Grigg is here as a maid—"

And then there was no time to say more, for Sybil was standing before them. The flush on her face was deeper. Her expression was ugly.

"Farrington!" she cried.

The butler appeared almost at once.

"Show this girl out!" Sybil said, and indicated Peggy.

"Very good!"

Peggy went. Augusta watched the door close. It was a startled cry from Sybil that made her turn round.

"What! You're not going already, Kiki?"

Kiki and her three companions had come into the hall.

"Sorry, Sybil—must, you know!" said Kiki uneasily. Nothing to do with this little business, of course; but it's so dreffly late as it is. Meant to tell you that we had only just come to give you a look in, eh, Phil?"

"Rather!" said Phillida.

"Come another night all right," said Kiki confidently. "It is a bit late, isn't it Sybil? Awfully sorry to rush off like this, when we've seen so little of you, but I—I promised to be back early."

Sybil took the proffered hand and tried to smile.

She knew that it was false—but polite! They were going because of that scene. They sided with Augusta—against her!

"Good-bye, Augusta!"

Kiki was shaking hands as cheerfully with Augusta as she had done with Sybil! Phillida Tankeray did the same, and then the elegant and languorous Cora Clayton. Only Daphne Linton moved on towards the door as though she was forgetting Augusta.

The seconds that followed seemed as long as minutes to all of them. Augusta stood by the drawing-room door, but Sybil accompanied the others along the hall. It was just the lull, Augusta knew, before the storm burst again. Her anger had passed now, leaving her curiously reluctant for the inevitable scene. But when she heard the closing of the front door at last, she braced herself for what must now happen.

Sybil Spender came back along the hall.



SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT!

After the Fourth Form had been speculating on "The Most Amazing Happening Possible!" Mabel Lynn committed them to paper.

SUPPOSING there was a serious fire at Cliff House (for which we don't hope, of course!) and there was no accommodation for the Fourth Form! Where should we go?

SUPPOSING that nearly all our mistresses went to stay somewhere for the weekend, and they were unable to return to the school! How should we get on?

SUPPOSING a girl like Annabel Hichens suddenly came into a title and great wealth, just as Lady Hetty did!

SUPPOSING Miss Primrose had to leave, for some cause or other, and a really harsh headmistress came to take her place!

SUPPOSING the school, being an old building, was suddenly condemned as unsafe until the builders had renewed the foundations! Where should we all go?

SUPPOSING a film company was allowed to come to Cliff House to make film scenes of life at a modern girls' school! Would it cause any fun and excitement?

SUPPOSING the Danesford Hall girls had to turn out of their school for some reason, and they were all billeted with us!

SUPPOSING Miss Bullivant fell in love, and she became the best-natured mistress at Cliff House!

SUPPOSING that the coming summer proved so hot that the governors gave orders that we were to leave the school and live an open-air life under canvas!

SUPPOSING (and we said this one last of all) Bessie Bunter's expected remittance really did arrive!!!

"Augusta!" came a palpitating cry from Kiki.

"You! I'll deal with you later!" Augusta snapped. "Peggy has come here, Sybil Spender—why? To collect for the good of someone else, because she hasn't a greedy, selfish mind. She knows that there are others who need help! You sneer at her—laugh at her! You— Oh, I haven't words for you!"

Sybil licked her pale, quivering lips. "Go—go away!" she stammered. "I—I won't have this! I order you back to your—your room, at once—"

"Not yet!" said Augusta. "You've insulted my friend, Sybil, you've never yet learnt what a friend is. When you've done, and everything seems black, and the whole world is against you—that's when you find out your real friends—those who are not prepared to drop you like a hot coal. Peggy didn't desert me, because she can always think of others—as you've mocked her for doing to-night. Now do you understand why I speak like this?"

She turned from Sybil as though even too contemptuous to wait for a reply, and faced the others.

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been sufficient. I've done little enough myself to be able to throw stones at you. That's all!"

And the silence that fell in the room as Augusta finished speaking was so intense that a pin could have been heard to drop.

Kiki Barbour suddenly coughed, and every eye turned on her flushing face.

"There's a lot in what Augusta's been sayin'!" stammered Kiki, and at that she went redder than ever.

Sybil tried to say something.

"In—in fact, it—it was jolly bad form of you, you know, to—to talk to Peggy as we did—what?" went on Kiki. "Anyway, I—I didn't really mean it to be taken that way, and—and I'm goin' to say I'm sorry!"

"Oh, rather!" said Phillida Tankeray, who always took her lead from Kiki. "Horrid of us—what? I—I mean to say—under the circumstances—"

"Stop!" cried Sybil Spender. "Girls, you haven't heard me! This girl, Peggy Preston, had no right to come creeping in here like this, and bothering us and pestering us!"

"But she didn't, y'know!" said Kiki, who could speak up on occasion. "You

Sybil Spender's Anger.

YOU understand what you've done?" There were to be no preliminaries. The voice that asked that question was vibrant with anger.

"Perfectly!" said Augusta Anstruther-Browne quietly.

Her tone stung Sybil to complete fury. "Oh, you do, do you?" she cried. "You talk like that about it! You, whom I've paid to be my companion! You create this scene! You stick up for a creeping scholarship kid collecting subscriptions for a charity home! What do you mean by it?"

"More than what I said!" answered Augusta.

"More? More? Ah, you've driven me too far this time, my girl!" panted Sybil. "I shouldn't be surprised if you've arranged this! You were on their side—you've always been. You hate me. You want to make me look small in front of Kiki and the others. You came here for that purpose—not to earn your money at all. Now you've driven them away. I know their grins for what they're worth. They won't be paying me another visit!"

"Possibly not," said Augusta. "But you drove them away yourself!"

"I did?"

"Yes. Kiki let it out—that you had dragged Peggy there against her will!" Augusta's eyes suddenly flashed. "And I'll say it again, too! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"You won't say that again in a hurry!"

"Perhaps not! But—"

"You, an expelled girl—a girl expelled for stealing—"

"Stop!" cried Augusta.

"I won't; it's the truth! You're the girl I've tried to help! I've done all this for the sake of the past. I've given you dresses, and looked after you, and paid you when no one else wanted you—"

"You didn't!" interrupted Augusta.

"You dragged me here! I didn't want to come! I'm not a thief, and you could have helped me to prove it! You traded on the fact and got me here, and you've asked for everything that's happened!"

"Be careful!" hissed Sybil.

"But what is there to be careful about now?" answered Augusta. "It's all over, I suppose? I told you I had no desire to be on friendly terms with you. You've never been a real friend to me—Peggy has! You could have saved me from being discharged from the Creameries, but you wouldn't! You knew that Judy had been to the dance, but you held your tongue—"

"Yes, because I didn't believe in you!" shouted Sybil.

Augusta recoiled.

"What?" she said hoarsely.

Sybil was beside herself with spiteful temper.

"No, I didn't believe in you! You've brought charges against a poor servant-girl, one of the very sort you pretend to uphold, because you thought you were strong enough to make her confess something she hadn't done! I've never believed your story! You hoped to hound her out of the district, and then say she was afraid to face you—"

"It's false, and you know it is!" cried Augusta.

"It isn't! I believe you were rightly expelled, and this is how you throw my charity in my face!"

They stood facing each other.

Both were strong girls in their way, and both were very angry now. Augusta was the first to come back to a dim

understanding of the realities of the position.

"You believe me guilty?" she asked. "Then why should I stand and argue with you here?"

Sybil pointed wildly to the door. "You can go out now, if you like! You can go out and beg for your living!" she cried. "That's the regard I have for you now!"

And then she knew a sudden triumph as she looked into Augusta's eyes. She knew, from the fleeting expression of dismay, that she had a hold on Augusta that neither had been realising before. Quick was Sybil to seize it.

"But you don't want to go—eh?" she sneered.

Augusta was quivering. Go? Go where? Back to her aunt? She could

And then Augusta knew all the bitterness of defeat, and it seemed to numb her brain as she looked into the other's eyes.

"I know," she muttered. "Work, yes!" said Sybil, and suddenly laughed. "Mrs. Leggett!" she cried, raising her voice. "Mrs. Leggett! Here! I want you at once!"

Augusta guessed from that what was in store for her.

All her pride rebelled. She wanted to fling Sybil's "kindness" in her teeth. She wanted to rush away from the place and the impossible terms that were to be offered to her. Afterwards she could not understand the restraint that kept her there, but she must have been thinking of Judy, must have known that reckless defiance now might mean the end of all that she had worked for with such patience for twelve days.

Mrs. Leggett appeared.

"Ah, so you're here!" nodded Sybil. "Yes, I sent for you, housekeeper." Augusta could hear the eagerness in her tone that she was now trying to mask. "Could you do with another servant, housekeeper?"

"Another servant, Miss Sybil?" gasped Mrs. Leggett. And Augusta knew from her tone that she must have guessed. "Oh—er—perhaps a—a parlour-maid, or a—"

"No; one who's decided to learn the thing thoroughly!" interrupted Sybil. "I don't know much about cleaning, but I believe you're supposed to start from the bottom. Who's the junior maid?"

"Judy Grigg, Miss Spender," quavered Mrs. Leggett.

"Then promote her, housekeeper!" said Sybil. "Here is the girl to take her place—Augusta Browne!"

