New Serial Starts To-day!

"NO JOY IN HER RICHES!"

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The School Friend

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Augusta Anstruther-Browne.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT!

(A dramatic moment in the magnificent new long complete story of the girls of Cliff House School.)

Special Article Inside! "ARE SCHOOL HOURS TOO LONG?"

Are SCHOOL HOURS Too Long?

YES!

"BOTHER it!" growled Winnie, my chum, as we escaped from Miss Wright's glance at last for a moment or two. "As though school hours aren't long enough without making us stop to fusty old lectures on the subject of Roman remains, and such thrilling things!"

"It is a nuisance!" I agreed, a good deal put out myself. "I'm sure I'm not a tiny bit interested in Roman remains—or any other remains. I specially wanted to get home."

"They keep us at it from morning till night!" went on Winnie, still determined to have her grouse out. "We have to get to school early enough—nine o'clock, or rather ten to nine—and we're stuck in a fusty old school-room for three and a half hours, with a ten minutes' break. We have to get back to school after dinner at two o'clock, and don't get off till half-past four; and then they have the cheek to keep us after school hours, to sit in a stupid old class-room and listen to a lecture on Roman remains."

Judging by the disgusted tone in which Winnie made this concluding remark, it was the last straw which broke the camel's back; but I confess, girls, that I entirely sympathised with Winnie.

Don't you think school hours are too long? I do.

I think school hours are miles too long, considering the heaps of things that schoolgirls are expected, and supposed, to do when they get home.

I know most mothers and music-teachers, and teachers as well for all that, can never understand why schoolgirls hate school, hate music practice, hate home lessons, and hate everything, in fact, but play. But I know the reason—Win and I have often talked the subject over.

They expect us all to do too much. It's a bit of a strain, you know, to expect a growing girl, full of the desire for strenuous bodily exercise, to sit still and listen to a teacher giving a lesson for five and a half or six hours a day. Then that same girl must perforce occupy the piano-stool for another hour, and do her homework—then help mother do little odd jobs, perhaps.

Taking it as a whole, I think most schoolgirls' lives are all at school. Of course, I know we've got to be trained to work, but I think the majority of girls will agree with me when I say grown-up people try to make us work too hard.

They're disappointed if our reports turn out badly, but it's taking things altogether from their point of view, and not from ours. I know perfectly well that I'm jolly well tired of lessons and tired of that old class-room long before half-past four in the afternoon.

I can just hear older people saying, "Ah, the girl who wrote that ought to have lived in the times when child labour was employed; when poor little children of seven and eight had to work ten, eleven, twelve hours and more, for their very existence. She would not grumble at her very easy fate, now."

Perhaps I ought to have lived in the dark ages, but I don't. I live in a world that expects schoolgirls and boys to work mentally, not twelve, but six hours a day—and I'm still sure that it's too long. There should be more breaks and more games, fewer dry lectures, and fewer detentions for every possible and impossible shortcoming.

Are school hours too long? Of course they are!

NO!

"NOW, girls, we will take this specimen. I want you specially to note——"

Ting-a-ling-a-ling!

Bang! bang! slam!

Miss Harting looked up, her eyes glinting.

"Girls," she said ominously, "although the bell has gone, my lesson has not yet concluded"—and she went on with the description of the flower she was holding, while twenty-two girls sat in silence and listened.

The Fourth are noted for the promptitude with which they welcome the bell which puts an end to lessons for the day. The minute school is over nearly all of us slam our desks and prepare to depart. And most of us grouse if we're kept a second over the prescribed hour of departure. Personally, I must confess I'm always glad, these days, when school is over; but that's not to say I think school hours are too long.

I don't!

I always used to think so, until my elder sister left school and went to business, and since then she's told me so many times that she would give anything to be back at school.

So I'm busy now, making the very best and most of my schooldays. And I've come to the conclusion that there is so much I want to pack into my schooldays that school hours are, if anything, too short for my liking.

But, personally, I should like to see school hours changed a little. I should like to have an hour or an hour and a half added on to school hours, in which we could all do our homework or prep.

I know the idea would necessitate more work; the school would have to remain open later in the afternoon, and there would have to be mistresses on duty; but, nevertheless, I think it would be an idea that would help all schoolgirls immensely, and then, once prep was over, they could go home and have the rest of the evening to themselves.

We had quite a discussion the other day, in the junior Common-room, on the subject of too long or too short school hours, and most of the girls came to the conclusion that junior girls should have their school hours lengthened, whilst senior girls should have an hour or half an hour put on to the time they spend in school.

I don't agree with that.

In fact, I don't really see what any schoolgirl has got to grumble about in the length of time they spend in school.

"Yes," argues one of my readers, "but in our school we have a teacher who drones on and on, and you simply can't listen to her. It's awful to sit still for an hour, while she's taking a lesson. Then suppose a mistress happens to be cross—it does occur sometimes, you know—that lesson that she takes is simply terrible. All lessons are too long."

I wonder how many girls there are in the world whose parents tell them that their school days are by far the happiest, and that "when they grow up," etc., etc. Well, I've determined that no grown-up shall have a chance to say that to me. I love my schooldays—I love the time I spend in school, and thoroughly enjoy everything connected with it. That's why I don't consider school hours are a minute too long.

What do you think about it?

(What is your opinion on this subject? Write and tell your Editor.)

The Opening Chapters of our Splendid New Serial!

NO JOY IN HER RICHES!

By JOAN INGLESANT.

One would have thought that RUTH HOPE should have been as happy as the day is long. She has a beautiful home, a kind and indulgent father, and is the lucky possessor of a cheerful disposition, and yet—she is unhappy! A most curious state of affairs, but one that forms the theme of quite the finest story you have ever read.

The Gardens of Disillusionment.

"OH daddy, daddy! Is this all ours?"

Ruth Hope's hands were clasped, and on her pretty face there was a look of radiant happiness—a look that delighted her father's heart, although he felt twinges of a remorse he was doing his best to stifle.

"Yes, Ruthie!" he whispered, as he laid his hand on her silvery fair hair. "It is all ours—yours and mine—and here we shall live!"

A sharp intake of breath greeted his words, and Ruth caught at her father's arm and clung to him.

"Roses and lilies, lawns, and—oh, such wonderful trees!" she whispered. "I never dreamt, never believed that your surprise was this—this wonderful garden with its water-lilies on a silver pool, and its sweeping lawns and long terraces! Oh, daddy!"

A strange smile hovered in John Hope's eyes for a moment, and then had gone. He was looking down into that beautiful and enthusiastic face. How like her mother she was in her joy. The same love and clinging nature, the same stalwart and proud character, the same joy in all the simple beauties of life.

"I knew you would be surprised," he whispered. "But I never fancied that you would be so surprised and delighted as this.

"Why," he added, "one would almost think that you had come from quite a poor home; it wasn't so bad at Eversley, was it?" he asked gently.

A film of tears had crept into Ruth's eyes as she raised them to her father's. Her lips trembled.

"There was a happiness we lost there, daddy," she whispered. "Something that made it wonderful and never to be forgotten, small as the house and gardens were!"

John Hope nodded.

He was looking out over those stretching lawns and was picturing the woman he had loved and lost. Ruth's mother, who had given such charm and delight to their pretty little home.

Mrs. Hope had gone, but she had left the beauty of her spirit behind her, and often, when John Hope and Ruth knelt over that little flower-girt grave beneath the soft laburnum-trees, they felt that she was very, very near them.

"Daddy," whispered Ruth, "I am sorry, I have made you sad!"

John Hope looked down at her with loving eyes, and drew her to him.

"Sometimes, Ruthie," he whispered, "I feel that she is not dead—I feel that she lives again in you."

For a moment he was silent, but only a moment, the next instant a soft smile had come into his eyes. Sadness lay in his heart, but his one object in life was to keep sorrow from Ruth.

"There will be happiness for you here, Ruth," he said. "The stretching gardens will be your kingdom, and no pain shall come into your life—none at all. There will be happiness and beauty. 'Roses, roses all the way,' as the poet said!"

Ruth caught her breath, and her eyes danced with light.

"Daddy, daddy!" she exclaimed, "I know—I know! If I could not be happy here, I feel that there is not such a thing as happiness. I know that I shall love everything, and I feel that there will be no shadows—none at all—in the future!"

"Pray Fate that it may be so," said John Hope reverently. "Now," he added, "there is work to be done. I have got to see the estate people and arrange for the telephone, there are one hundred and one things to be done, and done they must be. I can leave you to explore, can't I? But," he added, "don't get lost, the grounds are nearly large enough for you to miss your way!"

Ruth laughed merrily as she watched him walk away.

Her cup of happiness was full to overflowing.

All about her, as far as her eyes could see, the land belonged to her father.

Ruth had an eye for beauty, and the sweetly pretty Elizabethan manor-house had captivated her affections at once.

She could see it mistily through the trees now. Mullioned windows and ivy-covered porch over which roses hung. They climbed upwards to make the front of Rosedale Manor seem aflame with flowers.

Ruth, care-free and lighthearted, laughed into the sunlight that cast deep green shadows over the turf that had grown green and glistening through the care of centuries.

Happy! Why? Now she would always be happy—always!

There had only been one shadow in her life, and that had come when her mother had passed away after a short illness.

Seating herself beneath a spreading elm-tree, she made rosy plans for the future. There would be village fetes and bazaars, she would make friends, and they could enjoy this glorious garden with her.

Flattering sweet dreams came into her mind—days of joy and laughter to come, evenings of wonder when the great diamond stars peeped down from the blue mantle of the summer night and laughed into the unruffled surface of the lily pool.

She could see that pool from where she sat. It gleamed like a large crystal, and was set in the most beautiful spot of that lovely garden.

It lay in a hollow with the lace-like leaves of the acacia-trees hanging over it as though trying to kiss the still loveliness of the pool.

Water lilies floated in great profusion, and the sudden reddening of the pool's surface was the glinting light from the scales of goldfish that gave additional glory to the clear depths.

Ruth clasped her hands, and her eyes were large with wonderment.

She had never dreamed that the heart could hold such a quantity of joy. Her happiness held her spellbound.

Slowly she rose to her feet, and idled towards the pool, and the sun as it found her little frock and her face and hair named her as being lovely as the flowers to which it gave an added charm.

Little did she know that eyes followed her movements.

Eyes that were as green as jade and as mysterious. Strange, keen, and hard eyes—eyes that were secretive and cunning in their glances—eyes that peered enviously through willow fronds.

A mouth that seemed as one small crimson line became even thinner, and a peculiar smile lay on that mouth—a smile that was covert and scheming.

The next moment the eyes had turned away, and a swift figure crept stealthily through the dense undergrowth of a little wild patch in this natural garden.

Ruth came to the marble stones that ringed the pool around. There was a white marble seat set beneath some trees, and upon this seat she sat down and

Ruth could see her own face mirrored in the water, and there was another face there now—the face of a keen-eyed girl!

looked into the mirror-like depths of the pool.

She could see her face in the clear depths, and she laughed into the water, and her eyes smiled back at her.

"Oh, I am happy—so happy in this sheltered garden, where no gloom, no unhappiness can come!"

Suddenly she looked up. Was it fancy, or had a laugh, a mocking laugh, really cut into the summery air?

Ruth looked about her, but there was no sign of any figure—it was as though she were alone in all the world at that moment.

Strange though! Something had sent a shiver through her heart—something unexplainable. There had been an unpleasant note in that laugh; but it wasn't a laugh, it must have been a bird. The garden was empty save for herself, and her father was in his study busy with his work.

"Foolish thoughts, Ruth!" she whispered to herself. "You are letting happiness get the better of you!"

A vagrant wind stealing through the trees fanned her cheek, the scent of the flowers came to her, and, parting her lips, she drew in the freshness of the air, and was glad.

Something suddenly ruffled the pool, and she leant forward, to see a goldfish swimming down into the coloured weeds that stirred lazily in the crystal depths.

She watched its descent, and then a sudden cry came to her lips.

Were her eyes deceiving her?

Ruth could see her own face mirrored in the water, and there was another face there now—the face of a keen-eyed girl.

What could it mean?

She sat up suddenly and looked behind her, and as she did so there came a rustling of leaves, and then silence.

Ruth sprang to her feet and looked about her. There was not a sign of anyone save herself.

Thoroughly surprised now, she ran through the trees and peered keenly down their shady aisles.

No one was there. But stay——

A speck of white in the distance caught her notice. It was gone as quickly as it had appeared, and now she fancied that she saw a figure flitting through the trees.

A laugh came into her eyes.

Someone had been attracted to the garden, and had invaded it to examine its beauties.

No doubt it was someone young who had fancied the house empty.

Ruth sped down the aisle between the trees, and now she caught sight of a white frock and a pair of quickly moving legs that sped over the turf of a little glade.

Ruth followed, and called out as she ran, but the figure she pursued did not stop.

Ruth saw the flash of the dress, and, judging that the runner had doubled on her tracks, she cut off at right angles, waited behind a laurel-bush, and regained her breath.

Feet—hurrying feet—were coming towards her. Now they were nearer, and now——

Ruth stepped out and faced a flushed-faced girl, who, seeing her, came to a dead stop.

And the colour drained from the newcomer's face.

"Hallo!" said Ruth, with a smile. "You needn't have run away like that!"

Her eyes had taken in the other girl—for girl she was.

The invader was dark, and it was the same face that Ruth had seen mirrored in the pool.

There was no smile in the eyes, though, and the mouth was mocking and contemptuous.

It seemed that the girl was recovering from the start that Ruth had given her.

"Well?" she asked abruptly, almost rudely.

Ruth smiled.

"I thought that I was alone in my garden," she said softly. "I did not think——"

"Your garden!" came the biting ejaculation. "Who said that it was your garden?"

Ruth flushed.

"I am Ruth Hope," she answered quietly. "My father is the owner of Rosedale Manor!"

A harsh and bitter laugh greeted her words.

"Oh, I see!" came the sharp exclamation. "You are the daughter—his daughter!"

A peculiar emphasis had been laid on the "his."

"I am," said Ruth softly.

The girl's manner was irritating in the extreme, and Ruth was suddenly stung to the question.

"What are you doing here?" she asked in quiet tones.

The girl's lips curled into a contemptuous smile.

"I have more right here than you have!" she cried bitterly. "More right than the daughter of that man!"

"What do you mean?" asked Ruth, angry and amazed.

"I mean what I say!" came the sharp reply. "And if you knew, you, too, would understand!"

Ruth had never seen such hatred on any face as the hatred that had come into this one on the mention of her father.

Those green eyes had become tiny points of bitter light, and the hard mouth was cruel and defiant.

"This is all a riddle to me," Ruth murmured. "I don't understand. I fancied you had come into the garden by mistake. Now I find you saying strange things—things that puzzle me. Who are you?"

The girl laughed sharply and placed her arms akimbo.

"I am Sylvia Severance," she answered. "Perhaps that will explain matters to you—perhaps that will convey my meaning——"

A look of utter surprise crossed Ruth's face.

"Severance—Severance!" she whispered. "My father bought this house and estate from Mr. Severance. They were associated in business."

"Bought! Bought!" echoed Sylvia scornfully. "You mean, stolen—stolen! That is what you mean!"

The words lashed into Ruth's brain. They were unbelievably cruel; they had been said with such biting incision; they had a ring of frightening sincerity about them.

"Try and enjoy it!" continued Sylvia. "Try and find glory in the flowers, the gardens, the sweet pool by which I saw you seated; try and draw loveliness from it if you can! It is not yours—not yours to enjoy or admire, not yours to have or keep! It is all false—all false! Your joys will be false, for you will know—always know—that you are an interloper! Nay, worse—a usurper! The daughter of a thief—a thief——"

"Stop!"

Ruth's cry rang through the garden. Her hands were clasped to her face, but the heart-flung exclamation had escaped her lips.

Sylvia smiled cruelly.

"I shall not stop!" she said bitingly. "I shall say what I have to say, and I shall say it to-day, to-morrow, and the next day!"

"You shall not! You shall not!" said Ruth almost fiercely. "The gardens shall be barred to you—the house forbidden you! I shall not see you! For what you say is untrue!"

Sylvia Severance laughed—laughed mockingly.

"And I shall not see you again to-day, or to-morrow, or the next day, sha'n't I, Miss Hope?" she scoffed. "And how will you prevent me seeing you and telling you again and again that your father is a thief?"

"You cannot help yourself!" came Ruth's quick response. "You fancied you were clever in saying what you said about my father; but, for all that, you shall not be allowed here!"

In amazement Ruth was looking at Sylvia as she continued:

"You have told untruths about my father. You shall be barred the gardens, I tell you. Instructions will be given," Ruth added. "My father——"

Sylvia smiled—a smile of mocking contempt.

"He cannot keep me out. You cannot keep me out," she said incisively. "And for a very good reason——"

"What reason?"

"For the simple reason, Miss Hope," whispered Sylvia smoothly, and in calculated tones, "that your father would never dare——"

"But he would dare—for he is innocent of all you accuse him!"

"Not he!" mocked Sylvia. "Not likely that Mr. John Hope would go against me, or forbid me the house; for you must know a very important thing—a very important fact that prevents you keeping me from Rosedale Manor."

"There can be no fact that can prevent me carrying out what I intend," said Ruth firmly.

"But there can!" came the instant response. "A thing you have not reckoned with in the slightest degree!"

Ruth raised an indignant face to that of Sylvia Severance.

"You have stayed too long," she said coldly. "You can go—and now!"

Sylvia only smiled.

She came a step nearer to Ruth until she was almost touching her, and the older girl's eyes were piercing like flames into the face of Ruth Hope.

"Go—go! You tell me to go!" she whispered viciously. "How can you tell me to go when—when," she murmured bitingly, "I stay here—must stay here because your father dare not turn me out!"

Ruth stepped back in amazement, and looked blankly at the tall and imperious girl.

"Stay here?" she cried.

"Yes, Miss Simple!" came the retort. "You fancied yourself clever a moment since. You were going to bar me from the gardens, forbid me the house, weren't you? Little did you know that it was not in your power—not in your father's power—to do this!"

Ruth's hands had fallen limply to her sides. She was looking at Sylvia Severance as though Sylvia were some statue.

She was trying to collect her thoughts, trying to grasp out and retain those silken cords of happiness that had wound themselves about her so short a time since, and which now, one by one, had been snapped and drawn from her.

Her heart was aching. Tears were very near to her eyes.

It was all too terrible and unbelievable. But then calmer reasoning bade her doubt this jade-eyed girl.

Sylvia Severance was standing and watching Ruth with a gloating smile of satisfaction wreathing her thin lips. It seemed as though she was enjoying to the full each heartrending emotion that swept through Ruth Hope's soul.

A smile lay in her hard eyes, and she laughed mockingly.

"You know now—know all!" she said cruelly. "Go and enjoy your gardens and your home now—revel in the new luxuries to which you have come—luxuries to which you are not used. See if you do not find thief branded on every tree. Why," she cried, "the very flowers will mock you—the branches of the elms will laugh at you when the wind touches them, for you have no right here—none; and I have. That is why I stay, and why one day you will have to go!"

Sylvia gave a sharp laugh, and then turned on her heel and languidly walked away, leaving a bewildered and trembling girl behind her.

In a few minutes all the joy of the morning and of this wonderful surprise had been snatched from Ruth. In its place had come bitterness and an awful doubt.

Were the girl's words true?

Was her father a thief?

But no—no, that could not be true! She would go to him and tell him everything, and he would smile and explain to her—convince her that what had been said was a tissue of falsehoods.

And then reason came into Ruth's brain.

If the girl was speaking untruths, how was it that she was living here—remaining in the home that once her father had possessed? That was a fact that could not be explained unless, in its explanation came an absolute proving of her biting and accusing words.

"A thief!" she whispered to the warm wind, and the wind seemed to echo: "A thief!"

— — —

Growing Suspicions.

"RUTH, this is Sylvia—Sylvia Severance. I want you and Sylvia to be very good friends."

Ruth was holding on to her father's desk, and now, as he spoke, she extended a lifeless hand to the hard-faced girl who smiled mockingly at her, and they shook.

Some few moments since she had been summoned to her father's study, and, truth to tell, she had not known how she could face him. The presence there of Sylvia had not helped or encouraged her one little bit.

Her heart was beating with hammer-strokes, and she wondered if her face was betraying her real feelings.

John Hope glanced from Sylvia's calm and confident face to the pale visage of his daughter. He wondered at her pallor. Had she not been the embodiment of joy when he had shown her the gardens that afternoon.

He made no comment, however, although his keen eyes had noticed the lack of enthusiasm when the two had bowed and had then shaken hands.

Neither had betrayed the fact of their previous meeting, and he put the slight stand-offishness to Ruth's natural restrain and retiring disposition. He had always looked upon Sylvia as being a strange girl.

Her looks had revealed nothing. She wore a mask of controlled feelings, and John Hope saw nothing to make him give her a second glance.

Nor did he notice that Ruth's eyes were averted. There were business things to attend to, and he looked to the two girls to entertain each other for the evening.

"Sylvia is staying here for the time being," said Mr. Hope. "You will consider her as our guest, Ruth," he added. "I leave you two to make plans together, and I am sure you will get on well!"

There was a suggestion in his words that he wished to be left alone, and both girls realised the fact.

Sylvia, a peculiar smile of triumph on her lips, turned and walked from the room, but Ruth hesitated.

"Well, Ruth?" smiled Mr. Hope, inquiry in his eyes.

"Daddy——"

There was a sigh in Ruth's tone as she uttered the word, and she was going to speak—speak out and have this thing settled for all; but then the terrible thought that her father might have to confess the truth, came over her, and with a forced laugh she backed towards the door.

"There was a question," she whispered. "But it will keep until the morning!"

"If my little girl wishes to speak now——"

John Hope's face was kindness personified; his voice was soft and full of affection.

Ruth's fluttering heart bade her keep silent.

"No—no!" she whispered. "The morning—in the morning, daddy!"

She flushed, and before he could call her back, she had turned and had run from the room.

The anxious eyes of John Hope followed her, and now, instead of turning to his work, he laid down his pen and looked thoughtfully into the distance.

There was a slight frown on his forehead, and his eyes were not the eyes of a man who is happy with his thoughts.

He shook his head, and then, stretching out his hand, picked up a photograph which was standing on his desk.

It was in a silver frame, and was the photograph of a very beautiful woman. The eyes were the trusting eyes of Ruth.

"I know all!" cried Sylvia Severance. "I know that your father stole this estate—yes, stole it!"

There was something honest about the chin—something that demanded honesty in others.

And, as he looked at it, his lips formed two words that he did not utter.

"I wonder!"

Then, with a deep sigh, he placed his lips to the photograph, laid it down, and continued with his work.

Ruth, shivering slightly, although the night was not cold, stood in the hall, uncertain as to how to spend the evening.

Miss Hope, her father's sister and now the housekeeper at Rosedale Manor, had gone to her room complaining of a headache.

