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The Schoolgirl

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Every
Saturday
INCORPORATING
"SCHOOLDAYS"



**"WE DEMAND
BARBARA REDFERN'S
EXPULSION!"**

A dramatic incident from this week's
exciting long complete Cliff House
School story.

In this Vivid, Long, Complete Cliff House School Story You Will Read What Happens When—

BARBARA REDFERN has been blamed for the extraordinary strike which has occurred among the Cliff House staff. But Babs suspects—with good reason—that it is Gail Gregory who is behind it all. And so the Form Captain decides that the only way to end the strike is to bowl out Gail. Accordingly, Babs gets busy . . .

The Ultimatum

"IT'S rubbish!"
 "It's not fair!"
 "We won't have the dance cancelled!"
 "Hear, hear!"
 Argument in the Fourth Form Common-room at Cliff House School was growing hot.

"But—" And Mabel Lynn, her golden hair awry and her face the picture of distress, waved her arms frantically, as she stood on a chair. "Oh, my hat! Will all of you listen to me!" She tried to make her voice heard above the din. "I thought you'd made me chairwoman of this meeting!"
 "Yes, rather, we did, you know!" Bessie Bunter blinked round. "Not, of course, that I wouldn't make a better," she added fatuously. "But give Mabs a hearing, girls."

"Yes, let her speak!" cried Tomboy Clara Trevlyn boisterously.

"Gee-whiz! Easy with the draught, old Spartan!" Jemima Carstairs gasped. "When you whisper like that you nearly blow my eyeglass out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Go on, Mabs!"

Mabs gathered energy and breath. "The situation," she announced seriously, "is this. A few days ago Miss Primrose gave us permission to organise a concert and dance to be held in the theatre in aid of the local hospital."

"Hear, hear!"
 "From the moment," Mabs went on, "we settled down to rehearsals things began to happen between the Form and the servants. The servants, for some reason, imagined that we of the Fourth had got our knives into them—"

"Shame!"
 "And so," went on Mabs, her lips compressing, "just as we were getting into full swing the servants went on strike against the Form."

"For no reason—?"
 "They kept it up," Mabs went on. "They're on strike now. They say that we've tried to get them into scrapes; they say that we're responsible for the cook resigning and for Amy Forrest, one of the maids, getting notice to leave."

"And it's not true!" Lucy Morgan piped excitedly.

"It's not true," Mabs repeated. "But, all the same, the maids think it is. My own idea—or, rather, it is an idea that was suggested to me by Babe—is that someone is deliberately making this



GAIL MEETS HER MATCH

By
HILDA RICHARDS

trouble downstairs, just in order to mess up the dance."

She saw she had the attention of the whole room now and went on quietly, but emphatically.

"It's strange, isn't it, that we've never had trouble with the servants before? And it's stranger still that this trouble all started since the dance was arranged."

There was a pause. Girls glanced at each other. But more particularly they glanced at one girl who stood rather aloof from the gathering in one corner—a girl whose pretty face was framed in a mass of chestnut curls, and who was looking rather thoughtful and a little worried. That girl was Barbara Redfern, captain of the Fourth.

And perhaps in that pause they were

recalling all the disagreeable events that had led up to the strike. The deliberate messing-up of the Fourth Form studies after the maids were supposed to have cleaned them; the resignation of Mrs. Murphy, the cook, who had been accused of serving up uncleanable stew.

The stew, it had subsequently transpired, had been tampered with; and, since Barbara Redfern had been alone in the kitchen that same morning, she had been accused.

Then there was the case of Piper's

keys, which had vanished from his lodge, to turn up again in the pocket of Barbara's coat in the cloak-room. Only when the handkerchief of Amy Forrest, one of the maids, was found beneath the coat, had the situation assumed a different complexion.

Amy then had been accused. Amy, in her bitterness and indignation, had said things which had compelled Miss Primrose to give her notice, and thus had the strike been precipitated.

But that, unfortunately, was not all. By this time there was a bitter war between the servants and the Fourth Form. The whole of the Fourth were regarded by the servants as enemies. And Babs, since she had unwittingly played such a leading part in these events, was named as the chief villainess of the piece.

But Babs had ideas about the mischief going on. She attributed it all to the secret machinations of Gail Greaves Gregory, the girl from India, who, incidentally, had sworn vengeance upon the Fourth Form when she had left the school in a huff nearly a fortnight ago.

To her own satisfaction, at least, Babs had proved that Gail Greaves Gregory was hiding in the school.

She had seen the hand of Gail Greaves Gregory in this strike, and had come to the conclusion that Gail was at the root and bottom of all the trouble.

So, in order to find out the traitress in the servants' camp, Babs had hidden in the servants' dormitory last night.

But, alas! the wily Gail had once again been too clever for her. Babs had not only been discovered, but had been accused of spoiling her and redemption the clothes belonging to the servants, which had been piled in the centre of the floor and soaked with black ink.

And so the feud had flamed out afresh.

Babs moved now; she came forward. "Mabs, may I say a word?" she asked.

"Why, of course!" "You all know," Babs said, "what has happened. You all know what I suspect—that Gail Greaves Gregory is in league with the servants; that she, hiding in the school, is behind all this. It's true that Gail is supposed to be in London, and it's true that Miss Primrose receives letters and telephone messages from her in London."

She paused, her eyes narrowing. "All the same, I know beyond doubt that Gail is hiding in the school, and it's up to every one of us to keep our eyes open. Not until Gail is found and bowled out will this agitation cease. Thanks, Mabs. That's all."

There was a mutter at that. Some of the girls glanced wonderingly at Babs, some sympathetically.

Not one of them there had any blame for the leader of the Fourth, though it was true that as a result of the servants' dormitory episode Babs was now in disgrace with the headmistress.

"And in the meantime," she said, "we've got to see Miss Primrose. Primmy says that unless the strike is broken we can't hold the dance. Because the dance is a Fourth Form idea, the servants refuse to work; and that, of course, is an impossible state of affairs when we've got something like 200 guests to entertain."

"Girls," Mabs went on earnestly, "I've got an idea. It's just a forlorn hope; but all the servants can't be traitors, and, after all, the dance affects the whole school."

"I'm going to Primmy; I'm going to ask her to make one last appeal to the servants—not in the name of the Fourth, but in the name of the charities which

the dance is aimed to benefit. Who'll come with me?"

Instantly a forest of hands shot up. Since the whole of the Form was concerned in this project, and the whole of the Form was desperately anxious to see it a success, everybody was keen to remove the threat which now overshadowed it.

Mabs especially was anxious, for it had been Mabs' idea in the first place. Mabs who had organised and arranged it—and arranged it so cleverly that not one girl in the Fourth was excluded.

"Well, we can't all go," she said. "Six will be enough. Babs—"

Babs shook her head. "I'd like to come, frightfully," she said; "but it wouldn't serve any purpose, Mabs. Primmy's not very pleased with me, remember."

"Poor old Babs!" Marjorie Hazeldene gently sympathised.

"Well, you, Clara?" "I'm on," Tomboy Clara Trevlyn said promptly.

"And you, Marjorie?" "Please!"

"And you, Jimmy?" "What-ho!"

Jemima Carstairs beamed. "Anything to give the old cause a leg-up."

And you, Jean, and—and Joan Charnant," Mabs said. "All agreed!"

"All serene!" Leila Carroll enthused. "But I sure guess you ought to have a U.S.A. representative in the deputation."

But Leila, for once, was not heard. Six was enough, Mabs affirmed. Sympathetic as Miss Primrose might be, she would hardly welcome a crowd of juniors in her study.

So the six were selected. In a group they gathered at the door; with many fervent wishes for "good luck," left the room. Babs went with them as far as the end of the passage. Then she stopped.

"I'll slip down to the tuckshop," she said to Mabs. "We're short of tea, Mabs. Expect I'll be back before you, to learn the news. All the best, old thing!"

Mabs smiled anxiously. "We need it," she replied.

At the head of the deputation she turned into the corridor that led to Miss Primrose's quarters.

Babs, with a sigh, tripped off down the stairs.

As she did so, one of the maids came up, carrying a tray—it was the new maid, Ida Walsh, her peroxidised hair looking a little forlorn and dishevelled, with her mad-up face suffering from rather more powder than usual. She didn't look at Babs as she passed. Hastily she turned her head and walked on.

Babs flushed angrily. Cut—cut by a maid!

She paused a moment, feeling tempted to speak to Ida. But then she shrugged. Oh, what was the good? Ida's attitude was just expressive of the hostile contempt in which the rest of the staff held her.

But, all the same, her heart knew a little pang, for heretofore she had looked upon Ida as being one of the most friendly disposed of the maids.

Oh, what fools they were! she thought bitterly. Why couldn't they see what she saw? That they were just acting as the unsuspecting dupes in the game of a girl who, so far from having their interests at heart, would have laughingly seen them all dismissed tomorrow, to get her own spiteful way.

Gail Greaves Gregory! Where was she? Where hiding?

Babs set her teeth. She meant to find that out. She would find that out!

Rather forlornly she trailed on. She reached the tuckshop, went in and purchased her tea.

As she stepped into the drive once more, a rather imposing-looking car drew up outside the closed gates. A lady in a rich mink coat, carrying a muff of the same material, stepped out, peering through the bars. She beckoned as she saw Babs.

"Please," she pleaded in a musical voice, "will you ask the porter to come and open the gates? I want to come in!"

"Why, of course!" Babs cried.

And immediately she moved off, wondering vaguely who this expensively dressed stranger was. Certainly, she had never seen her before. What a sweet-faced woman, Babs thought, and how tanned, just as if, indeed, she had just returned from some holiday abroad! One of the girls' parent or relative, of course.

Piper, when she rang the lodge bell, came out rubbing his eyes sleepily.

"Please—" The woman smiled again. Almost unconsciously Babs found herself smiling in response. "I have come to see my niece, Gail Greaves Gregory."

Babs jumped. Gail's aunt!

"Oh, my hat!" she gulped.

"Miss Gail Gregory has left!" Piper said sourly.

"I beg your pardon?"

"She went off!" Piper said. "Hoff in a huff! Packed her bags and fair flounced out of the school, she did, without so much as kiss your hand! That was a fortnight come Thursday," Piper added.

