

"SCHOOLGIRL'S SECOND BOOK OF NEEDLEWORK"

Helpful Booklet
Within.

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HOW CAN MISS CHARMANT EXPLAIN?

A tense moment from the grand
long story of the Cliff House
chums—by HILDA RICHARDS
—inside.

A Splendid New-Term Story of Barbara Redfern & Co. of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School.



FORCED TO DEFEND A THIEF!



The Facts Are Known!

by Hilda Richards

I TELL you Babs didn't do it!" Clara Trevlyn spoke fiercely. She spoke with a glare which caused, for a moment, an intimidated silence to fall upon the clamouring inmates of the Fourth Form Common-room at Cliff House School and brought to their faces a rather uneasy, apprehensive look that reflected their reluctance to contradict that statement.

For Clara Trevlyn, the tomboy games captain of Cliff House's Lower School, was on the warpath.

Not in that mood was Clara to be defied with impunity. Despite the boisterousness of her nature, it was not often that Clara lost her temper. Clara was liked, and Clara was respected. She could play a joke—frequently did—and she could take a joke—which she also frequently did.

But in some moods Clara was also feared, and when she spoke as she spoke now, and in that tone of voice, the Fourth Form tensed for trouble. Daring indeed, the girl who contradicted the Tomboy in this mood.

"I tell you Babs didn't do it!" she repeated, with challenging defiance. "Babs wouldn't do it. And anybody who says she did—"

Clara paused. It was one of those grim pauses which express a great many words. It was a pause which breathed a threat, and Clara looked quite capable of carrying out that threat as she stood there, hotly facing them all, her grey eyes glittering, her unruly hair ruffled as though by the hot-headedness of her anger.

Marjorie Hazeldene, her gentle, anxious-faced chum, beside her, looked nervous.

"Clara dear—"

But Clara brushed her aside, though gently.

"Well?" she invited challengingly.

"Come on, speak up, some of you. You, Lydia Crossendale! You were



Miss Valerie Charmant, the Fourth Form's new mistress, is doing everything within her power to reform her younger sister. But it seems that all her efforts are to be wasted, for Celia is determined to go her own selfish way. And how little she cares that it is her sister who must suffer for her!

letting your tongue wag a minute ago. Wasn't it you who said Barbara Redfern was a thief?"

Lydia Crossendale, the snob of the Fourth, smiled sneeringly, looked at Clara, and then, with a shrug, turned away.

"Lost your tongue?" Clara inquired unpleasantly.

"Oh, rats!" Lydia retorted.

Clara breathed hard.

"Climbing down, eh?" she asked. "I thought you would. Well, that settles that!" She drew a deep, deep breath as an uneasy muttering broke out among the members of the Form. "I hope you're all convinced now," she added.

"But—" murmured Freda Ferriers. Like a flash Clara was upon her.

"Yes?" she said coldly.

"Oh, I say, hold on!" Freda cried in hurried alarm. "I—I wasn't going to say anything. Of course, I don't believe Babs is guilty. But—but you must admit that it looks fishy."

"What looks fishy?"

"Well—" And Freda broke off lamely. "This morning, before breakfast, certain things were missed from Fourth Form studies—"

"Well?" said Clara grimly.

"Well, Babs got up before the rest of the Form."

"Babs did," Clara agreed. "Babs got up with me, and with Janet Jordan. The three of us went for a swim, and not one of us was out of the other's sight. If you're suggesting that Babs took those things before the rest of the Form got down, then you're suggesting that Janet and I had a hand in it at the same time."

Freda looked sheepish.
"Oh, I wasn't suggesting anything of the kind!"

"Well, then——"
"But—but this afternoon——" Freda gulped. She was sorry now she had embarked upon her objection. The look on Clara's face frightened her. "During the hockey match——" she stammered.

"Yes, during the hockey match," Clara said. "Go on, say it! During the hockey match Babs was lammed on the ankle by that awful little cat, Celia Charmant. Babs couldn't go on playing, so she came back to the Fourth Form studies and stole Rosa Rodworth's wrist-watch. Of course, she planned all that," Clara added sarcastically. "She knew that frightful little sneak, Celia, was going to hit her with the stick. She knew that Rosa had left her wrist-watch on the table in Study No. 1. Is that what you're suggesting, Freda?"

"Nun-no, but it was fishy," Freda protested. "I mean, Celia said that she saw Babs coming out of Rosa's study. Then Celia found Rosa's missing watch in Babs' pocket."

"Yes, rather!" Lydia Crossendale chimed in. "You will admit that wants some explaining away. If Babs didn't steal that wrist-watch, how was it that Celia found it in her pocket?"

Clara paused. There was a stir of interest now. Every eye in the room was suddenly upon her.

Clara glared.
She couldn't think out an answer to that on the spur of the moment. The watch had been found in Barbara Redfern's pocket, but her faith in Barbara Redfern, the leader of the Fourth Form, and her own very staunch chum, was unshaken.

She knew Babs too well to believe for a moment that she would stoop to any act of dishonesty. The whole Form knew that, in fact. It was that knowledge of Babs' character, warring with the way in which Rosa's stolen wrist-watch had been recovered, which breathed the doubt.

They could not believe Babs a thief. And yet how was the discovery of the stolen watch, found in her pocket, to be explained away?

It was Bessie Bunter, the fat, hungry duffer of the Fourth, who supplied the answer. For some moments Bessie had been blinking very indignantly behind those thick, round spectacles of hers. Now she stepped into the breach.

"Wu-well, if you ask me——" she said.

"Ask you what?"

"Well, if you ask me how that watch came to be in Babs' pocket, you know," Bessie blinked, "I think that Celia put it there! After all, Celia was in the school at the same time as Babs," she ended in triumph.

"Oh, rubbish!"

"How could she?"

"She wouldn't do it!"

"Neither would Babs! We jolly well know Celia!" Clara jerked out. "If it's to be a judgment between Babs and Celia, then I plump for Celia—and you know you all do!"

"Really?" a voice asked.

Everybody turned. The door had opened. Lounging now in the doorway stood a thin, sallow-featured girl, surveying the scene rather mockingly. It was Celia Charmant herself!

There was a perceptible pause.

Celia smiled sneeringly. She was a new girl at Cliff House. She was, the Fourth agreed, one of the most unlikeable new girls who had ever come to the school—mean, spiteful, jealous, a tale-bearer, and a mischief-maker.

She was, indeed, the very opposite of the Fourth Form's ideal. Yet she was tolerated, not for her own sake, but for the sake of her sister, Miss Valerie Charmant, the new mistress of the Fourth.

A world of difference there was, to be sure, in the athletic, fair-minded mistress of the Fourth. She, too, had only joined the school a day or two ago, yet the Fourth had already decided that she was one of the best.

It was incredible that this sallow-faced sneak could have anything in common with the admired Miss Charmant. And yet she was her sister.

Because of that, the Fourth Form were willing to overlook many of Celia's unpleasant traits.

But not Clara. Clara stood and glared.

"Well, you?" she snapped.

"I heard what you said," Celia announced.

"Then I hope it did you good," Clara said levelly.

Celia scowled.

"You were trying to make out that I was a thief."

"Not trying," Clara corrected.

The look on Celia's face grew blacker.

"You're accusing me!" she cried.

"Tut! The perspicacity of the girl!"

Jemima Carstairs, the monocled member of the Form, observed.

"I am accusing you!" Clara faced her sternly.

"You were quick enough to accuse Babs, weren't you?" she asked.

"It was you who planted that watch on her."

Celia's face went white.

"I didn't!"

"Then how did it get into her pocket?"

"She stole it!"

"Clara!" Marjorie cried.

But that was enough for Clara. Her face was suddenly white. Her eyes gleamed as, with two fierce steps, she pounced at Celia, catching her by the shoulder.

"Say that again!" she cried furiously.

"Let me go!" shrieked Celia. "Let me go! You cat! You bully! Let me go! If you don't let me go I'll report you."

"Say that again!" repeated Clara.

"I will say it again! Barbara Redfern is a thief!" Celia almost screamed the words. "She is a thief. I saw her!"

Clara's eyes blazed. There was a terrible look on her face. One or two of her chums, fearful of what she might do in her angry temper, moved forward.

But they need not have feared. Clara was incensed; Clara was hot-headed, but she was above bullying and she was above cruelty. At the same moment——

"Oh, I sus-say! Cave!" Bessie Bunter quavered.

"Why—what——"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Clara, you chump!"

A fierce hiss went round. It was a hiss of apprehension, of dismay. Clara flung round towards the door, and then released her grip of Celia as though that girl had suddenly become red-hot.

For here, frowning through her pince-nez, stood the majestic figure of Miss Primrose, the headmistress of the school!

"Clara Trevlyn! Celia Charmant!" she cried sharply.

A deathly silence fell.

Into Celia's mean little eyes flamed a look of triumph. She was not hurt, but Celia knew how to make the most of circumstances. She crossed her hands over her chest, caressing both her

shoulders, as though they hurt. She gave a gulp.

"Oh, Miss Primrose!"

Miss Primrose's eyes glimmered.

"Were you two quarrelling?"

Clara flushed.

"She—she jumped at me, Miss Primrose," Celia cried. She was half blubbering now. "Oh dear, I—I'm hurt! She caught me by the shoulders, Miss Primrose, and she dug her nails into me horribly!"

"You little fibber!" Clara hissed.

Miss Primrose frowned.

"Clara, please!" she said sharply. "I saw you. You were attacking this girl."

"Yes, but I wasn't digging my nails into——"

"Celia!"

"Oh, y-yes, Miss Primrose?"

