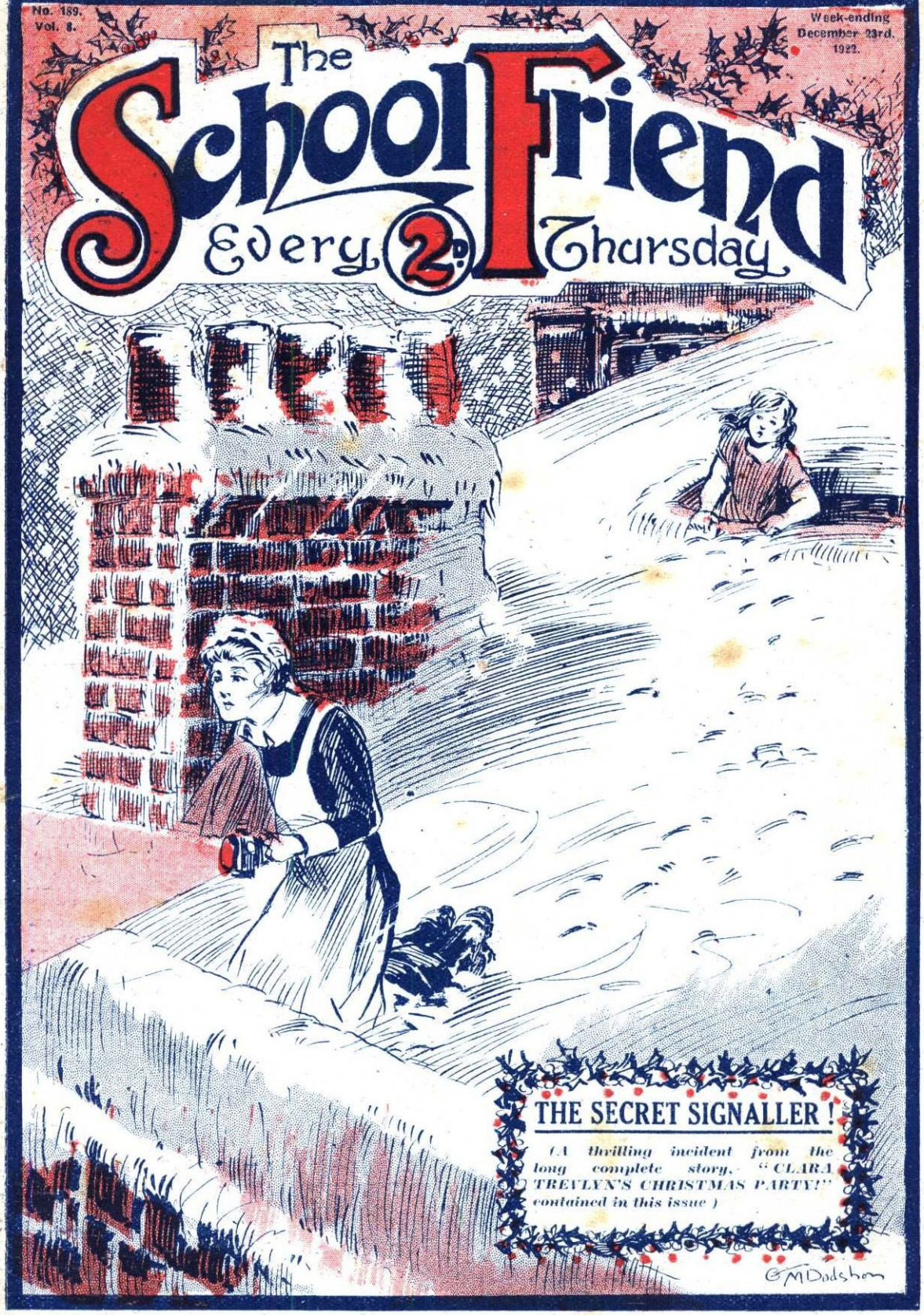
SOME REAL CHRISTMAS STORIES!

No. 189.
Vol. 8.

Week-ending
December 23rd.
1922.

The SchoolFriend

Every 2d. Thursday



THE SECRET SIGNALLER!

(A thrilling incident from the long complete story, "CLARA TREVLYN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY!" contained in this issue.)

G. M. Dodshon

This Issue Contains:

TWO FINE SERIALS, A MAGNIFICENT LONG COMPLETE STORY,
and a Special Christmas Edition of the "Schoolgirls' Paper."

Your Editor's Corner.

My Dear Readers,—In many ways the Cliff House girls' Christmas at Rose Villa, the home of Clara Trevlyn, is proving most enjoyable. Snow and ice—which go such a long way to make a Christmas "the real thing"—abound. Their host and hostess, Mr. and Mrs. Trevlyn, are the soul of geniality and good will. And Bessie Bunter is as funny and laughter-provoking as ever!

And yet there is that pathetic mystery which overshadows Mary Canninghame, the maid at Rose Villa. No wonder the girl feels that they cannot properly enjoy the festive season until fortune smiles once again upon Mary. But is this to be? Next Thursday's magnificent new long complete story of the girls of Cliff House, entitled:

"IN SPITE OF HER ENEMY!"
By Hilda Richards,

will supply the answer to this question. In the meantime, poor Mary's only home is the shelter given her by the kind Trevlyns. Is she—is her unfortunate father—destined ever to regain Stone Towers?

Thrill upon thrill we receive in the reading of that great serial of ours:

"THE HOUSE OF MANY MYSTERIES!"
By Mildred Gordon.

That the "ghost" is responsible for all the mysterious happenings there is not the slightest doubt, and that the "ghost" is in reality a human being Peggie Neale is positive now. But how to prove it? How to lay this human "ghost" by the heels? One and all of the party at the Manse are determined that this mysterious and uncanny business shall not go on much longer, and in next Thursday's powerful instalment you will find them tracking the "ghost" with greater earnestness than ever.

What of Doreen Harcourt, that ever-daring heroine of

"DOREEN, THE CIRCUS STAR!"
By Joan Inglesant.

How will she and the rest of the circus performers act now that their show is destroyed? There are hard times in store for them, and only their own courage can pull them through. Of this you will read next Thursday—and also of more thrilling adventures in the underground treasure chamber.

A fine "New Year Number" of

THE "SCHOOLGIRLS' PAPER"

will be before you next Thursday. The Cliff House Fourth-Formers will tell you what are their New Year resolutions; how to dance "old-fashioned lancers"; both Clara Trevlyn and Freda Foote have written some excellent verses; and, among a host of useful, informative, and entertaining articles, there is Bessie Bunter's "Diery of Christmass Happinings!" In all, a really splendid number!

BRIEF REPLIES.

"A Pair of 'Special' Readers" (New Malden).—Regarding further Special Numbers dealing with Freda Foote and Vivienne Leigh, these may be published later.

Miss V. Reece (Brixton).—No, the Cliff House girls do not play basket-ball.

"An Admirer of Babs" (Manchester).—See reply to "A Pair of 'Special' Readers."

Miss G. Fearn.—I will keep in mind your suggestion, but I doubt if the popularity of the SCHOOL FRIEND would be increased by my doing as you suggest.

"The Infant" (Bromley, Kent).—There is some possibility that articles on the lines you suggest may be published. I agree with you that Gwen Cook is exceedingly funny when holding forth on her favourite topic. I will see if she cannot be given greater prominence.

Miss A. G. (Snaith S.O., Yorks).—See reply to "A Pair of 'Special' Readers."

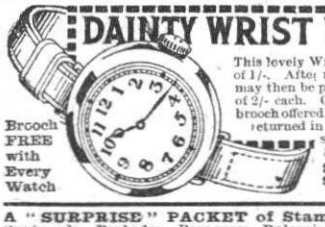
"Gladys" (Stockton-on-Tees).—Very interested to learn which stories have appealed to you most in the past. See reply to "A Pair of 'Special' Readers."

"Phyllis and Eileen" (Dublin).—See reply to "A Pair of 'Special' Readers."

Your sincere friend,
YOUR EDITOR.

Be sure and secure a copy of this week's issue of our Companion Paper

FULL OF SPLENDID CHRISTMAS STORIES.



DAINTY WRIST WATCH for 1/-

This lovely Wrist Watch sent upon receipt of 1/-. After receipt send 1/- more, balance may then be paid by 8 monthly payments of 2/- each. Guaranteed 5 years. Dainty brooch offered Free with every watch. Cash returned in full if dissatisfied. Gent's size same price and terms. Send 1/- now to—
SIMPSONS LTD. (Dept. 46), 94, Queen's Road, Brighton, Sussex.

Brooch FREE with Every Watch

A "SURPRISE" PACKET of Stamps.—Contains 30 varieties from Guatemala, Barbados, Paraguay, Bulgaria, Straits Settlements, Salvador, Malay, etc., price 4d.—W. A. WHITE, 85, Dudley Rd., LYE, STOURBRIDGE.

ALL applications for Advertisement space in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, SCHOOL FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

CUT THIS OUT

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

Send 7 of these coupons with only 2/9 direct to the **Fleet Pen Co., 119, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4.** You will receive by return a Splendid British Made 14-ct. Gold Nibbed Fleet Fountain Pen, value 10/6 (Fine, Medium, or Broad Nib). If only 1 coupon is sent, the price is 3/9, 2d. being allowed for each extra coupon up to 6. (Pocket Clip, 4d.) Satisfaction guaranteed or cash returned. *Special New Offer*—**Your own name** in gilt letters on either pen for 1/- extra.

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

HINDES HAIR TINT

— FOR GREY OR FADED HAIR. —

Tints grey or faded hair any natural shade desired—brown, dark-brown, light-brown, or black. It is permanent and washable, has no grease, and does not burn the hair. It has a clientele of over a million users. Medical certificate accompanies each bottle. It costs 2s. 6d. the flask. Chemists and Stores everywhere, or direct by stating shade required to—

HINDES, Ltd., 1, Tabernacle Street, City, London.

FREE XMAS GIFTS
SEND FOR LIST.

Your choice of these genuine 12-ct. gold-filled **Dress Rings**, equal in appearance to gold, set with beautiful sparkling carbon Diamonds.

Crossway Pattern, 1/6. **Two Stone Ring, 1/-.** Every ring guaranteed for 5 years. Cash refunded if not satisfied. List of Free Gifts sent with each ring. Send P.O., with 1½d. postage, to—
SIMS & MAYER
(Dept. S.F.), 418-422, Strand, W.C.2.

OUR SPLENDID NEW SERIAL!

By MILDRED GORDON.

The older the house, the more queer rumours gather around it. Former dwellers, long since passed away, have each left the stamp of their personality on the building, until legend attributes the weird noises and sounds to their agency. Such a place is the Manse, the ancient, ivy-covered mansion of the Willowby family, and here plucky little PEGGIE NEALE meets with a series of thrilling experiences, the like of which you can seldom have read of before.

THE CHIEF CHARACTERS OF THIS FINE STORY ARE:

PEGGIE NEALE, a brave and pretty girl of fifteen, the only daughter of

JACK NEALE—usually known as "Jolly Jack"—a jovial, one-legged ex-sailorman, employed as caretaker at the Manse, a big, old, mysterious house, owned by COLONEL WILLOWBY.

MARJORIE WILLOWBY, the colonel's daughter, a fair and pretty girl, is a great friend of Peggie's.

FARMER HALDANE, a very mean and sly type of man, and a neighbour of the colonel's. He suddenly becomes very desirous of purchasing the old house, but the old colonel will not sell.

Peggy Neale, rowing back to the Manse in a terrible storm, after an errand of charity, is in danger of drowning, but is rescued by a mysterious stranger, whose identity she never discovers.

She and her father set to work to prepare the Manse for the arrival of its owner, the colonel. Then many mysterious and terrifying happenings take place. Wild and uncanny noises are heard, doors appear to open and close themselves, and even lock and unlock themselves.

When the colonel and his family arrive, a ghost-hunt is organised. A wonderful underground passage is found leading from the house to the face of the Cliff. Here Peggie and Marjorie catch a glimpse of a ghostly figure, and Marjorie pursues him down a narrow path on the cliff. Marjorie suddenly disappears over the edge, leaving Peggie standing alone.

(Read on from here.)

— —

More Mysterious Than Ever!

ALL at once Peggie heard the splash of oars. She climbed up the slippery side of a great tooth of rock and gazed towards the sea.

A little cockleshell of a dinghy was rocking on the waves. A girl's form—Marjorie evidently—was lying in the stern. A dark-robed figure was pulling at the oars.

The wild thought came to Peggie's startled mind that Marjorie was being taken out to sea by the Willowby ghost!

Marjorie was certainly in the boat; but the figure rowing—that was surely a human being!

"Marjorie! Marjorie!" cried Peggie.

Peggie Neale, the caretaker's daughter, was so bewildered that she scarcely knew what she was saying.

Her cries met with no response. The man in the monkish garb, the dress of the Willowby ghost, kept steadily plying his oars and took the dinghy farther out to sea, without once looking round in her direction. And Marjorie, lying in the stern of the broad little boat, never stirred all the time that Peggie could keep her eyes upon her.

Peggie herself, standing on the slippery pinnacle of black rock, was not without peril. A heavy wind was blowing, and the sky was overcast and leaden. It caught at her skirts and tore out her brown hair in a cloud behind her shoulders as if it sought to whirl her into the foamy depths of the sea at her feet.

It was cold, too, with the icy clutch of the Arctic winds of the north-east. There was snow in the air, the old mariners were saying in the village and were prophesying a white Christmas. Peggie looked up to the clouds and wondered what would happen to her friend.

All along she had believed that the Willowby ghost was no mere spectral figure. She was positively sure now that he was a man as she watched him bend to and fro with the regular rhythm of an experienced oarsman.

"Who is he, I wonder?" she found herself asking. "Why does he chose to roam the manse in such a secret way? What is his object now in taking Marjorie out to sea? He must have heard me calling him. If he wishes to do Marjorie a service after her tumble down the cliffs, why doesn't he row her to the beach near the village?"

Somehow, though she could not account for it, Peggie had an idea that the ghost would do no harm to Marjorie.

In all his mysterious wanderings about the big house and the grounds she could remember no harmful thing that the ghost had ever done.

But that only made the mystery all the greater. Peggie had given the matter thought till her head had ached, but she could not imagine any reason for which any sane person would want to dress in monkish garb and wander through the underground passages and secret rooms and stairways of Colonel Willowby's home.

It was not until she found the waves leaping about her feet, and realised that the tide was coming in swiftly, and that she would have to swim back to the beach if she dallied there any longer, that she splashed through the sea and regained the cliffs.

Here a jutting headland hid the dinghy from view.

"What shall I do?" she thought. "If I go back to Mrs. Willowby and tell her that Marjorie has been taken out to sea, she will be in a terrible state."

Peggie climbed the cliffs. It was useless remaining down there on the beach. Up on the cliffs she might meet someone who would be able to help her or take a message to Colonel Willowby.

It was a difficult and dangerous climb. The path was almost horizontal in parts. After that had been negotiated, she had to press herself flat against the chalk and the gorse, feeling her way foot by foot, till another path led her to a higher plane, and eventually to the top of the cliffs.

But, by clinging to clumps of gorse and bushes, and after several tumbles, Peggie at last succeeded in gaining the grassy top of the cliffs.

Instantly she looked out to sea in search of Marjorie and the dinghy. She gave a glad cry. She saw the dinghy being pulled in towards the beach near the little fishing village of Thorpe. It was lost to view next instant behind a row of fishing-sheds, but Peggie was content.

"The ghost, or whoever he is, means well," she told herself. "He has taken her to Thorpe so that help may be summoned."

Thus comforted, she ran off along the cliff-top towards the village.

In the great, precipitous cliffs, which extended for miles along this part of the coast, there was a sharp break for about half a mile. Into this bay the little fishing village of Thorpe had been built. It was a strange, picturesque old place, with odd little cottages so clumsily built that it was a wonder they stood the force of the terrific gales which in the winter-time swept down on the shore.

Kingthorpe, near which the manse and one or two more big houses were situated, although little more than a village a mile or so back from the sea, was a much more modern place, but its

Peggie bent down, when suddenly a girlish figure rose above the wall, and hurled a snowball which narrowly missed Peggie's head.

red bricks and tiles looked commonplace beside the thatched cottages and even homes constructed of overturned barges, queer places in which there was scarcely room to stand, and which were the delight of the artists who made long journeys to paint them on their canvases.

At the end of the cliff near Thorpe a path had been made, and a wooden railing fixed so that pedestrians could make a safe descent into the bay.

Down this path, her hair flowing out in the breeze and a rich colour coming to her round cheeks, Peggie ran and scrambled at great speed.

In a few seconds she had reached the sandy beach over which the white-crested waves were tumbling. Close by the water's edge she knew she would find the dinghy.

Sure enough, she was soon standing beside it, looking at the wet oar-blades and trying in vain to find any name upon it, when, from some distance away, the little bent form of an old woman came out of a cottage and beckoned her arm excitedly to her.

It was Widow Tring, one of the oldest inhabitants in the fishing village. Whilst local folks said there was always a Willowby to be found in Kingthorpe since the place had been built, so there had always been a Tring in Thorpe for generations beyond memory.

The Trings were famous old sea-folk. They knew no other industry but the sea. There were Trings in the Navy, Trings on board many a great ocean liner, but they all had their homes in the little fishing village of Thorpe. There were several families of them at that moment in the village.

When they had done their roving abroad the Trings became fishermen and found livelihood and sport in the little yawls in which they went out to sea after whiting and pilchard and mackerel!

There were, indeed, more folk with the name of Tring in the village than anybody else, and the little old woman who beckoned to Peggie was Grannie Tring, the oldest of them all, and the dearest and sweetest little lady along the coastline.

"Peggie, dear child, come here, I want you!" the caretaker's daughter heard her calling presently.

"What is it, Grannie?" cried Peggie, as she raced breathlessly up.

"Such a strange thing has happened, child!" said the old woman, her face tanned and rosy and free from wrinkles, despite the fact that she was ninety years of age. "The master's daughter is lying ill at my house!"

Peggie knew at once that by the master she meant Colonel Willowby. Grannie Tring put her hand on the girl's arm and they went slowly off to her cottage.

"You mean Marjorie, Grannie, dear?" she exclaimed. "Marjorie is in your cottage?"

"Yes, child," the old woman answered. "I was sitting beside the fire while my granddaughter, Rosie, was cooking me some stew for dinner, when we heard three strange taps on the window!"

Peggie gave a start of astonishment. It had suddenly come into her mind how her father had been warned the same way about herself when she had been rescued from the river.

"And you went outside and found Marjorie lying near by unconscious?" she asked quickly.

"Yes, child, but not quite at once," said Grannie Tring. "Rosie and I both went to the door, but we could see no one. We don't know now who it was who tapped on the window. It was Rosie's clear eyes who saw the master's daughter lying on the sand!"

"She tumbled down the cliff when she was with me!" Peggie exclaimed. "Is she badly hurt, Grannie?"

"It was Rosie who picked her up in her strong arms and carried her into my little living-room," said the woman, as if determined not to be interrupted in the telling of her story. "Poor Miss Marjorie! There were cuts and bruises on her head and face and she was quite unconscious. But, what do you mean, child?" she went on. "The master's lass could not have tumbled down the cliffs to the door of my cottage?"

"No, no, of course not, grannie; I did not mean that," Peggie told her.

She explained how Marjorie had run after the Willowby ghost, had fallen down the cliff face, and been taken out to sea by the ghost in the dinghy.

"It was the ghost who tapped at your window!" she added. "He meant you to find Marjorie, and he went away so that you should not see anything of him."

The dear old soul shook her silver ringlets with a sceptical smile.

"I have heard many tales about the Willowby ghost, dear child, but I have never seen him, and until I do I shall never believe in him," she said.

Peggie did not feel in the mood to argue with the old soul. They had reached the cottage now, and as they stepped within it they heard Rosie's merry laugh and knew that all was well.

Grannie Tring is Incredulous.

"MARJORIE! I am so glad you are better, dear."

For a moment Peggie paused on the threshold of the quaint little room. It was a tiny place, hardly big enough to swing a pair of Indian clubs in, yet it had to serve as grannie's kitchen and parlour.

On the round table was a big family Bible with a pot of fresh flowers on top of it. Opposite the fireplace, in which a bright wood fire was burning, and before which a black cat sat licking herself, was a little dresser crowded with gleaming china and ancient, brightly-coloured little figures in pottery that grannie believed to be worth a fortune.

Marjorie, pale-faced, but smiling, with bruises on her cheeks and a strip of sticking-plaster over a bad cut on her forehead, was lying back in grannie's wicker armchair. Marjorie alone had all Peggie's attention as she looked into the room.

Peggie ran to her friend, caught her hands, and kissed her.

"Miss Marjorie has just been asking me how she got here, Peggie?" said Rosie, a name that suited her, for she had cheeks like burnt apples, a mass of brown curly hair, eyes bluer than the sea. A strong, buxom, fearless girl, nearly six feet tall, was Rosie, for her sixteen years of age. "But, bless me," she added, with a rippling laugh, "if I knew what to tell her."

"I expect I gave you a great fright, Peggie," said Marjorie. "I remember getting very excited when we came out of the tunnel and saw the ghost running along the cliffs, but after that nothing is clear to me until I found Rosie bathing my face and hands with water."

"You fell down the cliffs, dear," said Peggie. "Before I could get to you the ghost had carried you out to sea in his dinghy."

"The ghost again!" said Grannie Tring, shaking her silver ringlets, as she hobbled to a chair. "Peggie wants us to believe, Rosie, that it was the ghost who tapped on our window just now!"

"Sure it was someone, grannie," said the buxom girl, the smiles dying out of her face for a moment. "Miss Marjorie didn't drop from the sky. Someone must have put her there!"

"Maybe," said her grandmother, obstinately, "but 'tweren't no ghost as did it!"

"Anyway, if it was the ghost who picked me up from the rocks and carried me here to your cottage, grannie," said Marjorie, recovering her customary cheeriness, "I'm very grateful to him. And there's another thing, grannie," she went on. "I'm very hungry! I want my dinner!"