Ruth was not sorry, for there had never been much love lost between Miss Hope and herself. Agnes Hope, John Hope's eldest sister, was of the hard and calculating type, and her nature contrasted strangely with the soft and sincere characteristics of her niece.

When Ruth's mother had died, Agnes Hope had come to manage her brother's household, and although there had been no quarrel, Ruth had always felt that at some period of her father's married life, sister Agnes and Ruth's mother had never quite hit it off together.

Ruth sighed deeply, and wondered how she should spend the evening.

Had Sylvia been anyone other than Sylvia Severance, there might have been possibilities; but now, no possibilities presented themselves.

A little shudder stole through Ruth's frame, and she walked into the empty dining-room. The servants had just cleared dinner away, and Ruth was glad to be alone—alone with her thoughts.

Her eyes saw the crest above the mantelpiece, and she started back at the realisation that she was really a stranger in this house, that the crest there was the Severance crest and coat-of-arms, and that Sylvia was the only person who had a real right to remain here.

The thought made her tremble.

Inwardly she felt as though to fly the place would be the best course.

Why hadn't she spoken to her father? It had been better to find out at once—discover if what Sylvia had said were false or true.

In Ruth's mind there were not many doubts. Her father's anxiety for Sylvia and her to be friends; the fact that Sylvia remained here. These things seemed conclusive evidence of her father's guilt.

She heard a soft laugh echo behind her, and turned to see the mocking face of Sylvia regarding her.

"So, you see," whispered Sylvia Severance, "I was right and you were wrong. You are here under false pretences, and you've got to realise the fact, Ruth Hope!"

Ruth did not speak.

With a dead white face she looked at Sylvia, and then, turning her back on the cruel-faced girl, she walked from the dining-room and made her way to the library.

Perhaps she could find a book here—here amidst the neatly-arranged volumes and the legal boxes that Mr. Hope had transferred from Eversley, their late home.

The library of Rosedale Manor had always been one of its chief prides. It was furnished in black oak, and at the farther end of it, by the fireplace, there was an inglenook with two old oaken pews to either side of it.

These pews had high backs, and at first sight looked like boxes, for one could not see the seats of them from the middle of the library.

Ruth found a book, and taking it to the inglenook, seated herself lengthwise on one of the oaken pews and commenced to read.

But reading came difficult to her. There were so many thoughts in her mind that obtruded to drive the plot of the story from her attention, and at last she laid the book down and gave herself up to thought.

"Daddy! Daddy!" she whispered. "If only this thing were not true—if only my bitter thoughts could cease their evidence against you!"

But, expressed as her thoughts were, that fact did not give her relief or peace, and now her little face was lined and troubled, the light had gone from her eyes, there was no smile on her lips.

She sat there looking into the embers of the small, and unnecessary, fire. The evening was close, almost sultry, and only convention had made the under-housemaid light the fire.

The flickering embers brought no encouragement, no happy castles in their flames—only the terrible feeling that her father might be found out, and robbed of all that he owned, and honour as well.

Something came into her thoughts—a sound—and it was not a usual sound. It was soft and secretive, the noise that a careful footstep would make.

Ruth sat back in the inglenook. Perhaps Sylvia had come into the library.

She hoped that Sylvia would not see her, for she did not want to suffer more agonies—she had suffered enough that day as it was.

Ruth waited and listened. The newcomer had stopped—had paused in some part of the library.

The sound of metal upon metal came to Ruth's ears.

What could that mean, she wondered?

Perhaps, Ruth pondered, she should make her presence known—but no, if Sylvia saw her Sylvia was bound to open up the old subject, and she could not stand that—not that.

Turning her head she glanced round the pew, and what she saw sent amazement into her eyes!

Bending over one of the japanned tin deed-boxes that her father had brought to the Manor, was one of the maids.

Ruth recognised her at once.

It was Mildred, the youngest servant in the house, and Mildred was looking into the tin box and poking about amidst its contents as though life depended on her doing so.

Ruth watched her with fascinated eyes.

It had been her first thought that she would convey to Mildred the knowledge that it was not usual for a servant to pry into her master's affairs, but as she watched the girl, a feeling that something lay behind this came to Ruth, and she sat back and watched.

Mildred's busy hands moved bundles of papers to either side, and once or twice she lifted papers out of the box, and after examining them, slipped them back again.

She was so engaged when, from the hall without, there came the sound of footsteps.

With a hurried movement, Mildred slipped the papers back in the box she had opened and closed the lid softly.

The maid had barely done so when the door opened and Mr. Hope walked into the library.

He seemed surprised at seeing Mildred, but the maid had lost none of her presence of mind.

"Just came in to see if the fire was all right, sir!" she murmured.

For a moment he did not speak. He looked closely at the maid.

"I see, Mildred," he said at last.

Mildred walked sharply from the room, and John Hope watched her go.

Ruth saw the anxious expression in his eyes, and, forcing herself to be calm she sat back, for he was walking towards the inglenook.

Apparently he had only one interest. It was the fireplace that commanded his attention, for he was examining it carefully, and from a position where he could not see Ruth.

"H'm!" he exclaimed, seemingly not convinced that Mildred had been attending to the fire.

Then, turning, he walked towards one of the boxes, lifted the lid, extracted a paper, and returned to his study.

Ruth's amazement knew no bounds.

That Mildred had told a falsehood she knew full well, but what amazed her was that her father should have taken such pains to find out whether or not the girl was speaking the truth.

Mystery was crowding upon mystery—unhappiness on unhappiness.

"Father, is Sylvia telling the truth?"

ALL night long she had tossed to and fro in her bed, trying to woo the sleep that would not come.

Perhaps the sultry nature of the night had conspired to make sleep a difficult matter, but Ruth's brain was on fire with fears and misgivings.

Once she had stolen from bed and looked out over the gardens of Rosedale Manor, to see them lit up beneath the fitful flashes of summer lightning. The storm that had threatened with early evening had not broken over the district, but somewhere it was raging, and the tail end of it was giving an ominous sound to the night.

As Ruth gazed below her there came a broader flash than usual, and for a moment the trees were picked out against the lightning, and in that moment Ruth fancied she could see a figure running across the lawn—a girlish figure!

She craned her head forward, and waited for another flash. It came, but revealed nothing. She convinced herself at last that she had seen nothing, that all this was the outcome of her fevered imagination, and the suspicions that Sylvia Severance had implanted in her heart.

Ruth returned to her bed, and at last, with the first faint tints of the angry dawn, she fell asleep and dreamed on end. Grotesque visions came to her, pictures of the hours of sleep, in which the jade-coloured eyes of Sylvia followed her with relentless persistency.

She was glad when at last she awoke; but then, with the return of memory, her fears increased tenfold.

Ruth determined that she could not stand it any longer—the matter would have to be thrashed out.

Nor did the day help her. It was a morning that threatened rain to come, and a mist hung over the lawns and gardens of the manor.

The manor—her home!

An ironic smile came into Ruth's eyes, and she dressed listlessly, nor did breakfast fascinate her.

Sylvia, bright and smiling, was seated next to Miss Hope, and Miss Hope had been somewhat tart in her remarks as Ruth had entered the breakfast-room.

"You're very late, Ruth!" she snapped. "We can't have Eversley hours here, you know. Rosedale Manor is a large house to manage, and things must be done with method here."

Ruth flushed as her father raised inquiring eyes from his correspondence. He frowned slightly as he looked at his sister.

"I must teach Ruth to conform to Rosedale hours, dear Miss Hope," said Sylvia sweetly.

There was such apparent sincerity in

Sylvia's manner that Mr. Hope smiled and nodded.

Ruth bent over her plate with the tears very near to her eyes.

Sylvia and Miss Hope chatted together and apparently the topic was dress.

Miss Hope, turning from Sylvia, looked at Ruth.

"You must try to smarten Ruth up, Sylvia," she murmured, with apparent sweetness, although a barb lay beneath the soft expression. "She is inclined to get dowdy, aren't you, Ruth dear?"

Ruth raised a flushed and annoyed face to that of her aunt.

"I haven't noticed it, aunt," she answered. "I confess that I do not spend all my thoughts on my clothes."

Miss Hope's eyes narrowed.

"Don't get cross, my dear," she said. "I was only hinting that Sylvia, here, might——"

"Sylvia can keep her dress ideas to herself," said Ruth, almost losing her temper. "I can look after myself quite well!"

Sylvia was smiling blandly.

"Of course, dear Miss Hope," she murmured, "if Ruth ever does want my assistance in such matters she can have it and gladly. You know that, Ruth?" she said, leaning across the table.

Ruth did not speak. She glanced at Miss Hope, whose attention was directed to Sylvia Severance.

"How thoughtful you are, Sylvia child!" said John Hope's sister. "I am sure that Ruth doesn't meet your offer with the generous spirit in which it was made, but you must make amends for Ruth. The lack of influence of a mother, you know!"

"Agnes!"

John Hope had raised his head from his correspondence and was looking daggers at his sister.

"Yes, John?" said his sister.

"I will ask you to leave Ruth's mother out of it!" he said sharply. "I am quite satisfied with Ruth and Ruth's clothes—you understand?"

Miss Hope rose to her feet, and threw her serviette on to the chair.

"I can see that you side with your daughter against your sister, John!" she snapped. "It was always like that with you. Even as a child you were obstinate."

With that she walked from the room, and Mildred entered to clear away the breakfast things.

Ruth fancied that Mildred cast a sharp glance at Sylvia, and that Sylvia returned it, but she could not be sure.

Mr. Hope gathered up his correspondence, and, with a worried look on his face, hurried off to his study.

Mildred, completing her duties, left the room; but at the door she paused, looked at Sylvia, and shook her head.

Ruth saw the action and glanced at Sylvia. Sylvia had not taken the slightest notice of Mildred's signal, if signal it was.

The eyes of Sylvia Severance were focused on Ruth, and Ruth found them hard and compelling.

"And how do you like your wealth?" she mocked.

Ruth rose from the table, folded her serviette, and then faced Sylvia.

"What you have said is a tissue of falsehoods!" Ruth exclaimed hotly. "And you know it, Sylvia Severance!"

Sylvia's eyes narrowed, and she smiled with her lips.

"That is where you are wrong, Miss Clever!" she retorted, with a light laugh. "I spoke the truth, and I reiterate the truth—you have no right here, and you will soon learn that you have no right. Your father has thieved this property, and he will have to answer for that theft—you mark my words and see if he doesn't!"

Ruth clenched her hands.

"Come with me!" she cried. "Come with this story to my father and see what he says!"

For a moment Sylvia hesitated. Her face had paled slightly—she had drawn back.

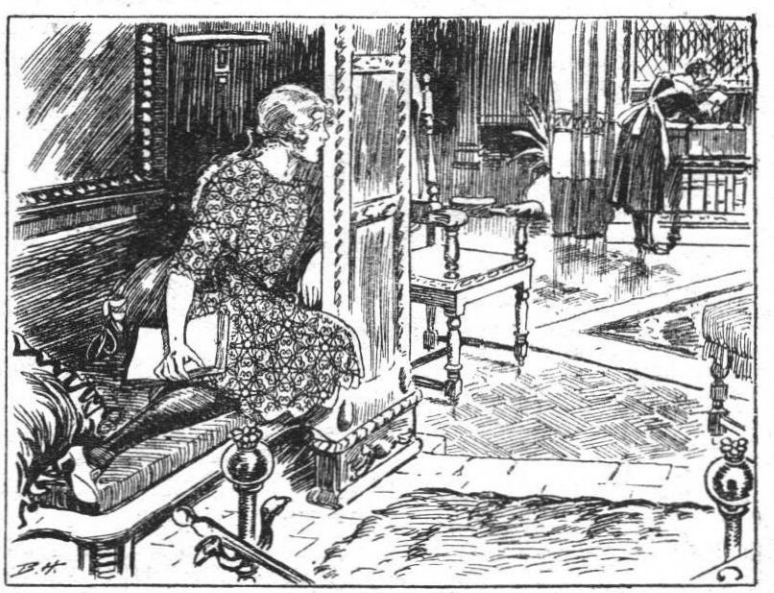
"I am not afraid of that!" she said at last. "Far from it. If you want the truth you can have it, and as soon as you like!"

"Then let it be now!" cried Ruth. "I will not stand these accusations against my father any longer!"

She walked towards the door, and Sylvia followed her. For one trembling moment she had fancied that Sylvia would not make good her boast, and her heart sank as she saw that the other girl was coming towards the door.

They did not speak as they walked through the hall.

Ruth tapped on her father's study door, and, as she heard the soft "come in," she turned the handle and entered the study.



It was Mildred, the youngest servant in the house, and she was looking into the tin box and poking about amidst its contents as though her life depended on it.

John Hope looked up in surprise.

"Well?" he inquired, raising his eyebrows. "What is it, Ruth? What is the matter?"

As he said this he glanced at Sylvia, nervously, as Ruth fancied.

"Daddy!" she exclaimed. "I hated coming here on the mission upon which I have come, but it had to be done, daddy!"

"Well?" he prompted.

Ruth raised her hand and pointed to Sylvia.

"Sylvia Severance here has accused you," she cried—"accused you of being a thief, daddy—of having stolen her home! Tell me—tell me that what she says is false—quite false!"

John Hope had cast a blazing glance at Sylvia and that girl had paled, and was holding on to his desk as if for support.

For a moment he did not speak. He looked at Sylvia as though to lash her with his gaze, and lash her it appeared to do, for she wilted beneath his glance.

"Daddy!"

Questioning, appealing hands were extended to John Hope. The dear true eyes of Ruth were gazing into his own whilst her fond heart suffered unutterable tortures as she waited—waited for his denial to ring out and confound this girl who had accused him of theft—theft of her home.

"Tell me—tell me that she has spoken falsehoods!" cried Ruth.

John Hope lowered his eyes.

"Daddy!" she exclaimed. "Why do you not speak? Speak, daddy—for pity's sake speak!"

There was dumb suffering in John Hope's eyes as he raised them to his daughter's.

He laid one of his hands on her shoulder—tenderly and comfortingly.

"My little girl must go and have a game of tennis," he murmured. "Have I not supplied her with the most wonderful of gardens, the best kept of tennis lawns? Go and play, Ruth!"

Ruth looked up, her eyes suffused with tears.

"Go with Sylvia, Ruth," he whispered again.

Dumb pain in her eyes, she turned on her heel and walked from the room.

He had not spoken. Her father had not denied the terrible accusation, and there was guilt on his face.

Ruth, her limbs suddenly grown weary, paused on the Manor threshold, and, as she did so, the tall figure of Sylvia stole to her side.

"What did I tell you?" she whispered triumphantly. "What did I tell you, Ruth Hope? Did he deny it—did he deny it?"

(And so the beauties of Rosedale Manor have all vanished for poor Ruth Hope. She feels that it is not hers to enjoy. She is here under false pretences. Does not her father's silence prove that? And now, what is she to do? Next week's long instalment of this splendid story will enthrall you more than ever. Order your copy of the SCHOOL FRIEND *at once so as to be sure of securing the next issue.)*

Augusta's Trust!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of the Girls of Cliff House School, featuring Augusta Anstruther-Browne.

By HILDA RICHARDS.

Glad News For Augusta!

"NOT cricketing?"

Augusta Anstruther-Browne shaded her eyes from the scorching sun, and allowed her cricket-bat to slide through her hand until it rested upon the ground.

As she asked the question, she smiled at a sun-tanned girl who was taking advantage of the shady porch of the school entrance.

The afternoon was alight with summer sunshine, and the quadrangle, with its tall, leafy trees, made a picturesque scene.

Cliff House, with its magpie walls and Tudor carving, seemed built on memories of summer days.

But no less alluring were the playing-fields, where white-clothed figures made elusive shadows.

"I'm going on the river soon," answered Philippa Derwent lazily, as she pulled her panama hat further over her eyes. "At present I'm waiting for the postman. Poor old chap's having a rest, I suppose. The lane's frightfully dusty."

"Something awfully important—I see. Well, if it's a remittance, I hope you get it."

Philippa Derwent shook her head.

"The Australasian post's in," she explained. "My people write nearly every post, and I'm anxious to get this particular letter."

"The Australasian post?" exclaimed Augusta. "Oh!"

Philippa Derwent hailed from sunny Tasmania, and the Australasian post had a special interest to her, for naturally she longed to hear of her people in the far-off colony.

But Augusta was no less interested. She was smiling brightly, and her eyes shone.

Philippa, looking at her, noted the smile.

"May be a letter for you, too," she suggested. "Your people are still in Australia, aren't they?"

Augusta nodded; and then a thoughtful look came into her eyes. She almost forgot the sunny afternoon, the green playing-fields, the chirping birds.

She was thinking of the time not so far distant when her father and mother, their money lost, had gone to Australia to recoup their fortune.

The time seemed long to Augusta, and letters from Australia were more than welcome.

"I'm going to wait with you, then," she announced. "There's almost certain to be a letter for me."

And, leaning upon her bat, she waited in the shady porch beside the Tasmanian girl.

"I shall wake old Biggs up when he does come," Philippa yawned. "If he doesn't come in a minute, I shall fall asleep. Fancy keeping a girl waiting all this time! I've a good mind to buy a wireless set and have wiry words with the pater down under."

"Not at all a bad idea," smiled Augusta. "But—— Hallo! Here he comes!"

They both stepped forward as through the school gates came the portly though beut figure of Postman Biggs.

His heavy boots crunched the dusty drive, and the two girls, to save him further weary paces, hurried to meet him.

"Letter for me?" asked Augusta.

"And me?" added Flap.

Postman Biggs sighed, slung his bag round to the front, and opened it.

"I dunno as 'ow I 'ave!" he murmured slowly. "And yet I can't say I ain't. Miss Redfern, Miss Stone, Miss Augusta Anstruther-Browne — there's yours, miss."

He sorted out the Cliff House letters, and handed one to Augusta.

A brief glance at the stamp and the writing told her that it was from Australia, and from her father.

Philippa Derwent almost snatched her letter from the postman.

"You'll deliver these others?" he asked doubtfully.

"Yes; leave them with us, Biggy," said Philippa, and she took them. "And there's something for luck."

She slipped the postman a shilling, and he, with cheerful smile and nod, took his crunching departure along the drive.

"Now," said Philippa, "for a good old read. Come under the elms——"

But Augusta was already half-way to the elms, reading her letter line by line, holding it quite tightly. Her breathing was short with excitement, and presently she lowered the thin, closely-written sheets, and turned to her companion.

"Flap!" she exclaimed, calling the girl by her nickname. "Oh, Flap—such news!"

Flap waved her hand, then looked up.

"Hallo! What's bitten you?" she inquired genially. "Have they sent a fiver?"

"Better than that!" exclaimed Augusta, her eyes shining with excitement

"Better—ten?" asked Philippa incredulously.

"No, no—a thousand times better than that! Oh, Flap, dad is on his feet again—he is coming home, and once again he will be rich. We shall have a home——"

"My word! Honest Injun! He's really struck gold——"

"Not gold! But he's on something important, and he's coming home——"

Augusta caught Flap by the arm.

"Oh, don't you see? Can't you understand?" she exclaimed in an excess of joy. "They're coming home, pater and mater—both of them. I shall see them again soon. To-morrow——"

She looked back at the letter.

Flap Derwent, smiling, gripped her friend's hand.

"Jolly good luck!" she cried, in her jovial way. "My word Augusta, I believe I'm as bucked as you! This is simply splendid—tophole! I—I only wish my people were coming," she added, rather wistfully.

"Poor old Flap! Perhaps they will—I didn't think mine were coming. See? He's sent me a paper—something awfully important."

She held up a foolscap envelope that had been folded into the rather large letter she had received.

"Plans or something?" asked Philippa.

"He didn't say what it is exactly—only I'm to meet him at Southampton when he lands, and give it to him."

"Something too awfully important to risk losing on a passage, I suppose?"

"Yes, it must be. But oh, Flap, you don't know how I feel! To think that they're really coming home, after—after all these months——"

Augusta's voice was almost husky, and Philippa gripped her arm, and her brown eyes smiled.

"I understand. I know what it means to be miles and miles from home—not to know how they're faring, never to see them for weeks, for months, and sometimes years on end. Of course, I understand!"

For a moment they stood thus, regarding one another in silence—a silence broken a minute later by Flap.

"And they are coming to-morrow, you say?"

"Yes, to-morrow the boat should get here. I suppose Miss Primrose will let me go?"

"Why, yes, she's bound to! How can she refuse? Oh, it'll be splendid for you, Augusta, on such a fine day as this——"

"Yes, they'll like old England," agreed Augusta gladly. "I shall bring them to the school——"

"And we'll have a regular banquet—a welcome home," added Philippa Derwent. "I say, it'll be splendid!"

"Yes, won't it?" cried Augusta. "Oh, I must tell them all—I must——"

She clutched the letter tightly in her hand, and looked towards the sunlit playing-fields.

"Come along," she said light-heartedly, and caught Philippa's arm. The girl from Tasmania, laughing, followed, despite the fact that her letter was still not read.

"Hi! Hi! Oyez!"

As Augusta, her bat waving round in circles, ran on to the cricket-field, there was a mighty shout.

"Here she is!"

"Augusta, you slacker——"

"We're waiting for you!"

But Augusta was not at all perturbed by the shaking fists.

"Where on earth have you been?" demanded Clara Trevlyn. "You said that you'd be along in a minute, and it's twenty minutes——"

"Oh, bother the minutes——"

"Wh-what——" stuttered Phyllis Howell. "I suppose you'll say bother the match, soon!"

"Bother the match!" laughed Augusta, and the Fourth Form cricketers almost collapsed.

Barbara Redfern, the Form-captain, and her friend and study-mate, Mabel Lynn, looked at one another helplessly.

"Of all the stupids," said Barbara, "you take the biscuit, Augusta. Don't you know that there's a match on?"

Augusta nodded.

"I did know," she agreed. "But I forgot. Look——"

She held aloft her letter, and smiled broadly.

But the letter did not seem to interest the Fourth-Formers. They simply stared, and Clara Trevlyn ominously tapped her forehead, and shook her mop of bobbed hair.

"Sorry I've kept you waiting," said Augusta more calmly. "But I've had a letter from home—from Australia——"

"Oh!"

The Fourth-Formers simmered down at that. Letters from home could be awfully important. They might contain money; good news, or bad.

But Augusta's face showed that the news was good.

"What's happened?" asked Barbara Redfern interestedly. "Something frightfully important. Pater struck oil——"

"Yes. But——"

"Oh, topping!"

There was a buzz of talk, and the girls looked genuinely pleased. Augusta was a popular member of the Form, and they were glad that fortune had once more smiled upon her people.

One and all remembered the time when Augusta had been rich; but in those days she had not been popular. She had swanked, and she had spent money not wisely but lavishly.

It was the fall of her status—her father's loss that had changed her. And that change had been complete. She had left Cliff House never expecting to return, and but for the kindness of a Miss Grey, who had befriended her, she would even now not be a member of the school.