"Miss—Miss Augusta Browne!"

"No, Browne now!" said Sybil. Her eyes flashed with triumph. "She will start at once. To-night she will have a servant's bed room. I want to see her get on, and I shall take a personal interest in all she does. I won't be accused of not looking after those in a lowlier station than my own in future! Now, Browne"—she pointed triumphantly up the stairs—"go and take off my clothes and put on your own!"

Augusta, standing perfectly rigid, her face a mask of all the conflicting emotions she felt, nodded her head.

"What do you say?"

"I heard!" muttered Augusta.

"Who? Address me, please!"

"Yes, Miss Sybil."

"M'lady, please!"

"Yes, m'lady!" muttered Augusta.

Then she went up the stairs, and almost ran to get away from the humiliation. She dare not stay then. Degraded to the most menial of all the servants, and defiance would mean something even worse! Degraded by the girl who had once professed to be her friend! That was Sybil Spender, the real Sybil, who could do this!

THE LOWLIEST ONE OF ALL!

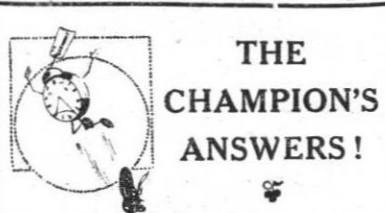
JUST a servant now at Spender Court!

One thing alone came to help Augusta's courage. She would, at last, be very near to Judy Grigg. They would meet on an equal footing, but they would meet!

So she accepted it, and changed her clothes. And when she came down Sybil was still waiting for her, and soundly rated her for the time she had been gone.

She must go and help with the washing-up of the dinner things at once. And Sybil herself saw that she did it, that

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A "Cliff House Game" that we sometimes play is to ask each member of the company seven questions. They may be made as difficult as possible, and may be asked by anyone. They should be answered promptly and properly. There is no one to beat CLARA TREVILYN, as you will see by her answers to the questions below:

1. How would you get away if suddenly hemmed in by a crowd in the town?
Pass the hat round!
 2. What would you do with an alarm clock that would not work?
Send it back to Germany!
 3. How would you disguise if in a field, and only ten seconds to do it?
Stamp on my foot, and make myself "Yell Ob!"
 4. Who is your favourite mistress?
Miss Steele, because steel is hard, but always rings true.
 5. How would you open a tin of fruit quickly without an opener?
Call for Bessie Bunter! She'd get at the fruit somehow!
 6. Why was the small boy, with fragile toys, like a chef with cooked potatoes?
(After a long pause.) Because very soon he smashed them (he's mashed them). (Loud applause!)
 7. What is the best way to keep a bicycle in good repair?
Never lend it to Bessie Bunter or Frances Barrett!
- We think that you'll agree that Clara deserved the prize, even though you'll know that she tried really hard when she knew that it was—a pair of stockings!
- Perhaps on some future occasion we shall give the answers of others—notably Bessie Bunter!

not earn her living in Courtfield now, for everyone in the town seemed to know about her. More, Sybil would soon see that they did! Go, either to live on her aunt's charity until the two of them caused the business to fail, or return at once to her sister in the North as an expelled girl. She had forfeited everything to come to Spender Court. And Judy Grigg was still here, unconvicted!

She would do that!

"I—I don't want to go!" muttered Augusta. "You know that. You forced me to come, and now—"

Sybil's anger changed to a fierce triumph.

"But you are not my companion any longer!" she cried.

"I don't expect to be."

"And if you want to stay here—why, I can be merciful, even now!" Sybil went on. "But you'll have to work for your living!"

hers were the hands that soaked in the greasy sodary water.

Then there were other things to be done, and Mrs. Leggett was given to understand, more than once, that her own position would not be a very secure one if she showed Augusta any kind of indulgence.

And Judy! Augusta could see the smiles on her face more than once. Some of the maids—evidently those who had promised the housekeeper that they would keep their eyes on Judy—were as considerate as they could be under the circumstances. Not so Judy. Her mean little nature delighted in Augusta's humiliation. There could be no doubt about that.

But Augusta got to bed at last that night. It was a different room that she occupied now—poor, and meanly furnished, situated right at the top of the house. The sheets were patched and the bedstead rickety. The Spenders did not live up to their name and reputation when caring for the servants. But it wasn't entirely the discomfort of it that kept Augusta awake far into the night.

A servant now—a servant to Sybil! Even now it seemed unreal. How much hard, laborious toil lay ahead of her she did not know. But she knew why it had happened, and that, at least, gratified her. She had defended Peggy publicly. This was her punishment, and Augusta was going to take it without complaining!

The servants were astir very early in the morning. Mrs. Leggett would have made Augusta's tasks easier if she had been sure of all her servants but she knew that there were some who would willingly carry tales to "Miss Sybil."

So Augusta had to light the fires and do all manner of black jobs before breakfast. And, even so, the early-morning work was nothing to what she had to do when Sybil had dragged herself languidly from her bed and breakfasted.

Augusta had just one opportunity to "climb down" if she had wanted to.

Meeting her in the hall Sybil stopped her.

"Getting on well?" she asked, and purposely refrained from calling her "Browne."

"Yes, thank you, miss," answered Augusta, her face mask-like.

"Bit tiring—eh?"

Augusta was now completely the mistress of her words.

"Fairly, miss," she said. "But I'm learning my work so that I shall stand in for promotion."

Sybil stared, quite unable to know how to take that. She did not doubt that in it there was that cutting sarcasm for which Augusta had once been famous.

"Anything you want to say to me?" asked Sybil abruptly, almost awkwardly.

"Nothing at all," answered Augusta, and passed on.

It was an offer to make terms, in all probability. Sybil, perhaps, regretted some of her temper, but what else could she offer? Something very much of the same nature, and only then if she was prepared to let herself be completely under her thumb! Better to stay where she was. Sybil could not give her a lower position!

But there were plenty of evidences of Sybil's spitefulness that day. Never had she taken such a personal interest in the domestic work. Augusta had to clean out her "den," and, after laboriously brushing the carpet, was made to do it a second time. She polished the grate, and brought up far more coal than was required. It exhausted her after being accustomed to so little manual work, but she showed no sign of fatigue.

Sybil was trying to break her strong will! Sybil wanted her to come to her on her knees, prepared to make any terms. Even now, it seemed that the rich girl did not know Augusta's character.

She had called her a thief, and that was something Augusta could not forget. She was staying at Spender Court because she felt she must. But she had absolutely finished with Sybil.

It was a long and arduous day. Augusta's work took her to parts of the building that she had not previously visited. She looked everywhere, hoping to find evidence of Judy's guilt; but she did not grow more sanguine when each hurried search in some new and impossible hiding-place brought nothing to light. Was she doing this in vain, after all?

Mrs. Leggett could give her no comfort that evening when they had a few minutes together.

"The girls have seen nothing at all, although they still think Judy has something on her mind," she said. "But don't give up, Augusta, right always wins in the end!"

That comforted Augusta, and she slept better. Wednesday morning came—another morning of hard work. Sybil had now adopted Augusta's own attitude—leaving it to her to make the first move for peace. But Augusta was not going to do that.

There was a new development that day, however, and it came very unexpectedly. Augusta was suddenly called from her task of preparing vegetables in the kitchen to see Sybil in the hall; and it was a Sybil who could not rest at anything but complete triumph that she met.

"Here, Browne!" Sybil cried. "Why aren't you scrubbing the front steps? Why has Judy been sent to do it?"

Augusta glanced bewilderedly from Sybil to the figure kneeling on the flight of marble steps, pail and flannel at her side.

"I—I wasn't told!" she stammered.

"Then find out your proper duties! It's scullerymaid's work here!" Sybil cried. "Judy has been promoted! Get down and do it at once!"

"Scrub the steps?" Augusta gasped.

"Either that or dismissal!" Sybil retorted.

Augusta set her teeth. Judy had risen, and she took her place. She wrung the flannel out in the water, then glanced up.

Judy was standing behind Sybil now, and grinning! Grinning!

Augusta slobbered the flannel furiously on the steps and wetted them. Grinning! Triumphant! And that scene, so typical of everything that had happened, depressed Augusta as nothing else had done. She felt suddenly that she was beaten; that grinning Judy was going to win, after all!

Judy Grigg's Desperation.

BUT that grin was a short-lived one. It had amused Judy highly to see Augusta relieve her of her task, but the amusement was temporary. She went to the kitchen to report herself, and in reality there was far less cordiality for Judy than there was for Augusta.

Yes, far less!
Although she tried to act and speak and move about like one of the others, she knew that there were some who could see through it all.

No definite charge had been brought against her, and yet she knew that she was a suspected girl!

What a shock it had been when first she discovered that Augusta had come to live at Spender Court! What terror it had inspired in her guilty heart! Yes, and twice on that very day she had nearly given herself away! Twice Augusta had nearly caught her with the evidence of her guilt in her hands!

She had managed to hide those fifty aprons since then, and so far no one had peeped behind the stack of wallpaper in a little-used cupboard and discovered them. No one knew that, sewn in the lining of her dress, was a crinkling five-pound note. But although she still evaded capture, Judy seldom knew a moment's peace.