"And a fair young terror she was, too, if you ask me! But if you're her aunt, you'd better come in and see Miss Primrose. Miss Primrose," he added aggressively, "is the headmistress, and which I wouldn't 'ave 'er job for fifty pounds a week. Though me own—with sour reminiscence—"is bad enough, with all the girls playing the tricks they does, and the servants on strike and all!"

The lady shook her head. She stared in bewilderment at Piper, as that worthy, very surlily, threw open the gates.

Then she turned to the chauffeur, dressed in a neat, green uniform. Babs noticed, with a start of surprise, that he was a coloured man.

"Ras, take the car to the garage in the village," she ordered. "I'll phone there when I want you. Thank you, porter!"—as Piper flung open the gates.

"And now—will you take me to Miss Primrose?" "Oh, let me!" Babs eagerly volunteered.

"Thank you, my dear. That is very kind of you. Never mind then, porter. You are one of the girls at this school!" she added, regarding her with sudden interest.

"Yes," Babs stammered.

Very long and earnestly the lady stared at Barbara, and the Form captain, colouring under her scrutiny, found herself wondering again. "My dear," she broke out, and looked so surprisingly overwhelmed at once, that Babs had an amazed impression that she was going to take her into her arms and kiss her. "What is your name?" she asked, in a suddenly trembling voice.

Babs told her.

"A nice name—a pretty name, yes!" She shook her head. "How strongly you remind me of—of someone!" she

said gently. "My little daughter, who—who was killed last year in an earthquake!"

The soft lips trembled for a moment. Then bravely she smiled.

"My name," she said, "is Maudsley. Mrs. Graham Maudsley. Do you, by any chance, know my niece, Gail Greaves Gregory?"

Babs uncomfortably replied that she did, reflecting fiercely at the same time that a girl like Gail did not deserve to have such a nice aunt as this.

"It is many years since I last saw her." The lady shook her head. "But you—" She stared at Babs as if wishful to impress her image upon her mind. "My dear," she cried softly, and put out her gloved hand, touching Babs on the shoulder, "do forgive me for stressing the point! How marvelously like my Alice you are!"

Babs did not know what to say, but she thought: How sweet this woman was! What a contrast to the stormy, spiteful-natured, vindictive girl who was her niece!

There were few people whom Babs fell completely in love with at the first meeting. But Mrs. Graham Maudsley, from that moment, was one of the number.

"But then," she went on, "you don't want to hear about my troubles—Barbara." She pronounced the name almost shyly, and with such soft music in her voice that Babs was entranced. "I am sorry," she added, "to hear this about Gail. I wrote to her before I left India, marking the letter 'urgent.' I have visited my brother, Sir Willis Gregory, at Gregory Grange. He, too, seems to be away."

How charming, how sweetly pretty she was! Babs felt herself more and more enslaved every moment.

Into the school she took her, but as Miss Primrose was at that moment in the servants' quarters with the deputation which Mabs had organised, she suggested that Mrs. Maudsley might like a cup of tea, and escorted her to Study No. 4.

Bessie Bunter was there, stooping before the fire. She turned a crimson face as the two came in.

"Oh, Babs, I sus-say!" And then she blinked. "Oh crumbs! I d-didn't know your aunt had come to Cliff House."

"But this is not my aunt, Bessie!" Babs laughed. "This is Gail Greaves Gregory's aunt."

"Eh? That cat? I mum-mean—Oh dud-dear!" And Bessie stood crimsoning. "But she's so awfully like you, Babs! Why, she might be your mother!"

Babs laughed. But now she noticed it, there was a resemblance between herself and this lady. Hardly to be wondered at, however, considering that her dead daughter had been so like Babs.

In some confusion, Bessie turned to the fire again, where she was making toast.

Mrs. Maudsley, with a smile, took off her coat and muff, and laid them on a chair while Babs put the kettle on. For a time there was silence in the study, while the visitor followed Babs about with her eyes.

Then suddenly she spoke:

"Barbara!"

"Yes, Mrs. Maudsley?"

"I wish you would tell me about Gail. It appears—with a frown—that she is not popular. I haven't seen the girl for many years. And I promised her father before I left that I would look her up. She was always

rather wilful, rather wayward. I had hoped she would grow out of it. Why did she leave Cliff House?"

"Well—" Babs said uncomfortably, and bit her lip.

Oh bother, she couldn't answer that question! But Bessie, who was hopelessly tactless, turned round.

"Because she was a s-silly cat!" she blurted out, failing to see the warning glances which Babs directed at her. "She was in the Upper Fifth, you know, and she was such a dunce that Primmy—I m-mean, Miss Primrose—put her into the Fourth. And then Gail started being spiteful, you know. And—and—I sus-say, Babs, I wish you

turned to Babs, however. "May I come back, Barbara?"

"Oh, please do!" Babs said, flushing. She went out leaving Babs staring at the door.

What an adorable lady! What bad luck for her to have such a scapegrace for a niece as Gail Greaves Gregory!

Then suddenly the door came open and Mabs entered.

"Mabs!" Babs cried, remembering the deputation. "How did you get on?"

Mabs dejectedly shook her head. Her whole attitude gave the answer to that question.

"No luck?" Babs asked.



GAIL'S aunt held out a beautiful pearl necklace. "Barbara, would you like this?" she asked quietly. Babs was overcome with confusion. "Oh, it's lovely!" she breathed—little guessing the anxiety that necklace was so soon to cause her!

wouldn't make faces at me. I know you kik-cats are jealous of my memory—"

"Be quiet!" Babs hissed. "But it's true!" Bessie bleated indignantly.

"Thank you!" Mrs. Maudsley smiled. It was rather a sad, thoughtful, reflective smile. "Is this my tea, Barbara? Thank you so much!"

Not again did she refer to Gail. But she talked animatedly as she sipped her tea, admiring the articles of furniture in the study. She talked a lot about her brother, Sir Willis Gregory, who was one of the school governors, and about Miss Primrose, whom she had met on a previous visit to England five years ago.

Then came a knock at the door. Stella Stone, the popular captain of the school, came in.

"Mrs. Maudsley?" she asked. "Oh, here you are! Miss Primrose is disengaged now. Will you come along and see her?"

"Oh, thank you!" Mrs. Maudsley

"No!"

"Oh, how rotten! But what did the servants say?"

"They said," Mabs replied heavily, "that they were willing to call the strike off—on one condition—and one condition only."

"And—and that?" Babs asked.

For a moment Mabs did not reply. Then she looked at her best of chums.

"That—that you leave Cliff House," she replied.



What Can It Mean?

BABS winced. Bessie Bunter glowered wrathfully.

"Oh, I sus-say, the beastly things! And what did Primmy say, Mabs?"

Mabs shrugged.

"What do you think? You don't

think Primmy would have her orders dictated to her by the servants, do you—on strike or not on strike? She told them that that was her business."

"And—and Babs isn't going?" Bessie asked anxiously.

"Of course not, goose!"
"Well, that's jolly good!" the fat girl exclaimed relievedly. "Those servants are getting too cheeky, you know. I've a good mind to go and give them a talking-to! I'll j-jolly well break the strike!"

Mabs smiled faintly. Babs, by the fireplace, shook her head. How the servants, who had once so admired and respected her, must hate her now! They demanded that she should be virtually expelled from the school. Truly, Gill Gregory was doing her work well.

"And—and Primmy said," Mabs said unhappily, "that if there's no break in the strike in the next twenty-four hours, we'll just have to cancel the dance!"

"She took a worried turn up and down the study."

"She says that we'll have to cancel the bills and the notices and call in the tickets. Oh, it's beastly!" she flashed out. "Beastly! Babs, can't we do anything?"

But what could they do? Babs' face was grim. Only one thing—that was to discover the secret author of all this mischief—to bowl her out, and thus show the servants what fools they had been.

But it was difficult to bowl out someone who never gave a clue as to her hiding-place, who worked so secretly that, except for themselves, no one even suspected her existence in the school.

Again Babs was racking her brains. Mabs rather forlornly sat down to tea. Little by little details of the interview came out.

How Miss Primrose had listened sympathetically to the deputation; how she had called the servants together, and had appealed to them, in the name of the charities which would benefit from the dance, to give up the strike.

It came as a faint surprise to Babs to learn that Ida Walsh had apparently been elected to be the spokesman of the strikers' cause—Ida, the newest servant at Cliff House.

Not all the servants had turned an un sympathetic ear to that appeal, but the spirit was still adamant. If Miss Primrose would recall Mrs. Murphy, and withdraw the notice under which Amy Forrest was labouring, and send Babs away, they would all return back to-morrow—not until!

"So I," Babs summed up bitterly, "am the stumbling-block. If I wasn't in the school, the dance would take place!"

Mabs bit her lip.
"Oh, don't talk about it, old thing!"
"But I want to talk about it!" Babs persevered. "Think I can't see it? This is Gail's latest scheme. Gail has always hated me. I believe she hated me more than anyone else. She'd like to see me turned out of the school. Having done her best to smash up the dance, that's what she's working for now!"

"It was she who messed up the servants' clothes in the dormitory last night; but, like everything else, she very cleverly managed to put the blame on me! But she shan't succeed!" she burst out fiercely. "She shan't! Sooner or later—"

"She stopped as a knock came at the door

Mrs. Maudsley, her face rather startled, stepped in.

She looked quickly at the captain of the Form.

"I'm sorry, Barbara; I didn't mean to listen. But I heard that. Were you talking about Gail?"

Babs bit her lip. She mumbled something.

"I think I understand." Mrs. Maudsley shook her head. "I have been talking to Miss Primrose, Barbara. I have also been talking to your Form-mistress, Miss Charmant—and Stella Stone."

The lips quivered a little. "I—I am almost glad now that Gail has gone away. After what I have heard, I have not the slightest wish to see her!"

There was silence.
"Meantime—the smile flashed out again—it may interest you to hear, Barbara, that I am remaining at the school for a few days. My brother—Sir Willis, with whom I intended to stay—is not likely to return, Miss Primrose tells me, for a fortnight; so she has very generously offered me the hospitality of the school until he comes back. I hope we shall see a great deal more of each other."

"Oh, Mrs. Maudsley, I hope so, too!" Babs cried.

"Incidentally"—Mrs. Maudsley dimpled—"I shall be present for this dance which Mabel has organised. How very clever that is of you, my dear!"