"Maybe you'd like to stop with old grannie, Miss Marjorie?" said the kindly old soul. "There'll be enough of Rosie's stew for us all."

"Thank you, grannie dear, I'll stop another time with you, but not now," said Marjorie. "Mamma knows that Peggie and I went ghost-hunting this morning, and if we do not go home to

lunch she will wonder what has become of us."

Grannie lifted up her hands in astonishment.

"The ghost again!" she cried. "Dear, dear! What has come over you young people to-day. There was never any talk of ghosts when I was a girl!"

"Oh, yes, there was, grannie!" cried Rosie. "I've heard you tell stories about the Willowby ghost! He was dressed like a monk, you said, and he used to roam about the seashore and up the paths to the cliffs."

"Did I tell you that, lassie?" said the old soul, puckering her forehead. "Maybe I did! I've said many foolish things. Rubbish—all rubbish!"

Peggie and Marjorie laughed at the old woman's artful escape from an argument.

"Well, we must be going now!" cried Marjorie, to whose cheeks the colour had now returned. "Thanks, Rosie, for all you've done for me, and you, too, grannie. I must come and see you again on Christmas morning."

She bent down to press her lips on the old woman's cheek.

"It'll soon be here now, lassie," said Grannie Tring. "Folks are saying in the village as it'll be a white Christmas. They don't know anything about it. It may be my last Christmas," she went on sadly. "Who knows? Well, grannie won't be afraid to go. She's had a long, happy time of it in peaceful little Thorpe."

The girls left the cottage. They had not gone many yards when Marjorie pulled up with a little cry of amazement.

She had put her hand in the pocket of her woolly sports-coat in search of her gloves, and had discovered a paper there.

"Look what I've found!" she cried, staring at the paper. "It's a message from the Willowby ghost!"

"The ghost again!" Peggie laughed. "It's a good job we've left grannie's cottage!"

She stepped to Marjorie's side, and read the scrap of paper in her friend's hand. It had been written with a black-lead pencil, and ran:

"Tell your father to have no dealings with Farmer Haldane.

"THE WILLOWBY GHOST."

"What an extraordinary thing for a ghost to do!" said Marjorie, smiling. "If I hadn't seen the actual writing, I should never have believed that ghosts could write."

"But doesn't this prove to you, Marjorie, that the figure we saw to-day in monk's dress is not a ghost, but a real person?" exclaimed Peggie. "I saw him rowing you out to sea when you lay unconscious in the stern. No ghost could do that. No ghost could tap on Grannie Tring's window and lift you out of the boat, then lay you on the sand and write that note and put it in your pocket!"

"It's very strange!" declared Marjorie. "You want to shatter all my illusions, Peggie. But if, as you say, it is someone disguised as a ghost, whatever can be their object in roaming about our house and its underground passages?"

Peggie shrugged her shoulders.

"You've got me there!" she laughed. "That is the mystery I mean to solve one day. But while we are in Thorpe, let us look for the dinghy in which I am sure the ghost brought you here. The oar-blades were all wet from the sea when I peeped into the boat, so the ghost, or whoever he is, cannot be far away."

She led the way down to the beach. They spent a quarter of an hour looking amongst the small row-boats that laid there. But not one of them was like the little, black-painted dinghy Peggie was sure she had seen, and in the end they gave up the search and hastened up the steep road that led to their homes.

"If I hadn't found myself in Grannie Tring's cottage, and discovered this note in my pocket," Marjorie exclaimed, as they stepped briskly along, "I should think I had dreamed it all!"

"There's no dream about the bruises on your face and the cut on your forehead," said Peggie. "Your father and mother may be cross and stop our ghost-hunting in the future, when they see what has happened to you."

"They'll never do that," said Marjorie. "I know the ghost frightens me sometimes, but I think hunting him is ever such great fun."

Colonel Willowby and his wife were indeed very concerned when they saw their daughter hurrying along beside Peggie, with the plaster upon her forehead. Luncheon had been waiting half an hour. Knowing that the girls had been roaming alone in the underground passages they had become very anxious about them.

"This ghost-hunting is becoming a very serious matter!" exclaimed Colonel Willowby, when Marjorie had told her father of their adventures. "If the ghost really is someone masquerading in monkish attire, it is time he was laid by the heels!"

"But he is a good ghost, daddy; I'm sure of that," said Marjorie. "He has done me a good turn to-day. And look at the message he must have put in my pocket!"

She gave him the roughly-pencilled scrap of paper she had found in her coat.

"'Have no dealings with Farmer Haldane'!" read out the astonished colonel. "Now, what exactly does he mean by that?"

He looked at Peggie as if he expected her to solve the mystery.

"Don't you think he means about selling the manse and its grounds to him, sir?" Peggie answered. "It was the ghost who put out the lights and took away the legal papers on the night you were discussing the matter with Mr. Haldane. This message is to impress you that the farmer is trying to make an unfair deal with you."

"But in what way, Peggie?" asked the colonel. "What does this mysterious man know about the business, anyhow?"

Peggie could not supply the answers to such riddles.

"Well, well, it is a very mysterious business altogether," said Marjorie's father. "We must be thankful, I suppose, that Marjorie's injuries are no worse."

Peggie hurried away to the lodge. Jolly Jack Neale, her father, had been no less anxious than Colonel and Mrs. Willowby about his daughter, and he shook his head dubiously when Peggie told him what had happened.

"Tar my decks!" he cried. "Whether he be ghost or man, if he gets within reach of my stout old walking-stick, he'll know something about it! Haul my mainbrace, it's time Jolly Jack took a hand in the game."

"Oh, you mustn't use any violence, father!" said Peggie, a little concerned. "The ghost has done no harm, so far, only good. Remember how he saved my life that night of the storm, and now he has done Marjorie a good turn, too!"

"Shiver my timbers, but I don't like mysteries!" said the caretaker. "Leastways, ghost or man, he's no friend of Farmer Haldane's!"

Peggie had hardly finished her dinner when the snow began to fall. It had been very cold during the last day or two, and already the lake in the grounds was frozen over and almost bearable for sliding and skating.

Christmas was only a few days distant now. At the Manse the servants were very busy making preparations for the holiday. Though the colonel's finances were not in a good way, and as yet he had found no way out of his money troubles, he was determined, he had told his wife, that all in Kingthorpe should have a jolly holiday as far as he was concerned.

Peggie and her father had already been invited to spend Christmas Day and Boxing Day at the Manse. Small presents—gifts of handkerchiefs, and packets of tobacco for the old couples, and dolls and toys for the little ones—were ready for

Before her knelt a man, a pail by his side, and he appeared to be searching for something he had lost.

distribution amongst the villagers on the following day, when everybody in Kingthorpe, as was the custom, would be welcomed at the colonel's home.

"Say, lass," cried Jolly Jack, taking his pipe from his lips as he sat beside the fire, and sent out a cloud of blue smoke, "you've forgotten something! Haul my tops'ls, don't you know it will be Christmas in a day or two?"

Peggie was in the little kitchen washing up the dinner-things. She smiled at her father.

"I haven't forgotten," she answered. "I was just thinking what a lovely, jolly time we are going to have at the Manse, father."

"Tar my decks, but what about the holly-ho and the mistletoe?" cried the caretaker. "You haven't got a scrap of decoration about the place, lass. Avast and belay!"

Peggie looked out through the window. The snow was thick on the ground. The trees and bushes were covered with feathery white balls like powder-puffs. The flakes were whirling down fast.

"I was going to get some from the woods this afternoon, father, but I'm afraid I've left it rather late."

"Ay, ay!" nodded the sailorman. "The wind's dropped and the sky is as grey and as solid as a granite wall. What's the weather for Christmas, sailorman, you says? Why snow, my lass, tons of it! 'It's going to be a white Christmas,' I tells 'em in Kingthorpe, and sure enough it is!"

Peggie finished her work. There were some lovely chrysanthemums in her own little garden. Before they were entirely covered by the snow, she decided to go out and pick them.

With scissors in her fingers, she had cut a number of glorious blooms when —whizz! came a snowball, which struck her full in the ear.

Peggie looked up, with a start. There was no one to be seen. All was particularly still, as it always is when snow falls. She smiled. She suspected Marjorie of being the thrower, but she could not find her whereabouts.

She bent down again to cut another bloom when a girlish figure rose swiftly above the wall, and another snowball came straight for Peggie. This time, however, she moved her head to one side in time, and it missed her.

"Ha, ha! Caught you that time, Marjorie!" she laughed.

The colonel's daughter reappeared above the wall, with a merry smile on her face.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Marjorie. "I hope I didn't hurt you, Peggie dear. I wanted you to think that the ghost was throwing snowballs at you!"

"I didn't think that!" Peggie answered. "I knew he wouldn't be so frivolous. I say, Marjorie," she went on, "will you take these flowers to your mother? We've got ever so many more for ourselves."

"Aren't they lovely!" cried Marjorie, accepting them. "It's kind and thoughtful of you to pick them for me. I say, aren't you glad the snow's come down? I love snow at Christmastime. It makes everything look so jolly, so really like Christmas. We'll make a snow man, and we'll get Jessie and the servants out, and have a real snowball battle. Daddy says the lake is already safe enough for skating. Oh, we're going to have a lovely time this Christmas."

Marjorie chatted on while the snowflakes whirled down on them and soon made snow figures of them both.

And then Marjorie explained why she had come out in the snow to see her friend.

"Daddy's going to have the snow swept from the ice on the lake, and we're to have skating by torchlight tonight!" she cried. "You'll come, of course, Peggie?"

"Rather!" cried the caretaker's daughter. "I've still got the skates I had last year. I'll look out for you. And now hurry home, dear, in case your mamma gets anxious about you."

The Discovery in the Snow.

"I'LL soon be back, daddy!" cried Peggie.

The old sailorman looked up with a start as he dozed in his armchair by the fire.

"Tar my decks, I was nearly asleep, lass!" said Jolly Jack.

"I'm going into the woods to get some holly and mistletoe, daddy," said Peggie. "It's not snowing quite so fast now. I'll soon be back again."

With an oily mackintosh over her slim, athletic figure, and a hood over her brown hair, and carrying a basket and her father's walking-stick, Peggie passed out of the lodge.

Peggie admired the scene as she strode briskly along. The gloomy old mansion only looked its best when the sunlight was full upon it or when it was hidden, as it was now, under a soft, fleecy mantle of white. The snow toned down all its harshness and ugliness.

Before she reached the woods, however, the house was cut off from her view. Finding and cutting the holly and mistletoe was an easy matter. There were any number of gnarled old oaks in Thorpe Woods, and holly-bushes, and from these she quickly snipped with her scissors as much of the Yuletide plants as she desired.

With a basket full of the red and white-berried decoration, she turned her steps homeward. It was getting late in the afternoon now, and darkness began to fall rapidly.

For a time she stepped along by the fence which separated Colonel Willowby's ground from Farmer Haldane's. It was a shorter cut this way. She was almost in sight of the lodge and quite three hundred yards from Farmer Haldane's land, when, once again that day, she saw the Willowby ghost.

It was only for a few moments, and then he was hidden behind a stout elm-tree.

But she knew it was no imagination on her part. There he was, as she had seen him before, in his long, black robe and cowl, moving slowly along, his head held down, as if in thoughtful meditation.

Peggie waited to see him emerge from the other side of the tree. He did not appear. She looked at the white bed of snow all round her. There were the tracks of her own feet showing distinctly. And there, too, were other tracks that were leading straight to Colonel Willowby's home.

"Were they the ghosts?" Peggie was thinking.

She looked up at the sky. It was getting darker every minute. Then she decided not to go in search of the ghost, but to keep on her way homeward.

But she had not taken more than twenty steps when she gave a little gasp of surprise.

Before her appeared to be another ghostly figure. But it was not the Willowby ghost this time. She saw that at a glance. It was the figure of a man rendered white by the snow that covered his head and shoulders.

The man had a pail in his hand, and he was bent down, searching in the snow for something he had apparently lost. It was that action, rather than his figure, that enabled Peggie to recognise him.

"Farmer Haldane!" she murmured.

She remembered the night of the storm. That night she had seen the colonel's neighbour doing the very thing he was engaged in now. He had a pail in his hand then, and he was searching the ground as if looking for mushrooms. Farmer Haldane had denied that he had ever been on Colonel Willowby's land, but he could not deny it now!

Peggie stepped straight towards the little, mean-faced man. He had his back to her, and, Peggie making no sound in the snow, he did not know of her presence until she was a few yards from him.

"Good-afternoon, Farmer Haldane!" Peggie said politely.

She disliked and distrusted the man, but as she could not avoid him, there was no reason, she thought, for being bad-mannered.

The farmer swung round on her as if he had been whipped. He glared suspiciously at her, and then he thrust his hands over the top of the pail he carried for fear she should see its contents.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded. "Have you been spying on me?"

Peggie held out her basket of holly and mistletoe.

"This is what I have been to gather, farmer," she answered. "Why should I spy on you?"

"You're always doing it!" was the man's surprising answer. "That holly-picking is only a ruse of yours to come out here and watch me."

"I don't understand you," said the caretaker's daughter frankly. "I never gave you a thought until I saw you a few moments ago. At any rate, I have not been on your land. You have yet to explain why you were trespassing on Colonel Willowby's."

It was a daring thing to say. It was the farmer's ill-humour that had forced it out of her lips before she was really aware she had said it.

"Trespassing, do you call it?" he cried, his mean, cruel face becoming purple with rage. "You're trying to thwart me in every way. It was you the other night who put out the lights and stole the papers when I was about to buy the Manse from the colonel! It

You Must Not Miss

ON SALE TO-DAY!

was you who tricked the colonel and told him you found the piece of ore in the study cupboard! Have a care, girl! I'm not to be baulked in my plans!"

Peggie stared at the man in astonishment. With the stout stick in her hand she was not afraid of the bullying farmer.

"I don't know in the least why you should suspect me of such things," she replied. "I know nothing about them. I know they happened, of course, but I put them down to the Willowby ghost who——"

"Ah, the Willowby ghost!" the man interrupted. He looked Peggie, with a fierce glare, straight into her eyes. "You are the Willowby ghost!" he shouted.

Peggie's lips parted. Surely the man was crazy. Then she laughed aloud.

"I!" she exclaimed. "The Willowby ghost!"

"Yes, you!" Jasper Haldane declared, drawing closer to her. "It's trickery by you, and connived at by that old simpleton your father! You don't want to lose the lodge, your home, and your living, and so you are hoodwinking the colonel and his family and ruining my plans!"

"Really, Farmer Haldane, it's too absurd——" Peggie began, when the man threw away his pail, leapt in and seized her by the wrists.

"You coward!" the girl cried, struggling pluckily to get free. "Let go!"

"Not until you have promised to keep a silent tongue!" growled the man threateningly. "I have greater power than you think, girl. If you dare to tell the colonel you have found me here——"

He had his mean face pressed close to Peggie's, when at that moment she saw a figure advancing quickly behind the farmer's back.

"Look—look!" she cried. "The Willowby ghost!"

Farmer Haldane released his grip on her wrists, and swung round in a flash.

The figure of the Willowby ghost, a black figure, against a background of snow, made a striking scene.

For the first time Peggie got a view of the ghost's face. It was that of a clean-shaven young man, with regular features—a handsome man, but with a strangely fixed expression and a transparent, unreal colouring.

As he moved towards them, with the mechanical swing of an automaton, there was nothing human about him. He looked the ideal ghost of Peggie's imagination, and at once all her convictions as to his reality became doubts again.

The effect on Farmer Haldane was wonderful. He stood staring at the advancing figure as if suddenly turned into ice.

The ghost was no more than ten yards from him before he trembled violently and seemed to regain his wits.

"Mercy on us!" he gasped. "It's the Willowby ghost come to thwart me again!"

A panic seized him. He took to his heels and began plunging wildly across the snow in the direction of his own land. Peggie was so concerned in watching his flight that her eyes followed him until he had almost reached the lake on which the skating was to take place that night. She forgot the ghost.

When she remembered and looked round in search of him, the monkish figure had disappeared.

Peggie rubbed her eyes and looked in all directions. She could not see the ghost, nor could she find the tracks by which he had come. Moreover, darkness, as it does in the winter-time when the sun sets, had fallen as if a curtain had been dropped across the countryside.

She picked up her basket of holly and mistletoe where it had fallen to the ground, and hastened homeward.

Her father was standing at the doorway of their little home. She could see the holes made in the snow by his wooden leg as he had stumped several times up and down the path to the gate to look for her.

"Tar my decks, lassie!" he cried cheerily. "I thought you was weather-bound. Still, you're in port now, lass, and all's well. Tea's ready and waiting for you, and I'm going off down to the village. Give me my stick, lass."

Peggie made a gesture of annoyance. When Farmer Haldane had seized her wrists, the stick had dropped in the snow, and she had forgotten to pick it up again.

"I'm sorry, daddy!" she exclaimed. "I must have dropped it in the snow; but I know where to find it. I shall be going to the lake soon, with Marjorie. I'll get it for you then."

"Don't matter, lassie!" cried the sailorman. "I've got another. Avast and belay! Being Christmastide, I must go down to Thorpe and pass the time of day to a few old shipmates of mine."

Peggie put her arm about his neck and kissed his weather-beaten cheek.

"Good-bye, daddy!" she said. "I won't tell you now, as I see you're impatient to get off; but I've got some more news about the ghost for you when you come back."

"Tar my decks!" laughed Jolly Jack. "The ghost! The ghost! It's all ghost nowadays since the colonel's come home."

Peggie watched his sturdy figure stump off into the darkness, then she hurried indoors with her basket.

It did not take her long to have her tea. Without bothering to wash up and put the crockery away, she at once proceeded to decorate the little passage and the living-rooms with the holly and the mistletoe she had gathered.

She was on the top of the table, fixing some mistletoe about the hanging oil-lamp, when, through the window, the blind of which she had not drawn, she saw a blaze of light.

"Peggie," Marjorie called out merrily, "bring your skates! Come along, Peggie!"

The caretaker's daughter jumped down to the floor. She had looked out her skates a few moments before. Pulling on a warm, woolly coat—for the snow had ceased falling—and carrying her steel runners in her hand, she hurried out of the lodge.

A merry sight met her eyes. Marjorie, Jessie, and the two other maids were carrying torches made from candles wrapped about with paper. Each had skates with her.

"Now for some fun!" laughed Marjorie gaily. "We've got a torch for you, Peggie. Jessie will light it for you. This way for the lake!"

With lighted torches in their hands, Peggie and Marjorie ran on ahead. They soon came in sight of the frozen lake. The gardeners had swept it clear of snow, and its frozen surface gleamed dully in the light of their torches.

"Here's a bank!" cried Marjorie. "Let's sit here, Peggie, to put on our skates."

She moved forward and stumbled over something in the snow. Peggie saw her friend bend down and examine something in the light of her torch.

"What is it?" she asked.

"It's a man!" Marjorie answered, with tremulous voice. "And—and it's Farmer Haldane!"

"Now for some fun!" laughed Marjorie gaily as Peggie appeared. "We've got a torch for you! We're going to skate on the lake, and, who knows, we may see the ghost!"

What has happened to Farmer Haldane? Peggie had last seen him fleeing away from the "Willowby Ghost" as if for his very life. And now—here he is, prostrate in the snow! What can be the cause? Don't miss next Thursday's thrilling instalment of this wonderful serial on any account!

Excitement usually follows where Clara Trevlyn goes, and the rule holds good in this story!

Clara Trevlyn's Christmas Party!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of the Famous Chums of Cliff House School, and the Christmas they spent.

By HILDA RICHARDS.

The Strange Way of a Beaver!

"HUROOH! Let it rip, girls! Hurooh!"

Clara Trevlyn was the maddest of the merry crowd of eleven girls who had packed into the compartment of the crowded train that was rattling along into hilly, snowclad Surrey.

The maddest—and that was saying something! For they had broken up at Cliff House that morning and they were off for the Christmas holidays. What girls would not have been excited? But Clara had a special reason for her exhilaration, for this year she had won—this year all her chums were to come home with her!

Babs, Mabs, Marjorie, Dolly—in fact, all those who had been her companions on their eventful educational trip—and one other! That one other was a very fat girl, and she looked red and uncomfortable. Even as the cheer died down, a series of very discontented remarks came from her.

"I say, don't you think it's jolly well time one of you gave me a seat?" demanded Bessie Bunter. "I'm in a fearful draught here, sitting on my bag! I'm frightfully uncomfortable! I shall get a stiff neck, and—— Peggy! Your knees! Ow!"

"But every time the train jolts you bump right in to me!" protested Peggy laughingly. "I can't help it!"

"You're so skinny!"

"If we were all as fat as you, we should never have got into this carriage!" declared Phyllis Howell, laughing. "Do give it a rest for a little while, Bessie. Your poor tongue must ache."

"Are you going to give me a seat?" asked Bessie.

Clara winked at the others.

"Here, Bessie!" she said. "We'll put this tin box right in the middle of the carriage. You can come and sit on it, and you'll have far more room, and be near when we have the sandwiches."

"Sandwiches!" repeated Bessie, looking much brighter. "That's not a bad idea at all. My bag's awfully uncomfortable. You put the box there, Clara, and it will be much better for me, won't it? Then I can pass the sandwiches round whenever anyone looks hungry."

The fat girl rose, just at the very moment that the train jolted with some violence over points.

"Oooooop! Ow! Help!" she gasped.

There was no help for Bessie.

She lurched violently and sprawled—right on Freda Foote. Freda Foote gasped, and repulsed her hurriedly.

"Go away!" she ejaculated. "You can't sit on me!"

Thump!

"Oooooh!" cried Mabel Lynn. "Freda, you duffer! You've shot her right on my lap, and she's nearly broken my leg! I can't nurse Bessie! You take her, Dolly!"

"I sus-sus-say——" stuttered Bessie Bunter.