But Augusta was back again, and her past was forgotten.

"My word!"

"What luck!"

"Will he be awfully rich?" inquired the fat voice of Bessie Bunter, the Falstaff of the Fourth.

Augusta shook her head.

"I don't know really," she said. "But I'm not so awfully pleased about that part of the news. I should like him to be rich—for his sake and mother's; They've been used to a lot of money. But I have learned to do without it. But——" She paused dramatically. "They're coming home——"

"Home—here to England——"

"Yes, and to-morrow, too!"

Augusta's face simply shone, and she waved the letter about in delight.

"Oh, isn't it just too wonderful, girls! They're coming home; and I shall meet them when they land!"

"Splendid!"

"Good luck, Augusta!"

And they pressed about her in a crowd, anxious to shake her hand to show that they realised and shared her joy.

"You'll be rich again, then!" smiled Peggy Preston, the girl from Lancashire.

"Yes—rich again!"

And in Augusta Anstruther Browne's tone there was reflective sadness. She was remembering—calling to mind the days when she had been rich, when she had not been popular with these girls.

The Woman in Black!

"NEARLY ready?" asked Gwendoline Cook casually.

Augusta nodded, and went on with her packing.

"Will you do me a favour?" said Gwen.

"With pleasure! I'd do anyone any favour possible this morning! Want some postcards of the jetty?"

"No. But Kyra Lamana is coming in by the "Sahara." That's the boat by which your people are arriving, isn't it?"

"Yes; but who on earth's Kyra—what you said——"

And Augusta was frankly amazed.

"Kyra Lamana," echoed Gwen, equally amazed. "Mean you've never heard of him—the ghost specialist?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Augusta stroked back her hair and laughed merrily. "Oh, Gwen, you'll be the death of me! The ghost specialist! Do you want to meet him?"

Gwen flushed. Gwen Cook was the ghost expert of the Fourth. She had not seen a ghost, but she lived in hopes, like the man in the poem.

"I was wondering," she resumed, with dignity, "if you would mind trying to take his photograph?"

"But I haven't a camera!"

"I can lend you one, if you promise to take the photo. Do, please. You can't miss him! He's got a long black beard, and a big blue tie. It's the sign of the Society for the Scientific Research into Supernatural——"

"If you like," laughed Augusta. "Only hurry up! I haven't much time to spare!"

Gwen fled off in great glee, and Augusta put her hat straight.

Her heart was beating fast with excitement, and she felt in a mood to laugh at anything. Gwen Cook was amusing, and she did not in the least mind taking a photo of the bearded man.

She was ready when Gwen Cook returned.

"It's a Kodak—you know how it goes," said Gwen. "You can't miss him. Black beard and blue tie. There'll be most of the society there; they'll have blue ties, women and men alike. I hope you're successful."

Augusta smiled, and slung the Kodak on her back. She picked up her bag and hurried down the passage. Half-way along she stopped, as a dozen or so of the Fourth Form waylaid her.

"Ready?" asked Barbara Redfern.

"You're catching the local from Friardale, of course? You can pick up the Southampton train at Courtfield."

"Yes, the nine-thirteen. I shall have to hurry."

Barbara Redfern nodded.

"We're cycling in. You can ride in, and I'll bring your bike back. I can wheel it beside my own. Miss Steel won't mind if we're a minute or so late."

"She won't have to," added Clara. "We're coming."

And, with Peggy Preston one side and Clara the other, Augusta was hurried along. Barbara Redfern took her bag, and in a crowd they crossed to where the bicycles stood ready.

"It's very good of you to see me off," murmured Augusta, as she rode beside Barbara Redfern.

"Not at all. We must see you safely into the train, and we'll have a topnole

IS THIS THE TRUTH? "Your mother and father left the boat at Aden," said the strange lady, "and they asked me to get a paper or something from you!"

banquet ready for you. The boat does come in to-day?"

"Yes, about midday. We shall come back to-night for certain."

"You've got the paper you had to take?"

"It's in the bag. I didn't forget that. Pater wants it urgently. It's very important."

"Good!"

In a merry mood they rode up to the small Friardale Station, and there Augusta entered the train.

The local train only went as far as the junction at Courtfield. There she would change into the train for Southampton. Only a few other people were on the train, and she found a compartment where she could be alone.

When her bag was on the rack she leaned out of the window, talking to the cheery friends who had come to see her off.

"Don't forget that photo. Promise!" cautioned Gwen Cook.

"I promise!" agreed Augusta, with a smile. "And I'll bring the pater and mater back to the banquet."

Peggy Preston stepped forward, but the train jolted, and someone pulled her back.

There was a waving of handkerchiefs, and Clara blew a kiss.

"Cheery-cheery!"

"Good luck!"

And Bessie Bunter, in atrocious French, cried:

"Bong voayargee!"

And the last Augusta heard of her friends as the train left the station was the laughter caused by Bessie's "French."

But she waved her handkerchief until they were mere specks and the station had all but faded away in the distance.

"Au revoir!"

She sank back on to her seat and took off her hat.

Her journey had begun. A few hours, and she would be with her people—her father and mother, who had come thousands of miles back to the homeland.

And the happiness of the reunion was mingled with sadness at the memory of the parting.

She took her father's letter from her pocket and scanned it.

"I am writing to Dorothea, and hope that she will be able to come——"

She looked up from the letter out at the passing fields and hedgerows. Dorothea, her sister, was in the North of England. She had been living with friends near to the place where she was working. The sisters wrote to one another often, but lately Dorothea's letters had been less frequent.

But now Augusta drew a letter from her pocket. It had arrived that morning, but she had been too busy to open it. The writing, large and round, told her it was from her sister.

She felt rather guilty that she had not read it before, and wondered what Dorothea had to say.

Had she received her father's letter——

But Augusta broke off in her meditation as she noted the name of the town on the rubber-stamped impression. It was not where Dorothea lived.

She opened the letter quickly, slitting the envelope, and hastily scanned the contents. Then she started.

"I have changed my address. And if you write, write to me, 'Post Restante, Lime Street Post-office, Hangton.'"

That sentence seemed to stare from the letter. The rest, a few commonplaces, some inquiries about school, discussion of a letter she had received—nothing more.

Dorothea had moved. She had left the friends. What could it mean?

She looked at the date on the letter, and realised that Dorothea would not have received the letter from Australia. She did not know that her father was coming home.

But why had Dorothea changed her address? Why, indeed? And Augusta felt a little depressed that her sister would not be at the home-coming; and she knew that her mother and father would be disappointed.

But she soon forgot Dorothea, dismissing the thought with an intention to wire to Hangton from Courtfield, although it would be too late.

At Courtfield, however, she had to rush in order to catch the train, and tumbled into a carriage just as the train was on the move.

A mumbling porter who had chased her slammed the door, and she put her bag on the rack.

A woman dusted her—Augusta's—dress where she had fallen, and Augusta, thanking her, settled down for the journey.

The train was an express, and rocked along the rails at a colossal speed. On, on sped the train till the houses told that the town was near.

Augusta got her bag down, and reslung the camera. She smiled as she remembered Gwen Cook's ghost specialist, and wondered what he would look like.

But she remembered suddenly that she did not know where the Sahara would come in. Two women were talking in the compartment, and Augusta waited until a lull came in the conversation, then addressed the one nearer her.

"Do you know where the boats from Australia come in, please?" she asked.

"Australia? The Sahara comes in to-day. Is that the boat?"

"Yes."

"My friend here is meeting it."

The other woman nodded.

"If you would care to come with me, I will show you the way," she said.

Augusta, glad to have a guide, thanked her. It was not many minutes later that the train pulled up.

As they walked, her companion asked her questions, and then told her that she, too, had relatives aboard the ship.

Soon they were one of a huge throng that waited for the boat, and she scanned the excited, anxious faces.

And as a cry went up, her nerves tingled, and she strained her eyes to see what other keen eyes had seen—the funnels of the Sahara.

How slowly she seemed to approach!

Augusta pressed nearer, trying to pick out figures on the deck. A kindly man close by lent her field-glasses, and she stared at them through the bows of the huge liner.

But it was impossible yet to distinguish faces, and the decks seemed crowded. She handed back the field-glasses and surged forward with the crowd.

She wanted to laugh, to cry, to cheer. In her excitement she pushed forward, and an angry woman reprimanded her. But Augusta did not care. As she saw that the woman was wearing a blue tie she smiled.

Remembering Gwen's request, she moved her camera round to prepare for the snapshot that was to come, and, by great dexterity, she wedged her way to the front of the crowd.

Her camera was ready, and the boat was nearer. She snapped it, and then prepared for the man with the beard and the blue tie.

Now she could distinguish faces. The man in the blue tie was to the fore, and he waved his arms. His companions on shore cheered back to him.

Augusta's heart beat faster, and she lowered the camera, searching for her mother and father. But she did not see them, and she was still searching when the gangway was down and the first of the passengers descended.

Now she resolved that it would be wiser to watch the gangway. But there was a halt.

The bearded, blue-tied man went down alone, posing for his friends' cameras. Behind him were a woman and a girl of fourteen. The girl would have descended but for the woman's detaining hand.

Quickly Augusta took her snap, glad that the obligation was over.

Then the people seemed to flock down the gangway. Augusta watched them breathlessly. But apparently her mother and father were in the rear.

Someone waving in the back! Perhaps it was they. She waved, and cheered.

One by one; then twos! Soon only a few remained on deck, and Augusta's heart beat anxiously. Were her father and mother below deck, sorting luggage?

Disappointed, she hurried forward through the crowd that was now around her. Everywhere people were greeting friends—handshakes, merry chatter, kisses.

And here she was, alone.

She evaded a sailor and ran up the gangway. An officer was near by and she caught his sleeve.

"Can you tell me, please," she said, "where Mr. Anstruther-Browne's cabin is?"

The officer pushed back his cap and looked at her.

"Anstruther-Browne?" he murmured, looking up at the sky. "Hold hard, I'll see."

It seemed hours before he returned, although it was merely a matter of minutes.

"Mr. and Mrs. Anstruther-Browne?" he asked.

"Yes, yes! I want to see them!"

"Sorry, miss. They went ashore at Aden, but didn't come back. They must have been detained. Sorry!"

And he patted her arm gently.

"I Must Keep My Trust!"

"NOT come!"

The knowledge stunned her. Her mother and father had not arrived, and she alone of all these people was disappointed.

It was too bad. All her excitement was gone—all the thrill and zest of their arrival. Perhaps now they would not come for weeks, months.

She looked out to sea, and almost cried aloud as she thought of the miles that separated them. Had they caught a boat—were they on the way? Surely they would have done that.

Feeling lonely and lost amongst all these people, she tried to wend her way back to the station. She felt a hand upon her arm, but did not turn her head at once.

But the hand was planted more firmly, and she turned. A thin woman in black was smiling at her.

"Excuse me, you are from Cliff House School?"

"Yes!"

Augusta stared in surprise, wondering if the woman were some acquaintance—a friend of someone at the school—Flap Derwent's——"

"And is your name Anstruther-Browne, Augusta?"

"Yes! Why?"

The woman smiled, and linked arms with her.

"You were waiting for your mother and father on the Sahara?"

"Yes! But they haven't come!"

"No—they left the boat at Aden, and

for some reason stayed there. Your father asked me, before he left, to get a paper or envelope or something from you——"

She looked at Augusta, and her eyes were hard, though her lips were curled in a smile.

"My father asked you to?"

Augusta repeated the words almost incredulously, and she looked at the woman more critically.

"Yes! Your mother and I were great friends in Australia. I will see you to the station. Perhaps it would be better to give me the papers there?"

"But my father's strict instructions were that I was to let no one have the papers!"

"Ah, but he did not know that he was to lose the boat. It is of paramount importance. To-morrow even may be too late."

"Then why did father stay behind at Aden?"

"He was unavoidably detained, and missed the boat. Your sister?"

"She is not here, yet."

"I see. You are hungry, perhaps—shall we lunch?"

Augusta frowned rather doubtfully. She was feeling miserable and lonely, and now that the woman mentioned lunch, she realised that she was hungry.

"Yes! I should like some lunch."

And when she had said it she wondered if she had done right in accepting. But surely this woman was genuine. She had said she was a friend of the family, she knew her name and the fact that she was at Cliff House; and so far Augusta had had no real cause to disbelieve the woman's statements.

"Will you wait just one minute then?"

And, with a smile, the woman turned. Augusta watched her receding figure until it stopped. In her eyes there was a puzzled look. She seemed to remember the woman—she had seen her somewhere before.

Then, as she saw that she was speaking to a girl, she remembered where. She had seen the girl on the gangway behind the man in the blue tie. And it was the woman who had held the girl back.

She waited until the woman returned, then mentioned the incident.

"A girl—yes, I saw her trying to push in front of the bearded man who was being photographed. I don't know her."

"Oh, I thought it was the same girl you were speaking to just now!"

"It was. One makes friends on a liner, you know. And now—lunch."

She took Augusta by the arm, and together they walked to the town. It was to a large hotel they went, but at the entrance the woman paused.

"The paper is in that bag?"

"Yes!"

"Then we had better leave it with the manager. It is too valuable to have with us. Anyone might steal it."

And, almost before Augusta had time to protest, she took the bag, and walked across to the manager's office with it.

Augusta, seldom caught unawares, watched, and noted that the manager took it without delay, that he locked it in a cupboard.

"There, that is safe now!" smiled the woman, as she returned. "Now for lunch!"

But Augusta hesitated. She was keen-witted, and not to be deceived easily. If the woman were genuine, all was well; but suppose she were not? Was it possible that she was an enemy—someone who had designs upon the paper?

Augusta could not help feeling that there was a possibility that her suspicion might bear fruit, and she resolved to keep an eye upon the woman.

At present the bag was safe, and she intended to make sure that the woman should not gain possession.

"It was really rather thoughtless of your father not to have cabled when he missed the boat," said the woman, when she had ordered lunch.

"Perhaps it is at school waiting for me——"

"Maybe. However, I have promised to see to this matter for him, so all will be well."

And the woman fixed her dark eyes upon the girl's face. Augusta Anstruther Browne returned the look steadily.

Augusta was the oldest girl in the Form, and perhaps the best judge of character.

The instinctive dislike she took to this woman was not unreasonable. Her eyes were close together, and never seemed to remain steady for an instant.

Her hands twitched, and Augusta had learned to judge deceivers and liars not merely by their eyes, but by their hands as well.

And the woman's hands moved restlessly while she talked.

"You are going back to school to-night?" she asked.

"Yes. I must see how the trains run. Only I am anxious about father."

"But he will wire——"

"I hope he does. I want to know what to do with the paper."

"But I am taking that."

The woman tapped the table impatiently, and looked about her. It was obvious that she was growing restless.

"Your sister—will she be coming down to see you? She is older than you?"

"Yes. Dorothea is twenty-three. I don't think she will be down."

"I see."

The woman went on with her lunch, and occasionally looked from the high window to the street below.

"You have a camera," she observed. "You wish to take photographs of the town, perhaps?"

"I hadn't thought of doing so. It is not my camera, but a friend's. I promised to take a photograph for her."

"Oh!"

The meal was nearly finished when Augusta spoke again.

"How many boats pass Aden?" she asked. "I mean—is there a regular service?"

"Really, I could not say. It is likely that there is a service. It is quite a prominent calling-place."

Augusta nodded, and relapsed into thought. Surely, she mused, her father and mother would resume their journey with all speed. The Sahara had stayed at the place a day or so ago. There had been ample time for them to wire.

And if the affair was so urgent they would have caught the next boat.

Why had they not wired? Or had they sent a message which had been delayed in transit so that it had arrived in Cliff House during her absence.

"How strange of father to have landed without giving some reason!" she remarked idly. "I suppose really he expected to be delayed, as he told you to take the papers on?"

"I rather fancy that he did. His visit must have had some connection with this affair. Possibly he suspected that danger lay ahead, and handed the commission to me in case of accidents—lest he should be detained."

"STOP! STOP!" As Augusta shouted she ran along the centre of the road, dodging in between the motors and omnibuses.

Augusta bit her lip. The thought that her people had met with some accident miles away was not comforting, and she began to wonder just what all this secrecy meant. What was this affair of her father's? What meant the paper of which she was in charge?

The woman's keen eyes were upon the girl's face relentlessly, and now she leaned forward.

"I am wondering," she said, with affected nervousness, "how dangerous this mission is. I do hope it is not risky, for I have promised your father. Has he any enemies, do you know?"

"No, I think not," Augusta replied slowly. "But he may have found some in Australia. No doubt people are after this paper, if it is so important."

"No doubt," the woman concurred. "I must be very, very careful, then."

Augusta smiled.

"Oh, I don't think they will bear you a grudge just because you were friendly with father and mother in Australia!"

"But the paper—they may follow me to get that——"

"Not at all. I am taking the paper until father sends instructions."

"I see."

The woman sat silent for a few restless minutes, then she gathered up her gloves.

"I will get your bag from the manager," she said. "Wait here for me."

She rose, and hurried across the room. But Augusta followed her, keeping out of sight as much as possible. She meant to take no chances of losing the bag.

But a pay-desk was in the corner, and a man stopped her.

"Your bill, please?"

"My friend in front——"

He nodded, and, hurrying forward, caught up to the woman. She paused, and Augusta, smiling, passed her.

"I will get the bag," she said, and, still smiling, she knocked at the manager's door.

"The brown bag that was left here—initial A hyphen B, please."

"Yes, certainly. A lady left it—— Ah, you were with her!"

He unlocked the cupboard, and handed her the bag, and she, thanking him, returned to wait.

The woman had not yet appeared, and Augusta went down the steps of the hotel.

She slung the camera round and prepared it. A few seconds after the woman in black appeared, and then—click! The snapshot was taken just as she stood in the entrance.

The woman in black stopped short, a look of momentary alarm on her face.

"Oh, I've got you in as well!" laughed Augusta. "Never mind! I can give mother and father a snapshot of their friend now."

The woman's frown changed to a smile.

"Do let me have a copy," she said. "I will take the films and have them developed for you here. I should so like a copy!"

"It isn't my camera," fenced Augusta. "Gwen Cook loves developing. I will send you a copy if you wish——"

"No, no! I am not certain of my address. It would not take them long here. They would forward the photographs to you——"

"But as they have not your address they couldn't forward yours, so that would be no good," said Augusta keenly. "By the way, please let me have my lunch-bill. It was silly of me not to take it."

"That is quite all right," murmured the woman, in as friendly a tone as she could muster. "I think you had better take a taxi to the station. It is not very near here. Shall I carry the bag?"

As Augusta shook her head, she called a taxi.

"To the station, please! The driver will take your bag."

The taxi-driver touched his cap, and took the bag from Augusta. She made no resistance; for in front there, the woman could not touch it.

But Augusta had not yet measured sufficiently the woman's cunning.

"Oh, do get me a paper, please?" she asked eagerly, and handed Augusta a coin.

For a moment the girl hesitated, then she ran quickly to the newspaper-boy near by.

She almost snatched the paper, then turned. Her blood ran cold as she saw that the taxi had moved off. It was across the road, and a car coming in the opposite direction prevented her catching it up before it had gained momentum.

"Stop, stop!" she shouted, and, watched by a dozen eyes, she ran along the centre of the road, dodging cars and other vehicles.

On, on she ran along the greasy surface. The taxi was speeding up, and she could see the woman in black looking back at her through the square window in the back.

But she was nearly breathless now. An electric horn sounded behind her, and she dodged aside.

The car had slowed up, and was slowly passing her. Without more than a second's thought, she mounted the running-board.

"Oh, catch up that taxi, please! He's gone off with my bag!"

The chauffeur, who was alone in the car, nodded, and motioned her to open the door. She did so, and, breathless, sat down in the seat beside him.

A touch of the accelerator, and he was close upon the wheels of the taxicab. He sounded the electric horn, and the cab drew into the side.

They were running parallel now, and Augusta, thanking the smiling chauffeur, stepped nimbly from the car to the taxicab.

The driver of the latter blinked at her, then slowed up.

"Thought you wasn't coming!" he grunted. "Hop in, miss."

"Can I have my bag, please?"

She took the bag and opened the door.

"I'm awfully sorry!" ejaculated the woman awkwardly. "I tried to stop him——"

Augusta shrugged her shoulders, and said nothing. But when the station was reached, she paid the taxi fare, and bade the woman a curt farewell.

Then she made for the train. Once seated in the compartment, she felt at ease. The woman was nowhere to be seen, and, for the moment, at least, the paper was safe; but what of the days to come?

The Newcomer!

NEARER and nearer came the train.

It came to a standstill, and Barbara Redfern and the others on the platform searched the carriage windows with their eyes, and Barbara raised her hand for a cheer.

The carriage door opened, and Augusta alighted.

"Hip—hip——" began Barbara. Then her voice tailed off, and she simply stared and the others, forgetting the cheers, stared, too, as they saw Augusta shut the door and come towards them.

"Great Scott!" murmured Phyllis Howell. "Where's her pater and mater? Haven't they come?"

But as Augusta came forward, the expression on her face was enough to tell them that Phyllis' surmise was right.

Augusta was alone.

As she advanced, they ran forward, plying her with eager, anxious questions.

"Haven't they come?"

"What's the matter, Augusta?"

Augusta smiled wanly.

"They—they haven't come," she said. "They left the boat at—at Aden, and were detained. They'll catch the next boat, I suppose. Has there been a wire for me?"

She caught Barbara Redfern's arm eagerly as she asked that question, and Babs shook her head.

"I haven't seen one. Why, Augusta, you don't think that there has been an—an——"

Barbara paused, not wishing to voice her thought, and Augusta bravely shook her head.

"I—I don't exactly think that," she said. "But—but it's strange they haven't wired. I don't know what to think."

There was a silence amongst the girls, save for an occasional whisper.

"So the bub-banquet's no good," stammered Bessie, in great disappointment.

"The banquet—oh, I had forgotten! I should have wired. I'm awfully sorry!" said Augusta penitently.

"It doesn't matter," murmured Barbara Redfern, with an effort. "It's a pity, but it's more of a pity that they haven't come. Poor old Augusta!"

Augusta turned her head away, and several girls noticed that her lips trembled. About her eyes there was a trace of moisture, and not a few girls felt lumps rise in their throats.

"It is a disappointment," murmured Augusta huskily. "I thought they had come and—and now it may be weeks—months——"

"Or days," added Peggy Preston gently. "Happen they'll catch the next boat. There's nothing amiss, Augusta."

And the girl from Lancashire took her friend's arm sympathetically.

But Augusta thought otherwise. She was thinking of the woman in black, and she could not help imagining that something was very wrong indeed.

She handed in her ticket mechanically, and then followed her chums into the street. There she halted, and stared in surprise at the horseless four-wheeler, and the girls around it.

"The equipage of honour—the state coach," explained Barbara. "But I suppose you're not in the mood for it now?"