There was always the possibility that the things might be found!

Even worse was her feeling that now, since Augusta had been talking to the housekeeper, she did not even dare to go near the stolen articles. Everyone seemed to be watching her wherever she went. She was openly suspected by many of the maids.

Now, indeed, she would have burnt the aprons without compunction, if only she had had the chance, for they were so bulky. But she had no opportunity.

She would have destroyed the five-pound note if it had been for a smaller amount. But five pounds was still money to the terrified but greedy girl—a tremendous amount, with which she could do so much, if she could only change it! And why shouldn't she have the benefit of it, after all the worry it had caused her?

She would have left Spender Court as abruptly as she had left Cliff House if it had not meant abandoning everything that she possessed. As it was, she could only take away her things by giving proper notice, and Judy was too frightened to do that and bring attention on herself. Besides, if she went, she dare not take the aprons with her. Supposing they were found after she had gone, someone would manage to trace her!

Judy took on the task that Augusta had abandoned, but did it as absently as she did everything these days. Several times she was discovered throwing peelings into the boiler, and cut turnips to the refuse pail. Little things like that showed how worried she was; and Judy knew that the others observed it!

And Augusta was still in the house, and nearer to her than ever!

Judy grinned and sniggered at Augusta's humiliation, because she hated her with a hatred that sprang from deep

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fear. The doggedness and complete thoroughness with which Augusta had taken to her new life awed her and scared her. It spoke of a strong will and a fierce determination; and Judy could not help reflecting how those traits marked everything that Augusta did.

When her self-made enemy came to the kitchen after finishing the steps Judy hardly gave her a glance. Her heart fluttered wildly when she heard Augusta told to dust the very passage in which was situated the cupboard where she had hidden that big parcel. At every hurried footstep after that she started violently; and although Augusta returned at last and made no comment, it did little to soothe the ever-present fears in her mind.

She ate her dinner absently, hearing little of the plans being made by the maids who were off duty on that Wednesday afternoon. It was a holiday for Judy, but she did not feel like taking it. Would it give her an opportunity of disposing of that "evidence" that was worrying her guilty mind so badly? She was willing to make any sacrifice if it would.

At first Judy's heart fluttered a little hopefully. More than half the maids were going to the pictures together, and Mrs. Leggett was to go with them. Augusta, under the circumstances, would be kept busily employed. But when Judy went to try the door of the boiler-house she found it locked, and realised, with dismay, why someone had taken the key!

It was just as a check on her activities if she did try to do anything! Someone suspicious—perhaps Mrs. Leggett—had done that, knowing that there was no other fire in which Judy could safely burn anything like fifty aprons!

And that dismayed her so much that she hardly realised at first the magnitude of the opportunity that came to her that afternoon.

The repeated knocking on the side door, whilst she was lounging moodily in the deserted kitchen, annoyed her, and when it was repeated for at least the fifth time, Judy shambled off the table.

"Suppose I'd better see which bothering tradesman it is!" she muttered. "Tisn't my job when I'm off duty; but Miss Sybil will make a row if no one goes."

She opened the door, and gazed moodily upon the person who had knocked. She saw an oldish, shabbily-dressed woman, with a wrinkled face, and rather cunning expression. She held, with one hand, a little truck made by mounting a box on wheels.

"Any old clothes, miss?" asked the woman throatily. "Old cast-off garments. I pay a good price!"

"We have to burn them all here," said Judy.

"Anything of your own, miss?" asked the woman, in a still lower tone. "I takes everything to London, and sells it there. I've got a market for pinnyfores and caps and aprons—"

"Prons!" breathed Judy, and felt the colour stealing to her face. She glanced over her shoulder, so used to alarms that she would have been hardly surprised to find that the thought in her brain had summoned Augusta. "Aprons! You buy them?"

The woman did not seem to notice her eagerness.

"My line, miss," she said. "Aprons, pinnyfores. I sells them better'n anything, most. If you have any—"

"I—I have a—a lot!" Judy interrupted. "I—I make them in—in my spare time," she went on, a quick falsehood coming to her lips. "I have a bundle of them—quite fifty. No one here seems to want them, but in London—"

"You mean it's on the strick Q.T., miss?" asked the woman—and winked.

Judy nodded. Her brain was whirling. She had admitted what she had in her possession at last, but the woman had encouraged her. And now, driven by that despair and fear that had haunted her, she was ready to go further.

It meant taking a risk—but a last risk! She was offered a price for the aprons she had stolen—and not only a price, which she had never expected to get, but the knowledge that they would be taken away from the district. It did not matter that the woman seemed as rascally as she was herself. It was a chance to get rid of them!

"Wait—wait here!" Judy quavered, trying to appear bolder than she felt. "I—I'll fetch them. They're all tied up in a bundle—fifty of them. But I'll guarantee they're new!"

"A pound for them!" bargained the woman, and Judy guessed that she knew that they were not her own handiwork

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at all. But she was in no mood to haggle.

"Yes, a pound!" she said.

"If they ain't all you says, and not worth the money, I can bring them back—"

"You—you won't do that!" Judy answered. "They're worth two or three pounds, only I—I want the money for a—a relative who is ill. Wait here!"

She darted away from the door, and started to ascend the servants' staircase. Her hands shook. It was the risk—the great risk—the final risk of all! If only luck would aid her to act for just ten minutes unobserved, she would be clear, and no one could prove anything against her! Yes, clear, and a pound to the good!

No one in sight—until she reached the upper landing. And then, suddenly Judy's heart seemed to stop beating altogether. She had to pass a room, with half-open door, to get to the cupboard in which the aprons were hidden. Through the crack of the door she could see a girl busily engaged in dusting.

It was Augusta!

So great was the fear that stabbed to

Judy's heart that she nearly turned tail and ran. Augusta again! Augusta, who seemed always on her track, was just the one to stand between her and success!

She hesitated, quivering with fear. But she did not run. Two things were making up her mind again, even with this difficulty facing her.

She simply could not let this chance pass after all the sleepless anxiety she had known. Days more of suspicion, of watching; keen eyes to watch her when she did anything unusual. No, it was impossible! Judy felt that if that strain went on much longer she would break down and confess.

And she must get back to that woman quickly, and see her away, now that she knew her secret. Supposing that she told someone that she was waiting to buy aprons!

Fear lent Judy an unnatural courage. She approached the door. Augusta had her back to it. With trembling hand Judy drew the door towards her very, very slowly, until it was shut. Once her heart seemed to leap into her mouth as the door squeaked slightly. But Augusta did not heed it. Ten more agonising seconds and the latch was shut. Judy's trembling fingers turned the key noiselessly in the well-oiled lock.

Then she drew away, panting. Augusta locked in—and Augusta did not know it! Judy's frightened eyes roamed everywhere, but there was no one to see her.

Luck at last! Yes, it seemed real luck! She secured the parcel, and passed the door of Augusta's room. She descended the stairs. There were sounds of movements in the house, but no one came to interrupt her. After an agony of fear she reached the side door again.

"Them the aprons, missy?" asked the woman, in a serene voice.

"Y-y-yes," said Judy. "T-take them away quickly. They don't like people coming in the afternoon."

The woman nodded her head, and winked as she put the parcel in to her little cart.

"That's right—all right with me, my dear," she said, and from a ragged pocket took a regular bundle of pound notes. "Deary me! How these things do blow about in the wind! Seven of them. I'm sure I'll lose one if I ain't careful. Here's your pound, dearie! I wish these other six was all in one, I do! Such a bother!"

Judy's heart seemed to be in her throat.

The woman wanted to convert the notes into something more convenient. She—Judy—had a five-pound note! But dare she ask the woman to change it—to offer to take five one-pound notes in exchange? Her greedy eyes rested on the money that would be so easily changeable. The temptation was too much. And, after all, the woman knew half her secret already!

"I—I've got a—a five-pound note—"

Judy began, in a thin voice.

"You have?" said the woman. "Lucky you! Them things is more convenient, to be sure—pon my word they is! You servants, being paid sich high wages these days, I suppose you often has five-pound notes—ch?"

"Yes, that's it!" gasped Judy. "I—I've had this one a long time, and—and I've been afraid of losing it. It's got so creased, and—and it blew away and got muddy one night. If you like them, I—I'd willingly change it with you."

"Let me see it, my dear."

Judy, utterly reckless now, snatched at the lining of her dress. It tore, and the crumpled note came to view. She handed it to the woman, who held it up and examined it.

"Not—not so high!" panted Judy. "It—it's quite a good one!"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 145.

"I'll give you four for it!" said the woman.

"I—I'll take that," nodded Judy.

Four notes were counted into her trembling hand, making five altogether. Five! She had parted with the aprons for nothing to this crafty rascal, but she did not mind that. Five pounds—and all the evidence disposed of at last!

"Good-day, my dear, and thank!" crooned the woman.

Judy nodded, and shut the door. She went away. Somewhere above there was a wild, banging sound—Augusta trying to attract attention! But Judy did not mind. She had covered her tracks at last. She had said good-bye to her fears. Now she only wanted to get away somewhere and hide until she had got over her present nervousness.

Bang, bang, bang!

Judy heeded nothing as she made her way to the servants'-room, there to drop into a chair and gulp with excitement and relief.