But there was no time for protest. Mabs obviously didn't want her. Mabs wasn't going to have her. Dolly Jobling had to accept the fat girl, and the fat girl came down very heavily indeed.

Thump!

"Help!" shrieked Dolly Jobling. "Oh, dear! She's nearly winded me! Go away, Bessie!"

"But I say——"

"Catch her, Babs!" said Dolly.

Thump!

"I don't want her!" cried Barbara Redfern, receiving the heavy form in her turn. "You caused it, Clara! Coming over!"

"I sus-sus-say——"

Bump!

"Lemme alone!" shrieked Bessie Bunter.

"Gerroff my lap, you silly chump!" cried Clara wrathfully. "You've torn my magazine in half!"

"How could I help it?" demanded Bessie furiously. "Babs jolly well pip-pip-pushed me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's it!" hooted Bessie. "You jolly well cackle!"

Bessie dumped herself down on her shabby brown bag, and glowered.

But five minutes later there was concord in the carriage, and Bessie was as happy as anyone. The sandwiches had been produced. They were excellent sandwiches. There was nothing that cheered Bessie so much on a railway journey as sandwiches!

"We'll be at the station in half an hour now," said Clara gaily. "It's called Morgen, as you probably know. We're rather countrified, and our house is right at the top of a hill. I warned you that it would be a bit of a squeeze—we haven't as much room as there is at Holly Hall."

"The more the merrier!" chuckled Dolly Jobling.

Right to time the train began to slow down. With much puffing the engine pulled into the sleepy-looking, snow-clad little station. Clara's spirits rose still higher.

"Happy Christmas, Tom! Happy Christmas, Ned!" she cried to the two porters. "Send the bags up, won't you? They're all in the guard's van, except Bessie's. We're going to walk up to Rose Villa. Here are the tickets, stationmaster—and compliments of the season!"

"Thank you, Miss Trevlyn!"

"Same to you, and many of 'em!" chorused the porters together.

There were glad smiles everywhere as the high-spirited girl led her companions along the snowy platform. Evidently Clara was a prime favourite. Out in the village street, where thatched roofs, projecting upper stories, and mullioned, small-paned windows spoke of the peace of centuries, it was just the same.

"Glad to see 'ee again, Miss Trevlyn!"

"Ay, an' a roight merry Christmas, too!" came the greetings.

It was just the sort of welcome to put the girls into greater spirits than ever.

Along the street they were proceeding, exchanging greetings with jolly rustics as though they had known each other all their lives—Clara's chums were good enough for the villagers!—when suddenly Clara paused and spoke to Marjorie Hazeldene.

"I say!" she said. "See that old fellow ahead of us, hobbling along with the stick. He looks rather down and out, doesn't he? He must feel lost at a time like this. Let's go along and wish him a happy Christmas, eh?"

"Oh, rather!" said Marjorie; and she smiled as she thought of the softness of Clara's heart, in spite of all her bluster.

Clara hurried on. He was a shabby little old man, and they could not see much of him, except that he seemed to have long hair and was bearded. He must have heard them coming, but he did not turn his head once. Clara grinned and, touching the old man's back lightly, cried in her gay way:

"A happy Christmas to you, dad! A happy Christmas!"

And the man's answer was startling.

He jumped away as though stung, and crouched back against a shop-front. His eyes were glittering and malevolent. His voice was harsh and angry. His reply dumbfounded the girls.

"Keep your wishes to yourself!"

he turned and growled. "Away with you and your merry Christmas! What do I care for it? What do I want to have to do with you and your chattering crowd of senseless girls? Get away with you and your happy Christmas—get away and be bothered! Keep your wishes for those that want them!"

Clara's jaw dropped. She looked past words altogether.

Strangely enough, the first girl to find her tongue was Bessie Bunter. Bessie, like them all, was indignant at the harsh and bitter outburst. She raised a hand and pointed.

"Bah!" cried Bessie. "Silly old Beaver! Beaver!"

The old man shook his stick savagely.

"I'll make you sorry, you fat, ugly girl!" he cried. "Go away with your taunting! Wishing me a merry Christmas indeed! Lot of humbug—that's all it is! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Bessie Bunter was crimson.

"Oh, I say, he called me fat! He jolly well insulted me, Clara!" she gasped. "Go on, Clara, pull his beard for him! You hold him, and I'll pull the old Beaver's beard—ooooh!"

Bessie's cry was a startled one.

"Let me alone! You leave me alone!" the old man snarled.

With that remark he had turned from them so abruptly that they stared in utter amazement. His stick went tap, tappity, tap along the frosty road, and his pace was twice what it had been before.

"Bunking!" said Babs.

"He is!" said Clara, utterly mystified. "And it was all Bessie's silly remark about pulling his beard! You'd almost think that he was scared by that—you'd almost think that it was that threat to pull his beard that made him bunk!"

"Why?" speculated Marjorie Hazeldene softly.

No one could answer that.

The Girl at the Window!

"COME in, girls! Welcome to Rose Villa!" boomed Mr. Trevlyn.

The front door was open, and the leading girls streamed into the hall to shake hands with those waiting to welcome them. A tall girl came smilingly forward to greet Clara.

"Hallo! I know you from your photograph, and I've heard so much about you. I hope you'll let me call you Clara!" she exclaimed, as she shook hands. "I'm Eunice Haddon! You know my name, of course? We live over at Stone Towers now—topping place, but awfully lonely. I've been coming over to see your mater quite a lot"

"You can call me anything but Miss Trevlyn," grinned Clara. "Hallo, mums! Hallo, poppa! How are you after all this time?"

Clara rushed in to greet her parents, who were laughing and chatting gaily with the girls in the hall.

"And Dick!" Clara added, giving her brother a hug. "You know all my chums, don't you? Now, if you've been making me an apple-pie bed——"

"Oh, you two, at it again!" laughed Mrs. Trevlyn. "Come right in and close the door, girls. You must be hungry after your journey!"

"Hungry! I should just think we are!" beamed Bessie Bunter. "Absolutely starving, Mrs. Trevlyn. Shall we have a snack now? It would—— Ow! Clara, you jolly well pinched my arm!"

Mr. Trevlyn gave a jolly laugh.

"Never mind, Bessie!" he exclaimed. "Dinner is all ready, and it will be served as soon as you have had a wash and just got your things in order. I think I can hear the railway cart already!"

Clara and her mother led the way upstairs to see the rooms that the girls were to occupy. As Clara had said, it was a smaller house than Holly Hall, where Babs lived, and they would have to fit a little tighter. But no one seemed to mind that.

"Mums, I was surprised to see Eunice Haddon downstairs," said Clara suddenly.

"Very likely, but she is such a nice girl, and she seems so lonely," said Mrs. Trevlyn. "She has been coming to see me a lot lately, and—and in a way I've invited her to spend Christmas here."

"Christmas!" said Clara. "But—"

"Yes, I know you are thinking that she might like to stay at her own home, Clara. She doesn't want it at all. She practically invited herself here, but in such a nice manner that I could not do anything but say we should be pleased to have her. It seems that they have some queer visitors at Stone Towers, and Eunice rather likes to get away from them."

Clara led the way into her own room, where beds for Marjorie and Dolly had also been erected. It was a room typical of Clara—full of sporting pictures and sporting gear, and quite devoid of the feminine touches that might have been expected in a girl's room.

Clara pointed away out of the window. Rearing itself out of the snowy wilderness half a mile away was a large and imposing residence, set in the midst of a park-like garden that must have been a picture in summer.

"Stone Towers—Eunice's home," Clara explained. "It changed hands recently, and the Haddons bought it. Before that—— Oh, it's rather a sad story. The other people had to get out very quickly. This bed do you, Marjorie?"

That was all Clara said about it, as though there was something more that she had been on the point of saying before she "thought twice." As gay as ever, she rattled on with other conversation, and was soon "settling" the rest of the party in the rooms they were to occupy.

They were all in the gayest of spirits as they descended the stairs.

"I expect Fred and Harry will be home this evening," she told them. "They're awful sports! We'll have a simply topping time; they'll be up to all sorts of fun! And we can get out the tobogans——"

It was at that very point that Clara's remarks stopped dead.

They had reached the dining-room, and just at that moment the door opened for a maid to come out. She and Clara came face to face; and Clara stopped dead, as though rooted to the spot with amazement.

And the maid? She, too, paused—startled. The girls saw a girl of their own age, slim and graceful, and there was something about her expression that caught their attention instantly. Her eyes were sad and heavy; her face was wistful. All of them had that impression.

"You?" muttered Clara; it was just a sound in her throat, a sound of utter bewilderment.

The girl averted her head. Her cheeks had gone crimson. She backed away from the door, and melted into the passage without a word. From inside the door Mrs. Trevlyn's voice called:

"Oh, Mary, you might bring another chair as well."

"Yes, madam," answered the servant's voice, and it seemed to choke.

In the awkward silence that had fallen Clara went into the dining-room. Straight to her mother she went, and in a startled whisper:

"Mums, you never told me!"

"Didn't you get my letter?" Mrs. Trevlyn gasped, in much the same tones. "I thought you would understand already."

"I didn't! I hadn't the foggiest——" Suddenly Clara turned, and raised her

HOW ABOUT THE RACK? "I say, don't you jolly well think it's time one of you gave me a seat?" demanded Bessie Bunter. "It's fearfully draughty here, and I'm not enjoying myself a bit!"

voice. 'Come along, girls, everything's ready! We're all waiting for you!"

The others entered and took their places at the table. Clara was grinning and trying to be cheerful. But for many minutes there remained on her cheeks that flush that they could not understand. And although they waited, Clara told them nothing—not a word about what had caused her such surprise in the hall.

Mary, the maid, brought in the other chair as requested. Unable to repress their curiosity, the girls watched her. Not once did she glance in Clara's direction. And Clara, for her part, kept her eyes on the table all the time.

Some mystery! They could all see that. Dick Trevlyn, with his eyes at least, was trying to tell Clara something. But Clara would not look at him at all.

Silently Mary finished her errand, and as silently disappeared. All the girls had looked at her. They had seen fresh details of her face—grey, thoughtful eyes that were often averted, almost as though that encounter had brought the girl near to tears. Some secret grief? Could it be anything like that?

Mary reappeared carrying a pile of plates. Quickly and deftly she laid one to each place. She had just passed the smiling and chatting Eunice Haddon when the visitor to the house gave a gasp.

"Oh, Mary—look!"

Something—some tension in the air—took all eyes to the spot. Mary had stopped; Eunice was pointing to her plate, and, as she looked at the servant-girl, there was an odd, challenging light in her eyes.

"Mary! A dirty plate—oh, how could you!" exclaimed Mrs. Trevlyn, in a shocked tone. "Really you should be more careful!"

"I am sorry, ma'am!" said Mary.

And she quickly took up the plate and replaced it with another. But few of the girls failed to note the answering light in her eyes as she looked, just for a second, at the smiling visitor.

It was like a challenge!

And Babs, just at that moment, made a very odd whispered remark to her chum, Mabel Lynn.

"Did you see the plate when it went down?" she breathed.

Mabs shook her head.

"I did," said Babs. "I could be almost positive that it was clean. It looked as though Eunice dabbed her thumb to it and the dirty mark appeared."

"Oh, impossible!" muttered Mabs.

And still more did she feel that as the meal progressed. At their first meeting none of the girls would have described Eunice as being exactly beautiful. Her beauty was apparent when she was animated. As they came to know her better they were changing their minds. She was laughing and chatting all the time. Her anecdotes came one after the other—without doubt she was the life and soul of the meal. And when it was over, at a word from Dick Trevlyn, she was making a fresh suggestion.

"Sing? I'll sing if you will, Dick! There, I can't be fairer than that, can I?" she laughed gaily. "You can manage the old 'Rustic Bridge by the Mill.'"

"Eunice will sing, I am sure!" interrupted Mr. Trevlyn, in his jolly voice. "We can hear Dick dirgeing in his cold bath every morning, and I'm sure we hear quite enough then! Now, Eunice, we won't take no!"

"Oh, very well, then!" the girl laughed prettily. "Will you others come as well and help me out, for I'm sure to break down?" She laughed again.

"And, really, I feel dreffly nervous—dreffly! It's only flattery from these good people—I really can't sing at all! I'm sure there will be some of you who can sing ever so much better than I'll ever be able to!"

So laughing and so gay—such a really delightful companion she seemed! And as they went out of the dining-room together there stood Mary, the maid—serious, her face averted, waiting to come in and clear the table. What an odd contrast between the two of them!

The music was excellent. Eunice had under-estimated her powers. She had a sweet voice, and could accompany herself beautifully. The girls were charmed with her singing.

An hour must have passed before Marjorie, who had a slight cold, begged leave to trip up to her room to fetch a handkerchief. As she left the drawing-room and stood in the holly-decked hall she could hear the faint, merry echoes of Eunice's voice as she sang another lilting ballad.

Very quiet and still it seemed in the house as Marjorie went to the stairs. As she ascended Marjorie could still hear occasional ripples of the visitor's voice as she went on with her song.

She knew her room perfectly. It was just at the top of the stairs and to the right. As Marjorie came to it she noticed that the door was open, but she thought nothing of it at the moment. She had taken a soft step across the carpet before, with a sudden start, she realised that the room was not empty.

Not empty! No, she stood still, making no sound herself. There was a square of light where the window was let in the opposite wall. And from somewhere near that spot came a faint sound—like the sound of a suppressed sob!

Marjorie's heart was beating hard. Who was here, in Clara's room?

She caught her breath. There was the rustle of a dress, and a figure moved in front of the window. Marjorie saw a white cap, and a slim and graceful figure, and she knew.

It was Mary!

Still Marjorie stood there, perplexed, hardly knowing what to do. And as she stood there the girl leant forward to peer out of the window. Right ahead, clearly visible for both of them to see, were the gleaming lights of a large house set amongst the snowy fields. Marjorie knew at once that it was Stone Towers.

And another sob?

Yes, it was. But not one alone. Mary had dropped her arms to the window-ledge and her face was buried in them. Her shoulders were heaving. Stifled sobs filled the room. It was heart-rending. Tender, sympathetic Marjorie could not stand it longer.

Suddenly making up her mind she ran across the room and touched the sobbing maid.

"Mary, my dear," she whispered. "Whatever is it? Why do you cry like this, all alone?"

The girl started violently and spun back against the wall. She was trembling. Her wide, wild eyes were blotted with tears that almost blinded her.

"Who are you? Who is it?" she said hoarsely.

"I am Marjorie Hazeldene," came the soft answer. "I am one of Clara's friends. I came here to fetch a handkerchief——"

Trembling hands gripped her arm. A tearful, pitiful voice spoke to her in the darkness.

"Then you will not tell? Oh, please, please! You will promise not to tell anyone that you have seen me here?"

"If you wish it," Marjorie answered. "But, dear, I can see you are so upset. Is there nothing——"

"If I were caught here it might mean trouble; I might lose my situation!" choked the girl. "Oh, thank you for you promise! I know I can trust you; I know you will never tell anyone! It might mean trouble!"

She turned, and in a moment was blundering across the room. Marjorie heard her descend the stairs. Mechanically she took a handkerchief from her trunk and followed.

The girl had been so upset and so frightened—because she might lose her situation?

No, whatever it might be, it was certainly not for that reason.

Who Japed Dolly Jobling?

THE evening was drawing on, but Clara Trevlyn had said nothing to enlighten her chums. It was strange. Of course, if Clara wanted to keep anything to herself, they knew that she had a perfect right to do so, and those chums who were with her would be the last persons to ask her to speak. But it was unlike Clara to keep anything to herself.

What mystery could there be?

Marjorie Hazeldene was worried. She could not forget what she had seen. She still remembered the tense earnestness of that little servant-girl's voice. But it was to be a secret. Marjorie had given her word, and she could never think of breaking that.

Peggy Preston sang, and Mabel Lynn gave a recitation. Both were received excellently, and other girls followed, to add to the general entertainment. Bessie Bunter beamed upon Dick Trevlyn.

"You'd like to hear me sing, wouldn't you?" she said, persuasively.

Clara heard.

"No, Dick wouldn't!" was her emphatic answer.

"Oh, really!" said Bessie, looking at Clara with great indignation. "I was talking to your brother. I say, Dick, you would like to hear my pretty soprano voice, wouldn't you?"

"Dick suffers from bad hearing!" said Clara determinedly.

"I'll sing aloud, so that he can hear," said Bessie.

"No, thanks! He wouldn't have any hearing left at all then!" Clara answered.

There was a chuckle from the girls.

"Well, I'm blessed!" gasped Bessie wrathfully. "Dick, did you ever hear anything like that? Be a man and defy Clara; I always do! I wouldn't let my sister rule me like that, you know!"

"I—I've just remembered something!" gasped Dick Trevlyn. "Sorry, Bessie. I—I'll be back in a moment!"

And Dick Trevlyn, looking very uncomfortable, shot out through the door.

Evidently Dick had heard of Bessie's singing before!

"Let us have another song," cried Mr. Trevlyn. "Come, Eunice, you haven't finished your repertoire yet! How about the 'Japanese Sandman'?"

Gay and pleasant was Eunice's answer—so perfectly natural and unrestrained, that the girls were really grateful to her.

"That funny thing!" she said, and laughed. "Oh, it's upstairs, Mr. Trevlyn! If you'd like to hear it, I'll pop up and get it."

And in a moment she was whirling across the room, smiling here and there, and seeming to have some laughing comment for everyone as she passed.

"I think the 'Japanese Sandsman's' on the music-stand," Babs, in a low voice, remarked to Mabs.

"Funny!" said Mabs, her eyes opening wide. "I thought the same thing! I believe I saw Eunice looking at it earlier in the evening."

"Well, she'll find it isn't upstairs, then," said Babs. "I say, what an awful duffer Bessie can be at times!"

"Yes; and to say that just after Clara and her mother had been talking together over the other side of the room," said Mabs. "Anyone with half an eye could have seen that Mrs. Trevlyn was explaining something."

They sat silent again.

Clara and her people—all the girls knew them so well that they knew that there could be nothing unjust going on in the Trevlyn household. Yet they could not forget that maid Mary, and what they had seen of her. Those sad eyes, and the wistful look when everyone else in the house was so jolly.

The door opened, and Eunice bounded gaily in.

"Not upstairs! I've remembered it's down here, after all," she exclaimed. "Dreffly sorry to keep you waiting, dear people. Miss E. Haddon, the celebrated one-finger champion, will now operate. Thump!"

She sang the song wistfully and very beautifully. They saw that she was an actress. In a moment she could compose her face and throw any expression into her voice, just as she wished. And then, when it was over, she was laughing again and disclaiming all skill when they applauded her.

A bell trilled softly in the passage, and the door opened as Mary, the maid, answered Mrs. Trevlyn's summons.

"Bring some lemonade, please, Mary," said their hostess, and the girls noted the gentleness and kindliness of her order.

Within a minute Mary was returning, carrying a tray loaded with glasses. It was just as she came in that Eunice happened to look across the room and observed a picture.

"Oh, I say!" she exclaimed. "Is that Nelson, Mrs. Trevlyn? We're so fond of his pictures at home; we've got ever so many."

Naturally all eyes went to the picture. And then something—— It seemed like a chilling premonition—made Babs glance away. She saw a quick stumble, a whirling figure; she knew a moment of helpless agitation, and——

Crash, clatter, clatter, crash!

There on the floor lay Mary, the maid, with her tray fallen and the glasses broken and split in all directions.

"Oh, Mary, Mary!" cried out Mrs. Trevlyn. "What ever have you done? Oh, my girl, what has made you do such a thing?"

But Babs had seen. In the fraction of a second she had seen a foot quickly withdrawn from in front of the laden girl—a foot that Mary could never have seen herself.

And that foot had belonged to Eunice.

Instantly Babs touched the accomplished girl's arm. They looked each other in the eyes. No word was spoken, but their eyes communicated.

Babs' look showed that she had seen all. And Eunice. At first she started. And then, momentarily, it seemed as though something fell from her like a disguise. It was as though her eyes flashed with fire. Perfect fury—that was what Babs saw, all in a second.

Then it was gone.

"Oh, Mrs. Trevlyn, I am so sorry—so sorry!" Eunice cried, in an agitated voice.

Mrs. Trevlyn glanced from the bewildered maid, who was picking up the broken glass.

"Sorry, Eunice? Why; what makes you say that?"

"It was my fault, Mrs. Trevlyn," Eunice said, sounding more agitated than ever. "I slipped—I didn't notice poor Mary. I must have tripped her up; it was all my fault! Oh, let me help the poor girl! I am so dreadfully sorry!"

Mrs. Trevlyn laughed good-humouredly as she touched a bell.

"Why, of course not, Eunice!" she exclaimed. "I couldn't hear of such a thing. Besides, it's Christmas time, and we're not going to cry over spilt lemonade." She patted the maid's neck, for all the girls could see how she was trembling. "Leave this to be cleared up by Emmie and Florence and you go and prepare some more, my child!" she said. "Accidents will happen at times."

Mary, looking upset, flushed, and bewildered as well, left the room.

Babs heard a voice in her ear:

"Why did you look at me like that?"

It was like a snarl. She turned to Eunice; and once more she saw that light in her eyes, like a flame of fury!

"I—I thought——" Babs gasped.

That hard light went so quickly that Babs could almost doubt that it had ever been there. Eunice smiled and patted her back.

"I'm only joking," she said. "I know you didn't mean anything, Babs. Of course you know I wouldn't have let that poor kid suffer for upsetting the stuff!"

"No, it wouldn't have been fair, would it," Babs answered, in the same bantering tones.

But in her case, too, it was pretence. Her heart was thumping. She felt that she had made no mistake. Eunice had drawn attention to the picture—why? Eunice had deliberately thrust out her foot—again, why?

And Babs was sure that she had read that look aright—she had only forced the girl to confess! She was positive—positive! She thought again of that episode of the soiled plate—perhaps that had put her on her guard? But what could it mean?