"What were you quarrelling about?"

"I—I don't know, Miss Primrose,"

Celia sobbed, while the Form looked on in contempt. "Clara said that I was a thief because Barbara Redfern stole Rosa Rodworth's watch."

"What?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose, and——"

"Excuse me!" Clara looked grim. "I think I had better explain, Miss Primrose."

"Clara, silence, please. This is the first I have heard about this. Celia, stop making that noise. I do not believe you are really hurt. I saw the incident. Clara held you by the shoulders, but she certainly was not digging her nails into you. That is a falsehood. Rosa," she added sharply, addressing the Stormy Petrel of the Fourth, "what is this I hear? You have had that watch of yours stolen again?"

"No, Miss Primrose—at least, I've got it now," Rosa said.

"But somebody had taken it?"

Rosa bit her lip.

"Answer me, please!"

"Well, it—it disappeared from my study while I was playing hockey," Rosa admitted reluctantly. "But there's no need to make a fuss about it, Miss Primrose."

Miss Primrose's lips compressed.

"Thank you, Rosa. You will allow me to decide that," she said with asperity. "The fact that you have recovered the watch does not minimise the seriousness of the case. The watch is a valuable one. If it was taken it is right that I should know about it. Celia, you mentioned Barbara Redfern's name in connection with this charge."

"Y-yes, Miss Primrose."

"What has she to do with it?"

"Well, the stolen watch was found in her pocket," Celia said artfully.

The headmistress looked scandalised.

"Not Barbara?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose."

"But—but——" The headmistress looked incredulous. "No. I cannot believe that," she said. "Not of Barbara. You must be mistaken, Celia."

"Well, we all saw it," Lydia Crossendale drawled. "Babs had the watch all right. It might have been just a joke, of course."

"Lydia, you are accusing Barbara, too?"

"Oh, no, Miss Primrose." Lydia threw a darting look of malice at Clara Trevlyn, who, despite the presence of Miss Primrose, and despite the restraining hand of Marjorie Hazeldene upon her arm, looked liable to fly up again at any moment. "I'm not accusing anyone. As I said, it might have been a joke, but after what happened this morning——"

Miss Primrose frowned.

"What happened this morning?"

"Well, several girls lost things from their studies."

"What?"

"That's true, Miss Primrose," Lydia answered, and she went on to tell the astounded and incredulous headmistress the story. The eyes of Miss Primrose reflected her horror.

"My goodness!" she said. "And those things have not yet been found? You actually suggest, Lydia, that there is a thief in the Form? You have reported the loss of these articles to your Form-mistress?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose."
Miss Primrose frowned.
"She has not mentioned the matter to me," she said. For a moment she looked puzzled, and then she remembered herself. "Thank you, Lydia. I will see Miss Charmant myself," she added stiffly.

And with a frown that rather boded trouble to come, Miss Primrose walked out, severe, a trifle agitated, and so preoccupied that she forgot to punish Clara for causing a scene.



No Shaming Her!

MEANTIME, where was Barbara Redfern?

At the moment she was in Study No. 12 in the Fourth Form corridor. It was the study occupied by Celia Charmant, Bridget O'Toole, and Lucy Morgan. But none of its usual occupants were in the room now.

Babs stood near the door, anxiety on her face. In front of her, bending over an assortment of articles on the table, was the pretty, pale-faced Miss Charmant, the elder sister of Celia.

There was a box on the table, too. The box bore the initials "C. C.," proclaiming it to be Celia Charmant's property.

The lid was open, revealing an untidy mass of needlework pieces, and it was obvious that the articles at which Miss Charmant stared had been taken from that box.

And what a collection there was, to be sure!

How those girls who had been victims of the unknown thief of the Form that morning would have stared if they could have seen that collection.

A gold-rimmed monocle glimmered on a handsome morocco case which had gold edges. A silver bracelet, which Lucy Farraday, the quiet mouse of the Form, would have immediately recognised as her own, nestled by its side.

A silver photo-frame, the property of Marcelle Biquet, stood lonesomely upright; near it a chased cigarette holder made of ivory and gold. There was also a beautifully carved ivory figure belonging to Gwen Cooke.

The pretty face of Miss Charmant was strained and white. The black curls that adorned her shapely head seemed disordered and awry as though reflecting the state of her mind at that moment. For several seconds she pored over the articles. Then she shook her head.

"I can hardly believe it even now! Celia took these!" she whispered. "Celia is a thief!"

Babs looked uncomfortable. "And if it is found out—" the mistress went on.

It was Babs' turn to shake her head. The answer to that observation was a grim one indeed. If it was discovered that Celia had taken those articles, only one punishment could be her fate. Expulsion!

Miss Charmant shuddered.

"No!" she cried suddenly. The word seemed to cut through the study. "Barbara, I couldn't allow that—I couldn't! It would break father and mother's heart." She paused. "I promised them when I came here I would look after Celia. You understand, Barbara? I promised I would help her. She doesn't understand school life. She has never had a chance. She must have a chance."

"Yes," Babs assented.
"We must hush this up," Miss Charmant proceeded agitatedly. "You will help me, won't you, Barbara? I know you would wish Celia to have a chance to reform. Celia has known so much poverty and hardship in her young life that perhaps this isn't altogether surprising. I will talk to her, I must talk to her. But she must be given a chance. You'll help me to give her that chance, Barbara?"

Babs' face was very tender. Her eyes were aglow. She felt that she would have done anything for this sweet-natured mistress in her trouble.

"Of course I'll help, Miss Charmant," she promised. "But how are you going to manage?"

"I don't know—not yet. I must have time—time to think," Miss Charmant said. "Thank goodness I haven't reported the loss of these articles to the headmistress. Please, please say nothing, Barbara." She picked the articles up. One by one she dropped them into the box. The box she tucked under her arm. "I will take this along with me to my room, and return them to their owners later," she said. "Meantime, Barbara, will you find Celia and send her to me?"

"Yes," Babs assented. "And—and, Miss Charmant!"

The mistress' face was very tender.

"Yes, Barbara?"

"If I can do anything else, you will let me, won't you?" Babs pleaded.

"If you can—yes," the mistress smiled. "You've been most helpful, Barbara. I think," she added, "that I can put this matter right myself. Celia is wayward. I am sorry to admit that, being her sister, but there it is. But we must help her, Barbara. We must bring out the best in her and give her a chance."

She touched the Fourth Form leader's arm. It was a light touch, a gentle touch, but how Babs thrilled! It was a touch which expressed more deeply than words could have conveyed, the gratitude of the new mistress.

It was accompanied by one of those simply adorable smiles of hers as, box under arm, she walked out, while Babs held open the door.

"I will see you later, Barbara," she said. "Meantime—Celia—"

"Yes, Miss Charmant," Babs almost stuttered.

Miss Charmant nodded. Outwardly cool and composed again, she walked away. Babs with a bursting heart, feeling somehow uplifted and privileged. What a dear the new mistress was. And yet—

Babs frowned suddenly as she walked along to her own study. What a contrast, she reflected, in sisters! Miss Charmant, surely one the finest women one could wish to know—a mistress with the heart of a schoolgirl; a woman who had inspired respect and affection already in every member of her Form, except in her own sister, Celia.

It seemed impossible that such a mean-spirited girl as Celia Charmant could be even remotely related to one so utterly charming. Yet there it was. Strange!

And yet—was it?
Barbara thought again of the story Miss Charmant had told her.

When Valerie was a baby her parents had emigrated to Canada. Valerie, who was very ill at the time, had been left in the care of Mr. and Mrs. Charmant, who had subsequently adopted her.

The Charmants had brought her up as their own daughter, loving her, lavishing wealth and affection upon her,



"LISTEN to me," said Miss Charmant firmly. "Whether you like it or not, I'm going to reform you. You will put back all the things you have stolen from those girls!" Her sister's lips parted in a sneer.

"Clever, aren't you?" was her only reply.

while her own parents, in search of a new fortune, had drifted about Canada. Valerie was grateful to the bottom-most depths of her heart. She had done her best by making the most of the opportunities given her to be a credit to the Charmants. In that she had succeeded.

Then—
Mr. and Mrs. Sheldon, the real parents, had recently died, leaving another daughter, Celia. Hearing of this, the Charmants had traced the girl, and bringing her to England, had adopted her also, and sent her to Cliff House School.

The result? Babs did not know the Charmants, but she felt that she loved them. Because she was Valerie's sister they had taken Celia. They had decided that she should have every chance, just as Valerie had had. Even though they could not understand how their old friends, the Sheldons, had come upon such misfortunes—still they determined to make up to Celia.

They had dispatched her to Cliff House, there to be placed under the watchful eyes of her Form-mistress sister, who had promised the kindly old couple who had adopted her that she would do her very utmost to help the child.

And this—this was the outcome. Celia, already the most unpopular girl in the Form; was now a thief. A thief! At school only a few days, she already merited expulsion.

Miss Charmant was going to save her from that fate, while accepting herself the responsibility that Celia should improve!

What a sister indeed!

Babs shook her head. What an uphill task Miss Charmant had before her!

Meantime, Miss Charmant went on, walking thoughtfully, worriedly downstairs towards her own study.

The box under her arm, though not heavy, seemed to weigh a hundred-weight. Her face was shadowed and anxious.

Celia a thief. Celia, her own sister!

She had never dreamt that Celia could have done that. Condemn Celia she might, but she must always remember, she told herself, that Celia was not like other girls.

She had not had the opportunities of other girls. To Valerie was the task of making Celia a girl the school could be proud of. Of moulding her character.

Yet how to save Celia from this piece of reckless folly?

