

"MABEL LYNN'S MASTERSTROKE!"

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of the Girls of Cliff House School, featuring MABEL LYNN.

No. 159. Vol. 7.

Week Ending May 23th, 1922.

The School Friend

2^d



Given Free

THE RIVAL IMPERSONATORS!

(A unique incident in the magnificent long complete story, "Mabel Lynn's Masterstroke!" contained in this issue.)



COLOURED ART CARD.

No. 4.—Mabel Lynn.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

The Special "Mabel Lynn" Number of "The Cliff House Weekly," and TWO Fine Enthralling Serials.

THIS WEEK'S ISSUE OF OUR COMPANION PAPER contains:

"THE GIRLS THEY COULD NOT EXPEL!"

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of the Girls of Morcove School.

"LOST IN THE PACIFIC!"

A Thrilling Adventure Serial.

"THE GIRL REPORTER!"

A Splendid Serial, featuring Grace Lindsay, Newspaper Reporter, and Girl-Guide.

"THE THIEF OF THE CIRCUS!"

One of an Enthralling Series of Circus Tales.

The Schoolgirl's Own



NOW ON SALE!

NEEDLEWORK, GIRL-GUIDE, AND COOKERY NOTES.

Fresh Clear Skin and Complexion

Every day, especially after washing, before going out, and on retiring at night, rub in a little Icilma Cream. No other cream gives such a feeling of daintiness and refreshing cleanliness.

Icilma Cream is a "complete beauty treatment" in itself, because it contains the wonderful Icilma Water.

Icilma Cream

Price 1/3; large pot, 2/-, everywhere. Flesh-tinted Cream, 1/9 per pot. Icilmia Bouquet Face Powder (two tins - Naturelle and Creme), new popular size, 1/3; large size, 2/6 per box.

Use it daily and look your best



Icilma Face Powder

Icilma Bouquet Face Powder, the fascinating silk-sifted face powder—supreme for every purpose for which toilet powder is used— is now sold in a popular size at 1/3 per box.

New popular size, 1/3.

"MARVEL" Lace Assortment Box.

NOTTINGHAM High-class Lace, direct from the Manufacturer, 2/6 to 20/- per box, carriage paid. All guaranteed perfect and supplied in attractive boxes. Patterns on application, starting price of box required. Cash with order.—ERNEST WILKINS, 6, Birkin Avenue, NOTTINGHAM.

£1 WILL BUY YOU THE FINEST BARGAIN PARCEL of Silk Jumper, Camisole, Hosiery, etc. List Free of lovely Wearing Apparel.—H. H. CLEGG (Dept. M15), 96, High Street, MANCHESTER.

CUT THIS OUT

"School Friend." PEN COUPON. Value 2d.

Send 13 of these coupons with only 2/9 direct to the Fleet Pen Co., 119, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4. You will receive by return a Splendid British Made 14-ct. Gold Nibbed Fleet Fountain Pen, value 10/6 (Fine, Medium, or Broad Nib). If only 1 coupon is sent, the price is 4/9, 2d. being allowed for each extra coupon up to 12. (Pocket Clip, 4d. extra.) This great offer is made to introduce the famous Fleet Pen to the SCHOOL FRIEND readers. Satisfaction guaranteed or cash returned. Foreign post extra.

Lever Self-Filling Model, with Safety Cap, 2/- extra.

WAVY HAIR.



GIRLS! Why have straight, lank, unattractive hair, when IN A FEW MINUTES by means of "CURLENE" it can be transformed into a radiant mass of RIPPLING CURLS. The effect of each application lasts for some days and after a short course of treatment the hair develops a tendency to WAVE NATURALLY. About one month's trial supply sent, with GUARANTEE, for 1/9.

THE CURLENE CO. (Desk 36), 37 & 38, Strand, London, W.C.2.

LOVELY LEATHER, ALL COLOURS, 11d. sq. ft. MAKE OWN GLOVES, HATS, DOROTHY BAGS, and save money. Send 2d. stamp full set patterns.—CATT, Leather Merchant, NORTHAMPTON.

STOP STAMMERING. CURE YOURSELF AS I DID. Particulars Free.—FRANK A. HUGHES, 7, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, W.C.1.

OUR FINE NEW SCHOOL AND MYSTERY SERIAL.



By
IDA MELBOURNE.

CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

DOLORES KALENZI, a dark-eyed, olive-complexioned, and very attractive Eastern girl, who, by the orders of her aunt, is forbidden the friendship of

KITTY CRICHTON, PEARL HARDY & CO., the upright and light-hearted Fourth-Formers at Limmershaw High School.

YELMA KALENZI, the aunt of Dolores, who is really not at all an unkindly woman, but is under the strict orders of Dolores' uncle.

None of the happy freedom of the Limmershaw High School girls was allowed Dolores Kalenzi. Twice a day, at the finish of her lessons, her aunt called at the school to take her home, and on account of this the Eastern girl naturally became an object of ridicule amongst most of the High School girls. She was there to study—nothing more, said her aunt, and she was not to make friends with Kitty Crichton.

Later, a mysterious chalked sign was noticed both by the Eastern people and by the Limmershaw girls on a certain tree in the woods. It caused Dolores' aunt great alarm, and she kept the Eastern schoolgirl in even closer captivity. Jane Prestwich, a mean, prying sort of girl, made herself very friendly with Dolores, and, as the aunt would allow none of her niece's friends in the house, it was arranged that Jane should call disguised as a mistress. The "mistress" arrived, the aunt ushered her into Dolores' room, and then the Eastern schoolgirl received a great shock. The disguised caller was not Jane Prestwich!

(Read on from here.)

The Impostor!

"NOT Jane!"
Yelma Kalenzi's repetition of Dolores' startled statement was made slowly, but with much force.

The stranger, alarmed, made a step forward, then backwards. Had she been witness she might have remembered the proverbial failure that follows hesitation.

Even though Yelma Kalenzi did not yet understand fully the true state of the circumstances, she was nevertheless aware that something was very much wrong.

She caught the "schoolmistress" by the arm, and wheeled her around so that they stood face to face.

Yelma's hand swept up, and Dolores watched in agitation, to see the hat and wig snatched from the impersonator's head.

"Ah!"
Yelma Kalenzi's face whitened, and for the fraction of a second her grasp on the woman's arm loosened. Just that infinitesimal space of time was sufficient for the impostor to secure freedom.

She tore her arm from Yelma, and dashed to the window. Dolores inter-

posed, but a lean, strong hand sent her staggering back.

When she had recovered her balance it was too late.

Her aunt was by the window, and Dolores, looking over her shoulder, saw the woman rolling over on the ground of a garden bed.

"Chileen! Chi-leen!" her aunt called frantically.

The dusky servant ran forward. The woman, sighting him, scrambled up and ducked under his thin arm.

In a minute she was hurrying to the gates, her skirts flying around her as she kicked up the hem.

Chileen was in pursuit. But he gave up the chase as its hopelessness dawned upon his none too nimble brain.

Yelma Kalenzi drew back from the window, and faced her niece.

"That woman!" she exclaimed tersely. "Where has she come from? Her name?"

She spoke imperatively, but Dolores could not reply.

"She was no schoolmistress!" went on Yelma fiercely.

"I—I know. I didn't expect her, aunt. I didn't—I—I—"

Dolores was about to say that she had never seen the woman before, when quite

suddenly into her mind came the memory of where she had seen that face before.

But she did not voice her thoughts, for she recognised the woman as the match-seller—the seller of the matchbox that had contained the mystic sign of circle and triangle.

Perhaps Yelma Kalenzi saw that hesitation, for she frowned heavily.

"You are keeping something from me, Dolores. What is it? This schoolmistress—who is she? Is there really such a mistress at the school?"

"No, aunt," Dolores answered huskily. "No—"

"There is not? Ah! Then why did you allow me to suppose that there was such a person?"

For a moment Dolores hesitated, her face slightly flushed at the thought of the deception in which she had taken part.

"It—it was a girl from the school, coming to see me."

"A girl? That was no girl. The truth, Dolores!"

"No, no! There has been some mistake—some accident. A girl planned to come disguised as a mistress. Somehow this woman replaced her; how, I do not know."

"Is that the truth? It was not with this woman you arranged the scandalous deception?"

"No."

Yelma Kalenzi's eyes were burning, and her lips were set in a thin, tight line. Dolores quailed before that angry glance, made more fearful by knowledge of her guilt in allowing the deception to proceed.

"Very well," said her aunt curly. "There is nothing for it but that you shall be locked in this room, save during school-time. You cannot be trusted!"

"But, aunt—"

Even as Dolores stepped forward with arms outstretched the door slammed to and the key grated in the lock.

She stood impotent and forlorn, her arms still pleading. As she turned back to the window, her arms fell limply to her sides.

A prisoner again! And Jane Prestwich's cunning had placed her in a position more difficult than before. What was she to do now? What was there she could do but remain in this room, her world for the time to come?

Back to the window she went, and looked down the winding lane whence the woman of mystery had gone.

Now that the incident was temporarily closed, Dolores wondered anxiously the reason for that impersonation.

It was not some haphazard trick. But for her aunt it might have succeeded in its purpose, whatever the purpose might be.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 159.



"Slippery Stokes," read Pearl Hardy, from the light of the torch. "Seventeen hundred and seventy-four." The arrow pointed straight ahead, and the party forged on.

Why did that woman give the mysterious sign and then try to break into the house? It must be for a serious reason, and the sign must mean something.

Dolores walked back to her bed. Now she could hear her aunt downstairs moving about. Dolores' brow was heavy, and lined with worry. The mystery of this house seemed beyond discovery.

At first she had loved it—before she had gone to the school and seen other girls free. She had read books, and been allowed to wander about in the fields, but always with her aunt or Chileen near.

Then she had not minded it so much. The books had interested her, arrested and held captive her imagination. But now her thoughts were expanding.

Things which before she had accepted as being quite natural now seemed strange.

The house—never before had that seemed a place of mystery. Always it had impressed her with its antiquity, its picturesqueness; but now the mental glorification seemed strangely out of keeping with the present representation of the house as a prison.

She rested her chin on her hands, and looked out through the open windows, past the blue curtains to the distant purple line of hills that became more misty with each passing minute.

How strangely quiet it seemed! She rose almost reverently and crossed to the windows, holding the blue curtains, through which the waning sun shone softly in a peaceful purple mist.

She leaned out upon the balcony, drinking in the evening air, watching the birds flying homewards, and the drifting clouds.

Away to the left a ribbon of silver, flecked with gold, showed the not far distant coastline whence on quiet nights the wind brought sounds of lashing waves upon the rockbound coast.

Only once had she been to the sea, when by her special request she had been taken there by Aunt Yelma and Chileen.

But although Chileen had liked the water, her aunt had been afraid.

There was no repetition of that splendid day. And now, seeing that silver ribbon, Dolores longed for the sound of beating waves upon the rocks.

More and more complete was her imprisonment, and the hardship of it pressed upon her.

Not if she wished ever so could she go to the sea, for her aunt would not take her, and Chileen was never allowed from the house alone.

Sometimes the girls from the school went, she thought wistfully. Kitty and Pearl—they saw the sea often. They had spoken of their outings with enthusiasm.

If only she could go with them! If only she could be care-free!

She walked up and down the room, her movements almost clockwork in their precision.

But she stopped in her pacing as she heard footsteps on the gravel without. They were hurried footsteps, and she hurried to the balcony.

Leaning over she saw the figure of a school-girl. And one glance sufficed to tell her that it was Jane Prestwich.

"Jane," she called impetuously. The girl stopped and looked up. She waved her hand and came running back.

"Dolores," she panted. "Oh—has a woman come—as—as—me—I mean—as a mistress?"

The girl's words, spoken breathlessly, were only just audible. Dolores nodded.

"Yes—but she went—why? What happened?"

The voices had been heard by other ears, and now the large main door was flung open.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 159.

Chileen appeared with Aunt Yelma in close attendance. At sight of them crossing the intervening space Dolores halted in her reply.

"Girl! Girl! What do you want?" exclaimed the angry voice of Yelma Kalenzi.

Jane Prestwich turned, still slightly out of breath.

"I—I have come to warn you," she said.

"To warn us? Of what, pray?"

There was a traceable alarm in Aunt Yelma's face; and Dolores, noticing it, wondered why.

"Yes, yes. I—I was coming here—disguised as a schoolmistress—and—I was set upon—gagged and bound by two people. One was an old woman. She—she came here in the disguise I intended to use."

"She has been here," Aunt Yelma answered. "Who was she?"

The question was eager, and Jane hesitated before replying. Dolores, above, listened anxiously for the answer.

"No; I do not know her name. But I have seen her before. She is a beggar—sells matches. I—I saw her chalking on this wall."

"Chalking on this wall. What—what did she chalk?"

Yelma Kalenzi, as she asked that question, seemed to be leaning forward on her toes as though she were preparing to spring forward, tiger-wise.

"A circle—and a triangle!"

Had she suddenly hurled a bomb at her questioner Jane Prestwich could not have caused more alarm or surprise.

Aunt Yelma tried to reply, then looked at Chileen.

"Thank you," she said curtly to Jane when she had recovered her voice. "It was foolish of you to entertain the deception. I hope you realise your folly."

She turned on her heel, and Jane stared after her. Nor was Dolores any less amazed, although the news that this woman was one of the sign-makers was not news to her.

Jane looked up, but she did not speak. She turned on her heel and walked quickly away.

Dolores watched her until her rather thin figure disappeared beyond the hedge-rows.

Then all was quiet save for the banging of a door within the house. Only an occasional twitter came from the birds in the trees, only a gentle breeze fanned the leafy branches.

Then, as the rose-tinted clouds crept over the hill-line, changing anon to gold and purple, Dolores went wistfully, sadly back to her bed, and lay there while the gentle twilight wrapped the room in increasing darkness.

Pearl's Proposition!

"I TELL you it's a fact!"

Pearl Hardy spoke with conviction, and the expression on her face obviated the necessity to look at the visages of her audience; evidently they were incredulous.

"But smugglers don't exist to-day," said Kitty with a tolerant smile.

Pearl shrugged her shoulders.

"All right," she said rather crossly. "Of course, you know best. But I tell you I've seen it in a book. I didn't say they did exist to-day—but the fact remains that their caves do."

There was a faint chuckle from the back of the crowd, and Pearl went rather red in the face.

"I jolly well wish I hadn't told you," she sniffed. "Disbelieving duffers. I bought this funny old book from a second-hand book-shop. A queer old book it was, and several of the pages

were stuck together. If I hadn't have read it I might not have noticed the fact."

She paused, and her hearers pressed nearer. Some were still smiling, which seemed to enrage Pearl; but others, with more imagination and romance in their make-up, listened hopefully.

It was just before morning lessons were due to begin and Dolores had joined the fringe of the crowd.

Like others just near her, she wondered what was happening. But Pearl spoke clearly and with decided emphasis, and Dolores was soon "put wise."

"I turned over a page and found it didn't run on. Then I looked at the number" went on Pearl—"two page numbers were missing—then—"

"Then you woke up" suggested someone.

There was a slight laugh, but Pearl was above "the common herd" just then.

"Then I noticed that that particular page was extra thick," she resumed. "There were two stuck together. I could just part the stuck pages—and what do you think I found between them?"

Pearl Hardy looked round with triumphant challenging interrogation.

Kitty shook her head and the tame humorist winked.

"A treasure chest full of diamonds?" she asked. "Or an old Spanish galleon."

Pearl did not deign to reply and she looked scornfully—as well she might—at those who laughed.

"I found this plan," she said dramatically. And from amongst her books she took an old stained sheet of paper that had been patched together at the back with stamp-paper.

"Well, well," said the humorist. "Complete with stamp-paper—in seventeen hundred and something?"

"Will you be quiet?" snapped Pearl. "You needn't think that your being funny—at least no funnier than your unusual features make you appear. I didn't find the chart in a piece. I found bits between different pages—and then pieced it together."

At that there was a silence, and the crowd, obviously fearful of expressing either doubt or acclamation, said nothing.

It was difficult to suppose that Pearl had made up the story, and if she hadn't—

Only a small amount of imagination and of romantic anticipation was required to tell them what to expect.

"A treasure chart" breathed Dolores from the back of the crowd.

Several girls craned their head, but Pearl Hardy only nodded. She had been waiting for someone to make the suggestion.

"Exactly—it will be a treasure—for it tells where the smuggling Slippery Stokes stored the contraband stuff to evade the customs officers."

"My word!" There was a buzz of excitement now, and Dolores managed to get near to the speaker.

"May I see it?" she asked eagerly.

Pearl, only too glad at having an appreciative audience, nodded airily.

Dolores took the paper and scrutinised it.

The paper smelt musty as old books do, and it was flecked with light brown spots of age. The ink-marks were brown and, in places, indistinct.

At the bottom was the scrawled name of Slippery Stokes, the peculiarity of the signature being akin to that of the man.

"A smuggler's cave! Oh, how exciting!" murmured Dolores, her eyes shining. "And near here; it says Lincaup—that is a small fishing village

near here. He gives the bearings, too, so—

"I know," said Pearl. "I have been looking up all the particulars. I don't suppose anyone has ever discovered the things. So what do you say to a search?"

"A search?"
The words seemed a chorus, and Pearl, standing proudly in the centre of the group, nodded.

"We can find the smuggler's cave and the—the stuff—it'll be worth something."

"After all that time!" said someone more sceptical than Pearl.

"Well, it's mostly wine, I suppose, and perhaps precious stones and—and all sorts of things!"

Pearl Hardy's eyes were sparkling with excitement, an excitement with which she quickly infected the others.

Kitty Crichton, to whom they now were looking, nodded her head quickly.

"There might be something in it," she said. "And it's not a bad way of spending an afternoon. Hands up those who can swim. Only swimmers allowed."

There were a few complaining voices, but those who held their hands aloft seemed well pleased.

Dolores' look of excitement faded away, and she became quite depressed.

"Good!" said Kitty. "Hallo, Dolores, don't you swim?"

Dolores shook her head.

"I've never had the chance," she said.

"I've only been to the sea once."

"Only been to the sea once, and you live so near!" ejaculated half a dozen voices.

"Surely not!" exclaimed Kitty. "You know the water that comes very near to you is the sea. You might not realise it unless you went near to it, for there's a high cliff."

"Near?" Dolores queried slowly. "I have seen the sea far away to the left."

"Oh, it's nearer than that. A mile from your house—not more," said Kitty.

"It may be less. But the spot just there is treacherous."

"Yes, only swimmers allowed," added Pearl, who did not want the main subject to be forgotten. "It's safe enough to swim really, but rowing isn't very great."

They would have made further arrangements then, but the bell for the commencement of classes rang, and there was a hurrying to the School House.

But Dolores did not move. She watched the others as they ran off, and in her eyes was the pain of regret—regret that she could not be one of them.

She could not swim! And they only wanted swimmers. Yet, even could she swim, would her aunt let her go? It was not probable.

Bitterly she realised how cramped in by rules and regulations she was. Even in such a trip as this she would not be allowed to take part.

And her fertile imagination had pictured those old pirate days, with boats landing softly in the setting sun, the smugglers' eyes and ears ready for alarm of the approaching arresting hand of the customs' officers.

She could see them in their waders and old woollen caps, their skin browned and hardened by their rough life. One cask after another taken out of detection's way across the moist beach, the carrier stumbling against small jutting rocks, his heavy boots cruching into hard footprints the damp sand that the ebbing tide had left.

Vividly she could realise their fear! And then she seemed to see them departing, their crime committed, or nearly so. They had passed the half-way line.

Their cargo had been left; they had made their plan of its position, and hidden the plan.

And then—then there had been discovery. The gang had been split up. Slippery Stokes had gone with the rest, where she knew not.

But the contraband lay in the cave, unheeded, unknown, unsuspected. There it lay to-day, with a century's flotsam around it.

Now it was going to be discovered and brought to light—the casks that had been carried to the cave and rolled, booming, through it to the hiding-place by smuggling hands a hundred years ago.

And she was not to be there! How petty now the restriction seemed—not to be allowed out of the house, not to be allowed friends and companions.

She sighed heavily, and her inattention brought the Form-mistress' wrath upon her.

A hundred lines!

Bitterly she thought that that would at least be something to do during imprisonment, while the others were out undertaking the fascinating task of finding the smugglers' hidden spoil!

Now Pearl and her followers had gone down the lane, and Dolores waited for her aunt and Chileen.

She had not long to wait, for now she saw them just in sight. She hesitated, then hurried forward. In her face there was the light of hope as she greeted her aunt.

"Aunt," she exclaimed eagerly, "you saw those girls. They are going exploring. Can I go with them?"

"With them?" her aunt frowned.

"Certainly not! I have told you times enough. You must come home. Chileen, take her arm."

But to that indignity Dolores would not submit. She tore her arm free, although she made no attempt to breakaway. The hopelessness of trying to do that was apparent to her. She had been ordered to come home, and she must obey. To run away would only make the guard over her still more strict.

And it was too strict now to please her!

Her eyes were wistful, though, as she thought of the sea and the broken coast-



Kitty Crichton flashed her torch round the cave, and the attention of them all was caught by an iron-bound box in the far corner.

The Explorers!

"ALL ready?"

Pearl Hardy looked round at the group of girls just outside the school.

"Ay, ay, sir!" grinned the humorist.

They were a merry crowd, and obviously intent upon enjoying themselves that afternoon.

Each carried a haversack, that was either their own or borrowed, and the haversack had been thoughtfully provided with sandwiches. Kitty had suggested that precaution, for, as she explained, there was the possibility of them getting stranded on the rocks, high and dry, but foodless.

It was not a cheering or optimistic thought, but Kitty deemed prevention better than cure. Kitty, in addition to the haversack, carried a coil of stout rope.

They marched off at last, and left one girl looking after them wistfully.

More than ever Dolores wished to go; but now there was not the remotest chance.

She had finished writing her imposition, and as yet had had no lunch.

She had waited to watch them set out for their afternoon of search, thus doubling the hardship of her imprisonment.

line; and to-day of all days—to-day, with the sun strong and bright! An ideal day.

But there was to be no outing for her, as she was now assured.

Pearl & Co. were already out of sight, for, swinging happily along, they covered the ground quickly.

"What a day!" murmured Pearl appreciatively. "It will be a rag, won't it?"

"Yes, if we find anything," smiled Kitty. "I don't say that the chart is wrong. But someone else may have found it a hundred years ago—the treasure I mean. The customs people may have found it when they rounded up some smugglers."

"Look here, Kitty," said Pearl, shaking her fist in mock anger, "you keep your pessimism quiet; this isn't a joke. There's a treasure—or something we're going to find. At any rate, it will be rather fine to discover an unknown smuggler's cave."

"But we do know the smuggler, Slippery Sam—I mean, Stokes," said someone who was not particularly bright.

"Duffer! I mean the cave is not known—not the smuggler. Some of the smugglers' caves round here are known, but this one isn't. At least, there isn't."

one at the place marked on this map—not that I have heard of. And mother hasn't heard of one. She has lived in the place for years."

"Oh, I am not saying there's no such place," said Kitty pacifically.