She picked up her bag, her eyes still on Babs—indeed, from the moment she had entered the room they had never left the Fourth Form captain's face.

"Barbara!"
"Y-yes, Mrs. Maudsley?"

"I—I wonder if—if you would care for—for this—just as a keepsake, my dear? From all I have heard, you have suffered rather at Gail's hands. And—and—well, I feel that I would like to make some little restitution. Besides, I should like you to have something to remember me by, as I shall always—always remember you."

And then, to Babs' astonished delight, she withdrew a beautiful rope of pearls, dangling them in the air.

"Barbara, would you like this?" Babs was overcome with confusion.

"Oh, but Mrs. Maudsley, I—I daren't take it—not that! Why, it must be worth hundreds of pounds!"

Mrs. Maudsley laughed amusedly.
"Not really, Barbara. They are not real pearls, though they are such skillful imitations that sometimes I have a job to tell my own necklace apart from them. I was wearing this necklace—or, rather, the original—when I last saw my niece Gail. She was only a child at the time, of course, but she admired them so much that I determined to present her with a necklace just like it when next I saw her. That is why I've brought this to England with me. How ever"—her lips compressed a little—

"Gail has shown herself very definitely as being unworthy of any gift. Barbara—"

She came forward. Babs drew a deep breath. Her eyes shining, she stared at the gleaming necklace. Oh, it was beautiful—beautiful!

For a moment she could hardly believe that it was imitation; it looked so real. How well it would go with her new blue evening frock! How beautifully it would match the oyster satin she wore sometimes in the afternoons! And it was hers—hers!

"Oh, I sus-say!" Bessie said enthusiastically.

"But—but—" Babs breathed.

"Please!" Mrs. Maudsley said. There was a note almost of pleading in her

voice; very soft, very tender were her eyes as she regarded Babs again.

"Why, thank you ever so much!" And Babs, with a dazed look, took the lovely necklace, holding it in her hand.

"Goodness! I don't know what to say."

"Then," Mrs. Maudsley said, with a rippling laugh, "why say anything, Barbara? It makes me happy to give it to you. I should always like you to remember me, Barbara, when you wear it. And—"

She stopped, as a knock came at the door, and the door opening, revealed the form of Ida Walsh.

"Mrs. Maudsley?" she asked.
"Yes."

"Miss Primrose—" And then Ida, starting, saw the necklace in Barbara's hand. She gave a start. For a moment a change came over her powdered face; the eyes behind the glasses seemed to narrow and to shoot two darting points of light.

Quickly, questioningly, her gaze flashed from the necklace in Barbara's hand to Mrs. Maudsley's face, and it seemed in that swift scrutiny that Ida knew exactly what had happened.

Only for a moment, however, did that look betray itself on her features; the next moment she was smiling.

"Miss Primrose says that the guest-room is ready, ma'am," she said.

"Thank you," Mrs. Maudsley nodded. "I will go there later. Barbara, you will show me the way, won't you?"

"Oh, I'd love to!" Babs cried rapturously.

Ida lingered.
"Miss Primrose said that I was to take you, ma'am," she put in.

"Never mind, my dear."

Ida, however, seemed disposed to linger. Her eyes, greedy behind the glasses that she wore, could hardly wrench themselves from the necklace in Babs' hand.

"You—you're sure you wouldn't like me—"

"It is very considerate of you, but no," Mrs. Maudsley firmly said. "Please go now."

Ida withdrew; she withdrew slowly, however, backing towards the door as if still half-hypnotised.

Without looking, she groped for the handle, turned rather too sharply, and collided with the ledge. An exclamation jumped to her lips, as quickly she put a hand to her face, knocking her spectacles off at the same moment.

"Oh!"

"It—it's nothing!" And Ida, with one hand stretched over her face, turned quickly.

"You have hurt yourself?"

"No, I haven't!" Ida cried. "No, please don't make a fuss!" And, still with her hand over her face, she bolted hurriedly through the doorway, leaving Babs staring in amazement.

"Well, my hat! Ida!"

But Ida's feet could be heard pelting down the passage.

Babs picked up the glasses which, unheeded, had fallen to the floor.

"Funny kid!" she said. "But, I say, she's left her glasses behind." She stooped, picking them up, and then hurriedly she rushed towards the door.

"Ida!" she called.

But Ida had disappeared. Then she shrugged. Babs frowned, then she shrugged.

Well, it wasn't her place to go rushing after Ida, she told herself, though, from all she had heard, Ida was as blind as a bat without her glasses. No doubt as soon as she discovered their loss she would return.

She put them on the table while she went to the bureau to get the little ivory box which had been Mabs' last

birthday present to her, and in which she kept odds and ends she valued.

With a little sigh she watched the light rippling through the pearls as she dropped them into the box.

"They're lovely!" she breathed. Mrs. Maudsley smiled. She had seated herself; was idly toying with the glasses which Ida had left behind.

She watched Babs, as carefully she closed the box, locked it with a tiny key, and put the key back into her pocket; then, carefully carrying the box to the bureau, Babs locked it in there again.

"What a charming girl she was! Mrs. Maudsley was thinking. How graceful! How pretty! How—and she sighed—how like that beloved daughter of hers who had met with such a ghastly fate last year!

Almost unwittingly she found herself playing with the glasses. In the way people will when their minds are occupied with other things, she put them on, blinking across at Babs; then, suddenly becoming aware that she was wearing them, she laughed.

"Why, goodness! Look what I've done! Barbara, how do you like me in glasses?"

Babs smiled. "They suit you," she said. "But don't keep them on too long, Mrs. Maudsley, or we'll have you going crossed-eyed, or something. Ida's sight is awfully weak, and the glasses are supposed to be exceptionally strong."

"What, these?"

"Yes." "But that's absurd! They're not strong at all," Mrs. Maudsley said. She lifted them, put them on her nose again, then lifted them again; then she took them off, scrutinising them carefully; "Why, they're not even optical glass!" she cried.

Babs looked at her in surprise. "I happen to know something about spectacles," Mrs. Maudsley went on. "My husband before he died was an optician. All spectacles are made of special glass, whatever eyes they are fitted for. But this isn't special glass; it's just ordinary plain glass. Try them."

And Babs, as she put them on, blinked. For what Mrs. Maudsley said was true. It was no more difficult to see through those lenses than it was to look through the window pane of Study No. 4.

Babs frowned. If Ida's eyes were as bad as she said they were, why did she wear spectacles which could be of no benefit to her?

Why, indeed, wear spectacles at all? Could it be—

And Babs tingled at the sudden startling thought that came, unbidden, into her mind.



"I SUS-SAY, what's that?" Bessie exclaimed, pointing to something caught in the flap of the bureau. Babs recognised it at once as a maid's cap. Strange that it should be there—and the pearls gone from their case!

A pair of glittering dark eyes looked into the glass, showing a powdered face that was flushed and fiery, and red lips that were wreathed back in a sneer.

Certainly in that moment she was a strangely changed girl, and imagining her with dark hair instead of the peroxidised blonde, there was a startling resemblance in her features to that other girl who had so stormily stamped out of the school nearly a fortnight ago, and who, with threats on her lips, had promised the Fourth her revenge.

But perhaps not strange. For Ida Walsh and Gail Greeves Gregory were one and the same. Gail Greeves Gregory, unsuspected as such, was Ida Walsh.

Bitter now her expression as she gazed into the mirror. For the first time Gail was feeling displeased with herself. So far it had all been such maliciously enjoyable fun to her—this masquerade she was playing at Cliff House.

So far her schemes had gone just as smoothly as clockwork. Her enemy, Janet Jordan, was still in hospital. The servants, artfully provoked, were on strike. The Fourth Form, up in arms; their dance in the act of being cancelled. She had got Barbara Redfern exactly where she wanted her.

And so far, so Ida told herself, nobody suspected her!

All such fun it had been—yes. But not now. The fly in Gail's ointment of self-content was the sudden and unexpected arrival of her aunt—Aunt Miriam Maudsley—from India.

Always Gail had rather looked up to Aunt Miriam, and always had Gail carried in her mind the promise Aunt Miriam had given her on the last occasion they had met.

That promise—that she would have a copy made of the pearls Gail had then

so much admired, and would make her—Gail—a present of them.

Gail scowled. Well, apparently Aunt Miriam had remembered that promise. Here she was. Here, with her, was the necklace she had promised—brought all that distance for her. But Gail hadn't got it—would, it seemed now, never, never have it. Barbara Redfern, that hated enemy whom she had sworn to crush, had it instead of her.

"But it's not hers," Gail gritted. "It was never meant and never made for her. It's mine!"

Here! Yes, so Gail told herself. Had she been at Cliff House in her own personality Aunt Miriam would no more have thought of giving that necklace to Barbara Redfern than she would have thought of giving it to Bessie Bunter.

The very fact that she had created a position which meant she could not declare herself, filled Gail with raging fury.

But she blamed, not herself, but Barbara Redfern for that. Always Barbara Redfern had been the thorn in her side—she and her cronies in the Fourth Form.

Always she had been her most bitter, most vindictively regarded enemy. Wasn't it like Babs to step in and take what was hers?

"But she shan't keep it!" Gail vowed. "She shan't! The necklace belongs to me! It was made for me, brought to England for me! I'll take it. I'll have it if I have to steal it. That is"—reflecting—"if it is stealing to take what is yours by right. And then—then—"

Her eyes snapped.

Well, what then? What? Gail pondered the question. The coming of Aunt Miriam had rather upset her plans. In any case she would be glad to clear out of Cliff House now. But not before, she told herself viciously,



The Secret Schemer

AND strangely enough for a girl who suffered with her eyes as Ida Walsh was supposed to suffer with hers, the owner of those glasses was still unconscious of their loss.

For Ida Walsh, as she called herself, was too hurt, too blindly furious at that moment to be conscious of anything, save what she had seen in Study No. 4.

In the servants' dormitory she sat alone. She sat before her looking-glass, scowling savagely at the red mark above her nose, which was the legacy left by her collision with the door of Study No. 4.

she had settled her score with Barbara Redfern.

"I'll see her thrown out," she told herself. "Once that happens, then I can just disappear. Nobody will suspect. One day Ida Walsh of the blonde hair, the next—they presto—Gail Greaves Gregory turns up at the school to greet her dear aunt. And then—what times!" She chuckled softly to herself. "But first," she vowed, "that necklace. I must get it!"

