

MEET THE CHUMS OF CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL In The Long Complete Story Inside

The Schoolgirl

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Every
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INCORPORATING
'SCHOOLDAYS'



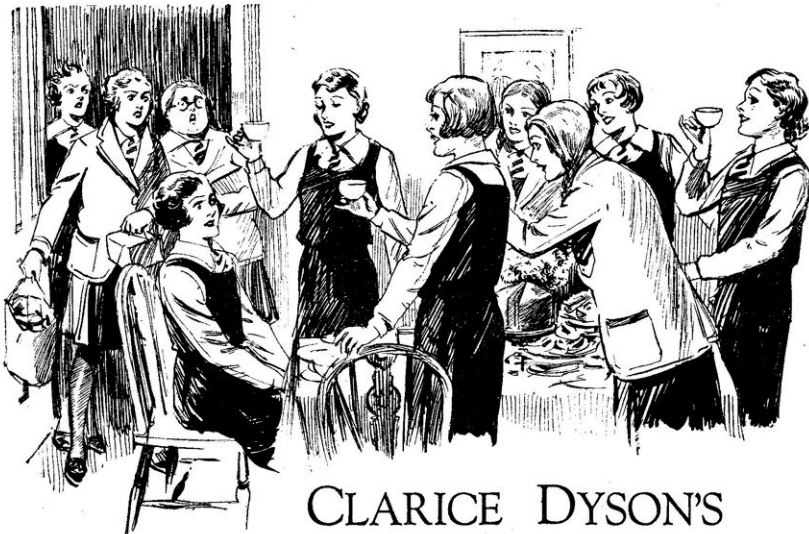
"STOP!"

A tense moment in this week's powerful long complete Cliff House School story, entitled:

"CLARICE DYSON'S DECEIT"

ARE YOU READING "THE PART-TIME 'PRINCESS'"?

A Fine Complete Tale of School-Life, Featuring Barbara Redfern & Co. of the Fourth Form at Cliff House



CLARICE DYSON'S

DECEIT

By
HILDA RICHARDS

The Triumph of Babs

"MABS!"

Mabel Lynn looked up with a start, the tiniest pucker between her eyes as the door of Study No. 4 in the Fourth Form corridor at Cliff House School was flung open, and Clara Trevelyn, the tomboy captain of games, called her name.

Clara was beaming. It was evident from the look on her face that she was tremendously excited.

"Mabs, where's Babs?" she asked.

"I don't know," Mabs said.

"Eh?" Clara blinked. "My hat, what's the matter with you?" she cried, in surprise. "Hasn't she been in?"

"Not," Mabs said, "since lessons."
"Well, fancy that now!" And Clara stared wonderingly. "But I always thought you and she never went anywhere without each other," she cried.
"What's happened? You're not bad friends, are you?"

Mabs flushed confusedly. She did not reply.

"Eh?" Clara looked startled. The excitement fading out of her cheeks, she stepped quickly into the study.
"Mabs," she cried, "look at me! What is the matter?"

"Oh, nu-nothing!" Mabs faltered.

"No?" Clara shook her head. "But there is," she said. "Other girls have noticed it, too. Marjorie was only mentioning a few minutes ago that you and Babs don't seem to be hitting it off since Clarice Dyson came into this study. I told her to stop talking rot! Everybody knows what pals you and Babs are. But is there anything in it, Mabs? Tell me!"

Mabs averted her head.

"Were you looking for Babs?" she asked, avoiding the question.

"Eh? Yes. But Mabs—"

"Then you'll probably find her"—and Mabs could not for the life of her help a trace of bitterness creeping into her tones—"with Clarice Dyson in the tuckshop. They went off together a few minutes ago."

"Oh!" Clara said. She eyed Mabs very queerly, very strangely, however. "Oh, right!" she said, rather awkwardly. "I just wanted to tell Babs the great news before anyone else breaks it. I expect she's almost forgotten by now that she entered that etching for the Courtfield Art Exhibition—"

Mabs glanced up with quick interest.

"Why?" she asked

"Nothing!" Clara chuckled. "Except that the judging committee have awarded it first prize. The Charmer, who was on the committee, has just told me, and I'm off to tell Babs. In the tuckshop, you say?"

Mabs nodded dazedly. Clara, with a whoop, started out into the corridor again, leaving Mabs sitting there with a new look in her eyes, a flush in her cheeks, that little cloud which had descended upon her at the utterance of Clarice Dyson's name now utterly dissolved. Babs—Babs, her chum, had won first prize!

NO one but Mabel Lynn knows Clarice Dyson for what she really is—a cunning, self-seeking mischief-maker. Even Babs has been taken in; and Mabs soon discovers how hard it is going to be to prove the new girl's duplicity.

Mabs smiled—involuntarily, suddenly. She remembered that etching—a really delightful little picture of the new theatre at Cliff House. It had been her suggestion that Babs should enter it for the local art exhibition, which Babs, after some persuasion, had done.

She rose impulsively. She must tell Babs—she must be present when Clara broke the glorious news to her.

Babs was her friend—always had been her friend; sharing her joys, her sorrows, as she had shared Babs'. But half-way to the door she stopped, with a sudden drawn, almost haggard look upon her face, the quick quivering of a lower lip suggesting that she might burst into tears.

For suddenly, overwhelmingly, that other memory swept over her. She was no longer on the old cordial, chummy terms with Babs!

At the doorway Mabs hesitated. Oh, wretched, wretched business! A new tide of bitterness surged over her. And perhaps, even though it was so rarely that thought sullied Mabs' mind, she felt a flash of hatred towards the new girl, Clarice Dyson—who had been responsible for bringing about those strained relations.

But she couldn't face Babs in Clarice's company! She couldn't! Babs, of course, thought that she was jealous of Clarice. But if Babs had only known!

Rather helplessly Mabs' arms dropped to her sides. Listlessly she turned back into the study. She glanced without interest at the sheet of music on which she had been working at Clara Trevlyn's entry—a new number for the Cliff House concert, which was to be held at the end of the spring term.

What a mess it all was, to be sure! Why couldn't Babs see through the hypocritical sweetness in front of her—who, when she had Mabs on her own, was so bitter and vindictive? Already the presence of Clarice Dyson in Study No. 4 had led to misunderstanding and disruptions—had led to the expulsion from the study of fat Bessie Bunter.

But Babs couldn't see it. Babs—so thoughtful Mabs—considered that she was jealous of her friendship for Clarice Dyson.

And Clarice, artful, cunning, fostered that illusion. Certainly, Mabs admitted, Babs had no reason to complain of her treatment at Clarice Dyson's hands. Clarice had been as charming as a girl could be to Babs' own face.

With a sigh Mabs sat down at the table again. But not to work. Her glance—wistful, yearning—turned towards the window which gave a view of the drive, showing Clara Trevlyn hurrying down it as fast as her legs would carry her.

How, in that moment, Mabs wished that she had never seen Clarice Dyson! How she longed to share in the joy which would be Barbara's now—to be friends again with her!

"But I can't—I can't!" she murmured distractedly. "Not while that little hypocrite is here!"

But couldn't she? Mabs frowned. Well, why not? Why, she asked herself with sudden fierceness, should she tamely relinquish Babs to Clarice Dyson? After all, Clarice Dyson was only here for a short time—perhaps no longer than a month at the outside.

Supposing—And then all at once Mabs was struck with the idea. The idea, it was!

That morning she had received a more than usually handsome remittance from home. For once she had money—as she laughingly described it—to burn. It was meet that Babs' great triumph in winning the competition prize should be celebrated.

What price a lovely study feed, with all Babs' friends present, and Babs herself the guest of honour?

"Topping idea!" Mabs cried. She laughed happily. Yes, she'd do it! She'd do it!

It must, of course, come as the most delicious surprise to Babs, who should be kept in ignorance of what was taking place until the very last moment. How her eyes would light up then! How lovely it would be to see her surprise! After that, there could be no further misunderstandings.

As for Clarice—well, bother Clarice! But not! Just to show Babs that she bore no real animosity against that girl, she would invent her, too.

Whoosh! And away went the music-sheets as Mabs, full of enthusiasm, sat down to further her new scheme.

Now the guests. Bessie Bunter—poor old Bessie, of course! Clara Trevlyn. Marjorie Hazeldeene. Janet Jordan. Leila Carroll and Marcella Biquet. Jennima Carstairs and Jean Cartwright. Phyllis Howell, too. Joan Sheldon-Charmant. Muriel Bond. Clarice Dyson, and, of course, Margot

Lantham. That would be just as many as Study No. 4 could comfortably hold.

Now for the actual spread. Must have plenty of everything and the best of everything. Better get out a list and ask Auntie Jones at the tuckshop to deliver it after lessons to-morrow.

Enthusiastically Mabs pen pushed its way across the paper. She was in the midst of her labours when the door opened and Barbara, flushed and radiant, came in, accompanied by Clarice Dyson.

"Why, hallo, Mabs!" she said. "Busy?"

Mabs, with a guilty flush, hastily whipped the papers to one side.

"Nun-no—that is—" she faltered. "Babs, I—I've heard about the prize. I—I'd like to congratulate you!"



A Means To An End

MABS stood up, just a little hesitantly extending her hand.

Babs stared at her, and then, with a flush of real pleasure—for Mabs' attitude since the advent of Clarice Dyson had rather worried the captain of the Fourth Form—took it. Her eyes were very soft.

"Thanks, Mabs!" she replied gently. "And—kind—?" Mabs laughed. "Well, come in!" she cried gaily. "Come in! I'm finished here, you know. Er—shall we—we have tea? I suppose you haven't seen old Bessie?"

"Bessie is in the tuckshop," Babs smiled, "making merry with Clara and a few others." She dimpled. Very, very pleased did Babs look in that moment, for she, too, had been feeling the strain, and she was only too glad to see this change in her chum.

"Yes, rather; let's have tea!" she cried. "Mabs, you lay the cloth. Clarry, you get the bread-and-butter."

"Rather!" Clarice laughed. She flashed a smile at Mabs. Nothing at all in her attitude or her looks to show that she regarded Mabs as an enemy! Always sweet in front of Barbara was Clarice Dyson, only waiting for Babs' absence to show that other side of her nature.

There was a brisk clattering of cups as Mabs laid the table, while Babs, grabbing up the kettle, rushed off to fill it.

Only then did that change which Mabs knew so well come over Clarice Dyson.

"Friendly all at once, aren't you?" she sneered.

"Here's your breadknife," Mabs said quietly.

"What's the big idea?" Clarice wanted to know.

"The butter," Mabs replied steadily, "is in the bottom cupboard."

"But I want to know—"

"I'll get it for you."

And Mabs, determined at all costs not to be goaded, stepped across the room.