She had no intention of spoiling the harmony of the party; and, after all, cave or no cave, it would be a pleasant expedition.

When they had gone a mile or so, a map was brought forth—a local map—an Ordnance survey that gave the smallest details.

"There is a place, sure enough!" said Kitty. "It's a real part of this coast all right. No doubt about that. My word, I believe it's the piece of sea we were talking about this morning. Yes, it is the part near to Dolores' house."

"About a mile away from the house—yes, that's the part," agreed Pearl, pointing over her map. "Well, we can get there all right. Let's get a move on. We'll have to hire a boat and row round, of course—a couple of boats."

So they walked on to the small village that lay by the sea, and there, from an agreeable old man, they hired two rowing-boats.

"Row yourselves, miss?" he asked Pearl.

"Yes, rather!"

And they crowded into the two dinghies.

Pearl took charge of one boat, and Kitty the other. Jane Prestwich was in the party, and decided to act as coxswain and captain while Pearl stroked.

They rowed steadily, always keeping level with the shore. But they had not to row very far before they sighted the cove where the cave was marked on the sketchy map.

"My word! Looks a cavey sort of place," murmured Pearl, as she paused a moment in her rowing to glance over her shoulder. "But I can't see the cave. How are we going to get in on the shore? It looks mighty rocky!"

She called out the question to Kitty in the following boat, and Kitty signalled to her.

There was little danger in rowing ahead, for in that spot the water was not remarkably deep.

Kitty was the first to negotiate a boat through, and as she landed she held up an oar in triumph.

Her party was now pulling the boat on to the small strip of beach, and, making use of a rock, they wedged it in tightly, placing the painter's end under a heavy rock, which four of them had difficulty in lifting.

"That doesn't stand much chance of drifting out," said Kitty. "Now, forward, my lasses, and scale these mighty cliffs!"

She forged ahead, and commenced scrambling up the rocky side.

It was not remarkably difficult, and the girls were in splendid condition, and athletes all of them.

One after the other they swarmed up, and Kitty was soon on a quite wide ledge.

She cautioned the others to wait while she went carefully along, searching.

The others waited patiently, and presently Pearl followed her along.

But the cave, if it was there, was certainly not a large roomy affair. It was one that had to be searched for.

Kitty's first examination of the rock-sides had been casual, but now she went over them very carefully.

Still, however, there was no sign of a cave of any description, large or small, and she began to think that somewhere the plan erred, unless the formation of the rocks had in any way altered.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 159.

"I'll search the other side," she said.

"It may be there."

"No good!" called Pearl. "It won't be there. The map shows it this side of the curved-in bit. Search again!"

Inch by inch they went along the rock, and Pearl glanced from time to time at her companion, wondering if she had found anything.

She heard a "Coo!" almost the second after she had turned her head away, and, looking again, she saw Kitty waving excitedly.

Slowly Pearl went along the ledge until she was near her friend.

"Look!" exclaimed Kitty excitedly.

"Up there!"

Pearl stared in the direction her leader's finger pointed. But she could see no sign of a cave.

"Blessed if I can see anything!" she exclaimed. "Where? There's no cave there—"

"Not a big round gap," smiled Kitty. "But see those cracks—see how even they are! That's a door, I should say!"

"Phew! But they could never have got barrels up there."

"Not at high tide—or with ladders, and a rope to pull from above?"

"My hat! Yes! Here, girls!"

Pearl waved excitedly, but Kitty caught her arm.

"Wait a bit!" said the captain of the Fourth cautiously. "Before we get this ledge crowded, let's try to reach the place. No sense in bringing them all up here for nothing."

So Kitty, taking careful footholds, climbed higher, until she could touch the door.

She leaned upon it, and then slipped—for the door had given way suddenly, pivoting in the centre.

Pearl gave a sigh of relief as she saw that her leader was not injured or in danger.

Kitty was now through the door. She swung it so that it stood properly open, at right angles to the main rock. The rock of which it was composed was thin, and chipped down to not more than two-inch width.

At sight of that mysterious entrance there was a rush of the followers, and soon the ledge, from a distance, must have looked like a black-birded rock.

One after the other they entered the mysterious cave. And one after another they stopped as the musty scent assailed their nostrils.

"A light," said Pearl quickly. But already ahead she saw the bright gleam of Kitty's electric lamp.

Each girl, by instruction, had provided herself with an electric torch, and Pearl, for once properly prepared, had two reefs and two spare bulbs.

To have been left in the dark would be unpleasant.

The inside of the cave was rough-hewn and green. Pearl found that her hand came away moist from the side of the passage.

Their footsteps rang, and Kitty, throwing a stone, had the pleasure of hearing a bell-like sound from the cave side.

"Endless," said Kitty suddenly, as she stopped. "My goodness!"

She flashed her torch round, and, in awed silence the girls regarded the sombre walls, and realised that they were in the middle of a huge rock, with the sea below and the sky far, far above.

On ahead went the cave, to where they knew not.

All the torches were lit at once, and the whole cave was flooded with light.

Pearl examined the walls thoughtfully.

"Might be another secret door arrangement," she said, with a wise frown.

"Might have another cave leading off this. Never know."

"Yes, we can search," said someone. "No need to go farther."

But Kitty Crichton shook her head. "This is an unnaturally long cave," she said. "The way from here is bored through earth and propped up—you can see—right at the end."

Her voice echoed hollowly, and the others nodded.

They remained stationary, a silent group, until a girl behind called out.

"What's this?" she exclaimed. "Somebody's initials?"

It was the humorist, attempting to speak casually. But by the light of her torch they saw initials carved in the rock.

"Slippery Stokes," read Pearl, although they could all see the wording.

"Seventeen hundred and seventy-four."

"And an arrow," said the humorist, quite excitedly.

"Goodness! Yes, an arrow!"

The arrow pointed straight ahead, and after just a minute's hesitation, they forged on, Kitty still leading.

Yard after yard they went up the cave, until, as Kitty had predicted, they came to an end of the rock. Then there was a halt.

"This isn't a cave," said Pearl. "It— it looks like a secret passage."

"That's just precisely what it is," agreed Kitty. "Come along!"

The passage now was low, and they had to bow their heads. For miles, it seemed, they walked in the awkward position, and the atmosphere was none too pleasant.

Kitty called a halt, and they stooped low, finally sitting on the ground.

She flashed her torch ahead.

"Nearly the end!" she said quickly. "More rock ahead!"

After that short rest they went on again, and, as Kitty had said, came to rock again.

"Look!" said Pearl suddenly. "This was a crevice once, between two large rocks, and it was roofed in—see?"

And, flashing her torch, she showed the roof bridged by logs and earthed over. But the walls were of rock.

"That's so. I say, it must have been a flourishing concern!" murmured Kitty. "But in those days this part was deserted, and they may have been able to do it. There is probably a huge store-room along here—"

"One they could reach from the lane by a secret passage—from an inn, perhaps," suggested the humorist, who now was taking the exploration seriously.

"Very likely. Hallo!" exclaimed Kitty, and stopped.

She flashed her torch, now dimming rather, on a wall ahead. Pearl came to the rescue with her torch, and the wall that seemed the end of their journey was lit up brilliantly.

Kitty and Pearl ran forward together, for both had sighted the same thing—a handle, an iron ring, rusty and old, but clearly visible.

It took the combined efforts of four of them to open that door, however.

In excited silence they waited, while Kitty flashed her torch round the room; for the cave they now saw was square, well-built, and less musty than the rest of the passage.

But what caught the attention of them all was an iron-bound box in the far corner.

(What is in the iron-bound box? Have the merry chums of Limmershaw High School really hit upon a smuggler's treasure? And, meanwhile, what of Dolores? You simply must not miss next week's instalment of this exciting serial. Place a standing order for the SCHOOL FRIEND with your newagent to avoid the risk of ever being disappointed.)

Mabel Lynn's Masterstroke!



A Direct Challenge!

WELL DONE, Mabs!" Mabel Lynn smiled and bowed deeply.

It was the dress rehearsal of the play of the Fourth Form Dramatic Society and the audience consisted of quite a number of girls from all Forms at Cliff House School.

"Jolly good Mabs" said Barbara Redfern captain of the Fourth Form, and she patted her chum on the shoulder.

Mabel Lynn pressed Barbara's hand, and bowed again to the applauding audience.

But for the knowledge that it was Mabs no one in the audience could have realised the fact. For she was disguised beyond recognition. Even her voice had been altered—for in her play, which had been written by Barbara and herself, she took the part of an elderly woman.

That she had acted the part well was testified by the ringing applause of the critical audience. And in the Fourth Form portion of the hall there was tremendous excitement.

But Stella Stone, captain of the school, and therefore a person of some importance, was also highly appreciative.

Stella turned to Grace Woodfield, of the Fifth Form, and nodded her head.

"That kid will make a name for herself some day," she said. "I know that I would pay a good deal to see her—and walk a few miles, too."

"Same here," agreed Grace, with a nod. "There isn't really anyone in the school to touch Mabel—though, of course, we pretend that we could lick her in acting or anything else," she added with a smile.

"And so we could," exclaimed Flora Cann, the athlete of the Fifth Form.

Flora was keen on the honour of the Fifth, and it pained her dignity that anyone could suggest that the Fourth could prove themselves superior to the Fifth at anything, although in this case probably Flora had a shrewd suspicion that her Form captain was right.

The Fourth and Fifth were great rivals, and the Fifth did not always come off on top in their sundry conflicts. However, they made the most of matters by feigning contempt of, and lack of interest in, such combats as went against them.

Grace shook her head and rose from her seat.

The rehearsal was over and Mabel Lynn had left the stage. Most of the audience had now gathered into groups,

and Grace Woodfield found herself surrounded by members of her own Form. "I just heard you say that the acting was good," said a smooth voice at her elbow.

Grace turned and looked at the girl who had spoken. She was a girl who might easily have been taken for a Fourth Former, for she was no taller and did not look a great deal older, although the lines at the corners of her mouth spoiled what might otherwise have been a charming, girlish face. They were lines of bad temper, and the lips erred on the side of thinness.

"Well, of course," said Grace, in a tone of surprise. "It was good. Did you think it wasn't, Beryl?"

The tone of her voice betrayed no great liking for the girl, and indeed Grace had not yet found a great deal in Beryl Lamont that she could like.

"No; I do not think it was good."

The answer was hard and coldly spoken. The clearness of it caused the attention of the group to be focussed on her.

"I—I wouldn't say that it was not good," said Flora Cann. "That's not quite fair, Beryl. You're only a new girl—we know that Mabel is a good actress. The only thing I say is, that what the Fourth can do we can do."

Beryl Lamont smiled loftily. "It is deplorable," she said sarcastically, "that I am only a new girl, as you term it. But I had some experience before I came here. I did not start life when I entered Cliff House last week. It may interest you to know that I have done a great deal of acting myself."

She smiled superciliously, and surveyed the others to see what effect her loudly-spoken words had had.

Other girls had now joined the group to learn what had caused the emphatically worded retort.

"What's that got to do with it?" asked Clara Trevlyn, of the Fourth, with pert indignation.

"To do with it?" laughed Beryl unpleasantly amidst silence. "Well, quite a great deal. I have been on the real stage—my mother was an actress. I know something about acting, and what may appeal to your schoolgirlish tastes does not appeal to me."

"Bow wow!" said Clara rather rudely.

Clara was feeling rather annoyed that this "upstart," as she termed her, should take upon herself to condemn Mabel Lynn's acting.

Beryl shrugged her shoulders. "That is neither intelligent nor polite," she remarked. "I was not addressing you, children. Naturally you

look upon your Form companion as very clever—she shines above you, and you conceitedly think that, because she acts better than you, she must be marvellous. She could hardly act worse."

"Oh!"

"What cheek!"

The Fourth Formers glared indignantly at the new Fifth Former, and Grace Woodfield coughed awkwardly. Things were getting beyond the stage of friendly rivalry.

"I shouldn't argue about it here, Beryl—" she began.

"Rats!" interrupted Clara Trevlyn. "She is not going to back out. Perhaps she will show us that she can do something better?"

"Perhaps I will," said Beryl lightly. "But it does not flatter me to act before a set of children. No doubt your little play will prove popular with the village audience. It will probably earn a lot of money. I am not denying that. For its purpose it is, no doubt, excellent. But when the statement is made that the acting is good, I challenge it."

She looked serenely at the girls and smiled tolerantly.

Clara Trevlyn was fairly bubbling over with rage.

"That's like you swanking Fifth Formers," she said. "You can run down what we do—but you can't do anything better yourselves—"

"We haven't run down the play," chimed in Grace Woodfield hastily. "I don't agree with Beryl!"

"I don't exactly," added Flora Cann. "Of course, we could give a better show than you, but I think Mabel can act."

"Thank you," said Phyllis Howell of the Fourth, sarcastically.

"In fact—you think she's a wonderful actress?" asked Freda Foote. "Only you can all do better, of course!"

"There's no occasion to be rude," said Grace Woodfield.

The atmosphere was electric. The Fourth-Formers were angry, and the Fifth-Formers, although annoyed with Beryl, felt themselves bound to support their own Form.

"Well, if the Fifth are so clever, perhaps they will show us how they can better Mabel's acting," said Peggy Preston. "But I don't see why we should quarrel about it. If Beryl says that she is a better actress, well, she may be right. I don't see that it matters—"

"It does matter," said Clara emphatically. "Mabel is the best actress in the school—here, Mabs!"

Mabel Lynn, having changed into her

drill-dress, came with Barbara Redfern as Clara called.

"What's the rumpus?" asked Barbara Redfern.

"Clara's got a bee in her bonnet," smiled Mabel Lynn.

"Yes, I have," retorted Clara. "This—this cheeky Fifth-Former—says that she can act better than you, Mabs."

"Does she?" asked Mabel lightly. "Perhaps she can. I shouldn't quarrel about it, Clara."

"That's all very well," said Phyllis Howell. "You're too modest, Mabs. These silly, conceited Fifth-Formers—"

"Shush!" murmured Barbara Redfern, waving her hand. "No squabbling, Clara. Let's have the facts. What is it, Grace?"

Grace Woodfield shrugged her shoulders.

"Nothing at all," she said. "Beryl, here, thinks she can act better than Mabel; Clara, who has never seen her act, says that she can't."

Barbara Redfern looked at Beryl, who was clasping her hands in an affected manner.

"Yes, that is precisely what I said and think," said Beryl airily. "Surely you are not so conceited, Mabel Glynn, or Flynn, whatever your name is, as to think that you can act?"

Mabel flushed.

"I think nothing about it," she said. "Not having seen you act, I can pass no opinion. I have done my best, and I am—er—sorry that it does not please you."

"Oh, it pleases me; it's rather amusing," sneered Beryl. "But, gracious, it's not acting. If you like, I will give you lessons. But I suppose you're too conceited for that; you think you are finished."

"I think nothing of the sort," said Mabel angrily.

Beryl laughed, and there was an angry buzz from the crowd.

"Look here, Miss Conceited" snapped Clara. "If you think you're so clever, prove it. Show us that you can act."

"My dear child," remarked Beryl. "I have acted before real actresses. I have been on the stage. My mother was a talented actress; perhaps you have not heard of Felice Licorn?"

"I have," said Mabel quickly. "She was a great actress, so my father says."

"Your father is right. Felice Licorn was the stage name of my mother. If you were less rude, I might be persuaded to give you a demonstration. I would show you what real acting is—"

"Well, of all the swanks!" exclaimed Clara Trevlyn. "If your acting is as good as your boasting, you ought to shine. But it is no good asking you to give any proof. You wouldn't believe us if we said it wasn't good—"

"And you'd be too prejudiced to say it was if it were," sneered Beryl. "No, thanks!"

"You couldn't take us in as Mabel can," said Phyllis Howell. "There you are—there's a chance to prove that you aren't boasting."

"How do you mean?" asked Beryl.

"Why, dress up as someone we all know, and see if you can take us in. That'll be proof. Mabel can do it, let's see if you can."

Beryl waved her hand.

"Dear children, that is mere mimicry, not acting."

Clara Trevlyn laughed, and most of the girls smiled.

"Put to the test," chuckled Clara, "see how she backs out? 'Pooh—pooh! That is beneath me.' Swanker!"

"Like all the Fifth," said Marcia Loftus unpleasantly. "All swank."

It was Marcia's way to turn any sort of friendly rivalry into deadly enmity, and that remark was not calculated to create good feeling.

"Don't talk nonsense!" said Grace Woodfield curtly.

"Boo!" cried Bessie Bunter shrilly; and the fat girl of the Fourth made a face at Grace Woodfield. "Sus-silly Fifth," stuttered Bessie. "Can't act for toffee. You couldn't jolly well take me in—"

Grace Woodfield made a sudden movement, and Bessie dodged away hurriedly. The Fourth-Formers were chuckling, and the Fifth frowned seriously. Really, after the way Beryl had spoken it was up to her to accept the challenge.

"You'll have to do it, Beryl," said Grace, "or admit that you have only been boasting."

"I have not been boasting!" snapped Beryl Lamont. "All the same, I don't see—"

"Swank, swank, swank—who can't act for toffee?" chanted Bessie Bunter.

"Beryl Lamont!" chorused the Fourth.

Beryl Lamont bit her lip. She had brought this on herself; but to a girl of her conceit it was not pleasant.

"Very well," she said curtly. "I'll take you all in. I'll show you that I can act! I could make myself so like that human doughnut that you'll instinctively hide your money when I get near you or—"

"Oh, really, Bub-Beryl," stammered Bessie, blinking indignantly through her glasses. "You lean broomstick, you couldn't imitate my fine figure if you tut-tut—"

"My dear kid," said Beryl. "I could disguise myself as anything on earth—"

"You couldn't disguise yourself as a credit to the school!" chuckled Freda Foote. "On the other hand, the mere addition of a tin horn would make you a gramophone complete, with one record, entitled, 'Me, by Myself!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Beryl Lamont shrugged her shoulders.

"You can laugh," she said angrily. "But she who laughs last laughs best. And now you've challenged me, I challenge your clever Mabel. See if she can take us in!"

"Right!" agreed Mabel. "It's the Fourth against the Fifth again!"

"Oh, really, Mabel," began Bessie Bunter. "I think as the best actress I ought to stand for the Fourth—"

A roar of laughter broke out.

But Bessie Bunter continued to protest that she was the best actress, although she was kind enough to admit that Mabel Lynn was "not bad."

Bessie Bunter, however, was not taken seriously, and in Study No. 4 there were lengthy discussions on the part Mabel was to play. And Bessie was not admitted.

Meanwhile, in the Fifth Form passage Beryl was being told what the Fifth Form thought of her.

"You've made us look a set of bragging asses," said Flora Cann angrily. "And you've got to pull this off. We don't want the kids laughing at us."

"Don't get excited," smiled Beryl Lamont. "I shall probably take you in as well."

She went into her study, and closed the door in their faces, and the other Fifth-Formers went off in high dudgeon.

In her study, Beryl Lamont smiled serenely, and sat down in the armchair, opposite which, on the wall, she had thoughtfully hung a mirror. Gazing into that was her chief recreation.

"Silly kid!" she said to herself. "I'll bring her down a peg—thinking she can act! Pooh!"

And she laughed. But Beryl was to find that to under estimate the enemy's ability is invariably dangerous, and always foolish. But really Beryl Lamont was not wise, and, being unwise, she had no fear of defeat.

A Daring Scheme!

"BLESSED swank!" murmured Clara Trevlyn angrily. "We must take her down a peg or two. As a matter of fact, she doesn't stand the ghost of a chance, really. I don't suppose she can act."

"I wouldn't say that," murmured Mabel Lynn. "We have never seen her act; and the fact that she boasts does not disprove anything. Her mother was a wonderful actress."

"Yes, we shall have to be wary," admitted Barbara Redfern. "Mustn't be taken in by her, or there will be jollification in the Fifth. We should never hear the end of it."

"Besides," said Marjorie Hazeldene, "if we win it'll make everyone keener than ever on the play, and the Fifth will simply have to turn up in force, even if they hadn't intended to before."

Barbara Redfern nodded.

"That's certain," she agreed. "We must take them in. And Mabs can do it, I'm quite sure."

"Hear, hear!"

There was quite a crowd in Study No. 4, the study that Barbara and Mabel shared; in fact, most of the Fourth seemed to be present. Marcia was not there, nor was Nancy Bell, and one or two others whom Barbara had thought it advisable to keep away.

"The only thing," said Mabel Lynn, "for this to be a success is that it must be a secret, really. I don't mean that I don't trust you all, but you can't pretend that it isn't me if you know it is. If you could, you would all be actresses."

"That's true," nodded Phyllis Howell. "If we know it's Mabel our actions and faces might give us away. We mustn't know."

There were murmurs of approval at that, and they all saw the wisdom in the suggestion.

"Of course, if you guess, you'll have to keep it dark, but I hope you won't guess," said Mabel Lynn. "Anyway, I think I had better keep it dark from you all. I shall want Babs to help me, but that is all."

She looked round at the girls in the study, and saw that she had their approval.

"You're right," admitted Clara Trevlyn. "We leave the honour of the Fourth to you and Babs, Mabs. I know you'll pull it off."

And the whole of the conference, saving only Babs and Mabel Lynn, left the study.

"You've got an idea, Mabs?" asked Barbara Redfern quickly.

Mabel Lynn shook her head.

"Not definitely," she said. "I'm on the track of something. But I wonder what Beryl is going to do?"

And that is what Beryl herself was wondering. The Fifth Form girl, although still confident of success, was just realising the difficulties that beset her path.

It would not be easy to disguise as someone and take in the girls.

There was Miss Bullivant, the drill mistress. Beryl knew that she could make-up as Miss Bullivant. But—and it was a big "but"—Miss Bullivant was tall, and Beryl was short.

She looked up as a tap came at the door, and smiled as Grace Woodfield entered.

"Made up your mind?" asked Grace.

"Made up my mind!" repeated Beryl, as though the other's remark puzzled her.

"Yes, about the disguising business," said Grace, rather crossly.

"Oh, that!" said Beryl. "I had forgotten all about it."

Grace Woodfield, looking at the new girl queerly, wondered whether or not that answer were true.

"There's no hurry, I suppose?" went on Beryl. "Any time will do?"

"First come, you know," said Grace, and Flora Cann, who had come with her, nodded. "We don't want Mabel Lynn scoring."

"H'm! I should like to see that happen!" laughed Beryl.

"Would you? Well, I wouldn't," retorted Grace, rather acidly. "You've made us appear a pack of fools as it is, and you're going to carry off this business to-morrow afternoon. It's a half-holiday."

"To-morrow!" drawled Beryl. "Really, I cannot be bothered. I'm reading a paper on Shakespeare's women. I haven't time."

"Then you'll have to find time!" Grace Woodfield set her jaw, and Beryl looked at her. Then she shrugged her shoulders and laughed.

"Of course, if you're going to get cross about it," she said, "I'll take them in, and you, too."

"We're going to see what sort of cut you make at it before we let you loose," said Flora Cann. "If you're going to make a hash of it, then we throw in the glove, or make you up better."

Beryl rose to her feet and yawned.

"To-morrow afternoon!" she said thoughtfully. "That's rather short notice, of course. Still, I'll do it."