She squared her shoulders. There was a rather nasty glint in her dark eyes. So far she had had things all her own way. She meant to go on having them her own way. No need now for her to hide her light beneath a bushel. She had made the Fourth feel sorry for itself, and it should go on feeling sorry for itself.

The dance, to all intents and purposes, was a wash-out. Right, so much for the Fourth! Once she had seen Barbara Redfern disgraced, she could count her mission fulfilled.

Carefully she made-up her face. Then suddenly she discovered the loss of her glasses.

Now—
Oh, great goodness, she must have left them in Study No. 4!

Gail bit her lip.
Oh, bother! That was a bit of carelessness, if you like. Still, it was hardly likely that those fools in Study No. 4 would suspect anything—and no doubt by this time they had found them and picked them up.

Rising, she went along the Fourth Form corridor.
"Come in!" Babs' voice sang out, when she reached the door.

Ida went in. She stood for a moment, her eyes quickly going towards the bureau from which Babs, in that moment, was in the act of turning.

She did not look at Mrs. Maudsley, seated by the table, but she blinked just a little to give the impression that she was missing her glasses.

She said:
"I—I left my glasses in here, I think."
"Yes, Ida, here they are," and Babs held them out towards her, staring, Ida thought, rather too curiously into her face. "You did not hurt yourself, Ida?"

"No," Ida said sharply.
"Why did you run away like that?"
"Nothing," Ida said, in a voice that did not invite further conversation; and with the glasses in her hand, she quitted the study.



Babs Does Her Best

"MABEL LYNN! Mabel Lynn!"
Diana Royston-Clarke, her eyes shining, came hurrying down the Fourth Form corridor, waving a letter.

Mabs, on the point of turning into the Common-room, looked round.

"I've a letter here from my father," Diana said gleefully. "The Mayor of Lantham, you know. He's sold the twenty tickets for the dance I sent him, and wants to know if you can let him have another twenty. And Margot," Diana continued, with a beaming smile—Margot Lantham was her friend—"says that her mother has got rid of a dozen, and wants another dozen."

"And yes," Lucv Morgan—rushing from the other side of the passage at that moment—shrilled, "I have an order from Friardale for six more tickets!"

"And Friardale School want another ten," Joan Sheldon-Charman put in. Mabs gulped. Her face flushed, her eyes shone. Oh, my goodness! What a clamour all at once—this, and already two hundred tickets had been disposed of. What a success the dance was going to be!

Mabs thrilled. Her idea, her dance! Everybody keen and keyed up; everybody enthusiastic. A few more days—
Then—

Like a cloud suddenly drifting across the face of a serene sun, the realisation came to her. The dance was in danger! It might never take place! The servants were on strike!

She shook her head.
"I'm awfully sorry—"
"But you must have the tickets!"

Diana cried:
"Yes, rather!"
"But—the servants—"
"Oh, bother the servants; they'll come round!"

"But supposing they don't?"
"They will," Diana said. "We'll jolly well make them, somehow. Anyway, let's get the tickets out while there's still time. I can't disappoint my pater now. I've promised to send them off!"

Again that stab came at Mabs' heart, seeming suddenly to weight it with lead. Oh, how—how could she let them have the tickets—how, when everything was so dreadfully, so desperately uncertain?

"If the strike," Miss Primrose had declared, "is still in being by this time to-morrow night, we shall have to cancel the dance, much as I hate the idea!"

How, then, while this shadow of uncertainty overhung the project, could she let more tickets go, thus storing up more and keener disappointments—more anger?

"Please," she pleaded, "I—I can't give you the tickets at once. Just wait—please wait until to-morrow morning!"

Not very enthusiastic did the disappointed applicants look at that. And yet, when Mabs explained, they had to see her point of view. A lot of use to sell tickets, and then to have to recall them—enough, she emphasised, there weren't enough out already!

With that they had to be content, though the murmurings were bitter, and resentment against the servants who had brought about such a crisis flamed out afresh.

Mabs, however, changing her mind about going into the Common-room, turned on her heel and went back into Study No. 4.

Babs was there alone, a look of unusual thoughtfulness upon her face. She was seated by the fire.

"Oh, Babs!" Mabs cried. "Babs, we've got to do something! It will kill the Fourth if the dance doesn't come off. Everywhere they're rehearsing like mad. Everybody's just too splendid. And the tickets—why, if the dance was a Covent Garden affair, with the Starways orchestra presiding, it couldn't be more popular or more successful! But I daren't! let the tickets go—not until, at least, I knew that everything is going to be all right!"

Babs glanced at her queerly.

"Mabs, sit down," she said. "I've something I want to say to you!"

"What?"
"About the dance and the servants." Babs gave a quick glance towards the door. "Mabs, I've been thinking—about Gail Greaves Gregory."

Mabs stared uneasily.
"I've got another idea. Wait a minute!" Babs spoke quickly. "We've

been thinking, remember, that Gail was hiding in the school, with some of the servants as her confederates. Well, she's not!"

Babs blinked.
"You mean that Gail isn't responsible?"

"No, I don't mean that. Gail's responsible all right. But Gail, in this case, has been cleverer than we thought. I tell you when I got the idea I fairly jumped, but the more I think about it, the more convinced I am that the idea I've got hold of is right. Gail Greaves Gregory, Mabs, isn't conspiring with the servants. She's one of the servants, and she's doing all the scheming for which the servants are getting blamed, simply to put the servants' backs up against us!"

Mabs looked startled.
"But—but how? If she was disguised as a servant, we should have recognised her."

Babs smiled grimly.
"If," she asked, "she had a powdered face, a lipstick mouth, and peroxidized hair? And if she wore glasses—"

Mabs stared.
"Why, you don't mean—"

"Ida Walsh," Babs nodded. "That's just what I do mean, Mabs. Listen now—think! Gail left here last Tuesday week. On Friday Ida Walsh turned up at the school. Remember? Ida at once became friendly with Janet Jordan. From that moment Janet began to suffer. Remember, Mabs, before she went, Gail told Janet she hadn't heard the last of her!"

Mabs' eyes opened wide.
"Well, Janet's out of it. But what happened after that? Gail set to work upon the Fourth. The servants, whom we had always been friendly with, turned suddenly hostile and went on strike. Now Ida Walsh has been made their leader, and Ida it is who is authorising them to show us no quarter!"

Mabs pouted a little.
"But I don't see," she objected. "Of course, I admit there's a coincidence in the dates. But, after all—"

"Now wait another minute," Babs said quickly. "That's not all. We know that Gail is in the school. Surely, by this time, if she had been working from outside, we should have got an inkling of it. When Ida Walsh turned up, she told Janet Jordan that she wore glasses because her eyesight was so bad that she could hardly see without them. Not so long ago we had a look at those glasses."

Dawning understanding showed in Mabs' eyes. She looked incredulously at her then.

"Then—"
"I believe," Babs stated quietly, "that Ida Walsh and Gail Greaves Gregory are the same. Ida Walsh, if you notice, has had her hair peroxidized. That would be necessary in Gail's case, because Gail's hair was dark. And did you notice her eyes when she came to ask for her glasses back? Without the glasses, they were Gail's eyes. Why does she use powder and lipstick—a kid of that age? Simply, if you ask me, to disguise her natural colouring, which is dark. Mabs, I think we're on the track at last!"

Mabs was struck speechless.
"But—oh, goodness, how are we going to prove it?"

"I've got an idea," Babs said. "It's a wild one, but I hope it will come off. Mabs, I've been telling Mrs. Maudsley about this strike. I've told her, without mentioning Gail, of course—after all, we've got to prove what we suspect—that I believe one girl is responsible for

all of it, and she's as keen as any of us now to bowl that girl out and save the dance.

"And, as it happens," Babs went on, her eyes glittering with the suppressed excitement which was upon her, "Mrs. Maudsley's maid who was expected at Cliff House to-morrow morning, can't turn up here until the day after to-morrow, because she went to have some teeth out while Mrs. Maudsley was in London, and it's proved such a shock to the poor girl's nerves that she's been ordered a day's complete rest."

"Well?" Mabs asked wonderingly. "Nobody knows about that," Babs went on, "but it gave me a holiday. To-morrow, Mabs, is a whole holiday, and I'm going to take a leaf out of Gail's own book. Mabs, listen!" And she leaned forward tensely. "I've got permission from Mrs. Maudsley, and everything's arranged. There's only one way to prove our suspicions, and that is to get among the servants themselves. I'm going to do it, and I'm going to do it by turning up here to-morrow morning as Mary James. That's the name of Mrs. Maudsley's maid."

"Oh, my hat!" Mabs gasped. "But I shall want your help," Babs said. "Now, listen!"

And Mabs did listen. Her eyes took on a new gleam, her face a new interest.

Next morning, before anyone was up, she and Babs left the school, Babs carrying a suitcase and Mabs her make-up box.

They took care to avoid the servants' quarters, sneaking out of the school not by the orthodox way, but through a gap in the hedge.

Presently, reaching Friardale Woods, they slipped into the abandoned rangers' hut which had been the scene of so many previous adventures.

"And now," Babs chuckled, "to work, Mabs!"

Mabs grinned. It was an anxious grin, however. She put her make-up on the ground and opened it. Over the neglected mantelpiece she placed a mirror, and, turning Babs' face to the light, commenced to work.

Babs' somewhat thin eyebrows were thickened until they grew bushily above her eyes. A skillful touch of chalk powder on her cheeks succeeded immediately in transforming her colouring.

Her brown curls were dragged back, and padded out with false hair to form a bun at the back of her head. A pair of tinted glasses, and—hey presto!

"Look at yourself in the mirror!" Mabs grinned.

Babs looked. She chuckled. "My hat, is that me?" "You think it'll do!" Mabs asked anxiously.

"Do?" Mabs laughed merrily. "Why, I can't even recognise myself!" she said. "Mabs, it's a work of art—a sheer work of art! Now the toggins!"

The "toggins," otherwise the clothes, were taken from the case which Babs had carried.

They consisted of a tweed suit, borrowed from Margot Lantham, and not recognisable at Cliff House because Margot had not yet found any occasion to wear it. A black maid's dress and cap and apron lay in the bottom of the bag.