"I Owe You Everything!"

BANG, bang, bang!
Augusta Anstruther-Browne was nearly frantic with dismay and disappointment as she banged on the panels of the door, and called to be released. She had seen. She knew! And yet here she was, a helpless prisoner, unable to make anybody hear.

Yes, Augusta knew! She would never guess what instinct had made her look from the side window when she did, but she would never forget the sight she had seen far below her. A beggarly woman with a large parcel, and a fluttering slip of paper, and the pale, twitching face of Judy Grigg! Then Augusta had heard the closing of a door, and the rumble of wheels! And she had guessed the meaning of it all in one brilliant flash of intuition.

Bang, bang!

Would she never be heard? The woman must already be away from the place. Every moment that passed gave her a longer start. Which way would she go when she left? Mustn't she know that she had dealt with a thieving girl? Yes—and that would make her hurry, and hide, just as soon as she was away from Spender Court!

All that Augusta had hoped to get had gone—and gone before her very eyes! She was nearly mad with disappointment and dismay. Locked here—by whose hand? Judy's, of course! But she couldn't prove that any more than she could prove anything now!

Click!

That was the lock. And the door opened with startling suddenness, to reveal a scared-looking maid.

"I've been sent up, Augusta, to find out who was making the noise!" she exclaimed. "There's going to be an awful row, and—my! Where are you going?"

Augusta had not waited. She was simply flying along the maids' corridor to those imposing stairs that led from top to bottom of the house, and finished in the hall.

At all costs that woman must be stopped!

Third floor—second floor—first floor; afterwards Augusta did not remember treading any of the stairs. And then suddenly a girl stood before her, and barred her path. Only just in time did Augusta stop to prevent a collision.

It was Sybil Spender.

"Good gracious! It's Browne!" cried Sybil's horrified voice. "She must have gone mad! Girl, are you—"

"Let me pass!" cried Augusta, and she would have brushed Sybil to one side.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 145.

The rich girl grabbed at her wrist.

"Judy's got rid of the things—to a beggar woman!" panted Augusta. "I must catch her! She's left the place, and—"

"Come here!" Sybil cried, and held tighter. "I won't have this sort of thing—oh!"

Augusta was tugging wildly. Sybil, as she had done once before, had to follow. She was dragged down the stairs after Augusta, shrieking all the time. And there Augusta's progress was checked again, by the butler this time.

"The—the woman—" Augusta began hoarsely.

"Cheek! Rushing about—as though you owned the place!" Sybil was panting, but almost shrill with anger. "Telling this—sort of story, too! Unless you apologise, you're—you're instantly dismissed!"

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Augusta made a rush to pass the butler, but he held her.

"No! Let her go!" Sybil cried suddenly. "I'm finished with her now—absolutely! Browne—you're discharged from this moment!" Her pointing finger indicated the door. "Discharged! Do you hear? You will go at once, to chase this woman, and you can go for good! Does that steady you? Does—"
Thump, thump! came on the front door.

"Goodness! Who's that?" Sybil ejaculated, astonished. "Daring to knock like that, and at the front door!"

"Shall I see?" asked Farrington.

"Yes. And send them about their business!"

But there was another thump, thump! before the severe and scandalised manservant could open the door. He did so in a dignified, slow, and reserved manner—and then fell back with surprise!

Seven Cliff House girls, headed by Peggy Preston, simply bounded into the hall. Babs, Mabs, Bessie, Marjorie, Clara, Dolly—they were all there. And Peggy, heedless of the butler and the amazed Sybil, and everyone else, rushed straight towards Augusta, crying:

"It's all right—it's all right, Augusta—it's all right!"

Sybil tried to speak, and the butler tried to be fearfully dignified. But Augusta was the one who made herself heard first.

"The rough-looking woman, Peggy—she's got all the evidence!" she said

hoarsely. "Did you see her? Because if not, I must run—"

"Run! You will run!" Sybil Spender broke in at last. "You're discharged, I've told you! These ill-mannered, unruly friends of yours have come just in time to take you with them!"

And then Sybil simply stared, for her words had had a most curious effect. The seven boisterous visitors were pealing with merriment!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—but the woman—" stammered the bewildered Augusta.

"There isn't a rough woman!" Peggy cried joyously. "Did you see her, Augusta? It's a good thing you didn't chip in, because we've got all the evidence at last! Ha, ha, ha! Mabs was the rough woman—she's just taken off her disguise!"

"Mabs!" gasped Augusta, and nearly tottered backwards.

"But it was Peggy's idea!" chimed in Mabs modestly. "She told me just how to go about it, too! I've got all the aprons, and I've got the five-pound note, Augusta!"

"And six of us are witnesses that Judy gave them up—we were hiding in the garden while Mabs did it so well!" cheered Babs.

"Yes, and I pretended to be awfully dishonest, and Judy didn't mind that, either!" Mabs explained breathlessly. "Oh, it's the completest thing possible, Augusta—"

"Look!" yelled Clara, more loudly than anyone. "There she is! And she's bunking!"

And Clara, heedless of the pomp and state and dignity of Spender Court, tore in reckless pursuit of the figure in the passage, gave a distant hail from some far spot, and then returned, forced the white-faced, trembling figure of Judy Grigg in front of her!

All this time Augusta was standing, hardly knowing whether to laugh or cry in her relief. Sybil was equally amazed. But there were others on the scene now, attracted by the excitement. Red-faced, pompous Mr. Spender was one, demanding what the "to-do" was about.

Babs told him everything in quick, breathless sentences—Augusta's expulsion, the wickedness of Judy, and how their trap had caught the girl. And it was such an amazing story that it seemed to rob him of speech for the moment. But he soon understood. He saw the discreditable part that his own daughter had been playing; he saw, too, that a thief had been sheltered and encouraged under his own roof. To avoid a possible scandal, he did the best thing possible.

"This is a matter for your own headmistress, young ladies!" Mr. Spender exclaimed. "There seems to have been a lot of misunderstandings. I tell you what I will do. Farrington, order the two cars to be got ready, and these girls shall be driven to their school at once, and Augusta and Judy shall go with them."

"Oh, please—please have mercy!" broke out the trembling voice of Judy, at that decision. "I know I've done wrong, but I never meant anything! Oh, please!"

But no one could heed such a cry then. Clara was still holding her, and Clara was not going to let go. Into one of the cars, that came so quickly to the door, she bundled Judy, and there she sat, and trembled, and looked the guilty figure that she was.

What excitement as they drove away! Augusta, her cap and apron gone, still seemed to think that it was all unreal. She gazed into Peggy's fond eyes as she sat beside her; but Augusta could find no words—absolutely none—just then!

To Cliff House—and then to Miss Primrose! And Judy, so completely caught out and terrified, confessed everything, and saved Miss Primrose any inquiries. She admitted stealing the note, and allowing Augusta to suffer when she was guiltless. She owned to stealing the aprons. Just for mercy did Judy beg—just for the mercy she did not deserve.

"I have made a terrible mistake, Augusta—I have been guilty of a great injustice, through the wickedness of this contemptible girl Judy!" Miss Primrose cried, and there were tears in her eyes. "I can never express my regret that this has happened—never! All the hardship that you have suffered, and yet nothing has daunted you—"

"Oh, don't blame yourself, Miss Primrose!" Augusta broke out earnestly. "You could do nothing else at the time. Everything was against me—everything. And now that it is over, I—I don't regret it. I've learnt more than I could have learnt at school in whole terms. And I've found out who were my real friends, Miss Primrose—Babs, Mabs, Clara—all those who worked such a clever trick this afternoon. But most of all I shall remember Peggy, the girl who came to see me first—the girl without whose absolute confidence in me I might never have proved my innocence!"

And then the tears started to Augusta's eyes. She caught Peggy to her and pressed her quivering lips to those of the girl she had once hated—the girl for whom she would have an unwavering love—perhaps for ever!

Babs and Mabs were the two who "stage-managed" Augusta's return to the school, after she had had tea with the headmistress.

The passage, to Augusta's rather fearful eyes, at first appeared deserted, and she was just congratulating herself

that she could get to some place and hide for a little while, when they all burst on her!

Mostly Fourth-Formers they were, but there were members of the Second and Third and Fifth, and monitresses as well. They cheered and they congratulated.

And Gwen Cook & Co., how contrite they were, and sorry that they had ever lost confidence! How eager and sincere they were now in trying to right the wrong as far as they could by apology.

What amazement, too, when everyone knew that Augusta had had such compelling reasons for going to Spender Court, and how the rich girl with whom she was supposed to be friendly was really making her a drudge! They cheered again at that, proud of the spirit that had kept Augusta there to remove the stain from her own name, and from the name of the school!

But even when she was released from those "chairs" her, Augusta had nothing but visitors for a long while. Miss Bullivant and Miss Steel came to congratulate her, and Lady Hetty Hendon apologised. Then came the matron to say that Miss Primrose was simply delighted with the cookery aprons, and was writing a cheque for them at once.

"And better news!" Mrs. Towle added. "Miss Primrose doesn't see why so many orders should go to London, Augusta, and she's going to appoint your aunt to supply a lot of things to the school—quite enough to help her business."

