

GREATLY  
ENLARGED NUMBER

SPLENDID NEW SERIAL :  
"Friendship Forbidden!"

No. 156. Vol. 7.

Week Ending May 6th, 1922.

# The School Friend

2p



WAS THIS  
HER FRIEND'S  
WORK ?

(See "Peggy Preston's  
Loyalty" inside.)

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**PEGGY  
PRESTON**

Also in this issue: SPECIAL "PEGGY PRESTON" NUMBER of the "Cliff House Weekly."



# YOUR EDITOR'S CORNER

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, Farrington Street, London, E.C. 4.

My Dear Readers,—

Well, and what do you think of it all? Was I unduly enthusiastic in my announcements of all these new features which are now before you? I do not fancy you will think I was, and I shall be greatly surprised if I do not get shoals of letters telling me that the "School Friend" has scored yet another triumph.

And now about next week's issue. The coloured art card to be given away is of

## CLARA TREVLYN.

You are all fond of Clara—Clara, with the "tomboy" ways and the bright and breezy disposition. She is an immense favourite with Cliff House girls and "School Friend" readers alike. You will like this pretty coloured card of her every bit as much as you like the card of Peggy Preston, presented with this issue. Like this one of Peggy, it will be a positive

## WORK OF ART

and you simply must not fail to secure it.

According to my plan of producing these splendid bumper numbers of the "School Friend," popular Clara Trevlyn is to figure as the leading character in the magnificent new long complete story of the girls of Cliff House school, entitled:

## "CLARA TREVLYN'S TEST!"

By Hilda Richards.

What is Clara Trevlyn's test? All who know Clara are well aware how she can rise to an occasion, how well she has acquitted herself in the past in tasks that have appeared hopeless. It is true that Clara has not had many great parts to play until now. The tenor of her way at Cliff House has not been quite the same as that of Peggy Preston or Augusta Anstruther-Browne. Her parts, in fact, have been mainly of the lighter variety. But Clara Trevlyn's great test has come at last. How will she acquit herself? Will she come through with flying colours, or— But the less I tell you of this splendid story the more you will enjoy it when it is before you next Thursday.

How have you found the Special "Peggy Preston" Number of

## THE "CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY" ?

Does it not, as I told you it would, tell you all of interest there is to be known about Peggy? Do you not find that you love Peggy Preston more than ever after reading it? I am sure you do. The more one learns of Peggy Preston the fonder must one grow of her.

Well, when you have read the

## SPECIAL CLARA TREVLYN NUMBER

of the "Cliff House Weekly," which is to be one of next Thursday's many fine attractions,

you will find that, as in Peggy's case, you grow more and more fond of Clara. Everything you could wish to know about Clara is dealt with in this number, and it is rather surprising how much there is to be told about this popular character. Lack of space this week prevents me enlarging upon its many interesting features, but I can assure you that, as Barbara Redfern puts it in her Editorial this week, "in its different way you will like this Special Clara Trevlyn Number every bit as much as you do the Special Peggy Preston Number."

The second absorbing long instalment of

## "FRIENDSHIP FORBIDDEN!"

By Ida Melbourne.

will also be before you. You want to hear more of Dolores, and her unhappy lot at the Limmershaw Grammar School. I do not doubt for an instant that she has gained your entire sympathies. This new serial is as fascinating as it is novel, and next week's superb instalment will hold you from start to finish.

There will, of course, be another enthralling long instalment of the serial you are all enjoying,

## "THE SIGNALMAN'S DAUGHTER!"

By Gertrude Nelson

And with that I think I have singled out all the fine attractions that are to be provided by next week's

## SECOND GREATLY ENLARGED NUMBER

of the "School Friend."

Another word, however, about our beautiful art card. You have already got your picture of Peggy Preston, and next week you will be in possession of the handsome card of Clara Trevlyn. And then—who is to follow Clara? I should like to tell you, but this I must keep a secret until next week. Suffice to say, the girl in question is one of the best-liked of the Fourth-Formers. Can you guess her name? Do not forget that, including Clara Trevlyn's portrait, there are NINE MORE TO COME!

## BRIEF REPLIES.

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

"Billy" and "Fish" (Durham).—The answer to your first question is "No." I cannot promise that there will be a second serial written by a Cliff House girl.

"A Regular Reader" (Glasgow).—It is quite probable that the girls of Cliff House and Morcove schools will meet in the future.

"Simo, Jings, and Billy" (Melbourne, Australia).—You can obtain all the information you require from a book, entitled: "Girl Guiding," published by Messrs. C. Arthur

Pearson, Ltd., Henrietta Street, London, E.C., price 2s. 3d., post free.

"Two Tomboy Chums" (Victoria, Australia).—As you wish to become Girl Guides, I advise you to write to the Girl Guide Organisation, 25, Buckingham Palace Road, London, W., and you will be sent full particulars. Regarding the rest of the information you require, see reply immediately above.

"Francie," aged 14.—Many thanks for letting me see your sketches. They are quite good.

"Grace" (Earlsfield).—Glad you are so fond of all the features in my papers.

"Olive" (Derby).—Thanks for letting me know which features you like best, and which characters are your favourites.

"An Admirer of the 'School Friend'" (Newbury).—I will consider your suggestions, but a few of them are rather impracticable. I cannot promise that Ivy Lynn and Ruth Preston will arrive at Cliff House together. The future must show.

"Freda" (Bridge of Weir).—Your wish is being gratified, for portraits of your favourite characters are now being presented with the "School Friend." Yes, Marjorie Hazeldene is very pretty indeed.

Your Sincere Friend,  
YOUR EDITOR.

.....

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# OUR FINE NEW SCHOOL AND MYSTERY SERIAL.



By  
**IDA MELBOURNE.**

## Alone!

**"S**IMPLY topping!" Kitty Crichton spoke enthusiastically, and her blue eyes shone. "Yes, it is a good idea," agreed Pearl Hardy modestly. "You can always trust me to hand out the good ideas! A cycle ride, and a picnic in the woods. Look at the sky, girls—blue, blue everywhere. Not a cloud."

The other girls in the group nodded, and one or two echoed Kitty Crichton's enthusiasm. If Kitty were keen, then it was indeed an excellent idea. For Kitty Crichton was the leader of the Fourth Form at Limmershaw High School.

"Hands up those in favour!" called Kitty.

There was a show of hands, and some girls, in their enthusiasm, held up two.

"Fifteen," she said thoughtfully. "Let me see—"

"Wait a minute," interrupted Pearl Hardy. "There's the infant. She's got her hand up."

All eyes turned upon a dark-haired, lithe-looking girl, who stood some yards from the group. Her hand was raised, but when all attention was centred upon her, the hand was lowered, and her dark, violet eyes shaded.

"Hallo!" said Kitty cheerily. "Do you want to come with us?"

It was an invitation, and yet it seemed forced. Dolores Kalenzi flushed beneath her olive skin, and seemed to draw away from the girls.

Of course she wanted to go, would not anyone want to go out on such a day?

"Join us if you like," said Kitty.

"If nurse will let you," added Pearl Hardy.

At that there was a peal of laughter from the group of girls, and Dolores' colour showed a pink tinge—as near a pink as her rather dark complexion allowed.

"Perhaps nurse will bring you out in the pram if you ask her nicely," suggested Pearl, who fancied herself as a humorist.

But Kitty Crichton shook her head, and frowned at her chum.

"Do you think you could come, Dolores?" she asked.

The dark girl hesitated. She looked at the school gate, and at the green trees waving against the blue sky. Could she join her Form-fellows? Once again she looked towards the gates.

"I—I should like to," she replied, her voice soft, almost purring. "I—I can cycle. There is a cycle at the house."

Pearl was evolving another joke, but Kitty Crichton had a look of sympathy in her soft blue eyes. She was sorry for this lonely girl, whose aunt came unfailingly each day to fetch her from the school.

"Shall I ask your—your nur—I mean aunt?" she hazarded.

Dolores looked towards the gates, from the direction of which a tall woman was crossing the lawn.

"Let's all ask," said Pearl. "I don't mind pushing the go-cart. Is it a go-cart you have, Infant? Or does nurse carry you?"

"I walk," replied the dark girl. "I wish you would not joke so. It is not my fault that my aunt comes to the school."

The tall woman was drawing nearer now, and her dark face could be clearly seen. According to Pearl, this "nurse" was a gipsy; but that Dolores denied.

What Dolores' own nationality was the girls did not know. Her accent and her peculiar English were not British, nor were they akin to any of the foreign languages they learned. Dolores Kalenzi was a mystery.

She stood now facing the approaching woman, almost glaring at her. The others were smiling.

"Dolores," said the woman as she approached, "it is time to come home."

Her voice, too, was soft, but there was the same accent traceable as in Dolores', although Dolores' English was better.

"I think I'll stay to-day, aunt," answered the girl. "I want to go cycle-riding with these girls—"

"Cycling?" repeated the woman, and she looked keenly at Kitty and the others. "You must come home, Dolores. I am late to day. It is unfortunate."

She took her niece by the arm, and was about to walk away, when Kitty stepped forward.

"Excuse me, madam," said Kitty. "But if you don't mind, we should like to have Dolores with us this afternoon."

"We'll look after her," added Pearl. "We won't let her get out of eyesight. I've got some toy reins at home—"

"Dolores must come home," said the woman, with a quick look at Pearl. "Come, child."

Dolores hesitated, and looked at the group of girls, and at the trees waving against the blue sky.

Most of the girls were smiling, and Pearl Hardy openly chuckled. Only Kitty Crichton seemed serious.

"Come!" said the woman more sharply. "It is useless to delay."

Dolores bit her lip, and for a moment thought of resistance. Then she shrugged her shoulders, and, turning sharply, led the way to the gates, her aunt following.

"You should have come home," said the woman, as they passed through the gates. "Have I not forbidden you to remain there after lessons?"

"But, aunt," protested the girl, with a gesture, "this afternoon—when the sun shines—when the big blue sky calls me,

and the trees whisper beseechingly, what can I do? Must I stay at the house—"

"Tush!" said her aunt. "What can you want in the open? You have your room, and your books. Be silent, Dolores, and do not become a prey to complaining."

Dolores made no reply, though inwardly she seethed. She was angry with her aunt—angry at what she called her aunt's stupidity. How foolish she was always made to appear! The girls jeered at her. Their mothers did not fetch them away from school.

She turned to her aunt.

"Aunt, I wish you wouldn't come to the school for me. I—I'll come home. But it makes them laugh at me."

"Tush!" said her aunt. "What matter they? You want little to do with them, child. They can teach you nothing, unless it is mischief. You are better at home. Look! What can a girl want better than that?"

She pointed to a large greystone house, tall, and with queer gables that seemed to cave in at the side like a Chinese house.

A large cedar-tree waved sombrely in the garden, and the gravel drive, weedy and unkempt, seemed white in the bright sunlight.

But the house was beautiful. The blue curtains flapping in the slight breeze made it an enchanting picture.

"I know," murmured Dolores rather wistfully. "It is very beautiful."

And for the rest of the way home she fixed her gaze upon that large house. Her home—her home. Almost mechanically she murmured, "Prison!"

Prison?

Yes, that is what the house really was—her prison! A prison, beyond the gates of which she was only allowed for a few hours.

"Come, Dolores," said her aunt more kindly.

And the girl realised that her aunt was already half-way up the drive. She followed then, quickly, and stood in the dark porchway until, in answer to her aunt's ring, a dusky manservant in quaint blue attire, opened the door.

He bowed as they entered; and Dolores' aunt gave him not even a passing glance as she walked through the long corridor. The corridor was high, its walls covered with tapestry.

She paused by the tapestry, while her aunt went on into the back regions of the house. Then she ran lightly up the wide staircase and along to a room that she called her own.

For a second she looked round it—at the expensive hangings, the quaint pictures, and the carved ivory figures.

Then she moved quickly across the thick-carpeted floor to the high windows,

She opened them, and walked on to the balcony.

There she stood, looking up at the blue sky and at the distant skyline and the blue-grey of beyond. Beyond which led to—where? She knew not. For she had not since she could remember moved from this house.

She had faint memories, but nothing distinct.

Presently the door of the room opened, and she turned her head. Her aunt was crossing towards the window.

"I have brought you something to eat, Dolores. Then you can stay in this room."

Dolores turned and looked at the tray her aunt had brought. It was a carved tray, beautiful to look at, and the fruit upon it looked even more beautiful. But Dolores, who always worshipped beautiful things, paid them no heed now.

"Aunt," she said, "look at the sky, look at the trees and fields. They are calling me, aunt. I want to run about in the fields. I want to sing—to shout—in the open. Here I am caged in—"

"Tush!" said her aunt. "You are romancing. Those girls have put foolish ideas in your head, Dolores. What can you want? You have everything. You have diamonds, pearls, wonderful dresses to wear, books, and pets. 'Tis but a passing fancy to go out. A few chance words spoken by those girls. You will get over it."

"But I sha'n't—I sha'n't! This I have been wanting for years. I want friends. I want to be care-free, as they are. Why must I be caged in?"

"You are not caged. You can come for a walk with me through the fields at the back. Those fields do not differ from others—they are beautiful. You can skip, you can jump. You can do that here—"

"But not with other girls. If only I could have friends to this house, and show them my treasures—"

"Vanity!" remarked her aunt. "Your uncle orders that you stay here. You go to school because you must learn—you must be taught English, and by English teachers. You are not sent there to make friends with the other girls. Why should you want friends when you have everything? Have those girls diamonds, pearls, wonderful dresses—a room such as this? No—"

"Yet they are jolly, they are happy," pointed out Dolores wistfully. "They are jolly, and I—I am sad! I am caged, while they are free. Oh, aunt, why can't I be free? Why can't I have friends? For just one hour of friendship I would give my diamonds, my pearls—everything! Just to say I had a friend—"

"You talk nonsense. The sun has been too powerful; you must rest!" exclaimed her aunt, in some agitation. "If the girls put such ideas as these into your head, then you shall not return to the school."

"They had nothing to say to me. They do not want me, because I am not like them—free."

Dolores spoke bitterly, and her dark eyes glittered luminously. Her voice, which had been raised and hard, was now softer, and she became pleading.

"Just one hour, aunt—"

"Not a minute!"

As she made that reply a worried shade crossed the woman's brow. She looked at Dolores in a puzzled way.

"Calm yourself," she said. "Here is fruit. Eat it. You are hungry. I will return soon."

She went from the room and closed the door, leaving Dolores standing with her back to the open window.

The girl went out on to the balcony

and leaned against the stonework. She was angry, she was disappointed, and she looked longingly at the sky.

She watched the white clouds that drifted off, but she did not seem to observe them. Not for some minutes did she see that the clouds had changed from white to grey, a sombre grey—almost black. And the air was still.

The birds had stopped singing. She realised that they had gone in search of shelter.

The air was heavy. The sky was overcast, and faintly came a distant whistle of wind in trees. Creak, creak! went a poplar over the way. The dust lifted from the road, and over all there was a painful silence. Thunder rumbled in the distance dully. A flash of lightning lit the sky, and then followed a crash of thunder.

Flash after flash, but still Dolores stood on the balcony. And then down came the rain in a driving sheet, swamping the lawn and beating down the few flowers mercilessly.

"Dolores, you will get wet—"



"I want friends, aunt!" cried Dolores. "I want to be care-free, as they are! Why—why must I be caged in?"

Her aunt had re-entered, and Dolores turned. The woman came towards her, bearing in her hand something that glittered and sparkled.

"Oh, an emerald!" exclaimed Dolores. "Yes, an emerald! I thought it would make you forget friendship. This emerald is more wonderful than a hundred friends. There, take it."

Her aunt smiled and walked from the room triumphantly.

Dolores stared at the emerald sparkling greenly in her hand, and an angry expression overspread her dark face. This—a stone—to replace friendship! What was it? A stone—nothing more—a beautiful stone, yet a stone, nevertheless. Impulsively she raised her arm, and next minute it was flying through the window.

She ran forward to see where it had landed, and then drew herself up and gasped. For coming towards the house were cyclists, drenched through, but apparently cheerful, for they laughed.

Dolores waved. But they did not see. "Bound to get shelter of some sort," she heard Kitty Crichton say. "They can't refuse."

Clang, clang! went the bell.

Dolores clapped her hands and danced back into her room. They were coming! Friends were coming! She had no need to search for them. This was splendid indeed! Now her aunt could not complain. What a surprise for Kitty and the others when they found her in the house!

She ran back to the balcony and leaned over. She heard Kitty speaking, then heard her aunt's voice. Puzzled, she listened. Kitty's voice sounded angry.

Slam!

There was no mistaking that sound. The door had been shut, and the cyclists were outside. She leaned farther over and heard angry murmurs.

Then slowly the cyclists retraced their steps to the gates.

"Kitty!" she called. "Kitty!"

But what was her soft voice matched against a storm? Soon the cyclists were gone.

Gone! Her aunt had turned them away—turned away the girls who might be her friends! She was not even allowed to have friends here. Why was she forbidden to have friends?

Back into the room she went, and sank on to the soft covering of the carved bed.

Friendship forbidden her; yet she had all this splendour, all this wealth. How worthless it seemed beside friendship!

She buried her head in the pillow, and asked herself again and again—why, why, why? But the only reply was the sound of thunder, and the echo—why?

### A Ray of Sunshine!

"OF course it was her fault!"

Pearl Hardy spoke emphatically, and looked round at the other girls who were her companions in the Fourth Form-room.

"Yes, she could have spoken," agreed another girl. "I suppose the Infant was annoyed that she couldn't come with us."

"But that was no reason why she should not let us take shelter. It was her house; her nurse opened the door."

Pearl looked at Kitty Crichton for confirmation, but Kitty was frowning.

"I think you're a little hard on Dolores," said Kitty slowly. "It was her aunt who refused us—not Dolores. She may not have known about us calling—"

"She did; I saw her looking from the balcony above," said another girl. "It was her revenge. I don't think she's English—"

"I think it's all prejudice," said Kitty Crichton. "We have no proof that she saw us, or that she didn't want us to go into the house."

But Kitty's was not the general opinion, and her voice was drowned by the others.

"She'll be here in a minute!" exclaimed Pearl, holding up her hand. "Then we can ask her."

It was nine o'clock and almost time for lessons to begin. The Fourth-Formers crowded to the window, and there came an exclamation from Pearl as she pointed towards the gates.

"Here comes nurse and the Infant," she said. "So nice and good."

Dolores, crossing the quadrangle with her aunt, looked up at the Fourth-Form window crowded with faces. At the door of the School House her aunt stopped to say au-revoir.

"Now, my little one," she said, kissing Dolores upon the cheek. "Hurry back when school is over."

"I will come home," she said. "Good-bye, aunt."

And she hurried into the school. She left her hat and coat in the lobby, and changed into her school shoes, then, very

reluctantly, prepared to face the scorn of her school friends.

Timidly she opened the Form-room door and peered in.

"Here she is!" came a perfect shout, and Dolores nervously entered.

"We've got a bone to pick with you," said Pearl Hardy seriously, wagging a forefinger at Dolores. "We've most of us got colds to-day, because you wouldn't let us in your house—"

"Hear, hear!"

Dolores stared at them.

"Because I—" she repeated. "But I wanted you to come in; it was aunt who refused. I was on the balcony. I called to you—"

"Yes, it's easy to say that now," said a thin-faced girl. "Very easy. But you could have called us back; your nurse may not have known we were your friends."

Dolores lowered her eyes, and her hands were tightly clenched as she walked to her desk.

"Booby!" said the thin-faced girl. "She'll cry in a minute. Then she'll want her nurse."

"Oh, stop being funny!" exclaimed Kitty Crichton quite angrily. "You're hardly the one to talk about being a booby, Jane."

Jane Preswick scowled, and tried to become less prominent.

"You would stick up for the kid!" she muttered.

"Yes, I would! Because I don't think you're being fair to her. The Fourth has got a name for playing the game—"

"Do you mean to say we're not playing the game?" queried Pearl Hardy indignantly.

Pearl's face was flushed. For she realised that there was in her leader's remark an element of truth—a big element. And that realisation did not make her very well pleased with herself.

"Well, yes; it isn't like you, Pearl. It may seem funny to you; but, obviously, Dolores doesn't think it funny."

She crossed to the dark-faced girl, and laid a hand upon her shoulder.

"Cheer up!" she said kindly. "It's only their fun; they don't mean any harm, you know."

"I know," said Dolores. "I—I don't mind."

"Why don't you explain to your aunt," asked Kitty. "I'm sure she wouldn't come and fetch you if she knew that it made the girls laugh at you."

"I have told her," answered Dolores miserably. "She pooh-poohs it. She says friendship does not matter. But it does—it does. I want to be friends with you all."

"Of course you do," said Kitty understandingly. "You shall, too. It's games lesson this afternoon. I'll teach you how to play tennis, and then you can stay to watch the seniors' tournament."

"Oh, I should love to!" exclaimed Dolores, her eyes shining. "You are kind. I do want to learn tennis!"

There was a scuttling of the other Fourth-Formers back to their desks then; for the Form-room door had opened, and Miss Poole, the Form-mistress, was in the room.

"Be seated, girls," said the mistress.

"Kitty, in your place, please!"

Kitty leaned over to Dolores.

"See you in the interval," she said.

Then she ran to her desk and sat down.

Desks were opened, and books were brought out. But Dolores sat staring ahead, her eyes aglow with a new light. She was going to be taught to play tennis; she was going to be friendly

with these girls. How splendid! Her life of solitude would be over.

A sharp remark from the Form-mistress made her realise that it was lesson-time, and she opened her desk, and brought forth her geography book.

Dolores was a good pupil, and Miss Poole had a favourable impression of her. Perhaps lack of friends made Dolores more attentive, or perhaps it was that she spent so much of her time in reading.

Miss Poole tried to make lessons interesting, although several of her pupils had opinions that differed vastly as to that. She talked to great length, and tried to make lessons less matter-of-fact.

Dolores listened intently as the mistress talked of the East, and its quaintness and romance. Always keenly imaginative, the dark-faced girl could picture the scenes and the peoples the mistress described.

"You will see in your books," said the mistress, "pictures of the people of Boursalia. Their costume is picturesque

precious stones in the land. It was the smile of friendship, and to the lonely girl, the world seemed a fairer place.

### The Photographs!

CLANG, clang, clang!

It seemed ages before the bell rang for the interval, and when, at last, its welcome clang was heard, Dolores shyly made towards Kitty Crichton.