Miss Charmant was thinking about that. She had an idea. Well, thank goodness the thing had gone no farther. Here were the articles which Celia had taken. Not yet was Celia suspected.

In the Form Babs would shield her from suspicion. Meantime, if these articles were given back anonymously to their owners there would be no further fuss.

She must see Celia. Celia must be made aware of the enormity of her offence; she would make her put the things back herself. Thank goodness, anyway, that she had not yet told Miss Primrose.

She reached the door of her study, tightly holding the box. She felt guilty, nervous suddenly. She looked round quickly, almost furtively, as she put her hand to the handle of the door. She went in.

And then—

Miss Charmant gave a little cry.

"Miss Primrose!"

Miss Primrose, the headmistress, stood there, her face a trifle forbidding. Her gaze immediately travelled to the box under the new mistress' arm.

"Miss Charmant," she said, "I have been waiting for you."

Valerie felt like gasping. She knew that her face turned white. She knew that guilt, for a moment, shone in her eyes, even though she was not guilty.

She found the headmistress staring at her—a puzzled, not-understanding stare. She felt for a moment she dare not meet her gaze.

By an effort she regained her composure. She placed the box down upon a table near by, carelessly covering it with a newspaper so that Miss Primrose should not see the initials on it. Then she smiled.

"I'm sorry, Miss Primrose—" She tried to keep her voice calm and natural. "I had no idea—"

"Apparently not!" the headmistress broke in. "You seem disturbed, Miss Charmant."

Miss Charmant tried to smile.

"Oh—do I? It—it was seeing you here, Miss Primrose," she said. "I had no idea, of course, that you wanted me. Is—is it anything important?"

"Very important. I have learned," Miss Primrose went on, frowning a little, "that certain girls in your Form have lost articles from their studies."

Miss Charmant knew that she should not have jumped, but she did. Again the colour drained out of her face as dismay gripped her. Again she became aware of Miss Primrose's puzzled look, and inwardly wished she were a better actress.

"Y—yes, Miss Primrose."

"These thefts were reported to you, I understand?"

The mistress admitted the fact.

"You didn't report them to me," Miss Primrose said sharply.

"No"—the Form-mistress gulped a deep breath. That charge, at least, she could face. "I realised it was my duty," she said, "but I did not want to worry you with the matter, Miss Primrose. It might have turned out to be—I was hoping that it would turn out to be some practical joke."

Miss Primrose looked a little more mollified.

"Apparently it is no practical joke," she said. "There is some trouble in the Form. A new theft was attempted this afternoon, and Barbara Redfern is accused of having taken Rosa Rodworth's watch. That, of course, is absurd. Barbara is one of my most trusted pupils. I wish you had referred this matter to me at once, Miss Charmant."

"I'm sorry I did not," Valerie Charmant answered.

"Very well, Miss Charmant. But in future, I should like to be informed of these incidents as soon as they occur. Meantime, you will please make the strictest possible inquiries and let me know the result. The articles which are lost must be found."

"Yes, Miss Primrose," Miss Charmant gasped.

The headmistress nodded graciously. She went out. Miss Charmant, her mind a-whirl, sank into a chair and gave a long-drawn "Phew-w!" She felt like someone who had just experienced a narrow escape from an accident.

Now what could she do?

She sat upright suddenly, a grim look on her face. There was a tap on the door—a rather loud tap. She called "Come in."

Celia Charmant, sulky and obviously prepared to be defiant, shuffled into the room.

"You want me?" she asked rudely.

"That cat Barbara Redfern just told me—"

The eyes of Valerie Charmant glimmered.

"Come in," she said. "Shut the door. Take a seat. And do not let me hear you refer to Barbara Redfern or any of your Form-mates in that way again. Celia—"

The new girl pouted. Miss Charmant went to the table and lifted up the box.

"Celia, this is yours!"

Celia gave a jump.

"Why, you—what do you mean by taking my things?"

Guilt, confusion, the wild look of alarm on her face were convincing proof, if any were needed, that she knew the contents of that box. She half sprang to her feet.

"Sit down," her sister said with tight lips. She placed the box on her desk. "Celia," she added, "last night you stole those things which were missed this morning!"

"I didn't!"

"Then how do they come to be hidden in your box?"

"They're not hidden in my box," Celia said desperately.

"They are. Fortunately I found them." The mistress' glance was grim. "Do not tell stories about it, Celia. I know. I little guessed," she added bitterly, "that to your other mistakes in this school you would add the unforgivable one of theft. Celia, why did you do it?"

Celia's eyes were frightened.

"I didn't do it!"

"You did! You stole these things. You hid them in this box. Had it not been for Barbara Redfern it might have been left to someone else to discover your guilt. You realise what that would have meant, Celia? Expulsion. Disgrace. A reformatory, perhaps."

Celia's lips set. She seemed to have herself under control now.

"I don't know what you mean," she blustered.

"You do." Valerie gazed at her sternly. "Barbara Redfern found these things, Celia."

"That spy!"

"Celia!"

"Yes, that spy!" Celia broke out. "What's she want, meddling about in my things? She found them, eh? She did!" Her eyes flamed with a sudden light of malice. "Oh, I see the little game now," she added spitefully. "Barbara Redfern took them. She planted them in that box because I accused her of stealing Rosa Rodworth's watch, and she was afraid she'd get bowled out! She did! That girl hates me—"

"Celia! Barbara does not hate you." A little flush appeared in Miss Charmant's cheeks. "How can you talk like that?" she cried suddenly. "Have you no sense of decency, no sense of sportsmanship? If it hadn't been for Barbara you might now be standing in front of the headmistress trying to explain this away!"

"But I wouldn't. I've got nothing to explain." Celia's eyes flamed. "Barbara's the thief! She's trying to fasten things on me. And you're helping her!" she cried violently, hoping to impress her sister with a display of wrath. "You go nosing and meddling and interfering with my things—"

"Celia! Be quiet."

"And stop that!" Celia broke out savagely. "Don't play the high and mighty schoolmistress with me. I'm your sister—and a fat lot of good that does me!" she exclaimed bitterly. "You've got a down on me like those other cats in the Fourth Form. You're mad with me—and I know why. Because I've been adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Charmant! You're afraid that will spoil your chances with them!

You're trying to cook up something against me!"

Miss Charmant sat aghast.

"Celia!"

"Well, I won't have it!" Celia went on violently. "That's my box. Those are my things. I want that box, and I'm jolly well going to have it—see? It's mine, I tell you. Mine!" And in sudden desperation she sprang up and snatched it.

"Celia, put that down!"

"I won't!"

She turned quickly. But quick as she was, her sister was quicker. In a flash she sprang from behind her desk, and, catching the girl with one hand, snatched the box from her with the other.

Then, very firmly, she gripped the spiffire by her shoulder and forced her into the chair. Very grimly, very sternly, she frowned upon her.

"Now, listen to me," she said fiercely. "This sort of scene will not help you. I happen to know, Celia. I'm your sister. We both owe a very deep debt of gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Charmant, but perhaps my debt is greater than yours. I promised those two dear people, when I came here, that I would look after you and help you. I'm doing it—not for your sake, but for theirs."

Celia's lips parted in a wordless sneer.

"And I'm going to reform you," Miss Charmant went on. "Whether you like it or not, you're going to be a credit to this school. This is a serious matter. You have robbed these girls. You are going to put back the things of which you robbed them. I'm going to see that you do it!"

"Clever, aren't you?"

"Very!" Miss Charmant agreed. "Celia, you will take back those things now. This evening you will be excused call-over, and you will take advantage of the emptiness of the corridors to replace these articles. And even if you cannot regret your follies, never, never do anything like this again. Here is the box—"

She held the box towards Celia, willingly proffering it now. The new girl rose. For a moment her chest heaved. She stepped forward. Then with a quick, downward thrust of her hand she swept the box from her sister's grasp.

Crash!

It fell upon the floor.

"That's my answer!" Celia scoffed. "If you want to put the things back, put them back yourself! And rats, rats, rats to you!" she exclaimed defiantly.

She sped to the door. Too late the mistress thrust out a detaining hand. The door opened and slammed, and Celia was gone.

With white face the mistress looked at the box.

"Sorry, Fatima—sorry! But look here—" And Clara, wildly excited, no longer the truculent Clara of the Common-room, waved in excitement a sheet of notepaper above her head. "Babs, I've had a letter!" she cried.

Babs stared.

"Well, is that a reason for wrecking the study?"

"And shattering the peace of my nerves?" Mabel Lynn asked.

"Yes, rather, and I nun-nearly choked," Bessie paused wrathfully, wiping her lips with the corner of her serviette. For Bessie had been in the act of raising the cup to her lips when the boisterous one had brushed past her. "I sus-say, is that letter for me?" she asked eagerly next moment. "I'm expecting a letter, you know—"

"With a remittance from a titled relation in it," Mabs chuckled. "The

heavy sarcasm, ~~is~~ lost on the chums of Study No. 4, "was mistress of the Fourth Form at Cliff House until the beginning of this term."

Babs pretended to look astonished.

"Well, well, don't we live and learn."

"And she left," Clara went on, elaborating her sarcasm, "to take up an appointment as headmistress at Whitechester—which is 'the main reason,' she added, "why Miss Valerie Charmant came here. Now do you realise?"

Babs laughed.

"Well, come on, what's she got to say? And why?" she added warmly, "has she written to you?"