Augusta forced a smile, and shook her head.

"It's frightfully decent of you," she said gratefully. "I—I only wish they could be here."

"Poor old Augusta!" murmured Clara, more gently than was her wont. "I should go back to school if I were you——"

"I shall. But I hate having spoiled your welcome."

"Let's hope we can have the real thing pretty soon," said Mabel Lynn. "Perhaps they'll be here in a day or so. This has been a useful rehearsal; and I dare say Bessie will be able to rake up another banquet, if someone provides the funds——"

And Bessie Bunter smirkingly agreed that she could.

Old Joe was duly compensated, and his horse returned to his four-wheeler. Then in none too merry a crowd the welcome party returned to the school.

On the homeward journey Freda Foote made various humorous but unsuccessful attempts to enliven the conversation. But although Augusta smiled obligingly, she was not to be cheered.

"Oh, by the way," said Barbara Redfern when they were near the school, "someone has arrived in your absence."

"Someone——"

"Yes—Caryl Bagshaw—you know, the girl from the North."

"Oh, I remember," said Augusta casually. "A new girl who was coming from a school up North. Anyone you know, Peggy, from your district?"

Peggy shook her head.

"No; she's not from Lancashire, apparently. I thought she was. From what she said, I imagined she might have come from the place where your sister Dorothea is. She's in the North."

Augusta for a moment did not reply. Then, when she found Peggy looking at

(Continued on page 269).

Next Week: SPECIAL CARAVAN NUMBER!

THE CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY

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General Information Concerning AUGUSTA ANSTRUTHER-BROWNE

By BARBARA REDFERN (*The Editress*).

Augusta Anstruther-Browne is fifteen years of age—a year older than the average Fourth-Former. She is a handsome girl—tall, and graceful in figure, with thick, jet-black hair, soft, grey eyes, and finely-chiselled, rather aristocratic features. She shares Study No. 3 with Lady Hetty Hendon. Augusta and Hetty have little—or nothing—in common, with the result that the two cannot be called friends. Augusta's bosom chum is Peggy Preston—the two, in fact, are the dearest of chums.

I think I might truthfully describe Augusta as the most interesting and striking girl at Cliff House. Her character since she came has undergone the completest change imaginable. I have seen a few Cliff House girls' characters change greatly for the better—those of Vivienne Leigh, Bessie Bunter, Agnes White, and my younger sister Doris, to be exact—but never has the change been so dramatic and so complete as that in the case of Augusta.

We may know her as the mildest, tenderest, and softest-hearted girl probably in the whole school, eagerly ready to extend a hand to those in trouble, and upright, frank, and honest in every way. When she arrived she was a pronounced snob, her great object to "rule the roost" in the Form, her pet hobby to defy all school rules; and she was consequently shunned by most of the girls in the Form! What a change indeed! Fancy any of us shunning Augusta now! We all cherish her friendship to-day.

Her whole expression, even, has undergone a complete change since her early days here. When Augusta, expelled, and repentant of her headstrong career here, returned in the guise of "Olive Wayne," it was not only the glasses, the bobbed hair, and the limp that made her disguise so effective. It was the great alteration of her expression brought about by all her trials. That was why, though she seemed familiar to some of us, we failed to see Augusta beneath the mask.

The eyes that had formerly been cold, grey, and merciless, were now softened and infinitely sad. The voice which had been imperious, with a metallic ring in it, was now low, gentle, and often scarcely audible. The hard, almost cruel lines of her mouth had vanished, and her lips had grown prone to trembling. And the altogether supercilious expression of her face had been replaced by one of humiliation, and often wanness. Verily, Augusta's disguise was far more complete than ever she realised at the time!

We all love the memory of "Olive Wayne"! In that dramatic role Augusta succeeded in showing what a fine sterling type of girl she really was. She showed how sincere, how deep-rooted was her repentance. And we all felt that we loved Olive to the same extent that we scorned the expelled Augusta!

Though the pathetic sadness of expression of "Olive Wayne" has not altogether vanished, Augusta's face is now cheerful and hopeful, her mouth always ready to smile, and her eyes bright—with a brightness very different from that defiant fire that used to be their characteristic! Augusta has retained the best that was in the old Augusta—for even in those days she showed that there was a better side to her nature—and the best qualities of "Olive Wayne," too!

That dominating spirit that was so pronounced in the Augusta of old is as strong as ever within our present chum, but it has been directed into better channels. We now see it on the cricket-field when we have a match to pull out of the fire. We see it in the tennis-court when she has lost the first two games of a set against some formidable opponent. We see it in a hundred-and-one ways every day.

Augusta is a superb all-rounder at cricket, excellent either as half or forward at hockey, thoroughly first class at tennis, which is her favourite game, and quite one of our mainstays at rowing, swimming, and running. She is fond of these sports, too, and that rather sad air of hers is displaced by complete cheerfulness when she is engaged in them.

On the whole, however, Augusta seems rather to favour quieter pursuits than those that come under the heading of sports. She is fond of reading, and usually prefers the "heavier" kind of literature—very different from the silly "love" novels which at one time used to be scattered about her room! Her violin, too, claims a good deal of her attention; she is a thoroughly accomplished player, and soft strains of somewhat sorrowful music are often to be heard emanating from Study No. 3.

WHY WE LIKE AUGUSTA!

By Madge Stevens
(Third Form).

AUGUSTA is immensely popular among us Third-Formers. There is nothing distant or aloof about her, as there was at one time. She is always ready to help us in any way—in fact, the only Fourth-Former really at all like her in this respect is Marjorie Hazeldine.

Augusta is clever at everything—lessons, sports, and all pastimes. And she's jolly interesting and entertaining in every way. You know what a fine cricketer she is. She ranks with Barbara Redfern, Phyllis Howell, Clara Trevlyn, and the best players of her Form. I wonder how many of these, apart from Augusta, would be willing to spend a couple of hours of a fine evening coaching Third-Formers? Augusta often does so, and I can tell you we thoroughly appreciate it! She doesn't waste her time with us in vain, either. We find we have all improved after each lesson from her. She has taught us how and where to pitch a ball, how to keep the ball down when batting, the correct and safest way of making different kinds of catches, how to field and return with the greatest possible speed, and all kinds of things that are not easy to find out for oneself.

What we can't make out is where all that old fierce temper of Augusta's can have gone to. I haven't known her to be out of temper for ever so long. Nothing ever seems to make her angry, except the sight of children or animals being treated cruelly, and that kind of thing. The other week we had rigged up over our Common-room door a booby trap of cushions for the benefit of Bessie Bunter, who had promised to look in and give us a few tips on how to play cricket.

To our dismay, it was Augusta who came in and got the cushions. But she never looked angry for an instant. It was surprise that filled her at first, and when we blurted out our mistake she was actually amused, and laughed quite heartily. She had called, as we remembered then that she had promised, to mend the broken splice of Iris Marshall's cricket-bat, and she mended it so perfectly that the bat is, in my opinion, a good deal better than it was when Iris first bought it second-hand from Clara Trevlyn!

She has mended our tennis rackets for us more than once, and has always made splendid jobs of them. She gives me the impression that nowadays she simply must be helping someone, and doing good in some way or other. And as Augusta seems to know a good deal about everything useful, you can imagine how popular she is with us, and with everybody else!

With our prep, for instance, she is always willing to help us out of difficulties, and she is always capable, too, for she is clever, and spends a lot of her time in study. She never seems at all bored, or out of patience with any question we ask her, either concerning lessons or anything else that interests us.

In her cupboard she has a splendid first-aid outfit, and if ever any of us Third-Formers ever meet with troublesome cut fingers, grazes or sprains, Augusta is the girl we make for. Our proper course, I know, should be to go to the matron for attention, but Augusta is just as well able to deal with minor mishaps, and there is never any fear of being scolded, still less reported, by Augusta.

To think that this is the same girl who used to cuff us almost whenever we were in her path, and spurned us whenever she could! No, it simply isn't the same girl! Augusta now is a different girl altogether! And she's one of the very best girls in the school!

BRIEF HISTORY OF AUGUSTA ANSTRUTHER-BROWNE.

THE history of Augusta Anstruther-Browne is more dramatic than that of any other girl at Cliff House.

Augusta arrived at Cliff House with the fixed determination to "open the eyes" of the girls with whom she was to mix, and to be generally the leading light of the Fourth Form. Her parents were very wealthy then, and, apart from doting on their younger daughter and spoiling her, they allowed her a far too excessive amount of pocket-money. Augusta was a mean, self-centred snob, and had never been taught to be anything else.

In Vivienne Leigh—a very different girl from the "Viv" of to-day, as her brief history will show—and the mean Marcia Loftus, Augusta found two cronies. They were toadies, in fact, worshipping Augusta because of her wealth and her stylish manner. Vivienne then was just the weak-willed type of girl to be influenced by Augusta's domineering charm. But among the best girls of the Form Augusta made a very bad impression.

Peggy Preston arrived at the same time as Augusta, and the latter's snobbish nature received quite a shock at the idea of a scholarship girl being a member of the same Form as herself. She resolved to make things as hard as possible for Peggy, and do her best to drive her from the school, and everything was black for her—for a time.

The first dawn of the great friendship between Augusta and Peggy came with the Cliff House fire. Augusta was trapped by the flames in the dormitory, and Barbara Redfern, coming to rescue her, was trapped, too. Both girls were overcome by the smoke, and fainted. But Peggy Preston a handkerchief over her face, fought her way through the flames, and rescued both in the most dramatic manner! No wonder Augusta still treasures the cheap handkerchief that protected Peggy from the overpowering smoke during her great deed!

Augusta's gratitude was deep and genuine, and at the time she seemed a changed girl. But a girl's whole character—especially when that character is the strong one that Augusta's always has been—is not easily altered. Augusta had never felt cause to be grateful towards anyone before. Still, Augusta felt quite amiably disposed towards Peggy, though her recklessness was as strongly pronounced as ever—more so, in fact.

She borrowed her father's car, and went for a jaunt with Marcia and Vivienne, brushing aside Peggy's earnest protests. The reckless three succeeded in losing themselves some distance from school, and met with disaster to their car, spending the night in the open air, during which time a tiger had escaped from a visiting circus! One can imagine the consternation of the headmistress about the missing girls when Babs, as in duty bound, informed her of the three's escapade.

The next day the tiger caused wild alarm by paying a morning call to Cliff House, but this was as nothing compared with the terrible dread that held the watchers as the three truants unsuspectingly entered the gates. Augusta was knocked down by the tiger, but Barbara Redfern, dashing up with an upraised chair, undoubtedly saved the reckless girl's life by driving the animal off.

But Augusta was anything but grateful for this service. She actually believed she could have escaped from the tiger through her own resource! And she felt a sense of bitter grievance against the Form captain for reporting the matter of the motor-car. Thereafter Babs took Peggy's place in bearing the self-made enmity of Augusta.

She broke bounds to visit a dance, and Barbara Redfern, trying to save her, was seen and almost expelled. Augusta, who had not relished Babs' interference, intended to allow the Form captain to be expelled—for Babs would not break her silence. But Peggy Preston interfered at the crucial moment, with the result that Babs was let off, and Augusta escaped with a caning.

In the memorable stories of the Princess Zelie, Augusta, with Marcia Loftus and the princess, were captured by the latter's enemies. And it is here we see Augusta in the best light so far, though it is purely on account of her recklessness and love of the "limelight." Both the princess and Marcia Loftus were safely rescued from the conspirators, but Augusta remained their captive. It was as their captive that she overheard their plans to kidnap the princess again.

With a mighty effort that few but Augusta could have made, she broke free, and warned the Fourth-Formers, in whose dormitory Zelie slept, of the kidnappers' intention. Thus, when the women arrived, the Fourth were ready for them, and they were captured. And all through Augusta! Augusta, so different from the quiet, modest, and unassuming girl with whom we are now familiar, did not forget to blow her own trumpet, either!

The reformation of Vivienne Leigh did not in the least tend to bring about a corresponding change in Augusta. Sheer weakness of initiative had made Vivienne Augusta's follower, and when her great test came she rose handsomely to the occasion, and showed herself to be one of the finest girls in the Fourth Form. But Augusta went heedlessly on in her old, reckless, trouble-making style, finding Nancy Bell a suitable substitute for Vivienne.

In that enthralling business of the Cliff House treasure, Augusta did not show up to advantage. She did all she could to hinder the treasure-seekers, scoffing and jeering at them, and did all in her power to blacken the character of Mary Carnaby, the big-hearted gipsy schoolgirl, who was so instrumental in bringing the vast and ancient treasure to light. Augusta did not show up at all well. Nor did she improve her record when she joined forces with Connie Jackson, when that girl ruled the school. But, despicable as had been many of her parts, she was to appear even worse before the turning point came!

She formed an acquaintanceship, which was as fascinating as it was to prove fateful, with Sybil Spender, of Spender Court. Under Sybil Spender's influence, Augusta was led to perform alarming feats of recklessness. Nothing Peggy Preston said now could make any impression on Augusta. In fact, Augusta openly snubbed and spurned her as the "poor, shabby, scholarship kid" of the Form.

All her previous limits of recklessness were eclipsed now under Sybil Spender's influence. She smoked cigarettes, and she actually stole money from a charity fund of which she had been made a trustee. In order to pay back what she had "borrowed," she played cards for money with Sybil Spender and her friends. But the money was wanted by the headmistress whilst Augusta was away, and Barbara Redfern, in the greatness of her heart, replaced it.

Babs had saved her enemy from disgrace, but Augusta was not thankful. She hated Babs all the more! And why? The reason, knowing the old Augusta as we do, was understandable in her case. She won money at cards, and, with this, offered to pay Babs back. But Babs, knowing how the money had been obtained, would not take a penny of it. This cut Augusta to the quick. It was the cruellest blow her pride had ever received. Barbara Redfern should suffer—for her very kindness!

With Sybil Spender she hatched a remarkably cunning and callous plot. At Spender Court there was one young servant remarkably like Babs in looks and stature, and, without having any real knowledge of the plan, she was persuaded—or forced—to dress in schoolgirl's attire, and to be photographed with a cigarette in her mouth. This "faked" photograph brought no little disgrace upon poor Barbara's shoulders at Cliff House, and she lost no time in calling at Spender Court with the object of thrashing the matter out with Sybil Spender.

And there the deep and cruel plot really began. Barbara was locked in a spare room, whilst Sybil Spender rang up Miss Primrose on the telephone. Then, declaring herself to be Barbara Redfern, and imitating her voice, she commenced a most insolent conversation with the astounded headmistress, which terminated in that lady slamming down the receiver and hurrying off in her carriage to bring "Barbara" back by force. Reaching there, and dashing into the imposing house without any formalities whatsoever, she heard dancing and girls' voices. A door slammed as she burst into the room. Barbara Redfern had, it seemed, fled!

Barbara Redfern, as the cunning Sybil had plotted, escaped just a few moments previously, and, full of fury at the way she had been treated, rode rapidly back to Cliff House. The headmistress pursued in her carriage, and, at Cliff House, the storm broke.

There was only one possible punishment for Barbara Redfern. Expulsion!

The next morning poor, grief-stricken Babs was summoned before the whole school for the ordeal of public expulsion. At the very last moment, however, three girls—Mabel Lynn, Peggy Preston, and Vivienne Leigh—learnt the truth from the servant at Spender Court, and at last the well-merited order of expulsion was passed upon Augusta Anstruther-Browne.

It was in the train that the second crushing blow descended upon her. A newspaper left on the opposite seat caught her attention, a glaring headline attracted her, and she read that her father's great business had crashed!

What were Augusta's feelings now? For herself—for being denied a future of spend-thrift living? That is exactly what one would expect. But no! She found herself thinking of her parents—how would they bear the new condition? What an ungrateful daughter she had been; they had done so much for her, what could she do for them in return? Little though she realised it, her nature had altered during those few seconds. Her heart was full of unselfish, remorseful feelings she had never before cherished. It was the old Augusta who, proud, defiant, had boarded the train at Friardale, but it was a very different girl who alighted at the terminus in the big city.

Augusta loved her parents as she had never loved them before, and when they were gone, bound for Australia, and her elder sister had been found a home in the North, Augusta was forlorn. Work was found for her under some hard people—the Jenners—owning a millinery business, where she had a wretched time. So miserable was she made that she ran away, and after wandering desperately about the London streets, weak from worry and lack of food, she was knocked down by a motor-car.

The owner, Miss Ballantine, took pity on her plight, and engaged Augusta to act as companion to her wayward and wilful niece, Lorna Grey. Augusta gave her name as "Olive Wayne," and, full of heartfelt thanks for the care of the generous Miss Ballantine, bitterly regretted her headstrong career at Cliff House. Her mind was full of torturing memories of the girls who seemed gone from her for ever—Barbara Redfern, Peggy Preston, fat Bessie Bunter, and the rest—particularly of the first two, whom she had wronged so. What strange, bitter days of her life were these!

The time came for Lorna Grey to go to Cliff House School as a new pupil, and Augusta had had such a restraining influence on the impetuous Lorna that Miss Ballantine decided that Augusta must go, too, to look after her!

Thus, cutting and bobbing her luxuriant hair, and donning tinted glasses, as well as walking with a limp caused by her accident, Augusta came back to Cliff House with Lorna Grey. Not a girl saw through her disguise—so altered was she in every possible respect—and she became a general favourite with her sad, quiet, and modest demeanour. She kept her word to Miss Ballantine. Time and again Lorna would have got into trouble with her waywardness and recklessness, had it not been for the imploring of "Olive" and her wonderful restraining influence. How it hurt Augusta to see Lorna trying to follow the very same path that she herself had traversed! And, at last, by saving Lorna from an onrushing train when her foot was caught in the points, Augusta both revealed her identity and atoned for her past.

Yes, Augusta atoned was allowed to remain at the school; and that her atonement is genuine was shown quite recently when Sybil Spender tried to regain her friendship. But Sybil had not bargained for Augusta's spirit, and soon learned to wish she had not sought out her old friend. For Sybil, when she had tired of Augusta, had dropped her very quickly in the old days.

Augusta's reformation is deep and lasting, and she will continue to be a credit to her school while she remains at Cliff House.

HOURS OF MY LIFE!

By Augusta Anstruther-Browne.

MY DARKEST HOUR.

BEYOND all possible question, when I was expelled from the school, and read in the paper of my father's gigantic crash in business, and then, returning home, found the black news to be all too true! That was the terrible, unexpected blow that plunged me into my darkest hour. I shall never forget the staggered expression on the white faces of dad and mum. And what made that hour darker was the fact that they thought only of me and Dorothea—myself particularly. I, who at this crisis should have been capable of earning money for them, and helping them until brighter times! That, indeed, was my darkest hour!

MY BRIGHTEST HOUR.

The hour following the moment when, after I had semi-consciously babbled that Olive Wayne was Augusta Anstruther-Browne, Miss Primrose at last decreed that I was not to leave Cliff House! How well I can remember how Babs and Peggy and their friends, who were really responsible for the decision, came dashing into the sanatorium, falling upon me, and bursting out the tidings! The rest of that brightest of all hours we spent gabbling about all that had happened, and discussing our plans for the Christmas that was just upon us! And the thought that I, after such a terrible struggle, was once more one of them—well, I could hardly believe that it had all been true!

MY BITTEREST HOUR.

When, after obtaining Lorna Grey's promise to prevent Vivienne Leigh from spending the money that might not be hers, I came back to find Vivienne in disgrace! Lorna had broken her promise! I felt very bitter then, for I had expected better than this from Lorna. But still, when one considers Lorna's reckless nature, and the good chance that the money might have come into Vivienne's hands, one realises that there was at least a little excuse for Lorna.

MY SWEETEST HOUR.

Of recent days I have had so many hours that all seem to merit this heading, that I don't know which to chose. That, following the cancellation of my expulsion order, I should think, most merits it, though I have described that as "my brightest hour." If it were "my sweetest moment" I had to mention, and were allowed to limit the time to within the last few weeks, I should say that this was when a boundary catch of mine won a great cricket match for us by one run! But as for my sweetest hour—well, there is nothing I find more sweet than solitude when I am in the mood for it, so it is not surprising that my sweetest hour this week was one of my quietest, and I spent it doing—nothing! The hour was one between sunset and dusk, and I reclined in a sloping meadow, half a mile from the school, idly watching the stars one by one appear in the deepening sky. The day had been a swelterer, and the evening breeze was like a warm breath, and full of fragrance, and I felt—well, thoroughly lazy! And as I lay there the whole of my past life seemed to float before my eyes like a panoramic picture, and during that hour I felt with delightful sweetness that fate had been working for the best all along—that after all it was best that everything had happened as it had! That hour was indeed the sweetest of its kind. I felt wonderfully calm, tranquil and content.

LETTERS TO HAND THIS WEEK:

By Augusta Anstruther-Browne.

"Dear Augusta,—You must excuse our cheek in writing to you. The reason is, we've heard the full story from Sybil Spender—you know, how you were expelled from the school for stealing some old rags, or something, and took that awful job at Spender Court to put things right, and Sybil took full advantage of your position. Well, that just about finishes it with us so far as the fair Syb. is concerned. Candidly, we never thought she could be so mean. We heard the full story quite by accident, and we're ashamed to think that we ever helped Syb. in the spiteful business at all. You deserve a pat on the back, Augusta, and you'll get it when we jump on you suddenly some time next week! And we want to meet once more that pretty little friend of yours from the North—Peggy Preston, isn't her name? I know we were mean enough to poke fun at her when she turned up at Spender Court, collecting for charity. Still, we didn't mean it spitefully at all. We apologised when you pointed it out in that light, Augusta, didn't we? Well, we're going to show you and Peggy just how friendly we can be. And there's Vivienne, too! We simply must have another waltz round with Viv! Is she still keen on dancing? We're looking forward to a jolly couple of hours with you and your chums, Augusta!—Yours ever,

"Kiki Barbour, Phillida Tankeray, Cora Clayton, Daphne Lunton."

"My dearest Augusta,—Or shall I call you Olive? That is the name that seems to stick in my mind. My niece and I have had a delightful and instructive time during our tour of the Continent, and we only wish you were with us. But, of course, it is much better for yourself that you should be accomplishing yourself at Cliff House. You will be glad to learn that your restraining, softening influence upon my niece has been far more lasting than it might have appeared when I took her away from Cliff House. Had you not been called away from the school to attend Dorothea in her illness, Lorna would not have so lost control of herself. She is always talking about you, Augusta, and in a way which shows how strongly you have influenced her for the better.—Yours most affectionately,

"E. M. Ballantine."

"Dear Augusta,—I am having a simply ripping time so far away from you; but—well, I feel much more lonely than I expected without you! You're such a quiet and retiring being that I never expected to miss you anything like so much as I do! Still, there's heaps and heaps to be seen, and I'm enjoying myself immensely. And without spending much money, too! When I feel I would like to make rash outlays, I often find myself thinking of you, and then—well, I don't spend! And I feel just as happy by saving the money as by spending it. I've been to a few boarding schools en route, and got on quite well with the foreign girls, but—well, it isn't like Cliff House!

