

"AGAINST THE HEAD'S ORDERS!"
Hilda Richards' Brilliant Complete Cliff House Story Within

THE SCHOOLGIRL

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED "SCHOOL-DAYS"

2^D



**JUST IN TIME
TO SAVE BESSIE!**

A vital moment in this week's
magnificent long complete Cliff
House School story.

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Every Saturday.

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Humour and drama mingle in this arresting, long complete Cliff House School story, featuring Barbara Redfern & Co.

AGAINST THE HEAD'S ORDERS!

By Hilda Richards



AWKWARD FOR BABS & CO.

"**W**ISH they'd buck up!" Barbara Redfern said apprehensively.

"Jolly long time!" agreed tomboy Clara Trevlyn.

Mabel Lynn, who completed the trio, said nothing. Rather nervously, Mabel was glancing towards the door outside which they were standing.

That door was labelled "Miss Penelope Primrose," and Miss Penelope Primrose was the headmistress of Cliff House School, to the Fourth Form of which these three girls belonged.

And the very fact that they were waiting outside the study told that they were expecting a call of the most calamitous nature.

As a matter of fact, the call they were expecting was of a very grave nature indeed.

For, inside that room, in conference with the headmistress, was Inspector Wissendale of the Courtfield Police, and Inspector Wissendale was annoyed. For the inspector considered himself to have had his leg very severely pulled by Babs and Mabs and Clara.

"Ahem!" said Mabel Lynn.

She looked at Babs. Babs, meeting her glance, pulled a face. Clara, glancing at both of them, thoughtfully scratched one side of her nose, and grinned rather sheepishly.

The door opened. The rather severe features of Miss Primrose herself, adorned with a pair of pince-nez, gazed out at them.

CONFIDENT that the plot against Marmion Tracey, and the mysterious activities of Bessie Bunter's "titled relative" are linked in some strange way, Babs & Co. defy even the wishes of their headmistress, in order to reach a solution of what is proving a baffling mystery.

"So there you are?" she observed, rather superfluously. "You may come in."

"Th-thank you, Miss Primrose," Babs said, and looked at Mabs, nudging her elbow to lead the way. But Mabs hung back.

"You first," she muttered to Clara.

"No, you, Babs," Clara said.

Babs sighed. Then she smiled faintly. She stepped in as the headmistress held the door open, Mabs and Clara, looking as if they intended to make a last minute bolt for safety, rather more slowly followed her.

The door behind them closed.

The three culprits stood in a line opposite the headmistress's desk. Miss Primrose, following, sat down at that desk. Inspector Wissendale, of the Courtfield police, stood near the window, gazing out into the school grounds. For a moment there was a dead silence.

Then Miss Primrose spoke.

"I am surprised—very surprised," she said sternly, "to have had such a report from Inspector Wissendale about you. I know you girls are high-spirited. I know that you are fond of a joke. That, as you know, I do not mind, providing your fun has no unpleasant repercussions on other people. But this—!" And Miss Primrose paused again.

Babs shifted uneasily. She was the leader of the trio. Miss Primrose, as if aware of that, kept her eyes fixed upon her.

"This," Miss Primrose went on firmly, "is beyond a joke. It is, indeed, a serious offence. Barbara, you invoked the assistance of Inspector Wissendale, telling him a story of a girl who was held prisoner by gypsies in Friardale Woods against her will. The inspector has wasted valuable time in searching the gypsy camp in proving that your story was merely a hoax. Not only that, but has it occurred to you that your conduct is a direct insult to the gypsy tribe? I hope, Barbara—"

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Babs flushed. Clara immediately looked warlike. Mabs appeared indignant.

"But, Miss Primrose, it was no joke," Babs said quietly. "It was true."

"What? Barbara, how dare—"
"It was true!" repeated Babs levelly. "There was a girl in that gipsy camp, being held a prisoner. We saw her. We tried to rescue her ourselves."

"Nonsense!" the inspector said sharply. "There was a girl there—yes, Miss Primrose. The girl whom Miss Redfern pointed out to me as being the prisoner of the gipsies was one of her own friends—Bessie Bunter."

"Bless my soul! Barbara—"
Again Barbara flushed.

"Bessie happened to be in the camp," she explained. "The girl I am speaking of is rather—well, plump. The light was bad, and, for a moment, I was deceived into thinking that Bessie actually was the girl I imagined her to be. Bessie, apparently, had only just arrived in the camp. She had fallen from a horse which her uncle, the man who calls himself Earl Percy de Bunter, had bought for her, and which had run away from her."

The headmistress looked up quickly. "Calls himself?" she repeated. "What do you mean by that, Barbara?"

Babs paused. Clara looked uncomfortable. Mabs bit her lip. Barbara had not meant to use that phrase. It had slipped out.

But Babs really and truly believed that Earl Percy de Bunter, the man who posed as being Bessie's titled relative, was, in fact, no more a relative of Bessie's than he was of hers.

"Calls himself?" Miss Primrose repeated. "Barbara—"

"I think you'd better explain," Inspector Wissendale put in.

"Well—" said Babs, and paused.

"You see, Miss Primrose, it was like this," Clara put in.

"Bessie's uncle—" Mabs began.

"One at a time—please." Miss Primrose looked severe. "I was speaking to Barbara," she reminded them coldly. "Your words, Barbara, seem to infer that you have doubts about Bessie's uncle—not, indeed, that I have met the gentleman—I have heard vaguely that an uncle of Bessie's is living near—"

"That is all. Apparently, Barbara, you have a suspicion that this uncle of Bessie's is not all that he purports himself to be. Why?"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Babs to herself.

"Why?" Miss Primrose insisted.

Babs thought quickly. Her suspicion of Bessie's uncle was only a suspicion, but it was a deep-rooted one for all that.

A few days ago Earl Percy de Bunter had come to the school, announcing himself as Bessie's uncle, and surprising that girl as much as it had surprised anybody.

Certainly he had behaved very generously towards Bessie. Outwardly, at least, there had been nothing in his treatment of the fattest girl in the Fourth to arouse suspicions.

But Babs had an idea—an idea, indeed, that amounted almost to conviction now—that Earl Percy de Bunter was playing some deep game of his own.

She had an idea, too, that his game, what ever it was, was very decidedly mixed up with the girl prisoner in the gipsy camp.

But how to convince Miss Primrose of that? What was she to say? Babs

stood silent, looking rather uncomfortable.

Miss Primrose's lips compressed. She gazed at the uneasy faces of the three, and then touched a bell. A maidservant appeared.

"Kindly find Miss Bessie Bunter of the Fourth Form, and bring her here," the headmistress ordered. And, when the maid had disappeared, she looked again at Babs. "The matter of Bessie's uncle we will leave in abeyance," she decided. "To return to this girl in the gipsy camp. If there was such a girl, surely you have some idea who she was, Barbara?"

"Oh, yes, I have!" Babs said.

"Ah?"

"Her name is Marmion Tracey. She lives at Tracey Towers, in Tracey."

"Indeed?"

"She—she is an heiress to a rich Canadian gentleman," Babs said.

"And that is all you know?"

"H'm!" Miss Primrose frowned, and Inspector Wissendale looked incredulous.

"How did you discover this?" she asked of Barbara.

"I happened to see a photograph of her in an illustrated magazine," Babs volunteered.

"She did not tell you?"

"No."

"Oh!"

At that moment there came a tap on the door. Miss Primrose called "Come in," and Bessie Bunter, the fattest girl in the school, entered blinking rather apprehensively behind the thick round spectacles she wore.

"Oh, really, Miss Primrose, I didn't do it!" she said at once.

Miss Primrose frowned.

"I didn't!" repeated Bessie. "I—I wouldn't dream of doing it! Everybody knows that I'd scorn to do a thing like that!"

The headmistress frowned more deeply.

"Bessie—"

"I—I wouldn't dream of—of damaging anything," Bessie went on, looking suitably shocked. "I—I've too much respect for—for you, Miss Primrose. And I wasn't doing any harm, really.

It wasn't my fault, that the water-jug slipped out of my hands, and broke on the floor. In fact, I—I wasn't touching the water-jug. It—it must have been broken before I went into the dormitory."

"Bessie!"

"Ow! Oh dear! Yes, Miss Primrose?"

"I did not send for you to talk about a broken water-jug, though I presume you have broken one."

"Me? Oh, Miss Primrose!" Bessie's eyes opened in innocence. "Me? Me break a water-jug? Oh, really, you know, you do me an injustice! I—I've never even seen a broken water-jug!"

"I never even went near the dormitory to wash."

"Bessie, you are telling stories."

"Oh dear! Oh, Miss Primrose!" Bessie exclaimed, in a hurt voice.

"Apparently you have broken a water-jug, in which case, of course, I shall see that you pay for it. But it wasn't about that that I asked you to come here."

Bessie blinked.

"Oh crumbs! Why couldn't you say that before?"

"I beg your pardon, Bessie!"

"I mean—of course, I knew it wasn't," Bessie hastily corrected herself.

"As if you would call me, knowing that I broke the water-jug perfectly accidentally. It slipped out of my hands, you see, when I was washing. That is to say, of course, I wasn't washing. The water-jug was nowhere near me." Miss Primrose made a gesture of impatience.

"We will go into the matter of the broken water-jug later on," she said. "The matter I wish to discuss with you now is one referring to your uncle."

"Oh!" said Bessie, and smirked.

"Oh, yes, Miss Primrose! My uncle—or—ahem! My titled relative, you mean."

"The Earl Percy de Bunter. That is the name, Barbara?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose."

"Oh, well!" And Bessie smirked.

Bessie, a dear in many ways, had persisted in giving herself airs, since the amazing arrival of her astounding uncle, and though that uncle had been as much of a surprise to Bessie as to anyone else, she now accepted Earl Percy de Bunter unhesitatingly.

"Oh, of course!" she said languidly.

"I can—ah—undahstand your desiah to know something more of the—ah—aristocracy of this country, Miss Primrose."

"Bessie, do not be absurd! Do not speak in that ridiculous way!" Miss Primrose said severely.

"Ridiculous?" And Bessie blinked indignantly. "Oh, really, Miss Primrose—"

Barbara, here, protests that your uncle is—well, not all that he represents himself as being."

Bessie glared at Babs.

"She's jealous!" she said flatly.

"I confess that I have never heard of him myself until now," Miss Primrose went on.

"Oh, really, Miss Primrose!" And Bessie looked haughty. "That just shows how your education has been neglected!" she said huffily.

"What?"

"Oh crumbs! I mean, oh dear! I mean that—that I always did say you didn't know as much as you pretend to know. Ow! No, not that! I mean, of course, Miss Primrose—yes, of course—"

And Bessie assumed a fatuous smile.

"Of course—what?"

"Well, of course, you know all about the arist—aristocrat—the—the nobility."

"Bessie, you are being foolish. You assure me that this man is really your uncle?"

"Oh, really, Miss Primrose, of course he is!"

"You are sure?"

Bessie blinked.

"Well, I should know," she said.

"He's my uncle, isn't he? He's one of the—de Bunters, you know," she added impressively. "Awfully wealthy, and—and—so clever, you know. One of the peerage. He not only sits in the House of Lords, he actually sleeps there!"

"Very well!" Miss Primrose looked a little testy, though she smiled faintly.

"I will see this man," she said. "Where is he to be found?"

"Found? Oh, really, he—he's in my study, Miss Primrose! I told him to stop there while I went to the dormitory to wash."

"Come in!" Miss Primrose called.

The door opened. A tall, immaculately dressed man, wearing a monocle, entered. He smiled.

"Pardon my intrusion, but I believe my niece is here," he said. "Ah, Bessie, there you are! I wish to tell you that I am going back—"

"Excuse me!" And while Babs & Co. stood aside, Miss Primrose came forward. "Have I the pleasure of speaking to Earl Percy de Bunter?"

"The man smiled agreeably.

"That is my name."

"Oh!" Miss Primrose surveyed him. "You have only recently discovered Bessie?" she hazarded.

"That is true."

"Ahem!" Miss Primrose looked uncomfortable, but, having made up her mind, she determined upon going through with the matter. "There is a suggestion," she said hesitatingly, and glanced towards Barbara Redfern, "that you are—or—well, that you are not the man you represent yourself as being. The suggestion is not mine. It came from one of my girls. I should like you to assure us, if it is possible."

Earl Percy smiled. He drew himself up.

"I think," he said, with a glance towards the crimsoning Babs, "that you are rather making a mistake, aren't you? There is no foundation whatever for such a suspicion."

"Oh!" exclaimed Babs.

"But Clara and Mabs were watching the man closely."

"Miss Primrose"—the man smiled—"I am sorry that, unwittingly, I should have been the cause of any embarrassment upon your part. I can understand, in a way, why these girls ran away with such an impression. As far as I am concerned, I forgive them."

Miss Primrose paused. She glanced at Inspector Wendale.