The clothes were put on. Babs beamed. "Well, Miss Lynn, and here I am!" she said pertly. "Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes; you can go and break that beastly strike." Mabs laughed, "and so save the dance! But, look here, Babs,

(Continued on following page.)

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My address is: The Editor, THE SCHOOLGIRL, The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4. Write to me whenever you like.

MY DEAR READERS.—This week your favourite paper appears in its new dress; and I'm quite certain you're all going to like it.

As a matter of fact, one or two opinions have already been expressed, for Claudine, my almost-grown-up niece, was privileged to see an advance copy, and she went into ecstasies about it.

Claudine is frightfully pleased with herself these days, for this is her last term at school, and she's now looking forward very excitedly to beginning a career.

Unfortunately, she hasn't made up her mind what she wants to do when she leaves school. As usual she has come to me for advice, and—as usual—my advice has been scorned!

I suggested all sorts of nice occupations. For instance, a hat-shop (I don't know about the financial side of it, but that's nothing to do with me!) One of those very superior shops that are to be seen in the West End of London, with a name like Daphne or Mirabelle, or something equally fanciful in nice flowing letters over the door. And one tiny hat alone in a very big window—price four guineas. You know!

But, oh, no! Nothing like that! Claudine wants to do things, such as swimming the Channel and flying round the world. A truly modern young miss, is Claudine.

But I made it quite clear that I will not under any conditions be a passenger in an aeroplane of which she is the pilot. There are some risks I am prepared to take, but that one—no! Quite definitely no!

LET ME KNOW

To return to our paper. I do hope you will all like the new arrangement of the cover, and I hope that you will write and tell me that you like it! My address is at the head of this Chat, and I shall look forward to lots and lots of enthusiastic letters from you.

I do hope you have told all your friends about the stories now appearing in our paper. A short time ago I printed a little slogan which, I think, will bear repetition. Here it is:

EVERY SCHOOLGIRL SHOULD GET ANOTHER SCHOOLGIRL TO READ "THE SCHOOLGIRL."

Bear this in mind, won't you?—and if you have a chum who isn't yet a reader, well, just lend her your SCHOOLGIRL when you have finished with it, and then she'll be able to judge for herself. I don't think she'll be disappointed!

Next week's stories will delight you: there's a little bit of everything—school-life, mystery, romantic adventure abroad, and lots of humour.

The long complete Cliff House school story, by Hilda Richards, is the first of a new series. It features all your favourite characters of the Fourth, and it is entitled:

"THE GIRL WHO CAME BETWEEN"

I'm not going to discuss the "plot" with you, for I feel that to do so would perhaps spoil some of your pleasure in reading the tale, but I can promise you that it's packed with delightful school-life incidents, with a spice of adventure and fun.

Then we come to THE PART-TIME "PRINCESS." This original and romantic series is in direct contrast to the rest of the contents of our paper, but I feel sure that Perdita will win many admirers. I am anxiously awaiting your comments on this newest feature.

There will be another thrill-packed complete tale in next Saturday's number, written by Dorothy Vernon.

Our complete mystery tale next week is written by Phyllis Lawford, who has contributed to a previous number. Her story is called, "SALLY'S CINEMA CLUB," and is a fine narrative of exciting mystery.

Look out for a further instalment of our merry Sunny serial next Saturday, as well as a number of entertaining article features.

Make sure of a week-end treat by ordering your SCHOOLGIRL at once!

With best wishes,

YOUR EDITOR.

JUST FOR FUN!

Little things for your amusement!

Winnie: "Is there a post here on Saturdays?"

Joe: "Yes, I think there is!"

Winnie: "Well, be careful not to bump your head on it, then!"

* * *

Teacher: "What! Late again? Whose fault is it this time?"

Mary: "Not mine, please. I woke up early enough, but mummy didn't call me till late."

* * *

Traveller: "Am I in time for the last train?"

Porter: "No, you're just in time for the next one, sir!"

"I'll leave you now and nip back to school before some duffer starts asking questions. You'll go on later?" she asked.

Babs nodded. With one last appraising scrutiny at her handiwork, Mabs departed.

Babs, rather more leisurely, repacked the bag, glanced again at herself in the mirror, and smiled once more, but this time rather grimly.

Well, even Gail Gregory wouldn't recognise her in this get-up, she thought; and as nobody had ever seen Mary James, it was hardly likely that anyone else would suspect her.

She tingled a little at the thought of mixing with the servants, of being one of their number if only for a day. If—oh, if only she could bowl out Gail Greaves Gregory, or, at least, nip this mischief in the bud!

For half an hour she sat after Mabs had left her. Then, rising, she walked towards Friardale. As it was a full holiday at Cliff House, the buses were running, and she caught one at Friardale Station that deposited her outside the school gates.

Piper frowned.

"Which if you're Mary James, you're expected," he said. "Report at once to Mrs. Carey, the 'ousekeeper."

"Thank you!" Babs returned, in a piping voice quite unlike her own. "Will you show me the way, please?"

She smothered a grin as Piper laboriously directed her. Five minutes later she was confronting the housekeeper.

"Right!" Mrs. Carey briskly said. "I've had orders about you. You'll sleep in the room next to your mistress—that's in the school," she informed her. "But you'll have your food with the servants—that's us. And no talking to the girls of the Fourth!" she added warningly.

"But why?" Babs asked. "Aren't we allowed to talk to girls of the Fourth?"

The servants, Mrs. Carey informed her, are on strike against the Fourth.

"Oh, I say! Does the headmistress allow that?"

"No, she doesn't; but for once she can't help herself!" Mrs. Carey snorted. "Now, mind your business; and if you want any breakfast, go to the dining-hall. We're just starting."

Babs thanked her. She hung up her hat and coat. But her heart beat a little faster as she was shown into the dining-hall—a long, lofty apartment very much like the dining-hall that the girls themselves used.

What a thrill it was to be in the enemy camp! What, she thought, would the girls say if they knew that Barbara Redfern, their hated enemy, was among them?

But nobody suspected. Mrs. Carey introduced her. The introduction provoked no particular excitement, for new maids came and went at Cliff House with monotonous regularity. Once when she found herself face to face with Ida Walsh—or, as she believed her to be, Gail Greaves Gregory—did Babs feel a qualm.

Ida looked at her long and searchingly.

"You'll do," she said, "but remember, Mary, you take no orders from anyone in the Fourth. If you do, well—!" Her eyes gleamed behind her glasses with a suspicion of threat. "You'll have me to answer to."

"But why?" Babs asked innocently.

"Because," Ida said between her teeth, "I'm leading the strike, that's all!"

Well, that was one little suspicion confirmed.

Babs glowed inwardly. She sat next

to Ida, stealing a glance now and again at her profile. Was it Gail? It was! The profile, at least, was suggestive, and now Babs was near enough she saw the dark hair growing close to the scalp, to encroach upon the tresses that were peroxidized.

Right! She'd keep a careful eye upon Gail.

She did. After breakfast she reported—as she should—to Mrs. Maudsley. She came down again, to find quite a commotion going on.

Gail was there, in the midst of the servants, addressing them.

"I tell you we've got to stand together," she was saying. "Not until our demands are satisfied are we going to give in. We've been unfairly treated. We want Mrs. Murphy back, we want Amy's notice withdrawn, but, above all, we want Barbara Redfern expelled! It's Barbara Redfern who is at the bottom of all this mischief."

"Hear, hear!"

"And after the Fourth wants the dance, then they can jolly well let Barbara Redfern know that she's the one thing that's standing in its way," Gail went on. "Why should we be called upon to make the sacrifices? Why should we have to give in? I tell you now, everybody, that if you cave in without getting your demands satisfied you'll be sacked one by one. Barbara Redfern will see to that."

Babs blinked.

"But who is this Barbara Redfern?" she asked. "Has she done something awful? I've been talking to my mistress. Mrs. Maudsley says it will be a great shame if the dance doesn't come off, because every ticket is sold, and the hospitals are in desperate straits. I think that the dance is a ripping notion to raise money for the hospitals, and where would we all be if it wasn't for the hospitals? If you ask me, it's like hitting someone who's done you a good turn."

There was a murmur at that. One or two of the girls looked away. Gail's eyes gleamed.

"No need for you to speak!" she stormed. "You know nothing about it!"

"Oh, but I do!" Babs said in surprise. "Haven't I told you I've been talking to Mrs. Maudsley? Mrs. Maudsley's awfully cut up about it. She said that she'd no idea that the maids of a school like Cliff House could turn out such traitors towards Miss Primrose, who's always done her best for them. Mrs. Maudsley said herself—"

"Will you be quiet?" hooted Gail.

"But—"

"Be quiet!" And Gail desperately pulled up her sleeve. "Get in there."

"But I want to say—" Babs protested.

"You've said enough," Gail snapped, as she hustled Babs through the near-by doorway. "Now, what do you mean by all that talk?" she added.

Babs gasped. But she was not afraid. Rather was she exultant. She saw that those few words had carried weight. She had seen the looks of conscience-stricken guilt on those other maids' faces.

She had given them a new point of view—a disconcerting point of view from Gail's standpoint—and Gail was justly incensed.

"What do you mean by it, eh?"

"What I said," Babs replied spiritedly. "I think it's jolly unfair. I don't know what you've got against the Fourth Form, but in striking on the night of the dance you're not only hitting against the Fourth Form, but against the whole school, and the

hospitals, as well. You—!" And then she sprang back. "Here, let me go!" she cried in alarm.

But Gail did not let her go. Her face suddenly aflame with passion, she stepped forward. She caught Babs' wrist.

"You little trouble-monger!"

"Let me go!" Babs cried. "You're hurting!"

She stepped back quickly, catching a glass of water from the table.

"Let go!"

"Not yet. Not—"

And then Gail did let go as Babs, with a desperate jerk of the arm, flung the contents of the glass in her direction.

Just in the nick of time Gail avoided it, the water shooting across her shoulder. Her eyes flamed.

"Why, you—you dare come near me!" Babs cried defiantly.

Gail's face was furious. For a moment it seemed that she would fling herself upon Babs. But Babs' attitude gave her pause. Facing her, Babs hardly looked, in that moment, the girl who was likely to be caught unawares a second time.

"Well?" she snapped.

Gail looked roused.

And then suddenly her eyes gleamed. Quick as a flash her hand went out towards a jug that stood upon a shelf at her hand. It was a heavy jug, and it was full of milk.