Kitty linked arms, and led her down the corridor to a quiet alcove.

"Now we can chat," said Kitty, and sat down beside Dolores on the small corner seat. "You're going to learn to play tennis, and become one of us, aren't you?"

"I shall play, but only in game lesson—when school is on," said Dolores wistfully. "Aunt, she will not let me be here after school, I know—"

"But why?" exclaimed Kitty, naturally puzzled. "It does seem strange."



"Where did you get this, Dolores?" demanded her aunt. "It is not your father, you stupid girl! How dare you say it is!"

—it is rather an outlandish kingdom, and not a great deal is known of it. These photographs are unique. In fact, I should think there are none other like them in the world—"

Dolores, breathing hard, leaned forward on her desk. Suddenly she raised her hand, and the mistress looked at her.

"Yes, Dolores."

"Miss Poole, I have photographs and pictures at home of those people—my aunt has them—"

"Really!" exclaimed the mistress, greatly surprised.

The others in the Form turned towards Dolores, and there was a buzz of talk, quelled immediately by the mistress.

"They are of people dressed like this. I will bring them," said Dolores eagerly.

"That is nice of you, Dolores. We shall be delighted to see them," said Miss Poole kindly. "They will be both interesting and instructive."

Dolores lowered her arm. Her face was flushed slightly with excitement, and Kitty smiled at her. That smile to Dolores meant more than all the

"Why? I know not. It has always been the same—ever since I could remember. But before I came here a week or two ago, I seldom went from the house, save to wander round the fields—"

"But where were you at school before? You must have been at school somewhere!"

"I wasn't," she said. "I can never remember being at school. I—I have always lived in that house. At least, I can remember another house—a large house, a splendid house like a fairy castle. But where, I know not. Aunt says it is imagination. But it isn't. I know that it isn't. I can remember the blue sky behind that large, white, fairy castle, and then the sea. I remember a tall man in fine clothes—but only faintly!"

Dolores was speaking earnestly, and her voice was slightly raised above her ordinary soft tone. Her eyes sparkled. But as she finished, she seemed to slip back into her shell, like a shy snail.

"But where were you born?" asked Kitty.

"I don't know. Aunt says France, but when I asked her before, she said Italy. My father died when I was very young," she said. "So did my mother. But aunt never lets me question her much. She is so funny. There is a room into which I must never go—I know not why. It is always locked."

"Goodness—how queer!" exclaimed Kitty. "Your aunt is a little bit—strange, isn't she?"

"Yes. But she is quite kind, and lets me have everything—everything but what I want most—friendship."

"Friendship," murmured Kitty, seeing the sad look in her companion's eyes. "Why, Dolores—I can give you that—if you want my friendship."

"Of course, I do," said Dolores. "Oh—Kitty—may I call you that? I do so want a friend—and you more than anyone else."

She smiled radiantly, and clasped Kitty's hands passionately.

"And we can go out and about together," she cried. "How splendid! We can have splendid times—perhaps."

She broke off, a thoughtful shade on her brow. What would her aunt say to this? Would her aunt allow this friendship?

As those questions ran like fire through her brain she sighed.

"If—if we can," she murmured, turning to Kitty.

Kitty smiled.

"No one can prevent friendship. They can prevent us meeting, but friendship will always live."

"I hope so," murmured Dolores.

Kitty Crichton jumped up.

"Then come along," she said. "You can have a bang with the racquet, there's still a few minutes left."

But Kitty had underestimated the time. Hardly were they out in the quadrangle when the bell rang, and they had to hurry indoors.

When morning lessons were over, Miss Poole called Dolores to her.

"Bring those photographs, please, Dolores," she said. "I should very much like to see them. They should prove extremely interesting."

"Yes, Miss Poole. I will."

Dolores hurried from the room, to find Kitty waiting for her.

"I come your way home," said Kitty. "Come along."

And she linked arms with Dolores.

Together they crossed the quadrangle, and several girls looked curiously at the pair; thinking it strange, no doubt, that Kitty Crichton, the leader of the Fourth, should have "palled" with the Infant, as Dolores was called.

Pearl Hardy hurried towards them, and nodded curtly to Dolores, as she walked round to the other side of Kitty.

The three linked arms, and Dolores looked proudly at the other girls, who were walking in twos and threes.

She had a friend now, even as they had—she—

She started, as through the gates, came the well-known figure of her aunt.

"Oh!" she exclaimed.

The woman stared at the sight of her niece and the others girls with arms linked. She hurried forward, and Kitty halted, frowning. Trouble was in the air, Kitty had scented it.

"Aunt," exclaimed Dolores, a trace of nervousness in her tone, "this is my friend, Kitty Crichton!"

"Indeed!" Her aunt bowed curtly to Kitty. "I have called because I want to take you to see your uncle, Dolores," she said. "We must hurry! Come! Bid your friend good-bye!"

Dolores stared at her aunt, and Kitty frowned.

"But—" protested the girl.

"Come! We must not be late!" Dolores allowed herself to be led away, and looked back imploringly at Kitty.

"Good—good-bye!" she called.

"How many times have I told you not to make friends!" exclaimed her aunt angrily. "You are sent here to learn; not to make friends! Come home!"

Dolores, in silence, allowed herself to be led along. But Dolores was angry and a trifle resentful. Why wasn't she allowed to make friends? It did not seem fair. Other girls had friends—several friends. And she was forbidden even one!

She went upstairs to her room, and stared gloomily through her window at the distant countryside. Not for some minutes did she remember the photographs and pictures of which she had spoken to her schoolmistress.

Where were they? She had almost forgotten. She went to the door, with the object of calling out and asking her aunt the question. But then she paused. Suppose her aunt objected to that? There was no reason why she should, but she might, and to return to the school without them would make her appear silly in the eyes of the other girls.

So she crept downstairs, and searched the large, high-ceilinged room, the walls of which seemed papers with books, ceiling high. On the soft, thick carpet her feet made no sound, and, free from disturbance, she rummaged amongst the old papers in the quaintly-carved bureau.

At last! Here they were—a few faded photographs, and some painted pictures, a carving, and a spear-head.

She slipped the photographs down the neck of her drill slip, and decided to leave the spear-head behind.

Then, silently and unobserved, she crept up to her room.

What a painful meal dinner seemed—how long-drawn-out! Every moment she expected the photographs to drop from her dress. But they did not. And when the meal was over she was free, although not until it was almost time for lessons to start was she allowed to go to school.

She reached school in a breathless state, having run all the way. Even then she was only a few minutes early for lessons.

Miss Poole took the photographs with a smile, and examined them keenly, while Dolores stood by proudly. Then the mistress examined the paintings and the carving.

"These—these are surely very valuable!" she said. "I suppose your aunt knows that you have brought them?"

Dolores' face fell.

"No—no!" she admitted.

"Oh! Then I think you should ask her permission. I should like to show them to other Forms. Will you ask her, please? Take them back with you, and ask her. I am sure she will not mind."

Very reluctantly Dolores took the photographs and carving back.

"I—I will ask, Miss Poole," she said. "I hope she won't mind."

"Very well. But I should not like to be responsible for them, unless with her permission."

Dolores, rather disappointed, went back to her seat, and immediately was requested by the girls around to let them see the things. But Miss Poole put a stop to that.

When the ordinary lessons were over, and it was time for tennis, Dolores found that she had become suddenly popular.

Girls pressed all round her—all with the same request—to see the photographs.

"You may look," she said to Kitty, and handed her the treasures.

Kitty Crichton, with the others all around, examined the paintings, the carving, and the photos.

"Aren't they wonderful?" she said.

"And this photo is rather remarkable. Look at that tall man—"

She held it high to get it away from the shadows cast by the other girls' heads.

"Goodness!" she exclaimed. "I seem to know his face! He's awfully like someone!" She stared at it a second longer.

Then Pearl Hardy exclaimed suddenly: "Why, he's like the Infant! He must be her father! Is he, Infant?"

They all turned to Dolores, who raised her brows in surprise.

"My father!" she exclaimed. "I—I don't know. I don't think so."

She took the photograph and stared at it.

"Aunt would know," she said thoughtfully.

"Well, here is your aunt," said someone, "just coming across the quad."

Dolores turned, and for the first time was really glad to see her aunt coming towards her.

"Aunt, aunt!" she exclaimed, running forward, and brandishing the photograph.

"The girls say this is like me! This man—is he my father?"

"Your father!" exclaimed the woman suddenly, and she looked suspiciously at the group of girls. "Let me see."

She snatched the photograph.

"Where did you get this, Dolores?" she almost shouted. "It is not your father, stupid girl! It is—it is some native of a foreign country! How dare you bring this, you wicked girl!"

Who cannot sympathise with Dolores, forbidden by her aunt to have friends? It is indeed a pity, for in Kitty Crichton and Pearl Hardy she could have two of the best friends any girl could desire. But why is friendship forbidden poor Dolores? Why must she be ever under the vigilance of her aunt outside lesson hours? And those photographs? Why is her aunt so annoyed that Dolores should be showing them to the Limmershaw High School girls? There is evidently a deep mystery enshrouding the young life of Dolores, and the solving of it will make the most absorbing reading. Do not spoil your interest in this fine serial by missing a single instalment. To make certain of securing your copy of next Thursday's issue of THE SCHOOL FRIEND place an advance order with your newsagent—a standing order, preferably—and do me a lasting favour by recommending "Friendship Forbidden!" to all your friends.

# Peggy Preston's Loyalty!



A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of  
the Girls of Cliff House School, featuring  
Peggy Preston. - By HILDA RICHARDS.

## The Cheat!

**SCRATCH, scratch!**  
The soft scraping sound made by at least twenty pens writing at the same time was the only sound that broke the silence in the Fourth Form class-room at Cliff House School on this pleasant May afternoon.

It was the first day of term after the holidays that had proved so pleasurable and so exciting for most of the girls, and this hour and a half would form the only real work that had to be done to-day. They were answering questions set on their "holiday task," the book that was given for all to read during the vacation.

To most of the girls it was not at all an uncongenial task. To one who sat writing quickly and fluently it seemed a real pleasure. This girl was Peggy Preston, the pretty girl from the North. Study never came hard to Peggy and examinations never daunted her. She had cause to be grateful to the study that had allowed her, when poor, to come to Cliff House on a scholarship grant.

What was more, she had thoroughly enjoyed reading the chosen book—a sympathetic tale of fine honest friendships and all the things that she loved. Her blue eyes shone as she went on with her writing, for she meant every word that her facile pen put to paper. Once she paused to brush the brown curls back over her shoulders, but it was only a momentary halt. Peggy had cause to be proud of her good looks, but she was too easy-going and unaffected to make comparisons in her own mind.

"Girls!" said Miss Steel's voice, suddenly. And that stopped all of them—even Peggy. "I am going out of the room for a few minutes. I suppose that it is unnecessary for me to say that I leave you on your honour to carry on as though I were here?"

"Certainly, Miss Steel," answered Barbara Redfern's voice, as spokeswoman for them all. And Peggy just murmured assent.

"Thank you, girls," said Miss Steel in her dignified way, and she walked out of the room and closed the door.

There were one or two whispers, but not concerning the examination. And they quickly died down—all save one. A voice that no one liked went on, coming from the desk right beside Peggy. And it said:

"What did happen to Sir John? This stupid No. 3!"

Peggy Preston looked up and met Marcia Loftus's eyes. Marcia looked the same as ever—thin-faced, sallow, mean. There was a worried look in her greish eyes now, and she appeared rather anxious, too. Peggy could guess that Marcia, as usual, had been slacking.

"Did you ask me, Marcia?" said Peggy, in her quiet way.

"Yes, I can't think for the life of me!" said Marcia. "Do tell me."

"Miss Steel's left us on our honour, so it wouldn't be fair," said Peggy, with gentle reproof. And she went on with her work, intending to forget all about it.

About a minute passed. She was writing quickly when a faint rustle, like the turning of a page of a book, came to her ears. She did not heed it until it was repeated. Then, suddenly, her eyes glanced to the side. She saw Marcia make a hasty movement and push something, shielded by her arm, under the desk, and make a fumbling attempt to go on writing.

Peggy resumed her work for another minute. Then she heard the same noise. This time she looked up at once, and, as she understood, the colour came to her cheeks in a swift flood. Marcia was cheating! And not merely by asking questions that the others could ignore if they liked—she had the "holiday task" on her lap, and was reading the page that gave a full index of the contents of all the chapters!

"Marcia!" gasped Peggy.  
The girl started and looked up, a spot of colour in each sallow cheek. Her eyes met those of Peggy fearfully.

"Yes?"  
"Put that book away!" whispered Peggy.

Marcia had hidden the book as swiftly as before. She stared at Peggy with eyes that tried to be bold.

"What's the matter with you?" she demanded.

"I saw!" said Peggy in a low voice.

"You were cheating!"  
"Oh, I wasn't!" retorted Marcia.

"And don't you dare to say that to me!"  
Babs whirled about in her desk, having at last become aware of what was happening.

"Peggy!" she said. "What's the matter with Marcia?"

But Marcia answered the question herself, with an attempt at that bluffing way of hers that was so well known.

"Peggy's trying to be funny!" she said bitterly. "Just because she's mugged and swotted all the holidays she wants to show off. I wasn't doing anything."

Peggy had no wish to make any scene, but she could not let that go.

"I'm not doing anything of the sort!" she retorted. "You were cheating, Marcia. You had the holiday task book there!"

"Wha-a-at?" came an incredulous gasp from the class.

"I hadn't!" cried Marcia, her cheeks flaming. "I was looking at a stupid geometry book that someone has left under the desk!"

"Show the book!" said Peggy hotly.

"I won't—just to please you!" retorted Marcia. "You're only an interfering, sneaking Council school kid, and that's how you know so much about cheating! I expect you had a few cribs when you sat for the examination that brought you to Cliff House!"

"Shame, Marcia!"  
"Take it back!" said Babs indignantly. "You've no right to say such horrid things!"

Peggy, driven to an unusual anger, made a sudden grab to take the book from under Marcia's desk. Marcia gripped her at the same moment. They were locked together when the door opened, and Miss Steel returned.

"Goodness gracious! This scene—when I trusted you on your honour!" said Miss Steel with a touch of bitterness. "Sit down both of you! You should be heartily ashamed of yourselves—especially you, Peggy Preston! If I have anything like this again you will both be placed in detention."

They sat down—Peggy with a burning sense of injustice in her breast. She tried to go on with her answers, but she had lost the fluency. Her paper would not do her justice, and it would be through the meanness of Marcia. But, even so, Peggy would have tried to dismiss the incident from her mind—if she had been allowed.

When the examination was over, Miss Steel told the girls that they could rise and take their departure while she collected the papers. They did so, and it was out in the corridor that an indignant crowd formed around Marcia Loftus.

"Peggy, just a minute, please!" Babs exclaimed. "Marcia was perfectly horrid in class, and it was awfully mean of her not to own up. We all think she ought to apologise. Isn't that so, girls?"

"Rather!" said a chorus of voices—particularly clear being those of Mabel Lynn and Bessie Bunter, Barbara's chums.

"Apologise, eh?" Marcia stood against the wall, her cheeks coloured again, a greenish glint in her eyes. She looked the Marcia of old just then—the sneak and the mean-spirited schemer who had so often offended the form. "Think I'll apologise to Peggy Preston, the scholarship girl?"

"Peggy is not a scholarship girl now," said Babs curtly. "It wouldn't matter if she was, to our way of thinking. Are you going to apologise, Marcia?"

"What for?" said Marcia blusteringly. "You believe what Peggy said about me?"

"Of course, we do!"  
"Did you see the book?"

"No. But—but Peggy said—"  
"Peggy said!" sneered Marcia.  
"Well, you go in there and look under my desk, and find the book if you can!"  
"We can't, as Miss Steel is going to stay and correct the papers. But we'll certainly look later—"

"Yes, and if you don't find one there you'll put one—I know!" retorted Marcia recklessly. "Oh, you needn't look at me like that, Barbara Redfern! I've not come back this term to purr on you, and think what a lovely, conceited Form captain you are! I know you'd do anything to try and score off me, and that's why you're trying to back up Peggy. But I know a bit about Peggy now, too!" She gave a chuckle, queerly nervous and malicious at the same time. "Yes, a good bit!"  
"What do you know about me?" said Peggy, speaking at last.

Marcia chuckled again.  
"Oh, a good many things—especially about examinations!" said Marcia, and suddenly pointed. "There! look at her blushing, girls!" She knows what I mean, all right!"

And with that Marcia Loftus turned suddenly and walked away. Peggy was blushing, but from quite different motives from those Marcia implied. It was the cruel spite of Marcia's tone that brought that colour.

"I—I really don't understand—"  
"Of course you don't, Peggy," said Babs quietly. "We understand Marcia of old. She's come back this term determined to stir up as much trouble as she used to. Marcia sha'n't succeed if we know anything about it. Never mind what she said—all of us are quite certain that she was trying to cheat! Who says a walk?"

Quickly a goodly number were ready for a stroll, and they fell in with the suggestion, that the neighbouring town of Courtfield should be their goal.

Peggy Preston, of course, went with them. She walked with her chum, Augusta Anstruther - Browne, and Augusta's cheery banter soon drove the gloomy expression from her pretty face. It was only when they reached Courtfield, at last, that they had cause to remember the class-room scene. Looking over the road, Augusta suddenly saw Marcia Loftus, who was not alone. With her walked a smartly-dressed girl of about her own age, and the two were evidently on the best of terms.

Augusta drew Peggy's attention.  
"See? Marcia's found a new chum!" Augusta said. "She looks rather a nice girl to be chumming with Marcia. I wonder where they met? She can't really know what Marcia's like."

Peggy saw a quiet, round-faced girl of fresh and nice complexion, and was vaguely puzzled.

"I seem to have seen that girl before—but it's a very long while ago," Peggy said.

"How funny!" breathed Augusta. "Do you know, I was thinking the same thing, and wondering if I had met her when I used to know Sybil Spender. If you've seen her before, it can't be that. But perhaps we're both mistaken, and thinking of someone like her. Hallo, where are they going?"

"Looks like some new attraction in Courtfield!" mused Peggy Preston, looking at the brightly-painted shop outside which the two girls were stopping.  
"Yes, they're going in."

A minute later Peggy and all the others had reached the same place, and Babs, Mabs, Bessie—who were leading—had paused as Marcia had done. They were gazing at the shopfront, not without amusement.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 156.

It was certainly a new attraction for Courtfield. Bills announced that "Mrs. Jordan's Waxworks" were on view within, but were only staying for a limited period. The usual attractive and highly-coloured bills were to be seen in profusion. A poster right in the middle of the windows promised a most unusual attraction.

It said:

"You must see  
MOLLY, with the  
Marvellous Mind.  
She will describe the  
Wax Replicas  
and make up  
Witty Rhymes."

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### Peggy's Old Chum!

"LOOKS decidedly interesting!" laughed Barbara Redfern, having read all the notices.  
"It's something new for Courtfield, too! I wonder what Molly is like!"  
"I say, let's go in, girls!" squeaked Bessie Bunter excitedly. "It says that they have all the Famous Explorers. I expect they'll have my Uncle Corny in there!"

"Shall we have a look round, Peggy?" asked Babs.

"Certainly, Babs," said Peggy, and that decided the eight of them. They paid their money at the little office, and went past a red plush curtain. In the first room they came to were numbers of very well executed wax figures.

But what caught their eyes at once was the form of a smallish girl, wearing a mask that hid the features of her face. She was dressed in a picturesque costume, and gave them a timid bow as they appeared.

"Are you Molly, with the marvellous mind?" asked Babs smiling.

"Yes, miss," the girl answered. "If you will come with me, I will show you round the exhibition. Just name the characters you see, and any event you can think of, and I will try and make up a rhyme about it."

"Splendid!" Babs was saying. "I think I'll choose—"

But Peggy Preston hardly heard. She glanced first at Augusta, then at Babs. No, they were just watching interestedly, nothing more. The others—yes, they were waiting for Molly to go on. They had not noticed it. But Peggy's heart was pounding madly.

She had heard that voice before! Yes, she was sure of it—quite sure! And suddenly, as she looked, she saw the eyes of the masked girl resting on her for a moment, and then look away. The girl recognised her, too! In that moment Peggy understood who the girl was.

Molly—that was her real name! But here—here in Courtfield, with a wax-work exhibition! Peggy found it hard to even attempt to listen to the glib and ingenious rhyme that the girl was constructing around the personality of Oliver Cromwell. Molly Martin was here, and Peggy was yearning with all her heart to speak to her!

But she hesitated, being uncertain of her ground. And while she followed dumbly behind the others, Molly led them round the exhibition, winning flattering and whole-hearted applause from the delighted girls. And they were especially pleased when, becoming bolder, she fitted words to the tunes of popular songs and sang them charmingly.

But it was torture for Peggy. The only pleasure she had was that they did not meet Marcia. In the further room was an exit door, and through there

Marcia must have gone on hearing them arrive.

"And that, young ladies, completes the exhibition!"

How pleased was Peggy to hear that remark that Molly made at last. And, turning to go, she whispered suddenly to Augusta.

"I want to stay behind—for a few words, Augusta," Peggy said. "I'll catch you up—in the Creameries, eh? You don't mind if I don't say more just now? You'll explain to the others?"

"Why, certainly," said Augusta, and she smiled in that manner that showed that from Peggy this was quite sufficient explanation.

So Peggy stayed while the others went. She was alone at last with the masked girl.

Quite alone—and then the girl made a sudden movement and whipped the black covering from her face!

"Peggy!" she muttered.  
"Molly Martin!" muttered Peggy, and suddenly she had clasped the girl in her arms and kissed her. "Oh, Molly, even now I can't believe that it is really you! But I knew your voice at once."

The girl gave her a delighted hug.

"Oh, Peggy, I didn't realise how near I was to your fine school until I saw you come in here!" she said, in her charmingly unaffected way. "And then—well, I could hardly think of my words at all. I wanted to speak, but of course, I couldn't do so in front of your smart friends."

"Oh, you could have done, Molly—I should have been proud!" Peggy answered quickly. "And now you must tell me everything—why are you doing this, Molly, and how long since you took this employment? It must be awfully hard and trying for you, when I know that you longed so much—"

"No, Peggy, no! You've said that before!" Molly interrupted earnestly. "This is no hardship to me, and Mrs. Jordan pays me well."