"I am sure," she said, "that if you can relieve any doubt—"

"Why—why, certainly! I am indeed Bessie Bunter's uncle," Earl Percy went on. "I am a rich man, recently returned from abroad. I have not seen Bessie for some years—not, indeed, since she was a child in arms."

He smiled. He seemed in no wise put out. Indeed, he appeared to be enjoying the situation.

"My name," he went on, "is Earl Percy de Bunter."

"Then you are an earl?"

"Indeed, no! Earl is merely my Christian name," Earl Percy replied suavely. "To be named 'Earl,' he added, glancing at Babs, "does not necessarily mean that you hold a title. Earl is as common a Christian name as Percival or Herbert. Bessie, apparently, who had deluded herself into imagining she had titled relatives, has insisted upon believing that Earl in my name stood for a title. It is just the foolish child's illusion."

"Oh, mum-my hat!" Bessie feebly muttered.

There was a long, long pause.

Babs felt suddenly at sea. The explanation, ingeniously simple, had been one that had not occurred to her. And it was just like Bessie, of course, to construe the name Earl into a title. She felt her conviction weakening.

"Ahem! Thank you, Mr. de Bunter," Miss Primrose said. "I hope, Barbara, that you are now assured."

Babs bit her lip. She felt shaken, but something told her still that this man was not to be trusted—that there really was some vital connection between him and the Marmion Tracey of the gipsy camp. But she could hardly repeat that in his presence.

"If I've made a mistake, I'm sorry," she apologised.

"And you, Clara?"

Clara looked at Earl de Bunter. Clara was not the girl to give in without a struggle. And Clara's prejudices, once having taken root, died hard.

Besides, Clara, so admirable in many other ways, lacked the one big quality which had made Babs the leader she was. That quality was tact.

She paused.

"May I ask Earl de Bunter one question?" she asked.

"Why, certainly! Fire ahead!" the man said jovially.

"Do you, or do you not, know Marmion Tracey?" Clara said directly.

Earl de Bunter started at that. The hand which he had put up to his chin shook slightly; a startled expression leapt into his eyes. But the next instant he was calm, reassured again. He smiled.

"Why, no. Who is she?"

"She is a girl who has been kidnapped from her home—a girl very much like Bessie, who is at present a prisoner in the hands of some gipsies near here."

"Clara!" cried Miss Primrose.

"Let him answer, please, Miss Primrose," Clara said.

"But—"

"Oh, really!" And Earl de Bunter laughed. "This is absurd," he protested. "This is preposterous! I can only guess what you are driving at, young lady, but it appears to me that you are accusing me of having something to do with this—er—kidnapping."

"Yes, indeed! Clara, I really must insist," Miss Primrose said angrily.

"Yes, really, Clara," put in Bessie indignantly.

Earl de Bunter smiled.

"Please do not be angry," he said.

"It is natural, perhaps. When I was a boy at school, I remember, I entertained all sorts of silly suspicions. We are rather like that when we are young—scenting adventure and romance in everything. I confess I am amused at being selected as the villain of this young lady's imaginary romance. I presume," he added, tolerantly amused, "that you have made sure of your facts in this case, Miss—er—Trevlyn? That is your name, is it not?"

"It is."

"You know definitely, for instance, that this young lady—this Marmion—has been kidnapped?"

"Well, she told us—"

"Indeed?" He laughed. "May I suggest that there may be some mistake?" he added. "May I suggest, for instance, that you inquire at this girl's home as to whether she really is missing? When one starts to track one's villains, you know, one should have the case against them at the start."

"But really—" Miss Primrose said again.

"No." It was Inspector Wendale who spoke. He had been eyeing the man rather keenly. "That is a suggestion," he said; "an excellent suggestion. There is no suspicion against you. Mr. de Bunter, but it will perhaps help to relieve these girls of their suspicions if the matter is cleared up." He picked up the telephone book. "You said Tracey Towers, Surrey, Miss Redfern?"

"Yes."

"I may use your phone, Miss Primrose?"

"Certainly."

"Thank you!" And the inspector put the call through.

There was a breathless silence in the study. Babs & Co. stood still, wondering now if there really had been some mistake. Earl de Bunter was so sure—so confident—and yet Babs had remarked that momentary agitation of his when Clara had mentioned Marmion's name.

The inspector spoke into the mouth-piece of the instrument, nodding as he did so. Finally, with a "Thank you," he hung the receiver upon its hook again.

"Well, that settles that," he said. "I have been in communication with the butler at Tracey Towers, and he assures me that Miss Marmion is there. I think that disposes of any doubt, Miss Primrose."

"Indeed, yes. Mr. de Bunter, please accept my most profound apologies."

Earl de Bunter smiled.

"Thank you." He shot a glance at



BABS, Mabs, and Clara shut their eyes and jabbed with their pens at the piece of paper. Each was hoping that she would be the lucky one to visit the gipsy camp.

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the three crestfallen girls. Then he laughed good-humouredly. "And you?" he asked. "May I ask for an apology from you, too?"

"I'm sorry," said Babs at once. "And I," Mabel supported. "And after a moment: "I'm sorry, too," Clara mumbled. "Thank you," he nodded. "Then all is well that ends well. I trust, Miss Primrose, that you will not be too hard upon the girls," he said. "Naturally, they must have some outlet for their imagination. May Bessie come now—thank you!"

"And Earl de Bunter, with Bessie in tow, left the room.

"There was a deep and awful silence. The three chums, utterly crestfallen and humiliated, stood with red faces in front of their headmistress.

"I am sorry," Miss Primrose said regretfully at last, "tremendously sorry that you three, of all girls, should have been so unreasonably foolish in your conduct. I must warn you again of allowing hastily conceived ideas to run away with you.

"Through this absurdly unjustified suspicion you have put Inspector Wisendale to considerable trouble. You have insulted a tribe of gypsies. You have insulted a gentleman whom, I am sure, is worthy of your most sincere admiration. I cannot let it pass. From this moment until I lift the ban, the gypsy camp at Friardale is out of bounds to you.

"You will each write two hundred and fifty lines, and if there is the slightest hint of any repetition of this trouble you shall all be confined to bounds for the remainder of the term. You may go."

"And the three, feeling chastened and ashamed, trooped dismally towards the door.



A Wild Chase
Through the Night

CLATTER, clatter, clatter!

Clippetty-clop-clop! Marmion Tracey, desperately digging her heels into the flanks of the paining horse beneath her, cast a frightened look back through the trees of Friardale Woods.

Night was falling—indeed, it was almost dark. Deep pools of shadows lay about the silent trees, and except for that frightened clippetty-clop behind her no sound broke the silence of evening.

But Marmion had no eyes for the beauty of the countryside. She had no eyes for anything save that faintly overhanging shadow which minute by minute gained upon her.

For Marmion was making the most desperate bid of her life to escape from the hateful gypsy camp in which she had been a prisoner for two days.

And Marmion was being pursued. On, on! The open country stretched before her. Beneath her, the horse panted and whinnied in its distress, but gallantly responded to her efforts. She must get on. She must reach a village or a road before the relentless mounted pursuer finally caught up with her.

On, on! Marmion almost sobbed. She felt exhausted as it was. The country hereabouts was unfamiliar. She did not

know that, by turning to the right across the common, she could strike the main Courtfield-Friardale Road.

She did not even know what part of the country she was in, for Marmion was many miles away from that charming Surrey home of Tracey Thewens where she had lived with her guardian, Augustus Fanshaw and his wife, Georgia. Two days ago she had been ruthlessly snatched from that home—brought here.

If only she could get back! That was the thought in Marmion's mind now—the thought which sped her on. The fear in her heart was the fear of those thudding hoofs behind her—hoofs which, if they ever caught up with her, would mean captivity once more.

"Oh, on, on!" she cried desperately, feeling the horse flapping beneath her. The animal did its best, but it was almost spent. Out here, on Friardale Common, the going was heavy. Pits filled in plenty awaited the unwary. Once, catching its foot in a hole overgrown with bracken, the horse stumbled almost fell.

Desperately Marmion wrenched at the reins.

At the same moment there came an angry shout behind her: "Stop!"

Marmion threw a hunted glance over her shoulder. Her heart sank with dismay as she saw, emerging from the clustering shadows of the trees a wild-looking horse, the rider of which threw up a hand towards her as he galloped.

She recognised him at once. Jake—the son of old Mother Fa, who dominated the tribe!

"No!" she sobbed. "Oh, no! Go on, go on!"

She shook her mount into greater speed once more. The horse galloped like the breeze for a hundred yards. The pursuer in the distance became fainter, fainter.

A fierce exultation seized the girl as she saw that she was drawing away. Beneath her the horse sweated and panted, its breath rasping noisily in its throat. But Marmion was in no mood to spare either herself or her mount.

"Get on!" she cried, and searched with anxious eyes the moonlit countryside in front.

Clacketty-clack, clacketty-clack! Her mount, straining every nerve, was going all out. The wind, hitting her face, stung it into colour. Her bobbed hair fell tossing in a confused mass about her round face.

On, on! Now lights gleamed in the distance ahead of her—moving lights, the lights of a car. Marmion took fresh hope, steering towards those lights, hoping by some miracle to intercept the car.

And then, just when hope was strongest in her heart, the greatest calamity of all befell. The horse, stretching at full gallop, went plunging forward, one foot in a deep hole.

There came a shrill whinny of distress from the animal as it went hurtling forward, a cry from Marmion as she felt herself jerked upwards and outwards. The shrill whistle of the wind sang in her ears, the world tilted about her in a mad, whirling circle.

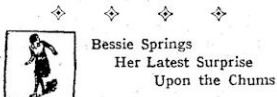
Thud! Her head hit something. A numbing pain ran from the temples right through her frame. She gave a faint moan.

Something big, heavy, solid, seemed to be pressing down upon her.

She felt the mist of blackness swirling in her brain. She put out a feeble hand as a red light flashed before her eyes. Her last conscious impression was of her horse's breath upon her arm. Then darkness came. Marmion sank back.

She knew no more until, waking at last, she found herself strapped in front of Gipsy Jake, jogging back through Friardale Woods in the direction of the gypsy camp.

Her effort to escape had failed. She was a prisoner once more!



Bessie Springs
Her Latest Surprise
Upon the Chums

SCRATCH, scratch, scratch! "Oh dear!" sighed Barbara Redfern.

"Oh blow!" growled Mabel Lynn.

But Bessie Bunter, who had stood with a rather thoughtful frown upon her fat face, staring out of the study window into the quadrangle, turned.

"I say, you girls—" she began. "But the girls took no notice. The girls, indeed, were terrifically busy.

It was the following day. Afternoon lessons were over, and the imposition which Miss Primrose had given them had got to be in before bed-time. Quite a lot of that imposition remained to be done, and there was prep on top of it.

So Babs and Mabs were working as for dear life.

"I say—" Bessie began hopefully again.

"Thank goodness, that's another fifty!" sighed Babs, and reached for another sheet of foolscap.

"Lucky thing!" Mabs said, who had yet to tackle her second hundred.

"But look here—" said Bessie eagerly.

"Be quiet, Bessie!" Bessie glowered. Bessie had no lines to do, and so Bessie was impatient with Babs and Mabs because they were so busy.

Bessie, in fact, had not even had lessons this afternoon, for her uncle, Earl Percy de Bunter—whose alleged title was now the latest joke at Cliff House—had called for her during the dinner-hour, had begged her off lessons for the afternoon, and taken the fat junior out to enjoy what he termed "a good time."

Whether the time had been good or not, Babs and Mabs had not yet ascertained. It seemed, at all events, to have supplied Bessie with food for thought. Since she had entered the study, returning from that "good time," Bessie had been unusually pensive.

"But, I say—just a minute!" Bessie pleaded.

Scratch, scratch, scratch! "Look here, Ma—"

Scratch, scratch, scratch! "Babs, old thing—"

"Be quiet, Bessie!" Babs said, without looking up.

"But, I say—"

"They're in the cupboard, if you want them," interjected Mabs, her head bent to her work.

"Want what?"

"Well, the tarts, of course. Don't you want them?"

"Oh, really, Mabs!" And Bessie looked disdainful. "You can have your old tarts!" she said, with fine scorn. "What do I want with your tarts? I've had my tea, and a jolly nice tea it was! Sausages! Tomatoes! Cakes! Yum—"

"Sounds more like a breakfast," Mabs put in.

"But look here—"

Scratch, scratch, scratch!

The pens of Babs and Mabs seemed to be racing against time.

"Look here, are you going to listen to me?" Bessie howled.

"No!"

"Oh, really!" Bessie blinked. "What on earth are you writing?"

"Lines."

"But— Oh, blow! Look here, Babs, do stop it!" Bessie implored.

"Just listen to me. I want to speak to you."

"Sorry! In a hurry."

And Babs and Mabs, without even casting a glance upon the fat duffer of the study Co., went on writing as though their very lives depended upon it.