"You're not games captain, my pet!" Clara chortled. "And it's in my capacity—whoa, good word that, make a note of it, Bessie—in my capacity of



"OH, Miss Charmant, thanks awfully!" was all that Clara could stammer, as the new mistress handed her a note. What a splendid contribution to the present the Fourth intended to give their old Form-mistress, Miss Matthews.

one Bessie's been expecting ever since she came to Cliff House. But that's not it, Bessie," she added, shaking her golden head. "Because, you see, it wasn't posted two years ago—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But look here," Clara exclaimed. "Mabs, stop pulling Bessie's fat leg! This letter"—Clara paused impressively—"guess who it's from?"

"Solid or liquid? Masculine or feminine?" Babs asked teasingly.

"Don't rot!"

"Guess!"

"Brother Jack."

"Wrong!"

"Well, who the dickens is it from, chump? You don't expect us to run through the whole telephone directory, to—"

"It's from Janey!"

"Janey?"

"Miss Matthews—Janey!" Clara looked exasperated. "My hat! Don't stare at me like a stuffed cuckoo! I thought you had brains in this study. Miss Matthews," she explained, with

games captain that she has written to me. No; don't interrupt, you jealous old fish," she added, with a laugh. "Let me explain. You remember Janey said that she would present a silver cup to the winning side in the Whitechester Cliff House match?"

"You're telling us," Mabs smiled. "I'm telling you!" And the Tomboy heaved a deep, deep breath. "Janey's written to me about the match. She's heard of Miss Charmant—"

"Yes!"

"And she's heard that she plays hockey. She suggests"—Clara almost exploded with delight—"that Miss Charmant should play for Cliff House."

"What?"

"And—and that Miss Matthews—you remember how fond Janey herself was of hockey—should play on the Whitechester side."

"My hat!"

"Clara, you really mean it?"

"Look at the letter," Clara exclaimed, and thrust it into Babs' hand.

Babs read it. Mabs craning forward,



What Fun!

"BABS! Babs, are you in? Oh, my hat!" And the door of Study No. 4 came open with a crash, and into the room breezed Clara Trevlyn. "Babs!"

Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn, and Bessie Bunter, sitting at the table at tea, almost jumped.

"What on earth—" Mabs gasped.

"What the dickens—"

"I sus-say— Oh, phoo!" gasped Bessie Bunter wrathfully. "Clara, you clumsy thing! You've made me spill this tea!"

against all the canons of politeness, read it over her shoulder. Yes, there was no doubt about it—there it was, in the well-remembered handwriting of Miss Matthews.

In three weeks the Cliff House-Whitechester match was to be played; the junior team of each school competing. Miss Matthews made the suggestion in all earnestness.

"Oh, my goodness!" Babs breathed. "Of course you'll accept?" Mabel Lynn put in.

Clara smiled widely. "What-ho!" she agreed. "But first, of course, we'll have to see the Charmer. Babs, you think she'll agree?"

"Like a shot!" Babs said. "And, oh, Clara, what a thrill!" She laughed merrily. "I wonder if Janey will be sorry afterwards, when they see how good Miss Charmant is?"

They all chuckled—except Bessie, who really thought that a place in the team should have been found for her, in spite of the fact that she was the veriest duffer ever seen when it came to playing any sort of game.

Yesterday Miss Charmant had taken a stick in the practice match, and she had made Cliff House open its eyes.

Even Miss Keys, the gym mistress, herself an international hockey player three times over, said very seriously that Miss Charmant was an excellent player. And when Miss Keys, who was proverbially grudging in her praises, said a thing like that, it counted for much.

On the other hand, Miss Matthews thought quite a good player, and very fond of the game, was not brilliant.

"Well, it's on Janey's head," Mabs laughed. "We haven't suggested it. It seems a shame to swindle the poor dears."

"The Charmer will just wipe Whitechester off the map."

"And the cup—"

"It will be ours—for a cert!"

The chums chortled in delighted chorus.

"Well, then, come on," Clara said impatiently. "No, wait a minute. We'd better make a deputation of it. Mabs, you're on the committee. You, too, Babs. Get Leila Carroll and Janet Jordan and we'll all go together. Bessie, be a sport—"

"Eh? Oh, look here, you know, if you're going to see Miss Charmant let me come, too?" Bessie pleaded anxiously.

"But this is a hockey matter, chump!"

"But can't I come—just to—sus-see her, you know?" Bessie asked, colouring. "I'll be quite quiet. I won't say a word when I talk—really!"

"My hat!"

And Clara stared. But Babs, who understood, smiled. Bessie, like everyone else in the Fourth Form, had fallen under the spell of the Charmer's irresistible appeal. That was not an uncommon affair in the Fourth at this juncture, but it was surprising to discover Bessie one of its victims. Mabs laughed.

"Well, let Bessie come," she said. "But not a word, Fatima. This is hockey business."

"Oh, yes, of k-k-course!" Bessie said. "Shall I fetch Leila and Janet?" she asked, brightly now.

"Please!"

So off Bessie ran, pleased and happy and eager to form one of the party to interview the idolised Form-mistress. In less than a minute she was back again, accompanied by a Leila and Janet no less eager than herself. They almost jumped for joy when they heard Clara's momentous news. Eyes

sparkled, cheeks dimpled. If Miss Charmant would only consent! If only—

"Why, Whitechester won't get a look in!"

"Gee, let's go!" Leila cried.

So off they went, the six of them, thrillingly eager, hearts rejoicing. Miss Charmant, seated at her desk, glanced up with a welcoming smile that did not altogether banish the look of overshadowed anxiety on her face when they came in.

"Why, Clara—Barbara—Bessie—all of you!" she cried. "This is a pleasure! Come in—do! Anything wrong?"

"Hardly!" Clara laughed. "Miss Charmant—"

"Yes, Clara?"

"Well, I hardly know how to say it, but—well, would you mind reading that?" And the Tomboy spread the letter on the desk. "It's from Jan—Miss Matthews," she explained. "It concerns our match with Whitechester." She paused, glancing gleefully at her chums as the mistress perused the document. "You see what she suggests, Miss Charmant?"

There was a little flush on the mistress' face as she looked up.

"You mean—you would like me to play?"

"We'd love it!"

"There is no rule against it?"

"None whatever," Clara replied eagerly. "In fact, it's a jolly good idea. Janey—I mum-mean, Miss Matthews—is fond of hockey. Very often she used to make one of the team when we were having practice or anything. Of course, if you played you'd captain the side," Clara added anxiously.

But the mistress shook her head.

"I should certainly do nothing of the kind," she corrected. "The side already has a most excellent captain in yourself, Clara. But it is a good idea—yes, a very, very good idea!" Her eyes kindled. "If it is permissible I should love to play."

"Oh, Miss Charmant!"

"You'll accept, then?" Clara asked breathlessly.

"I accept, yes," Miss Charmant nodded. "And thank you for the honour."

"Oh, topping!"

Faces flamed then. Gleefully the party looked at each other. Miss Charmant had accepted! The idol of the Fourth would play in the Whitechester match—as one of themselves—under Clara's captaincy! They could have hugged her for that!

"Oh, I say, it's frightfully nice of you!" Babs gasped.

"Not at all! It's very nice of you to ask me," Miss Charmant laughed. Her face was irradiated, eager. She looked as excited as themselves. Mistress she was at Cliff House, but a schoolgirl she was at heart, and hockey was a game for which she still retained all her school-girl enthusiasm. "I promise I'll do my best!" she laughed. "Is Miss Matthews a good player?"

"Yes, rather! But not as good as you, Miss Charmant!"

Valerie blushed rosily.

"Now, now! Don't let your enthusiasm run away with you," she chided gaily. "Besides, look how embarrassed you are making me! I think it's a very nice suggestion of Miss Matthews, and I hope she will not regret it," she added, with another laugh. "She was very fond of you girls, wasn't she?"

"Well, yes!" Mabs admitted.

"And you very fond of her?"

"Janey was a dear," Mabs smiled.

"I see!" Miss Charmant looked thoughtful. "And this cup she is presenting—I fancy I see her reason. She wants to forge a link between her old school and the new—developing the friendship between the two schools, and all that. That's very charming of her."

"Yes, isn't it?"

"And—and—well, I was wondering." Miss Charmant laughed again. "Here's another suggestion," she said. "Turn it down if you don't like it. I expect the idea has already occurred to you. But wouldn't it be rather nice, and wouldn't Miss Matthews treasure it most awfully if we gave her—well, a sort of memento of the match? I gather she left in rather a hurry at the beginning of term. In which case, of course, it might not have occurred to anybody to organise a collection for a parting gift."

"My hat!" Babs exclaimed. "You know, Miss Charmant, we hadn't thought of it!"

"No?"

"Well, what idiots we were!" Clara put in. "Oh, crumbs, that looks bad. Miss Matthews was such a sport."

Miss Charmant laughed.

"Now, please!" she protested. "Don't reproach yourselves. Of course, you didn't think of it. How could you think of it? Everything happened so quickly, didn't it? But it's not too late. Supposing you decide, when the cup is presented to the winning side, to make Miss Matthews a presentation, too!"

Babs' eyes sparkled.

"My goodness, that would be topping!"

"Miss Matthews would just love it!"

"It would show her that we hadn't forgotten her!"

"Yes, rather! And if you want my suggestion," Bessie chimed in, "I vote we give her a jolly good feed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a laugh, in which Miss Charmant joined. But she shook her black curls merrily.

"Hardly, Bessie! What we want is something that she can remember us by—for years and years and years. But listen to me," she broke off, blushing, "talking just as though it were my affair!"

"Oh, but, Miss Charmant, if you've got any suggestions—"

"No, I think I've gone far enough!" Miss Charmant smiled, with a shake of her head. "In any case, you can decide on the presentation when you make the collection. The amount of collection will naturally govern the selection of the gift. If you're seriously going to do it—"

"You bet we are!" Clara exclaimed boisterously. "I mum-mean, of course we are!"