Mary came with more lemonade. Later there was a wire to say that the two elder brothers had been delayed after all. And when Dolly Jobling was caught yawning it was at last suggested that a move should be made for bed.

"Not a bad idea at all!" Clara exclaimed. "Then we can get up in the morning and have a giddy, I mean a jolly, snow-fight. What say?"

The girls were quite agreeable, and they started to take their farewells of the hospitable folk who were entertaining them. At the door stood Eunice Haddon, with a jolly word for everyone—especially for Babs!

"Perhaps I'll see you to-morrow, eh, Babs?" she said. "You've made it such a jolly evening. Do you toboggan? Oh, spiffin'—fine! Yes, the car's coming for me, and it's rather late, but I daresay it'll be toddling round in half a motor!"

They were soon up in their bed-rooms. Dolly, the tired one, lost little time in jumping into her pyjamas. Marjorie was still affectionately combing her hair when Dolly shot down between the sheets.

"Oooooooer!"

It was a perfect shriek from Dolly. Marjorie and Clara whirled about.

"Ow! O-ooer!"

Dolly was sitting up in bed, hugging one foot. There were spots of red on it.

AN UNSEASONABLE REPLY! "Keep your happy Christmas to yourself," he growled. "Away with you and your merry Christmas! Keep your wishes for those who want them!"

"Whatever's the giddy fuss?" gasped Clara.

"Ow! Oooooh!" said Dolly. "Something in the bed—scratched, or stung! Whew!"

"Her foot's bleeding a little!" Marjorie cried in alarm. "Let me get a handkerchief!"

Clara whirled back the bedclothes.

"And I don't wonder!" she exclaimed. "This is a bit beyond a joke. The bed's stuffed with holly! Just look!"

A voice came from the open doorway.

"My girls, whatever is the matter?" cried Mrs. Trevlyn. "Is something wrong? I heard such a cry—— Good gracious! Two sprigs of holly in the bed! Whoever could have played such a stupid prank?"

The other girls had come running in in their dressing-gowns. Dolly's foot

was only scratched, as it happened, and it was the momentary pain that had alarmed her. While they were crowding about her a fresh voice spoke.

"What a cruel trick—oh, what a thoughtless trick!" cried the indignant voice of Eunice Haddon. "That was in Dolly's bed? My word! Now—now I come to think——"

She broke off and darted into the passage. There was the sound of a short, sharp scuffle. Then Eunice returned—and by the hand she led the dismayed figure of the girl-maid, Mary!

Mrs. Trevlyn stared.

"Eunice, what is the matter? What has Mary to do with this?" she exclaimed.

"I—I'm sorry. I hate to say such a thing, Mrs. Trevlyn, about one of your maids," Eunice answered reluctantly. "It was when I came up for the music. I was in the passage when I saw this girl creep out of this room—positively creep. I didn't like to say anything at the time——"

Mary burst in wildly:

"Oh, Mrs. Trevlyn, I haven't done such a thing as this! Oh, I haven't done it! Really, I haven't, Mrs. Trevlyn!"

Eunice's voice sounded hurt and reproachful.

"But I saw you in the room, you know!"

"Why were you in here, Mary?" Mrs. Trevlyn asked. "You know your duties do not bring you here?"

Mary's lips moved, but they said nothing.

"You do not deny that you were here?" Mrs. Trevlyn asked. "And you will not give me a reason?"

Mary's grey eyes were full of a dumb, hopeless appeal.

"It is most extraordinary!" Mrs. Trevlyn exclaimed. "And you—I cannot imagine any possible reason why you should do such a thing. Mary, you are not to come to these rooms again on any pretext—your work will be downstairs."

"Oh, Mrs Trevlyn!" gasped Mary, as though involuntarily. And to the startled girls it seemed to come right from the girl's heart.

Mary hung her head. She was quivering—shaking from head to toe. Not one of the Cliff House girls could feel anything but pity for her in her inexplicable plight.

"You must go to your room," said Mrs. Trevlyn. "Eunice, I thank you for telling me this. Your foot is not seriously hurt, is it, Dolly?"

"Oh—oh, dear no!" Dolly hastened to say. "I can't feel it at all, Mrs. Trevlyn. I take it as a jape, that's all." She grinned cheerily. "I've worked dozens of japes myself!"

Mrs. Trevlyn reassured herself that all was well now, then helped to remove the holly, and went away with Eunice and Mary.

"Well, who did do it, I wonder?" speculated Freda Foote, when they were alone at last. "You Bessie?"

"Me?" gasped Bessie, with ungrammatical indignation. "Of course I didn't! I wouldn't do such a thing!"

"Well, then, it wasn't one of us, or we should know!" said Freda, looking puzzled. "How strange! It couldn't get there by accident."

"I say, let's forget it and go to bed," said Clara gruffly. "I'm sorry it's happened, but—but we can't clear it up. Cheerio, children!"

It was such a blunt request that the girls took the hint. Out in the passage Babs whispered to her chum:

"Was that girl Eunice smiling as she went away?"

"I'm sure she was!" said Babs vehemently. "I watched her this time."

Clara and Dolly were comfortably settling down in their beds, when——

Tap, tap!

Just with that warning the door was opened, and the light had clicked on. Flap Derwent and Phyllis Howell came excitedly in. And Dolly noted, with great perplexity, that Clara was instantly wide awake!

"What's the rumpus now?" she asked.

"We've seen someone out in the lane," Flap Derwent answered. "It isn't much, but I thought you'd like to know, because he seemed to be looking up at this house quite a lot. It was Bessie Bunter's Beaver!"

"Never!" gasped Dolly.

"Yes—standing about in the lane at this time of night," answered Flap. "I thought you'd like to know, Clara. I suppose all the locks are good?"

"Dad always sees to that; and Dick's got some patent burglar alarms of his own invention that always go off when the milkman comes!" Clara answered. "Don't worry!"

Flap and Phyllis departed, presumably to tell the others. Dolly had thought about speaking, when she heard Clara's snore. It sounded warning and defiant. It was a hint that Clara wanted to be considered asleep; and Dolly took the hint.

But what did it mean?

Someone else in the room was thinking that; someone who knew more. Marjorie Hazeldene had said nothing, and had asked no curious questions. But her mind was full of them.

She alone, but for her promise, could have assured Mrs. Trevlyn that Mary's reason for coming to that room was very different from japing. She had understood that gasping, heartfelt little cry—"Oh, Mrs. Trevlyn!"—when Mary was forbidden to come to the room again. There was some reason—some deep reason!

Marjorie tried to forget it in sleep. She could not. Those grey, pathetic eyes seemed to haunt her. Poor Mary! she thought, again and again. There was something wrong—something radically wrong. A secret hung over the house. Clara knew things she would not explain. Why? Something very important it must be for Clara to give no word of explanation to her chums.

The Beaver Again!

"JUMP along, girls! Look lively! Snow's getting cold!"

That was Clara Trevlyn's cheery greeting on the following morning as she went from room to room, rousing her guests.

Quite herself she seemed now, with none of that uneasiness and preoccupation they had noticed the night before. She dragged Bessie Bunter out of her warm bed with all her old zest.

The girls washed and dressed with the briskness that the morning demanded. And it was only when they were descending the stairs that a small incident occurred to throw all their minds back to what had been happening the night before.

At the bottom of the stairs, Mary, the maid, was busily dusting. She did not seem to have heard them at first. Suddenly, however, she gave a start, just glanced at Clara, who was leading, and hurried away to the back of the hall.

And Clara—she had behaved in just the same manner! For no apparent reason at all she suddenly looked back, and paused for a second. And thus the two avoided meeting.

Intentionally? Although the girls said no word about it, it seemed to them that it could be nothing else!

"I've got the toboggans out!" yelled the cheery voice of Dick Trevlyn, from outdoors. "I say, it's simply ripping! You girls are slackers not to get up earlier than this!"

Customarily a quick retort would have come from Clara. Although she and Dick were the best of chums, they were "always at each other," as their mother said. But Clara did not even seem to have heard. A mood of preoccupation had fallen on her again.

And when she spoke, just as they had left the house, it seemed to her chums that her remark came right from what had been going on in her mind.

"Did you girls like Eunice Haddon?"

"She's a jolly girl, certainly, and got a very nice way with her," said Peggy Preston.

"Quite so," nodded Clara. "She's not quite my stamp, of course, and—and I rather expected I was going to have Christmas with you girls. Still, she certainly makes things go!"

"She does—she's full of life," said Freda Foote.

"I expect she'll be along some time to-day, but—but I'm glad that she's not staying here," said Clara. "She's rather tacked herself on to us, you know—not, of course, that we mind. Oh, I expect she'll be all right."

And with that somewhat cryptic remark, Clara set the lead and raced for the first toboggan.

Poor was Clara's acting at times, and it had been poor this morning. It was quite clear to the girls that, for some reason, Clara had not taken to Eunice at all. And that was strange, for, as a rule, Clara usually "hit it off" splendidly with a girl of Eunice's type.

In a very little while, however, they were forgetting all their thoughts as the fun of tobogganing warmed up. Whatever might be said about Clara's house, it was ideally situated for that sport. Dick, the amateur carpenter, had kept the toboggans in excellent order, and the races they had were the greatest fun imaginable.

Up and down they went—up and down. With dancing eyes and healthy, rosy cheeks, they made the most of the time. Even Bessie became enthusiastic until she clumsily rolled from one of the sleighs and followed her chums—in a sitting position!

The breakfast gong had to be sounded twice before they came—with one exception—from the snow sport. That exception, needless to say, was Bessie!

As soon as the meal was over Mr. and Mrs. Trevlyn started to get ready to go out. There seemed an enormous number of packages that they wished to take.

Clara spoke to the others.

"I wonder if you'd mind if Dick and I go with our people?" she said. "It's a lot of stuff for them to look after, and if Dick drives our little car it'll give the pater a rest."

"Of course we don't mind, Clara," the girls assured her.

They could guess whither these hospitable folk were bound, and the reason for their jolly smiles. That they would go into Morgen village with the parcels and return without them was quite certain!

Dick brought the little car to the door, and they were about to start off

(*Continued on page* 185.)

Here are many hints that will help to make your Christmas Party a success!

THE SCHOOLGIRLS' PAPER

THE CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY

No. 39. (New Series.) **Week ending December 23rd, 1922.**

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE;

A Happy Christmas!

By Miss Penelope Primrose.

(Headmistress of Cliff House School.)

MY DEAR GIRLS,—I wish you all a Very Happy Christmas!

The words are simple, the wish is old; but I think that in all our English language there are no three words that can convey more real meaning than these.

Pictures rise before one's mind even when one thinks about the words. A Happy Christmas! It is the great festival of re-union throughout our land. There are homes where, for the first time for twelve months, all the members of a family are together in one house. Some great impelling force brings them miles and miles from far-scattered interests. The great national institution compels them, in some sweet but resistless manner, to gather together to spend a happy Christmas.

Can there be anything finer than a festival that makes for happiness and joy? I think not. Christmas Day is a great day—the most wonderful day of the year. Peace on earth, goodwill to all men. Could a better motto be chosen?

Christmas, too, is a time for "making things up" and renewing old acquaintances. We send our Christmas cards to old friends, even though we have dropped correspondence; it is a pleasant reminder that we still think of them. We reconsider those little quarrels that have taken place and realise that we cannot be *quite* happy on the night of December 24th unless we are at peace with the world. And reconciliation follows.

A Happy Christmas! That is my wish to you all, and to everyone this year. I should convey more to you than I could say in any other words. Happy—and happiness is an infectious thing. Happiness in others reflects itself in you. Making someone else happy makes you happy, too. I hope that everyone will do their share this Christmas to make our great festival gayer and brighter than ever.

Believe me to be your sincere friend,

PENELOPE PRIMROSE.

SCHOOLGIRL TOPICS!

By the Editress (Barbara Redfern) and her Staff.

BACK AGAIN.

Back again in dear old England! Back to England, home, and beauty—and Christmas!

And we're glad! We've had a wonderful time. We've made two exceptional and outstanding friends in Eulalie da Silva and Zo-Rayah whom none of us will ever forget. Our adventures have had the happiest possible endings. But we are glad to be back—if only for Christmas!

They have different ideas of spending it on the Continent. We don't wish to sneer at any other people's customs in saying this. But there is something about an English Christmas that nothing else can touch—and we are back in time to have it!

You who have been in England while we have journeyed in "furrin pairts," have probably been preparing for the last few weeks. There are so many things to be done—paper chains to be made, pudding fruit to be prepared, rooms furbished up, presents made, and everything like that. We've missed those joys, but we haven't missed the joy of anticipation.

Whatever we've seen has not shaken our faith in the old-fashioned Yuletide that we all love so well. You may spend it in a palace or a cottage—it's Christmas just the same. And so we take this opportunity of wishing all our readers, very cordially indeed, a jolly good time at Christmas!

BESSIE—EX-EDITRESS.

Yes, and we've taken up the "reins of office" again!

Bessie Bunter, for six weeks installed in all her glory in Study No. 4 as Editress, has abdicated in our favour. She has delivered over the official fountain-pen (now broken beyond repair), piles of inky papers and proofs that we can never hope to sort out, and the full right to run the "Schoolgirls' Paper" just as we like.

We've looked through the last six issues of our little paper, and candidly, we're amazed—there's no other word for it.

When we entrusted Bessie with the task of "carrying on" during our absence, we never believed that she would complete much more than one issue. But she has! She has completed six; and each one is really amusing, even though it may be amusing in places where Bessie didn't intend it to be funny!

There are little things that have slipped in where they shouldn't have done. Bessie accuses the whole school of being in one huge conspiracy to jape her. Her leg has certainly been pulled quite a lot of times, and she has been blissfully ignorant of it.

But from what the other girls tell us, Bessie has worked like a trojan—she really has! If the majority of the contributions that have appeared have been by Bessie, it is because she's quite convinced that it needed some "really good writing" to keep the paper going. Bessie's taken herself far more seriously than we ever expected she would.

We can't take over without thanking Bessie for all she has done, and the real work that she has put into our little paper. Although we are going to run it on different lines ourselves, we're sure that Bessie has given you a nice change!

Three cheers for Bessie Bunter, ex-Editress! She thoroughly deserves them.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

What a time it has been at Cliff House—and every other school, we suppose—making Christmas presents!

There were dozens of little things that we had planned to do between us, and they'll never get done now. There hasn't been time to do much needlework since we've been away.

Our presents this year will have to consist more or less of novelties we have collected on our journeys. Marjorie Hazeldene, for instance, is immensely proud of the shells of two cocoanuts that she actually brought down from a tree with the aid of stones—an accomplishment worthy of Clara herself! Marjorie's going to turn them into pincushions of an entirely novel kind, and there will be just time for it.

Dolly Jobling also has got a bright idea. She has a small quantity of real desert sand collected by herself (mostly in her shoes, be it said!), and with this she is going to renovate a couple of old and neglected photo-frames, and give them a quite novel lease of life. How? Simply by smearing the frames with paint or gum, and then allowing the sand to stick on.

Peggy has a very nice bouquet of dry grasses that will be certain to be welcomed as a drawing-room ornament, and most of us have similar substitutes for what we originally intended to do. But we've missed some of the fun that you girls will have had.

Who does not know the frantic night when you sit up late to "finish it off to-night—I really must, you know!"? Who does not know the rush to the draper's shop, just when the busy gentleman is about to close and in no mood for trivialities, and you tell him that you must match some crochet cotton to finish off an article you're making? Who doesn't—— But there! We all know the excitement that comes from things going wrong—it's part of the fun!

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 189.

SOME PRESENT SUGGESTIONS!

By Marjorie Hazeldene and Meg Lennox.

WE met Angelica Jelly at the post-office as we were returning from Friardale. She was flustered and talkative. You know the state of affairs, of course; we saw at once that she was "wound up" and uneasy about something, and simply must confide in the first person she met.

"I've just sent a present to my Aunt Jessie," she told us. "It's a hair-tidy. I—I know she's got several, but it's different from all the others. Do you think she'll like it, Meg? I think she will myself. You see, I left it rather too late—in fact, I was busy on some poker-work and forgot about it. Yes, I bought the hair-tidy in the village—not really very smart. Do you think she'll like it, Marjorie? Yes, I'm sure it ought to be all right. Only I wish I had had more time, but I'm sure she won't be disappointed with it."

And all the time Angelica knew that it was a feeble present that she had sent, and was sorry she had sent it, and was simply trying to convince herself that it was all right when she knew it wasn't. So we put our heads together when we got to school, and this article is the outcome.

NOVEL FLOWER-HOLDERS.

A real and genuine "scrape" was once, to our knowledge, turned into a triumph by this ingenious idea.

It happened at Christmas-time, and there was some skylarking. A tray containing wine-glasses was bumped, and four went on the floor. Wine-glasses have a real passion for parting with their stems, and three of them did so, leaving the top intact. The fourth shivered to atoms.

Mother, of course, was angry.

"We've three medicine-glasses already!" she told her daughter. "I shall have to throw these tops away. They're no use for anything."

But ingenuity proved that they were. For each one a little crochet bag in green silk was made. Dainty yellow ribbons were attached, and the top of a wine-glass fitted into each. When they were half-filled with water they made ripping little "hanging vases" for violets and similar small flowers.

See if you can "convert" the top of a broken wine-glass in this manner. Of course, small tins can be used with equal effect.

PINCUSHIONS.

These are not new, we know. But have you ever made a combined pincushion and jewel-box for a friend's dressing-table?

You need the simplest of materials—a nice cigar-box and some oddments of material. The cigar-box is daintily lined, care being taken to allow the lid to shut as before. Its outside is decorated with art material, and the top of the lid is covered with a well-stuffed pad to form the pincushion. With a little care you can make them look quite effective—and novel, too!

PATCHWORK.

Since this has come back "into fashion" it offers unlimited scope for the use of all those oddments and snippings that have been accumulating in the work-basket.

There are plenty of novelties for girls who are ingenious at designing, and who do not care for the old "geometrical designs." It needs an artist to do anything like a picture; but, if you have an eye for colour, why not work up a "jazz design" of your own?

It is easily done in this manner. Choose the prettiest of your oddments, and cut them into the shapes most common in jazz patters—circles, ovals, crescents, straight pieces, etc. Then, working on a clear table, arrange them on the material that is going to be the foundation of your work.

It is best to start with something small, of course. Don't just put the colours anywhere; arrange them to get the best "effect." Blending must be studied; have your colours bold, but do not let them clash. When they are all arranged to your satisfaction, pin them very carefully in position so that the work of stitching them will be quite straightforward.

It really sounds easier than it is. Two or three evenings can be given to the arrangement of your pattern before you start, but it is well worth taking care. When once the pattern is pinned in position, you can very easily go on with the finishing work.

A Hearty Christmas Greeting to All Our Reader-Chums.

From the Editress, her Staff and Contributors, and the ex-Editress, Bessie Bunter.

CHRISTMAS FUN!

By Freda Foote.

CHRISTMAS is always a time of tongue-twisters. Uncles and aunts blossom forth and do their best; parents are quite sure they can master the old familiar phrases; and the "family" do their best.

Some people, you will find, are really expert with the six soldiers from Sandwich, and all the old favourites. They have tried them so many times that they know them off by heart, and can go right through without a single slip.

Well, I'm going to upset their little plans this Christmas by trying them with new ones. Here are some of them:

The treacle trickles thickly in the saucepan thin and trim, but the thick and tricky treacle will tickle as it trickles if the sticky, thick, and tricky treacle trickles on your hand.

Fancy frenzied fighters fighting frightened, frenzied foes.

For Biter, our dog, I bought a bone. The bone was bought and brought to Biter, and Biter brighter looked; a better biter thought he'd bite a bit of Biter's bone, but Biter, brighter, bit the biter, and brought the bought bone home.

I dare say you'll be able to learn them off with a little practice. I only wish you could hear Bessie mastering them. She's a treat!

Here is a little verse that looks all right on paper, but is more difficult to understand when it is told to you—not, of course, that there is much sense it it, in any case.

If you say it off quickly, however, you'll be able to puzzle most folk, and make them wonder whatever you're talking about.

A boxer, Lett, once bought a pet
A kangaroo called Letter-Box;
The kangaroo, a boxer, too,
Disliked to see a letter-box.
The boxer Lett let Letter-Box
Go off and box the letter-box!

The way to tell a little verse like this is, of course, to do so very seriously, and as though it was perfectly obvious to everyone that they understood just what you meant. You can make a lot of fun out of pretending that you cannot understand which word puzzles them.

If you know similar verses to this, bear my advice in mind.

The little game that I am going to describe is always known at home as Freda's Fishing—in honour of its inventor. Whether there is much honour in having your name always associated with a silly catch always seems doubtful to me.

Anyway, you must judge for yourselves. This is how we play it. It is used chiefly when we have a party of youngsters.

While they are sent out of the room, I arrange a fair-sized screen in one corner and prepare a little fishing-rod, made out of a stick with a piece of cotton and a bent pin on the end of it. Then I fetch the youngsters in one at a time, with a speech like this:

"This is a magic fishing-rod, and will tell your fortune. Take one of those pieces of plain paper off the table, double it, and fix it on the 'hook' on the line. Now, to make sure there's no one hidden behind the screen, have a look and see. All right? Then here's your fishing-rod. Swing it round, and let the paper hang over the screen."

They do so, of course. I wait for a few moments, then give a dramatic cry:

"It's happened! Your fortune's told! Pull the line back quickly!"

They do so, and take the paper off. And behold! to their utter astonishment (as a rule), there is a message written on the paper. It is usually some joking piece of "fortune-telling," specially adapted for the youngster in question.

Immediately, of course, they dash behind the screen to see who is concealed there, but there is no one to be seen—I am the only one in the room. I tell them that it won't work with them again, and send them out of the room so that someone else may come in.

How is it done? Perhaps you've guessed the trick, which really lies in sending the child to look behind the screen the first time. Beforehand I prepare all the "fortune-telling" on folded slips of paper just like the blank piece that the youngster chooses. I send them to look behind the screen to give me a chance to flick off the plain piece of paper and substitute a prepared piece. Of course, being folded, the writing is invisible to the youngster, and it is only the specially cute ones who ever think of watching me while I "hold the line for them."