Bessie glared. Bessie very badly wanted to talk to Babs and Mabs, but obviously conversation with them was impossible in the circumstances. She sniffed.

"Just a minute, I say!" she added.

"How do you think I'd look with my hair bobbed?"

"Ghastly!" Babs said candidly.

"Awful!" cordially agreed Mabs.

"Oh, really—"

"Don't argue, Bessie!"

"But, oh dear!" And Bessie sighed—such a doleful sigh that Babs did look up.

"Bib-Babs, he wants me to have it cut."

Babs frowned. She looked at Mabs, who sighed resignedly and put down her pen.

"Who?"

"The earl."

"Oh, you mean Mr. de Bunter." Babs shook her head. "Honest, Bessie? He really wants you to have your hair bobbed?"

"Y-yes."

"But what for?"

"Well—" Bessie paused. She was not, as a rule, diffident about advertising her charms, but she seemed decidedly hesitant now. "He—he says it will make me look prettier than ever."

"My hat!" gasped Mabs.

"Then he really thinks you're pretty now?" Babs asked with a smile.

"Oh, really, Babs! Of course he thinks I'm pretty!" Bessie expostulated. "And I am pretty—so there!" she added defiantly. "Everybody knows that I'm the prettiest girl at Cliff House. There's only one who can compare with me in looks, and that's you, Babs."

"Thanks!" said Babs dryly. "Do I accept that as a compliment?"

"Well, of course!" Bessie blinked.

"You ought to be jolly proud to be compared with a good-looking girl like me. Of course, I can't help being good-looking."

"No, of course not," agreed Babs thoughtfully.

"It's not my fault that I—I'm the most beautiful girl in the school."

Bessie went on seriously. "I know some cats don't think I am, but that's just because they're jealous. But—"

And again Bessie became distressed.



MARMION'S face grew whiter still as she glimpsed, through the caravan window, the figure of a girl, who, finger on lips, was enjoining silence. The girl was Barbara Redfern.

"Do you think I ought to have it done, Babs?"

"What, have your hair bobbed? Certainly not!"

"But the earl—"

"Blow the earl! He's pulling your leg, Bessie."

"Oh, g-g-goodness, I wish I could think so," Bessie said unhappily. "He isn't, Babs. He drove me round to the hairdresser's specially to make an appointment for to-morrow."

"You mean, he's serious?"

"Yes."

Babs frowned. She glanced sharply at her fat chum, from her to Mabs, and a rather meaning look passed between them.

Till this moment Babs had rather been inclined to treat this latest sensation of Bessie's as a joke, but, glancing at the duffer's unhappy face, it became obvious that it was no joke.

Bessie wasn't pretty. As a matter of fact, Bessie was one of the plainest girls in the school, though nothing on earth would have convinced the fat girl of that fact.

Her face had a certain charm, but that charm could never, by the most elastic stretch of imagination, be dubbed prettiness. Part of it, indeed, was given to her features by that thick, cable-like plait which Bessie now so unappiably contemplated mutilating.

"But that's piffle," Babs said un-easily. "What's his idea, Bessie?"

"Well, he says it will make me look better than I am," Bessie said,

"though, of course, I don't agree with that. Nothing could really make me look prettier, could it?"

Mabs smiled. But she resisted the obvious reply. She said:

"No."

"And he's really made an appointment? What hairdresser's, Bessie?"

"Pinner's, in the Courtfield High Street, at six o'clock," Bessie said dismayedly. "Oh, Babs, I don't want to do it really, but—"

"Well, why have it done?" Babs questioned.

"Well, how can I get out of it?" Bessie asked aggrievedly. "I can't, can I? I mum-mean, the earl's been so non-nice, and all that, that it would be beastly, wouldn't it, not to do what he asked?"

And he says he wants me to look nice because my grandfather, from Canada, is coming to see me. Bless if I knew I had a grandfather in Canada," Bessie mumbled peevishly.

"That is, of course," she added hastily, "I knew all the time. The Bunters are such—such jolly Empire builders, you know. Awfully nice old man, my grandfather."

Babs looked up with a new interest. Grandfather in Canada! The phrase set something going in her mind.

"My hat!" she said suddenly.

And she looked at Mabs, in whose face a light of understanding was dawning.

For, like a flash, memory had returned to Babs. She felt excited, without knowing exactly what there was to be excited about.

All those suspicions which she had tried to thrust to one side since the interview in the headmistress' study yesterday came crowding back.

She remembered now. She saw again that page of the illustrated magazine which she and Mabs had looked at in the lounge of the Courtfield Hotel.

The magazine had contained a photograph of Marmion Tracey, and the caption beneath it had given details of the expected arrival of her grandfather, a millionaire, from Canada.

And that picture of Marmion had shown a girl with bobbed hair! Marmion herself had bobbed hair!

Despite herself, suspicions came flooding back to Babs. The whole thing was too coincidental.

Mabs whistled. In the sudden excitement of that discovery the lines were forgotten.

"Well, I'm blest if I see what there is to get excited about," Bessie said peevishly. "That doesn't alter the fact. The question is, Babs, what am I going to do?"

"About my hair, I mean. I don't mind learning the song he's given me—"

"Song? What song?"

"Well, something I am to sing for grandfather," Bessie volunteered. "Uncle knows what a ripping singer I am, because I've told him so, and he's given me this song so that I can sing it for grandfather when he arrives. It's grandfather's favourite, or something. Jolly old ballad called 'Love's Old Sweet Song,' or something. Mabs, you can play the piano."

"Well?" asked Mabs.

"I'll get you to play it over some time," Bessie said. "Do you know it?"

"Oh, yes, rather!" Mabs smiled. "Good! But—Babs, what shall I do?"

"If you mean about your hair—no," Babs said. "There'll be a row if you have it cut. Besides, it would spoil you. But the question is, what are we to do about it? Oh, hallo!" she added as a tap came at the door. "Come in!"

Sally, one of the maidservants, poked her head in at the door.

"Please, Miss Bunter, your uncle's come. He's downstairs, and would like to see you."

"Oh dear!" gasped Bessie. "Oh goodness! Babs do I look all right?"

"Marvellous!" agreed Babs.

"Thank you! Very well, Sally," Bessie said, adopting her best accent. "Tell the car! I will be along in a moment. Her-hem! Well, so-long, Babs! So-long, Mabs! Will see you later!"

And Bessie left the study, while Babs and Mabs grinned excitedly at each other.

"Couldn't be better," Babs said gleefully. "My hat! I say, what do you make of it, Mabs?"

"Something fishy?"

"Agreed. But the question is, what are we to do about it? We can't let that fat duffer have her hair cut. Neither can we let that man use her for his own ends."

"And we can't tell the Head what we suspect."

"Besides, she'd line us. And wouldn't believe us, in any case."

"And we've no proof."

"No; but we're going to get it!" Babs' eyes gleamed. "Mabs, go and fetch Clara," she said tensely. "We're going to get proof. We're going to watch Earl de Bunter, and when he leaves Cliff House one of us is going to follow. Do you see?"

"But why?"

"Because," Babs said thrillingly, "I've come back to my old idea. There's some connection between him and that girl in the gipsy camp. And it's very probable, if that's right, that Earl de Bunter will visit the gipsy camp on occasions. He may do it on his way back to-night. And, lines or no lines, we're just going to find that out!"



A Daring Bid to Learn the Truth

"ONLY one of us can go," Babs decided.

"Well, I'm the one," Clara Trevlyn put in promptly.

"But why not all?" Mabel Lynn protested.

"Because, dear child, one can do more than three," Babs said wisely. "You see, if we're going to find out anything at all, we can't risk being discovered. Now, listen, and I'll tell you my plan. Earl de Bunter has his car downstairs. He's alone. Whoever of us follows him has got to get into the car quick, and hide beneath the seat. You see?"

"Oh, ripping!"

"But suppose he goes to London or somewhere?" Mabs objected.

"Just got to take the risk," Babs said blithely. "It's for Bessie's sake, remember. And the sake of that poor girl who is being held by those gipsies. And I really think," Babs added, "that I'm the one who ought to go."

"Well, have another think," Clara advised. "I'm the one who ought to go. I'm just cut out for this job. On a bit of detective work like this you want a girl who is really clever."

"Which is just the reason why I should go," Mabs put in triumphantly.

Babs laughed.

"Now, no quarrelling," she said. "We all want to go. We all can't go. Besides, there're risks. The best thing for us to do is to draw lots. Now, draw that pen, Mabs. You can take that pen, Clara: I'll take this one."

Babs drew towards her a sheet of paper and roughly inscribed a small circle in the centre of it.

"Now, shut your eyes, everyone. When I say 'jab'—jab. The one who gets nearest the centre of the circle has the honour. Ready?"

"Ready!"

"Eyes shut?"

"Right! Then jab!" Babs exclaimed breathlessly, and three pens descended as one.

The girls' eyes opened, staring at the small circle which Babs had marked. And then Babs laughed.

"Me!"

"Oh, I say!" Clara looked disappointed. "Never mind! You're the best, really, Babs. I give in."

"Well, good job that's settled," said Babs. "Look here, if I'm not back by call-over, try to get me from being spotted, won't you? And put a dummy in my bed if I'm not back by bed-time. Mabs, in that case you'd better open the window on the ground floor. Now I'm off!"

"But—"

"I'm off!" Babs cried.

Clara laughed.

"Oh, all right, you lucky thing! But do be careful, Babs!"

"Rather!"

"Come back with plenty of news!" enjoined Mabel.

"All I can find out."

"Right-ho! Good luck!"

"Good luck!"

And Babs hurriedly departed, to hide herself beneath the seat in Earl de Bunter's car before that unsuspecting suspect should start on his journey home.

of the surrounding caravans in black silhouette.

It shone on the tiny window of the endmost of the caravans, picking out the distressed face of a girl. The face was plump and round, and showed traces of recent tears.

It was the face of pretty captive Marmion Tracey.

Marmion was gazing towards the road, dimly seen as a ribbon of white through the trees. Her heart was heavy. Whatever hope she had entertained she had abandoned altogether now.

An hour had passed since her return to the gipsy camp, semi-conscious, utterly beaten. She had been shut up in this caravan, and its door had been locked upon the outside. And here she was now. Here, she knew, she would remain—a prisoner at the mercy of the gipses.

"Oh dear!" sighed Marmion. She shifted restlessly. Then she stood quite still. Not yet had she recovered from that blow upon the head. Every time she moved something seemed to get aching, and a swirl and swim in her skull, bringing with it a sharp, piercing pain which stabbed through to her eyes.

She swayed unsteadily upon her feet, and, groping her way to a box, sat down, almost dizzy with the pain of movement. She felt so weak, so helpless.

Marmion could have cried.

How different, this, from the life she had been leading but two days ago—days now which seemed like years!

Then she had been healthy, happy, carefree, of the joy of life, and full of excitement at the thought of seeing her dear grandfather who was on his way home from Canada. Now—

Her mind ran off at a tangent. She thought of her guardian, Uncle Augustus. There had been a scene between them over the burning of some documents which she had recognised as belonging to her grandfather; but that had been the only quarrel they had ever had.

It had not lasted long. Indeed, she had almost forgotten it. She thought of him with a throb of gratefulness now, however, for yesterday she had seen both him and her Aunt Georgia.

He had been too far away to speak to, and had been in his car with three girls belonging to Cliff House School.

His presence in the district was the one ray of hope which Marmion now entertained. For, not suspecting Uncle Augustus, she had decided that he had traced her to this part of the world, and was actively engaged upon tracking her down.

It could only be a matter of time, she felt, before her presence in the gipsy camp was discovered and she was rescued.

Besides, there were those three Cliff House girls.

They knew, too. Sooner or later they would come again—might tell the police. Thinking of those things, Marmion breathed a little more freely. She must be patient; she must wait.

But oh, it was hard to a girl of her athletic nature, hard to be cooped up here in this tiny box of a caravan, hard not to be allowed even to breathe the free, pure air of the woods!

And though she was hungry, she knew that neither bread nor water would be given her until after to-morrow had passed. That was her punishment for trying to escape.

She groaned.

And then she started up, not heeding that pain in her head. Her eyes became full of a wild, incredulous joy and hope. For on the road outside a large

THE moon rode high in the heavens, shedding a mellow light through the trees in Friar-dale Woods. The light fell upon the camp of the gipsies there, picking out the roofs

car had purred to a standstill, and a man who had descended from it was pushing his way through the trees.

The moonlight shone full upon him, revealing his face in every detail. Marmion's heart throbbled.

"Uncle! Uncle Augustus!" she cried.

The man walked on.

"Uncle!" In her excitement and agitation, Marmion beat at the pane of the window. "Uncle!" she cried.

"Uncle, I am here! Marmion! Uncle, don't you recognise me—"

She stopped. The man paused for a second. He looked towards her. For an instant their eyes met, and Marmion knew that he recognised her.

