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Grand Romantic Serial

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# The School Friend

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## OUR GRAND NEW ROMANTIC SERIAL.

THE  
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QUEEN!

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(Who wrote that most popular story "Friendship Forbidden!")



To all who are fond of reading stirring, breathless adventure, quick-moving incident, and the doings of schoolgirls in a strange country, this story will make an instant appeal.—YOUR EDITOR.

## CHARACTERS YOU MUST KNOW.

**DOLORES KALENZI**—or Princess Dolores—an attractive, brave-hearted Eastern girl, the daughter of the King of Bouralia. When at Limmershaw High School she found great chums in the persons of

**KITTY CRICHTON, PEARL HARDY & CO.**, the merry and sterling Fourth-Formers, with whom she had many thrilling adventures before it was discovered that she was an Eastern princess.

**PRINCESS JOZINE**, the niece of the **GRAND DUKE OF YARAFEY**, who was formerly King of Bouralia, but was dethroned. Both are enemies of the Kalenzi's.

Dolores receives an urgent message from her father (the King of Bouralia), telling her that her presence is greatly needed in her own country, and that she might bring friends if permission were obtained. Everything is arranged, and, with the headmistress taking charge of the party, Dolores, Kitty, Pearl & Co. set off to continue their schooling in Bouralia.

From the outset the Yarafeys show that they mean to be the enemies of Dolores. The princess, however, does not fear them. Whilst out riding, the King, with Dolores and her friends, is caught in a sandstorm, and the King is separated from them. Later his horse returns—riderless! The girls, suspecting the Yarafeys of treachery, go with a squadron of cavalry to the Grand Duke's castle.

The girls learn nothing from the Yarafeys, and, later, Monica Lawrence, an American girl, is kidnapped, but escapes. The girls suspect the Yarafeys of being responsible, but the Princess Jozine suddenly becomes very friendly, and gives Dolores advice as to the governing of the Bouralian people. Is her advice genuine? The whole party return to the capital, and there Dolores finds that the entire populace believe her father to be dead. The chief Minister desires to see Dolores on the affairs of state.

(Read on from here.)

## Her Father's Throne!

**D**OLORES bowed her head. "Tell him, then," she returned, "that I will see him in an hour's time. I am tired, and wish to rest."

The message was delivered, and then Dolores, relieving herself of the uniform, rested.

Two hours passed before she was awakened by the maid, who then dressed her in a beautiful gown. The tiredness cleared from her eyes, and refreshed by her sleep, she went down to

the room where the minister patiently awaited her.

He rose as she entered, a tall, stately man, dressed in black, swarthy of face, and heavily bearded.

"Your Majesty," he said, bowing deeply, "I come to express on behalf of your ministers and subjects the most profound sympathy in your bereavement."

"Bereavement! My father is not dead?" she cried.

"Dead!"

His large head moved from side to side slowly, and he raised slightly his broad shoulders.

"The desert is merciless. How could man live on the wild mountain-side tracked by wild animals day and night? Ah! We of the plains know too well the dangers of the hills. Alas! I wish that we had Bouralia's friend, your Royal father, present to guide us through turbulent times."

"Need times be turbulent?"

"No," he agreed. "But people are difficult. Jealousy is difficult to part."

"Oh, but it is not long-lived!" said Dolores. "Friends are gathering about me. Surely I have nothing to fear."

The minister paused before replying, and looked at her keenly.

"Nothing to fear," he repeated, accenting none of the words, speaking tonelessly. Then he drew himself up, as though awakening from a trance. "To begin with, your father will be mourned—a day set apart for the purpose. The priest will hold service on the Mountain of Kings. And then your Majesty's coronation will be celebrated."

Dolores, dazed at the calmness, the calculation of the arrangements, shuddered.

"My father—mourned as dead! But he can't be dead!" she repeated. "It—it is impossible! He must be alive—he is alive!"

The minister made no reply. He stood motionless, tugging at his beard, knitting his massive eyebrows.

"Then, if we do not recognise your father's death, a Regent must be appointed until his return. The Duke of Yarafey would then rule the country—until your father's return."

"Yarafey! But I am the King's heir—"

"Ah, yes; should the King be dead, then, indeed, you will succeed him."

Dolores drew a sharp breath as the

true importance of the qualification dawned upon her. How could her father be proved dead? There was no proof. Suppose that Yarafey should insist he was alive?

Then Yarafey would rule; there would be no need for quarrelling as to the right to the throne. The Princess Jozine would act as his Queen in affairs of State—be hostess at banquets.

All her father's work would be undone. No, no, she must rule, she knew it; but for that she must admit her father dead—mourn for him as dead. For several seconds she turned the matter over in her mind.

"Very well," she said suddenly. "The country shall go into mourning. The King is—dead!"

"The day after to-morrow, your Majesty, shall be a day apart, a day for mourning. The priest shall hold service on the Mountain of Kings—a service which your Majesty shall attend."

He bowed deeply over her hand and kissed it, and departed.

She, alone in the dark, sombre room, was near to swooning.

On the day after to-morrow the King was to be mourned as dead, the King her father.

Could it be true? Was he dead, her kind father? She went to the window, looking down at the jostling, dingy crowd, the garish players who amused the crowds, all so different from old England.

And as she stood by the window she thought of old England, of Limmershaw, the dear old village, the dear old view from her window there—the sea! Oh, how wonderful it had been!

There she had been friendless, lonely.

Then had come friends, and most wonderful friend of all—her father.

Her father had gone; her friends would go. They could not stay here for ever.

Once more she would be alone; but not in England, not with that wonderful view. She would be alone amongst these natives, with their strange beliefs and customs.

And only the memory of her father's wish, of his hopes that she would be Queen of Bouralia, deterred her from carrying out her wild desire to leave Bouralia, returning to old England, and there forget the past.

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But she was Queen; she must stay and rule, carrying on her father's life-work. Her father—would she never see him again, never hear his kind voice?

How heartless a mob, that in one breath mourned "The King is dead!" and in the next exulted, "Long live the Queen!"

**Hunting the Koose!**

**B**OURALIA will, indeed, have cause to be proud of its Queen!

Princess Jozine of Yarafey spoke smoothly, and, it seemed to Dolores, with sincerity.

"I'm afraid I sha'n't be able to capture the animal," said the schoolgirl Queen, with a smile. "Monica may be able to; I hope that she is."

"It is all the same. The subjects will, indeed, be glad to know that their Queen has sufficient knowledge of their faiths and beliefs to give them so concrete a proof of her power."

Princess Jozine was the personification of charm, and her dark eyes seemed almost motherly as they gazed upon Dolores.

"How many people have ever captured a koose?" asked Monica Lawrence practically, endeavouring to discover how difficult was the task she had set herself.

And Dolores translated the question to the Princess.

"Captured?" Princess Jozine smiled peculiarly, and shrugged her shoulders. "Often the koose has been killed by huntsmen. Only the great King Kalfasa has captured him alive. That is why the capture alive of a koose is regarded as so great a sign of fortune. As capturer of the koose your name will go down to history despite your—your youth—"

Dolores looked at the Princess quickly, but the dark, handsome face was devoid of any sarcastic expression.

She looked then at Monica, who, dressed in the serviceable drill dress, and large Stetson hat, was admirably prepared for her adventure.

They were all standing at their horses' bridles, by a castle gate that led on to the desert. It was a private gate, openable only by the key that was in Dolores' possession. Consequently there was no guard, and, it being a deserted hour, no one was about to watch their departure.

"It is best to keep the venture a secret," smiled Princess Jozine. "Firstly, to be effective, the captured animal must not be produced until the moment when its entrance would cause the greatest effect. Secondly—it is a dreadful thought—but suppose the venture should fail?"

"It shall not fail," said Dolores determinedly, and she mounted her horse.

Momentarily she wondered whether or not the princess would be glad at failure. A doubt even entered her mind as to the existence of the animal. Was the princess sending them upon some wild-goose chase across the desert?

Not until they were upon the desert itself did she voice that doubt.

"Shouldn't be surprised," growled Pearl Hardy. "I don't care much for Jozine. Too many airs and graces for my liking. Anyone would think we were three years old, the way she treats us sometimes."

"I guess I don't sorter feel any tearing at the heart-strings when her name's

mentioned," drawled Monica Lawrence. Then she added: "But these people are changeable. One minute they're as haughty as a Boston hostess, next minute they're heaving their hearts at you. I reckon we've got enough water and grub in that one-horse shay to last us."

And indeed there was small need to worry about food. The "one-horse shay," as Monica had so impolitely termed the small wagon they had with them, was well stocked with water.

Jane Prestwich was in charge of the pair of horses, with Fay Curzon beside her. Julia Parsons, Kitty Crichton, and Pearl Hardy were riding just behind Dolores and Monica.

Princess Jozine had given them detailed instructions regarding the places where they were most likely to discover the koose, and Monica was quite confident that they would be able to capture it.

"Reckon she thinks we'll fight shy of it, and she'll have a chance to crow. Shouldn't be surprised," drawled Monica slowly, "if she had a whole crowd of natives waiting for our return. It'd be like her—"

"Pretending that the news of our expedition had leaked out through the servants," added Kitty Crichton quickly. "Yes; it's more than likely. It would be a cruel trick. But quite like Jozine, no doubt."

Dolores, however, was anxious to give the princess a chance, if she really wished to be a friend.

"We'll capture the koose—or try it," she said. "At least, it will prove whether or not Princess Jozine is genuine."

And as nothing whatever was to be gained by argument, the matter was not further discussed.

With the strange Bouralian wagon following, they crossed the desert slowly. Princess Jozine's directions had been clear, and Monica was quite sure that she would be able to follow them.

"Not pleasant to be lost on the desert," she observed, when, after several minutes' travelling, they were out of sight of the palace.

"We sha'n't get lost," Dolores reassured her. "At least, not in accordance with any plans that the Princess Jozine may have made. For, as I informed her, the hussars have been warned that we shall be on the desert, and they have patrols out."

And as they progressed further it became quite evident that the princess' directions had not been made to mislead them.

All the signs that she had mentioned were one by one encountered, and the progress was easy. Soon they were off the wearisome desert on a strange sort of plain, with peculiar grass, and bordered by mountains, themselves forest covered.

Monica looked about her keenly, watching for signs of the herds.

"If we strike a koose herd we shall have to be forked lightning on horse-back, I reckon."

But they travelled for nearly two hours before signs were seen of a herd.

Fay Curzon was the first to observe the signs, and a cheer went up. They had just slaked their thirst, and taken the knife-like edge from their hunger.

When the herd was sighted there was a scurrying to get all the foodstuffs back into the wagon; and Fay Curzon followed the foodstuffs with surprising rapidity.

Her pith-helmet was jerked to a jaunty angle, but she cared not for that. She was far too intent to make sure that her

view of the herd should be from the interior of the wagon.

Monica Lawrence, with a pair of prismatic binoculars, had the herd in view, and she frowned heavily.

She almost snorted as she looked at them.

"What's the matter?" inquired Dolores anxiously. "No good?"

"No good?" exclaimed Monica disdainfully. "Look at them! Why, they're like half-starved cows, and as harmless!"

Dolores focussed the binoculars to her sight, and gave the herd a searching examination.

Truly they did not present a fearsome sight. Huddled together, with their heads hanging dejectedly, they looked despondent and perfectly harmless.

"Appearances are deceptive," said Pearl Hardy, with a shake of the head. "Some dogs always look thin whatever they have to eat, you know. Perhaps these koose are the same."

Monica sniffed.

"Bouralian hunters must be a fine crowd if they can't capture them alive," she growled. "Why, look at their legs! Talk about tired cab-horses—they're mercury compared with a koose!" she finished, in great disgust.

And Dolores had to admit that the animals did not look speedy.

"But Princess Jozine most distinctly said that they were difficult to catch; they must be if no one but King Kalfasa has ever caught one."

"Shouldn't think they'd want to!" grunted Monica. "However, we'd better get one now that we've agreed to."

And, while the wagon remained behind, Monica led the solo riders towards the herd.

Amazed, they watched the motionless herd. As they thundered nearer to the animals they saw that the herd was motionless either from fear, or from complete ignorance of pending danger.

They were sorry-looking animals, thin and spiritless. Their large eyes seemed strangely mournful.

"They—they can't be koose!" exclaimed Pearl Hardy. "They don't look at all fierce!"

"They're not!" agreed Monica emphatically. "I dare say if we whistled they'd come."

They halted, and stared at the herd of koose. There was no doubting that they were koose. The princess' description of them, flattering though it had been, was nevertheless accurate in the main.

"They must be koose," murmured Dolores slowly. "But I don't see why they're so difficult to capture—unless they're very fleet of foot."

"H'm! They look it! Strikes me the Bouralians have got the idea that they're mighty hard to catch, and they can't forget it."

Monica rode out ahead to the herd, the cynosure of large, soulful, koose eyes.

She made the lasso sing through the air, and the loop neatly encircled the neck of the foremost animal.

He grunted, wriggled his neck, then became placid.

Monica Lawrence nearly fell off her horse.

"It's criminal—cruel, I guess!" she drawled. "Why they haven't a chance! A child of three could rope in one of these. I suppose they haven't escaped from a travelling menagerie?"

"Not on the desert," agreed Julia Parsons dryly. "Perhaps they're asleep with their eyes open. Shoo them!"

Monica shooed till she was red in the face; then they all "shooed" together.

"No good," smiled Dolores. "Let's all give a yell. One, two, three—"  
"Yee-ooowww!"

At that frantic scream frightened birds wheeled about, and the horses pawed the ground.

But the koose remained motionless, expressing polite surprise, but nothing more.

Monica, trembling with indignation, drew back her lasso, and hurled it again, striking the foremost animal on the flank.

Apparently annoyed, he wheeled slowly; and the others, like sheep, wheeled with him.

Monica, delighted, set off in chase, and soon they were all speeding across the desert after the ridiculous animals. That they were fast was apparent, and they were evidently very frightened.

Over her horse's neck bent Monica, and soon she was in chase of the flying herd. The other girls, laughing, followed.

"Rather ridiculous if she doesn't catch one now," laughed Julia Parsons. "And she won't either, if she isn't quick on her rope."

But Monica Lawrence seemed to make no effort to fling the rope. She was riding hard, and soon abreast of the herd.

"What—what's she going to do?" demanded Dolores, in alarm. "Why, gracious—"

Dumbfounded, they watched, as Monica Lawrence suddenly left her saddle and mounted the back of one of the frightened kooses.

The manner in which she steered it was marvellous.

"It'll throw her!" cried Pearl Hardy, in alarm. "I know it will!"

But although the animal reared, and jumped, Monica retained her seat. She seemed to be enjoying the pastime; and only when the remainder of the herd had vanished from sight did she dismount.

Then she looped the rope round the neck of the trembling animal, mounted her horse, and returned to her friends.

The koose, huge though it was, seemed quite afraid, and its large eyes roamed about anxiously.

"Captured," laughed Monica. "Gee! Talk about big game-hunting! Chess'd be more thrilling, I reckon. Tame as white mice."

Very meekly the koose followed, like a well-trained dog on a leash; and several times the girls expressed doubt as to the animal's identity, despite the fact that it tallied with the description given by the princess.

"It's all the better really," said Dolores slowly. "As the koose is tame, we shall be able to lead it easily. We must have it at the funeral service to-morrow."

She spoke heavily, and the others glanced at her sympathetically. But no one enlarged upon the subject.

With Monica leading the koose, they returned to the waiting wagon.

"Got one!" cried Jane Prestwich, in surprise. "My word, what—a tame animal! Is that the wonderful koose?"

"This is the wonderful koose," agreed Monica Lawrence. "We've got it, and now we're going to use it as a symbol of power, I guess."

A more dejected symbol of power there could not have been. Bulky it certainly was, but nothing else.

At the end of the rope it followed them tamely, never attempting to pull back.

The palace was in sight when Dolores halted her party with upraised hand.

"Hark—that piping!" she exclaimed. "Did you hear it?"

The girls stared round at the rocks, the only place in sight where any piper could be hidden. There was no sign of anyone.

The strange, weird sound continued, and the girls exchanged blank looks of amazement.

Over the sand the sound came, wistful, tuneless and uncanny.

"Look, look! The koose!" cried Jane Prestwich suddenly, and pointed to the animal.

It had thrown up its head, and was pawing the ground. Suddenly its head lowered, and, tearing the rope from Monica's saddle where it was fastened, and wheeling that girl and her horse, it streaked across the desert at a great pace, leaping the rocks, and running straight on.

Too amazed to speak, the girls stared at one another wonderingly.

"The—the piping's ceased," said Kitty Crichton slowly.

"It stopped before the koose reached the rocks," added Pearl Hardy, with the same brevity.

Then they looked at one another again,

Dolores glanced down angrily at the cringing beggar.

"You!" she exclaimed. "How dare you! You charmed away the animal we have been at such pains to capture!"

The bearded beggar crouched at her Majesty's feet, kissing the hem of her garment.

"Oh, most Royal queen," he whined, "have mercy on your servant."

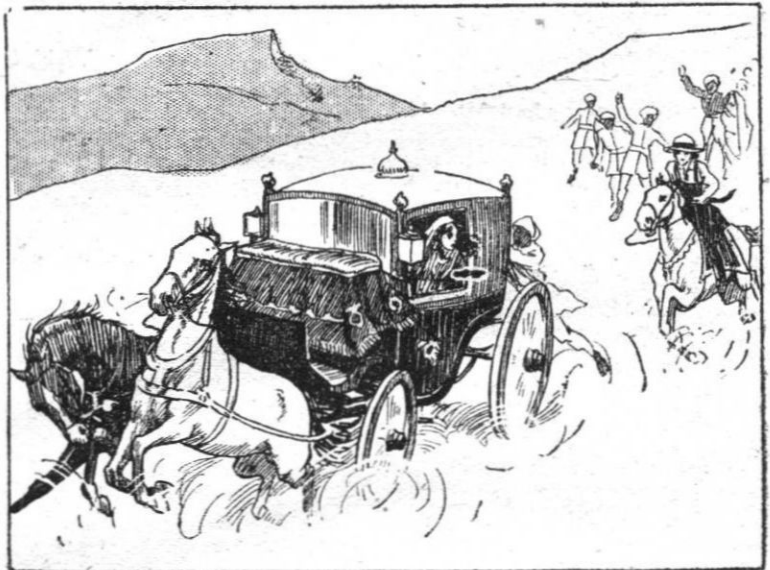
"Mercy? Is this your gratitude, after we have captured the honoured koose to bring blessing on the land. Are you an enemy, a paid servant? Who are your masters?"

The beggar shook his head slowly. "I have no master; your Majesty's commands alone I obey. I am your most humble servant, with your interests ever in my heart."

"And yet you have caused the koose, the symbol of my power—"

The beggar looked up at her and moved his hands pleadingly.

"The koose, your Majesty—the koose is the animal of evil. On the day when a koose alive shall enter the city, then



Dolores glanced back and her heart leapt as she saw a lone rider thundering after the coach at a furious pace. "Monica!" breathed Dolores, filled with sudden hope.

wonderingly. The koose they had captured so easily had vanished—called away by a mysterious piping.

And in their minds was the same thought. Whence had the piping come?

"If I were superstitious I might think it a supernatural call," said Dolores. "I wonder if this always happens—if the natives suppose that there is some guardian over the koose that prevents his being captured?"

"Whether it is or not," growled Monica, "I guess it's pretty plain we've lost the koose, and I reckon I'm going to know why."

She set her jaw grimly, and rode towards the rocks, the others close behind.

Dismounted, they clambered about the rocks, searching for they knew not what.

"Must be someone here!" exclaimed Pearl Hardy. "I—Halo!"

She ran forward, and, stooping, clutched at a foot. A sudden yell rent the air, and next moment the girls gathering round, saw the crippled beggar of the palace gates lying on the sand.

On the sands near him lay the pipes that had evidently been responsible for the charming away of the koose

shall Bouralia live in evil, then shall the children die, and the castles fall!"

"Animal of evil!" repeated Dolores, amazed. "What do you mean? It cannot be true!"

Her face was white, and her hands clenched.

"Oh, it is only too true, your Royal Highness. Had I not charmed the koose, Bouralia would have been ruined, and your most gracious Majesty—"

He shook his head sorrowfully.

"Thank you, thank you, then, faithful servant!" Dolores exclaimed, with an effort. "Your loyalty shall find reward."

She placed her hand upon his shoulder, and he bowed his head.

Then, quite suddenly, she wheeled, and without another word, mounted her horse.

"Princess Jozine has deceived us," she said, through her teeth, when they had ridden a little way. "But for that poor beggar Bouralia would be in a state of revolution. I see it all now."

"We might have guessed!" said Pearl Hardy angrily. "That's why they were so easy to catch. Thank goodness that beggar took the trouble to save us. We

should never have believed him had he argued with us."

"He is a loyal servant; I cannot insult him by rewards with gold," said Dolores. "It has taught me who is my enemy. Princess Jozine shall never be trusted again."

Her voice trembled as she spoke, and the hopelessness of her position overcame her. What other such traps would the traitorous princess lay for her?