Clarice, standing by the table, suddenly flung up a foot. Mabs stumbled against it.

But again, with admirable self-possession, she said nothing. Just for an instant she flashed round the anger blazing in her eyes. Then she realised—Yes, of course, Clarry would love to provoke a row just when Babs might return. She said quietly:

"I really wish, Clarice, you would keep your feet out of the way. You would have tripped me."

"What's the matter with my feet?" Clarry belligerently demanded, flaring up. "They weren't in your way if you'd only look where you were going— Oh, hallo, Mabs," she added, as that girl appeared at the door; and gone was her anger all at once. "I was just saying to Mabs, how lovely it was for you to win that prize! Wasn't I, Mabs?"

Mabs did not reply, but the content in the look she shot at Clarice gave Babs just a little inward quism.

Before she could reply, however, the door opened again. This time it was the adored mistress of the Form, Miss Charmant, who stood there.

"Oh, Barbara!"

Barbara spun round.

"Miss Charmant!"

"I just called in to congratulate you," the mistress said. She came in, closing the door after her. "All the same, if there's a cup of tea to spare, I'd love it! I missed my usual tea this afternoon. Well, Barbara, aren't you glad of yourself?"

Babs laughed.

"Of course, Miss Charmant. But I was awfully lucky."

"Merit," Miss Charmant affirmed. "Merit, Barbara! I was one of the judging committee. A beautiful little effort, really. I'm going to beg it from you when it comes back from the exhibition. But—" Her lovely eyes clouded a little. "Barbara, have you ever heard of Ivy Greene?"

"No," Babs said.

"A girl in the village," Miss Charmant informed her. "A cripple. Quite a nice girl, and—and I suppose one can't allow one's heart to run away with one, but I felt so sorry for her. She was there, you know—at the town hall when we were judging."

She sighed.

"Look, Clarice, the kettle is boiling! She had an exhibit, too—rather a pretty little effort, but with none of the technique of yours, and painted in such cheap water-colours that it couldn't possibly have won a prize."

"Poor thing!" Babs said.

"She—she was terribly enthusiastic about your etching. She said it must be marvellous to draw like that!"

"And—and—well," Miss Charmant laughed, "she was so frightfully interested in you, Barbara, that I'm afraid I committed you without consulting you. But, in short, I promised Ivy that I would tell you all about her, and practically suggested that you might like to go and see her. She'd be awfully thrilled, I know."

"But I would!" Babs cried at once.

"I—I'd love to meet her! She's a cripple, you say? Where does she live?"

"In Friarade, a little place called Rosemary Cottage, near the Hathaway tea-rooms. If you'll let me know when you're going, Barbara, I'd like to send the child a little something. Her father's out of work, you know, and I gather that her mother helps in the Hathaway shop."

"Thank you, Clarice! Is that my tea? One lump of sugar, please. As a matter of fact, Miss Charmant thoughtfully considered, "if you're doing nothing very important after tea, Barbara, you might like to make the trip then? I'll give you a special late pass."

"Oh, I say!" Mabs exclaimed. "And—and can I take Mabs with me?"

"Yes, of course, and"—Miss Char-

mant merrily conceded—"Clarice, too, if you like. Take your sketch book, too, Barbara—I rather promised you might. Ivy will be delighted. No, Clarice, I won't stay for another cup. Barbara, if you like to come along now I'll make out those passes right away."

Gleefully Babs left the study. This was an unexpected treat. Such a sweet and considerate friend. Of course, she'd just love to meet Ivy Greene, and at the same time do whatever she could for her. And late passes for three of them—

Entrancing prospect! If only, she wistfully thought, things had been different. If only Mabs had not conceived this dislike of Clarice—what three good chums they could have been together!

She only hoped to goodness that they weren't quarrelling now. They seemed so ready to quarrel the moment her back was turned.

But they weren't. Not if she could help it, Mabs had grimly resolved, should the rift in the lute of Study No. 4's harmony be widened.

Hardly had Babs disappeared than she made an excuse to Clarice, and disappeared herself—to issue the invitations for the party in Babs' honour she proposed to project after lessons tomorrow.

Clarice, however, did not seem to be disturbed. She did not, for once, even seem to wish to be hurtful. She watched Mabs as she disappeared, and then chuckled to herself.

"So," she muttered—Clarice had a dangerous habit of talking to herself when preoccupied—"that's the way the wind blows, is it? Ivy Greene, eh? And Miss Charmant so frightfully keen on the kid that she's willing to grant late passes. Sounds, Clarry, old top, as if you might keep that information up your sleeve. Might be useful!"

And she grinned again in evident delight as she thought of the prospect special passes held out. Courtfield, after all, she reflected, was not so far from Friardale. In Courtfield one really could enjoy oneself.

For to enjoy herself, to have the good time she had promised herself during her temporary stay at Cliff House, was Clarice Dyson's secretly avowed determination. Not if Clarice knew it was she going to settle down to the humdrum existence which her anxious father, prior to his trip abroad, had planned for her.

She had money; she meant to spend it. She also had friends in the Form who had money, and who also wished to have a good time.

Not Babs—oh, no. Clarice thought maliciously, not goody-goody Babs, who was such a stickler for rules that she had prevented her from breaking bounds in Lydia Crossendale's company last night.

All the same, she must remain on good terms with Babs. Babs, after all, was the girl into whose charge she had been put; who had been most earnestly requested by Miss Primrose to report any lapse she might show.

Clarice knew that, of course—not much went on that Clarice did not know! So far, at least, she'd kept on the right side of Babs. Mabs, of course, was a different proposition. Mabs knew her for the deceitful girl she was in reality—hence her secret hostility towards the girl whenever, in private, they met.

Very cunningly she had driven a wedge into the friendship which, before her coming, had made Mabs and Babs so inseparable. She was not going to

rest, she vowed, until, as in the case of Bessie Bunter, she had succeeded in getting Mabs out of the study for good.

But these late passes—
Babs came in, face flushed, eyes sparkling, waving three white slips above her head.

"Got them!" she cried. "Oh, where's Mabs?"

"Here!" that girl replied, and appeared at the door, looking unexpectedly happy. "Got the passes, Babs? Oh, good! Well, let's have tea and get going!"

In a great hurry they finished, and, rather neglectfully leaving the unwashed dishes until they came back, went to the cloak-room, put on hats and coats, and were just in time to catch the bus outside the school gates.

A quarter of an hour found them in Friardale, Babs with a parcel under her arm, Mabs still smiling as if secretly pleased—for she was, having issued her invitations to to-morrow's party—and Clarice, rather quiet for once, thoughtfully frowning.

Rosemary Cottage, a small, thatched little dwelling, sandwiched between the Hathaway tea-rooms and the Friardale butchers, was reached at last. Babs knocked.

From inside came the sound of stumbling footsteps. The handle of the door turned with a squeak. A rather wondering, wide-eyed girl with a pale face and strangely large black eyes stared out at them.

"Y-yes?" she asked.
"Does Miss Ivy Greene live here?" Babs asked.

"Why, yes!" The little girl looked amazed. "I am Ivy Greene."

"And I—" Babs dimpled. "am Barbara Redfern, of Cliff House School. Miss Charmant asked me to call."

How Ivy's face glowed at that! How suddenly embarrassed she became! If Babs had announced herself as a fairy princess Ivy could not have been more wildly excited.

She invited them in, apologising for the fact that her mother and father, having gone into Courtfield to shop—for the Courtfield shops were cheaper than those of Friardale—were absent.

Babs smiled. What an engaging little thing the child was!

"And—and you did bring your sketch-book, didn't you, Miss Redfern?" Ivy breathed. "Miss Charmant was telling me—"

"It's here," Babs smiled, and put it on the table. "And here," she added, "is a little present from Miss Charmant herself. She asked me to give it you, Ivy."

And she held out towards the trembling girl the little packet wrapped in tissue paper, which she had brought with her.

Ivy opened it, staring in dumb surprise and delight at the box of really super crayons which the removal of the wrappings revealed.

She could not speak. She just gazed at Babs, too overwhelmed even to express in words the thanks which shone so manifestly in her eyes.

"Oh, it—it's so good of her, and—and you!" she got out at last. "I saw your etching at the town hall, Miss Redfern. It was lovely."

Babs smiled.
"I'm glad you liked it, Ivy."

"Oh, I did! It—it must be lovely to be able to draw like that," she said wistfully. "I'm so awfully fond of painting, though, of course, I've never had any training. Daddy says if he could afford it, he'd send me to an art school, and buy me real water-colours and all that, you know. But, oh, Miss



WHEN Ivy saw the box of crayons Babs had brought from Miss Charmant, her delight knew no bounds. While Clarice, standing by, secretly exulted; she thought she saw how Babs' interest in the little cripple girl might be turned to her own advantage.

Redfern, is this your sketch-book? Do let me see."

Babs opened it. Clarice shifted a little impatiently. Mabs, her eyes upon the little girl, found herself shaking her head.

Poor kid! she was thinking commiseratingly. What a plucky fight she was making in life, despite her poverty, and the cruel handicap of that injured leg.

But Ivy was happy. Tumultuously happy. She loved Babs' sketches. Frightfully clever Babs was, she said; and then, prevailed upon to bring out samples of her own handiwork, hesitantly produced a rather tattered book cover in which were several paintings.

The paintings were good—exceptionally good—but it was apparent at once that what handicapped Ivy was not her lack of artistry, but the material with which she worked.

The paper on which she had executed her paintings was thin and cheap; the colour she had used lacked richness and depth. Excellent as they were in other respects, they could never, never have won a prize in any sort of competition.

Babs felt quite touched.

"And these are really yours, Ivy?"

"Yes," Ivy shyly admitted.

"Can I have a look at your paints?"

Ivy blushed.

"They—they're not very good ones, Miss Redfern, but they are the best daddy could afford for me."

The paints were produced. Babs sadly shook her head. She examined the brushes—cheap, imitation hair ones, ragged and wispy. And Ivy had worked with these! Uncomplaining little soul that she was, she had energetically and painstakingly laboured at her paintings with such crude tools!

A sense of pity, an overwhelming desire to do something for the little one, rose in Babs' heart.

She glanced sympathetically at the cripple girl.

"These are not very good, are they?" she asked gently. "It's a miracle to me, Ivy, how you managed to do the work you have done. But—" She paused, reflecting, and then impulsively making up her mind, beamed. "Ivy, I've a box of paints at school—a brand new box, complete with six lovely new brushes! They were given to me for a Christmas present, but as I stick to black-and-white, they're not of much use to me. Would you like those?"

Ivy looked overwhelmed.

"Oh, Miss Redfern, I couldn't—"

"But you can!" Babs said, with a laugh. "And you're going to have them, Ivy! I'll bring them with me next time I come—to-morrow, after tea, perhaps," she added gaily.