A swift spasm of rage crossed his features, his hands clenched. And then he shrugged, pulling up his coat collar. He passed on, striding towards the group of gypsies who sat at the campfire.

And for a moment Marmion stood dreadfully still, her face as white as paper. Her uncle—he had seen her. He hated her!

The bitter truth dawned upon her at last, causing a chill hand of fear to grip at her heart.

Now she knew. Now everything was explained. Her uncle was in league with the gypsies. She was being kept here, obviously, at his command!

A low cry burst from the lips of Marmion. She reeled, would have fallen; but at the same moment there came a cautious tap at the window, and, staring with dazed eyes, she saw, framed there, the face of a girl, who put a cautious finger to her lips for silence.

The girl was Barbara Redfern!



Wherein Bessie Demonstrates that Singing is Another of Her Many Accomplishments

"**A**HEM!" said Bessie Bunter.

"You ready, Mabs?"

"Good gracious, yes!"

Mabel Lynn said.

"Ahem!" said Bessie again.

"Got a cold?" asked Clara Trevlyn sympathetically.

"Nun-no, of course not," Bessie blinked. "I must clear my throat," she explained. "All good singers clear their throats, before they start, don't they, Mabs?"

Mabs, at the piano in the music-room, laughed.

"Well, not necessarily."

"But if you've still got a tart in your mouth that you've forgotten—" Clara Trevlyn put in humorously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The several girls in the music-room laughed. The news that Bessie Bunter was going to sing had been noised abroad, and to listen to Bessie singing was a new experience which promised fun.

Nobody really believed that Bessie could sing, although Bessie considered that when it came to real singing the world's greatest contraltos were simply just not in it with her.

Bessie was going to show Cliff House that she could sing.

"Ahem! Right, I'm ready now," she said importantly, blinking at the sheet of music before her. "Go on, Mabs, play the overture."

"The what?"

"Sure you don't mean the opening bars, Bessie?" Leila Carroll said. "This isn't a concert, is it?"

Mabs ran her fingers lightly up and down the keys. She knew the song. "Love's Old Sweet Song," as a matter of fact, was one of her own father's favourites. Mabs often played it for him when she was at home during the holidays.

The opening bars rippled out, and Bessie drew a deep breath.

"Just a song at two-high-light—"
"Oh, ye tuning-forks and piccolos!" murmured Jemima Carstairs faintly.

"Great Scott!"

"'Wh-hen the lights are low,'" sang Bessie blithely.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bessie, you're putting the pianist out!"

"And the flick'ring shadows—"
"This is awful!" moaned Clara Trevlyn.

"Do carry me home," murmured Jemima faintly. "Oh, for a spot where I may soothe my offended ears and rest in peace!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie broke off and glared.

"Look here, you cats—"

"Is that the next line, Bessie?"

"No, it isn't! If you don't keep quiet I'll threaten Bessie sulphureously."

"Hurrah!" cheered Jemima. "Come on, girls, make a noise!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," howled Bessie, "am I singing or am I not singing?"

"You're not, Bessie!"

"Then what do you think I am doing?"

"Disturbing the peace, I guess," Leila Carroll languidly put in.

Bessie glared—a glare that almost cracked her glasses. Then she sniffed.

"Well, if you don't like it you know what you can jolly well do!" she sniffed.

"I've got to sing this song. Go on, Mabs! Start again."

"Oh, not at the beginning, Bessie," implored Clara Trevlyn.

But Bessie, considerably ruffled, ignored the sally. She started.

"Just a song at twilight,
When the lights are low,
And the flickering shadows,
Swiftly come and go—"

"Ow! Mercy!" howled Clara Trevlyn plaintively.

"Rescue me!" cried Jemima.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you cats, what are you grinning at?" howled Bessie in fury.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're jolly well jealous, that's what it is," Bessie went on indignantly.

"You won't give a really ripping singer like me a chance!"

"Ripping's the word, I guess," Leila Carroll opined.

"Oh, you're all jealous!" snorted Bessie. "Mabs, old thing, strike up!"

Mabs laughed.

"Where do we start this time, Bessie? At the beginning or in the middle?"

"Oh, start at the end and sing backwards," Jemima advised. "Such a refreshing change, what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Bessie glowered. Once again she opened her mouth, while the grinning girls, with mock horror, stuffed their fingers into their ears. Bessie burst forth.

"Just a song at twilight—"

At the same moment the door opened and the amazed, excited face of Barbara Redfern peeped into the room.

"What on earth—" she said.

"Shush, Babs! Bessie!"

"She's singing!"

"When the lights—" warbled Bessie, and broke off. "Oh, really, Babs, what are you glaring at me like that for?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sorry, Bessie. Don't mind me," Babs smiled. "But what on earth's this—a concert?"

"No, it isn't a concert. I never asked these grinning chumps to come in here," Bessie snorted. "This is the song my uncle has asked me to learn, you know. I'm just learning it, that's all. That is, if these jealous cats will only let me go on."

"Oh, Bessie, do go on!" mocked Jean Cartwright.



BESSIE BUNTER glared wrathfully as Mabs and Mabel went on writing furiously. Each refused to pay the slightest attention to Bessie's rambling remarks!

THE SCHOOLGIRL, "Schoolgirls' Weekly," and "Schoolgirls' Own," are

"Don't let us spoil it for you, old thing."

"Well, I don't mind," Bessie blinked. "But you'll all have to promise to be quite quiet. You ought to look upon it as—as an honour," she said off-handedly, "to have me sing to you. It's not every day that I sing."

"Well, that's something to be thankful for, I'll say!" applauded Leila Carroll.

"Now we'll start again." And Bessie very importantly picked up her sheet of music. "Go on, Mab." "Go on, Mab."

Mabs, smiling, struck up the opening chord. Bessie, to the tune of "Love's Old Sweet Song"—or, at least, sounds that were reminiscent of that tune—opened the ball again.

"Oh, let me like a soldier—!"

"Here, I say!" she expostulated, breaking off. "Somebody's changed my music!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The girls simply yelled.

But Babs had no further attention for Bessie. She had nodded towards Clara, and the tomboy, meeting her look, silently detached herself from the group with which she had been standing.

She threw a look towards Mabs, who, looking round, met Babs' gaze and silently rose. Bessie, rummaging around for her real music, never noticed the sudden flight of her pianist—did not notice that Mabs was gone, indeed, until finally she had discovered her own music pinned to the bottom of her dress by some joker. By that time, however, Mabs, Babs, and Clara were half-way to Study No. 4.

"Babs, you found out something?" Clara asked.

"Yes."

"About—Marmion?"

"Yes, she's there. In the gipsy camp." "Phew!" Clara whistled. "I say," she exclaimed, "you spoke to her, Babs?"

"No, I couldn't speak to her. If I'd raised my voice I should have been heard by the gipsies. But I saw her. She was in a caravan—I was on the outside. I couldn't get a message to her, but I thought of a plan.

I showed her my watch and pointed to twelve o'clock. I think she understood."

"Oh, did she! Then she's jolly clever," Clara expostulated. "I'm bothered if I can. What's the big idea, Babs?"

"Come in," was Babs' reply to that, for they had reached the door of Study No. 4. "Listen, the big idea is this," she added quietly. "I thought it all out. Earl de Bunter, as he calls himself, is Marmion's uncle!"

"What?"

"It's true. I've thought it out," Babs said. "It's fairly simple when you know as much as we do, though there's still a few points to clear up. Earl de Bunter visited the camp to-night. Marmion saw him through the caravan window. She called him 'uncle.' He saw her all right, but affected to take no notice. He went and talked to the gipsies."

Clara's eyes gleamed.

"Wait a minute," Babs said, as the tomboy prepared for another question. "That fact, in itself, proves as we thought—that there's some big connection between Earl de Bunter and the girl held by the gipsies. It's my belief," she went on seriously, "that the gipsies are holding Marmion at his orders!"

"My hat!"

"And then there's Bessie," Babs added shrewdly. "He's got some scheme on in connection with Bessie. It sounds preposterous, on the face of

it, I know, but remember what we've found out. Marmion's a lot like Bessie. At a pinch Bessie might pass for Marmion to someone who does not know her very well; or someone, say, who has not seen Marmion for a few years. The only difference, in fact, is that Marmion is a little better looking than Bessie, and has bobbed hair."

"Bobbed hair!" Mabs' eyes lighted up. "But, Babs, that's what Earl de Bunter wants Bessie to do—have her hair bobbed."

"Yes; and he wants her to sing an old song, doesn't he?" Babs asked. "He wanted her to ride a horse—!" She frowned. "He must have a reason for those things, and that reason is connected with Marmion. I'm more sure than ever now that Bessie is just being used as a dupe by Earl de Bunter, who is no more her uncle than I am. And goodness knows, eventually, what bother that fat duffer might not get into about it!"

There was silence. The three looked at one another with grave, concerned faces.

"It's no good saying anything to Bessie," Babs went on. "She's so full of her rich uncle that she won't hear a word said against him. And it's no good going to the headmistress, or to the police. But we've got to do something. And we're going to do something. There's only one way in which we can expose the whole plot."

"And that?" questioned Clara.

"That's to get Marmion to talk."

"But how?" questioned Mabs.

"How?" Babs smiled. She looked cautiously round the study. "By rescuing her," she said. "Listen. I told you just now that I showed her my watch through the caravan window. I pointed to the hour of twelve, meaning that she must hold herself in readiness at twelve o'clock to-night. Because"—Babs ended on a tense note—"at twelve o'clock to-night we three are going to the gipsy camp. And we're going to get Marmion out."

"Great pip!"

"Oh, Babs, what an idea!"

"And having got her out," Babs went on, "we're going to smuggle her back into the school. And after that—"

She shrugged.

"After that?" Clara repeated. "Well, we'll see what happens," Babs naively replied. "I think," she added; and then she stopped as the door opened and Bessie Bunter, blinking suspiciously through her thick, round spectacles, came into the room.

scene. Now that the moment of the actual adventure was at hand, many thoughts which Babs had not hitherto taken into consideration rose up to haunt her.

Was Marmion alone in that caravan? Had Marmion, perhaps, been taken somewhere else in the meantime? A thousand mocking doubts, indeed, crowded her mind.

But the risk had to be taken. Only the three knew how great that risk was.

This was an escapade which, after the interview of that morning, would land them within the shadow of expulsion if they were caught, and it behooved them to go carefully.

They had broken bounds. That was serious enough in itself. But on top of breaking bounds they had come to this forbidden gipsy camp against the Head's orders, in defiance of the ban she had put upon them.

So they stood still, hardly daring to breathe, while their eyes swept the moon-bathed clearing, anxious to be certain that the coast was clear before they ventured farther.

"Seems O.K.," muttered Clara.

"Quiet enough," agreed Mabs.

"There might be a dog, or dogs," Babs said tensely. "Watch."

They became silent again, their eyes fixed upon the caravan nearest them. The camp lay still; the fire was dying low. Each of the five caravans was dark and silent.

The big tent at the far end of the clearing was leered, and faintly from beneath its canvas welled an unpleasant snore. Everywhere else was very silent; so silent indeed that the first chime of the hour from the church clock of Friardale village made them all jump.

Babs looked at her wrist-watch. "Twelve o'clock!" she muttered.

"Well, come on. Let's get a move on," tomboy Clara said impatiently.

"What's the programme, anyway?"

"Shush!"

"Oh blow—"

"Shush!" Babs whispered. "Watch for Marmion. The programme is this:

I found on this evening that the door is locked and bolted on the outside. Fortunately, however, they keep the key in the lock. What we've got to do is to unlock and unbolt the door from the outside and get away without anyone being the wiser. There—look!" Babs broke off suddenly.

They all looked, stiffening as they did so. There was a movement in Marmion's caravan; they caught a glimpse of a face at the window. The face, white, strained, peered out, looking directly at them. It was the face of Marmion Tracey.

Babs thrilled.

"She's there."

"Good! Then come on!" muttered Clara.

"Wait a minute," Babs raised a hand.

Marmion saw and understood. She looked towards the door, nodding her head to signal that she was ready to fly, and at the same time putting a cautious finger across her lips for silence. Babs waved.

"Right. Come on," she murmured. She stole forward, Clara and Mabs following her. It was perhaps less than fifty yards to the caravan, but to the Cliff House chums it seemed ten miles.

With the stealth of Indians they stole forward, treading on tiptoe, almost at



In the Gipsy Camp
at Midnight

"SHUSH!"

"Quiet!"

"Softly now!" breathed

Barbara Redfern.

The hearts of the three—Babs herself, Mabel Lynn, and Clara Trevlyn—were beating fast as they reached the clearing in Friardale Woods in which the gipsy camp was situated.

They halted for a moment to dart a sharp, questing look in the direction of the nearest caravan. That caravan, as Babs knew, was Marmion's prison.