"With the best of love,

"Lorna Grey."

(There was also, of course, the letter from my parents, enclosing that precious document, and a letter from Dorothea, which I did not quite understand at the time. I was soon to, of course! And that's all, if I include a short letter from my Aunt Sarah, letting me know what a pleasant time she is having on holiday.—Augusta Anstruther-Browne.)

Tastes that Differ.

THE tastes of Augusta Anstruther-Browne and Lady Hetty Hendon, who together share Study No. 3 in the Fourth Form passage, are as opposite as the two poles. To many it is something of a mystery how they manage to get on together without quarrelling. But perhaps, when one considers the matter, this is not at all mysterious. Augusta is so mild, gentle, and pacifical by disposition, and Lady Hetty makes a point of keeping herself so aloof and "diggernified before inferiors," that they do not cross one another's paths enough to quarrel. But if, say, Clara Trevlyn were in Augusta's place—well, what on earth would happen?

I do not know in what respects the tastes of Augusta and Hetty are similar. Augusta's favourite colour, for instance, is a quiet pale blue. Hetty's is a glaring red! Hetty likes colours, and wants wallpaper all the shades of the rainbow. Augusta prefers a quiet blue and white.

When Augusta wants companionship she usually goes along into somebody else's study, but Hetty invites her friends to Study No. 3. Hetty's idea of what she calls a "convivial" evening—or, when on a larger scale, an At-home—is to entertain large numbers of the most unpopular girls at Cliff House, let them eat as much as possible at her expense, and then regale them with her "singing." Hetty's singing is terrible—shrieking and out of tune—very different from the melodious strain from Augusta's violin or her own clear, low voice. Hetty, for her part, considers that Augusta's violin is "dismal, squeaky, and skworky!"

Augusta's taste in summer dresses is as plain and simple as it is sweet, whilst Hetty's dresses are both extravagant and absurd. Augusta's poise is naturally elegant and lady-like, whilst Hetty's is both affected and silly. Their tastes in literature, of course, are correspondingly opposite; and, as for sports, Augusta loves them just as much as Hetty scorns and despises them. Hetty's taste in study furniture, too, is half a dozen times more extravagant than ever Augusta's was in the past.

So, verily, the tastes of these two ill-matched s' '-mates are Tastes That Differ!

AUGUSTA!

By Clara Trevlyn.

Adored by us all is Augusta
For her modesty, mildness, and grace.
Far different from when she was just a
Proud spendthrift—the scorn of the place!

Her temper was hot, even spiteful,
And with her we'd many a "row"!
She was quite the reverse of delightful—
How different Augusta is now!

At the time when we were her opponents
We owned she had courage to spare,
And Cliff House had few such exponents
Of the spirit to do and to dare.

And even when she had the fancy
To "chum with" and take up the part
Of Marcia Loftus and Nancy,
We knew she despised them at heart.

She suffered; but, facing disaster,
All heedless of trouble and pain,
In the part which Dame Fortune had cast her—
The part of the girl, "Olive Wayne."

And now she has all our affection—
This girl who was put to the test.
And the cry comes from every direction;
"Augusta—she's one of the best!"

ON HOLIDAY WITH AUGUSTA

By Peggy Preston (Fourth Form).

AS you might suppose, the kind of holiday that is most congenial to Augusta's temperament is a very, very quiet one. For my own part, I rather appreciate a somewhat bustling holiday among throngs of people, unless I wish to study.

At the close of our adventures in France, when we had made dear little Suzanne Lupin one of the happiest girls in the world, the party of us had a few days on our hands. Most of the girls spent the time in much-needed rest at their own houses, but Augusta could not very well do that, and she and I visited my parents, who were taking their holiday at one of the quietest coves on the South Coast.

Well, I wasn't sorry for the quiet, after the stirring times we had had across the water, but Augusta—she simply revelled in it! When I asked her, later, what had been her happiest hour of the holiday, she said that it had been an hour she had spent lying full length on the grass-covered cliff, gazing placidly at the waning tide—alone with her thoughts!

But I can assure you that a holiday with Augusta is not by any means the cheerless business this might suggest. That was simply the way Augusta liked to pass her time when I was indoors, studying. But there was a small tennis-court not far away, and many an enjoyable game we had there. We also had many a delightful ramble.

Part of the short time Augusta spent writing verse, and in trying to paint one or two picturesque sea and inland scenes. Twice she showed how eager she is to help creatures in distress. Once she climbed some dangerous crags to rescue a small bird with a broken leg. On the other occasion she saved the life of the affectionate little dog which had accompanied her on a lonely ramble, and which had got into difficulties in the sea.

OLIVE WAYNE!

By Augusta Anstruther-Browne.

SINCE the day I resolved to make good, my one regret has been that I did not learn my lesson earlier. And what a day it was, too—the day when I, definitely expelled from Cliff House, picked up that fateful newspaper in the train, and saw the news of my father's crash!

That was the only occasion I remember on which I have found myself considering others before myself. Then I knew how much I loved my parents, and how grateful I was for the good time they had let me have, and realised how I had wasted that time and their money! I was heartbroken—full of torturing emotions.

I gave myself the name of Olive Wayne, because I wanted something that was totally unlike Augusta Anstruther-Browne—something that was quiet, simple, and retiring. I gave it, you may remember, first of all to a policeman who was struck by my ill appearance as I wandered, homeless, among the traffic about the great London thoroughfares. It was the sight of the moon—the waning, doleful, hopeless-looking moon—that suggested the surname as being a very fitting one for me at that moment. And Olive—what could sound quieter and more peaceful than that?

Strange as it seems, I do not miss the old times in the least—the times of extravagance, rule-breaking, and pleasure-seeking. I never feel tempted to return to them. I get much more pleasure from a game of cricket now than ever I did from an evening with Sybil Spender. Buying a pretty, but plain, dress now out of my moderate allowance, gives me much more delight than it did to buy half a dozen of those gorgeous, elaborate, and finely-cut dresses on which I spent such sums in the old days.

No; I never feel that I want to set foot again on the old path—not even for a single evening. I am completely happy and contented as I am.

AUGUSTA ANSTRUTHER BROWNE!

By Angelica Jelly.

UNLIKE the majority of the Fourth-Formers at this school, Augusta Anstruther-Browne is a remarkably interesting girl. At all events, her career is decidedly interesting. It has made me wonder recently whether I myself will ever be called upon to play in the same part—whether I shall ever plunge into a sea of recklessness, get myself expelled, and return in the role of a second Oliver Wayne!

To tell the truth, I rather fancy myself in the role of an Olive Wayne. There is something fragrantly romantic about it. Augusta did it remarkably well, but I say without hesitation that I could fulfil the part much better, and deceive the whole school much longer. With my hair bobbed, tinted glasses before my eyes, and a limp or hobble, I should be the centre of attraction at Cliff House!

Augusta was expelled for her recklessness, and now I feel I must divulge a secret which will surprise and shock my readers. I, Angelica Jelly, admired for my fine and sterling carriage as I am, have a tendency to be headstrong and reckless. Realising that the whole school regards me as its model of schoolgirl uprightness, I fight down the temptation. But there it is! I do not, of course, spend the money on clothes that Augusta did, nor have I it to spend. But I have sometimes reflected that, attired in my new party dress, and dining out with smart friends, I would look rather fetching!

I hope—I earnestly hope, for the sake of the school which regards me as its example, which looks up to me to do the proper thing—I hope that I will not break out and do anything desperate—anything that will get me expelled from the school, to return as a second Olive Wayne! But—who knows?

MY VARIOUS INTERESTS!

By Augusta Anstruther Browne.

LIFE at Cliff House is simply crammed with interest. I have as keen an interest in sport as anybody, when I am engaged in it. When I am taking part in a cricket match I think of nothing else. I am full of zeal to do my best. On the river I am the same—obsessed with that, and thoroughly in my element swimming, rowing, or whatever might be afoot. Yes, sport is one of my keenest interests!

But I have others which I cherish. In classes I set myself to learn as much as possible, so that I may be quite accomplished when I pass from Cliff House into the wide world. I am also fond of reading, though of late I have favoured writings that take a good deal of thought and concentration to appreciate.

My most enjoyable hours, however, I spend with my violin. My violin is a companion which always shares my own emotions—sad, gay, tranquil, or excited, always exactly the same as I am!

I have lately spent a fair amount of my time composing music myself, and the results have proved much better than ever I anticipated. I don't know what the judges would think of my efforts, but every now and again, when I am in the mood, it gives me the completest satisfaction to play them myself, and among the girls they have met with the greatest appreciation.

Another interest that has recently grown within me is that of portraying any pretty scene of nature that strikes my fancy. First of all I love to gaze at the scene, almost enraptured, then I set to work to write verses—of sorts!—about it, and then I sketch it in outline, and then I paint it. This may seem a queer interest, or sequence of interests, and however worthless my results may be from an artistic standpoint, I feel I must do as I have detailed!

Another quiet pursuit I am fond of is needlework, though I am not by any means brilliant at it. And yet another interest that claims my attention is gardening! I don't know why this is; perhaps it is because, when gardening, the mind is absolutely at rest, and sort of resuscitating itself, but I often give old Ephraim Pennyfarthing a helping hand, much to his surprise and delight! So on the whole I find I prefer these quieter interests to the more vigorous ones of sport.

ORGUSTER ANSTROOTHER-BROWN A YEWLERGY.

By Bessie Bunter.

NO, deer rgeders! Sertingly not! The above is not, in case you have got the idear, an insult! It is not the same as saying: "Orguster—A Duffer," or "Orguster—A Booby," though I admit that it looks like it.

You will find the werd "Yewlergy," spelt rongly, as yewsyewal, in the dikshunary. You will see that it means enkoamium, and when you look up the meaning of that you will find that it is pannyjirrik, and when you look up the meaning of that you will find that it is adderlayshun, or ekstollashun, or lordashun, and when you ask somebody the meaning of all that, they will tell you that it is high praize!

That is what Orguster dizzerves—high praize. And that's what this yewlergy is jolly well going to give her!

Orguster is ferst rate at everything were other gerls are good, and she also eksells at things where only a few gerls are good—such as mewsic and akting. She is a fine orl-rounder at krikket, and in the feeld at deep mid-slip point she is only to be beaten by one gerl I know. I don't give you any cloo as to the name of this gerl, for, as you will have seen, I have made it a ferm rool to leeve myself rite out of these brillyunt artikels.

Orguster would do anybody for anything—I mean, anything for anybody. She is not the gerl to carst dowt on a gerl's staitments conserning ekspekted remmittunces—not often, anyway. She is a splendid gerl! She cashed a remmittunce in advance for me only this mornin! She's a ripping gerl! She let me help myself at her cubberd only this afternoon! She's a topping gerl! But when I bumped into her as she was drinking tea, she chased me out! She has her faults, of course, like most peeple!

This brillyunt yewlergy, deer reeders, will not be compleet without a werd of praize to Orguster's farther, Mr. Orguster Anstroother Brown. Mr. Orguster has gone to Orstraylier to make a forchun and this is a very wise plan on his part. It's just what I'll do if ever I'm broke. You just take a boat, and tell them to stop at the Yewnited Straits of Orstraylier, and then make a forchun, and come back with it, and there you are!

So now, deer reeders, three cheers for Orguster Anstroother-Brown, and her mudher, and her sister Dorrertheer, and Mr. Orguster Anstroother-Brown!

AUGUSTA'S TRUST!

(Continued from page 264.)

her searchingly, she answered in the affirmative. In point of fact, the mention of Dorothea had caused Augusta to remember her sister's letter. Dorothea was in the North, but not in the same locality.

"And she knew the name—that's strange," added Mabel Lynn.

"Knew the name," ejaculated Augusta. "How did she know Dorothea?"

"Yes, she heard the name. She started rather when we mentioned it, and couldn't say where she'd heard it."

"Oh, perhaps someone who's acquainted with Dorothea's friends!" murmured Augusta, and she frowned.

Could this girl supply news of Dorothea? she wondered. Her sister's change of address had been sudden, and, as far as she knew, without reason.

"Why," exclaimed Phyllis Howell suddenly, "there's the girl! Ask her, Augusta." She put her hand to her mouth and called: "Caryl! Car-ryl!"

A dark girl who was standing near the trees turned, and Phyllis waved.

She hurried forward.

But Augusta, who had moved forward to greet her, stopped. Her bag slipped from her fingers to the ground.

Her eyes almost goggled from her head as she found herself staring at the girl who had been on the boat—the companion of the woman in black!

Mistaken Identity or——

"AUGUSTA!"

"What on earth's the matter!"

In amazement they stared at their chum as she stood as though rooted to the ground, blinking at the new girl. And the new girl—something in her attitude seemed to tell them that these two had met before.

Caryl Bagshaw was the first to speak. She advanced, with hand outstretched, smiling.

"How do you do?" she said. "I suppose you are the girl who went to Southampton—Augusta Smith?"

"Anstruther-Browne," Augusta corrected her.

"Oh, I thought that was the name of the girl who lived in the north," answered the other quietly. "I make such silly mistakes about names."

"My sister lived in the north. Did you know her?"

"No. I've heard the name. My father's solicitor's married daughter had that name, but we quarrelled with her. That's why I was so surprised when someone mentioned the name."

"It isn't a common name, either," added Peggy Preston. "Still, the north is full of strange names—and the south and east and west as well, for the matter of that."

"But I've seen you before," said Augusta. "You came off the Sahara at Southampton."

She watched the girl's face keenly to note the effect of that remark, and she was not disappointed. For a second the girl changed colour. Then she laughed rather awkwardly.

"I haven't been nearer to Southampton than Friardale Station," she said. "I came from the north, where I'm living."

"But I'm certain," protested Augusta. "You were on the gangway——"

The girl still smiled and shook her head.

"I've never even seen Southampton!" she laughed. "There are probably dozens of girls like me about."

"But I'm sure. I should not forget your face so soon——"

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

Barbara Redfern looked a trifle surprised.

"I suppose she ought to know where she's been, Augusta," she remarked chidingly.

"She ought to," agreed Augusta. "And," she added laconically, "I don't suggest that she doesn't."

A glance round at the faces of the other girls showed her that they regarded her attitude as peculiar. But she did not care. There was no mistaking that face, nor the figure.

"Well, one can hardly be in two places at once!" protested Caryl Bagshaw. "Anyway, I don't see that it matters."

"Nor do I," agreed Dolly Jobling. "Poor Augusta's overwrought——"

"I am not. But I won't argue; I'm too tired. Where's Gwen Cook? I've got a photo for her."

"Gwen's doing lines. She wanted to see you."

Augusta nodded as she left the group. Looking back, half-way across the quadrangle, she saw that they were talking, and that some of them were casting curious glances at her.

To them her persistence that Caryl had been at Southampton must have seemed peculiar. But, peculiar or not, it was the truth, and she would stand by her statement.

Now she hurried into the School House to find Gwendoline Cook. Gwen was in the Form-room, busily writing away, but at Augusta's entrance she jumped up.

"Oh, here you are, then!" she exclaimed. "I wanted to come to the station, but Miss Steel lined me for running about in the corridors. Have you got the photo?"

"Yes. And there are two of mine there. One of a ship, and one of a woman in a doorway."

"Oh, your mother, I suppose?"

"No; someone else. Mother and father haven't come."

"Haven't come? I say! What has happened?"

"They went ashore at Aden, and didn't come back; so I suppose they were delayed."

"Oh, I'm awfully sorry, Augusta!" said Gwen sympathetically. "And haven't they cabled, even?"

"No. That's what's so funny. I should have thought that they'd do that."

"Yes, it is strange. But they'll write. I shouldn't worry, Augusta."

Gwen took the camera and returned to her desk.

"Thanks awfully for getting this snapshot!" she said. "I'll finish the reel, and develop them. There's only two blanks now."

"Yes. Any time will do for mine. Bye-bye!"

Augusta hurried to the dormitory, and, looking round first to make certain that the room was deserted, she opened the bag and brought out the paper.

She racked her brains for a hiding-place, then smiled as an obvious one occurred to her.

Over her bed was a picture. "A Garden in Late Summer," it was called. Unhooking it, she soon had the back off. To slip in the paper, and return the picture to its former position was but the work of a moment.

Smiling at the excellence yet simplicity of the hiding-place, she unpacked the rest of her bag.

But suddenly she paused, and the expression of her face altered. She turned suddenly and stepped back.

For in the centre of the room was Caryl Bagshaw!

"Is this the Fourth Form dormitory?" asked Caryl, with an engaging smile.

"Yes. How long have you been here?"

"Been here? Where do you mean? The school?"

"No; this room!" retorted Augusta snappishly. "You know what I mean. You have been watching me."

"Watching?" repeated the other. "Why should I watch you? Anyone would think you were a criminal by the guilty way you started when I came in."

"You came in just now, then?" Augusta asked, with a sigh of relief.

She could have kicked herself then for the way in which she had acted. Had she asked no questions, perhaps Caryl would not have suspected anything.

Now, what else was there for her to do? Caryl must suspect that something was wrong. And if, as Augusta thought, she were in communication with the woman in black, then she would search the dormitory.

And now Augusta fixed her with a keen, penetrating look.

"This is the Fourth Form dormitory," she said slowly. "Is there anything you want? Your bed, I think, will be that one——"

And she indicated a bed that stood at the far end of the long row.

"I see. That is what I wanted to know. May I use that dressing-table? My hair is untidy."

"Yes, if you wish."

Augusta hesitated; then, as the girl turned to the dressing-table, she went from the room. For a short distance she walked down the passage.

There she paused, thinking. To all intents, Caryl was innocent of any ulterior motive, but—— Augusta felt that there was a very big "but" indeed.

A movement in the dormitory caught her ear, and she crept back softly on tiptoe.

Still cautious, she threw open the dormitory door, and peered round.

Her lips tightened at the sight that met her eyes.

Caryl Bagshaw was standing by her bed, and the picture of late summer was in her hand.

She had just turned it over, and was now opening the back.

"You did come earlier, then?" remarked Augusta coldly.

Caryl wheeled round, and the picture fell on to the bed. Her frightened eyes met Augusta's, and she stammered a reply.

"The—the picture fell down. It must have been hung insecurely."

"You mean you were watching when you came in——"

"Watching you! What has that to do with the picture?"

Augusta paused. Caryl Bagshaw was evidently not an easy girl with whom to deal. Her face betrayed her, but her words were cunning.

"It would be better if you spoke the truth occasionally. That picture did not fall down. And you *were* on the 'Sahara'!"

"I was not on the 'Sahara.' Don't be absurd! Why, I came from the North this morning."

"It is useless to tell me that!" snapped Augusta. "I know that you were. I do not forget faces." She paused, and smiled. "Besides, I have a photograph of you. You were behind a man with a

blue tie; he was being photographed, and I was one of the photographers. I remember now, you were in the photo."

"I—I was not there, I tell you! Where is the photograph?"

"When Gwen Cook has developed it I will show it to you, after I have shown it to the rest of the Form, and denounced you."

"Denounced me! How do you mean?"

"I don't know why you are here, that is what I mean. Your mother, aunt, or whoever she is—that woman in black—she tried to get the paper——"

"Paper! You must be mad! I don't understand."

And Caryl Bagshaw looked really amazed.

Augusta laughed.

"I'm not a simpleton!" she said angrily. "Please don't try to deceive me! You come from Australia. You know where my father is. I see it now—you and your black-dressed friend schemed to get my father and mother ashore, and leave them there——"

Now Caryl looked really dazed.

"You are talking above my head. What black-dressed woman do you mean?"

Augusta snapped her fingers impatiently.

"Don't fool me! It is only wasting time. I tell you, you shall never get the paper!"

Caryl smiled.

"I am sure you are making some great mistake," she said. "I know nothing about a paper——"

Augusta drew in a deep breath.

"Very well," she said: "we shall see."

She crossed to the picture, opened the back, and took out the envelope she had placed there.

"Here is the paper!" she exclaimed. "Look at it carefully; it is the last time you will ever see it."

And she noted that Caryl did look at it keenly, but Caryl's eyes were innocent when she looked at Augusta again.

"I think you're over-excited," she said calmly, and in the most enraging manner possible. "Perhaps it would be better for you to lie down and sleep for a while. You will probably hear from your father to-morrow."

"Sleep!" echoed Augusta. "Yes; so that you can steal the paper!"

The other shrugged her shoulders, and turned back to the dressing-table. Augusta waited a minute, then went from the room, still holding the paper.

And the rest of the evening she spent in her study, after resolving to hide the paper when night fell. Bed-time was not far off, and she strolled down to the Common-room, hoping that the enlivening atmosphere there might cheer her.

But as she opened the door, she realised that the atmosphere, though enlivening, was not cheerful. The Common-room was in an uproar.

"It's a rotten trick!" Gwen Cook was saying. "I don't know who has done it, but it's mean!"

Gwen's tone was tremulous, almost tearful.

"Well, I haven't seen it," declared Clara Trevlyn determinedly. "I think ghosts are all bosh, and that you're a silly fathead to think about them; all the same I wouldn't take your camera. And I don't see why anyone else should want to steal a stupid photograph of a ghost maniac——"

"Perhaps you don't!" retorted Gwen shortly. "But—but I want that photo——"

"Well, perhaps Augusta took it for something. You're too hotheaded, Gwen," said Barbara Redfern.

"Augusta's here."

All heads turned, and Gwen came quickly towards her as Augusta spoke.

"You haven't had my camera?" asked Gwen eagerly. "I left it in the study, but it's gone now!"

"Your camera gone!" ejaculated Augusta; and she looked round the room.

"I think I can guess who has taken it," she said slowly. "Caryl Bagshaw."

"Caryl Bagshaw!"

It was an incredulous chorus. But Augusta nodded.

"Yes. In the photo I took of the ghost-man, Caryl was included. She was just behind him. It was proof that she was at Southampton——"

"But, what on earth! Why should she want to destroy it, even if she were at Southampton? And she says that she came from the North."

"Well, she didn't! I had proof in that photograph——"

Augusta stopped, as a girl in a dusky corner of the room rose.

"Excuse me! I must defend myself," said the quiet voice of Caryl. "But I was not at Southampton; and I didn't take the camera. I have not the pleasure of Gwen Cook's acquaintance, nor do I know where her study is."

"You could find out!" interrupted Augusta. "You spied on me in the dormitory. If you have spied once you will spy again. Girls"—she looked at them all—"that girl is here to steal the paper father sent. A woman at Southampton tried to get it from me, and Caryl Bagshaw was with the woman, as the photograph would prove."

There was an excited buzz of talk at that, and all eyes were turned upon the dark girl in the centre of the room.

"You still keep up that ridiculous invention!" she asked, with an impassive shrug. "I tell you, that you are excited and overwrought. I don't know what paper you have. But it would ease your mind to send it back to your father."