Almost as she seized it she hurled the contents across the room. Too late Babs, seeing it coming, ducked. The milk splashed all over her face, half-blinding her.

"Now!" Gail cried.

In a flash she was across the room. Outside, there was a sound of running footsteps. One hand fiercely caught Babs by the shoulder, spinning her round.

Babs, still half-blinded, slipped in the milk beneath her feet and went crashing against the wall with a shock that jerked every atom of breath from her lungs. Her spectacles jumped off, her hair came down, falling in coiling ringlets about her face.

"What is it?" It was Amy's voice outside. "What's happened in here?"

"She went for me!" exclaimed Gail.

"Why?"

"And—and—" And then Gail stood stunned. Behind her glasses her eyes widened, rounding like saucers as she stared down at Babs, her make-up washed away, her hair curling about her ears, her spectacles off. "Oh, great goodness!" Gail gasped, and ran to the door, flinging it open violently. "Here, come in, come in, all of you!" she cried.

"Come and look!"

"But what—?"

"We've a traitor in the camp!" Gail cried. "Barbara Redfern herself! No wonder she was egging us all on to call off the strike! Look!"

And as the wondering servants crowded in, and Babs, sick with dismay, recoiled to her feet, Gail pointed a quivering finger towards her.



Gone!

WELL, that was that! She had done her best to save the dance, but once again her enemy, the girl she believed to be Gail Greaves Gregory, had been too much for her.

There was a row, of course. Mrs.

Carey, the housekeeper, was at once summoned. Mrs. Carey, in high dudgeon, marched Babs off to Miss Primrose.

Upset, as she already was, Miss Primrose had some very bitter things to say indeed, and Babs, to her dismay, found herself gated for the next fortnight.

And she had found out nothing—noting that would advance her cause and save the dance. Instead, she had only aggravated feeling below stairs, and made matters worse than ever.

Rather ruefully Babs trailed off to Study No. 4. Mabs jumped as she saw her.

"Why, Babs!"

"Wash out!" Babs briefly informed her.

"You mean—you were spotted?"

"Yes, by Ida Walsh. Otherwise," Babs said bitterly, "Gail Greeves Gregory. She went for me in the kitchen, just when I thought I'd swung the servants round to my point of view. Now—" She shrugged. For now the servants, realising that they had only been imposed upon by the girl they deemed their enemy, were in a state of flaming indignation.

"Poor old Babs!" Mabs said sympathetically.

And she bit her lip. She looked quite harassed! The last subterfuge had failed! What hope now of saving the dance?

The door opened, and Bessie Bunter rolled in, accompanied by Mrs. Maudsley. Her eyes opened.

"Oh crumbs! Bib-Babs! I sus-say, where have you been?"

"But—Excuse me a moment," Mrs. Maudsley said suddenly. She looked rather worried. Babs thought, "Barbara, I—I hate to disturb you, especially when—" And she smiled tenderly. "It was bad luck, my dear. But never mind. I wanted to speak to you, Barbara—about the necklace I gave you yesterday."

"Yes, Mrs. Maudsley?" Babs said wonderingly.

"I told you, didn't I, that the original and the copy were so much alike that I could hardly tell one from the other?" Mrs. Maudsley bit her lip. "I suppose it must have been the artificial light that deceived me; but, Barbara, I did make a mistake. So silly of me—but I gave you the original instead of the copy. Here is the copy"—and she passed Babs a small parcel done up in tissue paper. "I wonder, Barbara, if you would very much mind letting me have the original back? It is very valuable, and I treasure it so, you know. It was my late husband's last present to me."

"Why, of course!" Babs assented. She took her key from her pocket. At once she crossed the study to the bureau. Then she paused, shooting a quick, questioning glance at Mabs.

"I say, this bureau's open! Have you opened it, Mabs?"

"No," Mabs replied.

"Bessie?"

"Oh, rur-really, you know, of course I haven't!" Bessie protested indignantly.

A little pucker appeared in Babs' brow. But she said no more. She drew open the drawer, gasping in relief as she saw the ivory box. But that, when she touched it, was open, too.

And then—
Babs started as she flung up the lid. Her face grew white. For of the pearl necklace there was no sign.

"It's gone!" she cried.

"What?"

"It—it's gone!" And Babs, flinging round, showed the empty box.

Everybody stared.

"Oh, mum-my hat!"

"Somebody's taken it?" Bessie

stuttered incredulously. That somebody had taken it was obvious. The unlocked bureau, the empty box, proved that. But who could have taken it?

Mrs. Maudsley's features looked quite haggard.

"You mean—somebody's stolen it?" she cried. "But no, I can't believe that! Barbara, that necklace was worth a thousand pounds!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

In consternation they all regarded the box again—as though its empty interior could supply the answer. Who had taken that necklace? Who—

Then Bessie—Bessie suddenly trembling with excitement, pointing one finger towards the bureau:

"Look! What's that?"

Babs flung round.

There, caught in the drawer, and now only a little revealed because the drawer had been dragged open to its fullest extent, was a dangling thing of lace and linen.

"A maid's cap!" Babs breathed.

"But the maids don't come in here!" Mabs objected.

All the same, the cap told its own story. Some maid had been in Study No. 4. Some maid had left that cap behind. Whether on duty or off duty, no maid certainly had a right to pry into the bureau.

Babs took it. She examined it, noticing that it was a new cap, with no traces of laundry marks. Who among the maids was likely to have a new cap?

Like a blow the answer struck her.

Ida Walsh! Ida had not been long enough at the school yet for her things to have been returned from the laundry.

But Babs said nothing about that. The evidence was altogether too flimsy.

Any of the maids might have bought a new cap and left it here.

The one thing that seemed obvious, however, was that one of the maids, with no right in this study, had been in here tampering with the bureau. The theft was too serious to be hushed up. Not that Mrs. Maudsley would have agreed to hush it up. She was already distraught at the loss of her necklace.

"Barbara, what shall I do?" she cried. "What shall I do?"

Babs shook her head. She felt bewildered. Her suspicion against Ida Walsh was strong, but she realised that the grounds upon which that suspicion were built would satisfy no one except herself.

In any case, the decision as to what should be done was not left to her. For who should come walking down the corridor and into the study at that moment but Miss Primrose herself.

She looked scandalised when told the story. In bewilderment she handled the maid's cap.

"This—this—you are sure, Barbara, that this was left in the bureau?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose."

"Then," Miss Primrose said, with a compression of the lips, "the maids must be called together. I will inquire into this immediately, Mrs. Maudsley—immediately! Mrs. Maudsley, will you please come with me? And you, too, Barbara."

She rustled off. Mrs. Maudsley, with a troubled shake of the head, followed her, with Babs at her heels.

Straight into the kitchen Miss Primrose went. She immediately she had the servants summoned before her. No one knew anything, of course, about the theft of the thousand-pound necklace, but Ida Walsh's eyes gleamed.

At the end of Miss Primrose's recital she stepped forward.

"Excuse me, Miss Primrose, but you



"I'VE come to ask you, Miss Primrose, if you will expel me?" Babs said very steadily.

did say, didn't you, that the cap was found by Barbara Redfern?"

"I did," Miss Primrose said.
"And," Ida asked disagreeably, "it was Barbara Redfern here who suggested, because of the finding of the cap, that it must have been stolen by one of us."

Miss Primrose frowned. Babs' face looked haggard, for she could guess what was coming.

"Ida, what are you trying to say?"
Ida's lips curled.

"I'm not trying to say anything!" she retorted; "but I do say this—that it's all a faked charge, Miss Primrose! She was here, not so long ago, as you know—spying among us in disguise. She could have stolen that cap as easily as anything. She did steal it—and she left it behind just to make it appear that one of us had stolen the necktie."

There was a mutter of resentment.
"It's not," Ida said artfully, "the first time she's done it. Remember when Piper's keys were missing, and Amy, Forrest was blamed because her handkerchief was found on the spot?"
"Yes, rather!" Sally broke in furiously.

"Down with Barbara Redfern!"
"Mischief-maker!"
Ida flung round, her eyes gleaming with triumph now.

"Miss Primrose," she cried, addressing the headmistress, "I know you've no sympathy with us as strikers, but even you must realize now that we've got a legitimate cause for complaint."

Miss Primrose's lips tightened.
"But we're not unreasonable," Ida went on. "We only ask for justice. We didn't want to take this step. But what other way had we of getting our rights? It is Barbara Redfern here who has put the Fourth against us—who has played all these tricks upon us. Barbara Redfern is responsible for this strike much more than we are. But we will call it off—"

She paused.
"Yes?" Miss Primrose asked stiffly.

"If you will agree to expel her!"
And Ida pointed to Babs, who was standing silent.

Miss Primrose's eyes glinted.
"Ida, you will consider yourself, with Amy Forrest, under a week's notice from this moment!" she snapped. "The very idea! I will not be dictated to—I will not! And I warn you all!" ominously—"that if this nonsense does not cease, I shall replace you all. I came here, not to talk about your unwarranted strike, but about the theft of this necktie—"

"Well, we didn't steal it," Sally put in resentfully. "Come on, girls, let's walk out."

"Sally, how dare you!"
But Sally had turned. She seemed not to care. A murmur went up from the others—a bitter, vindictive mutter. Ida had now joined the ranks of victims. Ida, as well as Amy, under notice!

Babs felt almost ill.
She was the cause of it all! She was the one, so they thought, who was responsible for this state of affairs.

Oh, if only she could do something—say something! But what was the use?

She stood silent, helpless, as Ida and the other maids walked calmly from the kitchen.



Getting At The Truth

"WELL, of all the cheek!"
"My only Sunday bonnet!"
"Are the servants going to run the school?"

The news of the latest disturbance had just become known in the Fourth Form Common-room.

It was news which filled the Fourth with indignation. Really, everybody agreed, it was too thick. The cheek

of it—to demand the expulsion of Barbara Redfern!

So Clara Trevlyn and Rosa Rodworth and Gemina Carstairs and a few others said.

But there was also a volume of contrary opinion in the Fourth Form. Some of the girls, chafing under these continued clashes, were saying other things.

The great dance for which the Fourth had worked so wholeheartedly together was virtually a wash-out. It could not take place with the servants on strike, and there was no doubt, from the servants' point of view, they had something to grumble about.