"As whom?" asked Flora Cann determinedly.

But Beryl did not know, and Grace Woodfield looked at Flora and frowned.

"We shall have to be careful," she said. "Must make it someone who's out of the school at the time, you know."

They sat thoughtfully silent for a moment, and Beryl hummed a popular air.

"I've got it!" exclaimed Flora Cann suddenly. "Miss Primrose."

"Miss Primrose!"

"Yes. She'll be out of the school to-morrow afternoon. I heard her tell Miss Bland that she was going to the village. We can wait until she goes. Can you do it, Beryl?"

"Easily!" said Beryl, smiling. "You won't know which is which. And if Miss Primrose sees me she'll think I'm a mirror."

"Good biz!" chuckled Grace Woodfield. "Then it's a go! You make up as Miss Primrose. I can rake together some togs that will look like hers. She doesn't wear anything very distinctive, and the hair is easy. You're hardly full enough in the face, but you can add to that. Paste will help."

"Oh, that'll be easy!" said Beryl in her sure way. "You leave it to me. I tell you there won't be a pin's difference between us."

"Let's hope you're right," said Grace rather doubtfully. "Still our fate's in your hands. If you don't pull through, mind, after all your swank, there'll be trouble!"

But Beryl only laughed. She remained in the study for only a few minutes after they had gone; then, putting on her hat, she went down the corridor.

Although the hour was late it was not nearly dusk yet, and in daylight she crossed the quadrangle.

She made direct for the headmistress' house and fearlessly went up the path.

Miss Primrose's house and garden

were forbidden ground, and only the most intrepid girl ventured to trespass thereon. But Beryl had no fears.

She did not notice a girl bob down in the headmistress' garden, nor hear a fat groan of dismay.

"Oh mum-my!" murmured the fat voice of Bessie Bunter. "I—I thought it was Miss Prim!"

And, although not a particularly bright girl, Bessie realised that discretion here was distinctly the better part of valour. So she remained in concealment.

Miss Primrose's maid opened the door, and Beryl went inside, when the maid returned with the information that the headmistress would see her.

Bessie, crouching down, saw Miss Primrose enter the room, a window of which gave on to the garden. Bessie Bunter's fat heart thumped fearfully. At any moment now she might be seen. Beryl was talking to the headmistress.

She walked down the small pathway, and Bessie moved slightly. But now Beryl had stopped—just outside the gate.

"Hallo! Where have you been?" said the voice of Flora Cann.

"To see Miss Primrose," answered Beryl. "I fancy I've caught her every gesture now; I know all her postures and expressions. My dear girl, I shall live the part."

"Good!" said Flora. "I must say it was rather smart to go and see her. But I wonder if you'll take in the Fourth?"

"I wonder!" laughed Beryl. "Only I know how I can act."

Their voices faded away, and Bessie Bunter drew a deep breath.

"Oh, the c-cat!" she stammered, breathless, as she sneaked from the garden to the quad. "Going to dress as Miss Primrose is she? He, he, he! I'll bowl her out!"

She ran across the quadrangle as fast



BESSIE'S IMPERSONATION! "How—how dud—dare you girls laugh at your headmistress?" demanded Bessie Bunter. "Fifty lines, Grace Woodfield! I must not laugh at my head mistress—I mean, my red mistress—that is, my headmistress!"

and Miss Primrose nodded confirmation of what she said.

The fat girl of the Fourth dared not move, for Miss Primrose faced the garden.

Miss Primrose's face showed slight surprise. And no wonder. For Beryl had gone on a very small excuse. She was asking some question about a lecture Miss Primrose had given. The headmistress was replying to the girl's questions and explaining things to her.

And all the time Beryl kept her eyes fixed upon the headmistress' face.

But after a short time there was little more for her to say. She could stay no longer without making it obvious that she was making an excuse for staying.

"Thank you, Miss Primrose!" she said. "I didn't quite catch all that you said when you gave the lecture—and at first I didn't like coming."

"You may always ask my advice, Beryl," said the headmistress kindly.

She followed the Fifth Form girl from the room and opened the door for her.

"Good-night, Miss Primrose!" said Beryl.

as her small, fat legs would carry her and burst into Study No. 4.

Mabel Lynn hurriedly slammed a drawer to, and Barbara Redfern leaned back in her chair.

"Hallo, Fatima!" said Mabel. "What's the matter with you?"

Bessie Bunter blinked at her suspiciously.

"I say, Mabs," she said, "what have you put in that drawer—"

"Never you mind," said Mabel Lynn.

"If I thought you wouldn't blab, Bessie, I might tell you—"

"I—I sha'n't blab."

But Mabel Lynn shook her head. "Sorry, Bessie!" she said. "Afraid it can't be risked."

"What are you going to disguise as, Mabs?" asked Bessie breathlessly.

Mabel shook her head. "Sorry, Bessie! Only Babs is to know. Not even Clara and Marjorie know."

Bessie Bunter's face became long with disappointment. She half opened her mouth with the idea of telling them what she had heard. But she stopped in time.

Obtuse though she was at times, Bessie realised that it would not be fair to tell them what disguise the enemy was adopting. And she kept silent.

But in the dormitory that night Bessie Bunter gave vent to a sudden, unpremeditated chuckle.

"What the dickens!" ejaculated Clara Trevlyn. "Got a cough, Bessie?"

"Nunno!" answered the fat girl, with a chuckle. "You don't know what I know. I know something. But—You wait!"

"But I know what you don't know," said Clara.

"What's that?"

"That if you don't stop making that clockwork noise I'll biff you with a pillow."

But Bessie Bunter continued to chuckle, although she chuckled more judiciously. Evidently Bessie Bunter had some scheme in mind. And Bessie, for once, was keeping it to herself.

The Biter Bit!

"THERE she goes!"

Grace Woodfield made that remark.

Grace, Flora, and Beryl were in Study No. 7 on the Fifth Form passage. That study belonged to Beryl, and now it looked more like a green-room than a study.

Grease-paints were on the table, and clothes of all sorts were littered about the room.

Before the mirror stood Beryl—but a strange Beryl. From her neck downward she was a schoolgirl in drill dress; above the neck she was a middle-aged woman, her face fuller than usual, with just a faint tinge of colour, her hair nearly white. Now she was adjusting a pair of spectacles.

She came to the window as Grace spoke, and nodded as she saw the headmistress passing through the gates.

"Splendid!" she said. "Won't they be surprised to see her back again!"

"They will!" chuckled Grace. "My apologies, Beryl. You certainly look the part. Why, if I didn't know you were disguised I should think you were Miss Prim."

Beryl smiled carefully and coughed. "Girls!" she exclaimed. "Please do be careful. I will not have you litter the quadrangle with these bits of paper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Top-hole!"

"Miss Primrose to the T."

"Not bad—eh?" asked Beryl in her own voice. "I think I learnt pretty well all about her last night."

"Bessie Bunter, you utterly foolish girl!" she said, in quite an excellent imitation of Miss Primrose's voice.

"Splendid!" said Grace. "My word! Your face is topping! Now for the dress!"

The dressing was not easy, but soon Beryl was adorned in a skirt and blouse, almost the replica of Miss Primrose's own.

"In the study, with the blind down—they'll think I am the dear Head," smiled Beryl. "Lucky I tipped her maid—wasn't it?"

"Yes; rather," agreed Grace. "I must say you're pretty smart, Beryl."

"Oh, I know a trick or two," said that girl confidently. "That costume is an exact copy of the one Miss Primrose was wearing, you know—at least, from a casual glance. There are things slightly different, but I hadn't a chance of examining the one she was wearing."

"It'll do all right," said Grace confidently. "You're arriving in a cab, you know."

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 159.

"Let me see," said Beryl. "I go down the back stairs—eh? And down the lane the cab's waiting—you ordered it?"

"Yes; everything's O.K. The cab's there," said Flora. "You just nip into it, and drive into the school."

"Then I send for Piper, and tell him to send me the Fourth Form—"

"Not all of them," corrected Grace. "Just one, Barbara Redfern. You'll have to be very careful, Beryl, not to do anything extraordinary. They're expecting you to be something—and if you do anything noticeable, they'll be suspicious. Better not send for any of them. They haven't done anything wrong, and it'll look suspicious. I believe they've got a rehearsal on this afternoon. Why not go and inspect that. Miss Primrose hasn't been yet."

"Right-ho!" agreed Beryl. "But I want to make them sit up—give them lines no end!"

"H'm!" said Flora Cann. "Don't go too far, or they'll spot you. And don't prolong it, in case Miss Primrose comes back. I don't suppose she'll be long."

"I'll keep watch," said Grace, "and when she comes, I'll tell you, Beryl."

"Good!"

Beryl looked herself up and down, then surveyed herself in the mirror.

"Girls," she said, "really this play is extraordinarily good. For a girl, Mabel, your acting is fairly good."

"That's the idea!" chuckled Flora.

"Now, come on! I'll go ahead to see if the coast is clear. When I drop my handkerchief, stop. When I pick it up go on."

Flora went down the passage, and "Miss Primrose" and Grace followed.

They quickly reached the back stairs, and so far Flora had only had to drop the handkerchief once.

The cook was coming up the stairs just as Flora had passed the kitchen door.

"Afternoon, Miss Primrose!" said the cook, surprised to see the headmistress.

"Good-afternoon!" smiled Beryl, quite in Miss Primrose's manner.

Down the side-path, and into the lane by the side of the school they went, and found the cab waiting.

Miss Primrose got into it, and the cabby, who had his instructions, whipped up the horse.

From their study window, Flora and Grace watched the old cab roll into the gateways and up the path.

It stopped, and several girls stared. Their stares became smiles as the well-known figure alighted.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Flora. "I could almost think it was Miss Primrose!"

"Yes; she's quite good," admitted Grace. "But I suppose it's mean of me. But I don't like her, and really I shouldn't mind if she were taken down a peg or two."

"Nor should I," murmured Flora. "Wonder how she's getting on?"

They stared out of the window, and presently they took their attention from the school gates. The school cricket ground was more interesting.

The school team had no match on that day; but the Third were playing a team of mixed Second and Third. If the cricket was not edifying it had the saving grace of being amusing.

"Just look at that kid!" chuckled Grace. "Elsie Brane—see how she misses every one!"

"My goodness, yes—but, oh—Look, Grace—the Head!"

Grace Woodfield stared as her chum pointed to the well-known figure of Miss Primrose.

Together they turned, and ran to the door, and soon were rushing headlong down the stairs.

At the bottom they all but collided with the stately dame herself.

"Grace—Flora!" exclaimed Miss Primrose. "How dare you rush about in that unseemly manner! Return up the stairs immediately, and come down properly! Is this the sort of thing that happens in my absence? Can I not trust even a Fifth Form girl?"

"Oh!"

"Oh dear!"

Grace and Flora looked glumly at one another, and then slowly retraced their way up the stairs.

Half-way up Grace paused, to find the headmistress' eye still upon her. Another Fifth Form girl had come into the school, and Grace beckoned to her. It was the last chance. Beryl must be warned, or at any minute she might come from the Hall, where the rehearsal was, and encounter the real headmistress.

"Angelica!" called Grace.

Angelica Jelly, not the brightest girl in the Fifth Form, but certainly the most willing, paused.

"Yes, Grace?"

"Tell Beryl to be careful!" said Grace.

"Beryl?" asked Angelica. "Beryl Lamont, I presume? Where is she, Grace?"

"In the Hall," said Grace. "You know—we told you—"

"Ah, yes!" smiled Angelica. "I understand, exactly. She is—"

"Yes—go!" almost shrieked Grace.

And Angelica went. But Miss Primrose remained stationary.

Then, she went up the stairs after Grace and Flora.

"Grace Woodfield," she said sternly. "your conduct is amazing! Why did you scream out to Angelica in that manner. Have you forgotten that I am present—or is it your desire to appear rude and ill-bred?"

Grace Woodfield flushed.

"I—I'm sorry!" she gulped. "I had no intention of being rude, Miss Primrose."

She looked over Miss Primrose's shoulder, and saw several Fifth-Formers entering the Hall. They had come, as arranged, to see Beryl "take in" the Fourth.

"Cheerio!" waved Amy Barlow. "Jolly good!"

"Amy Barlow!" almost shrieked Miss Primrose. "How dare you shout in that manner!"

"Jolly good!" chuckled Amy. "But you can't take me in!"

"Can't—can't—" stammered Miss Primrose. And Grace Woodfield made faces at her Form-fellows.

Unfortunately for her, Miss Primrose turned, and caught sight of one of those grimaces.

"Gracious, girl!" she exclaimed. "Have you taken leave of your senses? Surely you must be mad!"

Grace's face was crimson, and Flora was rather white.

The end of the jape did not strike them as being amusing.

Moreover, at any minute Angelica might return with Beryl.

"Oh! Ah! Er—could—could you come and see my st—study, Miss Primrose?" stammered Grace. "I—I—I—"

Miss Primrose tightened her lips, and Grace wisely said no more.

Suddenly the Fifth-Formers at the foot of the stairs made motions with their hands, and Miss Primrose quickly descended the stairs.

Grace Woodfield groaned with dismay as she caught sight of the second Miss Primrose.

"Goodness!" murmured Miss Primrose at the foot of the stairs. "What—what—"

"Ahem!" said Miss Primrose the second. "Ahem! My dear madam I—"

"Dear madam?" exclaimed Miss Primrose heatedly. "So this is the cause of the disturbance? This is some foolish joke. Who is this woman? You—Gracious! Surely that is not intended to—to be myself?"

Beryl Lamont pulled a long face. "I—I am, 'Miss Primrose,' headmistress of this school," she said tartly. "Who are you?"

"Who—an—I?" stammered Miss Primrose. "I—"

Grace Woodfield on the stairs sighed. "If she's got nerve she can pull it off yet," she said. "She's got the nerve, too. I believe."

"Yes, you!" thundered Beryl, in tones similar to those of Miss Primrose when that lady's gorge was rising.

Miss Primrose drew herself up. "Grace Woodfield," she said, "I presume you are responsible for this. Ah, Angelica, you are there! You have brought Beryl?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose," stammered Angelica.

"Ah, I see! Then that is Beryl Lamont. Take off that guise."

"What do you mean?" demanded Beryl, endeavouring to play out the lost game.

For reply Miss Primrose stepped forward, and snatched at the hat.

There was an "Oh!" as it came off in her hand, with a wig adhering to it.

Beryl Lamont blinked and gasped like a freshly-landed fish, as she stood with her own bobbed hair revealed.

She cut a most extraordinary figure, and there was a roar of laughter.

"Oh, my hat! Sold, Beryl—sold!" exclaimed Clara Trevlyn. "Dished!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Primrose stamped her foot. "Silence! I demand silence!" she stormed. "You Fourth Form girls will be severely dealt with. You should set a better example to these Fifth Form girls. They apparently act like children and play childish pranks! I am ashamed of them—"

"Miss Primrose—" exclaimed Grace Woodfield remorsefully.

Suddenly the headmistress left them all prostrate with astonishment.

"Rats!" she said slowly and distinctly. "Likewise bosh!"

Grace Woodfield nearly fell down the stairs, and there was a buzz in the ranks of the Fourth.

"Dished, diddled, and done!" resumed "Miss Primrose," and whipped off her hat and wig.

Beryl Lamont started forward, and from the girls went up a perfect shout: "Mabel Lynn!"

Bessie Puts Her Foot In It!

"Oh, goodness gracious!" "Mum—my word!"

Grace Woodfield's expression was, to say the least of it, extraordinary.

"Done!" said she hopelessly. "Beryl, you've lost!"

Beryl Lamont clenched her hands hard. "I have not lost!" she exclaimed. "Someone has given me away!"

"Given you away? What rubbish!" cried Grace Woodfield. "You've lost! Mabel took you in; you must admit that. You thought she was Miss Primrose."

"I did not. I knew that she wasn't. There has been some trickery, I tell you.

She knew all along what I was going to do."

"Blessed sneak, backing out!" said Clara. "My hat! Not satisfied with running Mabel down, you won't even admit when you're beaten."

"I'm not beaten!"

Beryl's voice was shrill and almost tearful. Mabel Lynn shrugged her shoulders.

"It doesn't matter much," said Mabel Lynn lightly. "Shake, Beryl! It wasn't a bad rag."

She put out her hand honestly, but Beryl Lamont glared at it, then turned abruptly on her heel, and strode off.

Clara Trevlyn gave a low whistle. "Of all the sneaks!" she said. "If that's a sample of the Fifth—"

"It isn't, thank goodness!" said Flora Cann. "We're not proud of Beryl. We—"

Hallo, here comes the real headmistress. "Ware, Mabel!"

Mabel Lynn hurried off, and the others would have gone, too. But Phyllis Howell was pointing down the passage.

But the laughter ceased abruptly as a stern, trim figure entered the doorway.

"Oh!"

"Poor old Bessie!" murmured Clara. But, strangely enough, Bessie Bunter did not seem in the least dismayed.

"Bessie Bunter!" exclaimed Miss Primrose. "You foolish girl! What is the meaning of this?"

"I—I'm not Bessie. I'm Miss Primrose. Beryl, how—how dare you disguise yourself as me?"

"Beryl!" exclaimed the headmistress. "Is the poor girl insane? I have feared it—"

"I—I'm not insane! Look here, Beryl, you can't take me in, so there! I—I mean, how dare you disguise as me! You can't take in the Fourth, Beryl. They're too clever. Fifty lines, Beryl!"

And Bessie Bunter drew herself up absurdly, and shook a stodgy forefinger at the flabbergasted headmistress.

"I can see through your disguise," said Bessie. "I know you're Beryl Lamont,



THE DOUBLE! "Topping!" cried Barbara Redfern. "If I didn't know it was you, Mabs, I should really take you for an old lady!" "Well, I am an old lady!" said Beryl Lamont, imitating the voice that Mabel Lynn had adopted for the part.

Then the whole crowd stood quite still, dumb and motionless with amazement.

For down the passage was coming quite the most remarkable figure that had ever been seen in Cliff House.

The figure was short and fat. A long skirt trailed the ground, and a red blouse blatantly showed in the neck of the long but too narrow costume coat. An ancient toque was jammed down on the face, and on the tip of an extremely fat nose was balanced a pair of pince-nez.

"I—I say, you girls, buzz off—I mean, clear away! This is disgraceful! Gug-Grace Woodfield, stop slop staffing—I mean, stop laughing! How dud-dare you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How—how dud-dare you girls laugh at your headmistress!" demanded Bessie.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was not a satisfactory reply, but Bessie Bunter was undaunted.

"Fifty lines, Grace Woodfield!" she snapped. "I must not laugh at my headmistress—I mean, redmistress—that is, headmistress!"

my girl, so you needn't pretend—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The true purport of Bessie's mistake had dawned upon the girls. But Miss Primrose was quite at a loss.

"Disguise!" she repeated mechanically. "Bessie—"

"Don't call me Bessie! I am Miss Pup-Primrose. You will light me a hundred rhines. I mean, write me a hundred lines!"

"You foolish girl!"

Bessie Bunter blinked at the Fourth and Fifth-Formers.

"Don't be tut-taken in by her," she stammered. "I can see through her. It's Beryl Lamont!"

"How dare you, Bessie!" shouted Miss Primrose. "You utterly foolish girl. Follow me to my room."

At this Bessie began to understand that here was the genuine article. "I—I thought you were—were Beryl in disguise," stammered Bessie. "Beryl in disguise? Beryl Lamont, you mean?"

"Nunno. I didn't mean Beryl Lamont. THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 159.

I didn't know she was going to disguise as you," stammered Bessie, hopelessly confused. "Not at all. She wouldn't dream of such a thing. I told her she couldn't take me in."

"And why are you wearing this foolish rig?" demanded Miss Primrose grimly.

"Fuf-foolish? I was frightening Beryl. I mean I—I wasn't frightening. This isn't meant to be you, Miss Primrose. Not at all. Oh, dud-dear no!"

"Me? Gracious! Do you think—are you absurd enough to imagine that you resemble me?"

"Yes, rather. I mean no," stammered Bessie.

Miss Primrose gripped her by the arm. "Come with me," she said sternly. "Grace Woodfield, tell Beryl Lamont that I wish to see her."

When Miss Primrose and her "double" had gone there was a buzz of excited talk.

"The silly, fat chump!" exclaimed Grace Woodfield. "How did she know that Beryl was going to disguise as the Head?"

Barbara Redfern shook her head in bewilderment. "I don't know. Mabs didn't know. Bessie must have kept it to herself."

Daisy Worrall of the Fifth laughed unpleasantly.

"Possibly," she said. "Of course, this explains how Mabel Lynn was able to detect Beryl so easily."

"Mabs didn't know," exclaimed Barbara Redfern angrily. "We arranged what she was to do last night!"

Daisy Worrall laughed unpleasantly again and shrugged her shoulders.

"Anyway, Beryl will get into trouble and Mabs hasn't," she sneered.

"When Mabs knows what has happened she will own up," retorted Barbara Redfern angrily. "You believe that she didn't know, Grace?"

Grace Woodfield paused.

"Well, I'll take your word," she said. "But it's funny how that Bessie knew. And—and well, Bessie's not the type to keep a secret, is she?"

"And it's funny that Mabel spotted the disguise so quickly!"

"Oh, rubbish!" interrupted Clara Trevlyn. "I say that Mabs didn't know. But whether she did or not, doesn't alter the fact that she took you all in. You thought she was Miss Primrose. Therefore she scored."

"That's true," admitted Grace Woodfield. "She took us in. Anyway, what's the use of arguing? Keeping Miss Primrose waiting won't help anyone."

And Grace went off to tell Beryl that she was wanted in the headmistress' study.

Barbara Redfern hurried back to Study No. 4, where Mabel Lynn was already in her drill dress.

"Oh dear!" sighed Babs. "Bessie has spoilt everything!"

"Bessie has?" exclaimed Mabs.

Then Barbara told her what had happened, and of the accusation that Daisy Worrall had made.

"That's just like Daisy!" said Mabel. "She's always ready to say something unpleasant. Of course you don't think that I knew, Babs?"

"Of course I don't, silly!" laughed Babs, and she squeezed her chum's arm. "And I'm coming with you to Miss Primrose. I'm in this as well as you."

And when they went to the headmistress' study, they found Grace, Flora, and Beryl there, with Bessie Bunter shaking and tearful.

"This is a most serious matter," said Miss Primrose sternly. "And I am surprised to find that you, Grace, and you, Barbara, have taken part in it. I am

pained that you should see fit to mimic me, and make me a laughing stock."

Miss Primrose had a most awkward and uncomfortable way of putting things. None of the girls had looked at the little jape in that light.

"I didn't mean to mimic you in that way, Miss Primrose," said Mabel Lynn, her face flushed. "I wasn't making a caricature of you. I—I tried to imitate you—to be your double. I didn't do anything funny. Nor did Beryl."

"That's so, Miss Primrose," said Grace Woodfield. "You see it was a test of acting—whether Mabel or Beryl was the better actress. They happened to disguise as the same person accidentally."

"Mabel did it because I did," put in Beryl Lamont quickly. "Bessie Bunter found out what I was doing, and told Mabel."