"And yet, if I hadn't won the scholarship, you would have been at Cliff House school now—perhaps one of the happy party visiting here," breathed Peggy. "Oh, Molly, you can't help me looking at it that way, knowing that you were second on the list when there was only one vacancy—"

"But the better girl got it—I never grieved, dear! And now—"

"Molly!" Peggy said, interrupting in her turn. "Why did you stop writing to me? I've always wondered, because we were such chums at school. Was it because—because of this?"

"Yes," said Molly, and the next moment she was deep in explanation. Knowing Peggy's sensitive nature she had kept the news from her. It had become necessary to do something to earn her own keep. After all, it was not a bad sort of life at all. The mask? Oh, that was partly to make her more mysterious, and because she still had that old timidity and blushed so quickly when spoken to. Also, it would make it easier for anyone else to take her place if it became necessary.

"Take your place?" Peggy exclaimed quickly. "How? When?"

And then Molly, unable to hide it any longer, told her old school chum the rest of the story. Mrs. Jordan, who owned the waxworks but always lived in hotels and seldom came near the exhibition, was really a very good sort. She did not want to lose Molly, but would not stand in her light. If Molly should leave, Mrs. Jordan's daughter would take her place, and the mask would help. The proprietress wanted her daughter to



earn the strange business in the same way that she had done herself.

"She has just left a boarding school where she wasn't a great success," Molly explained. "I don't know her name, and don't believe I've ever seen her. She hates the waxworks and will never come near with her mother. If I should leave she would realise that she had to come here—"

"But what will you do if you leave?" Peggy asked anxiously.

"I—I—oh, I can't help telling you everything now, Peggy!" Molly said, all in a rush. "I'm hoping to win a musical scholarship, and I can take the examination in Courtfield while we're here. There! That is my secret hope, dear, and now you know!"

Peggy was wildly excited. Her chum trying for an award that would lift her out of this queer, blind-alley calling! A musical scholarship—and Molly had always been so good at music, too! Yes, it wasn't just a vague sort of hope—she must stand a good chance!

"Oh, Molly!" Peggy said, in her sincere and earnest way. "This is splendid news! And, Molly, I want to help you in any way I can—I do really! Do you think I can?"

"I find it very hard to study, leading this sort of life," Molly confessed wistfully. "But I don't see how—"

"Are you always open here, Molly?"

"No. Usually only in the evenings. It is because the schools are mostly returning to-day that we are—"

"Then come to Cliff House and have tea with me to-morrow afternoon, Molly!" Peggy pressed. "You will? Oh, yes—don't be shy, dear! My chums are not snobs—they'll be delighted to meet you. And if you bring the papers we can have a quiet talk over them, and then I can get some advice from Miss Chantrey, who's our music mistress and awfully clever."

Two little unbidden tears suddenly stood in Molly's eyes.

"Oh, Peggy, you are too good!" she murmured.

"No!" Peggy was standing still, holding both her hands in her eager grip. "You remember when we were younger that we—once formed what we called a comrades' club at school, Molly? We promised to help one another if ever we could. Well, I haven't forgotten that. I've left the old school, but I'm proud of it, and I never want to forget the chums I had before I made new ones. I will try and help you, Molly!"

"But your friends—they won't understand—" she still demurred.

"Yes, they will! They know how proud I am of my humble start. I shouldn't be much of a girl if I turned my back on the things that helped me to become a Cliff House girl. You will come to-morrow—yes?"

"I shall be glad to come, Peggy," Molly answered gratefully. "But there is just one thing. You will not tell anyone that I am working for this scholarship?"

"Not if you wish it, dear," Peggy said.

"I have a queer reason, but I must ask you to promise," Molly explained, looking away. "A week ago I went to my trunk and found that all my specimen examinations had been torn up—and it put me awfully behindhand with work until I got fresh ones. Other things like that have happened; pages are missing from some of my books, and that sort of thing."

"Good gracious! Who could be so mean?" Peggy cried.

"I don't know—but it's happened," Molly said, in a worried voice. "I could never suspect Mrs. Jordan—she's too

nice. The commissionaire and the casket-maker are kind and thoughtful, too. I can only say that it just happened. But I have been pretending since then, that I had dropped the idea so that I can work in secret. That is why I ask you to say nothing, Peggy."

Peggy gripped her hands again, warmly and impulsively.

"And I promise, Molly—I promise!" she said, earnestly. "I don't see any reason why we should tell anyone. But I'm going to help you in this, Molly—I will! To-morrow afternoon we start!"

And as Peggy went, something very strange happened in that inner room that should now have been deserted, and as still as its store of waxwork figures.

One of the curtains moved!

If Peggy or Molly had been there they would have investigated instantly. But there was no one to see that movement; no one to find out whether it was just caused by a playful eddy of wind, or by the action of a hidden eavesdropper!

Another scene came to Peggy's mind. She remembered that first meeting of the comrades' club of which she had spoken. They had all been younger then. How serious their little faces must have been as they all made the promise that none of them really expected to be able to fulfil! But they had meant what they said.

And here the wheel of chance had spun, and Peggy's parents were rich and could give her almost anything she desired. She was no longer a scholarship girl. She could have thrown her money about, and joined in any snobbish set like that formed by the arrogant Lady Hetty Hendon of the Fourth. But Peggy was still the scholarship girl at heart.

Steps in the passage took her running to the door. And there, looking into the passage, she stopped with a little murmur of disappointment. Marcia Loftus was coming along with the smart friend they had seen in Courtfield yesterday.



**AN ATTEMPT TO BE FUNNY!** "Lum-tum tummy tum!" chanted Marcia mockingly. Peggy angry and confused, tried to go on playing.

#### Proud of Molly!

PEGGY PRESTON was alone in her study after lessons had finished on the following afternoon. The table was tastefully set for two. Peggy had warmly pressed Augusta to stay as well, but Augusta had thoughtfully excused herself, knowing how much Peggy would have to say to her old chum, Molly Martin.

Peggy looked at the tea-table, and added restless finishing touches. She paced to the window and looked down into the quadrangle. She saw, as in a sort of vision, little disconnected pictures of other days. Walking home from school with Molly, each of them swinging their shabby satchels, speculating on what they would be having for their tea. "A nice iced cake, I expect!" Molly remarked, very seriously. And Peggy, in reply had said: "Oh, we shall be having fruit and cream, and bonbons to pull afterwards." They had both laughed and walked on, softly singing, realising what a queer little pretence it was. For each knew that little more than plain bread might await them in those days of their deepest poverty!

"Peggy!" Marcia called.

Peggy stopped, instead of returning to her study.

"Let me introduce you," said Marcia, giving Peggy a look that puzzled her. "This is Peggy Preston—my friend, Priscilla Bayton, whom I met in the holidays. She's just come to tea with me."

Priscilla took Peggy's hand in a warm grip, while Peggy was still puzzling her brains as to whether she had ever seen her before.

"Charmed to meet you. You have got a ripping old school here!" Priscilla declared. "I've been telling Marcia how fortunate she is to be at such a place. I only wish I'd been at Cliff House for years like most of you."

"Oh Peggy, hasn't been here long. She came as a scholarship girl, Priscilla. The first one!" Marcia said that as only Marcia could!

"Scholarship, eh?" Priscilla asked jocularly. "Ah, well, you deserved it, Peggy. I can see that! You're all such a happy little family here. It must have been a fine feeling coming here after your old life, what?"

It was said with a charm of manner so

different from Marcia's sneering utterance that Peggy could only smile and reply in the same spirit. But at that moment someone called from below for Peggy. She was excusing herself instantly and rushing off, and a few seconds later she came face to face with her own visitor—Molly Martin.

Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn, the cheery chums of No. 4, had met Molly and brought her into the school. She was walking shyly between them, evidently tongue-tied. And at first glance Peggy could not help noticing the great contrast between this poorly though neatly dressed visitor, so out of her element, and the stylish girl who had just come for Marcia.

But the comparison was only for a moment. In another instant Peggy was kissing her and setting her at her ease.

"Thanks awfully, Babs and Mabs," Peggy said. "Won't you come to tea after all?"

"No; but we will look in afterwards, with pleasure!" Babs declared. "A chum of yours, Peggy? That's good enough for us, eh, Mabs?"

"Rather!" said Mabs.

Peggy sped off to her study, Molly at her side. Her old chum was startled at the sight of the cosy little den and its decoration.

"What a lovely place!" she breathed. "Oh, Peggy, you shouldn't have brought me here, because I know that some of them will only talk—"

"Let them, Molly dear!" said Peggy cheerily. "By-and-by you're going to the Musical College, and then you'll have a study like this yourself! Good, the kettle's boiling, so we can start at once."

And with such a genial hostess, not one whit changed from the girl she had known in the old days, Molly was very soon indeed at her ease and thoroughly enjoying herself. At Peggy's request she produced the papers relating to her examination, and also some of her own written work, and Peggy ran through them. She clapped her hands several times.

"Why, Molly, you are clever!" Peggy said admiringly. "You're miles ahead of me at music. I don't think there's much I can help you with after all!"

"Oh, yes. I don't know everything I should," Molly confessed. "Besides, it's so nice to have someone interested in it as well. And I haven't got a teacher I can go to with any knotty point. I have to try and find it out from my books. That isn't always possible with singing."

Every now and then Peggy had to break off to inquire after some old friend whose name came suddenly into her mind, but she quickly returned to the subject so important to Molly. She had scarcely finished looking through everything before Augusta appeared, wanting to be introduced to Molly. Babs and Mabs came quickly after that, and a good many others as well. By the time that Molly announced that she would have to be going, to be ready for the evening show, she had met most of Peggy's chums.

"I'll have a long talk with Miss Chantrey when she comes to-morrow, Molly, and I'm sure she will help," Peggy promised. "And now, if you really must go—"

She broke off. In the passage they had come abruptly on Marcia and her smart friend. Peggy was sure that Marcia saw them, although she affected not to do so. She took a sudden side-step, and—

Bump!

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 156.

### Who Told Marcia!

"OH!" gasped Marcia Loftus, and stared at unhappy Molly, with whom she had collided. "I wish you'd look where you're going when you come here!"

"It was your own fault, Marcia!" said Peggy Preston indignantly.

But Marcia broke into a sneering laugh of well-assumed surprise and satisfaction. "Priscilla, look!" she exclaimed. "See who's here! It's Molly, with the Marvellous Mind—the waxworks' girl! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is it really, Marcia?"

"Yes. She's one of Peggy's old friends. They knew each other before Peggy got the scholarship! Peggy'll bring anyone up to the school here. There's no snobbery about Peggy! Ha, ha, ha!"

And then Peggy Preston's heart bounded. Not a bit like Marcia was this stranger—not a bit! Instead of encouraging the sneering laughter she gave timid, startled Molly a quick and friendly smile, and took her hand.

"But Molly's so clever, Marcia, she is really!" Priscilla declared. "How are you Molly? Awfully pleased to meet you without your mask! I heard you the other day, Molly, and I think you're simply splendid! You'll make a fine name for yourself if you keep at it!"

There were involuntary murmurs of approval from the girls in the passage who had witnessed the scene. No, Marcia had not found a chum really after her heart at all! Priscilla was glad to shake hands with Molly!

"It's one for you—and you asked for it!" whispered Clara Trevlyn, to Marcia who stood very awkwardly at one side.

"Oh, mind your own business!" Marcia snapped. "Priscilla doesn't know as much about Peggy as I do!"

An unpleasant situation, however, had been turned very effectively. And Peggy was more delighted still when Miss Steel and Miss Bullivant, meeting them on the stairs, paused to shake hands quite impartially with both the visitors.

"There, Molly!" said Peggy. "Now you won't be afraid to come here again, I'm sure! I'm so sorry you've got to rush off like this, but perhaps you'll come earlier next time?"

She returned to her study and cleared away the tea-things. Augusta helped her, mentioning that she had known Molly by sight in the old days. She laughingly alluded to many little scenes that came to her mind—memories of those old days when she had not been on speaking terms with Peggy, but had seen Peggy and Molly together.

They did their preparation, which was light that evening, and went into the Common-room. As they opened the door they could hear that Marcia Loftus was inside, and talking excitedly: she broke off at sight of Peggy.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Marcia pealed, as though at some great joke. "Here is Peggy Preston herself, girls! Here's the girl who accused me of cheating yesterday! Now you can hear what she has to say about it herself!"

Peggy stopped, amazed at the curious looks directed at her by so many of the girls.

"Oh, Peggy, I'm so glad you've come in!" Barbara Redfern burst out impulsively. "Marcia's been saying horrid things against you, Marcia, repeat them to Peggy's face, now that she is here to answer you—if you dare!"

Peggy's heart seemed to miss a beat as Marcia broke again into that malicious chuckle, and her eyes shone greenish and more triumphantly than ever.

"Repeat them?" she said. "Why, of course I will, if you like! I'm not

afraid to do that. Peggy accused me yesterday of trying to cheat. Now I'll tell you why Peggy is such an expert at cheating—something that you've never heard from her own lips! She was caught cheating herself just before she sat for the examination that brought her here. Now!"

Peggy Preston staggered back, her face white with horror.

"Oh, Peggy, you will deny such a wicked falsehood at once!" Babs cried.

Peggy fought to regain her self-control.

"Yes, I—I do deny it!" she said breathlessly. "I was not caught doing such a thing at all—"

But Marcia interrupted her again.

"No. Before you finish your denial, let me tell you the rest!" she cried.

"Then you shall explain it all—if you can! Three days before the scholarship examination took place, Peggy Preston, there was a smaller exam. held in the school. You don't deny that? Good! When it was over, a bundle of cribs was found under your desk. You were accused of cheating. Can you deny that also is the truth?"

Marcia flung the question at her, and then stood waiting. There was a dramatic silence. Every eye was turned on Peggy. And how white and absolutely unnerved she looked!

"Peggy, give Marcia the answer she deserves!" Babs cried.

But still Peggy hesitated.

"Peggy, you can deny every word, we know!" Marjorie Hazeldene put in anxiously.

"I—I can't deny every word!" said Peggy huskily.

"Wha-a-at?" came a gasp from everyone.

"But I do deny what Marcia means," Peggy went on, with a sudden rush. "Listen girls! How she has found out this I—I don't know. But now you have heard so much I will tell you everything. Such—such a thing did once take place."

"Peggy!"

"But I was innocent, girls, and—and it was proved! The writing was not a bit like mine, and—and the headmistress examined my papers, and said that the cribs could not possibly have helped me. That is the true story!"

"How is it we've never heard of it before, until I found it out?" sneered Marcia.

But here Augusta spoke up hotly in her chum's defence.

"How?" she queried sternly. "Why should Peggy, or any girl, speak of a mistake once made—a false accusation against her? I was once accused of being a thief, and expelled from here; but, as you all know, I was proved innocent! Marcia has only told a half-story, and no one who knows Peggy can possibly believe what she means to imply."

"Well done, Augusta!" Babs cried. "You've put it splendidly! As for you, Marcia—"

But Marcia had not finished. Still with that mocking smile on her face, she turned to Peggy again.

"How is it, Peggy Preston, that you're suddenly making a fuss of this old friend of yours, Marvellous Molly—the girl who would have won the scholarship if it hadn't been for you? Don't forget that I know that she came second on the list!"

"Everyone knows that!" said Peggy in amazement. "I've never made any secret of it at all!"

"Oh, I'm not going to believe that you let it out accidentally!" scoffed Marcia Loftus. "Of course, you've had to keep to it now. But it's funny that I've found this out, and that you're suddenly making such fuss of your old 'friend'

at the same time. Some of us, if we were at all suspicious, might even think that you had a reason for wanting to keep her quiet."

"Oh, how can you say such a thing, Marcia?" gasped Peggy, white to the lips. "You're pretending to think that I got here by some unfair means—"

"I believe that's what Molly, the Marvellous One, thinks," said Marcia. "Chumming with a girl at the waxworks—a common show-girl, indeed! As though you'd do that, Peggy Preston, if you hadn't some reason. Think what you like, girls; but it's pretty clear to me, especially in view of the exam, that Peggy can't deny."

Indignation broke out at that. Almost without exception, the girls turned on Marcia. They could not believe such a cruel and unwarranted suspicion as that which she voiced. They told her so, plainly and without mincing words. Peggy was too popular for Marcia to be allowed to make such statements unchallenged.

But there was a question on the lips of many of them, too. How had Marcia managed to find out so much? Peggy, listening dully to all their voices, wanted to hear the answer to that question as much as anyone did. In the middle of the scene the door opened to admit Gwen Cook.

To the surprise of everyone, and almost heedless of the commotion in the room, she went straight to Marcia.

"Marcia—that old green coat that you had last term!" Gwen exclaimed. "What have you done with it?"

Marcia, ignoring the others, turned to Gwen at once.

"Why do you ask that? Have you seen it?" she said eagerly.

Gwen's answer came like a bombshell.

"Seen it?" she repeated. "Either that, or one marvellously like it. I went to the waxworks in Courtfield when I was coming back from my music lesson, just to see this Molly, of whom you all speak so well. And, girls, Molly was wearing a green coat—either Marcia's old one, or one just like it!"

In the dead silence that fell, Marcia said:

"My old coat, Gwen; you were quite right." She went off into a sudden snigger of laughter. "But it's quite all right. I know about it. There's no need to make a fuss."

Again a silence, deeper than ever. Then, uttering a wild cry, Peggy rushed across the room and gripped Marcia's shoulders. Her face was flooded with colour, and her hands shook visibly.

"I know what you mean by that, Marcia—oh, I know!" she said hoarsely. "It's an insult to my chum Molly! You know that she knew about the exam, but promised, as everyone did, never to breathe another word about it. You're trying to make everyone think that, in exchange for your coat, Molly's been telling you secrets!"

Marcia tried to smile, but it was a feeble attempt.

"You haven't been told anything by Molly; I'll vouch for that," Peggy went on. "I don't believe it's your coat at all that she's been seen wearing this evening!"

"Oh, yes, it is!" Marcia said.

"I don't believe you—I don't! You shan't imply such things against my chum. It would be too mean and horrid to believe that she had been telling you such stories against me—"

Augusta Anstruther-Browne, at that point, intervened. She took Peggy's arm and urged her away.

"Don't, Peggy—don't!" Augusta whispered, cooler than anyone. "I can see through it if the others can't. Marcia

is saying all this to get what she probably considers her revenge because you caught her cheating herself."

Marcia Loftus laughed again, openly and without restraint.

"All right, my girls, think it—think what you like!" she cried. "But you'll find out that it is my old coat that Molly is wearing! And before very long, too, you'll find out the sort of girl Molly really is, and why Peggy has brought her here! And if you see much more of her after another day or two my name is not Marcia!"

### Spiteful Marcia!

MARCIA LOFTUS' words had not been without their effect.

Peggy Preston realised that only too well when Molly Martin came to see them the following afternoon.

Babs & Co. were as cheery as ever, and seemed to have entirely forgotten. But there were girls who listened to Marcia

everyone had promised that not another word should be said. They had not discovered the real culprit, but Peggy had not minded that in her own joy at her name being cleared.

And now that episode that should have been completely blotted out was made public!

She was innocent, of course, but she could not deny the facts. They remained; they had been published abroad by Marcia. The girls like Gwen, who liked to consider themselves "open minded," might take the "facts" more readily than the explanation.

Still, Peggy could never believe that Marcia had got to know through Molly; but she did have to ask her a question about the green dress.

And Molly's answer was an extraordinary one.

She admitted wearing such a dress the previous night. Why? It had been placed on the top of her basket, with a note pinned on it: "Wear this to-night." She had assumed that it was Mrs. Jordan's writing, as she was in the habit



**THE TAUNTER!** "Ha, ha, ha!" Marcia Loftus exploded. "Girls! Peggy's been out at her old job of cleaning!"

sometimes only too readily. Indeed, Gwendoline Cook, Cissy Clare, and a few more like them really believed that Marcia had hit on the truth, they just said among themselves that, "there was no smoke without fire, and there might be something in it." And so they avoided Molly, or did not appear to notice her when they passed in the passage, and Peggy understood only too well what it meant.

She was a bit herself that afternoon, much as she struggled to overcome her feelings. That episode of her old life—no, she had not thought of it twice in the last year! Within an hour of accusation she had been absolutely cleared. A party of them had met together—her teacher, the headmistress, Molly, and not more than two or three others.

"Peggy is innocent, and I want you all to promise that no one shall ever breathe a word about this unfortunate charge," the Head had said. "It would be very unfair to her, especially as she is going in for the scholarship examination."

Peggy remembered the scene, and how

of receiving such notes. That morning the dress had been missing again. It was all Molly could say.

Peggy Preston refrained from giving details.

She chatted with Molly about the musical examination, but rather dully, it must be confessed. Her mind was confused. How could the dress possibly have got there?

It seemed absolutely unreasonable to suppose that Marcia could have got into the waxworks and played such a trick! Even Marcia could not have found such an opportunity. Yet what else was Peggy to think? The only other answer that she could form in her mind was that Molly was not speaking the truth—that Marcia had "got at her," as she implied.

But that was monstrous! Peggy's loyalty was almost proverbial. She could never think such a thing as that about her old chum. Never! There was some explanation that she could not guess at present. Yes, Molly had spoken of torn-up music—

"I say, Peggy, there's one thing!" Molly said suddenly. "It's the thing  
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I've dreaded most, and—and I'm certain that you can help me with this. Before I take the examination I've got to attend before a board and sing a song. I know what it will be—it's the same song for everyone. But I'm nervous about that."

"Molly, you have a beautiful voice!" Peggy exclaimed.

"Thanks, Peggy!" said Molly gratefully. "But—but even so, that isn't everything. You'll understand what I mean. I—I haven't been trained in expression, and that's what you've always been so good at yourself. If you could train me to sing the song—"

Peggy asked what it was, and she knew the air of it.

"Why, Molly," Peggy said, "if you think I could help in that way—"

"Yes, you can, Peggy—you can!" Molly exclaimed. "You know that at school that was always one of your greatest points—your expression. If you could sing that song—"

"I haven't got a copy now, Molly. Have you?"

"No, mine isn't here. But—but—"

"I know!" Peggy ejaculated. "The Chanter has it. I'll ask her to train me in it to-morrow morning. She will—like a shot! And then, to-morrow evening, Molly, I can sing it when you come here. If you come in the Common-room, where our piano is—"

But Molly suddenly looked alarmed.

"No, please! Not—not that, Peggy! I should have to meet—"

And there she broke off, looking more confused than ever.