The moon rode high in the sky, shedding an all-too-brilliant light upon the

Organising a Wonderful Free Gift Scheme that will Create a New Craze!

times hardly daring to breathe. Their eyes roved keenly from side to side.

No alarm. They went on. Once Clara trod on a dry twig and snapped it with a sound that, in that night silence, sounded like the report of a gun. Tingling, she pulled up, halting a second. From the tent farther along the line of caravans came a guttural grunt from one of its sleeping occupants. "O.K.!" breathed Mabs. "Get ahead, Babs!"

On, on! Now they were in the shadow of the caravan itself. They paused, Clara taking position at one side of the door, Mabs at the other, watching keenly, alert for the slightest sound.

Babs crept forward. Her hand went up towards the key. There was a faint scraping sound as she turned it.

Her heart was thumping now. In her mouth her tongue felt hot and dry. She knew the dreadful risk she and her chums were running. But, overcoming even the fear of consequences was her thought for the girl prisoner in that caravan.

She reached up towards the top bolt, showing faintly in the moonlight. There was a sharp, scraping sound as it shot back.

For a moment they all stood still. In that silence the sound had become magnified a dozen times. It sounded like the grating of the wheels of a railway train to the nerve-braced girls.

But nothing happened. "Buck up!" muttered Clara.

But Babs was already struggling with the bottom bolt—big, heavy, and unloiled. She pulled gently. The bolt refused to budge.

She pulled again, and, with a sound like the rumble of a train, the bolt slid along its sockets, shrieking in rusty protest at having thus been disturbed. There was a movement in the tent near by; a voice.

"My hat! Buck up!" gasped Clara. The door opened. Marmion, her face white and tense, looked down at them. From the tent came the voice again.

"What's the matter out there?" "Shush!" breathed Babs.

They stood tense, watching, waiting. But the aroused sleeper in the tent, apparently, after listening a few moments, decided that nothing was amiss. They heard his grunt as he lay down again.

"My goodness!" gasped Mabs in relief.

"Quiet now!" And Babs, taking Marmion by the hand, helped her down the steps. "Not a sound," she whispered, as she led the way towards the road again.

And they crept on, reaching the road without mishap. Once there, however, they turned their faces towards Cliff House, and flew!

"THE question is," said Babs, "what are we to do now?"

It was half an hour later, and Babs, Mabs, and Clara, accompanied by the white-faced Marmion, were back at Cliff House, having entered by the ground-floor window they had carefully left open.

They were, at the moment, in Study No. 4—a fact which would surely have brought down the wrath of the Powers that Were upon their heads had it been known.

For Cliff House, little suspecting the

stranger within its gates, was asleep, and the hour was half-past twelve.

The lights were on, but the door was shut, and the chums spoke in soft whispers. Marmion, sitting in the chair, looked up. Her face, pretty if pale, was very thoughtful, and in her eyes shone a light of gratitude.

"Well, we can tell the Head," practical Clara pointed out. "Now we've got Marmion, and can prove she was a prisoner in the gipsy camp."

"Yes, but we can't prove that the man who calls himself Earl de Bunter put her there," Babs said. "And the man himself will deny it. Not only that, but it means that Marmion will be given again into his custody."

Clara pulled a face. "There was a thoughtful pause. Babs was in full possession of the facts now.

longer. The man who posed as Bessie's uncle was teaching Bessie to take Marmion's place.

Marmion, writing to her grandfather, had told him of her singing, her riding, her reading, and it was certain that, when the old man saw her, he would be interested to hear all about that.

That was why, Babs guessed, Augustus Fanshaw was taking pains that Bessie should know something about those subjects.

That was why he was so anxious for Bessie to have her hair bobbed. For, apparently, the only photograph the old grandfather had of Marmion was a snapshot.

The resemblance between Bessie and Marmion was sufficiently similar to be indistinguishable from such meagre proof.



SILENT, hardly daring to breathe, the three Cliff House girls and Marmion stood tense, as a voice came from within a near-by tent! Was Marmion's escape fated to be discovered?

For Marmion had told her story as they made their way back to the school. And that story had verified many of the suspicions that Babs held, and, as far as she was concerned, at least, made the whole situation crystal clear.

Marmion's grandfather, whom she had not seen for seven long years, was due to arrive in England at any moment now, and, obviously, Earl de Bunter—whose real name was Augustus Fanshaw—did not want Marmion and her grandfather to meet.

Marmion, in fact, had seen Augustus Fanshaw burn some papers belonging to her grandfather. He was afraid that when she and her grandfather met, Marmion would tell him all about that. Oh, yes, it was all clear now! The mystery, in fact, was a mystery no

It was Augustus Fanshaw's intention, obviously, when grandfather came, to pass Bessie off as Marmion. How he was going to do it, exactly, was not clear. But until now he had proved himself cunning, and it was obvious he had thought it all out.

It was obvious, too, that to give Marmion up would not help the girl.

Very probably her cunning uncle had prepared for such a contingency, and had his plans laid. This was an occasion, Babs conceded, when cunning must be met with cunning.

Having gone so far, it was not in Babs' mind to spoil the whole thing by a hasty denouncement of

Augustus Fanshaw. "That's true," Marmion agreed now, and her forehead puckered. And even Clara, thinking it over, was inclined to agree.

"Well, what's to be done?" asked Mabs. Babs paused.

"I know," she said; "at least, I think I know," she added. "We'll hide Marmion."

"Eh?" "Hide her—?" "Where?"

"In the school. There's one of the attics fixed up as a staff spare-room; she can have that. We'll smuggle her meals."

"Yes, but I say, half a minute!" protested Clara. "But why—?"

"Why?" Babs gave a cluck of impatience. "Don't you see, you old goose?" she laughed. "Listen. Marmion's uncle will know to-morrow her escape from the camp. He won't think we've got anything to do with it. He'll conclude that Marmion's run away."

"Well? What's he going to do? Put yourself in his position. He can't make a hue and cry about Marmion, because he would reveal his own share in her disappearance. On the other hand, the grandfather is coming to England at any moment. Mr. Fanshaw's got to produce Marmion when he arrives. Well, we know how he'll do that. He'll produce Bessie."

"Well?" Clara still looked unconvinced.

"Well, don't you see?" Babs added triumphantly. "That's where we come in. We keep Marmion dark. Grandfather arrives. We shall know all about that—through Bessie. At the critical moment we produce the real Marmion, and bowl him out!"

"My hat!"

"Babs, that's an idea!"

"Catch him in the act, as it were?"

"Surely!"

"Marmion, you don't mind?" Babs asked.

"Mind?" Marmion's eyes flashed. "I'll do anything—anything," she vowed. "Babs, from this moment I am in your hands. All that I ask is to meet my grandfather again."

"It shall be done!" smiled Babs. "And now," she added, "Quiet! Upstairs, all of you. I'll take Marmion to the attic."



Bessie Prepares to be "Presented"

MORNING! With bright sun and carolling of birds, and a frosty nip in the air which sent Clara Trevlyn, for all the lateness of the hour at which she had retired, bounding out of bed in the Fourth Form dormitory at Cliff House.

Morning, with the bright sun streaming in at the tiny attic window among the roofs of the old school, and a wondering-eyed, plump-faced girl turning over to behold in sleepy bewilderment the glittering light peeping through the curtains.

And the same sunshine shone upon a stalwart gipsy man, who, walking hesitatingly into the lounge of the Courtfield Hotel, asked the curious-eyed porter for Earl de Bunter.

The same sun, a few minutes later, shone upon the form of Augustus Fanshaw, alias Earl de Bunter, as he sat with an amazed and disturbed expression upon his face, listening to the gipsy's story.

He rose, pacing the room. "And you say you don't know where she is?"

"I take the gipsy, spread his hands. "She went in the night. This morning I found the door open."

"Oh, you're a fool! A fool!" And Fanshaw bit his nails. "Great Scott! What a dickens of a mess I'm in now," he grated. "She's run away. Goodness knows where. Goodness knows what she may do!" He thought for a moment. "The police, sooner or later, will find

her. She may even report to the police."

"Yes," agreed Jake. "If!" "If?" "The eyes of the man whom Bessie knew as her uncle narrowed. An expression came over his face which would have startled that fat junior considerably had she seen it.

"Listen, Jake, I have it," he said. "There is nothing to fear. If this girl falls into the hands of the police—and she is bound to do that unless she goes home, in which case all will be well, for the butler there is acting under my instructions. But if she falls into the hands of the police, they will come and see you. You must say that she wandered into your camp, that she was ill, suffering from delusions. You understand? You have not ill-treated her?" he added sharply.

"No; only threatened."

"Then that is well." Augustus Fanshaw heaved a sigh of relief. "That absolves you from any blame. I shall be called in as her guardian, of course. I shall say that she was strange in her manner, and wandered off. You give the impression that you took pity on her. I—" And he stopped then as the telephone bell rang. Irritably, he picked up the instrument. His face changed as a voice came from the other end of the wire.

"Yes, yes, certainly," he said into the mouthpiece, and slammed the receiver upon its hook.

"Jake, get out!" he said testily. "I will send for you when I want you."

Jake rose to his feet, fingering his cap. He shuffled towards the door.

"Get out!" Fanshaw barked.

And Jake, with a shrug, departed. Augustus Fanshaw waited till the door had closed, and then, calling the exchange, gave the Cliff House number and asked for Miss Penelope Primrose.

BESSIE BUNTER peered at herself in the mirror above the washstand in the Fourth Form dormitory, smoothed her eyebrows with a finger, and struck a pose with one hand upon her hip. She beamed with satisfaction at her reflection.

"Ahem!" she coughed politely. "Clara Trevlyn, in the act of slipping on her tunic, paused.

"My goodness, Bessie, what's the matter?"

"Ahem!" said Bessie again, without taking notice.

Clara winked at Babs, who, just having returned from an early visit to the attic, was now divesting herself of her dressing-gown and putting on school uniform.

Babs smiled slightly. "Ahem!" said Bessie again, in her most ladylike manner.

"Got a cold, old thing?" June Merritt sympathetically inquired. "Bessie, I've never upon her a look of frigidity."

"I have not got a cold," she said haughtily. "I will trouble you, June, not to make facet-facet-funny remarks. Ahem! You forget that I am a—a lady!" Bessie went on, turning up her little snub nose.

"Well, I'll say that's not difficult," Leila Carroll opined.

"All ladies have—have things to do," Bessie went on vaguely. "I must look my best—what? My uncle, you know—the Earl de Buntah—is so awfully rich and influential, and all that. Can't let him down—what? Ahem! My uncle says I must act like a lady."

"Well, why not give it a try-out?" Leila suggested.

And the dormitory tittered. But the veiled sarcasm in that remark was lost upon Bessie.

"I—er—am doing so," she said. "That is to say, of course, I—ah—always do. Rathah a bore, you know; but, then, one must bow to the—ah—conventions. I have been talking with my—ah—rich and influential uncle—? "And he told you to be quiet?" suggested June Merritt.

"No, he jolly well didn't! I mean, really—June, he told me that some day I should be presented at Court, you know."

"Oh, what court, Bessie?"

"The tennis court," suggested Clara Trevlyn; and there was a laugh.

Bessie blinked reprovingly.

"Really, Clara, I fail to see that that is funny!" she said haughtily. "The remark, in my opinion, is in distinctly bad taste. No real high-born lady would—ah—dream of saying a silly thing like that. The Court I am referring to is—is the Court," Bessie added vaguely. "Where people are presented, you know. One wears white satin model gowns and trains and feathers, and all that sort of thing."

The Form chuckled.

Bessie as an aristocrat was the funniest thing they had struck for a long time. Nobody, apparently, took the fat junior seriously except Bessie herself.

But Bessie took herself with a seriousness that more than made up for all the levity with which she was regarded in Cliff House. And Bessie, guileless as a child, implicitly believed in all the lavish promises Earl Percy de Bunter had made her; and really she was convinced now that she was cut out to be one of the great ladies of the land.

So Bessie, with a view to that time, was practising—assiduously and earnestly.

The Fourth did not discourage her. Until they grew weary of Bessie's sudden highfalutin' airs and graces they found the fat girl very rich entertainment. Indeed, rather than discourage, they did their best to enhance the opinion that Bessie had of herself.

"Oh, you mean a wedding!" Phyllis Howell put in.

Bessie sniffed.

"I wish you would not show your ignorance," she said haughtily. "I thought you'd know. You may wear trains, but you don't wear feathers at a wedding like you do at Court, so how can it be a wedding?"

"Answer's a sprig of orange blossom," Clara Trevlyn suggested.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie sniffed.

"Oh, you're jealous, that's what it is," she said offendedly. "You all know how ripping I'll look really in a—a model gown with a train. A model," continued Bessie, "would just suit me. I've got the figure for it, you know. Look! I'll show you!" Bessie added eagerly; and, seeing that she had the attention of the Form, caught up a sheet from her bed. "Now watch this. This is the gown."