"And you've done it, Mrs. Towle!" cried Peggy, hugging her. "We shan't forget how you helped me to get to Spender Court on Monday, and find out Augusta's real reason, so that we could think of a scheme to help her."

"Cliff House School sha'n't be the only dealer from Aunt Sarah, either," chimed in Babs. "From what I've heard, everyone is going to buy from her now that she's stocking special things for us."

"Hear, hear!"

It was a long, long while before Augusta could get away from all the cheers and congratulations, but they saw at last that she wanted to say something to Peggy. And so, at last, Peggy and Augusta found themselves alone in Peggy's study.

"Well, Peggy, it's over!" said Augusta, with a strange awkwardness. "I don't suppose aunt will prosecute Judy, well as she deserves to be sent to a reformatory. All this business ought to be a lesson to her. So— Oh, bother! You see, I'm evading it, even now. Peggy, it's no good, I can't tell you what I want to! I've liked you for a long while, but I've never known how much you could do for anyone—least of all, for me. I owe you everything. What I've suffered is nothing. I'd go through ten times that to find such a friend! Peggy, I'll never desert you—never! I'd go through anything for your sake now—anything!"

And then she kissed her again and again, and those grey eyes that could look so cold and hard were swimming with hot tears.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

(Next Thursday's issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND will contain "Bessie Bunter's Invention!"—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!)

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,—I wonder how many of you there are who consider that the stories would not be the same without Bessie Bunter? Thousands upon thousands, surely! This I know from the large percentage of letters I receive containing the sentiment. No reader has anything to say about the plump Bessie without having some compliment to pass upon her. She is amusing, she is big-hearted—in fact, she is the life and soul of the stories! These are some of the compliments that have been paid to Bessie Bunter, and I must agree that they are all justified.

Those of you who are old readers of the "School Friend," however, will know that Bessie Bunter was not always the girl she is in these days. Fond of food though she still is, one never now hears of her "raiding" a study cupboard. Though she is still prone to exaggerate, she never deliberately tells untruths. Thus has Bessie Bunter altered—due, chiefly, it must be mentioned, to the influence of Barbara Redfern. From being one of the most despised of girls on account of her greedy and selfish ways, she has earned herself the credit of being one of the best-liked girls in the school.

In next week's story Bessie Bunter will take the leading part. This will gratify the request of readers who have written recently. From such a story you would naturally expect something humorous. You will conjure up memories of "Bessie Bunter's Hundred Pounds!" "Bessie Bunter's Parrot!" and other excellent stories in which Bessie

played such prominent and amusing parts. And you will not be disappointed. But our next story of the girls of Cliff House School, entitled,

"BESSIE BUNTER'S INVENTION!"

By Hilda Richards,

has another element, apart from humour. Bessie Bunter's principles now rank with those of the best girls in the Form. Through no fault of her own, she causes financial loss to a poor old man. Good-hearted as she is, she is deeply grieved by this, and is determined to replace the loss somehow. But how? Well, she enters a competition, with the intention of presenting the prize-money to the old man. Time was when working for such an object would not have appealed to Bessie Bunter; but now she is different. The competition is in connection with a certain pursuit at which she is far from stupid. But there are obstacles in her path. What these obstacles are, and whether, in spite of them, she wins the prize, you will learn next week.

The Extracts from the "CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY!"

next week will be as entertaining and original as ever. A list of their titles will show you their novel nature: "Sights To Be Seen in the Studies!" "Cliff House Legacies!" "My Oldest Possession!" "My Very Latest Possession!" "If I Were Headmistress!" "How To Make Chocolate Fancies!" "Cliff House Pantomimes!" "Bessie Bunter's Great

Jape!" and "The Essentials of a Good Story!"

Another enthralling long instalment of "JOAN HAVILAND'S SILENCE!"

By Joy Phillips,

will be found in next week's issue. Joan Haviland, Elsie Dainton, and Hilda Heathcote are showing themselves three of the best girls one could possibly wish to know. But Ruby Haviland—well, one wonders if she will ever be strong enough to follow the example of those three.

SUPERB COLOURED PLATE.

I wish to draw your attention this week to our Companion Paper, the "Schoolgirls' Own." Next week this popular paper will present a beautifully-coloured plate of Princess Mary and Viscount Lascelles. I have had numerous requests for coloured plate to be presented with one of my papers, and at last I am able to comply. The instant you set eyes on this plate you will long to have it framed and hung in your room. Make certain of securing your copy of next Tuesday's "Schoolgirls' Own" by ordering in advance. There is certain to be a great demand for this issue of the "Schoolgirls' Own" on account of the plate, and I advise you to visit your newsagent at your earliest opportunity.

Your Sincere Friend,
YOUR EDITOR.

The Opening Chapters of a Magnificent New School Serial!



JOAN HAVILAND'S SILENCE!

By JOY PHILLIPS

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



THE LEADING CHARACTERS.

JOAN HAVILAND, a poor scholarship girl, who formerly lived in Brick Row, in a London suburb.

RUBY HAVILAND, her sister, whose sudden accession to riches completely spoiled her.

ELSIE DAINTON, the friend of Joan.

HILDA HEATHCOTE, an excellent girl, and captain of the Fifth Form at Greyhurst School.

SYBIL SARDONE, **CLARICE CHOANE**, **OLIVE COURTNEY**, and **PHYLLIS FRANKLIN**, four "cronies," who formed a "set" at Greyhurst, and were bitterly opposed to Hilda Heathcote and her friends.

Joan and Ruby Haviland arrived at Greyhurst School separately—Joan with Elsie Dainton, Ruby with Sybil Sardone. Ruby had previously pressed Joan to keep silent as to their relationship.

From the first Sybil Sardone & Co. were down on Joan, though Hilda Heathcote and her chums befriended the scholarship girl. It was on account of this that Hilda became accused by her enemies of favouritism, and lost many of her friends.

It needed but one day more to Founders' Day—the day famed for visits from the girls' parents. Ruby was dismayed to hear from Joan that their mother would be visiting the school to-morrow. On top of this came the spiteful scheme of Sybil Sardone's—a scheme to the effect that Ruby should dress in rags, and welcome the scholarship girl's mother!

(Now read on.)

What a Mistake!

SYBIL SARDONE opened her eyes, and yawned. Then she suddenly smiled to herself.

It was the morning of the Founder's Day—the day for bringing off the great coup against the Form captain!

First bell was going; but Sybil was in no hurry to get up. She remained lying upon her back in the cosy bed which was hers—a bed that should have been as plain as all the scholars' beds were supposed to be, and mostly were. But Sybil—trust her!—had long ago added little extras for the better enjoyment of her night's repose.

"Heigh-ho! Anybody awake there?" she called out lazily, at last. "Clarice darling! Olive dear! Phyllis!"

There was no response, and this surprised Sybil. She sat up in her bed, and then she saw that only one other occupant of this dormitory-annex was in the room.

"You awake, Ruby darling?" she called, getting out of bed, and stepping across to Ruby Haviland's corner. "Where's everybody else?"

Ruby's muffled voice made answer, as she kept the bedclothes about her head.

"Oh, Sybil dear, I do feel seedy this morning! I'm not going to get up!"

"Not going to—Founder's Day? Nonsense, Ruby!"

"No. Oh, don't rout me about; I can't

hear it!" wailed Ruby. "Perhaps I'll feel better later on. The others finished dressing and went down downstairs just before you called out."

"Um! This is lively!" grimaced Sybil. "You keeping to your bed on the very day when you promised to help us have a rag!"

"I—I didn't promise, Sybil!"

"Well, it was an understanding, so I thought!" pouted Sybil, flinging on her dressing-gown. "Can't be helped, I suppose; but it is a sickener, your being out of the programme!"

She took up a big towel and her sponge-bag—the latter containing her favourite scented soap, and padded along to one of the bath-rooms, whilst Ruby Haviland still lay curled up in her bed, shamming sickness.

Sybil's sulky comments on this upset to the "programme" gave the malingering something more to feel miserable about.

She wondered, guiltily, if her friend had a suspicion that the indisposition was only put on—a mere ruse for avoiding all part in the day's malicious activities. If so, then Sybil would turn against her for being a coward!

Oh, how sickening it all was! How all this deception and double-dealing seemed to make trouble grow like a snowball!

But in a few minutes the unhappy girl felt slightly reassured. She could hear a clear voice carolling blithely. It was Sybil's voice, getting over all feelings of vexation.

"Well, cheer up, misery!" was her remark to Ruby, fifteen minutes later. "As for me, I'm going down to brekker—and then to business! Ha, ha, ha!"

She was, of course, late for breakfast. Discipline was relaxed this morning, however, this being a holiday, and so Miss Trotter, the Form-mistress, had no frown for the latecomer who dawdled into her place at table.

"Morning, Miss Trotter! 'Morning, everybody! Grand day for our sport!"

"Sport?" returned several of the girls, looking puzzled.

"Oh, I mean it's a grand day for all the visitors!" Sybil answered airily. "But I suppose we are going to have a bit of sport, too!"

"I think so, Syb darling," said Clarice Choane, with a lightning twinkle of her right eye as he chum sat down beside her. "Yes, I've had this letter from home. My people at the last moment can't come!"