"Who would you have to meet?" said Peggy wonderingly.

"I—I— Oh, Peggy, it's my stupid shyness, I suppose!" Molly confessed. "I—I should feel so awkward sitting there, making notes. And—and the others would guess that you were teaching me; and you know that until the exam is over I want it kept a secret. Not because I want to rob you of the credit—"

"I know what you mean, Molly," said Peggy in a worried voice. "It is a difficulty, to be sure. But what else can we do?"

"Is the piano near the window?" Molly asked suddenly.

"Yes."

"And the window—do you have it open often?"

"Always," said Peggy, and suddenly understood. "Why, Molly, you think that I could sing it at the open window?"

"No, no—not really that!" said Molly confusedly. "I—I'm only trying to think of something—"

"But I shouldn't mind it at all, dear!" Peggy laughed. "I often sit by the window and sing. I know how you feel—that you can't attend properly if everyone is watching you. If you really think that it would help you to stand beneath the window while I was singing it—"

Molly hugged her impulsively.

"Oh, Peggy, it is so good of you to make such an offer!" she cried. "I couldn't think of anything I'd like more. It would help me so much just to stand there in the twilight and listen. I'm like that, you know—in the dusk I can attend so much better!"

"Plenty of us are like that," nodded Peggy. "And this, of course, has other advantages. Molly, I'll do it. Tell me when you'll be along, and I'll promise to be there at the window, and sing the song as well as I can. And when it's over I'll come down and meet you, and bring you up, and no one will guess!"

They were both delighted with the idea, and the clouds seemed to have rolled completely away from Peggy's

mind. She was in quite gay spirits when Molly rose at last to go.

And in the passage they met Marcia Loftus, as though she had been lingering there for that purpose.

Marcia gave a grin, and went into her study. They heard the key turn.

"What's the matter, Peggy? Why was she laughing?" asked Molly.

"Oh, it's all right. Just Marcia's way, dear," mumbled Peggy awkwardly. "Marcia wasn't laughing at you, of course."

Thus Peggy kept her counsel and allowed the sneering smiles of Marcia to pass apparently unnoticed.

On the following day Miss Chantrey came, and after a chat with her the mistress offered to teach Peggy the song very willingly indeed, and arranged a practice during the dinner-hour. Peggy tackled the singing of it as she had seldom tackled anything before, and had real cause to be gratified at Miss Chantrey's praise.

"Your expression is very good indeed, Peggy," she said. "There is no girl in the Form who interprets a song better. Do you know, you really teach me things at times!"

How encouraging were such words when Peggy did want to play the part of a teacher! At least, she really could help Molly in this way, and she understood how important it was.

The evening came, and Peggy tackled her preparation immediately tea was over. Molly had arranged to come at seven o'clock. She was now known to Piper as a visitor, and it would be comparatively easy for her to gain that little bricked alcove very near to the Common-room window in which she could stand and listen without being seen. At ten to seven Peggy rose to go to the Common-room. Would there be any hitch, she wondered?

In the passage she met Marcia Loftus and Priscilla Bayton.

"Hallo—good evening, Peggy!" Priscilla exclaimed, in her charming effusive manner. "Keeping fit?"

"Oh, yes," Peggy laughed. "Thanks very much. And you?"

"Oh—just lazy, that's all!" said Priscilla. "I've just been telling Marcia how lucky she is to be here! I always envy her whenever I come up here, you know."

Peggy went on to the Common-room, strangely gratified. True, the two girls were following her. But charming Priscilla—such a strange chum for a girl like Marcia—certainly had a great influence over the mean-spirited Fourth-Former. Marcia would be nicer with Priscilla there than without her. If only the friendship really could do Marcia some good!

Peggy Preston crossed to the piano and raised the cover of the keyboard. She tried to say, casually:

"Anyone mind the window being open?"

"Yes, I do!" spoke up Marcia, at once. "It's horribly draughty in here. Why can't you stay in your study if you want the window open?"

Peggy was puzzled at the queer glint in Marcia's eyes.

"I'd like it open if no one else minds," she said, beginning to breathe more quickly.

Marcia turned to her friend with a sneering laugh.

"Oh, you're going to hear something now, Priscilla—Peggy's going to sing!" she exclaimed. "Ha, ha, ha! Must have the window open, you know, so that all the girls can hear her sweet silvery voice echoing away on the evening air—fearfully poetic, isn't it!"

Poetic—that's it! Not conceitedness, of course! Ha, ha, ha!"

Peggy went very red. But Priscilla—how strangely she turned Marcia's words at once!

"I should think Peggy sings rather nicely, Marcia," Priscilla answered, with good-humoured reproof. "I'm very keen on singing myself. I hope she really is going to give us a song!"

### Where Molly Had Been Standing!

"THERE, Marcia—that's what you deserve for being so horribly sarcastic!" exclaimed Barbara Redfern. "Come on, Peggy."

Do sing us that song we heard you practising at dinner-time—it sounded awfully pretty!"

"Yes, do, Peggy!" came quite a chorus.

Peggy struck the opening chords of the song.

"Lum, tum, tummy-tum!" chanted Marcia mockingly. "Lum, tum—Awayeeee, in the morning!" She broke off from her shrill and unmusical "singing" to laugh. "Sorry, but I started in the wrong place. There's more lum tumming to come! Ha, ha, ha!"

Peggy, very red, and looking angry and confused, tried to go on playing. Marjorie Hazeldene broke the dead silence that fell.

"Marcia, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" she said, indignantly. "Why must you be so offensive to Peggy?"

"Why should Peggy always be showing off?" Marcia retorted, and hasn't her eyes glinted at Peggy. "She hasn't got the only voice in the Form! If she will come in here and play at the open window—"

"It's no business of yours!" struck in Babs.

"Yes, it is! She's showing off!"

"You're trying to show off in front of your visitor, Marcia! I hate to say it, but you sha'n't insult Peggy like that!"

"Oh, very well," Marcia yawned. "It's quite all right! Peggy's going to sing after all—I haven't insulted her, I can see. That's a jolly good thing about Peggy, Priscilla! She knows how to take snubs for praises. Nothing will stop her when she means to let us hear her voice!"

With Marcia still humming softly and mockingly, and the girls only tolerating it because of her visitor, Peggy played the opening chords again. She was certain that she had heard Molly's low call. Now she would sing the song.

Her voice rose, sweetly, trillingly, now loud and challenging, then just a sweet, pathetic echo of that former strength. Peggy sang on. It was a song that needed great interpretation—for that reason it was an examination piece. Peggy supplied that interpretation. Even Marcia was caught at last under the spell of that beautiful voice that had no rival in the Fourth.

The last verse came. From its quiet and slow opening it worked swiftly to its climax—to the freedom and defiance that the singer must feel and convey. The Common-room echoed with the full melodious sound of the singer's sweet voice. For the last bar or two the girls seemed to hold their breath. The voice tailed off—there were three last, crashing chords—and then, dead silence.

"Oh, well done, Peggy—well done!" Babs cried, catching her breath. "The best thing you've ever sung. Bravo!"

And that was the signal. Everyone (Continued on page 17.)



# THE CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY



No. 6. (New Series).

Week ending May 6th, 1922.

My Dear Readers,—Just a few lines to introduce to you our Special Peggy Preston Number, and to explain the changes that mark this week's issue both of the "School Friend" and the "Cliff House Weekly." In a Special Number like this, where

as much as ever possible has to be mentioned in connection with the character to whom it is dedicated—Peggy Preston—there isn't much room for anything very great in the way of an Editorial. In fact, I was under the impression that it would have to be left out altogether, for it was until no more than a few minutes ago that I discovered that I could just squeeze it in.

Your first glance through the pages of the "Weekly" will make—or have made—you wonder—Where are the four centre pages which were filled by "The Signalman's Daughter"? This fine and much-liked serial now begins on Page 24 of the "School Friend," and the explanation for its altered position is simple and satisfactory.

When we heard that the "School Friend"

## EDITORIAL.

By Barbara Redfern.

was to be increased in size, we saw at once, as the Editor of the "School Friend" pointed out, that a most important point would be a neat and balanced arrangement of its features. And so, with an extra serial starting, what could be better, brighter, and more uniform than to have the new serial at the beginning, "The Signalman's Daughter" at the end, and the "Cliff House Weekly" occupying the four centre pages?

We readily agreed that no other arrangement could be more satisfactory all round, and this is the attractive form in which you see the "School Friend" for the first time this week. I know that all readers, too, will promptly agree that it could not be improved upon.

dene, Clara Trevlyn, Dolly Jobling, Phyllis Howell, Philippa Derwent, Augusta Anstruther-Browne, and myself. Which of us is to have the honour of succeeding Peggy?

You won't be disappointed with the answer. Clara Trevlyn is the girl, and the Special Clara Trevlyn Number will be in your hands next Thursday. "Bright and breezy" is the motto and the keynote of this number, and every one of its many features possesses that characteristic "Clara Trevlyn" atmosphere. You will like it, in its different way, every bit as much as you do the present Peggy Preston Number. Need I say more?

Your sincere friend,

BARBARA REDFERN.

## General Information concerning Peggy Preston.

By BARBARA REDFERN.  
(Fourth Form.)



PEGGY PRESTON is fourteen years of age, with light brown curly hair and very clear blue eyes. She is considered the prettiest girl in our Form, and I heartily endorse that opinion. Though, perhaps, just a trifle less in height than the average Fourth-Former, she more than makes up for this with her many accomplishments.

In my endeavour to place a faithful description of Peggy before you, I find it hard to decide which of her talents should take first place—her achievements on the sports field, her class work, her charming singing voice, or, above all, the sterling pluck and determination she showed when she first came to Cliff House as a poor scholarship girl, and which has been her prominent characteristic all along. Never once has Peggy been guilty of any mean action. Not a single act of hers could we point out with the accusation, "That is not like Peggy Preston!" She is as peerless of character now as on the day when she arrived here, poor and friendless.

I, editress-like, feel tempted to place Peggy the Story-Writer before any other of her powers. Mabel Lynn, who instinctively puts acting first, finds that she has the greatest admiration for Peggy the Singer; Phyllis Howell feels that Peggy really excels as a sports girl; and I, again, who know what it is to pass a scholarship exam, have no end of admiration for Peggy the Scholar. And Peggy the Pretty has admirers throughout the school.

As a story-writer, Peggy excels. We all read and enjoy the short stories she writes from time to time for the "Weekly," and may she honour us with many more!

On the sports field, Peggy is one of our best all-round players. At cricket she can always be relied upon to reach double figures, to field without mistakes, and to act as a very effective change bowler. We never dream of leaving her out of an important match.

Class work never presents any difficulties to Peggy Preston. Even Miss Bullivant is satisfied with her work. Peggy's singing causes her to be the leading spirit of any concert we give, just as Mabel Lynn is the shining light in any play we perform. Peggy's sweet voice has an irresistible appeal, and some of her triumphs have been simply gorgeous.

Peggy has a younger sister, Ruth, aged eleven. She is to become a member of the Third Form before very much time has passed, and we shall all be glad to meet her again. She is in every way a worthy sister of Peggy Preston.

## Peggy Preston: My Chum!

By AUGUSTA ANSTRUTHER-BROWNE (Fourth Form.)



LOCKED away in a little drawer in my study is a handkerchief—a very plain one, and costing no more than a few coppers when it was bought, there is too good reason to believe. But no money in the world would ever buy it from me. Its worth to me is not of the kind that can be estimated in any coin.

Why? It is the handkerchief that Peggy wore to protect her mouth and nostrils from the smoke when saving my life from the Cliff House fire. You will understand what that bit of cheap material means to me.

From that time Peggy's friendship towards me was simply wonderful—wonderful because of the way I returned it! Looking back, I almost shudder to think of it all. I wonder how she managed to put up with me and my woeful lack of gratitude. Any other girl would have broken off with me once and for all.

But Peggy—why, one might have thought it was I who had saved her life, by her great forbearance! Ever patient, always pleading with me to be her friend—to act as she did, and be a credit to the Form! How could I have been so blind as not to see the loyal chum I had in Peggy—the chum I was daily snubbing and spurning?

I don't know. But the time came when my eyes were opened. Those awful days in London—between my being expelled and returning as "Olive Wayne"—I missed Peggy then! The rest—yes, I missed the rest of the girls, but Peggy most of all.

Then I knew the girl I had snubbed and scorned and slighted. Then I knew her for the best chum a girl could ever have, and time and again since she has proved it.

Again, quite recently, when I was for a second time expelled from the theft committed by Judy Grigg, Peggy was the first to come to my aunt's to console me.

But why? Why has Peggy always striven, with all the ardour of her loyal heart, to help me—to save me from myself, in many cases? Just as if, as I said before, I had saved her life, instead of her having saved mine? She has never had anything to thank me for. Indeed, she had every reason to hate me. And yet, such friendship, such a loyal, self-sacrificing, determined chum!

There is only one thing to account for it. It is that great sympathetic nature of hers.

So Peggy has won in the end. She wanted me to try to be a credit to the Form, and that, just that, is what I try to be.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 156.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF PEGGY PRESTON!



Such a history as this must of necessity be of the briefest possible description. It is simply intended to inform the reader—particularly those who have made Peggy's acquaintance but recently—of the chief happenings that have occurred in connection with the one-time scholarship girl since her arrival at Cliff House.

**P**EGGY arrived simultaneously with Augusta Anstruther-Browne, then—a very, very different Augusta from the one we now know.

How Peggy was snubbed and persecuted by the then rich, proud, and snobbish girl does not make pleasant history. It is far better skimmed over lightly. Both Peggy and Augusta, dearest of clumps now, wish to blot it all completely from their memories. Suffice to mention the climax came when Augusta was trapped by the fire at Cliff House and Peggy Preston saved her in the most thrilling and self-sacrificing manner. Thereafter a very curious friendship existed between the two new girls.

Peggy Preston, with her mild, patient, and forgiving disposition, and the then Augusta, quick-tempered and glorying in her recklessness, were two exactly opposite types. For how long could such a pair—study-mates, too—remain friends? In the few weeks that followed Peggy showed what is undoubtedly the very finest side to her character. With

wonderful forbearance, a close and loyal friend of Barbara Redfern, and yet striving to keep on friendly terms with the wilful girl who was plotting against Babs—was not Peggy at her best then?

But for Peggy Preston, it is curious to conjecture what would have happened both to Barbara Redfern and to Augusta Anstruther-Browne. Barbara Redfern would have been expelled on a false charge, for a certainty, and Augusta herself would have earned expulsion sooner or later. But Peggy altered all this, and proved a sterling chum to both girls, removing the guilt from Babs' shoulders on to the real culprit's—Augusta's—and the unsuccessful pleading with Miss Primrose not to pass upon that girl the order of expulsion so richly merited.

Indeed, Peggy's strongest qualities were to the fore in this phase of her career at Cliff House—her cool clear-mindedness, her strong will and determination, her forgiving disposition, and her splendid loyalty—the loyal friendship that would not be altered by all

the snubs and taunts, and, indeed, cunning with which it was returned.

Since their first day at Cliff House the lives of Peggy and Augusta have ever been entwined. It was on account of this that Peggy became so closely associated with Vivienne Leigh, Augusta's crony in the days when Peggy and Augusta shared Study No. 9, and Vivienne and Marcia Loftus occupied Study No. 3.

Peggy could never refrain from striving to help a girl in distress, and when Vivienne, for the first time, showed that splendid trait in her character, when she stood accused of—and would not deny—the theft committed by her brother, Peggy Preston was one of the three girls to believe in her as long as ever possible. Thus began the deep and lasting friendship between Peggy and Vivienne.

Yes, Peggy, on account of her own experience, no doubt, has ever been the first to tender her sympathy and help for any girl in need of it—particularly anyone unfortunate enough to have the Form against her.

It is not at all surprising to find that Peggy Preston is as modest as she is noble. Such girls almost invariably are. This was instanced when she saved the life of a little girl from drowning. Peggy endeavoured to keep the affair a secret, and it was not until another girl claimed credit for the noble deed that Peggy was obliged to admit the real facts.

Peggy Preston is now no longer a scholarship girl, but in a hundred ways she has shown herself to be just the same brave, loyal, big-hearted Peggy we have known in the past.



## PEGGY AT SPORT!

By PHYLLIS HOWELL.

(Fourth Form.)

**T**O our power in the realm of sport Peggy Preston is an acquisition. We are admittedly the leading sports Form at Cliff House, and Peggy is one of those who have well assisted us to merit the distinction. We can always rely on her to strive her utmost the whole time in whatever branch of sport she is engaged.

True, there are girls who just exceed Peggy at most branches of sport—Barbara Redfern, Clara Trevlyn, and Flap Derwent. This is accounted for, I do not doubt, by the fact that studious little Peggy is not quite of such robust constitution as other girls. She is not so fitted to bear the wear and tear of a game or contest.

But it happens that vigour and strength are not by any means all that are required in sport. Skill is no small asset, and Peggy is as skilful at games as she is at lessons. You would know this if you saw her play cricket, hockey, or tennis.

Peggy has had one or two triumphs at cricket and hockey since she came to Cliff House. Like the rest of us, she has her good day and her bad day. This seems to me to be an ideal opportunity for writing a few words about Peggy's greatest cricket triumph, for she gained this only a few days ago in our return match with the Danes.

Our first match of the season with the Danes was contested last week. We managed to beat them by no more than a single run—due to the magnificent slow bowling of Freda Foote. It was one of the most thrilling matches ever contested at Cliff House, and there was no doubt we were most lucky to win by that narrowest of margins.

The Danes were determined to get their revenge on their own ground the following week. They opened the game with a vim and vigour which surprised themselves as well as us. Each Dane in turn brought off slashing drives and cuts all round the wicket, playing like masters of the game, and each partnership seemed to our dismayed senses that it would last an hour. The Danes, in addition to their grim purpose, were on the top of their form.

We got them all out at last, and started

our innings. Peggy had fielded finely during the early part of the match, and brought off three glorious catches. As bad luck would have it, she strained herself rather badly in making the third, and had to retire to the pavilion. When we joined her, Peggy decided that, if she were really wanted to bat—which seemed eminently probable—she would go in last.

Our wickets fell with melancholy regularity. Seven girls returned, and we had only made half the Danes' score! Dolly Jobling was stonewalling in her own rock-like style, but then Marjorie left her, and then Vivienne Leigh, after putting up a fine fight, came back with twenty to her credit. Forty more runs were wanted when Peggy made her way rather painfully to the wicket.

How she got those runs she never knew. She says she simply stuck to it, taking as much care as possible. She never hit out, but simply guarded her wicket, snatching a run whenever the ball went between two fields. And thus, run by run, with Peggy as cool as a cucumber from first to last, and Dolly's wicket always safe, the match was won by a wicket!

Her greatest triumph in hockey was in a match with the Fifth, when Babs was hurt and Peggy took her place at centre-forward. We were two down at that point, with only twenty minutes to go, and Peggy proceeded to give a sparkling display, and scored three goals!

At rowing, like all other branches of sport, Peggy is exceedingly good. She is one of the last girls we should think of leaving out of an "eight" in an important race. But it is in the skill that Peggy really shines. She can cut through the water at a really amazing speed.

We have had an "unofficial" river contest with the Danes recently. And at swimming—various distances—and diving, and eight-oar rowing we shared the points. The deciding event was between two small skiffs, and Peggy took ours whilst Gertie Thomas represented the Danes.

Flap Derwent is just about the best oarswoman in the Fourth Form, and in ordinary

circumstances she would have taken the skiff. But Flap had jarred her wrist slightly in stopping a fast ball at cricket practice, and hardly felt like testing it in a skiff race.

But we knew a little of Peggy's prowess with the skiff, and we could rely on her to put up a game fight with the long-armed Gertie. So little Peggy, with her pretty face set firmly, took her seat and rowed to the starting-point with Gertie, and the pair waited for the signal.

Barbara Redfern dropped the handkerchief, and they were off—Gertie taking long, sweeping, powerful strokes, and Peggy, though hers were perceptibly shorter, rowed with splendid vigour. In view of the unimportance of the contest—which is not included in the records of the two schools—the race was amazingly thrilling. Girls were posted at wide intervals along the bank of the River Sark, and each girl watched them pass breathlessly.

Peggy led first, but then Gertie's long, powerful strokes began to tell, and she crept up to Peggy and slowly forged ahead—this at the third stage. I happened to be the girl posted here, and I could see Peggy set her small teeth and pull with all her might.

The extra effort told. At the fourth stage she was level with Gertie again. From that point all the way to the fifth stage they were dead level, both boats appearing to be glued together. The race grew more and more exciting. Strangers walking along the towing-path paused to gaze breathlessly at the passing boats. Some of them actually got so enthusiastic as to cheer and utter urging cries to which ever girl they fancied.

At the winning-point quite a crowd of girls and strangers had gathered by now. A cry of some sort burst from practically every lip as Peggy was seen to shoot forward, rowing with wonderful vigour and freshness, leaving Gertie lagging and obviously tiring.

And then, at this crucial moment, one of Peggy's oars snapped across the blade. Everybody—even people who had never set eyes on Peggy before—felt grievously disappointed. Would this mean the defeat of the "little 'un," as some of them called her?

But, no! Peggy rowed more strenuously than ever, though, owing to the mishap, Gertie was now steadily decreasing the distance between them. And at last, in a queer curving line caused by the faulty oar, Peggy reached the winning-post just a length in front of Gertie. It was a brilliant feat, and one that has stamped Peggy as one of the leading oarswomen of the Fourth Form.

On the tennis-courts Peggy is very popular as a partner, and has an effective backhand volley which is quite her own. And at swimming, running, high-jumping, and cycling, Peggy holds a position well above that of the average Fourth-Former.



## PEGGY AS I SEE HER!

Opinions obtained throughout the school by PHILIPPA DERWENT.

**BARBARA REDFERN.**—Without a doubt the girl of whom our Form has the most reason to feel proud. Generous, big-hearted and forgiving to a fault, she seems to excel in everything worth while excelling in—lessons, sports, good looks, and pluck are just a few. She deserves every grain of her great popularity.

**MABEL LYNN.**—I am apt to judge a girl chiefly on her powers as an actress or entertainer of some kind or other. As an actress Peggy is well above mediocre, but as a singer she shines unrivalled at Cliff House. Her voice is more than sweet—it is exquisite.