In her ignorance of Bouralian customs, how could she guard against such false steps? And there was no one to guide or warn her.

Angrily they returned to the castle; and judging by the expression upon their faces, Princess Jozine would meet with a warm reception.

But instead of Princess Jozine at the castle gates, they found a crowd of natives.

"The traitress!" exclaimed Pearl Hardy. "See—she has prepared an audience for us. Dolores, get into the wagon; they had better not see you in a drill dress."

The wisdom of the advice being apparent, Dolores acted upon it, and stowed herself away out of sight before the natives had time to recognise her.

### The Ceremony—And After!

ONCE in the quietness of the palace, they searched for the princess. But, wisely, she was not present.

To Miss Bowden they explained everything, and the headmistress looked extremely anxious.

"Poor Dolores," she said kindly, "your task is not an easy one! It is bad enough to be in ignorance of the customs; but to have evil advice is infinitely worse. In future, dear, take no heed of their advice."

"The memorial service to-morrow?" asked Dolores huskily. "There is no trick about that, surely. Is—is it unusual, or against their principles?"

"I think not. Your servant has your garments prepared. All the arrangements have been made. There can be no trick in that. The whole city is in mourning, dear."

And, comforted somewhat by the words, Dolores hurried up to her room. There she shut herself in, and flinging herself upon the large bed, drew from a drawer by the bedside a photograph.

It depicted her father, a portrait of him, that Julia Parsons had taken with her camera. The photography was good, and the expression on the face typical.

Dolores looked at it searchingly and longingly. That smile so pleasant. Her father—how she loved him. How different things would be now if he were present to guide her.

Dead—oh, he could not be! Yet soon they would hold a memorial service. How she would be able to bear it she could not imagine. He would not wish her to cry—she was sure of that. He wanted her to be a queen—a ruler.

Much, much happier she would be back at Limmershaw High School. Even solving algebraical problems and "swotting" Euclid would be preferable.

It needed a great effort to make herself go down and present herself at the meal. She looked round for Princess Jozine. But the princess was not present.

Nor did the princess put in an appearance on the following day, when everything was being prepared for the sad procession.

Dolores, clothed in a long gown of black, looked at her own reflection in

the mirror, stared at her white face miserably.

A queen of misery she looked; and for to-day that was to be her role.

Everywhere in the city was black—a city of mourning.

The carriage into which she stepped was draped in black. All the attendants wore black, and her school friends, who followed in another coach, were quiet, and when they spoke did so in whispers. They wore their drill dresses, for they were the darkest dresses they had brought.

Alone in her coach, Dolores leaned back, impressed and made miserable by all she saw; by the dark hangings, and the mournful natives, whose dusky skins seemed to suit so admirably the mournful occasion.

Up the rocky Mountain of Kings they climbed through the mass of natives to the music of muffled tom-toms and weird murmurs from the natives, who rolled their eyes round as their queen approached.

Looking to neither right nor left, Dolores alighted, and, guided by an officer, found her way to the appointed place behind the priest.

Behind the priest she stood, with her friends about her.

The priest spoke, and the natives, on their knees, bowed their heads to the ground. The schoolgirl queen hardly heeded the voice of the priest.

The grief of the natives seemed genuine, and, looking up once, she saw the nobles standing apart, with Princess Jozine, her head bowed, well in the foreground.

How long the service really lasted Dolores did not know; it seemed eternity to her.

The priest's dull, murmuring voice came to her distantly, and, not being fully conversant with the natives' faiths and beliefs, she scarcely understood what she did hear.

It was all over before she realised the fact. With the priest she had bowed and gone on her knees; and, erect now, she followed him back to the coach.

By the coach she saw the beggar of the palace gates kneeling. She wanted to stop and speak to him, but deemed it irreverent to interrupt his prayers.

This ceremony was as salt upon an open wound; it was cruel, heartless, as though they were taunting her with her father's death.

She stumbled blindly into the coach, and closed her eyes, thinking of the days when her friends should be gone, and she should be alone in Bouralia—alone and friendless amongst the strange natives, a prey to treachery.

Her eyes were moist, and she groped for her handkerchief, which had dropped upon the floor of the coach.

And her fingers closed not upon the handkerchief, but upon a piece of folded paper.

There was writing upon it, and, fearing treachery, she unfolded it, reading the message.

Her eyes opened wide, and the paper slipped through her fingers.

For on the paper, in her father's unmistakable handwriting, were two words: "Be brave!"

Her father—he was alive!

Only those two words—there was nothing else. She turned the piece of paper over and over several times. But something told her that there was no other message.

She would be brave. Since her father was evidently alive, there was no need for sorrow. Why he was keeping his presence a secret she could not surmise. What was his plan? Why had he allowed everyone to think him dead?

The questions dazed her, and seemed unanswerable. Whatever his reasons, she must act as Bouralia's queen, fearlessly and conscientiously.

For the first time now, since she had entered the coach, she began to take notice of the natives that lined the mountain passes. They stood motionless, in reverence, bowing only as the coach bumped and swayed down the uneven, hilly path.

Dolores smiled at those who glanced directly at her, but presently she smiled no more. A look of anxiety crossed her face.

No longer were the natives reverent—no longer motionless. Their dark eyes were opened wide with horror. They were pointing, shouting; and Dolores, catching the sound of a Bouralian word they muttered again and again, leaned out of the window.

"The snake! The snake!"

It was a cry of fear that rose from the crowd, and Dolores drew a quick breath as she saw the thick, ugly, writhing form of the much-feared mountain snake crossing from the side of the track.

The horses were snorting with terror, even more afraid of the reptile than the natives. The coachmen sat terror-stricken on the box; but they only remained there for a few seconds, and then, with yells of fear, they leapt to the ground, anxious to get out of the viper's path.

Dolores did not realise that they had gone, and called to them to drive on. The horses, at first undecided whether to run forward or to back, plunged madly, and quickly made up their minds, as the viper, hissing, advanced.

Down the hillside they plunged, the coach rocking and swaying behind them. Round a corner they swerved, sending the coach over at an angle, only to right it with a bang as they sped down the straight but steep incline.

Dolores, hanging out of the window, saw the awful steepness of the mountain-side, and saw, too, that further on was a sheer precipice, down which the coach would surely roll, over and over, should a horse stumble.

But the horses, maddened with fear, plunged on, the coach still swaying and rocking wildly. The schoolgirl queen clung tightly to the window-frame, and measured her chances of escape.

Just ahead were some bushes. Could she open the door and leap from the coach into them? She would be bruised and scratched, perhaps, but not badly hurt.

Quick as a thought she turned at the clumsy door-handle. She tugged and tugged, but the door would not move. Almost sick with horror, she realised that the door was locked.

The other door—that, too, was locked! She set her teeth, and tried to look unafraid, but the rocking coach bumped her from side to side, bruising her head and limbs.

And then from without came another sound, the sound of shouting and fresh-ding hoofs. Dolores glanced back up the rocky incline, and her heart leapt as she saw a lone rider bending low over a horse's neck, thundering down at a furious pace.

Every second brought that rider nearer.

"Monica! Monica!" breathed Dolores. "Surely she cannot do it—she cannot!"

And yet Monica was getting nearer and nearer, and the thudding ring of her horse's hoofs was clearer.

(Will Monica, with her wonderful horsewomanship, rescue her chum, the Schoolgirl Queen? Don't miss next Thursday's thrilling instalment of this magnificent serial on any account.)

## HERE IS A CAPITAL "MYSTERY" SCHOOL STORY!

## By Whose Hand?



## Was it Marcia!

"I'VE seen her!"

Bessie Bunter made that statement with much excitement and rolled off her cycle. Her fat face was red, and her large round spectacles were nearly slipping off her short, stubby nose.

"Seen whom?" asked Barbara Redfern in some surprise.

And the captain of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School gave Bessie an inquiring stare. Mabel Lynn, her chum, who stood beside her, smiled slightly.

"Bessie's seen a ghost," she said.

"I—I haven't—I tell you I've seen Marcia Loftus!" declared Bessie.

At that there were exclamations of surprise, and several girls who had been standing near came forward. Bessie Bunter, undoubtedly flattered by her audience, set her spectacles straight and blinched through them at the girls.

"Where have you seen Marcia?" demanded Gwendoline Cook.

"I've seen Marcia in the village—at least, just outside," said Bessie slowly, and obviously "out" to get the best possible effect from her statement.

"In the village!"

Her words were echoed in amazement by all the girls. And they stared at her rather as though they were inclined to disbelieve her.

"I know her hat!" said Bessie Bunter excitedly. "I called out to her, and she looked round—"

"Then it's not Marcia Loftus," said Freda Foote, with twinkling eyes. "Marcia's thin—you're the only round one of the Fourth, Bessie."

"Oh, really, Freda! I didn't mean round in that way. I mean she looked back at me. And then she ran off."

She blinked in triumph at the girls of her Form who gathered round her. Bessie Bunter was always pleased to be the bringer of tidings, but seldom had it fallen to her lot to be the bearer of such tidings as these.

The expression on the faces of the girls did not, however, seem to show a great deal of faith in Bessie's description of whom she had seen.

"But Marcia ran away from school—surely she wouldn't remain in the district?" protested Philippa Derwent.

"Hardly," agreed Mabel Lynn slowly. "Although it seems to prove that the cave people are still active."

"It also proves that Mrs. Loftus' theory is wrong," pointed out Barbara Redfern. "Marcia's mother seems to think that Marcia was kidnapped—"

"And that can't be so if she's walking about quite free in the district."

But as all those conclusions depended

upon Bessie's statement that she had seen Marcia in the village, doubt still existed.

"I—I suppose you weren't mistaken, Bessie?" suggested Barbara Redfern slowly. "It might have been some other girl. If you were thinking of Marcia at the time, imagination might—"

"It was Marcia," vowed Bessie, with an indignant blink. "Do you think I don't know Marcia when I see her? I tell you she has been at the bottom of the cave mystery all along. She used to signal from the attic to the ship at sea."

"That's what we supposed," nodded Mabel Lynn. "And, if you did see her, then it looks rather as though she ran away because we were getting suspicious, and because she wishes to be near her friends and accomplices."

They all agreed with that theory, although, on the face of it, there was something peculiar in the fact that a schoolgirl was an accomplice of people who were engaged in some nefarious scheme in the caves.

The small group in the quadrangle was a buzz of talk as the matter was discussed from all angles.

Bessie's information, if it were accurate, certainly shone a new light on to the mystery. For days the mystery of the cliffs had puzzled the Fourth-Formers, but they were yet no nearer a solution of the mystery.

"We can soon find out whether Marcia is hanging about Friardale," said Clara Trovlyn. "The best way to find out is to go and look—"

"Oh, really!" cried Bessie Bunter. "I think you ought to believe me!"

Clara smiled, and shook her head negatively.

"Fraid I can't," she said. "You're such an unreliable porpoise. Besides, at a hundred yards I dare say you'd take me for Marcia."

And, really, it was not at all unlikely that Bessie might do such a thing. She was extremely short-sighted, and her spectacles were seldom at the right corrective setting to give her clearness and distinctness of vision.

"I jolly well know it was Marcia," she grumbled. "But you disbelieving stupid can go and see if you like. I'll show you the place where I saw her."

To that suggestion there was ready agreement. All the girls were anxious to clear up the mystery which Marcia's disappearance had deepened.

Bicycles were hurriedly taken from the shed, and, within a few minutes a dozen or so girls were following behind Bessie Bunter, who puffed and gasped in the leader's place.

"Bessie may be right," frowned Barbara Redfern to Mabel Lynn. "We

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of the Girls of Cliff House School, featuring a strange series of happenings in and around the school.

By HILDA RICHARDS.

haven't proved conclusively that Marcia was the girl who signalled from the attic, but the odds favour her as the culprit—"

"They most emphatically do," Mabs agreed, with a nod. "But suppose we find that Marcia is in the district—what had we better do? Mrs. Loftus will still maintain that she has been kidnapped. I—I suppose Marcia's mother has nothing to do with it?"

But that thought was dismissed from Mabel Lynn's mind almost as soon as it entered.

Mrs. Loftus did not seem the sort of person likely to be in league with mysterious people who rowed into caves at night.

Friardale was reached in a very few moments, and the girls rode through it slowly, looking to right and left. There were several Cliff House girls in the village, but none of them could be mistaken for Marcia, although Phyllis Howell suggested that it was a mistake that Bessie might have made.

Very indignantly Bessie repudiated it.

"I know her hat!" she said scornfully. "It had a red ink mark on it. I know that because I put it there—"

Several girls chuckled at that. For they could remember Marcia Loftus' anger when Bessie Bunter had waved a red inky pen to the misfortune of Marcia's hat.

"That's where I saw her!" exclaimed Bessie suddenly, as she slowed up.

She pointed to a field by the roadside, and the girls dismounted.

"She'd hardly be here still, anyway," said Barbara Redfern slowly. "Unless, of course, she's in hiding. But then she'd hide in the caves."

One or two girls had rested their machines against the hedge, which they then proceeded to climb.

"Heaps of mud!" called Freda Foote from the other side of the hedge. "Anyone know Marcia's shoe-mark?"

There were many replies, and soon Freda was accompanied by the others, all hurrying towards the mud-swamp where footmarks would certainly be clearly defined.

They gathered round such a place, taking care they did not obliterate present marks with their own.

With a quiet, Sherlock-Holmesy air, Barbara Redfern bent over the mud, examining. Some searched the grass, others went scouring further afield for Marcia herself.

Presently Barbara Redfern gave a sharp cry, and pointed to a clearly-marked footprint in the mud.

"Hallo! Proof!" she cried joyously.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 177.

"Just look at this! Marcia's footprint without a shade of doubt!"

A moment later and they were all crowding about her, examining the mark in the mud.

"Marcia's shaped foot," agreed Marjorie Hazeldene. "Just a little bit broader than it should be."

The tall tale footprint was unmistakable. Marcia's ordinary walking shoes were rather clumsy, broad, and square-toed.

Had she been wearing other shoes, recognition of the mark would not perhaps have been so easy.

"What did I tell you?" demanded Bessie Bunter. "I saw her—I know I did. Marcia has been at the bottom of the mystery all the time, as I always said she was."

"Yes, I can remember you saying it," murmured Clara Trevlyn, with a tinge of sarcasm. "But, as a matter of fact, I believe you're right this time, porpoise. Marcia is somewhere in the district. These footprints couldn't have been here for hours."

"No; it only commenced to rain an hour ago," agreed Barbara Redfern. "Therefore, Marcia has been here recently. She left school before morning lessons, and has been out all day. Surely she can't be playing truant, or staying away just to give us a scare?"

"Hardly likely," decided Mabel Lynn. "She received that cypher message. Perhaps she has been in the caves all day, helping her accomplices."

And various suggestions were put forward. But the discussion was ended abruptly by Mabel Lynn catching her chum by the arm, and pointing to some bushes beyond a line of trees.

"That hat!" she exclaimed. And the girls caught a glimpse of a white school hat behind the bushes. A portion of a drill dress was also visible.

Only for a minute they paused; then, with Barbara Redfern as leader, they streaked towards the hedge. But the hat vanished before they had half traversed the field.

"It's Marcia!" cried Clara eagerly. "See, that red-ink stain stands out clearly."

As she spoke the white-hatted girl was plainly visible in the sunlight, and the ink-marked hat was noticeable.

Through the bushes they tore. But while most of the girls streaked on, Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn paused. The latter had picked up something white from the ground—a handkerchief.

One glance only was needed to tell them to whom it belonged. For in one corner was embroidery in which were linked an M and an L.

A curt nod Barbara Redfern gave, then followed the girls. Across the fields ahead of the girls ran the white-hatted figure, and the Fourth-Formers followed it tenaciously.

"Babs, she's making for the Priory, surely!" jerked out Mabel Lynn.

And Barbara Redfern, reserving her breath, nodded. The old Priory—a beautiful ruin—was just the hiding-place for a fugitive, but the Cliff House girls were fairly conversant with its interior.

Some of it was in partial collapse, and therefore dangerous, but there was little of it they had not explored.

The girl in front had a good lead, and she made use of it.

She was through the hedge, and into the ruined Priory, with the others a hundred yards behind.

"Now we've got her!" panted Barbara Redfern, as they halted outside the ruin. "Marcia's game is up, I think. Search everywhere, and yell directly you see her."

Into the ruin they ran, their footsteps echoing uncannily. It seemed strange wandering about the passages where in places the sky was the only roof.

But down below there were dark cells, lonely and forbidding. These the girls searched in parties of three, awed somewhat by the majestic silence of the Priory.

But only the ringing echo of their own footsteps rewarded their searching.

When every cell they knew, and every corner and alcove, had been searched, they gathered by the tumbled part, where the ruin was collapsing.

"No go," said Barbara slowly, and rather puzzled. "Unless she knows another way out, how did she escape?"

But no one could answer that.

"She may have hidden in some dark corner, so that we missed her," hazarded Mabel Lynn. "Let's get out in the open and look round. There's the chance that she only came a yard or so into the place, waited until we passed, then ran out."

It was obvious that they had been tricked in some manner, for one and all were certain that the girl had entered the Priory. She was not there now, to the best of their knowledge. Therefore, she must have run out.

On the grass outside they paused, dividing into three groups. One remained stationed outside the entrance, one walked round the left side of the building, the other the right.

The two search-parties met at the other end of the building, and their faces showed clearly that they had found no trace of the fugitive.

But as they stood talking Barbara Redfern looked about her. A rustle in the grass caught her ear, and she moved silently forward.

But next moment she stopped with a smile, and indicated a figure that lay stretched on the grass.

"False alarm!" she murmured.

And the others smiled, too, as they saw the recumbent figure of a Cliff House servant. It was Emily Stokes, although at first they had not been able to recognise her, owing to the fact that her face was covered by a book.

Her face was buried in her hands, and her brightly-coloured hat was pushed back on her head. One foot, displaying a much-worn shoe, was half-raised from the ground.

Her whole attitude was one of interest—interest in the book that lay on the grass before her.

"Shoo!" said Clara Trevlyn suddenly.

Emily Stokes rolled over on the grass, and blinked wide eyes at the girls.

"My!" she panted. "You—you did give me a scare. I wondered where you come from, I did! I thought it was one of them ghosts from the Priory!"

"Ghosts!" Barbara Redfern laughed. "Your mind's full of ghosts, Emily. Do we look like ghosts?"

"I dunno," murmured the servant. "But, you see, I just been reading all about ghosts in this book—'Horrors of Haunted Houses and Awful Apparitions.'"

"Ugh!" said Barbara Redfern, with a shiver. "Never mind the ghosts. Have you seen anyone pass here—one of our Form?"

"No, miss, I ain't. You're the first lot I've seen. Are you playing 'ide and seek'?"

"More or less," Babs agreed. "Sorry to interrupt your horrors, Emily."

But Emily was already engrossed in her ghosts again, and did not hear the apology.

Disconsolately the girls turned back, and returned across the fields to their cycles.

"Bother!" exclaimed Barbara Redfern. "Marcia's beaten us this time—as she's

been beating us all the time—and all along the line. But one thing is certain—she hasn't been kidnapped. She's keeping away from school of her own accord."

"And that means she's playing a sly game," nodded Mabel Lynn. "But she won't stand much chance if a thorough search of the neighbourhood is organised."

"No; and we'll take good care that the caves are searched," smiled her friend. "But more important still, we're going to make sure of being included in the search party."

To which all those in the party chimed in:

"Hear, hear!"

### "No one to go to the Cave!"

"GO for a row, miss?" The boatman took the short clay pipe from his mouth, and touched his peaked cap. As he did so the ash fell from his pipe down the coarsely knitted blue sweater.

Katie Smith of the Fourth Form at Cliff House glanced at him, then looked out at sea.

"I think I will," she said.

The boat against which the man leant was some way from the small fishing village of Pegg, and did not seem in a position likely to obtain him much custom. But, then, most of the boatmen round Pegg seemed quite indifferent to the custom of visitors wishing to row on the sea.

Miss Primrose, the headmistress of Cliff House School, did not approve of her scholars rowing on the sea, and had she seen Katie this evening it is probable that she would have forbidden her to go in a boat.

Katie was the youngest girl in the Fourth Form, and the most adventurous; and perhaps it was the possibility of adventure that appealed to her now.

The boatman pushed the boat into the sea, indicated to Katie her seat, then settled down to the oars.

A moment later and he was pulling steadily and strongly out to sea.

Not until they were a hundred odd yards from the coast did the boatman speak. Then he looked from underneath his shaggy eyebrows at her, and his beard shifted as he smiled.

"Think they'll recognise me, Katie?" he asked.

"No, daddy. It's an awfully good disguise. You look a real Pegg boatman. Had any custom?" she smiled.

"Yes. I took one or two people out this afternoon. Rowing isn't easy work, is it? But one can't be a detective without working," he sighed. Then, in a slightly altered tone, he asked: "What news?"

Katie leaned back in her seat, and looked over the side while she spoke.

"That's the idea," he commented, interrupting her. "You'll be a detective yourself some day, Katie. I'll wager that no one would guess we were anything other than a boatman and his fare."

"Not even through field-glasses," she smiled. "I'll dip my hand over the side, daddy. But about the news. Marcia Loftus has been kidnapped."