"I don't know where he is. That is a thing you know."

There was a dramatic silence then. But Agnes White, frowning rather, leant forward.

"But you have heard from your father, Augusta surely?" she asked. "A telegram came for you."

"For me?"

"Yes, the boy brought it——"

Agnes White broke off and coloured.

"Where is it?" asked Augusta.

Agnes, frightened, bit her lips, and the girls crowded round her.

"Don't say you forgot to mention it!" exclaimed Clara Trevlyn. "You—you absent-minded dummy!"

Agnes went a deeper shade of pink. Her reputation for absent-mindedness was colossal. But this—it was frankly the "limit."

"I—I'm most awfully sorry!" she stammered. "The—the boy gave it to me. I meant to bring it to you. I—I thought I had——"

"Never mind!" interrupted Augusta. "The point is where is it now?"

Agnes, feeling herself the cynosure of accusing eyes, flushed.

"I—I think it's in my sports coat-pocket," she said. "I put it somewhere safe while I——"

Clara Trevlyn stepped forward.

"What's that stuck in the neck of your drill dress?" she asked.

Agnes started, and drew out an orange-coloured envelope.

There was an angry buzz of talk, and some laughter, but Augusta heeded neither. She took the envelope and ripped it open, her eyes dancing with excitement.

But as she straightened the crumpled telegram, her face took on a startled look, and she read the message through and through.

"Bad news?" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"I—I don't know," murmured Augusta. "It's not from father—it's from someone else."

Then, to their amazement, she walked from the room, shutting the door.

Caryl Bagshaw made a movement as though to follow her, but stopped. And while the girls in the Common-room told the forgetful Agnes what they thought of her, Augusta was standing in the passage outside.

Her eyes were full of amazement, and with reason, for the telegram read:

"Be in your study to-night at eleven. Mum's the word.—DOROTHEA."

Caryl Comes to Terms!

BOOM!

As the school clock struck the first stroke of eleven, Augusta rose from her bed and slipped on her slippers and dressing-gown. From under the sheet she drew the precious envelope, then stole softly from the dormitory.

Very cautiously Augusta opened the study door, and peered into the darkness.

Then, to show her sister that she was in the study to keep the strange appointment, she lit a stump of a candle that was in the cupboard.

Its flickering light made the shadows awesome, and Augusta, listening to the stately ticking of the clock on the mantelshelf, wondered how long her sister would be.

She leant her arms on the table, and counted the ticking seconds of the clock.

"One hundred and four," she mumbled, and almost imperceptibly her head nodded.

She rested it upon her hands.

Tap, tap, tap!

She lifted her head, and her heart seemed to beat in her throat.

Tap, tap! came the distinct sound.

Augusta blew out the candle, and immediately the moonlight silhouetted a figure on the blind.

Swiftly she let it up, and she could not help a start of surprise as she saw the face of Dorothea pressed against the window-pane.

"All right!" she whispered, and, inch by inch, with consummate care, raised the window.

Then she gave her sister her hand and helped her in.

"At last!" murmured Dorothea shakily. "Oh, gracious, Augusta!"

And, momentarily bereft of breath, she sank into the armchair. Augusta pulled the blind.

"Well," she exclaimed softly, "you always were an athlete, Dorothea—but you don't mean to say you climbed the ivy!"

Dorothea smiled wanly and nodded. She was a pretty girl with deep blue eyes and a roguish smile. Her clothes, once stylish, were dusty and threadbare.

"Same old togs," she smiled breathlessly. "Oh, Augusta, I'm in a merry fix!"

And her face saddened. The weak lines about the mouth, the lack of firmness in the chin, were noticeable.

"What's wrong," asked Augusta.

It was easy to see that she was the stronger of the two. Always she had taken the lead, though she was younger.

"Oh, same old stunt! I acted the goat. You know what a fool I am. Cissy Blades ran up a huge bill, and then stole to get the cash, but she left the

blame on me. It was my fault. If I hadn't been such a chump the evidence wouldn't be against me. But there it is. And now there's a warrant out for me."

"A warrant?" asked Augusta. "A police warrant?"

She looked at her sister, aghast, and Dorothea nodded.

"Well, I can't give Cissy away, and it'll take the police months to get me. I'm going to Australia to the pater."

Augusta drew a deep breath.

"Then you didn't get his letter."

"What letter?"

Dorothea looked amazed.

"Why, the pater and mater are on their way home."

And Augusta explained briefly what had happened, while her sister, leaning forward, listened in amazement. Despite her twenty-three years, Dorothea had a child-like look of simplicity at times, and now her flippancy was annoying.

"What a rare old do!" she chuckled. "And you've got this paper. Wonder what it is? Shall we see?"

"No, we won't! It's the pater's, not ours."

Dorothea shrugged her slim shoulders.

"Funny kid," she said. "You've changed lately."

"It's a pity you haven't," returned Augusta grimly. "What do you intend doing now? You can't go to Australia."

Dorothea looked round the study.

"It's not too bad here," she mused. "I could shake down in this room all right. Of course, it's rather small."

Augusta frowned.

"Don't you realise that the police are after you? Suppose they come here and arrest you. Can you prove your innocence?"

"Oh, they won't arrest me! Besides, you can hide me here. There are secret passages and places. It'll be rather fun. Besides, I'm not tall—with a drill dress and my hair down and a little make-up I could look like a schoolgirl. There are so many here they wouldn't realise a new face."

"Of course they would. Marcia Loftus, for one, would find out about it. You've been here before."

Dorothea chuckled.

"Talking of that—remember how I bet you I could climb this ivy?"

"And I said you'd be insane to do so. And I still retain that opinion. Suppose it had given way."

"Oh, suppose—suppose—suppose! Suppose the sky fell in!"

"Oh, do talk sensibly!" said Augusta impatiently. "It must be nearly twelve o'clock. Goodness, I've got enough to worry me as it is! Doesn't it worry you that father and mother are missing, and that this paper may be important?"

"Oh, well, yes! But the pater can look after himself. You worry too much. It'll all come right."

"Yes, that's the way you look at things. I admit they generally do come right in the end—for you. But you don't do anything towards it; you leave it to other people."

"I leave it to those who are competent," said Dorothea, with a sarcastic tilt of the head. "And you, dear Augusta, are competent enough for both of us. I leave it entirely to you. My fate is in your hands, and your dear, sweet conscientiousness will carry me through the toughest day, as Shakespeare says."

"Oh, for goodness' sake, be serious! What is to be done?"

And while Augusta, frowning anxiously, pondered on the difficult question, Dorothea hummed a musical comedy waltz and lounged back lazily in the armchair.

"Got anything?" she asked, as Augusta's expression changed slightly.

"Yes. It's the box-room for you to-night, Dorothea," she said grimly. "Like it or lump it! I'll get you some food, and lock you in."

"The box-room! Oh!"

Dorothea groaned aloud. She rose from the arm-chair, stretched herself, and lounged to the door.

Augusta opened the cupboard door and took out a loaf of bread, some butter, and a tin of milk. Raking in the drawer, she found a tin-opener.

"That's your ration!" she said.

Dorothea pulled a face and pouted.

"No fruit salad, no merry oysters—no nunninks!"

"You're on prison diet now to get you in training," said the younger sister firmly, and Dorothea groaned in resignation.

"Oh, well, I leave it to you, as usual."

Dorothea opened the door, then paused, starting nervously.

CANCELLED! "This is the state coach," explained Babs. "But I suppose you're not in the mood for it now?" Augusta shook her head.

"Thought I heard someone," she said, "—a door shutting?"

"Rubbish! Nerves. You've got the hunted criminal feeling! Box-room, Dorothea."

But Dorothea was not mistaken about the door!

With many grumbles, Dorothea settled herself in the dusty box-room, amongst trunks and boxes. Augusta, bidding her good night, left her with the bread, butter, and milk.

Certainly Dorothea would not starve.

And Augusta, happy regarding that, returned to bed.

But she did not sleep. She had too much to worry her.

Dorothea had taken the matter lightly, but Augusta had seen through that flippant exterior. She knew her sister well, knew her every gesture and emotion, and she knew instinctively that Dorothea's flippancy to-night had been but a disguise. Dorothea felt that the end was near.

Dorothea could not look after herself—and it had always been Augusta's task to look after her. She took it as natural, but she could not pretend to like it! Suppose the police should come to the school? It was a far from remote possibility; in fact, it was a probability.

And if they did, Augusta knew that once more it would be "up to her."

She could imagine Dorothea weak and pleading, Dorothea helpless. Besides, she must stand by Dorothea. Dorothea was her mother's favourite, and perhaps her father's.

If she deserted Dorothea there would be trouble. And Augusta, feeling her responsibilities thick upon her, sat up and tried to think hard.

The paper—she had that—yes, that was all right. Dorothea was safe. Until her father wired, there was nothing for her to do but wait—for until then she had no idea what she was to do but guard the paper.

That much was clear; and Dorothea, she must be kept in hiding till—till goodness knew when—Augusta did not!

But a girl not far away, in a bed into which she had just crept, a girl whose first night it was in the school, thought that she could make a very good guess.

And, as she heard Augusta turning restlessly in bed, she chuckled softly to herself.

Caryl Bagshaw held a trump card up her sleeve, and she was sufficiently devoid of scruples to play it.

The Trump Card!

"EXCUSE me!"

Augusta turned sharply, and looked far from pleased as she heard herself thus addressed by Caryl Bagshaw.

"You want me?" she asked coldly.

Caryl smiled.

"Unpleasant, but true. I want you!" She looked about her. "I've got a trunk," she said cautiously.

Augusta stared at her.

"So have I," she said. "I believe Babs has—and Mabs. Even elephants have them!"

Caryl smiled.

"Exactly. But I want my trunk. I

don't want to create a scene, but I want my trunk——"

Augusta stared at her, more amazed than ever.

"And the trunk's in the box-room! But the box-room's locked! You, as an old scholar, may know where the key is!"

"The key——"

Augusta gripped her hand tightly, and clenched her teeth, hoping that she had betrayed no sign of amazement.

"What sort of trunk is it?" she asked. "Perhaps I can get it out for you! I—I may be able to find a key that will fit!"

"Oh, if the key's missing I shall have to go to Miss Steel!"

"No, don't do that!" exclaimed Augusta quickly.

"Don't—why?"

Augusta bit her lips, and gave the girl a keen side-glance.

Caryl was smiling slightly, her lips twitched, and there was a faint twinkle in her eyes. Perhaps it would be better described as a glitter.

"I—I can get it out!" Augusta said, with an effort."

It was hard to climb down to Caryl.

"No, thanks. I don't want it out. I want to look for something!"

Augusta drew a breath and clenched her hands harder. She would have liked to shake Caryl; the girl's smile incensed her.

"Just give me the box-room key," said Caryl. "It'll save me going to Miss Steel. You wouldn't like me to do that, would you?"

"I—I—I don't see that it matters to me," said Augusta rather huskily, and fear gripping at her heart made her wonder what the other girl had discovered.

"No, perhaps not! But—do think of your sister!"

And Caryl laughed softly as she beheld the expression on Augusta's face.

"I—I don't understand! My sister——"

"Yes. You can't keep her locked up there all day! She'll get tired of brown bread and butter, and tinned milk!"

Augusta's eyes blazed.

"You—you spy!" she exclaimed thickly.

Caryl held up her hand.

"Shush!" she motioned. "You don't want the whole school to know! Gracious, what would the Form say, eh, if they learn that dear Augusta's sister was a thief? What would your mother and father say if, when they came home from Australia, they had to visit a daughter in prison?"

"Don't! Don't!" pleaded Augusta.

Caryl shrugged her shoulders.

"An unfortunate picture when painted in true colours; but—well, I'm willing to keep silent."

Augusta did not reply. Perspiration was standing on her forehead in beads. Her face was strained. From the bottom of her heart she loathed this girl, and now she knew that she was in her power.

And Caryl knew it. Caryl thought the time ripe for her trump card.

"Your mother's fond of Dorothea," she suggested. "I know that she is. She said so on the boat. Yes, I was there all right; but one has to step carefully. Your mother and your father are both fond of Dorothea. They'd hate her to be in prison! On the other hand, the option——"

"The—paper!" exclaimed Augusta.

"Yes, the paper; the option of the gold claim is practically worthless!"

"It is not—it——"

"That is for you to decide! If you give me the paper, then, of course, Dorothea goes free. But——" She leant forward till her face almost touched Augusta's. "But if—you—do—not—then I—tell the police!"

"Tell the police!"

Augusta repeated the words in a daze, and at first the full enormity of the threat did not dawn upon her.

Caryl would tell the police, Dorothea would be arrested, and then—then the picture that Caryl had painted would come true!

Oh, what a home-coming for her mother! It would break her heart to find her daughter in prison. It could not be. Yet Dorothea would be too lackadaisical to gather evidence to prove her evidence.

She might even judge prison to be "rather a lark."

But Augusta knew what it would mean to her sister in later years—knew that it might break her mother's heart. Oh, if only she could know Dorothea's innocence!

Would there be time?

Caryl seemed to be reading the girl's thoughts.

"You can take your time," she said casually. "But I mean just what I have said, and I shall keep my eye on the box-room and its precious contents."

Augusta took a step forward, then hesitated. To take strong action would not help, dearly though she longed to be a man facing a man, and be able to give physical expression to her over-wrought feelings.

Caryl had the whip-hand. And what was there to do?

Her sister—she could not let her go to prison. But if the paper were important—and doubtless it was, since there were such persistent efforts to steal it—that must be kept.

Caryl had mentioned a gold-mine and an option.

Had her father a chance to buy some land that contained gold? If so, then the paper was probably of paramount importance. She must not part with it!

And she looked at Caryl determinedly.

"I will not part with it!" she announced, fixing the girl with her eyes. "Father has trusted me with it——"

"And you really think that he would rather let his daughter go to prison? I wonder what dear Dorothea would say about it?" laughed Caryl jeeringly. "You had better speak to her before you make rash decisions. It won't be pleasant for you, mind, if the police come to arrest your sister. Don't forget that!"

"I haven't forgotten it. Only a coward would make such threats. How a girl could be such a sneak I can't think!"

"Names do not hurt me, so don't waste your valuable breath!" shrugged the other. "And don't keep me waiting. Better make your decision as soon as possible."

And she turned suddenly and walked off.

Augusta, breathing deeply, watched her receding figure, realising that the climax had been reached. Caryl Bagshaw had showed her hand, and Augusta could not but admit that it was a powerful one.

And she was left to make the choice—the terrible choice. Either she must betray her sister or her father's trust.

What would Dorothea say? Augusta felt a tremor of nervousness. Dorothea was unreliable. Would she be weak now? Would she suggest giving up the paper?

No. Surely there must be some way out, some intermediate path that avoided either drastic course?

Caryl's was no idle threat. Out of spite the girl would betray Dorothea to the police. She had no better feelings, and to hope that her threat was empty would be foolish.

So Augusta, distressed in mind, made her way with great caution to the box-room.

She opened the door quietly, and entered.

Dorothea from a seat on a trunk looked at her, and smiled.

"Cheer-ho!" she said. "I've had a jolly night. The view from here is good—tophole, in fact. And I can keep an eye on the gates in case the merry police should enter——"

But she paused, and examined her sister's face.

Augusta was looking worried and perturbed. The way in which she closed the door told of her uneasiness.

"What's the matter?" asked Dorothea quickly.

And Augusta told her.

"My!" Dorothea exclaimed, and her look was serious. "You mean that the little spy knows all about the paper, and is simply here to get hold of it?"

"Apparently."

"And she wants me to be given up to the police? Why?"

"She doesn't want it. Only if I do not give up the paper she will give up you. She thinks I'm certain to give up the paper——"

"And you're not?" murmured Dorothea, with a whimsical smile.

She leaned back against the wall, and clasped her hands behind her head.

"Well, how can I, Dorothea? If this paper means the possession of a gold-mine—wealth to the pater and mater—how can I give it up? I have no right to."

"No, of course not. My fault, really!" sighed Dorothea. "I'm always getting in the cart. Now, if I weren't botherin' you, you could tell that kid to go and eat coke."

She frowned despondently.

"The pater's a good sort," she mused, rather wistfully. "He's done a lot for me, and he doesn't grumble. I don't suppose he'd grumble if you gave up the paper to save me, but it wouldn't be fair. It wouldn't."

She smiled.

"After all, I need a lesson. Let them get me, Augusta. I sha'n't hurt in prison, shall I? They get good food, I've heard, and it isn't as though I'd done anything to deserve it."

But Augusta could not accept that light view of the matter.

"The mater couldn't bear to know you were in prison. Besides, the disgrace! If you're not guilty, we can save you, surely?"

Dorothea shook her head.

"It's an off-chance," she said. "I've promised the girl I shall keep silent, and I must. It won't hurt me. After all, you're between two fires. If the paper goes, the mine goes for ever. And—and I sha'n't get more than a year," she added, with a half-hearted smile. "Then I shall come out, and it'll be over. The mine and the wealth will live down my past perhaps."

"But, Dorothea, innocent or guilty, it would ruin your life. Mother couldn't bear it."

Dorothea shrugged her shoulders.

"Dear kid, if the choice is between the two, it must be either the paper or——"

Augusta shook her head.

"I—I don't know what to do!" she said huskily. "How can I make the decision——"

She broke off and listened. Dorothea went to the window, but her sister pulled her sharply back.

"Don't show your face. They are calling. It sounded like my name."

Then she caught sight of a uniformed boy in the quadrangle.

"A telegram—perhaps a cable. Oh, Dorothea, it may be from father! I must see."

And she whirled from the room, but not too quickly to lock the door securely.

Down into the quadrangle she went, and almost collided with Clara Trevlyn, who ran excitedly to meet her.

"Cable for you!" cried Clara breathlessly, and she waved an envelope.

Excitedly Augusta took it from her, and ran her finger through the flap, tearing it open.

She spread out the slip of paper and read the contents eagerly.

Her face lighted up, and she turned to run back to the School House.

"All right?" asked Clara.

"Yes. They'll be home in a day or two, but I can't stop now."

"Well!" exclaimed Clara, and she stared after Augusta's fleeting figure in amazement.

But Augusta was thinking only of her telegram. She rushed up the passage to the box-room, and almost forgot caution.

It was not until she was nearly to the door that she remembered. Some Third-Formers were in the passage, and she waited until they had passed by.

Then she unlocked the door and flung it wide.

"A cable!" she cried excitedly.

Dorothea nodded.

"Read it out," she said.

"'Arriving shortly, letter follows. Take paper to Dawson, land agent, 13, Dulecque Street, London, before twelve o'clock p.m. Thursday 23rd.'"

"Dawson," ejaculated Dorothea. "Oh, he's a solicitor or land agent or someone, isn't he? Then this'll be urgent. My word, isn't to-day the twenty-third?"

Augusta rather worriedly nodded.

Dorothea smiled.

"Simple, then," she said, with a wave of the hand. "I have a way out. You must let me plead with Miss Caryl. It's the only way——"

"What's the good? She won't let you off. Is it likely, when she wants the paper?"

"Indeed not; but we can argue, and bring a little cord and perhaps a handkerchief into the discussion—not to mention a hat and veil, and possibly a cloak."

"What on earth——"

Augusta, positively amazed, simply blinked at her sister.

Dorothea laughed softly.

"Where there's a will there's a way," she exclaimed for her sister's edification. "The problem is this. The paper must reach Mr. Dawson by twelve; when it has done so, presumably friend Caryl's tricks will be done——"

"But that won't prevent her giving you away——"

"No, it won't; but I will, with the aid of cord and a handkerchief——"

"Goodness! Hold her a prisoner! But—but you can't for ever. Then she will give you away——"

"But I shall be far, far away by then. Don't you see the wheeze now?"

Augusta nodded quickly.

"Yes. And I think you're right, too. Twelve o'clock—and it's nine now. I haven't too much time. I will get Caryl here."

And, acting on the impulse, she rose, and set out to find Caryl Bagshaw. Caryl was not far away.

"You have decided?" she asked eagerly when Augusta approached her.

"We want you in the box-room to talk things over. It's no good here."

Caryl hesitated, then nodded agreement.

"I will come," she said. "But bring the paper—that is necessary."

"Wait here, then."

And Augusta sped off to her study. But it was not only the paper that she brought back. In her dress was concealed strong string and a large handkerchief.

But Caryl Bagshaw did not know that; at least, not at present. Later she was to learn; and not so very much later, either!

She entered the box-room, and Dorothea bowed to her.

"Here you are, then," smiled Dorothea. "Splendid! You wish to hand me over to the police, I understand, in exchange for the paper?"

"That is so," smiled Caryl. "And I consider it's a cheap 'let off' for you."

"Probably——"

"That is the paper. Let me look. I do not wish to be deceived!"

"I haven't decided yet," remarked Augusta coldly. "Perhaps you may not have the paper——"

She drew back as Caryl made a quick snatch. But too late! Caryl Bagshaw had the precious envelope, and, opening the door, sped down the passage.

"After her!" cried Dorothea.

But her cry was needless. Augusta was already in chase. Caryl had run along the passage and dived into one of the rooms.

"Stop!" cried Augusta.

She flung herself against the door even as it closed. Once again she used her weight against the panels, and this time the door flew open wide, so that she all but fell into the room.

Caryl Bagshaw, envelope in hand, stepped back.

Augusta, regaining her balance, obtained hold of the envelope. Caryl seemed to have lost heart, for she hardly struggled.

"You sneak!" exclaimed Augusta contemptuously. "And now I suppose you will give my sister up to the police?"

Caryl shrugged her shoulders tauntingly.

"Why not?" she asked.

"Even if I give you the paper?"

"Perhaps."

And reluctantly Caryl retraced her steps to the box-room.

"I'LL TELL THE POLICE!" Augusta repeated the other's words in a daze, and then suddenly she realised the full meaning of the threat.

"Got her, then?" asked Dorothea. "Splendid! Now for the giddy scheme."

She pounced upon Caryl, gripping the girl's arms behind her back. The frightened spy would have screamed, but Augusta, quick as lightning, jammed a portion of the handkerchief in her mouth, and secured it there tightly.

It was the work of only a minute or so to truss up Caryl so that she could not move. Her eyes glittered above the gag, but speech was impossible.

"And that's the end of you," chuckled Dorothea. "When you are released, which may not be for hours, I shall be far, far away; and the paper will be in London!"

And Augusta, holding the envelope tightly, nodded. She looked fiercely at her enemy, and frowned as the dark eyes seemed to smile.

"Don't take chances, Dorothea," she whispered. "Wait only till I shall be in the train, then go."

"What-ho!"

Then Augusta took her departure, leaving the spy to the tender mercy of Dorothea.

At the Last Moment!

"STOP!"

Augusta paused, and turned back. She was walking through the gates of Cliff House, and her heart sank, for she thought that perhaps she had been seen by some monitress.

She was taking French leave. There was not a minute to be lost—and suppose Miss Primrose refused consent?