"She did not," said Mabel Lynn indignantly. "That is not true. I knew nothing of what Beryl was doing. I am sorry that you are offended, Miss Primrose. But I did not look upon it as an insult. I tried to give what I hoped would be a life-like impersonation of you."

"Perhaps not," said Miss Primrose slowly. "I know you well enough, Mabel, to take your word for that. But I would advise you not to repeat the performance. You are a clever actress."

Beryl Lamont gave a short laugh, and Miss Primrose turned to her.

"Silence, Beryl!" she said.

"I—I'm sorry, Miss Primrose," said Beryl. "I hardly thought you meant that seriously. Of course, for a school-girl, Mabel Lynn's quite a good actress—quite good."

Miss Primrose frowned.

"I see, Beryl," she said coldly. "This has been brought about by your jealousy. What you think of Mabel's acting I did not ask. I think she is splendid, and I have asked your mother to be present at the performance that is to be given in the village hall."

"My mother?" exclaimed Beryl. "Your mother is a fine actress—a wonderful actress, and it grieves me that you are so unlike her—not necessarily in acting, but in nature. Your mother was not a jealous woman."

Beryl bit her lip.

"My mother thinks that I am a great actress," she said.

Miss Primrose nodded, but made no reply.

"Now, about this affair," she said. "You are all guilty, and you will be punished. Bessie Bunter, what part have you played? Was it your intention to make me a laughing stock—Do you really imagine that you look at all like me?"

"Ahem! Yes, rather. I'm a jolly good actress. Only they're all jealous of me!"

"Bessie!"

Barbara Redfern stepped forward. "If you please, Miss Primrose," she said, "I think that Bessie meant to scare Beryl. Somehow she learnt in advance of Beryl's intention. And—and she's such a silly duffer, she really thought she could impersonate you."

"Oh, really, Babs," said Bessie indignantly.

"Enough!" snapped Miss Primrose. "Two hundred lines each. Now go, and let me have no repetition of this."

The girls left the study, but outside Beryl Lamont stopped.

"You think you've won," she said to Mabel Lynn. "They think a lot of you here apparently. But my mother will tell you what a fool you make of yourself on the stage. You won't believe me, but she knows."

"I am perfectly willing to have your mother's decision," said Mabel. "But

why are you so dead set against me, Beryl?"

Beryl Lamont tried to laugh.

"Dead set against you?" she asked. "I'm not. I don't care tuppence one way or the other about you. I thought, though, that I might be able to prevent you making a fool of yourself on the stage."

"It's very kind of you," smiled Mabel. "But really I don't mind making a fool of myself, as you call it."

"My dear kid," said Beryl, controlling her temper with difficulty, "you couldn't deceive a blind mouse with your acting. I let you imagine that you took me in, but you didn't."

Grace Woodfield made a deprecatory gesture.

"For goodness' sake do stop swanking," she exclaimed. "You've failed, and you may as well admit it. Mabel can knock spots off you when it comes to acting, although I admit you played your part pretty well."

"Thank you for nothing. Perhaps you will see what my mother thinks of clever Mabel."

And Beryl Lamont, head in air, walked off.

"Of all the swankers!" ejaculated Flora Cann.

Mabel Lynn laughed.

"Poor Beryl," she said. "It was rather rough. Because after all, she made a good Miss Primrose. But her hands gave her away. I wonder why she didn't wear gloves?"

But Beryl was firmly of the opinion that Mabel must have known in advance of her plans. It did not seem possible to Beryl that anyone could see through her disguises.

Grace and Flora were satisfied that Mabel had not known in advance. They took her word, and her remark about the hands showed that she had observed that it was Beryl. For really there was no resemblance between Miss Primrose's rather pink, plump hands and Beryl's long artistic ones.

Mabs had scored, and Beryl was displeased, and unreasonably jealous. She was Mabs's enemy, and Mabel Lynn was to find that Beryl was not a pleasant enemy.

A Subtle Move!

"SPEAK up more, Gwen."

Mabel Lynn rapped the stage with her pointer. Mabel was stage-manageress, as well as leading light in the play, and the rehearsal was in progress.

Gwen Cook nodded, and cleared her throat.

She spoke her lines again, and Mabel Lynn nodded.

"It'll be all right," Mabs whispered to her chum, and Barbara Redfern smiled.

"Thanks to you, yes, Mabs," she agreed. "We shouldn't have pulled through without you. The girls are doing their best, but, of course, they're not born actresses."

"They're doing well now," said Mabel. "But I'm beginning to see what a trial we must be to mistresses. Phew! It is a job getting them to understand and do what one means!"

She rapped the stage, and Gwen was pulled up again. Luckily the girls did not mind being ordered about by Mabel Lynn. They knew that what she said was right, and one and all wanted the play to be a huge success.

They were acting it on behalf of charity, and the more crowded the hall, the more they would manage to secure for the organisation on behalf of which they were working.

(Continued on page 101.)



THE CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY



No. 9. (New Series).

Week ending May 27th, 1922.

THERE is such a lot I should like to say about Mabs that I hardly know where to begin! Still, I must keep in mind the important fact that this feature is intended to contain general information concerning Mabs, and nothing more. So I think that, after all, I had best begin in the usual way.

Mabs is decidedly fair, with bobbed, flaxen hair, and grey eyes. On the sports field she is very good all round, but high and long jumping are her strongest points. This is where Mabs is valuable in any sports contest with rival Forms or a rival school, for perfect high and long jumper are to be found only here and there.

As a chum, Mabs has proved herself the finest and most loyal I could possibly desire. We have never quarrelled from our earliest remembrances. In my office of Form captain, particularly, she is always most ready to help me. When ever I am in difficulties, when ever I am not quite sure of my judgment in any particular direction, Mabs is always at hand with practical advice.

She is assistant editress of the "Cliff House Weekly," and a very useful



General Information Concerning MABEL LYNN.

By Barbara Redfern (The Editress.)

assistant I find her, too! But it is as an actress that Mabs has really gained fame amongst us. Mabs loves acting, and has loved it all her life. When only a few years of age she could recite yards of Shakespeare, and strike the correct attitudes. And ever since she has devoted most of her spare time to the art—practising impersonation, voice mimicry, as well as ordinary theatricals.

And now she can impersonate anybody, at least passably well, and mimic almost any kind of voice. In voice mimicry, in fact, she has only one superior at Cliff House, and that is Bessie Bunter, whose extraordinary powers in this direction, of course, are a byword.

What arouses the greatest admiration amongst us Fourth-Formers is the facility with which Mabs can "make up" for almost any part. Mabs is post-mistress in this branch of the science. She has the kind of face that can assume—and, more important still, retain—practically every expression at will. She

knows exactly how to make her face seem fatter, or wizened, jolly or surly. She knows, too, exactly how to put on a wig, and with her own hair, too, she can change. And with her grease-paints, pencils, brushes, rouges and pigments she can work positive wonders.

Take two such different types of faces as that of the plump Miss Plummy and austere Connie Jackson. By devices of her own I have known her make her face quite a startling resemblance to Miss Plummy's, and with her sticks, and an alteration of her hair, and a blouse, she succeeded in making herself the image of Connie Jackson. In fact, when she popped her head round our study door the other evening in this disguise, and, in Connie's harsh voice, gave Bessie and myself a hundred lines, we were really taken in! When Mabs came in, of course, the difference in stature gave her away at once.

It is at acting, then, that Mabs shines at her brightest, though she has more than once proved herself a perfect heroine, and every day in her life she shows that I have one of the most loyal chums in the world.



HOW BABS MET MABS!

By Marjorie Hazeldene (Fourth Form.)

BARBARA REDFERN, Clara Trevlyn, Dolly Jobling, Freda Foote, Marcia Loftus, myself, and one or two others of the present Fourth-Formers, had progressed from the Second Form to the Third before ever Mabel Lynn came to Cliff House.

We all wondered what kind of a girl this new Mabel Lynn would prove to be; but Babs, then occupying the "unofficial" captaincy now filled by Madge Stevens, was naturally most interested. We were ordered to meet the newcomer at the station, and make her feel as much "at home" as ever we could. Little did we guess which was to feel least "at home," the new girl or ourselves!

Six of us were waiting at the station when the train arrived, and only one passenger alighted. Though we were not concerned about any other than Mabel, we had to open our eyes at the sight of this newcomer to the village. She was but a girl, but her skin was of an extraordinary colour—something between the coal black of a negress and the yellow of a Chinese. And completely covering her whole form was a large, vividly patterned shawl, whilst in her hand she firmly grasped an umbrella.

This was the only passenger to alight. But of anything resembling an ordinary schoolgirl like ourselves we saw no sign.

To our increasing alarm, the strange passenger rushed towards us eagerly and excitedly. "Cliffsee Housees girlees—you?" she exclaimed. "How gladee dis chille be to meetee you all!" "My word!" ejaculated Babs, after the first shock. "You—you don't mean to say you're—you're Mabel Lynn?" "Maboo Lynnee! Goo, dat liddle bit be just my namee!" cried the new girl, dancing about joyfully. "And you—all you belongee dat liddle ole shack, Cliffsee Housee?"

We nodded our heads faintly. We had never before heard Cliff House described as a "liddle ole shack," and neither had we ever heard such a queer mixture of the negro lisp and the Chinese pidgin English.

"Well, we—we're very glad to see you, Mabel," said Babs, with an effort, as she extended her hand. "My name is Barbara Redfern—commonly known as Babs—and these girls are—"

"Den Baboo!" cried our new friend excitedly. "Den Baboo must be the friendee oh Maboo!"

The new girl suddenly altered her manner. She seemed to take a sudden dislike to all but Babs, and waved her umbrella. "Shoo! Shoo!" she cried wildly. "Baboo for Maboo—not youe! Shoo!"

We retreated swiftly out of the station, and thereafter kept in a group well behind Babs and the coloured girl as they walked to the school. They were both coloured girls at that moment, in fact, for Babs' face was crimson—particularly when she passed into the school, and had to face the astounded girls about.

And then Babs showed Maboo to the dormitory, where she could wash her hands and face, whilst Babs herself went to Miss Drake to prepare her for the unexpected nature of the new girl. Miss Drake did not know what to think, and came to the conclusion that Babs had brought the wrong girl to the school.

Babs had one of the shocks of her life when she went back to the dormitory to bring Maboo to Miss Drake. The Maboo she found was just a smaller edition of the Mabs we know to-day—a pretty, fresh-complexioned schoolgirl of just the kind we wished for.

Mabs did not explain to the dumbfounded Babs, but to Miss Drake, of course, she did. It proved to be all very simple. Mabs had had the railway carriage all to herself, and thought she would take the opportunity of trying two new sticks of grease-paint—black and yellow. But she found herself at Friardale long before she expected, and had no time to rub off the colours. This induced her to make a jape of the whole business—for, as Mabs pointed out, it was the only way of appearing other than a fool.

Both Miss Drake and Babs could see that the explanation was genuine, and Mabs escaped with a sharp reprimand. It was in this way that Babs and Mabs first became known to one another, and they have been the dearest of chums ever since.



BRIEF HISTORY OF MABEL LYNN.



It is as the boum chum of Barbara Redfern that Mabel Lynn is chiefly known. But Mabs cannot be so briefly dismissed. She is not by any means part and parcel, as it were, of Babs. She proves in a thousand ways that she has a character, and a sterling character, of her own.

It is true that we see her chiefly as a "backer-up" of her chum and Form captain, by Babs' side through sunshine and rain. But this only serves to show the loyal, sterling character of the girl more clearly. Babs, in her place, would act just the same.

As an actress, however, Mabel always has shone alone. Her powers in the histrionic art are particularly brilliant, and admitted and appreciated by the whole school. There is not a would-be girl actress at Cliff House to approach her. And so, whenever acting has been the foremost concern, Mabel Lynn has always been in command—even over her chum—Babs, who has the warmest regard for her powers.

But in our earliest remembrances, Mabs is just the loyal, ardent, hard-working supporter of Babs. She was by her side when the "Cliff House Weekly"—then known as the "Fourth Form Magazine"—was first produced—amidst competition! She was the stoutest believer in Babs' innocence when the Form Captain was accused of a theft committed by the cruel stepfather of Winnie Rogers, who is now regarded as one of the nicest servants at Cliff House. And it was chiefly through her untiring "canvassing" that Barbara Redfern beat Phyllis Howell in the voting for captaincy of the Fourth Form cricket eleven. And time and again, before and since, has Mabs shown herself to be the loyallest chum any girl—particularly a Form Captain—could be lucky enough to have.

But all this while the loyal and modest Mabs had never been called upon to take what could truly be called the leading part in any incident, humorous or serious. It was, indeed, a very strange sequence of events which finally revealed to us what a real heroine we have in the quiet, modest, and unassuming Mabel Lynn.

It all began by Freda Foote bringing to the school a keepsake in the form of an ornamental casket. If the light-hearted, jest-loving Freda had had an inkling of what the fact of her having this casket in her possession would bring about, she would certainly have been the very person to have left it at home.

A valuable diamond, known as the "Jewel of the East," was concealed in the casket, and two distinct parties were striving desperately to get possession of it—the first, a rascal named Barrety, who sent his daughter, Joan, to the school as a maid for this object; the second, the Princess Zahzeran, to whom the jewel really belonged.

It was the princess, through the instrumentality of Marcia Loftus, who succeeded in securing the precious jewel. Not only that, but she took both Freda and Marcia as prisoners on board her yacht. And it was at this crucial point in the drama that Mabel Lynn came to the fore.

Quite alone, she smuggled herself in a motor boat belonging to the princess' retinue, and thus gained access to the yacht. There her first valiant move was to render useless the machinery of the motor-driven vessel. And then, after she had found Freda and Marcia, the ship caught fire, and Mabs and Freda heroically saved the life of the princess, whose "faithful" retinue had deserted her.

This performance stands out as the noblest

and bravest in the whole of Mabs' history at Cliff House.

After that there is a pause in Mabs' history, during which Bessie Bunter, Connie Jackson, Grace Kelwyn and Lillian Graner-Lawless are respectively to the fore. And then Mabel Lynn once more occupies the "limelight"—this time in a decidedly humorous role.

In this role Mabs brought off what was undoubtedly her biggest triumph as an impersonator. What girl, other than Mabel Lynn, could have impersonated the stiff and staid Miss Rockingham, the lady with a predilection for archeological research, with such realism as to "take in" the Fifth. The Fifth had seen Miss Rockingham, and of course, they see Mabel Lynn practically every day. And yet Mabs deceived them to such an extent as to practise upon them one of the biggest japes on record!

Mabel's next really great part came to her quite recently, and she rose to the occasion admirably. For a "jape" of the very meanest description on the part of Lorna Manton, the girl from Oakvale House, Mabel Lynn was blamed. With every ounce of determination in her Mabs resolved to settle this girl.

It proved to be the most disheartening task possible for Mabs. All the luck fell into the scale of the Oakville House girl, and the evidence against Mabs grew blacker and blacker. On top of being accused of perpetrating the "jape" in Courtfield, she was convicted of wrecking a dressing-room at the theatre, and of letting loose an enraged bull from a stable on Mr. Jackers' farm.

Where a weak character would have given up all hope of vindication, Mabs' determination only increased. But the setting free of the bull, as readers will remember, brought about the end of Mabs' desperate task. Lorna Manton's character underwent a sudden change, for, at the risk of her life, she saved Mabel Lynn from the savage bull—which, by the way, Lorna had not wilfully caused to be freed. Lorna confessed, Mabs was cleared, and from that moment the two girls have been warm friends.

We can see both by this and the affair of the casket that, in a heroine's part, Mabs can acquit herself just as creditably as Barbara Redfern, Peggy Preston, and Augusta Austruther-Browne. But, somehow, it is as the staunch, loyal, self-sacrificing "lieutenant" of Barbara Redfern, her Form Captain, that we love to picture her in our minds.



HOW I BEGAN.

By Mabel Lynn.

FIRST performed before what might deserve the name of an audience in the big library at Lynn's Folly at the age of about seven.

Before that, as might be expected, I had simply given recitations. This, of course, cannot come under the term of "acting"; but whereas most children reciting simply make the poses and gestures they are told to, I wasn't satisfied with that. I had a way of introducing poses, gestures, expressions, and often sentences of my own, and people who witnessed it were good enough to pronounce it wonderful for a child of my age.

And then at seven I gave my first exhibition of acting proper. In those days we used to give an annual performance of some kind in the library, and though our library happens to be very large, it is surprising the number of friends we could pack in there. This particular year the play was based on the book "Little Dorrit," of Dickens, and I was given the part of Little Dorrit.

Well, I'll never forget how I felt on the impromptu platform, facing those rows of faces! The part of Little Dorrit called for a great amount of emotional work, and it is remarkably hard to be really emotional without appearing ridiculous. In the words of the adage, "It is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous."

Time and again I felt I was making a fool of myself. I was in dread of hearing the sound of titters from the younger members of the audience. But father and mother had said that I could do the part, and I resolved that I should!

After the first twenty minutes or so I lost my nervousness, thought of nothing but my lines and my acting, and felt thoroughly in my element right to the end. It was only the storm of applause at the finish that awakened me to the fact that there was such a thing as an audience! What had been their candid opinion of my exhibition? Were they clapping out of sheer politeness, or—

Well, when I heard afterwards that I had actually brought tears to the eyes of many of them I was surprised and pleased out of all bounds. I had been a success!

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 159.

PARTS I LIKE TO PLAY!

By Mabel Lynn.



SHAKESPEAREAN parts are my favourites, and always have been. They offer so much scope for dramatic acting. And of them all, the parts of Portia, in "The Merchant of Venice," and Lady Macbeth, in "Macbeth," are easily my favourites.

Of the two, I prefer Portia. Though both parts are dramatic, there is a vast difference in playing them. The part of Lady Macbeth might be termed melodramatic. In this part we must do exactly as Shakespeare tells us. The gestures, expressions, and voice tones of every actress in the part of Lady Macbeth are practically the same.

In the role of Portia it is different. The actress herself has to make the dramatic atmosphere. The scene and wording of the play only suggest. It is left entirely to the actress whether her lines fall dull and flat or whether they are thrillingly dramatic. This is why I fancy the part of Portia rather than any other Shakespearean part. Such a great deal of scope for getting desired effects is allowed the actress—in her expression, in her rendering of the lines, and in any gestures she cares to make.

Of other parts, I am very fond of that of Rosalind, in "As You Like It." The part of Hamlet offers a good deal of scope for tragic acting, but the play, in my opinion, is a good deal too melodramatic for schoolgirls. They are apt to make the whole thing seem ridiculous to the audience.

In "Julius Caesar," the parts of Brutus or Marc Antony please me equally well. The parts of Cleopatra and Desdemona I am equally fond of, too, though one is a heroine and the other a villainess. But whether the part is that of a heroine or villainess does not make a scrap of difference to me. The main thing about any part, from the point of view of a keen actress, is that it should offer plenty of scope for dramatic—or, as the case may be, humorous—acting.



MABLE LIN: The Footlite Faverit.

By BESSIE BUNTER
(Fourth Form.)

THE footlite faiverit! That, dear readers, is the word for Mabs! The footlite faiverit she is, and she dizzerves to be. Her akting is simply marvelous. We don't know how she does it. And she has just the figger for an aktress, too—or she would have if she were plumper.

In parts from the plays of that immortal bard, Henry Wodsworth Shaikspeer, I must admit that Mabs is better even than I am—in all eksept one, I should say, and that is the part of Roamyo, in "Roamyo and Jewliet."

I am so fond of this part, and it sews me so very well, and I have praktised it so orphan that I am perfekt, and cannot be beeted or even ekwelled. I sometimes praktiss with Aggy White. Aggy is very thin and very obliging, but the part of Jewliet does not sew her a bit.

That meen cat, Marshler Lofters, knows we often praktiss these parts, and she stopped me in the quod the other day, and sed: "There's Agness White at the window ther, Bessie! She wants you to praktiss."

I was so pleased that I did not notiss that it was Miss Bullivant's window that Marshler pointed to. I could see someone looking out, and I thort it was just like silly Agnes to go and put on the grey wig of an old woman for Jewliet! Littel did I know that it was really a viziter of Miss Bullivant's seated at the window!

I stood underneath her, struk a line attitude, and cried:

"But soft! What lite thro' yonder window brakes?"

It is the East, and Jewliet is the sun!"

I notissed the head above me give a jerk. Miss Bullivant herself dashed to the window, shrieked at me, and gave me five hundred lins for insulting her viziter! In fewcher, I think I'll levee Roamyo to—

Mabel Lin; the Footlite Faiverit!



TIPS TO WOULD-BE ACTRESSES.

By MABEL LYNN
(Fourth Form.)

FIRST of all, either you join or form an Amateur Dramatic Club. Choose from among you the most popular girl, and make her manager of your club. Thus you will find it easier to allow her decisions to be the final word on any difficult matter that crops up.

This item settled, particularly if your manager be a good actress herself, everything should run smoothly from the beginning, and you will all be in a position to do your best. Let the keynote of your club be economy, making as little outlay as possible in the way of scenery, props, make-ups, etc.

Next, in choosing your part, never voluntarily take one that does not suit you. Listen to your chums' advice on this question, and be ready to place faith in them. They can often judge better than we can ourselves, I have found.

And now for making-up. Pressure of space prevents my giving more than a few general hints here. Grease-paints of all shades for altering the complexion can be obtained. They are numbered—1 to 20. Make-up of some kind is nearly always essential on a well-lighted stage, otherwise one has an appearance of looking rather ill. Before using your grease-paints, however, remember to rub well into your face cold cream or cocoa-butter. This makes a foundation for the paint, and protects your skin from injury.

In addition to grease-paints of every shade you are likely to need, see that your make-up box contains "lining sticks" for lining the face, an eyebrow pencil, a camel hair brush, a soft rag for wiping off grease, towel and soap, a good, clear mirror, plenty of safety and ordinary pins, and rouge and powder.

And then, taking it your property-box is in good order, you are complete. As a last word, when on the stage, take care that your attitude is neither one of self-consciousness nor conceit. Show the audience that you are grateful for their applause, and you are on the road to popularity.



ACTING—MY LATEST HOBBY!

By ANGELICA JELLY.
(Fifth Form.)

BY the remarks one hears floating about, one might be led to the erroneous assumption that Mabel Lynn is the best actress at Cliff House. It is true she possesses the gift in no small degree. But when I mention that I have recently taken up acting as a hobby, the reader will instantly recognise who is the actress!

But jealousy is rife at Cliff House, and in the Fifth Form particularly. I am not appreciated. In a recent Fifth-Form play my name was deliberately left out of the caste. In fact, I was not even told the name of the play, and it was not until I had pressed Flora Cann that she told me—"Julius Cæsar!"

I was destined to discover that Flora had deliberately deceived me. The play was really "Antony and Cleopatra"—not "Julius Cæsar!" But I did not know that. And for the sake of the Form, I was constricted to think that such an indifferent actress as Grace was to take the part of Julius Cæsar!

Ten minutes before the play began I took drastic measures. Grace slipped up to her property-box in one of the box-rooms, and I locked her in! Then, dressed in my armour of Julius Cæsar, I waited near the hall until the curtain was due to rise.