"But—but—Oh, Miss Redfern, how can I thank you?"

"By just—Babs smiled—"saying nothing. Mind you," she added, with a laugh, "I'm not going to give them to you for nothing. The very first picture you paint with them, Ivy, I shall expect you to give me. Now, really, we must be going. To-morrow, then."

She rose. Mabs and Clarice, taking their cue from her, rose, too. Almost too delighted to speak, Ivy accompanied them to the door, and said good-night. She was preparing to close the door when Clarice, with a sudden movement, wheeled.

"Here, Ivy," she said, "take that. Get yourself some new paper or something with it. But don't tell anyone I gave it to you."

"And Ivy, staring in bewilderment, could not speak. For in her hand lay a new half-crown!



With Malice Aforethought

IMIMPULSIVELY good-natured that act of Clarice's, it appeared. But it was not done without a motive.

Very closely had Clarice studied the little one during that conversation, and certain ideas rising nebulously in her mind had suggested that this new-formed friendship between Babs and Ivy Greene might be used to her own advantage.

Right! Then the first and obvious step was to ingratiate herself with Ivy, and since she had neither paints nor brushes to give her, a half-crown seemed the best way of buying Ivy's favour.

Thus Clarice prepared the ground for further possible exploitation. That unexpectedly generous little gift would put the simple Ivy in her debt.

For Clarice had a gift for seeing ahead and in planning ahead. She figured that Ivy Greene might be useful in that scheme of hers to have the good time upon which she had set her heart, and in keeping Barbara Redfern in ignorance at the same time.

Miss Charmant, apparently, was in the same tender mood as Babs, where Ivy was concerned. Easy enough, with Ivy as the excuse, to get late passes galore. But she must think of some way of working it.

Not that Clarice had any doubt as to her ability on that score. Still, preparing the ground, she talked of nothing else on the homeward walk but Ivy Greene—what a sweet little child she was; how awful it must be for her to hobble through life with one game leg! How drawn she was towards her! How dearly she would like to see her again!

Even Mabs was mildly amazed at the warmth and affection which Clarice managed to infuse into her tone, and in Babs' estimation Clarice rose higher than ever.

Gates were reached at last. As they expected, they were closed.

Piper, the porter, came grumbling to open them. It was half an hour past call-over then, and Piper, when disgruntled, took a surly delight in warning delinquents that they were reported. But even morose Piper was silenced when Babs produced the passes.

The gates swung open. Babs & Co., with a sense of having scored, stepped through. They walked up the drive into Big Hall. Bessie Bunter, her eyes gleaming excitedly behind her thick spectacles, came up.

"Oh, B-Babs! I sus-say, Babs, Miss Charmant wants to sus-see you, you know!"

"When—now?"

"Yes, rather! She told me, to tell you as soon as you came in."

She glanced a little sourly at Clarice, for Clarice had been the means of getting Bessie expelled from Study No. 4, and Bessie, at the moment studious, was not in a mood to forgive Clarice all in a hurry. "But I sus-say! Where have you been?" she asked aggressively.

"And what did you take that cat—"

"Meaning," Clarice asked, "me? Oh, Bessie!"

But Bessie sniffed. She turned away while Babs, with a warning glance at the fat chum, hurried on to find the Form-mistress.

Mabs paused. She looked again at Clarice—Clarice, smiling, radiant—and

thinking perhaps of Clarice's enthusiasm for Ivy Greene, and ready-and willing for the sake of that harmony in Study No. 4, to forgive and forget. She touched Clarice on the arm.

"Oh, Clarice, can I have a word with you?"

Clarice gazed at her.

"In private?"

"Yes."

"Not going to ask me to break bounds or anything?" Clarice asked anxiously.

"You know I'm not."

"But what's the idea of the secrecy?"

"Nothing, really. It's just a little surprise I'm planning for Babs—to celebrate her winning the art exhibition, you know. This—" And Mabs, dragging her aside, told her, while Clarice's eyes lit up. "You'll come, Clarice?"

"Why, of course, I'll come!" Clarice said. "And thanks for the invitation. Half an hour after lessons, you say—in Study No. 4."

"Yes."

"O.K., then! Who else is coming?"

And Mabs, with a sense of relief, told her. She had half dreaded that the invitation might be turned into an opportunity by Clarice for a fresh quarrel.

But it hadn't, and Clarice seemed pleased. Clarice was pleased, for Mabs' idea suggested another idea to her. A delicious idea in truth, it was.

But it seemed to amuse Clarice, for she was chuckling mightily to herself as she ambled off to Study No. 1, which housed Lydia Crossendale, Rosa Rodworth, and Freda Ferriers.

The three looked up at her entry.

"Hallo, Clarice! Come in!" Lydia said cordially. "Rather been wanting to see you, she added.

"Bad luck about the dance last night, but—" She paused; then from her pocket she produced a folded handbill. "Look at that!"

Clarice took it. She looked at it.

The handbill was an advertisement announcing an extra special tea-dance, to be held at the Assembly Rooms, in Lantham, on Wednesday afternoon next. Herbert Greatbanks, the film star, had agreed to act as M.C., and the famous Lulong Dance Band, celebrated throughout Europe and America, was going to render the music.

"Oh, I say!" Clarice breathed.

"Are you going?"

"Just trying to work it out," Lydia grinned. "Lantham, of course, is out of bounds. I'm going, if there's half a chance. So is Rosa, and Freda here. Will you come?"

"Won't I?" Clarice exclaimed; and her eyes shone. "Leave it to me. I'll think up something. I'll keep this if you don't mind," she added, slipping the handbill into her pocket.

"Mean-time, I've got a new scheme on. You've heard that Babs has won the first prize in the art exhibition?"

"Well, what of that?"

"Quite a lot." Clarice slyly grinned.

"Because, you see, as Babs is such a very, very dear friend of mine." She spoke mockingly. "I've decided to stand her a first-class feed. I'd like all of you in this study to come, the only stipulation being that no one must breathe a single word as to what is taking place. You see—with sly significance—"I want it to be a surprise for darling Babs."

"Meaning," Lydia chuckled, "that you've got some private score to pay off?"

"Something like that. But, anyway, don't split, will you? Immediately after lessons in Study No. 4—under-



IN an avalanche the pile of tea things crashed to the floor, smashing to fragments. Mabs knew that it was the new girl's fault. Clarrice had deliberately pushed her.

stand? I'm going along to the servants' quarters to bribe Sally and Amy to prepare it for me while we're at lessons."

She went out, leaving the three looking at each other. Lydia chuckled; Freda tittered. Rosa, who was of a somewhat different calibre, frowned. Still, it was no business of hers, and a tea-party, she philosophically reflected, was a tea-party, after all. Meantime, Clarrice went off down the corridor.

She slipped into Study No. 10. Diana Rowston-Clarke, lying negligently back in the armchair, her feet resting on the carved head of one of the monks which adorned the fireplace, looked round languidly.

"Oh, you!" she said. "Hallo! Want to see me—or Margot?"

"You," Clarrice chuckled. "You can keep a secret, can't you?"

And she extended to Diana the invitation that she had issued to Study No. 1. Diana grinned.

"Right! I'll be there. Immediately after lessons, you say?"

"Immediately," Clarrice impressed. From Diana she went to Gwen Cook, from Gwen Cook to Phyllis Howell, and Peggy Preston. She invited the Terraine Twins and Bridget O'Toole, she invited Frances Frost and Nancy Bell.

That, she thought, would be enough, and, satisfied that she had done her work well, tripped downstairs to interview Sally and Amy.

That done, Clarrice strolled back to Stridyn, No. 4, there to find Babs and Mabs, Babs in a state of great excitement.

For Babs had just returned from Miss Charmant, and Miss Charmant, who had been discussing her success in the Art Exhibition with Miss Primrose, the headmistress, had saddled her with a most important duty.

"Oh, Clarrice, what do you think?" Babs breathlessly greeted her. "Miss Fielding—you've heard of Miss Fielding?"

Clarrice nodded. She had heard of Miss Fielding. Who hadn't? At Cliff House there was one name revered above all others—that of Miss Fielding, its first scholar, its greatest benefactor, the builder of its theatre, its new swimming-bath, the donor of its fifty new scholarships.

"Why, yes," Clarrice agreed. "It's her birthday in a fortnight's time," Babs explained. "It's Miss Primrose's wish that the whole school contribute towards a handsome present for her, and that we celebrate it with an enormous party."

"Oh, I say!" Clarrice exclaimed. "Hope I'm here for that."

"And—and"—Babs rushed on. "When we give her the birthday present we're also presenting to her an illuminated address. As the winner of the competition," Babs dimpled. "Miss Charmant has decided that I'm to prepare the address, so I'd like to know what you think of that?"

Clarrice blinked.

"That's a big job, isn't it?" "Oh, yes; but I'm having certain times off," Babs said happily. "And, of course, I shall have to put in every moment of my spare time, as well. It's really a terrific thing—about twenty small sketches, in all, besides no end of lettering. Miss Charmant is supplying the libretto, and I'm going to work to-morrow after lessons on roughing it out."

"You mean after tea?" Mabs put in anxiously.

"Of course!"

"But what about Ivy Greene?" Clarrice asked. "And those paints. Babs, you promised to take those to her to-morrow, after tea."

Babs frowned. "Oh, dear! So I did. Oh, boy, or! But still, never mind. You and Mabs aren't doing anything. You could take them along for me, instead. I'll speak to Miss Charmant and ask her for passes."

Clarrice grinned. Inwardly she crowded. So far, so good! She shot a look at Mabs, who, determined to be nice, smiled back at her.

Perhaps Mabs was not feeling enthusiastic over the prospect, but Mabs was so pleased with the honour that had been done Babs that she felt she would have put up with anything—yes, even having to accompany Clarrice to Friardale.

In any case, she had resolved to give Clarrice no further ground for animosity. Since it made Babs so unhappy that there should be enmity between them, Mabs, for her part, was determined to do her best to heal the breach.

But not Clarrice!

From that moment Clarrice's mind was working. What she had vaguely schemed for had happened. Another late pass out to-morrow! Her mind was already grappling with the inducement it offered. Supposing she got away after her party—about half-past five? Armed with a special late pass, she need not be back till eight—two whole hours and a half!

Plenty of time, she reflected, to slip into the cinema at Courtfield and see that ripping new film—that is, if one went to Courtfield direct from Cliff House School.

But not with Mabs for company—oh, dear, no! To-morrow was not a half-holiday, and, except on half-holidays, Courtfield was out of bounds. She'd got to get rid of Mabs somehow. If anyone was going to accompany her on that trip, it was going to be Lydia Crossendale.