"Kidnapped!" he echoed; and he almost lost his boatman air in his surprise.

"Yes," explained Katie eagerly. "This morning the girls found a cypher—a message in code in the Fourth Form passage. They have suspected for some time that Marcia is the accomplice of the cave people, and they thought the message was for her. Anyway, she got hold of it, pretending to solve it, and



thereby prove her innocence. Mabel Lynn took a copy of the cipher—

"Ah! That was excellent!"

"It was," she smiled. "Then Marcia vanished; and so did the copy that Mabel Lynn had taken."

The boatman's eyes shone as he pulled at his oars, and he nodded keenly.

"The girl had received instructions, and destroyed the duplicate they had taken of her orders."

But Katie shook her head.

"I don't think so, dad," she said. "I think it was just a trap. I am quite sure that Marcia wasn't the accomplice. I'm sure that she was kidnapped, and that the duplicate of the cypher message was stolen by the real accomplice."

"Probably. It seems feasible. Have they a reason for wishing to kidnap this girl?"

"Yes. Marcia is pretty keen-witted, and she was searching in the box-room. Someone, obviously the accomplice, I think, shut her in. The girls found her there and thought that she had been there to signal. But what makes me so certain is that I intercepted another message. That man with the nasal voice asked if the girl had been captured—"

"Ah, excellent! You have acted very smartly, Katie, in finding that wireless telephone, and tapping the line. Perhaps you will be able to find out more. But do not let your school-fellows into the secret. For with several girls sharing the knowledge it will not be long before the accomplice, too, shares it."

"No. I haven't said a word to any of them." She looked across the sea and dried her hand upon her handkerchief. But she paused in the action suddenly, and, shading her eyes, looked to the horizon. "Daddy," she whispered. "In a minute, look round—a periscope over there—look!"

He turned his head slowly, and looked fixedly at the periscope that could be clearly seen.

"Careful!" he said. "They can see us. My word, Katie, they're still hanging about, then! But for you I might even now be a prisoner aboard that ship."

"Yes, thank goodness, I intercepted that message in time, daddy."

Both thought of the previous night when Katie, in the moonlight on the shore, had waited until her father, made a prisoner by the gang in the caves, had been rowed out towards the submarine.

Even now Katie could almost feel the icy cold water upon her. It seemed more like a nightmare looking back upon it. But the men in the boat had been quite unaware that Katie had foundered their boat on the treacherous rock, and then saved her father.

"The submarine," her father murmured now. "The coastguards will see them. Why do they come up in daylight? Trouble perhaps—"

But even as he spoke the periscope vanished.

"Perhaps they didn't see it," said Katie, sneaking in hushed tones. "When I looked a moment ago it wasn't there."

"H'm! It's a risky game they're playing. We'd better get back to the coast, Katie. They've probably seen us. We don't want to encounter trouble. I'm going into the caves this evening. I fancy I know their movements. All well-organised schemes work as though by clockwork. If they didn't, blunders would be made."

"But the signal-light, daddy—why does the girl at school make it?"

"Probably it is a signal that she has got something or other; that things are all right. I have been along the coast here for hours. But never before have I seen the submarine. In the day-time

it rests on the sea-bed, and only comes up at night. Naturally they do not wish to endanger themselves by unnecessary movements. The signal tells them what to do."

"I see. And, as the submarine is still about, the signal will be repeated?"

"Yes, I'm pretty sure of that. But you had better watch, Katie. Now, I fancy it would be advisable for you to get back to school in time to watch the movements of anything suspicious."

Katie nodded agreement. She was only too eager to carry on with her vigilance.

She left her father on the beach, paying him as though he were an ordinary boatman. And he, slipping the coin into a pocket, touched his cap and lit his pipe.

Katie, with never a glance back, returned to the school. She went by a roundabout route to conceal the direction whence she had come.

She smiled to herself as she thought of the manner in which she had tricked the Fourth-Formers.

They all believed that she was down on the beach to collect rare stones for her

mysterious telephone message referred to her and not to Marcia—that they wished to kidnap her, suspecting the part that she was playing?

For what else could it mean—this strange conduct of Marcia's? Why had she run away from the school to remain in the district?

They were questions that throbbled through Katie's brain; and questions, too, that she was quite unable to answer.

She asked again if they were certain that the girl they had seen was Marcia, and their reply was so indignantly that she made no further inquiries.

Barbara Redfern was annoyed, and Katie herself was no less annoyed. Barbara felt that Marcia had tricked them, and it was not pleasant to be tricked. Katie, on the other hand, had not quite made up her mind as to what exactly had happened.

She badly wanted to see Marcia, and when Barbara Redfern suggested a search, Katie heartily agreed.

Back at the school, Barbara went at once to Miss Primrose, and informed the headmistress of what they had seen.



**NOT THE GIRL THEY EXPECTED!** It was Emily Stokes, and her whole attitude was one of absorbed interest in the book that lay on the grass before her.

father; though at first they had suspected her of being the accomplice at the school. Very cleverly she had kept the real secret of her father's purpose.

In the whole Form there was not one girl who suspected that Katie was the daughter of a prominent criminal investigator. And she meant to keep that secret still.

She emerged into the lane that led to the school, and had hardly walked more than a dozen yards when voices behind attracted her attention.

Looking back, she saw Barbara Redfern & Co. returning from their exploration of the ruin. She waited for them, and she listened in amazement to what they had to tell her.

"Marcia about still?" she echoed. "Are you sure?"

"Quite sure," said Barbara. "She dodged us in the ruins. But we haven't finished with her yet. Marcia is going to be found. She can't trick the school as easily as she thinks she can."

"But why is she staying here?" persisted Katie wonderingly; and as she spoke a sudden fear came into her heart.

Had her conclusions been wrongly drawn? Was it possible that the

"This is extraordinary, Barbara," frowned the mistress. "You seem quite sure that the girl you have seen was Marcia, and I hope that you are right, for it takes away the sense of fear I had that she might have been kidnapped. We must search, and as quickly as possible, too. Marcia must be found!"

"This evening. It will be dark soon, and if she is hiding in the ruins—"

"It would not be easy to find her, I agree. But this extraordinary story about the caves you have told me. Can it be possible that Marcia Loftus is in league with people who are evading the law in some way?"

"I—I don't know. I only thought it might be so. It is strange that she should be wandering about near the school. There is no other known reason why she should run away."

Miss Primrose shook her head sadly. "I hardly know what to decide," she said slowly and wearily. "It is a most difficult situation."

"We could search the caves, Miss Primrose."

"Certainly not," returned the mistress quite sharply. "If what you have said

is correct, Barbara, the caves shall be placed out of bounds. Perhaps I will allow seniors to search. But you may tell your Form that the caves and that portion of the beach must be regarded as out of bounds."

She picked up a sheet of paper, and wrote quickly.

"There," she said, looking up, "you may pin that on the board, Barbara, and please point it out to your Form, and to the captains of the other Forms."

She made a motion to signify that the interview was finished, and Barbara, taking the sheet of paper, bowed her head understandingly, and turned on her heel.

In the semi-darkness of the corridor she almost stumbled.

"What—" she began, then noticed a servant on all-fours searching on the floor.

It was Emily Stokes!

"Sorry!" gasped Emily Stokes. "It's so dark here I can't sorter see. I suppose you 'aven't a match?"

"Match? Yes!" answered Barbara, somewhat surprised.

She lit a match, and left Emily groping over the floor for whatever she had dropped. But she turned back when she had gone a few yards, and found Emily walking towards her.

"Found it?" she asked.

The servant nodded, and showed a sixpence.

"Good!—I came back to ask you if you did see anything of that girl, Emily?"

"That girl—oo, I know! Yers I did, Miss Redfern. Just after you'd gone someone come-out of the ruin, and I ses to meself there's that there gel. So I ups and, after 'er; but she was too quick—"

"Oh, she came from the ruin? You are sure of it?"

"Yers; I 'ear a scrambling first, then a bang of a stone. I thought it was a ghost—"

"Oh, all right!" said Barbara rather hastily. She had no wish to enter into a discussion on ghosts, or even hear a description of what had been Emily's sensations when Marcia had emerged from the ruin.

She had found out what she wanted to know. Marcia had somehow evaded them when they had searched the ruin.

In thoughtful mood she pinned Miss Primrose's notice on the board.

"From to-day, until further notice from me, the caves and adjoining beach will be out of bounds."

That was the notice signed by the headmistress that Barbara affixed to the board. And when Katie Smith saw it she smiled. No amount of orders of that kind would keep her away from the caves, but it would prevent interference from others.

### The Quality of Merely!

KATIE SMITH, with a faint sigh, rolled over and leant upon her other elbow.

The tiled roof was not conducive to comfort or repose, and Katie, having lain in the same position for many minutes, was feeling rather bruised.

But she was patient, and her eyes never for a second relaxed their attention on the skylight beside which she was lying.

Through the skylight she could see the corridor below, and in full view was the door of the attic, whence the signals were sent.

Leaning forward, she could see the doors of the other attics. There was a

faint light in the corridor, for she had lit a gas burner previous to her climb on to the roof.

From her splendid vantage point she would be able to see anyone who came along the corridor, and it was from the attic under her observation that all the signals to the sea had been given. It was only from those windows that a light at sea could be seen.

If a light were not to be shown, there was the telephone concealed in the chimney. Someone could come to use that. As the only entrance to the room was through the door, she would have the signaller under observation.

But she had waited a long time already, and she was getting anxious. Had anyone discovered that she had intercepted the telephone calls, she wondered?

Even as the thought occurred to her, footsteps sounded along the corridor. The footsteps were heavy and slovenly, and a look of disappointment crossed her face as she saw that it was only one of the servants coming up to dress for an evening out.

She gave a small grunt of disappointment, and settled down to watch again. Faint footsteps came to her now and again, but they told of someone walking in the corridors below.

The staircase leading to the attic had a creaky tread, which promptly told of anyone approaching.

She could hear the servant in the bedroom still, but there was no other sound.

Presently everything seemed quiet. She turned for an instant to look to where she knew the sea lay. But in that direction everything was black darkness.

Disappointed at her fruitless vigilance, she opened the skylight and slithered down.

As she did so, the door of the servants' bed-room opened.

Suspended half-way, her feet clear of the floor, Katie Smith remained, undecided in mind whether to climb back on to the roof, or to drop to the floor below.

She took the latter course, and there was a sharp exclamation of pain.

Bump into the servant she went, and they rolled over together on the floor.

Dazed slightly, Katie found herself staring at Emily Stokes.

The servant stared at her, rubbing her head.

"Oh, oh!" she groaned. "Oh, Miss Smith—"

Katie picked herself up quickly, and gave the servant a helping hand. All the time her brain worked quickly.

She knew that if Emily went downstairs with a story of what she had seen, the Fourth-Formers might draw unpleasant conclusions.

"Sorry, Emily!" murmured Katie. "I—I didn't realise you were just under me."

"Oh, it's all right, miss," said the servant, brushing her dress and giving Katie a peculiar look. "Where hever did you come from? The roof?"

"Yes. I— Just a joke, Emily. Please don't say anything to the girls. I—"

She found a half-crown in the pocket of her dress, and handed it to the servant.

Emily glanced at it ponderingly, then gave a knowing wink.

"Right! Mum's the word, miss!" she said, and walked towards the stairs.

Katie, frowning slightly, waited till the girl was out of sight, then opened the door of the attic. She closed it quickly, found her way to the chimney, and on her knees groped for the telephone instrument.

But her hand found nothing, and, a rather puzzled look upon her face, she struck a match and peered up the chimney. The match died out, and she set her lips.

The telephone had gone!

She looked round quickly at the door and at the window, as though she expected to see watching eyes looking at her.

No one was to be seen, however. Yet someone must have watched her, someone must have realised that she had intercepted the telephonic communications; otherwise why had the telephone been removed?

How cunningly the hidden hand worked!

Surely Marcia could not have found her way into the school and removed the telephone? No, no! She was quite sure that Marcia was not the girl. Then who was the guilty party? Who could it be?

Her own phone! The thought suddenly occurred to her, and she wondered if it were still safe.

It took her but a moment to fly down the stairs to the hall and open the door.

Looking carefully to right and left, she crossed the quadrangle. Assured that she had not been observed, she crept towards the place where her instrument was hidden.

She listened intently, but no sound came. At first she had imagined that the position of the instrument must have been changed, and that the school accomplice was still in communication with those in the caves.

But that was now replaced by a doubt as to whether or not such communication still existed; for it was quite possible that some other means of communication had been found.

The signalling had apparently given place to telephony. Had they now some other scheme, or was Marcia the accomplice, and had she removed her telephone to her hiding-place?

Where could her hiding-place be? The Priory? Yes, surely that was the most likely place.

Her ear was still to the receiver, but she had almost forgotten the fact; and when a voice sounded suddenly she was startled, and looked about her.

But the strange buzzing sound made her pay attention to her instrument.

"Hallo!" she whispered.

"Hallo!" came the voice.

It was a strange voice, one she had not heard before, although there was something strangely familiar in the intonation.

"Yes, yes—" she murmured.

"Katie!" said the voice, suddenly altering; and her heart leapt as she recognised it as her father's.

"Yes?" she cried eagerly. "What is it, daddy? You've found their phone?"

"I have, and—"

The buzzing sounded again, and she waited impatiently for her father to continue.

So intent was she upon the instrument that she did not notice the footstep that sounded close behind her.

"Hallo!" she cried.

And a voice behind her echoed the word. At first she thought it some strange freak of the instrument; but a sudden rustle caused her to fling down the instrument, turning so that it was concealed behind her.

"Hallo!" said the voice of Clara Trevlyn.

Katie found herself looking into that girl's eyes, and saw that Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn were there, too. She noted that they were looking at her strangely, and her throat was dry.

"Whom are you saying 'Hallo!' to?" asked Clara.

"Hallo?" queried Katie, with a short laugh.

"Yes; we were walking by and heard you," said Clara. "Not going off your head and talking to yourself, I suppose?"

"I didn't hear you coming," said Katie, trying to evade the question.

"Which we must regard as fortunate, perhaps," said Barbara Redfern dryly. "Are you still looking for precious stones and relics, Katie?"

Katie Smith flushed, and her heart beat faster.

The sarcastic inflexion in the Form captain's tones did not pass her unnoticed. Did they suspect, then, that her excuse was false—did they think that she was not a collector of stones?

"Silence should give consent," murmured Mabel Lynn. "But, judging by your silence, Katie, I suppose in this case the proverb's wrong, eh?"

"Proverbs are mostly wrong," said Katie, anent nothing. "A still tongue shows a wise head."

"I suppose it does," nodded Barbara Redfern. "Look here, Katie, you're being jolly mysterious. If you're talking to some friend—"

Barbara broke off abruptly; for from the telephone receiver came a voice—"Hallo!"

It sounded faintly, and Katie, with a swift movement smothered it. But that one word had been sufficient to arouse the girls' suspicions.

"What was that?" the three asked together; and Barbara Redfern stepped forward.

Katie turned aside anxiously; but she was too late. For, although the instrument was hidden, the wire was in view. "A telephone!" cried Clara; and pushing Katie aside, she held up the instrument.

Katie stifled a cry, and remained seated, perfectly motionless, as though petrified.

From the receiver came a faint buzzing sound; she knew that her father was speaking. How many seconds would elapse before Clara put the instrument to her ear. And then—Then she would have failed—and she simply must not fail. For her father's sake she must not fail.

She sprang to her feet, and leaning forward, snatched the instrument.

Clara, off her guard for an instant, lost possession of it.

"Stop her!" cried Mabel. "She's signalling."

They made a rush at her, and Katie, with wonderful presence of mind, skillfully put the instrument out of action by severing a connection.

In the struggle the action passed unnoticed, and she allowed Barbara to gain possession of the instrument. With breast heaving with her unsteady breathing, she stood back, watching them anxiously.

"Bowled out!" said Clara grimly. "Listen in, Babs. It's connected with the caves—it must be!"

But Barbara had already placed the instrument to her ear. She might just as well have placed her ear to the tree trunk for all the sound that she heard. She looked suspiciously at Katie, then glanced at the instrument.

"Disconnected," she said grimly. "Or else you've warned them in some way, Katie?"

Katie Smith did not answer, and the three girls stared at her angrily.

"Never mind about the disconnecting," said Clara Trevlyn gruffly. "We've bowled her out completely—that's all we need worry about. No need for her to pretend she's collecting stones. She's been caught in the act."

"Unless she was phoning to the pebbles on the beach?" suggested Mabel

Lynn with a smile. "Is that what you're going to say, Katie?"

"I'm going to say nothing—except that I wish you'd mind your own business."

"We will. But this our business," pointed out Barbara Redfern. "Marcia Loftus has disappeared. It's all very amazing; but you two must both have been accomplices, and I suppose she's working outside the school now?"

"I don't know anything about it." "You don't? We'll see what Miss Primrose has to say about that."

"Miss Primrose!" Katie Smith simply stared at them in amazement.

"You—you're not going to report me?" she asked incredulously.

Barbara Redfern nodded grimly, and Katie looked at her rather wildly.

"But why—why?" she persisted. "I—I can use a telephone if I wish to."

"Certainly!" Barbara agreed coldly. "You can do just as you like. If you're practising, or making experiments, it

movement, and Mabel pulled her hat down slightly, looking at Barbara, as though wondering what line of action her friend would take.

Barbara was looking at Katie anxiously, much inclined, evidently, to be lenient.

"It's a very strange affair," she added slowly. "I suppose, really, we don't know anything against the people in the caves, and we haven't any proof that you were phoning them. But I tell you this, Katie—we shall watch you, and if our suspicions are aroused again, we shall take a hand in the matter."

Katie looked at her a full minute before speaking. Then she gripped Barbara's arm.

"Oh, Babs, thank you! You're a brick!" she exclaimed rather huskily. "Soon I'll tell you all, but now I can't."

She stooped and hid the telephone, while the three watched her. Then she walked off, and Clara Trevlyn stared after her.



**A SURPRISE FOR BOTH!** Bump into the servant went Katie Smith, and they rolled over together on the floor.

won't hurt you to explain. And, of course, that would put quite a different complexion on the affair."

But Katie did not speak.

"Of course she wasn't experimenting!" exclaimed Clara Trevlyn impatiently. "She was signalling—sending messages to those people in the caves—weren't you?"

"I was not!" said Katie firmly.

For a moment she wondered if it would be advisable to tell them all—she could trust them—and yet she had not her father's permission to do so.

"I—I can't tell you what I was doing," she said rather miserably. "But it was nothing wrong—I am not in league with those people. Please don't ask me. I—I've been sworn to silence."

Barbara Redfern looked at her thoughtfully.

"I'd like to believe you, Katie," she said slowly. "But—well, you must admit that circumstances are rather against you."

"I know they are, but I can't explain. Perhaps, in a day or so, you will know. Till then I can say nothing."

Clara Trevlyn made an impatient

"Well?" exclaimed Clara. "Of all the asses, stupid minnies, you're the stupidest, Babs. We've tried all this time to bowl out the signaller, and when we do, you let her off."

Babs nodded and smiled.

"Yes, I suppose I am stupid," she said. "But we haven't proved that she's the girl we want to know, although there isn't much doubt."

"There isn't any," said Clara bluntly. Babs sighed, and the three of them returned to the School House, Clara at least highly displeased at the result of the interview.

"Then we didn't do what we wanted," said Mabel Lynn, as they reached the door. "We'll have to go out the tree way after all."

"What's the good of going out?" demanded Clara Trevlyn gruffly. "If we do find Marcia, Babs will only let her free."

At which Barbara laughed merrily. "Dear old Clara!" she said. "Suppose we had reported Katie, where should we be? Nothing would be found

out, the mystery would still have continued. Probably they could do without Katie as an accomplice, and find another. As it is, the phone is still— Suppose we get through, eh?"

"My word!" cried Clara, her eyes shining. "Go there first—before we break bounds, and take the message that we interrupted."

Then she thumped Barbara on the back so that that girl gasped.

"Topping!" she murmured. "Absolutely ripping!"

"It will be a stunt," nodded Mabel Lynn. "We can watch Katie and see that she doesn't leave the dorm, or we can tell Dolly Jobling to keep an eye on her."

The three of them smiled gleefully at the prospect of intercepting a call.

"There's only one thing," said Barbara Redfern slowly. "Suppose Katie is right—it may be some sort of private experiment. I shouldn't feel justified in listening in if it were, you know."

"Oh, that was only bluff!" said Clara assuredly. "Otherwise why was she so alarmed? If she'd shown us the telephone and said it was something private, it would have been different. Besides, why does she have the phone outside in such a secret place?"

But that question neither Barbara nor Mabel attempted to answer, for their opinion of the incident tallied with Clara's.

All three were eager to sift the mystery to the bottom, and their path seemed to be clearing.

### A Discovery!

"SHALL I bring a torch?"

Bessie Bunter hissed that question across to Barbara Redfern.

The Fourth-Formers were in the dormitory, and a momentary silence had fallen. But it did not remain so for long; Bessie Bunter's sibilant whisper hissed its way through the silence like a knife through butter.