**ANNABEL HICHENS.**—I do declare I get more out of patience with things the longer I live! Peggy Preston is supposed to be the most accomplished girl in this Form! Indeed? How can a girl be accomplished if she does not take to scrubbing floors, scouring pots and pans, and generally keeping the home as clean as a new pin? I declare again, I am right out of patience!

**MADGE STEVENS (Third Form).**—We must admit we rather admire Peggy Preston, in spite of her being a member of the silly old Fourth. Peggy has stuck up for herself jolly well ever since she came, and that's what we like. It's a treat to watch her on the cricket field, and she's jolly clever at lessons, too, and we've often had help from her. And we must say we'd rather have Peggy's singing in our Common-room than those awful duets from Pansy and Iris!

**MINNIE JEROME (Third Form).**—Madge has stated our opinion of Peggy Preston quite correctly, but I should like to know why Peggy's hair is curly, and if she found it hard to win her scholarship, and what sort of pen she uses when she writes her stories, and why —?

**ALICE CONSTABLE (Upper Third Form).**—Peggy Preston meets completely with our approval. We would perhaps like her to be a little more maidenly like ourselves in some respects—on the hockey field, for instance—but on the whole we have no serious fault to find with Peggy Preston.

**BUNNY, PIP, AND TEDDY BEAR (Second Form).**—Oh, we like Peggy intensely! We don't know any girl so clever and brave and kind. She and Babs are our favourites.

**GRACE WOODFIELD (Fifth Form).**—Considering that she is merely a Fourth Former, she is remarkably accomplished and efficient. I might almost say that she would make a worthy member of our own Form!

**STELLA STONE (School Captain).**—One of the most admirable girls in the lower school. Excels in almost everything, and will prove a credit to the school.

**MISS STEEL (Fourth Form Mistress).**—Very satisfactory indeed at all lessons.

**MISS BULLIVANT (Drill and Maths. Mistress).**—I could not possibly find any fault with her in either of my two subjects.

**PIPER (The Porter).**—A reg'lar fine girl, that there Miss Preston! Gived me a shillin' tip this morning just for going into the village for her, she did!

**AUNTIE JONES (Tuckshop Proprietress).**—I wish all the girls were like Miss Preston, I do! A regular customer, never owes me a farthing, and most Hin-teresting to listen to in conversation across the counter.

**MRS. TOWLE (Matron).**—Miss Preston is one of the few girls who do their own mending, and so take a lot of the work off my shoulders. You can quite understand that she is a favourite of mine, Miss Derwent!



## MY LIKES AND DISLIKES!

By PEGGY PRESTON.

**M**Y likes and dislikes are not very numerous, and I hope not very strong. Babs suggests that I should give a general outline of them, without actually bringing in such trivialities as what I like for dinner, and which foot I like to put before the other. I don't know quite where to begin on a list like this. The girls, I assume, should come first, but even then I hardly know what to say! I like so many, and I try my best not to dislike anybody!

Still, I think I might safely say that Augusta Anstruther-Browne is the girl for whom I have the greatest liking. I always felt, way back in the old days, that her actions were due to thoughtlessness and recklessness, and not to a spiteful nature. As to dislikes, I don't know that I dislike any girl in the school, though I admit certain of them are not all that they might be.

In books, I find I like Dickens' works as well as any. That writer had such an understanding and sympathy for poor people and their struggle for existence.

In sports I like cricket in the summer. I cannot say exactly why I prefer it to tennis. It may be because I play cricket better, or perhaps because it is, after all, a bigger sort of game than tennis. For the winter I do not consider that hockey could be improved upon. Swimming is an especially fond of, and my present great hope is that the summer will be favourable for it.

In dresses there is nothing I prefer to plain white silk, and in flowers I like the rose—red or white.

Do I prefer study to games? That is a question I have been often asked. I can only reply: When I am studying, I prefer study; when I am immersed in a game, I could like nothing better. The truth is, I find each one a refreshing change after the other!

Singing I am particularly fond of, and I am not at all out of my element where dancing is concerned. For story writing I have positively a passion. I get a most remarkable gratification from seeing a story take form beneath my pen.

Taking long walks and cycle rides makes a great appeal to me. Most of the girls like to take their "outings" along the coast, but I much prefer to delve inland.

I was surprised to learn that a few of the girls are under the impression that I prefer solitude to companionship. This is quite off the mark. I'll admit I don't like to have someone talking into my ears when I am studying or story-writing. But when I have no need for concentration, I like nothing better than companionship.

I have heaps of other tastes I could refer to, but I doubt if they would be sufficiently interesting to mention. But you will have seen at once that my likes are far in excess of my dislikes, and give me reason to be more than satisfied with my lot at Cliff House.

Our next issue of the  
**CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY**  
will take the form of a Special  
**CLARA TREVLYN NUMBER.**

Everything you could desire  
to know about popular, bright  
and breezy Clara Trevlyn will  
be contained in this fine Special  
Clara Trevlyn Number.

DON'T MISS IT!



## SHOULD PEGGY BE FORM-CAPTAIN?

Fourth Form Opinions secured by PHILIPPA DERWENT.

**BARBARA REDFERN.**—I should not in the least mind handing over the captaincy for a period to Peggy. The question is—would Peggy like to take on the job?

**MABEL LYNN.**—Peggy would make a good captain, and we should all back her up our utmost if she were elected. But she is inclined to be too forgiving, and she would never be able to deal with Marcia and Nancy with Bab's firm hand.

**BESSIE BUNTER.**—I have nothing to say against Peggy as a captain. Flap, only your question is perfectly ridiculous. For Peggy to become captain the captaincy would have to pass from Barbara—What's that, Flap? Yes, you're right, that's logic! Now, if the girls wanted a captain in place of Babs, whom would they be certain to elect? ME, of course! Lul-lul-look here, Flap, there's juj-juj-jolly well nothing at all to cackle at—

**AUGUSTA ANSTRUTHER-BROWNE.**—Speaking entirely from my own standpoint, I should not like Peggy to be captain, though I consider she has practically all the necessary qualities. I feel that we are closer chums with both of us ordinary members of the Form.

**MARJORIE HAZELDENE.**—Both Babs and Peggy are excellent girls, but as Babs has been captain all along, and has given us nothing but the highest satisfaction, why should we think of changing?

**CLARA TREVLYN.**—Ask me this again, Flap, when Peggy expresses a wish for the job.

**DOLLY JOBLING.**—I should not have the slightest objection against Peggy as our captain. But I must admit, though, if Babs resigned, I should nominate Clara or Marjorie, my study-mates, for the captaincy.

**VIVIENNE LEIGH.**—I know Peggy could be relied upon to acquit herself well in the captaincy, but I cannot help thinking things would not seem quite so well with any other captain than Babs.

**FREDA FOOTE.**—The only great point of difference between Babs and Peggy I can think of is Peggy has much more patience with my jokes and puns than has Babs. The question, as Hamlet would have remarked, is: is that sufficient reason for my wanting Peggy as captain?

**ANNABEL HICHENS.**—As neither Barbara nor Peggy seem to realise the fundamental fact that a woman's place is in the home, I do not consider that either of them are fit captains for this Form.

**PHYLLIS HOWELL.**—I think I will speak from the point of view of sports, Flap. In cricket, Babs and Peggy are about equally good, though Babs excels at hockey. In running, swimming, and other sports there is nothing much to choose between them—Babs excelling at one thing, Peggy at another. Peggy, with her studious tendency, cannot be expected to devote so much of her time to sports as Babs—still less to the organising part of them, which is the chief concern of a captain. So the one conclusion for us is that Babs, from the sports standpoint, makes the better captain.

**MYSELF.**—Power of organisation, as Phyllis remarks, is the chief need for a captain. Peggy will be the first to agree that in this Babs excels above all the rest of us.

**PEGGY PRESTON.**—Most decidedly not! We're all satisfied with Babs, and I could mention quite a few girls who would be better fitted than myself by temperament for the job—Clara Trevlyn or Phyllis Howell, for instance. But Babs is the captain for my fancy.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 156.



## Interesting Similarities!

"How I am like Peggy Preston!"

By ANGELICA JELLY

(Fourth Form.)

A GOOD deal of fuss is being made of Peggy Preston just at the moment. On consideration, I must admit that she deserves it. In most things, she is well above the standard of the average girl in her Form. And the thought suddenly struck me that, in this respect, Peggy Preston and I are very similar. To put it in the form of a ratio: As Peggy Preston is to the Fourth Form, so am I to the Fifth.

Not the least thing in which Peggy Preston excels is beauty. Peggy Preston is exceedingly pretty. Indeed, one might regard her as the prettiest girl in her Form. And is it not curious that I, too, should hold that honour in my Form? True, there are certain jealous and spiteful girls in the Form who disagree with this obvious fact—all of them have at one time or another—but that is because beauty is never appreciated at home.

In the village, however, I have known children to stop and look at me, with the words busting from their lips—"Oh, her face!" and "Just look at her face!" Indeed, when the other day I was wearing that becoming spring hat of mine, I notice several grown-ups smile admiringly at me!

Again, in hockey, Peggy Preston and I both excel. How curious that, in the recent match, Fourth v. Fifth, when Peggy scored three goals against us, I also should score three! True, one was against my own side; but the other two were simply wonderful achievements, and would have won us the game had not Stella Stone faultily judged me to be several yards offside in either case. It is really time Stella thoroughly masticated the rules of hockey!

In lessons, too, Peggy and I shine with parallel brilliance. In other directions, Peggy has saved two lives—one from fire and the other from drowning. I have performed exactly the same deeds! Grace Woodfield's dress once caught fire, and I, with remarkable presence of mind, beat out the flames with her overcoat.

Far from being grateful, though, Grace scolded me, because I happened to be responsible for having accidentally set her dress alight!

On another occasion I saved Flora Cann from drowning. I was out walking with her along the towing-path, when I accidentally tripped her up, and she plunged into the water. I seized a severed branch, and extended it to Flora, who, after first receiving an unlucky blow on the head from it, seized it, and clambered out.

Thus, it will be seen, that between Peggy Preston and myself there are many very interesting similarities.



## RUTH PRESTON!

Her Latest  
Letter!

(A number like this could not be called complete without reference to Peggy Preston's pretty little eleven-year-old sister, Ruth. Ruth has only visited us once, but we are all immensely fond of her. With Peggy's permission, we print below Ruth's latest letter to her sister.—Barbara Redfern.)

DEAREST Peggy—We do hope you got over that strain you met with in the cricket match. Mother and I are quite anxious about it. And how are Babs and Mabs, and that plump chums of yours—Bessie? I find I want more and more to go to Cliff House, and be one of you all. Still, I am very happy here, and there's always something happening. I didn't tell you in my last letter that I had found a new pet, did I, Peggy dear? It is a poor little linnet, and I found it lying in the garden with a broken leg. I took it to the doctor myself, and soon had the leg set, and bought a cage for the bird. The poor little leg mended very quickly, and the linnet became quite tame, and grew immensely fond of mother and me. We christened it by your name, dear—Peggy! I took it the other evening to show all my Brownie friends. You know of an evening we use our main room at the High School as our drill-hall? Well, the Brownies were delighted with Peggy. But when we turned our backs for a moment, leaving the cage door open, we turned round again to find that Peggy had—gone! It was an awful shock to me. I felt fearfully upset. It was only with ever such difficulty that I went home to tell mother we had seen the last of poor Peggy. Mother listened to my dismal tale with a grave face. When I stopped, she said: "Never mind, Ruth dear! I've just got another little bird for you in the next room!" I didn't care about any other little bird but Peggy; but I went in, and saw on the table, among a lot of bird seed—Peggy! It had found its way from the school right back to our house, and mother knew it all the time! There's no need to say how happy I felt! Now, do write as soon as you read this, Peggy dearest, and let us know how you are.—Your loving sister,

RUTH.

## PEGGI PRESSTUN!

An Appreeshiayshun.

By BESSIE BUNTER.



WHO is the gerl who brings such honner to the Forth Fourm in evvery thing she does? Who shines so britely at lessons and all kinds of sports? Who has shown herself to be so full of plukk and dairing? Who has saved lives gallore? And who, on top of all that aforesaid, is kind and jennerus to a fault?

No, dear readers! Do not lift up your voyces and showt in yewnizon: "Bessie Bunter!" I want you to forget for a moment that I am a member of the Forth Fourm, and then arnser. The arnser you reply—or, in other werds, the reply you arnser—is: "Peggi Presstun!"

Yes, Peggi is the gerl we are so proud of. Peggi it is who shines so britely at lessons and all kinds of sports. Peggi who has shown herself to be so full of plukk and dairing, who has saved lives gallore, and who, on top of all that aforesaid, is kind and jennerus to a fault!

Kind and jennerus, yes! Peggi is not the kind of gerl to let a hungry gerl go without a littel snack from her cubberd! She just lets me help myself to her caik! So let this APPREESHAIYSHUN ring owt lowd and troo; let it be showtd from the howse-tops! Lern it off by hart, deer reeders, and spred it throu out the land—spred it throu the woods and the forests, throu wilderness, jungels, prayeries, dezzerts, swamps, and whatever else there mite be!

Phew! That was splendid literary effort—one of my best! But it is worth the good corze! This is an appreeshiayshun, and this is the way it should jolly well be written!

There is only one gerl in the Fourm to come anywhere near Peggi at lessons, sporte, plukk, dairing, life-saving, and jenneeruity. But I don't want to be akkewsed of blowing my own trumpitt, so I will not dye vulge her name.

Her story-writing is brilliyunt, and the only faults in it are in spelling, frazing, stile, plot, and karrikter droring. If Peggi steddily reeds my artikles and cerials to the "Clif Howse Weekly" she will be able to pick up tips concerning those detales—partickyewlerly in spelling.

Peggi has the additionaal advarnridge of being one of the most bewtiful gerls in the Forth Fourm. How orphan do we heer it said: "If Bessie Bunter were to leave, Peggi Presstun would be the prettyest gerl at Clif Howse!" Peggi has much to be proud of.

## PEGGY!

By CLARA TREVLYN.

(Fourth Form.)



Here's to Peggy Preston, who's  
A credit to the Fourth!  
I know a few we'd rather lose  
Than Peggy from the North!

We've liked her from the day she came,  
When Bessie, in a fluster,  
Got faulty as regards her name,  
And took her for Augusta!

I'm sure that everyone agrees  
She merits recognition.  
Fourth-Formers all aver that she's  
A splendid acquisition!

My giddy hat! In what respect  
Can Peg be called deficient?  
In looks, in sport, in intellect—  
In everything proficient!

Her singing's quite a treat to hear;  
At flection, too, she's splendid.  
Her "Minstrel Girl" was such a dear,  
It grieved us when it ended!

In strength, perhaps, she isn't great,  
But what she lacks in force  
She makes up for—with overweight!  
In "gameness" and resource!

But the quality one most prefers  
To all she does possess,  
Is that great tender heart of hers  
For people in distress.

May nothing her content alloy!  
No grief her path encumber!  
May every reader, too, enjoy  
This Peggy Preston Number!



## PEGGY PRESTON'S LOYALTY!

(Continued from page 12.)

took up the clapping—Priscilla Bayton and even Marcia. They were calling for a repetition when the door opened to admit a monitor, Iris Bentley.

"Peggy!" she exclaimed, heedless of the applause. "That girl who has been visiting you—are you expecting her to-night?"

Peggy was startled at the sharp question.

"Yes. I—er, I'm expecting her any minute now, Iris," she said.

"Oh," said Iris. "That's just as well, because I saw her just now as I came into the school hanging about in the grounds—right under this window I should imagine. She had a pencil or something in her hand. I think you'd better go down and see what she wants."

With that, Iris withdrew from the room. Marcia Loftus gave an excited cry and started to snigger.

"Ha! Now we know why Peggy wanted the window open!" she cried triumphantly. "I said it was swank! Peggy wanted her old chum to hear her singing to us, and hear us clapping her!"

"Marcia, what a horrid suggestion!" blazed Babs.

"Oh! But can Peggy deny it?" asked Marcia insolently.

They saw the nervous flush on Peggy's cheeks as she rose from the piano.

"Of course Peggy can deny it!" said Augusta Anstruther-Browne stoutly.

"If her chum has come along, she naturally wouldn't like to come up and interrupt until the song was over."

"Let's hear Peggy deny it, anyway!" said Marcia, pressing forward.

"I'm going downstairs to meet Molly and bring her up," Peggy tried to answer off-handedly.

"If she's still there!" Marcia persisted.

"Still there?"

"Yes! You can't deny that you've been singing for that girl to hear you—that you've been swanking. Now you're pretending that she was coming up in any case. I don't believe it! I'm coming down to see!"

Babs and Mabs interposed.

"You stay here, Marcia!"

"I won't!" said Marcia. "It's a bit thick to have council school girls hanging round the school and someone inside swanking to them. I want to see Molly myself!"

Peggy Preston, not knowing what to say in answer to Marcia's clever distortion of the actual truth, was hurrying from the room to find Molly. Babs whispered to the others.

"Marcia's out to make a scene, and we won't allow it, girls!" Babs said. "You know how shy Molly is—we've all noticed it. Let's go down and give her a jolly reception, and make her feel at home!"

"Jolly good idea!" they agreed cordially.

Marcia Loftus was ahead of them, with Priscilla apparently urging her to steady herself. The girls hurried along behind, determined that, even if Priscilla was not successful, Marcia should not insult Peggy's old chum as she evidently intended to do.

They came to the quadrangle, and hurried along. Peggy Preston had turned the corner ahead of them, and was calling for Molly. When they came up with her she was still looking about and calling.

"Isn't Molly there?" exclaimed Babs disappointedly.

Before Peggy could reply Gwen Cook gave a cry of absolute consternation.

"Good gracious! Girls, look there—just look at that wall! See what someone has done!"

"In a moment every eye was following the direction of her pointing finger. They gazed at the wall that was just below the Common-room window and gasped.

Never had they expected to see anything like that at Cliff House!

The wall was covered with charcoal drawings and big, printed capitals. One figure, with immense glasses, was labelled "Teacher." Another, with open mouth and fuzzy hair, looked as though it was supposed to represent Peggy herself. There were five or six of those hideous scrawlings. Never had anything like it been seen at the school before!

"Peggy! My word, look there! Look what Molly has been doing!" yelled Marcia Loftus, grabbing Peggy's arm. "Just look at it! No wonder you can't find Marvellous Molly now! She's an artist as well!"

Peggy Preston gazed at the wall, and her heart seemed to stop beating altogether. Her throat was dry; she could not speak.

Almost at the very spot where she had arranged that Molly should stand!

No girl could have helped the instant horrifying suspicion that leapt to her mind. But it was only momentary. Molly would never do such a thing as that!

"Girls, just look at it!" Gwen Cook went on, in rising indignation. "Are we going to tolerate a girl who comes here and does this sort of thing?"

"Not likely!"

"It's disgraceful!"

Peggy Preston found her voice at last. "Girls, this is not Molly's work!" she burst out huskily. "Someone else has been here and done this! Molly isn't responsible!"

Marcia laughed maliciously.

"Phew! As though anyone will believe that?" she cried. "Why has Molly run away, Peggy? Can you answer that?"

Crimson-faced and panting, Peggy stood facing them. She couldn't explain it in any possible way. She could only deny it.

"Peggy," said Babs, a curious tremor in her voice, "you admit that Molly has been here to-night. Can you tell us why she waited here, and did not come upstairs? Were you expecting her?"

"Yes. I—I was expecting her!" Peggy muttered. "I—I—" She broke off tremblingly. How could she go on without giving away Molly's secret, and the reason for that song?

"Iris Bentley said she saw her holding a pencil in her hand!" ejaculated Nancy Bell. "Was it really a pencil, girls, or a piece of charcoal?"

"A piece of charcoal, of course!" cried Lucy Morgan.

"It wasn't! It was a pencil!" cried Peggy, forgetting herself.

"Ah! And there are pencil marks as well!" said Marcia triumphantly.

Babs took Peggy's arm.

"Peggy, it's an awful shock for you, I know," she said. "But surely you can't deny that Molly must have done this, and taken fright when Iris saw her at work?"

"She—she's gone because of seeing Iris!" Peggy muttered. "But it's my fault. It's her shyness that has made her go. I—I know that Molly would not do anything like this—"

"Well, I say Molly has done it!" Marcia Loftus cried. "It's absolutely proved, girls! I consider it's disgraceful that Peggy should associate with such a girl! I've told you before what sort of

girl she is! I summed her up as soon as I saw her!"

Peggy Preston was pale and trembling. She made a desperate appeal to all of them.

"Girls! Surely you will take my assurance that I know Molly well enough to know that she would never do this!"

"But how can we think anything else, Peggy?" groaned Babs.

Peggy Preston turned away. She could stand and listen no longer. Molly Martin, her old chum, had fallen in the estimation of everyone. She knew that, and no argument could, at present, change their minds. They were entitled to believe such evidence as that on the wall.

But they were wrong, all wrong! Molly was innocent—she was certain of it!

## Marcia the Mimic.

EARLY the following morning, before rising-bell had sounded, Peggy Preston was out of bed and dressing.

She had been awake for at least a couple of hours, her mind tormented with thoughts. She knew that the majority of the Fourth-Formers had at last lost confidence in her chum. She could not be angry with them because they had done so. It was a great test for her own loyalty.

A test—yes. Her sweet, kindly face was pale and worried as she dressed, and considered all the things that had happened.

Many a girl, she knew, would already have lost confidence in Molly. How had Marcia found out about those events of the past? How had Molly obtained that dress? Who had scrawled those drawings?

There were other things, too! Marcia must have known Peggy's plan when she opened the window—Peggy was sure of it! Marcia must have known that Molly was coming! Again, how had she found it out? Had Molly told her? Was she really against her, as Marcia hinted?

For that matter, was the whole musical business a fraud? It sounded such a flimsy story that she had told! It must be kept a secret because she "had some enemy" who had torn up examination-papers! Was it not more probable that that was just some invention, so that Peggy should not tell the others the pretence on which Molly claimed her friendship, while secretly working against her to humiliate her?

No!

"Never that—never that!" Peggy muttered, clenching her hands.

Then she remembered her reason for rising, and quickly finished dressing. By that time rising-bell was ringing, and there was a sleepy stir in the dormitory. But few indeed were the cheery "good-mornings" cried to her now. That was typical of the feeling of the Form.