Miss Charmant laughed.

"Then I'm glad," she said. "Who's going to be the treasurer?"

"I will!" Bessie volunteered at once.

But that, needless to say, was a suggestion that was vetoed before the fat one had a chance to enlarge upon it.

Bessie was a dear old duffer. Bessie was an adorable old chump, but Bessie's sense of responsibility where money was concerned could not be said, by any means, to be her strongest point. It was Babs who settled the question.

"Well, as the presentation will take place after the match, that sort of gives it a sporting complexion; so I vote the games captain takes on the job."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good for you, Babs!" Leila voted.

"Well, I'm willing," Clara agreed.

"But you'll have to help, Babs. We'll do it between us, and woe jolly well betide the girl who doesn't brass up!

Whoa, there, everybody! Get your six-pences ready, because I'm coming on your track, and there's no excuse for not paying up. We've got nearly three weeks to do it—"

"Clara's obviously the girl for the task," Miss Charmant smiled. "But I'd like to head the collection. Now, where's my foolscap? Here we are. Take a sheet, Clara. Jot down the names of the contributors and the amount contributed."

As eager as they were, she took the sheet of foolscap, quickly ruled it, and then wrote her own name at the top, with an amount in the margin next to it.

"There you are," she said, and handed Clara the sheet and a crisp note. "That will give you something to start with."

Clara looked staggered. "Oh crumbs! A pound—a whole pound!"

"Why, of course!"

"Oh, Miss Charmant, thanks awfully!"

Miss Charmant only laughed pleasantly and then dismissed them. Clara dazed, the rest bubbling over with a new excitement, and Miss Charmant fixed firmly and for ever in their affections, they all went to the Common-room to break the latest news.



Nothing is Safe!

AND that news! What a furor it caused! Of course, it was the loveliest idea. A presentation to Miss Matthews! Why hadn't they thought of it before? Still, jolly nice of Miss Charmant to think of it for them, and just because it was her suggestion there was an eager rush at once to contribute to the fund.

It was still early in the term, so that money was fairly plentiful in the Form, most of the girls having returned with remittances from fond parents and relatives.

But even more exciting than the news of the presentation was the other news—that Miss Charmant, whose prowess on the hockey field they had all been privileged to witness, was going to play in the match when Janey brought her Whitechester warriors to Cliff House.

The Fourth Form crowded. With the Charmer in their ranks the result was a foregone conclusion—or so they told themselves!

There was no need for Clara to call for contributions; they just poured in. For half an hour Clara had an extremely busy time filling up her foolscap sheet.

Every girl in the Common-room came forward—even Bessie Bunter, who borrowed half-a-crown from the guileless Marcelle Biquet in order to make a contribution of two shillings.

Florins, half-crowns, shillings poured in with roady good will. Those who could not afford much handed over six-pences, promising a further instalment on Friday, when the first week's pocket-money would be distributed.

Clara beamed hugely. "Four pounds nine shillings," she said. "My hat! We're going off with a bang. And there's no reason," she added, "why we shouldn't rope in other Forms. After all, Janey was history mistress as well as Form-mistress. But wait a minute! Let's check up." And Clara ran through the names. "Marcia

Loftus—I don't see her name on the list."

"What list?" asked Marcia Loftus, who had just strolled in; and she was told. And even the hard-bitten sneak of the Fourth contributed her last two silver coins—a shilling and a sixpence.

"Good for you!" Clara enthused. "That's topping, Marcia!"

"Oh, don't worry! I didn't give it to you," Marcia sniffed. "And I didn't give it because I doted on Miss Matthews. But—well, since Miss Charmant's going to see the list—" And she coughed and bit her lip, as though afraid she had betrayed her secret feelings.

But Clara only grinned. It was a tribute indeed to the personality of the new mistress that she could enchant a girl usually so utterly devoid of affection as Marcia Loftus.

She ran through the list again. Everybody, it seemed, had contributed.

It was really amazing to see some of the names there—Marcia Loftus, Nancy Bell, Freda Ferriers, Lydia Crossendale—Lydia in her usual lordly manner donating ten shillings.

None of those had been over fond of Janey; and had the suggestion come from anybody but the Charmer their names would have been contemptuously absent from that list.

But the Charmer's generous way of identifying herself with the collection, her name at the head of the sheet, fired them all with a desire to emulate her—and in emulating her, to please her.

"I think you've got everybody," Babs said, conning the list over the Tomboy's shoulder. "No; one absentee—Celia."

"Where is she?" Clara cried, and rapped the table. "Cee-lee-ah!"

But Celia was not in the Common-room. Inquiry elicited the fact that she had not been seen there since tea. Clara stood up.

"Good enough! Then we'll go along to her study," she said. "She's not going to get out of this, even if she is a new girl. Come on, Babs!"

Babs nodded. The two quitted the Common-room together, leaving behind them a buzz of excited chatter; they went along to Study No. 12. Babs tapped on the door, and the two entered.

Celia Charmant was there; she was sitting at the table, a sheet of paper in front of her, the light shining down upon her features. She gave quite a jump when the two Fourth Formers entered, hastily turning over the paper on which she had been writing.

"Dash it! What do you mean by bursting in like that?" she cried in sudden temper.

"Sorry!" Clara grinned good-naturedly. "We just had to come, Celia. The fact of the matter is—" And she produced the sheet and explained the mission. "Your sister coughed up a whole pound, so we thought you'd like to come in, too. You wouldn't like to be left out, would you?" she added coaxingly. "Everybody else in the Form has contributed."

Celia scowled. "Well, I don't see why I should be expected to give you money. Who is Miss Matthews, anyway? I don't know her."

"Of course you don't! Neither does your sister, for that matter—"

"Blow my sister! Oh, get out!" And Celia crossly turned to her work again.

The affability in Clara's face died out. She looked truculent all at once. Doubtless she would have made some biting retort if Babs hadn't pulled at her sleeve, nodding wisely towards the door. Whoreat, Clara—reflecting, after all,

that Celia was within her rights, and was perfectly justified in regarding the presentation as none of her business—shrugged and prepared to go. The two of them reached the door, when the voice of the spitfire arrested them.

"I say, hold on a minute!" She turned round. There was a look on her face—a narrowed, calculating look—which escaped Clara, but which Babs vaguely noted. "I'm sorry!" she said, to their amazement. "I didn't quite get the idea at first. Of course, if all the Form's in it—" she added casually.

Hope burned up again in Clara's face. "You mean—"

"Well, I haven't a lot of money, but if a shilling would be of any use—"

"Stick your name there!" Clara invited.

Her annoyance vanished magically as she grinned triumphantly at Babs. Much as she disliked Celia, the Tomboy could have patted her on the back at that moment.

Clara was very earnest and very thorough, and when she undertook a task she was prepared to sweep all personal prejudices on one side to accomplish it to her satisfaction.

"There you are!" she cried cordially. "Sign on the dotted line, and hand over the bobble!"

Celia studied the paper.

"My, you've collected a lot!" she said.

"How much does all this come to?"

"Four pounds twelve-and-sixpence!"

Clara grinned. "Thirteen-and-sixpence with yours. That's just a beginning, though. We hope to collect twice as much when we've roped in the other Forms."

Celia's eyes gleamed. "It's a lot of money."

"Quite a bit," Clara agreed easily.

"And you've got it all with you?"

"Got it? I should say!" Clara

grinned. "My blessed pocket is sagging! Listen!" And she clinked coins merrily. "It weighs about a hundred-weight, but I'm hoping it will weigh a ton and a half before I've finished! Thanks for the bobble! You're not such a measly little terrier, after all! This way, Babs! We'll take this to your study and count it!"

They went out jubilantly without another glance at the spitfire of the Fourth. They left Celia sitting there, a strange look on her face, a sudden cunning gleam in her eyes.

The door closed. She smiled as though anticipating some thought which occurred to her. She nodded at the sheet of paper in front of her. Her lips framed words.

"Four pounds thirteen shillings and sixpence! Nearly five pounds!" she muttered. "Umph!"

And she nodded again, well pleased with herself. Then, picking up her pen, she finished her writing.

CHINK! CHINK! Chink!

"All correct, Babs?" Clara asked anxiously. "Four-thirteen-six?"

"That's right!" Babs nodded.

"Jolly good—eh?"

"Very good indeed! But what are you going to do with it? Most of it is in silver. You can't carry this about with you for the next three weeks."

Clara frowned.

"Well, what can we do?"

"Change it into notes."

"Yes; but who's got notes? And who— Oh, come in, chump!" she added resignedly, as a tap sounded upon the study door. Then she flushed to the roots of her hair as the door came open and on the threshold stood—Miss Charmant!

"Oh crumbs! I—I didn't mean that!" Clara confusedly stammered. "I—I thought it was some other chump—that is, I thought it was some other girl!"

Miss Charmant smiled.

"I'm sure you did, Clara!" she said, with a light laugh. "Still, you're forgiven this time! Be careful in future, however! My word! Is that the collection?" she added, her eyes kindling.

"Yes," Babs answered.

"You've made a topping start!"

"Yes, haven't we?" Clara enthused. "Everybody was just ripping!" she said. "They almost fought to put their names on the list. But that's not all!" she added proudly. "Some of the girls have promised more when they get their pocket-money, and we're going to carry on the campaign into other Forms. At this rate," Clara continued, "we should raise about ten pounds."