Barbara stared at the fat girl, and frowned.

"Topping shoes of yours, Babs," said Mabel Lynn hastily.

Bessie Bunter, blinking, presumed that Barbara had not heard her. She looked anxiously at the many faces that stared at her, put a fat hand to the side of her mouth, and whispered again, slowly:

"Shall—I—bring—a—torch?"

Freda Foote chuckled, and Clara made a threatening motion with the pillow.

"If you don't hurry up and get undressed, Bessie," murmured Augusta Anstruther-Browne, "there'll be trouble when the prefect comes to put out the lights."

Bessie stared at her, blinked, and got on with her undressing. But she gave Barbara a penetrating stare.

"You might answer me," she murmured, a trifle peevishly, but still in the same penetrating whisper.

"What do you want a torch for, Bessie?" asked Freda. "Frightened of the dark?"

"Torch!" exclaimed the fat Fourth-Former, with a slight start. "W-what torch?"

She looked at Freda suspiciously, but the look on that girl's face was ingenuous.

"Not going out for a stroll?" asked Freda.

"Stroll—oh dear, no! Who—who said we're going out?" asked Bessie. She looked condemningly at Clara Trevlyn.

"Have you been telling them, Clara?" she asked. "After we agreed—"

"Dry up!" growled Clara.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 177.

"Dud-dry up!" stammered Bessie. "I like that after you tell them all that we're—"

"Go to sleep!" howled Clara.

Bessie Bunter blinked indignantly, and Freda chuckled. Nor was she the only one to give vent to mirth.

"I sha'n't jolly well go to sleep," said Bessie, getting on her perch as it were. "It's just like you to blame it on to me, Clara. I suppose you'll pretend now that I told them that we are—"

"Br-r-r!"

"Poor old Bessie," said Freda gravely. "Always getting it in the neck. Don't you take any notice of her, tubby. Would you like me to lend you a mac in case it rains?"

"R-rains! It—it won't come through the roof," said Bessie, with a laborious attempt at humour; and she winked elaborately at Barbara Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Amazed by the laughter and by the frowns, Bessie Bunter simply blinked.

"You've been telling them, Clara!" she said angrily. And she turned to Freda & Co. "Well, we're not going out—see?" she said. "Clara was only pulling your leg. If she said we're going to the ruins—we're not—"

"Oh, so you're going to the ruins?" asked Nancy Bell, and Barbara Redfern groaned audibly.

"Ruins!" exclaimed Bessie. "We're not—I mean, who told you we were going? If Clara's been giving us away! I say, Babs—did you hear that, Babs?"

But Barbara was apparently asleep.

"You're not going out?" asked Freda Foote pleasantly and innocently.

"Nunno," said Bessie relieved. "Of course not!"

"Then why have you got your night-dress over your underclothes? Is that your usual way of going to bed?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie blinked at Freda, then jumped hastily into bed. Freda would have made some other remark, but at that moment the door of the dormitory opened, and Connie Jackson of the Sixth Form entered to put out the lights.

"Lot of noise!" she commented, looking keenly at the line of beds. "I shall keep an eye on this dormitory to-night!"

But she received no reply, save a series of snores, and a cheery "Good-night!" from Freda Foote.

For a moment Connie paused, then she turned out the lights, and slammed the door.

Directly she had gone four figures sat up in bed.

"Bessie, you fat silly—"

"Bessie, you stupid!"

Four fists were shaken in the darkness, and Bessie blinked in surprise.

"Of all the howling dummies!" exclaimed Clara Trevlyn. "You ought to be muzzled and kept on a lead—"

"Oh, really, Clara! It's your fault! If you hadn't told them—"

Bessie put her head back quickly on her pillow as a rustle came from the direction of Clara's bed, and she was only just in time, for a slipper whizzed over her head.

She was wise enough then to keep silent. But the damage had been done. Katie Smith, farther down the dormitory, smiled to herself.

Thanks to Bessie she knew of the forthcoming expedition. The chums of Study No. 4 were going to search the ruins. They would be out of the school, and the path would then be clear for her to return to the telephone or go down to the caves.

She lay awake for an hour or so, and then a rustling sound told her that someone was getting out of bed. She heard whispered words, but was not able to distinguish them. Clara's voice, gruff,

and rather deep, was easily recognised, and she smiled again.

Then came Bessie's voice, protests, and more whispering. Finally, dark, shadowy figures passed between. She counted them—five, including the last fat shadow, Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn, Clara Trevlyn, Augusta Anstruther-Browne, and Bessie Bunter—they were the adventurers!

Not until they had been gone for some minutes did Katie attempt to get up. She pushed back the bedclothes slowly, and slipped her feet down to the floor.

But she paused, and an icy chill ran down her spine as she felt a hand upon her shoulder.

"Not so quickly!" said a voice that seemed to contain a chuckle.

Katie wheeled, and found Dolly Jobling behind her.

"What's the matter?" she asked quickly.

"Nothing. I'm going to keep you company. I can't bear the thought of you lying awake," said Dolly Jobling sweetly. "So I'm staying with you."

Her hand gripped Katie's arm, and that girl gave her an angry glance.

Dolly Jobling, although she smiled, looked exceedingly determined. Dolly was strongly built, and a struggle seemed useless. Even if she did struggle free, Katie did not see much prospect of being able to dress unimpeded.

"It's very thoughtful of you," she said calmly. "No doubt I shall be able to sleep in a minute, but I sha'n't if you hold my arm like that."

Dolly relaxed her over-ferm grip, and sat on the bed.

"Room for us both in this?" she suggested.

Katie made no reply. She slipped back into bed, and tucked herself in. What Dolly cared to do was for that girl herself to decide. Katie was evidently going to sleep.

And Dolly Jobling, shivering, sat there until the steady breathing told that Katie really was asleep. It was very cold, and she looked at Katie, sleeping peacefully, and her look had something of envy in it.

She reflected that, by this time Babs & Co. were at the Priory, and a second later she was tucked up in her own bed.

At almost the same moment Barbara Redfern & Co. were approaching the old Priory.

"Hope to goodness Dolly's kept Katie in!" murmured Barbara.

"Yes, I think she has," nodded Clara.

"But for that fat stupid Bessie—"

"Oh, really, Clara!"

The embryo argument was stunted by a motion from the Form captain. Barbara was tired of the discussion. Whoever was guilty, the secret had leaked out, and, on the principle that spilt milk is worth no tears she decided to forget the matter.

They were near to the Priory now, and stood motionless, regarding the blackness of the ruins as they stood, sinister silhouettes against the grey-black sky.

"Now, not a word!" whispered Barbara. "If Marcia's hiding there, we'll have to trap her. Get your torches ready, but don't use them unless absolutely necessary."

She led the way, and they followed through the high grass.

The wild cry of a night-bird awoke the echoes, and caused Bessie Bunter to draw back, afraid. But she followed the others when she saw that they were going ahead.

The ruins were not cheerful, they had an aspect of lonely ferocity in the way they leaned forward.

(Continued on page 605.)

# THE SCHOOLGIRLS' PAPER

THE CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY



No. 27. (New Series.)

Week ending September 30th, 1922.

**M**Y DEAR GIRLS,—  
Loyalty is a small word with a lot of meaning. We must all be loyal if we are going to be happy and successful, and earn the respect of those with whom we live and work.

I expect you all know the grumbling girl, who says: "Oh, I don't see why I should obey her!" and "I don't intend to do that unless it pleases me!" Well, that girl is a friend to no one—not even to herself.

You must be loyal in all sorts of directions. Not only does it mean to King and Country; you must be loyal to all those who are set in authority. To your parents, your mistresses, your Guide captains, your sports and club captains—loyalty every time!

Why? Well, I can give you a very simple illustration. There is room for only one captain on a ship at sea. He cannot work the boat by himself, but he can work it if all his orders are obeyed. If everyone worked for himself in a storm there would very soon be disaster. It is just the same in ordinary life. You will remember that during the French Revolution leaders were



**This Week's Message:**  
**LOYALTY!**  
By Miss Penelope Primrose  
(Headmistress of Cliff House School.)

deposed whenever they were not liked. They may not all have been good leaders, but all sorts of dreadful things happened while the people were leaderless.

Many years ago I had the pleasure of meeting a charming girl, who was popularly known as "the nicest girl in her school." I knew, at the time, that there was a really unpopular mistress there. (I do not try to hide the fact that such a state of affairs can exist.) Well, I chatted with this girl about her

school, but I noticed that never once did she allude to the mistress who was disliked. That was because she was a "nice" girl, and she was loyal to her school! It was none of my business, as she knew. She did not wish to give her school a bad name by dropping an idle word that might be taken the wrong way. Disloyalty often shows in quite thoughtless chatter.

Try and be loyal to all your superiors. Most girls sooner or later occupy positions of responsibility. Always remember that you cannot be a real leader unless you also know how to obey.—  
Your Sincere Friend,  
PENELOPE PRIMROSE.

## SCHOOLGIRL TOPICS!

By the Editress (Barbara Redfern) and her Staff.

### HOW DO WE DO IT?

**W**RITES a reader: "How do you do it—I mean, in writing up the Schoolgirl Topics? You never say 'I think,' but always 'We think,' and that sort of thing. Do you all crowd round a table, all grasp one huge pen together, and write them in that manner? Or who is really responsible?"

Evidently a reader with a pretty turn of imagination. But we do not all clasp one huge pen, thank you! This is the secret of the "we." It means that we are all agreed, or the majority of us agreed, and it is therefore our view. Who does the actual writing is another matter.

Babs and Mabs do most of it. There is a meeting of the staff, and the Editress and assistant editress are expected to bring forward a few topics for discussion. If we do not like any of them we get some more and talk them over. When we have decided just what we should like to say, someone puts it on paper. If it is a sporting paragraph, we can safely leave it to Phyllis Howell. If it is something that needs to be outspoken and rather sarcastic, Clara Trevlyn is exceedingly capable!

Then we have another meeting, and the "Topics" are read over. If anything has been omitted, we put it in. If someone disagrees with certain sentiments—often Clara—we put that in as well. When we are all satisfied we feel that that is the end of the matter.

Of course, it is not really the end of it. Bessie Bunter attends all our meetings, because she objects to "being bundled out of her own study," and usually sits on the coal-scuttle, for want of a chair. She makes twice as many suggestions as anyone else,

and when we have finished she glances through the "Topics" with a disdainful sniff, and offers to write it up "in a really readable form."

### SHOULD A BOY GIVE UP HIS SEAT?

Five of us were coming back from Courtfield the other evening, when we saw the bus just ahead of us, made a frantic rush, and boarded it. All the seats were taken, but five schoolboys immediately rose and offered us theirs. Four of us accepted. One said she preferred to stand, if they did not mind, and did so. Those of us who sat down felt exceedingly guilty.

You see, we had been idling in a cafe for nearly an hour, and were not a bit tired. It was sheer laziness—and the sight of the bus just going!—that made us want to ride. If we had not turned up, those boys would have been able to sit. They looked dusty and tired from a long tramp they had been on, and certainly needed the rest far more than we did. And so we were jolly glad when some passengers got out and there were vacant seats for them at last.

Should we have accepted their seats? That was the question we debated all the way back to the school. In the end, we decided that we did the right thing. Babs summed it up very well in these words:

"The boys acted chivalrously, and, whatever you say about boys and girls being equal, none of us can help admiring the boy who is really chivalrous, and polite and considerate to girls and women. If we had refused their seats they would have felt

snubbed, and might not have liked offering them again. One of them looked really self-conscious, and I think it was best to take his seat as nicely as possible, and make him feel that you were really grateful."

Clara Trevlyn was the one who insisted on standing, and her view was this:

"Let the boys stand up for a lady with a baby in her arms, or an elderly lady—that's only fair. A girl should do the same thing if the men don't volunteer immediately. But I don't want a boy to stand up and give me a seat. When I refused I grinned, and tried to look as though I didn't mean to snub anyone intentionally. As a matter of fact, I felt as awkward as they did, and wish they hadn't stood up."

We wonder what other girls think. Boys nowadays often do not know what to do under the circumstances, especially when their offers are sometimes refused in a far less chummy manner than Clara's.

### AFRAID OF A MOUSE.

We have just been reading an alleged school tale that has sent us into shrieks of mirth—but not the same shrieks that were intended.

The point is this. A mouse was supposed to appear in this school, and it caused a dreadful panic. The headmistress dare not leave the table in her study, and there was panic in the class-rooms. Everyone was afraid to move. And in that manner a whole chapter passed.

We are afraid that the writer was drawing more on imagination than fact. Does the average girl run away from a mouse in these days? Usually, quite the contrary takes place. She runs after it! We have just heard of a story of a japing brother who released one of his white mice to scare his sister. Did his sister scream? Not at all! The ungrateful girl captured the mouse, claimed it as her own, and, to her brother's mortification, stuck to it, and started keeping a white mouse as her own pet!

# Stories of Cliff House Pets.

## No. 2.—"Tony." By PEGGY PRESTON.



It really was not Tony's fault. Mabel Lynn admits that she, if anyone, is most to blame for what happened. It certainly was rather thoughtless to leave an open bottle of ink in the middle of the table, with a fountain-pen filler standing in it, especially when Tony was alone in Study No. 4.

Tony is just a tiny little marmoset monkey, with a soft and silky coat and winning ways. His usual abode is in the pets' house, but Babs had obtained special permission to have him in the school for half an hour to brush him. Tony loves being brushed and made a fuss of. He had whistled all the time that the little brush was at work. No one had seen him take more than a cursory glance at Mabel when she was filling her fountain-pen. When the brushing was over, Tony looked sleepy, and crept across to a cushion that has always been his favourite, and snuggled down upon it.

"Splendid little chap!" breathed Babs. "Tony's half-hour is nearly up, but we'll let him stay just a little while longer, won't we? He does look tired!"

Tony appeared to have gone to sleep, for his tiny eyes were closed. A message came that Babs and Mabs were wanted for a few moments in Study No. 7. They took a last look at Tony, and went softly from the room.

And Tony's eyes opened wide—very wide indeed!

Tony had not been sleeping at all. That was just a little trick on his part. There was something frightfully interesting in the study—something he had never seen before. It looked like a bottle of something that might be good to drink. Tony loved the sweet things that were sometimes brought to him in bottles.

He was off the cushion in a flash, and climbing on to the table. There are no sharper eyes than those in the monkey world. He looked everywhere to see that no one could be watching him, then turned his attention to that black bottle in the middle of the table.

What a queer thing it was! He lifted it up and sniffed it cautiously. Not very nice, certainly. But here was a curious thing—it was like a red grape that he could pinch as hard as he liked, and yet it always came back to the same shape! That was something that needed further examination!

So Tony took the fountain-pen filler out and regarded it very wisely. He held it upwards, and sideways, and downwards, and then up again. All at once he thought of the red grape at the lower end of it, and pinched it as he had done before.

Black ink squirted into Tony's face, nearly blinding him!

He whistled and chattered in anger and

alarm, and a voice from the doorway ejaculated:

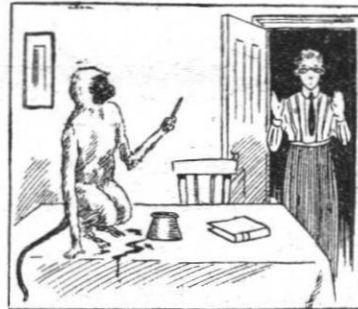
"Good gracious!"

Miss Bullivant gazed into Study No. 4, feeling almost as perplexed as the black-faced marmoset felt.

Tony should have stood at attention, but he did not. Miss Bullivant's voice scared him. His face was inky, and made him feel uncomfortable.

"Do you hear? Leave that ink alone! Put it down!"

Tony was still more scared. Anyway, he would have his revenge on that red grape before he was caught. It should not do that sort of thing again! He gave it the hardest pinch he possibly could.



And this time the fountain-pen filler was pointed at the Bull.

"Ah! Oh!" ejaculated Miss Bullivant.

Babs and Mabs came rushing into the study and caught Tony. Miss Bullivant coughed and gasped, and banged her hand on the table.

"The little beast!" she cried. "Barbara, look at me—just look at me!"

Babs looked—but only once. She dare not take a second glance. Miss Bullivant's face was splashed with black ink. She looked woebegone beyond description.

"I—I'm awfully sorry, Miss Bullivant!" Babs murmured. "We thought Tony was asleep, and we didn't leave him for a couple of minutes!"

"Enough!" cried Miss Bullivant. "You will each write one hundred lines, and in future that detestable little ape will be kept in the pets' house, and never again brought into the school! I shall request Miss Primrose this time to have him removed completely!"

And all through that horrid little red grape!

Poor Tony knew that he was in disgrace. In spite of his mischievous ways, there is no more sensitive pet at Cliff House. Babs and Mabs tried to comfort him as they washed his face, and then took him back to his usual quarters. When they passed the house, an hour later, Tony was still hopping disconsolately about, making those queer little crooning noises that they knew so well. Tony was "crying."

On the next day he was still upset. He only pecked at his food, and refused to be comforted. He was still in disgrace, and he wanted to be forgiven. His sharp eyes suddenly saw Miss Bullivant when she was more than a hundred yards away.

He hopped to the top of his box, and "showed off" for all he was worth. He made faces at all the other pets, and whistled to Miss Bullivant. He jumped about, and chattered and whimpered—all to attract her attention. But, although she came near to him, and finally passed the house, she never gave him a single glance.

Poor Tony's heart nearly broke at that, for he had done his best in his funny little way to show how sorry he was.

It was the following morning. Cliff House was at breakfast when a small figure squeezed through the opening between the swing doors.

It was Tony!

He had managed to unfasten his chain after several hours of laborious work—Tony is an expert at getting loose.

Several of the younger girls saw him and tittered, but Tony did not heed them. Instantly his sharp eyes saw where Miss Bullivant was. She was the only person who interested him. He wanted to do something to please her—that was why he had come here.

They were eating—Tony could tell that. Food! Yes; Tony loved food himself. Miss Bullivant must love food as well. What an idea it was! If he could give her some food she might be pleased.

Tony crouched behind Bessie Bunter's chair. The sausages were being passed down the table. There was a very large one, and the plate came to rest in front of Bessie. Tony saw it, and leapt!

He was on the table in an instant, that huge sausage in his paw. Bessie Bunter shrieked from surprise and indignation.

"Come here! Come here, you little beast! You've stolen my sausage!"

But Tony did not heed. He leapt across the table, down to the floor again, and rushed to where the mistresses were seated. He jumped up in front of Miss Bullivant, placed the sausage on her plate, and sat in front of her, whistling with pleasure.

Miss Bullivant gasped. She went red. Her eyes went to her plate, and then to Tony. It was too much. Miss Bullivant laughed, and her voice blended with the general merriment that echoed through the dining-hall.

And in that way Tony, the marmoset, was forgiven.

(Another pet story shortly.—ED.)

# Cookery Hints.

By DOLLY JOBLING.



## How to Make Petit Milk Biscuits.

At the bend in the corridor we ran into Annabel Hichens. "If you girls have time to spare," said Annabel, "I'll show you my biscuits, and let you taste them, too."

"Lead the way, Annabel, and we'll follow," replied Marjorie. On the table in Annabel's study, piled daintily on a blue plate, were some most delicious-looking biscuits.

Annabel passed them round to us, and they tasted splendid. "Mother's awfully keen on cake making," said Peggy Preston, brushing the crumbs off her dress. "Will you let me have the recipe for these biscuits, so that I can send it along to her?"

"Certainly!" beamed Annabel, who loves being asked for a recipe. "It's my own invention," she added, modestly.

**How to Make Annabel's Petit Milk Biscuits.**

Required.— $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. of butter,  $\frac{1}{2}$  a pint of sour milk, one small tea-

spoonful of bicarbonate of soda, sifted flour, 2 ozs. of castor sugar, and a pinch each of cinnamon and spice for flavouring. Warm the butter in a basin until it becomes liquid, add the milk, sugar, and sufficient flour to form a soft paste. Add the flavouring, and stir in the soda very quickly. Roll the paste out on a floured board into a strip, cut into rounds, and bake the biscuits on a greased baking-sheet in a moderate oven until they are a pale brown.

"What a cheap little recipe!" exclaimed Peggy, as she jotted it down on paper.

"How did you get the sour milk?" asked Marjorie.

"Perhaps the 'Bull' looked at it!" suggested Clara.

"No," replied prim Annabel, quite missing the implied joke. "I was passing the kitchen door, and I overheard cook saying that as some milk had turned sour she must throw it away, so I asked her if I might have it for making biscuits."

"Do you really mean that sour milk is good for making biscuits?" I asked.

"Yes," replied Annabel; "if used for mixing cakes, biscuits, or pastry, it makes them very light."

### A Tip to Remember.

"There's just one little point I would like to tell you girls," said Annabel, as we were about to go. "After the biscuits are mixed and the soda added, they must be placed into the oven, without any delay, else the action of the soda on the flour will be lost, and the biscuits won't rise."

# THE FOURTH FORM PARTY IN THE GYM.

(Hum this to the tune of: "John Brown's Body.")



Babs.



Dolly.



Bridget.



Freda.