ANOTHER NEW GAME: CLIFF HOUSE PUDDINGS.

Described by PHILLIS HOWELL.

WE evolved it, bit by bit, in the Common-room.

It was almost the last night of the term. Bessie Bunter had one of her usual, but perfectly impracticable, ideas of making a Christmas pudding. Her idea was to collect up the ingredients from all of us, start work immediately, leave the pudding to boil all night, and then, after breakfast, we could gather in the Common-room and have a "special snack."

Bessie Bunter, of course, thought that it was a perfectly and purely priceless notion. Bessie would! Quite apart from the possibility of Bessie getting the pudding made in the time, and the chance of it being allowed to boil all night, we wondered who really would get the "special snack" in the morning. Not us, at any rate! So we pulled her leg instead.

"If you'll let me have half a pound of currants, Dolly!" Bessie said coaxingly; and Dolly told her to wait while she went to her study.

"And sultanas from you, Clara!" said Bessie.

"Right!" said Clara.

"And suet from you, Phyllis!"

"Let me go to my study!" I said.

Out in the passage about a dozen of us gathered, and, amidst much chuckling, we hit upon our little scheme. Each of us obtained a piece of paper and wrote something. Then we formed up in a line, and in a very solemn manner indeed trooped back into the Common-room.

"Hallo! Where are the things?" said Bessie, looking vexed.

"Here they are!" we said, and one by one we presented—with the same solemnity—our slips to Bessie.

Bessie Bunter blinked at them in astonishment and disgust.

"'To Auntie Jones,'" she read. "'Please supply bearer with half a pound of blacking at my expense. Please supply bearer with two dozen cobwebs at——' Here, I say! What's the meaning of this?"

"For your pudding, dear!" said Clara sweetly.

"Mum-mum-my pip-pip-pudding?"

The expression on Fatima's face was so funny that we shrieked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say! I'm blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" hooted Bessie. "I said I was going to make a pudding!"

"Well, fire away!" said Clara.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie glowered upon the slips of paper.

"I sha'n't take any steps to make it——"

"No, you wouldn't have room for steps in the basin!" chuckled Freda Foote.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Duffers! You're jealous and mean!" sniffed Bessie indignantly. "You can jolly well starve now, for all I care! If you care to cackle about it I'm blessed if I can see the joke, so there!"

Slit, slit!

Our "ingredients" were rapidly reduced to a state resembling confetti and whirled about our heads.

"Now, that's unfeeling of you—and wasteful, Bessie," said Clara. "I wanted to put them all together and just see what sort of pudding they would have made. I guess it would be a funny one."

"Pudding!" sniffed Bessie. "Soot, and blacking, and cobwebs——"

Clara tapped her forehead dramatically.

"'Sssssh! Silence while the Oracle concentrates the grey matter!" she breathed. "Something is taking place within this lofty dome of thought!"

"If you think——" began Bessie.

"I do sometimes," Clara apologised. "I'm doing it now—at this very moment. I am thinking great and important thinks. I've got an idea! A game!"

"I'm blessed if I can see——"

"I'm glad my cranium isn't transparent," said Clara. "You're quite right, Bessie. It isn't visible yet. But there is an idea in this, girls. I think I can see it. Six of us can play if you'll clear the table. It's a game that will want a bit of concentration. Now listen!"

"About my pudding——"

"You keep on pudding—I mean, putting—your spoke in!" said Clara. "But this is a game——"

"I'm blessed if I'll play any silly old game when you won't let me make my pudding!" declared Bessie vengefully. "In fact, I'll jolly well push the table over, so there!"

We "shooed" Bessie to silence. Clara was wearing that patient look that she always wears when "something is taking place within."

"Listen," she said "First we want six times as many slips of paper as there are players. They must be blank, and all look as much alike as possible. In our case that will be thirty-six. Now take half of them and write really sensible ingredients on them. I suggest that you write three each of:

"Currants, raisins, sultanas,
Candied peel, suet, and flour."

We did so, in response to Clara's wishes. Bessie tried to interest us once more in her own scheme. As Freda said, the attempt was rather "fruitless."

"Now, for the other eighteen slips, we'll have three each of the following," said Clara.

"Cobwebs, blacking, soot,
Vinegar, soap, and sand."

"And the game?" we prompted.

"Well," said Clara, "come and sit round the table, and then I'll show you what I mean. We first of all shuffle them all up together, with the names downwards, and then deal them out, six to each girl. Doesn't matter how they're dealt—the quicker the better. Now each girl in turn will take one of her slips, read out aloud what the name is, and place it face downwards on the table. You won't be able to see what that slip is, so you've got to remember it—see? The next girl calls out 'Currants,' or whatever it is, and puts her slip down as well, and so on until all thirty-six are on the table. They can be put where you like, but they must not actually cover each other."

We did this, and the thirty-six slips of paper, blank side uppermost, were spread upon the table in fantastic designs. Bessie Bunter, forgetting her indignation, looked over our shoulders and began to appear quite interested.

"Now, starting with the girl who first put a slip down, you will each take one turn and pick a slip up," said Clara. "This goes round six times, and by then all the slips will be up. Of course, you all know just where everything is, don't you?"

Some of us didn't sound quite certain.

"You must know!" scoffed Clara. "The idea is to make either a perfect real pudding or a perfect nonsense pudding! Now start!"

We started.

And the result? Well, there wasn't anyone who got anything like a pudding! Those who tried for a real one always managed to get a few cobwebs or something like that in it! Those who tried for the reverse got just the ingredients we wanted. When we read aloud the results there were shrieks of laughter, I can assure you!

"How about counting?" Babs asked. "Does Peggy score because she has only one lump of soot in her pudding?"

"I should say so—as you've got two tins of blacking!" said Clara. "That'll be the best idea. Peggy having made only one mistake, wins the first game."

We went on playing, and although the game in that state would have been quite satisfactory, we very soon saw ways in which we could add to it. One of the big difficulties of the game, you see, is that no one knows what anyone else is going to decide to collect—and that difficulty, of course, comes on top of trying to remember what everything is!

Well, we soon allowed exchanging. That meant that, when we each had our six slips of paper, we could exchange with others who wanted to get rid of certain ingredients. For this you were allowed to tell the truth, or else "imagine." Thus, if you offered "currants," and it was really "soot," it didn't matter—except that your word was not likely to be trusted next time. On the other hand, saying "currants" when you were really offering currants would tell someone that you were trying to make a fruit pudding. The girl to get a complete pudding first was the girl to win the game, of course.

One other regulation we made was that to have a perfect pudding of only two ingredients—i.e., 3 sultanas, and 3 currants—would count double points; but not, of course, if it were 3 sultanas and 3 cobwebs.

PARTY PUZZLES!

Selected and Composed by Peggy Preston.

My first is in tin, but not in lead.
My second's in sung, but not in said;
My third is in search, but not in find,
My fourth is in take, but not in mind.
My fifth is in present, but not in gift,
My sixth is in valley, but not in rift.
Just seek it out, and you will find
I have a popular bird in mind!

Answer: **TURKEY.**

My first is water frozen,
My second is dry ground;
My whole they call an island,
In the Atlantic 'twill be found.

Answer: **ICELAND.**

I am a famous river sight,
For London visitors a delight.
Two words have I, of letters six—
The following hints will help to fix.

The initials of the words here described, and their finals, each read downwards, will give the hidden words:—

(1)	A part of yourself.	L	im B
(2)	A part of ourselves.	O	u R
(3)	Little more than half of nutriment.	N	utr I
(4)	A name for bad fear.	D	rea D
(5)	A mighty giant with a small name.	O	G
(6)	A number under ten but near it.	N	in E

The following sentences or phrases are made out of the letters of certain words, and if the letters are rearranged in their right order the words can be found.

In the first column are the muddled up letters; in the third column is a description of what they can be rearranged to spell.

Tis ye govern.	The privilege of a king	Sovereignty
Man must see	Pleasant passing of time	Amusement
Golden Land	A land we love	Old England
To love Ruin	A cause of civil war	Revolution
Hire candles	Old-fashioned illuminants	Chandeliers

My first is in hide, but not in seek,
My second's in hear, and also in speak;
My third is in cat, but not in dog,
My fourth is in wood, and also in log.
My fifth is in run, but not in walk,
My sixth is in speak, and also in talk.
My seventh is in hat, but not in scarf,
My eighth is in smile, but not in laugh.
My ninth is in holly, but not in berry,
My tenth is in grin, but not in merry.
With my assistance all girls may
Make Christmas homes look bright and gay.

Answer: **DECORATION.**

COOKERY HINTS!

Some Dainties for a Schoolgirls' Christmas Party. How to Make a Strawberry Trifle and Mayfair Jellies. Tips on Arranging a Buffet. :: :: :: :: By DOLLY JOBLING.

OUR Form-mistress, Miss Steel, usually gives a little party to the girls of the Fourth Form, just before the Christmas holidays.

It is a "dressy" affair, and real fashion prevails on this occasion.

Miss Steel gave her party last Wednesday, and as I was on my way down to the kitchen, to borrow an iron to press the creases out of my new dress, I peeped into the drawing-room, where the party was being held, and saw the most glorious array of refreshments on the buffet.

I'm awfully keen to get new recipes—they will be so useful if I give a party myself later on—so I went and coaxed cook to give me the recipe of the delicious trifle that I had just seen, also of the stunning-looking little jellies.

Cook was in a real "Christmassy" mood and made no bones about imparting some of her cookery knowledge to my willing ears.

I just jotted the recipes down as follows:

STRAWBERRY TRIFLE

Required.—Six sponge-cakes, half-ounce of sweet almonds, strawberry-jam, a little vanilla flavouring, one pint of custard, a few spoonfuls of cold milk, and a few glace cherries.

Cut the sponge-cakes into halves, and place them in the bottom of a pretty dish. Pour over a few spoonfuls of cold milk—just enough to soak the sponge-cakes—and add a few drops of vanilla flavouring.

Blanch and slice a few almonds, and sprinkle them over the sponge-cakes. Spread the cakes with a layer of strawberry-jam.

Prepare a pint of custard with a custard-powder, and pour it over the sponge-cakes.

When the custard has set, decorate the top of the trifle with the remainder of the almonds and glace cherries.

The almonds look well stuck round the edge of the trifle, and the cherries arranged in the centre.

MAYFAIR FRUIT JELLIES.

Required.—One pint packet of raspberry or lemon jelly, one tangerine orange, one banana, and a few slices of tinned pine-apple.

Prepare the jelly according to the direction on the packet. Peel the tangerine, divide it into sections, remove the pips and any pith.

Peel and slice the banana, and cut the pineapple into small portions.

Mix, and arrange the fruits in the bottom of little glass or china moulds, pour over enough of the jelly mixture to cover the fruit, and stand the moulds aside until the jelly has set.

Re-heat the remainder of the jelly, and pour enough into the moulds to fill them. Allow the jellies to set, dip the moulds for a few seconds into hot water, and turn the jellies on to dainty glass or fancy plates.

SOME TIPS ON CHRISTMAS DECORATING!

THE great secret of decorating is to give all your decorations proper places where they will show off to the best advantage. Don't be worried if your means are small; for often a better effect can be obtained with a few decorations than with a lot which are huddled together and kill each other.

You can be as individual as you like in decorating, and the more original you are, the better. For instance, a friend of mine concentrates only on mantelpieces—but she does those jolly well. Two or three ornaments are removed, and in their place are neat little ornaments composed of holly artistically arranged on wire stands. The mantel-border is replaced by one made specially for the occasion from dark cloth, upon which leaves and berries are either stitched or gummed. In the bed-rooms these are made from white material stencilled, and, although the cost is very small, the effect is most striking.

And why shouldn't it be? After all, when you enter the room your eyes do not take in all the details, by any means. As often as not your eyes go straight to the mantelpiece, which is always centrally situated. If that is really well decorated, it is quite sufficient for a room.

Those who are fond of paper chains should hang them artistically and drape them as much as possible. The colours should tone, and never clash. Some very pretty effects can be achieved if you hang them so that they will catch the light when the room is lighted after dark. Always study this effect when you are hanging them; but be careful to see, at the same time, that they don't become nuisances by obscuring the light. Try to keep them above it as much as possible.

Very beautiful effects can be obtained by Chinese lanterns, and if you have a conservatory or other glass place, you cannot choose a better situation for them. When they are glowing at night they are very pretty indeed; and here, again, paper chains can be used with good effect.

Lastly, do not forget to keep a very nice sprig of holly for the Christmas pudding. It is most annoying if a piece has to be wrenched away from the decorations at the last minute!

DO YOU KNOW THESE?

Flap Derwent has collected them for you.

Q. What is the difference between a fowl with one wing and a fowl with two.
A. A difference of opinion (a pinion).

Q. Who were the first astronomers?
A. The stars themselves, for they have always studded (studied) the night sky.

Q. When is truth not truth?
A. When it "lies" at the bottom of a well.

Q. When did King John complain of the laundry?
A. When he lost all his clothes in the Wash.

Q. How do we know a dove is very cautious?
A. Because he minds his peas and coos.

Q. Why does a donkey eat thistles?
A. Because he is an ass.

Q. How many insects does it require to make a landlord?
A. Ten ants (tenants).

Q. What is the difference between a cat and a sentence?
A. One has claws at the end of its paws; the other has a pause at the end of its clause.

Q. When is a fish like a bird?
A. When it "takes a fly."

Q. What two letters describe the usual condition of Bessie's purse?
A. M.T. (Empty!)

Q. What does an Atlantic liner weigh with two thousand people on board waiting to cross to Britain?
A. She weighs anchor.

KRISSMUS TIPS!

By Bessie Bunter.

IT was a few werds from Piper, deer reeders, just before leaving Cliff Howse, for the holly-days, that sujjested the titel of this yuseful article.

He had carrid my belongings to the gates, and then stood before me and held out his hand conspikuously, and then said something about tips at Krissmus being the usual thing.

"Here's a tip for you, Piper!" I said breezily, feeling in my bag. "Go and wash the dirt off your hand! Har, har, har! That's my tip to you!"

And I pulled out my handkerchief, and blew my nose merrily. But the dull old porter could not see the humer of my remark, and he looked dissapointed—more than that, in fact. So, to cheer him up, I informed him, in confidence, that I was ekspekting a rimmittunce from Bunter Court, and that I would cable him a substanshul tip from Clarer Trevverlin's place.

So I left him—raydyating with gratitude, THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 189.

I suppose—though I did not look—and set off with the others. But that little remark of Piper's sujjested that a few "Krissmus Tips" from my pen would prove a boon and a blessing to reeders of the "Schoolgerls' Paper."

Krissmus, deer reeders! Most gorge-us seezon of the yeer! The seezon when a young gerl's thorts turn to turkeys and geese and mince-pies and crakkers, holly and misselto and paper chains and Krissmus-cards, and carrol-singing and toboggining and hanging up our stockings—but especially to turkeys and Krissmus-pudding!

This is where my Krissmus Tips come in.

Don't have too much holly knocking about. It's too jolly prickly to be plezzant, and ought not to be assoshiated with Krissmus at all.

On the other hand, you can't have too much mizzletoe deckerating the house, but if there are boys inclooded in your party make sure that they are not short-sited. I have been most unforchunate in this respect, for all the Krismus parties I have been to in the past the boys have somehow been awfully shortsited. No matter how much mizzletoe I have stood under, the boys have never seemed to notice it, and have always hurried off at a tangent.

Clarer Trevverlin's brothers all seem to be fritefully shortsited—Dick Trevverlin in partickerler. I reely don't know how he manages to miss seeing the mizzletoe over my head sometimes! (He's seen it once or twice, and bolted for his life!—Clara T.)

Here are a few Goalden Rools for Krissmus:

1. Don't be afraid of eeting too much Krissmus-dinner. It is impossibul!

2. Let your first question on visiting your friend's house be: "Where is the pantrey?"

3. Don't fail to obtain permishon to visit the pantrey for a little snack whenever you have that healthy sinking feeling.

4. If you are a ventrillokwist, be very careful how you use the gift. My own wunderful gift has not been propperly appreeshiated this Krissmus.

5. Think twice before you honour your chums with carrols and seezonabul Krissmus songs. There is the risk that in your case, as well as mine, shear personel jellusy will make your friends stop you as soon as you start.

P.S.—If my reeders are lucky, they may find some "New Yeer Tips" in this paper next weak. (Afraid "your readers" are going to be unlucky, then!—Ed.)

CLARA TREVLYN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY!

(Continued from page 180.)

when Mrs. Trevlyn remembered something and jumped to her feet. Marjorie, who was beside her, spoke at once.

"You have forgotten something, Mrs. Trevlyn?" she said. "Can I run and get it for you?"

"Thank you, Marjorie—it was a message for Mary," she said. "I wished her to see to all the flowers this morning. I wonder——"

"Certainly I will tell her, Mrs. Trevlyn," promised Marjorie, and she was speeding off even as the car moved away, and the girls wished them good luck.

Two maids were in the kitchen, but there was no sign of Mary.

"I think she is in her room, miss," one of them said. "If there was any message——"

"I may as well run up and tell her myself," Marjorie smiled. "Can I find her room?"

"Oh, quite easily, miss. It is in the attics—the one with the green door."

Marjorie sped off up the stairs. There was no difficulty in finding the room with the green door. She gave it a smart tap.

"Oh!"

The sound came distinctly from inside the room, and Marjorie was startled. Somehow it sounded wrong—it was like a little ejaculation of astonishment. Or fear?

Immediately following it, there was a rustling sound, like the sorting of papers. Marjorie was sure they were papers crinkling. Then there came the creak of some lid hurriedly raised, and the soft grating of a lock. Only then did steps come across the room, and the door was opened.

"Oh, it's—it's you, Miss Marjorie!" said the maid, in a tone of utter relief.

Marjorie was staring.

"Yes, Mary. Mrs. Trevlyn asked me to bring you a message that you were to see to the flowers this morning. But——"

She broke off. Intuition would have told her that there was something wrong if her vision had not already done so. Mary was trembling. Her face was pale and drawn, and her eyes were red as though she had been recently weeping.

"Thank you, Miss Marjorie," murmured the girl. "I will see to the flowers as soon as——"

Marjorie laid a gentle hand on the girl's shoulder.

"Mary," she said, very softly, "you cannot disguise it from me now. You would not tell me last night, but I am sure that something is worrying you. Won't you tell me?"

The girl half-turned away.

"I can't! No; it—it wouldn't be fair!" she muttered. "I can't do it. I'm only a servant here, only kept on through—— Oh, no! Please don't ask me any more. Please leave me alone!"

"Is there no way I could help?" said Marjorie. "Are you quite sure, Mary?"

Again the girl seemed to struggle with herself. Her hands shook. There were glistening tears in her sad grey eyes.

"No, nothing. You—you wouldn't offer if you knew," she said hoarsely. "You don't know the sort of girl I am. Some day I may—— But no! Nothing ever happens—nothing can happen now!"

She turned abruptly, and then, as though afraid of a fresh outburst, closed the door.

Amazed and dismayed, Marjorie returned along the corridor and descended the stairs.

"You don't know the sort of girl I am!"

The words were ringing in her brain. What did it mean? What was this secret about Mary? The gay decorations of Christmas-time seemed a mockery when there was such hidden grief in the house. What was it that was causing her such sorrow, such secret misery, when everyone else seemed so gay.

"Marjorie, you slacker! You have been a time!" cried Dolly Jobling's voice.

Dolly came rushing forward, cheerfully heedless of the strange expression on Marjorie's face.

"Yes, we're waiting to go out!" Babs exclaimed, from the doorway. "Who do you think has gone down the lane?"

"I—I couldn't say," said Marjorie uncertainly.

The others were still too excited to notice her absent manner.

"It was my old Beaver!" cried Bessie. "And we're going to follow him, Marjorie!"

"Just going to walk the same way," Mabel Lynn exclaimed, taking Marjorie's arm. "He was hanging about round here last night, and now he passes again. And no one ought to be harbouring such thoughts as his at Christmas-time, did they?"

"Indeed they shouldn't!" said Marjorie; and the words came from her heart.

They hurried her into her hat and coat, and in another minute were making their way towards the lane. The quest of the Beaver promised to be rather exciting. Exactly what they would say when they met him they did not know, but all the girls felt that no one should be able to voice such thoughts as he had voiced when they met him last.

"These are his tracks—two footmarks and the stick," remarked Dolly. And after they had followed them for some time she went on: "He must have walked jolly quickly, for we haven't been long in following."

"Just what I was thinking," said Babs. "It's surprising."

And, as it happened, they were destined to be still more surprised. The bearded man had had a very short start, but on and on the girls walked without even catching a glimpse of him. Yet they knew they were right, for the footmarks were fresh and very easy to follow. Nearly half an hour must have passed, and their surprise was growing greater and greater when Babs suddenly gave a low, warning cry.

"You've seen something?" Babs asked.

Barbara's voice was astonished and perplexed.

"Yes; he's just over there amongst the trees, and he's not alone. There's someone with him, and it looks like a girl. I can see—— My hat! Do you see who it is, girls?"

One breathless name came from all of them:

"Eunice Haddon!"

"Look! Oh, I believe he's seen us! Yes, he has!" said Peggy breathlessly. "He's darting off amongst the trees. I believe Eunice is coming this way. Let's walk on as though we had seen nothing."

They did so. Both figures had disappeared from sight, but in another few moments a laughing, girlish figure broke through the hedge and stood before them.

"Hallo, hallo!" Eunice cried out gaily. "Why, it's all Clara's friends! Fancy meeting you here! Where's Clara?"

"Gone out with her people, Eunice?" Babs answered blandly. "I say, I wonder if you'd mind enlightening us a bit? Who is that old fellow with the beard?"

For a second utter consternation showed upon the tall girl's face.