"Well, that's topping!" she cried heartily. "Isn't it, Mabs?"—with a friendly smile at the other girl. "Right—ho, then, Babs! We'll look upon that as settled. Now"—with a glance at the table, on which the still uncollected things from tea still remained—"What about clearing up and getting down to prep? Not you, Babs. You get the prep books out. Mabs and I will clear, won't we, Mabs?"

"Yes, of course!" Mabs agreed.

"Right—ho!" You collect the crocks while I put the other things away in the cupboard." And Clarrice, briskly suiting action to words, snatched up the pepper-pot and salt-cellar. "Here we are! Out of the way, Babs, you old heroine. Mabs—"

But Mabs needed no urging. Really, in this jolly mood, she almost liked Clarrice.

Babs laughed. She flew to the bureau, banged down the lid, and began to collect the books, while Mabs stacked up the plates on one corner of the table. She hummed a little tune. So pleased, so happy, was Mabs, thinking of her chum, thinking deliciously of that surprise party which should so increase her happiness to-morrow. She jerked her head towards the door.

"Clarrice, open the door, will you? I'll take these things along to the cloak-room and wash-up."

"Certainly!" beamed Clarrice. She flew to the door. Mabs, arming herself with the plates, put the cups and saucers on top of them and moved towards the door, which Clarrice now was smilingly holding open. She reached it, and, with a smile of thanks, was passing through it, when—

"Oh!" gasped Mabs.

She was not prepared for the teacher-

ous push which she received. Quite a hard, callous push, it was, and delivered so spitefully, so unexpectedly, that Mabs inadvertently stumbled, releasing her hold upon the pile of crocks she carried.

One gasp came from her lips. She staggered and then—Crash, crash, crash!

In an avalanche the whole of Study No. 4's tea-things cascaded from her grasp. There was an appalling crash. Plates, cups, and saucers splintering to fragments, flew all over the corridor.

Mabs wheeled furiously.

"Clarice!" she cried.
"But there was Clarice, all wide-eyed amazement and horror, standing a good two yards inside the study, and Babs, in the act of turning from the bureau, staring in amazement.

"Mabs!"
"She pushed me!" Mabs cried angrily. "She deliberately pushed me!"

"Oh, Mabs!" cried Clarice. "I—I never touched you. You tripped over the carpet. Babs, you saw, didn't you?"

"Why, you—"
"Mabs! Mabs!" Babs shook her head. "No, I didn't see," she said. "My back was turned. Oh, goodness, Clarice, did you push her?"

"Good gracious, no!" Clarice's anger flamed in her face. "Of course I didn't! I just waited until she passed through the door, and then turned back. I heard her stagger over the edge of the carpet, there, and I turned—just here, where I'm standing now."

Mabs breathed deeply.
"I tell you—"

"Oh, don't, please!" Babs looked distracted. "Mabs, please be reasonable!" she begged. "Clarice couldn't have pushed you from here."

Mabs lips compressed.
"You mean you believe her?"

"Well, Mabs, look for yourself."

Mabs' glance was scornful.
"All right," she exclaimed—"all right! I didn't trip—not until she pushed me in the arm. She did it deliberately—on purpose!"

"Oh, I didn't!" Clarice cried, and looked almost ready to cry. "Babs, I didn't—really!" she cried chokily. "She's making it up. You know how she hates me—"

"What—who's made all this mess?" interrupted a voice at the door.

The voice belonged to Connie Jackson, the unpopular prefect of the Sixth Form. They all jumped to behold Connie standing there, gazing in astonishment at the litter in the corridor. Her gaze flew instantly to the flushed and angry face of Mabel Lynn.

"Did you do this?"

"She tripped over the carpet," Clarice Dyson put in.

"Oh, you did, did you?" Connie sneered. "Then you can take fifty lines for being careless!" she said. "You can take another fifty for making such a mess, and another fifty on top of that for not having the things washed up sooner. And who," she demanded angrily, "was shouting as I came down the passage? It was your voice I heard, Mabel."

Mabs drew a deep breath.
"Well, I'm waiting. You know that orders are there's to be no shouting in studies."

"Ask her!" Mabs said quietly, pointing at Clarice.
"I'm asking you."

"All right," Mabs flung round. "I was shouting," she said. "I was rowing with Clarice Dyson. And if you want to know what I was rowing about, it was because—"

And then she stopped. Oh, what was the use of making a fresh scene! Once again Clarice had triumphed; once again her spite had succeeded.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter!" she finished lamely.

"All right. Then take another hundred lines for rowing!" Connie snapped. "That's two hundred and fifty lines altogether, Mabel Lynn. Have them in my study before prep tomorrow. Or—"

And she gazed darkly and significantly at the golden-haired girl. "Now clear this mess up!"

Mabs bit her lip. She found herself quivering. Oh, it was unfair—unfair! The cruel injustice of it! At that moment she could have flung herself upon Clarice, who, sadly shaking her head, was glowering at Babs, who, in her turn, was looking deeply distressed.

Clarice sighed.
"Oh dear!" she said. "Oh goodness! Mabs, shall I help you pick them up?"

"Thanks; I'll do it myself!" Mabs said shortly.
She stopped. Quivering she was—quivering with uncontrollable yet futile rage. Again Clarice, in the cunning, hypocritical way of hers, had been the means of widening the breach in the friendship between her and Babs, and had got her into trouble at the same time.

Oh, why couldn't Babs see through her shallowness, her cunning, her hypocrisy? Two hundred and fifty lines! But worse than that was this further misunderstanding between her and Babs. She almost choked.

Babs, without a word, went forward. Very quietly and considerately she got out the tray from the cupboard, while Clarice, in a mood of gloomy despair, apparently, sank down into the armchair. Babs stepped forward.

"Let me help," she said.

Mabs did not reply. She couldn't. Words at that moment would have choked her. The shattered pieces swam before her eyes as she stooped, the carpet seemed to be whirling around her.

She felt Babs' presence, she longed, with an almost fierce, irresistible desire in that moment to clutch Babs' arm. But she didn't.

Silently the two laboured, until all the broken pieces were collected.

Mabs, with a nod of thanks, picked up the tray and trailed along the corridor. Babs watched her; then rather forlornly turned back into the study.

Clarice quietly began to sob.
"Oh, Clarice!" Babs said wretchedly. "O-o-oh!" blubbered Clarice. "Oh, Babs, I—I'm so miserable. I—I thought it—it was all going to blow over. She was so nun-nice, and then she turned and flamed up like that! Babs, she doesn't like me! She never has liked me. She's just jealous because you're friends with me, and because I've come into this study!"

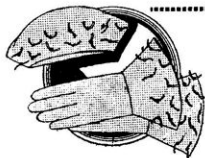
"Oh, nonsense!" Babs cried.
"But there was no conviction in her tone now. That was not like Mabs—not her Mabs to be jealous, to fling out wild and unfair accusations. The whole wretched incident, of course, had been an accident. Mabs might have thought somebody had pushed her, and seeing Clarice so near, would, naturally, blame her."

But— And she bit her lip, her happiness suddenly shattered as she recalled those many other incidents of a similar nature, which had happened since Clarice's arrival in the study.

Was Mabs jealous? Was she always seeking for some opportunity to pick on the new girl?

She did not see Mabs again before call-over. Mabs, indeed, never even came back for her prep books.

She joined Bessie Bunter in the class-



KNOTS MAKE

NOVEL

TRIMMINGS

Brighter berets are just the thing
for the sunnier days in store.

SUMMER, Autumn, Winter—and now Spring! Nothing seems to put the beret out of favour, does it? Even the seasons can make no difference to its popularity.

And what a good thing this is—especially to schoolgirls to whom comfort means so much!

But comfort need never mean dowdiness—not even plainness. Just look at the beret here. Don't you think it has quite a seven-and-six-penny look?

I do. And so I want you to add six-and-sixpence to the value of your present plain beret without any sewing at all—unless you call the making of knots sewing!

And that, I assure you, is all this novel trimming consists of.

Mark out in chalk two, three, or even four lines around the rim part of your beret.

Then collect all the scraps of wool you can—any old colour, and any old length.

LOTS OF KNOTS

Thread inch lengths through your beret at regular intervals, and tie the two ends of each in a knot.

The various colours will look very gay, and the knotting very new, I assure you.

If you have some gloves with rather big, plain gauntlets, trim these in the same way, and you'll be positively thrilled with the result.

I shouldn't be at all surprised if you don't find the other feminine members of the family following your lead, either!

But you won't mind such a compliment, I'm sure!

room, where the forlorn fat one was doing preparation all by herself. Bessie blinked.

"But—but why aren't you doing prep in the study, Mabs? It's j-jolly nice to have you, of course, but I'm blessed if I'd do prep here from my own choice!"

Mabs shook her head.
"You don't mind company, Bessie?"
"Nun-no, rather not, especially when it's you," Bessie said.

Mabs looked hopeless. She couldn't explain. She didn't want to explain—not even to dear old Bessie.

She wanted really to be alone. Mabs, for the first time for many terms, Mabs wanted to be on her own. Something had to be done about all this. In Study No. 4 they just couldn't carry on leading this bickering cat-and-dog life! For Babs to disbelieve her! For Babs to hold the balance between herself and that awful little hypocrite—

Rather sad was Mabel Lynn that night. Rather subdued as she went to bed. In silence she undressed. Feeling dangerously near tears again, she climbed between the sheets. A very feeble "Good-night!" it was she cried to Babs, who answered it with just the slightest constraint and a weary shake of the head.

Connie came in. Out went the light, and the dormitory settled down to slumber.

But for a long, long time Mabs lay awake, thinking tortuous thoughts, writhing in anguish as she recalled that unforgettable scene.

Babs must believe her. Babs was her friend, wasn't she? This little mischief-making hypocrite was trying to tear her and Babs apart. Well, she shouldn't—she shouldn't!

But how—oh, how could she go on enduring the life in Study No. 4 if incidents like this were continually going to crop up?

She fell asleep presently—a dream-haunted sleep. In the morning she awoke, heavy and unrefreshed, before rising-bell, and slipping out of bed, put on her clothes, and went downstairs at once. To her surprise Babs was in the room.

"Why, Babs—"

"Oh, hallo, Mabs!" Babs' smile was rather forced. She had a sheet of cartridge-paper before her, and was sketching with a pencil upon it. "I'm just trying to rough out the illuminated address," she said, "but it's not coming easily. What do you think of it?"
"I think," Mabs said, looking at it, "it's lovely, old thing! What's that you're putting in the corner—a sketch of the cloisters?"

"Yes."

By tacit consent not a word between them of yesterday's upheaval, though it was in the foreground of both their minds.

Mabs smiled faintly. Oh, it was so lovely to be with Babs—to have her once again all to herself, if only for a few moments.