Feeling very happy and inclined to celebrate,  
We thought we'd have a function where all could participate;  
The banquet, like the room we chose, was voted simply "great"  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Babs, of course, well organised the merry doings there,  
And when she came along with us we made her take the chair;  
The chair was rather rickety, but no one seemed to care,  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Dolly made a jelly—got the whole directions pat—  
But being rather clumsy, in the doorway went and sat;  
Those who came behind her found the jelly on the mat,  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

"Who's to make the sandwiches?" "Why," Bridget said, "I am!"  
She spent a lot of time upon the bread and tongue and ham;  
But in her hurry mustard-ed the ones she'd filled with jam,  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.



Peggy.



Hetty.



Nancy.



Clara.

Freda made the tea, and chose a shining silver pot,  
She kept us waiting quite a time to get the water hot;  
To put the tea inside was all that Freda Foote forgot  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Peggy made a trifle in a manner skilled and deft,  
It looked a little beauty, but of hope we were bereft;  
For Bessie had a "trifle," and there wasn't any left  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Nancy Bell decided that she'd make us all feel small,  
And left her seat to pin some cartoon drawings on the wall;  
But Bessie then annexed her plate, and made a record haul  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Lady Hetty Hendon wore a most "sooperior air,"  
And talked in mincing accents of "this exquisite affair";  
When someone laughed out loudly—my, she did give her a glare!  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.



Marcia.



Gwen.



Lucy.



Marjorie.

Clara made some marzipan of very brilliant hue,  
She carved it, and remarked she thought we'd find the flavour new;  
Then Marjorie made a grab, and found her missing tumbler, too  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Marcia Loftus, I'm afraid, as usual was a "cat,"  
She criticised the things we'd made, and sneered at this and that;  
Until we pointed out that she was sitting on her hat  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Gwen, of course, was chatty, and our inmost feelings stirred,  
Recounting spook adventures that had recently occurred;  
Bessie Bunter looked too full to say a single word  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Lucy made a Welsh dish that was very far from waste,  
When pressed to give the recipe she wrote in so much haste;  
For folk who kept on questioning—she never had a taste  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.



Meg.



Annabel.



Phyllis.



Flap.

Marjorie was charming. "Do have some of this!" she saith,  
"What can I pass now, my dear?" in every other breath;  
"Til Clara interposed: "Eat up—you'll starve yourself to death!"  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Meg came in a jumper that made everybody pine,  
She told us how to knit one of a similar design;  
She hardly ate a thing, but thought the function simply fine  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Annabel was very prim—we couldn't cheer her up,  
She talked in gentle accents, and she never banged her cup;  
We knew she wouldn't brighten 'til 'twas time for washing-up  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Phyllis Howell was very bright, and awfully glad she came,  
But said: "Suppose we celebrate next time, and have a game?"  
Bessie had to tell her that she didn't think the same  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.



Agnes.



Augusta.



Cissy.

At last the tea was over, and Flap rose and said "I am  
Just going to have a swing upon the old trapezium!"  
The next we saw of Philippa was sitting in the jam  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Agnes White just then looked in the door and gave a groan;  
She'd quite forgotten our affair—how'er could she atone?  
Poor Agnes had to have a little banquet on her own  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Then we pressed Augusta just to fetch her violin,  
In silence so complete we heard the falling of a pin;  
But Dolly put her hand on it, and made an awful din  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Cissy Clare recited all about the three blind mice,  
At first she was so nervous that she had to start it twice;  
But when she grew more confident it really sounded nice,  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.



Bessie.



Katie.



Mabs.



Vivienne.

Bessie Bunter sang about a storm in '83,  
She sang it very loudly and with great ferocity;  
But Bessie, like the storm, was really "very much at sea"  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Then Katie did some conjuring, and anything she'd take  
And do just what she liked, and then with mirth we had to shake;  
For Bessie asked her if she'd turn some bread into a cake  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

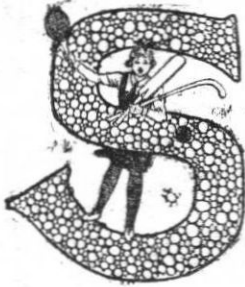
Mabel Lynn recited—it was voted simply great,  
Applause was just terrific, and I really ought to state  
That Clara Trevlyn in her efforts went and broke a plate  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.

Vivienne started singing as we joined up in a line,  
And clasping hands we joined her in the song of "Auld Lang Syne";  
The merriment was over, and we'd found it simply fine  
At the Fourth Form party in the Gym.



**A SCHOOLGIRL'S ALPHABET!**

(Continued from last week.)



S stands for Sporting—  
You'll find as a rule  
The right Sporting Spirit  
Will make a fine School!  
Genius or Gaffer,  
You'll learn just the same  
The fine thing Sport teaches  
Is "Playing the Game!"



T stands for Tuckshop;  
To it we repair  
On birthdays and joy-days,  
And "celebrate" there!  
One girl we know of  
Repeatedly states  
That Tuckshops should all be  
Kept out of the rates!



U stands for Uncle,  
Who comes from afar,  
And asks if you'll have  
A ride in his car.  
Uncles are "sports," and  
I'm sorry to say  
That most of them live  
Such a long way away!  
THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 177.



**THIS WEEK'S SPESHUL REPPORT!**

By Bessie Bunter.

**M**Y dear readers will be delited to know that I have got a lot of fine news to give them this week.

First of all I must tell you about some very funny happenings that have taken place in the Sixth Form this week, and it is all becoss Frarnses Barritt has bought a grammar-fone.

It is reely quite a nice-looking masheen, and I offered to try over some of the teuns in No. 4 studdy for Frarnses, knowing what a duffer she is at understanding how things werk. Frarnses, however, was reely most ensulting to me, and when I remembered that I have had a tiff with her and we are not properley on speaking terms yet I told her that she could keep her grammar-fone, and I hoaped she would soon smash it.

Well, Frarnses startid the thing werking and she put on a very lowd reckord sung by Senior Markoney, the famus Spanish Tenner, and Conney Jacksen was apparently trying to werk in her studdy at the same time. She rushed out and threttened to smash the reckord if Frarnses diddnt stop, and Frarnses sed it was very prettey and she would put on a lowder needel.

On the following day Frarnses startid to werk the grammar-fone agane, and in the middel of one of the reckords there was a tremmendus ringing noise which Frarnses sed was all in the peace, but it kept on when the reckord had stoped, so Frarnses looked inside at the werks and what do you think had happined? Someone had put an alarm clock inside and Frarnses thort it was the teun. Har, har, har!

Then the next day the grammar-fone was fownd to be missing. Of coorse, evverything pointed to Conney Jackson havving it, becoss she was havving a party. She sed she diddnt know anything about it, but her party had only just startid when Senior Markoney startid to sing lowder than ever rite under her tabel!

In the middel Frarnses came rushing in, and between her and Conney they broak the reckord, meeing the grammar-fone one. I reely beleave that Ida Jacksen did it by attaching a peace of cotten to the trigger that starts the masheen werking, but no one could accuse her althow the cotten was fownd.

The masheen is not at Cliff Howse at present becoss Frarnses sed that Conney had upset the werks and she would have to put them rite. Frarnses got the werks out all rite but she coodent put them back agane and it has had to go away to be properly repaired. Evveryone in the skool thinks it a grate joak, and whenever we meet Frarnses we hold our noses and say "Eddystone Bell Reckord" to her, and it makes her look quite feurious.

Last Tewsday the Matren announced that she was going to hold what she called a Speshul Mending Parrade, becoss a lot of gerls were getting slack and not mending their things, but leeving it all for her. When I saw Clairer Trevverlin getting reddy in a grate hurrey to mend her stockings I had a brilliant idear. I watched her go out of the studdy and then I slipped in and put my own stockings in her basket.

The result was splended. Clairer diddnt recognize my stockings as they are the same size as her own and she very kindly mended them all and gave me time to go round looking for copeney for my dear readers. When she had done them all I claimed them, and evveryone thort it such a fine joak that they simply shrieked with larfter.

If Clairer had had a sence of humer she would have seen the joak as well, but as it is she had threttened to get hold of my stockings and cut all the darns out agane becoss she had to sit up till ten o'clock mending her own, and she simply hates darning. In order to prevent her havving her meen revenge I am at present wairing three pairs of stockings at once, which is rather uncomfortable, but I expect Clairer will soon forget.—Tour old chum,  
BESSIE BUNTER.



**HOW TO LOOK SMART EVERY DAY!**

By Marjorie Hazldens.

**I**'LL show you my new jumper," said Molly, as she patted her hair into place in front of the long, swinging mirror.

"I wonder where it can be?" she went out, pulling out first one drawer and then another, and turning the things upside down in her hasty search. "Oh, I remember. I was in a hurry yesterday, and threw it into the bottom of the wardrobe, and then forgot all about it. I do hope that it hasn't got crumpled!"

But when she brought the jumper forth for me to inspect, it really looked like an old rag!

It was last Saturday afternoon that I went to tea with my friend Molly Green, who lives in Courtfield.

After we had finished tea she took me up in her room to see some snaps she had taken during her holidays, and from them we got on to talking of autumn clothes.

She has a lovely room fitted with a large wardrobe. And her dressing chest has deep, roomy drawers—the kind that hold lots of blouses and jumpers, and even a big hat.

But although she has this lovely accommodation, Molly always manages to look untidy. She never has holes in her stockings or buttons off her clothes. She just looks "crumpled"—as if her clothes had been kept in the bottom of the wardrobe along with the jumper, instead of being trim and neat.

**What Molly Should Do.**

"I never seem to have an inch of room to keep anything!" grumbled Molly, looking ruefully at the crushed jumper.

"What about that large drawer at the bottom of the wardrobe?" I suggested.

"It's full up to the brim," replied Molly, pulling the drawer open.

It certainly was. But what a confusion! Blouses, dresses, coats, and numerous other things just thrown in on top of each other.

"Why don't you keep one drawer for blouses and jumpers, another for dresses, and a third one for odds and ends?" I suggested.

"I'd just love to!" replied Molly. "But I've got in such a muddle, I don't know where to start to get straight!"

"Perhaps I could help you," I said, rather timidly, as I didn't want to be thought interfering.

"How perfectly sweet of you!" said Molly, giving me a hug.

We put all the things on to the bed, sorted them into order, and then put them tidily into the drawers, in the order I had already suggested. We were surprised to find how much more space we had now that everything was neatly folded.

**How to Treat Crumpled Clothes.**

One or two dresses and costumes were much too crumpled to wear as they were.

So we took them down to the kitchen, and just pressed them into shape.

Two dresses—one made of soft silk and the other a dance frock of georgette—we pressed lightly with a cool iron, and they looked perfectly fresh again.

For the costumes we adopted a different method.

First, we brushed them with a stiff brush, removing the dust. Next, we placed a damp cloth over the hem, on the wrong side of the skirt, and pressed the hem well with a fairly hot iron. Then we lightly ironed the skirt all over on the wrong side of the material, and finished by pressing the collar, not forgetting to remove the spots from the front of the coat and pressing it.

Costumes should be frequently pressed in this way, especially after they have been worn in the wet. You would be surprised what a difference such a little attention makes to even an old costume.

At the end of an hour, we had completely cleared up the room. I don't think that Molly will let it get untidy again, or treat her clothes so carelessly.

She now realises that attention to detail is the secret of looking smart.



## BY WHOSE HAND?

(Continued from page 600)

Footsteps had a hollow ring in the weed-covered interior, and the treacherous flagstones, worn, and much out of place, made walking uncomfortable.

Many excursions thither had taught the girls the easiest route, and they followed it. Sometimes, when the sky was clear, the ruined roof could be seen above, with a night jar perched on a twisted rafter.

A mystic air of things past, buried, and forgotten, surrounded the place, breathing an atmosphere that was uncanny and unnerving.

Barbara, in front, wisely decided that it was time to use her torch, and she flashed it on, searching the corners and cavities.

Behind her the others spread out in such a manner that, anyone attempting to force their way through, would inevitably be caught.

"Nothing doing yet," whispered Augusta, for, save for the fluttering of bats, no sound could be heard, and the flashing torches revealed no trace of her whom they sought.

Everywhere in the Priory they searched, through all the many cells, tapping the wall carefully.

Not a corner of the place was left unsearched. They went everywhere they had been in, searching the place thoroughly.

"Strange!" frowned Barbara Redfern. "We searched everywhere this morning. There is no secret cell or passage that I can see. Where did Marcia hide?"

The others shook their heads in perplexity.

"Why not work backwards?" suggested Augusta Anstruther-Browne slowly. "Emily says that she saw Marcia come out of the back there. Obviously, then, that is the route from her hiding-place."

"Very well. It's worth trying," agreed Babs, and she led the way out to the back, where they had found the servant-girl reading.

"Emily was here," said Barbara slowly. "Just by these bushes."

She illuminated the bushes with her torch, and the others nodded.

But Bessie Bunter gave a sharp cry of fright, and stepped back.

"Ow! Oh! The gug-gug-ghost of the Pup-Priory!" she stuttered, her teeth chattering.

"Ghost! Where?"

Even as she spoke Barbara realised what Bessie Bunter meant. Something white was in the bushes. Fearlessly she stepped forward, shining her torch.

The white object did not move, and stooping, she touched it. Her soft laugh caused the others to step forward.

"A parcel," she said, in answer to their questions.

And she brought towards them a parcel tied up in newspaper.

"Goodness! Pretty hefty parcel," observed Mabel Lynn. "Badly tied up—in a hurry, by the look of it."

"What's that poking through?" asked Augusta quickly; and she caught hold of some material that was bursting through the badly-tied parcel.

With a torch shining on it they stared amazed as Augusta, in silence, drew from the parcel a drill dress. A crumpled-up hat followed it.

"Marcia's hat and dress!" said Barbara quickly.

They looked at one another.

"Then—then what's she wearing

now?" asked Mabel Lynn. "She's in some disguise. It was Emily we saw reading, and not Marcia in disguise?"

"Oh, it was Emily all right!" said Barbara slowly. "Goodness! What game is Marcia playing, I wonder? And where is she to-night? It proves, anyway, that she wasn't kidnapped, doesn't it?"

"Conclusively," agreed Augusta. "The point is—where is she now? I don't think we stand much chance of finding her."

They stood together, looking from one another to the clothes that Barbara was holding. So silent were they that even the rustling of the wind-blown grass could be heard distinctly.

So they remained for some minutes, and Barbara Redfern looked about her.

"Keep still," she whispered softly. "Still as mice. I heard a footsteps!"

Tense and silent they remained, and then they heard the sound that Barbara's sharp ears had caught—the sound of someone creeping through the grass.

They faced the sound, breathing unsteadily, keeping close together. Nearer came the footsteps, and suddenly Barbara flashed on her torch.

She did not pick up the figure at the first attempt, and when she did it was only the back view of someone in a dark coat, running.

In chase they ran stumbling over the rough ground, Barbara endeavouring to keep the figure in the rays of her torch.

"A girl in a thick coat!" she panted. "Marcia's size!"

On they ran, dodging first this way, then that, getting nearer and nearer to the fleeing figure.

"We'll catch her yet!" said Clara grimly.

And it certainly seemed that they would, for every step took them nearer to the fleeing girl. They noted that she was not running so quickly now, and their hopes rose.

They were in the lane now, and the girl had jumped the hedge. Barbara's torch was of no avail, save to spot the place where she had vanished.

Together they clambered over the hedge into the field. And there they stood looking about them, flashing the torch to and fro searchingly.

But the torch revealed nothing. The girl seemed to have vanished. Somehow she had eluded them. Perhaps she had run on into the darkness beyond the torches' rays—perhaps she was hiding in the hedge-row. She might even have climbed back over the hedge in another spot.

And while they stood there time was being wasted, for every moment took the girl farther away from them.

"No good!" said Barbara Redfern despondently. "We've lost her. It'll be like chasing a needle in a haystack looking for her here. I had no idea Marcia could run so fast."

And because they were talking they did not notice the sound of stifled breathing in the hedge behind them.

### To the Rescue!

**H**AD they turned they would have seen Katie Smith standing there motionless.

She had crept out of the school the instant that Dolly, completely deceived by the pretence of sleep, was herself slumbering.

And now she stood by the hedge waiting for the girls.

When they returned to the school they might find her missing. Whether they did or not, Katie did not mind. She

was free—that, from her view, was the great thing.

Her father had been sending her a message, and that message had unfortunately been interrupted. What had he been about to tell her?

Was he in danger? Was he in need of her help?

The thoughts were worrying her, and she was eager to reach the caves. As the girls were still talking on the other side of the hedge, she crept away, and presently was running like a hare to the cliff-head.

But as she neared it she advanced with caution, for it would not do for anyone to suspect her presence. Slowly and carefully she descended the face of the cliffs, scarcely moving a stone.

And when she reached the beach she paused, listening. The sound of the waves was well-known to her, and she scarcely heeded them. She was listening for other sounds.

She strained her eyes looking out to sea. But there was nothing there to draw her attention. Only for a moment she waited, then she crept along towards the gaping caves that held so many secrets.

In the mouth of the forbidding and forbidden cave she paused, listening, hoping to hear some sounds.

But all was quiet, hideously quiet, and she crept in on hands and knees. The silence reassured her, and she walked boldly upright on the sandy incline.

Everywhere was inky blackness, and she groped her way through the caves, feeling the rocky sides. Suddenly her hand groped where there was no rock, and she fell on her knees.

Her heart beating wildly, she remained there, lest a movement should betray her.

A secret passage, it must be, she decided. She groped about, and smiled as she found a square chunk of rock. Further groping revealed a hole in the wall where the chunk should fit.

To climb through the hole was the work of but a moment. Then she found herself in a small passage. The fact that her head touched the roof above told her how small it was.

She was getting nearer to the secret now; she realised that only too clearly. But she went carefully, for the fact that the slab was out of place warned her that the enemy were somewhere in the vicinity.

On her hands and knees she went slowly forward, lest she should hurt herself on the low roof. Progress was slow yet sure.

She had not gone many yards when she paused again, and her hand closed upon a wire. Excited, she traced it, and gripped a telephone instrument that lay upon the floor.

The phone—the one her father had used. Then a look of utter dismay crossed her face. The instrument was off the hook, hanging loose from the wire. Why was that? Surely her father would never leave it like that, unless—unless he had been captured!

Had they captured him when he was phoning—caught him unawares? It was not unlikely.

She put the instrument back on the hook, which was easily found, then remained quite motionless, listening. From near at hand came the steady sound of breathing.

Cautiously she drew back. But though she strained her ears, she heard no other sound.

Everywhere was darkness, and only that sound of breathing could be heard. What was it? What did it mean? Was there someone tracking her?

She took her pocket torch, holding it

ready. Should she shine it, or should she endeavour to escape? To escape! Surely that was the better way.

But somehow she was afraid. The darkness seemed to be closing in upon her.

She flashed on the torch, swinging it round nervously. Down to the square hole in the rock there was nothing.

The other way— She leaned forward, for on the side of the small tunnel was a man in a large oilskin coat and sou'-wester hat, bound and gagged securely.

"Daddy!"

She gasped out the word as she saw his face, and scrambled forward. His eyes were open, and he seemed to smile. She saw him struggle, and rapidly she untied the gag.

"Thank—thank goodness!" he panted. "Katie, you little brick! They—they caught me as I was phoning you. But there is no time to waste. A knife is in my inside pocket. Cut the bonds. Be quick! They are in the cavern at the end of this tunnel."

She found the knife, and slashed at the cords that bound him.

"Carefully, dear!" he whispered. "We shall need them."

It took but a second to sever them all, then he stretched his limbs and sat up. His first action was to remove the sou'-wester hat. Then he slipped off the coat.

"Quick! Slip these on," he whispered. "Then lie here in the position I was in. It will be all right."

Without questioning the reason, Katie assumed her father's former position. Careful manipulation of the oilskin and the sou'-wester made her seem the sailor-man the cave people had bound up.

But her father was not yet finished. He removed his false beard, and affixed it skilfully to his daughter's chin, then gagged her. But he did not tie the handkerchief, nor did he tie the bonds that bound her legs and wrists.

To all appearances there was no difference between his bound figure and Katie's.

And Katie, excited, yet not afraid, lay motionless, taking this strange circumstance as being perfectly natural.

"Good girl!" he smiled. "I'll make a detective of you yet, Katie. Stay while I go and investigate. I sha'n't let them capture you, never fear."

She nodded, and, with a smile, he crept up to the end of the cave.

Hardly had he gone when she heard the sound of voices. A lamp lit up the tunnel, and she closed her eyes. The people were approaching. Perhaps she would obtain a glimpse of them, and possibly of their accomplice at the school.

So excited was she that she trembled; for now the voices were nearer. She could distinguish the nasal voice that several times she had heard on the telephone.

"Here's the guy!" said the nasal voice, and touched Katie's arm with his toe.

She lay quite still, hardly breathing. The sou'-wester was pulled down over her eyes, but she could just see a tall, slim figure crouching in the narrow tunnel.

The man wore a reefer jacket, and a peaked cap that was tilted on one side so that it cast a shadow on his thin nose. The lamp was sufficient to show her his curled lips and steel blue eyes.