Peggy left the dormitory, and went downstairs. She was thinking of that charcoal scrawling, and knew that no one in authority must see it. In the passage she encountered Piper, carrying a pail and flannel, and asked for the loan of them. He gave them to her, after making a queer and apologetic statement about the "strange behaviour" of Peggy's visitor, who had come the previous evening.

Peggy went out of the school, gritting her teeth. She could not listen to Piper or anyone. Somehow, things were very black against her old chum. She was just going to believe in her—that was all!

How hideous those drawings appeared in the cold light of morning! Those

effigies must be cleaned off before any official eye fell on them.

It was hard and laborious work. Peggy rubbed and rubbed until the perspiration stood on her brow, but only very slowly she cleaned the wall. By the time she had finished it was almost breakfast-time.

By the worst possible luck she encountered a group of Fourth-Formers just as she was returning to the school, carrying the pail of dirty water.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Marcia Loftus exploded. "Girls, Peggy's been out at her old job of cleaning! She's been out to wash the wall where Molly scribbled!"

"Molly didn't scribble!" Peggy could not help retorting.

Marcia grinned cynically.

"And that's why you wouldn't leave them there for anyone to see!" she sneered. "Absolute proof of dear little Council School Molly's innocence! Ha, ha, ha! Still, I expect Peggy's enjoyed herself, girls! A pail and house-flannel—back to the old love! I don't suppose it's the first time she's washed a wall!"

"Oh, be quiet, Marcia!" cried Barbara Redfern indignantly.

"No wonder Peggy's so fond of her old chum, after all!" Marcia said, as a final thrust. "Takes her mind quite back to the happy old days of scrubbing before she won the scholarship! I dare say Molly would like to see you with that pail, Peggy, and know that you hadn't forgotten the old Saturday morning doorstep cleaning that you probably did together when you were such—pals!"

Peggy passed on. Clara, greatly incensed, was giving Marcia the shaking that she had asked for, but the mischief was done. Those fitter jibes were not without their effect.

In a queer flutter of anticipation, Peggy received a note after breakfast in the handwriting of her chum. She retired to a quiet corner to read it. This would explain matters, surely!

But it explained nothing. It was a friendly and grateful note, telling Peggy how wonderfully she had sung the song, and how much it had helped Molly. She had managed to score her music all the way through with the necessary expression. And then the note finished:

"Dear Peggy,—I am sorry that I went without seeing you, but one of the girls saw me, and I didn't want her to come back and ask questions in case my secret became known. I hope you won't be offended with me for doing this, but I thought it best. Again, ever so many thanks, for I can never repay you for your kindness."

And never a word about the chalkings on the wall! Could they have been done after Molly went? No, that was impossible—there was no time. Had Molly seen them and not thought of mentioning the matter? Well, there was no reason why she should. She could not know the scene that had taken place.

Peggy set her mind to a fresh task. Who was really responsible?

She thought instantly of Marcia Loftus, as the most likely girl. But as soon as she started to make inquiries she found that she must rule that out. Marcia and Nancy Bell had been in the Common-room right until the moment of Priscilla's arrival the previous evening. Several girls remembered that.

Then who had done it? Peggy was baffled. It tested her loyalty again.

Peggy resolved at all costs to see Molly that evening. Augusta, her chum, cheerfully offered to walk across to Courtfield with her.

They were half-way there before Peggy even brought up the subject that was uppermost in her mind. She said it then, with a rush.

"Augusta, I value your opinion a lot, you know," Peggy said, impulsively.

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"You don't really think that Molly is guilty of that scribbling, do you?"

Augusta answered as calmly and quietly as ever.

"On the face of it, it looks as though she is responsible," she said. "Candidly, too, practically everyone in the Form thinks you're mistaken in her. I don't know anything about Molly, Peggy, but I do know you. If you know her well enough to believe that she wouldn't do such a thing, I take her at your estimation. If she's good enough for you, she's good enough for me."

"Oh, Augusta, that is ripping of you!" said Peggy gratefully. "I felt that you were like that all along. I'm going to see Molly. I hope she'll be able to explain everything."

But it was to prove different from that.

When Peggy went into the waxwork exhibition, alone at Augusta's own request, it was to find a very depressed and cheerless little Molly indeed.

She was overjoyed to see Peggy, of course, and full of gratitude for Peggy's rendering of that song. But her old friend divined instantly that she had something on her mind, and Molly needed little pressing to speak of it.

A dress was missing!

It was one of the spare costumes, blue sateen trimmed with lace, laid aside while a figure went to be repaired. Soon that figure was coming back. Molly had hunted high and low for the dress and could not find it anywhere!

"And I'm really in charge of them. That's what worries me so much," Molly finished. "I dare say I shall find it somewhere. There are still some old boxes to look in. But I get worried so easily, Peggy. You know I was always like that at school."

Peggy knew that it was true.

Beyond getting the statement from Molly that she had seen chalked figures on the wall when she reached the school the previous evening, she said nothing about what had happened at the school. How could she? Molly would only see that she was suspected of doing that. It would only worry her further!

So, for a little while, the two old chums talked of the musical examination. Molly said that she expected to hear any day that she was required for the singing test that came first, and spoke of the increased confidence that Peggy's assistance had given her. She promised, on parting, to send Peggy a note as soon as anything fresh happened.

Peggy went out of the shop deep in thought. They wanted her to suspect that Molly was playing her double—that she had one tale for her, and as soon as her back was turned, she was doing all she could to injure her.

Never could Peggy believe such a thing as that about an old chum, and especially about sweet, frank, shy little Molly! She was incapable of being so deceitful! There was some other mystery—something that Peggy could not explain.

Peggy walked back to Cliff House at Augusta's side, not knowing what to think. They reached the school, and encountered Bessie Bunter on the stairs. Bessie Bunter was tittering with great amusement.

"I say, it's awful of Marcia, really, but she is saying such funny things!" Bessie told them. "She's in the Common-room now! You must see her! He, he, he!"

Peggy, suddenly alarmed, walked along to the Common-room and opened the door. Her heart seemed to leap as she looked.

Immediately her eyes lit upon Marcia Loftus, and Marcia's method of "being funny"!

Marcia Loftus stood, grinning, beside a dummy figure. It was evidently a costume stand, taken from the dress-

making class. A cardboard face and an old hat gave it a passing resemblance to a waxwork figure. But it was the costume that caught and held Peggy's frozen attention. The costume was of blue sateen, with white lace trimming!

"Ha, ha! Here's Peggy!" Marcia cried. "Peggy, I'm going to have some waxworks of my own! As you're so interested in the Courtfield ones, I'm sure you'll like this. Just listen while Marcia with the marvellous mind makes up a rhyme!"

Peggy fought to regain her self-possession. She saw Marcia grin at the "waxwork," and then heard her start to concoct a rhyme, saying it in a high-pitched, illiterate, and wavering voice that was a cruel skit on Molly.

"Ere you see a figure of Peggy Preston,

Do you like the clothes what she is dressed in?

She's only a scholarship girl rose 'igh in the world,

But she sings very nice, and 'er 'air's all curled!

At any exam. she will never crib—oh, not 'er!

And she thinks——"

"Stop!"

Peggy gave a cry and leapt forward. She caught at Marcia's arm, and caused her to break off abruptly from the cruel and spiteful rhyme.

"Stop!" Peggy panted. "You're pretending to 'take off' Molly, Marcia—I know! But you sha'n't do this thing—you sha'n't go to such lengths!" She stared into Marcia's glaring eyes. "You've gone too far this time! Where did you get that dress? Answer me!"

Marcia stared at her, coolly and arrogantly.

"Where?"

"Yes! Tell me at once! I know what's happened! I'll make you sorry for this, Marcia, if you don't speak!"

Marcia, with supreme coolness, fished in her pocket, and produced a crumpled slip of paper.

"Here's the bill for it, Peggy, if you want to know," she said. "I paid ten and six for it from John Smith, the second-hand dealer. It says on the bill what I paid the money for."

Peggy's heart seemed to stop beating altogether as she looked. It was true. The bill was for a second-hand sateen dress blue in colour, with white lace. Marcia had bought that dress—bought it!

"All right?" Marcia's taunting voice seemed to come to Peggy from an immense distance. "And now, perhaps, you'll explain why you went for me in such a manner, Peggy Preston? I thought, when I bought it, that it looked like a show dress—the sort of thing they might have at a waxwork show! And now——"

Peggy staggered away, white and shaken.

"My word! It is! I guess everything now!" Marcia cried triumphantly. "Girls, Peggy thought I'd 'borrowed' this dress from her chum. I believe her chum 'borrowed' it first! Peggy Preston, can you deny that this dress is missing—that your friend Molly has 'lost' it?"

Peggy staggered across the room without a word knowing that every eye was upon her pallid face and trembling figure.

"It's true—it's true!" Marcia cried, louder than ever. How quickly she had managed to guess! "Girls, there's a dress missing—Peggy can't deny it. This is the dress that's missing, evidently! Dear, honest little Waxworks Molly is the one who has lost it. Peggy Preston!" Her voice arrested Peggy

at the door. "Turn round! I'll be kind and make you an offer, if you like—just to save a scandal over the name of your old chum. You can have this dress for the money I gave for it, if you like. If you refuse, I'll never make the offer again! What do you say?"

"I—I'll think about it!" Peggy mumbled, and then, in a stumbling rush, she went to her study. There she dropped into a chair and buried her face in her hands. What had happened? What had she said? What would the girls think now?

Only one thing, surely—the very thing she had practically admitted! The missing dress had been sold in Courtfield. Molly could not have lost it as she had said. Luck had aided Marcia to bring the worst suspicion of all. The whole Form would hear of what had happened—the whole Form would believe that Molly Martin was little better than a thief!

**Anything to Help Her Chum!**

**T**AP, tap!  
"Come in!" called Peggy listlessly.

Barbara Redfern smilingly appeared in answer to her call.

"Hullo, Peggy! Why aren't you down at the nets?" Babs exclaimed. "I thought you might be up here. You've only been down once this term!"

"I—I wasn't thinking of cricket, Babs," said Peggy, with a wan smile.

Babs patted her shoulder softly.

"Buck up, Peggy! Buck up!" she whispered. "You musn't let yourself get so depressed. We depend on you for cricket, you know! I'll tell you why I've come hurrying up like this. The Fifth have challenged us to a game this afternoon, and Phyllis and I have accepted. Of course, you'll turn out, Peggy?"

Peggy wavered. She had wanted to see Molly this afternoon, but was it fair to her Cliff House chums to desert them? They were not flattering her when they spoke so highly of her bowling, and Peggy loved cricket herself. Miss Steel, who encouraged sport, would give her an evening pass if she played in the match.

"I'll be pleased to play, Babs," Peggy said, "if—if you're not already made up. But—"

"As though we should think of leaving you out!" said Babs, with assumed heartiness. "You know we—we—oh, Peggy, I can't evade it. I know why you're so unhappy; you all know. Peggy, you musn't think too much about what has happened. No one can do anything but admire the ripping way you stuck to your old chum until—until that happened!"

Peggy bit her lip, and there followed an awkward silence. Babs, she knew, wanted to be sympathetic. But what was there that Babs could say, and still be honest about it?

"You'll play, anyway, Peggy?" Babs said, at last.

"Yes. With—with pleasure," Peggy mumbled.

Babs squeezed her hand, and reluctantly left her study, but that hand pressure conveyed more than many words could have done.

Peggy rose when the bell went for class, and went listlessly to her studies. The talk of cricket was in the air during interval, and at dinner-time. She tried to interest herself. But it all flew suddenly from her mind when Boker, the page, handed her a note as she left the dining-hall.

A note—in Molly's writing!  
With tingling pulses she ran to her study, and tore it open. Why should Molly send her a note marked "Urgent"? What had happened? She gazed, in excitement and dismay, at the message she read:

"My dearest Peggy,—What I have at last plucked up courage to ask you is more than I ought ever to hope or expect, and I don't mind if you refuse, at all. The fact is that they have only just informed me that my song will be heard this afternoon in Courtfield at three o'clock, and it will be over in less than an hour. It means that I have got to leave the waxworks, and Mrs. Jordan is away, and I can't get her to take my place.

"But I can't miss this opportunity, Peggy, when I have hoped so much to have it. I am going to slip out for an hour and trust to luck. I know it is asking an awful lot of you, but could you come down here this afternoon and just see that the visitors who come

enthusiasts. "Want to hear Bessie's idea of how to do the hat trick?"

Peggy forced the words by a great effort:

"No. The—the fact of the matter, Babs, is that I want to be excused from playing this afternoon!"

"What?"  
Everyone seemed to ask the question at once.

"I—I've got to go out, you see," Peggy apologised. "I'm awfully sorry, but I—I can't do anything else."

Barbara Redfern's smile was gone. "Peggy! You're never going to let us down at the last minute?"

"I must go out," said Peggy haltingly.

Babs stared at her in obvious dismay.

"At least, Peggy," she said at last, "you will assure us of one thing. It isn't anything to do with Molly that makes you leave the team?"

Peggy felt the colour coming to her cheeks.

"Yes," she said, "it is because of Molly."



**ENOUGH!** Peggy leapt forward, and catching Marcia by the arm caused her to break off abruptly from the cruel and spiteful rhyme.

in don't damage anything? That is my only fear and is the only thing that would annoy Mrs. Jordan—she won't mind me going otherwise."

Peggy's brain whirled.  
This was the day of the first examination. It was a preliminary to the real test but it might make or mar her old chum's future. What else could she do but heed that appeal for her help?

Her mind was instantly made up.

There would be a dozen more cricket matches before the end of term. There might never be another chance like this for Molly. She had made that promise in the past, to stand by her and help her, if ever she was able. She had meant it.

Yes, and she was still loyal to Molly—still her friend. She would not believe what malicious tongues had whispered against her. Her course was clear. She rose and walked to No. 4 study.

"Come in, Peggy!" called Babs cheerily, turning from a cricket conversation with several of the team's

There was a long and heavy silence. "Nothing will make you change your mind?" asked Babs at last.

"Nothing, I'm afraid," Babs sighed heavily.

"Then I'm sorry, Peggy," she said. "You force me to speak. I didn't want to do it. You're not doing the right thing. Everyone in the Form feels that. It isn't fair to us or to the Form to leave us like this and go to Molly!"

"Why not?" panted Peggy.

"We know the sort of girl she has proved herself to be?" said Babs steadily. "She's no friend of yours, Peggy. It can't be all talk—"

"Oh, it is—it is!" Peggy burst out, in sudden anger. "You don't give her a chance! I didn't think you'd ever be so hard on a girl! I will see her whenever I like."

And with that she flung out of the study and returned along the passage, panting.

What had she said? Already she was sorry for those rash, angry words to  
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girls who had been such good chums. But she had been unable to help herself. It was love for a dear chum, for an old chum, that she had spoken. The words had come from her heart. No one should turn her from Molly!

With sudden resolution she picked up her hat and coat and put them on.

Five minutes later, without seeing anyone else, Peggy was leaving the school. She hurried for Courtfield, and arrived well before three o'clock. Molly was amazed and delighted to see her—and fearful as well. It was so good of Peggy, she said; and Peggy knew that she meant every word. Had it been quite easy for her to leave the school? Had she had to sacrifice anything? Those were her first thoughtful questions.

Peggy glossed over difficulties with an ease that she was far from feeling. If Mrs. Jordan did not mind as long as there was someone to supervise, she said, Molly had better start as soon as possible.

And so Molly, after taking the card announcing her performance from the window, started—with Peggy Preston's wishes for good luck still ringing in her ears.

She went along the street so excited that at first she did not see two figures standing together, talking. Then, with a sudden gasp of surprise, Molly observed them—and one was Marcia Loftus. She was talking to a lady whom Molly had seen before. Abruptly changing her course, Molly crossed the road.

But Peggy did not see anything of that as she paced up and down inside the little exhibition, waiting for the first customers.

What a queer thing she was doing! Here she was, instead of playing in the first cricket match of the term, taking the strange part that Molly, her old chum, took to earn her living!

She heard steps in the shop, and peeped between the curtains that divided the main part from this smaller room. Her heart leapt. For the moment she was frozen with horror.

Her first customer was Miss Bullivant! Miss Bullivant, of Cliff House!

Peggy's heart began to flutter wildly. True, she was wearing the mask, but that would never be sufficient to disguise her from the Cliff House mistress. And she mustn't be caught here! Miss Bullivant would order her back to the school immediately—she knew that.

She must hide!  
Desperately Peggy glanced around her. Hide! But where?

A wild idea came into her brain. It seemed the only thing to do.

With a lightning movement she was on one of the side platforms where the figures stood. She had grasped the large hat and cloak of one of the female figures, and was pulling them on herself. She kicked the card across so that it stood just beneath her. And hardly had she taken up a rigid attitude than Miss Bullivant appeared!

Would she see through the new "wax-work figure"?

Peggy hardly dared to breathe. She felt that some movement must betray her to the mistress. She feared that her eyes would blink at the wrong moment, or she would sway. Thank goodness the other figures were very realistically made!

Miss Bullivant stood still, looking everywhere. Never had Peggy seen her look quite so keen, so eager. She glanced here and there, then suddenly crossed to the curtains at the end of the room. She looked behind them in every corner.

As though she was searching for someone—hoping to find someone here!

Peggy's heart seemed to stop altogether as Miss Bullivant turned away.

and ran her eyes over the figures. Yes, she looked at Peggy. Peggy was certain of that, although her own gaze was fixed staringly on the wall. The mistress even moved nearer to her. And then she turned away.

But not for a full two minutes did Peggy dare to move from her position. It was only when she was positive that Miss Bullivant must have left the building that she descended from the stage, trembling, the hot colour in her cheeks, marvelling at her escape.

Why had Miss Bullivant come here? Peggy could not answer that question, but it had upset her for the afternoon.

Other curious visitors came in, but to them Peggy was an almost dumb guide, only once making any real attempt to play the part of Marvellous Molly. All the time she was fearing that Miss Bullivant might come back again, or that someone else would appear, and recognise her.

She will never forget the flutter of anxiety in which she remained until Molly at last reappeared. And then—

Agitated was Peggy, but her chum seemed even more so.

"I—I don't think I can possibly have passed my exam," Molly whispered tremblingly.

"You don't?" Peggy exclaimed, almost as agitated as Molly. "Oh, surely, dear—"

"The—the examining gentleman was so stern!" Molly explained nervously. "I did my best, Peggy—I did, really. I—I believe I sang as well as I've ever done. But I was so eager to do something fine; and he only nodded, and said that he'd write to me. And—and when I came out I wasn't looking where I was going and I nearly got run over."

Peggy patted her back reassuringly.

"Then that is what has made you feel more nervous, Molly!" she exclaimed. "But, thank goodness, you're still safe and sound. Molly, if you've done that—why, I'm sure that there'll be a more hopeful verdict than you expect! Keep your spirits up!"

Peggy stayed a little while longer, and then bade her chum farewell. She walked away from the shop, feeling that she had at least done her duty. The promise was partly redeemed; she had made it possible for Molly to attend her first examination. There would be unpleasantness in the Form because she had left the cricket team so unavoidably at the last moment. But what did that matter? It was the price that she had to pay for her loyalty to an old chum.

Loyal, yes! Peggy still believed in Molly implicitly, in spite of everything. Little could she guess, as she walked back to the school, the shattering blow that was still to fall—the blow that would try her to her heart!

### The Last Straw!

"PEGGY PRESTON! Where have you been?"

Peggy was startled and amazed to find Miss Steel, the Fourth-Form mistress waiting for her. Her expression was stern, and her voice was hard. The sight of her filled Peggy with a strange apprehension.

"I—I've been to see a friend, Miss Steel," said Peggy.

"Oh! Who was this friend, Peggy?"

"My old school friend, Molly Martin."

"Where did you two go?"

Peggy was silent. They had gone nowhere together.

"You had better tell me, Peggy. I want an exact description of your movements this afternoon."

Peggy was still silent. How could she tell what she had been doing? Why did Miss Steel want to know?

"Very well, Peggy," said the mistress. "Go up to your study now. I will see you again."

Peggy went upstairs. In the passage she came on Barbara Redfern and several of her chums. They stopped talking at sight of her, and Babs came forward.

"Peggy! What ever have you been doing this afternoon?" exclaimed Babs, in a strange voice.

"Doing?" burst out Peggy. "Oh, I had to go out—there was nothing else for it. I didn't let the team down intentionally—"

"It isn't that, Peggy," said Babs. "It's this business about the cinema, where—but there, I'm not going to believe it! I know you can explain where you've been. You haven't been out with Molly to the pictures, have you?"

"Good gracious, no!" said Peggy. She stared at the grave faces of her Fourth-Form chums. "What do you mean, Babs? What is all this mystery about the cinema?"

"Something rather unfortunate has happened," said Babs.

"Unfortunate! How! What is it?"

"I'll tell you," said Babs. "Someone has telephoned to the school during the afternoon to say that two girls were ordered out of the Courtfield cinema an hour or so ago. They created quite a scene inside. One of them wore a Cliff House hat-band, and appeared to be a Fourth-Former. Miss Steel is trying to find out who the girl was."

Peggy Preston recoiled.

"And she suspects me, Babs?" she breathed.

"Miss Steel, like everyone else, doesn't know what to think," said Babs slowly.

"She—oh, Peggy, it wasn't you, was it? You weren't there with Molly Martin this afternoon?"

"Of course not, Babs!" Peggy answered instantly. "But—but why should anyone think such a thing?"

"Because there's a story going round the Form that you were seen there!" Babs answered. "Goodness knows who started it. But none of us would believe it of Peggy, would we, girls?"

"No. It was too bad altogether," they answered.

"You can explain where you were, Peggy, of course?" Babs asked anxiously.

Peggy did not reply to that. Could she explain? It meant describing her own good turn. It meant telling Molly's secret. Peggy was more sure than ever that Molly had an enemy.

"You can't tell?" said Babs, after a long silence.

"No," said Peggy, and suddenly looked up. "Oh, I know you think I'm mistaken in my old chum. I'm not! She'd never be the sort of girl you've been thinking her to be. I—I want to think things out. Only I can tell you this—I've never been near the cinema this afternoon."

Peggy went into her study and dropped into a chair. She was dazed and bewildered, not knowing what to think. There was a tap at the door, and she looked up in surprise to see Marcia Loftus.

"What do you want, Marcia?" said Peggy, shortly.

Marcia closed the door very carefully and came across the study, a nervous smile flickered about the corners of her mouth.