Then I dashed in. They were all waiting desperately in the "wings" for Grace—"Cleopatra." I saw Antony—Flora Cann—in the chariot, and leaped in beside her. I must be excused the mistake, for both plays begin with Antony in the chariot—with Cleopatra in the one, and with Julius Cæsar in the other—and I saw nothing wrong.

The Third-Formers, who were there to push the chariot, saw nothing wrong, either, and we moved on to the stage with Antony gaping. Everybody looked so confused that I got slightly confused myself, and shouted Marc Antony's lines by mistake: "Friends, Romans, countrymen! Lead me your ears!"

The performance was a failure. The curtain was rung down immediately.



THE PLUCK OF MABEL LYNN!

By PEGGY PRESTON (Fourth Form.)

THE quality of Mabs which I most admire is that sterling pluck which she never fails to show whenever she is called upon. As an actress, I know, she excels far ahead of anyone else at Cliff House. On account of this she has a host of admirers. But somehow I feel I must most admire her pluck and resource.

Mabs' pluck is not of the ordinary kind. There is always a good deal of cool brain-work connected with it. What I mean is, supposing a horse were running amok, and probably endangering lives, the average plucky girl would jump at the reins to stop it, and possibly meet with serious injury as a result of her valiant action. Mabs, however, would be more inclined to indulge in a few seconds' hard thinking, striving to hit on some way of stopping the horse that would be much safer all round.

The pluck of Mabel Lynn has more of the cool, calculating element about it than that of any other Fourth-Former I could mention. A typical instance of this occurred only a few weeks back.

Babs, Mabs, and myself had been into Courtfield, and, returning, had reached the level crossing at a spot midway between Courtfield and Friardale. Ahead of us, over the crossing, was one of the Courtfield Council schools, from which, it being about four o'clock, the children were just being released. The eldest of them couldn't have been more than ten, and they drifted towards and away from the crossing in little clusters.

We suddenly became aware of a rapid and heavy clattering of hoofs from behind us along the road. Looking back, we saw, to our consternation, a runaway trap! We could see the frantic figure of a young girl in it. The reins had slipped from her grasp, and the horse, with the bit between its teeth, was completely out of control.

And it was tearing madly towards us and the children!

"You stand back, girls!" muttered Babs, through gritted teeth. "I'll make a snatch at the reins!"

"And I'll take the reins at the other side, Babs!" I said quickly, hurrying across as I spoke.

Mabs was already dashing over the level crossing.

"Don't do anything at all, girls!" she yelled, without slackening pace. "I'll stop the horse without damage to anyone—not even to itself! Keep clear!"

Babs and I gazed helplessly at Mabs as she sped up the steep steps of the signal-box. What should we do? The trap was now a hundred yards away, moving faster than ever. The children were standing in the middle of the road ahead, and simply gaping, and not realising the danger that the spectacle threatened them with.

Clink! The open gates of the crossing moved, and in their slow, cumbersome way began to move. They moved quicker, and we had a glimpse of Mabs through the glass wall of the box. She was turning the handle industriously.

Mabs was closing the gates to bar the path of the horse! This would save the children, yes—but the girl and the horse! The horse would never stop now! It would crash into the gates, the girl would be hurled out of the trap, and—

Even as these dismaying thoughts rushed through our minds, the gates, now about half closed, suddenly ceased to move!

"It's all right, girls!" we heard Mabs yell. "Keep clear of the trap!"

More on account of hesitancy than anything else, we kept clear as the trap dashed past us. Whirr! At that very instant the gates moved again, faster than they had ever done before! The horse was through, the front wheels were through, and then—

Jamb! Cra-a-sh! The gates closed tight upon the centre of the trap, and, gazing wide-eyed up at the box again, we saw Mabs and the signalman pulling at the handle.

Both gates twisted perceptibly, and cracked somewhere. The horse kicked and plunged madly for the moment. Taking in the full situation at last, Babs and I did the best we could by each rushing to a back wheel and swinging downwards on a spoke with all our might.

The horse was beaten. Calmness came upon it when it found itself absolutely stationary, though it perspired freely. And then, though I still kept my hold on the spoke, and Mabs and the signalman still held their force on the handle, Babs vaulted over one of the gates, jerked back the horse's bit, and held the reins.

The children gathered round the scene excitedly and eagerly. They still didn't know what Mabs' cool-headedness had saved them from, and we did not tell them! As for the trap, the body looked a little worse for wear after the incident, but the girl and the horse were absolutely unharmed. It was a brilliant performance on the part of Mabs, and we didn't forget to tell her so, either!

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 159.



MY MOST DIFFICULT PERFORMANCE!

By Mabel Lynn.

It occurred during a Christmas holiday at my home, Lynn's Folly. I forget now, however, whether it was just before or just after I had been removed into the Fourth Form.

In my native village there is a boarding-school for girls, and several of whom I know well have formed an amateur dramatic club, and they perform for local charities only. On Old Year's Night they were to give, amongst a few short sketches, an abbreviated rendering of "The Merchant of Venice."

I meant to see this. I am afraid I am rather critical at such performances—a little too ready to see defects which might, under the circumstances, be quite excusable. Still, I was prepared to appreciate the work of my friends.

I cut things rather fine, and set off a little later than I intended. Lynn's Folly is a little distance from the village concert-hall, and I cycled. The evening was black, and on the ground there lay a soft, slushy, and very slippery material that had once been snow. This was not an ideal condition for fast cycling, but it had to be done if I were to reach the hall in time for the rise of the curtain. And somehow we never enjoy a performance quite so well if it has already started when we get in.

As I drew near the point where the road merges into another leading to the village I heard a sudden ringer from the second road. I hastily applied brakes, and it seemed that the other cyclist did the same. It would have been far more fortunate if one of us had not done so, for, even as we slowed up

where the roads met, our machines collided—not violently, but with an unpleasant jerk. My own machine merely lobbed over, and I saved myself easily by resting on my leg. But the other cyclist—a girl—was not so fortunate. Her machine skidded, and she fell heavily, with a sharp cry. When I helped her up we found that her ankle had been rather badly rickety.

Even as I made that discovery I saw who the girl was. She was a friend of mine—one of the leading members of the amateur dramatic club I was about to see perform! To say I was concerned puts things very mildly indeed.

"Mabel Lynn—oh, I'm glad it's you, Mabs!" she gasped painfully. "You—you may be able to save the play! I can't act with this foot—it'll get worse and worse as time goes on! You know the part of Portia through and through, don't you?"

"Portia! Oh, of course I do!" I exclaimed eagerly. "But haven't you an understudy?" "Not for that part," she said, shaking her head. "I had one, but the girl was taken ill only the other day. But you, dear—there's just one thing that will prevent your being a success!"

"That will?" I exclaimed. "I'm fearfully afraid so," nodded my friend hopelessly. "You see, we've cut the old play down to less than half its length in order to make it fit in with our other turns—knocked out some scenes altogether, shortened others, and that kind of thing. If—if you care to try it, it will be the most difficult performance you've ever attempted!"

"Don't worry, dear! I'll pull through all right!" I reassured her. "The chief thing is—do you think you'll be able to get back to the school before your foot gets too painful?"

She was sure of that, and I set off again for the concert-hall, this time with a very different object in view from the one I had set out with. I reached the hall, explained matters, and made up for the part of Portia whilst the first scene of the play—"The Merchant of Venice," of course—was already being performed.

I had got a few minutes for discussions with the other members between scenes. There was only one possible arrangement we could come to. A look each time from whomsoever I was acting with would have to tell me where my part was cut. And then I went on with the member taking the part of Nerissa.

Practically half that scene had been cut. Whole speeches of both Portia and Nerissa had been cut out. For my benefit Nerissa spoke just a trifle more slowly than she would have done otherwise, and it was only by closely following her words that I could see where I was to resume each time with my part. It was immensely difficult.

But I came through with far greater honours than ever I could have expected. Each act was warmly applauded, and the audience noticed no flaw. But my most difficult part came with the well-known "Court of Justice" scene. Here the amateur dramatic club had very cleverly contrived to make slashing cuts and yet keep the scene as dramatic as in the original.

How I managed this I don't know. It all seemed more or less like a nightmare to me. A slight cough, imperceptible to the audience, would tell me where to break off in my speaking, and a look or a whispered "Now!" would tell me where to go on again.

A storm of applauding marked the finish of the performance. Not a person in the audience guessed the difficulties under which I had been working. So, to my great surprise and relief, it was not only the most difficult, but one of the most successful performances I have ever given!



MY PROPERTY BOX.

By Mabel Lynn.

A BOX twice the size of any of the others in the same box-room, and so full that the lid is six inches from closing—that is my property-box.

I ran through it one evening this week, with a view to throwing away such of the "props" as I considered I should no longer want. I did not find a single superfluous article, and I came to the conclusion that what I really wanted was an extra property-box!

Here are a few of my props I noticed particularly. There was the gown I wear as Lady Macbeth. The very sight of it brought back to me in a flood all the performances in which I had taken the part of this tragic character—two at Cliff House and a gorgeous charity show in the village. It is wonderful how a mere prop can bring such a rush of pleasant memories to the mind!

I noticed the costume I wore as Romeo, the fairy garb of Ariel, in "The Tempest," the comical hat I wore as one of the Merry Wives of Windsor—all with their train of memories of ripping performances. Not least among these was the judicial gown of Portia. That would have been the very last I should have discarded!

And then, amongst an assortment of wigs, blouses, dresses, umbrellas, sunshades, and all manner of things that might be wanted at any time, I noticed something that made me burst into a peal of spontaneous laughter. It was the hat and grey toque I wore in my guise of Miss Rockingham in the jape against the Fifth! I don't think I could ever part with those for anything!

Shakespearean parts, of course, are not the only ones I have played. I have wigs and dresses which I have worn in plays and sketches based on famous novels and poems—"props" which, too, I felt I simply could not part with. Among them is the old-fashioned dress, which I wore as Little Dorrit in my first play, described in this number.

I have also several costumes which have been specially designed for me for plays which we ourselves have composed. I never know when these might be useful again, so I dared not clear them out. Besides, each one has its own special memory for me of the night of the play on which I wore it.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 159.



IS MABS OUR BEST ACTRESS?

Various Opinions obtained by Philippa Derwent.

BARBARA REDFERN.—Far and away our best.

CLARA TREVLYN.—Absolutely the giddy shining light at Cliff House! No one to touch her!

MARJORIE HAZELDENE.—Proved herself so time and again.

PEGGY PRESTON.—Apart from having a natural gift for the art, she knows her subject through and through. Easily our best.

DOLLY JOBLING.—I'm no judge of acting. But all I can say is, Mabs' acting is always a treat to watch.

BESSIE BUNTER.—In some ways she is unbeatable, Flap, but in some of Shakespeare's parts I must say I put her in the shade. Have you seen me in the part of Hamlet, the Moor of Athens? I mum-mum-mean, Hamlet, King of Venice. Bother it! What I mean is, Hamlet, Prince of Tyre—Oh, really, Flap! There's juj-juj-jolly well nothing at all to cackle at in that!

ANGELICA JELLY (Fifth Form).—Mabel Lynn is not without merits in many parts of Shakespeare; but, on account of my majestic and imposing figure, I am far more impressive than she in such parts as Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, and Othello.

FRANCES BARRETT (Sixth Form).—Is Mabel Lynn, a mere Fourth-Former, the best actress at Cliff House? Rubbish! Most emphatically not! She does not get into her work a tenth of the drama that characterises my own histrionic performances. My renderings of such tragic parts as those of King Lear, and Timon of Athens have elicited from Miss Primrose, Miss Bullivant, and Miss Steel, respectively, the distinct compliments: "Extraordinary!" "Astounding for a Sixth-Former!" and "Incredible for one of her age!"

JOSEPHINE TUCKER (Sixth Form).—I must admit that Mabel's abilities are not at all common. But have you seen me in the becoming role of Florence Nightingale, my dear Philippa?

MARY PATTERSON, who is slightly deaf (Sixth Form).—What's that, Philippa? Repeat it more distinctly, will you? Mabel Lynn—lend Mabel Lynn our best mattress? What ever are you talking about, Philippa? Your questions get more and more stupid every time! Come here whilst I box your ears! (I didn't oblige!—P. D.).

MABEL LYNN'S MASTERSTROKE!*(Continued from page 98.)*

"It was lucky we had that audience the other night," said Mabel. "The girls have got used to the worst kind of critical audience, and I don't think anyone will suffer from stage-fright. Vivienne Leigh's good, so is Augusta."

The caste was a large one, and Mabel had plenty to do to keep them together.

Clara took the part of a servant. She opened the door and announced Augusta, who was playing the part of a wealthy lady of leisure.

As a servant, Clara was a little brusque and not sufficiently polished.

"Don't bawl so, Clara," said Mabel Lynn gently. "You should speak smoothly, and don't stare at Augusta."

"Right-ho!" agreed Clara. "Wish I hadn't to wear this silly cap, though. I can't keep it on."

"That's all right," smiled Mabel. "Don't fuss about it, Clara. Remember you're a parlourmaid, and a trim one. All parlourmaids have to be trim, and don't hump your shoulders."

Clara groaned deeply, and did her level best to look trim. As a matter of fact, she did not play the part badly, although she was apt to forget what she was told.

The door of the hall opened quietly, and Mabel, turning, saw Beryl Lamont. There were several girls of other Forms present watching. As most of them had bought tickets for the performance it did not matter greatly.

But Mabel Lynn frowned as she saw Beryl. Beryl Lamont was not by any means a welcome visitor.

"Good-evening!" said Beryl coolly. "Getting on all right?"

"Very well," said Barbara Redfern.

Beryl strolled nearer to the stage, and watched, with a faint smile on her rather thin lips.

"Quite good!" she said. "I've just bought a seat for myself, and mother is coming at Miss Primrose's invitation."

Mabel Lynn nodded, and spoke to Augusta.

"Yes, always face the footlights," said Beryl to Augusta. "And when you make a funny remark, let the laughter die down before proceeding."

"The remark was not intended to be funny," remarked Mabel coldly. "And I am stage-manageress here, Beryl. I should have thought you would have known enough to refrain from interrupting."

"Oh, of course! I am so sorry!" replied Beryl smoothly. "I am rather interested in this play, as a matter of fact. Girls speak highly of it. And the dress rehearsal was quite good."

It almost seemed that Beryl was speaking genuinely, and Mabel Lynn softened. Mabel's was a forgiving nature, and she did not wish to nourish enmity if Beryl wished to be friendly.

"Would you mind if I just glanced at your part?" asked Beryl.

"Not at all," said Mabel. "There's a duplicate here you can look at."

"Thanks," Beryl took the copy, and glanced through it.

"Who's taking the part now—while you're managing?" she asked.

"No one really," admitted Mabs slowly, guessing what was coming.

"Would you like me just to go on and read the lines? It would be a help."

Mabel looked at Babs, and Babs nodded. After all, there was no harm in what Beryl suggested. She could not usurp Mabs' part. And her intention could not be to score off Mabel, as she had not had long enough to prepare.

To have someone acting the part would, moreover, be useful.

Mabel at present was reading her lines, but she could not take her position on the stage.

"Very well. I shall be obliged," said Mabel readily. "I am sure you can do it. We're only in the first scene. We'll start it again. You've seen it once. You know roughly the idea—the sympathy of the part."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Beryl confidently, and she went behind.

None of the other Fourth-Formers looked particularly pleased, and Clara was openly annoyed. But Mabel calmed her down; and as Mabs was stage-manageress, she was the one to decide.

"As long as she doesn't start to boss us about," said Clara darkly. "If she does, I shall throw something at her. I dare say she has only come to laugh."

"I don't think so," said Mabel seriously. "At least, we can give her a chance. Now run along, Clara."

Once again the play opened, and Beryl was on the stage. Mabel Lynn watched her keenly, and nodded.

"She can act," she said to her chum, "although somehow she never quite loses herself, does she? She never forgets that she's acting, and that there are people looking on."

"If only she'd forget her conceit she would certainly do better," agreed Babs.

Barbara Redfern was on the stage a few minutes later when she received her cue.

Hers was not a very large part, but it required acting. Barbara did her best, and Mabel nodded approval. Beryl neither smiled nor spoke.

Beryl was acting the part quite well. She spoke clearly, and in the voice required, an altered voice that was very much like the voice Mabel Lynn adopted.

That Beryl was taking a great interest in the play was obvious, and she watched every movement of the other girls.

"Jolly good, Beryl," said Mabel Lynn. "Jolly good!"

Mabel Lynn was too honest to stint where praise was deserved. Even though Beryl was to some extent her rival, Mabel did not withhold the applause that was Beryl's due.

The play over, Beryl came down the steps from the stage, smiling.

"Not bad—eh?" she said.

"Very good," said Mabel Lynn.

"Thank you for taking the part, Beryl. It has been a great help. What do you think of the play generally?"

"Quite good," said Beryl, who had been rather flattered by Mabel's praise.

"It should go well. I rather like this part. Do you mind if I keep a copy to—send the mater?"

"Not at all," said Mabel. "I know it off by heart, of course."

"Thanks."

With a nod, Beryl Lamont left the room, and Mabel looked after her, half frowning, half smiling.

"Beryl's not a bad sort," she said. "And she acted that well."

But all of them would have been surprised could they have seen Beryl that evening.

Her study-door was locked, and Grace Woodfield, who hammered on the panels, went away unsatisfied.

"Can't think what Beryl's up to," said Grace to Flora. "She's walking up and down the study, muttering things."

"Learning some high-brow part," suggested Flora. "Never mind her."

But Beryl was not learning a high-brow part. She was holding the duplicate copy of Mabel Lynn's part, and reading from it. From time to time she repeated lines from memory, and went through the part as though she were on the stage.

Truly it was a mysterious performance. For she was not taking part in the play.

Had Mabel Lynn seen her then, Mabel would have been surprised. But there were even bigger surprises awaiting Mabel Lynn, although Mabel, fortunately, was in blissful ignorance of that.

Beryl's Mother!

MABS! Anyone seen Mabel Lynn?"

Doris Redfern, the younger sister of Barbara Redfern, put her head in the Fourth Form Common-room, and asked that question.

"Yes, here I am," said Mabel Lynn.

"You're wanted," said the Third-Former. "Miss Primrose wants you. There's someone there—Mrs. Lamont, I think."

"Mrs. Lamont."

Mabel Lynn sprang up, and Barbara Redfern patted her on the back.

"Trot along," said Babs. "Now's your chance. You know you want some influence. If Mrs. Lamont approves of you, she may be able to get you on to the stage when you leave school."

"All right, don't push me—I'll go!" laughed Mabel Lynn, as the others of the Fourth Form clamoured round her.

"You'll make me nervous."

"Not you," said Clara. "Run along, and if Beryl says anything rude, make faces at her."

Mabel laughed, and ran off to avoid their energetic pats on the back.

Doris Redfern grinned, and took her arm.

"Come on, Mabs!" said the fag, with an air of affection. "Show 'em what Cliff House can do. It's funny you're in the Fourth—"

And Doris Redfern frowned seriously.

"Funny! Why?" asked Mabel Lynn.

"Well, you're good at acting," said Doris, "and you Fourth-Formers are usually such duffers at everything. Now, if you were in the Third—"

"Well, I was once," said Mabs consolingly. "When you were in your cradle. You are three now, aren't you—or is it four next birthday?"

"No cheek!" glowered the smaller edition of Barbara. "You jolly well know I'm eleven!"

Doris might have extended her anger, but they had reached Miss Primrose's study, and even Doris Redfern's face became serious.

"I'll leave you now," she said. "But mind—be good!"

Mabel laughed, and tapped on the door. In response to Miss Primrose's call, she entered.

A charming-looking woman, with glorious auburn hair, rose and greeted her vivaciously.

"So you are Mabel Lynn!" she said, and looked Mabel up and down appraisingly. "I am very pleased to make your acquaintance, Mabel. Miss Primrose has been telling me about you."

"It is very kind of you to come, and to take an interest in me, Mrs. Lamont," answered Mabel. "I only wish that I had been able to see you act. Father has often spoken of you."

"My acting days are over," laughed Mrs. Lamont. "Still, Beryl will carry on my name, I hope. She shows great promise."

"She does," agreed Mabel.

Mrs. Lamont nodded, and seated herself, resting both hands on the tall, jade-handled, ebony stick she carried.

"Beryl has been spoilt, though," said Mrs. Lamont, rather wistfully. "That is why I have sent her to school. She had a private tutor for years; but she has not mixed sufficiently with other girls."

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 159.

"School will undoubtedly improve her," said Miss Primrose. "I hoped that perhaps she and Mabel would find much in common."

"Yes; you must come to tea with us, Mabel," said Mrs. Lamont, smiling pleasantly at Mabel Lynn. "The play is due to take place to-night."

"Yes, Mrs. Lamont. At seven o'clock."

Mrs. Lamont nodded.

"I have one or two calls to make in the neighbourhood," she said, "and I sha'n't be back until almost the time for the performance; but some day I will send the car, and you shall come to tea with Beryl and me, if Miss Primrose does not mind."

"Certainly not! I should be pleased that Beryl and Mabel were friends," said the headmistress. "And I hope you will like her acting."

"I am sure I shall," said Mrs. Lamont. "It will not take long to know what chance you would stand on the stage, Mabel. If your conception of the character you play is good, no doubt I can place you when your schooling is over. A good start is half the battle."

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Lamont!" said Mabel gratefully. "I will do my best, and—and if I am not good enough, it will be my fault."

She shook hands with the former actress, and, flushed and happy, went from the room.

Half-way down the corridor she was stopped by someone, and she looked up. Mabel had been in a brown study—dreaming glad dreams of the future that might be. For Mrs. Lamont had a great deal of influence, and once she had a start, Mabel could be trusted to make her own way.

As she looked up now, she saw Beryl, and smiled.

"You've seen my mother?" asked Beryl quickly.

"Yes. She's been kind enough to offer to help me, if she likes my acting," said Mabel happily.

Beryl nodded.

"Oh, that's all right!" she said easily. "The mater will like your acting all right."

She turned then, and walked up the passage towards the headmistress' room. Only a few yards farther on Mabel met Barbara Redfern.

"Seen her?" asked Babs.

Mabel told her chum what had been said.

"And I've just met Beryl," she added. "She seemed quite keen. I don't think she's so bad as we thought, Babs. When I told her what her mother had said she was quite pleased. And, after all, if things do go well, we shall be rivals, she and I."

"Yes, it is strange that she's so friendly. But she may not be a bad sort," murmured Babs. "Still, there isn't much time to waste, Mabs. We ought to get all the things down to the hall."

They hurried back, and soon Barbara Redfern was marshalling the Fourth Form forces to take the necessary equipment down to the village hall.

"Can I help?" asked Beryl Lamont, coming forward.

"Yes, the more the merrier, thanks," said Babs. "You go and help Mabs with that trek-cart load."

And Beryl helped with a will to pull the trek-cart, which was loaded with costumes.

When the hall was reached Beryl proved a great help in arranging the simple, but quite effective scenery for the first scene.