Something seemed suddenly to snap in Mabs' heart. Babs was her friend! She wouldn't desert her! She wouldn't! She'd put up with Clarice. She'd endure anything rather than lose Babs.

Well, to the dickens with past misunderstandings! Her cue, from now on, was to steer clear of Clarice Dyson. This afternoon—

Mabs flushed suddenly. That should work the trick. When Babs discovered the splendid feast she had set out for her—her own friends gathered to share it with her, surely then any little clouds that might now be marrying their happiness would disappear.

DISGUISE FOR A SCHOOL HAT

School hats respond wonderfully to colourful trimmings. Try one of these suggested here if you agree.

SPRING being definitely in the air, naturally our thoughts turn to clothes. New things are a delight, of course—but not always easily come by.

So I've thought of the next best thing for you—a disguise for older things. In fact, your school hat, which has been used as a constant companion since last September.

I see no reason at all why this shouldn't go gay in evening times and at week-ends, do you?

A new band for your hat will work a complete disguise, turning it from an everyday into a very lighthearted affair. The top band you see here is simplicity itself to make.

You'll require three-quarters of a yard of ribbon, just wider than your present school band. Choose a colour that's not too light, won't you? Eau-de-Nil or turquoise blue don't look their best on black or brown felt and velours.

But a deep green or a brown stripe would look cheerful without being startling.

Fasten the ribbon around your hat, and arrange two woolly pompons on the front to cover the join. (This join you'd be wise to finish off with two hooks and eyes or press-studs, by the way, so that your new band is easily removable and put-on-able.)

Make the pompons with oddments of wool—such as you're sure to discover without much trouble in these days when knitting is again a decidedly modern pastime.

Just one word of warning—the colour of them. Bring all your artistic training to bear on this subject, and remember the difference between harmonies and contrasts—both equally effective, according to your type, whether dashing or restrained!

BAND-WITH MATCHING SCARF

The next style I have planned for you consists of a hatband and scarf to match.

You will want only a quarter of a yard of checked material—fairly thick, I'd suggest—to make both.

Cut from this a strip two inches wide (or a little wider if your school hatband happens to be on the deep side).

Neaten the edges with your best hemming or blanket-stitching, and piece around your hat.

No hooks and eyes for this one are needed, you'll rejoice to know. Instead, just fasten the ends by pinning your initial brooch over them. (And you know where to buy one for as little as twopenny if you haven't already got several.)

The other strip of material which you have left is to make your matching scarf. Again hem or blanket-stitch the sides.

Tuck into your coat and pin in position with a brooch similar to the one on your hat—a little bigger for preference.

And if you feel you'd like to be original, why not choose your Christian name initial for your hat and the first letter of your surname for your scarf?

Definitely different!



It would prove to Babs, at least, that she was still in the forefront of her thoughts. And even Clarice could hardly attempt any underhand trick while the study was full of other girls. She laughed a little. With an impulsiveness which took Babs by surprise, she suddenly stooped and gathering her shoulders in a rapturous hug of affection, laughed a happy laugh and flew out of the room.

Must see Clara! And Marjorie and Leila! Must go to the tuck-shop and order her spread! She, Marjorie and Clara would collect the stuff immediately after lessons. And then, heigho, for the great surprise!

Deliberately that day Mabs forced herself not to think of Clarice Dyson. She waited in a ferment of impatience for the bell which would signal the end of class in the afternoon. It came.

"Babs," she called.

"Yes?" Babs said.

"Don't be too far away. I shall want you in half an hour."

"Right-ho!" Babs laughed, "but why?" And then, as Mabs flattered out of the room, she turned to find Clarice gleefully standing at her elbow. "Babs," Clarice cried, "I want you—right now."

And she linked her arm in that of the

Fourth Form captain's and led her towards the classroom door.

"But what is it?" Babs asked.
"Wait and see," Clarice said. "By the way, Babs, did you get those late passes?"

"Oh, goodness, yes, but—" and Babs' face overshadowed. "Mabs won't be able to go, of course—not now, with all those lines to do. Don't you think you'd better take Leila, or someone?"

"Oh, I'll find somebody," Clarice said carelessly, and hastily pocketed the passes. "Don't you worry about that. Now, Babs, close your eyes," she added, as they stopped in front of the door of Study No. 4, "and don't open them till I tell you again. One, two—" she flung the door open, while Babs, smiling, stood there, her eyes screwed up. "Three! Look, Babs!"

Babs looked. Then she looked again. She stared and stared and stared, as if she could hardly believe her eyes.

What was this? Figures standing round the table laughing at her stupefaction! Lydia Crossendale, Rosa Rodworth, the Terraine twins, Freda Ferriers—oh, goodness knows who, and there, piled high with delicious eatables, was the table itself, almost creaking under the weight of the good things it contained.

"Oh, my goodness! But why—"

"For you, Babs," Clarice laughed gleefully. "I thought it would be ripping to celebrate your winning the competition, and here's the little party I've thrown for you."

"For me?" Babs cried, astonished. And all suddenly realising, turned. "Oh, Clarice, you really shouldn't, you know. But it's lovely!"

"Lovely it was. Gorgeous! Babs' face flushed, her eyes sparkled. How splendid of Clarice, how really thoughtful. And this was the girl Mabs accused of—oh, well!

"Shall we start?" Lydia asked. "You're the guest of honour you know, Babs."

"Yes, please do," Babs cried. So they all sat down, talking merrily.

But Babs missed Mabs. She missed Leila and Jemima and the others, and considered that it was only because Clarice was so new to the school that she had included in her invitation so many of the girls whom heretofore had always been her enemies. Not, naturally, that that enmity showed now. Even Nancy Bell seemed ready to be unusually charming to Babs.

"Well, a toast," Clarice cried. "Stand up, everybody. To Barbara Redfern, winner of the Courtfield Art Exhibition prize, and the designer of the illuminated address to Miss Fielding," she added, her cup in the air. "Hip—hip—"

The door opened. Mabs, accompanied by Clara Trevely and Bessie Bunter, stood there, her arms loaded with parcels. She blinked.

"Why, what—"

"Come in, Mabs," Clarice cried. "Come in, Bessie, and you, Clara. Join the merry throng."

Mabs looked stupefied.

"But—"

"All welcome," Clarice merrily went on. "We're standing this spread to Babs."

"Yes, rather. Do come in, Mabs," Babs laughed.

But Mabs did not come in. Her face had paled suddenly. She looked hard—at Lydia, at Freda, at Rosa and Nancy Bell. She looked at Clarice, Clarice, whom she had invited to her own party!

Perhaps in that moment something of the truth dawned upon her, dismaying her, sickening her, causing her all at once to flush fiery red.

"This is—Babs' party?" she said.

"Yes, rather!" Lydia grinned. "It was Clarice's idea, you know. Clarice thought we ought to celebrate Babs' winning the Courtfield prize."

"Oh!" said Mabs.

"Good idea, don't you think?" Clarice innocently asked.

"A very good idea," Mabs said. "Very good! And so—" with a flash of anger—"so utterly like you, Clarice. You knew, of course, that I had the same idea. I was giving this party to Babs."

"Oh, Mabs," Babs said uncomfortably. "Come in."

"I won't come in—I won't!" Mabs' tone was bitter. "But you ought to know, Babs. I had this idea first. I invited Clarice, and Clarice stole a march on me. I've got the things—"

"Oh, I say," Clarice cried. "Mabs, I'm so frightfully sorry! I didn't think we would clash. How was I to know?"

"I invited you."

"Oh, but you didn't—"

"Well, my hat!"

"Oh, Mabs, you know I never knew anything about it!" Clarice said reproachfully. "As if I'd have flung a

party when you were going to give one!"

Mabs gazed at her witheringly. She felt the tears of mortification rushing to her eyes. Oh, what would this deceitful girl get up to next? She had stolen her idea, had stolen her tea-party. That event to which she had looked forward with such eager anticipation all day as being the means of healing the breach between her and Babs had been swept out of her control.

Her own guests, due to turn up in ten minutes, would find another party in progress—a party to which they had not been invited.

Mabs could have shrieked with mortification; then swiftly, as she realised how heartlessly she had been tricked, that mortification burst into flaming anger.

She had stood enough—too much—from Clarice Dyson. It had to stop somewhere, and it was going to stop now.

Her eyes flamed.

"You—you wretch!" she panted. "You deceitful thing! So this is your party, is it? This is the idea you stole from me! But I can see through your paltry tricks. Oh, yes, I can see! I stole, this is my study as well as yours! I've got friends coming, too. So you can go!"

"Mabs!" cried Babs in a shocked voice of horror.

"Yes, get out!" Mabs cried.

"Oh, but—but—" Clarice looked

astounded. From her guests rose an angry murmur. "But really—"

"No, wait a minute!" Babs stepped forward. Her face was pale. She hated to interfere, but to interfere was her duty. "Mabs, I'm sorry!" she said. "There must have been some mistake."

"There was no mistake."

"There must have been!" Babs said sharply. "But, anyway, Clarice was here first."

"You mean you're going to let her get away with it?"

"It's not a matter of getting away with Mabs; it's a matter of common fairness."

"And," Mabs cried bitterly, knowing that she was saying words she was going to regret, but too angry to heed them in that moment—"and I'm not fair! Is that it, Barbara? I never have been fair since that spiteful little schemer came into this study, have I? And have you ever once sided with me against her? No! Always—always you've taken her part against me. You've chosen her as your friend."

"Mabs!" Babs cried.

"I planned this," Mabs went on, her voice shaking. "She knew it. Oh, never mind! But I'm finished! You're convinced now that I'm just a—jealous cat, and that she's all she should be. Well, go on, carry on with her. You'll find out your mistake some time."

"But—but, I say, what's all the fuss about?" asked Bessie densely. "Lul-lul's join Clarice's feed—though the mean cat didn't ask us. Then we can have our own afterwards."

"Oh, Bessie, be quiet!" Mabs gasped desperately.

There was a silence. Lydia tittered.

"Oh, my hat! Look at the inseparables!"

"Mabs!" Babs cried in a vibrant voice.

But Mabs had finished. The tritter, the sneer, from Lydia Crossendale had brought her to her senses.

Anger suddenly evaporated; the fury in her eyes dissolved before a rush of tears. Blindly she rushed from the study, closing the door behind her; and then, alone in the corridor, she burst into a storm of tears.



Too Clever

"GOT the passes?"

"Yes, rather!"

Mabel Lynn started.

There had been no celebration feast. The tuck she had so gaily purchased lay at the moment in Clara Trevely's study.

After the violent scene in Study No. 4 Mabs had neither the heart nor the inclination to preside at what could only have been a mockery of her original intention. Nobody understood. Babs, it seemed, least of all.

Dazed, humiliated, Mabs had returned alone and unaccompanied to the music-room.