Undenably, Lydia Crossendale said, Barbara Redfern had contributed to the present friction, and it was up to Babs to do something to put things right, so that the dance could be held.

"Yes, hear, hear!" Nancy Bell put in, when Lydia expressed that opinion.

"Oh, rubbish!" Clara snorted.
"What can Babs do?"

"Well, she caused the mischief!"
"She didn't."

"Then why are they demanding that she be expelled?"

"Oh, stop nagging!" Mabs broke in exasperatedly. "Babs isn't to blame. She's only done what she has done to try to put matters right. It's not her fault if things haven't panned out as she expected. The great thing is that unless the servants can be brought to heel, the dance is off."

That was the great thing, and Mabs, thinking of it, looked haggard and harassed.

She had worked so hard for the dance; had looked forward to it so keenly. Hateful it was to feel that she was going to disappoint so many of her friends, so many would-be guests. Cliff House would never get over it.

But what was Mabs to do?
Time was running short now. Already it was almost too late to call in the invitations which had been sent out.

Babs, white-faced, worried, almost in despair, was racking her brains. She

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NOW ON SALE—FOURPENCE EACH



wanted the dance to be held for Mabs' sake; for the sake of the school.

There was only one way out, it seemed. Only one—that was to get expelled.

But that, of course, was silly. To-morrow came. Still no relaxation in the attitude of the servants. Still no clue as to the whereabouts of Mrs. Maudsley's valuable necklace.

Babs had spent a sleepless night, weighing up the matter from every angle. And Babs had come to a decision.

Before breakfast she went again to the servants' quarters.

She entered the servants' waiting-room. To her surprise, there was no one there, but on the table were the servants' letters, and the one that was on top of the pile was addressed to Ida Walsh.

The postmark was London, and across the top was scrawled in an unformed hand: "If left, please return to No. 4, Salisbury Court, Wanstone, London." Almost without being conscious of the fact, Babs found herself taking a note of that address.

So that, she presumed, was the address from which the letters which had convinced Miss Primrose that Gail Greaves Gregory was in London were coming. That—

She stiffened. The door opened. Into the room came Ida Walsh. She looked a little taken aback.

"You!" she said.

"Yes!"—Babs eyed her—"Ida Walsh!"

Ida's eyes gleamed.

"Well?"

"I've come to talk to you," Babs said levelly. But not for a moment did her eyes leave the other's face. "I've heard what you said to Miss Primrose."

The other sneered.

"I'm not pleading for myself—I'm pleading for the dance," Babs went on quietly. "The dance affects not only the Fourth, but the whole school—yes, and the hospitals. You know that it can't take place unless you call off this strike."

Ida stared at her wonderingly, then suddenly seeing the letter on the table, she snatched it up quickly, ramming it into the pocket of her apron.

Babs noticed her lips compressed a little, but she said nothing.

"Well?" Ida said again.

"Ida"—Babs looked at her—"I'll admit if you like, that you've beaten me."

Ida laughed.

"That's very condescending of you, I'm sure!" she mocked.

"The dance takes place the day after to-morrow," Babs went on. "At the moment there's every prospect of it not taking place. Ida, couldn't you call off this strike—if only for the night of the dance?"

Ida's eyes narrowed.

"And that's what you came to see me about?"

"Yes."

"Then," Ida said, between her teeth, "here's the answer. The answer is 'No!' The servants are up in arms against the Fourth, but more especially against you. We don't want you in Cliff House any longer. We want you to get out—do you hear? And not until you've left will we lift a finger!"

Babs paled.

"And that's your answer?"

"That's it!"

"Thank you!" And Babs quietly left the room.

Her face was pale, but her purpose was still unflinching. She did not go to Study No. 4. She went instead to Miss



THE SECRETS OF CHARM

What an elusive quality it is!
Yet how well worth striving for!

I WONDER what you would consider the very nicest compliment that could be paid you?

Would you like to think it had been said of you: "Oh, she's terribly pretty!" Or: "She's very, very kind!" Or: "She's so unselfish," "She's perfectly sweet." Or would you prefer to be known as "charming."

It is a compliment indeed if it is applied to you, for Charm is built up of so many nice things—like gentleness, thoughtfulness, daintiness—oh, and many others. It consists not only of mental good points, but of outward qualities as well.

LITTLE POINTS

YOUR VOICE can reflect your charm. It needn't be "prunes and prisms-y," but it can be clear and sweet. Pitch it low and talk clearly even in your most heated moments.

Don't make statements in a loud voice with which other people are not likely to agree. Opinions should not be aired in that way when there may be others around who know more about the subject than the speaker.

Listen attentively when you are being spoken to, and you'll not have to have it repeated so frequently. But if you do not hear, don't hesitate to say: "I beg your pardon." That is much more charming than giving the wrong answer!

YOUR FACE, too, reflects your charm. While no one wants you to have a perpetual Cheshire cat grin

on your nice schoolgirl face, it is definitely not attractive to wear a constant scowl, however serious may be your thoughts.

Don't be afraid to be the first to smile when you meet another girl you know. To wait until she does may mean an opportunity lost, and it will be all the more difficult to smile next time.

When talking to people, always look at them—not stare, of course. But avoid keeping your head down and looking at your feet. It may only be shyness that makes you do it, but this is not always realised, and it destroys that frankness which is so charming in schoolgirls.

GOOD GROOMING

YOUR APPEARANCE matters a great deal, too, if you would have charm. Silks and satins do help—but not much! It's the details of your dress that count.

The spotless collar, the well-pressed frock—these make for charm in dress.

Dainty white finger-tips; well-brushed hair; neat seams to stockings; well-polished shoes; firmly sewn-on buttons—details all, but so important.

Little kindnesses; small acts of thoughtfulness; good manners. A sweet voice, a ready smile, and an appearance of good grooming. Each by itself quite a small thing. Yet together these details make up that big and worth-while quality—**CHARM.**

Primrose's study. The Head's eyes gleamed as she saw her.

"Well, Barbara?"

Babs stiffened.

"I've come to ask you, Miss Primrose, if you will expel me."

"What?"

"If you will expel me!" Babs repeated the words steadily.

"Have you taken leave of your senses, Barbara?"

"No, Miss Primrose; but I do want the dance to take place."

"I see!" Miss Primrose looked a little more kindly, however. "Barbara, please get such foolish ideas out of your head!" she said. "Much as I admire the impulse which leads you to ask such a question, my answer is no—most definitely and emphatically no! You may go."

"But—"

"Please, Barbara, I am busy!"

Babs drew a deep breath. She went. The bell was ringing for lessons then, but she did not go into class. Her mind was made up. She was going to save the dance, and since saving the dance

could only be done by surrendering to the servants—well, she would do it.

Upstairs she went. In the dormitory she packed a few things in an attache-case. Then she went to Study No. 4 and wrote a brief note.

"Dear Mabs,—Please let the servants know that I have complied with their demands. I have left Cliff House."

"BARBARA."

She wrote it with thin lips and a breaking heart. But her hand did not falter. She had vowed to save the dance, and she would save it. Her surrender, surely, would bring the servants to reason.

But Babs had not surrendered altogether. Babs had other ideas. Not so tamely was she going to knuckle under to the girl she believed to be Gail Greaves Gregory. She was working with a plan in her mind now, and her apparent surrender was part of that plan.

While the school was at lessons Barbara Redfern was sneaking out through Lane's field.

Half an hour later she caught a London-bound train from Friardale. Three hours later found her in London, and an hour later on top of a bus, being carried towards Wanstone.

No. 4, Salisbury Court!
Would she get to the bottom of the mystery now?

Salisbury Court, when she eventually located it, proved to be a row of rather large houses in the East End of London, which had seen better days. She was tingling as she walked down the street.

She was thrilling as she reached No. 4 and raised the knocker. A rather pale-faced woman answered her knock. She stared at the well-dressed girl on the doorstep.

"Er—yes?" she asked.
"I—I've come to make a few inquiries about Miss Ida Walsh," Babs said.

"Ida Walsh?" The woman looked amazed. "My daughter? But—"
Babs' heart knew a tremendous leap. "Yes, your—your daughter," she repeated.

"But she isn't in. She went off this morning to a place called—called Friardale," Mrs. Walsh informed her. "She's got a job there—at a school."

A place called Cliff House. She was supposed to have gone there a fortnight ago, but another girl from the school came for her, asking her to postpone the trip. But, if I may ask, young lady, who are you?"

"Oh, I am also one of the girls from the school," Babs answered, her heart thumping like a sledge-hammer.

"Then perhaps you'll come in."
"Thank you!"

Babs went in. She was on a red-hot trail now.

Her subsequent conversation with Mrs. Walsh confirmed in every detail her own suspicions. Gail Greaves Gregory had changed places with Ida Walsh!

Everything that Mrs. Walsh said bore that out. A fortnight ago Ida had received her appointment at Cliff House School. Then Gail had called—the description Mrs. Walsh gave fitted Gail to the letter.

As a result of that girl calling, Ida had stated that the appointment was postponed. In the meantime, she had been doing an awful lot of telephoning and letter-writing.

Babs left the house walking on air. Now she knew—she knew! It was the real Ida Walsh, of course, acting under the instructions of Gail, who had sent those telephone messages to Miss Primrose. The real Ida Walsh who had sent the letters—those letters having been written by Gail Greaves Gregory, at Cliff House, and posted on by Ida from London.

The whole scheme became as clear as limelight then.

At last she had found out Gail Gregory.

No longer did she hesitate. Off went Babs to Charing Cross again. She learned that she would have an hour to wait before the next train departed for Friardale, and, suddenly reminded of the fact that she was hungry, tripped towards the buffet. Nice time, she thought, for a sandwich and a cup of tea, and took a seat at one of the tables.

Hardly had she done so, however, than she jumped.

And she stared. She stared as if she could not believe her own eyes.

For at the next table sat a girl with blonde hair and spectacles, a girl in a tweed suit, who could be none other than—Gail Greaves Gregory!

In a moment Babs was out of her chair.
"Gail!" she cried. "Gail, you awful thing! So I've bowled you out at last!"

The girl looked up in baffled consternation and surprise. Yet there was no recognition in her eyes.

She frowned.
"Eh? What!"

"Gail!"
"Aren't you making a mistake?" the other asked. "My name's not Gail, I've never seen you before. My name," she added pointedly, "is Ida Walsh!"