"That—that old chap?" She laughed, and her face was composed again. "Oh, you saw us, did you? Just a poor old tramp, I should say, Babs, properly down on his luck. I gave him a little tip to help him on his way—a ten-shilling note, that was all. I felt so sorry for him. Has he been stopping you as well?"

"We found him very quarrelsome," Babs answered. "He rather made us wonder who he was, that's all?"

"Yes, just a tramp," said Eunice. "I say, I'm awfully sorry to appear so rude, but I've had my walk and I promised to hurry back to Stone Towers. Do you mind if I rush off? I'll be coming along to see Clara this evening, for certain."

She had gone almost as quickly as she had appeared, laughing and waving her hand, such a seemingly happy and care-free creature.

"And so he's just a surly tramp—that's all," mused Babs.

"He may be; but if so it only makes it queerer, to my way of thinking," said Flap Derwent, in a strange voice. "I've just been looking through the hedge, girls, and, whatever he was, one thing is quite clear. To judge by those tracks, Eunice didn't just meet him there. I should say she's been walking up and down, waiting for someone at that spot, for more than half an hour!"

"You don't mean it!" gasped the girls incredulously.

"I do!" said Flap. "Look for yourselves! And all I can say is, if the Beaver was a tramp, for whom was that girl waiting?"

No one could answer. The question was beyond them!

Mary's Secret!

DARKNESS had fallen upon Rose Villa that evening when a girlish figure sat in the kitchen, brooding and alone.

The two other maids had laid the cold supper and gone out. Mary was duty-maid; Mary was keeping her vigil alone.

Faintly to her ears came the sounds of all the jolly voices in the drawing-room. Fred and Harry, Clara's elder brothers, had arrived at last, and were causing all the fun imaginable. Again and again there would come a jolly, unrestrained gust of laughter. Then, at intervals, high and distinctive, another voice would sound—a gay, laughing voice that none could mistake.

"Eunice Haddon!" muttered Mary; and she gritted her teeth.

Again the laughter came; and it seemed this time, like a sound that grated on every nerve in the girl's body. She rose suddenly from her seat by the fire, quivering, as though she must get away from the sound of it. Her steps took her to the window.

There she stood, gazing out into the darkness of the bleak, wind-swept night.

Thoughts crowded her mind—thoughts that made her bite her lip and wince.

"Twelve months ago!" the girl muttered. "Twelve long months ago! Then—oh, little did I ever dream of this! Not twelve months ago!"

Her mind was whirling. She saw, once more, a gaily-lighted room. In her imagination she could hear the soft strains of a band. And faces surrounded her—faces she loved.

She started abruptly from her thoughts and gazed around the deserted kitchen.

Gone—all gone! These were dreams now, nothing more. She began to pace up and down afresh, filled with new thoughts.

"Can it still be possible?" she muttered to herself. "Will he ever come now? Once I was so hopeful——"

Her voice died away.

Presently she looked at the clock.

"It is near the hour that he said, and seldom have I failed to watch, if nothing else," Mary murmured to herself. "I thought then that it was possible—that all this terrible business could be cleared up. Once, by his letters, he was so confident—so sure of success."

A shivering fit took her, and she moved nearer to the fire.

"So sure!" she breathed. "Oh, if only it could come true then! If only the world could have known of the great injustice! Not for myself so much—I have learnt different things. But for him it means so much—everything! And he has these enemies, and I have never been able to warn him——"

She looked around again. It was a cosy kitchen. The other two servants, left to their own devices, had decked it as it should be decked at such a season. Holly everywhere, and paper chains, and the little mottoes.

She sank to a chair, lost in her gloomy and bitter reflections.

Presently she looked back to the clock, whose hands dragged so slowly around the white face. A thought came to her mind.

"No, they will not be wanting anything just yet. I have time—time and nothing else to do."

Swiftly she left the kitchen and went flitting up the stairs. When she had opened the green door in the attics she clicked on the small electric light. It was a trim, tidy room—so trim that something instantly caught her eye and her heart to jump with alarm.

Had someone been here disturbing things?

That cardboard box—she had not left it like that. The lid of the other one had been properly closed! Her breath was coming faster. There was a fear in her heart. Desperately she searched in the little pocket of her skirt and withdrew a key. She ran across the room and placed it in the lock of a wooden locker that stood against the wall.

Back grated the lid, and from the lips of Mary, the kitchen-maid, came a long, low sigh of intense gratitude.

The envelope—the packed, yellow envelope on which her eyes were resting, was still safe—still undisturbed.

Quickly she ran across the room and locked the door. Then she was back again and fingering the envelope. The sadness had gone from her grey eyes. Once more the old hope shone in them as she took the package in her fingers. One by one she took letters from it, some with Canadian stamps, some with American stamps, but all addressed in the same writing. She counted them twice, and breathed again.

"All here!" was her fervent comment.

They were replaced, and the key turned in the locker again. But at the door Mary stood hesitating. After a moment she locked the room and took the key of that as well. Then she was tiptoeing down the stairs.

Back in the kitchen again, and she was lost in her reveries when the sudden striking of the clock aroused her. She started up, almost mechanically.

"To-night—yes, I can do it, if the coast is clear!" were her muttered words. "It may be fruitless. I shall not mind that. If only I could believe that there was hope, I would do anything!"

She opened the back door and went out into the snowy garden. It was cold, and snow was falling again.

Her hands were trembling, but not only with cold. Excitement and a certain dread played their parts as well. She took a bicycle lamp from a shelf and, with shaking hand, lit the lamp. From the bottom of a drawer came a piece of green paper to cover the glowing lens. Last of all she draped about it a duster that all but obscured the light.

She tiptoed across the kitchen. It meant visiting the forbidden room again. Discovery would mean a repetition of the questions she dreaded. But the risk had to be run.

The Chinese lanterns threw but a soft light in the hall. Mary glided to the stairs. Her foot was on the first one when——

"What are you doing, Mary?"

The voice was low and harsh. A hand fell on her shoulder so startlingly that she all but dropped the lantern. Starting about, she saw—Eunice Haddon!

"You?" muttered Mary.

"Yes. What are you doing here? What is the lantern for?"

Mary's eyes glowed with a strange and desperate light.

"Leave me alone! I have stood as much of your cruelty as I can!"

A low, sneering chuckle answered her.

"Blow out that light—blow it out, I say, or I'll call Mrs. Trevlyn!" Mary obeyed, as though helpless to do anything. "I'm in the house, and I'm always watching your little tricks! Don't forget that, Mary Ca—— But perhaps you'd rather I forgot that part?"

Mary made a choking answer.

"Can't you leave me alone, with your horrid taunts?"

"Not when I know so much—and you don't deserve to be left alone!" came Eunice's mocking answer. "I know too much! Mrs. Trevlyn's too kind to you! But I don't forget your history—I don't forget the past! Back to the kitchen with you now, and if you dare to leave again I shall raise an alarm, and you'll be caught next time!"

Without a word Mary obeyed the order.

Baffled—beaten! Caught by the spying, cunning girl who came as a friend to the house! Her heart was over-full. She sank to a chair, and the tears streamed down her cheeks. Friendless, helpless!

Friendless?

Mary could not guess the scene that was taking place at that very moment. Four girls had trooped back into the drawing-room, looking sheepish and quite unable to say a word for themselves.

"Hallo! They're back!" cried out Clara Trevlyn gaily. "Fixed up the fortune-telling stunt?"

"We—we couldn't, after all," admitted Barbara Redfern.

There was a yell of laughter from Dick Trevlyn.

"Ha, ha, ha! Poor Babs, Mabs, and Marjorie and Peggy—even the four of you couldn't beat my wheeze! And I'll wager you don't know how it was done, even now!"

"We'll try and think it out later," said Babs, and the four girls who had left the room on the excuse of thinking out a fortune-telling trick got to their seats and seemed very glad to do so.

Almost at once the door opened to admit Eunice Haddon.

"I couldn't find the music—it must be down here after all!" she exclaimed, in her gay and bantering manner. "What a dreffle headpiece I'm getting! Yes, here it is, after all!"

Four girls looked at each other. And four pairs of eyes seemed to say, at the same moment:

"What a fearful story-teller the girl is!"

The truth was that fortune-telling had been only a prearranged excuse for getting outside the door as soon as Eunice herself made an excuse to get away. And those four had seen—not everything, it is true; but they had watched the two figures that stood together at the foot of the stairs!

"Eunice was bullying her!" Babs muttered.

"Yes. Holding something over her head," Mabs replied, in the same low tones. "Yet it is a secret. She came back here as though nothing had happened."

"Can we doubt now who put the holly in the bed last night?" asked Marjorie.

They could doubt it no longer.

How they possessed themselves in patience until bedtime, they hardly knew. But supper was over at last, and Mrs. Trevlyn suggested making a move. Eunice again was at the door to bid them all good-night, but in the manner of at least four of them she must have noticed a coldness that had not been there before.

And those four, while Clara stopped to chat over many things with Fred and Harry Trevlyn, hurried to Clara's own room above and spoke their thoughts at last.

"What an impostor the girl is!" Babs burst out. "Whatever are the rights and wrongs of the case, it was sheer bullying, nothing else!"

"Did you see what the girl was carrying?" Mabs breathed. "Was it a lantern?"

"I think so," said Peggy. "Carefully covered with a cloth. And it—— Oh, my goodness, what's that?"

It was like a scraping sound, right above their heads.

Marjorie, who was standing by the window, gave a gasp of sheer surprise.

"Girls, come here, quickly!" she breathed. "There's something awfully queer! It's like a light—coming right from above the room!"

They crowded to the window.

It was true. For the moment they held their breaths in utter astonishment.

Flash, flash, flash—they could see it even as Marjorie said. Above their heads a green light was shining intermittently into the gloom beyond.

"Someone signalling!" muttered Peggy.

"Yes, and from the roof!" Babs said. "I say, it's queer, isn't it? Do you think we ought to see who it is?"

"We ought to have a look," said Marjorie. "I think—— My goodness, I believe that Mary's room is almost above our heads!"

They went softly up the stairs to the

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY....PRICE 2d
THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 189.

attic bed-rooms. The green door stood partly ajar. Even as Babs opened it further a cold draught blew upon her face. She turned to whisper to the others.

"There's a sort of skylight open," she said. "If I stand on this chair just underneath I can look through. Wait a minute, girls."

She stepped up as she spoke and drew her chin up to the aperture. The sight that met her gaze filled her heart with not a little alarm.

It was certainly startling enough.

Perched uncertainly on the sloping roof was the figure of a girl. Around her the snow whirled in its cold and white ferocity. Not a second glance was needed to know that it was Mary, the kitchenmaid.

Shivering with the cold she was as she kept to that precarious perch. Her feet rested in the guttering, and one hand was pressed to the freezing tiles to steady her. With the other hand she removed the duster again and again from the bicycle lantern.

Flash, flash, flash!

"What is it, Babs?"

Babs silently stepped down for the others to see. They looked in turn. It was amazing and eerie. So this that they had stumbled on so accidentally was part of the sad maid's secret? What did it mean? What possible import could those green flashes have for anyone?

Scrape!

Marjorie dropped from the skylight and laid a trembling hand on Babs' shoulder.

"She is coming back!" she said. "Let us get away. The slightest sound might startle her and make her lose her hold. I am so anxious. Let us get away. She might think we were spying."

Softly they crept into the passage, closing the door behind them. They listened anxiously to hear that the girl had made a safe return. What a long time she was! Had something happened? Was she stuck in any way?

Quite suddenly a sound came, but not the sound for which they were listening. Mary must have regained the room without making any noise. It was her voice they heard—a muttering, trembling voice that said:

"Not to-night. He has not come. There is never, never any reply——"

The voice tailed away into a broken sob. Unintentional eavesdroppers as they had been, the four girls turned. Without speaking a word, they tiptoed down the stairs and melted away to their rooms.

The Intruder by Night!

"BY the way, there's a bit of excitement that I quite forgot to tell you," said Dick Trevlyn at the breakfast-table on the following morning. "Eunice Haddon was ringing up. I don't know whether she thought she'd scare me."

"Did she say 'Boo!' at you?" asked Clara banteringly.

"No; she said 'Burglars'!" was Dick's bland retort.

"What! Over at Stone Towers?" Clara cried.

Dick laughed.

"Jumping crickets! How you do leap at conclusions!" he said. "I should have told you everything if you hadn't butted in umpteen million times. Eunice warned me against burglars. She said that her father's heard that a chap's going to try and break into a house round here when someone flashes a lantern—red, green, or some silly colour like that. Prime, isn't it?"

"Burglars!" said Fred and Harry Trevlyn. "Oh, that's the goods! Hope they trot round soon!"

There was a laugh at that, but hardly any of the Cliff House girls joined in it with any enthusiasm.

With the exception of Clara and Bessie—the latter was too unreliable to be trusted with such a secret—all the girls knew of the previous night's happenings.

On top of everything came a message that was, for them, of such a startling nature.

All the girls, except Clara and Bessie, drifted out of the room and gathered in a cluster in the hall as soon as ever they could.

"And so Eunice has sent that message!" breathed Babs.

"But it can't be true!" said Mabs disbelievingly. "It seems so absurd on the face of it. When I think of that girl as we saw her, crouching there on the roof and shivering with the cold——"

"And what she said afterwards!" Marjorie murmured. "Oh, no; it's false ever to think such a thing."

"They must have seen the light at Stone Towers," said Dolly Jobling breathlessly. "Clara's is the only room that faces right on to it. And you say that the girl was on the roof right over the spot?"

"Yes, signalling in a special direction, of course!" Babs answered. "Some friend of Eunice must have told her, and she has sent this message to make us distrust Mary. I think I would distrust Eunice first, after what we've seen!"

"So would I!" said Flap Derwent. "What an unpleasant position it is! If only Clara had told us what it all means!"

Hardly had she finished speaking than from outside the front door came the hum of a motor-engine.

A moment later there was a peal at the bell, and when the door was opened a girl motor-cyclist stood outside—none other than the very girl they had been discussing!

"Hallo, everybody!" she cried cheerily. "Sorry to knock you up at such an unearthly hour, but I'm just out shopping. I say, Dick, did you get my message about the chappie? I shouldn't wear that gold chain of yours, in case he sets about you!"

Dick and Clara made some joking replies, and then at a call from their mother hurried away.

Eunice Haddon strolled across to where the other girls were standing.

"Queer business, you know, isn't it?" she said chattily. She lowered her voice to a more confidential tone. "You know, I haven't said anything to the others. But the light has been seen, and not very far from here."

"We don't doubt that," said Babs in a very quiet voice. "You have good reason to know all about it, Eunice!"

"I?" said the girl, startled.

"Yes," said Babs, with the same directness. "We're not quite so much in the dark as you may imagine. And we should like to know why you are trying to turn us against Mary!"

"Mary! Then you know?" gasped the girl, as though stung.

NO BUSINESS THERE! Marjorie peeped into the room. There was the rustle of a dress, and a figure wearing a white cap moved in front of the window. It was Mary, the servant!

"We know what your message hints at," said Babs. "But we don't believe in a burglar."

For the moment Eunice looked staggered. Then, all at once, that fire seemed to leap in her eyes again. A flush suffused her cheeks. She took a step forward, and stood confronting Babs. Her expression was ugly.

"What are you hinting at?"

"Why are you so spiteful to that girl?" countered Babs.

"Who are you to criticise me?"

"A visitor here—and you are only a visitor. I am on the same footing as you!"

Again that fire glowed in the tall girl's eyes.

"Oh!" she said. "Perhaps you haven't heard? Perhaps Clara hasn't told you yet who Mary really is?"

"Clara has told us nothing," said Babs.

"Then I will!" answered the other, in a vibrant voice. "Have you ever heard of the name Canninghame—James Canninghame? Come on—you read the papers! Think of six months ago—there was a notorious swindle, a man who was running a public company was suddenly

found bankrupt. He'd been robbing people for months. Before the police could catch him he bolted—remember? Canninghame was his name. And that is the name of Mary, the maid here—Mary, the daughter of that swindler, who ran away to America to get away from justice!"

Babs could hear her heart beating.

"I can't believe that you would say such a thing unless it were true!" she muttered.

"Oh, it's true enough!" said Eunice, with a savage satisfaction. "He ran away from Stone Towers, where we live at present. His daughter—she was there alone. That's Mary. These good people here took her in out of charity. She had no friends to go to—no relatives at all. She's useless as a maid, useless as anything. Crafty and deceitful, like her father. The class of girl to rob her best friends. And that's Mary Canninghame——"

"Eunice, what are you saying? Whatever are you saying?"

Eunice whirled about. Beside her stood Clara, wild-eyed and shocked.

"You have told them?" was her breathless question. "You have told them what I have been keeping secret?"

The change in the smart visitor was amazing.

"I—I hope I haven't done wrong, Clara," she said contritely.

"You've really told?" Clara breathed.

"Yes. You see, it—it was an argument that led to it. They thought I was unjust——"

"And so you are, if you treasure up that girl's father's misfortunes against her!" Clara burst out furiously.

"Misfortunes!" interjected Eunice. "Why, he robbed——"

"Who's getting the benefit of what happened, anyway?" Clara interrupted wildly. "You—you and your people! You're the last one who should ever throw a stone against this girl! Your people foreclosed and took Stone Towers. You're living where Mary used to live. If you had a spark of pity in you you'd never tell such a story as you've just told!"

"But, Clara——"

"Here she is in this house, just a maid, at Christmas-time—friendless and deserted!" Clara rattled on. "It's a horrid position for me, because I knew her slightly in the old days. "It's a horrid position for my people. They wanted her to be a sort of companion, but she wouldn't. Just board and lodging—that was all she asked. She's worked well. She's had everything to put up with. You're not the girl I thought you were, Eunice!"

Eunice looked as though she wished the ground to swallow her up.

"Oh, Clara, I am so sorry!" she said. "I didn't know you'd take it like this! I wouldn't have said a word if I'd known. I say, do forgive me! You'll shake hands, won't you?"

"Well, if you're really sorry, "said Clara, and she shook.

"And I must go," Eunice added. "I wish I'd never come, making all this trouble. You didn't tell me, you know, or I wouldn't have said a word. As it is, I won't breathe another thing against Mary. There is a lot in what you say. Good-bye!"

It was a very awkward silence that fell as she closed the door.

"Don't let on, girls, for goodness' sake," said Clara at length. "You know the truth now—you know why I was so startled to see that girl here. My mater's letter telling me about it never got to me. I knew what had happened to her father, but I never told anyone that he lived so near to us. It wasn't because I think any the worse of the poor kid for what her father is supposed to have done."

"Was the case proved?" Marjorie asked.

"No," Clara said. "He left a most pathetic note, saying he'd gone away to get proof of his innocence, and would return. But that's six months ago. No one knows anything about him, except that sometimes a letter comes here for Mary. It's always in a disguised handwriting, but dad guesses, although he pretends not to."

"Poor Mary!" sighed Babs.

Clara drew a deep breath.

"Thanks! I knew that was just how you'd feel," she said. "I hope you'll try and go on just as though you didn't know."

The girls promised they would.

But during that day, when they saw Mary about her duties, they thought of her in quite a new light. Mary Canninghame! No wonder there was that lurking sadness in her eyes! No wonder Christmas meant so little to her! Watching and waiting—waiting for a father whose name was under the black and terrible cloud of swindling!

Dolly had a startling theory to offer after dinner.

"That signalling!" she breathed. "Do you think it possible that she was hoping her father might be somewhere near to see it?"

"Poor Mary, if that is her only hope!" Babs answered sadly. "She looks so hopeless that there can be little chance of her signals ever being seen. How pathetic! And yet, of course, she must naturally cling to any hope."

At tea-time there was a telephone-call for Babs. From the other end of the wire she heard, with amazement, the dulcet voice of Eunice.

"It's about the Beaver," Babs said, as she turned away from the instrument. "Eunice Haddon rang up—rather a queer thing for her to do. She said she's heard that the chappie she helped has been taken very ill. He's in some hospital, almost dying."

"Dying!" gasped Bessie, looking quite pale. "Oh, I say! Poor old fellow! I—I'm sorry I called him an old Beaver now!"

But she looked cheerier again when tea was over, and Dick led the way to the drawing-room. Eunice had not come, and all the girls noted the fact with a secret relief. They were rather wishing that they were not going to see the girl from Stone Towers again.

Games were started, and it was from Mr. Trevlyn that the suggestion at last came that a game of Postman's Knock should be played. The excitement of Bessie at the very mention of it was terrific.

"Oh, rather!" she cheered. "Topping game! I say, I'll be the jolly old postman, you know! I'm spiffing at taking parts like that! I can talk just like a postman, too! I say, Mr. Trevlyn, let me go and be postman first!"

"Right, Bessie—you shall go!" Mr. Trevlyn said. "We've played all these other games for two or three hours, and it's quite time we had a change. Off you go!"

Bessie went out into the passage beaming delightedly. Then her gaze wandered as far as the stairs.

And something seemed to clutch Bessie's heart. She would have shrieked if she had had the power.

She was not alone!

At the bottom of the stairs was the figure of a short man. He looked almost as surprised as Bessie. A matted beard covered most of his face, but two venomous eyes glowed in the lamplight. They had met before!

For two tense, dreadful seconds Bessie Bunter cowered back against the wall as though petrified with fear. And then the figure moved. It was enough. Bessie whirled about, snatched open the door, and fled in the room shrieking.

"Help! Help! I've seen the gig-gig-ghost! The gig-gig-ghost!"

There were loud cries of laughing disbelief.

"A ghost! A shadow!" scoffed Clara.

"What ghost?" others asked.

"The gig-gig-ghost of the Bib-Bib-Beaver!" Bessie shrieked. "I sus-sus-say he was there! You—you l-l-look, if you don't believe. It's the g-g-ghost of the Beaver! He's come to haunt me!"

Dick Trevlyn ran for the door, his brothers following him.

In another moment Dick gave a cry of genuine alarm.

"Yes, it's true! There's something wrong!" was his startling report. "Dad, the passage window has been forced. I'm going out to see if I can see anything!"