To be stopped at the last minute would be unthinkable. She was half-inclined to run on. But, looking back, she saw that the person who had called to her was no one connected with the school.

The woman's dress was bright, and her hat small. A veil, patterned so that little of the face could be seen, hung from it.

And under the hat showed some golden hair.

"Can you direct me to Miss Augusta Anstruther-Browne, please?" the woman inquired.

"Why, yes. I am she," Augusta answered in surprise. "But I—I am in an awful hurry."

"But this matter is urgent. I come from Mr. Dawson, a land agent. Your father has a valuable paper that must be handed to Mr. Dawson by noon to-day. Do you know anything about it. It is very late."

Augusta's hand went to the large dorothy-bag she carried. Then she paused and eyed the woman keenly.

"Yes, it is on the way there," she answered.

"On the way there?"

In the woman's voice there was a note of alarm.

"Yes. It will not be late——"

"But the post. If it reaches there later than twelve—— What a pity it has gone. I have come especially to fetch it. I have a fast car."

"Is it near by?"

"Yes——"

"Then could you possibly give me a lift to London, please?"

The woman hesitated, and Augusta tried to control her excitement. As yet she had not made up her mind whether this woman was honest or not. If she were, it did not matter; if she were not, it would be rather daring to take the paper to London under her very nose.

"I am afraid not," she said. "I shall not be going to London now. If the paper has gone, of course, it is too late. But really it was rather foolish to trust it to the post——"

"Not by post; by special messenger."

"Ah! What sort of person?"

The question was eager. But Augusta made no effort to answer it.

"I have a train to catch," she said. "Mr. Dawson will find who the messenger is when he gets the paper."

The woman bit her lip and glared.

Augusta, nodding politely, walked past her through the gates. She was walking, since to have cycled would have called attention to herself. During lessons Piper, the school porter, had the key of the cycle-shed, and it was impossible to ask him for the key.

Looking back when she had walked some few yards, Augusta saw the woman in the gateway, and she laughed.

"If it were so urgent," she asked herself, "why did not Mr. Dawson telephone or telegraph instead of sending a messenger?"

The woman was an enemy, she felt sure of that. But, enemy or not, she was thrown off the track now, that was certain.

A glance at her wrist-watch, and she commenced to run.

She had delayed with the woman longer than she imagined, and now there were but a few minutes in which to catch the train.

But Friardale station was near, and she ran well.

She bought her ticket and reached the platform as the train was about to leave the station.

Into the nearest carriage she bundled, and fell back upon the seat, glad that she had thrown off pursuit.

But a yell from the porter made her hasten to the window. Looking out, she saw the woman running along the platform.

The train was gathering speed now, and had nearly arrived at the end of the platform. The woman's face was red, and her breath came in gasps, but she did not abandon her chase.

A last, mad rush, and her hand was on the handrail of the guard's van. She stumbled, and was dragged along for a few yards. Then the strong arm of the guard came to her rescue, and she was bundled into the train.

Augusta, her face white for anxiety of her enemy, returned to her seat. The woman was safely in the train now—but what a mad rush—what a reckless race against seconds! The paper must truly be of importance. And this woman one of the enemies!

As the train bumped and rattled along she looked at the carriage windows, watching the scenery with unseeing eyes. Her thoughts were elsewhere.

Then the train arrived at Courtfield without incident. There Augusta waited, but she could not see the woman. To delay longer might lose her the London train, and she crossed to the up platform.

The train came in a second later, and she found an empty compartment.

But she was determined to keep it empty, and she stood by the window, ready to prevent the woman's entry if possible. Certain now that the woman was an enemy, she expected to see her at any moment. The woman had told untruths. Why should she do that if she were an emissary of Mr. Dawson's?

And while she pondered the subject in her mind she kept a keen watch from the window.

Nor did she relax that watch until the train was moving. Then she turned, and a gasp of astonishment left her lips.

"You!" she exclaimed.

For in the far end of the compartment sat the woman with the veil!

"Yes, I! Nearly missed this train——"

"How did you get here?" interrupted Augusta angrily.

"Oh—the other side!"

Augusta's hand slid to her bag, and sighing with relief as her fingers closed on the envelope, she kept her eyes on the woman.

"We may as well understand one another," she said. "You are not an emissary of Mr. Dawson's. You want this paper. You sha'n't have it!"

The woman smiled.

"That is a matter of opinion," she said. "I shall have it! This is a non-stop train, remember."

"And if you did get it, do you think I should allow you to take it to Mr. Dawson?" asked Augusta, with great contempt.

The woman shrugged her shoulders.

"I should ask you to prevent me doing that," she laughed. "The game is nearly ending. If you get it to Dawson before twelve, you've won! If you don't, we win! What happens to the paper as long as Dawson doesn't get it is no matter!"

"But——"

The woman rose, and crossed the compartment.

"I shall pull the communication cord!" exclaimed Augusta.

"That will not prevent me getting the paper and throwing it away. We shall be crossing a river soon."

For reply, Augusta lunged out with her hand, caught the woman under the chin, and forced her head back. It was a time for action, and Augusta was not at a loss.

With a hard thrust she sent the woman reeling back, then she turned to the door and opened it. The train was rocking as it gathered speed, and the wind whistling by made it difficult for her to open the door.

But she did not hesitate. She intended to take what she considered the easier course.

At Cliff House Augusta's nerve was renowned. She needed all that nerve now, as she stood on the footboard of the express.

The door swung to, and she shut it, as she hung grimly on to the grip. Inch by inch she crept along the footboards.

The adjoining compartment was empty, but one further along was occupied by two men and a woman. She paused by the door, and the three faces stared at her in alarm.

A man opened the door gently, and helped her in.

"Great Jupiter, girl, you'd have been killed! What's the matter?"

And Augusta, when she had lost a little of her shakiness, told them that a woman had tried to rob her—but that was all.

"You'd better let me see you to a taxi when we get to the station, then," said the man, "if it's something valuable you've got. Where do you want to go in London?"

Augusta told him, and he nodded. But after thanking him for his offer she relapsed into silence, although she smiled occasionally as she realised that the chase was indeed over.

She saw the woman when the terminus was reached, but highway robbery was impossible—Augusta's escort would see to that.

And, thanking him again, she raced across the platform between the lines of people and hailed a taxi.

From the small back window she saw the woman wending her way through the people, but she had not seen Augusta. And the Fourth-Former chuckled delightedly.

Through the London streets went the taxi, stopping now and again for traffic halts that made Augusta angry.

She glanced at the clock, and started as she saw the time.

Twenty minutes to twelve!

She would be in time, although none too early. She glanced at the envelope, then smiled again.

The taxi had stopped now, and looking out she saw the name of Dawson on a brass plate at the side of an entrance.

She alighted, and fumbling in her bag, found half-a-crown, which she handed to the driver.

Then, smiling happily, she ran through the entrance and up the flight of stairs.

"Third floor," she muttered to herself, and on that floor she paused.

There it was—"A. D. Dawson. Inquiries."

She tapped at the door and a small boy opened it.

"Mr. Dawson, miss? Yes! This way."

And he showed her into a square, com-

fortable office. A bald-headed man at the desk looked up.

"Mr. Dawson?" she asked; and he nodded. "I have brought this paper from Mr. Anstruther-Browne."

He frowned.

"H'm! The option, eh? He wired me the money. Just in time; I should close it at twelve. Give it to me!"

He seemed none too pleased, and she stared in surprise, but handed him the paper.

He slit open the envelope, then searched in it. His fat fingers brought several sheets of paper to light, and Augusta leant forward.

For the sheets of paper were blank!

"What's this?" he grunted. "Blank paper? Huh!

He drew out a smaller piece, and with a smile handed it to Augusta. With trembling hands she took it.

Three words, written in ink, were on the paper, and she stared at them wide-eyed, while Mr. Dawson chuckled.

For the three words were:

"My game.—CARYL."

"Oh! Then the paper, it has been stolen! Mr. Dawson"—she leant forward agitatedly—"someone has stolen the paper. Please let me get it. I had it!"

But Mr. Dawson shook his bald head, and stroked it nervously.

"My dear young lady," he said, with an oily smile and outspread hands, "business is business. That paper was an option on some land in Australia. A man named Peters bought an option on it—an option to buy it for two hundred pounds." He looked at the clock. "In a quarter of an hour that option expires, and I shall sell the land for my client for five hundred pounds or more."

"But the mine? The land is father's."

"He bought the option. But the land is not his unless he cares to pay the price. It is unfortunate. But if the option is here before twelve he shall have the land. Peters gave him the option on his death-bed. But now—well, it is useless. You do not know where it is?"

"At school. A girl took it. I can get it in—in an hour or two."

"Too late!"

Augusta clenched her hands, and stared at the blank paper in bewilderment. Caryl had stolen it—but how? She must have substituted it.

Too late!

She sank on to a chair, and felt that she wanted to cry. Oh, what a fool she had been! Too late!

She stared at the clock with wide eyes. The hand had jumped! It was creeping towards the ten mark. Ten minutes—ten minutes in which to save the land—the land that she knew now contained gold!

Ten minutes in which a miracle might happen! But the days of miracles were past.

Nine minutes now, for the hand was creeping round.

"It is no good!" exclaimed Mr. Dawson impatiently. "I had better return the money to your father."

"Not before twelve o'clock," said Augusta grimly. "Your 'phone—let me use it, please."

Mr. Dawson shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Ten minutes! Why, the school is miles away. How can it be sent that distance in ten minutes—eight minutes, to be exact?"

"Can't the option be extended?"

"No. There's a client ready to pay twice—perhaps four times the amount. Your father has told me he cannot afford it. Very well; he must either get the option to time, or forfeit it."

"But he was delayed."

Mr. Dawson shrugged his shoulders again, and looked at the clock.

"Six minutes," he said. "Impossible now. Nothing can travel at the speed—nothing——"

He broke off as a tap came at the office door, and frowned.

Augusta jumped up, her face colouring, and her eyes suddenly bright. For a voice she had heard often before came from the next room.

"Don't bother, sonny; leave it to me!"

Dorothea! Dorothea here! What could it mean?

Augusta tore open the door, and Dorothea, her sister, smiling, entered.

"The merry option—and to time!" she said.

Mr. Dawson snatched the envelope, ripped it open, then scowled.

"I see it's all right," smiled Augusta; and then her reserve broke down, and she clasped her sister passionately.

And while Mr. Dawson saw to the matter in hand the two sisters watched, with glad smiles.

. . . . . .

"Quite simple," said Dorothea, as she and Augusta, their lunch ordered, sat at a quiet table in a City restaurant.

"But how did you know?"

"Accidentally. Dear old human nature, you know. I loosened dear Caryl's bonds just before I was preparing to leave, and then she gave the game away completely. I told her I was free, and that you had the paper. Then she interrupted me. Waggled an envelope, and said she'd won. Said she'd got the real paper. I didn't believe her; and she told me that she changed them while she was in that room."

"When she escaped from the box-room with the envelope. She must have had one all ready then."

"She did. Well, of course, I just snatched the paper. She warned me that I daren't go to London, for fear of arrest. But—well, I had to, hadn't I?"

"But were you chased?"

"I was—yes. By a detective. I sent him off the track, though, I fancy. Never mind."

"Never mind!" ejaculated Augusta. "You braved the police—braved arrest to get the paper in to time?"

"Well, yes. Let me see, when must we get back to Mr. Dawson?"

"Two o'clock. But you needn't come. The detective may be there—— Oh, bless him!"

Dorothea sprang to her feet with an exclamation, and Augusta frowned, as a short, fair man advanced towards them. He raised his hat.

"Miss Dorothea Anstruther-Browne?" he asked.

Dorothea drew back.

"Oh, gracious, you're the 'tec! I'm done, Augusta!"

The man nodded.

"I am the detective," he agreed. "But I have not come to arrest you. I've been following you to inform you that your innocence is proved. The guilty party has been arrested."

"Oh, great jumpers!"

Dorothea almost collapsed on to her chair. And the detective, rasing his hat, walked from the shop.

"Oh, Dorothea!" murmured Augusta. "To think that—that you've been hiding like this, and it's been all right the whole time!"

"Thank goodness, the mater won't know!" breathed Dorothea. "That's what I think about it. My word, I shall go easy after this! I have been a chump!"

"You've been a brick!" murmured Augusta.

And with that sentiment the Fourth Form, when they learnt the facts of the case, heartily agreed.

"I reckon your pater ought to be proud of both of you!" murmured Clara Trevlyn. "Caryl had the sense to vanish. We haven't seen her again. If she had stayed I'd have bumped her. But now I'm going to get the welcome ready for your people."

"Yes; they're really coming to-morrow," smiled Augusta. "Thank goodness!"

And Mr. and Mrs. Anstruther-Browne did not disappoint again. In the Fourth Form there was great excitement, and Philippa Derwent led the horse while Old Joey's cab was pulled part of the way home by the Fourth Form.

Mr. and Mrs. Anstruther-Browne's joy knew no bound, and when they learnt of the trials Augusta had endured to keep her father's trust, their pride in their daughter increased tenfold. But Dorothea was not forgotten, though mention of her unfortunate escapade was omitted.

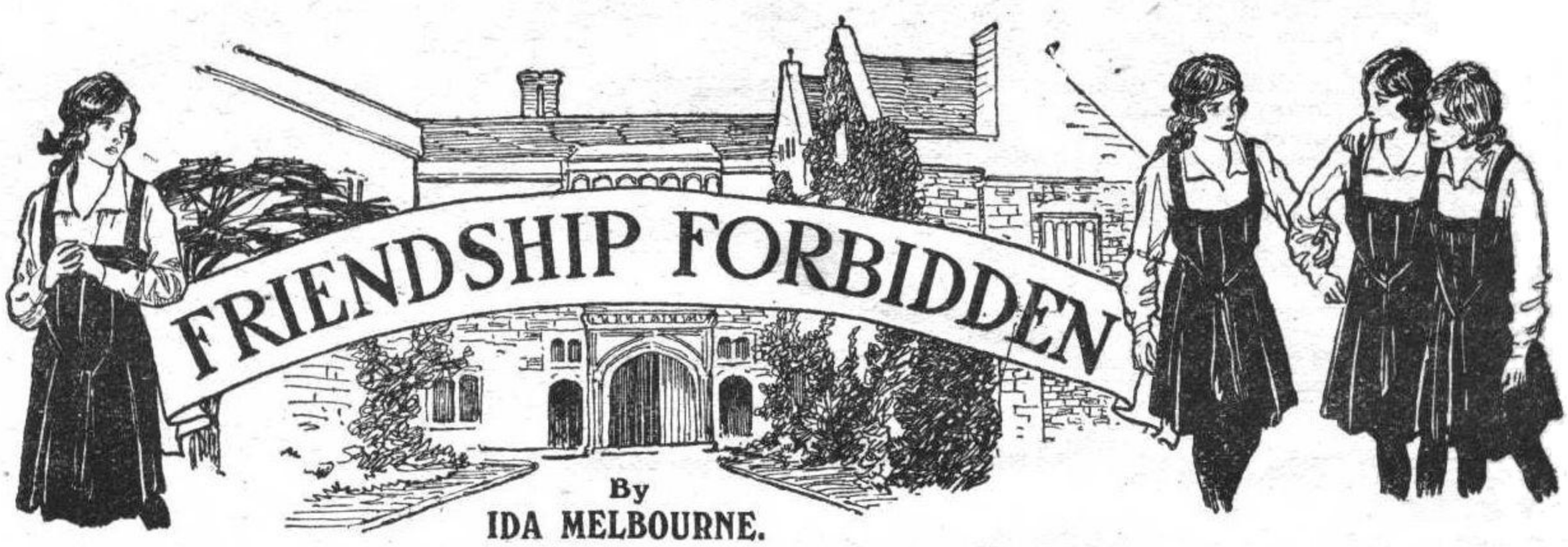
"You wonderful girls!" said Mr. Anstruther-Browne. "No man could have better daughters. Had I guessed that there would be this trickery, I would have told you the whole business, and given you the address. But the first I knew was when we were kidnapped at Aden. Luckily, we were able to bribe the native who was our warder. They nearly succeeded, and would have done but for you two."

"Hear, hear!"

And that evening there could not have been a happier assembly than that gathered in and about Study No. 3 to celebrate the successful conclusion of Augusta's trust.

THE END.

OUR FINE 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 to make no friends with Kitty Crichton & Co.

Later, a mysterious chalked sign was noticed by both 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.

The Limmershaw girls had the great fortune to discover a vast treasure in a cave among the cliffs. But shortly afterwards the treasure was stolen from the school, and Dolores discovered its hiding-place—in the dungeon beneath her own home! For the sake of her aunt she put the girls off the track, but a cunning, prying girl, Jane Prestwich, was not so easily shaken off. Looking meaningly at Dolores, she declared that, when the police arrived, she would "do her duty!" What did the girl know? wondered Dolores.

(Read on from here.)

"The Arm of the Law."

DOLORES found that the girl's eyes were upon her, and she drew back slightly, her heart thumping with fear.

Did this girl suspect? How much did Jane Prestwich know? She had no chance of speaking to the girl; for other Forms who had heard of the discovery were arriving now to make inquiries.

Dolores walked about impatiently, wishing that she could go home and warn them, awkward though it would certainly be to broach the subject.

But she stopped in her pacing as a blue-uniformed figure entered the school gates. She recognised the policeman, and stared.

Other girls had seen him, and now, with Jane importantly in the centre, they hurried to meet him.

Breathless, they explained all that had happened; and he, listening, made laborious and slowly-written notes in his small black book.

Jane's evidence he took down with many a "hum and ha!" looking at her querulously. But it was obvious that her evidence impressed him immensely.

The bell rang for classes, then, but although the others rushed off, Jane remained, talking to the policeman.

With the crowd that ran to the schoolhouse went Dolores. But half-way she dropped out, feigning that her shoelace was loose.

And, bending low over her shoe, she managed to glance back at Jane.

Hastily she rose, for Jane's eyes were fixed upon her. She did not wish to draw suspicion, although she suspected that Jane was not altogether unsuspicious of her already.

Slowly she went into the school, looking about her. How could she go into lessons, leaving her aunt's fate in the hands of circumstance?

At all costs her aunt must be warned. For Jane Prestwich could not be trusted. It was not unlikely that she would mention the Kalenzis to the zealous constable.

Through a window Dolores saw Jane advancing. She noted the smile on the girl's lips, and hurried to the door—with what object she knew not.

Jane stared at her for a moment, then laughed.

"Well, little Miss Mystery?" she said. "You're Christian name is solved. See what you make of that."

And, with a short laugh, she walked on, leaving Dolores, her eyes round, staring after her.

For a second the full purport of the remark did not dawn upon her. Then she saw it, and turned white.

On the steps of the schoolhouse she hesitated, then ran down them, pell-mell, aware only of one desire—to reach her home and give her aunt warning.

Forgetful that she was hatless—that she should be in school—she raced along the lane, covering the distance to her home in record time.

Breathlessly, she hammered on the door, and the minutes seemed hours ere Chileen's soft welcome footsteps sounded.

The door opened, and she almost fell into the hall. The servant caught her in his arms.

"What is it, mam'selle?"

Dolores choked for breath, and leaned back on the closed door. Chileen, alarmed, called for Aunt Yelma.

As her aunt came hurriedly down the stairs, Dolores staggered forward.

"Oh, aunt!" she gasped. "Aunt, the—the——"

She broke off, and wheeled round as a sharp knock came at the door.

"What is it?" she asked in alarm.

Chileen, puzzled, went slowly to the door. He stood on tiptoe and peered through a small sliding port-hole.

"A policeman," he said, turning back.

"Oh!"

Dolores clutched her aunt's arm fearfully, choking for breath. The police! They were here, then. The end had come—through Jane. The place would be searched—the treasure found.

If she could only prevent them—if——

But her wild meditation was broken short by repeated hammering on the door.

A Searching Inquiry!

CHILEEN, his eyes wide open, stared at Madame Kalenzi, who, upright and motionless, gazed fixedly at the servant.

"Open the door, Chileen," she said, without a quiver in her voice.

Chileen bowed, and turned to the door. Silently he withdrew the bolts and swung it open. Dolores drew back, biting her lip, holding her breath in agitation.

For the local police-constable stood in the doorway.

He seemed rather surprised to see her, and frowned portentously.

"What do you want here?" asked Madame Kalenzi sharply.

The constable coughed, and dug his thumbs in his belt.

"I be come to hask you a few questions, ma'am," he announced.

"Oh, perhaps you will enter, constable."

Chileen stood aside, and the policeman clumped in. He awkwardly removed his helmet, and looked about him.

"You wish to see my husband, no doubt," murmured Yelma Kalenzi, and Dolores could not but marvel at her aunt's calmness and confidence.

To look at her, no one would have imagined that her house harboured a valuable treasure stolen from a school. There was no light of fear in her eyes, and Dolores gained courage.

But every inch that the policeman took seemed to her a step nearer to discovery—and then, disaster.

But Madame Kalenzi saw to it that the policeman did not walk too far into the house. The constable was peering about him curiously.

Never before in his life had he seen such a house, and such furnishing. His experience was limited to the rustic dwellings around the town in which he spent all his time.

Yelma Kalenzi, with great skill, steered him into a small back room, and there he was more at home. For the room was sparsely furnished, and bore little that told of Eastern ownership.

There he waited awkwardly.

Dolores, after a momentary hesitation, went into the room. She did not quite know if he would make some sort of search. And she meant to do all in her power to frustrate any such attempt.

But the stolid constable had no such

enterprising thought in mind; and when her uncle appeared, Dolores drew back.

Her uncle's keen, dark eyes fixed themselves upon the local constable, who coughed, and tried to look official.

The policeman was portly, and that word might also be applied to her uncle, save that he looked strong and active in comparison to the constable's stolidity.

The chief of the Kalenzi household gripped his short, black, square-cut beard, and tugged it slightly.

"You want to ask questions?" he queried slowly and distinctly in his rumbling tone.

The policeman nodded.

"Yes, sir. A young lady wots at the school with miss 'ere"—he jerked his thumb in Dolores' direction—"informed me as you could give definite statements regarding Boralia. Some jewels, which is believed to belong there, 'ave been stolen."

"Boralia?"

Uncle Kalenzi shrugged his broad shoulders and spread out his hand expressively.

"Boralia," he smiled. "I know it not. What jewels are these?"

"The treasure, uncle," added Dolores. "The treasure the girls at school found in a cave by the sea——"

Without turning his head, her uncle nodded.

"I understand," he answered slowly. "And you, officer, have come to see me about this. In what way do I become connected with it?"

He spoke with slow perfection of English, and the policeman nodded stolidly.

"That's right, sir," he agreed, flattered to be addressed as "officer." "I wants to hear just what you knows of this place Boralia. Oi 'ave been informed, as you know."

Again the bearded man shrugged his shoulders.