She wanted no tea after that. She had been a fool—oh, a fool to allow her temper to run away with her like that! To have played into her enemy's hands by provoking that scene.

Sick at heart, weary, miserable, she felt in that moment. She wanted nothing to do with anybody.

Now, in her favourite corner, sitting on the pouffe by the fire, and screened from view of the door by the grand piano, which formed her back rest, she was crying softly.

But she pricked up her ears when the door opened and two girls came into the room. She heard the voice of Clarice Dyson, followed by the drawing tones of Lydia Crossendale.

"Courtfield?" Lydia asked. "The cinema—eh? Good! But what about the paints you've got to take to the kid at the cottage?"

"Oh, we'll dump those!" Clarice

grinned. "Well, if you're ready—"

The door opened and closed again. Mabs sat upright. She understood now. Clarice had got the passes intended for herself. Clarice, instead of fulfilling Babs' mission, was out to make merry in Courtfield.

And this—this, she thought bitterly, was the girl Babs preferred to her!

If Babs only knew! If Babs could only have heard!

Well—and suddenly Mabs stood up. Why shouldn't Babs know? Why shouldn't she discover for herself what sort of a creature she was making a friend?

She had tried, goodness knows, to convince Babs; but Clarice, always so sly, so cunning, had most artfully turned the tables on her every time. Babs should know. Babs had a right to know! If Babs saw with her own eyes—

Straight to Study No. 4 Mabs went. Babs, busy on her illuminated address, looked up. She flushed a little as she met Mabs' gaze, but there was little warmth in her own.

"Well," Babs asked in a stifled voice.

"I suppose you've given Clarice the paints to take to Ivy?"

"Why, yes!"

"And you'd be surprised, I suppose, to learn that Clarice, instead of delivering those paints, was going to dump them?"

"What?"

"And, instead of going to Rosemary Cottage, she's going to break bounds with Lydia Crossendale and go to the Courtfield Cinema?" Mabs asked.

Babs bit her lip.

"Mabs," she said sadly, "why are you saying this? Don't you think there's been enough trouble over you and Clarice?"

She paused as a step sounded outside, but as the door did not open, continued:

"I really don't know, Mabs, what's come over you since Clarice arrived."

"Thank you, you needn't read me a lecture." Mabs said bitterly, though it broke her heart to talk to her chum in that strain. "Since you believe me so incapable of telling the truth, I'm just asking you to prove my statements for yourself. Oh, I know you think that anything I happen to say about Clarice Dyson is made up and inspired by spite, and not until you've found that girl out for yourself will you believe me!"

"Well, I'm asking you now to find her out for yourself. I'm asking you, if you

Straight to the prefects' room she hurried, cautiously tapped on the door, and then, sinking in, locked the door behind her and took the receiver of the telephone from its hook.

"Courtfield Grand Cinema, please," she said.

The number came through. Freda spoke in a low voice into the receiver.

"Hallo! That the cinema? Listen! Two Cliff House girls are coming along. They'll be at the cinema in about a quarter of an hour. Miss Crossendale is one of them. Will you ask her to telephone Freda Ferriers at Cliff House? Tell her it's urgent."

street they walked, towards Rosemary Cottage. Mabs braced herself.

"Well," Babs said, "here we are."

"Knock," counseled Mabs.

"You're quite sure they won't be here?"

"Quite," replied Mabs through tight lips.

Babs knocked. She knocked with an inward tremor. Supposing— And then from inside the cottage came a rush of steps, a gay voice crying: "No, I'll open it, Ivy!" The door was flung open, and Mabs almost reeled in surprise.

For there confronting them, hat and



THE cottage door was flung open and Mabs reeled as she saw Clarice the new girl cried. "What's brought you here—and you, Mabs?" again Clarice had been too clever for

standing there. "Why—Babs!" Mabel realised instantly that once her.

like, to give me a chance. I tell you she and Lydia have gone to the Courtfield Cinema. If you've got any sense of duty as captain of the Form, if you've any sense of loyalty left towards me, it's up to you to prove what I say is true."

Babs winced.

"What do you want me to do?"

"Nothing much. I just want you to come with me—to the Greene's cottage. If Clarice doesn't turn up there, then perhaps you will be satisfied. And," Mabs declared bluntly, "she won't turn up. Well, are you coming?"

Babs sighed. She looked at her chum very queerly. Then quietly she rose, putting down her work.

"I'll come," she said.

"Thank you," Mabs returned.

She went out. Outside the door a girl rapidly straightened up and walked away. Mabs glanced after her, never guessing for a moment that she had been listening and had overheard every word, much too full of her own emotions even then to give more than a subconscious glance as she disappeared round the angle of the corridor.

But Freda Ferriers, toady and crony of Lydia, did not look round.

"Very good, miss."

Freda hung up the receiver. Through the landing window she watched Babs and Mabs as they hurried out of the school, passing down the drive. Then suddenly there was a ring in the prefects' room again. She flew to the phone.

"Hallo! That you, Lydia? Oh, thank goodness! Listen! Babs and Mabs are on the track of Clarry. They've gone off together to the Greene's cottage to find out if you have turned up there. If you take a taxi from Courtfield you'll be able to get there before them. But hurry."

"Oh, my hat! Thanks, Freda!"

"Not at all!"

And Freda put down the receiver with a grin.

Meantime, Babs and Mabs were strolling on. As there was no half-holiday at Cliff House to-day, there was no bus service, and the only method of getting to Friarfield village was by walking.

Very silent they both were as they tramped—Mabs stiff with the pride and the unwillingness to break down which possessed her, Babs thoughtful and worried.

They reached the village. Up the

coat off, looking radiantly pretty, was Clarice herself. She smiled at them.

"Why, Babs!" she cried, in pretended delight. "Fancy—you! Whatever's brought you here? Come in, do! Ivy is just dying to thank you for those lovely paints. And—why, Mabs, you, too!" she cried. "Come in!"

But Mabs had met that strange, stricken look of Babs. Her face turned white.

"No, thank you," she replied, in a stifled voice, and, turning abruptly, walked away.

Clarice, it seemed, had beaten her again. Her effort to expose her had failed!



Too Much For Mabs

SHE was in her study, wearily plodding through her two hundred and fifty lines, when, half an hour later, Babs, accompanied by Clarice, came in—Clarice smiling happily and gleefully, Babs worried and frowning.

She glanced up once very briefly—and then, with set lips, bent her head to her task once more.

Clarice looked at Babs and sadly shook her head. Babs, with a weary little sigh, removed her hat and hung it behind the door.

Mabs wrote on—scratch, scratch, scratch—driving the pen quite furiously over the paper, and wishing to goodness that she could free herself of the fierce, burning sensation which possessed her.

Clarice coughed.

"Er—busy, Mabs?" she asked pleasantly.

"I am," Mabs said, without looking up.

"What are you doing—oh, lines!" Sympathy was in false Clarice's tones.

"I say, what a wad!" she cried. "Mabs, can I help you?"

"No!" Mabs said fiercely.

"But I'd like to, you know," Clarice said softly. "After all, though you did blame me for pushing you, Mabs, I don't bear malice."

Mabs looked up. Clarice was standing there by her side—speaking for Babs' benefit, of course—the most earnest, entreating look upon her face, her eyes yearning and wistful.

Oh, what a hypocrite this girl was! What a two-faced, deceitful, artful little cat! Not often was Mabs moved to fits of violence, but she really felt in that moment that she could have struck Clarice.

"Will you," she said between her teeth, "leave me alone, please?"

"But I only wanted—"

Babs frowned.

"Clarry, please!" she said, but she could not resist: "I think that's very childish of you, Mabs."

"Do you?" Mabs asked, looking up.

"Well—"

"Thank you!" And in sudden anger Mabs collected her sheets. "In that case, I'll clear out," she said. "I'll do my lines in the class-room. I wish"—with a bitter look—"you joy of your company, Barbara."

She went out, closing the door behind her. Babs stood still, white-faced and tight-lipped.

As the door closed she made an impulsive half-step towards it, and then turned as Clarry's hand was placed upon her arm, as she saw Clarry's earnest face looking into her eyes, Clarry's head shaking in a wise injunction not to follow.

"Meanwhile, Mabs, her heart overflowing, went on to the class-room. In its gloom she finished her lines, and tripped along to Connie Jackson's study to deliver them.

It was time for prep then, and after hesitating to decide her course of action, she strolled into Study No. 4.

After all, why should she efface herself from that study? It was her study as well as Clarice's.

To her relief, however, Study No. 4 was untenanted. At once Mabs tripped across to the cupboard where she kept her books, was stooping to collect them, when a yellow, folded slip of paper on the floor caught her eye.

It was a printed bill, and Mabs, wondering if it was something she had dropped, opened it and read it. She frowned a little.

"ASSEMBLY ROOMS, LAN-
THAM," it was headed.

Assembly Rooms—Mabs knew the place. Quite an aristocratic rendezvous were the Assembly Rooms, famous for the famous people they attracted and the really excellent dances which were held there.

But this handbill referred to a tea dance, with Henry Greatbanks, the cele-

brated film star, as the M.C., and the famous Lulong band in attendance.

Posh, thought Mabs, and frowned a little enviously, perhaps wishing that Lantham was not out of bounds.

Then she saw the date.

To-morrow!

Mabs wondered then. To whom did this handbill belong? But she knew even as the thought crossed her mind.

Clarice Dyson!

Was Clarice going to that dance? There was the sound of footsteps in the passage. Mabs, without thinking, hurriedly pushed the handbill into her pocket. The door opened again, and once more Clarice came in, accompanied by Barbara Redfern. Clarice was laughing.

"And, you know, Babs, I do feel that I'd like to give Ivy something. Yes, truly! Thanks to you and Miss Charmant, she's got paints and brushes and crons, but she hasn't got an easel or a decent palette, or anything like that. I'd like to go over to Courtfield to-morrow and buy the things, and then take them on to her. Do you think Miss Charmant would think it was awful cheek if I asked for passes?"

"Well, why not put it to her?" Babs replied. "Tell her I sent you."

"Oh, thanks awfully! Shall I go now?"

"If you like."

Clarice laughed.

"Well, I will," she said, and off she trotted there and then.

While Mabs, giving no sign that she had heard that conversation, kept her head bent to her work, afraid to look up at Babs, afraid to speak. But her eyes gleamed.

She fancied the handbill in her possession supplied the real reason for Clarice's sudden, amazing philanthropy.

Clarice wanted those passes, of course—not for Ivy Greene's benefit, but to go to the dance.

Babs pouted.

"Mabs?"

"Yes?" Mabs said, with a little gulp.

"Mabs—please look at me." Babs' gaze was entreating. "Mabs, why won't you be different?" she asked sorrowfully. "Why must you make things so unpleasant in the study? Surely you believe in Clarice now?"