"Reckon you won't interfere any more," drawled the nasal voice roughly. "You old beach-combing sailor men are just too smart for any vocabulary—hey?"

He thrust his chin forward, but Katie took no notice. She trembled with

suppressed excitement. She wanted to laugh at the way she was tricking these people, yet she was not wholly unafraid.

"I guess you'll see dear Ostend in the mornin', old salt," drawled the voice.

He leaned forward, and Katie, fearful lest he got angry at her silence, nodded her head. Anyway, the gag forbade speech; but if she mumbled, even her voice would denounce her.

"Scared stiff," said a deeper voice. "Leave him alone, Gun. He's only some pie-bald boatman. He'll be scared enough when he wakes up in Ostend."

"I guess so," nodded Gun, turning away. "We don't allow a spy in our rig-out, and the quicker a few of them learn it the better, I reckon. When that ther windjammer tells his yarn in Ostend somehow—if they can get across his talk, which isn't likely—"

And he laughed metallically.

A chill ran down Katie's spine at the man's words. They had not suspected, and they had not found her father. But suppose they took her aboard the submarine to Ostend!

Suppose her father were too late? She set her lips resolutely. Her father would not be too late, and—and if he were, then she must face the music uncomplainingly. For his sake she must not reveal the deception.

It was far, far more important, she told herself, that he should be free.

"Carry him down, Gun?" asked the deep-voiced man. Then he looked over his shoulder to someone behind. "Here, Vi, we've got this one all right. The other fellow escaped, and we haven't seen him since. But this chap is sure collared."

A girl came forward, and Katie, hardly able to throttle her excitement, half-opened her eyes.

"Splendid!" said a girl's voice. "If people will interfere, they surely cannot grumble at punishment. No doubt a good many people would welcome a voyage to Ostend."

And she laughed.

Disappointed, rather, Katie realised that the speaker was a stranger. A cultured voice, but not the voice of anyone at Cliff House.

But she looked up as the figure passed in front of her. But the girl was wearing a cloak and a mask. Her head was covered by the cloak's hood.

"This is the sailorman—eh?" asked the girl suddenly.

"I reckon so," nodded the nasal-voiced man, turning. "What do you reckon it is—seaweed?"

The girl did not answer at once.

She pointed to Katie, and looked over her head. As she did so, Katie realised that it was she who held the lantern, for now it was in her upraised hand while she pointed to the other.

"Gun," she laughed softly, "you're a clever sort of fool. Did you ever see a sailorman with that complexion?"

The tall man gave a sharp exclamation, and by the grating sound Katie knew that he had turned. Her heart thumped, and she moved her wrists.

Bowled out! And they were all about her!

She half-rose. And then—

Smash!

The girl holding the lantern shrieked. There was a splinter of glass, and the lantern fell to the floor, where it spitted, then spluttered out.

Angry exclamations filled the cave, the tall man was endeavouring to strike a match.

But Katie, getting up, dodging past the startled girl, ran with her head low, clean at him. Caught completely unawares, the tall man fell clean on his back.

His hand caught Katie's ankle, but she kicked the hand savagely with her other foot. With a gasp he released her, and she ran on.

By the square entrance she paused, then clambered through. The huge oilskin hampered her movements, but she was through, and now searched for the pocket-torch.

Shining it along the tunnel, she saw her father running straight to her with the cloaked girl in pursuit. Centring the powerful rays of the torch upon the girl and dazzling her, Katie enabled her father to gain the lead.

Katie, with her father's pen-knife in her hand, waited. He came scrambling through—nearly through.

"Hold him!" came an angry shout from the tall man, and the girl caught the escaping detective's wrist.

Katie, seeing her father a prisoner, gripped the girl's hand, and wrenched it away, and so hard that the girl's knuckles were cut against the side of the rugged wall.

With a cry the cloaked girl jumped back, and Katie saw her father tumble through the hole to safety.

But now the lean man was near. Another second and he would scramble through. Quick as the thought Katie seized the slab of stone, lifting it with strength that excitement gave her.

She jammed it down, and with her father's help fixed the slab in position.

"Run, Katie!" he cried. "I will give you a minute. Don't worry about me; I shall be all right. I can fix them in."

She hesitated, anxious for her father's safety. He, with a quick smile, placed his arm about her, and drew her to him.

"Brave little girl!" he whispered, kissing her. "You are the bravest daughter ever, Katie!"

The man inside was pushing at the huge slab, and Katie, at a motion from her father, ran off.

"Back to school!" he whispered.

And as she ran down the cave the last she heard was the thumping on the stone slab.

### A Curious Find!

"BETTER find it, I suppose," said Clara Trevlyn, with a sigh of weariness. "But next time we go out, Bessie, you'll stay at home."

Which, although a little ambiguous, was expressive.

"So will you!" retorted Bessie indignantly. "How could I help dropping the silly old glove? Anyone would think you never dropped anything—"

"I don't go about scattering portions of my clothing behind me!" said Clara sarcastically.

"Shush, shush!" murmured Barbara Redfern, with a smile. "You're both careless cuckoos; and if I have any more arguing I shall leave you both at home next time. Now, come along, like good children."

She smiled, and linked arms with Clara and Bessie, while Mabel Lynn and Augusta, also smiling, followed.

It was quite early in the morning, before breakfast. They had not been up for more than a few minutes when Bessie had discovered that on the previous night she had dropped her glove.

"I dare say she dropped it just outside Piper's lodge," said Clara scornfully. "And Miss Primrose will carpet the lot of us—"

"I did—didn't drop it outside Piper's Podge—I mean, Piper's lodge. I dropped it when you banged into me climbing over the wall. If you hadn't—Ow!"

She gave a howl, and hopped on one foot.

"W-what did you do that for, Babs?" she gasped.

But Barbara's face was as solemn as a wooden idol's. Bessie a moment later saw why. Connie Jackson was regarding them coldly.

"I didn't see old Connie," said Bessie, with a snigger. "Did she hear me talking about— Ugh!"

That grunt was caused by a dig in the back from Mabel Lynn.

Bessie, setting her spectacles straight, strode on in indignant silence. Every time she attempted to speak her remarks were interrupted by bangs in the back, and bumps.

"Now," said Barbara, in relief, when they were in the middle of the quadrangle, and no one else was in sight, "what are you yowling for, Bessie?"

"I wasn't yowling. I was just telling Clara—"

Bump!  
And Bessie retained silence until they reached the slanting tree by which they had made their exit on the previous night.

"This is the place," said Babs softly. "For goodness sake, don't chatter, Bessie! Even a blind mouse would guess that we'd broken bounds if it saw us searching here."

They spread round the tree, and stooped down searching.

"Here it is!" said Mabel Lynn and Augusta together.

Barbara stared in surprise; for the two girls were not standing together.

"Two of them?" she asked.

"No; mine isn't a glove," said Mabel Lynn slowly.

She was frowning, and looking in a very perplexed manner at something she held in her hand.

Bessie had taken her glove from Augusta, and with the others crowded round Mabel Lynn to see what that girl had found.

It was a long, tightly-bound roll, wrapped in brown paper. There was no name or address on it, and Mabel, finding the brown paper open at either end, pulled out the contents.

"Canvas—a picture!"

Amazed eyes stared at the picture Mabel Lynn unfurled. It was an oil-painting, and not a modern one by the look of it.

"A portrait; jolly well done, too!" said Augusta Anstruther-Browne admiringly. "Looks like some old Master."

"Wonder whose it is?" said Clara Trevlyn, in surprise. "Aren't any collectors of pictures at the school, except Miss Primrose, and she wouldn't climb over the tree to get out."

"Hardly," chuckled Mabel Lynn. "Must belong to someone, though. I—I say," she murmured, "you don't think it was stolen? It may be one of Miss Primrose's that someone tried to smuggle out and dropped."

It was a startling suggestion, yet one that was by no means unfeasible.

"Ask her—eh?" said Barbara Redfern slowly. "Or shall I pin it on the notice-board—no, that won't do, will it? Although if the thief is in the school one of us could hang about and watch the faces."

"Better ask Miss Primrose first," said Augusta wisely. "Come on; this is interesting. I wonder if it has anything to do with the people in the caves?"

"Goodness—yes, it may have!"  
With the possibility of its connection with the riddle of the caves, the finding of the picture had a new interest.

"Miss Primrose won't be in her study yet, surely," said Augusta. "She's in her house—"

At that time of the morning the headmistress was not likely to have gone into her study. Sometimes she even breakfasted in her private house, which was on the other side of the quadrangle.

The girls, aware of that, turned and made their way to Miss Primrose's private house.

Barbara knocked on the door, and the maid smiled when she answered the knock, and bade them enter.

"Miss Primrose is in her study," said the maid.

They waited in the hall until she returned and told them that the headmistress would see them.

Miss Primrose they found at her writing-table, before the open window. It was not a warm morning, but the mistress was wearing a warm woollen coat.

"Yes, Barbara," she said, surprised at the early visit. "What do you want?"

"We found this in the quadrangle,

"In the quadrangle, Miss Primrose."  
"The quadrangle. Surely it cannot be the same. Yet it is. Look!"

She handed the newspaper to the captain of the Fourth, and the others gathered round her.

"Valuable Old Master Stolen! Picture Worth Many Thousands!"

The glaring headlines simply jumped at them.

"Van Steert's famous portrait of 'The Lady of Sorrow,' which was in the collection of Lord Lawney, was ripped from its frame and stolen early yesterday morning," read Barbara. "The loss was not discovered for some hours, although a servant afterwards stated that she had heard noises in the night. A romance surrounds the picture (a reproduction of which will be found on page four)—"

Barbara broke off and turned eagerly to the page; then, with wide-opened eyes the girls stared at an excellent reproduction of the missing picture.

One glance sufficed to show them that the picture they had found in the quad-



**AWKWARD FOR KATIE!** A sudden rustle caused Katie to turn the instrument so that it was concealed from view. "Hallo!" said the voice of Clara Trevlyn.

Miss Primrose, and thought it might be yours," said Babs.

Miss Primrose adjusted her spectacles and took the picture. She unfurled it, then a look of blank amazement crossed her face.

"This—is this the stolen Van Steert!" she cried.

"It is yours, then, Miss Primrose?" exclaimed Barbara Redfern.

"We thought it was," echoed Mabel Lynn.

"Mine?" returned the headmistress. "Good gracious, no! I wish it were," she added, with a laugh. "It is far more valuable than any of my poor pictures."

She reached for a newspaper that lay upon her desk, opened it, and glanced through the pages.

In wonderment the girls looked at her. Barbara glanced questioningly at Mabel Lynn, as though asking whether the interview were finished, or whether Miss Primrose had something further to say.

"Ah, here it is," said the headmistress, as though in answer to Barbara's unspoken query. "The stolen Van Steert. Really, it is most amazing. Barbara—where did you say you found this picture?"

rangle was the original of the reproduction.

"My hat!" gasped Clara. "Then that's the missing Van Steert. Miss Primrose, but—but how—"

"Yes, Clara, that is the question. How did it come into the school?" nodded the headmistress, much amazed. "There is no doubt at all in my mind that this is the original. But—but—really—"

There was silence in the study, and the girls looked from the reproduction to the portrait itself. In every detail it was the same. Moreover, the jagged edge of the painting showed that it had been cut from the frame.

Barbara read to the end of the column that dealt with the missing masterpiece, and when she had finished she placed the newspaper on the table.

"We had better inform the police," said Miss Primrose. "They must know of this amazing occurrence as soon as possible."

"Tozer'll be a fat lot of good," murmured Clara Trevlyn under her breath. And the others, knowing the portly village policeman, grinned.

## The Accomplice!

"DID you see that?" Barbara Redfern asked the question, and looked quickly at Mabel Lynn.

"I noticed that she had a letter," nodded Mabel.

"Not that; but did you notice the stamp on it. I saw it in the rack. It was an old stamp stuck on. Either someone has tried to trick the post-office, or someone has tried to give the impression that it was sent through the post, and not delivered by hand."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, the date is old, and the stamp is only marked partially by the rubber mark the post-office people use. That letter was really delivered by hand."

Mabel Lynn nodded.

"Probably," she agreed. "I suppose it was sent by the cave people."

Breakfast was over, and the girls had gone to their studies to prepare the books required for morning lessons. To follow Katie into her study was impossible, and they did not attempt it.

To control their detective curiosity was difficult, but they managed to, and waited along the passage to watch Katie come out of her study.

But Katie did not make an appearance. She was sitting at the study table reading the note she had received.

"Be watchful this morning. Expect phoning."

That was all the message contained. But it was enough. Katie, with a pleased smile screwed it up, then burnt it until nothing but powdered ash remained.

Then she went from the study. A quick look to the left showed her Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn talking. They appeared to show no interest in her, and she hurried towards the Form-room.

The two chums of Study No. 4 followed her almost immediately, and Katie noticed then the looks they gave her. She frowned rather worriedly, for, remembering the night before, she knew they must be suspicious of her.

With the best intentions in the world they might quite conceivably spoil everything. Somehow she must trick them. And she soon found the scheme, a quite simple one that suited her purpose.

Taking a penknife from her desk, she commenced to sharpen a pencil. Two or three cuts, then the knife slipped purposely and gashed her finger.

She gave a sharp cry of pain, and squeezed the finger-tip, from which blood oozed.

"Katie!" exclaimed Miss Steel. "You foolish girl! Run along to the matron at once and get it bound up! Hurry!"

And Katie, binding her handkerchief over the slight wound, hurried from the study.

She ran then not to the matron, but to the Fourth Form passage. To bind up her finger was but the work of a moment. Then she hurried up the stairs along a corridor below the roof, and, assured that no one was watching, climbed through a skylight.

Closing the skylight, she crept across the roof to the skylight that gave on to the corridor outside the attics.

There she lay, concealed yet able to see, as she had lain before. She remained there for many minutes before soft footsteps warned her that someone was approaching.

But she gave a sigh of disappointment as she saw that it was only Emily Stokes the maid.

She watched the girl walking along the passage in her slovenly style, whistling a tune.

Katie smiled amusedly at the girl's gait; but presently her smile died away, and she leaned further forward, staring at the servant.

She almost gave a cry of amazement, but stopped herself just in time.

For Emily Stokes' right hand was swathed in a bandage.

Was it coincidence? Or was Emily the accomplice? But Katie Smith smiled at the thought, and shook her head. Emily, slovenly speaking, could not be the girl of the night before—the girl who spoke with a cultured tone and accent.

Besides, what sensible criminals would have an accomplice such as Emily? It was surely absurd!

The servant, still humming, entered the bed-room, and closed the door noisily. Katie listened, opening the skylight and looking along the corridor suspiciously.

Her heart almost stopped beating as to her ears came a fresh sound—a peculiar buzzing.

The telephone in the attic buzzing.

What should she do—climb down, or wait for the accomplice to put in an appearance?

She waited not a second, but slithered through the skylight, landing softly and skilfully on the corridor below. Outside the door she paused, then placed her hand softly on the handle.

She pushed, but the door did not budge, and, glancing down, she saw that the key was on the inside. The door was locked on the inside.

She snapped her finger fretfully. What a fool she had been! Of course, the accomplice had been in the room all the time! Angrily she looked about her.

Should she remain there, and shout for help? But the accomplice might hear, and escape by the window. For now Katie began to think that the accomplice was not a member of the school at all, but an outsider who had found some means of entrance by the roof.

If only she could stay there and send someone else for help—perhaps then she would be able to trap the person as she came out.

Ah, Emily! She could send her.

Softly she walked to the door of the servants' bed-room. She tapped upon it gently, then pushed open the door.

"Emily!" she whispered.

Only a faint echo of her voice answered her, and, surprised, she entered the room, looking about her.

But the room was empty! Emily Stokes had vanished.

So completely dumbfounded by the discovery was Katie that she almost forgot her reason for wanting the girl. She glanced hastily under the beds, then at the windows.

But Emily was not to be found, nor was her means of exit visible.

Katie went slowly back to the door. On the threshold, however, she paused, leaning back. Eyes sparkling, she went on tiptoe to the wall that bordered one side of the adjacent attic.

A second later, with ear pressed to the wall, she was listening intently to the faint sounds that came from the next room.

She could hear someone speaking, although the words were indistinguishable, and her heart beat fast with excitement as she recognised the voice—the voice of the woman whose hand she had bitten.

Silently she left the wall, and took up her position outside the attic door. It

P.-c. Tozer was certainly not a very powerful or discriminating arm of the law, and his brains would be of little assistance, if any, in the clearing up of the mystery.

"Getting on to breakfast-time," observed Barbara Redfern, looking rather anxiously at the clock.

"Ah, yes! Dear me, I was quite forgetting!" murmured the headmistress. "I will see into this matter, girls. Hurry now—you mustn't be late for the meal."

Only too eagerly Barbara Redfern turned to the door, and her companions, rather surprised, followed her.

"You're in a jolly hurry," commented Clara Trevlyn. "If you hadn't rushed out she might have let us do some detecting stunts."

Mabel Lynn smiled.

"Babs has got a reason," she said. "I know her better than you do, Clara. Look at that thoughtful frown."

Barbara broke into a merry laugh.

"Yes, I had a reason," she said. "I read that column in the newspaper right through, you see. Now, it appears that this is the third valuable picture that has been stolen recently. Apart from pictures, necklaces and various treasures have been stolen."

"Well, what about that?" asked Clara.

"I'm just coming to it. The police think that it is some gigantic gang at work. In some mysterious way the stolen goods have been got out of the country, although, a keen watch has been kept everywhere."

She paused and looked at her friends. Clara frowned, and Bessie Bunter blinked. But Augusta suddenly laughed and clapped her hands.

"Of course, of course!" she exclaimed. "And, moreover, the picture was found in the quad."

"Well, we know that," said Clara, rather gruffly. "Why don't you say what you mean, instead of talking in riddles!"

"Pictures have been stolen," smiled Mabel Lynn, who apparently had seen what Barbara meant. "One stolen picture is found here. Stolen pictures are smuggled from the country—"

"The caves!" shouted Clara.

"Shush!"

But Clara did a war-dance, probably to celebrate her own brightness; and then Bessie Bunter's circular face was made oval by a broad smile of understanding.

"Absolutely!" said Barbara Redfern excitedly. "What else can it mean? Those people in the caves smuggle things out of the country. The accomplice waits in the school to receive the stolen valuables and pass them on to the cave people."

"Goodness!"

They paused in the quadrangle and looked at one another excitedly.

"But—but who is the accomplice?" demanded Clara.

"Someone who is in communication with the cave people, obviously. Marcia, perhaps; or Katie?"

"Katie—it must be Katie! She was using that telephone. Watch her! Goodness," laughed Mabel Lynn, "what a feather in our caps if we solve this mystery and beat the police to a frazzle, eh?"

"We will," said Barbara Redfern determinedly. "We'll stick to Katie like her own shadow; and, unless I'm a very bad judge, it won't be long before we bowl her out."

would not be many minutes before the accomplice came out of the attic.

Her face was frowning and thoughtful, although the puzzled look still remained in her eyes.

Suddenly the voice in the attic ceased; and Katie, with a gleam of sudden inspiration in her eyes, flew back to the door of the servant's bed-room.

From there she had in view both that room, and the door of the attic.

A faint click sounded, and she looked at the door of the attic, but it did not move. She looked then at the servants' room.

A gasp of amazement left her lips, and she stepped forward, every muscle tence.

For a piece of the wall had suddenly moved outwards; and, like a flash, the whole secret was revealed to her.

No need to look at the untidy stockings and slovenly shoes to tell her who was the accomplice.

A moment later she was facing Emily Stokes—Emily suddenly white-faced and frightened.

"So it is you," said Katie—"you, Emily; and it was your hand I hurt last night—bowed out—caught in the act—"

"I—I— What do you mean?" blustered the girl, going nearer to Katie. "I haven't done anything!" Her voice became a whine, and she dropped on to her knees. "Oh, don't tell on me!" she pleaded. "Don't tell on me! I was just a-looking for ghosts!"

She upraised her hands pleadingly, but Katie Smith gave her a look of scorn.

"Don't try to trick—"

But there she broke off, for with remarkable quickness the attitude of the pleading girl changed. Her arms gripped Katie tightly about the knees, jerking the girl heavily to the floor.

Even as Katie opened her mouth to shout, she felt a firm hand covering it.

Widely she struggled, but the servant was older than she, and surprisingly strong.

With goggling eyes Katie watched the servant's free hand drag a sheet from the bed. Next moment, despite her most frantic struggles, Katie's head was encased in the sheet.

She was gagged, and unable to yell out for help.

To tie her hands and feet scarcely occupied a second of time.

"Now you're finished," said the girl, rising, "it may be of interest to you to know that you are too late. You tricked us in the caves last night, but it's our turn now. You may lie here all day without anyone hearing you. I hope you do. Good-bye!"

And, with a stifled laugh, she went from the room, closing the door behind her, leaving Katie a helpless prisoner.

Katie struggled madly for many minutes, but it was not easy to loosen the bonds, which had been cleverly tied.

If only she could escape before the accomplice got clear—before she warned the submarine, and the thieves made their departure!