"I should rather like you to help with the scenery—arranging it during the play

—because we shall be changing," said Babs.

Beryl Lamont hesitated.

"Well, to tell the truth, I rather wanted to see it from the front," she said. "I like watching things from right at the back of the hall."

"Only standing room at the back," said Babs, "and from the number of tickets sold there'll be a goodly few standing."

"I don't mind," answered Beryl, with a smile. "All the better. What are the dressing-rooms like?"

"Quite good," said Babs.

She led Beryl round behind into the green-rooms, and Mabel and one or two followed.

"Three in all," said Babs. "This small one and two large."

Beryl regarded them thoughtfully.

"Well, Mabs has one to herself, I suppose?" she said.

"Oh, no!" said Mabel. "There won't be enough—"

"But you must!" laughed Beryl. "Goodness, you're the star! And suppose my mother comes round? She can't have a chat if there are others in the room."

"That's so," Mabel agreed. "But—but, well, it looks so like swank."

"Not a bit," said Beryl, with certainty. "It's your due. You've got the leading part, you know." She entered the small room, and looked round. "A cupboard," she said. "That's handy."

"Not for me," said Mabel, in surprise. "I sha'n't be staying beyond to-night."

"Oh, cupboards are useful sometimes," Beryl answered. "You must have this room to yourself."

"Yes, I think so, too, Mabs," said Barbara. "There will be heaps of room for the rest of us, really, in the other rooms, and, as Beryl says, if her mother comes round to see you it would be much better if you are alone."

"Right-ho, then," Mabs agreed. "I suppose it would be better."

They would have gone then, but Beryl remained staring at the cupboard. She opened the door, and peered in.

"It evidently takes your fancy," smiled Babs.

"Yes, I like sensible cupboards," said Beryl, with a rather peculiar smile. "Most of them are so poky."

She shut the door, and the three went from the room. There was a narrow passage that separated the small dressing-room from the larger ones, and it is probable that the small room was intended for the star. At times some quite well-known people had graced the small Friardale Hall, and they had been the occupiers of the small room.

There was nothing more to be done in the hall then, and the whole crowd of them went back to Cliff House, there to remain with as much patience as they could muster until the hour for the commencement of the performance.

Mrs. Lamont met Beryl and told her that she was going out.

"But I shall be back in time for the play," she said. "I only wish that you were in it, Beryl."

Beryl smiled cynically as she watched her mother depart, but she did not go into her study. Beryl Lamont waited for a few minutes, only just long enough for her mother to disappear through the school gates, and then she followed.

The Fourth-Formers would have been surprised if they had seen Beryl hurrying towards the Friardale village hall, and her movements there would have surprised them even more, for Beryl entered the small dressing-room, went into the cupboard, and shut herself in.

With a penknife she had taken from

her pocket she laboriously drilled air-holes, a thing that would have amazed Mabel Lynn greatly.

It might appear that Beryl Lamont had taken leave of her senses, but the smile on her face as she worked showed that there was method in her seeming madness.

Almost a Failure!

NOT feeling nervy?"

It was Barbara Redfern who spoke, and she eyed her chum anxiously.

Mabel Lynn shook her head.

"Not a bit," she said confidently. "I'm feeling fit for anything to-night. I'm sure I shall be O.K."

"Well, if as much depended on my acting as on yours to-night," said Babs, "I am sure I should be feeling a bit funky. Your whole career practically depends upon the impression you make to-night."

"It does," said Mabel. "And I, too, thought that I should be nervous, but I'm not. I may feel differently when I see Mrs. Lamont sitting in front, but I don't think that I shall."

She entered her dressing-room, and closed the door. It was, however, opened a second later by Babs.

"Sure you wouldn't like someone to help you dress?" Barbara asked.

"Quite sure, thanks. They'd only make me nervous, and I can manage quite well alone."

Babs shut the door, and Mabel, to prevent further interruptions, turned the key in the lock. There might be a goodly number of inquirers, and she did not want them. She started to arrange her make-up requisites, so that she could use them more easily, and, thus engaged, she did not hear the door of the cupboard behind her open.

She turned as she heard a movement, and then a hand was thrust roughly over her mouth, and a knee planted firmly in her back. She was too astonished to cry out, and in no position to put up a resistance.

The next thing she realised was that a bandage had been flung round her eyes. The bandage was tied, while her assailant's fore-arm prevented her from shouting. Then a gag stopped whatever cries she might make from passing her lips.

Mabel was unable to see or speak, but she lunged out with her foot, hoping to make some noise that would attract the attention of her friends in the neighbouring room, but a hand arrested the movement of her leg, and she was effectively tripped up.

While she kicked wildly her hands were drawn together and firmly tied. She was rolled over, and to the hands now tied behind her back one foot was added and then the other.

Mabel Lynn was as helpless as a fowl trussed for roasting!

Beryl Lamont, a little breathless, stood up and smiled, then by an effort she placed Mabel Lynn in the roomy cupboard. She looked for the key, but there was none.

Mabel, however, was not visible when the door was closed. Then Beryl Lamont acted very quickly. She slipped off her drill dress, and in a minute was making-up for the part that Mabel Lynn was to have played.

She was an adept with grease-paint, and it did not take her very long. Mabel's identity, in the guise of the character she was to play, was completely concealed, and there was no reason why anyone should suppose that Mabel herself had been impersonated.

On the contrary, they might think that the disguise was more complete. Beryl

smiled at her reflection in the glass, and shook her fist at the cupboard where Mabel Lynn, her mind a prey to doubts and wonderment, lay concealed.

Beryl was not easily satisfied, and she examined herself very critically before she finally decided to show her face to the others.

But a tap came at the door of the dressing-room, and Barbara Redfern's voice called out:

"Ready, Mabs?"

Beryl opened the door.

"Topping!" said Babs. "If I didn't know it were you, I should think you were an old lady, really I should."

"Well, I am an old lady," said Beryl, imitating the voice that Mabel Lynn adopted for the part.

"And you've got the voice, too," said Babs, in deep admiration.

Beryl chuckled, but she was sufficiently clever to give an old lady's chuckle.

"Still not nervous?" asked Babs.

"Well, I am a bit," admitted Beryl. "I daren't speak in my ordinary voice, or I shall go on doing so when I'm on the stage."

She spoke a few lines from the play, and Babs patted her on the back.

"There's no need for you to be nervous," she said. "It's simply topping. Here, Clara, what do you think of Mabs?"

Clara Trevlyn came forward, looked at Beryl, and grinned broadly.

"My hat!" she said. "You do look the part. So much so that I want to jape you."

"You're a naughty little girl," said the "old lady."

And from the group of Fourth-Formers came a delighted chuckle.

"Nearly time," said Babs. "You're on, Mabs. Now don't get nervous."

"I—I'm all right."

Barbara Redfern stared at her. The shakiness in Mabs' voice was noticeable.

"Not nervy?" she asked in alarm.

"Oh, not—I—I—oh, well, I don't suppose she'll be very critical."

And, leaving the others to stare in wonderment, "the old lady" went into the wings.

She took her seat in the chair by the fireside, with Gwen Cook opposite her.

Barbara and the others in the wings watched anxiously.

The small school orchestra played vigorously, and the curtain went up as they ceased.

The lights in the hall went out and the footlights seemed a glare.

The white head bobbed and whispering was heard.

Barbara Redfern bit her lip and leaned slightly forward. Mabel Lynn should have spoken, but she was silent.

"Goodness!" murmured Babs, quite white in the face.

Clara Trevlyn frowned and shrugged her shoulders.

"Can't be stage-fright," she whispered.

They leaned forward, and murmurs came from the hall. Babs could see Miss Primrose frowning and Mrs. Lamont beside her.

Suddenly the old woman beside the fireside spoke in a croaking, uncertain voice. It might have been taken for the correct tone, but Babs knew that it was not, and she shivered fearfully. Surely Mabel Lynn was not going to make a hash of things.

Gwen, made slightly nervous by her companion's momentary silence, stammered slightly, and from the back of the hall came a slight chuckle.

But the old lady by the fireside was speaking now with slightly more confidence, and Barbara sighed her relief.

The lines were spoken well, yet not

with certainty. And there was not the acting that there usually was.

Gwen spoke distinctly, and Babs waited.

But the old lady by the fireside made no response. Babs heard Gwen whisper, and so must everyone else.

Once again "Mabel Lynn" spoke, and this time Babs groaned.

"Oh, dear, it's all U.P.," she said. "Mabs has got stage-fright. Mabs of all people. Oh! And—what must Mrs. Lamont think!"

There was quite a buzz of talk in the hall, and presently Miss Primrose silenced it; but she looked rather mournfully at the lady beside her.

Mrs. Lamont was frowning and staring anxiously at Mabel Lynn. What was passing in her mind could be guessed easily enough.

But now the old lady on the stage was acting her part.

And Barbara Redfern stared. Surely Mabel must have lost her grip of things.

When at last the curtain fell there was a sigh of relief from the Fourth-Form actresses.

And from "in front" came laughter and a buzz of talk.

"Mabel Lynn" was instantly surrounded by a whole group of girls.

"What's the matter, Mabs?"

"Poor old Mabs!"

Barbara Redfern gripped her arm.

"Poor old Mabs!" she whispered. "I am so sorry. Can you pull together—or would you rather someone else carried on?"

"I—I can go on."

The words were spoken huskily. Beryl Lamont was playing the part well.

The laughter of those in front could be heard distinctly. But the curtains parted now, and they had a glimpse of the audience.

Barbara Redfern's face was white. It was failure! Failure for Mabs. Her chum had failed when she wanted most to succeed. That was Babs' thought.



ANOTHER'S TRIUMPH! Beryl Lamont's eyes burned, and her face was white with anger. Every cheer, every handclap, seemed to sting her into ungovernable jealousy of Mabel Lynn!

For it would have been better had she been nervous, silent even.

Now she was over-acting, badly over-acting, even as Bessie Bunter might have played the part.

She forgot her lines; and Barbara, as she took up her cue, tried hard to save the situation.

But that was more than Babs could do. She had not the leading part.

She almost forgot her own lines in reminding the old lady of hers.

The scene, which should have aroused the audience's sympathy and kept their interest sustained, now caused several giggles. Mabel Lynn's part should have been pathetic. It was now comical.

"Completely dished," groaned Augusta Anstruther Browne in the wings. "Oh, dear, if only it weren't such a tragedy for Mabs, I could laugh! Poor kid, she got stage-fright, and now she's trying to pull herself together. Oh, it's terrible!"

The old lady became confused, she said the wrong lines, cut in on someone else's speech, and ignored her cues, leaving a painful silence to follow.

"The villagers are all laughing," said Freda Foote. "Oh dear! What a sell!"

"But—hullo, mind, Miss Primrose."

The head-mistress of Cliff House, her face worried, came forward, and took Barbara Redfern aside.

"Barbara," she said, "really I think someone else should take Mabel's part. Whether it is nervousness or not I can't see. I was not able to see the dress-rehearsal. Does she—she usually act like that?"

"No, no," Miss Primrose, cried Barbara. "She—she's a good actress. Oh, she is unlucky; I don't know what made her afraid!"

"Mrs. Lamont, I could see, was not impressed. She must think I am absurd to have given such a report of Mabel's acting. I wish you had told me—"

"But it isn't usual, Miss Primrose—oh, really it isn't!"

Perhaps Barbara's insistent voice had been heard.

The audience were stamping their feet

now, and Babs bit her lip in an anguish of doubt. What must she do?

"Perhaps Mrs. Lamont could help her—encourage her," suggested the headmistress. "But this—it is not giving the villagers their money's worth and is—making the school a laughing-stock."

"Mrs. Lamont is here," said a soft voice.

The actress came forward and placed a hand on "Mabel Lynn's" shoulder.

"Never mind—" she began.

She stopped; for "the old lady" was not looking at her.

"There is no need to be ashamed," she said.

"Mabel Lynn" turned her head round, and then Mrs. Lamont's grip tightened.

"Goodness!" she exclaimed in such surprise that they all turned to her.

"What is it?" ejaculated Miss Primrose, fearful that perhaps Mabs might be ill.

"This—this is not 'Mabel Lynn'!"

"NOT 'Mabel Lynn'!"

It was a perfect shout, and they all crowded round.

"This—this is my daughter Beryl," said Mrs. Lamont huskily.

The Situation Saved!

THE "old lady" tried to tear away, but Barbara Redfern gripped her; and Clara Trevlyn, with a quick sweep of the hand, whipped off the wig.

The hair that was revealed did not belong to Mabel Lynn, and the expression on Mrs. Lamont's face told that she was right.

"I know Beryl's eyes," she said rather huskily. "There is a hazel fleck in her right eye. I thought when she was on the stage—something familiar in her actions—"

"Beryl!" cried Barbara Redfern angrily. "What does it mean?"

Beryl Lamont smiled and tore herself free.

"You didn't know!" she laughed bitterly. "But for mother you would never have known. The audience doesn't know."

"You have done this to make Mabel Lynn look foolish," cried Barbara angrily. "But for your mother we might

have thought it was Mabel acting badly. You would have ruined her career!"

Beryl Lamont nodded calmly. "I would," she said bitterly.

"Beryl!"

Mrs. Lamont's tone was soft, and tinged with sadness. In her eyes there was a trace of tears.

For a moment Beryl Lamont looked repentant. Then the old, bitter, jealous spirit took hold of her.

"I hate her!" she cried.

"And you stooped to this, Beryl!" said her mother scornfully. "You deceived me! You would have ruined that girl's career!"

"She made me a laughing-stock, and I did the same for her."

"Beryl!"

The mother looked at her daughter sadly, and then turned away.

Beryl Lamont remained motionless, fighting hard with her pride. But her mother moved away, and still Beryl did not move. Miss Primrose stayed but a second later, then she, too, went.

"Now," said Clara Trevlyn, "where's Mabel Lynn?"

"Find out!"

They gathered round her threateningly, and the audience stamped and shouted its impatience.

Barbara Redfern looked about her wildly.

"In the dressing-room—she must be!" she exclaimed. "I don't know how Beryl changed places. But Mabs went in and locked the door. But she hasn't come out."

They rushed to the dressing-room, opened the door, and crowded in.

The dressing-room was empty. But Barbara rushed to the cupboard and dragged open the door.

The sight that met her eyes made her gasp. But she did not lose her presence of mind. She lifted Mabel out, and soon they were untying her bonds.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mabel, who was nearly purple in the face.

She took in great, deep breaths, and stretched out her aching limbs.

"Oh, Mabs! Is it too late?" whispered Barbara Redfern. "This is Beryl's doing. Can you carry on?"

They explained quickly to Mabel what had happened.

"I can do it," she said rather breathlessly. "I must! Go and tell them, Babs, that I did not act the first scene—that it was a substitute. Tell them that I will not be long. But Beryl—she has the things."

Phyllis Howell and Philippa Derwent dragged Beryl Lamont into the dressing-room, and although she struggled she was robbed of her disguise.

While the others dressed her, Mabel made up her face and adjusted the wig. Feverish fingers worked actively, and for once with more speed than less.

It did not take them long to get Mabel Lynn in her proper attire. She looked an old lady, and was not nervous.

"We'll pull through yet," said Babs, as she rushed into the dressing-room. "I've told them, Mabs, and I think they'll give you a chance. Poor Mrs. Lamont, she does look miserable! But she is staying there to see you act."

"I shall act," said Mabel Lynn grimly.

"It's up to me for her sake and for the school's sake."

She went from the room, the others following.

The scenery for the second scene had been arranged, and Mabel Lynn took her place. Perhaps it was the knowledge that much depended on her; perhaps it was keenness to avenge herself; but the fact remains that she acted as she had never done before.

At first the audience were prepared to

be amused. But they settled down without realising it, and soon they were enjoying the scene.

Mabel Lynn held them spellbound. If proof were needed that she could act, here was the proof. She was an old lady, and they all forgot that she was Mabel Lynn.

It was impossible to conceive that she could be only a girl, and not the old lady she feigned to be.

Babs realised that with a start as she watched, and in her interest all but forgot her cue.

She recovered in time, but only just in time, for Mabel Lynn was about to improvise to give Babs time.

No one noticed anything amiss, and once on the stage, Babs helped Mabs right loyally.

They played together well, and Babs served to help Mabs in her part.

Everything ran smoothly and naturally. There was just the right element of surprise, just the right amount of sympathy.

"Excellent!" murmured Mrs. Lamont.

And when the curtain dropped for the second time there was a hearty clapping of hands.

Mabel Lynn had certainly saved the situation.

"Really splendidly done!" said Mrs. Lamont. "I have never seen a girl show such promise. One really might imagine that she was an old woman!"

"Yes, yes! Quite different—"

Miss Primrose had been about to mention the unfortunate first scene when she remembered that the culprit was her guest's daughter.

"I know what you mean," said Mrs. Lamont. "I cannot forgive Beryl easily. I did not realise that she is so jealous. Her action was unforgivable."

Miss Primrose nodded, but made no other reply.

"No punishment would touch her so much as my scorn," said Mrs. Lamont. "And she must be punished. Her school-fellows' scorn might not touch her. I will go without saying good-bye directly the performance is over. Tell her that I have done so, and make her feel what she has done."

"I will," said Miss Primrose. "Most certainly. It was—er—inexcusable."

The curtain had risen again, and now they were once more interested in what was happening on the stage.

Behind the stage there was jubilation, and the Fourth-Formers, who before had been so glum, were smiling broadly.

Beryl Lamont, in a spirit of bravado, was remaining there. But no one spoke to her. Her eyes burned, and her face was white with anger.

Every cheer, every hand clap, now seemed to sting her, and she wanted to fling herself at Mabel in a fit of ungovernable jealousy.

To her the play seemed a succession of applause, and it seemed to be never ending. But the finish came at last, and the curtain had to be raised time and time again.

She could picture Mabel, triumphant, bowing and bowing again. The cheers and hand-claps were insistent. There was a stamping on the floor.

And all for her rival, Mabel Lynn!

She ground her teeth in helpless rage, and tightened her hand till the nails dug into the flesh.

At last Mabel was leaving the stage—Mabel, surrounded by a crowd of cheerful girls.

And Beryl Lamont sat alone, apart.

Presently her heart leapt as she saw her mother coming forward.

"Mabel Lynn," said her mother's clear voice. And Beryl Lamont leaned forward to catch the words, her heart beating in her throat.

"Mabel, you have done splendidly!

A NEW Paper
for Home Dressmakers

2 FREE
PATTERNS

HARMS WORTH'S
POPULAR FASHIONS
is a new monthly paper
for the girl who makes her
clothes at home. No. 1, on
sale TO-DAY, is full of
new and VERY SIMPLE
designs for summer wear,
and includes the FREE
Patterns to make the
Cotton Frock shown here
and a dainty Frock for a
child. Buy it NOW!



HARMSWORTH'S

Popular
Fashions 3s
Of all Newsagents.

No. 1 JUST OUT.

You show great promise. I could scarcely believe that you were a girl and not an old woman. If you can act other parts as well, you will be truly great. You deserve to be on the stage. The stage deserves you—it needs you. When you are ready I will help you."

"You will, Mrs. Lamont? Oh, thank you!" cried Mabel Lynn gratefully, her eyes shining. And she took Mrs. Lamont's hand in hers and pressed it.

"You deserve all the praise you received, Mabel, and more," said the actress. "Your performance was wonderful! But I must not detain you. You are tired. Good-night!"

And Mrs. Lamont turned and walked through the crowd of girls as they politely stepped aside for her.

"Mother!"

The word was spoken almost in a whisper, half-choked.

Beryl Lamont strove to push her way through the crowd of girls.

But, without turning her beautiful head, Mrs. Lamont disappeared, and Beryl was carried along by the crowd of girls.

"Three cheers for Mabel Lynn!" called Barbara Redfern.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Come on, Beryl!" shouted Doris Redfern. "Cheer her!"

And Doris caught the Fifth Form girl's arm and raised it to cheer.

It was the bitterest pill of all to swallow—to be made to cheer her enemy. So felt Beryl, and she roughly pushed the fag aside.

Through the crowd she plunged, and she was pushed about herself. But at last she was through, and making for the exit.

Mabel Lynn, forgetful of her enemy, was sitting flushed and triumphant on the shoulders of a couple of enthusiasts.

"Good old Mabel!" called Clara, nearly hoarse with shouting. "My word, when you do get on the stage you'll give me a free ticket!"

"And me," laughed Phyllis Howell.

At that there was a chorus of laughter, in which Mabel joined.

"There wouldn't be room for anyone else in the place if you all came for nothing," she said. "Never mind, we'll see!"

But it was still some minutes before they would allow her to go into her dressing-room and change.

But Clara, Babs, Phyllis, and Philippa kept the others back, and Babs slipped into the room to help her chum.

"Oh, Mabs," she said, "you were splendid! You're made, dear! You saved the situation, and saved yourself as—"

"But suppose Mrs. Lamont hadn't found out Beryl?" shuddered Mabs. "Did you all think it was I acting?"

"I did," admitted Babs. "As a matter of fact, she can act. For she took us all in really. She, too, looked the part. And it was rather clever to act badly like that."

Mabel nodded.

"But to think of any girl being so mean, so despicable!" murmured Babs. "She knew that she might have ruined all your chances. She meant to; in fact, she admitted it. Poor Mrs. Lamont—"

"Yes; I am sorry for her," sighed Mabel. "It—it must hurt her dreadfully. For she is not that sort. And I think she is fond of Beryl."

"Yes; but I don't think we shall see much of Beryl any more. She'll be taken away from Cliff House."

"It is such a pity," sighed Mabs. "More for her mother than herself. She will deserve it, but her mother—"

"Yes, it is her mother who will

suffer," agreed Babs sadly. "And she has done nothing—nothing but try to help you, as she must have helped Beryl."

"If I saw Beryl, would it make matters worse?" asked Mabel Lynn hurriedly. "If—if I forgave her?"

"It might," murmured Babs. "She has done her best to harm you."

"She is too proud to admit that she is sorry," said Mabel. "I must go."

And when she was ready Mabel avoided the throng outside the door and hurried back to Cliff House with her chum.

But how would Beryl take that? Even Mabs was doubtful of success, much as she hoped for it.

The Tragic End of a Crowded Day!

GONE?" Beryl Lamont muttered the word through dry lips.

"Yes, your mother has gone, Beryl," said the headmistress sternly. "She has gone into the country, and has

Then her voice died away, and she became silent. She leaned back on the table, gripping the edge of it. Her eyes looked down at the carpet, and she trembled violently. In the study there was silence, and a tap at the door seemed remarkably loud.

Mechanically Miss Primrose called "Come in!"

Both stared as Mabel Lynn entered, and Mabel seemed surprised to find Miss Primrose in the study.

"I—I—I've come to say that I bear no ill-feeling," murmured Mabel Lynn haltingly.

Mabel rather wished that she had not come, but now she must stay.

"You have come to forgive this—this unprincipled girl!" exclaimed Miss Primrose. "Surely now you will feel remorse?"

Beryl looked up, and her eyes, burning and resentful, met those of Mabel Lynn.

"Remorse!" she said bitterly. "Is it not enough that you have scored? Why do you come to pity me, to mock at me?"