"Quite a small fortune!" Miss Charmant observed. "But be careful, Clara! If I were you, I should change that money into notes. If you'd like to come to my study afterwards I'll change it for you." Then she paused, looking at Babs, her sweet face suddenly worried and overshadowed. "Oh, Barbara—"

"Yes, Miss Charmant?"

"I—I wonder if you will do something for me?"

"Why, of course!"

"It's—it's about the—the articles which were stolen this morning." The mistress bit her lips. Babs, who shared her secret with her, looked quickly at Clara, and then blushed a little. "I'm rather anxious," Miss Charmant went on, "to have a list of the names of the girls who missed things, together with a list of the articles missing. Do you think you could manage to get me that list, Barbara?"

"Why, of course!" Babs said at once.

"Then would you mind—now?" Miss Charmant requested. "It won't take you long?"

"Not five minutes," Babs agreed readily. "Most of the girls are in the Common-room."

"Thank you!" The mistress heaved a sigh of relief. "I'll stop here," she said, "and talk to Clara."

Babs nodded eagerly. Willingly she flew upon her errand at once, anxiously hoping that no further difficulty had arisen. She had heard by now that Miss Charmant had been taken to task by Miss Primrose. She rather suspected that this development was the outcome of that talk.

But her heart melted with pity for the mistress who had so unfairly been placed in this situation. She knew how strict, how stern, Miss Primrose could be in a case like this.

"Poor Miss Charmant!" she thought.

She walked onward. What a position! What mockery the whole thing must be to her! Asked, no doubt, to discover the identity of the thief; requested to see that the missing articles were restored!

Yet she had those articles in her own possession, and she knew that the thief was her own sister, whom desperately she was endeavouring to shield.

What was she going to do with those stolen things? Babs wondered. How, in the long run, was she going to clear Celia?

Those were problems. They were problems that concerned Babs, whose affection for the new mistress was now so overwhelming. They were problems which worried her a little, hating to feel that such a really ripping woman as Miss Charmant was in such a difficulty.

It was a problem which tried her

anger, too—anger against Celia, that hard-faced little spitfire who could so calmly detach herself from all this turmoil, allowing her sister to bear the brunt of her own misdeeds! Awful little thing!

She reached the Common-room. From behind the door came the noisy chatter of voices. It was growing dark outside, and the room was flooded with light. Girls stood in groups, talking and laughing.

The topic of conversation still paramount was the forthcoming Whitechester-Cliff House match, and the surprise in store for the Whitechester girls when they found themselves up against such a redoubtable opponent as the new Form-mistress. The match was three weeks off yet, but the excitement in the Lower School was almost at fever-heat.

In Study No. 4, Miss Charmant and Clara were also discussing that question. Miss Charmant, however, did not share the optimism of the Fourth.

"It's going to be a good match," she said. "Whitechester is very keen on hockey, I've heard, especially their juniors."

"Oh, yes; they're quite a tough gang," Clara sturdily admitted. "But with you in the team—"

"One player doesn't make a team," Miss Charmant reminded her. "In any case, supposing I don't justify all your hopes? I'm only human, you know, and there's always the possibility that I might be off form. Apart from which, Whitechester can be trusted to fight hard. They, too, will be keen to win that cup, you know. You mustn't underestimate your opponents. That's the surest way of coming a cropper."

With that Clara agreed.

"We're not doing that," she said.

"We know Whitechester!"

"And you're having extra training, of course? It's often the best-trained side that wins the match, you know. And whether you win or lose this, you can be sure of one thing—you're going to have a very hard fight. Have you made arrangements for extra training?"

"Well, not yet!"

"I should!" the mistress nodded. "I don't want to interfere—"

"Oh, Miss Charmant, as if you are—"

"Then supposing you make extra training a rule?"

"Yes, Miss Charmant. What would you suggest?"

"Half an hour before breakfast. It means getting up early, of course, but if the team's keen it won't mind that. Supposing, for instance, the whole team has a brisk swim every morning, followed by a run round the track?"

Clara's eyes glamed.

"My hat, that's a good idea!"

"Then you'll do it?"

"Rather! I'll give orders to-night. And let me catch anyone slacking!" Clara said grimly.

Miss Charmant laughed.

"That's the spirit. No slacking," she applauded. "And as I'm a member of the team, I fall into line, too, you know. Get me out with the rest every morning, and we'll swim and race together." She laughed. "Meantime, Clara, what are you going to do with that money?"

"Well, change it."

"And carry it about with you?"

"I suppose so."

But Miss Charmant shook her head. "Unsafe," she decided—"very unsafe. I should find a hiding place for it if I were you. I'll take charge of it if you like— But no, perhaps I'd better not," she added. "I might be out

or something when you want it. Have you any place in your study where it would be safe?"

Clara thought.

"Well, there's my bureau. There's a drawer in that."

"You can lock it?"

"Oh, yes!"

Miss Charmant looked relieved.

"Then I should certainly put it there and carry the key about with you. If anything should happen—" She broke off as the door opened and Barbara came in. "Oh, Barbara, you have it?"

"Yes, Miss Charmant." And Babs paused, proffering the sheet of paper in her hand.

"Thank you!" The mistress took it. She smiled very sweetly, very gratefully at the leader of the Fourth, whereat Babs, for no reason at all, flushed hotly. "Well, I'll leave you to it," she added, with a light laugh. "When you're ready, Clara, come along to my study, and I'll change that money into notes for you. Meantime"—she smiled—"round up the team and get things moving. And don't forget—as far as training is concerned—I'm under your orders."

She smiled again, laughing as she went through the door. The laugh hid the ache in her heart, the worry in her mind. It disappeared as soon as she found herself in the corridor, and she frowned.

A sigh that welled from the bottom of her heart escaped her lips, and for a moment there was a bitter expression on her face as she regarded the letter in her hand. Then, looking up, she started.

Beside her was a girl—Celia.

"Celia!" she cried. "Where have you sprung from?"

Celia pouted.

"Any business of yours?" she asked unpleasantly.

Miss Charmant bit her lip. How hopeless it seemed to do anything with this unteachable girl! There were times when it occurred to Valerie Charmant that the only possible way of drilling any sense of decency or discipline into her would be a thorough good smacking.

"You have been listening outside this door!" she said sharply.

Celia laughed.

"Guess again!" she grinned impudently, and turned to slouch off down the corridor. But a word from Miss Charmant arrested her.

"Well?" she asked, turning cheekily.

"Celia, you will remember that you are excused call-over."

"Thanks!" Celia scoffed.

"You know what for—you will find the things in my study."

Celia laughed again. Valerie Charmant, in an uncomfortable frame of mind, and with a slightly heightened colour, went off down the corridor.

She went to her own room. There she studied the list which Barbara had given her. Would Celia take that hint, she wondered? Would she seize this opportunity to make amends? She had given her the chance. If Celia chose to avail herself of this chance of putting back the articles she had stolen, then it was quite possible that the whole thing might blow over. If she did not— Valerie bit her lip.

If she did not, then there was only one thing for her to do. She must put them back herself!

Rather anxiously she waited for call-over to come. In the meantime, Clara came in. She changed the silver for notes and went out again, intent upon secreting the money in the drawer of

her bureau, and utterly unsuspecting that Celia Charmant followed her.

Call-over came at last. The bell went. The Form, obedient and on its best behaviour, assembled. Miss Charmant, in Big Hall before any of them, ranged her eyes over the class.

And then her heart leapt.

Celia was not there!

Had Celia, after all, taken her warning to heart?

It seemed like it.

Suddenly a load lifted from the pretty mistress' mind. With a smile she opened the register, beaming at the attentive ranks of heroine-worshipping girls before her. She had hardly called out the first name, however, than Dulcia Fairbrother, the duty prefect for the day, hurried up.

"Oh, Miss Charmant, excuse me!"

"Yes, Dulcia?" the mistress said mildly.

"Miss Primrose would like to see you in her study, at once," Dulcia answered. "She has instructed me to take the register." She took the register from the mistress' hand, while Miss Charmant, with a rather wondering look at her, handed it over. "Will you go at once, Miss Charmant?"

"Why, of course."

And the new mistress, much to the disappointment of the Form, left.

She ascended the stairs. Since Big Hall was crowded, her best means of reaching Miss Primrose's study was by way of the Fourth Form corridor.

Anxiously wondering at this sudden summons, uneasily wondering if Celia had been caught in the attempt to replace the spoils she had stolen the night before, she climbed the stairs, and in a rather worried frame of mind began to traverse the long winding corridor. She rounded the bend.

And then—

"Celia!" she gasped.

For a single second she halted, eyes widening in astonishment. Farther along the corridor, she had seen the door of Study No. 7 open. She had seen the quick figure that disappeared within.

Even as she stopped, the quick shutting of the door came to her ears; but, unless she was dreaming, there was no mistake about the girl she had seen entering that room.

It was Celia herself!

"Celia!" she gasped again, and sped up the corridor.

She reached the study. Impatiently she tapped upon the door. There was no answer. With a feeling of vague alarm she opened it.

Study No. 7 was disclosed before her. Of Celia there was no sign. The lights were on, the windows opened, bringing in the smell of the damp night mist.

Valerie Charmant blinked.

And then quite suddenly she stiffened. Every spot of colour fled from her face.

She found herself staring at Clara Trevlyn's bureau. The topmost drawer was hanging open. That was the drawer, she knew, in which Clara had concealed the collection.

She stepped towards it. She looked. And then a sudden fit of trembling shook her as at last the hideous truth dawned upon her. Celia had cheated! Celia had tricked her! Celia, instead of utilising her absence from call-over to put back the articles which she had stolen last night, had taken advantage of the privilege to commit yet another theft!