Mr. Trevlyn appeared as Harry ran back and grabbed a heavy walking-stick.

"Keep back, girls!" he warned them. "I'll run over the house first and see that everything is safe."

Even as he and Dick went running up the stairs two maids came from the kitchen, crying out to know what was the matter. At Mrs. Trevlyn's quick report a fresh cry left one of them.

"Then where can Mary be?" she exclaimed in alarm. "Mrs. Trevlyn, she's not been in the kitchen for some minutes. She said she was going upstairs. We heard nothing——"

"Mary upstairs?"

It was the signal for the whole house to join in the hunt. Harry and Dick were bumping about above when the others joined them. More than one girl was crying out for the missing servant girl, but never an answer did they receive. Down in the hall Bessie was still chattering about the Beaver.

"Mary! Mary, where are you?" the cries rang out.

And then quite suddenly Harry's voice answered:

"I've found her! Bring a lantern! Here she is!"

The Best Gift Books for Xmas

Packed with jolly pictures, coloured plates, stories, games, riddles, and jokes, one of these splendid Annuals will give you more fun and amusement than any toy could ever do. See that you get one for Christmas.

PLAYBOX & TIGER TIM'S ANNUALS *for the very little ones.*

WONDERLAND & PUCK ANNUALS *for children from 7 to 14.*

SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN & HOLIDAY ANNUALS *for Girls and Boys at School.*

6/- *each of all Booksellers, Newsagents and Bookstalls.*

The very tone of his voice told them the truth.

Mrs. Trevlyn came running along, carrying an electric torch. She flashed it on the stairs that led to the attics, and there they saw Mary

She was lying sprawled in a heap, her face deadly white, her lips apart.

"Poor, poor child!" murmured Mrs. Trevlyn, hastening to her side. "Perhaps it is just a faint from shock. I must take her to her room."

Already she was picking up the unconscious girl and carrying her upstairs. The girls followed as Mary was laid upon the little bed. Peggy fetched cold water, and with it they moistened the girl's open lips.

She shuddered. Then her hands twitched convulsively. A voice that they hardly recognised came from her throat, although her eyes were still closed.

"He's here—he's here!" that voice muttered. "Oh, don't let him take anything! Don't let him take anything! Stop him! He'll get away with it! Oh!"

"Poor girl, she saw him!" murmured Mrs. Trevlyn. "There really was someone in the house. The shock must have caused her to faint. I will put her to bed and give her something to bring her round."

Out in the passage Marjorie Hazeldene touched Babs and drew her to one side. Her voice was trembling as she asked Babs to repeat what Mary had said.

"Those were the words?" Marjorie gasped. "Oh, I am so glad! I can keep silent now. If I spoke it might look so funny!"

"Why? Whatever do you mean?" asked Babs, astonished.

"I've been to our room," Marjorie answered. "I looked under the bed. There I saw a bicycle-lamp that was still burning, and tied across the front of it was a piece of green paper. Mary must have been signalling again!

On Christmas Day!

THE night had passed, and the morning light flooded the rooms. Bright, happy faces were to be seen in the passages as the girls rushed from room to room, carrying everywhere the same gay message:

"A merry Christmas to you! A merry Christmas!"

For it was Christmas morning!

Even Bessie was awake and sitting up. In her hands was the bulky stocking that she had hung up the previous night. Bulkier than ever it was this morning. Bessie shook it, and on to the bed there fell the weirdest assortment of cotton-reels and empty match-boxes that the girls had ever seen.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a perfect shriek of laughter as Bessie discovered her "presents."

"Oh, I say—this is stupid!" exclaimed Bessie disgustedly. "I suppose Clara's jolly well done this! She's nearly split my lovely silk stocking, too, ramming them all in! I'm blessed if I'd have hung it up if I'd known!"

There was laughter and ragging everywhere. Breathlessly excited, the girls dressed in those party frocks without which it simply would not be Christmas. Bessie had a voluminous and very "rustle-y" dress which took ever so much arranging, and a sash that everyone declared would set the house on fire if it touched any wood.

Then they were descending the stairs; and there at the bottom stood a maid, wearing a bright and pretty dress that was part of the "regulation dress" at Rose Villa on Christmas Day. She smiled and stood to one side as they came down, and her greeting was:

"A really happy Christmas, young ladies!"

It was Mary.

"Merry Christmas to you, Mary!" the girls responded heartily.

She was trying to smile; she was trying to look bright and cheerful. But all the time there was that haunting sadness deep in her grey eyes. She could not get away from—something!

There was an opportunity for the girls to chat together when the meal was done.

"That poor girl! If only we could help her to enjoy just this one day!" Barbara Redfern breathed. "If we could do anything. But she must be thinking of her father and those old days. There is nothing that we can do to bring them back again."

"And yet there's some mystery—I'm positive of it!" Mabs put in. "I was thinking about it last night. Eunice and the Beaver are both in it. You remember they were talking together yesterday morning. Well, I'm positive that that meeting was arranged. Then last night Eunice told us that the Beaver was ill. Why? Perhaps to put us off our guard; perhaps she knew he intended to enter the house."

"But what for?" Flap asked. "We know he was upstairs, and uninterrupted, yet he took nothing at all. Why was he here?"

"Something must have made him desperate—something must have driven him to the house!" speculated Peggy Preston. "Other nights he's been hanging about outside, but that's all."

"Very likely. And he's not all he seems, either," Babs said. "He was annoyed with us in the village for noticing him at all, as though he didn't want to attract attention. Then he bunked when Bessie suggested pulling his beard—and you can think what you like about that! And although he looks so old he was able to get away last night—Fred Trevlyn couldn't catch him at all!"

Marjorie struck in with a breathless comment.

"It's something to do with Mary," she said. "And, if you ask me, I think the Beaver was trying to rob her of something. That was what caused her to faint when she saw him. She must have been signalling with the lantern, but not to him!"

"Oh, certainly not to him!" the girls agreed.

"But what he could want to take I can't guess," Marjorie went on. "Only it must be something very important. I believe Eunice knows what it is, and that's why she keeps on coming here, although anyone with half an eye could see she wasn't really welcome. But I don't think she'll dare to come to-day, after sending us that false message about the man last night."

"I feel sure she won't come now," Babs agreed. "If she did—why, we'd soon find out something then!"

Clara was with them when they went for a walk that morning, and so discussion was dropped. It was because they were guests in Clara's house that made the situation such a difficult one.

When they returned, they were astonished at the sight that met them in the hall. Four figures stood in a line—Mr. Trevlyn and his three sons. Each wore a spotless white apron and a white mob cap. They stood smartly to attention as the girls entered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a shriek of laughter from the girls. They simply could not help it.

"Dad, what ever's the matter?" cried Clara.

"Topsy-turvy day!" answered the beaming Mr. Trevlyn. "To-day we're going to change places at dinner-time. The maids are going to sit at table, and you shall have four skilled waiters to attend to your wants. Ha, ha, ha! Think it's all right?"

"Capital spree!" cried Clara delightedly.

It proved to be a delightful meal, and one of the gayest that the girls could ever remember. In came the maids, looking rather embarrassed, but as pleased as anyone at the compliment. And Mary—yes, she was smiling, too.

Christmas pudding, mince-pies and custards as well were added to the plates,

CRASH! CLATTER-CRASH! There on the floor lay Mary, the maid, with her tray fallen and the glasses broken and spilt in all directions!

and when those had been disposed of Fred Trevlyn brought in the crackers, and Mr. Trevlyn, in his daughter's own language, "put the lid on everything" by giving a solo on the whistle that he found in his own cracker.

All too soon did the merry meal finish. The boys positively insisted on washing-up, and a tremendous clatter came from the kitchen while they did it.

And then——

Like a bombshell it came. There was a peal at the bell, and one of the maids who had resumed duty, answered it. She came to the door to announce:

"Miss Eunice Haddon!"

And there was Eunice, as smiling and as cheery as ever, entering the room. Smiling and cheery—yet it was like a cold wind that came through the open door, causing the merry laughter to die away to an almost strained silence.

Eunice did not seem to notice it. She greeted them all in turn, hoped she wasn't in anyway inconveniencing them, and said how she had been simply pining to be able to get away from Stone Towers to come and see them.

But Babs, in a whisper to those nearest to her, had some very different remarks to make.

"It's too bad, and if she's come here to face it out, it means that there's some fresh mischief afoot!" she breathed.

"Yet we can't say anything to her in front of the others," murmured Mabs.

Babs shook her head.

"We can't," she said; "but this girl coming here—it alters everything. We can't let anything happen on such a day as this. I'll get hold of Clara and get away with her on some excuse. Then we can tell her everything. It's got to be done now!"

And Babs arranged it very well. Dick Trevlyn played up well by getting Eunice engaged in argument. When it was going strong Babs whispered to Clara, and Clara, in a louder voice, invited her Cliff House chums to accompany her to see some special present that had been given her that day.

And out in the hall——"

"What is really the matter, Babs?" Clara asked breathlessly. "It's because that girl has wedged in again, I know. You think——"

"Come up to your room and we'll tell you everything," Babs said.

Amazed, but very sympathetic indeed, Clara heard the whole tale.

"What a pity you didn't tell me before," she breathed. "But, of course, I've had an idea myself that there was something very queer going on. The mater's hinted at it herself. We've all been worried about Mary, to tell you the truth. But I didn't suspect Eunice so much——"

"Yet she knows something!" Babs said.

"She's a hateful, catty girl!" was Clara's vehement retort. "And if she's up to some trickery in our house there's a No. 7 shoe belonging to yours truly that's going to descend on it. Mary must be in some danger and trouble, I'm sure, and there's only one thing for it; we must have it out with her, all together. It's the only way she can be helped."

Down to the kitchen they went in a body. No; Mary wasn't there, the maids said. A village boy had brought her a note, and she had gone to her room to read it. Upstairs they went and rapped on the green door. It opened, and the sight they saw was simply amazing.

It was Mary transformed! Mary altogether different!

Colour suffused her cheeks. She was panting as though with excitement. And in the eyes that had been so sad and pensive there was the light of a sheer and wonderful joy.

"Mary!" gasped Clara.

The girls hardly seemed to know where she was or what she was saying.

"Oh, yes. You want me? You want me to do something? Certainly, I'll be delighted. Oh, rather——"

"No, it isn't to do anything for us," said Clara, taken aback. "We wanted to speak to you about yourself, Mary. Several things you have done have worried us, and you've seemed so strange——"

"But it's all right now—everything's going to be all right!" came the maid's startling answer; and only then did she seem to realise what she was saying, after all the weeks of secrecy.

But Marjorie, in that wonderful way of hers, was at her side. She seemed to divine her thoughts. There was something compelling about her.

"Your secret hope, Mary—it has come true?" she breathed. "Oh, you cannot hide it from us now, when you are so excited! Mary, we are all friends, and we have come to warn you that there is danger about. Won't you treat us as friends—now?"

The maid beckoned them all into her room.

"Yes, yes, and I'd have to tell you whether I wanted to or not. I must tell someone!" was her trembling, excited whisper. "But I know that you are only friends, and I have seen how sorry you were for me. But there's no need for sympathy now. Listen! Oh, please do not breathe a word of this to anyone else! My father's coming home to-night! My father's coming home to me on Christmas Day!"

Tears of joy were streaming down her cheeks.

"Yes, he's coming back—he's coming to me to-night!" she rushed on. "It's secret, of course. I've expected him for weeks. For weeks I've sent him the signal light that we arranged before his letters stopped. But he's got the last papers now, and he's coming for those that I have been guarding for him as he's sent them." She gave a quivering, hysterical laugh. "My daddy's coming back—he's near here already. To-night I'm going to give him the papers I've got. And when he holds those he will be a free man—able to look the world in the face and prove that he was never a robber and a thief!"

That was all she could say then. The bewildering joy of it was too much for the girl who had waited and hungered so long for this joyful news. She laughed and wept alternately, hysterically, almost unaware of the presence of the girls. And the Cliff House girls stood respectfully in the presence of the wonderful and overpowering emotion, waiting until Mary should be more herself to tell them the rest.

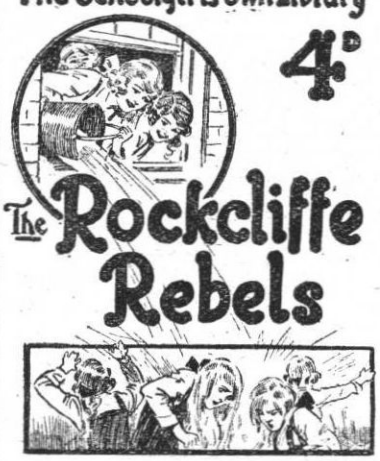
Little did any of them think to open the door. Still less could any of them guess that a figure crouched outside—a figure that strained to hear every word that drifted through the keyhole.

NOW ON SALE!

No. 2 of our Splendid New Monthly Publication.

The Schoolgirls' Own Library

4d



Containing a capital long complete story of the high-spirited girls of Rockcliffe School.

The Master-stroke!

MARY CANNINGHAME had told the girls everything, and the mystery that her hopeless signalling had created was a mystery no longer. After weeks of doubt and suspense that note told her that her father was in England—was near to her.

And more—she had let them all into her plans. The grown-ups were not to be told until later, for reasons that appeared very good indeed then. Mary hinted that she had enemies, without mentioning names. Although the girls could not understand what parts they were playing, they could name two of them in their own minds—Eunice Haddon, who now lived in Mary's old home, and the man they had dubbed the "Beaver."

What parts? They did not mind—it hardly seemed to matter. No more exciting adventure could any of the girls have planned for Christmas evening than the one that lay before them. At tea—a free and easy meal, served in the drawing-room—it seemed easy to laugh and joke with Eunice, so sure were they at last they were bluffing her as well as she had bluffed them.

"Topping—simply topping day, isn't it?" was her enthusiastic comment about nothing in particular.

"We're having a splendid time," the girls agreed.

Eunice turned to Clara, all smiles and outward happiness.

"I say, Clara! I wonder if you'd mind if I leave my pearls in your room. There's bound to be some romping later on in the evening, and I should be so sorry to have them broken."

"Of course, I don't mind!" Clara answered; and while Eunice was gone, they whispered amongst themselves.

"At seven o'clock!"

"The other two maids will be away from the kitchen then, Clara!"

"Quite certain?" Clara answered. "They're both going out this evening. I'll square Dick to keep Eunice talking, while we make an excuse to be away for a little while. We must be in the kitchen by ten to seven——"

She broke off as Eunice returned, telling them where she had left her pearls.

Five o'clock now! Nearly two hours to wait before the great adventure of the evening. They joined in games, but always with an eye on the clock. At a quarter to seven they grew almost

anxious. But Clara, with Dick's help, made an excellent excuse for all of them to get out of the room on the pretext of having a breath of fresh air.

In the kitchen, whither they went as softly as mice, they found Mary Canninghame.

She was pacing up and down.

"You've got the papers, Mary?" whispered Clara, suddenly.

Eagerly the girl nodded, and touched the front of her dress.

"Yes, here—all here! I've counted them twenty times. I've looked at every one. They don't mean much to me, but I know how dreadfully important they are. Oh, perhaps it was thirty times!"

"We'll turn out the light," Clara said. "It will be better and easier to see. All here, girls?"

"All here!"

The light clicked off, and in the darkness they waited. Beating hearts in the utter stillness. Minutes that seemed like hours. The sudden striking of a clock—a sound that caused half of them to start with surprise—five, six, seven! The chosen hour at last! What would they see?

"Look!" said Mary, in a strangled voice.

They had all seen it through the window. A gleam of light, like the striking of a match, and it was gone. Quickly it was repeated. Then there was a pause. Again there came two flashes from the darkness.

"The signal!" whispered Mary.

The very air seemed electric. Near to the window they all stood, while Mary struck a match, just once. They waited; and then, across the white surface of the snow, a dark figure moved. Very slowly it came, step by step, cautiously, without the slightest sound.

Mr. Canninghame returning to his daughter!

Nearer, nearer! Quite close to the window now. How Mary must be aching to cry the glad name and fling herself into his arms after all this suspense!

The door-handle creaked slightly, and forward went Mary. To the tense, straining ears of the girls, a voice spoke:

"Mary, you are there?"

"Oh, daddy!" was her trembling whisper.

"The papers—quickly!" said the hoarse voice urgently. "I am being followed! I must run with them! You have the papers? Ah!"

It was like a cry of triumph.

The door went—bang!

A dark, running figure flashed by the window.

"And it wasn't daddy! It wasn't! I've been robbed!" shrieked Mary Canninghame.

She was at the door, tearing it open. Almost stupified, the Cliff House girls panted after her. The girl was sobbing with fear and apprehension.

"I've been robbed! The papers—gone! He's stolen them!"

"We'll follow!" yelled Flap and Phyllis together. "We'll catch the man, whoever he was!"

"The Bib-Bib-Beaver!" stuttered Bessie, and for once she was right.

Off went Flap and Phyllis, with Clara and Dolly in hot pursuit. Mary would have followed them. But at that very moment the door opened again and—crash. A tall figure rushed at Mary and held her by main force. A furious voice cried:

"My pearls! My pearls! Where are my pearls?"

It was the voice of Eunice Haddon.

Babs could only stammer with dismay.

"Eunice, leave her alone! There's been a robbery—a man has snatched her papers and bolted!"

Eunice replied by dragging the servant-girl back into the now lighted kitchen.

"Where are my pearls? Now! Answer me!" she fairly shouted. "Mary Canninghame, daughter of a thief, I accuse you of stealing my pearls!"

Mr. and Mrs. Trevlyn were coming forward, amazed and horrified spectators of the scene.

Hardly knowing what they said, the Cliff House girls tried to explain.

"A package that she gave to a man?" Eunice shouted. "And you're silly enough to think it was papers? Those were my pearls! You girls have actually helped her to commit a theft!"

"Eunice, it's a lie!" Babs cried.

"Did you see the papers? Did you see them I say?" Eunice shouted back.

"Not actually. But—but——"

"Then be quiet! My pearls have gone! They were worth ever so much. This girl sha'n't move until she confesses everything! She sha'n't——"

Abruptly she broke off.

From outside the lane a man's loud, commanding voice cried out:

"Quickly, constable! That's Mr. Canninghame creeping to the house! Arrest him! He's the man you want! Arrest him!"

One wild shriek rang through the kitchen of Rose Villa, and on to the floor fell Mary in a dead faint.

. . . . . .

It was a quarter of an hour later. There was still panic. No one knew if Mr. Canninghame had been arrested after that cry. Clara & Co., who were back after being given the slip by their man, could only say that they had seen a constable pursuing a fleeting figure. Mary was propped in a chair, dazed and white-faced. Eunice Haddon was still demanding vengeance.

"My pearls! Without the shadow of a doubt she's taken them!" she declared. And then Clara took a hand.

"Eunice Haddon!" she cried. "Your pearls have not gone. You haven't been robbed. You're a fraud—a wicked schemer, and I tell you so to your face. Now don't you dare to say another word!"

"Did you see the papers?" Eunice sneered.

"No, I didn't!"

"Nor anyone else!" the mocking girl said. "What papers could they be? A pretty little tale to take in innocent schoolgirls——"

"What papers? What papers?" Clara cried, and suddenly her fury overwhelmed her completely. "Why, papers that you and your parents daren't let anyone see, Eunice Haddon! Papers that would probably prove that you and your people were swindlers—not Mr. Canninghame!"

"Clara! Oh, my child, be careful!" begged Mrs. Trevlyn.

"I won't! I don't care!" Clara answered madly. "This is a plot! You, Eunice, know all about it! Don't you dare to interrupt me! Your pearls haven't been stolen! I'll wager they're hidden somewhere in this house. Why did you ask to leave them in my room? Because you were planning this?"

Again Eunice would have interrupted, but Clara checked her.

"Planning and plotting. We know! That man with the beard—he's an ally of yours! You've forced yourself on us to work your schemes against Mary. Now you know what you are and what we think of you!"

Eunice was very white. Her lips twitched. But she still had a show of bravado as she pointed to Mary.

"Pretty words—reckless words!" she sneered. "But they'll all change when I choose to have that girl arrested! She's tricked you with a story that I'll prove to be false——"

"No you sha'n't!" Babs broke in there. "It's you who have done the trickery! You've taken us all in—you've made fools of us all. Instead of protecting Mary, we've betrayed her into your hands. But we haven't finished yet, Eunice Haddon! It's up to us to find out the truth, and teach you a lesson! And we will—we will! Cliff House will!"

THE END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

(Next Thursday's issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND *will contain "In Spite of Her Enemy!"—a magnificent new long complete story of the girls of Cliff House at Clara Trevlyn's home, by Hilda Richards; further fine instalments of "The House of Many Mysteries!" by Mildred Gordon; and "Dorcen, the Circus Star!" by Joan Inglesant; and another great number of the "Schoolgirls' Paper." Order your copy in advance!)*

Starting Shortly!

A SPLENDID NEW SERIAL,

"THE Firebrands OF FREESTONE FALLS!"

By **BETTY ADAIR.**

See Next Week's

SCHOOL FRIEND.

It's Changed Her Whole Life.

YOU simply wouldn't know Mary since she's got rid of those terrible headaches. She used to be so dull and worn-out looking. Now she's the brightest girl in the shop, and looks ten years younger.

Customers like to be served by her—she's so quick and obliging, and always ready with a smile. Mr. Smith says he's going to promote her; she has done so well this year.

Mary says it's all due to "Daisy." The very first dose of "Daisy" she tried took away one of her worst headaches in less than five minutes. Mary never allows herself to have a headache now; she just takes a "Daisy" as soon as she feels one coming on.

All you have to do, she says, is to take a single dose of "Daisy" in half a cup of hot tea, milk, or water, or, if you like, you can just put the powder on your tongue and swallow it down, and the pain vanishes as if by magic. Mary told me she first took "Daisy" because it is the only headache cure that doctors recommend. She wrote for a sample, and they sent her two packets to try.