"How can I say," he smiled, "when I have not seen the country, and know of it only by such casual mention of its customs as appear in newspapers?"

"Then you 'aven't been there?" the policeman inquired, in deep disappointment.

"I have not. It grieves me that I cannot give you information. Who was it informed you that I have knowledge of Boralia? It might be of assistance—perhaps I could discover of whom she was thinking. Possibly it is merely a confusion of names."

"Well——"

The constable scratched his head, and looked doubtfully at Dolores. It was obvious that he was not anxious to reveal the identity of his informant.

"Jane Prestwich," said Dolores quickly.

"Well—yes. Miss Prestwich it was. She asked me not to say, but, seeing as you knew, miss——"

"Ah, Prestwich—Jane Prestwich!" smiled Dolores' uncle. "That is interesting. Did she say why she thought it was I who knew something of Boralia—I mean, she gave nothing but the name—no other form of distinction?"

"Matter of fact, sir," said the constable laboriously, shifting rather awkwardly from foot to foot, "she said Madame Kalenzi——"

"I see! And her reason?"

There was a strange, almost magnetic, compelling force in Monsieur Kalenzi's voice, and his questions were answered always.

"She—well, sir, I fancy something Madame Kalenzi said had made her think it. She spoke of photographs, and—er—several things."

"The girl is probably thinking of someone else. Schoolgirls, keen though they are, make mistakes regarding names."

"Yes, sir. But—well, your name ain't a common one—not to be mistaken with Smith or Johnson."

"Ah 'no! But is it not possible that this girl Prestwich may have mistaken the person? She may have thought that my wife had the photographs, whereas, it was some other person."

"Yes, I suppose so," agreed the constable, rather heavily.

He felt that he was being guided—gently persuaded that a mistake had been made. And he was quite right. Monsieur Kalenzi did not do things by halves.

"It is rather annoying, constable," he went on, "to have one's afternoon disturbed in this manner. Kindly see to it in future that the witnesses are sure of their facts. It would save your time, and other people's. Girls may be fond of joking. But I am not. To me this flavours distinctly of a joke."

And Dolores drew in a deep breath. She knew that it was no joke. Jane Prestwich had been in deadly earnest. Julia might have sent the constable on a wild goose chase, but Julia would not have been so vindictive as to accuse any special person.

No; Jane had intended to make things awkward, but she had failed.

"There is nothing further I can do for you, officer?" asked Monsieur Kalenzi suavely.

"I think not, thank you kindly, sir!" murmured the outwitted policeman. "Sorry I troubled you!"

And he followed Chileen to the door, bidding the servant a gruff "good-day."

With his grim smile on his rather swarthy, well-defined face, Monsieur Kalenzi watched the man disappear. Then he turned suddenly to his niece.

"This girl Prestwich, Dolores?" he asked sharply. "Who is she—what is she? A busybody?"

"Yes, uncle. She came here——"

"Here?"

He turned sharply at the sound of a footstep in the doorway, and saw his wife there, frowning.

"This is that girl Jane's work, then?" Madame Kalenzi demanded.

"Yes, Aunt Yelma. She told the policeman. I do not know what she suspects."

"Suspects?"

They both stared at her then, and Dolores, with an inward start, realised that she had said too much. She was supposed to know nothing about the hidden jewels.

"Suspect—what can she suspect?" demanded her aunt inquiringly.

"She may think that—that we have something to do with the jewels. She thinks we know about Boralia."

"Indeed? You must dissuade her of that notion, Dolores. It is absurd!"

"Yes, aunt. But—but the photographs I took to school!"

Her aunt and uncle exchanged a quick look, but not so quick that Dolores could not observe it.

"They were nothing—sent by a friend; I was not aware they were of Boralia. However, no matter. It is not likely that they would interest the constable."

"No, uncle. I—I will try to tell Jane."

"Perhaps we had better see her," suggested Yelma Kalenzi, and she looked meaningly at her husband.

"Possibly," he assented.

"Jane—Jane thinks the ring and triangle gang stole the jewels," added the girl quickly. "She says that she's found out that they're a Boralian secret society!"

She looked at her aunt and uncle to note the effect of the statement, and she was not disappointed. Amazement and alarm were expressed in equal proportion.

"You must ask this girl home, Dolores," said her aunt quickly. "She would be interesting. I remember her. Do not forget." And, with a nod of the head to her niece, she went from the room, her husband following a second later.

Jane Forms Her Own Conclusions!

"IT'S ridiculous!"

Jane Prestwich spoke angrily, but from the girls gathered around her there was no response.

Jane held her audience; for Jane had

"Look!" cried Pearl Hardy, flourishing the newspaper. "Here's all about the robbery!"

always plenty to say, and knew how to say it.

"I don't see why," murmured Kitty Crichton, as Jane looked round triumphantly.

Afternoon lessons were due to begin in twenty minutes' time, but already the quadrangle was crowded. Girls had arrived early. It was a fine afternoon, and their intention had been to get in a little practice on the tennis lawns.

But their good intentions regarding tennis were forgotten when Jane held forth on the subject of the lost treasure.

"The local constable isn't brilliant!" said Jane scoffingly. "Anyone could twist him round their little finger! What did you expect the Kalenzis to say—that they knew of Boralia?"

"To tell the truth," returned Kitty, rather angrily, "I, for one, don't see what the Kalenzis have to do with the affair! You seem to have dragged them into it! And it was like your cheek to send the police to their house——"

"Hear, hear!"

It was a regular chorus, and Jane flushed angrily as she saw that she was losing her grip on her audience.

"I have my reasons," Jane returned coldly. "What they are is not your concern. But I say this—the Kalenzis know something about Boralia! We know that they do! Yet they hide it! Why?"

"For their own reasons! It's not our business!" retorted Pearl. "Some day your nose will get biffed if you poke it into things that don't concern you!"

Jane Prestwich shrugged her shoulders, and sneered.

"I don't mind abuse," she said. "It is no argument. You can call me a fool, or any other name you care to, but it won't alter facts. Dolores brought a photograph to the school—a photo of Boralia! And Madame Kalenzi was alarmed——"

"She was angry!" retorted Kitty. "My mother would probably be angry if I brought photographs to the school."

"She wouldn't be alarmed. There was no reason why she should be. Anyway, whether she was right or wrong in being angry or alarmed is beside the point. The point is that she knows something of Boralia, so the photographs were of that country."

There was no answering that, and Jane looked triumphantly at the silent girls. She saw that she had impressed them, and her eyes gleamed.

"That being so," she went on, "why did Madame Kalenzi deny that she knew anything of Boralia when the jewels were shown?"

Still there was no reply, although the buzz of talk showed that Jane's well-sown seed of suspicion was germinating. Madame Kalenzi must have known something of Boralia.

"Wait a bit, though," interrupted Kitty Crichton. "You haven't proved that Madame Kalenzi knows anything about Boralia, Jane. There is no proof that the photographs were of Boralia. The costume was similar, but there was no writing or printing to say so. It may be a photograph of a fancy dress ball party."

"Rubbish!" jeered the schoolgirl detective. "I tell you she knows a great deal about Boralia!"

And she thumped one decisive hand into the palm of her other.

"And—if she does?" asked Julia Parsons. "If, as you say, she does know something about Boralia, what of it? What concern is it of ours?"

"What concern?" Jane laughed. "Dear simpletons," she went on mockingly. "What concern? Madame Kalenzi knows something of Boralia. The jewels were Boralian jewels; the secret society is Boralian. Madame Kalenzi fears the secret society. Why?"

But her question was only echoed, and she shook her hand dramatically.

"I won't bother to explain," she jeered, "if you are too dense to see! Why? Why should a woman be afraid of a secret society from a foreign land? Some jewels of that land are within a mile or so of her house——"

"You mean that Madame Kalenzi had the jewels—that she stole them from Boralia?" ejaculated Julia Parsons in amazement.

At that there was an amazed buzz amongst the members of the crowd, and Jane Prestwich smiled.

"I say nothing," she answered. "I make no accusation. My conclusions are my own. You may come to what conclusions you can. That is all."

Jane was cunning enough to keep herself clear of any libellous statement; but that Julia Parson's conclusion was the same as Jane's was obvious.

"It's absurd!" exclaimed Kitty Crichton angrily. "Positively absurd! You have no proof against Madame Kalenzi, and it is unfair to make such accusations without!"

"I have made no accusation," smiled Jane. "Julia made the accusation."

"Oh, it's all very well to blame it on to me!" exclaimed Julia crossly. "I was asking a question. You implied it if you did not say it."

"I——"

Jane broke off, as Kitty Crichton held up her hand.

"What's the matter?"

"Dolores."

There was silence then, and all heads were turned to the gates. Chileen and Dolores were just entering, and all watched as Chileen halted, bowed, and departed.

Dolores seeing the group came towards it.

"Mind," Kitty warned Jane, "not a word!"

Jane shrugged her shoulders, and the group partly broke up, the girls dispersing in twos and threes.

As she saw the crowd melting away at her approach, Dolores halted in wonderment. Why should the girls disperse? Why—what had she done?

She went forward quickly, and Kitty, smiling and friendly, took her arm.

"Don't look so worried, Dolores," she smiled.

"I am not worried. But—but why did the girls go away when I came? Why do they look at me so?"

"It's nothing, dear," murmured Kitty Crichton soothingly. "Only Jane holding one of her lectures, you know."

"What has Jane been saying?"

The question was awkward, and Kitty Crichton was for once lost to know how to reply. She had no desire to worry Dolores by mentioning what she considered Jane Prestwich's idle suspicion.

But Dolores looked about her inquiringly, and caught Jane Prestwich's eyes. She strode angrily towards the girl.

"What do you mean?" she demanded. "You have been talking about me! What have you said? Tell me!"

She spoke insistently, and gripped Jane Prestwich's wrist. Dolores' blazing eyes wrought fear in the craven heart of Jane Prestwich.

"I have—have said nothing," she stammered. "Who had told you? Did Kitty——"

"Kitty said nothing. But this is proof. You have spoken of me! You have been telling lies! What have you said?"

In Dolores' eyes there was a matchless fierceness, an insistency that brooked no denial.

And Jane found herself wavering.

"I only said that there's more in this treasure than—than meets the eye. Your aunt can pretend that she knows nothing of Boralia, but——"

"But what?"

"But I know better."

Jane had recovered her composure now, and her eyes narrowed.

"What makes you so afraid of what I say?" she queried.

The angry voices had attracted the girls, and now the crowd reformed about them.

"I am not afraid, you—you sneak!"

"Not afraid! You call me pretty names. I have said nothing about you. It merely seems strange to me that your aunt should be afraid of this circle and triangle society from Boralia, especially when the jewels were found so near your house——"

"Near—near the house?"

As that wavering echo of her chance shot showed her her words had struck home, Jane Prestwich fairly quivered with excitement.

"It was not I who suggested that your aunt had stolen the jewels from Boralia," she said cunningly.

"My aunt——"

Dolores' grip on the girl's arm relaxed, her cheeks paled, and then she stepped back.

"How dare you!" trembled Dolores. "You have no right to say those things. You hate me—you try to harm us at every turn! You sent the police to the house! Why? What have you against us?"

Jane Prestwich laughed.

"Nothing," she said—"nothing, my dear Dolores! I make no accusations only——"

"My aunt knows nothing of Boralia!" exclaimed Dolores quickly.

"That remains to be proved, and I shall prove that what I think is right!"

Then Jane Prestwich turned on her heels and walked off.

Dolores started after her, amazed, alarmed at what she had heard.

She wheeled round to face accusing eyes.

"You do not believe her?" she exclaimed hoarsely. "Because my aunt is not English they say this of her! She——"

"We do not believe it," said Kitty Crichton softly. "Do not be alarmed. No one heeds Jane, Dolores."

But Kitty was wrong, and although she had said that no one believed the accusations Jane had made, there were girls who had doubts and suspicions.

For the Kalenzis acted strangely. It may have been because they were foreign. But—and the girls felt that there was a very big "but."

News of Boralia!

"LOOK!"

Pearl Hardy flourished a newspaper excitedly as she ran into the Form-room after afternoon lessons.

The girls were at their desks gathering together the books they would require for their homework.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Julia Parsons.

"Miss Bowden gave me this paper!" exclaimed Pearl gleefully. "'The Limmershaw Gazette'!"

As she opened the paper on her desk the others crowded round her, all trying to get a glimpse of the news that was causing this perturbation.

"What is it—a report of the cricket-match?" asked Kitty Crichton

"No. Something even more interesting. Look!"

Pearl pointed to a column that Miss Bowden had marked heavily with blue pencil.

There was a craning of heads, and Jane Prestwich read aloud the heading:

"'Strange happenings at the High School! Boralian jewels found in cave!'"

"My hat! What do they say? Anything much?" asked Kitty Crichton eagerly.

Dolores, an anxious light in her eyes, leant forward, but several heads blocked a view of the paper from her eyes.

"Read it aloud, Pearl!" urged Kitty.

And Pearl Hardy read aloud a more or less accurate description of how the jewels had been discovered in the cave.

Further, there was a description of the jewels, and a statement that they were the crown jewels of Boralia, which, the paper had discovered, had been missing for years.

"Now they talk about the burglary," went on Pearl, clearing her throat.

And she read of the mysterious robbing of the school, and how the jewels had been taken.

"Hallo!" she exclaimed, and stooped. "Here's something extra—something new!"

"Well, read it out! What is it?" they asked her excitedly.

Pearl cleared her throat again.

"'The police have completed their investigations, and the recent discovery of the empty jewel-box on the coast leaves no room for doubt that the inspector's theory regarding the flight of the thieves holds good. It is evident that they hurried to the shore, and thence went to sea, probably picking up a steamer or motor-boat that awaited them.

"'It is further assumed that the jewels have found their way back to Boralia. Thus the last scene of this romantic drama has been played, and the curtain falls, screening the stage and actors from the public.'"

"My word!"

"They've gone, then!"

"That puts the kybosh on your theory, Jane!"

Jane Prestwich shrugged her shoulders carelessly.

"Perhaps so," she agreed. "But it may be that what I said first is true—the circle and triangle gang are responsible. They came to fetch the jewels, and now they've got them."

A hubbub of discussion started then, but Pearl Hardy held up her hand for silence.

"Here's another rather interesting bit, girls," she said, and holding the paper up she went on reading:

"'In connection with this affair it is of interest to note that news had been received of Captain Valce-Hurts, who recently attempted the trans-Asiatic flight. Captain Vance-Hurts, it will be remembered, was thought lost, but news to hand recently announces that he has started for England.

"'Owing to engine trouble he was forced to land in Boralia. There he found an old man, apparently a hermit of the hills, who proved of assistance to him in that he could speak English and Boralian. Who this interesting person is it is impossible to surmise, but it is understood that he is returning with the gallant airman. Possibly the large red machine may fly over our native town on its return journey, as it did on the outward flight. No doubt the hermit, be he so disposed, could tell the story of the lost jewels. But that we must wait and see.'"

Pearl lowered the paper, and looked round at the crowd about her.

"How's that?" she asked. "Limmershaw's to the fore."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Julia Parsons excitedly. "Suppose we can get this old chap here. What fun! What tales he could tell us of Boralia——"

"He speaks English," added another.

And there were broad smiles of excitement at the romantic prospect.

Even Jane Prestwich was smiling. But perhaps the reason for her smiles differed from that of her form-companions.

She left the group, and, smiling, went to the window. For a moment she stared out into the quadrangle, then she went back to the desk.

"May I look at the paper?" she asked; and almost before consent was given, took it from Pearl's hand.

She ran her eye down the column, then took up a pencil and heavily scored the margin.

"What on earth are you doing that for?" inquired Pearl Hardy in amazement.

But Jane smiled, and made no reply. Her reasons, as usual, were her own, and not to be confided.

Her heart beat wildly as the aeroplane banked and circled. Was it going to land here!

"That's Miss Bowden's paper!" exclaimed Pearl. "Don't take it away."

"I'll bring it back——"

Pearl caught her arm.

"Where are you going with it now?" she demanded.

"To show Madame Kalenzi the splendid news; she's sure to be interested in it——"

And, tearing her arm loose, Jane ran from the room. Dolores crossed to the window and looked out. Her aunt and Chileen were below. Both had called for her to take her home, and she hurried down the stairs.

"Jane must be mad!" frowned Pearl.

And she angrily crossed the room. Dolores followed but a second later, and then the whole Form swept after her.

What Jane expected to happen when the paper was shown to Madame Kalenzi they did not know, but they intended to be present.

Madame Kalenzi viewed the approaching girls with amazement. She saw that Jane Prestwich was the leader, and her eyes narrowed. Madame Kalenzi had little cause to like Jane Prestwich, and she was not pleased to see her now.

"You want me?" she asked quickly.

But she did not see the paper. She looked round at the approaching girls, and waited. Evidently she expected something to happen, and intended that they should be present when it did.

She held up the paper.

"Perhaps you have not seen this, Madame Kalenzi?" she asked slyly. "Your native country——"

The woman gave her a quick, penetrating side glance, and took the paper.

She held it up to read it, and, to the chagrined Jane's amazement, held it in such a manner that her face was concealed from view.

"I see," Madame Kalenzi observed, as she lowered the papers. "These jewels, they are the ones you had stolen. They have gone to this country"—she looked at the paper—"Boralia. I am glad of that, if that is where they belong."

Jane Prestwich's face fell in disappointment.

"You haven't read on," she said crossly.

Madame Kalenzi glanced carelessly at the paper, but she was not reading. Jane, observant though she was, missed that point.

"You mean about the aeroplane?" asked the woman, and she frowned in rather a puzzled manner.

"Yes. The man coming from Boralia."

"You know him?" asked Madame Kalenzi, with affected stupidity.

"No, no. He is coming from Boralia. He may come here."

"I have read that. I fail to see anything to cause excitement."

In silence Madame Kalenzi handed back the paper.

"It was kind of you to show it to me," she murmured. "Thank you! I am glad that the mystery of the lost treasure has been solved. It was so romantic."

Jane did not reply. She almost snatched the paper.

"Don't mind her, Madame Kalenzi," said Pearl Hardy, rather angrily. "We're not all as ill-mannered as Jane, you——"

"Quite so. Dolores, are you ready?"

And in silence they wended their way homewards. Dolores was feeling far from happy, and tea-time did not make her happiness any greater. Occasionally during the meal her aunt and uncle spoke, but it was in the strange language.

Tea finished, Dolores hurried upstairs. She went into her room, and wearily picked up her school-books.

But she was not in the mood for work, and she went out on to the sunny balcony.

It was a glorious evening, and she sighed as she heard the singing of birds, the hum of a bumble bee a yard or so away.

She started rather, for the sound of the bee seemed louder—strangely loud, more like a myriad of bees. Now it was louder. A passing car?

She leaned out of the window, and then glanced searchingly at the sky.

It was not the hum of a bee, or of millions of bees; it was the sound of an engine, yet like no engine she had heard before.

But as she gazed at the sky a distant speck that moved rapidly told her the meaning of the humming. An aeroplane.

It had taken shape now. The sun was upon it, and she saw the colour—red.

Her heart thumped wildly as the aeroplane banked and circled.

Was it going to land here?

(Another long instalment of this fascinating story in next week's issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND. *Be sure and order your copy at once.)*

Your Editor's Corner.

MY DEAR READERS,—The summer holidays will soon be upon us. How many of us are not already looking forward to them with eager anticipation? Very few, I imagine! The very thought of them conjures up pleasant visions before our minds. Some of us think of the vast expanse of the sea, the long-stretching breezes, the distant cliffs, and the burning bronze sky forming a canopy for the scene. Others think of some inland scene, with its woods and glens, spacious stretches of green meadows, of leafy lanes, and of rippling brooks. It all depends upon whether we are looking forward to a holiday by the sea or a holiday inland.

Barbara Redfern & Co., like ourselves, are looking eagerly forward to their summer holiday. But which of these pictures have they filling their minds? The sea—or the country? The title of next Thursday's magnificent, new long complete story of the girls of Cliff House,

"THE SCHOOLGIRL CARAVANNERS!"

By Hilda Richards,

is doubtless sufficient to tell you. The Cliff House girls are to spend their summer vacation in the country—travelling through the leafy, picturesque southern country in caravans. No kind of holiday could be more health-giving, beautiful, and serene.

But if Babs & Co. are looking forward to a "quiet" holiday, they are destined to be mistaken! Their novel holiday will be simply crammed with adventures and exciting incidents. The merry chums of the Fourth Form can be trusted to enjoy themselves under very nearly the most adverse conditions, but their tempers are sorely tried in next week's grand story. They fall into the bad graces of a person who is in a position to make the first part of their holiday, at least, very unpleasant. The steps this person takes to do so, and the steps the famous chums take in the opposite direction, make the most fascinating reading. The finish of the story will leave you with a greater admiration than ever for the fine spirit of Barbara Redfern & Co.

The second powerful and fascinating long instalment of

"NO JOY IN HER RICHES!"

By Joan Inglesant,

which this week's must make you await eagerly, will be in your hands next Thursday. Who does not sympathise with poor Ruth Hope's position at Rosedale? It is a painful one for her, as it would be for any other sweet and upright girl. Sylvia Severance states that Ruth's father has not come by the estate honestly, and Ruth's father—he does not deny it! To another kind of girl this would not cut deeply. After living in modest circumstances, the life and the surroundings at Rosedale would seem so exquisite, so gorgeous, that she would not concern herself deeply as to whether or not she was entitled to such conditions. But Ruth—it cuts Ruth to the quick. Enraptured as she was by everything at first, her magnificent surroundings now have no charm for her. To poor Ruth everything is little less than hateful. Her father—a thief! The estate of which he has come into possession—it is not his! Can this be true? Sylvia Severance does not forget to keep bringing it up before our poor heroine. She is striving her very utmost to make Ruth's life at Rosedale unbearable. Ruth is full of pluck and grit—she is a girl with a splendid spirit, but—well, this charge is just the very thing to crush her. And that is precisely what the spiteful Sylvia knows—it is a fact which she means to exploit to the full.

Do tell your friends about this grand new story. None of them should fail to read what will, I am sure, prove to be the most popular story we have ever had.

There are many dramatic happenings in next Thursday's instalment of

"FRIENDSHIP FORBIDDEN!"

By Ida Melbourne,

all of which will still further increase your interest in this story.

Next week's number of the

"CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY!"

will appeal to you all, for it will be nothing less than a

SPECIAL CARAVAN NUMBER!

It will be as bright and breezy, and as full of incident, as ever you could wish, so take care not to miss it!

There will be another pleasing article next Thursday, and in it you will learn two interesting points of view concerning

THE "CROCODILE CRAWL."

Should schoolgirls be compelled to walk along the streets in a long line—in "crocodile" fashion, that is—under the charge of a mistress, or should they be allowed to proceed as they please? In this article you will find opinions and reasons for and against.

Your Sincere Friend,

YOUR EDITOR.

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