For the drawer in which Clara had concealed the fund for Miss Matthews' present was empty!



MISS CHARMANT drew back in horrified consternation as she saw the empty drawer of Clara Trevlyn's bureau. So Celia, instead of putting back the articles she had already stolen, had taken the opportunity to steal the money which had been collected for Miss Matthews' present.



The Meanest Trick.

OUTSIDE, on the window-ledge that adjoined Studies No. 6 and No. 7, the palpitating form of Celia Charmant crouched.

The ledge was wide. It was stout and strong. Furthermore, it was railed off by a low railing, which had been placed there by the nineteenth century architect who had been responsible for the alterations to this part of the building.

She was twenty or thirty feet above ground, it is true, but she was in no peril. Nevertheless, Celia was not made of the stuff that Clara Trevlyn was made of. Nor did she feel too safe. Clinging to the ivy, she wormed her way along.

Celia's main object at the moment was to get from Study No. 7 to Study No. 6.

Narrow shave, that! But she was filled with a sense of triumph. Not for nothing had she spied upon Clara. The funds of the Jane Matthews testimonial were in her possession.

Rough luck that Valerie had seen her enter Study No. 7. Valerie, of course, would guess. But she had no fear of her sister.

Now, here she was—and by the greatest of good luck, the window of Study No. 6 was open. She dropped into the room just as Valerie, guessing how she had made her escape, peered from the window.

"Celia!" she muttered again.

Celia heard and chuckled. But she made no reply.

The eyes of Valerie Charmant, in Study No. 7 hardened. She withdrew, closing the window after her. She knew where Celia was, at all events. Celia should not escape her now. She crossed the floor of the study quickly. She opened the door. At the same moment—

"Oh!" Valerie gasped.

A figure was approaching the study from the opposite end of the corridor. It was the figure of Miss Primrose.

Quite a jump of fear Valerie's heart gave then. In a half-scared way she flung a glance at the door of Study No. 6. Even in that moment her thoughts were of Celia, the sister who had wronged her. If Celia chose that moment to reappear, when she was supposed to be in Assembly Hall answering her name to call-over—

But she need not have worried. Celia was nothing if not artful. Not Celia's way to fly unprepared into the corridor. Celia, above all things, believed in caution, and she had taken the opportunity to open the door a little and to peer out to see if the coast was clear before making her get-away.

That peep had shown her Miss Primrose approaching along the corridor from the other end, and she had shut the door promptly. Behind that door she now stood, still holding the door-knob.

Meantime, Miss Primrose came on. She looked rather oddly at the flushed, agitated face of Miss Charmant. Was there just the hint of suspicion in that glance? It seemed so to Valerie, who, a poor actress, felt waves of guilt ebbing and flowing into her face. She almost gasped when Miss Primrose spoke to her.

"Ah, so here you are, Miss Charmant! I was looking for you!"

"I—yes—" Valerie heard herself stammering.

"There is nothing wrong in Study No. 7?" the headmistress asked.

"Oh, no! I—"

"I thought there might be. I saw you come out of the room," Miss Primrose said. "In view of—ahem—a rather disturbing communication I have received. But still—" She rambled oddly in a manner quite strange to her, and for some other reason looked embarrassed.

"I have received a letter which I thought it was my duty to show you without delay," Miss Primrose went on. "That is why I sent for you. Will you be good enough to accompany me to my study?"

The mistress nodded. She could not speak, but again she wondered at the Head's display of agitation.

She fell into step beside her. "It is the sort of communication of which I strongly disapprove!" Miss Primrose went on. "Preposterous, of course! I want you to believe, Miss Charmant, that I attach no credence to it. But I am going to give it to you. I want you to discover, if possible, who wrote it, and to report the culprit to me." She opened the door of her study, which they had now reached. Rather disturbed, she walked across to her desk, and picked up a sheet of paper. "Here it is!" she said angrily.

Miss Charmant took it. She read it. And then her face turned deathly white. The slip in her hand shook and trembled. For upon that paper, painstakingly written in block capitals, which afforded not the slightest trace of the writer's identity, were these words:

"MISS CHARMANT IS THE THIEF!"



Suspicion Persists.

CRASH!

That was the door of the Fourth Form Common-room. It came open violently, suddenly. It crashed back with such force upon its hinges that Bessie Bunter, who was standing near it, caught the edge of the door in the back, and, with the most surprised expression on her fat face, sailed gaspingly into the arms of Jemima Carstairs.

Jemima, unprepared for such a sudden shock, sat down, with Bessie sprawling on top of her. Up from Bessie went a frantic wail.

"Oh, wow-wow! Groo!"

"Clara, you chump!" Barbara Redfern cried.

Clara, whose mighty shove at the door was responsible for that diversion, looked grim. Anger was blazing in her eyes; her nostrils were twitching with the temper that consumed her. But she gave a little cry as she saw the result of her handiwork. Hurriedly she stooped to assist Bessie.

"Oh crumbs! Sorry! Did I hurt you, Bessie?"

Bessie blinked wrathfully.

"You jolly well did! Ow! I've fractured my spine!"

"Awfully sorry, old thing! I didn't mean it. There!" And Clara hoisted the fat one to her feet, dusted her down, and set her upright, while Babs and Mabs, springing to Jemima's rescue, raised her dazedly to the perpendicular, where Jemima continued to sag like a sack between them, an utterly woe-

begone expression on her face. "Oh, I say, are you hurt, Jimmy?"

"Not hurt, just flattened," Jemima murmured. "So good for slimming to have Bessie hurled at you. But don't worry, old things. I shall be as right as rain after a year or two in hospital."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm sorry!" Clara stammered.

"Yes, old thing, so am I, what?"

Jemima straightened up. "So refreshing having you bursting in like a breath of fresh air. Or should one say a ninety-mile-an-hour gale?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clara crimsoned.

"Say, what's the big idea?" Leila Carroll asked. She stared at Clara.

"Peeved?"

Clara's eyes glittered.

"More than peeved. I'm mad—just mad!" She glared round. "Who's taken it?"

"Taken what, chump?"

"The money we've been collecting for Janey's fund!"

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"What?"
Consternation descended at once upon the Common-room.

"Somebody's been and busted open one of the drawers of my bureau!" Clara said grimly. "And they've sneaked every bean. May be a joke, or it may not. But whoever's got that money's got to return it!"

There was a buzz.

"But when was it stolen?" Babs asked.

"During the last hour. I changed the money into notes with Miss Charmant. It was her idea I should put it in the drawer of my bureau. Some sneaking thief has been and taken it. And burst open the drawer to do it!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Consternation became rife then. There were angry murmurs. Girls gazed at each other, mystification on every face. It was coming to something, the Fourth agreed, when a girl could not even lock up money in her own study. They'd got to do something about it.

Indignation broke out. Poignantly back to memory came those other thefts of last night. Who was the unknown thief who crept about in other girls' absence raiding their most valuable things?

It wasn't as if this was a private possession, either. That money had been contributed by all of them. It was the Form's money!

"I suppose you don't know anything about it?" Lydia Crossendale sneeringly asked Babs, and then gave a yell of pain and wrath as Clara, with no light tread, stepped upon her toe. "You cat, what did you do that for?" she howled furiously.

"Just to remind you to keep that

tongue of yours between your teeth," Clara said grimly. "And shut up, or I'll tread on your other precious toe!"

"But—"

"Shut up!" Clara warned.

"I won't shut up!" Lydia's face grew vindictive. "It's my business, isn't it?"

"It's your business, all right. It's the business of the whole Form, come to that. But it's not your business to throw insults about!"

Lydia's eyes gleamed.

"Well, Babs—"

"Babs had nothing to do with it!"

"Then who has?"

"That's what I'm going to find out. Perhaps," Clara added grimly, "you know something about it yourself."

Lydia looked aghast.

"You beastly thing! Are you accusing me?"

"No, just giving you a taste of your own medicine," Clara replied. "You're ready enough to try to get Babs in hot water, aren't you? It's a different thing when the boot's on the other foot, isn't it?"

it? You're just as likely as Babs to have something to do with it—more, in fact. So be quiet!"

Lydia glowered. One or two of the others grinned. It was interesting to see Lydia's reaction to the accusation with which she, in her unthinking spite, would have saddled another girl.

"Well, something's got to be done about it," she said now. "And if nobody else is going to do anything, I am. I'm fed up! I lost my gold cigarette-holder last night. Now the Form's fund has gone. We've reported it to the Charmer. She's done nothing. Right! I'll go a step farther!"

She stepped towards the door. "Lydia, where are you going?" Babs gasped.

"To see the Head!" Lydia flounced round. "Well? Afraid?" she taunted.

Babs fell back at that, biting her lips. She had no proof, but she thought that she could guess where the guilt lay. Only one girl in the Form would have committed that theft. And that girl was Celia Charmant!

Babs remembered now that she had been absent from call-over. She remembered now that she had not seen her since just before call-over. It was during call-over that the theft had taken place.

"Lydia!" she cried.

"Rats!" retorted Lydia.

And, head in the air, she walked from the room.

A little silence followed her absence. Girls looked uneasy. Lydia was within her rights. Nobody tried to prevent her. Nobody could prevent her. Had Babs done the thing expected of her, she

(Continued on page 17.)

actually until the cotton breaks—and then gives up in despair, because she doesn't want to start again.

THE WAY TO THREAD YOUR NEEDLE.—Yes, there is a correct way to thread your needle. When you break off the cotton it is the end that you break that should go through the needle's eye, not the end that was hanging on the cotton reel.