"Hurrah! I mean, you have my deepest sympathy!" said Sybil flippantly. "Sorry my people are not coming, either! For those who do come there will be a fine sight to see!"

Putting a meaning emphasis on the word "sight," she grinned across at Joan Haviland, sitting, as usual, next to her cousin, Elsie Dainton.

"Your mother coming, Joan Haviland?" threw out Sybil, with mock sweetness.

"Yes, my mother is coming."

"I shall be pleased to see her—charmed!" said Sybil.

And then Clarice Choane suddenly choked over her tea:

"Ha, ha, ha! He, he, he! Really, Miss Trotter, you must"—cough, cough—"excuse me—"

"Clarice, if you and Sybil Sardone have

some joke up your sleeve, you need not let it upset the breakfast-table!" Miss Trotter said, half sternly. "Behave!"

She waited until Clarice had ended her fit of mirthful coughing, and then resumed: "Why is Ruby Haviland not down? Does anybody know?"

"Yes, Miss Trotter," answered Sybil, setting down her cup. "Ruby is ill this morning."

"Ill!"

It was a gasping echo of the word from Joan Haviland.

All present, at the table looked at her. Her sharp ejaculation seemed to betray such an extraordinary amount of concern for Ruby.

"Well, off colour, anyhow!" grinned Sybil Sardone. "But that is no reason why you should change colour, kid!"

"Sybil!" said Miss Trotter reprovingly. "Sorry, Miss Trotter! I'll call Joan something else next time, since you don't like 'kid.'"

The impudent remark was passed over by the Form-mistress. She had risen, and now she asked the girls to excuse her, as she wished to run up and see just what was wrong with Ruby.

"You will take charge, Hilda," she said, to the Form captain. "The girls can rise as soon as they have finished."

With Hilda thus left in charge, it was a glorious chance for Sybil and her cronies to have what they called "a game."

Gaily they rattled away now, and every remark was a two-edged one, cutting at the captain and also at the scholarship "kid" and her cousin.

Hilda met all the cheap sneers and insinuations with that composure which never failed to exasperate the "rebels." Elsie Dainton, too, was sublimely indifferent to the enemy on the other side of the table. She entered into talk with Joyce Carroll, the subject being music.

As for Joan, the voices of friends and foes alike were meaningless to her. She was thinking of Ruby, her sister, still in bed because she was ill!

How the loving girl longed to rush upstairs to find out what was the matter! Oh, she was thinking, if only she could have jumped up and gone with Miss Trotter just now!

But, ah, there it was again—the same old bar to her being with Ruby; the horrid secret that also forbade any display of sisterly interest!

No, no; she mustn't let others suspect how anxious she felt! It had been a slip—an almost fatal slip—when she had made that exclamation of alarm just now.

"Well, supposing we scatter?" was Hilda's informal way of giving the dismiss presently.

"Ooo, thanks off!" said Olive Courtney, in her high-society tone. "Sybil, we have permission to rise!"

"I rise and bow!" said Sybil, suiting the action to the word.

Hilda's air was one of absolute indifference. She didn't even seem to be aware of Sybil Sardone's existence! And Sybil went off with her three cronies, feeling more than ever that they must humble that girl.

"What's wrong with Ruby Haviland? Isn't

the going to get up to-day?" asked Clarice, when they were together in Sybil's study.

"Bother Ruby! I notice she always does go to pieces when we've got some little scheme afoot!" Sybil said bitterly. "Still, I suppose we must make allowances for her being a new member of our set!"

Clarice stepped to a corner where a large cardboard-box was standing upon a chair. She removed the lid and took out one of several ragged female garments.

"I'll play Ruby's part, that's all!" she chuckled. "See how I look in this togger by-and-by. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Meanwhile," rejoined Sybil, glancing at her wrist-watch, "I'm for a run into the village. The study ladder is low, and I want to leave an order at the grocer's."

"We'll all go down the town," was Clarice's way of saying that they would accompany Sybil; and so, half an hour later, they were footing it along the road to Greyhurst village.

Sybil left her order at the grocer's, and she and her companions did some other shopping besides; and then they picked up an open carriage that was plying for hire at the railway-station.

It was the only one left on the rank, for already a train had brought in its first throng of grown-up visitors to the school, and all the rest of the vehicles—a great number to-day—had been snapped up.

Quite a smart landau was this carriage in which these girls were being driven back to the school, and they were in great good humour by now. It was such a glorious day for the great event, and the dry, bracing air of the countryside was such a tonic to the four, they experienced that delicious sensation of being at one's best—and looking it, too!

Perhaps that was why, as they overtook a lonely pedestrian half-way to the school, Sybil felt moved to offer a lift.

"Stop, driver!" she called. And then, leaning forward in her seat, she spoke to the person in the road. "Are you on the way to the school? If so, perhaps you would like a lift."

She was a tall, comely woman, in very quiet and lady-like attire, whom Sybil was addressing—a scholar's mother, doubtless.

"It is very kind of you!" she exclaimed, so graciously that all four girls felt they must have introduced themselves to a personage worth knowing.

"Do take my seat, and I'll ride with the driver! Oh, you must!" cried Sybil, with her most adorable smile. "I'm afraid you found all the cars and carriages snapped up at the station. This landau only came in at a lucky moment for us girls."

"Why, to tell you the truth," smiled the lady, "I would have walked, in any case."

"Oh!" said Sybil. But she was not disillusioned. Now and then, in the circles in which she mixed in London, she had met people so truly great and dignified, they could do things which would mean loss of prestige if humbler folk did them.

This lady, Sybil decided, must be one such stately personage. She evidently was a lady, judging by the way she wore her clothes—such quiet clothes—and by the way she spoke.

Sybil, now perched aloft alongside the driver, could not take part in any conversation, and even the three girls sitting with the lady managed to say very little during the rest of the drive. There was a lot of traffic on the road—fast cars tearing to and fro between the school and the station, and this was a check upon talk.

"So this is Greyhurst!" the lady herself exclaimed, when the carriage turned in at the wide main entrance. "How wonderful—how beautiful!"

"You have a scholar expecting you?" said Clarice, thinking it was time they found out her name. "I wonder if she is in our Form—the Fifth? If so—"

And there the speaker paused, noticing that the lady's face was proclaiming sudden great excitement and joy.

"Why—why!" the girls' companion exclaimed, bending to gaze intently at two girls who were walking down the drive towards the lodge-gates. "I declare, there is my little Joan already! Joanie darling—Joan!"

"Who?" came in a gasp from all four swell girls.

The driver was checking the horses. Out of the still-moving vehicle sprang the lady, whilst one of the three girls who had been walking down the drive suddenly sprinted forward, crying joyfully:

"Mother! Oh, hurrah—hooray! How good of you to come so early!"

Sybil almost fell off her seat alongside the driver!

In a few moments she and her cronies were standing in a group beside the carriage, their eyes full of amazement, humiliation, and disgust.

"It—it's Joan's mother!" gasped Sybil, over and over again. "We've been giving a lift to that kid's mother!"

"To a mere washerwoman! Oh, help!" exclaimed Clarice. "But—but would you ever have dreamed—"

"Noo—ooo, noo!" said Olive Courtney faintly.

"What a sell!" sighed Phyllis Franklin.

"Look at 'em!" scowled Sybil, rage shaking her from head to foot. "Do you see? Didn't I tell you what it would be?"

For Joan, now she had finished hugging and kissing her mother, was introducing her to Hilda Heathcote, the Form captain, whilst Elsie Dainton also hastened to play her part in the welcome to Greyhurst.

"And that's our captain!" sneered Sybil. "Going out of her way to be nice to the scholarship kid's mother!"

"I wish all the girls were here to see," muttered Clarice.

Then Sybil pulled herself together, giving the spiteful little laugh that always boded trouble for her enemy.

"The girls shall know about it, anyhow! Come on!"

And the four snobs re-entered the carriage and drove on to the school porch.

In Mother's Arms Again!

TICK-TICK, tick-tick, tick-tick! From where she lay curled up in the dormitory annexe, Ruby Haviland could see and hear a little china clock marking the flight of time.

Half-past ten. Dozens of visitors must have got to the school by now. She had heard cars booming up the drive, the slamming of carriage-doors after the passengers had alighted, the excited chatter of happy girls showing their parents round the school.

In the whole great building, it seemed to her, this room in which she was keeping to her bed, shamming illness, was the one quiet spot.

Everywhere else, nothing but a riot of happy sounds, telling of the jubilation which parents and scholars were sharing on this happy day that had brought them all together once again.

Tick-tick, tick-tick!

Was mother here by now? The moments were slipping by so quickly, and, oh, it was no use thinking the crisis was still a safe

way off. At any instant she might see her mother over there in the doorway, rushing anxiously to the bedside. And then—was that to be the end of all the deception that had gone on up to now? Would others be with mother, to hear her loving cries—cries that would tell them in an instant that she—Ruby Haviland—was Joan's sister?

In a way, how she longed to see mother again. How she envied her sister Joan all the joy that was to be hers to-day—the joy of meeting mother before all the school, just as other girls were meeting their parents.

For Ruby was no more without love for her mother than she was without love for her sister. Only, whenever that love made any demand upon her personal ease, whenever it threatened to interfere with her enjoyment of life, or to break up any friendships she had made, then her selfish nature was not equal to putting love before all else.