"I want to speak to you—about the cinema," said Marcia.

"What is it?"

"I've been out this afternoon myself," said Marcia.

"Good gracious! Then you're the girl Miss Steel wants?" Peggy ejaculated.

Marcia watched her with twitching lips.

"Yes. But you won't tell about it, Peggy," she said.

Peggy jumped up in her chair.

"I shall if you don't confess yourself!" she cried. "I'm not going to be blamed for what you've done—"

"Ssssh!" warned Marcia.

"Why should I not speak?" Peggy demanded.

Marcia answered her in more of a hiss than a whisper.

"Because of who I was with, Peggy Preston! See! I wasn't alone at all. I was with your friend—Molly!"

"Molly!" panted Peggy.

"Yes! I was mad to go out with her, but she said she wanted a spree and would tell me some more things. It was her bad manners—"

"I don't believe it—I don't believe it!" choked Peggy Preston.

Marcia stepped back, a sneering smile on her face.

"All right, then!" she mocked her pale, trembling companion. "Speak if you like, and then I'll tell everyone about Molly, and just what she did! You'll be sorry if that happens, Peggy Preston!"

"Molly hasn't been out with you!" panted Peggy. "I know it! I know where she went—"

"To a musical exam?" chuckled Marcia, and laughed outright at Peggy's amazed and horrified expression. "That's what she told you, eh? Ha, ha, ha! I guessed that was her story, Peggy Preston, from what she said. And I know where you've been this afternoon, too! Miss Bullivant is a witness, if necessary, that Molly was away from the waxworks!"

"How do you know this?" said Peggy huskily.

"Oh, I saw that!" Marcia returned. "As a matter of fact, we were watching. Does that satisfy you? Are you going to speak now, and—give your friend away as well as me?"

"Molly wasn't with you," muttered Peggy.

"All right! Speak, and then it will be proved!" returned Marcia. "Miss Steel and everyone will know the sort of girl you've been associating with, and it will all come out. I'll see that they know everything! I don't suppose she'll keep her job at the waxworks after that!"

Marcia backed slowly towards the door. Peggy watched her as though fascinated. She saw the greenish glint in her eyes, and saw them wavering, too. There was something strangely fearful as well as triumphant about Marcia. But Peggy could not consider that then.

The door closed, and Marcia had gone. Peggy lowered her eyes at last and buried her face in her hands.

Molly—with Marcia?

It seemed too dreadful to contemplate at first. Molly associating with Marcia, her enemy? The musical examination all a fraud? Everything wasted time?

Marcia's words were dinning in her ears. Marcia knew everything! From whom could she have learnt about that secret change this afternoon if not from Molly?

Why had Molly come back in such an agitated state? Why had she told Peggy that she did not think she had passed—as though she was preparing her to hear, at some later time, that she had failed!

The door opened suddenly—how long after Marcia's disappearance Peggy could not say.

"Peggy!" said Miss Steel's voice.

Peggy rose dumbly to her feet. She knew why Miss Steel had come. What was she to say to her? She had not re-

flected on that. Was she to give away the guilty girl, or—?

"Have you decided to make any statement to me, Peggy?" asked Miss Steel.

Peggy stood, with thumping heart, trying to think what she should do.

"You are still silent?" asked Miss Steel, frigidly. "Very well, Peggy Preston, I will not prolong a painful matter. I am shocked to think that such an occurrence has happened, and so early in the term, too! Already I have had to reprove you for an exhibition of bad manners. You will be gated for the rest of the week, and will also write two hundred lines, Peggy. Also, you will not attend the entertainment arranged for this evening. I am sorry I have ever had to deal with such a case."

Miss Steel turned away.

Peggy went back into the study and closed the door.

She heard a voice in the passage say, quite loudly:

"Of course, we know why she wouldn't say anything! She didn't want questions asked about Molly!"

Peggy could never believe that Molly had been false to her this afternoon.

How did Marcia know so much? There was some other explanation. Someone—someone—must have seen that letter that Molly wrote to her, asking her to come to the exhibition. Who? Peggy could not tell. But things had gone too far now—they must be straightened somehow. Peggy felt that she could not bear to think of anything else until this mystery was cleared up.

She rose suddenly and donned, almost mechanically, her hat and coat. She had forgotten the gating. She was going to Courtfield now, at once, to see Molly and find out why everything kept on going wrong.

It was the supreme test of Peggy Preston's loyalty to an old chum: Now, in the hour when she should have doubted most, her trust was stronger and firmer than ever. It wasn't Molly's fault:

In the passage girls were still standing about, talking. Peggy glanced at none of them. Scattered scraps of conversa-



**WILL SHE BE RECOGNISED?** Peggy's heart seemed to stop altogether as Miss Bullivant turned and, running her eyes over the figures, looked direct at Peggy.

And it sounded like Marcia Loftus's voice.

Peggy hid her face in her hands again, and tried to choke back the tears. Marcia again! What a double game Marcia was playing now, as always. She had threatened Peggy to silence; now she was making capital out of it, although to Peggy she had admitted her own guilt!

Peggy bit her lip as a swift shudder passed through her.

Why had she heeded Marcia? Why had she believed her? No, it was not really belief—Marcia's accusation had just seemed to stun her for the time being. If she had not been so upset, she would have told Miss Steel everything just now!

She tried to face the situation, and what it came to.

Did she believe Marcia?

No! Perhaps, for the moment she had wavered; she had doubted. But now the old conviction came back to her with added strength. Marcia had not told her the truth! It was false for her to say that she had been out with Molly!

The girl didn't appreciate Miss Primrose's kindness at all, they were saying. Most of them would stay away from the entertainment as a protest. But Peggy did not heed what it was about, as she sped swiftly down the stairs towards the quadrangle. "Stop! Peggy—come here!"

The cry came just as she reached the gates. It was in the voice of Miss Steel. Peggy knew that instantly; she realised, at the same moment, what she was doing. Only momentarily she paused. In another second she had gone out and was in the lane.

"Stop, Peggy!" came a last order—and then silence. Peggy knew what she had done. She had broken out, and Miss Steel knew that her punishment had been defied.

"But I must go—I must!" Peggy muttered. "I've got to see Molly and find out how it is that Marcia can plot against her and always win."

And Peggy went hurrying on. It was defiance, although she considered it justified. Supposing Marcia was right, after

all, and Molly had been deceiving her—but she wouldn't think of that! It couldn't be—it couldn't!

She passed a cart in Friardale; heard its driver asking for Cliff House. But she was too anxious to give it one curious glance.

And so, at last, Peggy came to Courtfield. It was a long walk, and had occupied a full hour. During that hour she had had time to dwell on many matters in her mind. If she had told Molly more, perhaps so many things would not have gone wrong? Anyway, she would see.

The door of the waxwork exhibition was shut, and there was a note pinned to it. Peggy Preston read it with dazed eyes:

"Opening at eight o'clock this evening."

Shut until eight! Then where was Molly? Had she broken out and come here on a wild-goose chase—had she risked everything in vain? Dully she went into the adjoining shop and made inquiries.

"Why, they've gone to give a little show at your school, miss—Cliff House," said the man behind the counter. "Didn't you know about it?"

"Cliff House?" repeated Peggy, in a dazed voice.

"Yes. Your headmistress arranged for it this afternoon, so I'm told. They're not very busy until late in the evening. One of the mistresses came this afternoon to see about it, and went off to fix it up with Mrs. Jordan. It's that clever Miss Molly that got them such an engagement."

Peggy thanked him and came out of the shop.

She remembered everything now. Miss Steel had spoken of an entertainment. She knew part of Miss Bullivant's reason for appearing there this afternoon. She remembered the girls speaking about staying away from the Hall—as a protest. She recalled that cart in Friardale.

What a duffer she had been to make such a muddle of everything in her pre-occupation! If only she had listened she would have known that Molly was coming to the school. She must have actually passed her on the way. Now she was three or four miles away, and perhaps the entertainment was already in progress.

She had muddled everything! Probably when she returned, Molly would be gone—and in goodness only knew what fresh disgrace! Miss Steel would punish her for defying her orders! Everything was wrong!

What could she possibly do next?

### Lifting the Veil at Last!

**M**OLLY MARTIN'S exhibition at Cliff House was about to commence.

Chiefly on Barbara Redfern's pleading, most of the Fourth Form girls were attending. Few of them, however, had come to applaud. In their eyes Molly was already condemned and "unmasked." They were sorry she had been asked to come here. They did not mean to give her any encouragement.

But there was at least one Fourth Former who looked pleased. That girl was Marcia Loftus. She grinned at the masked girl who stood on the stage, surrounded by the few waxworks that had been brought, and then grinned across

at a girl sitting at the back of the hall with a stylishly-dressed lady, said to be Mrs. Jordan, the proprietress of the show. The girl came across to Marcia and whispered.

"All right?"

Marcia nodded.

"Yes. I think that Molly will go down this evening in the estimation of a few of them!" she chuckled softly. "I managed to add something to the paper you told me about! You watch for events."

"I shall!" nodded the other, laughed, and returned to her seat.

Molly had started her entertainment. At first she asked for dates and events connected with her figures, and, as usual, supplied little verses that were simple but witty and ingenious. Then she went further, holding short dialogues with the figures that had been brought. She made the final announcement that she would endeavour to deal with a few Cliff House characters and incidents, and consulted a paper lying on the table in front of her.

And that was where Marcia sat up afresh, with an anticipatory smile. They were notes that Molly had, placed there by Mrs. Jordan herself, after a chat with Miss Primrose. But Marcia had seen that further notes had been supplied.

The first was about Piper—"a porter who kept by the gates there, and slept!"—and raised a peal of laughter.

The second attempt that she made dealt with sport at the school.

The third—to the horror of everyone except Marcia—dealt with a certain Miss Steel who was supposed to have left the school.

Molly was constructing a rhyme about a Miss Steel who had been compelled to resign because of bullying the girls. She stammered and looked uneasy as she went on with it. The growing silence in the hall warned her that something had gone wrong.

With a sudden movement Miss Steel leapt to her feet

"Stop!"

Molly paused in the middle of a sentence.

"Miss Primrose, there is some mistake here! What this girl is saying—neither I nor anyone else can be expected to listen to it!"

And then Marcia was on her feet as well.

"It's a shame! We can all see what the girl is driving at!" she cried.

"Hear, hear!" a voice added.

Molly was standing rigidly still. The air of the hall seemed electric. Miss Primrose was on her feet as well, bewildered and annoyed. The girls were wondering whatever would happen.

But they were not prepared for what did actually occur.

At that very moment the swing-doors of the hall burst open.

Through them burst Peggy Preston, and behind her came an elderly man. They both stopped still, but only for the moment. Before a stylishly-dressed girl at the back of the hall could move out of sight the man suddenly raised a hand and pointed.

"There is the girl there, miss," he said huskily.

Peggy started forward. At the same moment Miss Steel moved and held her arm.

"Peggy, what is the meaning of this interruption?" she breathed. "Take a seat somewhere immediately. I have something to say to you at some later time."

Peggy trembled.

"Oh, Miss Steel," she gasped, "if that is the case, it is just another plot! I can explain it—I know I can! There is a girl—Oh, she is trying to escape!"

And with that breathless gasp, Peggy

managed to struggle away from Miss Steel, and went rushing across the hall.

The smartly-dressed girl who had been stealing so rapidly towards the door was just too late. Peggy seized her arm and whirled her round. She found herself staring at Priscilla Bayton, Marcia's new friend.

"Oh!" Priscilla gasped, as though surprised. "What is the matter? What do you want?"

"I want you to confess!" said Peggy, in a hard voice.

"Confess?" The girl stared at her. "Why, you must be mad, Peggy! What have I to confess to? What is the matter with you?"

Miss Steel had come hurrying forward, with Miss Primrose close behind her. The elderly man who had accompanied Peggy had also drawn near, and so had Mrs. Jordan, the waxworks proprietress.

"You understand, Priscilla Bayton!" said Peggy sternly. "You know what I mean! Do you recognise this gentleman who has come all the way from Courtfield with me? He is a second-hand dealer—Mr. John Smith. He knows you, Priscilla—you once sold something to him. Now do you understand what I mean?"

But the next one to speak was not Priscilla. It was Mrs. Jordan who exclaimed:

"This is all a mistake, I am sure—some muddled identity!" she cried. "You are speaking to my daughter, and her name is not Priscilla and never has been. She is called Nora—Nora Jordan!"

Peggy Preston looked staggered for the moment.

"She is Nora—your daughter?" she gasped. Then her look changed to one of triumph. "Why, then that explains everything—everything that has puzzled me so much!" She took a step nearer to Nora Jordan and looked into her eyes. "I think," she said very quietly, "that it would be better if you told the story yourself."

And Nora, suddenly losing the whole theatrical pose, dropped her eyes, clung to her mother, and said in a trembling whisper:

"Yes; I'm caught! I'll tell—I will, really!"

It was under as dramatic conditions as could be imagined that Nora Jordan, alias Priscilla Bayton, told her story.

From first to last, but never suspected by anyone, she had been Molly Martin's hidden enemy!

It was easy to understand it now. For she was the daughter of whom Molly had once spoken—the daughter whose existence they had all forgotten. Why was she Molly's enemy? Even Bessie could have guessed that now. For Molly to win her musical scholarship would mean that stage-struck Nora would have to take to the waxwork exhibition that she despised and hated, although it had always been her mother's livelihood!

That was why she had been, in reality, as deeply against Molly in secret as Marcia had been openly. But Priscilla had always been "acting"—she had always "posed" before the Fourth-Formers, and deceived them as to her true character.

Of course, there were other explanations which she gave freely in her confession. How had she known of that examination that belonged to the past? Why, she knew the girl who had been really guilty of cheating—it was a cousin of hers, whose name was instantly familiar to Peggy Preston. That accounted for the strange familiarity that they had noticed in "Priscilla" herself.

And it was not really wonderful that

she should happen to be in possession of such information, considering that she and Marcia had met in Peggy's home town during the Easter holidays. That was where their acquaintance had started; that was why, when they had met in Courtfield during the time of the waxwork exhibition, they had been able to plot together so whole-heartedly—Nora against Marcia, and Marcia against Peggy.

She admitted it all now—everything that there was to tell—seeing that nothing would now save her from the indignant sentence that her mother had already pronounced on her. No longer should she lead an idle life attending "dramatic academies!" Nora's duties at the exhibition were to start the next day!

She told her story so frankly that Peggy could see the small amount of real justification that she had had in acting as she had done. All along, as Peggy could now recall, "Priscilla" had not worked so much to humiliate Molly as to keep her away from a chum who was likely to encourage her to go in for the musical examination, and help her with her studies! That was all she wanted—Molly to remain satisfied with her position. It was when Marcia had taken a hand that the more ugly events had taken place.

But Nora did not shield Marcia. Of course, they had been hand-in-glove, but Marcia had suggested "Priscilla's" taking of the dress and selling it to John Smith, so that Marcia could "buy" it there, and so shame Peggy Preston. How had "Priscilla" got the dress? With the greatest of ease. She was always able to use her mother's key when the waxwork exhibition was not open. She had entered to tear up

Molly's examination papers. She had, in the same way, left that dress of Marcia's to be worn for one night, and "borrowed" the other, so that Molly might fall under a suspicion that would cause Peggy to "drop" her.

Who had scribbled on the wall? Not Molly, nor Marcia. It was "Priscilla," the girl whom no one seemed ever likely to suspect of such a thing. Marcia's eavesdropping had apprised them of Peggy's plan to sing to the waiting girl. They had concocted "evidence" without difficulty.

Even the stir during this evening's performance was a last attempt on Marcia's part to humiliate Molly. Mrs. Jordan's daughter, having such "inside knowledge," knew of the paper of "prompts" that was to be put on the table for Molly's help. It had not been difficult for Marcia to add the words against Miss Steel's name that had threatened to cause such a stir.

Who had been expelled from the cinema? Marcia and her friend Nora, of course!

A long confession; but at least it was an honest one. "Priscilla" admitted everything—even to the opportunity that chance had afforded her of reading Molly's letter written that morning. And then there was nothing left unexplained that the girls could not guess—no single slur on the names of Molly and her gallant Cliff House chum, Peggy Preston!

At the termination of the wonderful scene that marked the feting of Peggy Preston in the Common-room that evening, she was pressed by the repentant girls to explain how she had managed to unmask a plot that, in all the annals of Cliff House, had few rivals.

"It was only by hard thinking when I was in the tightest corner of all," Peggy confessed laughingly. "And yet I can't understand now why I didn't guess it at first. If I hadn't known Molly so well—"

"If you hadn't been such a wonderful chum, and so loyal, you mean!" smiled Augusta Anstruther - Browne. She looked across at the chair where Molly Martin was sitting shyly with the others. "Molly, you and I share the friendship of Peggy, I think; and, in my opinion, we're two of the luckiest girls at Cliff House."

"I'm sure we are!" Molly exclaimed, and then blushed more than ever.

Molly, here? Yes, it was that that completed Peggy Preston's joy to-night. Mrs. Jordan, to make up for the wrongs that her employee had suffered, was paying for her to remain at Cliff House to have special musical instruction until her examinations were over!

And Marcia—what had happened to her? Marcia was in bed at that moment, sent there after an exemplary caning that should certainly teach her better, to say nothing of her fortnight's strict gating!

It proved a jolly evening—a wonderfully jolly evening. For Molly it was one long, sheer delight, for the girls were doing everything they could possibly do to atone for the suspicions that had proved so unwarranted. And Molly was to have several more of these jolly evenings before her exam—an examination, let it be said, that she was going to pass with flying colours, and for ever get out of the rut of that blind-alley occupation.

And this joyful ending had all come about through Peggy Preston's loyalty to her in memory of the old days!

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## THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

OLIVE WALTERS, a pretty, golden-haired girl of fourteen, who attends St. Mildred's School as a day boarder.

TOM WALTERS, Olive's father, a signalman who was on duty at "Gosbridge Box."

MR. THEODORE DUKE, a big financier, and the father of

SYBIL DUKE, who, with Olive, is a member of the Fifth Form at St. Mildred's.

Olive's mother had been ill for some time, and her illness suddenly took a serious turn. Olive rushed away to fetch her father, who, putting the signals at "danger," risked leaving the box for a few minutes.

A special, bearing Mr. Duke, on important business, was shortly due. A ruffian in the employ of an enemy of Mr. Duke's tampered with the levers, and knocked Tom Walters to the ground as he returned to the box. The special crashed into some trucks, blocking the line, before it could properly pull up, and was derailed, Mr. Duke being injured. The signalman was discharged, and made to leave the cottage, and the family took lodgings in a poor quarter.

Meanwhile, Olive was having a very bad time of it at St. Mildred's. A piece of scheming on the part of Sybil Duke resulted in Olive's being shunned by almost the whole Form. But the crushing blow came when the bank in which her father had invested his small savings failed. Then Olive, heedless of what anyone might think, sang in the street to earn money, and wonderful was her success.

(Read on from here.)

## A Surprise for Olive's Father!

OLIVE felt there was no shame in singing in the streets.

It was not as if she were begging. The money Old Sam had collected had been given because her singing had been appreciated and surely she had as much right to sell her talent in this way as had a singer on a concert platform or a stage, who earned a huge weekly salary for so doing.

All the same, she hoped her school-fellows would not find out.

Olive had had much bitter experience of how cruel and snobbish they could be, and she shuddered to think of their scornful laughter and contempt even if it was but pretended, should they discover how she was keeping the wolf from her parents' door.

Old Sam returned to her, his hat heavy with coppers and small silver coins. He was so excited that he could scarcely speak for a moment, and when he laughed delightedly, the sound had a touch of hysteria about it.

"It's wonderful, missy—wonderful!" he declared, when he did find his voice. "I would never have believed we could

have collected so much. We must have two pounds or more, altogether."

"Bravo!" Olive exclaimed cheerily, though there were tears of relief and joy in her eyes. "We will count it when we reach home. But wait! I must sing one more song. It is only right to these people, after they have been so generous."

With alacrity, old Sam hobbled round his harmonium, and seated himself before it.

"What shall it be this time, missy?" he asked, looking up at her enquiringly.

"The Old Folks at Home, I think," answered Olive, for she was thinking of her mother and father. "Yes, please play that, Sam. It—it is very suitable to-night."

The notes of the aged instrument made music beneath the old man's fingers. Olive sang the old, old song she had named, finishing it just as the Hippodrome's doors were opened, and the people began to file into the building.

Nevertheless, those remaining still outside applauded her with a will, and, as the girl smiled her acknowledgments, she was well satisfied with the reception of this, her final song.

"That's all for to-night, Sam," Olive said. "Let us go home now, and count and share our takings. If you are willing, we will come out again to-morrow evening, and see if we can repeat our wonderful success."

"If I am willing! I should say I was, missy," the old man cried. "And don't you worry about being successful! Singing like yours couldn't fail to appeal to people—take it from me. I do not think I have heard quite as sweet a voice as yours for many years. But look here, Missy! I don't like taking half the money. I say again that it was your singing that earned it, not my playing. Give me, say a quarter, and I'll be more than content."

"You are going to have half, and then I shall insist upon paying half of Paddy's vet's fee," Olive persisted. "I couldn't have done it, Sam, without you. I am sure I should have been too nervous to stand in the street alone and sing. Besides, your accompaniment made my singing ten times better than it would have been without it—ten times more noticeable."

The old man shook his white head in protest, but Olive meant to have her own way about the division of their earnings.

The girl helped him hoist his harmonium on to his back, then they set off back to the tenement building.

In its passage, a gas jet flickered in

a wire cage. The passage chanced to be deserted, and producing the money they had taken, old Sam placed it in piles upon the stone stairs, counting the coppers into shillings, and laying the silver for the present on one side.

There proved to be twenty-eight and tenpence in copper coins, and, when Olive counted the silver that totalled to fourteen shillings, making a grand total of forty-two shillings and tenpence.

The girl took a pound, and forced the remainder upon the still-protesting Sam.

"You have got to take it!" she said, stamping her foot in mock anger. "The odd two-and-ten will be enough to cover the fee for the veterinary surgeon, I expect, and we shall have paid half each. When will you take him?"

"I have half a mind to take him right away, missy. It's past the hours of the vet. I am thinking of, but he is a nice young fellow, from what I have heard of him, and I do not expect he'd mind looking to Paddy, if he is in."

"Go and get him now, Sam," Olive urged. "I will come with you, if it is not too far. I feel anxious to know if poor Paddy can be made well."