"This is the gown!" applauded Jimmie Carstairs. "Observe, ladies!"

"You wear it like—like this," Bessie said. "This is a real gown, of course," she added unnecessarily. "My Court gown will have real diamonds on it, and—and rubies and things. And a train, of course. All the best gowns have trains, don't they, Babs? Now," said Bessie; and, having draped the sheet about her shoulders, she stood rather like a plump feminine Nero, beaming at the assembly.

The Fourth-Formers had a hard job to keep their faces straight.

"Well, I'll say you look a wow!" Leila Carroll opined.

"Bien chic!" Marcelle Biquet, the French junior, tittered.

"Topping, Bessie!"

"Thank you!" Bessie was extremely gratified. She rather fancied herself, did Bessie. "My word," she added, catching a glimpse of herself in the mirror as she moved forward, hand on hip. "I do look rathah distinguished, you know. I shall be the sensation of the season—what?"

"You will."

"Oh, not a doubt about that, Bessie!" Bessie repeated herself.

"Of course, you must imagine me with a head-dress. Plumes, you know."

"Hen feathers," suggested Lydia Crossendale.

But Bessie sniffed.

"Well, wait a tick," Leila said. "Gee, I wish I had my camera! Half a sec, Bessie!" she added excitedly. "I guess I can fix up that head-dress in three shakes of a duck's tail!"

And Leila darted from the room, to return a moment later with three white chrysanthemums she had filched from the vase which stood in the window of the corridor outside.

Bessie smirked.

"Hold tight! I'll put them on!" Leila offered generously, and stuck them in Bessie's thick plait, so that they stood perched on the crown of her head. "There!" she added admiringly.

Bessie stood smiling. She stood still, so that the flowers shouldn't drop. But she stood in such a posture, striking such an attitude and with such an expression of delighted satisfaction on her face, that the Form simply yelled.

And in the middle of the yell the door opened and Miss Bullivant came in.

Miss Bullivant was the Form mistress of the Lower Third, and the most uncertain-tempered teacher in the school.

"Bessie!" she cried sharply.

Bessie wheeled—with such disconcerting suddenness that one of the flowers broke, hanging over her forehead.

"Oh crumbs! I mean, y-yes, Miss Bullivant!"

"You ridiculous child!"

"Oh, really, Miss Bullivant!"

"Why are you dressed up in that absurd fashion?"

"Absurd!" Bessie looked indignant.

"Oh, really, Miss Bullivant, you don't understand!" she expostulated. "I was only showing these girls—"

"Take it off at once!"

"But—"

"Take it off! And you other girls stop giggling!" Miss Bullivant said sharply. "Bessie, your uncle has just rung up the headmistress."

"Oh—ah!" Bessie said, with a self-conscious smirk.

"He has asked Miss Primrose to give you a message. Your grandfather is arriving at six o'clock to-night, and your uncle wishes you to spend the day with him. You will go to Courtfield immediately after breakfast."

"Oh, yes! Oh, of course!" Bessie stammered.

"That is all."

"Thank-you, Miss Bullivant!"

And Miss Bullivant, with a frown, withdrew.

And Bessie reluctantly divested herself of her imaginary gown. The Fourth grinned.

But Babs and Mabs and Clara exchanged significant glances. It seemed that this was the cue they had been waiting for.

And Babs, at least, immediately made up her mind. Whatever happened, she was not going to lose sight of Bessie that day.



No "Bob" for Bessie

THE day, being Saturday, was a whole holiday at Cliff House. And Courtfield, on half-holidays and on whole holidays, was recognised as being within bounds.

After breakfast Babs and Mabs and Clara held a quick council of war.

"Two of us will follow Bessie," Babs said. "The other must stop in the school to look after Marjion. Mabs, you stop. As soon as anything happens I'll ring you up. Is that agreed?"

"Yes."

"And you will come with me, Clara?"

"Yes, rather!" the tomboy said.

Babs nodded.

"Then that's fixed up," she said relievedly.

And when Bessie left the school, striding importantly down the drive an hour later, she had no idea that Babs and Clara were following in her wake.

Babs and Clara were resolved that to-day should see this amazing mystery cleared up.

BUT Bessie, despite her assurance, despite her pomposity in the school, was not feeling easy in her mind.

It was beginning to strike even Bessie that her uncle was a little unusual in many ways. Bessie had not enjoyed trying to learn to ride a horse. She had wondered vaguely why she had had to learn that song, and why her uncle had been so insistent that she should be able to do these things.

And Bessie was disturbed—very much disturbed—about the latest request of her uncle's.

That hair-cut! Bessie was vain. Bessie honestly believed she was pretty. But even Bessie had moments in which she was more or less candid with herself, and was not looking forward with pleasure to having that long cable-like plait of hers shorn away.

(Continued on next page.)

THE PERFECT PRESENT

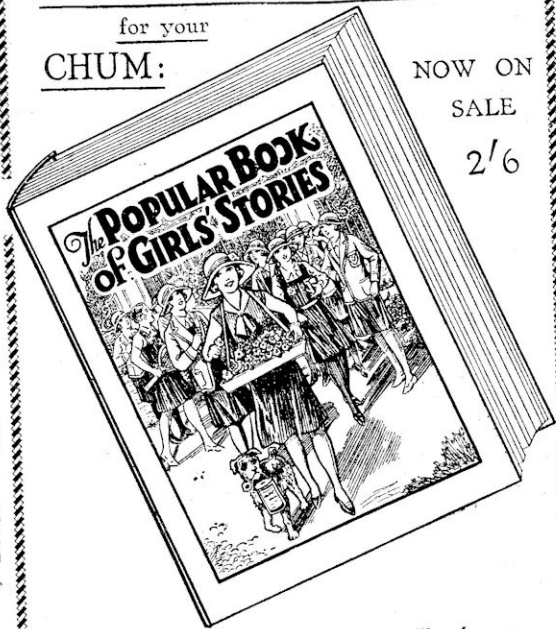
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She doubted, indeed, despite her uncle's protestations, whether it would improve her looks, and great was the disturbance in her mind.

But Bessie was, first and foremost, grateful.

Since he had so amazingly introduced himself, her uncle had given her the essence of kindness. He had given her everything her heart desired—money, tuck, clothes—and had opened up to her a vision of such delights to come as she had only entertained heretofore in dreams.

Bessie, as a result, was chary indeed of displeasing her uncle. She would, in fact, have done anything for him. But to have her hair cut—

No; even Bessie had grave doubts about that procedure.

She was still entertaining these doubts when she stepped into the hall of the Courtfield Hotel and was instantly whisked up to her uncle's suite by the lift-boy. He greeted her warmly. Resplendent in morning dress, he stood in the centre of the room awaiting her. His wife, reclining gracefully upon the settee, threw the fat junior a half-amused glance and went on reading.

"Ah, Bessie!" Earl Percy said.

"Uncle!" she exclaimed, and shook his hands.

"Sit down!" he smiled cordially.

"Like something to eat?"

"Nunno—no, thanks!" Bessie stutted.

"Very well." He paused. "I suppose you heard, Bessie, that your grandfather is coming to-day?"

"Yes."

"He arrives at six o'clock this evening," Earl de Bunter went on. "We are meeting him at the station, and then coming back here for dinner. He will be delighted to see you again, Bessie."

But he frowned. "I think I ought to warn you that—well, he is a little eccentric, you know. Suffers from delusions. You know what delusions are—"

"Yes."

"He imagines things," Earl Percy went on. "We have to humour him, you know. Of course, it's ridiculous; but he imagines, for instance, that your name is not Bessie at all. Funny, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Bessie politely.

"I beg your pardon?"

"I mun-mean, yes, it is. I was laughing."

"But this is serious!" Earl Percy frowned.

"Oh, is it?" Bessie asked bewilderedly. "I thought—thought you said it was fun-funny. But it is funny. If he doesn't think my name is Bessie, what does he think it is?"

Earl Percy frowned.

"Well, he thinks it's—It's Marmion."

"Eh?"

"Marmion."

Bessie stared.

"But that's the name of—"

"Oh, it's a common name!" Earl Percy said off-handedly. "After all, what does it matter? One name is as good as another, isn't it? As a matter of fact, Bessie, there's a reason for it. Your grandfather was present at your christening, you know. He was very keen on you being called Marmion, but our godparents christened you Bessie. But the old man, as I've said, is a bit of a crank in some ways. He always insisted that Marmion was the name you should have been christened, and he's

always insisted upon calling you Marmion. You understand?"

Bessie looked nervous.

"Oh, yes!"

"And—well, there are other things," Earl Percy went on. "He might say things which you don't understand. He may mention names of places you don't understand; but you must pretend to understand, you see. You must play up to him, as it were. You see?"

"Yes—yes," Bessie said, in dismay.

But she felt the sinking of the heart. She felt nervous. Her grandfather did not sound the attractive proposition she had imagined him to be. To Bessie's mind he sounded like a lunatic, and Bessie was rather apprehensive about lunatics. She looked dreadfully uneasy.

"I sus-say, he won't go for me?" she questioned anxiously.

"Go for you? Good gracious, of course not!"

"He—he is not v-violent?" Bessie stammered.

"Oh, Bessie, don't be such a little goose. Of course not!"

And Earl Percy laughed at the very idea of such a thing.

But Bessie did not feel reassured, for all that.

"You're sure you understand?" her pseudo-uncle asked anxiously.

"Oh, yes; I think so!"

"Right!" He smiled relievedly.

"Then don't forget. Be warned. And now, Bessie, we'll go along to the hair-dresser's. I've arranged the appointment for this morning, and they'll be waiting for you now. Come along!"

"But—"

"We can't waste time, you know."

"Oh dear! Oh, no!" Bessie gasped.

"But, I say, uncle—"

"Well—"

"I—I really dud-don't think I'd look prettier, after all, with my hair cut! It's my crowning glory, you know."

"Nonsense!"

"Bib—but I don't!" Bessie persisted anxiously. "In fact, I—I know I shall look ghastly, and Mabs says I shall look awful."

"Nonsense!" Earl Percy repeated sternly.

"But—"

"Bessie, I can't have you make a fool of me," Earl Percy said. "I have made the appointment, and you must go. Besides, your grandfather dislikes girls with long hair. Come along now!"

Bessie, with a groan, rose to her feet. She followed her uncle out, feeling very much as prisoners of old must have felt when they were going to the block to be beheaded.

Bessie felt that she would never be the same girl again without her tresses. But what could she do now?

FROM the opposite side of the street, Babs and Clara saw Bessie, looking rather doleful, emerge, hand in hand, with Earl Percy de Bunter, and walk on down the street. They saw the pair disappear into the hair-dresser's on that side of the street.

Babs stared.

"My hat! I'd forgotten that!"

"What?" asked Clara Trevlyn.

"Earl Percy has persuaded that fat duffer to get her hair cut."

"Great goodness! She'll look a freak."

"She will. And the worst of it is," Babs said, "Bessie doesn't want it done.

I say, turn your back!" she added quickly.

They both turned, and Earl Percy, unaccompanied, came out of the hair-dresser's shop again, obviously having left Bessie behind. Babs looked at her tomboy chum.

"I say, we can't let that duffer go on with it!"

"Rather not?"

"You think we ought to interfere?"

"I'm pretty sure we ought to interfere," Clara said. "Our Bessie, without her hair! My hat! What a tragedy it would be! Come on!"

And Clara, in that determined way of hers, strode across the road.

Babs followed. She really was anxious about Bessie. She knew that Bessie really didn't want that "bob," and she knew, too, that Bessie, out of a sense of gratitude, couldn't refuse.

That Bessie would look a sight, Babs had no doubt. Besides, she would get her leg pulled unmercifully at Cliff House.

Babs felt concerned. Bessie was a duffer, but she was Babs' chum. It was Bessie's business, of course, what she did with her hair, but in many matters Bessie's mind was made up for her by other people. Besides, there would be a row with Miss Primrose. Girls weren't supposed to have their hair cut whilst at school without first showing the headmistress the written permission from their parents.

Babs steered herself. Yes, they must save Bessie.

Clara, at a run, led the way into the hair-dresser's shop.

From a luxurious waiting-room ran a line of cubicles, the doorways covered with manye velvet curtains, and from one of these cubicles came a distinctly distressed voice. It was the voice of Bessie.

"Ow! Not too short, please! Dud-don't take too much off, you know."

"But your uncle, miss. He said a distinct bob."

"Oh dear, I know!"

"But—"

"I'm afraid I must obey his instructions," came the voice of the assistant.

"Now, please, will you sit perfectly still? A little more to the right, please."

"Bessie!" shouted Babs.

"Stop!" yelled Clara.

And simultaneously they thrust the curtain aside and burst into the room.