She ceased to struggle, panting for breath, and as she lay quite still, a buzzing from the next room came to her ears—another message—and the accomplice was gone.

Oh, if only she could get free!

### The Riddle of the Caves!

"BARBARA, please find Katie Smith, and send her to me immediately!"

"Yes, Miss Steel."

Babs answered quickly, then hurried after her friends to the Form-room.

Second lessons were over, and now

there was a ten minutes' interval before the next lesson. Katie being still absent from the Form-room, Miss Steel had grown angry and impatient.

She little dreamed when she asked the question that Barbara herself was just hurrying off to find Katie. With her chums she ran now along the corridor.

"Where to?" she asked.

"Not much good searching outside," said Augusta quickly. "She may be in the school. Clara can take those field-glasses of Miss Steel's and look from the roof. She could see Katie if she were near the cliffs."

Barbara nodded curtly, and led the way upstairs, while Clara ran off to fetch the powerful field-glasses which had been of service to them before.

Athletic and energetic, Clara quickly caught up the others just as they were upon the upper landing.

"The attics first," said Babs. "This end one." And she flung open the door, then she stepped back and pointed to the floor. "Look!" she gasped. "The telephone hidden under the floorboards—"

She dropped through the skylight neatly, her eyes shining with excitement.

"We can catch her if we use bikes!" she said. "Come on! What's the matter?" she cried, looking sharply at Barbara Redfern.

Babs pointed to the quadrangle below. "That crowd outside Miss Primrose's house!" she said. "There's old Tozer there—"

Almost before she had finished the sentence they were streaking down the stairs. In another moment they had joined the group that surrounded the headmistress' house.

No need to ask what had happened. Everyone was talking at once, discussing it.

"The stolen picture!" explained Freda Foote. "You know, the picture you found. Miss Primrose's servant was bound and gagged, and the picture stolen. A girl in drill-dress, probably Marcia—"

She stared in surprise as Babs & Co.,



"MARCIA'S HAT AND DRESS!" They stood amazed as Augusta drew from the parcel a drill dress. A crumpled hat followed!

They stared at the loose floorboard which had not been replaced, and under which the telephone could be seen distinctly.

"And there—look at that piece of wall! It's a door!" exclaimed Mabel Lynn.

She crossed to it, and flung it open. A moment later she had vanished from sight into the servants' bed-room. A call from her brought the others to her side.

Mabel Lynn pointed to the floor, on which lay sheets, knotted strangely, scattered about.

"What on earth can it mean? Has—has someone tried to escape by making a sheet ladder—"

"The window is not open!" pointed out Augusta. "There has been a struggle, by the look of it. Ah, look! Katie's hair-riband! What has she been doing, I wonder?"

Clara did not waste time in words. Field-glasses in hand, she clambered up on to the roof, and from that rather unsafe perch she viewed the surrounding landscape.

"Yes, yes!" she cried excitedly. "There's Katie running like the wind! I can see her—"

instead of replying, raced across the quadrangle to the cycle-shed.

"It's Katie, of course!" said Babs. "Come along! Ride like mad!"

She set the example, and tore across the quadrangle, although cycling there was forbidden. Rules and regulations were unheeded just then, however.

Down the lane they went at a spanking pace. The pace quickly became too hot for Bessie Bunter, and she dropped behind. But they could not wait for her. The four of them sped on, sending the dust scurrying.

Bumping over fields they went, scarcely noticing the jars and the vibration.

Then on the cliff-head they flung down their machines, and Barbara, running to the cliff-top, stood there motionless.

"Oh, gracious! A submarine! Look! Look!"

Even as she spoke the sinister vessel rose from the water.

But Clara Trevlyn jerked her friend's arms.

"Look on the beach below!" she exclaimed excitedly. "Don't you see? Katie Smith and Marcia—"

She focussed the field-glasses, and the expression on her face changed.

"It's Katie!" she said slowly, in a strange tone. "But she's bound hand and foot—"

"And Marcia?"  
"It isn't Marcia. I can't see her face. Now I can. Gracious, Babs! It's Emily Stokes, the servant!"

"Emily Stokes!"  
They echoed her amazement, and were so petrified that they stood motionless, watching the figures on the beach below—watching them carry Katie Smith, helpless, into the rowing-boat.

"They're kidnapping her! Quick!"  
Babs shouted, and the figures on the beach turned. Katie Smith saw them, and a wild cry left her lips—a cry that reached the ears of her friend on the cliff-head.

"Cliff House, rescue! Rescue!"  
And Babs, Mabs, Clara, and Augusta could not hear that cry and stand motionless. So quickly did they descend the cliff face that it seemed they were sliding down.

The figures by the boat paused, uncertain whether to stay and struggle, or get away quickly to the submarine.

And their hesitation lost them seconds. Before the boat was properly launched Babs & Co. were down the beach. Together fearlessly they rushed at the kidnappers. Emily Stokes stood back; one of the men shouted.

Then Clara, with a bull-like rush, sent the supposed servant splash into the water!

Babs and Mabs clutched at helpless Katie, and lifted her from the boat.

Their success, however, was but short-lived. From the caves hurried other figures—a muscular, wiry-framed woman and the man with the nasal voice.

It was only a matter then of finding cord to bind their feet and wrists.

And the cave people were not at a loss for that.

"Got them!" snarled the woman. "You're a fine 'un, Vi, you are! This is your fault. Get them aboard the ship, Gun. We've got to get clear of here!"

Unable to struggle, the five Cliff House girls were packed in the boat, and one sturdy sailorman was deputised to row them out.

"Done!" groaned Clara. "Who would have thought this would happen? And no one knows where we are."

"None, except Bessie," nodded Babs. "We're done! Bessie can't do anything. They've kidnapped us, and goodness knows when we shall get back."

"We're not done yet!" said Katie

Smith quietly. "There is still my father and—"

"Your father?"  
And then, realising that the game was nearly played out, she told the girls her father's secret, and also how she had escaped half an hour earlier. She spoke in cautious whispers so that the boatman should not hear.

"My hat! Katie, you topper!" chuckled Clara. "To think that all the time you've been fooling us! What a cheek! Anyway, let's hope your pater is—Hullo! Here we are!"

The boatman had drawn alongside the submarine, and someone on the submarine deck was preparing to take them in.

He had just caught hold of Barbara's arm when there came a frantic shout from the shore.

"What's the matter with Gun?" asked the man on deck. He turned leisurely. Then his expression changed. "Ship!" he exclaimed briskly. "But what's the matter with Gun?"

The girls looked back to the shore, and had a brief glimpse of another rowing-boat, containing those who had been on the beach. They were rowing madly and quickly, as though their lives depended upon it.

"Destroyer!" said the man on the submarine hoarsely. "A T.B.D.! Oh, Jemima, we're done!"

For a moment the girls did not understand. But a moment later they caught sight of a fast-moving boat that cut the water away from its bows. And it was coming straight for the submarine.

Wild shouts came from the other rowing-boat. But whatever the orders they gave the men on the submarine did not understand.

They were just staring at the destroyer, bewildered and fascinated by it.

Nearer it came, and the rowing-boat behind the girls was turned round in an attempt to reach the shore, and so escape. But panic seemed to be reigning, some wishing to reach the submarine, others the shore. And in the chaos the boat turned in ridiculous circles.

But the destroyer was alongside now, its decks crowded, and through a megaphone a voice that Katie knew so well shouted:

"The game's up, Gun Fisher! Heave to, or you'll be sorry for it."

"Daddy," cried Katie Smith, "we've won—we've won!"

For the second rowing-boat came slowly towards the submarine.

"It seems too wonderful for words!" declared Katie.

She looked round at the other faces in the crowded study, and finally her gaze rested upon her father at the head of the table.

There was great rejoicing in the Fourth Form Common-room that evening, and Katie Smith's father was the guest of honour. Katie sat on one side of him and Marcia Loftus, very white-faced, on the other.

"Too awful!" corrected Marcia, with a shiver. "That woman on the submarine was a hundred times worse than Miss Steel. They tricked me down to the caves with that false code message, and then kidnapped me, and took me on the submarine."

"How many times did they take you across to the Continent?" asked Katie's father.

"I don't know. A good many times," said Marcia, brightening slightly, as she realised that she could make herself quite a heroine.

"And to think that that servant, Emily, deceived us all the whole time! It was rather clever to disguise as Marcia. We all thought you were about in the district, Marcia."

"Oh, they were clever!" nodded Mr. Smith. "Their scheme, of course, was taking stolen goods out of the country and bringing in contraband. They are merely one link in an enormous criminal secret society, so big that it was almost a small free state."

"Well, that branch is finished," said Barbara Redfern, in relief. "They'll be in prison for some time, I suppose?"

"Yes, years," nodded Mr. Smith, "and you all contributed right nobly in their capture. But the chief of all was Katie. Some day she'll be a great detective."

"I hope so," smiled Katie.  
"Here's to Katie, the detective!" laughed Clara.

And glasses were promptly emptied in salute of the triumphant conclusion of the strange adventure. The Riddle of the Caves had been solved, the stolen Van Steert had been found in the thieves' possession, and returned with many other stolen treasures.

But it was mainly thanks to Katie Smith that the conclusion had been so triumphant, and her toast was drunk not once but many times.

THE END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

## "THE MISFORTUNES OF BESSIE!"

is the title of next Thursday's magnificent new long complete story of the Girls of Cliff House, by Hilda Richards. It is the first of a series of stories which you will vote to be at once the most amusing and the most thrilling you have ever read. You must not miss these stories of the most entertaining schoolgirl character ever created.

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# NO JOY IN HER RICHES!

By  
**JOAN INGLESANT.**

## CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

**RUTH HOPE**, a beautiful, fair-haired girl of fifteen, who, with her father, has come to live at Rosedale Manor, formerly in the possession of the father of

**SYLVIA SEVERANCE**, a dark-haired, vindictive girl, a year or so older than Ruth.

Hardly has Ruth arrived at the Manor than Sylvia taunts her by saying that Ruth's father, John Hope, has no right to the possession of the estate—in other words, he has stolen it! And, to her horror, her father returns only an evasive answer.

Ruth receives three five-pound notes from her father, who has made one of his frequent mysterious departures, and then is shocked to learn that the same notes are wanted by the police. To add to her worries, an attempt is made to break into her father's room, and Ruth herself takes possession of certain important documents to prevent them being stolen. And then two policemen arrive and search the house, for some reason which they do not divulge. On their departure Ruth looks out of the window, and there she sees them walking down the lane—with her father between them! "Arrested!" grins Sylvia. And really that seems to be the only construction to be placed on the incident. Then Ruth discovers that Mr. Severance is hiding in the grounds of the Manor, and this leads her to believe that the position of the Severances is not so strong as they try to make out. Shortly afterwards Sylvia leaves the house, saying she is going into the village, but Ruth guesses that it is her object to visit her father.

(Read on from here.)

## Caught!

**A**ND Ruth was right. Sylvia did not make any attempt to go down to Rosedale, but instead she hurried down the drive, cut off to the left, and for some little time she waited on a knoll of ground scanning the distant rush meadow, or "The Wilderness," as Mr. Hope had christened it.

Earlier in the day she had left a note in the woodpecker's nest. He should be here.

Why didn't he come, so that she could tell him how wonderfully well she had succeeded. Of the key she had found in Miss Hope's room, of the opened study and the envelope of papers she had discovered.

Why, she had found the letter first go off, and now—

Now her father would be able to prove his right to the Manor, and banish those Hopes for good.

"Is that you, Sylvia?"

A covert whisper came through the darkness, and now the familiar figure of Mr. Severance loomed up spectrally in the gloom.

"Father!"

She ran forward and gripped his hand.

"What luck?"

"Found them, found the one you want!" she cried. "Oh, father—"

He looked nervously about him.

"It is dangerous to talk here, now that we are within an inch of success. The hut in the rush meadow, we will go there. Give me the paper."

Sylvia drew the envelope she had found in the study from her blouse and handed it to him, and then, taking his hand, the two hurried through the night.

Down over the firm ground and on to the little path he knew so well.

"Be careful, Sylvia!" he cautioned, when he came to the spot where Ruth had found his footmarks had come to an end.

"Follow me!"

He led the way, and she crept closely behind him. Once she made a false step, but only a wet foot was the result of it,



And there Ruth saw the outline of a policeman's form! The sight sent fear into her heart.

and at last they were through the morass and into the clearing.

The stars shone down on his little patch of secrecy.

"Hidden, as safe as a moat-ringed castle!" he whispered.

"Come!"

He took her hand and they crossed the clearing, and entered the hut.

Groping along a ledge he found an electric torch, and switched it on.

Then feverishly he drew out the papers. His eyes lit on the first one, and he registered his light on it.

"Without a doubt!" he cried. "This is the one, Sylvia—this is the one!"

"And now—"

He slipped the letter back, and brought his hand down on the envelope.

"Now—now I can face John Hope, and fearlessly, Sylvia!" he cried.

Suddenly he looked up, for a sound, an unfamiliar sound, had echoed through the night.

"What was that?"

He ran to the door of the hut, and Sylvia followed him. She peered over his shoulder just as he staggered back, trembling and terror-stricken.

The lights from two police lanterns were flickering in the clearing.

"Yes, there are lights there! Don't you see them, Sylvia?"

Mr. Severance gasped rather than said the words, and it became noticeable that he was trembling; noticeable to Sylvia, who watched those lanterns that distantly seemed like fireflies in the summer grass.

"How did they come here?" he whispered. "We must have been betrayed. But stay—"

He breathed with relief as he saw that the lights had vanished.

But only for a moment did they disappear; the next, their twinkling little beams threw dashes of radiance over the damp grass.

"Somewhere a night-bound bird, roused from its rest, lofted on a strong wing, and with a wild, an unearthly call to its mate, disappeared into the gloom above some aged pollards.

A muttered exclamation came from the distance—ample evidence that those lights were held by human hands and no radiant mysteries of the night, no will-o'-the-wisps, as Mr. Severance had fancied.

"We must have been followed—followed—by whom?"

But Sylvia could not answer.

Why should her father be afraid? she asked herself.

The papers were in his possession; that important letter that he had declared would save the whole situation was now resting in his pocket.

Now he would have proof enough—proof that the Hopes were upstarts.

And the Hopes would have to go!

It was a thought that inspired Sylvia. "We must get away—out of this!"

The whispered words of her father brought her back to earth with a jar.

"Go?" she murmured, incredulous.

"Yes—yes!" he whispered. "The time is not opportune for me to expose Hope. It would never do to accuse him here—back to the Manor—"

He caught at her hand.

"Behind the hut!" he whispered. "There is a door! Perhaps we could elude them in the dark. And then to the path. Come!"

Without more ado he drew her back into the hut, and, lifting a beam at the extreme end of the little building, he revealed the presence of an exit, and through this they crept.

They seemed like wraiths of the night as they stole out into the clearing.

To their ears came the sound of subdued voices, and then a call through the night.

"Who is there?"

A few yards in front of them there gleamed the light of a lantern, but before its radiance could fall on their faces, Mr. Severance had dragged Sylvia down into the tall grass.

"H'm!" they heard a voice exclaim. "Thought I heard something then!"

The sound of very soft footfalls walking away from this neighbourhood came to their ears.

Mr. Severance was breathing heavily.

"That was a narrow shave!" he whispered. "Perhaps we can win to safety now!"

Sylvia shivered.

"Come; we must make a dash for it!"

Sylvia felt her hand grabbed, and she was rushing across the clearing, and—

The next moment she was nearly blinded by a broad ray of light—the light from a big lantern, and in its glare she saw the deathly pale face of Mr. Severance—the face of her father.

It was a picture of pitiful fear. The lips trembled, and the eyes were the eyes of a hunted thing.

And the bearer of the light!

In all the grimness of his calling he towered—or seemed to tower—above them.

It was the inspector.

He barred the path—barred the way to safety, held the neck of that only path from the clearing!

They were caught!

The inspector did not speak. All this time he had been standing in an attitude that suggested dire consequences for Mr. Severance if he made any attempt to force his way past the law.

Now, and as Mr. Severance spoke, the inspector drew a whistle and blew three shrill blasts on it.

As he did so Sylvia's father ran forward, but a firm hand on his shoulder held him back.

"Won't pay to attempt anything of that sort, sir!" said the inspector gruffly. "There are men waiting the other end of the path; it would be useless!"

Mr. Severance fell back, and now two constables came running forward, and the light of their lanterns revealed the inspector's face to Sylvia.

It was the man who had called at the Manor—the man who had been interested in her movements.

He evidently saw the look of recognition, for he smiled strangely.

"Caught you this time, little lady!" he said not unkindly. "It is a good thing for you that you are as young as you are, otherwise the law might have had something to say about the way you tried deliberately to foil the workings of its justice!"

Her father was not speaking, and now as she looked at him, looked at that swaying and bowed-headed figure, a terrible feeling of terror surged through her whole being.

He looked guilty—very guilty. But, no, that could not be, for he had the paper that could clear him. Had he not said so?

It was a pretence; that was what it was. He was playing some part.

"Mr. Severance," said the inspector sharply, "shall we go back to the Manor, or—"

Sylvia's father looked up, and now his face seemed stronger, his manner more assured.

"The Manor!" he answered. "I do not know what your object is, inspector, although I admit that you should think it strange for me to be found in so lonely a spot as the rush meadow."

He paused.

"If it is of interest to you to know it," he added, "I have only been waiting there to watch events, and now—now things have happened just as I fancied they would. My evidence—"

"H'm!" exclaimed the inspector. "We will hear all about that later, Mr. Severance."

Sylvia felt reassured. Her father had confirmed her thoughts.

He had been playing a part. He was sure of his evidence. This inspector

would have to eat humble pie, and the Hopes, they would have to go—and soon.

"Shine your lanterns on the path, lads," said the inspector. "I am none too sure of the way. Mighty treacherous here, this water and morass."

One of the constables stepped forward, and very carefully, very gingerly, began to guide the party back through the morass.

At last they were on the firm ground, and the superstitious country policeman could breathe again.

Even the inspector, an experienced man, had not relished that journey into the morass.

A chill wind had come with the evening, and Sylvia shivered as the party proceeded at a quick pace in the direction of the Manor.

Her brain was working quickly, and she was trying to peer into the future, to determine what would be the outcome of all this.

It was decidedly unfortunate that her father had been found in that lonely and secret place, for the fact seemed to suggest his guilt; and yet, as she thought, the fact was weighed upon her that his explanation was very sound.

He had been staying there to investigate and discover proof of Mr. Hope's fraud. And now he had that proof. She was sure of it.

Somehow, though, it all seemed a trifle unreal to Sylvia.

The little party halted, and Mr. Severance looked askance at the inspector.

"Well?" he queried.

But the inspector did not answer.

Very firmly he walked towards the large door, and with an authoritative knock he sent a noisy summons through the old place.

And the sound came to the ears of a girl—a girl who, aroused by the sound of many feet on the gravel paths earlier in the night, had ceased her preparations for the night, and had dressed and waited, timorous and apprehensive.

It was Ruth.

To her the night had seemed filled with sound, and once, leaning out of her window, she had seen the outline of a policeman's form.

The man had been standing beneath her very window, and as she had looked out had walked away with noisy footsteps.

The sight had sent fear into her heart.

To her it had seemed that she was being watched, and the thought made her fear for her father.

How long she had waited in her room she did not know; but what she did know was that in her terror she had taken the precious papers from their place of concealment, and had secreted them in a safer place—next her heart.

Now that insistent knocking was dinning into her mind, and as she ran to the door, frightened and unnerved, the rush of footsteps on the stairs came to her ears.

Switching off the light, she flung the door open, and came face to face with Mildred and Miss Hope.

They had paused on her landing just as she opened her door, and Ruth saw at once the gleam of triumph in Mildred's eyes.

"The moment has arrived!" snapped out Mildred. "Don't think that I didn't see him. I saw him sneaking up to the Manor, and through the window."

Ruth's hands stole to her heart.

"What do you mean?" she whispered. "Whom did you see?"

Mildred laughed harshly.

"The new squire—the squire who will soon be something else—your father!" she cried. And then she ran lightly down the stairs.

"The police again!" said Miss Hope. Her face was chalk white. Mildred's words had frightened her.

"I saw them coming up the drive—a number of them—with lanterns. There was a girl."

She spoke brokenly, hurriedly, and as though to the air rather than Ruth, for, with her words said, she followed in the wake of Mildred.

Ruth paused, irresolute.

She was afraid now, terribly afraid. The whole air seemed charged with impending bad fortune.

Mildred had seen her father creep back to the Manor. That accounted for the watching policeman.

And now!

No doubt they had caught him—were bringing him back here.

Slowly she walked down the stairs, and as she did so the sound of loosened chain, bar, and opening portal, came to her ears.

A crowd of people seemed to be coming into the Manor. Her frenzied eyes saw the uniforms of the policemen.

Her father would be there—there in their charge, handcuffed and humbled.

Could she go down?

Her senses seemed to be leaving her; but she told herself that she must fight against her weakness. There was something to be faced, and face it she would.

With firmer tread now she descended the stairs and came into the hall.

She saw the group of people, saw the inspector, and—yes, but what could this mean? Why did Sylvia look so pale? Her hair looked untidy, and her feet were wet. Splashes of mud were on her skirt.