NOT SHE! "Come on, Beryl!" shouted Doris Redfern, catching the Fifth-Former's arm. "Cheer her!" It was the bitterest pill of all for Beryl Lamont to swallow—to be asked to cheer her rival.

left no address. Oh, you foolish girl! Can you realise what a blow this is to your mother, who worshipped you? Would you dishonour her name like this by playing a mean, sneaking trick? You sought to ruin Mabel Lynn's future; and your mother had the courage to prevent you."

Beryl did not make any reply. Her lips were dry, and her heart was aching. Remorse, jealousy, and pride fought within her.

"Have you no repentance, no better feelings, girl?" asked the headmistress sternly. "You have wounded your mother deeply. Yet she has given you a chance. She will return in a week, and you must show her that you are sorry, show her that you have fought down jealousy and hatred."

Still Beryl did not reply.

"Surely you care for your mother?"

"I do—I do. Of course, I do!" said Beryl, almost in a shout.

"I have come neither to pity nor to mock at you," said Mabs patiently. "I have—"

"Oh, don't blarney me!" cried Beryl. "I know your motive, you hypocrite! You wanted to please my mother, to usurp my place, and get her praise at my expense! Well, you've scored. You can laugh—"

"I don't want to laugh."

"Oh, get away! Aren't you satisfied? You've made mother desert me—"

Beryl Lamont choked, and then all her pride gave way as she burst into a flood of passionate tears.

Miss Primrose gently laid her hand on Mabel Lynn's sleeve.

"Mabel," she whispered, "leave her. We can do no good by remaining. Tears are a safety-valve—"

And Mabel, nodding, left the study. But at the end of the corridor she remained, anxious on Beryl's account.

Presently the door of Beryl's study open, and the girl came out, hurrying along the passage.

"Beryl, where are you going?" exclaimed Mabel.

Beryl Lamont stared at her, then pushed her savagely away.

"You've driven mother from me!" she exclaimed. "I'm going to find her. Mother will understand—"

"She has gone. The train must have left by now."

But Beryl heeded her not. Hatless, she ran on down the stairs, and Mabel Lynn followed.

It was dark in the deserted quadrangle, but she could hear Beryl ahead.

"Stop!" she shouted. "Stop! Beryl!"

But Beryl Lamont ran on. The gates were shut, and she rattled them in vain. Mabel saw her looking round wildly. Then the excited girl ran towards a tree that was near to the school wall.

"Beryl," panted Mabel, "that tree is rotten; it won't bear your weight!"

But Beryl Lamont, driven reckless by the pain in her heart, hardly knowing what she was doing, scrambled up the dead tree, and clung to a branch.

"Beryl, come down!"

Mabel, gasping, reached the foot of the tree. But already Beryl was half-way along the rotted branch.

Creak!

That ominous sound came from the branch, and Mabel Lynn caught her breath.

"Beryl!" she called, and then drew back as a loud crack and a shriek told her that the branch had given way.

And Beryl Lamont was falling—falling. With a thud that made Mabel Lynn's heart leap, the girl hit the ground, and lay still.

Mabel Lynn ran forward, and dropped to her knees. She touched the girl, and spoke. But Beryl Lamont did not answer. She lay motionless, in a heap, unheeding Mabel's imploring cries.

"Help!" cried Mabel.

But Beryl's shriek had been heard, and already half a dozen figures were crossing the quadrangle. Piper, the school porter, had come from his lodge, and now girls from all Forms were crowding round the fallen girl.

"I don't think there are any bones broken," said Mabel Lynn shakily.

"No, I think not," agreed Stella Stone, the school captain, who was on her knees. "Here, Clara, go for a doctor as fast as you can ride! One of you other girls get the stretcher—quick!"

Miss Primrose arrived, and the crowd was dispersed. Mabel was led off by her chums, and all the while she was eagerly plied with questions that she did not trouble to answer.

"My goodness, it was a fall!" muttered Mabs. "She must have got concussion or—"

She did not finish her sentence, but the others nodded.

"She will be all right when the doctor arrives," said Barbara, with a confidence she did not feel.

"You come in now," said Marjorie Hazeldene gently.

But Mabel Lynn shook her head determinedly.

"No—I'll just wait," she said.

And though they tried to persuade her, she remained near the sanatorium where Beryl had been taken.

What ages it seemed before the doctor arrived! And yet Clara's breathless state showed how she had ridden—and Clara could ride.

An eager crowd awaited the result of the doctor's examination.

It was Stella who broke the news, and she broke it by hushing them all.

"It is concussion of the brain," she said softly. "Miss Primrose's and the doctor's orders—silence!"

And every girl understood the necessity for that. Beyond an occasional whisper, there was hardly a word as that large crowd wended its way back to the School House, oppressed by the tragic ending to the eventful evening.

"Poor Beryl!" said Mabel Lynn. "I warned her, but she seemed strange—over-excited—"

"It wasn't your fault, Mabs," said Babs earnestly. "You couldn't help it."

But although she knew that it was not her fault, Mabel Lynn could not help worrying. The whole school seemed quietened by the accident, and the next morning there was far less excitement and shouting than usual. Even Mabel Lynn's great performance was dimmed beside Beryl's accident.

Games were forbidden, and the quadrangle was always crossed quietly.

Unpopular as Beryl had been, the bulletin of her progress which Miss Primrose posted up was watched and read eagerly by all.

But for some days the only report was that she was unconscious.

One glad morning announced that Beryl was progressing; and that was followed by the announcement that she was delirious.

It was after the latter announcement that the occupants of Study No. 4 received a visitor.

Miss Primrose entered the study, and the worried look on her face caused general dismay.

"Miss Primrose!" exclaimed Mabel Lynn. "What is it? Beryl—"

"Beryl is delirious, Mabel, I have something important to ask you—did her mother make mention of where she was going?"

"No," answered Mabel, with certainty; "she said nothing."

Miss Primrose sighed.

"We have wired everywhere—made any amount of inquiries—but she cannot be traced. And Beryl is calling for her. The doctor says that she must be found."

"The papers?" asked Barbara Redfern. "You have advertised—"

"Yes; but there is no reply. And to-night is the crisis. Mrs. Lamont must come to-night, or—the result may be serious."

"Oh!"

The chums of Study No. 4 looked hopelessly at one another in dismay. Even Bessie Bunter was lugubrious.

"I should have asked her where she was going. I am as much to blame as she!" murmured the headmistress remorsefully.

"Can nothing be done?" gulped Mabel Lynn. "Poor Mrs. Lamont! It will be terrible when she does know!"

"There is nothing—it is useless, if she cannot come!"

Mabel Lynn smoothed her hair back worriedly.

"If—if Beryl believed her mother is there—"

"She cannot. She will know. She can see, and her mother's voice—she would know that."

A sudden, eager light filled Mabel Lynn's eyes, and she started forward quickly.

"But suppose I disguised?" she asked.

"If I could—"

"Disguise?" asked Miss Primrose

quickly. "Do you mean, Mabel, that you could—could impersonate Mrs. Lamont?"

Mabel Lynn nodded.

"I think so! I will try, if you think it is any use."

"It is worth trying," said the headmistress. "I shall know if the semblance is good. The voice?"

Mabel Lynn paused.

"Beryl!" she said, in a soft, low voice. "Beryl, my dearest girl!"

Miss Primrose started.

"Mabel, that would have deceived me—it will deceive Beryl, I think! Yes; you are shorter, yet— Can you get the necessary disguise?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose. Oh, do let me try! I promise that I will do it—"

Her voice was eager, and the headmistress nodded.

"It is the only way," she said. "If you can do it, Beryl will be saved. But hurry, my dear!"

Miss Primrose closed the door quietly, and Mabel turned to her chum.

"It is my chance—to prove to Mrs. Lamont that I am grateful," she said.

"Oh, Babs, can I do it?"

"Do it, Mabs? Of course you can! I'll help you. There are things in the property-box—an auburn wig—and the rest is not difficult. Her dress was simple—"

Mabel Lynn knew the contents of the Fourth Form property-box off by heart, and she knew where to find the things.

With paint and powder she worked rapidly. She made up her brows, her eyes and her mouth, altering the shape of the latter with dexterity.

Mabs had a memory for faces and quick, snapshot-like observation. She retained a mental picture of almost any face she noticed.

And she had looked searchingly at Mrs. Lamont.

She hastily donned the auburn wig. Then she essayed the walk, until, with Barbara's help, she almost reached perfection.

"Now for rings. She had three. Miss Primrose—and Miss Drake. I must borrow their rings—and Shireen Al Raschid's pearl necklace."

Babs ran off to make explanations and get the necessary jewellery, and when she returned she brought Miss Primrose.

The headmistress stared in surprise at the transformed Mabel.

"Extraordinary!" she exclaimed.

"The resemblance is amazing. It scarcely seems possible that it is you, Mabel."

"It is, Miss Primrose," smiled Mabel.

"I shall be ready in a minute."

Quite a crowd had gathered in the doorway of the study, and were staring at Mabel Lynn.

"Top-hole," said Phyllis Howell. "It would take me in, and unless Beryl is particularly wide-awake it will take her in."

Miss Primrose suggested details that required attention, and soon Mabel was Mrs. Lamont to the life.

"If you are ready, Mabel," said the headmistress, "you had better accompany me to the sanatorium. There is no time to be lost."

Mabel Lynn nodded, and, setting her dress to rights, she crossed the study. Barbara Redfern patted her on the back.

"Good luck!" said Babs. "Don't be afraid, Mabs. Beryl won't guess, poor kid—she's too ill to look closely."

Mabel, with Miss Primrose beside her, crossed the quadrangle, and practised the walk.

Very quietly they went up the stairs. Everywhere in the sanatorium was impressively silent; and the knowledge that a girl was near the Valley of the Shadow was impressed upon Mabel's mind.

And the saving of that girl's life depended upon her alone. Now she must bring all her powers of impersonation to the fore. If she did not live the part—if Beryl should find out, then matters might be worse than before.

Miss Primrose quietly opened the door of the ward. On the only bed lay a girl, white-faced, her eyes half closed. A nurse held her hand, while a doctor stood by, thoughtfully stroking his chin.

As the door opened, all three turned, and the girl on the bed struggled to rise. She flung out her hands as the nurse supported her.

"Mother!" she exclaimed hoarsely, her eyes wide open.

Mabel Lynn hurried forward, and dropped to her knees.

"Beryl," she said softly, nestling the girl's head against her. It was a skillful move, for her face could not now be seen by Beryl.

"Beryl, my poor child!" murmured Mabel Lynn. "If only I had known before! It was my fault!"

Beryl Lamont hugged her closer, and a tear trickled down her cheek.

"Oh, mother, I have been crying for you!"

"I know—I know, dear. Miss Primrose has told me," said the soft voice. "I have been cruel! It was wicked to leave you! Oh, Beryl, suppose—suppose—"

Mabel's voice died away to a whisper, and Miss Primrose felt herself strangely affected. The doctor had turned away and was leaning against the mantelshelf.

"Mother dear," whispered Beryl, "I—I am sorry. I was jealous. Oh, mother, you're not cross—say that you are not cross. I—I am sorry—"

"Cross, darling, no, I am not!"

Mabel Lynn kissed the girl's hair tenderly. "My poor darling!"

"I—I was a fool, mother—a jealous fool! Say that you forgive me. Mabel will. But how can I face her? I was mad with jealousy. Mother—darling—mother—"

"Poor Beryl! How you must have suffered! It is all right, dear. You will be well soon. Don't worry, darling. No one is blaming you, you know. Dear, dear Beryl—"

She smoothed the girl's hair lightly,

then bent down and kissed Beryl softly on the lips, closing her eyes. She raised her head quickly.

"And now, dear," she whispered, "you must sleep. You look tired. Sleep, darling."

She cuddled the girl tightly, and Beryl, worn out, lay in her arms.

Fatigued with the anxious waiting, and the agony of remorse, Beryl fell asleep in Mabel's arms. For a long time the girl held her burden, gently, tenderly, then she laid her back on the pillows and rose.

Mabel Lynn stretched out her aching limbs, and drew a deep breath. Then Miss Primrose took her by the arm and led her silently from the room.

In the eyes of the headmistress of Cliff House, there was a suspicion of tears, and her voice shook a little as she laid her hand on the shoulder of Mabel.

"It—it was wonderful," she said—"really wonderful. Mabel, I know you have saved that poor girl's life!"

Three days later, with a white, anxious face, Mrs. Lamont came hurriedly into the quadrangle, and was led to Miss Primrose by Clara Trevlyn, who felt that she was not the best person to break the glad news to Mrs. Lamont.

When Miss Primrose had explained the whole position to the overwrought woman, Mrs. Lamont collapsed on to a chair, and sobbed.

She had been travelling all day, having started immediately that she had seen the advertisement in that morning's paper, and the fear that her daughter might be in danger had completely worn her out.

"To think that I went without saying good-bye!" she said chokily. "Oh, where is that wonderful-girl, Mabel?"

Mabel was sent for, and the grateful mother kissed her passionately.

"How can I ever thank you?" she said. "It was wonderful of you—wonderful! And—and Beryl had treated you so badly."

But with a glad laugh, Mabel put aside her thanks, and in a few moments Mrs. Lamont had her daughter in her arms.

Not until Beryl was almost recovered did she learn of the action that had saved

her life, and shamefacedly but bravely, she thanked Mabel herself.

Many long hours did Mabel spend with Beryl and her mother, for the girl's convalescence was slow; but before Mrs. Lamont took her daughter away from Cliff House, Mabel and Beryl had become firm friends. Nor was Mabel the only girl who, watching the cab bearing Mrs. Lamont and Beryl, drive out of the gates, regretted that Beryl was going for good, for in those weeks Beryl had changed remarkably, and had won the friendship of many of the Fourth-Formers.

A few days after her departure a letter came to Mabel from Beryl—a long, affectionate letter, in which she again thanked Mabel for her action. There was a postscript on the letter, and Mabel read it eagerly, for it was penned by Mrs. Lamont.

"When you are ready," it ran, "I will be ready, too. I can give you an introduction which will start you on what, I feel sure, will be a very wonderful stage career."

Mabel's eyes shone as she passed the letter to her chum, Barbara Redfern.

"How splendid!" Babs said, as she passed it back. "I, too, feel sure it will be a wonderful career. How can it be anything else?"

And Barbara Redfern was not alone, in voicing that opinion. She did not keep the news to herself, and when the Fourth-Formers heard it they crowded round, full of congratulations and praise.

But it was praise that Mabel justly deserved, for how dearly she had earned it!

THE END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

(Next Thursday's issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND will contain "Bessie Bunter's Task!", a magnificent new long complete story of the girls of Cliff House School, by Hilda Richards; a beautiful coloured art card of Bessie Bunter; the Special Bessie Bunter Number of the "Cliff House Weekly"; and further long, absorbing instalments of "Friendship Forbidden," by Ida Melbourne; and "The Signalman's Daughter," by Gertrude Nelson. Order your copy of the SCHOOL FRIEND in advance to avoid disappointment.)



NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

of the

"School Friend"

is a

Special

"BESSIE BUNTER"

Number!



You must not miss this on any account!



No. 5 of our beautiful FREE Coloured Art Portrait Cards.



The SIGNALMAN'S DAUGHTER



Our magnificent new Serial of
Railway, Home, and School Life.
By **GERTRUDE NELSON.**

(Author of "The Ivory Seekers," "The Island Feud," etc., etc.)



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.

Through an enemy of Mr. Duke tampering with the levers in Tom Walters' box, a special train bearing the financier was derailed, and Mr. Duke was injured. From that moment his daughter Sybil, at St. Mildred's, was the bitter enemy of Olive, and took every opportunity for scheming against her.

Tom Walters was discharged by the railway company; and, on top of that, the bank which held his small savings suspended payment. Swallowing all her pride, Olive sang in the streets to earn money, and was seen by Sybil Duke, who did not hesitate to turn it to her own spiteful advantage.

Olive's father at last found work carrying samples. By a most unlucky accident, the samples which he brought home the first evening caught fire and were ruined. Tom Walters could not refund the damage, and a bad-tempered partner of the firm had a bailiff put in the home. While Mr. Matthews, the partner, was there to see that the bailiff was installed, Winnie Norris suddenly called. She had had a fair idea of how things stood, and had brought money with her. She paid the bailiff in full, and ordered Mr. Matthews to leave the house.

(Read on from here.)

Winnie's Way!

WINNIE walked to the door and held it open. It was an action that spoke louder than words. Mr. Matthews hesitated, snorted, then strode through it with undignified haste, simply because there was nothing else to do.

Winnie slammed the door upon him, collapsed into a chair, and shook with laughter.

"He deserved that," she said, as her mirth subsided. "If any other unwanted persons intrude here, Olive, just send for me, and I'll get rid of them for you. Ha, ha, ha! Did you notice how red his neck went? He reminded me of an angry turkey!"

"Winnie, how can I ever thank you enough for what you have done?" Olive asked, tears starting again to her eyes as she compared Winnie's kindness with the attitude the other girls of St. Mildred's would have adopted could they have known that a man in possession had been in her parents' home for debt. "Goodness know when we shall be able to repay you."

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 159.

Winnie hastened to change the subject—at least, she made an attempt to do so, but Olive's father and mother would not allow her just yet.

As Tom Walters took the girl's hand and pressed it, and his wife stooped and kissed her, the ex-signalman was earnest in his thanks, and, like those of Olive, his eyes were suspiciously moist.

"If only there were a few more noble-hearted people like you, Miss Norris, the world would be a better place," he said huskily.

And then he told her of the unfortunate manner in which the debt had been incurred, and of Mr. Matthews' harshness, and Winnie was even more delighted to think she had discomfited the bully.

"It worries me when I wonder how we can repay you the money you paid out for us, however," Tom Walters said, in conclusion. "When I succeed in getting some sort of work, I will pay you as much as I can each week if you will accept it that way."

Winnie made a protesting gesture. "Begin to worry when I worry, Mr. Walters," she said. "You must not be stupid. Fifteen or sixteen pounds is absolutely nothing to me, for my father is fortunate enough to be very rich. Take this further five-pound note to help you a little until your luck takes a turn. Yes, I insist! You can repay me at any time you find it possible."

"No, no!" Olive cried, drawing her father back, though, for his part, he had drawn his hand away from the rustling banknote, as though he feared it might burn him. "You have already been too kind, Winnie, and we will not impose upon your generosity."

But Winnie was determined they should accept the money.

Without warning, she sprang from her chair, hugged and kissed Olive in her best madcap manner, and when Winnie released her and darted for the door, Olive found the crisp note in her hand.

"Winnie, come back!" she cried. "We—"

But the door had opened and slammed, and Winnie had gone, and, knowing it would be useless to go after and argue with her, Olive, with a helpless gesture, handed the note to her father.

"We must try to repay her quickly as soon as you get work, daddy," she said. "Isn't she a wonderful friend?" she added, with a break in her voice.

Mrs. Walters, who was seated by the table, crying softly in her relief and gratitude towards Winnie, looked up at her daughter's words.

"A friend such as one seldom finds when in need, Olive," she said quietly.

At the Memorial Hall!

THE night of Olive's great opportunity had arrived at last! At seven-thirty on the following evening Miss Crawford, the kind-hearted mistress of St. Mildred's Third Form, stood on the steps of the Memorial Hall, glancing expectantly at the passers-by.

"Ah, at last!" she exclaimed, as Olive Walters emerged from the passing crowds who thronged the busy street and approached her, smiling. "I feared you were going to be late, Olive."

"I am afraid I have been terribly vain and taken a long time to dress, Miss Crawford," the girl said, as she clasped the mistress' welcoming hand. "I hope I have not kept you waiting long."

"No, no! Perhaps I was a trifle early," answered Miss Crawford. "And it was quite right to take pains to try to look your best, child. It makes all the difference to the success of a song if the singer has a charming appearance. Let me see. Yes, you do look very, very nice."

With a smile, she had opened the coat Olive wore, and, with a critical eye, glanced at the simple white frock the girl was wearing.

Her slight pallor, born of nervousness, enhanced rather than detracted from her youthful beauty. Her eyes were like shadowy violet pools as they smiled up into those of the mistress, and Miss Crawford felt that she would win the hearts of her audience when later that evening she took the platform to sing.

Together the mistress and the girl made their way round to the rear of the hall. Passing through a door there, they were a few minutes later in a room behind the stage, where a number of ladies and gentlemen who were to figure in the forthcoming concert were gathered.

Olive's nervousness increased a little now that the time grew so near when she would face what was confidently expected to be a crowded house.

A portly, pleasant-faced gentleman, in evening-dress, stepped forward and shook hands with Miss Crawford. He was almost immediately joined by a middle-aged lady, also attired in evening wear, who also greeted the mistress with obvious pleasure.

"Let me introduce you to Mr. and Mrs. Wilberforce, Olive," Miss Crawford said.

"Ah, so this is your little friend, Miss Crawford?" Mr. Wilberforce boomed, in his rather deep voice, as he held out his hand to the girl. "Mind you make a hit to-night, my dear. There may be a big future before you as a concert singer, if

all Miss Crawford tells me about you proves correct; and I do not doubt that it will, for I know her to be more than a good judge."

"You are very kind, sir," Olive murmured, feeling a little shy. "I will do my very best."

"That is right, dear," put in Mrs. Wilberforce, who seemed to have taken an instant liking to the girl. "You are a little nervous, I can see that, but you will soon forget that, once you are on the platform."

"Oh, yes, everyone does!" declared her husband. "It is only natural to feel a little reluctant to appear before a large crowd, especially when one is a beginner. But the sensation quickly passes away when a singer's heart is in her work. As I knew nothing about you, Miss Walters, until I had arranged all my programme, I have had to put you rather near the end; but I presume Miss Crawford will see you home after the concert, and that your parents will not object to your being a trifle late?"

"No, Mr. Wilberforce. Mother is expecting it to be ten or eleven o'clock before I get home," Olive answered. "But she does not mind. She thinks you are very kind to give me this chance."

Mr. Wilberforce patted her in a fatherly way upon the shoulder.

"Then that is all right," said he. "Miss Crawford will show you where to leave your coat and hat. Then you must make yourself at home until it is time for you to sing."

He bustled away with his wife. Miss Crawford and Olive left their outdoor things in the cloak-room, and returned to the room beside the stage, to find that the concert had commenced.

A lady, who was proving herself an expert pianist, and her two sons, one of whom played a 'cello and the other a violin, were occupying the platform.

Their playing was magnificent, and Olive enjoyed it immensely as she stood in the wings, listening.

Their performance concluded amidst whole-hearted applause, and a male singer, with a fine baritone voice, followed with equal success.

The concert promised to be one of the best to which Olive had ever listened. The interval came, but was only of short duration, as Mr. Wilberforce's programme was somewhat crowded.

The second half of the entertainment gave promise of being as excellent as the first, and as the evening wore on and on, Olive began to wonder how long it would be before her turn came.

Then suddenly she found Miss Crawford touching her arm.

"Be ready, dear," whispered the mistress. "You sing after the gentleman and lady who are now going on with the mandolines."