Just as much as if she were really ill, to-day she longed to see her mother at the bedside.

Oh, if only mother would come to her alone, or with Joan as the only witness to the reunion! It would be all right then—it would bring such a great happiness! But—

The miserable, anxious round of thoughts started all over again.

Supposing a few of the scholars came in with mother! Then—

Hark! There were steps sounding on the stairs just below the dormitory landing. Two people—more than two, were there? Oh, were there several? If so, then all was over!

The relationship was to be revealed to all the school—every girl in the place was to know that she, Ruby, had been a girl who was ashamed of her mother. And why?

Only because she was a mother who lived in poverty, toiling hard for her daily bread!

A tap at the half-closed door. Then, with wild eyes peeping over the edge of the bed-clothes, Ruby saw who entered.

Mother—only mother, with Joan at her side!

The fearful suspense gave place to wild relief and joy.

In a moment, before Mrs. Haviland could speed across to the bedside, the wretched girl was sitting up, reaching out her arms, voicing the very cry which she wanted Sybil and the rest never to hear:

"Mother!"

"My darling—oh, my poor darling! For you to be kept to your bed like this on such a day!" exclaimed Mrs. Haviland, clasping Ruby to her heart and kissing her. "What is the matter, dear? Nothing serious, is it? Tell me you feel a little better now!"

"Oh, yes—yes, mother darling!" Ruby



"Mother! Oh, hurrah—hooray! How good of you to come so early!" cried Joan Haviland, joyfully. Sybil Sardone & Co. stood in a group, their eyes full of amazement.

wailed, starting to cry. "I—I'm not really ill; only upset in myself. Don't worry, mother—don't let it disappoint you because I can't be with you all day. You—you've got Joanie, haven't you?"

"Yes, dearie. But, oh, how can I help feeling so sorry?" murmured Mrs. Haviland, stroking Ruby's glossy hair whilst she still held the weeping girl close.

She added presently:
"Joan has brought me straight up to you, dear, and now we both want to stay here—"

"No, mother! Ah, that wouldn't be fair!" Ruby exclaimed, whilst she squirmed inwardly at the generous-sounding remark which was screening her own selfish purpose. "You must go away and be with Joan. Don't worry about me, please! Don't let this spoil your day! Joan will be with you all the time!"

"But is there nothing I can do for you, dear? Don't you want me to sit here?"

"In a way, mother, I— Yes, I do. But I—I mustn't be selfish!"

What a thing to have said, when all the time there was the selfish desire to keep the secret still!

"Joan always says she is so happy at Greyhurst," murmured Mrs. Haviland in her soothing way. "And you, my Ruby?"

"Yes, mother—in a way, yes. But this

"Joan tells me the Form-mistress found nothing much the matter with you; but—"

"There is nothing, mother, so—oh, just let me lie here, please! Do, do leave me!"

"Very well, darling. Joan and I will slip up to you again, however. I am not staying very long, as I simply must get back to my work."

The widowed woman bent over and kissed Ruby then, and turned back to the door, sighing a little anxiously.

"Ruby dear," came Joan's gentle whisper then, in the girl's ear. "I—I understand, dear. Ah, if only you had acted differently all along! But now you are in an awful plight, I see, and you—you can't bring yourself to face it out, Ruby?"

"Oh, leave me—leave me!" was Ruby's whimpering answer, muffled by the bed-clothes.

"Ruby, wouldn't it be better to face things out?" persisted Joan, in a whisper inaudible to their mother. "Think of the pain to mother, whom you love as much as I do, if— if she finds to-day that you—"

"Don't let her find out, Joan! Try—try not to!"

"I will, Ruby—I must now things have gone so far."

Then Joan kissed the unhappy girl, and joined mother on the landing.

"She will be all right by-and-by, mother,"

Joan was thinking the whole time of her mother's feelings. Poor Joan! Founder's Day was proving an ordeal for her, and no mistake!

To have to be loyal to the promise given to Ruby, to have to guard the secret now, if only because its revelation would mean fearful opprobrium for Ruby, and yet to have to keep mother away from just the girls one wanted her to know—how hard a task it was!

Somehow Joan managed it, however. The presence of so many other parents helped, of course. Again and again girls who were friendly with Joan came drifting by; but they always had their own parents with them, and there was no time for formal introductions and handshakes—only time for a pleasant interchange of smiles and bows.

"Well, I think it a beautiful school, Joanie darling!" Mrs. Haviland remarked at last. "I don't know what has interested me most—perhaps that dear little study which you share with Cousin Elsie. By the way—"

"Yes, mother?"

"You didn't show me Ruby's study, after all!"

They were close to a ground floor door leading out into the grounds. The mother seemed to expect Joan to give a light laugh at such forgetfulness and to go back upstairs with her; but Joan—hating to do so—still drew her into the open.

"Oh, Ruby's study—it's pretty much the same as mine, mother!" was all the half-distracted girl could say. "Come and see the sports field!"

"I shall love to, Joanie! I am thinking, though, what a pity you and Ruby aren't in the same study—with Cousin Elsie, of course."

"Oh, well, mother! The day we got here we found our names on a board, with the numbers of the studies opposite them, and so there it was!" Joan said, with perfect truth. "I say, you don't mind my bringing you away from everybody, do you?"

"Dear child—"

"Dear old mumsie!" Joan exclaimed, hugging her by one arm whilst they walked across the grass. "I believe all the girls I like have fallen in love with you at sight, and no wonder!"

Mrs. Haviland's comely face lit up. Smiling, as she was now, she looked ten years younger.

"Then I am not disgracing you, Joanie dear?" she said playfully. "Because I couldn't drive up in a car, wearing my furs, and—"

"Mother, stop it!" Joan cried, half laughing and half crying. "You look topping in that lovely costume Uncle John gave you last Christmas!"

"The last present I am ever likely to get from him—your poor Uncle John!" the mother exclaimed, with a low sigh. "Ah, Joanie, how he must wish he was here to-day, instead of on the wide ocean, outward bound to Australia! Tell me, dear; does Elsie manage not to brood?"

"Brood! Mother, I'm with Elsie almost every hour of the day, and could not wish for a jollier companion! Elsie's a brick!"

At this instant some mirthful sounds not far behind them made mother and daughter face about sharply.

For a few moments, as they looked, they felt puzzled. Then Joan, at any rate, saw the reason.

Hobbling towards her and mother, as fast as the disguise would let her, was a girl dressed up in the most awful rags—an old blouse, a skirt all torn and tattered, with a sack-apron tied about it.

The girl's sleeves were rolled up to the elbow, and each forearm was decorated with smears of blacklead. She carried a pail and dustpan in one hand, and a couple of brooms in the other.

But even this was not the whole of the girl's ridiculous make-up.

Slung about her neck was a large square of cardboard, on which some words had been hand-printed.

The girl came hobbling and shuffling towards Joan and her mother, rattling the



The girl came hobbling and shuffling towards Joan and her mother, rattling the pail and brandishing the brooms.

morning—oh, I am upset, and no one can do me any good!"

"Dear, dear! This grieves me, Ruby!" The girl unclasped her arms from about her mother's neck, and sank back upon the bed, hiding her face in the pillow.

Nothing but the truth in what she had said just then! No one could do her any good. So long as she clung to her deception and the friends she had made, always hoping to tread the path of pleasure, what good could others ever do her?

The mockery it all was, this career on which she had embarked even before she came to Greyhurst! For how long now had she been trying to find happiness, only to find herself dropping deeper and deeper in the mire of her self-wrought misery!

Her anguished mind was full of some such thoughts as these, when she felt mother's hand caressing her again.

"Your head aches, my darling?"

"A little—yes."

Joan said comfortingly. "She just wants to be quiet."

"A little overwrought, I fancy," was the mother's murmured opinion. "I do hope Ruby is not overstudying, Joanie darling. She always was rather highly strung."

Joan could have laughed then in a hollow, mirthless fashion. But she didn't. There was something rather humorous in Ruby's "indisposition" being attributed to over-study. At the same time, what a painful, anxious situation it all was!

Going the round of the school in the next half-hour or so, Joan could not help feeling that her position was just as trying as Ruby's.

Guarding the secret of Ruby's relationship—not because she wanted to, by any means, but because the promise to do so had been wrung from her weeks ago—was completely spoiling Joan's happy day.

Mother was with her, the mother whose loving care for her and Ruby all through the years of cruel poverty Joan never forgot for a moment—the mother one had such a glorious right to be proud of! But how could one introduce her to one's school friends when there was the risk of any bit of talk betraying the secret?

And yet, not to give her a chance of knowing all one's friends in the school—what a shame it was! What a slight upon her!

ANSWERS

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pail and brandishing the brooms, and in another moment the startled pair could read what the placard bore.

"This is my visiting-card!

I am

Mrs. Heavy-Hand,

and I live in the village.
Washing and Mangling Done by Day, Hour,
or Week!

Special terms for Scholarship kids,
because I have one of my own!"

"Not Captain for Nothing!"

TEARING her eyes off that hideously-garbed figure and the offensive placard, Joan glanced at all the people round about.

She saw that they were looking more shocked than amused—and that was the thing that comforted her!