Bessie was there, an expression of tragic misery on her face. She was enveloped in a protective cape, and the woman assistant, with a pair of long scissors in her hand, had already combed out her hair, was in the act, indeed, of shearing it through. She paused at the interruption, her hand falling to her side.

In a moment Babs and Clara were at Bessie's side.

"Bessie, come out of this!" Babs gasped, wrenching away the linen covering.

"But—"

"I'm sorry! We can't stop; it's a mistake! Come on!" Babs said anxiously. "Bessie, you chump! What would Miss Primrose say?"

"But look here—"

"Come on!"

And, whisking the bewildered Bessie to her feet, Babs and Mabs caught hold of her and rushed her from the cubicle, while the assistant stood rooted to the spot.

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"Hurry!" gasped Clara.
 "Where?"
 "You'll see! You don't want your hair cut, do you?"
 "Nun-no! But my uncle—"
 "Bother your uncle!"
 "But—Ow! Really, dad-don't rush me like that!" Bessie howled.
 But Babs and Clara paid no attention to the fat duffer's protests. They had made up their minds. From this moment they were going to take the law into their own hands. They were going to rush Bessie back to Cliff House. They no longer felt that their fat chum was safe with her uncle.

if I'm falling to pieces. But I say, Babs!"
 "Yes?"
 "Ow! Wu-wait a minute! Wait till I gig-got my breath back!" Bessie puffed.
 "Oh dear! But, oh, I suppose, Babs, I'm j-jolly glad!"
 "What about?"
 "Thith-that you kik-came in and rescued me," Bessie said.
 "Oh dear! That beast was just about to cut my hair off. Oh, gig-goodness! I say, where's the earl?"
 "You mean your uncle?"
 "Goodness knows!"
 "Blow the earl!" exclaimed Clara Trevlyn, and looked at Babs as a motor bus came bowling along. Babs nodded.
 "Come on, Bessie! In you go!"
 "Go!"

Eton cropp'd," Clara prophesied darkly.
 Bessie looked utterly dismayed.
 "Oh dad-dear! Do you think so, Clara?"
 "Well, he tried to get you bobbed, didn't he?"
 "Y-yes!"
 "And you didn't want to be bobbed?"
 "Nun-no," Bessie admitted feebly.
 "And— But here's the bus. Jump in, Bessie."
 But Bessie was given no alternative.



ARRAYED in the sheet, and with the bunch of flowers stuck in her hair, Bessie struck a dignified attitude. Her new-found dignity would have received something of a shock had she seen the stern figure of Miss Bullivant in the doorway!



Bessie Learns the Truth

RIGHT through the shop and into the street Barbara Redfern and Clara Trevlyn rushed the amazed and breathless Bessie, and not until, indeed, they had whirled round the corner into the next thoroughfare did they stop.
 Bessie, considerably puffed, fighting desperately to get back her breath, eyed them in astonishment.
 "Oh, really!" she murmured feebly.
 Babs laughed breathlessly.
 "Puffed, Bessie?"
 "Puffed?" Bessie blew out her cheeks. "Mum-my hat! I feel-fel as

"The bus! We're going back to Cliff House."
 "Oh, really, Babs! What for?"
 "Bessie, there's something we want to say to you—something we must tell you!" Babs said quickly. "Something we must show you. If you must know what—"
 "But my uncle—"
 "Bother your uncle!"
 "But, really—"
 "Look here, do you want your hair cut again?" Babs asked.
 "Nun-no!"
 "Well, you know what will happen if you meet your uncle. He'll take you back."
 "Oh dear!"
 "And this time he won't be content with a 'bob.' He'll probably have you

Clara, with a well placed hand in the fat girl's back, pushed her in. Bessie, still blinking, utterly bewildered and not a little distressed, found herself sitting in a seat between Babs and Clara, and the bus was on the move almost before she realised it.
 But somehow, now, she didn't care.
 As a matter of fact, Bessie was just beginning to sort out her emotions and her impressions. Bessie, indeed, had suffered several distinct shocks.
 That interview with her uncle had upset her, though Bessie had not realised it until now. She had been so kind and considerate that Bessie had felt nothing but gratitude towards him. And though she had persuaded herself that he really was her uncle, there was a little imp of conscience which had been haunting her all the time,

For Bessie knew, in her heart, that the man was not her uncle. Nobody knew better than Bessie that her wealthy relatives were simply myths. They were so very real to Bessie, however, that she really had persuaded herself that they existed, and only when this one had popped up in the flesh had she doubted them.

Bessie, indeed, did not come of a wealthy family. Her father, of whom she always spoke as a millionaire, was, in reality, something in the City, with an income which only just enabled him to keep Bessie and his two other children at school.

Bunter Court, which Bessie painted as a palatial mansion overrun with footmen and gold pillars, was in reality nothing more than a rather large villa on the outskirts of London.

In fact, Bessie had only one really wealthy relation. That was her Aunt Agatha, now in New Zealand. And Aunt Agatha's wealth had been most surprisingly swept into her lap by the winning of a first prize in a big sweep-stake.

Bessie was uncomfortably conscious of all those facts. Till now they had never troubled her. But this—

Bessie sighed.

Not often was Bessie given to deep thinking, but she was thinking now. Slowly but surely it was beginning to dawn upon her dull mind that during these last few days she had been practising some form of deception. How, she had only the most vague idea, but she knew that Earl Percy was not her relative.

It troubled her conscience a little, therefore, that she should have accepted so much at his hands. True, he had vowed he would be her relative. True, he had more or less forced her to accept all those things which he had pressed upon her. And yet—

"I sus-say, Babs," Bessie muttered unasily.

But Babs was looking at Clara. And the bus, jolting rather noisily over the cobbles that led to the road which ran directly to Cliff House, made conversation rather an effort.

Bessie relapsed into her thoughts. Bessie had been fighting that little voice of conscience. If Bessie had thought of the matter at all, she had told herself there was no harm in accepting what someone else was so obviously anxious to give. In a vague sort of way she had wondered if there was a "catch" in it anywhere, and she had a very definite feeling now that there was a catch.

The uncle she had met that morning had been an altogether different being from the uncle she had known since his surprising introduction to herself at Cliff House. And Bessie was not feeling easy in her mind.

The fact that she was to meet this strange grandfather this evening had impressed Bessie with a most uncomfortable alarm. She felt nervous on his account.

A man who was going to insist upon calling her Marmion when her name was Bessie was not the sort of person Bessie enjoyed meeting. And somehow she could not help but couple that name of Marmion with the white-faced girl she had once seen in the gipsy camp.

And the suggestion that she should have her hair bobbed. Bessie had agreed because there seemed nothing else for her to do without appearing utterly ungrateful, but secretly she was enormously glad that Babs and Clara had slipped in in time to prevent her being shorn.

But why had her so-called uncle been so insistent upon that ceremony being performed? Why had he been so insistent that she should learn that song, learn to ride a horse?

Deer as she was, it was beginning to dawn upon Bessie that Uncle Earl Percy was perhaps not all that he seemed.

"Babs," she said.

"Here we are," Babs called cheerily. "This way, Bessie."

"But—"

"This way," Clara repeated.

And Bessie, with a sigh, climbed down into the road as the omnibus stopped just on the corner of the cross-roads near the gates of Cliff House School.

"But I say," persisted Bessie unhappily. "Oh, Babs, why have we come back to the school?"

Babs smiled.

"Didn't I say?" she asked. "Don't you remember, Bessie, I said I'll tell you something? And show you something. Look here"—she turned in the lane and faced the fat girl—"this business has gone far enough, Bessie."

"Wh-what business?"

"This masquerade—by the man who calls himself your uncle."

Bessie tried to look indignant, but only succeeded in looking miserable.

"Oh, really, Babs—"

"Now, Bessie!" And Babs looked at her seriously. "Bessie," she added, in a softer voice, "do you really believe it? Do you really, truthfully, and honestly, believe that the man is your uncle?"

Bessie was silent. But she looked dreadfully distressed.

"You don't, do you?" Babs took the other's arm. "I know, Bessie," she said understandingly. "You've thought you might as well have a good time while the good time was going. We don't blame you—not really. But—"

"Oh, Babs, don't you?" Bessie asked.

"No. Not you. It's not the sort of thing we'd do, though," Babs smiled kindly. "Still, we know now, Bessie," she added, quickly, "supposing you'd known all the time this man had been posing as your uncle that another girl was being made unhappy?"

Bessie winced.

"Oh, Babs, wh-what do you mean?"

"What girl could have been unhappy?"

Babs shrugged.

"Never mind—wait," she said mysteriously.

But Bessie looked pained. Very suddenly she stopped in the middle of the road, panting, her feet apart.

"No, Babs, I'm not coming," she said, with unusual determination.

Babs looked surprised.

"But, Bessie—"

"It—it's not fair," Bessie said, and almost looked as if she were going to burst into tears. "Babs, I've not been making another girl unhappy?"

Babs' heart melted.

"Not you. Not willingly—or knowingly," she replied. "Dear old Bessie—"

"Babs, you've got to tell me," Bessie persisted.

"Oh, come along!" muttered Clara.

"No," Bessie looked excited. "Babs, I do—demand to know," she said. "If there's another girl—"

"Well, there is," Babs nodded. "Bessie, you've heard of Marmion Tracey?"

Bessie jumped.

"Yes, yes! Marmion. Mum-my hat, Babs, that was the name he wanted me to use."

"Who, your uncle?"

"Yes. To-night, when we're meeting g'ug grandfather."

"Oh!" It was Babs' turn to look excited now. "What time, Bessie?"

"Six o'clock."

"Where?"

"At the station."

"Oh!" And Babs laughed. "Bessie," she said seriously, "I want you to do something now. Listen. I'm taking you to see Marmion. She's in the school. This man who calls himself your uncle—but never mind the story. It's too long to tell out here. But see, Bessie, will you do something?"

"Anything," Bessie said earnestly.

"To help Marmion?"

"Oh, Babs, of course."

"Even if it means throwing your bogus uncle overboard?"

"Yes."

"Then good, that's the ticket!" Babs laughed gaily. "Come along, Bessie!"

And she caught the fat girl by one arm and led her into the school.

Ten minutes later Bessie met Marmion in Study No. 4. And from the moment of meeting Marmion all Bessie's ideas and impressions underwent a change.

For Bessie, vain duffer as she was, had a very, very tender heart. And when Bessie was put in full possession of the facts as Babs and Mabs and Clara knew them, and learned from Marmion's own lips all that she had endured whilst her rascally guardian had been posing as Bessie's uncle, Bessie became a changed girl.

Bessie was quite willing to have a good time at Augustus Fanshaw's expense, but Bessie was most certainly not willing to be the dupe Augustus Fanshaw had designed her to be.

But perhaps Bessie was most indignant because she realised how, through her innocent fault, Marmion had been made to suffer. From that moment Bessie was on Marmion's side.



A Daring Plot Cleverly Exposed by Babs & Co.

"HERE we are!" Augustus Fanshaw said, drawing a deep breath. "Now, Bessie, remember what I have told you about your grandfather."

"Yes, uncle," answered Bessie meekly.

"They stood on the platform at Courtfield Station—three of them: Mrs. Fanshaw, alias Lady Georgia, looking very much overdressed as usual, Augustus Fanshaw, alias Earl Percy de Bunter, looking, if the truth must be told, considerably nervous and ill at ease."

And thirdly, of course, Bessie Bunter, who, though she tried not to show it, rather felt her knees quaking beneath her. For Bessie was there to play a part.

It had been an eventful day for Bessie—quite one of the most eventful she had ever spent.

First had come that interview with Earl Percy, then her rescue from the hairdresser's. Then she had met Marmion, and in the fat duffer's heart had been kindled a fierce fire of resentment against the man who had schemed to use her as his pawn in the cunning game he was playing.

After that had followed the talk with Babs and Mabs and Clara and Marmion, in which a certain plot had been hatched, and in which Bessie was given a part.

Then "Earl Percy" had arrived, demanding to know why she had run away from the hairdresser's shop. There

had, in fact, been quite a scene, but Bessie had reprised herself and everyone else by her determined refusal to accede to her uncle's request to have her hair cut again and—acting upon Babs' advice—had told her uncle that she would not have it done unless he first rang up her father on the telephone and asked his permission.

That had seemed to give "Earl Percy" pause. Finally he had climbed down, and so here was Bessie, still with her thick plait intact, but with all sorts of alarming thoughts surging through her brain. Bessie was not cut out for parts like this.

Desperately she was trying to remember Babs' instructions: "Play up to him. Get him back to the hotel." Her mind was hopelessly confused, however.

And now the moment was at hand. Here was the train. A stream of people was pouring towards them as they stood outside the barrier, and "Earl Bunter," as though he feared she might run away, was fiercely clutching Bessie's wrist.

He glanced at her rather apprehensively.

"Remember?" he hissed.

"Ow! Yes."

"What is your name?"

"Why, Bessie Bunter."