Sylvia had been assisting the police—yes, that must be it.

"Ah, here is Miss Hope!"

The inspector had swung round, and, as he did so, a gasp of astonishment came to Ruth's lips.

It was not her father they had brought back to the Manor.

Mr. Severance!

She saw the policemen ringed about him, and, with a trembling word of inquiry on her lips, she approached the inspector.

There was a peculiar smile on the man's lips, and his eyes seemed strange.

"Sorry to disturb you at this hour, Miss Hope," he said; "but it had to be done!"

Ruth was at a loss to know what all this meant, but then, in a flood, realisation came to her.

Mr. Severance had come voluntarily—come to charge her father with theft. That was it!

The inspector was speaking, but only faintly could she hear what he was saying.

"It would be better if we adjourned to Mr. Hope's study!"

"Yes, my father's study—my father is—"

Ruth found herself speaking mechanically, and she led the way in the same manner; the whole of the party flocked towards the private room of Mr. Hope. There was a wait whilst Miss Hope sent Mildred for the key.

Ruth waited as one in a dream. Was all this true? What did it all mean?

The door of the study was opened, and the inspector stood aside for Ruth to enter the room.

"It's a wretched business!"



The inspector was speaking to her, and she told herself that she must collect all her wits.

There might yet be something she could do to save her father.

The blood drained from Ruth's face. Mildred had seen him come back—come back secretly to the Manor.

Oh, why had he come—why? They would find him—perhaps had found him.

If only Sylvia—Mr. Severance—Mildred would speak—anything that might destroy this terrible atmosphere—this tension!

Ruth raised her eyes and looked at Mr. Severance.

They were torturing her—that was what they were doing.

Their strength of position was undoubted. They could take their time—they could let her suffer.

Now the members of the party were all looking at her—their eyes seemed to burn into her brain.

The inspector looked about him, and shook his head.

"I don't understand it!" he muttered. Mr. Severance had raised his head, and was looking keenly at the inspector.

"Now," he thundered, "perhaps you will let me know what all this means!"

Ruth paled. There was such assurance in his voice.

Mr. Severance looked about the study, and then, walking deliberately over to her father's desk, he seated himself at it, and looked sternly at the inspector.

"I demand to have Mr. Hope produced!" he said coldly. "This matter has got to be cleared up. I have been ousted from the Manor by a fraud, and I formally charge Mr. Hope of having robbed me of my monies and my estate!"

Ruth stepped back. She had heard what she had expected to hear. There was finality here—terrible finality!

The inspector looked awkward.

It seemed as though he had expected to find someone in this study on their entry. He was at a loss for words with which to answer.

Not so Sylvia.

Her quick brain had become enlightened by this dramatic demand of her father's.

"You are back home, father!" she cried. "Back here to prove that you have been cheated out of what was yours by right, and that I have been cheated as well!"

Sylvia turned a flaming face to Ruth's. "Listen to that, Ruth Hope!" she cried. "Take this in, and realise that I made no idle boast when I said that your father's guilt would be proved!"

Sylvia's eyes were alight with triumph as she looked about her.

"What has been gossip so long is now going to be proved as real fact!" cried Sylvia. "There is nothing against my father, but against Mr. Hope!"

She laughed mockingly.

"See, Ruth Hope!" she shrieked, indicating her father. "My father has come back—and in honour!"

Ruth lowered her eyes as Sylvia pointed a scornful finger at her.

"Where is your father skulking?" cried Sylvia. "He is in the Manor somewhere—the police know that. He fancied that the police wanted my father—when, in reality, they want yours. Yes, Ruth Hope, they want your father, for he is guilty of theft!"

**Startling Revelations!**

**R**UTH stood as one who has received a staggering blow, and to her, at that moment, it seemed that even the frail hold she had had on the edge of the precipice was being taken from her.

Miss Hope—feeling the utter disgrace of the Hopes—stood with bowed head.

There was a strange look on the face of the inspector.

He eyed Mr. Severance keenly, as if trying to discover what really lay behind that confidence.

"I must say," said the inspector at last, "that things have not quite turned out as I expected!"

Sylvia Severance flashed a meaning glance at Miss Hope.

The inspector looked about him, as though the corners of this plainly furnished study might conceal some unknown figure who was lurking in them.

"It seems as though Mr. Hope is afraid to face the music!" said Mr. Severance, with a light laugh. "You see, inspector, you have been engaged in the finding of a mare's-nest!"

He paused.

the biting retort. "And you have no right to ask any questions!"

"I will not answer!" he fumed, "H'm!" exclaimed the inspector, "That remains to be seen!"

Mr. Severance looked about him just as a wild animal looks when it is brought to bay.

The inspector snapped his book close, and walked towards the door, looked out into the passage, and then returned, as though thoroughly satisfied with something or other.

"Now, it seems," he said, "that Mr. Hope has in his possession a certain letter, and also some papers, that directly incriminate you!"

Mr. Severance laughed. "He has only to produce them," he answered. "I know of no such evidence."

"Are you sure?" asked the inspector sharply.

"Positive!" As Mr. Severance spoke he leaned forward and looked keenly at the inspector.

"And now, inspector," he cried, "let us end all this tomfoolery—let us get to real business. Mr. Hope had nothing



"Father!" exclaimed Ruth, and with a cry she ran into his arms.

"I am afraid, inspector," he added "that I shall have to report this whole matter to a higher authority!"

The inspector nodded.

"Maybe the opportunity will be given you, Mr. Severance!" he said shortly. "But first perhaps you will not mind obliging me with a few facts—"

Mr. Severance brought his fist down on the desk with a dull thud.

"I'll do nothing of the kind!" he cried. "Here am I, the Squire of Rosedale, displaced by fraud, badgered by the police, and now that I am able to prove how I have been wronged, I am to be cross-examined, just as though I were some thief!"

"I know that it goes against the grain," he answered. "I can just imagine how any innocent person would feel being put to such a test, but you have to remember that Mr. Hope has been suspected; he has had to suffer more than you have!"

The inspector drew out his notebook.

"If you will kindly oblige—just a few details!" he suggested.

"I'll oblige you with nothing!" came

against me—never has had anything against me!"

Sylvia swung round.

"But I have evidence against that girl there!" she cried, pointing at Ruth. "She has notes—five-pound notes—notes that are wanted by the police!"

The inspector smiled softly, and, turning to a constable, beckoned him to his side, and whispered something in his ear.

The man nodded as the inspector turned to Sylvia.

As his daughter had been speaking a strange change had come over Mr. Severance's face. He looked nervous—ill at ease.

"Perhaps you will go with Hawkins here and get those notes," said the inspector to Sylvia.

Ruth's heart was beating hammer-strokes, and now she was holding on to the back of a chair to keep herself from falling.

The notes—those notes her father had asked her to keep back!

Here was the end—final proof of his guilt!

Hawkins, the constable, followed Sylvia from the study, for Sylvia had not waited a moment.

And when they had gone a deathly silence settled over the study—a silence that could almost be felt.

It seemed ages that the two were absent from the room, but really only a few moments passed before they returned, Sylvia bearing some five-pound notes in triumph!

She knew very well where they had been placed; it had not taken her long to find them.

"There you are!" she cried, glancing at Ruth. "Ask that girl why she never attempted to spend them! Look at the numbers, and look at this newspaper cutting. Those notes are wanted by the police!"

Then, to Ruth's utter stupefaction, she saw Sylvia draw the newspaper cutting from her purse. It was the cutting that she had fancied lay soaked and forgotten at the bottom of the lily pool.

The inspector took the notes, and he smiled as he took them.

He gave one glance at the cutting. "Most valuable evidence!" he exclaimed. "It certainly implicates Mr. Hope!"

"My father!"

Ruth cried the words in frenzied tones, and turned towards the inspector.

This was terrible—too terrible to be borne.

"Perhaps you know more about Mr. Hope, miss," said the inspector. "Perhaps there is other evidence."

Sylvia's face was flushed as the inspector turned to her.

"I do—I do!" she cried. "There were other papers—an envelope of them. She has been hiding them! Perhaps she has them with her now!"

The inspector nodded, and looked sternly at Ruth.

"Is this true?" he asked sharply.

"Yes," she whispered.

The inspector's eyes lit up.

"Then you must give them to me, and now!" he said. "Come, Miss Hope, else I shall have to arrest you!"

With a sob, she drew the envelope from her blouse, nor did her eyes see the look that was on the face of Mr. Severance—the strained, excited look!

"There!" cried Sylvia. "At last, Ruth Hope, we shall know the truth—the truth about those papers!"

"Yes," murmured the inspector, "the truth—the truth at last!"

He took the envelope from the trembling hands of Ruth, and his glance at her was kind.

Miss Hope was gasping.

"Ruth was the thief of those papers!" she whispered. "You were right, Sylvia—she stole them!"

Sylvia laughed harshly.

"Of course she stole them!" she cried. "I knew all the time!" She swung round. "Daddy!" she exclaimed.

Mr. Severance had gone deathly pale, but he steadied himself with an effort.

"All the excitement!" he murmured.

"Poor Mr. Severance!" said Miss Hope, in cringing tones.

He took no notice.

"Now," said the inspector, "we seem to be getting nearer to the object of all these happenings this evening—much nearer!"

He looked at Mr. Severance.

"You, Mr. Severance," he exclaimed, "accuse Mr. Hope of being a thief?"

"I do," said Sylvia's father, his tones shaky and uncertain.

"Then we know that much," said the inspector shortly, as, very quietly, very calmly, he took the papers out of the envelope and scanned them carefully.

Suddenly Mr. Severance sprang from his chair and tried to snatch the letters from the inspector's grasp, but a constable pushed him back into his seat.

"No, you don't, sir!" cried the constable, Hawkins.

Mr. Severance was clawing at the desk

now, and the inspector was looking at him very keenly indeed—very keenly.

"So you deny that Mr. Hope has any documents in his possession that incriminate you, Mr. Severance?" said the inspector coldly.

"I do—I do!" said Mr. Severance bitterly.

"Even a letter in which you admit your guilt in having swindled a company?" asked the inspector calmly.

"That I most emphatically do!" cried Mr. Severance. "No such letter exists!"

"Are you sure, Severance?"  
The words were spoken in deep tones—familiar tones to Ruth, for, with amazed and frightened eyes, she looked at the entrance to the study and the figure who stood on the threshold of the room.

"Father!" she exclaimed; and she ran forward—ran into his arms.

"Calm, child! Be calm!" he whispered.

"Oh, how brave you are, daddy!" she whispered. "They have come to arrest you!"

But he had no eyes for her now; his gaze was on the pale face of Severance.

"Are you sure, Severance!" he thundered.

"Yes," cried Severance, rising to his feet.

With calm precision Mr. Hope slipped his hand inside his inner pocket and drew out a letter, which he handed to the inspector.

"Read that, inspector!" he said quietly.

And the inspector read it—read it out to those in the room, the letter that Ruth had copied and allowed Sylvia to steal from Mr. Hope's desk.

Sylvia's face was a picture in blank astonishment. Mr. Severance had lowered his eyes for fear that those in the room might see them and their guilt.

Sylvia's hands were gripped fast, her teeth were biting her lips.

She had been fooled—fooled, had fallen into a trap, and had led her father into it.

But stay—

The inspector was looking at Mr. Severance.

"What I have read is evidence against you," he said. "But we had evidence without that. These papers here"—he tapped the bundle taken from Ruth—"these papers make it clear what a scoundrel you are! You defrauded people, and should have been arrested long ago, would have been arrested had not Mr. Hope taken compassion on you—"

He paused, and now Ruth was looking with amazed eyes into her father's face. Had she been robbed of her senses? Was all this true or idle imagining?

It couldn't be true, for a few minutes since her father's guilt had been plain.

But now—

The inspector was continuing. She listened, and as she listened the realisation that this was all true came to her.

"Took compassion on you!" said the inspector. "Bought your estate when he knew that you had defrauded him, bought it to save you, and fancied you had gone out of the country with the proceeds. Promised to look after your daughter and never let her know the truth, and even when his daughter was called the daughter of a thief, even when lying stories were put about, he kept his word to you."

The inspector paused.

"With what ingratitude you repaid him!" he cried. "You bade your daughter poison the minds of people against him because you envied his honesty, and you used your daughter as a means of getting these papers which



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incriminate you hopelessly. But a loyal girl safeguarded them. Ruth Hope is responsible for saving her father."

The inspector indicated the notes—the five-pound notes.

"These notes were paid by you to Mr. Hope," he said, "and with the intention that Mr. Hope would be suspected when he exchanged them. But he knew, and yet he never betrayed you. He sent them to his daughter, and bade her save them, this to avoid the risk of passing them in payment. It is only now—now, when you accuse him, he defends himself and bowls you out!"

The inspector smiled.  
"He has been listening to your condemnation of him, seeking to give you another chance, but you have failed. Now—now the law must take its course. Constables!"

Mr. Severance gave an appealing cry, but it was of no avail, his supplications of innocence. There were those who would judge the rights and wrongs of the case. Other people had come into the field requiring justice for the wrongs he had done, and now had come the time for justice to be done.

Ruth's heart was overflowing with a sudden happiness. She had never dreamed, had never believed!

Mr. Hope gave one pitying glance at Mr. Severance as he was led away.

Then he turned to Miss Hope.

"I have made arrangements for you," he said coldly. "I realise that you can never live with us again. I have settled a definite sum on you, and have arranged that you shall look after Sylvia. I will keep my promise on that score. Good-night!"

And as Miss Hope, with lowered eyes, and followed by the utterly defeated Sylvia, walked from the room, Mr. Hope drew Ruth into his arms.

"Now you need have no doubt, dear child," he whispered.

**Gardens of Happiness!**

"COME, Ruth!" he whispered. "Come, and I will show you what is yours, yours to have and enjoy, yours over which to rule and tend—all yours!"

About Rosedale Manor the gentle wind was rustling the ivy and the creeper, and already on the creeper the

deeper touches of red were coming, a token of autumn.

Late roses still bloomed over the portico, and in the carefully-kept gardens, but the glory of the chrysanthemums told that summer was passing, and that these last lovely flowers that looked upward to the sun were in reality the harbingers of winter.

And yet—  
All summer it seemed, and all too wonderful, for peace had come where there was no peace, joy had come where before there had been no joy, and the skies were clear and the sun was smiling.

These were the unspoken thoughts of Ruth Hope and her father as they gazed around at the scene where had been enacted the drama of their lives.

Now, as their minds recalled the various incidents, the whole thing seemed a troubled dream. It was difficult to believe that it had ever happened, that they had ever had enemies, that anxiety had ever existed for them.

And yet there still echoed in Ruth's ears the mocking sound of Sylvia's voice harping on her oft-repeated accusation, "Your father is guilty, your father is a thief!"

Only an echo of that uneasy past, and Ruth clutched her father's arm affectionately, and gazed lovingly into the kind eyes that regarded hers.

She had never really believed him guilty—no, not even in the darkest hour of her trial. And now was her reward to be with him always—always, she told herself.

They did not speak as they sauntered along, for somehow their hearts seemed too full for words, and over them hovered a lovely spirit that had come with memory.

The spirit of a woman!  
She had been in their thoughts, and somehow it was her presence that gave an added glory to the sun, although just a note of sorrow came with remembrance.

Down across the lawns, over which now the brown leaves lay, and through the gardens of fallen flowers and autumnal trees.

Their steps led them to where the lily pool lay, and here they paused and looked into its crystal depths.

Ruth found no face there. But stay,

as she looked into the clear depths a face seemed to gaze back at her from the mirror of water—the face of Sylvia Severance.

It was imagination, but she saw it now, and how different that face. Gone were the looks of hatred and triumph, gone were the glances of arrogance and spite, to leave in their place a kinder look, a look that had been etched there by sorrow and suffering.

Somehow John Hope had divined Ruth's thoughts.

"Forgiveness is divine, Ruthie!" he whispered. "It is the crown of the victor, the laurel of the great heart, and you have forgiven?"

Ruth's eyes were shining as she looked up into her father's face.

"Daddy," she whispered, "when one is happy forgiveness is so easy, and yet I always forgave her, and now—now I pity her from the depths of my heart!"

John Hope pressed his daughter's hand.

"I know you do," he said fervently. "Perhaps she has learnt a lesson she will never forget!"

He looked down into the water and shook his head.

"If there was one gentle soul who could teach her that lesson it was you, dear child," he whispered. "You who, all through your doubts and worries, were staunch to me, your father. Never doubting, never cowardly, but fearing for me!"

He smiled into her eyes.  
"All happiness is born of suffering, all joy comes from sincerity, and you, Ruth, have won happiness. And now—now you can enter into the enjoyment of your riches with never a fear!"

John Hope paused.  
"The future is clear," he whispered, "as clear as the crystal of that water. And your heart, child," he added gently, "has been as white in its intentions as the last of these lilies who look towards the sun."

He drew her to him.  
"We have passed from the gardens of disillusionment," he said, "out of their thousand dangers into the myriad glories of hope, happiness, and peace, and somehow we have won for Rosedale the spirit of Eversley. There is joy in our riches at last, Ruth—the riches of the heart!"

THE END.

**GREAT NEW SERIAL!**



Starts in Next Thursday's issue of THE SCHOOL FRIEND.

DOREEN is a girl who already possesses thousands of admirers. All who have previously made the acquaintance of this delightful character in our companion paper, "THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN," must not fail to read this story. Those who have not, must on no account fail to be introduced to "La Belle Doreen" next week!

See "Your Editor's Corner" for fuller particulars.

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## Your Editor's Corner.

**M**Y DEAR READERS,—All of you who are readers of both Companion Papers—the "Schoolgirls' Own" as well as the "School Friend"—will remember—will have the fondest memories, in fact—of Doreen Harcourt, the wonderful young circus dancer. Those of you who have not met her have an extra treat in store, for she will endear herself to your hearts at once. In next week's issue of this paper you will have the pleasure of renewing, or making, as the case might be, the acquaintance of Doreen Harcourt, in the first instalment of our powerful new serial:

### "DOREEN, THE CIRCUS STAR!"

By Joan Inglesant.

Doreen has lost none of that wonderful charm which made her so popular with "Schoolgirls' Own" readers, and I know that by "School Friend" readers she will be equally admired. Doreen, you will remember, ceased to be "La Belle Doreen" of Barcomb's Mammoth Circus when her guardian at last found her. And now we find her in the distant and sunny land of South America, on her uncle's estate there. But, so is the ordinance of Fate, Doreen and her little sister Margie are to be alone! Her uncle is unable to accompany them, and her aunt, who is here to manage her husband's affairs—what happens to her that she is taken from her nieces? This you will learn in this most enthralling story, and you will learn how Doreen makes the acquaintance of good old friends—and an enemy! No doubt you can guess who these dear old friends of hers are—Mr. Barcomb and his

wife, with their mammoth circus from Europe. And her old enemy—which of you who have already made her acquaintance will ever forget her? She is Natalia Vorska, and from the outset she behaves in the manner we would expect of such a girl. Thus, in the tropical land of South America, and with strange and many sinister people about her, Doreen Harcourt becomes the centre of a gripping drama. Brave and fearless a girl as we know her to be, Doreen's highest qualities are taxed to their fullest in this fresh drama of her young life, and Miss Inglesant's glowing descriptions of adventure in this strange land—a land which this widely-travelled writer knows to her finger-tips—will afford you hours and hours of the finest possible reading.

Who will not be glad to read another story of that most laughter-provoking of all school-girl characters, Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter? That next Thursday's magnificent new, long complete story of the girls of Cliff House School, entitled:

### "THE MISFORTUNES OF BESSIE!"

By Hilda Richards,

will be eagerly welcomed I have not the slightest doubt. Letters I receive are full of such sentiments as "Do let us hear more of Bessie!" "Cannot she take the leading part again?" "We can't read too much of Bessie Bunter!" and many, many more in the same strain. Indeed, many readers do not hesitate to say that Bessie Bunter is their favourite character. Well, next week we will have "more of Bessie," and, incidentally, a

long, long laugh. For my own part, I find nothing more refreshing than one of these excellent stories of Miss Richards' about the imitable Bessie, and I am sure that it is the same with all lovers of the Cliff House stories.

Surrounded by perils and worries though they are, the heroines of

### "THE SCHOOLGIRL QUEEN!"

By Ida Melbourne,

are by no means dismayed. They are holding their own against heavy odds, and Dolores—every girl of the party, in fact—will not rest until the King is found, and the whole truth of his disappearance is brought to light. Next week's instalment will be just as packed with thrilling adventures as those you have read.

There will, as usual, be another bright, novel, instructive number of

### "THE SCHOOLGIRLS' PAPER"

in our next issue, and you will see that Barbara Redfern & Co. have spared no labour to keep it well up to the standard that has made it so popular throughout the schoolgirl world.

### BRIEF REPLIES.

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

Miss A. G. Wheeler (East Sheen).—I will see if I cannot do as you suggest.

"Admirer of Augusta" (Portsmouth).—I will bear in mind your suggestion regarding Sybil Spender.

Your Sincere Friend,

YOUR EDITOR.