Mabs did not reply. With feverishness she went on writing.

Babs shook her head. For a moment she stood by the table, gazing very, very forlornly at Mabs.

Perhaps it was as well that Mabs did not see the expression on her face, an expression which still proclaimed her love for Mabs, her un-understanding of Mabs, puzzled, pleading. Babs looked in that moment very much as if she wanted to put her arm round Mabs, as Mabs had put her arm round her that morning. But she didn't.

Rather wearily she moved to her desk and got on with her work.

Meantime, Clarice was in Miss Charmant's room. Miss Charmant was smiling.

"Well, it's very kind of you, Clarice, really. Of course you may have permission—of course?"

"But—but it will take quite a time, you know," Clarice put in artfully.

"We'll have to go to Courtfield first and buy the things. Then we'll have to take them to the cottage and—give them to Ivy. And, naturally, we can't run away at once. I—I was wondering if you would give me a pass for half-past eight, instead of eight."

Miss Charmant frowned.

"Well, it is unusual, Clarice; but—"

yes, I can do it. Who are you taking, by the way?"

"Well, Lydia, Miss Charmant, t. Lydia's awfully fond of Ivy, you know. And—if you don't mind, Rosa Rodworth. And—and I thought that—that, as it will be rather dark coming back, there'd better be a party of us, you know. I'd rather like Freda to be included, too, if you don't mind."

"Oh, artful Clarice! Miss Charmant, smiling, unsuspecting, delighted, for little Ivy's sake, that she had found such staunch friends, made the passes out willingly enough.

Clarice took them with outward thanks but with inward glee.

Once she was cleared of Miss Charmant's study she burst into Study No. 1 like a whirlwind, almost cannoning into Bessie Bunter who was coming down the passage. She waved the passes on high.

"Oh, my hat, look—got them—four of them! What price the tea-dance at Lantham now, kids?"

"I say"—Lydia stared. "How on earth did you manage it?"

Clarice chuckled.

"Just cheek," she said—"and a little cunning. All set, then? To-morrow, immediately after lessons, we go to the tea-dance."

"What-ho!"

Bessie Bunter, who had stopped outside, paused at that. She shot a glance towards the door. Her eyes gleamed behind her thick round spectacles, for if Bessie had an enemy at Cliff House School, that enemy was Clarice Dyson.

So Clarice was going to Lantham, was she? Going to some sort of a tea-dance. Lantham, she knew, was out of bounds. The cat!

Bessie couldn't give Clarice away—of course not! But she felt very tempted to do so. To get her own back on the girl who had caused her expulsion from Study No. 4 was one of fat Bessie's major ambitions.

Dismally she rolled up the corridor, blinked at the door of Study No. 4, was about to knock, when Mabs came out. She flung a quick look at the fat one.

"Oh, hallo, Bessie!"

"Hallo, Mabs! Er"—and Bessie paused, blinking over Mabs' shoulder at the vision Barbara Redfern's back presented as she worked steadily at the illuminated address. "I sus-say, Mabs," Bessie added.

"Yes, odd thing?"

"Does, Babs know that Clarice is breaking bounds to-morrow?"

Mabs gazed at her sharply. Then she closed the door. She looked swiftly at Bessie.

"Bessie, how did you find that out?"

So Bessie told her. Mabs' lips curled with the contempt she felt. So her suspicion was right! Clarice was going to that dance. Clarice, professing the most virtuous of motives, was getting privileges by false pretences, in order to break school rules. And Babs couldn't see it!

"Bessie, say nothing about this," she demanded swiftly.

"No, Mabs, but what—"

But Mabs was not replying to that. She was thinking. It wasn't fair! It wasn't right! Anger against this hypocrite who could so unconsciously play upon the tender feelings of her chums, assailed her once again. Babs should know the sort of traitor she was!

But how—

Mabs reflected. Not a second time did she mean to be caught. How Clarice had found out her intention this afternoon was still a mystery; but the next time, she resolved, she would make sure.

Obviously it was of no earthly use going to Babs and warning her of what she knew. Babs, after this afternoon's evidence, could perhaps be excused if she hesitated to believe her. But Babs was going to know. And this time, Mabs resolved, there should be no mistake.

And, in order that there should be no mistake, Mabs, without a pass, followed the precious quartet when they set off the following afternoon, carrying cases. They went direct by train to Lantham, ticket got out, and immediately hurried to the dance hall.

Mabs watched them as they went in, screened from view in a shop doorway, and as soon as they disappeared, her lips came together. Well, she had them now! If Babs came this time, even she could hardly fail to realise the dupe which Clarice Dyson had made of her.

And Babs should come!

There was a telephone-box handy. It commanded a view of the main door of the Assembly Rooms, in which at that moment Clarice & Co. were laughingly changing into afternoon frocks in one of the magnificently equipped cloak-rooms.

Mabs took down the receiver, phoned Cliff House, and asked urgently for Babs.

A wait of a few moments. Then Babs' voice:

"Yes, who is that?"

"It is I—Mabel. Babs, I'm in Lantham!"

"What? But that's out of bounds."

"I know But—Oh Babs, I can't explain—not now. But will you come here—at once. There's a train from Friarade in twenty minutes, and you can catch it if you hurry."

"But what—"

"No, please, don't ask questions," Mabs begged. "Just come!"

A pause; then Babs:

"All right. Where shall I meet you?"

"Outside the telephone-box near the Assembly Rooms."

She rang off. Well, that was that, she thought grimly. Babs didn't know, of course, what she was coming for. Mabs hated to be mysterious, but there was no other way, she told herself.

Had she told her, Babs would probably have refused. But once she was here—

For the next half-hour Mabs hung about. Never once did she stray from her post. Inside the hall Clarice & Co. little suspecting the existence of the silent sentinel outside, attired themselves in their gayest afternoon frocks and, concealing their cases containing their Cliff House uniforms in the cloak-room, tripped down to be entertained by the famous Lulong band. They meant to have a good time.

Five o'clock was striking from the town hall clock when Babs, flushed from hurrying, panted up. She stared at Mabs.

"Mabs, what ever—"

"Come with me!" Mabs said grimly.

"But what—" Babs asked. "Wait a minute! I suppose you realise we're both out of bounds, Mabs?"

"Yes."

"And if we're caught we'll get into fearful trouble?"

"Yes," Mabs replied.

"Then what—"

"Come with me," Mabs said, between tight lips. "I can't explain. I—I want you to meet somebody," she added.

"Where?"

"In the Assembly Rooms."

"But who?"

"You'll soon see!"

Babs blinked. What was the matter

with Mabs? But the truth did not dawn upon her even then. And Mabs, fearful of refusal even at this late hour, did not intend to explain. Babs, she promised herself, should see with her own eyes.

"But Mabs—"

Mabs, however, was striding forward. Babs, biting her lip, went into the foyer after her.

Unfortunately it was at that moment that Lydia Crossendale, sweeping round in the arms of a partner on the ball-room floor, should happen to glance through the open door, and to see hurrying into the hall, those two figures from Cliff House School.

Lydia's partner stood dumbfounded and staring as suddenly, without a word of apology, she tore herself loose, rushed palpitating to Clarice, who was dancing with Rosa Rodworth.

"Quick!" she cried. "Babs—and Mabs—they're coming here!"

"Oh, my hat! Tell Freda!"

"Quickly!"

In a moment the party had broken up. Four, as one, rushed to the wide stairs which led up to the cloak-rooms.

Three at a time they pelted up them, and Freda Ferriers, the last of the group, reaching the top, turned one hunted glance towards the door. At that moment Mabs came in.

Just too late Freda floundered forward. Mabs gave a jump.

"Freda!" she cried.

But Freda had disappeared.

"Babs—" Mabs turned. But Babs was still in the act of passing through the door. It dawned on Mabs all at once that Lydia & Co. must have seen her coming.

But they shouldn't get away with it—they shouldn't! She hardly realised in the supreme urgency of that intention what she was doing. Had she stopped to think she might not have obeyed the impulse which seized her then.

Up the stairs she leapt, three at a time. Babs, entering the dance hall, stared.

"Mabs!"

"Wait for me!" Mabs counselled.

"Well, my hat!" Babs gasped. Had her chum suddenly taken leave of her senses? What was the big idea in all this?

But not so easily was Mabs to be shaken off. She reached the landing. Through the glass window of one of the doors she saw Clarice's moving silhouette. She burst in. The window was open. Lydia Crossendale was in the act of climbing through.

Three startled girls turned, in the act of donning their outdoor coats and hats.

"Lydia, come back!" Mabs cried.

But Lydia dropped into the car park outside. Clarice turned.

"You spy!"

"Come back!" yelled Mabs, as Rosa made a dash for the window.

And with some furious intention of dragging her back, she sprang forward.

But that was enough for Clarice. Clarice at that moment was quivering with rage. Her face was white, her nostrils quivering. Mabs! Mabs—this interfering little upstart. Spoiling her pleasure once again! Savagely she caught Mabs by the shoulders, spun her round, and then, with a vicious thrust, sent her staggering back across the tiled floor.

The floor was slippery. Mabs, finding herself going, endeavoured unavailingly to retain her balance. And then—crash!

With a shattering impact she brought up against the porcelain wash-basin on the other side of the room. Her arm caught against the glass shelf above it. The glass shelf went flying upwards, and the whole structure, glass shelf, the bottles and impedimenta it contained, came crashing down with a noise that was appalling.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Clarice. "The window—quick!"

Dazedly Mabs stood there, gazing stupidly at a cut on her hand. In a trice Freda and Clarice were out of the window and into the car park outside.

Lydia by that time had frantically signalled a taxi. Clarice, with great



WATCHING from the concealment of a shop doorway Mabs saw Clarice and Co. enter the dance hall. "Now," thought Mabs, "I've caught them!" Once and for all she was resolved to prove Clarice Dyson's deceit.

A COUNTRY CALENDAR

March

Wild flowers to look for this month: Primroses, violets, wild daffodils, celandines. Birds that begin to nest in March: Song thrushes, blackbirds, hedge sparrows, long-tailed tits, robins. Chiff-chaffs, and wheatears—first of the summer migrants—arrive at the end of the month. Red squirrels appear. Badgers and hedgehogs awaken from their winter sleep if the weather is genial. A few early butterflies are seen in the garden. Skylarks, blackbirds, thrushes, wrens, and hedge sparrows are singing.

FICKLE March sometimes gives us a day of truly spring-like beauty, all the more welcome because it is so unexpected, so out of place at a time of year when we are prepared for the worst of every weather.

The wind comes suddenly, gently, from the west; fleecy clouds trail across a sky of palest blue, and there is heartening warmth in the sun.