As for all the peals of merriment which had so far attended the dressed-up girl's passage across the field—they only came from friends who were with her. And those friends—they were girls beneath contempt!

So Joan would have liked to cry aloud to her astounded mother; but she could not. For, in a flash, she had to ask herself—what if mother afterwards found out that these same girls were Ruby's own friends—Ruby's?

The poor girl, in her agony of mind over the gross insult, caught her mother by the hand.

"Never mind, mother darling! Oh, don't look at them, mother!" she exclaimed frantically. "Come away—come away!"

"I— Yes, dearie; I'll come!" was the tremulous response. "But why is it, Joanie? They mean me—that name on the placard is a play on our name, dearie! And why—what have I ever done, Joanie?"

"Mother darling, do come!" implored poor Joan, distractedly pulling her mother by the hand. "They—they are only doing this in—in fun!"

"In fun, Joanie!" the white-faced mother echoed hoarsely. "Very well, darling, I'll go with you; but—"

But the "swell" set of the Fifth Form had no intention of letting their victims off so lightly.

With people thronging to the spot from all parts of the field, they ringed the mother and daughter about. Clarice Choane was the girl in disguise. Encouraged by her companions' shrieks of laughter, she bowed mockingly to Mrs. Haviland, and then spoke to Joan.

"Good-day, my dear! Which I 'ope as 'ow you're quite well!" Clarice cried, with a few sniffs. "Might I ask you if you could tell me where I kin find the capt'ing of the Fifth Form?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Sybil and the others, whilst the rest of the crowd still looked on more puzzled than amused.

"Yer see, my dear," went on Clarice, rattling her pail and brandishing the brooms, "I 'appen to know as 'ow the Fifth Form capt'ing is always a friend to the pore!"

"How splendid!" tittered Sybil. "You've only got ter be a bit down," said Clarice, addressing all the crowd, "and you'll find a friend in the capt'ing of the Fifth. So where is she, please? Only let me find 'er—"

"I am here!" broke in a calm voice from the edge of the crowd; and next second the throng had split apart, to let Hilda Heathcote come to the front!

"Ho, miss! 'Ow do yer do, to be shore!" Clarice began, in that awful voice she was putting on. She would have said more, too, only Hilda Heathcote's hand suddenly flashed out, tearing the placard away.

"Now finish what you wanted to say!" Hilda said calmly.

Clarice was looking very foolish all of a sudden. Not so Sybil. That girl took up Hilda's challenge.

"Clarice shall let me say it!" cried Sybil hotly. "And if it is in front of a big crowd—scholars and parents alike—so much the better! Greyhurst shall know why we have done it! A protest—that is what it is!"

"Protest! Absurd!" came a murmur from some of the disgusted girls standing around with their scandalised parents.

They were not Fifth Form girls, however, and Sybil was quick to take advantage of this.

"You don't belong to our Form!" she flashed at them all. "If you did, you would know that it is time someone had the courage to end the captain's abuse of her position!"

"Fear, hear!" said Phyllis Franklin.

"Shame—shame!" panted Joan, still holding on to her mother's trembling hand. "You couldn't have a better captain! Mother dear—all of you! Hilda Heathcote is—"

"Oh, yes, you are going to flatter her!" struck in Sybil scornfully. "Well, you may, when Hilda Heathcote has done nothing but favour you, make a pet of you, ever since you came to the school! You, with your precious scholarship won at a Council school—you, a mere—"

"Now stop!" said Hilda, with an air of authority that caused the grown-up on-lookers to feel sure she was quite capable of handling the whole disgraceful scene.

"I'll have my say!" burst out Sybil.

"You won't!" said Hilda flatly. "Or, if you do, I will have every word witnessed to before the headmistress!"

The look in Hilda's eye was daunting Clarice. She turned to the more infuriated Sybil.

"Oh, let's come away, Syb! We—we've had our bit of fun. Gracious, what a fuss some people make about nothing!"

"You are not going yet, Clarice. Stand still!" the captain said, in that tone which simply meant obedience. "Now, all four of you! Are you going to apologise to this girl's mother, or am I to take you to the headmistress—which?"

The grown-ups exchanged delighted glances. Nothing much the matter with Greyhurst, they were doubtless thinking, when it turned out girls like Hilda Heathcote!

"I'll not apologise," said Sybil, swinging away. "And if I refuse, you may be sure the others will!"

Clarice, Phyllis, and Olive, however—they were looking far from resolute on this point.

"Oh, if she wants an apology!" mumbled Clarice, whilst she tried to rid herself of some of the attire that had ceased to be "funny."

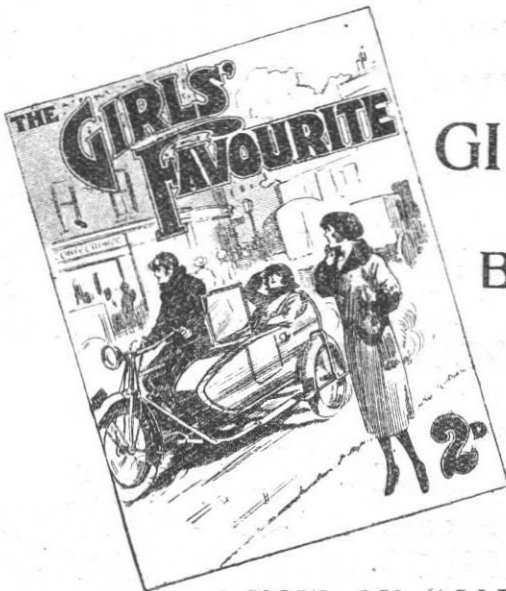
"Just as you please," said Hilda. "Only, decide at once. Mrs. Haviland is not going to be kept waiting about."

"As to that, miss," the widow managed to falter at last, still deathly white and shaking visibly, "I suppose the girls really are sorry in their hearts, and—and—"

"If you don't mind, I will insist on the apology," said Hilda gently. "I really think I must."

(Continued on page 24.)

No. 3.



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JOAN HAVILAND'S SILENCE!

(Continued from page 23.)

"Quite right—quite right, young lady!" spoke up one white-moustached, military-looking father. "Make them toe the line, my dear!"

"Well?" said Hilda, looking straight at the crestfallen snobs.

"We—it was only a joke!" spluttered Clarice.

"Do you beg Mrs. Haviland's pardon?"

"N—ye—yes!"

"I didn't hear you answer, Sybil! Do you apologise to Mrs. Haviland?"

Sybil simply writhed with her well-deserved feeling of humiliation.

"I—I— Yes, there! And bother the lot of you!" she gulped, storming away.

Then Hilda Heathcote seemed to find nothing more to do but put a wisp of hair to rights, smiling faintly, whilst on all sides looks of immense approbation were bestowed upon her.

"Capital girl—capital!" muttered the white-moustached gentleman, marching off with a senior girl who happened to be his daughter. "Discipline—ay, nothing like it!"

And in the same strain were other grown-

ups talking, as they now dispersed, most of them with a Greyhurst scholar "in tow."

"Joan—auntie!" panted Elsie Dainton, suddenly disclosing herself amidst the breaking crowd. "What a shame I was out of it all! But I couldn't get to you, although I was on the edge of the crowd!" She turned to the Form captain. "Hilda, you were simply spl—" she began.

"Oh, say it another time, dear!" Hilda cut in, laughing. "All I hope is that no one thought I was showing off."

"How could they, Hilda?"

"Anyway, I wasn't. I just mean everybody to see that I'm not Form captain for nothing!"

She turned to Mrs. Haviland and Joan, meaning to saunter a little way with them.

"Mrs. Haviland, it was letting them off too lightly, I know; but, as I expect you could guess, they are girls really not worth troubling about."

"Yes, my dear; oh, yes, I could see that at once," the mother said, trying to pull herself together. "Just because Joan is a scholarship girl—"

"Partly that, and partly because Joan is my friend," said Hilda. "Most of all, though, it is simply because I happen to be the captain."

"Yes," rejoined Elsie Dainton bitterly; "anything to make trouble for the captain of the Form! It has always been the case, hasn't it, Hilda?"

"And always will be, I fancy, for as long as I am captain," answered that girl. "I wonder if another girl, taking my place,

would come off any better? Time will tell, perhaps!"

Strange, that words such as those should have come from Hilda's lips then!

Not that the half-smiling remarks made any serious impression upon either Joan or Elsie at the moment they were spoken. So lightly thrown out, the words were treated by those who heard them as Hilda's own usual way of ending talk about herself.

But afterwards—before this very day was over—how vividly were Joan and Elsie both to recall this bit of talk: how prophetic it was to seem, viewed in the light of later events!

For, indeed, time was soon to tell how another girl would fare as captain of the Form. As for Hilda, its able leader up to now, her term of office was fast running out, little though she knew it.

Well for her, too, on this festive Founders' Day, that she had no presentiment of what the evening had in store!

Well for the peace of mind of all who esteemed and loved the girl, that they also had no forebodings, no hint of that terrible catastrophe which was to leave the Fifth Form confronted with the question:

"Who will lead us now?"

(What can it possibly be that is to deprive Hilda Heathcote of her office as captain of the Fifth Form at Greyhurst? Don't miss next Thursday's long instalment of this enthralling new serial. Order your copy at once!)

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