Unmasked At Last

NOT since the declaration that the servants had gone on strike had such a bombshell exploded in Cliff House School, as that which signalled the news that Barbara Redfern, rather than continue to be the bone of contention between the Fourth and the servants, had left the school of her own account.

Bessie Bunter was almost in tears. Mabs, so far from looking happy, was the most worried girl in the world. It was a noble and sporting gesture on Babs' part, everybody agreed, but that Babs should have sacrificed herself—

"No, no, no!" Mabs cried. "We've got to find her!"

But finding her, as everybody said, was easier said than done.

A telephone message to Babs' home proved that she had not arrived there. The booking-office clerk at Friardale was questioned. Yes, he remembered seeing Miss Redfern, but she had only booked to Courtfield—informed which sent Miss Primrose hot on the trail to the station there.

But there was no satisfaction to be obtained, for Babs at Friardale had boarded the slow London train, and had never even got out at Courtfield, paying the excess on the train as it travelled towards London.

Consternation then. But in the heart of one girl at least, joy. That girl was Gail Greaves Gregory, who never questioned that Babs had gone for good—and that her own victory was complete.

True, Gail would have liked to see her expelled, but what did it matter? Babs had gone. To get her out of the school had been her chief objective. Good!

And immediately Gail made her plans. She had tired of her role of strike leader. With Babs gone, there was nothing else to fight for, she assured herself. Let the servants go their own way. She had brought to a successful conclusion the game she had played, that was all that mattered!

She was anxious now to turn up at the school again as herself, to claim relationship with this rich aunt who could so transform life for her. The strike didn't matter now. Let the servants do as they willed, Gail was out for her own good time.

That afternoon another girl slipped out of Cliff House. It was Gail Greaves Gregory.

Gail, however, did not go to London. She walked as far as Friardale, and there boarded a train for Lantham.

Arriving there, she went into the post office. There, in one of the cubicles, she re-read the letter which she had received from Ida Walsh that morning.

She had received several couched in the same tone since she had changed

places with Ida Walsh, for Ida was bitterly complaining that the money which Gail had promised for the deception, she had not received.

That had been the one thing Gail had forgotten when she had embarked upon this career of deception. For naturally, as all her letters to Cliff House were addressed to Gail Greaves Gregory, they had been withheld.

Except for a few shillings, indeed, Gail had no money at all.

She wrote now:
"Send money to-morrow. Whatever you do, don't come to Cliff House as threatened.—G."

She sent off the telegram. Then, turning, she made her way to the hairdresser's.

An hour she spent there, getting her hair re-dyed its original colour, and re-making up her face so that once again she was the same old Gail Gregory. She laughed at her reflection in the mirror.

"Exit Ida Walsh, re-enter Gail," she told herself. "Now for Cliff House and a high old time!"

It did not occur to Gail then that when she reached Cliff House she would have to account for her absence.

She took her bag. As she opened it to pay the assistant, something bright caught her eyes, making her pause. It was a pearl necklace.

She laughed a little as she closed the bag. Perhaps, she thought, it might be possible to link up the disappearance of that necklace with the sudden disappearance of Barbara Redfern.

Rather a joke it would be to get school because, having stolen that necklace, she wished to dispose of it discreetly. Must think that out. The idea rather appealed to her.

She boarded a bus. Quite gaily she sauntered into Cliff House an hour later. With a careless wave of the hand, she tripped into Big Hall. Girls, just dismissed from lessons, turned to stare at her.

"Why, if it isn't Gail Greaves Gregory!" Jemima Carstairs said.

"Gail!"

"Where the dickens have you been?"

"Don't you know your aunt's here?"

"My aunt, no!" Gail shook her head. "I've been in London, having a high old time," she said. "Priddy got my letters and my telephone calls, didn't she? But I got fed-up there, you know. After having cooled off, and all that, I thought I'd look the old school up again. How's everything?"

"Have'n't you heard?" Leila Carroll asked.

"Heard what?"

"About the servants!"

"No! What about the servants?" Gail asked interestedly.

"Well, they have been on strike," Lucy Morgan shrilled. "And a new maid, Ida Walsh, who led the strike, has disappeared!"

"No," Gail cried. "You don't say so! And what about my old one, Barbara Redfern? I don't see her here."

"Don't you?" asked a voice; and Gail wheeled as Barbara sauntered into the Hall. "Well, here I am, Gail Greaves Gregory—and if you've any question you'd like me to answer, I'll be pleased to oblige."

And, to Gail's open-mouthed astonishment, Barbara Redfern herself strode forward, accompanied by another girl, at sight of whom Gail felt inclined to swoon, for the other girl was—

Ida Walsh!

And, as if that was not bad enough, who should stroll on to the scene at the same moment but her aunt, Mrs. Maudsley, with Miss Primrose.

NOT OFTEN in her career had Gail Greaves Gregory felt the ground so utterly swept from under her feet. But she was completely flabbergasted now. "You!" she breathed. "But, Barbara, I thought—" And then she pulled herself up. "Aunt," she cried in rapturous delight, "fancy seeing you here!"

But Mrs. Maudsley's face was frigid. She eyed her niece without affection. "Gail," she said, "I have been hearing very bad reports of you."

"Oh, aunt!" "Apparently"—Mrs. Maudsley's lips compressed—"you have thoroughly disgraced yourself here."

Gail hit her lip. She meant to bluff. "Well, I'm sorry," she said. "But it's not as bad as all that, aunty. I admit I walked out of the school in a huff—"

"And did not return," Miss Primrose put in.

"Goodness, no!" "You did not return," Miss Primrose asked bitingly, "as Ida Walsh?"

Gail blinked. "Ida Walsh? Never heard the name," she said, in such utter mystification that had not the truth been so established even Miss Primrose might have revised her opinion. "Why should I return as Ida Walsh?"

"That," Miss Primrose said, "is a matter of which you have left plenty of evidence, Gail. This girl"—and while Gail pretended to stare in amazement at the real Ida Walsh—"was found by Barbara in London. She stated that you took her place as a maid, agreeing to pay her certain sums of money for the privilege—which you did not pay."

"Yes, that's true," Ida Walsh put in. "But it isn't!" Gail cried angrily. "I tell you I've never seen this girl in my life—I haven't! She's making it up—must be making it up! Why, you—little traitor," she cried, flinging round upon the maid, "when did I see you?"

"Oh, Miss Gregory, you know—" "I don't know. I know nothing of the sort!" Gail's cheeks flamed; she was acting well now. "I tell you you're being deceived, Miss Primrose! I know nothing of this girl—nothing!"

"You mean you haven't been in Cliff House since you left?" Babs asked.

"Of course I haven't!" "And you didn't get Ida Walsh to send letters and phone up Miss Primrose?"

"No, I didn't!" "And you didn't incite the servants to go on strike?"

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"And you didn't—" And Babs' eyes suddenly gleamed; for, unknown to Gail, the fastening of her bag had come undone. Just for an instant Babs saw a shiny, glittering thing there, and the whole of her nervous system seemed to quiver. "And you didn't," she added in a voice that made the assembled girls gasp, "steal your aunt's necklace?"

Gail's eyes blazed.

"Barbara Redfern, how dare you—" "But I dare," Babs said steadily, "because, Gail, during your supposed absence that necklace was stolen. It was stolen by a girl in the school, obviously. And if that girl wasn't you, how is it—" And then with swiftness that took Gail completely by surprise she jumped forward, snatching at the handbag, quickly upturning the contents into her hand at the same time.

"How is it," Babs finished slowly, "that this is still in your possession, Gail?" "And, while a murmur went up from the group, and Gail staggered back

deathly white, Babs held up the necklace. There was no answer to that; no bluff on earth could have got her out of that. She shrugged.

"Well," she said, "what are you going to do?" "I," Miss Primrose said very quietly, "am going to expel you, Gail."

"And I," Mrs. Maudsley said freezingly, "am going to disown you."

"And we," Amy Forrest angrily chipped in—Amy had just appeared on the scene—"are jolly well going to rag you if ever you show your nose in the servants' quarters again! You traitor! You mischief-maker! Oh, Miss Primrose, can I say how sorry we are that we've all been taken in by this girl!"

But they could. They did. And Miss Primrose forgave them. The strike at

written, and which had been acted by the Fourth, was just drawing to a close. And as the curtain came down on the final scene, what a storm of applause there was!

"Bravo!" "Well done?" "Author—author!"

Shyly, blushing furiously, Mabs was persuaded to come before the curtain to receive the plaudits of the audience. And not until she had made a little speech would they let her go.

Then, a few minutes later, the chairs were removed from the floor, the band took its place on the stage, and dancing began.

Babs and Mabs had the first dance together, and as they went round they discussed the evening.



"GAIL!" Babs gasped. "So I've caught you at last!" The girl at the table seemed surprised. "Aren't you making a mistake?" she said. "My name is not Gail. I'm Ida Walsh!"

Cliff House was over. Gail, in the return she intended to be her final triumph, found herself beaten.

Beaten—yes, beaten! Beaten by the girl against whom she had worked and plotted—Barbara Redfern.

In disgrace, and not in triumph, she left Cliff House that night. All her scheming had come to naught.

The strike called off; the dance a sure fixture once again; everybody happy—and Barbara, her hated enemy, more firmly than ever established in the affections of the aunt whose favours she prized greater than any on earth.

Gail Greaves Gregory, as far as Cliff House was concerned, was no more.

IT WAS the night of the dance. In the new theatre at Cliff House there was a scene of animation and brilliance. The handsome building had been gaily decorated throughout, and now it was packed to capacity with a delighted audience.

The sketch which Mabel Lynn had

"Just think, Babs, if this had been cancelled!" Mabs said.

"I know, Mabs! My word, it's been a crashing success! What a silly duffer Gail was! If she hadn't played the fool she might have been here now, enjoying herself."

Mabs nodded. "Still, there it is. Gail has paid the penalty of her behaviour. And, personally, I never want to think of her again. But if it hadn't been for you, Babs—"

"Now, Mabs, no speeches!"

So Mabs was silent. But the look she gave her best chum showed only too plainly that never would she forget the part Barbara had played in the showing-up of Gail Gregory.

THE END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Now turn over and read all about the magnificent long complete Cliff House story which will appear in next Saturday's SCHOOLGIRL. It is the first of a new series, and features Babs and Mabs.