On such a day all Nature awakens. Red squirrels come down from the beech-tops to play over the brown carpet of leaves, and in the fields the hares are suddenly "mad"—scampering and frolicking like the lambs in the big, thatched pen on the hillside.

Crocuses bring sudden purple and golden glory to the garden, and a venturesome bee seeks an early wallflower in a sheltered nook. Glossy celandines shine under the hedge, and the first primroses show where



soon there will be a myriad beneath the oaks.

What matter that to-morrow the wind from the North may rush down and grip the countryside in iron frost! To-day it is spring! The larks know it, singing above the downs—up, up, up they go, lost in the blue.

Newly-mated partridges call across the meadow in the twilight, and rooks go busily to and from their high nests in the beechwood.

To-morrow a lashing gale may buffet those nests that have withstood so many of winter's storms, and cruel frost send the partridges flocking together again, as in November.

Winter and spring sparring for supremacy—Mixed days of May and December. But from now onward there is less of the sting of December and more of the kiss of May; every day the sun mounts higher in the heavens, dusk gives way reluctantly to night, and long after sunset a thrush sings from the topmost cross of a fir-tree.

The rooks wing home in the twilight, unhurrying; the peewits, newly come to the hilltop, call plaintively. And their wild cries, stirring music of lovely and lonely places, bring gladness and comfort, for they tell of spring coming swiftly on the wings of the west wind.

presence of mind, stopping only to pull the window down, cut across the car park after it.

"Courtfield!" she gasped to the driver, and they all bundled in.

Mabs, dazedly coming to herself, stood there, helpless.

Then—

With a crash the door burst open. A woman dressed in the uniform of a cloak-room attendant stood on the threshold, her eyes goggling.

"Why—good gracious!" she exclaimed. "What's happened here?"

Mabs looked at her helplessly.

"I—it was an accident. I slipped—"

"I see." The cloak-room attendant looked at her searchingly. "You're a Cliff House girl, I see. Wait, I'd better call the manager."

She put her head into the passage.

"Boy," she called to a page, "fetch the manager, please."

Mabs blanched. How could she explain—Oh, how—how?

She turned desperately. Surely, she asked the attendant, she must remember that four other girls had been in this room, but the cloak-room woman had only just come on duty, she told her. She had no idea who had occupied the rooms, and if there had been four other girls in here, where were they now?

In horror Mabs waited. The manager, a fussy little man with bulging eyes, came in.

"Why, what's this?" he burst out.

"Who did it?"

"She did!"

"I tell you—" Mabs gasped.

But no good—no good. The evidence was against her. She was almost swooning with the horror of the situation, while Babs, downstairs, was impatiently stamping her feet. Where had Mabs gone? She determined at last to find out herself.

Bather angrily she tripped up the cloak-room steps to find Mabs coming out of the cloak-room doorway, her face ghastly white, a vituperative little man with bulging eyes following her.

And he was saying ferociously:

"I shall report this to your head-mistress at once—at once! Do you hear? If you cannot pay for the damage, she will. Twenty pounds worth of damage you've done, young lady—twenty pounds!"

"Oh, my goodness!" exclaimed Babs. And as always in time of trouble, instinctively forgetting the differences of the past, she rushed to her chum's side. "Mabs, what happened?"

But no need for Mabs to explain that. The manager, wildly voluble, did all the explaining that was required. Babs gasped with horror.

"But Mabs—"

"I—I didn't—" The feebly stammered denial was all that would come to Mabs' lips at that moment. She felt dismayed—crushed by the overwhelming

disaster which had befallen her. "It

was Clarice!"

"Clarice?" Babs started back.

"Mabs!"

"She was here."

"But"—Babs' eyes opened—"how could she have been here? She's gone to Rosemary Cottage!"

"Are you her friend?" the manager asked.

"Why, yes!"

"What is your name?"

"Barbara Red—"

And then Barbara, realising that she was out of bounds, bit her lip. "Does that matter?"

"It matters a very great deal—a very great deal!" He indicated the cloak-room. "See! Somebody's got to pay for that damage! And I want somebody, apart from my own staff, to be able to state what damage was done. I shall give your name!"

"Oh, but—but no!" Mabs cried.

"Babs, I'm sorry!"

But Mabs' sorrow made no difference. Babs was standing still, gazing at her queerly.

Babs was involved in this now—Babs, who had been dragged from her work—who had not the faintest intention of breaking bounds—who had only come here because Mabs, her old friend, had been so urgent on the telephone.

Her name was taken. At last, after much palaver, they were released.

In the street Babs turned questioning to her chum.

"Mabs—"

"I tell you," Mabs said wearily, "it was true. Clarice was there—with Lydia and Rosa and Freda. Oh, I see you don't believe me! I don't expect you to believe me—not now!"

Babs bit her lip. She turned away. But she wondered. Not like Mabs, that. What funny little game had Mabs been up to? Was it possible that Clarice had been here?

But, of course, Mabs wouldn't tell lies. Then she felt herself remembering—all those pinpricks in the study—all that had happened.

She came to a decision. Well, she'd soon prove it. She'd go to Rosemary Cottage right away.

She did! But it did not occur to her that Lydia & Co. had taken the taxi there. Lydia & Co., indeed, anticipating something like this, had made all speed into Courtfield.

Hastily, at Clarice's suggestion, they had bought Ivy her presents. In the cloak-room of the Courtfield Restaurant they had rapidly changed back into Cliff House uniform, and leaving their bags to be called for later, had made all speed to Rosemary Cottage.

They were there when the astounded Babs, ten minutes later, arrived. Babs blinked.

"Clarry—"

"Yes, Babs, dear?"

"Have you been into Lantham this afternoon?"

"But no," Clarry frowned. "Why should we have gone into Lantham?" she asked innocently. "We went to Courtfield, of course—to buy these things. And goodness, weren't they difficult to get!" she laughed. "I should think we tried half a dozen shops before we found the things we wanted, and it took us hours to select them. But Ivy loves them—don't you, Ivy?"

"Yes, rather!" Ivy said enthusiastically.

Babs shook her head. Oh, what a hopeless mess it was! What had come

over Mabs? Had she been dreaming? Had she allowed her jealousy of Clarice to make her imagine things?

But later, when she got back to Cliff House—

Miss Primrose was there. Miss Primrose—stern-faced, grim.

"Barbara, I have already dealt with Mabel Lynn. It is now my turn to deal with you. I am not accusing you of having a hand in the damage which was done at the Assembly Rooms this afternoon, but I demand to know what you, the captain of the Form, and one of Cliff House's nonnities, were doing out of bounds!"

Babs bit her lip.
"I had an urgent phone call, Miss Primrose."

"Indeed? From whom?"

"Well, from—a friend."

"Indeed?" Miss Primrose's lips pursed. "That is hardly a satisfactory way of explaining yourself, Barbara. I feel deeply the disgrace which is reflected upon Cliff House as the result of this disgraceful episode. Whatever your excuse, you were with Mabel Lynn at the time this—this scene was enacted, and I cannot hold you guiltless. You will consider yourself detained for the next two half-holidays. Now you may go!"

Babs went. Slowly she made her way along to Study No. 4. Clarry was there, writing at the table. Mabs was seated in an armchair before the fire, staring deeply, morosely, into the flames. She did not look up as Babs entered. But Clarry rose at once.

"Oh, Babs dear, I'm so sorry! Did Primmy go for you?"

Babs shook her head.

"But, Babs, you look so wretched—so white!" Clarry's eyes were very concerned. "Babs dear, can I get you something?"

From Mabs came an impatient

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shuffe. Oh, this deceitful, two-faced girl!

She rose abruptly. From the table she snatched her books. She couldn't stand it—she couldn't! She went out, closing the door behind her.

"Mabs!" Babs quiveringly cried.

But Mabs, biting her lip, wouldn't listen.

Down the corridor she went, to knock at the door of Study No. 7.

Marjorie Hazeldene, sitting at the table doing her prep, looked up.

"Why, Mabs, what's the matter, dear? You look ill!"

"Can I share this study with you for a little while?" Mabs asked quietly.

"Why, of course. But—but why?"

"Because," Mabs said bitterly, "I just can't stand that girl, Clarice Dyson—I just can't! I tell you," Mabs went on, almost violently, "that if I have much more, I shall break out—break out! I just can't stand it! Babs has chosen her. Well, let Babs have her. Until she comes to her senses, I've finished with both of them!"

And then suddenly, uncontrollably—while Marjorie stood appalled—she flung herself into the armchair and commenced to sob as if her heart was breaking.

While in Study No. 4—

Babs and Clarice were there, the former looking very troubled, very sad. On Clarice's face, too, there was that so cleverly assumed expression of contrition; the look in her eyes, which seemed to say:

"I'm so sorry all this has happened." But at heart, oh, how she was rejoicing! How she longed to burst out laughing, seeing Babs there, so worried and upset!

She wanted to cry out:
"If you only knew, Barbara Redfern!"

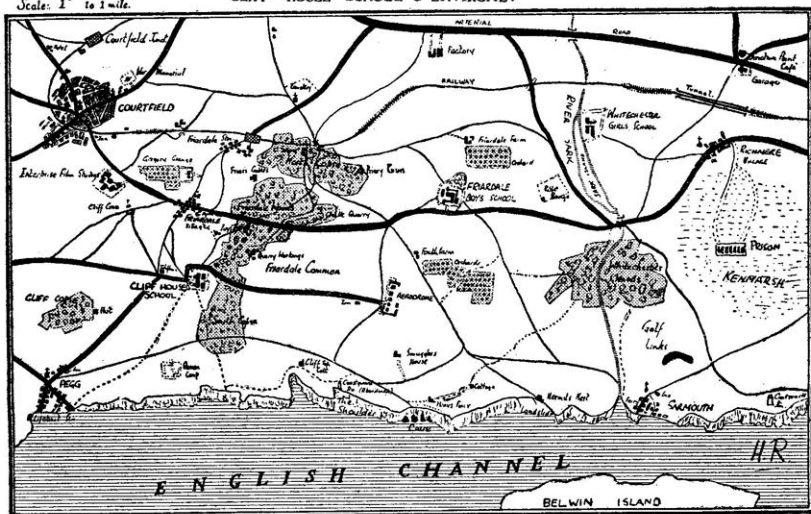
But no. She must be silent. She had done what she had attempted to do—had wrecked that friendship between Babs and Mabs. In the meanness of her heart she exulted in her triumph. Babs and Mabs, it seemed, were parted for ever.

Yes, it was her moment.
"And," thought Clarice, "I'm going to make the most of it!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY

Scale: 1" to 1 mile.

CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL & ENVIRONS.



Many new Cliff House admirers have written to ask about the geography of the district in which the School is situated. From this interesting map, specially prepared by Hilda Richards, you will be able to obtain a very clear idea of the environs of Cliff House.