Dr. Robertson Wallace writes: "Your Daisy Headache Cure merits my complete approval. . . . It is free from any possibility of causing injury to the system."

Have you got "Daisy" in your house. If not, buy some to-day. For the sake of your health and your happiness, you cannot afford to be without this great remedy. Make a special note to remind you to get a packet of "Daisy" the very next time you go out.

TWO "DAISIES" FREE.

If you have never tried "Daisy," send a postcard to Daisy Ltd. (Dept. B16), Horsforth, near Leeds, and you will receive two "Daisies" FREE.

"Daisy" is sold by Stores and Chemists everywhere at 2d. each, packets of 8 powders 1/- (a cheap and handy package for the bag). "Daisy" Tablets (specially convenient form) 1/3 per box. [Advt.

OUR FINE ADVENTURE STORY!

DOREEN the Circus Star.

By JOAN INGLESANT.

There, in the sunny land of South America, you will read how Fate decreed that Doreen Harcourt should once more become the Star Dancer of Barkomb's Famous Circus.

CHARACTERS YOU MUST KNOW!

DOREEN HARCOURT, a beautiful, fair-haired girl, formerly a dancer in Barkomb's Mammoth Circus. She, with her younger sister Margie, is on a visit to South America with

LADY GRAYLING, the wife of Sir Peter, their uncle and guardian. Sir Peter is in England.

NATALIA VORSKA, a spiteful, hot-tempered girl, formerly Doreen's rival at Barkomb's Mammoth Circus.

DON RAMON DA LOPEZ, a Spaniard, whom Sir Peter places in charge of his estate in South America.

Doreen meets with Septimus Barkomb, her old master who treated her so well, lately arrived in South America with his circus. Natalia Vorska, whom he has re-engaged, has suddenly deserted the circus, leaving him without a star dancer. Doreen fills the breach, and proves a huge success.

Natalia has joined forces with Don Ramon, and plots with him against Doreen.

An old man named Manuel Doria, who has proved himself a good friend to Doreen, tells the circus star of a secret underground city beneath the Graylings' estate, which he believes contains wealth that Don Ramon is himself striving to possess. Together a party from the circus go and explore, only to find that Natalia and her friends are in the underground city, too. They drop a key—the key to a wonderful treasure cave—which Doreen secures before her party finds its way out.

Natalia, with Don Ramon and his daughters, make all manner of desperate efforts to regain the key, but fail each time.

Later, without any warning, a reservoir-dam bursts, and the town and the circus are in dire danger of being flooded.

(Read on from here.)

The Great Peril!

BREAKING, bursting, thundering, mad in its freedom, came the water.

It rioted and roared its way. Crash followed crash with the same sound of bursting shells. Wild pandemonium was swaying everything!

Trees bent and broken were rent from their roots and flung before the onrushing flood.

Giant stones, moved from their position, came hurtling down on tent and caravan.

The sound of splitting wood, the cries of human beings, the trumpeting of elephants, the roars of lions and tigers, and the frightful anguish of disaster ringed her about, and now—now, as she stood there, facing that oncoming torrent, she remembered.

"The key!" Doreen cried. "The key to the treasure cave!"

Here, facing her, was the loss of that very thing that would mean so much to Sir Peter Grayling!

But should she risk her life to get it?

Was it safe to stay with that roaring flood coming nearer and more near to her?

Only a moment she paused—only a second or the fraction of one. The next instant she had darted towards the big tent where the performances were held.

She ran blindly and seemingly through a world of emptiness, for by now the circus was almost deserted.

Fear for their lives had sent hands and performers rushing away without any thought of their personal belongings.

They had not paused to think of those, for their lives were more precious, and these they were doing their best to safeguard.

Horses and animals had been dragged away, and now the water was rushing towards the circus, rioting in joy at its freedom, anxious for destruction.

Cascade upon cascade was dashing over the hill top in the mad attack on the circus.

As the rent in the reservoir deepened, so deepened the noisy explosion of each succeeding rent.

Noise upon noise, thunder of water and bursting breach, bending trees and crashing stones as they flung with mad abandon into tent and caravan.

Doreen ran on.

A flying boulder whizzed past her and made a clean hole through an overturned caravan. Another followed.

How they missed her was in itself a miracle!

She was careless of danger now. She did not reck of the danger into which she was speeding.

She had one thought and one alone—the key!

And how perilous was this adventure into which she was flying!

Tons of water were descending on the circus, and, as she battled her way into the big tent, a wave of water caught the tent and shook it.

It carried her in with its flood, and now she had to swim for it.

Once she was nearly beaten down by the inrush of the torrent.

But up she came to the surface and struck out for where a rope was dangling above the water.

It was the high rope by which she was accustomed to mount to the trapeze above.

Now one of Doreen's hands caught the fibre, and she hung on like grim death as the waters swirled about her and sought to snatch her away from her hold.

Barrels, tubs and all kinds of refuse were floating here, and even as she hung there, a caravan was thrown against the tent, and the whole fabric shivered.

Doreen was in an extremity.

At any moment now the whole tent might come down upon her, and what hope for her then?

Even now it was swaying crazily as though in the grip of a tornado.

She clung on, mesmerised by the torrents which were pouring down into the tent, but now, as she realised her predicament, a sudden realisation of danger came to her, and the next moment she was swarming up the rope.

Higher and higher she went until now she was hanging above the flooded circus.

Below her all was a sea of moving objects. And the sides of the tent were swaying in towards her.

Once she fancied that the whole concern was collapsing, and a scream came to her lips to die away as the tent bellowed out again and left her free to mount upwards.

Now, with the agility of a monkey, she swarmed above, and, dragging the rope up with one hand, she swayed to and fro.

Suddenly she turned, and, leaping outwards, risked the great divide that separated her from the trapeze.

For one sickening second it seemed that she had missed her objective and must fall into the seething waters below her to be submerged in their depths.

What thoughts passed through her mind in that frightening second!

She seemed to see Natalia's hard and gloating eyes on her.

It was then that her hands caught the trapeze, and she hung on!

There was her breath to be regained, and regain it she did, as with stark eyes she looked about her.

Boom!

Above the rush of the water there came an ear-splitting crash.

Doreen knew well what that signified.

Another portion of the reservoir had gone, and soon, soon tons more water would descend to riot and roar with the floods already here.

There was not a moment to be lost!

Gripping at the trapeze ropes, she drew herself up, and now her object became more clear.

While the whole tent seemed ready at any minute to collapse, Doreen drew herself to the trapeze, and, reaching for the precious key, grasped it.

There came a thunderous crash against the tent. Doreen turned, and, with affrighted eyes, saw that a volume of water had hit the side of the big affair, burst it, and was rising with violence in the centre of the arena.

It rushed to the other side of the tent, but its force had been broken, and it swayed back and mounted—mounted towards her.

She clung on; a scream came and went. She cried out as that nose of water mounted upwards, and then fell with a splash into the centre of the circus.

Her teeth were chattering, and she was trembling in every limb as she swung to and fro.

Her face was bloodless, but her heart was strong within her as she swayed over those restless and ever-mounting waters.

Now the trapeze was in full movement. Doreen had raised herself on it.

She swung it with her legs, and now, poising a moment, she flew out towards the rope.

As she caught it there came a deafening crash, and, looking above her, she saw the top of the great tent sway.

In the centre, where the great pole held the canvas up, this pole was swaying to and fro.

There came an ominous crack.

Doreen clung to the rope, she was slithering down.

"Oh, help—help!"

She could not restrain those cries, for she was witnessing a dreadful thing.

The centre pole had snapped right in two, and now down towards her was coming the whole canvas top of the circus.

It would fall and enmesh her—it would bury her beneath its weight, and that would be the end.

There was only one thing to do, and she did it instantly.

Releasing her hands from the rope, and, with a last despairing hope in her heart, she let herself fall head-foremost into the water.

It seemed to come up and meet her, and she hit it flat.

Almost all the breath was knocked out of her, and for a moment she felt that she was losing consciousness; but she drove the feeling away, and battled for dear life in the waters that foamed about her.

Now, with a crashing of woodwork above, the whole of the tent caved in, and as it did so another wall of water struck the ruined marquee.

It struck it full and fair, and at the moment when Doreen, seeing the canvas descending on her, had given up all hope.

The new wave of water from the burst reservoir caught the ruined tent, lifted it, and flung it away from Doreen, and Doreen was lifted on the crest of one of the great walls of foam, and was borne forward.

She tried to strike out, but it was useless.

She was going down—down—down into the depths!

Something struck her, nearly numbed her brain!

All she knew was that she was fighting desperately for life.

One hand was outflung, and now it came in contact with something. She tried to grip that solid substance, but another wave of water bore it away from her.

She saw a tree floating past her, and struck out towards it, but the tree was whirled away as though it were a piece of paper in a gale.

Doreen looked about her.

Everywhere was water—water, and there was no hope, none at all!

She gave herself into the hands of Providence. For one frightful second she decided that she could fight no longer.

The end had come. She had done her best, and had failed in the task.

Buffeted here, thrown there, caught in a new torrent for a second, and then the next instant dropped into the vortex of the waters.

Now her head was above water, now she was fighting with water swirling over her hair.

Once she was beaten against some solid object, and she felt that she was sinking.

The next instant she had clutched at a floating tub, and on to this she clambered for a precious moment of breathing space.

But now the tub was overturned, filled with water, and sank beneath her, and she was in the torrent's grip again.

Looking up, she saw that a great, rolling column of foam was descending on her.

She gave herself up for lost, and, as she did so, something rose on the crest of that foam!

It was a tree.

Doreen, her last fighting breath giving out, fought clear of the oncoming tree.

She cleared it.

The tree was passing her—it was her last chance, and that chance was going from her.

In a second she was striking towards the great floating object.

A wave tried to tear her away, but she fought through it—fought it and beat it!

One hand was raised.

Some cruel and solid substance beneath the water grazed her side, tore her dress.

She screamed out and clutched at the tree, clutched and caught it and hung on.

On and on raced the tree.

Now, as she saw that here was some slight hope of safety, she drew herself up on it, and as she did so she raised her eyes.

There, facing her, and with every instant coming nearer to her, was a solid stone wall.

Against this the water was breaking, and she realised that when the tree struck the wall she would be either dashed against the wall or flung back into the welter of waters, and from their grip there would be no second chance of a respite.

She clung to the tree, and, as the water roared the tree towards the wall the purpose of the all-compelling flood was made obvious.

Doreen saw the wall totter, fall, and crumble away to nothing, and not a moment too soon.

As it crumbled away like a house of cards, as the water tore through it and now over it, as the masonry roared about her ears with the sound of its mighty fall, the tree rode proudly over the lip of the the once proud edifice.

On and ever on.

Doreen tried to discover where she was, but the water hid almost all things from view.

The tree rocked beneath her, the waters sought to unseat her, but she lay flat and held tight, but the exertion was telling.

There was something tight in her brain.

At any moment she felt that something would snap there.

Her eyes were closing, and about her the desolation of the water was paramount.

Doreen could not sit up, for she was too weak, and her eyes were closing, and she had made her fight.

Her senses were leaving her. She sought to cling to the tree, but her fingers were cold and nerveless.

There was a buzzing in her head.

She tried to shout, but the words would not come, and now—now in a last agony of failure, she fell athwart the tree.

Merciful oblivion descended upon her.

Doreen had fainted—fainted when she was at the mercy of the teeming waters.

"Margie, Margie!"

Disaster!

WITH her last failing breath, Doreen spoke her sister's name, and, as she fell limp and lifeless athwart that tortured tree, that whirled and twisted in the mad grasp of the waters, her thoughts were of Margie.

Momentary as they were, a thousand fears were concentrated in them.

Her fears were not for herself so much

While the whole tent seemed ready at any minute to collapse, Doreen drew herself to the trapeze and reached for the precious key.

They rowed at a furious pace, but even as they drew near, Doreen slipped closer and closer to the water.

as for that little sister she had been left to guard and to mother, and now, as life ebbed out of her, as darkness came down over her eyes, she realised that Margie was alone.

Where she was, Doreen did not know. Whether or not the water had caught and had captured her, whether she was high and dry, watching with fearful eyes the ravages of the released torrent, Doreen could not tell.

Merciful oblivion had come at the very moment when she had fancied that her brain would snap.

Now she was silent. Her white face was turned expressionlessly to the blue heavens.

What a mockery those peaceful skies presented! Below them was wreckage and devastation. It seemed strange that they were so azure-tinted, so peaceful!

The tree rocked and rose. One moment it dipped below the surface as a rival current sought to snatch its burden away from it. Now it was protruding about the surface of the raging waters and riding buoyantly on the flood.

It seemed almost human in its endeavour to save Doreen from being submerged in the depths.

Once she was slipping weakly from her frail platform of safety, but a toss of the water sent her back into the curling arm of one of the broken boughs, and the bough held her almost as a mother holds her child.

But for that miraculous touch the unconscious form of Doreen would have been drawn into the meshes of the flood to sink beneath the surface, to be for ever lost to view, for the great undercurrent of the torrent was tearing down through the lower portions of Rio de Sancta and bound for the sea, into which even now the flood was emptying!

Once the tree, rushing towards a floating caravan, was turned from its path by a new outrush of water.

But of this Doreen knew nothing—nothing at all. She lay cradled in that bough's firm hold—but not for long.

The action of the water, the fret and counter-fret of contesting eddies and currents had worked her away from the bough's embrace, and now she lay across the bough again, and at any moment the end might come.

Indeed, it seemed to her, a girl whose help had so often been given to others, no aid was to be extended.

Perhaps it was that the disaster had happened with such frightening suddenness; perhaps Fate was playing a part, but to all intents and purposes she was alone—alone in that raging flood!

And if she were, it was not the fault of Septimus Barkomb.

Through Doreen's timely warning Septimus Barkomb, his wife, and the circus performers, had managed to get to high ground, and they had dragged most of the animals with them.

From here they had seen the water tear down, and miss, as though by a miracle, the town of Rio de Sancta.

Down into the valley on the western side of the South American city the waters had raced and, as Septimus Barkomb watched that tearing flood, there was a frightening fear in his heart.

His face was livid with fear, and, as his eyes looked about him, he was not thinking of the wreckage of his circus, of the frightful loss of money that he had incurred by this disaster, so much as of one face that was missing from those anxious-eyed people about him.

"Doreen!" he whispered to himself. "Oh, where—where can she be?"

Hercules looked blankly into his master's eyes.

The strong man did not know.

Clicquot shook his head, and Mrs. Barkomb's face was filled with fear as she drew the shivering form of little Margie to her.

Now, the first fears of the flood passed, able now to realise the extent of the disaster and the all-prevailing trouble for Doreen's safety, Septimus Barkomb did not hesitate.

Down below him he could see where the flood had met the River Sancta; he could see the boats tossing about as the waters rose.

"Hercules!" he cried. "Clicquot! There is not a moment to be lost!"

Their expressions were blank.

"What can be done?" asked Hercules hoarsely. "No boat could live in that—not in such a flood?"

Septimus Barkomb's jaw was set tight.

"Then if a boat cannot live, it will have to sink, and us with it!" he cried. "Doreen is somewhere in that flood, maybe caught in some wreckage, pinned beneath a tent, who knows!"

He spread out his hands.

"Do you think I can stay here when that gallant girl may be in danger?"

Hercules' eyes were full of fire.

"You mean that there might be a chance—a chance for her?"

"Who knows!" cried Barkomb sharply.

"Then come!" cried Hercules. "I am game if you are, Mr. Barkomb!"

"And I am old," murmured Clicquot; "but I do not forget what Doreen has done for others, and better we all perished than leave her to face that flood alone!"

Septimus Barkomb was tearing down the hillside. It was steep and it led to where the boats were being crashed against one another.

Once a rising mass of water bore down on the three men. It broke over them, but they fought through it, and now Septimus Barkomb had caught at the gunwale of a stout river boat and was drawing himself into the tossing craft.

Even as he crawled into it a wave swept over another boat and it sank before his eyes.

He shouted to Hercules, and Hercules drove through the flood; and now he was at his side and Clicquot with him.

The three men did not waste an instant.

The flood had spread out to the marshy lands of Rio de Sancta and, as the boat was untethered, Barkomb's keen eyes could see broken remnants of caravans, flapping canvas, uprooted trees, booths, and barrels of all descriptions floating seaward.

Where once the land had seemed solid all was now a wilderness of water. Speeding as the flood had been and rioting as it was now, Septimus Barkomb could see that the unloosened waters had spent their strength.

It would be many hours before they went down; but now, as he bent to his oars and as Hercules struggled against the flood, the craft they had commandeered certainly made headway.

Septimus Barkomb looked wildly about him as he rowed.

His heart was sinking, for he did not conceive it possible that Doreen could have made a fight against this flood.

He felt certain that she had given her life in warning the others, and tears were streaming down his cheeks, and his lips were trembling.

There was a dull feeling of agony in the heart of Hercules as well.

The three men felt that they were out on a hopeless quest, and they were in an agony of despair.

They had loved Doreen as a daughter, loved her for her gentle nature and her daring, and now——

"Oh, can there be anything alive in this?"

Clicquot paused on his oars and indicated the stretch of flood that extended to right and to left, before and behind him.

There was grim evidences of the disaster wrought by the breaking dam.

The marvel of it all was that the disaster had not been more tremendous.

Had not the breaking water borne part of the hillside away with it, the full force of the flood might possibly have been directed upon the most densely populated part of the great city.

And in that case!

Septimus Barkomb shuddered at the thought.

And as he thought on the matter there came a cry from Hercules.

Hercules was standing up in the boat, and his strident voice was ringing across the waters.

"What is that?"

Barkomb looked in the direction whither the strong man was pointing, but he could see nothing.

"It's gone!" cried Hercules. "There was something—I swear!"

"What?" shouted Barkomb, frenzied with anxiety now, praying that there might be some hope.

"A tree!" answered Hercules, and now his eyes were mad with excitement.

"There it is—there! And there is something on it—something that looks like a bundle! Look, Barkomb!"

His trembling finger was pointing into the distance, and now Barkomb did see.

Bobbing about like a cork in a mill-race was a tree. Across it lay something.

He shaded his eyes from the sun, and now, as he saw, he clutched at Hercules' arm.

"A form! It is a form—I am sure of it!" he cried.

Hercules did not speak.

He had leapt back to his seat and, with all the strength he could command, was turning the nose of the boat in the direction of the floating object.

The faces of the three men were white with intention, and there were prayers on their trembling lips as they pulled in the direction of the flotsam of the flood.

They were hoping against hope. They did not dare to think that there could be any chance of this log presenting such hope, but with the eagerness, the intensity of utter despair, they rowed towards it.

Some many yards separated them from the log now, and their frantic eyes saw that there was a form lying athwart that log—a human form!

"Oh, row—row!" cried Barkomb desperately.

Clicquot's frenzied eyes were full of fear.

"It is a girl!" he cried. "I can see that it is a girl, and quite plainly; but for pity's sake hurry! The water—the water!"

Barkomb was trembling with fear, for he saw now—saw that terrifying sight.

There was a form on the tree, and that form was sagging into the water.

Already the waters were grasping upwards to snatch their victim—the victim they had waited for with such persistence and cunning.

Hercules showed on his face the terrors through which he was passing, and now they were nearer to that tree, and now they could see.

"Oh, merciful pity!"

A cry had come from the lips of Septimus Barkomb.

"Doreen—it is Doreen!" cried Hercules. "For pity's sake pull, you two—pull as you have never used your strength before!"

Hercules lashed furiously at the water, and the boat shot along.

Now that figure was falling towards the water. Slipping, ever slipping—and soon!

With a cry, Hercules stroked the boat alongside the tree; and he was not one moment too soon, for as he clutched at Doreen's soaked dress she fell into the water!

"Hand her to me, Hercules!"

The strong man lifted Doreen as tenderly as a mother would carry her child, and Barkomb took her.

The three men, regardless of the flood, unconscious of everything almost, looked down into that face with the patience of longing to see the eyelids open, to see the touch of life come back to those white cheeks.

It seemed an eternity of time!

At last!

Ever so slowly her eyelids opened—a sigh escaped her!

"Margie!"

"She is safe!"

Barkomb was smiling down into her face. Then an expression of gloom settled.

Doreen was safe now, and he could think of all that had been lost in this disaster.

The efforts of years had been snatched from him in a few minutes.

His caravans, his tents, his money, his horses had been swept away.

But for the moment there was not much regret for the loss of all these things, for Doreen was saved, and Doreen meant more than all the worldly wealth he had commanded.

He smiled grimly as the boat touched the land.

What would the morrow bring forth?

(What splendidly loyal friends Doreen has! And, indeed, no girl deserves them more than she. Helping each other as they do, they can be trusted to leave no stone unturned in assisting the kind circus proprietor to re-establish his business. On no account must you miss next week's long instalment of this splendid serial.)

There's a Reason for the Green Glass Jar

Creams in opal pots—creams in china jars—creams in fancy containers of all kinds.

Or Icilma Cream in its plain simple green glass pot.

Which is right?

Well, only Icilma because Icilma Cream is properly guarded from the injurious rays of strong white light or sunlight by the *protective green* in the green glass jar. This green filters the light and prevents any action or chemical change in a snowy white cream.

This is just another point which shows how every detail is carefully considered in the manufacture and packing of Icilma Cream.

Do you wonder Icilma Cream is perfect?

Fancy pots often cover inferior creams, but the green glass jar, plain as it is, is the only right one—it is your protection as well as ours.

Icilma Cream

Price 1/3 per pot.

Use it daily and look your best.

YOUR CHRISTMAS WILL NOT BE CHRISTMAS WITHOUT

On Sale Everywhere Price 6/-

Printed and published every Thursday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland, 11s. per annum, 6s. 6d. for six months; abroad, 11s. per annum, 5s. 6d. for six months. Sole agents for South Africa: The Central News Agency, Ltd. Sole agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.; and for Canada, The Imperial News Co., Ltd. (Canada).—Saturday, December 23rd, 1922. DN