Olive's heart gave a jump, then pounded hard. But with an effort of will-power she fought down her nervousness, and looked forward eagerly to taking the platform with her friend from St. Mildred's, who, it will be remembered, was to accompany her singing.

But scarcely had the mandoline players begun to delight the audience than there happened that which was to cause Olive temporarily to forget even the great chance which was before her.

An attendant approached and touched her elbow.

"Excuse me, miss, but I am looking for a young lady named Walters, and from the description given me, I think you might be she," the man said.

"Yes, I am Olive Walters," the girl answered.

Then she detected a queer expression in the attendant's face, which she did not

understand. It was almost like sympathy.

He beckoned to her to follow him, and led the way to a side door, at which Olive found waiting a boy who looked like a newspaper vendor.

"You Miss Walters, miss?" the lad asked. Then, as Olive nodded: "A girl, who said she was a friend of yours, gave me half-a-crown to bring a message to you," he explained. "Your father has met with an accident."

"An accident—my father!" The blood rushed from Olive face, leaving it deathly white. The attendant hastily clutched her arm, feeling she was going to faint, as she swayed dizzily. But pluckily Olive recovered herself, though, in her agitation, she clutched hard at the boy's ragged sleeve. "An accident!—What sort of accident?" she asked, in an agony of suspense.

"I dunno, miss, but the young lady who told me to bring the message said it was serious, and that you had better go home at once."

"Yes, yes; of course! Oh, what can have happened to my poor father?" Olive cried, with a sob of apprehension in her voice. "Will you please tell a Miss Crawford what has happened, and that I have had to leave," she begged the attendant faintly.

The cloak-room was quite near, and Olive hurried into it and secured her hat and coat. A moment later she was speeding as fast as her legs could carry her through the streets towards her home.

She forgot the great chance she was missing—the chance that might never come again. In her mind was room only for the realisation that her dear father had been injured, and that she must go to him.

When Olive Reached Home!

ON, on through the streets sped the distracted Olive. When she reached the tenement building, she was gasping for breath, and her anxiety had increased rather than abated. Her heart seemed to be fluttering in her throat and threatening to choke her.

What had happened to her father? What was the nature of the accident that had befallen him?

As she asked herself these questions all the way from the concert hall where she was to have sung and thus had her great opportunity, so did Olive find them repeating themselves again and again in her brain, as she ran, panting, up the stone stairs.

She reached the landing upon which was the outer door of the gloomy room her parents called home.

She was so exhausted that for a moment she had to stand clutching at the rail of the iron banisters for support. And now that she had reached her home, she felt afraid to enter and know the worst.

Olive regained her breath a little and took a grip upon herself.

She moved forward, though slowly, reluctantly. She raised her hand and knocked at the door, and again her heart thumped wildly in her terrible apprehension.

There was a footfall on the opposite side of the door, and, next moment, it was opened by her mother.

Olive did not notice how Mrs. Walters started and stared, as she realised her breathless and agitated condition.

"Father!"

The word broke gaspingly from the girl's lips, and, darting past her mother, she rushed into the living room.

Olive then pulled up in dumbfounded amazement. She caught and held her breath, and wanted to rub her eyes, to make sure she was not the victim of a delusion.

For, her father sat quietly at the table, studying what appeared to be the "Situations Vacant" columns of a newspaper, and, although he looked tired out, as though he might only recently have come in from his daily search for work, he was certainly not seriously hurt as Olive had believed.

"Hallo, lass!"

Tom Walters turned in his chair and forced a smile to his tired, careworn face.

"Well, and how did you succeed at the concert?" he asked. "Your mother and I have been thinking of you and hoping you would make a real hit with your songs."

"My songs! Daddy, I don't understand this!" Olive said in a low, unsteady voice. "I—I haven't sung. I—"

"Haven't sung?" Tom Walters regarded her, half puzzled, half indignant. "Why have you not sung, Olive?" he asked, in a surprised tone. "They had



Without warning, Olive was suddenly hugged and kissed vigorously by her chum, and when Winnie had released her, Olive found a crisp five-pound note in her hand!

no right to ask you to turn up and then disappoint you like this. They—"

He broke off in increased astonishment. Olive had run forward and, sinking down beside his chair, she had hidden her face upon his knee and was sobbing convulsively.

With relief at finding him uninjured had come reaction, and she was inclined to be just a little hysterical.

"Little girl, little girl, what's wrong?" the ex-signalman asked, in concern, as he caressingly touched her bowed head, then stroked her wealth of red-gold hair. "Come, come, this won't do, dear. Who has been unkind to you and upset you like this?"

For a few moments, Olive could not reply. Her shoulders shook, as she continued to be torn by choking sobs. Then, as growing a little alarmed, her mother shook her arm and spoke almost sternly to her, the girl exercised her will-power and somewhat recovered herself.

"No one has been unkind—at least not at the concert, daddy," she faltered. "But someone—someone sent a message to me saying you had met with a serious accident—that was why I did not sing."

"They said that I was injured—hurt?" Olive raised her tear-stained face and nodded, fighting with the fierce sobs that still threatened to come.

"Yes—a newspaper boy brought the message, she said. 'He told me a girl, who said she was a friend of mine, had given him half-a-crown to come to the hall and tell me. She had told him you had met with an accident, and he seemed to think from her manner that it was very serious. Of course, I rushed away, though I was almost due to go on to the platform and sing.'"

Tom Walters looked angry. "It was a cruel hoax on the part of some enemy, Olive," he declared. "Nothing is wrong with me—I have not even been in danger of being injured so far as I know. Someone sent the message just before you were due to appear to stop your singing and spoil your chance."

Again Olive nodded, realising that this could be the only explanation.

She sprang to her feet, dashing the tears from her long lashes.

"I am going back," she said. "There may even now be time for me to render my songs if I explain to Miss Crawford and Mr. and Mrs. Wilberforce, who are stage-managing the concert."

She spun round on her heels. Her parents did not attempt to stop her, and Olive darted from the rooms and went running down the stairs.

She was filled with gladness and relief to think that, after all, her father was not injured. But, also she experienced a sense of burning indignation at the thought of the cruel trick that had been played upon her.

But she did not speculate as yet as to who could be the author of it. Her one aim was to get back to the Memorial Hall with the greatest possible speed, in the hope that even now she might grasp the great opportunity the kindly Miss Crawford had found for her.

Through the streets sped Olive, forgetting that if she spent herself too greatly and arrived at the concert hall panting and breathless, it might be a considerable time ere she was in any condition to make her appearance upon the platform.

She reached the hall and made her way round to the entrance through which she and Miss Crawford had gone earlier that night, when she had been so full of enthusiasm and hope.

But, as Olive passed into the room at the side of the stage, where singers and

other performers had congregated whilst they awaited their turn, the faint hope she had retained was dashed.

Someone was at the piano upon the platform, playing the National Anthem to show that the entertainment was at an end, and the few singers and other entertainers who still remained in the waiting room, were saying "good-night" to one another and preparing to go home.

Her chance—the chance that might have meant so much—had gone!

Vainly, Olive glanced round for Miss Crawford, wanting to explain. The mistress, who had been present only out of kindly interest in the girl, whose songs she had agreed to accompany had apparently taken her departure.

Then, Olive saw Mr. Wilberforce, and hurried through the departing artistes to his side.

"Mr. Wilberforce, I—I want to explain," she panted; and the portly gentleman turned with a start of surprise. "I want to tell you what made me rush away!"

Olive's heart sank as she saw the cold expression that came into his face, and



"Excuse me, miss, are you Miss Walters?" the attendant asked. "Yes, I am Olive Walters," the girl answered, alarmed at the queer expression on the man's face.

the annoyance in his eyes. She wondered at it a little, not knowing that the attendant, who knew of the message that she had received, had been sent rushing away on an errand by Mrs. Wilberforce, and had failed to tell either that lady's husband or Miss Crawford of the reason for her departure.

"I am very busy just now, Miss Walters," the concert manager said shortly. "No doubt you had reason for being absent when it was your turn to take the platform, but I regret I have not the time to listen to your explanation tonight."

He bowed, and turning, walked away, leaving Olive with a lump in her throat and the tears creeping back into her eyes.

She wondered a little at his curt manner, for how was she to understand that he had put her last moment absence down to sudden stage-fright, and looked upon it as the essence of stupidity?

Slowly Olive turned and walked back to the street. She felt that Mr. Wilberforce, at all events, would never give her another opportunity.

By a contemptible trick, she had been robbed of her great chance. But, who had sent the cruel message—who?

The Scholarship Examination!

OLIVE Walters pondered that question on her way home and for long hours after she went to her bed that night. For grief and disappointment kept sleep from her eyes until the small hours of the morning, when worn out and weary, she cried herself into a fitful slumber.

Olive was of a generous nature, and although again and again thoughts of her enemy, Sybil Duke, had stolen into her mind, she hesitated for more than one reason to decide that Sybil was the guilty party.

True, Sybil had proved she hated her, yet Olive, apart from wondering if Sybil had known anything of her proposing to appear at the concert, could scarce bring herself to believe that even the daughter of Theodore Duke could sink to such meanness.

Olive was the kind of girl to force herself to think as well as she could even of one who had proved a foe. Had she had an inkling of how Sybil Duke had overheard her conversation with Winnie Norris that day on the river, she would have had to realise the truth, however—that the cruel hoax had been yet another blow aimed by the girl who had vowed to be revenged upon her.

As a matter of fact, Sybil Duke was planning even more wickedly against her, had Olive but guessed.

Though Sybil had never forgotten the doubts of her crony, Agnes Graham, and in her inmost heart sometimes herself wondered if the accident that had robbed her father of his memory had been no real fault of Olive's father, she deliberately blinded herself to this possibility.

She had set out on a mission of vengeance, and meant to pursue it relentlessly to the bitter end. Someone should suffer for her father's financial losses and his present mental condition, and that person should be Olive Walters, Sybil would tell herself fiercely.

On the morning after her great disappointment, Olive set out rather earlier than usual for school, in spite of having had so little rest.

She wanted to see Miss Crawford and tell her just what had happened, and arriving at St. Mildred's, she slipped up to the mistress's study.

To Olive it seemed that the coldness she had noticed with Mr. Wilberforce was in a lesser degree, reflected in the manner of the usually kindly and sympathetic mistress. But it vanished as Miss Crawford patiently listened to all Olive had to say.

"What a wicked thing to do!" Miss Crawford exclaimed, when Olive reached the end of her explanation. "But who could have been guilty of so mean an action against you, Olive?"

Olive shook her head. "I do not know, Miss Crawford," she answered, though again the name of Sybil Duke was occurring to her. "No—I have no idea who could have sent the message."

Miss Crawford tapped thoughtfully upon her desk with the blue pencil she had been using, as she corrected some composition papers from a lesson of the Third's of the previous day.

"It was most unfortunate, Olive," she said. "The attendant said nothing either to Mr. Wilberforce or myself, to the best of my knowledge, and Mr. Wilberforce was quite angry at having his programme disarranged, whilst I must confess that I thought you had acted stupidly. You see, we both imagined that you had become nervous and run away."

"The attendant said nothing! Oh, Miss Crawford, what could you have thought, after coming to the hall to play

(Continued on page 112.)



All readers who write me and enclose a stamped envelope may be sure of receiving a prompt reply by post. All letters should be addressed: The Editor, "The School Friend," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

My Dear Readers.—I remarked in my last that that next week's portrait is to be one for which you have waited just as eagerly as for any of the others. And now, when I inform you that No. 5 of our splendid series of coloured art cards is a beautiful portrait of

BESSIE BUNTER,

you will agree that I had not exaggerated. It is true that Bessie Bunter is not beautiful, but her face is as pleasant as it is plump, and Mr. Dodshon has made of the portrait one of the most pleasing and characteristic of the beautiful

TEN COLOURED ART CARDS

that are in process of being given free with the SCHOOL FRIEND. Of these, four have already been presented, and next week's grand card of Bessie Bunter makes the fifth. You simply must not miss this grand portrait of the plump, lovable and laughter-provoking Bessie Bunter.

As you know, Bessie Bunter is also to take the leading part in the magnificent new long complete story of the girls of Cliff House, entitled:

"BESSIE BUNTER'S TASK!"

By Hilda Richards.

It is now nothing new to see Bessie Bunter in a praiseworthy light. She still eats large quantities of food, she is still prone to wonderful exaggerations, and she is as funny and laughter-provoking as ever she was. But she is not the girl we remember in her early days at Cliff House. Then she was really mean and sometimes quite spiteful, and far more greedy than she is now. Her exaggerations were of a far more serious nature than they are now. And to see or hear of Bessie doing a good turn for anybody, or doing without food on anybody's account, would have occasioned the vastest surprise. Not so now! Bessie has shown time and again that she is a sterling, big-hearted girl, thoroughly honest and truthful when she is impressed by the importance of what she is about. And this is the light in which we see her next week. You will find Bessie's antics as amusing as ever, and yet—well, one cannot help but admire her for the part she plays, humorous as it is in many ways.

You will naturally expect something even more than usually entertaining from next week's number of

THE "CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY,"

for this, of course, will be nothing less than a

SPECIAL "BESSIE BUNTER" NUMBER.

A considerable part of this unique number is from the "talented" pen of Bessie herself, so you can be assured of many a hearty laugh at her quaint writings, and her quaint spelling—or "spelling," as she prefers to write it. Here are just a few of the many laughable features of this number: "Bessie's Funniest Doing This Week!" "About this Speshul Number!" "When I am Brown up!" "A Riformed Karrakter: the Kitchin Cat!" "My Pets at Bunter Court!" "Bessie Bunter: a Self-Krittisizum!" and several more both by Bessie and her chums. You will all be thoroughly pleased with this Special Bessie Bunter Number.

Does not our absorbing new serial,

"FRIENDSHIP FORBIDDEN!"

By Ida Melbourne,

grow more and more thrilling as the plot unfolds itself? Can the Limmershaw High

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 159.

School girls really have lit upon the smugglers' treasure? It will be wonderful luck for schoolgirls if they have, but—well, such good fortune seems too good to be true, does it not? We must see how events will transpire in next week's superb long instalment of this powerful serial. By recommending it to all your friends you will be doing a great favour both to them and to your favourite paper.

There will, as usual, be another fine long instalment of that other popular serial of ours—

"THE SIGNALMAN'S DAUGHTER!"

By Gertrude Nelson.

In this instalment we are destined to hear more about that missing exam. paper. Poor Olive has already been accused by Sybil Duke of taking it, and if, on top of that, Olive wins the exam.—But will Olive win? You will find this instalment of most enthralling interest.

Now, I wish to impress once again upon you the fact that there are, apart from that of Bessie Bunter,

FIVE MORE CARDS

to come. They will portray Barbara Redfern, Marjorie Hazeldene, Dolly Jobling, Phyllis Howell, and Augusta Anstruther-Browne. The name of the popular girl who is to follow Bessie will be given next week.

HAVE YOU WRITTEN YET ?

I am expecting a great shower of letters as a result of the publication of these wonderful enlarged numbers of the SCHOOL FRIEND. Of course, at the moment of writing these lines I am not in a position to know what this shower will exactly amount to, but I shall be disappointed if it is not something enormous—in fact, something more like a thunderstorm than a shower! Have you yourself written yet?

Well, I want you to. I want to hear from every one of you, and to learn exactly what you think of the SCHOOL FRIEND in its present form. Nothing gives me more pleasure than answering my readers letters, and each one will receive a prompt reply. By letting me know exactly what you think, and which features you like best, and which do not make quite such a strong appeal to you, you give me a more and more accurate idea of how to produce future numbers of your favourite paper. For instance, our last school serial, "Joan Haviland's Silence!" by Joy Phillips, gained such an immense popularity among my readers, that I was induced to have the present two serials dealing with school life, too. My judgment has so far been justified, for Miss Gertrude Nelson's serial is being enjoyed by you all; and Miss Ida Melbourne's exciting story will, I am equally confident, make just as strong appeal to you.

Therefore, you will see how important it is that you should ALL write to me, giving me your opinions, so that I can endeavour to meet the tastes of everyone as near as possible.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

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

"Babs and Mabs" (Cardiff).—I shall be very pleased to consider anything you care to send along to me.

"A Young Yiddish Reader."—Very interested to learn which characters are your favourites.

"The Jazz Girl" (York).—Glad to hear that Bessie Bunter amuses you so much. As to your question regarding Barbara Redfern, I will reply to you in full if you will send me your name and address.

Miss E. Wallhead (Allendale).—I am afraid I cannot just at present promise a "Morocco Weekly." Glad to learn which characters are favourites. The girls you name are immensely popular with all my readers.

"Billie and Rae" (Huddersfield).—The mistresses at Cliff House do not make favourites of any of the girls.

"A reader of the SCHOOL FRIEND (Burton-on-Trent).—It is very improbable that Babs and Mabs will ever quarrel.

Miss Esther Rousham (Bisley).—Many thanks for your suggestion, which I shall bear in mind, though I cannot promise that I shall be able to avail myself of it.

"Tarzan of the Apes" (Middlesex).—Most of my readers consider that Bessie Bunter is funnier now than ever she was in the past.

Miss L. Gilbey (Regent's Park).—Augusta Anstruther-Browne, as you know, is very shortly to take the leading part in a story.

"A Merry Pickle" (Fortrose).—I will reply to your letter in full if you will send me your name and address.

"Blue Danube" (Australia).—I cannot promise a story in which Barbara Redfern "falls in love." Neither can I promise a story in which Babs and Mabs quarrel. It is extremely doubtful if the latter would be welcomed by my readers.

"A Pair of Tomboys."—As Bunter Court does not really exist, it is impossible for the girls to pay a visit there. At your ages, fourteen years, you would probably be placed in the Fourth Form at Cliff House.

"A Lover of Babs" (Brigg).—Glad you are so fond of Barbara Redfern. You must be looking forward to the story in which she will shortly play the leading part. At your age, thirteen, you would probably be placed in the Upper Third Form at Cliff House—which would not be exactly a pleasant thing to wish for, would it? Ivy Lynn will come to Cliff House in the near future.

"A Lover of the Fourth Form" (Morecambe).—At your age, twelve years, you would probably be placed in the Third Form at Cliff House.

Miss D. Reeve and Miss A. Brown (Portsmouth).—Your wish regarding Bessie Bunter is to be gratified next week, as you will have seen by reading the above Chat. Yes, Barbara Redfern's parents are quite wealthy. Lady Hetty Hendon is probably the richest girl at Cliff House.

"Sparkling Eyes."—Yes, more stories of the Cliff House Girl Guides will be published in the future. I am glad you think the stories improve week by week. I am afraid I cannot at present say when, if at all, Lorna Grey will ever return to Cliff House.

Misses C. Hersh and R. Finch (St. Mary's Home).—You are right; the stories would not be the same without Bessie Bunter. You will learn all there is to be known about this interesting character next week. Phyllis Howell has no sister. No, Mrs. Hartley—nee Miss Bellow—will not return to Cliff House as a mistress. She is visiting Guide captain, however. Glad to hear that the "Cliff House Weekly," in its new form, is making such a strong appeal to you.

Your Sincere Friend,
YOUR EDITOR.

“Like
Summer
cream!”

Bird's Custard goes like fresh cream with stewed or tinned fruits, and it is only one-eighth the cost.



Bird's Custard

with any fruit in season keeps the system healthy and energetic, yet sufficiently well-nourished.

Whether the weather be broiling hot or pleasantly fresh, no one fails to welcome a delicious dish of Bird's Custard and fruit. Any kind of stewed fruit in season, or pineapple chunks, tinned peaches or apricots, is always appetising and enjoyable served with Bird's Custard.

C17c

THE SIGNALMAN'S DAUGHTER!

(Continued from page 110.)

my songs?" the unfortunate Olive cried, in distress.

"I was a little annoyed—it made me appear rather foolish in the eyes of the Wilberforces, Olive, but of course, now that I know the truth, I can feel only sympathy for you," the mistress answered. "I will write to Mr. Wilberforce and explain, though he is—well, just a little stubborn and obstinate, and I doubt whether he will give you another opportunity of appearing at a concert he is managing."

Then, as she saw how Olive's lips quivered and the keen disappointment that sprang into her eyes—

"But, do not be disheartened, dear! It was a cruel trick to play upon you, and after all, Mr. Wilberforce is not the only gentleman who arranges concerts. I know several other people connected with the concert world, and perhaps, before long I shall be able to obtain you another opportunity—who knows?"

Olive gulped at the lump that had risen in her throat, and thanked Miss Crawford for her kindness.

That day, the hours spent at school were more or less uneventful, but on the next, there came the long looked-forward to examination for the Sir John Howard scholarship.

Olive, Winnie Norris, Sybil Duke and other girls who had entered for the contest remained in the Fifth Form class room, whilst the remainder of the

Fifth joined the Fourth for a course of nature studies out of doors.

Miss Symes presided at her desk before the class whilst the examination was in progress, the girls being handed papers of questions and seated well apart to prevent any possibility of "cribbing."

The work went steadily on through the morning, and more than one anxious pair of eyes glanced nervously up at the clock, as the hour of closing drew near.

One of the first to finish was Olive, who had been working industriously during the whole morning.

"How did you get on, dear?" asked Winnie Norris, as she and her friend at length found themselves in the quad.

"I can hardly say, though the questions did not seem so difficult as I had expected, Winnie," replied Olive. "I—"

She heard a spiteful little laugh at her back, and breaking off and turning, she found Sybil Duke had emerged after herself and her friend.

"It makes all the difference when one knows many of the questions they are to be asked in an examination, and have had time to study them up," Sybil Duke sneered meaningly.

Olive went deathly white, knowing well enough that Sybil was referring to the scholarship paper which Miss Symes had missed from her desk, and which she—Sybil—had insinuated Olive had stolen.

An indignant cry broke from Winnie, and she seemed half inclined to run after Sybil and have the thing out with her. But, on second thoughts, Winnie shrugged her shoulders.

"Take no notice of her," she said, giving Olive's arm an affectionate

squeeze. "How are things progressing at home, Olive? Has your father any prospect yet of work?"

"I am afraid not, Winnie—there are so many unemployed just now, and luck seems right against him," Olive replied, her face going grave. "Poor old daddy. I feel so sorry for him when I see him come home night after night walking as though he can scarcely drag one foot after the other, and with a hopeless—Oh, so hopeless a look, Winnie, in his eyes."

She flushed a little. "I do not know what would have become of us, had it not been for your wonderful kindness, Winnie," she continued in a low earnest voice. "We should have lost our home—"

"Not another word, silly," Winnie cried, jumping at her in her impulsive way and kissing Olive's cheek. "I suppose you are going home to dinner? Goodbye! I shall see you this afternoon, of course?"

"Yes," Olive said, as she waved her hand in farewell and moved away towards the gates; and at the moment, neither of the two friends realised that Sybil Duke was watching them thoughtfully from the farther side of the quadrangle, or dreamed of the underhand plot that was in her mind!

(Olive does not appear to have had much difficulty with the examination questions. Can it mean that she will come out on top? But, if so, how will Sybil Duke act, especially when—But I must not in any way spoil your interest in next week's dramatic long instalment by revealing any of the developments. Please order your copy in advance to avoid disappointment.)