Old Sam nodded his agreement. He toiled up the stairs with his harmonium on his back, and Olive stood at the foot of the staircase, awaiting his return.

He was smiling, when he presently came down the stairs, with the dog in his arms.

"He seems a little better, missy," he announced, "but I will take him, all the same. The vet's place is only round the corner, and the journey will not take us long."

Olive nodded, and moved towards the exit of the building, old Sam hobbling by her side with the sick dog.

They were fortunate. The veterinary surgeon was at home.

"It's out of hours, you know," he said, "but bring your dog in, and I will see if I can determine what is wrong with him."

Old Sam carried the faithful, shaggy-coated creature into the vet's consulting-room, and Olive followed. Here Paddy was laid upon the table, and the vet., who was quite a young man, with a grave and kindly face, thoroughly examined him.

"It's old age principally that is his trouble," he declared. "He has a severe cold into the bargain, though, and you must not bring him out again until he is better, once you get him home. Don't you play a harmonium in



the streets whilst he performs? I seem to have seen you doing so."

"Yes, sir," Sam answered, "but"—with a grateful glance towards Olive—"there's no need to take him out now."

"Good! Then follow my advice with him, and give him a dose of the medicine I will make you up, as directed upon the bottle, and you will soon have him well again. All right, old chap"—patting Paddy, as he turned his faithful brown eyes upon him—"I'll not hurt you. I am going to make you like a puppy again."

He disappeared into an inner room, presently to return with a bottle containing a dark liquid, which he handed to old Sam.

"Three times a day—it's on the bottle if you forget," he said. "Eh? Oh, half-a-crown will be sufficient. If you want any more medicine for him, it will be a shilling, and you can have it by sending round."

Sam's eyes were inclined to be moist, as he pocketed the medicine, picked up the dog, and placed him beneath his threadbare coat. He was more than relieved to learn that, apparently, there was little chance of Paddy dying, and tears of joy were very near.

The old man's story was a sad one. He had been quite a famous musician years ago, but the death of the daughter, who had been so like Olive, had done much to break him up, especially as it had followed within a few weeks upon the decease of his wife.

Sorrow had made him listless and indifferent where his work had been concerned, and he had lost many of the pupils he had had. Then, a stroke of paralysis had kept him for months in a hospital, and, when he had at length emerged to face the world again, practically a cripple, he was quite destitute.

He had drifted from one town to another, existing from occasional work in the way of playing at concerts and other entertainments. Then, for a year or two, he was more or less comfortable, having obtained an engagement with a picture palace. But the proprietor of this eventually went bankrupt, and old Sam was once again thrown out of work.

A lover of animals, and one who had wonderful influence over them, he had trained his dog, Paddy, to do tricks, whilst he had been in regular employment. That had been purely for amusement, but, when the picture palace closed and he had to seek some other livelihood, it had occurred to him to turn Paddy's cleverness to better account.

With a few pounds he had contrived to save out of the slender salary he had taken each week for his playing he purchased the portable harmonium, and, with this and his dog, he had taken to the streets, and managed to make an existence.

For years he had lived a lonely life with the nondescript dog as his sole companion, so that it was small wonder that he should feel grief when there had seemed danger of Paddy dying. To Sam it had been as though a very old and dear friend was likely to be taken from him.

The old fellow, having paid the vet.'s small fee, brushed his coat-sleeve across his eyes and hobbled towards the door. Olive followed, and the vet. showed out the curious companions.

Arriving back at the tenement building, the strange friends parted, though not before Olive had arranged to meet the old man on the following evening, to repeat the night's programme.

Olive ascended to her parents' humble

rooms, and entered the living-room; for she found the outer door ajar.

Her mother was in the adjoining bedroom, and her father was seated dejectedly at the table. He was reading a newspaper, which he had picked up from where someone had carelessly flung it upon the building's stairs.

In the paper was a short announcement concerning the affairs of Harmer's Bank, which the ex-signalman had naturally read with interest, though the report was anything but heartening.

The Senior Official Receiver, it stated, had discovered the bank's accounts in a hopeless tangle, and for that reason it might be many weeks before he could declare any sort of dividend for its victims.

The spectre of starvation loomed large before Tom Walters, as he stifled a groan and laid the paper aside, and he was quite unaware of his daughter's entry.

Olive's lips parted in a smile as, taking care not to clink the coins together, she took the pound made up of silver and coppers from the pockets of her coat.

She stole to his back, the money in her

"Mother! Mother!"—calling to his wife. "Come here and see!"

Mrs. Walters came from the bedroom as her husband dropped his hands from Olive's shoulders and turned away, shaking his head in mystification.

In her turn she stared blankly at the heap of money.

"Oh, where did it come from, Tom?" she cried, thinking her husband, who had only recently come in, had placed it there, and regarding him with something very like alarm in her eyes.

He nodded towards Olive.

"Ask our daughter, dear," he said. "She is responsible for it being there, but so far she has kept me in the dark as to how she got it."

"Olive, where did it come from?" Mrs. Walters asked, repeating her question.

"I earned it, mother—with my voice," the girl answered, smiling delightedly.

"You dear old things, how I am puzzling you! Don't you understand? I went with the old gentleman they call Simple Sam, and, whilst he played his harmonium, I sang—outside the theatre, you know; and, later, to the people



"I have just found that one of the scholarship papers is missing from my desk!" said Miss Symes. "Does any girl present know anything about it?"

cupped hands. Then, with a suddenness that startled him, she dumped the heap of money upon the table before her father.

A cry broke from Tom Walters, and he sprang to his feet with a suddenness that sent his chair crashing backwards to the floor.

He stared first at Olive, then at the heap of coins, and seemed to be resisting a desire to rub his eyes.

"Olive!" he gasped. "Where—where did you get it?"

He gripped her by the shoulders with a nervous strength that hurt her, and peered earnestly into her eyes.

"You do not think I stole it, daddy?" the girl asked, still smiling.

"No—no, I don't think that, lass! I know my little girl too well for that," Tom Walters said. "But it is so amazing!

Here we are with scarcely a penny in the world, and you walk in and put—what is it?—a pound or perhaps more upon the table."

"There is just a pound there, father, and I earned it quite easily," Olive told him. "You would, I am certain, never guess how."

"You earned it, lass? Do you mean you have found some sort of employment?" her father asked, puzzled,

waiting to go into the second performance at the Hippodrome."

As they recovered from their astonishment Mr. and Mrs. Walters looked at each other questioningly. Disapproval was evinced on the faces of both.

"I don't think I like your doing this, dear," Mrs. Walters said at length; "though the money is, of course, a veritable godsend."

"But why not, mother darling?" Olive argued, as she went to her mother, put her arms about her neck, and kissed her with cheek. "Why should I not turn a talent to advantage? Many big singers earn hundreds of pounds a week by doing so. Surely, if they may do it, I may do it, too, in a smaller way."

"But in the streets, lass!" her father said, shaking his head in protest.

"I cannot see that it makes much difference whether one earns money by singing in the open, or on a stage or platform indoors, daddy," Olive pointed out. "What about the troupes of singers who sing in the open air at almost any seaside place one can think of? Anyway, dears, you must not offer objections to my doing it until father can get some sort of work. Besides, there is another whom I am helping with, it besides,"

it's poor old Simple Sam, as the neighbours call him. His dog Paddy, who used to do tricks whilst he played his harmonium, is ill and cannot perform for the time being; and, but for my going with him and singing, Sam would not be able to earn a living.

"Now, not another word!" she begged, laying her fingers gently upon her mother's lips, as she would have spoken. "I expect you are both hungry, and I am going to take some of this money and slip out to buy something hot that we can have for supper."

She whipped up some of the silver, and before they could speak she had darted from the room, and they heard her running down the stone staircase.

There were tears in the eyes of Mrs. Walters as they met those of her husband.

"Ah, bless her, it is always others, and never herself, whom she thinks of, Tom," she said; and the ex-signalman nodded.

"She has a heart of gold," he agreed, a trace huskily.

### The Missing Scholarship Paper!

**W**HERE — ahem! — is Sybil Duke?"

Miss Agatha Symes, the headmistress of St. Mildred's, who was that afternoon to take the Fifth, adjusted her gold-rimmed pince-nez and fixed her glance on a vacant place in the foremost row of desks.

Agnes Graham stood up.

"She went home to dinner to-day, Miss Symes," Sybil Duke's crony volunteered. "Perhaps something has happened to prevent her coming back to school this afternoon."

"Ah, perhaps it is—ahem!—as you suggest, Agnes. You may resume your seat," Miss Symes said, nodding. "Attention, girls!"

Studies commenced, and, meanwhile, the absent Sybil was tearing towards the school on her bicycle.

The reason she had gone to her home to-day was because the specialist who had dealt with her father's case had been due to pay a visit to him again that morning and make another examination of him. And Sybil had been anxious to know what opinion the eminent brain specialist would pass.

There had come practically no improvement in Theodore Duke's condition since he had risen from his bed after his accident.

The specialist, after his examination of Theodore Duke to-day, had gravely shaken his head. The one hope he could hold out was that another shock might bring back the works-owner's memory as completely as the first shock had robbed him of it. And Sybil Duke, stubbornly refusing to believe the stories told by Olive Walters and her father at the official inquiry into the railway smash, felt even more bitter against Olive as she rode back towards the school.

"It is all through the father of that Board school upstart!" she was thinking, an almost fierce light in her eyes. "He ought to have been sent to prison! It is almost as if he had killed my father."

Well, she had been revenged to an extent upon Tom Walters through his daughter, by getting Olive shunned by practically every girl at St. Mildred's. But—and Sybil's face grew so bitter that it was almost ugly—she was far from satisfied as yet! She would make Olive suffer even more keenly before she had done with her.

"Can I beat her in the scholarship? I do hope I can," she mused, as she

pedalled into the road in which stood the school. "Apart from making it possible for me to enter a college, where otherwise mother might not be able to afford now to send me, I should have the satisfaction of knowing that I had kept her at St. Mildred's, where I have made the other girls hate her."

Sybil knew that Miss Symes had recently not been taking any of the classes in the afternoons, she having been working at preparing the examination papers for the forthcoming Sir John Howard scholarship. Therefore, as she presently entered the hall and glanced up at the clock, to find she was quite ten minutes late for afternoon school, she decided that her best plan was to make her way to the headmistress' study and explain the circumstances.

She was unaware that Miss Agatha had almost completed her task in regard to the scholarship now, and that she was instructing the Fifth in mathematics this afternoon.

The staircase and corridors were deserted.



"You are right, Winnie," said Olive firmly. "To leave St. Mildred's and forgo my chance in the scholarship would be cowardly. I will remain and face it all out to the bitter end!"

Sybil ran lightly up the stairs and, knocking at the door of the headmistress' study, she entered.

Though Miss Symes was not there, Sybil seemed a curiously long time before she emerged. Then, she glanced up and down the corridor almost furtively, the colour coming and going in her cheeks, and her hand upon the pocket in her skirt.

A little sigh, which might have been born of relief, escaped her lips, as she found that there was no one to see her. She retraced her steps downstairs, and a second or two later, entered her classroom.

Miss Agatha Symes turned upon her entry.

"You are very late, Sybil," she said severely. "What—ahem!—excuse have you to offer?"

"I have been home, Miss Symes, to learn the result of a visit of a specialist, who came to see my father this morning. I am sorry I am behind in returning."

"Under the circumstances it is excusable," the headmistress said. "I

trust there is improvement in your father, Sybil."

"Why, no, Miss Symes," Sybil replied. And she flashed a look of vindictive hatred at Olive Walters, who sat with her friend Winnie Norris in the second row of desks.

"I am sorry," said Miss Symes. "You may go to your seat, Sybil."

Sybil obeyed, and for the next half an hour the instruction of the Fifth continued without interruption. Then, there happened an incident which, trivial in itself, was to have very far-reaching results.

Miss Symes sneezed suddenly, jerking her pince-nez from her nose.

She made a frantic effort to catch the eyeglasses, but they slipped through her fingers and fell to the floor. As the mistress, who was very shortsighted, stooped and regained them, she uttered a vexed exclamation, for both lenses were broken.

"Dear me! How—ahem!—very annoying," she said. "Will one of you go to my study and fetch the spare pair of glasses lying upon the mantelpiece there?"

Always obliging and thoughtful for others, Olive jumped up from her seat.

"I will go, Miss Symes," she said. And, as the mistress nodded, Olive quitted her place, and hurried from the classroom.

Miss Symes was at a serious disadvantage without her glasses, and it was next to impossible for her to continue the lesson until the spare pair were in her possession. She, therefore, seated herself at her desk, and waited for Olive to return with them.

"Dear me! Where can the girl be?" she ejaculated, at length, drumming impatiently with her finger tips upon her desk. And certainly, Olive Walters was a surprisingly long time upon her errand.

When she did at last return to the classroom, she was apologetic.

"I am sorry I was so long, Miss Symes," she said. "But your glasses were not upon the mantelpiece, as you thought. I could find them nowhere until I thought of your roll-top desk. It was locked, but you had left the key in it, and I found your glasses on the blotting-pad inside. I hope you will not mind my having opened your desk to find them."

"Not at all—not at all," the headmistress answered, as she adjusted the nippers, which Olive had handed her. "Attention, girls! Let us resume the lesson."

For a further half-hour, mathematics tested the brains of the Fifth. Then, Miss Crawford made her appearance, to conduct a singing lesson until the bell for dismissal should sound.

Miss Symes handed over the class to the under-mistress, and betook herself to her study, to complete the small amount of work still needed upon the scholarship papers.

More than once, Miss Crawford had to speak severely to Sybil Duke for lack of attention. The works-owner's daughter seemed curiously abstracted and uneasy, and, though the mistress did not notice the fact, Sybil's eyes frequently travelled with a curious expression to Olive Walters.

Abruptly, the singing lesson was interrupted. Miss Symes thrust open the swing doors and entered the school-room, a worried look upon her somewhat aggressive face.

She advanced, and stood before the class. Somehow, there was about her a nervousness quite foreign to her nature. Miss Crawford, who had raised

her hand for silence, seeing the headmistress had something of importance to communicate to the girls, glanced at Miss Symes with a rather puzzled air.

"Girls," Miss Symes said, at length. "I have to mention a matter I have already mentioned in the other classrooms. I mention it not because I suspect any girl here of a dishonourable act, but because it forms a mystery I feel it my duty to try to clear up."

She paused, her eyes travelling from face to face gravely, uneasily, it seemed.

"What on earth is coming, Olive?" Winnie Norris, who sat next to the signalman's daughter, whispered. "Has someone stolen the family plate, her pet Pekinese, or—"

Miss Symes continued speaking.

"When I left this classroom, I went to my study to complete some work upon the papers connected with the Sir John Howard scholarship," she said. "I found that one of the papers—one of the scholarship papers, containing questions which will form part of the examination—was missing from my desk. Does any girl present know anything of the missing paper?"

There was a dead, tense silence. Then, Sybil Duke turned in her seat and flashed a glance full of suspicion at Olive Walters. Olive, realising its significance, as she had admittedly gone to the mistress's desk, started and drew a sharp horrified breath. Sybil suspected her, she thought, of purloining the paper! Would others share her suspicion?

If Miss Symes saw Sybil's action and Olive's change of expression, she paid no heed.

"Very good," she said quietly. "I scarcely expected that any of you would know anything about the paper. Just before I left my study to seek my luncheon, I tore up several sheets of paper upon which I had been scribbling certain notes. I can only conclude that inadvertently I destroyed the scholarship paper at the same time, though, as I burnt the papers I tore up, I could not be sure. Let your lesson—ahem!—continue, Miss Crawford. I am sorry it was necessary for me to interrupt you."

Olive Walters was glad when the bell for dismissal was rung, much as she loved, as a rule, to sing. Sybil Duke had whispered in the ear of Agnes Graham, and both girls had turned when Miss Crawford's eyes were not upon them and regarded Olive with bitter scorn.

Olive returned their looks unflinchingly, knowing that she was not guilty of the thing of which they suspected, or pretended to suspect her. But an icy hand seemed to be clutching at her heart. Could anything be more unfortunate than her having been to Miss Symes' desk, low that this wretched paper was missing? Instinctively she knew that these girls, who were her enemies, would suggest to others that she had misappropriated the examination paper and bring down upon her renewed contempt and mental torture.

Being in the front row, Sybil Duke and Agnes Graham were in the quadrangle before Olive and Winnie Norris. When Olive and her friend emerged, they found Sybil and Agnes Graham with a ring of other girls about them, and Sybil flung up her hand and pointed scornfully at the ex-signalman's daughter.

"There she is, girls! There's the thief and cheat!" she cried. "She ought to be expelled from the school, and she would

be, if Squibs were able to see a yard before her nose!"

If Olive had been pale before, she was doubly so now. She took a step backwards, and Winnie, seeing the indignant tears that had welled into her friend's eyes, faced Sybil almost fiercely.

"Will you explain what you mean, Sybil Duke?" she asked hotly.

"I will—if you are as slow-witted as Squibs and need an explanation," the works-owner's daughter flashed. "Though it ought to be obvious to anyone with intelligence. She stole the paper of questions when she went to Miss Symes' study for the glasses!" she cried, pointing again at Olive. "She stole it, so that she can gain an unfair advantage over the other girls who are in for the scholarship, by reading up the subjects to be dealt with by the examiners! Oh, you contemptible fraud! I wonder that you have the audacity to look any of your fellow competitors in the face, and—"

"It is untrue! I did not take the paper!" Olive cried, fighting with her tears. "It is a wicked thing of which to accuse me, Sybil Duke! You know in your heart that I did not steal it."

"Do I? I know that you did take it," Sybil Duke sneered. "If you win the scholarship, you ought to be disqualified and—"

"Stop!" Winnie Norris commanded, her face angry and flushed. "I, for one, think Squibs accidentally tore up the paper, as she herself thought possible. If you dare to repeat your accusations, Sybil Duke, I will go to Miss Syme and tell her of the things you are saying. You can call me a sneak afterwards, if you like, but I'll not hear my friend's name blackened by you like this."

Sybil shrugged her shoulders and moved away. She was quite content, for she knew that she had firmly planted the canker of suspicion in the minds of the other girls who had heard her, and that whispers of the mean thing Olive was supposed to have done would quickly travel over the whole school.

The schoolfellows who had been her listeners dispersed, but their expressions were hostile and scornful, and poor Olive turned, with a sob, to Winnie.

"You—you do not think I—I took it, Winnie?" she faltered brokenly.

"No, dear—I know you too well! I would never believe such a thing of you in this world!" Winnie declared, still indignant. "Take no notice of what the others say or think—it's not worth while. Because she dislikes you, Sybil Duke means to hurt you at every opportunity. That is plain."

But Olive shook her head miserably, the tears trembling upon her long lashes.

"I cannot help taking notice, Winnie," she said, choking. "Oh, I am so wretched! They all hate and shun me! I haven't a friend here, save for yourself, amongst the girls! I think I shall withdraw from the scholarship and leave the school."

"Olive, darling, that is the last thing you must do!" Winnie cried. "I would never believe you took the silly old paper. But—oh, well, don't you see?—to the others, it would look as though you were afraid and had run away. It would look like guilt, dear."

Olive was silent for a moment, struggling with her tears. Then, she flung her head up sharply, and, though they still glistened moistly, her violet eyes were resolute.

"You are right, Winnie," she said quietly. "To leave St. Mildred's and forgo my chance in the scholarship

would be cowardly. I will remain and face it all out—to the bitter end!"

In spite of this plucky determination to stay on at St. Mildred's, Olive Walters looked unusually pale and dejected as, at just before seven that evening, she waited at the foot of the stone staircase in the tenement building for her new friend, Simple Sam.

She set her lips firmly as she heard the uncertain footfalls of old Sam upon one of the upper flights of stairs.

When he appeared, with his portable instrument upon his back, old Sam's pleasant face was wreathed in a smile.

"I have good news, missy," he said, as he came down. "The medicine has done Paddy a wonderful amount of good, and he is almost well again."

"Oh, I am so glad!" cried Olive.

"Where to this evening, missy?" Simple Sam asked.

Olive thought for a moment.

"To the Theatre Royal, in Grey Street, I think. We did well there the first night we went out together, Sam," she said; and she little dreamed of the cruel trick Fate was playing her when it caused her to choose that particular theatre for their entertainment.

When they reached Grey Street and the vicinity of the Theatre Royal they found an even larger crowd queued up for admittance than on their first visit there, and, provided Olive's singing was received as well as had previously been the case, quite a miniature Eldorado was promised.

The broken-down musician stood his little harmonium on the kerb, placed his camp-stool before it, and struck the opening bars of Olive's favourite, "The Song That Reached My Heart."

There were those who glanced at the pair with contemptuous amusement at first, but when Olive began to sing the expressions of these people speedily changed, and they listened to her sweet voice with increasing admiration and enjoyment.

The song finished, Olive was clapped heartily, and she sang again, not for the moment noticing a closed motor-car which had pulled up in the kerb abreast of the entrance to the stalls.

Olive had her back towards it, or she would have seen those who had been its occupants emerging—a middle-aged lady and a girl, both wearing expensive furs over evening attire.

"Oh, mamma, doesn't that girl sing splendidly!" the younger of the two said. "Do wait whilst I give her a shilling."

Olive felt a hand touch her arm and turned. Then she heartily wished that the earth could yawn at her feet and engulf her. For, still holding out her hand, in which was a silver coin, but staring now in incredulous amazement, there stood before her the last person in existence she had wished to know of her venture—Sybil Duke.

*(Sybil Duke—the very last person Olive could have wished to have seen her here! How will Sybil act now towards the girl she has made her enemy? Don't miss next week's instalment on any account, and persuade all your friends to read "The Signalman's Daughter!")*

# A SAFE PLAN

Do not take too much for granted in the matter of health. Do not think that because you have not had any serious illness and because little disorders and complaints which you have experienced have disappeared without any special treatment or attention, therefore you can safely ignore all symptoms of stomach and bowel trouble.

It may easily happen, that the neglect to deal with some apparently slight case of indigestion or constipation may result in a serious decline in health and energy.

You will find it a far safer plan to take a little reliable medicine whenever you feel at all out of sorts. Thus, an occasional dose of Beecham's Pills will enable you quickly to throw off any disagreeable and threatening ailments and to maintain a high standard of health.

# BEECHAM'S PILLS

**Worth a Guinea a Box.**