HEMS ON FROCKS should always be hemmed by hand, not by machine. This is something that girls don't always realise. But if you look at any expensive dress in the shops you'll always notice that if there is a hem it is sewn by hand.

TACKING is very, very essential. Yes, I know it's terribly dull and often seems a waste of time. But it isn't, honestly. Very fine, or special, tacking cotton should always be used for this—and, of course, a correspondingly fine needle. If you use "any old cotton" and a darning needle, say, you'll find that not only will the needle marks show, but that your thick cotton will leave an ugly line. Particularly if you press a garment with the tacking still in.

NEEDLES should be of finest steel and kept in flannel in your needlework-box away from damp. Should they get rusty a brisk rub with emery paper will soon remove the rust marks. If emery paper is not handy a good trick is to rub them beneath your foot on a hard floor.

SEWING COTTONS, especially coloured cottons, will fade if they are left standing around a room in the sunlight. So remember if you keep your needlework-box or basket in the window, always to have the lid shut. No. 40 is a useful thickness cotton for most schoolgirl garments. But finer may be used for more delicate work.

PINS.—If you can't afford the luxury of dress-maker's steel pins, keep the pins you do use as short a time in the garment as possible. Pins certainly are useful, but don't try to make use of them instead of the valuable tacking if you long to be an expert needlewoman.

After all this good advice it's about time I left you to make some of the things I have described for you, isn't it? I hope they're a wonderful success!



Do you like to feel that all your belongings really do "belong"? If you know what I mean? That is to say, that they really and truly are your own and couldn't be mistaken for someone else's? There's no nicer way of getting this little personal touch than by marking all your clothes with some individual device, such as an initial. But even newer than this is a little flower motif,

THAT PERSONAL TOUCH.

How smart, yet how easy—to do are the "triangle" additions.

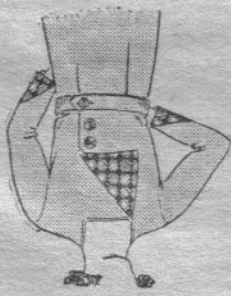
I told her she'd better copy some of the ideas, for her as she'd like to do. I've given you some measurements to know if the measure-my shoulder and wants-just been looking over By the way, Bessie's also add small cuffs of smart and you could smart and you could fastening with link-buttons as already explained, would look very A belt to match, up well.

and front of the shoulder-point so that they stand up well.

If the dress is already buttoned up down one side, remove the buttons and allow about five inches of the dress to remain undone, facing this piece back with a piece of your plaid. If, however, the bodice is quite plain, cut a triangle of plaid material to measure about 7½ in. on the two straight edges, turn in and stitch this to your dress to resemble the one-sided revers.

Add small triangles on sleeves in the same way, and if your dress has front seams, a rather good idea would be to cut them open for about 12 in. and insert inverted pleats of the plaid to match. Just straight strips of material 1½ in. by 8 in. would be all that is needed for these. From the scraps of plaid left over cover some rather large button mounds and stitch to front and belt and your dress will be quite transformed.

SMART "WINGS."—Another way of bringing a frock up to date is to add shaped wing-pieces to the front and back, fastening them on the shoulders with large buttons to give the fashionable pointed effect. Cut a pattern in newspaper first, making the wings 11 in. deep by 2½ in. wide at the top and tapering the outside edge away to nothing at the bottom. Shape the top away a little towards the inside as you see in the sketch. From the pattern you have made cut eight pieces



TRIANGLE TOUCHES.—Perhaps you've got a square-necked dress which you've grown rather tired of. If so, why not convert it into something quite different with the aid of ¾ yd. of checked or plaid material?

If the dress is already buttoned up down one side, remove the buttons and allow about five inches of the dress to remain undone, facing this piece back with a piece of your plaid. If, however, the bodice is quite plain, cut a triangle of plaid material to measure about 7½ in. on the two straight edges, turn in and stitch this to your dress to resemble the one-sided revers.

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Just frilling sewn on a plain frock,



FORCED TO DEFEND A THIEF

(Continued from page 12.)

should have gone to Miss Primrose. But Babs couldn't!

If Celia was the thief, she deserved to be shown up and punished. For Celia Babs had not a whit of sympathy. But she was thinking of Valerie Charmant—all that Celia's showing-up would mean to that mistress. Of her own promise to the mistress.

Still, there it was Lydia had gone now!

For some ten minutes Lydia was away. She came back just before the dormitory bell rang, a smile of triumph on her face. At once there was an eager surge towards her.

"Lydia, you saw Primmy?"

"I did."

"And you told her?"

"I told her," Lydia replied grimly. "I told her everything. And did she go up in the air? There's going to be trouble for someone. Primmy says that if the thief doesn't come forward by to-morrow she's going to put the matter into the hands of a private detective."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"And where is she now?" Babs asked.

"With the Charmer—in her study."

Babs bit her lip at that. Poor Miss Charmant! She, too, must suspect. Yet what a truly awful position she was in.

Dormitory bell rang then, and the Fourth, discussing the latest development, trailed off to bed.

As she undressed, Babs cast a look at Celia. That girl, affecting to be bored, climbed into bed without a word to any of the others and settled down to sleep.

One by one the Fourth turned in. Dulcia Fairbrother came round to put lights out. The Fourth settled down. Through the leaded windows the pale moonbeams slanted, staining the floor with yellow squares.

One by one the Form dropped off to sleep, but Babs lay awake, thinking—thinking of Celia, of Valerie, of her promise, and her duty, and wishing from the bottom of her heart that she could do something to help the despairing Form-mistress out of her troubles.

While in her own room Miss Charmant, her heart in despair, listened to the proclamation of Miss Primrose!

It was ten o'clock when the headmistress left Miss Charmant's room.

She went back to her own, an angry flush mantling her cheeks, a rather worried gleam in her eyes. From Miss Primrose's point of view, that interview had been unsatisfactory, to say the least of it.

Not usually was Miss Primrose a suspicious person. But she reminded herself several times during that interview that what she knew of Miss Matthews' successor was very scanty indeed.

True, Miss Charmant had come to Cliff House with the highest of references. Her personality was pleasant, and Miss Primrose liked her. Yet she could not help feeling some qualms. She could not help but remember that the series of disturbances which were disorganising the school had all happened within the short space of time that Miss Charmant had been at Cliff House.

Miss Primrose always tried to be fair. She told herself that she was, perhaps, being influenced in her opinion by the anonymous warning which she had received that afternoon.

Nevertheless, she told herself that Miss Charmant had been very lax in the matter of the thefts. She remembered

the new mistress as she had seen her earlier in her study—nervous, guilty, uneasy.

She remembered her as she had seen her outside the door of Study No. 7, somewhere about the time when the theft from that study had been committed. What was Miss Charmant doing there at that time of day? The headmistress remembered now that she had made no excuse, had given no reason for her invasion of Study No. 7 while its occupants had been absent.

And it was remarkable, too, to say the least of it, that it was Miss Charmant who had advised Clara Trevlyn to place that money in the bureau of her desk. Miss Charmant certainly knew, before entering the study, where to find that money!

Vainly Miss Primrose tried to tell herself that she was becoming unduly suspicious. Vainly she tried to tell herself that all the evidence was purely circumstantial.

Miss Primrose sighed wearily, heavily. It was all nonsense. All a dreadfully unhappy business, she assured herself.

Nevertheless, suspicion persisted!

from the task she had set her hand to, but there must be no turning back now.

That last interview with Miss Primrose, the attitude of suspicion which the headmistress had tried hard to overcome, but which had shone through her words and had been reflected in her bearing, had frightened Valerie Charmant. Not for herself. But for Celia.

Celia—what mischief that girl had caused!

Were there any room for bitterness in the heart of Valerie Charmant, she would have had good cause for hating her almost unknown sister at that moment.

Had Valerie Charmant listened to the voice of temptation within her, she would have got up there and then and gone to Miss Primrose with those missing articles and told her frankly what she knew.

But she could not do that. First because Celia was her sister. Secondly because, in spite of all the heart-burnings the little wretch had caused her, she was sorry for her. Thirdly—and strongest reason of all—because of her promise to those very dear parents of hers, Mr. and Mrs. Charmant.

No, whatever happened she could not let them down. She had promised to look after Celia. She had promised, realising that she would have an uphill task, that Celia was not as other girls were. She would keep that promise!

And if Celia would not make good her own mischief, then it was up to her!

That was how Valerie Charmant saw the path of duty. It was her duty, as Celia's sister. But it warred bitterly with her sense of duty as a mistress of Cliff House. She, aiding and abetting a thief! A thief! Was Celia a thief or had she taken those articles purely out of a spirit of malicious mischief?

Valerie preferred to think the latter. After all, there was no reason why Celia should steal other girls' property. She was well cared for. She was allowed pocket-money. No, these thefts, as the

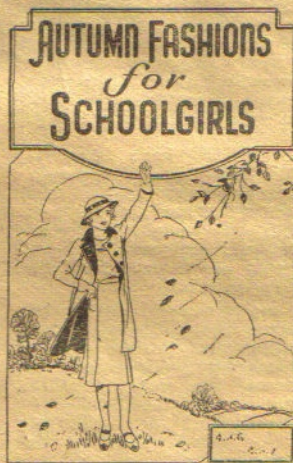


The Secret is Out!

HALF-PAST ten! The light still gleamed in the study of Valerie Charmant, on the mistress herself seated at her desk. The door was locked, the blinds drawn, and in the privacy of her study the mistress was examining certain articles that lay in front of her on the desk.

In front of her was the list which Barbara Redfern had procured.

There was a look of gravity, of sadness on the mistress' face. She shrunk



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