"No, you little idiot! What is your name in front of your grandfather?"

"Oh, dud-dear! Ow! Dud-don't grab my wrist like that," Bessie said unhappily. "Mum-Marmion."

"That's right. And don't forget to tell him that that snapshot you sent him with your hair bobbed was an old one."

"Nun-no."

"Hush! Here he comes!" stuttered "Ow! Oh goodness!" Bessie.

And she gazed rather apprehensively at the short, fierce looking old man who, with his eyes upon them, was handing over his ticket to the collector.

As his eyes fastened upon Bessie, they lighted up. He came forward.

"Marmion!" he cried joyfully.

"Marmion!"

"Mum-mum-mum!" Bessie stuttered.

"Ow! Oh dud-dear! Oh hel-lo, grandfather!"

"Marmion." The old man's face was wreathed in smiles. "Don't you recognise me?"

"Nun-no. I mum-mean, yu-yer, of course?" Bessie gasped. "Oh, my hat!

How you have grown, grandfather! I mum-mean, of course, how pretty you are! Nun-no! Have you been for a holiday or something?"

"Idiot!" hissed "Earl Percy."

The old man looked a trifle amazed. He shook his head.

"Surely little Marmion—"

"Earl Percy" cleared his throat.

"Marmion is—a little upset at seeing you," he said. "Of course, it has been years since she last saw you."

The old man threw him a glance. It was a glance, very obviously, which contained a certain amount of dislike.

"You spoke to me?" he asked.

"Well, sir, of course—"

"Don't!" the old man snapped. He looked at Bessie again. "Marmion! My dear, I have come from Canada specially to see you," he said, a little heartily. "Aren't you pleased to see me?"

"Eh? Y-yes, of course," Bessie stammered. "But—"

"But what, my dear?"

"Oh gag-goodness! You are making a mistake. I'm not Mar—"

"She's not very well, she means."

"Earl Percy" chipped in hastily; but he threw a furious glance at Bessie: "A little upset, you see, sir. She's been looking forward to your coming."

"But I haven't. I mum-mean, of course, I'm glad to see you," Bessie floundered, most unhappily.

"Of course, sir."

The old man looked dazed.

"But Marmion—" He eyed the girl searchingly. "My word, is this the girl who has written me such marvellous 'J's letters'?" he asked incredulously. "Is this the girl who sent me that photograph?" He eyed Bessie as though he could hardly believe his eyes. "Marmion—"

"Oh dear! Are you t-talking to me?" Bessie gasped helplessly.

"Of course I'm talking to you! My word!" The old man began to look indignant. "Are you a fool, child?"

(Continued on next page.)

TALKING IT OVER WITH YOUR EDITOR

MY DEAR READERS.—I had a long talk with Miss Hilda Richards the other day, and during our conversation one or two most interesting facts emerged.

We were discussing the popularity of her stories, and Miss Richards put forward the suggestion that she should select six stories out of all those that have been published, and that you should be asked to place them in the order in which they appealed to you.

Miss Richards selected six stories from the series. Here are her own favourites, and she has put them in the order which appeal to her. I am printing their titles below on a special coupon, which I would like you all to fill in and to send to me with your next letters.

Of course, there is no obligation for you to do this. I am merely asking you as a personal favour, for it will be most interesting to me and to Miss Richards to know just how these six tales appealed to you. I would add that the six selected stories are representative of several "types" of tales—school, mystery, adventure, humorous, etc.

The coupon appears on this page. All you have to do is to put the figure 1 against the story you enjoyed most, the figure 2 against your second favourite, and so on.

IMPORTANT

And now a few words about another very important matter which is exercising my mind at the moment. You have seen the notices in this issue of our paper, referring to a forthcoming mammoth Free Gift Offer, and I expect you are feeling very excited, and are anxious for further details.

Well, I'm not going to give you many details this week, but I don't mind telling you that this FREE GIFT OFFER which I am planning is something absolutely

MY ADDRESS IS:
The Editor, THE SCHOOLGIRL,
Fleetway House, Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.4.
WRITE TO ME TO-DAY.

outstanding. It is the greatest Free Gift Scheme ever devised—a Scheme designed to give immense pleasure to schoolgirls all the world over!

In next week's issue of THE SCHOOLGIRL will appear further details of this mammoth Scheme, so make certain that you secure your copy of Next Saturday's issue. AND PLEASE TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT THIS FORTHCOMING FREE GIFT SCHEME!

"When Marcelle Amazed Cliff House!"

"That Rich Relation of Bessie's!"

"Babs & Co.'s Priory Puzzle!"

"The Tomboy's Holiday Trial!"

"Babs' Fight for Stella!"

"Cliff House Blamed Clara!"

worked up because Babs & Co. won't do exactly what she wants them to.

But with all her faults—and she has many—Rosa is a fine character, and Miss Richards has not failed to extract every ounce of drama out of every incident in which the "Stormy Petrel" plays a part.

Next week's splendid story will be published under the title of:

"THE MYSTERY MAID OF CLIFF HOUSE!"

and because I don't want any of you to miss it, I would earnestly advise you to order THE SCHOOLGIRL without delay.

NEWS OF CHUM

I have had endless inquiries regarding my little canine companion, Chum, whose adventures you have read of in my Chats. To all anxious inquirers, Chum has authorised me to say that he is quite fit, thank you, and that he hopes I shall write of some of his latest adventures in my Chats very soon. The victory of the dog!

I really believe that Chum thinks these Chats should be devoted solely to his activities. He seems to forget, or to ignore, the fact that there are such things as new serials to be discussed, and although I enjoy writing about him, and you, readers all, seem to enjoy reading about him, I'm afraid I cannot grant him too much of my valuable space.

I shall have to console him for what he, apparently, considers to be a gross injustice, by giving him a particularly large and hearty bone—or, better still, by taking him for an extra long ramble.

By the way, Miss Hilda Richards has asked me to thank those of you who have written expressing sympathy with her in the recent loss of her pet Alsatian dog, Bet.

NEXT WEEK'S CLIFF HOUSE STORY

Hilda Richards has written another absorbing Cliff House tale for our next splendid number. Babs & Co. all play prominent parts, and you will also recognize acquaintances with Rosa Rodworth, the "Stormy Petrel" of the Fourth.

Rosa, as you know, is a millionaire's daughter, and, being of a hot-headed and tempestuous nature, she gets very

"Ye-yes. I mumm-mean, no," Bessie stammered. "Oh really, Mr. Tracey—"

"Mr. Tracey! I am your grandfather. Augustus, is this child a lunatic?"

"My dear sir—"

"Hang! Don't 'dear sir' me. Answer my question. Dash it!" the old man barked irritably. "What's the matter with her? Is she mad?"

"Oh really!" Bessie blinked indignantly.

"And where did you get those ridiculous spectacles from?" the old man asked. "Take them off, girl. My word! What a blow, what a stunning blow! I came here expecting to find a bright, intelligent granddaughter, brimful of love, happy. Instead, I find a gibbering imbecile! What on earth have you been doing to her, Augustus?"

"Really, my dear sir—"

"Hang it, don't 'dear sir' me!" the old man roared. "Marmion—"

"Oh dear! I'm trying to tell you," Bessie muttered, "but you won't give me a chance. You're making a mistake. I'm not— Ow! Ow!" she ended, with a roar. "Who trod on my toe?"

"Sorry, Marmion!" Augustus looked distressed. "I just moved—"

The old man snorted.

"I think," he said cuttingly, "that the people round here have lost their senses!"

He looked very bitter, very disappointed, and stared at poor Bessie like a man who has suffered a bitter disillusionment.

"I was expecting far better, far happier, things," he went on. "I was hoping to meet a girl who could at least talk sense. Oh, I'm sorry!" he added. "What am I saying? But Marmion, is it really you—can it be you? I never knew you wore glasses."

"Oh, yes; I always did-did," Bessie said. "I can't see without them."

"But you never mentioned them in your letters."

"Nun-no."

"And your hair." The old man started. "Marmion, I thought you had bobbed hair."

"Oh, dud-did you?" Bessie stammered.

"Well, I haven't, have I? But I've told you—"

"Ahem! Shall we get into the car?" asked Augustus Fanshew. "Marmion,

I am sure, will talk better when we arrive at the hotel."

The old man paused. He looked bewildered. They had reached the street now, had halted outside the big Roloedes saloon, drawn up at the kerb.

"Marmion, are you really ill?" he asked in concern.

Bessie halted. She cast a hunted look towards the car. For a moment, peering through the window, she saw Babs and Mabs and Clara on the other side of the car. She took fresh heart.

"Nun-no."

"But, my dear, you are so different."

"Yes, I am, because, you see," Bessie exclaimed, one eye upon Augustus Fanshew, "I am not Marmion Tracey!"

"What?"

"I am Bessie Bunter!" Bessie yelled at the top of her voice, one foot on the footboard of the car.

Augustus Fanshew went white to the lips.

"You idiot! You—you idiot!"

The old man looked dazed.

Bessie Bunter—not Marmion Tracey!" he muttered. Then his eyes flamed. "But Marmion—where is she?"

"Here!" cried Babs, springing from behind the car, and she threw open the door of the motor.

And there, revealed, stood Marmion Tracey herself.

Augustus Fanshew took one horrified look. His face, red a moment before, turned a sudden deathly grey. A hoarse cry came from his lips.

"Done!"

"Done—yes," a grim voice beside him said, and the scoundrel, turning with a gasp, beheld the stern features of Inspector Wisendale, of the Courtfield Police. "And I think," he said, "you had better come along with me, Augustus Fanshew, alias Earl Percy de Bunter. I have a warrant for your arrest on a charge of kidnapping Marmion Tracey. Marmion Tracey herself has supplied the information and these girls will be chief witnesses at your trial. Come along!"

And Augustus, all his affection gone, was led away, while Marmion and her grandfather stood looking at each other with startled eyes.

"Marmion!" the old man cried. "Is it really you?"

Marmion laughed, on a rather choked note.

"Yes, grandfather, it is I!" she cried. And then, somehow, while Babs & Co., touched by this strange scene, turned away, the two were in each other's arms.

Bessie Bunter looked dismayed. She looked, indeed, as if she wanted to cry. Not fully, until this moment, had the fat duffer of Cliff House realised the part she had played, and although she had done her best to atone, she still felt guilty.

But Marmion, at least, was not blaming Bessie. Neither was her grandfather. The two, separated so long, now joined again in reunion after seven long years, were too happy almost to speak.

It was a wonderful moment for Marmion. Scarce less wonderful was it for her grandfather. He adored his granddaughter. It was the thought of her—her letters, her inspiring cheerfulness—which had brought him post-haste to England.

And now he had found her—in what surprising circumstances! The tears, unashamed, coursed down his wrinkled cheeks. His hands trembled.

"Marmion!"

That was all he seemed able to say. But by-and-by, when the first ecstasy of meeting once again had passed, explanations took place, and then all the little things that had puzzled the chums became wonderfully clear.

Her father had left Marmion in Augustus Fanshew's care, with a certain sum of money and securities to enable him to look after her. Fanshew had used that money for his own ends. He had forged documents in Marmion's grandfather's name to augment that money. Accidentally, just before her grandfather's visit, Marmion had caught him.

It was the fear of what she might tell her grandfather which had caused Fanshew to imprison her in the gipsy camp while he endeavoured to supplant her with another girl, something like her, hoping that the passage of seven years would have blunted the old man's memory of Marmion's likeness.

But thanks to Bessie and Babs & Co. his schemes had met with failure.

AND so all ended happily.

Marmion and her grandfather were reunited once more, and Bessie, if not the heroine of the piece, came in for quite a share of the limelight when the trial of Augustus Fanshew took place.

Cliff House buzzed when it heard the news. It howled with laughter when the real identity of Bessie's titled relative was discovered.

But Bessie didn't care. Bessie, at least, had her conscience clear once again, and during the few weeks that Marmion remained in Courtfield with her grandfather she and Bessie became the greatest of friends.

So, of course, did Babs and Mabs and Clara.

"And I'm very glad, in a way," Marmion said one night in the lounge of the Courtfield Hotel, "that Uncle Augustus did select Bessie to impersonate me. Because," she added, with a tender smile, "if he'd picked upon anyone else I shouldn't have found such ripping friends."

A sentiment with which Grandfather Tracey, sitting near, a smile of contentment on his face as he watched Bessie Bunter putting away her sixth ice, nodded cordial agreement.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.



BARBARA REDFERN & CO.

play a leading part in the fine long complete Cliff House School mystery story, which HILDA RICHARDS has written for next week's issue of "The Schoolgirl."

It is entitled:

"THE MYSTERY MAID OF CLIFF HOUSE"

Rosa Rodworth, the richest girl in the Fourth Form, is to be the fore in this dramatic tale, which is packed with all the elements of a fine school story. In it you will also meet a new character—the mystery maid. Don't miss this grand story.